

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AT A GLANCE

POPULATION: 10,734,247 (July 2017 est.)

LANGUAGE: Spanish

PREDOMINANT RELIGIONS: Christian (Roman Catholic, Evangelical)

TIME ZONE: Same as Eastern Daylight Time (New York City)

TELEPHONE CODES: 809, country code; 829 is a new country code being phased in primarily for cellphone and fax numbers, as well as new landline numbers.

The Dominican Republic is a country with spectacular, varied scenery that includes the tallest mountains in the region, unbroken stretches of white sand beaches and the Caribbean's oldest and — some claim — most cosmopolitan city, Santo Domingo.

The Dominican Republic was one of the Caribbean's more obscure locales for a long time — before the government began splashing its assets around the world in colorful TV and print advertisements in a determination to elevate the country's name on the list of Caribbean vacation spots. Evidence of their success is visible throughout the country. Visitor numbers have soared, and many new resorts were built. There have also been more visits by cruise ships to the ports of Santo Domingo, Puerto Plata, Samana and La Romana. Although the growth in tourism is easing economic troubles in the country, it hasn't ended the desperate conditions experienced by many Dominicans. The unemployment rate is high, and more than a quarter of the people live in poverty, often residing in shantytowns and rural shacks.



COMPASSION IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Compassion's ministry in the Dominican Republic began in 1970. Today, more than 54,000 children are served by more than 165 Compassion-assisted child development centers throughout the country. Compassion's church-based child development centers are places of hope for impoverished children in the Dominican Republic. Under the guidance of caring Christian adults, children's pressing needs for nutrition and medical attention are met. Children also receive tutoring to help with their academics. Health and hygiene lessons teach them to care for their own physical well-being, and positive social skills are modeled and encouraged.

WEATHER

November through March, days may be in the 80s F / 28-32 C and nights in the 60s F / 15-22 C. It rains more during May through October, although generally not enough to rule out a visit unless a hurricane is predicted. (Hurricanes are possible June through November.) The north coast can be rainy in winter as well. The mountains in the west are considerably cooler, requiring a sweater or jacket during the evening. Constant

breezes keep the temperature and humidity fairly tolerable, though Santo Domingo can be extremely muggy in the summer. The southwest desert, while drier, can be hot in daytime.

CURRENCY

The local currency is the *Dominican peso* (DOP), but U.S. dollars are widely accepted in tourist areas and cities — as are credit cards, although some establishments may levy hefty surcharges. Banks give cash advances on credit cards but add transaction surcharges. ATMs are located throughout the country but may be out of order. Beware of scams in which “helpful” locals offer to assist you, then steal your money.

FOOD

Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, choose meat that is cooked thoroughly, avoid local dairy products, and assume the water is unsafe (stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks).

SHOPPING

Shop for local handicrafts, especially colorful Haitian art, wood carvings, ceramics and straw items. Soapstone carvings are based on art of the indigenous Taíno people. Craft markets and



stalls are found on tourist beaches and in regional markets in towns and cities. Bargain in markets and even shops, though not in larger stores. If a price is not marked, then negotiate.

ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

Voltage used throughout the Dominican Republic is 110V. Most outlets accept plug type A, and some travel guides recommend carrying surge protection for voltage irregularities. (For up-to-date plug and outlet information, check whatplug.info and click on your destination country.) You may also wish to take a universal plug adaptor, available in the luggage/travel sections of most big-box stores.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do** ask a local resident to teach you to dance *merengue*. Dominicans take great pride in their music and dance.
- **Don't** be in a hurry. Dominicans never are.
- **Don't** get angry or impatient in restaurants if your bill doesn't arrive. It is considered rude to present patrons with the bill until they ask for it.
- **Do** keep a flashlight handy for power failures.

DRESS

Dress is casual in most of the country. Pack plenty of loose-fitting cotton clothes. If you want to blend in, don't wear shorts in cities. Women who don't cover their shoulders and knees when visiting cathedrals risk being turned away. Like most other Latino societies, the Dominican Republic tends to be modest, and the importance of proper dress cannot be overstated.

Women: Modest, loose-fitting tops (nothing form-fitting) are recommended; sleeveless tops are acceptable, but please cover your shoulders in places of worship; pants, capris, longer skirts and loose-fitting, casual dresses are recommended for women.

Men: Button shirts and polo shirts are recommended. T-shirts are allowed in casual settings. Long, non-denim pants are recommended for center visits and church services.

Both: Shorts are highly discouraged outside of beachside locations. A light jacket is recommended for cool evenings or rainy days.

Shoes: Closed-toe shoes are recommended during the day due to potential unsanitary or uneven terrain.

GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

Leave at home all unnecessary credit cards, Social Security card, library cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet. Carry items in front pockets, not back pockets. Do not display large sums of money in public; make visible only the amount of money that approximates your purchase. Never leave items with cash in them (purse, wallet, backpack, etc.) on a bus, car, or any other location. Stay alert and be cautious at all times. Don't take safety and security for granted.

U.S. EMBASSY INFORMATION

Website: do.usembassy.gov

Phone: (809) 567-7775

Address: Av. Republica de Colombia #57, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

We strongly advise you to contact the CDC (www.cdc.gov) or check with your personal physician for more information about your specific health needs while traveling, including any recommendations for immunizations.

*All information taken from the World Factbook and
Compassion International.*

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

The official language of the Dominican Republic is Spanish. The country's secondary language is English. Some common Dominican greetings include:

Hello	¡Hola!
How are you?	¿Cómo está usted?
Pleased to meet you	Mucho gusto
Very well, thank you	Muy bien, gracias
Goodbye	Adiós (or chou in Bolivia)
What is your name?	¿Cómo te llamas?
My name is ...	Me llamo (name)
How old are you?	¿Cuántos años tienes?
Yes	Sí
No	No
Please	Por favor
Thank you	Gracias
You're welcome	De nada
I do not speak Spanish	No hablo español
Do you speak English?	¿Usted habla inglés?
I don't understand	No entiendo
You can do it!	¡Sí, se puede!
I love you	Te amo or te quiero
I am praying for you	Estoy orando por ti

Jesus loves you	Jesús te ama
You are precious to God	Eres precioso(a) para Dios
God bless you	¡Qué Dios te bendiga!
I believe in you	Creo en ti
Tell me about your family	Cuénteme de tu familia
Good/OK	Bueno
I need	Necesito
How much?	¿Cuánto?
Too expensive	Demasiado caro
Cheaper	Más barato
Where is the bathroom?	¿Dónde está el baño?
Where is the church?	¿Dónde está la iglesia?
Where is the bank?	¿Dónde está el banco?
Where is the hotel?	¿Dónde está el hotel?

SPANISH TIPS

The h is silent in Spanish; therefore, *hola* is pronounced “ola.” The ñ is pronounced ny; therefore, *pequeño* is pronounced “pe-kenyo.”