

# The Dominican Republic



## General Information

- Location: Occupies eastern two-thirds of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, which it shares with Haiti
- Capital: Santo Domingo
- Government: Democratic Republic
- Language: Spanish
- Population: 10,000,000
- Demographics: 87.5% Dominican (mestizo 67%; white 14.7%; black 8.6 %); 10.2 Haitian; 2.3% Other
- Religion: 82% Catholic, with freedom of religion for non-Catholics

## Economy

- Because of the Dominican's beautiful beaches and rich history, tourism is its number one industry followed by agriculture.
- Major exports include sugarcane, coffee, tobacco.
- Average income per person is \$5,000, although the gap between rich and poor skew this statistic. Most people in a poor community such as La Represa earn significantly less.

## Topography and Climate

- The Dominican Republic is generally mountainous, with deserts in the extreme west.
- The climate is tropical, with average highs in the low 80s in the winter months and mid-upper 80s during the summer. Temperatures in the 90s are not uncommon during the summer, although they rarely near 100. High humidity makes it feel hotter than it is.
- The Dominican rainy season runs from May to November. Hurricanes are threat during most of these months, especially between August and November.

## Culture

- Dominicans are very hospitable and kind to their guests. They value relationships and spending time with you.
- Dominican food staples include fruits such as bananas, coconut, passion fruit, oranges, grapefruit, cantaloupe, papaya, and watermelon; starches such as rice, beans, yucca, and plantains; and meats such as chicken, pork, and beef.
- Baseball is the Dominican pastime. Basketball is also very popular.

## History

- Discovered by Christopher Columbus on December 5, 1492, the first place he set foot in the New World.
- After the arrival of the Europeans, most natives were wiped out by enslavement, disease, or massacre.
- In 1503, the Spanish began to bring slaves from Africa to work the plantations
- In 1795, control of the Dominican passed to the French, as a consequence of a peace treaty with Spain.
- In 1805, Haiti invaded the Dominican Republic and slaughtered most of the residents of its larger cities, causing Dominican hostility toward Haitians that exists to this day.
- In 1808, the Dominicans revolted against the French and returned control to Spain only to declare independence again in 1821.
- In 1822, Haiti took control of the Dominican Republic after only nine weeks of independence.
- In 1838, led by Juan Pablo Duarte, the Dominican Republic gained independence from Haiti.
- The rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by political instability, including a brief repossession of the county by Spain.
- In 1916, the US occupied the Dominican Republic in order to establish stability. American occupation was resented by the Dominicans, and the US withdrew in 1922.
- In 1930, Rafael Trujillo began a brutal dictatorship that lasted for 31 years.
- In 1965, the US intervened in Dominican affairs, fearful of a Communist takeover. The US helped Joaquin Balaguer, an associate of Trijillo, win election in 1966. His 12 year regime was marked by a suppression of human rights.
- Through the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>, the Dominican Republic has maintained a stable government, with free elections.