



# Travel With Us!



## Dominican Republic

- The Dominican Republic in the West Indies occupies the

eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with Haiti. Its area equals that of Vermont and New Hampshire combined.

- There are many small offshore islands and cays that are part of the Dominican territory. A cay is a low elevation sandy island that is formed on the surface of coral reefs. The two largest islands are Saona and Beata.

- The Dominican Republic contains the highest mountain range in the West Indies called the Cordillera Central. Duarte Peak, at 10,417 feet, is the highest point in the West Indies.

- The Dominican Republic was explored and claimed by Christopher Columbus on his first voyage in 1492. He named it La Española, and his son, Diego, was its first viceroy (a royal official that runs the country).

- The capital and largest city is Santo Domingo. It was founded in 1496 and is the oldest European settlement in the Western Hemisphere. Santo Domingo claims the oldest university in the New World as well as the oldest house, hospital, street and cathedral. The cathedral's first stone was laid in 1514 by Diego Columbus, Christopher Columbus' son.

- The government is currently a representative democracy.

- The Llano Costero del Caribe is the largest of the plains in the Dominican Republic. Stretching north and east of Santo Domingo, it contains many sugar plantations in the savannahs that are common there.

- Between the Central and Northern mountain ranges lies the rich and fertile Cibao valley. This major valley is home to the city of Santiago and most of the farming areas in the nation.

- The Yaque del Norte is the longest and most important Dominican river. It carries excess water down from the Cibao Valley and empties into Monte Cristi Bay.

- The country experiences a tropical climate with seasonal changes in temperature. Rainfall varies according to seasons. The Domini-

can Republic lies at the heart of a hurricane belt and this makes it extremely susceptible to storms from June to October.

- Spanish is the official language.

- Independence Day is the National Holiday. It takes place on February 27. In 1844, the country received its independence from Haiti.

- Agriculture: sugarcane, coffee, cotton, cocoa, tobacco, rice, beans, potatoes, corn, bananas, cattle, pigs, dairy products, beef and eggs.

- Industries: tourism, sugar processing, ferronickel and gold mining, textiles, cement and tobacco.

- Natural resources: nickel, bauxite, gold, silver.

- The largest lake is Enriquillo, a salt lake at 131 feet below sea level, the lowest point in the Caribbean.

- Dominican folk music features instruments such as the maracas, tambora (small drum), accordion and the guirra (a percussion instrument scraped with a metal rod). The national dance is the méringue.

- Dominicans love baseball. Many professional players in the United States come from the Dominican Republic like Albert Pujols, David Ortiz and Ubaldo Jimenez.



The Cathedral of Santa María la Menor in Santo Domingo is the oldest cathedral in the Americas, begun in 1514 and completed in 1540