



Dominican Republic Background

Text From National Geographic Atlas of the World, Eighth Edition and Other Sources

[Dominican Republic Guide](#)

[Facts](#)

[Map](#)

Fast Facts

Population:

8,862,000

Capital:

Santo Domingo; 1,865,000

Area:

48,442 square kilometers (18,704 square miles or about the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined)

Language:

Spanish

Religion:

Roman Catholic, sizable Protestant community

Currency:

Dominican peso

Life Expectancy:

69

GDP per Capita:

U.S. \$6,300

Literacy as % of Population:

85%



Overview: Occupying the eastern two-thirds of Hispaniola, the Dominican Republic is the second largest country, after Cuba, in the West Indies. This mountainous land includes Pico Duarte—the highest point in the Caribbean. Colonized in 1493 by Spaniards, it offered the first chartered university, hospital, cathedral, and monastery in the Americas. Santo Domingo, founded in 1496, is the oldest European settlement in the Western Hemisphere. The nation became independent from Haiti on February 27, 1844, but endured political instability and repressive governments. Today it is a democracy, economically dependent on agriculture and tourism.

Development

[UNDP Human Development Report for 2016, Dominican Republic](#)

BeachCorps supports sustainable development in the Dominican Republic by helping empower local communities. While significant poverty exists in the Dominican Republic, our focus will always be on communities that are moving forward and taking control of their own development.

Economy

Industry: Tourism, sugar processing, ferronickel and gold mining, textiles

Agriculture: Sugarcane, coffee, cotton, cacao; cattle

Exports: Ferronickel, sugar, gold, silver, coffee

Environmental Challenges

“Today's world faces many environmental challenges. This environmental dictionary of the Dominican Republic will deal with those challenges that are considered of highest importance for the Caribbean country, challenges that require immediate attention from the Dominican people in order to secure a future that is environmentally harmonious, socially just and economically viable, a future where the island's population can continue to benefit from the many goods and services that biodiversity and other natural resources have to offer.” [Dominican Republic Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Environment](#)

"[Doing It Right in the Dominican Republic](#)" by Jeanine Barone in Travel with Heart on May 29, 2014. “A few of the other ways this tropical paradise is putting eco-sound theories into practice.”

CULTURE AND HISTORY

Baseball

[“A Brief History of Baseball and the Dominican Republic”](#) from [DR1.com](#). BeachCorps loves baseball and hopes to incorporate many baseball games into projects as means of promoting people-to-people engagement and supporting great causes. Who knows? Maybe you will meet a future “Big Papi” on your trip!

Dominican Cigars

“...The Dominican is home to some of the best, and oldest cigars brands on the planet thanks to the consistent, tropical climate that’s ideal for growing tobacco. For years, if you asked an enthusiast which country produced the best cigars, chances are they would say the Dominican. The first popular location for producing cigars outside of Cuba, brands like La Aurora, Macanudo, Arturo Fuente, Montecristo, Romeo y Julieta, and a slew of others, continue to flourish here. And chances are, the first cigar you enjoyed came from this cigar hotspot. There’s no doubt the Dominican makes some of the best, most approachable cigars around. But be on the lookout, because the Dominican has been pumping out some excellent higher-octane blends too.”
www.cigarsinternational.com

Dominican Coffee

[Dominican Republic Coffee](#) from [DR1.com](#). “Dominican coffee is short, very sweet and extremely strong. Short because it is served in a small, espresso-sized cup, sweet because it is made with generous enamel-stripping amounts of sugar, and strong enough to make your eyeballs pop out if you’re not used to it. It goes without saying that Dominican coffee is delicious, and a well-deserved source of intense national pride.”

Dominican Food

“[Dominican Republic Food](#)” from [DR1.com](#). The BeachCorps personal favorites are *tostones* and *sancocho*. Feel free to try local foods during projects on your own risk! BeachCorps excursions bring along boxed lunches, but locals may offer you food because Dominicans are incredibly hospitable.

Dominican Genetic History

“[Dominicans are 49% Black, 39% White and 4% Indian](#)” from [DR1.com](#).

Dominican Rum

“It is said that rum is the essence of the Dominican spirit. The major competition rum here has is the beer. The rum made on the island is some of the best in the world. It is not that easily obtained in many parts of the world. Also remember if you buy that bottle of [mamajuana](#) it tastes best made with Dominican rum.” www.colonialzone-dr.com

[Ultimate Rum Guide](#)

Dominican Slang

“**Dominican Slang**” from [DR1.com](#). Two of the words you should know are 1) “aplatanado” (*ah-plah-ta-NA-doh* or “plaintained”) and refers to a foreigner who has become so Dominicanized that they are like a local plantain, and 2) the culture of “dao” (*DAH-oh*), which is the culture of dependency that serious development experts try to avoid, particularly in voluntourism.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic History, Peoples, Culture, Relations

The Dominican Republic and Haiti have had a long and often difficult relationship which continues to this day. Below is some background reading on the relationship from a variety of perspectives.

“[Haiti and the Dominican Republic: One island, two worlds](#)” by DW Akademie, which describes itself as Germany's leading organization for international media development.”

“[The Life of Haitians in Dominican Republic - Migration Challenges Culture.](#)” by Educated Traveller and “Mr. T”. “MR.T “focuses on educating people about various topics related to travel, living abroad and different cultures.” This is an interesting look into the lives of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, with many similarities to the problems facing immigrants in other countries—including the USA.

Op-Ed by the Dominican Ambassador to the United States José Tomás Pérez, “[We are not trying to undo the past](#)” in the Miami Herald, July 13, 2015.