

Now that you're off to the DR, get ready to relax—or is it to play? In preparing, if you only read one thing, read and take this Inside Scoop with your documents. It's packed with tips to pave your way to fun.

travel: delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

The Dominican Peso
Canadian and US bills are accepted at most tourist venues. Only change money at a bank or hotel (many banks and stores close afternoons). Credit and debit cards are accepted in major areas with ATMs available. Many merchants want to see photo ID with credit cards. Use pesos in smaller areas and for small purchases. For security, log the dates you'll be away with your credit card company.

Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details, including:

- advance seats & upgrades
- booking excursions and special tours ahead
- Kids' Club services
- water sports available
- insurance coverage.

LeGrow's Travel
We Know Travel Best.™
A Maritime Travel Company

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Inside Scoop:

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Know before you go: travel isn't just your destination, it's also the journey

Whether a family vacation or a singles getaway to enjoy water sports, "the DR" provides great value with lots to keep you busy. Or not. An international destination (check the racy European swimsuits), it offers a hot mix of beach days and exciting excursions. Tips:

- Be realistic: we know you want value in balancing choices and amenities, but no matter what your budget, aim to relax and enjoy. Special requests are requests only, e.g. an oceanview suite; these are premium (why upgrade fees apply).
- Have a passport www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp that's valid six months from your travel date.
- Electrical service is 110 volts/60 hertz. Voltage irregularities are common; use surge protectors for appliances/computers.
- There's good phone and internet access. Check roaming charges with your provider.
- The DR enjoys warm tropical weather all year with average temperatures 77-87F/25-31C. November to April is the cool season, warmest is May to October.
- The local time is Eastern Caribbean Time, Atlantic Time in North America, 1hr ahead of Toronto (it sounds so much better saying "Caribbean Time"). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.
- If going off the resort, be respectful; cover up bikinis and keep hats off when in restaurants.
- Easter Holy Week is observed with some restrictions on tours/motorized water sports. Alcohol might not be served outside resorts.
- We strongly suggest LeGrow's Travel medical and cancellation/interruption insurance.

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

Pack Strategically

The world is overrun with black bags so put coloured tape or ribbon on your luggage to spot it quickly. Put your name outside and inside and remove old tags. In your carry-on, pack valuables such as jewellery; over-the-counter and prescription drugs in original containers with a list, dosage and doctor's phone number.

Pack liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags)—due to carry-on restrictions, the maximum size container is 100ml (3.4oz). All must fit in 1 clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre (often available at airport screening), then place the bag in the tray. You may take baby formula, food or milk for a child under 2 years of age (0-24 months). In carry-on pack pens/notebook, hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat or veg over borders).

Permitted in carry-on: cell phones, laptops, disposable razors, canes, umbrellas and nail clippers. Items you can't take on include knives, corkscrews and sports gear such as golf clubs, baseball bats, racquets and pool cues. Check with your airline and www.catsa.gc.ca/home for restrictions. If you snorkel, bring your gear as some resorts limit equipment time (and sometimes it's not as clean or new as you like).

Tips: Most hotels provide hair dryers. Walkie-talkies can help families stay connected within a resort (bring batteries!). Pack sunscreen in checked luggage inside a resealable plastic bag.

Shopping & Tours

Great deals include amber and larium, a semi-precious stone found only in the DR (it will remind you of the sea). Gold, cigars and rum are also good buys. If you want to buy something from beach/street vendors, ask how much the item is, offer half and bargain up from there (but don't haggle just for fun—vendors make their living from tourists). Many superb nature tours, to delight all ages, are available including bird-watching, mountain biking, hiking, eco adventures, rafting and kiteboarding.



Your Airline

Sign up online for your airline(s) email or text flight notifications as your flight could be delayed (the plane might be flying in). CATSA notes “*Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and contact their airline for further information on their flight(s).*”

Airline staff are on duty some 3hrs prior: due to staffing and security, check-in closes 1hr before departure. If late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. Many airlines have reciprocal “code-shares;” your ticket is for one airline, you travel on another's plane.

For check-in or carry-on baggage allowances, see the airline's website. Size and weight restrictions for checked and carry-on varies by airline. **Entry & Departure:** ask your counsellor about Tourist Cards (at airports) and required documentation. Keep a separate copy or cell photo of your passport's ID page. If your package doesn't include it, have cash: US\$10 entry/US\$20 departure fees.



“**Get Packing Checklist**” and “**General Planning & Packing Tips**” at www.legrowstravel.ca/inside-scoops
 Your sense of adventure & humour!

Before Leaving For Home

Do a room sweep for belongings. If you leave clothes or gifts for a staff member, leave a note as s/he'll need it to pass hotel security: kids clothes, toiletries and school supplies are welcome. A noon check-out is usual; your hotel may offer late checkout for a fee. Don't buy or accept anything suspect or that may be taken from you at customs: plants, meat/animal products drugs or endangered species parts. If you bring back wood items, they may be examined and seized. At www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/menu-eng.html, click on the Travellers tab for “Bring Goods Across the Border.” Know Canada's duty free exemption limits. **Note:** 151 proof rum is not allowed on planes.



Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!

Canadians: Emergency? Contact Global Affairs (collect if needed) 613-996-8885 or sos@international.gc.ca. Offices: **Puerto Plata** tel 809-586-5761 • **Punta Cana** 809-455-1730 • **Santa Domingo** tel 809-262-3100.
<https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/embassies-consulates/dominican-republic>

When You Arrive

After clearing customs, if on a charter (your counsellor will confirm), meet your rep outside the baggage area for the bus to your hotel. Others might say they'll drive you and you'll be reimbursed—not true! Before you get on, check luggage to ensure it's secure and loaded on your bus. The bus may drop travellers at other resorts (it's a great way to see other properties). You'll be advised of the time/place for your orientation meeting—don't miss it. The tour rep works part-time at your hotel (and other resorts) during posted hours. Since others are leaving, rooms are often not ready when you arrive, but start on the fun. Pack a swimsuit in your carry-on and head to the pool or beach. Your hotel's front desk will hold bags.

Tip: Most batteries (e.g. AAA, 9-volt) for personal devices are allowed in checked and carry-on, lithiums allowed with some limits. In entering and leaving, some visitors have reported batteries being taken due to varying “regulations.” Restrictions are enforced by airlines—check the airline's website, print and pack the page.

When You're There

Enjoy local food and drink in moderation: sun and alcohol don't mix. Avoid uncooked food and food from street vendors. Due to rabies, avoid street animals (much of the first Jurassic Park movie was made here). Drink purified/bottled water and wash your hands often. Ice at the resorts is safe but check with your tour rep. Some travellers go to the beach early to “reserve” beach chairs with towels: don't leave valuables or swap taken chairs. Hotels have beach towels; to reduce loss, sometimes a deposit is charged and returned on your departure. Water is a precious commodity: when people leave the beach to get ready for dinner, expect reduced water pressure/hot water. Keep your passport in your in-room safe or hotel's safety deposit box. Avoid timeshare sales: there's no “free” lunch. If you book a tour, make sure you can handle it: don't take Advanced Scuba diving if you can't swim. Going off resort to local nightlife? Take a taxi, go with others and return to your resort.

What To Do...What To Do...

There's so much offered: while beaches are a main attraction, get out of the sun for a different kind of fun. If you book excursions through your counsellor (less cash onsite), you're guaranteed a spot, you budget in advance and avoid “fly-by-night” operators. Otherwise, purchase tours only from companies at the hotel or your tour rep. Attractions differ depending on locale. Some suggestions:

- Swim with dolphins, sharks or stingrays (stingers removed). Hike and bike jungles, caves and lagoons. Explore the underworld of coral, reefs and tropical fish with scuba diving and snorkelling.
- Saddle up for horse riding on mountain or coastal trails: from beginner to challenging. Take a wild safari outback trip (thankfully, cold drinks included).
- Fore! If you golf, the DR speaks your lingo with challenging and gorgeous courses such as Teeth of the Dog and Playa Grande.

For other suggestions, see www.godominicanrepublic.com.

The International Language of Courtesy

Delays and cancellations are all part of travelling. Indeed a slower pace is guaranteed here: enjoy it! Not everyone speaks English. Just as visitors to Canada don't expect you to be fluent in their language, learn a few words in Spanish—take Maritime Travel's Inside Scoop: Spanish with you. Tread lightly—on holiday we're all more casual; littering and cigarette butts are unwelcome everywhere. Most staff work long hours—a smile, patience and a kind word are always welcome.

Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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