



Península de Samaná

Includes ➔

Eastern Península de Samaná	110
Samaná	110
Las Galeras	115
Western Península de Samaná	119
Las Terrenas	119
Playa Bonita	126

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ El Cabito (p118)
- ➔ Mi Corazon (p124)
- ➔ La Terrasse (p124)
- ➔ Le Tainos (p118)
- ➔ Rincón Rubi (p118)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Peninsula House (p126)
- ➔ Chalet Tropical (p118)
- ➔ Eva Luna (p123)
- ➔ Casa Por Qué No? (p117)
- ➔ Hotel Atlantis (p126)

Why Go?

This small slither of land is the antithesis of the Dominican-Caribbean dream in the southeast, where resorts rule and patches of sand come at a first-class premium. Far more laid-back and, in certain senses, more cosmopolitan, Samaná offers a European vibe as strong as espresso; it's where escape is the operative word, and where French and Italian are at least as useful as Spanish. The majority come to gasp at the North Atlantic humpback whales doing their migratory song and dance from mid-January to mid-March, but the peninsula is no one-trick pony. Sophisticated Las Terrenas is the place for those who crave a lively social scene, and sleepy Las Galeras boasts several of the best and most secluded beaches in the Dominican Republic (DR).

When to Go

- ➔ **Mid-January to late March** Over 10,000 North Atlantic humpback whales put on a show of monstrous proportions in the Bahía de Samaná. February is the best month.
- ➔ **April** Bypass the whale-watching frenzy and have the peninsula to yourself. Crowds have thinned out considerably but weather remains pleasant before the summer heats up.
- ➔ **December** Enjoy drier days in early December, after the autumn rains have thinned-out significantly but the flood of domestic holidaymakers haven't yet descended.

History

Because of Bahía de Samaná's fortuitous geography – its deep channel, eastward orientation and easy-to-defend mouth, perfect for a naval installation – the Península de Samaná has been coveted, fought over and bought several times over. At least six different countries, including Haiti, France, Spain, the US and Germany, have either occupied the Samaná area or sought to do so.

Founded as a Spanish outpost in 1756, Samaná was first settled by émigrés from the Canary Islands. It was deemed a prize as early as 1807, during the brief French possession of Hispaniola. France's commander in Santo Domingo, an ambitious leader no doubt, proposed building a city named Port Napoleon in Samaná, but France lost the island before the plan could move forward.

After its independence from Spain, the DR was taken over by Haiti, which controlled Hispaniola from 1822 to 1844. During this period Haiti invited more than 5000 freed and escaped slaves from the US to settle on the island. About half moved to the Samaná area. Today, a community of their descendants still speaks a form of English.

During Haitian rule, France pressured its former colony to cede the Península de Samaná in return for a reduction in the debt Haiti owed it. Incredibly, Haiti had been forced to pay restitution to France for land taken from French colonists in order to gain international recognition. Of course, France never paid restitution to former slaves for their ordeal.

After independence from Haiti in 1844, the new Dominican government feared its neighbor would invade, so sought foreign



Península de Samaná Highlights

- 1 Taking in the spectacular sight of majestic humpbacks breaching and diving on a whale-watching trip in the **Bahía de Samaná** (p111)
- 2 Dining precariously above crashing waves on the edge of the Dominican Republic at **El Cabito** (p118) in Las Galeras
- 3 Losing yourself for hours on the gorgeous sands of **Playa Rincón** (p116)
- 4 Enjoying the sophisticated European atmosphere in the bars and restaurants of **Las Terrenas** (p123)
- 5 Lounging, snorkeling and lazing about the isolated beaches in end-of-the-road **Las Galeras** (p115), one of the few independent-traveler-friendly locales in the DR
- 6 Navigating the rugged and wet mountain scenery of Samaná's interior on the trip to 52m-high **Cascada El Limón** (p122)
- 7 Showering yourself in discerning luxury at **Península House** (p126), one of the Caribbean's most distinguishing properties