



Central Highlands

Includes ➔

Santiago.....	182
San José de las Matas.....	188
La Vega.....	189
Jarabacoa.....	190
Parques Nacionales Bermúdez & Ramírez.....	196
Constanza.....	199
East of Santiago.....	201

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Aroma de la Montaña (p195)
- ➔ Il Pasticcio (p185)
- ➔ Camp David (p185)
- ➔ La Baita (p194)
- ➔ De Parrillada (p195)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Rancho Baiguatè (p194)
- ➔ Tubagua Plantation Eco-Village (p155)
- ➔ Alto Cerro (p200)
- ➔ Camp David (p184)
- ➔ Jarabacoa Mountain Hostel (p193)

Why Go?

Even die-hard beach fanatics will eventually overdose on sun and sand. When you do, the cool, mountainous playground of the Central Highlands is the place to come: where else can you sit at dusk, huddled in a sweater, and watch the mist descend into the valley as the sun sets behind the mountains? Popular retreats, roaring rivers, soaring peaks and the only white-water rafting in the Caribbean beckon. Down below in the plains of the Valle del Cibao is where merengue spontaneously erupted onto the musical landscape, and where you'll find some of the best Carnival celebrations in the country. Economic life in the Central Highlands revolves around Santiago, the Dominican Republic's second-largest city and the capital of a vast tobacco- and sugarcane-growing region. So it goes without saying that a visit here requires sipping rum and puffing a local cigar.

When to Go

- ➔ Some of the DR's most raucous Carnival celebrations take place in Santiago and La Vega in February and March.
- ➔ It is dry in the area around Santiago in January to March and June to August
- ➔ Mountain towns such as Jarabacoa and Constanza are cooler year-round; temperatures can fall below freezing at night.

1 Getting There & Away

Santiago's Aeropuerto Internacional del Cibao (p302) is the third-largest airport in the country and offers frequent international service to major destinations. There's a good selection of car-rental agencies at the airport.

Santiago sits on the main trunk highway that runs north from Santo Domingo to Puerto Plata,

and it has bus services to all points of the compass. First-class buses service all major destinations, except Constanza – for that you'll need to hop on a *guagua* (local bus). Renting a car, preferably an SUV, will give you more freedom to explore the countryside.



Central Highlands Highlights

1 White-water

rafting (p191) Riding the Caribbean's only raftable river, the turbulent Río Yaque del Norte near Jarabacoa.

2 Pico Duarte (p196)

Scaling the Caribbean's highest peak and lingering at the top to take in the views.

3 Constanza (p199)

Watching the sunset as the mist descends into the high-altitude valley surrounding the town.

4 Santiago (p181)

Dancing merengue till the wee hours at one of the bars near the Monument.

5 Carnival (p189)

Partying with the locals in little La Vega in February, when the town throws the country's biggest party.

6 Cigar factory tour

(p186) Head to Tamboril, just outside Santiago, to check out a factory and learn where stogies come from.