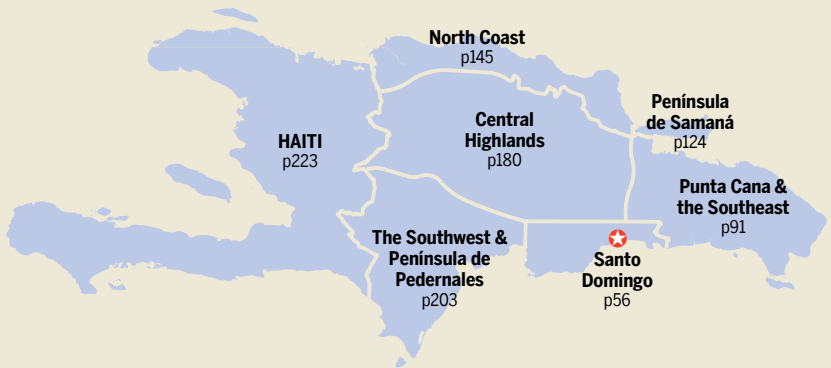




# Dominican Republic



Ashley Harrell, Kevin Raub

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# Itineraries



2  
WEEKS

## Dominican Circuit

This 'greatest hits' itinerary visits every major attraction in the DR, from the New World's oldest city and the adrenaline-packed central highlands to the country's best beaches and natural environs.

Start with two days exploring **Santo Domingo**, the Zona Colonial and essential Dominican experiences of baseball and dancing to merengue. On day three head to **Jarabacoa**. Visit the waterfalls in the afternoon, with white-water rafting or canyoning the next day. Head north to **Cabarete**, which has world-class water sports and mountain biking. Spend several days diving and beach-bumming in nearby **Sosúa** and **Río San Juan**, then bolt for whale-watching from **Península de Samaná**. If it's the off-season take a boat trip to **Parque Nacional Los Haitises** to see mangroves, cave paintings or the waterfall near **El Limón**. Spend two days hiking or boating to the beaches around **Las Galeras**, or for more nightlife, base yourself in **Las Terrenas**. The southeast is perfect for some more relaxing beach time – go for either deserted **Playa Limón** or perennially popular **Bávaro** and **Punta Cana**. Return to Santo Domingo. To the southwest is a spectacular drive to **Barahona**, and crocodiles in **Lago Enriquillo**. Spend a night or two before returning to Santo Domingo.

1  
WEEK

## East Coast

An east-coast sampler efficiently combines the colonial charm of the Americas' oldest city with total beach relaxation.

Fly into Santo Domingo or Punta Cana, and regardless of where you start, allow a full day to explore the old colonial center of **Santo Domingo**.

Base yourself in the southeast at the hub of Dominican tourism, **Bávaro and Punta Cana**, where the all-inclusive resorts are tailor-made for families; if all you want to do is splash about in the water, you could do worse than check in here. Many are particularly child-friendly, and activities include go-karts, bowling, sailing trips and parasailing. Resorts also offer tours to local sights; for more independence, rent a car and head out on your own. Singles, couples and those seeking nightlife can certainly find their own Shangri-la here as well.

Not far south of this area is **Bayahibe**, a tiny town on the edge of a national park, with the best scuba diving in the DR and a number of excursions, including catamaran tours to an island beach and snorkeling trips. For more privacy, head to deserted **Playa Limón** further up the coast.

5  
DAYS

## Península de Samaná

From beaches to whale-watching to waterfall hikes, this itinerary is all about water.

If you can, fly directly into Aeropuerto Internacional El Catey, the closest airport to the peninsula. Otherwise, get in a puddle jumper from another DR airport or consider taking a bus or driving from Santo Domingo – the new highway makes it a painless transfer.

If possible, plan your trip for mid-January to mid-March, when humpback whales migrate to the **Bahía de Samaná** and whale-watching tours are in full steam.

Base yourself either in Las Terrenas or Las Galeras. **Las Terrenas** has a cosmopolitan mix and a relatively sophisticated European vibe. Kitesurfing and other water sports are deservedly popular here and you can choose from day-trips horseback riding to the waterfall near **El Limón** or a boat trip to **Parque Nacional Los Haitises** to see the mangroves and cave paintings.

**Las Galeras** is a small laid-back town at the far eastern tip of the peninsula. The beaches around here rival any in the DR and there are chances to really get to the proverbial end of the road.

1  
WEEK

## North Coast

For a less-traveled beach holiday that comes with a side of thrill-seeking and a splash of history and culture, head due north.

Fly into the Aeropuerto Internacional Gregorio Luperón. From here, choose your base for the week, but allow yourself at least an afternoon in **Puerto Plata**. Wander the city's downtown streets lined with restored Victorian homes, explore the city's museums and have a drink at a Malecón restaurant.

Active types will want to stay in or around the water-sports mecca of **Cabarete**, east of Puerto Plata; it also has a lively bar and restaurant scene. Carve out several hours or days learning the ropes of kitesurfing, windsurfing or just plain surfing from the best. Of course, the beaches are equally alluring for doing absolutely nothing but sipping cocktails and reading a good book. Scuba divers and those looking for a more raucous nightlife should look into staying in **Sosúa**.

Further east near the quiet town of **Río San Juan** are several terrific beaches, and there are snorkeling and even cave-diving opportunities nearby.

1  
WEEK

## Central Highlands

The most extreme adventures in the Caribbean are concentrated here, along with a window into rural life in the DR.

Fly into the airport outside **Santiago** and spend a day exploring downtown and taking in Dominican painting at the Centro León. Take a tour of a tobacco factory and see a baseball game at the stadium if you're here during the winter season.

On the following day, head to **Jarabacoa**, gateway to **Parques Nacionales Armando Bermúdez and José del Carmen Ramírez**. The two parks cover much of the DR's central mountain range, including Pico Duarte. Visit the waterfalls in the afternoon, with white-water rafting, or canyoning and mountain biking for the next day or two. Or arrange your trip around climbing **Pico Duarte**. The standard trip is three days, but consider arranging a side trip to beautiful **Valle del Tétero**, which adds two days.

Unwind in the mountain town of **Constanza**, only a short drive from Jarabacoa, where you'll find cooler temperatures and stunning views. Rent a 4WD and off-road it through mountain passes to remote valleys and waterfalls.



Above: Cascada El Limón (p140)

Right: View of Plaza de España (p61), from the Alcázar de Colón



ENRIGELIZ/GETTY IMAGES ©

## Off the Beaten Track: Dominican Republic

### BUEN HOMBRE

This far-flung fishing village is now home to a kitesurfing camp, complete with rustic beachfront bungalows and a shallow, windy cove. (p176)

### RESERVO CIENTIFICA VALLE NUEVO

You'll need a 4WD to access this remote park with the coldest temps in the country. Situated on a high plain, fresh mountain air and beautiful vistas await. (p199)

### CACHÓTE

Bathed in cloud forest – rare for a sun-drenched tropical island – these remote cabins are reached by 25km of impressively bad road that fords the same river a dozen times. (p215)

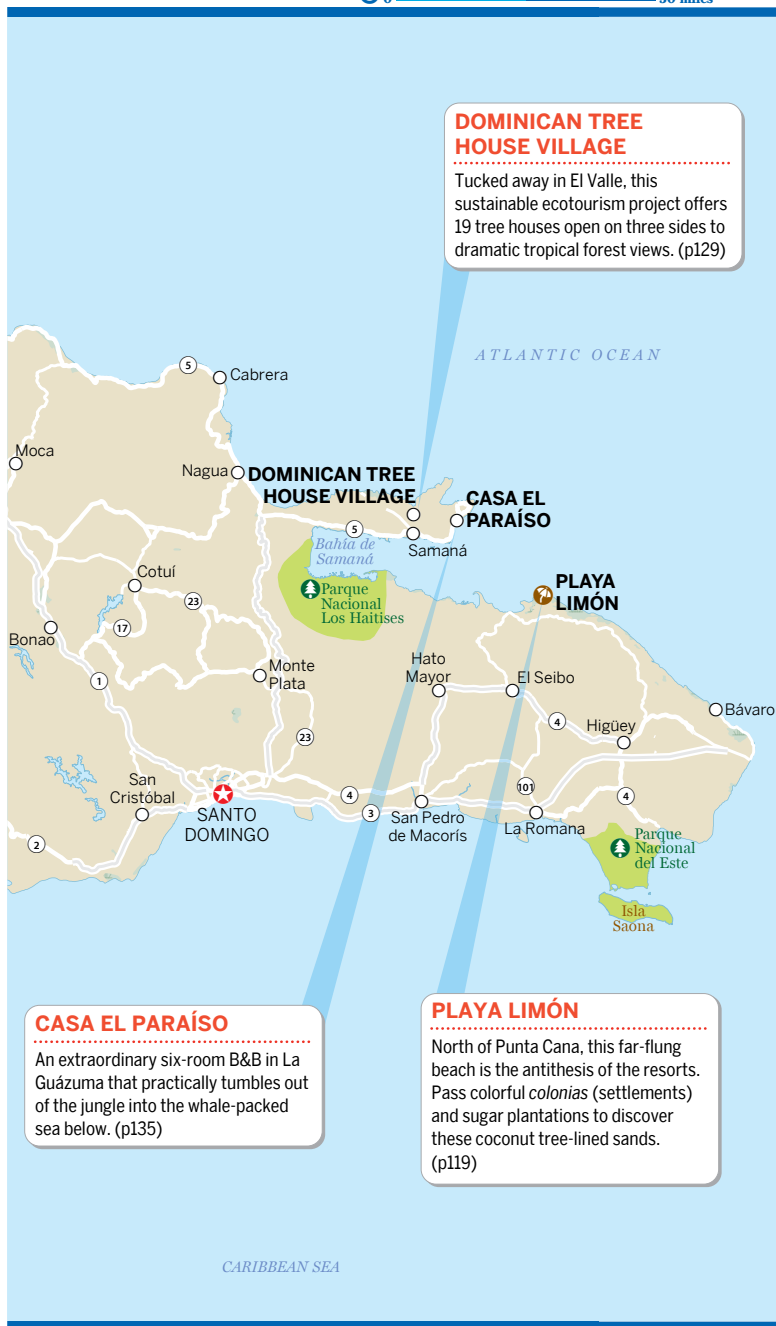
### BAHÍA DE LAS ÁGUILAS

Reached via a near-deserted one-lane highway, a pot-holed secondary road and a spectacular boat ride, the DR's most beautiful beach is as much about the journey as the destination. (p221)

### LOS PATOS

Stock up with gas and cash before you set out south of Barahona on the stunning drive to Paraiso. You'll probably find this *balneario* (swimming hole) and polished-stone beach free of other tourists. (p214)





### DOMINICAN TREE HOUSE VILLAGE

Tucked away in El Valle, this sustainable ecotourism project offers 19 tree houses open on three sides to dramatic tropical forest views. (p129)

### DOMINICAN TREE HOUSE VILLAGE

### CASA EL PARAÍSO

### PLAYA LIMÓN

### CASA EL PARAÍSO

An extraordinary six-room B&B in La Guázuma that practically tumbles out of the jungle into the whale-packed sea below. (p135)

### PLAYA LIMÓN

North of Punta Cana, this far-flung beach is the antithesis of the resorts. Pass colorful *colonias* (settlements) and sugar plantations to discover these coconut tree-lined sands. (p119)

CARIBBEAN SEA

# Map Legend

## Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

## Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkeling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

## Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

## Eating

- Eating

## Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

## Entertainment

- Entertainment

## Shopping

- Shopping

## Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

## Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

## Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

## Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway/Subte station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

## Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

## Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

## Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

## Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

*Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book*



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Ashley Harrell

Curator, Santo Domingo, North Coast, Central Highlands, Haiti. After a brief stint selling day-spa coupons door-to-door in South Florida, Ashley decided she'd rather be a writer. She went to journalism grad school, convinced a newspaper to hire her, and starting covering wildlife, crime and tourism, sometimes all in the same story. Fueling her zest for storytelling and the unknown, she traveled widely and moved often, from a tiny NYC apartment to a vast California ranch to a jungle cabin in

Costa Rica, where she started writing for Lonely Planet. From there her travels became more exotic and farther flung, and she still laughs when paychecks arrive.



### Kevin Raub

Writer, Punta Cana & the Southeast, Península de Samaná, The Southwest & Península de Pedernales. Kevin Raub grew up in Atlanta and started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. He almost didn't accept this assignment, his third through the region, until he found out the road to Sabana de la Mar was finished – he just couldn't bear another go on the formerly tortuous, pothole-ridden road. This is Kevin's

46th Lonely Planet guide. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram (@RaubOnTheRoad).

Read more about Kevin at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/profiles/Kraub](http://lonelyplanet.com/profiles/Kraub)

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