



Santo Domingo

809, 829, 849 / POP 2 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Pat'e Palo (p79)
- ➔ Adrian Tropical (p80)
- ➔ La Pesca de Oro (p81)
- ➔ Samurai (p82)
- ➔ Mesón D' Bari (p79)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Island Life Backpacker's Hostel (p72)
- ➔ Hostal Nicolás de Ovando (p75)
- ➔ El Beaterío Guest House (p74)
- ➔ Hotel Villa Colonial (p74)

Why Go?

Santo Domingo, or 'La Capital' as it's typically called, is a collage of cultures and neighborhoods. It's where the sounds of life – domino pieces slapped on tables, backfiring mufflers and horns from chaotic traffic, merengue and *bachata* blasting from corner stores – are most intense. At the heart of the city is the Zona Colonial, where you'll find one of the oldest churches and the oldest surviving European fortress, among other New World firsts. Amid the cobblestone streets it would be easy to forget Santo Domingo is in the Caribbean. But this is an intensely urban city, home not only to colonial-era architecture, but also to hot clubs, vibrant cultural institutions and elegant restaurants. Santo Domingo somehow manages to embody the contradictions central to the Dominican experience: a living museum, a metropolis crossed with a seaside resort, and a business, political and media center with a laid-back, affable spirit.

When to Go

- ➔ Carnival, at the end of February and beginning of March, is a big deal in the capital. The city hosts an international book fair in April and a blowout merengue festival in July.
- ➔ Baseball is played almost five nights a week at Estadio Quisqueya from the end of October to the end of January.
- ➔ Hurricane season, from August through December, means strong rains and developing storms can be a threat, though sunshine usually prevails. On average September sees the most precipitation and February the least.



Santo Domingo Highlights

1 Zona Colonial (p61)

Wandering the 500-year-old cobblestone backstreets of the New World's first city.

2 Catedral Primada de América (p68)

Entering the

first church in the New World

and imagining how 16th-century worshippers felt.

3 Estadio Quisqueya (p84)

Rooting for the home team at

one of the best places to watch

a baseball game in the DR.

4 Calle la Atarazana (p77)

Spending a relaxing night after dinner along romantic Plaza España.

5 Monasterio de San Francisco (p66)

Dancing to merengue music with amid 16th-century ruins.

6 Colonial Gate 4D Cinema (p84)

Beholding The

Battle of Santo Domingo with

at a 4D movie theater.

7 Parque Mirador del Sur (p71)

Strolling in the trees, Zumba with locals or cocktails at dazzling restaurants.