



# Santo Domingo

POPULATION: 2.9 MILLION

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Pat'e Palo (p63)
- » La Taberna Vasca (p63)
- » Vesuvio Malecón (p65)
- » Mitre Restaurant (p65)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Sofitel Nicolás de Ovando (p60)
- » El Beaterío Guest House (p60)
- » Coco Boutique Hotel (p60)
- » Casa Naemie Hotel (p61)

## 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* (Dominican music) blasting from corner *colmados* – 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, casual spirit.

## When to Go

The city hosts a blowout merengue festival in July and three-day Latin music event in October. Baseball is played almost five nights a week at Quisqueya Stadium from the end of October to the end of January. Carnival, at the end of February and beginning of March, is a big deal in the capital. Hurricane season, from August through December, means strong rains and developing storms can be a threat, though sun usually prevails. September on average sees the most precipitation and February the least.



## Santo Domingo Highlights

- 1** Wandering the 500-year-old cobblestone backstreets of the **Zona Colonial** (p44)
- 2** Entering the **Catedral Primada de América** (p45) – the first church in the New World – and imagining how 16th-century worshippers felt
- 3** Rooting for the home team at raucous **Estadio Quisqueya** (p68), one of the premier places to watch a baseball game in the Dominican Republic
- 4** Letting the night slip away after a late dinner along romantic **Calle la Atarazana** (p63) off Plaza España
- 5** Dancing to **merengue, bachata or salsa music** (p67) or just plain-old grinding down at one of the capital's vibrant nightclubs in Malecón