

Guide to

Dominican Republic

We visit sites off the northern, eastern and southern coasts



ST GEORGE
– dive the biggest wreck in the DR

10 things you **MUST** do in the Dominican Republic

PLUS TOPSIDE ATTRACTIONS FROM THE GENTLE TO EXTREME



Limon Waterfall is an awe-inspiring sight

From the editor



The Dominican Republic is a rising star in the Caribbean holiday scene, with resorts and hotels to suit each and every budget, fantastic beaches, crystal-clear warm waters, lush swathes of forest and a climate to die for. So it is a bit bizarre that the nation is not really known as a diving destination.

Ask about the Dominican Republic in diving circles and you will generally be met by stony silence. The odd person with a predilection for cave diving might know about the extensive cave systems which riddle the country, but otherwise this really is one of the undiscovered gems of the Caribbean.

However, the locals know what they have, and there are a multitude of dive centres just waiting to take you out to explore the nation's walls and reefs. There are even several artificial reefs, including the 81-metre St George – that is a decent-sized wreck in anyone's book.

The Dominican Republic is definitely known for encounters with one of the largest creatures on the planet – whales. Each year, humpback whales migrate past the country, and it is possible to join liveaboard trips that let you snorkel with these social leviathons.

When you aren't diving, there is plenty to keep you occupied, from the gentle (museums, chilling on the beach, whale-watching) to the extreme (kiteboarding, mountain biking, canyoning), plus plenty in-between.

The Dominican Republic is a great destination for divers and non-divers alike, so whether you want a relaxing break, a romantic holiday, a fast-and-frenetic club trip or a fun-filled family vacation, this beautiful Caribbean nation is sure to deliver.

Mark

Mark Evans,
Editor, Sport Diver

Photographs by: Dominican Republic Tourist Board, www.aggressor.com and Martyn Farr

TOP TEN THINGS YOU MUST DO...

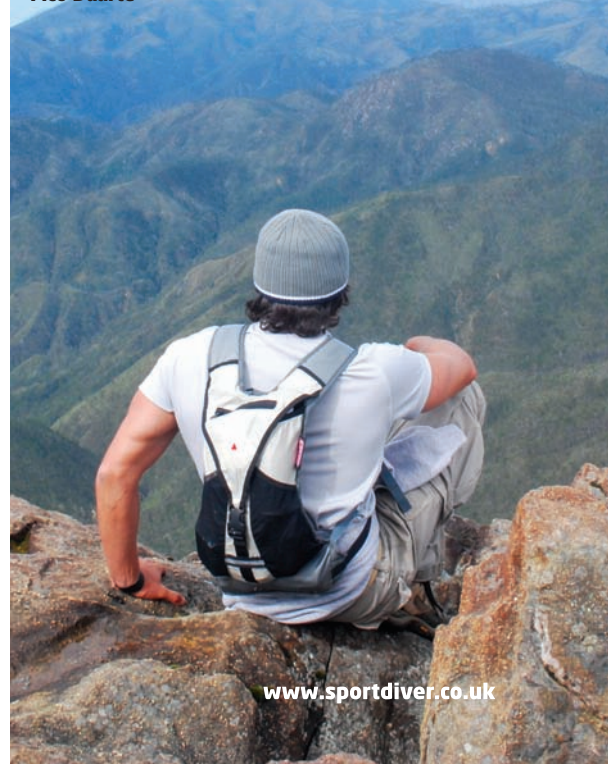
1 Dive the St George, a wreck that exceeds 80 metres long and is considered the largest sunken boat in the Dominican Republic. Located off the East Coast, this is best suited for advanced divers, as depths range from 24m-36m.

2 Explore Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. If you want history, it is all here – all western history eventually traces back through the meeting of two distinctly different cultures way back in 1492 with the arrival of Columbus. The Ciudad Colonial was even recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1992.

3 Chill out on Bahia de la Aquilas, which is consistently voted the Dominican Republic's top beach, boasting over 8km of bone-white sand lapped by warm turquoise waters.

4 Marvel at the Limon Waterfall (close to Las Terrenas in Samana), which is one of the country's most-amazing sights. The waterfall cascades its waters 50 metres off a sheer cliff to an inviting natural pool. A 45-minute hike or a 20-minute horseride will have you admiring this cascade.

The view from
Pico Duarte



www.sportdiver.co.uk



A chilled-out evening in the Colonial Zone of Santo Domingo

5 Visit the Larimar Mines and see the miners up close and personal as they search for the precious stone, which is only found in these specific mines and no where else on the planet. You can even buy some to bring home as a souvenir.



Canyoning is great fun

6 Go canyoning in the Damajaqua Cascades (27 Waterfalls). It takes an hour-long hike just to get to the start of the adventure, but coming down is much quicker, wetter and a lot more fun!

10 Try kiteboarding in Cabarete Bay, the 'kiteboarding capital of the world'. There are a host of professional schools just waiting to get you started if you have never given it a go. Let's be honest, if you are going to try this extreme sport, this is the place to do it!

Cabarete Bay is the 'kiteboarding capital of the world'



7 Go whale-watching from Samana. Every year, more than 50,000 people visit the area to watch the humpback whales during their mating season between 15 January and 15 March. These gigantic mammals come during the winter from the North Atlantic in order to enjoy the warm waters and give birth, and they put on a spectacular show for the watching public.

8 Visit Pico Duarte, the Caribbean's tallest peak at 3,087 metres. It can be reached by several trails that range from three to seven days, and those who make it to the top will be rewarded with a spectacular view.

9 Explore Lago Enriquillo; at 39 metres below sea level, this huge saltwater lake is home to crocodiles. Only a country as diverse as the Dominican Republic could lay claim to the highest and lowest points in the Caribbean!

Introduction to the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The DR is
renowned for its
reef diving

The Dominican Republic is the second largest nation in the Caribbean. It shares the island of Hispaniola, situated between Puerto Rico and Cuba, with Haiti. The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the island and Haiti occupies the western portion. To the north is the Atlantic Ocean and to the south is the Caribbean Sea. The Dominican Republic enjoys a privileged tropical, maritime climate. The main annual temperature ranges from a cool 17 degrees C to a warm 33 degrees C, primarily in low-lying areas and along the coast. Although known as a tropical island, temperatures in some mountainous regions can dip below the

freezing mark in the winter months. The Dominican Republic is geographically

The DR boasts
many wrecks



diverse for its size, having extensive beaches of white sand, evergreen forests in the highlands, fertile valleys with exuberant

vegetation, and even desert zones with dune formations. Its mineral resources include nickel, bauxite, gold and silver.

The Dominican Republic is crossed by four parallel mountain ranges running northwest to southeast, with fertile valleys in between. The largest is the Cordillera Central, extending from northwest of Santo Domingo into Haiti. The Cordillera Central's sister peaks of Pico Duarte, and the slightly smaller La Pelona, dwarf all the others in the region. The mountain range is also home to the Caribbean's highest savannah forest at 2,286 metres in Valle Nuevo National Park. Along the north coast is the Cordillera Septentrional. South of the Cordillera Central are the Sierra de Neiba and the Sierra de Bahoruco ranges. Between the Sierra de Neiba and the Sierra de Bahoruco is Lago Enriquillo, the largest natural, salt water lake in the country, with the lowest elevation in the Caribbean islands. The country is divided into 31 provinces and a district, in which the capital is located. Other important cities are Santiago, San Pedro de Macoris, Puerto Plata and Barahona.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Dominican Republic is home to the highest point in the Caribbean - Pico Duarte, the 3,087-metre peak of the Cordillera Central, one of four mountain ranges crossing the country. It is so high it is often covered in frost during the winter months.



Sunset in the
Dominican Republic

Dominican Republic diving

Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, the Dominican Republic is a diver's paradise, with nearly 1,000 miles of dramatic coastline. Beneath the surface of the azure, blue seas surrounding the country, divers are within easy reach of magnificent reef structures, amazing shipwrecks, uninhabited islands, mysterious tunnels and caves, and abundant marine life. Diving and snorkelling opportunities are never-ending, as most of the resorts offer courses and tours, making it easy for visitors to engage in this underwater one-on-one with Mother Nature. It's no wonder that the Dominican Republic is known as one of the best places to dive in the Caribbean region. With crystal-clear warm waters (average water temperature is 25-29 degrees C) and vibrantly coloured marine life, you will never run out of things to discover. Diving off the north coast along the Atlantic currents is particularly interesting, as you can see many unique bays and reefs. Another unique area is the Samaná Peninsula. Here, you can dive near high cliffs and coastal preserves. Divers also enjoy heading down the east coast near the Mona Passage for an

astounding underwater experience that leads you to the southwest coast.

If you want to explore this fascinating underwater world, the Dominican Republic has many trips and tours that will provide you with an unforgettable view of the waters surrounding this beautiful nation. ■

Currency

The currency in the Dominican Republic is the Dominican Peso (£1 = RD\$60.51). However, most of the hotels and restaurants in the tourist areas will accept major credit cards and US dollars.



There is the chance you
might encounter whales

Snorkellers venture close
to a huge humpback whale

NORTH COAST - ADRENALINE RUSH

A spectacular region filled with colourful coral, exciting dives and rich marine fauna. Sites like Pared del Aeropuerto (The Airport) offer memorable dives with spectacular reef walls and incredible amounts of tropical fish, while the 'kiteboarding capital of the world', Cabarete, isn't just widely-known for great watersport conditions, as it also boasts thrilling cave adventures for experienced divers. Beginning divers will also find a plethora of sites along the DR's North Coast, as areas like Sosúa offer shallow waters and sandy bottoms, particularly in the Puerto Plata province and the site El Canal. People love to snorkel here because of its spectacular colours and wide variety of fish. From January through March, Samaná is known for whale sightings, however this area also offers unmatched caves, tunnels and reef abysses for divers throughout the year, specifically at Las Galeras, there is the Cabo Cabrón, a challenging area that goes down to more than 36m. Here, there are large coral landscapes, like Las Tres Puertas (The Three Doors) and La Piedra (The Stone), which are formations jutting out from the sea.

At Las Terrenas you will find Las Tres Ballenas (The Three Whales), named after three stones that are covered in beautiful coral. Divers should also check out El Frontón, with its beautiful and abundant marine life that is great for snorkelling. For those not looking to go very deep, the Nagua area has Bahoba del Pinal, filled with marine life and caverns such as Eels and the Cueva de Lily, or Lily's Cave. Montecristi, a province to the north west, has a variety of coral reefs, including many in the vicinity of Punta Rucia. Here you will be able to enjoy the reef of Cayo Arena and the remains of 20 boats, including one of the Spanish fleet that sunk in 1563. The best months for diving on the North Coast are June to September, when the water is calm and visibility is at its very best.

Regional attractions

Caves:

- El Dudu, located just east of Cabrera - this site is one of the most popular in the DR, which includes a freshwater lagoon,

numerous tunnels and depths exceeding 90m.

- Pozo de los Caballos, which can be reached by going through two wide tunnels after diving El Dudu, and boasts a maximum depth of 15m.
- Cueva de Lily, derived from the same system as El Dudu and Pozo de los Caballeros - this site is considered a dry cave and is home to a colony of bats.
- Cueva de Arbol, located less than a mile away from El Dudu - this cave rests alongside an impressive sinkhole and averages depths of 7m.
- El Pantano, a 15-minute walk past Cueva de Arbol you'll find this site, literally translated as Swamp Cave, that features maximum depths of 18m.

Reefs:

- Las Tres Ballenas, located in Las Terrenas - this reef is made up of three beautiful stones covered in coral and is home to grouper.
- Tibisi, located near Las Galeras - this site touts a sand bottom, with a depth of over 40m and amazing visibility up to 30 metres.
- Mano de Oro, as one of Rio San Juan's most-popular reefs, the area features gorgeous ocean life and high visibility.
- Seven Colinas, located in Rio San Juan near Mano de Oro - this area offers an array of marine life and beautiful waters.
- Pared del Aeropuerto, located alongside the coast of Sosúa - this site is known for its swim-through passages and astounding reef wall.
- Cabo Cabrón, found in Samaná - this site offers wall diving and the ever-popular The Tower, a pinnacle that rises from 43m to just 1.5m below the surface.

Shipwrecks:

- Zingara, 36m below the water's surface - this wreck site is frequented by a two-metre moray eel that has a reputation for surprising curious divers.
- El Barquito - this small cargo ship is found near Sosúa and is the habitat for a wide array of ocean life.
- Las Galeras - this 1960s container ship is located in the beach town of Las Galeras on the north side of the Samaná Peninsula and is inhabited by a colony of big green moray eels.

There are caves and
caverns for all levels of
diver certification



EAST COAST - TRUE ADVENTURE

As one of the DR's most-visited destinations due to the renowned tourist areas of Bávaro and Punta Cana, the East Coast is well-known for its long beaches, which contain over 80 miles of coral reef. Divers also revel in the area's freshwater caves and cooler water temperatures, which make for a very refreshing and exhilarating experience. With a wealth of marine life (barracudas, morays and mackerel), the East Coast boasts the 81-metre St George, the biggest



Crystal-clear waters
and fringing reefs

sunken ship in the DR, and astounding caves. Both Catalina Island and Saona Island (National Park of the East) are diving hot spots, as they offer high visibility and fantastic places to see elkhorn corals, coloured sponges, fan corals and even dolphin sightings. Recently, explorers discovered the wreck of the Captain Kidd at 4.5m, with more than 20 cannons. In addition, sites off the coasts of La Romana and Bayahibe feature exuberant marine life both for diving and snorkelling – perfect for visitors of all experience levels.

Regional attractions

Caves

Padre Nuestro, just 15 minutes from Bayahibe - this freshwater cave includes massive tunnels, limestone stalagmites and stalactites.

La Jeringa, located in the National Park of the East - this relatively new site features an average depth of 14m and is an archaeologist's favourite for finding ancient fossils.

El Toro, with impressive stalactites and stalagmites hanging from the cave's tunnels and house-size boulders at every turn - this site offers an unforgettable dive at 18m below the water's surface.

Wrecks

Captain Kidd, resting in less than 4.5m of seawater - this newly discovered wreckage is just 21 metres off of the coast of Catalina Island and features 24 preserved antique cannons.

St George, nestled between the area's two major islands - this wreck exceeds 80 metres long and is considered the largest sunken boat in the DR. Best suited for advanced divers, this site is slightly tilted with depths ranging from 24m-36m.

Astron, just off the coast of Punta Cana - this ship wreck can be found 15m under the water's surface, split in two pieces.

Reefs

The Aquarium, along Catalina Island's shore you'll find 10m of coral reef filled with toadfish, seahorses and lionfish.

The Wall, located off the coast of Catalina Island - this coral reef site is considered one of the most-impressive dives, with black coral, magnificent marine life and transparent waters that offers depth and visibility of up to 25m.

The Pool, known as the world's largest swimming pool - this shallow reef boasts clear waters and beautiful marine life, located just north of Saona Island.

Catalinita, here you will find small lobster, enormous fan corals, many small caves and a chance to encounter blacktip sharks and cat sharks – all at just 18m. ■



The shipwrecks are
home to many fish
and crustaceans



Sergeant majors

The South Coast is blessed
with some stunning beaches

SOUTH COAST - SHEER EXHILARATION

Turquoise blue water, excellent visibility and very little swell makes this one of the best diving areas in the Caribbean. These waters boast illuminating coral, technicoloured fish and an underwater national park, in addition to eerie caverns and tunnels. Home to La Caleta, the underwater national park, and numerous dive sites near Boca Chica, the South Coast of the DR is a diver's dream, as it offers clear waters and array of ocean life – well suited for both beginner and experienced divers.

La Caleta National Park, one of the country's premier dive areas located just off the coast of Santo Domingo, features several noteworthy shipwrecks and a large reef system. The park begins at the Cave of the Swallows and extends to Caucedo Point, with an irregular topography with three well-defined terraces to explore.

Very soon, the first underwater museum about the country will be added to the La Caleta Park. The underwater museum will feature submerged sculptures with one section reflecting native Dominican themes and the other reflecting religious Dominican themes. On the coasts of the provinces of Peravia, Azua and Barahona you will find even more excitement. In Pedernales, the diving is simply spectacular and can be accessed from the beaches of Cabo Rojo (Red Cape) and Bahía de las Águilas (Bay of Eagles). These areas are full of intense colours and lots of marine life. Cabo Falso (False Cape), another good option, is only recommended for expert divers because of the strong underwater currents.

Also in the area is Los Frailes, where you can go underwater to see a formation of white rocks shooting up from out of the sea. Around these rocks, you will be able to see many different types of fish. Another extraordinary area surrounds the islands of Beata and Alto Velo, but again is only recommended to experienced divers because of its strong currents.

In short, underwater life along the South Coast in the Dominican Republic will give you a unique peek into an underwater world that you can't find anywhere else.



The Dominican Republic coastline is picture-perfect



Regional attractions

Caves:

Cueva Taina, located just off the coast of Santo Domingo - this site is perfect for experienced divers looking for crystal-clear, warm waters, breathtaking rock formations, stalactites, stalagmites and a stunning halocline at 15m. El Tildo, this cave site, located near Santo Domingo, features a pronounced halocline, stalactites and three different entrances. Jardines Orientales, found in Santo Domingo, this cave is recommended for expert divers as it boasts difficult access and dark, dangerous turns.

Wrecks

Hickory, located in La Caleta National Park, this 40-metre transport freighter lies at 18m below the water's surface in the middle of a nicely composed coral reef. It was sunk in 1984 as an artificial reef. Limón, 18m below lies a 35-metre tug boat that's considered the area's most well-preserved wreck, also located in La Caleta National Park. Capitan Alsina, angled on the reef at 40m, this ship is one of the deepest of all La Caleta National Park's wrecks. Don Quico, resting in a sandy area about 60m below La Caleta National Park water's edge, this site is recommended for deep range or technical divers. This ship is incredibly impressive, as it sits completely intact at the bottom of the sea and has safe access on all

sides.

El Catuán, located off the coast of Boca Chica, is also incredibly intact with easy access on all sides. At 18m deep, this wreck combines mystery, green morays, lionfish and crystal-clear waters – excellent conditions for photographers.

Reefs

Seven Coconut Shrubs, named for the seven coconut trees on the coast facing this area - this illustrious reef lies near Santo Domingo. At 15m visitors will find healthy coral life and prawns at every turn.

Dominican Bahamas, located near Santo Domingo - this reef gets its nickname from the wildlife that is so similar to the Bahamas, like sea turtles and barracuda. It ranges from depths of 18-36m.

El Tiringo, found just off the coast of Santo Domingo - this site features a natural environment for breeding stingray and American eagle ray.

El Hoyo, located just 200 metres west of Don Quico - this site looks like a Dominican Republic version of the Grand Canyon, reaching a massive 67m deep. A diverse range of marine life is found here in different types and sizes, including sea bass, snapper and many more.

El Aquario, ideal for beginners - this area is home to an amazing amount of fish species that are very comfortable around divers, as the site offers clear, shallow waters.

Horseback riding
through the
Dominican Republic

Other things to do in the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

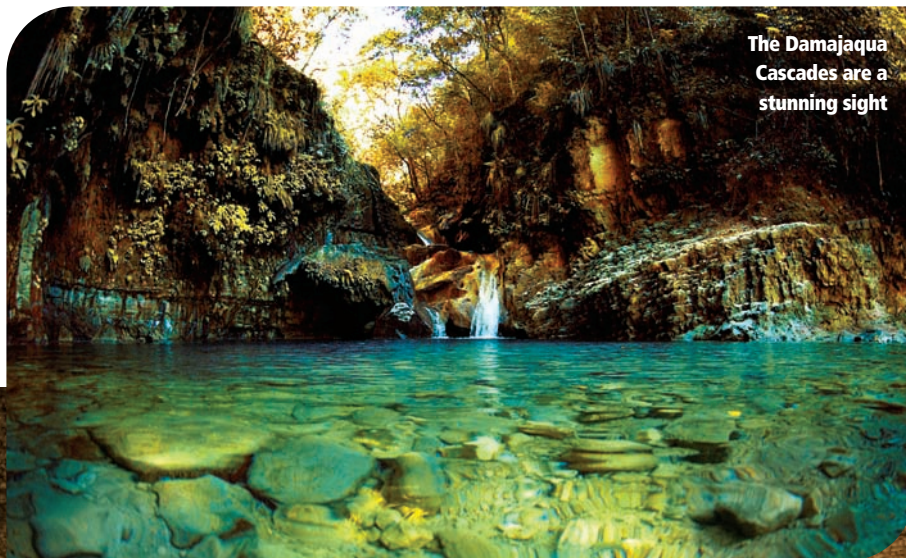
As well as scuba diving and snorkelling, there are a multitude of other attractions and activities to keep visitors occupied. If you want to get your adrenaline pumping, then a canyoning trip is sure to get your heart racing. One of the most-popular trips takes in the Damajaqua Cascades (27 Waterfalls), a series of waterfalls about 45 minutes from Cabarete or 25 minutes from Puerto Plata. In order to enjoy the canyoning adventure, you hike up the mountain for about an hour until you reach the falls and work your way back down the river by jumping and sliding through pools of water - this can be challenging so you shouldn't have any fear of jumping from three to six metre falls. Cabarete is a small, vibrant beach town known for its beachfront bars and restaurants. It is also the Dominican Republic's mecca for watersports, where you'll find a host of professional schools who teach surfing, kitesurf and windsurf. Santo Domingo is far more than just the capital of the Dominican Republic. It is where the New World started. For over five centuries, it has boasted its title as the 'First City in the Americas'. All of western history eventually traces back through the meeting of two distinctly different

cultures here one day in 1492. History buffs will not be disappointed. That's because Santo Domingo has an impressive display of historic monuments that document the earth-shattering event that happened over 500 years ago. It stands as a testament to both the Spanish, Taíno, and African influences that still shape the Dominican Republic today. The historical significance of this incredible city has not gone unnoticed. In 1992, the Ciudad Colonial (Spanish for 'Colonial City') was recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Ciudad Colonial is part of the original Santo Domingo, and the origin of the district dates back to the 1500s. The district is located in the west corner of the Ozama River, which bisects the city. The district today covers less than 5 square kilometres and contains many museums and other historic buildings documenting the Caribbean's earliest history. In 2009, Santo Domingo even received the distinction of being named the American Capital of Culture for 2010 by the International Bureau of Capitals of Culture. The Alcazar de Colon in Santo Domingo was built by Christopher Columbus' son between 1510 and 1514. This restored building was one of

the first structures built in the oldest remaining European city in the Americas, and is the oldest Viceregal residence in America. The building houses the Museo Alcázar de Diego Colón, whose collection exhibits the Caribbean's most-important ensemble of European late medieval and Renaissance works of art, which were acquired in the 1950s. The tapestry collection (spanning from the 15th to 17th centuries) is particularly important and unique in the Caribbean, and includes pieces produced by the Flemish Van Den Hecke family from cartouches created by Charles Le Brun. The Alcázar is the most visited museum in Santo Domingo. The Cathedral of Santo Domingo, the first cathedral in the Americas, is known for its dramatic architecture.



HOT SPOTS



The Damajaqua Cascades are a stunning sight

East and South East

Isla Saona is the number-one tourist excursion in the Dominican Republic - a beautiful island with quintessential tropical beaches and palm trees.

Cueva de la Maravillas is a beautiful cave system, well-maintained for visitors, with Taino drawings.

Playa Blanca in Punta Cana is a stunning white sand public beach popular with kiteboarders and anyone looking to relax. Playa Esmeralda is the East Coast's most-secluded and virgin tropical beach. Cueva Fun Fun is an immense cave system with underground rivers. ■

South Central

Playa Juan Dolio is a small beach town with kilometres of shoreline.

Playa Guayacanes is a tiny fishing town with quaint beaches and restaurants. -Playa Boca Chica is the 'city beach' known for its calm waters and fried fish.

Santo Domingo is the cultural capital of the Dominican Republic; home to the first hospital, monastery, paved road, stone home, university and church of the new world. Parque Nacional los Haitises is a real trek into the wilderness. The Parque Nacional los Haitises is home to mangrove forests, trails, marine life and secluded beaches. ■

South West

Lago Enriquillo is a saltwater lake home to crocodiles and friendly iguanas.

Larimar Mines offers an up-close experience to see miners searching for the precious stone only found in these specific mines and nowhere else on earth.

Playa San Rafael has radiant waters and a small natural swimming hole with music and fresh seafood.

Hoyo de Pelempito is the Dominican Republic's version of the Grand Canyon. Bahia de la Aguilas is hands down the Dominican Republic's top beach - 8km of bone-white sand and turquoise waters with no-one around. ■

White-water rafting
down the Yaque del
Sur river

Other things to do in the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Laguna de Oviedo (Lake Oviedo) is a small saltwater lake with more than 40 islets, and each of these is a refuge for birds such as gulls, pelicans and pink flamingos. The Cayo de las Iguanas, in the middle of the lake, is the place to see two types of iguana, the rhinoceros iguana and the ricord iguana. Although large and impressive, these iguanas are completely harmless. Travelling northeast from Laguna de Oviedo, the ocean-side highway towards the town of Barahona offers the most photo-inspiring seascapes of the Dominican Republic. Along this highway, visitors can stop at the popular beaches of San Rafael and Los Patos. Both beaches boast radiant blue waters, as well as natural swimming pools of fresh, cool water with vendors selling seafood and cold beers. Above San Rafael is the Cachote Cloud Forest, where a short 20km drive up the mountain will drop the temperature about 12 degrees C and have visitors in the middle of a community forest reserve - excellent for birdwatching, horseback riding and hiking. The Malecon, in the capital city of Santo Domingo, is a waterfront boulevard (George Washington Avenue) that is home to several huge hotel/casino complexes and dozens of small

restaurants, clubs and cafes. Go there to people watch, take a romantic carriage ride or just have a few beers. It is the site of many festivals and concerts throughout the year. Parallel to the Malecon you will find Avenida Independencia, a tree-lined street full of shops, bed and breakfasts and affordable restaurants with a nice mix of locals and tourists. Santa Bárbara de Samaná, or simply Samaná, is a city and municipality in northeastern Dominican Republic, capital of the Samaná Province. It is located on the northern coast of Samaná Bay. The city is an important tourism destination and is the main centre for whale-watching tours. More than 50,000 people visit Samaná each year to watch the humpback whales during their mating season between 15 January and 15 March. These mammals come during the winter from the North Atlantic in order to enjoy the warm waters and give birth. There have been times when up to 300 whales have been counted in the area. If you want to take things a little easier, there are several ranches around the Dominican Republic where you can go on a gentle horse ride around the stunning countryside. The Dominican Republic is home to the largest handmade cigar factory in the world, the

Tabacalera de Garcia, based in La Romana. This factory produces some of the world's finest cigars - Montecristo, Romeo y Julieta, H. Upmann, Don Diego, Santa Damiana, VegaFina and Onyx, among others - and employs more than 4,000 people.

East of Tabacalera de Garcia is Altos de Chavon, a vibrant cultural community of shops, art galleries, studios and restaurants; all of which was designed to resemble a 15th century southern Italian village.

If you want to see some spectacular views, then a trip in the cable car up the Isabel de Torres hill overlooking Puerto Plata is a must. Or for something even more exciting, how about a helicopter tour to get an aerial view?

HOT SPOTS

Central

Jarabacoa offers white-water rafting along the Yaque del Sur River and intense mountain biking excursions.

Jimenoa waterfall requires a 30-minute trek down the mountain. Jimenoa cascades 75 metres from an underground water tunnel and creates a natural swimming pool with cool water.

Pico Duarte is the Caribbean's highest peak at 3,087 metres, and it is a challenging hike that can be done via various routes that range from three to seven days.

Constanza is a gorgeous mountain town at an altitude of 1,300 metres. Located in a fertile valley, Constanza is a great town to enjoy fresh produce or sit back by a fireplace at night.

Valle Nuevo is also known as the 'Mother of the Waters', and is a national park where more than 400 rivers are born. Home to cold temperatures (sometimes reaching freezing in winter months) and the highest waterfall in the Caribbean, Aguas Blancas, cascading 150 metres. ■

North and North West

Cabarete is the watersport capital of the Dominican Republic for surfing, kiteboarding and windsurfing. Cabarete also has a great nightlife scene and kilometres of shoreline.

Puerto Plata is a charming city with old colonial homes, a famous amber museum, the Brugal Rum Factory and a chairlift to the Mount Isabel de Torres.

27 Charcos de Damajagua is a great adventure where visitors plunge into the pools of 27 different waterfalls.

Ocean World is a world-class marine park with dolphins, nurse sharks, stingrays, tigers and sea lions; one of the top attractions throughout the country.

Playa Punta Rucia is the gem of the North Coast, this beach is secluded and stunning. Visitors can also take a boat excursion to the popular Cayo Arena, a small reef island in the middle of the ocean with excellent snorkelling and coral diving. ■


North East

Cayo Levantado is the original Bacardi Island. Cayo Levantado was used for the rum company's famous commercials of the quintessential Caribbean beach.

Playa Rincon is one of the Dominican Republic's top three beaches; awe inspiring and well worth the trip.

Salto del Limon is an immensely beautiful cascading waterfall, which requires a 45-minute hike on foot. Visitors can also choose to arrive on horseback.

Las Terrenas is the Dominican Republic's liveliest small beach town. Las Terrenas is surrounded by beautiful beaches and has plenty of options for dining and nightlife. Reserva Cientifica Loma Quita Espuela is the largest rainforest in the Dominican Republic. Visitors can tour the rainforest and see the cultivation of cacao and the protected forest's natural beauty. ■



The cable car ride up the Isabel de Torres hill offers spectacular views

DIVE CENTRES

EAST COAST

CASA DANIEL SWISS DIVING SCHOOL

Casa Daniel, Bayahibe

Tel: (001) 809 833 0050

Web: www.casa-daniel.com

DRESSEL DIVERS CLUB

Bayahibe - Iberostar Hacienda, PADI Gold Palm Resort & National Geographic Dive Center. Punta Cana/Bavaro - Iberostar Bavaro Resort, PADI Gold Palm Resort & National Geographic Dive Center

Web: www.Dresseldivers.com

BLUE ZONE SPORT / TRAVEL PROMARINE

Punta Cana - Hotel Catalonia Bavaro Beach Golf

Tel: (001) 809 412 000

MARIANA CARIBBEAN SPORTS DIVING WORLD SA

Punta Cana - Barcelo Premium

Punta Cana

Tel: (001) 809 476 7777

Web: www.mariana-net.com

NEPTUNO BAVARO

Punta Cana - Hotel IFA Villas Bavaro

Tel: (001) 809 221 8555

Web: www.neptunobavaro.com

PELICANO WATERSPORT

Punta Cana - Hotel LTI Punta Cana

Tel: (001) 809 476 2326

Web: www.pelicanosport.com

PUNTA CANA DIVE CENTER

Punta Cana - Punta Cana Beach Resort, PADI Gold Palm Resort

Tel: (001) 809 959 2262

PUNTA CANA SCUBA DIVING

Punta Cana - Club Med

Tel: (001) 809 299 3182

SCUBACARIBE

Bayahibe - Casa del Mar, PADI Gold Palm Resort. National Geographic Dive Center Punta Cana - Melia Tropical, Natura Park, Sunscape Resort, Bahia Principe, Bavaro Beach Resort and Paradisus Hotel, all PADI Gold Palm Resorts. All Riu Hotels.

Web: www.scubacaribe.com

SCUBAFUN S.A.

Bayahibe

Web: www.scubafun.info

VIVA DIVING

Bayahibe - Club Dominicus, PADI Gold Palm Resort

Tel: (001) 809 686 5658

Web: www.vivadiving.com

SEA PRO, SA

Punta Cana

Web: www.seaprodivers.com

NORTH EAST COAST

STELLINA DIVING

Las Terrenas

Tel: (001) 809 868 4415

Web: www.StellinaDiving.com

PIRATES COVE DIVE CENTER

Samana

Tel: (001) 809 526 1970

Web: www.piratescovedivecenter.com

NORTH COAST

AQUA CENTER

Sosua

Tel: (001) 809 801 5000

Web: www.Aqua-center.com

DOLPHIN DIVE CENTER

Cabarete/Sosua, PADI 5 Star IDC

Tel: (001) 809 571 0842

Web: www.dolphindivecenter.com

DRESSEL DIVERS CLUB

Puerto Plata - Iberostar Costa Dorada, PADI Gold Palm Resort & National Geographic Dive Center

Web: www.dresseldivers.com

FAT CAT

Sosua

Tel: (001) 809 586 1392

Web: www.fatcat-diving.com

FIRST CLASS DIVERS

Confresi - Sun Village Resort and Hacienda, PADI Gold Palm Resorts

Tel: (001) 809 970 7622

Web: www.first-class-divers.com

HIPPOCAMPO DIVE CENTRE

Sosua

Tel: (001) 809 915 9135

Web: www.hippocampo.com

IGUANA MAMA

Cabarete

Tel: (001) 809 571 0908

Web: www.iguanamama.com

NORTHERN COAST AQUASPORTS, SA

Sosua, Puerto Plata

Tel: (001) 809 571 1028

Web: www.northerncoastdiving.com

SCUBACARIBE

Puerto Plata - Riu Hotel

Tel: (001) 809 320 1016

Web: www.scubacaribe.com

SEA PRO, SA

Puerto Plata - Playa Dorada Hotel

Tel: (001) 809 320 2607

Web: www.seaprodivers.com

SOUTH CENTRAL COAST

GOLDEN ARROW TECHNICAL DIVING CENTER

Santo Domingo

Tel: (001) 809 566 7780

Web: www.CaveDiving.com.do

NEPTUNO DIVE CENTER

Juan Dolio - Barcelo Capella, PADI 5 Star IDC

Tel: (001) 809 526 2005

Web: www.Neptunodive.com

SEA PRO, SA

Boca Chica - Hotel Hamaca

Tel: (001) 809 523 4611

Web: www.seaprodivers.com

TREASURE DIVERS

Boca Chica - Don Juan Beach Resort

Tel: (001) 809 523 5320

Web: www.treasure-divers.eu

GUS DIVE CENTER

Tel: (001) 809 566 0818

Web: www.gusdivecenter.com