

Dominican Republic

Facts and Statistics

Location: Caribbean, eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of Haiti

Capital: Santo Domingo

Climate: tropical maritime; little seasonal temperature variation; seasonal variation in rainfall

Population: 8,833,634 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: white 16%, black 11%, mixed 73%

Religions: Roman Catholic 95%

Government: representative democracy

Language in the Dominican Republic

Spanish is the official language of the country and which street signs and restaurant menus are written in. Even though the people linked to the tourist trade generally speak English, knowing some Spanish is a great advantage.

It is important to point out that "Dominicanese" (the local way of speaking Spanish, interspersed with Dominican elements) is the everyday life experience of the peasant's soul and wisdom, expressed with a rustic accent and with inland flavor. As in all countries, each region has its charm and accentuates its expressions in a peculiar way, identifying the speaker from the first words uttered in his conversation.

Dominican Society & Culture

Dominican Family Values

- . The family forms the basis of stability.
- . The individual derives a social network and assistance in times of need from the extended family, which generally encompasses three generations.
- . When possible, the extended family lives together or within the same vicinity.
- . Loyalty to the family comes before any other social relationship, even business.
- . Nepotism is considered a good thing, since it implies employing people one knows and trusts, which is of primary importance.
- . The oldest male in the extended family makes decisions affecting the balance of the family.

Dominican Hospitality

- . Dominicans pride themselves on their hospitality.
- . When someone visits, Dominicans go out of their way to make guests feel welcome and comfortable
- . Houseguests are treated royally and Dominicans attempt to cater to their every desire.

Appearances Matter

- . In Dominican society appearance is very important.
- . People are extremely fashion conscious and believe that clothes indicate social standing and success.
- . They take great pride in wearing good fabrics and clothes of the best standard they can afford.
- . Designer labels, particularly those from the USA, are looked upon favourably.

Class in the Dominican Republic

- . Racial and economic issues determine social stratification in the Dominican Republic.
- . The upper class are descended from the European settlers and have lighter skin than the lower class who are darker skinned and descended from African slaves or Haitians.
- . The middle class is comprised of mulattoes who are of mixed African and European ancestry and form the majority of the population.
- . Social class determines access to power and position, although in the large cities, the lines of demarcation often blur slightly.
- . Status is defined more by family background than by absolute wealth.
- . There is little social mobility.

Religion in The Dominican Republic

- . The Dominican constitution guarantees freedom of religion.
- . Over 90% of the population is nominally Roman Catholic.
- . For most people religious practice is limited and formalistic.
- . Popular religious practices are far removed from Roman Catholic orthodoxy.
- . People respect the advice of their local priest, or their bishop, with regard to religious matters; however, they often reject the advice of clergy on other matters on the assumption that priests had little understanding of secular affairs.