

Punta Cana



Entry Requirements

Citizens of all nationalities will be required to enter Dominican Republic with a VALID PASSPORT. (Passport must not expire within 6 months of travel dates)

Punta Cana is the name of a region in the easternmost tip of the [Dominican Republic](#). Covering about 420,000 m² (approximately 1,100 acres), the region is home to a coastline of sandy white beaches and to a "town" of the same name.

Located in the province of [La Altagracia](#) and population estimated at 100,000, the region borders the Atlantic Ocean to the east. To the north, it borders [Bávaro](#) and [El Cortecito](#) beaches. It also limits with [Cabeza de Toro](#), [Cabo Engaño](#) and further west with [Juanillo](#).

Despite the area being fairly deserted, the proximity of Punta Cana to other major resort areas such as [Bávaro](#) and [Uvero Alto](#) make the town one of the top [Caribbean](#) destinations.

Peak Season: Peak season in Punta Cana tends to run from December to April. Prices in both airfare and hotel increase dramatically during these times, while dropping in the summer and early fall months.

Climate

Punta Cana has a tropical climate. Although it is mildly windy, the ocean in the area is mainly shallow, with several natural marine pools in which visitors can bathe. The weather is fairly constant, with an average temperature of 26°C. The hottest season lasts from April to November, and during the day temperatures might reach 32°C. From December to March, temperatures during the evening are around 20°C. Very little rain falls around the area, mostly because of the flat landscape. The summer months tend to be very warm and very humid. It is suggested to wear loose fitting, cotton clothing – so pack light.

Language

- Spanish is the official language of the Dominican Republic and it's been widely spoken there from the locals.
- English and many other languages are spoken at the resorts and nearby restaurants, bars, discos, shopping centers, etc.
- Be sure to brush up on your Spanish skills before visiting Punta Cana. Many of the locals know English, but very little. It can become very frustrating when you can't communicate with one of the locals or an employee of the resort.

Arriving By plane

Several US carriers have scheduled flights to **Punta Cana International Airport** (PUJ) [\[1\]](#) including: Jet Blue, American Airlines, Spirit Airlines, Frontier Airlines, United, US Airways and Delta.

Punta Cana has one of the busiest and best connected airports in the region, sometimes receiving more flights than the Aeropuerto Internacional de Las Américas, located in [Santo Domingo](#) (at about a three-hour drive).

The Punta Cana Airport has a beautiful thatched roof and is an open-air design, also meaning that few areas of the airport have air conditioning.

Upon arriving at the Punta Cana airport, each passenger is required to purchase a \$10 tourist card before entering immigration, often included in your documentation upon departure or issued on the flight (unless you have a Dominican passport or a cedula residence card). After retrieving luggage and clearing customs, arriving passengers will be greeted by their tour company representative and directed to board the bus for transfer to their resort.

Getting Around

Taxis: All taxis operate with standard rates; most drivers carry a copy of these. The best thing to do when hiring a taxi is to clarify your destination and the price in advance. You pay upon arrival at your destination. Most hotels have taxi stations on or near their property; in most cases a bellman or front desk clerk can order a taxi for you. Taxi drivers accept dollars, pesos and euros.

Local Buses: For the more adventurous, the local bus lines operate on most of the roads of the area, for a minimal cost. The downside to public transportation in the [Dominican Republic](#) is irregular bus schedules, crowded vehicles, and potentially unsafe vehicles (689 casualties in 2007), drivers or passengers. Although for the most part it is a safe and effective means of transportation, it is generally recommended to use one of the more frequented means of getting around.

Rent-a-Car: A number of car rental agencies like Europcar, Budget, Prestige Car Rentals [\[4\]](#) and Avis offer service

in the area of Punta Cana and [Bavaro](#). Many hotels have car rental concessionaries on their properties. Keep in mind that their driving laws, habits and conditions may be different from the ones you are used to. When renting a vehicle always take the maximum available insurance, keep a map of the area you intend to drive in, and make sure you are comfortable with the drive.

Attractions

- **Santo Domingo:** This is the first European settlement of the Western Hemisphere. It has preserved its colonial heritage for more than five centuries, and is recognized by UNESCO as a world heritage site. Come to visit the first Cathedral of the Americas or the Alcazar de Colon, the palace of Diego, son of Christopher Columbus.
- **Altos de Chavon:** A modern-day artist's village resembling a 16th century Mediterranean town. It is set upon a spectacular hillside cliff overlooking the winding Chavon River. It is home to a 5000 seat amphitheater, an archeological museum, craft workshops, artist's studios and an assortment of galleries and restaurants.
- **Bavaro Runners:** A highly popular safari excursion in the area, experience the real people, scenery and life of the [Dominican Republic](#). During your day, visit typical Dominican homes, authentic sugarcane plantations, and go horseback riding on a spectacular beach.
- **Saona Island** Take a day trip to this spectacular island set in the natural reserve of The Parque Nacional del Este. Relax on powder white sands, where palm-studded beaches meet the soft surf of the Caribbean waters, and sometimes even dolphins swim alongside your catamaran!
- **Manati Park:** For the animal lovers this park features exotic fish, horses, parrots and the chance to swim with real dolphins! Stroll along the lush gardens, take pictures of the beautiful orchids and tropical plants, or buy some local crafts in the souvenir shops. The park is controversial, some claim that the park is mistreating its dolphins and want to close the park because of animal cruelty.
- **Marinarium:** In this unique water park you can experience some of the best snorkeling in the area, complete with nurse sharks and sting rays! Enjoy a Coco Loco as you cruise along the coast to your final stop, a waist deep natural pool in the sea.
- **Aquatic Tours:** Spectacular 2-passenger speed boats where you can cruise the coastline in style. Snorkel equipment and instructions included!

- **Dolphin Island:** A short boat ride takes you to a floating platform where visitors can swim with trained dolphins right in the sea. The package includes 15 minutes of free time with these unique creatures.
- **Seaquarium:** Scuba diving with a twist; Seaquarium is the unique tour that pairs you with a diving helmet and allows you to walk the bottom of the clear waters with an unforgettable view of reef and coral life- no certification required!
- **Helicopter Tours:** Change perspective and take your pictures of the Punta Cana coastline from hundreds of feet in the air. Fly over lush palm-studded coastlines, golf courses, vast stretches of white sandy beaches, and an array of shipwrecks.
- **Ocean Adventures:** Ocean Adventures Punta Cana offers 4 different kind of water excursions. The first, Bavaro Splash, combines driving a high performance boat, snorkeling and Snuba. The second, Dr. Fish Ocean Spa, is a three hour spa excursion offering gentle pilates/yoga and relaxing massages: a special massage on floating mattresses in the natural pool, detox foot treatments, and also the exclusive Dr. Fish pedicure: these tiny fish called Garra Rufa will gently exfoliate your feet by removing the dead skin creating the feeling of a gentle massage. The final option is the StingRay Bay, a trip by double floor catamaran toward a private and exclusive floating aquarium with nurse sharks and stingrays for a very safe interaction program. Price may vary depending on the excursion.
- **HorsePlay Punta Cana:** Horseback riding, zip lining combo tour with local culture. Experience the beauty of the mountains in the Dominican Republic as you travel by horseback on a river ride, cattle drive or romantic picnic excursion. Pump up the adrenaline as you zip line across the river then relax with a Dominican feast. Horseback riding experience is not necessary and you are accompanied by bilingual guides. Packages include transportation, food, horseback riding and zip lines.
- **SeavisTours:** Best rated eco excursions to the islands of Saona and Catalina and to the National Park del Este, with a river cruise on the Rio Chavon. Jungle tours to own properties on the banks of the river.
- **Caribbean Buccaneers Night Show and Dinner Cruise:** The only night excursion in Punta Cana: Pirate Show+Show Dinner Excursion. It starts at 5:30pm or at 9:00pm and lasts approximately 3 hours, It begins in the Buccaneers Village and moves on board of "La Hispaniola" a beautiful ship. Then it sails along the coast and reaches Shark Island, the platform located in the middle of the sea, where a dinner buffet will be offered and the pirate show will take place. 2 programs are available: with dinner (at 5:30pm) or without dinner (an more party time). Transportation available and complimentary from most hotels of Bavaro and Punta Cana

Currency

The local currency is the Dominican Peso. Its value fluctuates between 30-40 pesos per US dollar and 48-53 pesos per Euro. Although any currency can be changed into pesos, it should be noted that in some situations it may be difficult to exchange pesos back into your original currency. We recommend exchanging only small amounts of money at a time to avoid any inconveniences. Most banks exchange Dollars, Euros, and Traveler's cheques and can process cash advances on credit and debit cards. Don't forget to bring proper identification, such as a driver's license or passport. Please note that local ATM machines disburse only pesos, contact your bank for related service fees. If you are planning a day tour to [Santo Domingo](#), you will find that everything is much cheaper than you would at the resort. Souvenirs, clothing, artwork, liquor, etc., will be about 1/4 to 1/3 the price at your resort. Also, in the area all shops, restaurants, bars, excursion companies accept US dollars, Euros, Canadian dollars, British pounds, but it is a bit cheaper to pay in Dominican pesos. Do not exchange money outside a recognized bank or exchange house!

Shopping

If you walk outside your resort to the city/area internet cafes will also be half the price (yet still pricey by ordinary Dominican standards. For example, \$8 per hour in the resort, \$4 per hour in town in Punta Cana or Bavaro. In other parts of the DR, internet cafes are \$2 per hour or often less!)

Make sure you spend the remainder of your Dominican pesos. It is next to impossible to convert your pesos back to US dollars or Euros.

There are a variety of shops that are along the beachfront of each resort. These shops are owned and operated by the locals of the [Dominican Republic](#). Shopping outside of the resort complex in Punta Cana/Bavaro can be kind of an adventure. In most shopping plazas, you can expect to be accosted by hoards of Dominicans all pulling you in a different direction. The people of the Dominican Republic love to barter for the price of items. You can expect that once in one of their stores you will definitely be taken for a ride. You will initially be quoted ridiculously outrageous prices. It is imperative that you get the item for as cheap as you can. This can become quite an ordeal as the shopkeeper fights with you, insults you for your frugality, etc. Often times, the locals will offer you a price for an item that is much more expensive than the actual value of the product.

When walking along the beach also realize that the people at the shops will bother you to come buy something from them. It can often times become annoying because they will keep pestering you until you come and look at what they have to offer. Realize though that all you need to do is tell them that you are not interested and keep walking. The best way of letting the locals know that you are not interested is to tell them that you have no money and they will leave you alone. The people of the Dominican Republic are very friendly and become offended when you walk right past them without at least acknowledging their presence. A simple "no thank you" may sometimes work, but in most cases, they will not take no for an answer and will continue to chase and harass you.

Do not buy dried animals (turtle shells, sea shells...etc) because A.) It is illegal, so you will not be allowed to bring them through customs, and may get arrested trying; and B.) It encourages the locals to kill these creatures. Reef life should stay in the sea, so help to preserve these endangered animals by buying other types of souvenirs.

Drink

- Drinking from the faucet is not recommended. You should be okay using it to brush your teeth, but don't swallow it. Most hotels provide bottled water in the rooms; restaurants and bars use purified water and ice for your food and beverages.
- All-inclusive resorts have an endless supply of liquor.
- With the sun constantly beating down on you (much stronger since it is right next to the equator) and the endless supply of alcohol, dehydration is a constant danger. Be sure to make sure you hydrate yourself often with water or you may end up in a doctor's office suffering from dehydration and a fever!
- Mamahuana is a local concoction of rum, wine, root, and other ingredients.

Beer

Presidente is the most popular national brand of beer, and it is readily available anywhere. It is available in both regular and lite versions. For a beer with a bit more taste, you should try Bohemia, made by the same company, but with a fuller flavour...also available in a lite version.

Rum

They also specialize in many different types of rum:

- White Rums are generally light-bodied. They are clear and have a subtle flavor. These are primarily used as mixers and blend particularly well with fruit flavors.
- Golden Rums also known as Amber Rums are generally medium-bodied. Most have spent several years aging in casks, giving them a smooth palate.
- Dark Rums are traditionally full-bodied, rich, caramel-dominated rums. The richest of these rums are consumed straight up.
- Añejo and Age-Dated Rums are aged rums from different vintages or batches that are mixed together. The youngest rum in the blend contains a blend of rums that are at least 10 years old.

Most often, you will be offered Brugal or Barcelo products.

Coffee

Though in most Latin and Central American countries coffee is produced primarily for export, most of the coffee grown in the Dominican Republic is savored within its borders. And Dominicans, like Europeans, enjoy their coffee strong and black. One useful phrase for tourists to learn when ordering coffee is "sin azucar" (no sugar) for the simple reason that the locals measure by tablespoon rather than teaspoon.

Customs

U.S Customs

- 1.) Total of \$800 of merchandise duty free
- 2.) 100 (Non Cuban) Cigars
- 3.) 200 cigarettes (1 Carton)
- 4.) 2 liters of alcoholic beverages (must be over 21)

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Stay healthy

The CDC in the United States has stated that the entire province of La Altagracia, including the resorts, is at some risk for malaria. Malaria risk is significantly higher for travelers who go on some of the excursions to the countryside offered by many resorts. Currently the recommended preventative is chloroquine. Use mosquito repellent containing DEET, especially at dawn and dusk.

Several cases of cholera have been reported in travelers returning from Punta Cana resorts. Cholera vaccine, available in many countries, but not in the U.S., is recommended for aid and refugee workers only. Extreme care in hygiene and food habits for travel to risk areas, including resort areas, is advised. Carry oral rehydration salts in case of severe watery diarrhea. Azithromycin is recommended for diarrhea self-treatment; the epidemic strain of *Vibrio cholerae* has reduced susceptibility to ciprofloxacin and other quinolones.

Medical Services

- **Centro Medico Caribe Bavaro**

(809) 552-1415 Located in Plaza Brisas de Bavaro, suite 207. It features a bilingual staff for out-patient medical attentions. Open 24/7 for emergencies

- **Centro Medico Punta Cana**

(809) 552-1506 Near Plaza Bavaro and the local bus terminal It features a multilingual staff and in-house pharmacy.

Open until 9PM for visitors and 24/7 for emergencies

- **Hospiten Bavaro**

(809) 686-1414 Situated near the airport, Hospiten's multilingual staff and fully equipped facility is available 24/7 for emergencies

- **Dental SPA Clinic**

(829) 354 2664 Dental clinic located in Shopping Mall Plaza Rivas, 2nd floor, offers dental services. Call Dra. Cindy Korac at 809 552 1613 for more information and to make an appointment or visit the website Dentist Punta Cana

Pharmacy

- **Pharma Cana**

(809) 959-0025 Hours: 9AM-10PM This pharmacy is located near the airport and is the main pharmacy of the area of Punta Cana.

- **Farmacia el Manglar**

(809) 552-1533 Hours: 8AM-12PM This pharmacy near Plaza Bavaro offers delivery to many of the local hotels in the area.

Police

- (809) 686-8227
- There are 8-hour stations next to the Sitrabapu bus terminal in Bavaro and at Galerias Punta Cana near the airport.
- Remember that the Emergency Phone Numbers are 112 or 911.