Dominican Republic

Location

The Dominican Republic is located in the Caribbean occupying the eastern two-thirds of the Island of Hispaniola. At 19’00 degrees N and 70’40 degrees W, it borders the Caribbean Sea.

Geography

The terrain in the Dominican Republic is very diverse. It ranges from mountainous to slightly rolling bottomlands. The country is separated into twenty-nine provinces and one large district.

Climate

The Dominican Republic has a subtropical climate with ample rainfall and fertile soil. It is prone to hurricanes and weather conditions can change very fast and very frequently due to its windswept coast and location. The majority of the time the weather is great.

History

The Dominican Republic was first discovered/explored by Columbus in 1492. He was the first European to arrive on the island. His son, Diego, was the first Viceroy. The capitol, Santo Domingo, is the oldest European settlement in the Western Hemisphere. It was founded in 1496. The land was ceded to France in 1795, but the Haitians led by Toussaint L’Ouverture conquered it in 1801. In 1808, there was an uprising and the Dominicans took back Santo Domingo the next year. Spain regained title to the colony in 1814. At that time, a republic had been established. In 1821, the Spaniards were overthrown and in 1822, the Haitians took the island again. In 1844, the Haitians were kicked out and the Dominican Republic was created. This was done under the leadership of Pedro Santana. With all the turmoil, Santana worked to make the country a province of Spain in 1861. It remained a province of Spain until 1865.
President Baez attempted to have the country annexed to the U.S. in 1870. It was not successful. Unrest continued until Ulises Heureaux took over as dictator. In 1916, trouble again started. The U.S. sent in the Marines and they stayed there until 1934. It was during this time that Molina established a dictatorship in 1930 overthrowing the current leader, Vasquez. His dictatorship lasted thirty-one years until he was assassinated. A rebellion arose on April 4, 1965 and the U.S. again sent in troops. After the ceasefire on May 6, a stable government was again restored and has remained since. This nation has had a troubled past and tension still exists among some people.

**Important Dates**

 Important dates in the Dominican Republic include; New Year’s Day, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Labor Day, All Saints Day, Immaculate Conception, and Christmas. Due to some of these days falling on different dates in different years, the dates are not listed.

**Population**

 The population of the Dominican Republic is comprised mainly of mixed African and European decent. There are 8,721,594 people as of January 2002 with an average increase of 2.0%. The birth rate is 24.4/1000 and the mortality rate is 33.4/1000. The density per square mile is 464. Santo Domingo is the most populated city as of 1993 with a population upwards of 2,100,000. Most of the population resides in the urban centers even though the country relies heavily on agriculture.

**Currency**

 The official currency of The Dominican Republic is the Peso.
Education

Schools in the Dominican Republic are in need of help due to the increasing population. Most people attend school, but few go on to college. There are some universities in the Dominican Republic. Some of the universities offer exchange programs for students with other nations’ universities to study there.

Language

The official language of the Dominican Republic is Spanish. However, English is widely spoken among the people of the Dominican Republic.

Religion

The predominant religion of the Dominican Republic is Roman Catholicism with the vast majority of the population strictly adhering to this particular religion.

Agriculture

The Dominican Republic is a country heavily based in agriculture. The main crops are sugarcane, coffee, cotton, cocoa, tobacco, rice, beans, potatoes, corn, and bananas. The main animal products are beef, pork, dairy, and eggs. Seventeen percent of the work force is in agriculture. (1998)
Trade

The Dominican Republic’s biggest trading partners are the U.S., Netherlands, Canada, Russia, U.K., Venezuela, Mexico, Japan, and Panama. Exports total $5.8 billion (f.o.b.2000) and mainly consist of natural resources (nickel, bauxite, gold, silver). Imports total $9.6 billion (f.o.b.2000) and mainly consist of foodstuffs, petroleum, cotton, fabrics, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

Food

Local food is fashioned after traditional Spanish cuisine, but you will see some Haitian dishes.

Landmarks

There are many sites to visit in the Dominican Republic. The city of Santo Domingo is definitely one of the top destinations. The beaches are exquisite and, from what I hear, the fishing is great. Due to so much political unrest in the recent past, there are not a lot of distinctive landmarks.

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