

The Dominican Republic

Read to find out about this small island nation.

Where Is It?

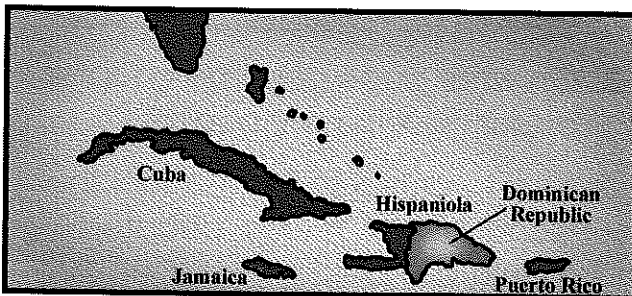
¹ South of Florida, a string of islands dots the ocean. One of them is Hispaniola (*hiss pan YO la*). Its name points to the fact that Christopher Columbus visited the island in 1492. As a result, Spain ruled the island for the next 300 years. Two nations now share the island. Haiti makes up the western third. The Dominican Republic makes up the eastern two-thirds.

How Big Is It?

² The Dominican Republic's area is about 18,000 square miles. That's about the same size as Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. The island's population of 8 million, however, is about twice the population of those two states.

What Happens There?

³ Most people live close to the island's coast. Most of the cities are there, and so is the best farmland. Sugar cane has been the island's most important crop for hundreds of years. The mountainous interior is split by deep valleys where farmers raise cattle.



What Is There to Do?

⁴ Like many other tropical islands, the Dominican Republic views tourism as an important industry. The coastal cities, especially, depend on tourists to fill their hotels and restaurants. The natural beauty of the beaches and of the forest regions draw Dominicans and tourists alike.

⁵ When you're ready for something else, wander into town to see local craftspeople and artists and their wares. If you like parades and costumes, go in February for Carnival. Music, dancing, and people in colorful masks will greet you at nearly every street corner. Whether you go to join the crowds or get away from the crowds, there will be a place for you in the Dominican Republic.

