

Dominican

Republic

# Dominican Republic

## Capital

Santo Domingo

## National Symbols

### The Flag



The Constitution determines that the National flag is made up of the colors blue overseas and red vermillion, in quarters. The red color represents the blood spilled by our liberators; the blue one expresses our ideals of progress and freedom and that God protects the Dominican nation. The white cross is the symbol of the fight of our liberators to leave a free mother country. Its white color reminds that peace and harmony must prevail among all the Dominican citizens.

### Coat Of Arms

Article 96 of the Dominican Constitution established that the Coat of Arms would have the same colors of the national flag in equal proportion. In the center, the book of Gospels is displayed opened. On the left side, there is branch of laurel and on the right side a branch of a palm. On top, a blue ribbon with the words "God, Mother

country, and Freedom". On the bottom, a vermillion ribbon with the words "Dominican Republic".

## History

Columbus discovered the island of Hispaniola, which he called La Espaniola, in 1492 and established it as his main base for the further exploration of the region. In 1697, the western part of the island came under French control, with the east remaining under Spanish control. In 1795, the city of Santo Domingo (The oldest city in the Americas, founded in 1496 by Columbus' brother) was ceded to the French, followed by the rest of the island of Hispaniola later the same year. The battle of Palohincado, in 1808, in which Dominican General Ramirez inflicted an important defeat on the French and the collapse of French rule in the eastern part of the island.

The colony reverted to Spanish sovereignty in 1809, and in 1821, the colonial treasurer, Jose Nunez de Caceres, proclaimed Santo Domingo's independence. This independence did not last for long. In 1822, the Haitians invaded the colony and occupied it for 22 years, until February 27th, 1844, when the territory of Santo Domingo recovered its sovereignty and declared independence once again, this time permanently, as the Dominican Republic.

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Today, the Dominican Republic shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, a former French colony.

## Government

**Type of Government:** Democracy.

**Provinces:**



31 provinces. Main provinces are Santo Domingo, Santiago, and La Vega.

### Independence Day

On the 27th of February a new life began for the Dominican people when they obtained their Independence from the Haitian force in 1844.

**First Dominican Republic President:**

Pedro Santana

### Main Political Parties

Partido de la Liberacion Diminicana (PLD),  
Partido Revolucionaro Dominicano (PRD),  
Partido Reformista Social Cristiano (PRSC).

### Constitution

The first Constitution of the Dominican Republic was promulgated in 1844,

immediately after the nation achieved independence from Haiti. By 1866, the Dominican Republic had adopted thirty five constitutional amendments. The 1866 Constitution, enacted at the conclusion of the civil war of April 1865, provided the necessary legal basis to ensure democratic stabilization in the country.

On August 14th, 1994, the 1866 Constitution of the Dominican Republic was modified. Among the most important amendments: a) It established The National Council of the Magistrates, which designated the judges of the Supreme Court of Justice. b) Provided for the administrative and financial autonomy of the Legislative and Judicial Powers. c) Expanded the competence of the Supreme Court of Justice to hear matters regarding the constitutionality of the law, to include not only laws and resolutions emanated from Congress but also decrees and regulations from the Executive Power and other governmental offices. The Supreme Court of Justice was given constitutional authority to designate the judges at all levels of the Judiciary and authorized to exert disciplinary authority over all its members, putting an end to Executive and Legislative control over judges and personnel of the judiciary.

Eight years later, in 2002, the 1994 Constitution was again amended to provide mainly for the presidential re-election (Article 49). Articles 89 and 90 were enacted which addressed electoral matters. The president and vice president are elected every four years by vote.

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## Branches Of the Government

The government is divided in three branches: The Executive, The Legislative, and The Judiciary.

In political science and constitutional law, the executive is the branch of government is responsible for the day-to-day management of the state. In many countries, it is referred to simply as the "government", but this usage can be confusing in an international the executive is not supposed to make laws (role of the legislature), nor interpret them (role of the judiciary): in practice, this separation is rarely absolute.

The Executive Power is identified by the Head of Government. In a presidential system, this person (the President) may also be the Head of State, while in a parliamentary system Head of Government is usually the leader of the largest party in the legislature and is most commonly termed the Prime Minister. The Head of Government is assisted by a large number of government employees and a number of ministers, who usually have responsibilities for particular areas (e.g. health, education, foreign affairs, etc.).

The Legislative Power. A legislature is a type of representative deliberative assembly with the power to adopt laws. In addition to enacting laws, legislatures usually have exclusive authority to raise taxes and adopt the budget and other money bills.

Legislatures are known by many names, the most common are Parliament and Congress, although these terms also have more specific meanings. In parliamentary systems, the Legislature is formally supreme and appoints the Executive. In presidential

systems of government, the Legislature is considered a power branch which is equal to, and independent of, the Executive, as it is the case of the Dominican Republic where the Legislative Power is divided in two chambers of the National Congress: The Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Judiciary or judicial system is the system of courts which administer justice in the name of the sovereign or state, a mechanism for the resolution of disputes. The term is also used to refer collectively to the judges, magistrates and other adjudicators who form the core of a judiciary, as well as the support personnel who keep the system running smoothly.

Under the doctrine of the separation of powers, the judiciary is the branch of government primarily responsible for interpreting the law.

## The Courts

### Supreme Court of Justice

The Supreme Court of Justice is composed of 16 Magistrates elected by The National Council of the Magistrates. The Council selects one Magistrate to serve as President of the Court, and designates a first and second substitute to replace the President of the Supreme Court of Justice in case of absence or incapacity (First Vice-President and Second Vice-President).

One of the most important functions of the Supreme Court of Justice is to hear appeals as well as questions on the constitutionality of laws. The Supreme Court is the highest administrative authority of the Judicial Power.

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It designates the judges and administrative personnel of all courts, exercises the highest disciplinary authority over all members of the Judicial Power, and sets the salaries and remunerations for judges and administrative personnel, and it also has jurisdiction over any cause of action brought against the President, the Vice President, or other public officials, as designated in the Constitution.

## Public Ministry

The Public Ministry is the agency of the Executive Branch responsible for directing the investigation of criminal acts, assisting with the prosecution of criminal actions and protecting the interests of the State.

The Public Ministry is composed of the following officials: The Attorney General of the Republic which represents the State before the Supreme Court of Justice; General Prosecutors before the Courts of Appeal; Public Prosecutors who appear before the Courts of First Instance; and Public Attorneys who appear for the State (Abogado del Estado) who are part of the Public Prosecutors Office, appear before the Higher Courts of the Land and its attachments.

## Courts of Appeal

There are ten Courts of Appeals, one for each judicial district. Five judges sit on each of the courts. The Court of Appeals functions primarily as an appellate body and it hears appeals from decisions issued by Courts of First Instance. The Courts of Appeals have original jurisdiction in accusations against lower court judges, Government Attorneys (Procuradores Fiscales), and Provincial Governors. These courts may be divided into Criminal and Civil Chambers.

## Courts of First Instance

The Courts of First Instance are divided into Criminal, and Civil, or Commercial Chambers. Depending on the size of the District, these courts may be subdivided into "Salas" (Halls). The National District has five Civil and Commercial Halls, and twelve Criminal Halls. The Chamber President distributes the cases among the different halls through a random allocation system.

## Justices of the Peace

The Justices of the Peace are courts authorized to hear small claim cases. They predominantly hear police and labor matters, as well as any other matter which Congress, through legislation, empower them to hear. There is at least one small court in each municipality, plus one located in the National District. Only one judge presides in each Peace Court.

## Special Courts

### Court of Minors

The Court of Minors addresses both civil and criminal matters, particularly issues pertaining to paternity, guardianship, visitation rights, alimony and adoption. There are seventeen Courts of First Instance for Minors and five Courts of Appeal, which are located in the cities of Santo Domingo, Santiago, San Pedro de Macoris, San Cristóbal and La Vega.

### Labor Courts

The Labor Courts were created by the Labor Code to resolve conflicts between workers and employers. There are thirty four Labor

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Courts of First Instance and eleven Labor Courts of Appeal. For large Districts these courts can be subdivided into Salas (Halls). The Labor Court of First Instance for the National District has six halls.

## Land Courts

The Land Courts are concerned exclusively with procedures relating to clearing title to property, registering real property, and resolving other questions relating to real property. The Land Courts include two "Tribunales Superiores de Tierras" (High Land Courts), one in Santo Domingo and another in the city of Santiago, and twenty Land Courts of original jurisdiction.

## Tax Courts

The "Tribunal Contencioso Tributario" (Tax Court) is formed by five judges and has jurisdiction over appeals filed against decisions of the public administration regarding the application of taxes.

## Social Recognition

### Baseball

This is not only the national sport, but also a national obsession, and even the smallest communities have large stadiums. The center of the country's baseball is the industrial seaport of San Pedro de Macoris. Many Dominican players go on to play in the US major leagues. Juan Marichal's, good performance as a pitcher for the San Francisco Giants granted him a place in the "Baseball Hall of Fame" and now he is the country's Director of Sports. There are more than 150 internationally well know baseball players from Dominican Republic, among

them, is Sammy Sosa.

## Merengue Music

Merengue Music is another Dominican obsession and it has the reputation to be the best of the world, the same as new fusions and rythms like "Bachata", "Merengue Rap", and "Merengue Hip-Hop". Proof of this is the hundreds of singers and groups that are internationally well known like Wilfrido vargas, Chichi Peralta, Tito Rodriguez, Cuco Valoy, Mickey Taveras, Johnny Ventura, Johnny Pacheco, Juan Luis Guerra and his group 4/40, Proyecto Uno, Fulanito, Las Chicas Del Can, and Los Hermanos Rosario.



Juan Luis Guerra

## Tourist Sites

Most tourists who come to the island are initially attracted by the magnificent golden sand beaches along its 1,400km (870-miles) coast line.

The island's northern Atlantic side contains the majority of tourist attractions, hotels and resorts, particularly in the 64km (40-mile) zone between Puerto Plata and Cabarete.

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Santo Domingo, in the south, features the very first monuments of the American continent: The first cathedral, the first hospital, the first chapel and the first university.

In the center of the country, the three main mountain ranges run roughly parallel to each other in an easterly/westerly direction. The Cordillera Central is the highest mountain range on the island. It includes Pico Duarte, the highest mountain in the Caribbean at a height of 3,098m (over 10,000ft).

Western influence can be seen in the numerous colonial buildings of the capital Santo Domingo while the African heritage, introduced by African slaves brought to the island by the Spanish, is reflected in its music.

