



## **Doing Business in the Dominican Republic**

*Creative Writing Assignment*

*Business Office Skills, Heald College, San Francisco*

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Doing Business in the Dominican Republic  
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## Table of Contents

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### *Overview*

*Welcome & Introduction*

*About the Company*

*About Your Stay*

### *About the Country*

*Geography*

*Language*

*Climate*

*Population Mix*

*Population Trend*

*History & Culture*

*Concise Dominican Timeline*

### *About Santo Domingo*

*On Local Attractions*

*On Doing Business*

*On the Workforce*

*On Practicality*

### *Final Thoughts*

### *Photos*



## Overview

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*Welcome & Introduction*

*About the Company*

*Phantom Records*

*The Organizer*

*About Your Stay*

*Translation Service*

*Hotel*

*CheckO-In & Calls*

*Taxi Service*



## Overview

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### *Welcome & Introduction*

We would like to welcome you to Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. Over the next week you will attend our workshop and meet us in person. We have been looking forward to this event and are eager to get underway.

This document is your welcome kit. It introduces you to the people, the accommodations and the surroundings in which our workshop takes place.

### *About the Company*

#### **Phantom Records**

Your host is Phantom Records. We are headquartered here in Santo Domingo and produce and distribute music Compact Discs. We specialize in Caribbean music genres. Our company was established twelve years ago, then as a sole proprietorship, and incorporated and moved to Santo Domingo five years ago, where it grew to its present size of 25 permanent employees and 25,000 units a year. We distribute to the United States, Latin America, and Europe.

#### **The Organizer**

As Program Officer for Phantom Records, one of my duties is to develop programs that address ongoing challenges. One such challenge is fostering a sense of social warmth between partners who are far apart geographically. We have found no substitute for personal contact so we are grateful for your participation.

### *About Your Stay*

#### **Translation Service**

As discussed in previous correspondence, Spanish is the national language here in the Dominican Republic. Therefore an English translator is on hand to help you. We have also selected a hotel that regularly hosts English-speaking guests and whose staff speaks good English. In addition we have translation guides available. They are pocket-sized and easy to carry. We trust this special package of translation services will meet your needs. But if you have any further needs please let us know.



## Hotel

Your hotel is named Hotel Duque de Wellington. Its address is *304 Avenida Independencia* and numbers are (809) 682-4525, main and (809) 688-2844, fax.

The Wellington has a restaurant, gracious rooms, Spanish villa style and a pool.

The rooms are also air-conditioned and provide a safe. The service is friendly and personal and we trust you will find the hotel as pleasant as past attendees.

## Check-In, Calls, & Currency Exchange

*Check-In.* Reservations have been made in each guest's name in accordance with their needs. Please ask for your reservation at check-in by name.

*Calls.* A telephone has been included in each of your rooms. You may direct dial around the country and to the United States using 1 plus area code. All calls however, in or out, are billed. Calls within the hotel are not. Call rates are available at the front desk.

*Currency Exchange.* Here, the best source of currency exchange is an ATM. ATMs offer the bank rates and self-serve convenience. A second alternative is hotel exchange. This is more expensive in terms of rate; however, the rates at your hotel are fair.

## Taxi Service

As Santo Domingo roadways are hectic, you are advised to use the Taxi we arranged for you. Kuki, pronounced "cookie," has been our Taxi driver for a number of years. We find him reliable and have left his details for you at the hotel. His photo appears below.



Kuki,  
Taxi driver.



## About the Country

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*Geography*

*Language*

*Climate*

*Population Mix*

*Population Trend*

*History & Culture*

*Concise Dominican Timeline*



## About the Country

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### *Geography*

The Dominican Republic is located two hours from Miami, Florida, in the Caribbean Ocean, between Cuba and Puerto Rico. It shares the island of "Hispaniola," occupying the eastern two thirds of the territory and a western border with Haiti. With an area of 48,000 square kilometers, the Dominican Republic is, after Cuba, the second largest Caribbean country.

### *Language*

The official language of the Dominican Republic is Spanish. The land was first conquered by Christopher Columbus, and made an early New World acquisition to the Old Spanish Empire. Ancient records of other languages are scarce, although it is clear that another culture, the 'Taino,' existed prior to the Spanish conquest.

### *Climate*

Located just below the Tropic of Cancer, the Dominican Republic is as Caribbean as Jamaica, Puerto Rico, or Cuba. It generally has warm to hot weather and warm tropical rains.

The island holds an average annual temperature of 25° C a peak of 34° C and a low of 19° C. Highs occur in June, July, and August and lows in December, January, and February.

Tropical Dominican rains in Santo Domingo are common but usually short. It is wise to keep umbrellas ready although temperatures will remain warm. It bears noting that monsoons and hurricanes do occur. However, they are not common this time of year and are not expected during your stay.

### *Population Mix*

As I alluded to earlier, the Spanish conquered the (reportedly) original Dominican population. An ensuing mix of West African native and Spanish culture took place. This is clear in the overwhelming 73% mixed-race presence here in the Republic. In fact, during a time, it was popular for wealthy Spanish aristocrats to take ethnic wives to have mixed children. The trend was so popular that the Spanish Empire separated mixed persons from whites. For a time, mixed persons and whites were not allowed to share public areas. As is clear today, a mixed heritage endured.



## *Population Trend*

In the last census, July 1994, the population of the country was estimated at 7.8 million, with 60.4% urban. The remaining population is rural or expatriated.

For the period of 1990 to 1995, the population growth rate was 2.8% per year, and average longevity was registered at 63.9 years and 68.1 for men and women respectively.

Dominican Republic: 8 million

Santo Domingo: 2.9 million

People: 73% mulatto, 16% European descent, 11% African descent

Religion: 95% Roman Catholic

GDP: US\$ 43.7 Billion

GDP Per Head: US\$5,400

Annual Growth: 8.3%

Industries: Tourism, sugar, nickel, gold, cement, and tobacco

Trading Partners: USA, Venezuela, Belgium, Mexico, and Japan

## *History & Culture*

The earliest inhabitants of the Dominican Republic reached the island around 2600 B.C., using hollowed canoes. They were nomadic hunter-gatherers who left little behind for archeologists to examine.

A second group, referred to as the Salaniots or ancient Arakwaks, landed on the island two thousand three hundred fifty years later. Their arrival in 250 B.C. is easily traced because of their distinctive ceramics.

A third migration, from Venezuela, swept through the Caribbean 250 years later and 700 years following that, this group occupied what is now the Dominican Republic and most of the surrounding islands. This group called themselves the *Taino*, for friendly people.

In 1492, four hundred thousand *Taino* lived in today's Dominican Republic when Christopher Columbus claimed the island. Within decades the *Taino* were decimated by European disease and slavery. From demise of the *Taino*, Spanish, French, and Haitians tugged and warred for control of the island. With the help of U.S. Marines, Santo Domingo evolved into today's Republic. A timeline follows.





## *Concise Dominican Timeline*

### **Dates**

**1496** Christopher Columbus arrived and conquered the western side of the island (present day Dominican Republic) and claimed the entire island on behalf of the Spanish Empire, naming it 'Little Spain' (Hispaniola).

**1676** The eastern side of the island was lost to France.

**1795** The Haitians conquered the entire island in a revolt against the French and Spanish Empires. Haiti became the first independent Latin American country and Haiti was the entire island. Their harsh domination of the Dominicans on the western side of the island left lasting mistrust and strained relations, which still persist.

**1844** The Dominicans declared independence from Haiti and retook their side of the island. Following unsuccessful attempts by Spain to take control of the Dominicans and failed attempts at self-governance, the U.S. Marines occupied the Dominican Republic from 1918–24 and established a constitutional government.

**1924** The first constitutionally elected President took office. Thirty years later...

**1960** The President was assassinated amid controversy, treachery, and corruption. Chaos followed.

**1965** The U.S. Marines re-occupied the Dominican Republic and re-established a constitutional government.

### **Subsequently ...**

Stability persisted and a series of elections progressed leading to today's Republic. There is a President, Senate, and Chamber of Deputies. The Dominican Republic has borrowed the U.S. Area Code of 809, and is direct dialed from the United States or within the country.

The Republic also uses the U.S. electrical system.



## About Santo Domingo

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*On Local Attractions*

*The City*

*The Architecture*

*The Beach*

*On Doing Business*

*On the Workforce*

*On Practicality*



## About Santo Domingo

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### *On Local Attractions ...*

#### **The City**

Santo Domingo is a sprawling, thriving metropolis of 2½ million people. In this city of contrasts, Spanish ruins compete with office buildings, luxury cars, and push carts.

The city is the focus of tourism, banking, trade, and poverty. Yet its most ubiquitous element is music. Santo Domingo is truly the nation's hub. And music (listening and dancing) is truly the nation's pastime. With the largest concentration of people, it also has the highest growth rate. The population of Santo Domingo has tripled in the past 30 years.

#### **The Architecture**

Old Santo Domingo is an area of the city preserved for historic value and is home to ancient Spanish architecture. It is the location of the original Spanish capital, which was later relocated to alternative grounds to make room for the growing bustling port industry of the city. Today the area is known as the Colonial District for its heritage and houses small museums and cozy cafes. It is a pleasant place to explore and you will experience it as part of the workshop.

#### **The Beach**

Your trip would be incomplete without a visit to one of our lovely Dominican beaches. Lagoons and small inlets with little or no crowding make for especially cozy sites of lounging, music, and splashing in glistening waters. Laze under oversize umbrellas doing nothing more than ordering rum punch and listening to *merengue*. Full service beachside restaurants serve excellent seafood. In the presence of beautiful Dominican beaches such as La Playa Boca Chica (the beach Boca Chica), you will come to believe the movies. The images you see are not altered, as the beaches are every bit the marvel they appear onscreen. Words cannot convey their majesty.



### *On Doing Business ...*

In general, you will find that interacting on business is more personal than is the norm in the United States. Dominicans are people 'of people.' It is our observation that compared to Americans (in general), Dominicans look to personal interactions as assessors to determine what level of trust to place in a businessperson.

A good rule of thumb is that Dominicans make courtesy and hospitality an essential in gaining trust and measure these on a person-to-person basis.

As you will learn, business and pleasure often mix in the Dominican Republic so we will discuss hints and tips for these situations during the workshop. These will be helpful should you find yourself in a personal setting with a potential or current business acquaintance.

### *On the Workforce ...*

The Dominican Republic has a viable record industry workforce due to adequate public education and high unemployment. Wages are lower than those in the United States as is the cost of living. Free public education is provided through high school. Attendance is mandatory through sixth grade. Although children in rural areas often do not attend for various reasons, including poverty, others attend urban private colleges, University, or trade school.

### *On Practicality ...*

We would like to remind you that you visiting a sprawling metropolis with all of the splendor and possibilities that entails. As a tourist or visitor in any major city, common sense is both practical and wise. As with any city, there are places and circumstances you will want to avoid. Be wary if you are traveling without one of your designated assistants, hosts, or your taxi. Overall, exercise prudence in displaying valuables, especially cell phone or computers, as these may bring unwanted scrutiny.



## Final Thoughts



## Final Thoughts

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*This is only the beginning. We hope you will return soon for another session. In the meantime, we will warm our hearts with memories of you in the hope you will return for our hospitality. We look forward to a productive and shared future!*

*Warmly,*

*Michael Widener,  
Program Officer*



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## Photos

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Ruth Ocumarez, Miss Dominican Republic, competes during a preliminary round of competition in the Miss Universe Pageant 2002. 75% of Dominicans are mixed persons of Spanish, West African, Haitian, and European heritage. Below: Clear water beaches and old world architecture speckle the Republic.







## Photos cont'd

Kayaking (left) and whale watching (bottom) attracts sporting and adventure tourist to the northern part of the Dominican Republic. Below: Soda shops and currency exchanges line the streets in Santo Domingo's *Colonial District*, known as Old Santo Domingo. Christopher Columbus' brother lived there.

