



Santo Domingo

Dominican Republic
By Stephany Tavares

"I love Santo Domingo because it has from malls of all sizes, to a diverse of culinary options, in this city you get it all. What I enjoy the most is the way the metropolitan area and the old city blend, while presenting a contrast that in many ways reflects the passing of the years on this small city and its millions of habitants"

I am most proud of Santo Domingo for...

The people of Santo Domingo or Capataleños, who represent the best of what the city has to offer. An outgoing spirit and open minded culture, enriched by values of simplicity, humility and welcoming arms. Don't be surprised if a local provides you with recommendations or offers you a bite of their food, as we love to have others enjoy all they can.

You can find me sipping a sunset cocktail at...

Depending on the day of the week, I might go to the Colonial City, sit in Segafreddo and order a fresh drink while enjoying the beautiful sights of the old city and watch tourists, and their many trends and cultural differences, as they walk by the small pedestrian street towards Plaza España.

You can find me shopping at...

All the malls of the main avenues of the metropolitan area offer a wide range of international stores and local fabrics. Acropolis, Agora Mall or Blue Mall, all with ample parking spaces will present you upscale inventories such as the ones from Louis Vuitton, Armani Exchange or Rolex, and at the same time provide you with everyday wear such as Sport Line, Converse, Victoria Secret, Gymboree or Pull & Bear.

Insiders Tip: Agora Mall integrates a supermarket with department stores in case you want to purchase things you forgot at home or to carry on the go, such as creams, sunblock, bags or just simply, sneakers. All banks with extended schedules can also be found in this mall.

A walk I recommend when in Santo Domingo...

Definitely a walk in the main avenues of the metropolitan area, the oldest city of the New World! You will marvel at the first cathedral, first university and first hospital built after the arrival of the Spaniards. You can either take a walk in the pedestrian street El Conde and visit the local stores and gift shops, or walk many of other routes to cover all the architecture that boast in the area: Plaza España which hosts the Alcázar de Colón (Columbus Alcázar); Museo de las Casas Reales, an old palace-like compound used by the Spaniard administration, and today a known museum; the Parque Colón (Columbus Park), adorned by a Christopher Columbus monument and just a few meters away the Cathedral of Santa María la Menor, first of the new world. Other remarkable and camera-friendly landmarks include The National Pantheon, allocated in an old Jesuit church, the Ozama Fortress, the ruins of the San Francisco Monastery and the Bari Hospital, the Borgellá Palace, the Consistorial Palace and Las Mercedes Church, among many many other.

Insiders Tip: If you are planning on visiting the local gift shops bring local cash and get ready to haggle in order to get the best bargain. There are some interesting museums in the area which are worth visiting: Amber Museum, Casa de la Moneda (House of Coin) and Chocolate Museum. Many snacks, restaurants and cafeteria are open during most of the day in case you get hungry.

A dinner place I recommend...

Any of the restaurants found in Plaza España provides their guests with an exclusive and distinct ambience of romanticism that plays well to either couples or small groups. Don't skip the wines or appetizers as they complement the experience. Most of all, don't be surprised to find local dishes turned into Spanish tapas, the size most certainly won't affect the flavor.

Insiders Tip: All restaurants have terrace tables, which allows parents to watch over their children, as they play around Plaza España. As of late the Ministry of Culture holds many activities free of cost to promote the local culture from concerts to exhibitions and extended schedule of the nearby museums.

Favorite landmark in Santo Domingo...

For me it would be Plaza España, because of its availability to all kinds of activities and access to other sites of interest. Others might enjoy staying at Parque Colón because its nearby bars and residential buildings as well as convenience stores or "colmados". Brides-to-be definitely debate between the colonial sites or the lush green landscape of the Botanical Garden, when considering where to have their wedding photo-shoot.

A local lunch spot I recommend?

Just a few blocks outside the Colonial City, I recommend visiting the restaurant El Conuco, known for its displays of local folklore activities and its yummy local cuisine. Stop by this piece of the country's gastronomy encapsulated in a few walls, whether it is for a main course of a quick bite.

What are family-friendly activities in Santo Domingo?

Families can decide between touring the Colonial City and then visiting the Plaza de la Cultura (Cultural Plaza) where Natural Science Museum and the Museum of the Dominican Man can be found, offering tours on the evolution of the local culture and native species. Up north is also the Botanical Garden. The interesting part about staying a couple of days in Santo Domingo is not necessarily what is inside the city, but the places you can travel to, parting from Santo Domingo. Beaches a less-than-an-hour distance to one side and cascades, caves and rivers to the other side.

New York has its' pizza, but Santo Domingo has its'...

The Sancocho! A stew of seven meats and tubers accompanied by avocado and white rice, the combination itself is like eating a piece of culture. Locals also enjoy the stew of rice and chicken or a meat of preference sided with a portion of yucca mash or sweet-potato mash.

Insiders Tip: Natural passion fruit juice is a must and if a guy is passing by with a tricycle full of coconuts, be sure to taste the coconut water, it's quite refreshing!

What's a good resource for visitors?

You can visit <http://www.godominicanrepublic.com/> and browse the section about Santo Domingo.



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