

## **CENTRAL REGION OVERVIEW**

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Home to some of the country's lushest and most fertile lands, the central region of the Dominican Republic (DR) includes the towns of Santiago and La Vega, as well as the stunning Cordillera Central mountain ranges and the Cibao Valley. Well endowed with rich soil and incredible natural resources, this region regularly attracts nature lovers, cigar connoisseurs and adventurers.

### **Top Attractions**

#### **Santiago**

Known as the cigar capital, Santiago, the DR's second largest city, is often compared to Santo Domingo. Offering a laid-back feel, entertainment hotspots and a cultured downtown area, Santiago is a city with something for everyone.

#### **La Vega**

Although a small city in comparison to Santiago, La Vega is anything but "small" in February. The town is the home of Carnival, one of the oldest and most dynamic Dominican traditions celebrating the DR's independence from Spain. A must see for travelers, weekly parades exhibit celebrants wearing detailed, colorful costumes and masks intended to mock the appearance of Spaniards, their former colonizers. La Vega's Carnival celebration is one of the DR's most famous and is an experience that won't be forgotten.

#### **Cordillera Central**

Otherwise known as the Dominican Alps, the picturesque Cordillera Central mountain range is the perfect respite for nature lovers and thrill seekers alike. Offering breathtaking views, hiking and plenty of water sports, the Alps are sure to satisfy a range of activity cravings.

#### **National Parks**

The central region contains two of the DR's numerous national parks, including Parque Nacional Armando Bermudez and Parque Nacional Jose del Carmen Ramirez. Both are equally stunning and provide plenty of activities due to their combined count of ten river systems. Jose del Carmen Ramirez also contains Pico Duarte, the highest point in the Caribbean. The peak is a must-see for visitors interested in a challenging hike and gorgeous views.

#### **CIBAO VALLEY**

In the DR, fertile soil translates to a wealth of tobacco crops and the finest cigars in the world. The Cibao Valley, located between Santiago, La Vega and Salcedo, provides ideal conditions to grow and harvest some of the finest tobacco in the world. With famous brands like Arturo Fuente , La Aurora and La Flor, recently

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named the world's best, the DR produces the finest cigars that promise to satisfy enthusiasts around the globe. *For more information see media materials on cigars.*

## **SANTIAGO**

Often compared to Santo Domingo, the city of Santiago, the DR's second largest metropolis, is comprised of natives that prefer a less chaotic and more purposeful lifestyle than its counterpart. Home to over 750,000 people, the heart of this laid back city proves to be the cultured downtown area. In addition, Santiago is where most of the DR's presidents were raised, giving the city well-deserved bragging rights.

A primary downtown attraction and a place where boredom is not in the vocabulary is Calle del Sol. Known as the city's main shopping district, the street is stocked with shops, hotels, restaurants, bars and an array of vendors.

Located north of Calle del Sol is Parque Duarte. A popular area to kick up those traveling feet and get acquainted with the locals, this shady park is a great representation of Santiago's laid back lifestyle.

An ideal spot for cigar lovers and a perfect place to relax after a day of shopping is the Museo del Tabaco. Visitors will learn about the art of cigar-making while purchasing some of the DR's top brands. Located in Santiago, it would be a sin to exit Cibao Valley without stopping by this one-of-a-kind museum.

*Hours: Tuesday – Friday, 9am to 12pm / 2 to 5pm*

People from around the globe visit Santiago year-round to stay at fine accommodations that satisfy the needs of any traveler. In addition, the city provides a vibrant nightlife and variety of stores that are comparable to the capital city.

Santiago provides an additional benefit by serving as an alternate airport to Puerto Plata. Both airports are of near-equal distance to Monte Cristi and other destinations in the DR's northwest region.

## **LA VEGA**

A quiet town with a rich history, La Vega was blessed with fertile soil and precious gold. It is fairly quaint, with 60,000 inhabitants. However, when February rolls around, the city is anything but quiet and reserved. La Vega is the home of Carnival, one of the oldest and most vibrant of Dominican traditions. Armed with colorful yet devilish hand-crafted masks, the Dominicans get rowdy and celebrate their independence from Spain. A matchless celebration, both natives and non-residents freely dance through the streets to blaring merengue music while sampling the finest food and drink the DR has to offer.

## **CORDILLERA CENTRAL**

Surrounded by picture perfect views and breathtaking landscapes of fragrant flowers and towering hilltops, the Dominican Alps are a one-of-a-kind attraction for many reasons. Perfect for nature lovers, the Alps are plentiful with fresh air and vegetation, and provide natural activity where even the most daring can be sure to expect an adrenaline rush. From hiking to cycling to river rafting, the possibilities for active entertainment are endless. The Dominican Alps provide ideal conditions for a range of activities while offering some of the highest points in the DR. It's the largest of the five mountain ranges in the country and features the highest elevation in the Caribbean, Pico Duarte.

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If hiking is the desired activity for the day, mountain adventures are an option. Guided expeditions are available to the hill-top towns of Constanza and Jarabacoa, with most tours accessible from main tourist areas. Nearly all include bus transportation.

### **Constanza**

One of the most elevated valleys in the DR, Constanza is 3,940 feet above sea level. With a mild climate and fertile lands, the valley grows an abundance of fruits and vegetables, as well as stunning, exotic flowers. A calm, peaceful area, Constanza is ideal for bird watching.

### **Jarabacoa**

Located at 1,732 feet above sea level, this town is less elevated than Constanza, but equally lush. With only 6,000 inhabitants, it's an excellent producer of fruits and vegetables due to its rich agricultural lands.

Jarabacoa's three rivers provide every adventurer with a priceless experience. The brave can try river rafting through the unpredictable waters of the Rio Jimenoa, Rio Yaque del Norte and Rio Baiguate. Each river provides a different level of action, so depending on the level of expertise or courage, the rafter can choose the one that is most appropriate. Other activities to try include tubing, canyoning, hiking and horseback riding.

## **NATIONAL PARKS**

Cordillera Central has two of the DR's numerous national parks, including Parque Nacional Armando Bermudez and Parque Nacional Jose del Carmen Ramirez. Together the two parks boast more than ten of the DR's main river systems. *For more information, see national parks media materials.*

### **Parque Nacional Armando Bermudez**

Located further north of the mountain range, this national park features a cool climate, with temperatures dropping below freezing during the winter. For visitors who are interested in exploring this extraordinary spot, organized tours with knowledgeable guides are available. Most tours can be accessed in small villages, including La Cienaga and San Jose de las Matas, where a ranger station is on site.

### **Parque Nacional Jose del Carmen Ramirez**

Partly featuring more than ten of the DR's main river systems, Parque Nacional Jose del Carmen Ramirez provides communities with irrigation for land and electricity by means of hydro-power plant. This park is also home to Pico Duarte, the highest point in the DR.

### **Pico Duarte**

Standing at 10,128 feet, Pico Duarte provides ideal hiking opportunities for visitors seeking out a challenge. The park offers a large variety of trails to choose from, each promising lush landscapes and fragrant forests. Requiring three days to reach by foot, Pico Duarte can be scaled through organized tours with an experienced guide. In addition, hikers have the option of staying overnight in a cabin, with ponies and mules available to carry the hiking equipment, food and the hiker, if necessary.

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