

Geography

Dominican Republic boasts an impressive land of unique nature offerings. Its territory compresses the most diverse terrains that give life to a rich mixture of landscapes. With destinations that include the Switzerland of the Caribbean when referring to the cool haven of Constanza, and being home to the lowest lake in the region, Dominican Republic's geography stands out for gathering an unforgettable array of earth phenomena.

Mountains and Elevations

A number of peaks rise on the grounds of Dominican Republic that gives this land an alluring scenario of a lush, vivid and versatile mountain range.

Among the most recognized are:

Pico Duarte elevates to 10,120 feet, making it the highest peak in the Antilles. With temperatures depending on the altitude, this mountain can get to chilling temperatures that go below 0° C in the early hours of the morning, while frost and rime can occur in areas of higher elevation. The pine tree is predominant in this area and the savannas are characterized by being particularly deep and closed, taken in the name of *savanna pajón*.

Pico Duarte is one of the most sought-after attractions for adventurous hearts, reachable in two, three or four-day excursions that trail around rivers, valleys and other peaks.

Sierra de Bahoruco is a national park located in the southwest of the Dominican Republic, between the provinces Independencia, Perdomo and Barahona, and comprises the mountain range that, when crossing to Haiti, becomes the Macizo La Selle. Sierra de Bahoruco is the shortest of the Dominican mountain systems yet is the second highest of the eastern portion of La Española island, with the peak, Loma Alto del Toro, rising 2,367masl. Its lush natural floor houses breathtaking pine forests and these are spread by dozens of domes that intertwine with valleys. Here lies the largest collection of orchids—52 percent of this species, and the barrancoli, parakeet, hutía and solenodón are a few of the animals that roam around the area.

La Humeadora is the highest peak within the national park that carries the same name. At 1,315 masl, La Humeadora stands in the central part of the hill rises, at a height of approximately 1,080masl. The Duey River which nourishes the waters of the river Haina—one of the main ports of the country, also supplies water to Santo Domingo, San Cristóbal and the La Victoria zone. La Humeadora (steaming) mountain was given the name because of its almost constant presence of fog. The national park spreads over 111.97 miles and also gathers the Palo de Cruz, Lomas Arroyo Grande, Puerca Gorda, Los Cagüeyes, Monte Bonito, among other peaks.

Lagoons, Lakes & Rivers

The bodies of water that run through Dominican Republic are one of the essential points that make the country a one of a kind place. Thirty large basins, 17 coastal basins and 18 main sub-basins, spread out around the territory, becoming astonishing rivers, waterfalls, lagoons and more.

Among the most recognized are:

Laguna Cabral, located in the eastern part of the Neiba Valley, belongs to the provinces of Barahona and Independencia. This impressive wetland comprises 44 percent of the 25-square mile natural refuge it lays upon. In 2011 it was declared a Wetland of International Importance within the framework of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The lagoon is 10 meters above sea level and 4 meters deep, and is home to the flamenco, the Creole duck, the endemic jicotea from the southwest and the rhinoceros iguana. The region also holds vestiges of pre-Columbian settlements, with Sierra de Bahoruco laying claim to some of the oldest aboriginal settlements on the island of Hispaniola.

Cuenca Yaque del Norte, is the biggest watershed of Dominican Republic with the river Yaque del Norte spreading to a surface of 2,660.68 square miles and stretching 124.89 miles. Its birth occurs in the La Pelona hill—a 10,160 masl that lays in the Central Mountain range. The orography is mainly mountainous and it is formed by the sub-basins of the rivers Amina, Bao, Guayubin, Jimenoa and Maguaca.

Lago Enriquillo, is the biggest lake in the Antilles and also the lowest point of the region, dropping approximately 43 meters below sea level. Located at the south, Lake Enriquillo constitutes a young tectonic phase with an extension of 62.1 miles and spanning an average of 12.4 miles. Within the lake is Isla Cabritos, an impressive 9.26 square mile island. This lake is also characterized as being the only neotropic ecosystem that has three universally recognized categories of superior management: National Park, RAMSAR Wetland and Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO).

Provinces and geomorphic regions

Dominican Republic, including its adjacent island, extends 18,609.3 square miles, making the country the second largest in the Antilles. The territory is highlighted as one of the insular Caribbean countries with a high biodiversity and endemism, due to the geological complexity and the geomorphological phenomena that shaped the surfaces of valleys and mountain ranges of the island.

The country's political and administrative division consists of 31 provinces and one district. Among the most visited provinces is the Barahona province in the south—one of the most looked after routes to the breathtaking Bahía de Las Águilas; the chic Punta Cana is located in La Altagracia province, and in the east the Monte Plata province holds one the lushest green areas with cities like Yamasá and Monte Plata.

The country is divided into twenty geomorphic regions and eight subregions. Each region and subregion has 13 zones with different geomorphological characteristics, grouped into two large groups: Rocky areas—those that are in the essentially mountainous geomorphic regions, in addition to lower rocky areas and coastal reef limestone rocks (Northern mountain range), and Deposition zones, those formed and/or conformed by terraces, alluvial fans, alluviums; reservoirs of hollows, lacustrine, marine beaches and bogs (Bahía de la Isabela, Montecristi).