

# A New Dawn for the Dominican Republic

April 7, 2009 by OceanHome

**Once a sleepy haunt for low-budget tourists, the Dominican Republic has awoken deep-pocketed investors and homeowners seeking an unspoiled tropical paradise.**



Despite the troubled economy, there are areas of the world where the real estate market continues to thrive. The Dominican Republic (or the DR as it's commonly known), just 90 minutes from Miami and three hours from New York, is one such spot. Aesthetically, it is a beautiful country, boasting lush mountain ranges and stunning beaches, as well as a variety of microclimates that range from warm and tropical to arid and temperate. Improvements to the infrastructure are ongoing, and land is cheap and easy to come by. The DR remains as Christopher Columbus described it upon discovery: "a beautiful island paradise with high forested mountains and large river valleys."

The bottom line: The DR is no longer the budget vacation spot or sleepy Caribbean backwater it was long thought to be. Ritz-Carlton, Starwood, and Four Seasons have all signed on to build or manage luxury hotels and residences here in the next few years, while major real estate players (think Donald Trump) are spending hundreds of millions to create luxury developments from the ground up. One local realtor says he's seen more new construction during the past few years than in the previous 18, while another estimates that more than 20 new condo projects are taking place along a 30-mile stretch of coast near Puerto Plata.

A colorful tapestry of Spanish, French, Haitian, and African influences woven by a rich and storied history, the DR offers an exciting and unique cultural experience that goes far beyond the typical sun, sand, and sea of neighboring destinations. From exotic cuisine to merengue, premium cigars to world-class baseball, the DR will likely surprise even the most seasoned traveler or home buyer.



And, of course, there are the golf courses and beaches that have put the destination on the map. Pete Dye, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Robert Trent Jones, Gary Player, Tom Fazio, and Nick Faldo have all left their imprint for golfers to enjoy, while no less than 1,000 miles of sand create the perfect complement to the greens in the form of beautiful beaches. The island is also known for its vibrant nightlife. Dancing is a way of life on the island and is viewed by Dominicans as an art; they take pride in sharing their native movements with others.

If the Dominican Republic has one very well-kept secret, the western region of the country is it. This scenic region includes the area west of Santo Domingo, and it is still largely undiscovered. The farthest part of the region is only about a three-hour drive from



Santo Domingo or Santiago airports.

Although the Dominican Republic provides a change of scenery at just about every turn, this region is the most diverse ecologically. Two salt water lakes, one being the largest in the Caribbean, provide a haven for massive populations of birds and reptiles. And while some sections of the area are mountain rainforest, other parts are pine forest and arid desert.



Local realtors say steady growth has actually been enjoyed in the Dominican Republic since the international airport opened at Puerto Plata in the 1970s, but it is only in recent years that the country has gained the interest of so many savvy buyers actively seeking a luxurious, but affordable, second home.