DISCLAIMER

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Welcome
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for accepting to teach in Dominican Republic!

The Office of International Affairs (OIA) at the Fischler School of Education and Human Services has prepared this country guide to provide you with basic and general information on the country you are about to visit.

This guide is intended to help you prepare for your trip. As you travel in the country, please let us know if you find that there are details that need to be added or changed so that we can keep our guides updated. Although we have tried to make it as comprehensive as possible, all of us know that our world moves very rapidly and changes happen everyday; however, we have tried our best to include all of the details you need to make sure you are comfortable in your new environment.

This information has been compiled with the help of the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Global Enterprises for Academic Development (SIGEAD), and the contribution from the OIA team members and our Field Associates and Regional Liaisons around the world. To all of them, and to you, thank you very much for helping these programs become as successful as they are today, and as a result, for making a difference in our students' lives, wherever they are located.

Have a wonderful experience and please be sure to meet with us upon your return so we can discuss your experience and solicit your input for future cohorts. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be any assistance to your prior to your departure, or while you are teaching.

Bon voyage!

Anthony DeNapoli, Dean of International Affairs
Alejandra Parra, Associate Dean of International Affairs
# NSU Emergency Contact

## Contact at the Office of International Affairs

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## Travel Office Numbers

- **Travel Office**: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
  **Office**: 954-262-8888

- **Travel Office (ONLY after contacting airline or hotel directly)**: 1-800-809-8858
  There is a charge of $20 if you contact this number.
**Passport Issues**

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue, or verify United States passports.

The Passport Services Office provides information and services to American citizens about how to obtain, replace or change a passport.

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of over 9,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver’s license.

Acceptance facilities include many Federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices. There are also 13 regional passport agencies, and 1 Gateway City Agency, which serve customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. Appointments are required in such cases.

You will need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time:

- If your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession;
- If your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago;
- If your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under age 16;
- Or if your current valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.

*To obtain more information on obtaining a passport please visit
http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_832.html

*To renew an existing passport please visit
http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/renew/renew_833.html
Weather Information
For weather information on specific countries please visit:
http://worldweather.wmo.int/

Central Intelligence Agency-The World Factbook

The World Factbook provides valuable geographic and demographic information. For more information on individual countries, please visit:

TSA Travel Tips

Make Your Trip Better Using 3-1-1

3-1-1 for carry-on =

- 3 ounce bottle or less (by volume);
- 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag;
- 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin.

One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. 3 oz. container size is a security measure.

Consolidate bottles into one bag and X-ray separately to speed screening.

Be prepared. Each time TSA searches a carry-on it slows down the line. Practicing 3-1-1 will ensure a faster and easier checkpoint experience.

3-1-1 is for short trips. If in doubt, put your liquids in checked luggage.

Declare larger liquids. Medications, baby formula and food, breast milk, and juice are allowed in reasonable quantities exceeding three ounces and are not required to be in the zip-top bag. Declare these items for inspection at the checkpoint.

Come early and be patient. Heavy travel volumes and the enhanced security process may mean longer lines at security checkpoints.

TSA working with our partners. TSA works with airlines and airports to anticipate peak traffic and be ready for the traveling public.
Useful Phone Numbers -- Sources of information include:

U.S. Dept. of State Travel Advisory: tel. 202-647-5225 (manned 24 hr.)

U.S. Passport Agency: tel. 202-647-0518

U.S. Centers for Disease Control International Traveler's Hotline: tel. 404-332-4559

Lost & Found

Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. To report a lost or stolen

**American Express** - To protect your information, you can only report a lost or stolen card by calling American Express Customer Service at 1-800-992-3404. Outside the United States call, collect 336-393-1111.

**Diners Club** - Call Diners Club Customer Service at 1-800-234-6377. Outside the United States call, collect 702-797-5532.


If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via Western Union. Call tel. 1-800-325-6000 www.westernunion.com.

Identity theft and fraud are potential complications of losing your wallet, especially if you have lost your driver's license along with your cash and credit cards. Notify the major credit-reporting bureaus immediately; placing a fraud alert on your records may protect you against liability for criminal activity. The three major U.S. credit-reporting agencies are **Equifax** (tel. 800-766-0008; www.equifax.com), **Experian** (tel. 888-397-3742; www.experian.com), and **TransUnion** (tel. 800-680-7289; www.transunion.com). Finally, if you have lost all forms of photo ID, call your airline and explain the situation; they might allow you to board the plane if you have a copy of your passport or birth certificate and a copy of the police report you have filed.
Here are some quick tips to make your travel easier and safer:

- **Register so the State Department can better assist you in an emergency:** Register your travel plans with the State Department through a free online service at [https://travelregistration.state.gov](https://travelregistration.state.gov). This will help us contact you if there is a family emergency in the U.S., or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

- **Sign passport, and fill in the emergency information:** Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport.

- **Leave copies of itinerary and passport data page:** Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends, so you can be contacted in case of an emergency.

- **Check your overseas medical insurance coverage:** Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance.

- **Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws:** While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. The State Department web site at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html) has useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit.

- **Take precautions to avoid being a target of crime:** To avoid being a target of crime, do not wear conspicuous clothing or jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of money. Also, do not leave unattended luggage in public areas and do not accept packages from strangers.

- **Contact us in an emergency:** Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the U.S. are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). Also, note that the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs may be reached for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747, if calling from the U.S. or Canada, or 202-501-4444, if calling from overseas.
U.S. Customs Restrictions – What You Cannot Bring Back With You

Some items may not be brought into the U.S., or may only be brought in under certain restrictions. For information on U.S. customs regulations and procedures, see the Customs and Border Protection booklet “Know Before You Go,” available at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg.

Customs and Border Patrol Top 10 Travelers Tips

1. Have all required travel documents for the countries you are visiting, as well as identification for re-entry to the U.S.
2. Declare everything you are bringing in from abroad, even if you bought it in a duty-free shop. This merchandise is also subject to U.S. duty fees and other restrictions.
3. Be cautious when buying something from a street vendor. Keep in mind that the merchandise may be counterfeit and/or unsafe and you might have to surrender it to U.S. Customs and Border Protection when you get home.
4. Know that the things bought abroad for personal use or as gifts are eligible for duty exemptions. If you are bringing them back for resale, they are not.
5. Know the difference between prohibited merchandise (such as ivory, tortoise shell products, absinthe, and counterfeit items) and restricted merchandise.
6. Be aware that many foreign-made medications are not FDA-approved, and you cannot bring them into the U.S. Also, when traveling abroad, bring only the amount of medication you will need during the trip.
7. Do not bring any Cuban-made products into the U.S., not matter where you purchased them.
8. Do not bring any food into the U.S. without first checking to see if it is permitted. Also, any and all live birds and bird products, whether for personal or commercial use, may be restricted and/or quarantined.
9. Understand that CBP officers can inspect you and your belongings without a warrant. This may include your luggage, vehicle, and personal searches, and is meant to enforce our laws as well as protect legitimate travelers.
10. Read our helpful brochure, “Know Before You Go,” before traveling. Print copies may be requested online, or view the web version at www.cpg.gov under the Travel section.
**Country Overview**

Sugar-white beaches, inexpensive resorts, and rich natural beauty have long drawn visitors to the Dominican Republic, while at the same time, a not-so-fair reputation for high crime, poverty, and social unrest has scared away many others. Which is it, a poverty-stricken country rife with pickpockets and muggers, or a burgeoning destination of beautiful beach bargains?

The answer is a little of both. The people of the Dominican Republic are among the friendliest in the Caribbean, and the hospitality here seems more genuine than in more commercialized Puerto Rico. The weather is nearly perfect year-round. In addition, the Dominican Republic's white-sand beaches are among the finest in the Caribbean. Punta Cana/Bávaro, for example, is the longest strip of white sand in the entire region.

Safety is still a concern in the Dominican Republic, but it should not dissuade you from planning a vacation here. Crime consists primarily of theft, robberies, and muggings, and most of it is limited to Santo Domingo (although the north coast resorts around Puerto Plata and Playa Dorada are not as safe as they should be). There is a low incidence of violent crime against tourists, however. Follow some simple common-sense rules, and you will be fine.

The combination of low prices and beautiful terrain has made the Dominican Republic one of the fastest-growing destinations in the Caribbean. Bargain-hunting Canadians, in particular, flock here in droves. Do not expect the lavish, spectacular resorts that you will find on Puerto Rico or Jamaica, but do expect your vacation to be that much less expensive.

Often mistakenly referred to as "just a poor man's Puerto Rico," the Dominican Republic has its own distinct cuisine and cultural heritage. Its Latin flavor is a sharp contrast to the character of many nearby islands, especially the British- and French-influenced ones.

Columbus sighted its coral-edged Caribbean coastline on his first voyage to the New World and pronounced, "There is no more beautiful island in the world." The first permanent European
settlement in the New World was on November 7, 1493, and its ruins remain near Montecristi in the northeast part of the island.

In the heart of the Caribbean archipelago -- nestled amid Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico -- the island of Hispaniola (Little Spain) is divided between Haiti, on the westernmost third of the island, and the Dominican Republic, which has a lush landmass about the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined. In the Dominican interior, the fertile Valley of Cibao (rich sugar-cane country) ends its upward sweep at Pico Duarte, the highest mountain peak in the West Indies, which soars to 3,125m (10,250 ft.).

Much of what Columbus first sighted still remains in a natural, unspoiled condition. One-third of the Dominican Republic’s 1,401km (869-mile) coastline is devoted to beaches. The best are in Puerto Plata and La Romana, although Puerto Plata and other beaches on the Atlantic side of the island have dangerously strong currents at times.

Almost from its inception, the country was steeped in misery and bloodshed, climaxing with the infamous reign of Dictator Rafael Trujillo (1930-61) and the ensuing civil wars (1960-66). However, the country has been politically stable since then, and is building and expanding rapidly. The economic growth has not benefited everybody, though. The country is still poor, even by Caribbean standards.

The greatest threat to the Dominican Republic these days comes from hurricanes, which periodically flatten entire towns. The major resorts have become adept at getting back on their feet quickly after a hurricane, but if a hurricane hits the country before your trip, you might want to call ahead and make sure your room is still standing.

**Banking**

**Banking Hours** - Most banks are open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm. ATMs are found at all branches of Banco Popular. Banks at the malls stay open until 6pm.

**Currency** - The Dominican monetary unit is the peso (RD$), made up of 100 centavos. Coin denominations are 1, 5, 10, 25, and 50 centavos, 1 peso, and 5 pesos. Bill denominations are RD$5, RD$10, RD$20, RD$50, RD$100, RD$500, RD$1,000, and RD$2,000. The use of any currency other than Dominican pesos is technically illegal, but few seem to heed this mandate.

**Communication**

**Language** - The official language is Spanish; many people also speak some English.

**Internet** - There is access to regular ADSL, G.SHDSL, and services only on metropolitan areas, costs are high and service is decent. A couple of cable companies at lower costs than ADSL offer Cable Internet but the service is very deficient and unreliable. WiFi hotspots are almost non-existent, with just a few in university campuses and other not-so-public areas.
Postal Service - You can choose between two services. The official postal service will send your postcard to your friends within 10 days. The private postal services send your mails via Miami within 7 days (25 pesos per postcard). The private postal service is more efficient. Some people using the official postal service receive their mails within 2 months.

Telephone - Telephone -- The area code for the Dominican Republic is 809. You place calls to or from the Dominican Republic just as you would from any other area code in North America. You can access AT&T Direct by dialing tel. 800/222-0300. You can reach MCI at tel. 800/888-8000 and Sprint at tel. 800/877-7746.

Documents Needed
All Americans traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States.. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Visitors who do not obtain a Dominican visa prior to entry must purchase a tourist card upon arrival to enter the country. Tourist cards cost ten U.S. dollars, which must be paid in U.S. currency. Tourist cards may be purchased at the Dominican Embassy in Washington or Dominican Consulates prior to arrival, as well as at Dominican airports at the time of entry. Tourist cards normally permit a legal stay of up to 60 days. Visitors who would like to extend their time in the Dominican Republic should visit the Migration Department in Santo Domingo and request an extension. Failure to request an extension will subject the visitor to a surcharge at the airport upon departure.

Electricity
The country generally uses 110-volt AC (60 cycles), so adapters and transformers are usually not necessary for U.S. appliances.

Emergencies
Emergencies - Call tel. 911.

Embassies & Consulates - Americans living or traveling in the Dominican Republic are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department’s travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Dominican Republic. Americans without Internet access may register
directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located at the corner of Calle César Nicolás Penson and Avenida Máximo Gómez. The American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit can be reached by telephone at 809-731-4294, or via email at acsantodom@state.gov. ACS Unit office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, Friday 7:30-12:15, except on U.S. and Dominican holidays. The Chancery of the U.S. Embassy is located a half-mile away from the Consular Section, at the corner of Calle César Nicolás Penson and Calle Leopoldo Navarro. The telephone number is 809-221-2171.

There is a Consular Agency in the north coast city of Puerto Plata at Calle Villanueva esq. Avenida John F. Kennedy, Edificio Abraxa Libraria, 2nd floor, telephone 809-586-4204, 809-586-8017, 809-586-8023; office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Hospitals - Medical care is limited, especially outside Santo Domingo, and the quality of care varies widely among facilities. There is an emergency 911 service within Santo Domingo, but its reliability is questionable. Outside the capital, emergency services range from extremely limited to nonexistent. Blood supplies at both public and private hospitals are often limited, and not all facilities have blood on hand even for emergencies. Many medical facilities throughout the country do not have staff members who speak or understand English. A private nationwide ambulance service, ProMed, operates in Santo Domingo, Santiago, Puerto Plata and La Romana; Telephone number is 809-548-7200. ProMed expects full payment at the time of transport. Dengue is endemic to the Dominican Republic. To reduce the risk of contracting dengue, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends wearing clothing that exposes as little skin as possible and applying a repellent containing the insecticide DEET (concentration 30 to 35 percent) or Picaridin (concentration 20 percent or greater for tropical travelers). Because of the increased risk of dengue fever and the ongoing risk of malaria in the Dominican Republic, practicing preventative measures is recommended by the CDC.

Pharmacies/Drug Stores - Pain relievers like Tylenol or Advil can be found in hotel/resort gift shops, corner stores and supermarkets in the Dominican Republic. Sometimes these items are under a different brand name so you may have to inquire. If you cannot find more specific medical/first aid supplies - like stomach or cough medicines, Band-aids or hydrogen peroxide - you will find these at one of the local pharmacies (farmacia in Spanish). Some pharmacies also sell vitamin supplements and more herbal-type remedies. It is highly recommended that you bring enough of your prescription medicine from home in the event it is unavailable here. As a precaution, you can also bring a note from your Physician indicating your prescription type,
which can then be provided to a local Physician. Only a local Physician's prescription will be filled at local (Dominican Republic) pharmacies.

**Police** - The Dominican Republic does have police that are specially trained to assist tourists who require assistance. This public institution is called Politur and represents a cooperative effort between the National Police, Secretary of the Armed Forces, and the Secretary of Tourism. Politur typically has personnel in tourist areas to provide first responder type assistance to tourists. If you are the victim of a crime, Politur can help you get to a police station so that you may file a police report and seek further assistance. For more information on Politur and contact information, use the following link: http://www.politur.gov.do/. Politur is located at the corner of 30 de Marzo and Mexico, Bloque D, Governmental Building, Santo Domingo. The general phone number is 809-686-8639.

**Holidays**
The following are official holidays in the Dominican Republic:

- January 1 - New Year's Day
- January 6 - Epiphany
- January 21 - Our Lady of Altagracia
- January 26 - Duarte's Birthday (celebrated on the closest Monday)
- February 27 - Independence Day
- March and/or April - Good Friday/Easter (Semana Santa)
- May 1 - Labor Day (celebrated on the closest Monday)
- June - Corpus Christi Day
- August 16 - Restoration Day (celebrated on the closest Monday)
- September 24 - Our Lady of Mercedes
- November 6 - Dominican Constitution Day (celebrated on the closest Monday)
- December 25 - Christmas Day

**Safety**
Crime continues to be a problem throughout the Dominican Republic. Street crime and petty theft involving U.S. tourists does occur, and precautions should be taken to avoid becoming a target. While pick pocketing and mugging are the most common crimes against tourists, reports of violence against both foreigners and locals are growing. Criminals can be dangerous and visitors walking the streets should always be aware of their surroundings. Valuables left unattended in parked automobiles, on beaches and in other public places are vulnerable to theft, and reports of car theft have increased. Cellular telephones should be carried in a pocket rather than on a belt or in a purse. One common method of street robbery is for at least one person on a moped (often coasting
with the engine turned off so as not to draw attention) to approach a pedestrian, grab his or her cell phone, purse or backpack, and then speed away. This type of robbery is particularly dangerous because the motorcyclist reaches the intended victim at 15–20 miles per hour and often knocks the victim to the ground.

Many criminals have weapons and are likely to use them if they meet resistance. Be wary of strangers, especially those who seek you out at celebrations or nightspots. Traveling and moving about in a group is advisable. The dangers present in the Dominican Republic, even in resort areas, are similar to those of many major U.S. cities. Expensive jewelry attracts attention and could prompt a robbery attempt. Limiting the cash and credit cards carried on your person and storing valuables, wallet items, and passports in a safe place is recommended.

Burglaries of private residences continue to be reported as well as crimes of violence. Criminals may also misrepresent themselves in an effort to gain access to your residence or hotel room. In one 2005 homicide, a U.S. citizen was murdered by two men who posed as repairmen to gain access to the apartment. In another, the Dominican police arrested the building’s actual maintenance man and an accomplice for the crime.

The U.S. Embassy continues to receive reports from Americans who have been stopped while driving and asked for “donations” by someone who may appear to be a police officer before they would be allowed to continue on their way. Usually, the person(s) stopping the American drivers had approached from behind on a motorcycle; several of these motorcyclists pulled up alongside the driver’s window and indicated that they were carrying a firearm. In some cases, the perpetrators were dressed in the light green uniform of “AMET,” the Dominican traffic police; however, they often seemed too young to be police officers or wore ill-fitting uniforms that might have been stolen. In another incident, individuals dressed in military fatigues told the victim they were police and requested the victim to follow them to the police station prior to robbing him. Such incidents should be reported to the police and the Consular Section. If Dominican police stop an American driver for a traffic violation, the driver should request a traffic ticket rather than paying an on-the-spot fine. The driver also has the right to ask police for identification. New regulations require police to wear a nametag with their last name. While everyone driving in the Dominican Republic should abide by traffic laws and the instructions of legitimate authorities, Americans finding themselves in the aforementioned scenarios should exercise caution. In general, drivers should keep their doors locked and windows closed at all times and leave themselves an escape route when stopping in traffic in the event of an accident or other threat. Incidents involving police may be reported to the Internal Affairs Department of the National Police at 809 688-1777 or 809 688-0777.
In 2006, the U.S. Embassy received reports of Americans and others who were victims of vehicular-armed robberies in the northern provinces of the Dominican Republic. At least three of the reports indicate the victims were intercepted during the morning hours, when there was little other traffic, while driving on rural highways connecting Santiago and Puerto Plata. Drivers should exercise extreme caution when driving at night and use major highways when possible. Although kidnappings are not common in the Dominican Republic, in 2007, two American citizens were kidnapped and held for ransom, in separate instances.

Many public transportation vehicles are unsafe, especially the route Taxi or “carros publicos” in urban areas. These are privately owned vehicles that run along certain routes, can take up to six or more passengers, and are inexpensive. Passengers in “carros publicos” are frequently the victims of pickpocketing, and “carro publico” drivers have on occasion robbed passengers. Urban buses (“guaguas”) are only marginally better. The U.S. Embassy is also aware of at least one incident in which the driver of a “motoconcho” (motorcycle taxi) robbed an American passenger. The U.S. Embassy cautions its staff not to use these modes of transportation. As an alternative, some scheduled interurban bus services use modern buses and run on reliable timetables. These are generally the safest means of intercity travel.

With respect to Taxi, visitors to the Dominican Republic are strongly advised to take only hotel Taxi or Taxi operated by services whose cabs are arranged in advance by phone and can subsequently be identified and tracked. There are continuing reports of thefts that target Americans as they leave the airport in a taxi that lacks air-conditioning. The driver rolls down the windows and when the taxi stops at a traffic light, a motorcyclist reaches in and steals a purse or anything they can grab. Travelers are advised to utilize the taxi service authorized by the airport if they have not arranged before arrival. Credit card fraud is common and recent reports indicate that its incidence has increased significantly. The U.S. Embassy strongly advises Americans to restrict severely the use of credit/debit cards in the Dominican Republic. The increase in credit card fraud is particularly pronounced in the eastern resort areas of the Dominican Republic. According to reports, store workers, restaurant service staff and hotel employees may conceal devices that can instantly record the credit card information. Often, this device appears to be a normal card reader used by businesses. Credit or debit cards should be carefully protected and never allowed
out of the owner’s sight. Stolen cards are often used to the maximum amount before the victims are able to contact the bank. Victims of credit card fraud should contact the bank that issued the credit card immediately. It is advisable to pay close attention to credit card bills following time spent in the Dominican Republic. There have been reports of fraudulent charges appearing months after card usage in the Dominican Republic.

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are present throughout Santo Domingo and other major cities. However, as with credit cards, the use of ATMs should be minimized as a means of avoiding theft or misuse. One local ATM fraud scheme involves sticking photographic film or pieces of paper in the card feeder of the ATM so that an inserted card becomes jammed. Once the card owner has concluded the card is irretrievable, the thieves extract both the jamming material and the card, which they then use. There are other ATM frauds as well. Exercise caution and be aware of your surroundings when using an ATM card.

The overall level of crime tends to rise during the Christmas season, and visitors to the Dominican Republic should take extra precautions when visiting the country between November and January.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. The Embassy regularly receives reports of individuals and families who have become victims of crime while within the boundaries of their resort hotel. A growing number of these crimes involve the burglary of their room and even the removal of the room safe. While in general the criminals do not commit their crime in the presence of the guest it is not unheard of for guests to be victimized in their own room. Vigilance is strongly recommended.

Travelers to the Dominican Republic should strongly consider leaving valuable property at home. The Embassy recommends bringing no item on your trip that cannot be easily replaced and to make contingency plans in case of theft. These precautions include making photocopies of all credit cards and licenses, which include the numbers to call in order to report theft; photocopies of passports and birth certificates; and leaving
emergency funds with someone at home in case it is necessary for money to be sent on short notice.

The Embassy occasionally receives reports of instances of sexual assault at the resorts, particularly while at the beach. "All-inclusives" are well known for serving abundant quantities of alcohol. Excessive alcohol consumption may decrease a person's ability to be aware of their surroundings, making them an easy target for crime. As such, the Embassy strongly encourages vigilance at all times.

The Embassy also receives reports of individuals who have suffered accidents or medical crisis at resorts. American citizens are advised to check their own insurance coverage when overseas or consider travelers’ insurance. Hospitalization in the Dominican Republic can be extremely expensive and patients are expected to pay for services immediately.

**Time Zone**
The time zone in the Dominican Republic is Atlantic Standard Time, -4 hours GMT or +1 hour EST. The Dominican Republic does not observe daylight savings time.

**Transportation**

**Air** - The Dominican Republic has seven international airports. The most used airports are Las Américas International Jose Francisco, Peña Gomez Airport, 20 minutes east of Santo Domingo, and Puerto Plata International Gregorio Luperón Airport, 15 minutes from Playa Dorada.

**Taxi** - There is more than one type of taxi in the Dominican Republic. When you step off a plane or out of your hotel, you will almost certainly find a "tourist" taxi. A few years ago the government funded new Taxi. They are now Hundai minivans or cars. All are sand colored. They replace the 70's vintage American gas guzzlers that used to transport tourists. Tourist Taxi fiercely protect their territory against other forms of transport. Not surprising since their prices are double those of the vintage Japanese cars that the city Taxi use. In the large cities you will find "carro conchos" who cruise the main streets like buses, constantly stopping to take on or disgorge passengers. They only charge a few pesos and are practical for short rides along the same street. Don't look for a taxi meter in the Dominican Republic. Tourist Taxi usually have posted rates at the entrance to resorts.

Motorcycle Taxi - Known as "moto conchos" they abound except for downtown Santo Domingo. They charge double at night, which means 20 or more pesos instead of 10 for a short ride. They are not practical for long trips and are involved in lots of accidents.

**Buses** - In contrast to car rentals and Taxi, buses are cheap, safer, and fun. You will meet real Dominicans. Metro Tours, Terra Bus and Caribe tours are for long trips, for example Santo Domingo to Puerto Plata. Clean modern and comfortable they are a bargain. They work by
reservation except on Holidays. Other intercity buses offer express and air conditioned services. If the bus is not express, it will make many stops. Local buses (guaguas) will take you to the next town for a dollar or so. The only problem with buses is that they stop operating at about 9 PM, so you cannot use them at night.

**Rental Car** - Major car rental companies have airport and city locations, such as Honda, National, Avis, Budget, Hertz, Europcar, Nelly Rent-a-Car, Dollar and many others. A valid driver's license and major credit cards are required to rent a car for up to 90 days. Driving is on the right hand side and the speed limit is 60 kph in the cities and 80 kph or 100 kph on the highways, unless otherwise indicated.

There are only two problems with this, cost and safety. You will find that the cost of car rentals is higher than you are used to. Safety is not a problem if you learn and apply the Dominican rules of the road. Simply stated; there are none! It is a big free for all. Most traffic police are on foot and almost nobody stops on their signal. With no radio and no pursuit car, it is a mismatch. In other words, traffic law enforcement is close to zero. If renting a car can be hazardous, renting a motorcycle is doubly so, but it is cheaper. Be very careful.

**Water**

Tap water is unsafe to drink and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are safe.

**Academic System**

**Overview**

There is both private and public education available in the Dominican Republic. The public systems provide one year of pre-school and Grade 1 to Grade 12 education. School is obligatory from pre-school until Grade 8. Private schools also provide Nursery and Kindergarten education. Public schooling is free but children are required to wear a uniform to attend and these are not provided free of charge. There are both public and private universities in the major cities and approximately 85% of the Dominican Republic is considered literate.

**Structure of School System**

**Primary**

Type of school providing this education: Primary School Educación Básica
Length of program in years: 6
Age level from: 7 to 14
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado de Suficiencia en Los Estudios Primarios

**Intermediate**

Type of school providing this education: Secondary school (traditional system)
Length of program in years: 2
Age level from: 14 to 16
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado de Suficiencia en los Estudios Intermedios

**Basic Secondary**
Type of school providing this education: Secondary school (Reform)
Length of program in years: 4
Age level from: 14 to 18

**Technical Secondary**
Type of school providing this education: Technical Secondary School
Certificate/diploma awarded: Perito

**Upper Secondary**
Type of school providing this education: Secondary school (Reform)
Length of program in years: 2
Age level from: 18 to 20
Certificate/diploma awarded: Bachillerato en Ciencias y Letras

**Second Cycle Secondary**
Type of school providing this education: Secondary school (traditional)
Length of program in years: 4
Age level from: 16 to 20
Certificate/diploma awarded: Bachillerato

**K-12**
Primary school lasts for six years and is compulsory. In secondary education, two systems are in operation. The traditional system comprises a six-year cycle divided into a two-year intermediate cycle and a four-year second cycle. On completion of the first two years, students obtain the Certificado de Suficiencia en los Estudios Intermedios. During the second cycle, students follow an academic, technical-vocational or teacher-training track. During the last year, students can choose to specialize. On completion of this cycle, students are awarded the Bachillerato in their specialization. In the reform system, studies last for six years, divided into two cycles. The first cycle (Ciclo Básico) is a four-year cycle with an emphasis on science. The second cycle (Ciclo Superior) lasts for two years and offers a greater choice of specializations than the traditional system. On completion, students are awarded the Bachillerato en Ciencias y Letras. Technical secondary is available in both systems via a Bachillerato in a technical area. Students are awarded the title of Perito on completion of their studies.

**Higher Education**
Higher education is provided by universities and other institutions of higher education. The Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo is the only state university. The others are private. All
institutions must be authorized by the President of the Republic. The Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior was created to supervise the enforcement of the regulations in the field of higher education and provide technical assistance to higher education institutions and advisory services to the executive power.

Professor/Student Relationship
The teacher is the authority of the classroom and discipline in the classroom is respected.

Teacher Education
Training of pre-primary and primary/basic school teachers - Primary school teachers are trained at secondary level as one of the options in the secondary education sector. Schools offer a two-year program following completion of grade 10 and accept students from both the traditional and the reform systems. Courses lead to the title of Maestro Normal.

Training of secondary school teachers - Two types of training are offered: a two- to three-year program leading to the intermediate degree of Técnico, Profesor or a Certificado de Estudios Superiores, preparing teachers for lower secondary level, and a four-year Licenciado in Education for upper secondary education

Etiquette

Cultural Orientation
The family forms the basis of stability. The individual derives a social network and assistance in times of need from the extended family, which generally encompasses three generations. When possible, the extended family lives together or within the same vicinity. Loyalty to the family comes before any other social relationship, even business.

Business Practices
This is a country where knowing the right person is often more important than what you know. Doing favors and collecting favors owed is a highly developed art form. Name-dropping is commonplace and nepotism does not have the negative connotation it has in many other countries. Trust is crucial to developing relationships. It is important that you treat business colleagues with respect and not do anything to cause them loss of face. Senior positions in business are predominately held by the upper class; therefore, it is important that you pay attention to the hierarchy and show appropriate deference and respect to those in positions of authority. Dominicans can be direct communicators and are not afraid to say what they feel.

Protocol
In Dominican society, appearance is very important. People are extremely fashion conscious and believe that clothes indicate social standing and success. They take great pride in wearing good fabrics and
clothes of the best standard they can afford. Designer labels, particularly those from the USA, are looked upon favorably. Appropriate business attire is expected. Men should wear good quality, conservative, dark colored business suits. Women should wear stylish suits or dresses. They should dress elegantly, including make-up and jewelry.

**Tipping**
Most restaurants and hotels add a 10% service charge to your check. Most people usually add 5% to 10% more, especially if the service has been good.
References


