

****MERENGUE****

Merengue is the most popular music and dance in the Dominican Republic (where it originated) and throughout many parts of Latin America. Typical instruments for merengue music include the bass, the guitar, the saxophone, the trumpet, the accordion, the güira (percussion instrument that sounds like a maraca), the tuba or trombone, and drums. Merengue music began in the 1840's and is still popular today because of its fast rhythm and sensual dance moves. Current popular merengue artists include Juan Luis Guerra, Los Hermanos Rosario, and Olga Tañón.

****SUGARCANE****

Sugarcane was first brought to the Dominican Republic in the 16th century by the Spanish. Sugarcane is the main agricultural product of the country. The US buys 15% of its sugar from the Dominican Republic. However, the controversy over how sugarcane is harvested remains an ongoing problem. 90% of the sugarcane workers are Haitian migrants (approximately one million Haitians currently reside in the Dominican Republic). The Haitian migrant workers are considered illegal and thus have no access to basic human rights and often live in deplorable conditions. The Haitian workers live in bateyes without electricity, toilets, water, health facilities or education. The Dominican government uses Haitian workers as cheap laborers and denies them citizenship.

****DOMINOES****

El dominó is a very popular game in the Dominican Republic. The main objective is to lose all of one's domino tiles while blocking another player. Playing dominoes is a national pastime in the Dominican Republic and many people can be seen playing it on their porches with friends, at bars, or at neighborhood markets.

Dominicans typically have a favorite partner and may possibly have hand signals. Body language is a big part of their game. It is probably the reason that Dominicans make so much noise while playing (to cover their signals). Be careful when playing in the street because there are extra points for different moves and the team that leads continues to go first throughout the entire game.

****SANTO DOMINGO****

Santo Domingo is the capital and largest city in the Dominican Republic and the largest city in the Caribbean by population. In 2010, its population was 965,040, rising to 2,907,100 when the surrounding metropolitan area was included. The city lies within the boundaries of the Distrito Nacional.

Santo Domingo is the cultural, financial, political, commercial, and industrial center of the Dominican Republic, with the country's most important industries being located within the city. Santo Domingo also serves as the chief seaport of the country.

Santo Domingo has a tropical climate but seldom experiences oppressive heat and humidity. December and January are the coolest months and July and August are the warmest.

The demographics of Santo Domingo are similar to other metropolitan areas of the country, except that the population of illegal immigrants (mainly Haitians) is larger in the city because of the relative ease of finding work and the economic diversity compared to other provinces. Santo Domingo, like most of the country, is made up of native-born Dominican mulattos, although there are large numbers of Afro-Dominicans and Euro-Dominicans, as well as a large immigrant community. In fact, over 20% of the city's population is immigrants, mainly Haitians. However, there are also recent immigrants from Europe, Asia, as well as other Latin American nations that live in Santo Domingo. The city of Santo Domingo has a significant community of Asians (mainly Chinese), Arabs (mostly Lebanese), and Europeans (mostly Spanish and Italian). There are also significant numbers of Jamaicans and Puerto Ricans in the city, as well as US born Dominicans returning to their parents' home country. The northeastern part of the city is the poorest while the southwest is the wealthiest. Santo Domingo is also developing a growing Dominican middle-class. The city is one of the most economically developed cities in Latin America.

Santo Domingo has a great social divide ranging from the extremely poor to the very rich. The average police officer earns approximately \$150 per month, while government bureaucrats or nurses earn around \$600. The average monthly wage for a Dominican is \$441. It typically takes \$600 per month to comfortably support a family of five people.