

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Pic. 1: Map of the Dominican Republic

FACTS

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Area: | 48442 m ² |
| Capital: | Santo Domingo |
| Type of State: | presidential republic |
| Inhabitants: | 8.833.634 (July 2004) |
| Population Density: | 181/km ² |
| Language: | Spanisch |
| Religion: | christians: 80% catholics, protestant free churches |



Pic. 2: Dominican Republic in the Caribbean

INTRODUCTION

The Dominican Republic (sp.: República Dominicana) is situated on the eastern part of the island of Hispaniola, the western third is taken by Haiti.

Hispaniola belongs to the „Caribbean Islands“, a chain of islands which lie between North and South America with a total length of 3.340 km from Cuba in the north-west down to Trinidad in the south-east.

The larger islands in the north - Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico - are called the „Great Antilles“.

The capital of the Dominican Republic is Santo Domingo, which counts about 1 Mio. inhabitants, the suburbs included nearly 3 Mio. people - that is about one third of the whole population. The urban population makes up 67%, which means that there is a high degree of urbanization, and as far as the capital is concerned, the largest amount of trade and fair takes place there. Therefore the Dominican Republic is a typical so called *primate urban system* according to Saskia Sassen¹.



Pic. 3: Flag of the Dominican Republic

HISTORY

The history of the Dominican Republic can be divided into the pre-columbian time, the era of colonization and the time of the republic.

The original inhabitants of the Caribbean Islands were the Tainos, who belonged to the Arawak. They were an indigenous people with the origin in today's Venezuela. They had an advanced culture based on agriculture and farming and the processing of cotton and gold, which allowed them to populate successively almost all of these islands since 700 BC. At around 800 AC they were driven out to the northern Great Antilles from the Caribs, a tribe which was coming from the south as well and been of a much more aggressive and warlike nature.

In December of 1492 Christopher Columbus (sp.: Cristobal

Colón) reached the „Westindian Islands“, which he described as the „Paradise“, and founded the first European settlement. It was not later than 1496, that the today's capital of Santo Domingo was built as the first city in the New World.

That was the end for the original inhabitants as well. They became victims of the colonization in form of compulsory labor and brought in diseases and already in 1600 they were completely extinct. Since the colonizers had not sufficient labor force they began to bring Africans as slaves to Hispaniola and elsewhere and for that reason the today's population is made up mostly by mulatto people.

Hispaniola was a colony of Spain. In 1697 the eastern part of today's Haiti was occupied by France and that was the beginning of the division of the island.

In 1804 Haiti was the first colony worldwide to gain independence. Since then there were struggles between the two parts of the island to suppress the other.

In 1844 the first Dominican Republic was declared, followed by a second after the restoration war in 1865 and the third attempt in 1924, which was the beginning of the dictatorship of Trujillo, who was assassinated in 1961.

In 1965 there broke out civil war and finally in 1966 the fourth republic was founded.



Pic. 4: Faro de Colón: 500 years discovery of the New World in 1992

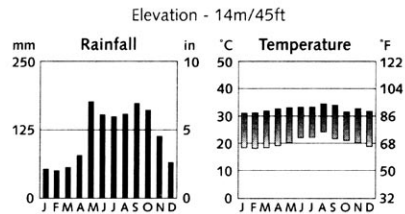
POLITICAL SITUATION

Today the fourth republic is still continuing to exist. The type of state equals the one of the United States, that means that there is a presidential republic with direct democratic elections for the president every four years. The ruling parties change from time to time and one can describe it as a stable kind of democratic system.

Since 2004 Leonel Fernández of the PLD is president.

CLIMATE

The climate of the Dominican Republic is tropical. There is a high amount of moisture in the air and the average temperature is about 27°C. Hispaniola lies in the field of tropical cyclone activity in form of hurricanes. The tropical climate can be divided into dry, rain and wind seasons. In addition the island is situated on the edge of an earthquake zone.



Pic. 5: Climate diagram of Santo Domingo

TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of the Dominican Republic is in majority mountainous. The surface is covered by several mountain ranges. One of them is the Central Cordillera which includes the Pico Duarte, the highest mountain of the Caribbean, with 3.175 m altitude.

VEGETATION

According to the vegetation there is a very high diversity. In several climatic zones and their microclimates, one finds e.g. on the one hand succulent and thorny vegetation like in a desert, on the other hand evergreen mountain and foggy wood in the higher altitudes, and along the coastline mangroves. Nearly the whole island was covered by tropical rain forest before the vast deforestation in favour of e.g. sugar cane monoculture. In the Dominican Republic there is a high share of endemic plants. Of 5.600 identified species, about 36% were classified as endemic, which is a circumstantial evidence for a long period of division from the continent. In comparison, Cuba as the first island divided from the continent, has a share of about 45% of endemic plants.

SOCIETY

There is a high rate of poverty, but actually only little tangible misery. The degree of jobless people is very high (prx. 30 %) and one has far spread underemployment. As far as health is concerned, in the bigger agglomerations there is sufficient basic maintenance. The rate of HIV-infections is between 4-5 %. Education: Although there is general compulsory school attendance, which is not always guaranteed, the degree of illiteracy is about 16 %. In the Dominican Republic live about 160.000 people with haitian origin, who speak the language of haitian creole. In general it is them who work on the sugarcane fields and reap it only with machetes.

ECONOMY

Currency: Dominican Peso (RD\$).
 Gross national product (GNP): 13,5 billion Euro.
 Rate of growth of GNP: 8 % (2001 only 2,7 %).
 Rate of inflation: about 10 %.
 Gainful employment: service 62 %,
 industrie 23 %, agriculture 15 %.
 Agricultural products: sugarcane, bananas, coffee, cacao, tobacco, vegetables, rice, coconut.
 Raw materials: ferronickel, gold, silver, zinc.
 Industrie: production of nutrition, sugar, tobacco, iron, steel, cement.
 Tourism: 2,9 Mio. foreign guests (2001), 2 billion Euro income



Pic. 6: The picture that nearly every visitor expects the whole Dominican Republic to look like

contact:j_schneemann@web.de

Images:

Pic.-No. 1: <http://www2.demis.nl/mapserver/mapper.asp>
 Pic.-No. 2: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominikanische_Republik
 Pic.-No. 3: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominikanische_Republik
 Pic.-No. 4: Author: Jürgen Schneemann
 Pic.-No. 5: Source: Lonely Planet Publications
 Pic.-No. 6: Author: Jürgen Schneemann

Literature:

1: Sassen, Saskia: Metropolen des Weltmarkts. Die neue Rolle der Global Cities, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main/New York, 1996, S. 24

Websites:

<http://www2.demis.nl/mapserver/mapper.asp>
http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominikanische_Republik
<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taino>
http://www.weltalmanach.de/staat/staat_detail.php?staat=dominikanische%20republik