

# The Beachees of Dorada and Sosua

## Puerto Plata's Main Tourist Attractions

> By Habeeb Salloum

Situated along the country's northern shoreline, Dorada and Sosúa Beaches are the main tourist spots in the Puerto Plata area, drawing a good number of the Dominican Republic's 2.5 million visitors. Washed by the Atlantic's turquoise waves, their fine sands and up-to-date modern facilities are ideal for those seeking sun and relaxation yet yearn for the comforts of the 21st century. From the half a dozen well-known beaches to the east and west of Puerto Plata, a resort town of 200,000 and the largest city on the north side of the island, they are the ones most often chosen by North American winter travelers.

The lovely 3 km (2 mi) Playa Dorada is the gem of the Dominican Republic's northern resorts. Lush tropical mountains overshadow and nestle hotel complexes

and sands. It is easily accessible - only a few miles from historic Puerto Plata (silver port), so named by Columbus in 1502 because a silver mist, caused by a type of

tree whose leaves give a silvery glow when seen from a distance, which hovers over the nearby mountains. In winter the beach is crowded with tourists - the vast majority ▶



Puerto Plata -Central Park

بويرتو بلاتا-المتنزه المركزي

Canadians with the remainder from the U.S.A. and Europe.

The beach, bordered by shrubs, intermingled with almond and palm trees, is the most developed on the Dominican Republic's northern shoreline. Yet, its atmosphere is serene. There are only a few of the handicraft vendors and other entrepreneurs who plague a great number of Third World resorts.

Most of the hotels have their own sections on the beach, which they keep very clean. However, these are not fenced off and if one is ambitious the entire beach is open to strolling and all types of water sports - everyone blinks an eye when invaders come from other territories. The exception is that guards do not allow the strollers to enter the hotels.

Fourteen luxurious hotel resort complexes with their shopping plazas border the sands. It is an ultra-modern holiday town where every tourist requirement can be found.

The most well known of these complexes, especially to North Americans, is Jack Tar Village. The resort was extensively renovated in 1997 and turned into an adults-only resort, catering to singles, honeymooners and couples. An 'All-Inclusive' resort, its abodes are clusters of one and two-story villa-style

accommodations encircled by the palm-dotted Robert Trent Jones 18-hole golf course - the only 18-hole course in the Puerto Plata area. The next nearest is a newly built luxurious course to be found near Playa Grande - about 125 km (78 mi) away.

If you are staying in any of Playa Dorado's resorts, you are also provided with a variety of eating, sightseeing and entertainment options. There are a good number of fine restaurants. In addition, you can join organized tours at reasonable rates from all hotels. These take visitors to almost every important tourist site in the Dominican Republic.

Less touristy, but with many tourist attributes is the resort town of Sosúa, about a fifteen-minute drive from Puerto Plata's International Airport. Six hundred German Jews fleeing their homeland established the town in 1940. Today, only about a dozen of these immigrants remain. The remainder left after the Second World War or married and melted into Dominican society.

The resort consists of two main sections: El Batey, filled with quiet shaded residential avenues, gardens, restaurants and elegant homes - a haven for artists and writers; and Los Charamicos with a maze of narrow streets filled with tin shacks and vegetable

stalls. The latter part of town is permeated with poverty and the smell of decay.

Nevertheless, most visitors come to Sosúa to enjoy its 3/4 km (1/2 MI) strip of enticing sands sheltered by coral cliffs - one of the finest beaches in the Dominican Republic. Its entire edge is crowded with food stalls, shops selling handicrafts and endless other products, intermingled with other stands featuring paintings produced by amateur artists.

The beach is the scene of a variety of water sports such as sailing, water-skiing, jetskiing, and offshore, a short distance away, the coral banks are excellent for scuba diving.

Unlike in the past, when travellers wrote that the beach was crowded with endless vendors and beggars who usually annoyed visitors, I found that there were only salespersons from the stalls, who tried to pressure the strollers to purchase their products. However, if pleasantly refused, they would smilingly move away.

The local colour, on and around the sands, has given this beach a great reputation among knowledgeable tourists. No doubt, these travellers are responsible for the saying 'wise are the travellers who have discovered Sosúa'.

Unlike Playa Dorado, Sosúa' sands are not ▶



Music band

فرقة موسيقية



Music band

فرقة موسيقية

surrounded by huge resort complexes. The only exception is the Sosúa Bay resort, located at the end of the beach, overlooking the sands. It complements the beauty of the scenery and the friendliness of the beach people, adding to the charms of this hidden resort which is truly a fine representative of the Dominican Republic - a part of Hispaniola - an island that Columbus loved most. ■

#### IF YOU GO

- 1) The best way to travel to the Puerto Plata resorts is to take the all-inclusive packages offered by tour companies.
- 2) Tourist accommodation in the Puerto Plata area has improved greatly. In the larger hotels, breakdowns of electricity, air conditioning or the water systems are rare.
- 3) The conversion rate of the Dominican Republic's currency (RD) fluctuates at around 33 to a U.S. dollar - change money in banks, which have branches in the major hotels.
- 4) Drink bottled water only - never from the tap.
- 5) Except in tourist oriented shops where goods are excessively priced, always bargain when shopping. In some instances, prices are inflated up to 8 times their true value. Best buys are the semi-precious stones amber and larimar.



Artisans Selling Wares

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- 6) For transportation, taxis cost from \$15. to \$25., from the airport to Playa Dorado or Sosúa; and \$10., from Playa Dorado to the centre of Puerto Plata or \$25. to Sosúa. However, do not get in a taxi or hire a tour guide without agreeing on a price first. Fares are not posted and there are no meters.
- 7) Meals in good restaurants cost from \$10. to \$30.; in peoples' eating places in town - from \$4. to \$10.
- 8) For a fulfilling personal excursion, take a taxi from Puerto Plata to the cable car. You first ride an exciting cable car - the only one of its type in the Caribbean - to the summit of the 800 m high Isabel de Torres

Mountain station. Here, one can spend hours walking through beautiful flower gardens and enjoying a fantastic view of Puerto Plata and the edging crystal blue waters of the Atlantic.

9) Fuerte de San Felipe, built from 1541 to 1577, is one of the most important tourist sites in Puerto Plata. Its romantic setting sitting majestically on a spit of land jutting into the Bay of Puerto Plata and its historic significance makes it appealing as a tourist site.

10) Remember: always keep \$10., for departure tax.

Note: all prices quoted in dollars, are U.S. dollars.



Santo Domingo-Columbus Lighthouse

سانتو دومينغو-فنارة كولومبس