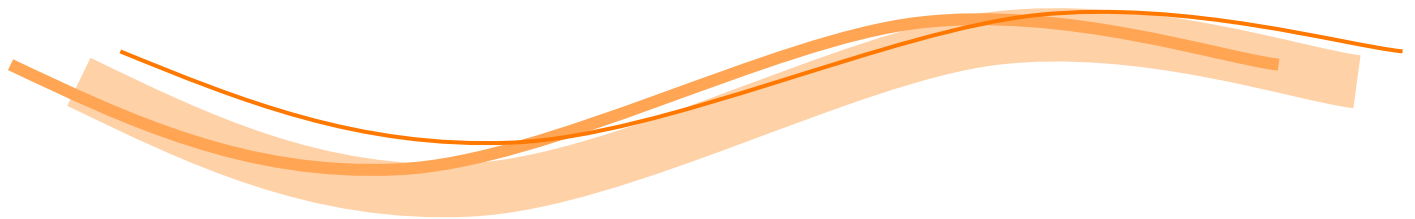




DESTINATION
Samana, Dominican
Republic





DESTINATION INFO	
Location	<p>The Dominican Republic (capital: Santo Domingo) is located in the Caribbean, on the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, east of Haiti.</p> <p>The Samaná Peninsula covers an area of almost 1,000 sq km and is washed to the north by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, and to the south by the Bahía de Samaná. Its main cities are Santa Bárbara de Samaná, commonly known as Samaná; Sanchez, the gateway to the peninsula; and Las Terrenas, the only main city located on the Atlantic Coast of the peninsula.</p>
Geography	<p>19,000 sq miles, 2/3 of Hispaniola, Greater Antilles, between Cuba and Puerto Rico, 600 miles SE of Florida</p> <p>Pico Duarte: 10,319 ft; not climbed until 1944, 3 day hike, \$240 plus 4 mules; Lago Enriquillo – 135 ft below sea level</p> <p>The Three DR's: (Moon Pub): Tourist DR: beaches, people, history, sun; Hidden DR: surprises, explore; Wild DR: peaks, deserts, caves, islands</p>
Name	<p>The gulf now called Samana was named by Columbus <i>Golfo de la Flechas</i> (Gulf of Arrows) as he was met by a hail of arrows from the natives when he landed here in Jan 1493.</p> <p>Hispaniola was named "Little Spain" by Columbus.</p>
Population	9.2 million
Language	Spanish
Currency	pesos, US Dollars and DR Pesos....29 pesos = Cdn \$ at Feb 2007
Tipping	10%
Government	<p>Representative democracy with Presidents elected for a 4 year term.</p> <p>Although the DR has long been viewed primarily as an exporter of sugar, coffee, and tobacco, in recent years the service sector has overtaken agriculture as the economy's largest employer due to growth in tourism.</p>
Documentation	<p>Canadians traveling to the Dominican Republic require a valid Canadian passport or an original copy of your birth certificate and valid government issued photo ID (such as a driver's license). You will also require a tourist card which will be provided on the aircraft during your southbound flight. Minors (under the age of 18) being nationals of Canada in addition to the above documentation requirements must: if traveling as an unaccompanied minor or with an adult other than a parent or legal guardian must hold a permit issued by the Consulate of Dominican Republic in Canada or the Director General's Office of Immigration in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic to leave the country of Dominican Republic. Baptismal Certificates are not acceptable as a birth certificate, nor are birth certificates issued in Quebec prior to January 1, 1994. Please contact the Consulate of Dominican Republic for more information.</p>
Time zone	One hour ahead of EST

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Health	Stick to bottled water. Consult your doctor about Malaria and Dengue Fever – very unlikely threat to tourists but you may want to additionally protect yourself anyway.
Safety tips	Be careful of pickpockets in Santo Domingo.

CLIMATE	
General climate	Average high 28 to 30 all year round
Today's weather	28 degrees Centigrade and mostly sunny for 10 Feb 2007
Best time to visit	Winter months

GETTING THERE	The new "Samaná International Airport" at El Catey makes the Samaná Peninsula accessible to direct international air travel.
Flying time	4 hour flight with Air Transat, departure tax: \$20 US (Oct 2006) A departure tax of US\$20 is assessed and must be paid in U.S. currency.
Cities	<p>Samana: Samaná has a distinctly modern and airy feel that is not found in most Dominican towns and cities. There is a simple reason for this: although its origins stretch far back in time, the town had to be rebuilt after it was completely destroyed by fire in 1946. Today, wide avenues, traffic circles and recently constructed buildings give it a very distinctive look that is not without its charms. Samaná's location, sheltered by mountains and overlooking the magnificent Bahía de Samaná dotted with fishing boats and yachts, adds greatly to the appeal of the town. This lively city boasts a pretty little port, one of the most colourful public markets in the country, a few quality hotels and several good restaurants.</p> <p>The structure known as La Churcha, in downtown Samaná, was brought here from England in 1820. Originally a Methodist church, it is now home to the Evangelical Church of Samaná. The Sunday services are celebrated with gospels.</p> <p>The little island of Cayo Vigía can be reached via a long footbridge located just behind the Cayacoa hotel. The island has experienced more prosperous times in the past; the view, however, is still striking, encompassing Samaná, the port, and the bay, and visitors can go for a swim here.</p>
Distances	245 km from Santo Domingo, capital of the DR (about 4 hours)
Ferries	Shuttle boats to Cayo Levantado from Samana Also ferry to Sabana de la Mar across Samana Bay
Trains	Used to have the only railroad in the country
Car Rental	Car rental agencies are found at all major airports and cities, and on the Samaná Peninsula in Las Galeras, Las Terrenas and Samaná. Jeeps and motorcycles may also be rented.

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Buses	In addition to Taxis , both private and public (gua-guas), the Dominican Republic is fortunate to have two excellent bus lines , Metro and Caribe Tours and a host of private busses that service most cities.
Passes	N/A

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	Three Bahia Principe resorts are featured by Transat Holidays in Samana for 2007: Gran Bahia Principe El Portillo Gran Bahia Principe Samana Gran Bahia Principe Cayo Levantado
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TARGET GROUPS	
Kids	Whale watching; swimming beneath a waterfall, the beaches
Teens	Discos at the resort, soft adventure excursions, great sports facilities at the resorts
Romance	Lush tropical forests, rolling mountains and long deserted beaches – perfect!
Honeymoons & Weddings	Packages available at the Bahia Principe hotels
Genealogy	N/A
Seniors	Endless beaches, excellent resorts and accessible tours to the countryside make this an excellent choice for the older vacationer.

UNIQUES	Usually starting in January and lasting until late March, Samana's humpback whales return every year to these tropical waters. Tours originate from Samana and Las Galeras (and several bayside locations in between) and from Las Terrenas. Whale-watching as a local tourist industry was begun in the 1980s by Kim Beddall, then an itinerant scuba instructor with no formal training as a marine biologist – although she's since been instrumental in the implementation of a code of conduct for whale-watch boats. Beddall still runs excellent whale boat tours through her Whale Samaná/Victoria Marine operation, Malecón (US\$45) that allow you to get an up-close look at the humpbacks; sightings are guaranteed in season.
Surprising	Los Altos de Chavon village: oddball 16th century Italian style confection on hilltop, crafts, workshops, Taino Art Museum, great views, shopping, restaurants

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History	<p>History: 900-1492 – native Tainos people lived in a tropical idyll; Caribs – cannibals – began to supplant them. Explored and claimed by Christopher Columbus on his first voyage in 1492, the island of Hispaniola became a springboard for Spanish conquest of the Caribbean and the American mainland. In 1697, Spain recognized French dominion over the western third of the island, which in 1804 became Haiti. The remainder of the island, by then known as Santo Domingo, sought to gain its own independence in 1821, but was conquered and ruled by the Haitians for 22 years; it finally attained independence as the Dominican Republic in 1844. In 1861, the Dominicans voluntarily returned to the Spanish Empire, but two years later they launched a war that restored independence in 1865. A legacy of unsettled, mostly non-representative rule followed, capped by the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo from 1930-1961.</p> <p>Columbus: “This is the fairest land under Heaven”...Ferdinand and Isabella</p> <p>The first battle between Europeans and natives took place on Jan 12 1493 on a beach on the Samana Peninsula.</p>
Books	Frommer’s Caribbean 2007
1000 Places to see before you die	Casa de Campo near La Romana – one of the worlds best golf and sporting destinations
Must Sees	The Cascada el Limón waterfall is immersed in a tropical forest on the Samaná peninsula. Tours offer you a relaxing, pleasant and unforgettable trip; a one- to two-hour donkey ride through tropical forest leads to this striking 55-metre waterfall. After bathing in the refreshing, crystal-clear water, you can enjoy a typical meal in the local restaurant.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	Baseball season: Oct to Feb; 1870, US Marines occupation 1916; 6 teams pro; “Its more than just a game, it is almost our way of life”; Pedro Martinez, Sammy Sosa, Alex Rodriguez
Golf	Samana's only golf course opened in 1993 and has been described as a fun course to play for those who enjoy tough holes. The small course is challenging with rolling hillsides, water and sand traps and steep climbs. Par: 3 Holes: 9 Length of course: 693 yards Green fees: \$10/18
Fishing	Marlin, sailfish, benito, tarpon, dorado, snook
Horse riding	To the El Limon waterfall – 2 hour roundtrip At Ranchito in Las Terrenas
Hiking	In the National Park and along the endless beaches
Cycling	The coast road is good biking terrain.
Diving	The reefs start just offshore on the Atlantic coast of the peninsula In Las Terrenas: Stellina Dive Centre.

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CULTURE	A few blocks back from the waterfront in Samana, the old First African Wesleyan Methodist Church of Samaná, popularly known as La Churcha, on Santa Bárbara and Duarte (daily 9am–6pm), tangibly maintains what African-American culture is left in Samaná. The prefabricated, tin-roofed structure was originally shipped over by the English Methodist Church in 1823, in support of a recently emigrated African-American community that still remains here. These days it's known as the Dominican Evangelical Church.
Arts	Dominican paintings are primitive, colourful and affordable.
Music	Meringue!
Films	Cayo Levantado is the original Bacardi Island photographed in the 1970s rum campaign.
Museums	At the southern end of the Plaza Espana in Santo Domingo, the Museo de las Casas Reales, built between 1503 and 1520, was the administrative centre of the West Indies, housing the Royal Court, Treasury and Office of the Governor. Inside, the museum's rather hodgepodge collection includes a few Taíno artefacts, Spanish navigational instruments, and an armoury donated by Trujillo with examples of weaponry used here since Columbus. Opposite the Casas Reales is the Alcazar de Colón, the fortified palace of the Columbus family, built by Diego from 1511 to 1515.
Festivals	Carnival: late Feb – Diabolo Conjuelo costumes, singing, dancing, every weekend in Feb Merengue festivals: July in Santo Domingo – musical blowout; Oct in Puerto Plata on the Malecon Las Noches de Vela: the night of the prayer festival Jan 21 - mix of Catholic and African religious festivities

ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	Playa Bonita, 13 km of uninterrupted beach that begins just west of Playa Las Ballenas, boasts the kind of powdery white sand you might expect to see only in tourist brochures. From Playa Bonita's entrance, a sand road provides access for four-wheel-drives and motorbikes, past a beachfront populated at most by a few small groups of people taking advantage of the isolation to swim or sunbathe naked, until, after 6 km, you reach Playa Cosón, a small fishing village holding two gourmet beach shacks with tables and chairs on the sand, serving grilled, fresh-caught fish for a few pesos.
Wildlife	Whales: 2500 of 6000 world population of humpbacks breed and give birth in the north on the Silver Bank; 50ft long, 60 tons; Dec- Mar Hutia: endemic mammal, nocturnal, 30cms, lives in caves

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Parks	Los Haitises National Park – 1200 square kilometers of limestone hills and mangroves. Guided tours to explore the many small islands and caves of the park are offered from Samana, Sanchez, Sabana de la Mar. Pre-Colombian pictograms cover the walls of some of the caves. Eco: 16 national parks, 67 protected areas; caimans in SW; birds: flamingos, parrots; solenodon – the Caribbean's only insectivorous mammal, almost extinct; sea turtles, whales
Gardens	The National Park of Los Haitises is a wild garden!
Castles/Forts	In Santo Domingo: First City of the Americas; Santa Maria Cathedral first church 1514, 1544; Calle de las Damas 1502 first street; Alcazar de Colombus – Castle of Columbus; Columbus' home, first monastery

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	Whether it's primitive native paintings, wood or whalebone carvings, island jewelry, precious amber, Dominican cigars or even a holiday T-shirt, you'll find it all in the many boutiques and specialty shops throughout the area: Amber, cigars, larimar, rum, rocking chairs, colourful art; Plaza Punta Cana, Plaza Bavaro Cigars: Santiago, Cibao Valley, Davidoff, Churchill
Markets	Samana town has one of the most colourful public markets in the DR.
Nightlife	Mostly based on the resorts, but Samaná has a great nightlife scene during the busier times of the year, with most of the action centred around the outdoor food and liquor shacks on the western end of the Malecón, e.g. Naomi, a slick dark, bustling place with great light shows and sound system, playing a mix of merengue and European techno.
Casinos	None in Samana, but available in other resort areas in the DR

CUISINE	
Food	Comida Creolla – creole cuisine blends Spanish, African, Indian and Caribbean influences; plantains, cassava, tropical fruits, mango, papaya, seafood, rice and beans; pastelitos: meat or cheese pastry turnovers; chimichurris: pork sandwiches hot off the spit; sancocho: national dish, sausage, pork, chicken, beef, goat, veg, herbs, spices in stew
Wine	Local beers: Quisqueya, El Presidente Rum: available everywhere, esp Brugal Extra Viejo
Restaurants	In Samana: Le France, Camilo's, La Hacienda, Tropical Lodge, Chino's up the hill; El Riconcito, with typical Dominican food and a few restaurants on the market with fresh fried fish or chicken.

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MORE INFO	DR Tourism Office: 514-499-1918
Brochures	Transat Holidays Sun 2006-2007 brochure available at travel agents
Website	www.transatholidays.com www.bahia-principe.com

HOTEL PRIZE PARTNER	Gran Bahia Principe El Portillo Part of the Bahia Principe Clubs and Resorts Group, one of the leading groups in Spanish tourism
Location	Located on the beautiful Samaná Peninsula - Approximately 90 minutes from the new Samaná airport
Facilities	<p>This elegant and luxurious hotel, which opened in November 2006, is perfect for families and friends. Surrounded by lush vegetation and set on one of the nicest beaches in Samaná,</p> <p>Buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner • À la carte dining • Unlimited local and selected international drinks (house wine included) • Free admission to the disco (drinks included) • Daily activities program • Nightly entertainment • Selected non-motorized water sports • Snack bars • Lounge chairs and beach towels (pool/beach) • Pool • Whirlpool • Bars • Disco-Karaoke • Tennis (day) • Gym</p> <p>Motorized water sports • Boutiques • Internet service • Fax service • Laundry service • Currency exchange • Car and motorbike rental • Taxi service to the peninsula • 24-hour medical services</p> <p>Wedding and FREE honeymoon packages also available</p> <p>Kids: One child stays and eats free when sharing a room with one or two adults except during Xmas/New Year • Babysitting</p> <p>Spa: The Spa offers a broad range of services and treatments: body, face (before and after exposure to the sun), depilation with warm wax, massages, steam, Jacuzzi, Vichy shower, and hydrotherapy bath. The Beauty salon offers all kinds of hair care: washing and drying, cuts, colour, texturising, styling, dreadlocks, manicures, pedicures,</p>
Accommodation	The resort features 396 spacious rooms and suites. • Royal Golden junior suite: air conditioning, ceiling fan, 1 king-size or two double beds, full bathroom, hairdryer, satellite TV, telephone, mini-bar, in-room safe (\$), breakfast table and chairs, balcony or terrace

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Activities	<p>Tennis, gym, motorized watersports</p> <p>PUEBLO PRÍNCIPE is a Dominican-style shopping and leisure centre where holidaymakers can enjoy warm Caribbean nights with live music and excellent animation programmes, to the sound of rhythmic Merengue and other tropical beats.</p> <p>This area provides an unlimited range of services and a series of shops to make your holiday even more enjoyable.</p> <p>Daily animation with live music (Merengue, Salsa) and a broad range of shows</p> <p>Discotheque, Piano-Bar, Karaoke and Snack Bar</p> <p>Shops: handicrafts, clothes, gifts, music, photography, jewellery, Internet connection</p> <p>Car and motorcycle rental service</p> <p>Medical service and chemist's</p>
Restaurants	<p>Restaurants including 3 à la carte (Gourmet, Oriental, Fish/ Seafood)</p> <p>Vegetarian dishes available</p>

AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER	Air Transat
Flight details	<p>Toronto: Sundays 24 Dec 2006 to 29 Apr 2007</p> <p>Montreal: Mondays 25 Dec 2006 to 30 Apr 2007</p>

TOUR OPERATOR NOTES	<p>Transat Holidays is the most important tour operator in Canada...and one of the top ten tour operators in the world.</p> <p>Transat Holidays is at the core of the vertical integration process adopted by its parent company, Transat A.T. developing and marketing vacation products as well as flights to destinations in the South and Europe.</p> <p>The company acts as a master craftsman in assembling different components of leisure travel: air transportation, passenger transfers from airport to hotel, accommodation, recreational and cultural activities, meals, cruises, and much more.</p> <p>As an industry leader, Transat Holidays offers departures from many Canadian cities including: St. John's, Halifax, Moncton, Fredericton, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto, Brandon, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, Comox, Abbotsford, Prince George and Kelowna.</p> <p>Transat Holidays' expertise continues to further establish the reputation it has held for almost 15 years as Canada's leading leisure travel company.</p>
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Products: Packages | Cruises | Hotels | Flights | Tours | Car Rentals | Train Travel

With a choice of over 300 hotels located in more than 50 destinations and a complete line of itineraries offered in partnership with the most prestigious cruise lines, all products offered by Transat Holidays are subject to a rigorous standard review.

2005 (Current) Agent's Choice Awards: Transat Holidays ranks number one for a 3rd year in a row: Transat Holidays has been ranked #1 for the third year in a row, by Canada's travel agents according to the results of the Agents' Choice Awards 2005, a survey carried out in February 2005 by Canadian Travel Press and Travel Courier.

Transat Holidays is without a doubt the country's leader in the tour operator category, maintaining a sizeable lead over its closest competitor. In fact, since the survey began, it is the only tour operator to consistently finish first in its category for three consecutive years. These results show that Transat Holidays is the tour operator of choice, and enjoys an excellent reputation in the travel agent community across the country.

Air Transat Kids Club: Most flights are operated on Air Transat, and they are committed to making your family vacation the best it can be. To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that our young passengers can really enjoy themselves while onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.

Parents benefit, too! Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family (maximum 6 people) can share. On your next trip with Air Transat, you can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.