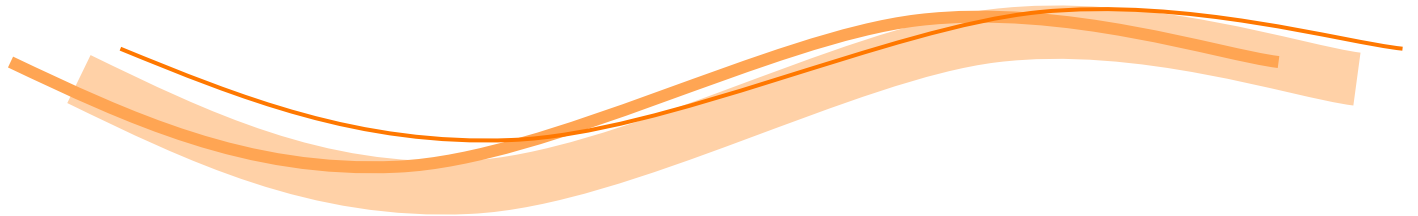




WESTJET VACATIONS





<p>WESTJET VACATIONS</p>	<p>WestJet will be flying direct from Montreal this winter offering a great flight schedule - PLUS a wide variety of hotel and resort options with WestJet Vacations. WestJet Vacations provides guests with affordable, reliable and easy-to-book travel experiences to 44 destinations in 12 countries.</p> <p>Surf the brand new, bilingual website at www.WestJetVacations.com for a world of exciting holiday ideas. WestJet Vacations also has French agents available to offer a fully bilingual service to guests contacting them by phone.</p> <p>From the US to Mexico to the Caribbean - WestJet Vacations bring the same friendly, affordable and reliable service that guests are used to receiving on WestJet flights.</p> <p>WestJet is Canada's favourite airline, offering scheduled service throughout its 71-city North American and Caribbean network. WestJet offers increased legroom, leather seats and live seatback television provided by Bell TV on its modern fleet of 96 Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft.</p>
<p>WestJet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet is Canada's favourite airline, offering scheduled service throughout its 71-city North American and Caribbean network. • Inducted into Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Hall of Fame and named one of Canada's best employers, WestJet pioneered low-cost flying in Canada. • WestJet offers increased legroom, leather seats and live seatback television provided by Bell TV on its modern fleet of 96 Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft. • With future confirmed deliveries for an additional 39 aircraft through 2018, WestJet strives to be one of the five most successful international airlines in the world. • Website: www.westjet.com • Connect with WestJet on Facebook at www.facebook.com/westjet • Follow WestJet on Twitter at www.twitter.com/westjet • Subscribe to WestJet on YouTube at www.youtube.com/westjet
<p>Quebec Website</p>	<p>WestJet Vacations has a new website at www.westjetvacations.com , the site responsible for providing vacation package bookings for the airline. Merging into the existing structure of www.westjet.com , the new site offers guests the opportunity to book both flights and vacations through a simple, intuitive and consistent website.</p>

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	<p>The site's new features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination and hotel guides that feature the best of each WestJet destination. From photo and video galleries to local attractions, agents you can choose, filter, compare and sort by price. • Intuitive mapping options that allow guests to view the location of their hotel in comparison to the airport and within the landscape of the country. • Social media sharing capabilities for each destination allowing guests to share their travel plans with friends and family on Facebook and Twitter. • An improved online booking process and the ability to split credit card payments between two cards. • Purchase buttons on nearly all site pages, making guest selection and booking options readily available. <p>In addition to these new features, WestJet's own user-generated content, Guests Know Best, will house photos, videos, written reviews and ratings about WestJet destinations and hotels from guests who've been to the area.</p> <p>The launch of the site is also an important strategic milestone in the airline's ongoing efforts to improve its level of service to its francophone guests. For the first time, a French version of westjetvacations.com is now live alongside the new English site, complementing the introduction of a French WestJet Vacations brochure, now in circulation. In addition, French-speaking call centre agents are now available between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. MT seven days a week</p>
<p>Why choose WestJet Vacations?</p>	<p>WestJet Vacations is your home for picture perfect getaways to some of the most beautiful spots in Mexico, the Caribbean and the U.S. Their vacation experts work hard so you can play hard. In fact, they're always coming up with great deals and packages to suit all tastes, interests and budgets. And they stand behind every one of those packages because WestJetters don't just work for WestJet, they own it. And owners care.</p> <p>WestJet Vacations offer thousands of vacation packages, all backed by WestJetters who care.</p> <p>You'll experience WestJet's famous guest service when booking your vacation, at the airport and in the air.</p> <p>WestJet's extensive and reliable flight schedule means your vacation can be 5, 7, 10 days...your choice.</p> <p>Get great deals such as free nights, room upgrades, free breakfasts plus</p>

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	<p>free accommodation and meals for kids.</p> <p>WestJet Vacations' product buyers research hotels, activities, prices and overall quality to help you plan the perfect vacation.</p> <p>Fly on WestJet planes with comfortable leather seats, ample legroom and large overhead bins.</p> <p>And you can rely on WestJet to take care of you if there's a flight delay, even if it's mother nature's fault.</p>
<p>The WestJet Experience</p>	<p>WestJet strives to offer guests a friendly, efficient and relaxing experience from the time of booking to the final destination. Guests now have a variety of innovative options to make their travels as smooth as possible.</p> <p>At most airports, WestJet's check-in choices include web check-in, mobile check-in, self-serve check-in or traditional counter check-in. Flowthrough check-in, both cost-effective and space-saving, has also been adopted at some of WestJet's airports. In 2007, WestJet was the first airline in North America to launch the electronic boarding pass, which is accepted at all Canadian destinations.</p> <p>The WestJet experience is delivered by its people. At the heart of numerous awards and distinctions are more than 8,000 WestJetters working hard to deliver a world-class guest experience. With an average of 1,200 resumes received each week, WestJet is able to recruit and train fun, friendly and caring people.</p> <p>WestJet's fleet of Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft are equipped with increased legroom, leather seats and live seatback television provided by Bell TV. Guests can also enjoy all the comforts of WestJet lounges. These third-party owned and operated lounges are available at airports in Toronto, Calgary, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Montreal. WestJet lounges offer guests a quiet place to work or relax before their flight. See www.westjetlounges.com.</p>
<p>Reward Program</p>	<p>Vacationers can earn WestJet dollars by flying or by having the WestJet RBC MasterCard. With the WestJet Frequent Guest Program you earn WestJet dollars by flying and with the WestJet RBC MasterCard, you earn WestJet dollars by spending on the card and by flying with WestJet.</p> <p>\$1 WestJet dollar = \$1 CDN towards travel with WestJet</p> <p>WestJet dollars can be used like cash to pay for all or part of a WestJet flight or WestJet Vacations package. And \$1 WestJet dollar equals \$1 CDN towards travel with WestJet. Best of all, you can use your WestJet dollars at any time, to any destination, with no blackout periods. You can even use them on seat sales.</p>

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	<p>Frequent Guest Program: Earn up to 2.5% back in WestJet dollars when you fly with WestJet. Keep spending and earn additional WestJet dollars + bonuses like companion tickets, free lounge passes and advance seat selection. http://www.westjet.com/guest/en/rewards/frequent-guest-program.shtml</p> <p>WestJet RBC MasterCard: Apply today and get a Welcome bonus of up to \$100 WestJet dollars. Earn up to 1.5% back in WestJet dollars on everyday purchases and up to 2% back when you purchase WestJet flights or WestJet Vacations packages with your card. http://www.westjet.com/guest/en/rewards/credit-card.shtml</p>
<p>Some WestJet Facts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet is one of the most profitable airlines in North America. • WestJet was inducted into the corporate culture hall of fame after being named one of Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008. • WestJet was named a J.D. Power 2011 Customer Service Champion. • WestJet employs more than 8,000 WestJetters. • WestJet flies a modern fleet of fuel-efficient Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft. • The longest flight on WestJet is approximately seven hours and two minutes from Montego Bay to Edmonton. • WestJet has three sizes of planes; 737-600 (119 seats), 737-700 (136 seats) and 737-800 (166 seats). • WestJet flies an average of 420 flights every day. • Approximately 82 per cent of eligible WestJetters own shares in the company through the employee share purchase plan (ESPP).
<p>WestJet Milestones</p>	<p>1996</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet founded by Clive Beddoe, Mark Hill, Tim Morgan and Donald Bell. • WestJet takes to the skies with 220 employees and three aircraft (Boeing 737-200s) with service to Vancouver, Kelowna, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg. • WestJet adds Victoria, Regina and Saskatoon to its network. <p>1997</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet adds an eighth destination with service to Abbotsford. <p>1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet expands its network to serve 12 Canadian destinations. • WestJet completes its Initial Public Offering of 2.5 million common shares <p>2000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet begins service in Eastern Canada, adding Hamilton, Moncton and Ottawa to its network. • WestJet announces its first stock split.

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**2001**

- WestJet accepts delivery of its first Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft (a 737-700).
- WestJet adds five additional routes, expanding its network to 20 Canadian destinations.

2002

- WestJet launches service to Toronto Pearson International Airport.
- WestJet successfully offers three million common shares, yielding net proceeds of \$78.9 million.
- WestJet announces its second stock split.
- WestJet named one of Canada's Top 100 Employers.

2003

- WestJet expands service to 24 Canadian destinations, including Halifax and St. John's. For the first time, WestJet's network spans Canada coast to coast.
- WestJet named Canada's second-most respected corp by Ipsos Reid.

2004

- WestJet begins transborder service to seven U.S. cities.
- WestJet announces its third stock split.
- WestJet installs the first live seatback television onboard its Next-Generation aircraft.

2005

- Adding service to seven new destinations, WestJet flies to 23 Canadian and 10 U.S. destinations.
- WestJet named Canada's most admired corporate culture by Waterstone Human Capital.
- WestJet retires the last Boeing 737-200.

2006

- WestJet named Canada's most admired corporate culture for the second year in a row by Waterstone Human Capital.
- WestJet introduces international service with flights to the Bahamas.
- WestJet Vacations is launched in June.

2007

- WestJet is named Canada's most admired corporate culture for a third-consecutive year by Waterstone Human Capital.
- WestJet introduces its community investment program, WestJet Cares for Kids.
- WestJet is the first airline in North America to launch an electronic boarding pass.

2008

- WestJet is named Canada's most admired corporate culture for a fourth-consecutive year by Waterstone Human Capital.
- WestJet adds eight additional routes to serve 30 Canadian, 14 U.S. and 11 international destinations.

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	<p>2009</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet opens its new Calgary office building, built in accordance with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. • WestJet and WestJet Vacations announce service to 13 additional destinations, including Varadero, Holguin and Cayo Coco, Cuba. <p>2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet is named to the corporate cultures hall of fame after five straight years of being selected as one of Canada's most admired corporate cultures by Waterstone Human Capital. • The WestJet RBC MasterCard and the WestJet Frequent Guest Program are launched. • In 15 years, WestJet grows from three aircraft, five destinations and 220 employees to 91 aircraft, 71 destinations and more than 8,000 WestJetters.
<p>South Destinations</p>	<p>WestJet Vacations fly to a wide variety of southern destinations this winter 2011-2012:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bermuda Bridgetown, Barbados Cabo San Lucas, Mexico Cancun, Mexico Cayo Coco, Cuba Cozumel, Mexico Freeport, Bahamas Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands Holguin, Cuba Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo, Mexico La Romana, Dominican Republic Mazatlan, Mexico Montego Bay, Jamaica Nassau, Bahamas Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic Puerto Vallarta, Mexico Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Samana, Dominican Republic San Juan, Puerto Rico Santa Clara, Cuba St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands St. Lucia, Hewanorra St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands Turks and Caicos, Providenciales Varadero, Cuba

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<p>US Destinations</p>	<p>There are more vacation opportunities with this impressive list of WestJet destinations in the States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albuquerque, New Mexico Austin, Texas Boston, Massachusetts Chicago, Illinois Dallas, Texas El Paso, Texas Fort Lauderdale, Florida Fort Myers, Florida Fresno, California Honolulu, Hawaii Houston, Texas Jacksonville, Florida Kauai, Hawaii Key West, Florida Kona, Hawaii Las Vegas, Nevada Los Angeles, California Maui (Kahului), Hawaii Miami, Florida Monterey, California Nashville, Tennessee New Orleans, Louisiana New York (Newark), New York Orange County - Anaheim, California Orlando, Florida Palm Springs, California Pensacola, Florida Phoenix, Arizona Reno, Nevada Sacramento, California San Diego, California San Francisco, California San Jose, California Santa Barbara, California Tampa, Florida Tucson, Arizona Washington, D.C
<p>Canadian Gateways</p>	<p>And with this range of Canadian gateway airports, it's easy to arrange for groups of family or friends to get together in WestJet Vacations array of destinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abbotsford, British Columbia Calgary, Alberta

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	<p>Charlottetown, P.E.I. Comox, British Columbia Deer Lake, Newfoundland Edmonton, Alberta Fort McMurray, Alberta Grande Prairie, Alberta Halifax, Nova Scotia Hamilton, Ontario Kamloops, British Columbia Kelowna, British Columbia Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario London, Ontario Moncton, New Brunswick Montreal, Quebec Ottawa, Ontario Prince George, British Columbia Quebec City, Quebec Regina, Saskatchewan Saskatoon, Saskatchewan St. John's, Newfoundland Sydney, Nova Scotia Thunder Bay, Ontario Toronto, Ontario Vancouver, British Columbia Victoria, British Columbia Windsor, Ontario Winnipeg, Manitoba Yellowknife, NWT</p>
<p>Responsible Travel</p>	<p>Since 2001, WestJet has spent more than \$2 billion upgrading its fleet to the more fuel-efficient Boeing Next-Generation 737-series aircraft. Emissions from these aircraft are 30 per cent lower on a per person basis than the fleet of 200-series aircraft WestJet replaced. WestJet currently has one of the youngest and most fuel-efficient fleets in North America with most aircraft equipped with blended winglets, which significantly reduce fuel burn and emissions.</p> <p>WestJet is the world-wide leader and the first carrier in Canada to adopt Required Navigation Performance (RNP) approach technology to land aircraft. RNP utilizes Global Positioning System satellites to allow aircraft to fly direct and precise approaches to airports. This shortens flight time and miles flown, also reducing fuel burn and emissions. Construction of WestJet's new Calgary campus facility is complete. The building was constructed following the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program, which promotes buildings that are</p>

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	<p>environmentally responsible, profitable and healthy places to live, work and play. For more on WestJet's green initiatives, visit the Environment section on www.westjet.com .</p>
<p>Current Deals</p>	<p>Here are just some of the deals currently on offer with WestJet Vacations as of November 24th 2011:</p> <p>Indulge in up to \$1500 in resort credits at Palace Resorts Stay a minimum of 5 nights and receive a resort credit towards room upgrades, golf, romantic dinners, spa and more.</p> <p>Cancun/Riviera Maya Experience with Real Resorts Book a 7 night package and enjoy 3 nights in Cancun and 4 nights in the Riviera Maya at select Real Resorts.</p> <p>THE ROYAL Cancun/Riviera Maya Experience with Real Resorts Book a 7 night package and enjoy 3 nights in Cancun and 4 nights in the Riviera Maya at select Real Resorts. Los Cabos</p> <p>Save on select Dreams Resorts & Spas Book early and save up to 40% on select Dreams Resorts in Puerto Vallarta. Or, save 20% on Dreams in</p> <p>Big savings at the Royal Solaris Los Cabos Save more than 30% on your hotel stay, plus receive up to \$200 in resort credits at the Royal Solaris Los Cabos.</p> <p>Mazatlan Early booking bonus at El Cid Resorts Save up to 55% on your hotel stay when you book ahead. Mazatlan \$600 USD Mega Pass at El Cid Resorts Receive a \$600 resort credit coupon book with a minimum 5 night vacation package.</p> <p>Puerto Vallarta Free golf at Club Marival Resort & Suites Receive one complimentary round of golf (18 holes) at your choice of either the Vista Nicklaus, Vista Weiskopf or the Marina Vallarta.</p> <p>Puerto Vallarta Free unlimited golf at the Crown Paradise Club All Inclusive Resort & Spa Book a 7 night package and enjoy unlimited free golf at three of the most renowned golf courses in Puerto Vallarta. Puerto Vallarta Unlimited free golf when you book Marival Residences & World Spa. Book a vacation package and enjoy unlimited free golf at three of the most renowned golf courses in Puerto Vallarta.</p>
<p>Contact</p>	<p>Telephone: 1-877-737-7001 Website: www.westjetvacations.com</p>

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Prize Trip	A WestJet Vacations prize package for two including airfare aboard WestJet from Montreal to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic and a seven nights stay at the Bavaro Princess All Suites Resort, Spa and Casino.
HOTEL PRIZE PARTNER	The Bavaro Princess All Suites Resort, Spa and Casino in Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. This resort is situated on nearly one hundred acres of palm fringed beach in Punta Cana, in an area renowned for its incomparable beauty, the quality of the sand and the clarity of the water on famous Bavaro Beach. This prestigious resort offers eight restaurants, huge pools, a glamorous spa, kids and teens clubs, casino, nightclub and endless activities.
Location	Beachfront, 17km from Punta Cana Int'l Airport and next to a shopping plaza.
Facilities	Two pools Two whirlpools Nightclub Fitness Centre Spa Shops Medical Centre Internet Centre
Accommodation	808 rooms in bungalows scattered among palm trees beside the beach; all are suites and can accommodate 3 adults or 2 adults and 2 children.
Children	Kids club (ages 4 - 12) Teen Club (ages 13 -17) Open daily Babysitting or child care service(\$) Playground
Activities	Tennis Scuba Snorkeling parasailing (\$) water polo intro scuba lesson in pool volleyball ping pong archery water sports centre tennis courts (Lit) (\$)
Restaurants	La Hispaniola – buffet • open for breakfast, lunch and dinner El Gaucho Steakhouse – located on the beach • buffet for breakfast and lunch • open for dinner offering a la carte menu

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	<p>Bella Pasta – located near the beach • Italian cuisine • open daily for dinner</p> <p>El Pescador – located near the beach • Seafood • open daily for dinner</p> <p>Chopin – located in the center of the Mangrove lake • gourmet buffet dinner • features live piano music played from a boat floating in the lake</p> <p>Sakura - located in the center of the Mangrove lake • serving Oriental cuisine • open for dinner daily</p> <p>Tanuki - located in the center of the Mangrove lake • serving Japanese cuisine in Teppanyaki style • open for dinner</p> <p>Lacey – located near the lobby • serving Gourmet cuisine • open for dinner daily • \$45 charge per guest</p>
Tour Operator	<p>WestJet Vacations – pick up their Mexico, Caribbean and USA 2011-12 brochure from your local travel agent and check out www.westjetvacations.com</p>

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<p>PUNTA CANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC</p>	<p>Come away to paradise in the Dominican Republic. Explore the white sandy beaches, impressive mountain ranges, spectacular waterfalls and lush greenery of the Dominican Republic. And the history, music, food and culture that give it such charm and spirit.</p> <p>In Punta Cana there are miles of silky-fine white sand, gorgeous beaches, coconut palms, crystal clear turquoise waters and lush vegetation - Punta Cana certainly has the wow factor. Beyond its exceptional natural beauty, this vacation spot offers something for everyone. Sail to the idyllic island of Saona, play a round or two of golf at one of the many courses, swim with dolphins, discover the countryside as you drive your own Jeep or go zip lining above the trees.</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>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.).</p> <p>Much of what Columbus first sighted still remains in a natural, unspoiled condition. One-third of the Dominican Republic's 1,401km coastline is devoted to beaches of which the most celebrated are those around Punta Cana, which lies in the east of the country.</p>
<p>Geography</p>	<p>The mountains of the Dominican Republic divide the country into northern, central, and southwestern regions. The northern region includes the Cordillera Septentrional (northern mountain range), the Cibao Valley, which is the country's major agricultural area; and the tropical Samaná Peninsula with its coconut plantations and bay, where humpback whales breed.</p> <p>The central region is dominated by the Cordillera Central (central range) which ends at the Caribbean Sea. The highest point in the Caribbean is Pico Duarte, which reaches an elevation of over 10,414 feet (3,175 meters) and has alpine forests near the summit. The Caribbean coastal plain includes a series of limestone terraces that gradually rise to a height of about 328 feet (100 meters) and has sugarcane plantations.</p> <p>The southwestern region lies south of the Valle de San Juan and encompasses the Sierra de Neiba. Much of the region is a desert and it includes Lake Enriquillo, the island's largest lake. Lake Enriquillo is a saltwater lake that lies 150 feet (46 meters) below sea level and is inhabited by unique fauna, including crocodiles, huge iguanas, and</p>

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	<p>flamingos. Pico Duarte was not climbed until 1944; it's now a 3 day hike, \$240 plus 4 mules.</p>
Name	Hispaniola was named "Little Spain" by Colombus
Population	Approximately 9.2 million
Language	The official language is Spanish; many people also speak some English.
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. Price quotations in this section sometimes appear in U.S. and sometimes in Dominican currency, depending on the policy of the establishment. Currently, 36.5 pesos = Cdn \$ at 26 th November 2011
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.
Government	Representative democracy with Presidents elected for a 4 year term 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
Documentation	Canadians traveling to the Dominican Republic require a valid Canadian passport. You will also require 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. Contact the Consulate of Dominican Republic for more information.
Time zone	One hour ahead of EST
Health	Stick to bottled water outside of the main resorts. Consult your doctor about Malaria and Dengue Fever – very unlikely threat to tourists but you may want to additionally protect yourself anyway.
Safety tips	Safety is still a concern in the Dominican Republic, but it shouldn't dissuade you from planning a vacation here. Crime consists primarily of theft, robberies, and muggings, and most of it is limited to Santo Domingo. There is a low incidence of violent crime against tourists, however. Follow some simple common-sense rules, and you'll be fine.

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CLIMATE	
General climate	The average temperature is 25°C. August is the warmest month, and January the coolest month, although even then it's warm enough to swim.
Today's weather	31 degrees Centigrade and mostly sunny for 2 ^{6th} November 2011.
Best time to visit	The DR is a year-round destination, but with special attraction to Canadians during the cold winter months! Hurricane season is generally September and October, but you would be very unlucky indeed to experience one of these storms.

GETTING THERE	There are frequent flights to Punta Cana from Canada. WestJet fly there from Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay in 2011/12
Flying time	It's just over a 4 hour flight from Toronto or Montreal with WestJet. There is a departure tax of US\$20 which must be paid in U.S. currency as at November 2011.
Punta Cana	<p>On the easternmost tip of the island is Punta Cana, site of several major vacation developments with more scheduled to arrive in the near future. Known for its spectacular beaches and clear waters, Punta Cana is an escapist's dream. Its 32km of white sands, set against a backdrop of swaying palm trees, are unrivaled in the Caribbean, and that's the chief and perhaps only reason to come here.</p> <p>Many Europeans (especially Spaniards) rushed to take advantage of Punta Cana's desirable climate - within one of the most arid landscapes in the Caribbean; it rarely rains during daylight hours. Capitalizing on cheap land and the virtually insatiable desire of Europeans for sunny holidays during the depths of winter, a half-dozen European hotel chains participated in something akin to a land rush, acquiring large tracts of sugar-cane plantations and pastureland. Today, at least a dozen mega-hotels, most with no fewer than 500 rooms, some with even more, attract a clientele that's about 70% European or Latin American. Some of them have some of the most lavish beach and pool facilities in the Caribbean, spectacular gardens, and relatively new concepts in architecture (focusing on postmodern interplays between indoor and outdoor spaces).</p> <p>If you choose to vacation in Punta Cana, you won't be alone, as increasing numbers of Latino celebrities are making inroads, usually renting private villas within private compounds. Julio Iglesias and celebrity designer Oscar de la Renta both spend time here.</p>
Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo is one of the Caribbean's most vibrant cities, with a 12-block Colonial Zone to rival that of Old San Juan in Puerto Rico. Come here to walk in the footsteps of Cortés, Ponce de León, and, of course, Columbus himself. Allow at least a day to capture some of the highlights of the old city such as its Alcazar and its Catedral Santa Maria la Menor.

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	<p>Bartholomeo Columbus, brother of Christopher, founded the city of New Isabella (later renamed Santo Domingo) on the southeastern Caribbean coast in 1496. It's the oldest city in the New World and the capital of the Dominican Republic. Santo Domingo has had a long, sometimes glorious, more often sad, history. At the peak of its power, Diego de Velázquez sailed from here to settle Cuba, Ponce de León went forth to conquer and settle Puerto Rico and Florida, and Cortés set out for Mexico. The city today still reflects its long history - French, Haitian, and especially Spanish.</p>
Distances	<p>Santo Domingo to Puerto Plata: 235km; to La Romana: 130km; to Punta Cana: 225km; to La Samana: 320km</p>
Ferries	<p>Shuttle boats to Cayo Levantado from Samana Also ferry to Sabana de la Mar across Samana Bay</p>
Trains	<p>There is no passenger train service in the DR</p>
Car Rental	<p>The best way to see the Dominican Republic is to drive. Motorists drive on the right here. Although major highways are relatively smooth, the country's secondary roads, especially those in the east, are riddled with potholes and ruts. Roads also tend to be badly lit and poorly marked in both the city and the countryside. Drive carefully and give yourself plenty of time when traveling between island destinations.</p> <p>For reservations and more information, call the rental companies at least a week before your departure: Avis (tel. 800/331-1212 in the U.S. and Canada, or 809/535-7191; www.avis.com), Budget (tel. 800/527-0700 in the U.S. and Canada, or 809/549-0351; www.budget.com), and Hertz (tel. 800/654-3131 in the U.S. and Canada, or 809/221-5333; www.hertz.com) all operate in the Dominican Republic. All three have offices at the Santo Domingo and Puerto Plata airports, as well as in downtown Santo Domingo. Avis and Hertz also have offices in La Romana and in Punta Cana.</p>
Buses	<p>Públicos are unmetered multipassenger taxis that travel along main thoroughfares, stopping often to pick up people waving from the side of the street. A público is marked by a white seal on the front door. You must tell the driver your destination when you're picked up to make sure the público is going there. A ride is usually RD\$5 (15¢/8p). The minimum fare is RD\$3 (10¢/5p).</p> <p>Public buses, often in the form of minivans or panel trucks, are called guaguas (pronounced gwa-gwas). For about the same price, they provide the same service as públicos, but they're generally more crowded. Larger buses provide service outside the towns.</p>
ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>WestJet Vacations feature a wide range of hotels and resorts in the DR, from 4 star to all-singing, all-dancing 5 star resorts.</p>

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LIFESTYLES	
<p>Kids</p>	<p>Acuario Nacional, Santo Domingo Phone: (809) 766-1709 Open from Tuesday to Sunday from 9:30am to 5:30 pm. Bordering the Caribbean Sea, the national aquarium offers visitors a glimpse of the Caribbean's diverse, colorful sea life. The aquarium's Plexiglas tunnel surrounds spectators with water, sharks, rays and conger eels. A variety of colorful fish swim throughout the tunnel, while exhibits explain different types of marine environments.</p> <p>Manati Park, Bavaro, Punta Cana Phone: (809) 221-9444 Website: www.manatipark.com Manati Theme Park focuses on nature, animals and the history of the Dominican Republic. Located in Bavaro-Punta Cana, the park is centered on an incredible landscape of magnificent gardens abundant with orchids and tropical plants. This park is a huge hit with kids as it encourages them, with the assistance of professionals, to hold non-poisonous snakes and play in a pool with dolphins.</p> <p>Parque Zoologico Nacional, Santo Domingo Phone: (809) 562-3149. http://www.zoodom.gov.do Open Tuesday to Sunday, 9am to 5pm Located north of Santo Domingo, Parque Zoologico is one of the largest zoos in Latin America. The 320-acre park provides guests with the opportunity to see intriguing animals like tigers, chimps and hyenas, while also offering glimpses of crocodiles, flamingos and nocturnal anteaters. Whether children are discovering creatures in the large landscaped grounds or going for a ride on the shuttle train, they're sure to enjoy their visit to Santo Domingo's National Zoo.</p>
<p>Teens</p>	<p>Islabon Jungle River Tour Phone: (809) 248-2818 Located about three miles east of Cabarete, the Islabon Jungle River Tour allows kids to explore the Islabon river area by boat and walk through jungle trails to a mini zoo that includes iguanas, snakes, turtles, ravens and North American crocodiles. The tour includes an informative chat about the nature found in the area.</p> <p>Monster Truck Safari Phone: (809) 244-4060 This full-day adventure tour allows participants to experience the diversity and beauty of the Dominican countryside in a fun, comfortable and safe environment. Holding approximately (28 people for small jeeps, and 32 for large), the large eight-wheel drive safari jeeps are driven by</p>

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	professionals on a variety of terrain. Participants are seated up high to ensure an exceptional view of the countryside and will be covered in case of rain. Various stops throughout the day offer a glimpse of true Dominican culture and life.
Romance	Lush tropical forests, rolling mountains and long deserted beaches – perfect!
Honeymoons & Weddings	WestJet Vacations can help you arrange weddings, honeymoons and vow renewals in the Dominican Republic. Let them know through your travel agent .
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; sitings are guaranteed in season
Surprising	Los Altos de Chavon village near the south coast is an oddball 16th century Italian style confection on hilltop, crafts, workshops, Taino Art Museum, great views, shopping, restaurants.
History	For at least 5,000 years before Christopher Columbus discovered America for the Europeans the island was inhabited by Amer-Indians. Anthropologists have traced multiple waves of indigenous immigration from two principle places. Some of the early Amer-Indians came from Central America (probably Yucatan and/or Belize) and some came from South America, descendants of the Arawakan Indians in Amazonia, many of whom passed through the Orinocco Valley in Venezuela. It is from the blending of these waves of indigenous immigrants that the Taíno Indians, the people who welcomed Columbus on his arrival, are believed to have originated. The Dominican Republic was discovered on December 5, 1492, by Christopher Columbus during his first voyage to the New World. At that time the island of Hispaniola (as Columbus named it) was called "Quisqueya" by the Taino Indians who occupied the land. With a population estimated around 600,000, the Tainos (meaning "the good") were peaceful and hospitable to Columbus and his crew of Spaniards.

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Columbus himself grew a particular fondness for Hispaniola, describing it in his journal as "a beautiful island paradise with high forested mountains and large river valleys."

Columbus' admiration for Hispaniola coupled with his crew's discovery of gold deposits in the island's rivers led to the establishment of European settlements, the first of which was founded in 1493 in La Isabela. With the presence of new settlements, the Taino Indians were put into slavery and over the next 25 year, were eventually wiped out. Simultaneously, the settlers began bringing African slaves to the island to ensure adequate labor for their plantations.

Columbus' brother, Bartholomew, was appointed governor of Hispaniola and in 1496 he founded the city of Santo Domingo. The capital city quickly became the representative seat of the Spanish royal court and therefore, a city of power and much influence. However, by 1515 the Spaniards realized the gold deposits of Hispaniola had significantly dwindled. Around this time Herman Cortes discovered silver deposits in Mexico. Upon hearing this news, most Spanish residents of Santo Domingo left for Mexico, leaving only a few thousand settlers behind. Because of the predominance of livestock, initially introduced by Columbus, these settlers sustained themselves by providing food and leather to Spanish ships passing Hispaniola on their way to the richer colonies on the American mainland. It is during this period of time that the pirates of the Caribbean made history.

The island of Hispaniola remained under Spanish control until 1697 when the western third of the island became a French possession. (In 1804, the western part of the island became the Republic of Haiti.) This area, which the French called "Saint Domingue" became the richest colony in the world thanks to large sugar plantations which were worked by hundreds of thousands of slaves imported from Africa. In 1791 a slave revolt broke out in Saint Domingue. For fear of losing their colony to the slaves, the French abolished slavery in 1794. With calm in Saint Domingue, the French were able to focus on overwhelming the Spanish on the island's eastern side, who later surrendered power.

In 1809 the eastern side of the island returned to Spanish rule. In 1821 the Spanish settlers declared an independent state but just weeks later, Haitian forces invaded the eastern portion of the island and incorporated Santo Domingo. For the next 22 years the entire island came under Haitian control. However, fueled by their loss of political and economic control, the former Spanish ruling class developed an underground resistance group led by Juan Pablo Duarte called "La Trinitaria." After

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	<p>several attacks by La Trinitaria on the Haitian army, the Haitians retreated. On February 27, 1844, the eastern side of the island declared independence and gave their land the name "Dominican Republic."</p> <p>The 70 years that followed were characterized by political unrest and civil war, mainly due to fights for leadership of the government by Dominican strongmen. Disputes continued with Haiti and power returned to the Spanish for a short period of time (Restoration Day celebrates the day that a national war of "restoration" began, re-establishing the Dominican Republic's independence by 1865). Turmoil in the early 1900's led the United States to intervene. In 1916 U.S. troops occupied the country and stayed until 1924 when a democratically elected Dominican government was put into place. However, the head of the army that was put into place during the American occupation, Raphael Leonidas Trujillo, used his power to block government reform and shortly thereafter, took total control of power in the form of a repressive dictatorship. His rule lasted until 1961 when his motorcade was ambushed and he was killed. (The anniversary of his death is a public holiday in the Dominican Republic.)</p> <p>Following Trujillo's death, political unrest again prevailed. The Dominican Republic went through a series of leaders until 1965 when Lyndon B. Johnson ordered the U.S. marines to again occupy the country. A rigged election in 1966 put Dr. Joaquin Balaguer, a member of the Partido Reformista Social Cristiano (PRSC), in power for a reign that lasted until 1978 when Dominicans elected Antonio Guzman, also of the PRD. Guzman died in 1982 at which time Dominicans elected another member of the D.R.P. In 1986 Balaguer was again elected, this time legitimately, and remained president until 1996 when President Leonel Fernandez (of the Party of the Dominican Liberation or PLD.) was elected. He served for four years and was replaced by Hipolito Mejia in 2000. Today's Leonel Fernandez is again president.</p>
<p>Books</p>	<p>Frommer's Portable Dominican Republic is a handy, pocket-sized guide to the half-island nation.</p> <p>An Adventure Guide to the Dominican Republic by Harry Pariser</p> <p>See also an article I have written for one of the airline in-flight magazines:</p> <p>http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/travelarticles/TA_Dominican.pdf</p>
<p>1000 Places to see before you die</p>	<p>Casa de Campo near La Romana – one of the world's best golf and sporting destinations</p>
<p>Must Sees</p>	<p>Isla Saona is a Robinson Crusoe type island paradise that is a short excursion from Punta Cana and well worth a day in paradise!</p>

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<p>SPORTS ACTIVITIES - Baseball</p>	<p>Back in 1866, American sailors stationed on the island of Cuba taught natives the rules of the game of baseball. Following the Ten Years' War (also known as the Big War) in Cuba, baseball migrated to the Dominican Republic along with Cubans who were fleeing their country. Quickly nicknamed "beisbol" by the Dominican people, the sport was rapidly learned and became a passion. Today, traveling from one side of the country to the other presents national scores of baseball fields and stadiums, attesting to the Dominicans' love for the game.</p> <p>The sport first turned competitive in the 1920s when baseball games began being played against neighboring countries. This competitiveness encouraged the establishment of the Dominican Baseball League. Four baseball teams were formed: Tigres del Licey and Leones del Escogido, both from Santo Domingo, Estrellas Orientales of San Pedro and the Las Aguilos Cibaeñas in Santiago. The popularity of professional baseball in the Dominican Republic ascended throughout the following years, but came to a halt in 1937 due to a financial downturn in the country. Meanwhile, amateur baseball evolved with Dominican teams competing with those from the U.S. and other Caribbean countries. The hiatus finally ended in 1951 with the return of professional baseball. Dominicans' idea of hosting amateur baseball in the summer and professional baseball during the winter months was generated, therefore giving the Caribbean the "home of winter baseball" title.</p> <p>Today there are two additional teams in the country's professional baseball league: the Azucareros del Este from La Romana and the Gigantes del Cibao. Each season extends from the end of October through February, with the winner advancing to the Caribbean Series. At the series, the winning team of the Dominican Republic league plays against the champions of the Mexican, Venezuelan and Puerto Rican leagues.</p> <p>The baseball season is October to February each year.</p>
<p>Golf</p>	<p>Punta Cana: The Bávaro Golf Course, at Barcelo Bávaro Beach, Golf & Casino Resort, Bávaro Beach (tel. 809/686-5797), is the best golf course on this end of the island, and bears the honor of being the golf course whose allure helped open the eastern DR to the tourist boom. Greens fees are RD\$1,920 for 18 holes, with cart rentals going for RD\$1,440. Guests of the hotel pay only 50% of greens fees. Open daily 7am to 5pm.</p> <p>Punta Cana Golf Club, near the Punta Cana Resort and Club (tel. 809/959-4653), is the best and most sought-after of the four golf courses now flourishing in Punta Cana. Fronting the sea, it was designed by P. B. Dye of the famous golfing family. Fourteen of its holes open onto</p>

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	panoramic views of the Caribbean Sea, and four play along the ocean itself. For 18 holes, hotel guests pay RD\$3,520, and nonguests are charged RD\$4,800. In summer, greens fees are reduced to RD\$2,144 for hotel guests, RD\$2,944 for non-guests.
Fishing	Sea fishing is great in all the resorts for Marlin, sailfish, benito, tarpon, dorado, snook You can arrange freshwater river-fishing trips through Casa de Campo in the south. Some of the biggest snook ever recorded have been caught around here. A 3-hour tour costs RD\$868 (US\$31/) per person, and includes tackle, bait, and soft drinks.
Horse riding	Within Punta Cana , the guest services staff at your hotel can arrange horseback riding for you, but if they can't, consider an equestrian jaunt at the region's biggest stables. These are headquartered at Rancho RN-23, Arena Gorda (tel. 809/747-7356 or 7538). It supervises as many as 125 horses that are stabled at three separate "ranches," each within a reasonable distance of one another. For RD\$1,800 (US\$54) an hour, you'll be guided on equestrian tours through groves of coconut palms near the beach and, in most cases, onto the beach itself. To reach it, you'll follow some clearly marked signs 3km through some of the wildest terrain left in Punta Cana, down winding sandy paths to a series of palm groves, to the site of these stables.
Hiking	In the National Park and along the endless beaches the walks are superb. For a special hike, there's a three day guided hike up Pico Duarte , the highest mountain in the Caribbean.
Cycling	The coast road is good biking terrain, but the roads are pot-holed and this is not ideal biking country!
Diving	There are diving opportunities with fully qualified operations in all the major resort areas of the country.

CULTURE	
Arts	Dominican paintings are primitive, colourful and affordable
Music	<p>Passing through the streets of the Dominican Republic visitors are sure to notice the handmade posters that hang from telephone poles promoting an upcoming merengue or bachata night at a nearby venue. Continue walking and it doesn't take long to realize that music acts as the soundtrack of the country and its people, often heard blaring from vehicles, stores, restaurants and houses. After sunset, the pulsing beats fill the air with life and draw locals and tourists alike toward the crowded dance floors of the world's hottest night clubs. A way of life on the island, Dominicans view dancing as an art and take pride in sharing their native movements with others. Salsa, Latin jazz and other types of dance music can be heard in the country, but are not as popular as their beloved merengue and bachata counterparts.</p> <p>Merengue</p>

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	<p>The country's national dance, traditional merengue groups are comprised of a three-piece band including a melodeon (accordion-like instrument), a guira (a scraped percussion piece) and a tambora (double-headed drum); however, it has expanded to incorporate other instruments such as the saxophone, trumpets, violin, flute and piano. Its tempo is characterized by an aggressive beat, requiring its dancers to swing their hips in rapid, fluid motions and make sure their feet follow suit. Early merengue's lyrics were based on sexual encounters and other socially taboo subjects, thus preventing it from becoming widely accepted. Today, merengue's lyrics cover more general topics including politics and current events. Its music has become so popular, in fact, that it is honored with two regional festivals each year.</p>
Films	<p>Cayo Levantado is the original Bacardi Island photographed in the 1970s rum campaign</p>
Museums	<p>At the southern end of the Plaza Espana in Santo Domingo is 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.</p>
Festivals	<p>Dominican Republic Jazz Festival: Nov 26-27 2011 in Cabarete The Dominican Republic is world-renowned for merengue so it is no surprise that the annual Dominican Republic Jazz Festival attracts a line-up of Latin jazz performers. Concerts are held at Cabarete beach and the Gran Teatro del Cibao in Santiago. http://www.drjazzfestival.com</p> <p>Carnival is held in late Feb – Diablo Conjuelo costumes, singing, dancing, every weekend in February.</p> <p>Merengue festivals: July in Santo Domingo – musical blowout; Oct in Pto Plata on the Malecon.</p> <p>Las Nochas de Vela: the night of the prayer festival Jan 21 mix of Catholic and African religious festivities</p>

ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	<p>Playa Bonita, 13km 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</p>

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	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 6km, 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 pop of humpbacks breed and give birth in the north on the Silver Bank; they are 50ft long and 60 tons; Dec- Mar is the season The hutia is an endemic mammal, nocturnal, 30cms, lives in caves and is rarely seen.
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 There are 16 national parks, 67 protected areas; caimans in SW; birds: flamingos, parrots; solenodon – the Caribbean’s only insectivorous mammal, almost extinct; sea turtles, whales galore!
Gardens	The National Botanical Garden in Santo Domingo occupies an area of one square mile and was founded to study, preserve and investigate the varied plant life of Dominican Republic. Opened in 1976, the Botanical Garden is named after Dr. Rafael María Moscoso, the first Dominican botanist who wrote a catalog of the plants of the Spanish island in 1943. It is a sanctuary where animals and plants live in perfect harmony, with roads and trails will lead you a personal encounter with nature. It highlights the permanent exhibitions of bromeliads, ferns, palms, orchids, aquatic plants and the Japanese garden. Open daily from 9am - 5pm. Tel 809-385-2611 www.jbn-sdq.org
Historical Buildings	Santo Domingo: Santo Domingo is the city of firsts in the Americas. Located in this metropolis are the first buildings constructed for religious, health, judicial and government purposes after the Spanish arrived. Among them, the first Cathedral of the Americas was erected (1523-1546), with its blend of Gothic and Renaissance styles. Don't miss the beauty of the Alcázar de Colón, the oldest Viceregal residence in the Americas. It was built at the beginning of the 16th century by the son of Admiral Christopher Columbus, Don Diego Columbus. He lived there with his wife María de Toledo, the niece of the King of Spain. Columbus Park is in the centre of the city's ancient quarter. It is an “urban living room” where everyone goes to enjoy its tree-lined streets where beautiful buildings date back several centuries.

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	Santo Domingo is also one of the grand shopping bazaars of the

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	<p>Caribbean, with such "hot" items as hand-wrapped cigars for sale virtually everywhere, along with local handicrafts. Jewelry made of larimar or amber is also much sought after. From gambling to merengue, Santo Domingo is also one of the liveliest cities in the Caribbean after dark.</p> <p>Notable cigar brands include: Santiago, Cibao Valley, Davidoff, Churchill</p>
Markets	<p>Most of the towns have fun markets to explore. Samana town has one of the most colourful public markets in the DR.</p>
Nightlife	<p>Punta Cana: Bávaro Disco, on the grounds of the Barcelo Bávaro Beach, Golf & Casino Resort (tel. 809/686-5797), has emerged as the hottest, most popular, and sexiest dance club in Punta Cana, thanks to a superb sound system. The venue is more European than North American, thanks to a heavy concentration of clients from Italy, Spain, and Holland. Painted black, with simulated stars overhead and lots of mirrors, the place is open nightly from 11pm to 5am.</p>
Casinos	<p>Most casinos are conveniently located within major resort complexes and are open until dawn, if not 24 hours. Dominican casinos use Las Vegas odds, so the casino's profits and player winnings are relatively the same and considered fair.</p>

CUISINE	
Food	<p>Breakfast typically calls for a serving of "Mangu," a mix of plantains, cheese and bacon, which can be found at most hotel and resort restaurants. Mangu has been dubbed the "mashed potatoes" of the Dominican Republic and is a must-try for all visitors. Locals are also known to prepare the dish for evening meals.</p> <p>A foundation of the native diet, "La Bandera Dominicana," or the Dominican flag meal, is eaten by nearly everyone at lunch time. The most important meal of the day, La Bandera consists of rice, beans, meat, vegetables and fried plantains to ensure energy throughout the afternoon and evening.</p> <p>Another popular dish is "Sancocho," a Spanish-style stew usually served with rice. Ingredients include various roots, green plantains, avocado and typically chicken or beef, although it sometimes includes a combination of seven meats (Sancocho prieto). Goat meat, a staple in many Dominican homes, may also be used in this recipe. It offers a unique addition to the character of any dish as these animals graze on wild oregano.</p> <p>"Locrio," or Dominican rice, varies with its preparer. An adaptation of the Spanish paella, locrio is made with achiote (a colored dye produced from the seeds of the achiote plant), since saffron spice is unavailable.</p>

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	<p>Near Samana, coconut trees decorate the landscape and provide a delectable milk sauce for fish, known as "Pescado con Coco." Throughout the south central coast, "bulgur", or whole wheat, is a main ingredient in "Quipes" (ground beef wrapped in wheat) or "Tipili" (bulgur salad).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Local beers, which are very good, are Quisqueya and El Presidente.</p>
Rum	<p>Rum production in the Caribbean is attributed to the African colonists who brought sugar cane with them to make crystallized sugar and molasses. They noticed, however, that the molasses began to ferment when left in the hot Caribbean sun and could be mixed with water to create what became known as rum.</p> <p>In the mid-to-late 1800's Don Andres Brugal Montaner, Don Erasmo Bermudez and Julian Barcelo started experimenting with their own personal refining processes. Today, the Brugal, Bermúdez, and Barcelo brands of rum have become popular across the globe and are considered some of the world's best. Unlike that of Jamaica and Barbados, Dominican rum is produced through a more natural process of distillation. Aging is often done in special American white oak kegs, thus creating a sweet, hearty blend.</p> <p>Bermudez, the eldest of the Dominican rum distilleries, was established in 1852. Its first formula, Bitter Panacea, remains famous. Distilling in Santo Domingo, Bermudez boasts the Dominican's oldest aging cellar.</p> <p>Brugal, established in 1888, is located just east of Puerto Plata and produces more than one and a half million liters of white and dark rum each year. Considered the most popular distiller, Brugal offers affordable bottles of rum for sale at its bottling plant and gives guests a free rum drink. Tours are offered Monday through Friday and admission is free.</p> <p>Barcelo, established in Santo Domingo in 1930, is said to be best-liked by locals. The plant manufactures 40 thousand liters of rum per day.</p>
Restaurants	<p>Chez Palace, Punta Cana: This is the showcase restaurant of one of the biggest resort complexes in the Dominican Republic. If you're not staying at one of the Barcelo hotels, you'll have to make reservations in</p>

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	advance. The decor is cool and stylish, as if it were imported from a chic resort in the south of Spain. A formally dressed staff serves superb dishes that include salmon mousse in a prawn sauce, tartar of tenderloin, grilled red snapper, grouper with mustard sauce, and filet mignon with truffles and foie gras.
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MORE INFO	DR Tourism Office: 514-499-1918
Brochures	WestJet Vacations 2011/2012 brochure is available at travel agents
Websites	www.godominicanrepublic.com and www.westjetvacations.com

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