



# Dominican Republic

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## From Ridges to Reefs Nature and People Thriving Together

The Dominican Republic's vibrant diversity of plants and animals attract scores of visitors from around the world. It is home to more than 5,600 plant species and 300 bird species. Residents appreciate the natural environment for its beauty but also depend upon it for food and as a source of livelihood. This is why The Nature Conservancy has helped establish national parks and marine managed areas around the country from areas around Samaná Bay to Parque Nacional del Este. These protected areas promote sustainable fisheries and coral reef and mangrove conservation, and also support the government's commitment to protect

20% of its marine and nearshore environment by 2020 through the Caribbean Challenge Initiative.

### Protecting Water At Its Source

Many island nations have limited freshwater, and this scarce resource is further stressed by agricultural and urban uses. In the Dominican Republic, the Conservancy is introducing Water Funds, tools that are being applied for the first time on a Caribbean island to conserve freshwater throughout the nation. Through partnering with local groups, the Conservancy has established two Water Funds to support four watersheds that

supply water to more than 60 percent of the Dominican Republic's population. The Water Funds will direct money from downstream users of water, like beverage companies, to targeted conservation work upstream in order to provide clean drinking water for more than 2 million Dominicans. These funds greatly aid local communities as the revenue can be channeled into reforestation work, management of established national parks and the implementation of new water conservation initiatives. With this approach, the communities and industries that rely on local freshwater can invest in sustaining it. At the same time, the



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## The new protected areas encompass more than 3.2 million acres of terrestrial and marine habitat.

natural systems that produce and filter water are restored and supported, ensuring that both nature and people can flourish together.

### Protecting Marine and Coastal Environments

Since its launch in 2008, the Dominican Republic has provided key leadership and support for the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI). The CCI is an unprecedented collaboration in the Caribbean in which each participating country commits to protect at least 20% of its nearshore marine and coastal environments by 2020 and to ensure the protected areas receive sufficient, reliable endowment funding to sustainably manage them into the future. Currently, 11 Caribbean nations and territories have joined the initiative and made this commitment.

A major advancement took place in 2009 when the Government of the Dominican Republic added 31 new protected areas into its National System of Protected Areas by an unprecedented Presidential Decree. The new protected areas encompass more than 3.2 million acres of terrestrial and marine habitat. The decree showed the Government's commitment to strengthen the existing National System of Protected Areas, particularly in nearshore marine habitats.

### Promoting Sustainable Fishing Practices

The Conservancy is working to promote sustainable fishing practices, in order to protect the Dominican Republic's vital marine resources and ensure that the livelihoods that depend on them have a sustainable future. This includes initiating "no take" seasons to allow certain species

breeding and recovery time and monitoring lobster and conch fisheries to gauge the health of marine habitats. In addition, the Conservancy has conducted, in collaboration with local community groups, a series of seminars to raise



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE A child plays by a clean waterfall near Los Dajaos, where environmental education has taught residents how to prevent water pollution and the Conservancy has helped to restore and protect crucial watersheds. © Carolyn Drake; Fishers at dawn in Boca de Yuma near Parque Nacional del Este, Dominican Republic © Carolyn Drake; A family returns home from a day of fishing in Sanchez, Dominican Republic. © Carolyn Drake



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awareness about invasive lionfish and the need to protect parrotfish in the Samaná Bay area. Aimed at fishers, students and restaurant owners, the seminars promote the consumption of lionfish to ensure their numbers are kept in check and discourage the consumption of parrotfish, which play an integral role in maintaining healthy coral reefs.

**A Sustainable Future**

The Conservancy continues to be actively involved in protecting the Dominican Republic’s natural environment, from its lush forests to its beautiful coastlines and coral reefs. The establishment of marine managed areas has laid the foundation for a fully functioning, viable marine system with coral reefs and seagrass meadows that will provide refuge for endangered species like sea turtles and

manatees, as well as support a sustainable fishing future for the country. The Water Funds initiative serves to help ensure people have access to clean freshwater while protecting important upstream habitats.

As Caribbean islands face increasing risks to coastlines and communities in the face of climate change, the Conservancy will be building upon its experience in nature-based climate adaptation strategies to strengthen the resilience of the Dominican Republic’s mangroves and coral reefs. Looking ahead, the Conservancy will be drawing upon proven effective strategies to build coastal resilience, as well as building awareness and engagement with local people who may be impacted.



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE A small souvenir hut on the beach at Parque Nacional del Este in the Dominican Republic © Mark Godfrey; Samaná Bay in the Dominican Republic © Mark Godfrey; A mangrove forest on the south coast of Samaná Bay in the Dominican Republic © Mark Godfrey

**OUR MISSION:** TO CONSERVE THE LANDS AND WATERS ON WHICH ALL LIFE DEPENDS



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