



Know
Before
You
Go

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

Provided by Sexual Assault Support and
Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA)

Updated June 2017



SASHAA
Sexual Assault Support &
Help for Americans Abroad

Let's be perfectly clear, the number one way to prevent sexual assault is to **not rape**. While the responsibility of ending sexual gender-based violence is on the perpetrators, this guide will offer general safety tips, country-specific information, and resources to help prevent and prepare travelers for the possibility of sexual assault abroad.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Use the **buddy system** and travel with friends!
2. Be aware of **social and cultural norms**. For example, looking at someone in the eyes when you speak to them is perfectly normal in the U.S., but in another country that could signify you're interested in the person.
3. **Recognize controlling behavior** when entering a relationship. Most rape survivors recall feeling "uncomfortable" about some of their partner's behaviors such as degrading jokes/language or refusal to accept "no" as an answer, whether in a sexual context or otherwise.²
4. **Avoid secluded places** where you could be more vulnerable. Meet new people in public spaces and let a trusted friend know where you'll be beforehand.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place.



ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS:

- Always be sure to watch your drink being poured and carry it yourself, even to the bathroom.
- Be aware of "drug-facilitated sexual assault drugs," also referred to as 'roofies' or 'club drugs,' which may turn your drink bright blue, cloudy, or slightly salty. Effects such as impaired judgment, lost sense of sight, sound, or consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and up to 4 hours.³
- Dominican Republic's legal drinking age is 18.⁴ It is said that the national pastime in Dominican Republic is drinking cold beer to beat the island heat and simply relax with friends and family.⁵

CULTURAL INFORMATION:

Major Religions: Roman Catholic 95%, other 5%.⁶

Legal System: The government is a representative constitutional democracy based in the French Civil Code. The President is both head of state and head of government of a multi-party system.⁷

Social/Cultural Norms: Dominicans are very welcoming and greet acquaintances and friends with a kiss on the right cheek. Holding hands with a partner is acceptable and very common, but other public displays of affection are less so. Dominicans take great pride in their appearance and dress.⁸

Gender Equality: Women play an important part in society, even if they are not sufficiently well represented in politics. The majority of university students are women. Although the law provides women and men the same legal rights, Dominican society is very chauvinistic. Women who work outside the home are still responsible for all domestic matters.⁹



Sexual Assault and the Law: Dominican Republic Context

The law criminalizes violence against women, and the state can prosecute rape, spousal rape, incest, sexual aggression, and other forms of domestic violence. Penalties for these crimes range from one to 30 years in prison and fines from 700 to 245,000 pesos (\$18 to \$6,300).¹⁰

If You Experience Sexual Assault...

Don't blame yourself! **Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.** You may be unsure of how to proceed, and that's okay. First, consider taking the following actions:

1. If you are in a safe place, **call someone you trust** to be with you. If you are not safe, call someone you trust to come and get you.
2. Do **self-collection of evidence**. Put all of the clothes you were wearing, bed sheets, and so on in a paper bag. If you have any injuries, **take pictures**. If there is semen present, collect what you can in a hotel glass or cup and put it in the paper bag.
3. **Call a SASHAA advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (See Resources)

Medical Care & Reporting Sexual Assault in Dominican Republic

Survivors of sexual violence can file criminal complaints, obtain free legal counsel, and receive psychological and medical attention at 17 satellite offices overseen by the Attorney General's Office. Police are obligated to refer domestic violence and sexual assault cases to these offices. The Attorney General's Office has ordered that investigations and presentation of charges must be concluded within 35 days unless the case is considered complex.¹¹

LGBTQ VICTIM CONCERNS



Societal views toward the LGBTQ community remain very conservative. There are frequent reports of discrimination and harassment of LGBTQ individuals, particularly transgender and lesbians, in areas of health care, education, justice, and employment. The government does not legally recognize same-sex unions or protect individuals under law against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. NGOs reported that LGBTQ persons were reluctant to file official charges or complaints due to fear of reprisals or humiliation.¹²

POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS, EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, AND ABORTION

Q. Are post exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception available?

A: Emergency contraception and PEP are available in public sector clinics and within the International Planned Parenthood Federation affiliated system.¹³

Q: Is abortion legal in D.R.?

A: Abortion under any circumstances is illegal. However, in both legal and medical practices, abortions are considered legal if performed to save a woman's life on the grounds of 'necessity.' These professional practices and the women who consent to abortions are subject to imprisonment for their decisions. Any person who helps a pregnant woman abort is subject to six months to two years in prison.¹⁴

Resources

SASHAA

SASHAA International Crisis Line:

To call our confidential, toll-free, International Crisis Line first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **Dominican Republic (1-800-225-5288) or (1-800-872-2881)**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **866-USWOMEN (866-879-6636)**.

Crisis Email:

To reach a SASHAA advocate, you can email us at crisis@866uswomen.org. All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. However, if you need to get in touch with us immediately, please call the international toll-free crisis line.

Live Chat:

SASHAA online chat services are available 24/7 at our website <https://sashaa.org>.

ATTORNEY GENERAL OFFICES

Santo Domingo:

Avenida Romulo Betancourt, No. 301
Tel: +809 533-6668

Puerto Plata:

Avenida Virginia Ortega No. 9
Tel: +809 586-8200

CLINICS/HOSPITALS

Hospital Metropolitano de Santiago (HOMS)

Autopista Duarte, Santiago De Los Caballeros
Tel: +829-947-2222

Hospital General Plaza de la Salud

Avenida Ortega y Gasset, Santo Domingo
Tel: +809-565-7477

Punta Cana Doctors

Boulevard 1ro de Noviembre, Bv. 1ero. de Nov.
Tel: +809 959-4002

U.S. EMBASSIES/CONSULATES

U.S. Embassy – Dominican Republic

Av. República de Colombia 57, Santo Domingo
Tel: +1 809-567-7775 or Emergency: +809 567-7775
Email: SDOAmericans@state.gov

U.S. Consular Agent – Puerto Plata

Calle Villanueva esq. Avenida John F. Kennedy
Edificio Abraxa Libreria, 2nd floor, Puerto Plata
Tel: +809 586-8017 or +809 586-8023

U.S. Consular Agent – Bavaro/Punta Cana

Palma Real Shopping Center, 2nd Floor
Bavaro, La Altagracia
Tel: +809 552-8990

NON-VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS

Ministerio de la Mujer

Avenida Mexico/ 30 de Marzo, Government Bldg.,
Bloque D, Santo Domingo
Tel: 809-685-3755
Website: www.mujer.gob.do

Santo Domingo Care Center for Abused Women

Aristedes Fiallo Cabral Street #353, Zona Universitaria
Tel: +809 221-3619 or +809 682-5604

Coven Support Center (CEAPA)

Calle San José, Bldg. 16, Apt B-94, Complex Herrera
Tel: +809 530-3003

Servicio Nacional de Representación Legal de los Derechos de la Víctima (RELEVIC)

Calle Cesar Nicolas Penson No. 7, Gazcue, Ciudad
Tel: +809 533-3522 Ext. 3000/3005

Asociación Tú Mujer- Santo Domingo

Calle Huáscar Tejeda No. 56, Zona Universitaria
Tel: + 809-535-3233 or +809-535-3234
Email: tumujer@tumujer.org

Núcleo de Apoyo a la Mujer

Apartado Postal 288, Santiago, 25
Tel: (809) 581-8301
Email: nam@codetel.net.do
Website: <http://www.nucleodeapoyoalamujer.org/>

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

National Emergency Police: +809 682-5423

Tourist Police (CESTUR): +809 200-3500

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- ¹² United States Department of Justice. "-Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada." Accessed September 30, 2016. <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/file/823901/download>
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