



Dominican Republic
Has it all

I Like it



DIVING GUIDE

An underwater photograph showing a diver on the right side, wearing a black diving mask and a red and black swimsuit. The diver is swimming towards the left. A large school of small, silvery fish is swimming in the center and right. The background is a deep blue sea with a rocky reef structure visible at the bottom. The lighting is bright, suggesting a clear day.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC UNDER THE SEA

Photography and text by Guillermo Ricart



Divers from all over the world visit Dominican Republic for its warm and clear waters. In addition to the exceptional natural beauty found along the entire coast, the country is home to an impressive and magical underwater world featuring extraordinary natural and archaeological features such as coral reefs, caves, remains of galleons, shipwrecks, multicolored marine life and treasures worth exploring, all protected as national parks.

Although, visitors can dive year round in Dominican Republic, the best time to go under water is between June and September when the waters are clear and calm with good visibility—optimal conditions for immersion. Year-round sea temperatures range between 75°F and 84°F (24°C to 29°C), allowing diving even in the middle of winter, when temperatures hover around 77°F (25°C).

Scuba diving and snorkeling are unique ways to explore the biodiversity of Dominican Republic's fascinating underwater world. Numerous dive centers provide the necessary equipment and transportation; qualified professionals lead dives as they share information on the ecological value of the country's marine life.

FACTS



Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the large island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Republic of Haiti, and is the second largest country in the Caribbean, comprising an area of 19,292 square miles (49,967 square kilometers). The country has a population of 10,5 million and enjoys sunny tropical weather all year. The average year-round temperatures are 78° F to 88° F (25° C to 31° C). The cooler season is November through April, while it is warmest from May through October.

TIME: The local time zone is Eastern Caribbean Time (GMT-0400). Dominican Republic does not observe daylight savings time.

CAPITAL CITY: Dominican Republic's historic and sophisticated capital city, Santo Domingo, is the oldest city of the New World. Santo Domingo's Colonial City was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1990.

LANGUAGE: Spanish is the official language; however, the majority of employees in hotels and tourist destinations speak relatively good English, French, German and Italian, among other languages.

CURRENCY: The Dominican peso (RD\$) is the official currency.

GETTING HERE: Dominican Republic currently has eight international airports throughout the country, including: Las Américas International Airport (SDQ) in Santo Domingo, Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ), La Romana International Airport (LRM), Gregorio Luperón International Airport (POP) in Puerto Plata, El Cibao International Airport (STI) in Santiago and El Catey International Airport (AZS) in Samaná. Maritime ports that regularly receive cruise ships in the country include Santo Domingo Port (Sans Souci and Don Diego terminals), La Romana Port (east and west docks, Catalina Island and Casa de Campo Marina) Punta Cana (Cap Cana Marina), Puerto Plata (Amber Cove) and Samaná Bay facilities (Cayo Levantado).



DOCUMENTATION: Most visitors arriving to the Dominican Republic—including those from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, the European Union, Mexico, many South American countries, Central America, Japan, and Israel (see the full list of countries on our website)—only need a passport with a minimum validity of the duration of their stay to enter the country. The cost of the 30-day tourist card, previously paid separately, is now included in the airline ticket for all visitors. More information is available here: <https://dgii.gov.do/sobretarjetaturista>

VISAS: Any person, regardless of their nationality, can visit Dominican Republic if they are a legal resident of, or if they have one of the following valid visas in their passport: United States, Canada, United Kingdom or Schengen. Travellers who do not have a passport or visa from countries listed above will need to apply for a visa. To issue a visa the passport needs to have a validity of at least six (6) months. If you need to apply for a tourist visa, please visit this website to find your Dominican consulate abroad: <http://www.consuladord.com>

ELECTRICITY: Operates at 110 Volts/60 Hertz, the same as North America. If needed, adapter plugs are available at most hotels.

TAXES: Dominican hotels and restaurants collect 28% of their published prices (18% sales tax + 10% service charges).

MEDICAL PRECAUTIONS: Due to the strength of the Caribbean sun and the climatic conditions of the area, it is recommended that vacationers always wear sunscreen and mosquito repellent when outdoors and drink filtered water throughout the day to avoid dehydration. For emergencies, contact 9-1-1, our National Care System for Emergency and Safety. <https://911.gob.do/>

DRINKING AGE: The legal drinking age in the country is 18 years old.

HOTELS: For information about Dominican Republic hotels and accommodations, visit www.GoDominicanRepublic.com/hotels, and the Association of Hotels and Tourism www.asonahores.com

For additional information, download our free app –Go Dominican Republic– available in the [App Store](#) and on [Google Play](#).

PUERTO PLATA

Minimum Depth: 8 meters (26 feet)

Maximum Depth: 40 meters (131 feet)

Marine Life: Barracudas, damselfish, trumpet fish, sergeant majors, seahorses and octopuses.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Known for its hospitable and cheerful locals, Puerto Plata offers vast history and culture, exquisite gastronomy, and fascinating adrenaline-fueled activities. Its warm waters and good visibility have made the region, especially Sosúa and Cabarete, one of the main tourist destinations in the area.

The favorable wind conditions have positioned Cabarete as a global capital for watersports and sailing. Diving centers cater to divers of all experience levels and many hotels offer excursions to enjoy the variety of the underwater attractions, including shallow reefs, shipwrecks, deep-sea diving and coral reefs.

LARIMAR I & LARIMAR II

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 16 meters (52 feet) - 32 meters (105 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

Starting at Larimar I, divers can visit this small wall covered with soft corals and then swim to the deeper Larimar II. This wall is 16 meters (52 feet) deep and goes down up to 32 meters (105 feet). It is home to an array of marine life including moray eels, trumpet fish, lionfish, crabs and octopuses.

MINI WALL

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 30 meters (98 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

In Sosúa Bay you will find Mini Wall, also known as “Calle Sin Salida”. Coral pinnacles lie in a labyrinth between patches of sand and a slight slope that descends 30 meters (98 feet). The average depth is about 15 meters (49 feet), where divers can spot anything from snappers to seahorses.



LITTLE POINT

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 12 meters (39 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Off the Sosúa coast, this dive site—also known as “La Puntilla” it formed by four rocks that fell into a formation of passages where divers can swim through, Little Point piques the interest of many visitors. The area is commonly dotted with barracudas and seahorses. Ideal depths of 12 meters (39 feet) make it a good beginner dive site.

CANYON

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 30 meters (98 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Located in Sosúa Bay, this is suitable dive for all levels, from beginners to the most experienced ones. Starting in the shallower area, divers head for a tear in the reef formed by the walls of the canyon, giving the spot its name. From there, divers can swim along the wall observing moray eels, lobsters and huge crabs that hide inside the giant barrel sponges. Also, there is great abundance of groupers, barracudas, yellow-tail snappers, spider crabs, anemones, shrimp, nudibranchs, toadfish and beautiful flaming tongue snails.



THREE ROCKS

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 9 meters (30 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Only a few minutes by boat from the coast of Sosúa, Three Rocks is a favorite spot among novice divers. These three coral rock pinnacles are home to the interesting yellowtail snapper and the sergeant major fish. Since the coral reef is surrounded by white sand, less experienced divers don't have to worry about breaking or hitting the reef and can fully enjoy and discover the local marine life, including a wide variety of tropical fish, as well as small cleaner shrimp, rays and moray eels.

More experienced divers can reach the Jardines de Coral at 24 meters (79 feet) descent and observe groups of gorgonians, sea fans and sea whips. If you're lucky and look carefully, you may find the spotted snake-eel that leaves only its eyes out of the sand to catch its prey. To the west is Point Reef, a wall over 30 meters (98 feet) deep.

ZINGARA WRECK

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 36 meters (118 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

Only for the more experienced divers, the Zingara is a 40-meter (131 feet) long cargo ship that was intentionally sunk in 1992. It is free of obstructions, so exploring the shipwreck compartments is completely safe. The Zingara is home to a healthy variety of corals, sponges and fish, including giant barracudas and 2-meter (7 feet) long green moray eels. An adjacent reef wall is covered with sea fan and sea whip corals, allowing divers to ascend gradually as they explore the marine life to reach a suitable depth to perform the safety stop and end the dive.



AIRPORT WALL

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 10 meters (33 feet) - 30 meters (98 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Frequented by regular divers to the area and suitable for all levels of certification, the Airport Wall is considered by many to be one of the best and most beautiful dive sites in the country. The wall starts at about 10 meters (33 feet) deep and then drops to almost 30 meters (98 feet). This is one of the richest dive sites in terms of coral and marine life, thanks to the wall covered with soft and hard corals and sea whips, where large and small fish find shelter in cracks and protrusions. The area is also dotted with cleaner shrimps and crabs. Moving away from the wall, you can discover and explore pinnacles and tunnels.



FIVE ROCKS

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 5 meters (16 feet) - 24 meters (79 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

As its name suggests, it consists of five large coral rocks that extend about 100 meters (328 feet). Located between Sosúa Bay and the Airport Wall, the reef starts at about 5 meters (16 feet) and its deepest point falls to nearly 24 meters (79 feet). A wide variety of barrel and tube sponges cover the area; you can also find moray eels, crabs, lobsters, octopuses and many schools of fish.

PYRAMIDS

Location: Sosúa

Depth: 18 meters (59 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Suitable for divers of all levels, the Pyramids is made up of large rocks and pebbles that fell into the sea, creating many cracks and passages for visitors to explore.





CAYO ARENA

Location: Punta Rucia

Depth: 5 meters (16 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

The fishing village of Punta Rucia offers an excellent soft-sand beach and beautiful mangroves. From its banks and the neighboring bay of La Isabela boats depart to Cayo Arena –also known as Cayo Paraíso– to enjoy exceptional diving. Its turquoise waters and schools of tropical fish that can be seen in very shallow waters make this spot a paradise for snorkel fans. It boasts some of the most abundant marine life on the island, with corals and sponges that surround the cay where divers can find octopuses, crabs, schools of surgeon fish, sergeant majors, damselfish, angelfish and yellowtail snappers, all swimming around your feet. This tiny sandbank is also a dreamy spot to relax and take plenty of beach selfies.

HUMPBACK WHALES

Location: Banco de la Plata

Depth: Snorkel

Experience Level: Beginner

Humpback whale watching season in Samaná Bay attracts visitors from around the world between January and March, when the whales come to mate and give birth from the North Atlantic to the Caribbean each winter. However, swimming with these majestic creatures is only allowed between January and April in the Banco de la Plata (Silver Bank) sanctuary – about 90 miles north of Puerto Plata on three boats designated by the Dominican government. Visitors must contact these tour operators at least a year in advance to secure a spot.



MONTECRISTI

Minimum Depth: 6 meters (20 feet)

Maximum Depth: 40 meters (131 feet)

Marine Life: Barracudas, damselfish, trumpet fish, globefish, seahorses and octopuses.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Located in the northwest corner of Dominican Republic, Montecristi has a great variety of coral reefs where visitors can dive through remains of galleons, steamboats, great rock walls and spectacular coral areas. The region is rich in marine life and thrilling diving options, but the must-visit diving sites in Montecristi are Manzanillo Wall, Manfredillo Shipwreck, Siete Hermanos Cays, El Morro, Isla Cabra, Banco Cuadrado, Banco Putusa and Banco El Pilar.

CAYOS SIETE HERMANOS

Location: Bahía de Montecristi

Depth: 3 meters (10 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

The beautiful waters of the Atlantic Ocean are the perfect setting for underwater nature lovers and adventure seekers. Siete Hermanos Cays boast rich landscapes from submerged forests and sand bottoms to large rocky walls. The cays are located about 6 miles (10 kilometers) northwest of the city of San Fernando de Montecristi, and a short 30-minute boat ride from the nearest coastal border.

The seven sandy cays are Tororu, Muertos, Ratas, Terrero, Monte Grande, Monte Chico and Arenas, all formed by coral sands. The area is known for its incredible beaches and for being the ideal place for watching migratory and native birds. It is the country's one-stop shop for aquatic activities, including snorkeling, night diving and deep diving, and it's the only area that combines the three activities in the same tour. Unlike other diving spots in Montecristi, you can dive on the shores of Siete Hermanos Cays even on windy days with high waves, as it is completely separated from the winds.

SUNKEN GALLEONS

Location: Montecristi

The remains of more than 15 sunken galleons from the fourteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can be observed in the shallow waters of Montecristi. Among them are Los Cañones de Tebo, Los Perfumes, Bolas de Mosquete, Los Ladrillos, Las Pipas, Las Porcelanas, Grandes Cañones and Punta Luna.



SAMANÁ

Minimum Depth: 6 meters (20 feet)

Maximum Depth: 40 meters (131 feet)

Marine Life: Barracudas, damselfish, moray eels, seahorses and turtles.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



The ecological wonder of the Samaná peninsula offers majestic crystal-clear waterfalls, beautiful unspoiled beaches, stunning mountainous hills lined with coconut trees, and rich history and culture. The region also boasts attractions including a mangrove reserve located in the nearby Los Haitises National Park, and the Marine Mammal Sanctuary surrounding the peninsula -where thousands of humpback whales arrive each winter to play, mate and give birth. Divers can enjoy beautiful coral reefs, endless walls, shipwrecks and caves all year round.



LAS BALLENAS

Location: Las Terrenas

Depth: 5 meters (16 feet) - 14 meters (46 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Named for its large stones resembling various whales, Las Ballenas is ideal for beginner divers and snorkelers. Here you can see many sergeant major fish, surgeon fish and beautiful corals.

LAS CUEVITAS

Location: Las Terrenas

Depth: 8 meters (26 feet) - 16 meters (52 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Las Cuevitas offers countless coral reefs with openings allowing divers to swim through the reef and discover a great variety of tropical fishes such as porcupinefish and balloonfish.



PIEDRA MARCEL

Location: Las Terrenas

Depth: 12 meters (39 feet) - 18 meters (59 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Located on a sandy surface, this rocky cliff features a great variety of coral and marine life.

CREOL REEF

Location: Las Terrenas

Depth: 25 meters (82 feet) - 35 meters (115 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

Creol Reef sits at a depth of 25 meters (82 feet) and it's only suitable for the more advanced divers. Here you can see a kilometer-long (0.6 miles) coralline chain, covered by a variety of gorgonians and sea fans that are frequently visited by huge Atlantic stingrays.

DOLPHIN WRECK

Location: Las Terrenas

Depth: 28 meters (92 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

This ship, originally used for marine research, was sunk in 2000 to create an artificial reef. The ship's older brother, the Hickory, rests at the bottom of La Caleta Underwater National Park near the capital city of Santo Domingo.



PORTILLO

Location: Portillo

Depth: 2 meters (7 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Perfect for snorkel lovers, Portillo boasts a huge coral reef and a wide variety of fish including angel fish, trumpet fish, and grouper. The area is also dotted with colorful crabs, sea urchins and anemones assuring to keep you entertained for hours.

PIEDRA BONITA

Location: Las Galeras

Depth: 10 meters (33 feet) – 60 meters (197 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

North of Cabo Cabrón, Piedra Bonita is one of the most spectacular and unusual diving spots in the northeast region. La Torre, as it is also known, sits at a depth of 60 meters (197 feet). After a free fall of 30 meters (98 feet), currents push divers around a huge rock covered by sponges, giant gorgonians and corals.

Here you will spot sea turtles, wrasse fish, porcupine fish and boxfish as they swim past Piedra Bonita and into the open waters of the Atlantic. Due to the strong currents, it is only recommended for experienced divers.



SUNKEN SHIP

Location: Las Galeras

Depth: 12 meters (39 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

After a terrible fire more than 30 years ago, an 80-meter (262-foot) long cargo ship sank about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) off the coast of Las Galeras. This popular diving site is currently lying face down on a sandy surface about 12 meters (39 feet) deep, northeast of Samaná.

FRONTÓN

Location: Frontón

Depth: 17 meters (56 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Adventurers who reach this area will be able to visit the unspoiled beach of Frontón, perfect for sunbathing, snorkeling, diving and observing the beautiful and abundant marine life. More experienced divers can try to spot a manatee at its breeding, which frequently enjoy grazing in the green underwater prairies.



SHIPWRECKS

Location: Samaná Bay

A fascinating ship cemetery can be found just south of the Samaná Peninsula, home of many ships that have sunk over the centuries. The pirate Roberto Cofresí sank his own ship at Punta Gorda when he was cornered by the Spanish while carrying countless treasures, but to this day, nothing has been found –the ship nor its treasures. In 1724, the Spaniards lost two galleons in the reefs nearby Miches, south of the bay: Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and Conde de Tolosa. The ships were carrying mercury for the Central and South American gold mines. Some of the remains are still scattered at the entrance to the bay.



PUNTA CANA

Minimum Depth: 3 meters (10 feet)

Maximum Depth: 25 meters (82 feet)

Fauna Marina: Barracudas, damselfish, moray eels, globefish, rays, seahorses and turtles.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Dominican Republic's sophisticated eastern region attracts vacationers from all over the world seeking to explore its natural treasures and enjoy Punta Cana's luxurious resorts. With 160 kilometers (100 miles) of the best beaches in the world, the coast is bathed in beautiful turquoise waters and lined by an impressive stretch of palm trees, making Punta Cana the country's most popular destination. Conditions for diving are often difficult due to strong currents, the open sea and the unprotected coastline; as a result, there are few coral reef habitats. For experienced divers, it is still an area of interest with impressive walls, white sandy sea bottoms, rays and schools of fish. Also it is home to the remains of several ships, some sunk by hurricane winds, others intentionally to create new marine habitats.

EL ASTRON

Location: Arena Gorda

Depth: 12 meters (39 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

This huge 120-meter (394-foot) long freighter crashed while carrying corn to Cuba; split in two and ran aground on the coast of Bávaro. The Astron is frequented by divers in calm weather conditions, since it is usually hit by strong currents, making it a spot suitable for more experienced divers.

LAS CUEVITAS & EL CANAL

Location: Bávaro

Depth: 12 meters (39 feet) - 22 meters (72 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Areas like Las Cuevitas, 22 meters (72 feet) deep, and El Canal, 16 meters (52 feet) deep, offer numerous caves and beautiful rock formations allowing a breathtaking dive.



ENRIQUILLO RM-22

Location: Playa Blanca

Depth: 18 meters (60 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

The Enriquillo RM-22 is a 44-meter (143-foot) long, 10-meter (33-foot) wide boat that sailed at 13 knots with a crew of 45 men and three 50-mm machine guns. It was donated to the Navy of the Dominican Republic in 1980 by the United States and delivered to the Puntacana Group in 2006 for its sinking near Playa Blanca. The ship sits 18 meters (60 feet) deep and, like the Astron, it is recommended only for experienced divers due to the strong currents in the area; the visibility is usually very good thanks to these currents.

The area is home to large schools of Atlantic horse mackerel, sea breams and yellowtail snappers, as well as hawksbill, leatherback turtles and green sea turtles, that come to the coast to spawn; their nests are protected by organizations that work with endangered species. In many cases, the eggs are removed from the beach to be incubated in safe spaces and then returned to the beach of origin for hatching.



EL ACUARIO

Location: Punta Cana

Depth: 5 meters (16 feet) - 7 meters (23 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

El Acuario is one of the most interesting diving spots in the region thanks to its coral cultivations developed by the area's organizations, which are then replanted for coral reef restoration. One of its most iconic residents is François, a large barracuda that is often seen swimming alone or protecting a school of small fish of the barracuda family. Mottled eagle stripes, porcupine fish, sandfish, grunts and parrotfish can also be spotted.

IGNERI CARIBE TAINO UNDERWATER MUSEUM

Location: Punta Cana

Depth: 3 meters (10 feet) - 7 meters (23 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Located between the waters of Playa Blanca and Playa Serena in Punta Cana, the Igneri Caribe Taino Underwater Museum makes for a unique snorkeling and cultural site, with depths ideal for beginners. Created by award-winning Dominican artist Thimo Pimentel, 35 sculptures depicting indigenous Taino figures lie underwater, submerged at three to seven meters (10-23 feet). To provide a habitat for fish, corals were planted around the sculptures, which snorkelers can see circling and swimming past these large Taino figures. In 2016 Thimo won the National visual Artist Award for his exquisite work.



LA ROMANA

Minimum Depth: 5 meters (16 feet)

Maximum Depth: 30 meters (98 feet)

Marine Life: Damselfish, globefish, rays, seahorses, and turtles.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Along Dominican Republic's southeast coast lies a vast strip of sugar cane plantations surrounding some of the most picturesque beaches, luxurious accommodations and the most sought-after attractions of La Romana and the nearby Bayahíbe. Founded at the beginning of the 19th century, La Romana was originally a sugarcane producing region. Its crystal-clear waters, lush tropical forests and endless entertainment options make La Romana the ideal destination for families, couples, divers, golfers and, fishing and sailing fans alike.

ISLA CATALINA

Location: La Romana

Depth: 5 meters (16 feet) - 43 meters (141 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner - Advanced

Close to La Romana is the small island of Catalina, a popular cruise destination and home to the Catalina Wall, a beautiful area protected by nature itself with many diving spots starting at 5 meters (15 feet) all the way down to 43 meters (140 feet) deep. The area also offers the Catalina Aquarium at 12 meters (39 feet) of depth, habitat of a rich diversity of marine life such as toad fish, squids and seahorses. The remains of Capitan Kidd's ship were recently found near the island of Catalina, at a depth of 6 meters (20 feet).



BAYAHÍBE

Minimum Depth: 4 meters (13 feet)

Maximum Depth: 40 meters (131 feet)

Marine Life: Damselfish, grouper, globefish, rays, seahorses, octopuses, moray eels and turtles.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Just 20 minutes east of La Romana is Bayahíbe, a fishing village founded in 1874. Today it is one of Dominican Republic's best diving destinations for both beginners and more experienced divers. Located in Cotubanamá National Park, the area has calm waters, very good visibility and lush marine life. Most sites are less than 30 minutes away by large catamarans or speedboats. Bayahíbe is home to underwater caves such as Cueva del Padre Nuestro and Viva Shallow, a coral reef located at a depth of 4 to 10 meters (13 to 32 feet) where divers can enjoy varied marine life and an underwater archeological museum, with artifacts and pieces from 17th-century Conde de Tolosa and Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe shipwrecks on the shores of Miches, in the Samaná Bay.

ATLANTIC PRINCESS SHIPWRECK

Location: Bayahíbe

Depth: 12 meters (40 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

The Atlantic Princess was a small cruise ship used by tourists of the area. In 2008, it ran aground on the beach during Tropical Storm Fay. The plan was to sink the ship and create a beautiful underwater environment for the enjoyment of visitors, but the Atlantic Princess got ahead and sunk on its own in the shallow waters on May 6, 2009. Today it is a place of interest for all kinds of divers, from beginners to experts, thanks to its abundant marine life.

ST. GEORGE SHIPWRECK

Location: Dominicus

Depth: 40 meters (131 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

Built in 1962 in Scotland, the 73-meter (240 feet) long St. George ship was used to transport grains in the Caribbean. Today it houses barracudas, moray eels, king mackerels and groupers, among other species. Due to its depth of 40 meters (131 feet), it is recommended only for advanced divers.



ISLA CATALINITA

Location: Bayahíbe

Depth: 12 meters (39 feet) - 24 meters (79 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

The small island of Catalinita features Shark Point, 12 to 16 meters (39 to 52 feet) deep, and Sting Ray City, from 15 to 29 meters (49 to 95 feet) deep, where divers can enjoy a great variety of sea life that includes stunning gorgonians and huge American stingrays. With luck, you might spot hammerhead and big blacktip sharks. Its coralline environment makes it the perfect spot for diving. Commercially diving is not allowed in this area. In order to do this activity, it is necessary to have a permit granted by the Ministry of Environment or be accompanied by someone who has access to the area.

ISLA SAONA

Location: Bayahíbe

Depth: 9 meters (30 feet) - 40 meters (131 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner - Advanced

Saona Island is a dream tropical escape, where long stretches of brilliant white sand and their giant coconut trees seem to melt into iridescent turquoise waters. With an area of 110 km² (42 square miles), the island of Saona is one of Cotubanamá National Park's highlights. Although the currents are often strong, the coral reefs have developed well. Saona Island is also the DR's most important turtle-nesting site.

La Parguera is the most popular diving spot among recreational divers, followed by Peñón I and II, with depths ranging from 9 to 33 meters (30 to 100 feet). Snapper, grouper, turtles, rays and many schools of fish enjoy this habitat. Other places of interest are Punta Cacón, featuring shallow waters and reefs inhabited by lobsters as hiding place from predators; El Faro, a diving reef off the south coast of Isla Saona and El Canal de Catuano, where divers can often spot sting rays and catsharks resting on the sand.





SANTO DOMINGO

Minimum Depth: 5 meters (16 feet)

Maximum Depth: 100 meters (328 feet)

Marine Life: Grouper, balloonfish, rays, lionfish, octopuses and turtles.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic's capital city, is the most culturally rich destination in the Caribbean thanks to its Colonial City—the first city of the Americas. Santo Domingo is also home to La Caleta Underwater National Park, one of the first in the continent. The park is 180 meters (591 feet) deep with an area of 10 km² (4 square miles) starting at Las Golondrinas Cave and ending at Punta Caucedo. La Caleta has an irregular topography with three well-defined terraces and impressive sites to observe.

LA CALETA UNDERWATER NATIONAL PARK

Location: Santo Domingo

Depth: 5 meters (16 feet) - 58 meters (190 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner - Advanced

This beautiful natural pool is close to Las Américas International Airport (SDQ) in Santo Domingo. Here you can find the Hickory, a sunken ship at about 18 meters (60 feet) deep, which was submerged in 1984 by a group of submarine researchers to create an artificial reef for the proliferation of marine life. The park is also home of other shipwrecks such as El Limón and Capitán Alsina located about 30 meters (100 feet) deep, and the Don Quico at about 58 meters (190 feet) deep. La Caleta has a variety of corals and schools of multicolored fish that use the reefs as shelter and food source. Nearby, there is an impressive system of karst rocks with a meandering network of underwater caverns and tunnels over 100 meters (328 feet) long; an ideal place for technical diving.



BOCA CHICA

Minimum Depth: 8 meters (26 feet)

Maximum Depth: 35 meters (115 feet)

Marine Life: Sponges, balloonfish, rays, lionfish, octopuses, starfish and seahorses.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Thirty kilometers (19 miles) east of Santo Domingo is Boca Chica, a large bay protected by coral reefs featuring crystal-clear waters and soft white sands. The water is mostly waist-deep throughout the beach. The area is free of strong currents or sudden falls, making it a serene destination with relaxing diving spots beyond the reefs. Boca Chica is home to most of the marine species that inhabit the island of Hispaniola, such as hard and soft corals, sponges, octopuses, reef fish, crustaceans, starfish, seahorses and sole fish. Two of the area's major diving spots are Coral Garden and El Letrero, both offering good visibility for underwater photography lovers, as well as healthy coral reefs that are home to numerous marine species from batfish, nudibranchs, and lobsters, to toadfish, catsharks and huge colonies of jellyfish.

CATUÁN WRECK

Location: Boca Chica

Depth: 18 meters (59 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

The Catuán sunk on December 12, 2006 at about 18 meters (60 feet) deep. The 33-meter (108-foot) ship is a marine habitat, home of an abundance of species and colorful coral gardens, making it a great place to explore. Only advanced divers can enjoy the amazing experience of swimming around and inside the ship, due to the depth in which it is located.



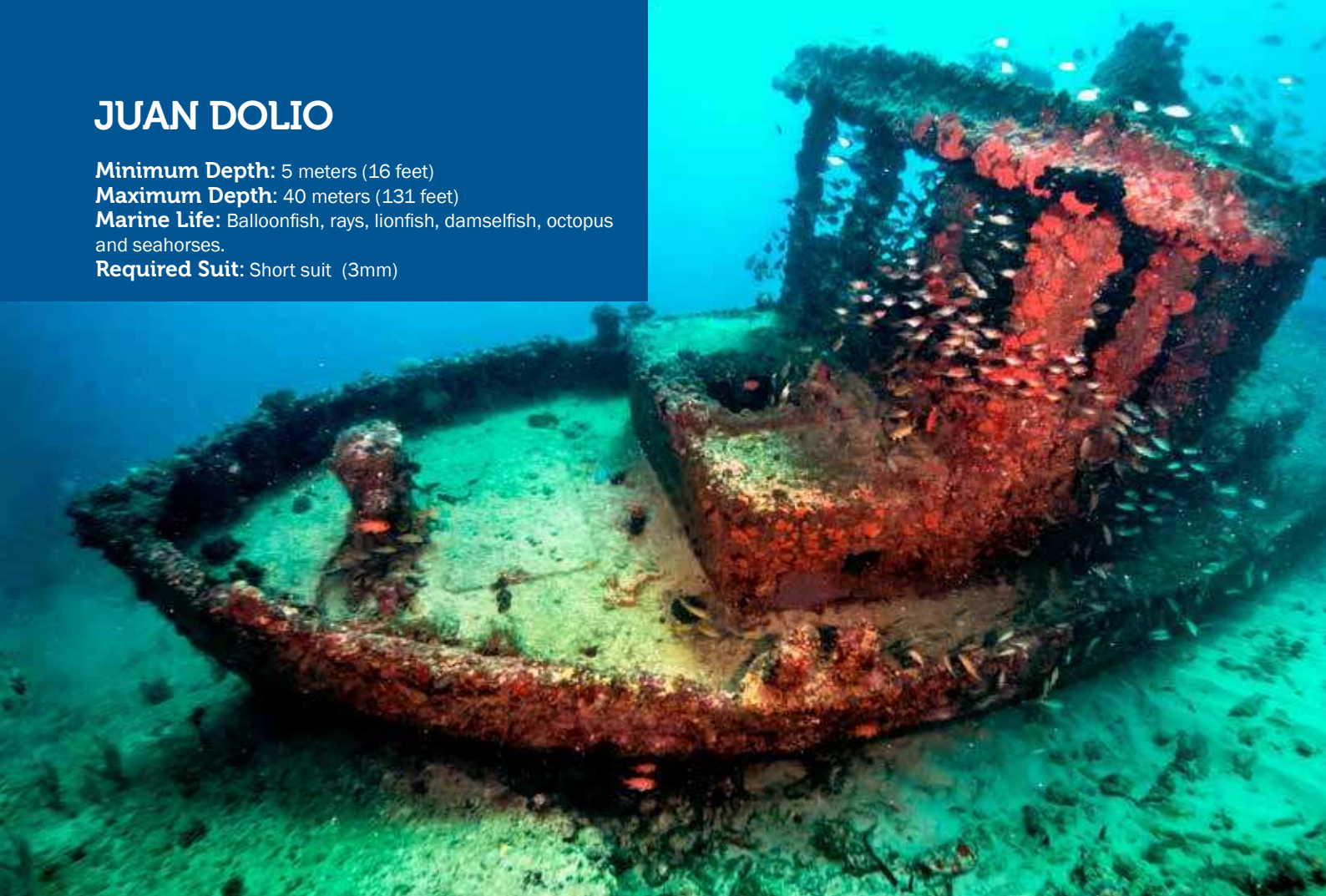
JUAN DOLIO

Minimum Depth: 5 meters (16 feet)

Maximum Depth: 40 meters (131 feet)

Marine Life: Balloonfish, rays, lionfish, damselfish, octopus and seahorses.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Located 20 minutes east of Boca Chica, Juan Dolio offers incredible snorkeling and deep diving along the entire coral reef wall. You can find amazing spots to explore underwater like Tanya V ship and the Alto Velo wreck. The area is quieter than Boca Chica and locals come to relax and enjoy the excellent cuisine served up at the local restaurants, especially on the weekends.

After a long day under the sea, you can also enjoy Juan Dolio long white sand beaches by taking a walk in the sunset.

TANYA V

Location: Hemingway

Depth: 22 meters (72 feet) - 34 meters (110 feet)

Experience Level: Advanced

This ship rests on a sandbank at a depth of 20 to 35 meters (66 to 115 feet) near the Hemingway reefs. The 60 meter-long (195-foot) Tanya V was sunk in October 1999. It is an excellent site for advanced divers dotted with beautiful coral and sponges.

ALTO VELO WRECK

Location: Playa Caribe

Depth: 8 meters (26 feet)

Experience Level: Beginner

Sunken in the waters of Playa Caribe on the southeast coast, the Alto Velo ship was a small tugboat that became an artificial reef covered with abundant marine life.



PEDERNALES

Minimum Depth: 4 meters (13 feet)

Maximum Depth: 30 meters (98 feet)

Marine Life: Balloonfish, rays, lionfish, damselfish, octopuses, turtles, barracudas and seahorses.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



Pedernales, a southwestern coastal province bordering Haiti, is the area with the largest number of baby hawksbill turtles in the Caribbean. The region has a reputation as one of Dominican Republic's premier diving destinations thanks to its white sand beaches, impressive rock formations and some of the best preserved coral reefs in the area. With a depth from 15 to 30 meters (49 - 98 feet), Cabo Rojo and Bahía de Las Águilas are two large diving sites full of intense colors and abundant marine life. Another highlighted site is Cabo Falso, although is only 4 to 15 meters (13 - 49 feet) deep, it is only recommended for skilled divers due to the strong underwater currents. In the surrounding area of Los Frailes, divers can enjoy a formation of iridescent white rocks that emerge from the depths of the sea and shelter a great variety of fish and large turtles. The crystal-clear waters of Beata and Alto Velo islands are visited only by diving experts due to the strong currents. Here you can spot sharks and spotted eagle rays.

BANÍ

Minimum Depth: 2 meters (7 feet)

Maximum Depth: 60 meters (197 feet)

Marine Life: Balloonfish, rays, lionfish, grouper, damselfish, barracudas and seahorses.

Required Suit: Short suit (3mm)



The entire southwestern coast of Dominican Republic offers a wide range of site for diving enthusiasts, and Baní is no exception. Located at the entrance of Las Calderas Bay, Salinas is home to salt mines, mangroves, dark-sand beaches and sand dunes. Here you can dive 20 meters (66 feet) deep, and find impressive marine biodiversity. El Derrumbao is a challenging diving spot with rocky walls and coral reefs visible from just a few feet offshore with a depth of 60 meters (197 feet). Diving in this area can start at the shore since the waters can gradually reach depths greater than 37 meters (120 feet).

10 TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Exploring the underwater world is one of the most fascinating experiences you can have. However, it is important to be knowledgeable before your first dive; following the rules will keep you safe.

PREPARE WELL: Like any other sport, it is important to have previous training. Talk to a diving instructor to guide you on your first steps and certify you as an open water diver. These certifications can be Open Water Certification, up to 18 meters (60 feet) deep, and Advanced Open Water Certification, from 18 meters (60 feet) to 33 meters (108 feet) deep. For immersion of more than 33 meters (108 feet) a special certification is required.

NEVER DIVE ALONE: This is the Golden Rule of diving. Solo diving is a practice that even the most experienced professionals avoid. Always dive accompanied, at least by one person, and do not move more than 3 meters (10 feet) away from your diving partner. Remember to communicate frequently with signs to indicate that everything is going well or if there is a problem.

DO NOT HOLD YOUR BREATH: Even though your diving equipment provides you with the oxygen you need to breathe normally, people have a natural tendency to hold their breath when going underwater. This reflex could cause problems like lung injury or panic attacks.

BE CONSERVATIVE: The more conservative you are while diving, the safer you will be. Remember not to feed the fish, or touch the animals or corals, as their protective layers can wear off. Move your feet quickly to avoid rays and never stand or walk on the reefs.

DO NOT MOVE TOO MUCH: Water is about 800 times denser than air, so any movement under the water requires more effort than on the surface and the body gets tired much faster.

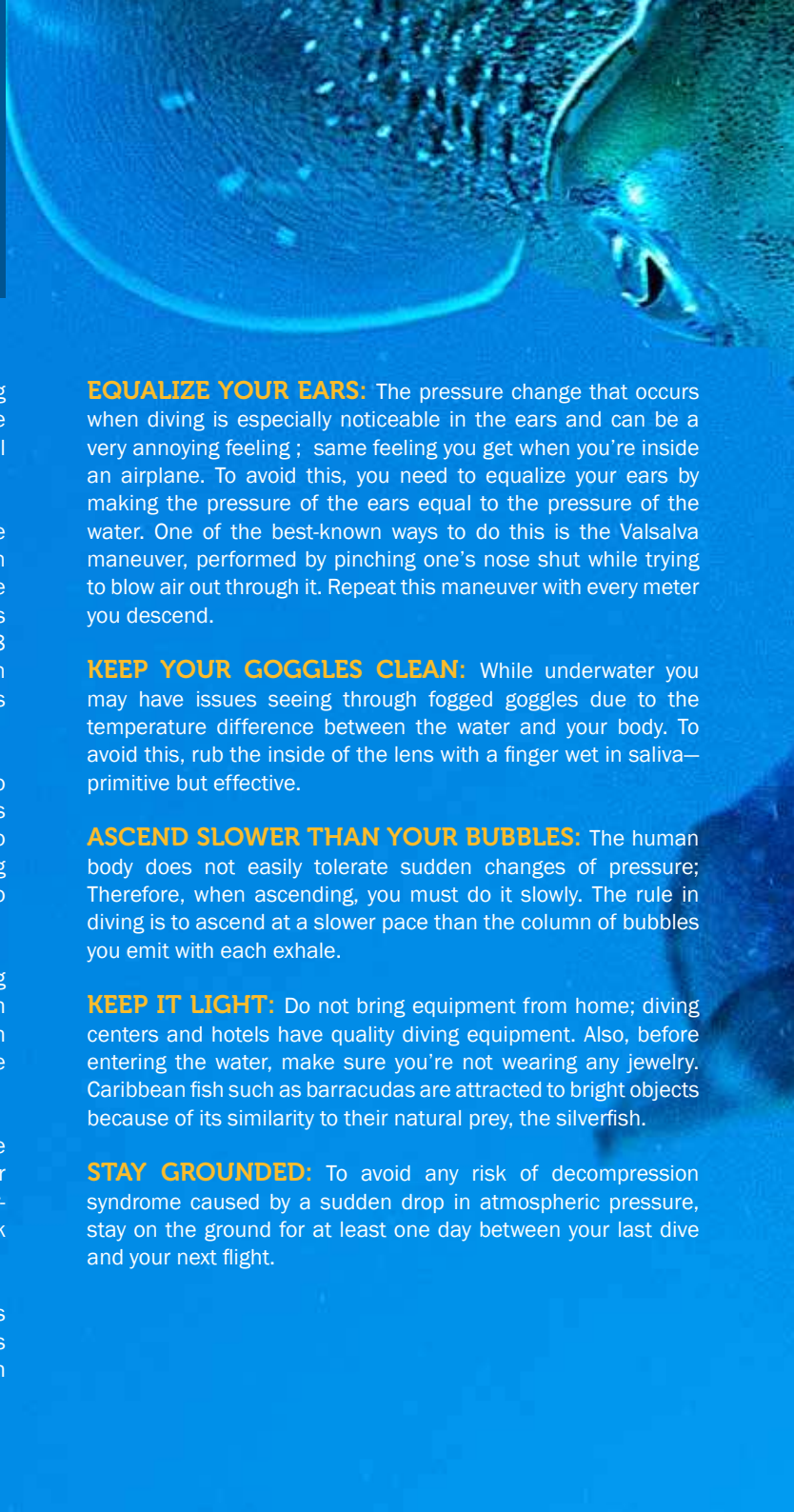
EQUALIZE YOUR EARS: The pressure change that occurs when diving is especially noticeable in the ears and can be a very annoying feeling; same feeling you get when you're inside an airplane. To avoid this, you need to equalize your ears by making the pressure of the ears equal to the pressure of the water. One of the best-known ways to do this is the Valsalva maneuver, performed by pinching one's nose shut while trying to blow air out through it. Repeat this maneuver with every meter you descend.

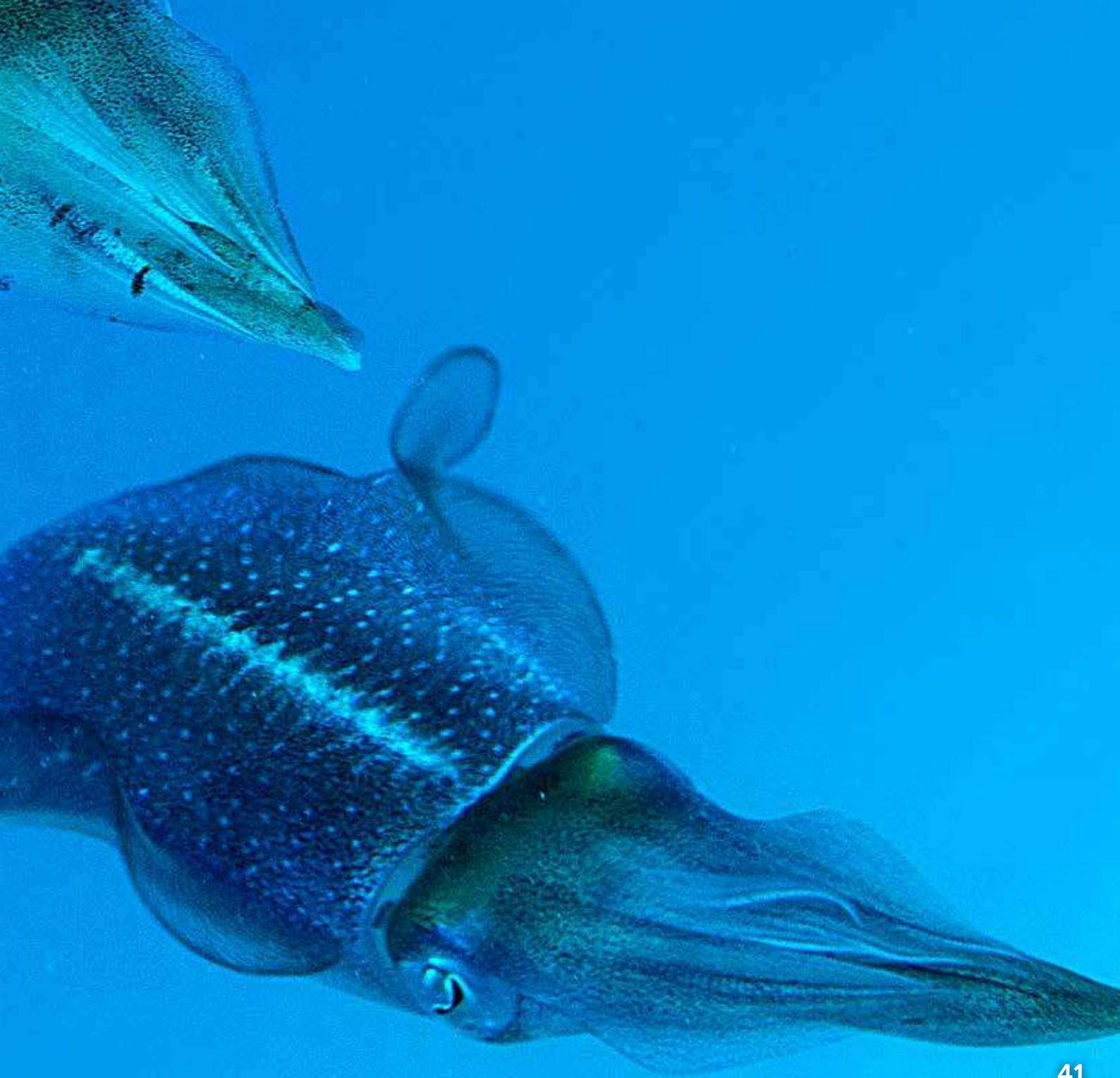
KEEP YOUR GOGGLES CLEAN: While underwater you may have issues seeing through fogged goggles due to the temperature difference between the water and your body. To avoid this, rub the inside of the lens with a finger wet in saliva—primitive but effective.

ASCEND SLOWER THAN YOUR BUBBLES: The human body does not easily tolerate sudden changes of pressure; Therefore, when ascending, you must do it slowly. The rule in diving is to ascend at a slower pace than the column of bubbles you emit with each exhale.

KEEP IT LIGHT: Do not bring equipment from home; diving centers and hotels have quality diving equipment. Also, before entering the water, make sure you're not wearing any jewelry. Caribbean fish such as barracudas are attracted to bright objects because of its similarity to their natural prey, the silverfish.

STAY GROUNDED: To avoid any risk of decompression syndrome caused by a sudden drop in atmospheric pressure, stay on the ground for at least one day between your last dive and your next flight.







DOMINICAN REPUBLIC DIVING MAP





Dominican Republic Has it all

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