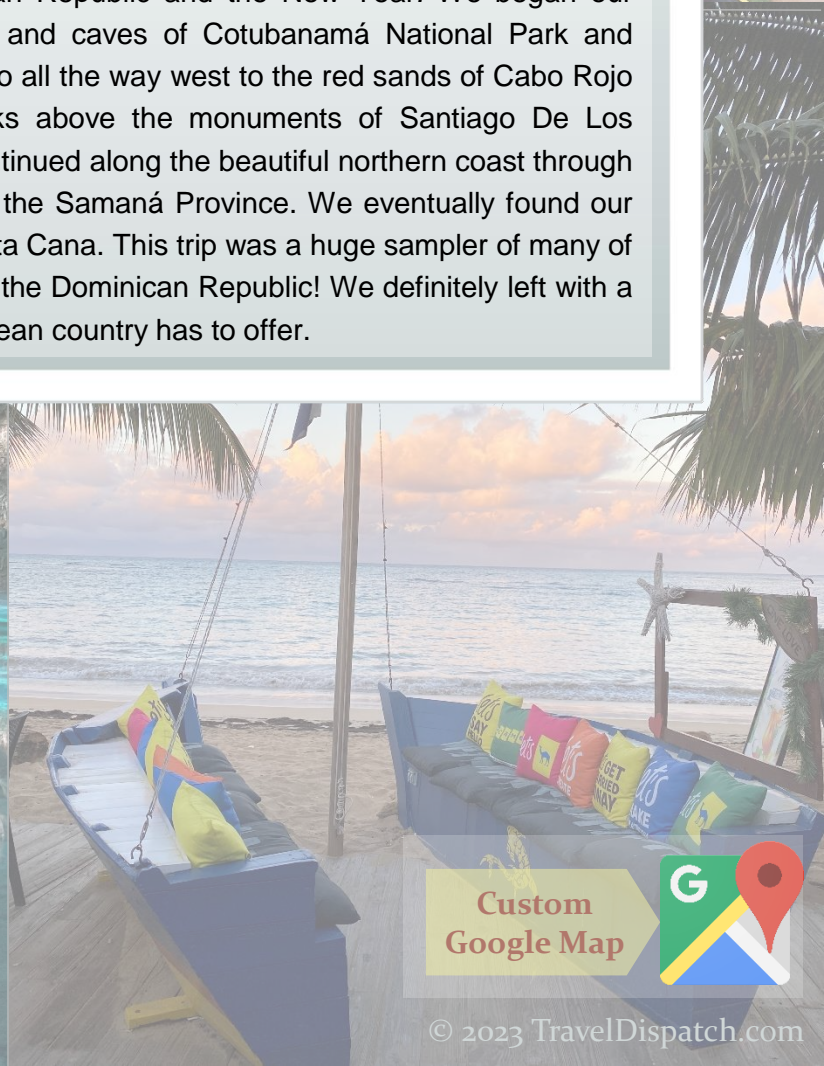
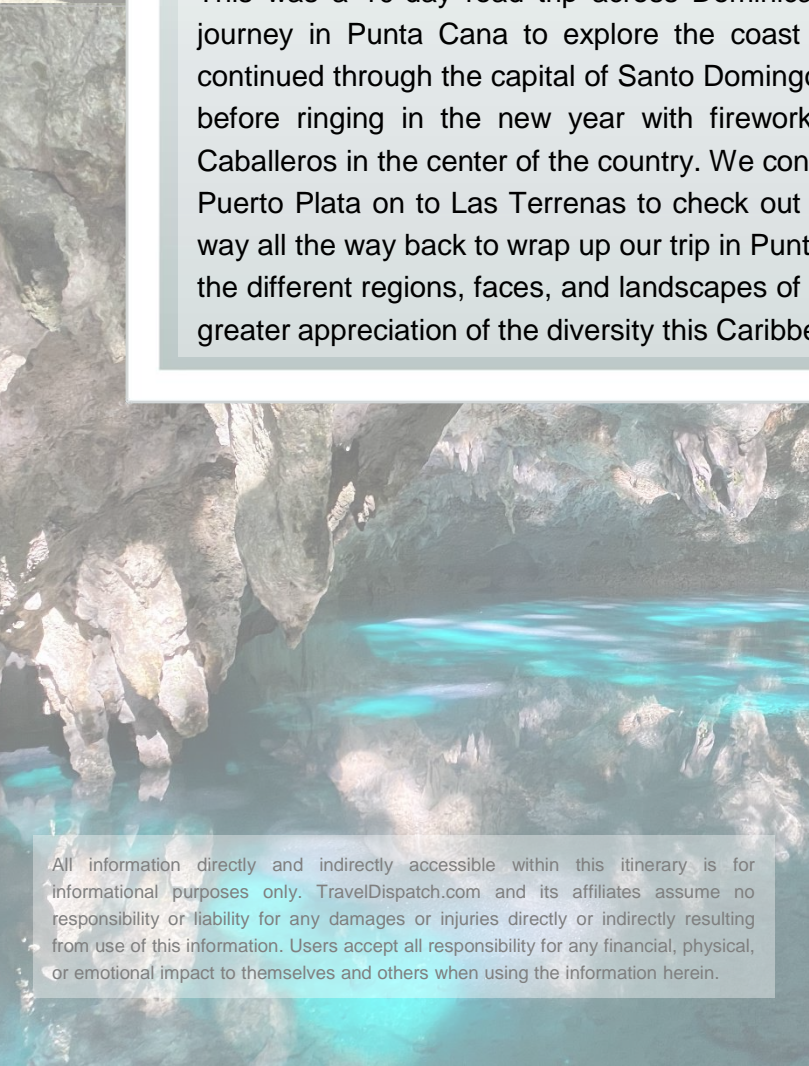




# WELCOME TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

*A 10-day Road Trip (over New Year's Eve)*

This was a 10-day road trip across Dominican Republic and the New Year. We began our journey in Punta Cana to explore the coast and caves of Cotubanamá National Park and continued through the capital of Santo Domingo all the way west to the red sands of Cabo Rojo before ringing in the new year with fireworks above the monuments of Santiago De Los Caballeros in the center of the country. We continued along the beautiful northern coast through Puerto Plata on to Las Terrenas to check out the Samaná Province. We eventually found our way all the way back to wrap up our trip in Punta Cana. This trip was a huge sampler of many of the different regions, faces, and landscapes of the Dominican Republic! We definitely left with a greater appreciation of the diversity this Caribbean country has to offer.



All information directly and indirectly accessible within this itinerary is for informational purposes only. TravelDispatch.com and its affiliates assume no responsibility or liability for any damages or injuries directly or indirectly resulting from use of this information. Users accept all responsibility for any financial, physical, or emotional impact to themselves and others when using the information herein.

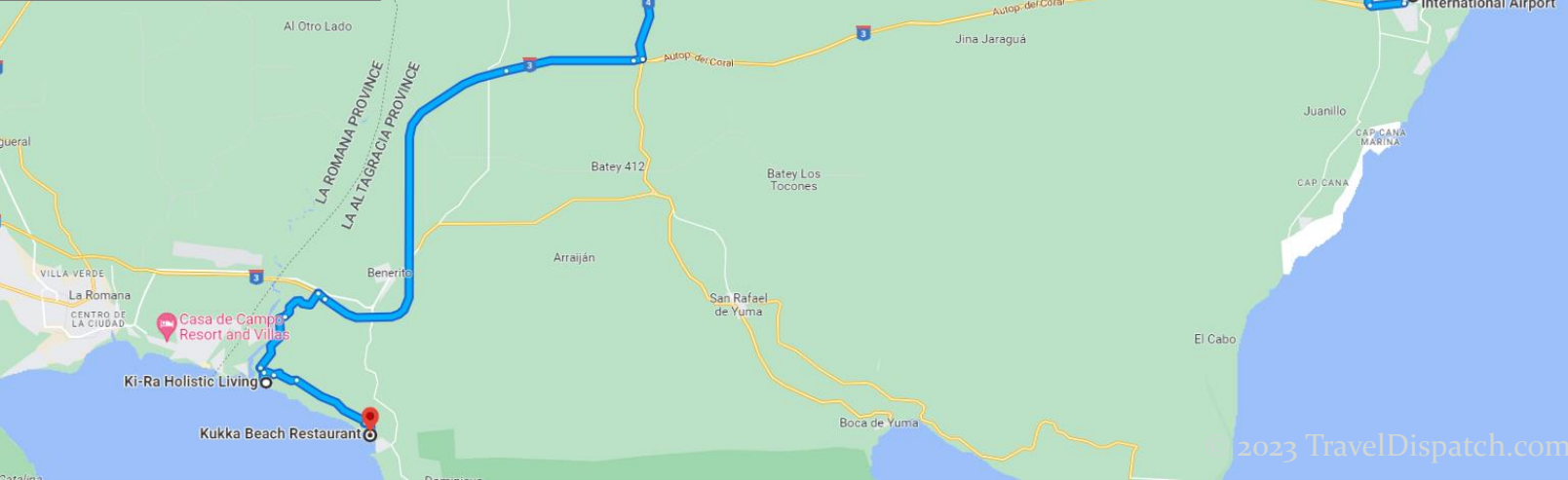
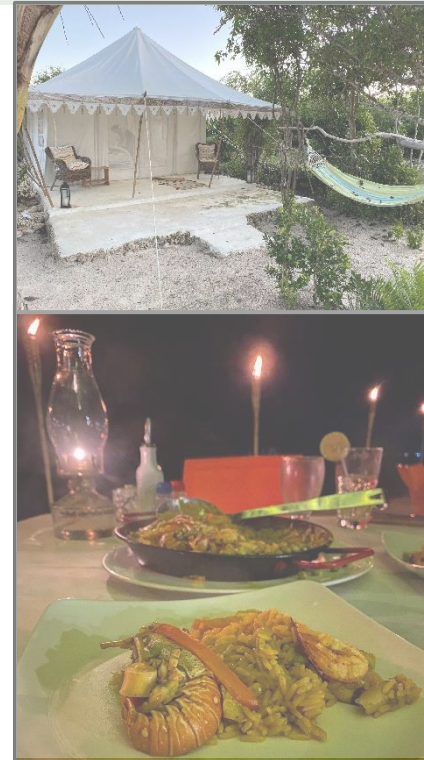
Custom  
Google Map



# DAY 1

Today we arrived in Punta Cana and made our way to the Boca de Chavon. We arrived in the early afternoon and took our rental car over for lunch and a couple beaches just north of Punta Cana along our way to check out the funky La Altagracia Church in Higüey. From there we continued south towards the Boca De Chavon where we checked into our guesthouse, wandered around the coast for sunset, and enjoyed a tasty alfresco dinner on Bayahibe Beach.

- 1:10PM** Arrive at PUJ and pick up car from [Budget](#) (or other provider)
- 2:10PM** Drive for lunch at [Jellyfish Restaurant](#) [17km; 20min]
- 3:30PM** Drive to check out [Macao Beach](#) [23km; 30min]
- 4:30PM** Drive to Higüey [28km; 45min]
- 5:15PM** Explore [Basilica Nuestra Señora De La Altagracia](#)
- 6:00PM** Drive to and check in at [Ki Ra Guesthouse](#) [41km; 45min]
- 8:00PM** Drive for dinner at [Kukka Beach Restaurant](#) [16km; 30min]
- 9:30PM** Drive home for a good night's rest! [7km; 20min]



# DAY 2

Today we explored caves and soaked in that DR relaxation. Our morning included hiking through a few caves amongst a swarm of bats (**you will need a headlamp!**) within Cotubanamá National Park after which we lounged, grazed on seafood, and enjoyed beverages at Bayahibe Beach pretty much the remainder of the day. However, if you're feeling up for it, we'd recommend checking out the 16<sup>th</sup> century replica Mediterranean village of Altos de Chavón OR take a full-day tour to the beautiful Isla Saona.

8:00AM

Drive **Cueva del Puente** [21.4km; 30 min]

**NOTE:** Google maps will route you down a narrow road along the coast; do not take it. Take the long way. We encountered a blocked road with armed men; nothing happened, but it's definitely not the route to take, despite it being more direct. **DON'T FORGET YOUR HEAD LAMP!**

8:30AM

Hike to **Cueva del Puente** (6km total; 2.5hrs; ~200m of cave to open ceiling; lots of bats, but definitely worth it)

11:00AM

Drive for lunch at **Kukka Beach Restaurant** [7km; 15min]

12:30PM

Wander around **Bahayibe Beach**

3:30PM

Drive to explore **Casa de Campo** [20km; 30min]  
(Altos de Chavón and Amphitheater)

5:30PM

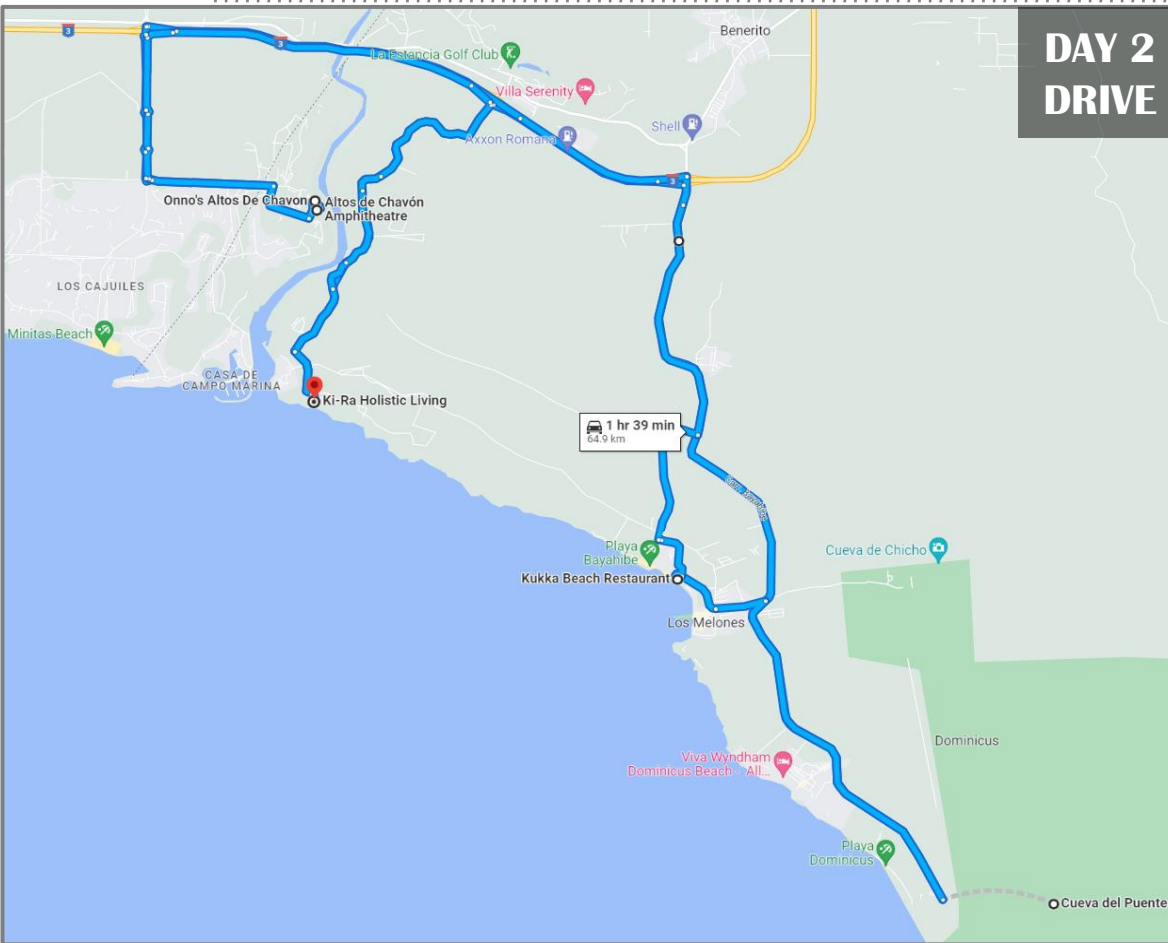
Dinner at **Ono's Bar & Restaurant**

7:30PM

Drive back to lodging [16km; 30min]

9:30AM

**ALTERNATE:** **Saona Excursion from Bayahibe**  
(full-day excursion if you prefer a beautiful beach island)



DAY 2  
DRIVE

# DAY 3

Today we migrated to explore the capital of Santo Domingo. We stopped to marvel at the clear blue waters of Los Tres Ojos along our way to Santo Domingo where we relaxed in our hotel's rooftop pool before wandering and grazing our way through the Colonial Zone to check out the holiday décor and festivities. Eventually we settled in for dinner along the edge of a square to enjoy a light show and concert before wandering through a street dance party at San Francisco Monastery along our way back to our hotel.

**8:00AM** Check out and drive to **Santo Domingo** [127km; 1hr 30min]

**9:30AM** Check out **Los Tres Ojos**

**10:30AM** Drive to check in and relax at **Billini Hotel** [7km; 15min]

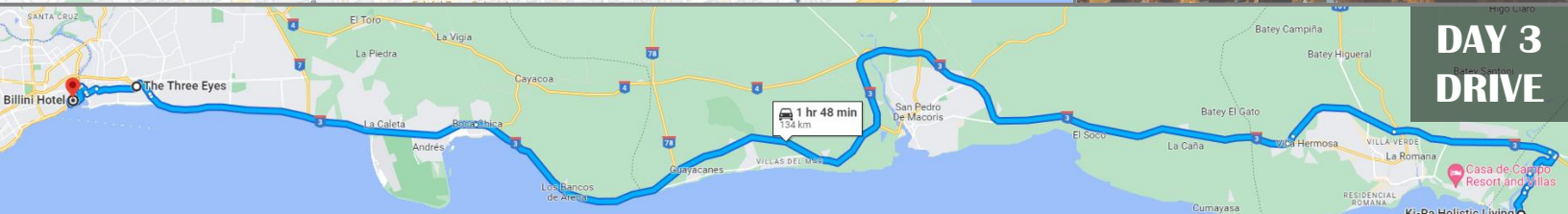
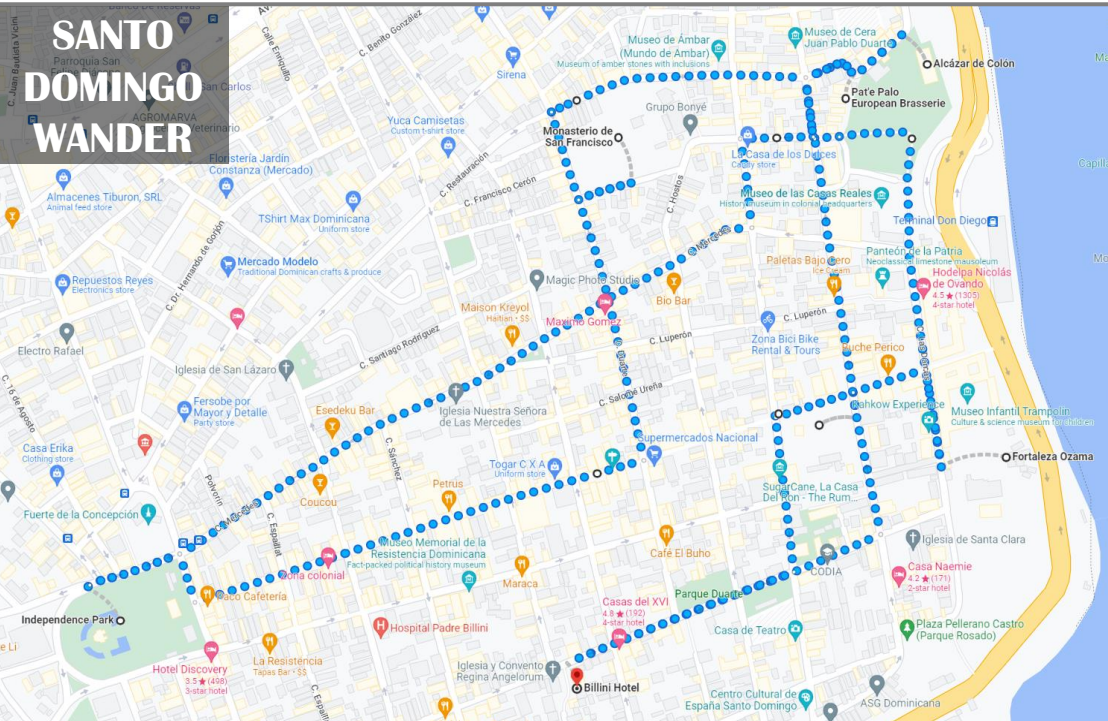
**1:00PM** Walk for lunch at **Cafeteria El Conde** (500m; 10min)

**2:00PM** Wander around **Zona Colonial** (4km; 1hr; take your time!)  
(Parque Colón; Fortaleza Ozama; Alcázar de Colón; Monasterio de San Francisco; Calle Hostos; Calle El Conde; Parque Independencia)

**6:30PM** Dinner at **Pat'e Palo European Brasserie**

**8:00PM** Check out any events at **Plaza de Plaza de España** AND / OR **Monasterio de San Francisco**

Walk back to hotel (1km; 15min)

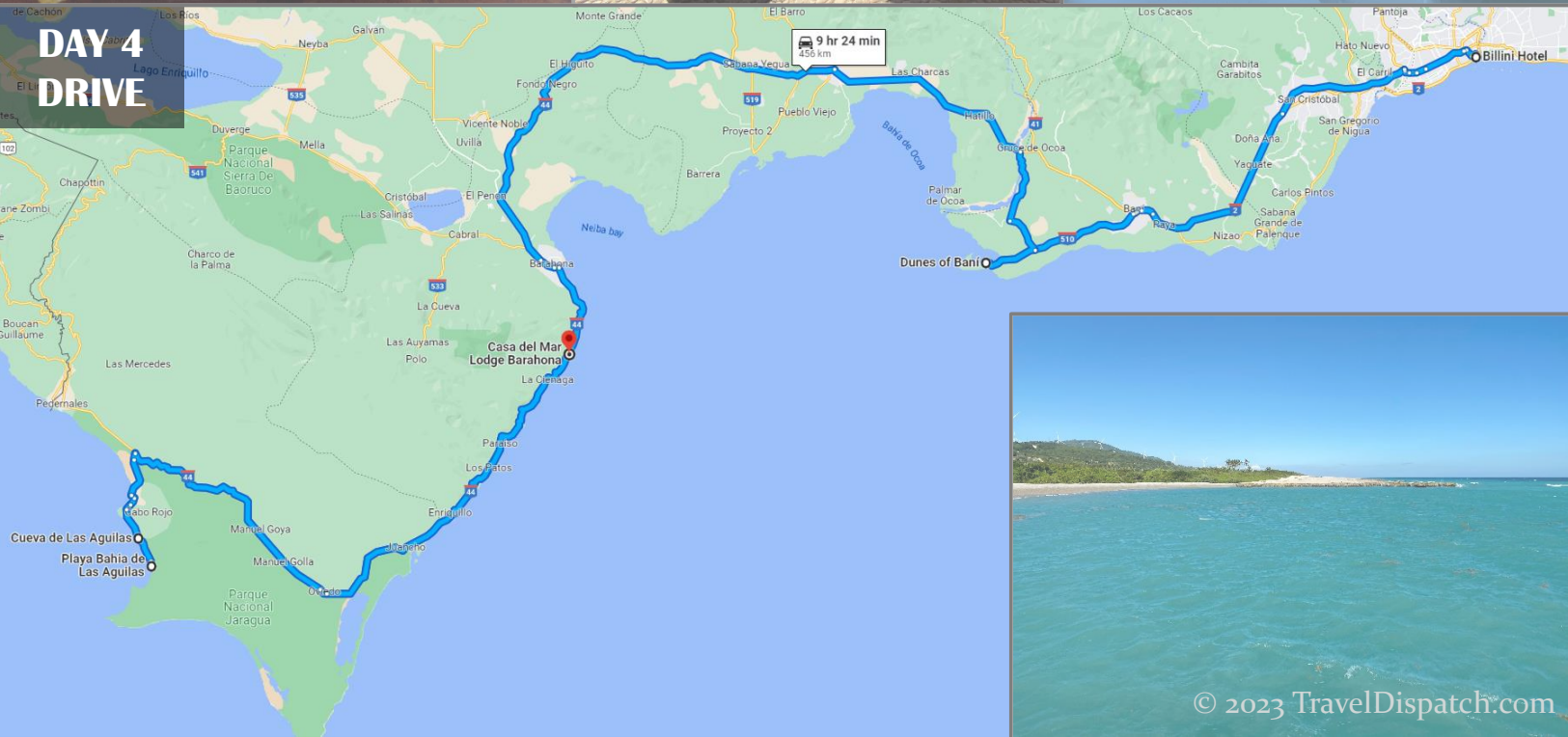


## DAY 3 DRIVE

# DAY 4

Today we made our way to the far reaches of western DR. After a night in Santo Domingo we drove west to hike along the Dunes of Bani and continued through the red desert to beautiful Bahía De Las Aguilas; almost to the Haitian border. After lunch we headed back east to stay the evening just south of Barahona; it was a long day of driving, but it was through some gorgeous countryside.

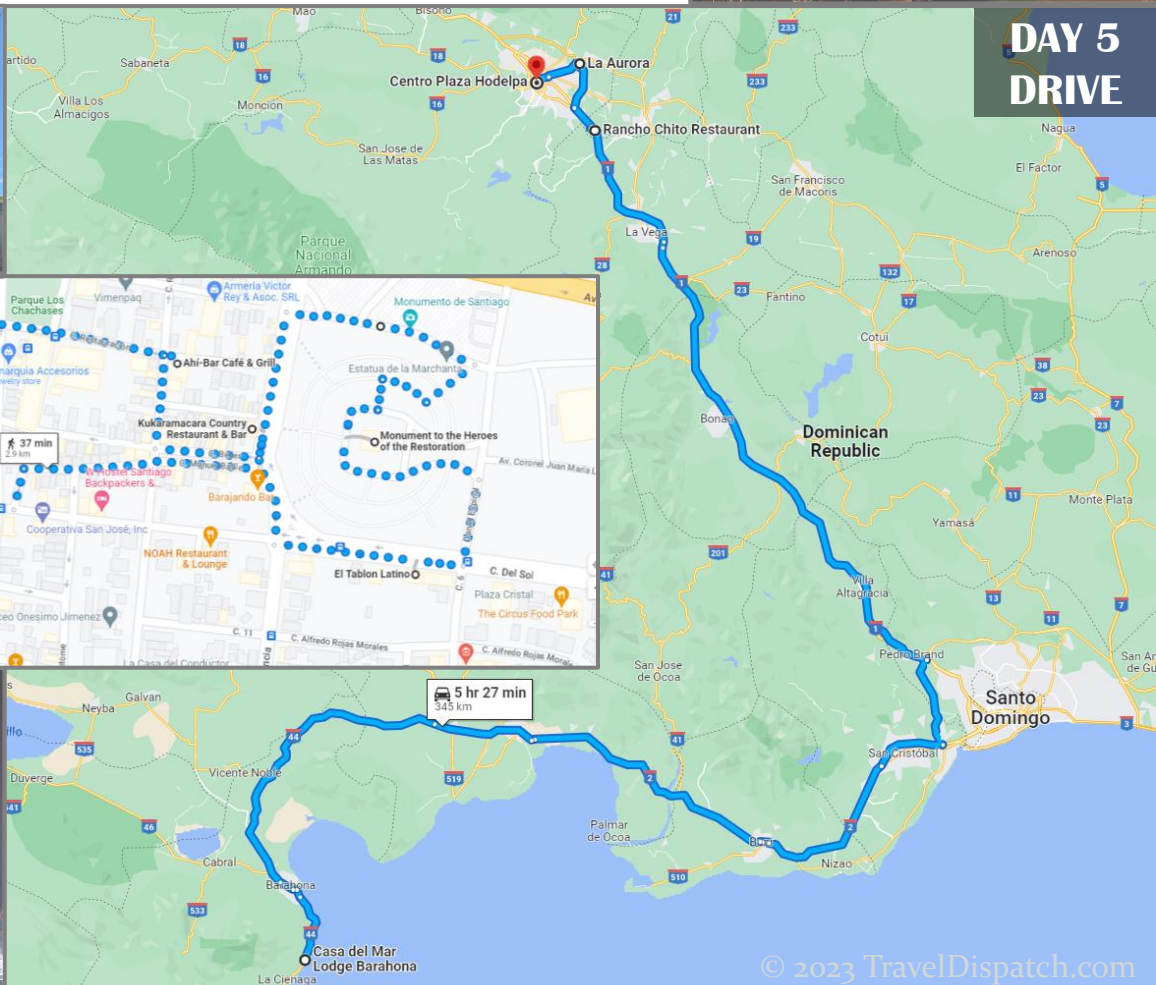
<b>6:30AM</b>	Check out and drive to the dunes [86km; 1hr 30min]
<b>8:00AM</b>	Hike around <a href="#">Dunes of Bani</a>
<b>9:00AM</b>	Drive to <b>Cueva de las Aguilas</b> [253km; 5hr]
<b>2:00PM</b>	Lunch at <a href="#">Rancho Tipico Cueva de las Aguilas</a>
<b>2:45PM</b>	Drive to explore <a href="#">Playa Bahia de Las Aguilas</a> [5km; 15min]
<b>4:00PM</b>	Drive to El Cacheo [112km; 2hr 45min]
<b>7:00PM</b>	Check in and dinner at <a href="#">Casa del Mar Lodge Barahona</a>



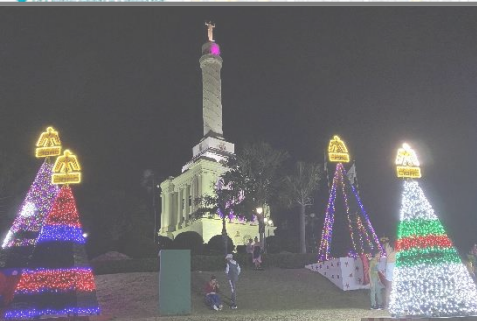
# DAY 5

Today we made our way inland for New Year's Eve fireworks in the city. We drove north after breakfast and enjoyed a pigilicious lunch along the way to check in for the evening at the central cowboy town of Santiago de Los Cabarelos. We wandered about town checking out the monuments and grazing on tasty snacks and beverages before having dinner and heading for an outdoor bar for the midnight fireworks show above the iconic Monument to the Heroes of the Restoration in the center of town.

7:00AM	Have breakfast and check out
8:00AM	Drive to lunch at <a href="#">Rancho Chito Restaurant</a> [321km; 4hr 45min]
1:30PM	Drive for <i>Factory Tour</i> at <a href="#">La Aurora Cigar Factory</a> [15km; 20min]
3:00PM	Drive to check in at <a href="#">Centro Plaza Hodelpa</a> [9km; 20min]
4:15PM	Wander around the ' <a href="#">Heroes Monument</a> ' central square (800m; 15min)
5:30PM	Have a beverage at <a href="#">El Tablón Latino</a>
6:15PM	Dinner at <a href="#">Kukaramacara Country Restaurant &amp; Bar</a>
8:00PM	Grab an outdoor table in prep for NYE at <a href="#">Ahi-Bar Café &amp; Grill</a>
12:00AM	Fireworks over the ' <i>Heroes Monument</i> ' in celebration of New Years!
12:30AM	Wander back to hotel (750m; 10min)



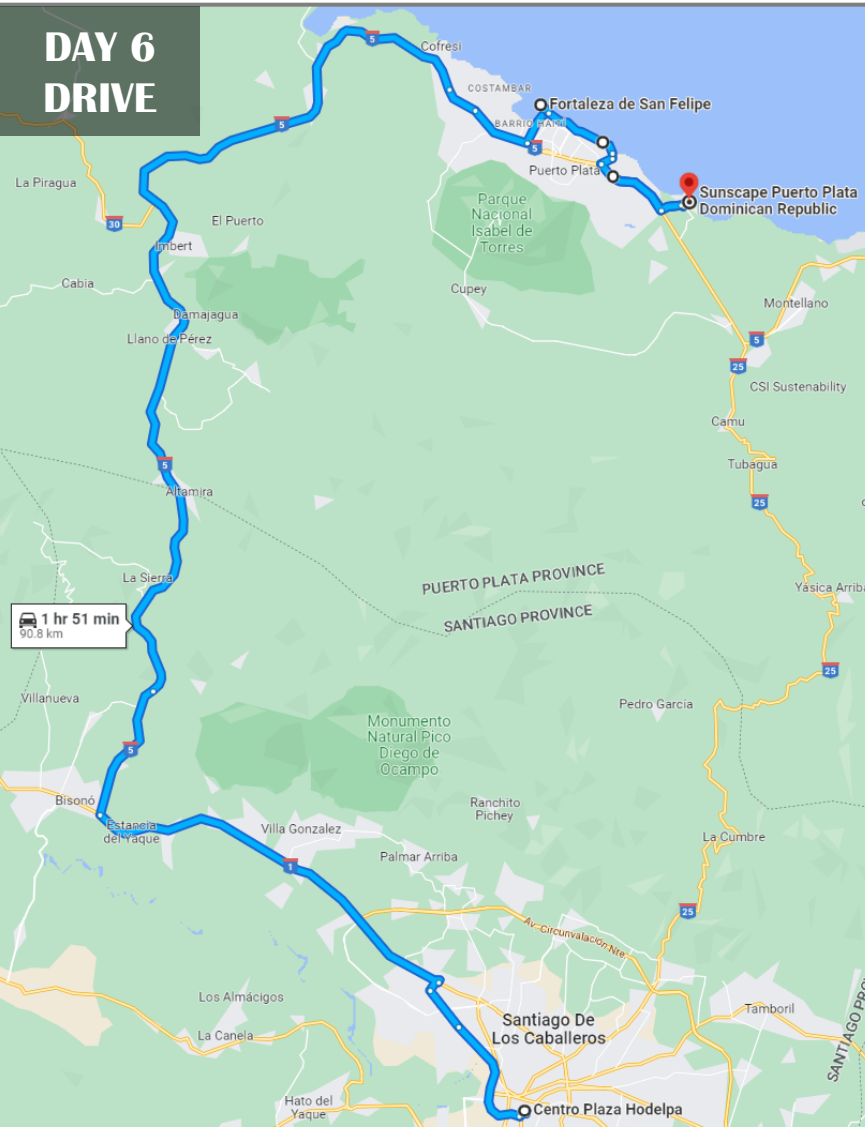
## DAY 5 DRIVE



# DAY 6

Today we headed back to the coast for beverages and beach. After breakfast we drove to Puerto Plata and explored a cool fortress on the sea before enjoying beverages at a local beach bar. We then checked into our 'all inclusive' resort to enjoy more beverages on the beach and eventually made our way back out for a tour and tasting at the Brugal Rum Distillery. The remainder of the evening we hung out at the resort for dinner and to check out the shows and entertainment.

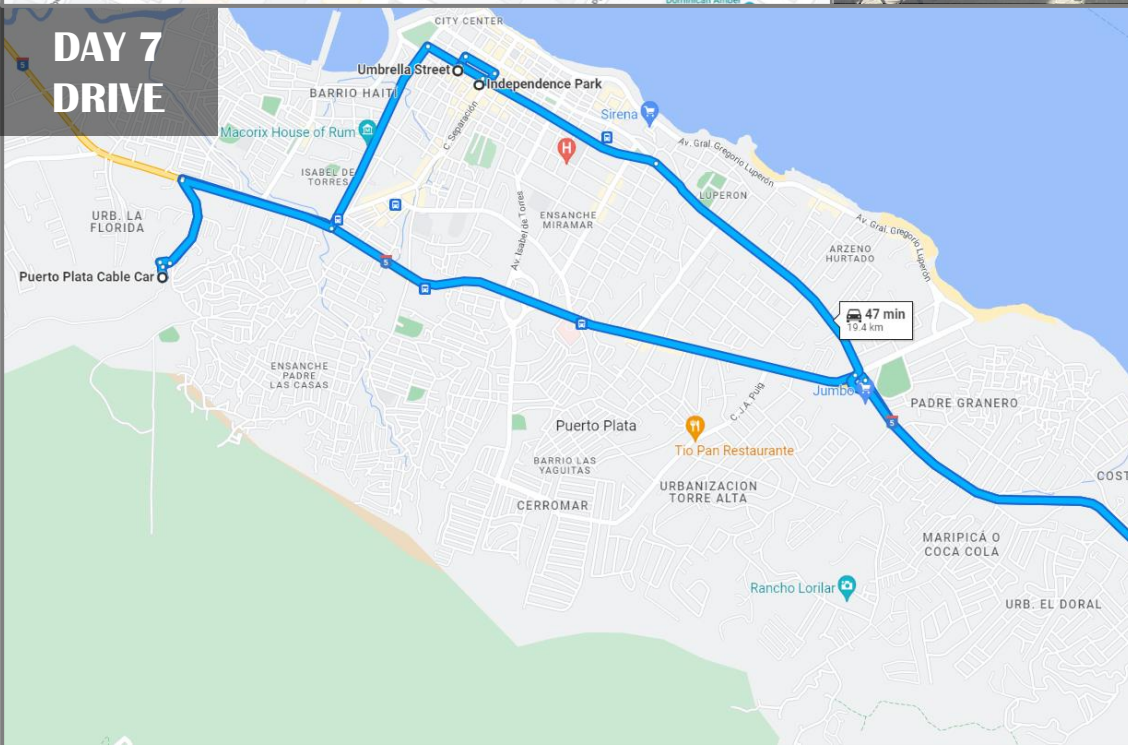
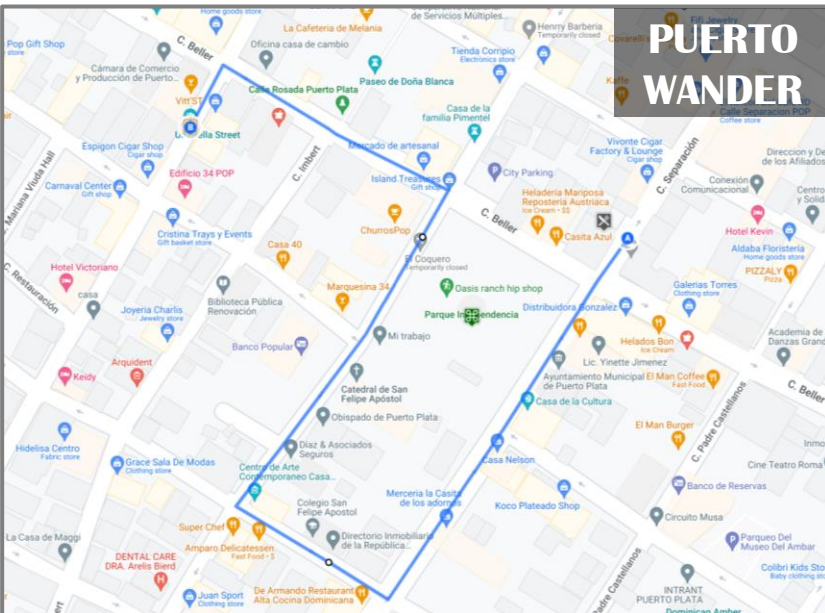
8:00AM	Breakfast at Centro Plaza Hodelpa
9:00AM	Drive to Puerto Plata [75km; 1hr 30min]
10:30AM	Explore <a href="#">Fortaleza de San Felipe</a>
11:30AM	Drive for beverages at <a href="#">Big Lee's Beach Bar</a> [3km; 5min]
12:15PM	Drive to check in at <a href="#">Sunscape Puerto Plata</a> [6km; 15min]
	Wander around property, check out the beach, and enjoy all the beverages and meals of an 'all inclusive;' however, DO NOT sign up for one of their vacation collection (time share) presentations!
2:30PM	Drive for <i>tour &amp; tastings</i> at <a href="#">Brugal Rum Distillery</a> [4km; 10min] (30-minute tour w/ tastings; close at 4PM)
4:00PM	Drive back to resort for dinner, shows, and relaxation [4km; 10min]



# DAY 7

Today we checked out more of Puerto Plata before ample lounging. After breakfast we headed to the teleferico for fantastic views from atop the Isabel de Torres mountain. We then stopped by Parque Independencia for lunch and to explore the plaza and 'gram-worth Umbrella Street. The remainder of the day we spent lounging at the beach and pool sipping frozen drinks, and it was excellent.

- 7:00AM** Breakfast at Sunscape Puerto Plata
- 8:00AM** Drive to explore the [El Teleferico de Puerto Plata](#) [9km; 20min] (open at 8:30AM)
- 10:45AM** Drive for lunch at [El Bergantin](#) [3km; 10min]
- 12:00PM** Explore [Independence Park](#) and [Umbrella Street](#)
- 1:00PM** Drive back to resort for beverages, beach, and relaxation the remainder of the day! [7km; 15min]

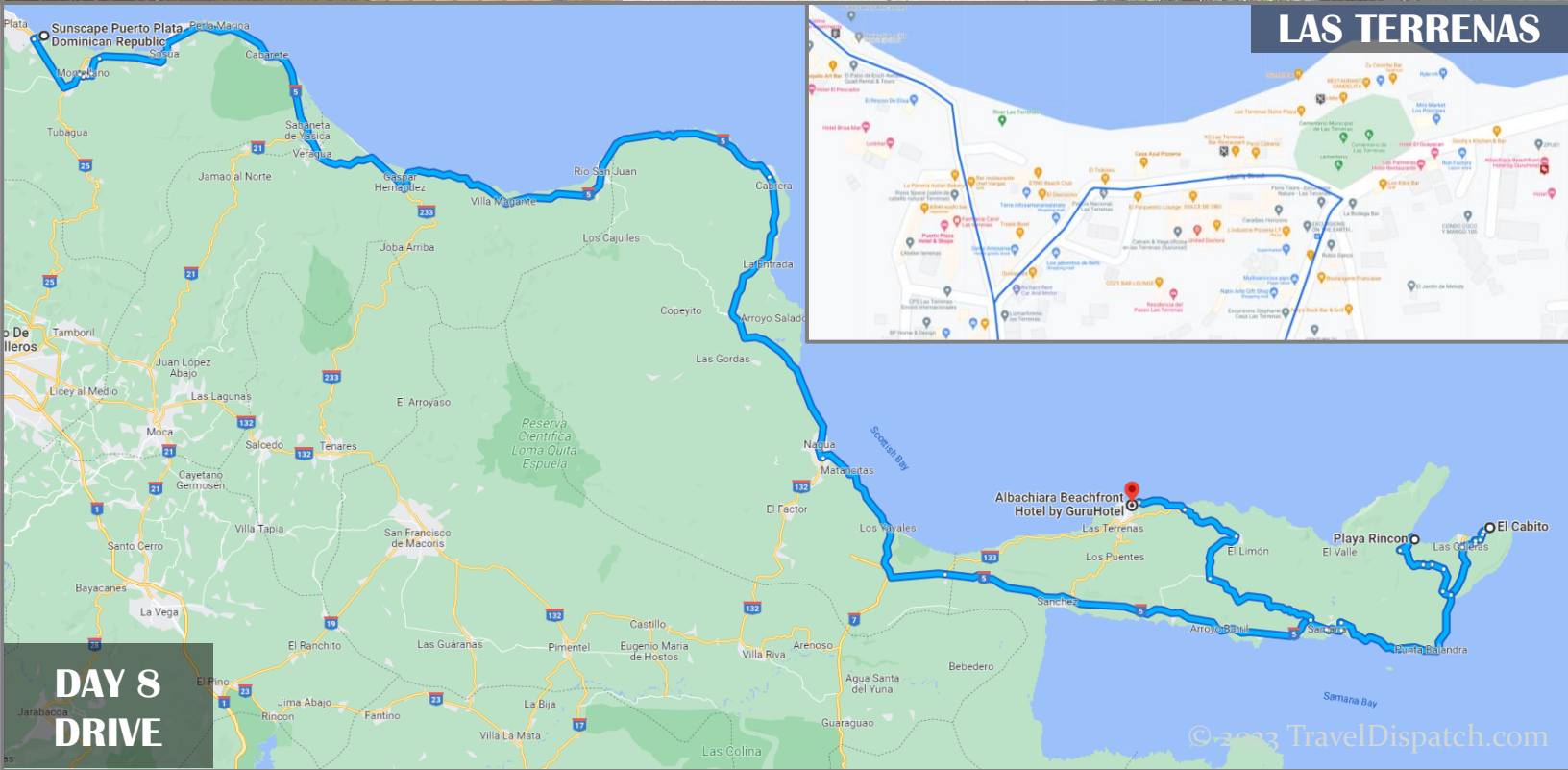




# DAY 8

Today we made our way along the coast to the gorgeous Samana Province. We made our way to the very tip of the Samana peninsula for an unforgettably delicious and scenic lunch clinging to the cliffs before making our way back to fully explore the cool beach town of Las Terrenas where we wandered the remainder of the day and enjoyed a very tasty al fresco dinner.

<b>7:00AM</b>	Drive to Las Galeras [243km; 4hr 30min]
<b>12:00PM</b>	Lunch at <a href="#">El Cabito</a>
<b>1:15PM</b>	Drive to explore <a href="#">Playa Rincon</a> [23km; 45min]
<b>3:00PM</b>	Drive to <b>Las Terrenas</b> [70km; 1hr 45min]
<b>4:45PM</b>	Check in at <a href="#">Albahiara Beachfront Hotel</a>
<b>5:30PM</b>	Wander along the beach; beverages at <a href="#">One Love Surf Shack</a>
<b>7:30PM</b>	Dinner at <a href="#">XO Las Terrenas</a>



# DAY 9

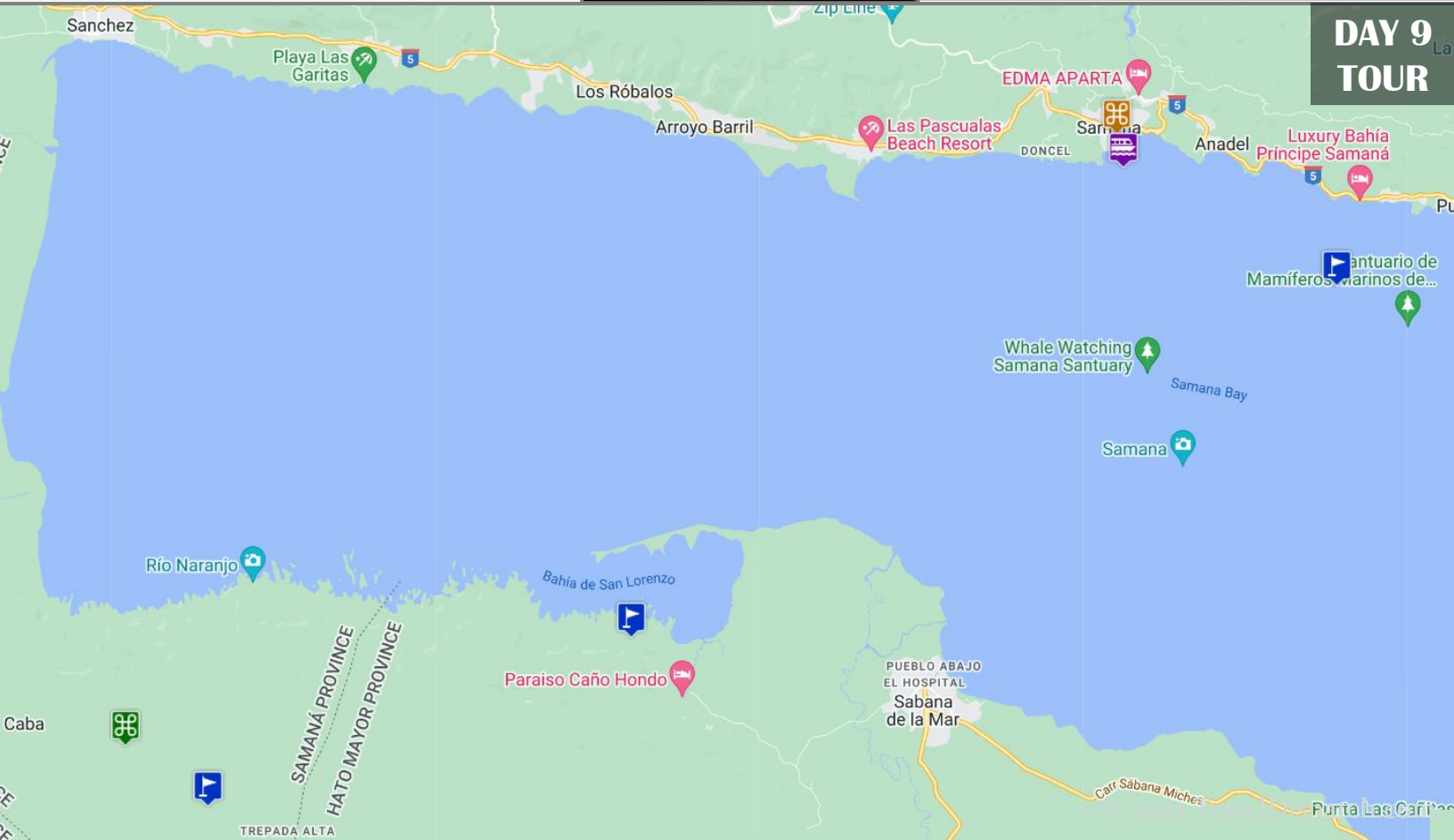
Today we explored the coast and caves of Los Haitises National Park. After breakfast we were picked up to take a full-day tour via catamaran of the diverse islands, coastline, caves, and beaches with the Samana Bay and Los Haitises National Park. We returned back to our hotel that evening and then had an amazing dinner at a great French restaurant on the beach.

**7:00AM** Breakfast at **Albachiara**

**8:00AM** Pick from hotel for *Los Haitises Tour* with [ATM Tours](#) (pick up at 8:00am; return 4:00PM; catamaran out to Los Haitises National Park, includes lunch)

**4:00PM** Return to hotel; shower & relax before dinner

**6:30PM** Dinner at [La Plage](#)



## DAY 9 TOUR

# DAY 10

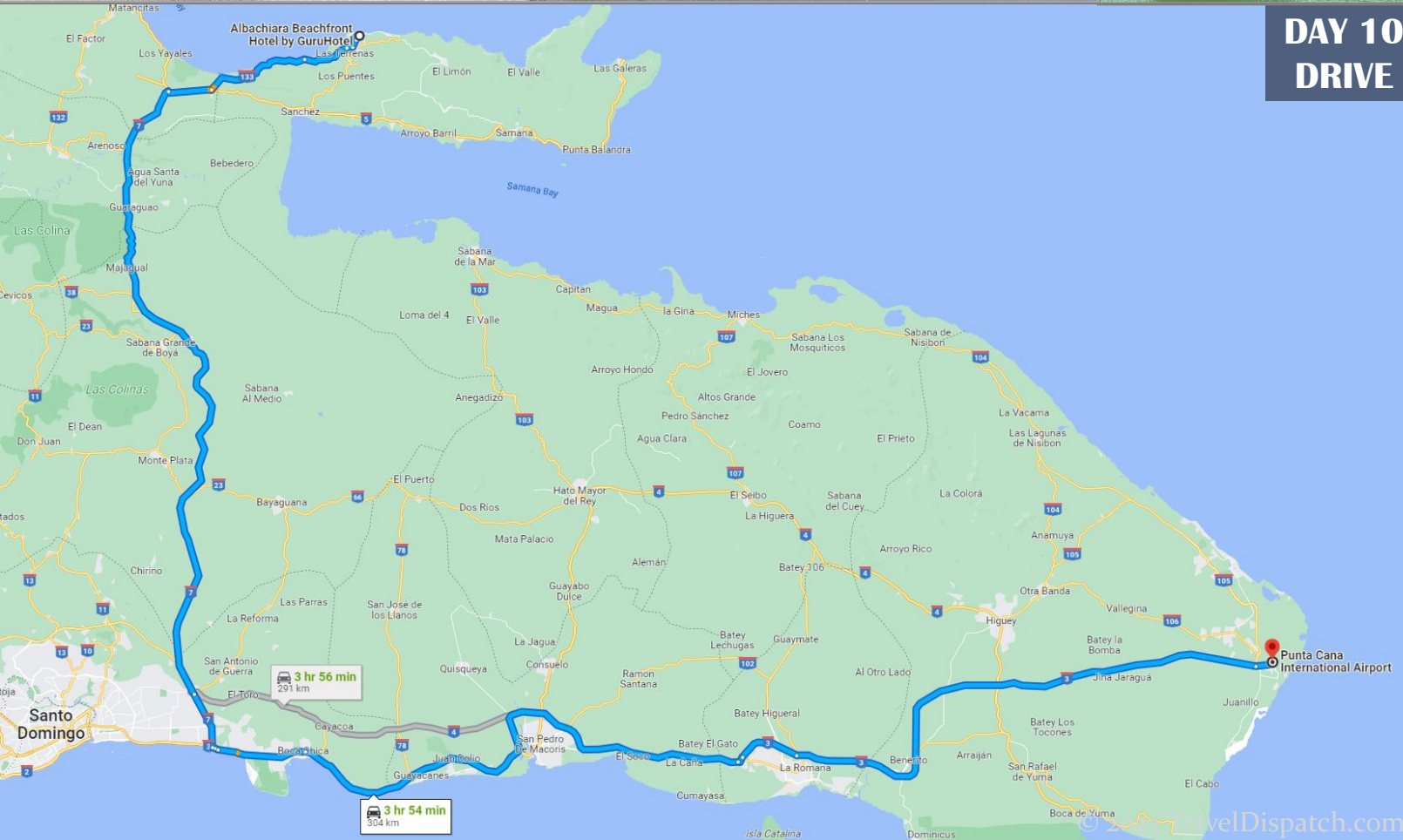
Today we made our way back to Punta Cana to fly home. After breakfast we made our way back to Punta Cana with plans of checking out a couple additional beaches and having lunch south of town in Playa Juanillo. However, the road starting at Cap Cana are apparently privately owned in that region of the country and we were restricted from entering that area without staying at one of the local resorts or paying ridiculous fees. Out of principle, we decided to skip it and just have lunch at the airport. Regardless, we hope you'll agree this trip provides plenty of fantastic experiences and more than enough exploration of the Dominican Republic.

**7:00AM** Breakfast at **Albachiara**

Explore and / or pack up to head up

**9:00AM** Drive to **Punta Cana International (PUJ)** and return rental [291km; 4hr]

**3:00PM** Fly home



The lists below illustrate our top picks based on our experiences along our trip. The lists are not intended to be exhaustive and we do not have partnerships or receive incentives from any of our recommendations. We've included any available links to the providers and to 'our reviews' I've posted on TripAdvisor. We wish you memorable travels and encourage you to reach out with any questions!

## LODGING

I've ranked our lodging experiences for this trip; *sequenced from best to worst*.

[Billini Hotel](#) [Santo Domingo; Day 3] [{Our Review}](#)

Despite the delayed check in, the rooftop pool, quality rooms, and location were great; *definitely recommend!*

[Albahiara Beachfront Hotel](#) [Las Terrenas; Days 8 & 9] [{Our Review}](#)

Great location, huge rooms, and helpful staff makes this an easy choice when in Las Terrenas.

[Centro Plaza Hodelpa](#) [Santiago de Los Caballeros; Day 5] [{Our Review}](#)

Friendly service and decent rooms were perfectly adequate for our overnight on New Year's Eve in Santiago!

[Sunscape Puerto Plata](#) [Puerto Plata; Days 6 & 7] [{Our Review}](#)

We're not really into the 'all inclusive' resort scene, but it was okay; *however, DO NOT sign up for any presentations!*

[Ki Ra Guesthouse](#) [Boca de Chavon; Days 1 & 2] [{Our Review}](#)

Friendly owners and nice location; but, we had a mosquito infestation and shower issues...*tough to recommend...*

[Casa del Mar Lodge](#) [Barahona; Day 4] [{Our Review}](#)

Great location and potential; however, management and restaurant definitely fell short...*would not recommend!*



## RESTAURANTS

I've included our Top 5 places where we ate during this trip; *sequenced by day, not ranking*.

[Kukka Beach Restaurant](#) [Playa Bayahibe; Days 1 & 2] [{Our Review}](#)

Great location and atmosphere with tasty food and cold beverages; so good we went multiple times!

[Pat'e Palo European Brasserie](#) [Santo Domingo; Day 3] [{Our Review}](#)

Great location, food, and people watching along one of the main squares in Santo Domingo.

[Rancho Chito Restaurant](#) [Santiago de Los Caballeros; Day 5] [{Our Review}](#)

Best smoky and crisp pork on the island; it's a buffet, but don't underestimate the quality you will find.

[El Cabito](#) [Las Galeras; Day 8] [{Our Review}](#)

Cliffside al fresco dining with amazing views matched only by the fresh, simple, and flavorful seafood specials!

[La Plage](#) [Las Terrenas; Day 9] [{Our Review}](#)

Excellent bistro on the beach with a talented French chef who enjoys spending time in the Caribbean.

## EXPERIENCES

[Hike through Cueva del Puente](#) [Bayahibe; Day 2]

It's a dark cave with plenty of bats (*HEAD LAMP!*), but reaching the hole where sunlight and vines drape through the ceiling is truly a Tomb Raider moment. (200DOP entrance; 6km total; ~2.5hr)

[Join the Holiday Celebration in Santo Domingo](#) [Santo Domingo; Day 3]

Between Christmas and New Year's the Colonial Zone is filled with events, music, and dancing; check out the Plaza España and Monasterio de San Francisco after sunset for street dance parties.

[Journey to Explore the Samana Province](#) [Samana Province; Days 8 & 9]

From delicious dining along coastal cliffs and beaches to natural glory found along the shores and caves of Los Haitises, the Samana Province is one of the best areas for experiences in the country.

[Check out Puerto Plata](#) [Puerto Plata; Days 6 & 7]

Between the rum distillery and oceanside fortress to Umbrella Street and Independence Park, you'll find a wide variety of things to enjoy and plenty of resort options in this area.

