

Friends of the Dominican Republic



50TH Anniversary Update

January 27, 2012

Update #3

In This Issue

[Earthquakes in DR](#)

[50 Years after Trujillo
Symposium](#)

[Travel Reminders](#)

[Nighttime Safety](#)

[PCVs need a loaner video
camera](#)

[Travel Tips for DR](#)

Question Links

[Dues-Donations](#)

[Data Changes](#)

[Newsletter Articles &
Comments](#)

[More About Us](#)

REMEMBERING!

We have some helpful travel advice in this update; please be sure and read the information about leaving Las Americas International.

With only two weeks away, we are working on last minute details. So far we have over 160 registered RPCVs plus many guests; we're expecting most of the current Volunteers to be in attendance Thursday so it should be quite a rich and different day for all of us.

- Historian Frank Moya Pons keynote on the Dominican Republic After Trujillo
- Dominican colleagues discussing the Enduring Legacy of Peace Corps
- A buffet lunch of comida tipica
- Gathering in small groups to review our program work and successes over the years

- Bob Bielen, MD and his RPCVs of the time on their work during the 1965 Civil War
- The dedication of a memorial to Andy Hernandez and the PCVs who died in service, Hernandez family in attendance
- Evening US Ambassador's Reception

Also, we have learned that preceding our celebration will be a major Dominican history symposium on the last 50 years - (Please see information from BJ Warren below)

Kathryn Hanowell, President,
Friends of the Dominican Republic
president@fotdr.org

John Evans, Chair, Celebration Planning
treasurer@fotdr.org

Recent Earthquakes in the DR

You may have read about the 5.1 earthquakes last week in the northeastern part of the DR centered near Nagua. We expect the Embassy to alert Peace Corps if there are expectations of continued seismic events. We have checked but they have not done so at publication.

RPCV Richard Laird is traveling in-country and has suggested you might look at the website DR1.com to learn about what has happened. DR1.com also has interesting news for ex pats.

A Washington Post article also has information. [Northern Dominican Republic shakes ...](#)

Good advice for you when traveling is this suggestion from emergency preparedness people: Have someone back home identified as the information exchange contact point for you and other loved ones. In case of an emergency event, you would call your central contact to let them know how you are doing. Your family and friends would call them for updates. This avoids multiple calls to you, adding to a likely strained communications system, and potentially

impacting communications for "first responders". I live in the Juan de Fuca/Cascadia fault area, so I keep up on my earthquake preparedness information. If you want to really dig into this, go to the FEMA website [What to do in an earthquake](#)

Kathryn Hanowell

Dominican Republic 50 Years after Trujillo

For those of you coming early you may be interested in this symposium sponsored by President Lionel Fernandez's "think tank" group.

- Monday, February 6th, 7- 9 PM -- a panel with historian Howard Wiarda and others-open to the public
- Tuesday Feb 7th , 6-8 PM -- another panel moderated by Bernardo Vega-theme- "Transition to Democracy" - by invitation only
- Venue for both nights is FUNGLODE (Fundacion Global Democracia y Desarrollo) located off Maximo Gomez near the University
- Both events require that your name be on an entry list at the door as space is limited
- BJ Warren will coordinate with the symposium and take names of any folks who want to attend either or both events based on a first come first served admission. rwarren@msi-inc.com

Note: This conference has been in the planning stage for about a year. Howard Wiarda is a Professor who was in the Dominican Republic many times and has written extensively about the DR, the revolution etc.

Travel Reminders

- Airport ridesharing to hotel and back: If you are interested please email your registration name, number in your party, your email contact, arrival date, time and flight numbers for ida y vuelta, airports of entry and departure to victoriaataylor@gmail.com
- Send an email to John Evans treasurer@fotdr.org if you will not attend one of the meals or events so we can adjust our numbers and apply the funds to our need to host volunteers and Dominicans.

Las Americas Airport - Be there 3 hours in advance!-a cautionary from Roger Weiss

About 3% of passengers traveling through Las Americas International Airport (AILA) miss their flights because they do not arrive the required three hours in advance. Because of all the pre-flight checks of baggage and documents, passengers are required to arrive at least three hours ahead of time, to allow for any issues to be resolved. Note: ***the baggage inspection area closes one hour before flight time.*** If there are large numbers of passengers, a latecomer will not have sufficient time to get through baggage inspection before it closes. Of course, overweight bags are always an issue when checking in. The airlines impose penalties on people who are forced to travel on other flights because they are late for check-in/baggage processing.

Use but be careful with credit cards

The Dominican Republic is now a major tourist destination, especially for Europeans. Credit Cards are widely used. Make sure you feel comfortable with the venue in which you use a credit card. Fred Kalhammer tells us there are "Lots of cases of copies made surreptitiously resulting in mysterious charges to one's card".....

Nighttime safety in Santo Domingo

Peace Corps urges caution when moving around Santo Domingo in the evening. Take taxis rather than walk unless you are on a major pedestrian street such as El Conde. Stay with a group for short walks between hotels and restaurants. Observe all the safety rules you would when in Rome or other major city where street crime is a problem.

We will have hired transportation - vans--to take us to the events Thursday (Peace Corps offices and Embassy) and Friday evening (Zona Colonial, Museo Trampoline).

Audio-Visual equipment needed for PCV use at reunion!

The PCVs who are helping us organize and run the conference want to be able to record all important events, especially the ones that are

going on simultaneously! They are desperately searching for a video camera and tripod for use on Wednesday to allow them to film all simultaneous events and preserve them for the 100th anniversary! Also, they are looking for two lapel microphones to record history interviews. If you can help, please email PCV Adam Fivenson at afivenson@gmail.com

Travel tips from an experienced DR traveler - Neil Ross

- ***Using a telephone in the DR***

1. HOTEL CALLING is quite expensive locally and more so internationally. Hotels are useful in a pinch but not if many calls are needed.
2. BORROW A DR CELL PHONE from a local friend. If you plan to use it often, buy time calling card for 25, 50, 100, 200 or 500 pesos and punch in the codes. Ask any Dominican for help if you are confused about how to use.
3. USING YOUR OWN PHONE - Your cell phone can work in the DR under two conditions:
 - Order international use from your telephone company (AT&T, Verizon, etc.) to allow your phone to make international calls in and from the DR. You will be charged a high per minute rate, but if you do not plan to make many calls, this could be easiest. The high rates also apply to local calls you make within the DR. If you visit the DR for several weeks or yearly, this is not a good choice.
 - If your phone is compatible with international calling (e.g. many better AT&T phones, any iPhone 4s, Blackberry) visit the Codetel Office in Santo Domingo (near Parque Independencia) to have it temporarily converted to DR (they switch the US chip for a DR one; be sure to save it to put back in on return home), get a local DR number (free), and buy time calling cards. You pay same low cost rate per minute, as do Dominicans.
 - Other option - If you plan to visit the DR often is to buy a cheap phone (around \$25 or so) at any Codetel or Orange store, get a local number, and buy calling cards. After you do not use the phone for over a month, the phone number and balance of the calling card disappears,

and must be acquired new in each visit. This is what I've been doing but my new iPhone 4s allows me to use my own phone and all the numbers on my address book. You can bring this phone back in later visits, get a new number and buy time cards.

- ***Use official money changers or ATMs for cash***

Best place to get your dollars converted to pesos is in the airport at one of the official money changing booths. Their rates are usually good and at the official rate. Later you can go to banks.

Avoid street moneychangers. A popular scam is for them to hand you the pesos to count, then to grab it back to double check the counting but in fact to switch through slight of hand the larger bills for lower value ones [e.g., 1000 peso notes for 10 peso notes].

Use banks, even if it takes longer waiting in lines, they are secure.

ATMs are faster, but be careful to watch for pickpockets. Almost all major hotels, resorts, casinos, banks, high-end stores have ATMs. There are ATMs even in many small towns. When you choose "English", they work the same way as home. You must enter the peso amount you want, not the dollar amount! ATMs have a maximum pesos withdrawal limit per day. Your bank will charge you a transaction fee plus a conversion fee, but the cash exchange rate is good.

- ***Renting a car and driving in the DR***

I have been visiting the DR at least once every year for over 15 years. Each time I rent a car and have by now driven to most parts of the country.

My recommendation is to use a well-known car rental company such as Hertz, Avis, National, Alamo, etc. I've tried local cheaper Dominican car companies but generally am not so impressed. For the past 10 years I've had good luck with National Car Rental.

Some tips:

- Use the rental in which you are a member of their frequent user

program (free) or join the rental company you choose and save about 10%.

- Reserve and rent your car online ahead of arrival.
- Avoid picking it up at the airport because [same as in states] extra daily airport charges apply; instead arrange for downtown Santo Domingo pick-up [or Santiago or Puerto Plata city centers] where those extra costs do not apply.
- You will have a taxi cost to the car company but that is a one time charge. All cars can be returned to any airport when departing without charge.
- You need a US driver's license and a credit card. I pay with my AMEX credit card for extra insurance coverage.
- You can get standard shift at lower daily cost or automatic for a bit more. If you plan to spend much time in cities, go for a smaller vehicle, but for long distance country travel, a bit larger one might be considered.
- Always get a car with a locking trunk where your luggage can be safely hidden. Never leave the car unlocked or locked with your gear visible.
- Before taking possession of your rental car, check the car closely paying attention to the tire treads, windshield washer, headlights, scratches/dents, and if anything does not look right ask for another car or to have it fixed.

Dominican driving style is different than US...understand and be prepared for the unexpected. Cars may not heed stop signs and red lights; they may cut you off. One-way streets often are not. If you are in traffic, your best bet is to move into an empty space first before someone else cuts you off for that spot. Defensive driving is essential. Do not expect cars even at high speeds to stay in their lane or to pass on the left...same for the many trucks. Surprisingly, road rage is rare there because everyone expects the unexpected.

Toll Booths: Going east and west out of Santo Domingo have toll booths. There is a new north south toll road from near Boca Chica north to Samana; have not tried it yet but hear it is much quicker than the Cibao route.

Other tips - All gas stations sell fuel at the same per gallon rate. In cities, homeless boys on street corners will wash your windshield for a few pesos so have some handy.

Looking forward to seeing you!

Kathryn Hanowell, President, Friends of the Dominican Republic
president@fotdr.org

John Evans, Treasurer and 50th Anniversary Chair
treasurer@fotdr.org



This email was sent to weissdsl1@frontier.com by president@fotdr.org |

Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Friends of the Dominican Republic | John Evans | 4512 Park Road | Alexandria | VA | 22312