Dominican Republic

Gateway to the birds of Hispaniola



Palmchats by Bobby Wilcox

The Dominican Republic offers one of the most rewarding and visually exciting introductions to Caribbean birding anywhere in the region. Beyond the country's famous beaches and tropical coastline lies a remarkably diverse landscape of pine-clad mountains, lush broadleaf forests, scenic valleys, coastal wetlands and dry Caribbean scrub, all supporting an exceptional variety of endemic birdlife together with a fascinating diversity of reptiles, butterflies and other Caribbean wildlife found nowhere else on Earth.

Our Rockjumper Gateway Tour has been specially designed to introduce travellers to the birds, wildlife and spectacular natural beauty of Hispaniola in a comfortable and enjoyable way. Exploring a variety of accessible habitats ranging from cool mountain forests to coastal lagoons and Caribbean dry forest, we can expect a wonderful selection of colourful and charismatic island specialties together with spectacular scenery and a warm Caribbean atmosphere throughout the journey.

Among the many highlights are the bizarre and beautiful Broad-billed and Narrow-billed Todies, the striking Hispaniolan Trogon, noisy Palmchat, colourful Hispaniolan Spindalis, Hispaniolan Woodpecker and the elegant Golden Swallow. We will also search for Hispaniolan Amazon, Antillean Piculet, Rufous-throated Solitaire, Green-tailed Warbler, White-necked Crow and numerous other Caribbean specialties while enjoying some of the island's most scenic mountain and coastal landscapes.

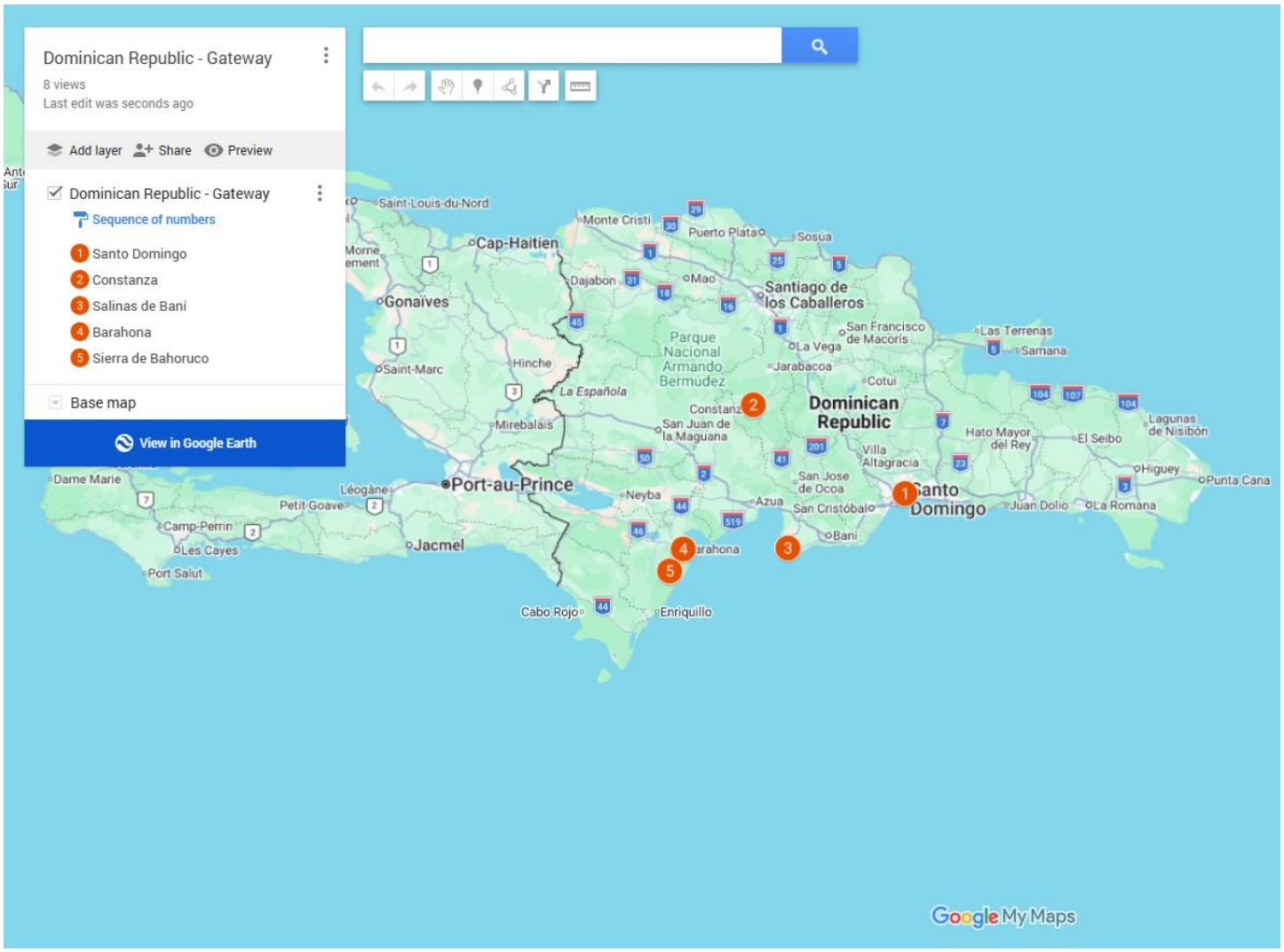
In addition to the excellent birding, the Dominican Republic offers welcoming hospitality, fascinating Caribbean culture, a deep passion for baseball and beautiful tropical scenery throughout. Comfortable accommodations, manageable travel days and generally accessible birding conditions make this tour an ideal introduction to Caribbean birding travel.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic & welcome group dinner**
Day 2	**Santo Domingo Botanical Gardens & transfer to Constanza**
Days 3 & 4	**Constanza & central highlands (Ebano Verde, Aguas Blancas & Pinar del Valle)**
Day 5	**Constanza to Barahona via Salinas de Baní**
Day 6	**Barahona to Pedernales via boat trip on Laguna Oviedo**
Day 7	**Southern Sierra de Bahoruco, return to Barahona**
Day 8	**Barahona to Santo Domingo & final departure**

*Optional Gateway Start Package**

Day 0	**Arrival in Miami & overnight stay**
Day 1	**Flight from Miami to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic & welcome group dinner**



Endemic species

Excellent **photography** opportunities

Optional **night** birding

Scenic highland **landscapes**

Coastal & Caribbean **scenery**

Birding sites in detail

Santo Domingo Botanical Gardens. The beautifully maintained Santo Domingo Botanical Gardens provide a wonderful introduction to the birds and natural habitats of Hispaniola. Despite being located within the capital city, the gardens protect extensive areas of native vegetation, palms, ponds and flowering trees that support an impressive variety of Caribbean birdlife. Birding here is easy and enjoyable, with much of our time spent walking along wide paths and quiet garden trails beneath towering palms and tropical vegetation.



Broad-billed Tody by Dušan Brinkhuizen

This is an excellent location to become familiar with many of the Dominican Republic's most characteristic species, and we may encounter Palmchat, Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Hispaniolan Parakeet, Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo, Broad-billed Tody, Antillean Palm Swift, Black-crowned Tanager and the tiny Vervain Hummingbird. Additional possibilities include Antillean Mango, Caribbean Dove, Greater Antillean Grackle, Bananaquit, Grey Kingbird, Smooth-billed Ani, White-winged Dove and Black-whiskered Vireo. Wetland areas occasionally produce West Indian Whistling Duck, Common Gallinule and various herons.

The gardens also offer excellent photography opportunities, and the comfortable pace of birding here provides an ideal and enjoyable beginning to our Caribbean birding adventure.

Santo Domingo to Constanza. Leaving the Caribbean lowlands behind, we travel inland toward the scenic central highlands around Constanza. The journey offers a fascinating transition from coastal habitats and tropical cityscapes to cooler mountain valleys, pine forests and lush agricultural landscapes.



Hispaniolan Woodpecker by Dušan Brinkhuizen

En route we may stop at productive birding areas and scenic viewpoints where species such as Palmchat, Grey Kingbird, Caribbean Dove, Loggerhead Kingbird, Antillean Palm Swift, Turkey Vulture, American Kestrel and Western Cattle Egret are often encountered. Flowering trees and roadside vegetation may also produce Bananaquit, Antillean Mango and Black-whiskered Vireo as we gradually gain elevation into the mountainous interior.

Constanza itself is renowned for its beautiful mountain scenery, pleasant climate and peaceful atmosphere, making it an ideal base for our exploration of Hispaniola's endemic birdlife.

Constanza & central highlands. The cool pine forests, broadleaf woodlands and scenic mountain valleys of the Dominican Republic's central highlands support an excellent selection of Hispaniolan endemics and other Caribbean specialties. Over two days, we will explore Ebano Verde Nature Reserve, Valle Nuevo National Park and the surrounding Constanza region, combining short forest trails, roadside birding and relaxed exploration of lodge grounds and mountain landscapes.



Hispaniolan Trogon by Dušan Brinkhuizen

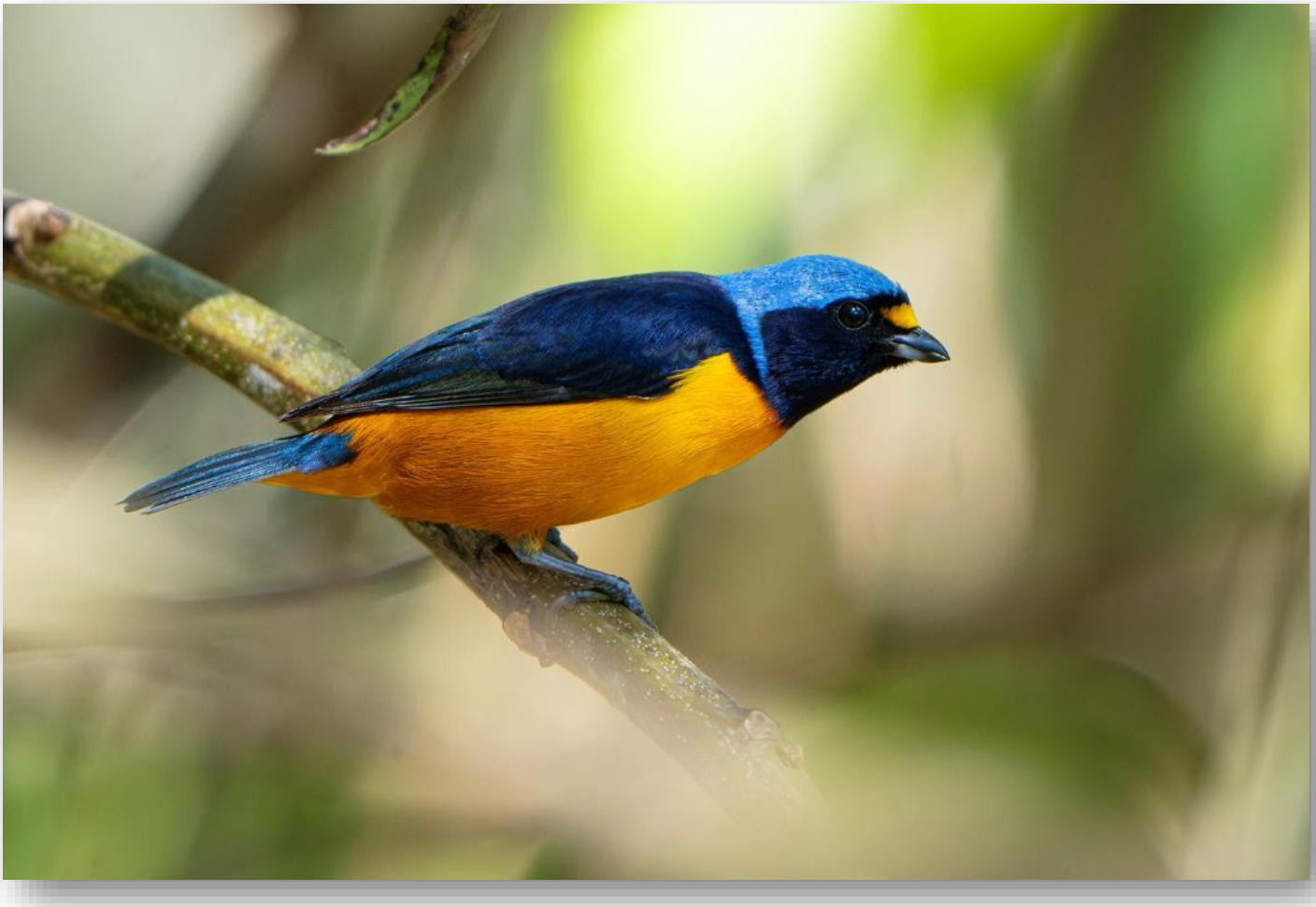
Ebano Verde offers particularly rewarding forest birding, with possibilities including the elegant Hispaniolan Trogon, colourful Narrow-billed Tody, Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Hispaniolan Emerald and tiny Vervain Hummingbird. We may also encounter Greater Antillean Elaenia, Hispaniolan Pewee, Stolid Flycatcher, Rufous-throated Solitaire, Black-crowned Palm-Tanager and Hispaniolan Spindalis.

The higher pine forests and open mountain habitats around Valle Nuevo provide a different birding experience, with species such as Antillean Siskin, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Yellow-faced and Black-faced Grassquits, Caribbean Martin and further opportunities for several of the

region's endemic birds. Scenic stops and time at Aguas Blancas waterfall add further variety to our exploration of the central highlands.

Birding in this region is generally easy and enjoyable, with most activities conducted along quiet roads, lodge grounds and short forest trails. Combined with Constanza's pleasant mountain climate and impressive scenery, the central highlands provide one of the most attractive and memorable sections of the tour.

Laguna de Oviedo. This large coastal lagoon is surrounded by dry forest, mangroves, salt-tolerant vegetation and open shoreline habitats, creating an important refuge for waterbirds and other Caribbean wildlife, and should prove one of the tour's most memorable wildlife experiences.



Hispaniolan Euphonia by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Black-necked Stilts, White-cheeked Pintail, Snowy Plover, Wilson's Plover, Reddish Egret, Tricolored Heron, Little Blue Heron and Royal Tern. Mangrove edges may also produce Mangrove Warbler, Caribbean Clapper Rail, Black-whiskered Vireo, Smooth-billed Ani.

A boat excursion also includes a visit to one of the lagoon's islands, where we will search for the Dominican Republic's impressive endemic iguanas. Combined with the dramatic scenery and

relaxed pace of the boat trip, Laguna de Oviedo offers excellent photographic opportunities and an enjoyable change from the forest birding elsewhere on the tour.

Additional birding possibilities include Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, American Oystercatcher, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover and White Ibis.

Barahona & southern Sierra de Bahoruco. The Barahona region and southern slopes of the Sierra de Bahoruco support some of the Dominican Republic's richest birdlife together with spectacular mountain and coastal scenery. Fortunately, several excellent birding areas are accessible via good roads, allowing us to comfortably experience the remarkable diversity of the region without the demanding conditions associated with some of Hispaniola's more remote mountain areas.



Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo by Bobby Wilcox

Over the next several days we will explore a variety of habitats including dry forest, pine woodland, broadleaf forest and scenic mountain roads in search of many Caribbean specialties.

Possible highlights include Hispaniolan Amazon, Hispaniolan Palm Crow, Hispaniolan Oriole, Antillean Piculet, White-necked Crow, Stolid Flycatcher, Greater Antillean Bullfinch, Broad-billed Tody, Narrow-billed Tody and perhaps Golden Swallow.

Additional species may include Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo, Palmchat, Hispaniolan Euphonia, Green-tailed Warbler, Black-crowned Palm Tanager, Caribbean Dove, Scaly-naped Pigeon, Hispaniolan Emerald and Red-legged Thrush. Coastal sections may also produce Brown Booby, Magnificent Frigatebird and White-tailed Tropicbird under favourable conditions.



Hispaniolan Amazon by Dušan Brinkhuizen

An optional evening excursion will search for Ashy-faced Owl, Northern Potoo and other nocturnal wildlife.

The region's flowering trees, forest edges and mountain viewpoints provide excellent opportunities for photography, while the dramatic scenery, fascinating reptile diversity and warm Caribbean atmosphere create a fitting conclusion to our introduction to the endemic birds and wildlife of Hispaniola.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Designed specifically for first-time international birders and travellers. Moderate travel days, comfortable accommodations and limited strenuous activity throughout. Some early starts are required for the best birding opportunities.
Birding Ease / Pace		Easy to moderate. Birding is conducted at an enjoyable pace with a strong emphasis on visually rewarding Caribbean endemics and scenic birding experiences rather than difficult or highly technical birding.
Accommodation		Comfortable tourist lodges and hotels with private bathrooms, reliable amenities and convenient access to birding areas.
Walking / Trails		Generally easy walks on roads, lodge grounds and well-maintained trails. Some uneven surfaces, steps and short inclines may occasionally be encountered in forested and mountainous areas.
Vehicles / Roads		Travel is conducted in comfortable vehicles on generally good roads. Some longer drives are unavoidable due to the geography of the island, but travel days are broken up with regular birding and sightseeing stops.
Climate		Warm tropical conditions are experienced throughout much of the tour, particularly in coastal and lowland areas. Cooler and more comfortable temperatures are typically encountered in the central highlands around Constanza. Occasional rain showers and humidity may be experienced.
Photography		Excellent. Many birds are seen well, and several locations offer excellent photography opportunities in attractive natural settings.
Annoyances		Warm tropical conditions, occasional rain and humidity may be encountered, particularly in lowland areas. Some early mornings are necessary for optimal bird activity. Tropical insects may occasionally be present.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 8;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve & site entrance fees;
- All guiding services,
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- International and domestic flights unless specifically stated;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Optional gratuities for your Rockjumper leader/s;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Typical additional personal costs may include travel insurance, airport hotels, alcoholic beverages, personal shopping and optional tour leader gratuities.

***Optional Miami Gateway Start Package**

For travellers who may feel uncertain about international travel, we offer an optional pre-tour (Day 0) overnight stay in Miami, Florida, where guests can meet a Rockjumper tour leader prior to the international portion of the journey. On Day 1, the group will travel together from Miami to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

The package includes a group dinner on Day 0 and breakfast on Day 1, one night of airport hotel accommodation, and assistance from a Rockjumper tour leader during airport check-in and international travel procedures.

Single Supplement: Many accommodations use twin-bed rooms. Guests who prefer private accommodation may request a single room for an additional fee. If you elect to share accommodation but a suitable roommate cannot be found, the applicable single supplement will become payable. We will always make reasonable efforts to match guests wishing to share.

Tipping: Gratuities for drivers, hotel staff, restaurants and local services are included on this tour. Tipping your Rockjumper leader/s is entirely optional and based on your satisfaction with the tour.

- **Tour prices are fixed in the primary currency shown in bold on our website. Prices listed in other currencies are approximate and may vary slightly due to exchange rate fluctuations at the time of final invoicing.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement may be offered to confirm departure.**

- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour-related costs and may need to be adjusted accordingly.**
- **Designated tour leader/s may change due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only and minor adjustments to the order of travel, accommodations or sites visited may occasionally be necessary.**

Rockjumper Gateway Tours are specially designed for travellers taking their first steps into international birding travel, as well as those seeking a more comfortable and approachable tropical birding experience. These tours combine enjoyable birding, comfortable accommodations and manageable travel days with a relaxed pace and a high level of support throughout the journey.

While birding remains the primary focus of these tours, the overall pace and structure are designed to be enjoyable and accessible rather than intensive. We avoid demanding hikes, difficult travel schedules and overly strenuous birding conditions wherever possible, allowing guests to focus on enjoying the birds, wildlife, scenery and overall travel experience.

Gateway Tours are intentionally designed around comfort, atmosphere and enjoyable birding experiences rather than long species lists or physically demanding schedules. These tours provide an ideal introduction to tropical birding travel while still offering exciting wildlife encounters and memorable birding throughout.

These tours are not suitable for guests seeking demanding, fast-paced, highly target-driven birding experiences or intensive photography-focused itineraries.

Most days begin with an optional early morning birding session when bird activity is at its best, followed by breakfast and a relaxed mid-morning pace. Afternoons generally include additional birding, wildlife viewing or travel between locations, with time available to enjoy the lodges and scenery. Optional evening outings may occasionally be offered in search of nocturnal wildlife.

Guests are welcome to participate at a pace comfortable to them throughout the tour.

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly limit luggage to 20kg (44lb) for checked baggage and 8kg (18lb) for hand luggage.
- The Dominican Republic experiences warm tropical conditions throughout much of the year, particularly in lowland and coastal areas. Lightweight clothing, sun protection and adequate hydration are recommended throughout the tour.
- Temperatures in the central highlands around Constanza can occasionally be cooler, especially during the evenings and early mornings, so a light jacket or warm layer is advisable.
- Mosquitoes and small biting insects can occasionally be present, particularly in humid and forested areas. We recommend bringing a good quality insect repellent containing DEET or a suitable alternative.
- Accommodation throughout the tour is comfortable and well situated for birding and sightseeing. A good variety of Western and Caribbean-style cuisine is generally available throughout the trip.
- The Dominican Republic has a well-developed tourism infrastructure, and electricity, Wi-Fi and mobile coverage are widely available throughout most of the tour, although internet speeds may occasionally be slower in more remote areas.
- The Dominican Republic is generally regarded as a welcoming and traveller-friendly destination. As with travel anywhere, guests should take normal precautions regarding valuables and personal belongings, particularly in busy urban areas.

Arrival and Departure Details

Day 1 of the tour is set aside as an arrival day, allowing guests time to settle in after their international journey. Guests may arrive in Santo Domingo at any time during the day, with a welcome dinner held in the evening to meet your fellow travellers and tour leader before the tour begins. The tour will conclude in Santo Domingo after lunch on Day 8.

Guests joining the **Optional Miami Gateway Start Package** may arrive in Miami at any time on Day 0 and check in to the group hotel at their convenience. That evening, guests will meet their Rockjumper tour leader and fellow travellers during a relaxed group dinner, providing an opportunity to get acquainted and discuss the exciting adventure ahead.

On Day 1, the group will travel together from Miami to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, with assistance provided throughout airport check-in and international travel procedures where required.

The above information regarding arrivals and departures is intended as a general guide only. Precise arrival and departure details will be provided in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive earlier and/or depart later and require assistance with additional accommodation or travel arrangements, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Please do not book any flights until the Rockjumper Team has officially confirmed the tour.

Rockjumper Gateway Tours are specifically designed around destinations with straightforward entry requirements for most travellers, with little or no visa or travel authorization requirements typically necessary. At the time of booking, we will advise guests of any known visa, entry or travel authorization requirements relevant to the tour.

Visa and entry requirements can vary depending on nationality and may occasionally change at short notice. Guests are ultimately responsible for ensuring they meet all entry requirements for the countries visited and should verify the latest information with the appropriate consulate, embassy or official government authority prior to travel.