

(Long) Weekend Retreat

FOR A RELAXING GETAWAY THIS SPRING, HEAD TO AMANERA, AN UPSCALE RESORT IN THE HEART OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. **BY JUDY KOUTSKY**

Views from the casitas at Amanera, which is set on the island's north coast.



The Dominican Republic might be just a quick flight from the tristate area, but spending even just a few days or a long weekend there will leave you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated.

There are plenty of activities to keep you entertained and a variety of hotels on the island. On the north coast, is Amanera, an Aman resort, which has views of the Cordillera Septentrional Mountain Range and rainforest on one side, and the Atlantic Ocean on the other. The boutique property has 25 casitas perched on top of the cliffs overlooking Playa Grande beach. Amanera means “peaceful water” and you’ll find just that here.

AT THE RESORT

Food lovers will enjoy the live cooking demonstrations as well as tasting the fresh, tropical, seasonal and sustainable local ingredients. For those looking to hone their culinary skills, the Amanera chef offers private lessons on how to make South American favorites, including ceviche. Try a wine tasting, or if you’re interested in spirits, the rum masterclass takes guests on a tour of the top producers in the Dominican Republic. (Pro tip: You can enjoy this with Amanera’s own brand of cigars.) If you want to go the romantic route, enjoy a dinner on the beach with your own private waiter.

(left) Experience local Dominican Republic cigar rolling;
(top) relish in open-air casa dining at Amanera.



Surf on Playa Grande and Playa Preciosa.

Hoping to relax and unwind? The spa is the perfect spot for a bit of TLC. There are beach spa pavilions, outdoor massage areas with panoramic views, plus couples' rooms. The extensive spa menu includes Aman signature treatments and Amanera 'moon cycle' inspired treatments as well as organic skincare products. Additionally, private guided meditation and yoga sessions are available.

If you're traveling with kids, they are sure to enjoy the kids club as well as the kids pool. And for parents who need a break, babysitting is available. Golfers can also head next door to the highly-

regarded Playa Grande Golf & Ocean Club to play a round or two.

IN THE REGION

While there's plenty to keep you busy at the resort itself, the region also offers lots of wonderful spots to explore as well—especially when it comes to water activities. For instance, Laguna Gri Gri is a popular freshwater lagoon lined with mangroves and is an ideal spot for swimming, snorkeling, SUP and exploring sea caves. If you're looking to surf, Playa Grande is the place to go—it has the perfect-size waves. It's good for both begin-

ners who are taking lessons and those who are seasoned. (Amanera can arrange for private lessons as well.)

Kite surfing is another popular activity in the DR and the wind conditions are ideal in Cabarete, considered a kite surfing mecca. The town also has a thriving nightlife and restaurant scene. Two restaurants worth trying are Yalla at Millennium Resort, which has a variety of Latin and Spanish dishes, and Bliss, which specializes in Mediterranean dishes (the fish is freshly caught and prepared with local ingredients).

If you're looking for a little culture or want to do some shopping, head to Rio San

TRAVEL

Flow through
yoga on the golden
sands of Playa
Grande beach.





Partake in a round at Playa Grande Golf Course; (below) a view of the resort from the ocean.



Juan, a charming fishing village that's known for its art and artisan crafts.

Other popular activities? Whale watching is most prevalent from mid-January to mid-March when the humpbacks make their annual migration past the Samaná Peninsula. Horseback riding can be done either along the beach or in the interior of the island through the mountains and along the rivers and plantations—and is a definite must-do. And for true adventure enthusiasts hiking in the Septentrional Mountain Range to find hidden waterfalls and crystal pools is a great way to combine adrenaline-pumping exercise with leisurely swimming.

aman.com/resorts/amanera