

Traveling to Dominica – In Transit Tips and Info

Upon Arriving at the Airport in San Juan

- Follow the other passengers to the baggage claim area.
- Claim your luggage off the carousel. (DO NOT use your phone in baggage claim.)
- Make sure you have your luggage claim tickets out and available for the person checking luggage at the exit door from baggage claim.

Getting to the Best Western Hotel

Located in the terminal within about 300 feet from baggage claim and only steps away from the American Airline *check-in* counters. The rooms in this hotel are tiny, and often overly cool. One stay's here because of the convenience. Rates range from \$115 - \$150 US.

- To get to the Best Western hotel, exit out of the baggage claim area, and go left out of the door. There are overhead signs that point to the airport, but they can be confusing.
- Double check with the person checking your luggage tags to make sure my directions are correct.
- Follow the sidewalk, past the post office (on your left).
- Look for an escalator going up. (There will be signs to the hotel, but they just say casino hotel). If the escalator is not working or if there are signs blocking it that say "out of order," you can consider going up anyway, they could just be cleaning... the escalator dumps out very near the hotel entrance. OR, keep walking a short distance and there will be an elevator... after using the elevator you will have to back-track to the hotel

*There are many other hotels within 5 minutes of the airport. Taxis can be hailed immediately upon leaving baggage claim. Walk out the door and get in line; someone will help you get the taxi. Expect to pay a taxi \$20, one-way, to get to the nearby hotels.

Where to Eat in or near the San Juan Airport and Best Western Hotel

McDonalds and other fast-food -- from the hotel entrance inside the terminal proceed RIGHT past the American check-in counters for a ways and around the bend... you'll come to it.

Buffalo Wildwings – Exit the hotel and terminal (you see it down and to your left) and walk directly across the street and walk-way into the parking garage... angle left down the stairs to the ground level and then right along the sidewalk to the restaurant.... We generally eat and have a beer here... This place is not too bad... a lot of local flavor... the local beer is good... the food ok... pay with cash.

Diner... from the hotel entrance inside the terminal proceed LEFT and then left again just a few feet beyond the information booth and very near the entrance to gate security... go in, stand in the counter line and order what you want... the food is OK... we sometimes eat breakfast here...

Also, there are a few places to grab a bit in the secure gate area before boarding your flight... sometimes we get a sandwich for the plane... you can also buy water once through security to take on the plane.

*If staying at a location away from the airport premises expect to find many recognizable as well as good local restaurants within walking distance of your hotel.

Leaving San Juan

- Check your luggage at the American "Eagle" counter... it will be to the right of the regular American check-in counters
- Proceed back to your left to the security area... it's at the very end of the American counters
- Make sure you have your passport and ticket out for the agents in security.
- Follow the usual security process. Be careful not to have a lot of liquid-like make-up in your bag, Jodi.
- In San Juan, you have to stand in a certain place before walking through the security scanners.
- Once you find your gate, probably at the furthest end of the terminal (there will probably not be an agent there for a while), ask for a customs form for Dominica and a red tag for your carry-on gate "checked luggage" -- in other words, because there is very little space for luggage inside the plane, they will take it from you to place in the cargo hold of the plane. (*NOTE that you can carry on a normal sized backpack, large purse or bag as long as it is not overstuffed... *keep/carry your most important valuables with you on to the plane... e.g. passport, cash, credit cards, cameras, etc.*).
- They do not serve food on the plane, only drinks. IF you want to eat just before departing now is a good time to do it... you'll see where. OR, if you want to purchase a sandwich & bottle of water to carry on the plane to eat on the way, there is a small vender near your gate location.
- You will depart San Juan on a turbo-prop plane that carries about 60 people; there might or might not be many passengers.
- To board the plane, you will be lead from the terminal, outside and across the tarmac to the plane.
- Just before boarding, **IF** you have a carry-on suitcase, you will have to be "gate-checked" at this point; they will take it from you before you climb the stairs to the plane **OR** they will tell you where to sit it on the tarmac so the airport folks can load it onto the plane. You can now board the plane. **The plane boards / unloads from the rear**, so a seat in the back is a good thing for getting off the plane. And, a seat on the right side of the plane will provide you a look of Dominica's coast as you arrive.
- Enjoy your flight!

Immigrations/Customs Form

- Info for **Immigration Customs Form** -- The form will be provided to both of you at some point just before or "after" boarding the plane from San Juan to Dominica.
- You each need to fill out the front; only one of you needs to fill out the back. You have up until you land in Dominica to fill this out... (*NOTE, it is always a good idea to be carry a pen for writing that is easily accessible to you.
- The form is needed to enter Dominica and will need to be presented, along with your Passport, at the immigrations desk upon arrival in the Dominica terminal and just before you can pick up your luggage.

Arriving in Dominica

- Follow the other passengers and proceed to the terminal and Customs. They might have your gate check luggage at the foot of the steps or it will come in with the rest of your luggage to the carousel
- Immediately inside the airport doors, there will be 2 customs booth.
- Get in the line for visitors or non residents or non citizens
- Have your passport, customs form and pen out (the pen just in case you have to fill out something you forgot)
- When it is your turn, wait for the customs officer to beckon you forward... you can "both" approach at the same time, unless otherwise directed.
- Give the custom's officer Passport and Customs form.
- He might ask you some questions... such as why you are here (vacation) – where are you staying – for how long, etc...
- He will look at your info like he is really looking for something; finally, he will stamp your passports and give you copy of the customs form back
- You will give this paper to the guy that is "clearing" baggage "out" the customs door.

Claiming Luggage in Dominica

- After getting your passport stamped, you will take about 2 steps forward; this is where you will see our airport's impressive (smile) luggage carousel on the left.
- It might or might not be crowded... grab your luggage and then proceed about 4 steps to the final customs counter.
- The customs officer will ask you if you brought a lot of money on or if you brought electronics and may ask you to open your suitcase. (just tell them personal stuff)
- He will ask for your copy of the customs form.
- There will be some skinny guy trying to take your luggage out (bell hop). Tell him no, you have it and be firm, but nice. If he does end up helping you, that's OK, too. Tip him a couple of US dollars or whatever you feel appropriate.
- As soon as you exit the terminal doors a lot of taxi drivers will start asking if you need a ride or not and or you're the person or transport picking you up will be very near by.
- Welcome to Dominica!

Departing Dominica

- Plan ahead for your journey back to the airport at Melville Hall. If you are staying at some locations on the west coast and are taking an early morning Liat flight, you might have to leave as early 3:30a - 4:30a so as to arrive an hour or more early for check-in.
- When checking your luggage **NOTE that you will also have to “gate-check” your CARRY-ON** luggage *unless it's a really small backpack or purse*, at the same time. Don't worry, a red ID tag will be placed on that piece of luggage whereas your carry-on will be provided back to you when you *exit the plane* in San Juan. Plan ahead, have your valuables like your camera, wallet, etc out of your main carry-on before you getting to the counter.
- After you have checked your luggage you will proceed to another counter where you will have to pay a **“departure tax” of \$22 US dollars**. As well, the small white “blank” departure slip you retained upon your arrival will need to be filled out and presented here. IF you lost it, another will be provided.
- Next, security check and boarding area... proceed out the door and to the right for about 50 feet – you'll see the sign above the entrance to security area – if no one is there, wait awhile, they will show up – note that the security folks can sometimes be overly picky.

Arriving in San Juan

- Make sure you have a immigrations/customs card for the U.S.
- Follow everyone else to Immigration.
- Get in the line for U.S. Citizens to present your passport and immigration card. They will give you a card. Don't lose it. You will have to show it again after you claim your luggage.
- Go downstairs to claim your luggage (not regular baggage claim, you are still in customs).
- Follow the other passengers after you get your luggage and present the sheet of paper again.
- Exit out and go right. Walk straight and you will see an airport exit door. Through this door you go left (I think, sometimes they set up those ropes and you might have to go a different direction) and you will see the Best Western. If you are unsure ask the security guard—they all speak English.

Going home from San Juan

- **Make sure you take your luggage outside the airport and put it through the agriculture scanner before you check your luggage in San Juan.** If you don't, they may send you back to do that before they will check your luggage back to the States. This is to ensure you don't have fruits, or plants.
- After your bags come out, they will have a red/orange sticker on it they says it has been through an agriculture scan.
- Follow the regular check in process at this point.