

Understanding the Port

Amber Cove is the rare Caribbean stop where the pier itself is the first attraction: Carnival built a resort around the dock — pool, slide, zip line — on the Dominican Republic's green north coast. The beach isn't here; the waterfalls, mountains, and Puerto Plata are just beyond.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Port Area

Ships dock at a two-berth pier on Maimón Bay — a Carnival Corporation port (Carnival, Princess, Holland America and sister brands). Other lines use Taino Bay, a different terminal eight miles away in town — check which port your ship uses.

Cash & Currency

Unlike a private island, your ship card does NOT work ashore and drink packages don't apply. Bring US dollars and a credit card — both are accepted everywhere, and ATMs are on site.

Getting Around

Everything inside the port is walkable. Taxis wait at the gate with rates posted inside — agree the total price and round-trip terms before you ride. Puerto Plata town is about 20 minutes.

GOOD

The Free Pool Day

Best for: Short stops, easy days, minimal logistics

- ✓ The Aqua Zone pool: free, swim-up bar and kids' splash included
- ✓ The hilltop Sky Bar walk — 360° views, free to climb
- ✓ Loungers are free — on multi-ship days, claim them early

Low effort, high reward.

BETTER

Beach or Culture, Your Call

Best for: Relaxers, tasters, history walkers

- ✓ Playa Dorada — the north coast's Blue Flag beach, ~25 minutes
- ✓ Chocal: a women's co-op chocolate factory you work in, not just tour
- ✓ Old Puerto Plata: the 1577 fort, Umbrella Street, rum and cigars

The mountain cable car is closed for rebuilding — skip anything that promises it.

BEST

Damajagua Waterfalls

Best for: Adventurers, swimmers, bucket lists

- ✓ Jump, slide, and swim down 7–12 jungle waterfalls
- ✓ Certified guides, helmets, and vests — mandatory and included
- ✓ Fitness required: ages 8+, real climbing, total soaking

Timing management required. Plan around all aboard.

Top Experiences to Consider

GOOD

The Aqua Zone

One of the few Caribbean ports where the free day is genuinely excellent: a huge resort pool, swim-up bar, and kids' slides steps from the gangway. The zip line buzzing overhead is a cheap add-on — ride it early, before the line builds.

BETTER

Playa Dorada

The reliable beach day: golden Blue Flag sand and calm water about 25 minutes out, with beach-break packages that bundle loungers, umbrellas, and rum punch. The posted taxi rates inside the port make it an easy independent run too.

BEST

The 27 Waterfalls (You'll Do 7–12)

Despite the name, port-day tours run the 7- or 12-fall circuits — and that's plenty: canyon pools, guided jumps, natural slides, grins all the way down. River conditions rule the day in rainy season; the guides' safety work draws specific praise in review after review.

Where Staff & Travelers Recommend

Book Inside the Gates

Transport rates are posted inside the port; outside, fares inflate and "sightseeing" detours multiply. Fix the total price, the currency, and the round trip before you ride — or just book the port's own transport.

Chocal

A women's cooperative chocolate factory in the hills — you grind, mold, and wrap alongside the makers, and the proceeds fund local jobs. The most genuinely Dominican thing on the excursion list.



Maimón Bay from the port's lookout rotunda



Overwater cabanas and two ships at the pier

Key Considerations

Know what Amber Cove is: a Carnival-built resort bubble, and a well-made one. Stay inside and it's an easy, polished pool day — but it isn't the Dominican Republic, and on multi-ship days (the port can host several at once) the pool and loungers fill fast. The money rules differ from the private islands too: your ship card won't charge here and drink packages don't work, so carry cash and a card.

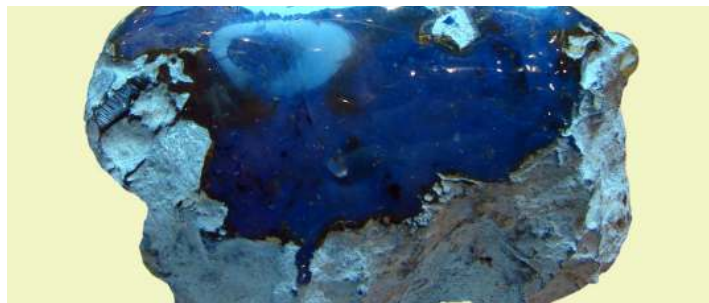
Two booking notes that matter: the famous cable car up Mount Isabel has been closed since 2024 for a rebuild that won't finish during this guide's life — skip anything that promises it. And Damajagua runs on river conditions: rainy-season swells can trim 12-fall tours to 7, or close the canyon outright. Book the falls early in your day and pack shoes that can swim.



The turquoise pools of Damajagua — the signature excursion



Fortaleza San Felipe, guarding Puerto Plata's harbor since 1577



Blue Dominican amber — the coast's namesake gem

Photos via Wikimedia Commons: Mustang Joe (CC0), Ulises Icardi (CC BY-SA 4.0), Funcheta (CC BY-SA 4.0), CareAhLine (CC0), Vassil (public domain)

Port Orientation

FROM THE PIER

Welcome Plaza & Shops

At the gangway

Inside the port

Aqua Zone Pool

Free — swim-up bar, kids' splash

Sky Bar Hilltop

Free walk-up, big views

Zip Line

Over the pool — modest fee

By taxi (~20–25 min)

Old Puerto Plata

Fort, Umbrella Street, museums

Playa Dorada

Blue Flag beach

By excursion

Damajagua Waterfalls

The signature — 7–12 falls

Cayo Arena

Snorkel islet — long transfers

DON'T FORGET

Confirm your all aboard time before you leave the ship.
Set a phone alarm. The ship will not wait for you.

Key Takeaway

Amber Cove flips the usual math: the free day at the pier is genuinely good, and the splurge is getting out into the real DR.

Bring cash, book inside the gates, and give the waterfalls the morning.

ETA will help you choose the right experience based on your travel style.

steve.ernst@ernst.llc
ernst.llc | 814/602-1851

Did You Know?

The Amber Coast. The port is named for the Costa del Ámbar — the mountains behind this coast hold amber 15 to 20 million years old, so clear that ants, wasps, and even lizards sit frozen inside. In Jurassic Park, the mine where the dinosaur DNA is found is set right here in the DR — though Hollywood filmed that scene in Hawaii.

The Lizard in the Glass. Puerto Plata's Amber Museum leans into the movie connection with a replica of Hammond's amber-topped cane — but its real showstopper needs no Hollywood: a whole lizard, sealed in golden resin for millions of years.

Thirty Years Between Ships. When Carnival Victory tied up on October 6, 2015, it had been nearly three decades since a cruise ship called at Puerto Plata. Carnival spent about \$85 million building Amber Cove to bring them back.

Born on This Coast. Merengue joined UNESCO's list of humanity's intangible cultural heritage in 2016 — and UNESCO's own citation points to the DR's northern region, this coast, as where it was born.

One-Mountain Stone. Larimar — the milky sky-blue gem in every shop window — exists in exactly one place on Earth: a single mountainside in the Dominican southwest. Sold in Puerto Plata; dug up 200 miles away.