

Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic: Amber Cove and Taino Bay

Two completely different cruise terminals serve the same town, and nobody tells you which one you are getting until you look at your itinerary.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Puerto Plata has two separate cruise terminals. Amber Cove is owned by Carnival Corporation and sits about five miles from town, serving Carnival, Princess and Holland America. Taino Bay is in the town itself, about a 15-minute walk from downtown, serving Royal Caribbean and Celebrity. Both are docked ports with free pool complexes, and neither publishes a taxi fare.

Facts checked against official sources on 24 September 2026

We have not sailed here. Everything below comes from official sources with links. When we have been somewhere ourselves the page says so.

First: which terminal is yours?

Puerto Plata has **two separate cruise terminals**, several miles apart, owned by different people, serving different cruise lines. Which one you dock at changes your whole day, and the itinerary usually just says "Puerto Plata."

	Amber Cove	Taino Bay
Owner	Carnival Corporation — Carnival calls it "Carnival's very own exclusive port"	Not published by any official source we could find
Lines	Carnival Corporation brands: Carnival, Princess, Holland America, AIDA	Royal Caribbean and Celebrity ; Holland America also publishes a Taino Bay page
Where	The Bay of Maimón, about five miles from Puerto Plata town	In the town itself — Royal Caribbean and Celebrity both put downtown about a 15-minute walk away
Opened	2015, an \$85 million Carnival Corporation build	December 2021
Free pool	Yes — the "Aqua Zone," with a swim-up bar, waterslides and a lazy river, described by Carnival as "complimentary for cruisers"	Yes — Royal Caribbean publishes "complimentary pools and lazy river"

The short version: if you want to walk into Puerto Plata and see the town, Taino Bay puts you there on foot. Amber Cove is a resort-style port five miles out, and getting to town means a taxi. Neither publishes a taxi fare.

Royal Caribbean's own framing is worth noting: it sells Taino Bay on "the big bonus of a prime location," explicitly contrasted with "the region's Amber Cove."

Amber Cove itself

Getting ashore	Two berths, so ships tie up alongside. Neither Amber Cove nor Taino Bay appears on Carnival's list of ports requiring water shuttles — both are docked ports, no tender.
Where it is	The Bay of Maimón, about five miles from Puerto Plata
Opened	2015
Cash	One ATM at the cruise centre, and it dispenses Dominican pesos only
Who can use it	"Currently, our facilities are exclusively available to cruise ship passengers"

What is there

The centrepiece is the Aqua Zone: pools, waterslides, a lazy river, a swim-up bar, zip-lines, kayaks and paddleboards. Carnival, which operates the port, describes the Aqua Zone as complimentary for cruisers. There are five food and drink outlets, including Coco Caña, El Cibao Café and the Sky Bar, and a welcome centre with shops selling apparel, souvenirs, crafts, jewellery, and Dominican amber and larimar. There is also a pharmacy.

The port runs on solar: more than 1,800 panels supply about 80 percent of its energy.

What costs extra

Cabanas. The Poolside Cabana is published at **\$535.99 per cabana** for up to eight guests, with only one person needing to buy it. It runs six hours with flexible arrival, and includes snacks, water and soda, air conditioning, a fan, Wi-Fi, a TV with HDMI, showers, a misting system, a refrigerator and a living-room set. Carnival lists two other cabana options without publishing their prices.

Carnival describes that cabana as "ambulatory accessible," meaning "Guests must take a few steps (up/down), walk short distances, and transfer to a seat."

Beyond the gate

The transportation hub at the port handles car rental and taxis. Published drive times: Ocean World Adventure Park about 20 minutes north, Damajagua Falls about 30 minutes south, and Sosúa and Cabarete less than half an hour away. Shore [excursions](#) can be pre-booked through your cruise line's website.

Not published anywhere official: whether there is a beach at the port itself, restrooms, any medical or first-aid facility (the pharmacy is not a clinic), wheelchair access or accessible routes inside the port, the distance from the ship to the welcome centre, taxi fares, and whether US dollars are accepted ashore. The two official sources also disagree on the size of the port, 25 acres on the port's own site and 30 on Carnival's.

Getting into Puerto Plata town

From **Taino Bay**, Celebrity publishes the options: free tuk-tuks between ship and terminal, taxis outside the complex, *guaguas* (local minivan buses, flagged down, cash), *carritos* (shared sedans), Uber, and car rental.

From **Amber Cove**, Carnival publishes only that there is a "transportation hub" where you "rent a car, hop in a taxi and explore."

No official taxi fare is published from either terminal. Unlike St. Maarten or Aruba, where the government sets and prints the rates, we could find nothing official for Puerto Plata. Agree your fare before you get in.

Practical facts, from the Dominican Republic tourism ministry

Currency	The Dominican peso (RD\$). The ministry says ATMs give the best rates; US dollars are sometimes accepted at poorer ones.
Language	Spanish is official. "English is widely spoken in the tourist areas."
Electricity	110 volts — US and Canadian plugs work directly.
Tipping	"Restaurant bills automatically include a 10% service charge," with roughly another 10% customary on top.
Water	The ministry is blunt: "Tap water is not safe to drink from the tap... Purchase bottled water at all times for drinking."

Documents, and a conflict worth knowing about

The Dominican Republic tourism ministry publishes that cruise passengers are **exempt from the E-Ticket** that air passengers must complete: "Passengers arriving on private

flights, non-commercial vessels, ferries, cruise ships, etc., do not need to fill out the E-TICKET."

On passports, two official sources disagree and we are printing both:

- **DR Ministry of Tourism:** an exceptional measure valid **through 31 December 2026** lets US tourists enter on a passport valid only for the duration of their stay, rather than the usual six months.
- **US State Department:** says the passport should be valid six months from arrival, and adds the line that costs money — *"Disembarked cruise ship passengers without a passport valid for 6 months must pay a daily migration escort service fee of approximately \$125 USD."*

They also differ on the tourist card: the DR ministry describes none for cruise arrivals, while the State Department says "cruise passengers need a tourist card if staying on land for over 24 hours" — which a same-day call does not reach.

Our read: carry a passport with six months on it and the question never arises. [More on documents.](#)

The US State Department currently has the Dominican Republic at **Level 2, Exercise increased caution**, issued 12 June 2025. The advisory names no specific region and does not single out Puerto Plata or the north coast. There is a US Consular Agent in Puerto Plata. That advisory is over a year old as we write; check it before you sail.

What the tourism ministry names as worth seeing

The DR Ministry of Tourism's own Puerto Plata page lists the **Teleférico cable car to Mount Isabel de Torres** ("panoramic city and ocean views"), **Fortaleza San Felipe** ("a 16th-century fortress turned museum"), the **Amber Museum**, and **Playa Dorada**.

What nobody publishes. No official source gives the cable car's operator, ticket price, hours or accessibility, and none gives an address, opening time or terminal distance for the fort, the museum or the beach. We looked. **And a caution: the old teleférico website domain has been taken over and now serves foreign gambling spam** — do not trust a search result that looks like the official cable car site. Book through the ship or a reputable operator.

Accessibility

Both terminals are docked ports, which is the single biggest thing in your favour — no tender. Beyond that, **neither terminal publishes any accessibility information at all.**

Carnival publishes the disclaimer that applies everywhere abroad: **"Carnival is not responsible for accessibility in non-U.S. ports of call."** Holland America warns that "many international vehicles lack wheelchair lifts, potentially requiring guests to transfer to sedan vehicles." The DR tourism ministry's one accessibility listing is a commercial mobility scooter rental it links to, not a government service.

Questions about Puerto Plata

What is the difference between Amber Cove and Taino Bay?

They are two separate cruise terminals serving Puerto Plata. Amber Cove is owned by Carnival Corporation, sits in the Bay of Maimón about five miles from town, and is used by Carnival, Princess, Holland America and AIDA. Taino Bay is in Puerto Plata itself, about a 15-minute walk from downtown, and is used by Royal Caribbean and Celebrity. Both have free pool complexes and both are docked ports.

Do you tender at Puerto Plata?

No. Neither Amber Cove nor Taino Bay appears on Carnival's published list of ports requiring water shuttles. Ships tie up alongside at both terminals.

Is the pool at Amber Cove free?

Carnival describes the Aqua Zone pool complex, with its swim-up bar, waterslides and lazy river, as "complimentary for cruisers." Cabanas at both terminals are a paid extra and no official price is published.

Do I need a passport for Puerto Plata?

Two official sources differ. The Dominican Republic tourism ministry publishes an exceptional measure through 31 December 2026 allowing US tourists to enter on a passport valid only for their stay. The US State Department says six months validity and warns that disembarked cruise passengers without it face an escort fee of about \$125 a day. Cruise passengers are exempt from the DR E-Ticket that air passengers must complete.

How far is Puerto Plata town from the cruise port?

From Amber Cove, Carnival publishes about five miles. From Taino Bay, Royal Caribbean and Celebrity both describe downtown as roughly a 15-minute walk. No official taxi fare is published from either terminal.

Where these facts come from

- Amber Cove official site (<https://www.ambercoveport.com/>)
- Amber Cove, port information (<https://www.ambercoveport.com/port-information/>)
- Amber Cove, FAQs (<https://www.ambercoveport.com/faqs/>)
- Amber Cove, location information (<https://www.ambercoveport.com/location-information/>)
- Carnival, Amber Cove (<https://www.carnival.com/awaywego/cruising-fun/shore-excursions/amber-cove>)
- Carnival, Amber Cove Poolside Cabana (<https://www.carnival.com/shore-excursions/amber-cove/poolside-cabana-445070>)

Ports change their rules and their prices. Check the official pages above before you sail.

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