

Dominican Tourist Police – On the Beach and in the Streets

In 1975, the police force in the Dominican Republic instituted a special unit, especially trained, to patrol and provide security at airports and other tourist spots throughout the nation. The need for such a unit grew because of the increase in the number of tourists arriving in the country and the crime rate that arose as a result. Clad in a smart uniform that consists of white shirt, blue pants and blue cap, the tourist police force has become an integral part of the security system in Dominican Republic.



The unit was established in 2000 as a separate agency, to provide security at spots frequented by tourists. The force came to be known as the ‘tourist police’ or the Politur. In 2014, through the collaboration of the Ministry of Defense and Tourism, the tourist police force was given the position of a specialized corps (now called CESTUR).

The Need

Tourism is an integral part of the economy and occupies an important position in the plans for national development. Due to the emphasis laid on the tourism industry, the Departments of Defense and Tourism decided to establish a special force exclusively for the protection and service of domestic and international tourists.

The Mission

Comprising of efficient and devoted officers, the tourist police was constituted for the protection of tourists, prevention of crimes perpetrated against them and to provide them with assistance. In a bid to create a secure environment for travelers to the country, the department was divided into several special units. These units were deployed to specific regions.

The aquatic unit was commissioned to guard beaches that draw tourists by the hordes. The unit combs the beach front and ensures the safety of tourists. The specially trained personnel have sophisticated marine equipment to provide assistance in case of an emergency on the beach and in the waters.

Along with the aquatic unit, the country boasts of a mounted police unit, that patrols the area on horse-

back. These men have an almost bird's eye view of the entire beach, giving them the advantage of monitoring what is happening.



Apart from the specialized police force, there are regular police patrol parties that walk the beat and interact with tourists directly. Their presence in the streets of Dominican cities is aimed at providing a sense of security to those visiting the country.

The officers can also be found keeping vigil on the streets in motorized vehicles. They also have a highly trained dog-squad to tackle any exigencies.

Designed for maximum efficacy, the department has a clear demarcated vision. Since the country depends largely on the tourism industry for much of the revenue, the tourist police play a significant role in ensuring that tourist's feel safe at all times.

Accomplishments

Considering the role tourism plays in the country's economy, the government remains committed towards keeping the place a safe haven, for visitors. As a result of this commitment a special school was founded, for training tourist police. The school trains hundreds of students each year, and works at strengthening the police force deployed in tourist sectors across the country.

In 2012, a team of approximately 50 members of the tourist police were stationed along the Coral Highway to patrol the stretch. The region was particularly infamous for crimes, especially against vulnerable tourists. The presence of the special unit on the highway resulted in a decrease in crimes.



The police have also taken control of Bavaro and Punta Cana, two of the most popular beaches among tourists. Previously, the beach fronts were strewn with old, abandoned buildings and were a hotspot for criminal activities and unregulated water sports. The active involvement of the special police force on these beaches has exhibited promising results. The areas are no longer a hub for nefarious activities,

instead come across as clean, organized and safe places to visit.

The tourist police have much to boast of its success – 2013, proved to be a good year. There were no crimes of robbery or assault reported on Highway East, and the credit goes to the presence of motorized patrol units along the Highway and adjacent areas.

The effort of the tourist police has contributed much to the expansion of tourism in Dominican Republic. The government is optimistic of hosting no less than 10 million tourists annually by the end of 2022 and endeavors towards maintaining the current high standards set for the tourist police, so tourists can feel safe.

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