

Farmacia El Manglar (☎ 809-552-1533; Plaza Punta Cana, Bávaro; ☎ 8am-midnight) Offers free delivery service to local hotels (until 10pm).

Farmacia Estrella (☎ 809-552-0344; Plaza Riviera/Estrella, Bávaro; ☎ 8am-10pm)

Hospitén Bávaro (☎ 809-686-1414; bavaro@hospiten.com; btwn airport & turnoff to Bávaro) Best private hospital in Punta Cana, with English-, French- and German-speaking doctors and a 24-hour emergency room. The hospital is located on the road to Punta Cana, 500m from the turnoff to Bávaro.

Pharma Cana (☎ 809-959-0025; Plaza Bolera, Punta Cana; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 8am-11pm Sun) Punta Cana's main pharmacy.

MONEY

Almost every major Dominican bank has at least one branch in the Bávaro area. All of the following have ATMs.

Banco BHD (Plaza Caney 1, Bávaro)

Banco Popular (Plaza Bávaro, Bávaro; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Banco Progreso El Cortecito (inside El Cortecito supermarket; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat); Plaza Bolera, Punta Cana (☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Scotiabank (Plaza Las Brisas, Bávaro; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Sights

BEACHES

Superlatives describing the beaches here are banded about like free drinks at a pool bar, but they're mostly deserved; keep in mind, however, that the best pieces of property have been claimed by developers and are either already occupied by all-inclusives and condos or will be in the near future. This means you will not be alone. In fact, you will be part of a beach-lounging crowd.

Public access is ingrained in the law, so you can stroll from less-exclusive parts like **Playa El Cortecito**, which tends to be crowded with vendors, to nicer spots in front of resorts – but without the proper color wrist bracelet you won't be able to get a towel or chair. Playa El Cortecito is a good place to **parasail** (12-15min US\$40), though, or to find a boat operator to take you fishing or snorkeling.

North of El Cortecito is **Playa Arena Gorda**, lined with all-inclusive resorts and their guests, many topless, riding around on banana boats, parasailing or just soaking in the sun. A further 9km north of here is **Playa del Macao**, a gorgeous stretch of beach best reached by car. It's also a stop-off for a slew of ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle)

tours that tear up and down the beach every day – there's less noise at the far northern end of the beach. Roco Ki, a massive new resort development in the area, is scheduled to open in winter or spring 2009.

In the other direction, south of Bávaro and El Cortecito, is **Playa Cabo Engaño**, an isolated beach that you'll need a car, preferably an SUV, to reach.

PUNTA CANA ECOLOGICAL PARK

Though development may eventually cover every inch of the Dominican coastline, for now there are still large areas of pristine coastal plains and mangrove forests. A half-kilometer south of Punta Cana Resort and Club, the **Punta Cana Ecological Park** (☎ 809-959-8483; www.puntacana.org; ☎ 8am-4pm) covers almost 8 sq km of protected coastal and inland habitat and is home to some 80 bird species, 160 insect species and 500 plant species. Visitors can take very worthwhile 90-minute **guided tours** (adult/child US\$10/5) taken in English, French, German or Spanish through a lush 18-hectare portion of the reserve known as Parque Ojos Indígenas (Indigenous Eyes Park), so named for its 11 freshwater lagoons all fed by an underground river that flows into the ocean. The tour also includes a visit to the park's botanical and fruit gardens, iguana farm (part of a breeding program) and a farm-animal petting zoo. The visitor center has a great collection of insects that was compiled by entomology students from Harvard, and interesting maps and photos of the area. One or two-hour **horseback riding tours** (US\$20/30) through the park and along the coast can also be arranged with advance notice. The park is operated by the Punta Cana Ecological Foundation, a nonprofit foundation created in 1994 that works to protect the area's ecosystems – including 8km of coral reef along the reserve's shoreline – and to promote sustainable tourism and hotel practices. Nearly 4 hectares of the reserve are dedicated to the Cornell biodiversity laboratory, a joint project with other American universities to inventory and study native plants, birds and insects. Unfortunately, there is no hotel pickup service; a cab here will cost around US\$25 each way from Bávaro or El Cortecito.

Activities

WATERSPORTS

Virtually every water activity is available but some involve a long commute to the actual

BÁVARO & PUNTA CANA

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site. Every hotel has a tour desk offering snorkeling, diving and boat trips to destinations such as Isla Saona. Parasailing is done from the beach all over Punta Cana and Bávaro. A popular family outing is a snorkeling trip to the **Marinarium** (www.marinarium.com; adult/2-12yr US\$72/36), a natural offshore pool near Cabeza de Toro, which is arguably more ecofriendly than other excursions. Rays, nurse sharks, tropical fish and patches of coral are all on hand.

GOLF

La Cana Golf Course (☎ 809-959-2262; www.puntacana.com; Punta Cana Resort & Club, Punta Cana; ☎ 7:30am-6pm) is Punta Cana's top golf course and is located at the area's top resort. The 18-hole course,

designed by Pete Dye, has several long par fives and stunning ocean views. Green fees are guest/nonguest US\$115/156 for 18 holes or guest/nonguest US\$71/96 for nine, including a golf cart. Club rental is US\$30 for 18 holes or US\$18 for nine, and golf cart costs US\$40 per round. A new Tom Fazio–designed course is scheduled to open in summer 2008.

Nearby **Cap Cana** (☎ 809-955-9501; www.capcana.com; Punta Cana), the site of an enormous development project in the works, has three Jack Nicklaus Signature golf courses already complete and open for play (greens fees June to October US\$220, November to May US\$320).

If you'd like to get in a round but La Cana is too upmarket, the **Catalonia Bávaro Resort** (☎ 809-412-0000; Cabeza de Toro; ☎ 8:30am-5pm) has a