

AVSIM Commercial Scenery Review

Airports of the Dominican Republic



Product Information

Publisher: [Dominican Aerodromes](#)

Description: 7 airports of the Dominican Republic.

Download Size:
27 MB

Format:
Download

Simulation Type:
FS2004

Reviewed by: [Robert Mariani](#) AVSIM Staff Reviewer - March 3, 2007

Introduction

Be honest. How many of you could quickly find the Dominican Republic on the map? Let me help. Go to the Caribbean and find the island of Hispaniola. Not there yet? OK, let's try this. Open Google Earth and find Florida in the United States (you know, Mickey, Miami, and tons of cruise ships). Slide straight down, or south, until you are about to jump off the edge. Glide across the Atlantic until you are clear of Cuba and then stop on top of Jamaica, man.

Next, move to the right at 90 degrees and the next big island will be Hispaniola. Almost there.... that first one third of the island is Haiti, and if you keep going east you will find our destination. According to Google Earth's measurement tool you are about 1100 miles southeast of Miami, or about 7,500 kilometers west of Frankfurt, Germany.

Christopher Columbus didn't have Google Earth; yet he found it, claimed it, and explored it on his first voyage in 1492. The island became a springboard for the Spanish conquest of the Caribbean and American mainland.

These days the Spanish, and others, are still coming, albeit onboard Boeings and Airbuses versus the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria. Despite the fact that Chris Columbus had to put up with stale sea biscuits, adverse weather, and could have been

killed or die from a plethora of unknown dangers, the modern day traveler has to deal with rude passengers, cramped economy seating, and airline food.

But once there, the warm waters of the Caribbean await. Cool drinks with little umbrellas are served under the cabanas on the white sandy beaches, and the view of the turquoise ocean is framed by palm trees. This more than makes up for the adventure of getting there. For those who enjoy traveling to the exotic destinations we will explore the latest offering from Ricardo Morillo, The Airports of the Dominican Republic.

Installation and Documentation

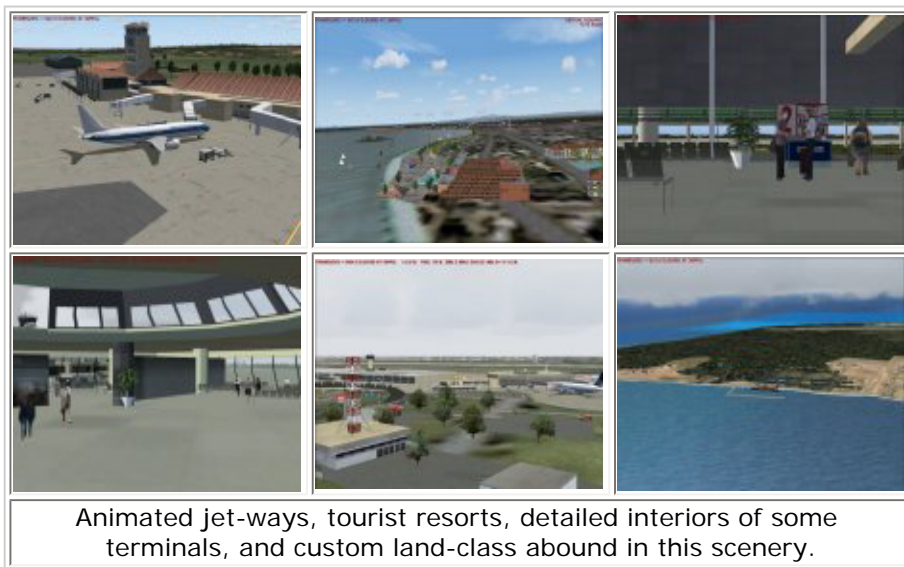
The Airports of the Dominican Republic comes to you as a 27 MB download, and installed by double clicking on the executable file. The installation is half-automatic, since the installer has to be pointed to the right direction of your Flight Simulator add-on scenery folder if you installed FS2004 anywhere other than the default location.

Once installed, the scenery, or rather the sceneries, have to be activated manually from Scenery menu in FS9. There is a separate file for each of the airports as well as the one for the land class. Furthermore, each airport has its own PDF manual that can be found in the add-on scenery folder. Once the installation and activation is done, you have to restart FS9 and you are ready to start exploring this beautiful country. You will get no less than seven airports, new custom land class, water class and lots of custom scenery and buildings around the country.

Before you start exploring, you may want to open up some of the manuals as they provide charts as well as important information on frequencies that you can use to communicate with the tower. In addition, the PDF's give you the parking positions that are most suitable for the type of airplane you are flying today, since the air-stairs and catering truck will dock with you as you call them up on NAV2. After all, how would your virtual tourists feel if after an 8 hour flight from Madrid, they had to jump to reach the apron?

Things to do – places to see – features to explore

This package consists of seven airports, but you can have two of those for free. Yes, you read that right. The author has released Santo Domingo La Isabela (MDJB) and Santiago Cibao (MDST) as freeware sometime ago, and four other ones (Punta Cana - MDPC, Puerto Plata – MDPP, Las Americas – MDSD and La Romana – MDLR) have feature-limited demos in the AVSIM library. You can check them out yourself after reading this review. Finally, there is the MDSI or San Isidro Air Base.



MDSD – Las Americas

We start this tour at the biggest and busiest airport. Las Americas International Airport is the main airport of the country, it sees 747's, 777's and A-340's regularly. In real life, many of the European, North and South American passenger and cargo airlines fly there. The airport has one runway, 11,000 ft feet long (3,353 m), and it was scheduled to undergo a major renovation in order to accommodate the A-380, once it enters revenue service.

MDSD, or Las Americas, is highly detailed in this add-on and features animated marshallers, animated gates, and service trucks that are activated by setting the NAV2 frequency to 112.00. In addition, the surrounding area is customized to represent real life as much as possible. The scenery features improved and customized roads, city buildings, coastline and

water. One nice feature are the moving cars on the main road leading to the airport, however they only work at night (very much like the FS2000 dots of light). There are no moving vehicles on the airport itself other than service trucks, which again, move into the position once the NAV2 frequency is set.

The night lighting of the apron is subtle, and well done in my opinion. Another nice feature is that some roads around the airport and in the city have light poles, which are illuminated at night, and create a great 3D effect while approaching or flying low around the city.

The terminal building has been modeled as true to life as possible, and comes with custom textures and detailed interiors that are all well lit at night. The surrounding airport buildings are presented with the same amount of detail and you really have to get out of the airplane and explore it with something like a car or motorcycle to appreciate all of the painstaking design done at this airport (press "w" twice to remove the panel and have a full un-obstructed view) . For example, I found an abandoned 707 just behind the general aviation parking covered with undergrowth, and after looking at some real life pictures, there it was. Great detail indeed.

The airport comes with its own custom AFD file in order to accommodate many popular AI packages, and that worked well on my setup with Project AI. One thing that really did not sit well with me were the apron and runway textures. While customized and definitely different than stock, the layout and orientation, as well as the repeating patterns, looked to me like one of the weakest parts of this package. Nevertheless, after looking at some real-life pictures of the taxiways and runway at Las Americas, the author did place the different color textures quite well. In the end, all the details and fine renditions of this place have left a big dent in my FPS counter, more on that later in the performance section of this review.



After extensive exploration of this airport, I figured it is time for a vacation. Our next stop will be the airport that also sees a lot of heavy metal, yet offers the opportunity for some beach lounging with a drink with that tiny umbrella in it.

MDPC – Punta Cana

While a Cessna or Beech Baron would serve well to reach Punta Cana and explore the scenery along the way, I opted for the wonderful new Fokker F28 from Project Fokker in order get that umbrella drink faster. My congratulations to the authors of this great free airplane as it got me there on time, and with a big thirsty grin on my face.

Punta Cana's single runway is 10,171 feet long (3,100 m), which is also more than enough to accommodate jumbos in real life. And they do come, loaded with winter weary Europeans and Americans in search of sandy beaches and warm sun and waters of the Caribbean. The airport is, according to Wikipedia, the busiest in the Dominican Republic, and saw over 1 million passengers in 2002, with plans for expansion that include a second runway. Most of those people came aboard scheduled and non-scheduled charters, and were destined for the Punta Cana Resort and Club, which is also the owner and operator of this private airport.

Just like Las Americas, Punta Cana offers many details and a uniquely shaped passenger terminal that is very well reproduced. On the Dominican Aerodromes web page, the author offers the comparison of his scenery with other commercial add-ons for the same airport, and includes some screen shots to back up his claims. The inside of the terminal includes

baggage carousels, and Punta Cana has animated ground marshalls, air-stairs and supply trucks waiting for you to park.

I found one thing about the animation that I did not like much. Once you park and set your NAV2 frequency, all air-stairs and supply trucks at the airport move into position, even if there are no other airplanes parked on the ramp.

Other notable features at this airport are; the perimeter fencing, subtle apron lighting, some static GA airplanes, detailed parking lots, and main road with light poles on the backside of the airport. On the other hand, the shrubs surrounding the airport are very poorly executed as they look very flat with no 3D anywhere in their genes, and probably belong to the FS98 era. What makes it worse, is the fact that at night they tend to have a lighter shade and appear totally out of place when mixed with FS 2004 trees – at least to me.



Moving away from the airport and still in search of that nice umbrella decorated drink, I found several resorts that litter the coast. While an improvement over the default scenery, I did not experience that "Wow!" factor, but it is a welcome addition. If you want to nit-pick, some of the buildings are placed across the only road. Numerous static sails (not sailboats-probably wind surfers) can be seen in the water as well. This didn't bother me at all, after all, this is a flight simulator. There were no lounge chairs, nor people, such as the ones I saw near Las Americas airport, so I went to my fridge and got my refreshment from there – minus the umbrella.

Overall, Punta Cana is a nice exotic airport to explore, and because there are no glass terminals and Burger Kings modeled, I found the performance better, but not by much. FPS still took a dump on my trusty system, and again, I will dwell on that later in the performance section.

MDPP – Puerto Plata, Gregorio Luperón International

Puerto Plata is another resort town on the northern Dominican coast, with capability to support all types of commercial air traffic with its 10,108 ft. (3081 m.) long runway. The lush greenery and magnificent playas (beaches) are within minutes of this seaside airport in real life.

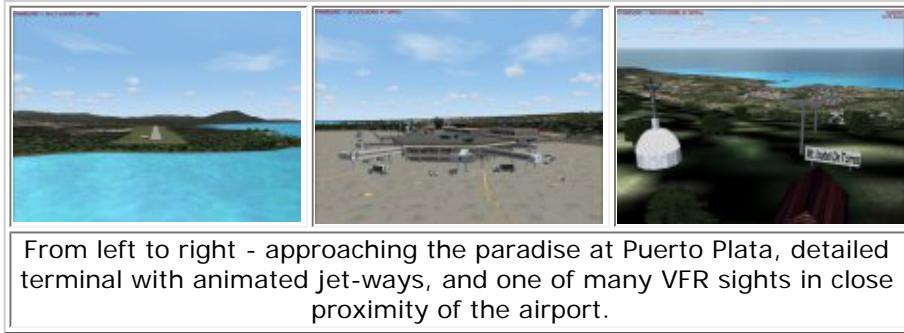
This add-on airport sports the moving passenger jet-ways and animated parking assistants as well. The main terminal is done with great attention to interior design, and if you are not looking for adventure in dining, Burger King awaits here as well.

Some static GA planes are sprinkled around, and night lighting is done well here, as is on all the other airports. Flat bushes abound on the perimeter of the airport, but if you line up at the right angle, they do not look quite as bad after all. The main road to the airport is illuminated by the 3D poles that glow orange at night, and the yellow lights of cars can be seen driving on that lone path to and from the airport.

A bit further out, there are resorts with more sails and well-lit hotels. Historical landmarks and even a cable gondola are modeled in the area and one can tell that the author has great familiarity with the area. Shipyards and cruise ships add to the ambiance and provide the casual VFR flyer with many interesting locations to explore from the air. The performance penalty for all the detail here does not come at the high cost, as in Las Americas, and you could probably get a decent

performance on final with most mid-range systems these days.

Unfortunately in real life this airport gained worldwide attention in 1996, when a Boeing 757 operated by Birgenair crashed after take off, killing all 189 passengers and crew aboard.



MDLR – La Romana

The first thing I noticed about this airport is the way the runway is textured. Gone is the grey or black of the concrete and asphalt and instead there is the creamy beige runway. The distance markers on the runway are barely noticeable, as they do not offer much contrast to the light shaded runway covering.

I contacted the author about that and he expeditiously provided me with info that the runway was new, and offered some real life pictures. While comparing those pictures to the scenery rendition of the runway, I concluded that they look quite similar. Even though my initial reaction was that the color wasn't right. Once again, just like in the case of Las Americas taxiways, the real life pictures proved that the author was striving for realism to the max, while keeping in mind the limitations of the software with which the scenery was designed.

Plenty of detail at this airport as well, good night lighting, and animated folks ready to wave you in to your parking position. The standard for detail set at Las Americas is continuing at La Romana, and the city itself features some custom 3D buildings, such as churches, tourist resorts, a golf course, and even a baseball stadium for your VFR exploring pleasure. To top it all off, everything comes packaged with a custom land-class so that the scenery blends right in - as it should.

Want to know about performance? Read on.

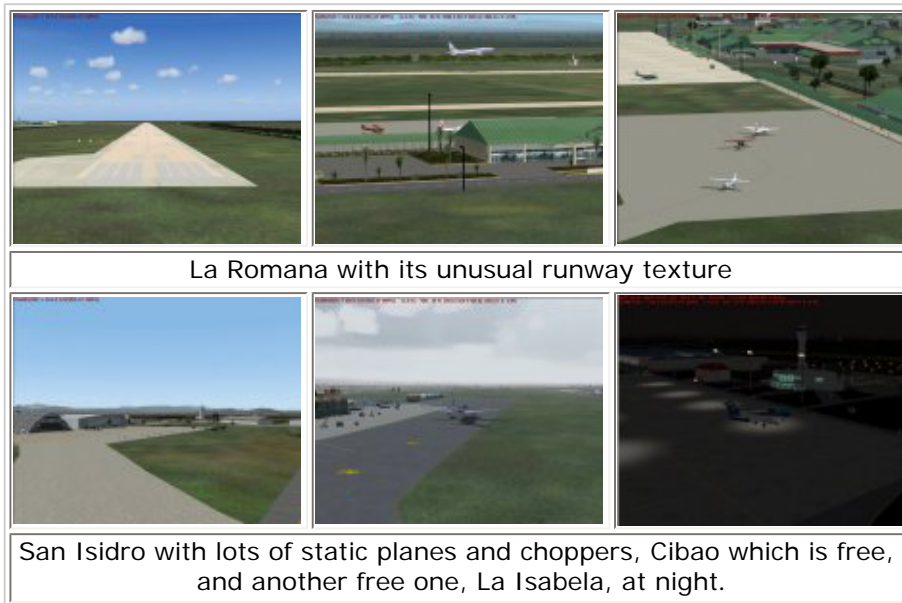
MDJB, MDST, MDSI – La Isabela, Cibao and San Isidro Air Base

The first two sceneries come packaged with the payware offering, but you can also download them free. If you are interested in this scenery, you may wish to give them a try since MDJB is the general aviation airport and MDST is a bigger international airport. Check out the detail at these places since they will give you a good representation of what you will be getting in rest of the scenery package.

I think it is a great idea from a scenery producer to offer an unrestricted example of their work, because the potential customers will know exactly what they will be getting if they decide to part with their Pesos in order to purchase the rest.

One caveat though. On a mid range system, the frame rates you get here will not be representative of all sceneries since the airports are not as big and built-up as Las Americas. For example, Cibao does not have the catering trucks and detailed interiors like their payware cousins, so the frames here are about 2-3 times higher than at Las Americas.

The San Isidro Air Base is not documented, or at least I could not find a manual for it, but it is mentioned on the developer's website. It features plenty of static aircraft and an opening hangar, as well as detailed portions of the highway leading to the airport and some custom power lines that can be seen behind the buildings. Unlike all other airports, this one has two runways.



Performance and Support

Finally we get to the F word. OK, get your mind out of the gutter – the word is Frames - per second. Having not jumped on the upgrade wagon, my 2 year old-ish system does well in FS2004 at most places. Even with TH2GO running the show at 3072x768 resolution across three monitors the performance is decent.

Test System

Pentium 4 2.8 HT at 3.1
800FSB
ASUS P4P800
BFG 6800 OC 128MB video
Corsair XMS 3200 1Gb
memory
TH2GO and TrackIR4PRO

Flying Time:
15 hours

For example, at LAX default with scenery setting at very dense, 50% Project AI, Max autogen, 100% 3D clouds and visibility limited to 60 miles, I can takeoff without stutters in most aircraft, but let's use the default 737 since everyone has it. Same goes for default Heathrow and Boston freeware scenery add-on. My frames on the runways are in the 20's and go up to my limit of 30 as I leave the gates and AI out of the view.

At Las Americas, which is highly detailed, I cannot break the 10 FPS mark when taxiing around and that is with only a couple of AI jetliners. The main building-terminal and numerous objects suck the life out my GF6800OC and even if I change to one monitor with 1024x768, things do not improve. Ok they do, but the airplane has to be facing away from the terminal, and that is fine when you are taxiing for takeoff. However, as soon as you line up and get ready to roll, that terminal comes in view and the frames take a hit – big time. At night the situation is even worse, probably because of all the special night effects mentioned before.

I can hear it now – it's the sliders stupid! Move them! That's what they are for! Right..., got it, will do.

And, so I did. Autogen – no effect. Ah yes, the scenery density slider. Let's see, going back to normal, a few vertical objects disappear yet the FPS is still virtually unchanged. OK, let's try all other settings. Ditto for those, except for sparse, which made my frames jump to their limit of 29 – but oops - the scenery, i.e. the airport buildings were all gone. Not good.

At this point I contacted the author and he graciously pointed out the fact that you should work the sliders and turn the shadows off for ground scenery. Mine were off all the time. The sliders made no appreciable difference up to the point where the entire add-on was virtually gone. In the same correspondence, the author also quoted the recommended system: P4 1.8!!! Sorry, but I got rid of that one shortly after FS9 came out, and I don't really think going back 1.2Ghz would help here.

The most disappointing part though, was the drop I got when approaching the Las Americas airport. On short final, things moved from bad to worse since the touch down was achieved at 7 FPS. Definitely a no go for Las Americas, at least not on my system. As stated above, to me this is Flight Simulator and if the flight part cannot be sustained with fluid motion, I see little point in all of the eye candy.



Approach to Las Americas was hard to accomplish on my system. FPS dropped to below 5 at times.

The other airports are better since they don't have such complex terminals and surrounding facilities, yet the simulation gets progressively slower as you get closer to the runway at Punta Cana, as well as San Isidro AB.

While the details are plentiful in this scenery add-on, they also take a heavy toll on a mid-range system. I suspect that the scenery design tools and techniques used to present this scenery are either outdated or not optimized carefully. Mind you, this performance was observed in the default airplanes, be it a Cessna or the 737, and I gave up trying to land at Las Americas with the POSKY fleet, which by the way, are not nearly as demanding as some of the other airplanes out there.

Having said that, the newer system, which is capable of running FSX decently at a major airport, will probably be OK. You would be very wise to try out the free demos and sample airports first, just to see how your PC is coping. Don't forget that the demos don't offer the detailed building interiors and the full version will have more impact on your resources, but at least you can get a feel without limitations that other demos impose.

I checked out the support forum as well. The last new post was made in November of 2006, and it was made by the author. It basically says that there is no FSX compatibility for now.

Closing Remarks

I looked around the buildings, peeked and sat inside the terminals, and that was fun. However, after the novelty of the fabulous details at some of the airports wore off, I wanted to fly around this beautiful country.

While on the ground or within the airports approach path, the drop in fluidity and slow performance of my system reduced the previously high excitement levels significantly. If you have the system that can deal with all the eye candy, or you don't mind the slowish performance on final, this scenery is the only choice as far as the area covered is concerned.

I wish the publishers were more realistic about their system recommendations and I also think the scenery could have been better optimized. I applaud the authors for the enormous amount of detail as well as the great demo policy and two freeware airports they provide.

What I Like About Airports Of The Dominican Republic

- Lots of details to explore in and around the airport
- Unique area of coverage that includes land-class and water-class
- Away from the big airports the FPS is good
- Great night lights on some roads
- Two free airports you can try and good demos for the rest

What I Don't Like About Airports Of The Dominican Republic

- Frames are un-flyable - on my system - when close to main airports
- One frequency does-it-all, for all gates and support vehicles
- Lack of scalability, i.e. the sliders are set for everything or nothing

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