

Spanish Ports

Columbus and Spanish explorers quickly established a port at Santo Domingo, on the island of Hispaniola. That island is now divided into Haiti on the west and the Dominican Republic on the east, where we visited for our first stop. We were west of Haiti when the sun rose on Friday morning, 20 December.



Throughout the trip there was a computer screen in the library dedicated to the ship position, with pink markers at our ports.

This initial map shows our position at that

sunrise. Later in the day we faintly saw to our north the mountains of the southwestern side of Haiti, between the clouds and the ocean. On the other side of those mountains is where Haiti suffered so much damage from the earthquake of January 12, 2010. Brown Booby birds found a free uplift at the bow of our ship as they searched for fish (small flying fish) to eat. That gave us a good view of them.



Our ship parked at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, beside the old Spanish fortifications, shown in these three views. The middle building was the residence for Columbus' relatives, if I remember correctly. The eight hundred passengers were given a choice of tours. We went to a botanic garden, thinking that it would be a better habitat for wildlife as well as for interesting plants and flowers. It was a good choice. This is an American Redstart warbler and a lizard. The most unusual bird (left) was a huge Hispaniolan Lizard-Cuckoo seen in the botanic garden.



Back at the ship flocks of green Hispaniolan Parakeets quickly flew by with a screeching call. On our way to Columbia we were accompanied by some white Masked





Booby birds.
Dark
Magnificent
Frigatebirds
greeted us at
Cartagena with
their



distinctively bent wings.

After silver and gold were discovered in Bolivia and other South American locations, the Spanish colonizers built a major shipping port at Cartagena, taking advantage of its unusually shaped harbor. The city was repeatedly attacked by pirates trying to grab the precious metals. In response the Spanish built a massive fortress that was never captured.



Cartagena is now a modern city, partly seen behind these military ships. It is still a major shipping port. This container ship is registered in Cyprus. There is even a large modern sailing ship in port.



We chose a tour that involved a canoe ride through the tunnels of a

mangrove swamp, in the far upper right corner of the satellite view of the city. Afterwards we ate fresh coconuts and juice.



Of course all tours had to pass through the shops of vendors of tourist souvenirs within the ancient city wall. I only photographed raw emeralds for which Columbia is famous.

