



Amanera



Photo by Steve Turvey, courtesy Aman Resorts

At a Glance

Golfers, nature lovers, couples and families seeking a luxe Caribbean beach vacation, with exquisitely designed, ultra-modern accommodations and a more private, less trammled jungle-by-the-sea location will be very happy here. The resort, on the country's northern coast, is a haven for minimalists (and Aman junkies). Open spaces abound in the 24 one-bedroom and one two-bedroom casitas set on the hillside overlooking the sea, and most have private plunge pools and lovely views. The property centers around Casa Grande, which houses the lobby, pool, restaurant and bar. Beyond the beach, the newly renovated 370-acre Playa Grande Golf Course draws serious players. Originally designed by Robert Trent Jones and his son Rees Jones, it offers the most ocean-facing holes in the Western Hemisphere, with spectacular vistas from its 60-foot cliffs, plus a restaurant and pro shop. In addition to golf, kitesurfing, surfing, paddleboarding, boat excursions, horseback riding, tennis and the gym and spa offer plenty of distraction.

The Standout: The two-bedroom Beach Casita, offering panoramic views of the ocean

Don't Miss: Exclusive access to one of the best golf courses in the Caribbean; non-golfers should try a guided nature hike, led by a local naturalist.

Indagare Loves

- The property's mile-long Playa Grande Beach
- Pampering service, including turndown treats like local Dominican chocolates and hand-crafted figurines
- Tree of Wishes program, supporting local schools and hospitals in need

Amanera Review

An hour from Puerto Plata, surrounded by sleepy towns and a wild, untamed jungle, Amanera commands a dramatic cliff along the Dominican Republic's pristine North Coast. With a name derived from the words "peace" and "water" in ancient Sanskrit and the local Tiano language, Amanera delivers ultimate barefoot luxury, marrying sleek sophistication with local Dominican flavor in a way only the Aman brand could do.

Designed by award-winning architect John Heah, the property perfectly complements the beauty of its natural surroundings. Like other Amans, the resort's aesthetic holds true to the philosophy of the brand, which emphasizes sleek minimalism and the luxury of open space. With a fluid indoor/outdoor layout and a palette including muted stone, the resort appears to have simply sprung up from the jungle; unassuming, but breathtaking.

Amanera is centered around the main building Casa Grande, which houses the lobby, pool, restaurant and lounge bar. The two-story structure boasts floating walkways, infinity pools and sweeping ocean views and overall marries drama with understated effortlessness from the tiled floors, which are locally handmade, to the chaise lounges complemented by accents of light yellow and blue.

Despite its grandeur, however, the resort feels intimate, with 25 free-standing casitas that occupy a hillside overlooking the ocean (a five to 10 minute walk from Casa Grande). Each offer water views, and 13 have their own infinity pool, which, although not heated, reach a comfortable temperature by afternoon. Surrounded by greenery, casitas constructed of warm auburn wood and light grey stone have multiple glass doors that open to spacious outdoor spaces. Every detail of the rooms has been attended to, from the sleek and innocuous lighting fixtures and remote control wall-sized window shades to the bathtubs, which benefit from a dreamy setting in an enclosed private garden.

On the beach, guests enjoy leisurely, barefoot lunches at Club de Playa, serving some extraordinary baja fish tacos (with high prices to match as is the norm at the Aman restaurants overall). Tables spill onto the white-sand beach where sunbathers rest on sleek chaises and others can kayak, paddleboard and surf. The water is crystal blue, and guests feel as though they have the entire, miles-long beach to themselves (the nearest neighbor sits a mile away). There is a pool for children and kids club on the beach, the latter offering daily programs that range from whale activities to nature hikes and arts and crafts.

The first ever golf-integrated Aman, Amanera boasts the newly renovated 370-acre [Playa Grande Golf Course](#). Originally designed by Robert Trent Jones and renovated by his son Rees Jones, the course offers the most ocean-facing holes in the Western Hemisphere with sweeping views atop its 60-foot cliffs, plus a restaurant and pro shop.

The Amanera spa, tennis courts and small, limited gym sit on the other side of the golf course, a 10-minute golf-cart ride away from the guest casitas. Though the spa is awaiting an upgrade, it is nevertheless an oasis, with two double treatment rooms offering classic and signature treatments inspired by healing traditions in the Dominican Republic. Products are locally sourced and include honey from a nearby apiary as well as vegan, almond-based oils.

As is typical for an Aman, the resort is quiet and ideal for those looking for an utterly private and serene escape. The flow of the property is distinctly peaceful, leisurely, and easy; guests move at their own pace and spaces never feel crowded. There's a lush and overgrown quality; paths are un-manicured and vegetation is relatively untamed, as the design blends seamlessly with its verdant natural surroundings.

The resort offers a comprehensive list of activities and excursions in the surrounding area, including hiking, water sports, boat trips and cigar-making demonstrations, but the magic of Amanera is in its ease and beauty of execution. There are no signs providing directions, no set mealtimes or dress codes, and the 150 staff members, many of whom hail from the local area, are warm and friendly, offering attentive service with masterful attention to detail that is also inconspicuous. After all, the formula is simple: guests at Amanera do not hear "welcome," but rather "welcome home."

Who Should Stay

Golfers, nature lovers, friends, couples and families looking for a luxurious beach vacation, with exquisite accommodations and a chance to experience a lush, fascinating region that is a bit off the beaten path from the typical Caribbean destination. Although the scene is positively romantic, the resort is a castaway paradise for families and

couples alike, alive with the humming jungle and steady crashing of waves on the beach.

Indagare Tip: The guided nature hike is a must, led by expert naturalist and charming outdoorsmen, who brings the jungle to life with his knowledge of local flora and fauna (you may even take home some of your own freshly picked fruit).

—*Blair West*

- *Indagare on February 12, 2016*

