



Our History and the PUNTACANA Brand

Visitors may be interested to learn that Punta Cana specifically started out as our company's name, a brand created in the early 1970s by Frank Rainieri, for a piece of land originally called Punta Borrachón (Drunkard's Point). Today, Punta Cana has become a generic name, a country brand - the most recognized Dominican brand in the world. As a result, our brand name is now PUNTACANA.

Here is Punta Cana's history in a nutshell: Back in 1969 a group of American investors, headed by Ted Kheel, bought 30 square miles of undeveloped land stretching along five miles of the east coast of the Dominican Republic in the province of La Altagracia. The land was mostly impenetrable jungle and bush with no access roads and only a handful of small fishing villages dotted along the coast. But the beaches were among the most beautiful on the island with their white sand, coconut palms, crystal-clear waters and protective coral reefs. A few years later, Dominican entrepreneur Frank R. Rainieri joined them with his vision to create a resort community that respects the natural habitat while providing visitors with a world-class vacation experience. At the time the area was called Punta Borrachón (Drunkard's Point), Frank Rainieri wisely decided to rename it Punta Cana, after the fan-shaped Cana palm leaf that flourishes in the area. (*Sabal causiarum*, commonly known as the Puerto Rico hat palm.)

Managed by Dominican Frank R. Rainieri and American Theodore W. Kheel, the Compañía de Desarrollo Turístico Residencial e Industrial S.A. (CODDETREISA), known today as Grupo Puntacana S.A., began development of the lot in 1971, with the opening of a small hotel known as the Punta Cana Club. It had 10 two-room villas, a clubhouse, a small town for employees, a power plant and a basic aircraft runway. At full capacity this hotel could accommodate 40 guests. Although it was never at full capacity, Punta Cana Club confirmed that the property had great potential and in 1978 French hotel company Club Méditerranée bought some land from CODDETREISA and started the construction of the first 350-room hotel.

The area, nonetheless, was still pretty isolated. The nearest town, Higüey, took six hours to reach so a new road was needed. The Colgate-Palmolive Company, which was required to repatriate its local entities' export earnings, became involved and the new highway was built, thus connecting Punta Cana to the rest of the country's road network. That same year, Ted, Frank and Club Med representatives discovered the inconvenience of having to travel four hours to reach the nearest airport, located in Santo Domingo.

This led to the construction of the Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ). After an eight-year battle with three different governments, authorization was finally obtained for the construction of the first private international airport in the country, allowing Grupo

Puntacana's primitive airstrip to be developed to accommodate full-sized commercial aircraft. In a joint venture with Club Med construction began, and in 1984, Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ) was inaugurated with the first international flight (a twin-turbo propeller aircraft) arriving from San Juan, Puerto Rico. It was the world's first and most successful, privately built, owned and managed, international airport. And it still is. Without it, the Punta Cana region wouldn't be what it is today. In its inaugural year the airport received 2,976 passengers, and in 2012 it has already received over four million. Currently, there are over 60 resorts in the Punta Cana-Bávaro area.

Due to its isolated location and lack of public provisions from the Dominican Government, Grupo Puntacana S.A. took on the responsibility for installing and maintaining all facilities required for proper operation. Access roads, security, waterworks, electricity, garbage disposal, waste disposal and schools are all operable thanks to Grupo Puntacana's projects and subsidiary corporations. Since 1997 the owners of Grupo Puntacana have been Theodore W. Kheel (since his passing he is represented by his son Robert Kheel and son-in-law, Arnold Jacobs), Frank R. Rainieri, Julio Iglesias and Oscar de la Renta.

Grupo Puntacana has transformed this once inhospitable jungle coastline into a booming industry, responsible for a quarter of the country's gross domestic product. Corporate Social Responsibility plays an important role in the owners' vision – a percentage of profits from the airport are invested in community projects. The company's mission to promote sustainable development ranges from interest-free educational loans and medical facilities to revolving loan funding for their workers' housing and an ecological foundation to protect and preserve the land and marine life.

Puntacana Resort & Club is the commercial name used for most of Grupo Puntacana's touristic activities within that original piece of land. However, there are other companies including Punta Cana International Airport, Puntacana Village and Punta Cana Laundry Services, which do not come under the Puntacana Resort & Club umbrella. With over 42 years of experience, this company is rock-solid and has been able to grow even through the recent international financial crisis. Faith, hard work and perseverance have been invaluable tools over these 42 years. Things were not accomplished overnight, but the company has continued to expand without rushing, but by never stopping.

Puntacana Resort & Club has won a variety of international awards: IAGTO's 2011 Best Golf Resort of the World, Tortuga Bay received the Conde Nast Traveler 2012 Readers' Choice Award as Best Hotel in the World (For Caribbean Hotels), in 2011 Puntacana Resort & Club also received the Travel + Leisure Global Vision Awards, among many others. Over 14 companies employ 2,000 direct employees and 2,000 indirect employees, and our plans for expansion continue.

The Punta Cana region continues to grow as well. The new Coral highway linking Punta Cana to La Romana in just 35 minutes was recently completed, and Santo Domingo can now be reached in less than two hours. The future for Punta Cana looks bright, as it promises to remain one of the top vacation destinations in the Caribbean