

# DR COUNTRY INFO

## The Location

The beautiful paradise known as the Dominican Republic and famous for its beaches and resorts takes up the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola (shared with Haiti). It is home to 10.2 million people, and more than 70% of them live in big cities. Our team will serve primarily in the capital city, Santo Domingo, and nearby villages.

## The Condition

Dominicans belong to at least 18 distinct people groups and have a strong cultural value for religion. They all speak Spanish, though some may speak English or a Haitian dialect. There are also several tribal languages spoken in rural areas. Unfortunately, while 94% of Dominicans consider themselves Christians, only about 9% are evangelicals who personally know Jesus. Another 11% have still not even heard the Gospel! The big need is to demonstrate what it looks like to have a personal relationship with God. Though they're very devout and religious, most Dominicans don't know Him!

## The Strategy

Friendly by nature, it's easy to meet people and initiate conversations in the Dominican. When sharing your faith, make sure to explain a personal relationship with Jesus, not religion. Recognize that Christianity (and/or Catholicism) is more of a culture than a faith. Don't ask if people are Christians. Skip that question and instead ask if they know Jesus personally. If you've performed the drama, ask what parts of the presentation relate to their life or the lives of people they know. Poverty and alcohol are big issues down there, as are depression and a longing for something more. As you talk, ask questions about their lives and answer questions about your own. Strategically use your personal testimony to show them what a personal relationship with Jesus looks like. Briefly and honestly share your struggles (but don't glorify them), and then focus on how Jesus saved you, changed you, healed you or gave you hope!

Also, **practice your Spanish!** A strong and immediate bridge can be built with your new Dominican friends if you know just a few phrases in their language. The fact that you made an attempt will mean a lot. You'll develop a close rapport almost immediately!

## Cultural Tips

Baseball and basketball are popular and great conversation starters! (Soccer, however, is reserved for high society people in the DR, very different than it is in Central American.) Note that personal space in the Dominican is smaller than it is in America. If a Dominican is standing uncomfortably close to you, don't back away. You'll insult them without knowing it! Also, make sure to maintain eye contact while talking, but don't stare. In addition, recognize that saving face is important so never criticize someone in front of others. Always use proper titles when addressing people – Senor, Senora or Senorita, followed by their last name unless they invite you to use first names. These tips will create lasting relationships and Kingdom opportunities!

## Challenges for Prayer

Begin to pray daily for the Dominican. Specifically pray for retention of converts and the follow up work our ministry partners will be doing. People are often willing to accept Jesus, but religion is more of a cultural ideal than a personal lifestyle in the Dominican. Many who convert never connect with a local church, grow and serve there. Pray that God would orchestrate ways for new believers to connect to the Christian community after you go home.

Also, pray for religious liberty and biblical ethics. The Dominican experiences much government corruption, violent crime and promiscuous relationships. Ask the Lord to raise up leaders who will stand up for biblical principles as they make and enforce laws. In addition, pray against the bureaucratic antipathy and low-level hostility toward Christians who enter the political arena.

Finally, pray for churches in the Dominican to cultivate a missional vision. In just the last decade, Dominican Christians have started sending their own missionaries to other countries to share the Gospel and their desire for missions is on fire. Pray for this to grow and increase as more and more Dominican missionaries are called, trained and deployed to the nations!

## Our Ministry Schedule

As we worship and serve together, our team will bring light into the spiritual darkness and help the truth of the Gospel shine brighter than ever!! The week will include:

- Community development projects
- Performing Gospel presentations in schools
- Church services, home visits, feedings or sports ministry (baseball/basketball)
- Adventure Day – Beach, baptisms, fun team outings, local markets and more...