



Purpose of the Trip

The 2021 Givingthanks in the DR is Village Church's 2nd annual all-ages mission trip to the DR (1st annual was 2019). The purpose of this trip is to give Village members and friends a life-changing opportunity to step outside of their comfort zones and experience the unique beauty of God's works in places where he/she is needed the most; build a greater awareness of our universal spiritual interconnectedness; form new and unlikely relationships; and experience how we are more alike than different. Trip website for info and online payment link: www.villagepres.org/givingthanks.

Why the Dominican Republic?

Village Church has been doing work in the DR since the early 1990s. These efforts eventually grew into the formation of an official partner ministry, the Dominican Republic Medical Partnership of Village Church (DRMP). The DRMP partners with Dominican-based organizations to provide surgical, medical and health education to children and adults living in the bateys. For more about the DRMP, www.villagepres.org/drmp.

Dominican-led

One thing that makes this trip special is that it is led by our Dominican partners at Fundación Enciende Una Luz (Light A Candle Foundation or "LAC") and we are there to support their existing efforts. There is a lot to the story of the DRMP and LAC connection and you can read about it in this [Good News article about our history and partnership](#). Also, click here for [LAC's website](#) and I recommend following their [Instagram](#) too as they regularly post videos of their work in action. As mentioned above, we there to support LAC's efforts, connect with people we meet, learn, laugh, maybe cry, sing and give praise to God for the abounding beauty of life.

What Are "Bateys?"

Bateys are impoverished and remote housing communities (or shantytowns) that are owned by private sugar mill companies. They provide meager sub-standard "housing" (for lack of a better word) for the companies' undocumented Haitian sugarcane cutters and their families. Most bateys are not equipped with water, electricity or access to health care services. These multi-billion-dollar sugarcane companies are tightly knit to the Dominican government, which allows them to get away with the hiring and inhumane treatment of their Haitian laborers.

Who Do We Serve?

We serve undocumented Haitians who live in bateys surrounding La Romana. Haiti is the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, so these folks have no better choice than to illegally enter the DR for the readily available, dangerous and low paying sugarcane cutting jobs that Dominicans do not want. The men work 14+ hours a day without a break, six days a week chopping sugarcane with a machete and are paid approx. \$2/day for this backbreaking labor.

Work Options

Each day you will have a choice of a going into a batey to help LAC with the medical and health education clinics or helping at the construction site of LAC's Community Health Center. Overview of both:

- The medical and health education clinics consist of 5-7 different "stations" such as hypertension and high blood pressure monitoring, children's health and nutrition, mosquito-borne disease prevention, hygiene and more. [Here is a guide describing station activities](#).
- LAC is building a new community health center in a small town near La Romana called Caleta. This Center will serve to complement the current LAC programs of prevention ongoing in batey communities by expanding services including medical treatment and management as needed for batey residents. The center will offer an ER, non-acute medical care, dental, health education and possibly physical therapy.

A Generalization on Haitian Discrimination in the DR

Haitians are the lowest class members of Dominican society and live in constant fear of deportation or imprisonment. The most obvious factor for which they are discriminated against is their darker skin tone. Dominicans are a mixed race of Spanish descent and, therefore, have a lighter skin tone. Haitians, however, are of African descent and have a darker skin tone. Other factors contributing to their discrimination is their assumed level of education and income; family background; clothing quality; accent when speaking Spanish; and African-based cultural practices.

Location & Lodging

We will be staying in downtown La Romana, which is on the southeastern coast of the DR ([La Romana Wiki page](#)). Our lodging is a dorm-style compound called Casa Pastoral, which has been home to DRMP trip members for the past 25 years. There are separate bunk rooms for men and women. Our meals are prepared by wonderful ladies at Casa Pastoral and the food is delicious. Casa Pastoral is in the heart of La Romana's vibrant city center so if you are a light sleeper, bring earplugs. [Casa Pastoral Facebook page](#) and [blog that describes Casa Pastoral](#).

Volunteer Service Hours

You will earn a total of 58 volunteer service hours based on the Presidential Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) requirements. *Pre-trip – 4 hours for planning & supply organizing. Trip – 54 hours for work & travel. Travel counts toward PVSA but the max # of daily hours accepted is 9 hrs/day. In summary, 9 hours x 6 days = 54 + 4 pre-trip = 58*

Cash, Credit, Spending

Approx. \$100 cash should be fine but make sure you have lots of smaller bills like \$1s, \$5s and \$10s for tipping and trinkets. Also, at the end of the trip, I will collect \$20/person in cash as a tip for the ladies working in the kitchen Casa Pastoral so, please keep that in mind when determining how much to bring. Credit cards are accepted at established stores & restaurants. Once there, LAC will advise us on whether we should exchange USD for DOP . The best place for shopping is at the beach where you can buy cute souvenirs, clothes, hats, etc. There are also bars and restaurants at the beach so you can help yourself to whatever tickles your fancy.

Tipping & Other Things

COVID has had a devastating effect on the already-fragile Dominican economy so please tip generously when you are at places where tipping is customary. If you join us on a shopping trip to Jumbo, the fantastically amazing Dominican version of Walmart, it is customary to tip the bagger (\$2-\$3 is nice since we are being generous). When we are at the beach, you likely will be approached by a kind Dominican bringing you a beach chair, lounge, etc. Please know that you need to pay for it if you accept it (might be \$5ish – a drop in the bucket for us but a big deal for him).

Homework

- Read this article from [The Atlantic that talks about Haitian treatment in the DR](#)
- Read this article from [The Guardian about George Floyd's impact in the DR around their presidential election in July 2020](#)
- Read & watch from [The Vox - Divided island: How Haiti and the DR became two worlds](#)
- Watch this from [PBS Learning Media, Hispaniola - An Island Divided](#)
- Watch this from [PBS Black in Latin America - Haiti & the Dominican Republic: An Island Divided](#)