

Country Handbook: The Dominican Republic

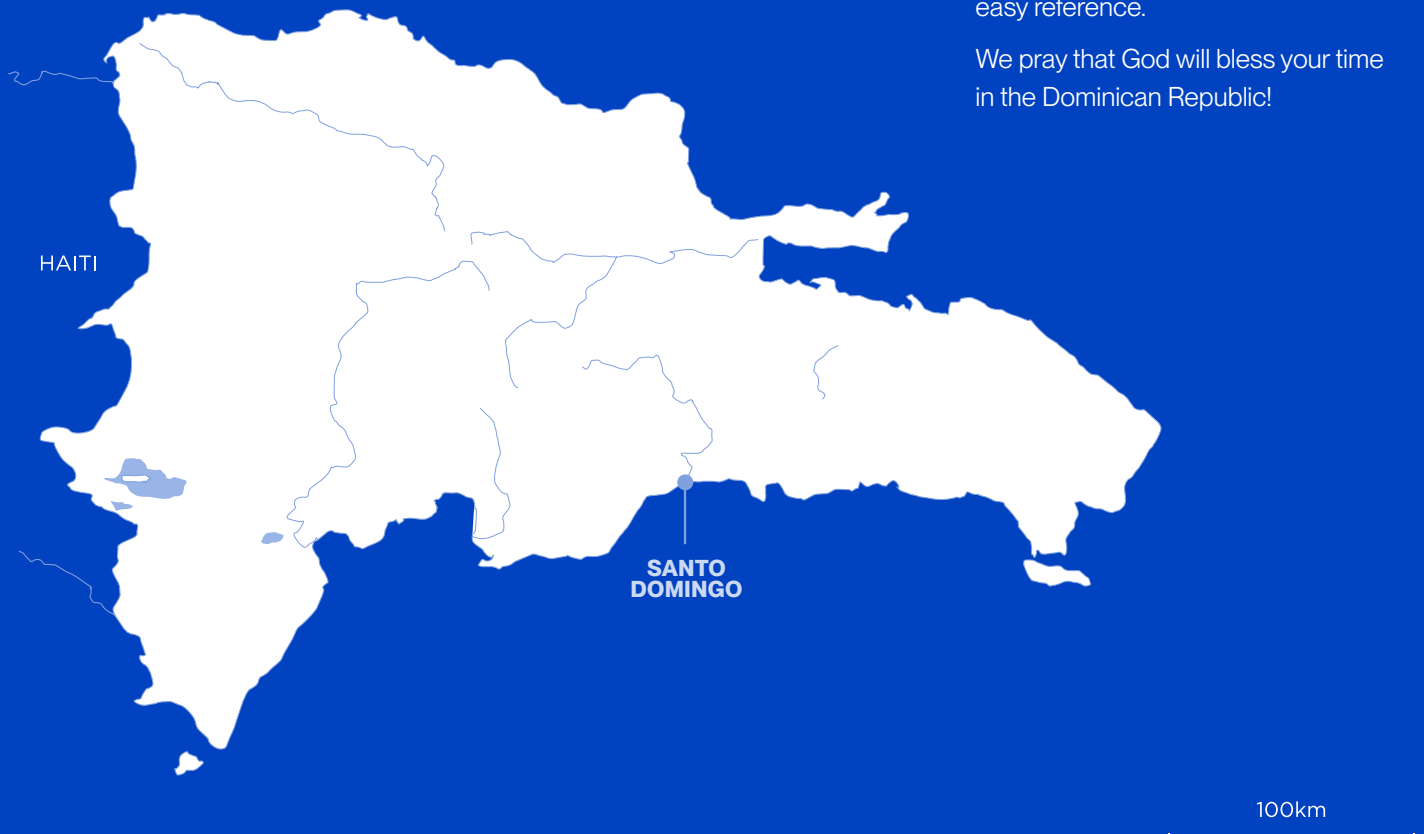


Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities and are being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to the Dominican Republic. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We pray that God will bless your time in the Dominican Republic!



Country Information



The Dominican Republic's warm climate and golden beaches make it a popular holiday destination for tourists across the world, as well as the setting for several popular movies, including The Godfather II, Jurassic Park and Pirates of the Caribbean. Baseball is an integral part of Dominican culture, and you'll often find people playing with makeshift equipment.

Main languages:

Spanish

Climate:

Tropical (average temperatures are between 28 to 31 degrees year-round)

Main religions:

Roman Catholic (52%),
Evangelical (18%)

Currency:

Dominican Peso



Compassion in the Dominican Republic

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Jesus' name in the Dominican Republic since 1970. 21 per cent of people live below the poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children **AGED 3 AND OLDER** attend their local Compassion centre before or after school.



For more information on the Dominican Republic, scan the QR code or visit:

compassion.com.au/where-we-work/dominican-republic

Compassion assisted children in the Dominican Republic typically attend program activities at their local child development centres. Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

Devotional time - Children learn to pray.

Spiritual lessons - Children sing songs and learn Bible stories. Children in the Child Sponsorship Program generally receive their own Bible as they join the program.

Break and snack time - Children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships.

Social-emotional lessons - Children learn conflict resolution skills and how to develop healthy self-esteem. Many of the children come from challenging home environments and are taught social and personal skills.

Lunch and social time - Children generally receive a nutritious meal every time they visit the centre. A typical meal could include pasta, rice, beans, chicken, wheat flour, oats, soup, meat, mashed potatoes, plantains, milk, chocolate, corn flakes, bread or sausages.

Health lessons - Children are taught practical health and hygiene tips.

Letter writing and career planning - Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests, setting realistic goals for their future.

In addition to Compassion's curriculum, once or twice a year, students from different child development centres participate in a camping retreat. Older students participate in youth clubs for sport, art, income generation and reading. Parents and caregivers have opportunities to develop vocational skills such as baking, tailoring and computer literacy.

Cultural Considerations



Language

- Useful Spanish phrases:

Hello: Hola

Goodbye: Adios

Good morning: Buenos dias

Good night: Buenas noches

Thank you: Muchas gracias

Please: Por favor

Excuse me: Perdon

How are you? Como estás?

I don't understand: No entiendo

I'm sorry: Lo lamento

Yes: Si

No: No

Greetings

- When you enter a room or begin a conversation, it is polite to offer a general greeting such as 'buenos días', which means 'good day'.
- Handshakes are another friendly gesture; men shake hands firmly when they greet one another.

Security

- Please ask permission before you photograph any local people. This can include photos taken from a moving vehicle, so be sure to check with your driver or Trips and Visits Specialist first.

Emergency contact information:

Local emergency number: 911

Compassion Dominican Republic office:

+1 809-274-2111

Australian Embassy (closest full consular

assistance is in Peru): +511 630 0500

Body language

- Dominicans are expressive in their body language and speak loudly and quickly in conversation. Nose wiggling means the person you're talking to either didn't hear what you just said, or they didn't understand you.
- In Dominican culture, people generally stand close to one another while speaking. Eye contact is also important to show interest and demonstrate trust.

Clothing

- Dominicans take care in their appearance and form opinions based on what people wear. Their casual dress is generally a little more formal than Australia.
- **Men:** Pants with t-shirts or button-up shirts are best. Shorts are not to be worn in government buildings or to church.
- **Women:** Modest clothing including pants, long skirts or dresses and modest tops are appropriate. Singlets and tight tops are not recommended, and shorts are not to be worn in government buildings or to church.
- It is best to wear closed-in shoes when visiting local church partners or children.

Eating and drinking

- Cuisine in the Dominican Republic is a blend of Spanish, African and Taino elements, with regional variants across the island. Dinner is the main meal and is almost always a family affair.
- A standard diet typically consists of beans, rice, chicken, beef, tuna and a selection of vegetables. For lunch, Dominicans often eat 'la Bandera Dominicana' (the Dominican Flag) which consists of white rice, bean stew and meat.
- Dominican coffee is among the best in the world. It's also common to find coconut milk and freshly squeezed orange juice sold by street vendors.



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Dominican Republic experienced some of the strongest and longest lockdowns in the world. School closure periods exacerbated learning inequalities for children in poverty. Providing children with access to education is a key priority for our local church partners in the Dominican Republic. Please pray that children can catch up on their education as quickly as possible.

Despite the nation's rapid economic progress in recent years, more than one in five people still live below the poverty line. Poverty increases the risk of infant mortality, malnutrition, unfinished schooling, child labour, early marriage, adolescent pregnancy and unemployment. Pray for our local church partners as they work to protect children and give them a better start to life.

Child labour is an ongoing problem in the Dominican Republic. Many families consider it essential for children to learn a trade, but too often they are denied an education (44 per cent of youth drop out of school early). Many children face exploitation and dangerous working conditions. Pray for local churches as they work to reach the most vulnerable children with practical, spiritual and emotional support.



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