

# Central Mass La Romana Mission Trip Orientation Guide

## Group Mission Goals

(adapted from the goals of the Central Massachusetts Good Samaritan Hospital Mission Council)

1. To create community.
2. To participate in a positive mission experience.
3. To serve, learn from, and interact with people in a different environment and culture.
4. To challenge individuals to explore and consider a deeper faith commitment.
5. To give testimony to the vitality of our faith.
6. As you prepare to go please take time to pray! - for yourself, for the folks in La Romana we go to support, for the dear ones you leave here, for your churches that they will be open to learning about the needs of another land and continue to be responsive, and for each other that we may use our caring and talents to the best of our ability and live considerately in community. (Note: If you have a favorite song / poem / thought that we can share during time for reflection /devotion? Please bring copies with you. Especially if it might be related to this year's devotional theme.)

## 7. REMEMBER – be filled – and carry the voice of this people to share with others.

If you haven't already, consider checking in with your pastor to see if you can either lead a worship service within a few weeks of your return or offer an extended mission moment for your home congregation upon your return. This helps you to process what you have experienced and helps your congregation to hear something of the beauty and the needs of the people of La Romana and its environs. **Deut. 4:9** Contemporary English Version (CEV)

<sup>9</sup>You must be very careful not to forget the things you have seen God do for you. Keep reminding yourselves, and tell your children and grandchildren as well.

## Mission Trip Background

**Who are we helping?** The Haitian Missionary Baptist Church (HMBC) has been serving the large Haitian population in the Dominican Republic since 1922. Today, the La Romana church consists of 21 congregations With about 1,000 members. Most of their churches are located in the *bateys*, or cane cutters' villages, outside La Romana. Bateys are workers villages found in the Dominican Republic where ever cane is grown, and the residents are almost all of Haitian descent. Most have no means of returning to Haiti. Lacking citizenship papers or documentation of any kind, the *braceros*, as they are called, are trapped in the bateys where they perform back-breaking labor and live in sub-standard housing. They own no land; even their houses are owned by the company for whom they work. During the *safra*, or harvest season, which lasts only about half the year, a good worker cutting cane for 9-12 hours will typically be paid \$4 - \$7US per day. Opportunities for women to work are limited to gleaning the fields or cooking and cleaning for men. Young boys frequently cut cane alongside the men. The braceros' families lead a grim, often desperate existence. These are the people you will meet and serve during your visit.

**Where will we live?** The Maranatha Center is a facility built by missionary work teams to house and feed you during your stay in La Romana. There are three large dormitories with baths and showers, a dining hall, walled courtyard and the former parsonage which is often occupied by a missionary

family. Accommodations are clean and simple: cots with foam rubber pads, tiled bathrooms with hot and cold water and flush toilets, laundry sinks, bottled water, and fans in every room. Just around the corner is the Haitian Missionary Baptist Church. The immediate neighborhood is considered safe and comfortable middle class by Dominican standards. In the evenings the streets are full of people and sounds, offering a fascinating look at Dominican society.

### EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION IN LA ROMANA

- La Casa Pastoral is the dormitory where we stay:
  - Address: #37 Avenida Santa Rosa, La Romana DR 22000
  - Kitchen Phone : 809-813-3940
  
- Hospital El Buen Samaritano is the Good Samaritan Hospital:
  - #79 Calle Circunvalacion, Sector Altos de Verde, La Romana DR
  - Hospital Phone (Directory in Spanish): 809-349-0022

**La Romana:** is a sea side city of about 171,500 Dominicans and Haitians located on the breezy southern coast of the Dominican Republic about 1 ½ hours drive east from the capital city of Santo Domingo. The main industries here are tourism and, of course, sugar production. One of the largest sugar plants in the world is just ½ mile from the mission team dormitories. While the streets are noisy and bustling with life, the pace is relaxed, and the people are friendly. Petty crime is sometimes a problem, and mission teams need to carry nothing with them on the streets at night and keep reasonable track of personal items in the dorms. **There should be no fanny packs or jewelry worn outside Casa Pastoral and the dorms should be locked when we leave the compound or during the night.** The violent crime rate is very low.

**The Good Samaritan General Hospital:** The hospital where much of our work takes place, is located about 3 miles from our dormitories. It is built on a plot of land that measures approximately 100 yards by 120 yards. A high wall surrounds the property. The building is about 80' wide by 120' long. Currently the first floor is being utilized for hospital stays, the second floor for medical clinics and the third floor for hospital stays and an ICU. The neighborhood surrounding the hospital is a poor barrio called Villa Verde, where mission workers have been treated with kindness and respect.

**Weather:** The Dominican Republic has a mild, subtropical climate. Temperatures in La Romana vary from about 64 degrees on the coolest nights to about 90 degrees on the hottest days. Humidity rises during the day until around mid afternoon, when it can become stiflingly high. A pleasant breeze blows virtually all the time. Mission teams come throughout the 4 seasons. The best weather occurs in the winter months, and, as one might expect, the hottest months are July and August.

**Language:** Spanish is the official language of the Dominican Republic; but many of the people of the Haitian Missionary Baptist Church in La Romana speak Creole, the language of Haiti. In the bateys most people speak Creole, though most of the younger people there also speak Spanish.

**What kind of work will we do?** The main focus of the missionary construction teams is the completion of the Good Samaritan General Hospital (GSGH) However, work teams are usually comprised of construction workers as well as medical personnel. The members of the construction team might take turns in assisting in the bateys with medical workers and medical workers may spend some time assisting with construction efforts.

**Construction Teams:** The HMBC has wide experience in construction. Since 1985 they have built the Maranatha Center, the main sanctuary of the church, which seats over 500 people, the dining hall, as

well as over half a dozen churches and schools in the bateys, as well as the ongoing work at the GSGH. Construction teams can be productive even if only a few of them are skilled workers. Tools are readily available at the site and building materials can often be easily purchased. Competent Dominican and Haitian workers usually work side by side with our missionary workers. Many groups find that their strongest friendships with Dominicans are formed on construction sites. Construction teams will be assigned to projects according to the skills they possess, and the particular needs of the GSGH at the time of their arrival.

**Medical Teams:** The Good Samaritan General Hospital is envisioned as a low cost, low tech facility emphasizing prayer, preventive health care, ON-site and mobile health clinics, public health education and the treatment of acute medical problems. The long term mission of the hospital is to provide open access to basic health care for the poor in the La Romana region, regardless of age, religion, or nationality. Teams can focus their efforts in various ways to help fulfill this mission.

Medical teams usually spend most of their time conducting clinics in the bateys. In doing so they are extending the care offered by the hospital beyond the work of the local health promoters. Local health promoters are people from the bateys who receive regular training in public health at the Good Samaritan hospital, and are able to inform the clinic teams of the particular needs of the local community.

The teams usually include doctors and nurses with a variety of skills, as well as lay people with no medical training who are trained on the job to organize the pharmacy, distribute toiletries, record vital signs, organize those waiting in line to receive care, and pray with the sick. Specialists such as physical therapists, dentists and emergency medical technicians always find opportunities to employ their skills.

The problems most frequently encountered in the bateys include worms and parasitic diseases, malnutrition, hypertension, skin infections, infected wounds, scabies, diarrhea and resulting dehydration, arm and back pain, ulcers, abscessed teeth, and a variety of pulmonary ailments. The medicines most frequently distributed ( in addition to vitamins ) are pain relievers, amoxicillin, antacids, deworming medication, and birth control pills.

## **Common sense rules for daily living**

### **General Health & Comfort**

**On the Way – if you have ear pain when flying:** “ear planes” may help relieve discomfort in flight.

**Wash your hands regularly - always before eating.** Take wipes and antiseptic hand lotion with you.

**DO NOT drink un-bottled water or eat food not prepared for us at the mission.** The food, and beverages served at the Maranatha center where we will be staying are safe. Never drink water from a tap, gargle in the shower, rinse your toothbrush in the sink, and never drink a beverage with ice unless you are quite sure the ice is “filtrado”; i.e. made with filtered water. You will never be far from a place where you can obtain safe, refreshing drinks. (However, you may help by assuring that the drinks go with us on the busses in the mornings!)

**Don't share cups or water bottles.**

**Brush teeth with bottled water.**

**Be careful not to drink shower water.**

**Never eat fruits or vegetables that have not been cooked, peeled or washed in filtered water:**

When in doubt, ASK!!

Some Tropical Medicine Specialists recommend taking **Pepto Bismol** tablets from arrival to departure as a preventive for intestinal diseases -2 tablets before each meal and at bedtime (8 per day). It turns stools black but doesn't upset your system in any way. **(Please discuss with your provider)**

**Don't walk on the streets or wade or swim in fresh water with bare feet,**

**Put on mosquito repellent in the evenings and before bed.** (Try to get a brand that contains **DEET**).

**Stay away from dogs and cats that wander the streets. Don't pet them – they can carry disease.**

Avoid close personal contact with persons who are sick.

Store rolls of **new toilet paper in containers** or plastic bags – **not on the floor.**

### **Community conventions and customs**

**Never wear fanny packs or jewelry. It makes you a target.**

**Used toilet paper always goes in the wastebasket,** never in the toilet.

Most of us take three or four work days of clothes, then have them laundered mid week by the church women for a very modest fee. Fees are paid at the end of the week. (This is a source of income for the women and saves luggage space for donations.) Some bring clothing to wear and then leave at end of week.

**Everyone helps** - clear tables after meals, keep dorm spaces clean, strip beds & clean rooms before we leave.

**Carry your passport** (& letter of consent - if under 18) with you during travel **& they will go in the safe** once we arrive. **The leaders will keep copies with them all week.**

- Carry airport entrance fee (a \$10 bill) with your passport so it can't be inadvertently spent
- Using local ATM's for cash seems to work best. (You can exchange dollars if your team returns early enough). **Make sure you notify your bank of your travel.**
- **Tag all luggage and carry-ons inside and out—we put yellow ribbons on everything.**
- **Don't go anywhere alone,** and let someone know where you're going. Teens **always** let your guardian know where you are going and who you are going with. **Always use the sign out sheet.**
- Everyone must be in the compound by 10 PM
- You will see many needs in La Romana and will be approached for financial aid or other material assistance. **We have found it best to help by going through our hosts and giving, according to their advice.**
- Communication Home - There is wifi at the compound so we will have internet in evenings. Also there are magic jack phones where we can call the U.S. for free.

## **Travel**

**Passport - You need one!** We have heard that it is good for it to be valid for at least one month after the trip. **You will need to pay a \$10 entry fee going into the DR.**

**Under 21** - Those under 21 who are NOT traveling with a parent or legal guardian must supply us with two forms: a medical treatment consent form, and a notarized document giving us permission to have you with us outside the U.S.

**Luggage:**

Bring 1 full sized travel carry-on (check with your airline for acceptable sizes) with your personal belongings and clothes, and 1 backpack with travel needs (check with your airline for acceptable size). We will try to use one or two large suitcases or duffel bags as your main luggage filled with supplies. Any extra room in your carry-ons can also bring supplies. (Stickers, nerf balls or little toys in quantity for kids in bateys are useful, plus medicines and personal care items.)

**Personal Items**

*Linens:* Single bed sheets & pillowcase are provided; if folks prefer to take their own you may leave them as a donation. Sometimes a light flannel sheet is helpful if a night is cool. **Bring your own towel.**

*Bring your Preventive Health Care, Medical Needs, and Prescriptions* (if any are lost in travel see Mary or Jenn immediately!!)

Work hat (brim all around to protect back of neck), strong sun screen, work gloves, good work shoes, sunglasses, water shoes or sandals for shower and beach.

**Be careful-you're far from home and are here to work**

**Cultural Issues, Behavioral Guidelines:**

<p>We are guests of the Haitian Missionary Baptist Church. Our behavior reflects on them and their mission. Some of their standards are different from ours in the US. Be discreet in dress and behavior.</p>
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**Dress:**

Women - No sleeveless dresses/tops except at beach. No midriffs showing, spandex or short shorts. Skirts or culottes (knee length or longer) or pants on the street; shorts OK on construction site and beach. Only skirts, dresses, pants or scrubs in the bateys!! Only skirts and dresses in church!!

Men - Long pants in the batey (unless doing construction) and in town; a nice sport shirt and slacks for church.

**Social**

It is requested that there be no drinking of alcoholic beverages.

No loud talking late at night (come in off the street in front of mission at 10 PM). The gate will be locked.

**Church Services and Religious Diversity:** We will all go to a church service in a batey either Sunday AM or Tuesday evening. There are services at the mission church AM and PM on Sunday. These are an important cultural experience; other church services on weekday evenings are optional; there may be several offerings at each church service. You might want to plan to have some money – at least for offerings and laundry - US dollars are OK.

Our own team is often very diverse religiously- Congregational, Baptist, Muslim, Quaker, Unitarian, Catholic, and probably others. For this week we are part of a Baptist Church mission, and all of us have something to learn and something to share in this experience. We hope each of us will be personally comfortable in this setting, and respectful of others who are different from us in their religious practices.

### **To Discuss With Your own Primary Care Provider or Travel Clinic**

**(All of these including the decision to go to the Medical Mission Trip to La Romana should be discussed with your primary care provider before the application process.)**

**Immunizations and Special Medicines** - Immunizations that are categorized as “required” are those which are strongly recommended by virtually all medical professionals who are familiar with the Caribbean and by the CDC. Those categorized as “suggested precautions” cover immunizations and other preventative procedures for diseases which in the Dominican Republic, but are rare. Some disagree about the advisability of these immunizations for those planning only short-term visits. This “suggested precautions” list is based upon additional advice of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Consult your family doctor in making decisions about these immunizations. (We will be visiting in rural areas and the medical teams will be working in rural areas.)

#### **Required immunizations**

Adult tetanus toxoid or adult DT within the last 5 years. (In other words, a tetanus “booster”.)

All normal “childhood” vaccines should be up to date: measles, mumps, rubella (MMR vaccine), diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus (DPT vaccine <7 years of age), and polio vaccine.

Zika Virus - For the general safety and well-being of our team, Any traveler that is pregnant or trying to get pregnant within 2 years following travel to this part of the world, should not go on this mission trip. Males and females with questions or concerns should ask their doctor and visit the CDC website for more details.

#### **Suggested precautions**

Check with your provider:

- to guard against malaria (risk is significant only in rural areas).
- to guard against hepatitis A & B

**Note:** We provide group travel insurance for everyone, which covers illness, accidents and emergency evacuation to the US if needed.

***\*PLEASE TAKE ANY PERSONAL MEDS YOU MIGHT NEED FOR ALLERGIES, ASTHMA, HEADACHES OR OTHER FREQUENT OR OCCASIONAL AILMENTS\****

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Below is a Tentative Packing List for informational purposes only. This may change!**

### **PERSONAL ITEMS PACKING LIST**

Every trip participant will be responsible for transporting 2 duffle bags (provided) that are filled with donations. Personal items for the trip should be limited to: a carry-on and a small personal item to fit under the seat (such as a backpack or tote bag).

#### **WEAR ON THE AIRPLANE:**

- Aqua colored La Romana Mission Team shirt
- Work boots (if you can manage them through security) or sneakers
- Sweater or sweat shirt and raincoat (to layer)
- **Passport & second photo ID** should be readily available—and \$10 for airport fee in La Romana

#### **IN YOUR CARRY-ON BAG:** (Essential items in case your luggage is delayed)

**Personal Medications** don't forget your regular prescriptions, malaria pills, any non prescription medications and supplements you normally take.

**Liquids:** *All liquids must be in a 1-quart zippered plastic bag, and all containers within must be 3 oz. Or smaller! Prescription liquids and creams may be taken through security in a separate additional quart bag.*

- 3 or 4 sets of work clothes (including extra work gloves)-scrubs for batey
- 3 or 4 underwear, socks
- street/evening clothes
- bathing suit, swim towel & beach shoes
- church clothes (F: dress or skirt (modest, cover shoulders)/M: collared shirt with dress pants
- Sneakers or street shoes (work or walking in town)
- hat - suggested with brim all the way around
- Sunglasses -
- sunscreen
- insect repellent (with DEET if possible)
- ear plugs - nights are **very noisy**
- travel game/book
- Phone and/or computer chargers
- camera & memory cards
- extra battery memory card or stick for camera (NOTE: VERY expensive there!)
- flashlight (electricity goes out)
- extra batteries for flashlight
- alarm clock
- plastic bag for laundry
- sheets (optional) – 1 twin bed set
- cotton blanket or flannel sheet(optional)
- modest pajamas (summer)or scrubs
- snacks - granola bars, raisins, gorp etc.
- backpack for beach
- face cloth & towel
- tissue packs
- wet ones for clean up & hand sanitizer
- 1 or 2 empty water bottle with a Cover
- handkerchief and/or dust mask (construction & medical)

#### **Larger liquids and pocket knives can be transported in the duffels.**

**Optional:** portable musical instrument - construction tools - snorkel & fins

gifts for kids - stickers, nerf balls, baseballs, tennis balls, a few bottles of bubble stuff  
donations: summer weight clothing, vitamins, medicines