

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month:

Profile of the Dominican Republic



Many of TriHealth’s amazing physicians and team members are either immigrants from or descendants of the beautiful island of the Dominican Republic. The island is known for its blue ocean waters, white-sand beaches, beautiful resorts, and the poverty that lurks on the outskirts of these tourist hot spots. A behind-the-scenes peek at the history and culture of this beautiful yet conflicted country reveals that baseball is a national

pastime and a great source of pride. Boys often dedicate their childhoods to this sport, hoping to play in the big leagues in the U.S. Almost 40 percent of players in U.S. leagues come from the Dominican Republic, including Pedro Martinez, Alex Rodriguez, Albert Pujols, and Sammy Sosa.

The population of the Dominican Republic is predominantly of mixed African and European ethnicity, and there are small Black and white minorities. It has long been believed that few people are descended, even indirectly, from the indigenous Taino peoples, who were largely decimated by disease, warfare, and the effects of forced labor shortly after their first contact with Europeans. The exact African heritage of the Black population is unknown, although many of their ancestors arrived as slaves from West Africa. The Spanish language has always been predominant, although English is becoming more common because of continued emigration to the United States—which has been accompanied by continual visiting back and forth—plus some repatriation. A French Creole is spoken among Haitian immigrants.

The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of Hispaniola, the second largest island of the Greater Antilles chain in the Caribbean Sea. Haiti, also an independent republic, occupies the western third of the island. The Dominican Republic’s shores are washed by the Caribbean to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the north. Between the eastern tip of the island and Puerto Rico flows the Mona Passage, a channel about 80 miles (130 km) wide. The national capital is Santo Domingo, on the southern coast. The capital city, Santo Domingo, has a rich history. Founded in 1496, it’s the oldest European settlement in the Americas.

In November 1821, Santo Domingo declared its independence from Spain. But two months later, Haiti invaded and took over. The Dominican Republic didn't become independent until February 27, 1844. However long before their independence, the country was called Santo Domingo, after Saint Dominic. The people were called Dominicans. After they won independence, the people called their country La República Dominicana (the Dominican Republic). Did you know Saint Dominic is the patron saint of astronomers? The Dominican flag is the only flag in the world that uses the image of a Bible. This coat of arms is at the center of the flag.

The Dominican Republic is the only place in the world where the blue, semi-precious stone called larimar is found. It most closely resembles turquoise, and it is called “larimar” because it resembles the color of the Caribbean Sea (or *mar*). It is also home to the oldest cathedral in the Americas, Catedral de Santa Maria La Menor which is over 500 years old. It has survived everything from pirate attacks to earthquakes.