

## USA Cheon Il Guk Missionaries: Dominican Republic - Our Three-Day Hike

Roland Platt  
March 1, 2019



**February 27, 2019**

We started off the day leaving the CARP center at 4am to go on a 3 day hike. Despite being sleep deprived, we made it to Parque Naciona Armando Bermudez to start our journey. Today, we walked 12 miles in a span of 8 hours. A lot of the terrain was uphill, muddy, and rocky. It was difficult for everyone, but we stopped every hour or two to re-energize. We made it to our camp site for dinner and rest for the night.

I asked Roland Platt, GPA Director, "what is the biggest difference between this hike to other hikes" [he has been on]. "It started off as a tropical forest then when we reached a certain altitude the forest become pine." He mentioned how you usually carry food and supplies then prepare the meals once you get to camp, but, on this hike, mules carried our bags and food was already prepared.



First year, Hong-Kook Matsunaga said a challenge was "staying internally focused" but the best thing about the hike was "God's creation."

They both said what they looked forward was seeing the sunrise the next day at the Pico Duarte, the highest point in the Caribbean Islands.

Thanks to the people of Dominican Republic, dinner was made on stone stoves, the way indigenous people used to make food. It was an interesting and new experience for most of us.

We ended the day with some delicious hot chocolate. This completed the day to make a new and fulfilling experience for most of us.



## **February 28, 2019**

Today, we woke up early and hiked through rocky paths to Pico Duarte, the highest point in the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean.

It took us 2.5 hours, with short breaks in between and trying not to trip over the many rocks.

After lots of coughing, sniffing, and thinking "Are we there yet?" we finally made it to the top. It had the flag of Dominican Republic, a white cross, and the statue of Duarte at the peak. Though it was cloudy and we couldn't watch the sunrise, we had a representative prayer, unison prayer, sang Tongil and had three cheers of Og Mansei! We all felt accomplished, having reached that point after hiking many miles.

After walking down the rocky path, to the camp site, we had lunch prepared once again by the people of Dominican Republic and the guides. This time we didn't have utensils to eat with so today I, and many others, really felt a part of the indigenous culture.

In the afternoon, we had a service by Hong-Kook Matsunaga, about having the right heart of offering to God and Dominican Republic, remembering the higher purpose of why we are here and to stay internally focused as well as enjoying ourselves. I think that service was a good reminder for all of us.

We played a few games, which was good bonding time for our nation.

Dinner, prepared by the lovely people of Dominican Republic, was pasta! And after our meal Roland oppa gave his life testimony; we learned about his family background, what kind of person he was before joining the movement exactly how he joined this movement and the path God planned for him throughout his life. I think it was very inspiring to see how God worked in his life and we can learn much from it.

Overall, this day started off a little difficult with its rocky, uphill paths, but it was pretty relaxing as we had lots of time to rest today. We ended the day closing under the beautiful stars of the Dominican Republic.



### **March 1, 2019**

This morning, we woke up to a dark sky filled with stars! Yes, once again, we woke up early in the morning to leave the camp site, BUT this time, we went down the mountain!

Today, I was able to enjoy nature much more going down the mountain than hiking up, other GPAers agreed. Second year, Nobuaki Iwamoto, said he, "felt so much of God's love through creation." Nobu, being injured, said he could appreciate the good things more. The people who helped him as well as being able to focus on his internal goal, all during his travel down.

I, too, took my time to enjoy the beautiful nature, that I unfortunately couldn't before, with my sole focus on climbing up and how difficult the hike was. We were all able to appreciate the beautiful sunrise and weather God gave us. At the bottom of the mountain, we said farewell to our kind Dominican Republic guides who took care of us for three days, after eating their delicious food for the last time.

Driving for 4 hours on the narrow roads of Dominican Republic to the CARP center, I realized most of the Dominican Republic is poor and in the countryside. There is lots of green and run down homes and stores. While the CARP center and the church is in the more modern part of Dominican Republic, in the city.

We ended the day back at the CARP center, not with a sky covered with stars, but a place to call home.

~L. Regidor