



EDUCATIONAL
TOURS



Your guide to the Dominican Republic

To prepare you for your upcoming Service Learning Tour, we've put together a list of everything you'll need to know about the country you'll be working in. Take some time to read all about the people and places you'll be visiting, as well as a bit of what you can expect once you're on the ground.

> Rough Guide

Capital: Santo Domingo

Language: Spanish

Dialing code: +1

Population: 10.4 million

Currency: Dominican peso

Service Learning in the Dominican Republic

Everything you need to know

Passport and Travel Documents

To enter the Dominican Republic, all U.S. visitors must have a valid passport; visit travel.state.gov to confirm any additional validity information. Citizens of all other countries should contact their appropriate embassy to find out what specific documentation is required for them to travel.

Weather

The Dominican Republic has a tropical climate with two seasons—wet and dry. The wet season begins in May and lasts through November. During the wet season it will rain frequently and will be anything from a light rain to a downpour. The dry season begins in December and lasts through April. However, the Dominican Republic has many microclimates because of its diverse topography, so these patterns will often vary locally. Temperatures remain fairly constant throughout the year but vary according to region. Mountainous regions of the Dominican Republic can be very warm in the day but cool in the evening. Please check weather.com for your destinations and travel periods.

Dress/Packing

You will be outdoors and working hard during your tour, so please ensure that you bring clothing that you do not mind getting dirty. We require that you bring long pants, work gloves and sturdy running shoes or hiking boots. If you are traveling on the Marine Conservation tour you should pack several swimsuits, towel, water shoes and a rashguard/long sleeve shirt that can get wet because a lot of the service work will take place in the water. Out of respect for the local culture, please dress conservatively during your service project. You are not allowed to wear tight or revealing clothing, shorts above the knee, tank tops, leggings, or yoga clothes. Summer clothes are appropriate all throughout the year, including light t-shirts, shorts, a light jacket or windbreaker, comfortable walking shoes and sandals. You should also bring sunscreen, a water bottle, sunglasses, insect repellent and travel-size toilet paper.

Currency

The Dominican Republic's currency is the Dominican peso, but in some cases the U.S. dollar is also accepted. Visit xe.com for more currency information. We recommend withdrawing money from a bank or ATM instead of using credit cards or traveler's checks. Most shops don't take credit cards. Traveler's checks are usually not accepted in the Dominican Republic and we highly discourage the use of them. Using ATMs is more convenient, but be sure to plan ahead because certain project sites will not have easy access to ATMs. You should notify your own bank of your travel plans to avoid service interruptions, and inquire charges when withdrawing money abroad.

Spending Money

It's always a good idea to bring spending money for optional excursions, free time activities, souvenir shopping, lunches, and snacks. We recommend bringing \$15–\$30 per day.

Tipping

You will have the same Tour Director during your entire tour and they will also act as local guides throughout the tour. You will typically have the same bus driver during the entire tour as well. It's customary to tip your Tour Director and bus drivers as a token of appreciation at the end of the tour. We recommend:

- \$6 per person per day for the Tour Director
- \$3 per person per day for the bus driver

Donations/Gifts

Out of consideration for the whole community, we encourage you not to give gifts individually to local children or families. If you would like to donate something, we ask that you contact your Tour Director who can provide guidance on if any supplies are useful to the community or partner organization at that time. Your Tour Director will then properly distribute the items to the organization you will be working with.

Phone and Internet

If you plan to use your personal mobile phone on tour, contact your wireless provider to see what fees you may incur for calling, texting or using data abroad. However, keep in mind that very few sites have cell service, and Wi-Fi will not be available at all hotels.

We strongly encourage travelers to focus on the tour and their immediate surroundings while they are abroad, rather than being distracted by things happening at home. In our experience we have found that disconnecting from the internet, phones, and tablets enhances the experiences.

Vaccinations and Health Precautions

For information on necessary vaccinations we strongly recommend that you visit cdc.gov or consult your physician for the most updated information.

Service Learning in the Dominican Republic

What to expect on your program

Tour Director

Your Tour Director is responsible for all the logistics on tour and ensures that the travel experience goes smoothly. They are all professionally trained to anticipate the needs of travelers like you. They also have an extensive knowledge about the communities and projects.

Service Projects

EF works in collaboration with local Dominican organizations that have established partnerships with different communities. You will receive the exact name of the local organization and community you will work with closer to your departure date.

During your time at the service sites in the Dominican Republic you can expect to be working on projects such as: reforestation, trail-building, removing invasive plants, mural painting, participating in educational workshops, tutoring youth in English, gardening, painting, mixing concrete, pouring concrete, smoothing and sanding walls, tutoring on computer literacy and more.

The work can be physically intense, and you will be outside for most of the day. While on the service site, your Tour Director will give you thorough instructions on the use of equipment, show you what protective gear should be worn, help you with construction, provide support and schedule rest times and water breaks. Some necessary gear will be provided on site, but you should also reference the packing list to make sure you bring the right clothes and shoes.

Accommodations

Accommodations generally are either small hotels or eco-lodges. The typical small hotels where your group could stay are clean, comfortable, and provide running water. The typical eco-lodge provides the same amenities, but will include mosquito nets when necessary and is often located within or near the community where the service project is located. Some accommodations, located in remote areas, may have limited electricity.

Students under the age of 20 will share rooms with three or four other travelers of the same gender in rooms that contain single or shared double beds, or a combination of the two. Students may share rooms with students in the tour group who are not from their own school. Adults will share twin rooms with other adults of the same gender. Adults may share rooms with adults in the tour group who are not from their own school. Groups might not all be roomed next to each other and may be on different floors. Electrical voltage and outlets in the Dominican Republic are the same as in the US so you will not need an adapter or converter.

Many hotel and public bathrooms have old plumbing and ask that you dispose of toilet paper in waste baskets rather than flushing. Water pressure in the Dominican Republic is often lower than the U.S. and the amount of hot water can be limited, so be prepared for short showers. In more remote sites, hot water may not be available.

Transportation

Many transfers on your Dominican Republic tour may take between three and four hours, depending on road conditions and the season. The country's topography includes curved roads and many steep hills. Those prone to motion sickness may consider bringing medication.

Food/Water

Dominican food is flavorful but not spicy. Typical dishes include: rice and beans, plantains, yucca, vegetables, chicken, and fresh fruit. Fresh fruit juices will often be served with meals as well as water. Tap water is non-potable in the Dominican Republic. Bottled water will cost \$0.5-1 dollars.

Photo Policy

To ensure photos are not exploitative or disrespectful of the community, we ask that you only take pictures of people who have a relationship with the non-profit you are serving, and obtain their permission in advance.

Your Tour Director will let you know when it is appropriate to have your camera out, and there will be plenty of opportunities for you to take photos and highlight key moments on your tour. We just want to ensure that wherever we go, we are treating people like people—not like scenery.

Safety

Always inform your Tour Director if you should need to leave the group at any point. Please do not bring large sums of money or valuables (electronics, jewelry, expensive shoes or clothing) with you. If you bring modest jewelry, please be mindful of the community in which you are working and living, and wear items accordingly. Please store any valuables you do bring with you in safe deposit boxes at hotels when not in use. Although hotels in coastal areas may be located near the beach, swimming is only permitted in certain areas designated by EF for safety reasons. Please be sure to read EF's Safety Handbook before going on tour.

Service Learning Global Ambassador Code

In order to provide an enriching experience for student travelers, we ask that everyone adhere to a simple code of conduct.

Student travelers should act as global ambassadors for their country, their school, their home and their family. Throughout the EF Service Learning experience, they will be guests in a foreign community and culture, and should act accordingly to not only deepen their experience, but also make a positive impression on the host communities.

The code for student conduct reflects three significant priorities:

1. That volunteers stay safe and healthy.
2. That volunteers maintain and enhance the positive reputation our local partners have in the communities where we work.
3. That volunteers positively represent themselves and their home culture through their behavior and interactions with local community members.

To maintain the safety, health and respect of our volunteers and program, student travelers are asked to agree to:

- Not smoke
- Not drink alcoholic beverages
- Not swear or use foul language
- Not use recreational drugs
- Not be involved in romantic public displays of affection
- Respect the quiet time as set by the Tour Director/Community Representative
- Not drive or ride on a motorized vehicle/motorcycle other than EF provided transportation
- Not give gifts or money directly to the children or people in the community without the involvement of the Tour Director
- Abide by the EF dress code
- Follow the instructions of the Tour Director and local support staff

By acting as global ambassadors, student travelers will not only leave a positive and lasting impact on the local community, but will return home having had a more meaningful experience, as well.

