

FOUNDATION FOR PEACE
Mission Trips - 2011

Frequently Asked Questions for the Dominican Republic

1. A summary of Dominican Republic history

The Dominican Republic inhabits the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, Haiti occupies the remainder. The island was originally occupied by the Taino tribe. The tribal members welcomed Columbus in 1492. Colonialism reduced the Taino population from about one million to about 500 in only 50 years. As a result, the Spanish began bringing African slaves to the island in 1503.

French settlers occupied the western end of the island, which Spain had ceded to France in 1697, becoming the Republic of Haiti in 1804. The Haitians conquered the whole island in 1822 and controlled it until 1844, when forces led by Juan Pablo Duarte pushed them out and established the Dominican Republic as an independent state. In 1861 Dominicans voluntarily returned to the Spanish Empire; in 1865, independence was restored. The United States occupied the Dominican Republic from 1916 until 1924, when there was a democratically elected Dominican government.

Unfortunately, in 1930 Rafael L. Trujillo, commander of the army, took power and achieved absolute political control. Mismanagement and corruption resulted in major economic problems. In August 1960 the Organization of American States (OAS) imposed diplomatic sanctions against the Dominican Republic as a result of Trujillo's complicity in attempting to assassinate President Romulo Getancurt of Venezuela. These sanctions remained in force after Trujillo's death by assassination in May 1961. In January 1962 a council of state was formed. In September 1963 the freely elected president was overthrown in a military coup. Following another military coup in 1965, U.S. military forces landed on April 28th to protect U.S. citizens and to evacuate U.S. and other foreign nationals. More U.S. forces arrived on April 30th to avoid a complete Communist takeover.

Free elections followed, beginning in 1966 up through 1990s, although there were some charges of fraud in 1986, 1990 and 1994. The early 1980s saw riots based on economic difficulties. In 1990 President Balaguer instituted a second set of economic reforms. After negotiating an agreement with the IMF, balancing the budget and curtailing inflation, the Dominican Republic experienced a period of economic stability marked by low inflation, a balance of payments surplus and a leap in GDP. However overall, there is no significant, obvious difference for the people living in the poorest areas.

2. What is the primary goal of the mission trip?

Foundation for Peace summer mission trips are multifaceted Christ-centered ministries shaped by the words of the Apostle Paul, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." (Romans 12:10-13)

In order to achieve this goal, our mission trips are focused on building relationships with the Dominicans by working hand in hand with the local church on construction projects and on the provision of free medical care and educational programs, regardless of race, religion, gender or socioeconomic status in the local community. We believe this will result in sustainable and successful initiatives that relieve the effects of poverty, encourage personal growth, and help to alleviate social injustice.

3. What are the actual things we will be doing on the mission trip?

There are 4 main ministry activities: a construction project, Bible school activities for children, worship with the local church and a medical clinic open to all in the community.

There will also be daily devotions/group meetings, at least one afternoon at the beach and an opportunity to purchase souvenirs.

4. Do I need construction skills to participate?

The work is non-technical and done hand in hand with our Dominican friends (e.g. passing concrete blocks, passing buckets of sand, gravel, water and concrete, mixing concrete, digging footings, and painting). If something requires training (e.g. laying blocks or tiles), training will be provided at the work site by our local maestro (construction manager). Most work is somewhat physically strenuous, especially in the hot environment of the summer months.

5. What are the accommodations like?

We house groups in 5 lodging locations in the Dominican Republic. Accommodations are divided into separate facilities for males and females where possible with a common meeting/dining area. Where possible, families will be housed together in one room. Accommodations are very basic with bunk beds, cold showers and no air conditioning.

1. Are there any special immunizations/vaccinations required for the communities where we will be working?

All participants are required to have up-to-date immunizations for their age, especially your tetanus immunization. In addition, we recommend that you have a Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and an oral typhoid fever vaccine before the trip.

2. Is malaria prophylaxis required?

There is no need for malaria prophylaxis except for specific areas in the western parts of the Dominican Republic. Most of our groups do not work in areas where there is a risk of malaria infection. Your group leader will tell you if you will be in malaria endemic area and the FFP will provide medicine for you to take as prophylaxis (i.e. chloroquine) when available. Please consult your doctor if you have health issues or take other medication. In addition, each person should routinely use DEET containing mosquito repellent (provided by the participant).

3. Is the water safe to drink?

No, not from the faucet! The FFP will provide purified water and ice made from purified water that is safe to drink. Avoid brushing your teeth with tap water or drinking any water/ice when you do not know the source.

4. What do I do if I get diarrhea?

Diarrhea is usually a self-limited disorder that resolves with only oral rehydration. Clear liquids are routinely recommended for adults. Travelers who develop three or more loose stools in an 8-hour period---especially if associated with nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, fever, or blood in stools---may benefit from antimicrobial therapy. Currently, ciprofloxacin 500 mg twice a day for 3-5 days is the recommended treatment. If diarrhea persists despite therapy, members should be evaluated by a doctor and treated for possible parasitic infection.

5. Should I take Pepto-Bismol daily in an effort to prevent diarrhea?

Most participants (> 90%) do not develop traveler's diarrhea (a bacterial infection, not parasites). However, if you want to take a prophylactic regimen to try and avoid developing

diarrhea, the following is recommended for adults: Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) taken as either 2 tablets 4 times daily or 2 fluid ounces 4 times daily may reduce the risk diarrhea. The use of Pepto-Bismol should be avoided by those who are allergic to aspirin, during pregnancy, and by persons taking certain other medications (e.g. anticoagulants, probenecid, or methotrexate). There are potential temporary side effects from this prophylaxis approach, such as blackening of the tongue and stool, and rarely ringing in the ears. This Pepto-Bismol regimen should not be used for more than 3 weeks.

FFP guidelines for the prevention and treatment of diarrhea can be downloaded at:

- <http://files.foundationforpeace.org/>
- User Name: public
- Password: isidro
- Open Folder: Trip member materials

6. What security precautions are needed for mission team members?

When you travel abroad, you can expect to have a safe and incident-free trip. However, there are rare occasions when mission trip members can be victimized by crime and violence, or experience unexpected difficulties. Over the years, more than 2,000 volunteers have traveled to the Dominican Republic with the most common problem with crime being petty theft (2-3 incidents per year). However, in 2008, a group member was shot in a struggle during a robbery of a gold necklace. He was rapidly cared for and God blessed him with a full recovery. The assailant was caught and jailed. The mission team was able to complete all of the planned activities in that community. As a result of this serious incident, we have enacted additional safety precautions to minimize the risks inherent to working in developing countries.

The Foundation for Peace and local church leaders will plan activities to avoid known dangerous places and situations. At the same time we need to recognize that every day, whether we're at home or away, there is some degree of risk despite these precautions.

FFP safety and security guidelines for participants can be downloaded at:

- <http://files.foundationforpeace.org/>
- User Name: public
- Password: isidro
- Open Folder: Trip member materials

7. What are the typical temperatures during the summer months?

The temperatures hover around 90° F during the day. While all of the areas we work will have shade (at least to rest in), it is important that all participants wear sunscreen products and a hat or visor. You can also find weather-related information at –

- <http://weather.yahoo.com/>
- <http://weather.noaa.gov/weather/ccworld.html>

8. Do the Dominicans understand the English language?

Very few of the people in communities where we send teams in the Dominican Republic speak English. They all speak Spanish. We usually have several people in the group who speak Spanish and full-time FFP staff are bilingual (English and Spanish)

9. What type of electricity do they have?

They have the same 120 volt electricity and plug style as in the United States.

10. How will airline travel arrangements be made?

In some cases the group leader will secure a group reservation for the expected number of participants. Signing-up early for a trip and providing the funds to cover your ticket guarantees you a place in the group reservation. In some cases, each person will be asked to reserve and pay for their own ticket on a specific itinerary on-line or through a travel agent. Please check with your group leader regarding your particular trip.

11. Can I arrive early or stay later than the mission trip dates (i.e. stay extra-time)?

In most cases the group leader will secure a group reservation for the expected number of participants. Discuss this option with your group leader so that your specific itinerary can be included in the itinerary if needed. If you would like to stay on FFP property for those extra days, first you must obtain approval from the President of the FFP, Ken Culver. An additional fee for in-country costs will be incurred for food, lodging and transportation.

12. Can I arrive late and/or leave early if I cannot stay the entire time (i.e. shorten your mission trip)?

These options should be avoided because it will significantly impact the overall quality of your experience. Arriving late and leaving early is disruptive to the groups and creates extra work for the FFP staff. If you are considering such a schedule, special arrangements must be approved by the President of the FFP, Ken Culver. An additional fee for in-country costs may be incurred for transportation.

13. What is the immigration/customs process at the Santo Domingo airport?

Completion of immigration (blue) and customs (white) documents:

- a. Be sure to fully complete:
- b. For "Reason for Visit" mark "Pleasure".
- c. Do not indicate that you are a medical professional.
- d. Write the address where you will be staying (list of lodging sites in handouts section)

14. Are there any special documents or fees that are needed to enter or leave the country?

The Dominican Republic requires an entrance fee of \$10 (US). The exit fee is included in the cost of your airline ticket.

15. Will there be a lockable area for valuable items?

In most locations there are no specific locked places. We recommend that a lockable suitcase be used to store valuables.

16. What are the typical meal menus?

The food is typical for the country, such as beans, rice, chicken, that are specially prepared by cooks experienced in cooking for North Americans using purified water. People should not eat food that has not been specifically prepared for the mission team without checking

with your group leader or a FFP staff member. Anyone with dietary restrictions should notify their group leader before the trip and we will let the women from the church who cook for us know ahead of time. There is no guarantee that we will be able to accommodate all dietary restrictions.

17. What currency is used in the Dominican Republic?

The official currency of Dominican Republic is the Dominican peso (abbreviated \$RD). FFP staff will provide you with an opportunity to change dollars for pesos at the government established exchange rate (about 35 pesos to the dollar) early in your mission trip.

18. Can we use ATM, Debit and Credit cards in the Dominican Republic?

In all communities where we house groups, there are banks with ATM machines. However, your card may or may not work in them, especially those at the Haiti border. Debit and credit cards are taken in many tourist shops in major cities and at the airport. However, you need to be careful about using credit/debit cards, even at the Santo Domingo airport, since there have been several instances where fraudulent charges have been made. Most, if not all of these occurred after the persons card number was copied down, instead of being swiped through a machine.

19. Internet Access

Internet access is available in some of our locations (intermittently) and may only be dial-up. Check with your group leader about internet access where your group will be staying. If there are computers in the facility in which you are staying, you need permission before using any of them, since they are personal property.

20. Shopping

Bargaining in the market is a common practice, so enjoy, but look for the win-win. Be a little generous with those who don't have as much. If possible check with FFP staff to see what a fair price is.

21. Telephone- Calling home

On our mission trips there are several ways to call home-

- Use your cell phone (check with your carrier to make sure you have international coverage and ask the price because it may be very high)
- Use the cell phone of another member of the group and reimburse them for the call
- If a telephone is available in your lodging area, you may use a calling card (Be sure to bring a local access number for your provider)
- No long distance calls should be made on land-line phones without FFP staff permission and must be fully reimbursed

22. Hurricanes

The Atlantic hurricane season is officially from June 1st to November 30th, encompassing over 97% of tropical activity. Maximum activity is in early to mid September. For more information go to: (<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>)

Each house where our teams stay is a very secure block building and is safe. If we learn that a storm is coming we would stock up on supplies and take refuge in the shelter of the house until the storm has passed. We are also blessed in that storms typically form close to where

the DR is located, meaning that they are usually relatively weak when they cross the island. They are generally just a lot of rain (tropical storms) rather than hurricanes.

26. They build everything out of cement. Why is that and where does cement come from? What is the difference between concrete and cement?

Wood is very expensive there. So expensive in fact, that they rent wood for the forms that are used to build the concrete structure. In addition, a cement structure provides security when tropical storms and occasionally hurricanes hit the island.

Concrete is a composite material consisting of aggregate (gravel and sand), cement, and water.

Cement, in the most general sense of the word, cement is a binder, a substance which sets and hardens independently, and can bind other materials together. The word "cement" traces to the Romans, who used the term "opus caementicium" to describe masonry which resembled concrete and was made from crushed rock with burnt lime as binder.

Cement Manufacturing Process

- Rock is removed from the quarry and fed through rock crushers. The first crushing reduces the rock to a maximum size of about 6 inches. The rock then goes to secondary crushers or hammer mills for reduction to about 3 inches or smaller. The raw material is ground, mixed, and fed to the kiln in a dry state.
- The raw material is heated to about 2,700 degrees F in huge cylindrical steel rotary kilns lined with special firebrick. This process is known as calcination.
- Kilns are frequently as much as 12 feet in diameter large enough to accommodate an automobile and longer in many instances than the height of a 40-story building. Kilns are mounted with the axis inclined slightly from the horizontal. The finely ground raw material is fed into the higher end. At the lower end is a roaring blast of flame, produced by precisely controlled burning of powdered coal, oil or gas under forced draft.
- As the material moves through the kiln, certain elements are driven off in the form of gases. The remaining elements unite to form a new substance with new physical and chemical characteristics. The new substance, called clinker, is formed in pieces about the size of marbles.
- Clinker is discharged red-hot from the lower end of the kiln and generally is brought down to handling temperature in various types of coolers. The heated air from the coolers is returned to the kilns, a process that saves fuel and increases burning efficiency.
- The clinker is then ground with a small amount of gypsum into a powder to make Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC), the most commonly used type of cement. Portland cement may be gray or white.