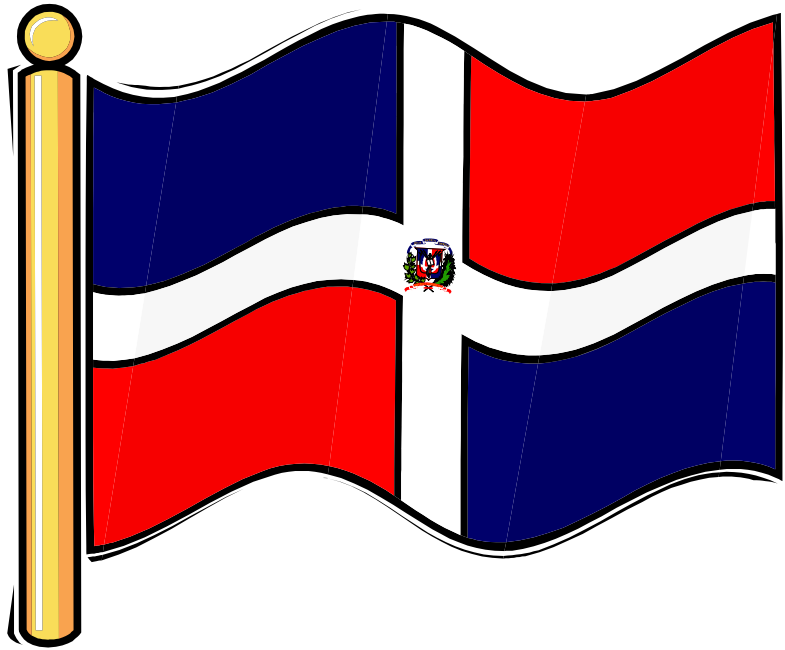


University of Southern Maine
College of Nursing and Health Professions



Dominican Republic
Health Outreach Program

Orientation Manual

October 2008

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Faculty

Orientation Manual

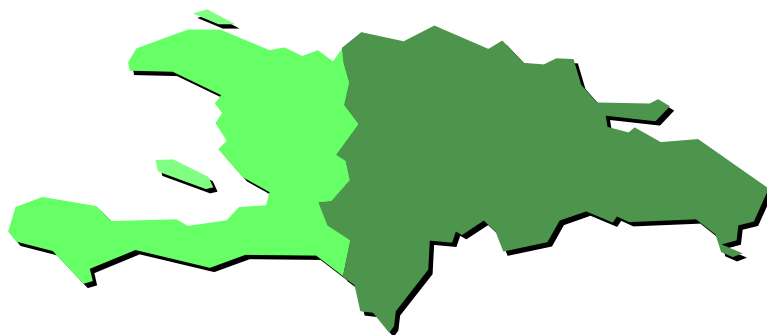
University of Southern Maine College of Nursing and Health Professions

Dominican Republic Health Outreach Project

Hola! Welcome to the Dominican Republic Health Outreach Project. You are about to embark on a trip that offers many rewards. For students, it is a chance to hone clinical skills under the watchful eye of nursing veterans as well as to experience life and work in a different culture. The project gives volunteers a chance to share their knowledge with nursing novices and to serve people in need; in some cases, they'll see patients they've treated for years. The perspective you gain may well change the way you think about your own culture. Everyone's experience will be unique.

This manual is meant to help you plan for your trip. It is by no means complete. Please share your suggestions for additions or revisions with faculty.

The Project's History



This project is the result of a meeting between Dr. Anne Keith, then a member of the College of Nursing's faculty, and Dr. John Consoli, a physician who works as a Catholic missionary, at a restaurant in Santiago. Keith was in the Dominican Republic on a mission organized by Intercultural Nursing Inc. Their conversation about the area's health needs turned into a partnership that now spans nearly 15 years. It began with eight USM nursing students and several interpreters traveling to the Dominican Republic in 1995. Theirs was the first group to stay at Fusimana, the missionary center that Dr. Consoli and his wife, Jessica, operate in the village of Lajas.

That first venture has turned into a twice-a-year program. USM nursing students and faculty, along with a host of volunteers, now provide personal care and health education to more than 2,000 patients in 15 rural villages. Each day, the team – often made up of as

many as 75 people – works out of homes, schools or chapels. They treat injuries, infection, and chronic health problems. They also teach nutrition, dental hygiene, and health education. Students must raise about \$8,000 to buy medical supplies for each trip.

To date, USM's Dominican Republic Health Outreach Project has served more than 15,000 patients.

Getting started

How do I take part in the trip?

Students interested in taking part in this partnership must send an e-mail of intent to faculty leaders [Carol Doane](#) and [Whitney Lutz](#). This e-mail should explain why you want to take part and what you hope to gain from the experience, as well as how you have prepared for work overseas and in adverse conditions. Be sure to indicate whether you speak any Spanish; though it is not required, language skill at any level is helpful. Your e-mail should include a brief biographical sketch. If you want to earn academic credit for the trip, please indicate for which course.



When do I apply?

Applications are reviewed about six months before each trip in January and in midsummer. If you are accepted, you'll need to enroll formally in USM's winter or summer session, and a deposit will be required at that time.

Are there any academic prerequisites for this trip? Does everyone take this course for credit?

No, not everyone earns course credit. Many participants are volunteers who pay an administrative fee but are not charged tuition. Health students are not eligible to volunteer unless they have previously been enrolled in the project as students.

Those who must meet academic requirements include:

- Undergraduate nursing students. They must have completed their first semester of clinical courses to participate. Completion of CON 356, Concepts in Community Health, is preferred.
- Students in the RN to BSN/MSN programs. They must have completed Health Assessment and all clinical prerequisites for NUR 419. (See Brenda Webster for details.)
- Health students in other fields, such as medicine or dental hygiene. Their participation in the trip will count as course credit for CON 495 (for undergraduates) or CON 595 (for graduate students).
- Spanish students. Any credits for Spanish must be approved by the Foreign Languages chair.
- Graduate nursing students. Their plans for special projects must be approved by faculty.

Professionals who seek continuing education credits may earn up to three units for this program.

The project is headquartered at a Catholic retreat center in Lajas. Do I have to be Catholic to participate?

No, though you will be asked to respect the religious nature of the center, known as Fusimana. Someone will say grace before the evening meal. Mass is offered weekly at a nearby church and occasionally at Fusimana, though you are not required to attend. Our village clinics serve people of all faiths. Church leaders are accountable for the results of our work, and we respect their guidance and culture at all times. We use the model of promoting public health in faith communities.



Do I have to speak Spanish?

No, although it's certainly a great advantage. We will have interpreters on the trip, so it is possible to go without knowing the language. But we strongly recommend you learn some Spanish before the trip. Knowing even a little can make a difference when working with patients.

Where can I learn Spanish?

University of Southern Maine: 780-4290

USM Center for Continuing Education: 780-5900

Portland Adult Education: 874-8160

Yale University Press also offers a terrific book with CD: "An Introduction to Spanish for Health Care Workers: Communication and Culture," by Robert O. Chase and Clarisa B. Medina de Chase.

Do I have to be in good physical shape?

This is a very demanding work experience. You will find that there is some lifting, climbing in and out of vehicles, and walking over various types of terrain, as well as working 12 to 14-hour days. We recommend that you walk one to two miles each day at least a month prior to the trip. Please include any physical limitations in your letter of application. A brief medical and emergency contact form is required by USM.

Getting There

Will we meet before the trip?

Yes. You will meet with faculty and the other members of your group in a series of workshops to plan for the trip and prepare for meeting the course objectives. At these meetings we will discuss:

- Arrangements for travel by plane, by bus, and in the back of small trucks
- Costs of the course
- Where you will stay
- Required vaccines and the risk of exposure to tropical diseases
- The risk of accidents
- History of the Dominican Republic and its culture
- How to work with an interpreter
- Health assessment and common primary care problems
- How to obtain donations of medical supplies to bring on the trip
- Team building, group functioning, and safety issues

Do I need a passport for this trip?

Yes. Non-U.S. citizens must also have current documents, and some will need a special visa from the Dominican Consulate in Boston. USM will need copies of all of these documents.

How do I get a passport?

For the most up-to-date information as well as all the appropriate forms, visit the U.S. Department of State's website at travel.state.gov. In a nutshell, if you're applying for a passport for the first time, you'll need to appear in person at a passport processing center, typically a post office or courthouse (you can search for them by zip code at the State Department website). You'll have to bring two photographs of yourself that meet passport requirements; you can have them taken at places like Fed Ex Office (formerly Kinko's), Wal-Mart, or even some post offices for a nominal fee. You'll also need to bring proof of U.S. citizenship, such as an original birth certificate, not a photocopy, and a valid form of photo identification, such as a driver's license. As of October 2008, a first-time passport costs \$100, payable by credit card, check, or cash. It takes about three weeks for the application to be processed. Expedited service is available, but you'll pay about \$60 extra plus the cost of shipping.



If you have a passport that has expired, you can renew it by mail provided it was issued within the last 15 years. Details are at travel.state.gov.



What immunizations do I need?

The College of Nursing requires that you follow recommendations issued by the Centers for Disease Control. That means that you must be up-to-date on the following:

- Diphtheria-tetanus (with pertussis if booster is due)
- Typhoid (either oral live vaccine or killed injectable vaccine)
- Hepatitis A (the USM Campus Health Centers offer an inexpensive vaccine)
- Hepatitis B (series of three with new option if departure is soon)
- Polio and MMR (if you had this as a child long ago, a booster is recommended)
- Tuberculosis screening within one year

Malaria prophylaxis should be considered based on CDC recommendations, though we have seen no cases in our area of the Dominican Republic. Malaria is sensitive to chloroquine in the DR. A different mosquito (a day biter) carries Dengue viral fever, which is spreading in the DR. DEET insect repellent and cover-up clothing can reduce your exposure. For more information, read the CDC's advisories for travelers at www.cdc.gov/travel/. You should allow at least two months to complete the required immunizations. USM Campus Health Centers offer a travel clinic. For more information, call 780-4211 (Portland) or 780-5411 (Gorham).

Students taking six or more credits per semester are automatically charged a health fee, so it's to their advantage to use the university centers. The health fee is optional during the summer session, regardless of how many credits a student carries. Students are therefore strongly advised to obtain their vaccinations during the fall or spring semesters.

Not a student? Call the City of Portland, which offers an excellent vaccine service as well as tuberculosis skin tests through its Infectious Disease Program at 103 India St. This service is open to everyone, regardless of residence, though an appointment is required. Call 874-8446 for an appointment or up-to-date information on fees.

Do I need to carry special health insurance?

Yes. You must have coverage specifically for health care and medical evacuation abroad. If you are injured, it is important to have a means to secure safe and reliable medical care and transport home. You will be exposed to tropical diseases and the potential for accidents, as is always true when traveling in third world countries.

Students can obtain this coverage through a group policy arranged by the university. This group coverage will also be arranged for non-students.

It is also critical that USM has the name, policy number, and phone number of your regular health insurance on a form that will be provided to you.

Packing

What should I bring?

Here's the short answer: not nearly as much as you might think. The lighter you pack, the more comfortable you and your roommate(s) will be in your room – and the more medical supplies you can carry when you board the plane. It's a good idea to talk with your roommate first to decide who will bring what. You might also want to pack your bags with the idea that you'll leave behind some items when you leave, such as bedding or shoes that are in good shape, toiletries, bug spray, and unopened snack foods. Anything we leave behind is gratefully accepted by the Peace Corps volunteers who serve as our interpreters as well as the Fusimana staff.

OK. So really, what should I pack?

Three days' worth of clothes, max. You'll need suitable clothes for working in the clinics (more on the dress code to follow). One of the perks of Fusimana is the terrific laundry service provided by the center's staff. Make sure you've labeled your clothes so that you can put them into big laundry bags. The staff will do all of the wash and have it back to you



within two days, often within 24 hours. They do ask that you wash your own underwear, so you might want to bring a small bottle of cold water detergent and a universal stopper for scrubbing in the sink. (By the way, gratuities for the staff are included in the fees you pay.)

Here's a basic packing list:

- Insect repellent for your skin – essential!
- Fanny pack for passport, money, camera (wear daily)
- Passport (to be kept with you at all times)
- Camera with plenty of film and batteries
- Water container, quart or 2-cup with sturdy top
- Sheets for your bed (large twin) and pillow (optional; a compressible down one is great)
- Light blanket
- Towels and wash cloth
- Several bath mats (showers can leak – these will help you keep your floor clean)
- Underwear, socks, night wear (it can get pretty cool)
- Two pairs of sneakers and/or comfortable sandals
- Swimsuit
- Insect spray for ants, roaches and bed bugs
- Ear plugs (roosters and neighbors can be quite loud at night)
- Alarm clock
- Flashlight and batteries
- Tampons, sanitary pads, razors
- Shampoo, soap, flip-flops to wear in the shower
- Toothbrush, toothpaste
- Brush and comb (leave your hair dryer at home – you often won't have electricity, anyway)
- Ziploc bags for personal use
- Sunscreen, sunglasses (a hat is a good idea, too)
- Umbrella or pocket-size raincoat

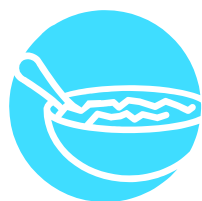
What do I need to work in the clinics?



Medical scrubs. You must wear a scrub top and/or scrub bottoms. You can substitute plain shorts (with an inseam of at least 9 inches), a modest, plain tank top, or a t-shirt. You should look like a medical professional. You don't have to bring your own stethoscope, though you might want to. A cheap head lamp is helpful for clinical assessments as well as getting around at night. You'll need hand sanitizer for frequent use at the clinic, so you might want to buy it in a container that can be clipped on to your fanny pack. Be sure to bring pens and a clipboard, as well as a roll of duct tape.

What about when I'm off duty?

Modest shorts are OK, but it is often preferable for women to wear a skirt, a dress, or longer shorts. Men might want to bring a shirt with a collar for some occasions.

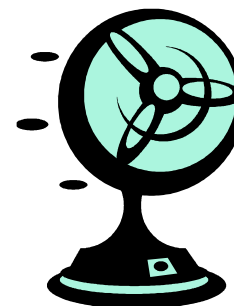


Should I pack any food?

Yes. Please bring a large box of cereal and a large jar of peanut butter to donate to the kitchen. You'll also want to pack snacks as shopping is very limited in Lajas, and our meals will include frequent beans and rice. Two suggestions: Pack all food in Ziploc bags unless you enjoy visits from bugs and rodents. Don't pack anything with a lot of chocolate in it unless you enjoy melted chocolate. You might want to pack small cans of tuna fish or potted meats, peanut butter and crackers, exercise bars, cereal, candy, dried fruit or trail mix. Bring high-fiber cereals if you need this in your diet.

Is there anything else I should consider?

Yes. You can tell who's been on this trip before: They're the people who look clean, comfortable, and cool. What's their secret? Any kind of pre-moistened wipe. You might want to use facial wipes a couple of times a day. Some veterans bring portable camp-style mattresses, though the beds at Fusimana are pretty comfortable. A battery-operated fan can provide a welcome breeze on a hot night. You might consider bringing an



electric heating pot and instant coffee or tea (though coffee is generally available in the dining room by 7 a.m.). If you want a hot shower at the end of the day, consider bringing a solar shower bag. Hot water is always in short supply. None of these things is a necessity, but they might make you more comfortable.

How much luggage can I take?

You can take two pieces of luggage and one carry-on bag. Your checked bags must weigh less than 50 pounds each. One of these bags will be a large duffel bag packed with medical supplies; this bag will be supplied by USM. The other is your own personal luggage. You should pack two days' worth of clothing in your carry-on bag (in case your luggage is lost), as well as any supplies or medications you may need. It is common for luggage to be delayed. For the latest packing regulations, visit the Transportation Security Administration's website at www.tsa.gov.

Medical Supplies

Where do the medical supplies come from?

You will be asked to request donations from pharmacies, doctors' offices, and hospitals. You may also request cash donations from organizations in your community. Some members will receive more than they can carry, while others will not receive as many. At our workshops, we will organize the supplies so that everyone will have a fairly equal amount to take with them. Please do not accept any medications that will expire before you travel.



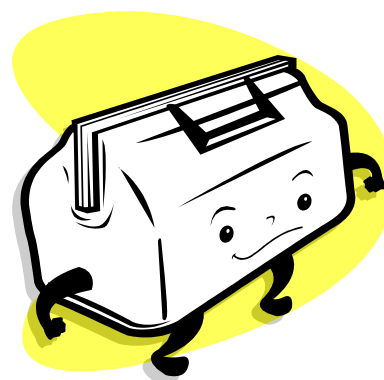
local churches, You may also and members of your donations than they

What medications are most needed?

Please check with Carol Doane (207-780-4064) for the latest information. We see about 2,000 patients on each trip. Generally speaking, large quantities are needed of these drugs:

- Antipyretics, analgesics: adult, infant, and child formulations of acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and aspirin
- Antacids: extra-strength generic is cheapest
- Vitamins: adult and children's multivitamins with iron, prenatal vitamins
- Antimicrobials: amoxicillin, sulfonamides, broad-spectrum antibiotics, Bactrim DS, zithromax, pen VK, augmentin, keflex, biaxin, vantin, cipro, fluoroquinolones, ceftriaxone (rochepmin IM with lidocaine)
- Antifungal creams and orals: nizoral, nystatin, lotrimin, clotrimazole, tolfante
- Antihistamines: Benadryl, chlorpheniramine, Claritin, Zyrtec
- Antibacterial ointment: Bacitracin, triple antibiotic, bactroban (singles and tubes)
- Antiinflammatories: ibuprofen, buffered ASA, naproxen, daypro, and others
- Cough and cold: adult and children's cough syrups (Robutussin, Pediacare, etc.)

We also need basic antihypertensives (if available in a large enough amount), diabetes medications (in large supplies only), and ophthalmics (erythromycin, floxins, sulfa, steroid-combo and lubricating drops).



Miscellaneous supplies in need include non-latex gloves, 4-by-4 sponges, kerlix bandages, wound and ulcer care materials, cast shoes, and reading glasses.

For our emergency kits, we need scalpel blades, epinephrine and Benadryl ampoules with syringes, both adult and pediatric Epi-pens, 500 mL bags of appropriate IV solutions with IV needle starter kits, silver nitrate sticks and primary care and urgent care supplies.

We also need supplies to perform lab tests for strep, pregnancy, urine leukocytes, hemocult, as well as any fast tests. Glucometers are accepted if they have at least 25 strips and are a standard type. We urgently need large supplies of strips with matching meters.

What to Review Before the Trip

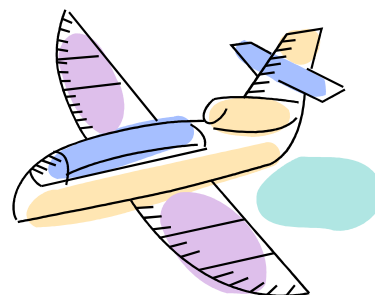
- Physical assessment skills, especially chest, skin, and children's ears.
- Dermatology, especially fungal diseases, scabies, infections, and leg ulcer care.
- Medications commonly used (see the list above)
- Treatment of intestinal parasite infections (pinworms and ascaris)

You might also want to read “Where There Is No Doctor: A Village Health Care Handbook” (Werner, D., with Thurman, C., and Maxwell, J., 2007). Available in bookstores or downloadable for free at www.hesperian.org.

At Last, Fusimana!

What happens when we arrive at the airport?

We fly into Santiago and go through customs. You will complete an application for entry into the country. When asked to list your reason for entering the country, mark “pleasure.” Everyone helps to move all of the baggage, and you will be responsible for your own luggage. We will drive about an hour from the airport to Lajas, the village that is home to Fusimana.



What is Fusimana?

Fusimana is the name of the retreat center where we will stay. It is a Catholic mission retreat center for prayer. There are triple rooms with bathrooms, including flush toilets and showers. Be prepared for numerous little breakdowns. You should only use bottled water to brush your teeth. This water will be provided. Do not put paper in the toilet. You'll be given plastic bags for disposal.

What will we typically eat?

Breakfast: bread, ham and cheese, hot cereal, coffee, fruit, cold cereal with boxed milk, or eggs.



Lunch: peanut butter and jelly or cheese sandwiches.

Dinner: rice and beans, chicken soup, cabbage salad, fried chicken or stewed meat, fresh local fruits. Boiled milk is served for coffee at breakfast only.

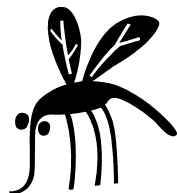
What if I am vegetarian?

Many vegetarians have successfully completed the trip. However, it is important to be flexible. The beans may be prepared with some meat broth, but they do not have any chunks of meat. The food is served buffet-style so that you will be able to pick and choose. Vegans will not have any problem as few foods are prepared with dairy products.

Will I have a roommate?

Yes. At Fusimana the rooms are mostly triples. If you have a roommate in mind, your request will be honored as much as possible. If you do not have a roommate, talk with faculty. They can help you connect with another participant.

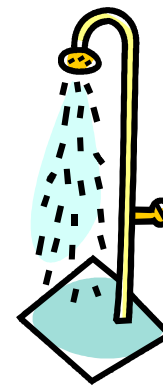
Are there bugs in the room?



Yes, there can be roaches, spiders, and centipedes. There are usually no problems with them, except for phobias individuals may have. There are also plenty of mosquitoes. You will be supplied with mosquito netting for your bed. Be sure it is tucked in on all sides of the bed and that it does not have holes (if so, duct tape is handy for patching them). You can also spray your room, bed, and net before settling in, though some students choose not to do this. We have seen a recent case or two of what we think are bedbugs.

What will I need to maintain personal hygiene?

Bring enough materials for your menstrual period. The change in temperature, along with the stress of the trip, can change your normal cycle. Even if you have just completed your menses, still come prepared. Handi-wipes and a small paper bag work well when you need to change at the clinics. There are only outhouses at the village clinics.



Can I take a shower?

Yes. The water pressure is pretty good most of the time, although it occasionally becomes low. It is often cold, so you might want to bring a solar shower bag to heat your water on the lawn while you're working in the clinic. Remember not to get a lot of shower water into your mouth or eyes.

The Clinics

What will I do at the clinic?

Remember: We are the clinic. We will convert a school or a church into a clinic for the day. Note that this can be a very confusing time, and it is best if individuals act under the direction of the coordinator.

If you are a nurse or other health volunteer, you will take a patient's history, perform a physical assessment, and then consult with a nurse practitioner or physician about the course of action. Remember to use universal precautions. You will instruct your patients about how to take the medication. Be sure to ask for allergies before giving any medication. Remember: You are not allowed to give out medication before consulting with the nurse practitioner or physician.

What other responsibilities will I have?

Each person is responsible for some supplies and medications. On the first day at Fusimana, you will unpack your supplies and organize them. Each day you will be sure that

your supplies are loaded onto the truck. Each night you will reorganize your supplies and pack for the next clinic. This can be a time-consuming project, but it is important since most patients cannot afford to buy medications in pharmacies.

What is a typical day like?

We work long days. Remember, we are on Dominican time. No times are firm.

7 a.m. Breakfast in the dining room. Fill your water containers.

8 a.m. or earlier: Load supply bins into trucks and ride to clinic site over bad roads and across rivers. You are potentially at risk for accidents. There is no 911.

8:30 a.m. Arrive at the clinic site and set up to see patients.

9 a.m. to noon: See patients.

12 to 12:30 p.m.: Lunch break.

1:30 to 3:30 p.m. See patients, then break down clinic.

5 p.m. Return to Fusimana.

7 p.m. Dinner.

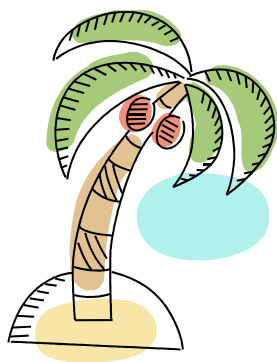
8 p.m. Daily group meeting followed by time to work on group projects, finish charting, and repack supply bins for the next day.

9 p.m. Usually we're done for the day. This is a good time to sit in the gazebo and share your experiences with classmates and volunteers.



What can I do in my free time?

You can walk around Fusimana. There are lovely paths around the compound with places to sit and meditate. You can walk along the road and meet and talk with the local people at your leisure. You might enjoy walking to a nearby fruit stand to sample local produce. There is also a colmado, or small store, where you can buy soda and other refreshments, call home and even check your e-mail for a free. It's strongly suggested that students walk in pairs when leaving the compound.



You'll also have one free day for fun in the beautiful beach town of Cabarete. You may choose to haggle with shopkeepers, enjoy lunch at a restaurant along the water, or simply enjoy a day by the pool. Cabarete is known for kite surfing, so there's plenty to see if you just want to lounge on the sand. You can swim in the ocean there, but only in town. The surf is dangerous elsewhere.

The use of substances, marijuana, or drugs is illegal and forbidden. Smoking should be minimal and not near any building or home. Beer or wine is strictly limited to the hour before dinner. Hard liquor is prohibited. These policies must be followed for the good of the group and the community we come to serve.

How much money will I need?

You will need \$10 to pay for a tourist visa at the airport. You'll pay for your own meals at Cabarete, where lunch can range from \$5 on the street to \$20 at a nice restaurant on the beach. Typically students also like to buy gifts as well such as jewelry, homemade baskets, coffee, and vanilla, so plan accordingly. We suggest at least \$100. We do not recommend that you use ATM cards or credit cards except for back up as there have several scams against our members. Lucky people may tell you otherwise, but beware.



How is the weather?

It is tropical and beautiful. In the winter, days are warm and sunny with temperatures ranging from the high seventies to mid nineties. In the summer, the temperature is in the eighties or nineties, but the evenings are cooler in the mountain area of Lajas. It can rain daily.



Can I call home?

Generally speaking, yes. Some cell phone services do work in the Lajas area. Be sure to contact your provider before you leave to activate whatever international calling plan the company might offer; doing so can save you significant money. There is also a phone and Internet service at the colmado next to the compound. These are open to the public at very reasonable rates; however, keep in mind that they are not necessarily reliable. Should a tropical storm take down power lines, for example, you will not be able to access them. You can call collect from Cabarete, but that tends to be expensive. There are also telecommunications stores at the beach that offer inexpensive service, and you can pay in pesos. You can also call from the airport when we arrive, though that's a pretty hectic time. If you do, be sure to use the airport phone center, not the pay phones.

Keep in mind that you will also be given emergency numbers to share with family and friends should they need to reach you.

Cultural Concerns

Do the Dominicans have pets?

Most Dominicans cannot afford to have pampered pets. You'll see scrawny cats and dogs, sometimes roughly treated. Try not to be sentimental. Do not treat these animals like pets or try to feed or pet them. Work animals sometimes look thin and may be moved along roughly.

Do people become homesick?

Yes. It is common for people to have some degree of being homesick or to experience culture shock. It can strike at any time. You will deal with a different climate, culture, and food. The poverty may be difficult to confront. The type of care you give will be very

different from what you are accustomed to, as you treat symptoms only, not the underlying causes, and of course lack technology. It is important to seek support when this happens from faculty and peers.

What is reverse culture shock?

It refers to a phenomenon that affects some students upon coming home. After immersion in such an intense and different experience, participants may have a difficult time readjusting to their life in the United States. It can be particularly helpful to seek out peers and colleagues to come to a new understanding of your experience.

What happens when we get home?

We will have a post-trip conference to share pictures and to process your experience. You will also complete your course evaluation. A final paper will be required of every student, but it is generally short and personal. (Graduate students are expected to produce longer work.) The due date will be established by faculty.

Policies and Forms

You will be informed of many policies and forms that must be completed. Please be sure to attend to these and consult faculty if you have questions or concerns. Maintain your personal vigilance at all times and do not follow the group or peers, or even leaders, if you question your own readiness or anyone's safety.