A guide in preparation for your upcoming trip to the Dominican Republic with Comunidad Connect

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Comunidad Connect is a non-profit social enterprise catalyzing community development in the Dominican Republic through service learning and cultural exchange.

Our Cultural Connections program facilitates guided cultural exchange, study abroad, and group volunteer trips with academic institutions, medical professionals, communities of faith, and corporate partners. Hundreds volunteer with Comunidad Connect every year for experiences that combine service, education, cultural activities, and responsible tourism.

We work alongside local leaders in rural communities and believe that responsible and intentional tourism facilitated by our Cultural Connections program is a driving force for social change. It leverages external resources, local relationships, addresses current priorities, and stewards community assets.

For over 10 years, CC has improved access to primary and preventive health services for over 10,000 rural Nicaraguans through programming focused on clean water, dental health, improved household infrastructure, and special medical care for vulnerable families. In May 2018, we expanded our efforts to the Dominican Republic and invite you to join us there. Together with our local partners, we participate in ongoing projects and programs that improve community health, empower youth through education and sports, and support ongoing sustainable community development.

For more information, please contact your trip leader or reach us directly at: info@comunidadconnect.org
Before You Arrive in the Dominican Republic

What to Turn In

Before your arrival to the Dominican Republic, please make sure you submit the following documents:

- Pre-Departure Participant Info
- Media Permissions Waiver
- Liability and Risks Waiver

*Forms completed through online registration process.

It is optional, though recommended, to enroll in the US Department of State’s Safe Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) before any international travel. If you are interested, enroll here https://step.state.gov/

Tips to Have a Great Trip

The Dominican Republic is an amazing country with so much to offer. In order to make the trip a success for yourself and your group, please keep some things in mind:

- Bring your best self. Come with an open mind and positive attitude!
- Pack a reusable water bottle and stay hydrated
- Participate and ask questions. Community development is not a spectator sport
- Spanish is not required, but brush up on some simple phrases and greetings before your arrival
- Tell your CC guide and group leader if you are not feeling well. We cannot help you if we do not know
- Follow your group’s and Comunidad Connect’s policies, which are in place to ensure your health and safety
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Get to Know the Dominican Republic

During your trip to the Dominican Republic, you’ll find yourself fully immersed in the lively culture, language, and history of the island. In order to make the most of your trip, we recommend you begin learning as much as you can about the Dominican Republic, so upon arrival, you already have some context for your experience.

The Dominican Republic, located on the Eastern half of the Hispaniola Island, boasts of pristine white sand beaches and crystal clear waters, making it a top destination for a tropical getaway. Though not far past the resorts, the countryside’s lush rolling hills and tropical climate create idyllic opportunities for ecotourism, such as picturesque hikes, crashing waterfalls and coffee plantation tours led by local farmers. Though for residents of communities, these rural conditions are barriers that isolate entire communities from critical products and services. In the DR, we partner with local organizations and community associations in the Puerto Plata province that focus on rural tourism, community development, and increasing access to health and education.

Suggested Reading

- *Feast of the Goat* by Mario Vargas Llosa
- *The Dominican Republic: A National History* by Frank Moya Pons
- *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola* by Michele Wucker
- *Toxic Charity*, Robert Lupton
- *Hoping to Help*, Judith Lasker
Sample Packing List

Each Comunidad Connect experience is customized to your group’s specific interests, so we can not provide a “one size fits all” packing list. However, this sample will provide general recommendations to keep in mind while you prepare your suitcase. We also recommend to not bring anything you could not stand to lose, get dirty, or damage.

Tips to Have a Great Trip
- Work clothes: appropriate length shorts, jeans, t-shirts
- Closed-toed work shoes (tennis shoes or work boots)
- Casual footwear (sandals or tennis shoes)
- Casual & comfortable clothes for after the work day or tourism
- Sufficient undergarments, socks, etc
- Sleepwear
- Sunglasses or hat
- Flashlight
- Raincoat or poncho (rainy season from June to November)
- Small backpack for day excursions
- Water bottle
- Swimsuit
- Athletic clothes, if working with sports teams

Clinical Groups
- Scrubs
- Lab Coat

Personal Care Items
- Toiletries
- Prescription medication: please keep in correctly labeled containers
- Prescription eyewear: glasses and/or contacts
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent

Optional
- Journal
- Leisure reading
- Camera and extra batteries
- Personal spending money: US dollars are widely accepted in the Dominican Republic if not worn, ripped, or written on

Documents
- Passport
- Photocopy of passport
- Important medical documents
We take our volunteers health and safety very seriously. Below are our general recommendations for before and during your trip to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable time in the Dominican Republic! Comunidad Connect provides purified water and always has a basic first kit on hand. Check out our complete Health and Safety Plan for more detailed recommendations.

### Pre-Trip

1. Talk to your doctor about recommended health measures for international travel.
2. Fill prescriptions for any regular medications you will need in the Dominican Republic.
3. Check the CDC website for the most up-to-date preventative health information and advice for the Dominican Republic.

### During Your Trip

1. Continue taking prescribed medications as necessary.
2. Wear mosquito spray to prevent vector-borne illnesses.
3. Apply and reapply sunscreen – the sun is very strong!
4. Stay hydrated – drink lots of water to prevent dehydration.
5. Do not touch or play with any animals.
6. Use the buddy system when walking, especially after dark.
**Is the Dominican Republic Safe?**
Yes, the country is very safe for tourists with petty theft being the biggest risk in larger cities.

**Do I need to speak Spanish?**
Spanish is not required to join a trip. There will be an interpreter for the group at all times. However, we recommend you brush up on your vocabulary because you will be able to immerse yourself in the projects and communities more through Spanish.

**Can I receive community service hours?**
Yes. We can certify any community service hours completed as part of your itinerary. You must provide us with the appropriate form to complete.

**What's the weather like?**
The Dominican Republic is a great place to visit all year round. Generally the DR is hot and sunny during the day, and can be rainy year round, with the most rainfall in November and December. However we encourage you to check the weather in anticipation for your trip.

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**Fundraise with Us!**

Many of our trip participants fundraise as a way to help cover their trip costs, raise money for the projects they will be working on, and to further support Comunidad Connect's ongoing initiatives in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. There are many ways to fundraise, from bake sales and campus events, to online birthday fundraisers on Facebook. We offer our trip participants an easy option to fundraise using our crowdfunding platform. This allows you to set up your own personal page that you can share with your friends and family and to spread the word about Comunidad Connect's work in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. When your supporters donate on your page, it is automatically applied to your account, and we will send them a receipt and thank you. Contact info@comunidadconnect.org to start your fundraising page.
Connect with us on social media and join the growing community of Comunidad Connect!

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram and Twitter to check out awesome photos and updates of the work we are doing in the Dominican Republic and in Nicaragua. We encourage you to share your experience with friends, family and colleagues after your trip.

Interested in sharing your experience with Comunidad Connect during and after your trip?

Contact us at info@comunidadconnect.org to share photos and videos with our marketing team or become a guest blogger!
Trip Guidelines

- If at the end of your trip you have items you would like to leave as a donation, our in-country staff will collect the items to be distributed as necessary to our community partners.

- Do not give individual gifts or tips to community and staff members, as we want everyone to be treated equally and fairly.

- The consumption of alcoholic beverages is permitted for participants 21 years and older only during recreational activities, never during service work or during cultural activities in the host community. Please discuss this with your trip leader in more detail.

The use of illegal drugs is not tolerated. Individuals found to be using or in possession of illegal drugs will be asked to return home immediately at their own expense.

- On occasions in rural communities, volunteers may have the opportunity to ride in the truck bed. Please consult your trip leader and CC guide to see if and when this is allowed.

- Remember you are an ambassador for your institution and country, so we ask that you be on your best behavior in the community and during recreational activities.
Contact Information

**General Inquiries:**
Don’t hesitate to send us an email at info@comunidadconnect.org with any questions.

**Emergency Contacts:**
U.S. Jon Thompson, CEO  
Phone Number: (404) 444 9147

**US Embassy in the Dominican Republic:**
Address: Av. República de Colombia 57, Santo Domingo 10505, Dominican Republic.  
Telephone: +1 (809) 567 7775  
Hours: 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM

**US Consular Agency:**
Address: Villanueva Street at the corner of Juan Bosch (formerly John F. Kennedy Ave.). Abraxa Bookstore Bldg., 2nd. Floor, Puerto Plata.  
Phone Number: (809) 586-8017 | (809) 586-4204 | (809) 586-8023  
Fax: (809) 586-8015.

Phone calls are only answered between the hours of 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Mon-Fri.

Email: PuertoPlataConsularAgency@state.gov