

THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Country

- The DR is home to 10.53 million people
- Christopher Columbus landed on Hispaniola in 1492 and founded Santo Domingo in 1498, making it the oldest city in the Caribbean. You will notice the Spanish influence in the buildings and in the country's Catholic heritage
- Life under the dictator Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961 effectively ruled) was brutal and many still bear those scars. Fr. Hipolito had his own encounters with Trujillo that are hair-raising
- Poverty is rife: 41.1% lives at or below the poverty line; the gap between the very rich and very poor is massive
- The streets are not safe, particularly for women. When on the trip, you must stay with the group at all times. Please never go out alone or ride any transit alone.
- Driving is a little crazy; if you get carsick easily, please sit towards the front of the vans and bring medicine with you. We will be in air-conditioned vans supplied by the DDG.
- It is very hot and humid all the time everywhere
- Please do not step in any water that is in ditches
- **Dominican culture is not a planning culture.** Things happen when they happen. For this reason, we can only do so much planning ahead of time, since we are very dependent on our partners there for plans- they determine hours of VBS and projects, number of kids, etc.
- I suggest fiction by Julia Alvarez and Junot Diaz if you want to get a sense of the culture

Food and Drink

- Breakfast: toast, eggs, fruit, café con leche
- Popular fruits: mango, avocado, guava, papaya, banana, plantain
- Sandwiches are popular in restaurants
- Rice and beans make appearances at almost every meal
- Beef, pork, and chicken are the normal meats we will eat. The food is heavy, but please be prepared to eat what we are served, especially at the church; we want to be grateful guests.
- **No water from any faucet is drinkable.** One should use water from bottles and machines. Please avoid getting water in your mouth from showering. Brush your teeth with bottled water only
- Fresh juice is delicious and available most places
- Those of American drinking age are welcome to order adult beverages in moderation
- All extras, like ice cream or beer, are out-of-pocket expenses for the consumer
- Drink water constantly

Hotel Information

- We stay at The Colonial in Santiago (3 star); the hotel in Santo Domingo varies
- AC in the rooms but no where else
- WiFi in the lobby and the restaurant, but it can be unpredictable
- Often hot water is available for showers
- Toilet paper is not flushed in the DR; trash bins are provided
- The roof is lovely and we will have evening prayer each night on the roof

- There is a grocery and a Bon within walking distance from the hotel (only go as a group)
- The humidity is high and the restaurant and WiFi are hot. Be prepared

Spanish

- There are lots of online resources available.
- Printable worksheets and vocab: <http://printablespanish.com>
- Vocabulary lists and verbs and games:
http://www.learnspanishtoday.com/learning_module/grammar.htm
- All PA residents can have a PSU card. PSU has audio CDS for Spanish that you can borrow. The kind I used are part of Pimsleur Language Programs
- There are basic phrase books available in stores and on Amazon; check out the Spanish sections of used book stores or go to yard sales