

Trip Leader's Guide

The following information has been put together to help you plan your group's trip. This has been compiled by other trip leaders and Solid Rock Missions, who are interested in sharing their expertise (and mistakes) to help you make this the best trip you can possibly have. This is a living, growing document. We welcome suggestions and comments for changes or additions. Thank you for your input. Hopefully this will help you to put your team together. Please send your comments and suggestions to srm@solidrockmissions.org.

The most updated Leader's Guide is located on our website. A Team Member's guide is also located there. Both are free for you to print and use as you like.

One year before the trip -

Contact Solid Rock Missions to set a date for your trip. You can call 419-956-4077 or e-mail us at srm@solidrockmissions.org. The sooner you can set the dates, the better. At this time, you will also be quoted a price for this trip. The dates will be given on a first-come, first serve basis. Groups that have a week this year will be given first right to either book or refuse the dates when they return from this year's trip. Once they refuse, it will be opened up to the first come, first serve. Solid Rock Missions does maintain a waiting list for future dates if and when they become available.

At this time, we do not require a deposit when you reserve your dates. We do this in good faith that you will honor your commitments. Occasionally we realize that some things out of your control happen that may require you to cancel your trip. If that happens, we understand. We do ask that you notify us as soon as possible so we can attempt to reschedule your time with another group. The income from these teams is important to help us continue to support the ministries we are involved with (as we will explain later). If you cancel, we would ask you to consider a contribution to help us with our monthly clinic subsidies.

Several important things to remember –

The pickup location for your group is the Los Americas Airport (SDQ) near Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Your quoted trip price is from this airport. SRM personnel will be there to greet you and help you once you arrive. Please make sure you schedule your trips in and out of Los Americas Airport. Occasionally, groups will decide to use other airports. In that case, the pickup and return point will be at the Hotel Lina in downtown Santo Domingo. The group will be responsible for their own transportation to and from their arrival and departure airport if it is different than Los Americas. Someone from SRM will meet them at the Lina.

We ask that you arrive and depart as a group. Larger groups may need to come in and go out on several flights. We ask that you keep the flights on the same day and as few a number of flights as possible so we can take care of transportation to and from the airport. We cannot pickup individuals. Any individuals traveling separate from the group, will need to take a taxi from the airport to the Hotel Lina. Likewise, on your way home, any individuals traveling separate from the group will need to get a taxi to get to the airport to take their flight (if it does not coincide with the group travel). Individual taxis are at your expense.

The second important thing to remember is your dates are specific for your group. We cater to a large number of groups during the year. In order to make it work, we coordinate the teams. That means that you need to plan your arrival and departures on those dates. Occasionally, Solid Rock Missions does have a little flexibility to change dates, but that is at the discretion and approval of Solid Rock Missions. Any additional expenses occurred as a result of unapproved changes will be done at the expense of the group.

Passports –

Passports are required to enter the Dominican Republic. US citizens are required to purchase a visitor's card (\$10 US) upon arrival. Citizens of other countries need to check the specific requirements for their particular country.

Seven -Eight Months Ahead of Your Trip –

1. Confirm the dates with SRM at 419-956-4077 or by e-mail at srm@solidrockmissions.org
2. Develop a contact list.
3. Contact a travel agent regarding airline tickets – group or individual.
4. Send a letter to interested participants with a deadline to notify you of their intent.
5. Place a notice in your church newsletter or bulletin. Run it several weeks.
6. Decide on advance group meetings dates and schedule them on the church calendar.
7. Decide on a time for a commissioning service.
8. If your team is a medical or surgical team, please look through the Medical Handbook located online at www.solidrockmissions.org/medicalhandbook.pdf.

Five - Six Months Ahead of Your Trip –

1. Confirm your group participants. You will probably have to call a few people to get them to commit to the trip. Focus on the toughest position you need on this trip. An example is medical teams need to find an anesthesia person. Construction teams need to find a construction leader capable of the project scheduled. Encourage the key people to find their help. Example; surgeons can find their own scrub team (and possibly pay their way).
2. Develop a brochure and mail to participants. The brochure should include costs for transportation and trip costs (from Solid Rock Missions). It should also include all important dates, passport information and immunization information.

Four Months Ahead of Your Trip –

1. Collect a deposit (you decide. It is best for you to collect the funds through your treasurer.)
2. Have your first group meeting. Get acquainted, general overview, travel instructions, passport information, obtain a copy of a photo page of each person's passport.
3. Develop a supply list (medical, school supplies, etc.) and begin collection.
4. Develop a devotions plan.
5. Contact reps for needed medicine and supplies.

Three Months Ahead of Your Trip -

1. Notify Solid Rock Missions of the types of medical people in your group and their specialties. This is helpful to line up cases for specialists.
2. Have your second meeting. Everyone should have made a deposit by this meeting. Collect remaining fees and passport copies.
3. Review supplies and progress.
4. Devotional list update.
5. Order medicine packs if you plan to purchase them.

Two Months Ahead of Your Trip –

1. Send a participants list to Solid Rock Missions.
2. No meeting necessary.
3. Continue to collect supplies.

4. Send Solid Rock Missions (srm@solidrockmissions.org) a list of all medicines you will be bringing in with you. The Dominican Republic is requiring that all medications (other than those prescribed for personal use) have clearance from both Customs and Public Health officials in the Dominican Republic. We need you to send us the name, quantity, dosage and expiration dates. Along with this information, we ask that you also include an approximate value of all of the supplies you take with you. This must be sent to Solid Rock Missions. We will need time to process the list and a clearance document will be mailed to you to take with you when you go. This document is important for you to have. It is fine for you to e-mail your list. We need it no less than two weeks in advance of your group arriving in the country. All details are needed as clearance is not granted without it. Bags may still be inspected at the airport and questions asked, but the process is much less problematic with this clearance. Clearance is not granted for expired medications and expired medications are not allowed to enter the country if discovered on inspection. DEA clearance on the US side is also advised for groups planning to carry controlled substances. Likewise, clearance for controlled substances must be approved from the Dominican government. This will take a minimum of six weeks advanced notice.

Medication List, all details needed for each medication

1. Medication name 2. Strength(s) 3. Form-tabs, caps, powder, solution
 4. Quantity 5. Expiration date(s)
5. Have your team members fill out the online registration for trip members at our website at www.solidrockmissions.org. That registration form also has a place for you to list your student's name and number. That information is a must if you want to meet your child. Guesthouse and school personnel do not have access to that information, so it is important for us to know prior to your trip.

One Month Ahead of Your Trip –

1. Provide Solid Rock Missions a list of participants paired off for hotel and resort reservations.
2. Obtain the guesthouse room layout for your group and assign members to rooms.
3. Final meeting – review final travel plans, review assignments, packing and customs procedures.
4. Commissioning service information.
5. Make sure your treasurer sends your trip money to Solid Rock Missions at least two weeks prior to your trip. Please have them designate on the check how much is for room and board and how much is for project money.

Things to Remember About Your Trip -

1. Check your entire luggage straight through if possible.
2. When booking your flights, make sure you allow extra time to get through the airports. When traveling through a gate-way airport (Miami, Newark, Philadelphia, NYC, etc.) allow at least two hours between flights both coming and going.
3. Check with your airlines on luggage restrictions. Most are limiting weight to 50 lbs. In some cases, airlines are now charging for any checked luggage. Make sure you check with your carrier before you book your flight. Be careful not to exceed that amount. You will be charged for additional weight. You are limited to two pieces of luggage, one carry-on and one personal carry-on (such as a purse, computer bag, guitar, etc).
4. Assign the baggage to each team member and make sure they will be responsible for it until it gets to the guesthouse.
5. Keep a general list of items in each of the bags. You will need this if you have to report missing luggage.

6. Make sure the group leader has the copies of passports. Hopefully you will not need them but if anyone loses a passport, these will be helpful.
7. Label your luggage. It is helpful to have the following information on each bag.
Clinica Christiana de la Salud Integral
El Capillo de Corbano
San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic
Ph: 809-557-5688

When You Are In Between –

As the group leader, you will be asked many questions by your team. Hopefully you will have the opportunity to answer all of the questions before you leave. You will be responsible for some decisions if plans change after you have left. Don't be afraid to ask airline personnel for their help. Please be patient with them and the TSA people as they are trying to do a difficult job. The key is to be flexible.

If for some reason you are delayed or if you miss a flight, be sure to call and let someone know what is going on. Just prior to your trip, Solid Rock Missions will send you a list of phone numbers to call if you are delayed. That will help your hosts in the DR adjust to your transportation and housing needs.

Just About There -

The last place you will be on your own is from the plane once you arrive in Santo Domingo until you are greeted by one of the hosts. This will give you a little idea of what to expect.

Once you get off the plane, just follow the crowd to the Immigration room. Before you go any farther, you will need to have \$10 US per person for a visitor's card. You can get them at the window to your right as you go down the steps or the ramp into the room.

Once you get your visitor's card, you will still need to fill out a customs and immigration paper. You will need your passport number and your flight information (both incoming and outgoing) for the card. Once you have everything filled out, you can get in line to go through immigration. You will need your passport and your visitor's card there.

When you leave the Immigration counter, you will head to the doors on the right. An official will be there to collect your visitor's card.

Once through the doors, grab a baggage cart and head to your carousel. When your group has its entire amount of luggage, go together as a group to customs. You will need your airline luggage claim receipts. They may then direct you to one of the lines to x-ray your luggage. This may be the spot you will need the documentation for the medicines and supplies you are bringing into the DR. Once you clear customs, head out the door and turn right. When you get out the last set of doors, someone should be there to meet you.

If you lost some of your luggage, go to the airlines counter in the carousel area and make the claim. Please do not give them the name of the hotel you will be staying in your first night there. Give the airline the information for the Clinica Cristiana. It normally takes a couple of days to get lost luggage.

If for some reason you have problems in customs, smile and try to get through it. If you need some help, send one member of your group out to find the SRM people and they will do what they can but there is very little we can do to get things out of customs. You may need to pay some taxes to get certain items out of customs.

There are a couple of suggestions to help you. Do not bring anything in a cardboard box. Cardboard boxes are fine in a suitcase or duffel. Use old luggage you will not mind getting damaged. And the best tip.....look like tourists. They love tourists.

It is also helpful to have the supplies in separate luggage or duffels from your personal clothes and items. If the supplies get stuck, at least you will have your clothes.

It is also a good idea for each team member to have a change of clothes and personal items with them in their carryon bag. When they arrive at the hotel, that is all they will need to take to their room for the evening. The other luggage will either be put into the hotel storage or kept on the bus overnight. There is security to watch the bus. Make sure you do get the items from hotel storage when you leave the next morning.

Our website also includes trip information for team members. Please feel free to use that information to help your team members prepare for their trip.

Relating to Money -

There are several places to exchange money to Dominican pesos. It is highly recommended that you do not change anymore than you think you will spend. Most merchants in Santo Domingo will take US dollars and give you change back as well. In San Juan it is still best to use pesos. The two easiest and best places to exchange money is in the baggage claim area at the airport and at the kiosk in the lobby of the Hotel Lina. The better rate is usually in the hotel lobby. The hotel lobby is not as rushed and it is convenient.

If you need to exchange money while you are in San Juan, talk to your guesthouse hosts to make arrangements.

FYI -

As you set up your trip, please tell us everything you want to do and we will try to set it up. There are a lot of things we cover with our fees. There are times where the group wants to do things other than the standard trip package, such as multiple out trips to various points of interest. It is fine if you want to do both. There may be an additional charge for additions trips. The earlier we know, the better. Just tell us what you want to do and we will customize your trip to meet your needs.

Our basic normal package includes one hotel night when arriving and a resort stay the final day you are in the Dominican Republic. You are welcome to stay longer but we need to know as you plan your trip. Additional nights at the resort or hotel will be your responsibility. You need to pay the resort/hotel directly for the extra nights and/or services.

The resort stay includes all meals at the resort. When you stay at the Hotel Lina, if you are there in time for supper, we will either pay for your meal at the buffet or give you some money to go eat where you want to as long as it doesn't exceed the Lina buffet's charges. Breakfast in the buffet restaurant is included with your stay at the Lina.

We highly recommend that each group member takes along a couple of 20 oz. bottles of water for their personal use once they arrive in the DR. You will not want to brush your teeth with the water out of the tap at the hotel. It is safe to drink water in the restaurant. You can then keep and refill your bottles at the guesthouse for the return trip home. There is water available in the mini bar in the hotel but it is expensive. If your group uses anything out of the mini bar or incurs any additional expenses (such as phone calls, room service, etc.) it will be their responsibility to pay when you check out of the hotel before you leave.

The hotels and resorts do have access to medical care should a member of your group need some care while you are there. Please check with the desk for help.

Due to changing conditions typical to any third-world country, there is some potential for us to need to change your plans from time to time. We will try to be sensitive to the groups needs, but we above all will keep the safety of the team in mind when making decisions. We ask that you graciously accept the decisions of the guesthouse hosts and please don't push them to make decisions that are not safe for your team.

We do have a couple of small pickup trucks at the guesthouse that are used for guesthouse personnel to transport people and materials to worksites. We occasionally will allow others to drive the vehicles to and from a local worksite. The vehicles are fully insured. One thing you need to be aware of is if you are driving and you are involved in a traffic accident or stopped for a traffic violation, you will be taken to the police station and you will be there until the situation is cleared up (even if it is not your fault). You could be there all day (and possibly all night). We just thought you might want to know before you decide to drive. It is very dangerous to drive there.

We do have a small safe at the guesthouse. We are able to store passports and other valuable things for your stay. We do ask that you label those items before giving them to the hosts. Solid Rock Missions will not be responsible for lost or stolen items during your stay (this includes items in the safe).

Rules –

There are a few that we need to tell you about. Your guesthouse hosts will share these and possibly a few others.

Smoking and alcohol is prohibited at the guesthouse compound and in all buildings. There is an outside area designated for smokers if needed.

We also ask that you refrain from visiting places that do not reflect well on our ministry in San Juan. While in San Juan, we ask that you avoid the bars, discos, cock fights, etc. You can use your own discretion during your stay away from the parts of the country we work in.

After dark, anyone leaving the guesthouse needs to go with a large group.

We do ask that in respect to our neighbors; please keep noise down after 10 pm. You can still stay up and play games and talk, etc. Just do it quietly. Please try to respect those that go to bed early and limit your activities and conversations around the guest rooms.

You are there to serve under the direction of Solid Rock Missions. It is our desire to help as many people as we can without creating expectations we cannot meet in the future. We have instructed our Dominican help that not acceptable to ask for money or other items from our guests. Likewise, it is inappropriate for members of your group to purchase or give things to any individuals. If you are not able to provide your gifts to at least 100 Dominicans, it is probably not a good idea to give it (In other words, no motorcycles, appliances, cars, homes, whatever. Please, please, please). This creates expectations from other Dominicans that we cannot meet and it also has an impact on our ministry to the Dominican people. We ask that you respect that. If you are interested in giving to one of our approved ministries or projects, that is acceptable. Funds given during your stay in the Dominican Republic that do not pass through our US office are not qualified as being tax-deductible.

We do have some approved ways to help. That is namely through our Student Sponsorship program. If a Dominican asks you for tuition help, please tell them to talk to director of the school. Please do not tell anyone you will sponsor them before you first check with the SRM office to see if they have been approved for the program. SRM will not sponsor any students not already accepted into the program. Any money sent for the unapproved students will be returned to the donors.

It is appropriate to give small gifts and hand out candy. We ask that you do not do that outside the clinic and guesthouse gates or inside the school grounds. There have been times these events have caused some mini-riots. We ask that you use great discretion. It is okay for you to leave your clothing, shoes, etc., to be given away. We suggest that you leave them for the guesthouse personnel to give to those they know are in need.

One thing that is acceptable at the guesthouse gate, is to have your shoes cleaned. The going rate is 10 pesos. It is fine if you want to give them a little more for an excellent job but please keep it to a reasonable amount. Again, you will be creating expectations and problems for future groups if you give them too much.

On occasion, some Dominicans may want you to hire them to help you (such as construction groups). If you need the help and desire to hire the person for the time you are there, that is fine. You will need to be the person that pays them. The going rate for general labor is \$500 pesos per day. Please do not pay more than that. Also please do not hire anyone on work beyond your stay there. We do not have the personnel to supervise extra labor. From time to time, we have some labor who Solid Rock Missions does not want you to hire (an example is a town drunk who uses his earning for booze rather than to feed his family). It is always good to ask us in the office or the guesthouse hosts if the person you want is acceptable. We hope you will respect this request.

Finally –

Just a couple of notes...

Despite all of the things we plan, there are occasions where things just don't quite work out the way we planned them. We want you to know that we are committed to making sure your team has the best trip possible and we will do everything we can to make that happen. The ministries we support effectively minister to the needs of Dominicans. Likewise, our guesthouse staff is there to help you and serve your needs as you work. These trips are life-changing experiences for your team members and our team is there to help facilitate the work that God is going to do in your lives during this trip.

We occasionally have teams that find children on the street and then ask us to get them in one of our schools so an individual or team can sponsor that child. We cannot do that. Children need to go through the process set up by the individual school. These schools have various requirements for entrance (that includes testing). Solid Rock Missions does not have or want any influence in saying who can go to the school(s). That is a Dominican decision that we respect. If someone in your group would like to sponsor a child, they can do so through our website while they are there or once they return home. Once they send the online registration, they can then go meet the child they have decided to sponsor. Please respect this and please do not put pressure on us or the schools to bypass this request.

Solid Rock Missions is not into this for the money. This is a ministry and a service to the Dominican people. Our so-called "profit" from these trips goes directly back to the support of the clinics we work with. We provide monthly money to them and that money comes from the leftovers of these trips. We appreciate your help provided not only physically but financially in keeping these ministries operating.

The word to remember is "Service". Hopefully, you are going on this trip to serve a kind, warm-hearted people who have very little. We at Solid Rock Missions are committed to making that happen and to make this a great

experience for you and your team. We are at your service in making this happen. If there is something you want or need, just ask and we will see what we can do to find it or make it happen.

Yes, we are ministering to the Dominican people and their needs but one of the added benefits or blessing is the ministry that happens in the lives of each person who goes to serve. God uses this opportunity to speak to team members. Lives are changed. Your team members will never be the same.

Thank you for your willingness to lead this team. Yes, it is a lot of hard work and you will be asked to do things that you don't normally do. You will probably become a parent, teacher and friend of each person who goes. It helps to put things in perspective. Hopefully some time on your trip, you will have the chance to reflect for at least a couple of minutes. When you do that, ask yourself if all the work was worth it? If you still have some doubts, take a walk through the clinic, visit one of the schools, or take a walk through the barrio. Then ask the question again. "Whatever you do for the least of these, you did for me" (Matt. 25:34-40). One other good reminder is "Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether slave or free." (Eph. 6:7-8)

Thank you for considering serving the Lord in the Dominican Republic. Solid Rock Missions is at your service. If there is anything we can do to help, please ask.

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