



# *Solid Rock Missions*

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## **Team Member's Guide To Enhance Your Mission Experience**

This guide is a result of experiences, suggestions and even a few not-so-good experiences that should help you prepare for your trip to the Dominican Republic. Solid Rock Missions has been working with your team leaders to put this trip together. This guide is a compilation of ideas which will hopefully help you to prepare for your trip.

The most important thing to do is to ask questions. You can ask your leaders. You can also contact Solid Rock Missions to ask them as well. Our phone number is 419-956-4077 or our e-mail [srm@solidrockmissions.org](mailto:srm@solidrockmissions.org). If we do not know the answer, we will find out.

**Our Commitment** is to the mission work that we are involved with in the Dominican Republic. We are there to provide assistance where we can to help open the door for sharing the Gospel with all Dominicans. Our second commitment is to you to help you effectively work and minister to help this nation in need. If you have a special talent or skill that you feel you would like to put to work in an effective way, please let us know about it so we can try to plug you in to some things where you can effectively serve.

**Brief History** is always helpful. Solid Rock Missions was officially incorporated in 1992 but our history goes back well before that. The beginnings really go back to the work of the Evangelical Mennonite Church. Through God's leading, the church planting and leadership training matured and the denomination moved on to a new field. At the same time, God was speaking others. Jim and Dorine Smith were some of those people. The Smiths developed a real love for the Dominican people. Along with the Smiths, God also brought along a number of other people, both from the Dominican and North America, who developed the vision for providing some help with healthcare and educational needs. In 1989, a Christian clinic was opened in the barrio on the edge of San Juan de la Maguana. In 1995, a Christian school was started. Since those beginnings, the work continues to grow. A guesthouse was built to handle work teams. Another clinic was built and opened. The school continues to grow. There are over 1000 barrio kids in the school. SRM operates sponsorship programs for a number of schools in the Dominican Republic (more information can be found on our website [www.solidrockmissions.org](http://www.solidrockmissions.org)). And many, many more opportunities to minister to the needy have come to our attention. We then work to develop programs to address those needs.

The bottom line is lives have been changed. It is affecting neighborhoods. It is affecting all ages. It is giving them hope. The Dominicans are a warm, loving and friendly group of people. It is our hope that you have the opportunity to get to know a few of them personally while you are there.

Solid Rock Missions is involved in helping organize trips to the Dominican Republic. There are roughly 25 groups that stay at the guesthouse every year. We serve, medical, construction, youth, evangelism and even a few other teams. We have a guesthouse capable of handling up to 48 team members. We effectively handle groups of 20-30. The guesthouse is the center for all of the activities. Our guesthouse hosts will make you feel welcome and they will try to assist you in any way they can in making your trip a great experience. Don't be shy to ask them questions.

Food and water at the guesthouse are safe to consume. That is not always the case in other locations. We have checked out (and eaten in) the places we will be taking you. We will get into that later.

At this point, let's get into some of the important things you need to think about before you get there.

### **Passport and Immigration Information**

Passports are required. You will not need a visa but you will need a Visitor's Card. The card needs to be purchased at the Santo Domingo airport prior to going through Immigration. The permit will cost you \$10 US cash. You will need to fill immigration and a customs form before going through immigration.

### **Health Information**

Solid Rock Missions highly recommends that you have an up-to-date tetanus vaccination. Medical personnel need to make sure that you have been vaccinated for Hepatitis. There are other recommended vaccinations. We recommend you talk to your healthcare provider about what they feel is necessary. Then you need to make a decision regarding what you would like to do. None of the vaccinations are mandatory for travel at this time. More information can be found at the website for the Center for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov/travel/caribbean.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/caribbean.htm).

### **Professional Licensing Information**

Medical professionals need to provide the guesthouse hosts with copies of your current licenses for your specialties. This needs to be done on your arrival at the guesthouse. Your group leader may require this from you while they are organizing your trip.

### **If You Want it, Bring It**

Whether it is medical equipment and supplies or construction tools, if you think you will want it, bring it. In some cases, it might be found in San Juan, so it is appropriate to bring money along to purchase it. Medical supplies and instruments are not that easy to find. If there is something you want, it is best if you bring it with you.

We always encourage you to leave that tool, instrument or supplies for future groups to use.

### **What To Wear**

We ask that you dress rather conservatively. Shorts should not be any shorter than the length of your finger tips. Halter tops and spaghetti string tops are prohibited. Sleeveless tops are fine as long as they are conservative. It is always good to bring a good skirt and blouse or good dress pants and a button up shirt for the occasions to go to church, out to supper or other special occasions. Please be sure to bring good comfortable shoes, whether work or casual shoes.

Laundry is done daily at the guesthouse, so you will not need a large amount of clothing. You can also bring clothing that you would like to leave at the guesthouse to donate to the poor in the area.

### **What To Pack**

- Luggage you don't mind getting damaged
- Insect Repellent (that includes DEET)
- Sunscreen, sunglasses, hat
- Kleenex & Toilet Paper (1 roll per person per week)
- Antibacterial soap
- Toiletry articles
- Personal medications (in original containers)
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Personalized water bottle
- Camera and more film than you will need
- \$100—\$200 for spending money is an average
- Work gloves
- Spare eye glasses

We also suggest that you bring along a couple of 20 oz. bottles of water for your use. Tap water is not safe to drink anywhere in the Dominican Republic. You can use your bottled water to drink and to brush your teeth. Save your

empty bottles and you can refill them at the guesthouse with the treated water there. You can then use your bottles for your trip home.

The places we will take you to eat are relatively safe. There are always a few common precautions to consider. First is to be cautious about eating uncooked foods. Salads look great but unless they are washed in chlorine water (which is the case at the guesthouse); they can cause you some problems. We do not recommend that you eat food from the street vendors or small shops. One exception is when visiting in Dominican home. Coffee and soft drinks are usually safe. So are cookies and pastries. When in doubt, don't eat it. It is better to be safe than to pay for it later.

### **What Not To Pack**

Needless to say..... **\*\*LEAVE YOUR VALUABLES AT HOME\*\***

You will not need to take bedding and linen. Towels, wash clothes, sheets, pillows, etc. are provided for you at the guesthouse.

### **Contact Information**

Time Zone—Atlantic Standard Time (Same as Eastern Daylight Time during the summer, one hour earlier during the winter months).

Guesthouse Phone Number— 809-557-5688

There is regular internet access to check your regular e-mail address through your own server. The connection is through a DSL connection in a third world country. That makes for some shaky and sporadic internet service from time to time. Make sure you know how to access your e-mail over the internet before you go.

There is no incoming regular mail. Please do not send anything by UPS or other carriers without first checking with us. Most generally these types of shipments will get hung up in customs and not make it there on time.

### **Guesthouse Phone Use**

The guesthouse phone is available for general use. We do ask that you pay for the number of minutes you use. FYI—some cell phones from the states will work in the DR. You will be hit with some roaming charges.

### **Luggage Labeling**

Your luggage should have your home address on it. It is also good to have the in-country address as follows:

Clínica Cristiana de Salud Integral  
El Capillo del Corbano  
San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic

Lost luggage is the responsibility of your group. Prior to leaving the airport, you need to report the lost luggage to the airlines. They will need to know where to deliver the lost luggage. You can use the same address above. Please have your lost luggage delivered to the above address. We ask that you do not have it sent to the hotel you will be staying in on your first night there. From experience, it will get to the hotel usually after you depart and that creates new problems in getting the luggage to San Juan. Your group leader will have the information of where you will be staying.

While we are on the subject of luggage, you will need to have the airline luggage claim stickers and your luggage with you when you go through DR customs.

### **Money**

You will not need much spending money since most of your expenses are covered with your fees. But if you want

to purchase any personal items, like souvenirs, ice cream or whatever, you will need to have some cash with you. There are two excellent places to exchange money. The first is at the airport when you arrive. There are two places at the airport. The first is right next to the kiosk where you get your visitor's card. The second is along the wall to the right before you go through customs with your luggage. It is actually easy to get this taken care of while waiting for your luggage.

The recommended place is the Hotel Lina. You can exchange money at the front desk. Both the airport and the Lina offer excellent exchange rates. We do not recommend exchanging money at any other hotels or resorts.

If you run low on cash while you are in San Juan, please ask the guesthouse hosts to exchange money for you.

VISA and Mastercard are accepted in most places in the cities but not in the small towns. Their exchange rates are normally the going rate. There are a couple of ATMs in San Juan that are a part of some ATM service providers. You need to make sure your credit card company knows you will be using your card in the DR prior to your trip. Most credit card companies will tack on fees for using your card(s) internationally; you might want to find out what those fees are in advance of using your card in the Dominican Republic."

### **Attention Student Sponsors**

If you sponsor a student at one of the schools we sponsor and you would like to see your child, please bring your information with you and give it to the guesthouse hosts when you arrive. You will need the child's name and number and what school they attend. Every effort will be made to give you the opportunity to see your child before you leave. We ask you not to give your students any gifts or money.

If you do not sponsor a student and you wish to, you can do it either before your trip or during your trip (or after, for that matter) by going to our website at [www.solidrockmissions.org](http://www.solidrockmissions.org). Once you select your child, remember their name and number and give it to the guesthouse hosts as soon as you can. Please complete the online registration form and submit it. Solid Rock Missions will confirm it on the website when the child's photo is replaced most generally with a brief "Thank You". Once you are home, you will receive information about the sponsorship by regular mail.

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.

### **A Few Rules**

There are a few rules that will help you out on your stay in San Juan. The guesthouse hosts will present them to you when you arrive. We do ask that you follow those rules. They are there for your benefit and safety.

One thing we do ask, is that you are cautious in handing things out to people or kids. Please think about it before you do it. At times, there have been mini-riots in the frenzy of trying to get whatever is being handed out. We do ask that you do not give things out outside the gate at the guesthouse. If you have questions about giving something out, ask the guesthouse hosts where and how to do that.

As long as we are on "rules", smoking is prohibited in the buildings and on the grounds at the guesthouse, clinics and schools. If you do need to smoke, there is a designated area at the guesthouse.

We ask that you refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages while you are in San Juan. We also ask that you do not visit any bars or discos while in San Juan.

**Cultural Issues**

Be prepared for culture shock. If you have never been there, you will experience it. The Dominican culture is much different than in North America. If you feel that shock, talk to someone about it. It helps to share that experience with someone else. It may also give you a different perspective on what you are experiencing.

You need to realize you are an ambassador of the country you are from. You need to be on your best behavior. The guesthouse has several rules that will be presented to you on your arrival. Following them is in your best interest and the best interest of the mission. Remember, if all else fails, you could be asked to leave.

The Dominican Republic is a relatively safe place as long as you use common sense. We recommend that you travel in groups. It is not good to be alone in a foreign country. We also ask that individuals do not leave the guesthouse compound at night even in small numbers. If you need to go somewhere, the guesthouse hosts will help you out. Petty thievery and robberies are the two largest crimes in the DR. That is the reason for using caution.

The one other word of caution comes from the desire of young Dominican males to romance young American women and hopefully find a way to America. Some of the things that young women do in North America are translated as being sexually promiscuous. Men also need to consider their actions as well. Please be aware of what you are communicating through your words, dress and actions. We want you to have a good trip and you will have one if you follow the above advice.

**[www.solidrockmissions.org](http://www.solidrockmissions.org)**

Our website is a good source of information about Solid Rock Missions, our ministries and our trips. Please take time to visit the site.

There is no such thing as a bad question. Please feel free to ask your group leader or if you wish, please contact us at Solid Rock Missions. Our e-mail address is [srm@solidrockmissions.org](mailto:srm@solidrockmissions.org) or call us at 419-956-4077.

**Trip Assurance**

Be sure to tell other people that you are going on this trip. It may encourage others to go. It may result in them wanting to help you with your expenses. Most importantly, it may result in them praying for you while you give of your time to serve others. Thank you for giving of your time, your resources and yourself to serve the Lord in the Dominican Republic.

**Medical Insurance**

You may want to check with your medical insurance carrier to see if you are covered while you are out of the country. If not, you may want to purchase traveler's medical insurance. We do not recommend any agent or company. We can provide you with a list of companies that do provide traveler's medical insurance.