

VISITOR GUIDEBOOK



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is a quantitative expression of a plan for a defined period of time.



TIPS & SAFETY

Immigration

A 30-day tourist card is automatically included with the purchase of an airline ticket to the Dominican Republic. Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months after the end date of your trip.

You must complete an online DR Customs and Immigration form before you travel. This form needs to be completed within 72-hours of your arrival to the DR. Complete the form online here before travel and have your QR code ready to scan when you check-in to your flight and again upon arrival to DR customs.

Luggage Ticket

Before exiting the airport, there will be airport assistants matching luggage tags, so make sure to keep it on hand.

Travel Insurance for friends and family

We highly encourages purchasing an traveler's health insurance policy in case of any medical emergency while in the DR.

Exchanging Money

The DR is very much a cash economy and many places (including ILAC) do not accept credit cards. That being said, we recommend that you wait until you are in the Dominican Republic to exchange dollars. The airport does not have good rates, and there is a very reasonable money exchange a block from ILAC (open M-S).

Practicing Street Smarts

Never carry more than you need while out. It is a good idea to leave your passport, at least one credit card, and some emergency cash in a safe spot in ILAC while out exploring.

We recommend leaving your expensive jewelry and electronics at home so as not to call attention to yourself while out in public.

When out, it is important to always be aware of your surroundings and to never leave your items unattended, even in restaurants and museums. Petty theft is common.

AROUND SANTIAGO

El Monumento is a famous landmark in downtown Santiago that is dedicated to the heroes of the Wars of Independence. It has a 230 foot staircase that you can climb and see over the city. The area around the monument is also a popular place to go out to eat, drink, or dance.

El Tablon Latino boasts the most Dominican menu and offers a blend of Dominican, Latin American, and other international dishes. It is a great place to kick back and enjoy a view of the monument over lunch or dinner.

Barajando, also nearby the monument, is a great place to dance typical Merengue and Bachata music. They have a live band most days of the week, and open rather early by Dominican standards (10 p.m.) The only downside is that you must purchase a bottle to occupy a table.

Puerto del Sol is an open-air lounge right next door to El Tablon (and like Tablon, they do not serve Presidente beer, only Quisqueya). Another good option for dinner, or just to sit and people watch.



SANTIAGO CONT.

La Aurora Cigar Factory is the oldest cigar factory in the Dominican Republic, located in Tamboril (about 20 minutes from ILAC). They offer English speaking tours to see the process in which cigars are hand-rolled on the factory floor. Tours are available M-F from 9-1:30 p.m. Call 809-575-1903 to arrange a tour. Tours are free, but purchase of cigars is appreciated.

Centro Leon is a Dominican art and anthropology museum with a gift shop and nice cafe. English speaking guides are available for an extra cost. It's open everyday (except Monday) from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Entrance is 150 pesos per person (except for Tuesdays when admission is free of charge).

Calle del Sol is Santiago's main commercial street where street vendors sell everything from flowers, to fruits and vegetables, to CDs and DVDs. Most stores are open everyday, except Sunday, from 9 a.m.-8 p.m. **Mercado Modelo** is also located on Calle del Sol. Souvenirs, jewelry and art are sold at this market.





Staying at ILAC

ILAC has bungalows (or *casitas* in Spanish) available for visitors to rent. To stay at ILAC, please send the lodging request form located on the last page of this guidebook to ilac@creighton.edu. Confirmations are best done when students are already in the DR and can confirm the reservation with staff on the ground. Lodging at ILAC includes three meals a day. Rates vary by group, so please inquire when making your reservation.

Ideal Visiting Times

Fall and Spring breaks seem like ideal visiting times, but even better are Thanksgiving and Easter breaks. Fall and Spring breaks come early in the semester when students are still becoming familiar with the country and culture, as well as Spanish skills. Visitors may not come while students are in the campo.



Address:

MISION ILAC
Carretera Duarte km. 7.5
Licey al Medio, Santiago
Rep. Dom. 51400

Phone: +1 (809)-736-0774

STAYING AT ILAC

- Three meals are included in the room fee. Breakfast is at 8:00, lunch at 12:30, and dinner at 6:00. On weekends, lunch is at 12:00.
- There is a Spanish mass every Sunday at 11 a.m. in the ILAC chapel.
- Please pay for your stay before leaving the country. All payments must be made in cash during office hours (9-5 p.m.)
- No alcohol or drunkenness is permitted on mission premises. The mission is also a smoke-free campus.
- The ILAC Mission has the option of storing your passport/valuables in a safe. Be sure to have a copy of your passport for identification. Report any lost or stolen items to the office immediately! Please remember to collect your passport or any other items that you may have stored in the safe during check out (M-F, 9-5).
- Please be respectful of quiet time after 11:00 pm because many students are studying and/or guests are sleeping.
- Please know that the ILAC Mission does not recommend hanging out at the establishments near the corner of Carretera Duarte and the Mission road. Please ask your group leader or the front office personnel for recommendations. Some restaurants that past ILAC guests have enjoyed are La Campagna, La Parrillita, El Tablón, Camp David, El Rinconcito, among others.
- The ILAC Mission uses a taxi company called Taxi Familiar (809-570-4444). Someone at the main office or any of the front guards can help you call a taxi.
- Upon checkout, please remember to leave your key with the main office. If you are leaving outside of normal business hours, you may leave your room unlocked with the key in the door.



FROM THE EYES OF A STUDENT

Students greatly appreciate the opportunity to give their family and friends a glimpse of what their semester long experience is like in the D.R. Words and pictures can only capture so much when communicating with people back home. Therefore, students try to take advantage of their time with visitors by showing them as much as possible. While trying to maximize time, visitors should also respect that students have a rigorous academic schedule. Visitors are more than welcome to explore the gardens and use the facilities at ILAC should the student need to be in class or study.

It is not unusual for students to feel stressed about having visitors because they feel as if they have to show many things in little time. Many students have commented at the end of their vacation that they are more tired after their visitors have left than before vacation started. Therefore, it is important to do as much as possible while still allowing plenty of time for rest. If visiting during the student's vacation, please consider that it should be a stress free time of rest and relaxation.

In the past, many students have shown their visitors a combination of what daily life is like on the island and what tourists experience. They have done this by taking their visitors to their service sites and the campos as well as to the beach resorts. There is a dramatic difference between these activities and visitors have left receiving an impactful, educational message.



SEE THE WORLD FROM A HIGHER PERSPECTIVE

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Learning about a different culture goes beyond food tasting and listening to the country's popular musicians.

Interpersonal communication, restaurant mannerisms, riding public transportation, school discipline, and every other aspect of daily life in the D.R. has its unique cultural norms. Understanding these norms is a learning process for the students and a big part of being successful at their service sites and in the campos.

Students really enjoy sharing Dominican culture with their visitors. Visitors may be shocked at first to see the student greet someone with a kiss on the cheek or yell at the bus driver to drop them off, both of which are part of Dominican culture. Visitors are cautioned not to mistake the student following cultural norms for personality change. It is easy to get frustrated by cultural differences, but having an open mind is the recommended way to approach stepping into a different culture.

In general, Dominicans are warm and caring people who enjoy conversing with Americans. Dominicans are very hospitable and want visitors to have a good impression of their homeland. They love to tell stories and are patient with non-Spanish speakers.

Remember that smiling can say more than words.



PROPER ATTIRE

Dominicans take great pride in personal appearance and modest dress. In the D.R., taking care of personal hygiene and dressing neatly is a way of showing respect to those around you. Acting on this cultural value will help you to fit in during your stay and Dominicans will appreciate the effort.

There are various places that do not accept certain kinds of dress. For example, in church, one should dress conservatively and not wear low cut tank tops, spaghetti straps, shorts, or flip flops. Most bars in Santiago require men to be wearing dress shoes and collared shirts, not t-shirts sandals or tennis shoes.

Most tourist towns like Cabarete are heavily populated with foreigners so dress is usually more relaxed. Although it is not an out of the ordinary sight to see people walking in the streets in their bathing suits or men without their shirts on in beach towns, those that do are almost always foreigners and it is not well-accepted by local Dominicans. Even during the hottest months of the year, July-September, many people will wear pants when out in public. Most professionals will be seen in pants with a long-sleeved shirt and jacket.

It is recommended that visitors bring more pants than shorts, skirts or Capri pants in order to avoid getting mosquito bitten. Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colored clothes. Therefore, white and pastel colored clothes are suggested and bug spray is a must.

If visiting during November-March, bringing a couple long-sleeved shirts and a light jacket is not a bad idea. Light-weight clothes are a good choice at any time of the year. As a safety precaution, expensive looking jewelry should not be worn outside of ILAC.



VISITING THE CAMPO

For many students, taking their families and friends to the communities where they spent ten days working on a service project and living with a

Dominican family is one of the most special parts of the trip. Former students have expressed both excitement and anxiety about this visit for different reasons. Students are normally excited to go back to the campo because they will be returning to a place where they had an amazing experience and look forward to introducing their family and friends to the community. Some students are nervous about the language and cultural barriers and mostly about how their loved ones are going to respond meeting their Dominican “family.” Students have said that their family members have made comments about feeling replaced by the student’s new, Dominican host family. It is important for family members to realize that students addressing their host parents as “mamá” and “papá” is a way of

trying to immerse into the situation, but does not mean that students consider them as replacements for their real parents.

Upon returning from the ten-day campo immersion, many students spend much time explaining to their family and friends back home about their experience with their host family. Likewise, one of the most common conversation topics that students discuss with their host families is the student’s family in the United States. Therefore, host families welcome the opportunity to meet the student’s family. Students like to make the campo visit with their family and friends an educational experience since the immersion is one of the most impactful events of the semester. Family and friends that visit the campo will have an easier time relating to and understanding the student’s new perspective on life. Students will usually plan day trips to the campo as they are usually not further than 2-3

hours from ILAC. Transportation arrangements can be made through Kenny Taxi or public transportation can be used, if possible.

Most host families will prepare food for visitors. Cooked and peeled food is safe to eat. Visitors may want to bring their own water bottle filled with purified water from ILAC. Students should ask if any juice offered is made with purified water before drinking it. It is okay to not eat something if you are not comfortable as students will have learned how to properly turn down food without being offensive. However, you will be quite pleased with the home-cooked, Dominican meals that you do try. Some families may want to give a gift of appreciation to host families. Appropriate gift ideas include candy, pictures, and other small American souvenirs. Avoid giving money or obvious expensive items as they will appreciate sentimental gifts more than anything else.



Students spend two mornings a week at their chosen service site. Many students become very attached to the people that they serve and wonderful bonds are made. Students will almost certainly take family and friends to their service site, as all sites are located in or around Santiago.

Sites include a school in a low-income urban neighborhood, a meal program for disadvantaged children, a nursing home, an orphanage for children with disabilities, and a center for youth who live or work on the street.

VISITING SERVICE SITES

Family and friends are welcome to engage themselves and interact at the service sites as the people at the sites are used to having visitors and love to receive attention and affection.

THANK YOU FAMILY AND FRIENDS!

At one of the first reflections the students have together, each student dedicates the upcoming semester to someone who has made a positive influence in their life. Many of the students choose someone from their family or a close friend. A reason commonly stated for why that family member or friend was chosen is because that certain person was influential in the student participating in the program.

Throughout the semester, the value of family is brought up time and time again.

Students truly appreciate their families more upon their return home and it is a lesson that sticks with them for the rest of their lives. It is not always possible for family and friends to visit the student during the program, and most students are very understanding if they do not end up having visitors. Students will never be alone during vacations and many will tag along with others that do have family or friends in the country visiting. The program directors are grateful to all family and friends who are supportive of the student following through with the program as it is not for everyone. The Encuentro Dominicano program draws a special type of student that is responsible, mature, open-minded, courageous, willing to serve and has the desire to learn from others as well as about themselves. After the program, many students become very involved on campus and in their communities, especially in organizations and activities that relate to justice. While some students become even more clear on their path in life, some students change their visions. Parental support and guidance is continually sought out by Encuentro Dominicano students before, during and after the program. Many thanks for having provided the student with a strong foundation and for your positive reinforcement. It makes a great difference.