



Newsletter No. 1
January 15, 2019

Hello everyone,

I hope you are all looking forward to our trip to Batey Libertad in March! This is the first of several newsletters I plan to send out as we get ready for the trip.

We will be distributing a participant directory by email soon - please send João a photo for the directory if you haven't already done so.

Project planning

We have divided the group into five teams: Public Health, Education, Arts, Construction and Business/career/life skills consulting. All of you should have received an email from me confirming which team you are on and identifying the leaders for the team.

The project leaders and I will be planning the projects with Yspaniola over the next few weeks, and the team leaders will be reaching out to you to get more information about how you would like to contribute to your team. As we get closer to the departure date, we will be coordinating the collection and transportation of supplies for the various projects.

Although we have divided the group into teams, we are working in a small community, and we will all need to collaborate closely in order to maximize our impact. We intend to keep everyone informed of what each team is planning, and there may be opportunities for you to work across teams. Please reach out to me if you are interested in contributing to another team's work.

More about Yspaniola

If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to spend some time looking at the information on Yspaniola's website <http://yspaniola.org>. It will give you a good idea of what Batey Libertad is like, as well as the projects that Yspaniola has organized in the community. Also, I encourage you to subscribe to Yspaniola's newsletter by providing your email in a box at the top of their homepage.

There are several videos worth watching on the website, including this one from 2014, which gives a short overview of Yspaniola's learning center:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=PC_mLsbv-uA.

Travel preparations

Flights

Please book your flights soon if you haven't already done so. Several airlines fly directly to Santiago from the US, although the flights are fairly limited and some of the schedules are not very convenient. If you fly into another airport in the Dominican Republic, you will need to arrange ground transportation to and from Santiago. Our program will start on the evening of Friday, March 8th, and will end with breakfast on Sunday, March 17th. I have included information about our hotel below - if you plan to arrive in Santiago before Friday, March 7th, and would like a room at the hotel where we will be staying, you can book the room directly on their website. (The currently available online rate is no higher than our negotiated rate.) We will be collecting your flight information, as well as information relating to any separate bookings you have made at the hotel, in the coming weeks.

We will not be scheduling group transfers from the airport to the hotel. Taxis are easily available and not expensive - the hotel is about 5 minutes away from the airport. The hotel also provides airport transfers - to schedule a transfer, you should contact the hotel at <mailto:reservashgc@hodelpa.com>.

Travel documents

You will need a valid passport with at least one empty visa page to enter the Dominican Republic. No visa is required for persons who hold passports issued by the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, European Union countries and many other countries. As of April 2018, visitors are no longer required to purchase a tourist card upon entry - the fee is now incorporated into the airfare for international flights entering the Dominican Republic. If you are traveling with a minor and are not their parent, it may be helpful to have a travel consent form signed by the parent.

Insurance

We encourage all trip participants to purchase travel insurance. You may also want to check your health insurance policy to understand how you are covered overseas.

Vaccinations and medication

Please consult your own healthcare provider regarding what vaccines and medicines you will need for travel to the Dominican Republic. The CDC Health Information for travelers to the Dominican Republic can be found at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/dominican-republic>. Malaria

is of concern primarily in the provinces bordering Haiti and in the provinces of Santo Domingo and La Altagracia. Transmission is rare in the city of Santo Domingo and other parts of the country, including where we will be working, but we encourage you to discuss with your doctor what precautions you should take with regard to malaria. We encourage everyone to bring, and use, plenty of effective insect repellent - mosquitoes are common and there is a risk of contracting other mosquito-borne illnesses.

Hotel and meals

We will be staying at the Hodelpa Garden Court, a comfortable modern hotel not far from the airport in Santiago, with a pool, gym, wifi and air-conditioning, as well as a restaurant and bar (<https://www.hodelpa.com/en/hoteles/santiago/hodelpa-garden-court>). The hotel is approximately one hour from Batey Libertad - we will be traveling to the community on buses, on well-paved roads. All meals from Friday evening, March 8th, through breakfast on Sunday morning, March 17th, are included in the program fee. Breakfasts and some lunches and dinners will be in the hotel -- others dinners will be in local restaurants. Lunches during the week will be served in the community, prepared by women in the community who are accustomed to hosting foreign visitors and who have been trained in proper food preparation. Vegetarian options will be available.

I will be providing more information regarding items to pack and other particulars in future newsletters.

As always, feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Best,

Perry