



Newsletter 2

February 2020

Hello YASC volunteers,

It is hard to believe we are just a couple of weeks away from the start of this trip! We are very excited to meet all of you soon at the [Verdanza Hotel](#) in San Juan, which will serve as our home base for the week. Our final group size includes 55 participants of diverse ages and backgrounds. We have an excellent program this year and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to organize it for you.

At this time, you should be working with your teams and fine tuning the details on each of your projects. We hope you are as engaged as much as possible since we will not be able to implement these plans on the ground without your help.

PROJECTS

Athletics

Team leader: Ed Weiss '92 MD

The athletics team is planning group sports and games for fun and exercise. They will be working on teaching new skills, team building, group dynamics, and just having fun playing.

Construction

Team leader: Santiago Villazon '88, '92 MD; assisted by Tom Crawford '76

This ambitious team will work on two construction projects, on two separate sites during the week. They will install sun shades in the elementary school and build bookcases in the middle school, with the help of students there.

Education

Team leader: Judy Crawford '76

The education team will offer a large and varied program. Science offerings include bees and botany, environmental science and computer coding with robots! They've also planned a school newsletter and performance art classes, including singing. This team will work with kids as young as three.

Public Health

Team leader: Rosalia Burke '92; assisted by Cecilia Frometa, Assistant Professor/Yale School of Medicine/Child Study Center

The public health group will have three teams that will focus on the following areas: understanding emotions and developing empathy, self-control and conflict resolution and finally, healthy habits for healthy living.

Photography & Media

Our official YASC photographer and media specialist will be Paul Fardig and Anastasia Carvalhais. They will be documenting the program and creating slide shows of the projects.

ZOOM RECORDING INE GROUP CALL

For those of you who were not able to join our zoom orientation call with INE last month, [click here to listen to the recording!](#) We encourage you to listen to it and learn a bit more about INE's operations. INE also has a terrific website with English content you can review, which will give you additional information into their activities ([click here to access](#)).

TRIP DIRECTORY

[Click here to open/download trip directory](#)

Get to know our group! Please review and let us know if you spot any errors/omissions. The directory is provided electronically only, but you are welcome to print it out. It's always handy to have a paper copy with you.

ITINERARY - This is the latest version of the trip itinerary, but please note that it is subject to change! [Click here to open/download trip itinerary](#) (also available on our website) – we plan to distribute updated versions of the itinerary on a daily basis on the ground.

FLIGHTS

If you have not yet done so, please email your round trip flight information to Francheska at: francheska@vamonostours.com

HOTEL EXTRA NIGHTS / CHECK-IN

We received a few inquiries pertaining to extra nights and price. While we encourage the group to book these nights directly with our logistics partner, Vamonos Tours (send email to carrie@vamonostours.com), you may contact the hotel directly if you wish. We heard from a couple of people that the price they can get directly with the hotel is lower than the price Vamonos is charging. A couple of important items to keep in mind on this front:

- 1) Price from Vamonos is a bit higher since it includes a 29% hotel tax and breakfast is included. If you book directly with the hotel, these fees will be added upon arrival. Moreover, the hotel will not guarantee you will stay in the same room once the service program begins;
- 2) You may be able to obtain a lower price online, but this is not something we can control. The hotel may be facing falling revenue since the earthquake in January to attract more people to the hotel. Do keep in mind that the price from Vamonos is based on a contract/group discounted rate negotiated back in October.

Check in is at 3pm! There is early check-in available on Saturday, March 7th, but the hotel will charge \$44.25 (anyone who checks in between 8 am and 3 pm). If you are interested in early check-in, please email Carrie and she will make these arrangements and process your payment.

TRANSPORTATION

As a reminder, transportation to and from the airport in San Juan needs to be arranged on your own, but there are plenty of transportation options to get you there including taxis and Uber. We will of course provide all other transportation during the program.

YASC VOLUNTEER TIPS

- 1. Be flexible**
- 2. Be respectful of your fellow volunteers and our ground partners**
- 3. Be a team player**
- 4. Avoid giving gifts**
- 5. Enjoy yourself!**

A YASC volunteer means being flexible, patient, and understanding. You must also expect the unexpected. While our project leaders are working hard to organize a detailed schedule of your teams' activities, please keep in mind these plans may change drastically on the ground. We ask for your flexibility as we may need to adapt and improvise.

GIFTS

It's very natural and tempting to give gifts to members of the community and students. Just keep in mind, however, that individual gifts are highly problematic especially when resources are scarce. We also don't want to create problems for our ground partner and the community. Please be assured that YASC will provide gifts where appropriate in close consultation with INE. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to us on the ground.

YASC's GOT TALENT

It is a YASC tradition that on our penultimate night, we feature a talent show. Song, dance, comedy...all entries are welcome. Bring your act along with your musical instruments, tap shoes, magic tricks – whatever you need for your performance. More details once we're on the ground in San Juan.

ATTIRE

Puerto Rico is much more conservative than the US. Puerto Ricans like to dress more formally. During your time at the schools, please dress appropriately. You're representing YASC and Yale. The children will see you as a teacher, so dress the part.

The following tips are most relevant during our work hours.

DO

- Wear comfortable, natural fabrics. It will be warm and humid.
- Wear comfortable shoes. You'll be on your feet a lot!
- Take your bathing suit. The beach is a 5 minute walk from the hotel.
- Bring a hat. The sun is much stronger in the tropics.

- Bring an umbrella or light rain jacket. It'll probably rain during our stay.

DON'T WEAR

- Short shorts, ripped shorts or shorts in general unless you're part of construction or athletics.
- Yoga pants or tops. Volunteers teaching yoga/dance should wear a mid-thigh tunic over their yoga pants during class transitions and lunch.
- T-shirts with profane words or images. For those in the classroom, consider polo shirts. That's what their male teachers wear.
- Ripped jeans. You want to look presentable and put together.
- Micro minis. Skirts should be no shorter than 2 inches above the knee.
- Low cut shirts, cropped tops or spaghetti straps. These are not appropriate in a school setting.

SAFETY

Take normal safety precautions. We will be in a large urban area. Puerto Rico is struggling economically for over a decade and unemployment is very high. Petty crime is common. Normal precautions include: not wearing large or expensive jewelry or watches, not walking on the beach at night, walk with a buddy, especially at night. Stay with the group during our activities.

We will soon follow-up this newsletter with a packing list. Feel free to contact us with questions or concerns.

Best,

Elena Labrada MD, Yale '86
elenayascpr2020@gmail.com
Trip Producer

João C. Aleixo
joao.aleixo@yale.edu
Director, Yale Alumni Service Programs



YALE ALUMNI SERVICE CORPS