

Coming to the Dominican Republic

A Preparation Packet for TEARS Short Term Mission Trip Team Members

Thank you for joining us in the DR.....

We look forward to meeting you, sharing the vision God has given us, and working with you here. We hope you will enjoy your stay and gain a greater heart to see the great commission fulfilled and God glorified. Please go through the information in this packet as a group or individually to better prepare for your trip.

TEARS Info

The Big Picture: God created man with the chief end to “glorify Him and enjoy Him forever!” But man rebelled and creation was subjected to bondage in the fall of Adam. Yet, God so loved us that He burst back onto the world scene in Jesus Christ, fully God and fully Man, to seek, rescue and restore man and all of creation to Himself. In doing so God chose to establish the church / the body of Christ to declare His glory and wonderful deeds amongst the nations and become a visible manifestation of His kingdom. Therefore the church has the joyous privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the good news of God’s saving grace “The Gospel”, beckoning and teaching the nations to worship God. Thus “The Gospel”, proclaimed and lived out by the church is the means by which God will re-establish His highest value, over all other values in the earth, His glory. This is God’s primary mission. The fruit of His mission is that we are restored into a right relationship with Him, and enabled to enjoy Him and His grace eternally. Consequently, it is the festive opportunity of the body of Christ to become His visible hands and feet in dynamic worship, reflecting Christ in every community, city and nation of the world so that once again all creation will worship and enjoy Him forever!

TEARS Vision: To glorify God by training leaders and facilitating holistic communities of worship in developing countries of the world.

TEARS Mission: It is our mission to plant churches and also enable churches to achieve community, interdependency, intimacy and accountability by becoming gospel- centered, disciple- producing bodies that are proactive in their communities and autonomous in function. Our main focus must be building Christ- centered relationships, discipleship / evangelism, and training believers in the discovery and development of their gifts, talents and vision for the enhancement of their communities and the advancing of the Kingdom of God.

Brief History and Ministry overview: T.E.A.R.S. Ministries started in 1995 as a grassroots mission to needy villages of the Dominican Republic. The Davis family’s commitment was to live with the people, like the people in order to better understand the needs of the community. With no running water, electricity or transportation it took a major effort by the Davis’s to survive day by day. In the midst of devastating poverty, the need became overwhelmingly clear and the first bible study was started in the

home of one of the locals. By 1997, there were several bible studies in various homes and the opening of a house church in the Davis family home. By the end of 1999 construction started a church building and there are currently approximately 100 active participants. There are now three main missions/churches that have been planted of which are located in: Jarabacoa, Soto, and Maria Auxiliadora. In the year 2000, prompted by prayer and the overwhelming need in the barrio for education for the needy children that could not attend public school for lack of money, birth certificate or Catholic baptism, T.E.A.R.S. Christian School opened its doors to 70 underprivileged children from Maria Auxiliadora. After seven great school years there are now 85 students at the school, from pre-school to the third grade. The school is supported by outside contributions and all services are provided to the students free of charge. TEARS is in a very exciting time in our ministry as we are being challenged to redefine our vision. God is laying it on the hearts of TEARS leadership that we need to get back to what is supposed to be our primary focus: training leaders and church planting. Presently the TEARS church planting team is starting to build relationships and evangelize in another large barrio on the other side of town. We are exciting to be a part of what God is doing in this country and look forward to all that he has in store for us.

Presently there are 18 people on the TEARS Staff; Rod & Twila Davis, Moreno & Antigo Inoa, Hector Julio & Diana, Vidal & Joy Reyes, Tracy Mullins, Jennifer & Luis Rodriguez, Bautista & Adriana Valerio, Obed Pennuelo, Robert & Claritza Mata, and Fey & Rosa Ramirez.

For more information about TEARS, please visit our website at www.tears.org.

LIST OF THINGS TO BRING

Back pack- for one day trips

Bible, journal notebook, and a couple pens

Bug netting- to go around bed (optional)

Camera and lots of film, or a couple disposable cameras

Ear plugs (a good idea for light sleepers)

First Aid Kit*- containing cold tablets, Tylenol, Band-aids, hydrocortisone cream, motion sickness pills, Pepto Bismo and Imodium.

Flashlight with extra batteries*

Gifts for hosts

Gloves*- for work projects

Good walking shoes and flip flops or sandals *

Insect repellent

Light rain jacket*

Moistened wipes (best individually wrapped) **and hand sanitizer.**

Money belt

Passport – make sure and get yours at least two months prior to your trip.

Personal Toiletries

Small photo album - of your family and hometown, to show your new friends. (Opt.)

Sewing kit with safety pins (one per team)

Sheets & pillow (and **light sleeping bag or blanket*** for those going to a mountain village)

Snacks

Spanish/ English Dictionary (optional)

Spending money – Cash can be exchanged anywhere (\$20 bills are good). Checks, travelers' checks, and credit cards or debit cards (best for larger purchases) can also be used.

Stationary- for thank-you notes to send home.

String- good for hanging up bug nets, making a clothesline, etc.

Sunscreen and Sunglasses - be very careful of intense sun

Swimwear*

Towel and a wash clothe

Voltage/ plug converter (possibly needed if coming from outside the US)

Watch with alarm* (When everyone on the team has a watch it helps stick with the full schedule).

Water Bottle*- one that you can carry with you the whole trip.

Wide brimmed hat- to keep the sun out of your eyes.

Clothes: Light, comfortable clothing is best to wear, with one casual dress outfit for church services. It is also recommended to have an old pair of clothes for work projects. Do bring long pants; both men and women here most commonly here long pants and sometimes it actually feels chilly enough for north Americans to where them too.

Please remember to dress appropriately. (No short shorts, no spaghetti strap tank tops, etc.).

Medication and eye glasses*- Take your customary medications along with extras. Be sure to know the generic names of your prescribed drugs. Also, bring an extra pair of eyeglasses. Notify your host and team leader of any special medical needs well before you arrive on the field.

(* -some of the most forgotten but often needed items)

Medical Insurance

Long before you leave check with your insurance carrier to see if you will be covered by insurance while out of the country. If so, find out all the necessary details in case medical care is necessary. For example, will you have to pay out-of pocket and get reimbursed when you return? What information will the insurance company require you to get while still at the clinic or hospital? Is there a phone number to call if you get hurt?

If you are not covered, check into getting a temporary travelers' policy. These are generally inexpensive. One travel insurance company that has been recommended to us is **Specialty Risk International**. Check out their web site at <http://www.specialtyrisk.com/>

Other suggestions include **Insurance Services of America** - www.missionaryhealth.net (or call 1-800-647-4589 and ask for Adam Bates) and **Adams & Associates** - www.aaintl.com.

(For those of you coming for longer periods of time, interns and staff, you may be interested in www.imglobal.com, they offer more long-term services).

TRAVEL TIPS

1. **Luggage:** Call your airline a head of time to check on suitcase weight and size regulations (most airlines allow 2 check-in bags at 50lbs each now). If the airline allows you to have two check-in items you might want to use one of the suitcases of each team member to bring needed gifts and supplies. Remember to pack lightly and to weigh each piece in advance.
2. **Extra security:** Be sure your suitcase, carry-on, and any extra baggage has a luggage tag with your name and address securely fastened to the outside of each piece. We suggest that you cut a bright piece of material into strips and tie one on each piece of luggage; then they will be easier to spot as they come through the luggage areas of each airport.
3. **Valuables:** Check your wallet and remove anything that won't be needed on this trip. Beware of potential pickpockets and take proper precautions, especially when traveling in large cities. You may want to leave jewelry and expensive items at home.
4. **Passport:** Photocopy your passport and give the copy to the team leader or in a safe place for use in case of emergency.
5. **Flight time:** Confirm flight times and reservations at least 24 hours in advance.
6. **Luggage check in:** When you check in your luggage at the airport, be sure to have it checked all the way through to Dominican Republic; you don't want to have to claim and re-check it in Miami or New York!
7. **Contact info/ flight info:** Make sure the team leader and your church office have the name, address, and phone number of a contact person for you. Also leave your flight information and trip itinerary with a friend or family member.
8. **Just in case:** Carry your flight information and missionary contact number on you throughout travel.
9. **A photographer:** For teams it is suggested that you assign one person to be the team photographer, and have plenty of film (at least 6 rolls of 36 exposures). We suggest ASA 200 film, good for both bright outdoors and indoor evening services, and take slides so you can share your memorable moments easily with your church congregation when you return home.

MONEY: The unit of currency in the Dominican Republic is the Dominican Peso. For most purchases you will need to pay in Dominican Pesos. We will take your team to change money at least once during your trip at a reputable place here in La Vega. New looking bills of the most recent style are ideal to avoid

problems in exchanging bills. You can also exchange travelers' checks and personal checks at the place we take you.

When you exchange money, you will generally receive larger bills. Try to keep as many small bills as possible for purchases at small stores. If you try to buy a soda at a small corner store with a 500 peso bill (about \$15 US) it is very likely that they will not have change. Use larger bills in larger stores and keep the small bills and coins until needed for purchases or tips.

Bartering is common in tourist areas such as the beach and the tourist mall in Santiago but not in other areas. Please only barter if you are serious about the purchase.

Visa and MasterCard credit cards are accepted at some larger stores, restaurants, and hotels in Santiago, Santo Domingo, and the Puerto Plata areas. Hotel Rey does accept credit cards. American Express is accepted in even fewer places. Very few places in LaVega will accept credit cards. In LaVega there are a few ATM machines that are possible sources of local currency (there is an inside, 24 hour ATM at the Exxon TigerMart). Although these may be helpful to your needs, don't depend on ATM funds for all of your money. Dominican ATMs limit how much you can withdraw per day (usually about 3000 pesos) and it is not uncommon for the machine or communication lines to not be working. Keep in mind that international exchange fees will apply.

Communications: If you would like your group to have a chance to call the US or Canada at some time during the trip this is possible by going to the telephone company office in La Vega where multiple phones are available for public use. Calling the US will cost about \$1 US for a 5 minute call.

There are several internet cafes in La Vega where you can use a computer by the minute or hour to check and send e-mail. Rates are about \$1US/half hour.

We will usually schedule one trip to a telephone company office on the first full day of your trip.

Animals: The Dominican Republic has many poisonous insects like scorpions, centipedes and tarantulas that you will not find in the US, and several diseases that can be transmitted by mosquitoes (including malaria and dengue fever). Please use appropriate precautions to avoid these creatures. Mostly, bring and use mosquito repellent with at least 15% deet, or repellent that is proven to work in tropical areas.

We recommend that you avoid close contact with all animals during your visit. There are dogs and cats that roam the area that could have diseases. Avoiding farm animals will make your return to the US easier during entry screening for mad-cow or other agricultural diseases.

Food: Much of the food in the Dominican Republic is different than what your body may be used to. It is not uncommon for some visitors to have diarrhea or stomach discomfort at some time during the trip. To minimize this likelihood we recommend that you completely avoid drinking water that is not purified and bottled and well as avoiding food from street vendors. Some physicians recommend taking a precautionary chewable Pepto-Bismol tablet each day as a preventative measure. You may want to check with your physician for their advice in this area. Be advised that Pepto-Bismol will cause your tongue and stool to be dark in color.

Elements: The Dominican Republic generally has a hot and humid weather that can cause dehydration. Make sure that each of your team members is drinking plenty of water each day. Additionally, make sure that you are properly protected from the sun while outside. Heat rash, heat stroke, sunburn and dehydration are among the most common health problems that teams experience in the DR.

TOURIST CARD

Upon arrival at the airport you will go through immigration. There you will need to purchase a tourist card for **\$10 US per person**. You must have a US passport. (A \$10 exit fee might also be required upon your departure if not included in your airfare).

(Please double check with your travel agency before traveling about the cost of the tourist card, there is a possibility that the cost will be going up in 2006/2007).

When filling out the *Tourist Card*:

For an address of where you will be staying in this country you can write:

Maria Auxiliadora, La Vega

(Calle #12, Casa #3)

Contact persons: Bautista Valerio (809-449-3061) or Tracy Mullins (809-449-3040)

If you staying at the Christian Conference Center the address is

Calle Basilio Gil

#7 Ciudad Universitario, La Vega

(809-573-2473)

THINGS TO BE AWARE OF IN THE D.R.:

1. **Picture taking:** Please ask before you take a picture of someone.
2. **Money and gifts:** Be discerning about who you give money to. It is best not to give money to anyone begging. A better way to help is to direct the person to a church or to make a gift of money, clothing, etc. directly to a church or ministry for the leaders to distribute.
3. **Facial expressions:** You will be watched closely, since people are often very curious about why you are here. Be careful in how you express yourself, especially when you see or smell something that you do not like. Don't assume anything is "like back home," and don't complain about it when you make the discovery.
4. **Machetes and Guns:** They use machetes for farming, so you do not have to fear people carrying machetes. Also, there are often security guards who carry large guns in front of supermarkets, gas stations, banks, etc; you do **not** have to fear these people either.
5. **Name calling:** You may be called "Big" (fat). Do not be offended; this is considered a compliment in a country where most people do not get enough to eat. On the contrary, it can be offensive to say to someone, "You are really skinny."
6. **Inviting others:** In this country if you invite someone to go with you somewhere to eat or drink they will assume that you are going to pay for them. So if you plan on inviting people places with you bring a little extra cash.
7. **Promises:** Please don't make promises to locals (church members or not) of money, gifts, etc.!!!!!! This can leave great heart ache when the promises are not fulfilled and these types of promises are not usually the greatest foundation for any strong relationship.
8. **Toilet paper:** Used toilet paper is put into the waste basket in this country. You may have some unwanted clean up if you flush it down the toilet!
9. **Taking someone to North America:** Please do not tell a local that you are going to get them to the United States or Canada someday!!!!!! This is not an easy task, sometimes impossible, and not always the best thing for the individual.

10. **Talking about life back home:** It is also best not to talk a great deal about how much better life in the U.S. is or to brag about how much stuff you have back home.
11. **Water and electricity:** For those of you staying with one of our missionaries or in the barrio we want to warn you that there is not always water in the faucets or electricity; they're on less than half the time. You may want to plan accordingly!
12. **Things to avoid:** While in this country we suggest that you avoid drinking water that is not purified and bottled, food given to you by street vendors, and wandering off alone.

CULTURAL COMPARISONS

We suggest that you read the book "Foreign to Familiar" by Sarah A. Lanier to get a good feel for how different two cultures can really be, or other books like it.

What is culture?

Not simply a set of customs that are easily changed. It's a whole different way of thinking, different assumptions that cause different groups of people to behave in totally different ways.

In order to discover those differences we suggest that you Observe--Listen--Inquire—Adapt. Be aware of the tendency toward "ethnocentrism," the idea that OUR culture is superior. Remember we are the intruders. WE must adjust and attempt to be at home in THEIR culture. Don't show paternalistic politeness. Treat everyone as adults. Don't be passive. Go ahead and make mistakes. Give yourself to the people. Leave OUR culture behind and find out what it's like to be a national in another culture. Keep up your "cultural antennae". Some things you think are human nature are really learned behavior and cultural. (example: "See you in a few minutes" may mean an hour!)

Here are some areas in which you may find the host culture to be very different from ours:

Educational Methods: Many cultures teach by rote. That means the teacher says a sentence and the students repeat it over and over. You will find Christians in this kind of culture who have memorized large portions of scripture, but when it comes to discussion of the meaning, it may be reduced to memorized phrases.

Problem-Solving by Consensus: In many cultures, you do not simply give a logical answer to a problem. Instead, you might sit for hours and listen to every view, then come to an agreement.

The Desire to Please: It is more important in many cultures to say something to please the person to whom you are speaking than to "tell the truth" about how you feel. Often you might really want to know what a national is thinking, and they will be searching for the answer that they believe will please you the most.

Time: Time has a very different value in non-western cultures. You may be kept waiting for inordinate amounts of time. They do not run their lives by the clock like we do. A worship service may start an hour later than scheduled and last an hour longer! Throw away your watch and do not judge your host by their "promptness" and other American values.

Greeting: Americans can walk down the streets in the U.S. and speak to no one. In many other cultures this is NOT the norm. Greeting others, even those you do not know, as you pass them on the street may

be MANDATORY in certain cultures! Because you are a North American, other nationals may wait for you to greet them first, but if you do, they will respond enthusiastically.

Food: You may need time to adjust, but don't be afraid-- the nationals eat it and don't die! Watch your facial expressions when presented with some food that you might consider "unusual".

Animals: In most third world countries, people treat animals differently. Sometimes it is lack of knowledge or the inability to care for them as we would. It is not common to play with dogs-- in most other cultures they are scavenging house guards and not playful pets. If you feel bad about how skinny or sickly the animals look, don't express it-- just think about the poverty of the people!

Examine Your Stereotypes

All of us maintain certain stereotypes about other people. Some are based on elements of truth. Others grow out of myths or false perceptions. It is unfair to judge or evaluate a person based on stereotypes about the group he or she belongs to. The Lord created individuals who are uniquely different, and should be treated as such.

Stereotypes North Americans Have About People in the Third World

Negative	Positive
Innocent	Interdependent with family
Lazy	Living in Harmony with Life
Slow	Content
Indifferent	Servant Attitude
Uneducated	
Needing our help	
Controlled by Customs	

When you arrive in the host country, you will be viewed in a certain way just because you are a North American. Doesn't seem fair, does it? But is there an element of truth in these views? Think about the stereotypes that follow, then answer the questions.

Stereotypes Others Have of North Americans

Negative	Positive
Aggressive	Educated
Harshly pragmatic	Blessed
Tense	Strong individuals
Discontent	Secured better lives
Corrupt	Free of superstition
Wealthy and materialistic	Organized
Dominating	
Loud and obnoxious	
Overbearing	
Competitive	
Selfish/self-centered	
Attitude of national superiority	
Preoccupied with efficiency	

Be prepared. The unprepared “tourists for Jesus” who go into a community determined to change the world in a week can actually do more harm than good. Get to know more about the Dominican Republic before you arrive. Find out more about the country, culture and learn a little Spanish too. Check out some of the websites listed below.

Basic country information- <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/dr.html>

History Info-

http://www.workmall.com/wfb2001/dominican_republic/dominican_republic_history_index.html

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/caribbean/dominican_republic/history.htm

<http://www.dominicanrepublic.com/thecountry/history.html>

DR 1 Newspaper- www.dr1.com

The United States of America Embassy- <http://www.usemb.gov.do/>

Leopoldo Navarro esquina César Nicolás Pénson

Santo Domingo, República Dominicana.

Tel.: (809) 221-2171

Weather report- <http://weather.yahoo.com/> (enter in the Caribbean , then the Dominican Republic, then La Vega or the city will be staying in) or <http://weather.yahoo.com/regional/DRXX.html>

Exchange rate web page- <http://www.oanda.com/cgi-bin/ncc>

*If any of these websites have changed their address or you've found a different helpful website, let us know and we'll update our list. *