

Mission Trip Leaders Guide



Table of Contents

To help you decide!

1. Who is Servant's Heart Ministries (SHM)?
2. Why take a team on a mission trip with SHM?
3. Mission trip costs overview

Ok, let's do it! Step by Step!

- Step 1. Register your team
- Step 2. Flights and accommodations
- Step 3. Team member information
- Step 4. Donations and Project Funds
- Step 5. Orientation and Team Schedule

Important info to know!

1. Meeting with your team
2. Passports
3. General Health, immunizations and medical insurance
4. Dress code
5. Money
6. Airport arrival
7. Devotions and Debriefs
8. Post trip Suggestions

To help you decide!

1. Who is Servant's Heart Ministries?

Servant's Heart Ministries (SHM) is a Canadian Charitable Organization (est. 2010) dedicated to helping you help others in the Dominican Republic thrive.

SHM strives to do more than just serve those in need. Our goal is to raise people up by equipping, empowering and effecting long term sustainable change in their lives.

SHM programs are managed by our Dominican and Haitian staff.

Our programs are as follows:

- Hugs for Kids Education Sponsorship
- Danica's Dream Pregnancy Education Center
- The Loma Project (Community Center)
- SHM Relief and Development

Our commitment to you is to provide you with a positive ministry experience working hand in hand with our ministry team on the ground.

2. Why take a team on a mission trip with SHM?

- It's a great way to create family. Bringing people together from different backgrounds with the same purpose helps to strengthen relationships.
- It helps to broaden perspectives. If you have lived in the same area all your life it is hard to even imagine life being different. Being on a mission trip helps you realize what is important in life.
- Challenges your comfort zones. Many people are stretched as they try new things and discover that those things may be their new favorites.
- Empowers not only the people you go to serve, but it also becomes an empowering experience for team members.
- Proof is in the experience. You will get to see God and his faithfulness first hand.
- Learn what really matters in life. Is life really about things and having the best of everything? You will learn that relationships are far more important.
- Lives will be changed. The team members most of all.

3. Mission trip costs overview!

Team Registration

\$200USD registers your team for the dates you choose.

Team Costs

\$250USD per person (plus travel, accommodations and project money) will take care of your costs in the DR. This includes:

- Sourcing of work projects and ministry opportunities

- Essential equipment for work projects
- In-country transportation
- Translators
- SHM staff person available at all times
- Use of cell phone for the team leader
- Orientation session with basic Spanish instruction and cultural sensitivity training

Accommodations

If you choose to have SHM book your accommodations at Sosua by the Sea, the cost is \$500USD per person for a one week (7 night) stay based on double occupancy (at least 2 people to a room). If you have a team member that wants or requires a room to themselves the cost is slightly higher at \$630USD.

****You will notice that all our costs are in US funds because the Dominican Republic is based on the US dollar. You will send the equivalent (at the daily exchange rate) in Canadian funds to our Canadian office.**

Ok, let's do it! Step by Step!

☐ Step 1. Register your team

Get your potential team together and discuss dates. Please consult with our team coordinator in Canada as to available dates by emailing teams@servantsheartdr.org or by calling our office at 902-543-2278.

We are aware that when it comes time to confirm your flights with the airline it may be necessary to book a day or two before or after the dates discussed with SHM.

The team registration is \$200USD per group and is a non-refundable cost that registers and confirms your mission trip dates. Realize that sometimes we have teams that overlap. Overlapping would give your team the opportunity to meet new people from different parts of North America and see how small our world really is. Please be assured that your team will continue to receive the same quality of attention from our staff.

Please fill out the **'Team Registration Form'** (found in 'Important Forms' download).

Send the fee and form one of these two ways:

1. Mail the form, along with the appropriate registration fee to the below address.

Servant's Heart Ministries

211 Pearl St.

Wileville, NS B4V 5H6

2. E-transfer the funds to phil@servantsheartdr.org and then scan/email the form to teams@servantsheartdr.org

****Send fees in Canadian funds based on the current rate of exchange at the time of payment. Go to www.xe.com to determine the appropriate exchange****

❑ Step 2. Flights and Accommodations

Flights

- Book your tickets to fly into Puerto Plata (POP) airport.

Why Puerto Plata? POP airport is only a 15-minute drive to your accommodations in Sosua.

- Send us your arrival and departure info (date, time, airline and flight number) once you have it confirmed. Don't forget to let us know if there are any changes!

Accommodations

We will gladly book your accommodations at an all-inclusive resort (accommodations and food), Sosua by the Sea.

A one week stay (7 nights) is \$500USD per person, based on double occupancy. If you have team members who require a room to themselves the cost is slightly higher for them at \$630USD.

For SHM to book your accommodations on your behalf we will require a roommate list and full payment for your stay 60 days prior to your team's arrival.

Please fill out the '**Accommodation Form**' (found in 'Important Forms' download) to determine your total amount. Send the fee and form one of these two ways:

1. Mail the form, along with the appropriate accommodation fees to the below address.

Servant's Heart Ministries
211 Pearl St.
Wileville, NS B4V 5H6

2. E-transfer the funds to phil@servantsheartdr.org and then scan/email the form to teams@servantsheartdr.org

Send fees in Canadian funds based on the current rate of exchange at the time of payment. Go to www.xe.com to determine the appropriate exchange

❑ Step 3. Team Member Fees and Information

Team member fees

Team member fees are **\$250USD** per person, per week. Team member fees cover the costs in-country (transportation and driver, interpreters, tools for work projects, etc).

Please fill out the '**Team Member Fee Form**' (found in 'Important Forms' download) to determine your total amount. Send the fee and form one of these two ways:

1. Mail the form, along with the appropriate team member fees to the below address.

Servant's Heart Ministries
211 Pearl St.
Wileville, NS B4V 5H6

2. E-transfer the funds to phil@servantsheartdr.org and then scan/email the form to teams@servantsheartdr.org

We ask for the first installment of **\$50USD** per person be paid **90 days prior** to your arrival with the remaining balance due 60 days prior to your expected arrival.

Please note: Trip Cancellation Policy

If you need to cancel your group, or reduce the number of team members, please contact us no less than 60 days prior to the scheduled arrival date for your team. When cancelling a team member or group after 60 days prior to the trip, the \$50USD team member fee will be forfeited.

* **Send fees in Canadian funds based on the current rate of exchange at the time of payment. Go to www.xe.com to determine the appropriate exchange**

Team member information

This is very important information for us to have. It is used to help us customize the teams schedule according to the skills and talents of your team members. The sooner we have the form completed, the sooner we can begin to work on your schedule.

The team coordinator will email you a link via Google Docs. All you need to do is click the link 'Open in Docs' and fill out the information. It's that easy. No need to send anything. Please fill out the form as soon as you have your team members confirmed.

Doing this together as a team is a great opportunity to get to know each other better.

Choose a focus for your team. What would your team like to accomplish while on their trip? For example: construction, education, ministry or special events? Be sure that each team member feels that they add value.

❑ Step 4. Donations and Project Funds

Project Funds

Your team is unique. It brings different talents, skills and ministry opportunities and is not the same as any other team. Whether your team's focus is construction, ministry, or special events; funds are needed to complete the specific tasks.

Construction projects consist of: SHM facilities improvements, house builds and small projects (floors, shelves, desks, etc). Ministry opportunities consist of: special children's, women's and men's events,

assistance in the pregnancy center, involvement in sports, music and art programs, medical checks and helping out in the school. The costs obviously differ depending on the project.

As a team leader it is important to consult with SHM early in your planning to discover the specific needs in the DR at the time your team is travelling. We take into account your team's desire/talents and the specific needs of SHM to help create a focus that works for both.

Because your team will fundraise to cover the costs of construction projects as well as ministry events, any amount raised will be allocated for team projects and ministry activities during your trip. The amount your team decides to raise will help determine your projects. For instance, a house construction cost is approximately \$10,000CDN but, to pour a concrete floor in a house could be done for a lesser amount.

Project funds must be sent **30 days** prior to arriving in the DR to allow us to make all the necessary arrangements for your projects. If we don't have the project funds in advance it may delay the start of your projects.

Please fill out the **'Project Fund Form'** (found in 'Important Forms' download).

Send the fee and form one of these two ways.

1. Mail the form, along with the appropriate project fees to the below address.

Servant's Heart Ministries

211 Pearl St.

Wileville, NS B4V 5H6

2. E-transfer the funds to phil@servantsheartdr.org and then scan/email the form to teams@servantsheartdr.org

Donations

Upon request individuals can make donations directly to SHM, and Canadian charitable receipts will be issued at the end of each year. Please contact us at donations@servantsheartdr.org for more information.

Step 5. Orientation and Team Schedule

Team Schedule

We value the time and sacrifice that you and your team are making to serve with us in the DR. Our goal is to create a schedule that will not only bless the people and programs in the DR, but will also bless you and your team!

Communication with our team coordinator is very important. The team coordinator is your liaison between our staff in the DR and you and your team. Teams@servantsheartdr.org

Together our DR staff and our Canadian team coordinator will create a schedule for your team using the team information form and conversations with you, the team leader. We will take into account the team's skills and talents, your desired focus and the funds that have been raised.

You may want to include a ½ day excursion where your team can do an activity together such as: cable car, monkey jungle and/or zip lining, 27 waterfalls or beach and shopping in Sosua or Cabarete.

Please keep in mind that you only have 5 working days on a 7-day trip to accomplish everything you plan to do. Also, working in a temperature with extreme humidity can be very exhausting. So, it is important to understand that sometimes you may have to pick and choose what you want to do.

Not all ideas are appropriate for the Dominican culture or the programs we have in place. In order to make your time in the DR most effective we rely on our DR staff to let us know if something does or does not work and we will explain the reasons.

Each trip will start with awareness activities. We do these activities for a few reasons:

- It gives us a chance to review some important safety information
- It allows us to give history and important information to newbies
- Returning team members will have a chance to see how projects have improved as well as reconnect with the DR staff members.

The daily schedule is divided into blocks of time: Morning, Afternoon and Evening. We will generally plan activities for two of these blocks each day. The team will return to the hotel for lunch and supper, giving the team a time of refreshing and our DR staff time to prepare for the next activity and care for their families.

Remember that your team will be integrated into existing programs. Our staff are diligent in creating opportunities to enhance these programs with as little disruption as possible.

Orientation

We will plan a time for our Canadian team coordinator or staff member to meet with your team (via Skype or in person) to go over some things you should know when traveling with SHM to the Dominican. We will work hard to have the basics of your schedule to you on or before our orientation with your team. At that time, questions and concerns can be addressed.

Please note** Flexibility is always the key to a successful trip.

You should be ready to go! If you have any other questions be sure and email our team coordinator at teams@servantsheartdr.org

Important Info to Know

For a seasoned team leader, most of this information will not be new to you but please read it through. If you are an experienced team leader and have any tips that you have found beneficial, please share it with our team coordinator. For new team leaders, we hope we can answer a lot of your questions in this document.

1. Meeting with your team

Much of the success of your endeavor will come from the time spent in team preparation. One of the best ways to do this is to meet together on a regular basis. These meetings are your opportunity to help a group of individuals become a team and are an integral part of the mission team's experience. Use the meetings to update the team on what is happening in the DR, discuss how you can use everyone's talents while on your trip, learn more about the Dominican culture and plan fundraisers.

Create opportunities with your team to foster positive attitudes and the importance of unity. Discuss questions and concerns with your team. Don't hesitate to contact SHM if you don't know answers.

With everyone's busy schedules, fundraisers can seem to be more hassle than they are worth, but they are great 'team building' activities. Team members can use this time to get to learn each other's strengths and weaknesses and work out the best way to function together before they are immersed in the team activities in the DR.

Set specific deadlines and due dates. Give your team members a schedule for when they will need to provide payment for travel, accommodation and other costs for the trip.

Plan daily debriefs and devotional themes and times with your team before you travel.

2. Passports

It is important to make sure everyone has their passport up to date. It should not expire within 6 months of your expected date of return to Canada.

You will want to collect information from all your team members before your trip. Take a copy with you and leave a copy with a trusted person at home that can be contacted in case of an emergency. You will want their full name, birthdate, emergency contact, lists of health concerns, health insurance, passport number as well as a copy of their passport.

With individual team information all in one place it will be easy for youth leaders to fill out customs forms when bringing a youth team. This can reduce confusion on the airplane on the way into the country.

3. General Health, Immunizations and Medical Insurance

We strongly suggest that you, the team leader, is aware of any health concerns (physical/mental) as well as medications that your team members may be on during the trip. You, or another team member you designate, should collect this information.

Please contact your local doctor or travel health clinic for questions about best medical practices when traveling, especially to a foreign country. They are the experts and are aware of the latest guidelines for your best trip experience.

Each team member is required to provide his or her own travel medical insurance. It is advisable that you make sure you have a copy of each person's insurance.

4. Dress Code

Where our dress code is fairly casual and we **don't require** team members to wear long dresses, long pants and long sleeve shirts while off the resort, to be culturally sensitive, we do have a few requests.

In general:

- No spaghetti straps, no short shorts (at least mid-thigh length), no short skirts (Knee length), no low-cut tops, and if you have tattoos it is preferred that they are covered.

Work site:

- Knee length shorts, capris, t-shirts, closed toed shoes (work boots or sneakers), and work gloves.

Ministry times:

- For women when working with children - capris, knee length shorts, t-shirts, no tank tops
- For women when working with women - capris, knee length shorts, knee length or longer skirts, no strapless shirts
- For Men - longer shorts or pants, t-shirts

Church services:

- Women - capris, knee length dresses/skirts, no bare shoulders and no spaghetti straps
- Men - longer shorts but if speaking pants are required, button down or polo shirt

***Please Note: If someone is dressed inappropriately, they will be asked to change or remain at the resort.**

5. Spending Money

Cash is needed for personal spending money (credit cards can be used in very few places).

Dominican currency is Pesos. You can bring either Canadian or American currency (no coins). We will arrange for your team to exchange money at a trusted exchange center. We suggest you do not exchange money at the airport.

There are also ATM's that will give you Dominican Pesos. We will show you the most trusted ones on your walking tour.

Most places will accept American Dollars however, the exchange rate will not be as good as going to our money changer. We suggest you exchange enough money to use for snacks or souvenirs during your stay.

You will have the opportunity through the week to buy coffee, vanilla and a few other gift things from the women at the Pregnancy Center. They use the money from these sales to supply the center with items for the babies and their moms.

6. Airport Arrival

It is NOT recommended to arrive in the Dominican with team t-shirts on. This alerts the customs people that you are a group and will obviously be carrying donations. The odds of them going through your luggage is much greater if they see you are traveling as a group. You can use your t-shirts while working in the DR or when you are travelling home.

There may be an entrance and exit fee that will need to be paid in US dollars. Some airlines (ie: Westjet) cover this cost in their tickets. Some however, do not. Check with your travel service provider to see if it is included in your ticket or you will need to provide it. NOTE *it is US cash ONLY.

You will receive two customs forms on the plane prior to your arrival in the DR.

- A blue one (one per person), which is the first one you will need when arriving.
- A white one (one per family) that you will hand in after you get your bags and you are on your way out of the airport.

The forms are pretty straight forward. For the address in the Dominican you can just put the name of the resort you are staying at. You will be asked the purpose of your trip and your answer is 'Pleasure'.

Once you have received your luggage and handed in your white customs form you can exit the airport. There will be porters available to assist you with your luggage. It is up to you if you want to use them or not. You will be required to tip them and the standard tip is about \$1USD per bag. *Hint, do not pay them until your bags are on the shuttle or truck you are traveling in – pay only one person, they will divvy it up. A simple ‘No Gracias’ is all that is required if you don’t want to use them.

7. Devotions and Debriefs

Team devotion time is a great time for the team to discuss what God’s word says about the things you are experiencing and feeling while on your trip. It is also a chance for the team to share prayer requests and pray for one another. Many teams set a time in the morning before they head out for the day.

The daily debriefing times with your team are an integral part of the whole experience. It is important to take a ‘Pause’ to reflect and process what is happening – relationally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Team members will have ‘AHA’ moments at different times throughout the week. It is also a valuable time to see and hear things from other perspectives.

Please make this a priority at the end of each day. Be sure everyone gets a chance to share and create a safe environment for those who have more difficulty with sharing.

While this is usually handled by the team leaders, the SHM staff is available to sit in on debrief times to answer questions that may arise. If something does come up during debrief that causes concern please do not hesitate to speak to one of our staff as soon as possible.

Our staff will plan to join you for the final debrief giving them a chance to express their thanks and to talk about some of the differences your team has made in the lives of the people you have served. It is encouraging for them as well to hear what impacted your team the most throughout the week.

Sample Debrief Questions and Conversation Starters:

- Talk about first impressions. Is it what you expected?
- What were today’s highlights?
- What was your greatest struggle today?
- What are you thankful for?
- Define dignity. Is it possible to help others without removing dignity?
- Is there a difference between compassion and pity?
- What has been your greatest challenge so far?
- What was your ‘high and ‘low for the day

Final Debrief

This is an important time for you and your team to express your thoughts and feelings of the things you have experienced during the week. It is a time to discuss how the week has changed you and will continue to change you as you return home.

- Have you done something you never thought you would do?
- What lessons have you learned?
- Did you have an 'aha moment' this week that you haven't shared with us yet?
- What has surprised you?
- What things about the trip made you happy, sad, angry, etc?
- How do you think the trip will alter your priorities and plans in the future?
- How have you changed regarding your ministry/serving capabilities?
- How has your view of relationships and their importance in your life changed?
- How has your perspective on material things changed?
- In what ways have you changed spiritually?

8. Post Trip Suggestions

It is recommended to get together with your team in a social atmosphere (pot luck, BBQ, dessert night) a week or so after your trip. Doing this gives your team members a chance to work through or talk about some of their experiences upon returning home. You have all just had an experience that has brought you together from different walks of life. You have had the chance to grow together. Don't let your busy lives take away from that experience, or let you feel that maybe it wasn't so important after all. Relating stories or remembering events that you went through may help someone feel that they are not alone.

Discussion Starters:

- What was the funniest thing that happened to you on the trip?
- What was the hardest thing for you to deal with?
- What was the most meaningful event of your trip?
- How did family and friends react to your stories of the trip?
- How are you feeling physically? (legit question)
- How has the trip changed your outlook on life since returning home?
- What are some of the changes that you are making in your life because of the trip?

Start Planning Your Next Trip!

At your post trip get-together discuss, share and dream together about your next trip! It is never too early to start.

Because everything is still fresh have your team try to answer some of these questions and keep notes!

What items do you wish you had brought with you or had left at home?

Anything specific that you would be definitely taking next time?

Were there any problems or unexpected blessings on the trip?

Were there things you wish you had gotten a chance to do?

How can you help encourage others to join your team?

How can I be an advocate for Servant's Heart?