

Planning Your Trip: A Guide for Volunteers

Saludos volunteers and families of volunteers. Thank you for choosing to do good work with Una Vida. This toolkit lays out everything you'll need to be prepared-- -- and feel prepared-- -- for a challenging and rewarding trip. It's the necessary slew of checkmarks that stand between you and the sweetness and tartness of fried *maduros*, the electric twang of *bachata*, and the teathy smiles of your host--mother. It's flush with critical forms to be returned to Una Vida, important policies of the non--profit, frequently asked questions, a tried-and-true packing list, and even a list of books about the Dominican Republic you might love (because we do).

Really Important Forms Checklist

These forms you must complete. Please turn in completed and (where indicated) signed forms as soon as possible.

- Application, with photocopy of passport (pg 6-7)
There is a non-refundable application fee of \$200 per participant that is immediately applied to the overall cost of your trip. This is our way of saying: are you in or are you out? If you're only kinda in, don't be shy. Let's talk about it! (Email rachel@una-vida.org)
- Participant Contract (pg 8)
These are Una Vida's expectations for all volunteers. Your safety, in addition to the safety of others, and the reputation of the non-profit, depend on your respecting this contract. Una Vida's policy is a zero tolerance for alcohol consumption by under 21 year-olds in the DR. Breach of this or any other portion of the contract is grounds for early departure from the DR at the volunteer's expense.
- Release and Waiver (pg 9-10)
This legal document requires the signature of both the participant and the parent of the participant in the case that he/she is a dependent.
- Medical & Food Allergies (pg 11)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: *How does the housing situation work? Will I be alone or with another participant?*

A: Una Vida staff will arrange housing based on the size of each group. You may or may not be presented with the choice of going solo or with another participant, but if you are, here's the scoop: historically, participants that go solo—with or without Spanish language skills—get a lot out of their host-- family experience.

Q: *Are the host families supportive of Una Vida's policies?*

A: On the whole, yes. Some volunteers have, however, been offered alcohol (a small amount with dinner, typically) by their host families. Culturally, this is the normal and hospitable thing to do. In this scenario, of course, it is your job to politely decline.

Q: *Is there anything disrespectful, any cultural blunder that I should be aware of?*

A: Generally speaking Dominicans are very laid back and easy going. At the dinner table, it's a good idea to eat heartily, even if you're not thrilled with the dish. If for some reason you just cannot eat what's served, use the phrase "me hace daño" (pronounced: me ah say danyo), meaning it hurts my stomach, with lots of empathy and good humor. Regarding coffee, Dominicans drink small amounts in part because it's expensive, so be careful not to serve yourself a venti .

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) - cont.

Q: *Will I eat all my meals with my host family?*

A: You will typically eat three meals a day with your family. In the case of a day-- long excursion into Haiti or elsewhere, be sure to let your family know you won't be home for lunch.

Q: *Should I help my host family with things like dishes and laundry?*

A: It's these small and humble acts that show the most respect to and appreciation for our host families.

Q: *What if I don't speak Spanish?*

A: You're not the first. Facial expressions and gestures are your allies. Learning basic words and phrases—showing due diligence with a pen and notebook—is a good way to bond with your hosts.

Q: *What kind of accommodations should I expect in terms of shower, bathroom, etc.?*

A: Accommodations vary from host to host, but be prepared for cold-watered bucket baths. It is what it sounds like, except more enjoyable. Most houses have basic plumbing. Note, however, that used toilet paper and feminine hygiene products always go in the trash can next to the toilet.

Q: *Do I need to get any vaccinations or medications?*

A: This advice should come from your doctor. Opinions do vary, particularly regarding preventative malaria medications, but you should do what is best for you under the advice of your medical professional. Una Vida staff and alumni are here to help, but medical advice is always best received directly from your doctor.

Q: *Should I bring a journal?*

A: Yes! You really should.

Q: *Should I bring my own snacks?*

A: It's a good idea to have a few bars in your backpack just in case you want one.

Q: *Should I bring make-up?*

A: No. But, if you insist, know that it will be appropriate only when going out at night and in moderation.

Q: *Anything I should be aware of?*

A: Dominican men make a lavish display of their attraction in the form of catcalls, whistles and adoring looks. This can be an unexpected and uncomfortable experience for some participants, and, if entertained, can also be a significant distraction from the goals of the trip: to do good work and learn about a culture. You may respectfully ignore such behavior and talk to an Una Vida staff member if these actions make you uncomfortable.

Tried-and-True Packing List

Due to transportation luggage capacity be mindful of how you pack. We recommend packing in a carry-on suitcase and a day-pack (backpack) filled with travel items (journal, book, water bottle, etc.). Also, be aware of airline restrictions regarding carry-on bags (liquids, knives, etc.).

Personal Items:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passport and second form of ID (Driver's license, state ID card, or school ID card) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen & Lip Balm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Framed photo to leave with your host family (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bendadryl Stick |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Journal, thank you cards, and pens | <input type="checkbox"/> Bug Spray (Deep Woods Off or similar) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headlamp or flashlight and extra batteries (small flashlights are good to give families when you leave) | <input type="checkbox"/> Old pillowcase or garbage bag for dirty laundry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camera and extra batteries | <input type="checkbox"/> Wristwatch with alarm or travel alarm clock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compact English-Spanish Dictionary | <input type="checkbox"/> Packaged snacks (granola/Clif bars, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hat (fully brimmed is best) | <input type="checkbox"/> Two 2-quart reusable water bottles (keep one in your backpack for travel) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work gloves (2 pair) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ear plugs (it gets loud at night!) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> Swiss Army knife or Leatherman (optional - may be placed in a checked bag for travel) |

Clothing Items:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water shoes and/or Teva type shoes (for bathing/swimming in the river) | <input type="checkbox"/> T-shirts/Tank tops (for work) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis shoes/hiking boots (for day to day work and hiking) | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 pairs of long pants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sandals or shoes to wear at night (a little more dressy) | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 collared shirts for gentlemen for night time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One pair of dress shoes (men) | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 or 2 cotton dresses or skirts and tops (on disco nights, you will want nice, modest clothes) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 swim trunks or bathing suits (women must wear tank top over bathing suit) | <input type="checkbox"/> Light sweater or hoodie and sweats (for nights in the mountains) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 towels (a bath size towel and a thinner one for a quick dry) | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 pairs of socks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 pairs of shorts/Capri's | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 pairs of underwear |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Lightweight cotton sleep attire (boxers and t-shirts work great) |

Toiletries:

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Shampoo (travel-size)
- Body soap
- Hand sanitizer
- All purpose wipes (2 packs)
- Tissues

Packing list continued on next page...

Packing List continued:

Gifts: gifts are really nice to bring as a "thank you" to your host family (or families). In addition to thank you notes and your framed photo, think about bringing one or two (not all!) of the following:

- handmade anything (always the best!)
- T-shirts or baseball caps
- Kitchen towels, pot holders
- Wipeable/flannel-backed table cloths (oil cloth).
- Uno cards, games, nail polish, items which are gifts but also activities to do with your family.

Do **NOT** Pack:

- X Too much
- X Large amounts of cash (Una Vida will exchange your dollars to pesos for you)
- X Travelers checks
- X Hair dryers
- X Curling or Flat irons
- X Too much make-up
- X Electronics* (seriously, including iPods!)
- X Anything you would be devastated to lose

*Bring cell phones for in-transit communication. Una Vida staff will collect and store your phones upon arrival in Miami or other connection point.

Una Vida Book Club

These are the books that have grounded us and inspired us. We encourage our volunteers to begin their journey well before they get on a plane with some reading material from this list.

On the Dominican Republic:

- *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Julia Alvarez
- *Before We Were Free*, Julia Alvarez
- *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Julia Alvarez
- *Why The Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola*, Michele Wucker
- *The Feast of the Goat*, Mario Vargas Llosa and Edith Grossman

On Haiti:

- *On That Day Everybody Ate: One Woman's Story of Hope and Possibility in Haiti*, Margaret Trost
- *Pathologies of Power – Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*, Dr. Paul Farmer
- *Brother, I am Dying*, Edwidge Danticant

On International Development & Social Service:

- *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn
- *Development as Freedom*, by Amartya Sen
- *Creating a World Without Poverty*, Muhammad Yunus
- *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, by Traci Kidder
- *The Blue Sweater*, by Jacqueline Novogratz

Fundraising Resources

Many participants raise funds through tax-deductible donations from family, friends, and local businesses; sometimes the entire cost of the trip! The following letter is an example; use it for inspiration for your own letter or just tweak a few things to add your own personal touch. Place the letter in an envelope with one or two articles and/or pictures from the Press Page of the website or our Facebook page and you're on your way. Good luck!

Dear family and friends,

This March I am planning to travel to a rural part of the Dominican Republic with Una Vida, a small non-profit based in Petaluma, CA. Una Vida is a 501(c)3 that is dedicated to building community and inspiring change, both here and in the developing world.

The upcoming program is a service-learning trip, meaning we'll work on projects such as health/wellness, housing/construction, education/child development, etc.—while we soak up the lessons of cross-cultural exchange. We will live and eat with Dominican families, and travel to rural mountain villages and markets.

In preparation for the trip, I am reading up on the DR and working to raise funds to cover the cost of my trip. I'm asking family and friends, as well as local businesses, to chip in to get me there.

Please consider making a donation on my behalf. If you make a check out to Una Vida with my name on the memo line, they will send you a receipt (it's tax deductible!). You can send it to:

Una Vida
1736 Gilrix Street
Petaluma, CA 94954

Payments may also be made at www.una-vida.org on my behalf and you will also find more information about the trip there. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Your Name

Una Vida Application

1 of 2

Participant Name: _____

Parent/Guardian name (If Participant is under 18): _____

Participant Address: _____

Participant cell number: _____

Parent/Guardian cell number: _____

Participant email address: _____

Name as it appears on passport: _____

Passport number: _____

Passport expiration date: _____

Emergency Contact Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact number: _____

Relationship to you: _____

- I understand that applications will be processed upon receipt of a \$200 non-refundable application fee. This amount will be credited towards the cost of the trip.
- I understand that to participate in the trip, participants (including minors) must actively participate in Una Vida. This may include meeting attendance, fundraising participation (if \$ is needed), and participating in community service activities.
- (For students) I understand that grade checks will be made and I must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA, as well as have no disciplinary actions against me to participate.

Participant Signature: _____

Must be completed by Parent/Guardian of participant under the age of 18:

- I/We understand that grade checks will be made and my child must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA, as well as have no disciplinary actions against him/her to participate.
- I/We understand that a \$200 non-refundable application fee is required to reserve a place on this trip. This amount will be credited towards the cost of the trip.
- I/We understand that to participate in the trip, participants (including minors) must actively participate in Una Vida. This may include meeting attendance, fundraising participation (if \$ is needed), and participating in community service activities.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ DATE: _____

Application Continued

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The following answers will be kept confidential. Please be thoughtful and honest.

1. What is your motivation for wanting to participate in this trip?

2. Have you ever lived in, worked in, or traveled to another country? Please explain.

3. Are you currently volunteering locally? If yes, which organization? If not, Why?

4. Do you have any specific skills/talents you would like to share on this trip? If so, please tell us about them.

5. What concerns might you have about traveling to a developing country?

6. What else would you like to share about yourself?

Parent/Guardian (for volunteers under 18):

1. Does your child possess the positive qualities needed to participate in this trip? Please Explain.

2. Why do you want your child to participate in this trip?

3. Does your child have any special needs? (Allergies, medical etc.)

4. Una Vida does NOT allow minors to drink while in the Dominican Republic, although it is culturally acceptable. Do you believe this will be a concern for your child?

Participant Contract

Name of Participant (please print): _____

As a Participant, I agree to:

_____ Respect my host family and host community (cultural practices, religious views,). Remember that I have come to learn, not to teach. I'll resist the temptation to inform our hosts about "How we do things".

_____ Abstain from the use of alcohol (minors 21 or younger), use discretion with the use of alcohol (adults), nor will I use any illegal substances. I understand that I am placing Una Vida staff and other participants at risk if I choose to use alcohol or illegal substances. I understand that it is socially acceptable for minors to drink in the Dominican culture. I also understand that there is a strong possibility that members of my host family will offer me alcohol and that I am expected to say NO to any offer of alcohol given to me.

_____ Advise Una Vida staff if I have knowledge that any minor involved in the trip is drinking or using illegal substances.

_____ Respect curfew as determined by Una Vida staff. As a courtesy to the team leaders, and for your own safety, an adult must know of your whereabouts at all times.

_____ Respect the group and the team leaders and their decisions. Be flexible, creative and supportive when things do not go as planned.

_____ Refrain from gossip. Instead, ask thoughtful questions and use your journal to take note of your thoughts regarding people, places and experiences.

_____ Refrain from any activity that could be construed as romantic interest toward a Dominican or fellow team member.

_____ Abide by the regulations, as explained by Una Vida staff. I also understand that if I do not comply with any or all of these regulations I could be asked to return to the United States or have another consequence, as decided by Una Vida staff. If I am required to return to the United States before the end of the trip, my family will be responsible for any and all additional expenses.

Signature of Participant: _____ DATE: _____

To be completed by Parent/Guardian of participant under the age of 18:

As a parent/guardian, I am supporting my child's decision to participate in this trip. By signing this pledge, I understand that if my child does not comply with any or all of these regulations as outlined by Una Vida in the "Participant Contract" my child could be asked to return to the United States or have another consequence, as decided by Una Vida. If my child is required to return to the United States, due to the breaking of this pledge before the end of the trip, I will assume any and all additional financial expenses.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ DATE: _____

Release and Waiver of Liability

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Please read carefully! This is a binding legal document!

Name of participant (please print): _____

THIS RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY (the "Release") executed on this ____ day of _____, _____, (month, year), by _____ (the "Participant" or "Parent/Guardian of a Participant"), in favor of Una Vida, a California nonprofit corporation, its directors, officers, employees, and agents (collectively Una Vida).

I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant), desire to work as a volunteer for Una Vida and engage in the activities related to being a volunteer with Una Vida. I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant), support my child's desire to work as a volunteer. I understand that the activities may include but are not limited to traveling to and from the Dominican Republic, travel within the Dominican Republic, constructing and rehabilitating residential buildings, consuming food and living in accommodations available and provided in the Dominican Republic, and all activities included throughout the trip.

I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) hereby freely and voluntarily execute this Release and Waiver of Liability under the following terms:

1. Waiver and Release:

I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) hereby release and forever discharge and hold harmless Una Vida and its successors and assigns, and/ or any other participants on this trip from any and all liability, claims, and demands of whatever kind of nature, either in law or in equity, which arise or may hereafter arise from the Participants activities with Una Vida. I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) understand and acknowledge that this Release discharges Una Vida, and/ or any other participants on this trip from any liability or claim that I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant), may have against Una Vida, and/ or any participants on this trip with respect to any bodily injury, personal injury, illness, death, or property damage that may result from the Participants activities with Una Vida. I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) also understand that Una Vida does not assume any responsibility for or obligation to provide financial assistance or other assistance, including but not limited to medical health or disability insurance in the event of injury or illness.

2. Insurance:

I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) understand that Una Vida does not carry or maintain health, medical, travel or disability insurance coverage for any Participant. I may purchase any of these at my own expense.

3. Medical Treatment:

I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant), hereby release and forever discharge Una Vida, the Petaluma City School District and/ or any participant on this trip from any claim whatsoever which arises or may hereafter arise on account of any first-aid treatment, or other medical services rendered in connection with Una Vida, or in the case of a minor child, with the decision by a representative or agent of Una Vida to exercise the power to consent to medical or dental treatment as such power may be granted and authorized in the Medical Release form.

4. Assumption of Risk:

I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant), understand that time with Una Vida may include activities that may be hazardous to the Participant, including but not limited to, construction activities, transportation, and moving of supplies. I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) recognize and understand that my time with Una Vida may, in some situations, involve inherently dangerous activities. I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) hereby expressly and specifically assume the risk of injury or harm in any and all activities and release Una Vida from all liability for injury, illness, death, or property damage resulting from participation.

Release and Waiver of Liability

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5. Photography and Video:

For and in consideration of my participation with Una Vida I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) hereby unconditionally grant Una Vida the right to use my name, photographs and likeness in any manner deemed fit by Una Vida, for the promotional, advertising, and informational purposes for Una Vida.

4. Other:

I, the Participant (and Parent/Guardian of the Participant) expressly agree that this Release is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of California, and that this Release shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of California. Participant agrees that in the event that any clause or provision of this Release shall be held to be invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity of such clause or provision shall not otherwise affect the remaining provisions of this Release which shall continue to be enforceable.

To express my understanding of this Release, I sign below.

Name of Participant: _____

Participant Signature: _____ DATE: _____

To be completed by Parent/Guardian of participant under the age of 18:

Name of Parent/Guardian of a Minor Participant: _____

Parent Signature: _____ DATE: _____

Medical Release Form

Emergency Treatment Release Statement: I hereby authorize Una Vida staff to render medical treatment to myself/son/daughter _____, which, in their judgment, is necessary in the event of illness or injury. I understand that I may or may not be contacted regarding this treatment

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian if under 18: _____

Date _____

Participants Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Parent/Guardian Name & Contact Number: _____

Parent/Guardian Contact Number: _____

Please list any and **all allergies, special medical conditions**, special medications, special dietary needs, or health problems with which Una Vida should be aware: _____

Please list any and all medications that participant/minor takes on a regular basis. Include amounts taken, number of daily doses and how the medication is to be administered:

Are there any medications that you know of that are contraindicated for medications participant/minor is currently taking on a regular basis? _____

Does participant wear glasses? _____ if yes, he/she must bring an extra pair.

Date of last tetanus shot: _____

Name of Family Doctor: _____

Office Phone Number: _____

Medical Insurance Carrier and Policy Number: _____

Name of Dentist: _____

Office Phone Number: _____

Dental Insurance Carrier and Policy Number: _____