



Boca Chica, Dominican Republic

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. -Psalm 46:1*

## **Visitor Information**

### **What we do:**

Holt's House of Hope provides refuge, restoration, and hope for the boys of Boca Chica through the gospel of Jesus Christ. We currently meet three times each week with a group of over 20 boys ages 11-18 for Bible study, English classes, and character development. Beginning in September, we will have a facility that will operate 5 days a week to provide vocational training, assistance with school work, English training, discipleship, and a hot lunch.

### **What to expect:**

Boca Chica is located 25 miles east of the capital city of Santo Domingo and 15 minutes from Las Americas International Airport. During the day, Boca Chica is known for its white beaches and shallow, crystal clear waters. At night, the town transforms into a party atmosphere with bars, street parties, and prostitution. It's the closest beach to Santo Domingo, so many weekends and holidays bring people in by the thousands. Sadly, Boca Chica's best known "amenity" is the prostitution. Visitors from Canada and Europe come to the town for very cheap hotels and prostitutes. The climate is hot year-round. The average high is 88 degrees and the average low is 78. The humidity from March through November is over 85 percent, so the heat index temperature is usually over 100 degrees. Life moves at a slower pace here, so please come with a good attitude, be on time to scheduled meeting times, and be flexible if our plans change!

### **Hotel information:**

You will be staying at Bellevue Dominican Bay resort in Boca Chica. It's a very basic all-inclusive hotel providing 3 buffet-style meals a day, 2 pools, and 2 snack bars. There are also bars serving alcohol, but we ask that you do not consume alcohol on your trip. Beach towels are provided by the hotel but toiletries are not. There is a short path provided by the hotel to the beach. For more information about the hotel, you can visit their website at [www.bellevuedominicanbay.com](http://www.bellevuedominicanbay.com).

## **Guidelines:**

As a visitor of Holt's House of Hope, we ask that you follow a few guidelines while you are with us:

*Clothing* - As an American, all eyes will be on you as you walk through town. Please only wear shorts with a 5" inseam or longer and modest shirts or wide strapped tank tops that are loose fitting without showing your bra. Yoga capris and pants should be covered with an extra-long shirt, skirt, or shorts. There are 2 different cultures here - those looking for a "good time" and the extremely conservative Christian community. Most of the Christian women you meet will have on a knee length skirt or longer and have their shoulders covered. Please bring a knee length or longer skirt/dress for women and pants for men in case we are invited to someone's home or we attend a church service.

*Photos* - We know you want to take pictures of your journey to remember for years to come and to show your friends and family back home. Please be mindful that you are taking pictures of people, their homes, and their personal lives. If you wouldn't want the same picture taken of you in your home environment, please don't take it. Please respect us if we ask you not to take pictures at certain times. Also, be aware of your surroundings when taking photos and carrying your phone/camera around. Phones and cameras can be stolen quickly.

*Travel* - Please do not go anywhere alone, even adults, outside of the main buildings of the resort. Girls and women, try to take a male with you if possible. Dominican men are known to cat call and make derogatory comments to females, but it lessens if a male is present. Men, if possible, try to have a woman with you. It cuts down (but won't stop) the prostitutes trying to get your attention. Always be aware of your surroundings and keep a headcount of people in your group.

*Giving Things Away* - It is common for visitors to want to give clothing, shoes, etc. to Dominicans while you are here. Please speak to Abby or Chris before giving items away to anyone in the local community. We are working to create a culture that encourages personal responsibility and investment for the boys we are ministering to. The boys have opportunities to earn points that they can use to 'purchase' these types of items. Giving them things outside of this structure is counterproductive. Giving items to others in the community puts us and our staff members in danger when an area thinks we are "rich" because we know Americans.

*Donations* - we are currently accepting the following types of donations for the Holt's House of Hope Store: gently used/unstained boy's medium to adult large dri-fit shirts and shorts, men's shoes size 5 to 10, baseball gloves, outdoor basketballs. At this time, we do not have a ministry platform for women's clothing/shoes or larger sized men's items.

**Other:**

*Entry Fee* - You'll need \$10 cash as a tourist entry fee when your plane lands in the Dominican Republic. Please make sure you have your cash easily accessible when you get off the plane.

*Money exchange* - The average exchange rate is currently approximately 47 pesos to 1 US dollar. There are several locations around town to exchange money. Do not exchange it in the airport until you've met up with us. The exchange rate is much better after you have passed through security. \$50 + \$10 entry fee should be plenty to get you through the week including souvenirs. Please only take a few dollars' worth of pesos at a maximum with you at a time unless you are specifically planning on buying a higher priced item at that time. There's a local grocery store that accepts credit cards where you can purchase snacks and small toiletry items you may have forgotten.

*Cell phones* - Do not take your phone off of Airplane Mode unless you have purchased an international plan through your cell phone provider.

*Wifi* - Wifi is not included at Dominican Bay. We'd love for you to "disconnect" for the week, especially from social media and texts with friends back home, but if you need wifi, the closest location is a coffee shop outside the gate of Dominican Bay. The wifi is free for paying customers. You will need to make a purchase and ask your server for the password that changes daily. A basic cup of coffee is about \$1.50. They only take Dominican Pesos as payment.

*Souvenirs* - There are several souvenir shops on the main beach road. There's a store located across the street from one of our favorite restaurants. We've had great service and found fair prices in there. If you choose to go into a shop, please don't go in a large group. You'll get better service and prices in small groups of 2-3 people. Large groups are overwhelming for the shop owners who are trying to prevent theft. There are also several vendors who walk up and down the beach selling sunglasses, beach towels, music, snacks, and about anything you can think of. If you don't want anything, politely say "no gracias" and break eye contact with them. Be aware that if you buy something from one beach vendor, many others will follow once they know you have money on you.

*Health* - There are no required vaccinations to travel to the Dominican Republic; however, we recommend you speak to your doctor to ensure all your shots are up to date before traveling. In the days before your trip, please start drinking several glasses of water every day. It's very easy to get dehydrated here. While on your trip, keep a water bottle with you at all times to stay hydrated through the day. The tap water here is not consumable, and we would strongly discourage using it to brush your teeth as well. There is clean, filtered water available at the hotel and we will ensure it is available everywhere we go. A common natural illness-preventative supplement is *Grapefruit Seed Extract*. It can be purchased in most pharmacies or health stores in the US. We recommend taking one tablet each day.

## What to Bring:

- A positive attitude!
- Passport
- Bible
- Money for souvenirs and snacks
- Journal and pen
- Sunscreen, Bug spray, Water bottle
- Day bag - the 2 shoulder, light weight bags are usually the best and easy to carry for hours at a time. (A purse is more likely to be an easy target on your shoulder than something covering 2 shoulders.)
- Clothes for church
- Tshirts/appropriate shorts are fine for everyday wear, dri-fit is encouraged for comfort
- Toiletries - Dominican Bay does not provide any toiletries other than soap. You might also want to bring a loofah or washcloth as these are not provided.
- Hat
- Swimsuit - ladies, please wear a modest one-piece or tankini that fully covers your stomach. If you do not have one - please wear a dark colored tshirt when at the beach or pool.
- Comfortable tennis shoes
- Flip flops - If you're doing construction, attending a meeting with the Holt's House of Hope boys, or walking through a village, you'll want to wear shoes that fully cover your feet. There are a lot of broken glass pieces and trip hazards. Chacos/flip flops are fine for the beach, pool, or dining hall.
- Pepto-Bismol and/or anti-diarrhea tablets. We hope you won't need them, but traveling and different cuisines can cause upset stomachs.
- Small bottle of hand sanitizer or wipes

Note: Please leave valuable jewelry and electronics at home.

## Common phrases to know:

Hola - Hello

Mucho gusto - It's nice to meet you

¿Como está(s)? - How are you?

¿Qué lo qué? - Dominican slang for "what's up"

¿Qué pasa? - What's up?

Dios te/le bendiga - God bless you

\*The reply to Dios te/le bendiga is "Amen"

Por favor - Please

Gracias - Thank you

¿Cuánto cuesta? - How much (does this cost)?

De nada - You're welcome

Sí - Yes

No - No

Con permiso - Excuse me

Lo siento - I'm sorry

No entiendo - I don't understand

¿Cómo se/te llama(s)? - What's your name?

¿Cuántos años tiene(s)? - How old are you?

¿Habla inglés? - Do you speak English?

¿Dónde está el baño? - Where is the bathroom?