



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Who is eligible to participate?** Just about any adult (18+) who is: (1) in good health, (2) eligible for international travel, and (3) capable of moderately rigorous physical activity. At this point, minors 14 and over can attend only with an accompanying parent or legal guardian.

**How do I know who will be in my cohort?** It depends. If you organize a group to participate, we will arrange a private, custom Seminar just for your group (minimum 6 participants). On the other hand, if you join us as an individual or small group (say, a couple or small family), you'll make new friends with shared interests. Our preparatory phase provides ample opportunity for team building. By the time you land in the D.R., you'll be well-acquainted with the entire cohort.

**Who are the leaders?** Paul Cumbo and Adam Baber are the principal leaders. Depending on the cohort, adjuncts or interns may assist them. You can read about Paul and Adam on our website under the "Staff" section.

**I'm interested, but I'm not sure I'm up to the physical demands due to my age or health.**

The Dominican Republic is a developing country with widespread material poverty. The rural roads are rugged. The Centro Camino in El Faro and our accommodations on the coast are comfortable and beautiful, with familiar plumbing and electricity, but they are simple. Our service projects involve some degree of physical labor. But cohort members bring different gifts. If you can't swing a pickaxe or mix cement, you can contribute in other ways. Most Camino activities aren't excessively strenuous, but the tropical environment is taxing and requires resilience. Ultimately, we recommend you consult with your doctor and a travel medicine specialist to make an informed decision.

**What kind of medical care is available?** If you have a serious medical condition potentially requiring immediate access to high-level care, Camino's international program is probably not right for you. There's no 911 service in the remote areas, and advanced medical care is often not immediately available in the local clinics. Our leaders are trained in basic first responder skills, and we have an arrangement for emergency helicopter evacuation. That said, it is a developing country and there is a degree of risk. Your Seminar fee includes a supplemental medical travel insurance coverage.

**Do I need to be able to speak Spanish?** No. Arguably, your experience will be richer in proportion to your Spanish abilities. However, there is also great value to the experience of relative powerlessness we experience when we become dependent on others for something as basic as conversation. That being said, we highly encourage participants to maximize their Spanish abilities prior to the practicum. Your leaders will have sufficient conversational fluency in Spanish to serve as interpreters and guides.

**What’s involved in the Camino “curriculum?”** Our curriculum is designed to provide you with appropriate context and working knowledge. It’s important to be familiar with the history, culture, and contemporary life of the Dominican Republic—not to mention, have at least a basic grasp of rudimentary Spanish. Cohort members will be invited to read a common body of texts, ranging from historical narratives and scholarly essays to contemporary journalism. We’ll discuss a broad range of topics, from the basics of Ignatian reflective practice to the price of coffee.

**Where will we stay, and what will we eat?** When we’re in the campo, we’ll stay at the Centro Camino. Our guest cabins accommodate anywhere from two to six people, and each cabin has a private bathroom and shower. Meals in the campos will be locally prepared Dominican fare: delicious traditional recipes of rice, vegetables, chicken, and fresh fruit. On the coast, we’ll stay in beautiful accommodations and enjoy meals onsite and at selected restaurants discovered through years of travel by the Camino staff. As a general policy, we avoid or minimize consumption of alcohol—this is a matter of group composition, age, and expectations. We work with the group to achieve consensus on this prior to the trip, and stick to the decision.

**What’s the water situation? Drinking? Bathing?** Because untreated water is often contaminated by agricultural runoff and inadequate sewage systems, we drink only 100% pure bottled water produced in reverse-osmosis plants. This is a major industry in the D.R. and most folks who can afford this inexpensive water drink it. As for bathing, we enjoy cool showers while in the campo, where running water is a luxury and hot water is nearly unheard of. (Limited solar heating provides for some limited warm water.) Truth be told, the tropical environment makes this a refreshing way to end a workday. We’ll discuss this during the preparation phase. On the coast, things are more familiar.

**This is a lot of money for a short trip. Can you explain the costs?** The Camino Institute Seminars are more than just vacation travel. They include a carefully designed course with online and in-person components. We’ve also designed the Institute to be a sustainable business model that contributes positively to the local economies where we operate. Program fees are all-inclusive, without surprises or nickel-and-diming. Doing things right in the context of international travel comes at a cost. You can count on knowledgeable staff, careful planning, thorough due-diligence, and a small enough cohort to provide highly personal attention to every member.

**Given that Camino is engaged in charitable work, why isn’t it a nonprofit?** The Camino Institute, which facilitates the services we provide our clients, is a New York-based Limited Liability Company structured to maximize sustainability, ensure affordable and adequate insurance coverage at our small scale, provide an agile business model, and enable our staff to devote their passion, time, and energy to this vision. It’s important to note that a substantial portion of Camino’s revenues go directly to bolstering the local economy through purchasing supplies and materials locally, and by contracting with local workers and merchants. At this stage, we are “for profit, for good.” We prefer to think of ourselves as a strategic, micro-economic driver more so than a charity.

**Please contact us by email at [info@caminoinstitute.com](mailto:info@caminoinstitute.com) if you have additional questions.**