



*Travel with Purpose.  
Disconnect to Reconnect.  
Focus on What Matters.  
Be of Service.*

2027

*Dominican Republic Service Immersion Programs for High School & College Groups*

## Imagine if you could build a place designed from the ground up for international service learning.

That's exactly what we did. Founded in 2018 by veteran educators, the Camino Institute offers premiere service learning experiences tailored for high schools. Camino's facilities, practices, and philosophy all reflect more than four decades of combined experience in education, including managing student international travel.

Our hilltop campus in El Faro — a safe, remote village in the mountains of the Dominican Republic — provides an ideal setting for small group immersions of up to sixteen. Camino programs are formative and practical. We have been deeply engaged with El Faro since 2011, and our projects spring from that relationship.

*“The Camino Institute provides a wonderful opportunity for our young men to disconnect from so many of the pressures and distractions that are part of their everyday experience and to connect more deeply with the community in which they are living, with each other, and with themselves.”*

*The carefully structured program of service and reflection provides a unique opportunity to develop a transformative sense of interiority, one which they can cultivate and engage not only in the Dominican Republic, but more importantly as they look to the future and what they want to make of it.”*

**Rev. James R. Van Dyke, S.J.**  
President, Georgetown Prep

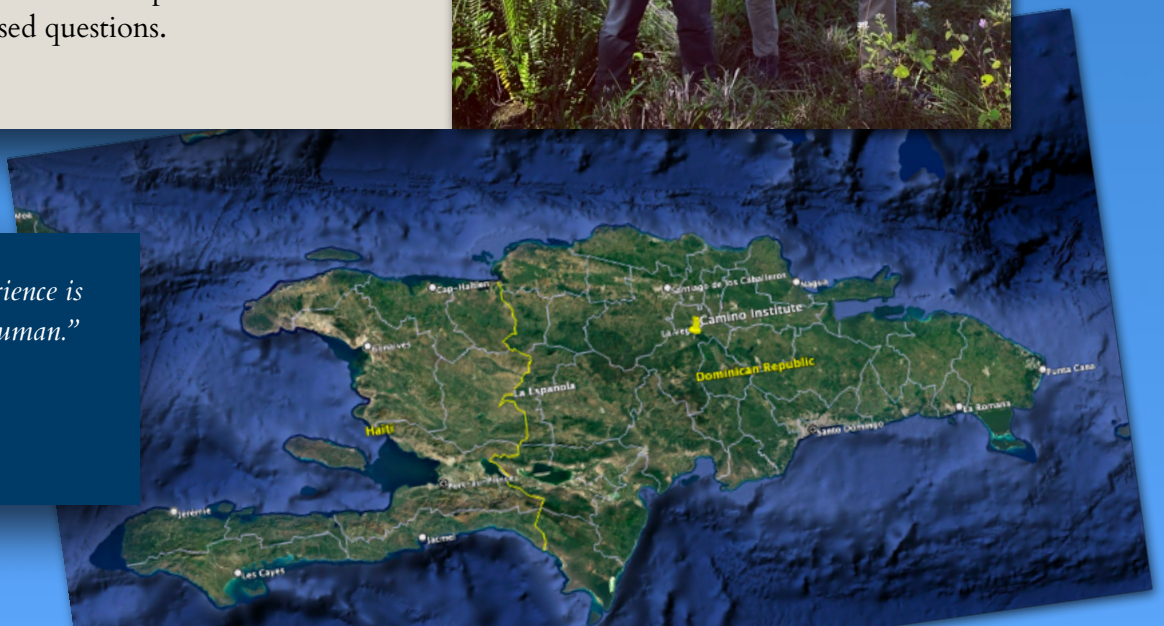
### ABOUT THE FOUNDERS

Camino was founded in 2018 by Paul Cumbo & Adam Baber, two longtime high school teachers. Camino emerged from their experience of leading dozens of domestic and international service immersion trips. Both are experienced classroom teachers, retreat directors, and curriculum designers. They are adept at facilitating meaningful reflection prompts and the deep conversations that emerge from focused questions.



*“The Camino Institute experience is about becoming more fully human.”*

**Paul Cumbo**  
Camino Co-founder





## Camino is a ‘Pilgrimage Experience’

Meaningful service work by day. Guided reflection and honest, vulnerable conversation about what really matters by night. And in between, a constant immersion in a fascinating, welcoming culture that exists amidst natural beauty. That’s what makes up the ‘pilgrimage’ experience of a Camino retreat.

Every Camino group sponsors a tangible service project that benefits a family or community in need. Groups work under the direction of our locally contracted foremen. If students can wield a pick and shovel, they get busy using it. If painting or gardening is more your group’s speed, you’ll get your hands dirty in that way. There’s always a way to contribute, and your group will get to know the people involved on a personal, intimate level. **It’s about the project, but it’s even more about encounter.**

### Q&A: Is Camino religious?

The Camino Institute has no official or ‘formal’ affiliation, but the formative Jesuit education and Catholic spirituality of our founders informs the approach to prayer, meditation, discernment, conversation, and reflective practice for religiously-oriented groups. However, programs can easily be tailored for non-denominational or secular school groups with a focus on awareness, relationships, appreciation for the natural world, and discerning an ethical path for life. Groups should be clear about their religious vs. secular identity when discussing a potential program.

### Q&A: Is it safe?

It’s natural to think about safety for international travel. Obviously, it’s impossible to control for every situation, but local knowledge, diligence, experience, and good practice go a long way. Relationships matter, too. Dominicans are overwhelmingly kind, generous, and honest. El Faro is a close-knit community of ranchers and farmers we’re proud to call our friends and neighbors. (Our co-founder, Paul, has spent several weeks there with his wife and three young children.)

It’s also reassuring that the Dominican Republic is the *most visited tourist destination* in the Caribbean. Violent crime is rare; even petty theft is uncommon outside of the busiest tourist areas. While poverty is widespread, the DR has a stable government and advanced medical care. In fact, our campus is only about 45 minutes from one of the Caribbean’s top-rated hospitals. We maintain subscription-based, concierge helicopter insurance coverage with a private air ambulance company for life-threatening emergencies.



### Q&A: What schools have sent groups?

By the end of 2026, we will have hosted:

- 4 groups from Georgetown Prep in Maryland
- 2 groups from Loyola High School of Los Angeles
- 2 groups from McQuaid Jesuit in Rochester
- 1 group from Park, an independent secular school in Buffalo

We are in conversation with other independent schools for potential travel in 2027 and beyond. If repeat clients are a good sign of a well-run operation, then this strong record of returning schools says something about the quality of the Camino experience.



## What sets Camino apart?

We acknowledge that our program costs a bit more than some others. The reason? **We offer a premiere experience.** We work on a small scale. We do not combine groups, so your school will have our full attention. We strongly recommend groups of 12 (10 students and 2 teachers), and we set a hard maximum of 14 people for school groups to ensure personal attention and quality time. Moreover, we are committed to sustainable compensation for our local staff. Groups can look forward to operating as a close-knit cohort of students, faculty, and Camino staff.

*“Surrounded by the beauty of the mountains and no outside distractions, I found my quiet voice..the one that reminded me of what I am capable of accomplishing and what is true to me.”*

**Michelle Capizzi**  
**Carlisle Etcetera, LLC**

Our experience is extensive. Our strong familiarity with the local community and Dominican culture combines with our professional knowledge of program design, group dynamics, and reflective & meditative practice to enable us to offer premiere experiences. We are veteran classroom teachers and leaders in independent schools. Our projects are meaningful, and never just busy work. We have a carefully-built curriculum that balances substance with agility, and centers on posing effective, intentionally-crafted questions that elicit genuine thought and conversation about challenging topics. **We’ve built an environment conducive to honest reflection.**

We offer a concierge, “turn-key” package. We handle all the logistics and take the worry and stress out of international programming. We can run the preparatory meetings, reflections during the trip, and offer follow-up activities. Of course, if schools wish to retain more control and take more of a lead on any of these elements, they may. That’s part of the appeal of our programs: we can tailor them to the needs and preferences of individual schools.



## Q&A: What are the accommodations like?

Our campus is designed for functional comfort, simplicity, and natural beauty—not luxury. We built it to offer our guests an environment conducive to the aims of our programs: disconnect to reconnect and focus on what matters. It's a step up from a hostel, but it's not a resort. Think tropical eco-lodge meets bed-and-breakfast. You'll sleep on bunk beds from IKEA in guest cabins. We have well-appointed bathrooms, toilets, and showers—but no hot water. We have ceiling fans, but no air conditioning.

Cabin A: Sleeps 4 in 1 bedroom w/private bathroom.

Cabin B: Sleeps 8 in 2 bedrooms w/shared double bathroom.

Cabin C: Sleeps 4 in 1 bedroom w/private bathroom.

Cabin D: Staff quarters with 2 private 1-bedroom suites. It is also available for individual faculty lodging if needed.

## Q&A: What are meals like?

All meals are included and feature Dominican staples like rice, beans, plantains, stewed or sautéed chicken or beef, and other vegetables like yucca, squash, tomatoes, carrots, and cucumbers. Meals are prepared by local women who have worked with our groups for years. We are intentional about providing nutritious, healthy meals, minimizing processed foods and using only extra virgin olive oil for cooking. All cooking uses bottled (or boiled) water. Most produce is local. We have been able to accommodate most common dietary restrictions with previous groups (e.g., vegetarian, gluten-free).

For groups that travel to the north coast, meals are provided onsite at the retreat center. For lunch at the beach, we visit quality local restaurants that have been vetted by the Camino staff over the years. Groups drink bottled water only.

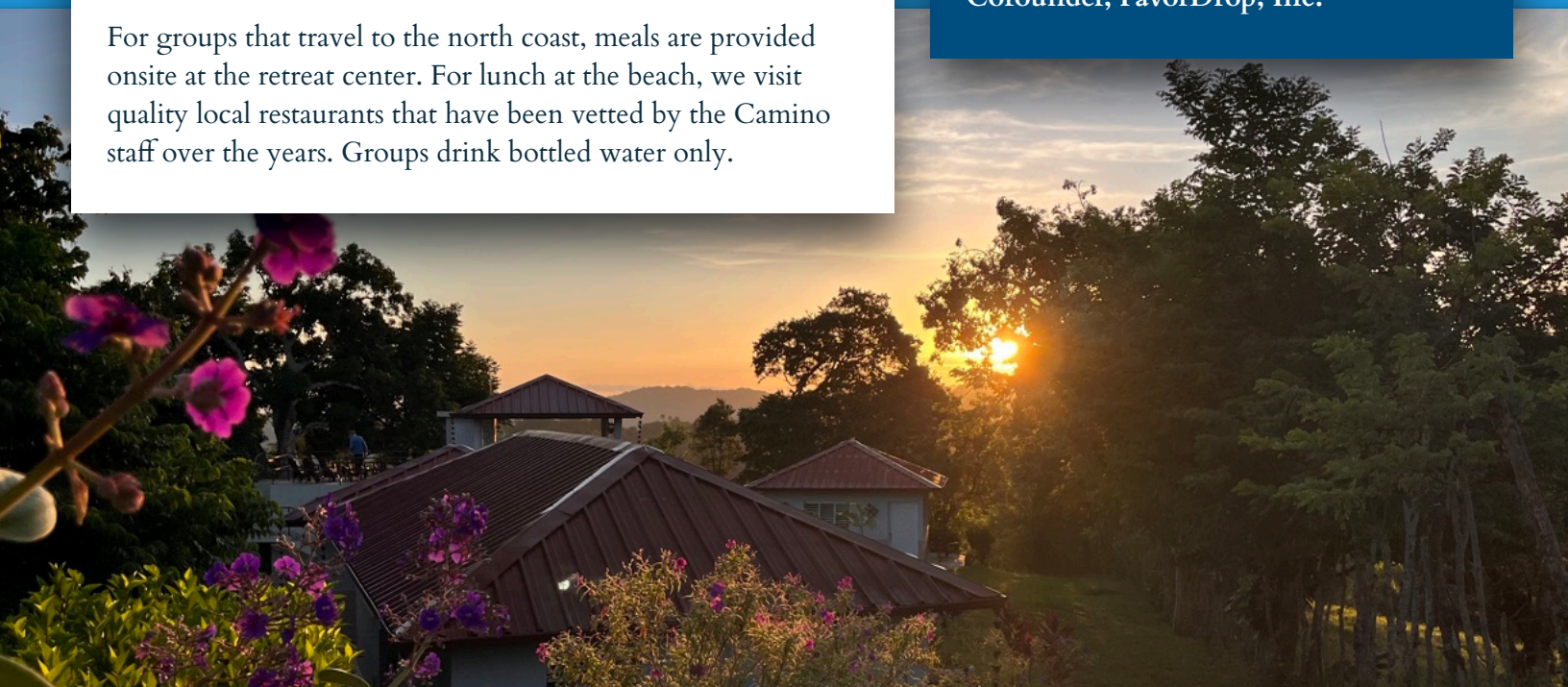
## Q&A: What about bugs?

We regularly use a professional service to minimize the presence of spiders, mosquitos, and other bugs on our campus—but it's a tropical environment and you'll see an occasional critter. Geckos are a common sight, for example, and you'll see ants, beetles, or spiders from time to time.

Our mountain location tends to see few mosquitos because of the higher altitude and the regular breezes. Still, we advise long sleeves and pants in the evening, along with plenty of insect repellent. Our guest cabins stay pretty bug-free with screened windows. There are more bugs near the coast. Currently, the CDC does not recommend antimalarial medications for the central and northern regions of the country, but participants are encouraged to consult with their physicians in advance of travel.

*"The quality time we spent on this journey together—undistracted by our phones and the pace of our regular lives—was precious on so many levels. We talked about things we don't often discuss, at a depth we don't often reach."*

**Tim Sardinia**  
Cofounder, FavorDrop, Inc.



## Experience ‘Thick Time’

Our campus is designed to help you disconnect to reconnect with what matters most, without devices and distractions. And when you do, time takes on a different quality. Detached from your daily routines, your senses become more attuned. Your awareness and presence grow keener. It’s a chance to just “be,” and also to take decisive action with clarity. It’s hard to explain, but it’s powerful. We’ve coined our own term to describe it: ‘thick time.’



## A Typical Day’s Routine

- 6:00 am: Coffee available, Quiet time for reading, meditation, prayer, or yoga
- 6:50 am: Shared morning intentions
- 7:00 am: Breakfast & daily orientation
- 8:00 am: Head to volunteer project
- 12:00 pm: Lunch & siesta
- 2:00 pm: Activity (visiting local families, pickup soccer games, hiking, waterfall visits, river swimming)
- 6:00 pm: Dinner
- 7:00 pm: Evening talks & guided reflections
- 9:30 pm: Bedtime

## A Typical Immersion Itinerary

This is the plan most 8-day immersions follow, but there’s always room for adjustment depending on a particular group’s needs and preferences.

- Day 1: Travel & orientation, opening reflections
- Day 2: Morning service work or village tour, afternoon cultural activities; evening reflections
- Day 3: Morning service work, afternoon waterfall hike; evening reflections
- Day 4: Morning service work, afternoon coffee co-op visit; evening reflections
- Day 5: Morning service work, afternoon down time; evening reflections
- Day 6: Drive to coast retreat center, batey ministry; afternoon pool & down time; evening reflections
- Day 7: Morning and lunch at the beach; afternoon pool & downtime; evening reflections
- Day 8: Depart for airport, fly home



*“The time and effort to get to the quiet, simple, but beautiful campus of the Camino Institute is well worth it. The opportunity to step back from our hectic lives, to not only serve others in an international rural community but then to be guided in reflecting on our attitudes, our purposes, and our goals in the Jesuit tradition is not one afforded to most people. I brought my four young adult children and feel this unique experience was incredibly beneficial to us at different stages in our lives. I recommend it for families, friends, business leadership teams, or anyone who seeks reflection and renewal.”*

**Dr. Jennifer Ruh, MD, Camino Alumna**

## The Service Component

One of the principles of the Camino Institute is to work with our network of friends and associates on the ground through many years of relationship to ascertain genuine expressed needs. We then try to meet one of them, insofar as our means allow. Sometimes, depending on our available resources (both labor and money), this means taking on a larger infrastructure-type project like paving a section of road or running new aqueduct lines. Other times, we focus on a smaller project that benefits a single family through needed home improvements.

Students learn from working shoulder-to-shoulder with our Dominican neighbors. Some of it is practical: how to wield a pick and how to mix cement. But much of it comes down to learning about cooperation, pacing, and teamwork. Moreover, by working alongside local families and communities, there's a chance for plenty of informal conversation and human connection. That encounter is, of course, at the core of the experience.

For trips that include the north coast, we participate in a simple ministry that distributes food and household sundries to disenfranchised Haitian villagers living in conditions of abject material poverty. It tends to open minds and hearts.



*“As a teacher and alumnus of the Camino Institute, I know about the real impact it can have on students. The program invites participants to serve, reflect, and grow. It is the kind of place that helps us form compassionate young people committed to justice in global society.”*

**Mr. Sean Whalen**  
Faculty, Fairfield Preparatory School



## Our Philosophy Around Projects

International service programs sometimes make the mistake of falling into a false dichotomy. One school of thought says the tangible project matters more than anything; the other says it's all about encounter and bricks and mortar distract from human elements.

Our philosophy around 'service projects' is nuanced and informed by experience, reflection, and ethical consideration — and, as such, rejects this reductive binary. Service learning is *not* all about a project. But at the same time, a tangible project matters. It's a both/and proposition.

If we are being honest as educators, the principal goal of immersive service-learning programs is the mission-driven formation of students. At Camino, we see the tangible building project as both an end in itself and a means to this educational end.

## Immersion Packages

Camino Institute offers two service immersion packages and one smaller, less involved Spanish language immersion. Pricing is based on group size, and is all-inclusive with the exception of airfare, which we do not include because it is so variable. Pricing includes everything else: the Camino curriculum, accommodations, meals, rental vehicles for ground transportation, project costs, project foreman salaries, taxes, tips, etc. For the Spanish language immersion, the price is reduced because there is no physical building project involved.

The principal difference between the packages is the north coast component. Groups that travel to the north coast experience a different aspect of the island and engage in a service project benefiting the Haitian refugee population. This option makes for a longer trip and entails additional expenses associated with transportation, lodging, and meals.

The Camino program fee is charged to the school, not to individual student participants. We require that school groups send at least 2 faculty chaperones, at least one of whom must be able to drive a rental vehicle (AWD SUV, automatic transmission, same driving laws as the USA). Beyond that, however, group composition is left to the discretion of the school, and does not affect the fee. In other words, the Camino program fee does not change based on having different ratios of students to faculty—although it may have an impact on per-student fees charged to families by the school. We recommend schools build a group of twelve, with ten students and two teachers. We have found this to be the ideal for group dynamics and logistics. From a cost standpoint, it is our best value.

|                 | Spanish Language Immersion<br>5 Nights, Mountains Only | Service Immersion: 6 Nights,<br>Mountains Only | Service Immersion: 7 nights,<br>Mountains & Coast |
|-----------------|--|--|---|
| 10 participants | \$16,420   | \$21,420                                       | \$23,460  |
| 11 participants | \$18,748   | \$22,748                                       | \$24,990  |
| 12 participants | \$19,460   | \$23,460                                       | \$27,285  |
| 13 participants | \$22,010   | \$26,010                                       | \$30,600  |
| 14 participants | \$25,070   | \$29,070                                       | \$34,680  |

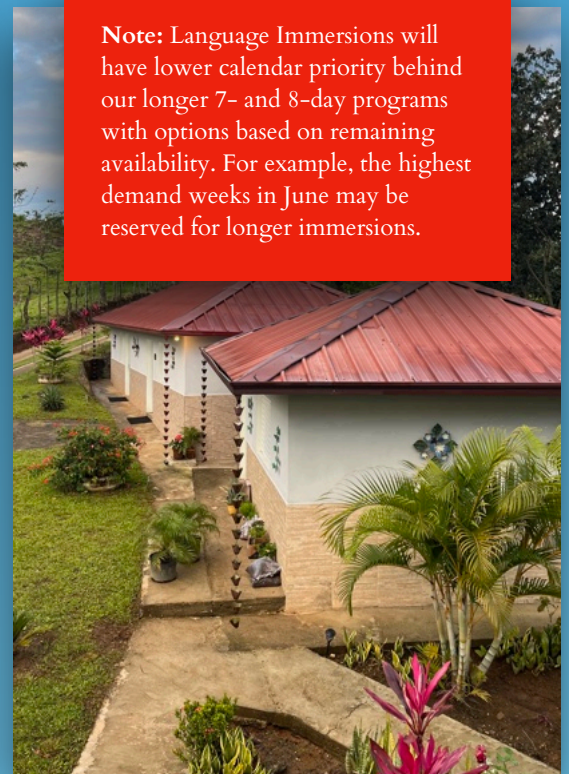
### Example Budget #1: Mountains & Coast

A school does a Mountains & Coast trip for 10 students and 2 faculty. The program fee is \$27,285. The school's service budget subsidizes \$2,000, a donor sponsors \$1,000, and the students are tasked with fundraising \$1,000. These elements total \$4,000. The remaining cost (\$23,285) is divided among the 10 student participants (\$2,328.50 each). Roundtrip air is \$600 per person, totaling \$7,200, also divided among the ten student participants and covering the teachers' flights. In total, each student pays **\$3,048.50**—that's for everything, including air travel, including the teachers' flights.

### Example Budget #2: Language Immersion

A school opts for a 12-participant Spanish Language Immersion for 10 students and 2 faculty. The program fee of \$19,460 is divided among the students, who pay \$1,946 each. With roundtrip air travel at \$600, a total of \$7,200 would likewise be divided among the ten, covering the teachers' flights. In total, the cost charged to each student is **\$2,666**.

**Note:** Language Immersions will have lower calendar priority behind our longer 7- and 8-day programs with options based on remaining availability. For example, the highest demand weeks in June may be reserved for longer immersions.



## Registration Process

Registration begins by getting in touch to let us know you're interested. We can discuss available dates and see what will work from a calendar standpoint. Typically, we have opportunities during a mid-February break, during Easter break, and in the months of June and July. **June is typically the most in-demand month for school groups.** Available weeks are very limited, and interest in Camino is growing every year. If you want your school to have a group in 2027, be in touch as soon as possible (preferably before the end of the 2026-2027 school year).

To explore a 2027 trip for your school, contact Paul or Adam:

[paul@caminoinstitute.com](mailto:paul@caminoinstitute.com)

[adam@caminoinstitute.com](mailto:adam@caminoinstitute.com)

Alternatively, you can submit an inquiry form on our website.

**Please note: we cannot 'hold' dates for interested schools. The only way to lock in a trip is for the school to pay the nonrefundable deposit of \$5,000 and submit the institutional registration & agreement form.**



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