



Tour:

REEF GUARDIANS

A Coral Conservation Journey

Destination:

Bayahibe, Dominican Republic

Specialization:

Caribbean Marine Science

REEF GUARDIANS: CORAL CONSERVATION

The Dominican Republic

Day	Morning		Afternoon		Evening	
1	International flight to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; clear customs, meet transportation and local team; transfer to hotel & check-in				Welcome Dinner, Show & Orientation in the UNESCO Colonial Zone	
2	Transfer to Bayahibe; Hotel Check-in		Dominican Foundation for Marine Studies: Introduction to Caribbean Marine Ecosystems		Guided Walking Tour of Bayahibe	Dinner & Dominican Dance Class
3	Coral Reef Ecology Master Class	Coral Restoration Techniques Master Class	La Coralina Reef Snorkel - Coral Identification & Parrotfish Census	Shopping & Exploration in Town	Documentary: Chasing Coral	Local Dinner
4	Marine Mammal Monitoring at Sea / Identification, Behavior, Habitat & Environmental Threats		Magallanes Beach - Coral Fossil Identification	Beach Break / Snorkel / Fun Time		Dinner
5	Coral Nursery Master Class Nursery Building & Transplanting		Coral Garden Buoy Construction / Snorkel		Dinner	Documentary: A Plastic Ocean
6	SERVICE PROJECT: Beach Clean-Up with Debris Census & Cataloging; Environmental Data Collection		Magallanes Beach - Coral Identification / Snorkel		Dinner & Free Time	
7	Full-day Catamaran Trip to Saona Island, Beach Lunch, Turtle Sanctuary and Natural Pools Visit				Farewell Dinner	Karaoke Night
8	Debrief & Reflection	Hotel Check-out & transfer to Santo Domingo	Depart the Dominican Republic for Home			



As with all sample itineraries, please be advised that this is an 'example' of a schedule and that the activities and hotels shown may be variable dependent upon dates, weather, special requests and other factors. Itineraries will be confirmed prior to travel.



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CORAL REEF CONSERVATION CERTIFICATION

IN THIS PROGRAM, ALL PARTICIPANTS WILL EARN THEIR CORAL REEF CONSERVATION CERTIFICATION THROUGH PADI'S PROJECT AWARE FOUNDATION. THIS COURSE HELPS YOU APPRECIATE THE COMPLEXITY OF CORAL REEF HABITATS AND TEACHES HOW YOU CAN HELP CONSERVE THESE VITAL SYSTEMS.



Day 1

Dinner included

Travel to the Dominican Republic, arriving in the afternoon. Upon arrival in Santo Domingo, you'll be greeted with the vibrant energy of the Dominican Republic! After checking into your hotel, the group will head to the Colonial Zone, a UNESCO World Heritage site. This historic district, brimming with centuries-old architecture, is the perfect introduction to Dominican culture. Stroll through its lively plazas and cobblestone streets, soaking in the sounds of local music and the aroma of traditional food. The evening will feature a welcome dinner and show and an introduction to the week's activities. Your program leaders will outline the focus on marine conservation and set expectations for the experience ahead. Get ready for a great week!

The Dominican Republic... The Dominican Republic has it all! Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the north and the Caribbean Sea on the south, this lush tropical island paradise boasts nearly 1,000 miles (1,609 km) of coastline, 250 miles (402 km) of the world's top beaches, magnificent resorts and hotels, and a variety of sports, recreation and entertainment options. Here you can dance to the pulse-pounding thrill of the merengue, renew in diverse accommodations, explore ancient relics of centuries past, delight in delicious Dominican gastronomy or enjoy ecotourism adventures in the magnificent national parks, mountain ranges, rivers, and beaches.

The Dominican Republic is located in the Caribbean region on the island of Hispaniola, bordered to the west by Haiti and surrounded by the Caribbean sea to the South and the Atlantic Ocean to the North. The country boasts a diverse terrain with a mix of mountainous regions in the central interior and lush tropical rainforests. In terms of size, the Dominican Republic is roughly twice the size of New Hampshire, making it a geographically diverse and picturesque Caribbean nation.

QUICK FACTS

Capital: Santo Domingo

Population: 10,790,744 (The World Factbook 2023 est.)

Language: Spanish but English is widely spoken in tourist areas

Religion: The majority of the population is Christian, principally Catholic, followed by the Evangelists and others who belong to various beliefs. The country ensures freedom of worship for all.



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Currency: Dominican Peso. Major credit cards and US Dollars are accepted at many tourist areas in the country. ATMs can be found throughout the country and at most resorts.

GDP by sector: Services, 56%; Manufactured goods, 15%; Construction, 14%; Remittances, 10%; Agricultural Production, 5%

Government: The country's political structure is based on the principles of democracy (representative democracy). Every four years, the country elects its president, vice president and legislators.

Time: The local time zone is Eastern Caribbean Time (GMT -0400).

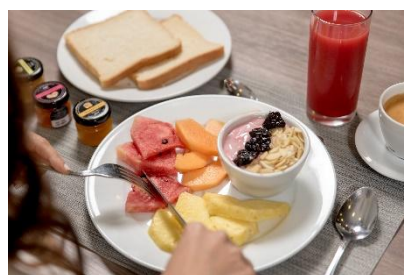
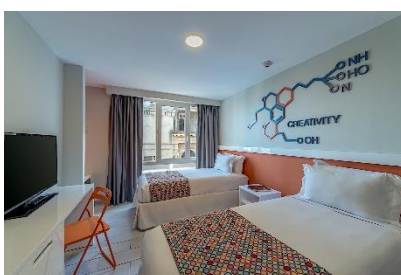
Climate: The country enjoys warm, tropical weather year-round with average year-round temperatures of 78°F to 88°F (25°C to 31°C). The cooler season is November through April, while it is warmest from May through October. The wet season is generally from June to November, the dry season from December to May.

Music: Merengue is the national dance and music of Dominican Republic, with such recognition worldwide that in 2016 it was declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Gastronomy: The country possesses a rich and multifaceted culinary history, having been influenced by Europe, Africa, Taino Indigenous peoples and other cultures, giving rise to Dominican food with delicious tastes and aromas. The use of tubers such as cassava, potatoes and Caribbean sweet potatoes, among others, was inherited from the Taino culture. The most elaborate dish prepared by the indigenous people, still practiced in the Dominican culture, is the cazabe – a round disk made of the cassava flour and baked in great burenes (clay dish). The loquat, maize, bija, peanut, jagua, sapote, fish and seafood, among other delicacies, are also part of the culinary legacy of the Taino culture.

Entry Requirements: Most visitors arriving to the Dominican Republic – including those from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, the European Union, Mexico, and many other countries do not need a visa to enter the country. You do need to have a valid passport with a minimum validity of six (6) months and a return air, maritime or land ticket.

Sample Hotel: *Novus Plaza Hodelpa* - In Santa Domingo's charming and historic Colonial Zone, this 96-room property offers a splash of modernity with their contemporary style, bright decor and eclectic design. Warm color palettes are complimented by tropical flair to perfectly capture the Caribbean "joie de vivre" of the Dominican Republic. All rooms are air conditioned, have in-room safes, and the hotel includes complimentary Wi-fi. Students will sleep in individual beds based on gender in double or triple occupancy rooms. Staff will sleep single occupancy in private rooms.



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UNESCO Colonial Zone of Santa Domingo - Ciudad Colonial (Spanish for "Colonial City") is the historic central neighborhood of the Dominican Republic's capital, Santo Domingo. It is the oldest continuously inhabited European-established settlement in the Americas. After Christopher Columbus's arrival on the island in 1492, Santo Domingo became the site of the first cathedral, hospital, customs house and university in the Americas. This colonial town, founded in 1498, was laid out on a grid pattern that became the model for almost all town planners in the New World.

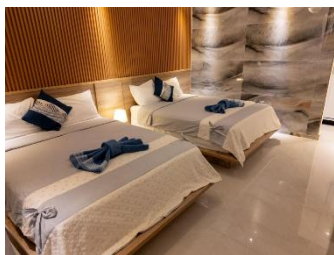
Day 2

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Good morning Dominican! This morning we'll depart for Bayahibe, a picturesque coastal town that will serve as our home for the next several days. Upon arrival, settle into your accommodations before heading to a local restaurant for lunch. The afternoon will be dedicated to an orientation led by the Dominican Foundation for Marine Studies (FUNDEMAR), where we'll receive an introduction to the marine ecosystems of the Dominican Republic and the conservation efforts in the region. We'll learn about the threats facing coral reefs and marine mammals, setting the foundation for our work in the coming days. After the orientation, we'll embark on a guided walking tour of Bayahibe to familiarize ourselves with the town and its coastal surroundings.

Bayahibe - The picturesque fishing village of Bayahibe is framed between beautiful beaches full of coconut trees and innumerable springs, located about 16 kilometers from La Romana. This beautiful place is frequented by thousands of visitors who come to observe all its attractions, especially its beautiful sunsets. Here, the sky is "dressed" throughout the year in various shades ranging from pink, blue, orange and red, joining on the horizon with the silhouettes of fishing boats and catamarans forming an impressive sensory spectacle.

Bayahibe has multiple beaches in its coast, including the beach Dominicus, certified as Blue Flag, and several more pristine beaches of white diamond color in the Catalina and Saona Islands. The town of Bayahibe retains its Dominican flavor, from its local restaurants and bars to its street craft stalls and fishermen who bring in fish every day. Aside from its coastal life, Bayahibe's streets are full of history and architecture, with pastel-colored wooden houses, iconic churches and mysterious Taino caves and springs within the Cotubanamá National Park.



Sample Hotel: Soficu Hotel on the Beach Bayahibe – A 2-minute walk from Bayahibe Beach, Soficu Hotel offers accommodations with a flat-screen TV and air conditioning, safety deposit box, coffee makers, hair dryers, swimming pool, a restaurant with room service, a 24-hour front desk and complimentary Wi-Fi. Breakfasts are



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taken at the hotel daily. Students will sleep in individual beds based on gender in double or triple occupancy rooms. Staff will sleep single occupancy in private rooms.

Dominican Foundation for Marine Studies (FUNDEMAR) - FUNDEMAR is an organization dedicated to promoting the sustainable use of marine coastal ecosystems and resources through research, education, and support for the development of conservation projects. It has a multidisciplinary technical team of biologists, ecologists and educators capable of carrying out actions and projects with scientific rigor. It also has a network of local and international volunteers with a vocation for service, who make their knowledge, resources and efforts available to the organization in support of the organization's objectives. www.fundemardr.org



TESTIMONIALS

"Fundemar was an excellent place to develop new skills, apply the ones I already had, and learn more about coral reef restoration efforts, but above all, it was a place where I was able to see how small efforts can make a difference in the community. It is a source of inspiration to see what a town, whose name I had never even heard of before, has been able to achieve through effort and dedication. Add to that the fact that the team really makes you feel like you're part of a family, and as a result, you have an opportunity that should not be wasted."

David López, Volunteer

FUNDEMAR has been working on coastal-marine ecosystem conservation since 2006 in Bayahibe, Dominican Republic. Five marine protected areas exist in the Bayahibe area within the Southeastern Reefs Marine Sanctuary which harbors coral reef, seagrass, and mangrove ecosystems. FUNDEMAR's projects include the preservation of coral reefs, the promotion of ecotourism and marine life, beach clean-up initiatives, and strengthening the commitment with local divers and communities.

Bayahibe Walking Tour – With our personal guide, we'll explore the area where we'll be living for the next week, getting to know its people, places of significance, and the amazing culture!

This evening we'll have dinner and then get ready for a special evening as we learn and try our hand at **Dominican Dance!**

Day 3

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Rise and shine Bayahibe! Today we'll dig into coral restoration work. After breakfast, we'll participate in a presentation by FUNDEMAR that covers **coral reef ecology**, the **ecosystem** services they provide, and the significant **threats they face from climate change and human activity**. Following this, we'll get hands-on experience with **coral restoration techniques**, such as **constructing coral reef structures** and **learning about coral nurseries**.



In the afternoon, we'll **snorkel at La Coralina Reef** to practice **coral identification** and **conduct a parrotfish census**, both essential tasks for understanding the health of marine ecosystems. In the evening, relax as you watch the critically acclaimed documentary *Chasing Coral*, which highlights the global coral bleaching crisis. A group discussion will follow, allowing you to reflect on what you've learned and its relevance to your conservation work.

Chasing Coral: A Documentary – Between 2014 – 2017, *Chasing Coral* captured the most severe bleaching event in recorded history. During these years, 75% of corals suffered or died from heat stress brought on by climate change. It is predicted that if nothing changes, by 2034 there will be severe bleaching events every year and by 2050, 90% of reefs could be lost.



When most people think about climate change, the image that comes to mind is melting sea. For many, corals are out of sight out of mind. This documentary sets out to reveal the hidden story of corals and bring this issue to the surface.

RAINFORESTS OF THE SEA

While coral reefs only occupy a tiny fraction of the ocean floor, they are one of the most important and diverse ecosystems in the world, with 1/4th of the marine creatures we know and love depending on them in some way. More than 500 million humans also depend on healthy reefs for food, income, and to protect our coastlines from tsunamis, hurricanes, and floods.

A FEVER IN OUR OCEANS

Did you know that oceans have absorbed 93% of the extra heat from greenhouse gasses? If they continue to heat up, they will become too acidic for corals to survive. While models for the future only indicate a 2° C increase, that's not as minor as it sounds. If temperatures rise even by 2°, corals will bleach more often with less recovery time.

BILLION WITH A "B"

Coral reefs contribute an estimated \$3.4 billion dollars to the U.S. economy each year, with \$36 billion dollars and millions of jobs through tourism alone. Long term bleaching is projected to cost billions of dollars, not only in loss of tourism and marine organisms, but in damages from floods, tsunamis, and other natural disasters mitigated by reefs.

Day 4

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Good morning Dominican! The morning of day four will be spent at sea, monitoring marine mammals off the coast of Saona Island. We'll **learn to identify different species of marine mammals**, such as manatees and dolphins and **collect data on their behavior and habitat**. As we observe these magnificent creatures, we'll also note any

environmental threats they face, such as boat traffic or pollution. Upon returning to shore, the group will discuss the findings, emphasizing the importance of marine mammal conservation.



In the afternoon, we'll head to Magallanes Beach, where we'll participate in an engaging **coral fossil identification** session. Here, we'll explore ancient corals and learn how their presence provides clues to past marine environments. The day concludes with a relaxing beach break, where you can reflect on the day's activities.

Magallanes Beach – The majority of the foreign residents in Bayahibe likely consider this beach to be their favorite! Located in a secluded cove, it commands a breathtaking panorama of the Caribbean. Unless there's a significant amount of wind, the water will remain perfectly calm and transparent. The best snorkeling in the vicinity is the main reason this beach is famous.

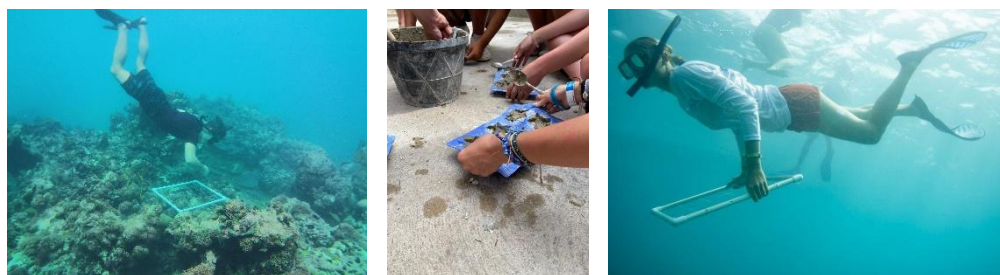


After an amazing day, this evening we'll have dinner at our hotel.

Day 5

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Rise and shine Bayahibe! Today we'll further our coral restoration efforts by working directly with FUNDEMAR's **coral nursery program**. In the morning, we'll assist with **building substrates and transplanting coral fragments**, learning the intricate process of **restoring degraded reefs**.



This work is crucial for enhancing marine biodiversity and improving the health of local coral ecosystems. We'll work alongside marine scientists to **construct buoys for coral gardens**, understanding why they are so important for conservation. Large buoys mark protected areas, while smaller ones help support coral nurseries by keeping coral afloat, allowing it to grow efficiently. We'll **build and install** both types of buoys while learning how these efforts protect the coral from human impact and promote healthy growth.

In the evening, we'll have dinner and then the group will gather to watch the documentary "A Plastic Ocean," which explores the devastating effects of plastic pollution on the world's oceans. A group discussion will follow, connecting the documentary to our work earlier in the day.

A Plastic Ocean: A Documentary - *A Plastic Ocean* documents the global effects of plastic pollution and highlights workable technologies and innovative solutions that everyone - from governments to individuals - can do, to create a cleaner and greener ocean. *A Plastic Ocean* is an award-winning feature length documentary brought to you by a group of dedicated scientists, film-makers, social entrepreneurs, scholars, environmentalists and journalists, which explores the fragile state of our oceans and uncovers alarming truths about the consequences of our disposable lifestyle.



"One of the most important films of our time."

Sir David Attenborough

"The most important thing we extract from the ocean is our existence."

Dr. Sylvia Earle

Day 6

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Good morning Dominican! Our last full day on the island begins with a half-day beach cleanup, focusing on the impact of plastic waste on marine ecosystems. We'll learn how to conduct a **debris census**, cataloging the types of waste we collect and **analyzing the long-term effects of plastic pollution on marine life**. This hands-on activity will not only help protect the local environment but also give you practical experience in **environmental data collection**. After a well-deserved lunch break, we'll return to Magallanes Beach for an afternoon of **coral identification**. Here, we'll apply the skills we've learned throughout the week to identify various live coral species and understand their roles within the broader ecosystem.



Service Project: Marine Debris Clean-Up - One of the most important issues in the coming years for our oceans, Marine Debris examines the overwhelming presence of unnatural items or trash in our oceans. It was recently stated there is now more trash in our oceans than fish. This issue is something the Dominican Republic sees first-hand as different items wash up on shore. Students are taught about the different types of marine debris, common causes and most importantly, what they can do to help. Afterwards, students are asked to perform an island stewardship by collecting trash.

Dinner will be served locally.



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Day 7

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Today is our last full day so we're set to make it one of fun and adventure to wrap up our week of learning! Today you'll set sail on a Catamaran which will take us to Saona Island. We'll be able to enjoy a beachside lunch and a visit to the turtle sanctuary, plus a stop at the Natural Pools! It's going to be a great last day!

Catamaran Trip to Saona Island – Enjoy a day-long escape to Saona Island on a fun catamaran tour and explore natural pools, perfect beaches, and shallow sandbars. It's time for fun!

Saona Island - Isla Saona is a small gem located 12 miles from the coast of La Altagracia province. In addition to its dream beaches, this beautiful place, which the indigenous people called Adamanay, has one of the largest natural pools in the Caribbean where you can swim in shallow waters full of underwater life. Described by visitors as “a must-see if you're traveling to the Dominican Republic,” Isla Saona is famous for its pristine beaches, history, landscapes and seabeds. In addition, it offers authentic fishing villages, caves that date back to the Taíno era, and it's the most important turtle nesting site in the country. In short, it is a natural treasure. And as it is part of Cotubanamá National Park, it is home to a great variety of local species. Coral reefs, mollusks, turtles, dolphins, and manatees inhabit its waters, as well as a wide variety of fish and plant species.



Turtle Sanctuary Visit – While here, we'll have a special talk with the sanctuary leader, Negro, to learn about the turtles in the Dominican. About 10 years ago the Dominican Government, the Tourism Industry, and local fishermen decided to start protecting this amazing marine species. Their objective is to ensure the largest number of Sea Turtles possible make it through nesting and back into the water. In this conservation project in Mano Juan, all the nests are monitored using a GPS system so it's possible to intervene in the event that a nest is located in a high-risk area, and thus prevent the eggs from being stepped on or stolen by poachers. The eggs are then transferred to the sanctuary, where they are incubated until the young are born. Afterward, the newborn turtle babies are released back into the ocean. Protected species include the leatherback sea turtle, green sea turtle, and hawksbill sea turtle. The hawksbill turtle is the most representative of all of them, with more than 25 nesting females per year.

In the evening we'll have our farewell dinner followed by a night of karaoke to celebrate our week!

Day 8

Breakfast (dependent upon departure times)

Rise and shine Bayahibe! On your final day in the Dominican Republic, we'll gather for a **group debrief** to reflect on the week's activities and discuss how the experience has shaped your understanding of marine conservation. After breakfast, we'll enjoy a **final stroll through Bayahibe** before packing up for our return to Santo Domingo. We'll say

goodbye to our new friends and mentors and make our way to the airport, carrying with you the knowledge and memories of a transformative experience in marine and coastal conservation.

Adiós from your new Friends in the Dominican!



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TRAVEL WITH PURPOSE

REEF GUARDIANS

A CORAL CONSERVATION JOURNEY

Minimum Booking Numbers:

20 students

What's Included:

Round-trip international flights
7-nights' accommodation in the Dominican Republic
Breakfasts, lunches & dinners daily starting with dinner on arrival and ending with breakfast on departure (dependent on flight times)
Transportation for programmed activities
PADI Coral Reef Conservation Certification
Welcome Show in Santo Domingo
Master Classes / Sessions:
 Introduction to Caribbean Marine Ecosystems
 Coral Reef Ecology
 Coral Restoration Techniques
 Coral Identification & Parrotfish Census
 Marine Mammal Monitoring at Sea
 Coral Fossil Identification
 Coral Nurseries – Building & Transplanting
 Coral Garden Buoy Construction
 Debris Census & Cataloging / Environmental
Full-day Catamaran Excursion to Saona Island with Natural Pools Visit
Turtle Sanctuary Visit & Talk
SERVICE PROJECT: Beach Debris Clean-Up
Documentary Viewing: Chasing Coral
Documentary Viewing: A Plastic Ocean
Personal Tour Director & Local Dominican Team
24-hour emergency cover

What's Not Included:

Fully comprehensive insurance (mandatory)
Snorkel, Mask & Fins – each participant should bring their own
Snacks and beverages other than at meal times
Transfers to/from home airport
Transportation for activities not shown in the itinerary
Baggage costs, pay directly to airline if required
Baggage handling - each student should be able to pull/load their own bag
Cost of passports nor required visas
Cost of inoculations or medication required for travel
Sightseeing / Entertainment options not shown in Itinerary
Hotel incidental deposits & bills – mini-bar, convenience mart, etc.
Any gratuities – drivers, hotel services, tour director
Credit card fees if individuals wish to pay via credit card instead of ACH

As always, our staff are always available to you to answer any questions you may have regarding programming.
If we may serve you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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