

Forge is an incredible tool in the family of Laravel products that helps developers focus on developing, not deploying and hosting. I personally use it when deploying Laravel applications and it does make life much easier.

Many of the pain points of hosting are taken care of for you so you can get right back to developing. Forge takes care of things like:

- Creating and provisioning a new server
- Setting up SSH keys
- Creating domains and subdomains
- Deploying from GitHub
- Save common bash scripts and re-run them on many servers
- Configure scheduled cron jobs
- Firewall and security pre-configured
- Configure New Relic and other services
- Install SSL Certs

Forge can do much more, but those are the main things that it will take care of for you.

How Does Laravel Forge Work?

You can think of Forge as a GUI or interface for maintaining your Digital Ocean servers (also called droplets) easily.

The steps to using Forge are pretty simple. The gist of it is:

- Link your cloud provider (Digital Ocean in this case)
- Create a server
- Create a site (a default site is already provided per server)
- Link site to a GitHub repo
- Deploy!

But Digital Ocean is already easy enough you say? Yes it is, but there are a lot of great features that Forge gives you so that creating and configuring many servers becomes an easy and repeatable process.

Why Use Forge?

Geared towards Laravel hosting This is an obvious one. A product build by Taylor Otwell and Laravel is naturally going to help out its sister products. Each server configured through Forge comes with:

Instantly configure domains and subdomains Forge gives us the ability to create domains and subdomains on the fly. It will configure the domain in Nginx, map it to the appropriate directory, and get a site up and running.

Deploy sites from GitHub This makes life much easier as a developer. By default, sites are manually deployed so you'll have to click Deploy. You can also set it to auto deploy so that deployment happens whenever you push to your repository.

Reusable bash scripts When creating multiple servers, there are often many things that we have to do for our specific environment. Forge lets us save those steps and reuse them across servers.

So much more Developing Laravel applications becomes much easier when you know that the deployment will match everything that your Laravel app needs. This includes things like cron jobs, server analytics, and more.

Now that we've talked on some of the benefits of Forge, let's look at how we can deploy a Laravel application. For our purposes, we'll just be deploying the default Laravel install that comes out of the box.