

# Facts and Important Info about Haiti



## A SHORT HISTORY

With its 9,996,731 people, Haiti is the 88th largest country in the world by population. It is the 146th largest country in the world by area with 27,750 square kilometres.

The native Taino - who inhabited the island of Hispaniola when it was discovered by Christopher COLUMBUS in 1492 - were virtually annihilated by Spanish settlers within 25 years. In the early 17th century, the French established a presence on Hispaniola. In 1697, Spain ceded to the French the western third of the island, which later became Haiti. The French colony, based on forestry and sugar-related industries, became one of the wealthiest in the Caribbean but only through the heavy importation of African slaves and considerable environmental degradation. In the late 18th century, Haiti's nearly half million slaves revolted under Toussaint L'OUVERTURE. After a prolonged struggle, Haiti became the first post-colonial black-led nation in the world, declaring its independence in 1804. Currently the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti has experienced political instability for most of its history. After an armed rebellion led to the forced resignation and exile of President Jean-Bertrand ARISTIDE in February 2004, an interim government took office to organize new elections under the auspices of the United Nations. Continued instability and technical delays prompted repeated postponements, but Haiti inaugurated a democratically elected president and parliament in May of 2006. This was followed by contested elections in 2010 that resulted in the election of Haiti's President, Michel MARTELLY, the first year that Cheryl went to Haiti. A massive magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010 with an epicenter about 25 km (15 mi) west of the capital, Port-au-Prince, in Carrefour – where our partner charity/missions team is based. Estimates are that over 300,000 people were killed and some 1.5 million left homeless. The earthquake was assessed as the worst in this region over the last 200 years.

## Geography

Haiti occupies the western third of the island of Hispaniola between the Caribbean Sea and the north Atlantic Ocean, sharing a border with the Dominican Republic. The terrain is mostly rough and mountainous. Extensive deforestation has led to large-scale soil erosion.



## Climate

Having a tropical climate, Haiti is hot and humid most of the year. In areas where the mountains cut off the trade winds, however, it can be dry and desert-like. Winter is a great time to visit. When visiting in their summer, please note that it will be very hot. Frontier Projects only have Team Journeys in Haiti's Autumn (September/October) and / or Winter (January).

## Population

About 9.9 million people live in Haiti, 3 million of which live in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. The average life expectancy is 61 years. Two out of every three Haitians is under the age of thirty.

## Economy

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere with 80% of its population living under the poverty line and 54% in abject poverty – even more since the earthquake. More than two-thirds of the population do not have formal jobs. The basic unit of currency is the gourde. Five gourdes make one Haitian dollar and the current exchange is about 78 gourdes to one American dollar (January 2019).

## Languages

Primarily French and Haitian Creole.

## Religion

Roughly 50 % per cent of Haitians are Roman Catholic while 40 % of those also practice voodoo. Approximately 42 % are Protestant with 10% of those also practicing voodoo.

# Important Info

## Health & Immunisations

The Centre of Disease Control does have the following recommendations for Aussies travelling to Haiti.

### **Recommendations on the website:**

#### **Malaria**

Tetanus/Diphtheria Vaccine

Typhoid Vaccine (injection or oral)

Medication for malaria prevention (usually Chloroquine)

Hep A Vaccine

Hep B Vaccine

BOOSTRIX, TYPHOID, and two DOXYCYCLINE and CHOLLERA is essential.

Malaria is transmitted by mosquitoes. Applying insect repellent to both skin and clothing can reduce the risk of acquiring malaria. The most effective repellents are those containing DEET. Chloroquine should be obtained through your family physician. The usual adult dosage is 500mg. once a week and should be taken on the same day each week, seven (7) days apart. The medicine should be started one (1) week prior to departing for Haiti and should be continued for four (4) weeks after returning home.

#### **Traveller's Diarrhoea**

The most common cause of TD is usually a bacterial infection with E. coli. In general, the CDC does not recommend taking antibiotics to prevent TD, but Pepto-Bismol tablets, 2 tablets four times a day, can be taken to help prevent it. (Buy these everywhere in the USA on the way through).

#### **Staying Healthy**

- Wash hands often with soap and water / hand sanitiser
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked foods or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself.
- Take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed.
- Protect yourself from insects. Apply AEROGARD (or similar) at 4-hour intervals.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry. Do not go barefoot.

## Dress Requirements

- Expect humid conditions and very hot temperatures in summer. The air does not cool down much at night –but may be cooler in the mountains.
- Sleepwear should be shorts and t-shirt style – for coolness and appropriateness. Certain circumstances, such as trips to the restroom at night, (and to the pit toilet in Bouvier), will make this clothing a necessity. Night clothes should not be worn to breakfast or while outside the sleeping room / tent.
- Jewellery should be kept to a minimum. No one should bring or wear expensive jewellery/watches.

### **Ladies:**

- Wear shorts below the knees (cut-offs) and jeans and track pants, stretch pants etc.
- Sleeveless shirts are permitted. Be careful where you wear spaghetti straps. Low-cut shirts should not be worn.
- For church, dresses or shirts should have short sleeves.
- Swimsuits: recommended as one-piece.

### **Men:**

- Men may wear shorts or jeans, t-shirts/shirts. Singlets can be worn while working.
- For church, men should wear pants / jeans, a short-sleeve button-up shirt, and shoes.

Following these guidelines is important not only for the mission's reputation, but also because it impacts how the local people will perceive you.

## Travel Info

### **Packing**

Check with your airlines (we all have more than one carrier so check with them both) what your luggage limit is. Each passenger should be allowed **2 checked bags** and **1 carry-on**. (With some airlines: The first checked bag is free but there is a \$30+ fee for the second bag – which Frontier Projects will pay for. Please check this out thoroughly.)

Frontier Team members are all asked to bring the 2<sup>nd</sup> bag with donations that we / you fill for the children and / or our Haiti team. You can also bring **a personal item** (small backpack, purse, etc.) All shampoos, shower gel, etc. should be placed in zip-top bags in case of leakage, only one in your carry-on, others in checked luggage.

### **Entering Haiti**

On the plane you will be given an immigration form. For "Reason for Visit" mark "Pleasure, Recreation". For the address you will be staying, write

**53, Waney 87, Carrefour, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (W.I)**

Do not indicate that you are undertaking any relief / missions work at all. You are a tourist.

Upon entering the airport, stand in the lines for immigration with your passport and immigration form ready to be stamped, you will be charged an entry fee in cash – you will need \$20us for this. Next, move on to the baggage claim area and get a baggage cart (cost is about \$2), collect your luggage and, after we are all through, and together, proceed to the customs line with claim tickets in hand.

When going through the customs line with your baggage, do not offer any information. If your bag is checked by a customs officer (rare these days), it will be very cursory.

There will be a lot of men in the baggage area outside trying to help with your bags. Please do not accept their help. They are very insistent, but a smile and firm 'no thank you' or 'Non- Merci' is all you need.

Keep your eyes on all of your personal belongings at all times. When out in public, never leave any of your bags unattended. Reggie and the mission staff will be waiting for us outside the airport and will drive us to the mission in Carrefour.

### **Life at the Mission and at Bouvier**

The mission / church is located in Carrefour, about an hour drive from the airport. Teams stay at the mission base.

#### **Water and Electricity**

Running water and electricity are both precious commodities in Haiti, so you should be careful to use both sparingly. Showers should be kept short. (There are no showers up the mountain in Bouvier so we take our own camp showers). There are toilets at the mission - but only pit-toilets at Bouvier.

You should NEVER drink, or even brush your teeth, with the tap water. Bottled water will be provided for you. There is often no hot water for showers. Cold water is usually preferred anyway, as it is so refreshing!

### **Living Quarters**

We have beds at the mission. You will need full bedding (blow-up or travel bedding) at Bouvier.

Be sure to keep all snacks in airtight containers or packaging so as not to attract unwanted visitors (cockroaches, mice etc.)

### **Health and Safety**

Passports and any large quantities of money should be locked up always. Keep your valuables (cameras, phones, etc.) very close by or locked up. Do not show money in public.

Do not walk barefoot.

Wash hands or use hand sanitizer often.

Drink plenty of water.

Eat only the food provided for you by the mission – or bought in supermarket/restaurants that have been approved.

Never leave the mission compound without an approved escort, and telling someone where you are going. Do not attempt to exchange money for Haitian currency – Reggie will go with you and help you.

Please do not invite street children into the mission to eat or play. This is for your safety and out of respect to the staff that have belongings there. If someone is hungry ask your host and they will facilitate help. Please play with the children at Bouvier or the Love Orphanage as much as you wish!! They love it!

### **THE ADDRESS IN CARREFOUR IS:**

**Light for Living International Ministries**

**53, Waney 87, Carrefour, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (W.I)**

**liflim.haiti (Skype)**

**email: liflim.haiti@gmail.com / pastor@liflimhaiti.org**

**Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/liflimhaiti>**

**Reginald Celestin +509 37055055.**

### **Donations and Charity**

It is strongly advised that you do not give money, food, clothing, toys, etc. away without it first being discussed with Reggie. It is very likely that people will ask you to give them things. Make no promises to give or send them anything, because they will be counting on that more than you could imagine. Be aware that if you give your address or e-mail address to a Haitian, they will often see you as a benefactor and later ask you for financial support. It's often best to politely refuse. Do not give anyone your phone number.

## **Journey Costs**

### **The Journey cost is \$1500au / \$1000usd each. (2019)**

This covers cost of all our food and transport on the ground, as well as a major contribution to the cost of materials for the practical love-projects being undertaken. This even includes the hiring of donkeys and paying those that will assist us daily. Payment in instalments is ok. Any problems, please talk to us. We would never be able to do this without you! Thank you so much.

## **Communication**

While cell phone use and e-mail are common in Haiti, the technology is not as reliable as at home. There is a Team mobile that will be available to us while we are there. Your own personal mobile – with a Haiti sim that you can get at the Port au Prince Airport - will work in Haiti.

We advise you to let your loved ones know that they will be able to contact you via Messenger / Skype / FB / emails. There is internet access at the mission, the connection is not always reliable.

They may not be able to talk with you on the phone while you are in Haiti – unless you have international roaming – or purchase a Haiti sim when you arrive.

## **Emergencies**

If there is an emergency back home, and you don't have international roaming, your family/friends may try contacting you through Reginald Celestin's mobile: **+509 37055055**.

If there is an emergency situation in Haiti, we will have Emergency Evacuation Cover for our entire team, through HERO (Haiti Emergency Response Operations) <https://www.heroclientrescue.com/>

## **Earthquake While We Are There**

### ***During an Earthquake***

Drop, cover and Hold On. Minimize your movements to a few steps to a nearby safe place and if you are indoors, stay there until the shaking has stopped and you are sure exiting is safe.

#### **If Indoors**

1. DROP to the ground; take COVER by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture; and HOLD ON until the shaking stops. If there isn't a table or desk near you, cover your face & head with your arms & crouch in an inside corner of the building.
2. Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture.
3. Stay in bed if you are there when the earthquake strikes. Hold on & protect your head with a pillow, unless you are under a heavy light fixture that could fall. In that case, move to nearest safe place.
4. Do not use a doorway except if you know it is a strongly supported, load-bearing doorway and it is close to you. Many inside doorways are lightly constructed and do not offer protection..
5. Stay inside until the shaking stops and it is safe to go outside. Do not exit a building during the shaking. Research has shown that most injuries occur when people inside buildings attempt to move to a different location inside the building or try to leave.

#### **If Outdoors:**

1. Stay there.
2. Move away from buildings, streetlights, and utility wires.
3. Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops. The greatest danger exists directly outside buildings, at exits and alongside exterior walls. Many of the thousands of fatalities from the 2010 Haiti earthquake occurred when people ran outside of buildings only to be killed by falling debris from collapsing walls. Ground movement during an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of death or injury. Most earthquake-related casualties result from collapsing walls, flying glass, and falling objects.

#### **If in a Moving Vehicle**

1. Stop as quickly as safety permits and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses, & overhead wires.