



www.heartinhaiti.org

Visitor Guide

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Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in visiting with the Haiti Education And Resource Team (H.E.A.R.T). We are a non- profit organization with a head office in Middletown, New York. Information about us and the projects we are currently working on, can be found on our home page at www.heartinhaiti.org.

We love to have visitors at our school! This guide has been created to help you plan your visit and includes: a basic overview of what types of accommodations are available, travelling tips, what you can expect from your visit with us (including choices of attractions available), and what you should anticipate when travelling in a developing country.

The mission and ultimate goal of H.E.A.R.T is to provide work opportunities to Haitians to fulfill the goal of fostering self-sufficiency and complete independence. If you have a specific skill (health care, ESL, skills and trades etc) in an area that could be utilized in a consult or conferencing type workshop please let us know in advance.

Accommodation is available at the school site however there are other hotels in the vicinity. Please indicate your preference on the application form. Please note that the volunteers are responsible for making their own arrangements as well as pay for transportation costs and all meals if they choose to stay off site.

It is very helpful for visitors to carry donations and supplies to and from Haiti for the sewing group, buddy program or school project. Please see our list of needs (as well as items not needed at this time), however, in our effort to promote independence, handing out items such as food, money, personal care products etc. is against the mandate and goals of HEART. We encourage supporting the local economy as much as possible and self-empowering opportunities.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Please be sure to read the United States State Department website for up-to-date travel warnings, vaccines and health information, and general guidelines for travel to the country: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/haiti.html>

Expenses/Flights/ Accommodations:

H.E.A.R.T is a completely voluntary organization and depends upon donations to cover the cost of operating our school and programs. All visitors are responsible for covering the costs of their own expenses. These may include (and are not limited to):

Flights:

All flight costs and expenses are the responsibility of the visitor.

The cost of flights can vary considerably depending on country of origin, time of year and even the day that you choose to travel on.

When booking flights, remember that any out-of-country travelers must clear customs and immigration prior to their connecting flight and should allow additional time to allow for this. Also, many flights involve long layovers as many flights do not leave for Port au Prince (PAP) until 8:30 am and do not arrive during the night.

Before you select a flight, check you flight details carefully. Make sure that you are landing at Mais Gate, Port Au Prince, Haiti.

Also, a credit card is required to obtain food, snacks, beverages, earphones and even blankets on most coach seats - cash is not accepted. Some airlines will accept Debit cards but it is up to the traveler to check these details prior to their flight.

Check baggage allowances and charges for each airline PRIOR to packing and/or accepting donated items.

Be sure to arrive 3 hours before take off for international flights. It is prudent to use the online check in a day before you leave to make sure your departure time has not changed.

The Mais Gate airport can be very chaotic at the baggage claim. You may wish to put something on your suitcase (brightly colored duct tape) that will help your identify your bags quickly. Black is the most common color for baggage.

Trip Insurance: It is strongly recommended that travel/trip cancellation be purchased with your airline ticket. Any expense incurred as a result of failing to do so is the sole responsibility of the visitor and not H.E.A.R.T.

Out-of-Country Medical Insurance, which includes Evacuation Insurance, is the responsibility of the Visitor to procure and is strongly recommended. Again, H.E.A.R.T will not be responsible or liable in any way to cover costs associated with any medical care that may be necessitated while visiting with us or our school location.

Passports and all citizenship documents are required for entrance into Haiti. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer to obtain these documents prior to arranging to travel. The amount of time these will take to get depends upon the individual country and requirements of the government of your country of origin.

****These documents should be obtained *prior to booking* your travel as well as other documents such as police clearances. Note that both of these types of documents *expire* so it is prudent to ensure that they will be valid at time of entry. H.E.A.R.T is not responsible for, and cannot assist if the Visitor is refused entry into the country for any reason.**

Register on-line at your Embassy one week before: Canada: http://www.voyage.gc.ca/main/sso/roca_notice-en.asp US: Http://Haiti.usembassy.gov/information_for_travelers/travel-registration.htm

Health:

The U.S. CDC website has valuable information for travelers to Haiti:

http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/mission_disaster/haiti?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001

Any person wishing to travel in Haiti must be in sufficient health to be able to deal with the environment common in the developing nations. For example special food and/or dietary restrictions may not be accommodated. All medical conditions and prescription drugs being used must be disclosed on the Visitor Information Form. Any essential medication that requires refrigeration, for example, could not be stored as hydro is often intermittent and the integrity of the medication would be destroyed. Other medications that would be essential must be disclosed and reviewed by the executive committee and a determination would be made as to the risk to the visitor.

If the visitor is accepted, it is necessary to bring ample supply (often suggested that an additional 3 month supply be on hand) in the event of a flight delay, illness or if any other unforeseen circumstance. This is the responsibility of the Visitor and additional medical releases (Doctor's permission) may be required for acceptance to travel.

Vaccines: All prospective visitors wishing to travel to Haiti are strongly advised to seek the opinion of their own physician or to call their national health office to obtain travel advice for the country for which they are visiting. Any cost incurred are the responsibility of the Visitor.

-All immunizations should be up to date

-Hepatitis A and B, MMR, Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid -Cholera (an oral vaccine such as Dukoral) -Anti-Malarial drugs

*please note that many of these vaccines and medications will need to be taken well in advance of traveling.

These other medications are **strongly advised** to have on hand for traveling to Haiti:

Insect repellent/ nets Anti-diarrhea medication Anti-nausea Anti-acid

Anti-biotic ointment Anti-histamine Anti-itch (after bite)

Customs Forms:

You will receive a customs form during your flight, prior to your arrival. You must provide a complete address and phone number of the person or hotel where you are staying while in the country. Make sure to have this info. on your person and have a pen available on the plane for this purpose. Shad St. Louis' home address and his telephone number is below, you may use them on your customs form:

321 Marin 49, Sibert, Croix des Bouquets, Haiti
Phone number : 011-509-3106-5992 and 011-509-3726-9988

The customs agent will return the lower part of the green form (Visitor's Visa) to you with your passport. This document **MUST** be given back to customs when you leave Haiti so keep it with you in a secure place. There is a \$10 charge that will be due before entering Haiti customs checkpoint.

Please check with your local customs **PRIOR** to travel as to what items are allowed in or out of the country (ie food, seeds, natural products etc).

Accommodations:

Accommodations are not available at the school site. Most of our visitors stay at the private home of Shad St Louis, the school's Director, located in Sibert, located about a mile from the school. You may contact us directly for an invitation and to check for availability.

Please be advised that this type of lodging is less secure than a hotel as it is a family home, directly in the midst of Haitian community. The property is surrounded by an 8 foot cement block wall and is gated. Electricity and running water is not guaranteed 100% of the time, although there is a generator available when the power goes off and a hand pump for the well for water retrieval in buckets. All running water is cold. Your stay here is completely at your own risk and the St. Louis Family accepts no responsibility or liability if you choose to stay with them.

Prior to accepting your request for an invitation, you must complete and return the liability waiver on page 12.

Cost:

At Shad's house, visitors are expected to pay for expenses incurred for your own food, transportation (to and from airport and/or school visits), and excursions. Money visitors pay to Shad is also used to pay the people who take care of visitors during their stay, for example, those who cook, clean the house, do laundry, and provide security during outings and at the house. Return visitors are also encouraged to donate for the maintenance and repair/improvement of the house.

The usual custom of visitors is to prepay all personal expense costs to the house prior to arrival. Our hosts then secure necessary items for the visitors throughout the course of their stay, but guests are encouraged to prepare for rustic outdoor living. Food/ water/ provisions are purchased through local markets daily to support the local economy. Our house cooks are also paid money contributed by visitors. The amount of this expense fluctuates and will be evaluated at the time of your approval to visit. Generally, you should estimate approximately **\$65-\$80 USD**/day which includes 3 Authentic Haitian Meals/day. Please be advised that if you have dietary restrictions, hosts at Shad's house will do their best to accommodate you but keep in mind that our cooks are local and use produce and ingredients that are purchased locally. Thus, it is not guaranteed that we can

accommodate dietary restrictions, so please make necessary hotel arrangements. If you request any added excursions (listed below) there will be additional charges. Please inform your hosts of any plans in advance so that they can accommodate your requests.

Sleeping Arrangements: Volunteers should be comfortable with communal-style living that may include both genders if they wish to stay in the huts. Being flexible, able to tolerate a hot climate and basic living conditions are essential attributes for traveling in this country.

Huts: consists of 4 single bunk beds and an office space (bring linens, pillow, mosquito netting, flashlight, chargers)

Facilities: There is one full 4 piece bathroom for guest use as well as a staff washroom on the main level. Running water is usually present, but not 100% guaranteed. There are no hot water heaters, thus all showers are with cold water.

There is possibility for Internet access (when power is available) through a 3G internet jump stick but it is not guaranteed. There are also animals on the site.

It is strongly recommended that all valuables (jewelry, expensive equipment etc.) be left at home and **that expensive jewelry is not worn in the community**. H.E.A.R.T cannot be responsible for loss, damage or theft. You should carry photocopies of passports or important documents (travel/evacuation insurance #, health ins. #, flight itinerary etc.) as well as leave a copy with the emergency contact person.

Suggested Items (not limited to):

-All personal care products (dental, body products, personal hygiene products etc) -
Towels, linens (summer weight sleeping bag or liner)

-Flip flop style shoes for shower

-Sunscreen/hat/bathing suit

-Supportive/comfortable shoes for rough terrain

-Warmer clothes for evening wear

-Rain gear- depending on season

-Ear plugs

-Journals, reading material, writing materials

-Laptop computer

- Cash for additional purchases, excursions, etc.

-Snacks (breakfast bars, coffee, tea, etc)

- Camera
- Flashlight
- Kleenex (toilet paper is not always available)
- Hand Sanitizer/wipes
- Travel clock

Cost Breakdown:

Transportation: Airport pickup, return and visit to the school grounds is included in cost if staying at the St. Louis home.

-Any additional (local) traveling from site is at the expense of the travellers.

Excursions: Trips can be arranged to visit local points of interest (Fort Jacques, the Metal Art community, to the capital, beach etc). These require the use of a vehicle and may involve additional expenses such as fees to enter. Please make pre-arrangements if these are of interest to you and we can send you the current fee schedule for these activities.

Translators: if you are working off-site and require a translator, please indicate for advance arrangements to be made. Prices can be negotiated for this service.

In the event of an emergency or unforeseen circumstance, every effort will be made to secure the safety of everyone under the direction and decisions of the Directors and Team Management of H.E.A.R.T.

It is strongly advised that personal information and contact information is not disclosed to nationals. These policies are very important to protect the volunteers and the agency. H.E.A.R.T will not be held responsible for any damage or personal loss that may be incurred due to failure to use discretion in these matters

Off-Site Accommodations:

Please note that the visitors are responsible for making their own arrangements as well as pay for transportation costs and all meals if they choose to stay off site.

These hotels are close to our school site and are reasonably priced:

The Visa Lodge- According to most reviews, Visa Lodge is a 3.5 star hotel. A comfortable stay there would include an outdoor restaurant and pool, 2 bars, TV and internet access. This is the most popular hotel for the visitors that have been to the HEART School, and it is conveniently located a few minutes from the country's airport. Please visit their web site for more information: services@visalodge.com

Servotel- Servotel was opened in November 2011 and has decent reviews by guests to Haiti. There is an outdoor pool, bar, TV, wifi, and internet access. Servotel is located

very close to the Port Au Prince Airport where all international flights arrive and depart. Please visit their website for more information: <http://www.servotelhaiti.com/home/>

Please Note: choosing to stay at hotels would require reservations and travel arrangements made through their guest services. English is spoken at the locations but to leave the site a translator and security would be required.

If you require travel with our staff, please make the necessary arrangements at the time of your reservation. All fees will apply.

Quick Facts About Haiti:

Haitian Culture: It is estimated that 95% of Haitians are of African descent. Various colonial occupations have introduced French, Spanish and North American influences. Haiti was the first independent black republic country (1804) but unstable governments and foreign interests have contributed to its pervasive poverty. Most Haitians worship in Christian denominations and on Sundays, church services are celebrated all morning. Voodoo is the traditional religion and is practiced by many. Haiti is known for its abundance of art and music, is often heard late into the night. It is the poorest country in the western hemisphere where 80% live in abject poverty. Health care is inadequate or non-existent for most.

Language: French is the official language of the country but it is estimated that only 10% of the population speak it fluently. The common language used is Haitian Creole. There are a few locals who can also communicate in Spanish.

Temperature: The climate is tropical. Temperatures range from the mid 70 F (23 C) in Jan. to 88 F (31 C) in July. There are two rainy seasons, April-June and October-November. Hurricanes can occur from Sept-Nov.

Currency: Gourde is the currency of Haiti and can be exchanged by your hosts. Exchange rates fluctuate between 45 – 50 G/\$1. USD is accepted also. You should have small denominations of USD (\$1.00 bills) on hand for airport stops, luggage carts, porter tips (although you do not have to use these services- if you do- a small tip is expected) etc.

Safety: Haiti is a relatively safe country as long as basic precautions are noted. Only have small amounts of cash on hand (carry what you need) and do not count or reveal money in front of anyone. Do not accept rides with anyone other than those designated by someone from HEART or if the person has your name card. Do not leave your hotel or the house without consulting your hosts and traveling at night is not advised.

Never leave bags unattended or agree to “help” someone with theirs at an airport.

In the event of an emergency or unforeseen circumstance, every effort will be made to secure the safety of everyone under the direction and decisions of the Directors and Team Management of H.E.A.R.T.

It is strongly advised that personal information and contact information is not disclosed to

nationals. These policies are very important to protect the volunteers and the agency while in country. H.E.A.R.T will not be held responsible for any damage or personal loss that may be incurred due to failure to use discretion in these matters.

Debriefing Information:

Many people experience a phenomenon known as reverse or counter-culture shock when returning from a culture that is very different from their own. It is a problem sometimes experienced by aid workers. Symptoms include, but are not exclusive to: depression, isolation, withdrawal from friends, families and social circles, severe mood swings, disinterest in work, home or family life, negativity and cynicism, and increased risk-taking. These are normal reactions to cultural change and should gradually fade with time. The best thing to do is to seek out others who have experienced similar experiences to help get through this process. Contact us immediately if you require referral in this area.

Sometimes in cases where a person is in extreme danger, witnesses death(s) or other atrocities he/she can experience psychological scars, post-traumatic stress disorder or mental illness. It is very important to seek support, counseling by a trained mental health worker or medical help immediately if these symptoms persist or become disabling

Visitor Information:

If you would like to visit with us, please be sure to get in contact with Shad, Carina and/or HEART representatives. Be sure to explain the accommodations you prefer, the number in your party and the length of time you would like to stay. Please ensure we have your contact information so that we can inform you if we can accommodate your request.

Name: _____
(first, middle, last)

Home Address: _____

Telephone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Email: _____

Date of Birth (d/mth/yr) _____

Have you travelled in the developing world or done any type of relief work before?

Are you requesting accommodation at the Sibert site? ____yes ____no

Will you be planning your accommodations off site? If so, which hotel? (name, address, phone)

Will you be making transportation arrangements with us (airport pickup, school visit etc)?

Do you have any health concerns or problems that we would need to be aware of?

Length of Intended Visit:

____ 1 week ____ 2 weeks

____ other

Is there any other information, experience or skills that you would like to add?

Do you speak Haitian Creole, French, or Spanish? ___ Yes ___ No _____ Other

Emergency Contact Information:

Nationality: _____

Passport Number: _____

Expiry: _____

Next of kin: _____

Relationship: _____ Phone # _____

Email Contact: _____ Cell # _____

Medical Information:

Allergies: _____

Blood Type: _____ Chronic Illnesses: _____

Current Medications: _____

Travel Health Insurance Company: _____

Policy Number: _____

Contact Number: _____

Physicians name _____ Contact # _____

Volunteer Release and Waiver of Liability Form

This Release and Waiver of Liability (the “release”) executed on (date:)

by (name of visitor candidate) _____ (“Visitor”) releases Haiti Education and Resource Team, a Nonprofit corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York and each of its directors, officers, employees and agents.

Visitors understand that they are responsible for his/her own insurance coverage in the event of personal injury or illness as a result of visiting any location owned or operated by the Haiti Education And Resource Team and it is solely their responsibility to acquire proper out-of-country insurances.

Waiver and Release: I, _____ release and forever discharge and hold harmless the Haiti Education And Resource Team and its successors and assigns from any and all liability, claims and demands of whatever kind or nature, either in law or in equity, which arise or may hereafter arise from my visit to the Haiti Education And Resource Team properties. I understand and acknowledge that this Release discharges the Haiti Education And Resource Team from any liability or claim that I may have against the agency with respect to bodily injury, personal injury, illness, death, or property damage that may result from the services I provide to the Haiti Education And Resource Team or occurring while I am providing volunteer services.

Insurance: Further, I understand that the Haiti Education And Resource Team does not assume any responsibility for or obligation to provide me with financial or other assistance, including but not limited to medical, health or disability benefits or insurance of any nature in the event of my injury, illness, death or damage to my property. I expressly waive any such claim for compensation or liability on the part of the Haiti Education and Resource Team.

Medical Treatment: I hereby Release and forever discharge the Haiti Education And Resource Team from any claim whatsoever which arises or may hereafter arise on account of any first-aid treatment or other medical services rendered in connection with an emergency during my visit with the agency.

Assumption of Risk: I understand that any services I provide to the Haiti Education And Resource Team may include activities that may be hazardous to me including, but not limited to _____
(fill in any specific known dangerous activity such as “construction work” or hazardous activity involving inherently dangerous activities. As a visitor, I hereby expressly assume the risk of injury or harm from these activities and Release the Haiti Education And Resource Team from all liability for injury, illness, death or property damage resulting from the services I choose to provide as a visitor or volunteer or occurring while I am

providing partaking in any activities of this nature.

I understand the inherent risk in traveling and volunteering in a foreign country. Should such injury, illness, death or harm occur during the course of my visit, I release and hold harmless the Haiti Education and Resource Team from all liability and waive any such claim for compensation.

Photographic Release: I grant and convey to the Haiti Education and Resource Team all right, title and interests in any and all photographs, images, video or audio recordings of me or my likeness or voice made by the Haiti Education And Resource in connection with my visit to the Haiti Education And Resource Team activities and or properties.

Furthermore, I agree to not using any photos, images, videos or audio recordings of any persons related to the Haiti Education and Resource Team, the school, students, property and community residents without the expressed permission and authorization from the Board of Directors.

Other: As a visitor, I expressly agree that this Release is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of New York and that this Release shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of New York. I agree that in the event that any clause or provision of this release is deemed invalid, the enforceability of the remaining provisions of this Release shall not be affected.

By signing below, I express my understanding and intent to enter into this Release and Waiver of Liability willingly and voluntarily.

Signature/ Date