



# A Volunteers Guide

2013

This guide is meant to provide assistance as you prepare to volunteer in Haiti. It is divided into sections from making your decision to volunteer with HHHI to reaching your destination in Port au Prince.

We hope it will help make your experience all that you want it to be.

*"Each trip to Haiti is different and each and every one is cherished" Karen M-S from TCHH*

Once you have made a decision to volunteer your first step will be to complete the application form on our website. There are two applications; one for rehabilitation professionals and one for the non-rehab medical professional and non-medical volunteers. You will need to attach a current CV and letters of reference. Your application will be reviewed and you will be contacted regarding your acceptance, your preferred date of volunteering and a pre-questionnaire will be sent to you if it is your first time to volunteer for our organization.

Every effort will be made to accommodate your preferred dates; however, if another team is on site, we may ask you to consider alternative dates. Upon acceptance by our administration and the date confirmed for your trip, you can begin the planning process with our volunteer coordinator in Haiti. Communication is essential and key to making your trip as smooth as possible.

Contact: [gailbuck@healinghandsforhaiti.org](mailto:gailbuck@healinghandsforhaiti.org)

A deposit for teams may be required and final payment of all costs should be made by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to your arrival. Team members always pay their own travel expenses. It's part of the humanitarian, volunteer experience and a core value of our mission. (A tax receipt may be given as for part of your expenses). Teams and Individuals may help defray the cost of the trip by participating in fund raising activities.

Cost associated with your trip:

- return airfare from your home city
- pre-trip immunizations and medications
- travel insurance
- Personal items you may need. (a suggested list supplied)
- room and board (2 meals provided-breakfast and dinner)
- airport transfer fees
- tip money for airport baggage porters (redcaps)
- in-country transportation
- translator/ Interpreter if you do not speak French or Kreyol
- spending money for activities or souvenirs
- valid passport – if you do not have one or if your current passport will expire less than 6 months from the return date of your trip, you will need to renew it. Allow 6-8 weeks. There should also be 4-6 blank pages for passport stamps.

As plans are confirmed, you will receive an invoice for the cost of your trip with instructions to where to send payment.

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## Check list of required information we need from volunteers...

- on line application
- CV
- references
- volunteer questionnaire completed, returned
- cost of trip: check payable to HHH
- license
- copy of Passport photo page
- liability Waiver
- registration with the US Embassy or Canadian Embassy
- proof of Medical Evacuation Insurance
- health and Emergency contact info (confidential)
- flight itinerary
- current Immunizations

### US Embassy registration:

- U.S. citizens are also urged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP - <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>) in order to receive the most up-to-date security information. While the Embassy's ability to provide emergency consular services is extremely limited, travel enrollment will enable receipt of warden messages via email. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States; callers outside the United States and Canada can receive the information by calling a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, except U.S. federal holidays. The Embassy of the United States of America is located in Port-au-Prince at Boulevard du 15 October, Tabarre 41, Tabarre, Haiti, telephone: (509) (2) 229-8000, facsimile: (509) (2) 229-8027, email: [acspap@state.gov](mailto:acspap@state.gov) American Citizens Services Unit office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Consular Section is closed on U.S. and local holidays. After hours, on weekends and on holidays, please call (509) (2) 229-8000. The Marine guard will connect you with the Embassy Duty Officer.

### Canadian Embassy registration:

- <http://www.voyage.gc.ca/>

### UK Embassy registration:

- <https://www.locate.fco.gov.uk/LocatePortal/olrportal.aspx>

For travel insurance go to: [www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com) you can choose the one that best fits your needs/budget. Make sure the insurance you choose covers Haiti. Some may not. Evacuation insurance is a requirement for travel to Haiti on behalf of HHH.

Airfare varies greatly from different parts of the country and from Canada as well as on different days of the week. Teams are required to arrive in country on the same flight as to minimize trips to the airport and additional transfer fees.

In the past, many teams have used their checked baggage allowance for donations and limiting their personal items to carry-on luggage. The volunteer coordinator will obtain a list of items needed in the clinic if they cannot be purchased in Haiti. Team Leaders need to submit an inventory of donations for approval. We have limited storage space for any items that are not used during your trip and it is very difficult for us to dispose of items in Haiti. Please do not bring any broken or obviously well used items. REMEMBER: if it's broken and can't be repaired in the US, it cannot be repaired here. If it's not acceptable at home, it's not acceptable here. If you bring items that are not used during your trip, please ask the volunteer coordinator before leaving them behind. Again, our storage is limited. Plan to take them home with you upon leaving. Many people will want to donate to your trip, please be discretionary. Not everything will be useful. Please do not accept expired medications or prescription medication from friends and family.

Traveling in Haiti can be many things: frustrating, challenging, tiring, scary, boring, dusty, noisy, bumpy, thrilling. There are many things to see as you travel from the airport to the Guesthouse / Klinik property or to and from a worksite. Be aware of your surroundings. Often times, traffic jams will slow traffic to a halt and people will approach the vehicle either with offers to sell you something or to beg for a dollar or two. Please do not give money to people on the street (unless you are purchasing something). If you give one child a coin, others will chase the car in traffic hoping to get some as well. It's not safe for the children and identifies our vehicles as a potential target for future teams.

Here are a few tips:

- if you are easily carsick, sit next to a window, towards the front
- if you are a nervous passenger, sit towards the rear
- be patient
- do not scream
- people are very used to having people take photos from the van. It does not mean they like it. If you need to take photos, ask person in charge first, be discreet and be aware of what or who will be included in the photo. Haitians are very proud of their country and do not like to continuously be portrayed in the worst sense of developing world.
- distance is not always measured by miles but often by time.

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- few people wear watches (that work)
- practice your Kreyol during trips in the vans
- sit next to someone that has been to Haiti and is therefore used to traffic and driving in it. They may be a calming influence.

Healing Hands Klinik Kay Kapab is open Monday through Friday from 7 am to 3 pm. The clinic sits next to the guesthouse. If you are scheduled to work in the clinic you should prepare to arrive prepared to work. Patients are scheduled for treatment. In the past and culturally, patients will arrive early and often before their scheduled appointment. It is important to adhere to the schedule times. If you are scheduled to provide an in-service / CME or lecture (alone or part of a seminar), arrive prepared and appropriately attired at least 15 minutes prior.

Attire: The therapy department wears scrubs or uniforms, closed toed shoes. A team shirt or plain t-shirt is acceptable when treating clients. Physicians or nurses wear a light lab jacket or uniform or scrubs. For education, business casual, slacks or skirts are appropriate. In the prosthetic and orthotic workshop, please wear close toed shoes or sturdy boots, long pants and short sleeves. Please, no loose clothing and if you have long hair, keep it tied back. Safety is key when working with machinery.

Many people want to take photographs while they are working, often to go along with reports. Permission must be obtained by all parties before any photos are taken. Photos are for personal use only and not to promote a product or business other than Healing Hands for Haiti. If you plan to use the photo for any type of news or journal article, written permission must be obtained. A release form can be obtained in the administrative office.

Do not emphasize the negative in your photos and only take what is appropriate.

Healing Hands for Haiti works with a number of orphanages that care for handicap children. If you will be working in an orphanage, it is appropriate to wear scrubs when working with the children. Capris or long pants and t-shirts are also appropriate. It is often an emotional and difficult day when working in an orphanage. You need to remember that the people running the orphanage are doing the best they can by the children in their care. For that reason, you have been allowed to visit and provide care and/or provide education to staff and caregivers of the children. Please do not make rash judgments and be discreet with what you see and say, but do spend time with team mates debriefing and sharing your feelings. They alone will understand what you are experiencing without judgment. Again, always ask permission before taking photos. Children love having their photos taken and then see themselves in review of photo. The directors of the orphanages are hesitant about having photos taken and feel they will be exploited in some way.

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Education: Healing Hands for Haiti has 2 on-going educational programs: a physio tech training program and a prosthetic and orthotic tech training program. We also have seminars scheduled throughout the year. We may ask you to provide a guest lecture or participate in a seminar. We offer or require our staff to participate in continuing education. We try to plan this several months in advance of your scheduled trip. If you have handouts or information (power point presentations) that needs to be translated this can be done ahead of time and information should be sent 4-6 weeks prior to trip. Haitians generally soak up all the information they can and love to have a certificate of participation. Most people think this is the most fun and most valuable and rewarding aspect of their trip.

#### Downtime Activities:

For volunteers that are here for more than 1 week, we will be happy to help you plan activities for your team or for individuals. Haiti is rich in history and culture. They have beautiful artwork and art galleries. Shopping for souvenirs and gifts is a must and there are many places to visit from the street shops to high end shops that sell colorful paintings and veve's, metal art and beaded jewelry, wooden sculptures to wooden bowls, just to name a few. Dining out at one of the many restaurants or going out to the Oloffson to dance to the iconic music of RAM (Thursday nights only) allows you to see and experience another side of Haiti. Spending a day at the beach is a good way to help you absorb the memories you've made during your trip and a good way to end your stay in Haiti. From the time you hit the ground, Haiti provides you with sensory overload. It can be shocking and even disturbing if you've never been to a developing country before. It is hot and humid, loud, busy and slightly chaotic. You need to take care of yourself both physically and mentally. If you are feeling ill, fatigued or mentally drained, talk to someone. Often times some extra rest, extra fluids and talking about your feelings will make all the difference. If you are struggling with an issue, talk to your team leader or the volunteer coordinator. We can't help you with what we don't know. It's important to be flexible. Plans can change...

*"TIH, things happen. Things change. Plan for the worst, hope for the best" Karen M, TCHH*

*Plan time to explore! Haiti has some beautiful beaches, skillful artisans, fantastic restaurants, great music and dancing. Support the tourism economy and have some fun!! Sarah, Minnesota*

#### Responsible Travel

Many people are choosing to incorporate volunteering with vacations. There are many, many organizations to choose from, many destinations and as many different types of skills. Researching is important to find the best fit for you. It is also important to look at the mission statement and goals that

an organization lives by. Know what the security situation is. A responsible traveler or volunteer will think of the economic, environmental and social responsibilities and impact.

They will want to minimize the negative impact of the places they visit and maximize their experience in making a positive connection to the people and environment.

What does this mean in terms of HHH and Haiti?

Economic:

Depending on what you will be doing in Haiti, think first about raising money to purchase supplies that can be purchased in Haiti. It may cost slightly more in Haiti but it is giving back to the community. This lessens the impact of bringing donated supplies that cannot be purchased or found in Haiti.

Environment:

Besides not bringing items that cannot be used or returning with unusable items, remember to recycle whenever possible. Remove pre-packaging plastic before you pack items. Taking short showers and turning off lights and fans when leaving room can make a big impact.

Social:

Haiti is your host country. Learn about where you are going. Be culturally aware and sensitive. Read about current events. Learn some basic language. Be willing to talk to people. Haitians are very friendly. They are very spiritual. Be interested\*. Be courteous to your housemates, team mates and staff.

\*As you become more familiar and develop friendships, you may be asked for money to help with school or food, you may be asked for a personal belonging, and i.e. your shoes, your camera or you may be asked for your personal information, i.e. phone number or email address. This may put you in a difficult position and others as well. Please discuss the situation with your team leader or your volunteer coordinator. You may tell that person that it is against policy of HHH or your team leader. No matter how discreet, singling out one person can cause a lot of problems for others. We can discuss alternative solutions.

Money- US dollars can be used most everywhere, however they must be in very good condition- ***no one will accept a torn, taped or bill with ink marks/ writing.*** Bringing a variety of bills is useful. You can exchange it here. Current exchange is fluctuating between 42-44 gourdes / 1 US dollar.

Packing suggestions:

- camera , charger or batteries
- flashlight/ headlamp, batteries

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- personal hygiene items
- Pepto Bismol or Imodium
- prescription meds including malaria medication
- a reusable, refillable water bottle is a must.
- a day pack with small roll of toilet paper, Kleenex, hand sanitizer and a power bar will help you get through the day much happier.
- swimsuit, beach towel (if planning a beach excursion)
- clothing for work, going out & relaxing
- (scrub pants if you're in medical field, shirts, skirts, pants, shorts )
- sunglasses,
- suntan lotion
- mosquito spray or lotion
- ear plugs, especially if roosters crowing, dogs barking, or snoring disturbs your rest.
- lightweight hikers, tennis shoes or teva's, flip flops
- snack bars for lunch
- journal, pen, reading material, personal music (iPod with earphones)

You should carry *a copy* of your passport on your person at all times. Some form of lockbox will be available to secure your passport, extra money and credit card. See guesthouse rules and security policy for more information.

And more tips:

How much money should you bring? This will depend on how long you will be here and planned activities. As mentioned before, much of Haitian art is unique and quite beautiful. It's very disappointing to find something you fall in love with and not have enough money to bring it home with you. However, there is a lot of purchasing power in the US dollar and there are many items that can be purchased for very little money. The art of haggling for the best price can be a fun experience. Before you start the process, determine what the value is to you. Most sellers will start out quite high and will usually meet you in the middle. Try to get the best deal but also do not undercut them. This is how they make their living. Most people bring \$300-400 US to spend on art, gifts, souvenirs and extra activities. ATM's are available but not reliable should you fall short of cash. Most of the grocery stores, restaurants and art shops will take MasterCard or Visa. Most of the beaches have an entrance fee ranging from \$20 to \$45, and usually includes a buffet lunch.

Lastly, you may want to leave a tip for the staff that has provided good food and a comfortable house. This can be done by the individual or as a team but leave the tip with the volunteer coordinator to distribute for fairness of all staff. The amount is at your discretion and is by no means mandatory.

#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS TO READ

Bradt HAITI travel guide, Paul Clammer. A very new and quick reference for Haiti travel with interesting bits of stories and history and helpful to know tips.

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Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder. A 2003 book about Paul Farmer's work in Haiti.

The Big Truck that Went By, Jonathan M. Katz. The only journalist living in Haiti at the time of the earthquake, Jonathan writes of his experience and life in Haiti.

The Rainy Season and Goodbye, Fred Voudou by Amy Wilentz. Goodbye Fred Voudou is a follow up to The Rainy Season and the experience of a writer living in Haiti before and after the earthquake.

Online: Background on Haiti and Haitian Health Culture, Cook Ross  
<http://www.cookross.com/docs/haiti.pdf>

These books will peak your interest and may lead to finding more interesting reads about Haiti.

FIRST LANGUAGE LESSON: Words to learn before you come...

French and Kreyol are the official languages of Haiti. Both are taught in school now. However, all Haitians speak Kreyol and will be very happy to hear you respond in their language.

Bon jou- Hello, Good morning, good day

Orevwa- Good-bye

Please- silvouple or souple

Mesi – thank you

Mesi anpil- thank you very much

Yes / no- Wi / non

Koman ou ye? How are you?

Ki jan ou ye? How are you?

Byen / tre byen- good / very good

Pa pi mal – not bad

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