



Information for Village of Hope Mission Teams Policies and Procedures

Whether you are a first time visitor or a veteran volunteer at Village of Hope (VOH), please review these guidelines before every trip to Haiti for information, changes and updates.

Team Preparation: Your mission trip begins with the selection of a team leader who will communicate with the VOH staff, schedule the trip, be responsible for payments and forms, and who will keep the trip participants informed of their roles and obligations. All responsibilities of the team leader are outlined in detail [on page 2](#). The team leader and the VOH Director will work together to choose projects for the team and to determine the costs associated with the trip beyond travel costs.

Financial Information: In addition to travel costs, the teams are responsible for major medical insurance, room and board at Hope House, a tourist fee, a non-refundable reservation fee and translators' fees. Amounts and payment deadlines for these fees may be found [on page 3](#).

General Health Considerations: Team members must be in good health and able to deal with the heat, humidity and rugged travel conditions in Haiti. Information about prescription medications, vaccinations and dealing with special health issues can be found [on pages 3 & 4](#).

What to Bring: Items you should pack for sun protection and other needs are listed [on page 4](#).

Travel Details: Passports are required, and may not expire within the 6 months following your trip. The trip should be registered individually by each team member with the US Embassy at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/>. Once in the Port-Au-Prince airport (PAP) you will be required to present a customs/immigration form, pay a tourist fee, and show your passport and customs declaration. Details of the immigration process may be found [on page 5](#).

After Your Arrival: You will be greeted by a porter from the VOH and transported to Hope House. The details listed [on page 5](#) will help you navigate the crowded and often chaotic scene at PAP.

Mission teams stay at Hope House while in Haiti. Hope House has comfortable dorm-like rooms with full bathroom facilities, and gathering areas for devotions and mealtimes, all in a secure setting. Limited WiFi is available as well as cellphone coverage and electricity. Meals are prepared at Hope House, and include some Haitian specialties. More information about meals and accommodating special dietary requests is found [on page 6](#).

As representatives of the body of Christ, you are asked to maintain professional relationships with all staff members, to refrain from giving money or gifts to individuals, to avoid smoking and public use of alcohol, and to respect the cultural differences between Haiti and the United States. Information about behavioral expectations is provided [on page 6](#). Reading about Haiti, its people and its history will enhance your visit. A list of recommended books can be found [on page 6](#).

Team Preparation

Begin by identifying one team leader who will serve as the contact person for trip scheduling with the VOH Director and Assistant Directors/Team Coordinators (TC). This team leader will receive the documents required for registration from the VOH staff. Additional responsibilities of the team leader are listed [here](#).

Scheduling: A \$300 non-refundable reservation fee is required within 30 days of making the reservation. Mail the reservation fee to VOH, Inc. 300 East Yamato Road, Boca Raton, FL 33431. Upon receipt of the reservation fee, the team leader and VOH TC and VOH Director will begin the registration process and secure the dates for the team. The average length of stay is seven days.

The team leader should schedule meetings prior to the trip to discuss trip details and fundraising efforts. The meetings will also foster personal relationships that will continue to grow as the mission experience progresses.

To enrich your experience, please research information about the history of Haiti. Once in Haiti, you are encouraged to engage in conversations with the experienced and knowledgeable VOH staff. The customs, values and priorities here are different in many ways, some very subtle. Be flexible and tolerant of the differences; recognize and validate the similarities with the Haitians with whom you will be interacting.

The VOH directors will work with the team leader to determine what the team will do during their visit. VOH cannot fulfill special requests for visits to programs outside of VOH ministries.

Discuss in advance with the VOH Directors what special funding in addition to travel costs will be needed to cover the focus of the team's mission experience. Some teams come for specific projects, such as Mobile Medical teams, the Summer Enrichment teams and the Christmas team. Teams have conducted Visiting Bible School (click to read the VBS Guidelines) or provided a week of evangelism and community outreach. You may also schedule a trip of three to five days to explore the ministries supported by VOH.

Medical teams require significant advance preparation, outlined in The Mobile Medical Team Guidebook which will be provided to team leaders interested in bringing a team. The team consists of doctors, other prescribers (physicians' assistants, nurse practitioners), dentists, dental hygienists, and nurses, as well as lay people who will provide primary care in areas served by the VOH Health Center.

Team Size: The optimum size for a mission team is from 8 to a maximum of 20 participants. Team members are often formed from the same organization or geographical area, but it is possible to have members join together from different churches or geographical areas.

Age: Physical health and emotional maturity are more critical factor than age. For youth groups, the minimum age is 12 and there must be one adult per three youth.

Financial Information

Team members and/or the team's organization are responsible for the following:

- Ground transportation in the US.
- Air travel to and from Haiti
- Major Medical Trip Insurance (\$30 per person for up to 30 days' coverage)
- Room and Board at Hope House (\$70 per person per night); includes transportation.
- Tourist Fee (\$10 per person), payable in cash at PAP airport prior to Customs
- One local restaurant meal (@ \$30 per person including tip and non-alcoholic beverages)
- Extra cash for souvenirs and miscellaneous items (some small bills are recommended)
- Translators Fees, if needed
- Mobile Medical Team fee (see the Mobile Medical Guidebook for more information)
- Reservation Fee (\$300)
- Flight Insurance (optional but recommended)

The team leader is responsible for paying Trip Insurance and Room and Board fees 90 days prior to arrival in Haiti. Please note, no reliable ATMs are available in Haiti at this time. Certain activities may require additional funding, which will be discussed with the team leader when the trip is scheduled.

Major Medical Trip Insurance is required by VOH teams coming to Haiti. This covers medical emergencies and emergency evacuations from Haiti if necessary, but does not cover flight or trip cancellations or flight delays.

As we are all aware, life in Haiti can change from day to day due to the less than stable government, weather conditions, etc. You may wish to consider purchasing flight cancellation insurance when booking your flights in the event that it becomes necessary to cancel your mission trip at the last minute.

Optional, but encouraged, is a tip for the six members of the Hope House Staff, who work diligently to assure the comfort and safety of visiting mission teams.

General Health Considerations

Team members must be in relatively good health to ensure their safety. Team members with chronic health conditions (high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, major dietary restrictions, etc.) or pregnant women should consult their physician prior to committing to the trip. The heat, humidity and rugged travel conditions in Haiti demand agility and stamina. Medical care consistent with American standards or expectations is not readily accessible. **The team leader should communicate any special health issues of the team members to the Field Director prior to committing to the trip.**

Bring enough of your prescription medication for your time in Haiti, **plus enough additional supplies to last 7 to 10 days more than the expected length of the trip**. Medications must be labeled with the patient's name, drug name, dosing information (either on the packaging itself or on a piece of paper). Do not pack personal medications in checked luggage in case luggage is lost or delayed.

Malaria prophylaxis, such as chloroquine, is strongly recommended. Team members should consult with their physicians for a prescription for the antimalarial drug of their choice. Use of insect repellent while in Haiti is strongly recommended.

Special vaccinations are not required in order to travel to Haiti. However, current **Tetanus and Hepatitis A & B vaccinations** are highly recommended. Contact your local health department or personal physician for information.

Emergency Contact: Each team member must provide the team leader with emergency contact information.

What to bring

- Your Bible
- Water Bottle
- Insect Repellent
- Sunscreen, Hat, Sunglasses
- Alarm clock
- Closed-toe shoes for work activities
- Personal care items (shampoo, toothpaste, etc.)
- Camera and extra batteries
- Flashlight

Some teams like to bring snack items to share with the team. We ask that any food items be left in the dining area in the space provided to avoid problems with ants and mice in the rooms.

Keep in mind airline restrictions when packing. The weight limit is 50 pounds per checked bag. Boxes and containers may be banned during certain times of the year, so check with the airline to determine what can be carried.

Do not bring expensive jewelry or prized possessions. Keep all cash on you, not in your checked bag or carry-on bag. Your belongings will be safe in your rooms at the guest house.

Occasionally, teams are asked to provide additional support to the ministry by bringing needed supplies and materials in their checked baggage. Often team members carry their personal items in a carry-on bag and use their checked bag to carry items requested by VOH. Upon presentation of receipts, VOH will reimburse the team for requested supplies

Travel Details

Passports: Passports are required. Note that it can take 6-8 weeks to obtain a new passport. Passport information is available at <http://travel.state.gov/>. Make sure your passport is current, has two pages for visa stamps and does not expire three to six months after your trip.

Make two copies of your passport, leaving one at home with someone who has access to it. Bring the second copy with you but carry it separately from your passport. Team members are requested to register their visit to Haiti individually with the US Embassy. This can be done online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>

Arrival: Upon arrival at the Port-Au-Prince (PAP) airport, you will be directed to Immigration and Customs with a stop at baggage claim before proceeding through Customs. Prior to Immigration, a tourist fee of \$10 will be collected. Provide exact change if possible. You will be given a receipt and a stamp that is affixed to your Immigration form. The lower portion of the immigration form must be completed and signed before approaching the Tourism Window. It is preferable that all team members arrive and depart on the same flight.

Immigration: Currently, a visa is not required to enter Haiti. At <http://haiti.org/> you can check visa requirements. Each person will be given a customs/immigration form to complete while in flight, which must be completed before proceeding through immigration. On the form, indicate the purpose of your trip by checking "pleasure", "recreation" or "personal". The local address in Haiti will also be required on the form and will be provided by your team leader. Retain the lower portion of the form as you will need to submit it to an immigration officer as you depart from Haiti.

Customs: Proceed through the Customs area together with your team. Have your passport and customs declaration form ready for the agent/inspector.

Baggage Claim: Luggage carts cost \$2 USD in the PAP airport and require exact change. If luggage is lost, the person whose name is on the airline luggage tag will need to fill out a form before leaving the customs area. The team should wait together and exit the building together. VOH will make arrangements to return to the airport to pick up the luggage after it arrives. Be sure people know which bag is theirs and are prepared to describe it. Haitian airport personnel do check that the baggage tags match the claim tickets.

Village of Hope will arrange to have a porter with a card noting the VOH logo and your team leader's name meet the team after you exit the building. Politely refuse any other porters offering help, saying "No, thank you" or "No, merci." You may need to be firm and repetitive. The porter will hire any other porters he needs to assist him. Any tipping will be paid by VOH.

After Your Arrival

Ground Transportation: VOH utilizes two vehicles for transporting teams, an extended passenger van and a large truck. Team members should have the physical ability to climb in and out of the van or truck and be able to tolerate rough road conditions.

Communication: There is limited Wi-Fi available at Hope House, with limited bandwidth. Cellular phones are the primary means of telephone communication on the ground.

International calling code 011 is required to call Haiti from outside of the country. Some cell phones from the US with international roaming service have worked in Haiti, but contact your carrier for information and additional charges.

Accommodations: Hope House is the residence for the Haiti field staff and guest house for visiting mission teams. Each room has bunk beds and/or single beds with linens, towels, toilet, shower facilities with hot water, and air conditioning when there is electricity available. A diesel generator provides back-up power as needed. The current/voltage is the same as in the United States.

Rooms are shared with 2 to 5 people in a room. Married couples may room together only if space permits.

Water is from a well and is safe to drink. Bottled water is provided for the convenience and comfort of the team.

Laundry facilities are limited. Ask the Field Director to make arrangements with the staff if this service is needed.

Meals: The Hope House staff will prepare all meals according to a predetermined menu and availability of products. Efforts will be made to accommodate special diets. Information about those requiring dietary restrictions will be collected on the Team Profile. If cross-contamination is a concern for individuals with severe dietary restrictions, they must discuss their needs with the team leader and VOH prior to committing to the team.

Picnic lunches are prepared by the team when they will be away from Hope House for the day. Breakfast and dinner are served buffet style with everyone sharing meals at dinnertime. Daily mealtimes may change based on the day's activities. The team is requested to assist with cleanup after the dinner meal.

Security: VOH will do its utmost to ensure the security of the team while they are in Haiti. Because the country is known for its instability, VOH monitors the security situation on a routine basis and will keep the team informed of any potential problems. Teams should be prepared to accept that their trip could be cancelled at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances.

The Hope House is surrounded by walls as is common in Haiti. The entrance is secured at all times, with the gate being opened by staff only, and never after dark. To ensure security, VOH requires team members to obtain prior approval before inviting anyone to the Hope House. VOH cannot honor requests for team members to go somewhere with someone not affiliated with VOH. While traveling in Haiti, additional security personnel will be present as deemed necessary by the Field Director.

VOH asks that while en route and in Haiti team members refrain from giving out personal information about themselves and the specific address location of Hope House to strangers. This is a safety measure to ensure that team members do not receive any unsolicited contact while in Haiti or after their trip.

Use social media wisely while on your mission trip, weighing the benefits (a great way to raise awareness and funds) and risks (alerting strangers that your home is vacant or your whereabouts in Haiti), for your personal safety and that of the guest house.

Devotions: Many teams plan daily devotions for the evenings. Extra Bibles, song books and a guitar are available for your use.

Gifts for students: We will make every effort to arrange a personal visit with a student you sponsor. Special gifts to sponsored children are not allowed in order to avoid problems among the students and/or their families. Money should never be given by team members to the students. Your compliance with this is appreciated.

Staff Relationships: Over the years, many team members have developed strong connections with staff members. However, as VOH grows, we strive to maintain professional relationships with the staff. This is increasingly difficult when supporters are in contact with and are providing personal assistance to individuals because it creates feelings of resentment among the staff and creates staff management issues. The most appropriate way to help is through donations to the organization, so VOH is able to provide employment, offer decent salaries, and maintain a fair and equitable workplace.

Miscellaneous: As representatives of the body of Christ, all participants are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times, respecting the values and mission of the Village of Hope with proper dress and behavior. There is no smoking permitted in the guest rooms or common areas of Hope House or any of the locations we visit. Public use of alcohol and tobacco is to be avoided.

Language: French and Creole are the official languages of Haiti.

Currency: Haitian gourdes are the currency of Haiti. The current rate (as of 6/28/17) is approximately 62 gourdes to 1 US dollar. There is a fixed rate of five gourds to a Haitian dollar. Although people refer to the Haitian dollar, there are no Haitian dollar bill.

Books about Haiti

Haiti - The Aftershocks of History —Laurent Dubois

The Rainy Season — Amy Wilenz

Mountains beyond Mountains — Tracy Kidder

Farming of the Bones — Edwidge Danticat (fiction)

Haiti Noir — A collection of short stories by Haitian authors edited by Edwidge Danticat

Bonjour Blanc — Ian Thomas

The Uses of Haiti — Paul Farmer

When Helping Hurts — Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert