

# **Mission to Haiti Canada**

## **Handbook**

“The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.”

Proverbs 11:25 (NKJV)

Please read the information contained in this handbook.  
It will help you plan your trip and make your experience in Haiti a meaningful one.

## **Introduction**

We're excited about your interest in Haiti. This handbook is intended to help you plan and prepare for your participation on a mission team. Your willingness to spend time, energy and resources to this country is greatly appreciated and valued. Your "visit" lasting only a week or two has the potential to create lasting changes. Not only does the team go to build something, or offer relief from a physical illness, but to empower the people by displaying a Christ-like love to our brothers and sisters in Haiti. We will be working along side the Haitian people. We ask that you seek out and build friendships.

## **Haiti and Its People**

In order for you to effectively serve the Haitian people, you need to know a little about them and their country.

The island of Hispaniola was first discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492. It soon became a Spanish colony, but European disputes resulted in the eastern 2/3 of the island remaining Spanish territory and is now the Dominican Republic, and the western 1/3 of the island became French territory and is now Haiti.

The riches and production of this one small colony, Haiti, rapidly increased the wealth of the French. Slaves were shipped by the hundreds of thousands from Africa, and were put to work in large sugar plantations. By the year 1800, the white French masters represented less than 1% of the population of the island.

In 1804, through a slave-led rebellion, the French were expelled from the colony and Haiti declared its independence. It became the first black republic in the world.

The past two hundred years of independence for Haiti have seen a variety of dictators and scores of military coups and turmoil. One of the most significant of these rulers was Francois Duvalier, "Papa Doc" who gained

power through democratic elections in the mid 1900's and named himself President for Life. Upon his death in 1973, his son, "Baby Doc" ruled Haiti ruthlessly, killing any dissidents, stealing extensively from the national treasury, and leading Haiti further down the road of poverty.

From 1986 until 1991, different temporary governments were established. Then in 1991, with the help of international bodies, Haiti held elections in which Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former parish priest, was elected with broad popular support. However, only a few months later he was ousted by a military coup. US military forces reinstated Aristide in 1994. Although he had to relinquish the presidency just a year later, (due to a Haitian law that prevents a president from running for two consecutive terms), the winning candidate was a close friend of Aristide. In spring 2001, Aristide was re-elected in a general election as president of Haiti. However, international election observers question the validity of poll tallying, and as a result, Haiti has had strained relations with many foreign governments and international organizations.

In January, 2004, opposition called for Aristide's resignation, accusing him of corruption. Violent protests erupted on the streets and rebel forces began to take over parts of the country.

Aristide asked for international help, but the US and France eventually convinced him to resign. He settled in South Africa. He promised to return one day.

In June 2004, the UN established a large peace keeping mission in Haiti.

In February 2006, Rene Preval was elected president.

### **Economy**

Unemployment is approximately 70% in Haiti. There is some production of cocoa, rice and coffee. The majority of Haitians work in the informal sector, selling goods on the streets. There is little foreign investment. The largest source of foreign dollars coming into Haiti is through government

and non-governmental aid agencies. The second largest source is support sent from Haitian family members living in North America.

### **People**

Haitians will grace you with large smiles, welcome hearts, and an eagerness to get to know you. Their main language is French Creole. Haiti is predominantly Roman Catholic, with 1/3 of the population being Protestant. Voodoo also remains a part of Haiti's fabric. There is a fusion between Catholicism and Voodoo.

### **Preparing to come to Haiti**

#### **Proper Identification**

Haiti requires that everyone must have a valid passport. The expiry date on your passport must be at least six months after your departure date from Haiti. Aboard the flight, you will receive a tourist's visa and customs document to fill out. Make sure you keep the copy that the customs agent gives you because they will ask for it when you leave.

#### **Travelers Insurance**

Be sure to have coverage for the entire time you will be away.

#### **Proper Clothing**

Everyone must dress modestly.

Women: Skirts and blouses or dresses are fine. Clothing must cover the body well in keeping with Haitian custom. Scrubs will be provided for those working on the medical and dental teams. Jeans and shorts are not acceptable. Capris or long shorts may be allowed for construction and evenings at the camp. Always wear a skirt when leaving the ministry centre (except for the day out to the beach) For church, bring a dress or skirt and top that covers the shoulders and is at least knee length. Jewelry and make-up should be limited. Bring a one piece bathing suit.

Men: Jeans and T-shirts can be worn for daily activities. T-shirts should not have beer slogans or other suggestive sayings or pictures on them. Shorts can be worn on construction sites. For church, bring a dress shirt and dress pants. Please remove earrings and you are asked to have your hair short. Bring a modest bathing suit for a day at the beach.

### **Personal Items**

You will need to bring your own personal toiletries such as toothpaste, soap, shampoo etc. Also bring toilet paper, sun screen, insect repellent, and a flashlight. (No aerosol cans) Bring a towel, washcloth, sheets, a light blanket and a pillow.

### **Meals and Snacks**

Meals will be provided but you should bring between meal snacks. Food should be in sealed bags or containers. If you have special dietary needs, you will have to bring your own food.

### **Extra Money**

All expenses are covered by your team fare. If you plan to buy souvenirs, you need to bring US currency. You may need to buy food in case of unexpected flight delays.

### **Bible**

You are required to participate in group devotions. Please bring a Bible.

### **Immunizations**

None are required but you should ask your doctor if he or she recommends any vaccinations, such as Hepatitis and tetanus. Your doctor may prescribe medication to prevent malaria.

### **Baggage Allowance**

You will be allowed one check in luggage weighing up to 50 lbs. You will be assigned a tote containing supplies, gifts for sponsored children, etc. You are allowed one carry on bag plus a camera or purse. It is suggested

that you put personal medication, a change of clothes and other necessities in your carry on in case your check-in luggage is delayed. New regulations prohibit any liquids or gels in your carry on baggage.

### **Miscellaneous Items**

There is much poverty in Haiti. The people greatly appreciate gifts. You can bring children's clothing (summer), school supplies, small toys, hard candy, shoes, toiletries, etc. Please check with your team leader before distributing items.

### **What to expect when you get to Haiti**

Once you set foot in Haiti, the first thing to greet you is the warm tropical sun. The temperature varies little year round. You will collect your luggage at the airport and will be loaded onto a bus. The ministry centre, where you will be staying, is about a one hour drive from the airport. Cabaret is a rural community where bananas and other agricultural crops are grown. There are two bedrooms on the second floor of the school. Each room has enough beds for 20 people. One room will be for the women and the other for the men. The beds are army bunk style with foam mattresses. Mosquito nets are draped over the beds. Each room has access to three toilets and three showers. Water is limited so you will need to be conservative. Electricity is provided by a generator. Occasionally, it is shut down for service of refueling. There are many night sounds (chickens, pigs etc.) so it is suggested that you bring ear plugs.

You must stay within the boundaries of the ministry centre unless permission is granted to leave.

You will have many opportunities to interact with the Haitians. The ministry centre is a busy place. On the grounds is a school, church, orphanage, the pastors house, and play areas for soccer etc. You are encouraged to learn a few words in their creole language.

A schedule will be carefully planned out by your team leader. In order to complete the projects, we will need everyone to co-operate. In the

evenings there will be time for games, and socializing.

To respect the national 'Christians, we ask that all group members refrain from smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages during their stay. For you to smoke or drink will cause them to question whether you really are a Christian. They are not being legalistic, but, in Haiti, these habits have a strong association with a former way of life. People who become Christian give up these habits as a way of showing they have become a new creation in Jesus Christ. You compromise your Christian witness if you do not respect this. If you know it will be impossible to give up either of these, then, please do not come.

The Haitian people may ask for things such as your watch, shoes, jewelry, money etc. Do not promise anything. A "maybe" or "I'll try" will be interpreted as a yes. Do not give your phone number or address to anyone.

### **Conclusion**

Above all, we need to remember that we go to serve in obedience to a call. What we do is first of all for the glory of the King. The key to a successful mission trip is to submit ourselves to God and to one another out of reverence for Christ. Thank you for the gifts of time, energy, and resources you are sharing. When you love, encourage, and strengthen others, you are a blessing to the Haitians and to the rest of the team. Please remember to pray for Haiti regularly.

## Construction



## Creating Employment



## Volunteer Mission Teams



Sponsorship



Medical/Dental Clinics

