

Packing for Haiti

- ✓ Short-term trips
(1-4 weeks)
- ✓ Long-term commitments
(months - years)



Lists & Tips

From Volunteers & Expats



*A HaitiHub Info Packet for everyone
committed to a more effective and
respectful way of working in Haiti*



Packing For Haiti

(A HaitiHub Info Packet – See www.haitihub.com for more)

For Short-Term Trips (4-weeks or less):

Respect, Humility, & A Willingness to Learn (pack these 3 before anything else! The right shoes and shirt don't matter much if you bring the wrong perspective.)

Luggage

Camping backpack (or sturdy duffel that can be worn like a backpack): For short-term trips, everything you need should be able to fit in this type of bag.)

Clothes

Pants (outdoor pants are great – the REI types are light, dry quickly, and many can convert into shorts. Plan on wearing each pair of pants 2-3 times)

T-shirts (polyester Under-Armour type are great but cotton are fine. You should have a few more t-shirts than the number of days you will be in Haiti, or max 14.)

1 Nicer Outfit (odds are you will want to dress nicer at least once for something like a community gathering, church service, or official visit.)

For men this usually means 1 collared shirt (polo or button-up) that can go with one of the pairs of pants you're already bringing.

For women this usually means a skirt & shirt (or blouse) combo. A skirt should be at least knee-length. A sundress is another appropriate option.

Shorts (are appropriate for both women and men. Shorts with cargo pockets are particularly useful. Women may want to stay away from short-shorts in favor of longer shorts that fall above the knee. Plan on wearing each pair of shorts 2-3 times. Athletic shorts are good for sleeping in.)

Good Socks (you should have a few more pairs than the number of days you will be in Haiti, or max 14)

Underwear (you should have a few more pairs than the number of days you will be in Haiti, or max 14. In addition to your normal underwear, it's great to have 1 pair of nylon+spandex outdoor underwear – Ex Officio, REI, Patagonia, and other companies make this for men and women. This kind of underwear can be washed in a sink or bucket. They dry extremely quickly and are odor resistant. They have a great



“multiplier” effect on your underwear supply because you can wear them on Day 1, switch to regular underwear on Day 2, wear them again on Day 3 after a wash and dry, and continue like this. 4 pairs of regular underwear + 1 outdoor pair can go 11 days.)

Sports Bras (these have advantages – they pack easier, are easier to clean if necessary, and support well on bumpy roads)

Jacket or Windbreaker (light and water-proof/resistant)

Footwear

Closed-toe Shoes (comfortable and broken in. Most cross-training sneakers are fine. Hiking shoes – like an REI-brand – can be great if you know you’ll be doing a lot of walking outside of city centers.)

Water Shoes (like Chaco’s or Teva’s or sandals for showering and river bathing. Also, Chaco’s and other footwear of this type can, surprisingly, dress up just enough with nicer outfits.)

Sun Protection

Hat (baseball caps work fine, full brimmed hats are a good option for those who are quicker to sunburn)

Sunscreen

Sunglasses

Chapstick with SPF protection

Water Bottle (A Nalgene or aluminum bottle works. It is sometimes easier to clean a Nalgene with its wider neck than the small-mouthed metal variety. Your bottle will smell after a few days, so you’ll need to clean it!)

Supplies

Passport and a **photocopy** of the picture page of your passport (keep the copy on your person and your actual passport at your guest house/hotel/home base)

Sleeping bag and a compact pillow (depending on your housing arrangement – some accommodations will have beds and pillows already. Check with your fellow volunteers.)

- Small Flashlight** with fresh batteries (or a personal LED headlight is a great option)
- Bug Repellent** (choose the pump kinds over the aerosol types)
- Baby Wipes** or pre-moistened wipes (great for the bathroom and also for wiping down at the end of a day as a shower replacement)
- Medications** you take regularly.
- Anti-malarial** medication (chloroquine, malarone, or doxycyclene)
- Anti-diarrhea** medication (a prescription for Cipro or a Cipro-equivalent from your doctor is great in addition to Immodium)
- Tylenol** or aspirin (just in case)
- Toiletries** (toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, deodorant, razor, etc... your normal overnight kit.)
- Tampons/pads** (even if you don't anticipate needing them). Panty-liners are also very useful and can extend your underwear supply.
- Earplugs** (help you sleep even when the room is noisy or the roosters get going early in the morning)
- Antibacterial Gel** (one small travel bottle is fine)
- Snacks** that won't melt much (trail mix and nuts, jerky, power bars/cliff bars, instant oatmeal)
- Compact notebook and pen**
- \$50 Cash** for souvenirs and incidentals (bring it in 5's because many small merchants won't give change in dollars)
- Daypack** (so you can have your water, notebook, pen, snack, camera, etc. with you during day programs)
- Plastic grocery bags** (great for everything – dirty clothes, wet items, shoes, etc... and they take up practically no space in your bag)

Optional Clothing & Supplies

- Buff** or Buff-type “multi-tasking bandana” (these can be great in lots of situations. See here for more: http://www.buffusa.com/wear/how_to_wear_a_buff)
- Scrubs** (are a standard go-to for medical folks. Scrub pants especially are good for many activities.)
- Swimsuit** (if you know you'll be in the ocean or going through a river on foot)
- Sweater or Sweatshirt** (if you'll be staying in mountains at higher elevations, it can get chilly at night)
- Crystal Life or Tang** to add variety to your water; sugar packets, if you wish to add it to coffee
- Camera** with any replacement batteries (you may not be able to recharge)
- Indiglo Watch** (useful for nighttime viewing)
- Mosquito Net** (depending on your housing arrangement, you may not need to bring your own. Ask your fellow volunteers. If you do need your own net, the self-erecting stand-alone mini mosquito “tents” for 1 are much more convenient than the kind that must be hung from the ceiling)
- Washcloth & Towel** (depending on your housing arrangement, you may not need to bring your own. Ask your fellow volunteers. The shammy-type towels are smaller, absorbent, and dry quickly.)
- iPod** or other music player
- Duct tape** (you can literally use duct tape for anything. A small roll is not a bad idea.)
- Moleskin blister dressing** (you may want this if you know you'll be doing many miles of walking)
- Playing cards** (good for the airports and for any downtime you may have once you arrive)

Miscellaneous Advice

~ Avoid black clothing. It gets hot and mosquitoes LOVE it; they're drawn to black articles.

~ For a trip of 2 weeks or less, it's unlikely that you will wash your dirty clothes. For a trip of 2-4 weeks, you probably will have an opportunity to wash dirty laundry (it could be by hand). Plan accordingly.



~ For longer hair, baby powder can be great for soaking up oil and helping you feel/smell cleaner if it's several days between showers. You may want to consider bringing a travel size bottle if you've got longer hair.

~ Bring a heavy-duty anti-diarrhea medication like Cipro in addition to Immodium. You might not need it, but if you do, you'll love it.

~ Make sure someone in your group has a basic first-aid kit with band-aids, Neosporin, iodine, rubbing alcohol, cotton balls, gauze, etc...

~ Just FYI, electrical outlets are the same as in the U.S.

What not to bring on a short-term trip

Cell phone

Laptop

Hairdryers/straighteners

If you wear retainers, bite guards, etc and can do without them for the duration of your trip, it's best to leave them at home. They're a pain to clean (and you have to remember to use treated water), a pain to keep track of, etc... But before you decide, consult your dentist/orthodontist! And if you are living in Haiti long-term, then definitely DO bring your retainers / bite guards / etc...

For Long-Term Commitments (months or years)

Bring everything listed in the Short-Term list but add the following:

- Extra Flexibility** (because some things in Haiti change quickly – like plans and agreements)
- Extra Patience** (because some things in Haiti change slowly – like organizational culture and attitudes)
- Extra Optimism** (because some things in Haiti change VERY slowly – like injustice and inequality)

- 2nd piece of luggage** (in addition to your camping backpack, a second piece of full-sized luggage is probably necessary)

- 1 Sweater or Sweatshirt**

- Laptop** (if you own one, bring it. For a 10-day trip, a laptop makes no sense. But if you will be living in the country for months or years, a laptop is excellent for everything – work, personal correspondences, music, pictures, watching dvd's. Wireless internet is available in Haiti's nicer hotels, café's, and guest houses. And with an old-fashioned Ethernet cord, you can also connect at internet café's. A webcam is also a good idea so that friends and family will be able to see you on Skype. As for your home cell phone, you'll probably travel with it but won't use it at all once you arrive in Haiti. Instead, you'll buy a \$30 Haitian cell phone that runs on phone cards – it works well enough, can make international calls if necessary, and is much cheaper to lose, break, or have stolen.)

- 2 additional nicer outfits**
 - For men, add:
 - 1 pair of khakis/slacks
 - 2 more collared shirts
 - 1 pair of practical dress shoes

 - For women, add:
 - 1 more skirt
 - 2 more blouses or other dressier tops
 - 1 pair of practical dress shoes (like flats)

- Additional pair of corrective eye-wear**, if needed (Definitely bring an extra pair of your seeing glasses. Or likewise make sure to have a large supply of your disposable contacts. Work and especially commuting in Haiti can be bumpy so just expect something will happen to your eyewear! Also consider buying one of those string accessories that attach to glasses – if your glasses fall, they'll stay around your neck.)

- Cash**. The amount depends on your volunteering/living situation but you should bring some. Certain volunteer opportunities include monthly stipends while others do not. You should find out how much money you will need out of pocket over 6 months and bring this amount with you in big bills. You can



change your Dollars for Gourdes as needed at many markets and other locations. This is definitely preferable to using ATM's in Haiti which are hard to come by, unreliable, and can be dangerous as targets for crime.

- Credit card** (the nicer restaurants, hotels, and indoor markets will accept credit card payments. It's good to have at least one card, especially for buying plane tickets. To prevent unwanted fraud warnings, notify your credit card company that you will be using the card from Haiti)
- Swimsuit** (Haiti has beautiful beaches as does the neighboring DR. You'll most likely end up at the beach a few times. Also, the nicer hotels in the country have swimming pools and you may go there when on vacation from your work. Culturally, there are no problems with 2-piece suits for women. Just use your best judgment in choosing a swimsuit for Haiti.)
- DVD's** (bring just a few of the movies that you love, want to show others, and won't mind watching several times.)
- Books** (again, bring just a few because books are heavy. An e-reader may be a nice option if you read a lot. Make sure to bring a copy of Creole Made Easy as well!)
- Knife** (a solid pocket knife with at least a 2.5-inch blade. Handy in all kinds of situations – cutting rope, opening boxes, opening cans if a can-opener is unavailable, etc...)
- Instrument** (this is optional. But if you play an instrument like the guitar, harmonica, ukulele, etc... it can add a ton of joy to your experience and to people you meet.)

For women:

- Tampons/pads** (bring enough to last you either A. for the duration of your long-term stay or B. until you know you will be visiting home again – like for Christmas or some other break/holiday that brings you back to the U.S. This is best because in Haiti you may not find the brand/type that works for you, or they may be much more expensive than in the U.S.)
- Panty-liners** (A box of 100 doesn't take up too much room and they're good to have. As with the nylon/spandex outdoor underwear, you can use liners to extend your underwear supply.)

And one final note for all long-term volunteers and expats:

First a disclaimer: This is NOT medical advice. Listen first and foremost to your doctor! We are simply describing our experiences.

A majority of long-term volunteers and expats discontinue taking anti-malarial medications after some months. They tend to make a decision after balancing the side effects of long-term anti-malarials against the possibility of contracting malaria.



You're all set!

Thank you for your commitment to Haiti's better future. And thank you for pursuing a more effective and respectful way of working in the country. This movement starts with us.

If you have any feedback or suggestions about this HaitiHub Info Packet, please be in touch. We love hearing from you! Email:

haitihub@gmail.com

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HaitiHub: Kote n'ap mete tèt ansanm!

Sincerely,

~ The Team at HaitiHub