

Haiti - OVERVIEW

Updated: May 30, 2014



Country Name Long Form: Republic of Haiti

Government Type: Republic

Languages Spoken: French, Creole

National Flag



Haiti is a Tier I Country (Critical Risk). Significant security measures are necessary.

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Haiti					
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political Violence is rated at HIGH in Haiti

Travelers are reminded of the potential for spontaneous protests and public demonstrations, especially in Port-au-Prince, that can occur at any time and may result in violence. Demonstrations are frequently held in Port-au-Prince and other outlying areas for various reasons, to include dissatisfaction of infrastructure and utilities to disapproval with government entities or UN presence. Any demonstration can turn violent, and innocent bystanders or travelers can be caught up in a clash between demonstrators and be prepared to seek alternate routes should one be encountered.

Violent political protests occur regularly in downtown Port-au-Prince around the National Palace, the Champ de Mars, and the State University campuses, along with sporadic incidents scattered throughout the city. These protests have been frequent, averaging multiple incidents per week since mid-2009. The demonstrations have been motivated by a variety of political and social movements, ranging from minimum wage to school curriculum to the presence of UN forces to cholera response to the

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presidential elections. They share a common trend in that protestors are quick to barricade streets and regularly stone the windows of passing motorists' vehicles.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is assessed as LOW

The risk from terrorism in Haiti is low. There are no known terrorist groups operating in the country and there are no recognized threats stemming from any regional or international terrorist organizations.

RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave Haiti a score of 19, indicating that the country has high levels of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in their public sector, with the least corrupt country receiving a maximum score of 100.

CRIME

Crime is assessed as HIGH

Crimes increase during holiday season and before school sessions begin due to the belief that people are in possession of more cash for gifts and school fees.

The most frequently reported crimes against American in Port-au-Prince are aggravated assaults, kidnappings and robberies. Home invasions also remain an item of concern in some parts of Port-au-Prince. Crimes against persons, including gender-based violence, remain a serious problem. Haitians still lack basic policing services, so many residents do not report assaults, rape and other crime because of lingering – and too often justified—perceptions of police apathy, incompetence, and corruption. Traditional tourist-oriented crimes such as pick pocketing and purse snatching are less frequently reported in Haiti.

There has been an increase in reports of crimes being committed by persons carrying/brandishing firearms. Knives or similar weapons also remain popular among criminal elements.

Residential theft (burglaries/home invasions) trends over the past couple of years have suggested a decline in traditional criminal burglary and a rise in robbery/kidnapping. In Port-au-Prince particularly, almost all home invasions were conducted for the dual purpose of kidnapping and robbery.

Sea Piracy incidents have been reported off the coast of Haiti.

KIDNAPPING

Although the number of kidnappings in general and kidnappings of U.S. citizens in particular dropped drastically in 2013, U.S. citizens traveling to and residing in Haiti are reminded that greater Port-au-Prince remains a leading venue for criminal kidnappings of American. Kidnapping of U.S. citizens should

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be reported to the Haitian National Police and the American Citizens Services (ACS) section of the U.S. Embassy.

Most kidnappings continue to be criminal in nature and the kidnappers make no distinctions of nationality, race, gender or age. All persons who are perceived to have wealth or some family connections with assets, either in Haiti or abroad, are vulnerable. The breakdown in reported kidnapping victims from the last few years is spread fairly evenly among men, women and children. While most cases were resolved through the payment of ransom, many kidnappings include physical or sexual assaults.

Express kidnappings often involve sexual assaults in addition to robbery. It is best to use ATMs only at secure, indoor locations, such as an upscale hotel or the airport, to decrease the risk of express kidnapping.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Female travelers to Haiti should try to avoid traveling alone at any time of day. Avoid using public transportation and hailing cabs off the street as these are risk to fall victim to both robbery and sexual assault. Temporary housing tent camps have high crime rates, including sexual assault. Female travelers should never travel to tent camps alone. There have been allegations that police and UN peacekeeping troops have been implicated in sexual abuse cases including rape. Criminals typically target local residents, but foreigners are also at risk, especially in isolated areas or if traveling alone.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Haiti's rainy season, which typically runs from May to July, is often characterized by flooding and landslides; these have, in the past, resulted in casualties, and travel and utility disruptions. The end of the rainy season coincides with the June to November North Atlantic hurricane season, during which storms can cause heavy rain and associated complications.

In addition, Haiti is located in an active seismic zone and is prone to both earthquakes and tsunamis.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- Intercity travel after dark anywhere in should be avoided.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking or driving in Haiti
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arrange through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.

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- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and to not make any sudden movements. Victims have been killed when they resisted attack or refused to give up their money or other valuables.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

Important contact details:

International dialing code: +509

International dialing prefix: 00

Victims of crime in should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:

POLICE: The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line in is 114

FIRE DEPARTMENT: 114

AMBULANCE: 114

Note: Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- Roads and utility infrastructure are in poor condition.
- Most highways remain severely damaged after the 2010 earthquake and some are only accessible with four-wheel drive vehicles.
- Electricity infrastructure in Haiti is extremely poor and most areas of the country do not have access to electricity.
- Mobile phone coverage is limited and unreliable, Satellite phone provision is advisable.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No road travel after dark.

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- No driving.
- No use of ATMs after dark.
- No use of jet-skis or other water sports equipment unless you are an experienced user.
- No traveling alone after dark.
- No deviation from approved travel route.

HEALTH

Medical services are far below U.S. standards and can be difficult to obtain. Emergency medical care is not always readily available; as most hospitals do not have an emergency department staffed 24 hours/day. There are a handful of hospitals available, all of which are suitable in medical emergencies only. Public hospitals are frequently overcrowded, understaffed and lacking adequate sanitation, while certain types of medical equipment and medicines are in short supply. There are numerous private clinics in Port-au-Prince and emergency medical treatment is generally of a higher standard than public facilities; however most medical centers and private healthcare providers will expect immediate payment for services, whether travelers have medical insurance or not. Most medical personnel do not speak English and a translator may be required if conversing with them.

- Tap water in Haiti is generally not safe to drink; travelers are advised to consume only sterilized or bottled water. This applies to water used for brushing teeth, making ice or washing foods.
- Pasteurized milk can normally be found in major cities, hotels and resorts. Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.
- Fruit and vegetables should only be consumed if they have been peeled or cooked.
- Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed. Food from street vendors should be avoided as this carries a higher risk of causing infection.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Haiti:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Polio (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended)
- Typhoid (recommended)
- Yellow Fever (required for travelers arriving from a country where yellow fever is present)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

Significant Diseases –

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- Malaria – A life threatening parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes. The malaria risk in Haiti is greatest in forest areas in Gros Morne, Hince, Maissade, Chantal and Jacmel.
- Dengue Fever – A life threatening parasitic disease transmitted by the Aedes mosquito. The dengue fever risk is greatest in the country's rural areas.
- Typhoid- A life-threatening illness transmitted though ingesting food or water that is contaminated with salmonella bacterium. The typhoid risk in Haiti is greatest in areas where sanitation and water quality is poor.
- Leptospirosis – A bacterial disease transmitted to humans through exposure to water contaminated with the urine of infected animals. The disease is endemic to the country's rural areas and low-lying villages. Causes of the disease are often reported at times of severe flooding.
- Lymphatic Filariasis – A parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes. Most cases of the disease have been reported in the country's coastal areas.
- Brucellosis – An infectious bacterial disease, which is acquired through contact with infected animals or consumption of unpasteurized dairy products from infected animals. The disease is prevalent throughout the country.
- Polio – A highly infectious viral disease transmitted by ingesting contaminated foods and can cause total paralysis in a short period of time. An outbreak of the disease was reported in recent years.
- HIV/AIDS – A life-threatening sexually transmitted disease. In recent years, infection rates have increased significantly across the country.
- Diarrhea – An illness caused by a bacteria, virus or parasite. One of the most common causes is a bacterium known as E. coli, which is transmitted by ingesting contaminated food and liquids.

HOSPITALS –

Canape Vert Hospital
87, Route du Canape Vert,
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Tel: +1 3767 8191

Adventist Hospital
Diquini 63, Route de la Mairir
Carrefour, Haiti
Tel: +1 2510-4580

US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

United States Embassy Port-au-Prince
Tabarre 41
Route de Tabarre

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Port-au-Prince

Tel: +509 (0)229 8000

Afterhours Emergencies: +509 (0)229 8122

Fax: +509 (0)229 8028

Email: acspap@state.gov

USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.