

Life Connection Mission

Montrouis, Haiti

Orientation Manual



Just over five hundred miles off the coast of Florida, the island nation of Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. From hurricanes to earthquakes, we have seen communities and missions come together to help and love one another. We feel blessed to hear about these stories, and we are pleased to answer the call to do more. Life Connection Mission is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit Christian mission based in the village of Montrouis, Haiti. Although our humble mission cannot possibly address all of the needs in Haiti, we are committed to doing everything we can to ease suffering, educate children, increase the quality of life, and work toward a sustainable future for our friends in Montrouis.

We operate a variety of ministries including a feeding program, a mission school, a medical clinic, housing projects, and Christian outreach ministry. We strive to not only meet the immediate needs of those we serve, but to help create a sustainable future of promise for them in the name of Jesus Christ.



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Introduction

Life Connection Mission's goal is to provide a quality education; to support responsible, productive graduates; and to minister to the various needs of the community in the village of Montrouis (pronounced mow-ee), Haiti. In order to meet this mission, we do the following:

- Administer the Institution Educative Excellence de Montrouis and sponsorship program for the school, which serves more than 500 students
- Provide a feeding program at the school
- Minister to the general needs of the community
- Partner with and host medical missions
- Build homes and other facilities
- Provide evangelical outreach
- Host incoming groups that wish to visit and help with the ongoing needs of Haiti

A non-denominational, faith-based organization, Life Connection Mission welcomes our brothers and sisters from all backgrounds who are led to help in this important purpose. We hope this manual will serve as a helpful resource as you prepare for your trip and during your stay. Please remember, if you have any questions or need assistance in planning your trip, we are always happy to help!

First Things First

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

If you would like to organize a mission team to Montrouis, the first step is to contact Dale Moyers (301.370.6426) or Peggy Moyers (301.370.6427), who maintain the master schedule of planned mission trips. They will help you schedule your trip so that it does not conflict with other incoming teams, as well as ensure that the necessary arrangements are made to host your group. Sleeping quarters, transportation, and meals in Haiti will be provided for your mission team.

COST

Major airlines offering service from the United States to Port-au-Prince (PAP) include American Airlines, Air France, Delta, Jet Blue, and Spirit Airlines.

The mission charges \$65 per person, per day for your stay (including the first and last day of your visit). This includes lodging, two meals a day, and bottled water. Transportation to and from the airport is an additional \$65 per person roundtrip. You will be responsible for the cost of other food and additional beverages that you may wish to purchase during your stay, as well as for any additional transportation needs.

VACCINATIONS

See the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention travel information for recommended vaccinations.

The mission charges \$65 per person roundtrip for transportation from Port-au-Prince on the day your scheduled flight arrives and return on your scheduled departure day. As expected, the lengthy trip to and from Port-au-Prince presents a significant expense for the mission. Therefore, any additional trips to Port-au-Prince due to anything not the fault of Life Connection Mission will result in a \$150 per vehicle used fee, or we will assist with arranging alternative transportation at your expense.



What to Take

Place the following mission contact number on your luggage tags in case your luggage is lost en route to Haiti: **509.3476.7030 and 509.4606.0280**. This number is subject to change, so please confirm with your coordinator before departure.

When packing for Haiti, keep in mind that it is **very hot**. We suggest bringing light-colored, lightweight clothing. Please remember that we are a Christian mission and, as such, clothing should be respectful and in good taste at all times. In spite of the heat, you may want to bring along a set of more formal clothes for attending church and/or visiting the mission school during business hours (see Section 6, General Guidelines for more information on formal dress).

The sun is usually shining, and therefore sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, and a water bottle are a must. You will be on your feet a lot and walking on unpaved roads, so bring comfortable shoes that you won't mind getting dirty.

The mission is always in need of toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, and other toiletries for the kids and employees and as a back-up for future guests who may have forgotten something.

How to get started...

The best place to start is to pray for the trip, traveling safety, the project, the people of Haiti, and your team members!

Identify a ministry area and start collecting donations to bring with you on the trip. See "Items for Ministry" on page 5 for ideas. Once you have identified possible ministry projects for your team, begin collecting money, supplies, and donated items from your church and community to help with your efforts.

A valid passport is required for all travel to Haiti (check your passport's expiration date to confirm that it is current). Bring two copies of your passport—one for your pocket and one for the mission to hold for you in case you misplace your passport. In addition, leave a copy at home with a friend or family member in case you lose your passport while traveling.



Travel to Haiti

Traveler's Insurance

Traveler's health insurance is required because most personal health insurance plans do not cover medical care in a foreign country or emergency transportation back to the United States. Some airlines also offer travel insurance. International travel insurance generally costs \$5 per day depending on your age and the type and amount of coverage desired.

If you check bags, **be sure to keep your luggage claim checks, as they will ask to see them in Haiti to claim your bags.** On the flight to Port-au-Prince, you will be asked to fill out a form for international travel. The purpose of your visit is "recreation." You will be asked to write the full address of your destination: 23 Quesqueya, Montrouis.

You will also be asked to fill out a customs form. Check all three boxes "No." Keep these forms out with your passport—you will need them as soon as you go inside the airport. Before exiting the plane, also place \$12 in an easily accessible place (i.e., pocket, lanyard) for the baggage cart and the tourist tax.

"Each of us has different gifts, each of which came because of the grace God gave us." Romans 13:6

Arrival in Haiti

Once in the terminal, follow the crowd downstairs to the immigration area. You will need to pay a \$10 tourist fee before proceeding to the immigration officer. You will hand your passport and the green international travel form to the immigration officer, and you will get a portion of the form and your passport back. **Be sure to keep the green portion that is returned to you. This is your temporary visa, and you cannot leave the country without it!**

After clearing immigration, proceed to the baggage claim area. Luggage carts are available for a small fee. Have this money handy. Get a cart if you have a lot of luggage and hold onto it or have someone from your group watch it as you claim your bags. Porters are available to help you with your bags. If you hire a porter, a reasonable tip is \$10 if they push the cart all the way to the truck.

After you have all of your luggage, you will then proceed to the exit where you will give an official your Haiti customs form (1A-1) and baggage receipts. Stay with your group and go through this step together. Your bags may be searched at this point. This is common and fine, for the most part their concern is with prescription medications.

There is usually a noisy crowd of people outside of the airport asking for money and reaching for bags. They are not trying to steal, but want to carry the bags to the car in exchange for money. Simply hang on to your bags and say "No thanks." *No meci.*

Move through the crowd, staying with your group and look for your LCM escort. They will have blue t-shirts with the LCM logo on the front and STAFF across the back. If you do not see someone from LCM, do not panic, they are there!). Call Benoit Rebecca 509.3476.7030 or Jean Rene 509.4606.0280 or 5093383.1162 if you cannot reach either Benoit or Jean Rene, call Dale Moyers at 301.370.6426 or Peggy Moyers at 301.370.6427.

While in Haiti

The trip to Montrouis takes approximately 1 ½ hours, depending on possible delays which are frequent in Haiti. Along the way, you will see signs of extreme poverty. In spite of the challenges facing them, you will find the people of Haiti very pleasant. When it is time to leave Haiti, you will find yourself wishing you could stay longer, and you will catch yourself laughing about how you felt when you first arrived. Hopefully, you will already be planning your next trip.

When you arrive in Montrouis, put your passports and money in the safe for storage.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The rooms at the mission are dormitory style with shared bathrooms. The cost of \$65 per day (including day of arrival and departure) covers lodging and two meals daily (breakfast and an early dinner). You will eat food prepared by Haitian cooks who use safe food-handling practices.

Electricity is not always reliable. Although we have solar panels, a generator, and inverters, we sometimes need to limit power usage. Bring a flashlight and battery operated devices (radio, clock, etc.) There is no air conditioning or hot water. Team members are encouraged to use bottled water to drink and brush their teeth (bring a water bottle). Please bring bed linens and towels if you can spare them, since the mission can always use more.

COMMUNICATION

Check with your cell phone provider about whether service is offered in Haiti.

TRANSPORTATION

LCM provides transportation to and from the airport to Montrouis for \$65.

MINISTRY IDEAS

Please discuss your ideas for ministry with your coordinator. Some ideas include:

- Vacation Bible School for the children
- Construction projects
- Medical clinics
- Community outreach, such as food distribution
- Dinner parties for children

We are happy to help with itineraries and budgets.

HAITIAN CULTURE

- Haitians are physical people. Hand-holding, embracing, cheek kissing, and shaking hands are cultural norms.
- If you are walking with one the sponsored kids, do not be surprised if they feel compelled to carry whatever you may be carrying. As this is simply a sign of respect for his or her elder, please allow them to do this for you and offer a simple “thank you” in return.
- Motor vehicles and bicycles have the right-of-way, not pedestrians! Please be careful as you walk through the community.
- If you hear the word “blan,” it is most likely from a child. In Creole, “blan” means “white,” but is typically used for “foreigner” of any kind. Please do not take offense; this is not a derogatory term, just a recognition that you are different.
- Haitians are sharing people. It is not uncommon to see a Haitian child split a piece of bread with another child. These kids know hunger, but also understand the importance of sharing. It can be heart-wrenching and heart-warming all at the same time.

General Guidelines

Leaving the Compound

Please do not be a loner! It's best to stay with your team and important to be accompanied by someone else whenever you leave the mission compound.

Church Services

Guests are often asked to speak at the church service, and an offering will be collected. Please give as you normally would at church.

Translators

Translators can be arranged through the mission if you wish to communicate with your sponsor children or others in the community. The mission will provide one translator every day. If you feel your group will need additional translation help, please make arrangements with your on-site coordinator.

Distributing Donations

Please check with your on-site coordinator to determine the best way to distribute any donated items you have brought with you.

Giving money is not a good idea, this can cause problems for future visitors and missionaries. We have established a benevolent fund to help families of the sponsored children and members of several churches in the community. You can be sure that contributions to this fund are distributed in a careful and thoughtful manner to those in need.

Tipping

We encourage groups to put together an offering for the many staff members and volunteers who help at the mission and work hard to make your trip a success. The money will be pooled, and workers will not know how much came from particular individuals.

Keeping the Mission Clean

Please don't litter. Abundant trash and a lack of waste management are creating a national health crisis in Haiti. We should serve as role models to the children

of Montrouis and encourage them to keep their community clean.

The mission's septic system is sensitive, therefore, we remind our guests to not flush anything down the toilet except toilet paper.

Valuables

Never leave anything unattended, and do not assume someone else is watching your valuables.

Daily Schedule

A typical day's schedule includes coffee and breakfast between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. and dinner at 5 p.m. "Patience" and "flexibility" are two key words in Haiti. You're on Haitian time now! Transportation may not always arrive on time, plans may change at a moment's notice, and materials may not be available as planned.

Conduct

Life Connection Mission is in Haiti to help the people of Montrouis, and we want to represent our mission well. As such, there should be no profanity, rude behavior, or inappropriate relationships with the Haitian people. In general, the mission discourages alcohol consumption while participating on a mission team. Life Connection Mission also seeks to provide a smoke-free environment for the health and comfort of our guests.

Formal Attire

There are a couple of situations that will warrant more formal dress. Haitian church services are a formal gathering where you will find the parishioners dressed in their "Sunday best." Likewise, the mission school is no exception. The students wear uniforms, and the teachers dress very professionally, a reflection of the high level of respect given to teachers in Haiti. You will typically see men in dress slacks and collared shirts with ties. Women commonly wear dresses or long skirts and blouses with sleeves. Please keep this in mind if you would like to attend a church service and/or visit the school during business hours.

Homeward Bound

AIRPORT

Plan to arrive at the airport 2 ½ hours before your scheduled departure. When you arrive, men will try to carry your bags into the airport. Just say “no” and enter the airport with your luggage.

After checking your luggage, you will pass through up to three checkpoints. You will be required to show your passport and ticket at each. The green receipt given to you upon entry into the country will be taken at the second checkpoint where your passport will be stamped. After this, you may go upstairs where there are several souvenir shops, duty-free shopping, and places to eat.

The third checkpoint is the entrance to the passenger waiting area. You will pass through a final metal detector and enter the boarding area. The airline staff makes announcements in Haitian Creole and English. Flights are clearly marked on the departure board.

THE FLIGHT HOME

You will be asked to fill out a U.S. customs form. The purpose of your trip is “personal,” check all three boxes “no,” and write in the value of any items you purchased while in Haiti. You will give this form to the customs agent in Miami/ Fort Lauderdale or wherever your first connection is to home.

WHEN YOU LAND

As you deplane, follow the signs for U.S. Citizens with nothing to declare. Give the agent your customs form and passport. After this checkpoint, go to the baggage claims area, claim your luggage, and proceed to customs following the signs for U.S. Citizens. Give the agent your customs form; you may be stopped here to have your luggage inspected. After passing through customs, if you have a connecting flight, you will recheck your luggage and proceed to the gate.

Money and Shopping

Money in Haiti exists in gourdes (pronounced “gouds”) and Haitian dollars. The exchange rate varies frequently, so consider checking rates before you travel. There will be opportunities for you to make personal purchases of some of the items produced locally (baskets, jewelry, wooden bowls, paintings, etc.). Local vendors can be scheduled at the compound, or you may go to a resort. We are happy to help you with the exchange rate and negotiating purchases if you wish.

Language

The official language in Haiti is French. Most business transactions and signage will use formal French. However, Haitian Creole is the common language. If you want to learn a little Creole before your trip there are plenty of resources on-line. The Haitians are thrilled and flattered to see a new visitor has taken the time to learn their language.

Sponsorship

A wonderful goal for everyone who visits the mission is to try to find at least one sponsor for an unsponsored child you meet in Haiti upon your return to the United States. Sponsorship forms are available on the mission’s website and certainly one of our staff members can further explain and introduce you to children who are patiently waiting for a sponsor.

While you are in Haiti, ask your LCM staff leader to gather some of the nonsponsored children at the mission school or at the LCM house for a dinner party. Take pictures of you or members of your group with the children. When you return to the states, share these pictures with your friends and family and encourage them to consider sponsoring a child at our mission school. If they have questions that you are unable to answer, please direct them to our webpage or call Dale Moyers.

Life Connection Mission

If God has called you to participate in a mission trip to Haiti, be prepared for a memorable experience! Only 500 miles from the southern tip of the Florida peninsula, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. This provides us with a unique opportunity to make a tremendous difference amidst indescribable poverty right in our own back yard. The need is urgent, but the reward is great. Being in Haiti, meeting the people we serve, and seeing God's work in action often lead to the deepest understanding of and commitment to the mission. Once you visit, you will never look at the world or your purpose in it the same way again.

After Your Trip

You will be excited and filled with an enthusiasm that should be shared with your church family and friends. Encourage others to participate on future mission trips so they too can fall in love with the people of Haiti and share God's love with them.

Hopefully you have taken plenty of pictures and slides during your trip. The mission would appreciate receiving your team's photos to be used in our publications and on our website. Please send your photos to Dale Moyers at dale@lifeconnectionmission.org.

Consider holding a follow-up meeting with the team to share your pictures and talk about the trip. Make suggestions for future mission trips, and take note of what worked out well and what could be improved.

ITEMS FOR MINISTRY

Areas of ministry include evangelism, the school and feeding program, medical clinics, and building projects. The following supplies are always appreciated:

- Good, clean clothing for all ages appropriate for a warm climate
- Shoes for all ages in good condition
- Children's underwear, socks, and white undershirts
- Personal hygiene items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, lotion, deodorant, shampoo, soap, and hand sanitizer. (Your dentist may want to donate toothbrushes and toothpaste.)
- Spiral notebooks
- Pencils, pens, colored pencils, markers, crayons, and sharpie markers
- New or gently used backpacks
- Small toys, stuffed animals, purses, coloring books, board games, and costume jewelry
- Balls (deflate them for easy packing), pumps, and needles
- Over-the-counter medications such as ointments; ibuprofen; children's cold medicines; Pedialyte; vitamins (adult, children's, and prenatal); infant and children's Tylenol; children's Benadryl
- Bath towels and washcloths
- Sheets for the mission and others in need
- Infant formula/diapers/baby clothes