



# **Security Ministry**

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## **Foreign Travel Brief**

**Port Au Prince, Haiti (December 2 - 10, 2011)**

*Last Updated: 11/24/2011*



# Security Ministry

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## Port Au Prince (capitol), Haiti

### Location:

Caribbean, western one-third of the island of Hispaniola, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, west of the Dominican Republic.

### Climate:

Tropical, semi-arid where mountains in east cut off trade winds

### Terrain:

Mostly rough and mountainous

### Languages:

French, Creole

### Religions:

Roman Catholic - 80%

Protestant - 16%

Other - 3%

None - 1%



### Major Infectious Diseases:

Level of Risk: High

Food or Waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A and E, and typhoid fever

Vectorborne diseases: dengue fever and malaria

Water contact disease: leptospirosis

### Time Zone:

Same as EST

### National Holiday:

Independence Day - Jan. 1

**Illicit Drugs:**

Caribbean trans-shipment point for cocaine en route to the US and Europe; substantial bulk cash smuggling activity; Colombian narcotics traffickers favor Haiti for illicit financial transactions; pervasive corruption; significant consumer of cannabis

**U.S. Embassy:**

U.S. Embassy Port-au-Prince  
Open Monday - Friday  
7:00 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.

Tel: 011-509-2229-8000

**Physical Address:**

Tabarre 41  
Route de Tabarre  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

**Mailing Address:**

P.O. Box 1634  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

**Register for your stay in Haiti:**

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country.

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

**State Department Travel Warning:**

- Travel fully supported by organizations with solid infrastructure, evacuation options, and medical support systems in place is recommended .
- U.S. citizens traveling to Haiti without such support have found themselves in danger in the past. U.S. citizens have been victims of violent crime, including murder and kidnapping, in Port-au-Prince. Some kidnapping victims have been physically abused, sexually assaulted, shot, and even killed. No one is safe from kidnapping, regardless of occupation, nationality, race, gender, or age. In a number of cases this past year, travelers arriving in Port-au-Prince on flights from the United States were attacked and robbed shortly after departing the airport.
- The Haitian National Police (HNP), with assistance from UN Police (UN Pol), are responsible for keeping peace in Haiti and rendering assistance during times of civil unrest. However, given the possibility and unpredictability of violent protests, the ability of HNP and UN Pol to come to the aid of U.S. citizens in distress during disturbances is very limited.
- Travel within Haiti can be hazardous; even U.S. Embassy personnel are under an Embassy-imposed curfew and must remain home or in U.S. government facilities during curfew hours.
- Some areas are off-limits to Embassy staff after dark, including downtown Port-au-Prince. The Embassy restricts travel by its staff to some areas outside of Port-au-Prince because of the prevailing road, weather, or security conditions. Transportation in Haiti is not reliable and poses a safety risk. Crowded vans and "tap taps" should be avoided because they are often overloaded, mechanically unsound, and driven unsafely. Erratic driving, poor road conditions, and frequent accidents exacerbate the safety situation.

### **Crime:**

- Haiti is a key transit point for drugs coming to the United States. Kidnapping, death threats, murders, drug-related shootouts, armed robberies, home break-ins and car-jacking are common in Haiti.
- Generally, these crimes are committed by Haitians against other Haitians, but foreigners and U.S. citizens have been victimized.
- In 2010, there were twelve reported kidnappings of U.S. citizens, twelve homicides, six aggravated assaults, two sexual assaults, and 82 reported robberies. Many U.S. citizens who were kidnapped reported being beaten and/or raped by their hostage takers. Kidnapping remains the most critical security concern, and kidnappers frequently target children.
- It is important to exercise a high degree of caution throughout the country. Keep valuables well hidden, ensure possessions are not left in parked vehicles, use private transportation, alternate your travel routes, and keep doors and windows in homes and vehicles closed and locked. You should avoid all night-time travel due to poor road conditions and increased criminal activity after dark. Remain alert for suspicious onlookers when entering and exiting banks, as criminals often watch and subsequently attack bank customers. Withdrawals of large amounts of cash should be avoided.
- Criminal perpetrators often operate in groups of two to four individuals, and may occasionally be confrontational and gratuitously violent. Criminals sometimes will seriously injure or kill those who resist their attempts to commit crime. In robberies or home invasions, it is not uncommon for the assailants to beat or shoot the victim in order to limit the victim's ability to resist. If an armed individual demands the surrender of a vehicle or other valuables, comply. This recommendation also applies in the event of a kidnapping. Exercise caution at all times and review basic personal security procedures frequently.
- While in Haiti, you must be particularly alert when arriving from overseas at the Port-au-Prince airport, as criminals have often targeted arriving passengers for later assaults and robberies. Avoid using public transportation, including "tap-taps" (private transportation used for commercial purposes). All public transportation is prohibited for Embassy personnel due to the safety and security risks associated with its use. Instead, arrange for someone you know to meet you at the airport.
- Avoid certain high-crime zones in the Port-au-Prince area, including Croix-des-Bouquets, Carrefour, Martissant, the port road (Boulevard La Saline), urban route Nationale #1, route Nationale #9, the airport road (Boulevard Toussaint L'Ouverture) and its adjoining connectors to the New ("American") Road via Route Nationale #1 (which should also be avoided). This latter area in particular has been the scene of numerous robberies, carjackings, and murders. Embassy employees are prohibited from entering Cite Soleil and La Saline and their surrounding environs due to significant criminal activity. Neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince once considered relatively safe, such as the Delmas road area, Petionville, and Vivy Mitchel have been the scenes of an increasing number of violent crimes.
- Cameras and video cameras should only be used with the permission of the subjects; violent incidents have followed unwelcome photography. Avoid photography/videography in high-crime areas.

### **If you become a victim:**

If you are the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the U.S. Embassy.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Haiti is 114.

### **Medical/Health Information:**

Medical facilities in Haiti are scarce and for the most part sub-standard. Outside the capital standards are often even lower than in Port-au-Prince. Medical care in Port-au-Prince is limited,

and the level of community sanitation is extremely low. Life-threatening emergencies often require evacuation by air ambulance at the patient's expense. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment in advance for health services.

Since October 2010, a cholera outbreak has spread across the country. **Before visiting Haiti, you may need to get the following vaccinations and medications for vaccine-preventable diseases and other diseases you might be at risk for at your destination:** (Note: Your doctor or health-care provider will determine what you will need, depending on factors such as your health and immunization history, areas of the country you will be visiting, and planned activities.)

- **Routine vaccines**, as they are often called, such as for influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT)
- **Hepatitis A**
- **Hepatitis B**
- **Typhoid**
- **Rabies**
- You will need to discuss with your doctor the best ways for you to avoid getting sick with malaria.

**Ways you might become a victim of a crime and/or terrorist activity:**

- **Location**: areas most frequented by Americans, hotels, transportation centers, apartments.
- **Association**: coming across as American tourists, appearance of high-ranking official, government affiliation, appearance to be a person of wealth, blend in with the local population.
- **Opportunity**: they look for “soft targets”.

**Six concepts to avoid threatening situations:**

- **Be Anonymous**: blend in, do not attract attention to yourself
- **Plan Ahead**: think ahead, and choose safer options, inspect vehicles, carry a local map
- **Be Aware**: look for suspicious persons/activities
- **Control Access**: prevent crime, maintain security of your possessions and location
- **Be Unpredictable**: change routine, change routes, change times, change speeds/lanes when driving
- **Be A Team Player**: cooperate with your team, and security measures in place, travel in small groups

**In Case of a Hostage Situation:**

- **Take care of your body**
  - Eat the food that is given to you
  - Exercise regularly (even if situps, pushups, etc...)
  - Get enough sleep
- **Take care of your mind and emotions**
  - Think positively and maintain confidence
  - Exercise your memory and imagination
  - Be optimistic and focus on your faith, family, and country
- **Maintain a sense of self-determination**
  - Keep a daily schedule
  - Maintain your dignity