

## Haiti Study Abroad Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

2018 Edition

1. **What are the trip Dates?** Sunday, May 20 to Monday, June 19

2. **What medications are required for Malaria?**

Students will need to take an oral anti-malarial medication and get several vaccinations prior to departure. Any medication that is taken on a regular basis will need to be taken as well.

3. **Will there be hiking during the trip?**

Yes lots of excursions and adventures in the mountains of Haiti and in the Artibonite Valley. We will use local transport (Tap taps) as well as our own power to get around the service learning sites.

4. **What service projects will we be doing while we are there?**

The service projects are tailored to student skills and interests. For example, if you are majoring in art or music, there is an NGO (non-government organization) that educates children by using music and art. Engineers can work on innovative products or designs. Pre-health professional majors can shadow doctors, maternity care nurses, or work with nutritional programs. The possibilities are endless for compelling opportunities to use your skills. In 2016 students learning projects included:

- As a group service project we installed three new In-Situ Filtration (ISF) wells in two communities near our service site location. Students assisted in the installation and water quality monitoring of these wells.
- Teaching dance to kids at a local school.
- Presenting information about mental health to nursing students.
- Sampling water and analyzing it for bacteria and DNA.
- Entering data and organizing hospital documentation for a local hospital (Hôpital Albert Schweitzer (HAS)).
- Showing a movie (Finding Nemo) to kids at the local library.
- Helping a non-governmental organization that provides after-school programs for kids.
- Observing doctors and dentists while working with patients (primarily pre-medical and dental students).

5. **What will the weather be like while we are there?**

We will be there at the end of the rainy season so it may be somewhat rainy and humid. During our time in the mountains it will be cool and pleasant (75-85 or so). It often rains in the afternoon for a couple of hours. When we get to the service learning sites it will be somewhat warmer and dryer (90-95 + humidity).

6. **Why did you develop the Haiti Study Abroad opportunity?**

I have been travelling and doing research with students in Haiti for almost 10 years. I have seen a country full of amazing places, people, and culture. I wanted to share this with GVSU students in a study abroad context so that they could see and learn about Haiti for themselves. I also wanted to provide an opportunity for students to use their unique skills in a collaborative way to explore the many challenges that Haiti and the Haitian people face.

7. **What will students do on the study abroad trip?**

Prior to leaving for Haiti we will meet several times to discuss books we are reading about Haiti and to begin learning Creole. The first week in Haiti will be an intensive “boot camp” of learning about the culture, hydrology, geology, and ecology of Haiti. We will explore and discuss many aspects of the environment in Haiti and the efforts to help Haitians through non-profits and relief. The next three weeks will be spent working in service learning placements with a variety of health, education, and natural resources organizations to learn while providing hands and skills relevant to the project. We will meet regularly during these service learning placements to discuss and share experiences at the service sites. Weekends will be filled with excursions to explore the natural beauty, culture, and historic places of Haiti.

8. **What sort of students should apply?**

Curious and courageous students that want to use their skills to learn about and experience Haiti in an immersive way. Students with almost any skill set or major can find a place on this study abroad program as it is intentionally designed to bring together people from different disciplines to collaborative discuss and work on the complex problems that Haiti faces.

9. **How will this study abroad experience be different than travelling to a more developed nation in Europe or Asia?**

Haiti is a very poor country yet they do much with the little they have. There are systemic obstacles to changes in Haiti that will require many different hands with unique skills and the ability to use those skills in a culturally sensitive way. This study abroad will explore the ways we can help a country like Haiti. We will also discuss and explore how well-intentioned efforts to help (by NGO's) can actually result in harm to the people and future of Haiti.

**10. Will the current political unrest and demonstrations make it unsafe to travel in Haiti?**

Haiti has struggled to govern its people almost since it was founded in 1804. The reasons for this instability are complex and sometimes are made worse by well-meaning outside countries like the United States and France. In Haiti public demonstrations are relatively common. They call them “manifestations” and almost all of them are peaceful efforts for people to vent their frustrations with corruption and poor government. I have collaborators in Haiti who are very familiar with political demonstrations and have a very effective networks for finding out about times and locations of demonstrations so they can be avoided. We will not take students near these demonstrations and all of the locations we will be staying have 24/7 security.

**11. What about Zika virus and other diseases that people might get in Haiti?**

We will take every possible precaution to reduce the risk of our students getting illnesses from mosquito- and water-borne diseases. We will also be located very close to medical facilities at all the locations we will be at during the trip in the unlikely event that someone does fall ill.

**12. Will I be able to stay in touch with people back home while I am in Haiti?**

We will have access to internet and telephones everywhere in Haiti so you will be able to contact people in the U.S. if needed. That said we will encourage all students to “unplug” from their devices and even to a limited extent their support system back home. The hope is that we will grow close as a group and support one another as we learn about and navigate Haiti. We will also rely on Haitians to help us navigate the sometimes non-linear path through Haiti.

**13. How many people (roughly) are you accepting to go on this trip?**

The minimum is 11 students and the maximum at the moment is 14, so between 11-14. If more than 14 apply we may ask for additional information with which to evaluate prospective participants. The more complete your application is on Oasis the better as I suspect that will be one of the criteria we use to evaluate applicants.

**14. What if I have other questions?**

I would be glad to discuss any other questions you have. E-mail me at [wamplerp@gvsu.edu](mailto:wamplerp@gvsu.edu) and we can set up a time to meet to discuss your questions. You can also call me at (616) 331-2834.