

## Preparation for Your Trip

There are a few things you'll need to do before you can travel to Haiti and Sonlight. Please read this information carefully.

1. Set a Date

Because of school breaks, holidays or other events, it's imperative to clear your intended travel dates with Carmen Niehaus ([carmeniehaus@gmail.com](mailto:carmeniehaus@gmail.com)) before making any reservations or plans. Trips to Sonlight last 7 days (consecutive Saturdays). As soon as you have your group's itinerary, email the complete itinerary to Carmen, along with flight numbers and full names of group members so Sonlight staff can make in-country arrangements. For hotel arrangements, let us know as early as possible how many men/women/married, couples/families are in the group.

2. Get or Renew Passports

You must have a passport to travel to Haiti, and if you don't have one, it takes about 6 weeks to get. Apply through your post office. If you already have one, make sure it isn't expired or won't expire during your travel.

3. Raise Support

The cost to travel to Sonlight is \$700, in addition to the cost of your round-trip international airfare. This covers your food, lodging, in-country travel, and expenses while you are in Haiti. As you raise support, you may consider using our sample support letter to ask family, friends and your church family to help with these expenses.

4. Packing

Because it is often difficult to get supplies in Haiti, the staff at Sonlight might need your group members to bring in anything from generator parts to glue sticks, peanut butter to windshield wipers. Contact Sonlight staff to see how you can help. Get a packing list on our website.

5. Shots/Medicine

Sonlight doesn't require group members to get any shots, but if any group member would feel more comfortable getting shots before travelling, check with your local health department. We do recommend malaria prophylaxis. This is a once-weekly pill to be taken 1 week prior to your trip, during, and 4 weeks after your trip.

## During Your Trip

**Clothes** – As missionaries and teachers, we feel it is very important to our ministry, our reputations and our witness that we dress modestly and respectfully. It has nothing to do with what we personally feel is acceptable to wear, but what Haitian culture deems appropriate. We want to make you aware of our dress code before you come, so no one is surprised, offended or embarrassed.

**Women:** Women and girls should plan to wear dresses or skirts that fall below the knee at all times. Sleeveless tops, sandals or closed-toe shoes are fine. Avoid shorts, pants, skorts or skinny straps at all times. Nothing too short or tight-fitting.

Men: During school hours (in or around school), men should plan to wear pants or slacks, and button-down shirts or polos. Closed-toe shoes are required on school grounds. Avoid jeans (at school) or printed t-shirts. In the afternoons/evenings, shorts, jeans, t-shirts and sandals are fine. When working construction, modest work clothes are acceptable – please keep them all on!

Dressing for church: Haitians dress up for church. Please plan to dress up as well: no jeans, tennis shoes, t-shirts, flip-flops or short skirts.

Meals – All food for groups is prepared by Norma Alexander and her kitchen staff in her home. Filtered water is used in preparation, and is available for drinking and to fill your water bottles. Norma is an amazing cook, so you won't go hungry, but feel free to bring some snacks along (in well-sealed baggies).

Lodging – Groups at Sonlight stay at the Holiday Beach Hotel across the street from the mission compound. Each room will hold 2-4 people. Each room has a bathroom and electricity from Sonlight. Some rooms are air-conditioned and have warm water; some have fans! Laundry can be done by the hotel staff during your visit, if needed. It will be hand-washed and sun dried.

Money/Valuables – Sonlight's group coordinator will collect your group members' passports to keep in the office safe during your stay with us. If you have other valuables, please leave them at home in the United States, or plan to keep them with you.

Charity – There are people in our community in Port-de-Paix in real need of help. There are also some people who attempt to take advantage of new visitors to Sonlight by asking for food, money, clothing, etc. The missionaries and staff at Sonlight will most likely know anyone you encounter in the area around the mission, and will certainly know whether they are in real need. We ask that you talk to a staff member before give anything away, so as not to encourage begging.

Internet/Communication – Our internet is for staff use. It is expensive and we pay for any downloading or photos sent or received. Your group leader will let friends and family know you have arrived safely, but internet will not be available for general group use.

Work – Sonlight hosts several different types of groups, or combinations of them – some groups come to work in maintenance and construction, some to work in the Academy and in classrooms, some for dental or medical clinics, some for Bible College seminars. If you would like to lead a group for a certain purpose, please email Carmen Niehaus ([carmeniehaus@gmail.com](mailto:carmeniehaus@gmail.com)) for details and opportunities.

### **Travel Reminders/Details**

- 1) When booking tickets to/from Haiti, it is imperative that your group plan to arrive in Haiti before 1pm on your scheduled Saturday arrival date, or your group will overnight in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. Overnighing will add \$70/person to group costs. After 1pm, it is too late to fly to Port-de-Paix on the same day. Your departure date will be the following Saturday. Note that the early morning international flights are sometimes difficult to meet, if your domestic flight is late leaving Port-de-Paix.
- 2) Due to new luggage regulations, we ask that group members pack personal things in their carry-ons and bring in a piece of luggage for supplies, food, and items needed for Sonlight. We will send the group leader a list of needed supplies and will reimburse you here. Sometimes if we are able to order items, we will have them shipped to a group member's address to bring. Your help with this has become so much more important due to increased shipping costs.

- 3) On the flight to Port-au-Prince, you will be given two forms to fill out – a white one and a green one. The white one is a customs declaration form. It can be filled out by family or couples with the same last name. It asks if you're entering the country with medicines. The Haitian government regulates carefully whether medications are imported for distribution in hospitals or clinics. DO NOT declare your personal medication on this form.
- 4) The green form is your visa to enter Haiti. Each individual will need to fill out this form. Please ensure that each group member has the following information to fill out their visa on the flight to Haiti:
  - It asks the purpose of your trip – Business/Pleasure/Other. Mark "Other" and fill "missionary" in the blank.
  - It asks the address of where you will be staying in Haiti. Put "#2 Rue Chalet, Port-de-Paix. (Tel. 3.741.7317.)"
- 5) After arriving in Port-au-Prince, you will have to clear immigration and customs. In immigration, you will need your passport and a green form (visa) you are given on the flight to Haiti; they will be stamped and returned to you. You will need both to leave the country. The white customs form will be collected as you leave the baggage claim area. When you arrive at Sonlight, please give all passports and visas to the Group Coordinator for safekeeping.
- 6) After clearing immigration and customs, a Sonlight staff member will meet you and take you to the domestic airport for a flight to Port-de-Paix, where Sonlight is located. Some of your luggage may not arrive in Port-de-Paix until the following day, so pack overnight necessities and church clothes for the following day in your carry-on bags. It's best to keep necessary medications or valuables with you. At the airports in Port-au-Prince, you will be offered help from many porters and asked for tips. Please do not enlist anyone to help carry bags, and please do not tip anyone, but allow the Sonlight staff member accompanying you to handle this.
- 7) When leaving Haiti, you will be required to clear immigration and customs back in Florida. You will have to claim your bags at your port of entry and drop them back off at your airline's counter for your next flight.