

NORTH AMERICA · HISTORY · CULTURE · BEACHES · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Haiti

Haiti is the only country founded by a successful slave revolt, and that story is written in stone at the mountaintop Citadelle Laferrière. Add the faded merchant houses and papier-mâché carnival of Jacmel, the cobalt pools of Bassin Bleu, deep Vodou traditions and one of the Caribbean's most original art scenes. Check the FCDO travel advice closely before planning any visit.

**The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to Haiti.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 10 December 2025.

 CAPITAL Port-au-Prince	 CURRENCY Haitian gourde (HTG) £1 ≈ HTG 175	 LANGUAGE Haitian Creole, French	 BEST TIME Dec-Feb
 DAILY BUDGET £50-£220 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type A, B 110V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 16h via Miami, Panama City or Santo Domingo ~£900-£1,500 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-5 standard time

Haiti holds more history per square mile than almost anywhere in the Caribbean. In 1804 it became the first independent Black republic after defeating Napoleon's army, and the north still holds the monuments of that era: King Henri Christophe's Citadelle Laferrière and the ruined Sans-Souci Palace above Milot, reached from Cap-Haïtien. The south coast has Jacmel, an arts town of 19th-century coffee merchants' houses, and nearby Bassin Bleu; further west lie Île-à-Vache and the Macaya mountains. Most trips focus on one region rather than attempting a loop, usually with a local guide or fixer arranged in advance.

Haiti is not a cheap destination: decent hotels are few and priced in US dollars, and getting around usually means hiring a driver. The rewards are intense and personal: painters' studios in Jacmel, rara bands in the streets during Lent, a Vodou ceremony if you are invited, and a welcome that never feels packaged, because there are so few tourists. It suits experienced travellers interested in history, art and religion who are comfortable with limited infrastructure and changing plans. Always check the FCDO travel advice before booking and again before you go.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY
Citadelle Laferrière
Built by King Henri Christophe to repel any French return, this colossal mountaintop fortress is still armed with cannon and piles of cannonballs. Ride or hike up from Milot, passing the ruins of Sans-Souci Palace on the way.
- 2

CULTURE
Jacmel
A seaside town of 19th-century coffee merchants' houses with wrought-iron balconies, workshops making papier-mâché carnival masks, and an art scene out of all proportion to its size. Its pre-Lent carnival is Haiti's most creative.

3

NATURE

Bassin Bleu

A chain of cobalt-blue pools linked by waterfalls in a limestone gorge in the hills outside Jacmel. The deepest pool is reached by climbing down a rope; go with a local guide and swim in the cool water.

4

BEACH

Île-à-Vache

A car-free island off Les Cayes with sandy coves, mangroves and a handful of small hotels, reached by boat from the south coast. Days revolve around swimming, walking between villages and fresh seafood.

5

SACRED SITE

Saut-d'Eau

A waterfall in the central hills revered by both Catholics and Vodou followers since a reported apparition of the Virgin Mary in the 19th century. Each July, thousands of pilgrims bathe beneath the falls seeking blessings and luck.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Port-au-Prince

≈ 2.8 million people

The sprawling capital is home to the MUPANAH national history museum and the galleries of Pétion-Ville, but check the FCDO travel advice carefully before including it in any itinerary.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Cap-Haïtien

≈ 280,000 people

Haiti's second city has a colonial grid of balconied houses facing the bay and is the gateway to the Citadelle, Sans-Souci Palace and the beaches of Cormier and Labadie.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Gonaïves

≈ 260,000 people

The 'City of Independence', where Dessalines proclaimed Haiti's freedom on 1 January 1804. A busy port with few sights, best treated as a stop between the capital and the north.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Haiti

Best time: **Dec–Feb**.

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

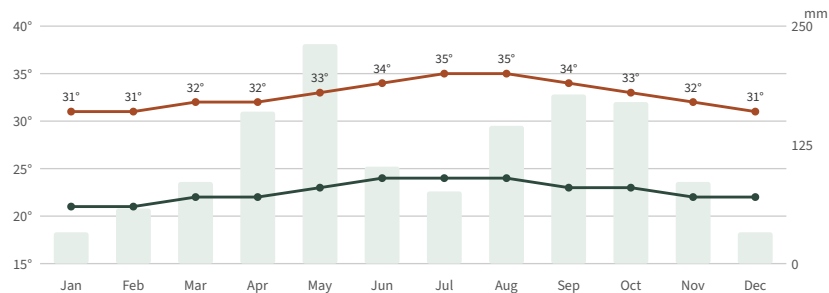
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Port-au-Prince

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb–Mar	Kanaval Haiti's pre-Lent carnival fills the streets with floats, konpa bands and costumed groups; Jacmel's version, famous for papier-mâché masks and satirical characters, is the most artistic.
Jul	Saut-d'Eau pilgrimage Around 16 July, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pilgrims crowd the Saut-d'Eau waterfall to bathe, pray and honour the Vodou spirit Ezili alongside the Virgin.
Nov	Fèt Gede On 1–2 November, Vodou followers honour the Gede spirits of the dead with music, rum-soaked offerings and ceremonies in cemeteries across the country.

How much does Haiti cost?

SHOESTRING £50 per person / day ≈ HTG 8,730 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £110 per person / day ≈ HTG 19,207 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £220 per person / day ≈ HTG 38,413 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Griot Chunks of pork marinated in sour orange and herbs, simmered and then fried until crisp, served with pikliz (fiery pickled slaw) and fried plantain.	Diri ak djon djon Rice cooked black in the liquid from dried djon djon mushrooms, giving an earthy, smoky flavour; a dish for celebrations and Sunday lunches.	Soup joumou A rich pumpkin and beef soup eaten on 1 January to mark independence, once reserved for enslavers; it is on UNESCO's intangible heritage list.
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Getting around

There are no trains and few long-distance buses suited to visitors. Tap-taps, the brightly painted pick-ups and buses, and moto-taxis are how Haitians travel, but most visitors hire a car with a trusted driver through their hotel or guide. Small domestic airlines have linked Port-au-Prince with Cap-Haïtien, Jacmel and Les Cayes, but services in and out of the capital have been suspended repeatedly, so check close to travel.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  A B 110V — bring a UK-to-A/B adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 116 Fire: 115 Police: 122 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +509	TIME ZONE UTC-5 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Leave around 10% in restaurants unless service is included, and tip guides and drivers in gourdes or US dollars at the end of a trip.

ETIQUETTE

Greet everyone with 'bonjour' (or 'bonswa' from early afternoon) before starting a conversation. Always ask before photographing people, and treat Vodou ceremonies as religious occasions, attending only when invited.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Toussaint Louverture International Airport (PAP), Port-au-Prince; Cap-Haïtien International Airport (CAP), Cap-Haïtien

Visas & entry for Haiti

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You do not need a visa to visit Haiti for up to 90 days.

To stay longer (or to work or study, for business travel or for other reasons), you must meet the Haitian government's entry requirements.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Measles

Rabies

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

Malaria risk in some areas

- There is a risk of malaria in Haiti: antimalarial tablets recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Haiti

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026

All Saints' Day

Mon 2 Nov 2026	Day of the Dead
Wed 18 Nov 2026	Armed Forces Day · Commemoration of the Battle of Vertieres
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	National Independence Day · New Year's Day
Sat 2 Jan 2027	Ancestry Day
Sun 7 Feb 2027	Carnival
Mon 8 Feb 2027	Shrove Monday
Tue 9 Feb 2027	Fat Tuesday
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Sat 1 May 2027	Agriculture and Labour Day
Tue 18 May 2027	Flag Day and University Day
Thu 27 May 2027	Corpus Christi
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day
Sun 17 Oct 2027	Death of Dessalines

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Haitian Creole

ENGLISH	HAITIAN CREOLE	SAY IT
Hello	Bonjou	<i>bon-ZHOO</i>
Thank you	Mèsi	<i>meh-SEE</i>
Please	Tanpri	<i>tahn-PREE</i>
Excuse me	Eskize m	<i>es-kee-ZAY-m</i>
How much is this?	Konbyen sa a koute?	<i>kohn-BYEN sah ah KOO-tay</i>

Know before you go

Prices are often quoted in 'Haitian dollars' (one equals five gourdes) rather than gourdes, so always confirm which unit is meant before agreeing a price.

Bring clean, small US dollar notes: hotels and drivers accept them widely, while card payments and ATMs can be unreliable outside the larger hotels and towns.

Check the FCDO travel advice before booking and again before departure, and arrange airport pick-ups, drivers and guides in advance through reputable contacts.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.