



SERVEAFRICA
Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

WELCOME HANDBOOK



SHORT TERM MISSION TRIP PROGRAM

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LIBERIA ON THE AFRICAN MAP



MAP OF LIBERIA



WELCOME MESSAGE



Dear friend,

On behalf of Serve Africa and the hundreds of orphans, underprivileged children, widows, and village pastors we serve in Liberia, we bring you greetings and extend heartfelt welcome to you as you visit (plan to) Liberia (and Africa). Your decision to leave your comfortable home, your work responsibilities, and your family duties to take on such an enormous sacrifice to come to Liberia is highly commendable. We hope that your experiences will be rewarding and that the days you have ahead will be more memorable and eternally blessed.

This trip will provide you the opportunity to serve and share your skills, talents, and experiences with orphans, widows, pastors, and many others. These people are in need of encouragement and empowerment opportunities, including education (scholarships), healthcare services, training support (and materials), spiritual guidance, discipleship, food, clothing, shelter, amongst others.

We are touched by your love for Liberia. And it is with deep conviction that we acknowledge how greatly you have challenged us by your decision to join us in breaking the cycle of poverty for our brothers and sisters who have been significantly affected by years of poverty.

We foresee the impacts of your visit as not only being priceless, but also entirely immeasurable for the fact they will go a long way into eternity.

Praise, honor, and glory to our heavenly Father for His loving-kindness, grace, and salvation through our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Holy Spirit guide, protect and bless your stay in Liberia!

Yours truly in Christ,

Stephen & Florence Wonbenyakeh
President & Co-founders
Serve Africa

COST IMPLICATIONS

Contribution: \$3,500.00

- Round Trip Flight Ticket
- Lodging (Hotel/Guest House)
- Feeding/Food
- On-ground transportation (Car)

Other Personal Expenses

- Vaccines – you are responsible for the costs of your vaccines.
- Passport – if you don't have a valid passport for travel, please consider applying for one now. You can apply for a passport through any locations of United States Postal Service. Let us know if you need help with this.
- Visa – you will need a Liberian visa to be able to check in and travel. You are responsible to process your own visa. A Liberian entry visa costs \$200-250. Let us know if you need help applying for a Liberian visa.

Note: Do not apply for a visa until you have booked your flights.

Activities/Programs

- Depending on the types of activities and programs that you will plan to implement while in Liberia, a separate budget will be prepared. Usually, food and/or transportation are needed when a mission team implements any activities that bring people together. Because each team decides on what programs to implement, the cost implications (budget) are always different. Here are some options of programs that we usually implement: Pastors Training, Teachers Training, Women's Conference, VBS, Health Education Program for Girls, Vision Screening, Sport/Soccer Games, Feeding Kids with Hot Meals, Service Projects, Community Outreach, Construction Work, amongst others.
- Serve Africa encourages members of each mission team to participate in raising any additional budgeted amount, especially money that will be needed for any programs/activities that a team decides on implementing during their trip.

BASIC TRAVEL INFORMATION

1. You are traveling to Liberia. Liberia is located at the western corner of Africa.
2. You need a Liberian Visa to travel to Liberia. You can apply for a visa via the Liberian Embassy in Washington DC or at a Consulate's Officer in Minnesota.
 - Website (Washington, DC): www.liberianembassyus.org
 - Minnesota (Consulate): www.liberianconsulatemn.com
3. All trips include a combination of activities including, but not limited to Pastors Training, In-Service Teachers Training, Women's Conference, VBS, Health Education Program for Girls, Vision Screening, Soccer Evangelism, Feeding Kids/Hot Meals, Service Projects, Community Outreach, and Construction Projects.
 - No professional training is required.
 - Are you a specialist? Let us know and we will plan a specialized program for you.
4. You are entitled to two checked bags (50 lbs.) and two carry-on bags. Check your airline ticket to confirm. Provisions vary from one airline to the other.
5. In your carry-on luggage, make sure to keep extra clothes that can take you for at least two days. Sometimes checked luggage are delayed or left behind due to airline's fault.
6. Yellow Fever Vaccine is required for entry into Liberia. If you have already taken Yellow Fever Vaccine, **you will need the yellow book for travel purpose.** Talk to your doctor if you think you need Yellow Fever Vaccine.
7. Proof of Covid Vaccination is required for travel to Liberia.
8. Malaria preventive care is STRONGLY recommended. There are several kinds of preventive medicines for Malaria. Talk to your doctor about the option that is best for you. You may also buy over-the-counter malaria repellent products in addition to your doctor's prescribed medications.
9. Other recommended vaccinations are Hepatitis A and Typhoid Fever. Talk to your doctor if you think you need any of these vaccines.

DRAFT ITINERARY

A Typical 14 Day Trip

Day 1	Travel
Day 2	Arrival (8-10 pm Local Time)
Day 3	Flexible (Finalize Plans)
Day 4	Event/Activity
Day 5	Event/Activity
Day 6	Event/Activity
Day 7	Flexible
Day 8	Event/Activity
Day 9	Event/Activity
Day 10	Event/Activity
Day 11	Flexible
Day 12	Event/Activity
Day 13	Flexible
Day 14	Travel

HOSTS & KEY CONTACTS

Name	Role with Serve Africa	Phone
Remington Leaman	Country Director	0777 089 939
Irene Dahn	Officer Manager	077 041 0258
Shadrach Makaah	Vice Principal/Administrator	0775 308 462
Constance Lonpea	Teacher/Administrator	077 628 8385
Rufus Seboe	Pastor, Alive Church Liberia	077 702 8588
Eric Dahn	Support Staff/Driver	088 073 0335
Yealu Duo	Pastor, Mensonn Baptist Church	0770-278-029
Moses Wonbenyakeh	Church Planter, Nimba County	0777 431 921
Anita Wonbenyakeh	Medical Support/Caterer	0776 446 097
Meko Wonbenyakeh	Caterer/Food	0770 427 899
Emmanuel Wonbenyakeh	Support Staff, Ganta City	077 793 8239

RECOMMENDED PARKING LIST

1. First Aid medications: pain and fever medicines (Tylenol, Ibuprofen), Diarrhea medicine (Pepto Bismol), antacid (for gas), cough drops, Aloe gel for sunburns, mild laxative.
2. Mosquito repellent body spray or lotion.
3. At least two bottles of hand sanitizers (make sure to buy the Travel Size).
4. Toothpaste (travel size) and toothbrush.
5. Hairdryer (battery powered). Since you might travel to the countryside where electricity is limited, you should consider traveling devices that use battery.
6. A pair of sunglasses if you like wearing those. It will be sunny most of the day, especially if your trip falls between November to March.
7. A pair of flip flop. You might need this while you are upcountry, particularly for taking shower.
8. A portable battery powered LED torchlight. You will need this in case you go out of electricity. Make sure to take extra batteries.
9. Shorts and breathable t-shirts are OK for working purpose because of the sun.
10. Take a set of dress clothing that you will wear to church. Remember you will be there for two Sundays.
11. Face caps are good. The sun will be hot if your trip is between November to March.
12. Adapter for your phone charger. The wall receptacles are different. You will need an adapter to be able to plug your device in the power source. Most laptop adaptors are auto-convertible from 110-V to 220-V. But for safety precaution, you can bring a portable surge protector for your electronic device. PLEASE KNOW THAT THE DEFAULT POWER VOLTAGE IN LIBERIA IS 220V.
13. Treats for kids. You can bring sweets (M&M, Lollipop). We don't recommend chocolate bars because they might melt due to heat.
14. Take some healthy granola bars. You will need those on days when lunch or dinner delays or when you are traveling on a long distance.

SOME IMPORTANT TIPS

1. Try not to walk alone! Move as a team or along with someone you know.
2. Always ask before proceeding to do good (give alms) when the Spirit leads.
3. Do not let strangers help with your bags or assist you. In most cases people have financial expectations for helping foreigners.
4. Call immediately when there is a problem or when you suspect some resemblance of a problem.
5. Consult your local team leader if you want to purchase something. Vendors usually increase price for foreigners.
6. Only accept and eat food prepared for you or from a recognized restaurant.
7. Water is life! Take your water (bottle) with you wherever you go. You may need water frequently (or maybe not) due to the prevailing weather.
8. Apply mosquito spray, lotion, etc. as often as possible. Mosquitos usually come out in the evening and when it begins to get dark.
9. Call people by titles when you know the titles they bear. Liberians general regard titles as a form of respect.
10. People will refer to you as “Black American”, “Whiteman”, or “Whitewoman”. They use the term to refer to you when they don’t know your name. There is nothing negative about it.
11. Greet people with hello in most (if not all) cases. ‘Hi’ is not a familiar expression.
12. Liberians have a special handshake. They like to snap your finger with their finger to make sound. Most times they might request a second handshake to teach you the skill if they realize that you don’t know the trick.
13. Men are generally expected to wear long pants to church. Women normally wear skirts or dresses for church. Otherwise, free trousers (not tight) are acceptable.
14. Use your hand sanitizer regularly. Everyone will want to shake your hands, even kids. And maybe more than one time on a particular occasion. In some cases, it is considered an honor to shake a foreigner’s hand.

15. Liberians speak English but their version of English is different. It's called Liberian English. You will have to listen very carefully to understand it.
16. Liberian dishes (foods) are generally spicy (hot, and I mean hot!), especially those ones that are prepared for the public. When offered a Liberian food, always taste a little bit first before deciding to get more.
17. Travel with small denominations of cash. We recommend \$5, \$10, and \$20 notes. You might not be able to get change in certain areas if all you have are big dollar bills.

COMMON LIBERIAN EXPRESSIONS

1. Small small – little or bit by bit.
2. Yes oh! Come oh! Please oh! Let's eat oh! – Liberians love to use "oh" to end their statements. There is no special meaning for this.
3. Your hello oh! – Hello, everyone.
4. Da me – it's me; it's I.
5. Different-different – varied, many kinds.
6. Mu-na – must not.
7. I na do it – I did not do it.
8. I coming to go - I am about to go.
9. Craw-craw – a term used for any bad skin condition (often scabies).
10. Chee-Chee-Polay - the person who gossips or the act of gossiping.
11. Gut-ful – full stomach.
12. Your hand-inside – you have been implicated; it is alleged that you did it.
13. Kwi – a term widely used among the tribal (illiterate) to designate foreigners or educated people.
14. Palava – argument; fight; misunderstanding.
15. Vexed – angry; upset.
16. Bush – jungle; forest.
17. Chunk – to throw something at; to hit someone with an object.

18. Dash – tip; to give someone a tip like to tip a caterer in a restaurant.
19. Dear – high price; more expensive than expected.
20. Too fine – impressive; in excellent condition; magnificent; beautiful.
21. Lay thing – small amount of thing. The expression is commonly used when someone does not feel comfortable calling the name of something, especially a financial gift.

LIBERIAN FOODS

Rice: Rice is Liberia's staple food. Every Liberian home eats rice at least once a day. There is a common saying that when a Liberian has not eaten rice, then it means he has not eaten yet. Cooked rice is usually eaten with stew or sauce made with sweet potato greens, cassava greens (leaves), palm butter, gravy, plava sauce, okra, beans, etc. Sweet potato and cassava greens are two most common sauces that go with rice.

Geingba (GB): GB originated among the Gio and Mano tribes of Nimba County. However, GB is now a national dish. To prepare GB, fresh cassava (tuba/root) is peeled and boiled. The cooked roots are placed in a big mortar and pounded with a heavy pestle, then shaped into balls. The balls are eaten with sauce made with fish, meat, and other ingredients.

Fufu: Fufu is a dough-like starchy food that includes cassava, yams, or plantains. All these ingredients are boiled, pounded and rounded into balls. This Liberian delicacy is generally served along with sauces or consumed with stews (which are prepared using meat, fish or vegetables).

Torborgee: Torborgee is a spicy and bitter Liberian stew made with torborgee beans and palm oil. The dish is often enriched by the addition of dried meat, chicken, pork, or fish, and it is usually associated with the Lorma people inhabiting Lofa County in Liberia.

Jollof Rice: Jollof rice is a rice dish that is generally prepared using long-grain rice, tomatoes, onions, spices, vegetables and meat. All the ingredients are cooked in a single pot. The recipes and ingredients may vary across different areas.

Rice Bread: Liberian rice bread is prepared by pounding the rice in a mortar, using a pestle. The rice flour is then mixed with other ingredients such as ripe mashed bananas, butter, eggs, baking soda, sugar, salt, water, and grated ginger.

Cassava Gravy: Cassava, eddo, and/or yam are Liberian popular breakfast. The combination is boiled and eaten with gravy made with chicken, meat, or fish.

Pepper Kala: Pepper Kala is made of flour dough that is fried in either palm oil or vegetable oil and eaten with hot pepper sauce. Pepper Kala is used for snacks.

Plantain Chips: Plantain chips are made of sliced pieces of green or ripe plantain that are fried in oil to become dried and crispy. A little of bit salt is added for flavor. Plantain chips are used for snacks.

Method

Kanyan: It is eaten as snack. Kanyan is made by blending parched peanuts, garri, and sugar. The three items are pounded until they mixed and become fairly smooth. When fully prepared, Kanyan is thick and must be eaten with access to drinking water.

Polo: It is used as snack. Polo is made of flour, baking powder, water, and sugar. The combination is rolled by hands into small round pieces and fried inside hot oil until it gets cooked. When it cools off, it becomes hard but breakable as one eats it. The Nigerians refer to Polo as Chin Chin.

FACTS OF INTEREST

Country: Liberia/The Republic of Liberia

Founded: 1822 by freed slaves from the United States

Capital: Monrovia

Nationality: Liberian

Population: 5.3 million (2022)

Unemployed: 65% (or above)

Poverty: 70%

Location: West Africa, bordered by the North Atlantic Ocean on the south, by Sierra Leone in the Northwest, Guinea in the North and Cote d'Ivoire in the northeast.

Area: 43,000 square miles

Climate: Two seasons: dry and rainy (duration of approximately 6 months each); dry season typically dry, hot days with cool to cold nights; torrid heavy rains are typical with warm to cool temperatures and brief periods of sunshine

Natural Resources: Rubber, iron ore, timber, diamonds, and gold

Ethnic Groups: Indigenous African Tribes (16) 95%: Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Lorma, Mandingo, Dan, Kisi, Vai, and Belle; Americo-Liberians 2.5% (descendants of immigrants from U.S. and elsewhere)

Counties (15): Bomi, Bong, Gbapolu, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Geddeh, Grand Cru, Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe

Ports and Harbors: Buchanan, Greenville, Harper and Monrovia

Key Religions: Christianity, Islam, Traditionalism

Currency: 1 Liberian Dollar = 100 Liberian cents

Exchange Rate: US\$1 = L\$ 150 (December 2022): varies depending on location.

FREQUENCY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long is a trip from the US to Liberia? A typical one-way trip to Liberia is 24 hours (including time difference and layovers).

Will Liberians understand me when I speak? English is Liberia's national language. It is taught in school and most transactions and interactions take place in English. However, in rural places you will need some interpretation done because of illiteracy.

Will I be able to use my U.S. phone in Liberia? Unlocked phones can be used in Liberia. You will need to buy a local SIM card and have it installed by a technician to make local calls and access internet. You will not be able to use this service if your phone is not unlocked. However, you can buy a smart phone locally. Smart phones are available beginning at \$75.

Will I have cell phone service? Local phone service is available in most places including the countryside. Internationally calls are also applicable wherever local phone service is available. However, international calls require certain applicable fees/costs.

How do I access the internet? Wi-Fi is limited. You might find wi-fi service at hotels and cafe'. You can use your mobile data if your phone has such service. **Note:** There are no unlimited data plans in Liberia. Your data consumption rate depends on browsing. \$5 data package might last for a few hours depending on your activities online. Good thing is you can turn off your data if you are not online.

Where will I be lodged? You will sleep in a guesthouse, sometimes in a motel or hotel. Some rooms in the guesthouse have manual fans while others might have AC. Some guesthouses have private (self-contained) rooms with a toilet and a place to shower. In some places, single team members will share rooms containing bunkbeds. **Note:** use your bottled water for brushing teeth and washing mouth. Water in guest house and hotel might not be safe for drinking.

When do I pay my contribution: \$3,500? You are to make 50% of your contribution three months ahead of your travel date. This allows us to purchase tickets in a timely manner. The balance 50% can be paid within month prior to your trip.

Will I have access to 24-hour electricity? Yes, there is 24-hour electricity in the certain places. Other areas might run 12 hours of electricity, 6 PM – 6 AM. When you travel upcountry, your access to 24-hour will significantly reduce.

What type of water will I drink? You will drink purified bottled water. **Do not drink from any other water source!!**

How will I get around? You will travel in a van, SUV, or something similar for trips in the city or for trips to the countryside.

What type of clothing should I wear? The weather is around 80-100 between November to March . So light clothing and shorts are ok for work, travels, or casual activities. **Note:** It's ok for both men and women to wear shorts if they are not attending church.

Will I have access to medical facility, especially when I travel upcountry? There is a nearby medical facility around the location where the team will be building the Safe T Homes®. The facility is directed by a Physician Assistant, and it provides First AID and basic care.

How do I get my laundry done? Make sure to take clothes that you will wear for the days you will be away from the city. There are no washing machines upcountry. And even in the city, laundry machines are available only in certain homes/facilities. However, hotel staff or staff members at the Hope Center can help provide laundry services for a minimal amount.

Must I take my travel documents with me? Yes. You need to have your passport with you during in-country travels.

Are there any security concerns? There are no major security concerns, except that street thefts and robberies are common. If you don't know a person, never entertain conversations with them. Always stay alert and keep an eye on your personal belongings, including things inside your hotel room. Do not expose your cash. If you are comfortable with waist bags, try buying one and use it while on the trip. Waist bags are ideal for concealing cash and for storing personal items like passports, vaccine cards, debit cards, etc. Note: **Men, do not keep wallets in your back pockets!!** Keep your wallet inside your backpack, handbag, or waist bag. Otherwise, keep it inside your front pocket. The magic of thievery works perfectly well when wallets sleep in the back pockets of men.

What should I do if I am convicted to respond to a need? For sure, you will see needs. And some of them will break your hearts. That's ok. However, always consult your team leader or someone who has been designated to lead or guide you.

Am I in an area conducive to taking exercise walks? I won't advise you to take a walk except in the compound (hotel) if there is space available for that. However, if you are upcountry there should be plenty of space for walking.

Do I need to pack an umbrella? Between November to March, you don't need an umbrella. You will need one between April to October.

Is it acceptable to take pictures? You are free to take pictures unless otherwise instructed by a sign.