

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO
EASTERN CARIBBEAN



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



August 2007



A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean Invitee,

Congratulations on your invitation to the upcoming pre-service training in the Eastern Caribbean. We are pleased that you have accepted an invitation to join the Peace Corps and to serve in the Eastern Caribbean. Serving as a Volunteer will be one of the most challenging experiences of your life and will be as rewarding as you make it. If you come with an open mind, a warm heart, lots of patience and flexibility, and a good sense of humor, you will do well.

This *Welcome Book* will help you prepare for your journey and hopefully answer many of the questions that you may have about the Peace Corps and life in the Eastern Caribbean.

Upon your departure from the United States, you will arrive in the island nation of St. Lucia. As a Peace Corps trainee, you will spend the first three weeks living with a St. Lucian family in the training community and engage in an integrated, community-based, pre-service training program. The majority of the training sessions will occur at the community level with some sessions taking place at the training center. After three weeks of training in St. Lucia, you will travel to your island nation of assignment for further community-based training. At that time, you will be assigned to live with a family close to the community where you will be serving for the next two years.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will be faced with many challenges. We are here to give you advice and guidance to help you determine for yourself how to respond to the various challenges of Peace Corps service, so you can make your next two years one of the most rewarding experiences

in your life. You can also prepare for this important and exciting two-year period by reviewing the recommended readings about Volunteer life in the Eastern Caribbean.

There are a few things to think about before you accept our invitation. You will have to make adjustments in your lifestyle to be accepted and effective in the Eastern Caribbean. You should not expect the people and culture to adjust to you. We make site assignments by matching your skills and knowledge with the needs of a particular organization and community, not on the basis of your personal preferences. You should expect to serve anywhere in the Eastern Caribbean, including rural areas on the more remote islands. To help ensure your safety and security, you will have to inform Peace Corps whenever you leave your assigned site. In an emergency, we must be able to contact you at any time.

Communities and agencies, working together, will assist the people of the Eastern Caribbean advance their personal and national development goals. In conjunction with local leaders and organizations, you will be given the opportunity to contribute to local and national development goals in a meaningful way. Communities and agencies across the islands anxiously await the arrival of your group of creative and hard-working professionals. At the same time, you will enjoy living on a lush, green, and peaceful island bathed in sunlight and clean, fresh air. The physical beauty of this chain of islands will astound you. Be excited about your chance to be of service to the warm and friendly people of the Eastern Caribbean while you enjoy the many splendors that these island nations offer.

The staff and I continue to prepare for your arrival and look forward to greeting and working with you. Welcome to the Eastern Caribbean!

Kate Raftery
Country Director

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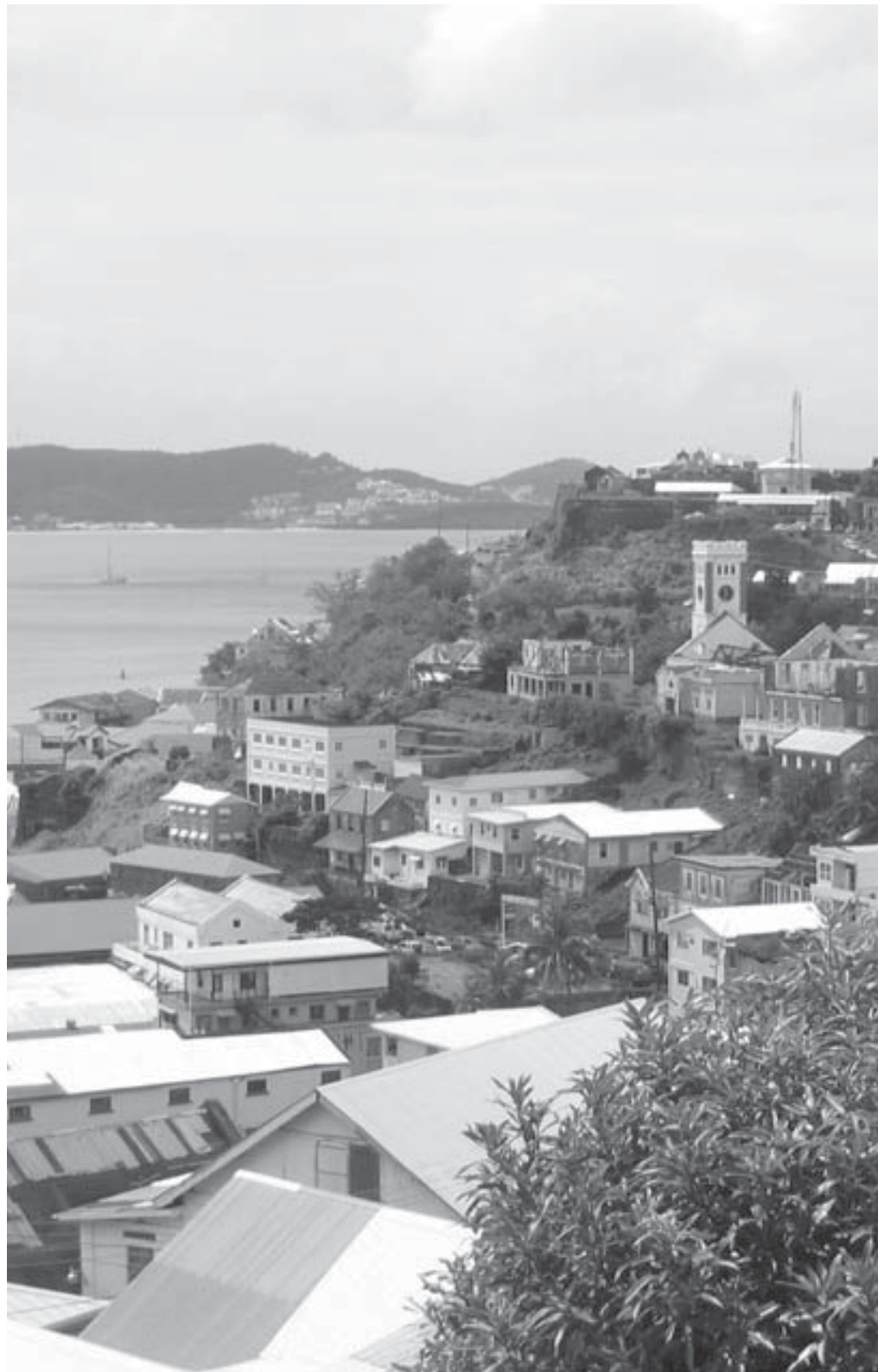
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PEACE CORPS/EASTERN CARIBBEAN HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in the Eastern Caribbean

The Peace Corps entered the Eastern Caribbean in 1961, when St. Lucia became one of the first countries in the world to receive Volunteers. Since then, approximately 3,300 Peace Corps Volunteers have served on various island nations in the region. Volunteers were initially assigned to education, agriculture, health, youth, and community development projects. The contributions of Volunteers in these areas have provided strong and consistent technical support to the Eastern Caribbean for more than 40 years. Basic human needs programming in the 1970s encouraged health, special education, preschool education, teacher training, forestry, fishery, and livestock extension projects. The 1980s were a period that focused on four projects: education, health, agriculture, and small enterprise development. At the beginning of the 1990s, education, environment, health, and youth initiatives were priorities. Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean has made significant progress since January 1991 to establish project-based programming and to provide focus to the program. After concluding an assessment of the program in 1993, efforts focused on developing partnerships with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and moving steadily away from formal education into educational projects targeting at-risk youth.

Peace Corps Volunteers currently serve in six island nations in the Eastern Caribbean: (1) Antigua and Barbuda, (2)

Dominica, (3) Grenada, Carriacou, and Petit Martinique, (4) St. Kitts and Nevis, (5) St. Lucia, and (6) St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in the Eastern Caribbean

Programming on each island nation of Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean is guided by the development priorities of the various governments and their ministries, as expressed in official plans and budget documents. With these partners, Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean periodically reviews programming on each island nation to ensure continuing appropriate focus and direction.

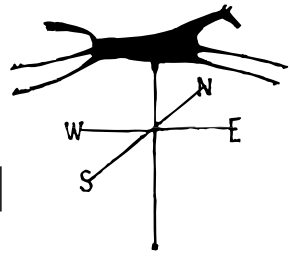
At present, the major focus of Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean is on improving the quality of life of disenfranchised and low-income communities by assisting in their transformation from recipients of aid into partners in change. Volunteer activities are aimed primarily at assisting communities in identifying, evaluating, and developing solutions to the many challenges they face. In responding to needs and priorities identified by their communities, Volunteers may be involved in a wide range of activities, including strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations and ministries working at the community level, raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and other chronic diseases, and enhancing educational and employment skills by emphasizing skills transfer in the areas of special education, literacy, and service learning. Peace Corps is considered by many government officials to be a leader in addressing the social and economic problems resulting from high unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, and unhealthy lifestyle choices among community members in the Eastern Caribbean.

The integrated community development program in the Eastern Caribbean addresses community needs and provides Volunteers with the flexibility to find the projects and programs where community needs and Volunteers skills and interests intersect. As a result, Volunteers are assigned to a community where they work directly with community stakeholders. In addition to a community placement, a few Volunteers may also be assigned to a specific organization or government agency. This, of course, requires careful planning and coordination to ensure that a Volunteer's primary focus on the community is maintained.

While all Volunteers will address the needs of the community where they have been placed, Volunteers over time will find their special niche in the areas of health, youth development, business, organizational strengthening, education, and service learning. Volunteers may train teachers in special education methodologies or assist national governments in organizing special education services for their students. Volunteers with a passion for business may coordinate Junior Achievement activities and promote entrepreneurship among various groups in their community. Other Volunteers may apply the behavior change communication (BCC) methodology to develop communication products and community outreach programs targeting HIV/AIDS and other problems, such as teenage pregnancy or drug use.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN AT A GLANCE



History

The Caribs and Arawaks discovered Christopher Columbus on the shores of their islands during his voyages to the New World. Columbus named the islands the “West Indies.” His diaries described the region as “a country full of precious things and unheard of wonders.” The lack of gold and resistance by the Caribs and Arawaks led the Spanish to turn their interests toward Central and South America. The islands initially served as a rendezvous for gold and pirate ships and later became bloody battlegrounds for contending European powers. St. Lucia, for example, changed colonial hands no less than 14 times, ending up as an English territory only after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. The West Indian historical legacy includes social inequities, a one-crop economic base, limited opportunity for academic and vocational schooling, a rapidly growing population, and high unemployment. Widespread poverty fostered social upheaval, characterized by the emergence of labor unions and the eventual stirrings of independence movements. Most of the island countries achieved independence in the 1960s and 1970s.

Government

The Caribbean is characterized by the Westminster system of government. Every five years, general elections are held, and after the leader of the winning party is sworn in as prime minister by the governor general, he or she then

chooses cabinet ministers. The actual administration of each government ministry is the responsibility of the permanent secretary, the chief civil servant. The governments all have a strong commitment to provide social services such as free primary and secondary education and health services.

Though the island nations have not succeeded at attaining political unity, they were successful in establishing the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) 20 years ago. This nine-member group includes all of the Peace Corps island nations and oversees several areas of cooperation, promoting unity and solidarity among the member states. The headquarters is in St. Lucia. The Caribbean governments have also established the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), a very successful union that governs trade in the region.

Economy

Island-nation economies remain based on single cash crops, like bananas; or tourism, which is the leading growth industry. There is also some light manufacturing. In general, economic development in the Eastern Caribbean is hampered by small domestic markets, a scarcity of trained labor, the absence of raw materials, and, in some cases, inadequate transportation and marketing facilities. The island nations face many challenges in the rapidly changing international economic environment.

Single-crop agricultural practices have been so pervasive that, despite favorable soil and growing conditions, food importation remains very high. Prior to the ruling of the World Trade Organization (WTO), these export crops enjoyed preferential treatment on the European market. Unfortunately, the WTO has forced Europeans to dismantle

these preferential agreements in the name of trade liberalization. This has put hundreds of small farmers out of business and has created a myriad of problems for these countries. The island nations have realized that solutions to the chronic problems of unemployment and under-employment lie in diversifying agricultural production, developing small business opportunities, expanding industrial capacity, and searching for ways to expand the service industry.

The CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), a regional effort to further regional integration, has become a reality throughout the Caribbean. The CSME will liberalize trade and other economic activities, including the freedom of movement of capital and people, a common currency, removing restrictions on the provision of services, and a regional regulatory mechanism. While it is expected to strengthen the region's ability to cope with global challenges, the small Eastern Caribbean island nations where Peace Corps operates have been designated as disadvantaged. Peace Corps can play a critical role by helping rural communities develop sustainable strategies to respond to and capitalize on the potential benefits of the liberalization process.

Damage to Grenada as a result of Hurricane Ivan in 2004 was extensive. Emergency recovery projects financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other international donors supported the rehabilitation of the healthcare and school infrastructure and the financing of critical imports. Peace Corps Volunteers successfully implemented more than \$65,000 in reconstruction projects and facilitated the access of funding for other community reconstruction projects.

There has been a recent shift in the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region resulting in a major developmental problem. The epidemic has begun to disproportionately affect younger populations, in particular young females. The major feature of the epidemic is the growing number of people living with HIV/AIDS and affected families requiring care and support. The changing profile of the epidemic is dramatically impacting not only the health sector but also economic resources in the region as human potential and productivity diminish.

People and Culture

People in the Caribbean are mainly of African origin (90 percent) with a sprinkling of East Indians, Caucasians, and some of mixed race. They are a people of warm, friendly disposition and are very hospitable to strangers. Youth dominate the population in all the island nations. About 3,000 descendants of pre-Columbian Caribs still live on the island nation of Dominica, where they live in a reserve on the east coast. Another community of Caribs live in St. Vincent.

The culture of the islands has been greatly influenced by their history, and it is often referred to as a “spicy” Creole culture. It is the mixture of the African, French, British, and Spanish cultures that came together to form this rich “potpourri.” The resulting French Creole language has disappeared completely in St. Vincent and Grenada, but has remained alive and strong on St. Lucia and Dominica. Other features of this spicy culture are the cultural festivals observed on the islands, like carnival, jazz festivals, Creole music festivals, Caribbean food festivals, and Saturday “market days.” One of the unique aspects of Caribbean culture is the music: Reggae, zouk, calypso, cadence, soca, and steel band music are the true West Indian sounds.

Though there is much to enjoy in all of the lovely islands, you must be careful not to adopt the tourist image or mannerisms. You can easily be mistaken for a rich American and be harassed from time to time. Remember that there are people who are not nice, kind, or honest anywhere.

Environment

The Eastern Caribbean is part of the chain of islands that lie in between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Some of the islands are volcanic in origin and are characterized by mountains, rivers, and lush valleys, as well as long stretches of beaches with clear blue waters and golden sand. Their many rain forests abound with hundreds of species of plants and animals, many unique to the Caribbean. Volunteers used to four seasons soon adapt to just two: the dry season during the first half of the year, and the rainy season in the second.



WELCOME TO
THE
RESTAURANT
& BAR

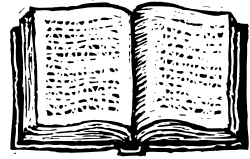
County
RUM

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CAFE**

COMPUTER CLASSES
TYPING SERVICES

ST. LAWRENCE
TEL. #
458-3734

RESOURCE LIST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



We offer a list of Web sites for you to search for additional information about the Peace Corps and connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that links change. We have tried to make sure all these links are active and current, but we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, please also remember that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the United States government. You may also find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About the Eastern Caribbean

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Castries to information about converting currency from the dollar to the Eastern Caribbean dollar.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

Visit this site to learn all you need to know about any country in the world.

www.state.gov/

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find your country of service and learn more about its social and political history.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments of countries around the world.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information about countries around the world. Each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political backgrounds.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries worldwide.

www.oecs.org

This site has information about the Eastern Caribbean states.

www.cananews.com

Caribbean Media Corporation. Information on a wide range of topics on the Caribbean.

www.caribbeandaily.com

World News (WN) network Information on a wide range of topics on the Caribbean.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

<http://home.earthlink.net/~foec/>

This is the website for the Friends of the Eastern Caribbean, a website for returned Volunteers who served in the countries of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada and Carriacou, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. If you're interested in communicating with a returned Volunteer from the Eastern Caribbean, they can put you in contact with someone who can assist in your preparations.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/peacecorps2/>

This Yahoo site hosts a bulletin board where prospective Volunteers and returned Volunteers can come together.

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the "friends of" groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities:

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts from countries around the world.

<http://peacecorpsonline.org/>

This site is billed an independent news forum serving returned Volunteers. It has links to Eastern Caribbean returned Volunteer groups.

Recommended Books

1. Anglin, Kevin, et al. *Lonely Planet Eastern Caribbean* (3rd ed.). London: Lonely Planet, 2001.
2. Clarke, Colin (editor). *Society and Politics in the Caribbean*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991.
3. Donnell, Alison ed. *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. NY: Routledge, 1996.
4. Keens-Douglas, Paul. *Twice Upon a Time: Poetry and Short Stories*. Keensdee Production, 1989.
5. Kurlansky, Mark. *A Continent of Islands: Searching for the Caribbean Destiny*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1992.
6. Springfield, Consuelo Lopez. *Daughters of the Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
4. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
5. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999
6. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
7. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
8. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we consider normal in the United States. If you expect U.S. standards for mail service, you will be disappointed. Mail takes anywhere from two to four weeks to travel in either direction. At times, some mail may get lost in transit. Some letters may arrive damaged or opened. Since communication with friends and family is a very sensitive issue for most Volunteers, we want to forewarn you about the reality of international mail service. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to write “Air Mail” on the envelope.

We strongly discourage having family or friends send you packages during the first phase of training in St. Lucia (which is your first three weeks in-country). If any packages sent to St. Lucia don't arrive within that time, we will forward your mail to your island of assignment, but at your cost. You will be notified of the charges prior to any packages being sent by airmail to your island of assignment and will be asked to reimburse Peace Corps for the cost.

If you absolutely need to receive mail during the initial three weeks of training, your address during training will be:

“Your name,” PCT
Peace Corps
PO Box 123
Castries, St. Lucia
West Indies

This address will only be valid for your first three weeks in the Eastern Caribbean. After that, you will be on your island of assignment. Keep all packages small and please advise people sending packages to avoid the sending expensive items.

We strongly urge that mail be sent directly to your site once you have sworn in as a Volunteer. Packages from family and friends are the responsibility of the individual Volunteer. Post office officials will open it in front of you. You may have to pay hefty customs duties. Due to the risk of packages getting lost in transit, don't have valuable items sent to you.

Telephones

Generally, long-distance communication via telephone is available, but expensive. Most Volunteers find that they can easily make or receive calls from the United States. Please note that 1.800 numbers are not accessible from the Caribbean. All other numbers can be dialed directly. Calls to the United States from the islands range widely in cost depending upon locality and time of day. United States phone cards do not work here, so do not bring them. You can purchase the local "smart-phone" cards to call home or to make local calls. While a number of Volunteers have home telephones, recent competition in the cellular phone market has resulted in improved service and lower prices, making cellular phones a more favorable approach to phone service for many Volunteers. The Eastern Caribbean uses both the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) and Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA).

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

The Caribbean enjoys the latest technological advances, and computer technology is common. Each Peace Corps office has a computer that is dedicated for use by Volunteers and offers Internet access. If you currently use e-mail, you should bring

important addresses with you. Use of the Internet and e-mail at the Peace Corps office will be difficult during your pre-service training, but Internet cafés are available in the capital as well as in some towns and villages.

Some Volunteers have e-mail and full Internet access in their home or work via providers in the Caribbean. The access is approximately \$1.75 (U.S.) per hour. The service is fair and runs at 28.8 BPS, sometimes higher. Current Volunteers strongly suggest bringing a laptop and a thumb drive. On most islands, wireless access is becoming more available, but is not guaranteed in all sites. The heat and humid weather may be extreme, but should not damage equipment. Power surges may be avoided with a good surge protector. Theft is an issue. As with all valuable personal property, bring a computer at your own risk and get it insured.

Housing and Site Location

During training, you will begin to integrate and establish links with your host community. Your associate Peace Corps director will identify proper housing for you. It is very likely that all homes will have running water and electricity. The houses will also be fully furnished and a few may include a television set with cable service. Volunteer sites can be as close as 15 minutes and as far as 90 minutes from the capital and the Peace Corps office.

Living Allowance and Money Management

The local currency is the Eastern Caribbean dollar, and it is the same currency used on all islands where Volunteers live and work. The exchange rate in June 2007 was approximately \$2.70 (EC) to one U.S. dollar. Traveler's checks can be cashed at any bank. Credit cards are widely accepted. Personal

checks from U.S. banks can be cashed, but it may take several weeks for the check to be cleared and for the funds to become available to you. All the banks have ATMs, so you can access cash most of the time. Your ATM card will also work at most banks in the region, but will provide only EC dollars.

Your Peace Corps living allowance is paid in Eastern Caribbean currency and is electronically deposited on/or about the last day of every month to the account that you open at a local bank. Both checking and savings accounts are available. You will receive more information about banking facilities on your island of assignment during training. The living allowance will cover all regular expenses such as rent, food, utilities, and other essentials. The amount paid varies according to the cost of living on the island nation where you reside.

Food and Diet

There is a wide range of food choices available in the islands. The Eastern Caribbean offers a wealth of fresh fruit and vegetables, most of which can be purchased daily from fruit stalls and grocery stores. Many Volunteers have been pleasantly surprised to find one or more fruit trees in their back yards, and many have used yard space to grow such vegetables as tomatoes, lettuce, sweet peppers, peas, and beans. All of the vegetables available in the United States are also grown here, and while a few are seasonal, one can find several different vegetables all year-round.

Volunteers who are vegetarians or vegans can buy produce and other items from the local markets, as well as from a number of vegetarian stores and shops that stock specialty foods.

Fresh fish is always plentiful as is fresh meat and locally grown chicken. All Volunteers are given books on local foods that provide information on nutrition, preparation, and safety.

Transportation

Mini buses make travel from one place to another very easy and inexpensive. Volunteer homes and work sites are no more than half an hour to two hours away from the capital. The buses may run up to about 8:00 p.m., although a few areas have service up to midnight. Volunteers are not allowed to drive automobiles or ride motorcycles because of the type of roads that exist and the number of fatal accidents related to these forms of transportation.

Most Volunteers rely on public transportation to get around. Some Volunteers can request assistance from the Peace Corps in arranging alternative means of local transportation. Volunteers on some islands can apply for and receive limited funds to purchase a bicycle in the Eastern Caribbean. The Peace Corps will also provide you with a helmet, which must be worn at all times while riding a bicycle. Failure to abide by this policy may result in termination of your Peace Corps service.

Geography and Climate

The Eastern Caribbean, including Barbados and the Lesser Antilles, is the island chain that separates the Atlantic Ocean from the Caribbean Sea. The Peace Corps places Volunteers on: (1) Antigua and Barbuda, (2) Dominica, (3) Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, (4) St Kitts and Nevis, (5) St. Lucia, and (6) St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The islands are geographically divided into inner and outer chains. The inner islands are volcanic in origin and are characterized by rugged, mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, lush fertile vegetation, and many rivers. Dominica alone has as many as 365 rivers. The inner islands include Grenada and its dependencies of Carriacou and the southern Grenadines,

St. Vincent and its dependencies of the northern Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Dominica. The highest points of these islands are generally in the center, except for a few spectacular sheer slopes on some coastlines. Most roads go around rather than over the islands. High points of elevation vary from 1,000 to 5,000 feet above sea level. Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis have a coral limestone base. They are relatively flat with less vegetation and rain than the inner islands.

The tourist brochures do not lie when they describe the islands of the Caribbean as lands of sunshine and beaches. The first thing you must realize is that you are heading to two years of summer weather. The temperatures make history if they go above 90 degrees Fahrenheit or below 70 degrees. The day-night range is usually about 10 degrees, from 80 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer months and 74 to 84 degrees in the winter. The sun is hot year-round, but gentle sea breezes from the northeast trade winds blow throughout the year and help to cool the air. The high humidity makes it is easy to work up a sweat anytime of the day or night.

The rainy season generally lasts from July to December, but the amount of rain varies widely in different locations. In addition, brief showers, sometimes downpours, are common in any month. Additionally, the Eastern Caribbean is prone to hurricanes during the months of June to November. The region can sometimes experience a dry season from March to May. Other environmental concerns, especially in the banana-producing countries, are deforestation, siltation, river pollution, and unplanned and inappropriate land use.

Social Activities

There are a variety of ways to enjoy social activities in the Eastern Caribbean. Since you live on islands where people are friendly and hospitable, the more friends you make and the

more you join in the local activities, the more you will enjoy your two years here.

All islands have local festivals of which Carnival is the biggest. There are plenty of shows, house and street parties, and steel band concerts. Also, most islands have an annual jazz or a Creole-music festival, and these are big cultural treats.

Outdoor sports are also popular among Volunteers and host country nationals. The islands have good hiking trails, mountains for mountain climbing, and thick rain forests that you can visit, preferably with a certified guide. The islands also offer wonderful snorkeling and a lot of warm sandy beaches, good for swimming or just relaxation. For sporting enthusiasts, there are several cricket, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and running clubs. Many Volunteers have initiated sporting groups or clubs in their host communities.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

One of the challenges of being a Peace Corps Volunteer is immersing yourself into the local culture while maintaining your own cultural identity and professionalism. It is not an easy thing to resolve, but we will guide you through the process.

The way you dress is important. You may feel inclined to wear shorts and tank tops because they keep you cool. However, as long as you are at any place other than the beach or the privacy of your home, it is imperative that you dress in a manner that does not resemble that of a tourist. It will become more apparent to you later in your service that setting the tone early on and dressing with care are very important for your image. You may be working as a representative of a government ministry, and, as such, you are expected to dress and behave accordingly. A foreigner wearing unmended or

excessively informal clothing is more likely to be considered an affront. This topic is extensively addressed during training. Wearing appropriate attire also helps you avoid harassment.

Integrating into your new community will be hard enough. A new Volunteer needs as few distractions as possible as they establish themselves. For that reason Volunteers are asked not to display body piercings or tattoos during the first months of their service. This includes nose rings, tongue bolts, and navel rings. Men are not allowed to wear earrings or have long hair or ponytails during that same timeframe. Tattoos should remain covered to the greatest extent possible throughout your service. If you do not remove your body rings and cut your hair before you arrive in the Eastern Caribbean, you will be asked to do so before you move in with a host family during training. If you have reservations about this policy and the degree of sacrifice and flexibility required to be a successful Volunteer, you should reevaluate your decision to accept the invitation to Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean.

Personal Safety

Your safety is our first priority and it must be yours as well. To this end, we have an emergency action plan that we continuously test and revise. The plan provides you with information on how to respond to a crisis situation. The section on Health Care and Safety in this *Welcome Book* provides tips on how to keep safe. Being a stranger in a foreign environment is, in itself, a safety hazard, and Volunteers must take their own safety precautions by being very vigilant and avoiding unsafe places or events. As a foreigner and an assumed tourist or U.S. medical student, you may become a target for muggings or other forms of physical and verbal assaults. Environmental risks such as hurricanes and volcanic eruptions are also a possibility in the Eastern

Caribbean. The Peace Corps is cognizant of these risks and has implemented policies and measures to enhance your safety and security.

By joining the Peace Corps, you have become part of a unique organization, which is predicated on the belief that every Peace Corps Volunteer will serve successfully and go home safe and sound. Your experience in the Peace Corps takes up only a short period in your life and you should expect to go home enhanced—not diminished; stronger—not weaker; enlightened—not confused, and certainly not physically or emotionally harmed.

The rules are different in the Peace Corps and each of us—trainees, Volunteers, and staff—must take full responsibility for our own behavior, safety, and welfare. We must also look out for the behavior, safety, and welfare of each other. It is our responsibility to do all that we can to encourage the appropriate behavior and ensure the safety of everyone else. This simple commitment may make the difference between someone who is enhanced by their Peace Corps experience and someone who is harmed.

You must take responsibility for yourself and not depend on others to make decisions for you. It is okay to tell others that you are worried about them. Work with them to avoid or reduce inappropriate and/or potentially dangerous behavior. Please speak to staff when you feel that additional assistance is needed to have someone stay safe, secure, and productive.

Rewards and Frustrations

Life as a Volunteer has its rewards, particularly as you begin your work. Your projects will start to flourish, and your partners will learn and grow. By the same token, you will feel the frustrations when things take too long to happen or do

not turn out as you expect. People may not always show the level of interest and enthusiasm that you anticipate, or they may not be prepared to make the changes that you think are good for them. Therefore, you must approach everything with an open mind, be willing to accept change, and, most of all, be flexible.

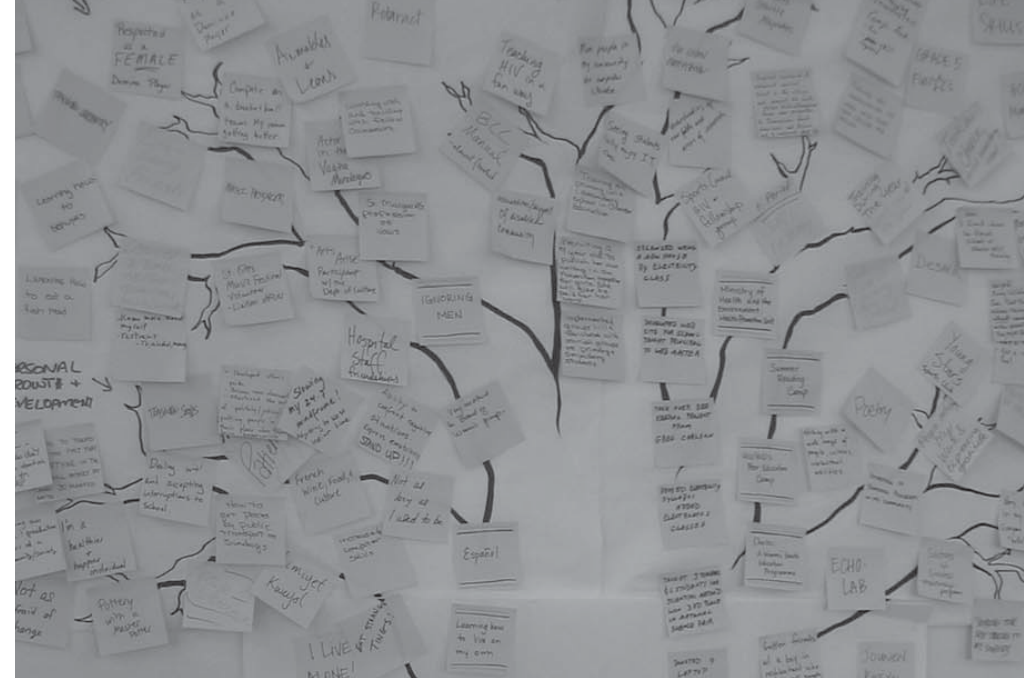
Volunteers are expected to observe the same work schedules, reporting procedures, leave-of-absence policies, and access to agency resources as their co-workers. You may feel alone and that no one appreciates your efforts. The way to overcome this is by setting your own personal goals and remaining focused on them, even when progress seems slow and remote. Peace Corps life has its ups and downs, good times and bad. Learn to enjoy the gains and look forward to these moments rather than dwell on the losses.

It is also important not to interpret “Volunteer” in the way that some volunteer service is viewed in the United States. Your assignment will involve being on the job day in and day out, following the same schedules and protocols as your host country colleagues. You will not be able to casually take a few days off to travel to another island or go off on a trip to visit family. There are opportunities for taking annual leave and vacation, but the associated application procedures and scheduling requirements must be observed. Failure to abide by these and other policies and procedures could be cause for disciplinary action. Peace Corps has more rules and regulations than you may expect. They are in place to provide a structured and supportive environment, within which you will be safe and productive.

Being a Volunteer in the Caribbean involves a high degree of commitment. Projects are designed and assignments are made with the idea that Volunteers will honor their commitment and work for two years. Host agencies, sponsoring ministries, and local community members or students are counting on you to remain in your position for a full term. Do not accept this invitation to service if you are not willing to make such a commitment.

Whatever frustrations and limitations may exist, Peace Corps Volunteers who serve in the Eastern Caribbean consistently find the experience to be uniquely rewarding. There is a special kind of satisfaction that comes from learning to live and work effectively in another culture. It soon becomes apparent that the experience effectively contributes to your own personal and professional development, and to the development of the host country.

CREATION



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 TREE OF
 ACHIEVEMENT

I LIVE
 KLONE!

Learning how to live on my own

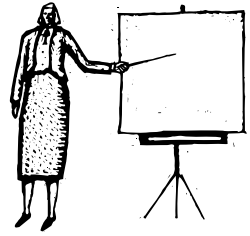
Started to get up on my own

Classroom

Learned how to live on my own



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training (PST) is seven weeks in length and begins with the arrival of a new group of trainees, once a year. Phase One of PST, the first three weeks, is conducted on St. Lucia, where Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean headquarters is located. Phase Two of PST takes place on the island nation of assignment and lasts four weeks. During the entire training period and for two weeks after swearing-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will live with a homestay family. Qualification for Peace Corps service is determined according to an established set of competencies and upon successful completion of PST. After seven weeks of PST, trainees are sworn in as Volunteers and are expected to serve 24 months from that date.

Pre-service training in the Eastern Caribbean is a unique and challenging opportunity that requires your active and full participation. There are two interrelated goals. First, training is designed to provide you with the basic cross-cultural, technical, language, behavior norms, and health and personal safety skills necessary to live and work effectively as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Second, training is a mutual assessment process, whereby you will have the responsibility to assess whether Peace Corps service is the right thing for you at this point in your life. At the same time, Peace Corps staff will assess your suitability to provide the Eastern Caribbean with Volunteers who are effective and qualified.

During the first week of training in St. Lucia, you will be assigned to serve in one of the six Eastern Caribbean island nations. Peace Corps staff will make site assignment decisions by matching your skills, background, and medical status with

the needs of a particular community--not on the basis of your personal preferences. You should expect to serve anywhere in the Eastern Caribbean, including rural areas on the more remote islands. When you accept our invitation to serve in the Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean, you are agreeing to serve in any of the six main islands and in any one of the smaller islands, such as Barbuda, Nevis, and Carriacou, which are also part of the region.

Our training has been designed with the following two goals in mind. The first goal is to assist you in developing the skills that will make you a self-sufficient Volunteer in your new environment by learning to access resources and information, engage safely and communicate easily with your communities, and adjust to cultural differences. The second goal is to equip you to work as a partner in change with your community to accomplish its goals in accordance with the Peace Corps' project framework. To meet these goals, training uses both competency-based and community-based training models. Your training activities have been designed to facilitate learning information and acquiring skills that will allow you to carry out the tasks outlined in the project framework and meet competencies in safety and security, health, personal behavior, culture, language, and technical areas. Additionally, the community-based training (CBT) model incorporates coaching, demonstration, and self learning. CBT focuses on individual autonomy where trainees are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. You will participate in field facilitated sessions and carry out self-directed activities on your own or with assistance from your community support network, including your homestay family.

Technical Training

Technical training prepares you to hone the skills that you bring, to feel confident in using your skills, and to learn new skills necessary to meet the needs of your community. Technical training will help prepare you to operate in the community development context, with specific technical topics including: asset-based community development approaches, management tools for group dynamics, conflict management, team building, learning methodologies for literacy, non-formal education tools, and a behavior change communication methodology. Current Volunteers assist in facilitating some sessions on the individual island nations. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Besides training in the area of community development, technical training will include sessions on the economic and political situations in the Eastern Caribbean and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review the community development technical goals and will meet with the local agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated by the training staff throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you will need to undertake your project activities and to be a productive member of your community.

For the most part, competencies in language, personal behavior, cross-culture, health and safety and security will be incorporated within the technical training sessions. Some sessions will be stand-alone, however, to ensure that critical elements of some competencies are addressed.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are important for personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are important to your job performance, will help you integrate into your host community, and ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Our goal is to help you acquire basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills more thoroughly once you are at your site. Although the language of business on most of the islands is English, many of the islands also have a second widely used language. Trainees assigned to St. Lucia and Dominica are introduced to the French-based Creole or Kweyol, which is spoken on these island nations. Volunteers going to other islands will have language sessions in the various dialects spoken there during phase two of pre-service training. Resources will also be available on St. Lucia and Dominica for working with language tutors once you are at your site.

Cross-Cultural Training

Throughout your pre-service training, you will live with a host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition into life at your site. Families are thoroughly briefed and familiar with the Peace Corps' homestay policy. They have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in the Caribbean. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families, and maintain those bonds long after their return to the United States.

Cross-culture and diversity are covered to help improve your skills of perception, communication, and facilitation within the community development focus. Topics such as "liming" with

a purpose, the cycle of adjustment, comfort zone exercises, group dynamics, and gender and development will be addressed.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic health and nutrition training. You are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all Peace Corps policies. You are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that Volunteers may encounter while in the Caribbean. Sexual health, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), harassment, nutrition, and mental health issues are among the topics covered.

Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service. There will be instruction on coping with crises and emergencies, and the regional emergency action plan will be explained and discussed.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides trainees and Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During your service, there is a minimum of three training events.

Additional workshops are planned on the basis of resources and special initiatives. The titles and objectives for the minimum number of trainings are as follows:

- *In-Service Training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Mid-Service Training*: Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, gaining and refining skills for their second year of service, and beginning to plan for life after Peace Corps.
- *Close-of-Service Conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews Volunteers' respective projects and personal experiences. Volunteers' views are solicited in the planning process to ensure that their needs are adequately met.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

Remember, you are responsible for your own learning. Peace Corps training will support you by providing opportunities for gaining experience, information and resources.

NOTES

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YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean maintains its own in-country health unit with three full-time medical officers. One, based on St. Lucia, is responsible for the medical needs of Peace Corps Volunteers on Dominica and St. Lucia. Another, based on Dominica, looks after Volunteers on St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada, Carriacou, Petit Martinique. The third, based on St. Kitts, takes care of Volunteers on Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis. The medical officers travel regularly to the island nations in their care. Consultant medical services are also available throughout the Eastern Caribbean. In addition, the Peace Corps has a well-organized system for moving seriously ill Volunteers to the continental United States or another appropriate site when necessary.

The Peace Corps medical program emphasizes the preventive approach to disease rather than the curative mode. As a rule of thumb, good healthcare comes from good health maintenance. Health conditions in the Caribbean are good by international standards, but certain immunizations are required and must be kept current during your tour. The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medication, and information to stay healthy; however, you must accept responsibility for using the information and medication provided. If you have any concern about the type and quantity of inoculations you will

receive during your service, please consult with the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. Refusal to get shots or take prescribed medication will be grounds for removal from service. All trainees will receive extensive medical orientation during training.

Health Issues in the Eastern Caribbean

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let your medical officer know immediately of significant illness and injuries. Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable, but only if proper care and precautions are taken. Food and water can pose a challenge to healthy living in the Eastern Caribbean. The most common diseases include food poisoning, environmental allergies, conjunctivitis (or pink eye), heat rash, swimmer's ear, viral infections, diarrhea, urinary tract infections, and dengue fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation during pre-service training. Other diseases prevalent in the Eastern Caribbean include STDs, especially HIV/AIDS, alcohol and drug abuse, diabetes, and hypertension.

A recent increase in hurricanes passing through the region has significantly increased Volunteer stress levels. The need to consolidate in preparation for a storm disrupts Volunteer activities and may take Volunteers away from their sites for a number of days, even weeks. In addition, if a storm does impact a Volunteer's island, dealing with the trauma and devastation can pose particular issues to mental health and well-being. Peace Corps staff members are trained to assist Volunteers in dealing with issues associated with hurricanes.

Helping You Stay Healthy

Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean provides personalized healthcare service to trainees and Volunteers. You will receive all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in the Eastern Caribbean you will receive a medical handbook. At the beginning of training, you will receive a health kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs.

During training, you will have access to basic first-aid supplies through the medical officer and local staff. However, during this time, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring at least a three-month supply of any prescription drugs or special medical supplies that you use, since they may not be available in-country and it may take several months for new shipments to arrive.

We will provide you with well-tested and proven generic medications to suit your needs. We cannot guarantee that we will provide you with the U.S. brand-name medications you currently use. You may want to consult with your physician now and switch from brand-name to generic medications before you come. In particular, women using oral contraceptives of a particular brand and composition may find that we will replace what they are used to with generics with the exact same composition of hormones and other components.

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in charge of your island of assignment will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition

cannot be treated on island, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept significant responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage “An ounce of prevention Is worth a pound of cure” becomes extremely important in areas where medical diagnostic and treatment facilities lack appropriate technology and resources. The most important of your responsibilities in the Eastern Caribbean includes taking preventive measures for the following:

Dengue fever is a common health problem in all of the islands, so you should take all the necessary precautions against mosquito bites. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is the carrier of this disease. Avoid mosquito bites by wearing appropriate clothing, ensure that your landlord provides screens on your windows, and use Peace Corps-provided mosquito netting and insect repellent.

Food poisoning is another common ailment that can be avoided by following proper food and water safety precautions. You will be cautioned about the quality of potable water and given instructions on how to keep your drinking water potable.

It is important to emphasize that HIV/AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease and concerns all sexually active individuals, both homosexual and heterosexual. The keys to reducing the risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS are knowledge and prevention. The Peace Corps has adopted medical policies and practices worldwide to help protect its Volunteers and staff from transmission of the disease;

however, only you can avoid the risk of infection. While you will receive more information from your medical officer about this important issue, you must be aware of the following basic facts:

- Worldwide, 5 million to 10 million people may be infected with the virus that causes AIDS.
- The incidence of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean is second only to sub-Saharan Africa.
- HIV/AIDS is fatal and currently cannot be cured.
- The AIDS virus is spread by sexual intercourse, by contaminated blood, and by contaminated hypodermic needles.
- A person can look and feel healthy and still be able to spread the virus.
- An infected woman can pass AIDS to her child during pregnancy or during birth.
- HIV/AIDS has not been shown to be spread by casual contact, such as living in the same house or sharing eating utensils, etc.
- HIV/AIDS has not been shown to be transmitted by biting insects.
- Celibacy or a stable, monogamous relationship with another uninfected person is the safest way to avoid infection. In any case, reducing the number of sexual partners reduces the chances of getting HIV/AIDS.
- Use of condoms reduces the exchange of body fluids and may reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS infection during sexual contact.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume they are free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs.

Your Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with more specific in-country information and will keep you informed of measures you can take to reduce your risk of exposure.

Women's Health Information

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer. Pregnancy is a health condition that is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions requiring medical attention, but may also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if a pregnant Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is highly unlikely that the Peace Corps medical and programmatic standards for continued service could be met. The majority of Volunteers who become pregnant are medically separated.

Feminine hygiene products are readily available in all the Eastern Caribbean island nations. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a six-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a health kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that might occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at your Peace Corps medical office. A review of the kit contents will be done during training.

Possible Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandage
Adhesive tape
American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook
Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
Band-Aids
Butterfly closures
Calamine lotion
Cepacol lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since the time you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records.

If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in the Eastern Caribbean.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth-control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. You may want to switch to generics before you come as we may not be able to provide you with U.S. brand-name medications. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or anti-oxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, although it might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about your on-hand three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. Many Volunteers in the Eastern Caribbean use contacts without problems, but Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended it for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval. However, please keep in mind the appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses may not be available in all sites.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you should consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health-care benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age and/or preexisting conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents

of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 85 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2006 Peace Corps Volunteer survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2006, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings).
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 11:00 p.m.

- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 73 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 48 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Fourteen (14) percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers. Twenty-six (26) percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

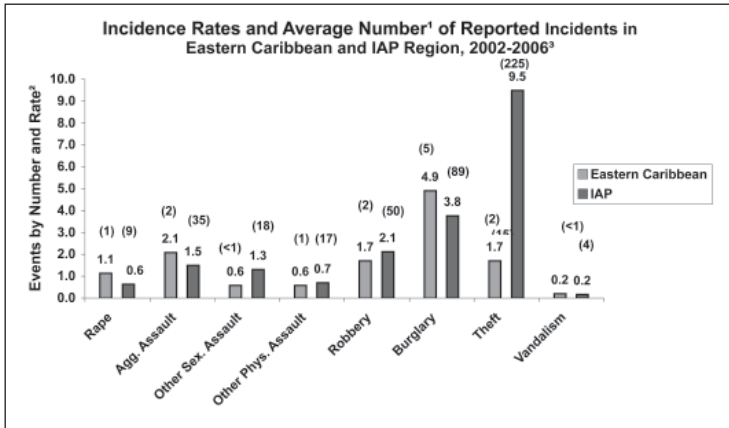
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents

of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in the Eastern Caribbean as compared to all other Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) region programs as a whole, from 2002–2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An "incident" is a



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Eastern Caribbean began as of 2002; due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Sexual Assaults are termed Other Sexual Assault and Other Physical Assault per CIRF definitions as of the year 2006. Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault and Minor Physical Assault per ANSS definitions.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 07/16/07.

specific offense, per Peace Corps’ classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking

something by force); other physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); other sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy,

local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer or the safety and security coordinator. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors, medical officers, and safety and security coordinator are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in the Eastern Caribbean

When it comes to your safety and security as a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will have to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime exists in all of the Caribbean islands. You can reduce your risk of becoming a target for crime by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions such as keeping away from high risk areas; not walking in deserted places alone (especially at night); avoiding angry, aggressive people; and keeping out of arguments and quarrels. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions, especially in large towns, are favorite work sites for pickpockets. Safety concerns in the Eastern Caribbean you should be aware of are: break-ins, petty thefts, robberies, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, drug-related crimes, gang feuds, rape, harassment, and vehicular accidents.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

As has been stressed, you must be prepared to take responsibility for your own safety. Basic and personal things like not making yourself a target, ensuring that your house is secure, and developing relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime are things that you alone can do. In coming to the Eastern Caribbean, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask a lot of questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and always be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and

procedures. Serving safely and effectively in the Eastern Caribbean may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers receive more negative attention in populated centers, where they are anonymous or thought of as tourists. In smaller towns, “family,” friends, and colleagues will look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, and do not respond to such negative and unwanted attention. Keep your money out of sight. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. If you need to be out at night, do so in a group or at least have a companion.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in the Eastern Caribbean

The Peace Corps’ approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents.

The Peace Corps office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may affect their safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memoranda from the country director or safety and security coordinator. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network using a “phone tree.”

Volunteer training will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues on your island of assignment. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes

safety and reduces risk in your home, at work and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout your two-year service and is integrated into the cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. Peace Corps staff work closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for the Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective role in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection criteria are based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements and other support needs.

You will also learn about the Eastern Caribbean's detailed **emergency action plan** in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. A booklet covering the emergency action plan will be given to each Volunteer. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers will gather at pre-determined locations until the situation resolves itself or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to Peace Corps staff. The Peace Corps has **established protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner. In addition to responding to the needs of the Volunteer, the Peace Corps collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcome among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race, and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences. Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal.

In other ways, however, our diversity poses challenges. Here in the Eastern Caribbean, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from your own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics considered familiar and commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed.

The Caribbean people are well-known for their generous hospitality to foreigners. However, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to differences that you present. We will ask you to be supportive of one another.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in the Eastern Caribbean, you may need to make what might feel like fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an

American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions will need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limits. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during your pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge will ultimately be your own.

Overview of Diversity in the Eastern Caribbean

The Peace Corps staff in the Eastern Caribbean recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, religions, sexual orientations, ethnic groups, and ages and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who will take pride in supporting each other and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Dealing with the behavior of some men in the Eastern Caribbean can be challenging to an American woman of any age. There are no laws in the Eastern Caribbean against sexual harassment, so men are used to making all types of remarks when a woman passes by. These remarks vary from a simple “psst!!” to “Looking good, baby!” to more sexually explicit solicitations. Even the local women whom they see every day are not spared this verbal harassment, but they know how to cope.

Volunteer Comments:

“So you are walking down the street minding your own business when you hear ‘Pssst, pssst!!’ You wonder what is that? Where did it come from? Was it intended for me? You look around and see a man, older or younger, good-looking or not. He is blowing you kisses and saying, ‘I like to see you.’ You look at him in a variety of ways—disgusted, annoyed, or bothered. But any verbal reaction or recognition may trigger an extended response. So you decide to ignore him and walk on. This is just one of the many scenarios a woman may encounter while walking down the street, and it will happen more than once a day.”

“As a female Volunteer, there are things that I had to get used to. The men here yell out to women, especially American women. Ignoring them, I have found, is the best way to handle it. After a while you won’t even notice it.”

“As a woman in the Eastern Caribbean, you will have to deal with male harassment. There is no way of getting away from it. The harassment can be in the form of catcalls, ‘psssting,’ and the list goes on. Sometimes it will be that simple. At other times, a man may be more direct. He may come sit next to you to talk, which may mean only that he wants to be your friend. Anyhow, it is important to mentally prepare yourself for this type of behavior. If you don’t, then you’ll find yourself getting very angry all the time. It is also important to decide how you will deal with these situations. Will you ignore the cat-calling, or will you be direct and acknowledge men before the calling begins? The latter is a good tactic, as it most usually throws them for a loop. Your way of dealing with this situation depends upon your personality. With time, you can and will get used to this behavior, and the adjustment will be made.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Volunteers of color face unique challenges in the Eastern Caribbean. An African-American Volunteer may pass for a local in tourist areas, but be viewed primarily as an American by many West Indians. The key is to come without preconceptions or expectations of immediate acceptance. Other minority groups may be called by names that are stereotypical and not very flattering. Also, for many Caucasian Volunteers, this will be the first time they are in the minority. The challenge is to create your own identity outside the stereotype. This is usually easier to do in your own community than in areas where you are not known.

Volunteer Comments:

“When I walk down the street I am called ‘Chinese’ or ‘Bruce Lee’ (even though I am a woman) or ‘Chiny.’ Not a day goes by that this does not happen. I believe this occurs out of pure lack of knowledge. This can become frustrating, but I find that when I tell people I am not Chinese but from a Native American tribe, they become interested to learn more about me. Then comes a cultural exchange that is all part of the Peace Corps.”

“I remember at the beginning of my service, I felt incredibly overwhelmed as I approached schools full of kids whispering ‘Chiny,’ speaking their own version of Chinese (‘ching ching chong’), or making karate noises (‘hiyaaaah!’). Some days you are more patient than others, and you really do learn to pick your battles. Ignoring works for some people and not for others. Those that want attention will continue yelling the comments after you even as you walk past them. Generally, if I am in my own community, I make it a point to stop and explain who I am. I refuse to feel uncomfortable in my own community. I find humor helps, and most of the

time it is just kids or men who want attention. The fact that you stop and give them attention makes them a little more understanding and they almost always approach me differently and more respectfully the next time. Then there are others who are not doing it for attention, but just to make a joke and get a laugh out of their friends at your expense. I find these to be the most frustrating situations, because I know they have no interest in knowing who I am or I have no interest in knowing who they are. Cars will pass by sometimes, slow down to make a comment while I'm walking on the road, and then drive off too fast for me to even respond. I'm left feeling helpless. Or, a couple of people will be nearby and make comments loudly enough for you to hear ('ching chong wong'), but not directly speak to you. I feel while it is part of the culture to joke and laugh, these comments are hurtful to me because I feel completely misunderstood."

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Senior Volunteers usually fare well in the Eastern Caribbean. They may not become victims of some of the harassment that younger Volunteers face, but the same safety issues exist, especially when they are viewed as tourists. Sometimes, seniors command a high level of respect from community members, especially in smaller communities. At other times, they are questioned as to why they are here.

Volunteer Comments:

"When young Volunteers ask if you want to turtle watch, climb a mountain, or go to the woods for a weekend camp, feel free to say no, and they will understand. I have found that a quiet evening enjoying a local dinner is a better way for me to relax. However, go with a local friend or another Volunteer. I think that I am not treated any better or worse

than any other Volunteer. Being an older Volunteer is a joyous experience, so come and enjoy what may be the best two years of your life.”

“Peace Corps is designed for trainees and Volunteers in their early 20s. The training, rules, and expectations are geared to that age group. It can be frustrating for an older Volunteer for that reason. Living with a host family, not being able to drive, and having so many restrictions takes time to get used to. I do not think I had considered all that before I joined, but I do see that Peace Corps is trying to adapt to having more and more older Volunteers coming in, so changes are occurring.”

“It was different once I arrived on my island. The adjustment period rears its ugly head. Each of us copes with the stress of adjusting according to our own strengths and weaknesses. The ages of the Volunteers assigned to my island fell into the low 20s for most, to four women from 45 to 60 years old. We all coped differently. It was a lonely time. I was forced to mine deep inner resources that I didn’t know I had. In conversations with my fellow Volunteers, I found out that they, too, went through the same process. Age has very little to do with it. Now that the stress has eased, I find I have made lots of friends of all ages, some within and some outside the Peace Corps community. Strengthening these relationships is what the Peace Corps experience is all about.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Many Caribbean people are intolerant of persons with different sexual orientations. Gay and lesbian Volunteers will have a hard time if they are open about their sexual orientation. Homosexuals can become subjects of continued

harassment and violence. Some West Indians believe that the Bible says that such people go against the divine plan. They may shun or mock gay Volunteers since they engage in what are considered to be abnormal practices. Volunteers who wish to be openly gay in their communities should discuss possible implications of this with staff and other gay Volunteers before doing so.

Volunteer Comment:

“It is quite an experience to be out visiting friends and family at home in the United States and then, upon returning to the Eastern Caribbean, having to go back into the closet. I expected the old-fashioned morality among the local people, but imagine my surprise when I found that I was the only homosexual among 50 or so trainees. Over time, I have fostered close friendships with fellow Volunteers on my island. This has provided me with the opportunity to finally have people with whom I can vent my frustrations. I have also made friends with local people, but such friendships are always tricky. I know, without a doubt, that if I were ever to reveal who I really am, I would surely be ostracized by them and the community at large. I work in the schools with children, and I must always be super careful never to reveal any hint of my ‘abnormality.’ Despite the adversities of my assignment, I am glad I came here. I enjoy working and living in the Caribbean. There are the daily ups and downs, but I find the positives most often outweigh the negatives.”

“I realized that compromises would have to occur, but I do not think I understood to what extent. Peace Corps staff has tried to establish support systems, but I realize that it is a very personal issue.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

People in the Eastern Caribbean are mostly devout Christians and take religion very seriously. They go to church, say their prayers, read the Bible, and generally engage in a variety of religious activities. Many American evangelists travel to the Caribbean to hold crusades and are well-received. It is often expected that people coming to live and work in the Eastern Caribbean will be active Christians. Volunteers of Jewish, Muslim, and other faiths may be questioned about their religious beliefs and perhaps be subjects of discrimination.

Volunteer Comments:

“There is religion in every school, at meetings, even, at times, on the buses when you ride home in the evenings. This can make you feel uncomfortable when you don’t believe in God or when your religion is one that does not exist on the island. Remember flexibility, patience, and tolerance.”

“An avowed atheist, I eschewed any and all religious activities at home in the States. Yet, suddenly, in response to a nation in which Christianity informs every aspect of daily life, my Jewish heritage and upbringing have become a significant part of what I define as ‘home’—where I come from. And at the same time, as this new understanding of home began to open up to me, my host family and neighbors traded anti-Semitic comments, mimicking the sounds of the language that belongs to my family. The people who were supposed to cushion my transition into West Indian culture were instead (albeit unknowingly) arousing my anger and frustration at what I perceived as a lack of courtesy and sensitivity.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

As a disabled Volunteer in the Eastern Caribbean, you may find that you face a special set of challenges. Here, as in other parts of the world, some people may hold prejudicial attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against you. There is very little of the infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities that has been developed in the United States.

That being said, as part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodation, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in the Eastern Caribbean without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. The Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in their training, housing, job sites, or in other areas, to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Married couples serving in the Eastern Caribbean generally have a very positive Volunteer experience. They support each other in integrating into the community, in evaluating progress in their assignments, and in putting their challenges and frustrations in perspective.

Couples live together throughout their service, including pre-service training. In addition to their individual projects, couples usually can find opportunities for collaborative work as well. However, given the small communities in the Eastern Caribbean, some couples may find the continuous presence of a spouse leaves each with little privacy.

Married Volunteers may not readily participate in activities in which their single peers are involved, and find that they are left out of the social “loop.”

The female partner may be subjected to the same sexual harassment as a single female Volunteer. Generally, most local men will desist from such behavior when it is established that the Volunteer is married.

Volunteer Comments:

“After 22 years of marriage, the most challenging aspect of our experience has been learning to live and work together 24 hours a day. Being married has its advantages; you have a built-in support system, a person to share the duties, a sounding board for your frustrations, a security blanket, and a friend to share your experiences.”

“Our primary assignments, health and community development, allow us to work independently, and this gives us some welcome separation, although we do partner for many of our additional activities. For example, together we conduct a parenting class for adults and an environmental club for young children.”

“Serving in the Peace Corps is an amazing experience, and sharing that with someone has been tremendously rewarding. We applied for the Peace Corps while engaged, and left for the Eastern Caribbean five months after we married. Together, we set out on an adventure, which allowed us the opportunity to grow, learn, and understand a new culture, new people, new environment, and, ultimately, more about ourselves and each other. Although we come from different fields (special education and small business

development), we work more closely together than ever imagined because of the community development approach to our service we have adopted.”

“Our days are now filled with schoolchildren, neighbors, friends, community development projects, lessons, meetings, swimming, laughing, sweating, and loving life. Barrouallie is a part of our lives that we will forever carry with us. It is something that we will share and treasure for the rest of our lives. That is one of the greatest benefits of serving in the Peace Corps as a married person...there is someone with you, experiencing everything you experience, sharing everything you do, and who will never let you forget your time in the Peace Corps once you return home.”

Things I must do :

1. I must talk softly.



2. I must sit in my chair.



3. I must ask to go out.



4. I must play well.



5. I must do my work.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage will I be allowed to bring to the Eastern Caribbean?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined linear dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag. Checking with local airlines is always a good idea to insure there are no new regulations.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Please research current restrictions on carry-on items, as determined by the airlines and government agencies, before you depart. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

What is the electric current in the Eastern Caribbean?

It is 220 volts. If you have U.S. electronic items, then you must use a step-down transformer. The islands experience power surges and occasional power cuts, so bring along a good surge protector. The surge protector is especially important if you are bringing a laptop.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often, Volunteers bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. Please note that U.S. bank accounts can be accessed with your ATM card, and can provide a way to access money when you need it, instead of carrying large amounts of cash.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (which begin to accrue once you swear-in as a Volunteer). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after your first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from the country director. The Peace Corps cannot provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance. Staff on each island will need to be notified when you have visitors at your site in case of emergencies.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. Ultimately, Volunteers are responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. Given an increase in lost baggage during transit, we strongly encourage trainees to purchase insurance before departing from the U.S. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided during your two-day staging event, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take

valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage. Moreover, satisfactory maintenance and repair services may not be available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in the Eastern Caribbean do not need an international driver's license. Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers are prohibited from driving.

What should I bring as gifts for Caribbean friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include: Knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are assigned to individual sites the first week of training. Phase two of PST takes place on the island nation of assignment and lasts four weeks. During the entire training period and for two weeks after swearing in as a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will live with a homestay family.

Once Volunteers are sworn in, they are required to live with the same homestay family for an additional two weeks. After this time, Volunteers can get help from community partners, host family, or their associate Peace Corps director in identifying a suitable home or apartment of their own. Some Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages; others may live in the capital, but the farthest they will be from another Volunteer is usually 20 to 30 minutes. All housing must meet Peace Corps' site selection criteria for safety.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The following number can be used 24/7 to report any such incidents: Office of Special Services, 800.424.8580, extension 1470. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at Peace Corps/Washington by calling 800.424.8580, extension 2509.

Can I call home from any of the island nations?

Direct dialing service is available on all of the island nations. Simply dial 1+ area code + the number. Fixed line telephone services are provided by Cable & Wireless, while three cellular carriers now operate on most of the islands. U.S. phone cards do not work here so do not bring them. You can purchase local "smart-phone" cards for local or long-distance calls.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

You may bring your cellphone as long as it is compatible with the Eastern Caribbean system. This means that it must be either GSM or TDMA. It may be easier to buy the phone and service together in-country once you are assigned to an island in the Eastern Caribbean. You are encouraged to purchase a cellular phone plan that services your island of assignment. On a number of islands, all the Volunteers are on the same calling plan, making intra-Volunteer calls free on that network. Please note that if you bring your own cellphone, you still may have to pay up to \$75 (U.S.) to get it unlocked so that you can use it in the Eastern Caribbean. If possible, bring it unlocked from the States.

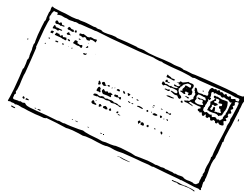
Will there be e-mail and Internet access?

The Eastern Caribbean is modernized and computer technology is common. Each Peace Corps office is equipped with a computer for use by Volunteers, which offers Internet access. If you currently use e-mail, be sure to bring along all important addresses with you. Internet and e-mail access will be difficult during training.

If you decide to bring your own computer, we recommend you insure it. Internet access is available from home and is fairly inexpensive. Volunteers sometimes find it helpful to have a computer for work.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM EASTERN CARIBBEAN VOLUNTEERS



Dear New Volunteer:

Welcome to the Eastern Caribbean! I'm guessing that some of your friends and family, and even you at times, have wondered what kind of placement Peace Corps has in store for you in the Eastern Caribbean—I know I did! Images of honeymooners, cruise ships, white sandy beaches, and tropical cuisine came to mind immediately, making me wonder if what I could offer would be useful to the people who call the Eastern Caribbean home. I soon realized that beyond being a tourist destination, the Eastern Caribbean needs and appreciates its Volunteers—whether your placement is business development, youth development, working within a village, or with an organization. Enjoy your two years because they will go by too fast.

In order to assist you with your packing needs, here's some information that may help. First, use the Peace Corps' guidelines for packing clothing as just that: GUIDELINES! They didn't make too much sense to me as I was packing, but I figured that the people who wrote them had lived in the Eastern Caribbean and knew what they were talking about. My advice: stick to what's cool, comfortable, and respectful! You can never have too many socks and underwear (well, that's what Mom always said!), a handful of T-shirts, a few "nicer" shirts (think polo type with collar or knitwear), at least five pairs of pants and a similar number of shorts, at least two pairs of dress shoes, and a couple pairs of jeans...yes, jeans!

Here's a quick list of things that I'm glad I brought or had sent that have assisted with the transition of moving to and living in a foreign, tropical location: eagerness to learn, wattage converter and plug adapters, Texas, open mind, two pairs of sneakers (one to mash up and the other for things like

hiking, walking, and wearing with jeans), CDs, humbleness, journals, two Nalgene water bottles, humility, laptop, camera, positive attitude, sun block, photos of friends and family, and a smile.

Closing out the current chapter of your life in the next weeks or months that you spend planning and preparing for your departure to staging may cause trepidation and anxiety. Don't despair—that's completely normal! The rewards that you will receive for making and sticking to the commitment of becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer will be well worth it!

Two of my favorite quotes that I relate to my Peace Corps experience are: "No one ever hurt their eyes by looking on the bright side of things"; and "Never expect anything to go your way, and when it does be pleasantly surprised!" Your experience is truly what you make of it...tightly interwoven are the non-material things that you bring with you.

With warmest wishes for a successful service post,

—Andrea Felix
Island Nation of Dominica

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Dear Prospective Volunteer,

Congratulations on surviving the most testing part of Peace Corps, the application process. You've not only been lucky enough to make it through, you've also been lucky enough to be placed in the Eastern Caribbean. You are about to embark on an amazing journey.

As you begin to tell your family and friends that you have been assigned to the Eastern Caribbean, you will get many strange reactions. Your volunteerism will suddenly be looked upon as an extended vacation or a "Beach Corps," but that isn't the case at all. In fact, the Eastern Caribbean post presents many reasons for Peace Corps' presence, including poverty, illiteracy, environmental issues, lack of resources and jobs, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and a partial "brain drain" due to migration. These factors, in addition to the banana market's recent collapse (one of the Eastern Caribbean's major industries), leave the region in need of much assistance.

That's where we come in. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will be able to connect people to the resources they need in order to help develop their abilities and communities.

I can still remember the day I arrived in my village. I was dropped off and simply expected to figure out what I needed to do. A very daunting task. But it didn't take me long to begin to understand where the village needed help. Slowly my projects began to develop and now, almost a year later, I can see the positive impact they will have.

The amazing thing about this post is that we have the technology and ability to bring this region into a condition that no longer falls under the category of "developing." Since we do not need to focus on basic survival needs, like clean water collection or food production, we are able to assist in development issues that will help the Eastern Caribbean compete in a global market. The countries of the Caribbean are currently involved in the CARICOM single market and economy. Without proper training and development, the islands making up the Eastern Caribbean will not be able to hold their own against Trinidad and Jamaica, causing them even more economic strife. The Eastern Caribbean needs the skills and education to emerge out of poverty and Peace Corps Volunteers can help give it that push.

My experience thus far has been amazing. The people, the culture, and the landscape are different from the United States, but I didn't join Peace Corps to have it be like home. Come with an open mind and you'll leave with an experience of a lifetime.

And now some advice on what to pack. Obviously, bring lots of pictures and music. There will be times when you need to escape back home and these items will help you do that. Other items to bring are a journal, camera, flip-flops, hiking shoes, Nalgene bottle, walking sandals, sturdy dress shoes, and cool clothing that can be mixed and matched for various occasions. Some items you might not think about bringing are: basic equipment for your favorite sport (trying to find even a Frisbee or basketball on Dominica is tough and expensive),

a flashlight keychain, blank CDs, Swiss Army knife, art supplies, teaching resources (including books, flashcards, and various supplies), playing cards, puzzle books, and supplies for your favorite hobbies. One point I want to make is that you shouldn't stress out about what to bring. If you forget it, you will survive without it. This was a difficult list to think of because I've adapted to life with what I've brought and what I can find here. So will you.

I hope this letter was of some help. Enjoy this adventure and good luck.

—Veronica Bagnole
Island Nation of Dominica

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Dear Prospective Volunteer:

I'm sure you have all heard the cliché, "time flies," well, trust me, it is absolutely true. As I near my one-year anniversary in Grenada, I can remember vividly reading these same types of letters.

Life as a community development worker in St. David Parish means I divide most of my time between working in a local community center and functioning as a teaching aid in a nearby alternative school. I also spend time with local youth groups, but it often doesn't feel like work at all. (I recently attended a 2007 ICC Cricket World Cup Match with community partners and it was considered work related.)

I don't have a rigid schedule like some Volunteers, which means that most of the work I do varies from day-to-day. I may spend an entire day in the classroom and the following day I'll spend the majority of my time doing manual labor around the community center. During training you'll constantly be reminded to stay flexible. The faster you're able to do this, the faster you'll be able to enjoy your time in the Eastern Caribbean.

After saying goodbye to family and friends, the first thing you have to do is move in with a new family. While that thought can be a little unnerving, I thoroughly enjoyed my

homestay experience. I still keep in touch with my homestay family in St. Lucia.

Once you make it through two homestays, it will be time to move out. Your individual living arrangements will vary but you will all have running water, (at least most of the time) electricity, a phone line, and stove. Some of you will have to wash by hand and take cool showers; others may have hot water and a washing machine. But don't spend too much of your time worrying about these things because you don't have any control over them.

When you do go inside your workplace for the first time dress appropriately and use professionalism. Once you're sufficiently integrated there, you can likely adopt a more laid-back approach in regards to dress and mannerisms. Also, even though you may be the only person there, show up to your meetings and projects on time.

Before I go over some items you should bring, I must say this: The Peace Corps is one of the most unique learning experiences you could ever have. No classroom will teach you the things about life, the world outside the United States, and yourself that your Peace Corps experience will.

No matter how hard you try to pack everything you'll need, once you get here, you'll realize you forgot something. Don't stress about it too much. While some of the Peace Corps policy and guidelines may seem a bit overbearing at times, the staff does an excellent job of keeping us safe and comfortable on our respective islands.

So congratulations! And to those of you heading to Grenada, I'll see you soon.

—Reggie Powell
Island Nation of Grenada

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Future Peace Corps Volunteers,

My sincere congratulations on being chosen to serve in one of the most beautiful and dynamic regions of the world. You're in for what will undoubtedly be the journey of a lifetime.

Be prepared to immerse yourself in the crystal clear waters of the Caribbean Sea; the aromas of fresh mangos, papayas, and pineapple; and the rhythms and rhymes of the soca, reggae, and calypso music. Be prepared as well for the challenges that come along with finding yourself in a completely different culture than your own. An open mind, patience, and perseverance are the roots to many of our successes. Working in community development has provided me with the liberty to broaden my creative horizons and attempt things I would have otherwise deemed unimaginable. I've been blessed with a freedom to focus on the things I see fitting to my educational and professional background, but more importantly to the betterment of my community and its people.

One of my current projects has been to start a student cooperative at the local primary school. It's an opportunity for the children to open their own savings accounts and learn the ever important lesson of preparing for their financial futures. The sense of pride, responsibility, and empowerment I've seen fostered in the over one hundred students participating has been immensely gratifying.

Nestled in a bay on the coast of the Caribbean, the rural fishing village I call home is famous across the island for its Friday night fish fry. I've worked with the local vendors association to help with business-management, group dynamics, and culinary training courses to better the Friday night event and the association as a whole. It's the most eclectic group of individuals I've ever worked with and I find myself constantly challenged in ways never before.

As you prepare yourself for what lies ahead, be reminded of the long-standing history the Peace Corps has in the Eastern Caribbean. The people of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and St. Kitts and Nevis have been opening their homes and hearts to people just like you since Peace Corps' inception more than 45 years ago.

Expect the unexpected, bring plenty of sunscreen and get ready for the most amazing experience of your life.

—Nicholas Klinger
St Lucia

They said that it would all become a blur...that we would barely remember the multitude of adjustments we had made during training...during the what-seemed-like endless time with our homestay families...the ups and downs and in between.

For true? Yes, for true, to use a bit of dialect early on. Almost 10 months in, I cannot for the life of me remember any problems whatsoever. This may be attributable to my age as I will turn 65 this June but, regardless, what I thought of at the time as cataclysmic, has now softened and faded into the deep blue waters of the Caribbean Sea. The very best advice I can offer is to encourage you to relax and chill. Eastern Caribbean time really is slower!

St. Kitts/Nevis are two beautiful islands with a varied history of colonial rule. The one constant in the struggle for power has been the steadfast resolve of the people here to gain independence. Twenty-three years ago, St. Kitts/Nevis became an independent nation. I am often overcome with the fullness of what it means to be here...to observe and be a part of this “developing country.” The emphasis of the Peace Corps on community development...the idea of living “in” a community and working with a particular village to improve their lives is, for me, the opportunity of a lifetime.

Not having a Peace Corps presence on the island for eight years prior to the arrival of our cohort, many of the people had no idea who we were, why we were here, or what we were about. The first several months in my village of Mansion were difficult. I had to force myself to walk the streets, introduce myself, and ignore the strange looks and glances that I encountered. The buses were especially hard. As an “older” person, I suspect that my difficulties were reduced. I will not kid you. It was hard. But, by sharing our travails at our Peace Corps meetings and with the ongoing support of the staff, it gradually got better. Eventually, after the people in my village and a few of the taxi drivers in town began to realize that I was not here just to visit—that I was here for the long haul—acceptance came.

Finding my niche was, and still is, a work in progress. Initially, I had to explore my own ideas that included several “grandiose” projects. Failure was part of the equation. Persistence and resolve served me well. I walked. I talked. I listened. One thing led to another. It did not happen all at once. It evolved. Today, after a million stutter steps, my work at the school reading with the kids, teaching creative writing and organizing the library, and our garden project with the Boys’ Brigade has solidified my place as a bona fide resident of Mansion. My friends here stop by to check on me periodically and my yard is filled with the joy and laughter of children playing. They do not call me “Grandma,” but that’s how it feels. One on one, one kid, one adult at a time, I make my mark. And, as if by osmosis, the wonder of it all is that they make their mark on me. Kindness. Beauty. Joy. Ups and downs. The mix is perfected.

All in all, it is a journey with steadfast support from the Peace Corps staff here, outings with other Volunteers, and the love and support of the locals whom I’m proud to call my friends.

I’ll share with you one of my favorite quotes: “Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming; Wow! What a ride!”

We are here. We are expecting you. So sit back...relax...hold tight. And get ready for the ride of your life!

Safe journey to you all...

—Marty
Martha C. Landis
St. Kitts

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Welcome to the Eastern Caribbean!

It doesn’t matter if you’re LGBTI or any other letter of the alphabet, the following will be true for you, the next two years will be a couple of the most difficult but rewarding of your life! Prepare yourself to make the most of it. While every

experience is unique and everyone has struggles, being a sexual minority poses additional challenges. My best advice, begin to build a support system as quickly as possible. I had success with PC staff and fellow volunteers. I had great support from the country director and my associate Peace Corps director, and shared more than one of my most difficult evenings with other Volunteers. We all had hard times and we learned to rely on each other. Maybe I could have made it on my own, but I'm glad I didn't have to.

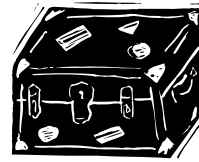
I began at staging. I had a frank conversation with the trainer who directed me to a staff member he knew to be helpful at the first stage of pre-service training who directed me to other supportive staff who eventually provided me with opportunities to provide support for others while continuing to build support for myself. As a result, I've had the opportunity to assist with diversity training within Peace Corps and even contribute to a NGO that does outreach work with the local gay community. It's been a trip.

So, what are you getting yourself into? Only you will be able to answer that and it's worth exploring. As for my experience, there's too much to describe here. No lie, it's going to be a challenge, and there are joys as well as tears. But truth be told, you didn't come here for a two-year vacation. You came here to help others make life better. There's ample opportunity for you to do just that, here. Good luck. It's a good thing you do, and I'm glad you're here.

—Tom Jacobs
Grenada



PACKING LIST



There is no perfect packing list. You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later.

One essential item to bring is a shortwave battery-operated radio. We strongly encourage all Volunteers to keep a radio at home so that in the event of an emergency or hurricane you can be kept informed of the latest developments

You will need clothing for work, special occasions, and relaxation and fun. Bring clothes that are washable. For work, both men and women should stick to cotton and poly-cottons so you can dress to stay cool. Military-style clothing (i.e., camouflage or olive-green Army surplus items) is inappropriate for a Volunteer. Comfortable and respectful are two adjectives to keep in mind.

For Work

For men: Let no-iron and wash-and-wear be your guide. For most jobs, short-sleeved shirts that tuck in and washable slacks will be your mainstays. Bring the number you think you need. Some people hate to be bothered with laundry and tend to let it pile up before attacking it; others prefer to wash things as they go. You're assignment will take you into schools, government offices, and local agencies. You can expect that your colleagues will always be dressed appropriately and well. A professional image is important. Select your shirts (with collars) and slacks with this in mind. Khaki pants become a staple in your wardrobe. Although shorts are worn on the

street, Volunteers should bring longer-style shorts for street use. Shorts are not encouraged for visits to the Peace Corps office. There will be rare events, including the end of training ceremony and other government or cultural events, at which a tie would be recommended so bring one or two for those occasions.

For women: Wash-and-wear cottons and poly-cottons are basics for your wardrobe. Cotton knits and cotton blends in darker shades or prints are the easiest to keep clean, neat-looking, and the most comfortable. Short-sleeved dresses, skirts, and blouses—your basic summer wardrobe—will do. Remember, loose fitting is cooler. Simplicity is a lot easier, especially when facilities for washing and ironing are difficult. You will not see professional women at schools or offices in shorts or capris. Please dress accordingly. Any shorts worn by a Volunteer in public should be of reasonable length.

For Special Occasions

Men: A pressed white shirt, clean, ironed khakis and a tie will serve for occasions such as weddings, funerals, christenings, formal school functions, and government functions. However, West Indians dress with care, and men usually wear suits and ties for dressier occasions. Volunteers can consider a summer suit or light blazer, but is not an absolute necessity. However, if you do not bring a light suit, the dress shirt and tie is necessary.

Women: At least two or three nicer dresses for the same kind of events listed in the men's section, and for evening parties, special events, or church. Don't bring anything elaborate or expensive. Conservative styles with pleasing colors will be most versatile. Long sleeves are not necessary.

For Relaxation and Fun

Shorts are acceptable around the house or at the beach, but not on the street. You may want to bring a couple of swimsuits. On most islands they are available, but expensive. Sleeveless tops for women are fine for casual wear. Bring appropriate clothing and shoes if you walk, exercise, or play sports.

Shoes

Good-quality shoes are hard to find and very expensive. You probably will not regret any pair of shoes you bring. But don't get carried away; one of the best places for mildew to develop is in shoes that lie undisturbed in closets for long periods. As a Volunteer, you will do a lot of walking and streets and roads are rough, so pick shoes that are durable and comfortable. Many Volunteers bring Chacos or Tevas with them.

Bring at least one pair of professional shoes as well as a comfortable pair of walking shoes with thick rubber or nonslip soles. Cotton socks are necessary because feet sweat profusely in this climate. If you are a big soccer player or another sport that requires special shoes, bring them with you.

Checklist of Clothing

For Men

- Summer suit or dress shirt and tie
- Short-sleeved, button-down shirts
- Cotton dress shirts (one or two)
- Long-sleeved shirt (one or two)
- Cotton polo-type shirts

- Light cotton sweater for air-conditioned venues (or a long-sleeved shirt can be used)
- Washable dress slacks/khakis
- Durable pants for outdoors
- Jeans—no patches, no holes (1-2 pairs)
- Cotton underwear and socks
- T-shirts
- Sports equipment and clothing
- Sneakers
- Durable walking shoes
- Professional black/brown shoes
- Swimwear

For Women

- Cotton and poly-cotton lightweight dresses
- A fancier dress with sleeves (or with a shawl to cover shoulders)
- Skirts and blouses for mix and match
- Cotton blouses or dress shirts
- Longer walking shorts
- Casual pants/capris
- Jean skirt
- Jeans (one pair, no patches, no holes)
- Cotton underwear, bras and socks (lots)
- Sandals (e.g., Texas)
- Sports equipment and clothing
- Sneakers
- Durable walking shoes
- T-shirts/polo shirts
- Swimwear
- Light cotton sweater (for air-conditioned venues)
- Low-heeled, closed toe dress shoes (two pairs)

Miscellaneous

- One set of sheets (full/queen size)
- Towels
- Travel iron (must work on 220 volts)
- Travel clock or cheap waterproof watch
- Small set of hand tools
- Flashlight
- Wattage converter/plug adapters
- Battery-operated radio
- Digital camera
- Favorite games and playing cards
- Sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Favorite recipes
- Pocket knife (multiple-utility; e.g., Leatherman)
- Handkerchiefs or bandannas (if you use them)
- Photos of family and friends
- Day pack or small backpack
- U.S. postage stamps (for sending letters with friends traveling to the U.S.); consider purchasing the “forever” stamp to help avoid having insufficient postage due to price increases
- Books
 - Favorite CD, DVDs, and iPod
- Large and small plastic storage bags
- Journals
- Items for leisure time such as sports equipment, camping gear, and art supplies

Toiletries

Unless you must use particular brands of anything, there is no need to bring a two-year supply of any toiletries. Everything

you need is probably available on the islands. Bring contact lens solution (though, remember the Peace Corps strongly advises against wearing contact lenses). Women should bring a supply of tampons. There will be bug repellent provided in your Peace Corps-issued medical kit, but if you have a favorite brand or type, please bring it.

Photos

Bring four passport-size photos (color or black-and-white) with you for local permits, visas for travel, etc.

Overnight Bag

You will spend your first night in St. Lucia in a hotel. We recommend that you pack an overnight bag with a change of clothes for your first night and carry it with you on the plane. This will save you from having to unpack larger bags before you arrive at your host family's home.

NOTES

WELCOME
PEACE
CORPS



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470)
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated for insurance. This is especially true when insurance companies know you have predictable expenses and are in an upper age bracket.)
- Discuss Medicare issues and arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Inter-America and Pacific	Ext. 1835	202.692.1835
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: easterncaribbean@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2517	202.692.2517
	Desk Assistant E-mail: easterncaribbean@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2509	202.692.2509

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)

PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

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