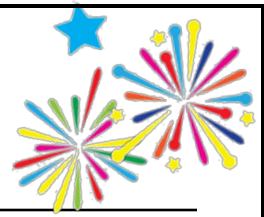


HBS Newsletter

Hôpital Bon Samaritain

Limbé, Haiti



HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Joyeux Noël

Every country has its traditions celebrating their holidays. Christmas in Haiti is very festive. For the most part, the people of rural Haiti celebrate Christmas through their churches having pageants and special programs. Christmas caroling in the morning is very popular in the days leading up to Christmas. After the midnight church service on Christmas Eve many persons stay up until dawn to welcome in Christmas Day. This evening of food and fellowship is aptly named "reveillon" (wake-up).

One of Haitian Christmas traditional decoration is the "Fanal". Artists make "Fanals" out of cardboard and colored tissue paper. Common designs are houses and churches with intricate cutouts over which the tissue paper is pasted on the inside. Other shapes also made include birds and fish. An oil base lamp (tin can) is placed inside for a very colorful night viewing similar to a stained glass effect. Other Christmas decorations include tree branches including those with the leaves removed, painted white and used with homemade decorations, colorful ribbons and balloons.

Traditionally gifts are not exchanged at Christmas but at the end of the year coinciding with Haiti Independence Day on January 1st, 1804. These end of year gifts are called "Zetren" in Creole.

Christmas has special meaning to the North of Haiti as Christopher Columbus sailed from the Acul Bay on Christmas Eve 1492 to have Christmas Day celebrations at the Village of Taino Cacique Guacanagari. History tells us that Columbus' flagship the "Santa Maria" sank on a barrier reef off Cap Haitian that fateful night forcing Columbus to leave behind 39 men to establish the first European Settlement in the "New World" which he named "La Navidad" (Christmas).



Happy Holidays!

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Traveling to Limbé

Coming to Haiti for the first time is quite an experience. Most people traveling to Limbé arrive at the newly renovated jet airport in Cap Haitian (pop 250,000). Once one has cleared Customs and Immigration and passes through the main glass doors, a welcoming crowd of Haitians made up of porters, taxicab drivers, friends and families are there to greet you, making you realize you have landed in an exceptionally different world.

Negotiating one's way out of the airport and on the road to the City of Cap Haitian one is struck by the large masses of people walking, riding in trucks, cars and on motorcycles. Cap Haitian is a very old style city dating back to the French period with older impressive architecture.

Leaving Cap Haitian, heading south to Limbé, the 18 miles of road takes about an hour as the asphalt has deteriorated leaving many potholes. Houses constructed of traditional "Mud and Wattle" and more recent CBS dot the side of the road. Donkeys, horses, goats, chickens, and of course many people are seen alongside the road. Headed up the mountain one has a spectacular view of the Acul Bay.



Once on the mountain pass the Limbé Valley is in view with greener, more lush vegetation caused by a higher than normal rainfall. Limbé was built on the river bend. Crossing the bridge into town, women are seen washing clothes by hand in the river using the rocks on the side to dry them in the sun.

Arriving in Limbé, the water fountains built by William Hodges can be seen alongside the main road where many people await their turn to fill their buckets. Houses with high foundations are painted all different colors, some of them with artistic design on the exterior.

Driving the main road one has a glimpse of the market place. Limbé was a crossroads where one of the largest open markets were held on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Merchants would come with foods, clothing, trinkets and much more from all over the north of Haiti to sell at this crossroad. Today the market is partially covered and has a much greater variety of goods. HBS buys most of their food at the market.

Visitors are encouraged to make the short half mile walk and experience rural Haiti products.

