

PART



St. Marc Community Organization

- **St. Marc Residents' Lifestyle:**

Family congregation tends to take place in the lakou, or porch area. Individuals from St. Marc prefer to “live outside” and as a result cooking and eating usually takes place outdoors.

In general the lifestyle in St. Marc is very family oriented. While people have friends outside of their family, time is usually passed with them at work/school or in brief visits. Time outside of work and school is spent with family. If children spend time with friends in the evening, curfews are set very early.

St. Marc residents also value their privacy and space. Those who can afford it will erect walls around their homes to protect themselves from invaders and to ensure privacy. These defensive walls are also topped with either barbed wire or broken glass bottles to ward off thieves.

Those who can afford it will hire servants to maintain their homes, look after the children, do the laundry (by hand as there are no washing machines), and most importantly – cook. Interaction between servants and family members is friendly and amicable. Often times loyal servants tend to become members of the family themselves.

Those who live near town have access to electricity and plumbing. Only about 40% of the population can afford electricity. The other 60% live without modern amenities. Although many households do not have internet, many people have email which can be accessed at local cybercafés.

Cars are a luxury, however most families in St. Marc have access to motocyclettes which they use for transportation. Haitians are meticulous in taking care of both themselves and their personal belongings. Motocyclettes and cars are washed every day, for example. People use water collected in the gutters to wash their motocyclettes. Those who do not own motocyclettes or know people that do, can easily get around either by foot or taxi.



- **St. Marc Residents' Religion:**

The majority of inhabitants in the city are also very religious. Church is attended every Sunday.

The most predominant Christian denomination is Roman Catholicism. Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, Evangelical and Mormon churches also have a presence in the area. The majority of inhabitants are very religious and as a result, church is attended every Sunday.

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Many also believe in and practice Voodoo, Haiti's predominant religion, simultaneously. Since health care is so expensive and few can afford it, Voodoo is often resorted to when one turns ill. Sometimes this can interfere with providing healthcare to patients since many will take the advice of their Voodoo priest over that of their doctor. In addition, the view of many is that illness is caused by a supernatural force and not from biomedical causes. For this reason the idea of preventative health is non-existent among less-educated residents of St. Marc. This world view causes them to delay seeking medical attention until their illness interferes with their ability to work. By the time they seek care they will already have been sick for some time.

- **St. Marc Residents' Ability to Support Themselves:**

In modern day urban centers, there are societal extremes and medians. In St. Marc, the population primarily falls on either one of those extremes without many falling in between. On one extreme lies the majority, the lower class who lives below \$2 US / day. These people make their living off of unskilled labor, odd jobs or selling at the market. They struggle day by day to house and feed their family and send their children to school. On the other extreme lies the "middle class", with a higher level of education. This population is able to find well-paying jobs with security. The middle class in St. Marc lead modest lives without struggling to provide food and shelter to their family.

- **St. Marc Residents' Concerns:**

Only six months after the January 12 event, there have been drastic changes in the lives of St. Marc residents. With the sudden influx of people coming in from Port-au-Prince either to live with relatives or set up a new camp and decrease in industry due to limited resources, people in St. Marc are struggling more than ever as the number of inhabitants greatly exceeds the number of jobs available. Primary concerns of residents include being able to provide shelter, food, and education to their children.

Another concern is staying safe through the hurricane season. Flooding is a frequent problem in some homes due to ill-suited locations. Other home owners who cannot afford glass windows, make use of shutters instead, also dealing with water entering their homes during storms. In the 2008 hurricane, there were many houses that were destroyed outright. Flying projectiles (i.e. metal roof panels) were life-threatening hazards.

One other major concern for most St. Marc residents is health. For the vast majority, there is no system in place that provides cheap or free health services. Most cannot afford to pay for medicine or even medical visits. This is why voodoo is often resorted to in place of health care. Local health institutions have actually observed a bizarre problem with people intentionally trying to contract HIV so that they can be provided with free health and nutritional support.

- **St. Marc Residents' Daily Activities:**

Daily activities vary depending on gender and age. The day for most residents of St. Marc without electricity begins at sunrise and ends a little after sunset. For those with electricity, the day starts an hour later and ends at around 10:00 pm.

Women, as the primary caretakers of the home, cook food for their families and do cleaning and laundry. Many need to resort to commerce for extra money to help make ends meet. This may either be through a merchant stand at the market, or working as ambulant sellers, or food vending.

Daily activities for children include attending school which begins promptly at 8:00 am. After which children are expected to return home to help with household chores. Summer vacation begins in July and ends in September. During this time children will help out around the house and have time to interact with other children their age.

- **St. Marc Residents' Interests:**

Typical interests for St. Marc residents include cooking and eating, making jokes, gambling at cock fights, listening to the radio, music, singing, attending church, praying, and soccer. Due to the proximity to the ocean, families enjoy visiting the beach on the weekends. This usually occurs about once a month and on holidays. Some residents have row boats that they can take out to fish.

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- **St. Marc Residents' Family Units:**

The typical family in St. Marc consists of about 4 persons. Families are primarily nuclear but there are also many single-parent families. Family units live together. It is also very common to remain at the grandparents' house for monetary and convenience reasons. Many businesses in St. Marc are family owned and people often work with their families.

- **St. Marc Residents' Children:**

Interaction between children outside immediate families is typically reserved for school. Schooling for children lasts for 16 years. Students usually start at 3 and finish when they are 18 or 19. Studying and making jokes with each other are common social activities. Playing football in the street or yard (if available) with neighbors or siblings/cousins is another common social activity which takes place amongst the youth.



- **St. Marc Residents' Extended Families:**

Families in St. Marc and throughout Haiti tend to stay in the same city, as well as within the same house as they grew up in. There are large networks of extended families in St. Marc that live very closely together. Children usually will stay at a parents' house until they themselves have a family of their own. Even still many will remain at the parents' house. This often results in overcrowding since families squeeze additional family members into the same rooms to house everybody. Often times some family members have to sleep outdoors.