



Offene Arme e.V.

CESRT volunteers

Frequently asked questions

To help you plan your trip please find here answers to some of the questions we are asked most frequently. We hope that this will be useful but if there is anything that you think should be included, or helpful information that you can provide, please let us know!

Travel

You can travel to Chios either by air or boat. The ferry terminal is located in the centre of Chios Town, and the airport is on the edge of town, all about a 15-20-minute drive from the CESRT Warehouse.

There are regular daily flights from Athens, plus also (less frequently) from Thessaloniki. The ferries travel to and from Athens and also connect to other of the North Aegean Islands. There are also flights and ferries to and from Turkey (Istanbul via Cesme).

For flights try:

www.olympicair.com

www.aegeanair.com

Or alternatively the websites www.opodo.co.uk or www.skyscanner.net.

For ferries see: <https://hellenicseaways.gr/en> <https://www.bluestarferries.com/en/>

Both companies offer overnight services on alternate days, to and from Piraeus Port in Athens.

Where to Stay/Go

Before you arrive, we recommend you download the link to our CERST Google Map, which has pins showing the most important CERST activity centres as well as other useful locations around Chios.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1cdAO7r3NWUTYfYcJRNwH89a4qL8>

The CERST Warehouse, our “home” and where we have a meeting every morning at 8:30 am (except Sunday) is in Thimiana (Vagia 122, Thimiana)

Child Protection

Please note that when you arrive you will be required to have a criminal record check done by the Chios Port Police before starting to work with the team. A coordinator will take you to the Port on your first day if possible.

Accommodation

In the summer (June – September) accommodation tends to book up quickly so please make sure you make your arrangements well in advance.

The majority of volunteers choose to stay in or around Megas Limnionas and Agia Ermioni and Karfas, all of which are close to the CESRT Warehouse. Here you will most likely be in the best place for sharing cars or lifts, as well as socialising with the volunteer team after work! If you have a car and can be independent, Chios Town can also be good alternative.

Some options are given below. Other accommodation can be found via www.booking.com or www.airbnb.com. You could also try the websites www.chiosnet.gr/ or www.chios.gr.

Megas Limnionas

Sunrooms

<http://www.sunrooms.gr>

This is run by Toula (Pothiti Kitromilidi) the founder of CESRT. It is a good option for first time or shortterm volunteers, or anyone travelling alone, as lots of volunteers stay here so it is very social. There are en-suite studio rooms which can easily be shared between volunteers. Prices start from Eu20 per night and depend of the time of the year. For booking, contact Toula directly on Whatapp +30 6932 631491 or info@chiossunrooms.gr.

Other options within a 5 minute walk from Sunrooms include:

Stroubis Apartments

www.stroubis.gr

For prices and booking contact Georgia Stroubi on studios@stroubis.gr or +30 693 7797395, and mention you are working with CESRT.

Anna Rooms

www.anna-chiosrooms.gr

Sun Village

<http://www.sunvillagehotel-chios.com>

Car Hire

There are numerous car hire agencies on Chios, so it is well worth asking around and comparing prices.

We have an arrangement with Vassilakis Rent A Car, who offer us good rates. Nick Vassilakis can be contacted on vassilakismick@yahoo.com or +30 694 836 9550. Please mention you are working with CESRT.

For motorbikes/mopeds:

N Kovas Rent A Moto - www.rentamotochios.com

Rent A Car & Moto - www.chiosrentacar.gr

There is also a good local bus service between Megas Limnionas and Chios.

Transport

Because of the different locations of the various CESRT activities we strongly recommend that you arrange to rent a car. For the team to function effectively we do need to have a certain number of cars on the road at any one time, to be able to reach boat landings sites and meet the daily demands of movement of stock and volunteers. You may wish to consider posting a note on the Facebook page to find a driver to share a car. **Due to the costs of car rental and fuel, for those who choose not to rent but to take lifts, we will ask you to contribute a minimum of €30 a week towards the costs of others' car hire.**

Communication

The group communicates almost entirely by Whatsapp. While it is possible to get by without it, we do recommend that you bring a smartphone with the facility to have this, so that you can make the most of your experience with us.

You should also arrange with your service provider to have internet data while abroad. Alternatively, you can purchase a Greek SIM card locally in Chios, either from Cosmote or Vodafone.

Shops and Services

Chios Town has a number of banks with ATM machines, pharmacist, supermarkets and a post office, as well as lots of shops, restaurants and bars. There are also various big supermarkets and petrol stations located near the airport and en-route to the warehouse. Megas Limnionas and Karfas are seaside villages; both have a number of restaurants, small supermarkets and an ATM (at Karfas).

Please note that in Greece you may be limited to the amount of cash you can withdraw each day. You should also bring some form of photographic ID (drivers license, etc) with you, as it is a legal requirement to carry this at all times.

What to Bring/Wear

Bring clothes that you don't mind getting filthy! Loose trousers and t-shirts or comfortable tops work well. In the Winter it can get cold, particularly at night, so bring an extra layer or two. In Summer it gets very hot so be similarly prepared with lightweight tops. For cultural reasons, very brief shorts and tops are unsuitable to wear in and around camp, but cropped trousers and knee length shorts work well. You should also cover your shoulders, although your high vis vest will do that. A small rucksack/daybag is useful, as is a bumbag. For footwear, depending on the time of year, lightweight trainers and/or sandals work well. You will be on your feet a lot so bring shoes that you are happy to walk in all day. Pack some flip flops as well for summer.

For night shifts, a long-sleeved top with zip pockets (for your phone and keys) is useful. You should also ensure that your footwear is sturdy enough for beach landings (trainers are sufficient). A head torch is a must, and a pocketknife will come in handy.

We do occasionally have some time off, so do bring some comfortable casual clothes and a swimsuit.

Schedule

A meeting is held every morning (Monday to Saturday) at the warehouse at 8.30 am. On your first morning (or as soon as practical) you will be given an introduction into CERST, and we will also discuss which activities are of interest to you, or where we may currently need your help.

Please let us know in advance if you have any specific skills or interests. If you want to work in the language centre, we ask you to mention this already in an email to the team. The Language Centre recruit teachers on a rolling basis, with a minimum time commitment of 2 months.

Some activities are run as morning and afternoon shifts, while others take place on a daily or weekly basis. For example:

Language Centre: Classes run from 10.30am until 5:30pm.

Warehouse: From after the morning meeting till 13.30 and 15.30 till 18.30.

The working day is generally finished by 18.30. The exception to this is “On Call” duties which are on a 24 hour rota. Although we ask volunteers to commit to at least 40 hours of work per week, most do many more and you will find your time is easily filled!

Sunday is a rest day for volunteers, with no warehouse meeting and very few formal activities. You may wish to bear this in mind when making your travel arrangements.

Donations

It is not mandatory to bring donated funds with you; however, many do, and all donations are hugely appreciated. Cash donations are always extremely welcome! Otherwise please contact us nearer to your arrival date to find out if there are any specific items (eg clothing) that would be useful for you to bring.

For donations, the following account has been set up:

Account name: Verein fur konkrete Fluuchtlingshilf

Account number 91-479106-

Zip Code 8126, Zumikon

IBAN - CH85 0900 0000 9147 9106 6

This account is administered from Switzerland, but accessed from Chios by a nominated long-term member of the team. The Humansnation organisation will also have a continued role both in Switzerland and Chios to ensure full accountability.

Interesting Links

A few resources that you may wish to follow:

CESRT Main Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/421759534684819/?fref=nf>

UNHCR website: For current data or statistics about Chios and other areas:

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

Are You Syrious:

<https://www.facebook.com/areyousyrious/>

Chios Voices: <https://medium.com/chios-voices>

Our Activities

Boat Landings

Our primary activity is to meet and give emergency aid to any refugee boats which land on the island. You must be registered with the port police (via CESRT) in order to assist at landings. You will be given separate training if you wish to take part in this activity.

We arrange each day for four teams of two people, with cars, to be “on call” for the next 24 hours to go to attend any landings. If you are on call you will be added to a separate Whatsapp group by Alpha. You should have your telephone with you and be available to go to a landing at any time. This takes priority over all other activities.

Two teams need a car stocked with food, water and clothes (“car stock”) to take to beach landings if required. One team will be tasked with coming to the warehouse to prepare water for “tea and noodles”. Please check and familiarise yourself with all necessary equipment as soon as you start the shift. If you meet a boat and have to go straight to another boat there is also car stock available ready packed in the “emergency car stock” bin inside the warehouse. Please ask to be shown this.

When on call you will be instructed by Alpha on what to do and when to go, so follow Alpha’s lead. Do not go to a boat landing unless you receive a call to do so.

Warehouse

The warehouse is our “home” and where all clothes and food for distribution are sorted and stored. Daily activities vary but there will always be things to do. There are usually two warehouse shifts per day, morning and afternoon. Car stocks regularly need to be replenished, and new donations correctly sorted. If in doubt about which tasks are required or where specific items are located, the warehouse coordinator or other volunteers will be happy to assist you.

Language Centre

The Language Centre requires a volunteer commitment of a minimum of 2 months in the interest of continuity for the students. Experienced teachers are recruited before coming to volunteer with CESRT.

The Language Centre is located close to Vial. We offer English, French, German and Greek classes from Monday to Friday. Classes are open to men and women over the age of 18, at all levels of ability.

Additional activities are run at weekends. Please speak to the coordinator of the centre for updates or opportunities to help out with different activities being run.

Beach Cleaning

This is required occasionally after beach landings, as there may be lifejackets on the shore and boats that need to be cut from under the rocks. CESRT are delighted to be involved with a German initiative where refugees in Germany are employed in recycling this material into saleable bags.

Other Activities

Other activities are carried out by the team from time to time depending needs arising, and our abilities to respond to these needs at a given time (eg, games within the football pitch of Vial, incidental/ emergency distributions or providing temporary assistance with other humanitarian endeavours on the island). Regarding other activities, you will be given further inductions before engaging in these tasks.