

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Offene Arme e.V.

Offene Arme e.V. is the registered name of our organisation – we were registered in 2018. Before this, we were known as Chios Eastern Shore Response Team (CESRT).

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

If you are a returning volunteer, thank you for coming back! For all volunteers, please be aware the situation on the island is constantly changing and at present there are not many boat landings, however the team is still on call 24/7 for other potential emergencies. We are not working in Vial camp and not attending landings anymore, though. We have set up other projects to address the physical and social needs of refugees that you can be involved in.

TRAVEL

You can travel to Chios either by plane or boat. The ferry terminal is located in the centre of Chios Town, and the airport is on the edge of town, both are about a 15-20 minute drive from the Offene Arme e.V Warehouse. Ordinarily, we would come to collect you upon arrival, however due to the required quarantine period, we are unable to at this time – there are taxis available at both the airport and port at the arrival times of flights and ferries.

There are regular daily flights from Athens, plus also (less frequently) from Thessaloniki. The ferries travel to and from Athens and also connect to the other North Aegean Islands. Both ferry companies offer overnight services on alternate days, to and from Piraeus Port in Athens.

FOR FLIGHTS TRY

- ❖ www.skyscanner.net
- ❖ www.olympicair.com
- ❖ www.aegeanair.com
- ❖ www.opodo.co.uk

FOR FERRIES TRY

- ❖ <https://www.directferries.co.uk/>
- ❖ www.hellenicseaways.gr/en

ACCOMMODATION

The Warehouse is our “home” and where we have a meeting every morning at 8:30am (except Saturday and Sunday). The warehouse is located in Thimiana (Vagia 122, Kampos 82100).

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, Agia Ermioni and Karfas, all of which are close to the 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 a good alternative. Some options are given below.

❖ www.booking.com

❖ www.airbnb.com

❖ www.chiosnet.gr/

❖ www.chios.gr

SUNROOMS (www.chiossunrooms.gr)

This guesthouse is run by Toula (Pothiti Kitromilidi) the founder of Offene Arme e.V. It is a good option for first time or short-term volunteers, or anyone travelling alone, as lots of volunteers stay here it is very sociable. There are en-suite studio rooms which can be booked for one person, or you can choose to share a room with other volunteers. Prices will differ depending on the season but are reduced for volunteers. For booking, contact Toula directly on WhatsApp, her number is **+30 6932 631491** or via email on pothitikit07@gmail.com.

ANNAS (<https://www.anna-chiosrooms.gr/>)

This guesthouse is another favourite of our volunteers. It is only a 5 minute walk from Sunrooms and has a great outdoor terrace where we sometimes host BBQs. There are en-suite rooms. For booking, contact via email on info@anna-chiosrooms.gr

Other option within a 5-minute walk from Sunrooms include:

Platsa Studios - [Agoda Platsa Studios](#)

POLICE CHECK

Please note that before arriving you will be required to email over a valid police check from your home country. This is required because we work with vulnerable people. In your first week you will also be taken to the port police to be registered as a new volunteer; a further criminal record check will be done by the Greek authorities.

CAR HIRE

We have a people-carrying van which provides lifts for volunteers between their accommodation and our work sites, however it may still be useful to you to hire a car for more freedom of movement around the island outside of work hours.

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 vassilakisnick@yahoo.com or **+30 694 836 9550**. Please mention you are working with Offene Arme.

For motorbikes/mopeds:

N Kovas Rent A Moto - www.rentamotochios.com

Rent A Car & Moto - www.chiosrentacar.gr

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

COMMUNICATION

The group communicates almost entirely by WhatsApp. We strongly recommend that you bring a smartphone so that you can make the most of your experience with us. You can only be on-call if you have WhatsApp and Google maps. You should arrange with your service provider to have sufficient internet data while abroad, or you can purchase a Greek SIM card locally in Chios from Vodafone, Wind or Cosmote.

SHOPS AND SERVICES

Chios town has a number of banks with ATM machines, pharmacies, 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 (passport or driver's license), as it is a legal requirement to carry it at all times.

WHAT TO BRING/ WEAR

Loose trousers and comfortable tops work well. Clothing with zip pockets (for your phone and keys) are useful. Bring a small rucksack and/or a bum bag. A head torch and a pocket knife will come in handy. For days off, bring some comfortable casual clothes and a swimsuit. You may want to bring some clothes you are happy to get dirty for specific projects.

In the winter it can get cold, particularly at night, so make sure you bring clothing that will keep you warm. In summer it gets very hot so be similarly prepared with lightweight clothing. For cultural reasons, very short shorts and tight or revealing tops are unsuitable to wear around the OA Distribution Warehouse, but cropped trousers and knee length shorts work well. You should also have tops that cover your shoulders.

You will be on your feet a lot so bring shoes that you are happy to walk in all day. Depending on the time of year, lightweight trainers and/or sandals work well.

SCHEDULE

A meeting is held every morning (Monday to Friday) at the warehouse at 8.30 am. On your first morning (or as soon as is practical) you will be given an induction to Offene Arme e.V, and we will also discuss which activities are of interest to you, or where we may currently need your help. You will normally spend your first day in the warehouse.

Please let us know in advance on your application form if you have any specific skills or interests.

The working day is generally finished by 17:00. The exception to this is “On Call” duties which are on a 24-hour rota shared amongst the team. We ask volunteers to commit to around 40 hours of work per week and some of that will be spent in the warehouse. Saturday and Sunday are a rest day for volunteers; you may wish to bear this in mind when making your travel arrangements. There will be no warehouse meeting or activities. A small team will be on-call on the weekend.

OUR ACTIVITIES

WAREHOUSE

The warehouse is our “home” and where all clothes and other stock 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. Any new donations must be 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. Sorting is very important for the OA Distribution Warehouse – it ensures that restock is simple for the volunteers working at this project and that only the highest quality items are provided to our beneficiaries.

We also have a ‘Local’s Shop’ which is open during the working day for local people to come and take clothes for free because we believe it is important to help everyone in need on the island, including the local community.

OA DISTRIBUTION WAREHOUSE

We have a “free shop” which is located 3.1km from Vial Camp, which operates on an appointment basis and is available to all asylum seekers and refugees on Chios. A number of volunteers are required to run this shop – with roles including check-in, check-out, shop floor assistant, restock and others. We serve approximately 30 beneficiaries per day in this project, and have a very long waiting list for appointments. This project includes working in close proximity to camp residents and other at-risk people – which means that we take lots of precautions concerning COVID-19 and any other factors which may pose a threat to the community we serve.

APARTMENT ACTIVITIES (Currently on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions) We facilitate sessions at apartment blocks inhabited by asylum seekers and refugees – these are aimed to encourage socialization in the blocks and to provide relief from boredom, we have a wide variety of activities and equipment available and we encourage volunteers to present new ideas for activities.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other activities are carried out by the team from time to time depending on the needs arising, and our abilities to respond to these needs at any given time (e.g. emergency distributions or providing temporary assistance with other humanitarian actors on the island). You will be given further inductions before engaging in these tasks.

We support other organisations that help refugees by providing supplies to them, these include actors such as ARSIS, IOM, Metadrasi and other smaller NGOs here in Chios.

Volunteers wishing to start a new project within Offene Arme e.V must speak first to the coordinators. The project must be financially sustainable and long term for the team.

DONATIONS

It is not mandatory to bring donated funds with you but all donations, however small, are hugely appreciated! You can either bring your donation in cash or you can send it by bank transfer to the following account:

Account Name: Offene Arme e.V.
IBAN: DE63 5139 0000 0060 5797 09
BIC: VBMHDE5F
Bank: Volksbank Mittelhessen

Or by PayPal - <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/offenearme>

There is another association that you can send funds to and all of the funds you send will go directly to Offene Arme. Their bank details are set out below:

Account Name: Verein für Flüchtlingshilfe
IBAN: CH85 0900 0000 9147 9106 6
BIC: POFICHBEXXX
Bank: PostFinance AG

If you want to bring donations with you such as clothes/toiletries etc please contact us nearer your arrival date so we can tell you what is needed at that time.

INTERESTING LINKS

A few resources that you may wish to follow:

Offene Arme e.V.

❖ www.cesrt.org

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

❖ <https://instagram.com/cesrt.offenearme?igshid=xjdmo7ci5bsc>

❖ <https://www.facebook.com/chiosesrt/>

UNHCR for current data or statistics about Chios and other areas: ❖

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

Are You Syrious (refugee news)

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

❖ <https://medium.com/are-you-syrious>