

2012-2013 COUNTRY GUIDELINES FOR NIGER FOR U.S. FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS

The Fulbright Program is sponsored and administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the United States Department of State, and awards scholarships to lecture, conduct research, and study abroad. The program is managed in country by the Public Affairs Section (PAS) at U.S. Embassy Niamey.

Country guidelines contain **summary** information about the Fulbright award, and logistical and program support provided through ECA, contact information for PAS or the U.S. embassy, and advisory information about your host country. These guidelines are an important resource, and should be reviewed prior to departing for your host country. This document may be supplemented by PAS during your arrival orientation at post. Please note that this information is subject to change.

THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION OF U.S. EMBASSY NIAMEY

The Public Affairs Officer (PAO), Marissa D. Scott, and the Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO), Joshua Waggener, are the American officials responsible for U.S. Fulbrighters. Cultural Affairs Specialist Soumana Abdouramane Cissé and English Language Program (ELP) Director Billa Anassour also assist Fulbrighters. The Public Affairs Section (PAS) is housed in the American Cultural Center (ACC), which is located on Rue de la Tapoa in Niamey.

You can contact PAS/Niamey by telephone and email:

Telephone: (227) 20-73-41-07 or 20-73-31-69
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It is also possible to send mail to the Public Affairs Officer via the diplomatic pouch: This requires only domestic postage. The pouch address is:

Marissa D. Scott, PAO
2420 Niamey Pl.
Washington, D.C. 20521-2420

YOUR FULBRIGHT GRANT AND THE BINATIONAL NATURE OF THE PROGRAM

The Fulbright Program is administered in accordance with regulations established by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FSB). The Board has ruled that Fulbright grant funds cannot duplicate benefits received under other auspices. Therefore, grantees who receive host government or host institution financial contributions (for example, international travel, per diem/subsistence/housing allowance) in cash or kind do not receive allowances for these grant benefits. Grantees who receive a concurrent grant to the same country under other auspices may have their Fulbright grants reduced if Fulbright grant benefits are duplicated by the other grant.

Host country governments and institutions support the exchange program through two ways: (a) *monetary contributions*, which result in a sharing of program costs, or (b) *nonmonetary assistance* to enhance the exchange experience for the guest scholar. For countries like Niger, the program is funded almost entirely by the U.S. government and the country offers some, usually limited, in-kind contributions, such as housing for U.S. Fulbright lecturers.

WHAT THE FULBRIGHT GRANT PROVIDES

Fulbright Students

Fulbright student grants have two components: (1) a base amount, and (2) a monthly maintenance allowance. Additional funds may be included in your grant as allowances and are described separately. Benefits authorized by ECA are paid in U.S. dollars through the Institute of International Education (IIE).

1. The **base amount** is provided to cover initial or onetime startup expenses such as:
 - a. Unaccompanied and/or excess baggage.
 - b. Miscellaneous costs, such as visa fees, permits, medical exams, immunizations, etc.
 This is a fixed sum in each grant and may not reimburse all expenses completely.
2. A monthly **maintenance allowance** is provided to cover recurring subsistence needs such as housing, fuel, utilities, and food. The allowance is based upon the estimated standard living costs in the country of assignment.

Fulbright Scholars

Fulbright scholar grants have three components: (1) travel and relocation, (2) a monthly maintenance allowance, and (3) a monthly stipend. Additional funds may be included in your grant as special allowances and are described separately. Benefits are based upon the estimated standard living costs in the country of assignment, and are not intended to duplicate U.S. salary levels or the standard of living of U.S. diplomatic personnel. Benefits authorized by ECA are paid in U.S. dollars through the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES).

1. Travel and Relocation
 - a. Unaccompanied and/or excess baggage.

b. Relocation allowance for expenses such as visa fees, permits, medical exams, immunizations, etc. This is a fixed sum in each grant and may not reimburse all expenses completely.

2. A monthly **maintenance allowance** is provided to cover recurring subsistence needs such as housing, fuel, utilities, and food.

3. Monthly **base stipend**

PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL

Travel to and within Niger

Grantee air travel is coordinated by the travel agency, HRG Worldwide, which will bill IIE or CIES directly for the costs of your tickets. HRG staff will assist you with your reservation and then send your reservation to IIE or CIES for approval. You must book a round-trip ticket with a return date that corresponds to the grant end date. All air travel and all air shipments paid for with United States Government funds must conform to the Fly America Act, which requires that all such travel and shipments be on “U.S. flag” airlines where such service is available.

Except for arrival and courtesy calls on University and research contacts immediately thereafter, which the ACC will assist you with, Fulbrighters are responsible for arranging their own local transportation. There are taxis available in Niamey. If you are doing research outside the capital, you may be able to obtain assistance from your research partners. Recent Fulbright researchers have found few problems in finding rides with international project vehicles traveling to Zinder and Maradi. The network is informal but works well. Busses and bush taxis are also available for travel outside Niamey.

If you choose to buy or import your own vehicle, you can do so at your own expense. Though expensive, it is almost always possible to find used cars for sale. You should ask your research partners or the university for assistance with purchasing, registering and insuring the vehicle. The Embassy cannot provide this assistance. If you plan to drive, acquire an international driver’s license through the American Automobile Association (AAA) or apply for a Nigerien license upon arrival.

Visas and Research Clearance

If possible, you should obtain a one-year multi-entry visa from the Embassy of Niger in Washington, D.C. Allow plenty of time for the visa process and use overnight mail as much as possible to speed things up. Call the Embassy of Niger if the process seems to take longer than expected. If your visa does not cover your full stay, the ACC will provide letters attesting to your status in order to get an extension locally. You can contact the Embassy of Niger at:

1333 16th St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 986-8400
Fax: (202) 483-3169

Research Proposal

When you are notified of your grant award, or at least two months before you plan to arrive, you need to send a summary of your research proposal in French to the Minister of Higher Education, through the Director of Research. You may request your research clearance be issued only one month in advance of your research start date. Many find it easier to finalize their formal clearances after arrival at post. You may send your request directly or through the ACC. The ACC can deliver the proposal, but the office staff cannot translate it for you. If you send your request directly to the Ministry, the ACC recommends that you send the office a copy as well so that it will be possible to trace your request if authorization is delayed.

Research Outside of Niamey

Please let the ACC know if your plans will include travel outside of Niamey. Due to recent occurrences of violence and crime in the country, the Embassy has issued a warden message for Americans informing them that Embassy personnel are currently restricted from travel. For up-to-date travel information, you can consult the Embassy Niamey website at http://niamey.usembassy.gov/niger/warden_messages.html.

Personal Mail and Access to the Diplomatic Pouch

Fulbright scholars have been approved for access to the pouch to send and receive first-class letter mail only (maximum of two pounds). An exception to this rule is that prescription medications, including malaria prophylaxis, may be sent via pouch, even if in boxes, provided they are identified as medical supplies. Magazines, newspapers and package mail are not authorized and will be returned to sender. Bring U.S. postage stamps in sufficient quantity for your first-class mail back to the United States. Forms available in U.S. Post Offices make it possible to purchase stamps by mail.

CAUTIONARY NOTE: In the past, abuse by several Fulbright scholars caused near-revocation of privileges for all program participants. Anyone who violates pouch regulations will be barred from use and will have to make other arrangements for handling personal and professional correspondence.

Please do not send a computer as part of your educational materials through the diplomatic pouch. Previous grantees may report that they did this successfully. This method is no longer possible. Pouch regulations have tightened and are strictly enforced. Boxes identified as containing equipment are returned to the sender.

You may receive mail, including packages, through international mail addressed to your name, in care of The American Cultural Center, B.P. 11201, Niamey, Niger. Mail can be picked up at the ACC, but the ACC is not able to forward mail within Niger. Generally, up to four weeks are required for mail coming from the U.S., whether by pouch or international mail.

Please see the information provided in your orientation packet on “For Personal Mail,” “For Official Mail,” and “Instructions for Shipment of Books and Educational Materials by Fulbright Scholars.”

Computers

Recent visitors have experienced no difficulties bringing computers into the country. If you take a computer, we recommend that it travel with you as part of your excess baggage. Customs officials usually require a list of names of the pieces of equipment, brand and model numbers, serial numbers, and estimated value. Plan to leave the country with the computer. Take one or two surge protectors and a good transformer. Dust can be a problem with sensitive electronic equipment. Local repair facilities and supplies are scarce.

Schooling for Dependents

Limited healthcare, schooling, and employment possibilities in Niger are important considerations for families. There are several schools available in Niamey:

- The American School, located next to the Embassy, provides classes from kindergarten through grade 9. For grades 10 - 12, supervised correspondence instruction is available. Pre-kindergarten are sometimes available by demand.
- The Sahel Academy, located across the river next to the university, is a private Christian missionary school. Courses are taught in English for grades K-12 school.
- The Rose Garden is a preschool for ages 2 to 5; some teachers speak English, and there is a bilingual program.
- The French “Cours la Fontaine” offers schooling through high school in French language only.
- Ecole Alliance provides primary bilingual education in French and English.

The ACC can make preliminary contact with a school to get more specific information and to have your child's name put on the registration list.

Spouse Employment

Spouse employment depends on the spouse's skills. Certified teachers can often find positions at The American School, at least as substitutes. Sometimes the English Language Program hires American spouses who are willing to work evenings and weekends. The U.S. Embassy newsletter *Sahel-o* advertises local vacancies that may be appropriate for spouses.

PAS AND EMBASSY SUPPORT

In an effort to support U.S. Fulbright scholars/students and their families, the following services are provided by PAS and the Embassy:

Arrival and Temporary Lodging

Whenever possible, ACC staff will meet Fulbrighters and assist with airport arrival, if sufficient advance notice of travel is provided. For you to receive this support, your program agency, CIES or IIE, must receive and forward your itinerary at least two weeks in advance of your arrival and request that you be met. If requested in advance, the ACC can make temporary housing arrangements, payment for which will be your responsibility. Please provide an acceptable price range. Modest rooms are available at local research institutes.

U.S. Embassy Access

Upon arrival in Niger, call the Public Affairs Officer or the Cultural Affairs Officer to arrange for ACC and Embassy briefings on services, security and health concerns. As a precaution in case of emergencies, you are required to register with the U.S. Embassy. Keep the Public Affairs Office and the Embassy Consular Section informed about your local address, telephone, and/or telex numbers throughout your stay.

BANKING & FINANCES

Banking in Niger must be done through local banks. The Embassy is in negotiations with EcoBank to provide an ATM machine at the chancery building, which would be accessible to Fulbrighters. We recommend that scholars carry a major credit card in addition to U.S. dollar travelers' checks. While a credit card is of little use in most of Niger, the Gaweye Hotel does have an exchange bureau that will accept visa cards, and it can be essential for travel outside Niger in emergencies. Fulbrighters using credit cards should check with the company about what services are available in West Africa.

HEALTH

Health Care

Before leaving the United States, Fulbrighters should have undergone complete medical exams. Carry a copy of your Fulbright medical examination report with you. Fulbrighters do not have access to the American Embassy health unit. The Gamkalley Clinic is recommended for most basic health care needs. Arrangements for all necessary immunizations and malaria prophylaxis should be made before leaving the US, as should arrangements for shipment of chronic prescriptions.

The Fulbright grant provides medical insurance and medical evacuation coverage (medevac) for the grantee only. Separate medical insurance and medical evacuation coverage is required for all accompanying dependents and must be arranged prior to departure from the United States.

Please be advised that grantee medical benefits are not in force during independent travel outside of Niger. If you plan to travel outside of the country, you need to arrange for other medical and medevac coverage for this period.

Health Precautions

Malaria prophylaxis should be taken by anyone traveling to and living in Niger. Prophylaxis should be started one week before arrival and continued four weeks after departure. Mefloquine (250 mgm) weekly or doxycycline (100 mgm) daily are recommended. Chloroquine (300 mgm) weekly with paludrine (200 mgm) daily is an alternative.

All visitors to Niger must have valid yellow fever and cholera inoculations stamped in their health cards. The Embassy Health Unit particularly recommends immunization vaccines for hepatitis A, hepatitis B, tetanus, and typhoid. Current booster/vaccines against childhood diseases (tetanus-diphtheria, polio, and measles/mumps/rubella) are strongly recommended for

adults as well as children. Drinking water should be boiled for at least 2 minutes, and fresh vegetables and fruits should be thoroughly cleaned in a disinfectant solution.

If using prescription drugs, it is a good idea to bring a supply sufficient for your stay in the country. Transport all prescription drugs in the original containers for simpler clearance through customs. However, if it is necessary to receive refills from the U.S., see the mail restrictions above for information on doing so.

SECURITY

Terrorism and Kidnapping

All Fulbright grantees will receive a security briefing upon arrival in the host country. The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Niger, and urges extreme caution due to increased kidnapping threats against Westerners. Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a terrorist group, continues its attempts to kidnap Westerners in Niger, including U.S. citizens, and has been successful in kidnapping Europeans in the region, including the abduction of two French nationals from Niamey. Although there have been no kidnappings in Niger since January 2011, the Department of State Worldwide Caution dated January 24, 2012, reminds U.S. citizens to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness when traveling in the region.

Because of the security threat, the U.S. Embassy in Niamey continues to restrict the travel of U.S. government employees and official visitors in the areas north of Niamey. The U.S. Embassy also continues to evaluate proposed travel and official and personal activities for employees, on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with Nigerien security authorities. Recently, the possibility of violence related to extremist and criminal groups from northern Nigeria has led the Nigerien government to recommend armed escorts for travel in far eastern Niger.

As a result of safety and security concerns, some organizations, including foreign companies, NGOs, and private aid organizations, have temporarily suspended operations in Niger or withdrawn some family members and/or staff.

Although the U.S. Government places the highest priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped U.S. citizens, it is U.S. Government policy not to make concessions to kidnappers.

Crime and Violence

Street crime and residential burglaries are an increasing problem. Care should be taken in arranging for a secure apartment, with solid doors and bars on accessible windows. Fulbrighters are also advised not to walk downtown or in parks after dark, as muggings occur frequently. As in any major U.S. city, people are cautioned to watch valuables at all times. Men should carry wallets in a front trousers pocket; women should carry tightly closed purses held securely to their sides. There are frequent reports of thieves snatching jewelry and other objects from open vehicle windows while stopped in heavy traffic. Carjackings are not uncommon but seem to come in spurts, so use caution, particularly when driving at night. Travelers' checks, passports and other valuables should not be left in a hotel room; check all important documents and

valuables in a hotel safety deposit box. Better yet, leave nonessential jewelry and irreplaceable items at home in the U.S.

Use caution when traveling to national parks or nature preserves. Travelers should only use the services of reputable travel firms or knowledgeable guides when traveling on safaris or to nature preserves. Safaris are best undertaken with a minimum of two vehicles so that there is a backup in case of mechanical failure.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Local Housing

While the Nigerien government is supposed to provide lodging in town for Fulbright lecturers, recent experience has shown that they are unable to do this. In the event that the government is unable to provide housing, your research institution should assist you in finding permanent housing. Researchers and students are responsible for finding their own housing.

What to Bring

Do not bring a lot of clothing. Dress is almost invariably informal in Niamey, even at the university. It is better to have a few basics that a tailor can copy from local fabric. However, good cotton underwear and shoes in American styles and sizes cannot be bought locally.

- Important documents and enough clothes and toiletries in your carry-on to get through a day or so in case your baggage gets sidetracked.
- Certified copies of all important family documents, including birth and marriage certificates, passports, diplomas, and medical records.
- Necessary financial documents, but most important, make sure that someone trustworthy in the United States can find anything you need quickly.
- A good portable shortwave radio.
- A supply of American stamps.
- Several strong combination locks or padlocks.

Other

As a member of the American community, you will be allowed to join the American Recreation Association, which is housed at the American School Niamey, if you wish, and to have meals at the canteen. The facilities also include a swimming pool and tennis court, as well as a gym.

Women may join the American Anglophone Women's Club in Niamey.

FULBRIGHT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Fulbright award requires submission of two reports: 1) at the interim or mid-point of the grant, and 2) a final report prior to departing the host country. Grantees will receive instructions from CIES or IIE, as appropriate, on filing these reports on-line.