



2023-2024 SIERRA LEONE COUNTRY GUIDELINES FOR U.S. FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS

Updated: April 25, 2023

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 Freetown.

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 FREETOWN

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) is responsible for managing Fulbright in Sierra Leone. PAS offices are located at the U.S. embassy. Embassy hours are 8:00 a.m.-5:15 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. on Friday. The Embassy website is: <https://sl.usembassy.gov/>.

Below is contact information for PAS staff who are your points of contact while in country.

Sarah Van Horne, Public Affairs Officer: vanhornesm@state.gov

Tommy Kain, Cultural Affairs Assistant: Kainte@state.gov

PAS via Embassy switchboard: (011-232) 99 105 500

PAS direct line: (011-232) 99 105 362

Embassy after-hours number: (011-232) 99 905 029

When dialing the above phone numbers from within Sierra Leone, drop the numerals in parentheses and add a -0- prefix, e.g., 0 99 105 000 for Embassy switchboard.

Fulbright scholars/students in the U.S. may write to PAS at:

Public Affairs Officer
2160 Freetown Place
Dulles, VA 20189-2160

All Fulbright grantees must register with the embassy in case of emergency. This should be done through the STEP website just prior to arrival in-country: <http://step.state.gov>. The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling

and living abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, allowing you to receive important information about safety conditions and helping the U.S. Embassy contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency. It is not specific to Fulbright grantees. Grantees should separately notify the embassy directly of their arrival date.

ENSURING YOUR SAFETY ABROAD

While overseas, U.S. Fulbright participants are private U.S. citizens who do not fall under Chief of Mission authority; however, they are also under U.S. government sponsorship during their exchange programs and the Department provides guidance and assistance for their welfare and security. Fulbright participants are supervised by the post/commission and must abide by post/commission requirements, the terms and conditions of their respective grants, and the policies of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

PAS, the Regional Security Office, and American Citizen Services can assist you in matters of safety and security. Should you encounter safety threats, or if you are a victim of crime, contact the U.S. Embassy in your host country for assistance. All U.S. Embassy websites have information on American Citizen Services, including how to obtain assistance in an emergency. In the event of an authorized ordered departure due to natural disaster, civil unrest, epidemics, or other emergency circumstances, Fulbrighters must consult with the U.S. Embassy.

Security Briefing

All Fulbright grantees will receive a security briefing upon arrival in the host country. At your security briefing, Fulbright grantees should ask about areas of the city and the country where they need to be especially alert. You can also ask for recommendations for protecting personal belongings at home and when traveling. Up-to-date security information can be obtained from the U.S. Department of State's travel website: <https://travel.state.gov>.

Security Tips

The U.S. State Department has designated Sierra Leone a level 2 "Exercise increased caution" post for crime and civil unrest. Violent crimes, such as robbery and assault, occur frequently in Sierra Leone, especially in Freetown. Local police often lack the resources to deal effectively with serious criminal incidents.

The U.S. government is unable to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens outside Freetown at night as U.S. government employees are prohibited from traveling outside the capital after dark.

Read the Safety and Security section on the country information page:
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/SierraLeone.html>

When in Sierra Leone:

- Do not physically resist any robbery attempt.
- Do not display signs of wealth, such as expensive watches or jewelry.
- Use caution when walking or driving at night.
- Always carry a copy of your U.S. passport and visa (if applicable). Keep original documents in a secure location.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Review the Crime and Safety Report for Sierra Leone.
- U.S. citizens who travel abroad should always have a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist.

Grantees should take care in arranging for a secure apartment, with solid doors and bars on accessible windows. Street crime and residential burglaries are not infrequent, and Fulbrighters are advised not to walk in most urban areas after dark, as muggings can occur. 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 reports of thieves snatching jewelry and other objects from open vehicle windows while stopped in heavy traffic. Carjackings are rare 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 non-essential jewelry and irreplaceable items at home in the U.S. Foreign diplomats and members of the expatriate community are often targeted, as they are perceived as wealthy. Most crimes are "targets of opportunity" in nature so take adequate personal security precautions.

Please 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.

Travel within Sierra Leone and to Other Countries

When planning trips beyond the area of your host community, check the Embassy website for the latest travel advisories <https://sl.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/security-and-travel-information/>. Fulbrighters should verify that PAS and the U.S. Embassy consular section have your current addresses and telephone numbers in case of emergencies. Fulbrighters should also keep PAS apprised of any travel, in-country or abroad. Please be advised that grantee medical benefits are not in force during independent travel outside of the host country. If you plan to travel outside of the country, you need to arrange for other medical and medevac coverage for this period. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's website at <https://travel.state.gov> where the current [Travel Advisories and Public Announcements](#) can be found.

Official Embassy personnel freely travel to all regions of Sierra Leone, but please let the Public Affairs officer know your plans for upcountry travel and how to get in touch with you in case of emergency.

Victims of Crime

U.S. citizen victims of sexual assault should report crimes to the local police and contact the U.S. Embassy at (011-232) 99 105 160. Remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime. See our webpage on help for U.S. victims of crime overseas.

The U.S. Embassy can:

- help you find appropriate medical care
- assist you in reporting a crime to the police
- contact relatives or friends with your written consent
- explain the local criminal justice process in general terms
- provide a list of local attorneys
- provide our information on victim's compensation programs in the U.S.
- provide an emergency loan for repatriation to the United States and/or limited medical support in cases of destitution
- help you find accommodation and arrange flights home
- replace a stolen or lost passport

Domestic Violence

U.S. citizen victims of domestic violence may contact the Embassy for assistance.

Emergency Medical Evacuation

Fulbright grantees have health care benefits under the Department of State Group Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). ASPE is a health benefits program; it is not an all-purpose health insurance, and it is subject to limitations. Traveler's medical insurance, particularly emergency evacuation coverage is strongly recommended, especially for grantees based outside the capital city. Fulbrighters are strongly encouraged to provide PAS with copies of their medical evacuation coverage documents in the event of an emergency.

The Fulbright grant provides limited medical and medical evacuation (medevac) coverage for the grantee only. The cost of medical insurance and medevac insurance for dependents must be paid for by the Fulbrighter. Fulbrighters based outside the capital should explore membership in a local medical evacuation service that transports injured or ill members from rural areas to the capital or another city.

In the event that a Fulbright grantee requires emergency medical evacuation, the U.S. Embassy will assist. Travel to another country for medical diagnosis and/or treatment is not necessarily an emergency medical evacuation. Consult the website describing the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' [Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges](#) for details.

Criminal Penalties

While you are traveling in your host country, you are subject to its laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different than our own, and persons violating local laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. If you break local laws in your host

country, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It's very important to know what's legal and what's not wherever you go.

Safety and Security Considerations for LGBTQ+ Grantees and their Dependents

Attitudes and laws towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals differ around the world, and some countries still criminalize homosexuality. Fulbrighters should research the host country prior to their departure from the U.S., particularly if they intend to be accompanied by their same-sex partner during the Fulbright grant.

[U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories for LGBTQI+ Travelers](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/lgbti.html)
(<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/lgbti.html>)

If you encounter any problems or if you are harassed or threatened due to your sexual orientation or gender identity, please contact the U.S. Embassy.

THE 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) *non-monetary assistance* to enhance the exchange experience for the guest scholar.

WHAT THE FULBRIGHT GRANT PROVIDES

For Student Grantees

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 one-time start-up 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.

For Scholar Grantees

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

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. However, please do not wait until reports are due to raise with CIES/IIE or PAS any concerns you may have.

PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL

Travel to Sierra Leone

Grantee air travel is coordinated through IIE and its designated travel agency, GBT AMEX, which will bill IIE directly for the costs of your tickets. GBT staff will assist you with selecting an itinerary, and will then send your itinerary to IIE 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.

Upon arrival in Sierra Leone, you will be required to show your yellow fever vaccination card and your visa. Arriving and departing passengers traveling on non-diplomatic passports must also pay a arrival/departure fee in cash. There is a website you may use to pay the fee in advance online, but travelers frequently have issues getting the website to work, so it is also possible to pay in US dollars

in cash. Currently this fee is \$25, but it is advisable to check if there has been a change before travel. More information about the arrival fee can be found here: <https://securipass.sl/>

Because the airport is located across the bay from Freetown, it is necessary to pay for a water taxi to bring you from the airport to Freetown. The water taxi services operate shuttles from the airport to the water taxi terminal, but subject to expeditor availability, an Embassy expeditor can also bring you from the airport to the water taxi terminal. The main water taxi companies are Sea Coach (<https://www.seacoachexpress.com>) and Sea Bird (<http://www.seabirdsl.com>). Both companies offer transfer to Freetown for \$45 one way, and can be paid in US cash, but it is advisable to check whether the prices have changed before you travel, as rapid inflation is causing frequent price adjustments.

Health Requirements for Travel

COVID-19 travel requirements are subject to change. Grantees should check the U.S. Embassy website at [COVID-19 Information - U.S. Embassy in Sierra Leone \(usembassy.gov\)](https://usembassy.gov) for updated information regarding current testing requirements.

We recommend all travelers be fully vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19. Fulbright grantees should ensure you have current yellow fever vaccination and tetanus immunizations. Vaccines for hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid, and current booster/vaccines against childhood diseases (tetanus diphtheria, polio, and measles/mumps/rubella) are also strongly recommended for adults, as well as children. For additional information, consult the Centers for Disease Control's website: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/sierra-leone>

Visas and Residence/Work/Research Permits

Grantees should take copies of all identification certificates and documents, including marriage and birth certificates, driver's licenses, etc., to your assignment country. Make photocopies of the first two pages of your passport, which should be kept separate from your passport in case of loss or theft. Also bring extra passport photos for obtaining visas and conducting other business.

Visas

For American citizens, a passport and visa are required for entry and must be obtained in advance. You can find information about the visa process, visa fees, extension requirements, and the link to the new online visa application portal here: <https://slid.gov.sl/visa-on-arrival/#:~:text=For%20visa%20request%20please%20apply,and%20delivery%20of%20the%20eVisa>. Additional information can also be obtained from the Embassy of Sierra Leone, 1701 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, Tel: (202) 939-9261. Please discuss all permit issues with the Sierra Leone Embassy (research permit, work permit, long term residency). They will be able to tell you what papers, documents, or forms will be needed. Please work, as much as possible, with the Embassy in Washington. Also, you can speak with previous Fulbrighters who may assist you with details. Upon arrival, the U. S. Embassy in Freetown will assist with extensions of stay and other immigration issues, but visitors are strongly advised to do as much advance research and preparation as possible regarding host country requirements before departure. PLEASE flag for the U.S. Embassy if your visa is expiring or if you anticipate needing to extend your stay, so we can make sure to assist you before your visa expires.

The host university may also be able to assist with arrangements for extended visas, residence and work permits for Fulbright lecturers assigned to the university. Lecturers are advised to have a copy of the offer letter from the university on hand upon arrival at the airport.

Researchers and students make their own arrangements for extended visas and work and residence permits upon presentation of a research permit issued by the Government of Sierra Leone via the appropriate Ministry.

Research Permits and Research Clearance

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) regulations require ALL researchers to obtain a research clearance prior to conducting any field work. Grantees are encouraged to reconnect with affiliate organizations once the grant has been awarded. Research clearance and permits can take months to obtain, and grantees must begin the process as soon as possible. Researchers/students who do not have research permits risk being denied entry. Obtaining a permit after arrival in country is a long and tedious process and may result in the grantee spending time that cannot be used on research, or in being denied a permit. It is also against government regulations for an individual to change visa status from that of a visitor to that of a researcher.

The GoSL encourages researchers/students to consult with a relevant Ministry/Department, research institution or another relevant body before submitting finalized funding proposals. A copy of the first correspondence outlining the research theme should be sent to the subject Ministry or the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs.

To obtain a residence permit, a researcher or student should first contact the Embassy of Sierra Leone, 1701 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, Tel: (202) 939-9261 for complete information on the proper procedures and requirements. Typical requirements include:

- a) Two completed application forms,
- b) Two recent color passport-size photos,
- c) Passport valid for at least one year, with at least one blank page,
- d) Fee (cash or postal orders only), and
- e) Letter of invitation or evidence of affiliation from the host institution. If the applicant is not affiliated to any institution, the endorsement should come from a person of professional standing in the field of the applicant's discipline, supporting the application and providing assurance that the research will conform to research guidelines.

Two copies of a completed research permit application form must be submitted to the relevant ministry at least four months before commencement of the study. Application forms may be obtained from any Government Ministry via the Sierra Leonean Embassy in Washington.

In cases where a research subject overlaps the portfolios of several Ministries, researchers are advised to submit their applications through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

For specific questions contact the Embassy of Sierra Leone, 1701 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, Tel: (202) 939-9261. Questions concerning research permits and application forms may also be submitted via info@embassyofsierraleone.net.

You may also contact the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, tel. (011-232-77-200-001 or 011-232-76-602-546 or 011-232-33-767-037). Please note that government phone extensions change often, so it is advisable to check with the Embassy of Sierra Leone to confirm current numbers before phoning long distance.

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:

Security

All Fulbright grantees will receive a security briefing by the Public Affairs Officer or Regional Security Officer upon arrival in the host country. Care should be taken in arranging for a secure apartment, with solid doors and bars on accessible windows. Street crime and residential burglaries are common in Africa. Fulbrighters are advised not to walk on the beaches after dark, as muggings occur frequently. As in any major U.S. city, people are cautioned to watch valuables at all times. There are 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 non-essential jewelry and irreplaceable items at home in the U.S.

Arrival and Temporary Lodging

For Fulbright lecturers, the Embassy will encourage the host university to have permanent housing ready for you when you arrive. If permanent housing is not ready for you when you arrive, the university may arrange temporary housing, or the Embassy can give you suggestions for temporary lodging and assist with reservations.

Fulbright students and researchers are expected to locate and make arrangements for their own temporary and permanent housing. The Embassy can give you suggestions for lodging in advance of your arrival, but can provide only limited assistance after you have arrived in country.

The University of Sierra Leone and other host institutions do not typically arrange to meet grantees upon arrival at the airport. Grantees are strongly encouraged to contact their host institution well in advance concerning details of their arrival and initial contact with their hosts. It is preferable for grantees to arrive on weekdays rather than weekends. Grantees must provide CIES or IIE with their final itineraries at least 3 weeks in advance.

All Fulbrighters are encouraged to contact the PAS prior to arrival to schedule Embassy briefings on services, security, and health concerns. As a precaution in case of emergencies, you are required to register with the Consular Section at the Embassy, which can be done in advance of arrival at <http://travel.state.gov>. Upon arrival you will need to provide the PAS and the Consular Section with your local contact information.

The Ambassador would appreciate an introductory meeting with you, which can be scheduled through PAS.

U.S. Embassy Access

Please arrange to visit the Embassy within one week of your arrival. Please note that you will need to be escorted while on Embassy grounds, so please schedule your visits in advance via phone or e-mail.

Check Cashing and Local Banking Arrangements

Contingent upon the Ambassador's approval, the American Embassy allows Fulbrighters to cash U.S. personal checks for local currency subject to the same rules and regulations that apply to the Embassy's American officers. Check cashing is limited to the equivalent of \$1,000.00 per day. Fulbrighters should arrive in country with a sufficient supply of paper checks from their personal accounts in the U.S., because this is the **ONLY** way to access funds via the Embassy cashier; third party checks cannot be processed or deposited via the cashier. The Embassy is unable to offer any other banking services. You should consider establishing overdraft service with your U.S. bank to cover any overdrawn checks that may occur because of slow mail service for sending and receiving bank statements and deposits. For checks over \$1,000, the Embassy can assist in making arrangements with a local bank.

We also recommend that Fulbrighters carry cash, since U.S. dollar traveler's checks and major credit cards are not accepted in Sierra Leone. Traveler's checks and/or a credit card are useful only for travel outside Sierra Leone, so always have cash on you that can be converted to Leones. While credit cards are not accepted in Sierra Leone, Western Union and Money Gram are available. There are no reliable ATMs in Sierra Leone that accept international cards.

Local Health Services and Access to Embassy Health Facilities

Fulbright grantees do not have access to the Embassy health facility. Bring copies of prescriptions for medications and eyeglasses, and other important health records. Contact the ASPE provider for more information on the prescription services covered by the Fulbright program. While grantees are covered by the Department of State for medical evacuations, accompanying dependents are NOT. Medical evacuation insurance for dependents is highly recommended. One evacuation insurance company, which the American community has used in the past, is International SOS Assistance, Inc. (<http://www.internationalsos.com/>)

Fulbright grantees should ensure you have current yellow fever vaccination and tetanus immunizations. Vaccines for hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid, and current booster/vaccines against childhood diseases (tetanus diphtheria, polio, and measles/mumps/rubella) are also strongly recommended for adults, as well as children. For additional information, consult the Centers for Disease Control's website: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/sierra-leone>

Grantees should carry copies of complete medical records and basic information that will enable quick and efficient medical assistance, if necessary. Seek the guidance of your personal physician prior to departure from the U.S. in selecting basic health information records to bring with you.

Grantees should carry a good supply of aspirin, vitamins, band-aids, and preferred over the counter medications. Grantees should bring enough prescription medications to last through their assignment.

Fulbright grantees have health care benefits under the Department of State Group Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). ASPE is a health benefits program; it is not an all purpose health insurance, and it is subject to limitations. Grantees should review the *Accident and Sickness Program for Exchange Participants in Programs Sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*. Traveler's medical insurance, particularly emergency evacuation coverage is strongly recommended, especially for grantees based outside the capital city. The Fulbright grant provides limited medical and medical evacuation (medevac) coverage for the grantee only. The cost of medical insurance and medevac insurance for dependents must be paid by the Fulbrighter. Fulbrighters based outside the capital should explore membership in a local medical evacuation service that transports injured or ill members from rural areas to the capital or another city; these may be less expensive than worldwide services. Fulbrighters are strongly encouraged to provide copies of their medical evacuation coverage documents with PAS in the event of an emergency.

Medical facilities in Sierra Leone fall critically short of U.S. standards. Unfortunately, Embassy Freetown is not able to extend use of its Health Unit facilities to Fulbrighters or their dependents. The Embassy may, however, be able to provide advice on finding local medical care at no cost to the United States Government. Visitors should begin taking malaria prophylaxis two weeks prior to arrival and bring enough supply to last the entire period of their stay (or until they will have an opportunity to replenish their supply in a country with reliable health services). Please bring your yellow immunization record (WHO card) with you. Fulbrighters on long-term medications are advised to bring enough supplies for the length of their stay, as well as copies of all prescriptions.

Malaria is a serious problem in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially for grantees traveling outside urban areas. Take precautions and be familiar with the symptoms so that you seek treatment early. Proper precautions, such as malaria prophylaxis, boiling and filtering water, washing fruits and vegetables, etc., should be taken. Please bring insect repellent and an insecticide treated bed net (available via online retailers). Note that effective malaria prophylaxis medication is not readily available on the local market, and when available is very expensive. Plan on bringing enough malaria prophylaxis for the length of your stay.

SENDING AND RECEIVING MAIL

Personal mail

As a courtesy, Embassy Freetown allows active Fulbright grantees access to the diplomatic pouch to receive first-class letter mail only (maximum of two pounds). Magazines, newspapers, DVDs, and package mail are not authorized. Take sufficient U.S. postage stamps with you for first-class mail to the U.S. The Department of State accepts no liability for loss or damage. First-class mail via the pouch can take up to two weeks or more for delivery. The address format for correspondence is as follows:

Your name (Fulbrighter)
C/o Public Affairs Section
2160 Freetown Place
Dulles, VA 201892160

Instructions for Shipment of Books and Educational Materials by U.S. Fulbright Grantees
(As of January 2022. Subject to change.)

U.S. Fulbright grantees are generally allowed to make a one-time shipment of educational materials to themselves in the host country through "the pouch", or the diplomatic mail system. Items sent in the diplomatic pouch are solely at the risk of the sender. The Department assumes no responsibility for loss of or damage to items sent via the diplomatic pouch. The USPS recognizes the Department of State as the agent for addressees and considers mail "delivered" to addressee upon delivery to the Department, at which point the mail passes outside of USPS control and is no longer defined as mail, it is defined as an "item." The USPS Domestic Mail Manual, Section 703, paragraph 3.1.2, recognizes that the Department has the authority to open and inspect all mail sent to it for transmission abroad to determine whether the item meets the Department's standards. Mail that does not comply may be returned to sender through USPS.

Some U.S. Embassies may not allow Fulbrighters to send pouch shipments. Please contact PAS in your host country for shipping address and additional guidance.

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.

14 FAM 724.8 Use of Pouch by Fulbright Scholars

Fulbright scholars, as described in 6 FAH-5 H-352.7, are authorized to make a one-time shipment of educational materials to the American embassy or consulate in the country of assignment. This shipment must not exceed 6 cubic feet in volume. Six cubic feet is equal to 10,368 cubic inches and 1 cubic foot is equal to 1,728 cubic inches. To determine the volume of a box in cubic feet, multiply the width times the length times the depth (all in inches), and divide the sum by 1728. For example, a box that measures 24" X 24" X 18" has a volume of 6 cubic feet. If a shipment exceeds 6 cubic feet, the entire bulk shipment will be returned to sender. The tracking or registry numbers should be included on all parcels (see 14 FAM 723.3 and 14 FAM 723.2). These materials cannot be sent back to the United States by pouch.

Address these packages to:

Cultural Affairs Officer
Post-specific street address

Department of State
Washington, DC
20521-xxxx (Post +4 ZIP Code)

The Fulbright scholar's name must appear in the return address.

b. Fulbright scholars assigned to a country with a Category A, Category B, or Category C post may use the pouch for letter mail up to 2-pounds to and from the United States. Letters must be addressed as follows:

Name of Grantee
Post-specific street address
Dulles, VA 20189-xxxx (Post +4 ZIP)

Fulbright scholars must also use this address as the return address on all mail from abroad.

c. Do not include any mention of the U.S. Embassy, the Department, Fulbright, or any other official title references in addresses using the 20189 ZIP code. The 20189 ZIP code can only be used for letter mail up to the 2-pound limit and cannot be used for mailing of the one-time shipment of educational materials.

Full instructions on use of pouch can be found [here](#).

Customs Restrictions on Professional and Personal Affects

Besides the limited pouch shipment and airline excess baggage, grantees may airmail materials addressed to themselves via international mail, but are subject to paying customs duty at the local post office before taking possession of the materials. All goods taken into the host country must be declared. There are no duties levied on equipment, such as computers, that are imported for personal use. Firearms may not be brought in without prior arrangements with the Department of Customs and the host country police department. Pets require a U.S.-issued export certificate before they can be boarded on international flights. Fulbrighters are not encouraged to bring pets, but those wishing to do so should contact the Embassy of Sierra Leone, 1701 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, Tel: (202) 939-9261 for information concerning import procedures for live animals. Please be aware that additional transit stops may also require clearance when traveling with pets. The Community Liaison Office at the U.S. Embassy can provide additional information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Permanent Housing and Household Goods

For Fulbright lecturers, the Embassy will encourage the host university to have permanent housing ready for you when you arrive. If permanent housing is not ready for you when you arrive, the university may arrange temporary housing, or the Embassy can give you suggestions for temporary

lodging and assist with reservations.

Fulbright researchers and students are responsible for finding their own housing. Western-style housing that meets minimum standards of comfort and safety can be very expensive. The Embassy can give you suggestions for lodging in advance of your arrival, but can provide only limited assistance after you have arrived in country.

Basic household items (cooking implements, plates, utensils, basic furnishings) are available on the local market, but often do not meet international standards and may be relatively expensive. Food is not expensive by U.S. standards, and there are several reasonably well-stocked grocery stores with most basic food items. A moderate selection of U.S. brands and specialty/gourmet items are available but tend to be relatively expensive. Tap water does not meet international standards for purity and safety; visitors should use bottled or purified water for drinking and cooking.

The television system used is PAL. Because the U.S. uses the NTSC system, DVDs brought from the U.S. will not be viewable on locally-acquired TV sets, unless they are multi-system. Satellite television service costs about US \$100 per month for a package that includes news, sports and movie channels.

Computers and Other Electronic Equipment

Fulbrighters do not have duty-free privileges, so all computers and electronic equipment brought into the country must be taken out of the country when the grant is completed or duty must be paid. Previous Fulbrighters have donated computer equipment to host universities at the end of their stay in exchange for the university's obtaining duty-free entry. Do not send computers as unaccompanied baggage. Cameras intended for personal use are allowed into the country duty-free.

Power outages and power fluctuations are common and can destroy a computer. The best solution is to bring a laptop which does not require a transformer and can easily convert from 120 to 220 volts. Another option is to purchase a transformer to convert your computer from 110 to 220 volts, and a heavy-duty surge protector and a voltage regulator. All can be purchased in-country. A previous Fulbrighter also advised that by bringing his own laser printer on his grant, he was able to avoid the tedious process of getting copies made at the university.

The capital and other large towns offer a variety of internet cafés with reasonable rates, but the service is often slow and unreliable by Western standards (on a par with dial-up service). Direct Internet access at homes and offices is rare, although it is increasing in the NGO and business communities. Unlike the U.S. where the universities were in the forefront of providing Internet service, universities in Sierra Leone lag behind in both e-mail and Internet access. Recent estimates rank Sierra Leone as having one of the lowest rates of internet penetration in Africa: 0.03%.

Academic Life

The University of Sierra Leone (USL) is the country's national institution of higher learning with an enrollment of more than 12,000 students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The university's website address is <http://www.tusol.org/>.

Academic Calendar

The academic year runs from August through May. There are two semesters: January-May and July-October. Fulbright lecturers should plan to arrive in early or mid-August. While classes may not actually start on dates scheduled, course assignments are often decided during the last semester of the previous academic year. Given this, lecturers must be present before classes are scheduled to start.

Teaching Requirements, Attendance, and Staff Hours

Lecturers may be assigned up to four courses, due to staff shortages in various departments. As stated in the Fulbright grant, PAS expects all lecturers to fulfill their professional responsibilities, including class attendance, faculty meetings, special projects, etc. Lecturers should communicate with their department heads as soon as possible to get an idea of classes to be assigned; however, Fulbright lecturers should also take note of workload assigned to them, and advise PAS if the host department is unbalanced in assignments.

Phoning Home and Mobile Phones

1-800 numbers cannot be accessed from Sierra Leone. Use of international long-distance calling cards is very limited. International calling rates are quite high - approximately US \$2.00 to \$2.50 per minute to the U.S. Many Americans subscribe to various call-back services to obtain cheaper rates - approximately US \$1.09 per minute.

Most Fulbrighters find it impossible to live without a mobile phone. There are several companies - Airtel and Africell are most common - and mobile networks are expanding. American phones, unless compatible with the GSM900 system, will not be compatible with the host country system. Mobile phones purchased in Europe should work.

Local Transportation and the Used Car Market

Fulbrighters who plan to drive may wish to obtain an international driver's license from the American Automobile Association (AAA) before leaving the U.S., although there is no guarantee that local authorities will recognize such a license. The U.S. Embassy can assist Fulbrighters to obtain a local license, but this must be paid for by the grantee; total cost is approximately USD 90. Japanese vehicles are common here, and therefore spare parts are easily available. Excessive speed, unpredictable local driving habits, poor vehicle maintenance, and the lack of basic safety equipment on many vehicles are daily hazards. Vehicle travel outside major cities at night should be avoided due to the poor condition of the roads and the threat of banditry. High clearance or four-wheel drive vehicles are essential for driving, even in certain areas of the capital, but especially outside major towns and in tourist areas. During the rainy season, many roads are passable only with four-wheel drive vehicles.

Fulbrighters are not granted duty free privileges to purchase or import vehicles. For that reason, Fulbrighters are advised not to import vehicles, as import duty is very expensive and delays are common in clearing vehicles through customs. The Embassy and PAS cannot assist with customs clearance.

Scholars who plan to drive are advised to look for a used vehicle upon their arrival in the host country. Prices are comparable to American standards (\$9,000 or more depending on the type of car), but most grantees can sell the vehicle for approximately the same amount upon departure. Car rental is possible but also expensive. PAS cannot provide official vehicles for personal use.

Depending upon where you live, it may be possible to call for a taxi by phone, especially if you can identify a reliable driver. Public transportation is not considered to be safe. Even long distance travel in modern buses can be unsafe, both because of criminal activity aboard the buses and because of hazardous driving conditions.

Public Holidays

In addition to observing U.S. holidays, the U.S. Embassy also observes Sierra Leonean holidays. Please contact Post for a current list of holidays.

Schooling for Dependents

There are very few international-standard schools in Freetown, the most common being the American International School and the British Montessori School. Yearly tuition rates vary widely. PAS will provide Fulbrighters with the information on prospective schools. Grantees should contact the school's principal or admissions officer. The Community Liaison Office at the U.S. Embassy can provide additional information.

Other Websites or Resource Material

Consular Information Sheet	http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1016.html
State Alumni	http://alumni.state.gov
Fulbright Association	http://www.fulbright.org

Major Newspapers or Country-Specific Resources

General Media Landscape: The Sierra Leone media environment is diverse and divided. Over the past three-five years there has been a proliferation of media outlets. New radio stations and newspapers have registered with the Independent Media Commission (IMC) including private and corporate interests.

Print Media: While there are over 100 registered daily newspapers in Freetown, most do not print on a regular basis. They are mainly circulated in Freetown, with few copies distributed upcountry. The Embassy has excellent relations with the print media, especially with the prominent newspapers such as Awoko, Politico, Standard Times, Concord Times, Premier News, Peep! Magazine, Awareness Times. While the production quality and layout of the newspapers are generally unattractive, the content of the best papers is newsworthy and sometimes accurate.

Online Media: In addition to the print media, several electronic newspapers have also appeared in the last year. They are often based outside the country, but have local correspondents. Prominent examples include:

- **Cocorioko** (www.cocorioko.net/)
- **Patriotic Vanguard** (<http://www.thepatrioticvanguard.com/>)
- **Allafrica.com** (<http://allafrica.com/>)
- **Newstime Africa** (<http://www.newstimeafrica.com/>)

Several locally-based newspapers also have online versions, including:

- **Awoko** (www.awoko.org)
- **Awareness Times** (<http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/index.shtml>)
- **Standard Times** (www.standardtimespress.net)
- **Global Times** (<http://www.globaltimes-sl.org/>)
- **Concord Times** (<http://slconcordtimes.com/>)
- **AYV Magazine** (<http://ayvnews.com/>)
- **Politico Newspaper** (<http://politicosl.com/>)

Radio: There are over 50 radio stations throughout the country. Radio, particularly community radio, plays a vital role in Sierra Leone and is the primary means by which Sierra Leoneans receive information. The print media and television are mostly limited to Freetown

Television: There are approximately ten licensed television stations in Sierra Leone but only three are operational. The independent government-supported Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) is the main television news station. It has had a monopoly on television programming and news in recent years after Sierra Leone's first independently ran broadcaster, ABC Television Africa, went bankrupt almost immediately after opening in 2005. SLBC was established following a merger between United Nations Radio and the former national broadcaster, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service. It was transformed into a public corporation in 2009 in hopes of creating a level playing field for all political parties and members of the public. A second commercial television station ran by Nigerians opened in late 2012, but closed within a year of operation. Two new television stations have emerged (AYV and Star TV). Compared to SLBC, African Young Voices (AYV) and Star TV run much more sophisticated shop and use state-of-the-art equipment. AYV and Star TV have established themselves as a leader in niche programming for all types of audiences and interests.

Social Media: Though internet penetration in Sierra Leone is under five percent, social media platforms involvement from Sierra Leoneans especially young people continues to grow favorably. The U.S. Mission online presence has improved significantly within the last 12 months. We have maintained an improved presence on the most popular social media platform (Facebook and Whatsapp). Our Fan base on the Embassy Facebook page grew from 40,000 likes to now 70,000 and we were highly acclaimed during the Ebola outbreak for our real time updates and analysis of the situation especially posts from the Ambassador. We have incorporated short videos and other tools on our social networking platforms and continue to monitor our progress and continually experiment with social media outreach throughout the year.