

# American Outlook

American Citizen Services  
United States Mission, Turkey  
December 2014 Newsletter



## MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR JOHN BASS

Dear Friends:

Thanks very much for the warm welcome to Ankara. Holly and I look forward to meeting more of the American citizen community here in Turkey, and we hope that we can share in your experiences in this beautiful country.

Our relationship with Turkey is one of the most important relationships that the U.S. has in the world today. Our partnership, grounded in 60 years of shared interests and values, is vital for international peace and security. As Ambassador to Turkey, my objectives are to continue building upon our strong foundation, to grow our partnership, to ensure we are supporting each other in our security concerns, and to ensure that together we are taking advantage of the very big opportunities we have to invest in each other's economies and societies.

In my 26 years in the Foreign Service, I have had the privilege to serve in U.S. missions in Iraq, Italy, Belgium, Chad and Georgia. Time and time again, in those various posts and various roles, I have seen the U.S. be a positive source for peace, freedom and human dignity in so many places.

Here at the embassy and our consulates, one of our most important missions is to support and help protect American citizens living in or visiting Turkey. I encourage those of you who have not already done so, to register with the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_4789.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_4789.html). The program enables you to receive direct email messages from the Embassy in times of emergency, and can be of great value to you and your loved ones. American citizens may also register to vote in U.S. elections by visiting [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

Holly and I wish you and your families a happy and safe holiday season, and continued health and success in the New Year.

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### **U.S. Embassy**

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## DIRECT DEPOSIT PAYMENTS OF YOUR SSA BENEFITS IN TURKEY

U.S. Embassy Ankara is pleased to announce that the direct deposit payment system for your Social Security benefits is now available.



With this new system, the Social Security Administration (SSA) will directly deposit your benefits into your bank account in Turkey. Because the payments will be deposited in US dollars, your bank account should also accept US dollars. If you currently receive your benefits on a Chase card or Direct Express card and you prefer this method, you may choose to continue with this option. However, please note that the direct deposit system will provide you with more flexibility than the debit cards the ability to control your own account balance, transfer money, etc.

If you would like to receive your SSA payments directly at your Turkish bank account, please complete the form at the below link. You will also need to have a bank employee sign the form. You should then return the form to the address indicated on the form. Once your form is received and processed, the SSA will send you a notice of change of payment address. You will then begin receiving your benefits directly at your Turkish bank account.

[Turkish Form](#)

[English Form](#)

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## CULTURAL ARTIFACTS



Turkish law has a broad definition of "antiquities" and makes it a crime to remove any from the country. Offenders are prosecuted. **All historic sites, and everything in them, on the grounds, or in the water, are the property of the Turkish Government.** If you buy antiquities, use only authorized dealers and obtain museum certificate for each item they are authorized to sell. At departure, you may be asked to present a receipt and the certificate. Failure to have them can result in your arrest and jail time. Contact the [Embassy of Turkey in Washington](#) or one of Turkey's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

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## TURKISH E-VISA AND STICKER VISAS AT THE AIRPORTS

As of April 17, 2013, the Turkish electronic visa (e-visa) became available. Although Turkish government previously announced that the sticker visas will no longer be issued at the airports as of e-visa availability, due to the busy summer holiday season they decided to extend the current sticker visa issuance at the airports beside the e-visa issuance and may stop issuing sticker visas at the airports as of January 2015.



Foreigners are required to present a six month validity passport in order to apply for a Turkish e-visa. Although the e-visa or sticker visa duration is for 180 days, foreigners cannot stay more than 90 days in Turkey within these 180 days. Foreigners who are planning to stay more than 90 days in Turkey should apply for a Turkish residence permit.

E-Visa application is possible from any place with an internet connection. Applicants just need to log on to [www.evisa.gov.tr](http://www.evisa.gov.tr), provide the requested information, wait for approval then make the online payment and download the e-Visa. The whole process takes no more than 10 minutes.

**Please note that the e-visa is only valid when the purpose of travel is tourism or commerce. Other purposes, such as work and study, require regular visas given by Turkish embassies or consulates abroad.**

Citizens of these countries are eligible to apply for e-Visas: Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Austria Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Greek Cypriot Administration, Grenada Haiti, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kuwait, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, U.S.A, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom.

Citizens of these countries are also eligible to apply for e-Visas under certain conditions: Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Iraq, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Republic of Congo, Republic of Moldova, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Please visit [www.evisa.gov.tr](http://www.evisa.gov.tr) to submit an e-visa application or for further information.

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## **EMBASSY SECURITY MESSAGES VIA TEXT MESSAGE**

We are pleased to announce the availability of a new SMS service for U.S. citizens interested in receiving security messages and alerts from the Embassy on their mobile phones. The service is optional and will run on an SMS system operated through Avea. This does not replace the existing registration system with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), but is an option designed to give you one additional method to receive important emergency information. Security and other messages will continue to be released via STEP to your registered e-mail address. You do not need to re-register with STEP if you have already done so.



Please note that in order to participate in this service, the US Embassy will be adding your number to a database that will be shared with the service provider. However, should you choose to participate, only your phone number will be shared. There is no charge to enroll in this service, other than normal messaging charges from your mobile provider. Note that if you have commercial text messages “blocked” for your phone by the cellular service provider, you may not be able to receive embassy text messages. Please contact your cellular service provider if this is the case.

### ***To sign up for this service please do the following:***

- e-mail [AnkaraWarden@state.gov](mailto:AnkaraWarden@state.gov) with the subject line “SMS Enroll.”
- Put your mobile number in the body of the message.
- Write your number in the following format: 05XXXXXXXXXX (11 digits, no dashes). You do not have to write your name.
- Copy and paste the following into the body of your email: “I authorize the release of my phone number by the U.S. Embassy to Avea for Embassy security messaging purposes only.”

## **ENROLL IN STEP TO RECEIVE THE ACS NEWSLETTER**

# STEP

Please remind your American friends to enroll in the U.S. State Department's free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program <https://step.state.gov/step/> in order for them to be included on the ACS Newsletter mailing list. It is a great way to keep abreast of any public announcements on safety and security issues in Turkey and elsewhere. In addition, the Newsletter is a helpful resource for the latest voting news, immigration policy changes, Embassy events and other activities concerning Americans living in Turkey. Another benefit is that if you move to another country, updating your enrollment in STEP ensures you continue to get timely information for your new country of residence! You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through [iTunes](#) and the [Android market](#), to have travel information at your fingertips.

STEP is also an important tool that consular officers around the world use during crises to distribute up to date information on emergency situations so that travelers and expatriates like you can make informed decisions regarding their safety.

## IRS NOW OFFERS DOWNLOADING OF PRIOR YEAR TAX FILINGS



You may download your previous year's tax returns at the below link:

<http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Get-Transcript>

## TURKISH RESIDENCE PERMIT AND LOCAL HEALTH INSURANCE

As of summer 2014, foreigners who wish to get Turkish residence permits are required to obtain Turkish private health insurances. The list of Turkish Insurance companies who are members of the Insurance Association of Turkey can be found below.

<http://www.tsb.org.tr/non-life-companies.aspx?pageID=965>

## HOW DOES THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT AFFECT



Many American citizens residing outside the United States are wondering:

- If they are required to subscribe to the Affordable Care Act (ACA)?
- If they will have to pay penalties for not subscribing to ACA?
- Is subscribing to the ACA an option for them?
- Is the coverage offered outside the U.S?

As published at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) :

U.S. citizens living in a foreign country for at least 330 days of a 12-month period are **not required** to get health insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act for that 12-month period. If you're uninsured and living abroad under this definition, you **don't** have to pay the [fee](#) that other uninsured U.S. citizens may have to pay.

See [question 12 on this IRS document](#) to learn more about the rules for people living abroad.

Generally, health insurance coverage in the Marketplace covers health care provided by doctors, hospitals, and medical services **within the United States**. If you living abroad, it's important to know this before you consider buying Marketplace insurance.

Questions? Call 1-800-318-2596, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (TTY: 1-855-889-4325)

## SECURITY- WORLDWIDE CAUTION



The Department of State has issued a Worldwide Caution to update information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world, which can be found [here](#).

The Department of State strongly recommends that U.S. citizens who travel or reside abroad enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) located at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). By enrolling, you will receive up-to-date travel information customized to your unique travel itinerary or country of residence.

## UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

The Embassy will be closed on the following American and Turkish holidays:

<b>January 1</b>	Thursday	<b>New Year's Day</b>
<b>January 19</b>	Monday	<b>Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.</b>
<b>February 16</b>	Monday	<b>Washington's Birthday</b>
<b>April 23</b>	Thursday	<b>National Sovereignty and Children's Day.</b>
<b>May 1</b>	Friday	<b>Labor and Solidarity Day</b>
<b>May 19</b>	Tuesday	<b>Ataturk Memorial, Youth and Sports Day</b>
<b>May 25</b>	Monday	<b>Memorial Day</b>



## OUR CONTACT INFO

**Ankara:** 110 Ataturk Boulevard  
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**Istanbul:** Uc Sehitler Sokak No. 2, 34460, Istinye, Sariyer,  
Tel: (90) (212) 335-9000  
Fax (90) (212) 335-9102  
<http://istanbul.usconsulate.gov>

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