

# EMBASSY UPDATES

NEWSLETTER FOR U.S. CITIZENS IN KOSOVO



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## Peace Corps – Changing Perceptions A Volunteer At A Time



Peace Corps came to Kosovo in 2014 by invitation of President Atifete Jahjaga and with the help of a \$400,000 startup grant from the US Agency for International Development Kosovo. USAID continues to support the work and service of Peace Corps Volunteers with a budget for small, community based projects annually. Peace Corps provides non-religious, non-political, and non-profit resources to residents of Kosovo. Volunteers do not become involved in religion, politics, or profit making enterprises.

Peace Corps Volunteers live and work in 38 municipalities throughout Kosovo, focusing on two programs: two-thirds of the Volunteers are in the English teaching project and the other third works on community organizational development projects. English is important for youth across Kosovo to learn because it is a bridge

### The U.S. Embassy will be closed on these dates:

November 11, 2019—Veterans Day  
December 25, 2019—Christmas Day  
January 2, 2020—New Year's Holiday  
January 20, 2020—Martin Luther King Day

November 28, 2019—Thanksgiving Day  
January 1, 2020—New Year's Day  
January 7, 2020—Christmas Day (Orthodox)



United States Embassy Pristina, Kosovo American Citizen Services  
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language between ethnically divided communities. It also provides an important additional means to acquire better employment and educational opportunities. Community organizational development projects stand up and connect local non-governmental organizations (NGO's) with each other to provide enhanced community support and services. Working together is working better. Volunteers also engage in secondary projects related to needs outside their primary project and often involve their personal interests. These range from yoga classes, baseball camp, photography club, helping with public health strategy, and summer camps for children to resume writing classes. They hold public events for local, regional, and national contests such as English poetry recitation, spelling bees, robotics, essay writing, and animation shows. The main mandates that



Volunteers follow are involving counterparts to learn leadership skills for sustainability of projects, and integrating the voice and needs of the community. You can find out about these events and how to attend at the [Peace Corps Kosovo facebook page](#).

Peace Corps volunteers come from all over the US. Currently, the largest contingent is from Texas, followed by California, Florida, and Massachusetts.

All volunteers are American citizens, and their backgrounds are as diverse as their reasons for joining Peace Corps.

Peace Corps volunteers arrive in Kosovo speaking no Albanian or Serbian. They are assigned temporary host families for their orientation and training period. During this period of approximately three months, the volunteers learn the language, learn about Kosovo, learn about the jobs they are expected to do in their communities, and learn about the norms they are to follow while in the country. Volunteers do not get paid for their time. They do not get special mail services. They do not get to live where they want, nor with whom they want. English volunteers learn how to work with a partner teacher and classroom management. Community development volunteers learn how to connect with NGO's and community leaders.

Once in their assigned areas, English teachers work in primary and secondary schools in rural villages and small towns and alongside local English teachers. They participate in community and school life, and help as they can. Community organization development volunteers have a more amorphous mandate, in that they have the challenge of working outside of a structured school calendar to carving out a niche focused on area needs while engaging multiple agencies as partners. Their initial few months involve listening to





community leaders, NGO 's, government officials, and regular people. Then they formulate and implement plans to help the community develop in the way it wants to. These volunteers inspire their communities to pitch in and help themselves while building infrastructure and relationships.

### Road Sign of the Quarter

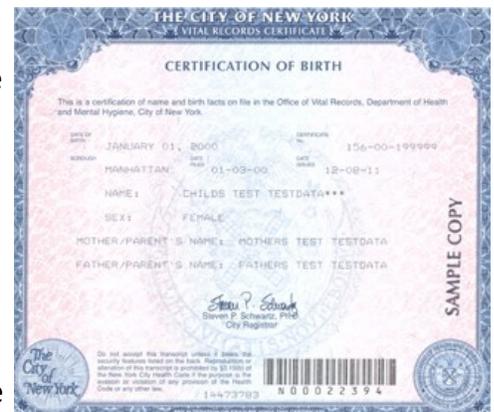
Instead of asking about only one road sign this issue, here is [a quiz](#) that has multiple signs. Enjoy!

## Documents for Traveling with Children

Traveling with children internationally can be exhausting, and not only because of the repetition of, “Are we there yet?” More and more countries are requiring extra documentation for children to enter and/or leave them. These are required at borders. The reasoning behind this is the cut down on child trafficking and parental abduction. It’s the government’s way of keeping your children safe. Here’s a list of the most common document requirements and how to obtain them.

**Passport.** Your child requires a passport. The passport may need to have at least six months of validity to enter a country. Make sure your child’s passport is up to date and, if it is not, [schedule an appointment](#) with us to get a new one.

**Birth certificate.** [Some countries](#) require an original birth certificate for entry; the birth certificate must include the names of parents. To obtain an original birth certificate from the US, you must contact the Office of Vital Statistics in the state your child was born in. A CRBA counts as a birth certificate if your child was born abroad.



**Travel Consent Letter.** If your child is not traveling with you, or is traveling with only one parent, a travel consent letter is becoming more commonly requested. [Traveling to or from a Hague Convention country](#) with a non-parent requires a [form](#) signed by both parents and notarized. When a child travels with one

parent, a [consent to travel form](#) signed by the other parent and notarized is advised. To notarize your documents, you may [schedule an appointment](#) with the Consular Section at the Embassy. Unaccompanied children under 14 years old leaving Kosovo must have a notarized letter signed by both parents or legal guardians giving permission to travel outside the country. The form MUST be notarized by a local, Kosovo, notary.

**Medical Consent Form**  
 This form is required for students under the age of 18. It must be completed in full by student/parent or guardian.

**Student Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to student: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Health Care Authorization and Release**

I, the undersigned, hereby authorize the undersigned to provide medical treatment (diagnosis and treatment) to the student named above and to release the student from liability for any medical care provided to the student by the undersigned.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

To avoid paper-piling, email back complete IIT medical consent form to IIT Health Services promptly.  
 How to submit the medical consent form:  
 • Email to IIT Health Services at [HealthServices@iit.edu](mailto:HealthServices@iit.edu)  
 • Mail to IIT Health Services at 257 24<sup>th</sup> St., Room 402, New York, NY 10013-0002  
 • Fax to 212-217-4100  
 If you have any questions, call Health Services at 212-217-4100.

**Medical Consent Form.** In case your child is injured or gets sick while traveling without both parents, it is advisable to prepare a [medical consent form](#). This, too, should be signed by the absent parent(s) and notarized.

We hope these tips will help you enjoy a less stressful travel experience with your children.

## Thanksgiving Abroad

Thanksgiving is the most iconic and celebrated of American holidays. How do you bring the holiday home in Kosovo? Two of the most important ingredients for the meal are readily available in Kosovo – whole turkeys and yams. Cranberries are harder to find, but it may be possible to get cranberry flavor with cranberry juice, which is readily available. If you want marshmallows on top of your yams, here’s [a recipe](#) that doesn’t use corn syrup. [Stuffing](#) is easy to make from scratch. Pumpkin pie can also be made [without canned pumpkin](#).

Thanksgiving isn’t only about the food, though. It’s about community and fellowship. Why not share your tradition of Thanksgiving with friends and neighbors who have never experience it? Maybe you will make new traditions in the process. It’s also a good idea to connect with your family via phone or facetime or other chat service. Maybe even set up the video at the table. You can make Thanksgiving away from home into a rewarding and happy day.



The fastest growing business in the Balkans is American. Gjirafa is incorporated in the US and has a branch in Kosovo. Most of Gjirafa's operations are centered in Pristina, from their various websites to their programming studios and delivery services. Gjirafa is the largest online retailer in Kosovo, and has expanded services to Albania, North Macedonia, and the diaspora population.

Gjirafa's seven websites deliver both original and aggregated content to their customers. They vet their suppliers to ensure they are selling official merchandise, and have the largest selection of electronics in stock in Kosovo, with over 50,000 separate items. Their original content includes short comedy series produced in house and childrens' programming that will debut in the new year. Aggregated programming includes information from news and weather channels, bus schedules, and other useful information. Gjirafa even includes its own delivery fleet, dropping items of to you at the location of your choice, and local shopping by phone with pick up at the warehouse location. Soon, you will be able to go into their facility and browse items and receive help from their sales staff in person.

Gjirafa monetizes its websites in three ways: direct sales of merchandise, ads on the website, and by licensing its self-built platform for others to use. This diversity of income streams enables Gjirafa to become more independent of market fluctuations than many other companies.

Gjirafa's  
Cahani,  
New York,  
masters'  
at one of  
firms in the



gjirafa.com

founder, Mergim  
spent twelve years in  
acquiring two  
degrees and working  
the top accounting  
world. He

incorporated Gjirafa in the US, then came to Kosovo seven years ago to build it from the ground up. USAID helped him start with a small grant. He says that grant was worth more to him than mere money. It was a representation of faith in his dream. He envisions it as the Amazon of the Balkans, and would love to join them in a partnership one day. Plans for the company include continuing to grow and partner with official brand name sellers in the region and to list on the NASDAQ stock exchange in the next five years.

As with other tech startups, Gjirafa has a generous compensation plan for its employees, including stock (80% of employees are stockholders), health benefits, good salaries, and an office dog. Their workspace is open plan and glassed in to represent the transparency of the corporation and its dedication to inclusivity. Because of this culture and attitude, Gjirafa has been able to draw back many Kosovo young professionals to Pristina after they have graduated and worked abroad at prestigious firms.

Gjirafa is helping Kosovo build itself from the ground up, and participates in civic organizations such as the American Chamber of Commerce, OSAC, and charitable organizations within the country.

## Unseen Kosovo—[Mana Board Game Bar](#)



Ermir Sahidushi was introduced to board gaming as a cultural movement while studying for his master's degree at Illinois Institute of Technology. He loved how board gaming made people put down their smart phones, engage in the game, and converse with each other. This love led him and some friends to open Mana Board Game Bar in the spring of 2018 in downtown Pristina, across from the Swedish Embassy and next to the British Council.

The game bar serves light snacks and drinks, and has more than two hundred games to play. The staff will listen to your likes and dislikes and recommend games to play. They'll even teach you how to play them. From light games, including children's games such as Twister, to complex games such as Twilight Struggle, can be found in the collection. Almost all of the games are in English. Occasionally, the bar holds game tournaments, and, more often, they bring in a dungeon master to teach newcomers how to play Dungeons and Dragons.

If you get hungry while playing, you can ask that food be delivered from a restaurant or bring some in yourself. The place is bright and cheery, with ample overhead lighting and front plate glass windows to let in sunlight. Come winter, when it's too cold to sit outside on the veranda, get together and play a game.



## Our New Embassy

We are now in our new embassy! This is exciting for us, as it enables us to provide more services and gives us elbow room in our office. The new embassy is a very different place from our old one. Instead of many small buildings on a spread out compound, we are all in one building that is large enough to accommodate everyone.

A few weeks ago, we hosted our Citizen Liaison Volunteers for a meeting at the new embassy. They met the ambassador and deputy chief of mission, learned about their role in the security of all Americans in Kosovo, and had a tour of some of the open spaces and the consular section. We were happy to see them and learn from them. Thank you, Volunteers, for coming to our new home! If you would like to learn about the Citizen Liaison Volunteer program, please email [PristinaACS@state.gov](mailto:PristinaACS@state.gov), and we will give you information.

