

Moving to the RTP (Research Triangle Park) area, “the Triangle”:

Note: The organizations listed below are not federal agencies, and NIEHS does not endorse or promote any of these organizations. When you enter the Web sites listed below, you will leave the NIEHS Web site. Please return to our Web site to find more information on fellows' career development, environmental health research and related information.

General information

The **Triangle area (RTP)** is a fairly large region consisting of three main cities, Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill and the towns and areas surrounding these cities. Each area has its own personality, and it will be helpful if you learn more about the different areas before deciding where to live. Here is a list of links to help you learn more about your future home:

Information about the state of **North Carolina** can be found at <http://www.ncgov.com/>

There are 100 counties in the state of North Carolina. Each county also has its own website. The four counties listed below are part of the Triangle area:

Durham County (contains the city of Durham):

<http://www.co.durham.nc.us/index.cfm>

Wake County (contains the city of Raleigh): <http://www.wakegov.com>

Orange County (contains the city of Chapel Hill): <http://www.co.orange.nc.us/>

Chatham County: <http://www.co.chatham.nc.us/>

General information about the **Triangle area** is at <http://www.rtpnet.org/>

Maps to the area, the Research Triangle Park, and local universities can be found at

<http://www.rtp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&filename=maps.html>

RTP was founded in 1959 and more than 40,000 people work there every day.

The Triangle area has been named as one of the best places to live and work by a number of publications including Employment Review, Forbes, Expansion Management, and CNN's Money Magazine.

Cost of living is relative; it depends where you are coming from, and is always fluctuating. For a general guide on the relative cost of living in the Triangle, go to <http://www.homefair.com/homefair/servlet/ActionServlet?pid=500&homefair&to=ActionServlet%3Fdg%3Dns%26pid%3D199%26cid%3Dhomefair&pagename=27&internal=T&partner=homefair>

Finding a place to live:

Rental housing is relatively easy to find in this area. There are several sites to help you search for apartments on the Internet:

RentNet: <http://www.rentnet.com/apartments/home.jhtml?lnksrc=ts5>

Search by zip code (postal code); NIEHS is 27709

Apartment Guide: <http://www.apartmentguide.com/>

Search by State=North Carolina; Metro area=Raleigh-Durham Metro Area

If you don't want to look for an apartment immediately, there are some **short-term housing options** that may meet your needs:

- Candlewood Suites (<http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/cw/1/en/hd/rdudn>) has hotel suites available to NIEHS new arrivals at special rates:

Studio suite prices:

1-6 night stay: \$74 per night plus tax

7-29 nights: \$64 per night plus tax

30+ nights: \$42 per night plus tax

One-bedroom suites are \$10 more per night.

Candlewood Suites has a shuttle that will drive you to and from NIEHS, so if you don't yet have a car, this will help you get to work in the beginning. It is also on the Triangle Transit bus line (see weblink below in the "Transportation" section). Your suite comes with a kitchen, housekeeping, free cable TV, free high-speed Internet access, free local phone calls, a 24-hour fitness center, and a free video and CD library. In order to get these special rates, call the hotel directly to make reservations, ask for Michelle Brown, and tell her that you work at NIEHS in the fellowship program. The phone number for Candlewood Suites is (919) 313-8850.

Other nearby options (these do not have a shuttle service to the NIEHS, so you will need a ride to work) include:

- StudioPlus Deluxe Studios on Hwy. 54 at

<http://www.studioplus.com/minisite/?hotelID=455> or on South Miami Boulevard.

at <http://www.studioplus.com/minisite/?hotelID=458>. Internet rates are around \$50-60 per night plus tax for stays of less than one week, or \$35-45 per night plus tax if you stay longer than one week. Currently StudioPlus cannot guarantee smoking or non-smoking rooms.

- Also, the Crossland Economy Studios on Hwy. 55 (website is at

<http://www.crosslandstudios.com/minisite/?hotelID=522>). Internet rates are about \$40 per night plus tax. As with StudioPlus, Crossland will not guarantee smoking or non-smoking rooms. You can safely bike to NIEHS on the bike paths from the StudioPlus located on Hwy. 54.

•The official homepage of Research Triangle Park, <http://www.RTP.org/>, has additional links to **furnished temporary housing** at the bottom of this page: http://www.rtp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&filename=city_guides.html

You can get an idea of what it would cost to **buy a house** by searching the Triangle Multiple Listing Service (MLS) at <http://www.trianglemls.com/> The MLS contains listings of multiple homes as posted by real estate agents as well as some groups that help people sell their own homes. Look for homes at the “Homes for Sale” link; this leads you to two links for viewing homes for sale. The “Immobel.com” link provides home finding services in multiple languages.

Some general advice about buying a home is at RelocationRTP at <http://www.relocationrtp.com/rtp-buying-a-house.htm>

Additional information about moving to and living in the RTP area can be found at the following websites:

New Movers magazine: <http://www.newmoversnetwork.com/>

Relocation Guide magazine (you can order a guide at this site):

<http://www.relocationguide.biz/order-magazine.html>

Setting up your new home

Fellows often don't move with many household items. The NIEHS has a public folder (accessible once your NIEHS e-mail account is set up) called the “Trading Post”. To find it, look on Outlook (the NIEHS e-mail system) under Public Folders>All Public Folders>NIEHS>.NIEHS># Trading Post. You'll find many things for sale: cars, furniture, houses, etc. You can also post an e-mail to say that you are looking for a particular item, or to sell things yourself.

Transportation

There's no good way around it---the Triangle area is big, very suburban, and you will probably want a car to get around. You may be able to use the Triangle Transit Authority's (TTA) **bus system** to get around (maps and information at <http://www.ridetta.org/Home/index.html>). If you are able to get around by bus, you may also be eligible to participate in the NIEHS Transhare program; NIEHS has a limited number of bus passes available to employees to encourage alternative forms of transportation to work. More information and the application for this program are at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/omfeb/transport/plan4.htm#transhare>

North Carolina **bike route maps** are downloadable from <http://www.ncdot.org/mapspubs/> Published and digital maps are available.

If you choose to drive, you will need a North Carolina **driver's license**. The list of required documents, the fees for a license, and the downloadable pdf version of the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) "Driver's Handbook" are at http://www.ncdot.org/dmv/driver_services/drivingpublic/applying.html

If you hold a license from another state or territory of the U.S., you should be able to get your NC license by taking the written test, the vision test, a quick test of traffic signs and paying the fee. **If you have a license from another country, be aware that the law enforcement authorities in North Carolina do not honor an International Driver License, so it is not worth getting one before you come to the U.S.** A valid license issued by a government agency from a home state or country is required to legally drive in this state, so you can use your license for up to 60 days after moving here. After 60 days, you must have a license issued by North Carolina.

You will also have 60 days to register a car previously registered in another state. For more information on registering vehicles, go to the NC Division of Motor Vehicles at http://www.ncdot.org/dmv/vehicle_services/

Buying a car

Look on the Trading Post (see above section on "Setting up Your New Home")--- fellows leave the country on a regular basis and sell their cars when they leave.

If you want to buy a new car, you will find no shortage of car dealers in this area. Check the "Yellow Pages" in the phone book to find the dealers closest to you.

Recreation

There's a lot to do in North Carolina: the **beach** is a 2-hour drive from the Triangle, and the **mountains** and some skiing are about 4 hours away. The **weather** in winter, spring and fall is moderate, and rarely has snow. Summers can be hot and humid (think "sauna"), but the rest of the year makes up for it if you don't like the heat!

For **local things to do**, check out the

Triangle CitySearch website at <http://triangle.citysearch.com/>

Zspotlight at <http://www.zspotlight.com/>

<http://www.triangle.com/>

The News and Observer is the biggest local newspaper and is found online at <http://www.newsobserver.com/>

The official North Carolina state website at <http://www.ncgov.com/> also has links to NC attractions.

Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill provide web access to their **visitors' bureaus**:

Raleigh: <http://www.visitraleigh.com/>

Durham: <http://www.durham-nc.com/index.php>

Chapel Hill: <http://www.chocvb.org/>

The Triangle is also close to several cities for **weekend trips**:

- Washington, D.C. is a 4-hour drive or 1 hour flight from Raleigh/Durham.
- Atlanta is a 5-hour drive or 90 minute flight from Raleigh/Durham.
- New York is an 8-hour drive or 2-hour flight from Raleigh/Durham.
- For the adventurous, American Airlines has one non-stop flight every evening to London's Gatwick Airport (about 7 hours flight time).

Raleigh-Durham International **airport** (RDU) is located about five miles from NIEHS, and is close to just about anywhere in the Triangle area. For directions, airlines that fly into RDU, and flight schedules, go to <http://www.rdu.com/>

Preschool, School and educational options

Preschool:

Our **childcare center** is First Environments; their homepage is <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/daycare/home.htm> and includes registration and fee scales. Please note that some postdoctoral and predoctoral fellows may not be considered federal employees depending on their appointment type and may have to pay the "General/Contractor" rates. Please contact First Environments for more information.

The state of North Carolina also provides a searchable database of childcare facilities at <http://ncchildcaresearch.dhhs.state.nc.us/search.asp>

Kindergarten through 12th Grade:

For **school-aged children**, you can search for schools and their annual test scores at <http://www.raleighrealestate.com/schools/school.htm> or at <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/>

Other programs and information for children provided by the state are at <http://www.ncgov.com/asp/subpages/intention.asp?P=2&I=40>

Community Colleges, Colleges and Universities:

The state has a list of resources for **higher education** at <http://www.ncgov.com/asp/subpages/intention.asp?P=2&I=72>

Links to the local colleges and universities can also be found at <http://www.rtp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&filename=education.html>

International visitors:

Taxes and Social Security Numbers (SSN)

Individual circumstances will differ, depending on whether you are moving from a position in the US (you have worked or been a student in this country previously) or are moving to the US from another country. Tax laws will affect our international scientists differently depending on their country of origin and existence of tax treaties. Below are some links that will help you find information specific to your situation.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS): This is the governmental office responsible for collecting **federal income taxes** in the US. Their main website is <http://www.irs.gov/>. More specific information for International Taxpayers is at <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/index.html>

You may need a **Social Security Number (SSN)** and card while working in the US. The SSN is used by the IRS as an identification number. It is often required by banks to open an account, and by the Division of Motor Vehicles to determine your immigration status. For more information, go to the Social Security Administration homepage at <http://www.ssa.gov/> Instructions for how to get a card and a link to “Social Security Numbers for Noncitizens” are at <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10002.html>

Please be aware that you will not be able to apply for the SSN and card until you have entered the US, and you must apply in person. It will take several weeks to receive your number. The closest Social Security office to NIEHS is at 3004 Tower Boulevard, Durham. You can search for the office and a map at <https://s044a90.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp> (NIEHS’ zip code is 27709).

The alternative to the SSN is the **Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN or TIN)**. An ITIN, or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, is a tax processing number only available for certain nonresident and resident aliens, their spouses, and dependents who cannot get a Social Security Number (SSN). It is a 9-digit number, beginning with the number "9", formatted like an SSN (NNN-NN-NNNN). It may be issued by the Social Security Administration or the IRS. For more information about the TIN, go to <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=96696,00.html>

Banking in the US

Many employers (including the NIEHS) will require you to “direct deposit” or transfer your pay/salary electronically into a bank account. You will need to **open a bank account** in order to get paid. If you already have a SSN or TIN, this should be relatively easy; if you do not yet have a number, it may take some time.

The US Patriot Act requires banks to have a system for identifying its customers, and to ensure that those customers are in the US legally. Many banks have chosen to require the SSN or TIN in addition to another form of identification (usually your passport), but it can take several weeks to receive your SSN or TIN number. Make sure that your SSN or TIN application is complete, and that you have signed it before submitting it---this will eliminate unnecessary delays in receiving your number.

You can find more information about the U.S. banking system are answered at <http://www.foreignborn.com/self-help/banking/index.htm>

A general website designed for foreign-born individuals entering the US is <http://www.foreignborn.com/> The site covers the basics on “Sending Money Abroad”, “Bank Accounts”, “Credit Cards”, “Health Insurance”, “Medical Care”, “Social Security” and more.

US Holidays

The US celebrates a number of **federal holidays**, during which federal agencies (including NIEHS), post offices, and banks are closed. These holidays are:

- January 1 (New Year’s Day)
- third Monday in January (Martin Luther King’s Birthday)
- third Monday in February (President’s Day)
- last Monday in May (Memorial Day)
- July 4th (Independence Day)
- first Monday in September (Labor Day)
- second Monday in October (Columbus Day)
- November 11th (Veterans’ Day)
- last Thursday in November (Thanksgiving Day)
- December 25th (Christmas Day)

Other helpful information

Looking for a source of **ethnic foods or restaurants**? Try searching on <http://triangle.citysearch.com/> under the “Shopping” and “Restaurants” tabs at the top of the page.

Our local community colleges (2-year schools) offer **English as a Second Language (ESL)** courses for all skill levels----many of these classes are free, or offered for a small fee. Please see Durham Technical Community College’s courses listed at <http://www.durhamtech.edu/html/current/noncredit/esl.htm>.

Wake Technical Community College’s ESL listing at <http://www.wake.tec.nc.us/conted/schedules/esl.html>; more advanced communication skills for those who do not need the basic ESL classes are listed at <http://www.waketech.edu/conted/schedules/com.html>.

Both colleges offer courses at many locations around the counties, during the day and in the evenings.