



Practical Exploratory Tips

By Samuel Kauffman
(Jeremy's Niger travel partner)

What do you expect to learn on an exploratory trip?

Spiritual conditions: We were burdened with the needs we found among these people. We found no missionaries specifically targeting the Manga tribes nor planting churches among them at this point. Today there is not one missionary presenting the glorious, liberating gospel of Christ to a people 400,000 strong.

Joshua Project and Operation World do a wonderful job of portraying needs of the world, but we have to remember that some of the information on unreached countries has been outdated by a lack of direct information from people living among them.

Physical conditions: It is impossible to fully understand and prepare for the climate, travel conditions, and living conditions of a people group or tribe without actually experiencing it with them. Ask questions about the climate and conditions in other seasons of the year. Ask about the financial conditions of the tribe or people and try to get a view of how they exist.

Population: The population of people groups and tribes increases and changes over the years. Though it

was difficult, our goal was to get up-to-date answers to the questions we had regarding the size of the various tribes. Many figures we found in the encyclopedia or by word of mouth were extremely far off from what we actually found by talking to people we visited and by observation.

How long should this trip be?

This question is answered by the practical decision of transportation. Traveling with public transportation provides opportunity for spending time with the locals. But there are downsides. Many unreached villages are accessible only once a week and we found public transport to be extremely unreliable and dangerous. By traveling with your own transportation, it is possible to gather much more information in a much shorter time, but you will face the challenges of dealing with more paperwork and officials.

We were glad for every bit of the four weeks that we spent in Niger. We were also exhausted from the travels by the time four weeks were up. If possible keep your schedule somewhat open ended, so you can shorten or extend your stay.

What kind of data should you collect while there?

Spend time with missionaries who are working in the country. They have been observing and experiencing many of the things we are looking for. Although they may be from different organizations, they are often very glad to share information and are excited about the cause of Christ in these lands.

Take lots of pictures (if the locals allow it). It helps to keep the information fresh for future trips

or later research and makes it possible to give a clearer picture to the people at home.

Carry a GPS device and mark waypoints for future use, but remember to be discreet with your use of it (a GPS device is a much desired black-market item).

Other important aspects of an exploring trip...

Buy maps in the States, otherwise you will spend an outrageous amount for maps that are out-of-date and inaccurate. National Geographic sells some re-

ally good maps. Do not rely entirely on a map for it may lead you astray.

Guide books are invaluable and a very worthwhile investment! The two best ones that we found were Lonely Planet and Rough Guide. We used them a lot to say the least! They are available for very reasonable prices on the Internet.

Your trip must be for the cause of the King or it is a waste of valuable time and resources! Go with a burden for souls, otherwise you will get frustrated with the officials and circumstances you get into as you travel.