

Making Travel Arrangements

More than likely you will arrive in the United States by airplane. Notify the International Student Services Office of your arrival date and time, since he or she may meet you at the airport.

Do not forget to bring at least \$100 to \$200 in small cash denominations with you, in case you need U.S. money before you reach a currency exchange center.

Travel During U.S. Holidays

Make travel reservations well in advance of your departure date. This is especially important if you travel in the United States during peak tourist seasons or holidays. These include the Easter observance (either in March or April); the summer months of June through August; and the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day holidays in November, December, and January. There are ten U.S. Federal holidays:

New Year's Day - January 1

Martin Luther King Day - observed the third Monday in January

Presidents' Day - observed the third Monday in February

Memorial Day - observed the fourth Monday in May

Independence Day - July 4

Labor Day - observed the first Monday in September

Columbus Day - observed the second Monday in October

Veteran's Day - November 11

Thanksgiving Day - observed the fourth Thursday in November

Christmas Day - December 25

Travel Agencies

Probably the most efficient and convenient way to make your travel arrangements is through a travel agency. Travel agents are usually knowledgeable about conditions in various countries and make specialized travel arrangements adapted to your needs. They can advise you on airlines, fares, and routes; compare prices; and confirm or change reservations. If you have dietary restrictions for religious or health reasons, the travel agent will also be able to order you a special, in-flight meal.

You may not have to pay a fee for these services. In many countries, you pay no more than you would if you dealt directly with the airlines, purchased your own ticket, and made your own hotel reservations. In fact, because they have access to current specials or sales, travel agents may save you money. They also are aware of which airlines offer reduced student rates or special student packages, including round-trip international fares and domestic U.S. fares.

Travel Clubs and Charter Organizations

Certain organizations in your country may specialize in charter flights and other low-cost travel to the United States. Sometimes these organizations advertise in local publications and student newspapers, but students usually learn about them from other people who have dealt with them. Some travel clubs require that you join their club and pay a membership fee before you are eligible to take advantage of their charter flights. It is a good idea to check on the organization's reputation before you pay a fee or make reservations. When you call for information, ask whether fares, departure dates, and connections are reliable. Sometimes, if the carrier does not sell enough seats, charter flights are cancelled or rescheduled.

Making Your Own Reservations

If you want to make your own reservations, you can deal directly with an international airline by phone, mail, or Internet. Most airline agents also can advise you on other travel matters, such as baggage allowances, airport and customs procedures, vaccination and health requirements, and so on. In addition, there are many travel websites where you can compare prices, create your own itinerary, and buy your tickets on-line. Making reservations in this way can be a bit more risky since you do not have the expertise of the travel agent at your service, but it can also save you time if you know exactly what you are looking for.

Travel Arrangements Made by Sponsors

If you are being sponsored by your home country government, a government official may make travel arrangements for you. If so, you will be informed by your sponsor. If you have a sponsor other than your home country government, write to that sponsor and ask for advice. You may want to share with your sponsor the travel information sent to you by the college or university you will attend. In any case, make sure that arrangements are made for you to arrive at the city nearest your university, not just your first point of entry. If your sponsor cannot arrange travel plans beyond your first point of entry, be sure to make onward arrangements before you leave home.