



American Hospitality Academy

Life in the **USA!**

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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Chapter 1 - Welcome and Introduction

“There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.”

Life in the USA – A Resource for Participants

Life in the USA is designed to support, guide and assist you during your stay in the United States. Some of the information, such as recognizing culture shock, will help you during the early days of your program, while other information, such as budget accommodations in the U.S., may be more useful at later stages during your program.

Keep this handbook throughout your program for helpful tips and contact information, and always refer to the AHA website www.americanhospitalityacademy.com for the most up-to-date information.

About AHA

AHA is your legal sponsor once you are in the U.S., and we will be here to assist you. If you have questions or problems of any kind during your Work & Travel USA program, call or email us. We're here to help!

With more than 25 years of experience dedicated to promoting cultural awareness through a wide range of training, education and certificate programs within the US and abroad, AHA has become the leader of providing comprehensive hospitality training and cultural exchange programs. Since 1986 we've successfully matched thousands of international and USA students with premier hotels, resorts and luxury hospitality organizations.

AHA is designated by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor intern, trainee and summer work and travel programs. As a proud J-1 Visa sponsor and cultural exchange organization, we encourage our participants and professional colleagues to learn about The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, also known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. This important act enables the Government of the United States to:

- Increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange.
- Strengthen the ties, which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations, and contributions being made toward a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world.
- Promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement and thus assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world.

The AHA Difference

Imagine being immersed into a new culture, gaining valuable experience, growing personally and professionally while building international friendships.

Now imagine a little bit more... Being a participant with AHA is unlike any other internship, training or work experience program you will find. AHA fosters an environment where diversity is valued, essential skills are developed and individual aspirations are fulfilled. Our unparalleled programs and services are delivered through AHA's World Campus, an online global community connecting participants from around the world with one another and the entire AHA team.

AHA J-1 Programs

AHA's programs provides students and young professionals *primarily* with a **cultural exchange** opportunity while gaining invaluable career training and work experience in the United States. AHA's J-1 programs include:

- J-1 Intern and Train Program
- J-1 Work and Travel Program

J-1 Intern and Trainee Program

The J-1 Intern and J-1 Trainee programs are designed for university students and young professionals to train at leading hotels and hospitality organizations around the USA for up to 12 months. The Intern/Trainee program provides on-the-job exposure to American techniques, methodologies, expertise, and enhances the participant's knowledge of American culture and society. You can then bring these experiences back with you to your home country.

J-1 Work and Travel Program

The J-1 Work and Travel programs provide exchange visitors *primarily* with a **cultural exchange** opportunity. Participants enjoy the unique opportunity to live and work in the United States during their summer vacation from college or university to experience and to be exposed to the people and way of life in the United States. Through AHA J-1 Visa sponsorship, qualified participants get the opportunity to experience American foods, style of living, citizens, nature, history, and more!

Chapter 2 - Pre-Departure Information

Improve Your English Language Skills

Part of your cultural exchange experience is being able to interact with and talk to people in the U.S. Speaking English will be the most important tool for you to be able to fully engage and learn about American customs and practices. It is a good idea to practice English as much as possible before you arrive in the U.S., as it will help you adapt more quickly.

- Take an English language course before the start of your program.
- Watch English language television or movies; listen to English language radio broadcasts; read English language newspapers, books or magazines.
- Practice, practice, practice! Speak English as often as possible and don't be afraid to make mistakes. Most native English speakers will be happy to help you choose the right words.

Airline Baggage Allowance

Be sure to check with your airline on how many pieces of luggage you may bring, the size, and weight of those pieces and cost per bag. Please be aware that many airlines in the U.S. have started to charge for luggage on domestic flights. Contact your airline before you depart to find out the latest fees and restrictions.

What to Bring with You (do not over pack!)

- Your passport, J-1 Visa and DS-2019 Form: You cannot get into the United States without these items, so make sure you have them in a carry-on bag. Make a copy of each of these documents and keep them in a separate bag, just in case you lose the originals.
- Dictionary: A good bilingual dictionary is essential.
- Pictures: Photographs of your family, friends and your hometown to show new friends.
- Items from your home country: Pictures, arts & crafts, recipes or small, locally made gifts are always nice to share with people in the United States.
- Toiletries: Shampoo, soap, a toothbrush, toothpaste, a razor and deodorant are essential. You can buy a supply for the duration of your program once you arrive in the U.S., so just bring enough for one week. Liquids in your carry-on luggage must be in 3 ounce (88 mg) bottles. If you bring an electric razor, make sure it is battery powered, because adapters tend to fail.
- Medications (pack in your carry-on luggage): If possible, you should bring enough medication for the entire time you are in the U.S. and use the original bottle. Also, bring a note (written in English) from your doctor, indicating the type of medicine you take, just in case you need to get more. We recommend that you call your airline first to check what type of medication and how much you are allowed to carry on the airplane.

- An extra pair of prescription glasses: This will be very important in the event that your glasses are damaged or if you cannot have your contact lens prescription filled while in the U.S.
- Driver's license: Bring your international driver's license and/or foreign driver's license with you and be sure to pack it in your carry-on luggage. Keep a copy in a safe place.
- An open mind: Be prepared for things to be different.

What to Leave at Home

- Valuables: Expensive jewelry and family heirlooms.

Chapter 3 - U.S. Culture & Culture Shock

U.S. Culture

The United States is called a “melting pot”: a place where people from countries all over the world come to build their lives and homes. The U.S. is home to people from all different cultures and nationalities. Each group has its own background, customs and values, which form what we call American culture. It is a culture that is continually being reshaped and redefined as more people from other countries immigrate to the U.S., but it is also influenced by the visitors who share information about their cultures when they interact with people who live in this country.

One of the best opportunities you will have over the course of your time in the United States is to learn more about American culture. That's what cultural exchange is all about. You will discover new things about Americans every day, and as a result you may decide to change some of your behaviors in order to adapt. Remember that adaptation is part of the fun of experiencing a new culture. It is not always easy, but remember that you are temporarily in the United States for a new learning experience; you will be returning to your familiar lifestyle afterward, so it's important to be flexible about making changes to how you do things. The key to a successful program is to stay positive and explore all the opportunities given to you.

Part of the excitement of living in a new culture is learning about how it differs from your own culture. You might compare your values and customs with the new values and customs you observe every day. The American way of life may be very different from your own, and that difference is part of your cultural exchange experience. Your time in the U.S. is designed to be a great learning opportunity, so take advantage of it!

Characteristics of U.S. Culture

Keep in mind that the following characteristics are generalizations, and as with any country or culture, there are many exceptions and lifestyles that may be quite different.

- Being on time is important.
- Americans like their privacy and their own space.
- Americans can be very direct and honest and might appear rude to people from other cultures.
- Americans are polite and say “please” and “thank you” a lot.
- Americans wait their turn. Everyone is expected to stand in an orderly line (queue), without pushing to be first.
- Americans may not know much about your country or other cultures.
- Americans value independent thinking.
- The role of the mother and father in an American family is more or less equal regarding child care and household responsibilities.
- There is an emphasis on education and learning for everyone.
- Americans like to joke, smile and talk. They will try to fill up quiet time with “small talk” about the weather and sports. They like direct eye contact, but they don't like to stand too close to one another or be touched.

while talking.

- Nudity is usually not accepted in the home and definitely not in public.
- Americans are very concerned about personal hygiene and cleanliness; it is not unusual to take one or even two showers a day, and almost everyone uses deodorant.
- American family life and child-rearing practices are extremely child centered. Children in the United States are encouraged from an early age to express themselves, take responsibility for their actions and help in the house. Parents believe such an upbringing will help children develop confidence and self-esteem.
- Very few Americans employ household staff. Even guests are expected to make their own beds and offer to help with chores.

Signs of Culture Shock

Culture shock is described as the anxiety, feelings of frustration, alienation and anger that may occur when a person is placed in a new culture. Many of the customs here may seem odd or uncomfortably different from those of your home country. Being in a new and unfamiliar place can be challenging even for the experienced traveler, and some feelings of isolation and frustration are totally normal. Participants experience culture shock to varying degrees; some hardly notice it at all, while others can find it very difficult to adapt to their new environment. Many may not attribute their problems to culture shock. Whatever the case may be, understanding these issues and why they happen will help you.

Some common symptoms of culture shock are:

- You may feel isolated and frustrated. You may become nervous and/or excessively tired.
- You may sleep a lot, even after you have recovered from jet lag.
- You may be excessively homesick. It is normal to miss home, family and friends. But if you can think of nothing else, write or call home all the time and perhaps cry a lot, you are probably suffering from culture shock.
- Due to your discomfort, you may feel resentment toward your new environment or the people around you.
- You may become dependent upon other participants from your home country. These friendships are important and are extremely supportive. However, if you spend time exclusively with people from your home country, you will miss the experience of interacting with people from the U.S. and other countries. AHA separates participants from the same country as often as possible so that they can more fully immerse themselves in English language and culture.
- You may be anxious about your job: “Why does my employer speak so loudly and quickly?” or “Will I be able to repay my parents the money they lent me?” This stress can become overwhelming and cause tension.
- You may feel reluctant to speak English or associate with people.

How to Cope With Culture Shock

- Maintain your perspective.
- Keep an open mind and a sense of humor. People in the U.S. may do or say things people in your home country would not.
- Talk to people about how you are feeling. You are not alone and do not have to go through the adjustment by yourself.
- Stay positive! Remember the time before you came to the U.S., and remind yourself why you wanted to participate in the program.
- Talk with your friends and your employer. They will be understanding and supportive.
- Speak English. In order to overcome culture shock you must accept certain aspects of the new culture.
- Make friends with people from other countries.

Take Care of Yourself

Like all rewarding experiences, being a participant in a cultural exchange program is sometimes difficult. Dealing with your stress will help to make your time abroad more fun, and it will also make you a better worker. Use these tips to make your days easier:

- Relax when you feel stressed.
- Keep a journal. This will help you to enjoy the wonderful days, and to get through the more difficult days.
- Communicate often with your employer. If you are feeling frustrated, see what you can change about the situation.
- Talk with other participants. You can support and encourage each other.
- If you have had a hard day, spend some quiet time without television or other distractions. Listen to music. Take a shower. Read a book. Exercise. Take a walk.
- Get plenty of sleep. If you are tired, you are more likely to get frustrated and sick.
- Eat a healthy diet, drink plenty of water, and exercise regularly so that you have the energy needed to make the most of each day.
- Take vitamins to stay healthy.
- Wash your hands often. This will help you avoid getting sick.
- When you do get sick, be careful with cold medicine. Many cold medicines will make you very sleepy, which will make your work more difficult. Make sure any medicine you take while you are working is “non-drowsy.” This means it will not make you sleepy.
- Think about the things you enjoy about the U.S. or plans you’ve made to travel during your 30-Day Grace Period.

Important Note for Non-Native English Speakers

You should always try to speak in English during your program. You may be uncomfortable with your skills and even feel embarrassed, but you will quickly notice that people will correct your mistakes in a positive way. Your English abilities will improve through your mistakes. Everyone will appreciate your willingness and desire to improve.

The worst mistake you can make is to keep silent. If you don’t speak, your employer may think you are incapable of performing your job. You must be able to communicate. Practice and repetition are the only ways you will improve your English skills.

If you don’t speak English and only speak in your native tongue, it will be harder to get to know people who cannot speak your language. Because English is being spoken by everyone around you, speaking English will enable you to make friends with people from many cultures. These friendships are some of the most rewarding elements of the program.

Chapter 4 - Money and U.S. Postal Service

U.S. Money

You will probably earn enough money to buy souvenirs, go out in your free time, travel after the program is over, and perhaps even save some money.

You should prepare to have a few different ways to access money while in the United States, such as traveler's checks, an ATM card, or a credit card. Handling your money in these ways is simply safer than carrying around large amounts of cash.

Paper Currency

American paper money comes in a standard size and all denominations are green in color. The difference in the bills is the famous face on the bill and the number in the corner. Bills are available in \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 denominations.

Coin Currency

Coins come in different denominations and each denomination is a different size. One dollar is equivalent to 100 cents. Americans use the following coins:

Penny

1 cent



Quarter

25 cents



Nickel

5 cents



Dollar coin

100 cents



Dime

10 cents



Traveler's Checks

We recommend that you bring traveler's checks with you in U.S. dollars. You can use them in almost any store, just like cash, but you will probably need your passport or some other ID. If they get stolen or lost, you can have them replaced, but only if you have the receipt(s). Make sure you keep the receipts separate from the checks, and contact the company that issued the traveler's checks immediately if your checks get lost or stolen!

Some issuers of Traveler's Checks in the U.S:

American Express

Phone: 1.800.221.7282

www.americanexpress.com

Travelex Worldwide Money

Phone: 1.877.414.6359 (wire transfers as well) www.travelex.com.us

Visa

Phone: 1.800.227.6811

usa.visa.com/personal/using_visas/travelers_cheques.html

Banks

U.S. banks are mostly regional, so you won't find the same bank everywhere in the country. Banks are usually open from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, but many are open on Saturdays. If you open an account in the U.S., try to find a bank with many locations, so you will be able to withdraw money and cash paychecks without incurring fees. You can research branch locations and ATM locations by checking the bank's website. Your employer may also be able to suggest a convenient bank.

Bank Machines (Automatic Teller Machines — ATMs)

ATMs are almost everywhere and they work the same way they do in your home country; they will allow you to get cash from your bank account as well as perform deposits and other transactions. Your bank card from home is likely to work in ATMs in the United States, but you should check with your home bank just to be certain. Remember, you will probably be charged a small fee to use an ATM outside of your home country. Many ATMs charge a fee to withdraw money; your bank at home may also charge an exchange fee.

How to Write a Check

The following You Tube video outlines how to write a bank check in the USA:

[CHECK VIDEO](#)

Bank Account Tips and Security

- Always know how much money you have in your account to avoid overdraft fees.
- Never share your ATM card or password, and be sure to check your account statements frequently for unauthorized charges. Cards in the U.S. must have magnetic strips on them.
- Never accept money or money transfers from stranger

Credit Cards

Credit cards are accepted almost everywhere, but be careful! You will have to pay the bill when you get home. To report a lost or stolen credit card call:

American Express	1.800.297.850
MasterCard	1.800.627.837
VISA	1.800.847.291

Sending Money Home

Every year participants on our programs work hard, save as much money as possible and then wonder how they can get it home safely. Over the years, AHA has heard many sad stories about participants who carried their earnings in cash and had it all stolen before they reached home. Never carry large amounts of cash. Do not carry your savings in cash! We want to make sure that you hold on to your hard-earned savings.

If you have a bank account in your home country, you should be able to transfer money to it fairly easily, especially if it is a U.S. dollar account. The transfer usually costs you approximately \$30 and may take 3-4 weeks to appear in your account at home. In most countries your bank will charge between 0.5-1% of the total sum to withdraw cash from the account. Please consult directly with the bank regarding international money transfers and associated fees.

Alternatively, you may find it convenient to buy traveler's checks. It is a safe way to carry money. You can use what you need as you travel and changing them back into cash at home is relatively easy. There are some fees involved in converting traveler's checks to cash in your home country. In some places it is as low as 1%.

International postal money orders may also be a good option for some participants. The fee varies depending on the destination country and is usually between \$3 and \$9 per money order. Each money order can be a maximum of \$700 and there is no limit to how many can be sent in a given time period. International postal money orders are generally issued in U.S. dollars and then converted into local currency at the time they are cashed according to the current exchange rate. Most large post offices should be able to offer this service.

If you open a U.S. bank account during your program, it is also possible to leave it open and use your ATM card to withdraw money as you travel as well as after you return home. Most ATM cards can now be used internationally. There may be ATM fees that vary from country to country but this still may be a good option for you. It is also easy for you to close your account by mail after returning home.

It may not be possible to cash a check in your home country, so please make arrangements with your employer to receive your last paycheck before you leave the state in which you worked. Checks have an expiration date, so be sure to cash or deposit your paychecks before they expire.

U.S. Mail

All prices accurate at time of printing.

Domestic mail weighing less than one ounce requires a 46-cent stamp (\$0.46). Postage for other items varies depending on size, weight and—in the case of international mail— destination. Postal service prices are subject to regular changes. To find out updated prices, contact your local post office or visit the U.S. Postal Service on the Internet at postcalc.usps.com.

The U.S. Post Office can also send packages, by air or surface transport. If you need something to be delivered quickly and need to track it, then FedEx or UPS are usually your best options. Both offer domestic overnight and 2 to 5 day service worldwide. The faster you want your package to arrive, the more it will cost! U.S. mail is delivered Monday through Saturday, except national holidays.

FedEx	1.800.463.3339	www.fedex.com
UPS	1.800.275.8777	www.ups.com

Chapter 5 - The Telephone System in the U.S.

How to Make a Call

There are four types of calls you may need to make while in the U.S.: local, long distance, toll-free and international. We will use the following telephone number, 1-843-353-1970 to demonstrate how to use the phone system in America. Phone numbers in the U.S. consist of a 3-digit area code (e.g. 843), then a 7-digit local number (e.g. 353-1970).

Local, Regional and Long Distance Calls

If you call a number within or outside of your area, you will usually need to dial 1 plus the area code (e.g. 843) and then the 7-digit local number (e.g. 353-1970). Some small towns with only one area code may only require you to dial the 7-digit local number. Ask your host or dial “0” for help from an operator. A cell phone will automatically add 1 to the beginning of any long distance call.

Free Phone Numbers (Toll-Free)

There are several different prefixes for toll-free numbers: 800, 888, 877. To dial a free phone number, simply dial 1 plus the 3-digit prefix, plus the 7-digit phone number. (Note: pay phones in some places, such as airports, may charge 25 cents for a toll-free call.) Numbers that start with 900 are premium rate calls that can be very expensive.

International Calls

When making international calls you must dial “011” followed by the country code, city code (you must drop the “0” before the city code) and number. These calls tend to be expensive, so you should not use your employer’s telephone without his/her permission. It is much cheaper to use a phone card such as those provided by eKit (pay as you go). Most phone cards designed for international use will have better rates than your employer’s telephone plan. To find out the country code for your country, visit www.countrycallingcodes.com

Emergency Phone Number – 911

Wherever you are in the U.S., you can dial 911 on any telephone in an emergency. You will be connected to emergency services (fire department, police and ambulance). This is always a free call. Do not call 911 for non-emergencies!

Phone Cards

You can use a phone card when using a public pay phone or someone's private phone. However, unlike in most other countries, phone cards in the U.S. are not inserted into the telephone. Phone cards have a toll free number, 1.800 plus 7-digits, which you dial first.

SIM Cards

SIM cards are offered for purchase in many retail stores. These cards can be inserted into unrestricted international mobile phones for use in the United States. *It is important to be aware of the charges associated with any SIM card before purchasing it!*

Collect Calls

Calling "collect" means that the person making the call does not pay for the call, but the person receiving the call does. Please be sure that the recipient of your call has told you it is okay for you to call them collect. Otherwise you should call them using a phone card. Collect calls cost more than dialing normally.

Directory Assistance

If you do not know a telephone number, you can call 411 for information (you will be charged a fee). You will need to tell the operator which city you are calling and the name of the person or business you are trying to reach. Directory assistance for toll-free numbers is 1.800.555.1212. Use this number when inquiring about phone numbers for airlines and bus companies.

Letters in a Phone Number

Phone numbers in the U.S. may contain letters, especially free phone numbers. When you look at the phone pad you will see that each number corresponds to 3 letters. Simply press the number where the letter appears; for example, 1.800.AUPAIRS would be 1.800.287.2477.

Skype

If you've brought along a laptop or have access to a computer, you can use Skype to make cheap or free international calls. Visit www.skype.com to set up an account and add credit. Never download Skype software onto a public or work computer without asking for permission first.

Chapter 6 – U.S. Laws and Helpful Information

Drugs

Illegal possession of controlled substances (drugs) in the U.S. is subject to prosecution by law. The penalties for drug possession vary from state to state. Any type of illegal drug use while in the U.S. may have serious consequences. You may have to pay fines or go to jail if you are caught with drugs or people who have drugs.

Alcohol

You must be 21 years old to drink alcohol legally in the United States. If you are under 21, and are found with alcohol, you may be arrested and subject to fines. In addition, if you purchase alcohol for persons under 21, you can be arrested and subject to fines. Drinking alcohol in public areas is also illegal in many places. You will be subject to fines if found guilty.

Many bars, restaurants, and liquor stores will only accept a driver's license or non-driver identification card from the Department of Motor Vehicles as proof of age. Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles for information on the procedure for obtaining an identification card.

Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or Driving Under the Influence (DUI)

Do NOT drive a car if you have been drinking alcohol, and do not get into a car if the driver has been drinking. Not only is your safety in danger, but DWI/DUI laws are very strict. You might have to pay up to \$5,000 or go to jail if

found guilty of DWI/DUI. Americans often choose a "designated driver" when going out with a group of friends. This person agrees to not drink alcoholic beverages and drives the rest of the group to and from their destination.

Local Law Enforcement

Unlike most countries, laws in the U.S. vary from state to state and even city to city. It is important to become familiar with and obey the local laws in the town or city where you are living. During the busy season, the population in resort towns may grow from a few thousand to more than 100,000. In an effort to maintain order, the local police often strictly enforce minor laws. Local laws that govern alcohol consumption, noise levels, and group gatherings are strict. Your best source of information will be local residents and U.S. students who are living and working in the same town or city.

Smoking

Americans are likely to be much less tolerant of smoking than people in other countries. It is illegal to smoke in many public places, so look around you before you light up; No Smoking signs are usually posted in a clear, visible location. Smoking is restricted in office buildings, restaurants, and public transportation, among other places.

Shoplifting (Stealing)

Shoplifting is illegal, and many stores have hidden cameras or undercover security officers to prevent theft. If you are found guilty of shoplifting—or any other crime—your program may be terminated and you may be prevented from visiting the U.S. in the future.

Legal Rights

Program participants have the same rights as U.S. citizens if accused of a crime:

- You have the right to know the crime you are being charged with.
- You have the right to remain silent and to refuse to answer any questions if you so choose.
- No person accused of a crime may be forced to confess or give evidence against themselves.
- You have the right not to be searched unless the police officer has a warrant.
- Most importantly, you have the right to be represented by a lawyer, and to be provided with a lawyer to represent you if you cannot afford to hire one.
- You are entitled to be released from jail upon posting of a bail bond (money paid to ensure that the person reports for trial) set by the court while you await trial.
- You are entitled to a fair trial conducted according to all the rules of evidence and court procedures.
- Above all, you are presumed innocent until proven guilty. You do not have to prove your innocence, but rather the prosecution must prove your guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

If You are Arrested

If you are arrested, you are allowed one phone call. It is important that you call AHA at 305.395.8881 to notify us of your situation. We will update your representative and your parents in your home country immediately. Please let AHA know the name and contact information of the jail that you are being held in, what the charges are against you, and the date of your court hearing. AHA is in direct and constant communication with your employer and with your representative in your home country, who is in communication with your parents.

If you are accused of committing a crime, the best advice in most circumstances is to talk to a AHA staff member before you answer any questions regarding charges. AHA can advise about the availability of free or low-cost legal services in your area.

If arrested, the following may happen:

- You may have to fill out paperwork.
- You could be charged with a crime and fingerprinted.
- You could be held in jail until bail is posted.

- You could see a court judge who hears preliminary details and drops the charges against you or sets a court date within the next 30 days. Sometimes court dates can be set sooner, especially if you remind the judge that you are only legally able to stay in the U.S. until your expected date of departure (program end date).
- Depending on the severity of the charges, you may have to stay in the area in order to attend your court date.

If you are found guilty of a crime, possible penalties include:

- Monetary fine
- Community service
- Jail time
- Deportation

Posting Bail

Whenever you are arrested and charged, a judge will decide how much bail you must pay for your release pending trial. Bail is a deposit that must be paid to ensure your appearance at the set trial date. Your bail is determined by the severity of your crime. If you are unable to pay your full bail, bondsmen can be hired to cover this cost. AHA can advise you on the procedures of paying your own bail or, if necessary, help you contact a local bail bondsman.

For example, if the court sets your bail at \$500 and you do not have that much money available, a bail bondsman will charge you about 10% (in this case \$50). The bondsman will pay the remaining \$450 towards your bail, and will keep your \$50 as his fee.

Failure to appear at your assigned court date will result in the loss of the bail money, which has been posted by you or the bondsman. If you used a bail bondsman, you will owe him the full fee. Failure to appear in court may also increase the severity of charges against you, may go on your permanent record, and may negatively affect the process of applying for a visa to come to the U.S. in the future.

Please remember that breaking a U.S. law or being arrested may affect your employment as well as your AHA J-1 program. Please follow our safety tips and abide by all U.S. and local laws while you are on the program. If you have questions or issues contact AHA immediately.

Personal Safety

In general, the United States is a very safe place. You should feel comfortable in your host community. However, it is always a good idea to keep security and safety in mind, especially when traveling after your program has ended. Overall, you will find this country full of warm, friendly people who will enjoy meeting you, sharing their culture with you, and learning about your culture. If you use common sense, you will be able to avoid most difficulties and have a wonderful, safe time in the United States.

- Do not hitchhike - it is illegal and dangerous.
- Do not accept rides from strangers.
- Do not walk across highways or jaywalk.
- Do not jog or walk alone at night.
- Do not carry more money than you will need for the day.
- Do not accept any form of money from strangers.
- Do not carry your passport with you if you don't need it. Carry a different form of identification, such as your driver's license or a copy of your passport.
- Protect your personal ID and confidential information: your Social Security number is yours alone. Do not allow others to use your number. Record your number in a safe place in case your card is lost or stolen. Protect both your card and your number to prevent misuse.
- During local emergencies, obey all warnings and advice from authorities and AHA.
- Internet Safety: Don't respond to emails from strangers, or provide personal information over the Internet unless on a trusted website with appropriate security.
- Avoid parks, woods and remote areas when you are alone, especially at night.
- Be alert to your surroundings when using an ATM. Take extra caution at night.
- Always let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Contact them if your plans change.
- Always wear a bike helmet and obey all traffic laws when riding a bike. Use lights and reflective clothing at night.
- If you feel you are being followed, cross the street and observe what the other person does. Put space between yourself and the person following you. Pretend to see a friend, even if it is a person you do not know and call

out or wave to that person. You should try to attract attention and scare away the person following you. If a store, restaurant or business nearby is open, go inside and ask for help.

- If you think you are being followed while driving, drive to the nearest police or fire station.
- Remember that cars drive on the right side of the road in the USA.
- Notify the authorities and AHA immediately if you are threatened by your employer, colleagues, landlord or anyone else.
- Do not engage in threatening, immature, unlawful or anti-social behavior.
- Be careful if drinking in a bar or restaurant. Watch your drink at all times, stay sober, and do not leave with anyone you don't already know.
- Do not get into a car with anyone who has been drinking.
- Be aware of Wilberforce laws that protect you: travel.state.gov/visa

Temperatures in the United States

Temperatures in the U.S. are normally displayed in degrees Fahrenheit. Always check the average local temperatures in advance of your travels to be sure you are prepared for the weather.

Fahrenheit = 1.8(Celsius) + 32	Celsius=	$\frac{\text{Fahrenheit} - 32}{1.8}$
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To convert Fahrenheit temperatures into Celsius:

- Begin by subtracting 32 from the Fahrenheit number.
- Divide the answer by 9.
- Then multiply that answer by 5.

$$32^{\circ} \text{ F} = 0^{\circ} \text{ C} \quad 61^{\circ} \text{ F} = 16^{\circ} \text{ C} \quad 95^{\circ} \text{ F} = 35^{\circ} \text{ C}$$

Metric Equivalents

1 mile 1.6 kilometers	1 yard/3 feet 0.91 meters
1 foot/12 inches.... 30.48 cm	1 inch..... 2.54 centimeters
1 pound/16 oz..... 0.45 kg	1 ounce..... 28.35 grams
1 gallon/4 quarts ... 3.79 liters	1 quart/4 cups 0.95 liters
1 cup 0.4 liters	

Tipping

Tipping is a common practice across the U.S., and people generally give a tip to anyone in the service industry. This includes restaurants, hotels, hair salons, taxis and bars. Individuals who work in these areas receive low wages because tipping is the custom, and in fact they make most of their income from tips. Please respect this practice. A tip of 15-20% is standard in restaurants, and \$2 to \$3 is typical for food delivery, taxis, and hotel service.

Sales Tax

Beware! The price you see on a price tag is not always what you will actually pay at the register. Most states have sales tax that is added to the price of the items. Sales tax and taxable items differ from state to state. For example, some states place a tax on clothes, but others do not. In grocery stores, some food may also be taxed, while other foods are not. Sales tax varies from 4% to 10%.

Chapter 7 - Driving in the United States

Driving in the United States

****In recent years, AHA has seen an increase in the number of program participants involved in serious automobile accidents while in the U.S., some of which have resulted in participant fatalities. In many of these cases, serious injury or even death could have been avoided if participants had made the simple choice to wear seatbelts. Please review the information below before making the decision to drive.****

AHA recommends that you use public transportation such as buses, trains, and airplanes when possible. In the event that public transportation is not available and you choose to rent a vehicle, you **MUST** obtain the proper auto insurance that covers medical and liability requirements in your state. AHA recommends purchasing above the minimum requirements for both medical and liability. Though it is more expensive, the coverage is necessary if you are involved in an accident. Some car rental companies also require an international permit in addition to your international driver's license. Most car rental agencies will not rent an automobile to persons under 25 years of age.

If you choose to rent a vehicle, you should know the following:

- Motorcycles/mopeds and recreational vehicles are **NOT** covered on your J-1 Insurance plan
- J-1 insurance is **NOT** Auto Insurance
- Each state has unique minimum insurance requirements and it is your responsibility to know them and to ensure you meet them.
- You must have a valid license

Basic Safety Tips for Driving in the U.S.:

- Always wear your seatbelt—it is the law
- Do **NOT** text and drive (in many states, this is the law)
- Follow the rules and speed limits posted on the road
- Do not drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Do not drive when you are tired
- Do not use your cell phone while driving; it is against the law in many states
- Remember that cars drive on the right side of the road in the USA.

Local Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

If you plan to drive in the U.S., you must understand the local, state and federal laws regarding driving. The best recommendation is to consult the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in the state in which you would like to drive.

Local DMV offices may be found through an Internet search, or by visiting the state's official DMV website. For more details about the DMV and driving in the U.S., please refer to the Resources section of our website at www.AHA.org/work-travel-usa/j-1-exchange-jobs/resources.

International Driver's License

If you intend to drive in the U.S., we strongly recommend that you get an international driver's license before you leave your home country. You cannot get one in the U.S. Depending on the day you obtain your International Driver's License, it should be valid in any state for up to one year.

Foreign Driver's License (Home Country Driver's License)

All U.S. states recognize foreign drivers' licenses. In most cases, your license will be valid for up to 4 months after the date you enter the U.S. Consult the DMV in the state where you wish to drive to confirm the length of validity and the rules for driving with a foreign driver's license. Your foreign license is valid if accompanied by your international passport.

Obtaining a Driver's License in the U.S.

Contact the local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for the state where you will be working to find out whether you are eligible to apply for a U.S. driver's license. If eligible, obtain a copy of the state driver's manual from the DMV so that you can learn the state's driving rules, and study for the written test and the driving test. Ask which documents you need to present to the DMV when applying for a license.

At a minimum, you will probably be required to show the following documents in order to apply for a state license:

- Passport
- Home country driver's license
- International driver's license
- Social Security card

Motorcycles require a special driver's license, and many states have laws requiring that you wear a helmet. The accident and sickness insurance provided by AHA will not cover you in the event of an accident while you are driving a motorcycle.

What to Do in the Event of a Car Accident

In the event of a car accident, find out if anyone involved is injured. If someone requires medical attention, or to report the accident, dial 911 from any phone. 911 is the free direct number for emergency services with the local police anywhere in the U.S. If possible, do not move your car until the police arrive and are able to assess the accident scene. While waiting for the police, exchange the following information with the driver of the other car:

1. Name, telephone number and license ID number.
2. License plate number, model and year of the car.
3. Registration number and expiration date.
4. Name of the insurance company and policy number.

If there are any witnesses, ask for their names, telephone number and address in the event of insurance problems. If you have hit a parked car, you must leave your name, phone number and license plate number on a piece of paper and put it under the windshield wiper, so they may contact you. Also write down the car's license number and model of the car.

Failure to leave your information or report the accident is considered a crime.

Make sure that any car you drive has insurance that will cover you as a driver or a passenger in the event of an accident.

You are responsible for any fines for moving violations or parking tickets. Failure to honor these fines may impair your ability to get a visa to the U.S. in the future.

Use Extra Caution

- Stay on marked roads.
- Be aware of special weather and road conditions (e.g., snow, fog, and flooding).
- Use extra care around school buses.
- Follow parking rules.

Bicycles, Motorcycles, Mopeds and Recreational Vehicles

Bicycle Safety

A bicycle is the best and most cost effective way for you to get around. There are many sports or bicycle stores that sell used bicycles. You can also check the local paper or online classified ads to find bicycles for sale in your area. Make sure that you purchase a bicycle helmet as well.

Motorists in some parts of the U.S. are not accustomed to sharing the road with bicycles, so it is very important that you are cautious and alert when riding a bicycle. Bicyclists are considered vehicle operators and are required to follow and obey traffic laws. Following these tips will help to make sure that your experience is a safe one:

- Wear a bicycle helmet
- Wear bright clothing
- Install reflectors and lights on the front and back of the bicycle, and always use lights at night
- Ride in the same direction as traffic
- Bike on the road where cars will see you, not on sidewalks
- Use hand signals so others can anticipate your actions

For information on bicycle safety, proper hand signals, and more, check out the following websites:

BicycleSafe.com

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Motorcycles, Mopeds, and Recreational Vehicles

Your J-1 insurance does not cover any injuries or accidents while you are driving or riding on a moped, motorcycle, or recreational vehicle. If you decide to purchase or ride on one of these vehicles, you are responsible for purchasing additional health and motor vehicle insurance.

Chapter 8 - Housing

Do your best to find housing long before your arrival in the U.S. In many cases, your employer may have recommendations for short- or long-term housing near your workplace. If you are beginning the search on your own, use the resources below. Most importantly, don't arrive in the U.S. without any pre-arranged housing.

For the first few nights in the U.S. you may need short-term housing. Hostels, affordable motels, or universities and colleges are good options. It's even better if you can travel and share expenses with other AHA J-1 program participants. Make reservations ahead of time to make sure you have a bed or room when you arrive.

When planning your long term-housing, consider living with other AHA J-1 Program participants -- this is a great way to make new friends and save money. Also consider whether or not the housing is furnished, includes utilities, and whether it is close to work or is close to public transportation, as these can all affect your monthly costs.

Rent, Sublet, or Share?

When you start looking for a place to live, you will find apartments that are available to rent, sublet, or share.

Rent

When you rent an apartment you sign a lease, or contract, with a landlord. Pay close attention to the lease agreement, as there may be penalties for breaking the contract. For example, if you lease an apartment for four months but decide to leave after two months, there may be a financial penalty in addition to your rent. AHA strongly encourages you to find an apartment where the lease is month-to-month, and avoid long-term leases with firm rules and commitments.

Sublet

A sublet is an apartment or room rented by the owner or leaseholder to another person. Finding a sublet is a good option because it gives you flexibility similar to a month-to-month lease.

Share

If you share an apartment you will pay a portion of the rent and common apartment expenses. This can be easier than looking for a place yourself. If you decide to share an apartment, make sure to meet your possible roommate to get a feel for the situation. Your first instinct is always your best, and you should not accept a situation that you don't feel comfortable with.

Finding Short-Term Housing

For the first few nights in the U.S. you may need short-term housing. Hostels, affordable motels, or universities and colleges are good options.

Hostels

Hostels can be some of the most inexpensive options. They generally provide shared or private rooms and shared bathroom facilities and may have Internet access. The Youth Hostel Association runs an online booking service, so you can pre-book your nights at cities throughout the U.S. Those in large cities tend to fill up fast, so it is important to make your reservation as soon as possible. Do not hope to get a room the day you arrive!

To research hostels, visit the following sites:

www.hiusa.org : Hostelling International USA has offices throughout the U.S. Due to the popularity of their hostels, reservations are recommended to ensure that your stay is confirmed in advance of your arrival.

www.ymca.int : YMCAs and YWCAs offer affordable temporary lodging. Within this website you can find a list of cities that offer affordable housing.

www.hostelworld.com : This website is available in multiple languages and can help you find a hostel in the U.S. Hostelworld.com provides online bookings for hostels and comprehensive city and country guides.

Hotels

There are many low-cost chains throughout the U.S. These options are good for small groups because you will pay for the room, not per person. Rooms often contain two large beds but you can ask for options. If you have an ISIC card, you will get discounts at budget chains across the U.S. An online search using sites such as www.hotels.com will help you find inexpensive options.

Universities and Colleges

Many universities and colleges offer budget accommodation in their student housing. Research whether there is a college or university in the area you are working, and contact the student housing office on campus.

Finding Long-Term Housing

Employers: Ask your employer or future coworkers for suggestions. Many employers either provide housing, are happy to help you arrange housing, or have recommendations.

www.craigslist.org : This website has pages for an increasing number of cities. There is no cost to place an ad on Craigslist, so it is common to find affordable housing here.

www.apartmentlist.com : This website allows you to search by neighborhood, and has lots of options for filtering your search. You can also log in with your Facebook account to access special features.

www.apartments.com : This website lists apartments for rent by state and city. You can also sign up for apartment listings to be emailed to you and they even have an iPhone application.

www.roommates.com : This service, and ones like it, list apartments where people are looking for roommates. A service like this can help you not only find an apartment, but someone to help pay the rent. In this situation it is very likely you'll share an apartment with an American and this will add to the cultural aspect of your J-1 Program experience. Be aware that roommate services like this can be free to join, but will generally charge a fee and can take longer.

University Listings and Bulletin Boards: Many campuses have bulletin boards where students post notices looking for roommates. Keep in mind that many students with year-long leases need to sublet their apartments for the summer, and often do so with affordable prices. Most universities also have an Off-Campus Housing Office, with lists of available housing and rental options in the local area.

Classified Advertisements: Another place to look for available housing is the classified section of a local newspaper, either online or in print. Note that the Sunday edition often has the most listings.

Questions to Ask

When looking at options, consider the following questions:

- What is the lease length?
- Are utilities included?

- Is furniture provided?
- Is it within walking distance of my job? Is it near public transportation?
- How accessible are stores, banks, entertainment, etc.?
- What's the average rent for a place this size in the neighborhood?
- How soon can I move in?
- How much do I have to pay before I move in (security deposit, first month's rent, etc.)?
- Is it safe? Do not accept the landlord's word. Be sure you are satisfied with the security of the neighborhood and the apartment/house itself. You can also ask other people for their opinion. Trust your instincts!
- Does it have laundry facilities?

Signing a Rental Agreement (Lease)

If you rent or sublet, you should make sure you sign a rental agreement. Keep a copy for yourself. A rental agreement may be optional, but you should still insist on signing one. The contract should define the terms you are agreeing to, including rental amount and dates, and protects the tenant and landlord. Before you sign any rental agreement, be sure to read it carefully and get an explanation of any terms that are unclear. Remember that only written information on a rental agreement makes an official legal contract.

Many leases last for one year so look for a lease that will allow you to rent month-to-month or for a shorter term. Do not sign a lease for a period longer than you think you are going to stay in the housing, because you may be charged a fee for breaking the lease if you move out early.

Security Deposits

All states allow landlords to collect a security deposit when a tenant moves in. Security deposits are usually one month's rent. Your security deposit will be returned to you when you leave, as long as there has been no damage to the apartment during your occupancy and you fulfilled the lease agreement. It is a very good idea to inspect your new apartment with your landlord before signing an agreement. Be sure to get a written record of existing damages and a list of all included furnishings and their condition. You can also take photos of the apartment's condition when you first move in to make a visual record.

Budgeting

When looking for an apartment, know how much you can afford to pay for housing and think about your additional living and entertainment expenses. Be smart with your budget so that you have enough money left for food and other necessities after you pay your rent. Make sure you have enough money to pay the first month's rent and security deposit when you arrive in the U.S.

Being a Good Tenant and Roommate

When you share your housing, you should make sure that everyone understands financial and other responsibilities within the apartment. Request a written agreement about the cost of housing and be sure to ask any questions that will be important to you. Some suggested questions you might ask are (write these down, and consider if there are other questions to ask before making a decision):

- How much does each person pay for additional expenses like electricity and Internet?
- How do you feel about having guests in the apartment?
- How do you feel about drinking and smoking in the apartment?
- Are there any things or areas in the apartment that will be private?
- How should grocery expenses be handled?
- Are you messy or neat?
- What should we do about keeping the apartment clean?

Eviction

"Eviction" means being removed from your housing, and there are many reasons your landlord can do this, including: not paying rent on time, making too much noise, or damaging property. If you are evicted from your housing, you should get an eviction notice and be given a deadline to leave the housing.

Do not let eviction happen to you! Be respectful of your living situation. This means paying the rent on time, taking care of your property, and following all of the rules in your lease or living agreement. If you have any concerns, talk to your landlord or the person responsible.

Chapter – 9 - U.S. Health Care & Insurance

As a J-1 Participant, you are required to have insurance meeting or exceeding the following coverage:

- Medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$10,000
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness

AHA has partnered with two insurance vendors, the required insurance must be purchased through one of these vendors. http://www.americanhospitalityacademy.com/internship_insurance.php

Accident & Sickness Insurance (General Medical Needs)

Health care in the U.S. is very different from health care in other countries. It is extremely important that you understand how your insurance works so that you will not be responsible for costly insurance bills.

AHA suggests you visit your doctor before you leave. Your insurance plan is for emergency medical situations including accidents and sudden illness, but it will not cover pre-existing conditions.

Please note that this is not health insurance, it is accident and sickness insurance. Health insurance is comprehensive and includes preventative care and regular check-ups as well as care for pre-existing and ongoing conditions. J-1 insurance, though, is simply for accidents and unexpected sickness. If you require regular care, you must ensure that you have a health insurance plan in addition to your J-1 insurance coverage. Health insurance must be arranged separately from J-1 accident & sickness insurance.

Your insurance is effective only for the dates outlined on your DS-2019. If you arrive before your program start date, you must ensure that you have health insurance plan in place. If you plan to utilize the 30 day Grace Period, you must extend your insurance.

Before Arrival in the U.S.

- Familiarize yourself with your insurance policy
- Be sure to understand the maximum amounts of coverage, the services/procedures that are covered, deductibles, co-pays, etc.
- Basic accident and sickness insurance does not cover pre-existing conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, etc.). If you require regular care, you may take on a more comprehensive health insurance policy on your own
- Bring any medications that you take on a regular basis with you and ask your doctor to write a prescription if you will need a refill in the U.S.
- Find a general doctor in your U.S. city who accepts your insurance policy

After Arrival in the U.S.

Always carry your Insurance ID card

In the U.S., you must show proof of insurance when you need medical treatment. If you do not have proof of insurance, you may be asked to pay more than your co-pay at the time of the visit. This can be very expensive

Getting Medical Attention

The quickest and most convenient way for you to get medical treatment for non-emergency situations is to go to a walk-in clinic or urgent care center. Benefits of these facilities include:

- ✓ They are open on weekends and often in the evenings.
- ✓ The wait is usually much shorter than an emergency room.
- ✓ The cost is less than visiting an emergency room.
- ✓ You do not have to make an appointment nor have a relationship with the doctor to be seen and treated.
- ✓ Emergency rooms and hospitals are for life-threatening situations. If you feel your life is in danger, go directly to the closest hospital for treatment and contact AHA as soon as possible. If you go to the emergency room for a non-emergency, you will most likely have to wait several hours to be seen and could incur higher costs than your

Traveling Outside the U.S.

If you plan to travel outside the U.S. during the program, you may only do so during the dates permitted by your program and visa. If you travel outside the U.S., you must have your original DS-2019 signed for travel by AHA. For detailed instructions on how to obtain proper travel validation from AHA, please call or email AHA.

Before traveling you MUST following these steps:

- Contact AHA at least two weeks (AHA suggests three weeks to allow for shipping) before any trip outside the U.S.
- Email AHA a copy of your passport, visa page. AHA will confirm you have a valid multi-entry visa, allowing you to re-enter the USA at the conclusion of your travel.
Karin@AmericanHospitalityAcademy.com
- Submit the Travel Request Form to your employer for signature.
- Your DS-2019 form **MUST** signed by AHA for travel validation. The signature confirms you are in good standing continues to be sponsored by AHA.
- **Mail your DS-2019** to AHA along with the Travel Request Form signed by your supervisor. Mail these documents to:

*Karin Morrison
American Hospitality Academy
240 Key Honey Lane
Tavernier, FL 33070*

- Include a prepaid return envelope (from AHA to your U.S. mailing address) using the same mail service you used to send your DS-2019. AHA recommends FedEx, UPS, or the U.S. Postal Service. Do not send money in the mail.
- AHA will sign and return your DS-2019 in the prepaid envelope you provided. You will need to present this document to the U.S. Customs Official upon your return to the U.S.

Other Important Notes About Traveling Outside the U.S.

- You may only return to the U.S. before your DS-2019 End Date
- You may only return to the U.S. before your J-1 Visa Expiration Date, and your J-1 Visa must be for “multiple” entries. The number of times you are allowed to enter the U.S. is indicated on your J-1 Visa under the “entries” section:
- If the letter “M” appears in this section, you are permitted multiple entries
- If it does not, you are only allowed to enter the U.S. the specific number of times indicated
- You cannot leave the U.S. for longer than 30 days.
- Check with your insurance before you travel. In most cases travel to Mexico, Canada, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas) is covered by your insurance. Travel anywhere else outside the U.S. is not covered.
- You may need a visa for countries you are visiting – you may want to check with your country’s U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Travel Smart

When you travel during your AHA J-1 program, keep the following tips in mind:

- Travel with friends whenever possible. Never hitchhike!
- Take a map and plan ahead. Research hotels, hostels, and transportation if you are traveling for more than one day.
- Always tell friends and coworkers where you are going and when you will be back.
- Take phone numbers for your friends and employers with you, and give them your phone number as well.
- Take your Health & Safety Guide along with your important AHA J-1 Program USA documents.
- Protect your personal property by keeping it in a safe place; if there are safes where you are staying, lock up your valuables and important documents.

Travel Resources

Traveling around the U.S. can be one of the best parts of the J-1 Program. It's a good idea to plan your trip in advance, to make the most of your travel time.

In this section you will find information about travel services that are available.

U.S. Air Travel

Air travel can be a great way to travel across the U.S. It can often be cheaper than bus or train, and may be much quicker. There are more than 1,000 airports throughout the U.S., so you can usually find one near where you're trying to visit.

You will normally need to book early to get the best fares. There are many websites that search all airlines to get you the best fares. Here are some of the most commonly used sites:

www.studentuniverse.com

www.orbitz.com

www.STAtravel.com

www.Expedia.com

www.Travelocity.com

www.Kayak.com

Be sure to look for student discounts.

Trains

Traveling by train is not as common in the U.S. as it is in many other countries. However, the national railroad, [Amtrak](http://www.amtrak.com), offers passes for up to 30 days just for international visitors. Student discounts are also available.

Buses

[Greyhound](http://www.greyhound.com) is the major nationwide bus company in the U.S., serving more than 2,000 destinations. They also offer weekly and monthly passes allowing unlimited travel during a set time period. Student discounts are also available.

Local Transportation

There are also many regional bus and rail companies that you may find convenient, especially when arriving in or leaving the U.S. You can often find this information on your arrival airport's website.

Accommodation

Hostels can be a great solution if you're looking for a cheap place to stay. They offer a comfortable night's sleep in friendly surroundings, and are a great way to meet other travelers.

www.hostelworld.com

www.hiusa.org

Travel Guides

There are lots of useful websites with information about many U.S. destinations. Here are a few. Many of them also offer guidebooks.

www.budgettravel.com

www.letsgo.com

www.fodors.com

www.frommers.com

www.lonelyplanet.com

www.roughguides.com

www.tripadvisor.com

www.virtualtourist.com

Individual cities and states may also have helpful tourism websites.