

# Arriving in the USA



# Living and learning in America

## 1. Arriving in the USA

### Arriving in good time

You will need plenty of time to recover from your journey and settle into your new home before your course starts.

For this reason, we recommend that you arrive in the USA at least two days before the beginning of your course. This means you will arrive over the weekend before the Monday on which your course starts.

### Immigration control at the airport

#### Always Hand-Carry Your Documents.

Do not check the following documents in your baggage. If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will be unable to present the documents at your port of entry. As a result, you may not be able to enter the United States.

### Documents you will need

The documents you will need to present to Immigration officials in the USA when you arrive are:

- **Your passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay; and SEVIS Form I-20 (if on student visa)**

In addition, it is strongly recommended that you also hand carry the following documentation:

- **Evidence of financial resources**
- **Evidence of student status, such as recent tuition receipts and confirmation of Acceptance for Studies**
- **Paper receipt for the SEVIS fee (if on student visa), Form I-797 (if applicable)**
- **Name and contact information for your "Designated School Official", including a**

**24-hour emergency contact number at the school**

- **Enrollment and accommodation documents from Kings Colleges**
- **If you're traveling with a member or members of your family for whom you're responsible, you must also show that you have enough money for their stay as well.**

When you answer questions from Immigration Officers it is important to be clear and to tell the truth. Give them straight answers to straight questions. Never try to give them money or gifts. Here are some key questions that Immigration Officers usually ask. Notice that they could ask the same question in different ways. You might want to practice your answers.

- **What is your name?**
- **What's your name?**
- **What's your first name?**
- **What's your family name?**
- **What is your last name?**
- **What is your date of birth?**
- **When were you born?**
- **How long are you staying?**
- **How long do you intend to stay?**
- **What is the purpose of your visit?**
- **Why are you here?**
- **Have you got a letter from the school/college?**
- **Do you have a letter from the school/college?**
- **Have you paid the school fees?**
- **Are your school fees paid?**
- **Have you paid a deposit?**
- **Have you got a return ticket?**
- **Do you have a return ticket?**
- **Where will you stay?**
- **Where are you staying?**
- **What's your address in the USA?**
- **Is this your first visit to the USA?**
- **Have you been to the U.S. before?**
- **Will you be working in the U.S.?**
- **Do you intend to work in the USA?**
- **Are you planning to get a job here?**

- **Have you got enough money to live on?**
- **Do you have enough money for your stay?**

If necessary, decide how you will write and sign your name in English. Do not change that spelling and signature while you are in the U.S. Make sure that other people use the same spelling if they write down your name. This will avoid confusion.

### Secondary Inspection Requirements

If the CBP officer at the port of entry cannot initially verify your information or you do not have all of the required documentation, you may be directed to an interview area known as "secondary inspection." Secondary inspection allows inspectors to conduct additional research in order to verify information without causing delays for other arriving passengers. The inspector will first attempt to verify your status by using the Student and Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS). In the event that the CBP Officer needs to verify information with your school or program, we strongly recommend that you have the name and telephone number of the foreign student advisor at your school. In the event you arrive during non-business hours (evening, weekends, holidays), you should also have an emergency or non-business hour phone number available for this official.

Failure to comply with U.S. government entry-exit procedures may result in your being denied entry to the United States. Under certain circumstances, the CBP officer may issue a "Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor" Form (I-515A), which authorizes temporary admission into the United States. Work with your school to submit the proper documentation without delay.

## Going through customs

The next phase you will go through at the airport after you have reclaimed your luggage is Customs control. If you have only your personal luggage, you should have no problems with Customs. Do not try to bring any of the following into the country:

- Weapons such as rifles, pistols, air or gas guns, knives, and martial arts equipment.
- Drugs such as heroin, morphine, cocaine, amphetamines, barbiturates, LSD and cannabis.
- Counterfeit and pirated goods, such as watches, clocks and CDs, and any goods with false marks of their origin.
- Obscene articles and publications, seditious and treasonable materials.
- Hazardous articles (e.g., fireworks, dangerous toys, toxic or poisonous substances),.
- Products made by prison convicts or forced labor.
- Switchblade knives (the only exception is for a one-armed traveler, in which case the blade must be no longer than three inches)

- Many fruits, vegetables, plants, cuttings, seeds, unprocessed plant products, and certain endangered plant species are either prohibited from entering the country or require an import permit
- Meats, livestock, poultry and their by-products (e.g., sausage, pâté) are either prohibited or restricted from entering the United States, depending upon the animal disease condition in the country of origin

You can bring the following with you, but they are restricted items. You will have to meet certain conditions if you want to bring them into the USA.

- Certain plants and their produce, including trees, shrubs, potatoes, certain fruit, bulbs and seeds.
- Radio transmitters such as CB radios that are not approved for use in the USA.
- Endangered species, including birds and plants, whether alive or dead, and goods made from them. This includes such things as fur, ivory or leather taken from endangered species.

There is no limit on the total amount of monetary instruments that may be brought into or taken out of the United States, nor is it illegal to do so.

However, if you transport or cause to be transported (including by mail or other means), more than \$10,000 in monetary instruments on any occasion into or out of the United States, or if you receive more than that amount, you must file a report (Customs Form 4790) with U.S. Customs

## Transfer to your accommodation

If you are staying with a host family we will provide you with their contact details (name, address, email, telephone number). Please make sure you have these ready when you land. If you are staying in a student residence we will provide you with address details in advance of your departure. If you require a transfer from the airport to your accommodation, you will need to book this with us in advance.

You will need to tell us about your travel arrangements. You can do this via your agent, or yourself if applying directly, in a letter or an email.

The information we will need is:

- Your departure airport
- Your flight number and airline
- Your arrival airport in the U.S.
- Your arrival time



Once you have cleared customs, our representative will meet you at or near the airport information desk. They will be holding a white and purple board with your name and Kings Colleges written on it.

If for some reason you do not make contact with them at the arrivals area, please ask the airport information staff to put a call out for the Kings representative.

Kings Colleges will provide you with a special mobile telephone number before you travel to use only in the event of an emergency with regard to your transfer.

**IMPORTANT - please read carefully:**

**Under no circumstances should you leave the area before meeting the driver. You pay nothing to the driver. Be aware that illegal cab drivers might offer to take you to your accommodation. Do not take these cabs. They may charge you much more than the normal fare.**

If you are intending to make your own way to your homestay, please let them know the approximate time you intend to arrive.

## Adapting to American Life

It's quite normal to take time to adapt to life in a new country. When you first arrive in the USA things may seem very different to what you are used to back home.

We understand this and will help and guide you as you get used to things. At first you might feel homesick. Don't worry, this is normal! It won't last long. We'll help you though this early phase by keeping you busy, and organising lots of ways for you to meet and make new friends.

Our friendly student counsellors or welfare staff are always there to help if you have any problems.



**Language tip**

All languages have words and expressions that show politeness and respect. American people use 'please', 'thank you' and 'thanks'.

It doesn't matter if you are speaking to someone younger or older than you. In the USA it is important to be polite and show respect to everyone you meet.

The Immigration Officer may say 'thank you' when you give him or her a document. Say 'thank you' when the Officer gives it back to you.

English speakers usually add please, thank you or thanks when they accept or refuse an offer. Would you like a drink? Yes, please./No, thanks. Just saying 'yes' or 'no' sounds rude to native English speakers in America.

**Study tip**

It is a good idea to buy a notebook so that you can make a record of your stay in America. Carry the notebook with you and write down all the things that are strange or interesting in some way.

Watch what people do in different situations. Is it similar or not to the way people behave in your country?

Write down any common words or phrases that people use when they speak to each other. You can then ask your American friends, host family or teachers when and why people use these expressions.

At the end of your stay you will have an interesting record of how you experienced language, customs and life in America.