

Travel Tips and Survival Guide

ISA - University of Utah

We would highly recommend you to go the entire document carefully. For your convenience, certain sections will have check-box bullets so that you could use a copy of this pdf as a checklist too.

Things to be done roughly a month before you depart

- Get your immunization done, especially the MMR shots and TB test. (see below and *After Your Arrival*)
- Get a Dental/Optical check-up done well in advance.
- If you have any major/considerable ailments, it's better to see a doctor now and prepare medically.
- Get prescriptions medicines for all common ailments. Be sure to have the technical name of the medicine along with Indian/US brand name. Medicines without prescription are confiscated by immigrations.
- Make photocopies of all your original documents, and keep one set in each luggage item. The **ORIGINALS** should be in your hand baggage.
- Get an original of the Provisional Certificate (PC) from your college. Don't worry if you don't have this; most colleges do not give this document this early. You can always ask your parents to courier it to you.
- Exchanging rupees to dollars. The tuition fees can be wired to the University of Utah account from India. The last date of tuition payment for Fall semester is usually in the first week of September. [Click here](#) for more information.

Immunization

The immunization program instituted at the University of Utah requires all students to have evidence of immunity to, or appropriate vaccinations against measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR). To ensure immunity, the University requires all students to have two measles vaccinations, 1 mumps vaccine, and 1 rubella vaccine or 2 MMR vaccinations. All the vaccination need to be after your 1st birthday and after December 31, 1969. There should be a period of at least 4-6 weeks between **two MMR vaccines**. The Immunity requirements may be met by showing:

- Written documentation of appropriate immunization with live virus vaccine : minimum of 2 Measles, 1 Mumps, and 1 Rubella vaccinations or 2 MMR vaccinations : after your first birthday and after December 31, 1969, or
- Written documentation of having had measles or mumps diseases and a titer (blood test) for Rubella.

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- Results of a titer proving measles, mumps, and rubella immunity

Official forms that will verify immunization include:

- Photocopy of medical records from home.
- Statement or photocopy of records from doctor/health care provider.
- State or international immunization records of vaccinations.
- Primary or secondary school records of vaccinations.
- Immunization records from another college or university attended.
- Documentation of measles, mumps, or rubella titer(s) showing immunity

PS: In case, you don't get it in India, you can always get it here at the University of Utah (Student Health Center) MMR: 1 shot=\$60 (so $2 * 60 = \$120$).

Keep in mind to take the immunizations on time; you cannot take the mandatory TB skin test if you have received any immunization within 1 month of the test.

For more info: [check this link](#).

Booking your flight

- Plan to arrive at the university at least a week or two before the International Student Orientation. Also, if you have been granted TA-ship, you might want to come early enough to attend the ITA workshop.

PS: You will need to contact the graduate advisor to be enrolled in the ITA workshop. If you have not done it yet do it immediately. Remember ITA workshop does not guarantee a TA-ship, however if you are a TA it is mandatory to have an ITA clearance to work. [More info here](#).

- The first thing to do is to block tickets (implying no financial commitment). This can be done via travel agents. Use a reliable travel agent.
- Confirm the status of your ticket either by calling or visiting the Airline website.
- Some Airlines offer Frequent Flier programs (e.g. Air France, TWA, Emirates). Make use of these programs.
- Book early to avoid change of airlines. A direct flight is the best. If a change of airline can't be avoided, ensure enough time is spared between connections.

Connections outside USA (London, Frankfurt, Dubai, etc.) must have at least an hour and half between them to be safe. These airports are big and travelling between terminals can take time. Go to your next gate and wait there.

Connection at your **Port of Entry** (First airport in the USA : Seattle, JFK, Dallas) must be atleast two and half to four hours. You will go thru immigration at this airport and the immigration lines can get quite long. In the worst case, you'll miss your flight and will have to wait for the next one.

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- Baggage is usually safe with a single airline. Change of airlines sometimes leads to misplaced luggage. Rarely airlines don't take care of baggage transfer. You may have to personally take care of it. Check this while booking the ticket.

Luggage

- Contact your travel agent or airlines for baggage allowances. Most airlines allow you to carry 2 pieces of check-in baggage, 1 carry-on (cabin baggage) and one laptop bag/backpack. Confirm the baggage limitations with the airline by calling them or check it online.
- The check-in baggage should not be more than 23 kgs (50 lbs). However, you can have up to 32 kgs (70 lbs) by paying extra.
- Additional bags can be added by paying extra fee.
- Total outside dimensions of any checked-in bag should not exceed 62 inches (157 cm) (width + height + depth).
- For the carry-on bag/cabin baggage, the maximum combined linear measurement (L + W + H) is 45 inches (115 cm) up to 14 in x 9 in x 22 in. The maximum combined weight of both the carry-on bags is 40 pounds (18 kg).
- For most airlines, the baggage specs are similar. However, check with the airline which you will be travelling on.
- Also, start your packing well in advance.

What should be brought along with you in your *Carry-on* baggage

- All original important documents (I-20, visa, tickets, etc)
- Some medicines (for air-sickness, major ailments)
- Enough small cash, Maximum \$100 will be needed as hard cash. Make sure you have varying denominations of the dollar bills. Also try and have a few quarters (\$0.25) for making phone calls from a coin operated phone. Rupees can be exchanged for dollars at any airport. However, exchanging at the airports and hotels is inadvisable as you get a very high rate of exchange.
- One of the below two to meet your daily expenses, housing rent and deposit :
 - Traveler's cheques up to \$1000. You can deposit the traveler's cheques or convert to cash at the University Bank.
 - Forex Card containing upto \$1000. You can withdraw from any ATM with most major Forex cards, but there might be a charge involved for each transaction.
- Receipts of your traveler's checks, in case you lose the actual TC's.

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- Address book/phone book (Indian & US contacts, especially your pick-up and host).
- Copies of your passport-size photo.
- Things to survive for a week in case your luggage gets misplaced (2 sets of clothes, etc.)

What should be left back at home

- List of addresses/phone numbers at which you can be contacted (host/pick-up/ISA).
- One copy of all your important documents.
- Arrangement to apply/collect/mail your transcripts.

Packing

Usually, clothes are machine-washed once a week or once every two weeks at your local Laundromat. Hence, you will need supply of clothes accordingly. Try to keep one week worth of clothes as backup. Get clothes that are a little loose. They may shrink in the machine. Some items are cheaply available in US.

For example, you will find comforters instead of blankets, and fleece jackets instead of leather jackets apt for US weather conditions. Similarly, most toiletries are cheap here; don't waste precious baggage space. See the following detailed list for an idea of what to bring:

Please DO NOT intend to buy heavy jackets for harsh SLC winters in India. You'll be wasting space and will not get the right ones which might be required. Get them here in SLC. You can get them for a fairly cheaper price in Aug/Sep as winter wouldn't set in until Nov/Dec.

• Documents (To be followed strictly!)

- Passport photocopies : Leave a copy in each bag you bring
- Admission letter : Leave a copy in each bag you bring
- I-20 visa photocopies : Leave a copy in each bag you bring
- Contact numbers (both here and that in India) : Keep them in the hand-baggage
- Transcripts : Keep them in the hand-baggage
- Receipts of traveler's cheques : Keep them in the hand-baggage
- Medical Fitness Certificate : Keep them in the hand-baggage
- Vaccination Certificate : Keep them in the hand-baggage
- Recommendation letters : Bring some extra copies for any use later
- Foreign clearance From Income Tax : Required for those who worked in India
- Indian Drivers License : Recommended

Do not waste time and money getting an international driving license/ permit in India. That is not necessary. [More info here.](#)

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- Recent Passport Photographs : 12
- Cash in dollars (\$100 - \$200) : In hand (We cannot stress enough to keep varied denominations with you)

REMEMBER !

We cannot stress this enough: the originals of **Passport, Admission Letter, I-20 Visa** and all other relevant originals **MUST** be in the bag you carry with yourself throughout the journey. Keep them safe; if you lose them, it's not worth the trouble!

• **Clothing**

- Shirts : 4-6 (Formal and Casual, Full and Half Sleeved)
- Formal Trouser : 1
- Blazer/Suit : 1 (Optional)
- T-Shirts : 6-8 (Polo, Turtlenecks etc.)
- Jeans : 4-5 pairs
- Belts : 1/2
- Sweater : 1 (For early winter)
- Pajamas/Night suits/Track suits : as required
- Undergarments : 12 pairs (vests and briefs) (Recommended)
- Towels : 2
- Handkerchief : 6
- Socks : as required
- Jacket : 1 (Get a water-proof jacket for rains. There might be frequent rains in Aug/Sep)
- Bed sheets : 2-3

• **Footwear**

- Sandals/Floaters : 1 pair
- Slippers : 1 pair
- Formal Black Leather shoes : 1 pair
- Action Shoes/Sneakers : 1 pair

• **Toiletries**

- Grooming kit (Make sure Razors/Scissors are in Check-in baggage)
- Toothbrush, Toothpaste : 1-2
- Bathing Soap, Shampoo, Lotion : 1

• **Utensils** (Recommended)

Indian styled utensils are hard to find in the USA and are often very expensive. It is advisable that these are carried along with you. You can split the utensils among your roommates too as these are often shared later.

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- Pressure Cooker (3lt/5lt) : 1
- Spare Weight/Safety Valves : 1
- Spare Gasket : 1
- Frying Pan : 1
- Kadai : 1
- Electric Rice Cooker : Not Necessary (Economically available in the USA)
- Spoons : few
- Steel Glasses/Plates : 2
- Cutting board and Knife : 1 (Ensure this is in Check-in baggage)

● Food

Again keep in mind the grocery stores and Indian store are very accessible.

- Tea Powder : 500 g
- Instant Coffee : 500 g
- Turmeric powder (haldi) : 200g
- Red chili powder : 250g
- Garam masala : 200g
- Dhaniya powder : 250g
- Jeera powder : 250g
- Asofoetida (hing) : 100g
- Instant food mixes

Optional

- Sambar Powder : 500g
- Chole Masala : 500g
- Pav Bhaji Masala : 500g
- Dal (2 Varieties) : 500g
- Pickels (Triple/Quadruple packed)
- Papads

- **Stationery** Don't get too much stationery. Most departments have free stationery available for students in the department.

- Backpack : 1
- Scientific Calc : 1
- Couple of Notebooks
- Pendrives / External HDD
- Pens/Pencils etc.

● Miscellaneous

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- Spectacles/Contact Lenses : 4-5
- Contact Lens Solution : 1
- Sunglasses : 1 (Recommended)
- Stitching kit
- Camera/Ipod/Headphones (Optional)

On the day of Flight

- Since it is going to be a long flight, wear something comfortable.
- Reach the airport 3-4 hours before flight departure.
- Sometime before landing, the flight attendant will distribute customs declaration forms & immigration forms (I-94). Fill these out on the plane (having a pen with you will come in handy here); you will submit them to the appropriate authorities when you land. After seeing your documents, the immigration officer will indicate the length of stay, university details, etc. This might be attached to your passport. DO NOT remove it; you might need it when you leave the country next time.
- **Keep your Form I-20 safe.** All transactions regarding your non-immigrant status will be recorded in this form. This should be retained at all times (not surrendered when you temporarily leave the US).
- Once you are out of the plane, go straight to the immigration counter. It might take you up to an hour here. Keep your I-20, passport, admission aid letters ready. They might ask a few questions like *Is this your first time in the US?*, *Are you a student?*, *Do you have an F-1 visa?*, *Which University are you attending?* etc. Answer these questions to the best of your ability. They might attach the I-94 card to your visa. You have now been officially accepted into the USA.
- Go to the baggage claim to fetch your luggage. Pick up a cart (you can get this at a machine for \$1 to \$4) to carry the bags if needed. Then pick up your bags as they come out on the conveyor (suitable eye-catching labels help here). If you don't get your baggage inform the inquiry section; you may have to wait for an hour here.
- Carry your baggage to nearby Customs. If asked, tell them that you are a student on an F-1 visa, your college, department, etc.

If the unthinkable should happen ...and nobody comes to pick you up (hey, even we mess up sometimes), and you're stuck in a new country with no friends, here's what to do:

- Firstly call your pick-up volunterr from a coin operated phone (quarters will come handy here) or use your WiFi enabled phone to make a Whatsapp call or a Regular call with Google Hangours. (SLC airport has free high speed WiFi).
- If your pick-up is not reachable (we are humans and mobile phone coverage is not in our hands) call your hosts and try to co-ordinate with them.

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- Last but not the least you can contact the ISA in-charge of logistics or the in-charge for hosts.

Now let's say it is just not your day and things are falling apart, do not lose your calm, Salt Lake City is one of the easiest places to get around. 1st thing you need to do is get out of the airport to your hosts or to the University of Utah. You can choose one of the following options:

- Taxis are very convenient, but pretty expensive, approximately charging about \$40 till campus. They're available just outside the baggage claim area.
- You could take an Uber. Your Indian Uber registration might not work here as there is not Cash option for Uber in USA. You might have to add one of your Credit/Debit Cards.
- You could ask the cabbie/Uber driver to take you to your hosts' place. Keep the address handy. Do not let go off the cab till you find your hosts. (PS: Cabbie does not carry more than \$10 worth of change, good to keep small dollar bills with you).
- If your hosts turn out to be a no show (which is highly improbable as they are expecting you), you could ask the cabbie to take you to the University Housing, but it is unlikely that they will have anything open, as they are always booked to the neck.
- There are many hotels (posh and value-for-money types), motels and guest houses in SLC, so you will not have to sleep in the streets. Your cab driver can help you find one. Don't forget to get a good night's rest, and call us in the morning to insult us with your choicest profanities.

Also check the new student guidelines link on the ISA website.

We wish you a pleasant and safe journey. Get to us in one piece and you're good to go! See you in SLC.

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