The Indian Students Association’s Guide to Survival at the University of Utah

TRAVELLING TIPS

THINGS TO BE DONE IN ADVANCE

• Dental/Optical (contact lenses or glasses) check-up
• Current checkup, especially if you have a major ailment
• Get requisite immunization done, especially the MMR shots and TB test (see below and ‘After Your Arrival’)
• 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 2011 semester is September 6th, 2011.

Check the following link for more information:
http://fbs.admin.utah.edu/income/tuition/

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:
1. 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
2. Written documentation of having had measles or mumps diseases and a titer (blood test) for Rubella.
3. 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.

NOTE: 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 2x60=$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 the following link
http://www.sa.utah.edu/ohp/healthA-Z/immunizations.htm
BOOKING YOUR FLIGHT TICKET

• Plan to arrive at the university at least 4-5 days before the International Student Orientation. Also, if you have been granted TA-ship, you want to come early enough to attend the ITA workshop (2nd week of August).

  • 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.

For more info: check the following link

  http://www.utah.edu/ita

• 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.

• Much before the flight date, call the airlines themselves and confirm your ticket.

• Convey your meal preferences, if any, to the airline directly by calling them.

• Some Airlines offer Frequent Flier programs (e.g. Air France, TWA, Delta). 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, leave at least a 4-6 hour gap between the scheduled arrival of one plane and the scheduled departure of the connecting flight, to allow for customs procedures when you reach USA.

• 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 1 piece 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.

• Another bag can be added by paying extra fees.

• Total outside dimensions of a 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.

THINGS TO BE KEPT IN HAND BAGGAGE

• Original important documents (I-20, visa, tickets, etc)

• Some medicines (for air-sickness)

• 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.

• Traveler’s cheques up to $1000. These will be required for your housing rent and deposit. You can deposit the traveler’s cheques or convert to cash at the University Bank.

• Receipts of your traveler's checks, in case you lose the actual TC's.

• 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, toiletries, etc)

THINGS TO BE LEFT AT HOME
• List of addresses/phone numbers at which you can be contacted
• One copy of all your important documents
• Arrange to apply/collect/mail your transcripts (20 copies are preferable)

ACTUAL 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 will be attached to your passport. DO NOT remove it; you will 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 will attach the I-94 card to your visa. You have now been officially accepted into the USA.
• Keep your I-94 safe and with your passport all the time.
• 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. 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.
• Cart your baggage to nearby Customs. If asked, tell them that you are a student on an F-1 visa, your college, department, etc.

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:

GENERAL CLOTHING
• Full Sleeve Shirts – 4
• Half Sleeve Shirts – 3
• Formal Trousers – 1
• Blazer/Suit – 1
• T-shirts – 6
• Jeans – 3-4 pairs
• Belts – 2
• Sweater/monkey cap – 1
• Pajamas/Night Suits – 2
• Underwear (briefs) – 12 pairs
• Banyans (vests) – 12
• Towels – 2
• Handkerchiefs – 6
• Socks – 4 pairs
• Jacket – 1 (bring a light rain jacket. Jackets for the harsh SLC winters need to be bought here. Consult your hosts about when and where you can find cheap jackets and other winter wear)
• Bed sheets – 2-3
• Razor – 1
• Shaving Blades/Cartridges – 6
• Shaving Cream – 1

FOOTWEAR
• Chappals/Sandals/Floaters – 1 pair
• Slippers – 1 pair
• Formal Black Leather shoes – 1 pair
• Casual Sports Shoes – 1 pair

TOILETRIES: Bring enough for 1 week (a small travel pack is highly recommended). For later, the grocery stores are pretty accessible. KEEP THIS IN YOUR CHECK IN BAGGAGE
• Trimming Scissors – 1
• Tooth Brush – 1
• Tooth Paste – 1
• Comb – 1
• Shampoo Bottles – 1
• Bathing Soaps – 1
• Lotion – 1

UTENSILS RECOMMENDED
• Pressure Cooker (3lt/5lt) – 1
• Spare Weight/Safety Valves – 1
• Spare Gaskets – 1
• Frying Pan – 1
• Kadai – 1
• Spoons – few
• Steel glasses/plates – 2
• Tea Filter – 1 (optional)
• Cutting Board & knife – 1 (Make sure that this is in check in baggage)

FOOD ITEMS- Again keep in mind the grocery stores and Indian store are very accessible.
• Tea Powder – 500 g
• Instant Coffee/Nescafe – 500g
• Turmeric powder (haldi) – 200g

OPTIONAL
• Shorts/Cargos/Bermudas – 2
• Traditional Wear – 1 (For any Indian Festival)
• Blankets (light-weight) – 1
NOT RECOMMENDED
• Woolen thermal wear – 0

OPTIONAL
• Talcum Powder – 1
• Hair Oil Bottle – 1
• Red chili powder – 250g
• Garam masala – 200g
• Dhaniya powder – 250g
• Cumin powder (jeera powder) – 250g
• Asofoetida (hing) – 100g
• Instant food mixes

DO NOT BRING ANYTHING WHICH IS IN THE FORM OF SEEDS. (Like Cumin Seeds (jeera), black mustard seeds (mohri), etc), THEY WILL BE CONFISCATED AT IMMIGRATIONS.

STATIONERY
• School Bag – 1
• Scientific Calculator – 1
• Note books – 1-2
• Pen drive (2GB)
• Pens/Pencils – 2 each

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

MISCELLANEOUS
• Spectacles/Contact Lenses – 5
• Contact Lenses Solution – 1 bottle
• Sunglasses – 1 (Recommended)
• Stitching Kit – 1
• Camera (Optional)
• Ipods/ MP3 Players (Optional)
• Wallet (to hold credit cards) – 1 (Recommended)

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
• Credentials (Contact info 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 it in the hand-baggage
• Vaccination Certificate ➔ Keep it 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 ➔ Optional (A new license over here requires you to attend driving classes and it is expensive. Do not waste time and money getting an international driving license/permit in India. You are required to possess a permit issued by the Utah DMV to drive here)
For more info: check the following link

• Recent Passport Photographs ➔ 4

OPTIONAL
• Sambar powder – 500g
• Chole masala – 500g
• Pav bhaji masala – 500g
• Dals – 500g (2 varieties)
• Clove (lavang) – 50g
• Papad
• Pickles (properly packed)

OPTIONAL
• Sharpener – 1
• Clutch Pencil (0.5 mm) – 1
• Lead Box (0.5 mm) – 1
• Steel Scale 12” – 1
• Gluestick – 1
• 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!

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 from a coin operated phone (quarters will come handy here). If you have a WiFi enabled laptop (SLC airport has unlimited free WiFi) Google Phone can be used.
• 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.
• Last but not the least you can contact the 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. 1"th 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.
• There is a shuttle service available as well, which you can get for about $16 a person. It’s almost like a taxi, except it is designed to serve up to 4 people at once. If you can't locate the counter, ask someone around. For more info: check the following link http://www.expressshuttleutah.com/

• You could ask the cabbie 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. 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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