

# EVERYTHING AFTER VISA

## ASSUMPTION

You are done with your VISA. Congratulations 😊

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**Disclaimer: All the information provided in the document are compiled from various sources such as the web, friends, seniors and relatives, for your ease. Items mentioned under shopping section are basic, mandatory and might differ from personal need and usage.**

## **I) Health Related.**

### **I.A) Immunization**

Each university has its own list of mandatory vaccinations, so check that out and start early, because some of them might require multiple doses over a period of time and you wouldn't want to risk taking any injections as you get nearer to the departure date.

For UNCC -

[http://studenthealth.uncc.edu/sites/studenthealth.uncc.edu/files/media/pdf\\_library/Immunizations%20Form%202013%20update.pdf](http://studenthealth.uncc.edu/sites/studenthealth.uncc.edu/files/media/pdf_library/Immunizations%20Form%202013%20update.pdf)

Some vaccination should have been taken from your childhood. If you had not taken or do not have medical records of the vaccines. It's better to get the immunization forms filled, signed and sealed by your family doctor.

### **I.B) Dental Checkup**

Dental care in US is very expensive. Most insurance companies don't cover pre-existing dental problems, you would need to fix an appointment with the dentist. In short, get all those caps filled and root-canal treatments done. It is so expensive in the US that you can go back to India, get it done and come back and even that will be much cheaper!

### **I.C) Eye Checkup**

Get an extra pair of spectacles/contact lens in your home country itself, as like all other things in the USA, this also is very costly.

### **I.D) Health Insurance**

It is always a question whether overseas health insurance provided for students by Insurance Policies like ICICI Lombard, TATA AIG etc., is acceptable or not. Even though it might end up cheaper than the university insurance, the coverage and the claiming process is much simpler if you take insurance from the university. So it is recommended to get the insurance from the university. However if it is too costly, take the insurance from [www.isoa.org](http://www.isoa.org) which costs as cheap as 31 \$ per month and covers almost anything that an international student might need. Also remember to take a travel insurance (usually you can add one while booking tickets from websites like yatra, cleartrip etc) from TATA AIG if possible for the first few days from the departure date till the classes start.

### **I.E) Medicines**

Carry a personal medical kit with all your tablets and medicines. If you have a medical condition, please carry your doctor records and prescriptions .These are very important since for getting any specialized medicine in the US, you need a prescription.

Cold, Fever	- Crocin or any paracetamol equivalent.
Running Nose	- Cetirizine
Body Pain	- Crocin,Dolo 650, Combiflam
Indigestion, Gastric Problems	- Gelucil, Zinetac
Throat Infection	- Erythromycin, Azethral
Allergies	- Avil .25, Allegra 120
Vomiting	- Avomine
Tooth Ache	- Combiflam
Cold, Head Ache	- Vicks, Amurtanjan
Stomach Pain	- Cyclopam, Dropar, Drotin
Diarrhea	- Lopomide, Loparet
Dizziness	- Diziron
Sprain	- Esgypyrin
Muscle stiffness	- Neurobion forte
Pain Relief Spray/Gel	- Volini

## II) Shopping

### II.A) Flight Tickets

There are two ways you can book your tickets for cheap:

A good reputed travel agent online booking through websites

Option 1 is slightly better in case many people are going together (like 8-10 people), as the agent might give you a discount. Also, many times, the agent might give you cheaper tickets than those offered by websites. The best way to go about is to enquire multiple agents and compare the deals you get. Also look at the time when it will depart and arrive in the US, and see if it will be convenient for you. Some of your friends might have parents who are businessmen who travel a lot and they would have their own trusted travel agent. They might give you cheaper tickets. Tickets get expensive as you wait longer, so book them at least 2-1.5 months in advance.

If you plan to buy flight tickets through websites, you may try the following:

<http://www.studentuniverse.com>

<http://www.makemytrip.com>

<http://www.yatra.com>

<http://www.kayak.com>

<http://www.expedia.com>

Student Universe is very popular among students as it has the cheapest deals compared to other websites. It even gives further discounts if you are a registered student with a valid .edu email address.

In any case, even if you are planning to buy from a travel agent, check the fares online and see if you get a better deal. If you are, then talk to the agent and try bargaining with him. If the deal online is still better, then go ahead and book online. But be wary of any hidden fees that the website may charge you during check-out.

Almost all airlines start giving out student deals sometime in June or even earlier, so keep a watch out for that. See if there is extra-baggage allowance, which will come in very handy for your first trip since you will be carrying a lot of stuff. Many airlines might also give you some discount coupons which may come of use during shopping. These offers are only valid when you book through the airline's official website or the authorized travel agent of the respective airlines. If you book through a third party site then these offers won't be valid, however the third party site may have an offer of their own. **Once you book the ticket either through online or agent, be sure to call up the airline and confirm whether the ticket has been booked, just to be safe. After booking the ticket from agent or third party websites, Create an account directly in the Airlines website and add the PNR number to get your points which can be used later to get discounted prices when you want to book tickets for someone else.**

Some of you would wait till you clear the Visa Interview to book the tickets. It is recommended that you block the ticket with a travel agent by paying some initial amount, as soon as you get your I-20 and book your Visa Interview (VI). At worst, if you want to postpone or cancel your ticket, the agent may charge you a small fee. But that is very less probable, as almost all of you will pass the VI with flying colors!

#### **Some tips on flight bookings:**

Try to get a single direct flight to your destination. If that is not possible/coming out to be too expensive, make sure the change of flights is within the same airline or code-shared airline. **(For information on code-sharing - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codeshare\\_agreement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codeshare_agreement) )** Get a single ticket for the entire journey. If you are changing flights, make sure you leave at least 3-5 hours gap between the arrival of the first flight and the departure of the next. Baggage is safe when you use only one airline service for the whole travel.

## **II.B) Luggage**

First things first, you will need some suitcases to carry all your stuff. You will most likely have a student offer by which you will be able to carry 3 \* 23 Kgs plus cabin luggage. (In the case of British airlines 3x23kg Check in bags + 1x23kg Cabin baggage + 1x23kg Laptop bag) . The most preferred brands by students are:

- American Tourister
- VIP
- Samsonite

American Tourister has some very good discounts at their factory outlets, so it will probably end up the cheapest of the lot. Samsonite is quite expensive. VIP is good too, but again might end up a little more expensive than American Tourister. **If you know someone working in the Army, Navy or Defense, ask them to get you luggage from the Canteen – Very cheap 50-60% of the MRP.** There may be other local places where you get unbranded pieces for dirt-cheap prices. Don't go with those. If your luggage breaks during handling at the airports, imagine the plight of all those stuff you would have kept inside!! You will find that there are two types - hard and soft cases. You might be tempted to go for 2 soft and 1 hard suitcases but there is no inherent advantage of a hard case over a soft one. In fact, the hard gets scratched easily during handling. Stick to 3 soft cases.

Now for the cabin luggage, get a nice huge backpack. You need to stuff as much as possible into the cabin bag, since the airlines hardly ever weigh the cabin luggage. If you are bringing your laptop from India, then you need to have a provision for laptop inside the bag. Plan accordingly and get a nicely padded and ample backpack. Don't look at brands, just go with utility.

P.S. Don't forget the **Transportation Security Administration (TSA) locks**. Get it from Samsonite.

**Note: When you travel with multiple airlines, then while transit there will be baggage security check while transferring baggage from one airline to other. TSA Inspectors have a Master Key to open the TSA locks in case of suspicion. So if you don't want your normal locks to be broken, Either get a suitcase with TSA lock or don't lock the luggage.**

More Information here - <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening>

## **II.C) Clothes and Apparels**

It is recommended not to get too many t-shirts from your home country and not too few either. You won't be washing your clothes for the first two weeks at least until you get a house, so you need your clothes to last for at least two weeks.

A general guideline for buying clothes:

- T-shirts (round neck) - 8
- T-shirts (collared) - 3 to 4
- Jeans (stick to blue/black) - 6 to 7
- Formal shirts - 3
- Formal trousers - 2
- Undergarments - at least 15 pairs (very important)
- Formal suit - 1 complete set
- Ties - 2-3
- Shorts/three-fourths - 5 to 6
- Track pants - 2 to 3
- Swimming trunks - 1 (if you plan to swim after coming here)
- One traditional dress for festivals

With regard to other stuff, you may need to buy these:

- Towels (any kind) - 3
- Hand towels - 3 to 4
- Leather belts - 1 to 2
- Belt for jeans - 1
- Formal leather shoes - 1 pair
- Woodland all-weather shoes - 1 pair (very important)
- Sneakers (optional) - 1 pair
- Sports shoes (optional) - They are very cheap in the US. You will most probably have a Pair already. Wear it and come. Wait till the Black Friday sales where you will get awesome pairs of shoes for cheap.
- Sunglasses - 1 pair (any good brand is okay)
- Socks - 6 to 7 pairs
- Sweater - 1 to 2 good warm ones
- A light jacket - 1 (you can get a thicker one once you land in the US)
- A good umbrella - 1 (don't get the cheap ones, they can't stand the wind)
- Handkerchiefs - 12 nos.
- Hawaii slippers - 1 pair (for wearing inside the apartment)
- Flip-flops - 1 pair (for summer and spring)
- Bed Sheets - 2 Blanket - 1 (optional)
- Pillow covers - 3
- A good wallet (leather) - 1
- A wallet for passport - 1
- Shoe polish - 1 (don't get liquid, might spill during travel)
- Shoe polishing brush - 1
- Monkey cap - 1

## **II.D) Electronics**

Though most electronics are cheaper in the US, there are some stuff you may buy from your home country.

- External HDD (get the portable one) - You might need this for bringing all those movies, music and files from back home. Minimum of 500 GB. Any brand is fine.
- USB keyboard and mouse (optional) - gamers might need this. Even otherwise, it is a good thing to have. Get Logitech/Microsoft/Samsung/Zebtronics.
- IPod/MP3 player (optional) - You might need this if you have to wait for long times at airports. Else, get it in the US.
- A good pair of headphones with mic.
- A branded spike-buster
- Home Country Pin to US Pin Converters - 2 to 3. (very important)
- A small table clock with alarm functionality
- A scientific calculator (very important) Casio fx991MS or fx991ES - This is damn expensive in the USA
- Good branded and decent wrist watch. An extra battery for your wrist watch.
- Pen Drive – 2 (You don't get it back if it goes to friends :p )

## **II.E) Personal Hygiene Products**

Most of the brands available in your home country may be available in the US too. However, you might need to bring the following items for your first few days of use. (Also for coming months if you have more space in bag and to save money initially).

- Tooth paste - one large tube.  
Brands also available in the US - Colgate, Close-Up, Pepsodent, Aquafresh (Note: The Pepsodent here is not the same as the Pepsodent in India, it is owned by a different company, not by Unilever)
- Tooth brushes - 3 to 4
- Soap - 1 to 2 bars.  
Brands also available in the US - Dove, Palmolive and Pears.
- Shampoo - 1 bottle.  
Brands also available in the US - Head and Shoulders, Sunsilk, Dove, Pantene, Nizoral.
- Shaving razor - A couple of disposable ones.
- Shaving foam - 1 small can
- Cold cream - 1 bottle
- Vaseline - 1 bottle
- Good clean combs - 2 to 3
- Comb cleaner/old toothbrush for cleaning the combs.
- Soap cases - 2
- Hair oil - 2 bottles
- Deodorant - 1 can
- Nail cutter - 2
- Earbuds - 1 small pack
- Sunscreen - 1 bottle
- Lip balm - 2 tubes

## **II.F) Utensils**

These are the most important things you need to carry from your home country. If you have already decided your roommates in your home country, then you will have the luxury of sharing/dividing items equally. All vessels should be flat bottomed, since in the US, most apartments use electric stoves. These may be the utensils you may want to carry with you:

- Pressure cooker - 1 (This is not available in USA. So get one)
- Pressure pan - 1.  
As far as possible, get both the cooker and the pan from the same brand so that you can interchange the gaskets and the weights.
- Med size kadai for cooking vegetables - 1
- Serving spoons (of various sizes) - 3-4
- SS Plate - 1
- Kadai/Pans for boiling milk/water - 1
- Knives - 3 to 4
- Vegetable chopping board - 1
- SS glasses/tumblers - 3
- SS spoons - 3 to 4
- Extra weights/gaskets for the cookers - 3
- Chapatti roller - 1
- Butter knives - 2
- SS forks - 2
- Kadai for making gravy items - 1
- Tea strainer - 1
- Water bottle (preferably Tupperware) - 1

## **II.G) Food Items**

These may be the food items you may want to carry with you:

- Ready-to-eat paste - 5 to 6 bottles
- Rice - 3 to 4 kgs for initial use
- Noodles - 10 to 12 (minimum)
- Some home -made sweets for yourself as well as for seniors.
- Pickles - 3 to 4 bottles
- Some snacks - how much ever you want, for the initial days
- All powders - chilli, garam masala, rasam, sambar, asafoetida, other powders you use - 0.5 to 1 kg each
- All dals that you use in cooking - 2 kg each
- Salt and Sugar - 0.5 kg each
- Papads - 2 to 3 packs
- Tamarind - 1 kg
- Ginger-garlic paste - 2 bottles



## **II.H) Stationery Items**

- Pens - 3 to 4
- Notebooks - 2 to 3
- Pencils - 3 to 4
- Erasers - 3
- Sharpeners - 3
- Key chains - 2
- Staple machine - 1
- Pins - 2
- Glue sticks - 2
- Markers - 2
- Highlighters - 1
- A4 sheets - 1 quire
- Small ruler - 1
- Phone book - 1.
- Cellophane tape - 1 roll

## **II.I) Books**

Textbooks are very expensive in the US, so you might as well talk to your seniors in the university and get the important textbooks from your home country. Only get those books you won't be able to live without, since they might take much of your luggage allowance. Also, get those fundamental books for revision of concepts.

**II.J) Items to carry from Home Country (India)**

<b>Health Care</b>	
<b>Items to Carry to US</b>	<b>Reason to buy in India</b>
Get the over the counter general cough, fever medication like crocin, Benadryl, meatin, etc that you normally use. Be careful and look for expiration date, buy the recent ones with most expiration date. You may get as much as you want. Recommended 4 strips each	Our physical body is used to generally used to the general medication we have in US. It is a good idea to have our regular medication until we adjust to this weather.
Eye glasses – at least 2 pairs Contact lens – based on how often you have to change them. If disposable advised to check online at Wal-Mart vision center <a href="http://www.1800contacts.com/">http://www.1800contacts.com/</a> .	Eye glasses are super expensive in USA; average good pair price is around \$150 – 200. Similar case with contact lens, but some disposable lens are cheaper in US.
Medicines along with prescription for preexisting medical conditions like Asthma, migraine, diabetes, etc. You may be asked for prescription at the immigration check point if it is not over the counter. There is no limit for the amount of medicine you can carry. Check <a href="#">TSA website for medical conditions carry on list</a> .	It is not a good idea to change your existing medication as it is preexisting condition. You may get new prescription after review with doctor.

Personal Care and Toiletries	
Items to Carry to US	Reason to buy in India
If you have any skin condition, then only get any soap. Otherwise NO.	You may not get the medical condition soaps you are prescribed in US
May be any Indian specific fairness creams, cologne that you are used to and not available globally. Gillette, Old spice, Axe, Tag are global brands. No need to carry these brands.	You may not get fairness creams in small towns. If in big cities, you may get these items in Indian grocery store.
Kitchen Items	
Items to Carry to US	Reason to buy in India
Pressure cooker with extra gasket and whistle.	You do not get our style pressure cookers here. The ones available in store are not good.
ONLY Homemade Sambar powder, Rasam powder and Garam masalas. Not too much. Just few packs.	ONLY HOME MADE Please. You get ready made powders by MTR, Badshah, etc brands in US, do not need to carry. You may carry some if you are going to a very remote location in US where there are less Indians.

Clothing & other personal usage items	
Items to Carry to US	Reason to buy in India
Undergarments. Get at least 15 pairs. Both tops and bottoms! You may buy these in US eventually, but it would be hard for the first time until someone takes you to the store.	You do laundry once in 15 days and there is no concept of washing it hanging it every day.
Wallet, Belts	These are a bit expensive here. But, if you want good brands, just get what you have.
Just one pair of Sneakers, slippers and one pair of Formal shoes	You get better models in US and cheaper too. Only for the first few months.
Just couple of pairs of Jeans and T-shirts, one formal dress( you won't even use this, just backup)Couple of pajamas and shorts	ONLY couple pairs and these are only for first few weeks. Clothes are cheaper in US if you buy at the right time in SALE. You have to wear the US brands in US to look cool and trendy!
Couple towels	Just for first two weeks. You get better ones here!
One leather or other good material Jacket, sweater and a Suit (maybe)	This is for first week or day. You should buy snow jackets and other woolen items in US. Indian jackets do not keep you warm for cold weather in US.

**II.K) List of items NOT to carry from India**

<b>Health Care</b>	
<b>Items NOT to Carry to US</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Any medication that does not have a prescription on your name should not be bought here unless they are sold over the counter.	It is not advisable at port of entry to carry any medication or drugs that do not have your prescription and you may be in trouble.

<b>Personal Care and Toiletries</b>	
<b>Items NOT to Carry to US</b>	<b>Reason to buy in USA</b>
Soaps, Shampoo, Moisturizers, Conditioners, Deodorants, after shave lotion, ear buds, nail cutter, mirrors, comb, perfume or cologne, shaving creams, Razors, etc	All these are very cheap in US and you are better off buying here. Make sure, you get all your current personal care kit to use for the first week. DO NOT BUY anything new, just get what you have.

Clothing & other personal usage items	
Items NOT to Carry to US	Reason to buy in USA
NO woolen clothing like thermals, winter jackets, fleece, etc	It is good to buy in US, you get good quality. The stuff you buy in India will not stand the cold weather.
NOT more than 2 pairs as stated above about jeans, etc	Jeans, corduroy, t-shirts, shorts are very common and regular wear. You will get good deals here in US. Also, I believe you should wear local brand to be trendy!

Kitchen Items	
Items NOT to Carry to US	Reason to buy in USA
Electric rice cookers or any electric related appliances	Different power specifications. Will not work
Masala powders, rice, oil, or any kind of dals. Unless you are going to a very remote place and there are no Indian or international grocery shops around.	Everything is available in US! Do not buy these items. They might look high price, please do not start multiplying everything with 65 !

### III) Packing

Don't postpone packing till the last moment, as you won't find time later, and in the tension you may miss out on some important things. Start packing early. Make sure you make a list of all stuff you are carrying. Label all the suitcases both inside and outside with both your home address and your university address. Include the phone numbers also. Make sure you are within the luggage allowance (you can do this by carrying the suitcase to the nearest scrap metal shop/rice mudi), though it can exceed up to 1-2 Kgs.

**Note: The reason why you should write your address on the top is that, if you miss your baggage in transit, the airline will send the found baggage to the address mentioned. However you have to report a missing baggage in the airline counter in the destination airport.**

#### III.A) Documents List

Here is a list of documents to be carried. It is advisable to keep one of each in one piece of luggage.

Passport Xerox (5 copies)  
VISA Xerox (5 copies)  
IDP Xerox (5 copies)  
I-20(5 copies)  
Air Ticket (2 copies)  
Original Mark sheets + Degree Certificate  
Attested Mark sheets + Degree Certificate (3 copies)  
Original Transcripts + Degree Certificate (3 copies)  
Immunization form (specific to university)  
University specific letters like admit, aid, forms. SEVIS Fee Receipt (3 copies)  
GRE score copies (5 copies)  
TOEFL/IELTS Original + Xerox copies (5 copies)  
Final Year Project Report  
Under-graduate Syllabus Copies  
Recommendation Letters.

Keep your original documents with you in the hand luggage and not in the check-in. Keep everything neatly organized so that you won't have to search for anything in case you need something during travel. Keep your passport always within the reach of your hand. **Get a wallet for your passport, Boarding passes, Currency, and a pen. ( Something compact like this to keep the inner pocket of your Jacket - [http://www.flipkart.com/kangoo-american-leather-passport-holder/p/itmeccp8vgd2knnn?otracker=product\\_breadCrumbs\\_Kangoo%20American%20Leather%20Passport%20Holder%20\(Brown\)](http://www.flipkart.com/kangoo-american-leather-passport-holder/p/itmeccp8vgd2knnn?otracker=product_breadCrumbs_Kangoo%20American%20Leather%20Passport%20Holder%20(Brown)) )**

#### III.B) International Driving Permit (IDP)

It is entirely up to you to get the IDP or not. Some states in USA accept your home country driving license for up to a year and so in such cases IDP won't be required as eventually you are required to apply for the American Driving License in either cases. However IDP doesn't cost much, and may be useful for renting cars. So no harm in getting it done. It may also serve as an ID.

### **III.C) Carrying Currency**

You can carry up to US \$10,000 in form of currency notes, Travelers check, DD etc. without declaring it at the customs.

This is a very important issue, and many people have doubts regarding this. Carry about \$ 500-1000\$ in cash and rest in travelers' checks around \$ 1000, which you could cash at a local bank. Exactly how much money you would need totally depends on where you are going. If you are going to a small town then anything from \$ 400 to 500 should be enough. But if you will live in a city close to the downtown then the cost would be \$ 1,000 to \$ 1,200. Research on the college website for costs should give you a good indication. You may also choose to carry cash in the form of travel cards, like ICICI or SBI Vishwa Yatra card.

Get denomination of quarter, half, 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100\$ notes from a local money changer/bank in your Home Country. This is useful for anything from Coke to washing clothes to getting carts at airports.. For tuition fee, you can either carry a DD, or ask your parents (Bank in case of Loan) to wire the money directly to the university. These are the two safest options. Make sure you get the DD in the university's name and not your name. Don't carry checks with you. Keep all your currency in your wallet inside your Jacket or hand luggage and not in the check-in luggage.



## **IV) The Apartment Hunt**

Here is a short guide on apartment hunting.

### **IV.A) Deciding Roommates**

Deciding who you want to live with for at least an year can be a headache, since you won't have any idea of how the others are (unless you met them) Mostly the roommates are decided through social networking sites like Facebook. And regionalism reigns supreme. For example, in most universities, all tamils stay with other tamils, all maharashtrians live with the other maharashtrians, all telugu people stay with telugus and so on. It makes sense, since you would want to stay with someone closer to your home and speak your mother tongue. If you don't get people from your locale, don't have too many expectations from roommates, learn to adjust with anyone. If you have previously lived with roommates, it helps a lot.

**Seniors are the best source of information regarding apartments, so dropping a mail to a couple of them seeking their opinion always helps.**

**Most Universities have an Indian Student Association. So they will help you out with things of this sorts.**

### **IV.B) Deciding the Apartment:**

The things you need to look for in an apartment are:

Rent: Find out how much the rent is, from the apartment owners (a simple mail should do, you can also enquire about this from the seniors) and find out what all are included in the rent. Sometimes all the utilities like water, electricity, gas, internet, cable, sewer, trash removal are included, but mostly it might include just some of them. Also ask if you need to pay any deposit first-up and about renters insurance. Make sure you don't forget these 2.

Number of Bed Rooms: Depends on the number of people you want to stay with. Some people might want to have their own room, some might be open to sharing rooms. So it is up to you. The apartment owners might have a ceiling on the number of persons staying in an apartment, like not more than 6 persons in a 3 BDR.

Number of Bath Rooms: Very important. If you intend to stay with more than 3 people, it is advisable to have 2 bathrooms.

Location: Places very close to the campus are usually very expensive, and those distant don't have much transportation facilities. Here is where seniors can help. Find out about the transportation facilities from various apartments. Ideally, it shouldn't be more than 10-15 minutes from the campus. Also get to know about the location of supermarkets nearby. Google maps do help a lot.

Furnishings: Some apartments may come fully furnished, some may just include the basic stuff (a refrigerator, a stove, dishwasher, central air-conditioning, heaters and a common washer/dryer).

Other Stuff: Most apartments have a swimming pool and a fitness center. They let you use it for free. Many apartments also have a recreation center where you can play table-tennis, pool, etc.

Ideally, you should be able to visit the apartment before you decide on where you want to stay. But many times, you may not have time for that, since apartments get booked pretty quickly. What you can do is, ask the seniors, their opinions on how good/bad a particular apartment is. Make sure you ask at least a couple of people, since some may be prejudiced against/for a particular apartment.

Once you have decided on your apartment, you can choose to book the apartment and sign the lease once you reach there, or ask someone you know to pay the deposit first-up before you land (Of course. Send them the money first :p ). Apartment owners are usually pretty lenient with students, so you can book the apartment before you reach there and then sign the lease.

## **V) International flight related**

Leaving your country and residing in a totally alien country requires lot of adaptation. This starts right from the airport, where you are about to board the flight for the very first time to US. Here are some important travel tips to make your first flight trip to the United States much easier.

### **Online Check In**

After you have booked your tickets, always do an online check in which opens up usually 24 hours before your flight. This online check in would save you a lot of time at the airport. You can choose the seats you like and also food and beverages you prefer. Print this ticket and keep it handy.

### **Arriving Early**

International Airports are always crowded like hell. It's always a good idea to come to the airport 3 hours before your flight departs. This would also give you enough of time to say goodbyes to your family and friends.

### **Entering International Airport**

For entering the International Airport, you require two things in hand; first is your passport and second is your air ticket. It's always good to organize yourself and hence it's a good option to keep your passport and air ticket in your jacket, purse etc.

### **Finding Your Airline Counter**

Once you enter the International Airport, you need to approach your airline counter. Keep a close eye on the counters. If you have done an online check-in, your counter would be separate than the usual counters. It's a good idea to ask the airline officials standing near the counters.

### **Getting your ticket from Counter**

Generally there will be a huge line in all the counters. You need to wait patiently for your turn. Once you reach the counter, you need to give them your air ticket, I-20 and passport. They would ask some general questions as to your purpose of visit and what will you study in USA.

Also here you need to check in the bags. Please note that if the weight of the bags are more than the limit specified by the airline, you need to pay extra and that too in dollars. Hence if you are sure your bags are very heavy, please keep your forex card in handy to pay extra.

Secondly, **you will be getting an Indian Immigration Form** that you will have to fill up. It is recommended that you also ask for US Customs form and also fill that and keep it in hand when you land at USA. If you don't get US Customs form its fine you can ask it later. Generally custom forms are distributed inside the aircraft, but it's ok to ask them if they have one.

After checking in the bags, please take the tags available at the counter. These tags must be put on the bags that you haven't checked in like your Backpack etc. Once this gets done and your bags are checked in you can take the tickets and proceed ahead.

### **Indian Immigration**

After filling the form, proceed towards the immigration counters. Generally there will be a huge line at immigration counters. Please be patient and wait for your turn. When your turn comes, please provide your passport, air ticket and I-20 to the officer. The officer will ask some general questions and then would stamp your passport and let you move ahead.

### **Security Checks and Scan**

After immigration you have to proceed towards security check. When you reach the security check please remove your jackets, empty all your pockets and take out your laptop from the bag. It is recommended

that you empty all your pockets and keep those things inside your laptop bag. Have your air ticket in hand and nothing else. You will be scanned, your air ticket will be stamped and please check your hand baggage.

Your hand baggage like Laptop bag will also be scanned and after scanning the official will stamp on the tag you have placed on the bag at the airline counter. **Kindly check this stamp. If your bag is not stamped you won't be allowed to board in the aircraft.**

### **Awaiting the announcement**

After you are done with security checks, all you need to do is wait for the announcement of your aircraft boarding. International Airports have lots of things to see around. You can spend some time on window shopping, talking with other students who are traveling, sleeping for some time etc.

### **Boarding inside the Aircraft**

Once you hear about the announcement for boarding, you have to proceed towards the desired gate, wait in line, show your air ticket and board the aircraft. Occasionally there would be an additional security check while boarding the aircraft.

### **Airline Travel**

Generally students do not travel directly to USA, they travel to one of the European or Middle-East destinations and then from there they travel to USA. Depending on the middle destination, your airline travel time would be 5 - 9 hrs. to the middle destination.

### **Eating In Aircraft**

It is strongly recommended that if it's your first international travel then don't eat too much. Eat little lesser than usual. Don't drink a lot, it is best to avoid any kind of hard drinks. Enjoy your travel, you can see lots of movies, TV Shows etc while in aircraft.

### **Arriving at your Middle Destination**

Once your plane gets landed in cities like Dubai, London etc. Pick up all your bags and wait in line to exit the aircraft. **Do not fill any kind of immigration forms for that country since you are just switching your aircraft and not going out of the airport. So no need to fill any kind of forms.**

Once you get out of the aircraft, look at the signs. You first need to proceed towards the immigration counter. In the immigration counter, you would be asked for your passport and air ticket and nothing else. Sometime you might even have to switch terminals inside the airport to board your second airline.

### **Security Check**

Once you get cleared from the immigrations, proceed towards security check. Security check is lot strict in European countries. Empty your pockets, remove your laptop, remove your shoes and socks, and remove your jackets and belts. Your hand baggage will be scanned. They won't allow you to carry water, so if you have it then drink it and throw the bottle.

### **Awaiting for another Aircraft**

Once you have cleared security check, you have to wait again till your aircraft boarding begins. You can go around, eat something if you are hungry. Forex cards are accepted in all airports. There would be a charge for using it since you will be spending in different currencies. If you don't have US Customs form, ask from one of the airline officials and fill it.

### **Boarding the second Aircraft**

This is similar to the one mentioned above. Board the aircraft and relax.

**US Immigration**

Once your flight lands in USA, take all your hand baggage from the aircraft and exit it. Proceed towards the immigration counter. There will be lots of separate counters at immigration, you need to go towards Travelers/Non Immigrants. Once you reach the immigration please provide your US Customs form, I-20 and passport. No need to provide anything else unless asked for. Answer the questions asked by the officer. Don't get panicked or nervous. Answer normally.

**Collecting your Luggage**

It takes a lot of time for your baggage to arrive. Wait patiently and pick up the right bag that belongs to you. It's a good thing to check the unique number pasted on your bag and verify that number with the number pasted on your air ticket.

**US Customs**

After collecting your bag, please proceed towards US Customs. Here you may be asked to open your baggage and they have the authority to search your bag entirely. If you are asked to open your baggage, please open it without asking any questions. They would generally ask questions like what's in the bag? Have you got any spices, food items etc.? Do you have fruits, vegetables or any other perishable fruits?

Once you have cleared the customs, you can exit the airport and that's all. Your dreams will come true. Work hard and your life gets made over there.

**ALL HAIL AMERICA!! AHO AHO AHO!!**