Budget Travel in North America

International Student Orientation 2015

Presenters:
Bill Nolting (bnolting@umich.edu); International Center, Assistant Director, Education Abroad
Audrey Buswell (abuswell@umich.edu); International Center, Education Abroad Advisor
Kun Zhao (zhaokun@umich.edu), International Center Peer Advisor

Introduction/Before you leave

- **Visa Information**: Remember, even though Windsor is only an hour away, it’s still in another country!
  - **Canada**: [http://www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/life/travelcanada.html](http://www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/life/travelcanada.html)
  - **Mexico**: [http://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/detroit/](http://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/detroit/) (click on Visas section on the left hand side)
- **Travel Signatures**: Make sure you have a valid Travel Signature before leaving the U.S.!
- **Guidebooks**: Lonely Planet, Frommer’s, Let’s Go (Available for purchase at any local bookstore, or come into our office and look at a copy!)

How do you decide where to go?

- Determine what type of vacation appeals to you (relaxed beach vacation, outdoor adventure, city/museum, etc)
- Read travel reviews for each destination: [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)
- Consider the weather/season (For example, Florida is extremely hot and humid during the summer!)
- Consider avoiding peak travel times/seasons to save money on transportation and lodging.
- Make your vacation reservation as early as possible!
- Contact the tourism bureau/convention center and/or chamber of commerce in your vacation destination for informational brochures -- sometimes they’ll even send a booklet full of coupons for discounts at local businesses! (website that includes links to state tourism sites: [http://www.sirlinksalot.net/travel.html](http://www.sirlinksalot.net/travel.html))
- Study, internship, volunteering, research abroad? --> International Center Education Abroad Office

Health and Safety

- **Health Insurance** (U-M Travel Abroad Health Insurance: [http://www.uhs.umich.edu/taij/](http://www.uhs.umich.edu/taij/))
- **U-M Travel Registry** ([http://global.umich.edu/going-abroad/planning/registry/](http://global.umich.edu/going-abroad/planning/registry/))
- Ask hotel/hostel staff about areas to avoid; guidebooks are also good for this!
- Do not hitchhike or pick up hitchhikers!
- Do not stay overnight in bus or train stations or parks.
- Avoid walking around late at night, especially alone (write down the number for a local cab company before you go out or ask someone to call a cab for you!)
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash!
- In general, project confidence!
- Considerations for women traveling alone
- If you’ll be going to Mexico (or anywhere else abroad), learn about the University’s Travel Warnings/Restrictions, as well as other health and safety resources: [http://global.umich.edu/going-abroad/planning/safety/](http://global.umich.edu/going-abroad/planning/safety/)

Getting Around North America: Transportation

*Because the distance between Point A and Point B tends to be so great when traveling in the US, it’s crucial to carefully consider not only how you will get to a certain area, but also how you will get around once you’ve arrived; depending on where you’re going, public transportation is not always available and cities are not always walkable (Guidebooks are a good way to find out more about transportation to and within a specific destination).*

- **Planes**
  - STA Travel for flexible student airfare (see Travel Tips from STA Travel section below)
  - Low cost airlines flying out of Detroit: Southwest, Spirit, AirTran, and USA3000
  - Check fares at other airports in the region; sometimes they’re cheaper!
  - Airfare is expensive. In general, book early to get the best deals.
• Trains
  o Amtrak: [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com); check out “Deals” for discounted rates; save 10% with an International Student ID card (ISIC) – card available through STA Travel for $25

• Buses – *fares deeply discounted when you book far in advance!*
  o Greyhound (throughout North America; also services smaller cities and towns that aren’t accessible with the train): [http://www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)

• Automobiles
  o Renting a Car
    ▪ Considerations: age restrictions, credit cards are often required, extra insurance
    ▪ Promotional/Coupon Codes: [http://www.autoslash.com/coupons](http://www.autoslash.com/coupons)
  o Hourly Car Rental: Zipcar: [www.zipcar.com/umich](http://www.zipcar.com/umich)
  o Car-sharing Services: Zimride: [http://www.zimride.com/umich](http://www.zimride.com/umich)
  o Thinking about buying a car? Attend “Buying a Used Car” (8/21 @ 10:30 AM; 8/25 @ 4 PM)

Accommodations
• Hotels/Motels: [www.hotels.com](http://www.hotels.com); [www.hotwire.com](http://www.hotwire.com) (just two of many examples!)
  o Hotel chains (Days Inn, Best Western, Hilton, Marriott) tend to be mid-priced and have consistent quality throughout the US; Motel 8’s are a cheaper alternative & tend to be located right off major highways
  o Hotel Ratings: [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)
• Hostels – mainly in the major cities: [www.hostels.com](http://www.hostels.com); [www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com) or contact STA Travel!
• Alternative Accommodations: [https://www.airbnb.com/](https://www.airbnb.com/); [www.couchsurfing.com](http://www.couchsurfing.com)
• Camping – Rent from UM Rec Sports [http://www.recsports.umich.edu/article/rental-center](http://www.recsports.umich.edu/article/rental-center)

STA Travel
• STA Travel is a student-oriented travel agency, [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)
• International Student ID Card (ISIC) - $25 - [http://www.isic.org/](http://www.isic.org/)

Organized trips through the International Center & other campus departments:
• Trips around Michigan and the surrounding areas organized by the International Center; stay tuned to your email for announcements and check out the International Center Events website: [http://www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/events/social-events.html](http://www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/events/social-events.html)
• Outdoor adventure trips (hiking, sailing, white water rafting, etc) organized by the U-M Dept of Rec Sports Outdoor Adventure Program [http://www.recsports.umich.edu/outdooradv/trips/](http://www.recsports.umich.edu/outdooradv/trips/)

Other helpful websites
• International Center Travel in North America: [http://www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/life/travel.html](http://www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/life/travel.html)
• Lonely Planet USA: [http://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa)
• Tips for travel in the US, including cultural tips on interacting with Americans: [http://www.drvoyageur.com/](http://www.drvoyageur.com/)
• Wikitravel: free online travel guides [http://wikitravel.org](http://wikitravel.org)
• Deals on tourist attractions in many large cities: [http://www.citypass.com/](http://www.citypass.com/)