



## Summer Work/Travel Program - Student Handbook 2018

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### Welcome to the GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel Program!

Dear Student,

We're very excited to welcome you to the United States! Inside this handbook, you'll find valuable information to help you navigate your cultural exchange in the United States. Our goal is to provide you with a chance to visit the United States, meet people, and learn about the culture while working at an American company. In turn, your participation will enrich the lives of the people you meet by giving them the chance to learn about you, your culture and your country.

Your time in the United States will be filled with opportunities to make new friends, learn about others, and learn a lot about yourself. If you prepare yourself well including reading through this handbook... you'll be ready for an exciting experience filled with discovery, rewards, and lots of fun.

Please read through this handbook. If you still have questions after reading the information contained here, please contact your in-country agency. When you arrive in the United States we will be available to help you. GeoVisions is the organization that is your official "sponsor" for visa purposes, and issues you the DS-2019 Form, which allows you to apply for the J-1 Exchange Visitor visa.

During the program period we hope to get around and visit most of the locations where GeoVisions students are employed. Hopefully one of us will get to meet you. We look forward to welcoming you to the U.S.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Morgan", is written over a faint circular stamp.

**Kevin Morgan**  
GeoVisions Founder

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## Part I: Introduction to GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel Program

### The Basics

This handbook contains a lot of critical information that will allow you to have a successful Summer Work/Travel program, and we encourage you to read through it carefully. In the meantime, the below check list contains a few critical steps that you will need to take throughout the duration of your program:

- ❖ **You can reach GeoVisions** by one of the following methods:
  - By phone – toll free: 888.830.9455 & local: 603.363.4187
  - By email - [visions@geovisions.org](mailto:visions@geovisions.org)
  - On the GeoVisions Website - [www.geovisions.org](http://www.geovisions.org) & [www.mygeovisions.org](http://www.mygeovisions.org)
  - Fax – 603.363.8446
- ❖ **Check in** with GeoVisions within 3 days of your arrival in the United States by visiting our website at <http://www.geovisions.org/>, or calling our office at 603-363-4187
- ❖ Report to your **designated employer** listed on your DS-2019 Form
- ❖ Apply for your **Social Security Number** 10 DAYS after you have checked in with GeoVisions
- ❖ Complete **your monthly check in** with GeoVisions between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month of your program by visiting: [www.mygeovisions.org](http://www.mygeovisions.org)
- ❖ Notify GeoVisions immediately if you **leave your job, or change your work location, or find a new job**
- ❖ Always remember that new and second job offers must be VERIFIED and CONFIRMED by the GeoVisions team PRIOR to your start of employment. If you begin working before we have approved the job, the State Department considers you to be working in unauthorized employment. Please do not start working until someone from GeoVisions tells you it is OK!
- ❖ Notify GeoVisions immediately if you experience **a problem with your job, housing, health, safety, or well-being**
- ❖ Notify GeoVisions, and complete and submit a Job Offer form if you wish to work at a **second job**
- ❖ Notify GeoVisions within 10 days if you **change your residential address**
- ❖ Engage in **Cultural Activities** while in the United States
- ❖ Work at your designated employer until the **end date** agreed upon on your Job Offer Form, and no later than the date on your DS-2019 Form

- ❖ You have **30 days to travel around the US** after the end date on your DS-2019. You must return home in time for your university start date

## Contacting GeoVisions

During your stay in the U.S. you will need to keep in constant contact with GeoVisions. Within 3 days of your arrival, you need to check in with us, and provide us with your residential address. You then need to check in with us monthly, to let us know how you are doing and if you need help with anything. Many students contact us throughout their stay with questions, if they are having problems, for advice, or any number of other reasons. We are here to help, so please do reach out to our team if you have any questions or concerns at all! Here is how you can contact GeoVisions:

### Phone:

**Toll Free Phone Number:** 888.830.9455

(24 Hours/day)

**Office Phone:** 603.363.4187

(Monday – Friday 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM EST)

### Email:

[visions@geovisions.org](mailto:visions@geovisions.org)

### Website:

[www.geovisions.org](http://www.geovisions.org)

[www.mygeovisions.org](http://www.mygeovisions.org)

### Fax:

1-603-363-8446

### Mail:

GeoVisions

PO Box 167

Chesterfield, NH 03443

### Voicemail / GeoVisions Answering Machine:

When you call GeoVisions you may hear a voice tell you the office hours and then direct you to leave a message. This will occur if we are on the phone assisting other students. Once you hear the tone, please begin to leave your message. We check our voicemail during the day so please leave a message.

## Introduction – who we are:

The team here at GeoVisions is excited to welcome you onto the Summer /Work and Travel Program. GeoVisions was founded by Kevin Morgan and James Miller, two highly experienced professionals with over 60 years of combined management of educational travel programs around the world. GeoVisions is designated by the U.S. Department of State to administer the Summer Work/Travel Program. We are committed to providing international learning experiences to students, while giving them attention and personal service to get the most from their global adventures.

The Summer Work/Travel program is made possible by the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, also known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. This act allows the US Government to do three key things:

1. Increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people of other countries through educational and cultural exchange
2. To strengthen the ties that unite the United States with other nations
3. To promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement

By participating in this program, you are playing a very important role in public diplomacy between the United States and your home country. This is your chance to learn about the United States and its many cultural aspects, as well as to share your own culture with the people you will meet in the United States. During your stay, we encourage you to take advantage of any cultural opportunities that come your way - this can be as exciting as attending a concert for your favorite musicians, to something as simple as having dinner with your American coworkers. No matter what you do while you are in the US, we hope you will use your experiences as meaningful cultural exchanges.

GeoVisions works with students, educational institutions, and employers to create opportunities for participants to explore life in the United States with maximum freedom, at minimal cost during their school vacation. As your program administrator, GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel will help you to prepare for your experience and obtain all the necessary visa documents. In addition, GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel provides orientation, regular contact, and assistance in case of an emergency for the duration of your participation.

We are dedicated to helping you gain intercultural skills and understanding that will help you in your future endeavors. This handbook has been designed to help you through your stay in the United States. We hope that it provides you with all the tools that you might need throughout your stay. This manual covers every part of your trip and answers questions about paperwork, culture, regulations, travel, health, and many other things.

## What GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel Offers You

- The J1 Work and Travel Exchange Visitor Visa allows you to work in the U.S. for no more than 4 months (students are only allowed to work between the start date and end date listed on your DS-2019 Form.)
- Assistance (through our local partners abroad) with application forms and documents
- Access to jobs
- Medical and accident insurance
- 24 hour emergency assistance and general support from our Summer Work/Travel Operations Center
- Full assistance with legal documents needed to obtain your J-1 Work/Travel visa
- Pre-departure and arrival Orientations

## Program Benefits

- **Cultural Immersion:** The best way to learn about another culture is to live and work with the people on a day-to-day basis. What you learn will help you in your future business and personal life. You will learn things you could never learn in a book or a classroom.
- **Improve your English:** There's no better way to improve your English than by speaking it every day. Our

work experiences are designed to help you maximize your use of English. You will most likely work in a position where you'll speak English just about all the time. It's amazing how you will see your language skills improve in a short time.

- **Share your Culture:** This is a great chance to introduce your own culture and customs to people you meet in the United States. Share your knowledge and experiences with them.
- **Enhance your CV:** Your experience in the U.S. will look good on your CV. It will tell future employers that you are independent, adventurous, disciplined, and willing to take risks. You may even gain specific skills that will help you in your career, or discover a new field of work that interests you.
- **Earn Money:** You will earn the same wages in your job that a U.S. student would earn and at least the minimum wage for the area in which you work. This should help you cover your living expenses while you live here in the United States, and you may even have some additional money left over to pay for travel at the end of your work period.

## Part II: Summer Work /Travel Program Rules and Policies

### GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel Program Rules

GeoVisions has established the following rules for program participants. Each student must agree to follow these rules while participating on this program. As a participant on the program you must agree to:

1. Attend any required orientations, and review the Online Orientation on the GeoVisions website.
2. Inform GeoVisions, through your agent, of your exact travel times, expected arrival time, and final method of travel to your employer.
3. Arrive prior to the date your employer expects you to begin your employment. You may enter the United States up to 30 days prior to the starting date on your DS-2019.
4. Check-in with GeoVisions within three days of arrival in the U.S. This can be done by one of the following methods:
  - a. On the GeoVisions Website - [www.geovisions.org](http://www.geovisions.org) & [www.mygeovisions.org](http://www.mygeovisions.org)
  - b. By email - [visions@geovisions.org](mailto:visions@geovisions.org)
  - c. By phone – toll free: 888.830.9455 & local: 603.363.4187
  - d. Fax – 603.363.8446
5. Report to the employer listed in your DS-2019 Form. This is the only employer for whom you are authorized to work without prior permission from GeoVisions.
6. Keep in touch with GeoVisions. We are your program sponsor, and we must hear from you monthly! Complete your monthly check in with GeoVisions between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month of your program by visiting: [www.mygeovisions.org](http://www.mygeovisions.org)
7. Contact GeoVisions if there are any problems at your worksite.
8. Obtain permission from GeoVisions BEFORE starting any new job, even a second part-time job.
9. Alert GeoVisions of any changes to your residential address within 72 hours of moving accommodation.
10. Alert GeoVisions of any changes to your email address. Email is our primary form of communication, so we must have your accurate email address on file and you should check your email regularly while you are in the U.S.
11. Obey all U.S. laws
12. Work the entire period as stated on the employment confirmation form.
13. Carry out the duties assigned to you to the best of your ability and in accordance with your employer's company standards. Comply with all of your company's rules including dress code.
14. Understand that employment is temporary and can only be extended to a maximum of a four-



- month work period, and as long as you do not miss any classes at your home university.
15. Do not work beyond the time period on your DS-2019. In no case can you work more than 4 months after the starting date on your DS-2019, or during the travel portion of your program.
  16. Understand that you risk program termination if you (1) fail to timely report your arrival and/or changes of residence; (2) start work at un-vetted jobs; and/or (3) fail to respond to GeoVisions monthly monitoring outreach.
  17. Leave the U.S. within 30 days of the end date on your DS-2019 Form.
  18. Complete and return all GeoVisions evaluation forms.

## IMPORTANT VISA INFORMATION

You are in the United States as an exchange visitor, and as a guest of the U.S. government. It is important that you follow all program rules and regulations. You must also obey all U.S., state and local laws. If you get arrested, break a U.S. law, leave your employment without proper notice, change jobs without GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel authorization, fail to check-in upon arrival, fail to report a change in address, or fail to check in monthly at [www.mygeovisions.org](http://www.mygeovisions.org), you could be dismissed from the program.

## What if I violate GeoVisions Program Rules?

We evaluate every situation on a case-by-case basis. When evaluating your situation, it is important that we communicate directly on the telephone. When we speak to you, we can discuss and address your concerns and ensure that we understand all details. The two most serious consequences of violating GeoVisions Program Rules are that you may be terminated from the program, or you may be placed onto Probation status depending on the circumstances.

If you are **terminated**, you need to make immediate arrangements to return home. Please note, there will likely be a change-of-ticket fee charged by your airline, which you will be responsible for.

If you are placed on **probationary status** with GeoVisions, you will be required to contact GeoVisions every week to let us know how you are doing and to confirm your program status. During this period, it is especially important that you follow all GeoVisions Program Rules or GeoVisions Terms and Conditions. GeoVisions Program Rules can be found in this handbook and GeoVisions Terms and Conditions can be found on your GeoVisions Application Form or at [www.mygeovisions.org](http://www.mygeovisions.org)

## Your Privacy


GeoVisions respects the privacy of our students and we do not share your application information with parties other than your employer and your in-country agent. This means that if you contact our offices with a question or concern, we will not discuss the matter with any third party that is not either your employer or your in-country agent. This means we will not discuss anything about you or your program with your parents, co-workers, friends, people you meet who volunteer to help you, etc. Should you wish to have GeoVisions discuss your situation with someone other than yourself, you will need to complete a document authorizing us to do so. A copy of this document is available from GeoVisions. Note that we may share information about you and your program with the US Department of State and other immigration, government, and law enforcement agencies.

## Part III: Preparation and Travel Plans


Congratulations - you've done a lot of hard work and preparation to get ready to come to the United States! You've worked with your agent abroad learn about the program, found a job and completed your application. Below, you'll find some information on applying for your visa, and what you should expect to experience as you arrive to the United States.

### DS-2019 Form

Upon acceptance to the program, GeoVisions will issue you a DS-2019 Form (see sample below). GeoVisions is designated to issue the DS-2019 form and is the administrator of your program. The DS-2019 form is a "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor J-1 Status" from the U.S. government. It officially identifies your program sponsor, your employer, describes the purpose of the program, and lists the exact period during which you are allowed to work.


 U.S. Department of State  
**CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR (J-1) STATUS**

OMB APPROVAL NO 1405-0119  
 07/01/2014  
 ESTIMATED BURDEN TIME: 45 min  
 \*See Page 2

<b>1. Family Name:</b> _____ <b>First Name:</b> _____ <b>Middle Name:</b> _____ <b>Gender:</b> _____		<b>J-1</b> 
<b>Date of Birth (mm-dd-yyyy):</b> _____ <b>City of Birth:</b> _____ <b>Country of Birth:</b> _____ <b>Citizenship Country Code:</b> _____ <b>Citizenship Country:</b> _____		
<b>Legal Permanent Residence Country Code:</b> _____ <b>Legal Permanent Residence Country:</b> _____ <b>Position Code:</b> _____ <b>Position:</b> _____		
<b>Primary Site of Activity:</b> _____		
<b>2. Program Sponsor:</b> <b>GeoVisions</b> <b>Program Number:</b> <b>P-4-06110</b> <b>Participating Program Office/Department:</b> <b>SUMMER TRAVEL/WORK</b>		
<b>Purpose of this form:</b> <b>Begin new program, accompanied by number (0) of immediate family members.</b>		
<b>3. Form Covers Period:</b> <b>From (mm-dd-yyyy):</b> _____ <b>To (mm-dd-yyyy):</b> _____		<b>4. Exchange Visitor Category:</b> <b>SUMMER TRAVEL/WORK</b> <b>Subject/Field Code:</b> _____ <b>Subject/Field Code Remarks:</b> _____
<b>5. During the period covered by this form, the total estimated financial support (in US \$) is to be provided to the exchange visitor by:</b> Seeking Employment : _____ Personal funds : _____ Total : _____		
<b>6. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE / DHS USE OR CERTIFICATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER OR ALTERNATE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER THAT A NOTIFICATION COPY OF THIS FORM HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (INCLUDE DATE).</b>		<b>7.</b> Name of Official Preparing Form _____ Title _____ Address of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer _____ Telephone Number _____ Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy) _____
<b>8. Statement of Responsible Officer for Releasing Sponsor (FOR TRANSFER OF PROGRAM)</b> Effective date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____ Transfer of this exchange visitor from program number _____ sponsored by _____ to the program specified in item 2 is necessary or highly desirable and is in conformity with the objectives of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer: _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy) of Signature: _____		
<b>PRELIMINARY ENDORSEMENT OF CONSULAR OR IMMIGRATION OFFICER REGARDING SECTION 212(e) OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT AND PL 94-404, AS AMENDED (see item 1 (a) of page 2).</b> The Exchange Visitor in the above program: 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Not subject to the two-year residence requirement. 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Subject to two-year residence requirement based on: A. <input type="checkbox"/> Government financing and/or B. <input type="checkbox"/> The Exchange Visitor Skills List and/or C. <input type="checkbox"/> PL 94-404 as amended. (ALL USAID PARTICIPANTS G-2-00263 AND ALL ALIEN PHYSICIANS SPONSORED BY P-4-0450 ARE SUBJECT TO THE TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT) Name _____ Title _____ Signature of Consular or Immigration Officer _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy) _____ THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE FINAL DETERMINATION REGARDING 212 (e).		<b>TRAVEL VALIDATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b> (Duration of Validation period is 1 year) *EXCEPT: Maximum validation period (up to 6 months for Short-term Exchange and 6 months for Career Development and Summer Work/Travel). (1) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at present time. _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy) _____ Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer (2) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at present time. _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy) _____ Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer
<b>EXCHANGE VISITOR CERTIFICATION:</b> I have read and agree with the statement in item 2 on page 2 of this document. Signature of Applicant _____ Place _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy) _____		

DS-2019 07-2011
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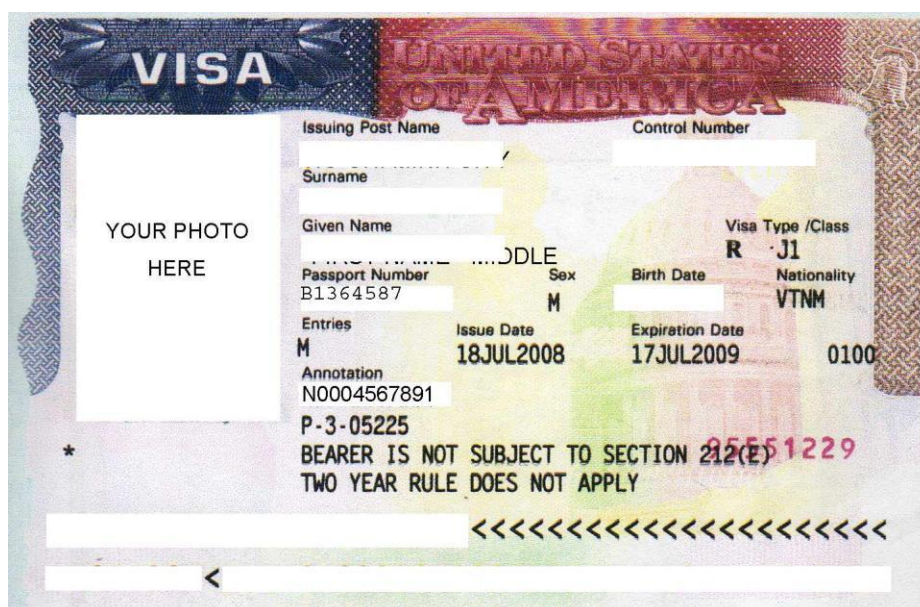
## SEVIS

SEVIS stands for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. It is a nationwide, Internet-based system that the U.S. government uses to maintain accurate and current information on J1 Summer Work/Travel Exchange Visitors. The information on your DS-2019 Form is listed in SEVIS and can be modified if there are changes to your program or personal information.

All Summer Work/Travel applicants must present proof of SEVIS Fee payment when they are interviewed at the US Embassy or consulate. GeoVisions will pay your SEVIS fee, but please speak to your agent abroad for detailed instructions on how to print off your SEVIS Fee Receipt, which you will need at your embassy appointment. <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/dhs/loadSearchPage.do>

## J-1 Visa

When you apply for the J-1 Summer Work/Travel Visa, you will present your DS-2019 form at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country along with your passport, visa application, visa application fee and SEVIS processing fee receipt. The J-1 Visa will be placed in your passport with the program number marked on it. The J-1 Visa, with a valid DS-2019 form, allows you entry to the U.S. as a GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel participant. You must provide these documents to be in legal J-1 status. You cannot request J-1 status after arriving, and you cannot apply for a J-1 Visa without going through a designated U.S. organization. Please see a sample J1 Summer Work/Travel Visa below:



## The Visa Application Process

This application process differs from country to country. Some visas are issued within a matter of hours and others can take weeks. Ask your agency representative to get an idea of the timeline. Talk to local agency to find out what is necessary to bring with you to the embassy. They will assist you with this process

## Research your area

An important step in your preparation is understanding the area you'll be living in while you're in the United States. The US is a large and diverse country – it can be snowing in Vermont while people are sunbathing in Florida! It's important to understand the climate, culture and activities available to you as you experience living and working in your local area. If you're placed in remote location, you may experience a slower way of life. Recreation activities may include hiking, skiing, or kayaking. City Dwellers, on the other hand, will have to adjust to a faster pace ... Before you arrive, research the local area, and be sure to pinpoint the sites you want to see and what you hope to experience. Both large cities, and more remote national parks have many great things to offer, and the more research you are able to do on your area before you arrive, the stronger your cultural exchange experience will be.

Another important step in researching your area and planning for your time in the US is to create a budget for yourself so you have a sense of what you can spend your money on while you are here. Pay attention to the cost of living in the area you will be in. Expenses such as gas, or even a gallon of milk vary from region to region in the US, so you will need to take this into consideration when planning your budget. Read your housing agreement carefully to see if you are responsible for paying for utilities. Paying for heating and electricity can be an unexpected cost, so be sure to plan for it. Finally, think about the activities you would like to participate in - you can often climb a mountain for little to no cost, but might need \$15-\$20 dollars for a museum. Attending a concert or sporting event can be even more expensive.

Helpful tools on researching your area, including the cost of living, can be found at:  
<http://www.cityrating.com>

Think about where you would like to travel when your program ends, and how much money that will cost you. Knowing these costs, and comparing them to what you will be earning is crucial in helping you have a successful Summer Work/Travel program. We recommend creating a budget work sheet for yourself before arriving. There are a number of online budget worksheets, but you may find the below website helpful: <http://www.budgetworksheets.org/worksheet/vacation-travel>

## Introduce Yourself

You're embarking on a wonderful cultural exchange in partnership with your employer here in the United States. Prior to your arrival, we suggest that you email, call, or Skype your employer so that you can introduce yourself and get acquainted with their expectations. This is a good chance to ask detailed questions about the local area, the work you will be doing, and also to convey some of your expectations for a successful program.

## Planning your arrival - send us your travel plans!

Sending detailed arrival information to your in-country agent, GeoVisions and your employer is one of the key steps in creating a successful arrival and positive Work and Travel Program. **Your employer needs to plan for your arrival and you need to know where to go and what to do once your flight lands.** Discuss with your in-country agent about the best way to get your travel plans to GeoVisions and your employer.

GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel asks that you work directly with your in-country representative to arrange flights to and from the U.S. Depending on your employer, there may be specific arrival instructions for you to follow. You may enter the United States up to 30 days before the start date on your DS-2019 form. Plan

to arrive **prior** to the date you are expected to be at your job.

If you're arriving after that date, it's important for you to tell your in-country agent and GeoVisions, so that we can update your employer to your delayed arrival. If you are significantly delayed, your position may no longer be available and alternate arrangements will need to be made. We may also need to amend your DS-2019 Form.

**Please be sure you understand all entry procedures and directions to your first-night's accommodations.** Your agent or GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel representative will gladly answer questions about housing. Make sure you have all of your questions answered before you get on the plane in your home country.

## Packing for your Cultural Exchange

Airlines limit the number, size and weight of the bags you can check-in and carry-on board so contact your airline to see:

- 1 ) How many pieces of luggage you are allowed to bring & the weight limitations
- 2 ) How much money the airline charges per bag you check.

Whatever the regulations, it is important that you **PACK LIGHTLY**. Remember that you will have to carry your luggage around the U.S. and you will often be in places that may not have elevators. Also, remember that you will probably take home more than you will bring to the U.S. So, keep your packing simple and limited to the essentials.

Also remember the United States electrical system uses 110 volts, 60 hertz (cycles). If you are bringing appliances from home, they might be designed for an electrical system that uses 220 volts. You will need to purchase a transformer and plug adapter that can accommodate the wattage of the particular appliance you will be using.

**Before you depart, be sure to make two copies of all your important documents.** Leave one set of copies at home and pack the other set in your luggage separate from the originals. Carry these documents with you during your trip.

What follows on the next page is a general list that you can adapt to your needs. Remember to check with your employer and bring clothing suitable for your job. Certain types of shoes and shirts, or pants, may be required for your job.

## Carry-On Bag Packing List

- ☐ Airline Ticket(s)- (keep photocopies of all tickets in a separate place)
- ☐ Passport with J-1 Visa and DS-2019
- ☐ Copy of your Job Confirmation Form
- ☐ Driver's Licenses
- ☐ Insurance Information
- ☐ GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel Student Identification Card
- ☐ Pen to fill in arrival card
- ☐ Social Security Letter or your Social Security Card if you are a returning participant



- ☐ Camera / Smartphone/ Laptop/ iPad, etc.
  - **Note:** we suggest leaving valuables at home.
- ☐ Prepaid Telephone Card
- ☐ Prescription drugs (and copies of any prescriptions)
  - **Note:** If you are taking prescription drugs and bringing them into the country, it is suggested to have a note from your doctor or chemist explaining the reason for the drugs. Also, if possible, plan to bring enough medication to last for the entire time you are in the U.S. and use the original bottle.
- ☐ Money and Traveler's Checks
- ☐ Jewelry (please do not bring expensive jewelry or family heirlooms with you)
- ☐ Copies of Passport & Credit Cards
- ☐ Arrival Instructions from Employer

## Back-Pack or Suitcase Packing List

### Clothing Checklist

- ☐ Outfit for professional office jobs (if required)
- ☐ Casual shoes (dress shoes if your job requires it)
- ☐ Tennis shoes or sneakers
- ☐ Dress shirts or blouses
- ☐ Casual/comfortable shirts
- ☐ Sandals (depending on location and time of year)
- ☐ Sweaters or sweatshirts
- ☐ Pairs of jeans/trousers
- ☐ Dress socks and athletic socks
- ☐ Warm Jacket (depending on location and time of year)
- ☐ Underwear
- ☐ Shorts
- ☐ Sun hat or baseball cap

### Medicine and Toiletries Checklist

- ☐ Non-prescription medication
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Toothbrush and toothpaste
- ☐ Contraceptives/condoms
- ☐ Soap
- ☐ Shampoo & conditioner
- ☐ Comb and/or hairbrush
- ☐ Sunscreen, moisturizers, cosmetics
- ☐ Razor blades or electric razor
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Contact lenses and cleaning solution

### Extras

- ☐ Purse or extra wallet
- ☐ Address book

- ☐ Umbrella
- ☐ Travel Journal (notebook)
- ☐ Luggage lock
- ☐ Alarm clock
- ☐ Electric plug adapters
- ☐ Books, guides, and maps
- ☐ English Language Dictionary
- ☐ Photos from Home
- ☐ Small, locally made gift from home to share with friends you make in the United States

## **Part IV: Arriving to the United States**

The below information will help you understand what you are set to experience as you arrive to the United States.

### **U.S. Customs Form**

This form will be handed out on board your flight. You will be asked to complete it prior to arrival. Your flight attendant may, or may not, be able to help you fill this out on the plane. This form is to ensure that you are not carrying anything into the U.S. that could potentially be a hazard. A customs agent will take this form after you have claimed your luggage. They will then inspect them and your items may be searched. Not all bags are searched.

A section of this form asks you the value of the items that will remain in the U.S. This will not be an issue for many. Most students bring everything they brought back home with them, and more. This form also states that if you are carrying more than \$10,000 you must declare it.

### **Passing through Immigrations**

The first thing you do when you arrive to the United States is pass through the Immigrations Port of Entry. Here, you will present your documentation to the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Immigration Authorities. As a guest in the United States, it is important that you cooperate fully with the Immigration officer and answer all questions clearly and respectfully. The officer may ask you for some general details about your visit.

Please note, it is important to have GeoVisions' contact information easily accessible to you during your admissions process. You will also show the officer the documents listed below.

- 1) DS-2019 Form
- 2) Passport with J-1 Visa
- 3) Declaration Form

These documents should already be filled in upon entry. The immigration officer you speak with will stamp your passport with your admission date, class of admission (J-1), and that date that you are admitted until (D/S). The letters "J-1" and "D/S" should be written on the stamp. "D/S" stands for "Duration of Status" and means that you are authorized to work during the dates specified on your DS-2019.

The officer will return your DS-2019 form to you. Keep your DS-2019 form safely with your passport at all

times. If your DS-2019 is lost or stolen, contact GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel immediately.

The officer will also give you information on accessing your arrival information (I-94). Keep this information safe, as you will need it to log onto the government I-94 website once you arrive to your employer. There is more information on the I-94 Process later in this handbook.

## Secondary Inspection

If your information cannot automatically be verified by the admissions officer, you are missing required documentation, or the admissions officer requires additional questions, you may be escorted to a “secondary inspection” interview area where they will conduct additional research to verify your information. This is done in a separate area as it may take more time than the first inspection. If this happens to you, do not panic – please just continue to answer the questions calmly and respectfully.

## Collecting Your Bags

After passing through immigration, you will go to the baggage claim area. Check the display board for your flight number. If you waited a long time at immigration, your bags may have already passed through and been placed on the floor of the baggage area. Once you get your bags, go to the customs desk, where you will show your passport, answer a few questions, and **hand in your declaration form as you leave.**

If your bags have been damaged or lost, report it immediately to the airline and get a Property Irregularity Report, as you will need this for insurance purposes. If you know where you will be staying in the U.S., give this address or your employer's address as the one to which you would like your bags delivered.

## Customs

You will go through customs after collecting your luggage. Make sure all prescription drugs are clearly marked. You cannot bring in articles made from protected species, nor can you transport perishable foods such as cheese, fruits, and nuts. Pay attention to duty-free allowances for gifts, tobacco, or alcohol if you plan to purchase items to bring into the country. If you bring in alcohol, you must be 21 years of age or older. If you carry more than \$10,000, you must report this to the customs official.

## WARNING: Protect Yourself and Your Property

When you are travelling, always keep your property close to you, especially in crowded places like airports, bus terminals, and train stations. Make sure that you keep all valuables - cameras, wallets, passports, documents, and money - with you at all times. Take great care of your luggage and do not let it out of your sight after you have collected it. Make sure your baggage is put onto your bus. Upon arrival in the city, watch your bags at all times. Remember: Do not pack valuables in your luggage. Keep them with you. Stay alert, be aware of your surroundings, and avoid uncomfortable situations. There are some people who will recognize you as a visitor and try to exploit you. As in any country you may be from, or have traveled to, you must use common sense when talking to strangers.

## Reporting to your Employer

We hope that you have reached out to your employer prior to your arrival, so that they are ready to welcome you to the United States, and so you know who to report to on your first day of work. Your employer may be expecting you to arrive a few days prior to the date you are expected to begin your job



(the start date on your DS Form). Some students prefer to arrive early, so that they can settling into life in the United States before they start their jobs. **Please check with your employer to confirm the date you are able to move into your housing.** When you speak to your employer, they will let you know if you can move into your housing right away, or if you'll need to book your own accommodations.

If you spoke to your employer prior to your arrival in the United States, they will either meet you at the airport, or will give you instructions to follow upon your arrival. Follow these instructions carefully and be sure you have your employers contact details (name, phone number, & email) so that you can contact them if you have trouble. Please also be sure to contact your employer if your flight is delayed, or if you miss one of your connections

**PLEASE NOTE:** Your employer is expecting you to report for work on the day that is listed on your job confirmation form. Failure to arrive on time may result in cancellation of your job offer.

## Part V: Your first steps in the United States

You are now in the United States and are ready to begin work. There are a few key steps you are going to need to take while you settle in.

### Arrival Check-in – THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT!!

All participants are required to contact (check-in) with GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel upon their arrival. **You must check-in within three days of your arrival to the United States.** You can check in by any one of the following methods:

- On the GeoVisions Website [www.mygeovisions.org](http://www.mygeovisions.org) (this is the quickest and easiest method)
- By phone – toll free: 888.830.9455 & local: 603.363.4187
- By email - [visions@geovisions.org](mailto:visions@geovisions.org)
- By Fax – 603.363.8446

When you check in, be sure to provide us with your residential address in the following format:

<b>House Number and Street Name:</b>	(example – 54 Split Oak Circle)
<b>Apartment or Unit Number:</b>	(example – Apartment 3b)
<b>City:</b>	(example – Chesterfield)
<b>State:</b>	(example –New Hampshire or NH)
<b>ZIP Code:</b>	(example – 03443)

It's also a good idea to send us your telephone number in the United States, if you have one.

It is VERY IMPORTANT to check in upon your arrival - Failure to do so could cause you to be put out of status in SEVIS, the government database. Thirty days after the Start Date on your DS-2019, your status in the US Government Database automatically changes to **No Show**. If you have not Checked In, you are violating the terms of your visa and there can be very damaging consequences.

If you are going to be late in your arrival to the United States for any reason, you must contact GeoVisions with the reason why you are going to be late and the new date you will be able to begin working.

## Monthly Check-In Info

While you're in the US, it's important to keep in touch with GeoVisions. We are your program sponsor, and we must hear from you every 30 days. You will be receiving emails from us to remind you to log onto our website between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month to update us on your experience in the United States. It is important for you to complete your **monthly check in** with GeoVisions by visiting:.

Please remember that this is a **REQUIREMENT** of your program, and we expect you to answer our emails and complete the monthly surveys. Failure to do so is considered a violation of program rules, so please do let us know how you are doing monthly!

## Retrieving your I-94

While you're in the United States, it's important to print out a copy of your I-94 (Admissions Record) for your employer and for Social Security. An I-94 is an arrival/departure card. It is a record of when you entered the U.S., and when you are expected to depart. To print off your automated I-94 visit [www.CBP.gov/I94](http://www.CBP.gov/I94) and enter the following information in the appropriate fields:

- Passport number
- Date of birth
- Name as it appears on your J-1 Visa
- Country of citizenship (written as "Country of Issuance")
- Date of arrival (as it appears on the stamp the CBP official placed in your passport)
- Class of Admission (J-1)

Please be sure you enter all dates in the proper format and ensure that your spelling matches the information as it appears on your J-1 Visa. When you view your electronic I-94, you should verify that all of the information listed on there is correct. Please note that your name will appear as it appears of n your J-1 Visa. If there are any discrepancies or issues viewing your I-94 information, please contact GeoVisions.

## Applying for a Social Security Number (SSN)

A Social Security number is required to ensure your wages are properly paid. After checking in with GeoVisions, you will need to apply for a Social Security Number. **Please note, you should wait ten days before applying for your Social Security Card.** You can apply at any Social Security office, or your employer may arrange for a Social Security representative to visit your employment site.

Social Security offices are not usually found in smaller cities. To find the office nearest you, visit the following website: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>

If you have participated in the J-1 program before, the Social Security number you were issued during that program will remain valid throughout your life. Therefore, you do not have to reapply for a new card.

To apply for a Social Security card, take the following items when you fill out an application:

1. The letter you received from GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel to the Social Security Administration
2. Your DS-2019 Form
3. Passport with your J-1 Visa

4. Printed copy of your I-94 Admissions Record
5. A copy of the letter offering you employment in the United States (your job confirmation form)

Use one of the following addresses on your social security application:

1. Your address in the United States. Be sure to include your apartment number.
2. Your employer's address in the United States

Once you've applied for your Social Security Number (SSN), the Social Security Administration will attempt to verify your status of within 10 business days. Once your SSN has been issued, a Social Security card will be sent to the address you've provided from the central Social Security Office in Baltimore, not the office where you have applied.

When you apply, make sure you **request a temporary certificate (form SSA-5030) from the Social Security Officer**. This temporary certificate has no number, but it is proof that you have applied for the card. You may call the Social Security Administration's toll free number 1-800-772-1213 approximately ten business days after applying for your card in order to find out the status of your application.

**You must report your Social Security number to your employer immediately after receiving it.** If you leave a place of employment after receiving wages, but before receiving your number, you are still required to report the number to your former employer. Be sure to bring your card home with you in order to file taxes. Failure to provide this number to your employer can result in problems with the IRS.

**As a reminder:** You are allowed to begin working even if you haven't received your Social Security Number yet.

## Common Social Security Questions

Here are some common problems students may have when applying for their SSN:

- **Why doesn't Social Security have your information if you have already checked in?** You've applied too early. When you check into SEVIS, we access a database shared by State Department and the Department of Homeland Security. The Social Security Administration does not have "live" access to this site, so information gets downloaded from SEVIS to the Social Security database, and it can take up to TEN days for this to happen.
- **Your employer is hesitant to hire you before you have received your Social Security Card:** Please have them call us, and we can try to help - 1-888-830-9455. You are allowed to work once you have applied for your SSN. You just need to be sure you have the temporary certificate (form SSA-5030) to show them, as proof of your application.
- **You haven't received your card, but your friends have:** Don't panic! The Social Security Administration tries to process SSN's within two weeks of your application, but the process can take much longer than that. The Social Security process differs with each individual application. They sometimes need to run additional checks, or they are just very busy. If you have not received your card after 10 business days, call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 to check on its status.

Below, please find a sample Social Security Application. This is the document you will complete when you apply for your Social Security Number. Please look the form over carefully, and be sure you have all of the necessary information available.

### SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION Application for a Social Security Card

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0960-0096

<b>NAME</b> TO BE SHOWN ON CARD		First	Full Middle Name	Last
<b>1</b>	<b>FULL NAME AT BIRTH</b> IF OTHER THAN ABOVE	First	Full Middle Name	Last
	<b>OTHER NAMES USED</b>			
<b>2</b>	<b>MAILING ADDRESS</b> Do Not Abbreviate	Street Address, Apt. No., PO Box, Rural Route No.		
		City	State	ZIP Code
<b>3</b>	<b>CITIZENSHIP</b> (Check One)	<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Citizen <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Alien Allowed To Work <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Alien Not Allowed To Work (See Instructions On Page 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (See Instructions On Page 2)		
<b>4</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female		
<b>5</b>	<b>RACE/ETHNIC DESCRIPTION</b> (Check One Only - Voluntary)	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Black (Not Hispanic) <input type="checkbox"/> North American Indian or Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> White (Not Hispanic)		
<b>6</b>	<b>DATE OF BIRTH</b> Month, Day, Year	<b>7 PLACE OF BIRTH</b> (Do Not Abbreviate) City State or Foreign Country FCI		
<b>8</b>	<b>A. MOTHER'S NAME AT HER BIRTH</b>	First	Full Middle Name	Last Name At Her Birth
	<b>B. MOTHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER</b> (See Instructions for 8B on Page 2)	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>		
<b>9</b>	<b>A. FATHER'S NAME</b>	First	Full Middle Name	Last
	<b>B. FATHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER</b> (See Instructions for 9B on Page 2)	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>		
<b>10</b>	Has the applicant or anyone acting on his/her behalf ever filed for or received a Social Security number card before? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (If "yes", answer questions 11-13.) <input type="checkbox"/> No (If "no," go on to question 14.) <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know (If "don't know," go on to question 14.)			
<b>11</b>	Enter the Social Security number previously assigned to the person listed in item 1.	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>		
<b>12</b>	Enter the name shown on the most recent Social Security card issued for the person listed in item 1.	First	Middle Name	Last
<b>13</b>	Enter any different date of birth if used on an earlier application for a card.	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>		
<b>14</b>	<b>TODAY'S DATE</b> Month, Day, Year	<b>15 DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER</b> ( ) - Area Code Number		
I declare under penalty of perjury that I have examined all the information on this form, and on any accompanying statements or forms, and it is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.				
<b>16</b>	<b>YOUR SIGNATURE</b>	<b>17 YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSON IN ITEM 1 IS:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Self <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Or Adoptive Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Guardian <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)		
DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE (FOR SSA USE ONLY)				
NPN		DOC	NTI	CAN
PBC		EVI	EVA	EVC
PRA		NWR	DNR	UNIT
EVIDENCE SUBMITTED		SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EMPLOYEE(S) REVIEWING EVIDENCE AND/OR CONDUCTING INTERVIEW		
		DATE		
		DATE		

## W-4 Form - Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate

When you begin your job, your employer will ask you to complete a W-4 form (Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate) to ensure that you are not overtaxed. Your employer will use the information on this form to determine how much tax should be withheld from your paycheck.

If you do not fill out your W-4 form properly, you may have to pay more tax in the future. Please note that you are classified as a **“non-resident alien”**. Therefore, the instructions shown on the W-4 form do not apply. The following instructions on filling out your W-4 form are from the following website:

<<http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Withholding-Exemptions---Personal-Exemptions---Form-W-4>>

**Please follow the instructions below when completing the W-4 form:**

- On line 3 check only the box marked “single” marital status (regardless of marital status)
- On line 5 claim only one withholding allowance unless you are resident of Canada, Mexico, Japan, South Korea or a U.S. National.
- On line 6 write “Non Resident Alien” above the dotted line.
- On line 7 do NOT claim “EXEMPT” withhold status.

On the next page, please find a sample W-4 Form. This is the document you will complete before you begin your job. Please look the form over carefully, and be sure you complete it following the above instructions.

### Form W-4 (2017)

**Purpose.** Complete Form W-4 so that your employer can withhold the correct federal income tax from your pay. Consider completing a new Form W-4 each year and when your personal or financial situation changes.

**Exemption from withholding.** If you are exempt, complete **only** lines 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 and sign the form to validate it. Your exemption for 2017 expires February 15, 2018. See Pub. 505, Tax Withholding and Estimated Tax.

**Note:** If another person can claim you as a dependent on his or her tax return, you can't claim exemption from withholding if your total income exceeds \$1,050 and includes more than \$350 of unearned income (for example, interest and dividends).

**Exceptions.** An employee may be able to claim exemption from withholding even if the employee is a dependent, if the employee:

- is age 65 or older,
- is blind, or
- Will claim adjustments to income; tax credits; or itemized deductions, on his or her tax return.

The exceptions don't apply to supplemental wages greater than \$1,000,000.

**Basic instructions.** If you aren't exempt, complete the **Personal Allowances Worksheet** below. The worksheets on page 2 further adjust your withholding allowances based on itemized deductions, certain credits, adjustments to income, or two-earners/multiple jobs situations.

Complete all worksheets that apply. However, you may claim fewer (or zero) allowances. For regular wages, withholding must be based on allowances you claimed and may not be a flat amount or percentage of wages.

**Head of household.** Generally, you can claim head of household filing status on your tax return only if you are unmarried and pay more than 50% of the costs of keeping up a home for yourself and your dependent(s) or other qualifying individuals. See Pub. 501, Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information, for information.

**Tax credits.** You can take projected tax credits into account in figuring your allowable number of withholding allowances. Credits for child or dependent care expenses and the child tax credit may be claimed using the **Personal Allowances Worksheet** below. See Pub. 505 for information on converting your other credits into withholding allowances.

**Nonwage income.** If you have a large amount of nonwage income, such as interest or dividends, consider making estimated tax payments using Form 1040-ES, Estimated Tax for Individuals. Otherwise, you may owe additional tax. If you have pension or annuity income, see Pub. 505 to find out if you should adjust your withholding on Form W-4 or W-4P.

**Two earners or multiple jobs.** If you have a working spouse or more than one job, figure the total number of allowances you are entitled to claim on all jobs using worksheets from only one Form W-4. Your withholding usually will be most accurate when all allowances are claimed on the Form W-4 for the highest paying job and zero allowances are claimed on the others. See Pub. 505 for details.

**Nonresident alien.** If you are a nonresident alien, see Notice 1392, Supplemental Form W-4 Instructions for Nonresident Aliens, before completing this form.

**Check your withholding.** After your Form W-4 takes effect, use Pub. 505 to see how the amount you are having withheld compares to your projected total tax for 2017. See Pub. 505, especially if your earnings exceed \$130,000 (Single) or \$180,000 (Married).

**Future developments.** Information about any future developments affecting Form W-4 (such as legislation enacted after we release it) will be posted at [www.irs.gov/w4](http://www.irs.gov/w4).

#### Personal Allowances Worksheet (Keep for your records.)

<p><b>A</b> Enter "1" for <b>yourself</b> if no one else can claim you as a dependent . . . . . <b>A</b> _____</p> <p><b>B</b> Enter "1" if: <span style="font-size: 2em; vertical-align: middle;">{</span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You're single and have only one job; or</li> <li>• You're married, have only one job, and your spouse doesn't work; or</li> <li>• Your wages from a second job or your spouse's wages (or the total of both) are \$1,500 or less.</li> </ul> <span style="font-size: 2em; vertical-align: middle;">}</span> . . . . . <b>B</b> _____</p> <p><b>C</b> Enter "1" for your <b>spouse</b>. But, you may choose to enter "-0-" if you are married and have either a working spouse or more than one job. (Entering "-0-" may help you avoid having too little tax withheld.) . . . . . <b>C</b> _____</p> <p><b>D</b> Enter number of <b>dependents</b> (other than your spouse or yourself) you will claim on your tax return . . . . . <b>D</b> _____</p> <p><b>E</b> Enter "1" if you will file as <b>head of household</b> on your tax return (see conditions under <b>Head of household</b> above) . . . . . <b>E</b> _____</p> <p><b>F</b> Enter "1" if you have at least \$2,000 of <b>child or dependent care expenses</b> for which you plan to claim a credit . . . . . <b>F</b> _____          (Note: Do not include child support payments. See Pub. 503, Child and Dependent Care Expenses, for details.)</p> <p><b>G</b> <b>Child Tax Credit</b> (including additional child tax credit). See Pub. 972, Child Tax Credit, for more information.          • If your total income will be less than \$70,000 (\$100,000 if married), enter "2" for each eligible child; then less "1" if you have two to four eligible children or less "2" if you have five or more eligible children.          • If your total income will be between \$70,000 and \$84,000 (\$100,000 and \$119,000 if married), enter "1" for each eligible child. <span style="float: right;"><b>G</b> _____</span></p> <p><b>H</b> Add lines A through G and enter total here. (Note: This may be different from the number of exemptions you claim on your tax return.) ► <b>H</b> _____</p>	<p><b>For accuracy, complete all worksheets that apply.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you plan to <b>itemize or claim adjustments to income</b> and want to reduce your withholding, see the <b>Deductions and Adjustments Worksheet</b> on page 2.</li> <li>• If you are <b>single and have more than one job</b> or are <b>married and you and your spouse both work</b> and the combined earnings from all jobs exceed \$50,000 (\$20,000 if married), see the <b>Two-Earners/Multiple Jobs Worksheet</b> on page 2 to avoid having too little tax withheld.</li> <li>• If <b>neither</b> of the above situations applies, <b>stop here</b> and enter the number from line H on line 5 of Form W-4 below.</li> </ul>
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Separate here and give Form W-4 to your employer. Keep the top part for your records.

<b>Form</b> Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service	<h2 style="margin: 0;">W-4</h2>	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate</h3> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">► Whether you are entitled to claim a certain number of allowances or exemption from withholding is subject to review by the IRS. Your employer may be required to send a copy of this form to the IRS.</p>	OMB No. 1545-0074 <h2 style="margin: 0;">2017</h2>
1 Your first name and middle initial _____ Last name _____		2 Your social security number _____	
Home address (number and street or rural route) _____		3 <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Married, but withhold at higher Single rate. Note: If married, but legally separated, or spouse is a nonresident alien, check the "Single" box.	
City or town, state, and ZIP code _____		4 If your last name differs from that shown on your social security card, check here. You must call 1-800-772-1213 for a replacement card. ► <input type="checkbox"/>	
5 Total number of allowances you are claiming (from line H above or from the applicable worksheet on page 2) _____		5 _____	
6 Additional amount, if any, you want withheld from each paycheck . . . . .		6 \$ _____	
7 I claim exemption from withholding for 2017, and I certify that I meet <b>both</b> of the following conditions for exemption. • Last year I had a right to a refund of <b>all</b> federal income tax withheld because I had <b>no</b> tax liability, <b>and</b> • This year I expect a refund of <b>all</b> federal income tax withheld because I expect to have <b>no</b> tax liability. If you meet both conditions, write "Exempt" here . . . . . ► 7 _____			
Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have examined this certificate and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true, correct, and complete.			
<b>Employee's signature</b> (This form is not valid unless you sign it.) ► _____		<b>Date</b> ► _____	
8 Employer's name and address (Employer: Complete lines 8 and 10 only if sending to the IRS.) _____		9 Office code (optional) _____	
10 Employer identification number (EIN) _____			

For Privacy Act and Paperwork Reduction Act Notice, see page 2.

Cat. No. 10220Q

Form W-4 (2017)



## Part VI: Your Experience in the United States

Employers have certain expectations when they offer you a job. They have a business to run and you are an important part of their operation. When you accept a job, you are making a commitment, and it is important for you to act responsibly. Below are a few things to keep in mind.

### Have a positive attitude and be enthusiastic

Have a positive attitude towards the job you accept. Employers are looking for workers who are enthusiastic and willing. You will be expected to work hard and complete the tasks that are assigned to you. Flexibility, enthusiasm, and teamwork are very important in the U.S. workplace. Without these, you risk losing your job.

### Time

Time in the United States is viewed very differently than it is abroad. Time is considered a commodity. In the US, you may hear the sayings “on time”, “running out of time”, “time is precious” and even “wasting time” because people from the United States are very time oriented.

Being on time is essential, and showing up earlier than expected is even an advantage, as it makes a good impression on your employer. If you are often late you will be seen as a person who doesn't take their job seriously and does not respect their colleagues. Plan to arrive to your job at least 5 minutes EARLY for every shift.

If you are going to be late to work, or if you are going to be absent, you must call your employer in advance to let them know why you are delayed. If you fail to do this, you may receive written warnings, and may even lose your job. Speak to your employer about their policies, so that you know what is expected.

### Dress Code in the Work Place

Before you travel to the United States, look at your job offer – it's likely that your employer has listed the uniform required for work. If this is not clear, ask your employer, or your in-country representative about the style of dress required for your particular job. Before you leave your home country, pack appropriately. If possible, buy the necessary shoes, trousers, and shirts needed for your job. You should also be prepared to pay a uniform deposit, or you may need to buy specific clothing upon arrival.

If there is no uniform required, look at how other workers dress to see what clothing is appropriate. Be aware that more professional employment requires a more formal style of dress, and you should attempt to match the office look.

### Work Place Communication

You may be surprised at some features of the U.S. workplace. Supervisors may share personal information that you would normally share only with close friends, and may allow you to call them by their first name. Socializing on the job is common, and your boss will often join in. Despite any friendliness, you are always expected to do your job and act appropriately.

Just as dressing appropriately at work is important, the language you use at work is of utmost importance. Your language should be “clean” (no swearing), friendly, and non-argumentative. This is especially

important if you are in a customer service position.

Please try not discuss controversial and inappropriate topics at the work place – this is not the appropriate venue to discuss last night's party.

Employers generally will not tolerate being yelled at by US employees, and there may be serious consequences if you do so. If you find yourself in disagreement with someone at the work place, try to keep your tone polite and respectful, even if you do not share their point of view. If you have a conflict, state your position in a calm manner, and listen respectfully to others' opinions.

Communication at work is spoken, but also involves your body language. In the formal work setting, Americans generally give each other a decent amount of physical space. They don't stand too close to each other, and limit physical contact to handshakes and the occasional high-five. Each office has its own environment and ethics, and you will learn what is acceptable in your work place, but it is very important to respect these physical boundaries, as others should respect yours.

## Missing Work / Calling In

We understand that you may fall ill while in the United States, and this may cause you to miss your scheduled work shifts. If this happens to you, it is important to **CALL YOUR EMPLOYER IN ADVANCE** to let them know that you will not be in for your shift. You should keep sick days limited, as your employer is relying on you to work your scheduled shift. If you miss more than one or two shifts a month, your employer may think you do not take your job seriously, and may end your employment there. If you do not call your employer to alert them of your absence, they will consider this a "no call no show" and could be grounds for immediate termination of employment. The below reasons are NOT APPROPRIATE reasons to call in sick:

- You overslept
- You are hungover /tired
- You are scheduled to work a shift at your 2<sup>nd</sup> job
- You do not feel like working
- Your friends have the day off

Speak to your employer to find out their policies.

## Rights and Responsibilities at Work

As a temporary employee, you have the same rights as any of your co-workers. You do not have any extra benefits. American employers and employees do not usually sign contracts, so employers can hire and fire if they feel they need to do so. U.S. law does not guarantee the job benefits that you may be accustomed to in your home country. Your employer will also have standards and policies that you will be expected to follow. These may be as simple as greeting guests with a smile, or cleaning a certain number of rooms each shift. Make sure that you are following the company rules and meeting their standards. It is important if you don't understand something that you ask questions. This will help you to do a better job and have a more successful work experience.



## Work as long as you promised

The employer you have agreed to work for played a huge role in allowing you to apply for your visa. Without their job offer, you would not have been able to go to the embassy to apply for your visa. They have made a big commitment to you, just as you are making a big commitment to them. If you tell an employer you will work until a certain date, **it is your responsibility to keep your promise**. Employers, especially those involved with summer or winter tourism, rely on their staff to work until the agreed date. It is likely that your employer would not have been able to hire you if you could not work until the end date they needed. Do not promise to work for a certain length of time, just to get a job. If there are circumstances that require you to leave the program early, please contact GeoVisions to discuss your concerns.

## Estimated Average Hours per Week

On your Job Confirmation Form, you will see a line that says “Estimated Average Hours per Week” and then a number. By the end of the season, this number is the **estimate** of the **average** hours per week that you should have been scheduled for. Adding up the number of hours that you were scheduled each week and then dividing by the number of weeks that you worked will help you calculate this number.

**For example:** If you start out at 20 hours per week for the first two weeks and then work 50 hours per week for the next two weeks, then your average number of hours per week for your first month would have been 35 hours.  $(20+20+50+50=140/4 \text{ weeks} = \text{an average of } 35 \text{ hours/week})$

**Please note, the hours at the start of your program will likely be lower than the average listed on your job offer.** As you are trained and are integrated onto the schedule, you will likely see your hours increase. Your hours and schedules may not be the same every week. Business levels are likely to vary each week and it is common to have different amounts of hours, different shifts and different days off from one week to the next. Hours can be impacted by business needs, weather, economic situations, your performance, sick time and other circumstances.

## Overtime

As a seasonal employee, you may be asked to work extra hours at your employer. Many companies will pay you one-and-a-half times the normal wage rate for extra hours. This rule varies state-by-state, and many seasonal employers (for example, many theme parks) are not required to pay overtime wages but they will pay you at your standard hourly rate of pay.

If you are looking to make extra money you may also be able to apply for a second job. It’s important to remember that **your 2<sup>nd</sup> jobs cannot interfere with the schedule at your primary employer**. Also, you **MUST** get any employer, even a second, or part- time employer, approved in advance by GeoVisions. If you begin working at an employer not authorized in advance by GeoVisions, you will be violating both GeoVisions and Department of State Program Rules.

## Flexibility

Sometimes business demands require that your employer move you from one department to another. If this happens to you, let us know. This may feel disappointing, but it’s important to be flexible in the work you do. Sometimes, moving positions will allow you to get the hours you need. It will also enhance your

resume to learn a new skill. Lastly, it will help your employer and the company. Keep in touch with GeoVisions if this happens to you – we can discuss the move, and will also update your record in SEVIS, the government database.

## **Part VII: What if I have problems at my job?**

### **Serious Workplace Problems - Contact GeoVisions Immediately**

Students need to contact GeoVisions if they encounter any of the following circumstances:

- Unwanted sexual advances or gender bias
- Unfair wage or tax reporting practices
- Demands to work an excessive number of hours against your will
- Physical threats at the workplace, especially if resulting in injury
- Verbal threats, and in particular, threats of deportation
- Housing conditions that threaten your health or safety

We can be reached by the following methods:

**Toll Free Phone Number:** 888-830-9455 (24 Hours/day)

**Office Phone:** 603-363-4187 (Monday – Friday 9:00AM – 4:00PM)

**Office Fax:** 603-363-8446

**Email:** [visions@geovisions.org](mailto:visions@geovisions.org)

### **Concerns at the workplace**

Occasionally students have problems at their work place. If you do, we encourage you to speak to your manager or supervisor and discuss your issue with them. If you are having problems with a supervisor or co-worker, try to resolve it in a strictly professional manner. You are a new employee and may encounter problems that other co-workers have already experienced. Speak to them about these conflicts - perhaps they can help you resolve them quickly and harmlessly. In any job, you may meet people you do not like, or cannot work well with. You may find that speaking to the person directly will help take care of the problem. If that is not successful and is impairing your work, speak to a supervisor about it. Discussion can avoid unpleasant situations.

If your supervisor cannot or will not assist you with your problem, you need to contact GeoVisions, and we will work with you and your employer to try to resolve the issue. Once we are contacted, we may (with your permission) contact your employer and discuss your issue with them. We may conduct a conference call with you, your employer and a GeoVisions representative. We may travel to your job site to speak with you and your employer in person. The goal of these discussions, whether they are over the phone or in person, is to answer your question, or solve your problem.

### **Changing Jobs**

**If you plan to change employers, your job is no longer available, or you are laid-off or fired, it's important for you to reach out to GeoVisions, so that we can provide you with more detailed information on this process.**

If you, GeoVisions and your employer are unable to resolve your concerns, GeoVisions will provide you with reasonable assistance in finding a new job. This will be in the form of tips and suggestions on seeking employment within the United States. We will also notify you of any current job openings that we are aware of. These employers may or may not be located in the same area of the USA. You are responsible for your own transportation costs for this move. GeoVisions will provide you with information on available plane, bus or train routes.

If you wish to find your own employer, you will be permitted to do so within 14 days of leaving your original employer. If you find your own employer, you will be required to find your own accommodations.

In order to facilitate a move to a new employer, GeoVisions will provide you with a blank job confirmation form, which will need to be completed and signed by you and your new employer. We also require a number of documents from your employer, in order to verify the position.

Once we have received the job offer, and vetting documents, our employer team will call the employer to verify your position and job terms. If the job is appropriate for the Summer Work/Travel program, we will update your SEVIS record. Once your SEVIS record is updated, you are allowed to begin work and someone from GeoVisions will email you to confirm you are able to begin working.

**As a reminder** – jobs must be approved by GeoVisions before you begin working. If you begin working before we have approved the job, it is a serious violation of both GeoVisions and State Department Program Rules. Please do not start working until someone from GeoVisions tells you it is OK!

**Job placements must be seasonal or temporary and must provide opportunities for you to interact regularly with U.S. citizens and experience U.S. culture during the work portion (i.e., not travel portion) of your program.** It is important to keep this, and some key rules in mind when seeking new employment in the United States.

Below, please tips on how to seek employment, information on appropriate jobs, and rules and requirements about the jobs you can work at.

## Tips on How to Seek Employment

Finding a job in the USA can be very challenging. Here are some tips to make it easier.

1. Start your search NOW. The easiest way to start is to browse the internet to find employers that you are interested in working for. Some helpful websites are:
  - a. [www.coolworks.com](http://www.coolworks.com) – awesome resource. Check here first!
  - b. [www.snagajob.com](http://www.snagajob.com)
  - c. [www.jobs.com](http://www.jobs.com)
  - d. [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com)
  - e. [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)
  - f. [www.jobs.net](http://www.jobs.net)
  - g. [www.groovejob.com](http://www.groovejob.com)
  - h. [www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com)
  - i. Websites of local newspapers in your preferred work location
  - j. The websites for specific companies that you want to work for.
2. When you find a job that you are interested in, try to apply ONLINE.
3. If you cannot apply online, or if you need to apply in person, go right away. Do not take time to

sightsee or visit friends. You can sightsee and visit at the end of your program. There are lots of people trying to secure jobs, both US citizens and foreign students. The longer that you wait the fewer jobs you will find.

4. Take a walk through town and stop in stores, shops, and restaurants, etc.
5. When you apply for one job, do not sit and wait for them to get back to you. You should apply for several jobs and call every couple of days to see if they have reviewed your application.
6. Ask friends that already have jobs if there are any more jobs available where they are working. Sometimes company's only advertise job openings internally, if you know someone that can give you a reference, it can help you get a job.
7. Buy the local paper. Local newspapers are good sources for local jobs. Call or visit the employer's location and ask to talk to someone in the Human Resources Department.

When you are looking for a job, please consider the below job categories:

- Waiters and waitresses
- Housekeepers
- General maintenance
- Ride operators at theme parks
- Cashiers and store clerks
- Ski and beach resort positions
- National Parks (like Grand Canyon and Isle Royale National Park)

## Vetting Documents

Department of State regulations also require sponsors to collect 2 other documents from employers at the same time as the job confirmation form:

1. A copy of the employer's workers compensation insurance front page (showing that the student will be covered while in the US)
2. A copy of the employer's Business License

**As a reminder** – these documents must be collected in order for our Employer Team to confirm new jobs. Jobs must be approved by GeoVisions before you begin working. If you begin working before we have approved the job, it is a serious violation of both GeoVisions and State Department Program Rules. Please do not start working until someone from GeoVisions tells you it is OK!

## Seasonal Job Information

You can do a number of jobs, but they must be seasonal in nature. Here's how the Department of State defines "seasonal":

Jobs that require minimal training and are seasonal or temporary ...

Employment is of a **seasonal nature** when the required service is tied to a certain time of the year by an event or pattern and requires labor levels above and beyond existing worker levels.

Employment is of a **temporary nature** when an employer's need for the duties to be performed is a one-time occurrence, a peak load need, or an intermittent need. It is the nature of employers'

needs, not the nature of the duties that is controlling.

## Prohibited Jobs

Before you start searching for a new job, it's important to understand the jobs that GeoVisions cannot approve. Below, please find the list of jobs that are PROHIBITED (not allowed) on the Summer Work/Travel Program:

1. In positions that could bring notoriety or disrepute to the Exchange Visitor Program
2. In sales positions that require participants to purchase inventory that they must sell in order to support themselves
3. In domestic help positions in private homes (e.g., child care, elder care, gardener, chauffeur)
4. As pedicab or rolling chair drivers or operators
5. As operators or drivers of vehicles or vessels for which drivers' licenses are required regardless of whether they carry passengers or not;
6. In positions related to clinical care that involves patient contact;
7. In any position in the adult entertainment industry (including, but not limited to jobs with escort services, adult book/video stores, and strip clubs);
8. In positions requiring work hours that fall predominantly between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am;
9. In positions declared hazardous to youth by the Secretary of Labor at Subpart E of 29 CFR part 570;
10. In positions that require sustained physical contact with other people and/or adherence to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Universal Blood and Body Fluid Precautions guidelines (e.g., body piercing, tattooing, massage, manicure);
11. In positions that are substantially commission-based and thus do not guarantee that participants will be paid minimum wage in accordance with federal and state standards;
12. In positions involved in gaming and gambling that include direct participation in wagering and/or betting;
13. In positions in chemical pest control, warehousing, catalogue/online order distribution centers;
14. In positions with traveling fairs or itinerant concessionaires;
15. In jobs that do not allow participants to work alongside U.S. citizens and interact regularly with U.S. citizens and to experience U.S. culture during the workday portion of their Summer Work Travel programs;
16. With employers that fill non-seasonal or non-temporary job openings with exchange visitors with staggered vacation schedules;
17. In positions that require licensing;
18. In positions for which there is another specific J visa category (e.g., Camp Counselor, Trainee, Intern);
19. In positions with staffing agencies, unless the placements meet the following three criteria:
  - Participants must be employees of and paid by the staffing agencies
  - Staffing agencies must provide full-time, primary, on-site supervision of the participants
  - Staffing agencies must effectively control the work sites, e.g., have hands-on management responsibility for the participants
20. Positions in the North American Industry Classification System's (NAICS) Goods-Producing Industries occupational categories industry sectors 11, 21, 23, 31-33 numbers (set forth at [http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag\\_index\\_naics.htm](http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag_index_naics.htm)).
  - In positions where you will displace domestic U.S. workers

- In positions where the host employer has experienced layoffs in the past 120 days and in positions where the employer has workers on lockout or on strike

## Driving on the Job

You are not allowed to work at a job where a driver's license is required, and you cannot be expected to operate a vehicle of any kind on the job. Jobs like valet parking, delivery, or pedicab driving are not allowed.

## Part VIII: Wages and Taxes in the United States

### Your Salary and Paycheck

There is no maximum amount of money you can earn. You will most likely be paid weekly or sometimes twice per month - check with your employer. You will always receive less than your "gross" salary, as there will be taxes and/ or deductions taken out of each check. . Depending on your agreement with your employer, you might also have uniform, housing, union membership dues, or other work-related costs deducted from your pay. If you should have any questions, talk to your employer.

Your employer should give you a salary statement, pay stub or pay slip with each paycheck, which will explain exactly what was taken out. It is wise to save these pay stubs and take them home with you to assist with your taxes. It is important to remember that, as a GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel participant, Social Security taxes, Medicare or FUTA taxes should not be deducted from your salary. More information on taxes can be found in this handbook.

### Taxes you do pay, and taxes you do not pay

As a foreign student working in the U.S., you will be required to pay certain taxes, but will be exempt from other taxes.

#### **Taxes you DO pay:**

- State Income Tax
- Federal Income Tax
- Local or City Income Tax

#### **Taxes you DO NOT pay:**

- Social security and Medicare tax
- Federal unemployment tax (FUTA)

### Income Taxes

**You do pay this tax.** In the U.S., federal, state, and local governments impose income taxes. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) collects personal income taxes, usually on a "pay-as-you-go" basis. This means that your employer generally withholds income tax from your salary and pays it directly to the government. You must pay U.S. income tax. Failure to pay any taxes you owe could cause problems for you in the future if you apply for any visas to return to the U.S.

## Federal Income Tax

**You do pay this tax.** Income tax is paid to the federal (national) government by all income-earning individuals. It is paid on income from salaries, wages, and tips. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of your salary will be withheld for federal income tax, a portion of which you may be able to claim back as a refund at the end of the year.

## State, City, and Local Income Taxes

**You May Have to pay these taxes.** States and cities may charge extra income tax according to local laws. State income taxes are approximately 5 to 8 percent. Ask your employer about the local tax situation. If applicable, state and local income taxes will be withheld from your paycheck. You may be able to claim a refund for a portion of these taxes at the end of the year.

## Social Security, Medicare, Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA)

**You do not pay these taxes.** You must have the Social Security card and number, but you are EXEMPT from paying Social Security, Medicare, and Federal Unemployment tax. Sometimes, employers make a mistake and withhold these taxes. You can tell if this happened by looking at your pay slip (the paper with your wage details). If you see any deductions under the word "FICA" or "FUTA", then the employer has made a mistake. Please contact GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel if you need assistance with resolving this problem.

## W-2 Forms

At the end of the calendar year, your employer will send you a W-2 form, detailing your total wages and the amount of each tax that was withheld. You must receive a W-2 form from each of your employers, since you will be required to submit copies of the form with your tax returns.

The employer will send the W-2 to your address in your home country; please be sure to give them your address before you leave the United States. If you don't give your employer your address, your employer will not be able to send you the necessary forms to file for your tax return. If you have not received your W-2 forms by February 15, in the year following your Work/Travel program, you should contact your employer(s) for replacement(s).

## Tax Return Forms and Tax Refunds

**The deadline for filing tax return forms is April 15.** Upon receiving your W-2 Form, you will need to complete a tax return form. The form you need is the **1040NR-EZ**, which is specifically for Non-Resident Aliens with No Dependents. You can obtain this form at the United States Embassy in your home country or on the Internet at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). There are separate forms for federal, state, and city taxes – please request these forms from your employer.

When you request the 1040NR-EZ Form, make sure to ask for the instructions pamphlet. To avoid any mistakes, follow the instructions carefully. If you overpaid the government, they will issue you a check. However, if you did not pay enough taxes, you must pay the government the amount you still owe. Your tax paperwork must be received by the IRS on or before April 15th of the year following the year when you earned the wages.



There are services that are designed to help foreign students file their taxes. Usually for a small fee they can make tax filing even easier. Your in-country representative may be able to suggest a service to use.

## Part IX: Housing

Housing in the United States varies from job to job; your employer may have arranged housing for you or you may have found housing on your own. Housing may be dormitory style, apartment style, houses, or even motel rooms. Below, please find some housing standards you should expect while you are in the United States. If you feel any of these standards are not being met, please contact GeoVisions for assistance.

If your employer has arranged your housing, they expect you to live there from your start date until your end date. It's important that you speak to them if you feel you are not comfortable in your housing, or if you plan to leave your prearranged housing. Please consult any leases that you signed and the terms of your deposits. Please also be sure you understand any company policies and general rules regarding your housing. For example, many housing options do not allow tenants to smoke indoors, make noise late at night, or host large parties. Check with your employer regarding additional rules

**Important Reminder:** You MUST advise GeoVisions immediately of any change in your residence address. Failure to do so is a severe violation of GeoVisions and State Department Program Rules.

### Housing Standards

- Each student will have his / her own bed, unless sharing is specifically agreed upon in advance and documented as such, by each of the students. Bed sharing or rotation is not allowed.
- Upon arrival, accommodations should be free of debris and belongings of former occupants.
- Students are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of their accommodations.
- Bedrooms and bathrooms must have a door that can be shut and locked. Students must be given keys to their accommodations.
- Students may be assigned to share an apartment with persons of the opposite gender.
- Entrances and exits must be lit and secure.
- There should be fully functioning toilets, sinks and showers in the living facility.
- Occupancy levels must meet city government codes.
- In consideration of your safety and security, you should exercise caution when inviting others into your accommodation. Check with your employer regarding additional rules and curfews that may exist.
- Never allow anyone to enter your housing if you do not know them well. Always identify anyone before opening a door to your housing.
- Students are responsible for their own deposits, housing fees and transportation.
- Students are responsible for any phone charges and should not use employer's or housing phones without using a phone card or previous approval.
- Smoking and drinking at your accommodations should only occur with individuals of legal age and not in violation of employer or housing manager or landlord rules.

If you feel that these standards are not being met, we encourage you first to speak with your employer, landlord or housing supervisor. If this person or persons is unable or unwilling to assist you, **please contact GeoVisions for assistance.**



## Deposits and Leases

When you move into your housing, you may be asked to pay a housing deposit. Housing deposits are generally due upon arrival, and your landlord may request you to pay this deposit in cash. Deposits can sometimes seem like a large amount as they may include first or last month's rent, and almost always include a "safety deposit". A safety deposit is a sum of money that your landlord will hold onto and use at the end of your stay to pay for any property damages or cleaning fees that you may be responsible for. The deposit may or may not be refundable. When you pay your deposit, it is important to understand exactly what you are paying for. Ask your landlord to provide you with written documentation about what your deposit covers, whether or not it is refundable, and what the conditions are to get a refund. Also, ask them when your refund will be issued as landlords all have varying policies on this. Finally, because you may be held responsible for cleaning fees and property damages, be sure to document your apartment by taking photos on the day you move in. Also, make sure you understand your landlord's rules and regulations.

You may also be asked to sign a lease. A lease is a formal contract between you and your landlord. In general, it will outline the rules of the apartment, the length of time you are renting the apartment, the rent fee and payment schedule, and the deposit. Some leases are more detailed than others. Before signing a lease, it is very important that you read it over carefully. Find out what will happen if you want to move out of the apartment earlier than planned, as many landlords may still require you to pay rent for the length you originally agreed to stay, whether you are living in the apartment or not. If you do not understand something on your lease, it is important that you ask questions before signing it. GeoVisions can help answer your questions, so do not hesitate to reach out to us. Most importantly, please SAVE COPIES of any documents you sign. This can help you if questions come up in the future.

## Part X: Emergency and Health Information

### Emergency Situations

If you find yourself in an emergency situation, please don't panic. Contact GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel immediately by calling 1-888-830-9455 if the following emergencies arise:

- You are seriously ill or injured
- You are the victim of a crime
- You are arrested

**If you are in a potentially life-threatening situation, call for help by dialing 911 from the nearest available telephone.** The person who answers will contact the police, the fire department or an ambulance to help you.

All other non-emergency issues should be handled by calling us between the hours of 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

### General Safety

Most Americans are very friendly. They can be very outgoing and hospitable, candid and open. They will often tell you how interesting it is to meet someone from a foreign country, and will be happy to help you. Do not be surprised if you are invited to dinner, taken to different places, or shown around the town you are in. But you must remember that, until you get used to where you are living, you are giving off clear

signals that you are a stranger to the city. Your clothes, your accent, and your attitude will often make you look like an obvious visitor. In every large city worldwide, there are individuals who live off of what they can take from others, through theft, swindles, or tricks. There is little or no chance that you will encounter any kind of difficulty with this small minority, but take precautions.

All large cities have some homeless people. People may approach you asking for money. Usually, they are homeless people. It is your decision whether to give money. You are entitled to refuse, but please do so politely.

During the day, most cities are quite safe, but at night, as in most parts of the world, there are certain areas to avoid. Ask your employer and co-workers for details. Never carry large amounts of cash and make sure that you are only carrying copies of your travel documents. If these are lost, you can easily make more copies from your original documents. Travel and explore with a friend, if possible. If you are alert and use good judgment, you will have few problems. Do not be intimidated by the size and pace of American cities, as you will soon realize that the people are not that different from the people you live with at home.

Never let anyone into your room or apartment that you do not know. Don't open a door for anyone until you are certain who it is. If you are ever in danger, and feel unsafe, you can dial 911 from any phone. You will be put in touch with local Emergency Response officials.

Please also be wary of internet scams; you may need to purchase items when you arrive to the United States but be sure it is a reputable retailer. Be cautious if they request personal information, cash payment, or to meet in person.

## Health Information and Insurance

There is no national health insurance in the U.S. You are covered by a private insurance company from the Start Date until the End Date on your DS-2019 Form. You may be covered by GeoVisions insurance, or on a policy arranged by your home country agent. Be sure to collect your insurance information from your agency before you depart for the United States.

Prior to going to a doctor, clinic, or hospital for treatment, call the number on the reverse side of your GeoVisions ID Card, or visit the GeoVisions insurance website:

<https://gem-guide.globalexcel.com/NRTCCSupport.aspx?p=MSOGG/MSO/EN>

24/7 emergency line 1-877-256-8298.

On the website or over the phone, you'll find information on doctors or "providers in your area", a summary of what is covered, and helpful information on understanding your insurance policy.

When you go to the doctor, you should not have to worry about paying very much for your treatment. Hopefully, the health care provider will bill your insurance company directly. If not, you will need to complete an insurance claim form and send it to the insurance company. You will likely be reimbursed for all covered expenses if the cost of them is reasonable and customary. Normally, all you have to pay is your \$100 "deductible" for a regular doctor visit or emergency room visit.

If you are going to see a doctor for a non-emergency medical problem, check your health insurance booklet to make sure that type of treatment is covered. For example, most international health insurance

policies limit coverage for pre-existing medical problems.

Your health insurance coverage through GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel is valid for the dates listed on your DS-2019 Form, which are the dates you have told us you will be working. If you are traveling in the U.S. following your job, you may purchase an insurance extension by contacting GeoVisions.

## **Doctor's Offices, Hospitals, Clinics, and Emergency Rooms**

Medical fees depend on the doctor, the type of facility, and its location. In certain areas of the country, especially large cities, medical care will be significantly more expensive.

Hospital Emergency Room ("ER") deductible - \$100

Regular Doctor visit deductible - \$100

Visit the GeoVisions website for information on doctors in your area. Also, ask friends or colleagues at work or call your local hospital for recommendations about local doctors.

Walk-in clinics are available all over the U.S. They offer an alternative to seeing a private physician or going to a hospital emergency room. They tend to be less costly, and for people who do not have a continuing relationship with a doctor, they can be a good choice. Please review your insurance information for details on coverage and claims procedures.

## **Dentists**

Dentists usually have private practices and are expensive. Many large hospitals, particularly those associated with universities, have dental clinics that are open to the general public and are less expensive than other clinics. Your insurance policy does not cover regular dental care. Read your policy carefully before you have any non-emergency treatment done to your teeth.

# **Part XI: Understanding the Cultural Component of the Summer Work/Travel Program**

## **Cultural Activities: Sparking Ideas**

As a Summer Work/Travel participant, you have a very unique opportunity to see and experience the United States in a way that a casual tourist may not. You have taken on the responsibility of participating in an important public diplomacy initiative that will help strengthen the ties between your home country and the United States. Engaging in cultural activities while you are here is the most important way to have a successful Summer Work/Travel Experience. Your participation in these activities will allow you to:

- Share perspectives, break down stereotypes, and build tolerance and trust - By engaging with Americans in cultural activities you will deepen your understanding of the United States, and help deepen Americans' understanding about your own culture
- Experience the United States outside of your job - Your primary interactions in the United States will likely be with your coworkers and roommates as these are the people you see daily. Participation in cultural activities will help you meet new people and explore the United States

beyond the work place

- Learn about the United States - The best way to learn about the United States' culture and way of life is to experience it hands on!

## Getting Started:

If you are feeling overwhelmed by this task, don't be! Participating in cultural activities can be as easy and inexpensive as you want it to be. Many of the things you enjoy doing in your home country will count as cultural activities here! When planning your activities, think about your personal goals while in the United States. For example, if your goal is to learn about United States' history you may want to go to a museum, visit a historical sight, or play a trivia game with your new American friends. If you attend a religious institution in your home country, seek out a similar institution in the United States. If you enjoy pop culture, attend a concert or go to the movies. If you want to deepen your involvement in your local community, try volunteering at a local organization.

Below, please find a list of cultural activities you can engage in:

Visit museums, zoos, theme parks, local historical societies & the local chamber of commerce
Attend concerts, sporting events, movies & the theater
Go on shopping excursions; be sure to visit local malls and outlet shops
Shop Local; visit independent restaurants, shops, and farmers markets.
Explore US foods and partake in US traditions: attend barbecues, picnics & visit ethnic restaurants
Share a meal with your US coworkers or friends you make in the US. Have them cook something traditionally American, or cook them something from home.
Celebrate US holidays by attending parades and holiday events.
Check local bulletin and community boards for meet up groups & book groups
Play sports and join the local recreational sports teams
Celebrate an Ethnic Holiday - share this with your coworkers and friends!
Plan a road trip and go site seeing. Also look into local bus tours and specials.
Attend state and local fairs, festivals, block parties & antique car shows
Go camping; roast marshmallows around the campfire and go hiking
Visit your local library and learn about local history.
Visit beaches & parks
Attend events and celebrations you are invited to
Share your culture; consider hosting multicultural trivia night, diversity roundtables, or cultural dress & costume nights.
Visit US religious sites; Buddhist Temples, Synagogues, Mosques, Churches, etc.
Explore multiculturalism and diversity in the US - try looking at local universities for multicultural clubs or speakers
Immerse yourself in local tradition; learn a folk dance or go to the rodeo
Volunteer - look online for your local homeless shelter, or soup kitchen
Search out local yard sales & flea markets

## Part XII: Managing Money in the US

### Living on a Budget

While the Summer Work/Travel program gives you an opportunity to earn money while traveling in the U.S., you will still need to budget wisely. For example, it may take a few weeks before you get your first paycheck so plan to bring at least enough money to live for one month (approximately \$800 to \$1,000 USD) with you on the airplane. Plan in advance, to ensure that you always have money set aside to pay for housing, meals, and any other expenses. If you want to save money for traveling or to take home with you, it's best to try to save a certain amount from each paycheck.

### Banking

Open a bank account as soon as possible. This will allow you to cash and deposit your paychecks, receive money from overseas and obtain an ATM or Debit Card. Your employer can help you identify a good bank in your area. When you go to open an account, be sure to bring various forms of identification, including your passport and social security number. If you have any credit cards, and proof of where you are living, you should bring this as well.

### Bank/ Debit Cards and ATM Machines

Most bank accounts provide bankcards that can be used at 24-hour automated teller machines (ATMs) or cashpoints. These are called ATM or Debit cards. These cards allow you access to your money at most banks throughout the United States, and can actually be used in replacement of cash at many shops. Speak to your bank to find out how to use your card.

A "PIN" or Personal Identification Number is provided for your Debit card. **This number should be a secret that only you know.** Memorize this number and then destroy any written copies of it. If someone else has your Debit card and your PIN number they can take money from your account. If you lose this card notify your bank immediately.

Note that some banks charge a fee every time you access your account from an ATM machine belonging to another bank. Keep track of all banking records. It is easy, especially when you use an ATM, to forget how much money you have taken out of the bank.

### Credit Cards

You may be able to use your credit card from home while you are in the United States. Most major retailers accept Visa, Mastercard, Discover Card, and American Express. Be sure to check with your credit card provider before using your card abroad; some companies charge international transactions fees.

### Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks are used less now than in the past. They are a safe and convenient way to carry funds with you. They can be purchased at any bank and are fully refundable if lost or stolen. Make a separate list of check numbers and buy small denominations. Some establishments do not accept traveler's checks; ask before you shop. Where an establishment specifies, "no checks accepted", this usually refers to "personal

checks" from your bank account, not traveler's checks.

## **Need Money in a Hurry? - Western Union & Wire Transfers**

Western Union is a popular money transfer company in the United States and worldwide. This service makes it possible to transfer money from your home country to anywhere in the United States within 15 minutes, on any day of the week. There is a handling charge, which will vary according to the amount of money sent. In the U.S., you can call 1-800-325-6000 or visit <http://locations.westernunion.com/> to find the Western Union office nearest to you, and the office nearest to the person sending money to you.

Wire Transfers allow someone to transfer money from a bank in your home country to your bank in the U.S. This can often take a week or longer. The charge varies from bank to bank, and both the receiving and sending bank may charge you. Not all banks offer this service - check in advance.

## **Part XIII: Making the Adjustment to life in the U.S.**

### **Understanding Culture Shock**

For almost everyone, adjusting to a new society is an exciting and sometimes challenging process. "Culture Shock" can be difficult to deal with at times, but this is a perfectly normal reaction as you have been taken from your familiar environment and placed in a new setting. While everyone responds differently, you usually go through stages in adjusting to a new culture and will encounter things that remind you of your "foreign" status, which is always interesting and often enjoyable. Keeping the following 5 stages in mind may help you understand what you are going through, and also to see that things WILL get better!:

1. **The Honeymoon Stage:** When you first arrive to the US, all of your experiences will likely feel new, exciting, and intriguing. You will be excited to be here, curious to learn about your new home, and stimulated by your new environment. You will also still feel a close connection to the people and way of life in your home country since you have not been away for very long yet.
2. **The Distress Stage:** Once the newness of being in the US has started to wear off, it is not uncommon to start to feel a more negative impact of the differences you are experiencing. Where these differences once felt exciting, they may start to feel confusing, isolating, and may even make you feel bad about yourself for not adjusting immediately. This is also the time when you may realize just how far away you are from your home, and family/friend support system.
3. **The Re-Integration Stage:** During this stage, you may start to develop negative feelings towards your new culture. You may start to view the new language, food, and way of life as inferior to what you left behind at home, and this could make you feel angry or hostile towards your new environment. It is important to remember that these are normal, healthy feelings, so don't get discouraged!
4. **The Autonomy Stage:** You should finally start to be feeling a little better and a little more like yourself again! This is the stage where you begin to accept the differences around you, and feel more confident in coping with new situations that arise. The negative feelings from the first few stages should start to wear off, along with the feelings of loneliness of isolation.
5. **The Independence Stage:** At this stage, you should hopefully feel completely like yourself again! You no longer simply accept the differences between the US and your home country, but you are able to appreciate them and learn from them! Hopefully you have developed friendships in the US, and no longer feel lonely or isolated. At this point, you might even be feeling "at home" in the US!

Again, it is important to remember that all of these stages, while not always pleasant, are a normal part of

the process in adjusting to life in a new culture. If there is ever a point where you feel you are really struggling with your adjustment, please reach out to family, friends (both at home and in the US) and GeoVisions! We are happy to talk with you about your experience.

## US Culture Traits

300 million people call the U.S. home, but they have their origins in every part of the world. Distinct cultures exist, despite the tradition of the "melting pot". You will find many ethnic neighborhoods and concentrations of immigrant groups, all of whom retain their own customs and social traditions. However, almost everyone merges into the American mainstream in some aspect of life, although they may keep many of their own ethnic customs socially and at home. You will find for example that many people in the U.S. speak Spanish. Spanish is in fact the second most common language spoken in the U.S. and it is likely that you will hear Spanish being used at the workplace and in daily life.

## Understanding Temperature

In judging temperatures, an easy formula for translating Fahrenheit to Celsius is to subtract thirty from the Fahrenheit number and divide by two. It's not totally accurate, but it's close! To convert Celsius from Fahrenheit, multiply the Celsius number by two and add thirty.

FORMULA:  $F-30/2=C$  EXAMPLE:  $60F-30, 30/2=15C$

FORMULA:  $C \times 2+30=F$  EXAMPLE:  $15 \times 2=30, 30+30=60F$

## Understanding Time Zones

The continental U.S. is divided into four time zones - Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific. When it is 12:00 noon Eastern Time, it is 11:00 am Central, 10:00 am Mountain, and 9:00 am Pacific.

The U.S. keeps Daylight Savings Time by turning the clocks forward one hour in early April and turning them back one hour in late October.

## Smoking in the US

As part of an intense anti-smoking campaign in the United States, tough measures provide a smoke-free environment. There are several national and local regulations regarding smoking in public places. Smoking is banned on all air flights. Smoking is restricted in many office buildings and restaurants, and usually prohibited on public transportation. Look around before you light a cigarette; "no smoking" signs are usually posted in a clear, visible location. If you are in someone else's house and no one else around you is smoking, ask what the rule is before you light up.

## Tipping in the US

Americans generally tip service people 15% to 20% of the price of the service. This applies to restaurant staff, bartenders, taxi drivers, hair stylists, and other service industry individuals. If you like the job someone did, show it by leaving a bigger tip. Tip less if you did not like the service. Your phone may have an app for this, and you can often find a wallet-sized tipping chart available for purchase at local card shops, stationers, or local drug stores. This will help you when deciding how much to tip various service people while traveling the U.S. Many employees in tipped positions make less than minimum wage and depend on tips to supplement their income.



## Part XIV: Staying Connected

### Internet Access

Internet is the most convenient and affordable way to stay connected to friends and family. You'll likely be able to access the internet in most of the locations you work at in the United States. Many employers have wi-fi connections set up for their students, so be sure to check with your employer for this information. Additionally, internet access can generally be found at Public Libraries (sometimes for free!), local restaurants, coffee shops, and public venues.

### E-Mail

Document your experience! A great way to keep in touch with your friends, family, and GeoVisions is to email frequently. People will be excited to hear about your experiences, and years from now, you'll be able to look back on your emails as a log of the experiences you've had.

**PLEASE NOTE:** GeoVisions' main form of communication with students is via email, so please be sure to check your E-mail often. If you change your email address, please update GeoVisions so we know how to reach you.

### Skype

Skype is a great way to stay connected to your friends and family abroad through video chatting. As long as you have a computer with internet, a camera and microphone, you can have a face to face conversation with someone back home for free! All you need to do is set up a Skype account by visiting the website: <http://www.skype.com/>. With this account, you can also purchase Skype Credit which can be used to make international phone calls at a low cost. Please note that you can log into your Skype account from any computer that is set up for it, so if you do not own a computer you can borrow one from a friend, or try an internet cafe.

### Social Media

Social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter can also be great, free ways to share your experience with people back home.

### Mobile Phones

If you have a mobile phone, you may be able to use it in the US. Talk with your plan provider about your options and fees before using your phone internationally. **SIM** cards can be easily purchased in the US. Again, if you plan to use your mobile phone in the US, talk with your plan provider before traveling to ensure you are pursuing your cheapest options.

### Telephones

Pay phones are rarely used anymore, and may not be your cheapest way to stay connected to people at home. They differ across regions of the U.S. In many regions, the cost of a local call may be 35, 50 cents or more. If you have "added value" to a Pre-paid Calling Card, you will have a toll free number you can call (without depositing any coins), and you can make local and long-distance calls. Most phones have instruction cards on the front of them, but many people find the systems confusing. If you are confused, ask for help.



## Directory Assistance

From many phones you can simply dial 411 to find a phone number of a business. You will be asked for the city and state you are calling, and then for the listing. Consult the instruction card on a pay phone if 411 does not work. Using this service is usually not free, but is not a large sum of money. You may also call 555-1212 from a payphone, for operator assistance.

## Calling Collect

If you do not have lots of coins, you may want to charge the call to the recipient, transfer charges or make a "collect call". To do this, first dial "0" and then the area code and number you wish to reach. An operator will offer to help you. Tell the operator that you wish to place a "collect call" from (your name). This also applies to international calls, though they are both very expensive.

## Telephone Directories

The easiest way to find a phone number for a business is to look online if you are able to. However, two different kinds of telephone books are available to you if you are looking for someone's number or address. The White Pages lists numbers by last name and city. The White Pages are used for looking up individuals by name. This will list their home landline phone number, but not their mobile phone. The Yellow Pages is the business directory where listings are under general business categories.

## Mail

You can buy stamps at a post office, many convenience stores, and even at many ATM machines. At stamp machines away from the post office, you may find that you pay more than the actual value of the stamps. You can drop mail in the slots at the Post Office or in a drop box on a street corner. Mail is delivered from Monday - Saturday in the United States. Please remember that it may take longer for international mail to reach its destination.

# Part XV: Travel during Your Program

Your Summer Work/Travel program makes it possible for you to travel to places in the U.S. other than just where your job is. You can travel on days off, or maybe you want to take advantage of the extra 30 days you can remain in the country at the end of the program.

## Trips Out of the United States

If you wish to travel abroad during your time in the United States, you can only travel abroad **within the dates on your DS-2019 Form**. If you travel outside of these dates, you may not be allowed back into United States and you will have to travel back to your home country directly from the country you are visiting.

If you wish to travel during the dates on your DS Form, you will need to send us your DS-2019 Form so that we can authorize your travel. This signature is required by Customs and Border Patrol for re-entry to the U.S. and confirms that you remain in good standing on the program. **You should send your DS-2019 form to the GeoVisions office at least two weeks before your trip.** Please include a note with the following information:

- the dates you are planning on traveling
- Destination Information – where will you be staying on your trip?
- Your return address
- and your phone number.

In order for us to sign off on your DS-Form, please mail your DS Form to:

54 Split Oak Circle  
Chesterfield, NH 03443

Once GeoVisions receives your DS Form and additional information, we will sign it and will send it back to the address you provided. We will send it by the same means you sent it to us; ie overnight post, or by regular mail.

**Important Notes:**

- Make sure your J-1 visa allows you to make multiple entries into the U.S. This is indicated by the letter "M" under the word "Entries" on your J-I visa and allows you to re-enter the U.S. more than once during your authorized dates. If your visa does not have an "M" you may not re-enter the U.S. on J-1 status.
- Make sure you look online to see if you need to apply for a visa to enter the country you will be visiting. Here is the link for those interested in visiting Canada:  
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/ENGLISH/VISIT/index.asp>
- Make sure that your employer has approved your time away from your work site, since you will be travelling during the dates on your DS Form. We always recommend to students to travel on your days off so that you don't leave your employer shorthanded.
- Upon your return to the U.S., you must present your passport with your valid J-I Visa and your signed DS-2019 form to the Immigration Officer. The officer will look at your DS-2019 form and return it to you, so keep these documents safe.

## Flights in the US

Except on very short trips, this is the quickest way to travel in the U.S. There are more than 1,000 airports throughout the country! Obtaining the best fare at the time you want to travel is not always easy. Check the internet or the travel section of major metropolitan newspapers for the latest and lowest airline fares. With many low cost airlines in the U.S. it is sometimes cheaper to fly then to take a bus or train.

## Busses in the US

Bus travel is an inexpensive and popular way to travel around the U.S. The major bus companies can help you connect to local bus transportation to reach even remote towns. Greyhound Bus Company is one of the major bus companies in the U.S. and offers a number of special discount passes. Greyhound information can be found online at <http://www.greyhound.com> or by phone at (toll-free) 1-800-231-2222.

Another option for bus travel on the east coast is Mega Bus & Bolt Bus. They are both one of the cheapest carriers of bus service in terms of price, but are reliable. For tickets and a complete coverage map visit the following links: <http://us.megabus.com/> & <https://www.boltbus.com/>

## Trains in the US

Amtrak, the national railroad, offers rail passes that allow you to travel through just a part, or on the entire system. You can buy single trip tickets and there is even a pass available only to foreign visitors to the U.S. For tickets and a complete coverage map visit the following link: <http://www.amtrak.com> or by phone (toll-free) at 1-800-872-7245.

## Hitchhiking in the US – DON'T DO IT!

Hitchhiking is **very dangerous**. It is strongly discouraged. In most of the states in the U.S. it is illegal. However it is completely illegal to hitchhike on any major highway, exit, or entrance ramp in the U.S. If you are caught hitching in places that it is illegal, the police can pick you up. If you do hitch, never do so alone. Beware of drivers with drugs or alcohol in the car, as it is an offense to have these items in a car in most states (you are just as liable for punishment as the driver in many states if you are stopped by a police officer).

## Tours in the US

Organized tours can be a great way of traveling if you are on your own or if time is limited. They are a good way to make new friends and see a large area in a short amount of time. Many students like to take adventure tours on which you stay in tents, cook your own meals, and visit major cities and national parks.

## Driving a Car in the U.S: Some General Driving Rules

You must have a valid driver's license from your home country in order to drive in the U.S. You will also need an International Driver's License, available in your home country from motoring organizations. You must obtain the International License prior to arrival in the U.S. To rent a car, most companies require that you be at least 21 years of age and have at least one major credit card.

It is important to understand that, in the United States, motor vehicle regulations and traffic laws vary from state to state. If you are planning to drive, be sure to become familiar with any local and state laws in areas you will drive.

- You must have car insurance when you drive in the United States. Rental car companies will offer this to you, but if you buy your own car, be sure to sign up before driving.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Report motor vehicle accidents to the local police immediately.
- Tickets/ Infractions: You are responsible for paying all tickets you receive and answering all charges incurred.
- Always wear your seatbelt! It is the law in most states and you can be ticketed for it.
- Never drink and drive or have open containers of alcohol in your car! Penalties are extremely strict and enforced.
- Look for posted signs stating the maximum speed limit and follow these closely. Laws against speeding are strictly enforced in order to prevent reckless driving, accidents, and loss of life.
- Visit the following site for more info: <http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Foreign-Visitors-Driving.shtml>

## Bike Safety

Riding a bicycle can be one of the cheapest, and most convenient ways to explore your local area while in the US. However, **the most frequent injuries, and, even deaths, of exchange students, result from bicycle**

**accidents.** Here are a few key safety rules that you should keep in mind when riding:

1. **WEAR A HELMET:** Make sure you have a helmet that fits you properly and wear it at all times when riding. This is one of the most important ways to protect yourself when riding your bike
2. **Maintain your bike:** Always check to make sure that your breaks and tires are working properly before riding
3. **Make yourself visible:** When driving on a road with car traffic, you always want to make sure that drivers can see you easily. It is a good idea to wear bright colors when you ride your bike such as neon or florescent colors. You also may consider putting reflective tape on your bike, or buying a flashing light to attach to it when riding at night
4. **Keep both hands on the handlebars:** Use a backpack to carry anything you may need to take with you
5. **Be attentive:** Always be on the lookout for pot holes, puddles, rocks, and more when riding. Keep an eye on the road in front of you so you are not caught off-guard
6. **Go with the flow of traffic:** Ride in the same direction that vehicles are driving in.
7. **Obey all traffic laws:** It is important to obey traffic signs, signals, and lane markings
8. **Yield to traffic and pedestrians when necessary:** Just as you would when driving, stop and look before entering a major intersection, making a turn into traffic, or approaching a crosswalk
9. **Be consistent:** Ride in a straight line and do not weave in and out of traffic. Signal before turning, just as you would when driving
10. **Avoid the sidewalks:** Adults generally should not ride their bikes on sidewalks, but should ride in roads with the flow of traffic while observing all traffic laws and staying attentive!

For more information on bicycle safety in the US please visit:

[http://www.be-safe.org/css\\_com/bicycle/rules.html](http://www.be-safe.org/css_com/bicycle/rules.html) & <http://bicyclesafe.com/#reprint>

## Accommodations on the Move

When you are traveling in the U.S., you have many choices in deciding where to stay. You can choose from hotels, motels, youth hostels, YMCA's, YWCA's, campsites, bed and breakfasts, and universities. There are about 300 youth hostels operated by the American Youth Hostels Association, a member of the International Youth Hostel Federation, which are scattered throughout the U.S. In order to use a Youth Hostel facility, you must be a member of the organization.

YMCA's and YWCA's also provide affordable temporary lodging. For information, call "Y's Way International" at 212-308-2899. You can also visit YMCA and YWCA websites for listings of local facilities near you. Note that not all facilities offer housing.

Many universities and colleges offer budget accommodations in their student housing. If there is a college or university in the area you are visiting, contact the student housing office on campus. It is recommended that you call and make reservations in advance, if possible.

You may want to buy a travel guidebook to help you find accommodations, restaurants, and other facilities while you are traveling in the U.S. Two that we recommend are the [Let's Go Guides](#) and the [Lonely Planet Guides](#).

## Part XVI: US. Laws - Avoiding Trouble

Even though you are a visitor, the law still applies to you. You must respect local laws, just as you do at home. The U.S. police can be very strict.

### Drugs

Illegal possession of controlled substances (drugs) in the U.S. is subject to prosecution by law. The penalties for drug possession vary from state to state and region to region. Any type of illegal drug use is very serious, as the U.S. is attempting to control the trafficking of illegal substances. You are subject to fines and possible time in jail for any drug possession or association with people who have drugs.

### Alcohol

Please be aware of U.S. drinking laws, which state that you must be 21 years old to drink alcohol legally in the U.S. In many regions, you will be asked to produce one or more identification documents (with picture) to prove that you are above the legal drinking age. Many bars will only accept a driver's license or identification card from the Department of Motor Vehicles that states your age. An identification card does not authorize you to drive. Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles for information on the procedure for obtaining an identification card. Drinking alcohol in public (i.e., outside a restaurant, bar, or your residence, is prohibited in many places, especially in beach resort towns. You will be subject to fines if you are found guilty).

A national campaign to raise awareness of "drunk driving" and decrease alcohol-related traffic accidents has swept the U.S. Phrases used for drinking and driving are Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or Driving Under the Influence (DUI). The enforcement of DWI/DUI laws is very tough. To keep yourself and others safe, **do not drink and drive**. Americans generally appoint a "designated driver" when going out with a group of friends. This person agrees to refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages.

### Shoplifting/Stealing

Shoplifting and theft are taken very seriously in the US. If you are caught shoplifting at a store, the police will be called and you will be arrested and taken to jail. Stores in the US do press charges, even for small amounts of merchandise. If you are accused of stealing at the workplace or from another person, the police can be called and an investigation started. If there is evidence to arrest you, the police will do so.

### Local Law Enforcement

Unlike most countries, laws in the U.S. vary from state-to-state and even city-to-city. It is important to become familiar with and obey the local laws in the town or city where you are living to avoid any potential legal difficulties. For example, the permanent population of resort towns may be only a few thousand, but during the summer months, the population may grow to more than 100,000. In an effort to maintain order, the local police often strictly enforce minor laws. Local laws, which govern alcohol consumption, noise levels, and group gatherings, are strict. Your best source of information will be local residents and U.S. students who are living and working in the town or city.

## Legal Rights - What to do if you are arrested:

If you are accused of having committed a crime, you should talk to a lawyer, before you answer any questions regarding:

- Underage Drinking
- Drinking Alcohol in Public Places
- Drug Possession/Disturbing the Peace
- Disorderly Conduct (talking back to the police, etc.)
- Destruction of Property
- Shoplifting
- Bouncing checks (writing checks from your account that are not covered by your funds)

**Make sure you or someone you designate contact GeoVisions immediately.**

## Posting Bail

Whenever you are arrested and charged, a judge will decide on how much "bail" you must pay for your "release pending trial". Bail is a deposit that must be paid to ensure your appearance at the set trial date. Your bail is determined by the severity of your crime. If you are unable to pay your full bail payment, "bondsmen" can be hired to cover this cost. For example, if the court sets your bail at \$500 and you do not have that much money available, a bail bondsman will charge you about 10% (in this case \$50). The bondsman will pay the remaining \$450 towards your bail, and will keep your \$50 as his fee.

NOTE: Failure to appear at your assigned court date will result in the loss of the bail money, which has been posted by you or the bondsman. If you used a bail bondsman, you will owe him the full fee. This may also increase the severity of charges against you.

It is also possible that you will be denied bail. If this occurs you will need to remain in jail until your court date.

## Part XVII: Completing Your Summer Work and Travel Program

Congratulations! You have been part of a cultural experience and we hope that you have many memories, pictures, values, life skills, and hopefully a little money to bring home with you. There may not seem like there is that much to prepare for when getting ready to leave but here are a few guidelines, so that you don't forget anything.

## Extending Your Stay

Sometimes students wish to extend their stay in the USA after they have arrived. Students are permitted to extend their participation in the program, up to a maximum working period of four months as long as it does not interfere with their university calendar or US Embassy guidelines. Additionally, we'll need to receive confirmation from your employer that they are able to extend your working period.

GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel has the following policies regarding extending your stay:

1. Extension requests must be submitted to GeoVisions at least 10 days prior to the end date on your

Form DS 2019.

2. Extension requests must be for a minimum duration of 7 days.
3. Only 1 extension request can be submitted per student per season.

Once a request is submitted to GeoVisions, we will confirm with your employer if it is a request that they are able to approve. We will also check with your agent abroad, to ensure your extension does not interfere with your return to university. If all parties approve your request, GeoVisions will amend and ship you a new Form DS-2019.

You will need to provide your employer with a copy of this amended form.

## Understanding the 30-Day Travel / Grace Period

Your Visa category allows you to remain in the U.S. for up to 30 days after the end date on your Form DS-2019. During these 30 days you are allowed to explore the United States as a tourist. We hope you have the opportunity to take advantage of this travel period – it's a great chance for exchange visitors to see new parts of the United States, and gain new cultural experiences.

It's important to remember that you are NOT ALLOWED to work after the end date on your DS-2019 Form. If you work during this time, you are considered to be in violation of the GeoVisions and Department of State program rules. This is a very serious offense, and it is very important that you abide by this rule!

Additionally, please do not leave the US and re-enter during your travel period. If you travel abroad outside of the dates on your DS Form, you may not be allowed back into United States and you will have to travel back to your home country directly from the country you are visiting. If you wish to travel abroad during your program, please see the section in this handbook about travelling to Mexico, Canada and beyond!

Please also be sure to book your travel home prior to the completion of the 30 day travel period. Participants who remain after the 30-day period without proper authorization are in violation of US immigration laws.

## Reconfirm Your Return Flight

You should reconfirm your flight with the airline to ensure you get a seat! Call the airline, or visit their website at least ten days before your flight to confirm you still plan to travel. You may be able to select your seat at that time, and also just ensure that no changes have been made to the schedule departure. We suggest you also call the day of the flight to ensure everything is scheduled as confirmed.

## Pay Your Debts

It is your responsibility to make sure that you pay off any debts that you have, such as rent, electric, heating, medical bills, water, or cable. Any bill that you have been told to pay while in the United States must be paid before you leave. This is also true of speeding or parking tickets. You can usually pay these at your police station, or send them by mail.



## Your Housing

As you pack up all of your belongings most students will notice that they have many things that will be left behind. These are your responsibility to clean up. **Your housing should look the same, if not better, than it did when you arrived.** Some employers have security deposits that can be kept if you do not fulfill your obligation to clean your living area, or complete your promised work dates. If your housing is in the same condition as when you arrived then these security deposits may be returned to you. Any damages done to the housing, or furnishings, may be deducted from this deposit before it is returned.

## Close your bank account

It is recommended that you close your bank account and retrieve your money prior to your return home. It can sometimes be difficult to conduct your banking after you leave the USA, and you may be subject to fees or taxes if you try withdrawing your money from an ATM outside the USA. Be sure you understand the policies of your bank and your account when you first sign up to avoid unpleasant surprises at the end of your stay. One safe way to send your earnings from your bank in the US to your home bank account would be to execute a wire transfer. This may cost a few dollars, but you will have the peace of mind that your money has been safely transferred and will be waiting for you at home. It is not recommended for you to take your funds home in cash, as traveling with large sums of money can be dangerous.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If your pay checks are automatically deposited into your bank account, be sure to let your employer know that you have closed your bank account.

## Reverse Culture Shock

At the end of the GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel program, you will have many wonderful memories, a full address book, and the confidence that you handled all the challenges and opportunities of your visit. For many people, readjusting to life in their own country is just as complicated as their adjustment to life in the U.S.! When you travel abroad, you expect things to be different, and they are. However, having difficulty readjusting to the familiar surroundings of your home country can come as a surprise. You may go back home expecting everything to be just as you left it. While you were away, two things will have happened. All of your friends and family have continued with their lives, so things will not be just as you left them, and after living in a new culture, you may have formed new ideas and have returned home a slightly different person with a new outlook on certain matters.

Cultural awareness and re-adjustment of perspectives are major benefits of international work and travel. When you return home, you will see your own culture from a slightly different perspective. You will have become accustomed to aspects of U.S. culture and may miss the "special" feeling of living overseas. Those who worked in resort areas will certainly miss the beautiful surroundings and facilities. When you get home, it will be good to stay in touch with other GeoVisions Summer Work/Travel participants, and keep the memories alive.

**Thank you for participating on the GeoVisions Summer Work  
and Travel Program!**