

# The First Two Weeks



A guidebook for International Students  
(by fellow international students)

# You've arrived! You're jet lagged, you're in your new (likely bare) home, now what?

Here we outline your first two weeks in the US and we propose some of the options you have.

Please keep in mind that the International Center also has different [events](#) that you can participate in if you choose to do so.

# Outline

1. Arrival recap
2. Day 1 - Settling in
3. Getting your MCard
4. Where to buy things
5. Orientations
6. Phone plan
7. Bank account
8. Grocery shopping
9. Getting around Ann Arbor
10. Library resources
11. Health insurance
12. UM Emergency Alert System
13. After the first two weeks

# 1) Arrival Day Recap

**On the plane** - fill out customs forms (this varies on format and requirements based on where you are arriving from).

**Security check at the airport** - Do not panic if they pull you out for extra security check. It happens sometimes. Keep your documentation with you that provides information about your VISA and your address in the US. Do what they tell you and you should be ok. Keep in mind that in these areas you are usually required to turn off your phone.

**Out of the airport** - YAY! There are different ways in how you can come to Ann Arbor:

- Buses that take you from the airport to Ann Arbor (you can buy tickets online, but will need a debit/credit card that is accepted). You can buy a ticket for the Michigan flyer, [here](#). You can also buy the ticket at the airport (see reservation section on [this](#) page), but you need to have the the exact amount of the ticket price in cash, and there is no guarantee in this case that there will be free seats for the bus you want to catch. Most buses offer bottles of water or there are water fountains around the airport (tip: bring a small refillable bottle, so you don't need to buy water at the airport!)
- Taxi, Uber or Lyft - outside the airport there will be taxis that can take you to Ann Arbor, those tend to be expensive, but it can be an option.

**Email us** before and maybe one of us can pick you up! [international-anthrostudents@umich.edu](mailto:international-anthrostudents@umich.edu)



## 2) Day 1 - Settling into your new home

So you find yourself in your new home. It can be overwhelming and the list of things to do might be staggering. Don't let this get to you - you will get it all done.

Take a look around your place; what will you need to get by the first few days?

1. Do you need linens, a pillow, basic cooking utensils? Make a list of the main things you need. There are lots of places where you can pick these things up. If you want new things, Walmart is a good option (they also deliver). There are also small shops around Ann Arbor, but they tend to be expensive. If you don't mind used things, there are several thrift shops in Ann Arbor.
2. What services do you need to set up? Internet? Water? Electricity? Make a list of these and try to get them set up as soon as possible. In terms of internet, if you live near campus, you may be able to use the school wifi or go to a cafe in order to get wifi (most places like Starbucks have free wifi) to contact your family.

# Tips if your apartment is unfurnished

If you know that you are coming into an apartment that does not have furniture, try to arrange that you have a sleeping bag for the first night (and a blanket). You do not necessarily have to bring these things with you. Send an email to the students! Chances are one of us has a sleeping bag or extra blanket lying around that we can let you borrow for the first few days until you are able to set yourself up.

If you cannot arrange to borrow one, consider bringing a small one with you (if possible). They both don't take a lot of space in your luggage, but can be a helpful alternative for your first few days.

For tips where to buy furniture and all other needs, see slides below.

### 3) Get your MCard

This should be one of the first things you do when you arrive as you use your MCard for everything university related: getting into buildings, using the library, using the busses etc.

Information on setting up and picking up your MCard can be found [here](#).



## 4) Where to buy things - home items, clothing etc.

This is a college town. People arrive and leave all the time. If you need a couch, a lamp, something for your kitchen, you can probably get it used for free or very cheap. There are Facebook groups such as: buy no things Ann Arbor, MI; Facebook MarketPlace, etc. There are also "Garage sales" where people pull out all the things they don't need anymore for cheap.

\*Many groups, clubs, associations also hold events where they give away or sell used things.

There are multiple thrift shops, like [Salvation Army](#) and [PTO](#) where you can buy used things for a good price.

[Craigslist.org](#) is an option (but you have to be cautious to avoid scams).

Worse case scenario: **order online** - the USA has a good system of ordering online through major companies such as Amazon, Target, Walmart and getting your items delivered. This is a somewhat more expensive option, but is there.

For a list of stores in Ann Arbor, you can check out the International Center's website, [here](#).

If you need help settling in your new home, please don't hesitate to reach out, even if you feel awkward about it. It can be a stressful procedure and having a hand can ease the process.

## 5) Orientations

You will have to attend a few orientations when you arrive.

The main two are the **Rackham Mandatory Immigration Check-in** and the **Anthropology Graduate Program Check-in** (you will receive information on these via your email).

They are both mandatory but make sure you pay extra attention to emails about the Rackham check-in. This is really important!! Here you get information on your F-1 VISA status and your I20, and you will get your first I20 signature. (If you are on a J1 visa you will have a DS2019, instead of an I20.) For more information on the check-in, you can go [here](#).

## 6) Getting an American Phone Plan

There are a few different options you can consider when it comes to an American Phone plan. You can opt for a prepaid, pay as you go plan, or an annual contract plant. It will just depend on your needs and preferences.

Depending on your needs, and if you get data, a monthly plan might cost somewhere around \$45 USD (with data).

A prepaid plan can be purchased online or in store. If purchased online, your new sim card will be shipped to you within a few days. If you also need to purchase a new phone, the in-store option might be better.

Major phone companies in the US include:

- 1) [AT&T](#)
- 2) [T-Mobile](#)
- 3) [Sprint](#)
- 4) [Verizon](#)

Of course there are others, such as [Google Fi](#), which is an excellent option if you plan to use your phone abroad - the plan is flexible and cheap (minimum pay \$20); we encourage you to look into what works best for you. And as always, you can ask us for help or advice.

## 7) Opening a Bank Account

This is also one of the first things that you will have to do when you arrive. There are many banks in Ann Arbor, it is worth while doing a little research to find one that suits your needs.

Many students first sign up with the [University of Michigan Credit Union](#).

Other banks include (but are not limited to) [PNC](#) and [Chase](#). These are larger banks which have branches throughout the US.

When going in to open your account, many banks will ask for ID (your passport), your I20, and your country ID tax number. Again you will have to consider your needs when picking a bank. We are always happy to answer any questions. Most banks have apps helping you managing your money. But most banks do not have options to send money to other people's accounts or your international account (except PNC). Apart from Paypal, a good option is to download Venmo app, which will help you manage getting money from one account to the other without charge for the first days. A word of caution, Venmo requires a piece of US issued ID for verification (This can be a Michigan driving license (if you get one), a Michigan ID (which you can apply for) or the VISA page in your passport).

Once you have your bank account open, you will need to set up your [direct deposit](#) so you can receive your stipend from the University (if you have not done so already).

## 8) Grocery Shopping

There are multiple grocery stores in and around Ann Arbor. Many require a car, however. One option is to carpool with a friend or roommate if you do not have a car.

Another option is to bus to the grocery store and take an Uber / Lyft back home.

In the Spring, Summer, and into the Fall, you can also go to the [Ann Arbor Farmers Market](#) for fresh local produce (Please note that it can be quite an expensive option, but is there).

There are also many small stores, like [Argus Farm Stop](#), pharmacies and even corner stores, like **7/11** if you need something small.

The [Maize & Blue Cupboard](#) is also an option to know about. This resource provides free food to students!

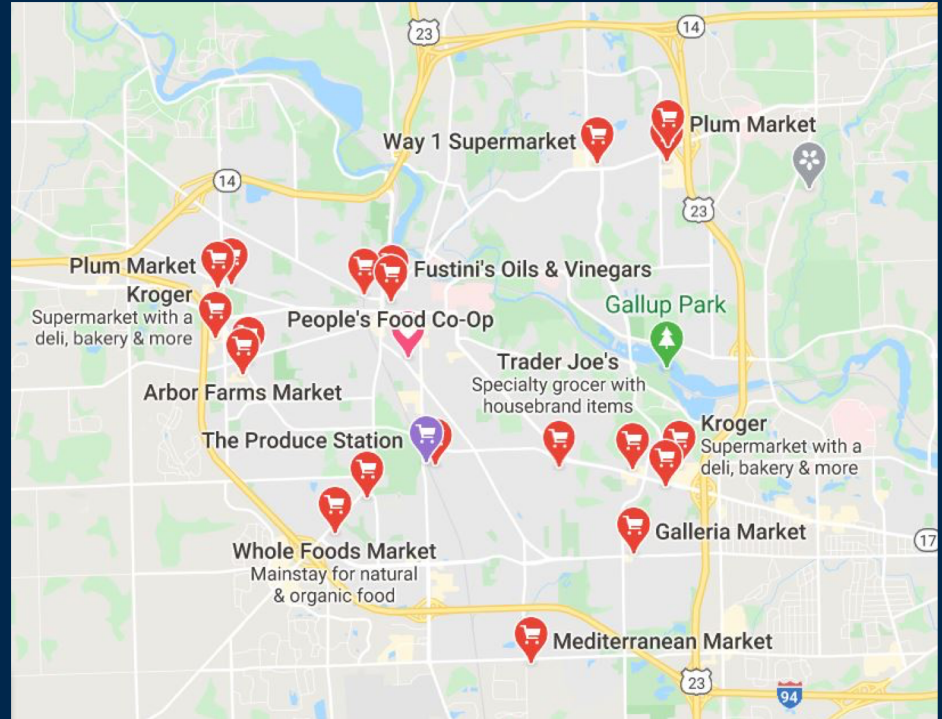
You can also order groceries or dry goods online, via Amazon or there are apps like [Instacart](#) which get the groceries delivered to you - for a charge of course.



# List of Grocery Stores

- Costco
- Kroger
- Meijer
- Walmart
- Aldi
- Trader Joe's
- Mediterranean Market
- Hyundai Asian Market
- Patel Brothers Grocery
- Way 1 Supermarket

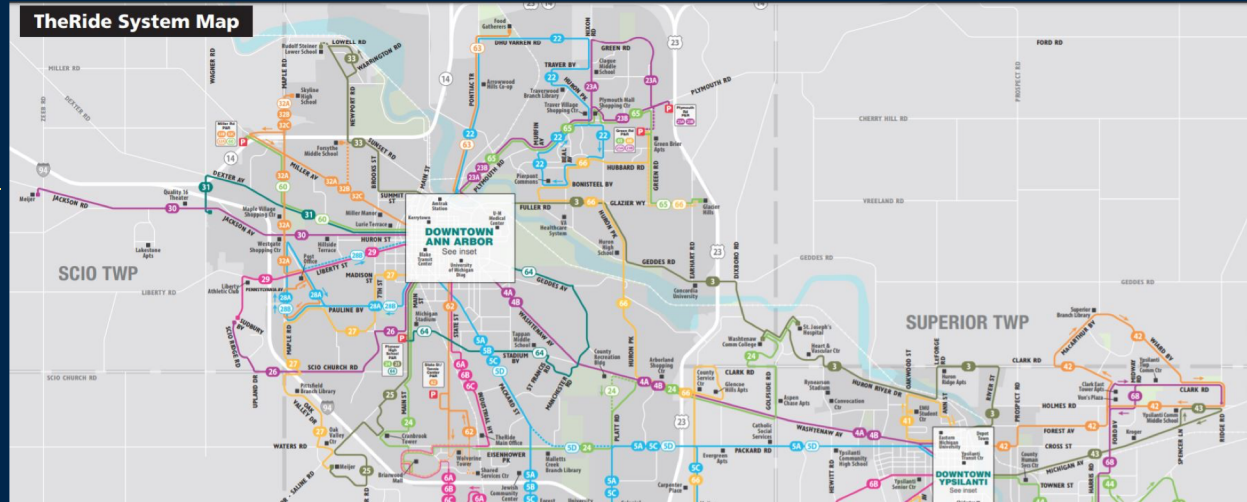
You can do a Google map search and find nearest to you or meets your needs. This is not a comprehensive list, just a small selection of what is available to you. For a comprehensive list, [go here](#).



# 9) Getting Around - Ann Arbor Bus Systems

Ann Arbor is a fairly walkable city. You can get around quite easily on foot, by bike, car if you choose to purchase one (although parking in the center is another thing all together). Another option for further trips is to take a Lyft or Uber. We have two bus lines in Ann Arbor, the University Buses and the City Buses. You can use both for free. You just have to swipe your MCard on the city buses.

For information on buses, routes and schedules, you can visit the [Ride Website](#). To access the map, [click here](#).



# If you want to explore outside Ann Arbor

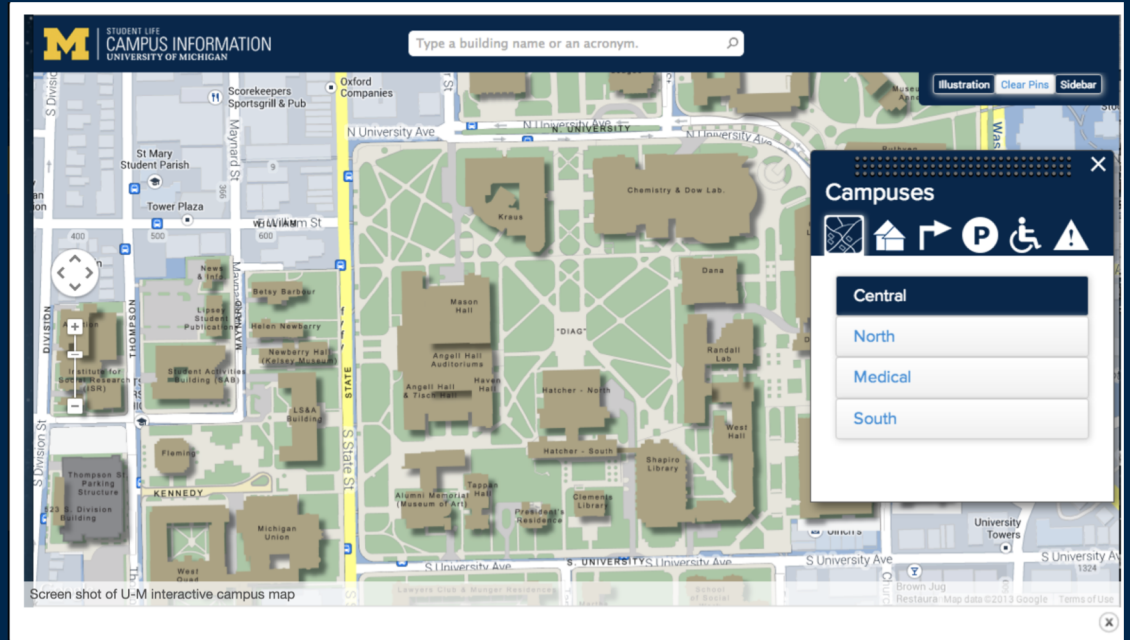
If you need a car last minute, but you otherwise do not want to buy a car there is the option of [Zipcar](#), which allows you to rent a car for a fee.

This might be a good option if you want to purchase new furniture or just want a weekend escape to explore outside Ann Arbor. Keep in mind that this is a somewhat expensive option, but is there.

Alternatively if you want to explore outside Ann Arbor during your time here there are bus systems such as [Megabus](#), [Greyhound](#) (the bus that takes you to the Airport apart from other places) or you can travel by [train](#).

# Campus Map

It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the campus. At some point you will learn everything by heart, but everyone has to start somewhere. This [Interactive Campus Map](#) is really helpful!



# 10) Library Services

There are many libraries on campus, [Hatcher Graduate Library](#) being the one dedicated specifically to graduate students. However this does not mean you cannot use and access the others. We also have a map library, located in Hatcher. For more information on the different collections and databases, [click here](#).

The [online search engine](#) will become your best friend. It will allow you to search for books, articles and any other materials. If the library does not have something you need in particular, you can order it from another Library, via [Interlibrary Loan](#). If you need just a chapter or a specific article, you can ask a Librarian to access it for you, and they will email you a pdf within a few days. Because of COVID, almost anything is available online through [HathiTrust](#). These are usually older materials, but still a great resource.

You can download an [extension](#) that will work with your browser access to licensed library resources by automatically detecting when you come across a resource.

# 11) Health Insurance

1. How to select your coverage
2. What is covered
3. Making an appointment
4. Mental health

As an international student, you are required to have health insurance. The good news is that basic health insurance is covered by your funding package. However there is always some confusion on what is covered and how to use the health services available to you. For information regarding health insurance at UMich as an international student, [click here](#). For an explanation of GradCare at Michigan, [click here](#).

For an overview of healthcare in the US, [click here](#).

# How to select your coverage

In your first year you will be asked to select your coverage level in October. Each year after that you will have the ability to change your coverage every October. Once you make your selection, it is what you will have for the year. After the first year, any changes you make in October will take effect in the beginning of the new year (January of the coming year). For more information, check out the [UHS Healthcare website](#).

You will receive an email at the beginning of the semester providing more information on health insurance and prompting you to make your selection before the October deadline.

# What is covered

## Basic (default coverage)

- No additional monthly cost
- Covers trips to the medical center
- Copay for prescriptions
- Preventative Dental Care
- Eye exam

You will have the option to add additional coverage such as Dental and Vision. These add ons will cost a monthly payment, but offer you more coverage such as dental work (fillings etc.) and prescription glasses. Not everyone will need the same sort of coverage so we encourage everyone to think about their needs and to consider the coverage they have in their home countries as well. If you are interested in purchasing extra coverage, you need to do so before the October deadline.



# Making an appointment - UHS

You can find information [here](#) how to schedule an appointment at the University Health Service (UHS). The building is located on campus (207 Fletcher St.). You can usually make an appointment by calling UHS or using the mobile app. For more information on making an appointment, please see this [page](#) by the International Center.

Later on you may also want to register on the patient portal. Read relevant information about the portal [here](#). UMich Medicine has created an app, [MyUofMHealth](#), which you can download and will let you access the UMich Health portal from your phone. Here you can make appointments, contact your doctor, view test results.

You will be asked to select a [primary care physician](#), this is like family doctor that you can visit instead of going to the University Medical Center. You can still go to the University Health Services even if you have a primary healthcare physician.

# Primary care centers

The Primary care centers are located inside the [UHS](#) building at 207 Fletcher St. Some of the most common used are for example:

- [Eye Clinic](#)
- [Women health center](#)
- [Wellness Center](#)
- [Immunizations](#)

Inside the building you also have a [Pharmacy](#) where you can collect any medicine you might need. If you choose to collect your medicine closer to your home, you can check close by [CVS](#) for example.

# Why make an appointment?

If you are feeling sick or are injured you should make an appointment.

However you do not have to be sick go into UHS. A yearly check up is always a good thing to do, before or after coming back from the field for example.

Some countries require you to have certain immunizations before arriving, this is important to consider before going off into the field.

If you have any health concerns or questions you can call the UHS and a registered nurse can give you advice. If needed they might encourage you to make an appointment to come in and talk to a doctor.

# Mental health

Graduate school can be difficult. There are resources available to help us deal with the stress cases by school can life in general.

Professional Counseling: [Counseling and Psychological Services](#), are a good first step if you have never been to therapy before. If you would like you go an alternate route outside of the University you can find your own therapist. Just make sure that they accept Grad Care. [Integrative Empowerment Group](#) is a service that many of our grads have used instead and have given it great reviews.

The community: While friends and colleagues should not replace professional help, they can still help. For many of us, our community was a great resources as we struggled through classes, research woes, and academia in general.

Comic relief: [Umich memes for wolverteens](#)

You will spend many years here. Remember to take care of yourself.

# Emergency room

While we hope you will not need to use it, it is good to know where the emergency room located. It is important to know also that our Grad Care will only cover Emergency Room visits if it is “necessary.” For more information on emergency room visits and coverage, [go here](#).

If you need health care and the UHS is closed, but it is not what would be classified as an emergency, you can also go to an Urgent Care Center. If you are worried about coverage, you can always call the center ahead of time to ask.

This [map](#) shows you the location of the adult and children emergency rooms.



# 12) UM Emergency Alerts

- UM Emergency Alerts are urgent, mass notifications that keep students, faculty and staff informed about major active emergencies on campus. This system will be activated without undue delay by the Division of Public Safety and Security (DPSS).
- Examples of Emergencies include:
  - An active violence incident, such as an active attacker
  - A tornado warning for Washtenaw County
  - A severe thunderstorm with wind greater than 75 miles per hour
  - A major spill of hazardous material(s)
- Students, faculty and staff are automatically enrolled to receive UM Emergency Alerts via email and text message/SMS. Please visit [alerts.umich.edu](https://alerts.umich.edu) to verify or update the mobile number currently enrolled in the system.
- For more information, please visit the [UM Emergency Alerts Website](#)

# 13) What's coming next?

After your few weeks here, you will be in full-PhD-mode. Congrats on making it! It's actually not an easy journey, so be proud of yourself!

For your further needs we created another PowerPoint to help you navigate little challenges that will come on your road further this year. In the next PowerPoint you can find information about:

1. Taxes
2. Funding
3. Useful Resources
4. Getting an American Credit Card
5. Things we wished people told us before..

**Things to keep in mind**



# Graduate school changes you

When you first come to Graduate school you might have different expectations or ideas of what this program or your career will be. This will most likely change in the next couple of years and that's ok.

Change can be terrifying and there can be many ups and down. Please be aware that you are not alone in this process. Many graduate students (international and non-international) suffer from what is called [imposter syndrome](#). Many of us had experienced it, so if you feel overwhelmed, do not hesitate to reach for help and enjoy yourself.

Graduate school is not just a "career choice", but for many of us is a stage of our life that will influence our mental health and who we are.

# Getting used to the USA

Your new home is most likely very different from what you were used to (at least that's how it was for many of us).

There are numerous courses and events organized by the University that can help you settle in, but sometimes they tend to conflict with your schedule or are simply not your thing (and that is completely ok!). However, the University or the Department might set up events, which are meant to help you, so it's good to keep track of them on your email.

Emails will become your new best friend. You will receive A LOT of emails. Make sure you are keeping track of them (it's hard - so don't hesitate to reach out to your Buddy or any of us for help of clarification). A good tip if you are struggling with emails is to set a certain time every day dedicated to checking and responding to emails. This is a rule of thumb of course, since some emails will require a more urgent response.

# Leaving on a positive note,

Despite its difficulties, Graduate school is meant to be a positive experience. We are here because we love what we do, after all. It will not always be easy, but we hope that it will be worth it. Take advantages of the resources Grad school offers, including the community and connections you will make with your colleagues turned future friends and collaborators!

Please Note: This guide is meant to be a helpful resource created by current international graduate students to help explain certain process or experiences we found challenging about the program or life in the US. It is not a substitute for official advice or mentoring from the University, the department or your advisor. We encourage the use of this guide as a starting point, but stress that it should not replace specific or official guidelines or advice pertaining to your specific situation. Whenever you need specific advice in regards to the program, classes, funding or anything bureaucratic (Visa, paperwork, taxes, payroll) you need to reach out to the appropriate administrator within the University as they are equipped to help answer your questions.