



Odyssey International Camp

Participant Handbook



CONTACT US



www.odc-camp.com



info@odcinternational.com



+1-310-421-0107



@OdysseyCamp



@odccamp



Odyssey International Camp

Table of Contents

1. WELCOME	3
2. CONTACT INFORMATION	4
3. PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST	5
4. ENTERING THE UNITED STATES	6
5. ARRIVAL CHECKLIST	7
6. TOP 10 MOST IMPORTANT REMINDERS	7
7. KNOW YOUR PROGRAM	10
8. RULES, REGULATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	11
9. CAMP COUNSELOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	13
10. CULTURE SHOCK	14
11. ACTIVATING YOUR PROGRAM	15
12. OBTAINING YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY CARD	16
13. MONEY	17
14. MONTHLY CHECK-INS	20
15. TAXES	20
16. TAX REFUNDS	22
17. MEDICAL INSURANCE	23
18. HOUSING	24
19. YOUR HOST CAMP	25
20. YOUR RIGHTS AS AN EXCHANGE VISITOR	28
21. CULTURAL EXPLORATION	30
22. SAFETY	31
23. LAWS AND LEGAL INFORMATION	35
24. LEAVING THE UNITED STATES DURING YOUR PROGRAM	37
25. LEAVING THE UNITED STATES AT THE END OF YOUR PROGRAM	39
26. AMERICAN CULTURE AND CUSTOMS	41
27. USEFUL INFORMATION	43
28. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	45

1. WELCOME

Congratulations on your decision to learn about and explore the United States through Odyssey International Camp! You are about to embark on a journey of knowledge, adventure and exploration and we are here to help you get the most out of your experience. The following handbook is designed to assist you navigate some of the common situations you may encounter during your time in the United States.

As your designated program sponsor, Odyssey has been approved by the United States Department of State to administer this exchange visitor program and is responsible for your safety and wellbeing during your program. We are also here to ensure the rules, regulations and goals of the program are met so that you, your host camp and everyone else involved with your J-1 program have a positive and memorable experience.

Please be sure to read and review all of the information contained in this handbook as it will surely help you at some point during your upcoming journey.

Again, welcome and let's begin!

2. CONTACT INFORMATION

One of the benefits of choosing Odyssey as your program sponsor is that someone is always available to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have. Please save the below contact information in case you need to reference it at a later date.

For general questions and inquiries, please contact:

Phone: +1-310-421-0107

Email: info@odcinternational.com

Address: 8200 Wilshire Blvd. Beverly Hills, CA 90211

This will allow you to contact Odyssey staff during regular office hours (8:30AM - 5:30PM PST Monday - Friday)

For 24 Hour Urgent Support:

Phone: +1-310-421-0107 ext. 0

This will connect you with an Odyssey representative regardless of time of day. Please only use this number in urgent situations regarding your J-1 program outside of normal Odyssey office hours. Do NOT use this number for emergency medical or law-enforcement situations (see below).

U.S. Department of State Contact:

Website: <https://j1visa.state.gov>

Email: jvisas@state.gov

Address: U.S. Department of State
Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation
Private Sector Programs Division
ECA/EC/D/PS - SA-4E, Room E-B001
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

You may also contact the US Department of State Emergency Hotline at any time: +1-866-283-9090

If you are in immediate danger or have been injured and need assistance, please dial **911** into any phone. This will connect you with emergency medical or law enforcement services.

Other Resources:

- United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) 1-800-375-5283
www.uscis.gov
- United States Department of State Help Line 1-866-283-9090 jvisas@state.gov
- Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs 1-202-401-9810
www.exchanges.state.gov
- Social Security Administration 1-800-772-1213 www.ssa.gov
<http://www.ssa.gov/>
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 1-800-829-1040

3. PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

Your visa has been approved and you are ready to leave for America! Before you get on the plane, please make sure you have researched and accounted for the following:

- ☐ Send arrival information to Odyssey including date, time, airport and flight number.
- ☐ Make sure you do not arrive more than 30-days before your program start date listed on your DS-2019.
- ☐ The climate in your destination. Weather can vary dramatically depending on your location and season. Be sure to research whether you should be packing winter coats or swimming suits, or both!
- ☐ Confirmed housing after arrival. Some host companies provide housing but some do not. Unless you were explicitly informed that housing is provided then you should assume it is not provided and you will need to reserve something on your own.
- ☐ Confirm how you will get from the airport to your housing.
- ☐ Confirm that you have access to at least \$1,500USD immediately after arriving to cover costs of getting settled before your first stipend check arrives.
- ☐ All of your important documents are packed, including your passport, DS-2019 Sponsor Letter, Insurance Card, Odyssey Handbook and all other documents which were mailed to you. Be sure to make photocopies of everything.
- ☐ International driver's license (if available). Even if you don't intend to drive, it is good to have alternate sources of identification.

- ☐ Prescription medications AND the original prescription from your doctor, translated to English if necessary. Some medicines which may be sold over the counter in your home country may be illegal without prescription in the United States.
- ☐ The city where you will be living. It will be useful to familiarize yourself with your new host city before you arrive through maps and research. Look up important locations like banks, groceries, your host company, and the social security office so it is more familiar when you arrive.
- ☐ All personal items you will need to be comfortable for the duration of your stay.
- ☐ Consider bringing some small gifts that represent your home country that you can give to new colleagues and friends you meet during your program.

4. ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

Upon arrival in the U.S., you will be a subject to the inspection by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers. CBP officers will conduct the Immigration, Customs and Agriculture components of the inspection process. Please make sure you have the following documents ready to present to the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officer:

1. Passport with your J-1 visa in it
2. U.S. Customs Declaration Form (will be given to you by the airline)
3. DS-2019

If you are unable to present your passport, valid J-1 visa and form DS-2019 you may be denied entry to the U.S. Please make sure you have all of the documents listed above with you when you arrive in the U.S. Please remember that it is always up to the CBP officer to determine whether you can be admitted to the U.S. The CBP officer will likely ask you a few simple questions about why you are visiting the United States, what you plan on doing and where you are planning to live. You may also be asked to go through a secondary inspection. Please try to be calm during the inspection process and answer all the questions truthfully.

ONWARD TRAVEL PLANS

After clearing Customs and Immigration, please proceed to your final destination, either you pre-arranged housing or host company. Be sure to follow the instructions that were

provided to by your host organization or Odyssey. If you arrive outside of the preferred arrival times as communicated by Odyssey, your host company or housing provider, you will need to check yourself for the night or weekend into the nearby hotel/motel/hostel at your own expense.

5. ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

Congratulations! You made it to the United States! Before you can begin exploring, there are some very important things you must do first:

- ☐ Check-in with Odyssey: This is a legal requirement and needs to be done within three days of your arrival! You will receive an email from Odyssey on the day of your arrival with instructions and a link for completing your Check-In. If you do not receive the email, please contact Odyssey directly at info@odcinternational.com. Although you may be very excited and distracted with all of the new experiences upon arriving, completing your Arrival Check-In is very important. Please complete the check-in as soon as you receive the link from Odyssey in your email.
- ☐ Call or write your parents to let them know you have arrived safely.
- ☐ Make sure you can access your \$1,500 pocket money upon arrival, whether this be with credit, debit or cash.
- ☐ Contact your host company to inform them you have arrived and confirm the time and date you should report for your first day.

6. TOP 10 MOST IMPORTANT REMINDERS

We know you have received a lot of information regarding your J1 program. However, the below points are extremely important for you to remember and act on since they can affect your J1 status.

1. **Check-in with Odyssey:** You will receive an email from Odyssey on the day of your arrival with instructions and a link for completing your Check-In. If you do not receive the email, please contact Odyssey directly at info@odcinternational.com. Although you may be very excited and distracted with all of the new experiences upon arriving, completing your Arrival Check-In is very important. Please complete the check-in as soon as you receive the link from Odyssey in your email.

2. **Maintaining Contact with Odyssey:** You must maintain contact with Odyssey throughout your stay in the U.S. The U.S. State Department requires Odyssey to monitor your location and activity throughout your program. Odyssey must know your living address, telephone number, and place of training at all times and of any changes to any of this information within 10 days. Your program will be terminated in the SEVIS system if you do not follow this rule.
3. **Complete your Monthly Check-Ins:** You will receive a monthly check-in link from Odyssey every 30 days. You **MUST** complete this check-in every month to keep your program in good standing. All Check-Ins and Evaluations are mandatory. Failure to complete them can result in your program being ended early!
4. **Do NOT leave your host camp:** If you are having difficulties or issues with your host camp, please first speak with your supervisor to see if it can be resolved. If the problem persists, please inform Odyssey and we will do our best to resolve it. You should never abandon your position or host camp without first consulting Odyssey. Your J1 visa is tied to your position at your host company. If you leave your position, you may be in danger of being out of status.
5. **Know Your Health Insurance:** Your insurance is provided for emergency situations, not basic care. In the event that you need to use your insurance, please do the following:
 - ALWAYS call your insurance company first: The phone number is listed on your insurance card. Give them your unique ID number, or the certificate number listed on your insurance card. The company will find a doctor in their network in your area and make an appointment for you.
 - Always take your insurance card, photo identification, and DS-2019 form with you to the doctor.
 - When you go to the doctor, you will have to pay a fee for the first visit and an additional fee for each follow up visit. This cost is called a deductible and it is normal for every insurance company.
 - Only go to a hospital in a true emergency: The deductible (fee) for a hospital is much more than a doctor's visit.
 - If you fail to call the insurance before seeking medical attention or within 48 hours of receiving medical care, you are responsible for paying any bills and must then use a claim form to seek reimbursement from your

insurance company. If you wait longer than 48 hours after receiving care to contact the insurance company, you will not be eligible for a reimbursement claim.

6. **Housing:** Some host companies provide housing options and some do not. Unless your host company explicitly confirmed that they will have housing ready for you, do NOT assume housing will be available when you arrive. If you are not reporting directly to your camp upon arrival, make sure you have reserved accommodation for your first night before arriving.
7. **Important Documents:** Make sure to keep all of your documents (Passport, DS-2019, I-94, J-1 Visa, Sponsor Letter, Birth Certificate (or official picture ID that is at least 1 year old) and Social Security Card) in a safe place. Replacing any of these documents can be costly and take a long time.
8. **Check Your Email Often:** Odyssey's primary mode of contact is the email address you provided during your application. All important messages and reminders will be sent to this address, many of which contain information which could impact your program if not attended to. Therefore, you must check your email at least once every three days and respond to all messages from Odyssey.
9. **Applying for Social Security:** Please wait 5 business days after you check In with Odyssey to apply for your social security card.
10. **30-day Grace Period:** You will have 30 days after the end date listed on your DS-2019 to travel the United States. You may not work during this time and must depart the country within 30 days.

7. KNOW YOUR PROGRAM

J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

“The purpose of this [program] is to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations, and the contributions being made toward a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world; to promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement; and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world.”

- Preamble to the Fullbright-Hays Act

THE CAMP COUNSELOR PROGRAM

In order to promote diverse opportunities for participation in educational and cultural exchange programs, the Department of State designates exchange sponsors to facilitate the entry of foreign nationals to serve as counselors in U.S. summer camps. These programs promote international understanding by improving American knowledge of foreign cultures while enabling foreign participants to increase their knowledge of American culture. The foreign participants are best able to carry out this objective by serving as counselors per se, that is, having direct responsibility for supervision of groups of American youth and of activities that bring them into interaction with their charges. While it is recognized that some non-counseling chores are an essential part of camp life for all counselors, this program is not intended to assist American camps in bringing in foreign nationals to serve as administrative personnel, cooks, or menial laborers, such as dishwashers or janitors.

LENGTH OF STAY

Camp Counselor programs have a maximum duration of 4 months. However, your specific program may be shorter depending on the season of your camp. A typical camp program lasts between 8-9 weeks. You may also remain in the U.S. for up to 30 days after the end

date listed on your DS-2019. You may not work and earn money during this time, but you are encouraged to travel and explore the United States.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

According to Department of State Regulations, **you may not arrive more than 30 days before the program start date** shown on your DS-2019. Upon completion of your exchange program, **you have a grace period of 30 days to depart the United States.**

If you plan to withdraw from your program, you must notify Odyssey. Odyssey will enter this information into SEVIS and you will be expected to depart the United States immediately. You will not be entitled to the post-completion 30-day period because you did not successfully complete your program. For more information, visit the Department of State Website: http://j1visa.state.gov/exchange_visitors/

8. RULES, REGULATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

The Exchange Visitor program is strictly regulated by the U.S. State Department. As a J-1 Sponsor, Odyssey is obligated to enforce the rules governing the program. Odyssey is committed to ensuring that exchange visitors are aware of these very specific regulations and that they agree to abide by them. While Odyssey wishes all program exchange visitors a wonderful experience in the United States, we must terminate the program of exchange visitors who do not follow the rules. If you have questions about any of the rules, please contact Odyssey.

The rules and expectations are summarized below.

- Meet all eligibility criteria of the program.
- Have and show adequate financial support.
- Maintain adequate health insurance, as arranged by Odyssey, that includes repatriation and medical evacuation in compliance with the Exchange Visitor Program requirements.
- Contact Odyssey upon your arrival in the U.S.
- Keep Odyssey informed of your current address and phone number at all times. You must update Odyssey with your new address within 72 hours if you move to different housing.

- Maintain contact with Odyssey. Reply to all Odyssey emails.
- Ensure you have frequent access to the internet during your program.
- Provide documentation of participation in cultural events.
- Represent your country and Odyssey with dignity and professionalism.
- Obtain the necessary endorsements from Odyssey before you travel outside the U.S. during your program.
- Report to the host company listed on your DS 2019.
- Attend all orientation and evaluation sessions organized by Odyssey, your agent, or your host company.
- Know and abide by all host company, Odyssey, and government rules, policies, and regulations.
- Abide by all signed agreements with Odyssey and your host company.
- Understand that your host company is not your social director. You are responsible for your own social life, entertainment, and transportation.
- Contact your supervisor with any problems. If you are unable to resolve the problem, you must contact Odyssey about your situation. If you wish to change host companies, you must receive permission from Odyssey prior to your relocation. Transfers are only granted on rare occasions, and exchange visitors must follow the proper procedure outlined by Odyssey.
- Use the grace period for the intended purposes only. You may not work or train for money after the end date listed on your DS-2019.
- Return home at the conclusion of your program in order to continue your studies and/or pursue a career.
- Understand that the program is not a way to obtain a permanent job in the U.S. or a way to immigrate. You are also not allowed to change your visa status during your J-1 program.

Failure to abide by any of the rules listed above and included in your Terms and Conditions document may result in dismissal from the program and early return to your home country.

9. CAMP COUNSELOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You have enrolled to become a camp counselor at an American summer camp. What does this mean? In general, all counselors are responsible for ensuring the campers under their care are safe while also having a great time at camp. You will be their mentor, protector, teacher, guide and cheerleader for their time at camp. Every camp will be different and offer different experiences to their campers. However, regardless of which camp you go to, you should be prepared for the following:

- **You will spend most of your day with campers.** This will not be a vacation! Expect to be busy for most of your morning, day and evening with camp and camper related activities. Camps expect you to be enthusiastic, positive and high energy when with campers. Don't worry, some breaks are incorporated into every day and you can expect at least one day off a week to recharge.
- **Most counselors sleep in cabins with their campers.** Cabins are rustic structures designed to keep the elements out and not much else. Be prepared for bunk beds, sleeping bags and snoring campers!
- **All counselors lead activities.** During the day you will likely be put in charge of an activity which you will lead for campers. If you were selected for a specific skill such as a sport, art form or watersport, you will likely be assigned as a leader for that activity and be expected to teach and guide campers. Even general counselors will be assigned to help with activities throughout the day, so don't expect much down time!
- **You will be a leader:** Your campers will look up to you like a parent, teacher and a friend who is their adult guide through camp. Therefore, you are responsible for getting your campers where they need to be in a safe and fun way. This means making sure they are awake and ready for breakfast, on time for their daily activities and in attendance at all camp events. You will be leading songs, organizing games and keeping everyone excited about what is to come.

Below is a sample schedule of a typical day at camp:

7:00AM - Wake up! Make sure your campers are ready for the day.	3:00PM - Fifth activity
7:30AM - Breakfast (Traditional American breakfast: pancakes, eggs, toast, fruit, bacon, sausage.. yum!)	4:00PM - Sixth activity
8:00AM - First activity of the day.	5:00PM - Break/Free time
9:00AM - Second activity	6:00PM - Dinner (BBQ, pizza, salad, hamburgers etc)
10:00AM - Third activity	7:00PM - Evening activity
11:00AM - Break/Free time	8:00PM - Group evening activity
12:00PM - Lunch (Sandwiches, pastas, salad etc)	9:00PM - Return to cabins, get ready for bed
1:00PM - Mail/packages/rest time	10:00PM - Lights out!
2:00PM - Fourth activity	

10. CULTURE SHOCK

There is a chance that after arriving in the United States, you may feel overwhelmed by all of the new languages, cultures and customs you come into contact with. This feeling may grow into more severe feelings of panic, depression, dread or homesickness. These feelings are often referred to as “culture shock” and are a very common experience for any international traveler regardless of their origin or destination.

Culture shock can be difficult but ultimately makes your experience even more rewarding. You would not have embarked on such a journey if you were not open, adventurous and ready to experience something completely new!

Culture shock is temporary and should pass depending on how quickly you can feel comfortable in your new surroundings. Below are some tips to help:

- Set realistic expectations for your J-1 experience: Exchange visitors may become disappointed when they first arrive if the location, host camp or fellow participants do not fit the image of what they were expecting. The best advice we can give is to not set many expectations and be as open as possible to whatever your experience has to offer. There will always be some positive and some negative aspects and it will be up to you to make the best of it.
- Get involved as much as possible in company activities and attend social activities, clubs, etc.
- Find something from home that is comforting: a book in your own language, a favorite food, music from home, etc.
- Seek out friends when you are lonely. Odyssey can connect you with other exchange visitors at your host company or in the area.
- Get outside and explore, even if no one is available to go with you. Go for a hike, visit downtown, watch a game in a restaurant. Getting to know your environment will help you feel more comfortable with your surroundings.

Culture shock is a very natural and common emotion and can affect people differently. However, if you feel severely depressed, lonely or homesick for an extended period of time, please call Odyssey to see how we can help.

11. ACTIVATING YOUR PROGRAM

As soon as your program begins and you have arrived in the U.S., you must update your U.S. home address and host company address (including your apartment or room number) in your Odyssey online participant portal. This will activate your program in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). Failure to report your address within 3 days of your DS-2019 start date will have serious consequences for your visa program. You will be reported as “out of status” to the Department of State and may face a negative end to your program and/or an inability to obtain visas to the U.S. in the future.

You will receive an email from Odyssey on the day of your arrival with instructions and a link for completing your Check-In. If you do not receive the email, please contact Odyssey directly at info@odcinternational.com

Although you may be very excited and distracted with all of the new experiences upon arriving, completing your Arrival Check-In is very important. Please complete the check-in as soon as you receive the link from Odyssey in your email.

Please be aware of the following:

- You cannot register before you arrive in the U.S..
- If you are staying in a hotel or apartment, you MUST include a room or apartment number.
- Your address cannot be the same as your host company address (unless you are actually living in the same building).
- We will not accept P.O. (Postal Office) boxes.
- If you move, you must register again with your new address. If you do not provide this information correctly, your SEVIS registration will be delayed. You cannot apply for a Social Security Card until you are correctly registered with SEVIS (see below section titled “Social Security Card”).

If you cannot access a computer or have problems, please contact Odyssey during normal business hours.

12. OBTAINING YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

You must have a Social Security number to work legally in the United States. To obtain a Social Security Card, you have to go in person to your local Social Security office 5 days after you check in for your program with Odyssey and bring the following documents with you (originals and two photocopies of each on separate pages):

- Passport/ J-1 Visa
- Sponsor letter
- DS-2019
- I-94 form
- Birth Certificate or at least one official picture ID (identification document including birthdate) that is at least one year old. (If the passport and other official ID, such as a driver’s license, are both less than one year old, a birth certificate is required.)

You can find the closest Social Security Office by following this link: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>. Alternatively, your camp director or HR representative will know the best place to apply for your social security card. The Social Security Administration recommends that you always wait at least 5 days after

completing your arrival check-in to apply for your card to be sure you are validated in SEVIS. The mailing address on the application should be the host company's address. The Social Security card will be mailed approximately 6-8 weeks later to your host company.

You should ask the Social Security officer for a **Form SSA-5030** proving that you have applied for the card and give it to your host company. Host companies may use temporary numbers in their payroll system (zeros) if the actual number is not available before the first payroll. If your host company is not sure how to report your stipend before you have received your Social Security number, please ask them to go to the Social Security Administration's website at: <http://www.ssa.gov/employer/hiring.htm>

The Social Security office will not process your application until you have been validated in the SEVIS system. If your SEVIS verification process is delayed, your host company may not be able to provide you with your stipend until you have received this card (although you must be paid for all time trained). You should bring sufficient funds to cover living expenses during this period, which could be at least one month.

If you have a social security number from a previous experience in the United States then you can use this and do not need to apply for another.

13. MONEY

PROGRAM FEES

The fees you paid in order to participate in this J-1 exchange program with Odyssey help to pay for a multitude of services and regulations. Here is a breakdown of where your fees go:

- Vetting your host camp for eligibility to participate in the program.
- Gathering, reviewing and processing all of your registration documents.
- Generating a unique DS-2019.
- Medical insurance for the duration of your program.
- Detailed exchange visitor handbook and orientation.
- 24 hour/7 days a week support from Odyssey staff
- Administrative fees associated with infrastructure and overhead to keep Odyssey resources available to you

STIPEND

You should receive a guaranteed stipend at the rate listed on your job offer. Your stipend should be commensurate with the stipend afforded to your American counterparts. Most camps issue stipends on a monthly basis. You may have left the country by the time your final stipend check is issued. In this case, it is best to have your host company deposit your check into your bank account and you can withdraw it using your Debit/ATM card from any ATM in the world.

MONEY ON HAND

It can sometimes take several weeks after arrival before you receive your first stipend check, either because of delays in receiving your social security number or because you started at the beginning of a pay cycle. For this reason, we require all exchange visitors to have access to at least \$1,500 to help cover the costs of living which can include housing, transportation, food, utilities etc. We also advise all exchange visitors have access to at least one credit card and one debit card.

OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

We highly recommend you open a bank account during your stay. It makes it easier for your host company to provide you with your stipend and it is safer than keeping large amounts of cash on hand. Nearby recommended banks can be provided by your camp or other exchange visitors at your training site.

Many banks offer ATM/debit cards that can be used like checks or cash at most stores and restaurants. Many of these cards are sponsored by VISA or MasterCard and can be used anywhere credit cards are accepted. You can also use the card for cash withdrawals from cash machines 24 hours a day. This can be convenient, especially when you are traveling. However, it is important to remember that this is not a credit card. The money will be withdrawn directly from your checking account when you use the ATM card. Often there will be service charges for cash machine withdrawals. Keep careful records of how much you have spent.

SAMPLE BUDGET

Below is a sample budget for what a J-1 exchange visitor can expect to pay in a typical month during the program. Again, your actual cost of living will depend on many factors including location, if you pay for accommodation, season and number of people you are living with. This is just to give you an estimate for an “average” program. Please also keep in mind that your first month may cost more than this since there are costs associated with any move and getting set-up.

One Time Expenses		
Category	Subcategory	Cost
Transportation	Roundtrip Airfare	\$1,200
Transportation	Airport to housing	\$50
Housing	Provided by camp	\$0
Phone	Cell Phone	\$50
TOTAL		\$1,300
One Time Expenses		
Category	Subcategory	Cost
Housing	Cable/Internet	\$0
Transportation	Taxis, public transport	\$50
Food	Meals	\$0
Food	Restaurants	\$75
Entertainment	Movies, parks, concerts etc	\$150
Phone	Phone plan/phone card	\$50
Miscellaneous	Unplanned expenses	\$100
TOTAL		\$425

14. MONTHLY CHECK-INS

You are required to check in with Odyssey on a monthly basis for the duration of your program. The purpose of checking-in is to ensure your safety and satisfaction and to ensure the goals of the program are being met.

At the end of every month you will receive an email notification from Odyssey reminding you it is time to check-in. You will be provided with a link to your online portal where you will complete a short survey about your program and any concerns or recommendations you have for how we can improve your experience.

You will also be required to upload pictures of you engaging in cultural activities. Please see the cultural activities section of this exchange visitor handbook for recommendations on cultural activities.

Please note that your monthly check-ins are a mandatory requirement to remain in good standing for your J-1 program. Failure to complete your monthly check-in and/or upload pictures of your cultural activities can result in program termination.

15. TAXES

Your host company is required by law to withhold income tax from your stipend and pay it directly to the government. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of your stipend will be withheld for federal income tax. Depending on regional laws, state and local income taxes may also be withheld from your stipend check. State and local income taxes can take out another 5 to 8 percent of your total income.

Exchange Visitors **MUST** pay U.S. income tax. Please look carefully at your first stipend check to ensure that these taxes are being correctly withheld. If you or your host company has questions regarding your tax status, they can contact Odyssey.

Some exchange visitors are surprised at the amount of taxes they need to pay. When calculating your potential monthly income from your stipend, assume 20% of the total will be withheld for taxes and take this into account when developing a budget.

Luckily, you do not need to pay all the same taxes as an American citizen:

Taxes You Have to Pay:

- Federal income taxes
- State income taxes
- City income taxes

Taxes You Do Not Have to Pay:

- Social Security & Medicare Tax (FICA)
- Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA)

If any of these seem to be deducted from your stipend check, please speak with your HR department.

I-9 - Employment Eligibility Verification Form

Before you can begin training and receiving a stipend check, you must complete an I-9. This will be provided to you by your host company. When you complete the I-9 you will need to show your DS-2019 and your passport with your J-1 Visa. Be sure to check the box “an alien authorized to work until” and enter the program end date listed on your DS-2019. Use your I-94 number on the line requesting the Alien # or Admission #.

W-4 - Employee Withholding Allowance Certificate Form

Host companies should also ask you to complete a W-4 form when you begin training which will be used to determine how much tax will be withheld from your stipend. Here are some helpful tips for filling out the W-4 form:

- On line 3, check only “single” marital status (regardless of marital status)
- On line 5, claim only one withholding allowance
- On line 6, write “Non-Resident Alien” or “NRA” above the dotted line
- On line 7, do NOT claim “Exempt” withholding status

SALES TAX

Some states impose a sales tax on most goods and services you purchase. Therefore, the price listed on a menu or at a clothing store may not be the actual price you pay. Sales taxes can range from 5-11% of the total price depending on the state.

16. TAX REFUNDS

Some of the taxes you pay during your J-1 program can be refunded to you after you leave the country provided you file the correct forms. The deadline for declaring all taxes paid in the year you worked is April 15 of the following year. If you do not file your tax declaration, you will not receive a tax refund and you could also have problems on future trips to the United States.

Your host company is required to provide you with a document by January 31st of every year which outlines the total amount of money you earned and the total amount of taxes you paid for the previous year. This is called the W-2 form and you will use this to file for your tax return. Host companies will often mail your W-2 to your home address in your home country so be sure to contact the HR department and make sure they have your address on file. Odyssey cannot provide or relay W-2 forms. Your host company must send them directly to you.

Our partner, Sprintax (Sprintax.com), specializes in providing U.S. tax refunds for J-1 visa holders. It's free to find out what you are owed and Sprintax operates on a no refund - no fee basis - a 10% fee will apply only if you do receive a refund. Their free tax refund calculator will give you an instant refund calculation so you can see how much you're owed. The Sprintax.com service is simple to use and custom-built for students like you:

1. Register for a free tax refund estimation at Sprintax.com
2. Fill out a US tax pack
3. Get your U.S. tax refund paid into your bank account

17. MEDICAL INSURANCE

Medical insurance for the duration of your program is provided as part of your program fees unless you are providing your own insurance. Your insurance begins on the start date of your program (as listed on your DS-2019 document) and ends on the end date of your program (as listed on your DS-2019 document). You will receive an email with your insurance ID cards and coverage information. Please contact Odyssey if you did not receive your insurance information.

Odyssey is your program sponsor, not your insurance provider. Below is an outline of your coverage and benefits which can also be found in detail in the insurance pamphlet which was provided to you along with your DS-2019. If you stay for any period of time during your 30-day grace period after your program end date, you will need to purchase additional insurance for this time. Please contact Odyssey for assistance.

Please note: J-1 program exchange visitors may be subject to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

Category	Coverage	Minimum Required Coverage
Coverage per accident/illness	\$100,000	\$100,000
Repatriation Coverage	100% of actual expense	\$25,000
Medical Evacuation	100% of actual expense	\$50,000
Deductible (maximum)	\$100	\$500

As you may have heard, health care in the United States can be very expensive if you are not familiar with your insurance plan. To avoid receiving a large medical bill after treatment, please follow the below steps:

1. **Call your insurance company before seeking treatment.** Not all doctors or hospitals will accept your particular insurance. It is crucial that you call the number provided on your insurance card to ask for the closest “In Network” doctor or facility that accepts your insurance. If you go to a facility that does not accept your insurance you could be responsible for a medical bill which you cannot afford!
2. **In non-life threatening situations,** choose urgent care, walk-in clinics and doctor’s offices, NOT hospital emergency rooms (ER).

3. **You should always take your insurance card**, photo identification, and DS-2019 form with you to the doctor.
4. **Every time you see a doctor**, you should be prepared to pay a deductible. A deductible is a normal fee that all insurance providers charge. The deductible for your plan to see a doctor is \$100. If you go to a hospital instead of doctor for treatment, the deductible can be much more. Therefore, whenever possible, call your insurance and ask for the closest “In Network” doctor.
5. **If you receive medical care** that you think your insurance should pay for, you **MUST** contact your insurance provider either before or within 48 hours of receiving care. If you do not, you will need to pay all the bills upfront yourself then try to have the insurance company reimburse you for the care you received. This can be a long and difficult process and the claims are sometimes not reimbursed, leaving you to pay for everything. Therefore, it is important to contact your insurance provider early and often if you are going to receive medical care!

IN-NETWORK VS. OUT OF NETWORK

In-Network: This group is always the best option. In-Network medical providers will bill the insurance company directly, so you will only pay the co-pay amount. The insurance contact information can be found on your insurance card.

Out of Network: The out of network providers will not bill the insurance company directly. Therefore, you will need to pay for your entire visit upfront (out of your pocket) at the time of service. This payment may be reimbursed to you by the insurance company once you file a claim. You must submit a Claim Form to the insurance company for Out of Network medical providers. With the Claim Form you are required to submit the itemized bill, any additional receipts and medical records from your visit.

18. HOUSING

Your housing should be provided to you by your host camp, free of charge. This should eliminate a major expense during your program. However, you should expect very simple housing and without modern amenities. Remember, this is camp! The average housing provided by your host camp will be sturdy but simple cabins in an outdoor setting without electricity, to be shared with the campers under your care. Privacy is at a premium at camp with shared bathrooms and living quarters. Be prepared for very basic amenities

and to embrace this aspect of the program as it is a crucial part of the branding and overall experience of an American summer camp.

While the cabins and other housing will likely be basic, Odyssey still requires it to perform the essentials of a functioning shelter:

- It must protect the inhabitants from the elements, namely wind, rain and snow.
- Every person (counselor and camper) must have their own bed.
- It must be structurally sound and be able to support the number of people it was designed for.
- Proper fire fighting equipment, such as fire extinguishers and evacuation plans must be in place, in accordance with the local fire authority.

If you feel any of these requirements are not being followed, please contact Odyssey.

19. YOUR HOST CAMP

Prior to arriving in the United States, you should have already participated in an interview with a representative from your camp and received a job offer with a description of your role at camp. Be sure to do research on your camp before arriving so you know what to expect. What is their focus and brand? Are they an outdoor adventure camp or do they focus on arts and crafts? How old will the campers be? Is your camp in the wilderness or in a city? The more you can familiarize yourself with your specific camp before arriving the more quickly you will feel comfortable.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Upon arrival at camp, you will likely have a few days before any campers arrive where you will learn about the camp, your duties and meet your fellow counselors. You will be trained on how to lead camp activities and if you were selected because of a special skill you possess (eg. Swimming certification or horseback riding), you will learn how the camp introduces campers to that specific activity. This is also the time where you will get to meet your fellow counselors and staff and begin to form relationships you will hopefully keep for a lifetime!

YOUR DUTIES

Most camp counselors are selected to be cabin or group leaders. This means you will be assigned a group of campers for a period of time (usually about 6-7 days). During this time, you will be the group's leader, advocate, protector, disciplinarian, band-aid/plaster applier, cheerleader, mediator, guide, teacher and friend. Specific duties and expectations will be assigned to you by your camp. You should expect to be available to assist your campers 24/7 while you are on duty.

While it is recognized that some non-counseling chores are an essential part of camp life for all counselors, this program is not intended to assist American camps in bringing in foreign nationals to serve as administrative personnel, cooks, or menial laborers, such as dishwashers or janitors. Therefore, you may need to sweep your cabin to keep it clean, help set up and break down events, and jump in on other tasks when someone is sick or missing. However, you should not be cleaning, providing maintenance work or cooking for the majority of your day. If you feel this is the case, or if you feel any of your duties are inappropriate, please contact Odyssey for assistance.

SCHEDULING

You should expect to be with your campers or available to respond to them if needed 24 hours a day for 6 days out of the week. This includes eating, sharing the cabin for sleeping, activities, during down time...Remember, you are their guardian and guides for their time at camp so they will come to you first for help and answers.

You should be given at least one day off a week where you are not required to fulfill your counselor duties. This is your personal time to spend however you like. Most counselors will catch up on emails, including responding to ALL Odyssey messages (especially monthly check-ins), call friends and family and go into the nearest town (if available) for some non-camp food and entertainment.

EXCHANGE VISITOR CONDUCT

Being a camp counselor is all about fun. However, it is important to keep in mind that a camp is also a business and you are being paid to perform the role of a counselor. Additionally, by participating in the Exchange Visitor Program, you are acting as an

ambassador and representative for your country. Therefore, it is best to be conservative with your behavior, at least at the outset of your program, until you have a good feeling for the rules and expectations of your specific camp. Below are some general rules to observe:

- Americans value punctuality, so be sure to be on time (or better yet, be early!) for all appointments.
- Notify your director as soon as possible if you will be late or unable to perform your duties.
- Dress conservatively until you know the dress code for camp.
- Follow company policies
- Speak English at all times
- Maintain your personal hygiene to the best of your abilities
- Be polite and considerate

Please remember that your J-1 visa status is tied to your placement. If you fail to follow company policies, your host company may terminate (fire) you. In general, you will be given warnings before a termination takes place, but this can vary depending on the severity of your infraction. If you are terminated, you may be required to return to your home country without a refund. Please be sure to contact Odyssey immediately if you feel you are in danger of being terminated or have been terminated.

DRUG TESTS

Some host camps do require all staff, including exchange visitors, to complete mandatory drug tests upon arrival. Regardless of the state you are living in, marijuana is still illegal on a federal level and testing positive for marijuana will result in your program being terminated. Please note that marijuana can stay in your system for up to 30 days.

Also, certain types of prescription drugs can cause you to fail a test, especially opioids. If you are taking prescription medication, be sure to bring a copy of the prescription translated to English as necessary.

If you fail a drug test you will be terminated from your host company. Depending on the situation, you may be required to return home immediately without a refund. Several exchange visitors end up in this situation every year, don't be one of them!

SECOND JOBS

You may not hold a second job during your J-1 program. You may only participate in activities and for the host company listed on your DS-2019. As a sponsor, Odyssey is required to terminate your program if you are caught working a second job.

20. YOUR RIGHTS AS AN EXCHANGE VISITOR

As an exchange visitor in the U.S., you have the right to:

- Be treated and paid fairly
- Not be held in a job against your will
- Keep your passport and other identification documents in your possession
- Report abuse without retaliation
- Request help from unions, immigrant and labor rights groups and other groups
- Seek justice in U.S. courts.

For more information on your rights visit:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/pamphlet/pamphlet_4578.html

If you are mistreated or your rights are violated, call these toll-free numbers:

National Human Trafficking Resource Center's 24 Hour Toll-Free Hotline +1-888-373-7888

Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line (Monday — Friday, 9am-5pm Eastern Time) +1-888-428-7581

Department of State J-1 Visa Hotline (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) +1-866-283-9090

If you are in immediate physical danger, Call 911.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual manner including the following:

- Sexual innuendoes, jokes, or comments
- Repeatedly asking for a date after the person has expressed disinterest
- Unwelcome touching of a person's body, hair or clothing
- Visual pictures or images degrading someone based on their sex
- Letters, notes, telephone calls, or material of a sexual nature

If you feel uncomfortable in your work environment for any reason, please inform your immediate supervisor or Odyssey.

PROBLEMS WITH YOUR HOST CAMP

Most issues arising at camp can be resolved by your camp director. If your director is not available or you do not feel comfortable speaking with them, you can also go to the HR department or administrative head of your camp. It is their full time job to ensure employees and exchange visitors alike are being treated fairly. They can also answer any questions about payroll, hours and scheduling.

If after speaking with your supervisor and/or the HR department your issue is still not resolved, please contact Odyssey. We can ensure that your host camp is following all the rules and regulations of the J-1 program.

Please note that you cannot change host camps simply because you are having issues or the location or host company is not what you were expecting. Learning to adapt is part of the program experience and it is in your best interest to work through any issues you encounter and enjoy your training. Again, Odyssey is available to ensure your rights as a J-1 exchange visitor are honored. However, it is your responsibility to try and make the best of your experience. Odyssey only allows a change of host camp when an exchange visitor's safety or well-being is in jeopardy or if the host company is unable to follow the rules and regulations of the J-1 program.

21. CULTURAL EXPLORATION

The primary purpose of the J-1 program is to allow students and young professionals from other countries to come to the United States, experience American culture, share their culture with Americans and eventually return home to share their experiences with friends and family. This is called person-to-person diplomacy and it is the primary reason the exchange visitor program exists.

During your time in the United States, you will have many opportunities to participate in cultural activities. In fact, it is a program requirement to send Odyssey proof of cultural activities you have participated in every month during your monthly online check-in. Odyssey will be sending ideas and organizing cultural events during your program which we encourage you to take advantage of.

In addition to all the resources already available, we also recommend you check out these websites for more inspiration:

- Be sure to use your 30-day grace period at the end of your program to travel and explore America!
- If you need an excuse to explore, try Geocaching <https://www.geocaching.com>
- For events happening in your state, Check out <http://www.thingstodo.com>
- For sports-lovers: <http://www.active.com>
- 50 great things to do while in the USA:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/northamerica/usa/746884/50-great-things-to-do-in-America.Html>
- Free things:
[http://freethingstodo.about.com/od/freethingsunitedstates/Free Things to Do in North America.htm](http://freethingstodo.about.com/od/freethingsunitedstates/Free_Things_to_Do_in_North_America.htm)
- For religious activities:
<http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/10/travel/beautifulreligious-sites-us/index.html>
- Find fun activities at a discount: <http://www.groupon.com/local/things-to-do>
- Volunteer opportunities: [http://www.voa.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer/Volunteer Locally](http://www.voa.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer/Volunteer_Locally)
- Arts & Crafts: Take a class at Michaels Store <http://www.michaels.com/Exciting-Classes/classes,default,pg.html>

Ultimately it is up to you get out and experience this amazing country you traveled so far to see! Have fun, be safe and remember to take lots of pictures!

22. SAFETY

EMERGENCIES

If you are ever the victim of a crime, feel your immediate safety is in danger, there is a fire or you have been injured and need assistance, either you or someone you are with should call **911**. This is the emergency number in the United States and works everywhere there is phone service. It will connect you to an emergency dispatcher who can send help immediately. Once you are safe and able to make a call, please call the Odyssey emergency hotline which will connect you with an Odyssey representative 24/7 for further advice: 310-421-0107 Ext. 0

If you find yourself in a larger scale emergency situation (such as a natural disaster, terrorist incident, riot or other situations where you may not be able to contact emergency services), use common sense and your best judgment to get to safety. Listen to emergency announcements and ask other people for help. As soon as you are able to access a phone or internet, contact Odyssey to let us know you are safe, your situation, location and where you intend on going. Odyssey will do everything in our power to provide resources to ensure you are able to leave the affected area safely.

URGENT BUT NOT EMERGENCIES

There may be situations where you need assistance but do not think it is an emergency. In this case, please contact Odyssey offices or the Odyssey emergency hotline for assistance. These situations may include:

- If you have been arrested
- If you feel ill and don't know whether to call an ambulance
- If you feel lonely or depressed
- If you have been fired from your host company
- If you have been evicted from your housing
- Issues with your immigration documents

For general questions and inquiries, please contact:

Phone: +1-310-421-0107

Email: info@odcinternational.com

Address: 8200 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, CA 90211 USA

This will allow you to contact Odyssey staff during regular office hours (8:30AM - 5:30PM PST Monday - Friday)

For 24 Hour Urgent Support:

Phone: 310-421-0107 ext. 0

This will connect you with an Odyssey representative regardless of time of day. Please only use this number in urgent situations regarding your J1 program outside of normal Odyssey office hours. Do NOT use this number for emergency medical or law-enforcement situations.

You may also contact the US Department of State Emergency Hotline at anytime: +1-866-283-9090

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

Being in a new country can be exciting and perhaps make you want to explore and take more risks than you normally would. While we encourage you to explore and experience as much as possible, we also urge you to use common sense. America has good and bad people, just like anywhere else in the world, who may try to take advantage of you if they see an opportunity. If a situation makes you feel uncomfortable, you should remove yourself from that situation as fast as possible. Here are some other tips:

- Try and go out with a friend or colleague, especially to places you are unfamiliar with.
- Always be aware of your surroundings. If you feel uncomfortable with someone or a situation, try and get to a more public place with more people around.
- Do not carry large amounts of cash and do not show money in public if you are taking out a wallet or purse.
- Do not bring original copies of important documents, such as passports, social security cards or DS-2019. If you need ID to get into a venue, check and see if alternate forms of ID besides your passport will work before going out. You can apply for a local Identification Card with your local DMV for a small fee as an alternative form of ID.

- If you need to withdraw money from an ATM, try to do it during the day in a busy area.
- Always lock your door when leaving your apartment or going to sleep.
- Don't fall asleep in public areas such as buses, parks or beaches.
- Try and walk in well-lit areas at night and with other people whenever possible.

If someone tries to rob you, do not resist. Give them what they want and do not say anything. It is better to give up your wallet or your purse than risk something much worse happening. If possible, try and remember what the person looks like and what they are wearing, then immediately call 911 and let them know what happened. Please also contact Odyssey as soon as possible so we can assist.

BICYCLES

Bicycling can be a great way to get around and see a city. However, they have several risks which you need to be aware of and account for:

- **Always wear a helmet:** Some cities require bikers to wear a helmet. Regardless of the laws, you should always wear a helmet.
- **Use bike lanes:** Many cities now have designated lanes for bikes (on the right). However, cars still enter these lanes when making turns so you must still be aware of your surroundings.
- **Be aware of your surroundings:** There will be cars, pedestrians and other bikers you need maneuver around. Enjoy your surroundings but also keep an eye on the road.
- **Lock your bike:** Bikes are very easy to steal and are a common target for thieves. Remember to lock your bike to a pole or bike lock even when leaving it at your apartment.

CARS

If you decide to buy or rent a car (details in the FAQ section), you must be comfortable, confident and cautious every time you enter a car. You must have a valid driver's license and insurance.

- **Always wear a seatbelt:** It is smart and it is the law. Failure to wear a seatbelt will result in a fine.
- **Know the rules of the road:** You need a valid driver's license in order to drive. Even so, laws and rules are likely different from your home country. Be sure you know how to conduct yourself while on the road.
- **Never drink and drive:** Law enforcement takes drunk driving very seriously. If you are caught drunk driving you will be arrested and need to pay large fines. It is also reckless and dangerous for you, your passengers and everyone else on the road. Don't do it!
- **Be alert:** Do not get distracted by other people, loud music, food or sight seeing. If you are tired you should pull over or switch with another driver. Unexpected surprises will happen on the road, whether it is another driver, pot hole or deer running across the road, and you need to be ready to react.

SWIMMING

Swimming is available in most camps, cities at public pools, lakes, rivers, oceans and water parks. Before you go swimming, please consider the following:

- Learn to swim! Most cities have recreation departments where you can learn to swim for free or a small fee. Your host company may also have swim classes or lifeguard training available.
- If you do not feel comfortable swimming but would still like to go in the water, simply wear a life vest.
- Watch out for the people you are with. Always try and go into the water with someone else in case one of you needs help. If you are with people who are swimming, keep an eye on them while they are in the water.
- Only swim in designated areas.
- When swimming in the ocean, do not swim too far from shore. Currents and rip tides can be very strong not far from shore and can quickly pull even strong swimmers out to sea. If you find you are being pulled by a current, do not swim against it. Focus on floating and begin calling for help.
- Never swim alone or in the dark.
- Never swim after drinking alcohol.

SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING

Skiing results in a high number of injuries for J-1 exchange visitors every year. While the experience can be thrilling, you must take the necessary safety precautions to avoid injuries.

- **Learn to ski:** You should enroll in a ski class or have an experienced friend teach you the basics of skiing before you get on a lift. All ski resorts will have classes for all experience levels you can sign up for. If you are completing an exchange program at a winter resort, most resorts will offer free ski passes and free ski lessons to their exchange visitors. Please take advantage!
- **Wear a helmet:** While it is usually not required, you should wear a helmet for the same reasons you wear one when riding a bike or motorcycle.
- **Stay in your comfort zone:** Do not try and take on bigger hills than you feel comfortable with. If you are with people who are going down hills that are too large for you, simply say that you are going to keep practicing on other hills and you will meet them later.
- **Dress appropriately:** Check the weather before you hit the slopes. Weather in the mountains can change drastically and you want to be sure you have the proper gear to stay warm and comfortable.
- **Wear sunscreen:** Even on cloudy days, it is very easy to get sunburned because the sun reflects off of the white snow. Wear at least SPF 50.
- **Drink a lot of water:** Once you begin moving and working in all of your heavy winter clothes, you will begin to sweat! Be sure to drink lots of fluids and eat enough food so you do not get exhausted.

23. LAWS AND LEGAL INFORMATION

While you are in the United States you must follow both national and state laws. National laws are the same everywhere in the United States. State laws can vary depending on the state. Claiming that you did not know something was illegal will not protect you from law enforcement. Therefore, if you are ever in doubt whether something is legal or not, it is best to wait to ask someone that knows for certain.

ARRESTS

If you are arrested, you should follow police instruction and never resist. Do not give any information beyond what you are required to give and ask to speak with a lawyer. Be sure to inform Odyssey as soon as you are able. We cannot give you any legal advice or support but we can help find you a lawyer and contact friends or family who can help.

The following acts are illegal in the United States and may differ from your home country. Please be mindful:

- Buying or drinking alcohol under the age of 21.
- Drinking alcohol in public places.
- Purchasing alcohol for anyone under the age of 21.
- Driving while intoxicated.
- Illegal drug use and/or possession. (Please note that while marijuana is legal for recreational use in some states, it is still illegal on a federal level. Even if you are in a state that allows recreational marijuana use, there is still some risk that you could be arrested by federal police. Never get on a plane with marijuana or cross state lines).
- Threatening another person or touching another person in any undesired way
- Disorderly conduct (including treating police officers disrespectfully)
- Property damage
- Hitchhiking (asking strangers for a ride in their car)
- Driving a vehicle without a valid license and insurance
- Having a sexual relationship of any kind with someone under 18
- Theft (stealing goods or anything that is not yours)
- Smoking in many public places. (Smoking is not allowed in any indoor areas and often not allowed in public spaces such as parks, beaches, or sporting venues. If in doubt, look for a designated smoking area or ask).

If you are arrested, you always have the following rights:

- You have the right to remain silent. You do not have to answer any questions, make any statements, or offer a confession if you do not desire.
- You cannot be forced to provide evidence against yourself.
- You have the right to be free from “unreasonable searches and seizures.” This means that the police need a warrant to conduct a search unless there is an

emergency situation. Do not interfere with the police if they insist on conducting a search without a warrant, but be sure to tell your attorney.

- You have the right to an attorney. If you desire legal representation you have a right to request an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, the court will appoint an attorney to represent you.
- You have the right to a fair trial.
- You are presumed innocent until proven guilty. It is the burden of the prosecution to prove your guilt beyond a reasonable doubt in court.

24. LEAVING THE UNITED STATES DURING YOUR PROGRAM

Please note: You cannot leave the United States during your program without first informing Odyssey! This is especially true if you plan on re-entering the United States to continue your program.

Exiting the United States during your program should only be considered for personal or emergency reasons, not for pleasure travel even if it is approved by your host company. You should save personal travel for the 30-day grace period at the end of your program.

If you do need to leave the country for any reason, please follow the below steps:

1. Check your visa expiration date

Your visa is what allows you to enter the United States. Please note that your Visa expiration date may be different from your DS-2019 end date. You must have a valid visa at the time of your re-entry to the US. Contact the US Embassy in your home country to inquire about renewing the visa stamp in your passport.

2. Check your visa to see if you have a multiple entries visa

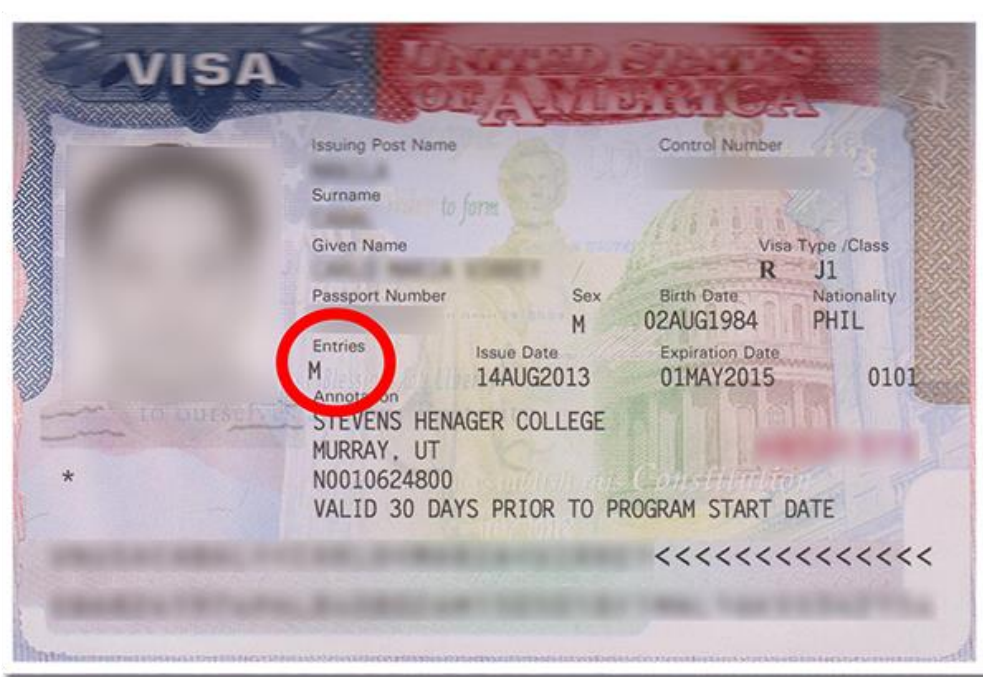
Check your visa to see how many times you can enter the U.S. You can see these by viewing what is written in the “entries” category on your visa. You may see a 1, 2 or M in this category.

A “1” Indicates a single entry visa. If your visa is a single entry, you will not be permitted to reenter the U.S. once you leave. Therefore, you cannot travel internationally while participating in your J-1 visa program.

A “2” Indicates you are permitted to enter the U.S. twice while on your visa program.

An “M” indicates a multiple entries visa. You can see an example of a multiple entries (M) visa in the picture below.

Multiple Entries: If you have a multiple entries visa (2 or M), please follow the instructions below. There is always a small chance that you will not be permitted to reenter the U.S. However, if you go within the dates of your DS-2019 form and follow the procedure below, you will most likely not have any problems.



3. Odyssey will need an e-mail from your Host Company confirming that they are agreeing to allow you to leave your training for the exact agreed upon dates AND that they are willing to continue your training program upon your return.

4. You must send the following documents to Odyssey. We strongly recommend when mailing your documents that you request a tracking number and delivery confirmation. For that purpose, we advise using FedEx or UPS service to mail your documents to Odyssey.

- Your original DS-2019 to be authorized for international travel.
- Host Company Letter (stating that they allowed you to take the vacation)

- Flight Details
- A PRE-PAID, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE, so we can return your documents to you. It is highly recommended that you use Fedex or UPS for this return shipping. If the envelope is not pre-paid and does not contain your address then we cannot return your documents to you.
- A short LETTER summarizing where you will be travelling, why you are going and the dates that you will be out of the country.

The mailing address for Odyssey is:

ODYSSEY INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

8200 Wilshire Blvd.

Beverly Hills, CA 90211

You should mail these materials to Odyssey 3 to 4 weeks before you plan to travel so there is enough time to complete the process and return your DS-2019 to you. Please remember that you will not be permitted to re-enter the United States if you do not have the DS-2019 form authorized for international travel by Odyssey.

25. LEAVING THE UNITED STATES AT THE END OF YOUR PROGRAM

The J-1 visa is not intended to be a long-term visa and is only valid for the dates stated on your DS-2019. Overstaying your visa could have negative consequences for future visa applications. If you would like to apply for another type of visa you must first return to your home country and begin the process there. Odyssey does not support change of visa statuses while in the United States.

30 DAY GRACE/TRAVEL PERIOD

All J-1 exchange visitors are allowed to stay in the United States for up to 30 days after the end date listed on their DS-2019. Now is the time to do any traveling you have planned! During this time you may no longer train, work or receive money from an American business, but you may travel anywhere within the United States. If you leave the country, including Mexico or Canada, you will not be able to re-enter. Please be

mindful of the date you must leave the country to avoid any problems at immigration or with future visa applications.

TRANSIT VISAS

Citizens of some countries are required to have “transit visas” if they are departing the U.S. after their J-1 visa has expired (while using the 30-day grace period) and have connecting flights in certain countries while attempting to return home. For example, citizens of India need a transit visa to land in the United Kingdom if their J-1 visa is expired, even if they are only landing in the U.K. for a connecting flight back to India. You should check transit visa requirements for your specific country when booking return flights home, especially if you are a citizen of the Philippines, India, or Indonesia.

FINAL STIPEND CHECK

Be sure to make arrangements with your host company to receive your final stipend check since it may be issued after you have left the country. The easiest way is usually to have it deposited into your bank account so you can withdraw it from any ATM at a later date.

HOME ADDRESS

Be sure to leave your home address with the HR department at your host company so they can mail you your W-2 form at the end of the year. You will need this in order to file for a tax refund.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

IMPORTANT: Please note that you will NOT have medical insurance during your 30-day grace period. If you would like to purchase additional insurance for this time, please contact Odyssey. Additionally, you will receive messages from Odyssey towards the end of your program with links that will allow you to purchase additional insurance.

26. AMERICAN CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

American culture is going to vary upon region, state and city. However, there are some aspects of American culture which are observable in almost every region you may visit. Enjoy observing and appreciating the following cultural traits and customs you are likely to encounter as you explore America.

INDEPENDENCE

Americans strongly believe in the concept of individualism. They consider themselves to be separate individuals who are in control of their own lives, rather than members of a close-knit, interdependent family, religious group, tribe, nation, or other group.

TIPPING

Tipping is a common practice in the United States and while not mandatory, should be respected as many employees in certain industries rely almost exclusively on tips for their income. For situations where tipping is required, in general 15-20% of the pre-tax bill is sufficient. You should expect to tip in the follow situations:

- Any restaurant where you sit down and someone serves you
- Taxis
- Bartenders
- Hairdresser/salon
- Nicer hotels if someone helps you with bags or other services

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Americans consider personal hygiene to be very important and may be uncomfortable with coworkers or people who do not practice the same levels of hygiene. Most host companies will expect you to:

- Take regular showers or baths.
- Use an underarm deodorant or antiperspirant every day.
- Practice good dental hygiene by brushing teeth twice a day.

- Do your laundry frequently so your clothes and uniforms are clean.

PERSONAL SPACE

In general, Americans value their personal space and will feel uncomfortable with too much touching or standing in close proximity to someone whom they do not know. When greeting someone, shake their hand or give them a hug (Americans do not kiss on the cheek as a greeting in general). Be mindful of where you are standing or sitting in public places to ensure you are not intruding on other's space. Also be mindful of how much noise you are making either talking, laughing or listening to music in case it is disturbing others.

SMALL TALK

Americans love to engage in "small talk", especially with people they do not know well, as a way to start a conversation. Small talk often includes talking about topics that anyone can talk about: the weather, sports, news events, food etc. Don't be surprised to meet strangers and have them immediately begin asking your questions about your experience in the U.S. This is normal and you are encouraged to ask your own questions! Americans in general will be curious about you and your home country and will genuinely want to know more about where you come from.

PUNCTUALITY

Be on time! Especially in a formal or business setting (like reporting to training or for a meeting) and always if you are meeting someone one-on-one or in a small group. Americans value punctuality very much and often feel it shows disrespect to make someone wait while another is late.

INVITATIONS

If you are invited to an event, either a party or holiday event or activity, you are encouraged to accept (only if you are familiar with the person). Americans will often invite new acquaintances to their homes for a dinner or party and this would be an excellent

time to meet and interact with other Americans in a very authentic setting! Be careful accepting invitations from anyone who you do not know well.

TALKING POINTS

Discussing issues or ideas openly with other people is considered not only proper but often welcome as a conversation topic. Americans may bring up issues which are sensitive or embarrassing to others such as politics, controversies, personal opinions etc. In addition, Americans, particularly in a business situation, do not spend much time on polite social talk that many other nationalities do. They often go right to the point of the discussion.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The United States is not a homogenous society but rather a diverse melting pot, rich in a multitude of cultures. You will have the opportunity to meet people from a variety of backgrounds, each with unique traditions, behaviors, customs, and dialects. You should be respectful of all people you meet or when talking about other people regardless of their ethnicity, skin color, gender or religion. Equality and respect is an important right for Americans and should be shown to everyone you meet.

27. USEFUL INFORMATION

MAIL

American domestic mail weighing less than 1 ounce requires a 51-cent stamp. International mail weighing less than .5 ounces requires a 69-cent stamp. For general questions regarding postal service in the USA (express mail, zip codes), call: 1-800-275-8777.

METRIC EQUIVALENTS

1 mile = 1.6 kilometers

1 pound = 0.45 kilograms

1 yard (3 feet) = 91.4 centimeters
1 ounce = 28.35 grams
1 foot (12 inches) = 30.48 centimeters
1 gallon = 3.79 liters
1 inch = 2.54 centimeters
1 quart = 0.95 liters

TEMPERATURE

32 degrees Fahrenheit = 0 degrees Celsius
68 degrees Fahrenheit = 20 degrees Celsius
95 degrees Fahrenheit = 35 degrees Celsius
Use: <http://www.weather.com/>

ELECTRICITY

Electrical appliances in the USA run on 110 volts. Plugging in electric appliances requiring different voltage may cause damage to the appliance. Save electricity by shutting lights and heaters off when you are not home.

TIME ZONES

The USA is divided into four time zones: Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific, each an hour apart.
For example: 9AM Pacific = 12PM Eastern

28. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the home country residence requirement?

Exchange visitors from certain countries with certain skills must maintain a residency in their home country for at least two years at the conclusion of their programs to qualify for specific types of visas. Please see Section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. In addition, all exchange visitors who do not qualify for a subsequent programs must reside outside the U.S. for at least two years before being eligible for further training programs.

If you are a subject to the 212 (e), which should be indicated on your visa, you will have to reside in your home country or last legal permanent residence for an aggregate of 2 years before you are eligible to apply for:

- An immigrant visa
- A permanent resident
- A nonimmigrant H visa as a temporary worker or trainee
- A nonimmigrant L visa as an intracompany transferee
- A nonimmigrant H or L visa as the spouse or minor child of a person who is a temporary worker or trainee or an intracompany transferee
- A fiancé K visa

Can I buy and drive a car while in the United States?

Yes, but you must have a valid driver's license and car insurance. You must also have funds to buy and maintain the car which can add up quickly. Please consider the pros and cons carefully when deciding to purchase a car. Most states require you to wear a seatbelt when driving or riding in a car as a passenger. To remain safe, you should always wear a seatbelt, follow the rules of the road, and NEVER drink and drive or get in the car with someone who has been drinking. All states are very serious about drunk driving and the odds of you getting arrested are high, not to mention getting in an accident.

Can I rent a car in the United States?

Yes, but most car rental companies will require you to be 25 years or older, have a valid driver's license and a valid credit card.

Can I extend my program?

The maximum duration of your program is 4 months. However, most camp programs are 9 weeks between May and September. Most camp programs are not eligible to extend but if you believe you have a valid offer to extend your experience further, please feel free to contact Odyssey.

What if I move housing while in the US?

If you change your housing from what you originally input when activating your Odyssey account, you MUST inform Odyssey of your move and update your new address in your Odyssey participant portal. This includes your address and apartment number. If you fail to update your address, Odyssey may terminate your program.

Why do I need a J-1 sponsor in order to participate in the program?

Only U.S. Department of State-designated J-1 visa sponsors like Odyssey are authorized to issue and send you the DS-2019 Form, also called Certificate of Eligibility. You need the DS2019 form to apply for the J-1 visa, which allows you to qualify as an exchange visitor in the USA.

J-1 Visa Sponsors help ensure that your internship:

- Matches your education and experience
- Contributes to your acquisition of skills, knowledge, and culture
- Qualifies for sponsorship under the J-1 visa
- Proceeds according to U.S. Department of State regulations and program rules
- Occurs at an appropriate and vetted host company
- Is regularly monitored and appropriately supervised
- Has all contracts in place between you, your host organization, and Odyssey.
- Sponsors also provide you with important guidance, problem solving, and orientation materials.

Why doesn't Odyssey want me to change my visa status while in country?

The purpose of the J-1 program is for you to have an opportunity to experience American culture, gain useful career training then return to your home country and apply what you have learned. The J-1 visa is not intended to be a stepping-stone or gateway to another type of visa for you to extend your stay in the United States. If you would like to pursue another type of visa after the completion of your J-1 program, you will be expected to return to your home country and apply from there.

Why do I need to keep my program in "Good Standing" with Odyssey?

You will often see reference to keeping your program in good standing or the potential for Odyssey to terminate or end your program early and in poor standing. If you violate the terms and conditions of the J-1 program, depending on the severity of the infraction and frequency, Odyssey may decide to terminate your program early. If this happens, your program will be canceled and you will need to leave the country within the prescribed amount of time given by Odyssey. This may also make it difficult to receive future visas to the USA.

In order to avoid this and keep your program in good standing, simply comply with all program rules and regulations and maintain **constant contact with Odyssey.**

CONTACT US



www.odc-camp.com



info@odcinternational.com



+1-310-421-0107



@OdysseyCamp



@odccamp



Odyssey International Camp