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J-1 Program City Guide



A Brief Overview of the Largest J-1 Cities Career Services – GACC NY

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Atlanta, GA

HISTORY

Atlanta was founded in 1837 as the terminal station of the Western & Atlantic railroad line, from which it takes its name. Transportation has remained a major business for the city ever since. Today, Atlanta International Airport is one of the nation's busiest in daily passenger flights. Atlanta's history is also defined by its progressive character and role in the Civil Rights Movement. Despite the era of segregation and Jim Crow, a black middle and upper class flourished in Atlanta, which had its own elite black colleges going back to the mid-19th century. It was also home to Martin Luther King, Jr. and thus a major center of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 60s, when African-Americans successfully protested against the racist institutions of the old South. Today, Atlanta is a progressive city in the heart of the "Deep South", a place where urban, Northern culture and traditional, Southern culture make a unique intersection.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Atlanta's best sights include the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic Site, its History Center, the Fox Theater, and on the lighter side, the "World Of Coca Cola" and the CNN Studios. Nightlife in Atlanta is among the most vibrant in the U.S., especially in the posh neighborhoods of Buckhead and Midtown.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 and \$1,000 per month on rent in Midtown when living with one or more roommates; prices are higher if you choose to live downtown or alone. Living in the suburbs like Dunwoody, Brookhaven or Mableton is also a less expensive housing alternative. While Atlanta is a very safe city, we recommend you avoid Southern and East Atlanta, including the neighborhoods of Grant Park, the Bluff and the I-20.

Getting around: You can find public transportation information on the [MARTA](#) website including schedules and a train map. The public transportation system is relatively well established, but you can also always rely on Uber or taxis. If you are living in the suburbs, you might want to consider renting a car and should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Atlanta use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, and BoltBus for less expensive options.

Boston, MA

HISTORY

Boston was founded by Puritan colonists in 1630, and has played a keystone role in American history ever since. The seeds of the American Revolution were planted with the famous Boston Tea Party incident in 1773, when colonists in Boston protested taxes levied on them by dumping a large shipment of tea that had just arrived from Britain into the harbor. One of America's oldest and proudest cities, Boston has always been a center of innovation and development, not just for Massachusetts, but for the whole New England region. In the years leading to the Civil War, Boston was a base for anti-slavery activities, and it maintains its liberal, progressive character still today. Some of America's finest universities are in Boston, not least the world-famous Harvard University, located in Cambridge, a sister city separated from Boston proper by the Charles River.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Boston is a city rich in history and culture. Must-see sights in Boston include the beautiful Boston Common, the Fine Arts Museum and the famous Freedom Trail. The Old State House at the heart of the city is one of the oldest buildings in the United States.

A go-to for all party people in Boston is Lansdowne Street near Kenmore Square, which offers a multitude of bars and clubs. One of these is the House of Blues – Boston's number one concert venue – which hosts one of Boston's biggest weekend parties on "Epic Saturdays".

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$750 and \$1,250 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates and much more if you choose to live alone. Living in the suburbs like Cambridge or Somerville or around Boston's universities (Harvard, Boston University, MIT, etc.) is not only less expensive but also a great way to meet young Americans! While Boston is a very safe city, try to avoid the neighborhoods of Dorchester, Mattapan, and Chelsea.

Getting Around: With the [MBTA](#) Boston has a very well established public transportation network. Visit its website to learn more about routes and fares for the subway (called the T), the bus, commuter rail, and water transportation systems. It is also important to note that late night service stops at 2 am and only restarts the next morning. While a train runs into the city, you might want to purchase a car from a local dealer if you live in

the suburbs. For travel outside Boston use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Birmingham, AL

HISTORY

Birmingham was founded in the American post-civil war period in 1871 as part of the anticipated intersection of two North and South railroads. Its industry focused on iron smelting, which explains why one of its most famous landmarks is *Vulcan*, a 55-foot cast-iron statue symbolizing Birmingham's steel industry. Birmingham bears the heavy weight of history: the city was a center of struggle during the Civil Rights Movement, and became infamous as the location of the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church. Three young African American girls were killed in the bombing, and some of the Ku Klux Klan members who carried out the bombing escaped justice until 2002. Birmingham remains one of America's most heavily African-American cities to this day.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Fun fact: *Vulcan* is the second tallest metal statue in the U.S. after the Statue of Liberty; you won't be able to miss it when you visit! Also check out the Botanical Gardens, the Railroad Park and its Civil Rights Institute to learn more about Birmingham's past. Although a smaller city, Birmingham has a colorful nightlife to offer. The best bars and clubs can be found in Five Points South, with Blue Monkey and Basecamp. Nana Funks in Lakeview District with music from the 70s to now is certainly worth a visit.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 and \$800 per month on rent with one or more roommates; prices are higher if you choose to live alone. While Birmingham is a safe city, we recommend you avoid the Sparkbrook and Lady Wood areas.

Getting around: Public transportation in Birmingham is not very well established and consists mainly of buses. You can find public transportation information on the [MAX Transit](#) website including schedules and a bus map. It might be beneficial for you to rent a car, and you should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Birmingham use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Charleston, SC

HISTORY

Charleston's history goes back to 1670, when it was founded by English colonists. The small seaport town grew to a prosperous city as a center of export and shipping for agricultural products such as rice, cotton and indigo. Though Charleston was slow to recover from the devastating Civil War, the city is now famous for its lush *antebellum* (before the war) architecture and "old South" style. With its rich history, lovely buildings, and gorgeous weather (symbolized by a palm tree on the flag of South Carolina). Charleston is known throughout the United States as one of the country's most beautiful cities.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

When visiting Charleston, make sure you wander through the Historic District and Charleston City market which have the power to bring you back to the old days of Charleston. Another beautiful spot is the Waterfront Park, which allows you to relax on the grass or on one of the old-fashioned park benches. Get a glimpse into America's history of slavery by visiting Middleton Place Plantation.

Most of Charleston's bars are located around Market Street and Upper King Street and the local LGBTQ party at Pantheon on the weekend.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 - \$1,000 per month on rent with roommates and more if you'd like to live alone. Living in the suburbs like Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island or Folly Beach is also a less expensive housing alternative. While Charleston is a very safe city, we recommend you avoid North Charleston and be wary of "fake" policemen pulling you over. Don't roll down your window unless you're sure you're talking to a real officer.

Getting around: Public transportation in Charleston is not very well established and consists mainly of buses. You can find public transportation information on the [CARTA](#) website including schedules and a bus map. It might be beneficial for you to rent a car and you should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Charleston use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Charlotte, NC

HISTORY

Charlotte was named in honor of the German princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, as part of an effort by the founding settlers to be in good favor with King George III of England, her husband. It thus became known as the Queen City. The famous Battle of King's Mountain took place just southwest of Charlotte and played a key role in bringing the Civil War to an end. Today, banking plays an important role in Charlotte's economy. Hugh McColl founded the North Carolina National Bank, which eventually became part of Bank of America, bringing a significant amount of banking jobs to the area. Today, Charlotte remains the second largest city in the southeastern United States.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Lake Norman with 520 miles of shoreline is certainly one of the prettiest spots in Charlotte and definitely worth a visit. When you are free for an afternoon, wander through the Historic Fourth Ward District or visit the Vietnam War Memorial Park to delve deeper into America's history. Charlotte's nightlife scene is very life-music-centric. Check out the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, where Bob Dylan has performed, or the EpiCenter which is right next by!

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 and \$1,000 per month on rent living with one or more roommates; prices are higher if you choose to live alone. Living in the suburbs like Davidson, Mooresville or Pineville is also a less expensive housing alternative. While Charlotte is generally a safe city, we recommend you avoid The East Side of Charlotte, including Central Avenue, Independence Blvd. and Monroe Road.

Getting around: The best way to obtain information about the public transportation system is over the [Charlotte City website](#), which includes schedules and a bus/train map. If you live outside the city in the suburbs it might be beneficial for you to rent a car and you should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Charlotte use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Chicago, IL

HISTORY

Chicago was founded in the late 17th century by French explorers, missionaries and fur traders. Connecting and controlling access to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basin, Chicago formed the ideal economic hub for America's expansion to the West and thus managed to establish itself as one of America's major cities. Chicago grew quickly, with even the infamous Great Chicago Fire of 1871 (which was started by a cow, according to legend) failing to stop its rapid expansion. During the First and Second World Wars, many immigrants contributed to the powerful political war-machinery, and Chicago became known for its high wages and strong unions, a political culture still visible today. The nation's third largest city for decades, Chicago now has been nearly overtaken by Houston, Texas in population. Though home to some of the finest universities, museums, and skyscrapers in the US, Chicago today struggles with a reputation as high-crime city.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Make sure you visit Millennium Park located in downtown Chicago, and don't miss the Art Institute of Chicago, one of the most famous museums in the world (among some Americans perhaps better known from the classic film *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*). Chicago is known for its deep-dish pizza, a variant on pizza that is known throughout the U.S. as a competitor to New York City's more traditional pizza style.

For going out, you can find numerous bars around Navy Pier and simultaneously enjoy the beautiful view on the water. Visit for example the Green Mill, an old jazz bar that is famous for being Al Capone's former stomping grounds.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$800 and \$1,250 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates and much more if you choose to live alone. Refer to [Curbed](#) for information about rent costs. Sites like Craigslist, apartments.com, and [Zumper](#), among others, can also help you find an apartment. While the city is generally very safe, try to avoid the south side of Chicago which has higher crime rates.

Getting Around: On the [CTA website](#) you can look up the public transportation routes you need and [Metra website](#) for information about the commuter train systems servicing nearby areas. While a train runs into the city, you might want to purchase a car from a local dealer if you live in the suburbs. For travel outside Chicago use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Detroit, MI

HISTORY

Since its founding in 1701, Detroit was caught in a struggle of occupation between the British and Americans, until it was taken over by the United States for good in 1813. Detroit developed a strong agricultural and later railroad manufacturing industry. No city in the U.S. is tied so closely to one industry: Detroit has been known since the early 20th century as a center of automobile manufacturing. The “big three” American car companies, Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler (today Fiat-Chrysler) all trace their roots to Detroit, and Ford and GM still maintain their headquarters in the city. With an influx of black workers after World War II, severe racial tensions became a part of Detroit life, marked by two infamous race riots in 1943 and 1967. Today, despite an unfortunate reputation for crime and poverty, in reality Detroit remains one of the most economically vibrant cities in the northern Midwest.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Besides the large museums and standard sights, consider visiting the Henry Ford estate located in the suburb of Dearborn, Fair Lane. If you are interning for an automobile manufacturer, his estate is a must-see: Henry Ford famously invented the T-Model and revolutionized the automobile industry. Bars in Detroit are mostly concentrated in Downtown. For something a little different, visit the cigar and martini lounge La Casa de la Habana.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 and \$1,000 per month on rent when living alone and for even less expensive if living with a roommate. In Detroit, the areas of downtown, midtown, and Corktown are a good pick. Outside Detroit, consider areas like Hamtramck, Ferndale, and Royal Oak. Many Exchange Visitors’ host companies may be in the nearby cities of Ann Arbor or Auburn Hills. If you choose to live in Detroit or the Detroit suburbs, remember to keep your commute to 40-60 minutes maximum if possible.

Getting Around: On the [City Website of Detroit](#) and [SMART](#) you can look up the public transportation routes you need. If you live in the suburbs you might want to purchase a car and check out local dealerships for that. A good way to get help is also to ask your colleagues. For travel outside Detroit use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expense options.

Jacksonville, NC

HISTORY

Jacksonville was founded in 1731 and is part of Onslow County. Its main economic focus was shipping goods that passed through the New River and until 1940 it was a rather quiet town. That year in December Camp Lejeune, a US Marine Corps Base was installed in Onslow County. Population rapidly doubled from 800 as workers who were part of the defense project and war effort came to the marine base. While after World War II Jacksonville has become quieter again, Camp Lejeune still operates today as a Marine Corps Base.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Sights to visit in Jacksonville include the Lynnwood Park Zoo, the Onslow County Recreation Park and the Northeast Creek Park. There are also some bars in the area, such as LA Mirage, The Orleans House and Alexander's, which all, just like the town itself, offer a rather intimate setting.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$400 and \$800 per month on rent in Midtown when living with one or more roommates; prices are higher if you choose to live alone. Living in the suburbs like Neptune Beach, Sawgrass or Palm Valley is also a less expensive housing alternative. While Jacksonville is generally a safe city, we recommend you avoid Northwest of Downtown and West of Saint John's river. East and South of the Saint John's River are the safest areas.

Getting around: The best way to get information about the public transportation system is over the [JTAFLA](#) website, which includes schedules and a bus/train map. If you live outside the city in the suburbs it might be beneficial for you to rent a car and you should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Jacksonville use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Los Angeles, CA

HISTORY

The history of Los Angeles starts in the 18th century when Spanish missionaries founded the town El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles. Several factors resulted in Los Angeles exploding to a population of 2 million in 1930: the collapse of the Northern California Gold Rush, the opening of a railroad connection to Santa Fe, and the discovery of oil in 1892. Starting in the early 20th century the movie industry boomed, and the L.A. neighborhood of Hollywood became synonymous with the industry. Today, L.A. is the second largest city in the U.S. and famous across the nation for its vibrant, global culture, movie stars, and fantastic weather— as well, unfortunately, for its terrible traffic jams and ubiquitous homelessness. The meeting of American (as well as African-American), Mexican/Hispanic, and East Asian culture has resulted in some of the best food available in the U.S.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

In L.A. you will never be bored. The top sights include the Hollywood Sign, Disneyland, Universal studios, Griffith Park and Griffith Observatory the Getty Center and the Santa Monica Pier. For nightlife check out the numerous bars and clubs, but don't forget the world-famous sports and concert arenas. Downtown L.A. is home to Club Nokia as well as the massive Exchange LA and the stunning Mayan Nightclub. Some of L.A.'s best bars are in hotels, including The Mixing Room, Bar | Kitchen, the Polo Lounge, Bar Centro, the Library Bar and The Spare Room. And always dress to impress!

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Los Angeles is the city of stars and that comes with a price: housing can get very expensive. Expect to live with a roommate and to pay a security deposit and the first month's rent upfront. Typical rents are then between \$850 and \$1,350 per month. L.A. is huge—make sure to check out lots of neighborhoods to find the best price and best location for you! While the city is generally safe, we recommend that you avoid living in areas of South Campton and downtown. In addition, avoid Skid Row at night as it is known for a higher crime rate and as a gathering point for homeless, which might make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Getting Around: Unfortunately, public transportation in L.A. is rather poor and most people travel by car. Consider renting a car or signing up for Zipcar. You can also use Uber, Lyft, or taxi services. For travel outside L.A. use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus,

Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options. San Francisco is a 7-hour drive and definitely worth seeing!

Miami, FL

HISTORY

Miami's early years were marked by conflict. The land was inhabited by the Native American tribe Tequestas and Mayaimi, after which the city is named. Three Seminole wars between Native Americans and the new settlers (Americans) overshadow the history of the city, with the second war in 1836 the largest and most devastating. In 1896 Miami was finally connected to the railroad system and following that it flourished. Miami is known for its beautiful beaches and Latin-American influences (Cuban refugees have long called the city home). Nowadays, wealth is pouring into the city, driven by groups as diverse as New York bankers fleeing high taxes and rich Venezuelans fleeing persecution.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Naturally, the number one attraction in Miami is Miami Beach, which is next to the famous Ocean Drive where neon signs of diverse hotels light up the sky. Another area to check out is the art deco district, which brings back memories of the beautiful 1930s in Florida. If you want to see the impact of Cuban immigration following Fidel Castro's rule of Cuba, check out Little Havana and its main road Calle Ocho.

Miami's nightlife is widely known as one of the best, with the hottest DJ's and rooftop-and pool-side bars. Some more "hip" clubs and artsy restaurants can be found in the Wynwood district. In addition, check out Sweet Liberty, LIV and many more!

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$750 and \$1,250 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates outside the center of Miami and \$1,250+ if you opt to live alone or in the city center. While Miami is generally very safe, we recommend that you avoid living in the north district of Miami due to higher crime rates.

Getting around: Public transportation in Miami is not very well built, so travel by car or bike instead. The [Miami Dade transit](#) website gives you more information about routes and fares for the rail and bus systems in the city. If you live in the suburbs you might want to purchase a car and check out local dealerships for that. A good way to get help is also to ask your colleagues. For travel outside Miami use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Nashville, TN

HISTORY

Nashville has been associated with the music industry for decades, and is still known today as the “Music City”. The term was first used by WSM-AM announcer David Cobb on air in 1950. Nashville remains a thriving center for country music, blues, R&B, gospel, and pop, with superstars such as Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan recording there. More recently, Taylor Swift moved to Nashville in 2003, at the age of 14, to start her music career. Aside from music, Nashville was also a focal point of the suburbanization boom of the 1960s, which resulted in the building of many new schools and universities. Now a major city of the American South, Nashville might be the next big thing: in 2013, the *New York Times* declared it the new “it” city.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

You can see Nashville’s music history yourself: visit Music Row for numerous shops, museums and memorials dedicated to the city’s music history. A little out of place but still very impressive is the Nashville Parthenon – a copy of the famous Greek architectural work, which you can visit in Centennial Park. Find the best live music venues in the District’s renovated warehouses such as Wildhorse Saloon and Graham Central Station for a real Southern country music experience.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 and \$1,000 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates; prices are higher if you choose to live alone. Living in the suburbs like Brentwood, Nolensville or Kingston Springs is also a less expensive housing alternative. While Nashville is a very safe city, we recommend you avoid places around and on Dickerson Road or Trinity Lane.

Getting around: The public transportation system in Nashville is fairly well established and you can find information about routes and schedules on the [MTA](#) Website. If you live outside the city in the suburbs it might be beneficial for you to rent a car and you should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Nashville use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

New York, NY

HISTORY

New York City has truly been a “city of immigrants” since its earliest days: the city was discovered by the Italian Giovanni da Verrazano; first settlements were by the Dutch; a Swede settled in the Bronx in 1639 and finally in the late 17th century the British occupied New York, which was then still called “New Amsterdam”. Manhattan was famously purchased by the Dutch from the Native Americans – for \$24! The City grew rapidly: by 1800 it was inhabited by about 60,000 citizens, 69% of which were foreign.

By the mid-1800s NYC handled more goods and people than all the other American ports combined and gained not only commercial, but also legal, insurance and manufacturing primacy. With the rise of the segregationist and racist Jim Crow laws in the South, African Americans from all over America fled to the Northeast and New York City, converging on the neighborhood of Harlem (named after the Dutch city of Haarlem). In 1910 Harlem was 10% African-American, only twenty years later in 1930 the proportion was 70%. Harlem became a center of black cultural celebration, culminating in the Harlem Renaissance, a period of literary and artistic bloom in the 1920's.

The Great Depression was heralded by the stock market crash on Wall Street on October 29th, 1929, known as Black Tuesday. Urban legend describes how financiers who lost their fortunes in the crash jumped from the skyscrapers to their deaths. The depression hit New York City especially hard, and the city suffered greatly: long lines for free soup and bread were a common sight. Starting in 1940, the U.S. economy geared towards World War II, revitalizing the economy. At this time, many persecuted Jews, fleeing the Holocaust and antisemitism in Eastern Europe, migrated to New York, peaking at 2 million immigrants after the end of the war in 1950. The district most rich in immigrant history is the Lower East Side, with many museums that tell the story of the unique communities that called the neighborhood and city home.

Another important part of New York's history is its LGBT community. The heart of the gay community in New York City was the East Village with many underground gay bars and famous LGBTQ activists populating the area. The 1969 Stonewall Riots on the Lower West Side of Manhattan marked a turning point for gay rights, not only in New York, but in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the whole country and world.

Today, in addition to New York's reputation as a center of diversity and inclusion, the identity of the city has been irreparably stained by the 9/11 terror attacks. The Twin Towers, then the tallest buildings in the city, both were destroyed by planes crashing into them, and more than 3,000 died. The attacks changed history, and led to two

ongoing wars in the Middle East, but for many New Yorkers, the best way to heal from the attacks has always been to carry on as normal, and look to the future, not the past.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

New York City's sights are breathtaking, numerous and unfortunately often very expensive. To stay on a budget, consider walking around Central Park, visit Time Square by night and the 9/11 memorial and the new Freedom Tower. The Staten Island Ferry takes you – free of charge – as close to the Statue of Liberty as you can get, and the Metropolitan Museum with its overwhelming asset of historical art pieces is always free. Many famous sights and museums offer discounts for students and tourists, as well as groups, so always research and plan ahead to get the best deal!

The nightlife in New York is almost as diverse as its history with the different areas offering very different going-out styles. The trendiest clubs and bars will be found in the Midtown and SoHo area, as well as the Meatpacking District, where prices are quite high and a certain level of dress code is assumed. For less expensive and more young and hip places, Brooklyn beckons, above all the famously “hip” neighborhood of Williamsburg. SoHo is offers a mix of cheaper and more expensive bars; certain places, such as the B Bar, are popular among interns.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: The bad news is, New York City is the most expensive city in the United States. Expect to live with a roommate and be prepared to pay a security deposit and the first month's rent upfront, and a significant broker's fee if you use a real estate agent. You may also be asked to pay last month's rent upfront as well. Monthly rent is at least \$1000-\$1500 when living with one or more roommates. Less expensive places can be found in Brooklyn, Harlem, and Queens. The Webster Apartments, exclusively for women, are popular among female interns, while male interns have the option of the Kolping House.

Getting Around: New York City has a great public transportation system, accessed by a MetroCard which you can purchase at any subway station. One ride costs \$2.75 but you can take unlimited transfers and go as long as you want as long as you don't exit the subway. For those commuting daily, the \$121/month unlimited MetroCard will probably be worth the money. Renting a car is probably not a good idea: nearly all neighborhoods have huge problems with parking. And besides, Metro North, the Long Island Rail Road, and PATH trains offer fast, reliable, 24/7 connections to Westchester (upstate New York), Long Island, and New Jersey, respectively. All three airports in the area can also be reached easily by train, subway, or bus.

Philadelphia, PA

HISTORY

Philadelphia was founded by an English Quaker in 1682, and played a key role in the American Revolution as a meeting place for the Founding Fathers. It is known as one of the nation's capitals in the Revolutionary War and temporarily served as the capitol when Washington, D.C. was under construction. In the 19th century, Philadelphia was one of the largest commercial centers of the U.S., and with its large, free Black community, the city became host of the first independent black religious denomination in the U.S. – the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Industry in Philadelphia specialized in textiles and economic ties with the South. Population, and therewith some of the prosperity, declined with the industrial restructuring in the late 20th century and the shift towards a service-oriented economy. Ghettoization became a problem in that era, but now Philadelphia is undergoing a robust revival: apartment construction has boomed as young people have flocked to the city's low rents, high quality of life, and excellent universities.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Philadelphia's sights include the Liberty Bell – an important symbol of American freedom – its Museum of Art, the Franklin institute and the food-paradise Reading Terminal Market. Regarding nightlife, the classics are found in the Old City and on South Street, which also hosts a variety of good restaurants. If you want it a little hipper, check out South Philadelphia or visit a live jazz show in Northern Liberties. Standard Tap, Bar Ferdinand and PYT have helped make Northern Liberties hip and are definitely worth a visit.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 and \$1,000 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates. These websites will help you find housing: [Craigslist](#), [ihousephilly](#), [Zillow](#), [trulia](#), [centercityhomefinder](#), [prudentialproperties](#), [centercityteam](#). While Philly is generally safe, avoid living in areas north of Spring Garden, west of 40th Street, and south of Washington Street for safety reasons.

Getting Around: Visit the [SEPTA](#) website to learn more about routes and fares for the subway, the bus, and the regional rail systems. Many residents of Philadelphia use Uber and cabs to get around. If you live in Philly's suburbs you might want to consider purchasing or renting a car. Visit the Amtrak website for travel to areas outside Philly or use Megabus, Greyhound and BoltBus for a less expensive travel option.

San Diego, CA

HISTORY

San Diego was founded and long occupied by Spanish missionaries, who, unlike American settlers, did not kill but tried to convert the Native Americans to Christianity. With the American Mexican war in the 19th century, America quickly took hold of San Diego with its strategic Southern Californian port. San Diego gained a great deal of inhabitants through the Gold Rush and flourished during the expansionist era of World War II. It has since been a city of mixed cultures, beaches and sunshine – a prime example of the Southern California lifestyle and the envy of Americans in colder climates.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Most of the bars and clubs of the beach town are located downtown. Head to the Gaslamp Quarter for rooftop bars with stunning night time views over the skyline, cozy couches and cool cocktails. The most popular spots include Bang Bang, Fluxx – San Diego’s high-end dance club – and Onyx Room and Thin which are two clubs in one location, featuring different music styles on different nights and a dress code, so change out of your beach wear and dress accordingly.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 and \$1,000 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates and significantly more if you opt to live alone. Sites like [apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com), [Craigslist](https://www.craigslist.com), and [Zillow](https://www.zillow.com) can help you in your search. Since the districts vary greatly in what they offer, read into each of them a little first before you settle on a place.

Getting around: Visit the 511 or [sandiego.org](https://www.sandiego.org) website to learn more about routes and fares for the subway and bus systems. The Coaster and Sprinter trains will take you to areas outside of downtown. If you chose to live in the suburbs you might want to rent or buy a car and consult a local dealer for that. For travel outside San Diego use the [Amtrak](https://www.amtrak.com) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

San Francisco, CA

HISTORY

San Francisco grew rapidly under the first Gold Rush in 1848. When the first gold was found at Sutter's Fort, San Francisco became the central port and depot of the newly discovered resource, and its population grew from 1,000 to 25,000 in just one year. During that time, the city is often described as "lawless and wild" – full of gambling and prostitution. The introduction of cable cars served as a major step towards making use of the hilly surrounding land, expanding San Francisco's settlement. Frequent, sometimes severe earthquakes have always been a burden on the city. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake almost entirely destroyed the city, killing 3,000, and remains today one of the worst natural disasters in American history.

San Francisco has always maintained a reputation as a center of cultural bohemianism, with writers as Mark Twain calling the city home and the 1967 "Summer of Love" taking place in the city. Relatedly, San Francisco has always been on the forefront of labor and women's rights activism as well as LGBTQ rights. The Castro District was one of the centers of the gay rights movement and still today has rainbow colored crosswalks all over its streets.

San Francisco has somehow always managed to keep itself current to the big trends of the day. Today, SF finds itself conveniently located right next to Silicon Valley, home of technology giants such as Google, Apple and Facebook. Visiting San Francisco is like a journey through time—from the struggle for survival of the early days, to the gay rights movement, to the modern digital era.

Unfortunately, disagreements over new housing development (a controversy that is likely familiar to Germans) have resulted in a chronic housing shortage, sky-high rents, and despite the city's great prosperity, a huge homeless population.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

San Francisco's most famous sight is undoubtedly the Golden Gate Bridge. Crissy Field in Marina offers a spectacular view on the famous red bridge, combined with beautiful lawns and typical Southern California palm trees and houses. Make sure you ride on the cable cars; the Castro District is certainly worth a visit with numerous hip coffee shops and thrift stores, and for more touristy sights head over to Alcatraz Island and its prison.

San Francisco's nightlife is crazy and wild, just like the city itself. The SOMA district offers several good clubs, including Monarch, Audio Discotech and DNA Lounge. An

alternative to SOMA is the Mission district where young and hip clubs and bars cluster. San Francisco has something to offer for everyone, so don't miss out.

For a change of pace, north of San Francisco lies the famous and beautiful Napa Valley, a center of wine production. Taking a trip to a winery is a classic way to take in the sights outside of the city proper.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Rents in San Francisco are among the highest across the United States – plan accordingly. You should expect to pay between \$1,500 and \$2,300 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates and pay a security deposit upfront. Considerably less expensive options include its suburbs like Oakland or East Bay. While San Francisco is very safe, we recommend you avoid living in areas like the Tenderloin and Western Addition.

Getting around: The public transportation system in San Francisco is well established and you can find information about routes and schedules on the [SFMTA](#) Website. San Francisco is also a very walk-able city! The CalTrain website provides information about the commuter train serving San Francisco and areas south. Many interns and trainees may be able to use the CalTrain for transportation to and from their training locations. For travel outside San Francisco use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Seattle, WA

HISTORY

At the time it was established in 1851, Seattle was actually called New York, but was quickly renamed Seattle after an Indian leader Sealth, who was friends with the European settlers. During World War I the city built an impressive shipbuilding industry which accounted for 20% of the nation's wartime ship tonnage. Seattle is known as a city of "boom and bust": starting with the lumber industry boom, over the gold rush boom, then shipbuilding boom and finally the technology boom centered around Boeing and various technology companies. For sure, Seattle today remains in a time of "boom": Amazon's 20 year transformation from little known company to technology giant has brought a massive wave of investment and jobs to the city. Though grateful for their prosperity, the city is now more expensive to live in, and many in Seattle might well prefer if things hadn't changed so much.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Seattle's top sight is the Space Needle, which was built as part of the 1962 World's Fair. At 605 feet, you can get the best view over the city and the adjacent regions. Good for walking around is the Pioneer Square History District and Pike Place Market. Seattle nightlife is known for performing arts and top musical acts which you can find at Show Box and Neumo's, or smaller bars such as the Crocodile Café, the Sunset or Comet. Capitol Hills hosts hip bars and the University District has several funky student places.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$500 and \$1,000 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates; prices are higher if you choose to live alone. Living in the suburbs like Everett, Redmond or Tacoma is also a less expensive housing alternative. While Seattle is a very safe city, we recommend you avoid places around and on Dickerson Road or Trinity Lane.

Getting around: The public transportation system in Seattle is fairly well established and includes buses, ferries and commuter trains; many people also travel by foot or bike. You can find information about routes and schedules on the [City Website of Seattle](#). If you live outside the city in the suburbs it might be beneficial for you to rent a car and you should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Seattle use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options. Vancouver, Canada, is close enough to travel to by car (if you fly, you must fill out an Electronic Travel Authorization).

Sunnyvale, CA

HISTORY

Sunnyvale's history tells a typical American story of reinvention and change: A small village full of fruit orchards in the 1800's is now a city at the heart of Silicon Valley. Transformation from sleepy orchards to high-tech began in earnest during World War II, when factories were built to produce steam engines and cannons for the American Navy. After the war, the farm fields were cleared for good, and homes and offices began to rise up. Technology firms have played a big role in the local economy ever since. One of the first video games ever made, *Pong*, was first installed at a bar in Sunnyvale in 1972. Yahoo! still maintains its headquarters in Sunnyvale, while Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), which also headquartered in Sunnyvale, is now located only minutes away in Santa Clara.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

While Sunnyvale is rather a small town, it still has a lot to offer to its visitors. Walk around the Farmers Market on Saturdays, Las Palmas Park or go discover Sunnyvale's public art exhibits. The nightlife scene in Sunnyvale is rather scarce, so you might want to consider heading to Palo Alto, San Francisco or Mountain View. What's nice about the area is that everything is very close together and you can take advantage of all the area's diverse benefits!

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: As part of the San Francisco Bay Area, living in and around Sunnyvale gets expensive. Expect to pay between \$700 and \$1,400 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates; prices are higher if you choose to live alone. For Sunnyvale, the same safety tips as those for San Francisco apply: we recommend you avoid areas like the Tenderloin and Western Addition.

Getting around: The public transportation system in Sunnyvale and the bay area is fairly well established and includes mostly busses. Many people also travel by foot or bike. You can find information about routes and schedules on the website of the [Santa Clara Transportation Authority](#). Since Californians usually travel by car it might be comfortable

for you to rent a car and you should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Sunnyvale use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.

Washington, DC

HISTORY

Washington, D.C. is a city built and designed for one purpose: to serve as the nation's capital city, centered around Congress, which is located on Capitol Hill—better known as “the Hill”. The city was built on land donated by Virginia and Maryland—thus it is not a state, and can be seen as the “51st” territory of the U.S. The city has always been closely tied to African-Americans, not least due to the fact that slaves in Washington D.C. were freed 9 months before those in the rest of the country. In 1963, Martin Luther King delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, marking a turning point in American history. Today, “D.C.” remains a liberal, Democratic, and heavily African-American city, which can result in tensions when, as now, Republicans control the federal government. Though D.C. has had problems with poverty and urban crime, it is more widely known these days for prosperity, as the nation's educated middle class flocks to high-paying, secure government jobs.

SIGHTS AND NIGHTLIFE

The top Washington sights include the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, the Washington Monument, the Capitol, and, for those interested in politics, dozens of offices and headquarters of major government agencies and international organizations. Washington's nightlife has a lot to offer. Nightclub 9:30 and Black Cat host the best local bands, Josephine and the Huxley have a VIP and posh aura, and Columbia heights offer various hipster, down-to-earth bars.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Housing: Expect to pay between \$1,000 and \$1,500 per month on rent when living with one or more roommates; prices are higher if you choose to live alone. Living in the suburbs like Arlington, VA, Bethesda, MD or other suburbs is a less expensive housing alternative while still close to the metro transportation line. While Washington is a generally safe city, we recommend you avoid the Southeast and Anacostia areas of DC.

Getting around: The public transportation system in Washington is well established and includes buses and trains; many people also travel by Uber or Taxi. You can find information about routes and schedules on the [WMATA](#) website. If you live outside the city in the suburbs it might be beneficial for you to rent a car and you should contact a local dealer for that. Always remember to have your car checked by a professional before you buy it. For travel outside Washington use the [Amtrak](#) (train) or Megabus, Greyhound, BoltBus for less expensive options.