



J-1 Visa Program

Housing/Rental Guide



Pan Atlantic
Exchanges





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Housing in the United States

Once your visa has been approved, you will need to find adequate housing for the length of your training program. We recommend beginning your search prior to your arrival to get an idea of how much rent will likely cost you each month. Pan Atlantic *does not provide housing* for participants.

Initial U.S Arrival:

Prior to your arrival, you should secure temporary housing to allow you time to find an apartment. Some Host Organizations will allow an Intern/Trainee to stay at their property (if applicable) for a few days to give the Intern/Trainee time to find a place to live. However, this is not always the case. There are several options for temporary housing:

- <https://www.airbnb.com/>
- <https://www.vrbo.com/>
- Hostels

You should also organize transportation from the airport. Your host company may offer transportation from the airport, so it is important to *communicate with them prior to your arrival*. Most major airports offer a variety of transportation to and from the airport. If your host company does not provide transportation from the airport, you should consider alternative ways to get to your destination:

- Uber
- Lift
- Taxi
- City bus

Average Rents in Major U.S Cities:

Pan Atlantic highly recommends you research the location of your training program before departing for the U.S. to learn about the city's cost of living. U.S. cities and states are very different from one region to another in terms of the average cost of living.

Interns/Trainees should expect to pay a significant part of their training stipend towards rent – even as much as 50% in major metropolitan areas such as New York City, Boston, San Francisco, San Diego, and Denver. Please find resources below that discuss the average rent in major U.S cities:

- The average rent for a [New York City Apartment](#).
- The average rent for a [Miami Apartment](#).
- The average rent for a [Boston Apartment](#).
- The average rent for a [San Diego Apartment](#).
- The average rent for a [San Francisco Apartment](#).



- The average rent for a [Phoenix Apartment](#).
- The average rent for a [Denver Apartment](#).
- The average rent for a [New Orleans Apartment](#).

Lease Agreements:

The best long-term option for Interns/Trainees coming to the U.S. is to rent an apartment. Most apartments you find will require a twelve-month lease to rent. A lease is a written legal contract between the tenant (you) and the landlord (owner of the apartment) outlining the costs per month as well as the living responsibilities. The legal responsibility for tenants is determined by state law so be sure to obtain a list of tenant responsibilities specific to your location.

Some of the more common tenant responsibilities may include:

- Following local housing, health and safety rules and regulations
- Keeping the apartment clean and regularly disposing of garbage into the proper waste containers
- Using all supplied appliances, plumbing fixtures, and electrical outlets with care
- Refrain from disturbing the neighbors
- Notify the landlord when repairs are needed

Landlords also have certain legal responsibilities:

- Obeying all property related safety and health regulations as determined by state law
- Ensure that all common areas are clean and safe
- Properly maintaining all heating, plumbing, and electrical sources
- Keeping the property in good condition and complete requested repairs in a timely fashion
- Supplying running water, heat and hot water always if responsible for all utilities
- Give tenants at least 24 hours' notice before trying to enter an apartment

When you sign a lease, it means that you are agreeing to the terms of the lease and **legally binding yourself** to responsibility for the apartment. The tenant is required by law to pay the rent (monthly cost to live in the apartment) on time as well as maintain the original condition of the living space. Failure to do so could result in legal actions against the tenant as outlined in the lease agreement. Therefore, read the lease carefully before signing it and make sure to ask the landlord or a friend if something is unclear to you.

Keep in mind that if you choose to sign a twelve-month lease and decide to leave the U.S. prior to the end of your lease you are still legally responsible for the apartment.



It is also important to know your legal rights as a tenant. One of your most important rights is to a habitable residence. This means that the home must be safe to live in, without dangerous conditions, and with usable heat, utilities, and water. Your landlord is required to make any necessary repairs to your unit in reasonable condition while you live there.

Before Signing a Lease:

- Have direct contact with the potential landlord or roommate via phone and/or Skype to ensure they are legitimate. Do not rely on e-mail.
- Request photos of the apartments.
- Research the location. Map the address to ensure it is viable and conduct extensive research online about the neighborhood. In addition to safety, research the distance and route to public transportation, grocery stores, banks and other places you will travel too often.
- Research the average monthly rent rates in the areas in which you are looking to live. This will help determine if you have realistic expectations, or if you are potentially being overcharged.
- If you are searching after your arrival, walk through the apartment or house with the landlord and make a written list of current faults or problems. This will help eliminate the question of responsibility for pre-existing damage. Some items to check are water pressure, is there hot water, any visible mold or water damage, and is everything in working condition, e.g. blinds, locks, doors.
- **DO NOT** send anyone money until a legally binding lease is signed by both parties. If someone requests that you send money, or states that you cannot go inside of an apartment before making a payment, **do not do it.**

Rental Resources:

There are a variety of online rental resources to assist you in your search for an apartment. Online rental websites typically let you set your monthly budget, as well as how many rooms you are looking for. Here are some great rental resources:

- <https://www.apartments.com/>
- <https://www.zillow.com/>
- <https://www.trulia.com/>
- apartmentfinder.com/
- <https://www.forrent.com/>
- [Apartment List - More than 5 Million Apartments for Rent](#)



We also recommend that you discuss rental resources with your host company **prior to arrival**. Your host company will be familiar with the area and should be able to assist you in finding safe neighborhoods to live in.

In some cases, a landlord will ask to review the credit history of the potential candidate. A credit history is a record of an individual's financial responsibility, and it helps determine one's ability to pay for their living expenses. Most Interns/Trainees, do not have a credit history in the U.S. In these cases, provide the landlord with *letters of recommendations* from sources who can comment on your credit history from your home country (such as a landlord, bank, or academic advisor); or ask your Host Organization to write a letter of support.

A tenant will usually have to pay a security deposit as well as first and last month's rent, which can amount to more than thousands of dollars. A security deposit is a refundable fee that is supposed to guarantee the wellbeing of the apartment. A landlord has the legal right to keep the security deposit if the tenant violates any of the terms outlined in the lease agreement and legally charge the tenant if the damages exceed the amount of the security deposit. **Be sure to get a receipt every time you pay rent!** **Never pay with cash!** Pay your rent and security deposit by using a personal check for every transaction in case there is a dispute over payment.

Roommates:

We highly recommend that you find a roommate to live with during your time in the U.S. This means that you and your roommate will split the rent and utilities each month, saving both of you a significant amount of money.

If you are planning to move into an apartment with a roommate, you might want to investigate writing out a roommate agreement that establishes the ground rules for your new rental unit. This agreement will typically cover all the duties and responsibilities that will be split between you and your roommate in your new living space. They are typically created after agreeing to your lease terms. Here's what to consider for a roommate agreement:

- **How Much Each Roommate Pays for Rent.** Typically, the rent would be split in half, so both roommates pay the same amount.
- **Who Pays Utilities and How to Split Bills.** Just like rent, roommates typically pay the utilities evenly. Often, a utility bill will be under one person's name and each roommate will provide a check or Venmo to the roommate responsible for the utility bill.
- **Guest Policies for the Apartment.** It is important to establish ground rules for having guests visit your apartment. If you are uncomfortable with your roommate's friends or significant other staying over, you should discuss this in the roommate agreement.



- **Cleaning Responsibilities.** Be sure to establish cleaning responsibilities early on and create a cleaning schedule. Household chores roommates should split include taking out the trash, dishes, cleaning the bathroom, keeping common rooms clean, etc...
- **Guidelines Around Noise Level.** If you need to get up early for work or prefer quiet time, make sure you establish “quiet hours” with your roommate.
- **What Household Items are Communal vs. Individual.** There may be some communal items that you share with your roommate such as: toilet paper, paper towel, milk, trash bags, cleaning supplies, etc... It’s important to establish a monthly budget with your roommate to cover the cost of communal items.

Furnishing your Apartment:

Once you have found a roommate and a place to live, you will need to provide basic furnishing for your apartment during your stay in the U.S. We recommend sticking to a minimal amount of furniture and to only purchase the necessities. Basic furnishing to consider:

- Bedframe
- Mattress
- Dresser
- Couch
- Table & Chairs

Other items you will need to buy for your apartment:

- Garbage Can
- Bathroom & Dish Towels
- Bed Sheets & Comforter
- Bed Pillows
- Hangers
- Cooking Ware & Kitchen Utensils
- Cleaning supplies: vacuum, mop, laundry detergent, surface cleaner, bathroom cleaner, etc...

You will be able to find affordable furniture from a variety of places including:

- <https://www.walmart.com/>
- <https://www.amazon.com/>
- <https://wayfair.com/>
- Ikea
- Retail stores such as: TJ Maxx, Target, Home Goods

Second-hand furniture is an affordable option that can be found easily:



- Goodwill
- Salvation Army
- Facebook Marketplace
- Habitat for Humanity Re-Stores

If you have a roommate, you should consider splitting the cost of commonly used apartment items such as cooking utensils, table & chairs, couches, towels, etc... It is important to keep your furniture in good condition so that at the end of your lease you may be able to sell your furniture or donate it to a local consignment shop.

Public Transportation in Major U.S Cities:

Once you have found an apartment to live in, you will need to familiarize yourself with the local public transit system in your city. Public transit in the U.S can be very different from public transit in other countries. Most U.S. cities provide a public bus or train system that you pay a fee for each time you ride. You will likely need to purchase a transit card that can be pre-loaded with funds.

- Public transit in New York City: <https://new.mta.info/agency/new-york-city-transit>
- Public Transit in Miami: <https://www.miamidade.gov/global/transportation/home.page>
- Public Transit in Boston: <https://www.mbta.com/>
- Public Transit in San Diego: <https://www.sdmts.com/>
- Public Transit in San Francisco: <https://www.sfmta.com/getting-around-san-francisco>
- Public Transit in Phoenix: <https://www.valleymetro.org/>
- Public Transit in Denver: <https://www.rtd-denver.com/>
- Public Transit in New Orleans: <https://norta.com/>

Always remember, it is important to know your rights as a tenant (renter) which can vary by state. The U.S. government provides an [index of tenant information by state](#).