

Summer Work and Travel: An American Adventure



From the Embassy of the United States of America in Sofia, Bulgaria



A Message from John Beyrle, Ambassador

Dear Students,

Congratulations! If you're reading this brochure, then you're thinking about beginning a unique American adventure through the J-1 Summer Work and Travel Program. We're very proud of this program. It allows bright young men and women the opportunity to get to know America first hand by working and traveling throughout our 50 states. In fact, since the program's inception, about forty thousand Bulgarian students have taken advantage of this opportunity.

This program benefits Americans and Bulgarians alike. First, you'll get to know the real America, not the one seen on TV or in the movies, but America as it's lived by Americans, because you'll be living and working right along side them. You'll not only improve your English and earn some money, you'll make friendships and take home impressions of America that will stay with you forever. Second, Bulgarians back at home will benefit, too, from hearing about your American adventure when you return to Bulgaria to resume your studies. And finally, we Americans benefit from this program because we will learn about Bulgaria's rich history, customs, and traditions while you're in the United States as de facto Bulgarian ambassadors.

We know students like you have a lot of choices as to where you can spend the summer, and we're delighted that you're considering spending it in the United States. Whether this is your first year considering the program or you're seeking a repeat visit, I wish you much success on your American adventure.

All the best,
John Beyrle

Practical Information

The United States Summer Work and Travel program permits post-secondary school students to work and travel throughout the U.S. during their summer holiday. Every year, the program draws many thousands of students from around the world, and Bulgaria is no exception.

Many work at hotels, beach resorts, and amusement parks across the U.S. Others are employed at national parks or even casinos. And of course, they have the opportunity to see some of the cities and scenery of the 50 United States.

The Summer Work and Travel program is a great opportunity to explore the U.S., get to know its culture and its people, improve English language skills, earn money, develop a network of international contacts, and gain marketable job skills.

REQUIREMENTS

To participate in this program, participants must meet the following requirements.

Post-secondary school students who are actively pursuing a degree or full-time course of study at an accredited educational institution in their country of residence may participate in the Summer Work and Travel program only during their summer vacation.

Students may not participate in this program during time periods other than their summer vacations, and program extensions are not permitted. Students must return to Bulgaria in time for the start of the university semester – no later than October 1.

To be eligible for the program, applicants must be bona fide students enrolled full-time at an accredited educational institution.

Prospective exchange visitors must also possess sufficient proficiency in the English language to participate in their programs.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE SUMMER WORK AND TRAVEL PROGRAM

There are a number of American sponsors that facilitate the Summer Work and Travel program. Both the American sponsors, and the local agencies who work with them, hold job fairs throughout Bulgaria in winter and spring during which qualified participants can be interviewed by prospective employers.

Local agencies can also help participants locate employment on their own.

The final step involves an interview with a consular officer at the U.S. Embassy in Sofia, which the local agency will help to arrange.

The purpose of the interview is to ensure that participants meet the requirements of the program and are eligible to receive visas.

For more information on visa requirements, please visit:

http://sofia.usembassy.gov/j1_summer_work.html

IN THE U.S.

Once they enter the U.S., students can work only during the period designated on their program approval form (DS-2019) – a maximum of four months – and they may spend up to one month traveling or preparing for their return. Students must return to Bulgaria at the end of their summer program, but no later than October 1.

Income earned by Summer Work and Travel program participants in the U.S. will be taxed, but applicants can apply for a refund upon return to Bulgaria.

TRAVEL USA!

We encourage students to take advantage of the “travel” portion of the Summer Work and Travel program. A list of resources for inexpensive and enjoyable travel in the U.S. is available in this booklet.

When visiting the U.S., be sure to get a

taste both of the vibrant cities and of the magnificent natural beauty. From the skyscrapers of New York City to the snowy mountains of Colorado, from the deserts of Arizona to the national monuments of Washington D.C., the U.S. has a wide variety of sites that impress millions of visitors each year.

TEN WAYS TO GET A TASTE OF THE BEST OF THE U.S.:

- 1) Take a drive along the Pacific Coast Highway (Route 1) in California, which runs along the breath-taking coastline. Be sure to stop and see the bustle of Los Angeles, the tranquility of secluded Big Sur national park, and the beautiful beaches of Carmel, all before crossing San Francisco's world-famous Golden Gate Bridge.
- 2) Sample the classic American architecture of Chicago, and don't forget to have some banitsa if you're missing Bulgaria, Chicago is a hub of Bulgarian-American culture.
- 3) Explore the unique landscape of Arizona, from the desert of Tucson to the red rocks of Sedona. Then visit the state capital, Phoenix, one of the fastest-growing cities in the United States.
- 4) Take in the history to be found in Philadelphia. Visit Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was signed and the U.S. Constitution was written, and see the Liberty Bell, which rang before the first public reading of the Declaration.
- 5) See the wonders of Glacier National Park in Montana. A great place to hike, camp, bike, and fish, the park possesses some of the most striking natural beauty to be found in the U.S., right in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. Be sure to drive down Going-to-the-Sun Road for the magnificent views.
- 6) Wander through the streets of New York City, from the Financial District, Chinatown, Soho, and Greenwich Village up through Midtown, the theater district, and Museum Mile. If you like to walk, take an entire day and walk the length of Manhattan on Broadway. Catch the excitement of an event at Madison Square Garden or see the Yankees in action at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx.
- 7) Sample the flavors of the American South. Try Tennessee, where you can visit Graceland, the home of Elvis Presley, or listen to some great country music in Nashville. Wander through the Old South in Charleston, South Carolina's tree-lined streets and beautiful old mansions. For a taste of Cajun flavor, explore New Orleans, filled with great jazz music, amazing seafood, and a party scene that never stops. Or explore cosmopolitan Atlanta, the site of the 1996 Summer Olympics, renowned for its beauty and its cultural prominence.
- 8) Visit Yellowstone National Park, which contains close to sixty percent of the world's geysers, including the famed Old Faithful, and enjoy the park's incredible diversity of wildlife, including moose, elk, bison, coyotes, bobcats, and bighorn sheep. Or check out Seattle, the largest city in the Pacific Northwest, a great place to hear live music and perhaps visit the famous Space Needle, constructed for the 1962 World's Fair.
- 9) Experience the unique blend of beach, nightlife, and Latin influences that have made Miami such an exciting city-have a "cortadito" (an espresso with a shot of milk) in Little Havana, shop and café hop on Miami Beach's Lincoln Road Mall, lay on beautiful sandy beaches during the day, and dance until dawn on South Beach's Ocean Drive.
- 10) No visit to the United States would be complete without seeing the monuments and museums of the nation's capital, Washington, DC. See the White House and the Capitol building, visit the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials and the Washington Monument, and visit the fantastic museums run by the Smithsonian Institution, all of which are free.

Information for Everyday Life in the U.S.

MONEY MATTERS

The basic unit of exchange in the United States is the dollar (\$), which is divided into 100 cents. One dollar is commonly written as \$1 or \$1.00. There are four denominations of commonly used coins: 1 cent, 5 cents, 10 cents, and 25 cents.

Americans usually refer to coins, not by their value in cents, but by their names. A one-cent coin is a penny, a five-cent coin is a nickel, a ten-cent coin is a dime, and a 25-cent coin is a quarter. U.S. paper money (often called bills: for example, a “one dollar bill”) comes in single-bill denominations of one dollar (\$1.00), five dollars (\$5.00), ten dollars (\$10.00), twenty dollars (\$20.00), fifty dollars (\$50.00), and one hundred dollars (\$100.00). You will immediately notice that, unlike in most other countries, U.S. bills are all the same size and color. They are differentiated from each other by the number value and the portrait of a different U.S. historical figure on each denomination. At first, you may find this confusing and you will need to watch which bills you use carefully. However, you will become accustomed to the currency and will soon be able to differentiate easily between the denominations. U.S. coins also are marked with the coin’s value and each denomination is a different size.

Having a bankcard is very convenient, since it can be used at ATM (Bankomat) machines all over the U.S., as long as they function on one of the banking networks used in the United States. Before leaving home, ask your bank if you can use your home country’s bankcard in the United States. This is especially useful if, in case of emergency, you need to get money from home quickly.

TIPPING

In the United States, tips (gratuities) are not automatically added to bills, as is customary in some other countries. Even if tipping remains a personal choice, it is usually expected when certain services are provided. You should be aware that the people who commonly receive tips are paid a wage that is lower than those who do not

receive tips. They depend upon tips for a significant part, sometimes the majority, of their income. The average tip is usually 15 percent, but it can vary depending on the extent and the quality of the service provided.

Eating Out: The expected tip in a restaurant is 15 or 20 percent in a good restaurant with excellent service. You should leave your tip on the table for the waiter or waitress as you leave. If you pay with a credit-card, you can add the tip to the credit-card charges before you total the bill. The restaurant then gives that amount in cash to your server. If you sit at a counter in a restaurant, the tip is usually smaller; 10 to 15 percent is sufficient. In a fast-food restaurant, the bill is paid when the food is ordered and no tip is expected. In a cafeteria or a self-service restaurant, you pay the cashier after having chosen your meal and, again, no tip is expected.

Taxi Drivers: It is customary to give 10 to 15 percent of the total fare.

Airport and Hotel Porters: It is customary to give \$1.00 for each bag.

Barbers, Hairdressers, and Beauticians: They usually are tipped 10 to 15 percent of the bill.

Valet Parking: The attendant should usually receive \$1.00 to \$2.00.

Never offer a tip to public officials, police officers, or government employees. This is against the law in the United States. There is no need to tip hotel desk clerks, bus drivers, theater ushers, salespeople, flight attendants, or gas station attendants.

Information for Everyday Life in the U.S.

RESTAURANTS

Restaurants in the United States range from inexpensive fast-food to very expensive restaurants. Some restaurants feature specialties of the region, others specialize in ethnic foods from various regions of the world. While some of these ethnic restaurants are very authentic, others have adapted their food to suit American tastes. It is safe to eat in restaurants in the United States since they are regularly inspected for cleanliness and for compliance with health codes. It is also safe to drink water from a tap in the United States. Bottled water is usually available in American restaurants for an extra charge.

MAILING ADDRESS

Before you leave home, give your correct mailing address in the United States to family and friends who will be writing to you. Be sure to include the zip code. A zip code is a five-digit number identifying the postal zone in which the address lies.

USING THE TELEPHONE

Telephone numbers in the United States have 10 digits, including a seven-digit set of numbers that is the prime telephone number. Preceding the seven-digit number is the three-digit area code. The area code serves a wide region, often a large part of a state. Usually you need to dial the area code only if the number is in an area with a code different than your own. However, some more populated areas now have more than one area code and require you to dial both the area code and prime telephone number even if you live in the same city.

In many communities in the United States, when you need police, the fire department, or paramedics in an emergency situation, you simply dial 911. Once you have dialed 911, the operator will ask you what the emergency is, ask for your address, and then summon the appropriate help. Most of the time, the operator will stay on the line and give you support or advice until help arrives. It is very important to call 911 only in an emergency situation, and it is illegal to use it otherwise.

GETTING A DRIVER'S LICENSE

If you plan to drive in the United States, you must have a valid driver's license. If you have an international driver's license, it is important to check whether the state where you are driving recognizes such a license, as not all states do. Check with the local office of the state motor vehicles department (DMV) to get information on obtaining a state driver's license.

All information is adapted from "Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States," a publication of the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State.