

2011

Studying Abroad at San Francisco State University

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Student Perspective From:
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How difficult/easy was it to obtain a US visa?

It's very easy to get a J1 or F1 visa if you prepare your documents well, and make an appointment with the US embassy in Thailand. Please check the following website and make sure you have all the required documents, and make sure to be on time, preferably thirty minutes before the appointment time. http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/non-immigrant_visas.html

Where and how did you find temporary housing when you first arrived? How much did it cost? Describe your experience.

Since I moved directly in to the university dorms, I do not have any experience with finding temporary housing.

Where and how did you find permanent housing? How much rent do you pay? Are you happy with where you live? Describe your experience.

I had permanent housing before I got to SFSU since I applied for the on-campus dormitory. I personally think this is the easiest way to get housing. At the same time, it's a good place to meet a lot of friends from various countries. Also, it's an excellent community where both local and international students can share experiences. The rent costs about \$1,500 per month, including 10 meals per week. Alternatively, you can find off-campus housing, which is cheaper compared to the on-campus dormitory, but make sure to ask local people if the place is safe or not. You can check off-campus housing at <http://sfbay.craigslist.org/>

How difficult/easy is it to get around? What mode of transport do you use primarily (public transport, bicycle, car, walk)?

Getting around SF is very easy since public transportation is very convenient. I mostly use public transportation because it's inexpensive (\$2 for about 2 hours), and most places are accessible by MUNI and BART.

How do you access your money? Did you open an American bank account? If so, was it worthwhile?

There is no fee for opening an account in SF, so I opened a Bank of America account because it's convenient for transferring money from Thailand. Plus, carrying lots of money on hand is very dangerous here, so it would be better to have a credit card because it is easy to deactivate if something goes wrong (like it gets stolen).

Did you obtain a California driver's license? If so, was it worthwhile?

I don't have a California driver's license, but I personally think that it's not important to get it since transportation is convenience, and most students plan to live here for only a short period.

Did you find San Franciscans to be helpful if you were in need?

Yes, most San Franciscans are willing to help. From my experience, when I didn't understand some points in class, classmates are willing to explain what the teacher said, and they normally have a study group before exams to help each other. Moreover, people in SF are also mostly kind and generous. If you get lost, you can ask people around the street or bus drivers. I'm sure they are willing to help you as much as they can.

Where did you obtain furniture for your room?

My dorm room is a fully-furnished room, so I didn't really need to buy new furniture. But I know students mostly go to Ross, Walgreens, Macy's, Nordstrom's, or go shopping online when they need to buy new furniture.

Primarily, do you buy groceries or do you eat out? Where and why?

I do both. There are a lot of grocery stores around the school such as Trader Joe's, Safeway, and Walgreens. If you prefer to cook, Trader Joes is the best place to buy fresh and organic ingredients. However, sometimes I eat out with friends at restaurants because it saves time and you can meet friends.

How difficult/easy was it to make friends? Describe your experience.

It's not difficult to make friends in SF because they have IEEC events, which gather the international students together. These events allow students to meet lots of new friends from various countries around the world.

What IEEC commitment did you choose (flyering, tabling, language exchange, country ambassador, IEEC officer, special contribution)? Describe your experience.

I chose **country ambassador**, which was one of my best experiences living in SF. During the study abroad fair, I was responsible for giving out information about Thai culture and represented Mahidol University, which is one of the most prestigious universities in Thailand, to foreigners. Also, I have an opportunity to work in the OIP office, which is a good opportunity to learn how they work, and organize the study abroad fair from professional officers.

Were you able to enroll in the classes you wanted?

Students need to create an account and login in the following website in order to check the available seats and time schedules for classes: <https://www.sfsu.edu/online/login.htm> Please make sure to consult your home university about transferred grades and classes.

How do your classes at SFSU compare to your classes at home?

Both universities have high quality professors and good learning environments. From my perspective, both universities have the same high quality standards.