

ARRIVAL GUIDE

FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED



Endless
Discovery

UC MERCED
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
STUDENTS & SCHOLARS

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Arrival Guide was created to help answer the questions most frequently asked by new international students and scholars before and upon arrival in Merced. The information provided includes housing, shopping and recreational activities.

WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear international students and scholars,



On behalf of the Office of International Affairs, welcome to the University of California, Merced. UC Merced is the newest, and fastest growing, campus of the University of California system and is committed to excellence in teaching, research and service.

We are pleased that you have chosen UC Merced and will soon join our dynamic academic community.

We understand that moving to a new university, city and country can be challenging. To help you with your move, we have prepared this Arrival Guide to answer questions you may have prior to, or after, your arrival in the United States. If you have additional questions, we encourage you to visit our International Student and Scholars website (iss.ucmerced.edu), contact your ISS advisor (iss.ucmerced.edu/new; +1-209-228-4708 or visit our office KL-101).

We look forward to meeting you in-person when you check-in, and wish you the best of success at UC Merced.

Sincerely,



Garrett Gietzen, Ph.D.
Director

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WELCOME FROM CLUBS

THERE ARE MORE THAN 200 CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS AT UC MERCED. MANY OF THESE CLUBS ASK FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ARRIVE AND ADJUST TO LIFE IN MERCED.

BELOW IS A WELCOME MESSAGE FROM JUST ONE, MIGSA. THE CHINESE SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS ASSOCIATION, THE IRANIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION AND OTHERS HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED THEIR INTEREST.

YOU CAN CHECK OUT ALL OF THE CLUBS AND THEIR CONTACTS ONLINE AT CATLIFE.UCMERCED.EDU/ORGANIZATIONS

Dear New Graduate Students,

Congratulations on your admission! MIGSA welcomes you to UC Merced. We are one of the many cultural and academic graduate clubs on campus. We encourage you to explore all your hobbies and passions by being part of the many great club options on campus.

You can see them all on the CatLife Directory.

At MIGSA, we want to create an atmosphere of a family away from your family. We celebrate major Indian festivals such as Diwali, Dusshera and Holi. Hopefully you can join us in all our celebrations, beat your homesickness and make some new friends here.

You can find more information about MIGSA on the CatLife pages or on Facebook.

Hope to meet you all soon.

Best wishes,
Megha, President, MIGSA



PRE-DEPARTURE PLANNING

Along with your form I-20 (for F visa students) or form DS-2019 (for J visa students/exchange visitors), you received instructions on how to apply for your non-immigrant visa. The U.S. Department of State website has further information on how to apply for your visa.

If your current passport has your name on one line, not separated by surname and given name, you should apply for a new passport before applying for your visa. Your passport should list your last/surname separate from your first/given name. If the names are not separate, the U.S. Embassy will put FNU on your visa, which will cause complications when you apply for your social security card or driver's license.

Your F or J visa permits you to enter the United States up to 30 days before the program start date listed on your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019.



TRANSPORTATION

The closest international airports are San Francisco (SFO), Oakland (OAK), San Jose (SJC) and Fresno (FAT). You can get more transportation information on our webpage, iss.ucmerced.edu.

The Graduate Division arranges two airport pick-ups in the week before the start of Graduate and Research Orientation Week (GROW). These dates are not available until summer. The information will be sent to you by email. Look out for this information if you would like to arrange to be on one of these two shuttles. This service is for graduate students.

Public transportation in California is not similar to transportation in most countries. Be sure to plan appropriately before arriving in California.

There is an AMTRAK train that stops in Merced. There is also the Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART), but this train does not travel to Merced — it stops in Pleasanton/Dublin, still a lengthy drive from Merced. Taxis, Uber or Lyft will cost several hundred dollars so we recommend you make prior plans to take AMTRAK or BART to AMTRAK. There is also the Greyhound Bus.

- › AMTRAK amtrak.com
- › BART bart.gov
- › Greyhound Bus greyhound.com

The two local buses in Merced are The Bus and CatTracks. CatTracks is proud to be the official transit system for the University of California, Merced. With service from the main campus to the Castle extension campus, as well as to Downtown Merced and select North Merced locations. Any students or scholar can ride CatTracks for free, provided he or she shows a UC Merced ID card.

- › The Bus
- › CatTracks

CHECKING-IN

AT THE UC MERCED INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

United States immigration regulations require new students and scholars report to their university after arriving to the United States. Failure to do so may result in a termination of your program and cancellation of your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019. This can lead to serious consequences for your legal status and ability to return to the US in the future. The check-in process is different for students and exchange visitors/scholars so please read below for your check-in process.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Following your arrival to Merced, you will need to check-in at the International Office, Kolligian Library room 101 (KL 101). Your attendance at the scheduled international student orientation is mandatory. Information about the orientation can be found in the letter sent with your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019.

BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WITH YOU TO YOUR CHECK-IN:

- › Passport(s) with visa stamps for you and any dependents;
- › Form I-20(s) or Form DS-2019(s) for you and any dependents;
- › Completed New Student Check in Form; and
- › Form I-94, retrieved online following your arrival to the U.S.



INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS (NOT REGISTERED IN COURSEWORK)

The Office of International Affairs holds J-1 scholar check-ins every other Friday. You can view a schedule online. Please email Rico Johnson to notify him which check-in meeting you will be attending following your arrival to the U.S.

BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WITH YOU TO YOUR CHECK-IN:

- › Passport(s) for you and any dependents;
- › Form DS-2019(s) for you and your family;
- › Completed check in form;
- › Proof of health insurance for you and your family;
- › Form I-94, retrieved online following your arrival to the U.S.;
- › Copy of the J-1 Exchange Visitors Responsibility Agreement; and
- › \$550 Dependent Fee for a spouse if applicable (cash, check or money order)

HOUSING

TYPES OF HOUSING IN MERCED

There are various kinds of housing options in Merced. Many students are able to find available rooms in houses where you can live with the home owner or multiple students. There are also apartments that range in size from multiple bedrooms, one bedroom or a studio (no bedroom). Most all of the apartments do not come with furniture so you would need to purchase furniture. Also, you may be need to request service and pay for utilities.

UTILITIES:

› GAS/ELECTRIC POWER	PG&E 800-743-5000	› INTERNET/CABLE	Comcast 800-824-2000
› WATER/POWER	Merced Irrigation District 209-722-5761	› INTERNET/CABLE	AT&T UVerse 844-827-7057
› WATER/SEWER	City of Merced 209-385-6841		



WHERE TO START

You should start your search for housing from abroad because finding housing following your arrival can be extremely difficult. The rentals in Merced go quickly.

RESOURCES FOR FINDING HOUSING IN MERCED:

- › UC Merced off-campus housing
- › UC Merced off-campus housing Facebook page
- › UC Merced Classifieds
- › Find apartments



HOUSING SEARCH STRATEGIES

1. Have a cell phone and a laptop or computer to inquire on vacancies that become available. You might need to leave messages so be sure to leave your phone number where they can reach you. You may want to prepare a script when leaving phone messages for the landlord mentioning that you are a new student at UC Merced and that you are interested in the property.
2. Become familiar with the housing vocabulary (see below)
3. Prepare a list of questions to ask your potential landlord such as:

“WHAT UTILITIES ARE INCLUDED IN THE RENT (WATER, GAS, ELECTRICITY)?

“IS THERE INTERNET?”

“WHAT IS THE COST OF THESE UTILITIES AND INTERNET?”

“WHEN WILL THE ROOM OR APARTMENT BE AVAILABLE?”

“HOW MUCH IS THE SECURITY DEPOSIT?”

“WHAT WILL I OWE WHEN I FIRST MOVE IN?”

“WHAT FURNITURE WILL BE IN THE ROOM OR APARTMENT?”

“ARE THERE LAUNDRY FACILITIES LOCATED ON SITE?”

COMMON HOUSING TERMS

SINGLE OR STUDIO Single room apartment with a small kitchen and a bathroom.

LEASE A legal contract signed by both the manager and the renter regarding the length of stay, price, and conditions of a rental agreement. It is important to not sign a lease for more than the amount of time you will stay. You are responsible for rent the entire length of the lease. Violation of the lease agreement can result in a heavy financial penalty. Residents should understand all of the conditions of the lease before signing. Any negotiated variation or amendment should be set out in writing, initialed, and dated by both the tenant and the manager.

CREDIT CHECK A process in which the landlord verifies your credit history and confirms your bank information. International students or scholars who do not have a credit history in this country should not need to pay for a credit check, but it may be necessary to negotiate an agreement with the landlord in this case.

DEPOSIT OR SECURITY DEPOSIT An additional amount you must pay when moving into an apartment (usually at least one or two months' rent) to guarantee occupancy, payment of rent, repair of damages, and professional cleaning after you leave. In most cases, the deposit is returned to you in full to you if there is no damage to your apartment at the end of your stay (there may be a slight deduction for cleaning). Inspect the apartment carefully when moving in and record any damages, so you won't be charged when moving out.

FIRST, LAST, DEPOSIT This means that to move in, you must pay the first and last month's rent amount, plus the security deposit amount. Most rental apartments require this, but it is possible to find those that only require the deposit amount and the first month's rent.

RENT Payment made for living accommodations, usually on a monthly basis.

UTILITIES The term used for the extra charges for gas, electricity, cable television, and water. Plan on spending an extra \$25-\$100 per month depending on your lifestyle. Some students are careful about finding "gas stoves" and "non-halogen lamps" as they use less energy.

SUBLET Special arrangement where you live in someone's apartment in their place. Sublets are attractive because they are often short-term opportunities with furnished rooms and no deposit. However, it is usually best to ask the person renting if their manager or landlord knows about your agreement, in case the lease prohibits you from taking his / her place.

A/C OR AIR Air-conditioning

BR OR BDRM Bedroom

FP Fireplace

2/2 OR 3/2 The first number indicates the number of bedrooms in the apartment. The second number indicates the number of bathrooms.

ABP All bills paid. Your utilities (water, electricity, gas, sewage, garbage collection) have been included in your rent.

W/D Washing machine and clothes dryer are provided.

HOUSING

SOME APARTMENT COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE MERCED AREA

The university does not investigate, endorse or guarantee the accuracy of any listing referrals, the quality of the facility listed, or the listed individuals, companies, or firms. The university does not investigate, endorse or guarantee suitability of those responding to the listings. Users of this service communicate and contract with each other individually and at their own risk. The Regents, officers, agents and employees of the University of California shall not be liable for any actions occurring because of arrangements made between users of this service or for any errors or omissions made in compilation or print of the listings.

AREA 1

NO.	APARTMENT NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE ADDRESS
1	Brierwood	3202 Denver Ave.	209-722-3300	
2	Covington Creek	925 Loughborough Drive	209-722-6731	covingtoncreek@yahoo.com
3	Lincoln Gardens	1287 Loughborough Drive	209-388-0837	
4	Meadowlark	3270 Meadows Ave.	209-383-5115	
5	Northwood Village	255 Snowhaven Court	209-383-6000	heritagemanagement.com
6	Oak Terrace	1019 Loughborough Drive	209-723-9639	
7	Royal Oaks	1622 Conestoga Drive	209-726-9151	
8	Saratoga	673 Loughborough Drive	209-723-6685	gsfpi.com
9	Sierra Village	1163 Loughborough Drive	209-384-7060	villagemeadowsapts.com
10	Village Landing	3601 San Jose Ave.	209-384-9000	heritagemanagement.com
11	Village Meadows	1163 Loughborough Drive	209-384-7060	villagemeadowsapts.com
12	Village Terrace	3827 San Jose Ave.	209-383-1000	heritagemanagement.com
13	Villages	3342 M St.	209-383-1616	thevillagesapartmenthomes.com

AREA 2

14	Brookdale Gardens	147 Brookdale Drive	209-383-3564	brookdalegardensapts.com
15	Brookdale North	344 E. Brookdale Drive	209-383-2201	gsfpi.com
16	Ridgeview Meadow	2111 Cold Springs Ave.	209-722-1112	
17	Garden East	295 Olive Ave.	209-722-4721	
18	Yardley Gardens	3388 G St.	209-383-3280	gsfpi.com
19	Sahara Apartments	200 Seneca St.	209-723-7262	

AREA 3

20	Bear Creek Manor	2929 M St.	209-723-4674	gsfpi.com
21	Bear Creek North	2976 M St.	209-383-5704	gsfpi.com
22	Bear Creek Park	2841 Park Ave.	209-384-2609	gsfpi.com
23	Bear Creek Terrace	2922 R St.	209-383-3549	gsfpi.com
24	Creekside Apartments	2813 Park Ave.	209-723-2157	bmgcreekside@sbcglobal.net
25	Alamar	218 S. Canal	209-385-3411	alamar@clarum.com
26	Granville	2908 Willowbrook Court		maxwellhomes.com
27	Olivewood	904 Olivewood	209-722-3922	
28	Summertrace Resort	1205 Devonwood Drive	209-384-2394	summertrace@sbcglobal.net
29	Swiss Colony	3075 Park Ave.	209-722-7721	maxwellhomes.com
30	Tioga	1715 N St.	209-723-2354	
31	Willowbrook	1756 Willowbrook Drive	209-722-0745	maxwellhomes.com

AREA 4

32	Castle Apartments	3044 G St.	209-722-8642	castleapts@aol.com
33	Campus Garden	2500 Glen Ave.	209-384-2900	
34	Riverglen	2560 Glen Ave.	209-383-5447	
35	Willow Glen Townhouse	2175 Yosemite Parkway	209-384-8030	willowglen@bigvalley.net

MERCED AREA MAP



TELEPHONE SERVICES

Making calls in the U.S. can be confusing. There are many different “area codes.” The area code in Merced and surrounding areas is 209.

TYPE OF CALL

HOW TO CALL

Emergencies

Call 911. This is the emergency number for police, ambulance services, and fire department. If you are on campus you can call 209-228-2677 (CATCOPS). Put this number in your cell phone contacts.

Directory Assistance

Call 411. An operator will give you phone numbers for people and businesses. There is a \$1.25 fee.

Calling outside the U.S.

Call 011 + country code + city code + phone number. See below for “collect calls” In the U.S. but going outside your local area code Call 1 + three digit area code + seven digit phone number.

In your local area code:

Call the seven-digit phone number directly.

On-campus to another on-campus phone

Call only the last four digits of the phone number. For example, the number for the Office of International Affairs is 209-228-4722, so you would dial 4722.

On-campus phone to an off-campus location

Call 9+ the phone number as described above. For example, if it's outside the 209 area code, you will call 9+1+ area code+ 7-digit phone number



HOW TO MAKE COLLECT CALLS

When you make a collect call, the person you are calling pays for the call.

To do so, dial 0 and tell the operator you want to place a collect call. The operator will dial the number for you and ask the person who answers if they will accept the charges. If they accept, you can begin talking immediately.

INTERNATIONAL CALLING CARDS

You can call home by using an international calling card, a credit card or by placing an operator-assisted or collect call. International calling cards are by far the least expensive of the three and can be purchased on the Internet at very low rates or at most grocery or convenience stores throughout the city. Different cards are better for different parts of the world in terms of connection, minutes and cost. Shop around and get the best deal for the country you are usually calling.

CELL PHONES

If you already have a cell/mobile phone from your home country, you will need to inquire about its use in the U.S. Many companies have international plans. However, it may be more economical to purchase a new phone after you arrive in the U.S. Do some research in advance by looking at websites of the major cell phone companies such as AT&T, T-Mobile, Verizon, MetroPCS and Sprint.

TELEPHONE SERVICES CONTINUED

Some cell phone companies in the U.S. require that you have a social security number (SSN) to purchase a service plan. If you will not be eligible for a social security number immediately, ask the cell phone companies about service plans that do not require it. In most cases, the cell phone companies can offer you a pre-paid plan that requires no credit check or identification numbers, or require a larger deposit in lieu of the social security number.

VERIZON WIRELESS

Verizon offers an international student program.

Here are the local Verizon stores:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| › 1124 W. Olive Ave., Merced | 209-385-2257 | › 680 Merced Mall, Merced | 209-726-5219 |
| › 1764 W. Olive Ave., Merced | 209-383-3623 | › 3560 G St., Merced | 209-205-4033 |
-

AT&T

AT&T offers a variety of calling plans.

Here are the local AT&T stores:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| › 560 W. Olive Ave., Merced | 209-725-2175 |
| › 225 Merced Mall, Merced | 209-230-5444 |
-

CRICKET WIRELESS

Cricket offers different calling plans.

Here are the local Cricket Wireless stores:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| › 2839 G St., Merced | 209-233-9905 |
| › 1340 W. Olive Ave. Merced | 209-723-3234 |
-

T-MOBILE

There is one T-Mobile store in Merced:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| › Merced Mall, 340 Merced Mall Drive, Merced | 209-384-3400 |
|--|--------------|
-

METROPCS

MetroPCS has various calling plans.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| › 30 W. Olive Avenue, Merced | 209-384-0000 |
| › 1950 Yosemite Parkway, Merced | 209-722-4336 |
-

SPRINT

Sprint also offers choices.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| 779 E. Yosemite Ave., Merced | 209-388-1200 |
|------------------------------|--------------|

MONEY MATTERS

ESTIMATED LIVING EXPENSES

HOUSING	\$500-\$1,600 per month depending on the type of room or housing you select. A deposit of up to 3 times this amount could be required upon signing a lease or rental agreement. This monthly estimate includes utilities, which also might require a separate deposit. See utilities listed under housing types above.		
HEALTH INSURANCE	Registered students are automatically enrolled in the UC SHIP insurance unless a waiver was approved by the deadline. \$1,100-\$1,250 per semester depending on education level (F-2 & J-2 dependent insurance is not included in this estimate)		
TRANSPORTATION	\$150-\$200 per month	BOOKS AND SUPPLIES	\$700 per semester
FOOD AND INCIDENTALS	\$300-\$400 per month	PERSONAL EXPENSES	\$200 per month



MONEY FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

When you arrive in the U.S., you will need enough money for immediate expenses including food, hotel (if necessary), housing costs (see estimates and the housing section on deposit and first month's rent for off-campus housing), university tuition/fees and transportation costs.

If you have a UC Merced TA/GSR appointment, it may take more than a month to receive your first paycheck. Do not bring large sums of cash. There are many safer options. Contact your bank in your home country for details about the following:

- › **Traveler's checks** — The money is immediately available if checks are in U.S. dollars. They can be replaced if lost or stolen. Keep in mind that traveler's checks in large sums can be difficult to use. Checks in a foreign currency may be subject to exchange fees.
- › **International credit cards** — Not all U.S. stores and businesses accept international credit cards.
- › **Electronic banking** — ATM/check cards from your home country bank may be used at some U.S. ATM machines/banks, but not all. These might offer the best exchange rates, but there may be daily limits for withdrawals.
- › **Wire transfers** — This is the safest way to transfer money, but a U.S. bank account must be opened first. Your tuition and fees may also be paid from your home-country bank directly to UC Merced by wire transfer. Find more information online.

MONEY MATTERS CONTINUED

FOREIGN CURRENCY EXCHANGE

Currency exchange facilities in the U.S. are less common compared with other countries, and exchanging money in the U.S. can be expensive. Some banks do exchange currency, but only if the currency is in notes, not in coins. Debit cards give the best exchange rate. Some currency exchange locations:

- › San Francisco Airport Travelex America has several currency exchange offices throughout the international terminal. The main office is located in the International Terminal Main Hall, Departures Level, near the security checkpoint for Boarding Area G.
- › Wells Fargo and Bank of America in Merced also exchange foreign currency if you open an account. See banking information below.



BANKING

Opening a bank account in the U.S. is recommended for several reasons. It is a safe place to keep your money. Banks and credit unions are government regulated and FDIC insured. In the U.S., you can use a combination of check writing, debit/ATM, and Visa/MasterCard to make purchases and pay bills. Once you open an account, you will receive an ATM/debit card that also can be used as a Visa/MasterCard. A bank account also allows for you to receive wire transfers. Many banks and credit unions open accounts for students without a social security number. Instead of a social security number that you might not have, a bank can use your passport number or state identification number from a driver's license or California state ID card.

You do not need a social security number to open a bank account. If a bank clerk insists on a SSN, ask to speak to a manager. To open a bank account, you will need:

- › U.S. State or other government issued identification (passport or visa)
- › A minimum deposit that may range from \$25 to \$100

The following are a few local banks and their locations

Bank of America

710 W. Main St., Merced
209-384-5051

Chase

3550 G St., Merced
(inside Raley's Market)
209-383-6082

Educational Employee Credit Union

(two ATMs on campus)
127 W. El Portal Drive, Merced
209-726-7420

Citibank

1840 M St., Merced
800-627-3999

Wells Fargo

3538 G St., Merced
209-381-7890

Merced School Employees Federal Credit Union

(one ATM on campus)
1021 Olivewood Drive, Merced
209-383-5550



HEALTH INSURANCE

All F-1, J-1 and J-2 visa holders are required to have health insurance. International students registered in classes will automatically be enrolled in the UC SHIP health insurance. We strongly encourage F-2 dependents also purchase health insurance due to the high cost of medical care in the U.S. You can view insurance rates, coverage dates and policy information online at health.ucmerced.edu/insurance.

The waiver process is available but seldom if ever approved for insurance policies purchased outside of the U.S. due to the strict waiver policy requirements.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Each incoming student is required to complete a TB screening questionnaire and prove vaccination and/or immunity to measles, mumps and rubella (MMR); varicella (chickenpox); meningitis (under age 22 only); and tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (TDAP) to comply with UC immunization requirements.

International students who have not had the above vaccinations may choose to obtain them in their home countries before arriving in the U.S. or get them following their arrival. International students who receive vaccinations before coming to the U.S. will need to submit proof of the vaccinations. Students who choose to get the vaccinations following their arrival in the U.S. may obtain their vaccinations at the UC Merced Health center or at another clinic in the U.S. You can get further information online.

EMERGENCY CARE

If you suddenly become ill or have a medical emergency when the Health Center is closed (nights, weekends and holidays) please call 911 (9-9-1-1 if using a campus phone), campus police at 209-228-2677, activate a Blue Emergency Phone, or go to the nearest urgent care or emergency room. If you have a medical emergency on campus call 911 or the campus police at 209-228-2677.

MEDICAL FACILITIES LOCATED NEAR THE CAMPUS

Mercy Medical Center Merced

Emergency Room
333 Mercy Ave., Merced
209-564-5000

Patients First Urgent Care

394 East Yosemite Ave., Merced
209-383-3990

Fountain Valley Urgent Care

374 W Olive Ave., Suite A, Merced
209-384-5766

Castle Urgent Care

3605 Hospital Road, Atwater
209-381-2000 option #2

If you do not need an ambulance, you may use the campus CatTracks bus system or taxi services:

Yellow Cab of Merced

209-723-0000

Merced Taxi

209-722-8294

Students under the university's Student Health Insurance Program can locate a Blue Cross Preferred Provider by accessing the Anthem Blue Cross website or by calling 800-888-2018.

IDENTIFICATION

CATCARD

Following your arrival at UC Merced, you will need to get your CatCard. At the CatCard Office in the Kolligian Library room 111A (near the Office of International Affairs), you will present your passport and student ID number. You can find your student ID number on your admission letter or in your student portal. Your picture will be taken and your CatCard will be issued within a few minutes.

The CatCard is a university identification card, but it also has many other purposes. It allows you to ride the CatTracks bus for free. It permits you access into labs and certain locked buildings. You can use it to pay for food, books and supplies on campus and at a few off-campus locations. For more information, please visit the CatCard website.

CALIFORNIA IDENTIFICATION CARD

The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) issues ID cards to persons of any age. The ID card looks like a driver's license, but is used for identification purposes only. A regular ID card is valid for six years. You may find it helpful to use the identification card instead of carrying your passport with you everywhere.

To apply for an ID card you will need to make an appointment at the DMV, which can be done online.

CALIFORNIA DRIVER'S LICENSE

If you have a car or will be purchasing a car, you will need a California driver's license. The state of California does not recognize an international driving permit (IDP). California does recognize a valid driver's license that is issued by a foreign jurisdiction of which the license holder is a resident; however, not all police officers are knowledgeable on the residency referred to in Vehicle Code Section 12505. A California driver's license is recommended to avoid any problems. Car insurance is required in California and most car insurance companies will require a California driver's license.

REQUIRED EXAMS: If this is your first time to apply for a driver's license in the U.S., you will need to take both a written examination and a driving test. If you can show proof that you have a valid driver's license from another state in the U.S., you will only be required to take the written examination. To study for the required written examination, you can download copies of the California Driver's Handbook along with sample tests from the DMV website. The test is available in many different languages, and if you do not pass it the first time, you can take it up to three times in one day. Once you have passed the written test, you can make an appointment to take the driving test (often scheduled several days later). You will need to bring your own car. The car you use must be insured and registered with the DMV. Once you pass the road test, you will be issued a temporary driving license until your permanent one arrives in the mail four to six weeks later. Check the website for current hours of operation. Be aware that this office is very busy and notoriously slow. For faster service call or go online to make an appointment.

To assist DMV customers who may have reading/learning difficulties, or English is their second language, the California Driver's Handbook is available in English, Spanish, Armenian, Chinese, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese. There is also MP3 audio format in English. This audio lesson is designed as a complement to the printed hand book.

LEARNING TO DRIVE

If you don't already know how to drive, you can take a driver's education course. There are many to choose from, and often, they provide training online. Whichever course you decide to follow, make sure it has been certified by the DMV. Find more information on getting started.

The local DMV is at: 1313 W. 12th St. | Merced, CA 95340
www.dmv.ca.gov



SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER | CARD

A Social Security Number/Card (SSN) is required for anyone who works in the U.S. Individuals are assigned one unique 9-digit number per lifetime. The number assigned will not change. The social security card is not a work permit. The U.S. government uses the SSN to collect taxes from employees. Creditors may also use this number to verify or check credit history. You do not need a SSN to apply for a driver's license or a bank account. The following people are eligible to apply for a social security number/card:

- › F-1 students with a job offer letter and work authorization from their I-20 sponsor
- › J-1 Students with a job offer and work authorization from their DS-2019 sponsor
- › J-1 Visiting Scholars
- › J-2 dependents with work authorization from USCIS (EAD)

F-2 dependents are not eligible to work in the U.S. and are not eligible for a Social Security Number.

A SSN is issued once per lifetime. If you have previously been issued a SSN but you do not have the card or do not remember the number, you can apply for a duplicate card at the local Social Security Administration Office: 600 West Olive Ave. | Merced, CA 95348

Although an SSN is only meant to be used for tax and government purposes, it is often used by financial institutions, businesses and others. An SSN is a unique ID, so it is often the target of identity theft. Therefore, you should be very careful about where and to whom you give your SSN.



POSTAL SERVICES

MAIL DELIVERY | PICK UP

Mail is delivered to your home once a day, Monday through Saturday. There is no mail service on Sundays or federal holidays.

MAIL DROP BOXES

If you want to send mail, you can either attach it to your mailbox for pick up by the postal worker, or drop it in one of the blue mail boxes located around the city, at a private postal center business or at a U.S. Post Office. The mail is picked up at specific times each day — check the schedule posted inside the door of the mail box. Make sure the mail box says U.S.P.S. on the box before dropping it in.

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE

The postal service in the U.S. is efficient and reliable. If you need to buy stamps, postcards and airmails, change your address or send letters and packages by first class, priority, express, certified or registered mail, visit the local post office. For more information on locations and hours call 1-800-275-8777 or check the website. U.S. post offices in Merced:

- › **U.S. Post Office** – 415A W. 18th St. | Merced, CA | 209-383-0553
- › **U.S. Post Office** – 2334 M St. | Merced, CA | 209-723-3741

MAILING AND SHIPPING SHOPS

There are many mailing service shops around town that function much like the post office, but are privately owned or retail chains and serve as a convenient alternative to the post office. Not only do they provide mailing and shipping, but they will also package your item. They offer photocopying and faxing services and other document production services as well. Some stores include:

- › **The UPS Store**
- › **Postal Connection**

COURIER/EXPRESS MAIL SERVICES

If you need overnight or quick delivery of a package, contact the following express courier services:

- › **DHL Worldwide Express:** 1-800-225-5345 or 415-644-0900
- › **Federal Express:** 1-800-463-3339
- › **U.S. Postal Service:** 1-800-275-8777
- › **United Parcel Service (UPS):** 1-800-742-5877

FAMILY RESOURCES

F-2 & J-2 DEPENDENTS

SPOUSES/CHILDREN

You can bring a spouse and/or children as dependents with you while you study in the U.S. Depending on your visa status, the dependent(s) would apply for either F-2 or J-2 visa status. Here is information on common topics of interest for international spouses and children in the U.S. Parents, siblings or extended family members do not qualify as dependents.

HEALTH INSURANCE

The Department of State requires J-2 dependents to have insurance upon arrival to the U.S. Here is further information on this insurance requirement and minimum policy coverage. ucmerced.edu/professors-researchers/j-1/health-insurance

F-2 dependents are strongly recommended to purchase health insurance.

EDUCATION

All children in California between the ages of 6 and 18 are required to attend school. Children will be required to have certain medical exams and vaccinations before entering school. To help your children make a smooth transition into their new school, read as much as you can about how the U.S. school system works and what you can expect. Here are some helpful websites:

- › The U.S. Department of Education
- › Great Schools
- › Merced City School District

An F-2 spouse or dependent child may not engage in a full course of post-secondary study (study after U.S. High School), but may engage in study at a SEVP-certified school in the United States as long as they are enrolled in less than a full course of study.

EMPLOYMENT

Dependents in J-2 status are permitted to apply for work authorization with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The employment must be for cultural enrichment and not based on financial need.

Dependents in F-2 status are NOT permitted to work while in the U.S.

RECREATION

Students are encouraged to experience the warmth of UC Merced's host community and discover Merced's treasures. The friendly downtown area with its brick-paved walkways, alleys decorated with murals and Italian trellises, an award winning multicultural arts center, community playhouse, the newly restored Merced Theater, and several historically significant buildings is a good place to start. There are also many additional things to do in nearby cities.

REGAL HOLLYWOOD MERCED MOVIE THEATERS:

403 W. Main Street, Merced, CA | 844-462-7342

PLAYHOUSE MERCED:

452 W. Main Street, Merced, CA | 209-725-8587

ROCKIN' JUMP:

1230 W. Main Street, Merced, CA | 209-500-1355

VISTA RANCH:

7326 E. Highway 140, Merced, CA | 209-722-8200

THE MERCED MULTICULTURAL ARTS CENTER:

645 W. Main Street, Merced, CA | 209-388-1090

MERCED SHAKESPEAREFEST:

Applegate Park, 28 West 27th Street, Merced, CA | 209-723-3265

MERCED ART HOP:

1733 Canal Street, Merced, CA | 209-349-8682

BELLEVUE BOWL:

785 Bellevue Road, Atwater, CA | 209-358-6466

Yosemite National Park, San Francisco, San Jose, the Central Coast and many other exciting cities are all within a 2 hours drive. The Outdoor Experience Program and YARTS public transit to Yosemite provide many opportunities to enable you to explore the central and northern areas of California.

recreation.ucmerced.edu/OEP/Calendar

yarts.com

SHOPPING

The Merced area and San Joaquin Valley have an array of shopping and dining options. Turlock, Modesto, Fresno and the San Francisco Bay Area are areas with more options that are not very far away.

FURNITURE

As a visitor temporarily in the U.S., you will likely want to buy inexpensive furniture. Target and Wal-Mart have some furniture items that require installation, but are easy to transport. Below are other furniture stores:

FURNITURE CITY:

1125 W. Olive Ave., Merced, 209-723-0477

SLATERS HOME FURNISHINGS:

345 W 18th St., Merced, 209-722-1534

BIG LOTS: 665 Fairfield Drive, Merced, 209-385-3113

IKEA: 4400 Shellmound St., Emeryville, 510-420-4532

Transporting your furniture if you do not have a car can be difficult. Some of the stores above will deliver for a fee. You can rent a truck at U-Haul, Budget or through other vehicle-rental companies. Renting and driving requires a valid driver's license and rental fee.

GROCERIES (FOOD)

The supermarkets listed below offer a variety of groceries. You can also purchase household items at supermarkets but it can cost more. There is another section below for household shopping.

RALEY'S: 3548 G Street, Merced, CA 209-722-3689

SAVE MART: 150 W. Olive Avenue, Merced, CA 209-723-1032

FOOD 4 LESS: 1115 W. Olive Avenue, Merced, CA 209-725-2150

FOODMAXX: 1300 W. Olive Avenue, Merced, CA 209-722-3385

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Furniture, bedding, small appliances, cleaning supplies such as towels, and laundry detergent, personal hygiene items such as shampoo, toothpaste and deodorant can all be purchased at:

WAL-MART: 3055 Loughborough Drive, Merced — Major retail store that sells inexpensive household items and some furniture.

TARGET: 3280 R St., Merced — Major retail store that sells inexpensive household items and some furniture.

DISCOUNT CLOTHING STORES

ROSS: 1113 W. Olive Ave., Merced, is a retail chain selling brand name clothing, shoes, accessories and housewares at discount prices.

MARSHALLS: 1200 Commerce Ave., Atwater, located in the Applegate Ranch Shopping Center

TJ MAXX: 2891 Countryside Drive, Turlock

SHOPPING MALLS

MERCED MALL: There are many stores and vendors a short distance from UC Merced at the Merced mall. It is located at 713 Merced Mall off of Olive Avenue. You can see a list of all the stores online.

VINTAGE FAIRE MALL: This mall is in Modesto, which is about 45 minutes north on the 99 freeway. The address is 3401 Dale Road.

DEPARTMENT STORES

JC PENNY: 600 Merced Mall, Merced

SEARS: 1011 W. Olive Avenue, Merced

MACYS: 500 Vintage Faire, Modesto

THE PROMENADE:

This shopping center is near campus and has several restaurants.

DOWNTOWN MERCED:

Downtown offers a number of quaint shops and activities.

COSTCO: Membership-based warehouse store. 1445 R St., Merced

DINING: There is a diverse selection of restaurants in the Merced area. There are listings on Yahoo or on Yelp.

MERCED FLEA & FARMERS MARKETS

FLEA MARKET:

900 G St., Merced (near the fairground) on Saturdays

FARMERS MARKET:

16th and Canal streets, Merced, on Saturday mornings

PHARMACIES/DRUG STORES

RITE AID: 3142 G St., Merced

CVS: 300 Merced Mall, Merced

WALGREENS: 3098 G St., Merced

EL PORTAL PHARMACY: 3377 G St., Merced

FACTORY OUTLET STORES

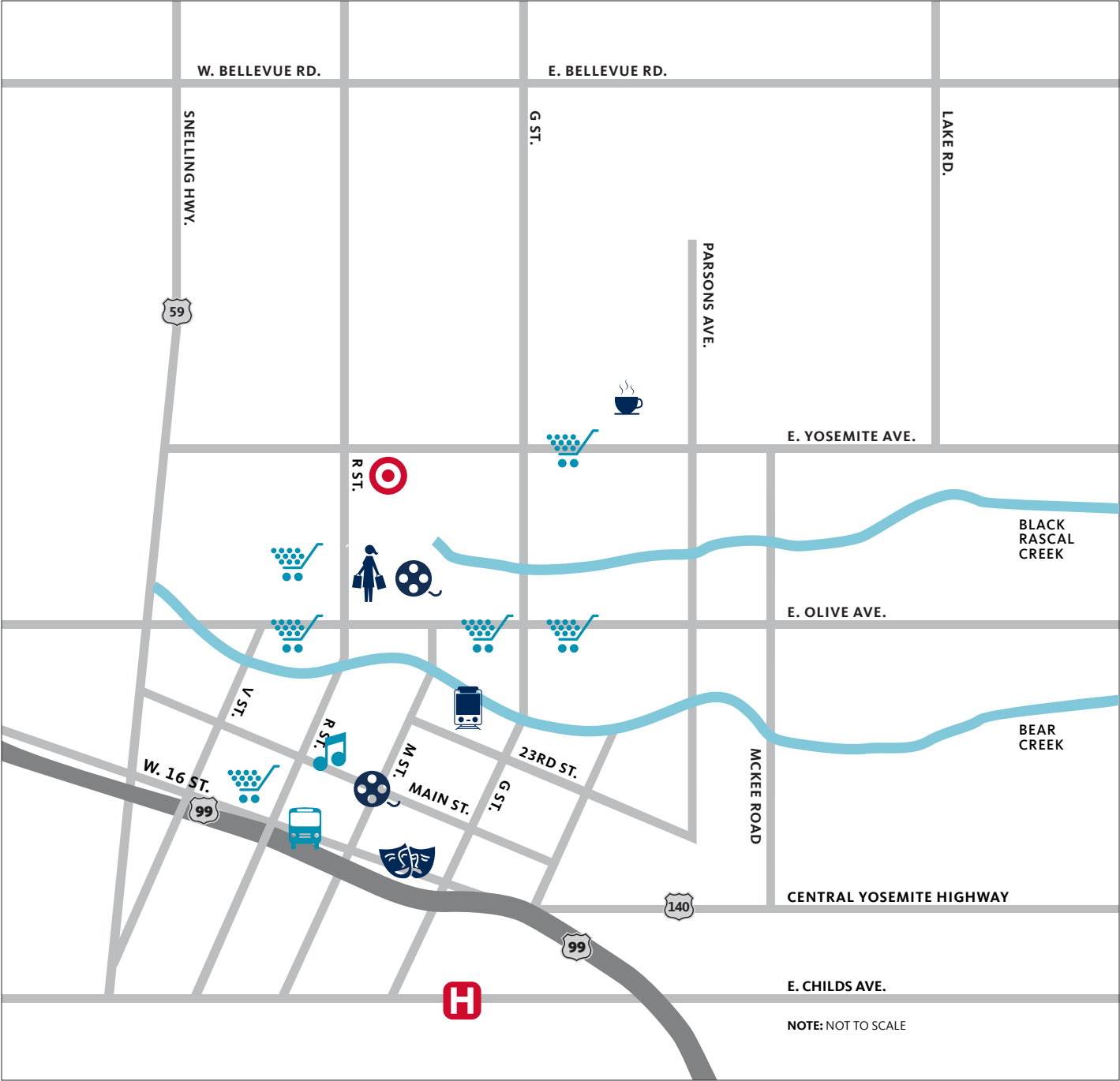
SAN FRANCISCO PREMIUM OUTLETS:

2774 Livermore Outlets Drive, Livermore

TULARE OUTLETS:

1407 Retherford St., Tulare

MERCED ENTERTAINMENT & SHOPPING



- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------------|---|------------------|
|  | AMTRAK STATION |  | MOVIE THEATER |  | PLAYHOUSE MERCED |
|  | GREYHOUND STATION |  | GROCERY STORE |  | MAINZER THEATER |
|  | MERCED MALL |  | MERCY MEDICAL CENTER |  | COFFEE HOUSE |
| | | | |  | TARGET |