OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Here is some information about topics that previous international students wished they had known before they arrived at UT.

Exchange students home countries
Each semester UT hosts about 50 exchange students who come from many countries including, but not limited to, Argentina, Australia, France, Germany, Netherlands, Hong Kong, Austria, China, UK, Japan, Estonia, Mexico, Italy, Spain, Canada, Brazil, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, South Korea, and South Africa.

Shopping
Knoxville has two malls, West Town Mall, and Knoxville Center Mall. West Town Mall is about 8 miles from campus going west on Kingston Pike, and Knoxville Center Mall is 10-11 miles northeast of campus. There are movie theaters and food courts in both places. Besides the malls, there are plenty of stores for all tastes – new and used books, music, sports, crafts and anything else you can think of – as well as Wal-Mart and Target superstores. Turkey Creek shopping center offers movies, restaurants, shops and bars, but it is 15 miles from campus.

Sports at UT
Sports are important at The University of Tennessee. They are not only a significant part of the campus culture, but also the culture of the entire country, especially in the South. Have no fear if you do not understand American football. You will soon realize many people attend the games for the atmosphere as well as the actual game. When the stadium is full, it becomes the fourth largest ‘city’ in the state of Tennessee! Tickets to all UT sporting events (except football) are free for students. In the case of a really important game, be prepared to wait in line. The women’s basketball team, The Lady Vols, is especially good and usually plays in the national championship series. Information about the athletic teams, schedules and tickets can be found at http://www.utk.edu/athletics/.

You can see or participate in volleyball, soccer, rugby, golf, tennis, sailing, swimming, horseshoes, badminton, wall climbing, hiking, camping, skiing, and more. You can join a campus team or take a class in many sports and activities. Whatever you do, be sure to visit the student recreation center, T-Recs. For more information about sports and recreation facilities and opportunities, please visit the RecSports website: http://recsports.utk.edu/.

And what is a Vol? Vol is an abbreviation for ‘Volunteer’. Tennessee is nicknamed the Volunteer State, and orange is the color of choice for Vol fans.

Alcohol
You cannot legally consume alcohol in Tennessee or any other U.S. state unless you are over 21 – no exceptions. Be prepared to show a photo ID if you order alcohol at a bar or restaurant or try to buy it at a store. Your student identification card, either UT or ISIC, is very rarely accepted as a valid form of ID, even if you are 21. The preferred ID is your passport or a temporary Tennessee driver’s license. In order to avoid problems (and so you do not have to carry your passport everywhere), you may wish to purchase a state ID card from the local government offices when you get to Knoxville. Please note that UT is a dry campus. This means that no alcohol under any circumstances is allowed on UT property even if you are over 21. If you are caught violating this alcohol policy, you will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs and will receive any consequences which they determine.

Please note also that no drugs are permitted, on campus or in general, and serious penalties result if you are found in possession of narcotics.
Sales Tax
Tennessee has a 9.25% sales tax on most items including clothes, food (both at the store and at restaurants) and medicines. Unlike many countries, this is not always included in the actual price, so if you want to buy a candy bar for 99 cents, it will actually cost you $1.08. Exceptions to sales tax tend to be at the gas pumps and at the movie theaters where the tax has already been included in the price. When you travel, you will notice that different states have different sales tax rates.

Great Smoky Mountains
During the semester, the Center for International Education may offer inexpensive or free excursions to the surrounding area. Previous trips have included hiking and camping activities in the glorious East Tennessee Mountains. Be sure to check with the Programs Abroad Office for more details once you arrive. You could also join a hiking club at UT that regularly goes to the mountains or participate in one of the trips offered by the UT Outdoor Program (UTOP). Visit the UTOP website to view their trip and event offerings.

Traveling around the U.S.
If you want to travel around the U.S. while at UT, there are plenty of opportunities to do so. If you are here for a full year, you will have almost a month between semesters to explore the country. If you are only here for the Fall semester, you will have a few long weekends. In Spring, you will have a week without classes for spring break. Of course, many students choose to travel after they finish their studies and before they go back home (your DS-2019 form is valid for up to 30 days after the last day of class).

In previous years, many international students have rented cars to travel around the United States. However, the new driver’s license laws may impact your ability to obtain a rental car. Since many rental agencies require a valid U.S. driver’s license as proof of ID, you may wish to investigate alternative means of transportation.

The metric system
The U.S. does not use the metric system; instead we still use miles, pounds, gallons, ounces, inches and feet.

Work while on exchange
UT Exchange Students:
Students on the UT exchange may apply for on-campus work by obtaining work permission from the Center for International Education (CIE). Some exchange students have worked up to 20 hours per week in the library, recreation center, as a tutor or in one of the student cafeterias to make extra money to help with expenses such as books or personal travel. You can apply for academic training (internship) for 4-8 months (on or off campus) as long as the position is directly to your field of study. The internship is normally completed after the end of your courses.

ISEP Students:
You need to seek work permission through the ISEP office in Washington, D.C. On campus work permission is relatively straightforward to obtain from ISEP and takes approximately 2 weeks. As an ISEP student, you can also apply for academic training for 4-8 months (on or off campus) directly related to your field of study. The academic training (internship) would normally be completed at the end of your semester.

Degree from UT
Generally, the length of an exchange is for one or two semesters. While you are at UT you are considered a special non-degree-seeking student. It is the intention of the exchange program that you will return to your home country and university where you will obtain your degree. You might want to consider returning to UT later to pursue a graduate degree!