

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' RESOURCE GUIDE 2017-2018



 THOMAS

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The International Students' Resource Guide is produced by the Office of Student Affairs to assist international students in their transition to Thomas College, the state of Maine, and living in the United States. This guide is an attempt to give you additional information that will help you navigate through a new climate, culture, customs, and ways of doing things. If you have questions that are not answered in this guide, please contact the Student Affairs Office at (207) 859-1243 or stop by our office in Room 127 of the Administration Building and we will be happy to assist you.

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TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE

How is college different from high school? New college students will find that college is very different from high school in many ways. It helps to be prepared ahead of time about these differences so you can plan for them. There will be differences in personal freedom, classes, instructors, studying, examinations, and even grades. The table below lists the differences between personal freedom in high school and personal freedom in college.

Personal Freedom in High School vs. Personal Freedom in College	
High School	College
Mandatory and Free	Voluntary and Expensive
Your time is structured by others.	You manage your own time.
You need permission to participate in extra-curricular activities.	You need to decide whether or not to participate in extra-curricular activities.
You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities.	You will be faced with a large number of moral and ethical decisions you have not had to face previously. You must balance your responsibilities and set priorities.
Guiding principle: You will usually be told what your responsibilities are and corrected if your behavior is out of line.	Guiding principle: You're old enough to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions.

More information can be found at the following websites:

How is College Different from High School?

<https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/college-different-high-school>

KnowHow2GO (American Council on Education)

<http://www.knowhow2go.org/>

Transitioning from High School to College Academics

<http://www.collegeview.com/articles/article/transitioning-from-high-school-to-college-academics>

Transitioning to College: Helping You Succeed

<http://libguides.library.kent.edu/t2c>

TRANSITIONING TO BEING AWAY FROM HOME

Homesickness

It is normal to feel some homesickness when you begin college. You are away from your family, friends, and familiar environment. To top it off, as an international student, you are also trying to familiarize yourself with a new culture. Here are 5 tips to help you combat homesickness:

- Stay connected with those at home via phone, Skype, e-mail, etc. (whatever works for you). This may sound like common sense, but staying connected with family will help you to retain some sense of the familiar while getting used to your new environment. The key is not to connect too often.
- Make plans to travel home during semester break, if possible.
- Keep yourself busy during shorter breaks to take your mind off your homesickness.
- Make new friends at college. Making new friends and doing things together is a great way to build a family atmosphere at college.
- Connect with a friend back home. Chances are they are experiencing the same thing and could use a chat with an old friend as well.
- Get out of your room. If you spend more time outside your room, you will meet more people, have new experiences, and have less time to focus on your homesickness. Before long, you will realize that you are no longer homesick.

Culture shift

As you may have already found, there are many different customs in the United States to which you will need to become accustomed. From food to clothing to etiquette to music and movies, the following resources will give you some helpful information to navigate the U.S. culture more smoothly.

Is America like What You've Seen on TV?

The website <http://internationalstudents.org/> contains a lot of helpful information on food, customs, holidays, history, music, art, clothing, sports, literature, the education system, regional differences and many more topics.

An example of an American custom is:

Meeting Someone

When meeting someone for the first time, men and women both usually shake hands. Only close friends exchange hugs and/or kisses, although men seldom do more than shake hands with other men. Americans usually exchange names by means of introduction; either first name only, or first and last name. Everyone expects you to call them by their first name unless they specify otherwise.

For more information and to join an online community of international students studying in the U.S., visit the International Students Portal at <http://abroadplanet.com/>.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT VISAS

Maintaining Status

The Immigrations and Customs Enforcement website has all of the information you need to know regarding International Student Visas. Their website is <http://www.ice.gov/>. Information on maintaining your status can be found at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students>. This Fact Sheet highlights the following steps you must take to maintain your status:

- As soon as you arrive on campus, check in with the college's Primary Designated School Official, Lindsey Nelson. Upon checking in, Lindsey will photocopy your travel documents and certify with Immigration and Customs Enforcement that you have arrived on campus. You should also work with your designated school officials responsible to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated.
- Understand The Importance of Maintaining Your Status - Knowing your responsibilities will help to ensure that your status will not be jeopardized. Each visa classification has requirements that the visa holder must follow and maintain. Those who do not follow the requirements violate their status and are considered "out of status," which could result in arrest, and violators may be required to leave the United States. Violation of status also can affect the prospect of readmission to the United States for a period of time. Most people who violate the terms of their status are barred from lawfully returning to the United States for years.
- Recognize and Avoid Status Violations - Examples of violations include the following:
 - ✓ Failure to enroll within 10 days of the program start date designated by your school or exchange visitor program.
 - ✓ Unauthorized employment during your stay.
 - ✓ Failure to leave the United States following completion of your course, exchange visitor program, or program-related employment.
 - ✓ For academic students (visa category F-1): Failure to maintain a full course load without prior authorization for a reduction from your designated school official.

Note: Citizens of Bermuda and Canada coming to the United States do not need to apply for a Visa but are required to obtain an I-20.

Campus contact information for Visa:

Lindsey Nelson, Registrar, Primary Designated School Official (PDSO)

E-mail: registrar@thomas.edu

Phone: 207-859-1405

Main College Phone: 207-859-1111. This number can be called any time of day or night.

If called after hours, the call will be sent to Public Safety. In an emergency, the office can contact a campus official.

Kelsey Bragdon, Assistant Registrar, Designated School Official (DSO)

Thomas Edwards, Provost, Designated School Official (DSO)

Jeannine Bosse, SFS Director, Designated School Official (DSO)

Traveling out of the country with a Visa

All international students must check in with the PDSO at least 10 days prior to leaving the country. It is the student's responsibility to determine if they are required to obtain an additional visa when traveling out of the country. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer at the Port of Entry (POE) decides whether or not nonimmigrants are admitted to the United States. This decision is based upon the facts and circumstances presented at the time you apply to enter. There is no guarantee that you will be admitted or readmitted to the United States. If you plan to travel out of the country during your time at a U.S. College, you can find more information at the following website: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/>

If all of your questions are not answered here, you can contact your Primary Designated School Official (PDSO), whose contact information is listed on the previous page, your embassy or consulate, or your legal counsel for further assistance.

F-1: OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

F-1: Optional Practical Training Application Instructions – Step One

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit of F-1 status that allows you to work off-campus in a field related to your field of study. You do not need to have a specific job offer to apply for OPT. You are eligible for a 12-month period of OPT at every level of education, for example, 12 months for a Bachelor's degree, an additional 12 months for a Master's degree, and an additional 12 months for a Doctorate degree.

Applying for OPT is a two-step process which begins first with a recommendation for OPT from your Academic Dean and Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) and second, with approval of your application by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In order to maintain F-1 status while you are on OPT, you must report employer name and address to USCIS and not be unemployed for a total of more than 90 days.

If you are applying for OPT, it is important for you to understand the application process and the rules that govern this type of employment authorization. Please read all OPT handouts carefully and speak with your PDSO if you have any questions.

Eligibility

To be eligible for OPT you must be in valid F-1 status and have maintained full-time student status for at least one academic year before applying.

OPT Limits

There is a limit of 12 months of full-time OPT. OPT may be used before completion of studies (Pre-Completion OPT), after completion of studies (Post-Completion OPT), or a combination of both time periods. OPT may be full-time or part-time, but any Pre-Completion OPT is limited to part-time during the school year. Any periods of OPT, whether part-time or full-time, will be deducted from the total twelve-month period available.

- Part-time OPT (20 hours per week or less) is deducted at half of the full-time rate (two months of part-time OPT = one month of full time OPT) before completion of studies.
- After completion of studies, part-time OPT is counted at the full-time rate.
- Full-time OPT is training that is more than 20 hours per week. Full-time OPT can only be granted during official college breaks or after the completion of degree requirements.

When to Apply

Post-Completion OPT applications may be filed up to 90 days before the completion of all degree requirements, and up to 60 days after the completion of all degree requirements. The completion of studies date may not necessarily be the same as the official graduation date. Your application must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of when OPT is recommended by your PDSO. USCIS processing time for this type of application is approximately 30 to 90 days. Please apply early to avoid delays in starting your employment.

How to Apply

- Complete OPT Date Verification Form
- Complete Academic Dean's Recommendation Form
- Complete Form I-765

The Form I-765 can be completed online, saved, and printed. This is helpful to eliminate the difficulty of reading handwriting and leads to more accuracy. Please go to www.uscis.gov, click on the "Forms" tab, and scroll down to Form I-765. Complete the Form, save it for your records, and print out a copy to sign in **blue ink**. If you wish to complete the form by hand, please write in **blue ink**.

- Under section 16, write either (c) (3) (B) for post-completion OPT, or (c) (3) (A) for pre-completion OPT or (c) (3) (C) for STEM extensions.
 - Carefully consider the address you use to complete this form. You should use an address where you will be in 2-4 months, when your EAD will be mailed. You may use the College address: **c/o Lindsey Nelson, PDSO, Thomas College, Waterville, ME 04901**
- Make Copies of all Form I-20s (pages 1 & 3 stapled together); include forms from previous U.S. schools (if applicable).
 - Print a copy of your Form I-94 (front and back). Your electronic I-94 card can be found at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html>.
 - Make a copy of your F-1 visa (unless you are Canadian, or have had a change of status approval).
 - Make a copy of your passport photo page and make a copy of your passport expiration date page (if different from your passport photo page).
 - Have 2 photographs (*see Photo Specification Handout*). Lightly write your name and SEVIS ID# on the back.
 - Write a personal check or obtain a money order made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security for \$410. Write your SEVIS ID # on the front of your check in the memo section. **Do not write on the back of the check.**
 - Make a copy of any previously issued EAD (if applicable).
 - Special Registrants must show proof of registration and should provide a brief letter indicating their FIN # and the date and location of registration from their last entry.

- Complete Form G-1145 (if you wish to receive an e-mail and/or text message confirming that your application has been accepted at a USCIS Lockbox facility).

Once you have assembled all of the required documents for your application, you must make an appointment to review your application with your PDSO. If the PDSO determines that you are eligible for OPT, you will be issued a new Form I-20 with the appropriate recommendation. Your recommendation information will be entered in Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), and you will be contacted by the PDSO via e-mail to pick up your complete OPT application materials.

Pick Up and Mail your Application

You are responsible for mailing your application materials to USCIS in a timely manner. **We strongly suggest that you MAKE COPIES OF ALL YOUR DOCUMENTS before mailing, and that you send your application by Priority Mail (USPS) with delivery confirmation.** Send your application packet to:

*By U.S. Postal Service
(USPS):* USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

*By Express Mail or Courier Service
(FedEx, UPS, etc.):*
USCIS Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121
Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

Maintaining F-1 Status While on OPT

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an extension of F-1 status. While you are on OPT, you are still in F-1 status and must follow the regulations in order to maintain your F-1 status.

1. Maintain employment during OPT—you must be employed or actively seeking employment. If you are unemployed for more than a total of 90 days during the 12 month OPT period, you will no longer be maintaining your F-1 status.
2. Report any change of address, or name, to your PDSO within 10 days of the change.
3. Report the name and address of your employer and any changes to your employment (including termination of employment) directly to your PDSO.

The above information was revised July 2017.

GETTING TO KNOW THE UNITED STATES

U.S. Federal Holidays and Other Common Observances

Americans celebrate a variety of federal and other national observances throughout the year. American holidays can be secular, religious, international, or uniquely American. It can be confusing to determine what public or private facilities are open on the various holidays, but this information can often be found in the local newspaper or by calling the office you wish to visit.

Various ethnic and religious groups in America celebrate days with special meaning to them even though these are not national holidays. Jews, for example, observe their high holy days in September, Muslims celebrate Ramadan, African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa, Irish Americans celebrate the old country's patron saint, St. Patrick, on March 17, and Mardi Gras is the day before the Christian season of Lent begins and is a big occasion in New Orleans, Louisiana. There are many other such religious and ethnic celebrations in the United States.

The following are common U.S. holidays. Federal holidays are noted with an asterisk (*).
January
○ New Year's Day* – January 1
○ Martin Luther King Day* – Third Monday in January
February
○ Valentine's Day – February 14th
○ Presidents' Day* – Third Monday in February
March/April
○ Easter – Celebrated on a spring Sunday that varies from year to year
○ Earth Day – April 22
May
○ Mother's Day – Every second Sunday of May
○ Memorial Day* – Last Monday of May
June
○ Flag Day – June 14
○ Father's Day – Every 3rd Sunday of June
July
○ Independence Day* – July 4
September
○ Labor Day* – First Monday of September
October
○ Columbus Day* – Second Monday in October
○ Halloween – October 31
November
○ Veteran's Day* – November 11
○ Thanksgiving Day* – Fourth Thursday in November
December
○ Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day – December 7
○ Christmas Day* – December 25

The above information was taken from the following website:
<http://www.usa.gov/citizens/holidays.shtml>

Eligibility to work in U.S./Maine

Students on F-1 visas are permitted to work 20 hours a week on campus while school is in session and 40 hours a week on campus during vacation periods. The work does not have to be in the student's major field. However, they are not eligible for work-study jobs, so finding on-campus employment may be a challenge. Some work may be available in the admissions office, campus bookstore or the dining center. You must meet with your PDSO before you can start any on-campus employment.

F-1 students must have been enrolled for at least one academic year and be in good academic standing before they can be authorized to work off-campus. They must be unable to get on-campus employment or the pay from available on-campus employment must be insufficient to meet the student's financial needs. Off-campus employment (OCE) can only be requested for F-1 students for three reasons under the terms of the DHS regulations: Economic Hardship, Special Student Relief, and Work with an International Organization. Off-campus employment is a case-by-case exception made for students who can show that new, unexpected circumstances beyond the student's control have created severe economic hardship. These may include:

- Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment – if it is not the student's fault;
- Large increases in tuition or living costs;
- Substantial decrease in the relative value of currency the student depends upon to pay expenses;
- Unexpected changes in the financial conditions for his or her sources of financial support;
- Unexpectedly large medical bills not covered by insurance; or
- Other substantial, unexpected expenses.

Process

- Talk with the PDSO (below) to see if your academic standing and circumstances meet eligibility requirements.
- If you are cleared to work, you will need to apply for a Social Security number. See the section below on Social Security numbers for instructions on how to apply.

Resources

- Website: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/employment/index.htm>
- Lindsey Nelson, Primary Designated School Official-PDSO
E-mail: registrar@thomas.edu
Phone: 207-859-1405

Social Security Numbers

Who is eligible?

Unless you are a noncitizen who wants to work in the United States, you probably do not need a Social Security number. Generally, only noncitizens authorized to work in the United States by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) can get a Social Security number. Social Security numbers are used to report an individual's wages to the government and to determine a person's eligibility for Social Security benefits. You need a Social Security number to work, collect Social Security benefits and receive some other government services.

Lawfully admitted noncitizens can get many benefits and services without a Social Security number. You do not need a number to get a driver's license, register for school, obtain private health insurance, or to apply for subsidized housing. Some organizations use Social Security numbers to identify you in their records. Most, however, will identify you by some other means if you request it. Social Security will *not* assign you a number solely so that you can get a driver's license or a service that requires a credit check. Although many companies, such as banks and credit companies, may ask for your Social Security number, you are generally not required to provide one if you don't have one.

Where to apply

If you find that you will need to apply for a Social Security number for work or other purposes while you are in the United States, and did not file for one already while in your home country, you can visit the Waterville Social Security office at 14 Colby St., or you can call them at (866) 931-9169. You will need to complete an application for a Social Security card, which can be found on the following website: www.ssa.gov/pubs/10096.html, and will need to provide some documentation of identity and non-immigration student status, your age, and work eligibility.

When to apply

If you qualify, you should wait until you are in the United States for at least 10 days before you apply for a Social Security number. You should also report to your school prior to applying for a number. Taking these actions will ensure that Social Security can verify your immigration status with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

What to bring with you:

At least two original documents showing your identity and non-immigration student status (Form I-20, *Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status will be one of these*), your work eligibility, and your age.

To provide proof of your identity:

Social Security will accept only certain documents as proof of identity. An acceptable document must be current (not expired) and show your name, identifying information and preferably a recent photograph. Social Security will ask to see your current U.S. immigration documents. Acceptable immigration documents include your:

- Form I-551 (includes machine-readable immigrant visa with your unexpired foreign passport);
- I-94 with your unexpired foreign passport; or
- Work permit card from DHS (I-766 or I-688B).

All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. Social Security cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents. They also cannot accept a receipt showing you applied for the document. One document may be used for two purposes. For example, your DHS work permit may be used as proof of both work eligibility and identity. However, you must provide at least two separate documents.

To provide proof of your work eligibility:

If you are an F-1 student authorized to work in curricular practical training (CPT), you must provide your Form I-20 with the employment page completed and signed by your school's designated official.

If you are an F-1 or M-1 student and have an *Employment Authorization Document* (EAD Form I-766 or I-688B) from DHS, you must present it.

If you are a J-1 student, you must provide a letter from your sponsor. The letter should be on sponsor letterhead with an original signature that authorizes your employment.

The Electronic Fact Sheet on the following website has some great information (including some of the above information) for International students: <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10181.html>

Note: Canadians who wish to work in the U.S. under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) should call the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) at the Champlain, NY, port of entry (518.298.8311) or the National Customer Service Center (800.375.5283). More information is available from the Department of State.

Work Study Information

International students *cannot* participate in the work-study program because they do not qualify for federal financial aid.

Obtaining a Bank Account

If you expect to be in the U.S. for a while, you will probably want to open a U.S. bank account so you can have any pay you receive directly deposited. It would also come in handy if you

expect funds to be wired to you from another country. Below are some questions you should ask before you open a bank account:

- What fees does the bank charge?
- Is there a minimum deposit to open the account?
- Is there a minimum balance you are required to keep?
- How much are overdraft fees?
- Are there fees for other items or services?
- How long does the bank take to clear a check?
- What is the interest rate of the bank account? Depending on fees and balance requirements, you will probably want to choose the account with the highest interest rate.
- What do you need to show the bank to open an account? At any bank, you will need to complete some paperwork and show at least two forms of identification, which needs to include your passport or resident or non-resident alien card and another form of ID such as a student ID, visa, license or another document that shows your name and address.
- Are other services included with the bank account?
- Can funds be wired directly into the account?
- Can scholarships and paychecks be directly deposited?
- Can you pay your bills online?
- Can I exchange foreign currency for U.S. currency at this bank?

The above information was taken from the following website:

<http://www.universitylanguage.com/blog/29/opening-a-bank-account/>

There are several banks in the Waterville area, so you will want to shop around for the best rates and services and the lowest fees. Area banks are listed later in this manual under the heading, *Getting to Know Waterville, Maine*.

Currency Exchange

Currency from your country may need to be exchanged for American currency. Currency exchange rates vary from place to place and day-to-day so the currency rates given in the website listed on the following page are only to give you an idea of the difference between the currency of your country and U.S. currency.

You will likely find the best currency rate at an ATM machine affiliated with a major bank. If your ATM card has a 4-digit pin number, you should be able to use it; however, there may be a fee charged by the bank and your home institution. (The ATM on campus will accept cards that match the logos on the machine. Because this ATM is not affiliated with a bank, no fees will be charged to your account when you use the ATM.) We cannot determine what your bank's policies and fees will be, so we recommend you contact your bank to ensure international transactions can be done and to find out what fees your bank may charge in addition to any ATM fees. You can also open an account (a student account will give you more benefits) at a local major bank to exchange currency at a branch instead of through an ATM. Other ways to use your money in the U.S. include using a credit card, or purchasing American Express gift cards or traveler's checks.

Up to date Currency Exchange rates can be located at the following website:

<http://www.xe.com/>.

Health Insurance Information

While you are studying in the United States, international student health insurance is necessary so that you are able to pay medical bills in case of emergency. Thomas College requires students to prove that they have an international student health insurance plan. Below is our International Student Health Insurance policy.

International Student Health Insurance

All international students (F1 and J1 visas) are automatically enrolled in the Thomas College Student Health Insurance plan. Students who choose to waive the Thomas Student Health Insurance plan **MUST** provide proof of a United States based health and accident insurance that meets or exceeds the minimums available thru HTH Worldwide Global Student USA International Insurance Plan (hthstudents.com). The waiver form, Verification of Medical Insurance Form and insurance policy must be received and on file at the College before moving into campus housing, participating in college activities and/or attending classes (regardless of the number of credits for which they are registered). Students must remain fully covered for the entire time that they are enrolled as a Thomas College student.

- Students who have a change in policy while enrolled at Thomas must notify Student Financial Services immediately.
- Students must have complete and up-to-date health and immunization records on file with the campus Health Center before moving into housing and/or starting classes.

GETTING TO KNOW THE STATE OF MAINE

Facts about Maine

Maine is a sparsely populated state with very few people compared to the land area the state encompasses. The land area in Maine is 30,862 square miles and the population in 2014 was 1,330,089. In comparison, the state with the smallest land area in the country, Rhode Island, which is 1,045 square miles, had a population of 1,052,567 in 2014. Maine is rich in forests, mountains, lakes, ponds, rivers, and coastline. It is called Vacationland as well as the Pine Tree State and is a popular destination for vacationers who love the outdoors and tourists who love the scenic beauty of its coastline.

Facts for Students

The State of Maine...

- Is recognized as one of the most healthful, beautiful and interesting states in the nation.
- Has over 21,000 miles of public highways.
- Claims America's first chartered town - York, chartered in 1641.
- Is nationally famed for the fine taste, texture and fresh color of its seafood, superior traits due to all the cool, clear waters which provide the perfect environment.

Statehood: Became the 23rd State on March 15, 1820

Forest: 17 million acres

Counties: 16

Largest City: Portland

Lakes and Ponds: 6,000



Persons per Square Mile: 43.1

Land Area: 30,862 square miles

State Capital: Augusta

Length of Coastline: 3,500 miles

Population of Maine in 2014: 1,330,089

Weather

What are the Average High and Low Temperatures in Maine?

Maine's four seasons offer a healthy, invigorating environment for the traveler. The state has one of the most comfortable summer climates in the U.S. and is recognized as one of the most healthful states in the nation, with summer daytime temperatures averaging about 70F (21C) and occasionally hitting 90F (32C) or above. Summer nights are usually cool and comfortable. We do get to temperatures around 100F once in a while - we have a few hot weeks in the summer.

In winter, temperatures average about 22F (-5.5C), but prolonged cold spells are rare (but that's without the wind-chill factor which can make it feel like it's 20 degrees below zero).

You can find information about weather in Maine at <http://www.maine.gov/mema/weather>. Click on the map to get the day's weather information for the area you are in or plan to visit. Or, you can visit <http://www.weather.com/> and type in your zip code (Waterville's zip code is 04901) for the weather forecast in your area.

What is the Average Snowfall in Maine?

A total winter snowfall averages between 60 inches (152cm) and 90 inches (228cm), making the state very popular with skiers and other winter sports enthusiasts.

You can find more fun facts about Maine on the following web page:

<http://www.maine.gov/portal/index.html>

Things to Do in Maine

Fun activities to do in Maine include apple-picking, blueberry picking, agricultural fairs, white-water rafting, canoeing, fishing, skiing, hiking, mountain climbing, walking on the beach, visiting museums and historic places – there’s no end to the list of possibilities! Because of Maine’s perfect geography, which includes mountains, rivers, forests, lakes, rivers and the ocean, Maine is a wonderful place to explore and do outdoor activities. Late September and early October is a wonderful time to be outdoors in the more rural areas of Maine because of the explosion of color the fall foliage provides. For those who love to shop, Freeport and Kittery have name-brand outlets and Freeport is home to the famous L.L. Bean. The Maine Mall in Portland is a popular shopping spot and there are smaller malls in most cities. A lot of the towns along Maine’s coast are tourist attractions and feature many gift shops and restaurants.

Outdoors

There are many places to explore in Maine, including a national park, state parks, beaches, lighthouses, covered bridges, and scenic byways. If you love to explore the outdoors, the following website lists about 40 state parks and lands that encompass over one million acres: www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/index.shtml

Acadia National Park in Ellsworth, ME is a popular tourist spot with mountains to hike, walking and bike trails, the ocean, swimming spots, etc. You can learn more about Acadia at this website: <http://www.nps.gov/acad/index.htm>

Check out the links below for information on Maine’s covered bridges, lighthouses and scenic byways:

<http://www.lighthousegetaway.com/lights/maine.html>
<http://www.coveredbridgemap.com/me/>

For information on Maine Wilderness Guides, go to <http://www.mwgo.org/>

For information on camping, beaches, boating, outdoor sports and other topics, go to <http://www.maine.gov/portal/visitors/outdoor.html>

Events, Fairs and Festivals

For information on agricultural fairs, art shows, community events, lodging and dining, go to http://www.maine.gov/portal/visitors/events_fairs.html

Shopping

Information on shopping in Maine can be found at <http://visitmaine.com/things-to-do/shopping/> Some topics include flea markets, downtown boutiques, Maine made products, and information on where to find the shopping outlets.

Culture and Arts

See the following website for information on museums, libraries, performing arts, cultural events, fairs, and musical events: <http://visitmaine.com/things-to-do/arts-and-culture/>. The site

also lists information about the Maine Arts Commission, Maine Humanities Council and other topics.

Government

Visit the following website for more information on Maine government:

<http://www.maine.gov/portal/government/>

Sales Tax

The Maine state sales tax is 5%. Thus, items you purchase in Maine will have an additional cost of 5% above the ticket price added to the amount you pay at the register. There is a tax of 7% added to lodging and prepared food, so if you stay at a motel or hotel or eat food in a restaurant, expect to pay 7% extra. There is also a 10% tax on short-term auto rentals.

The above information can be found on the following web page:

<http://maine.gov/revenue/salesuse/homepage.html>

GETTING TO KNOW WATERVILLE, MAINE

History of Waterville

In 1754, the first permanent white settlement of the area was established with 11 families. It centered around General John Winslow's Fort Halifax, where the Sebasticook joins the Kennebec River below the Ticonic Falls. Within ten years there were one hundred settlers on both sides of the Kennebec. The East Side, the first side, became known as Winslow in honor of the General, and the West Side, Ticonic, for the Falls. In 1771, Massachusetts incorporated both sides of the area as Winslow, and by the late 1790's more people were living on the west side than the east, due to the superior mill sites along the Messalonskee Stream. Without a bridge across the Kennebec, it made sense to incorporate the West Side as a separate municipality, and in 1802 Waterville became a town.

The town of Waterville had industry, commerce, education, and religion as a foundation upon which to grow. There were disastrous floods, severe winters, and wars, which diminished the able male population. But throughout it all, the town gained in strength and number. In 1883 Waterville was large enough to become a city, but didn't accept that elevated status until 1888.

The information above was taken from the following web page:

<http://www.watervillemaine.net/history-genealogy/3-events-in-waterville-history>

For more information on Waterville's history, see the above web page or visit the following:

http://www.watervillechamber.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=30&Itemid=118

Things to Do in Waterville

Information on shopping, libraries, museums, movies, points of interest, events, walking trails, restaurants and historic sites in Waterville or nearby towns, and a map of the downtown Waterville shopping area can be found at

<http://www.midmainechamber.com/cms/index.php/travel-tourism>.

For listings of area events, many of which are shown below, visit the following websites:

<http://www.watervillemainstreet.org/events.php>

<http://kennebecvalley.org/events/>

WATERVILLE AREA ANNUAL EVENTS
September Clinton Lions Agricultural Fair, Clinton Colby College Orchestra Concert, Waterville Common Ground Country Fair, Unity
October Kringleville Auction, Waterville Harvest Fest, Waterville Waterville Humane Society's Craft Fair, Waterville
November Waterville Main Street's Parade of Lights, Waterville Riverside Fire Station Hunter's Breakfast, Vassalboro
December Christmas Stroll, Belgrade Lakes Kringleville, Waterville Christmas Tree Lighting, Fairfield Christmas Fair, St. John's Catholic School, Winslow Colby College's Festival of Carols and Lights, Waterville
February Fairfield Chocolate Festival, Fairfield Vassalboro Fire Dept. Ice Fishing Derby, Vassalboro Winter Carnival, Waterville
March World of Women's Wellness, Waterville Spring Vendor Fair, East Waterboro
April Free Range Music Festival, Belfast Gem and Mineral Show, Standish Broken World Fest, North Haven
May

<p>Memorial Day Parade, Albion Memorial Day Parade, Unity Memorial Day Parade, Waterville Memorial Day Parade, Oakland</p>
<p>June Concerts in the Park, Fairfield National Trails Day, Region-wide</p>
<p>July Winslow 4th of July Parade and Fireworks, Winslow Belgrade 4th of July Parade and Fireworks, Belgrade Concerts in the Park, Fairfield Fiddler's Convention, Littlefield's Farm, East Benton Maine International Film Festival, Waterville</p>
<p>August Blistered Fingers Family Bluegrass Festival, Litchfield Winslow Blueberry Festival, Winslow Franco American Festival, Waterville</p>
<p><i>Also check out:</i> Downtown Waterville Farmers' Market Every Thursday, 2-6pm 3rd Thursday in April until Thursday before Thanksgiving <i>For more information on Annual Events, contact the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce at (207)873-3315 or info@midmainechamber.com.</i></p>

Places to Visit in the Waterville Area

- Belgrade Lakes (kayak rentals available)
- Benton Family Fun Park
 (Offers Go Karts, bounce houses, inflatable water slides, Knockerball, Zorb pool, mini golf and arcades)
- Blueberry Hill, Belgrade, (scenic look of the Belgrade lakes chain)
- China Lake in China
- Fort Halifax Fort and Park
- Lake Winnecook in Unity
- Main St. Waterville (shopping and dining)
- The Concourse Shopping Center
- Redington Museum and Apothecary
- Underwood Farm in Benton (berry picking)
- Waterville Commons (shopping)
- Waterville Opera House
- Waterville Public Library
- Unity Raceway

For more information, visit the page below, found on the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce website: <http://www.midmainechamber.com/cms/index.php/travel-tourism>.

Another helpful resource:

<http://watervillemaine.net/2-uncategorised/2-download-the-mobile-app-to-experience-everything-waterville-has-to-offer>

Banks

Bangor Savings Bank	(207) 861-8931
Camden National Bank	(207) 872-5636
Kennebec Federal Savings	(207) 873-5151
Kennebec Savings Bank	(207) 872-5563
Key Bank	(207) 873-6821
T.D. Bank	(207) 873-3301

Places of Worship/Spiritual Centers

Below are some of the places of worship and spiritual centers in and around Waterville. If you don't see your faith listed, or for a more complete listing of churches within a denomination, you may find that information on the following website:

<http://www.midmainechamber.com/cms/index.php/our-region/religious-places-of-worship>

Beth Israel Congregation	(207) 872-7551
Centerpoint Community Church	(207) 872-2084
Corpus Christi Parish	(207) 872-2281
Earth Tides Pagan Network	http://earthtides.org
Faith Evangelical Free	(207) 873-0343
First Baptist	(207) 872-5741
First Church of the Nazarene	(207) 622-7529
First Congregational	(207) 872-8976
First Maine Hindu Temple, Scarborough	(207) 632-0664
Islamic Society of Augusta	(706) 210-5030
Kennebec Valley Baptist Church	(207) 872-7021
Lewiston Auburn Islamic Center, Sunni	(207) 777-7733
Maine Hindu Temple, Westbrook	(207) 370-0475
Maine Muslims Community Center	(207) 797-6626
St. Mark's Episcopal	(207) 872-7869
Treetop Zendo, Soto Zen	(207) 619-1156
United Methodist	(207) 872-7564
Universalist Unitarian	(207) 873-4006
Waterville Zazenkai	(207) 873-1351

Storage Units in Waterville

Brown House Storage	(207) 873-7844
Pondwood Self-Storage	(207) 872-8100
Trafton Properties, Inc.	(207) 872-6070
Waterville Self-Storage	(207) 465-5192

Travel /Transportation

The area is serviced by two large airports, which are listed below. Greyhound bus line serves the region with a depot in Waterville. Several car rental agencies and taxi companies service local residences and tourists alike. Below is a listing of the most common methods of transportation in the area:

Airports

Bangor International Airport	(207) 947-0384
Portland International Jetport	(207) 774-7301

Bus Service in Waterville

Concord Coach Lines	
<i>(Service available from Colby during their school year)</i>	1 (800) 639-3317
Greyhound Bus	1 (800) 231-2222

Rental Cars in Waterville

Budget	(207) 873-1188
Enterprise	(207) 877-6601
UCarShare	1 (877)-990-8227

Taxi Service in Waterville Area

Elite Taxi, Waterville	(207) 872-2221
Pine Tree Taxi, Fairfield	(207) 465-2304

Other Resources

The Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce website, <http://www.midmainechamber.com/>, has many other resources. You may also call the Chamber of Commerce at (207) 873-3315, email them at info@midmainechamber.com or visit them at 50 Elm St. in Waterville.

THOMAS COLLEGE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Academic Calendar

The Academic Calendar below can also be found on the Thomas website under Academics.

Academic Calendar 2017-2018

Fall 2017

August	16	Wednesday	EDGE Program begins	
	24	Thursday	Last Day of Summer II Classes - Evening Divisions	
	25	Friday	New Student Move in/Orientation	
	26	Saturday	Orientation continues for new students	
	27	Sunday	Returning Students Move-in/Orientation	
	28	Monday	Classes start – Day and Evening Divisions	
	September	1	Friday	Summer II Grades Due – Evening Divisions
		4	Monday	Labor Day – no classes
5		Tuesday	Last day to add/drop courses w/no transcript record	
22		Friday	Early Warnings Due – Day Divisions	
October	9-10	Mon-Tues	Columbus Day Break – Day Divisions	
	13	Friday	Mid-Semester Warnings Due – Day Divisions	
	13-15	Fri-Sun	Homecoming and Family Weekend	
	16	Monday	Last day to drop a class – Evening Divisions	
	30	Monday	Last day to drop a class – Day Divisions	
November	10	Friday	Veteran’s Day – No classes	
	13-17	Mon-Fri	Pre-Registration – Day Divisions	
	20	Monday	Last Day of classes – Evening Divisions	
	21	Tuesday	Residences close at 7:00 p.m.	
	22-24	Wed-Fri	Thanksgiving Vacation – Day Divisions	
	26	Sunday	Residences reopen at noon	
	30	Thursday	Fall grades due – Evening Divisions	
December	8	Friday	Last day of classes – Day Divisions	
	11-15	Mon-Fri	Finals Week – Day Divisions Residences close 24 hrs. after last final or by 7:00 p.m. on Friday (whichever comes first)	
	22	Friday	Fall Grades Due – Day Divisions	

Spring 2018

January	2	Tuesday	Spring Classes Start – Evening Divisions
	6	Saturday	New Student Move-in/Orientation
	7	Sunday	New Student Orientation/Returning residents Residences reopen at noon
	8	Monday	Spring classes start – Day Divisions
	9	Tuesday	Last day to add/drop courses – Evening Divisions
	15	Monday	Martin Luther King Day - No Day classes
	16	Tuesday	Last day to add courses; last day to drop courses with no transcript record – Day Divisions
February	16	Friday	Residences close at 7pm
	19	Monday	President’s Day – No Day classes
	19-23	Mon-Fri	Winter Vacation – Day Divisions
	20	Tuesday	Last Day to Drop a Class – Evening Divisions
	25	Sunday	Residences reopen at noon
	26	Monday	Classes resume – Day Divisions
March	2	Friday	Mid Semester Warnings Due – Day Divisions
	12	Monday	Last day to drop a class – Day Divisions
	22	Thursday	Last day of Classes – Evening Divisions
	23	Friday	Residences close at 7pm
	26-30	Mon-Fri	Spring Vacation – No classes – Day and Evening Divisions
	April	1	Sunday
2		Monday	Classes resume – Day Divisions
2		Monday	Summer I Session Begins – Evening Divisions
9		Monday	Last day to add/drop courses - Evening Divisions
16-20		Mon-Fri	Pre-registration for fall – Day Divisions
27		Friday	Last day of classes – Day Divisions
30-4		Mon-Fri	Finals Week – Day Divisions seniors at 7pm or after last final (whichever comes first)
May	4	Friday	Senior grades due by noon – Day Divisions residences close for non-graduating students at 7pm or last final (whichever comes first)
	11	Friday	Non-senior spring grades due by noon – Day Divisions
	12	Saturday	Commencement
	12	Saturday	Residences Close for Graduating Seniors at 5pm
	28	Monday	Memorial Day – No Classes

June	7	Thursday	Last Day of Summer I classes – Evening Divisions
	18	Monday	Summer I Grades Due – Evening Divisions
	18	Monday	Summer II Session begins – Evening Divisions
	24 & 26	Sat./Mon.	New Student Pre-Registration/Orientation – Undergrad Day Division
	25	Monday	Last day to add/drop courses – Evening Divisions
July	4	Wednesday	4 th of July (No Classes)
	30	Monday	Last day to drop a class – Evening Divisions
August	23	Thursday	Summer II Session ends – Evening Divisions

Break Housing

Schedule

Below are the dates that the Residence Halls close for breaks and the dates they reopen.

Thomas College Break Housing Schedule 2017-2018	
November 2017	
21 Tuesday	Residences close at 7:00 p.m.
26 Sunday	Residences reopen at Noon
December 2017	
8 Friday	Last Day of Classes – Day Divisions
15 Friday	Residence Halls close 24 hours after last final exam or by 7:00 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 16 (whichever comes first)
January 2018	
6 Saturday	New Student Move-in
7 Sunday	New Student Orientation/Returning residents – residences reopen at noon
February 2018	
16 Friday	Residences close at 7:00 p.m.
25 Sunday	Residences reopen at Noon
March 2017	
23 Friday	Residences close at 7:00 p.m.
April 2018	
1 Sunday	Residences reopen at Noon
May 2018	
	Residences Halls close 24 hours after last final exam or 7:00 p.m. on Friday, May 1, (whichever comes first).
4 Friday	Residences close at 7:00 p.m. for all undergraduates
12 Saturday	Residence Halls close for graduating seniors by 7pm.

Procedures for Exceptions

During official College breaks, the Residence Halls close and residents are expected to vacate their rooms by 7:00 p.m. on the indicated day. Exceptions for Break Housing will be considered for reasons such as academics, athletics, work, and travel. Students requesting housing during break periods must submit a letter to the Office of Residential Life and Housing at least two weeks in advance of a scheduled break. Students will be notified prior to the break if they are eligible for Break Housing. Students on Residential or Disciplinary Probation, or who have a judicial history of property damage, repeated substance policy violations, or other violations are not eligible for Break Housing (students needing to stay for academic or athletic reasons may request special consideration). Resident students granted an exception to remain in housing over break periods must attend a mandatory Break Housing Meeting and adhere to additional Break Housing policies. The fee for Break Housing is \$29.00 per night or \$169.00 per week (7 nights). This fee is waived for residents required to be on campus for academics or athletics or have extended travel requiring that they remain on campus during breaks. Meals are not provided by the College during breaks. The Break Housing Request Form can be found at <http://www.thomas.edu/inside/student-resources/student-forms/student-housing/break-housing-request/>

Campus Resources

Below are the departments you will likely need to contact at some point during your time at Thomas College. These and other departments and resources can also be found on the Thomas website: <http://www.thomas.edu/>.

Department	Phone Number
Academic Affairs	(207) 859-1362
Career Services	(207) 859-1106
Dining Services	(207) 859-1442
Health Services	(207) 859-1401
IT Services	(207) 859-1204
Library Services	(207) 859-1233
Public Safety	(207) 859-1399
Recreation and Intramurals	(207) 859-1184
Residential Life and Housing	(207) 859-1243
Student Affairs Office	(207) 859-1243
Student Financial Services	(207) 859-1108
Student Life	(207) 859-1247
Student Success Center	(207) 859-1205

FAQs

Below are some questions that are frequently asked by new International Students:

Question: I'm struggling in a class. Can I withdraw or take an incomplete?

Answer: As soon as you feel that you are having difficulty in a course, we recommend that you talk to the instructor and ask for advice. Some instructors may allow you to earn extra credit, revise previous work or take an incomplete. An incomplete allows you more time to complete work not done and is usually only granted due to special and unexpected circumstances. We also recommend that you go to the Student Success Center to request tutoring. This is important because international students cannot withdraw if it would cause them to be registered for less than 12 credits.

Question: When and how do I file taxes?

Answer: Only students who have earned money in the U.S. need to file taxes. Taxes must be filed between January 1st and April 15th. Most international student employees will be able to use a 1040 NREZ for the federal taxes. You may also be required to file state tax forms for the state in which the money was earned. For more information on filing federal and Maine State Tax Forms, you may go to the IRS website (www.irs.gov) and the Maine Revenue Services website (<http://www.maine.gov/revenue/>).

Question: What do I do if my passport will expire?

Answer: You should have a valid passport at all times, unless you are exempt from passport requirements. You should begin to renew your passport 6 months before it expires. Check with your embassy in Washington, D.C. for processing information at: <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html>

Question: What do I do if my visa will expire?

Answer: Although many people believe that the visa expiration date determines when they must depart the U.S., this is NOT true. The visa is used as an entry document to the U.S., accompanying your I-20 and passport. The expiration date on your visa determines the LAST DATE YOU MAY ENTER THE U.S. on that visa, along with other required documents. If your visa expires while you are still in the U.S. and studying full-time, maintaining your F-1 status, you are not in violation of status. However, if you leave the U.S. after that visa expires, you will be required to obtain a new visa before being allowed to reenter the U.S.

Question: Can I travel outside of the U.S. during breaks?

Answer: Yes, you can travel outside of the country on school breaks provided that you have the required documentation to re-enter the United States. Your PDSO must sign the back of your I-20 to allow for re-admittance to the country. It is the student's responsibility to research travel visa requirements when traveling to a different country.

Question: In case of emergency, can I travel outside of the country during the semester?

Answer: Yes, international students can travel outside of the country during the semester for emergency situations. You will need to discuss your need for travel with your instructors and meet with the PDSO as soon as possible before traveling outside the country to ensure you take the necessary travel documents with you.

Question: Can my family come to visit me here?

Answer: The decision to allow your family members to visit you in the U.S. is made when they meet with the US Embassy or Consulate staff member in their home country. Contact the embassy or consulate to learn about requirements, time frames for visa interviews, how to pay fees and other issues.

On the website below, you can sign up to receive SEVP e-mail updates.

<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>