



# ARRIVAL GUIDE

FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS





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# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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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

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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 (<http://iss.ucmerced.edu>), contact your ISS advisor ([https://iss.ucmerced.edu/contact\\_us](https://iss.ucmerced.edu/contact_us); +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,



Garett Gietzen, PhD  
*Director*



## MEET THE STAFF

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## PRE-DEPARTURE PLANNING

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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 following U.S. Department of State website has further information on how to apply for your visa: <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html>. Be sure to use your name as listed on your passport for all immigration matters including your visa application and SEVIS I-901 fee.

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. Plan to arrive in time for any required orientations or training.

## TRANSPORTATION

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There are a few airports with 1-2 hours from Merced. San Francisco International Airport (SFO) is the most common, but there are also Fresno International Airport (FAT) and Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC). There is a small regional airport in Merced with limited flights. You can get more transportation information on our web page <http://iss.ucmerced.edu/resources/transportation>.

Public transportation in California is not similar to transportation in most countries. Be sure to plan appropriately before arriving to California. There is an Amtrak train that stops in Merced. There is also the Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART), which connects from SFO to public transit such as Amtrak and the

Greyhound Bus. Rideshare options, such as Uber and Lyft, can be costly so we recommend you use Amtrak or Greyhound when arriving outside of Merced.

AMTRAK	<a href="http://www.amtrak.com">www.amtrak.com</a>
BART	<a href="http://www.bart.gov">www.bart.gov</a>
Greyhound Bus	<a href="http://www.greyhound.com/home">www.greyhound.com/home</a>
Uber	<a href="http://www.uber.com">www.uber.com</a>
Lyft	<a href="http://www.lyft.com">www.lyft.com</a>

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. Students and Scholars can ride CatTracks for free by showing their UC Merced ID card.

The Bus	<a href="http://www.mercedthebus.com">www.mercedthebus.com</a>
CatTracks	<a href="http://taps.ucmerced.edu/transportation">taps.ucmerced.edu/transportation</a>

## CHECKING-IN AT THE UC MERCED OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

United States immigration regulations require new students and scholars report to the university after their initial arrival to Merced. Failure to do so may result in a termination of your I-20 or DS-2019 and program. This can lead to serious consequences for your legal status and ability to return to the U.S. 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 Office of International Affairs (Kolligian Library, Room 101). Be sure to bring your passport/visa, I-94 (printed after your arrival from the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](http://www.dhs.gov) website) along with your new Merced address. Your attendance at the scheduled international student orientation is mandatory. Information about this orientation can be found in the letter sent with your form I-20 or form DS-2019. An email will be sent reminding students of the orientation date. You can also get further information about this orientation online at <http://iss.ucmerced.edu/students/orientation>



## INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS *(Not a registered student seeking a degree)*

Once you arrive in Merced, you will want to contact the Office of International Affairs to arrange for your participation in a J-1 Check-In Session/Orientation. Please email [rjohnson26@ucmerced.edu](mailto:rjohnson26@ucmerced.edu) or [international@ucmerced.edu](mailto:international@ucmerced.edu). You will also need to notify your host faculty and department administrator of your arrival, and schedule an appointment to complete your on-boarding paperwork with the Human Resources/Payroll office.

# HOUSING

## TYPES OF HOUSING IN MERCED

There are various types of housing options in Merced. Many students choose to rent a bedroom in a house in which the homeowner or multiple students also live. Another option is renting an apartment. Apartments range in size from multiple bedrooms, one bedroom or studio (no separate bedroom). Most apartments are unfurnished, so you would need to purchase furniture after moving in. You will also be required to hook up utilities.

Below is a list of utilities:

Gas/Electric Power	PG&E <a href="http://www.pge.com">www.pge.com</a>
Water/Power	Merced Irrigation District <a href="http://mercedid.org">mercedid.org</a>
Water/Sewer	City of Merced (209) 385-6841
Internet/Cable	Comcast/Xfinity (800) 934-6489 <a href="http://www.xfinity.com">www.xfinity.com</a>
Internet/Cable	AT&T UVerse (877) 395-2147 <a href="http://www.att.com/local/internet/california/merced">www.att.com/local/internet/california/merced</a>



## WHERE TO START

You can start your search for housing from abroad, but be aware that rentals in Merced go quickly and there might not be much in advance. Finding housing can usually be done following your arrival. Here are some great sources for finding housing in Merced:

- » OCH database: [housing.ucmerced.edu/off-campus](http://housing.ucmerced.edu/off-campus)
- » UC Merced Classifieds: [ucmerced.uloop.com](http://ucmerced.uloop.com)
- » UC Merced Students Off-Campus Housing Facebook Page  
[www.facebook.com/groups/140045992743363](https://www.facebook.com/groups/140045992743363)
- » Find Apartments [housing.ucmerced.edu/housing/campus-housing/finding-place/find-apartments](http://housing.ucmerced.edu/housing/campus-housing/finding-place/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 next page).

# COMMON HOUSING TERMS

## SINGLE OR STUDIO

Single room apartment with a small kitchen and a bathroom.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## DEPOSIT OR SECURITY DEPOSIT

An additional amount you must pay when moving into an apartment (usually at least one or two month's 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 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 for those when moving out.

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## FIRST, LAST, AND 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.

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## RENT

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

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## UTILITIES

The term used for the extra charges for gas, electricity, cable television, and water. Plan on spending an extra \$100-\$200 per month depending on your lifestyle. Some students are careful about finding "gas stoves" and "non-halogen lamps" as they use less energy.



## SUBLET OR SUBLEASE

Special arrangement in which you rent an apartment or room in place of the person who's renting from the landlord or manager. 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 their place.

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## A/C OR AIR

Air-conditioning

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## BR OR BDRM

Bedroom

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## FP

Fireplace

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## 2/2 OR 3/2

The first number indicates the number of bedrooms in the apartment. The second number indicates the number of bathrooms.

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## ABP

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

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## W/D

Washing machine and clothes dryer are provided.

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## 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 as a result 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
1	Brierwood	3202 Denver Ave	(209) 233-9145	
2	Covington Creek	925 Loughborough Dr	(209) 722-6731	<a href="mailto:covingtoncreek@yahoo.com">covingtoncreek@yahoo.com</a>
3	Lincoln Gardens	1287 Loughborough Dr	(209) 580-4990	<a href="http://www.lincolngardensmerced.com">www.lincolngardensmerced.com</a>
4	Meadowlark	3270 Meadows Ave	(209) 580-4990	<a href="http://www.meadowlarkmerced.com">www.meadowlarkmerced.com</a>
5	Northwood Village	255 Snowhaven Ct	(209) 642-8056	<a href="http://www.northwoodvillagemerced.com">www.northwoodvillagemerced.com</a>
6	Oak Terrace	1019 Loughborough Dr	(209) 325-4450	<a href="http://www.oakterracemerced.com">www.oakterracemerced.com</a>
7	Royal Oaks	1648 Conestoga Dr	(209) 726-9151	
8	Saratoga	673 Loughborough Dr	(209) 723-6685	
9	Sierra Village	1163 Loughborough Dr	(209) 384-7060	<a href="http://www.villagemeadowsapts.com">www.villagemeadowsapts.com</a>
10	Village Landing	3601 San Jose Ave	(209) 418-7090	<a href="http://www.villagelandingmerced.com">www.villagelandingmerced.com</a>
11	Village Meadows	1163 Loughborough Dr	(209) 384-7060	<a href="http://www.villagemeadowsapts.com">www.villagemeadowsapts.com</a>
12	Village Terrace	3827 San Jose Ave	(209) 809-4375	<a href="http://www.villagelandingmerced.com">www.villagelandingmerced.com</a>
13	Villages	3342 M St	(209) 383-1616	<a href="http://www.thevillagesapartmenthomes.com">www.thevillagesapartmenthomes.com</a>

### AREA 2

NO.	APARTMENT NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE
14	Brookdale Gardens	147 E Brookdale Dr	(209) 383-3564	
15	Brookdale North	344 E Brookdale Dr	(209) 383-2201	<a href="http://www.rentatbrookdalenorth.com">www.rentatbrookdalenorth.com</a>
16	Ridgeview Meadow	2111 Cold Springs Ave	(209) 384-2900	
17	Garden East	295 E Olive Ave	(209) 722-4721	
18	Yardley Gardens	3388 G St	(209) 383-3280	<a href="http://www.rentatyardleygardens.com">www.rentatyardleygardens.com</a>
19	Sahara Apartments	200 Seneca St	(209) 723-7262	
20	Merced Station	2890 E Yosemite Ave	(209) 569-5167	<a href="http://www.mercedstation.com">www.mercedstation.com</a>

## AREA 3

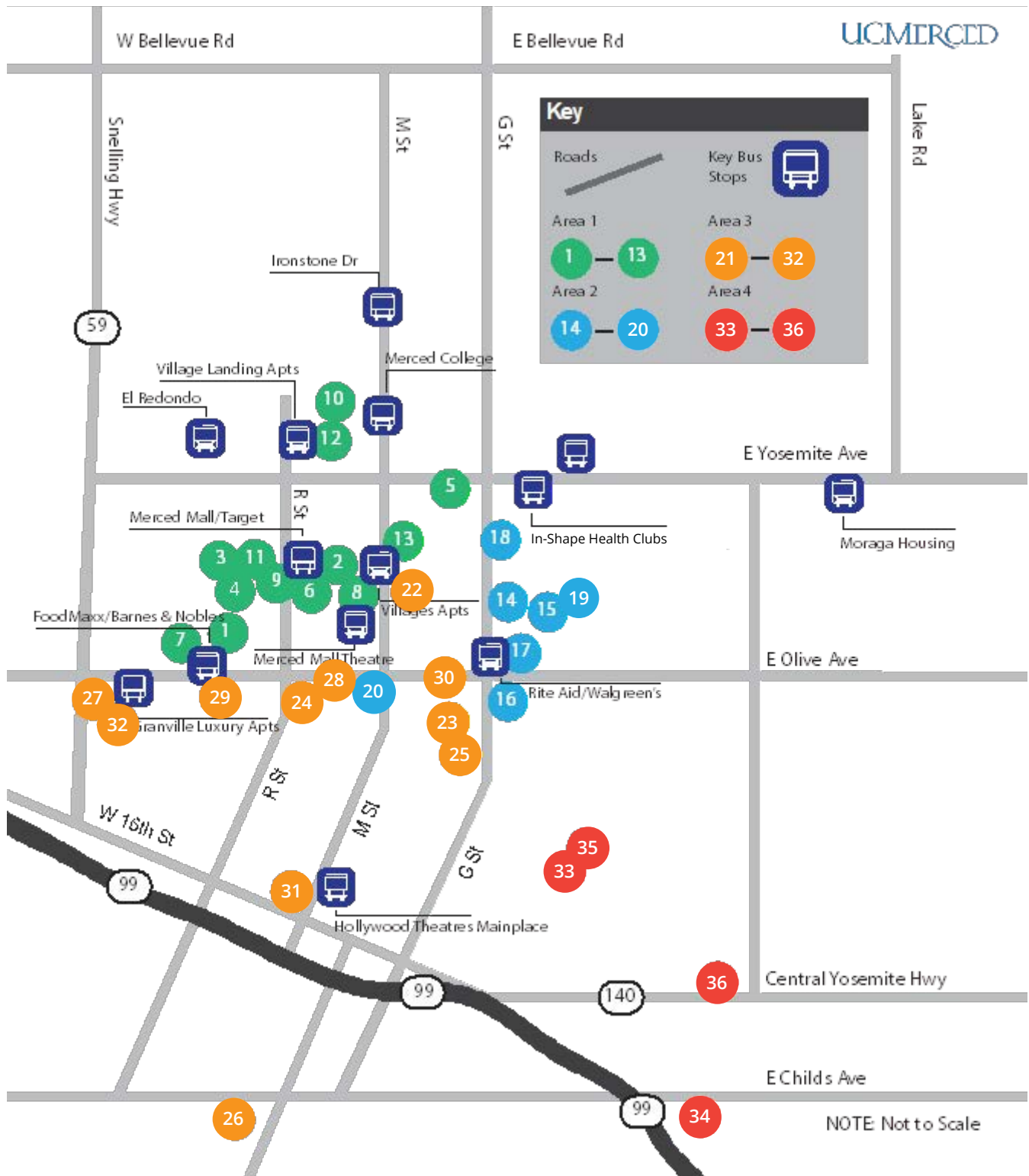
NO.	APARTMENT NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE
21	Bear Creek Manor	2929 M St	(209) 383-3549	<a href="http://www.bearcreekmanorandterraceapartments.com">www.bearcreekmanorandterraceapartments.com</a>
22	Bear Creek North	2976 M St	(209) 383-5704	<a href="http://www.bearcreeknorthapts.com">www.bearcreeknorthapts.com</a>
23	Bear Creek Park	2841 Park Ave	(209) 723-2157	<a href="http://www.bearcreekparkapts.com">www.bearcreekparkapts.com</a>
24	Bear Creek Terrace	2922 R St	(209) 383-3549	<a href="http://www.bearcreekmanorandterraceapartments.com">www.bearcreekmanorandterraceapartments.com</a>
25	Creskide Apts	2813 Park Ave	(209) 723-2157	<a href="http://www.bearcreekparkapts.com">www.bearcreekparkapts.com</a>
26	Alamar	218 S Canal	(209) 385-3411	<a href="http://www.alamarapts.com">www.alamarapts.com</a>
27	Granville	2908 Willowbrook Ct	(209) 726-3333	<a href="http://www.maxwellhomes.com">www.maxwellhomes.com</a>
28	Olivewood	904 Olivewood Dr	(209) 722-3922	<a href="http://www.olivewoodapartments.com">www.olivewoodapartments.com</a>
29	Summertrace Resort	1205 Devonwood Dr	(209) 384-2394	summertrace@sbcglobal.net
30	Swiss Colony	3075 Park Ave	(209) 331-9382	<a href="http://www.thetiogamerced.com">www.thetiogamerced.com</a>
31	Tioga	1715 N St	(209) 723-2354	
32	Willowbrook	1756 Willowbrook Dr	(209) 722-0745	<a href="http://www.maxwellhomes.com">www.maxwellhomes.com</a>

## AREA 4

NO.	APARTMENT NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE
33	Castle Apts	3044 G St	(209) 722-8642	<a href="http://www.castlemerced.com">www.castlemerced.com</a>
34	Campus Garden	2500 Glen Ave	(209) 384-2900	
35	Riverglen	2560 Glen Ave	(209) 233-9649	<a href="http://www.ositoapts.com">www.ositoapts.com</a>
36	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 for the city of Merced and surrounding areas is 209.

## TYPE OF CALL

## HOW TO CALL

### Emergencies

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

### Directory Assistance

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

### Calling outside the U.S.

Dial 011 + country code + city code + phone number.  
See below for “collect calls”.

### In the U.S. but going outside your local area code

Dial 1 + three digit area code + seven digit phone number.

### In your local area code

Dial three digit area code + seven digit phone number.

### On-campus to another on-campus phone

Dial only the last four digits of the phone number. Example: the Office of International Affairs is (209) 228-4722, so you would dial 4722.

### On-campus phone to an off-campus location

Dial 9+ the phone number as described above. Example: if it’s outside the 209 area code, you will dial 9 + 1 + area code + seven-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 collect call. If they accept, you can begin talking immediately.

## INTERNATIONAL CALLING CARDS

You can call home by using an international calling card, using 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 online or at most grocery 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

Since you may already have a cell/mobile phone in your home country, you should 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 to 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.

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 Avenue (209) 205-4267
- » 145 E Yosemite Ave (209) 205-4033
- » 292 Merced Mall (209) 205-4234

## AT&T

[www.att.com/wireless](http://www.att.com/wireless)

Here is the local AT&T store:

- » 1340 W Olive Ave (209) 725-2175

## CRICKET WIRELESS

[www.cricketwireless.com](http://www.cricketwireless.com)

Here are the local Cricket Wireless stores:

- » 2830 G Street (209) 2333-9905
- » 1248 W Olive Ave (209) 384-0034





# MONEY MATTERS

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## ESTIMATED LIVING EXPENSES

<b>HOUSING</b>	\$500-\$2,600 per month depending on the type of room or housing you select. A deposit for 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 on page 7.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$150-\$200 per month
<b>FOOD &amp; INCIDENTALS</b>	\$300-\$400 per month
<b>BOOKS AND SUPPLIES</b>	\$1,000 per semester
<b>PERSONAL EXPENSES</b>	\$300 per month
<b>HEALTH INSURANCE</b>	\$1,100-\$1,750 per semester depending on education level (F-2 & J-2 dependent insurance is not included in this estimate)

## MONEY FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

When you arrive to the U.S., you will need enough money for immediate expenses including food, hotel (if necessary), housing costs (see above estimates and the housing section on deposit and first month's rent for off-campus), 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. Contact your home country bank for details about the following options:

**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 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. 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. Further information is online: <https://bfs.ucmerced.edu/our-services/student-billing-campus-cashiering/campus-cashiering/international-payments>

## FOREIGN CURRENCY EXCHANGE

Currency exchange facilities in the U.S. are less common compared to other countries and exchanging money in the U.S. can be expensive. Some banks do exchange foreign money, 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 due to being ineligible, a bank can use your passport number or state identification number from a driver's license or California State ID card.

To open a bank account, you will need:

- » U.S. State or foreign 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 Street | (209) 384-5051

### **Chase**

800 W Olive Ave | (209) 725-7810

### **Citibank**

1840 M Street | (209) 230-5633

### **Wells Fargo**

3538 G Street | (209) 381-7890

555 W 18th St | (209) 722-5772

### **Educational Employee Credit Union (two ATMs on campus)**

755 E Yosemite Ave | (800) 538-3328

### **Merced School Employees Federal Credit Union (one ATM on campus)**

1021 Olivewood Drive | (209) 383-5550

1935 M St | (209) 383-5550

# HEALTH INSURANCE

All F-1 and J-1 international students and scholars, along with J-2 dependents 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 <http://health.ucmerced.edu/insurance>

You may request to waive UC SHIP health insurance if you have your own health insurance. However, waivers are usually not approved for insurance purchased outside of the US because many do not meet the strict policy requirements as listed on the waiver petition.

## IMMUNIZATIONS

All incoming students are 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), Tetanus/ Diphtheria/Pertussis (TDAP), and COVID-19 vaccination to comply with the UC Immunization Requirement.

International students who have not had the above vaccinations may choose to obtain the vaccinations in their home country before arriving to the U.S. or get them following their arrival to the U.S. 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 to the U.S. may obtain their vaccinations at the UC Merced Health center or at another clinic in the U.S. You can read further information online at <http://health.ucmerced.edu/immunizations>

## 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 Avenue, Merced  
(209) 564-5000

**Patients First Urgent Care**

394 E Yosemite Avenue, Merced  
(209) 383-3990

**Fountain Valley Urgent Care**

374 W Olive Avenue, Suite A, Merced  
(209) 384-5766

**Castle Urgent Care**

3605 Hospital Road, Atwater  
(209) 726-1235

If you do not need an ambulance, you may use the campus CatTracks bus system, rideshare, 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 dialing 1-800-888-2018

## IDENTIFICATION

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### CATCARD

Following your arrival to UC Merced, you will need to get your CatCard. At the CatCard office in Granite Pass 171, 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 <http://catcard.ucmerced.edu/>.

### CALIFORNIA IDENTIFICATION CARD

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: <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/idinfor/idcard.htm>

## 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 applying 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 Manual along with sample tests from the DMV website listed below. The test is available in many different languages and if you do not pass it the first time, you may retake the test. 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 you can download the forms needed for a driver's license from the website and call ahead to make an appointment.

In an effort to assist DMV customers who may have reading/learning difficulties, or English is their second language, the California Driver's Handbook (<https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/driver-handbooks/>) 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.

Local Department of Motor Vehicles Office:  
1313 W 12th Street  
Merced, CA 95340  
[www.dmv.ca.gov](http://www.dmv.ca.gov)

## LEARNING HOW 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 oftentimes, they provide training online. Whichever course you decide to follow, make sure it has been certified by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

See this web site to get started <https://www.dmvdriverseducation.org/California.html>.



## SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER/CARD

A Social Security Number/Card 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 social security number to collect taxes from employees. Creditors may also use this number to verify or check credit history. You do not need a social security number to apply for a driver's license. 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-2 dependents with work authorization from USCIS (EAD)
- » J-1 Visiting Scholars

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

You can learn more about applying for social security number here: <https://iss.ucmerced.edu/social-security>.

A Social Security Number is issued once per lifetime. If you have previously been issued a social security number, 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:

Social Security Administration  
600 West Olive Avenue  
Merced, CA 95348  
<https://www.ssa.gov/>



# POSTAL SERVICES

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## 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. 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 “USPS” on the box before dropping it in.

## UNITED STATES POST OFFICE

[www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com)

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

U.S. Post Office, 415A W 18th Street | (209) 383-0553

U.S. Post Office, 2334 M Street | (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 big retail chain stores are:

- » The UPS Store [www.theupsstore.com](http://www.theupsstore.com)
- » Postal Connection [www.pcamerced.com](http://www.pcamerced.com)
- » Courier/Express Mail Services

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

- |                               |  |                                |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| » DHL Worldwide Express       | <a href="http://www.dhl.com">www.dhl.com</a>     | 1-800-225-5345, (415) 644-0900 |
| » Federal Express             | <a href="http://www.fedex.com">www.fedex.com</a> | 1-800-463-3339                 |
| » U.S. Postal Service         | <a href="http://www.usps.com">www.usps.com</a>   | 1-800-275-8777                 |
| » United Parcel Service (UPS) | <a href="http://www.ups.com">www.ups.com</a>     | 1-800-742-5877                 |



## FAMILY RESOURCES - F-2 & J-2 DEPENDENTS

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### 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: <https://iss.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. Below are links to helpful resources.

The U.S. Department of Education <https://www.ed.gov>  
Great Schools <https://www.greatschools.org>  
Merced City School District <https://www.mcsd.k12.ca.us>

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 | (844) 462-7342
- » [Playhouse Merced](#), 452 W Main Street | (209) 725-8587
- » [Rockin' Jump Trampoline Park](#)  
1230 W Main Street | (209) 500-1355
- » [Vista Ranch](#), 7326 E Highway 140 | (209) 722-8200
- » [The Merced Multicultural Arts Center](#)  
645 W Main Street | (209) 388-1090
- » [Merced Shakespearefest Applegate Park](#)  
28 West 27th Street | (209) 723-3265
- » [Merced Art Hop](#), 1733 Canal Street | (209) 349-8682
- » [Bellevue Bowl](#), 785 Bellevue Road | (209) 358-6466

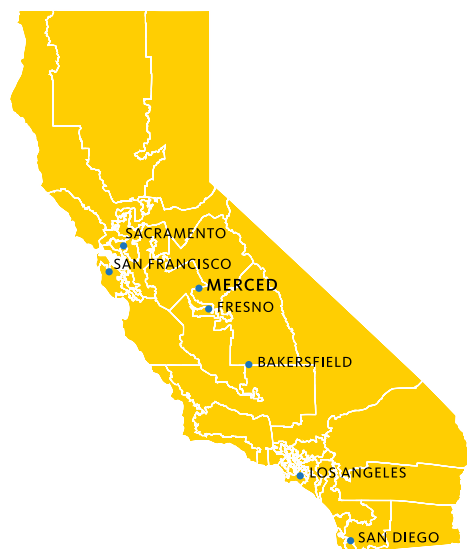
Looking to join other UC Merced students and staff on outdoor adventures? The Outdoor Experience Program, organized by Recreation & Athletics, is available to all UC Merced students looking to explore surrounding areas. Yosemite National Park, San Francisco, San Jose, the Central Coast and many other 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.



## Merced, in the heart of California

ESTIMATED TRAVEL TIMES TO UC MERCED:

Fresno	1 hour	San Francisco	2.5 hours
Modesto	45 minutes	Yosemite	2 hours
Sacramento	2 hours	Los Angeles	4 hours





# SHOPPING

The Merced area and Central Valley have a vast array of shopping and dining options. Turlock, Modesto, Fresno and the San Francisco Bay Area are nearby options with even more shopping!

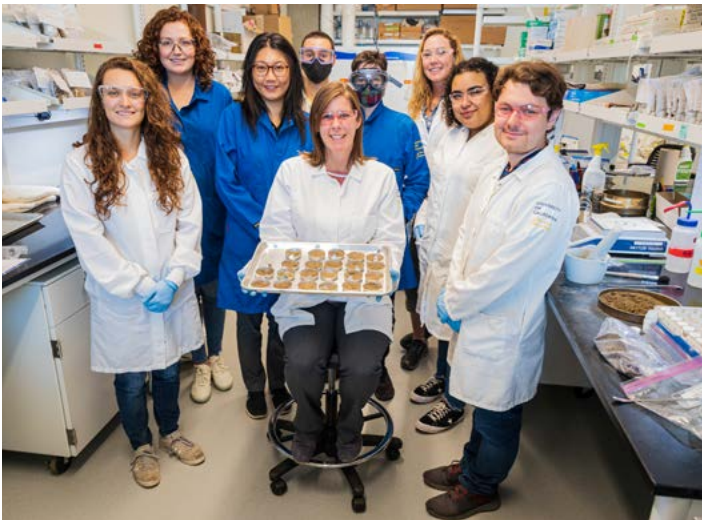
## FURNITURE

Target and Walmart offer affordable furniture items that may require assembly, but are easy to transport.

Below are other furniture stores:

- » [Furniture City](#) | 1125 W Olive Avenue
- » [Slaters Home Furnishings](#) | 345 W 18th Street
- » [Big Lots](#) | 665 Fairfield Drive
- » [Ikea](#) | 4400 Shellmound Street

If you do not have a personal vehicle, transporting furniture may be difficult. Some of the stores listed above will deliver for a fee. You can also rent a moving truck from U-Haul.





## HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

(Furniture, bedding, small appliances, cleaning supplies such as towels, and laundry detergent, personal hygiene items such as shampoo, toothpaste and deodorant).

Walmart | 3055 Loughborough Drive, Merced  
Major retail store that sells inexpensive household items and some furniture.

Target | 3280 R Street, Merced  
Major retail store similar to Wal-Mart that sells inexpensive household items and some furniture.

## DISCOUNT CLOTHING STORES

Retail chain selling brand name clothing, shoes, accessories & housewares at discount prices.

Ross | 1113 W Olive Avenue, Merced

Marshalls | 1200 Commerce Ave, Atwater

TJ Maxx | 2891 Countryside Drive, Turlock

## Shopping Malls

Merced Mall | 713 Merced Mall, Merced  
[mercedmall.com](http://mercedmall.com)

## Factory Outlet Stores

### The Promenade, E Yosemite Ave | (209) 719-779

This shopping center is near campus and has several restaurants and stores.

## Downtown Merced

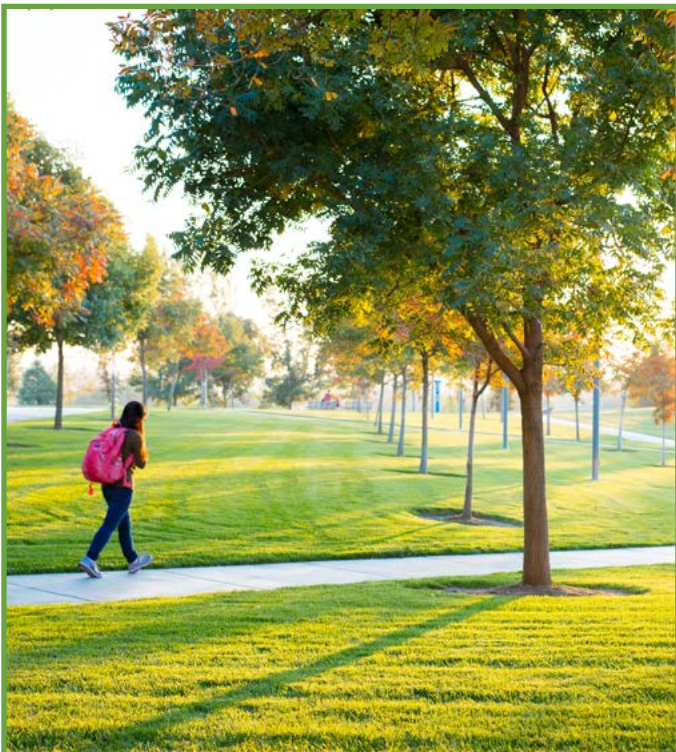
Downtown offers a number of quaint shops and activities.

### Costco | 1445 R St, Merced

Membership-based warehouse store

## Dining

There is a diverse selection of restaurants in the Merced area. Find local restaurants or on Yelp.



# MERCED ENTERTAINMENT, SHOPPING & TRAVEL



