



LIVING IN AUSTIN – TEXAS

- **Cost of Living:** To compare the cost of living to a city within USA to Austin, go to CNN site <http://money.cnn.com/calculator/pf/cost-of-living/> If you are relocating internationally, use the following site for comparison to New York and then compare New York to Austin. http://www.expatinch.com/html/intl_cost_of_living.html As a general planning guide for non-US residents, many Americans budget 30%-35% of their take home income for housing, 15% for transportation, and 15% for food. In Austin, you can save on housing expenses.
- **Climate:** Austin has seasons. Winters are mild, but temperatures go down to freezing and heating is required. Summers are hot and humid. Please bring an appropriate selection of clothes and blankets (there are reasonable priced stores here if you wish to purchase) For more information on the climate, check: <http://www.austinchamber.org/DoBusiness/GreaterAustinProfile/climate.html>
- **Teaching Materials:** Bring your planners, teaching aids in Spanish, traditional costumes or favorite children's books.
- **Credit Card and cash:** If possible bring a credit card and cash to complement your settling in allowances as it will take 1 to 2 days (if you are a non-resident of the USA) to establish a full banking access. It is very difficult for a non-resident to acquire a US credit or a car loan

Arrival Suggestions

- **Airport welcome:** If you wish, we could be delighted to meet you on arrival at the airport. Please send us your flight information.
- **Hotels:** You have the option of staying in a hotel or short-term rental apartments or arrival. Please go to hotelguide.com, hotel-rates.com or Expedia.com for your options. The south west – YPW Westlake - school is located in 3640 Bee Caves Rd, 78746. For a family, we would recommend a short term, two-bedroom apartment rental.

For YPW Central, the most accessible hotels are located on Highway 183, north of Capitol of Texas Highway (also known as Highway 360) up to Duval St. We would particularly recommend one of the several hotels located around Stonelake Blvd. and the Capitol of Texas Highway as they are near restaurants and stores. There is also la Quinta Inn located next to The Domain Shopping center on the MOPAC Expressway North (Hwy. 1)

For YPW Westlake, the most accessible hotels are:

1. Holiday Inn Express => 4892 US Highway 290 West, Sunset Valley, TX 78735 • (512) 891-9500
2. Extended Stay America => 5100 US-290, Austin, TX 78735 • (512) 892-4272
3. La Quinta Inn => 4424 S MoPac Expy, Austin, TX 78735 • (512) 899-3000
4. Wyndham Garden Austin => 3401 S, I-35, Austin, TX 78741 • (512) 774-6427

- **Car Rentals.** You will need to rent a car for the first week or so to help you get settled. We recommend that you rent from a site in the city, as you pay considerably more if you rent at the airport. The Enterprise car rental company (www.Enterprise.com) is reasonable and even more so if you have your own car insurance through your credit card or through your personal insurance company. This way you do not have to pay for the car rental company insurance. Although you can pay cash, it is significantly easier if you use a credit card to pay for your rental.
- **Communication.** We recommend that you immediately purchase a disposable cell phone (mobile). Later, you can enroll in a long term plan.
- **Exploring the city.** We recommend that you purchase a GPS to easily and quickly learn your way around Austin and to help you in the house hunting process.
- **Banking.** If you wish, we will assist you in setting up a bank account. It will take 1 to 2 days to receive your ATM card and checks with your address on it (checks without addresses are difficult to use to pay for certain services). You will probably want to rely on cash for the first few weeks. Social Security number. This number is essential in order to work in the USA. Bring a good book and be prepared to wait at the Social Security office. Make sure you bring all documents required including the YPW letter of offer. The address is 1029 Camino La Costa Austin, TX 78752, Tel. (512) 916-5404
- **Housing.** You will usually have to pay a deposit for the first month's rent. The rent for homes is also quite reasonable in Austin. Check the Austin American Statesman website <http://www.statesman.com/> or <http://austin.apartments.com/>. In the apartments website you can search for 78735, 78745, 78746 zip codes. The 78746 area is the closest to the school but it may be the more expensive.
- In addition to the first month's rent, usually a deposit equal to the rent is necessary. If you have children of school age, please read the section below on education prior to selecting a home or apartment. The school can recommend an excellent realtor if you wish assistance in finding a home. There are several apartment complexes near the school. Please investigate before you rent, as some of the apartment complexes are popular with university students who do like to party late at night. If possible, you should contact the apartments and reserve a place before you arrive. There is also an excellent application to find spaces for rent or sale. It is called Zillow, it is very useful for learning about purchasing or renting a home in Austin.
- **Services.** Please go to the Austin site for information on how to turn on your home services: gas, water, telephone, read the Chamber of Commerce website: <http://www.austin-chamber.org/LiveWork/index.html> under the Move to Austin link. You will need a check with your home address to pay for these services or will have to pay in cash. Non-residents will have to leave a refundable deposit of approximately \$200.00 for electrical service. For Telephone, Internet and Television Cable services we recommend ATT or Time Warner. For more information see their websites at : <http://www.austin-chamber.org/LiveWork/MoveToAustin/TelephoneUtilities.html>
- **Driver's License.** You will need a Social Security number and a home address to acquire a Texas Driver's License. The process should take two days and requires a long wait in the office. Be prepared to take a multiple choice test in a computer and a driver's test.
- **Social Security Number (non-residents only).** This is issued by the Federal Government and is essential to work and get credit (car loan). You can start a bank account and rent an apartment without it (at least to begin with) but you will have to furnish one eventually. To get one, you need to inform the Cordell Hull Institute (if they processed your Visa) as soon as you arrive in the USA. They will then inform the State Department (which issued your visa), who will then submit your name to the Social Security Administration for entry into a data base. This process can take up to two weeks. You then need to go to the Austin Social Security office and apply for a number. Since your name will be in the data base by this time, the process should rapidly conclude. Welcome to

US bureaucracy!

- **Shopping and Furnishing your home.** There are a wide range of stores in Austin. Please ask for advice prior to making major purchases as there are many discount stores in Austin: Walmart, World Market, Rooms to Go, IKEA, and Target are the most well-known (you can order online). You may wish to order furniture on line. One of our teachers recommends overstock.com and Rooms to go for furniture.
- **For electronic goods,** Best Buy and Fry's offer reasonable prices. You can order online from these stores.
- **Automobile purchases.** Autos are inexpensive. You will need established credit to purchase one with a car loan. However, you can also pay cash. Be careful in dealing with used car lots. You should always have any car you consider purchasing checked out by a mechanic. You can use Mobile auto repair. Tel: (512) 837-6735. It may cost \$ 95.00 for them (ask for Rodney) to check over the car for sale. We can also help you lease a car with Henna Chevrolet and they can help set up a lease even if you do not have credit history.

Living in Austin

- **Enjoying the city.** Austin is considered one of the most desirable cities in the USA to live in. It is the state capitol, the home of several universities, including the top ranked University of Texas. It also has a thriving information technology community (Dell Computers is located in the metropolitan area). The population is quite diverse and international. It is a center for the arts and hosts a major international music festival every year. It is close to the Texas Hill Country with its lovely scenery and growing vineyards. Austin takes Barbeque very seriously and there are some outstanding BBQ restaurants nearby as well as many outstanding American and international ones. It's music and night club scene is renowned. Austin, the city fathers say, has more live music than any other city in the USA. Finally, Austin has the reputation of being exceptionally diverse. Austinites are very proud of this and you will see many t-shirts and bumper states stating "Keep Austin Weird". For more information on what Austin offers see the local newspapers: The Austin American States and the Austin Chronicle: <http://www.statesman.com/>, <http://www.austinchronicle.com/> For restaurants and nightlife read <http://www.austin360.com/>. Also, one should read the Chamber of Commerce website: <http://www.austin-chamber.org/LiveWork/index.html>
- **Education.** Teachers who wish their children to attend YPW must complete the application process. They may apply for financial support, all the support required will be granted to hired teachers once the financial analysis has been completed. All children of the faculty have to pay the annual registration fee and supply fee (see details on website). There are many public school options in Austin. Usually, the school your children attend depends on where you live. Therefore, it is of critical importance to choose the school first and then look for housing in that area. For more information see the following two school districts in the Austin area: Austin Independent School District <http://www.austinisd.org/> and the EANES school district. For more information about other school districts, see the Chamber of Commerce website <http://www.austin-chamber.org/DoBusiness/GreaterAustinProfile/education.html>. Austin is in Travis county. Schools in Texas are rated through the results of the annual state exam called STAARS. The following link helps you determine school ratings. <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/>
- **School District Publishing** also has a Texas School Guide <http://tx-schools.com> . This will be an additional resource to research schools in the Austin area.
- **Higher Education.** if you are interested in post-graduate education, Austin is home to several universities, including the world class University of Texas.
- **Transportation.** There is limited public transportation in Austin. Life without a car is difficult. To enjoy the city, you would need a car.

- **Car Loans and Credit cards.** It is very difficult for non-US citizens to qualify for a car loan or US credit card. Non-citizens who need credit cards should bring ones from their home country. It takes at least six months to one year to get approval for a credit card or loan of any kind.
- **Taxes.** Faculty have the taxes deducted from their salaries. There are Federal taxes such as Federal Income Tax, Social Security (a Federal government retirement pension), Medicare (Medical care for persons over 65 years old). International faculty with J-1 Visas do not have to pay Social Security taxes. There are also State Taxes. There is no Texas Income Tax rather there is a sales tax of 8.5%. To calculate (approximately) your take home salary, go <http://www.paycheckcity.com/netpaycalc/netpaycalculator.asp>.
- **Teachers or Staff** who receive a settling in allowance will be taxed at a rate of approximately 25% (this tax must be paid by Dec. 31st). The school can, if the teacher wishes, take extra deductions from the teacher's salary in order to pay this.

APPENDIX

- **Calculating the Cost of Living**
 - o a. Go to http://www.expatinch.com/html/intl_cost_of_living.html and locate your present city. If it is not there, use one whose cost of living you would be familiar with: e.g. London. You can now compare New York (Cost of Living Index 100. The base) with any other city. Thus, if you are presently working in Nuuk, Greenland (Cost of Living Index 117.14) and making \$11,714.00 a month, it would only cost you \$10,000.00 a month in New York to maintain the same standard of living and whale blubber consumption (Greenland is 11.7% more expensive). You can now establish how your present salary would translate into a life style in New York.
 - o b. Now go to <http://cgi.money.cnn.com/tools/costofliving/costofliving.html> and enter the salary you are offered. Then select New York State and then New York City as your current location. Finally enter your destination state (Texas) and Austin. You will probably find that New York city is about 55% more expensive than Texas. Thus, your cost of living would decrease by about 66% (11% from Nuuk, plus 55% from New York), aside from the cost of importing the whale blubber.
 - o c. Bear in mind that if you live in Texas you will need a car so factor that in as a cost.