

■ OFF CAMPUS ■

3 things to make your student life easier IN NORTH AMERICA

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When you're planning to study abroad, you're not only venturing out into the western world of higher studies but also opting in for a new lifestyle. You'll already have a lot to deal with adjusting and assimilating. While in places like America and Canada, people tend to be quite friendly and will help you out where they can (this also depends on luck), sometimes you do feel like a burden on others. At times, you'll be left to figure things out and you might find yourself at a loss. So, here are three things that you should make time for while you're still in the country and in preparing for your trip.

Learn to drive

Everyone says this but I cannot emphasise how important and life-saving this skill is in countries like America. Public transport is either a hit or miss depending on which state you end up in. For instance, in New York City, public transport is cheap and always available but you'll need to gear up with self-defence tools. On the other hand, in upstate New York, which is more on the rural side, you'll never find an Uber after 5 PM, let alone a reliable bus schedule.

To emphasise this skill more, let me tell you about a time I found myself stranded on the highway. When I first got here, I told myself, "Hey, who needs a car? I'll just walk," and walking I did, for forty minutes to a place I was hoping to rent until I found myself stuck at the intersection of the 9G highway. This highway isn't the safest for walking with fast cars driving and no zebra crossing available, let alone pavements. The next thing I knew I was in a random stranger's car who offered to drive me to where I had to go. Let's just say that's how you make it the next day's newspaper headlines but

at that point I had nothing to lose. The trip back was very reminiscent of *King Lear* – stuck in the rain and attempting to walk back until I caved and requested a mate from my programme to come and get me.

All this could have been avoided if I knew how to drive. While getting a car might be tricky, you can always rent cars for when you do need to travel a little far. You could also loan a car from a dealership. While your university might have shuttles, the timings might cause issues. It is likely that the shuttle might not be running whenever you need it,

crucial safety asset to have access to. Endorsing your bank account, so that you have access to funds in Bangladesh when in the States (or somewhere else), can make your life easier.

Student employment comes with a bounty of restrictions and regulations, all of which can make earning here challenging. While it may not make a significant difference, but having a safety fund to fall back on can prove to be useful in dire times.

Invest in suitable winter clothing

You might think that going to Bongo Bazar and buying winter jackets will be a worthwhile investment and save you a ton of money. While it may save you money, it probably won't save you from the bone-breaking, spine-crippling cold. The winter clothes abroad are made to cater to their

cold weather and the coats can act as a snow coat, raincoat and windbreaker simultaneously. Speaking for myself, I brought two bags filled with sweaters and jackets. To my pleasant surprise, those are all my summer clothes now.

Bangladeshi winters are equivalent to summer in most North American regions. So, pre-plan a budget to invest in one or two winter coats and/or jackets when you get here.

These are a few things that I've flagged from my own experiences that would've made my life easier in America. However, wherever you go, talk to people who are already there or have visited the place. Look up Reddit threads and YouTube videos for more information. In the long run or when you're dealing with heavy coursework, these things make your life a whole lot easier.



ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

so you might have to start heading to class two hours earlier to avoid being late. In short, learning how to drive is an essential time-saving skill when living abroad.

Endorse your bank account

If you've been working prior to your departure, you likely have a bank account in Bangladesh. This is a



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