

USA NEW YORK

Homestay Accommodation



Our homestay families reflect the diversity of life in the United States. They include young, senior and single parent families and couples with and without children. American hosts live in houses, apartment complexes or townhomes and have varying ethnic backgrounds, diverse interests and different lifestyles.



You can purchase toiletries and other personal items locally, but you should plan to bring specific items with you such as prescription medications if you require them (in adequate supply).

Check-in and Check-out

Plan to arrive at your accommodation between 2:00 pm and 10:00 pm on the Saturday or Sunday prior to your course start date. Please make sure your Kaplan Representative and your host family know your arrival details as soon as you book your flights and no later than 2 weeks before your course start date. Host families are not available to pick up students at the airport. Please speak with your Kaplan Representative for information on transfer services. Plan to check-out of your homestay accommodation on Saturday morning.

Your life in a homestay

Living in a homestay will allow you to practice your English in a real-life setting. It is important to remember that you are both part of the family and a guest at the same time. You may have to help with household chores, keep your bedroom tidy and make your bed each morning. Make sure that you always ask for permission to bring friends around and let your family know if you will not be at home for dinner or will be going away for the weekend! We want you to be comfortable with your family, but we cannot promise a family of specific age, gender, or ethnicity. Every family is different and will have their individual lifestyles. Please make sure you understand your house rules upon arrival.

Host family name and address

You will receive your Accommodation Confirmation with your host family profile including name, address, phone number and email address. The Accommodation Confirmation will be sent to you from your Kaplan Representative. Host families are excited to get to know you; don't hesitate to email them to introduce yourself and get to know them before you even arrive.

What to bring

The USA has very diverse climates and weather can range from very hot to very cold. Therefore, please check the weather in the region you plan to visit and pack accordingly. Your host will provide you with bed linen and towels.

Meals

Please tell your host if there are foods you like very much or do not like at all as well as any food allergies you may have. Any special diet requests such as a strictly vegan or halal diet will be the responsibility of the student. Make sure that you ask your host if you can use the fridge or kitchen cabinet to store your personal foods before you purchase your food items. Food in the USA represents a wide variety of cuisines and may reflect the local populations as well as more typical American fare and your host family's ethnicity.

Breakfast: Breakfast is usually a light meal consisting of cereal, toast or fruit, frequently with juice or coffee. Often these foods will be made available to you and you will prepare your own morning meal.

Lunch: You will be responsible for purchasing your own lunch at a nearby restaurant or from a local store. A refrigerator and a microwave may be available for you to use at school.

Dinner: Dinner may be a shared meal in the evening, or occasionally you may prepare your own meal with food supplied by your host. Leftovers, food remaining from a previous meal, are common to have at least once per week. It is polite to ask for a second helping if you are still hungry. If you make other plans for dinner (to eat at a restaurant or a friends' house), please let your host family know. In an American home, dinner is typically between the hours of 5:30 and 7:30pm. If you arrive at your homestay later than this, you may miss the evening meal.

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Internet

Most families have either wireless or DSL Internet in their home. However, you should plan to bring your own laptop and/or other mobile device since most families will not have a computer for you to share. All Kaplan centers are equipped with computer labs with free Internet access; students may use these during business hours.

Telephone use

Be sure to discuss phone usage with your host family on arrival. Some host families have landlines which are available to students for local calls only. Students are asked to limit their calls to no more than 20 minutes. Long distance phone calls are not allowed in host family homes. Due to the increased use of mobile phones, many host families no longer have a home landline. You should be prepared to purchase an international phone calling card or a prepaid phone after arrival as you may need to contact your host regularly by text or phone message.

Laundry facilities

Be sure to discuss this with your host family after you arrive as laundry facilities will depend on your individual homestay. Most host families, while allowing the use of their laundry machine, ask that students launder their own clothes. You may be asked to limit your washing to once a week and provide your own laundry soap. Machines are either in the home itself, located in the common area of the apartment complex, or available at a local laundromat. Shared laundry machines (in an apartment or a laundromat) are usually coin operated and the student will be responsible for paying. The average cost per load of laundry (wash and dry) in an American laundromat is USD \$5.

Electrical current

The electrical current is 100/120 volts and students from some countries may require a transformer and a plug adaptor.

Getting to and from school

Your host will help you find your way to and from school on your first day and also show you how to use public transportation. Students should expect to use public transportation (such as bus, train and/or subway) to get to and from school. Journey time will depend on the location of your homestay but students should expect to travel about 45-60 minutes to get to school. Commuting, or regular travel between home and work or school, is very common in the USA.

Smoking

When you book your accommodation, please request a family that allows smoking if you smoke. Most hosts will request smokers to smoke outside. Please make sure you discuss these rules with your host family. In most US cities, it is illegal to smoke inside public places. It is also general courtesy to ask someone for permission to smoke next to them (even if you are outside).

Drinking

The legal drinking age in the USA is 21 years old. Please obey the law and do not drink if you are under-age. It is a courtesy to ask your host family for permission to drink in their home even if you are legally permitted based on your age.



Things to remember

- You are a part of the family as well as a guest
- Expect cultural and personal differences and be tolerant of them
- Be willing to try new foods
- Ask questions and become familiar with American customs. You may have to take part in family chores
- Speak with your host family as much as possible to get the most out of your homestay
- Purchase a phone card or a pre-paid cell phone for international calls
- Ask permission before inviting guests or friends to your homestay
- Notify your family if you are not coming home for the night, will be away for the weekend or will be missing dinner.
- Ask permission to smoke
- Ask permission to drink alcohol at your host family home, even if you are above the legal drinking age of 21 years
- Don't be shy and when invited accompany your host on outings and family activities



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Local Information

New York City is the largest city in New York State. Located on the east coast of the US, New York City (often just called New York) is within driving distance, or a short train ride, to many other popular US cities. New York City is made up of five areas called boroughs: Manhattan, The Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. Kaplan New York students often stay in homestays located in the one of these five boroughs.



Brooklyn

Brooklyn is the most populous borough in New York City. Many Brooklyn neighborhoods are ethnic enclaves where particular ethnic groups and cultures predominate. Brooklyn houses a large African-American and Caribbean population as well as large populations of Jewish and Russian communities all bringing their own distinct culture and food to the area. These distinct cultures and ethnicities enrich the diversity of each neighborhood. Home to vintage shops, indie bands and art galleries, Brooklyn has plenty to do. Students can visit Coney Island, Brighton Beach, Prospect Park Zoo or the Brooklyn Public Library. Brooklyn is famous for its beautiful brownstone houses in neighborhoods like Bedford-Stuyvesant, also home to Pratt Institute, a prestigious college for arts and sciences. Getting around Brooklyn is easy as there are 13 subway lines that connect the area to Manhattan as well as numerous bus lines that also provide an easy and fast commute to Manhattan and the neighboring borough Queens.

Queens

Queens, home to both JFK International and LaGuardia airports, is the largest size-wise of the five boroughs in New York City. Queens sits on the west end of Long Island and is the most ethnically diverse urban area in the world. With a population of over 2 million, the residents of Queens represent over 100 different nations and speak 138 languages. The borough is a patchwork of dozens of unique neighborhoods, each with its own distinct identity. Astoria, for example, is traditionally home to one of the largest Greek populations outside Greece but also has large Spanish American and Italian communities and a growing population of Middle-easterners and South Asians. While in Queens, students can visit the Flushing Meadows Park (home to the New York Mets baseball team), or see the panorama of NYC from the Rockaway Peninsula. Eating in Queens is an experience and with so many cultures represented, authentic cuisines from all over the world are easy to find. Getting to and traveling in Queens is easy as the area is served by 8 subway lines as well as numerous bus and express lines. The Long Island Rail Road, the second busiest commuter railroad in North America also serves the length of Long Island.

Bronx

The Bronx is located north of Manhattan and Queens and although densely populated, is home to lots of parks including the New York Botanical Garden and the Bronx Zoo. The Bronx offers a laid-back vibe, vibrant history and top-notch eats. The Grand Concourse, a majestic civic thoroughfare, provides the perfect setting for a warm weather stroll and includes Yankee Stadium, the Bronx Museum of the Arts and Pregones Theatre. Large populations of Irish, German, Jewish and Italian reside in the Bronx as well as growing populations of African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans. In recent years, this cultural mix has made the Bronx a wellspring of both Latin and Hip Hop music. Despite a rocky history and an outdated reputation as an unsafe borough, the Bronx today is home to many residential and quiet neighborhoods. Getting around the Bronx is easy as the area is served by 7 subway lines as well as numerous bus and express bus lines. The Metro North Railroad connects Manhattan and the Bronx.

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Manhattan

Manhattan is the most densely populated borough in NYC. Located primarily on the island of Manhattan at the mouth of the Hudson River, the borough is famous for its NYC landmarks, tourist attractions, museums and universities. Home to the United Nations Headquarters, the area is a cultural and economic center of NYC and the city’s metropolitan area, housing the seat of city government and a large portion of the city’s employment, business and entertainment activities. Millions of tourists visit attractions and landmarks in Manhattan including the Empire State Building, Time Square, Rockefeller Center and Wall Street. The East Village and Greenwich Village areas offer sophisticated restaurants and Chinatown and Little Italy offer great dining. Nightlife reigns supreme on the Lower East Side and Harlem’s legendary streets are dotted with music halls, lounges and mouthwatering dining options. Museum Mile along 5th Avenue is home to some of the city’s finest museums including the Guggenheim and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The prestigious Upper West Side is a hotbed of high culture offering groundbreaking opera, dance and orchestral productions at the Lincoln Center. There are numerous parks in Manhattan including Central Park and Madison Square Park where students can catch a concert or New York Knicks basketball game. Getting around Manhattan is easy as all major subway lines connect the area to the neighboring boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx.



Local Climate

New York City has very defined seasons, with winters being cold and snowy, and the summertime being incredibly hot! If you are traveling between October and March then be sure to bring a warm coat, as well as some suitable footwear for walking in the snow. March to June can be unpredictable, so prepare for both cool and warm climates. From late June to September temperatures can reach as high as 85°F (29°C) degrees, and in the summer the humidity is very high. Fall is much milder, but occasionally there will be hot or cool spells, so bring enough clothing to suit all climates. Downpours of rain are common and unpredictable in NYC, an umbrella and waterproof jacket are both recommended regardless of season.