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**AFTER VISA WHAT DO I DO??**

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**AFTER VISA THE FIRST THINGS THAT YOU NEED TO DO IS...........................**

**First and Foremost**

There are certain things that have to be done in advance, i.e., as soon as get you your visa - much before the flight.

Ø Learn to cook.

Ø Apply for a bank loan (if necessary)

Ø Make your passport valid for 6 months more than your stay indicated in your I-20.

**Immunization:**

Find out the necessary immunization info and get everything done. Generally there are some vaccines like Hepatitis B, which require 3 doses once each month. So do it early. These vaccines are very costly in US and you certainly do not want to start spending money the moment you land in US. Get requisite immunization done (especially MMR).

Fill this form up in India after consulting a doctor before coming here. In case you have records of previous immunization, get the original documents with you or a certification from a doctor saying that you have had the immunization.

**Tickets:**

Block the ticket first. You need not pay anything while blocking, it’s free! You can pay later after your visa interview and after your ticket and schedule is confirmed. Block flights with many airlines.

Ø Try and book a direct flight to your place, even if you have to take a local airline it is better and safer than greyhound, which usually has its stops in the shadiest area of towns. Buy a single ticket all the way through – add on are very expensive. Avoid change of airline. A direct flight is the best.

Ø If change of airline can’t be avoided, leave at least 4-6 hrs gap between the scheduled arrival of one flight and the scheduled departure of the connecting flight.

Ø Baggage is usually safe with a single airline - change of airline sometimes leads to misplaced luggage. Some airlines don't take care of baggage transfer - you may have to personally carry it (check this while booking) and cross check everything you are promised by the Travel agent with the original air lines. Even if you have confirmed ticket in your hand. Also, in case you are changing airlines in USA, and international airline allows extra baggage, confirm with the domestic airline if it allows the same. In most cases, the rules for baggage are different for domestic travellers.
Ø And remember to ask for student concessions. Generally all the airlines will come up with discount offer for students. So check all this out before you pay the money.

Ø Typical expenses: Rs.35,000 – Rs.45,000

Ø There is a direct flight with KLM-Northwest from Mumbai to Minneapolis. But typically this is an expensive proposition. Most people come here by Lufthansa or Air India through Chicago or New York, which might work out to be cheaper.

**Health Checkups**

Get a full medical check-up done and get full medical reports. If you have any major health issues, it is better to get it completely checked once before coming here because in spite of the insurance, health care is really expensive.

**Dental check up**

Fresh check-up, especially if you have a major ailment

**Is Dental Care necessary?**

Ø The University of Minnesota has a dental coverage and graduate assistants are eligible for only free dental cleaning twice a year. However, it is still advisable to have a complete check-up before coming here. Do this quite a few weeks before your departure since dental treatment generally takes time and the dentist may require you to come for follow up treatment.

Ø If you have any serious dental problems and require treatment such as root canal treatment, fillings or extractions, it is better to get it done in India as this is not covered by the insurance. The typical cost for a filling would cost between $100-200. Further, getting appointments for treatment is extremely difficult and you might have to wait anywhere between a few days to a few weeks for treatment.

**Eye Check Up:**

Get your eyesight checked - get a new prescription. Buy at least two extra pairs of glasses or a pair of contact lens.

Get prescriptions & medicines for all common ailments (the technical name of the medicine along with Indian/US brand name). Important: Complete the health documentation that you may have to submit when you arrive in US.

**It is best for you to consult your doctor for medications for common ailments. The list below is an exhaustive list of all possible medicines and you will not need so many medicines. So before purchasing these, definitely consult your doctor.**
List of Medicines Recommended by a Doctor

**Crocin Tablets (Paracetamol 500 mg)** - 3 strips
For fever, body ache, and headache.
One tablet three times a day as necessary.
Above 60 kg please use 650 mg tablets (thermol/dolo).

For fevers, mild pain relief **Actifed Tablets** – 2 strips (side effect drowsiness)

A costlier but much better alternative is **Alerid (cetrizine) or Neoloridin (loridine)** less sedation and next to no side effects

**Azithromycin 500 mg tablets (aziwin)** - 3 strips. One tablet once a day for at least 3 days ... use if you have a bacterial cold or Respiratory infection ... (most common symptom being dark yellow colored mucus, fever, etc.). NOT NEEDED FOR ordinary cold (white mucus, watery secretions)

**Sporidex 500mg capsules** - 2 strips. One tablet twice a day when necessary as advised (please don’t use on your own. This stuff needs a prescription to be used properly ... meant only for persistent troublesome infections)

**Avomine Tablets** - 1 strip for air/motion sickness. One tablet as necessary (causes drowsiness)

**Lomotil/Andial Tablets** - 15 (for diarrhea) But remember the best treatment for diarrhea is plenty of fluids, some good rest and bland food.

**Omeprazole 20 mg**. For gastritis. Can be take once or twice a day

**Digene Tablets** - 20 mg. For stomach discomfort. One each three times a day.

**Spasmoproxyvon capsules** - 3 strips for abdominal colic pain, backache, menstrual pain etc. One tablet every 6 hours or as necessary. Also for STONE problem.

**Domstal Tablets** - 10. For vomiting. Has to be taken at least half an hr before food.

**Electral Powder** - 2 packets. One teaspoonful mixed with drinks to make up loss of electrolytes after vomiting & diarrhoea.

**Novalgin** - 2 strips for headache & body ache. One tablet as necessary.

**Brufen 600mg Tablets** - 2 strips. For arthritic joint pain. One tablet three times a day after food.

**Avil Tablets** - 1 strip for allergy (use cetrizine/loridin for less sedation), One tablet as necessary.
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Relaxyl ointment - 1 tube to be applied as pain balm.

Band Aid assorted - 12

Soframycin skin ointment - 1 tube

Nimesulide tabs. For the severest of headaches and pains. (But banned in the US). 100mg upto 3 times a day

Ciplox capsules 500 mg. 2 strips. 1 capsule twice a day. For Infective diarrheas

Vitamin B-complex capsules. Just in case your starving yourself out there

Autrin: if you are suffering from low Hemoglobin. 2 capsules daily

SHOPPING:

There are so many things one needs to carry, as this is the first time you are going abroad. If you have a friend who is going to the same university, for the same semester, it is better to share few things. This saves space as well as money. In this section, we have listed the most common things that your seniors have carried and suggest you to do. Most commodities are available easily here but a few items like clothes, footwear, leather items, and other miscellaneous things are expensive in US. Once again this list may vary from person to person. It does not make sense to bring one year’s supply of everything since the US of A is no desert. You can get stuff for as cheap as in India even if you convert the currency in supermarkets. You must remember that it is a big pain to carry lots of luggage and the lesser the luggage, the better. The list below is again mostly suggestive. Use your discretion and make purchases.

Clothes:

Ø Jeans: 4 to 6 pairs

Ø Shorts: 6-8. Style depends on your taste and liking.

Ø T-shirts: 10-12

Ø Formal wear with tie– 2 pair. You will not use them too frequently and are not too useful.

Ø Cotton shirts: 4-5

Ø Night clothes: 2-3 pairs. If you have the habit of using night clothes.

Ø Undergarments...a lot of them...20-25.

Ø Socks: 10-15 pairs. Do not take nylon socks. Cotton ones are better.
Ø Sweaters: 1-2.

Ø Get a muffler, monkey cap and windcheater(for rains and not for the cold).

Ø Handkerchiefs: depend on if you use them regularly.

Ø 2 belts. One formal leather belt and the other as you please.

Ø Kurta pyjamas- These would be good during Cultural meets etc. This is wholly dependent on your taste and liking. It is not a necessity.

Ø 2 Turkish towels and two napkins.

Ø 2 thin single bed sheets.

Ø Gloves – As Minneapolis could get extremely cold during winter, gloves from India may not be of too much use during those times. It is advisable to buy special gloves after coming here.

Ø Thermal undergarments

Ø Don’t get any winter/snow jackets from India, because it is advisable to buy it in Minneapolis.

**Summarizing your clothes list:**

- Sunglasses* 1 no.
- Umbrella 1 no.
- Wind cheater 1 no.
- Under garments 20-25 no.
- Shirts* 4 no.
- T-shirts* 12 no.
- Bermudas or shorts* 6 no.
- Trousers* 4 no. (formal)
- Jeans 6 no.
- Handkerchief* 18 no.
- Socks 10-15 no.
- Belts 2 no.
- Sweater 2 full. No sleeveless.
- Thermal inner wear* 2 pairs
- Formal wear 2 pairs
- Kurta Pyjama* 1 white
- Chudidar* 1 no.
- Chudidar jacket* 1 no.
- Night dress* 2 no.
- Gloves* 2 pair
- *Monkey cap & muffler(important) 1 no.
- Napkin 2 no.

*Items marked with * are based on personal choice and are not necessities.*
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FOOTWEAR:

Shoes:

Ø SPORTS SHOES: 1 pair. Wear it and come. Sports shoes are real cheap in US, especially during the Thanksgiving and Labor Day sales. So do not spend too much money for these.

Ø WINTER/SNOW SHOES: You can get really good snow shoes here and since these are really heavy to carry it is generally not advisable to carry these all the way from there. Do not carry boots.

Ø FORMAL SHOES: It is better to get at least one pair of formal shoes from India as they are really expensive here.

Ø Get a pair of Floaters/sandals. After the winter, everyone is more than happy to throw away the winter boots and start using floaters as they are really comfortable. Most shops do not sell here floaters and they are really expensive.

Ø Slippers / Hawai chappal - one pair, if you want to.

Personal accessories:

Ø Wallet - one that has space for cards - you normally don’t carry much cash with you. It is preferable to have a pouch for carrying coins too.

Ø Shaving kit & Blades (get a good stock, they are costly in US).

Ø Soap (get a couple of bars of bathing soap till you go for the first groceries in US).

Ø Combs & hair oil.

Ø Small mirror

Ø Nail cutter.

Ø Small scissors, Safety pin bunch. Mini-sewing kit with some buttons.

Ø Mug – These are not available here easily.

Ø Blanket – Most people normally buy comforters which are pretty cheap and really cozy too. A blanket could get to be really bulky to carry. It is advisable to get a thin blanket and not a thick one.

Ø Metal scrubbers are not available here.

Summarizing your Personal accessories list:

1) Soap 3 no.       2) Shampoo 2 bottles
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3) Towels 2 no.
4) Napkin 2 no.
5) Body spray 1 no.
6) Perfume 1 no.
7) After shave 1 no.
8) Tooth paste 2 no.
9) Tooth brush 2 no.
10) Shaving tube 1 no.
11) Mach 3 razor 2 no.
12) Blades 10 no. (mach3)
13) Blanket 1 no.
14) Scrub 2 no. (1 metal scrubber)
15) Bedsheets 2 no.
16) Comb 2 no.
17) Nail cutter 1 no.
18) Scissors 1 pair
19) Scientific calculator 1 no.
20) CDs of songs
21) Medicines + first aid kit
22) Books – Get all possible textbooks as they can be really expensive here.
23) Back pack
24) Torch & Alarm clock, preferably a snooze clock.
25) Mirror
26) Soap box
27) Mug 2 no.
28) For people with facial hair, trimming scissors.

**Utensils:**

Depends on whether you guys plan to cook alone or with your housemates, since most people don't get time to cook daily, stuff is generally prepared for two days at a go - so keep this in mind when you buy vessels. It might be more useful to bring big vessels, if any, as you tend to cook in large quantities here.

Typical stuff you may want is:

Ø 2 plates – one big and one small.

Ø Forks (2 each).

Ø Serving spoons.

Ø Couple of cooking vessels.

Ø Pressure cooker - 5 liters.

Ø Cooker containers and spares (rings and valves).
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Ø Small Non-stick frying pan with turner.

Ø Tongs & knives.

Ø 1 pressure pan (Prestige), ask your prospective roommate to get one too.

Ø 6 spoons and a couple of steel glasses.

Ø Kadai.

**Summarizing your Utensils list:**

1) Cooker 1 no. + spares

2) Cookers Containers 2 no.(with their lids)

3) Kadai 1 no.

4) Non stick tawa 1 no.

5) Spoons 6 no.

6) Grip 1 no.

7) Chapati fork/tong 1 no.

8) Ladle for poori 1 no.

9) Knife 1 no.

10) Peeler 1 no.

11) Serving spoons (for dal, curry and rice) 3 no.

12) Knife& Fork 3 no.

13) Sauce pan 2 no.

14) Rolling Pin/ Belan (to make rotis) 1 no.

15) Plate 1 no.

16) Glass 2 no.

17) Box for condiments 1 no.

**Food Items:**

Some of the common food items that students carry are:

Ø Spices, Masalas, instant masalas

Ø Mustard packet.

Ø Asafoetida powder.

Ø Indian instant coffee + Indian tea (it takes time to get used to the American stuff)

Ø Elaichi, clove, cinnamon

Ø Get a couple of bags each of haldi, red chilly powder, Garam masala, Dhania, Pickle bottles. Bring approx. 1-month supply of masalas.
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Most Indian foodstuffs are available even in small cities. Don't come loaded with foodstuffs as you may have problem with customs. Try to get "instant" stuff, as people don't have much time for cooking in the US. In general the tendency is to use readymade powders rather than stuff which needs cooking. So instant masalas are much more useful compared to spices for say sambar or rasam.

Summarizing your Masala list:

1) Dhania 200 gm
2) Chilli powder 200 gm
3) Haldi 200 gm
4) Full jira 200 gm
5) Mustard Seed 200 gm
6) Garam Masala home made 200 gm
7) Pav bhaji masala 2 packets
8) Salt 250 gm
9) Sugar 250 gm
10) Hing powder one bottle
11) Papad
12) Instant powders

Music:

Get all the cassettes recorded which you might like to take with you. Though you get most of them in US, why spend money for luxurious things. Get CDs preferably of music if possible.

Stationary list:

1) Pens 2 no.
2) Pencils 2 no.
3) Erasers 2 no.
4) Blade 1 no.
5) Stapler 1 no.
6) Stapler pins 1 packet
7) Scribbling Pad 1 no.
8) Glue stick 1 no.
9) Pencil Sharpener 2 no.
10) Ruler - 12" 1 no.
11) Stick on pad 2 no.
12) Cello tape 1 no.
13) Ink pen 1 no.
14) Ink 1 no.
15) Needle 1 packet
16) Thread Black 1, White 1 reel, Blue 1 reel
17) Safety pins 1 dozen
Ink bottles are not normally available here. People start using pencils and stop using ink pens. Further, ink bottles are a pain to carry. So unless you are really particular about using ink pens, we do not recommend carrying ink bottles or ink pens.

Luggage:

This has to be done after proper planning as luggage is an expensive item and is to be retained for years, now that you will be doing lot of traveling in flight.

Bags:

2 large size suitcases

Packing:

Ø Start your packing well in advance.

Ø Buy two good suitcases - they should be able to withstand a lot of mishandling. They should be as large as possible within the size limitations and weight limitations.

Ø Put identification marks and labels on both the inside & outside the suitcases apart from this, the airlines will also provide you with adhesive labels.

Ø Check with your respective airline about the dimensions and weight of the bag.

Ø Do not lock your suitcases while coming here. They will be broken open during the customs check when you enter the US. It might be useful to tie a rope around the suitcases so that they do not split open in transit.

Ø Some airlines give students the option of carrying a third piece of check in luggage. The catch here is that unless you directly land at your destination, you will end up paying close to $100 as excess baggage fee on the connecting domestic flight, since most domestic airlines allow only 2 pieces of luggage for international travelers. Find out if this is the case before you start packing.

Ø Some airlines require you to show them a copy of your I-20 in order to be eligible to carry the third piece of check in luggage.

Things to be kept in the suitcases:

Ø Copy of all the certificates/documents (originals in hand baggage)

Ø Important application materials (SOP, Reco, resume etc.)(Hard & editable soft copy)

Ø Necessary book/notebooks. Textbooks could end up being really expensive here but do find out what textbooks you might need for your prospective courses. Do not bring everything just because you can lay your hands on it.
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Ø Copy of address book/telephone book/diary.

Ø Medical history files.

Ø Non-technical books (fiction/religious). [Note: second-hand storybooks are cheap in the US]

Ø Don’t take Indian files (empty) or punching machines - filing system is different in the US (3holes, A4)

Ø Don’t take paper.

Ø Wear your shoes to save space in the box. If needed buy only leather shoes (other types of shoes are cheap in the US). For some weather conditions, Indian leather shoes may crack.

Don’t worry yourself if you can’t bring any of the stuff listed above - most of the items are available in the US. You will be able to get anything you want here. The primary reason for carrying the aforementioned items is because of the mental block of spending in dollars which everyone experiences on their first trip here.

Things to be kept in hand baggage:

Ø Some medicines (including ones for air-sickness)

Ø Novel/mags/books for in flight reading.

Ø Sweater

Ø Original important documents (I-20, visa, tickets.)

Ø Enough money (little cash, traveller's' checks, quarters worth 5-10$ essential)

Ø Address book/phone book (Indian & US)

Ø Enlisted steps to be followed in case of emergency (accident, theft, etc.)

Things to be kept in person:

Ø Shorter extract of contact addresses - especially of people coming to pick you up and people which whom you will be put up temporarily.

Ø Receipt got along with travelers checks - in case you lose the TC's.

Ø 1 handbag to carry in flight stuff with you

Ø 1 backpack (get a good one since you will use it almost all the time in US).

Ø It is advisable to get a small pouch which can be slung around your neck, where you can keep part of your currency and all important documents like passport, I-20 and tickets.
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Books:

Ø Contact students at the Univ.

Ø Your entire fundamental course texts and notes (for reference of basics).

Ø Standard mathematical table and formulae handbook for engineering students.

Money to be taken with you:

You may have to bring $1000-$2000, other than your fees in case you have to pay it after coming here. Please note that if you carry too much cash, maybe over $10000, you may have to come through special clearance in customs, which might prove to be a pain. You can get cash from Thomas Cook/American Express and of course any Foreign Exchange bank. Most banks deal in foreign exchange and so this should not be a problem. Try and find out the exchange rates and commissions from independent sources and finally go for the best deal. It does not matter where you get your currency from. All this is after you buy your ticket. Take a major part of the money in DD or TC’s. The typical combination is DD for the entire fee you have to pay, $1000-$2000 in TCs, and $100 in cash, which must a combination of notes of various denominations. Get a few quarters (25c coins) amounting to $5-10 since these are most useful in automatic machines. They can also be used for calling from any public phone in the airport (helpful when your flight gets delayed). $1 bills are also useful and get a sufficient number of them.

Money you may need to pay after going there: Other than your fee, you may have to pay the security deposit for the house, rent for the first month, groceries for the first month, basic utilities like toaster, rice cooker etc. which may come around to $500 approx. You will not get a credit card for sometime until you build up credit history but most banks here offer debit cards and US Bank offers a credit card too. So do not carry too much currency. Bring the money in travelers’ checks and deposit them in the bank as soon as you get here.

Documentation:

Carry all documentation safely, and have photocopies to back you up - letter from Univ., mark sheets etc. (the visa stuff basically). Things to get photocopied: Make two sets of the following, keep one set at home and bring the other set with you.

Ø Visa

Ø Xth, Inter (10+2), Degree marks sheets, Convocation Certificate of Under graduation.

Ø I-20 and acceptance letter from the university.

Ø Take all the I-20's with you if you have more than one.

Important things to do before you leave:
Ø Give power of attorney (authorization letters) to your father or brother or to someone on whom you rely.

Ø Put your signature on a 10 plain papers, write you name below it, keep these at home, they may need it for any purpose like authorization to collect marks sheets, Provisional certificate, Transfer certificate, Bonafide certificate, Degree certificate, Migration certificate from the university, applying for the refund from the college etc.

Ø Make all bank accounts joint.

Things to be left at home:

Ø List of addresses/phone numbers at which info about you can be obtained.

Ø One copy of all your important documents.

Ø A copy of all relevant parts of medical history files.

Ø Arrange to collect/redirect mail from your room/hostel.

Ø Arrange to apply/collection/mail your transcripts (about 20 in number preferable)

A Review & Miscellaneous:

Ø In the US, the default date format is mm/dd/yyyy, so if there are any important documents where the format of the date is different, try to get the format changed or try to get the format mentioned at all those places.

Ø Do not forget your original Indian driving license and ensure that it is valid for at least two years after your date of arrival here.

Ø Get at least $750 if you get paid within one month of arriving and at least $1500 if you get paid after a month and a half of arrival.

Ø Get your application material if you wish to reactivate your applications at another place for the next quarter/year.

Ø Get a set of transcripts in case you apply all over again for a PhD.

Ø B.Tech. Degree certificate.

Ø Get an address/phone number diary.

Ø Have a set of copies of visa, passport, I-20 in each piece of luggage.

Ø Carry some Indian currency too in case you need it inside the airport before boarding your flight. Typically carry about Rs.1000.
Ø Get a good leather purse that has several sections of "visiting cards" size, you'll need those for the bunch of credit cards/key cards/ID's, etc. you'll accumulate in no time in US.

Ø Carry medical prescription for all your medicines you bring.

Ø If you have glasses, get a through eye-check-up before and get 2 extra pairs of glasses. Get lenses if you have the habit of wearing them.

Ø Keep passport, visa, I-20, and other admission documents in the handbag you'll carry on your shoulders all the time.

Ø Confirm your ticket a couple of days prior to the flight directly through the airlines you are flying no matter how reputed your travel agent is.

IN THE LAST WEEK:

Ø Call up and find if there is any change of the schedule of the plane (inform the people coming to pick you up of any such change).

Ø Please wait for communication from people here regarding pickup and temporary accommodation.

Ø Relax the day before journey, and check all the documents you are taking with you once again.

ON THE DAY OF THE FLIGHT AND ON – BOARD:

Ø Since it is going to be a long flight wear something comfortable (cotton dress + full hand shirt). Wear your shoes - in flight you can remove them (some airlines give in flight shoes - else relax in socks).

Ø Check all the documents once again and keep them at appropriate places.

Ø Be at the airport 3-4 hours before the departure.

Ø Relax during the flight, sleep as much as possible.

Ø If required don't hesitate to spend money. Contact people here after getting here in case you have trouble.

Ø You will be asked to fill out your I-94 just before you land in the US. Fill it carefully and with the same details as in your passport.

ONCE OFF THE PLANE:

You are now in the USA! Once you are out of the plane go straight to the immigration counter - rush for them to beat the queue. It might take 0.5 - 1 hour here. Keep your I-20, passport, admission & aid letters ready. They might ask a few questions like
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Ø Is this your first time in the US? Student? F-1 Visa? Which Univ.? They will attach an I-94 card to your visa. Ensure that the stamp on your I-94 is correct and the correct visa type is stamped on it.

Ø Then go to the baggage counter to fetch your luggage. Pick up a cart (you might have to pay for this with dollar bills) to carry the bags. Then pick up your bags as they come out on the conveyor (suitable eye-catching labels help here); we suggest you tie your baggage with rope of a bright color that is visible from a distance. All this is to make your baggage appear distinct. If you don’t get your baggage, inform the inquiry section - you may have to wait 0.5 - 1 hour here.

Ø Cart your baggage to the nearby customs. If asked, tell them that you are a student, F-1 visa, school, dept., coming to US for the first time, If asked to open your baggage do so slowly - do not mess up the place. If asked about the masala powders tell them that they are "dried Indian spices" to make traditional Indian food like curry. Rarely might they ask you to go to the agris dept nearby – it’s a pain. If asked about "vibhuti" tell them that it is a holy Hindu powder.

Ø In exceptional circumstances, your baggage may not have arrived in the same flight, and you will be asked to give your contact details for this. Do not panic at this situation. It happens sometimes and in almost all cases the baggage is delivered safely at home within a day or two. You can give the address of the contact person given to you. Ensure that you have at least two days clothes in your hand baggage.

**Note:** In most cases, you will not be asked to open your suitcases at all & you will be simply waved through.

Ø If you have to catch a connecting flight, contact an information desk and find out where you are supposed to go for your connecting flight. Ensure that you find the right terminal and then proceed to do anything else. Even if you are meeting someone before catching a connecting flight, do not leave this till the last minute.

Ø Now go & wait at the specified exit for the guys who are supposed to pick you up. If nobody turns up after some time (say 0.5 hour) call the contact number given to you. You could use pay phones (quarters are useful here!).

Ø Never leave your baggage unattended. Don’t go out of the airport until somebody comes & picks you up.

Ø Once you reach your friend's house (or your intended destination) call home & inform them of your reaching safely. Please also inform the contacts here after arrival.