Climate Science Research Experiences for Undergraduates

Student Handbook

Summer 2025 at Penn State University

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# The Region

You’ll be spending your summer in the borough of State College, which is located in Centre County. Also known as Happy Valley, State College is a small town that sits in Nittany Valley, which is part of the Ridge-and-Valley region of Central Pennsylvania. The University Park Campus of The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) is adjacent to State College and actually has its own zip code and post office. Penn State has many other campuses, referred to as Commonwealth Campuses, but University Park is by far the biggest.

# Getting Here

## By Plane

Flights can come into the [University Park Airport](https://www.universityparkairport.com/) with taxis and shuttles going to State College. This airport is a 7-minute drive from campus. There are also airports within a 4-hour drive of State College: [Williamsport Regional Airport](http://www.flyipt.com/) (1 hour), [Harrisburg Airport](http://www.flyhia.com/) (1.5 hours), [Elmira Corning Regional Airport](http://www.ecairport.com/) (2.5 hours), [Pittsburgh International Airport](http://www.pitairport.com/) (3.5 hours), [Philadelphia International Airport](http://www.phl.org/Pages/HomePage.aspx) (3.5 hours), [Baltimore/Washington International Airport](http://www.bwiairport.com/en) (3.5 hours), [Dulles International Airport, Washington, D.C.](http://www.metwashairports.com/dulles/dulles.htm) (4 hours), and [Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Washington, D.C.](http://www.metwashairports.com/reagan/reagan.htm) (4 hours).

## By Car

I-80 and I-99 are the interstate highways that go to State College. US 22 to US 322 is another potential route. The business portion of US 322 runs north–south through State College. The main road that runs east–west through State College is PA 26.

## By Bus

State College has a bus station at 152 North Atherton St (very close to Walker Building), but not all regional buses stop there. For example, the Megabus stop in State College is in the Walmart parking lot about 3 miles northwest of campus. Here are some links for regional buses:

[Fullington Trailways](http://www.fullingtontours.com/)

[Greyhound](http://www.greyhound.com/)

[Megabus](http://us.megabus.com/)

[Charter Buses to New England](http://www.psuctvalley.org/bus.html)

## By Train

Unfortunately, there is no train station in State College. Amtrak services the nearby towns of [Tyrone](https://www.amtrak.com/stations/tyr) (30 minute drive) and [Lewistown](https://www.amtrak.com/stations/lew) (40 minute drive), which have a line that runs to Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia.

# Getting Around

## Car

Getting around State College is easy with your personal vehicle. Directly downtown, Beaver Ave and College Ave are the main streets running “east” and “west” (strictly speaking, they run southwest and northeast). Allen St is a main street running north and south; it roughly bisects the downtown. Atherton St is another main street running north and south; this street is a main way to get out of town and to access many big-box stores and supermarkets.

Parking is available at the apartment complex, for an additional charge.

Parking downtown includes metered parking, parking garages, and parking lots. From 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., meters cost $1.25 per hour. The three parking garages downtown are on South Pugh St, South Fraser St, and West Beaver Ave across from Target. The garages cost $1 per hour from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and $0.75 during the night. The three parking lots are located on Allen St, McAllister St, and West Beaver Ave across from Panera. The rate is $1.25 per hour from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Parking is free everywhere on Sundays! Many stores downtown also validate parking, so take advantage of that to save money on parking. There is a parking lot outside of Five Guys on West College Ave that has free parking up to 2 hours at all times.

## Public Transportation

State College has a great bus system run by the Centre Area Transit Authority ([CATA](https://catabus.com/)). There are two buses that provide free service around campus and downtown: Blue Loop and Red Link. The rest are $2.20 (cash only) to ride. These buses offer trips to shopping centers, such as Walmart Plaza and Trader Joe’s Plaza. To track bus locations and see where the stops are, download the free myStop app—it’s super helpful!

## Uber/Lyft

There are many rideshare services in State College including Uber and Lyft. They operate at all hours.

## Biking

Bikes are a great way to travel downtown and around campus. Biking is easy on campus and many streets downtown have bike lanes. Additionally, there are several paved bike paths throughout the borough. Downtown State College recently adopted Spin e-bikes, which are rentable electric bikes. There are 300 of these across State College, and you can download the Spin app to see locations and pay fares. The fare is $1 to unlock the bike and $0.30 per minute, and free between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. You can also walk over to [Lion Surplus](https://surplus.psu.edu/), a Penn State thrift shop behind the IM fields, and pick up a (very) cheap bike to use for the summer. If you bring or buy a bike, you must [register](http://www.transportation.psu.edu/transportation/alt-transportation/bicycles/registration.cfm) it.

There is also good cycling outside of town. For road biking, there are many small county roads to explore, though some are better than others in terms of traffic and shoulder width. There are many terrific mountain bike trails, too. Find more information about biking resources in the region at [CentreBike](https://centrebike.org/), [Nittany Mountain Biking Association](https://nittanymba.org/), and the [State College Cycling Club](https://www.statecollegecycling.com/).

## Walking

Of course, you can walk! The campus and downtown are extremely walkable, and wheelchair accessible. Get some fresh air!

## Campus Map

This interactive [map of campus](https://map.psu.edu/?id=1134#!ct/59509,33177,25403,26748,26749,26750,27255?s/) is very helpful to find buildings, computer labs, parking, athletic fields, libraries, and so much more. Some notable places are:

* Old Main (the main administrative building)
* The HUB–Robeson Center (the main student center)
* The Pattee and Paterno Libraries
* Berkey Creamery
* Palmer Museum of Art

# Housing

You will be housed in [White Course Apartments](https://liveon.psu.edu/university-park/housing/white-course-undergraduate-apartments) on campus. These are suite-style apartments with kitchens and lounge areas, as well as study spots and amenities in the Weston Community Center. The apartments are at the far west end of campus. They are a 5–10 walk away from Walker Building, where many REU students will have their offices and where most of the professional development activities will take place.

## Laundry

Each apartment suite in White Course Apartments has their own washer and dryer. There is no fee to do laundry!

## Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is available through the PSU guest network; get connected at <https://wireless.psu.edu/>.

## Fitness

The IM (intramural) building is the on-campus fitness center, located on the east side of campus. Penn State visiting scholars are eligible for a $95 Associate Membership, which includes pool access. Memberships must be purchased in person at the IM Building. There is also a Planet Fitness downtown under Target on South Fraser St, an OrangeTheory on South Atherton St, a YMCA on Whitehall Rd, and other local gyms.

## Food

Most REU students choose to do their own cooking in the apartments. Though the kitchens have appliances, they are not stocked with kitchenware (dishware, silverware, pots and pans, utensils, etc.). Bring your own kitchenware or purchase it from State College. Consider coordinating with apartment mates. There are several thrift stores in the area, though no longer within walking distance. Goodwill and CentrePeace are the biggest and are 4 and 8 miles, respectively, northeast of State College.

State College has some small supermarkets downtown and several large supermarkets on the outskirts of town. Downtown you will find groceries at [McLanahan’s](https://mclanahansmarket.com/) and [Target](https://www.target.com/sl/state-college-university-campus/3234). The nearest supermarket on the outskirts is [Weis](https://www.weismarkets.com/stores/weis-markets-state-college-33/4384) on Westerly Pkwy, which is a little over a mile from White Course Apartments. Further out (a few miles) in both directions on Atherton St you will find Weis, Giant, Wegmans, and Aldi.

State College also has many international food stores. Some great examples are the State College International Market (228 South Allen St) and Global Foods (240 West Hamilton Ave).

Finally, State College has some wonderful farmers markets that are supplied from the numerous farms in the Centre Region. The [State College Farmers Market](https://www.statecollegefarmersmarket.com/) is right downtown on Locust Lane. Just outside of town are the [North Atherton Farmers Market](https://www.northathertonfarmersmarket.com/) and the [Boalsburg Farmers Market](https://www.boalsburgfarmersmarket.com/).

You won’t be eligible for a meal plan, but you can deposit funds into your ID card and get 10% off at dining on campus and in some [stores downtown](https://idcard.psu.edu/university-park). ([LionCash](https://liveon.psu.edu/university-park/meal-plans))

There are multiple food locations on campus where you can use LionCash: [On Campus Eating](https://map.psu.edu/?id=1134#!ce/26622?ct/33177,25403,27255,26750,26749,26748,26721,26723,26720,26718,41153?s/).

# Health

If you need emergency medical assistance, State College has a large hospital just outside of town, [Mount Nittany Medical Center](https://www.mountnittany.org/mount-nittany-medical-center) and for urgent care [Mount Nittany Health Express CARE](https://mountnittany.org/locations/mount-nittany-health-express-care/). Urgent care is also available at [MedExpress](https://www.medexpress.com/), which has a location on North Atherton St. There are several large medical providers in the State College area, including [Mount Nittany Health](https://www.mountnittany.org/home), [Penn State Health](https://www.pennstatehealth.org/), and [Geisinger](https://www.geisinger.org/). Unfortunately, the medical care on campus (University Health Services) is only available to Penn State students.

Numerous pharmacies are located in and around State College, including CVS, RiteAid, Walmart, Giant, and Wegmans.

# What to Bring

Located in the rolling Appalachian Mountains of central PA, State College tends to get some weird weather. The weather in the summer can range anywhere from 90 degrees and sunny to 50 degrees and rainy, not to mention the thunderstorms! Here, we provide you with a list of clothes to pack:

* Warm-weather clothes
  + shorts, t-shirts, tank tops, skirts, light jacket
* Chilly-weather clothes
  + jeans, pants, sweatpants, sweatshirts
* Casual attire
  + for working in your lab, hanging with your friends, or walking downtown
* Professional attire
  + for the final symposium (business casual is appropriate)
* Outdoor gear
  + if your lab requires field work, you’ll probably want good field shoes, like boots or sneakers, and a raincoat, a hat, and good socks
* Shoes
  + Sneakers, professional shoes, sandals, etc.

Here is a list of non-clothes items you’ll probably want to bring or pick up when you get here:

* Kitchenware, as mentioned above
* For your room:
  + Sheets (twin XL), blanket, pillows, towels, snacks
* Backpack, laptop, chargers, notebook, pencils/pens
* Umbrella, sunglasses, hat, purse/bag
* Laundry soap, dryer sheets
* Toiletries, medicine, etc.

# Things to do in and Around State College

Summer at State College is as vibrant as during the semester, with festivals, activities, and outdoor recreation. The Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts (“Arts Fest”) is notable in the large number of artists and musicians that it attracts. Arts Fest runs for several days over a long weekend in early-mid July and covers a large part of the campus and several closed-off streets downtown. Many shows are free, though there are also some events that require a button, which can be purchased at a fairly low cost.

## Summer Events in State College

[4th Fest](https://www.centralpa4thfest.org/)

[Arts Fest](https://arts-festival.com/)

[First Friday](https://downtownstatecollege.com/first-friday/)

[State College Pride](https://www.centrelgbtqa.org/)

[State College Community Calendar](https://www.statecollege.com/events/)

## Summer Events near State College

[Rhoneymeade Fest](https://www.rhoneymeade.org/)

[People’s Choice Fest](https://peopleschoicefestival.com/)ival

## Theaters

The State Theatre is the main local theater downtown, and features movies and musical acts. You’ll have to go a few miles out of town to find the two main multiplex theaters in the area. Here are some links:

[State Theatre](https://thestatetheatre.org/)

[UEC College 9](https://www.uecmovies.com/theatres/details/1011)

[UEC State College 12](https://www.uecmovies.com/theatres/details/1012)

## Outdoor Activities

Central Pennsylvania has recovered spectacularly from the massive logging of the 19th century. There are many places to enjoy the natural beauty of the region. If you go hiking, be mindful of **ticks** by wearing proper clothing, avoiding contact with brush, and using bug spray.

Very close to White Course Apartments is a terrific path that winds for a few miles around Penn State’s golf courses—it’s great for walking, running, and cycling. Here are just a few additional places to check out, roughly increasing in distance from downtown:

Penn State Arboretum

- gardens, walking trails, events ([website](https://arboretum.psu.edu/))

Millbrook Marsh Nature Center

- walking trails, wildlife viewing ([website](https://www.crpr.org/millbrook-marsh-nature-center))

State Game Lands

* Hiking, mountain biking (see [website](https://www.pgc.pa.gov/HuntTrap/StateGameLands/Pages/default.aspx) for interactive state map; nearest game lands are #176, only 2 miles west of State College, and include Haugh Family Farm and The Barrens)

Mt. Nittany

- hiking (500 Mount Nittany Rd, Lemont, PA 16851)

Tussey Mountain

- concerts, mini golf, go karts, batting cages ([website](https://tusseymountain.com/summer-home/))

Colyer Lake

* hiking, fishing, boating ([website](https://www.fishandboat.com/Resource/Lakes/Pages/ColyerLake.aspx))

Shaver’s Creek Environmental Center

* hiking, raptor center, boating ([website](https://www.shaverscreek.org/))

Rothrock State Forest

- hiking, mountain biking, fishing, swimming, kayaking, etc. ([website](https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateForests/FindAForest/Rothrock/Pages/default.aspx)); great regional resource, with some nearby hiking at Shingletown Gap, Musser Gap, and Bear Meadows as well as swimming at Whipple Dam.

Penn’s Cave

- underground cave, wildlife park ([website](https://www.pennscave.com/))

Lincoln Caverns

- underground cave, tours ([website](https://lincolncaverns.com/))

Frisbee golf courses

- Harvest Fields (wooded area, interspersed with mountain biking trails)

- Circleville Park (considered an easier course)

## Restaurant Recommendations Downtown

Though not quite the selection of restaurants you might find in a big city, State College has a wide range of choices for all budgets, tastes, and dietary preferences and restrictions. Some breakfast choices include Bagel Crust, Sower’s Harvest Cafe, Elixr, The Waffle Shop, and Irving’s. For lunch and dinner, consider The Corner Room, Primanti Bros, BRGR, Federal Taphouse, Snap Pizza, Kaarma Indian Cuisine, India Pavilion, Tadashi, Little Szechuan, Cozy Thai, Lupita’s, and El Jefe’s. A real local delight for coffee, books, and lots of vegetarian/vegan snacks and sandwiches is [Webster’s Bookstore Cafe](https://www.webstersbooksandcafe.com/). These are just a few suggestions—there are many more great choices!

## Getting out of Town

Tired of country living and need a city fix? Consider a weekend trip to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Washington, or New York. It’s several hours one-way to each of these. A car may work best for some of these destinations, but bus is also a possibility. To take a train, you would need to first drive to Tyrone or Lewistown.