

śāhaśwara



2025



# WELCOMING GUIDELINE

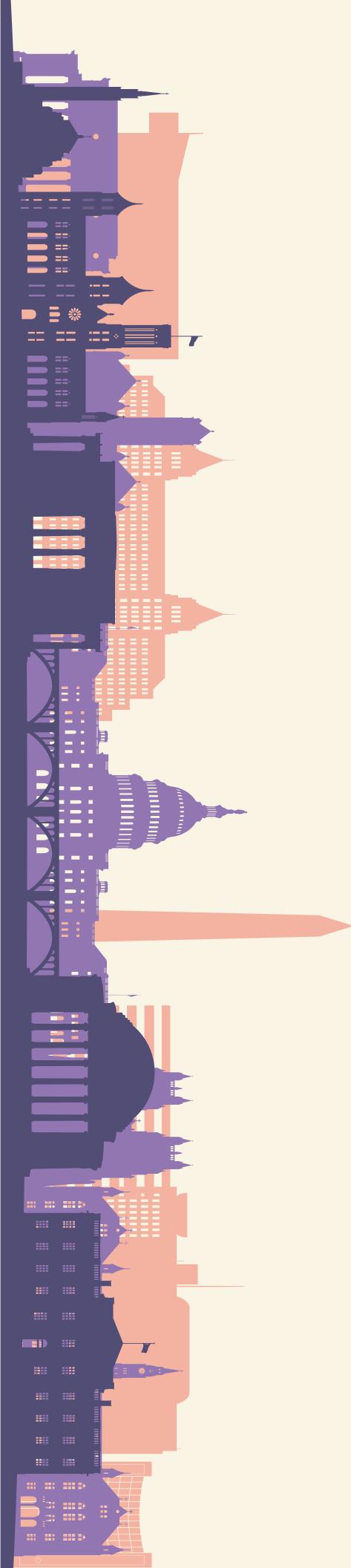
FOR STUDENTS IN DMV AREA



@PERMIASDC



PERMIASWDC@GMAIL.COM



# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the United States! We are thrilled to welcome you to the DMV (Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia) area as you begin your studies at one of the many esteemed institutions in this region, including the University of Maryland, George Washington University, Johns Hopkins University, George Mason University, American University, or Northern Virginia Community College. This student guide was created especially for Indonesian students like you to ease your transition into a new environment, both academically and culturally.

Whether this is your first time living abroad or you've traveled internationally before, adjusting to life in a different country can be challenging. This handbook is designed to help you feel more prepared and confident, offering practical tips on everything from what to pack and how to get around to finding housing, accessing healthcare, and connecting with fellow students. We hope it will serve as a helpful resource throughout your journey—and remind you that a supportive Indonesian community is here, ready to welcome you every step of the way.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 01. PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATION

- Passport, F-1/J-1 Visa, and I-20/DS-2019 Tips
- How to Find & Secure Housing from Abroad
- What to Pack
- Vaccines, Insurance, and Financial Prep
- Travel Day & Airport Checklist

## 02. ARRIVAL & FIRST WEEK IN THE U.S.

- First 7 Days Checklist
- Phone Plan Setup
- Open a U.S. Bank Account
- Student ID & Campus Setup
- Transportation from Airport to Campus
- Emergency Contacts

## 03. EVERYDAY LIVING IN THE DMV

- Public Transportation
- Healthcare 101
- Grocery Shopping
- Weather & Clothing

## 04. COMMUNITY & CAMPUS LIFE

- PERMIAS DMV and Indonesian Groups
- Mental Health and Cultural Adjustment Tips
- DMV-Specific Communities & Events

## 05. UNIVERSITY-SPECIFIC GUIDES

- University of Maryland, College Park (UMD)
- George Washington University (GWU)
- Johns Hopkins University (JHU)
- American University (AU)
- George Mason University (GMU)
- Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)
- Georgetown University (GU)

## 06. FINAL WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

## PART 1

# Pre-Departure Preparation

## Passport, F-1/J-1 Visa, and I-20/DS-2019 Tips

- **Passport:** Ensure it's valid for at least 6 months beyond your program's end date. Renew it if needed.
- **I-20/DS-2019 Form:** This document is issued by your U.S. university and confirms your student status.
- **F-1/J-1 Visa:**
  - Schedule a visa appointment at the U.S. Embassy (usually in Jakarta or Surabaya).
  - Prepare documents: I-20/DS-2019, SEVIS fee receipt, visa application (DS-160), passport photo, academic transcripts, bank statements, etc.
  - Attend the interview, stay calm, and answer truthfully.
- After visa approval, double-check your visa stamp and I-20 for errors.



## How to Find & Secure Housing from Abroad



- **On-campus housing:** Easiest for first-year students. Apply early via your school portal.
- **Off-campus housing:**
  - Ask PERMIAS or Indonesian upperclassmen for trusted housing options.
  - Search: Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist (be careful!), or student housing websites like hotpads.com, zillow.com, or apartments.com.
- **Tip:** Sign leases only with verified landlords. Avoid paying in cash upfront to unknown people.

## What to Pack

- **Weather:** Pack for all 4 seasons – especially fall jackets and a warm winter coat.
- **Everyday essentials:**
  - Medications (and prescriptions translated in English)
  - Indonesian spices/snacks you love
  - Laptop and universal charger
  - SIM card (optional, but U.S. SIMs are available after arrival)
- **Kitchen items:** Rice cooker (optional – can buy in the U.S.), reusable bottle, chopsticks, etc.
- **Clothing:** Formal clothes (for events/interviews), swimwear, slippers.



## PART 1

# Pre-Departure Preparation

## Travel Day & Airport Checklist

- Keep the following with you in your **carry-on**:
  - Passport + visa
  - I-20/DS-2019 form (printed and signed)
  - Flight itinerary
  - SEVIS receipt
  - Cash + cards
  - School acceptance letter (just in case)
- At U.S. **immigration**:
  - Be polite and answer clearly.
  - Show your documents when asked.
- Upon arrival, follow the signs to customs, pick up your luggage, and exit to the arrival area.



## Vaccines, Insurance, and Financial Preparation



- **Vaccinations:** Your school may require COVID, MMR, Hepatitis, TB tests – check your immunization form and submit it before arriving.
- **Travel & Health Insurance:**
  - Confirm if your school's insurance starts immediately.
  - If there's a gap, get temporary travel insurance for your flight and the early days.
- **Finances:**
  - Open an international debit card (e.g., Jenius, BCA Xpresi) that works in the U.S.
  - Bring \$200–300 USD cash just in case.
  - Have a credit card if possible (e.g., BCA Visa, Mandiri Mastercard) for emergencies.

# PART 2

# Arrival & First Week in the U.S.

## Your First 7 Days Checklist

- Get your U.S. SIM card and set up your phone
- Open a U.S. bank account
- Get your student ID
- Set up your university email
- Attend orientation (international and school-wide)
- Explore your campus area
- Add PERMIAS DC and campus ISA contacts!



## Phone Plan Setup



- Recommended prepaid carriers for students:
  - **Mint Mobile** (cheap and easy online setup)
  - **T-Mobile Prepaid, AT&T Prepaid, Visible**
- You can get a U.S. SIM at the airport, Target, or via mail.
- Plans range from \$15–40/month.

## Open a U.S. Bank Account

- Common banks: **Chase, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Capital One, PNC**
- You will need:
  - Passport
  - I-20/DS-2019
  - School acceptance letter
  - U.S. address (can use a temporary one first)
- Ask for a student account – many have no monthly fee!

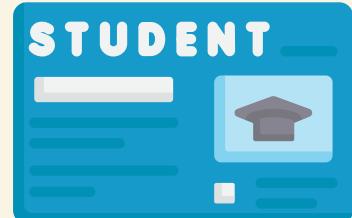


## PART 2

# Arrival & First Week in the U.S.

## Student ID & Campus Setup

- Visit your campus Student Services Center to get:
  - Your ID card (needed for everything!)
  - Wi-Fi login, campus app
  - Medical forms and insurance info
- Many campuses have free SIM cards and local maps – ask!



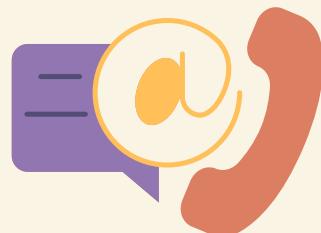
## Transportation from Airport to Campus

- For **University of Maryland (UMD)**:
  - Nearest airport: DCA or BWI
  - Take a shuttle, Uber/Lyft, or MARC train → College Park
- For **George Washington University (GWU) & American University (AU)**:
  - Nearest airport: DCA
  - Metro directly to campus (Foggy Bottom for GWU, Tenleytown for AU)
- For **Johns Hopkins University (JHU)**:
  - Nearest airport: BWI
  - Use Lyft/Uber or Light Rail → Baltimore Penn Station
- For **George Mason University (GMU)**:
  - Nearest airport: IAD or DCA
  - Bus/Metro combo or ride-share
- For **Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)**:
  - Campus varies, but most are accessible via Metro + bus or carpool
- For **Georgetown University (GU)**:
  - Nearest airport: IAD or DCA
  - Uber/Lyft



## Emergency Contacts

- **Indonesian Embassy (Washington, D.C.)**:
  - Phone: +1 (202) 775-5200
  - Website: <https://www.kemlu.go.id/washington>
- **PERMIAS DMV**:
  - Instagram: [@permiasdc](https://www.instagram.com/@permiasdc)
  - Email: [permiaswdc@gmail.com](mailto:permiaswdc@gmail.com)

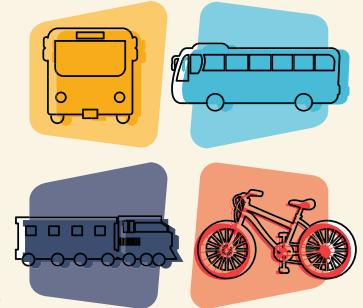


## PART 3

# Everyday Living in the DMV Area

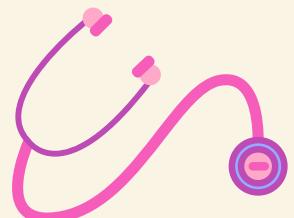
## Public Transportation

- Lyft & Uber - the most general options that can be used around DMV
- Use the Washington Metro (Metrorail) and Metrobus for most travel.
- Apps to download:
  - Transit App
  - Moovit
  - MetroHero
- Use a SmarTrip card (physical or in Apple/Google Wallet).
- Side notes: always stand on the RIGHT side of the escalator – the left side is for walking!



## Healthcare 101

- For small sickness (flu, fever): Visit urgent care clinics.
- For emergencies (broken bones, serious illness): Go to the Emergency Room.
- Always bring your insurance card.
- Use your campus health center for basic services (many are free).



## Grocery Shopping

- Regular grocery stores: Giant, Safeway, Aldi, Walmart, Target
- Asian stores: H Mart, Lotte, Great Wall, 99 Ranch
- Indonesian ingredients: Ask seniors or order from Weee! or Amazon



## Weather and Clothing

- Winter: Thermal long johns, coat, gloves, boots
- Summer: Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses, loose clothing
- Always check the weather app before leaving home!



## PART 4

# Community & Campus Life

## PERMIAS DC and Indonesian Groups

- Join PERMIAS DC and other Indonesian Student Associations (ISA) on your campus! These groups host:
  - Cultural celebrations (Independence Day, Eid, Christmas)
  - Study sessions and social events
  - Career panels and alumni networking
  - Potluck dinners and sports days
- Follow us on Instagram @permiasdc and join our WhatsApp/Discord groups for updates!



## Mental Health and Cultural Adjustment Tips

- Moving abroad is exciting but can be emotionally overwhelming. You may feel homesick, anxious, or lonely.
  - Don't isolate yourself – reach out to friends, upperclassmen, or PERMIAS mentors.
  - Most schools have free counseling services – take advantage of them.
  - Practice self-care: eat well, rest, and explore the area gradually.
- Remember, you're not alone. Everyone feels this way at some point, and it gets better with time and community.



## DMV-Specific Communities & Events

- Get involved in:
  - Indonesian Embassy events (open houses, national holidays)
  - PERMIAS DC gatherings (Bukber, graduation, BBQs)
  - Local festivals: National Cherry Blossom Festival, DC Night Market
  - Join student groups/clubs on campus (ISA, cultural orgs, intramurals)



## PART 5

# University-Specific Guides

## University of Maryland, College Park (UMD)

- Location: College Park, Maryland – suburban campus with a huge student body.
- Transit: Access via College Park Metro (Green Line), Shuttle-UM buses, or MARC.
- Housing & Food: The Varsity, South Campus Commons, etc.; lots of halal and Asian food near campus.
- Student Org: IndoTerps; active in both culture and food-related events. check out more information on [@indo\\_terps](#) Instagram!



## George Washington University (GWU)

- Location: Downtown DC – right in the heart of the capital!
- Transit: Foggy Bottom Metro Station; walkable to most places.
- Housing & Food: Foggy Bottom apartments; Whole Foods nearby.
- Tips: Expect a fast-paced, urban lifestyle with lots of internship options.



## Johns Hopkins University (JHU)

- Location: Baltimore, Maryland – Homewood Campus is most common for undergrad.
- Transit: JHMI Shuttle, Light Rail, MARC Train.
- Housing & Food: Charles Village apartments; Hopkins View Apartment; Baltimore Seafood and Ekiben are worth trying!
- Note: Safety awareness is important – stay in well-lit areas.
- Student Org: Indonesian Student Association, check out more information on [@indonesiahopkins](#) Instagram!



## American University (AU)

- Location: NW Washington, DC – more suburban, near embassy row.
- Transit: Tenleytown-AU Metro + AU Shuttle.
- Housing & Food: Dorms or off-campus housing in Tenleytown.
- Vibe: Policy, law, and international relations focused campus.



AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, DC

## PART 5

# University-Specific Guides

## George Mason University (GMU)

- Location: Fairfax, VA – large campus with suburban feel.
- Transit: Fairfax Connector bus, Vienna Metro Station.
- Food & Housing: Many Indonesian students live in shared apartments in the Fairfax area.
- Note: Lots of clubs and Southeast Asian presence.



## Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)

- Campuses: Multiple, most common for Indonesian students: Annandale & Alexandria.
- Transit: Metro + Bus combo works well.
- Note: Perfect for transfer students – make friends early and ask for academic help when needed.



## Georgetown University (GU)

- Location: Georgetown neighborhood in Washington, DC – historic, scenic, and slightly tucked away from the city bustle.
- Campuses:
  - Hilltop Campus
  - Law Center
  - McCourt School of Public Policy
- Transport: GU Transport Shuttle buses connect Hilltop and Capitol campuses to key Metro stations (Dupont, Rosslyn, Union Station). Metrobus, DC Circulator, and bike are also other options in the area.
- Housing: On-campus housing is limited for grad students; off-campus housing is common. Here is a list of Popular neighborhoods.
  - Hilltop Campus: Burleith, Glover Park, Wisconsin Avenue, Rosslyn
  - Law Center: NoMa, Capitol Hill, Rosslyn
  - McCourt School of Public Policy – NoMa, Capitol Hill
- Student Org: Georgetown IndoHoya (plenty events and gathering)  
more info @indonesiageorgetown



## PART 6

# Final Words of Encouragement

Dear friends,

Coming to the U.S. is a big leap – and we're proud of you for taking it. You've worked hard to get here, and while the journey may feel daunting at first, you are not alone. With your campus community, fellow Indonesian students, and PERMIAS DMV, you have a support system ready to welcome you.

### Advices from Alumni

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions – Americans are used to international students.”

“Join campus events early. It helps build friendships that last.”

“It’s okay to miss home – just remember, you’re building a new home too.”

Need help or have questions?

✉ Email: permiaswdc@gmail.com

📷 Instagram: @permiasdc

We can't wait to meet you.

With warm regards,

**PERMIAS DC**

