PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION: ONLINE RESOURCES

It’s a good idea to read some of the suggestions below before you come to Columbia, since you will be very busy once you arrive!

A great student-created series of 5 short YouTube videos on Cultural, Social, and Academic Adjustment:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPfB6GljM9Q&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H82Ifq0HbTQ
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7iznNFGzIg&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=powo_XwMTZs&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbTKaZLLALo&feature=related

USA - Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette
http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/usa.html

International Moving: Culture Shock
http://moving.about.com/od/internationalmoves/a/culture_shock.htm

Social Customs and Cultural Differences is interesting to read before you get here, and continues to be useful to refer to after you arrive as you adjust to living in the U.S.
http://www.edupass.org/culture/

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STUDENT VISAS

Everyone --except Canadians and citizens of Bermuda--must have or obtain a student Entry Visa in your passport before traveling to the United States to study. Although an F-1 or J-1 student visa may be applied for as early as four months in advance of the report date on the I-20 at item 5 or program start date on the DS-2019 form, you may not enter the U.S. more than 30 days prior to this date.

Do not come to the U.S. with a B-1/B-2 Visitor Visa or on a 90-day visa waiver. U.S. immigration law prohibits those in visitor status from attending classes and from changing to student status after arrival. You will waste your time and your money if you arrive as a tourist rather than in student status.

Government regulations require that you attend the university that issued the I-20 used to obtain the F-1 visa, so you should be entering the U.S. with a Columbia I-20 and an entry visa that has Columbia written on it, if this is your initial entry in F-1 status.

If you have been a student in the U.S. before and your F-1 or J-1 entry visa is still unexpired, you may continue to use that visa for entry with a Columbia I-20 or DS-2019.

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IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS!

PAY ATTENTION to the information you received from Columbia Health! You are not permitted to register for classes until you have complied with immunization requirements. If you do not register for classes by the end of the normal registration period, you will be in violation of your F-1 or J-1 status. Refer to the Health Services links below for information on satisfying the requirement:

Immunization Requirements:  http://health.columbia.edu/about/immunization-requirements
CREDIT CARD FROM HOME

We recommend that you arrive in the U.S. with a credit card from home, if at all possible. If you haven't lived in the U.S. before, you won't have a U.S. credit history of paying your bills, making it difficult to obtain a U.S. credit card soon after arrival.

INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS LICENSE

It is advisable for non-citizens or permanent residents to obtain an International Driver's License (IDL), which must be obtained from your home country. This permit verifies that you hold a valid license in your home country. It is your foreign driver's license that allows you to drive in the United States. Contact the authorities in your home country to get an international driving permit, as the United States does NOT issue international driver's licenses to foreign visitors. If you are already in the U.S., you may obtain a certified translation of your driver's license until an IDL can be acquired. You can contact your consulate for a translation.

NY State recognizes your foreign driver license if you remain a resident of the nation that issued the license. You do not need to have a NYS driver license to drive in NYS unless you become a resident of NYS. The law defines a resident as a person who lives in NYS with the intent to make NYS a "fixed and permanent place to live." You may, however, choose to obtain a NYS license. The disadvantages of obtaining a NYS drivers license are that you must take the complete driving test regardless of prior driving experience (unless you have a Canadian license) and you must surrender your foreign license.

The NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). See “Drivers From Other Nations”
http://www.dmv.ny.gov/license.htm#driversfromothernations

ISSO CONTACT INFORMATION

Columbia University
International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)
524 Riverside Drive (in International House North between 122nd and Tiemann Place)
Telephone: 212 854-3587  Fax: 212 851-1235
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/issso/
isse@columbia.edu

Office Hours: SUMMER Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9-4 pm. Closed on Wednesdays until August 15.
Thereafter, the ISSO is open on Wednesdays 10:30 – 4 pm.

See the attached map of the ISSO location.