The purpose of this pre-arrival guide is to prepare you for your stay in El Paso. The content of this guide is based on feedback given to us by previous program participants and includes general information about the City of El Paso. Although we have tried to be as thorough as possible, there are some aspects of the program and living in the United States that you will have to experience first-hand. We hope this guide gives you a good starting place.
## Before you Leave Home

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1. Before you leave home

Pre-arrival Checklist

☐ Visas (all students)

Ensure your F-1 student visa is stamped on your passport.

☐ Immunizations (all students)

- It is mandatory that you get your Bacterial Meningitis immunizations prior to arriving in the U.S.

☐ IMPORTANT Documents (all students)

- Valid Passport
- Valid Student Visa
- Valid I-20
- Original acceptance letter from the English Language Institute at UTEP
- Keep these items with you at all times during travel.

The following items are suggested:

- U.S. currency for your first few days
- Credit Card
When you arrive

Arrival Checklist

☐ Go through U.S. Customs and Immigration (all students)

When you arrive at the U.S. Airport or land crossing, be prepared to present the following to a customs officer:

- Your passport
- Your I-20
- ONLY if you are crossing through the land customs and immigration. You can pre-pay the I-94 for $6 at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/apply-document and show the CBP officer your receipt. You will be issued a I-94 card
- Original acceptance letter from the English Language Institute at UTEP

Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- Why are you coming to the U.S.?
- Where and what are you going to be studying?
- Do you have an acceptance letter from the English Language Institute at UTEP?
- Where are you going to be living?
- Do you have enough money to study in the U.S.?
- What is the address of the University of Texas at El Paso?

☐ Arrange transportation from the El Paso International Airport (all students)

- Uber/Lyft: You can get an uber/lyft to UTEP’s campus or wherever you are living. Download the apps on your smartphone to get started.
- Taxi services will be at the airport ready to take you wherever you need to go.
- Public Transportation. See page 8 for more details.

☐ Attend mandatory International Student Orientation (ISO) (all students)

The English Language Institute offers a customized International Student Orientation to welcome students to campus and help them acclimate academically, socially, and culturally. Students will be informed of all the resources available to them during orientation.

☐ Arrival Information (all students)

Submit the following documents to ELI when you arrive:

- 1. Copy of your passport
- 2. Copy of your signed I-20
- 3. Copy of your F-1 student visa
- 4. Copy of your I-94 card (if you flew into the USA, you will need to download the I-94 from the webpage, go to: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search
What is El Paso like?

El Paso is the sixth largest city in Texas and is located on the United States-Mexico border. The city on the other side of the border is Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. El Paso is often called the Sun City. Collectively, the City of El Paso and other nearby cities, such as Juarez, Mexico and Las Cruces, New Mexico are referred to as The Borderland. This region of over 2.7 million people constitutes the largest bilingual and binational workforce in the Western Hemisphere. El Paso has a strong federal and military presence. William Beaumont Army Medical Center, Biggs Army Airfield, and Fort Bliss call the city home. Fort Bliss is one of the largest military complexes of the United States Army and the largest training area in the United States.

El Paso is part of the Chihuahuan Desert; with over 320 sunny days annually, it is one of the sunniest places in the United States. Winters are mild with occasional snowfall, while summers are hot and dry. Rainfall averages 9.7 inches (250 mm) per year, much of which occurs during the summer from July through September, and is predominantly caused by the North American monsoon. During this period, southerly and southeasterly winds carry moisture from the Pacific, the Gulf of California, and the Gulf of Mexico into the region.

El Paso is home to the country’s oldest continuously active missions of Ysleta and Socorro, an 18 acre zoo, the Chamizal National Memorial lying adjacent to the Bridge of the Americas, several theaters and museums, the Franklin Mountains State Park, and the University of Texas at El Paso.
How do I get to El Paso?

You can arrive in El Paso by three different modes of transportation – flight, car, or the express bus.

By plane

The El Paso International Airport (ELP) is located 14 miles from UTEP. The major airlines serving El Paso are:
- American/American Eagle
- Delta/Delta Connection
- Southwest Airlines
- United Airlines/United Express

Many air ticket searches will often include Abraham González Airport (IATA: CJS) south of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. A taxi from the Abraham González Airport will cost around $60 to The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP).
By car

Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, is accessible by Mexican Federal Highway 2 which runs along the United States border, and Mexican Federal Highway 45 which heads south to Chihuahua.

There are several international border crossings in the El Paso/Juarez area. In general, individuals in vehicles should expect long waits and traffic jams to cross over into the United States especially during rush hour. Crossings on the extremities of the region are typically less crowded but also less accessible. From west to east, the crossings in the El Paso area are as follows:

- **Bridge of the Americas** - Central/East El Paso (approx. 13 miles to UTEP)
  The Bridge of the Americas connects Mexican Federal Hwy 45 with US 54 via I-10
- **Paso Del Norte/ Santé Fe Street Bridge** - Downtown
- **Stanton Street Bridge** - Downtown, SENTRI pass required for northbound entry
- **Ysleta/Zaragoza Bridge** - East El Paso (approx. 15 miles east of downtown) -
  South on Zaragoza Road
- **Santa Teresa** - Just west of El Paso in Santa Teresa, New Mexico

By express bus

There is no central bus terminal, and different bus companies operate their own terminals or stops. The terminals are along S. Santa Fe St. or the adjacent cross streets in the west part of Downtown from the Convention Center. Take the Sun Metro bus #14 and #15 to UTEP’s bus station by Glory Road.

- **Greyhound and Autobus Americanos** have bus routes from Mexico City to El Paso. The cost is about $130 to $150. The journey will take about one day and 2 hours.
- **Transborde Bus Service** has a bus from the Abraham González Airport at Juarez to Downtown El Paso. The ticket price is $13 for a one-way trip.
Getting around El Paso

Public transportation:
Your classes will be located within walking distance to the dormitory, as are many shops, cafés, and restaurants. You will be able to access a number of city buses within blocks of the dorm if you wish to travel downtown or to other places in the city. You will receive your University ID card during your first week at UTEP. Although public transportation is accessible in the campus and downtown area, it can often be harder to find reliable public transportation in certain parts of El Paso. When traveling via public transportation, it is important to find reliable routes before you make your trip. You will notice that public transportation in the US has both differences and similarities to that of your home country.

Walkability:
During your stay in El Paso, you will be doing a lot of walking. Be sure to bring comfortable shoes and appropriate clothing for the weather. While it is easy to walk around the campus and downtown area, walking is not a reliable method of transportation outside campus.

Taxis:
Taxis are available throughout the city to help you get to your destination; with fares range around $25-50 for nearby distances.

Uber/Lyft:
Uber and Lyft, these app-based ride-for-pay services, are both available in El Paso. Download the app and get a ride in minutes. Fares will vary depending on the company you select.

Sun Metro Bus service:
Sun Metro Bus service is also available but requires two transfers, and the schedules are usually hourly until about 5 p.m. Route #33 takes 35-40 minutes to travel from the airport to the Downtown Transit Center (along S. Santa Fe St. between W. 3rd & 4th Ave., on the west side of downtown). The #50 takes the same route and 50 minutes, will cost $1.50 one way (or $3.50 for a day pass). From the Downtown Transit Center you may take routes #14 and #15 to arrive at UTEP’s bus station by Glory Road. Visit sunmetrobrio.net for more details.

Ride Share:
We encourage ride-sharing so we help contribute to improved air quality, decreased traffic congestion and the best use of our limited parking capacity.
What should I bring?

There are tight restrictions on how much luggage you can bring, so pack lightly, and remember to leave room for purchases you make in El Paso. Typically, airlines allow passengers two checked bags that can each weigh 22.67 kilograms (50 pounds), one carry-on item (small piece of luggage or duffel bag), and one personal item (purse or backpack). It is important to check what the baggage requirements and restrictions are before packing for your trip.

About El Paso
El Paso’s weather has four distinct seasons. For winter months, pack warm, waterproof clothes that you can wear in layers.

Dress on campus is casual. There may be some events where professional dress is required.

- **We recommend to bring a sweater while attending your classes.** The rooms where our classes are held can have low temperatures at times.
- **Only pack what is necessary.** You may purchase the rest of your items when you arrive in El Paso.
- **You may purchase all household needs when you arrive in the United States.**
- **Computers and electrical equipment should have an American adapter so you can use them once you arrive.**
Money and Financial Information

**Exchanging Money**
Before you leave your country, you should plan for your finances. You can purchase traveler’s checks in U.S. Dollars from your bank and bring them with you to El Paso, Texas. Be sure to keep them safe and write down the check numbers, in case they get lost. After you arrive in the U.S. and set up a bank account, you may also have your money electronically wired to a local bank. You should arrange to have enough money to cover your first month’s expenses AND your first semester tuition, books, insurance and housing.

**DO NOT** under-estimate the amount of money needed.

**DO NOT** carry a large amount of cash. It is difficult to exchange money from your currency to dollars and there may be a fee. Bring your money in U.S. dollar traveler’s checks, have it electronically wired to your new U.S. account, or get a bank card to withdraw cash from your account through an automatic teller machine (ATM).

**Banking in the United States**
Upon arrival in El Paso you will want to open a bank account with a local bank. El Paso has many banking options. Wells Fargo Bank has a location on campus at the Union Building. However, you should research your banking options and choose the bank that best suits your needs. When choosing a bank you may want to consider: branch locations, monthly fees, international money transfer fees, and account options.

**How can I pay for my purchases?**
Most stores accept cash, credit cards, and debit cards. There are many ATM machines and several banks in the University area. For the most part, you should have no trouble using your personal debit card in El Paso. However, some students have faced issues using their debit cards at specific stores.

Please notify the bank (in your country) that issued your debit/credit card of your travels. Larger banks will often make a note on your account in their systems, allowing for easier usage.
Where can I shop in El Paso?

We are happy to help you navigate the wide variety of stores El Paso offers. Past participants have enjoyed shopping at Marshall’s, Ross, Walmart, and Target. Additionally, you may be particularly interested in the University Bookstore, which sells University of Texas souvenirs and clothing. https://www.bkstr.com/texaselpasostore

Several malls in the area are accessible by bus:

Cielo Vista Mall
http://www.simon.com/mall/cielo-vista-mall

Sunland Park Mall
https://sunlandparkmall.com

The Fountains at Farah
http://www.fountainsatfarah.com/directory

The Outlet Shoppes at El Paso
https://www.theoutletshoppesatelpaso.com
Where will I be staying?

Living on campus

The Department of Residence Life provides apartment-style residence halls with several floor plans, from cozy efficiencies to two- and four-bedroom units. There are also community spaces with room for studying and recreation, private mailboxes and administrative offices. All residence halls/dormitories at UTEP are co-educational and ADA compliant rooms are available.

https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/housing

MINER VILLAGE
• 2401 N. Oregon St.
  El Paso, Texas 79902
  (915) 747-5352

MINER HEIGHTS
• 300 W. Schuster Ave.
  El Paso, Texas 79902
  (915) 747-6112

MINER CANYON
• 3490 Sun Bowl Dr.
  El Paso, Texas 79902
  (915) 747-6351

You will share an apartment with 4-6 others. The apartment will have a kitchen with gas stove and oven and refrigerator only. You will have your own room.
How can I call my family?

You will have Wi-Fi access on campus. You will be able to make international calls through your cell phone or via SKYPE (or another video/voice call program) on your laptop or mobile devices.

Where will I eat?

Mealtime: Mealtime may be different than the meal times you are used to in your home country. Breakfast is considered an important meal in the US and is usually consumed between 7 and 8 a.m. Typical lunch times are 1-2 p.m. and dinner is eaten anywhere from 6-8 p.m. Portion sizes in the US are typically larger. In addition, many foods in the USA use a lot of sweeteners and spices and are also fried.

Breakfast and lunch: You will eat at the UTEP Pick ‘N’ Shovel cafeteria within the UTEP campus.

Note: The Pick ‘N’ Shovel offers a rotating menu along with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free food choices.

Dinner and weekend: You will be given $10 cash for dinner and $30 for weekend for your meals. You can try food outlets near the UTEP campus such as Luby’s, Cafe Istabul or the numerous fast food outlets like McDonalds, Wendy’s, Canes and Burger King.
What happens if I get sick?

Go to the Student Health Center on the University campus if you need medical assistance.

Antibiotics and other drugs that are easily purchased in a pharmacy in some countries require a prescription in the US, and in order to obtain a prescription, you have to be seen by a doctor. However, many medicines used to treat the common cold or flu can be purchased at a local drug stores such as CVS or Walgreens without the hassle of going to the doctor, which can prove to be inconvenient for minor illnesses. If you take any medicines regularly or have access to basic medicines like ibuprofen, stomach or digestive relief tablets, cold/flu remedies, or antibiotics, we recommend bringing them with you.

Allergies: El Paso’s location and temperate climate is known to worsen pollen and cedar allergies. It is common for people to experience watery eyes, runny noses, and coughs/sneezes. The Student Health Center Pharmacy has a wide variety of allergy medication. Typically, you will not need to visit a doctor for allergies.
What to Do in an Emergency

Fire, Police, Ambulance: Call 9-1-1
On Campus Emergency: (915) 747-5611

The UTEP Police Department is located on campus and is committed to protecting all UTEP students, staff, faculty and the public.

Make sure the Office of International Programs (OIP) and the English Language Institute at P3 has your current emergency contact information.

If an emergency occurs:
1. Keep calm and do not run or panic.
2. If you are told to evacuate, proceed safely to the nearest exit.
3. Do not re-enter any building until it is deemed safe to do so by UTEP Police Department.

Student Heath and Wellness Center
OPEN HOURS
Monday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. *
Tuesday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. *
Wednesday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. *
Thursday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. *
Friday 8 - 11:30 a.m. & 1-5 p.m. *
Saturday Closed
Sunday Closed

*Please Note: We take our last patient at 4 p.m.

For more information, visit: https://www.utep.edu/chs/shc/

After office hours, for urgent or emergent conditions which are non life-threatening use the following link to find the nearest Urgent Care Facility or Emergency room near you.

Emergency room and Urgent Care Facilities: http://www.yellowpages.com/el-paso-tx/emergency-room
What expenses will I have?

You will need money for snacks, non-cafeteria meals, laundry facilities, souvenirs, toiletries, and any other purchases you want to make. An average of $150-$250 may meet your weekly expenses, depending on your life style.

Sample Costs in El Paso

- Vending machine item $1.25
- 32-load laundry detergent $7
- Gallon of milk $4
- Loaf of bread $3
- Cup of coffee $4
- Pizza (8 slices) $10-12
Where can I learn more about The University of Texas at El Paso and the City of El Paso?

Here are some websites that you might find useful:

- The University of Texas at El Paso: [http://www.utep.edu](http://www.utep.edu)
- ELI on Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/ELIP3UTEP](https://www.facebook.com/ELIP3UTEP)
- ELI on Twitter: [https://twitter.com/P3ELIutep](https://twitter.com/P3ELIutep)
- ELI on Instagram: [https://instagram.com/P3ELI](https://instagram.com/P3ELI)
- Events in El Paso: [https://visitelpaso.com/events](https://visitelpaso.com/events)
The online Campus Map has a list of buildings, parking lots, shuttle routes and areas currently affected by construction.

Visit [maps.utep.edu](http://maps.utep.edu)
What will my first week be like?

Your first week in El Paso will be very busy and you are likely to feel tired. There are a lot of events during the first week, but they will slow down once your classes start.

**Arrival Check-in**
ELI staff will assist you in completing the check-in paperwork to start your program at the University of Texas at El Paso.

**Student Orientation**
You will attend an orientation where staff answer any questions, and explain your class schedule and social events calendar.

**Miner Gold Card (student ID)**
You will have to get your Miner Gold Card (student ID) from the Miner Gold Card Office at the Mike Loya Academic Services Building, room 116.

**ESL Placement Test & Orientation**
The placement test will help us understand your English proficiency and place you in to the appropriate class level.

**Note:** If you miss the placement test, you will have to pay a $100 fee to schedule a new date to take the test. If you are a returning student to the ELI program after a period of 5 months, you will have to take a placement test.

**Parking Permit for vehicles on campus**
For those who want to drive to campus, you are required to buy a parking permit for your vehicle from the Parking and Transportation office located at the Mike Loya Academic Services Building.
## What will my weekly schedule look like?

Please treat the schedule above only as a visual reference.
Suggested Events Descriptions
(for 4-week Calendar)

UTEP Centennial Plaza (Thu Nov 15, 2018): One of the lasting legacies of the Centennial is the transformation of the campus into a pedestrian-friendly public space. The new Centennial Plaza transformed the heart of the campus into a large open-area reminiscent of urban plazas located across the Paso del Norte region and in Mexico, where residents congregate and celebrate life. Groves of native mesquite trees shade a paseo for strolling, socializing, or studying. The plaza also showcases a beautiful, hand-carved and hand-painted Lhakhang, a gift from the Kingdom of Bhutan to the people of the United States and entrusted to the University’s care. Website: http://centennial.utep.edu/centennialplaza.html

Downtown Christmas Light Up (Sat, Nov 17, 2018): Don’t miss the lights this holiday season at San Jacinto plaza! Over 400,000 lights and 121 decorated trees! 10ft tall glitter light displays with 455 shooting star lights and the 30ft San Jacinto Holiday tree with 18,400 lights and over 900 ornaments! Website: https://www.elpasotexas.gov/holiday/san-jacinto

Movie Night: Glory Road (Sun, Nov 18, 2018): Fifty-two years ago (in 1966), a small school in West Texas quietly climbed the national collegiate basketball rankings. Against all odds, the team achieved the impossible: an NCAA title after starting five African-American players in the championship game. The win has been a point of pride for The University of Texas at El Paso ever since. Glory Road is a 2006 American sports drama film directed by James Gartner, based on the true story surrounding the events leading to the 1966 NCAA University Division Basketball Championship (the historic name for what is now known as the NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Tournament) Website: http://gloryroad.utep.edu/bear/

Ice skating (Thur, Nov 22, 2018): Downtown’s Arts Festival Plaza will once again host an ice skating rink this winter with interactive features, holiday shopping, seasonal food and drinks, lights, décor and more. Website: https://www.winterfestep.com/about-moksha/

UTEP Dinner Theatre (Fri Dec 8, 2017) – TICK TICK BOOM – Side Dish Student Production: This autobiographical musical by Jonathan Larson, the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning composer of RENT, is the story of a composer and the sacrifices that he made to achieve his big break in theatre. TICK, TICK... BOOM! Takes you on the playwright/composer’s journey that led to a Broadway blockbuster. Set in 1990, this compelling story of personal discovery is presented as a rock musical filled with instantly appealing melodies and a unique blend of musical theatre styles. Website: https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/udt

Shopping at Outlet Mall: The Outlet Shoppes at El Paso has 94 famous name brand outlets and designer factory stores. Website: http://www.theoutletshoppesatelpaso.com
For questions and more information, please contact the ELI Program Manager.
Phone: (915) 747-8043
E-mail: gparthiban@utep.edu
Fax: (915) 747-5538
Website: ppp.utep.edu/english-language-institute

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instagram.com/P3ELI

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
PROFESSIONAL
& PUBLIC PROGRAMS
EXTENDED UNIVERSITY

PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS
Phone: (915) 747-5142
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Website: ppp.utep.edu
On-site: 101 W. Robinson Ave., Memorial Gym Suite 111

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