



## **the s@s grad students' guide**

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*Updated by SAS (2011)*

Dear incoming grad students,

This info is meant to supplement the administrative info given to you in the admission packets that you have been receiving, and also the info given in the undergraduate guide for new students (the S@S Frosh guide), which is geared towards the incoming freshmen.

I have tried to focus specifically on info regarding grad life at Stanford, and also how to get as much as possible out of Stanford given that most of you have only one year to spend here.

- Ian

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# 1 Admin stuff and other info from the I-Center

The Bechtel International Center provides information and administrative assistance to all international students. I am sure by now they must have sent you a considerable amount of materials. Their website contains a lot of useful information for incoming international students, and they have a section specifically for incoming grad students. I am not sure whether the info on the website is the same as the info that they have sent to you by snail mail already, but anyway, the website info can be obtained at

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/icenter/NewStudentInformation/index.html>. Do look at Bechtel's info first, before reading on.

## 2 Housing

By now all of you should have gotten your housing assignments. Here is a little on what to expect when you move in. Most of the following are based my personal opinions though, from some experiences I have had visiting grad friends.

- S Lyman:** One of the newer grad residences, just opened a couple of years ago. Quiet and pleasant surroundings, new and very spacious on the inside. You get your own room, and share kitchen and living/dining room. Near the golf course, driving range, tennis courts, and horse stables. Drawback is that Lyman is on the west side of campus, quite far away from all the other grad residences which are on the east side of campus; makes it hard to meet up with other grad friends. Quite far from the main activity areas on campus too (ie Main Quad, post office, libraries), though quite accessible to the engineering quad.

**S Rains:** Relatively new grad residence, nice interior layout, with adequate living space. You get your own room and share a living/dining room and kitchen. A little far from the main areas on campus, but is in the cluster of grad residences, so meeting friends is easy. I like the little function room and the pool room that Rains has. There are also more social activities organized for the residents at Rains. On the downside however, is that it gets noisy sometimes on weekends, with neighborhood parties going on.

**S EV:** There are high-rise and low-rise buildings in EV. You can view this at <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/hds/has/tour/gradtour/loorplans/index.html> if you are not too sure which one you are going to live in. Haven't been to all the different EV residences, but generally, the residences are a little old, both on the outside and inside. Those in the low-rise buildings should get their own room, but high-rise apartments in EV only come with one bedroom and one living room, so you will either have to share the bedroom with your roommate, or have one person sleep in the bedroom and one sleep in the living room (a more common arrangement I think). There are also some two-storey-two-bedroom apartments, those are spacious, with the living room, kitchen and a little outdoor porch on the ground floor, and bedrooms on the second floor. Those apartments are spacious and comfortable. EV is more catered towards families with kids, and tends to be a quieter place to live in as compared to Rains.

**S** In general, apartments in EV are close to other grad residences. However, depending on which part of EV your apartment is in, the distance you will have to travel

to go to class will be anything from a little far to very very far.

- § **Munger:** This is the premier grad residence on campus, and you have lots of privacy since you get the whole apartment to yourself, but it will cost more than the other grad residences.
- § For more info on grad housing, click here: <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/hds/has/tour/gradtour/index.html>
- § Try this map at [http://www.stanford.edu/home/map/search\\_map.html](http://www.stanford.edu/home/map/search_map.html) if you want to find out where your housing is.

### 3. Food

- § **Meal Plans:** Graduate meal plans are available at \$5.95 for lunch and \$6.95 for dinner. You can purchase them in person or online in blocks of 5 meals. These are buffet style, so if you like to go to meals hungry, it's a good deal. Check out [http://www.stanford.edu/dept/rde/dining/grad\\_meals.htm](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/rde/dining/grad_meals.htm) for more details! This is a very viable option compared to eating out all the time, which would set you back >\$7 for a proper meal. The quality of dorm food though ... is not constant. Tip: go on special occasions, like Valentines' Day (although somewhere else might be more romantic for your significant other) because they usually have better food then!
- § **Cooking:** Most grad residences have kitchens, so meals should be no problem for those who cook. Marketing can be done at the supermarket Safeway (one in

Menlo Park, one at Sharon Heights, probably need to drive). Asian food stuff can be bought further out at Ranch 99 (one in Cupertino, one in Milpitas, 20 to 30mins drive away), or at Castro in Mountain View (15 minutes drive away). Both Safeway and Ranch 99 have discount cards, so don't forget to sign up as members. The past spring, Webvan.com also started an online marketing scheme, where students can order online and then pick up the groceries from designated pick-up points on campus. Worth a try.

**S** **Cooking utensils** can also be found at Safeway and Ranch 99, and probably also at places like Target and WalMart. There is also a place on campus (the Village Rental Co-Op) where grad students can loan crockery, utensils and some other stuff for the whole year for a nominal fee. It is situated at the basement of Abrams Midrise (Escondido Village). This is also a good place for renting camping equipment, unless of course, you are a regular camper and might want to consider owning as opposed to loaning equipment. See <http://www.stanford.edu/group/EV/Misc/VRC/> for more information.

**S** **Buying food:** Tressider – Tressider Union has a cafeteria, the CoHo (coffeehouse), Jamba Juice, and a small supermarket, all on the ground floor. The cafeteria sells normal cafeteria stuff, like pizza, sandwiches, some Asian food, Mexican food etc. The CoHo is more of a place to hang out than eat, but it sells sandwiches and drinks. They often invite bands over on weekends, but no matter how noisy it gets in the CoHo, you can still find people trying to do their course readings or write a paper. Jamba Juice sells smoothies, there's no place to sit, just a take out counter. Busy students with no time for

lunch (or lazy ones who wake up late and miss lunch) like to just grab a jamba juice and head off for class. (Anyway, Singapore's Yaba Dooba looks eerily similar to Jamba Juice, right down to the "boosters" and even the way the menu at the counter is designed. Yaba Dooba's portions are much less generous though.) The Tressider supermarket stocks some drinks and sandwiches in its fridges, and shares an outdoor seating area with the cafeteria.

**S Other Cafés and Campus Eateries:** There are other cafés dotted around campus, like at the Business School, outside Green Library, at the Education Building, and at the Political Science building. I haven't tried these, but they mainly have coffee and sandwiches. For PoliSci buffs, the PoliSci café has cool-sounding sandwiches like the Hobbes' Leviathan sandwich and the Rousseau's Veggie sandwich. There is also a "Thai Café" – the name might sound exotic, but this place is just a hole in the wall in the basement of the Psychology Building. It is open from 12 to 2pm (I think) every weekday. The menu is on the wall; it sells a limited range of Asian-tasting food. Good value for money I would say. Don't be put off by the long queue, the line moves quite fast. See <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/visitorinfo/activities/dining.html> for more information on the >30 dining options on campus!

**S Eating Clubs:** Eating clubs are eating areas on campus that grad students can sign up as eating associates for daily/weekly meals. Eating associates are required to sign up for the whole quarter, and can choose a variety of meal plans depending on how many meals a week they want to eat at the eating clubs. Eating clubs are



located at Toyon (East side of campus) and the Suites (west side). Grad students can also sign up as Eating Associates at some undergrad houses that have their own cooks. These include the row houses (like Storey, Muwekma, and Bob), and East House.

**S Ordering food:** You can also order food from restaurants outside of campus, and they will either deliver, or you can go and collect it from them. You can find these restaurants in the Stanford Directory (a phone directory cum yellow pages). There are many discount coupons at the back of the Directory that you can use. There is also this Hong Kong-grad-student's-mum who cooks Chinese food and delivers it to your doorstep for about \$4 a meal I think. Not too sure about the details, will update this once I get more info from those who have ordered from her before.

**S Free food:** There is a lot of free food around campus, you just have to look out for flyers. Sources for free food include after-talk receptions, after-performance receptions, companies' recruiting seminars, and compensation for taking part in psychology experiments. Word is that there is a free-food campus mailing list, will try to get more info on this. Another way to get free food is to make lots of undergrad friends, and then invite yourself over to their dorms for meals. But be careful which dining hall you invite yourself to: there is no such place as a good dining hall at Stanford, but those to absolutely stay away from include Stern and Wilbur. (For those staying in the Eastside i.e. EV, Rains, CroMem, you're most welcome to visit me in Manzanita, the food here is pretty okay.)

#### 4. Transport

**S Getting to class:** Most grad residences are rather far from where the classes are, so bikes are very much a necessity. Walking will take a little more time, but during the rainy winters more people walk as they don't like splashing all over puddles in their bikes (Incidentally, by

winter, many are also walking because their bikes have already been stolen and they have no choice but to walk. So do buy a sturdy U-lock and lock your bike frame and wheel to something very immobile.) Besides bikes, it is also rather common to see people getting to classes in their roller-blades, skateboards, and skate-scooters (or whatever you call the skateboard-with-a-handle thing).

§ I also know of some grad students who drive to classes, but parking is rather inconvenient, as you will need to pay parking meters or buy parking labels for most parking lots near classes. The only place with free parking I know of is the Tressider Parking Lot, just behind Tressider Union. It's got free 2-hour parking, but no one really monitors whether you stay beyond 2 hours or not. Anyway, from the Tressider parking lot, it is still about a 5 to 10 minute walk to class.

§ **Public Transport:** For those without cars, there are some forms of public transport to get out of campus and around the area.

- **Marguerite:** This is the free shuttle bus that goes around campus and to the nearby University Avenue and CalTrain stations. You can check the bus schedules online :<http://transportation.stanford.edu/marginfo.html#margueriteschedules>. The buses are rather on-time. In particular, do not worry about not being able to get off campus to buy stuff without a car, because the Marguerite has a bus route (the Shopping Express Shuttle Bus Route) that takes you all the way out to the San Antonio Shopping Center where almost everything can be found. You might

be relieved to know that there's also a Daiso (everything for US\$1.50) at the San Antonio Shopping Center in addition to Walmart and Target and other stores.

- **Caltrain:** This train runs from Gilroy in the south to San Francisco in the north. To get to SF, take the Marguerite to either the Palo Alto station or the California Avenue Station, and then take the train north to the last stop (4<sup>th</sup> and King). Costs about \$6.50 or \$13 for a two-way trip. It takes about an hour to get there. Check the Cal-train schedules before you go, as the trains usually arrive only once an hour. More info can be found here (<http://www.transitinfo.org/Caltrain>). These trains are also very punctual. You can also take the CalTrain to get to and from SFO if you do not have that much luggage to carry. Stop at the Milbrae Station and transfer to the BART.
- **Airport Shuttle Buses:** Airport shuttle buses are one of the more popular forms of transportation to and from the airports (both San Jose airport SJC and San Francisco airport SFO). These are van-like shuttle buses that take you from the airport right to your doorstep. Shuttles cost about \$15 to \$20 plus tip per trip, and trips take about 40 minutes for SFO and 25 minutes for SJC. Most shuttle drivers know the Stanford campus pretty well, so I would recommend getting a shuttle when you first arrive at SFO. To get a shuttle bus from Stanford to the airport, look up the shuttle numbers in the Stanford Directory, and call a day before. Don't forget to use the many discount coupons at the back of the Directory too.

- Click here: <http://transportation.stanford.edu> for more info on public transportation around campus.

**S Cars:** Cars at Stanford are relatively affordable, and there quite a few people selling used cars on the newsgroup su.market at the start of school. Do ask around for more information. For matters regarding cars or driving, e.g. registering your car that you drove over from other states, call up or go to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

The **nearest DMV to campus is the one in Mountain View**, about 10mins drive away.

Address: 595 Showers Drive, CA 94040

For Appointment/Info: (800) 777-0133. For more info, go to [http://www.dmv.ca.gov/fo/listing\\_m.htm](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/fo/listing_m.htm).

For the California DMV website, click here (<http://www.dmv.ca.gov>). Some common DMV questions for those new to California are answered here (<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/newtoca/newtoca.htm>).

For the **Automobile Association of America (AAA)**, the nearest office is on Forest Ave, off University Ave in Palo Alto.

Address: 430 Forest Ave, Palo Alto, CA 94301

For information: (650) 321-0470

For the Northern California AAA website, click here (<http://www.csaa.com>).

To rent a car, try looking up the Stanford Directory for a list of car rental companies. Take note that most have an underage charge for drivers below 25. There are several car rental agencies on campus such as Zipcars and these are located in several parking structures.

**S Planes:** try calling up the travel agencies such as [www.cheaptickets.com](http://www.cheaptickets.com), [www.lowestfare.com](http://www.lowestfare.com), and [www.priceline.com](http://www.priceline.com).

## 5. Shopping

There are a few places you can go to get your groceries and lifestyle needs – the San Antonio Shopping Center (Walmart, Target, Daiso, Ross and other smaller shops and restaurants), Town and Country (you can find Trader Joes there and a couple of cafés, restaurants and eateries), Sharon Heights “secret” Safeway along Sand Hill road. The first two are easily accessible via the shuttle bus routes. Town and Country is also a leisurely 8-10 minute bike ride from Memorial Church (pretty much the center of the campus).

## 6. Academics

By now, I guess you should have a rough idea of what academic requirements are needed for your degree. Below is a list of people who are pursuing their Masters, or PhDs at Stanford. You can try contacting them to discuss what classes they have already taken or plan to take.

CS	Pang Wei ( <a href="mailto:koh.pangwei@gmail.com">koh.pangwei@gmail.com</a> )
EE	Thung Han ( <a href="mailto:thunghan@gmail.com">thunghan@gmail.com</a> )

## 7. Places to Go, Things to Do

You came to Stanford because you wanted to have fun. And to bask in the sun. Here are some places to consider when planning your getaways.

**Getaway dates at Stanford** include:

Thanksgiving Break (Nov)

Winter break (Dec)

Martin Luther King weekend (Jan)  
Presidents' Day weekend (Feb)  
Spring break (Mar), and  
Memorial Day weekend (May).

§ Places to visit: **Nearby** (1 to 3 hours away):

- San Francisco
- Napa Valley
- Six Flags
- Vallejo
- Gilroy
- Monterey
- Carmel
- Big Sur

§ **Further out** (more than 3 hours away):

- LA
- Yosemite
- Death Valley
- King's Canyon and Sequoia National Park
- Lake Tahoe
- Vegas

§ **Inter-college activities:** There are also inter-university activities coming up, so look out for emails on these activities:

- o Mellon Games: Inter-college sports and games, hosted by the Carnegie Mellon University Singaporean students association.

§ **Sports and Games:** For those interested in outdoor stuff like backpacking and camping, playing soccer, watch out on the SAS email lists where emails with details on



such stuff go around asking if people would like to join them.

**S** Stanford has an extremely strong athletics department and almost all of our sports teams are ranked among the top in the nation. Look out for upcoming games in the Stanford Daily (our college newspaper) or check out the teams at [www.gostanford.com](http://www.gostanford.com). Don't miss out on the Big Game, the annual (American) football game between Stanford and arch-rivals Berkeley. The basketball team also has a very fanatical following, and students start lining up hours before the exciting games in order to get in.

Finally, check out the S@S webpage at [www.stanford.edu/group/sas](http://www.stanford.edu/group/sas) for information on upcoming events held by the Singaporeans@Stanford society. (This webpage is scheduled to be updated over the summer of 2011, sorry for the inconveniences!)