

Field Report

Amherst is a small town in western Massachusetts. The area is known for the many outdoor activities like hiking, biking and many more. It is easy to get in touch with people by looking at the university's outdoor club. I personally liked the kayak program offered by the University and made a lot of friends and nice memories there. People who prefer the city life may be better off going to Boston or New York.

The most important institution here is the University of Massachusetts UMASS Amherst; it is a well-known modern university and offers many different programs. I was hosted by the Building and Construction Technology (BCT) department, where I mostly worked with Alexander Schreyer and Peggi Clouston. All the people I worked with were very nice and helpful. The BCT class rooms and laboratories are technically up to date; the department is about to transfer into a new building next year that marks the state of the art in timber engineering.

There is a few things future students should know before planning to visit Amherst or generally the North East. First of all, living here is expensive, rents over 800 dollar per month are normal especially close to the campus. During the semester, it can be very hard to find something appropriate. There is websites for housing in Amherst that really help; also on Facebook there are several groups where people offer rooms. Often people offer rooms in private houses; it might be too expensive for what you finally get though. During the summer break when most of the students work in Boston or go home, many sublets are available. They are usually really affordable, but staying during the summer also means there is nobody else around! Literally every student is gone and Amherst which really lives from these students seems almost a ghost town.

UMASS Amherst is known for its good cuisine; in the several dining halls they offer a big variety of good food. Especially the dining halls in the campus center and nevertheless the two big dining halls at the south west residential area offer dishes from all over the world. Due to the fact that everything is produced fresh there and with high quality products, they won several awards.

As I made a bad experience with my first landlord, I highly recommend everybody to really know the rights and responsibilities when renting. Especially regarding “giving notice” when leaving the place in case of a month-to-month agreement. Massachusetts law stipulates that notice must be given 30 days early and before the last rental period begins. In my case, I gave notice on the 5th and wanted to move out the following month, but due to the 5 days I was late, I was made responsible for another month!

I highly recommend buying a car; in the U.S. everything is very spread out and far away. Especially for trips i.e. to Canada (5 hours), Boston (2 hours) or the big Apple (4 hours) a car is

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“Stiffness behavior of double-shear wood-steel sheet connections”

very useful. Websites like Craigslist, Carfax and Autotrader make it easy to find something. A big price difference can be noticed between private party sales and dealer sales. When selling the car, it is important to be like a month and a half early and to list it not too much higher than the bluebook value.

The bus system in Amherst is good, to get from the university to Northampton and the main residential- as well as shopping areas is very good and students do not pay anything.

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