

# Location 101

## Where Do You Want to Live and Learn?

Are you drawn to the big city, to wilderness, or to a little of each? Do you want to stay in a familiar place, or branch out?

The location of a college is often downplayed relative to the importance of academics. Let's face it, though. It can have a huge impact on your choice of a college and your experience there.

### **The Familiar vs. the Unknown**

Consider how you react to new situations and people. If you get anxious or homesick for familiar diversions, you may not want to throw yourself into a different environment. On the other hand, college is all about new experiences, whether you seek them or not. A change in locale can be one. For example, maybe you live in a large city but want to try life in a small town.

### **Managing Expectations**

Learn what to expect from a college's setting before you go and, better yet, before you make your final decision. For example, if you live in Los Angeles and go to school in a rural area of Montana, don't be shocked when you can't get anything you want, whenever you want it.

Similarly, if you're from a small town in Montana and go to school in Los Angeles, realize that you may miss the big sky of your home state. To get the big picture, visit campuses, talk to students, and read campus and local newspapers.

### **You've Got Options**

If you get to campus and don't feel anchored to the school or its location, you're not stuck. Many schools offer an option to study abroad or off-campus for a semester or a year. You can also transfer to another college or program.

Keep in mind, too, that a college's location is only one characteristic, however significant. Factor in other things such as the kind of school, majors offered, financial aid available, and most importantly, the "feel" of the college.

### **Bottom Line**

Ultimately, you determine what experience you'll have at college. You need to evaluate who you are, places you like, the activities you enjoy, and how easily you adapt to new situations.