Home and City Life

What is the cost of living in C-U?

The average rent for a two bedroom apartment with all utilities paid in Champaign-Urbana is $500 a month. Of course, it’s likely to be higher close to campus. It costs between $10 and $17 a month to have garbage picked up at curbside in Champaign. The costs are similar in Urbana, but the garbage is picked up near your house instead of curbside.

The average monthly gas and electric bill for Champaign-Urbana is $128.67. The average water bill is about $10 a month.

In Urbana, sales tax can be up to 7.25 percent for retail purchases and 7.75 percent for prepared foods. In Champaign, sales tax is 7.25 percent for most retail purchases. Outside the city limits, the sales tax drops to 6.25 percent.

What's up with the buses?

Champaign-Urbana’s city bus system is called the Mass Transit District (MTD), and it’s really quite good. The MTD has twelve routes (most named with colors) which serve all of Champaign and Urbana, including the Market Place Shopping Center and Parkland College. The MTD also has three routes which serve the campus. They are the Quadbus, which orbits the quad; the Illini bus, which serves the engineering campus and the Veterinary Medicine building; and the Shuttle bus, which serves the remote storage parking lots south of campus. Furthermore, the MTD runs the Nite Rides servicedescribed before.

By showing your student ID, you can ride all of these buses for free. (Actually, it’s not free; you pay a $15 transportation fee every semester, but it is a very good deal. Take advantage of it.) You can pick up a bus schedule on most buses, call MTD at 384-8188 or check their home page http://www.cumtd.com for information.

Where can I buy food?

As with the rest of the United States, Champaign-Urbana is plagued with a disease known as Convenience Stores. Sporting names like White Hen, Kwik Shop, and Colonial Pantry, these stores offer a small selection of junk food, magazines, and a few essentials like milk and eggs. Even the most minimal attempts at comparison shopping will reveal that these stores are charging much more than a regular grocery store. Following you'll find a list of bigger and better names with stores in the area. Included is a list of small local stores where you may find items not available in chainsupermarkets, or common food at better prices.

Aldi’s. Although it is a little far from campus, the absolute lowest prices in town on many of the items they stock can be found at Aldi's on Mattis Avenue between Bradley and University. Many Illinois natives are already familiar with this little store from Batavia, but those from out of state should give it a try. Their selection is not large and they mostly stock house brands, but you can save on groceries by shopping there. Be aware that they only take cash, remember to bring a quarter for the shopping cart (it is refunded), and grab an empty box while in the store since you will box your own groceries.


Annapoorna The basic Indian store - pickles, spices, rice, and Bollywood movies. 505S. Neil Chmp.

Art Mart. Although strictly speaking this is not a grocery store but rather a combination of kitchen gadgets, gifts, and imported foods store, you can find here the best French style bread in town, as well as a good, albeit expensive, deli. Located at Lincoln Square Mall. Call them at 344-7979.

Common Ground Food Co-op. Located in the Illinois Disciples’ Foundation at Springfield and Wright, the Food Co-op is very convenient for CS students. The Coop sells a variety of dry goods, spices, produce, and dairy goods, and now meat. Members must eventually buy a $30 equity share of the Co-op when they join. This share is refunded after a member decides to quit. Working members receive a small discount for their groceries in exchange for working three hours per month. Non-working members pay a slightly larger percentage. The Co-op buys locally grown produce and products, bakes its own muffins and bread, and stresses ecologically packaging. You are welcomed to bring your own containers for grains, seeds, and produce. Non-members are encouraged to visit a few times before joining, check it out!

County Market One of the cheapest places to shop in town. There are several locations: the downtown Urbana location is the closest, but the store on Philo Road in Urbana is the nicest. Open 24 hours a day.

Far East. Located in a warehouse on the corner of Clark and 5th Street in Champaign. Asmall Asian grocery store that brings in fresh vegetables and seafood from Chicago. It’s hidden, and has limited hours, so look hard! Jerry’s IGA. Located on Philo road in Urbana, on Kirby and in the Round Barn centerin Champaign, Jerry’s is a typical American supermarket. Jerry’s has a decent bulk foods section, and recycles plastic bags and egg cartons.

Los Mariachis/El Charro Mexican-food stores on Green St. Best place to find tortillas, tamales and fresh Mexican cheese. Los Mariachis also wires money and sells phone cards.
Nite Rides. The Mass Transit District offers an excellent late night service, called NiteRides, available to students, faculty and staff of the U of I. This service operates as late as 4:00 AM Monday through Saturday, and 12 AM on Sunday (during Fall and Spring semesters only). It services around campus.

Where can I go to get my hair cut?

It is easy to find a place to get a haircut in Campustown, but you may be interested in finding a better place. Here are a few you might look into:

For bad attitude and funky style: Ippatsu on Neil St. in Downtown Champaign. For Aveda products: Kane and Company across from the train station.

For trendy cuts: Fuad's on 1st St. near Campustown.

For cheap cuts: The College of Cosmetology on Race St. They give discount haircuts for those who don't mind being guinea pigs.

For something cheap, and near campus: Glenn's Barber Shop on 1st Street between Green and Springfield. The regular rate is $8, which is probably the cheapest in town.

How do I get on the internet?

The University offers free local dial-up access for graduate students. Campus Information Technologies and Educational Services (CITES) provides a detailed tutorial on configuring dial-up at the following website: http://www.cites.uiuc.edu/dialup/index.html (note that you can pick up this information from the CITES helpdesk if you don't have any other access). Before you set this up be sure that you have first established your University netID and password. Also, you must be registered for classes and have a hold taken off of your account. I had to call the CITES helpdesk several times to get the hold taken off of my account.

If you are living in the Family and Graduate Housing Apartments in Orchard Downs or at Goodwin & Green, you will get free Cable Broadband connections, arranged via University Housing.

If your landlord does not offer Ethernet connections or you just want some other fast internet, the local utilities offer services. For DSL you normally have to get it with the phone company that you choose (either McCloud or SBC). The price is about the same for both; in June 03 its about $50/month. Insight Communications offers Cable service for about $45/month (you can also package that with cable television).

How do I get an apartment?

One resource for your hunt for the perfect apartment is the Tenant Union in the Illini Union. The Tenant Union helps tenants to file complaints with unscrupulous landlords, keeps files of past complaints, examines leases for objectionable clauses, and gives seminars around campus about renting apartments. When you are thinking about renting an apartment, get a copy of the lease and show it to the folks at the Tenant Union! The tenant union also publishes the Champaign-Urbana Tenant Handbook, full of important information for the prospective renter.

Here are some links that should help you with your search: http://www.housing.uiuc.edu/http://www.news-gazette.com http://www.illinimedia.com http://community.housing.uiuc.edu http://certified.housing.uiuc.edu

What can you tell me about staying safe in Champaign-Urbana?

Champaign-Urbana may seem like a small, sleepy town, but it is not without its dangers. A few tips and some common sense will make the campus a much safer place. CAMPUS Car Assistance. If you have trouble with your car late at night, or want to be escorted from your office to your car, call CAMPUS at 244-HELP.

Don't prop open building doors. You may be tempted to prop open the outside doors of Siebel Center or some other University building. Don't. Several assaults have taken place because the assailant was able to enter a University building through a door that was propped open. If you need to meet someone without a building key after hours, make some other arrangement. In an Emergency, call 9-911. To reach the police, the fire department, or an ambulance, call 9-911 on campus or from your residence hall room. Dial 911 from off campus. Emergency Phones. If you are outside on campus and need to get in touch with the police quickly, use one of the blue-light-topped emergency phones located around campus.

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Meijer. A one-stop open 24 hours super-store that includes: full grocery store with good looking produce, bakery, pharmacy, drug store, clothing store (a la K-mart or Target), hardware store, toy store, florist, video store, bank, and restaurant (three fast food restaurants and a seating area). Located on North Prospect, easily reached by bus (4, 15, 100) which stop right next to it.

Schnuck's. Probably the nicest looking of all supermarkets in the area, and the one with the best deli and meat fish counters. Not as big as Meijers but with a pretty good food selection. Expect to pay more, but not a whole lot more. Open twenty-four hours a day. There are two locations. One on Mattis Av. in West Champaign and the other near University Av. and Vine St. close to downtown Urbana.

Strawberry Fields. Strawberry Fields used to be a cooperative venture, much like the Common Ground Food Co-op is today. Now, however, Strawberry Fields is a locally owned health food store. Their produce seems good, and their bulk food section is reasonably complete. They bake the best whole grain bread in town. On Springfield Ave. close to downtown Urbana.

World Harvest. Located in the small strip mall on University one block west of Beckman. This place looks and sounds like an average convenience store, but that's just an illusion! This small store has all sorts of ethnic foods, many brought in fresh from Chicago regularly. The emphasis is on middle eastern foods, but there are also Chinese, Indian, Thai, Japanese, Greek, and other foods.
the area delimited by State on the West, University on the North, Vine on the East, and Windsor on the South. If you need a ride from the University to a location within that area (or vice-versa) at a time when no bus is available, give them a call and they will pick you up! You can also go to the Union at:02 and :32 after the hour and catch the Nite Rides van there.

I really like the YMCA, is there one close to campus?

While not strictly a part of the University, the YMCA's Latzer Hall at 1001 South Wright Street houses many activities of interest to students, including the Y-Eatery, the Dup-It copy shop, and the Friday Forum. The Friday Forum is a noon-time lecture series, which focuses on a different topic each semester. Many internationally known writers and thinkers have spoken at this prestigious series. Stop by Latzer Hall for a schedule of the semester's lectures. Another lecture series, entitled Know Your University, features administrators and other prominent people in the University talking about what they do and what's happening at the University.

Each semester the YMCA also hosts Communiversity, extra-curricular classes on subjects as drawing, dancing, foreign languages, music, and bicycle repair. You can't get graduation credit for these courses, but you sure can learn a lot.

The YWCA, whose offices are located in the YMCA building, is an organization dedicated to the elimination of racism and the empowerment of women everywhere. For more information on the YMCA, see their website at http://www.universityymca.org.

What newspapers are available?

The Daily Illini. The Daily Illini is a newspaper written and edited entirely by students. It is owned by an autonomous company (Illini Media), and is published Monday through Friday while classes are in session. In contrast, many newspapers at other universities are published weekly by the university itself. Its popular around here to complain about the DI, but there's just no doing without it. All the public University of Illinois announcements are carried in the DI. The DI is also the best way to find out what's happening on campus, movies, concerts, final exams, and more. As if that weren't enough, the comics page carries a number of major strips, including Doonesbury. Local cartoonists are featured at the bottom of the page. As of July 97, the Daily Illini is free. You can get it from news stands all around campus. The News-Gazette. The News-Gazette is published by the Stevick family, which also owns WHMS and WDWS (in each case, the trailing S stands for Stevick). Whether or not you agree with its editorial page, the News-Gazette is a good source of information. In particular, the classifieds section brings you rental housing ads for off-campus. These units are surprisingly cheap, and can be surprisingly accessible, too. The News-Gazette also contains ads for estate sales, at which you can purchase the belongings of recently deceased people at rock bottom prices. A very cost-effective way to shop.

Hub. This alternative weekly contains editorial articles, music and movie reviews. It also has a schedule of music events going on in town, and a liberal personal ads section. It is also free and you can get it everywhere: the Grainger lobby, coffee shops, bars etc. Inside Illinois. Inside Illinois is a newspaper for faculty and staff published every two weeks by the University. It contains stories about people and their activities at the University, as well as information pertinent to University employees. On the last page is a very good calendar listing events across the University for the coming two weeks, including concerts, lectures, and films.

What radio stations are there in C-U?

WEFT. 90.1 FM. Community supported radio. This station is great fun, since it's totally out to lunch. Unless you get a copy of The WEFT Revue, you'll never know what to expect when you tune in to WEFT: Gregorian chant, Irish folk music, hardcore thrash, or poetry readings. Pacifica Radio News, Mon.Fri., 5 PM.

WILL. 90.9 FM. This is the commercial-free FM station of the U of I. It features classical music most of the time. Jazz on Saturday nights. World music on Sunday from 6 PM to 7 PM. It ranks among the best public stations out there. If you like classical music, you ought to give it a try.

WIXY. 103.3 FM. Country.

WKIO. 92.5 FM. Oldies 92. This station is seriously interfering with many people's ability to receive WILL and WEFT. Complaints can be filed with the FCC. WLRW. 94.5 FM. Top 40.

WZNF. 95.3 FM. Classic Rock, meaning only Beatles, Stones, Pink Floyd, and The Who. Known as Z95. WHMS. 97.5 FM. Lite rock. Younger folks hate it, older folks hate it too. WPGU. 107.1 FM. Love it or hate it, this is the University's campus radio station. Like the DI, it is owned by Illini Media. The WPGU staff (mostly undergraduates) turnover quite rapidly, meaning things are always changing there. Give them a chance. WILL. 880 AM. The local National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate. With a news schedule including NPR's All Things Considered, the BBC News Hour, and the Canadian Broadcast Corporations As It Happens, WILL-AM is a great way to stay in touch. By contributing $25 ($40 for nonstudents) to their cause you will get a subscription to their program guide, Patterns, which helps you stay on top of WILL-AM, -FM, and -TV.

WDWS. 1400 AM. This station broadcasts Illini basketball and football games.

What about local TV?

WCIA. CBS, Channel 3. The ever-popular Dan Rather, David Letterman, Big Ten Basketball.

WILL. PBS, Channel 12. MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour (highly recommended), a steady diet of BBC comedies. Silver Screen movies every night at 10:30 PM.

WAND. ABC, Channel 15. Nightline.

WICD. NBC, Channel 17. Wheel of Fortune, Jay Leno.

WCCU. FOX, Channel 27. The Simpsons.
How about cable?

There are several basic plans offered by our local cable TV company. They can provide you with something like thirty channels, including ESPN, MTV, WTBS, WGN(Chicago), and all the local network stations. To get wired up, call Insight at 394-2500. Dish Network is also available. Check the Yellow Pages.

Can you tell me about the public libraries?

Champaign and Urbana both have fine public libraries, which you can use for free. All you need is a piece of mail, which establishes your residency. Take this piece of mail to the appropriate library (east of Wright Street means Urbana, west of Wright means Champaign) and you will receive a Lincoln Trails library card, which is good at dozens of libraries throughout the state (just in case you want to check out books when you're visiting Hoopston, for example). The Champaign and Urbana libraries loan out videocassettes, CDs, audio cassettes, and records, in addition to the books you'd expect to find there. The Urbana Free Library has a videocassette collection that rivals that of many commercial video rental stores. Both the Urbana and Champaign libraries have started loaning out DVDs.


How about other community resources?

There are several other community resources available to incoming graduate students. The English Center, located at 610 S. Sixth St., provides classes to international people whose first language is not English. Students primarily consist of graduate/PhD. students, visiting scholars, and spouses. Courses are offered in Conversation, Listening, Pronunciation, Reading/Grammar/Vocabulary, and TOEFL.

Are there good parks in the area?

Allerton Park. In the late 1800s, the Allerton family cornered the hog market in Chicago and became fabulously wealthy. Robert Allerton purchased a large piece of land near Monticello, Illinois, and established a large estate and farm. Both were later donated in their entirety to the University of Illinois. Allerton Park features lovely woods, statuary, a greenhouse, and several miles of trails. It is a popular destination for bicyclists (round trip 50 miles). The main Allerton House is used for conferences and meetings throughout the year. There is an annual conference on coding and cryptography at Allerton.

Lake of the Woods Park. Another popular bicycling destination (30 miles round trip), Lake of the Woods features the Early American Museum (described earlier), a lake for boating and swimming, a lookout tower, picnic areas, and hiking trails. Champaign-Urbana Park Districts. One of the most amazing institutions of Champaign-Urbana are the park districts. Nearly any time during the year you can find plenty of things to do at one of the in-town parks. Catch a jazz concert; watch a free movie; get a Taste of Champaign-Urbana (an annual cooking contest for local restaurants in which you are the judge). You can do it all for less in one of the many parks.

Crystal Lake Park. Close to campus, on University before Race St. Has a lot of picnictables and a little lake.

What places are there to visit close by?

Chicago. Roughly 60% of the University's undergraduates are from Chicago and its suburbs. Downtown Chicago is 150 miles from C-U by train or bus, and offers a vast array of opportunities. Attractions include the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Shedd Aquarium and Oceanarium, the Adler Planetarium, the Brookfield and Lincoln Park Zoos, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the ever popular Museum of Science and Industry. Chicago also has a very active concert and theatre scene. In the summer, impressive jazz and blues festivals take place downtown in Grant Park. The ethnic neighborhoods of Chicago are numerous and fascinating. No matter what your heritage, you're sure to find it somewhere in Chicago.

St. Louis. Special attractions in St. Louis (located southwest of here) include the St. Louis Arch, Busch Gardens, and Busch Stadium (home of the St. Louis Cardinals). Indianapolis. Indianapolis has a nice airport that is easy to reach. If you face a choice between driving to Chicago and driving to Indianapolis to catch a plane, choose Indianapolis. (Just remember that they are in a different time zone for half of the year don't miss your flight!) Indianapolis has a terrific art museum, a children's museum, and Union Station, a converted train station turned shopping Mecca. Springfield. The capital of Illinois features the history of the state and especially the history of Abraham Lincoln. You can also protest the law of your choice and speak to your state legislator at the Capitol Building.

Eastern Illinois Towns. While not cities per se, many of the nearby towns host special events. Drop by Arthur for the annual Cheese Festival. Experience the Arcola broomcorn festival. Or check out the many heritage days that sprout up during summer like newly planted corn. Too many of the outstudents grous(190,737),(928,754) about how boring C-U is without getting out to see what rural Illinois has to offer. Try it... you may be surprised.

Kickapoo State Park is about 28 miles east of Champaign-Urbana, right on I-74 Exit 206. It takes about 30 minutes to get there, and you can hike through the park, or go fishing. Nice place for an afternoon trip.