

Job Market Fly-Outs

Your dissertation abstract and your advisor's recommendation letters helped get you an interview at the meetings. Your successful interview and a possible reading of your job market paper have now led to your being invited to a campus fly-out. These have opened the door, but now everything depends on your paper and your campus visit. The visit is the final critical step in landing a job.

For a typical campus visit, you will spend an entire day interviewing on campus. You should therefore expect to stay for two nights. Typically you are expected to make your own travel arrangements. After the campus visit, you submit your travel receipts for reimbursement. (Be sure to save all receipts. If you take a taxi, ask for a receipt.) The standard expectation is that you arrange for reasonably inexpensive economy-class airfare. If you are uncertain if a certain expense is justified or not, it is okay to ask. If you are traveling by air, it is a good idea to ask what the best airport to fly into is. You should also ask for the best method to get from the airport to your hotel.

When traveling, expect surprises and be prepared to make last-minute changes. Travel in January and February is notorious for weather-related delays. I strongly recommend that you travel light, and do not check baggage. (Lost bags are a real pain.) This will require you to be careful to adhere to the current restrictions on carry-on bags (e.g. liquids).

For air travel, you have the option of flying from Madison (MSN), Milwaukee (MKE), Chicago O'Hare (ORD) or Midway (MDW). It is often worthwhile considering all options. Be aware that to get to MKE you need to drive, while to ORD or MDW you can take the Van Galder bus (check their schedule at <http://www.coachusa.com/vangalder/>). Flying out of Madison is convenient, but I recommend that you avoid a route from Madison that connects through ORD, as the United and American flights between MSN and ORD are unreliable. (They are delayed or cancelled in bad weather.) If you want a flight from ORD, I recommend that you take the Van Galder bus. It is a longer trip, but reduced uncertainty.

Typically the hotel room is direct-billed to the university or employer, but you should be prepared to pay (and be reimbursed later) if direct billing has not been arranged. In addition, at check-in the hotel will typically ask for a credit card "for incidentals". Typically only the room charge and tax are direct billed. Don't make the mistake of billing personal expenses to the room thinking that the university will pay without noticing. (I know of one job candidate who lost a job offer due to this mistake.)

Most campus visits are scheduled for a full day. Typically you are given the schedule in advance. (Sometimes the schedule is left for you at the hotel when you check in.)

Some start with breakfast. You may be picked up at your hotel in the morning. Be in the hotel lobby punctually at the requested time.

Your campus visit will include a number of half-hour interview slots with individual faculty. These interviews can be similar to the ASSA interviews, or they can be quite casual chats about the local city and weather. You will typically be taken to lunch and dinner with members of the department. In all these situations, you should remember that you are still being interviewed. In addition to being interested in your research, the faculty are interested in you as a person, and how you will fit into their department. The importance of "fitting in" is probably less important at the very top departments, which are primarily focused on research.

The most important part of the campus visit is your seminar. This is where you will present your research to the department, display your command of the topic, and demonstrate your seminar skills. Many inferences will be made based on the seminar, including your research potential and your teaching ability. Preparation is the key.