



Dear incoming grad students,

Welcome to the University at Buffalo! We hope you're excited about attending graduate school here. Whether it's your first time as a grad, or you're an old hand, there's always lots to learn about your new institution - and you might not get it all during orientation! The current graduate students in the Department of Geology have put together this guide to help you settle in and avoid difficulties while adjusting to your new setting. If your question isn't answered here, please feel free to contact the President of the Graduate Club (Amanda Hintz, arl6@buffalo.edu), or ask any of your peers - they've gone through this too!

The University at Buffalo

The University at Buffalo is the largest school in the SUNY system, and has about 30,000 students on two main campuses: North Campus (in Amherst) and South Campus (in the City of Buffalo). The Department of Geology is located on the North Campus, and you'll likely be spending most of your time here. The University's main administrative building (Capen Hall), Undergraduate Library (Capen Library), Lockwood Library, and the Student Union are all on North Campus.

South Campus holds the University's medical schools, as well as many undergraduate classes and dorms. The University's Student Health Center and pharmacy are located on South Campus in Michael Hall. South Campus is also the site of the South Campus Instrumentation Center, which houses a Scanning Electron Microscope and other analytical equipment not available on North Campus.



Parking is terrible on both campuses. Plan to arrive early (before 9) if you want a decent space; otherwise you'll be fighting with your fellow students for the few spaces that open up later than that. (Open parking will start reappearing after lunch, and after 3 PM you can use the faculty lots). There are some gated lots you can buy a yearly pass for if you want guaranteed parking for about \$100 a year. There are also special carpool spaces in premium locations, but you have to register as a carpool and get a special permit. You'll need to display your parking pass from 7AM-3PM during the week. If you don't want to move your car around, buses travel regularly between North and South Campus, including on the weekends. If you live in the city, it's often a good option to walk, bike or drive to South Campus and ride the bus the rest of the way.

The Geology Department



Environmental Geosciences



Volcanology



Climate Change



Integrated Tectonics and Stratigraphy



Ecology and Evolution

Currently, the Geology Department is divided into five sections: Environmental Geosciences, Volcanology, Climate Change, Integrated Tectonics & Stratigraphy, and Ecology & Evolution; we also share some professors with the Ecology, Evolution and Behavior (EEB) graduate program. We are located in two main buildings (Cooke/Hochstetter Halls and the Natural Sciences Center tower), although we also hold 100-level labs in the Physics building (Fronczak Hall, north of NSC).

The main office is located in 411 Cooke Hall. Graduate student mailboxes are located there; you can get to them from inside the office, or open them with a combination lock if the office is closed. Please check your mail regularly! You can also send faxes and drop off campus and regular mail in the office. (This should be the address you use for any mail that comes to school - don't use your lab address!)

Marty Roth (mlroth@buffalo.edu) is the department secretary. She does a lot for the department and she doesn't have a lot of spare time, so make sure you try to find answers to simple questions before getting in touch with her! Alison Lagowski (aal@buffalo.edu) is the Assistant to the Chair; Robyn Wagner (rlwagner@buffalo.edu) is the Departmental Assistant; Pete Avery (avery@geology.buffalo.edu) is our Technical Specialist (he'll help you get supplies if you're teaching labs); and Travis Nelson (tnelson@buffalo.edu) is our tech specialist (he's great with pretty much any technology issue you have, and he'll be helping you find and set up computer equipment if you need it).

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Teaching/Research/Graduate Assistant Life

Chances are you're being funded for graduate school, either by the department, your advisor, or an outside source (like a fellowship). Here are the differences between each type of situation, and some basic information about what to expect as far as costs and benefits:

Teaching Assistant (TA)

A TA salary is about \$16,000 per year (and includes a tuition waiver). TAs are required to assist faculty in teaching undergraduate classes and labs; usually you'll be assigned a couple of lab sections or grading for a particular semester. TAs are members of the Graduate Student Union, which costs about \$30/month in dues (required), and receive state employee health insurance (about \$20 a month, also required).

Research Assistant (RA)

Research assistants are usually paid from grants and, while the salary depends on the advisor, it should be comparable to that of a TA. They are also members of the Graduate Student Union and receive state employee insurance.

Graduate Assistant / Other

Some students come with (or earn) graduate fellowships that pay their salaries instead of being paid from a grant. In this instance your salary will also be administered by the Research Foundation, but you will not be eligible for the TA/RA insurance. You can either buy the school's generic student insurance or Research Foundation Insurance.

Insurance

TAs and RAs receive NY state employee health, vision and dental insurance. This covers most medical needs, basic dental exams every 6 months, and basic visual exams (glasses or contacts but not both) every 2 years. If you go to the Student Health Center (<http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/shs/student-health/>, Michael Hall on South Campus), your student fees cover your copay; you can also go to in-network providers in the area if you prefer. This insurance plan costs about \$20/month and allows for dependents.

If you are just starting as a TA/RA, you must attend an orientation session before you can be enrolled in the GSEU health insurance. Dates and locations for these sessions (there are a lot) are listed on the HR website; you usually have until the end of September to enroll.

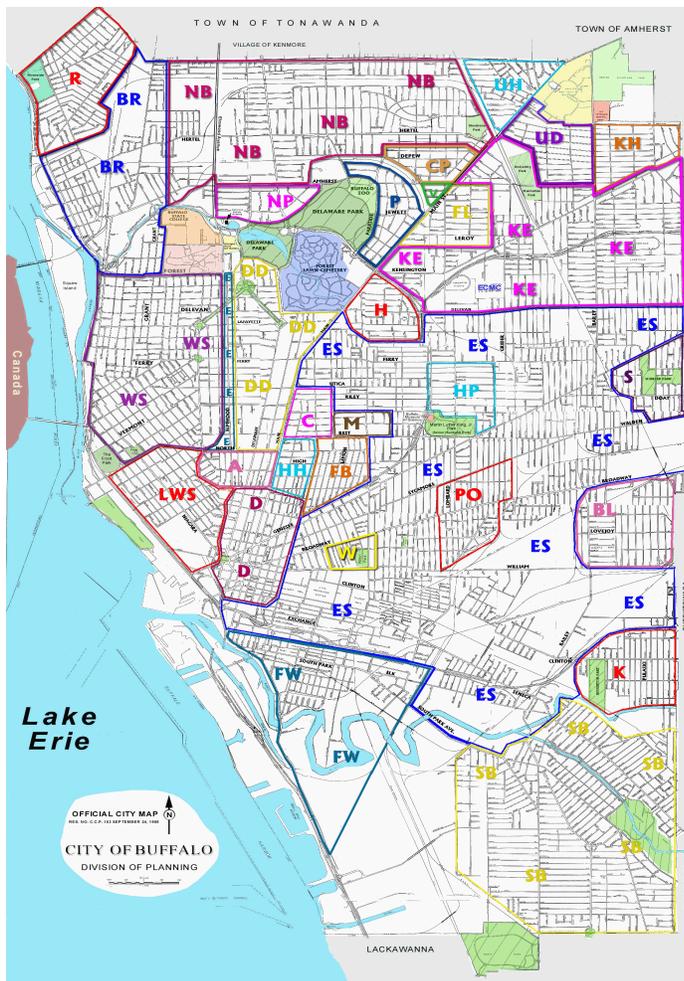
Students on Fellowships are not eligible for TA/RA insurance, since they are technically not state employees (long story). You can purchase the school's student insurance (\$1,580/year, through Aetna) or the Research Foundation insurance (\$2,654.34/year, through POMCO). The coverage limit for the school's insurance is very low, but if you're in a low-risk field of study and you don't get sick a lot, it should be adequate. (It also requires that you get your basic medical care through Michael Hall *and* all your prescriptions through the student pharmacy there, and the plan has a limit on how much prescription cost it will absorb.) The RF insurance is similar to the TA/RA insurance, but with less coverage in the vision/dental plans.

Tuition waiver and residency requirements

If you are a TA or RA, you should receive a tuition waiver from the school. (Students on fellowships may not, so be careful!) To receive this waiver, you must hold status as a resident of New York State, and the grad school will have you fill out a form for this as soon as you arrive. To hold resident status, you pretty much need a NYS drivers license and a NY address. *This only counts for tuition purposes* - it does not make you an "official" resident of New York State. (Students are not required to become official residents, although you can for tax purposes.)

Graduate coordinator

Dr. Mitchell (cem@geology.buffalo.edu) is the current coordinator; he's responsible for organizing the TAs before the semester begins, helping resolve issues that come up during the semester, and keeping track of TA feedback on how teaching is going. He'll hold meetings for the TAs several times during the semester to keep up with this.



Living in Buffalo

Buffalo is a large and diverse metropolitan area (city pop. 260,000, 1.2 million including the suburbs), with living situations to suit every taste. You'll find something to your liking whether you want to live in the city, the suburbs, or even the country. The names of places in and around Buffalo can be a bit confusing; we have villages, towns, and cities, each with their own administrative systems. Rental prices vary significantly by location, as does the safety/crime rate of the neighborhoods.

www.crimereports.com lists official police reports in different areas, and the UB Map Library has a visual guide to neighborhoods in the city, minus the suburbs (http://library.buffalo.edu/maps/buffalo-wnymaps/buffalo_neighborhoods.php).

All the rents listed are ranges taken from quick Craigslist searches, and can apply to many different properties (from one-bedrooms to whole houses, depending on your location). Craigslist is an excellent place to find housing, but don't forget UB's Sub Board Off-Campus listings (<http://subboard.com/och/index.asp>) where you will often find listings aimed at students.

- **Allentown:** Centered on Allen Street from Main Street (north) to Symphony Circle (south). Adjacent to Buffalo's theater district, Allentown is a center for visual/performing arts and hosts many restaurants. Many locations are a short walk to an NFTA rail station. Rent: \$500-\$700
- **Delaware Avenue:** Just east of Elmwood, the Delaware district follows Delaware Ave. past Delaware Park (the biggest city park, and the site of lots of open-air performances in the summer) and the Forest Lawn Cemetery as well as the Albright-Knox (modern) Art Gallery. Lots of converted Victorian homes, although many will not have off-street parking. Many locations are a short walk to an NFTA rail station. Rent: \$500-\$900.
- **Downtown:** Buffalo's business district is mainly located in this area, although there are many high-rise apartment buildings. This is the extreme southern end of the city, however, and commuting to North Campus will take a long time. However, many locations are a short walk to an NFTA rail station. Lots of loft-style apartments but fewer houses. The area is being revitalized, so there are some shops and restaurants, but many places are still boarded up and the area can be pretty deserted at night. Rent: \$500-\$900
- **Elmwood Village:** The most trendy and up-and-coming Buffalo location. There are lots of shops, bars and restaurants within walking distance. Finding off-street parking may be difficult. Great nightlife and lots to do in the summer (concerts, farmers markets, etc.). Housing will be converted Victorian homes, usually three or four apartments each. Many locations are a short walk to an NFTA rail station. Rent: \$400-\$800

- **North Buffalo:** Hertel Avenue is a big feature of this area (it's Buffalo's Little Italy), and it's close to Delaware Park and the Buffalo Zoo. It's pretty walkable, with lots of small shops and groceries. Hertel avenue hosts Buffalo's Annual Italian Heritage Festival in July. Rent: \$500-\$800 for 2 bedrooms (a few 1 bedroom apts can go for under \$500).
- **University Heights:** Mostly an undergraduate area; definitely has crime problems. Runs along Main Street, which used to be a commercial center but is now noticeably run down. Rent can be low if you want to rent only a room, but you may end up sharing a house with a bunch of noisy partiers; many houses are large, but rented by the bedroom rather than by apartments. You can also rent a whole house and split the rent between friends. Rent: \$200-\$500 per bedroom, \$500-\$1600 per apartment/full house.
- **Amherst:** A large suburb of Buffalo; areas surrounding the UB North Campus have lots of apartments but will be more expensive than in the city. Parks and green space in many areas, but expect to do a lot of biking or driving to get places. Bus service is thin in some places. Rent: \$500-\$900 for a one-bedroom apartment.
- **Williamsville:** Located in Amherst; a suburban feel and more expensive than most areas. Very safe (there's almost no crime here). You'll end up driving most places, but there are also several parks and lots of green space here if you want to bike around. Rent: \$600-\$900 for a one-bedroom apartment.
- **Niagara Falls:** A longer commute to get to campus. Downtown Niagara Falls has lots of crime problems, but the smaller satellite communities are fairly safe. Rents are cheap and it shouldn't be too difficult to find a house to split up. Rent: \$400-\$800.
- **Grand Island:** Located to the northwest of the city on the way to Niagara Falls. Grand Island is mainly suburbs, but has a few pet-friendly apartment complexes that may work for people who have large dogs. Commuting to and from Buffalo will cost you, however, as the only way to get on and off the Island is on toll bridges. Rent: \$600-\$900 for apartments, more or less for houses depending on the owner.
- **The Tonawandas:** Located east of Grand Island. Includes Town of Tonawanda, City of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. Commute time to campus is decent. These areas have quite a bit of green space and parks but not much nightlife/entertainment near by. The area is safe with a low crime rate. Housing includes some apartment complexes as well as homes for rent. Rents vary from \$600-\$900 and up.
- **Cheektowaga:** West of the city, and an older suburban area; there are lots of single family homes and a few apartment complexes/duplex communities. Home to the Walden Galleria mall (great for shopping but really crowded on the weekends) and "Land of the Crabapples". Rents run fairly cheap (\$500-\$800 will get you a 2-3 bedroom place), but the area lacks some of the culture and extracurricular activities of other parts of town.
- **Hamburg/Blasdell/Orchard Park:** South of the city, and definitely a long commute! Hamburg and Orchard Park are less crowded areas, with parts of the towns bordering Lake Erie. Hamburg hosts the Hamburg Fairgrounds (and the Erie County Fair, which is the second-largest in the country). Well below the snow line, so be careful if you don't like driving in snow. Rent: \$400-\$800 for a one-bedroom apartment.
- **Clarence/East Amherst:** Located east of the Williamsville/Amherst area (and Transit Road, the major N/S route that leads to Lockport). This is really the beginning of farm country; housing is either single family homes or scattered apartment complexes. It's a pretty area, especially in harvest season, but quite removed from the city and requires a fairly long commute. Rent: \$400-\$800 for apartments, \$600-\$700 and up for houses.

- **Lockport:** Located about a twenty minute drive north of the Buffalo area, Lockport has a small -town feel and lower rents than the metro area. Shopping and entertainment are not going to be the same as in the city; be prepared for a rural atmosphere. Lockport does have the local drive-in theater, a great place to watch movies in warmer weather. Rent: \$300-\$700 for 1-3 bedroom apartments (and sometimes houses).

Parks

Buffalo has lots of parks! Frederick Law Olmsted (architect of Central Park) designed his first system of parks and parkways in Buffalo, and proclaimed Buffalo to be "the best designed city in the country, if not the world." During the 1901 Pan American Exposition, Buffalo was celebrated not only as the City of Light, but the City of Trees. Delaware Park in the city is the largest and most well-known; in the summer, it hosts concerts and plays as well as the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (modern art, free entry on Friday afternoons, open year-round). There are paths, tennis courts, and plenty of open space for sports and relaxing.

The Buffalo Waterfront has also been newly "revitalized", and is home to several parks, museums, and shopping. They host concerts in the summer and early fall, and you can even fish there (if you like a city setting for your angling). South of the city, you can visit the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens, a Victorian-style greenhouse adjacent to the South Park Arboretum (another Olmsted offering). The Gardens are open year-round, and the Arboretum has a golf course and a road for running/biking/walking.





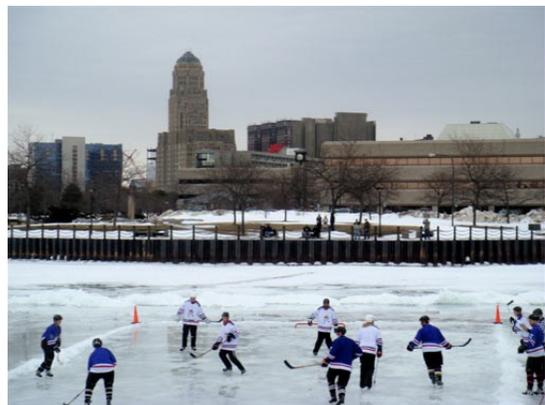
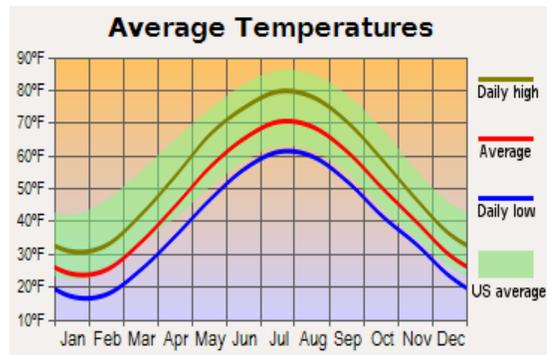
Niagara Falls is just a short drive away; on the New York side is a nice state park that's accessible year-round (even in the dead of winter, although it gets cold!) If you want to visit the area in the summer and avoid the parking fee at the Falls, you can drive along the Robert Moses Parkway to the Whirlpool and Devil's Hole State Parks. Whirlpool has some nice hiking and an excellent view of some class 6 rapids (but no swimming!) There are also bike trails along the parkway. If you like, you can also walk, bike or drive to the Canadian side of the Falls (just remember to bring your passport or enhanced driver's license).

Weather

Buffalo has a bad reputation because of a major blizzard in 1977, but we actually get less snow than many parts of the state. In the winter, lake-effect snow is usually concentrated south of the city (you can often see the snow line as a wall of clouds to the south). Below this line, you can expect to measure snowfall in feet; above it, in inches. UB campuses rarely close for snow or ice, even when the local school systems do; usually there has to be a major problem with keeping the roads clear before they'll announce a closure. Once Lake Erie freezes over, the snow pretty much stops (unless something blows in from Lake Ontario, which rarely freezes).

Temperatures in the winter can get quite cold (teens or 20s for much of the season), and wind chills can make it even worse. Invest in a warm coat and sturdy boots! Driving in the winter is usually not a problem even if you don't have an SUV or four-wheel drive. Just remember to be cautious, don't speed in slush or on ice, and don't make sharp turns. Plowing is usually pretty good in Amherst and parts of the city, but if you live on a side road, the plows may not get to you right away.

The rest of the year is pleasant. Spring starts taking hold in March or April, it will feel summer-y by the end of June, and fall arrives in September. Temperatures won't usually rise above 90 degrees, although this past summer was an exception! The cooler summers are a plus because you don't have to use an air conditioner constantly (and some apartments will not have them, so factor a window unit into your budget if you like a cool house). Another plus is the low humidity. It is quite windy year-round, however, because of Buffalo's proximity to Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.





Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
Serving Buffalo Niagara



Public Transportation

The city bus system is better downtown, but NFTA operates in Amherst and north of campus as well. The campus has multiple buses: The UB Stampede, which travels between North and South Campus; on-campus shuttles to parking lots and the Ellicott complex; and shuttles to and from different apartment complexes. All campus buses are free for UB students, although you are supposed to show your ID to board.

NFTA also has a (small) rail system, which starts at UB South and goes up and down Main Street. The train is free between Tupper Street and the HSBC arena, and \$1.75 a ride from Tupper Street to South Campus. There is a pilot program to give free rail passes to students who live within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from a rail stop (but some students who live up to 2 miles away have been able to get them, too). Many locations in Elmwood Village, Delaware Ave, Downtown and in Allentown neighborhoods are a reasonable walk to a

rail station, so a morning commute could consist of a 5-30 min walk to a rail station, a 5-15 min train ride to South Campus, and the 10-15 UB Stampede to North Campus. This sounds complicated, but really isn't bad, 45min-1hr.

UB also has a Zipcar program (<http://www.ub-parking.buffalo.edu/zipcar.php>). UB students, faculty, and staff can join for only \$35/year. You also get \$35 in free driving to use your first month. Zipcars are parked on campus, and if you're a Zipcar member, you just reserve one online, and then use your member card to get in the car and drive. You pay by the hour or the day, and the rates include gas and insurance, so you can just pick up and drop off a Zipcar from campus anytime 24/7. Members age 18-20 can use a dedicated group of Zipcars that live on campus. Members age 21+ also have access to thousands of Zipcars all around the world.

Residency and registering your car in NY

UB will require that you fill out a residency application so if you are receiving a tuition waiver, they will only have to pay in-state rates. This residency status is *only through the school*, and is not official for purposes of car registration, taxes, voting, etc. To qualify for it, you'll have to get a NYS driver's license, although this doesn't require you to become an official resident (just to turn in your old license and have a NY residence).

If you decide to become an official resident, you should register your car in NY (which will require you to get the title for the car, usually from the bank that holds your loan if you don't own the car yet), and register to vote. This means that you can fill out resident taxes (easier than the part-year or non-resident ones, which are a pain). The New York DMV (<http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/>) doesn't hold titles, so once they re-issue a title for NY, they'll just send it to you. Keep it in a safe place!

Traveling, local sightseeing, and passports

Buffalo is a good jumping-off point to visit other places. Niagara Falls is about a half-hour drive from campus; Rochester is an hour away; Toronto is about two hours away (not counting time spent at border crossings). There are lots of state parks (Letchworth, Alleghany, Chimney Bluffs) and places to visit in the Finger Lakes on day trips; the NYS Thruway will take you on longer trips all the way across the state. It's about 8 hours to NYC by car or train (or a 1 hour flight).



The Buffalo-Niagara International Airport (<http://www.buffaloairport.com/>) is located just south of Williamsville, about a twenty-minute drive from campus. Airport shuttles are available as well as taxis, and there is both short and long-term parking available (it costs a maximum of \$40 per week or \$8/day for the least expensive lot). The cheapest option to fly out of Buffalo is probably Southwest Airlines, and you can get some good deals on airfare if you book well in advance. You can also fly out of Toronto, <http://www.gtaa.com/en/home/> (not a bad idea for international trips, since you'll need a passport anyway) and get pretty good prices.

The Buffalo area has several Amtrak (<http://www.amtrak.com/>) train stations: the [Exchange Street](#) Station in Buffalo, the [Depew](#) Station (east of the city), and the [Niagara Falls](#) Station. Fares run \$40 to Toronto (a 2-3 hour ride, depending on the border crossing), \$50-\$60 to New York City (a 9-hour ride), and \$70 to Chicago (a 10-hour ride). In many cases, it's cheaper and faster to drive, but this is an option if you don't have a car and can't find a ride.



Because we're so close to Canada, it's almost a crime not to have a passport. There's a full-service passport facility (<http://law.lib.buffalo.edu/services/passport.asp>) in the Law Library (O'Brian Hall) open 7:30 AM - 3 PM Monday-Friday, or you can go to any post office in the area. Another option is to get an Enhanced Driver's License through the NY DMV. This will allow you to travel to Canada, Mexico and some Caribbean countries without a regular passport, although you can't use to travel overseas or when flying.

Other stuff

- UB hosts Farmers Markets on campus! They're held on Wednesdays by Capen Library on North Campus, and Saturdays on the Main Street sidewalk at Kenmore Ave. on South. If you're looking for neighborhood markets, there's the Elmwood-Bidwell Farmers Market (<http://www.elmwoodmarket.org/>) in Buffalo on Saturdays, one in Williamsville (at the Williamsville Mill on Spring Street) on Saturdays. They usually happen from May/June to October. The Broadway Market (<http://broadwaymarket.org/>) on Broadway and Bailey is indoors and open year-round, but has more vendors around holidays (especially Easter!)
- If you need hiking/camping gear, the Eastern Mountain Sports on Niagara Falls Boulevard offers a 10% discount on full-price items for UB students with an ID.
- It is possible to walk to almost any building on North Campus using the "tunnels" (useful in the winter if you don't want to brave the wind chill or carry your coat around).
- The UB Center for the Arts hosts musicals, concerts, plays, guest speakers, and dance performances year-round. There's often a student discount to take advantage of, and for some events (like the Distinguished Speakers Series) the Graduate Student Association reserves free tickets for grads.

Useful websites

- Geology Department (<http://www.geology.buffalo.edu>)
- Geology Graduate Student Association (<http://gsa.buffalo.edu/gsa/geologygsa>)
- Graduate Student Association (<http://gsa.buffalo.edu>)
- Graduate School Forms (<http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/forms/>)
- Human Resources (<http://hr.buffalo.edu>)
- Parking Services (<http://www.ub-parking.buffalo.edu/general.php>)
- UB Geology Library and GEOREF portal (<http://libweb1.lib.buffalo.edu/infotree/resourcesbysubject.asp?subject=Geology>)
- NFTA-Metro (<http://www.nfta.com/>)
- UB Center for the Arts (<http://www.ubcfa.org/>)
- Buffalo Parks (<http://www.erie.gov/parks/> and <http://www.bfloparks.org/>)
- Buffalo-Niagara Visitors Information (<http://www.visitbuffaloniagara.com/>)