

United States of America travel guide

About United States of America

From the soaring skyscrapers of New York City to the dramatic mesas of Arizona, the United States of America is a place of staggering beauty and extraordinary diversity. Nothing prepares you for your first glimpse of Manhattan's iconic skyline, the yawning expanses of the Grand Canyon or the neon-lit excesses of Las Vegas, just some of the country's many highlights.

You could easily spend a lifetime in the US and still feel like you've just scratched the surface. It's epic on every scale. After all, this is a place where you can watch the thunderous spectacle of Niagara Falls, trek through the soaring Black Hills of South Dakota and cruise along California's glorious Pacific Coast; where you can ski at Lake Tahoe, go cattle ranching in the Midwest and imbibe live jazz in New Orleans. The options, it seems, are endless.

The USA's manmade landscapes are nearly as spectacular as the natural ones. New York City boasts some of the most impressive skyscrapers on the planet (think Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, Rockefeller Centre), although the skylines of Seattle, Chicago, LA and Vegas are no less recognisable.

The American people are similarly diverse; from the colourful Cubans of the southeast to the gun-slinging wranglers of Texas and hardy Inuits of Alaska, the country is a melting pot of cultures. Generations of immigrants have shaped the national identity in everything from food and language to music and manners.

Once derided for being boring, the resurgent capital, Washington, D.C, boasts hip new bars, chic boutiques and a burgeoning culinary scene, which are welcome diversions in this theatre of politics. In spring, the city turns pink with cherry blossom - the legacy of a peace offering sent by Japan.



Once derided for being boring, the resurgent capital, Washington, D.C, boasts hip new bars, chic boutiques and a burgeoning culinary scene, which are welcome diversions in this theatre of politics. In spring, the city turns pink with cherry blossom – the legacy of a peace offering sent by Japan.

The glorious East Coast retreat of Cape Cod is also not to be missed. Looking around this exquisite peninsula it's easy to see why the founding fathers, who stepped off the Mayflower here, chose to make this extraordinary land their home. "God bless America," they sang. And God blessed her indeed.

Key facts

Area:	9,826,675 sq km (3,794,100 sq miles).
Population:	324,118,787 (UN estimate 2016).
Population density:	32.5 per sq km.
Capital:	Washington, DC.
Government:	Federal republic.
Head of state:	President Donald Trump since 2017.
Head of government:	President Donald Trump since 2017.
Electricity:	120 volts AC, 60Hz. Plugs have two flat pins with or without a third round grounding pin.



Once derided for being boring, the resurgent capital, Washington, D.C, boasts hip new bars, chic boutiques and a burgeoning culinary scene, which are welcome diversions in this theatre of politics. In spring, the city turns pink with cherry blossom - the legacy of a peace offering sent by Japan.

The glorious East Coast retreat of Cape Cod is also not to be missed. Looking around this exquisite peninsula it's easy to see why the founding fathers, who stepped off the Mayflower here, chose to make this extraordinary land their home. "God bless America," they sang. And God blessed her indeed.

 **Key facts**

Area:	9,826,675 sq km (3,794,100 sq miles).
Population:	324,118,787 (UN estimate 2016).
Population density:	32.5 per sq km.
Capital:	Washington, DC.
Government:	Federal republic.
Head of state:	President Donald Trump since 2017.
Head of government:	President Donald Trump since 2017.
Electricity:	120 volts AC, 60Hz. Plugs have two flat pins with or without a third round grounding pin.



GATDABLESS
TRAVEL & TOURS

United States of America History, Language and Culture

History of United States of America

Following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in North America in 1492, waves of European settlers, mainly English, French and Dutch, crossed the Atlantic and by the 17th century had colonised the Eastern Seaboard. The American War of Independence (1775-1783) ended colonial rule and by 1853, the boundaries of the mainland United States were, with the exception of Alaska, as they are today. Economic activity in the southern States centred on plantation agriculture where attempts to end slavery were fiercely opposed and the election of Lincoln to the presidency in 1861 resulted in the American Civil War as the southern States seceded from the Union. After four years of bloody fighting the more powerful Union forces prevailed and the country entered a period of consolidation, building up an industrial economy. The mid- and late-19th century also saw the development of foreign policy as formal links were established with the old colonial powers.

In Europe, US intervention in 1917 proved decisive for the Allies in WWI and signalled the emergence of the USA as a global power. Driven by free-market economics and innovative production methods the USA became the world's leading economy. It entered WWII and by its end had developed nuclear weapons and the superpower conflict that dominated the late 20th century.

Its post-war foreign policy saw the US increase its global military presence, fighting in Korea, Vietnam and multiple interventions in the Middle East. Relations between the USA and the USSR improved greatly after 1985 under the new Gorbachev government.

4



GATDABLESS
TRAVEL & TOURS

In 1988, George Bush was elected to the White House as the Eastern Bloc collapsed and the Cold War thawed. He was followed by Bill Clinton who served two terms characterised by a growing economy before George W Bush won the 2000 presidential election in controversial circumstances and shaped a more aggressive and jingoistic US foreign policy, particularly after the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001. In November 2008 a record turnout returned Barack Obama as the country's first black president who also served two terms in the White House. In late 2016, businessman and television personality Donald Trump defeated Hilary Clinton to become the 45th president of the United States.

Did you know?

- The United States of America is made up of 50 states, the federal district of Washington, D.C., five major self-governing territories and a range of other assets.
- Famously called America's only true art form, jazz grew out of the sounds and rhythms brought over by African slaves mixed with European folk traditions and popular songs.
- Among the inventions claimed by Americans are the telephone, the phonograph, the electric light bulb, the movie camera, the assembly line and the aeroplane.

United States of America Culture

Religion

Nearly half of all Americans are Protestant with Roman Catholic, Mormon, Jewish and many ethnic minorities. An increasing percentage of Americans are distancing themselves from formal religious affiliations; more than 19% declared no affiliation in 2015.

GATDABLESS
TRAVEL & TOURS

Social Conventions

Americans are renowned for their openness and friendliness to visitors.

Shaking hands is the usual form of greeting. A relaxed and informal atmosphere is usually the norm. As long as the fundamental rules of courtesy are observed, there need be no fear of offending anyone of any background. Gifts are appreciated if one is invited to a private home. As a rule, dress is casual. High-end restaurants, hotels and clubs may require more formal attire.

Smoking is increasingly unpopular in the US; it is essential to ask permission before lighting up. Smoking is not allowed on city transport and restricted or forbidden in public buildings in most states. An increasing number of states (including California and New York) have banned smoking altogether in many public places.

The wide variety of national origins and the USA's relatively short history has resulted in numerous cultural and traditional customs living alongside each other. In large cities, people of the same ethnic background often live within the same communities, although race relations remain fraught in certain regions, as highlighted by the Ferguson riots in 2014 and Baltimore protests in 2015.

Language in United States of America

English is the main language, with significant Spanish-speaking minorities (12.9%).

