



Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

# United States



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International ( OMNI )

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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** North America.

**Time:** The USA is divided into six time zones: Eastern Standard Time: GMT - 5 (GMT - 4 from first Sunday in April to last Sunday in October 2006; from second Sunday in March to first Sunday in November, from 2007). Central Standard Time: GMT - 6 (GMT - 5 from first Sunday in April to last Sunday in October 2006; from second Sunday in March to first Sunday in November, from 2007). Mountain Standard Time: GMT - 7 (GMT - 6 from first Sunday in April to last Sunday in October 2006; from second Sunday in March to first Sunday in November, from 2007). Arizona does not observe DST). Pacific Standard Time: GMT - 8 (GMT - 7 from first Sunday in April to last Sunday in October 2006; from second Sunday in March to first Sunday in November, from 2007). Alaska: GMT - 9 (GMT - 8 from first Sunday in April to last Sunday in October 2006; from second Sunday in March to first Sunday in November, from 2007). Hawaii: GMT - 10. When calculating travel times, bear in mind the adoption of Daylight Saving Time (DST) by most States in summer. From the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October, clocks are put forward one hour, changing at 0200 hours local time.

International Trade Administration, Office of Travel & Tourism Industries

**US Department of Commerce, Room 1003, Washington, DC 20230, USA Tel:** (202) 482 0140. Website: [www.tinet.ita.doc.gov](http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov)

Travel Industry Association of America

**1100 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 450, Washington, DC 20005, USA Tel:** (202) 408 8422. Website: [www.tia.org](http://www.tia.org)

Embassy of the United States of America in the UK

**24 Grosvenor Square, London W1A 1AE, UK Tel:** (020) 7499 9000. Website: [www.usembassy.org.uk](http://www.usembassy.org.uk) Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0830-1730. Consulates in: Belfast and Edinburgh.

American Embassy in the UK - Visa Services

**Tel:** (09068) 200 290 (24-hour visa information line; calls cost 60p per minute, UK only; identical information is available on the embassy website at no cost) or (09055) 444 546 (operator-assisted visa information).

## 2 OVERVIEW

### **Travel Warning:**

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina caused widespread damage in the states of Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Communications and the transport infrastructure have been badly affected. All airports in the region are closed. There have been a number of casualties. Please visit <http://www.fema.gov/> for further advice on how to deal with the aftermath of hurricanes. You should check news reports regularly and keep in touch with your local travel agent about how this might affect your travel plans.

'A country straight out of the movies!'



Mickey Mouse, Miami Vice, Sleepless in Seattle&#8230; thanks to cinema and TV we all have impressions of the United States of America. Yet nothing can prepare you for your first glimpse of Manhattan's unforgettable skyline, your first ride in a yellow cab, the ubiquitous hamburger joints, the vast expanses of prairie, the sweet strains of New Orleans jazz or the neon-lit excesses of Las Vegas. The USA is a huge country to explore, with 50 states to choose from, flanked by two oceans and covering an incredibly varied terrain. For five centuries, since the 'New World' discoveries of Christopher Columbus, people from every corner of the globe have come here in search of 'the American Dream'. Between them, they have created the richest, most powerful country on earth, and a fascinating melting pot of cultures and traditions. Tourism centres mainly on the subtropical states of Florida, California and Hawaii, the winter ski resorts and the huge metropolises. But it is the astonishing, vast landscapes that make the USA truly distinctive spectacular National Parks like Yosemite and the Everglades, rugged ice fields, the Great Lakes and the desert plains and such awe-inspiring sights as the Grand Canyon and the Rocky Mountains should be on every **visitor's must-see list. As Gertrude Stein remarked:** &#8220;In the United States there is more space where nobody is than where anybody is. That is what makes America what it is.&#8221;

Teresa Fisher

### 3 GENERAL INFORMATION

**General:** Information on the USA is provided in two parts: a general overview and individual State profiles, each of which has its own section.

**Area:** 9,809,155 sq km (3,787,319 sq miles).

**Population:** 296,410 million (official estimate 2005).

**Population density:** 32.5 per sq km.

**Capital:** Washington, DC. Population: 550,521 (official estimate 2005). 20 other cities have a population larger than that of Washington, DC. New York is the largest city, with a population of over 8 million. Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio and San Diego, had populations of over 1 million in 2000.

**GEOGRAPHY:** Covering a large part of the North American continent, the USA shares borders with Canada to the north and Mexico to the south and has coasts on the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans, the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. The State of Alaska, in the northwest corner of the continent, is separated from the rest of the country by Canada, and Hawaii lies in the central Pacific Ocean. The third-largest country in the world (after the Russian Federation and Canada), the USA has an enormous diversity of geographical features. The climate ranges from subtropical to Arctic, with a corresponding breadth of flora and fauna. For a more detailed description of each region's geographical characteristics, see the individual State sections.

**Government:** Federal Republic since 1789. Gained independence from the UK in 1776. The USA is a Federal Republic with 50 States and the District of Columbia (as in 'Washington, DC'), which lies between Maryland and Virginia. The Constitution (the final arbiters of which are the members of the Supreme Court) ensures that the powers of the executive, legislature, judiciary, presidency and the individual states are balanced by constitutional procedures. The President is elected by



an electoral college system, based on universal adult suffrage, every four years. No president may be elected to serve more than two full terms of office. The legislature is bicameral; the Senate has two members from each state while the larger House of Representatives allocates seats on the basis of population. Collectively these two bodies are known as Congress. Each state enjoys a fairly high degree of self-Government. Head of State and Government: President George W Bush since 2001. Recent History: Conditions in Iraq, and national security generally, will be a major issue for Bush junior, who secured a second term at the Presidential election in November 2004. Republics tightened their grip on the Senate, kept control of the House of Representatives, and also presided over the possibility of further changes in the Supreme Court. It seems that Americans were keen to preserve stability in the White House whilst their nation remained in the midst of its 'War on Terror'. It remains to be seen how Bush junior will act in such a 'War' while in his final term as President - and, also, how the President will respond to domestic affairs and criticism of his persistent snubbing of environmental concerns, which culminated in him refusing to sign the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse emissions.

**Language:** English, with significant Spanish-speaking minorities.

**Religion:** Protestant majority with Roman Catholic, Jewish and many ethnic minorities.

**Electricity:** 110 volts AC, 60Hz. Plugs are of the flat two-pin type. European electrical appliances not fitted with dual-voltage capabilities will require a plug adaptor, which is best purchased before arrival in the USA. The television system is NTSC I/II and is not compatible with the PAL and SECAM systems used in Asia and Europe, although cassettes can be converted.

**SOCIAL CONVENTIONS:** 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 defined communities. 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. Americans are renowned for their openness and friendliness to visitors. Gifts are appreciated if one is invited to a private home. As a rule, dress is casual. Smart restaurants, hotels and clubs insist on suits and ties or long dresses. Smoking is becoming increasingly unpopular in the US and is often considered offensive; it is essential to ask permission from all present before lighting up. Smoking is forbidden on city transport and often restricted or forbidden in public buildings. There will usually be a notice where no smoking is requested and most restaurants have smoking and non-smoking sections. Smoking is banned in all restaurants in California and New York City.

Passport/Visa

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
<b>British</b>	Yes	No/2/3	Yes
<b>Australian</b>	Yes	No/2	Yes
<b>Canadian</b>	Yes	No/1	No
<b>USA</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>OtherEU</b>	Yes	No/2	Yes
<b>Japanese</b>	Yes	No/2	Yes



**Restricted entry:** The following are not eligible to receive a USA entry visa: (a) people afflicted with certain serious communicable diseases or disorders deemed threatening to the property, safety or welfare of others; (b) anyone who has been arrested (except for very minor driving offences) or who has a criminal record; (c) narcotics addicts or abusers and drug traffickers; (d) anyone who has been deported from or denied admission to the USA. Note: Those who are ineligible may be eligible for a waiver of ineligibility.

**PASSPORTS:** Valid passport required by all; validity varies - for most countries it is required for the duration of the stay; check with the Embassy (see Passport/Visa Information). New Requirements for Travellers: The US Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 requires that by January 1, 2008, travellers to and from the Caribbean, Bermuda, Panama, Mexico and Canada have a passport or other secure, accepted document to enter or re-enter the United States. In order to facilitate the implementation of this requirement, the Administration is proposing to complete it in phases following a proposed timeline, which will be published in the Federal Register in the near future. This is a change from prior travel requirements and will affect all United States citizens entering the United States from countries within the Western Hemisphere who do not currently possess valid passports. This new requirement will also affect certain foreign nationals who currently are not required to present a passport to travel to the United States. Most Canadian citizens, citizens of the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda, and to a lesser degree, Mexican citizens will be affected by the implementation of this requirement. For further details about the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, visit the website of the US Department of State: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc\\_2223.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html)).

**Note:** (a) For nationals included in the Visa Waiver Program (see below), passports must be valid for at least 90 days from date of entry (except for nationals of Andorra, Brunei and San Marino, who must hold passports valid for at least six months beyond the intended date of departure from the USA). (b) All travellers entering the USA under the Visa Waiver Program now require individual machine-readable passports. Children included on a parent's passport also now require their own machine-readable passport. Travellers not in possession of machine-readable passports will require a valid USA entry visa. (c) Passports issued on or after 26 October 2005, will need to have a biometric identifier in order for the holder to travel visa free under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Machine-readable passports issued between 26 October 2005 and 25 October 2006 require a digital photograph printed on the data page or an integrated chip with information from the data page. Machine-readable passports issued on or after 26 October 2006 will require an integrated chip with information from the data page (e-passport).

**VISAS:** Required by all except the following: (a) citizens of countries under the Visa Waiver Program (see 2. below); (b) 1. nationals of Bermuda and Canada, provided holding valid passports; (c) nationals of Mexico, provided holding a valid passport and a US Border Crossing Card. Note: (a) Landed Immigrants of Canada and British residents of Bermuda who are citizens of, and have valid passports from, Commonwealth countries or Ireland are no longer eligible to enter the USA without a visa. (b) The Transit Without Visa (TWOV) and International-to-International (ITI) transit programs have been indefinitely suspended as of 2 August 2003. All passengers using US airports for transit purposes are now required to obtain a transit visa. This does not affect qualified travellers travelling visa free under the Visa Waiver Program (see below).

**Visa Waiver Program:** (a) 2. The following nationals, upon presentation of a valid passport (see Note above), do not require a visa under the Visa Waiver Program: Andorra, Australia, Brunei, EU countries (except nationals of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovak Republic, who do require a visa), Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, San Marino, Singapore and Switzerland. To qualify



for visa-free travel under the Visa Waiver Program, nationals must travel on a valid passport (see Note above), for holiday, transit or business purposes only and for a stay not exceeding 90 days. If entering the USA by air or sea, passengers must hold a return or onward ticket or itinerary (if onward tickets terminate in Bermuda, Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean Islands, travellers must be legal permanent residents of those countries), hold a completed form I-94W and enter aboard an air or sea carrier participating in the Visa Waiver Program (lists of participating air or sea carriers are available from most travel agents or the carriers themselves). If entering the USA by land from Canada or Mexico, hold a completed form I-94W\* issued by Immigration at the port of entry and a US\$6 fee (only payable in US Dollars). Note\*: (a) Passengers must have the full address and ZIP code of where they are staying in the USA to be able to fully complete the I-94W form. (b) Members of Visa Waiver Program countries who want to work, study or remain more than 90 days in the USA must apply for a visa before travelling, as should those who have been previously refused a visa, have a criminal record, or are in any way ineligible for an unrestricted visa. (c) 3. Holders of UK passports with the endorsement British Subject, British Dependent Territories Citizen, British Protected Person, British Overseas Citizen or British National (Overseas) Citizen do not qualify for the Visa Waiver Program. Persons unsure about visa requirements (including those defined in 'Restricted Entry' above) should contact the US Consulate General or the Visa Department of the US Embassy (see Passport/Visa Information).

**Types of visa and cost:** Tourist, Business, Transit and Student. Other types of visa are also available, contact the US Embassy (website: [www.usembassy.org.uk](http://www.usembassy.org.uk)) for further details. The visa application fee is \$100 (currently equivalent to £63), regardless of whether the visa is issued or denied and regardless of the duration of the visa or entries required. The Embassy will provide a paying-in slip, which is attached to the application form DS-156. The fee must be paid in cash at a bank prior to submitting a visa application to the US Embassy, and the bank will issue a receipt of payment, which must be attached to the application form. The fee receipt, once paid, is valid for one year. Some nationals may also have to pay a reciprocal visa issuance fee details are available from the State Department (website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)).

**Validity:** Visas may be used for travel to the USA until the date it expires, or if marked 'valid indefinitely' for up to 10 years. Some visas are valid for multiple entries. The length of stay in the USA is determined by US immigration officials at the time of entry but is generally six months; there is, however, no set time.

**Note:** (a) The Embassy no longer issues visas valid indefinitely. Any new B-1/B-2 visa issued will be valid for a maximum of 10 years. (b) A visa does not expire with the expiry of the holder's passport. An unexpired, endorsed visa in an expired passport may be presented for entry into the USA, as long as the visa itself has not been cancelled, is undamaged, is less than 10 years old and is presented with a valid non-expired passport, provided that both passports are for the same nationality.

**Application to:** Visa branches at Consulates General. Those residing in England, Scotland or Wales should apply to the Embassy in London (see Passport/Visa Information).

**Application requirements:** (a) Completed visa application form DS-156 and form DS-157, if required. (b) Valid passport (validity dependant upon nationality) and with at least one blank page. (c) One recent passport-size photo. (d) Embassy copy of the fee receipt endorsed by the bank. (e) Evidence of sufficient funds to cover all expenses while in the USA. (f) Documentation of intent to return to country of residence. (g) Supporting documents (such as purpose of visit) and/or issuance fees, where relevant. (h) Stamped self-addressed, special delivery envelope, for return by post. Business: (a)-(h) and, (i) Evidence of intended business activities in the USA, such as a letter from their employer. Important Note: All applicants aged 14 to 79 are required to



schedule an appointment for an interview (tel: (09055) 444 546; Mon-Fri 0900-1600). Applicants under the age of 14 and those 80 and over may be eligible to apply for a visa by mail. Also note Restricted Entry.

**Note:** Additional processing requirements and information are required for: (a) males aged 16-45; (b) nationals of Cuba, Iran, Korea (Dem Rep), Libya, Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. (c) nationals of China (PR), Northern Cyprus, the Russian Federation, Somalia and Vietnam. Please note that requirements are subject to change at short notice and any applicant should check with the US Embassy (website: [www.usembassy.org.uk](http://www.usembassy.org.uk)).

**Working days required:** Varies with each embassy; interview appointment waiting time is usually 25 to 30 days (27 days for London Embassy), and visa processing time is usually five to seven working days (three days for London Embassy). It is important to allow sufficient time for processing the visa, and final travel plans should not be made until a visa has been issued. Applications lodged during the peak travel season may take longer.

**Temporary residence:** The law in the USA is complex for those wishing to take up residence. More information may be obtained from the Embassy (see Passport/Visa Information).

**Passport/Visa Information:** Embassy of the United States of America in the UK 24 Grosvenor Square, London W1A 1AE, UK Tel: (020) 7499 9000. Website: [www.usembassy.org.uk](http://www.usembassy.org.uk) Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0830-1730. Consulates in: Belfast and Edinburgh. American Embassy in the UK - Visa Services Tel: (09068) 200 290 (24-hour visa information line; calls cost 60p per minute, UK only; identical information is available on the embassy website at no cost) or (09055) 444 546 (operator-assisted visa information)

## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** US Dollar (US\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of US\$100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of US\$1, and 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 cents.

**Currency exchange:** Hotels do not, as a rule, exchange currency and only a few major banks will exchange foreign currency, so it is advisable to arrive with US Dollars.

**Credit & debit cards:** Most major credit cards are accepted throughout the USA, including American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services that may be available. Visitors are advised to carry at least one major credit card, as it is common to request prepayment or a credit card imprint for hotel rooms and car hire, even when final payment is not by credit card.

**Traveller's cheques:** Widely accepted in hotels, stores and restaurants, provided they are US Dollar cheques; Sterling traveller's cheques are not acceptable and few banks will change these. Change is issued in US Dollars. It should be noted that many banks do not have the facility to cash traveller's cheques (the US banking system differs greatly from that of the UK) and those that do are likely to charge a high commission. One or (in some cases) two items of identification (passport, credit card, driving licence) may also be required. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in US Dollars.

**Currency restrictions:** There are no limits on the import or export of either foreign or local currency. However, amounts in excess of US\$10,000 or the equivalent (including foreign



currency, traveller's cheques, money orders and 'bearer bonds') must be registered with US Customs on Form 4790. Failure to do so may result in civil and criminal prosecution, including seizure of the money. There is an embargo on transactions of US currency with Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Korea (Democratic People's Republic of).

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing £1.00=US\$1.74

**Banking hours:** Variable, but generally Mon-Fri 0900-1500.

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported by visitors over 21 years of age into the USA without **incurring customs duty**: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 2kg of smoking tobacco or proportionate amounts of each; 0.95l (1qt) of alcoholic beverage; gifts or articles up to a value of US\$100.

**Note:** (a) Items should not be gift-wrapped, as they must be available for customs inspection. (b) The alcoholic beverage allowance (see above) is the national maximum; certain States allow less and if arriving in those States, the excess will be taxed or withheld. (c) For information about the importation of pets, refer to the brochure Pets, Wildlife US Customs, available at US Embassies and Consulates. (d) Further information on US customs regulations is available online (website: [www.customs.ustreas.gov](http://www.customs.ustreas.gov)).

**Prohibited and restricted items:** The following are either banned or may only be imported under licence: (a) Narcotics and dangerous drugs, unless for medical purposes (doctor's certificate required). (b) Absinthe, biological materials, some seeds, fruits and plants (including endangered species of plants and vegetables and their products). (c) Firearms and ammunition (with some exceptions consult Customs' website). (d) Hazardous articles (fireworks, toxic materials), including matches and match books (unless packed tightly in a closed container). (e) Meat and poultry products fresh, dried or canned. (f) Any fish (unless certified as disease free) or their eggs, unless canned, pickled or smoked. (g) Dairy products and eggs. (h) Cuban cigars, brought from any country. (i) Wildlife and endangered species, including crustaceans, molluscs, eggs, game and hunting trophies and crafted articles of any part thereof. (j) Dog and cat fur. (k) Some art and artefacts (such as Pre-Columbian monumental and architectural sculpture and murals from South America). (l) Imports from Iran and leather souvenirs from Haiti (eg drums). (m) Some automobiles. (n) More than one article (limited to once every 30 days) displaying a counterfeit or confusingly similar logo to trademarked and copyrighted articles. (o) Merchandise from embargoed countries: Afghanistan, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Serbia & Montenegro and Sudan; information materials (pamphlets, books, tapes, films and recordings) are permitted, except from Iraq.

**Note:** Gold coins, medals and bullion, formerly prohibited, may be brought into the USA, except from embargoed countries (see above).



## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period. Jan 2 2006 New Year's Day. Jan 16 Martin Luther King Day. Feb 20 Presidents' Day. May 29 Memorial Day. Jul 4 Independence Day. Sep 4 Labor Day. Oct 9 Columbus Day. Nov 10 Veterans' Day. Nov 23 Thanksgiving Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Jan 15 Martin Luther King Day. Feb 19 Presidents' Day. May 28 Memorial Day.

## 7 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	No	No
<b>Cholera</b>	No	No
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	No	N/A
<b>Malaria</b>	No	N/A

**Other risks:** Rabies may be present in wildlife. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix.

**Health care:** Medical insurance providing cover up to at least US\$500,000 is strongly advised. Only emergency cases are treated without prior payment and treatment will often be refused without evidence of insurance or a deposit. All receipts must be kept in order to make a claim. Medical facilities are generally of an extremely high standard. Many medications available over the counter in other countries require a prescription in the US. Those visiting the USA for long periods with school-age children should be aware that school entry requirements include proof of immunisation against diphtheria, measles, poliomyelitis and rubella throughout the USA, and schools in many States also require immunisation against tetanus, pertussis and mumps. HIV-positive visitors must apply at the Embassy for a waiver of inadmissibility before entry.

Travel - International

**Note:** The information to be found immediately below is of a general nature. For more details, consult the individual State sections. Visitors to the USA should consider that, although all trips to the USA are almost always trouble-free, the US government has maintained its general threat from terrorism as "elevated". All nationals should expect stringent security checks at airports and in other public buildings. The US also introduced changes to its entry requirements for those wishing to enter the US under its Visa Waiver Programme.

**AIR:** The principal US airlines operating international services are: American Airlines (AA) (website: [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com)), Continental Airlines (website: [www.continental.com](http://www.continental.com)), Delta Air (website: [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com)), Northwest Airlines (website: [www.nwa.com](http://www.nwa.com)) and United Airlines (website: [www.ual.com](http://www.ual.com)). Many other airlines operate services from all over the world to the USA.

**International airports:** The busiest airports in the USA include Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International (ATL) (website: [www.atlanta-airport.com](http://www.atlanta-airport.com)), Chicago O'Hare International (ORD) (website: [www.ohare.com/ohare/home/asp](http://www.ohare.com/ohare/home/asp)), Los Angeles International (LAX) (website:



[www.lawa.org/lax](http://www.lawa.org/lax)), Dallas/Fort Worth International (DFW) ([website: www.dfwairport.com](http://www.dfwairport.com)), and Las Vegas McCarran International (LAS) ([website: www.mccarran.com](http://www.mccarran.com)). For further details, consult the individual State sections.

**Approximate flight times:** From London to Miami is nine hours 45 minutes, to New York is seven hours 50 minutes, to San Francisco is 11 hours 10 minutes, to Seattle is nine hours 50 minutes and to Washington DC is eight hours 25 minutes (all times are by non-stop flight).

**Note:** Return flights to Europe from the east coast of the USA take approximately 30 to 40 minutes less than outward westbound flights, and from the west coast of the USA approximately 60 minutes less. Visitors arriving in the USA via international airports may be subject to serious delays. A stringent new security system, which requires all visitors with visas to be photographed and fingerprinted upon entry, was put into operation in January 2004, as part of US anti-terrorism measures. Experts warn that this heightened state of alert could prevail for the next few years.

**Departure tax:** None.

**SEA:** The top ports of call are Port of Anchorage ([www.muni.org/port](http://www.muni.org/port)), Honolulu, State of Hawaii, Harbor Division ([www.state.hi.us/dot/harbors](http://www.state.hi.us/dot/harbors)), Port of New Orleans ([www.portno.com](http://www.portno.com)), New York, The Port Authority on NY & NJ ([www.panynj.gov/aviation.html](http://www.panynj.gov/aviation.html)), and Tampa Port Authority ([www.tampaport.com](http://www.tampaport.com)). Numerous cruise lines sail from ports worldwide to both the east and west coasts; contact a travel agent for fares and details.

**RAIL:** The US and Mexican rail networks connect at Yuma, El Paso and Del Rio, with limited scheduled passenger services. There are several connections with the Canadian network, including New York/ Montréal, Chicago/Toronto and Seattle/Vancouver services. For further information, contact Amtrak (tel: (800) 872 7245 (toll-free in USA) or (212) 582 6875 (New York); [website: www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)). In the UK, contact Leisurail (tel: (0800) 698 7545 or (0870) 750 0222).

**ROAD:** There are many crossing points from Canada to the USA. The major road routes are: New York to Montréal/ Ottawa, Detroit to Toronto/Hamilton, Minneapolis to Winnipeg and Seattle to Vancouver/Edmonton/Calgary. There are road links to Mexican destinations from El Paso, San Diego, Tucson and San Antonio. Bus: Greyhound offers services to many destinations in Canada and some destinations in Mexico (tel: (800) 231 2222 (toll-free in USA); [website: www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)).

Travel - Internal

**AIR:** The USA may be crossed within five hours from east to west and within two hours from north to south. Strong competition between airlines has resulted in a wide difference between fares. Categories of fares include first-class, economy, excursion and discount. Night flights are generally cheaper. Cheap fares: Money-saving schemes for overseas visitors include discounts on internal flights with the Visit USA (VUSA) Airpass, offered by the principal US airlines (often in conjunction with British Airways) and can be purchased in advance. (Delta offers a similar scheme branded as Discover America.) These passes are offered as a minimum of three and a maximum of 10 coupons entitling the passenger to that number of flights within the USA at a discounted fare; price is based on the number of flight segments. A number of restrictions usually apply, including: (a) the pass must be booked in conjunction with a round-trip flight to the USA (although this can, in some cases, be on a different carrier); (b) tickets must be purchased outside North America and are not available to US, Canadian and some Caribbean residents; (c)



tickets must often be purchased before a specified time (eg 21 days in advance); (d) the traveller must utilise the first coupon within a specified time period (usually within 60 days of arrival in the USA) and use all the coupons within 180 days of arrival. Agents are advised to contact the offices of individual airlines once a basic itinerary has been organised, as terms may vary. Note: Baggage allowance is often determined by number and size in addition to weight.

**SEA/LAKE/RIVER:** There are extensive water communications both along the coastline and along the great rivers and lakes. The Ohio River carries more water traffic than any other inland waterway in the world. Tour ships and passenger and freight lines crisscross all the Great Lakes from ports in Duluth, Sault Sainte Marie, Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, Rochester, Cleveland and Toronto.

**RAIL:** Nearly all the long-distance trains are operated by Amtrak, which serves more than 500 communities in 45 States over a 35,000km (22,000 mile) route system. Even so, rail is not considered the best or fastest way to travel within the USA, as trains can be slow and infrequent, as well as expensive. Some services, however, are popular and reliable. Services along the northeast corridor exist between Boston, New York and Washington. The 'Acela Express' high-speed rail service along the northeast corridor is capable of travelling up to 240kph (150mph), reducing the current three-hour trip between Washington, DC and New York by 30 minutes and the New York to Boston journey from four hours 30 minutes to three hours. Other routes from Washington, DC run south to Miami and New Orleans, and from Boston, New York or Washington, DC to Chicago. From Chicago, daily services radiate to Seattle, Portland, Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Orleans and San Antonio (via Fort Worth). Connections also exist between Los Angeles and San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco, San Francisco and Bakersfield, San Francisco and Seattle (via Portland), San Antonio and Oklahoma City, New Orleans and Atlanta, and Kansas City and St Louis, amongst others. A coast-to-coast train service is provided between Jacksonville and Los Angeles via Tucson, El Paso, San Antonio, Houston and New Orleans. Prices and timetables are subject to change without notice. A variety of State and municipal bodies operate short-distance and commuter rail lines around various urban centres, many connected to stops on the Amtrak lines. Amtrak also operates a Thruway bus service, which connects to some cities and towns not on the Amtrak grid. A number of independent companies offer short routes, often in scenic locations, onboard vintage trains. These routes are often a good idea for travellers wishing to reach wilderness locations that are off the beaten track. Amtrak contact details: For up-to-date information, contact Amtrak (tel: (800) 872 7245 (toll-free in USA); website: [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)); in the UK, contact Leisurail (tel: (0800) 698 7545 or (0870) 750 0222). US travel agents can also obtain information on Amtrak train services, schedules and travel packages through the Western Folder Distribution Company Travel Information Network by entering their ARC number online (website: [www.travelinfonynetwork.com](http://www.travelinfonynetwork.com)). Facilities and services: Nearly all trains have coach seating and air conditioning, with a variety of sleeping accommodation available for a supplemental charge. All long-distance trains have waiter-staffed, seated dining facilities. Cafe cars on shorter trips provide snacks and beverages that guests can take back to their seats. Tour packages: Amtrak offers a variety of tour packages throughout the USA flexible to any budget. Full details are provided in the Amtrak Travel Planner, which is widely available. A great deal of the USA's beautiful scenery and historical sites can only be viewed by train. Passenger trains continue to attract a discerning and ever-increasing clientele. Indeed, rail travel in the USA as in many other countries has undergone a considerable revival in recent years, and the trend continues. It is therefore advisable for passengers to reserve well in advance, as some routes are often booked out. Cheap fares: The USA Rail Pass is specifically designed for international travellers from outside the USA or Canada and offers 15 or 30 days of unlimited travel either on a national or regional basis. The National USA Rail Pass offers travel on the whole Amtrak network in the USA and Canada (excluding Auto Train, Metroliner and Acela Express between Boston, New York and



Washington). It costs US\$440 (US\$295 off-peak) per person for 15 days and US\$550 (US\$385 off-peak) for 30 days. The peak season is from 28 May to 1 September and off-peak fares are in effect for the remainder of the year. Children under 2 years of age travel free and those aged 2 to 15 pay half the adult fare. The following Regional USA Rail Passes are also available: The Northeast Rail Pass is valid on trains from Newport News (Virginia) north to Boston (Massachusetts), Burlington (Vermont) and Montréal (Canada), west from Philadelphia to Harrisburg (both Pennsylvania), west from New York City to Niagara Falls (New York State), and all stations in between; the East Rail Pass covers the region east of Chicago (Illinois) and New Orleans (Louisiana) up to Montréal; the West Rail Pass covers the region west of Chicago to Seattle (Washington State), Portland (Oregon), San Francisco and Los Angeles (both California); the Far West Rail Pass covers the region from Denver (Colorado) to Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles; and the Coastal Rail Pass covers the west coast and from Seattle to San Diego (California). Prices for these passes vary between US\$205 for the 15-day Northeast Rail Pass and US\$405 for the 30-day West Rail Pass (with a 20 to 30 per cent reduction during off-peak season). The Northeast Rail Pass also provides the option of purchasing a 5-day pass for US\$149 during the peak and off-peak seasons. Passes can be purchased prior to travel to the USA or at Amtrak stations, upon presentation of a valid passport issued outside Canada or the USA. Passports and passes must be presented for the issuance of rail tickets. The passes cover coach-class travel tickets and seat reservations on Amtrak passenger services. However, rail passes act as a form of payment for seats only to guarantee a seat on a specific train, a reservation must be made well in advance; cancellation fees may apply. Travellers should contact Amtrak (tel: (800) 872 7245) to find out whether reservations are required on specific journeys they wish to make. For journeys where reservations are required, train times should be reconfirmed 24 hours prior to departure. Travellers planning to travel during peak times should make reservations well in advance. Further information on prices and timetables is available from Amtrak (for contact details, see above). A list of international sales representatives can be found online (website: [www.amtrak.com/international/salesreps.html](http://www.amtrak.com/international/salesreps.html)).

**ROAD:** Driving is a marvellous way to see the USA, although the distances between cities can be enormous (eg 4716km (2930 miles) between San Francisco and New York City). A realistic evaluation of travel times should be made to avoid over-strenuous itineraries. Driving conditions are excellent and the road system reaches every town. Petrol (gas) is cheaper than in Europe. AAA (American Automobile Association; website: [www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com)) offers touring services, maps and travel advice to affiliate auto club members. Some AAA clubs offer referrals to companies for vehicle insurance policies, which are compulsory in all States, even for hire cars. AAA basic benefits are offered as a courtesy to affiliate auto club members who present their valid membership card (eg AA membership for the UK) while visiting in the USA. For further information, Americans should contact their local AAA club office (listed in the local telephone directory), while visitors to the USA should contact their own national association for information on the AAA before departure. Bus: Greyhound is the main national coach carrier and covers the whole of the USA. This 24-hour service is supplemented by over 11,000 other tour lines, covering the country with reasonably priced and regular services. Some Greyhound services are available to Canada and Mexico. There are express bus services between major cities. Air conditioning, toilets and reclining seats are available on all buses. Meals are not provided, however, food and drink (non-alcoholic) may be consumed on board and there are regular meal stops on longer routes. Unlimited stopovers are allowed for unrestricted fares. Reservations are not accepted (although may be required if connecting to another carrier) and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis; passengers are advised to arrive at the terminal approximately one hour before the scheduled departure. For information on fares and schedules, contact Greyhound (tel: (800) 231 2222 (toll-free in USA) or (214) 849 8100 (international callers); website: [www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)). Cheap fares: Greyhound offers a range of Discovery Pass programmes, valid for 4 to 60 days in the USA and/or Canada, which can be purchased by US, Canadian and overseas travellers. The



International Ameripass is 10 to 15 per cent cheaper than the domestic version, but must be purchased outside the USA and Canada. The Ameripass, which gives seven, 10, 15, 21, 30, 45 or 60 days unlimited travel throughout the USA and some points within Mexico, costs US\$229-609 for domestic purchasers (US\$219-559 for international). A four-day pass is also available for US\$165, but only to overseas visitors. Passes are validated at the ticket counter at the beginning of the trip and identification must be shown; individual tickets are not necessary. The pass is valid for a continuous period (depending on which pass is purchased) starting from validation. Unlimited stops are allowed. Discounted fares are available for children aged 2 to 12 years, passengers over 62 years old and students enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate study. A variety of regional discounts are also available. For further details, contact Greyhound on one of their Discovery Pass numbers (tel: (888) 454 7277 (if purchased in the USA) or (888) 661 8747 (if purchased in Canada) or (402) 330 8552 or 330 8584 (if purchased overseas)). Car hire: Major international companies have offices at all gateway airports and in most cities. There are excellent discounts available for foreign visitors. US\$160 per week is an acceptable budget rate and drivers should make sure that free unlimited mileage is included. A drop-off charge will most likely be added if the car is deposited in a different city from the one in which it was hired. Credit-card deposits and inclusive rates are generally required. As a guide to car sizes, an 'Economy' or 'Compact' refers to a car the size of a standard European car, while a 'Standard' refers to a car nearly the size of a limousine. Minimum ages for hirers vary according to the rental company, pick-up point and method of payment. Agents are advised to contact the individual companies for information on drivers under 25 years of age. Those looking to hire a car in the USA can save money through fly-drive deals and by booking a car in advance (obtaining written confirmation of the price is recommended). Drive away: Auto Driveaway provides a service enabling the traveller to drive cars to and from a given point, only paying the price of petrol. A deposit is often required and time and mileage limits are set for delivery, which leaves very little time for sightseeing (there are heavy financial penalties for those who exceed the limits). Drivers should also check the car beforehand, so as not to incur any unnecessary repair costs. Some companies allow the driver to finish the journey in Canada. Details are published under Automobile & Truck Transporting in the US Yellow Pages. For further information, contact Auto Driveaway (tel: (312) 341 1900; website: [www.autodriveaway.com](http://www.autodriveaway.com)). Campers/motorhomes: The hire of self-drive campers or motorhomes, which are called 'recreational vehicles' or RVs in the USA, is easy and provides a good means of getting around. For more information contact The Recreational Vehicle Dealers Association (tel: (480) 464 7300; website: [www.cruiseamerica.com](http://www.cruiseamerica.com)). Documentation and insurance: An International Driving Permit is recommended, although it is not legally required (it is often very useful as an additional proof of identity). A full national driving licence is accepted for up to one year. All travellers intending to hire or drive cars or motorhomes in the USA are strongly advised to ensure that the insurance policy covers their total requirements, covering all drivers and passengers against injury or accidental death. A yellow 'non-resident, interstate liability insurance card', which acts as evidence of financial responsibility, is available through motor insurance agents. Additional Collision Damage Waiver covering the car itself is also strongly recommended; in some states this extra insurance is included in hire rates by law. Traffic regulations: Traffic drives on the right. The speed limit is usually 55mph (89kph) on motorways, but varies from State to State. Speed limits are clearly indicated along highways and are strictly enforced, with heavy fines imposed. Note that it is illegal to pass a school bus that has stopped to unload its passengers (using indicators and warning lights) and all vehicles must stop until the bus has moved back into the traffic stream. It is illegal for drivers not to have their licences immediately to hand. If stopped, do not attempt to pay a driving fine on the spot (unless it is demanded), as it may be interpreted as an attempt to bribe. Note: There are extremely tough laws against drinking and driving throughout the USA. These laws are strictly enforced.



**URBAN:** Some US cities now have good public transport services following a 'transit renaissance' after the energy crises of the 1970s. There are numerous underground train systems in operation in major cities including New York (subway), Washington, DC (metro), Boston ('T'), Chicago (train) and San Francisco (BART Bay Area Rapid Transit); others are being planned or built. There are also several tramway and trolleybus systems, including the much-loved antique trams found in San Francisco. Note: Many of the underground train systems are dangerous during off-peak hours (the New York subway, in particular, has acquired an almost gothic reputation for violence, although this has been much exaggerated), but they offer cheap, quick and efficient travel during the working day, particularly in New York, Boston and Chicago. Travel by any other means during the day is likely to be slow and arduous.

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS/MOTELS:** There are many good traditional hotels. However, the majority are modern and part of national and international chains, often with standard prices. Motels are hotels situated along main roads, away from the city centre and towns. In general, the quality of accommodation is high, with facilities such as televisions and telephones in each room. Hotels expect payment in advance and reservations are held until around 1800, unless a late arrival is requested.

**Grading:** Basic categories fall into Super, Deluxe, Standard, Moderate and Inexpensive. Prices vary according to standards.

**Pre-paid voucher schemes:** Several companies offer a pre-paid voucher scheme for use at various hotel and motel chains throughout the USA.

**BED & BREAKFAST:** This long established tradition in the UK is now spreading across the USA. B&B signs are not generally displayed by individual homes, but most homes offering this service are listed in directories, which may be purchased by interested travellers. 'B&B inns' have up to 20 or so rooms, and are distinguished from 'country inns' in that the latter offer meals in addition to breakfast.

**RANCH HOLIDAYS:** There are ranches all over the southern and western States offering riding, participation in cattle drives, and activity holidays in mountain and lakeland settings.

**CAMPING/CARAVANNING:** This is extremely popular, especially in the Rocky Mountains and New England. The camping season in the north lasts from mid-May to mid-September; reservations are recommended if camping during the high season. Camping alongside highways and in undesignated areas is prohibited. The 24,000-plus campsites fall into two general categories: Public sites: Usually linked with National or State Parks and Forests, offering modest but comfortable facilities from US\$10-22 per night. Most of them will have toilet blocks, electricity hook-ups and picnic areas. Campsites are usually operated on a first-come, first-served basis and will often restrict the length of stay. Advance reservations are possible at some national parks. Privately run sites: These range from basic to resort luxury. Most have laundry and drying facilities, entertainment and information services. Reservations can be made through a central reservation office in the USA. Fees range from around US\$20-40. Camping in the backcountry (a general term for areas inaccessible by road) requires a permit, available free of charge. Visitors are advised not to drink water from rivers and streams without boiling it for at least five minutes.



It is also advisable to check fire regulations and inform a park ranger of the itinerary before setting out to a backcountry area.

**YMCA/YOUTH HOSTELS:** There are over 2400 YMCA centres throughout the USA. Membership is not necessary but reservations should be made two days prior to arrival via the Head Offices. The YMCA offers centrally located accommodation at attractive rates, coast to coast throughout the USA. Most centres offer single and double accommodation for both men and women and many also have sports facilities. Youth hostels offer their members simple, inexpensive overnight accommodation usually located in scenic, historical or cultural places. HI-AYH (Hostelling International - American Youth Hostels) operates some 150 hostels in both urban and rural locations. Membership is open to everyone, with no age limit, with free group and youth (under 18 years) memberships. European visitors should take out membership before travelling.

**SELF-CATERING:** Self-catering facilities, known in the USA as 'apartments', 'condominiums' (or 'condos'), 'efficiencies' or 'villas', are also available.

**HOME EXCHANGE:** There are several agents who offer home exchange programmes between the UK and USA.

**ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION:** (American Hotel & Lodging Association 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005, USA Tel: (202) 289 3100. Website: [www.ahla.com](http://www.ahla.com) Professional Association of Innkeepers International Website: [www.paii.org](http://www.paii.org) There are also numerous national and regional B&B associations. Campgrounds of America (KOA) Tel: (406) 248 7444. Website: [www.koa.com](http://www.koa.com) YMCA of the USA 101 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606, USA Tel: (312) 977 0031. Website: [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net) Hostelling International - American Youth Hostels (HI-AYH) 8401 Colesville Road, Suite 600, Silver Spring, MD 20910, USA Tel: (301) 495 1240. Website: [www.hiayh.org](http://www.hiayh.org) or [www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)

## Introduction

For details on resorts, excursions, places of interest and tourist attractions in the USA, see the individual State sections.

## 9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Outdoor pursuits:** The vast expanses of wilderness, mountains, forest, canyons and coastlines of the USA lend themselves to a wide range of outdoor pursuits. From trekking in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, whitewater rafting through the Grand Canyon on the Colorado River, canoeing down the Mississippi River, fishing on the Great Lakes, sailing in Florida, diving in Hawaii to skiing in the Rocky Mountains, every activity can easily be arranged. The USA's national parks are administered by the National Park Service (NPS; website: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)). Hiking trails are generally well kept and well marked. The National Park system includes National Monuments, which are smaller than parks and focus on maybe just one archaeological site or geological phenomenon (such as Devil's Tower in Wyoming), National Forests and 170 or so lesser known Parks, which are located away from the cities and highways. State Parks and State Monuments are administered by individual States. Most of the USA's parks and outdoor recreational areas have visitor centres where advice on trails, activities and other practical information (such as weather reports or fishing regulations) can be obtained. Most parks and monuments charge admission fees ranging from US\$4-20. A number of passes are available from the NPS: the



National Parks Pass (US\$50) gives one driver and all accompanying passengers a year's unlimited access to nearly all national parks and monuments (users should note that this pass does not reduce fees for facilities such as camping, swimming, parking and boat launching). Only the larger parks have hotel-style accommodation, while almost all parks and monuments have facilities for camping. For further details on camping, see the Accommodation section. Fishing permits are compulsory and vary from State to State. Rock climbing and mountaineering are particularly popular in the Sierra Nevada and in the Rocky Mountains. For further information about reservations, permits, regulations and services, visitors should contact the individual parks in advance or the National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240 (tel: (202) 208 6843; website: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)).

**Spectator sports:** Often called 'the nation's pastime', baseball is an important part of the US psyche. The 'boys of summer' play Major League Baseball (tel: (212) 931 7800; website: [www.mlb.com](http://www.mlb.com)) from April to September, 162 games in total, culminating in the post-season World Series championships, first contested in 1903. Games are frequent and tickets for regular season games are readily available and can be relatively cheap, starting at around US\$9 per seat. American football tickets during the September to January National Football League (NFL; tel: (212) 450 2000; website: [www.nfl.com](http://www.nfl.com)) season are not only very expensive but also extremely hard to come by. Many people opt for the popular college games instead. College basketball is also surprisingly high profile, although not as big a draw as professional games in the National Basketball Association (NBA) (tel: (212) 407 8000; website: [www.nba.com](http://www.nba.com)), whose season runs from November to April, with the playoffs often extending to June. The popularity of ice hockey has expanded from Canadian and far northern cities to the rest of the USA. Professional teams compete in the National Hockey League (website: [www.nhl.com](http://www.nhl.com)) from October to March, and tickets are sold out quickly. The most popular tennis competition in the USA is the US Open at Flushing Meadows in New York, held from late August to early September. Individual tickets go on sale during June. For ticket information, write to Customer Service, US Open Ticket Office, USTA National Tennis Center, Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Flushing, NY 11368 (website: [www.usopen.org](http://www.usopen.org)). For general information on tennis, contact the United States Tennis Association (website: [www.usta.com](http://www.usta.com)). The heart of horse racing in the USA is the 'bluegrass country', focused around the State of Kentucky. The most important races of the year, the Bluegrass Stakes and the Kentucky Derby (on the first Saturday in May), are run at the Churchill Downs racecourse in Louisville, Kentucky. There are also major tracks in New England. Rodeos, a legacy of the historical development that resulted from the spread of cattle ranching, are frequently held in Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas and throughout the western States. The USA also hosts the world's largest motor racing event, the Indianapolis 500, held annually in May.

**Wintersports:** The USA offers some of the world's best skiing runs, particularly in the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada. The Rocky Mountain States (and Colorado in particular) are exceptionally good for downhill skiing, the best-known resorts including Aspen, Big Sky, Jackson Hole and Vail. In the Sierra Nevada, Lake Tahoe is the major ski destination. Cross-country skiing is also well catered for, with backcountry ski lodges scattered around mountainous areas along both coasts (New England and California) and in the Rockies. Minnesota, Wisconsin and Wyoming are also good destinations for cross-country skiing. Information on cross-country skiing can be obtained from the Cross Country Ski Areas Association (website: [www.xcski.org](http://www.xcski.org)). In the past few years, snowboarding has become increasingly popular, and plenty of ski resorts now offer half pipes and board rental.

**Golf:** The American passion for golf is exemplified by the extremely high number of courses found throughout the country, as well as the massive crowds flocking to the United States Golf Association's national championships games. In 2002, the 102nd US Open was held on a public course for the first time, at Bethpage State Park (Black Course) on Long Island. For further details



on courses, fees and competitions, contact the United States Golf Association (USGA), PO Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931 (tel: (908) 234 2300; fax: (908) 234 9687; website: [www.usga.org](http://www.usga.org)).

**Watersports:** One of the activities that epitomises US sport is surfing and Hawaii, with its legendary winter swells at northern Oahu (surfing's spiritual home), Sunset Beach, Waimea and the Banzai Pipeline (situated in the Ehukai beach parks), remains one of the USA's (and the world's) most famous surfing destinations. California also has some good breaks in Malibu, Rincon and Steamer Lane. During winter, southern California is also superb, with swells at Huntington Beach and Santa Cruz. Diving and snorkelling are particularly good in California, Florida, Hawaii and along the East Coast. The Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), the world's largest recreational diving membership organisation, has its headquarters in California, at 30151 Tomas Street, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 (tel: (800) 729 7234 or (949) 858 7234; fax: (949) 858 7264; e-mail: [webmaster@padi.com](mailto:webmaster@padi.com); website: [www.padi.com](http://www.padi.com)). Other popular watersports include sailing, windsurfing, sea kayaking and jetskiing.

#### Entertainment

**Food & Drink:** In large cities, restaurants are mostly modern and very clean, offering a vast range of cuisines, prices and facilities. Restaurants come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from fast-food, self-service and counter service to drive-in and table service. The 'diner' is an integral part of the US way of life; consisting of a driveway, neon lights and simple food served from the counter; these are generally located in or just outside smaller towns. See Food & Drink in the individual State sections for further details on regional specialities. National specialities: Fried chicken. Hamburgers. Apple pie. National drinks: Coca-Cola. Espresso. Regional wines. Microbrewery beer. Things to know: There are also many types of bars, ranging from the smart cocktail lounge, cafe-style, high 'saloon' style bars and imitations of English pubs to the 'regular' bar. Generally speaking, waiter/waitress service costs more. Drinking laws are set by the individual States, counties, municipalities and towns, although traditionally closing time in bars is between midnight and 0300. Legal Drinking Age: The legal age for drinking also varies from 18 to 21 from State to State and the laws on the availability of alcohol run from New Orleans' policy of anytime, anywhere and to anyone, to localities, such as in Utah, where drinking is strictly prohibited. Tipping: Widely practised, as service charges are not usually included in the bill and waiters depend heavily on tips for their income. Waiters generally expect 15 to 20 per cent, as do taxi drivers and hairdressers. It should be noted that a cover charge is for admission to an establishment, not a tip for service. Porters generally expect US\$1 per bag.

**Nightlife:** Clubs generally stay open until the early hours in cities, where one can find music and theatre of all descriptions. Theatre tickets for Broadway, New York's equivalent of London's West End 'Theatreland', can be booked through the Group Sales Box Office, 226 West 47th Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10036 (tel: (800) 223 7565 or (212) 398 8383; website: [www.bestofbroadway.com](http://www.bestofbroadway.com)). Special discounts for group bookings are available. Tickets must be paid for in advance and will be mailed out or kept at the theatre box office for collection on the night of the performance. Gambling is only allowed in licensed casinos and the legal age for gamblers is 21 years of age or over.

**Shopping:** Variety, late opening hours, competitive prices and an abundance of modern goods typify US shopping. Many small stores, specialist food shops and hypermarkets are open 24 hours a day. Clothes and electronic goods can be bought direct from factories. Retail outlets range from flea markets and bargain stores to large chain department stores. Malls are a popular way of shopping in the USA and consist of a cluster of different kinds of shops in one building, often a few storeys high, connected by an indoor plaza. Note that a sales tax is levied on most or all items in most States and the addition is not included on the price label; sales tax can be



anywhere from 3 to 15 per cent, depending on the State; some States have no sales tax at all. Shopping hours: Mon-Sat 0900/0930-1730/1800. There may be late-night shopping one or two evenings a week. Some States permit Sunday trading.

#### Business

**GDP:** \$12.77 trillion (official exchange rate 2005 estimate) Main exports: Machinery and transportation equipment, such as aircraft, computers, electric power equipment, industrial machinery, and motor vehicles and parts; manufactured articles, especially scientific measuring equipment; chemical elements and compounds, including plastic materials. Main imports: Machinery and transport equipment, such as automobiles and parts, engines, office machines, and telecommunications equipment; manufactured articles, such as clothing, shoes, and toys; basic manufactures, such as iron, steel, and other metals, and paper and newsprint. Main trade partners: Canada, China, Japan, Mexico, France, Germany, South Korea, Taiwan, and UK.

**Economy:** The US economy is the world's largest, most powerful and most diverse. The roots of this lie in the physical expansion and development of the country during the 19th century. As a result, the USA benefited from a unique combination of mass immigration, technological and marketing innovations, exploitation of natural resources, the expansion of international trade, historical fortune (hugely destructive wars that caused immense damage to other world powers but left the USA virtually untouched) and the fostering of a political and economic system well designed to exploit them. The enormous influence of US-based multinational companies in the world economy has not only afforded unique global influence to the US Government but also allowed its currency to acquire unique international status. Large areas of the USA, particularly in the Midwest, are under cultivation and produce a wide range of commodities: the most important of these are cotton, cereals and tobacco, all of which are exported on a large scale. The principal mining operations produce oil and gas, coal, copper, iron, uranium and silver. The US manufacturing industry is a world leader in many fields including steel, vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, chemicals, electronics and consumer goods. Since the late-1970s, however, the biggest employer has been the service sector, particularly finance (including banking, insurance and equities), leisure and tourism. Services now account for three quarters of output and employment. New computer-based industries associated with the Internet, which began revolutionising lifestyles and commerce during the late-1990s, rose quickly, burned brightly and died suddenly. Toward the close of 2000, many of these 'dot-com' industries plunged into bankruptcy. The USA's technology sector went into decline and the country found itself in recession. Annual growth averaged around 4 to 5 per cent during the late-1990s, but slipped to 2.2 per cent as the economy slowed down. The events of September 2001 added to the pessimistic outlook for the economy, as several industries (notably civil aviation and tourism) suffered a sudden fall in demand. In addition to important IT and telecommunications industries, traditional manufacturing industries, such as steel, were also depressed. Toward the end of 2003, a BSE scare caused a major upheaval in the USA's meat industry, particularly affecting its exports (mainly to Japan). The internationally controversial war on Iraq has also threatened many trade friendships and lowered the value of the US Dollar (US\$1 in 1990 had the same buying power as US\$1.42 in 2003), although the USA's economic might has been maintained. Unemployment reached 5.9 per cent in November 2003, although productivity increased by 9.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2003. The USA's most important trade relationship is with Canada (which accounts for approximately 20 per cent of all US trade). The two countries concluded a free trade agreement in 1989: this accord formed the basis for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), to which Mexico became a signatory in 1992. (NAFTA is of similar proportions to the EU in terms of population and economic output.) Other major trading partners are Japan, the UK and Germany, followed by other members of the EU.



**Business Etiquette:** Businesspeople are generally expected to dress smartly, although a man may wear a short-sleeved shirt under his suit in hot weather. Normal business courtesies should be observed, although Americans tend to be less formal than Europeans. Appointments and punctuality are normal procedure and business cards are widely used. Dates in America are written month-day-year: 4 July 2003 would thus be abbreviated as 7/4/03. Write out the month in full to avoid confusion. Office hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1730.

**Conferences/Conventions:** If for no other reason than its role in the world economy, the USA is an important conference destination; there are State, city and regional travel and convention organisations in every part of the country, each actively promoting its own assets. With so much information available, the real problem for the organiser is to find some way of getting through it all. There are several magazines aimed at helping the conference organiser; they include Meeting & Conventions Magazine (website: [www.meetings-conventions.com](http://www.meetings-conventions.com)), Successful Meetings Magazine (website: [www.succesmtgs.com](http://www.succesmtgs.com)) and Corporate Meetings and Incentive Magazine (website: [www.meetingsnet.com](http://www.meetingsnet.com)). Home to three of the 10 largest convention venues in the USA, Las Vegas was the most popular US trade show venue in 2004, hosting some 174 shows, followed by New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Orlando, New Orleans, San Diego, San Francisco and Washington, DC. Organisers interested in US venues should contact the US Travel Industry Association or the travel organisations listed in the individual State sections. In addition to the State organisations, addresses of travel and convention organisations for cities and counties are also included.

**Commercial Information:** The Partnership for New York City 1 Battery Park Plaza, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10004, USATel: (212) 493 7400. Website: [www.nycp.org](http://www.nycp.org) The US Chamber of Commerce 1615 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20062, USATel: (202) 659 6000 or (800) 638 6583. Website: [www.uschamber.org](http://www.uschamber.org) The Trade Information Center - US Department of Commerce Tel: (800) 872 8723. Website: [www.tradeinfo.doc.gov](http://www.tradeinfo.doc.gov) The National Foreign Trade Council 1625 K Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006, USATel: (202) 887 0278. Website: [www.nftc.org](http://www.nftc.org) British American Business Inc 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10017, USA Tel: (212) 661 4060. British American Business Inc. (UK Office) 75 Brook Street, London W1K 4AD, UK Tel: (020) 7467 7400. Website: [www.babinc.org](http://www.babinc.org)

## 10 CLIMATE

See the individual State sections.

## 11 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** Before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in North America in 1492, the continent was inhabited by peoples thought to have been descended from nomadic Mongolian tribes who had travelled across the Barents Sea. The first wave of European settlers, mainly English, French and Dutch, crossed the Atlantic in the 17th century and colonised the Eastern Seaboard. The restrictions on political rights and the punitive taxation which the British government imposed on the American colonists led to the American War of Independence (1775-1783), with the Declaration of Independence being signed in 1776. The outcome was a humiliating defeat for the English King, George III. The American Constitution born of this victory has been imitated by many other countries. A period of settlement, purchases from the French and Spanish, and annexation of Indian and Mexican lands followed. By 1853, the boundaries of the United States



were, with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii, as they are today. Economic activity in the southern States centred on plantation agriculture dependent on slavery. Attempts by liberally inclined Republicans, led by Abraham Lincoln, to end slavery were fiercely opposed. The election of Lincoln to the presidency in 1861 precipitated a political crisis in which seven southern States (joined later by three others) seceded from the Union, leading to the American Civil War. The more powerful and better equipped Union forces prevailed over the rebel Confederacy after 4 years of fighting. After the war, the country entered a period of consolidation, building up an industrial economy and settling the vast interior region of America known as the Midwest. The mid- and late-19th century also saw the development of an American foreign policy: formal diplomatic and trading links were established with the old colonial powers; and the USA sought to assert itself as the dominant power on the American continent a policy espoused by the Monroe Doctrine (1822) which laid the basis for intervention in support of the USA's 'national interest'. The latter has been a constant feature of US policy ever since. Successful diplomatic and commercial overtures were also made to Japan, paving the way for the growth of US power in the Pacific. In Europe, US intervention in 1917 proved decisive for the Allies, and signalled the emergence of the USA as a global power. Driven by free-market economic policies and innovative developments in technology and production methods notably the growth of the motor industry the USA had by this time undeniably become the world's leading economy. The USA entered World War II following the Japanese attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbour, although its earlier neutrality had been decidedly favourable to the Allied Powers, especially Britain. Domestic post-war politics have revolved around the struggle between the Republicans and Democrats, the only two parties of any significance. The Republican Party, often referred to as the GOP or Grand Old Party, picks up most corporate support and substantial backing from wealthy individuals; the Democrats are perceived as the party supported by particular interest groups, thus the 'labor vote', 'black vote', 'Jewish vote' and so on, and as having more liberal views on social and welfare policy. The Democratic Party is, however, by no means left-wing and equally as keen as its GOP counterpart to attract the votes of 'middle America' the mostly white, middle-income, middle-class folk who form the backbone of the US electorate (ie the quarter of the population who actually vote). Both Republican and Democratic candidates have been elected to the presidency with roughly equal frequency over the history of the nation, but Republicans have been more frequent in the White House since 1945 while the Democrats have dominated Congress. World War II also saw the birth of nuclear weapons and the superpower conflict that has, until recently, dominated modern international relations. The essence of post-war US foreign policy was the struggle against the spread of communist influence. Despite the dangers of nuclear escalation, the USA has never eschewed military intervention, either directly, or by proxy. The Korean War of the 1950s (under UN auspices), the ill-fated Vietnam war and the Middle East have all seen US troops engaged while many other countries have experienced the effects of military forces financed and supported by discreet US backing. The Reagan administration, which came to office in 1980, reinvigorated the ideological struggle against communism. However, relations between the USA and the former USSR improved greatly after 1985 owing, almost entirely, to the new Soviet foreign policy adopted by the Gorbachev government. In 1988, Reagan's Vice-President George Bush (father of the current president) was elected to the White House. Bush presided over the collapse of the Soviet bloc and, to that extent, 'won' the Cold War. With its principal enemy vanquished, American foreign policy needed overhauling. Thus we have the 'New World Order', a loosely defined notion coined by Bush senior in early 1991. The enemy, so to speak, was best defined prophetically by one American official as a 'swirling pot of poison made up of zealots, crazies, drug traffickers and terrorists'. Under the aegis of the New World Order, Bush senior launched two major, largely successful military campaigns against Panama and Iraq. But his neglect of domestic matters, especially the economy, was exploited by his main political opponent. This was Bill Clinton, the relatively unknown Democratic Governor of Arkansas who went on to win the 1992 presidential election by a comfortable majority. After a shaky start, Clinton served two terms. His administrations' principal legacy was a healthy economy, fuelled by



8 years of steady growth, and two key trade agreements which laid the foundations of what has come to be known as 'globalisation': the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); and the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) from which emerged the World Trade Organisation. Clinton's foreign policy record was mixed. It started badly with the disastrous and humiliating US involvement (through the UN) in Somalia; Haiti almost went the same way although the position was later recovered. Thereafter, the Dayton accord that ended the Bosnian civil war was a success, favourably contrasting decisive US diplomatic and military action with the vacillations of the Europeans. In the Middle East, the 1994 Israeli/Palestinian accord was derailed by mutual suspicions while the 'dual containment' strategy designed to keep the twin pariahs, Iran and Iraq, in check had mixed results. Clinton's second term was dominated by his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Congress appointed a special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, to investigate dissembling by Clinton about Lewinsky and other dubious episodes in his business and personal lives. Despite accumulating a mass of evidence, Starr was unable to persuade Congress to impeach Clinton, but the episode seriously tainted his presidency. The 2000 presidential election pitted Clinton's Democratic Vice-president, Al Gore, against George W 'Dubya' Bush, governor of Texas and son of former President George Bush. The contest was ultimately decided in favour of Bush, in circumstances that are still bitterly disputed, by an extremely narrow margin in the state of Florida. Bush arrived in Washington as an unknown quantity, but assembled a Cabinet of seasoned Washington hands such as Dick Cheney (Vice-President) and Colin Powell (Secretary of State); a number of others had served under his father. Many had close links with the oil industry so when the new administration, in one of its first major foreign policy decisions, pulled out of the Kyoto agreement on worldwide carbon dioxide emissions, there were strong protests but little surprise. Soon afterwards, the USA announced its intention to abrogate several arms control agreements. It has also embarked on a controversial research programme to develop a defensive system against ballistic missile attack (known colloquially as 'Son of Star Wars') and a substantial increase in defence spending to fund it. In general, US foreign policy has now taken a more aggressive and nationalistic bent: the main enemy was defined as the 'axis of evil', a group of countries including Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea who were perceived as implacably opposed to the US and its policies. Then came '9-11'. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, which claimed over 3000 lives, made for a defining moment in American history. The impact on the American people and its body politic was immense. The country demanded action, and Bush immediately despatched a substantial force to tackle and destroy the perpetrators: the al-Qaeda movement headed by Osama bin Laden and its hosts, the Taleban regime in Afghanistan. He also assembled a diplomatic coalition of some 40 countries including the Western allies, Russia and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, India and Pakistan to wage an International War Against Terrorism. The Taleban were brought down within weeks (see Afghanistan section). Some senior al-Qaeda personnel were captured, including Kahlid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged organiser of '9-11', but others, including Bin Laden himself, eluded capture. The Bush administration now turned its sights upon the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. With support from Britain and others, the Americans sought to use Saddam's possession of 'weapons of mass destruction' a phrase encompassing nuclear, chemical and biological armaments to justify an invasion of Iraq. This was completed in March 2003 after three weeks of fighting. However, no 'weapons of mass destruction' have been found, a fact which has since caused some political embarrassment for Bush and his allies. The Iraq campaign was an undoubted military success. Most of the leading figures from Iraq's brutal Ba'athist regime were captured, including Saddam Hussein himself, or killed. But American and allied forces have since been confronted by a dogged insurgency which, using paramilitary tactics, has claimed hundreds of soldiers' lives and continues to destabilise efforts to rebuild Iraq according to the American blueprint. Conditions in Iraq, and national security generally, will be a major issue for Bush junior, who recently secured a second term at the presidential election in November 2004. John Kerry, his democratic challenger, conceded defeat after a fiercely divisive and close presidential battle. However, this



election bore none of the claimed controversies of the election in 2000. Indeed, the USA witnessed a record turnout of an estimated 121 million citizens come out to cast their vote. Bush junior was triumphant in seizing the popular vote as well the electoral vote, whilst the Republics tightened their grip on the Senate, kept control of the House of Representatives, and also presided over the possibility of further changes in the Supreme Court. It seems that Americans were keen to preserve stability in the White House whilst their nation remained in the midst of its 'War on Terror'. It remains to be seen how Bush junior will act in such a 'War' while in his final term as President - and, also, how the President will respond to domestic affairs and criticism of his persistent snubbing of environmental concerns, which culminated in him refusing to sign the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse emissions.

**Government:** The USA is a Federal Republic with 50 States and the District of Columbia (as in 'Washington, DC'), which lies between Maryland and Virginia. In addition, the USA has close associations with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam and the US Virgin Islands and exercises trusteeship on behalf of the UN over several Pacific Island groups. The Constitution (the final arbiters of which are the members of the Supreme Court) ensures that the powers of the executive, legislature, judiciary, presidency and the individual states are balanced by constitutional procedures. The President is elected by an electoral college system, based on universal adult suffrage, every 4 years. No president may be elected to serve more than two full terms of office. The current President is George W Bush, with Dick Cheney as Vice-President. The legislature is bicameral; the Senate has two members from each state while the larger House of Representatives allocates seats on the basis of population. Collectively these two bodies are known as Congress. Each state enjoys a fairly high degree of self-government.

#### Travel Advice

Most visits to the USA are trouble-free but visitors should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate international terrorist attacks, which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. The US Government remains concerned about continued threats. Since the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the US Government has issued a number of warnings of potential further terrorist attacks in the US. The US domestic threat level stands at "elevated" (yellow). Visitors should expect stringent security checks at airports and public buildings. Visitors should be alert to the dangers of car and street crime in cities. Hurricane Rita made landfall on the east Texas/west Louisiana coast on the morning of Saturday 24 September. After landfall, Rita caused significant damage, flooding, power outages and road closures in areas hit hardest. Hurricane Katrina caused widespread damage in the States of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama in August 2005. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, visitors are advised to contact the following organisations for the **latest travel advice:** British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

#### Top Things To See & Do

For details on resorts, excursions, places of interest and tourist attractions in the USA, see the individual State sections.

#### OverviewII

Mickey Mouse, Miami Vice, Sleepless in Seattle&#8230; thanks to cinema and TV we all have impressions of the United States of America. Yet nothing can prepare you for your first glimpse of Manhattan's unforgettable skyline, your first ride in a yellow cab, the ubiquitous hamburger



joints, the vast expanses of prairie, the sweet strains of New Orleans jazz or the neon-lit excesses of Las Vegas. The USA is a huge country to explore, with 50 states to choose from, flanked by two oceans and covering an incredibly varied terrain. For five centuries, since the 'New World' discoveries of Christopher Columbus, people from every corner of the globe have come here in search of 'the American Dream'. Between them, they have created the richest, most powerful country on earth, and a fascinating melting pot of cultures and traditions. Before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in North America in 1492, the continent was inhabited by peoples thought to have been descended from nomadic Mongolian tribes who had travelled across the Barents Sea. The first wave of European settlers, mainly English, French and Dutch, crossed the Atlantic in the 17th century and colonised the Eastern Seaboard. The restrictions on political rights and the punitive taxation which the British Government imposed on the American colonists led to the American War of Independence (1775-1783), with the Declaration of Independence being signed in 1776. The outcome was a humiliating defeat for the English King, George III. The American Constitution born of this victory has been imitated by many other countries. By 1853, the boundaries of the United States were, with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii, as they are today. Economic activity in the southern States centred on plantation agriculture dependent on slavery. Attempts by liberally inclined Republicans, led by Abraham Lincoln, to end slavery were fiercely opposed. The election of Lincoln to the Presidency in 1861 precipitated a political crisis in which seven southern States (joined later by three others) seceded from the Union, leading to the American Civil War. The more powerful and better equipped Union forces prevailed over the rebel Confederacy after four years of fighting. After the war, the country entered a period of consolidation, building up an industrial economy and settling the vast interior region of America known as the Midwest. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, which claimed over 3000 lives, made for a defining moment in American history. The impact on the American people and its body politic was immense. The country demanded action, and Bush **immediately despatched a substantial force to tackle and destroy the perpetrators**: the al-Qaeda movement headed by Osama bin Laden and its hosts, the Taleban regime in Afghanistan. The Taleban were brought down within weeks. Some senior al-Qaeda personnel were captured, including Kahlid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged organiser of '9-11', but others, including Bin Laden himself, eluded capture. The Bush administration now turned its sights upon the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. With support from Britain and others, the Americans sought to use Saddam's possession of 'weapons of mass destruction' a phrase encompassing nuclear, chemical and biological armaments to justify an invasion of Iraq. This was completed in March 2003 after three weeks of fighting. However, no 'weapons of mass destruction' have been found, a fact which has since caused some political embarrassment for Bush and his allies. The Iraq campaign was an undoubted military success. Most of the leading figures from Iraq's brutal Ba'athist regime were captured, including Saddam Hussein himself, or killed. But American and allied forces have since been confronted by a dogged insurgency which, using paramilitary tactics, has claimed hundreds of soldiers' lives and continues to destabilise efforts to rebuild Iraq according to the American blueprint. More recently, the country suffered from major weather patterns. In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina caused widespread damage in the states of Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Communications and the transport infrastructure were badly affected. There were a number of casualties. Some infrastructure damages are still being repaired but most tourist parts of the states are now ready for visitors.

#### Communications

**Telephone:** Full IDD is available. Country code: 1. For emergency police, fire or medical services in major cities, dial 911. The following area codes denote toll-free (freephone) numbers: 800, 855, 866, 877 and 888. Telephone numbers with the prefix 900 are usually expensive.



**Mobile telephone:** Most foreign mobile telephones, unless tri-band, do not work in the USA and charges are high. Most visitors choose to hire a mobile telephone.

**Internet:** There are Internet cafes in most urban areas. Many of the international airports offer Internet access too.

**Post:** There are numerous post offices throughout the States. Stamps can also be bought at stamp machines in hotels and shops and at ATMs, at an extra cost. Airmail to Europe takes up to one week. Post office hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700 (24 hours at main offices in larger cities).

**MEDIA:** Press: The most influential papers are the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and the Washington Post. Owing to the high degree of self-Government of each State, newspapers tend to be region specific, although recent economic pressures have resulted in large-scale mergers. Even so, the USA publishes more newspapers than any other country, and has perhaps the bulkiest Sunday newspapers in the world, particularly the Sunday edition of The New York Times. TV: The top television networks are ABC (American Broadcasting Corp), CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System), CNN (Cable News Network), FOX (Fox Television Network), and NBC (National Broadcasting Corp). Radio: Among the national radio networks are ABC Radio Networks, American Radio Network (operated by CBS), National Public Radio and Westwood One (operated by CBS).