

The United States of America



Capital: Washington D.C.

Largest city: New York

Form of government: Federal presidential constitutional republic

Population: 314,500,000

Currency: USA dollar

The USA is the 4th largest country in the world both in area and population. It is larger than the whole Europe.

The population is over 314,500,000 inhabitants of different races and colour. The people of the USA are descended from various peoples who migrated to North America from all over the world at different times, bringing their costumes, languages and national characteristics.

English is the official language of the country and Spanish is the 2nd spoken language. But many other languages are spoken in the USA like German, Italian, and Chinese.

The USA is a federal republic, consisting of 50 states and one federal district, the District of Columbia (D.C.). 48 states are on the mainland between Canada and Mexico. Alaska, the 49th state, is separated from the rest by Canada, while Hawaii, the 50th state, is on the Pacific Ocean and was the last to become part of the USA. Each state has a state capital and its own government that makes its own laws.



The flag

The national flag of the USA is called the "Stars and Stripes". The 13 stripes represent the 13 colonies that formed the USA, while the 50 stars are the present 50 states.

Geography

The borders of the USA are: Canada in the north, the Pacific Ocean in the west, Mexico in the south and the Atlantic Ocean in the east. The USA has a varied landscape with wide plains, high mountains, deserts, forests, numerous rivers and lakes. All country's big lakes are Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and Lake Huron.



The general shape of the country is that of a huge basin between two great mountain chains: the Rocky Mountains in the west and the Appalachian Mountains in the east.

The Great Plains in the central area are crossed by the two largest rivers in the USA: the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers. Together, the Mississippi-Missouri make the 4th largest river system in the world.

The north-east area of the country has got the largest concentration of industrial and commercial cities, including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit and Boston.

The capital city of the USA is Washington D.C. but New York is the largest city.

Agriculture and breeding

Almost 19% of the USA is dedicated to agriculture and breeding.

Thanks to the variety of climate the products are extremely diversified. In the Great Plains we have cultivation of corn, in the south cotton, tobacco, sugar beet. In California we have orchards, vineyards and citrus.

In the Rocky Mountain area we mostly have breeding.

Industry

The USA has a large quantity of energetic resources like coal seam, oil fields and gas deposit.

The USA has the first place in the world as extractor of the subsoil till the 70's.

The most important are steel and iron industries and machinery industries.

Near Chicago there are big car industries like Ford, General Motors and Chrysler.

Transportation and tourism

Transports are easy thanks to an enormous road and railway network.

The USA has the second place after France for importance of tourism.

Across the USA: time and climate

The mainland of the USA is nearly 40 times the size of the United Kingdom. It is so large that there is a time difference of six hours between the most western point in Hawaii and the most eastern point in Maine.

You pass through four time zones as you cross the USA on the mainland.

From east to west they are: Eastern (on the east coast), Central (in the central area and Texas), Mountain (in the states of the Rocky Mountains) and Pacific (in the states on the Pacific, and Nevada).

The difference from one zone to the next one is one hour, so when it's 8 a.m. in Washington, it's 5 a.m. in San Francisco.

You set your watch back one hour if you travel from east to west.

You set it ahead one hour if you travel from west to east.

Travelling by air you can cross several time zones in just a few hours. Travellers suffer from a sort of tiredness called "jet leg", because of this time change.

Climate

The climate varies through the huge territory of the USA which has regions with every type of landscape.

In the south-west, the states of Arizona and New Mexico have large areas of desert, while in the north Alaska has an arctic climate.

The south-east around the Gulf of Mexico has a humid subtropical climate.

Along the western coast the temperature changes little from winter to summer, but in the northern and central parts of the country violent extremes are common.

Here winters are freezing and snowy, while summers can be very hot and dry. Many cities such as Chicago and New York suffer heavy heat waves in summer.

In this season, the coastline on the Caribbean Sea often suffers from violent hurricanes and tornadoes that cause serious damage.

Hurricanes are violent storms with winds that can blow at 250 to 350 km/h, bring torrential rain and destroy everything in their path.

Most of California suffers from earthquakes. They are particularly active along the San Andreas Fault, a large break that divides California from Arizona



New York

New York is the largest city in the USA attracting 18 million visitors each year. It has a population of about 8 million inhabitants and gets up to 12 million with the suburbs.

New York has several neighbourhoods such as Little Italy, Chinatown and Harlem where Italians, Chinese and Blacks live.

The city is divided into 5 boroughs: Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and Staten Island.

New Yorkers call their city the Big Apple. The city is built on the Hudson River and the boroughs are connected to each other by long bridges and by the largest rapid subway in the world. Manhattan is a long island and is the heart of the city with its skyscrapers and many well-known attractions like the Statue of Liberty, the United Nations Buildings, The Empire State Building (443 meters tall), 102 floors and 73 elevators, Central Park (843 meters wide), Lincoln Centre, a large cultural centre for music.

The American Museum of Natural History, Broadway, the most famous theatrical centre in the world, Fifth Avenue, the most fashionable street, Time Square, famous for the New Year's Eve celebration.

