

THE U.S.A.

The U.S.A. are situated in the southern part of North America but they include also Alaska in the North of the American continent and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean. They border on Mexico in the South and on Canada in the North; in the West there is the Pacific Ocean and, in the east, the Atlantic Ocean. With their area of more than 9 million sq km the U.S.A. are the fourth largest country in the world (after Russia, Canada and China).

The countryside of the U.S.A. is very varied. About one half of the continental U.S.A. is occupied by the Cordilleras in the West. (But the highest mountain of the country is in Alaska. It is Denali /Mt. Mc. Kinley – 6,194 m.) To the East there are mostly plains; lowlands can be found around the Gulf of Mexico and in the very East. The only higher mountains there are the Appalachian Highlands.

There are many rivers in the U.S.A. The biggest river system is that of the Mississippi and the Missouri. Great Lakes on the US – Canada border make up the biggest reservoir of fresh water in the world. The Niagara Falls between Lakes Ontario and Erie belong to the main tourist attractions (as well as the Grand Canyon on the Colorado River).

The climate of the U.S.A. is varied too – from the Arctic climate in the North to the subtropical climate in the South (Florida etc.). There is also great difference between the climates on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. On the Hawaiian Islands there is the tropical climate.

The U.S.A. are famous for their national parks – e.g. Yellowstone NP, Grand Canyon NP, Denali NP and many others.

The U.S.A. have a population of about 330 million, about 3/4 of them in urban areas. People living here are of all possible origins and all the races can mix here together. Now there are about 80% of white people here (quite a lot of people of Czech origin as well). The main language spoken here is American English but various minorities speak their original languages (Chinese, Spanish etc.). American English differs from British English especially in vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling; there are only few differences in grammar.

e. g. vocabulary:	chemist's	-	drugstore	drogerie + lékárna
	shop	-	store	obchod
	chips	-	French fries	hranolky
pronunciation	[t] sometimes [d]	city	–	[sɪdi],
		Italy	–	[ɪd li]
	[a] sometimes [æ]	class		[klæs]
		can't		[cæn't]
		dance		[dæns]
spelling is mostly easier:	programme	→	program	
	catalogue	→	catalog	
	doughnut		donut	
	centre		center	

The U.S.A. are a federation of 50 states (48 + Alaska + the Hawaiian Islands). The most important document in all states is the Federal constitution, but many laws in individual states differ from each other – e.g. the system of education is different in various states.

The heads of the states are called governors; the head of the whole U.S.A. and the most powerful person in the country is the President.

Since January 2021 the President has been Joe Biden from the Democratic Party. The other important political party is the Republican Party. The Vice-President is chosen from the same political party as the President.

Both the President and the Congress of the U.S.A. (= the Parliament) have their seats in Washington DC. But there are many other interesting places in the country too (e.g. the largest cities – New York, Los Angeles, Chicago)

NEW YORK is the largest city in the U.S.A. and it belongs to the largest cities in the world too. It is difficult to say how many people live there: in central area about 10 million, in the whole area about 18 million people. Almost half of them are white, about a quarter African Americans and the rest Hispanic. More than 80 languages are spoken here.

New York has five major parts: Manhattan, Queens, the Bronx, Staten Island and Brooklyn.

The original inhabitants were Indians. Manhattan Island was bought from them by the Dutch in 1625 for goods worth \$ 25 and called New Amsterdam. In the end of the 17th century it became an English colony and was renamed New York.

Today, New York is mainly an important industrial and business centre, seat of many international organizations (e.g. the UNO = the United Nations Organization) and cultural institutions (about 30 universities – the best of them is Columbia University, famous museums, galleries, theatres, concert halls etc.)

New York is famous for its skyscrapers – the most of them can be found on Manhattan Island. The first skyscrapers were built in the beginning of the 20th century. The best-known ones are the Empire State Building (1931, 381 m), the Chrysler Building (1930, 306 m – the seat of the Chrysler automobile company), the UN building (1950?). The highest of them was the World Trade Center (1973, 417 m) but it was destroyed during the terrorist attack on 11th September 2001. However, it was built again and the highest of its five new towers (called One World Trade Center) is even higher than the original “Twins” (more than 540 m – the highest structure on the Western hemisphere).

Manhattan, the heart of New York, was built on a modern plan of “streets” and “avenues” which are mostly numbered. Only a few of them - the oldest – have got their names: e.g. Wall Street (the financial centre of the U.S.A.) and Broadway (the centre of cultural life).

The symbol of New York, the U.S.A. and freedom at the same time is the Statue of Liberty. It has been situated on Liberty Island since 1886. The Lady holds a book with the inscription “4th July 1776”, the date of the beginning of the independent U.S.A. It was a gift from French people.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Where are the U.S.A. situated? What countries and oceans do they border on? What is the area of the country?
- 2) Characterize the countryside of the U.S.A.
- 3) What do you know about rivers and lakes in the U.S.A?
- 4) Describe the climate in the U.S.A.
- 5) Enumerate some U.S. national parks.
- 6) Characterize the population of the U.S.A. (number, nationalities and races, languages)
- 7) Give some differences between American and British English.
- 8) Describe the political system in the U.S A. (states, constitution and laws, heads of the states and the whole U.S.A., political parties etc.)
- 9) The capital of the U.S.A. and other important cities.
- 10) Would you like to visit the U.S.A., which places and why?
- 11) How large is New York? Characterize its population.
- 12) Enumerate the major parts of New York.
- 13) What do you know about the history of New York?
- 14) Why is this city important today?
- 15) Enumerate some famous skyscrapers in New York. Where can be the most of them found?
- 16) Try to describe the plan of Manhattan.
- 17) What is the symbol of New York?