

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): ++1

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Capital: Washington, DC

Time: The USA is divided into six time zones: Eastern Standard Time: GMT – 5 (Apr-Oct: GMT – 4), Central Standard Time: GMT – 6 (Apr-Oct: GMT – 5), Mountain Standard Time: GMT – 7 (Apr-Oct: GMT – 6), Pacific Standard Time: GMT – 8 (Apr-Oct: GMT – 7), Alaska: GMT – 9 (Apr-Oct: GMT – 8), Hawaii: GMT – 10.

Background: The United States became the world's first modern democracy after its break with Great Britain (1776) and the adoption of a constitution (1789). During the 19th century, many new states were added to the original 13 as the nation expanded across the North American continent and acquired a number of overseas possessions. The two major traumatic experiences in the nation's history were the Civil War (1861-65) and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Buoyed by victories in World Wars I and II and the end of the Cold War in 1991, the US remains the world's most powerful nation-state. The economy is marked by steady growth, low unemployment and inflation, and rapid advances in technology.

Location: North America, bordering both the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean, between Canada and Mexico

Map References: North America

Area: total: 9,629,091 sq km, land: 9,158,960 sq km, water: 470,131 sq km, note: includes only the 50 states and District of Columbia

Climate: mostly temperate, but tropical in Hawaii and Florida, arctic in Alaska, semiarid in the great plains west of the Mississippi River, and arid in the Great Basin of the southwest; low winter temperatures in the northwest are ameliorated occasionally in January and February by warm chinook winds from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains

Terrain: vast central plain, mountains in west, hills and low mountains in east; rugged mountains and broad river valleys in Alaska; rugged, volcanic topography in Hawaii

Natural Resources: coal, copper, lead, molybdenum, phosphates, uranium, bauxite, gold, iron, mercury, nickel, potash, silver, tungsten, zinc, petroleum, natural gas, timber

Population: 275,562,673 (July 2000 est.)

Nationality: noun: American(s), adjective: American

Ethnic Groups: white 83.5%, black 12.4%, Asian 3.3%, Amerindian 0.8% (1992), note: a separate listing for Hispanic is not included because the US Census Bureau considers Hispanic to mean a person of Latin American descent (especially of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin) living in the US who may be of any race or ethnic group (white, black, Asian, etc.)

Religions: Protestant 56%, Roman Catholic 28%, Jewish 2%, other 4%, none 10% (1989)

Languages: English, Spanish (spoken by a sizable minority)

Economy: The US has the most technologically powerful, diverse, advanced, and largest economy in the world, with a per capita GDP of \$33,900. In this market-oriented economy, private individuals and business firms make most of the decisions, and government buys needed goods and services predominantly in the private marketplace.

US business firms enjoy considerably greater flexibility than their counterparts in Western Europe and Japan in decisions to expand capital plant, lay off surplus workers, and develop new products. At the same time, they face higher barriers to entry in their rivals' home markets than the barriers to entry of foreign firms in US markets. US firms are at or near the forefront in technological advances, especially in computers and in medical, aerospace, and military equipment, although their

advantage has narrowed since the end of World War II. The onrush of technology largely explains the gradual development of a "two-tier labor market" in which those at the bottom lack the education and the professional/technical skills of those at the top and, more and more, fail to get pay raises, health insurance coverage, and other benefits. Since 1975, practically all the gains in household income have gone to the top 20% of households. The years 1994-99 witnessed solid increases in real output, low inflation rates, and a drop in unemployment to below 5%. Long-term problems include inadequate investment in economic infrastructure, rapidly rising medical costs of an aging population, sizable trade deficits, and stagnation of family income in the lower economic groups. The outlook for 2000 is clouded by the continued economic problems of Japan, Russia, Indonesia, Brazil, and many other countries. Domestically, the potentially most serious problem is the exuberant level of stock prices in relation to corporate earnings.

Industries: leading industrial power in the world, highly diversified and technologically advanced; petroleum, steel, motor vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, chemicals, electronics, food processing, consumer goods, lumber, mining

Currency: 1 United States dollar (US\$) = 100 cents

Railways: total: 240,000 km mainline routes (nongovernment owned), standard gauge: 240,000 km 1.435-m gauge (1989)

Highways: total: 6,348,227 km, paved: 3,732,757 km (including 88,727 km of expressways), unpaved: 2,615,470 km (1997 est.)

Waterways: 41,009 km of navigable inland channels, exclusive of the Great Lakes

Ports and Harbors: Anchorage, Baltimore, Boston, Charleston, Chicago, Duluth, Hampton Roads, Honolulu, Houston, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Port Canaveral, Portland (Oregon), Prudhoe Bay, San Francisco, Savannah, Seattle, Tampa, Toledo

Airports: 14,572 (1999 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 5,174, over 3,047 m: 180, 2,438 to 3,047 m: 221, 1,524 to 2,437 m: 1,310, 914 to 1,523 m: 2,448, under 914 m: 1,015 (1999 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: total: 9,398, over 3,047 m: 2, 2,438 to 3,047 m: 6, 1,524 to 2,437 m: 155, 914 to 1,523 m: 1,661, under 914 m: 7,574 (1999 est.)

Heliports: 118 (1999 est.)

Visa: required by all except the following: citizens of countries under the Visa Waiver Program; nationals of Bermuda and Canada, providing holding valid passport; nationals of Mexico, provided holding a valid passport and a US Border Crossing Card.

Duty Free: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 2kg of smoking tobacco or proportionate amounts of each; 1litre of alcoholic beverages; gifts or articles up to a value of US\$100. (including 100 cigars in addition to the tobacco above).

Health: rabies may be present in wildlife. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered.

