

The United States of America

POSITION AND GEOGRAPHYThe USA extends on more than one third of North American continent, being the fourth largest country of the world. It borders Canada and Russia in the North and Mexico in the South. The total area of the US is over 9 million square kilometers and it is home of more than 240 million people mostly of European origin and also of Afro-American, American Indian, Japanese, Chinese and other origin. The official language is American English and the second most widespread language is Spanish. The continental part of the US consists of two highland and two lowland regions. The highland regions are the Appalachian Mountains in the east and the Rocky Mountains in the west. The highest point of the USA is Mount McKinley (6194 m) in Alaska. Between the Rocky and Appalachian Mountains are the central lowlands, which are called the prairie and the eastern lowlands, called Mississippi Valley with the most famous valley – Death Valley. Part of the USA is Alaska in the north of the American continent and the Hawaiian Islands 3,200 km south-west from California. The USA has many rivers. The biggest river system is that of the Mississippi and the Missouri. The Mississippi is the third longest river in the world being 6, 212 km long. In the west we should mention the Colorado, the Columbia and the Rio Grande on the Mexican border. The biggest river in Alaska is the Yukon. The most important river in the east is the Hudson, connected with the Great Lakes on the US – Canada border make up the biggest reservoir of fresh water in the world. They are Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. The Niagara River – part of The St. Lawrence River – connects Lake Erie and Lake Ontario forming the world-known Niagara Falls 51m high. The climate of the USA is varied – from the Arctic climate in the north to the subtropical climate in the south. But the temperate climate prevails. Of course in the vast areas of the USA the climate cannot be the same everywhere. As difference between the climate on the Atlantic coast and the Pacific coast, where the summer and winter are not very different. The most agreeable climate is on the Hawaii Islands. The coldest climate is in the Alaska, which is covered by the snow and ice. Florida has subtropical climate which often brings hurricanes – hot winds. The region around great Lakes is known for its changeable climate.

HISTORY AND POLITICS The American continent was discovered by Vikings around the year 1000 A.D. The existence of the American continent wasn't known in Europe until the voyage of Columbus in 1492. He never realized that he had discovered a continent between Europe and Asia. In 1620 the Puritans came from England in their ship the Mayflower and reached North America. They were called Pilgrim Fathers. During their first winter, over one half of the settlers died. The rest survived and learned from local "Indians" how to farm and catch fish. The following November, after their first successful harvest, they celebrated with a special "Thanksgiving" dinner. The first 13 colonies were formed under the British control. The colonies were mostly agricultural, especially in the South, where tobacco and cotton plantations were worked by African slaves. Colonies wanted to reduce their dependence on Britain. British Parliament wasn't willing to let the colonies go their own way and the result was one of the most famous events, the Boston Tea party in 1773. A group of Americans dressed as Indians and threw bags of tea into the Boston Harbor in protest of unfair taxes. The Party was one of the significant events to the American Revolutionary War against England. The Declaration of independence belongs to the most important documents. It was signed on July 4, 1776 by all 13 colonies in Philadelphia. This day was called Independence Day. The new United States of America rapidly expanded. In 1803 it bought 2 million square kilometers of land from France. In the 1840 gold was discovered near "Frisco" and thousands of pioneers rushed across America to make their fortune. The era of the Wild West had begun. The American Civil War broke out in 1861. The Southern states, organized as the Confederacy under President Jefferson Davis fought against the Union of the Northern states under President Abraham Lincoln. The Union states wanted to make slavery illegal. In 1865 the American Civil War also called the war between the North and the South ended in victory for the North. The slavery was abolished in 1863. The first American military mobilization on foreign soil was in 1917 when the US entered the World War against Germany. New

immigrants from European countries were coming to the USA. The 1930s were the years of the great economical crises. Thousands of banks and companies were ruined. Millions of people also lost their jobs. In the WWII. the USA remained neutral and didn't enter the War till Japanese attacked a Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Two years later, a team of US scientists developed the first atomic bomb. This devastating new weapon was dropped first on the Japanese city of Hiroshima and on Nagasaki. The USA is a federation of fifty states. The system of American Government is based on the principal established in the Constitution written in 1787 and in the Bill of Rights. The Constitution divides the power of the government into 3 branches - the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch and the Judicial Branch. Every state has its own governor, its own police and its own laws. The Congress consists of two parts - the Senate and the House of Representatives. President is a head of the state, chief executive and commander in chief (head of army, navy and air force). He is elected in national election for four and may be re-elected for another four year.

SALT LAKE THE CAPITOL AND OTHER CITIES Washington D.C. has the 10th largest population in the country. It was especial planned and built as the capital and the centre of the government. In the city, along the Potomac River, there are the most important buildings in the USA - White House - the residence of the American President, the Capitol - the seat of the Congress, the Pentagon - the centre of military forces. There are no factories and industry in Washington and no building can be higher than the Capitol that is why we can't see any skyscrapers there. There is a large airport and Georgetown University. Some famous monuments stand there: the Washington Monument, Lincoln and Jefferson Memorial.

New York is one of the largest cities not only in the USA but in the world. It has population which has more than 14 millions people. The city has five parts: Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn and Richmond. It is important seaport and harbor, and the largest business, industrial and cultural centre of USA. NY is nicknamed the Big Apple. Its first name was New Amsterdam. The modern town was built on a grid plan of streets and avenues. The streets go from west to east and the avenues from north to south. The streets and avenues are indicated by numbers. NY is famous for its Manhattan skyline- a large number of skyscrapers on a small area. The tallest of them are Trade Centre Buildings having 110 stories. One of the most famous skyscrapers is called Empire State Building. It has 102 stories and a TV tower at the top. Next famous skyscrapers are Rockefeller Center, Chrysler Building and Pan American Building.

Chicago is the 3rd largest city in the USA. Chicago is called the metropolis of Middle West. It is nicknamed the "windy city" because of the breezes that blow in from lake. California is a beautiful country on the western coast of the US. The most enjoyable places are Disneyland, Universal Studios in Hollywood and the Sea World in San Diego. Las Vegas lies in Nevada. It is visited by more than 12 million visitors every year. They want to get rich quickly in its casinos. They also go to see many famous singers, comedians, dancers and musicians in its hotels and nightclubs.

BEAUTY SPOTS Statue of Liberty stands on the Liberty Island in the New York's harbor. It greets all the people coming to NY. It is symbol of democracy, freedom and justice for all people. It is a statue of a woman. She holds a burning torch in her right hand and a law book in her left one. It was present from France.

Mount Rushmore is the state of South Dakota in the mountains called the Black Hills. It is dedicated to 4 presidents- G. Washington, T. Jefferson, A. Lincoln and T. Roosevelt. Their faces are carved into a high granite cliff. These faces are the largest sculpture in the world. The Grand Canyon is deep gorge which was carved by the river into the rock. At some places, it is over a mile deep its walls are very colourful. It is a beautiful sight.

The Central park is the largest park in the world. New Yorkers come here to relax. They can do sports here, they can have picnics on the grass, play games, they can walk their dogs or have a meal or a drink in of many restaurants. But at night it is a dangerous place where many homeless people and criminals are. People can be easily robbed or even killed.

Yellowstone Park is the best known national park in the States. It is the oldest park in the world with many beautiful waterfalls and geysers and many animals which are protected. = grizzly bear, black bear, eagle, bison, elk... The Brooklyn Bridge connects Manhattan and Brooklyn and is the best-known of NY's bridges. The Rockefeller Center is a complex of skyscrapers. There are many banks, expensive restaurants, luxurious shops and parks. You can meet many famous people there - actors and actresses, writers, artists. The apartments are very expensive.

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS Easter is not a national holiday and most of Americans spend Easter Sunday with the family.

The Easter version of Santa Claus is the Easter Bunny. The Easter Bunny - usually a person dressed up in a large, colorful rabbit suit - brings gifts of brightly colored eggs, candy and chocolate eggs and rabbits to children. Many parents tell their children that the Easter Bunny lays Easter eggs and then he hides them in the grass, in bushes and trees. So kids race across the lawn bumping into each other and often fighting over who got to the egg first. Then comes Mother's and Father's day - days dedicated to our parents because they really worth it. Thanksgiving day: After the first harvest of the Plymouth colonists, a day of thanksgiving and prayer was proclaimed to be shared by all the colonists and neighboring Indians at a great feast. The thanks were not only for the bountiful food, but also for the help of teaching them how to plant, hunt, fish, and then cook foods that were strange and unknown to them. It became a national American holiday many years later possibly because of a woman named Sarah Hale. She was writing to president of US for 40 years asking for a holiday of thanksgiving. At last she was successful with Abraham Lincoln. Nowadays it is celebrated by a traditional dinner which main course is roast turkey. Christmas: Even though they are traditionally a religious holiday, people are used to many secular celebrations. Every year on Christmas eve, the American President turns on the lights of the huge Christmas tree situated near the White house. Around the Christmas season churches, various organisations, and newspapers ask for donations of money and food for the needy, and volunteers from the "Salvation Army" dress up like Santa Claus and stand in the street ringing a bell to collect money for the poor. Some welfare groups prepare hot meals and serve them to the homeless. In order to help to parents, a couple of weeks before Christmas you can find "Santa helpers" strategically placed all around shopping malls and stores. They sit in a chair, take kids on their laps and kids tell Santa what they want for Christmas. In the USA Christmas are not a family holiday, families invite friends to join them at dinner and often have give parties at Christmas-time. Independence Day July 14th. On this day in 1776 the U.S declared her independence from England. It was the beginning of a new nation. On the 4th of July families and friends celebrate and every town and city has parades, games and sports with prizes. Halloween is the most famous custom. Everybody are dressed as ghost and witches. A popular tradition is to cut the shape of a face in a pumpkin, put a light inside it, then put it in the window. CULTURE AND FAMOUS PEOPLE Thomas Alva Edison was born in Ohio in 1847. He was not a very good student but was keen on scientific work. The most important invention of Edison is the electric bulb. Walt Disney, American film producer who created the first animated cartoon films. Disney is the author of such cartoon characters as a Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Pluto. He planned and built Disneyland, a famous amusement park, that opened near Los Angeles in 1955. He had created a great number of short animated cartoon films, which brought him success all over the world before he started a project of a long cartoon film based a version of the classic fairy tale billed "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". Other films are Pinocchio, Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland and the Lion King. Elvis Presley popular American rock'n'roll singer who strongly influenced the character of popular culture in the U.S.A. in the 1950s and 1960s. More than 500 million of his records were sold during his life. He starred in 33 movies including the famous "Love Me Tender".