

10 THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Population: 338 million

Area: 9,631,420 sq km

Capital: Washington



The USA is a state located in the North American continent. It is bordered by Canada in the north and Mexico in the south. It is washed by the Atlantic Ocean in the east and the Pacific Ocean in the west. The USA is a federation of 50 states and a federal district, Washington, D. C. Alaska, the largest state, and Hawaii are separated from the US Mainland.

The US flag, nicknamed the “Stars and Stripes”, has 13 stripes of red and white, representing the original 13 colonies of the new nation. The blue square in the upper left corner contains 50 white stars, standing for the 50 states.

Political system

The US is a union of self-governing states united by a central government. The head of each state is the governor. The federal government consists of three branches: **legislative, executive, and judicial**. The legislative power lies with **Congress** which is made up of the **Senate** and the **House of Representatives**. There are 435 members in the House of Representatives and 100 senators, two from each state. **The Capitol** in Washington, D.C. is the seat of Congress.

The head of state and head of government of the United States of America is **the President** of the United States. He directs the executive branch of the federal government and is the commander-in-chief of the United States Armed Forces. **The first president was George Washington**. Joe Biden is the 46th and current president. **The White House** in Washington, D.C. serves as **the official residence** of the president. The President is chosen, together with his Vice-President, in nationwide elections **every four years**.

The two leading parties are the Democrats and the Republicans.

Judicial power is in hands of the Supreme Court.

Geography

The USA is **the third largest country in the world**, its area is almost 10 million square kilometres. There are **4 time zones**. The climate is very varied, from the coldest arctic zone in Alaska through the mild climate zone in the north to the subtropical zone in the south and the tropical zone in Florida, the Gulf of Mexico and Hawaii.

The northernmost point is in Alaska, which is also the farthest west you can go. The southernmost point is in Hawaii and the farthest east is Maine. **The highest point** is Mount McKinley in Alaska at more than 20,000 feet (6,190 m) above sea level, and **the lowest point** is in Death Valley, California, at more than 200 feet (86 m) below sea level.

The USA has a varied **landscape**. The West is mountainous. The mountain ranges include Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains. There are also several famous **national parks** like Yosemite, Yellowstone, Sequoia or Grand Canyon in the West. The east coast has many cities, like New York City, Boston and

Washington, D. C. The middle of the country is quite flat, with large farming areas of the Midwest. The southern part of the country is more tropical in the east and more desert-like in the west.

The biggest river, the Mississippi, runs for more than 3,700 kilometres from Minnesota to Louisiana, ending in the Gulf of Mexico. Other big rivers include the Colorado, which flows from Colorado to California, and the Ohio, which starts in Pennsylvania and joins the Mississippi in Illinois. The Niagara River with the famous Niagara Falls is situated on the border with Canada, in the Great Lakes region.

The top 16 highest points in the country are all in Alaska. Colorado also has many tall spots, mainly because the Rocky Mountains run through the state. These are all in the western part of the country, as the East is more flat, especially in the Midwestern farming areas.

American Cities

The most famous US city is probably **New York City** thanks to its museums, restaurants, Broadway shows and musicals, and shops. Other attractions include Liberty Island, with the Statue of Liberty, and the large Central Park. New York City is famous for its skyscrapers, such as the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building. The latter is the tallest building in the city since the World Trade Center was destroyed in the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The capital of the US is **Washington, D.C.**, named after the first US president, George Washington. In addition to the White House, where the president lives, and the Capitol Building, where Congress passes laws, there are many museums and memorial sites. The Mall (park) is a great place to visit many of these, like the Washington Monument, the Martin Luther King Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial.

The east coast has other popular cities for tourists, such as **Boston**, which is a historic city with a beautiful harbour. On the west coast, in California, the most popular cities are **Los Angeles** and **San Francisco**. Los Angeles is best known for movies and movie stars. Visiting places like Hollywood, the beaches and doing lots of shopping is why people like L.A. San Francisco to the north is a diverse mix of people, history and culture. There is a large Asian population here and many of the city's historic points, like cable cars, still exist. The city's most famous landmark is the Golden Gate Bridge, which was built in the 1930s. One of the country's liveliest cities is **Miami**, in Florida. Besides the beach, there is a large Cuban influence here as well as lots of design and artists. Texas, America's second largest state, has many big cities, like **Houston** (where you can visit the Space Center), **Austin**, **San Antonio**, and **Dallas**.