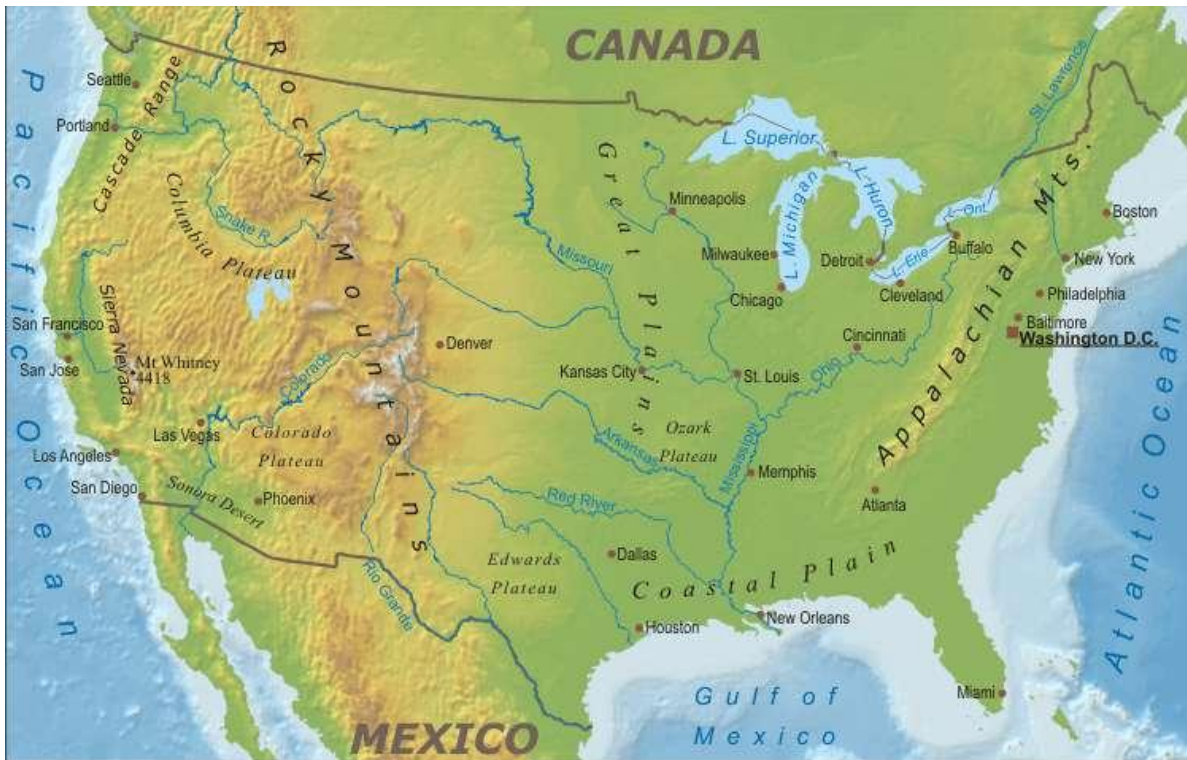


The United States

US Geography



The United States of America is a country in North America that extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean and borders with Canada in the north and with Mexico in the south. The U.S.A. consists of a federation of fifty states, forty-eight of which are on the mainland; the other two are Alaska, which lies northwest of Canada, and Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean.

Because of its size it has four different time zones; going west, there is one hour difference between each zone, so when it's 12 a.m. in New York, it is only 9 a.m. in Los Angeles.

The landscape of the U.S.A. is varied; there are forests, deserts, mountains and plains. The three main mountain ranges are the Pacific Range and the Rocky Mountains in the west and the Appalachian Mountains in the east. The highest peak is Mount McKinley (6,194 meters) in Alaska.

The central part of the country is a vast plain crossed by two of the longest rivers in the country: the Mississippi (3,778 km) and the Missouri (3,726 km) rivers.

The United States is rich in lakes. The largest are along the Canadian border and are called the Great lakes. They are Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie.

You can find every kind of climate on its territory. There are places too hot or too cold, too dry or too wet. At certain times of the year in some parts of the country there are twisters and hurricanes which cause great damage.

The USA is often called "The Melting Pot of the World". In fact, there are about 250 million Americans of different races and origins; 83% are white, 12% are African American, 4% are Oriental and 1% are Native American.



The American flag is called the “Stars and Stripes”. There are thirteen stripes which represent the original thirteen states that formed the United States, and fifty stars, the number of the states which form the present federation.

The major languages are American English and Spanish. The US currency is the Dollar with its famous symbol \$.

The United States is a federal republic. Its capital is Washington. Washington stands on the Potomac River in the District of Columbia between the states of Maryland and Virginia. The District of Columbia is divided into four squares. The US Capitol building stands in the center where the squares meet. It is a beautiful, classical, white building with a dome and it is over 250 years old. Congress meets there. Congress is the American parliament and it makes new laws and important decisions. In Washington many streets haven’t got names. They’ve got numbers or letters. Diagonal streets have the names of US States. The White House where the President of the USA lives and works is in Pennsylvania Avenue. Washington hasn’t got any skyscrapers.

The “Big Apple” as New York City is often called is the largest city in the USA with over seven million people. At the entrance of New York Harbor is the Statue of Liberty. The Statue was a gift in 1886 from the French to the Americans. The framework was made by Gustav Eiffel, who also built the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The Statue of Liberty is 93 meters high.

The centre of New York is Manhattan. It is an island surrounded by two rivers and the sea. Manhattan is the main American centre for finance, trade, culture and arts. Central Park, at the centre of Manhattan, is one of the world's great parks. Twenty-five million people visit this manmade park each year. Central Park is mentioned in more than 170 films; in fact it is the most filmed public park in the world.

The Empire State Building is an example of the dream to build buildings to reach the sky. These buildings are called skyscrapers. It is probably New York's most famous skyscraper. When it was built in 1930, it was the tallest building in the world.

Times Square is the centre of the theatre district. Billboards are used to advertise the different shows. The first electric billboard was used in 1917.

An unthinkable event happened to the United States of America on September 11, 2001. Terrorists hijacked four passenger jet airliners. The hijackers commandeered the planes and deliberately flew three of the planes towards the World Trade Center twin towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, next to Washington ,D.C.. The fourth plane crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The twin Towers were among the tallest buildings in the world. They were completely destroyed and thousands of people were killed.

Answer these questions

1. How many states are there in the USA?
2. Is Alaska part of the USA?
3. How many different time zones are there in the USA?
4. What is the landscape like?
5. What are the most important mountains?
6. Which is the highest peak?
7. Which is the longest river in the USA?
8. Where are the Great Lakes situated?
9. Why is the USA often called "The melting pot of the World"?
10. How many stars and stripes are there on the American flag? What do they represent?
11. Where does Washington stand?
12. Where does the president of the USA live and work?
13. Where is the Statue of Liberty?
14. What is Times Square famous for today?
15. Is Central Park a natural park?
16. What are skyscrapers?
17. Why was the Empire State building famous when it was built?
18. What happened on September 11, 2001?