

Country Guide For
UNITED STATES



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	1	Contact Addresses
	2	General
	3	Passport
	4	Money
	5	Duty Free
	6	Public Holidays
	7	Health
	8	Accommodation
	9	Sport & Activities
	10	Social Profile
	11	Business Profile
	12	Climate
	13	History and Government
	14	Overview

1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: North America.

International Trade Administration, Tourism Industries
US Department of Commerce, 14th and Constitution Avenue, Room 2073, NW, Washington, DC 20230

Tel: (202) 482 4029 or 482 0140. Fax: (202) 482 2887.

Web site: <http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov>

Travel Industry Association of America
1100 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 450, Washington, DC 20005-3925

Tel: (202) 408 8422. Fax: (202) 408 1255.

Web site: <http://www.tia.org>

Embassy of the United States of America
24-32 Grosvenor Square, London W1A 1AE

Tel: (020) 7499 9000. Fax: (020) 7629 9124.

Web site: <http://www.usembassy.org.uk>

Opening hours (for telephone enquiries): 0830-1730 Monday to Friday.

Consulates in: Belfast (tel: (028) 9032 8239) and Edinburgh (tel: (0131) 556 8315).

American Embassy Visa Services

Tel: (09068) 200 290 (24-hour visa information line; calls cost 60p per minute) or (09061) 500 590 (operator-assisted visa information; calls cost £1.50 per minute; lines are open 0800-2000 Monday to Friday).

American Travel and Tourism Information Service

For general information on the USA, telephone numbers of UK representative offices and to order brochures, call (09065) 508 972 (recorded information; calls cost £1 per minute).

British Embassy

3100 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008

Tel: (202) 588 6500. Fax: (202) 588 7870 (chancery) or 588 7892 (passports) or 588 7850 (visas).

Web site: <http://www.britainusa.com>

Consulates in: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles (tel: (310) 477 3322), Miami, Orlando, New York (tel: (212) 745 0200), San Francisco and Seattle.

Embassy of the United States of America

490 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 1G8

Tel: (613) 238 5335. Fax: 688 3082 (consular section) or 688 3080 (administration).

Web site: <http://www.usembassycanada.gov>

Consulates in: Calgary, Halifax, Montréal, Québec, Toronto and Vancouver.

Canadian Embassy

501 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001

Tel: (202) 682 1740. Fax: (202) 682 7689. Web site: <http://www.canadianembassy.org>

Consulates in: Buffalo, Detroit, Los Angeles (tel: (213) 346 2700), New York (tel: (212) 596 1600) and Seattle.

Country dialling code: 1.

2 GENERAL

Information on the United States is provided in two parts: a general overview and individual State profiles, each of which has its own section.

Area: 9,809,155 sq km (3,787,319 sq miles).

Population: 276,133,609 (2000).

Population Density: 28.2 per sq km.

Capital: Washington, DC. Population: 606,900 (2000). Eighteen other cities have a population larger than that of Washington, DC. New York is the largest city, with a population of over seven million. Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, San Diego, Detroit and Dallas populations of over one million in 2000.

Geography: Covering a large part of the North American continent, the United States of America shares borders with Canada to the north and Mexico to the south and has coasts on the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans, the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. The State of Alaska, in the northwest corner of the continent, is separated from the rest of the country by Canada, and Hawaii lies in the central Pacific Ocean. One of the largest countries in the world, the USA has an enormous diversity of geographical features. The climate ranges from subtropical to Arctic, with a corresponding breadth of flora and fauna. For a more detailed description of each region's geographical characteristics, see the individual State sections.

Government: Federal Republic since 1789. Gained independence from the UK in 1776. Head of State and Government: President George W Bush since 2000.

Language: English, with significant Spanish-speaking minorities.

Religion: Protestant with Roman Catholic, Jewish and many ethnic minorities. In large cities people of the same ethnic background often live within defined communities.

Time: The USA is divided into six time zones:

Eastern Standard Time: GMT - 5 (from Apr-Oct: GMT - 4).

Central Standard Time: GMT - 6 (from Apr-Oct: GMT - 5).

Mountain Standard Time: GMT - 7 (from Apr-Oct: GMT - 6).

Pacific Standard Time: GMT - 8 (from Apr-Oct: GMT - 7).

Alaska: GMT - 9 (from Apr-Oct: GMT - 8).

Hawaii: GMT - 10.

Note: When calculating travel times, bear in mind the adoption of Daylight Saving Time (DST) by most States in summer. From the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October, clocks are put forward one hour, changing at 0200 hours local time. Regions not observing DST include most of Indiana, all of Arizona and Hawaii.

Electricity: 110/120 volts AC, 60Hz. Plugs are of the flat 2-pin type. European electrical appliances not fitted with dual-voltage capabilities will require a plug adaptor, which is best purchased before arrival in the USA.

Communications:

Telephone: Full IDD is available. Country code: 1. Outgoing international code: 011. For emergency police, fire or medical services in major cities, dial 911.

Mobile telephone: GSM 1900 network. Network operators offering nation-wide coverage include Aerial Operating Company Pacific Bell (<http://www.pacbell.mobile.com>), and Bell South (<http://www.bellsouth.com>). There are numerous regional operators.

Fax: There are bureaux in all main centres, and major hotels also have facilities. Fax services are very widely available.

Internet/E-mail: There are Internet cafés in most urban areas. ISPs include America Online (<http://www.aol.com>), Cable and Wireless (<http://www.cwusa.com>), IBM (<http://www.ibm.net>) and MSN (<http://www.msn.com>).

Telegram: These can be sent through all telegraph and post offices.

Post: There are numerous post offices throughout the states. Stamps can also be bought at stamp machines in hotels and shops and at cash dispensers, but these have a 25% price mark-up. Airmail to Europe takes up to a week. Post office hours: 0900-1700 (24 hours at main offices in larger cities).

Press: The most influential papers are The New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and the Wall Street Journal. Owing to the high degree of self-government of each State, newspapers tend to be regionalised, although recent economic pressures have resulted in large-scale mergers. Even so, the USA publishes more newspapers than any other country, and has perhaps the bulkiest Sunday newspapers in the world, particularly the Sunday edition of The New York Times.

BBC World Service frequencies: From time to time these change.

MHz17.8411.866.1855.975
(East)

MHz21.6611.869.5905.975
(West)

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	2/3/4	Yes
Australian	Yes	2	Yes
Canadian	Yes	No	No
USA	-	-	-
OtherEU	Yes	2	Yes

Entry restrictions: The following will be refused entry to the United States of America unless a 'waiver of ineligibility' has first been obtained:

- (a) people afflicted with certain serious communicable diseases;
- (b) anyone with a criminal record;
- (c) narcotics addicts or abusers and drug traffickers;
- (d) anyone who has been deported from or denied admission to the USA within the previous 5 years.

PASSPORTS: Valid passport required by all.

Note: (a) For nationals of countries under the Visa Waiver Pilot Program, passports must be valid for at least 90 days from date of entry (except for nationals of Andorra, Brunei, San Marino and Slovenia, who must hold passports valid for 6 months from date of departure). (b) For all other nationals, passports must be valid for 6 months from date of entry.

VISAS: Required by all except the following:

(a) 1. nationals of countries under the Visa Waiver Pilot Program: Andorra, Australia, Brunei, EU countries (except nationals of Greece, who do require a visa), Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Switzerland and Uruguay;

(b) 2. UK nationals resident in the Cayman Islands or the Turks & Caicos Islands who arrive directly from those islands for non-immigration purposes, provided they are in possession of an official certificate as proof of no criminal record;

(c) transit passengers flying with certain airlines authorised to carry foreign nationals in transit without a visa, provided they continue their journey from the same airport within 8 hours and hold valid onward or return documentation (for details of when a transit visa will be required, contact the nearest visa branch).

Note: (a) To qualify for visa-free travel under the Visa Waiver Pilot Program, nationals mentioned under (a) 1. must travel on an unexpired passport for holiday, transit or business purposes only and for a stay not exceeding 90 days; hold a return or onward ticket, a completed form I-94W and enter aboard an air or sea carrier participating in the Visa Waiver Pilot Program if entering by air or sea (lists of participating air or sea carriers are available from most travel agents); or hold a completed form I-94W issued by the immigration authorities at the port of entry for a fee of US\$6 if entering by land from Canada or Mexico.

(b) 3. Holders of UK passports with the endorsement British Subject, British Dependent Territories Citizen, British Overseas Citizen or British National (Overseas) Citizen do not qualify for visa exemption. Persons unsure about visa requirements (including those defined in 'Entry restrictions' above) should write to the US Consulate General or the Visa Department of the US Embassy (see address section).

Types of visa: Non-immigrant and Immigrant. Non-immigrant visas are subdivided into a number of different visa types, including Student (participating in academic or exchange programmes), Journalist, Temporary worker and Transit. For details on other types of non-immigrant visas and application requirements, contact the Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy) or call the operator-assisted visa information service in the UK (tel: (09061) 500 590; calls are charged at the rate of £1.50 per minute).

Validity: 10 years. Some visas are valid for multiple entries. The length of stay in the USA is determined by US immigration officials at the time of entry, but is generally 6 months. For extensions and further information, apply to the US Immigration & Naturalisation Service.

Cost: £28, regardless of whether the visa is denied or issued and regardless of the duration of the visa or entries required. The embassy will provide a paying-in slip. The fee must be paid in cash at a bank prior to submitting a visa application to the US Embassy. In the UK, Barclays Bank does not charge a handling fee for this service. One part of the two-part stamped receipt must be stapled to the visa application form. Some nationals may also have to pay a reciprocal visa issuance fee.

Note: A visa no longer expires with the expiry of the holder's passport. An unexpired visa in an expired passport may be presented for entry into the USA as long as the visa itself has not been cancelled, is undamaged, is less than 10 years old and is presented with a valid non-expired passport, provided that both passports are for the same nationality.

Application to: Visa branches at Consulates General. Those residing in England, Scotland or Wales should apply to the Consulate General in London. Nationals of Northern Ireland should apply to the Consulate General in Belfast (see address section). The Consulate General in Scotland no longer deals with visa applications.

Method of application: Visas can be applied for by mail, drop-box or through an authorised travel agent who has an agreement with the Embassy to lodge passports. The drop-box at the London visa branch is open 0830-1700 (closed on public holidays). Only applicants requested by the Embassy to appear in person for an interview will be required to schedule a personal appointment.

Application requirements: Postal or drop-box applications: (a) Completed visa application form OF-156. (b) Valid passport. (c) 1 passport-size colour photo. (d) Copy of Embassy's red paying-in slip. (e) Supporting documents. (f) Stamped, self-addressed envelope. Applications through travel agent: (a)-(f), but applicants should contact the travel agent for details on paying the visa fee.

Further documentation may be required to substantiate details such as the purpose of visit plus proof of intention to return to country of residence.

Working days required: 10 days. Passports will be posted back in the stamped, self-addressed envelope or handed back to the travel agent. It is important to allow sufficient time for processing the visa, and final travel plans should not be made until a visa has been issued.

Residence: The law in the USA is complex for those wishing to take up residence. More information may be obtained from the Consulate General (see address section).

4 MONEY

Currency: US Dollar (US\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of US\$100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of US\$1 and 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 cents.

Currency exchange: Hotels do not, as a rule, exchange currency and only a few major banks will exchange foreign currency, so it is advisable to arrive with dollars.

Credit cards: Most major credit cards are accepted throughout the USA, including Diners Club, American Express, MasterCard and Visa. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available. Visitors are advised to carry at least one major credit card, as it is common to request prepayment for hotel rooms and car hire when payment is not by credit card.

Travellers cheques: Widely accepted in hotels, stores and restaurants, providing they are US Dollar cheques; Sterling travellers cheques are not acceptable. It should be noted that many banks do not have the facility to encash travellers cheques (the US banking system differs greatly from that of the UK) and those that do are likely to charge a high commission. One (or in some cases) two items of identification (passport, credit card, driving licence) may also be required. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars.

Currency restrictions: There are no limits on the import or export of either foreign or local currency. However, amounts in excess of US\$10,000 or the equivalent (including 'bearer bonds') must be registered with US Customs on Form 4790. All gold coins and any quantity of gold must be declared before export.

Banking hours: Variable, but generally 0900-1500 Monday to Friday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported by visitors over 21 years of age into the USA without incurring customs duty:

200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 2kg of smoking tobacco or proportionate amounts of each; 1 litre of alcoholic beverage; gifts or articles up to a value of US\$100 (including 100 cigars in addition to the tobacco allowance above), US\$200 (if arriving from US Virgin Islands, American Samoa or Guam).

Note: (a) Items should not be gift-wrapped as they must be available for customs inspection. (b) The alcoholic beverage allowance above is the national maximum; certain States allow less and if arriving in those States, the excess will be taxed or withheld. (c) The gift allowance may only be claimed once in every six months and is only available to non-residents who intend to stay in the USA for more than 72 hours. (d) For information about the importation of pets, refer to the brochure *Pets, Wildlife - US Customs*, available at US Embassies and Consulates. (e) Further information on US customs regulations is available on the internet (web site: <http://www.customs.ustreas.gov/>).

Prohibited items: The following are either banned or may only be imported under licence: (a) Narcotics and dangerous drugs, unless for medical purposes (doctor's certificate required). (b) Absinthe, biological materials, some seeds, fruits and plants (including endangered species of plants and vegetables and their products). (c) Firearms and ammunition (with some exceptions - consult Customs). (d) Hazardous articles (fireworks, toxic materials). (e) Meat and poultry products. (f) Any fish (unless certified as disease free). (g) Cuban cigars. (h) Wildlife and endangered species including crustaceans, mollusks, eggs and any crafted articles of fur, skin, and leather. (i) dairy products. (j) Imports from Iran and leather souvenirs from Haiti.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Jan 15 Martin Luther King Day. Feb 19 Presidents' Day. May 28 Memorial Day. Jul 4 Independence Day. Sep 3 Labor Day. Oct 8 Columbus Day. Nov 12 Veterans' Day. Nov 22 Thanksgiving Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Jan 21 Martin Luther King Day. Feb 18 Presidents' Day. May 27 Memorial Day. Jul 4 Independence Day. Sep 2 Labor Day. Oct 14 Columbus Day. Nov 11 Veterans' Day. Nov 28 Thanksgiving Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	No	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	-
Malaria	No	-
Food and Drink	No	-

Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix.

Health care: Medical insurance providing cover up to at least US\$500,000 is strongly advised. Only emergency cases are treated without prior payment and treatment will often be refused without evidence of insurance or a deposit. Medical facilities are generally of an extremely high standard. Those visiting the USA for long periods with school-age children should be aware that school entry requirements include proof of immunisation against diphtheria, measles, poliomyelitis and rubella throughout the USA, and schools in many States also require immunisation against tetanus, pertussis and mumps. HIV-positive visitors must apply at the Embassy for a waiver of ineligibility before entry.

Travel - International

Note: The information to be found immediately below is of a more general nature. For more details, consult the individual State sections.

AIR: The principal US airlines operating international services are: American Airlines (AA), Continental Airlines, Delta Air, Northwest Airlines, Trans World Airlines TWA (now taken over by American Airlines) and United Airlines. Many other airlines operate services from all over the world to the USA.

International airports: The 10 busiest airports in the USA are Atlanta (ATL), Chicago (ORD), Los Angeles (LAX), Dallas/Forth Worth (DFW), San Francisco (SFO), Denver (DEN), Miami (MIA), Newark (EWR), Phoenix (PHX) and Detroit (DTW). For further details, consult the individual State sections.

Approximate flight times: From London to Anchorage is 8 hours 55 minutes, to Detroit is 8 hours 30 minutes, to Los Angeles is 11 hours, 20 minutes to Miami is 9 hours 45 minutes, to New

York is 7 hours 50 minutes (3 hours 50 minutes by Concorde), to San Francisco is 11 hours 10 minutes, to Seattle is 9 hours 50 minutes and to Washington DC is 8 hours 25 minutes (all times are by nonstop flight).

From Singapore to Los Angeles is 18 hours 45 minutes and to New York is 21 hours 25 minutes. From Sydney to Los Angeles is 17 hours 55 minutes and to New York is 21 hours 5 minutes. More international flight times may be found in the individual State sections.

Note: Flights from Europe to the USA take longer than those coming back; ie flying east to west takes longer than west to east. Flights to Europe from the east coast of the USA take approximately 30-40 minutes less and from the west coast of the USA approximately one hour less.

SEA: Numerous cruise lines sail from ports worldwide to both the east and west coasts. Contact a travel agent for fares and details.

RAIL: The US and Mexican rail networks connect at Tecate (Tijuana), Yuma, Nogales, Douglas, El Paso, Del Rio and Laredo, but there are few scheduled passenger services. There are several connections with the Canadian network. The major routes are: New York-Montréal, New York-Toronto and Seattle-Vancouver. Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit and Buffalo are all connected via terminals in Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa. For further information contact the US National Railroad Passenger Corporation Amtrak (tel: (1 800) 872 7245 (toll free; USA and Canada only) or (212) 582 6875 (New York) or (020) 7400 7099 (Destination Marketing, London) or (0870) 750 0222 (Leisurail, UK); web-site: <http://www.amtrak.com>).

ROAD: There are many crossing points from Canada to the USA. The major road routes are: New York to Montréal/Ottawa, Detroit to Toronto/Hamilton, Minneapolis to Winnipeg and Seattle to Vancouver/Edmonton/Calgary. Coach: Greyhound offers services to many destinations in Canada and some destinations in Mexico (tel: (1 800) 231 2222; web site: <http://www.greyhound.com>).

Travel - Internal

AIR: The USA may be crossed within five hours from east to west and within two hours from north to south. Strong competition between airlines has resulted in a wide difference between fares. Categories of fares include first-class, economy, excursion and discount. Night flights are generally cheaper.

Cheap fares: Money-saving schemes for the visitor include discounts on all internal flights offered by TWA (taken over by American Airlines), Delta and other principal airlines. The traveller should buy tickets 21 days in advance. Delta, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic offer a Discover America Pass which includes a minimum of three and a maximum of 10 coupons entitling the passenger to that number of flights within the USA at a discounted fare. The traveller must commence travel within 60 days of arrival in the USA and use all the coupons within the following 60 days. The cost of the pass is according to the number of coupons requested. The coupons must be purchased outside the USA.

Agents are advised to contact the offices of individual airlines once a basic itinerary has been organised.

Note: Baggage allowance is often determined by number and size rather than weight.

SEA/LAKE/RIVER: There are extensive water communications both along the coastline and along the great rivers and lakes.

Great Lakes: The Ohio River carries more water traffic than any other inland waterway in the world. Tour ships and passenger and freight lines crisscross all the Great Lakes from ports in Duluth, Sault Sainte Marie, Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, Rochester, Cleveland and Toronto.

RAIL: Nearly all the long-distance trains are operated by Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corporation), although suburban and some medium-distance services are run by local agencies. Although the US rail network has more than 300,000km (186,410 miles) of track, passenger trains run over only a small part of the system. Outside the densely populated northeast, trains run once-daily over a handful of long-distance routes. Amtrak's main route is the Boston-New York-Washington, DC northeast corridor; other routes run south to Florida and New Orleans, and between Boston, New York and Washington, DC to Chicago. From Chicago, daily services radiate to Seattle, Portland, Oakland (San Francisco), Los Angeles (via Omaha-Denver-Salt Lake City-Las Vegas or via Kansas City-Albuquerque-Flagstaff), New Orleans and San Antonio (via St Louis and Dallas/Ft Worth). A connection also exists between San Antonio and Los Angeles via El Paso, Tucson and Phoenix. There is a thrice-weekly train from Los Angeles to New Orleans. Prices and timetables are subject to changes. Amtrak have recently launched 20 ACELA Express high-speed trains capable of travelling up to 240kph (150mph), reducing the current three-hour trip between Washington and New York by 30 minutes and the New York to Boston journey from four and half hours to three hours.

Amtrak contact details: For up-to-date information contact Amtrak (tel: (1 800) 872 7245 (toll free; USA and Canada only) or (212) 582 6875 (New York) or (020) 7400 7099 (Destination Marketing, London) or (0870) 750 0222 (Leisurail, UK); web-site: <http://www.amtrak.com>). US travel agents can also obtain information on Amtrak train services, schedules and travel packages through the Western Folder Distribution Company Travel Information Network by entering their ARC number on the Internet (web site: <http://www.travelinfonet.com>).

Tour packages: Amtrak offers 74 different tours in 34 States throughout the USA. Full details are provided in the Amtrak brochure, which is widely available. Nearly all trains have one-class seating and air-conditioning, with a variety of sleeping accommodation available on payment of a supplementary fare. All long-distance trains have dining facilities. The railroads often pass through fine scenery, particularly on east-west routes. While most Americans drive or take the bus, the passenger trains continue to attract a discerning and ever-increasing clientele. Indeed, rail travel in the USA - as in many other countries - has undergone a considerable revival in recent years, and the signs are that this trend will continue.

Cheap fares: The USA Rail Pass is specifically designed for international travellers and is sold only to visitors from outside the USA or Canada. USA Rail Passes allow for 15 or 30 days of unlimited travel either on a national or regional basis. The National USA Rail Pass offers travel on the whole Amtrak network in the USA and Canada (overnight sleepers, auto trains and the 'Metroliner' between New York and Washington are not included). The 15-day National USA Rail Pass costs US\$440 per person in the peak season and US\$295 per person off-peak. The 30-day National USA Rail Pass costs US\$550 per person and US\$385 per person off-peak. The peak season in 2001 is from June 1 to mid-September and off-peak fares are in effect for the remainder of the year. Children aged 2-15 pay half the adult fare and children under two years of age travel free. Group, family, weekend and tour packages are all available, although fares may still exceed combined bus and air fares. In many cases, point-to-point tickets bought outside the USA will be considerably cheaper.

The following Regional USA Rail Passes are also available: the Northeast Region Pass is valid on trains from Newport News (Virginia) north to Boston, Burlington (Vermont) and Montreal (Canada), west from Philadelphia to Harrisburg (Pennsylvania), west from New York to Niagara Falls, and all stations in between; the East Region Pass covers the region east of Chicago and

New Orleans up to Montréal; the West Region Pass covers the region west of Chicago to New Orleans; the Far West Pass covers the region from Seattle to San Diego and to Salt Lake City and Flagstaff; and the Coastal Region Pass covers the east coast and from Seattle to San Diego on the west coast. Prices for these passes vary between approximately US\$185 for 15-day passes and US\$430 for 30-day passes (with a 20-30% reduction during off-peak season).

Passports must be presented at the time of purchase and passes must be used within 90 days of purchase. The passes cover coach-class travel tickets and seat reservations on Amtrak passenger services. However, rail passes act as a form of payment for seats only - to guarantee a seat on any specific Amtrak train, a reservation must be made. Travellers should contact the nearest Amtrak station to find out whether reservations are required on specific journeys they wish to make. For journeys where reservations are required, train times should be reconfirmed 24 hours prior to departure. Travellers aiming to travel during peak times should make reservations well in advance. Higher class and other accommodation is available on payment of the usual supplements. Further information on prices and timetables is available from Amtrak (for contact details, see above). A list of international sales representatives can be found on Amtrak's web site (<http://www.amtrak.com/trip/international.html>). The USA Rail Pass brochure is published in eight languages is widely available.

ROAD: Driving is a marvellous way to see the USA, although the distances between cities can be enormous. A realistic evaluation of travel times should be made to avoid over-strenuous itineraries. Driving conditions are excellent and the road system reaches every town. Petrol is cheaper than in Europe. The American Automobile Association (AAA) offers touring services, maps, advice and insurance policies, which are compulsory in most States, even for hiring (tel: (321) 253 9100; fax: (321) 253 9107; web site: <http://www.aaa.com>). Membership of a visitor's own national automobile association (eg AA or RAC membership for the UK) entitles the traveller to AAA benefits.

Coach: Greyhound World Travel is the main national coach carrier and covers the whole of the USA. This service is supplemented by over 11,000 other tour lines, covering the country with reasonably priced and regular services. Air-conditioning, toilets and reclining seats are available on intercity routes. Greyhound covers the Southern States, the Southern-Central States, the South Rockies area and also extends into Mexico and Canada. Facilities for left luggage and food are available, usually 24 hours a day. Once disembarked at a bus terminal, passengers are not permitted to wait there overnight for an onward bus (ie no sleeping in the terminal). For information on fares and schedules, contact Greyhound Lines (tel: (1 800) 231 2222 (toll free; USA and Canada only); web site: <http://www.greyhound.com>).

Cheap fares: Greyhound Lines offers the Ameripass, which gives 7, 10, 15, 30, 40 or 60 days unlimited travel throughout the USA. The pass must be bought outside the USA through Greyhound World Travel. Ameripass offers half-price fares for children 2-12 years old and discounted fares for passengers over 62 years old and students enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate study. Unlimited stopovers are allowed on ordinary tickets. Greyhound Lines also offers excursion fares for point-to-point travel. For further details contact Greyhound Lines (Ameripass) (tel: (1 888) 454 7277 or international bookings (212) 971 0492 (New York); web site: <http://www.greyhound.com>).

Car hire: Major international companies have offices at all gateway airports and in most cities. There are excellent discounts available for foreign visitors. Credit-card deposits and inclusive rates are generally required. As a guide to car sizes an 'Economy' or 'Compact' refers to a car the size of a standard European car, while a 'Standard' refers to a car the size of a limousine. Minimum ages for hirers vary according to the rental company, pick-up point and method of payment. Agents are advised to contact the individual companies for information on drivers under 25 years of age.

Drive away: The AAA and Auto Driveaway provide a service enabling the traveller to drive cars to and from a given point, only paying the price of petrol. A deposit is often required and time and mileage limits are set for delivery, which leaves very little time for sightseeing (there are heavy financial penalties for those who exceed the limits). Details are published under Automobile & Truck Transporting in the US Yellow Pages. Some companies allow the driver to finish the journey in Canada. For further information, contact Auto Driveaway (tel: (312) 341 1900; web site: <http://www.autodriveaway.com>).

Campers/motorhomes: The hire of self-drive campers or motorhomes, which are called 'recreational vehicles' in the USA, are a good means of getting around.

Documentation: An International Driving Permit is recommended, although it is not legally required (it is often very useful as an additional proof of identity). A full national driving licence is accepted for up to one year. Insurance: All travellers intending to rent or drive cars or motorhomes in the USA are strongly advised to ensure that the insurance policy covers their total requirements, covering all drivers and passengers against injury or accidental death. A yellow 'non-resident, interstate liability insurance card' which acts as evidence of financial responsibility is available through motor insurance agents.

Traffic regulations: Traffic drives on the right. Speed limit: usually 55mph (89kph) on motorways, but varies from State to State. Speed limits are clearly indicated along highways and are strictly enforced, with heavy fines imposed. Note that it is illegal to pass a school bus that has stopped to unload its passengers (using indicators and warning lights) and all vehicles must stop until the bus has moved back into the traffic stream. It is illegal for drivers not to have their licences immediately to hand. If stopped, do not attempt to pay a driving fine on the spot (unless it is demanded) as it may be interpreted as an attempt to bribe.

Note: There are extremely tough laws against drinking and driving throughout the USA. These laws are strictly enforced.

URBAN: Some US cities now have good public transport services following a 'transit renaissance' after the energy crises of the 1970s. There are a number of underground train systems in operation in major cities including New York (subway), Washington, DC (metro), Boston ('T'), Chicago (train) and San Francisco (BART - Bay Area Rapid Transit); others are being planned or built, for instance a long-overdue network in Los Angeles. There are also several tramway and trolleybus systems, including the much-loved antique trams found in San Francisco.

Note: Many of the underground train systems are dangerous during off-peak hours (the New York subway, in particular, has acquired an almost gothic reputation for violence, although this has been much exaggerated), but they offer cheap, quick and efficient travel during the working day, particularly in New York, Boston and Chicago. Travel by any other means during the day is likely to be slow and arduous.

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: There are many good traditional hotels. However, the majority are modern and part of national and international chains, often with standard prices. In general the quality of accommodation is high, with facilities such as televisions and telephones in each room. For further information, contact the American Hotel & Motel Association, Suite 600, 1201 New York

Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005-3931 (tel: (202) 289 3100; fax: (202) 289 3199; e-mail: infoctr@ahma.com; web site: <http://www.ahma.com>).

Grading: Basic categories fall into 'Super', 'Deluxe', 'Standard', 'Moderate' and 'Inexpensive'. Prices vary according to standards.

Pre-paid voucher schemes: Several companies offer a pre-paid voucher scheme for use at various hotel and motel chains throughout the USA.

GUEST-HOUSES: There is a network of guest-houses (boarding houses) throughout the USA. For details, contact The Director, Tourist House Association of America, PO Box 355-AA, Greentown, PA 18426 (tel: (570) 676 3222).

BED & BREAKFAST: This long-established tradition in the UK is now spreading across the USA. B&B signs are not generally displayed by individual homes, but most homes offering this service are listed in directories, which may be purchased by interested travellers.

RANCH HOLIDAYS: There are ranches all over the southern and western States offering riding, participation in cattle drives, and activity holidays in mountain and lakeland settings.

CAMPING/CARAVANNING: This is extremely popular, especially in the Rocky Mountains and New England. The camping season in the north lasts from mid-May to mid-September. Camping along the side of highways and in undesignated areas is prohibited. For information on campsites, contact KOA (Kampgrounds of America) (tel: (406) 248 7444; fax: (406) 245 9878; web site: <http://www.koakampgrounds.com>). The 24,000-plus campsites fall into two general categories:

Public sites: Usually linked with National or State Parks and Forests, offering modest but comfortable facilities. Most of them will have toilet blocks, electricity hook-ups and picnic areas. Campsites are usually operated on a first-come, first-served basis and will often restrict the length of stay. Advance reservations are possible at some national parks. Fees range from free to around US\$20 per night.

Privately run sites: These range from basic to resort luxury. Most have laundry and drying facilities, entertainment and information services. Reservations can be made through a central reservation office in the USA. Fees range from around US\$25-35. Camping in the backcountry (a general term for areas inaccessible by road) requires a permit, available free of charge. Visitors are advised not to drink water from rivers and streams without boiling it for at least 5 minutes. It is also advisable to check fire regulations and inform the park ranger of the itinerary before setting out to a backcountry area.

YMCA/YOUTH HOSTELS: There are 74 YMCA centres in 68 cities throughout the USA. Membership is not necessary, but reservations should be made two days prior to arrival via the Head Offices. The YMCA offers centrally-located accommodation at attractive rates coast to coast throughout the USA. Most centres offer single and double accommodation for both men and women and many also have sports facilities. For further information contact YMCA of the USA, 101 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606 (tel: (312) 977 0031; fax: (312) 977 9063; web site: <http://www.ymca.net>). Youth hostels offer their members simple, inexpensive overnight accommodation usually located in scenic, historical or cultural places. Youth Hostel Association membership is open to everyone with no age limit and there are individual, family and organisation memberships. British visitors should take out membership in the UK before travelling. For further information contact the American Youth Hostels Inc, Suite 840, 733 15th

Street NW, Washington, DC 20005 (tel: (202) 783 6161; fax: (202) 783 6171; e-mail: hiayhserv@hiayh.org; web site: <http://www.hiayh.org>).

SELF-CATERING: Self-catering facilities, known in the USA as 'apartments', 'condominiums' (or 'condos'), 'efficiencies' or 'villas', are also available.

HOME EXCHANGE: There are several agents who offer home exchange programmes between the USA and the UK.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Outdoor Pursuits: Outdoor Pursuits: America's vast expanses of wilderness, mountains, forest, canyons and coastlines lend themselves to a wide range of outdoor pursuits. From trekking in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, whitewater rafting through the Grand Canyon on the Colorado River, canoeing down the Mississippi River, fishing on the Great Lakes, sailing in Florida, diving in Hawaii to skiing in the Rocky Mountains, every activity can easily be arranged. America's national parks are administered by the National Park Service (NPS). Hiking trails are generally well kept and well marked. The National Park System includes National Monuments, which are smaller than parks and focus on maybe just one archaeological site or geological phenomenon (such as Devil's Tower in Wyoming), National Forests and 170 or so Lesser Known Parks, which are located away from the cities and highways. State Parks and State Monuments are administered by individual States. Most of America's parks and outdoor recreational areas have visitor centres where advice on trails, activities and other practical information (such as weather reports or fishing regulations) can be obtained. Most parks and monuments charge admission fees ranging from US\$4-20. A number of passes are available from the NPS: the National Parks Pass (US\$50) gives one driver and all accompanying passengers a year's unlimited access to nearly all national parks and monuments (users should note that this pass does not reduce fees for facilities such as camping, swimming, parking and boat launching). Only the larger parks have hotel-style accommodation, while almost all parks and monuments have facilities for camping. For further details on camping, see the Accommodation section. Fishing permits are compulsory and vary from State to State. Rock climbing and mountaineering are particularly popular in the Sierra Nevada and in the Rocky Mountains. For further information about reservations, permits, regulations and services, visitors should contact the parks in advance or the National Park Service, The Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Office of Public Enquiries, PO Box 37127, Room 1013, Washington, DC 20013-7127 (tel: (202) 208 4747; web site: <http://www.nps.gov>).

Spectator sports: Spectator sports: American football, baseball and basketball are the national sports. Schedules and ticket information can be obtained from local tourist offices. The baseball season lasts from April to September, the football season from September to January, the basketball season from November to April. Baseball tickets are relatively cheap, at around US\$7 per seat, while professional football tickets are not only very expensive, but also extremely hard to come by. Further information can be obtained, respectively, from the National Basketball Association (NBA) (tel: (212) 450 2000; web site: <http://www.nba.com>); the National Football League (NFL) (tel: (212) 450 2000; web site: <http://www.nfl.com>); and the Major League Baseball (tel: (212) 931 7800; web site: <http://www.majorleaguebaseball.com>). The popularity of ice-hockey has expanded from Canadian and far northern cities to the rest of the USA. The ice-hockey season runs from October to March. For information, contact the National Hockey League (web site: <http://www.nhl.com>). The most popular tennis competition in the USA is the US Open at Flushing Meadow in New York, held from late August to early September. Individual tickets go on sale during June. For ticket information, write to Customer Service, US Open Ticket Dept, Flushing Meadow, Corona Park, Flushing, NY 11368 (web site: <http://www.usopen.org>). For

general information on tennis, contact the United States Tennis Association (web site: <http://www.ust.com>). The heart of horseracing in the USA is the 'bluegrass country', focused around the State of Kentucky. The most important races of the year, the Bluegrass Stakes and the Kentucky Derby (in May), are run at the Churchill Downs racecourse in Louisville, Kentucky. There are also major tracks in New England. Rodeos, a legacy of the historical development that resulted from the spread of cattle ranching, are frequently held in Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas and throughout the western States. The USA also hosts the world's largest motor racing event, the Indianapolis 500, held annually in May.

Wintersports: Wintersports: The USA offers some of the world's best skiing runs, particularly in the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada. The Rocky Mountain States (and Colorado in particular) are particularly good for downhill skiing, the best-known resorts including Aspen, Vail, Jackson Hole and Big Sky. In the Sierra Nevada, Lake Tahoe is the major ski destination. Cross-country skiing is also well catered for, with back country ski lodges scattered around mountainous areas along the coast and in the Rockies. New England, California, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Wyoming are also good destinations for cross-country skiing. Information on cross-country skiing can be obtained from the Cross-Country Ski Areas Association (web site: <http://www.xcski.org>). In the past few years snowboarding has become increasingly popular, and plenty of ski resorts now offer half pipes and board rental.

Golf: Golf: The American passion for golf is exemplified by the extremely high number of courses found throughout the country as well as the massive crowds flocking to the United States Golfing Association's national championships games. In 2001, the 101st US Open will be held at the famous Pebble Beach Golf Links in California from Jun 12-18). For further details on courses, fees and competitions, contact the United States Golfing Association (USGA), PO Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931 (tel: (908) 234 2300; fax: (908) 234 9687; e-mail: usga@usga.org; web site: <http://www.usga.org>)

Watersports: Watersports: One of the activities that epitomises American sport is surfing and Hawaii, with its legendary winter swells at Oahu (surfing's spiritual home), Waimea, Sunset Beach and the Banzai Pipeline, remains one of America's (and the world's) most famous surfing destinations. California also has some good breaks in Malibu, Rincon, Trestles and Mavericks. Diving and snorkelling are particularly good in Hawaii, California, Florida and along the East Coast. The Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), the world's largest recreational diving membership organisation, has its headquarters in California at 30151 Tomas Street, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688-2125 (tel: (949) 858 7234; fax: (949) 858 7264; web site: <http://www.padi.com>). Other popular watersports include sailing, windsurfing, sea kayaking and jetskiing.

10 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: In large cities, restaurants are mostly modern and very clean, offering a vast range of cuisines, prices and facilities. American breakfasts are especially notable for such specialities as pancakes or waffles with maple syrup, home fries and grits (a Southern dish). Foreigners are often perplexed by the common question of how they would like their eggs fried, ie 'over easy' (flipped over briefly) or 'sunny side up' (fried on one side only). Fast food chains serving hot dogs, hamburgers and pizzas are everywhere. Regional specialities range from Spanish flavours in the southwest to Creole or French in the Deep South. Restaurants come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from fast-food, self-service and counter service to drive-in and table service. The 'diner' is an integral part of the American way of life; consisting of a driveway, neon lights and simple food served from the counter; it is generally located in or just outside smaller

towns. Discounts on eating out include Early Bird Dinners, where discounts are offered for meals served prior to 1800; Children's Platters, selections from a low-cost children's menu; and Restaurant Specials, when a different specific meal is offered each day at a discount price or there is an all-you-can-eat menu. Drink: There are also many types of bars, ranging from the smart cocktail lounge, café-style, high 'saloon' style bars and imitations of English pubs to the 'regular' bar. In cities many have 'happy hours' with cheaper drinks and free snacks on the counter. Generally speaking, waiter/waitress service costs more. Drinking laws are set by States, counties, municipalities and towns, although traditionally closing time in bars is between 0000 and 0300. The legal age for drinking also varies from 18 to 21 from State to State and the laws on the availability of alcohol run from Nevada's policy of anytime, anywhere and to anyone, to localities where drinking is strictly prohibited. Where the laws are severe, there are often private clubs or a town only a few kilometres away from the 'dry town' where alcohol sales are legal. It is important to be aware of these laws when visiting an area and it is worth remembering that where alcohol is available, visitors may be asked to produce some form of identity that will prove their age. It should also be noted that it is illegal to have an open container of alcohol in a vehicle or on the street. Beer is the most popular and widespread drink and is served ice cold. Californian wines are very popular. See also Food & Drink in the individual State sections for further.

Nightlife: Clubs generally stay open until the early hours in cities, where one can find music and theatre of all descriptions. Unlike in Europe, bars are usually for drinkers and not for social meetings. Theatre tickets for Broadway, New York's equivalent of London's West End 'Theatreland', can be booked for groups of over 20 through Group Sales Box Office, 3rd Floor, 226 West 47th Street, New York, NY 10036 (tel: (212) 398 8383; fax: (212) 398 8389). Tickets must be paid for in advance and will be kept at the theatre box office for collection on the night of the performance. Gambling is only allowed in licensed casinos and the legal age for gamblers is 21 years of age or over.

Shopping: Variety, late opening hours, competitive prices and an abundance of modern goods typify American shopping. Many small stores, specialist food shops and hypermarkets are open 24 hours a day. Clothes and electronic goods can be bought direct from factories. Retail outlets range from flea markets and bargain stores to large chain department stores. Malls are a popular way of shopping in the USA and consist of a cluster of different kinds of shops in one building, often a few storeys high, connected by an indoor plaza. Note that a sales tax is levied on all items in most States and the addition is not included on the price label; 3-15% is normal. A guide to the customs and laws of American shopping is available from PO Box 95-M, Oradell, NJ 07649. Shopping hours: 0900/0930-1730/1800 Monday to Saturday. There may be late-night shopping one or two evenings a week. Some States permit Sunday trading.

Special Events: The holidays which are closest to the people's hearts are Thanksgiving and Christmas. See also Special Events in the individual State sections.

Christmas: The Americans celebrate Christmas in a big way, both religiously and as consumers. Northern regions have the added bonus of wintery weather and snowfall, and a 'White Christmas' (a fairly common event in the New England area and other northern States) always adds to the atmosphere.

Thanksgiving: This takes place on the 4th Thursday of November (Nov 22 in 2001; Nov 28 in 2002). It is a festival celebrated with close family and friends. Blessings are shared and prayers of thanks are said over a meal of roast turkey, bread stuffing, roast potatoes and yams. This holiday originated in the first year after the Pilgrim Fathers arrived in the New World as a feast to thank the Native Americans for their aid and advice in helping the immigrants come to grips with a new land.

The 4th of July: In honour of America's victory against the British in the Revolutionary War, this holiday is celebrated throughout the country with spectacular fireworks displays. American

fireworks are among the best in the world and some of the most dazzling shows take place over lakes, rivers or on the coast, where the sky is lit up and the light is reflected from the water.

Hallowe'en: Another holiday celebrated in the USA is Hallowe'en (Oct 31). Children dress up in, often ghoulish costumes, as witches, devils and ghosts and tour the neighbourhood, usually in groups, knocking on the doors of nearby houses and saying 'trick or treat'. The owner of the house is then obliged to give the children some sort of 'treat', usually food or sweets. Failure to comply can result in the 'trick'. The night before Hallowe'en is known as Mischief Night, when children roam their neighbourhoods making a nuisance of themselves with pranks such as ringing doorbells and running away or spreading toilet paper along fences and telephone poles. Both of these nights are somewhat unpopular with adults, but children have a great time and the tradition is probably too ingrained in American tradition to be discontinued.

Mardi Gras: Every year New Orleans celebrates Mardi Gras, attracting visitors from all over the USA and abroad. There are parades, dancing in the streets and revellers in masks and costumes all in a spirit of wild abandon.

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Social Conventions: The wide variety of national origins and America's relatively short history has resulted in numerous cultural and traditional customs living alongside each other. In large cities people of the same ethnic background often live within defined communities. Shaking hands is the usual form of greeting. A relaxed and informal atmosphere is usually the norm. As long as the fundamental rules of courtesy are observed there need be no fear of offending anyone of any background. Americans are renowned for their openness and friendliness to visitors. Gifts are appreciated if one is invited to a private home. As a rule dress is casual. Smart restaurants, hotels and clubs insist on suits and ties or long dresses. Smoking is often restricted in public buildings and on city transport. There will usually be a notice where no smoking is requested and many restaurants have smoking and non-smoking sections. Tipping: Widely practised, and service charges are not usually included in the bill. Waiters generally expect 15%, as do taxi drivers and hairdressers. It should be noted that a cover charge is for admission to an establishment, not a tip for service. Porters generally expect US\$1 per bag.

11 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: The US economy is the world's largest, most powerful and most diverse. The roots of this lie in the physical expansion and development of the country during the 19th century. Subsequently the USA benefited from a unique combination of mass immigration, technological and marketing innovations, exploitation of natural resources, the expansion of international trade, historical fortune (hugely destructive wars which caused immense damage to other world powers but left the USA virtually untouched), and the fostering of a political and economic system well designed to exploit them. The enormous influence of US-based multinational companies in the world economy has afforded not only unique global influence to the US government but has also allowed its currency to acquire a unique international status. Large areas of the USA, particularly in the Mid West, are under cultivation and produce a wide range of commodities: the most important of these are cotton, cereals and tobacco, all of which are exported on a large scale. The principal mining operations produce oil and gas, coal, copper, iron, uranium and silver. The US manufacturing industry is a world leader in many fields, including steel, vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, chemicals, electronics and consumer goods. Since the late 1970s, however, the biggest employer has been the service sector, particularly finance (including banking, insurance and equities), leisure and tourism. Services now account for three-quarters of output and employment. To this has been added the new computer-based industries associated with the Internet which are already revolutionising lifestyles and commerce during the late 1990s - a process which will certainly continue into the next millennium with the USA in the forefront of new developments. The US economy has performed steadily, if unspectacularly, in recent times: inflation and unemployment are both around 4%, while annual growth has picked up to 5% after registering several points lower throughout the 90s. The USA's most important trade relationship is with Canada (which accounts for 20% of all US trade). The two countries concluded a free trade agreement in 1989: this accord formed the basis for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), to which Mexico became a signatory in 1992. (In its scale, NAFTA is of similar proportions to the EU in terms of population and economic output). Other major trading partners are Japan, the UK and Germany, followed by other members of the EU.

Business: Business people are generally expected to dress smartly, although a man may wear a short-sleeved shirt under his suit in hot weather. Normal business courtesies should be observed, although Americans tend to be less formal than Europeans. Appointments and punctuality are normal procedure and business cards are widely used. Dates in America are written month-day-year: 4 July 2001 would thus be abbreviated as 7/4/01. Write out the month in full to avoid confusion. Office hours: 0900-1730 Monday to Friday.

Commercial Information: The following organisations can offer advice: New York City Partnership & Chamber of Commerce, 1 Battery Park Plaza, New York, NY 10004 (tel: (212) 493 7500; fax: (212) 344 3344; web site: <http://www.nycp.org>); or Chamber of Commerce of the USA, 1615 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20062 (tel: (202) 659 6000; fax: (202) 463 5836; web site: <http://www.uschamber.org>); or United States Department of Commerce, Export Assistance Centre, Suite 206, Room 635, 6, World Trade Center, New York, NY 10048 (tel: (212) 466 5222; fax: (212) 264 1356; web site: <http://www.ita.doc.gov>); or National Foreign Trade Council Inc, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 (tel: (212) 399 7128; fax: (212) 399 7144); or American Chamber of Commerce, 75 Brook Street, London W1Y 2EB (tel: (020) 7493 0381; fax: (020) 7493 2394; e-mail: acc@amcham.org.uk; web site: <http://www.amcham.org.uk>).

Conferences/Conventions: In the last 20 years, ABTA (the Association of British Travel Agents) has held its annual convention in US cities four times (in Miami, Los Angeles, Orlando and Phoenix). That no other country has been revisited so often clearly indicates the importance of the USA as a conference destination; there are State, city and regional travel and convention

organisations in every part of the country, each actively promoting its own assets. With so much information available, the real problem for the organiser is to find some way of getting through it all. There are several magazines aimed at helping the conference organiser; they include 'Meeting & Conventions Magazine', 'Successful Meetings Magazine' and 'Corporate Meetings and Incentive Magazine'. Of statistical interest is Chicago's status as host to more trade shows than any other city in the world. Organisers interested in US venues should contact the US Travel Industry Association or the travel organisations listed in the individual State sections. In addition to the State organisations, addresses of travel and convention organisations for cities and counties are also included.

12 CLIMATE

See the individual State sections.

13 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in North America in 1492, the continent was inhabited by peoples thought to have been descended from nomadic Mongolian tribes who had travelled across the Barents Sea. The first wave of European settlers, mainly English, French and Dutch, crossed the Atlantic in the 17th century and colonised the Eastern Seaboard. The restrictions on political rights and the punitive taxation which the British government imposed on the American colonists led to the American War of Independence (1775-1783), with the Declaration of Independence being signed in 1776. The outcome was a humiliating defeat for the English King, George III. The American Constitution born of this victory has been imitated by many other countries. A period of settlement, purchases from the French and Spanish, and annexation of Indian and Mexican lands followed. By 1853, the boundaries of the United States were, with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii, as they are today. Economic activity in the southern States centred on plantation agriculture dependent on slavery. Attempts by liberally-inclined Republicans, led by Abraham Lincoln, to end slavery were fiercely opposed. The election of Lincoln to the Presidency in 1861 precipitated a political crisis in which seven southern States (joined later by three others) seceded from the Union, resulting in the American Civil War. The more powerful and better-equipped Union forces prevailed after four years of fighting. After the war, the country entered a period of consolidation, building up an industrial economy and settling the vast interior region of America known as the Midwest. The mid- and late 19th century also saw the formulation of an American foreign policy with two principal elements: formal diplomatic and trading links were established with the old colonial powers; while on the American continent, the USA sought to establish itself as the regional power - a policy espoused by the Monroe Doctrine (1822) which laid the basis for intervention in support of the USA's 'national interest'. The latter has been a constant feature of US policy ever since. Successful diplomatic and commercial overtures were also made to Japan, paving the way for the growth of US power in the Pacific. In Europe, US intervention in 1917 proved decisive for the Allies, and signalled the emergence of the USA as a global power. Driven by free-market economic policies and innovative developments in technology and production methods - notably the growth of the motor industry - the USA had by this time undeniably become the world's leading economy. The USA entered World War II following the Japanese attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbour, although its earlier neutrality had been decidedly favourable to the Allied Powers, especially Britain. Domestic post-war politics have revolved around the struggle between the Republicans and Democrats, the only two parties of any significance. The Republican Party, often referred to as the GOP or Grand Old Party, picks up most corporate support and substantial backing from

wealthy individuals; the Democrats are perceived as the party supported by particular interest groups, thus the 'labor vote', 'black vote', 'Jewish vote' and so on, and as having more liberal views on social and welfare policy. The Democratic Party is, however, by no means left-wing and equally as keen as its GOP counterpart to attract the votes of 'middle America' - the mostly white, middle-income, middle-class folk who form the backbone of the US electorate (i.e. the quarter of the population who actually vote). Both Republican and Democratic candidates have been elected to the Presidency with roughly equal frequency over the history of the nation, but Republicans have been more frequent in the White House since 1945 while the Democrats have dominated Congress. World War II also saw the birth of nuclear weapons and the superpower conflict which has until recently dominated modern international relations. The essence of post-war US foreign policy has been the struggle against the spread of communist influence, not only for ideological reasons but also for economic motives. Despite the dangers of nuclear escalation, direct military intervention has not been eschewed, however, as in the Korean War of the 1950s (under UN auspices), the ill-fated Vietnam mission and, most recently, the Middle East. The Reagan administration, which came to office in 1980, reinvigorated the ideological struggle, although relations between the USA and the former USSR improved greatly after 1985 owing, almost entirely, to the 'new thinking' adopted in Soviet foreign policy under the Gorbachev regime. In 1988, Reagan's Vice-President George Bush was elected to the White House. As far as the USA was concerned, the collapse of the Soviet bloc meant the Cold War was won and the foreign policy effort needed to be realigned. Thus we have the 'New World Order', a loosely defined notion coined by Bush before the war against Iraq in early 1991. The enemy, so to speak, was best defined by one White House staffer as 'that swirling pot of poison made up of zealots, crazies, drug traffickers and terrorists'. Under the aegis of the New World Order, Bush launched two major military campaigns, against Panama and Iraq. While both were successful in their immediate objectives, the long-term benefits have been less clear. A by-product of the intervention in the Gulf was the new impetus which the crisis gave to a solution of the Palestinian question in which the USA, as Israel's essential ally, has long been involved. Contacts between Israel and the Palestinians which began in late 1991 and early 1992 were followed up by the dialogue which produced the 1994 Oslo accord (see Israel section). Unfortunately, subsequent events have shown the limits of US influence and its comparative impotence when tackling the fundamental issues in the region. For all Bush's engagements on the international stage, his apparent neglect of the domestic situation was exploited by his opponent, the Democratic Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton. Bush failed to repeat his achievement in 1988 of overhauling a large Democratic poll lead, and Clinton won the election by a comfortable majority. With a shaky start, characterised by some major political misjudgements and some unfortunate personnel selections, the Clinton administration took a while to get into its stride. The two main planks of its **domestic policy had emerged by the autumn of 1993**: firstly, to support ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and to pursue a settlement of the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT); and secondly, a wholesale reform of US healthcare. This latter task was entrusted to Clinton's talented First Lady, Hilary Rodham Clinton, who unveiled, in September, an outline programme to introduce a comprehensive healthcare system for all American citizens. Though well-received at first, it became bogged down in argument and eventually fizzled out. Despite some opposition NAFTA was endorsed. GATT meanwhile was transformed into the World Trade Organisation, which now effectively operates as a regulatory authority for international trade. In the first two years of his presidency, Clinton was able to make use of the Democrats' traditional control of Congress. However, the Republican victory in mid-term Congressional elections gave the GOP unprecedented control of both Houses of Congress, which they have maintained ever since. The feuds between Congress and the White House were almost continuous, covering almost every aspect of policy - and were later to have devastating consequences for the Clinton presidency. Clinton's foreign policy record improved after a poor start, beginning with the disastrous US involvement (through the UN) in Somalia which was largely a humiliation; Haiti almost went the same way although the position was later recovered. The first 'achievement' (to which, in truth, the Americans contributed

comparatively little) was the staging of the formal signing of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement in August 1993. Since then, the Dayton accord which ended the Bosnian civil war has been a success, favourably contrasting decisive American diplomatic and military action with the vacillations of the Europeans. In the Middle East, the 'dual containment' strategy designed to keep the twin pariahs, Iran and Iraq, in check has had mixed results. In the case of Iran, the political environment has radically altered in that country and the outright hostility of the USA now appears rather myopic. Next door, President Saddam Hussein has dealt with everything with which the USA and the rest of the world have attacked him and his regime has yet to be seriously threatened. White House handling of the long-running Cuban problem, characterised by a slight softening of the traditional hard line, has been thrown into disarray by the Elian Gonzalez affair. (This concerns a six-year-old Cuban refugee who was rescued during his flight across the Florida Straits after his mother had drowned. Despite fierce lobbying by relatives in Miami, who initially looked after him, the child has been returned to the custody of his Cuban father.) At home, the early 1990s were a period of steady growth and rising prosperity and these were the main factors that gave Clinton a substantial opinion poll lead as the 1996 election campaign got under way. Divisions among the Republicans assisted. The challenger, Senate Republican leader Bob Dole, was easily seen off by Clinton in what was one of the least dramatic presidential elections in the history of the USA. But dramatic events were to follow as Clinton became embroiled in a series of confrontations with Congress arising from one of his numerous affairs. Having repeatedly lied about his involvement with a junior staff member, Monica Lewinsky, Clinton was relentlessly investigated by a special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr. Despite much time, money and effort, Starr was unable to amass sufficient evidence to persuade congressional Democrats (whose votes were needed to ensure the required two-thirds majority for impeachment) that Clinton deserved that fate. Having survived that, Clinton has presided over a fairly quiet period in American foreign policy and a still booming economy at home. GOVERNMENT: The USA is a Federal Republic with 50 States and the District of Columbia (as in 'Washington, DC'), which lies between Maryland and Virginia. In addition, the USA has close associations with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam and the US Virgin Islands and exercises trusteeship on behalf of the UN over several Pacific Island groups. The Constitution (the final arbiters of which are the members of the Supreme Court) ensures that the powers of the executive, legislature, judiciary, presidency and the individual States are balanced by constitutional procedures. The President is elected by an electoral college system based on universal adult suffrage every four years. No President may be elected to serve more than two full terms of office. The current President is George W Bush, with Dick Cheney as Vice-President. The legislature is bicameral; the Senate has two members from each State while the larger House of Representatives allocates seats on the basis of population. Collectively these two bodies are known as Congress. Each State enjoys a fairly high degree of self-government.

Covering a large part of the North American continent, the United States of America shares borders with Canada, Mexico, the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans, the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. The State of Alaska, in the northwest corner of the continent, is separated from the rest of the country by Canada, and Hawaii lies in the central Pacific Ocean. One of the largest countries in the world, the USA has an enormous diversity of geographical features. The climate ranges from subtropical to Arctic, with a corresponding breadth of flora and fauna. Washington, DC is the capital with a population of approximately 606,900 (2000). 'DC' stands for 'District of Columbia', not a State but an administrative district created specifically to avoid having the capital city in any one State. It is a city of green parks, wide tree-lined streets, white marble buildings and, surprising for a US city, very few skyscrapers. It has the fourth-largest concentration of hotel and motel rooms in the country. Tourism is the leading private industry. US sites of interest include The Yosemite National Park, The Grand Canyon, the Florida Everglades, Death Valley, San Francisco's China Town and Golden Gate Bridge; not to mention the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty .

The range of cuisine is truly international but featuring American icons such as hamburgers, hot dogs and hash browns. Mexican food is very popular.

Clubs generally stay open until the early hours in cities, where one can find music and theatre of all descriptions. Unlike in Europe, bars are usually for drinkers and not for social meetings.

14 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: Covering a large part of the North American continent, the United States of America shares borders with Canada, Mexico, the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans, the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. The State of Alaska, in the northwest corner of the continent, is separated from the rest of the country by Canada, and Hawaii lies in the central Pacific Ocean. One of the largest countries in the world, the USA has an enormous diversity of geographical features. The climate ranges from subtropical to Arctic, with a corresponding breadth of flora and fauna. Washington, DC is the capital with a population of approximately 543,213 (1996). 'DC' stands for 'District of Columbia', not a State but an administrative district created specifically to avoid having the capital city in any one State. It is a city of green parks, wide tree-lined streets, white marble buildings and, surprising for a US city, very few skyscrapers. It has the fourth-largest concentration of hotel and motel rooms in the country. Tourism is the leading private industry.

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