

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

GEOGRAPHY:

The USA are situated in the southern part of North America. Its neighbours are Canada in the north, Mexico in the south and the Confederation of Independent States in Alaska. It covers the area of about 9 million sq kms.

The Rocky Mountains and the Coastal Mountains bound central plains to the west, the Appalachian Mountains to the east and alluvial plains around the Gulf of Mexico. The highest mountain in the USA is Mount McKinley in the Alaska Range. The largest rivers are the Mississippi and the Missouri.

The border with Canada is in its central part made by the Great Lakes Region. The USA with Canada share lakes Superior, Huron, Erie and Ontario.

There are big variations of climate. Temperatures change from the arctic cold in northern Alaska to subtropical warmth on Hawaii and the Gulf Coast States. On the western coast temperatures change very little between summer and winter, the north central states have different climate in summer and winter.

There are many national parks in the USA with beautiful and preserved nature e.g. Glacier NP, Yellowstone NP, Yosemite NP, Rocky Mountains NP, Grand Canyon NP, Mount McKinley NP.

PEOPLE:

The USA population is about 245 million. People live either in the cities or in the huge suburban areas. The majority of population works in some service profession. Many ethnic groups live in the USA. America is sometimes called the "melting pot" or "Pizza" because people living here are of all possible origins and all the races can mix together. Now there are mainly white people, but there are also black people, Asian and Pacific islanders and American Indians and Eskimos.

The main language spoken here is American English but various ethnic minorities speak their original languages (Chinese, Spanish etc.). American English differs from British English in vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling.

HISTORY:

The American continent was discovered first by Icelandic Vikings, another visitor was an Italian mariner Christopher Columbus. The first English colony was founded in Virginia at Jamestown in the 16th century. The ship named Mayflower brought English men, women and children to northeastern region (Massachusetts) where they found the colony called Plymouth. They called themselves the Pilgrim Fathers and wanted to build up a colony based on their own religious ideas. In October 1621 they celebrated good harvest and held a feast with much food. They called this day their day of Thanksgiving.

In 1773 a group of patriots, dressed as Indians, threw a cargo of British tea into the Boston Harbour. This event is known as the Boston Tea Party.

The Declaration of Independence was written on July 4th, 1776 mainly by Thomas Jefferson that defended the American revolution against the British king George III and explained "that all men are created equal" and have a natural right to life.

NATIONAL ECONOMY:

The main industrial items are manufacturing, steel, car industry, electronics, machinery, and clothing. Nearly half of the country is a farmland, but only 20 per cent is arable. The main agriculture products are corn, soyabeans, wheat, cotton, tobacco, cattle, fruit and vegetables.

The USA is rich in mineral resources: coal, copper, lead, uranium, gold, iron, mercury, oil. The main trading partners are Canada, Japan, Mexico and Great Britain.

GOVERNMENT TYPE AND ADMINISTRATION:

The USA with the President as the head of state is a federation of 50 states. There is one district, D.C. - District of Columbia - it means the land of Columbus - this territory is not a state, the state capitol is situated here. The capital is Washington, D.C. Other big cities are: New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, Houston, Chicago,...

INTERESTING PLACES:

Besides the US capital and New York there are many places worth seeing, such as many national parks and large urban areas.

Los Angeles - film centre Hollywood, luxurious quarters (Beverly Hills), every year the American Film Academy awards Oscars, the biggest ZOO in the world

San Francisco - one of the cleanest and most picturesque cities, several quarters (Chinatown), a cable car going through its streets, Berkeley University is here;

New Orleans - the city where jazz was born

Houston - the NASA centre and Johnson Space Centre is here

Florida - tourists area with long beaches on Miami, there is Cape Canaveral where spaceships are launched off

Philadelphia – machinery

Chicago - the highest skyscraper in the USA

Detroit - centre of US car industry

THE CAPITAL OF THE USA - WASHINGTON D.C.

It is the first city in the world that was especially 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 - the White House (the residence of the American President), the Capitol (seat of the Congress), the Pentagon (the centre of military forces). There are no factories, industry and skyscrapers here; there is a large airport and Georgetown University, many monuments here to commemorate the outstanding US presidents (e.g. Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson). In the Library of Congress we can find the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

THE AMERICAN FLAG AND ANTHEM:

The American flag consists of two parts - one smaller blue oblong with 50 white stars symbolizing 50 American states and one larger oblong consisting of 6 white and 7 red stripes symbolizing the original 13 states which used to be the British colonies. The flag is sometimes called "Old Glory" or "Stars and Stripes"

The American national anthem is called "The Star-Spangled Banner".

PRESS AND BROADCASTING:

People can watch more than 1 000 TV stations, can read over 9 000 newspapers and 11 000 magazines or journals. Among the most important American newspapers belong: Daily News, USA Today, The New York Times...TV works on four major networks: CBS, NBC, ABC and CNN.

SPORT:

Sports are very popular, especially: baseball, American football, football, basketball, ice-hockey. Besides local and national sports teams there is a long tradition of school sports clubs. Many Americans exercise for good health or undergo some fitness programme.

VOCABULARY

among - mezi
arable - orný, orná půda
banner – prapor
beside - vedle
bound - ohraničovat
broadcasting – rozhlasové / televizní vysílání
cable car - lanovka
cape - mys
cargo - náklad
cattle - dobytek
coal - uhlí
coast - pobřeží
commemorate – oslavovat něčí památku
consist – skládat se
copper - měď
corn - kukuřice
cotton – bavlna
district – správní obvod
either (-or) – buď nebo
farmland - zemědělská půda
gulf - záliv
harvest – sklizeň, žně
iron - železo
launch - vypustit
lead - olovo
luxurious - luxusní
machinery - stroje
mariner - námořník
melting pot – tavící hrnec
mercury – rtuť
oblong - obdélník
oil - ropa
origin - původ
outstanding - vynikající
patriot - vlastenec
picturesque - malebný
plain - rovina
race - rasa
range – oblast
resources – zdroje, zásoby
service - služba
soybeans – sójové boby
suburban - předměstský
thanksgiving - díkůvzdání
throw - hodit
undergo - podstoupit
wheat – pšenice
worth – za něco stát

1. What are the neighbours of the USA?
2. What is the area of the USA?
3. What is the highest mountain of the USA?
4. Are there any national parks in the USA?
5. How many people live there, in the USA?
6. Why is America called the „melting pot“ or „Pizza“?
7. What is the main language spoken in the USA?
8. Who discovered the American continent?
9. What was the Boston Tea Party?
10. When was the first day of Thanksgiving celebrated?
11. Who was the main man in American Revolution and when was the Declaration of Independence written?
12. What are the main industrial items and agriculture products?
13. Who are the main trading partners of the USA?
14. Who is the head of the state?
15. What is the capital of the USA?
16. Do you know any interesting American places?
17. What is the name of the cape where spaceships are launched off?
18. What does American flag look like?
19. How many TV stations and how many newspapers are there in the USA?
20. What sports are most popular in the USA?