

# THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Jacy Meyer  
(USA)

**Population:** 300 million  
**Area:** 9,631,420 sq km  
**Capital:** Washington



## THE FLAG

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. In the original flag from 1777 no real details were described, so many of the country’s early flags looked different. In 1818, President Monroe **adopted a bill** that described the basic design of the flag. In 1949, Congress made a **permanent nationwide observance** of Flag Day every year on June 14 (but it’s not a federal holiday).



The United States of America occupies about six percent of the world’s land, which means it is nearly 10 million square kilometers in size! 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 above sea level, and the lowest point is in Death Valley, California, at more than 200 feet below **sea level**.

There are four main **coastal** regions in the US: the Atlantic (which **runs along** the Atlantic Ocean, from Maine to Florida); the **Gulf** (in the south-eastern part of the country, along the Gulf of Mexico); the Pacific Coast (to the west, from Washington to California, as well as Alaska and Hawaii); and finally the Arctic coast **way up north** in Alaska.

The biggest river, the Mississippi, runs for more than 3,700 kilometers 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 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.

Usually the east and west sides of the US are defined by the Mississippi River, but the true Continental Divide runs north to south through the Rocky Mountains. This separates the eastward flowing streams from the westward ones. In the US, the west flowing streams empty into the Pacific Ocean, while those that flow east finish at the Atlantic Ocean, but usually through the Gulf of Mexico. Every continent, except Antarctica, has a continental divide.

And where can you go to experience all this wonderful geography? In New Mexico you can visit the Carlsbad Caverns, a network of more than 80 **limestone caves**. In Florida, visit the **swampy** sites in the Everglades National Park. Here, a river six inches deep and 50 miles wide covers **marshes** and forests and is home to more than 300 species of birds and other animals. In Arizona, you can visit the Grand Canyon, formed over millions of years by the Colorado River, or in Hawaii see some volcanoes in Volcanoes National Park.

The forest in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee is responsible for the park’s name. The trees **give off water vapor and an oily residue** which covers the mountains and fills the valleys with a **smoke-like haze**.

## US CULTURAL CITIES

Thanks to some of the films that come out of Hollywood, many people think the US is a cultural **wasteland**. But both the country and its citizens enjoy a variety of monuments, museums, concerts, and other artistic **venues** located mainly in the country’s larger cities.

### New York City

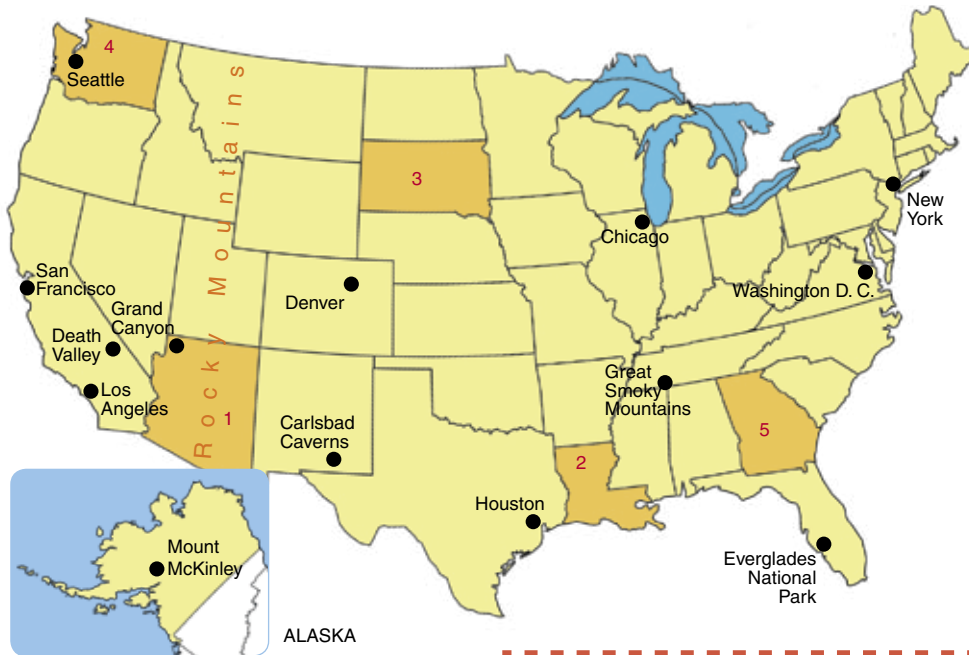
The “city that never sleeps” is one of the most exciting, cosmopolitan cities in the US. More than 8 million people live here, making it one of the largest cities in the country. The city is made up of 5 boroughs – Manhattan, The Bronx, Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Queens. Boroughs are basically large neighborhoods used to **govern** large populations more easily.

Carnegie Hall is a concert venue in Manhattan known not only for its beauty and history, but also for its artistic programming. About 100 concerts usually classical, but sometimes popular music, are performed there each year.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the “Met” as it’s popularly known, is one of the most important art institutions in the world.



Death Valley National Park, situated south-east of the Sierra Nevada mountains, is the hottest and driest of the national parks in the United States. Temperatures in the valley can range from up to 54 °C in the day in the summer to below freezing at night in the winter.



Also located in Manhattan, it contains more than 2 million works of art from a variety of artists, including classical European, modern American, Egyptian and Islamic.

### Washington D.C.

Moving south along the Atlantic coast we visit Washington D.C., the nation's capital. D.C. stands for District of Columbia and the city is named Washington after the country's first president, George Washington. All the country's big federal offices are located here, including the Capitol and the White House. There are many monuments located along the National Mall, a large open area in the center of the city. Here you can find the Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial, and the National World War II Memorial.

### Los Angeles

If you jump across the country to the west coast, you'll find Los Angeles, California. Many people are familiar with L.A. because of Hollywood, but there are lots of other interesting things to see. Los Angeles has more than 4 million people, and is **ethnically diverse**, with many **residents** moving to the city from Latin America and Asia. One popular tourist spot is Mann's Chinese Theater, built in 1927 to be the world's greatest cinema. It's famous for the **autographs** of well-known movie stars written in cement in the theater's **courtyard**.

### San Francisco

Built on a **peninsula** between the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay, this city is known for its **steep** hills and

**foggy** days. On a clear day you can see Golden Gate Bridge – a suspension bridge that marks the beginning of San Francisco Bay. When it was built in 1937, it was the largest suspension bridge in the US. More than 100,000 cars cross the bridge every day. In San Francisco Bay, **you can take a ferry ride** to visit Alcatraz Island. Originally a lighthouse, then a military **fort**, it's most best-known for being a prison. No prisoners have been imprisoned there since 1969, and now the island is a National Historic Monument where visitors can see the old prison, military ruins and the lighthouse.

### TASK

Can you guess the names of the states which have been coloured on the map? Then match the following facts to them.

- A) This state was named after a French king (because it used to be a French colony) and its biggest city, New Orleans, is famous for its carnival.
- B) This state was named after the first US president, but it doesn't include the US capital of the same name.
- C) Known as the 'Peach State', this is the largest state east of Mississippi River and in 1996 its capital Atlanta hosted the Olympics.
- D) This state is well known for its desert landscape with cactuses and impressive rocks (Monument Valley).
- E) This state is best known for Mount Rushmore – a memorial to four US presidents.

Solution on p. 3



Los Angeles is the largest city in the state of California and the second-largest (only to New York City) in the United States.

### → Vocabulary

- to stand for** - symbolizovat
- adopted a bill** [ə'dɒptɪd bɪl] - schválil návrh zákona
- permanent nationwide observance** [ˈpɜːm(ə)nənt ˈneɪʃ(ə)nwaɪd əb'zɜːv(ə)ns] - každoroční celonárodní slavení
- sea level** ['siːləv(ə)l] - mořská hladina, úroveň moře
- coastal** ['kəʊstl] - pobřežní
- to run along** - táhnout se podél
- gulf** [gʌlf] - záliv
- way up north** - nahore na severu
- to flow** [fləʊ] - téct (řeka)
- limestone caves** ['laɪmstəʊn] - vápencové jeskyně
- swampy** ['swɒmpɪ] - bažinatý
- marsh** [mɑːʃ] - bažina, močál
- give off water vapor and an oily residue** ['gɪvəʊ ˈɔɪli ˈreɪzɪdʒuː] - vylučují páru a olejovité látky
- smoke-like haze** [heɪz] - kouřový opar
- wasteland** ['weɪs(t)lænd] - pustina
- venue** ['venjuː] - místo konání
- to govern** ['gʌv(ə)n] - vládnout (něčemu), spravovat (něco)
- ethnically diverse** [ˈeθnɪkəli daɪ'vɜːs] - národnostně rozmanitě
- resident** ['rezɪd(ə)nt] - obyvatel
- autograph** ['ɔːtəgrɑːf] - autogram
- courtyard** [kɔːtjɑːd] - nádvoří
- peninsula** [pɪ'nɪnsjələ] - poloostrov
- steep** [stiːp] - strmý, příkrý
- foggy** ['fɒɡɪ] - mlžný, mlhavý
- you can take a ferry ride** ['fɛrɪ raɪd] - se můžete svěřit trajektem
- fort** [fɔːt] - pevnost

### ● Language points

#### Measures

- 1 inch = 2.54 centimetres
- 1 foot = 30.48 centimetres (12 inches)
- 1 mile = 1.6 kilometres

**Suspension bridge** (*visutý most*) is a bridge in which the roadway is suspended from (= hangs on) cables running between towers.

### ● Culture point

**Columbia** is an old nickname for the present-day USA. It originated from the name of Christopher Columbus, who discovered the continent. Today, it still appears in the names of some places, institutions and things, e.g. District of Columbia, Columbia University in New York, or the spaceship Columbia.