

## Country Profile: United States

### General Information:

- The United States is located in North America.
- It is bordered by Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. To the west is the Pacific Ocean and to the east is the Atlantic Ocean.
- It is comprised of 50 states. Forty eight of them are contiguous plus the District of Columbia. Hawaii and Alaska are the two non-contiguous states.
- The climate varies regionally due to its enormous land mass. It is tropical in Hawaii and Florida; most of Alaska is subarctic or polar; semi-arid in the great plains west of the Mississippi River; arid in the Great Basin and desert in the southwest; Mediterranean in coastal California; oceanic in coastal Oregon and Washington. In the northeast the weather can range from hot and humid in the summer to bitterly cold in the winter.
- The natural resources includes timber, natural gas, coal, copper, lead, molybdenum, gold, iron, phosphates, uranium, bauxite, nickel, mercury, silver, potash, zinc, tungsten and petroleum. The United States has the world's largest coal reserves accounting for 27% of the world's total at 491 million short tons.
- The capital is Washington D.C. The largest city is New York City.
- The currency is the United States dollar.
- There is no official language, but the national language is English.
- The type of government is a federal constitutional republic.

### Economy:

The United States has a capitalist mixed economy. It is the largest and most technologically powerful economy in the world. Private firms, individuals, and corporations make most of the decisions for the economy. Federal and state governments buy goods and services from the private sectors. The economy is based on the United States' abundant resources, a well developed infrastructure, and high productivity. The US has the largest GDP in the world. It is ranked eighth in nominal GDP per capita. The US is the largest importer of goods and the third largest exporter. The leading export product is electrical machinery, whereas vehicles are the leading import product. The United States is an industrial power. Its leading manufacturing field is chemical products. The United States is the number one producer of electrical and nuclear energy, liquid natural gas, sulfur, phosphates, and salt. It is also the third largest producer of oil in the world. The New York Stock Exchange has the largest dollar volume.

### Culture Etiquette:

#### Greetings:

When greeting each other, either male or female, a firm handshake and maintaining direct hand contact will suffice. Between good friends or family, a light hug is a common greeting. When an American says "Hi, how are you?" it is usually not an invitation for a lengthy discussion.

#### Communication Style:

Americans speak in a direct informal manner. They are usually polite and friendly. Topics to avoid during conversations are politics, homosexuality, abortion, racism, and criticizing the government. To discuss these topics it is best to have a strong relationship with the person. It is considered rude and uncomfortable to ask for money and discuss monetary issues.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

## Country Profile: United States (cont'd)

### Personal Space and Touching:

Personal space is valued, therefore during conversation, a comfortable distance of 2 -3 feet of each other should be maintained.

There is little or no touching during conversations unless it is between friends and family. Hugging is for close friends and family.

### Eye Contact:

Maintaining eye contact during a conversation is valued. It is also a sign of respect and interest when the other person is speaking. Staring is considered rude especially in large cities.

### Views of Time:

Punctuality is very important. It is best to show up on time for appointments and social functions. The phrase "time is money" tends to be adhered to in urban environments, but not as much in rural environments.

### Gender Issues:

Equality for men and women is valued in the work force, even though a woman's wages may still be lower than a male's. Many families have a dual income with both male and female working.

### Gestures:

The "OK" sign or thumbs up is acceptable and is used throughout the country. Whistling at a performance is a sign of appreciation. Waving is both a greeting and saying goodbye. It is done by moving the entire hand from left to right with the palm facing outward. Raising the middle finger is offensive. Avoid using it when pointing or scratching.

### Taboos:

Race is a sensitive subject, so refer to Americans of different ethnicities as: African American, Italian American, Asian American, etc. Spitting is unacceptable in a public setting.

## **Business Etiquette:**

### Dress:

Business attire depends on the region and industry. Attire in urban areas is more formal than in rural areas. People in upper management are usually dressed in formal attire. For the first meeting men and women should wear a business suit. For men it can either be blue, gray, or black with a white collared shirt and a tie. For women it can be a dress, pantsuit, or business suit with limited accessories, and it should not be too revealing. Many companies allow business casual attire such as a neatly pressed pants and shirt. Casual attire is common for some industries.

### Titles and Business Cards:

Interaction usually occurs on a first name basis, but it is best to address people with either Mister or Miss. Wait for an invitation to address someone by their first name. The use of first names is common between subordinates and managers. There is no specific procedure for giving and handing business cards. When a business card is given, Americans either fold or write on it. This should not be seen as a sign of disrespect.

### Meetings:

Punctuality is valued, so arrive on time or a few minutes before the meeting is scheduled to begin. There is little or no small talk. Meeting agendas are common and are usually adhered to. Meetings do not tend to last long as the focus is on accomplishing the task at hand and moving on to the next one.

### Negotiations:

Final decisions are made from the top down, but a group consensus is valued. Hard selling tactics are used from time to time. The business deal is more important than the personal relationship.

(Continued on Page 3)

## Country Profile: United States (cont'd)

### Gift Giving:

It is not common to bring a gift to the first meeting, but it will be welcomed. An expensive gift will be seen as a bribe. If invited to someone's home it is appropriate to either bring a bottle of wine, chocolates, or flowers. Gifts are usually opened when received.

### **Travel Information:**

The following countries are waived from obtaining a visa: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The visa is waived if the stay is less than 90 days. All other non-immigrant travelers must obtain a visa that is appropriate for the nature of the visit. It can be obtained from the United States Consular office in the traveler's home country. People who wish to work or live in the United States as traders or investors must have visas authorizing them to do so.

Business visitors should obtain a B-1 visa. Temporary business visitors may use the B-1 visa to negotiate contracts, take product orders, consult with associates, engage in litigation, perform research, attend a convention, and attend meetings with the Board of Directors of a U.S. corporation. If the visitor receives a payment other than reimbursed expenses, then the visitor may not qualify for the B-1 visa. A temporary work visa must be obtained. The B-1 visa can be granted for up to one year with a six month extension. The visa application should include a letter from the traveler's employer stating the purpose of the visit, and should also specify that the employer will not obtain employment in the U.S.

Sources:

[http://www.hlbi.com/dbifiles/dbi\\_pdf/DBI%20USA%20A4.pdf](http://www.hlbi.com/dbifiles/dbi_pdf/DBI%20USA%20A4.pdf)

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

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