

The United States of America

Total area: 9,631,418 sq km
Population: 295,7 million
Capital: Washington, District of Columbia

Geography

The United States includes fifty semi-autonomous states. It also **administers** 14 territories, **made up mostly of** Pacific islands.

The United States is the third largest country in the world in both size, and population. It is approximately half the size of Russia.

The central region is dominated by large plains. In the west are mountains and, in the southwest, areas of desert. **Alaska features** river valleys and **rugged** mountains, while Hawaii is largely volcanic. **The lowest extreme** is Death Valley in California (-86 m). Mount McKinley in Alaska (6,194 m), is the highest point in the US.

Climate

Though the climate is mostly **temperate**, there are extremes in Alaska (arctic), and Florida and Hawaii (tropical). There are also semi-arid areas in the west, and **arid conditions** in the southwest.

Natural dangers

The Pacific Basin faces danger mainly from earthquakes, volcanoes, forest fires and **mudslides**, while those



The flag is a **rectangle** with 13 alternating red and white horizontal stripes, representing the original thirteen colonies. In the upper-left corner is a blue rectangle with fifty white stars, one for each state. The flag is nicknamed *Stars and Stripes* or *Old Glory*.

The **current** flag is not the original design. There have been many designs over the years, **mostly dependent on** the number of stars. This flag has been in service since 1959, when the last two stars were added (representing Alaska and Hawaii).



With five national parks, Utah is America's national parks capital.

living on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts must **beware of** hurricanes. The Midwest suffers mainly from tornadoes, as does the southeast.

History

The United States was officially founded on July 4, 1776. This was the date the former British colonies **declared** their independence. A long war followed between the new country and the old, ending with an American victory in 1783. The first **constitution** was proclaimed in 1789.

The most violent time in America was from 1861 - 1865, when a bloody civil war was fought between states from the north and south. The north won and ended **slavery** in the south.

Later, in all, 37 more states were added to the original 13, bringing the total to its current number of 50.

As America's economic power grew, the US became more influential and more **involved in** world politics. In 1898, America became an empire after **defeating** Spain in a war over Cuba. The US freed Cuba and gained Spanish **possessions** in the Pacific, such as the Philippines.

In both WWI and WWII, the US began as a neutral state, but in fact, acted as an arsenal and banker for the **Allies**. In both these wars, America eventually joined in the fighting, and was **vital** to the success of their allies.

Since the end of the WWII, the US has been the most dominant nation in the world. American policy is often controversial, and some countries, such as France and Germany, often disagree



Mount McKinley in Alaska (6,194 m)

with that policy. It is ironic though, that America's best ally is the country from which the US **split** back in 1776, Great Britain.

Political system

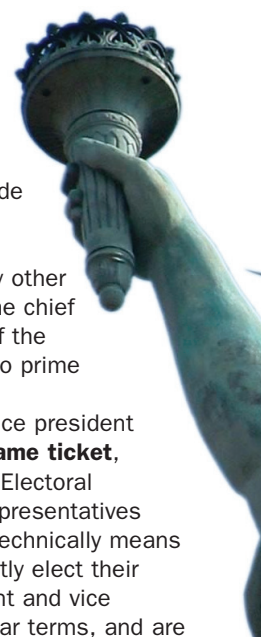
Type of Government: Representational federal republic, based on a strong constitution.

The government is divided into three **branches**, the **Executive, Legislative, and Judicial**.

The Executive is made up of the chief of state (the president) and his cabinet. Unlike in many other countries, in the US, the chief of state is also head of the government. There is no prime minister.

The president and vice president **run for office on the same ticket**, and are chosen by the Electoral College, made up of representatives from each state. This technically means Americans do not directly elect their president. The president and vice president serve four year terms, and are limited to just two terms.

The Legislative branch is a **bicameral** congress made up of the Senate (two from each state) and the House of Representatives (435 members, with membership based on state population). Both senators and representatives are directly elected by the citizens of the state they represent. Senators serve a term of six years, while representatives serve two.





Soft sand is typical for beaches in Hawaii.

Famous skyscrapers in New York

There are five main US ethnic groups... and Homer Simpson.

The Judicial branch **enforces** and interprets the laws made by the Legislative and **approved** by the Executive. This branch consists of many levels of federal courts. The highest of these is the Supreme Court, with nine justices **appointed for life**.

There are two main political parties: the Republicans (thought of as conservative) and the Democrats (liberal). The current administration is Republican.

People

There are many ethnic groups in the US. Five basic categories are: white (81.7%), black (12.9%), Asian (4.2%), Amerindian and Alaska native (1%), native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander (0.2%). One of the largest ethnic groups, Hispanic, is not an official ethnic group.

Holidays

One of the most popular holidays in America is Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November) when people give thanks for their lives and country.

Christmas (December 25th) coupled with New Year's Day (January 1st) is known collectively as 'the holiday season'.

The main summer holiday is Independence Day, July 4th, celebrating the day when the US declared independence from Britain in 1776. Cities hold **parades** and fireworks displays, and many sporting events **occur**.

Memorial Day (honoring soldiers killed fighting for America), celebrated the last Monday in May, and Labor Day (honoring the American **workforce**), celebrated the first Monday in September, are also popular summer holidays.

Patrick Phillips (USA)

vocabulary

to administer [əd'mɪnɪstə] - spravovat
made up mostly of - tvořených většinou
Alaska features ['fi:tʃəz] - pro Aljašku jsou typická
rugged ['rʌɡɪd] - rozeklaný
the lowest extreme [ɪk'stri:m] - nejnižší bod
temperate ['temp(ə)rət] - mírný
arid conditions ['ærɪd] - suché prostředí
the Pacific Basin faces danger mainly from earthquakes ['ə:θkweɪks] - tichomořskou oblast ohrožují hlavně zemětřesení
mudslide ['mʌdslaɪd] - sesuv půdy
to beware of [br'weɪ:] - dávat si pozor na
to declare [dɪ'kleɪ:] - vyhlásit
constitution [kɒnstɪ'tju:ʃ(ə)n] - ústava
slavery ['sleɪv(ə)rɪ] - otroctví
involved in - zapojený do
to defeat [dɪ'fi:t] - porazit
possession [pə'zeʃ(ə)n] - država, kolonie
ally ['ælaɪ] - spojenec
vital ['vaɪt(ə)l] - důležitý, klíčový
to split - odtrhnout se
branch [brɑ:n(t)] - složka (moci)
Executive, Legislative and Judicial [ɪg'zekjʊtɪv 'ledʒɪsleɪtɪv dʒʊ'dɪʃ(ə)l] - výkonná, zákonodárná a soudní
run for office on the same ticket - kandidují na úřad společně
bicameral [baɪ'kæm(ə)r(ə)l] - dvoukomorový
to enforce [ɪn'fɔ:s] - prosazovat, uplatňovat
to approve [ə'pru:v] - schválit
appointed for life [ə'pɔɪntɪd] - jmenovanými do funkce doživotně
parade [pə'reɪd] - přehlídka
to occur [ə'kɔ:] - konat se
workforce ['wɜ:kfɔ:s] - pracující
rectangle ['rektæŋg(ə)l] - obdélník
current ['kʌr(ə)nt] - současný
mostly dependent on [dɪ'pend(ə)nt] - většinou v závislosti na

