

Overview

USA



Health Care and Security

Recommendation for inoculation: protection against tetanus, hepatitis B, and diphtheria, etc. is recommended. You will find further current information about the different regions, seasons, maps and health care regulations on the website of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) at

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>

Medical treatment is expensive and has to be paid in advance or paid on the spot.

Travel Health Insurance: It is recommended to contract a travel health insurance in your home country as well as to have a mortgageable credit card. In most cases of sickness it is less expensive (if medically possible) to fly back to your home country and to get treatment there.

Emergency Call: fire department/rescue/police: 911

Entry Requirements and Security

Passport: required, has to be valid for at least 6 further months.

Visa: If you need a visa, you must go to your closest U.S. visa-issuing post for an interview as part of the application process. Further information can be found at http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html



International travelers who are seeking to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program are now subject to enhanced security requirements. All eligible travelers who wish to travel under the Visa Waiver Program must apply for authorization using the following process: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> (free of charge).

Entry Requirements: After September 11, 2001 the USA enacted new security measures and entry regulations. You will find further information on the website of the Department of Homeland Security at www.dhs.gov/us-visit.

Customs: There are special tariff regulations concerning the import of food, animals, gifts, souvenirs, etc. If you know in advance, what kind of goods or products you would like to take abroad, we recommend you to contact the American embassy and to ask for the particular regulations.

Electric Power Supply

System voltage: 110 V, 60 Hz. You should bring an adapter for dual volt hair dryers or razors.

plug:  plug-in: 

Time difference

To Central Europe (MET): -6h (in the summer time) -5h (in the winter time), further information can be found at <http://www.worldtimeserver.com>

Currency

(updated January 2010)

1 US Dollar (USD) = 0,7358 Euro (EUR)

1 Euro (EUR) = 1,3659 US Dollar (USD)

Finances

Almost all credit cards are accepted. It is possible to withdraw cash with your credit card (with the associated PIN) at many ATMs. It is also possible to withdraw money with your EC/Maestro card, which is less expensive than with your credit card. Please ask for further information at your bank. Money exchange is not possible at every bank but is rather limited – for a fee - to exchange offices that can be found almost everywhere. Traveler checks are accepted at most places.

Taxes: In most states there exists a „sales tax“ of 4 or 7 %. This „sales tax“ is not stated on the price tag but added at the cashpoint. Sometimes the hotel levies an accommodation tax.

Measures

1 Mile = 1,61 km

1 Foot = 0,3 m

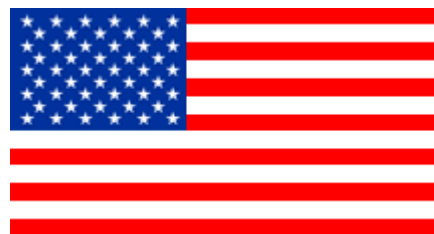
1 (US-) liquid Gallon = ~3,8 l

1 (US-) dry Gallon = ~4,04 l

° Fahrenheit – 32 multiplied by 5, divided by 9 = ° Celsius (i.e. 77 ° F = 25 ° C)

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Important Contacts

Before leaving please look for your embassy and the contact details in the USA. Take this information with you on the trip.

Code of Behavior

Greeting and Having a Conversation: The most common way to address a person is with his/her first name. But only use it after it has been offered or in case the conversational partner does not tell his/her last name when you meet.

Smalltalk: Making comments is very common. Someone who wants to come straight to the point can decline something in a nice way by saying „I'm busy“.

Topics: Political subjects should be treated with care. Please keep the „Political Correctness“ in mind, i.e. use the term „African Americans“ for black Americans. In contrast to that it is not unusual to talk about money in general or about the income.

Business cards: Business cards are quickly put in a pocket which is not considered as being rude.

Respectable appearance: Personal hygiene is very important in the USA. Discreet but fashionable and modern clothes are common at business talks.

"Wait to be seated": Do not jump at the first free table but wait until the waiter or waitress comes to show you to one of the tables.

Food and Beverages: A "refill" of non-alcoholic beverages is usually free (except if they are served in cans). Drinking alcohol or smoking at public places are frowned upon, at many places it is even restricted. The obvious carrying of alcoholic beverages is illegal. Alcoholic beverages are not allowed for people under the age of 21.

Bill: arrives at your desk without you having to ask for it. A long stay in a restaurant is rather uncommon. The one who invites is also the one who pays the bill. In case the person who invited you is not the „host“ you will take care of the payment.

Tip: Please give generous tips since the restaurant staff only has a very low basic salary and therefore relies on tips. At restaurants in towns with a high number of tourists the service is included; this is often mentioned on the bill, sometimes hand-written, as "15 % service included". If not stated, give an appropriate amount yourself. Even though the tip is a voluntary gesture it is actually the waiter's or waitress's wage. Be generous!

Time Management: A delay in the USA is not as bad as in Germany for example. But as soon as you sit down at the table to start the business talk the rule applies "time is money". Negotiations can be very quick and contracting at the first meeting is not an exception.

Small presents: Small presents for business partners should not cost more than 25\$. A thank-you letter after an invitation to the house of a business partner is a matter of course. But please: do not bring personal presents for women, no special toy weapons for children or cigars from the communist Cuba for conservative men.