











What basic facts do you know about the United States?

Can you tell me about some important events in American history?

What can you tell me about the American system of government?

What are some of the US's geographical features?

Could you tell me something more specific about the individual states?

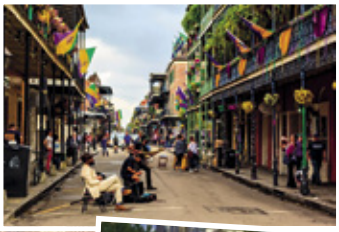
Can you describe one of the major US cities? What can you see or do there?

What can you tell me about some famous Americans?

Could you describe some popular sports in the US?

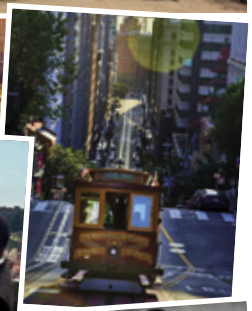
Would you like to go to the US? Why?















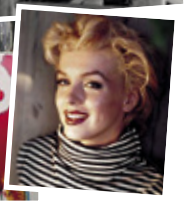












MATURITA CARD THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Overview

The United States of America (US, USA) is made up of 50 states plus the District of Columbia (where the capital city of Washington, D.C. is located) and territories such as Guam and Puerto Rico. The "contiguous US" or "lower 48" is the 48 states that border each other. Two states are separate: Alaska is in the north along the western part of Canada, and Hawaii is an island in the Pacific Ocean. The US has land borders with Mexico and Canada. With over 330 million people, it is the third most populous country in the world. English is widely spoken, but Spanish is also common. Lots of other languages are spoken in the country's diverse immigrant communities, and Native American tribes also preserve rich linguistic histories of their own.

US history

The ancestors of the indigenous Americans arrived when Alaska was joined to Asia by land. Different civilisations flowered in the thousands of years before colonisation by the British, French and other Europeans. Britain dominated in North America until its 13 colonies declared independence on July 4th 1776 (now Independence Day).
The Revolutionary War that followed lasted until 1783 and resulted in the foundation of the USA. From 1861–65, the country went to war against itself after the US government proposed to ban slavery, and 11 pro-slavery states in the southeast left to form the Confederate States of America. This led to the Civil War, which ended with the defeat of the Confederacy. Other key events include the Japanese attack on the US naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7th 1941 (which led to the US entering the Second World War), the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (a guarantee of equal rights for all) and the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11th 2001.

The US government

Each state in the US has its own state government with a governor at its head, but the federal (national) government is more powerful in some areas. The federal government consists of three branches. The president (elected by a system called the Electoral College) is the head of the executive branch. The legislative power lies with Congress (the 435 members of the House of Representatives and the 100 members of the Senate, two from each state). The Supreme Court holds judicial power.

US states

Alaska is the largest state and has the longest coastline in the US. The most populous state is California, called "the Golden State" in a reference to the gold rush. Florida is nicknamed "the Sunshine State" and is known for rocket launches from Cape Canaveral. Georgia, "the Peach State", is famous for its peanut and peach farms.

Geography of the US

The US is a land of diverse terrain. The Rocky Mountains run from the north to the south, with deserts to the west and the Great Plains to the east. The highest mountain in the US is Denali (6,194m) in Alaska. The Great Lakes – Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior – are found on the US border with Canada. The Grand Canyon is a large and scenic canyon in Arizona.

Major cities

Washington, D.C. is the capital, home to the White House (the seat of the president) and the Capitol Building (the seat of Congress). New York City is the largest city by population (almost 9 million). Los Angeles is known for the Hollywood film industry. New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz and the centre of French-American culture. San Francisco is the birthplace of both hippie counterculture and the tech revolution of Silicon Valley. Other big cities include Seattle, Chicago, Boston, Miami, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Houston and Philadelphia.

Famous people

Famous Americans include Ernest Hemingway, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Emily Dickinson and Edgar Allan Poe, all writers; the actors Morgan Freeman, Tom Hanks, Marilyn Monroe and Meryl Streep; Bob Dylan, a singer-songwriter; the musicians Elvis Presley and Louis Armstrong; inventor Thomas Edison; civil-rights activists Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks; presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln; and the artist Andy Warhol.

Sports and pastimes

American football is the US's most popular sport. In this sport, players run with an oval ball over the opposition's goal line to score points. Other popular sports are basketball and baseball. In baseball, a person uses a bat to hit a ball and tries to run around bases on a playing field called a diamond.