

USA. Lecture 1. Nation

1. General Information.
2. Regions and States.
3. Main Cities.
4. Major Sights.
5. Population.

1. General Information

The *United States of America* is the official name of the country; there are abbreviations *U.S.* or *U.S.A.* and a byname *America*. The country is a federal republic of 50 states.

The U.S. is the fourth largest country in the world in area (after Russia, Canada, and China).

The national capital is Washington, which is coextensive with the District of Columbia, the federal capital region created in 1790.

The U.S. Flag is called *the Stars and Stripes* or *Old Glory* or *the Starry Banner*. It is comprised of a blue canton with 50 stars each symbolizing one American state and 13 red and white stripes that stand for the original 13 colonies.

The symbolic meanings of the elements of the flag are:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| <i>The star</i> | – heavens and the divine goal to which man has aspired from time immemorial |
| <i>The stripe</i> | – the rays of light emanating from the sun |
| <i>Red</i> | – hardiness, valor and bravery |
| | – blood spilled protecting the country |
| <i>White</i> | – purity and innocence |
| | – freedom |
| <i>Blue</i> | – vigilance, perseverance and justice |

The first unofficial version of the flag called *Continental Colors* or *Grand Union Flag* appeared in 1776. The first official flag called *Betsy Ross* or *The Old Thirteen* appeared on June 14, 1777. Since then June 14 is celebrated as Flag Day.

The first *Great Seal* appeared in 1782 after 6 years of efforts to design it. It is used to certify signatures and documents of the highest importance. The obverse of the Great Seal represents the *coat-of-arms* of the USA.

The national bird and symbol of the U.S.A. is *Bald Eagle* or *the American eagle*. This bird is found only in North America. It symbolizes freedom and reliance of American nation on its own virtues.

The national anthem is *The Star-Spangled Banner* by Francis Scott Key, written in 1814. Music was introduced by John Stafford Smith in 1780.

Other national abolitionist and patriotic tunes are *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and *America the Beautiful*.

Uncle Sam is a popular U.S. symbol. He was probably named after “Uncle” Sam Wilson who examined army supplies for the U.S. government during the War of 1812. This fact is said to have led to the use of the nickname Uncle Sam for the United States.

The Liberty Bell, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is a symbol of independence. It is considered an icon of liberty and justice.

U.S.S. Constitution nicknamed “Old Ironsides” is the most famous vessel in the history of US Navy. It was named by George Washington. It is the oldest commissioned naval vessel afloat in the world.

Some of the most popular *U.S. national holidays* are:

1. Martin Luther King Day (Third Monday in January).
2. Abraham Lincoln's Birthday (February 12).
3. George Washington's Birthday (February 22).
4. Arbor Day (April 22).
5. Memorial Day (Last Monday in May).
6. Independence Day (July 4).
7. Labor Day (First Monday in September).
8. Columbus Day (Second Monday in October).
9. Veterans' Day (November 11).
10. Thanksgiving Day (Fourth Thursday in November).

2. Regions and States

U.S.A. falls into the following *regions*:

New England

Mid-Atlantic Region

Midwest

The South

The Southwest

The Rocky Mountain Region

Pacific Northwest and Alaska

California and Hawaii

Delaware is the oldest state, Hawaii is the youngest one.

Alaska is the biggest of the 50 states and Rhode Island is the smallest one.

California is the most populated state, Wyoming is the least populated one.

3. Main Cities

Washington D.C. is located on the north bank of the Potomac River. It is home of the federal government. Most important government institutions are situated in the District:

1. Capitol.
2. White House.

3. Supreme Court.

New York City or "*The Big Apple*" or "*The city that never sleeps*" or "*Gotham*" is the most populous U.S. city situated at the mouth of the Hudson River in New York State. Its population is more than 8 mln people. It is best known for the *Statue of Liberty*, *Wall Street*, *Times Square*, *Central Park*, *The Empire State Building*, *the United Nations building* and *Brooklyn Bridge*.

The city consists of five boroughs: *The Bronx*, *Brooklyn*, *Manhattan*, *Queens*, and *Staten Island*. It is also famous for its ethnic centers, e.g. *Harlem* (African-American), *Little Italy*, *Chinatown*, *Brighton Beach* and *Lower East Side* (Jewish), etc.

Los Angeles or "*L.A.*" or "*The City of Angels*" is the second largest U.S. city situated on the Pacific Coast in California. Its population is about 4 mln people. Its main landmarks are *Hollywood sign*, *Hollywood Bowl*, *Beverly Hills*, *Little Tokyo*, etc.

Chicago or "*The Windy City*" or "*The City of Big Shoulders*" is the third largest U.S. city located in Illinois on the shore of Lake Michigan. Its population is about 3 mln people. It is the financial and industrial center of the Midwest. *Willis Tower* aka *Sears Tower* is a skyscraper office building. Its height is 527.3 m. It is the tallest freestanding structure in the U.S.A.

4. Major Sights

The Statue of Liberty (Liberty Island, New York City harbour). This statue is a woman holding the torch of liberty, and its official name is the "Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World". It has become a symbol of freedom and was the first American sight seen by many people who went to the U.S. for a better life.

The Washington Monument (Washington, D.C.). This four-sided stone structure (obelisk) honors the “Father of our Country,” General, Founding Father, and the first president of the United States, George Washington.

The Jefferson Memorial (Washington, D.C.). It honors the author of the Declaration of Independence, first Secretary of State, and third President of the United States.

The Lincoln Memorial (Washington, D.C.). It honors Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, and “the virtues of tolerance, honesty, and constancy in the human spirit.”

Independence Hall (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). At this building, colonial leaders met to plan the future of the new nation. The Declaration of Independence was adopted here on July 4, 1776. Independence Hall was also the home of the Liberty Bell for over 200 years.

Arlington National Cemetery (Virginia). It honors those men and women who served in the Armed Forces. Currently, there are over 260,000 people buried in there and approximately 5,400 burials are conducted each year.

Mount Rushmore National Monument (South Dakota). It is a colossal sculpture representing the heads of Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. The four heads represent, respectively, the nation’s independence, democratic process, leadership in world affairs, and equality.

5. Population

The overall population of the U.S.A. is currently more than 300 mln people. Eastern part of the country is more populated than the western part.

Racial and ethnic variety of the United States is due to 3 main reasons:

1. The presence of surviving Native Americans.
2. The descendants of Africans.
3. Immigrants.

Race/Ethnicity

White	80.0%
African American	12.8%
Asian	4.4%
Native American and Alaskan Native	1.0%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0.2%
Multiracial	1.6%

The country was first inhabited by Native Americans who lived in tribes: *Sioux, Apache, Pueblo, Cherokee, Navaho, Iroquois*, etc. The Native American population had been exterminated for centuries by the European settlers. Today it has risen from its low point of 235,000 in 1900 to 2.5 million at the turn of the 21st century.

There are 310 reservations in the U.S.A. inhabited by about one third of Native Americans. The remaining two thirds live in cities. The problems they face are poverty, unemployment and alcoholism. These problems are caused by the incapability of Native Americans to adapt to modern American values. Presently, the majority of Native Americans live in such states as California, Oklahoma, Arizona and New Mexico.