Fast Facts The United States of America

1

THE UNITED STATES
Capital city: Washington D.C.

National emblems

The American Great Seal

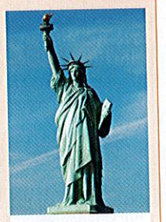
Bald Eagle

Uncle Sam personifies the country.

50 white stars representing the 50 States

13 red and white stripes representing the 13 original colonies

The American Flag: The Star Spangled Banner or Stars and Stripes


The Statue of Liberty

National anthem: *Star Spangled Banner*

Mottos

"E Pluribus Unum" (Out of many, one)

"In God We Trust"

Currency : US Dollar ($)

Public holidays

3rd Monday of January: Martin Luther King Day

4th July: Independence Day

1st Monday of September: Labour Day

12th October: Columbus Day

4th Thursday of November: Thanksgiving

2

AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

Government (a federal constitutional republic)

Federal Government
Each State has a governor.

- Attorney general (Justice)
- Vice President
- Secretary of State
- Secretary of Defense (at the Pentagon)
- Secretary of the Treasury

The Cabinet (Executive power)

The President
Elected for a 4-year term he/she is the Head of the State and lives in the White House.

The Supreme Court (Judicial power) Ensures that no law is against the Constitution.

Congress (Legislative power)

The Senate (100 members)

The House of Representatives (435 members)

Basic documents

The Declaration of Independence **(1776)**

The Pledge of Allegiance **(1892)**

The Constitution (**1787** : 27 Amendments)

- 13th Amendment — **1865**: abolition of slavery
- 15th Amendment — **1870**: prohibits the denial of suffrage based on skin colour (right of vote for all men)
- 19th Amendment — **1919**: right of vote for women
- 26th Amendment — **1971**: voting age is 18

The Bill of Rights (**1789**: first 10 Amendments)

- 1st Amendment — Freedom of speech, of religion...
- 2nd Amendment — The right to bear arms

Political parties

The Democrats (emblem = donkey) They favour stronger federal control (considered liberal-left).

The Republicans (emblem = elephant) They favour restriction on central power (considered conservative centre-right).

3

ICONS AND CONCEPTS

Iconic places

Liberty Bell (symbol of American Independence)

Mount Rushmore South Dakota

Ellis Island (where European immigrants arrived in New York from 1892 to 1954)

Ground Zero (where the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center stood before the 2001 terrorist attack)

Plymouth Rock Massachusetts

Places of power

Silicon Valley (close to San Francisco, is home to the computer industry)

The White House

New York Stock Exchange (Wall Street)

The Pentagon

The Ivy League (a group of long-established eastern universities of high academic and social prestige)

Concepts

Work ethic
A belief in the importance of hard work to climb the social ladder

The American Dream
A dream of liberty and justice for all, of equal opportunities and the pursuit of happiness.
A belief in economic opportunities and attachment to individualism

Deep South
The south-eastern States: Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. They were pro-slavery, formed the Confederacy and were defeated in the Civil War (1861-1865).

Pioneers
Early settlers going West.

Underground Railroad
A network of secret routes used by slaves to escape to free States and Canada.

Melting pot
The image of the USA as a pot in which European immigrants will be transformed into a "new race" (now considered a myth and replaced by "salad bowl").

The Frontier
The borderline between "civilization" (settled territories) and the wilderness (Indian territories). It often refers to the American expansion westward.

4

AMERICAN MEDIA

Satellite networks

Cable networks

Television (more than 1,500 channels)

Internet Networks

Radio

National Public Radio (NPR)

Cinema industry

- Warner Bros
- Columbia Pictures
- Universal
- Metro Goldwyn Mayer
- Paramount
- 20th Century Fox
- Dreamwork
- Pixar
- Walt Disney

The press

Newspapers (more than 10,000)

Mostly sold from vending machines on street corners

Few national

Mostly local

Magazines (more than 11,000)