



T: 1-800-985-4852
E: info@realgap.com
P: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

USA Experience

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: USA Experience **Trip Code:** USSS **Duration:** From 21 days

Trip Highlights

- Guided bike tour of Washington DC Monuments
- Limousine ride in Las Vegas
- New Orleans' Bourbon Street
- Grand Canyon sunrise or sunset
- Live music in Memphis, Nashville, New Orleans & Austin, Texas
- National Parks and Monuments - Monument Valley, Grand Canyon and Zion
- Tour of Philadelphia, Washington DC & Los Angeles
- Travel along the original Route 66
- See stunning Lake Powell
- Walk amongst the Appalachian Mountains



Overview

This chart topping adventure holidays USA tour blends the rugged beauty of America's west and a heaping of southern hospitality with the high-octane energy of the eastern seaboard. Do DC and the Deep South, party it up in New Orleans and cross the great state of Texas. Experience the mystery and wonder of the desert southwest as you mingle with mountains, cavort with canyons and get native with the locals. Go for broke in Las Vegas and experience the laid-back vibe of California and LA.

Destination Info

There isn't a person out there that hasn't dreamed of taking off on the ultimate American road trip with a bunch of mates! Cruising down the open road, tunes cranked, wind in your hair not a care in the world; getting off the beaten track with a whole continent to discover.

The United States is a country of incredible diversity. The nation is home to dynamic cities and small towns that vary dramatically from region to region, and the awe-inspiring National Parks are unparalleled for their beauty and diversity. Eastern energy, slow-paced deep southern charm and a laid back west coast lifestyle, combine to create an incredible culture of virtually everything.

Itinerary



The following itinerary is an example Southern Sun which starts in LA and ends in the New York Area, however you can also start this tour in the New York area and end in LA!

Day 1-2: Los Angeles and Las Vegas

With the Californian sunshine on your face we visit Hollywood Boulevard for a stroll along the Walk of Fame and photos of that massive Hollywood sign before leaving LA and onto the desert neon city of Las Vegas - the greatest show on earth. Watch out though, some dub this place 'Lost Wages'! Included is a cruise down 'The Strip' in a super-stretch limo but you may want to indulge in an all-you-can eat buffet, take in a show or just watch the amazing crowds and neon signs as the glitzy hotels try to outdo each other with spectacular attractions. And if that's not enough, take a helicopter flight back down The Strip, or just gamble the night away in one of the world class casinos. Oh and there's a saying here: what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Accommodation: Hotel.

Day 3: Zion National Park

Onwards to Zion National Park and explore the hidden canyons or maybe hike to Angels Landing for incredible views over the valley floor, as well as being an exceptional lunch spot. Okay, so getting up there can be devilish at times, but the famous trail puts on a full 360-degree display of the magnificent national park. Accommodation: Camping.

Day 4: Lake Powell

Time to wash off the desert dust in the refreshing waters of Lake Powell. Swim in the deep blue water or just sit back on the shore and soak up the powerful rays of this beautiful and surreal man-made desert oasis. Accommodation: Camping



Day 5-6: Grand Canyon National Park

Without doubt one of the most beautiful viewpoints in the Southwest, Horseshoe Bend makes for an impressive stop before the big event. No trip west is complete without a stop at the Grand Canyon and we have a full day tomorrow to experience the grandeur of one of the Earth's natural wonders. Pack your best boots and don't forget your camera for a sunrise/sunset hike along the rim. For the more ambitious take the long hike down Bright Angel Trail to Plateau Point or choose the 'bird's eye' view on a scenic flight. As you watch the sinking sun paint it amber, maroon and red, its breathtaking immensity will blow you away. Accommodation: Camping

Day 7: Monument Valley

On the road again and off to one of North America's most iconic landscapes, used as the set for countless Western movies, including the recent remake of The Lone Ranger. Immerse yourself in the native culture on an optional guided jeep tour of the Navajo Reservation and back roads. As you marvel at the sight of towering buttes and mesas which dominate the awe-inspiring landscape during the day, wait till the sun goes down and you're swapping camp fire stories under a blanket of stars. Accommodation: Camping

Day 8: Santa Fe

For all the art lovers out there Santa Fe is the one for you, visit Canyon Road, home to art galleries, cultural treasures such as hand-woven Navajo rugs, historic adobe buildings and a vibrant restaurant scene. Santa Fe will definitely win you over with its laid back charm and with tons of festivals and events throughout the year, you're bound to stumble upon something interesting. Accommodation: Camping



Day 9: North Texas

A state which is larger than some countries is the biggest state in the continental USA and is also home to plenty

of delicious Mexican-American cuisine, 'Tex-Mex', spicy fajitas and tacos. Hitch up in Fort Stockton and opt for a historical tour of this frontier army post, active from 1867-1886. If you want to cover more ground, Balmorhea is a great place to stop to enjoy the crystal-clear water of the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool. Swim, scuba dive, or just relax under the trees. Accommodation: Camping.

Day 10-11: Austin Texas

The music keeps on flowing as you arrive in Austin, another place which vies for the title of capital of America's music scene. Austin is an electric, cultural and artistic city which packs a punch. Live music can be heard almost any night of the week, so after a day of exploring, hit up the city for a dose of top shelf music and of course as the drinks start flowing, lots and lots of dancing. Accommodation: Camping

Day 12: East Texas & Louisiana

We say farewell to the biggest state of continental USA, and goodbye to the home of 'Tex-Mex' cuisine and a big hello to Louisiana, the home of gumbo stews and all that jazz and a place every music lover should visit at least once in their life. Accommodation: Camping

Day 13-14: New Orleans

We hit Louisiana and can search for gators on our optional swamp tour through the mysterious bayous of Cajun country (a must do!) Next up is the home of the Big Easy & Bourbon Street - New Orleans. Head into the enchanting French Quarter and hear the real deal at Preservation Hall, before tucking into some classic and delicious Southern cuisine. If you don't want to stop at just eating the likes of gumbo and jambalaya, why not take part in an optional New Orleans cookery class and really impress the folks back home. Make a beeline for the notorious nightlife of Bourbon Street, where almost anything goes. New Orleans is a place full of life and is a place you won't forget in a long, long time. Accommodation: Hotel



Day 15: Memphis

Turn up that radio you're about to hit Memphis, the birthplace of Rock 'n' Roll! With that in mind why not visit Sun Studios the home of Rock 'n' Roll which opened in 1950, a place where many great names have passed through. Stroll along Beale Street where the electric atmosphere will keep you entertained for hours as you listen out for some of the best Jazz and Blues music in town. There is more to Memphis than just music, pay a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum located in the former Lorraine Hotel and see the place where Martin Luther King was assassinated. Accommodation: Camping

Day 16: Nashville

From Honky Tonk bars to The Grand Ole Opry, they don't call Nashville the 'centre of the music world' for noth-ing! This place is full of life and you'll be hot footing your way from one country bar to the next. Find out all about the history of music at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, home to the largest collection of country music in the world. Even if Country isn't your thing, there's live bands everywhere you go, so you're sure

to be singing along by the end of the day. Accommodation: Camping

Day 17: Ocoee, Tennessee

Next up is the hard-hitting State of Tennessee where you overnight in Ocoee. In 1996 the world's eyes were on Ocoee as it hosted the world's first Olympic white water event and still to this day it boasts some of the world's best rafting. Don a life jacket, grip a paddle and bounce along an exhilarating stretch of white water on an optional rafting trip, but don't forget to look up as you'll fly past some pretty awesome scenery. For those of you not keen on the rapids, there are a number of surrounding trails to explore, so don't forget your camera. Accommodation: Camping



Day 18: Appalachian Mountains

You'll certainly appreciate the grand views of the rolling green slopes of the Appalachian Mountains as you cruise through Virginia. The numerous trails are calling out your name, so strap on your walking boots and stretch those legs with a memorable walk through the lush national forests. With photo opportunities around every bend, make sure you also keep an eye out for Appalachian residents such as cougars, deers, black bear and great horned owl, this really is a magical place. Accommodation: Camping

Day 19-20: Washington D.C

Next up is Washington D.C, the social, cultural and political hub of the United States. A great introduction to the city is to make your way central as the sun goes down for a self-guided illuminated view of America's Capitol - from the Smithsonian Museum to the Lincoln Memorial. During the day the city is awash with greenery, so once you're done with sightseeing, go people watching in the parks or take advantage of the great nightlife in Georgetown! A great way to see the city is to explore by bike at your own pace. Accommodation: Camping

Day 21: Philadelphia & New York Area

Leaving the capital behind we head to Philadelphia where we have the chance to break a sweat climbing up the famous 'Rocky' steps, see the symbol of American independence the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, plus opt for an early Philly cheese steak lunch. Why not hit the Reading Terminal Market awash with food, colours, flowers and incredible people watching. From here we travel to the final destination of the tour to the New York area and the end of our cross country adventure. This tour is not scheduled to spend any time in New York City so make sure you book extra hotel nights and explore the sights and sounds of the Big Apple on your own. Splurge along Fifth Ave, hit the top of the Empire State Building, or soak up the trendy, laidback vibe of Greenwich Village before heading home.

This tour ends at approximately 17:00 hrs. We can book you post-tour accommodation at our gateway hotel if required. If you are planning to fly tonight, please do not book a flight that departs before 21:00 hrs.

Accommodation

16 nights camping (including fees and equipment) and 4 hotel nights

Meals

On our camping tours, our groups share in the preparation and cooking of the food. Supplies, excluding soft drinks and alcohol, are purchased from the food kitty, and each member of the group pays US\$10 per day en route. This covers three meals on most days while we are camping; eating fresh foods that we purchase as we travel to satisfy the international flavour of the group - a healthy way to travel at an unbeatable price. Naturally this does not cover hotel stops or when Trek groups sometimes sample regional cuisine at local restaurants.

What's Included

- Services of Trek America tour leader
- 16 nights camping fees and equipment (excluding sleeping bag and pillow) + 4 nights hotel
- Private transportation with free Wi-Fi
- Activities as described in the itinerary



What's Not Included

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Food
- Optional activities



Additional Information

Tour Operator

This tour is operated by Trek America.

Minimum Age

Minimum age is 18 years. Maximum age is 38 years.

Flights

New York to LA

Your flight to the USA should arrive at Newark Airport, New Jersey no later than the day before your programme start date. Your return flight should be arranged for no earlier than the day after your programme end date from Los Angeles.

LA to New York

If you are starting the tour in Los Angeles, you will need to arrange your arrival flight into Los Angeles and your departure from Newark, New Jersey.

To book your flights, call our expert team on 01273 647219 and they can help you find a great deal. Just check with us that your trip is guaranteed before booking your flights.

FAQs

1. How much money do I need to bring on the tour?

For TrekAmerica camping tours you will need to budget for the food kitty. This is usually US\$10 a day however see individual tour pages for specific details. This will cover all of your meals while camping but does not cover meals during hotel stops or when the group chooses to sample regional cuisine. Depending on the tour you choose, there may be en-route hotel nights paid locally and the cost will be shown on the itinerary. You should budget for each of these night stops. We recommend you take at least US\$40/CAN\$40 dollars per day to budget for your optional activities and snacks along the way on all our North American Treks. This does not include money for food kitty and en route hotel expenses. We suggest you bring US \$150 with you in cash. ATM's and cash machines are readily available throughout North America and major credit cards are widely accepted throughout the country. Traveller's checks are accepted and can be a safe way to take your funds but aren't always the most practical. In some off the beaten track destinations ATM's and cash machines may be limited. Credit card payment can't be accepted for food kitty and enroute hotel payments.

2. Do I need to tip?

Although it may not be customary in your country, it is normal and expected in North America to tip waiters, bar staff, any type of guide and taxi drivers. Service workers are paid a low wage and depend upon their tips for their livelihood. A minimum of 15% is standard in restaurants. Your trek leader works long and hard for you. He or she may well become your close friend during the trek, but they also need to pay their bills. If the leader's performance meets or exceeds your expectations we recommend a tip of US \$5 per person, per day.

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

The currency in the US is the US Dollar (USD, symbol; \$), which is divided into 100 Cents. Coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 Cents (¢) and the 1 Dollar coin. Notes come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Dollars, though the \$2 note is rarely used.

No other currency is accepted but most major credit cards are universally accepted, especially Visa or MasterCard, and may even be required for larger purchases. ATMs are available almost everywhere and will charge a small fee for withdrawing cash using a credit card or international card, unless your card belongs to a worldwide network such as Cirrus or Exchange.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 11.16 \$

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 3.21 \$

Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 1.48 \$

Water (0.33 litre bottle) 1.27 \$

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

Passports and Visas

You should ensure that you have a full passport that is valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information provided below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

For stays of up to 90 days citizens of Australia, New Zealand and most European countries will need to apply for an

USA Experience



ESTA visa before they go. The ESTA visa can be applied for online for a small fee and must be used within two years of issue.

For working holidays applicants will usually need to hold an ESTA visa and a working visa, the type of visa required will depend on the nature of your work, your nationality and the length of your stay; you will also usually need some form of sponsorship from an employer in the USA.

For the most up to date information on passports, visa requirements and working in the USA, please visit <http://www.visabureau.com/america/default.aspx>

Cultural Considerations

A global culture and tradition is virtually non-existent in the USA because of the vast mixture of backgrounds that its original immigrant education came from. This is particularly reflected in the number of China Towns, Irish Districts, Jewish districts and so on that are in virtually every city across North America, as well as the fact that several states have Spanish and French as official state languages alongside English.

The American people are similar to Europeans in terms of what does and doesn't offend them. Although sometimes seen as loud and crass when outside their native country, you may find that Americans in America are less overpowering than you might expect. Here are a few ways to avoid offending your hosts:

- It is best to avoid talking about religion – faith is seen as being entirely personal to many Americans, although you are likely to come across people belonging to religions that have the intention of trying to convert you. Whichever of these you come across, they will not be used to having their beliefs challenged and may become offended easily.
- Smoking in public is becoming restricted more and more – keep an eye out for signs.
- Americans tend to have a relaxed social attitude and you may find that people (even shop assistants and waiters) are really interested in talking to you, especially about your country of origin. This is seen to be polite so engage them in casual conversation.
- In such conversation you may find that the person you are talking to has little knowledge of life outside the US (this is by no means the majority of people) and may refer to stereotypes – if you feel that you need to correct their views, do it politely and they will be gracious.
- US residents feel a strong connection to their 'land of origin' even if their family has lived in America for 200 odd years and once had an Irish relative!
- Terrorism is still very much a topic that must be approached with utmost respect. Talking about war should also be approached with caution - the American public are very patriotic about their troops.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in the USA. The legal age of alcohol consumption in the US is 21. However, please respect other participants. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact on your volunteer work during the week. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into the USA. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, the USA has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including "soft" drugs like marijuana, are ILLEGAL. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling – it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

Tipping

In a restaurant or taxi you should tip 15- 20% of the bill total, as no service charge will be added on. Tipping is widely practiced due to the low wages that the workers in such professions receive.

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

As in most countries there are people who try to take advantage of tourists. The following advice is intended to help you stay safe:

- Always keep your personal items such as passport, money and camera with you and in a safe place. You can buy mini padlocks to prevent people from going into your bag without your permission.
- Don't carry excess amounts of cash
- Wherever possible, walk around in groups, especially after dark, and avoid taking short cuts
- Do not pick up hitch hikers if you are driving and do not hitch hike yourself
- When you are out do not leave your drinks unattended, as there have been reports of drinks being spiked

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: www.fco.gov.uk

USA: www.travel.state.gov

Australia: www.smartraveller.gov.au

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

Language Guide

Here are some choice American phrases to get you started!

Pants - *Trousers*

Restroom/washroom - *Toilets*

Sidewalk - *Pavement*

Subway - *Underground*

Laundromat - *Laundrette*

Band-aid - *Plaster*

Soccer - *Football*

Football - *American Football*

Fanny Pack - *Bum bag*

Philly Cheese Steak - *A long sandwich made with thin slices of steak and melted cheese*

Twinkie - *A little golden sponge cake with a cream filling*

Candy - *Chocolate/sweets*

Americans tend to call certain things by their brand names, for example tissues are 'Kleenex' and so on.

Food & Drink

Currently the USA is famed for its love of the quick and easy fast food- burgers, pizza, fries and so on. However, there is so much choice out there, budget and otherwise- get out and sample it! You will be able to get any ethnicity food you could possibly imagine but if you want something properly American try out some steak, ribs, seafood in the coastal areas (especially Florida and California). Try some Cajun food (spot the European influence!) or something Mexican both options are delicious.

It is really important that you let us know before you depart if you are a vegetarian or have any other dietary requirements.

Public Holidays

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country.

To view a list of the public holidays for the USA, please see the link below:

www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/

Weather

The climate in the USA is relatively temperate though specific weather conditions can vary greatly depending on where you are; this country is pretty huge! As a general rule the further south you go, the hotter it gets, while the north and areas far from the coast experience the most extreme weather. California and the east coast are warm and balmy for most of the year while northern areas such as New York experience 4 definable seasons.

Hurricanes and tornadoes are more common in south-eastern areas and occur during excessive warm weather on a sporadic basis. The USA is the only country in the world to cover all of the six climactic zones, ranging from tropical to polar, which means that a trip here will be an adventure in more ways than one!

Time

USA Experience



The USA has four time zones (not including Hawaii and Alaska) all of which are behind the Greenwich Mean Time. They are:

- Eastern time; five hours behind GMT (New York)
- Central time; six hours behind GMT (Chicago, Texas)
- Mountain time; seven hours behind GMT (Rocky Mountains, Southwest)
- Pacific time; eight hours behind GMT (California, Nevada)

Don't forget to take Daylight Saving Time into account from mid-March to early November

Electricity

In the USA the electric system is 120 Volts and frequency 60 Hertz. If your device does not accept power at this voltage you will need an adapter. Outlets in United States of America / USA generally accept 1 type of plug:



Flat blade plug

Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

Phone: 1-800-985-4852

Email: info@realgap.com

Post: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

Web: www.realgap.com