

**REAL**  
Gap Experience

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## USA Tour 21 Day Cross Country BLT (Lodging)

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



**Trip Name:** USA Tour 21 Day Cross Country BLT (Lodging)

**Trip Code:** USCC

**Duration:**

### Trip Highlights

- Evening illumination visit to Washington DC Monuments
- Admission to Carlsbad Caverns
- Grand Canyon sunrise or sunset
- Scenic walks and hikes
- Tour of Las Vegas Strip
- Sightseeing in Nashville, Memphis, Austin and San Diego



### Overview

You're going to hit all the highlights like the big cities and famous National Parks and have the opportunity to indulge in adventurous activities on this complete USA tour holiday. After a day of adventure you'll be heading back to your hotel, motel, cabin or hostel to freshen up before you hit the town for a bite to eat or a drink with the locals.

Start with a visit to the nation's capital before experiencing the "southern charm" of Memphis and New Orleans. Cross the prairies of Texas and spend the days exploring the national parks of the southwest. Finish this tour with the excitement of Las Vegas and San Diego before ending in Los Angeles.

### Destination Info

There isn't a person out there who 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.

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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



**This tour operates in both directions, from New York to Los Angeles and Los Angeles to New York.**

### Day 1-2: New York Area & Washington DC

Departing from the New York area, travel to the Nation's Capital, Washington DC, for a perfect introduction to the cultural and political history of the United States. Want to know a secret? Go undercover at the International Spy Museum. Timetable a stop at Union Station, make tracks to the zoo, then see where big-hitting political animals shape the nation on an included monument tour.

### Day 3-4: Virginia & Nashville

Next, touch down in the Appalachian Mountain Range and the gorgeous pine-clad foothills. Then off to the centre of American music in Nashville, Tennessee - the shining star of the country music scene. Hit The District - centre of city nightlife - laze in the parks, trawl the malls or learn to line dance; cowboy boots or sequinned denim anyone?

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## Day 5-6: Memphis

A short distance away is Memphis, the Birthplace of the Blues. Strolling along Beale Street must be on your checklist to see the influences that Blues and Jazz music has had on America. But top billing goes to Graceland, former home of the King himself, Elvis Presley.

## Day 7-8: New Orleans

Your soundtrack grows jazzier in the Big Easy. Spice up your trip with lipsmacking Cajun and Creole fare, ride a steamboat on the Mississippi River, relax to the sounds of a Jazz or Dixieland band in the French Quarter and join the ongoing party on Bourbon Street. New Orleans has more than just food, drink and music to offer. Join a swamp tour into the alligator habitat of southern Louisiana, to view all sorts of wildlife on the mysterious bayous of Cajun country.

## Day 9-10: Louisiana & Austin, Texas

Head out of the bayou and onto the range, as south turns to west before your very eyes. Welcome to the Lone Star State, otherwise known as the great state of Texas. Austin is the "Live music capital of the world" and home of great BBQ. This city is packed with "Texas sized" excitement and is sure to impress.



## Day 11-12: Lubbock & Carlsbad Caverns National Park

The birthplace for Buddy Holly and the world's largest cotton growing region. This is the best of Texas. Head out of the largest State into New Mexico and Carlsbad Caverns National Park to explore one of the largest cave

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systems in the World. Gnarled limestone stalagmites like the Witch's Finger reach upwards, while stalactites in the Bell Cord Room hang from the cavern ceilings.

## Day 13-14: Taos & Monument Valley

Venture into the desert with a stop at Taos, where history and south-western spirit is available by the bucket load - it must be all those sandy Pueblo-style buildings that make up what is one of America's oldest towns. We hit the iconic Monument Valley next, used in countless Hollywood scenes from Westerns to 2001: A Space Odyssey and everything in between. If you choose, you can board a jeep and let your Navajo guide show off the huge hunks of red rock and share the fables of the sacred lands. Tonight, experience a stunning sunset overlooking the valley.

## Day 15-16: Grand Canyon National Park

Holy Cow! This is a dead cert on your list of top stops! Pack your 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. Watching the sinking sun paint it amber, maroon and red, its breathtaking immensity will blow you away.



## Day 17-18: Las Vegas

Back to the modern world with a bang - Las Vegas - the greatest show on earth! Cruise "The Strip" in a super-stretch limo, indulge in an all-you-can eat buffet, take in a show or just watch the amazing crowds, neon signs and attractions that many hotel casinos have to offer. And if that's not enough, take a helicopter flight down The Strip or just gamble the night away in one of the world class casinos.

## Day 19-20: San Diego

SeaWorld or San Diego Zoo? Hold on, is that beach calling? Sure is! Rent bicycles, rollerblades and surfboards at the beach and don your shades and soak up a few final rays.

## Day 21: Los Angeles

It's a crying shame but your adventure in north America has to end; at least the Hollywood Walk of Fame will help



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script your blockbuster ending to this great adventure.

## Accommodation

You will stay in a mixture of hotels, hostels, or camping cabins (20 nights included).

## Meals

There is no food kitty collected on this tour. All meals are taken in local restaurants and paid for individually (not included) allowing you to sample the tasty regional cuisine!

## What's Included

- Transportation
- Services of a tour leader
- All 20 hotel/cabin/hostel nights
- Admission to Monument Valley
- Admission to Carlsbad Caves
- Illumination tour of Washington Monuments
- Admission to all National Parks and Monuments on itinerary



## What's Not Included

- International Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Spending Money
- Food



## Additional Information

### Tour Operator

This tour is operated by Trek America.

### Minimum Age

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

## Flights

Your flight to the USA should arrive at Los Angeles or Newark Airport, New Jersey (depending in your direction) 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.

To book your flights, call our expert team on 01892 277037 and they can help you find a great deal. Just check with us that your trip is guaranteed before booking your flights. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

## Programme Changes

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your Online account, or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

## 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 programmes have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimised.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our UK 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.



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

Beware: Don't book with an organisation that has no financial protection for their clients. Not only are they breaking the law, you could lose all your money or be stranded overseas.

Our ATOL licence (6527), offers complete financial protection for any flight inclusive trips. To acquire an ATOL licence we have to undergo a very rigorous inspection from the Civil Aviation Authority, so you know that we tick all of the boxes. The ATOL license means that no matter what happens to us, your money will either be returned or if you've already left, your trip will be guaranteed.

We are also a Member of ABTA which means you have the benefit of ABTA's assistance and Code of Conduct. Many of the travel arrangements that we sell are protected in case of the financial failure of the travel company. If you have any questions about the financial protection that applies to your booking then please ask our team and they'll be happy to help.

## 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)

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## 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 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 General Practitioner 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.

A useful website to visit in the first instance is <http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk>

## Zika Virus

Zika virus is transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes and whilst the infection often occurs without symptoms it can cause an illness similar to dengue fever. There has recently been reported a possible link between exposure to Zika virus (ZIKV) in pregnancy and microcephaly and other congenital malformations and investigations are ongoing. We recommend you visit the [FCO website](#) and select your destination country for the latest travel advice prior to booking.

If you are already pregnant it is recommended you seek medical advice from your GP as [The National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#) advises you should consider avoiding travel to areas where ZIKV outbreaks are currently reported.

## 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](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

USA: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

Australia: [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://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*

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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/](http://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

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 Foreign and Commonwealth Travel Advice.

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

## Volunteer numbers

Please note: You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us.

## 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.

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