



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

USA Tour 21 Day Southern BLT

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: USA Tour 21 Day Southern BLT **Trip Code:** USSB **Duration:** From 21 days

Trip Highlights

- Visit the Navajo tribal lands in Monument Valley
- See the sights of Nashville, Memphis and New Orleans
- Watch a stunning sunrise over the Grand Canyon
- Evening illumination visit to Washington DC Monuments
- Grand Canyon sunrise or sunset
- Las Vegas limousine tour
- Sightseeing in Nashville, Memphis, Austin and Los Angeles
- New Orleans Bourbon Street jazz and blues music
- California's white sandy beaches in San Diego
- Travel along the original Route 66
- Visit Philadelphia's top highlights
- National Parks - Carlsbad Caverns, Monument Valley and Grand Canyon



Overview

Travel right across the continent, from the most cool to the most populated US city - that's LA to NY in other words. If you're just not a camping sort of person, there's no finer way to roll on through a kaleidoscope of deserts, mountains, cities and canyons. Magic!

Destination Info

There isn't a person out there that hasn't dreamed of taking off on the ultimate north 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



1-2 - Los Angeles & San Diego

Take a tour of 'Tinseltown' starting with a drive through Hollywood to Venice Beach where people-watching down on the beach is the main pastime. Head south to San Diego for some seriously laid back vibes and powder white sand beaches. There's loads to keep you busy in SD, why not pay Shamu a visit at SeaWorld or visit the 'best zoo in the world', San Diego Zoo. Not your thing? Stick by the coast and show off your skills by renting some rollerblades or a surfboard, or simply don your shades and soak up some rays. Accommodation: Budget lodging included

3-4 - Las Vegas

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, ride a roller coaster and party the night away in a super-club. If you're looking to flash the cash even more, why not take a helicopter ride along The Strip or change those dollars for casino chips and gamble 'til the wee hours. As the saying goes; 'What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas', so enjoy every last second. Accommodation: Budget lodging included

5-6 - Route 66 & Grand Canyon National Park

En route to the Grand Canyon we'll drive along a section of the original Route 66, stopping at the town of Seligman; a town frozen in time and full of old Americana, so grab a root beer and have a look around! Next up, the Grand Canyon should be on everyone's bucket list and once you've cast your eyes upon the deep canyon landscape you'll understand why. Pack your boots, camera and water and venture into the canyon itself along the Bright Angel Trail to Plateau Point or choose the "bird's eye" view on a scenic helicopter flight. Watching the sun rise or set over the canyon with the colours changing from amber, maroon and red is simply breath-taking.

Accommodation: Budget lodging included

7 - Monument Valley

Iconic Monument Valley, used in countless Hollywood Western movies is the most photographed place in America with good reason - but don't be fooled into thinking it's a tourist trap. You can venture well off the beaten track aboard 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 tribal valley and the chance to try the legendary Navajo Taco (if you can finish it that is). Accommodation: Budget lodging included

8 - Santa Fe

With 325 days of sunshine per year and bright blue skies, plus some of the best Mexican food in the USA, Santa Fe won't disappoint. Visit Canyon Road; an area of Santa Fe popular for art galleries, cultural treasures (hand-woven Navajo rugs and Southwestern wood carvings), historic adobe buildings, vibrant restaurants and colourful buildings. Accommodation: Budget lodging included

9-10 - Carlsbad Caverns National Park & Texas

Roswell's International UFO Museum makes for an entertaining stop which lays on the Southwestern charm by the bucket load. Head on to New Mexico and Carlsbad Caverns National Park to explore one of the largest cave 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. Next, prepare for a big welcome as you enter the Lone Star State, otherwise known as the great state of Texas, the birthplace of Buddy Holly and the world's largest cotton growing region. Accommodation: Budget lodging included

11-12 - Austin, Texas & Louisiana

USA Tour 21 Day Southern BLT

Austin has exploded as the "Live music capital of the world" and home of great BBQ Tex Mex food. The city is packed with "Texas sized" excitement and is sure to impress with a nightlife which rivals some of the biggest cities in the world. We then say goodbye to Texas and head into bayou country, Louisiana. Accommodation: Budget lodging included

13-14 - New Orleans

Welcome to the country's Deep South, where life moves at a much slower pace. Why not spice up your trip with lip-smacking 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 party on Bourbon Street. New Orleans has more than just incredible tasting food, drink and music to offer. You can take a swamp tour into the alligator habitat of southern Louisiana, and see all sorts of wildlife on the mysterious bayous of Cajun country. Accommodation: Budget lodging included

15-16 - Memphis

Memphis, the Birthplace of the Blues and jazz is next on the list - and what a destination! Strolling along Beale Street must be on your checklist, you'll see influences of Blues and Jazz music everywhere. A visit to the Civil Rights Museum gives you an insight into the history of slavery and the struggles to overcome it. But the top billing has to go to Graceland, former home of 'The King', Elvis Presley. Accommodation: Budget lodging included

17-18 - Nashville & Virginia

Next is Nashville, Tennessee - the shining star of the country music scene. Hit 'The District' - the nightlife hub of Nashville, laze in the city's parks, trawl the malls or learn to line dance. Cowboy boots and sequined denim anyone? Next, touch down in Virginia, home of the 'spine of America', the Appalachian Mountain Range. Accommodation: Budget lodging included

19-20 - Washington DC

Travel to the Nation's Capital, Washington DC, the centre for cultural and political history. Want to know a secret? Go undercover at the International Spy Museum. Make tracks to the zoo, and then see where big-hitting political animals shape the nation on an included monument tour under an evening neon glow. Why not get up early to beat the crowds to the Lincoln Memorial? It makes for some great photos too! Accommodation: Budget lodging included

21 - Philadelphia & New York Area

Leaving the capital behind, drive towards Philadelphia in Pennsylvania where you visit the Liberty Bell, the steps from the Rocky movies, and can have a Philly cheese steak lunch - delicious! Then we head over to New York Area for 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

All accommodation - 8 hotel, 7 hostel, 3 motel, 1 cabin & 1 guesthouse nights.

Meals

What's Included

- Services of a TrekAmerica tour leader
- Private transportation with free Wi-Fi
- All accommodation - 8 hotel, 7 hostel, 3 motel, 1 cabin & 1 guesthouse nights
- Activities as listed in the itinerary



What's Not Included

- Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Optional activities
- Food (kitty will be collected USD\$10 a day)



Additional Information

Group Size

13

Transportation

Private transportation with free Wi-Fi

Tour Operator

This tour is operated by Trek America.

Minimum Age

Minimum age 18 years old.

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 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 many people will there be on the tour?**
Between 6 and 13 people with one tour leader.
- 2. What is the average age of the tour participants?**
The age range is 18-38 and early to mid twenties are the most common ages.
- 3. How fit do I need to be?**
There will be a fair bit of walking and hiking on the tour as well as the opportunity to do lots of activities. So you should be relatively fit but don't forget that activities are optional so you can do the trip at your own pace.
- 4. Will I be the only person travelling on my own?**
No, the majority of our travellers are solo travellers and you will meet lots of people on your tour!
- 5. What if I have never camped before?**
Don't worry, your fantastic tour leader will show you how to put your tent up and use your camping equipment.
- 6. 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.
- 7. 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.

Police Check

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

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 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.

USA Tour 21 Day Southern BLT

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

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