



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

USA Tour 63 Day Trailblazer

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: USA Tour 63 Day Trailblazer **Trip Code:** USTB **Duration:** From 63 days

Trip Highlights

- Cross 28 US states & 2 Canadian provinces
- Explore Las Vegas, LA and San Francisco
- Niagara Falls Maid of the Mist cruise
- Evening illumination visit to Washington DC Monuments
- New Orleans' Bourbon Street
- San Antonio's Riverwalk
- Alien spotting in Roswell
- Walk the Golden Gate Bridge
- Louisiana swamp tour
- Visit the Amish community in Shipshewana, Indiana
- White Sand beaches of Florida
- Sightseeing in Charleston, St. Augustine, Miami, Florida Keys, Santa Fe, San Diego, Seattle, Vancouver and Chicago
- Walk amongst Giant Sequoias
- National parks and monuments - Carlsbad Caverns, Mesa Verde, Arches, Monument Valley, Grand Canyon, Bryce, Zion, Badlands, Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Glacier, Banff/Lake Louise, Redwood and Yosemite



Overview

So how about more than two months dedicated to all things Stateside? We've combined our Coast to Coast North and South Treks to create one vast circuit that takes in the best of the US. Seriously, if you want full throttle adventure, this is the big one!

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



Days 1-2 - New York Area, Philadelphia & Washington D.C

Washington D.C. is the perfect introduction to the social, cultural and political history of the United States. Explore D.C.'s parks by day and monuments by night. From the impressive Smithsonian Museum to the White House, the capital has something for everyone. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 3-5 - Carolinas, Charleston, St Augustine & Daytona Beach

Bond with new buddies as mountain views morph into swamps, plantations and palmetto palms in the Carolinas, then enjoy a cozy campfire. Historic Charleston is next. This place oozes old world charm, especially the gaudy mid-1700 houses of Rainbow Row. Head on to St Augustine, the oldest settlement on US soil which owes much to its spanish plaza and sizzling sand. Accommodation: Camping included

Day 6 - Miami

SoBe (aka South Beach) has it all! Stroll the art deco seafront or pose with the beautiful people on sugary sand and in ultra-cool nightspots. Magnificent Miami beckons with miles of white beaches and palm trees swaying in the breeze... Accommodation: Hostel included

Days 7-8 - Key West

Over conch fritters and Key lime pie, admire a crimson sunset and swap tales from teeming reefs, before celebrating with a sunset party! Accommodation: Camping included

Days 9-10 - Orlando

It's not far from strip malls and souvenir shops to the Magic Kingdom. Escape from it all with an optional day at Disneyworld. Forget your age, it makes a big kid of one and all. With two nights here, fitting in extra thrills and spills is a piece of cake. Maybe slip-slide around Wet 'n' Wild, be drenched by killer whales at SeaWorld or cross the final frontier at Kennedy Space Center. Who wants to grow up anyhow? Accommodation: Camping included

Days 11-12 - Panama City Beach

Dream of lazy beach days or windsurf and jet ski the afternoon away. The heat of the beach simmers beyond sundown in this undisputed good-time town. Pack dancing shoes with your flip-flops as the party spirit simmers far into the small hours at the hippest, hottest haunts of the Gulf Coast. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 13-14 - New Orleans

Now we're talking all that jazz! We head into the enchanting French Quarter of New Orleans! Hear the real deal at Preservation Hall, echoing with chirpy trumpet and smooth sax or sample a Hurricane at Pat O'Brien's! New Orleans has more than just food, drink and music to offer. Do the Huckleberry Finn thing as you chug along the Mississippi River. Accommodation: Hotel included

Days 15-18 - Louisiana & Texas

Look for gators on our optional Louisiana swamp tour through the mysterious bayous of Cajun country. Then don your Stetson and toast marshmallows as the Lone Star bids you a big-hearted welcome for four nights in the mighty Texas. The second biggest of the states has plenty of oil, cowboys and southern hospitality. Feel that

tumbleweed vibe at the Alamo in San Antonio and don't forget to checkout the Buckhorn Saloon and Museum, crammed with cowboy curiosities. Accommodation: Camping included

Day 19 - Carlsbad Caverns National Park

Do you know your stalactite from your stalagmite? Carlsbad Caverns is one of the largest cave systems in the world and boasts over 100 limestone caves sporting bizarre rock formations. Pack the amphitheatre at dusk as thousands of resident bats swarm out. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 20 - Sante Fe & Roswell

Soak up the artsy vibe of Santa Fe, the oldest US capital city, high in the desert foothills, and check out the International UFO Museum and Research Centre (and gift shop!) in Roswell! They say Aliens crashed to Earth and they have proof! Mesa Verde National Park is next. Explore the ancient dwellings of Ancestral Pueblans cut into the cliff face on an optional ranger led hike; viewings are highly recommended! Accommodation: Camping included

Days 21-24 - Colorado Rocky Mountains & Arches National Park

Distant peaks sport snowy caps and pines huddle together as you pit yourself against amazing hiking and biking trails in the Rockies before heading to Arches National Park. The park's name says it all. Some 2,000 orange sandstone arches strike their poses. The scenery here is breathtaking and a sunset stroll to Delicate Arch tops most 'to do' lists. Take on the famous "Slick Rock" mountain bike trail, float down the Colorado on a scenic rafting trip or tackle the terrain high above on a guided jeep tour. Accommodation: Camping included

Day 25 - Monument Valley

Navajo legends rise from crimson flats at Monument Valley. The only things to pre-date the origins of Native American culture are the massive towering rock formations which dominate the awe-inspiring landscape. Take the opportunity to experience it close-up with an optional Navajo guided 4x4 ride before setting up camp on the edge of Monument Valley. What a place to swap campfire stories and songs. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 26-27 - Grand Canyon National Park

Next we come face to face with the most awe-inspiring national park of them all, the Grand Canyon. Nothing you have ever seen before will prepare you for this spectacular site! Hike from the forest above to the desert below, or take a helicopter flight above it all and marvel at the brilliant colours. One thing's for sure though, this place looks incredible from any angle, especially walking along the rim at sunset or sunrise. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 28-29 - Lake Powell & Bryce Canyon National Park

It's time for some stunning R&R, basking in the clear blue waters of Lake Powell ringed by deep red rock. Swim, horse-ride in the desert or just sit back on the shore and soak up the powerful rays of this beautiful and surreal man-made desert oasis. Bryce is next with it's knobbly hoodoos striking their crazy poses as your camera clicks away at a perfect sunset. What's a hoodoo when it's at home? Actually, Hoodoos are weird and wonderful rock spires arranged in rows as far as the eye can see. They will leave you searching for your own way to describe this 'indescribable' place. Accommodation: Camping included

Day 30 - Zion National Park

Another batch of top notch trails provides one final hiking fix at Zion National Park. Swim and explore the hidden canyons or maybe hike to the top at Angels Landing. Okay, so getting up there can be devilish at times, but the famous trail puts on a 360-degree display of this magnificent national park. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 31-32 - Las Vegas

Next, Las Vegas - the greatest show on earth! The Strip, the shows, the casinos, the clubs; Sin City's glitziest and brashest spots are sure to impress as you cruise the Las Vegas Boulevard on an included limo ride! Hop onto one of the world's highest thrill rides at Vegas' Stratosphere and it won't just be your head that's spinning. 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. Accommodation: Hotel included

Days 33-34 - Los Angeles

Journey across the desert and catch some California sun as you roll into the larger than life LA scene and our turn around point before heading back east. Why not hang out at and people watch at Venice Beach tonight? Accommodation: Hotel included

Day 35 - Los Angeles, Santa Barbara & California Coast

With LA in the rearview mirror, head up the rugged California coast on the Pacific Coast Highway and take in the sights as the surf spirit takes hold of you! Fasten your seatbelt for blockbusting scenery. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 36-37 - Yosemite National Park

Heading east through California's gold country we following the scenic drive into the Yosemite National Park

region and a chance to hike or bike, through the extraordinary landscape of glacier-carved granite monoliths and spectacular waterfalls. Either way, this park rocks! Once deep inside Yosemite, keep your eyes peeled for black bears. Coyote roam freely as well and when the sun goes down, their howling often echoes amidst pines and sequoias. Admit it, this is what clicks the spirit of the great outdoors up a notch or two. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 38-39 - San Francisco

Next, "Everybody's Favourite City", San Francisco. This town will blow you away. Sunlight on the bay, wispy fog around Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars climbing steep streets: it's a 24-carat stunner. Maybe view the Bay and Alcatraz on an optional sunset sailboat cruise, then the party people can flock to trendy bars and clubs in North Beach or Haight-Ashbury and that friendly vibe gets even better. Accommodation: Hotel included

Days 40-41 - Redwood National Park

You will be amazed to walk amongst the towering forest giants of Redwood National Park - home to the tallest trees in the world and some of the most spectacular coastal scenery on the Pacific Coast. Leave footprints on what is virtually your private Pacific beach or traipse between gigantic Redwoods, feeling like ants in their mighty shadow. Accommodation: Camping included

Day 42 - Florence, Oregon Coast

The Florence Oregon Coast is the perfect place for relaxation and fun. You'll find beautiful evergreen forests, the sparkling Pacific Ocean and towering dunes for you to spend time climbing and rolling down. Take time out swimming and having fun in the Oregon sunshine. Accommodation: Camping Included

Day 43-44 - Seattle

Beam yourself up! Well, take the glass-fronted elevator up the iconic Space Needle (optional) and gaze over the Emerald City with a hot cup of coffee from the very first Starbucks! Then tonight blare out guitar-loaded classics in the city that gave the world Hendrix and Nirvana. Accommodation: Hostel included

Day 45 - Vancouver

Straight into Canada and the awesome city of Vancouver. With its stunning combination of mountains and coastline, the city boasts outstanding views. Take to Stanley Park on two wheels, then regain your inner city slicker around A-grade museums and galleries or bustling Granville Market. Why not check out the city nightlife in Gas Town or the eclectic "Robsonstrasse" tonight. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 46-47 - British Columbia & Lake Louise

Heading through BC, appreciate the mirrored lakes, grizzled peaks and spectacular scenery as dark conifers and shadowy summits drift by. A nickname like the "gem of the Rockies" is a lot to live up to, but it's no sweat for Lake Louise. The imposing chateau looks on as mountains cluster round the turquoise surface. As for you, well, you could always hike out to the Plain-of-Six-Glaciers or inspect the scene by paddle power on an optional canoe trip. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 48-49 - Banff National Park

Blaze show-stopping trails in the footfalls or horse tracks of pioneers of old. Perhaps bounce across the bumpy terrain by mountain bike or hover above it all by helicopter. One dunk in the hot springs and a drink or two later, you'll sleep like a log. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 50-52 - Glacier National Park & Montana

With two days in Glacier, you'll have plenty of time to explore the alpine meadows, snow-streaked cliffs and shimmering lakes. Montana is often referred to as 'Big Sky Country' because of its numerous stars, but it is also a trekkers' paradise. This area sure adds a healthy dose of the wow factor. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 53-54 - Yellowstone National Park

Pitch up in the world's first National Park, Yellowstone. This is a superb wilderness of spouting geysers, waterfalls and simmering mud pools. A-grade American stars grace the trails - keep your eyes peeled for the abundant wildlife. Large herds of bison and elk roam the park and if you're lucky, you may even see bear or wolf. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 55-56 - Cody & Mount Rushmore

We're into Wild Wyoming, the heart of cowboy country, This is what Cody is all about. Named after William Cody (aka Buffalo Bill), the old west is alive and literally kicking here. After all, "Cody is rodeo", with nightly summer shows. You'll agree with the Lakota people, from afar the pine-coated hills do appear black. Mount Rushmore's next and the uniquely sculptured faces of our four greatest Presidents. Close by, another rock-carved epic is shaping up: the Crazy Horse monument, a nod to the famed Lakota Indian war leader, very impressive!

Accommodation: Camping included

Days 57-58 - Badlands & Minnesota

Never mind the "bad lands", touching down here feels like a moon landing. Low-slung buttes, chiselled spires and saw-tooth ridges have a bizarre lunar quality. Spend the afternoon exploring the park's surreal landscape and don't forget your camera for sunset! From the North Star State, cross native American Sioux terrain and America's original western frontier. Resident coyotes may utter the occasional howl as you settle back for some shut-eye under canvas. Accommodation: Camping included

Days 59-60 - Chicago

Chicago is next on the menu for two nights, famous for music, museums and Lake Shore Drive. Soar up Willis Tower for dizzying views over the Windy City, trawl the upmarket malls of Magnificent Mile and grab a slice of Chicago's deep-dish pizza before peddling on the optional "Bobby's Bike Hike" tour. Then hit the blues groove, drop into a corner bar or seek out heaving dance and hip-hop beats in the hangouts of Wicker Park and Bucktown. Accommodation: Hostel included

Day 61 - Cedar Point, Ohio & Lake Erie

We make a brief stop to Gary, Indiana for a photo of the house where Michael Jackson grew up, followed by a visit to the Amish community in Shipshewana who maintain a more traditional way of life, and in some cases without electricity, cars and travelling by horse and cart. Then it's Ohio, where you can ask a 'buckeye' to tell you all about their state nut or how cool Cedar Point Amusement Park's rollercoasters are! Ride the Millennium Force - the greatest rollercoaster in the world! Accommodation: Camping Included

Day 62 - Niagara Falls

On the edge of Lake Ontario, the sensation of crashing water is stupendous, the noise immense, at America's greatest national attraction, Niagara Falls. Wait 'til you're down on the water aboard 'Maid of the Mist', where the cascades pound, churn and foam right before your eyes. That's what you call a front row seat! Accommodation: Camping included

Day 63 - New York Area

Today we travel through New York's Finger Lakes region and the Pocono Mountains en-route to the New York Area. 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

51 nights camping & equipment (except sleeping bag) + 2 hotel night in LA

Meals

What's Included

- Services of a tour leader
- 51 nights camping fees and equipment (except sleeping bag), 8 hotel & 4 hostel nights
- All transportation by private vehicle
- Niagara Falls Maid of the Mist cruise
- Night time illumination tour of Washington DC monuments
- New Orleans Bourbon Street
- San Antonio's Riverwalk
- Alien spotting in Roswell
- Walk the Golden Gate Bridge
- Scenic walks and hikes
- City tour of Las Vegas, Hollywood and San Francisco
- National Parks and Monuments
- All accommodation



What's Not Included

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



Additional Information

Group Size

13

Transportation

All transportation by private adventure vehicle

Budget

Food Kitty: US\$10 per day.

Tour Operator

This tour is operated by Trek America.

Minimum Age

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

Flights

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For the NY-NY option 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 Newark Airport, New Jersey. Alternatively, if you have chosen the LA-LA option you need to arrive into Los Angeles no later than the day before your programme start date, and depart from Los Angeles no earlier than the day after your 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 dont 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.

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,



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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

Canada

The unit of currency in Canada is the Canadian dollar (CAD, symbol \$) with notes in denominations of CAD 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100. Coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25 Cents (¢) and the \$1 (loonie) and \$2 (toonie or twoonie) coin.

Many terminals such as airports, bus, train and ferry stations have ATMs where you will be able to withdraw cash. Most are linked to international networks, the most common being Cirrus, Plus, Star and Maestro and the machines all dispense Canadian dollars.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 12.14 \$

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 4.52 \$

Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 1.64 \$

Water (0.33 litre bottle) 1.42 \$

(Prices quoted in CAD Dollars)

USA

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

Canada

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 6 months, the following nationals DO NOT require a visa: holders of British passport endorsed British Citizen, British National Overseas Citizen & British Overseas Territories Citizen, nationals of Andorra, Antigua & Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Rep, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Hong Kong (S.A.R. passport holders only), Iceland, Ireland Rep, Italy, Japan, Korea (South), Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania*, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Poland*, Portugal, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, United States, Vatican City & permanent residents of United States holding Permanent resident or Resident Alien Card (Form I-551).

* must have an e-passport.

Visitors must depart Canada within 6 months from the date of arrival unless otherwise indicated upon arrival.

If you are doing a working programme in Canada

You will need a working holiday visa to take part in this programme - it is your responsibility to obtain your own visa. Please check visa availability before booking. For information on visas and how to apply please visit the website of your local Canadian Embassy.

The working holiday visa is available to anyone age 18-30 from one of the following countries: UK, Australia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand or Sweden. Please check that there are still Open Work Authorisation visas available before applying to the programme for the current year.

For the most up to date information on passports and visa requirements please visit:
<http://canada.embassyhomepage.com/>

USA

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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

Canada

Canadians are similar to Europeans and Americans in terms of what does and doesn't offend them, but it is always best to be polite and respectful of the culture of the country that you are visiting. Canada is a multi-racial/multi-faith/multi-cultural nation, so it is difficult to pinpoint a particular Canadian culture, though it is perhaps the

French region of the country that has a more pronounced set of customs and traditions. Here are a few ways to make sure that you don't offend your hosts:

- The Canadian people are extremely polite and expect similar behaviour from visitors.
- Be aware of personal space when you are conversing with Canadians, don't get in too close!
- Canadians can be offended by being told that they are practically the same country as the USA – it most certainly isn't!
- Do not assume that all French speakers are Quebecois.
- It is polite to take a gift with you if you are visiting someone's house.
- It is considered a sign of respect to try and speak French in Quebec province – so give it a go!

Tipping

If you do choose to eat out during your time in Canada please keep in mind local customs. Generally for lunches out a 10%-15% tip is customary and for dinners a 15%-20% tip is customary.

USA

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

Canada

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
- When you are out do not leave your drinks unattended, as there have been reports of drinks being spiked

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.

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- 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

Canada

One quarter of the Canadian population are French speaking, with a fair number of them speaking very little English. Although the residents of the French speaking parts have their own slang and accents etc, they will still understand you if you can speak European French.

USA

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

Canada

You will find all your normal fast food options, as well as a good range of ethnic dishes if that's your cup of tea.

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However, for those seeking proper Canadian fare, you can try a staple of game and fish. You will find a lot of European influences in the cooking, but pork is a popular ingredient of the Quebec region, along with all the French style dishes. Fish is something to try all over Canada, varieties varying between regions and you can even bite into a Caribou steak in the Artic regions.

You cannot leave Canada without having local maple syrup - drench something in it, drizzle some on a snowball with a stick to make an icepop or buy some in the airport to take home to your mum!

USA

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

Canada

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

www.timeanddate.com/holidays/canada/

USA

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

Canada

The sheer size of Canada means that its climate varies dramatically. For a better understanding of the weather, we have divided the country into five different areas:

Canadian Prairies - Summers here tend to be short and warm with showers. Winters can get very cold with freezing winds.

Eastern Canada - Conditions tend to change from day to day with rain and cloud never far away throughout the

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year. Summers here vary and are generally bright, although sea fogs are common. Winters can be cold with snow and few hours of sunshine a day.

Northern Canada – Home to extreme winter weather conditions! Snow covers this land for most of the year. Its summer is very short and accompanied by cold winds, frost and snow.

Southern Canada – The place to be! Southern Canada plays host to the sunniest and warmest summers in Canada, though summer storms can bring cold and wet conditions. Temperatures drop dramatically in the winter and the lakes freeze in December through to March (if you're lucky though, there may even be mild spells in the middle of winter).

Western Canada - Coastal areas tend to have sunny summers and mild winters. Coastal mountainous areas can be wet with rain and snow. Inland areas tend to be protected from the worst weather and are generally drier though can drop down to freezing during winter.

USA

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 Canada

Canada uses six primary time zones. From east to west they are Newfoundland Time (GMT -3.5 hours), Atlantic Time (-4 hours), Eastern Time (-5 hours), Central Time (-6 hours), Mountain Time (-7 hours), and Pacific Time (-8 hours).

Daylight Saving Time begins at 2am local time on the first Sunday in April. On the last Sunday in October areas on Daylight Saving Time fall back to Standard Time at 2am.

USA

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 Canada

Electricity in Canada uses 120 Volts at 60 Hertz. Outlets in Canada generally accept 1 type of plug:



Flat blade plug

USA

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