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USA Tour 7 Day Western BLT (Lodging)

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: USA Tour 7 Day Western BLT (Lodging) **Trip Code:** USWB **Duration:** From 7 days

Trip Highlights

- Travel with a great group of like minded travellers
- Grand Canyon sunrise or sunset
- Walk amongst the Giant Sequoias of North America
- Get your kicks on Route 66
- Scenic walks and hikes
- National Parks - Yosemite and the Grand Canyon

Overview

This little teaser of the West Coast of USA tour, highlights the area's contrasting cosmopolitan centres and incomparable natural beauty. Make your way from the City by the Bay to the granite peaks and Giant Sequoia forests of Yosemite National Park. Then traverse the Mojave Desert for the bright lights and crazy nights of Las Vegas before experiencing the Grand Canyon, one of the World's seven natural wonders.

Follow the iconic Route 66 back to the Colorado River and Lake Havasu before finishing things off in Hollywood…now that's a wrap!

Destination Info

The West is definitely a land of extremes! With National Parks, wilderness areas, snow capped mountains, deserts and beaches, the list goes on and on. One 'must see' is the Grand Canyon, 280 miles of geological wonder that really does have to be seen to be believed.

Hit the big cities and stroll down the 'Walk of Fame' along Hollywood Boulevard, or hit the blackjack tables in Las Vegas and cruise The Strip in a super-stretch limousine. Catch a cable car to Chinatown or Fisherman's Wharf, then wander back along San Francisco's lively streets.

Itinerary

This tour operates in both directions, from Los Angeles to San Francisco and San Francisco to Los Angeles.

After a brief fling with San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, hit the old prospectors' trails to the east on day one. They'll take you smack bang into Yosemite National Park. Who says granite isn't as pretty as gold? It makes for memorable eye candy round here, from the chiselled landmarks of El Capitan and Half Dome to the highest waterfalls in North America. Throw in the colours of sunset, a chilled drink or two and you've got one sure-fire ice-breaker - though the chances are you're all best of buddies already.

Time to put those lucky numbers to the test. Not to mention your energy levels in this 24/7 party town. A-list stars swarm here, although breaking the bank may be easier than blagging your way into their swanky celebrity hangouts. If that fails you can still cruise the The Strip in a superstretch limousine.or ease the pain in one of the famous all-you-can-eat buffet.

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Take to the wing and witness the Grand Canyon's monumental red-and-gold formations from up high. Hike deep into the canyon on the Bright Angel Trail, or settle for being a mere a mile up from the Colorado River bed: the hiking paths along its vast rim are unforgettable, particularly at sunset.

After a beautiful sunrise and well-spent morning at the Grand Canyon, head west and follow the sun to idyllic Havasu. This is A-grade Arizona: Mojave Desert, Colorado River and the original London Bridge.

Follow the sun, back to the Pacific. Tour Hollywood and the Walk of Fame or instead hit the beach for a sunset finale. The City of Angels (and A-listers) greets you in the only way it knows how - sprawling, celebrity-driven and simply electric.

Accommodation

6 nights hotel/cabin/hostel accommodation

Meals

There is no food kitty collected on our Budget Lodging Tours. All meals are taken in local restaurants at your own expense allowing you to sample the delights of American cuisine! We recommend to budget around $25 per day for meals paid locally.

What's Included

- Services of a tour leader
- 6 nights hotel/cabin/hostel accommodation
- Transportation
- Grand Canyon sunrise/ sunset
- Walk the Golden Gate bridge
- Walk amongst Giant Sequoias
- Scenic walks and hikes
- City tours of Las Vegas and Hollywood
- National Parks - Yosemite and the Grand Canyon

What's Not Included

- International Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Food
- Optional activities

Minimum Age

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

Flights

Your flight to the USA should arrive at San Francisco 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. Alternatively, if you are starting the tour in Los Angeles, you should arrange your arrival flight to Los Angeles and your return flight from San Francisco.

To book your flights, please contact your travel advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. 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

Please note that all tours are subject to change up to 8 weeks before the date of travel. It is advisable that you do not book flights or extra nights at hotels until 8 weeks before travel. If you do choose to book flights or hotels you will be liable for any changes that need to be made if the tour dates or hotels change.

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 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 is the accommodation like?**
   You will stay at a mixture of hostels, hotels and cabins throughout the tour. These are multi-share basis, usually 4-6 per room same sex.

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. 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.

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.

You will be assigned a personal travel advisor who will co-ordinate your program with you. Feel free to contact them at any time before you go, or when you are on your travels. They will provide you with competent assistance and help with any questions or advice you may need during your stay.

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.

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 you 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 reommended 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

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