

ONE WAY AMERICA

Your Guide to USA

TELEPHONE: Country code (+1). Area codes vary by state and city.

STANDARD TIME: The United States covers multiple time zones. The contiguous United States includes Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific Time, while Alaska and Hawaii have their own time zones. Daylight Saving Time is observed in most of the United States, although Hawaii and most of Arizona do not observe it.

WEIGHTS & MEASURES: The United States primarily uses the U.S. customary system for everyday purposes, including miles, feet, inches, pounds, Fahrenheit and gallons. The metric system is also widely used in science, medicine and many commercial applications.

ELECTRICITY: 120v AC, 60Hz. Standard U.S. household outlets use Type A and Type B plugs. Appliances from countries using 220–240v may require a transformer or voltage converter as well as a plug adapter. Many modern electronic devices are dual-voltage, but the manufacturer's rating should always be checked before use.

INOCULATIONS/VACCINATIONS: There are no general vaccination requirements simply for travelling to the United States. However, people applying for U.S. immigrant visas are subject to medical examination and vaccination requirements. Depending on age and circumstances, required vaccinations can include measles, mumps, rubella, polio, tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, varicella, hepatitis A and B, influenza, meningococcal, pneumococcal, Hib and rotavirus. Applicants should bring their vaccination records to the approved panel physician. U.S. Travel Information+1

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: Federal holidays include New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth National Independence Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Individual states may observe additional public holidays, and some holidays may be observed on different dates where they fall at weekends.

OFFICE HOURS: Traditionally 09.00–17.00, Monday to Friday, although working hours vary considerably between employers and industries. Flexible, hybrid and remote working are now common in many sectors.

BANK HOURS: Traditionally approximately 09.00–17.00 Monday to Friday, although branch hours vary by bank and location. Some branches open on Saturdays. Online and mobile banking are widely used.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS: 911 – Police, Fire and Ambulance.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C., USA

The U.S. Department of State is responsible for U.S. foreign affairs and provides information relating to visas, immigration through U.S. embassies and consulates, and U.S. citizens travelling or living abroad.

People relocating to the United States should ensure that they have the appropriate immigration status before travelling. Visa and immigration requirements vary depending on the purpose of the move, including employment, family reunification, investment, study or other circumstances.

U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is responsible for border control and the examination of goods entering the United States.

Household goods and personal effects arriving separately from the owner are subject to customs procedures and may require documentation including CBP Form 3299. [CBP Help+1](#)

Part 1 – Background Information on the United States of America

Background

The United States of America is a federal republic consisting of 50 states, the District of Columbia and a number of territories and associated jurisdictions.

The United States declared independence from Great Britain in 1776 and adopted its Constitution in 1787. The country has since developed into one of the world's largest economies and a major centre for business, technology, finance, education, culture and international trade.

Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States, while New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, Philadelphia, San Antonio, San Diego and other major cities are important centres of population and economic activity.

The United States is a federal system. Many important matters affecting daily life, including taxation, education, driving, property law and certain business regulations, can differ between individual states.

For this reason, anyone relocating to the United States should research the specific state in which they intend to live.

Geography

The United States covers a vast area of North America and borders Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. It has coastlines on the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans, as well as the Gulf of Mexico.

The country contains a wide range of landscapes, including mountains, deserts, forests, plains, wetlands and extensive coastal areas.

The Rocky Mountains extend through the western part of the country, while the Appalachian Mountains run through the eastern United States.

The central part of the country contains extensive agricultural plains, while the western states include deserts and mountainous regions.

Alaska is separated from the contiguous United States and is situated in the north-western part of North America. Hawaii is an island state in the Pacific Ocean.

Climate

The United States has an extremely varied climate because of its size and geographical diversity.

The north-east and northern states generally experience cold winters and warm summers. The southern states generally have warmer climates, while Florida and parts of the Gulf Coast have subtropical or tropical conditions.

The western states range from coastal Mediterranean climates to desert and high-altitude mountain climates.

Severe weather can occur in some regions, including hurricanes, tornadoes, winter storms, flooding, wildfires and extreme heat.

Anyone relocating should research the climate and natural hazards specific to their intended state and city.

Economy

The United States has one of the world's largest and most diversified economies.

Important sectors include technology, finance, healthcare, manufacturing, aerospace, defence, energy, agriculture, entertainment, retail, professional services and telecommunications.

Major business centres include New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Seattle, Houston, Dallas, Atlanta, Washington, D.C. and Miami.

The United States has extensive international trade relationships and is home to many of the world's largest multinational companies.

The economy is primarily market-based, although federal, state and local governments regulate many aspects of business activity.

Population

The United States has a population of more than 340 million people.

The population is highly diverse, with communities representing almost every part of the world.

Major metropolitan areas include New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas–Fort Worth, Houston, Washington, D.C., Miami, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Boston, Phoenix and San Francisco.

Language

English is the predominant language of the United States.

Spanish is also widely spoken, particularly in states such as California, Texas, Florida, Arizona and New Mexico.

Many other languages are spoken throughout the country because of the country's large international and immigrant population.

There is no federally designated official language for the United States, although English is the principal language used by the federal government.

Religion

The United States has a diverse religious population.

Christianity remains the largest religious tradition, while Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and other religions are represented throughout the country.

There is also a significant population identifying as having no religious affiliation.

Freedom of religion is protected under the U.S. Constitution.

Education

Education in the United States is primarily administered by individual states and local school districts rather than by a single national education authority.

Children generally attend elementary school followed by middle school and high school, although the structure varies between states and school districts.

Public schools are generally funded through a combination of state and local sources and are available without tuition fees to eligible children residing within the relevant school district.

There are also private schools, international schools, religious schools, charter schools and homeschooling options, depending on state law.

The United States has a large higher education sector, including universities, colleges, community colleges and specialist institutions.

Currency

The unit of currency is the United States dollar (US\$ or USD).

One dollar is divided into 100 cents.

Notes are commonly issued in denominations of \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100.

Coins include 1 cent, 5 cents, 10 cents, 25 cents, 50 cents and \$1.

Credit and debit cards are widely accepted, and electronic payments are common.

Health and Medical Care

The United States does not operate a single universal healthcare system equivalent to the NHS.

Healthcare is provided through a combination of private insurance, employer-sponsored insurance, government programmes and direct payment.

Health insurance is therefore an important consideration when relocating to the United States.

Depending on individual circumstances, healthcare coverage may be obtained through an employer, the Health Insurance Marketplace, Medicare, Medicaid or other insurance arrangements.

Eligibility varies according to immigration status, income, age, employment and state of residence.

Medical treatment can be expensive without appropriate insurance, and new residents should arrange suitable healthcare coverage as early as possible.

Social Security

Social Security numbers are widely used in the United States for employment, taxation, banking, credit and other official purposes.

Eligible immigrants and other individuals authorised to work in the United States may apply for a Social Security number.

People moving to the United States should check the Social Security Administration requirements applicable to their immigration status.

Driving

Driving is an important part of everyday life in many parts of the United States, although public transport is well developed in some major metropolitan areas.

Driving laws and licensing requirements are determined primarily by individual states.

A person relocating permanently should obtain a driver's licence from the state in which they reside.

Requirements vary by state and may include identity documentation, proof of residence, written examinations, driving tests, vision tests and other requirements.

International Driving Permits may be useful for visitors, but an IDP does not replace the requirement to obtain a state licence when required for residents. [USAGov](#)

Utilities

U.S. domestic electricity is normally supplied at approximately 120 volts AC and 60Hz.

This differs from countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and many European countries, which generally use approximately 220–240 volts.

US-style Type A and Type B sockets are standard.

Appliances designed only for 220–240v cannot normally be used directly in the United States. A suitable transformer or converter may be required.

Many modern computers, phones, chargers and other electronics are designed for 100–240v and can be used internationally with an appropriate plug adapter.

Always check the manufacturer's voltage rating before connecting an appliance.

Television and Electronics

The United States uses television and broadcasting standards that differ from many other countries.

A television purchased outside the United States may not be fully compatible with U.S. broadcast or cable systems even if the voltage can be converted.

Before shipping a television, check its voltage, frequency, tuner and broadcast compatibility.

Modern laptops, tablets, phones and other electronic devices are generally easier to relocate provided their power supplies support 120v and 60Hz.

Taxation

The United States operates a federal taxation system together with state and, in some areas, local taxes.

Federal income tax applies to individuals according to applicable federal rules. Many states also impose their own income taxes, while some states do not have an individual state income tax.

Sales tax is generally imposed at state and/or local level and varies considerably between locations.

Property taxes are generally administered locally or at state level.

Anyone relocating to the United States should obtain appropriate tax advice because U.S. tax residency and reporting requirements can depend on immigration status, residence, citizenship and other factors.

Immigration

A person relocating to the United States must have an immigration status appropriate to the purpose and duration of the stay.

Common categories include:

- Permanent immigration through family or employment.
- Employment-based temporary visas.
- Family-based visas.

- Student visas.
- Exchange visitor visas.
- Investor and treaty-based categories.
- Other temporary or permanent immigration categories.

Visa and immigration rules are subject to change and can be complex.

Anyone intending to relocate permanently should obtain current information from the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services before making travel or shipping arrangements.

For immigrant visa applicants, an approved medical examination by an authorised panel physician is required, together with the applicable vaccination requirements. U.S. Travel Information+1

Although every care is taken to ensure that all information in this Relocation Guide is accurate and up to date, One Way America cannot accept liability for any inaccuracy. Immigration, customs, tax, vehicle, pet and other regulations can change and should be checked with the relevant U.S. authorities before shipping.

Part 2 – United States

Import Customs Regulations

To the best of our knowledge, the following information applies to the importation of household goods and personal effects into the United States.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) regulations can vary according to the status of the importer, the country of origin of the goods, the nature of the goods and the circumstances of the move.

Household Goods and Personal Effects

Used household goods and personal effects may qualify for duty-free entry when the applicable CBP conditions are met.

CBP defines household effects as items such as furniture, carpets, paintings, tableware, books, artwork and similar household furnishings that have been used abroad for at least one year and are not intended for another person or for sale.

CBP may require evidence that the goods were used abroad for the required period. [CBP Help](#)

The fact that an item is part of a household shipment does not automatically make it duty free.

Newly purchased goods, commercial goods and goods that do not satisfy the applicable requirements may be subject to duty and/or other charges.

Unaccompanied Household Goods

Household goods shipped separately from the owner are considered unaccompanied articles.

CBP Form 3299, Declaration for Free Entry of Unaccompanied Articles, may be required.

The complete inventory of the shipment can be treated as the packing list and must be provided to CBP if requested.

The inventory should therefore be detailed and should not simply state "household goods" or "personal effects." [CBP Help](#)

First-Time Immigrants

First-time immigrants moving to the United States may be eligible to import qualifying used household effects free of duty where the applicable requirements are satisfied.

CBP's Form 3299 instructions specifically include people emigrating to the United States as first-time immigrants.

The importer should provide accurate information regarding:

- Country of previous residence.
- Length of residence abroad.
- Length of use of the goods.
- Immigration/residency status.
- Nature and ownership of the goods.
- Whether the goods are intended for personal use or sale.

[CBP Help](#)

Documentation

The following documents may be required depending on the circumstances:

- Passport.
- Visa or evidence of U.S. immigration status.
- Permanent Resident Card/Green Card, where applicable.
- Detailed inventory/packing list.
- Bill of lading or air waybill.
- CBP Form 3299 for unaccompanied household goods where applicable.
- Purchase receipts for new or recently acquired items.
- Evidence of ownership and use.
- Customs entry documentation.
- Power of attorney for the customs broker, where applicable.
- Vehicle documentation where a vehicle is being imported.
- Import permits or certificates for restricted goods.

Inventory Requirements

A detailed inventory is particularly important for shipments entering the United States.

Descriptions should be specific enough for customs officials to identify the goods.

For example, descriptions such as "clothing," "kitchen items" or "electronics" may be too general in some circumstances.

Where appropriate, descriptions should identify the type of item, such as:

- Men's cotton shirts.
- Wooden dining table.
- Ceramic dinner plates.
- LED television.
- Laptop computer.
- Children's bicycle.
- Leather sofa.

CBP guidance emphasises the use of clear and specific cargo descriptions. U.S. Customs and Border Protection

New Furniture and Household Goods

New furniture, appliances, electronics and other recently purchased goods may not qualify for the same duty-free treatment available to qualifying used household effects.

Receipts and invoices should be retained.

The customs treatment of new goods can depend on their classification, value and country of origin.

Food

Food products require particular care when being imported into the United States.

Many food products are restricted or prohibited, particularly meat, poultry, dairy products, fresh fruit, vegetables and products that may carry pests or animal diseases.

Almost all agricultural products must be declared to CBP.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) states that travellers entering the United States must declare agricultural and wildlife products. [APHIS Service+1](#)

For this reason, food should generally not be included in a household goods shipment without first checking the requirements for the specific product and country of origin.

Meat and Animal Products

Meat, poultry, dairy, eggs and other animal products can be subject to strict restrictions.

Some products may be prohibited because of animal disease concerns or because of their country of origin.

Do not assume that a product that is legally available in the country of departure can be imported into the United States.

All applicable agricultural products must be declared.

Plants and Seeds

Plants, plant parts, seeds, soil and other plant products are regulated by USDA APHIS.

Requirements vary according to the species, country of origin and intended use.

Some plants may require permits or phytosanitary certificates.

Plants in soil are generally prohibited, and many seeds and plant products have specific requirements. [APHIS Service+1](#)

Plants and seeds should therefore not be packed with household goods without prior confirmation of admissibility.

Soil

Soil from most foreign countries is prohibited unless it meets specific USDA requirements or is imported under an applicable permit or approved treatment.

Garden soil, soil-covered plants, gardening materials and similar items should not be included in a household goods shipment without specialist advice. APHI Service

Alcohol

Alcohol imported into the United States is subject to federal and potentially state requirements.

The rules can vary depending on:

- Type of alcohol.
- Quantity.
- Country of origin.
- Intended use.
- State of destination.

State alcohol regulations can be particularly important because each state may have its own licensing, taxation and importation requirements.

Clients should obtain advice before including alcohol in a household shipment.

Tobacco

Tobacco and tobacco products are subject to federal requirements and may also be subject to state taxes and restrictions.

Large quantities may be treated differently from ordinary personal effects.

Clients should obtain current customs advice before shipping tobacco products.

Prescription Medicines

Prescription medicines should be carried in their original packaging and accompanied by appropriate documentation.

The importation of medicines into the United States is regulated by federal authorities, and some medicines legally available overseas may be restricted in the United States.

Controlled substances are subject to particularly strict requirements.

Clients should check with the relevant U.S. authority before including medicines in an international household goods shipment.

Firearms and Weapons

Firearms, ammunition and other weapons are subject to U.S. federal, state and potentially local laws.

Import requirements can involve the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), CBP and other authorities.

The rules can vary significantly depending on the type of firearm, country of origin, importer and destination state.

Firearms and ammunition should not be included in a household goods shipment without obtaining specialist advice and confirming all applicable federal and state requirements in advance.

Dangerous Goods

Explosives, fireworks, flammable materials, chemicals and other hazardous goods may be prohibited or subject to strict transport and import controls.

Examples can include:

- Gas cylinders.
- Petrol/fuel.
- Certain paints.
- Solvents.
- Aerosols.
- Fireworks.
- Explosives.
- Certain chemicals.
- Some batteries and pressurised containers.

Such goods should not be packed with household goods unless their transportation and importation has been specifically approved.

Works of Art and Antiques

Works of art and antiques can generally be imported into the United States, but special requirements may apply depending on the item and its origin.

Items containing materials from endangered or protected species may be subject to CITES requirements.

Clients should retain evidence of ownership, age, value and origin for valuable antiques and artwork.

Endangered Species

The United States regulates the importation of products derived from protected wildlife and plant species.

These can include:

- Ivory.
- Certain animal skins.
- Furs.
- Trophies.
- Coral.
- Certain woods.
- Reptile products.
- Other protected animal or plant materials.

A CITES permit or other documentation may be required.

Do not include potentially protected wildlife products with household goods without checking the requirements first.

Motor Vehicles

Vehicles imported into the United States must satisfy applicable federal requirements administered by agencies including CBP, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

A vehicle manufactured for a foreign market may not automatically meet U.S. safety and emissions standards.

For vehicles less than 25 years old, compliance with applicable U.S. Department of Transportation safety standards can be a significant consideration.

Vehicles that are at least 25 years old can generally be imported without regard to compliance with all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, although other requirements may still apply.
CBP Help

EPA requirements are separate. In general, a non-U.S.-specification vehicle that is less than 21 years old may require modification, testing and certification unless an exemption applies. US EPA

Importing a vehicle can therefore be considerably more complicated than importing household goods.

Before shipping a vehicle, we strongly recommend confirming:

- Vehicle age.
- Country of manufacture.
- U.S. specification/compliance status.
- EPA requirements.
- NHTSA/DOT requirements.
- State registration requirements.
- Customs duty and taxes.
- Shipping and port charges.
- Modification or certification costs.
- Insurance availability.

Vehicle Documentation

Depending on the circumstances, documentation may include:

- Original vehicle title.
- Registration documents.
- Purchase invoice.
- Passport.
- Bill of lading.
- EPA documentation.
- DOT/NHTSA documentation.
- Customs entry documentation.
- Proof of insurance.
- Evidence of vehicle age.

Importers should establish the vehicle's eligibility before shipping it.

Pets

Pets entering the United States can be subject to federal and state requirements.

Requirements depend on:

- Species.
- Country of origin.
- Animal health status.
- Destination state.
- Vaccination history.
- Age of the animal.
- Mode of transport.

Dogs have particularly detailed federal requirements, and the CDC is the primary U.S. authority for dog imports. APHIS also regulates the importation of dogs, cats, ferrets, birds and other animals. APHI Service

Some states may impose additional requirements beyond federal requirements.

Pet owners should therefore check both federal and destination-state requirements before making travel arrangements.

Dogs

Dogs entering the United States must meet applicable CDC requirements.

Additional USDA APHIS requirements may apply depending on the country from which the dog is travelling and the dog's vaccination and travel history.

Owners should start the process well before the intended travel date because required documentation, vaccinations and health certificates can take time to arrange. APHI Service

Cats and Other Pets

Cats, ferrets, rabbits, reptiles, birds and other animals can be subject to different federal and state requirements.

Birds and exotic animals can involve additional federal agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Do not assume that a pet that can enter one U.S. state can automatically enter another state under identical conditions.

Fumigation and Wooden Packing Materials

Wood packaging materials entering the United States are regulated to reduce the risk of introducing plant pests.

International wooden packing materials may need to comply with ISPM 15 requirements.

This can include:

- Wooden crates.
- Pallets.
- Dunnage.
- Cases.
- Other solid wood packing material.

Appropriately treated and marked wooden packaging should be used where required.

Cash and Monetary Instruments

People entering or leaving the United States with more than US\$10,000 in currency or certain monetary instruments must generally declare the amount to CBP.

There is no prohibition on carrying more than US\$10,000, but the required declaration must be made.

This requirement is separate from the importation of household goods.

Customs Inspection

All goods entering the United States are subject to customs inspection.

CBP may examine household goods and personal effects, and agricultural products may also be inspected by USDA officials.

Clients should ensure that all goods are accurately declared and that the shipment inventory is complete and truthful.

Agricultural products should always be declared even if the owner is unsure whether they are admissible. USDA states that declaring agricultural products allows inspectors to determine whether the items meet U.S. entry requirements. APHIS Service

Import Permits and Restricted Items

Some goods require permits or additional government approval before importation.

These can include:

- Plants.
- Seeds.
- Certain animal products.
- Wildlife products.
- Firearms.
- Certain medicines.
- Biological materials.
- Commercial quantities of goods.
- Certain vehicles.
- Agricultural products.

Where a permit is required, it should normally be obtained before the shipment leaves the country of origin.

Temporary Residents and Students

People entering the United States temporarily, such as students, temporary workers and certain other non-immigrants, may have different customs treatment from permanent residents or first-time immigrants.

CBP considers factors including immigration/residency status and the circumstances under which the goods are imported.

Temporary residents should not assume that all household goods automatically qualify for duty-free entry.

The applicable customs treatment should be confirmed before shipping.

Diplomatic Removals

Diplomatic personnel may benefit from special customs privileges depending on their diplomatic status and the applicable U.S. agreements and documentation.

Diplomatic shipments should be coordinated with the relevant embassy, U.S. Department of State and customs broker.

Inheritance

Inherited household goods and personal effects can have different customs treatment depending on the circumstances.

Supporting documentation may include:

- Death certificate.
- Will.
- Probate or executor documentation.
- Detailed inventory.
- Evidence of ownership.
- Evidence establishing the relationship between the deceased and beneficiary.

The customs treatment should be confirmed before shipping inherited property.

Wedding Gifts and Trousseaux

Wedding-related household goods and gifts may be subject to specific customs provisions depending on the circumstances.

Where substantial quantities of new goods are being imported, clients should provide invoices and a detailed inventory.

The applicable duty treatment should be confirmed before shipment.

Disclaimer

The United States is a federal country and many rules vary between states. In addition to federal customs requirements, clients may need to comply with state regulations covering vehicles, pets, firearms, alcohol, medicines, taxation and other goods.

This guide is intended as general relocation information and should not be considered legal, immigration, tax or customs advice.

Immigration and customs regulations can change, and the final decision regarding admissibility of a person or item rests with the appropriate U.S. government authority.

Before shipping, clients should confirm current requirements with the relevant authority and their customs broker.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) should be consulted for customs and household-goods requirements. CBP confirms that qualifying used household effects can potentially enter duty-free where the relevant conditions are satisfied, and that unaccompanied household goods may require CBP Form 3299. [CBP Help](#)⁺¹

USDA APHIS should be consulted for food, plants, agricultural products, animals and related items. [APHI Service](#)⁺¹

U.S. Department of State should be consulted for visa and immigrant-visa requirements, including medical examinations and vaccinations. [U.S. Travel Information](#)⁺¹

USCIS should be consulted for immigration status and applications within the United States.

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More info on our website: <https://onewayamerica.com>.