



Otázka: The U.S.A.

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The United States of America includes 50 semiautonomous states. 48 states are situated in the southern part of North America and lie between the Pacific and the Atlantic Ocean. Alaska is situated in the North and lies between the Pacific Ocean and the Arctic Ocean. Hawaii lies in the Mid-Pacific. Its neighbours are Canada in the north, Mexico in the south. The United States of America also administers 14 territories, made up mostly of Pacific islands.

The United States is the third largest country in the world in both size, and population. It is approximately half the size of Russia. Its population is about 300 million people and total area is about 10 million sq km- The capital is Washington D.C. (District of Columbia). Around 79 per cent of inhabitants live in urban areas. There are many ethnic groups in the US. Five basic categories are: white (81.7%), black (12.9%), Asian (4.2%), Amerindian and Alaska native (Eskimos) (1%), native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander (0.2%). One of the largest ethnic groups, Hispanic, is not an official ethnic group. The main language spoken here is American English but various ethnic minorities speak their original languages (Chinese, Spanish).

The US flag, nicknamed the "Stars and Stripes", has 13 stripes of red and white, representing the original 13 colonies of the new nation. The blue square in the upper left corner contains 50 white stars, standing for the 50 states.

The central region is dominated by large plains. In the west are mountains and in the southwest, areas of desert. Alaska features river valleys and rugged mountains (robustní), while Hawaii is largely volcanic. The lowest extreme is Death Valley in California (-86m). Mount McKinley in Alaska with 6 194 m is the highest point in the US.

The largest rivers are the Mississippi and the Missouri. The border with Canada is in its central part made by the Great Lakes Region. The Great Lakes are: Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and

Ontario. Between Erie and Ontario are all over the world known Niagara falls. There are many national parks in the USA, for example: Yellowstone NP, Rocky Mountains NP, Grand Canyon NP, Glacier NP, Yosemite NP.

Mount Rushmore in South Dakota is famous for busts of 4 presidents (Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt) inscribed into the rock.

The USA can be divided into four parts: 1. North (Alaska) and the North East. 2. The Middle west, the area of great Lakes 3. The agricultural South 4. The Far West.

Now I would like to tell you something about each typical region separately.

First Alaska. Alaska is the largest and least populated US state. It is separated from the US mainland by Canada. Alaska has an arctic climate and is partly covered by glaciers. It is site of the highest US mountain, Mount McKinley 6 138m above sea level.

Midwest is a region of the flat fertile (úrodná) land, which makes it perfect for farming. It is nicknamed „the nation's breadbasket“ (obilnice národa) with huge fields of corn, wheat, and other grains. (obiloviny). There are fewer large cities (Chicago) and not a very dense population. People from this area tend to be thought of by those in larger cities as "hicks" (= people who are not very cosmopolitan and spend more of their time with farm animals than at cultural events). The biggest city here is Chicago. There is situated the highest skyscraper in the USA. It is named Sears Tower. Other states in this region are for example Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota,...

South. This region was devastated by the **Civil War** (1861-5), a conflict between the South (which supported slavery (podporovalo otroctví) because its main industry, agriculture, was dependant on this type of labor) and the North (which was against slavery because it profited more from industries which were not as dependant on slave labor). The North won and slavery was abolished, but for many years blacks were segregated and discriminated against. The

region has a mild climate suitable for agriculture and is a popular destination for retired people. There is also situated the capital – Washington, D. C. in this area. Other big city here is New Orleans, the home of jazz. Now I would like to tell you something about **Washington D.C..** D.C.stands for District of Columbia and the city is named Washington after the country's first president, George Washington. It is situated on East coast. All the country's federal offices are located here, including the Capitol and the White House. There are many monuments located along the National Mall, a large open area in the centre of the city. Here you can find the Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial, and the national World War II Memorial. Other famous city is New York with its Statue of Liberty standing on Liberty Island. It's a present of France to the USA; in her head there is the observation gallery, in one hand she holds the tablet showing the Declaration of Independence, in the other the burning torch. Other Points of interests in NY are the United Nations Building, Lincoln's Center with the Metropolitan Opera, Rockefeller Center and Music Hall, City Hall, St. Patrick's Cathedral and skyscrapers as Trump Tower, Pan American, Empire State Building and Ground Zero as remainder of World Trade Center.

Other states in this region are for example Florida, Virginia, Kentucky,...

Southwest is a hot dry region, with deserts and lovely scenery. For Example in Arizona you can visit the Grand Canyon formed over millions of years by the Colorado River or you can visit Death Valley National Park situated south-east of the Sierra Nevada mountains. This national park is the hottest and driest of the national parks in the United States. Southwest was home to various Native American tribes and even now there are Indian reservations. The US won some parts of this region from Mexico in the Mexican-American war and Spanish culture is still strong there. Texas is the second largest state after Alaska and an important center of oil production. Other states located southwest are for example New Mexico or Arizona.

The West has high mountains run from the north to the south (the Rocky Mountains) and the area has a lot of unspoiled countryside popular for hiking and camping. It was first settled by Spanish missionaries but now has a varied mix of immigrants from all around the world. California is known for its film industry (Hollywood) and hi-tech and computer industry (Silicon Valley). The lowest point in the US is Death Valley in California at 86 m below sea level. San Francisco famous for its hilly relief and cable cars (lanovky), Los Angeles and San Diego are the largest cities here. There is also situated Las Vegas where you can win much money.



Hawaii is the only US state situated only on islands. All the islands were formed by volcanic eruptions and the spectacular (okázalý) scenery and tropical climate make them a popular tourist destination.

Though the climate is mostly temperate, there are extremes in Alaska (arctic) and Florida and Hawaii (tropical). There are also semi-arid (polosuché) areas in the west and arid conditions in the southwest.

The US is famous for its natural dangers. The Pacific Basin faces danger mainly from earthquakes, volcanoes, forest fires and mudslides (sesuv půdy), while those living on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts must beware of hurricanes. The Midwest suffers (trpět) mainly from tornadoes, as does the southeast.

New England

The first European settlers settled in this region in the 17th century and it became the country's cultural and economic center for a long time. Even today, it is home to some of the most prestigious universities (Harvard, Yale...).

Now I would like to tell you something about history of US. I will start with first settlements.

Till 1400 native Indians were the only inhabitants in the USA. In 1492 Christopher Columbus discovered America. The first English colony was founded in Virginia at Jamestown in 1607. In 1620 the ship named Mayflower brought 102 English men, women and children to the north-east coast where they founded the colony called Plymouth. They were members of a religion sect called Pilgrim Fathers, but in winter about one half of them died. The next year in October 1621 they celebrated good harvest and the day of celebrations they called Thanksgiving day. During the 17th century many colonists settled in the country. From these settlements became the 13 colonies under British rule.

Well known is the War of Independence It started, when British government started to charge new taxes (účtovat nové daně) on the imported goods (for example: sugar, coffee, textiles etc.)



to cover the costs of the war against France. The colonists refused to pay taxes, so British soldiers were sent to Boston. In 1773 a group of patriots (vlastenci), dressed as Indians, threw the cargo (hodil náklad) of British tea into the Boston Harbour. This event is known as Boston Tea Party. Americans began boycotting British trade. In 1775 at Lexington the War began. In 1775 at Lexington the War began. Later George Washington took over the command (převzal velení) of a Continental Army. The Continental Congress began to work as a national government and on July 4th, 1776 they agreed on the Declaration of Independence written mainly by Thomas Jefferson. This is the day, when the USA was founded.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

The USA is a federal republic which consists of fifty states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) Each state is different from the others : it has its own state government, laws, customs, education, taxes, traffic, regulations etc. Each state government has the Constitution. The Constitution sets the basic form of government three separate branches. 1, Executive (President) 2, Legislative (Congress) 3, Judicial (Supreme)

The head of the federal government is the President. His power is wider than of the Prime Minister. He is elected every four years. The president is chosen by direct election. America has a two party systems: The Democrats- Congress consists of the Senate and the Republicans - the House of Representatives.