

Overview of United States of America

Billed as the 'land of opportunity', for more than 500 years, people have travelled to the United States of America seeking a better life. The territory was fought over by colonial powers for 300 hundred years, and finally won its independence from Britain in 1783.

Despite the near-annihilation of the Native American population, a bloody civil war, and centuries of ingrained racism (Native Americans were not granted citizenship until 1924 and racial segregation was the norm until as late as the 1950s), the American people have succeeded in forging one of the world's most democratic and tolerant nations. This has resulted in a fascinating melting-pot of cultures, and the undisputed military and economic heavyweight of the world.

A country of this size, with a history this colourful, truly does present endless opportunities for travellers heading stateside. World-famous attractions like the Statue of Liberty in New York City, Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, and the Grand Canyon in Arizona don't even begin to scratch the surface of what the US has to offer visitors.

Depending on where and when you travel, a holiday in the United States can offer sizzling desert mesas, labyrinthine cities, chilly snow-covered forests, tropical jungles, or rolling flower-covered prairies. With an area of roughly 3,794,083 square miles (9,826,630 square km), the US is the perfect place to take long road trips along the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Pacific Coast Highway, or Route 66, gaining a broader understanding of this vast nation along the way.

Whether you want to see the celebrity stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the majestic summit of Pike's Peak, or the world's largest ball of twine in Darwin, Minnesota, the United States has something for everyone.

Key Facts

Language:

English is the most common language spoken but Spanish is often heard in the south-western states.

Passport/Visa:

It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. A visa is required for short visits unless travellers qualify for entry under the Visa Waiver Program. The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables citizens of certain countries to travel to the US for a stay of up to 90 days without a visa. Visitors under the VWP need to register online three days before travel and have an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). This allows the US government to screen all visitors before travel. Visitors entering the country under the VWP must have a machine-readable passport (MRP) that has a barcode on the photo page. Travellers under the VWP must have passports that include biometrics if they wish to enter the country without a visa, which means that passports must contain unique personal data such as fingerprints or iris details. All passports must contain a digital photo image in order to travel visa-free. All visitors to the USA have a photograph and two fingerprints taken by an inkless scanner on arrival, including those travelling visa-free under the VWP. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA, a valid passport is required by immigration authorities. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

Currency:

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

Electricity:

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. Plugs are mainly the type with two flat pins, though three-pin plugs (two flat parallel pins and a rounded pin) are also widely used. European appliances without dual-voltage capabilities will require an adapter.

Travel to United States of America

Overview

Sightseeing in the USA is a lifelong pursuit, due to the vast scale and variety of the attractions on offer. Indeed, the USA is far more than a single country: each state and region has its own character, geography and unique, world-class sights.

Three-quarters of all foreign tourists spend time in California, Florida and New York, while the country's five most visited cities by foreign tourists are in these three states. In between east coast California's beaches, movie glitz and sunny weather and west coast New York's urban thrills and iconic sights, the USA is a country of great diversity: the Creole culture of Louisiana, the wide-open plains of the great Midwest, epic skiing around the Rocky Mountains, the magnificence of the Grand Canyon, and astounding lights of nearby Las Vegas. Offshore Hawaii is a place of irresistible beauty too, and Alaska offers a unique wilderness to explore.

Given all there is to see and do, and the vast distances between them, visitors will need to plan their trip carefully and concentrate on a few areas. Winters (November to February) on the east coast get very cold with plenty of snow, while beaches can get uncomfortably hot over peak summer months of July and August. Travellers should also look out for big national events such as Spring Break (March), Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November), when transport and accommodation get very busy.

Climate in United States of America

The United States of America covers a large region, stretching from east to west across nine time zones. Therefore, it is no surprise that the country has a varied climate, ranging from arctic regions to deserts. California, on the west coast of the US, has a pleasant, Mediterranean climate, and the Pacific Northwest Coast has more of a maritime climate, with cooler summers and mild winters, influenced by westerly winds. The central part of the US has extreme temperature variations and a continental climate, with cold winters and hot summers. The eastern central US tends to be more humid, while the western central US is semiarid. The east side of the country has a continental climate caused by air masses moving from west to east, with hot summers and a prevalence of tornadoes in the Mississippi River area. Florida has the warmest winters on the eastern seaboard. It is recommended that travellers research the climate in the specific state they wish to visit when choosing when to travel.

Health Notes when travelling to United States of America

There are no specific health risks associated with travel within the USA. Medical facilities are excellent, but expensive. Only emergencies are treated without prior payment and treatment can be refused without evidence of insurance or proof of funds. Good medical insurance is essential. Visitors must be fully vaccinated with the primary series of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine to travel to the United States by plane if they are non-U.S. citizens.

Safety Notes when travelling to United States of America

Travel within the United States is generally trouble-free, though travellers should be aware that the US shares with the rest of the world, an increased threat from terrorist incidents. Security has been heightened, particularly at airports. Restrictions on hand luggage apply and travellers are advised to check on the latest situation with airlines in advance. Travellers should also be alert to the dangers of car and street crime in cities and should use common sense and take basic precautions. Hurricanes are common between June and November, putting the southern USA, including the Gulf Coast and the eastern US at risk. There is a risk of wildfires in many dry areas in the US, particularly on the West Coast from March to November.

Customs in United States of America

Laws vary from state to state, including speed limit, fines and punishment. The age at which alcohol may be legally bought and consumed is 21 years.

Duty Free in United States of America

Travellers to the United States who are returning residents of the country do not have to pay duty on articles purchased abroad to the value of \$800 provided their stay was longer than 48 hours and their duty-free allowance was not used in the 30-day period prior. For passengers arriving from Samoa, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, a duty-free allowance of \$1,600 is allowed. The following items are included in this: 50 cigarettes and 10 cigars and 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages or 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of perfume containing alcohol. Restrictions may apply to goods from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Angola, Liberia and Sudan. It is prohibited to import Cuban cigars from any country.

Travellers to the United States who are non-residents do not have to pay duty on the following items: 50 cigars or 200 cigarettes and gifts to the value of \$100 provided their stay in the USA is not less than 72 hours and that the allowance has not been used in the preceding six-month period.

Prohibited items for residents and non-residents include meat or meat products, poultry, narcotics, absinthe, plants, seeds, vegetables, fruits, soil, live insects and other living plants or animal pests. Fish is prohibited unless it carries disease-free certification. Wildlife and animals or their by-products carry restrictions. Dairy products and eggs from specified countries are not allowed. Firearms and ammunition are not allowed without the necessary license and permit.

Doing Business in United States of America

In such a large country, filled with so many diverse groups, business practices may differ according to each state, however rarely to any large degree. The East Coast is traditionally more formal than the West Coast, though in states such as California, dress code and conservative appearance are as common as they would be in New York. Punctuality is important throughout the country and it is considered rude to be late for a meeting. Gift-giving is uncommon as it may be construed as bribery. Appropriate titles (Mr, Mrs, Ms) are used upon introduction and until otherwise stated. Americans favour politeness and greetings of 'Hello' and 'How are you?' are often expressed with sincerity. Business hours may vary in each state, but an 8am start and 5pm finish Monday to Friday is the most common with an hour over lunch.

Status and age are not necessarily indicative of seniority, nor do they carry much weight in themselves. Those doing business in the States should be mindful of this fact; foreigners should never make assumptions about someone's position or rank. Best practice is to be respectful to all parties. That said, the US upholds a hierarchal business structure, in which 'the boss' is the ultimate decision-maker. Senior leaders have the power of the last word, and can go against the grain just as easily as they can follow popular opinion. Foreigners should concentrate on winning over this individual, even if the greater group seems unsupportive. Americans value a direct style of communication. In this fast-paced, consumer culture 'time is money', and small-talk is viewed as unnecessary and wasteful. It's best for foreigners to get to the point quickly, speak about issues in a frank and open manner, and to avoid taking offence if someone questions or challenges them outright.

Communication in United States of America

The international country dialling code for the United States is +1. Mobile networks cover most of the country, especially all urban areas, and WiFi is widely available.

Tipping in United States of America

A 15 percent tip is expected by taxi drivers, bartenders, hairdressers and waiters, but travellers shouldn't tip in fast-food or self-service restaurants. In expensive restaurants or for large parties, the tip should be 20 percent of the bill. It is normal to tip staff such as valets and porters in hotels; this is discretionary, although a minimum of \$5 is expected. Most services are customarily tipped if the service is good.

Passport/Visa Note

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Entry Requirements

Entry requirements for Americans:

US citizens require passports.

Entry requirements for Canadians:

The most important requirement on entering the U.S. is providing proof of Canadian citizenship. A valid Canadian passport is the best document to prove Canadian citizenship and the right to return to Canada. However, several other documents can serve, depending on the mode of transport. Generally, Canadian citizens do not require visitor, business, transit or other visas to enter the United States from Canada, though there are some exceptions.

Entry requirements for UK nationals:

UK nationals require a passport valid for duration of stay. Most passport holders can get an Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) through the Visa Waiver Programme, which allows travel to the US for up to 90 days. The VWP includes tourism, certain types of business visit and transit to another country.

Entry requirements for Australians:

Passports must be valid for the period of intended stay. If visiting the US for fewer than 90 days, Australian nationals may be eligible to apply for an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), and enter under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP).

Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Passports must be valid for duration of stay. Irish nationals can get an Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) under the Visa Waiver Programme for entry into the United States.

Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

Passports must be valid for duration of stay. New Zealand nationals can get an Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) under the Visa Waiver Programme for entry into the United States.

Entry requirements for South Africans:

South Africans must hold a passport valid for duration of stay. A visa is required.

Tourist Offices

United States Tourist Office: <http://www.usatourist.com>

United States of America Embassies

In Canada:

United States Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 688 5335.

In the United Kingdom:

United States Embassy, London, United Kingdom: +44 20 7499 9000.

In Australia:

United States Embassy, Canberra, Australia: +61 2 6214 5600.

In Ireland:

United States Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 1 668 8777.

In New Zealand:

United States Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 4 462 6000.

In South Africa:

United States Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 12 431 4000.

Foreign Embassies in United States of America

Canadian Embassy

Canadian Embassy, Washington DC: +1 202 682 1740.

British Embassy

British Embassy, Washington DC: +1 202 588 6500.

Australian Embassy

Australian Embassy, Washington DC: +1 202 797 3000.

Irish Embassy

Irish Embassy, Washington DC: +1 202 462 3939.

New Zealand Embassy

New Zealand Embassy, Washington DC: +1 202 328 4800.

South African Embassy

South African Embassy, Washington DC: +1 202 232 4400.

Currency

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

Exchange rate for 1 USD - U.S. Dollar

0.00 BMD Bermudan Dollar	0.93 EUR Euro	0.80 GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	152.99 JPY Japanese Yen	1.37 CAD Canadian Dollar	0.91 CHF Swiss Franc
1.52 AUD Australian Dollar	39.40 UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	443.91 KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	93,075.00 LBP Lebanese Pound	4.86 LYD Libyan Dinar	6.86 BOB Bolivian Boliviano
0.00 NPR Nepalese Rupee	0.00 OMR Omani Rial	0.00 QAR Qatari Rial	1.35 SGD Singapore Dollar	10.82 SEK Swedish Krona	0.00 TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar
0.00 VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	58.11 DOP Dominican Peso	0.00 HRK Croatian Kuna	16.95 MXN Mexican Peso	610.53 XOF West African CFA Franc	0.00 PGK Papua New Guinean kina
0.00 BSD Bahamian Dollar	0.00 FJD Fiji Dollar	0.00 HNL Honduran Lempira	133.87 DZD Algerian Dinar	0.00 MMK Myanma Kyat	0.00 BWP Botswana Pula
3.72 PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	938.44 CLP Chilean Peso	386.84 AMD Armenia Dram	23.29 CZK Czech Koruna	17.63 MDL Moldova Lei	139.89 ISK Icelandic Krona
12,582.40 UZS Uzbekistan Sum	3.72 ILS Israeli New Sheqel	0.71 JOD Jordanian Dinar	0.00 KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	38.15 UYU Uruguayan Peso	0.00 MUR Mauritian Rupee
0.00 NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	10.88 NOK Norwegian Krone	4.03 PLN Polish Zloty	3.75 SAR Saudi Riyal	0.00 LKR Sri Lanka Rupee	36.79 THB Thai Baht
3.66 AED U.A.E Dirham	5.09 BRL Brazilian Real	4.63 RON Romanian New Leu	7.81 HKD Hong Kong Dollar	610.53 XAF Central African CFA Franc	25,405.70 VND Vietnamese Dong
878.36 ARS Argentine Peso	0.00 XCD East Caribbean Dollar	0.00 GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	10.06 MAD Moroccan Dirham	0.00 BHD Bahrain Dinar	1.00 PAB Panamanian Balboa
1.70 AZN Azerbaijan Manat	3,920.00 COP Colombian Peso	88.42 KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	362.00 HUF Hungarian Forint	10.89 TJS Tajikistan Ruble	16,073.70 IDR Indonesian Rupiah
47.95 EGP Egyptian Pound	1,358.84 KRW South Korean Won	7,456.52 PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	4.74 MYR Malaysian Ringgit	508.31 CRC Costa Rican Colón	1.67 NZD New Zealand Dollar
277.87 PKR Pakistani Rupee	91.39 RUB Russian Rouble	18.51 ZAR South African Rand	3.13 TND Tunisian Dinar	0.00 BBD Barbadian Dollar	1.82 BGN Bulgarian Lev
32.33 TRY Turkish Lira	57.28 PHP Philippine Peso	32.31 TWD New Taiwan Dollar	1,164.84 NGN Nigerian Naira	0.00 XPF CFP Franc	0.00 GHS Ghanaian Cedi
0.00 JMD Jamaican Dollar	0.00 ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	0.00 BND Brunei Dollar	108.90 RSD Serbian Dinar	7.24 CNY Chinese Yuan	6.94 DKK Danish Krone
3.49 TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	83.42 INR Indian Rupee				

Port of Call - Baltimore

Historically a working-class port city, Baltimore has been transformed over the past 20 years into one of America's most attractive and interesting destinations with plenty of interest for cruise passengers. Baltimore is renowned for its charming and distinct neighbourhoods, and epic draw-cards like Fort Worth and Oriole Park. Baltimore's port was founded in 1706, preceding the founding of the actual city. The port is the furthest inland US port, and cruise ships take around 12 hours to reach the Atlantic along the picturesque channel of Chesapeake Bay. Cruise ships dock at newly built South Locust Point cruise terminal, close to the heart of the city. Although conveniently located it currently has very few amenities.

Shopping in Baltimore

Head to Harborplace, within Inner Harbor, for more shops than your credit card can ever handle. The funky Hampden district has a great range of interesting stores does Charles Street in Mount Vernon. Visit Faidley's for the best crab cakes in the land - they will ship frozen to your home.

Best Buy: Baltimore Orioles memorabilia

Dining in Baltimore

Woodberry Kitchen - bustling open-plan restaurant serving local cuisine Charleston - southern cuisine in the city's most highly rated eatery Mama's on the Half Shell - incredibly local seafood and a fun atmosphere

Best Dish: Steamed crab

Port of Call - Cape Canaveral

This small beach community, on the north point of Florida's coast, is a lively aerospace industry hub, a tourist-oriented town, and home to miles of protected marine sanctuary. The Cape is synonymous with Kennedy Space Center, where NASA's space flights depart. It's also a popular beach to watch sea turtles lay their eggs and witness the hatchlings. Millions of passengers a year flow through the six cruise terminals at one of the busiest ports in the world. Most cruise vessels will berth at either terminals 2, 3, or 4 which have been specifically built to accommodate cruise ships. Others sometimes dock at terminals 8, 9, and 10. All terminals are near to one another and provide all conceivable amenities for dining, shopping, entertainment, and further transportation.

Shopping in Cape Canaveral

Surfers and the curious can visit the famous Ron Jon Surf Shop for a huge selection of beach products. There are a few shopping facilities at the port and many more at Merritt Square Mall. The space centre also has a great gift shop.

Best Buy: Best Buy: NASA memorabilia

Dining in Cape Canaveral

Kelsey's Pizza - Pizzas and Italian dishes in an unpretentious setting Rusty's Seafood and Oyster Bar - Casual seafood joint in Cocoa. Grills - Lively seaside location with music and grilled food.

Best Dish: Barbecue Steaks

Port of Call - Catalina Island

Catalina is 22 miles (33km) off the coast of LA but with its peace and seclusion, it feels a million miles away from big city life. Bicycles and golf carts outnumber the few cars, and the pace of life is addictively relaxing. The undersea ledge immediately offshore is home to abundant sea life, easily experienced by snorkelling or glass-bottom boat tour. The only settlements are at Avalon - a magical, eccentric town where buffaloes stroll the airport runway - and the smaller settlement of Two Harbors, precipitously located at the tip of the island. Cruise ships anchor in Avalon bay as there is no deepwater port. Passengers are tendered into town via smaller boats arriving at Green Pleasure Pier where there is a visitor's bureau and water-sports rental companies.

Shopping in Catalina Island

Shops and boutiques are concentrated along Crescent Avenue. This is not a big retail environment but you can find interesting collectables and antiques, and eclectic clothing outlets.

Best Buy: Historic pottery

Dining in Catalina Island

Catalina Country Club - patio dining in style with live jazz Ristorante Villa Portofino - great Italian food Steve's Steakhouse - excellent steaks and seafood with great harbour views

Best Dish: The breakfast special at Antonio's Pizzeria

Port of Call - Fort Lauderdale

Port Everglades is one of the busiest cruise ports in the world, often the start and end of cruises to the Caribbean. Located just next to the picturesque resort area of Fort Lauderdale, the port makes a great beach destination on its own. The most popular, and best, activity in Fort Lauderdale for idle time before or after a cruise is spending all day hopping on and off the water taxis that navigate the elaborate canals of the city. Port Everglades has amenities to handle more than three million passengers a year. Port Everglades is located conveniently close to the airport, giving extra time for a detour in downtown Fort Lauderdale. The cruise terminals have every conceivable amenity for embarking and disembarking passengers, including transportation between the city and airport.

Shopping in Fort Lauderdale

Fort Lauderdale is packed with shops and even offers shopping tours. Las Olas Boulevard and Riverfront are perfect for high end boutique window shopping. For everything under the sun, the Sawgrass Mills claims to be the largest discount and entertainment mall. Fun and unique bargains can be found in the south's largest flea market, the Swap Shop.

Best Buy: High fashion

Dining in Fort Lauderdale

Gilbert's 17th Street Grill - casual family restaurant with excellent burgers Truluck's Restaurant - upscale seafood and steak restaurant 101 Ocean - classy but casual dining in the heart of city

Best Dish: Stone Crab

Port of Call - Frederick Sound

Frederick Sound is one of the busiest ports of call along the Inside Passage. Of all the cruise ports in Alaska, it has a well-earned reputation for being the best place to see humpback whales. Roughly 500 of the graceful creatures pass through Frederick Sound each year, using the area as a feeding ground and giving visitors an opportunity for a once-in-a-lifetime encounter. Cruise ships dock in the town of Petersburg. While the shallow waters can't accommodate large cruise ships, Frederick Sound is popular with smaller ships and buzzes with activity all summer long.

Shopping in Frederick Sound

Shopping opportunities in Frederick Sound are not abundant, however there are some small bookshops and art galleries in town where you can find handmade items as well as tacky tourist memorabilia.

Best Buy: vacuum-packed smoked salmon

Dining in Frederick Sound

Coastal Cold Storage - takeaway restaurant with good fried fish and chips and breakfast sandwiches
Tina's Kitchen - salmon and halibut burgers in a casual environment
Papa Bear's Pizza - friendly restaurant serving pizza, chicken wings, and burgers

Best Dish: fresh halibut

Port of Call - Haines

Haines connects the Inside Passage to the Alcan Highway, making it a popular stop on both land and sea holidays in Alaska. The scenic location Haines is situated in is known as the Valley of Eagles for its abundant Bald Eagle population. A unique phenomenon in North America, the small population of around 2,000 people is dwarfed each winter by the arrival of more than 3,500 of the majestic birds. The town of Haines was originally occupied by the Tlingit people, and while it was caught up in the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1800s it was only after World War II that Haines truly became connected to the outside world. Now most of the region flocks there each July for the Southeast Alaskan State Fair. A fairly new port of call on cruise itineraries, one of the best aspects of a stop in Haines is the lack of crowds; fewer than 20 ships dock here each year so the town retains an undiscovered air that seasoned cruise passengers will find refreshing. Cruise ships dock at the Port Chilkoot Wharf, at the foot of Portage Street below Fort Seward.

Shopping in Haines

There are a few souvenir shops in town for cruise passengers, selling everything from postcards and t-shirts to beautifully-made local art. The Sea Wolf Art Studio is the best place to go for native Tlingit art, including totem poles, masks, woodcarvings and jewellery. You can also pick up fresh smoked salmon and halibut at Dejon Delights.

Best Buy: Tlingit silver jewellery

Dining in Haines

The Bamboo Room & Pioneer Bar - casual diner with excellent fish and chips Mountain Market & Spirits - good vegetarian and healthy foods in a relaxed environment Fireweed Restaurant - simple and tasty salads, pizzas and pastas made from scratch

Best Dish: White salmon (when available)

Port of Call - Hawaii (Hilo)

The second largest city in the whole of Hawaii, Hilo is a major port of call for many cruise ships. The lush and diverse landscape enchants visitors and the warm and welcoming locals will charm their way into your hearts. One cannot visit Hawaii without spending some time on its pearly white beaches and enjoying the sun and surf. Head to the Richardson Ocean Park to check out the black sand beach. Other key attractions include the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Queen Liliuokalani Gardens, a 30-acre (12 hectare) Japanese garden, or the Pacific Tsunami Museum. Cruise ships dock at Hilo port, which is located just a few minutes from town. Cruise passengers are often greeted by a show put on especially for their arrival where traditional Hawaiian music and dancing can be enjoyed as well as the sale of souvenirs.

Shopping in Hawaii (Hilo)

Most shopping in Hilo can be done in and around Kamehameha or Keawe Avenues and passengers who are in town on Wednesdays and Saturdays should be sure to check out the Hilo Farmers Market. There are great shopping opportunities in this town and the scenic bayfront is also a great place to pick up some bargains from storefronts dating back to the early 1900s. Orchids and coffee are favourite buys, but are not always realistic souvenirs for cruise passengers to take back home.

Best Buy: Black pearls

Dining in Hawaii (Hilo)

Cafe Pesto - great cosy Italian restaurant with hearty pastas Ocean Sushi Deli - Trendy eatery serving quality sushi

Hilo Bay Cafe - unassuming cafe serving Hawaiian-influenced American fare

Best Dish: Mai Tai cocktail and delicious sushi

Port of Call - Honolulu

Honolulu is both the capital and largest city of Hawaii, famed for Waikiki beach, gorgeous scenery and world-class attractions such as Pearl Harbour. Beyond the modern comforts of Honolulu, the island of Oahu is quiet and strikingly beautiful. There are 23 national parks to explore and countless beaches to laze on. Cruise passengers arrive at Oahu Dock, part of the Honolulu Cruise Terminal. The terminal complex is centred round Aloha Tower allowing passengers to step right into the heart of the city.

Shopping in Honolulu

Aloha Tower is both a key landmark and top shopping centre for visitors. Other options include Ward Warehouse and the Ala Moana mega-mall containing a huge range of international shops. Waikiki's International Market Place is great for souvenirs with over a 100 unique shops. The Farmer's Market on Saturday's is great for delicious local produce.

Best Buy: Items carved from local wood

Dining in Honolulu

Michele's at the Colony Surf Hotel - romantic restaurant overlooking Waikiki Beach
Chai's Island Bistro - sensational seafood right outside the Terminal
Sushi Sasabune - innovative and upscale sushi restaurant with knowledgeable chefs

Best Dish: Fresh pineapple

Port of Call - Icy Strait

One of Alaska's newest cruise ports, Icy Strait is an attractive mix of scenic natural beauty and small-town charm. Conveniently located near Hoonah, a large Tlingit Indian settlement, and Glacier Bay National Park, the port strikes a balance between providing memorable experiences for visitors and preserving the local lifestyle and ecosystem. Icy Strait has many miles of untouched wilderness to enjoy, and the local wildlife includes grizzly bears, humpback whales, seals, sea otters, bald eagles, and more. Organised excursions are available to many scenic points of interest. Cruise ships dock just off Icy Strait Point in Port Frederick Bay, centrally-located for good restaurants and shopping.

Shopping in Icy Strait

Icy Strait's dedication to keeping things local means visitors can stock up on unique berry jams and confectionaries you won't find anywhere else. The Icy Strait Point shopping centre has a variety of choices, including food, artisan crafts like blankets and wooden carvings, and jewellery. Cruise passengers should keep in mind that there are no banks or ATMs in Icy Strait, and draw cash on the ship before disembarking, however many shops accept credit cards.

Best Buy: warm woven blankets

Dining in Icy Strait

The Crab Station - fresh Dungeness Crab in a casual outdoor dockside setting
The Landing Zone Bar & Grill - hot food with great views of Port Frederick and the zipline
The Cookhouse Restaurant - halibut fish and chips with waterfront views

Best Dish: Dungeness Crab

Port of Call - Juneau

Juneau, Alaska's capitol city stretching along a narrow strip between mountains and the Gastineau Channel, is an unexpectedly cosmopolitan port stop on Inside Passage cruises. Mountains and stretches of wilderness cut off any land access to Juneau making it very reliant on its cruise industry. Juneau's best attractions lie in the scenery surrounding it; some of the best are longer excursions, but quick popular trips include riding Mount Roberts Tramway for an eagle's eye view of the city, or visiting nearby Mendenhall Glacier. Several ships can dock at the terminal located just next to downtown. When the docks are full, which is often in peak season, ships anchor in the harbour and tender passengers in. The town can get incredibly crowded on days in the peak cruise season.

Shopping in Juneau

There are many small souvenir shops near the cruise terminal. Downtown Franklin Street and Mendenhall Valley both are popular shopping districts both with tourist merchandise and boutique shops. Many art galleries are spread around town including great examples of Native American arts and crafts.

Best Buy: Smoked Salmon or small totem pole

Dining in Juneau

Red Dog Saloon - Iconic restaurant and bar popular with cruisers Tracy's King Crab Shack - best seafood in Juneau Silverbow - The state's oldest bakery

Best Dish: Baked freshly caught wild salmon

Port of Call - Kailua Kona

Kailua Kona, on Hawaii's Big Island, is a popular year-round cruise destination offering extraordinary weather (12 different climates on the island!) and stunning landscapes. Cruise ships dock off shore and passengers are ferried on tender boats from the ship and disembark at the Kailua Pier. The pier is in the centre of Kailua town, which has good restaurants and shops. Within easy reach of Kailua, cruise passengers can explore Big Island's tropical rain forests, the frozen tundra of Mauna Kea, and the arid Ka'u desert. An array of activities, from snorkelling to snowboarding, are also available for visitors on the island; there are water sports operators at the Kailua Pier. Tourist information is available from a booth at the pier, and there is also transport and tours available for cruise passengers. The pier is within easy walking distance of the town.

Shopping in Kailua Kona

Ali'i Drive is the main shopping destination in Kailua, with a variety of shops selling everything from T-shirts, sunglasses and jewellery to local souvenirs or arts and crafts. The Coconut Grove Marketplace and the Ali'i Gardens Marketplace are also worth browsing, featuring extraordinary finds such as traditional weapons or local coffees and nuts. Wal-Mart and K-Mart are also located nearby.

Best Buy: Kona coffee and macadamia nuts

Dining in Kailua Kona

Rapanui Island Café - trendy bistro known for its fresh and tasty Indonesian food Island Lava Java - great for breakfast and coffee, and their pizza is also fantastic Da Poke Shack - a tiny eatery, perfect for enjoying Hawaiian seafood on a budget

Best Dish: Hawaiian burger (beef burger with pineapple, cheese and bacon)

Port of Call - Ketchikan

Known as the 'Salmon Capital of the World' and the rainiest town in southeast Alaska, the port of Ketchikan is named after the Ketchikan Creek, which flows through the town. The town boasts the world's largest collection of standing totem poles, which can be viewed at the Saxman Village, Totem Bight and the Totem Heritage Center. Other attractions include The Southeast Alaska Discovery Center, Eagle Spirit Gallery, Scanlon Gallery, the Misty Fjords and the WestCoast Cape Fox Lodge where visitors can enjoy spectacular views over the city. Cruise ships dock in the centre of town but when the port is crowded, ships may be required to anchor in the bay and tender passengers into Ketchikan.

Shopping in Ketchikan

Those with a penchant for shopping should look no further than Creek Street where all the best boutiques and specialist stores can be found. The galleries along Stedman Street, such as Blue Heron, also provide some wonderful shopping opportunities.

Best Buy: A hand-carved totem pole

Dining in Ketchikan

Annabelle's Keg and Chowder House - stylish eatery or gastropub for diners to choose from Pioneer Cafe - classic American diner food Bar Harbor Restaurant - great seafood eatery

Best Dish: Salmon

Port of Call - Key West

Key West is an island; part of Key West City, at the very tip of the Florida Keys. This historic vacation destination seamlessly mixes old Victorian houses and placid blue waters into a funky modern tourism hub. Famous sights in Key West include historic residences such as Ernest Hemingway's and Harry Truman's homes, best seen aboard the Conch Tour Train. For a rare view of the flat island, the Lighthouse Museum is a popular lookout. Most cruise ships dock at a pier alongside Mallory Square, directly in Old Town. Although cruise passengers are encouraged to spend time in Key West, cruise ships must depart from the pier before sunset and return after dark so as not to impair sunset views. Westin Pier, also called Pier B, is within walking distance, while The Navy Mole, shared with the US Navy, requires a short trolley (tram) ride.

Shopping in Key West

The Old Town offers attractive shops, especially at the Harbor Walk and Duval, offering an assortment of artisan crafts, paintings and clothes aligned for casual window shopping. Boutique shops are also found along the Sunset Waterfront.

Best Buy: Anything key lime coloured

Dining in Key West

The Flaming Buoy Filet Company - fun eatery serving excellent lobster macaroni cheese New York Pasta Garden - great Italian food in a pretty outdoor setting Garbo's Grill - cheap and cheerful Caribbean-style fast food

Best Dish: Best Dish: Yellow Tail Snapper or key lime pie

Port of Call - Kodiak

Known as Alaska's Emerald Isle, Kodiak rewards visitors to its port with a strikingly beautiful vista of verdant wilderness, craggy peaks and plunging fjords. Inhabited by Alutiiq natives for over 7,000 years, Kodiak is a small but vibrant port town on Kodiak Island. The inhabitants of Kodiak are passionate about the outdoors, with hunting and sport fishing being two of the most popular activities. Authorities are careful to regulate these industries however, to protect local wildlife like elk, Sitka Deer, mountain goats, puffins and the famous Kodiak Bear, as well as fish including Alaskan salmon and halibut. A busy commercial port town, Kodiak welcomes the tourist industry but doesn't pander to it. There are no tourist buses, backpacker hostels or airport shuttles, but the opportunity to experience life in the Alaskan Archipelago is a fascinating one for visitors from all walks of life. Cruise ships dock at Kodiak's City Dock II, located about 1.5 miles (2km) south of the downtown area.

Shopping in Kodiak

For a small town, Kodiak has a large number of gift shops and galleries tucked around corners. Tourist shops in Mill Bay Road have t-shirts and hats emblazoned with the town's name, while the downtown mall is ground zero for local art, Russian crafts, and other locally-made Kodiak souvenirs. Look for the 'Made in Alaska' emblem to ensure you're supporting the local community.

Best Buy: Smoked salmon paté

Dining in Kodiak

Old Powerhouse - Japanese restaurant with harbour views and good sushi
Henry's Great Alaskan - Friendly sports bar serving burgers and deep-fried seafood
Mill Bay Coffees and Pastries - Excellent seafood, sandwiches and pastries made by a French chef

Best Dish: Fresh-caught Kodiak salmon

Port of Call - Maui (Kahului)

The largest community on the Hawaiian island Maui, Kahului is an commercial centre perfect to springboard into the lush scenery, volcanic peaks and paradisaical beaches of the rustic and pristine landscape. The best activities on the island are experiencing its dramatic landscapes outside of the port city. The best among these is Haleakala National Park and its enormous volcanic crater or the road to Hana, a spectacular and dramatic scenic drive. Ships berth at the Kahului's dock, a near walk into town, although nothing of particular interest is close to the port. Most passengers wisely take organised shore excursions or waiting taxis to more interesting destinations around Maui. The beginning of the Hana Highway is next to the dock. Some ships anchor off the coast of Lahaina and tender passengers to its downtown, a short drive from Kahului.

Shopping in Maui (Kahului)

There is a standard mall in Kahului although better souvenirs and boutique shopping is found in Lahaina. There are more small shops in Whaler's Village on Kaanapali Beach.

Best Buy: Hawaiian t-shirt

Dining in Maui (Kahului)

Da Kitchen Kahului - enormous portions of Hawaiian grilled food
Bistro Manila - friendly restaurant serving excellent filipino food
Makena Grill - Small fish taco stand is the best on the island

Best Dish: Local potato chips...really

Port of Call - Miami

With one foot already in the Caribbean, Miami is one giant playground of a disembarking port city, complete with stretches of white sand beach only outshined but the coils of hot pink neon lights, making it the crowned 'cruise capital of the world'. Most associated with Miami is South Beach, both the long stretch of sand and the Art Deco neighbourhood alongside famous for nightlife, restaurants and shopping. With over four million passengers a year, the Port of Miami is the home of about 24 different cruise ships and ten cruise lines departing to all over the world, particularly the Caribbean. The port is located on Dodge Island and connects to the city centre via a short bridge. New cruise passenger terminal buildings D and E and four older terminals have every conceivable passenger amenity.

Shopping in Miami

The best shopping is done in several open air malls, the famous Lincoln Road Mall and The Falls. Upscale shops are best found in both Miracle Mile and Bal Harbour. Near to the Port of Miami, Bayside Marketplace is a fun place to peruse souvenirs.

Best Buy: Designer clothes

Dining in Miami

Azul - One of the city's best, serving Mediterranean and Asian cuisine downtown Joe's Stone Crab - Simple and famous casual seafood dining and great crab News Cafe - Beach side quick and delicious breakfast and lunch café

Best Dish: Miami Cuban Pork Sandwich

Port of Call - Mobile

Located in the Gulf of Mexico at the junction of the Mobile River and Mobile Bay, the port of Mobile in Alabama is bears a striking resemblance to New Orleans. Complete with French Quarter, its very own Mardi Gras, southern charm and Creole culture, this bustling and diverse city falls in the top 15 largest ports in the United States. Key sights include Ft. Conde Museum, the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park, Bellingrath Gardens and Museum Home and the Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center, and IMAX theatre. Cruise ships dock at the Mobile Alabama Cruise Terminal on the banks of the Mobile River. Once development is complete, the cruise terminal promises to offer plenty in the lines of shopping and entertainment.

Shopping in Mobile

There is not much shopping at the cruise terminal but Lower Dauphin Street in the Historic District is a great place for art and antique shopping.

Best Buy: Coconut Cream Pie

Dining in Mobile

Wintzells - Great local Cajun cuisine
Kitchen on George - Seasonal, locally sourced cuisine featuring fresh seafood
NoJa - an eclectic menu offering Asian, Mediterranean and Gulf Coast cuisines

Best Dish: Cajun seafood

Port of Call - New Orleans

A cruise involving the port of New Orleans is a must for lovers of all things mysterious, eclectic and colourful. This bustling city is famous not only for its French Quarter and Mardi Gras, but also for being a wonderfully exciting city to explore on foot with plenty of hidden treasure tucked away in nooks and crannies. Known for its exotic cuisine - which can be sampled in one of the city's many eateries - the port of New Orleans also boasts a fascinating WWII Museum, the Aquarium of the Americas, Mardis Gras World and the New Orleans Historic Voodoo Museum. Cruise ships dock at the Erato Street terminal, which has a pedestrian bridge that connects passengers to the Riverwalk shopping and dining complex ensuring cruise visitors have a memorable experience in New Orleans.

Shopping in New Orleans

This pedestrian-friendly city has plenty of boutiques and specialty shops along its bustling streets, and the three-level Riverwalk Marketplace features a variety of tourist shops and food court eateries. The antique shops and art galleries of Royal Street are a treasure hunt of unique collectables. The famous French Market is open every day and the many stalls tout hot sauces and Cajun spices, and passengers who walk a little further will find a flea market selling inexpensive souvenirs and trinkets.

Best Buy: Faux Limoge boxes, voodoo dolls

Dining in New Orleans

Mulate - Affordable eatery specialising in Cajun fare Parkway Bakery and Tavern - grab an authentic local po'boy sandwich at this affordable eatery. Commander's Palace - refined Creole fare and notable for an elegant jazz brunch

Best Dish: Cajun crawfish, jambalaya and gumbo

Port of Call - Portland

A cruise around the North Atlantic isn't complete without stopping in the New England port of Portland, Maine. Tucked away on a stretch of picture-perfect coastline, Portland was called a 'Jewel by the Sea' by famous local poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Over 50,000 cruise passengers visit this port annually. Key attractions include the Wadsworth-Longfellow House, which was built in 1785, as well as the Portland Observatory, where views of Portland and Casco Bay can be enjoyed. There are also countless lighthouses to view, the most notable being the Portland Head Light. Cruise ships dock at the Portland Ocean Terminal, which is adjacent to Commercial Street, which runs along the length of the waterfront and features restaurants, shops and fishing boats.

Shopping in Portland

Nearby Freeport is a great place to do a spot of shopping, but cruise passengers will find that there are many shops within walking distance of the cruise terminal. Many major chain stores can be found here as well as a lot of antique and specialist shops. The Arts District is a great place to spend a day shopping. Enjoy the cobblestone streets of the Old Port shopping district on Portland's waterfront, where many bargains can be found.

Best Buy: Antiques

Dining in Portland

Gilbert's Chowder House - fresh local lobster and clam chowder
Standard Baking Company - coffee and fresh baked goods like molasses cookies and sticky buns
555 - upscale restaurant famous for its lobster macaroni cheese

Best Dish: Fresh Maine lobster

Port of Call - San Diego

Southern California's beach city and cruise gateway to Mexico, San Diego is a sunny multicultural community with all the trappings of a first-rate international city while still retaining the small town feel of its many neighbourhoods. The best attractions in San Diego and cultural heart of the city are its crowded and fun beaches. Sea World is also an excellent San Diego landmark and tourist destination. Cruise ships berth at San Diego's port at B Street Pier, located at the end of Ash Street and Broadway directly in downtown San Diego. There are three cruise berths at the port. A large cruise passenger terminal is nearby with many dining, shopping and transportation options as well as customer service representatives for assistance.

Shopping in San Diego

There are many small shops along San Diego's waterfront near the cruise terminal. Downtown and Gaslamp Quarter both offer major shopping centres and fashion retailers such as Westfield Horton Plaza and Seaport Village. Small antique shops also line the waterfront area.

Best Buy: Antiques

Dining in San Diego

Fish Market - Fresh Seafood in downtown, above a fish market. Fred's Mexican Cafe - Gaslamp District's Mexican done well with great Margaritas. Boat House - Seafont location for quiet elegant fine dining.

Best Dish: Spicy Mexican-style fish.

Port of Call - San Francisco

San Francisco is many people's favourite American city. It is both beautiful and compact, enjoying perennial spring weather and a refreshing cosmopolitan atmosphere. Cruise ships entering and departing San Francisco pass under the Golden Gate Bridge as passengers take in the unfolding views of this most scenic of West Coast cities. Cruise ships dock at the San Francisco Cruise Terminal which is located at Pier 35 on the Embarcadero waterfront. The terminal is right alongside Fisherman's Wharf, and within walking distance of many downtown attractions. San Francisco Cruise Terminal hosts 200,000 passengers annually, most on round-trip cruises to Alaska or Mexico.

Shopping in San Francisco

Embarcadero Centre is close to the port and offers a great selection of stores. Union Square has probably the city's best range of shops, while Haight and Chinatown have some unique and interesting outlets. Hayes Valley is home to the best galleries and boutiques.

Best Buy: Wine from the Napa Valley

Dining in San Francisco

Tadich Grill - this California Street eatery has been operating for 150 years Restaurant Gary Danko - fine dining in a relaxed environment The Slanted Door - close to the Embarcadero the city's best Vietnamese cuisine

Best Dish: dim sum in Chinatown

Port of Call - Seattle

Tucked away in the Puget Sound, the water-surrounded hills of Seattle have vibrant districts blending rugged Pacific Northwest wilderness with a modern cosmopolitan city. The most popular attractions in Seattle are its defining skyline building, the Space Needle, and the famous seaside market, Pike Place Market, which is home to 'thrown fish'. Two downtown cruise terminals, Bell Street Pier number 66 and the Smith Cove Terminal on pier 91, welcome over 800,000 passengers a year on more than 200 ships, mostly starting on their voyage to Alaska. Pier 91 is north of the city centre near Magnolia Bridge and Pier 66 is directly downtown.

Shopping in Seattle

The best tourist shopping in Seattle happens in the many eclectic shops in Pike Place Market and the surrounding neighbourhood. Downtown Seattle has upscale shopping centres and a series of boutique stores. The Seattle areas of Fremont, University District and Capitol Hill all have many unique stores.

Best Buy: Smoked salmon

Dining in Seattle

2120 - contemporary menu and a broad selection of wines Pike Place Chowder - authentic and award-winning chowder Chandler's Crabhouse - upscale, with many different varieties of crab.

Best Dish: Baked salmon

Port of Call - Seward

The tiny town of Seward, located 126 miles (200km) south of Anchorage, isn't much to shout about in terms of architecture or nightlife; Seward's main attractions are the glaciers that surround it, home to spectacular vistas and abundant wildlife that includes whales, sea lions, otters, puffins, eagles, bears and more. The town itself is a charming and photogenic slice of old Alaska, and is best experienced with a slow stroll past the bustling harbour through the historic downtown with its interesting little shops and art galleries. Seward is a popular stop on Alaskan cruises, and sees more than 100,000 visitors brought in on cruise ships each year. Many cruises start or end here, as the town is in close proximity to major highways, train stations, and airports. Cruise ships dock at the Dale R. Lindsey Alaska Railroad Seward Intermodal Terminal, about a mile (2km) from downtown Seward.

Shopping in Seward

Seward isn't exactly a shopper's paradise, but you'll find some small gift shops and art galleries downtown. Not surprisingly, many shops stock cold-weather gear: something to be grateful for if you didn't pack warm enough!

Best Buy: Berry bark and homemade candy

Dining in Seward

Exit Glacier Salmon Bake - casual restaurant near the highway with great seafood
Smoke Shack - humble-looking restaurant with good ribs and pulled pork
Thorn's Showcase Lounge - great halibut fish and chips in a retro setting

Best Dish: Alaskan King Crab

Port of Call - Sitka

The small town of Sitka on Baranof Island has a rich and colourful history. Originally occupied by the Tlingit Indians, the town was also an important Russian outpost before Alaska was sold to the US in 1867 (a transfer that took place in Sitka). Despite its size of only 9,000 people, Sitka is a bustling town that attracts more than a quarter of a million visitors each year. With both cultural and natural attractions as well as a variety of good restaurants and lively pubs, Sitka has something to offer everyone. Cruise ships dock offshore from Sitka, and smaller boats are used to ferry passengers ashore to the O'Connell Bridge Lightering Facility at the foot of Castle Hill or the Crescent Harbor Lightering Facility near the Centennial Hall.

Shopping in Sitka

There are plenty of shops in Sitka, stocking everything from tacky t-shirts to delicious smoked salmon. Furs are a popular souvenir from Sitka, as well as Russian and Tlingit art and crafts. On busy cruise ship days, head over to the Baranof Arts & Crafts Association, which has a great selection of items made by local artists.

Best Buy: Russian handicrafts

Dining in Sitka

The Larkspur Cafe - lively cafe with evening entertainment Ludwig's Bistro - upmarket Mediterranean cuisine in a cosy atmosphere Dock Shack - cheap and cheerful seafood at the waterfront

Best Dish: Halibut fish and chips

Port of Call - Skagway

Situated in a narrow glaciated valley at the head of Alaska's Taiya inlet, the small town of Skagway first earned its place on the map in 1897 when prospectors from all over the world arrived by steamship in search of gold in the Dawson Gold Fields, turning it into a bustling port town with saloons, hotels and railways. Skagway is today one of Alaska's most popular ports and cruise passengers arriving here will still feel the same gold rush atmosphere of the town as period buildings and wooden sidewalks are restored to their former glory reinforcing the distinctive charm of this port. Visitors will love the authenticity of the town and exploring the attractions such as the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Visitor Center or even trying their hand at a gold panning at Liarsville Gold Rush Trail Camp. Cruise ships dock at one of three deep-water docks which are all just a short walk from town. Smaller ships may dock at the Ferry Dock, which is also just a short walk from the heart of the town.

Shopping in Skagway

Most shops are located on Broadway Street, but this small town does boast a few shopping opportunities, with everything from the regular touristy shops selling mass produced trinkets and junk to dinky independent clothing stores. For great crafts, prints, needlework and jewellery, visit Skagway Artworks or Changing Tides while Fairway Market is the place is a good place to pick up some fresh fruit snacks, film, health and beauty aids and sundries. Klothes Rush Gifts is the perfect place to pick up Alaska souvenirs while Miss Kitty's Buttonhole on French Alley sells funky hats, canes and 1898-style clothing.

Best Buy: gold jewellery, hand-painted gold-mining pans

Dining in Skagway

Stowaway Cafe - casual eatery serving comforting homemade fare Lemon Rose Bakery - sandwiches and great cinnamon rolls Skagway Brewing Company - microbrewery with American pub food

Best Dish: Alaskan king crab

Port of Call - Tampa Bay

Located just an hour away from one of the entertainment capitals of the world, Tampa Bay boasts sandy, white, palm-fringed beaches and a multitude of water activities such as fishing, parasailing, and jet skiing. Key sights include Busch Gardens and Pier 60 Park for family outings, while the Florida Aquarium is a must for marine animal lovers. The Tampa Museum of Art exhibits some impressive Greek and Roman classical artefacts as well as some more contemporary art. The Moccasin Lake Nature Park provides some breathtaking walks and scenery for nature lovers. Ships dock at the Port of Tampa Cruise Terminal located in the Channel District, from where several Carnival, Royal Caribbean and Holland America ships regularly depart.

Shopping in Tampa Bay

There is plenty of shopping around the cruise terminals in Tampa Bay. Just across the street from some of the cruise terminals is the Channelside Bay Plaza and downtown, the Hyde Park Village shopping area is great for bargain hunting.

Best Buy: Unique clothing

Dining in Tampa Bay

Bern's Steak House - popular restaurant with delicious cuisine Seasons 52 Fresh Grill - an ever-changing menu of fresh and healthy food Roy's Restaurant - upscale restaurant with Hawaiian-inspired cuisine

Best Dish: Fried shrimp

Port of Call - Whittier

A tiny town even in the busy summer cruise season, Whittier itself isn't much of an attraction with just more than 200 permanent residents. The town is a great base for exploring the pristine Alaskan wilderness however, and the region is filled with wildlife like bison, elk, moose, caribou, musk ox, bears, black-tailed deer, great horned owls and bald eagles. Located just 34 miles (55km) from Anchorage, the town is a popular end point for Alaskan cruises as an alternative to the slightly larger Seward port. Cruise ships in Whittier dock at the Whittier cruise ship dock at the southern end of the town.

Shopping in Whittier

There is very little shopping in Whittier, however cruise passengers will find several gift shops with a mixture of cheap souvenirs and handmade items.

Best Buy: Smoked salmon

Dining in Whittier

Swiftwater Seafood Cafe - homey restaurant serving good halibut fish and chips The Anchor Inn - serves hearty meals with big-screen sports playing Lazy Otter Cafe - chili and chowder in a cosy cafe

Best Dish: Salmon

Overview of the Attractions in United States of America

Sightseeing in the USA is a lifelong pursuit, due to the vast scale and variety of the attractions on offer. Indeed, the USA is far more than a single country: each state and region has its own character, geography and unique, world-class sights.

Three-quarters of all foreign tourists spend time in California, Florida and New York, while the country's five most visited cities by foreign tourists are in these three states. In between east coast California's beaches, movie glitz and sunny weather and west coast New York's urban thrills and iconic sights, the USA is a country of great diversity: the Creole culture of Louisiana, the wide-open plains of the great Midwest, epic skiing around the Rocky Mountains, the magnificence of the Grand Canyon, and astounding lights of nearby Las Vegas. Offshore Hawaii is a place of irresistible beauty too, and Alaska offers a unique wilderness to explore.

Given all there is to see and do, and the vast distances between them, visitors will need to plan their trip carefully and concentrate on a few areas. Winters (November to February) on the east coast get very cold with plenty of snow, while beaches can get uncomfortably hot over peak summer months of July and August. Travellers should also look out for big national events such as Spring Break (March), Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November), when transport and accommodation get very busy.

Public Holidays in United States of America

	2023	2024
New Year's Day	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
Martin Luther King Day	Tue. January 16	Mon. January 15
President's Day	Tue. February 20	Mon. February 19
Memorial Day	Wed. May 29	Mon. May 27
Independence Day	Thu. July 4	Thu. July 4
Labour Day	Wed. September 4	Mon. September 2
Columbus Day	Wed. October 9	Mon. October 14
Veterans Day	Mon. November 11	Mon. November 11
Thanksgiving Day	Sat. November 23	Thu. November 28
Christmas Day	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25