Great American cities

Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. became the capital of the USA in 1790. The city is on the east coast of the country. It’s the only city in America that is not part of a state – it’s an independent district with the states of Maryland and Virginia on its borders.

Washington, D.C. is the centre of government for the USA. Many people who live there work in the government. The President of the United States lives there in the White House. Congress (the American parliament) also meets here. Washington, D.C. was named after George Washington, the first President of the USA.
New York City

New York City is in The State of New York and it’s the biggest city in the USA. It has a population of over 8 million people. The city is on the island of Manhattan, on the east coast of the USA. New York is a centre for banks and business.

It’s also one of America’s oldest cities. Dutch settlers bought the island from the Native Americans for $24 in 1626! The Dutch called the town New Amsterdam. In 1664 the English changed its name to New York. New York was the first city many European immigrants saw when they entered the USA. Today, the city has got big Italian and Chinese areas.
Chicago is in the north of the USA on Lake Michigan, in the state of Illinois. It’s the third largest city in the USA. The city started to grow in the first half of the 19th century when the railways brought new immigrants to the city.

People call Chicago the ‘Windy City’. The wind comes in from the prairies and gets stronger as it passes through the skyscrapers of central Chicago. But the city is famous for other things, too. In the 1920s and 1930s, thousands of African Americans moved to Chicago and Chicago became an important city for jazz.
Miami

Miami is on the south-east coast of the USA in the state of Florida. Over half the population of Miami was born outside of the USA and most people there speak Spanish.

People say Miami is more like a Latin American city than a North American city. Miami has a warm climate and it’s popular with tourists because of its beautiful beaches. Many tourists also go there for its vibrant music scene and its fantastic night clubs.

New Orleans

New Orleans is in the south of the USA. It’s near the Gulf of Mexico, in the state of Louisiana. The city is at the mouth of the Mississippi River and its port is one of the busiest in the world. In the 1800s, boats brought cotton and other products, down the river to New Orleans. It was also a centre for buying and selling slaves.
Nearly 400,000 people live in New Orleans. New Orleans is famous for its annual carnival ‘Mardi Gras’ – an old French tradition. It’s also famous for its jazz music. Louis Armstrong, the brilliant jazz trumpeter, was born there.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles is on the west coast of the USA in the state of California. It’s famous for its film industry and the Oscars ceremony takes place there every year. Los Angeles has the perfect weather for making films. It’s normally sunny and it gets very little rain.

In 1892 scientists discovered oil in Southern California and Los Angeles soon became the centre of the US oil industry.