Independence Day is a national holiday in the USA. Americans sometimes call Independence Day the ‘Fourth of July’, as on this day in 1776 the United States government declared its independence from Britain. More than two hundred years later, the Fourth of July is still a very important day for Americans.

Americans celebrate Independence Day outdoors – it’s summer and the weather is good. They have barbecues or picnics with their families. They sometimes get together with other families in their street and organise a ‘block party’. A block party is like a British street party. It’s a lot of fun and people eat hot dogs and hamburgers and there’s music and dancing.
In many cities there are Independence Day parades. At the parades people wave the American flag and wear the national colours of red, white and blue. The parades are usually in the morning or early afternoon and they often have floats representing events from American history. In big parades there are also enormous balloons shaped like people and animals. Some of these are more than 15 metres high!

In every parade there's always someone dressed as Uncle Sam, a famous American icon representing the American government. Uncle Sam is an old man with a white beard, and he wears clothes made out of the American flag.
In the evening, after the parades, there are fireworks in public parks and in people’s gardens. In New York you can watch them across the Hudson River. They are fantastic and you can see all the famous buildings in Manhattan illuminated in the coloured lights. In Chicago you can watch fireworks over Lake Michigan and in San Francisco you can watch them over the famous Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz Island.

If the weather is bad on Independence Day, you can always go to the cinema. The Fourth of July is a big day for new films, for example, blockbusters such as Transformers and Spider-Man, came out Independence Day.