



USA



Welcome

Americans expect to be greeted immediately and in a friendly, welcoming manner. When meeting someone they don't know, Americans will shake their hand. Hugs and kisses are more common when they see their friends or family. Sometimes men will also slap each other on the back.

When introduced, Americans will very quickly use your first name, even with someone they have just met. They might even shorten it without asking, so Michael might become Mike, or Susan would be called Sue. If using titles, many women prefer to use Ms. rather than Miss or Mrs.

Coming from such a large and diverse country, they may find the United Kingdom relatively small and 'quaint'. Americans tend to appreciate the United Kingdom's traditions and long history, although they are likely to refer to all of the United Kingdom as England. Many Americans admire British Royalty, so you might be asked questions about the Royal Family.

The UK welcomes more visitors from the USA than any other country. Most first-time visitors will try to do a lot, preferably in groups, even if they are only visiting for a short time.

The Language

Even though Americans speak English, their accents vary and may differ quite a lot from those of most British people; they may be hard to understand if you are used to British English.

They also tend to use different words and expressions, so don't be afraid to ask them to clarify if something they say doesn't make sense. They will not be very familiar with British slang and may struggle to understand a strong regional accent.

American or British English?

bathroom = toilet, loo
appetisers = first course
entrée = main course
dessert = pudding
check = bill
subway = underground
faucet = tap



USA



The Culture

Americans value the individual. They tend to be very self-reliant and take pride in their own achievements. They are motivated by a can-do attitude and are eager to get things done, even if it's not their job. For example, it would not be unusual for an American who drops a fork in a restaurant to take a clean one from another table rather than wait for the waiter to replace it.

Americans are taught that 'all men are created equal' and that everyone should have the same opportunities and ambitions, whatever their background. Realising these ambitions is often described as 'the American Dream'.

Americans are not afraid of telling you what they really think. Do not be offended if they seem blunt as this may simply be their more direct way of communicating.

Customer Service Advice

Good customer service is highly valued in America. Most Americans expect to be greeted enthusiastically, in a friendly manner and without delay. They are not keen on being kept waiting.

Americans want their individual tastes to be catered for. For example, in restaurants, it is not unusual to ask for dressing or sauce 'on the side' or ask for a substitution, such as rice instead of potatoes. It is also commonplace for Americans to ask for a 'doggy bag' that allows them to take away food that they did not finish. Most Americans eat much earlier than the British, particularly dinner which they will often eat between 5pm and 7pm. When eating out, Americans are used to leaving more than the standard UK service charge. You can usually expect to receive anything between 15-20% of the total bill.

Americans who do not come from a large city may have never used public transport before visiting the UK. They may be uncomfortable with the crowding, especially on the tube and in central London, as they are not used to sharing a confined space with others.

- **DO** give free handouts or souvenirs when possible. Americans love a bargain and will appreciate having a memory of their visit.
- **DO** help Americans find their way if they appear lost or confused.
- **DO** ask them what part of the USA they come from.
- **DO** share any positive experiences you have had in the USA.



USA



Land of Opportunity

The United States of America is the third largest country in the world in terms of land mass, after Russia and Canada. There are 50 states in the USA which span four time zones. Its economy and military are the largest in the world.

The American economy is diversified, with an emphasis on service industries. Silicon Valley's computer industry and Hollywood films are especially well known. New York's Wall Street remains one of the world's most important financial centres. Less obvious are the large numbers of small businesses, farmers and entrepreneurs.

Key Facts

- **Population** – approx 300,000,000
- **Capital City** – Washington, DC (District of Columbia)
- **Language** – English (82%), Spanish (10%)
- **Religions** – Protestants 50%, Catholics 25%, Jews 2%, others <1%, agnostics 14%
- **Currency** – US Dollar
- **Exchange Rate** – US\$2 = £1.00
- **Dialling Code** – +1
- **Time Difference** – GMT-5 to GMT -8 (US mainland)



Where to go next

For more information about welcoming international visitors to London, visit:

www.rln-london.com/welcoming

RLN London's *Service Finder* can help you find language and cultural services – including translation, detailed cultural briefing and language training.

www.rln-london.com/servicefinder

'Welcoming the World' is an initiative which aims to help people in frontline roles to give great customer service to international visitors. RLN London has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this country profile, which is one of a wider series. However, views or opinions presented by the contributing author do not necessarily represent those of RLN London.

Remember!

These are general guidelines on how people from different cultures *might* act and the customer service they *might* expect. They can't predict every individual's behaviour in every situation.