



Politics

The United States is a federal republic. Federalism means that the national government shares powers with the 50 U.S. states and the separate capital city, the District of Columbia (D.C.). In a republic, the government is made up of representatives of the people.

There are two major political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans. Their core beliefs and policies have changed dramatically over time. Traditionally, Democrats have been associated with support for pro-worker economic policies and liberal social values, and Republicans have been associated with support for pro-business economic policies and conservative social values. Other smaller political parties include the Green Party, the Libertarians, and the Constitution Party.

The U.S. Constitution established the American government in 1787 and defined its role. The main purpose of the federal government is to protect individual freedoms such as the freedom of speech, religion, the press, and the right to protest. It has been changed or “amended” 27 times, to expand freedoms in different ways, such as by ending (“abolishing”) slavery and giving women the right to vote.

The legislature (Congress) has an upper house and a lower house: the Senate has 100 members and the House of Representatives has 435 members. Each state sends 2 Senators, but each state sends a different number of representatives based on its population.

Culture

There is no official language of the United States, though American English is the most commonly used language, followed by Spanish. American musical culture has been deeply influenced by African-American traditions, with American musical styles such as jazz, blues, bebop, R&B, hip-hop, and rap all being invented by Black Americans. Other popular American musical genres include pop, rock’n’roll, and country, all of which were also deeply influenced by African-American musical traditions.

United States culture has long been inventive and entrepreneurial. Some famous American inventions include the lightbulb, zipper, microwave ovens, and the internet! Compared to other people, Americans tend to be risk-takers, very expressive of their feelings and quick to make friends.

Geography

The United States is the third most populous country in the world, with 330 million people. It is also the third largest country in the world by area, at almost 10 million square kilometers – 125 times larger than the Czech Republic! You could drive 5,400km in a straight line across the United States without leaving the country, while the distance from Aš to Třinec is about 590km. The United States is so large that it contains almost every climate zone.

The two main mountain ranges are the Rockies and the Appalachians. The highest mountain in the United States is Denali in Alaska (6,190m). The lowest point in the United States is in California in Death Valley National Park (-85m).

There are 62 national parks in the United States, most of which are located in the Western United States. Together they measure about 200,000 square kilometers, about 2.5 times as large as the Czech Republic.

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