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This Guide

Working abroad sounds to many people like an adventure.

However, without thorough preparation, starting with a successful application, it is bound to fail. Therefore, Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM) has prepared a set of country guides describing the main routes to employment in over 40 countries. Are you interested in working in Australia, France or Japan? Has your partner accepted a job in Hungary, Switzerland, or the United Arab Emirates?

Are you looking for an internship possibility in the UK, Singapore or Italy? The Looking for work in... guides from ELM will help you with accurate information and practical tips on working cultures and differences in job hunting in over 40 countries.

As an extra addition to the series – following many requests - ELM introduced a new guide: Looking for work in International Organisations which explains how to successfully look for work in for instance the institutes of the European Commission, UN institutions and NGO's.

This guide contains information on the United States of America. It tells you how to apply for a job in the US and the cultural differences that you will come across when looking for a job in the US. Do not underestimate those national differences. What is common in one country might be very unusual in another country. To find a job abroad you need to be aware that national differences manifest themselves not only in different

languages, but also in different recruitment practices. Thus, looking for work in another country involves more than writing your CV/resume in another language.

No matter the country in which you are looking for work, the key focus of your CV should be to persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview. Accordingly, your CV should be regarded as a marketing tool, adapted to the market in which you intend to use it. The information in this guide, together with the sample CV, will help you to adapt your application for the American job market. However, make sure your application remains a reflection of your personality. Working abroad is one thing, but having a job that does not suit you will definitely cause homesickness!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nannette Ripmeester', with a horizontal line underneath.

Nannette Ripmeester, MA
Managing Director
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Country Profile

Country

The United States of America, a union of fifty states spread over North America, Hawaii and Alaska, has a surface of over 9.5 million square kilometres (5.9 million square miles).

The US covers six time zones, four from east to west and Alaska and Hawaii have their own time zone. The capital of the US is Washington, DC (approximately 582,000 inhabitants in 2007). Other main cities are Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Philadelphia, and New Orleans, to name just a few.

There are three major mountain ranges: the Appalachians in the east, the Rocky Mountains in the west, and the Sierra Nevada along the border of Nevada and California. The country has abundant natural resources and vast swathes of fertile soil. The Atlantic Coast is the most heavily populated area and retains strong traces

of its European heritage. This is where the oldest American cities are located, and where most of the major events in early American history took place. The central north-east is marked by the Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario), which occupy an area larger than most European countries. The central area is characterised by the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio rivers. Further west are the Great Plains. This is what used to be the 'cowboy country'. Desert predominates the south-western part of the US. The climate and degraded soils keep population density to a minimum, apart from some very large cities in this area.

Climate

Due to the fact that it is such a large country the US has extremely diverse climates. Despite this the overall climate is temperate in most parts of the US. Generally speaking, it gets hotter the further south you go and seasonally more extreme the further you go north or inland from the coasts. Winters in the north-east and upper mid-west can have long cold periods while it's still warm enough to swim at the beaches in Florida and southern California.

Population

The US has a population of approximately 307.12 million inhabitants in 2009.

The US always had its attraction for immigrants. It was (and is)

considered as the Promised Land. A land in which the American Dream - from newspaper boy to millionaire - could happen to you. Due to slave trade in the 18th and 19th century plus the never-ending flow of immigrants from Europe, Asia and South America, a true multicultural society emerged in the US. The main groups of immigrants came from China, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Russia and South America. In large cities most of these groups still have their own neighbourhood in which you feel like you are visiting the country itself.

People in the US, especially the minorities, are very sensitive about the way they are addressed; Never use for instance the words blacks or Negros, but African Americans. You can, however, use the term whites, but politically correct is Caucasians. The phrase Native Americans is used instead of Indians, and people from South America and the Caribbean are called Hispanics or Latinos. 74 percent of the US population is Caucasian, 12 percent is African American, 9 percent Latino, and 3 percent is Asian. Only 1 percent of the population consists of Native Americans.

History

The first Americans, the Paleo-Indians came from Asia just after the last Ice Age. They settled throughout North, Central and South America, and they developed distinct and dynamic cultures. The Norwegian explorer, Leif Eriksson, was probably the first European

to reach North America, in the 10th century. In 1492, Columbus discovered America, which started the colonisation of the country by the Europeans. By 1600, most of the country had been explored by Spaniards, Portuguese, English, Dutch and French. Migrants who came to settle in the US soon followed these explorers. In 1619, the first Africans arrived as 'indentured labourers'. A year later 100 English Puritan pilgrims who were escaping religious persecution arrived on the boat the Mayflower and founded a colony at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts. The pilgrims signed the famous Mayflower Compact - a declaration of self-government. The Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution would later be based on this document.

During the 18th century many more settlers arrived. The British government attempted to maintain authority in its 13 North American colonies, which led to conflict with French settlers and their Native American allies in the French and Indian War (1757-1763). The British were victorious but were left with a war debt, which they tried to recoup by imposing new taxes on the colonies. Protest against these new taxes united the colonies in an anti-British sentiment. When their protestations were ignored, colonists sneaked aboard several British ships in Boston harbour and dumped cargoes of tea overboard. The Boston Tea Party, as it became known, was the start of civil revolt. In 1776, the revolt against taxation led to the War of Independence, and on the 4th of July of

that year the Declaration of Independence was drawn up. It took, however, another five years to beat the British troops.

In the 19th century, Americans colonised the continent, giving the country its present shape. Both the north-eastern states - due to the industrialisation - and California - due to the gold rush - attracted most immigrants. In the south agriculture flourished, but it was almost totally reliant on the labour of slaves. As northerners began to call for an end to slavery, tensions between the states rose. When Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, the southern states seceded from the Union, and the Civil War started. The northern states took over control in 1865, freed the slaves and introduced adult male suffrage (the right to vote).

The US did its best not to get involved in World War I but finally capitulated in 1917 and send over troops to Europe to help the allied forces. After the war Prohibition was introduced in 1920, when the manufacture and sale of alcohol were made illegal. The Prohibition turned Chicago into the theatre of organised crime. The 1929 stock market crash signalled the start of the depression that plagued America throughout the 1930s. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour in 1941, the US became involved in World War II. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 not only ended the war with Japan, but also started an era dominated by nuclear powers. After World War II the US was involved in the Cold War, a conflict between the US and the Soviet