

A Lawlers Concise Guide to *Moving to the USA*

The United States of America achieved independence in 1776, and since then it has evolved from a small agrarian nation into an industrial and agricultural world leader.

From the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, the United States is a land full of cultural diversity and scenic beauty. It covers an area of more than 9million square km and has a population of more than 250 million.

The information below is designed to answer any basic questions you may have regarding your forthcoming move. Remember to always ask your Removal Company or Consulate for any further advice you may need.

Housing: Most American families own their own homes, with single-family homes and condominiums being the most popular. Rented accommodation is also widely available and housing costs vary from one region to another.

Travel: Throughout the U.S. there are various forms of travel options available. The country has a multitude of inner roads and interstate highways – however, air travel has mainly replaced surface transportation for those individuals travelling long distances in the U.S. Other forms of transport include: passenger rail service, buses, trams, subways and of course the All – American taxi cab.

Employment: To gain employment in the U.S, a foreign national must enter the country with a temporary employment visa or be a lawful permanent resident and have a valid 'Alien registration receipt card' or 'Green Card' as it is more commonly known. Employees also need to have a social security number, which is obtainable from Government Offices, with proof of permission to work.

Taxation: the U.S Government collects Federal Income Tax. All income is subject to tax, which is usually paid through payroll withholding. State and Social Security taxes are also collected in this way. Virtually all employees are required to submit a Federal Tax Return every year. There is no VAT or sales tax in the United States.

Immigration: Anyone who is not a U.S National must obtain a visa to enter the U.S, whether they be a student, on a visit, work, or wish to reside permanently, visa arrangements must be made before arrival. Any Embassy or Consulate can provide

information on visa issuance.

Education: Required education in the United States begins at Primary school aged 5 and concludes in High School at 17 – 18 for most students. Graduating from High School is not mandatory, but is considered a minimal educational qualification for securing even the most basic job.

Utilities: The electric supply is 110 – 115 volts at 60 cycles AC and a standard flat 2 pin plug is in general use. Appliances, which are brought into the U.S, must have transformers (unless they are built in) and plug adapters. T.V's will not work unless they have been designed to the North American transmission system and Cable T.V requires a cable adapter(if it is not already built in) Natural as is available throughout most areas. Appliances using gas must be adapted to accept the type of gas available in each region.

Shopping: 7 days a week shopping is available throughout most of the U.S., with large supermarkets having extensive opening hours. These are usually supplemented by smaller 'convenience' stores, where the 'basics' can be purchased 24 hrs a day.

Currency: The United States uses the decimal system of currency, with 100 cents to each U.S Dollar. Other monetary denominations are \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100. Coins include 1cent (penny) 5 cents (nickel) 10 cents (dime) 25 cents (quarter) and 50 cents (half dollar)

Emergencies: In most areas, all emergency services can be obtained by dialling 911, however it is strongly advised that you familiarise yourself with the local numbers for these services.

Health Service: There is no free health service available in the U.S. It is strongly recommended that anyone wishing to enter has their own comprehensive health cover.

Import Requirements: All goods imported to the U.S.A are subject to customs duty. However, there are certain concessions, which enable you to import your personal and household effects with little or no charge. Your removal company will be able to advise you in more detail but please see below as a general rule of thumb.

Clothes and accessories, jewellery, toiletries, hunting and fishing equipment and similar personal items are free from customs duty, if owned and used by you before coming to the U.S. However, any jewellery or similar items valued at \$300 or more, and have been imported duty free may not be sold for 3 years unless duty is paid to a District Director of Customs before the sale. You may also import free of charge, furniture, carpets, linens, clothes and other similar household effects, and any professional equipment, which has been owned and used abroad, such as professional books and tools of your trade. Exemptions to this rule include stage props, costumes and theatrical scenery.

Prohibited Imports: Goods prohibited from importation include: Lottery tickets, drugs (except those prescribed) pornography, seditious and treasonable materials, dangerous toys, toxic and poisonous substances and products made by convicts and forced labour. It is essential that you obtain advice regarding prohibition from your removal company.

Motor Vehicles: All motor vehicles imported need to conform to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emissions standard and the Department of Transportation (DOT) safety and theft prevention standards. Your Removal Company and appropriate U.S. Consulate or Embassy will be able to advise you of guidelines and procedures.

Animals and Pets: All pets must be examined at the first port of entry for diseases that may be passed onto humans. All dogs – except puppies under 3 months old must be vaccinated against Rabies at least 30 days prior to entry - Contact your U.S Consulate for further details.

Useful Contacts:

Lawlers Removals Wreakes Lane Dronfield

S18 1PN

Telephone: 01246 413462

Fax: 01246 290348

The Embassy of the United States of America

24 Grosvenor Square

London

W1A 1AE

Telephone: 020 7499 9000

The information set out in this guide is not law, but is our interpretation of various laws and regulations as they pertain to individuals entering the country. All information has been checked by us, so that as far as possible, all information is correct at the time of printing. However the Lawlers Group cannot accept liability for any inaccuracies in the information given.

Always check with your local Embassy, High Commission or Consulate who may provide you with further information

Sept 2002