

QUICK FACTS AND INSIGHTS USA

Economic environment

Population:	299million
Internet penetration:	70% of the US population use the internet
GDP 2006 (PPP):	\$13,195 billion
GDP growth:	3%

The USA is still the world's largest economy and has experienced steady growth in recent years. However, the downturn in the housing market has resulted in slower growth in 2007 and this is predicted to continue into 2008 before recovering. The US dollar is expected to remain weak in 2008, resulting in continued adverse exchange rates. 2008 will be dominated by the run-up to the Presidential election.

(Source: The Economist / ETC)

US outbound travel trends

- Outbound travel is growing from the USA – evidenced not only by record outbound statistics for 2006, but also the increasing pace in the issuing of passports. Foreign travel has traditionally been largely to neighbouring countries, but more Americans are travelling further afield.
- Touring and cities holidays are the most popular with Americans who travel to Europe. They enjoy learning about the culture of their destination, for example visiting historical places.
- American holiday trips to Europe are generally spread throughout the year and they will often last around 10 to 14 days in duration. Therefore a trip to Europe is a significant investment in time and money, and value for money is a key demand.
- While the internet is increasingly prevalent as the method of both planning and booking a holiday to Europe, travel agents still have a significant role to play.
- The over 45s represent the majority of US leisure travellers to Europe. The highest concentrations of travellers are in the states of California, New York, Illinois and Florida. They tend to be from the higher socio-economic groups.

Scotland's visitors

- The US has long been Scotland's most valuable overseas market, and this situation is likely to remain - the good direct flight links helping to facilitate more visits. However, promotional fares and special deals are a vital element in attracting visitors, particularly as Scotland is often perceived as a relatively expensive destination, a situation exacerbated by the current exchange rate.
- Americans' desire to explore a country and learn more about its culture and history is a good fit with Scotland's tourism offer, and sightseeing, touring and history are very popular amongst our current US visitors. Also popular is meeting the locals – often cited as a highlight of the trip. The USA is an important market for Scotland's golf, while US visitors also like walking during their holiday.
- Most visitors arrive by plane and travel around by car, staying in hotels or B&Bs. They often start to plan their holidays around 4 to 6 months in advance.
- Visits to Scotland are biased towards the summer months, and last on average around 8 to 10 days. Americans sometimes combine Scotland with another destination, such as England.
- The over 45s account for over half of Scotland's American visitors and a travel party of 2 is the most common size. Around a third of visitors in a year might have visited Scotland before.

For more information on Scotland's visitors from the USA, visit www.visitscotland.org