

A low-angle photograph of the Statue of Liberty against a clear blue sky. The statue's right arm is raised, holding the torch. The American flag is visible in the upper left corner, partially overlapping the torch. The statue's face and crown are prominent in the foreground.

HAMILTONS

An essential guide to relocating in

America

If you are moving to America/USA, there is a lot more to consider than choosing an international removals service. Our relocation guide provides additional information on choosing schools, working abroad, sorting your finances and more. Please note this information is believed to be accurate at the time of writing, but please check with our international removals department prior to your moving date.

Visas

There are a number of different visas you can apply for when moving to America from the UK, depending on how long you intend to live there for. Temporary work visas allow foreign workers residency for a period of time to live and work. These vary in duration and include Speciality Visas (H1b), Temporary Skilled or Unskilled (H2B), Intracompany Transferees (L1) and Employment Based Preference Visas.

Permanent work visas are allocated to applicants who can make a significant contribution to the country. These are grouped into preference categories; the highest of which is the first preference. This category (EB1) welcomes applications from aliens with extraordinary abilities, investors, outstanding professors and researchers, multi national executives and managers. The second preference category (EB2) is open to applications from people with advanced degrees or those that have exceptional ability in the sciences, arts, or business. The third, fourth and fifth preferences invite skilled workers / professionals, special immigrants including religious ministers and investors who will create employment in the country respectively.

Many of these permanent work visa preference categories are oversubscribed, which means that it can take a number of years for employees to be allocated their visa. Family visas are also available to certain immediate relatives of American citizens allowing them permanent residency without regard to the preference system of allocation. These are available for an American citizen's spouse, child and parents.

It is also possible for siblings of American citizens and adult children (over 21) to apply for a family visa under a preference system of allocation.

Finances

It is important to organise your finances pre-departure so that everything is in place when you arrive. Investigate whether your current bank has a dedicated expatriate division, or consider opening a new account with an American bank such as the Bank of America and Citibank.



Schools

Education is compulsory in America, whether it takes place at a public, private, religious or boarding school, by private tutor or home educating. Children are guaranteed public education in their area of residence. To enrol parents need to find out which school district they are in, and then call the school that their address puts the children into and inform them that the children will be attending. There are only small fees associated with attending public schools such as book rental fees.

There are also many excellent private schools, which vary in cost.

Many parents are now choosing to home educate their children in the US to provide them with a more natural method of teaching that is flexible enough to be able to give the child exactly what he or she needs.

Healthcare

American health care is generally paid for through medical insurance although over 47 million Americans currently hold no cover. Without an adequate insurance policy, the cost of medical treatment is very expensive, with even an ambulance ride to hospital costing a few hundred dollars.

On arrival in America you can register with a doctor by finding one locally through the phone book. Or you may see a practice as you drive through your nearest town, as they are usually well marked from the road. To register, you will need to provide details of your medical history and fill in a number of forms.

If you require emergency treatment, it will help considerably if you can take proof of insurance with you. The doctors will generally save your life first and then bill you afterwards and you will be required to pay before you leave. Even with medical insurance cover, you may have to pay part of the fee after receiving treatment.

Prescriptions are also chargeable in the US.

Moving Your Pet

It is possible to take your favourite cat or dog with you to your new home in America. They will need to be given a rabies vaccine, six months in advance and checked a month later to ensure immunity has been achieved. They will also need a health certificate issued within ten days of travel. Vaccines should be recorded on a pet passport. Cats and dogs being imported from the UK are not kept in quarantine.

Whilst living in America it is essential to give your animal a rabies booster every eleven months. This will ensure that your pet is allowed to return to the UK with you at any time.

For other animals please check with the American embassy.



USA Customs Information

International removals to USA and other overseas destinations are more complicated than moving house within the UK due to the Customs & Excise regulations applied to importing your belongings. Below is a guide to current American Customs & Excise regulations. Please note that information is correct at time of publishing but may change at any time. Hamilton's American removals department will guide you through all relevant Customs & Excise regulations prior to your overseas move.

You may import used household and personal effects duty free providing that they have been owned and used by you for a least one year before they arrive in the USA. In order to prove their eligibility for duty free status and finalise the clearance, you must have arrived in the country prior to the arrival of your effects. Customs forms must also be completed in the UK ready for presentation to US customs before the arrival of your consignment.

Most household and personal effects entering the USA will be subject to examination by US customs. These can range from a container x-ray through to a full physical examination. Checks can incur costs, which unfortunately cannot be pre-paid in the UK. Charges can be made for x-ray, handling and re-stowing of effects, container demurrage and port storage. You should be aware that if a full examination is required then the cost could run to thousands of dollars.

We will require the following documentation to clear your goods through customs.

- US customs form 3299
- Treasury department 3299 supplemental declaration RC-159
- Power of attorney
- Copy of passport
- Copy visa
- Inventory of goods (this will be completed by our removal team)

All of the above forms can be obtained from our international department.

Restrictions/Prior Authorisation Required

Alcohol - duty is payable on all alcohol brought into the USA and in some states it is prohibited. The rates of duty and taxes are very high and are based on the type and strength of the alcohol. For this reason, we do not advise that you include any alcohol in unaccompanied shipments.

Food - absolutely no food or beverage may be included in the shipment, including dried foods, spices, pre-packaged or canned food. (Alcohol is the only exception as detailed above).

Firearms - in order to import a firearm that was acquired overseas, you will need an approved US Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF) permit.

Other prohibited articles include lottery tickets, narcotics and dangerous drugs, obscene articles and publications, fireworks, dangerous toys, toxic or poisonous substances and switchblade knives.

Ivory - due to the international ban on the import/export of ivory, pianos that have ivory keys should either not be sent or sent separately.

Motor Vehicles

Only vehicles that were originally manufactured in the USA can be shipped with a consignment of household effects, unless the vehicle is over 25 years old. Customs clearance on non-US vehicles can only be carried out by specialised customs agents, and with the added costs of shipping, duty, customs bonding and conversion, the charges can quite often exceed the value of the car. We recommend if you do

wish to include your car that you contact the US Department of Transportation in advance of your move for more advice.

We will require the following documentation for motor vehicles:

- Vehicle registration
- Proof of ownership
- Steam cleaning certificate
- Copy of US Title
- Letter from manufacturer stating the vehicle meets US emissions standards

Useful Information

Electrical supply 110-115 volts. Domestic appliances from the UK will not operate without a transformer

TV/DVD/Videos Unless designed for American systems, these items will not function

Mobile networks Most foreign mobile telephones, unless tri-band, do not work. Network operators offering the closest to nationwide coverage include:
AT&T Wireless (www.attws.com),
Cingular (www.cingular.com)
and Verizon (www.verizonwireless.com)

GMT New York is in Eastern Standard Time (EST), GMT - 5 hours
Chicago is in Central Standard Time (CST), GMT - 6 hours
Los Angeles is in Pacific Standard Time (PST), GMT - 8 hours
For more information please visit www.greenwichmeantime.com/time-zone/usa

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