

# US east coast snapshot

Ranging from the Sunshine State of Florida in the south to the Green Mountain State of Vermont in the north, and including the party state of New York in between, the USA's east coast presents a colourful pallet of experiences for language travellers. GILLIAN EVANS reports.

Stretching over 3,000 miles, the US east coast states are home to some of North America's most well known cities. "Famous cities such as Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington DC, Atlanta and Miami span the coast, and Canadian cities such as Montreal, Quebec City and Toronto are not far away," says Christie Ward at the Intensive English Language Program at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, CT.

Owing to the vastness of the coast, as well as the sheer number of states along it, the region offers visitors a hotchpotch of culture, history, landscapes and urban living. And, as Des Levin, President of Talk International in Fort Lauderdale, FL, points out, "Places are very different from north to south." This means there is something to suit all tastes, "from big cities like New York and Miami to small towns and villages, mountains, beaches, parks", he says.

Sarah Wade Hutman at Zoni Language Centers in New York City claims, "The East Coast boasts more diversely populated, exciting, culturally and historically vivacious American cities than any other US region," while Ward highlights the region's historical legacy as an important draw for

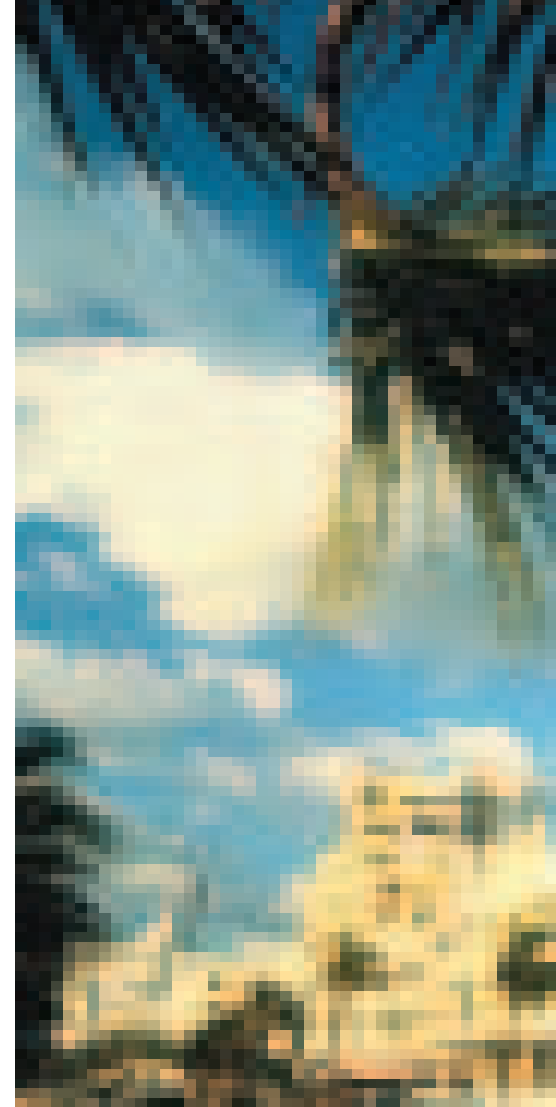
international students. "Because the east coast is the oldest part of our relatively young country, the historical and cultural attractions are popular," she says.

Another draw for language travellers is the east coast's reputation as one of the country's major seats of learning. Martha Hall, Academic Director of New England School of English (NESE) in Cambridge, MA, just across the Charles River from Boston, explains, "Massachusetts is considered one of the nation's leading academic and cultural centres." Brian Pellinen from Aspect Dean College in Boston provides a further illustration of the influence that over 80 colleges and universities, including the prestigious Harvard University and MIT, have locally. "One in five people in the Boston area are affiliated with higher education in some way," he says.

Dubbed the Athens of America, Boston itself has a European flavour, and is home to around 300,000 students during the academic year. "Few other cities in the United States provide students with such a exciting blend of culture, tradition and history," claims Hall.



**Mystic Seaport, CT**  
Once a thriving port and ship building town, Mystic Seaport is now the largest maritime museum in North America. Visitors can sail or row exact replicas of traditional wooden boats



Indeed, New England – which is made up of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island – was one of the first areas in the New World to be colonised by Europeans. As a consequence, there is plenty of history to discover in this area. The region also contains beautiful landscapes, and for students studying in Boston, Hall says, "The

Berkshire Mountains and beaches of Cape Cod are just a short distance away, and the many small, picturesque colonial-style towns on the way make the journey to these places highly enjoyable."

North of Massachusetts is Vermont, which is aptly known as the Green Mountain State and offers

## Agent viewpoint



"First of all, the atmosphere is more academic than on the West Coast. Also, considering that American history began [on the east coast], the values are more traditional. The ethnicity of the East Coast is more European whereas that of the West Coast is Asian and Hispanic. Some students prefer this as they hope to soak themselves in English speaking situations, choosing areas where there are not so many Japanese students.

New York City is the most popular destination. Many Japanese get quite surprised when they learn that New York state is not just the city. Then, Boston, MA, is second. Third choice is Florida. Students who want to study in a nice, relaxed atmosphere with fewer Japanese choose Florida. Some students, especially from the south part of Japan, are surprised how much snow the northern states have, and enjoy snow shovelling. Also, they are surprised that you cannot get by, even in the

city, without a car. In Japan, it is very walkable and you can go anywhere by using public transport."

**Chye Suzuki**, Staff Service Education International Co., Japan

"The universities in this area of the USA are more well known and have a good reputation throughout the world. Also, the cities are very important and large and it is where the most important companies are set up. Another thing of interest is that in the



Art Deco buildings on Miami's south beach in Florida



In contrast, New York City offers students the quintessential US big city experience, and as Wade Hutman points out, to anyone studying in the Big Apple, “the New Yorker lifestyle is within reach”. Zoni Language Center and Aspect New

York are located close to the Empire State building, an ideal base from which to explore the city’s famous sites, such as Central Park, the Museum of Modern Art and Times Square. Yet Wade Hutman stresses that there is more to the city than its tourist attractions.

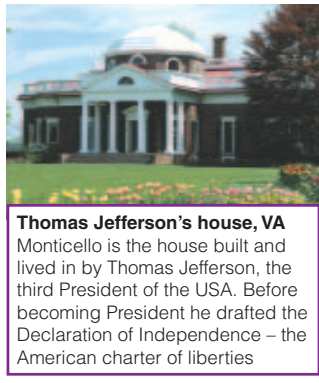
“From Greenmarkets selling organically grown produce to flea markets selling antiques and cool vintage clothing, and from world-renowned jazz clubs like Blue Note to New York City buskers playing for tips in the subway, it’s the diversity of neighbourhoods and the people who live here that really attract newcomers,” she says. Shari Lamont at Aspect New York adds that students enjoy “a stroll through Central Park, a jog over the Brooklyn Bridge or a walk along the Hudson River”.

a whole range of outdoor activities. “With numerous mountains, lakes and streams, students can enjoy activities such as skiing, snowboarding, hiking, kayaking, sailing, and boating,” says Jacqui Samale Roden at the School of International Studies, Saint Michael’s College in Colchester, VT. She explains, “Scenic bike paths are abundant and a popular site for cyclists, runners and roller bladers.” The college campus is close to the state’s largest city, Burlington, which Samale Roden describes as “a college town bustling with entertainment, fantastic restaurants and numerous fine shops”.

Students studying at the Intensive English Language Program at Central Connecticut State University are also able to combine both urban and rural experiences during their stay. “Connecticut is a small state sandwiched between New York and Boston,” explains Ward. “International

students often say how much they like the natural surroundings but they are also glad to be a short distance from two world-famous urban centres.” The area offers many activities, including hiking and biking trails, golf courses, ski resorts, skating rinks, beaches, museums and theatres.

Similarly, Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania provides students with both easy access to the countryside and city living. Describing the area, Jona Hammer from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, says, “Our landscape is full of green fields dotted with small farms – you only have to drive for 10 minutes from anywhere in the city to be in the countryside.”



**Thomas Jefferson's house, VA**  
Monticello is the house built and lived in by Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the USA. Before becoming President he drafted the Declaration of Independence – the American charter of liberties

New York is also an ideal base for exploring other areas and cities of the east coast as students can travel easily between neighbouring states, says Jesse Ro at the American Language Communication Center in New York City. “New York City is only approximately two hours from Philadelphia, and all

large cities are connected [by] buses and trains,” she observes.

For a glimpse into the country’s political scene, Washington DC, the nation’s capital, makes an ideal study destination. Students studying at the John Hopkins University Paul N Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington are within walking distance of “federal offices,



north part of the east coast there is very little Latin influence. New York, Boston, Georgia, Massachusetts and Florida are the most popular areas with our students. Students enjoy the sea, the beaches, the weather and the climate. Most of the student centres have very young people. During the evenings they go out to the different pubs and bars and during the day they do winter sports in the north or marine sports in the south. During their

holidays, students can visit many different areas of the USA.”

**Sandra Bustamante Mariscal, Global Institutions, Colombia**

“People from all over the world are gathered on the east coast and students can easily experience different cultures in one city. Take New York, the city is so energetic. Students can go to their classes in the morning, have lunch at Little Italy, visit the



Museum of Modern Art in the afternoon, have their dinner in Japan Town and catch a Broadway show in the evening. They don't need to worry about what to do next because there are so many things and places waiting for them to explore. On weekends, students might go to a baseball or basketball game, take in other excursions or have a picnic or barbecue with their host family”

**Nancy Tsai, Envision Group, Taiwan**

international organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, embassies, research institutions, multinational corporations, shops and restaurants”, says Julie Hitt at the school’s Office of Summer Programs. In addition, SAIS arranges a number of excursions for its students. “Participants visit Capitol Hill to meet with a US senator, attend briefings at the Department of State and at the Office of the US Trade Representative, and visit educational, cultural and media institutions, such as *The Washington Post* and the National Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian Institution,” says Hitt.

For a slower pace of life and an experience of the famous Southern US charm, South Carolina is a must. “Both of our campuses – [in] Columbia and Greenville – are located in the heart of the traditional South,” says Susan Toler at the Agape English Language Institute in South Carolina’s state capital,

Columbia. “Students enjoy the slower pace, friendly people, less traffic, and traditional values, but still with all the amenities of modern life.” South Carolina has much to offer students in the form of mountains, historic towns and attractive beaches, and Agape English Language Institute offers students a comprehensive schedule of excursions. “We travel to Orlando, Atlanta, Washington DC, and Myrtle Beach [in] South Carolina, [and

have] skiing trips in the winter and white-water rafting trips in the summer,” explains Toler.

Talk International in Fort Lauderdale, FL, also prides itself in its range of excursions and activities for students, and Levin highlights trips to the Seminoles Reservation, the Everglades and swimming

*“Upon arriving, many international students say they always hear Americans saying, ‘You know?’ when telling stories or talking to them. This is used as a way of affirming what they are saying or as conversation fillers. But many students incorrectly think they are being asked to answer this question, and they say, ‘No I don’t know’. After they’ve been here a while they realise that this is a little funny and often start to pick it up themselves.”*

**Sarah Wade Hutman, Zoni Language Centers, New York City**

with dolphins as among the best. Florida is also home to some of the USA’s most popular tourist attractions such as Disney World, Sea World and the Kennedy Space Center, as well as some spectacular beaches. “Florida is bathed in golden sunshine 310 days a year,” says Levin.

“Its 1,760 kilometres of sandy beaches invite you to sunbathe year round and tempt you with every water sport you can imagine.”

According to Levin, Fort Lauderdale itself is the “jewel” of south Florida. “This beautiful coastal city boasts two kilometres of pristine white beaches, studded with palm trees and washed by the warm crystal clear waters of the Atlantic Ocean. This is where the rich live or come to play,” he says.

In central Florida, Patrick Chapin at Aspect Orlando highlights the social appeal of the state. “The University of Central Florida [in Orlando] attracts over 30,000 students from around the world,” he says. □



**Atlantic City, NJ**  
Once the fashionable summer retreat of affluent city dwellers, Atlantic City is now known as the Las Vegas of the east coast. A number of grand hotel casinos line the beach front