

Leisure in the U.S.



8. Leisure in the U.S.

Sports

There are lots of activities, events and excursions at Kings for you to enjoy after lessons. The Activities Organizer at each college is there to make sure you have lots to keep your days busy and fun-filled with your fellow students.

Amateur sports teams (soccer, football, volleyball or baseball to name a few) are often formed through local gyms or recreational centers. There is a wide choice of other sports to take part in, such as tennis, swimming or exercising in the gym.

Many Americans also enjoy watching sports. The main spectator sports are football (American), basketball and baseball. Soccer is also growing in popularity in the U.S. If you enjoy watching sports you can join others in front of a television at home or in a sports bar that shows live sports on big screens.

Watching television

In the U.S., there are 5 terrestrial channels, which everyone can receive, but many people also have cable or satellite TV. There are also additional digital channels. Most channels are commercial, that is, they receive money for showing advertisements or commercials during breaks in the programs.

The Public Broadcast Station (PBS) does not show commercials. PBS is funded by private donations from large foundations, as well as by small grants from the government and public donations from viewers.

Shopping

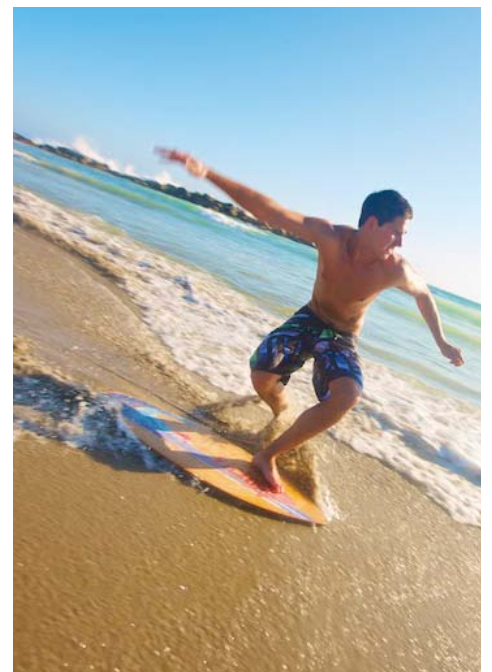
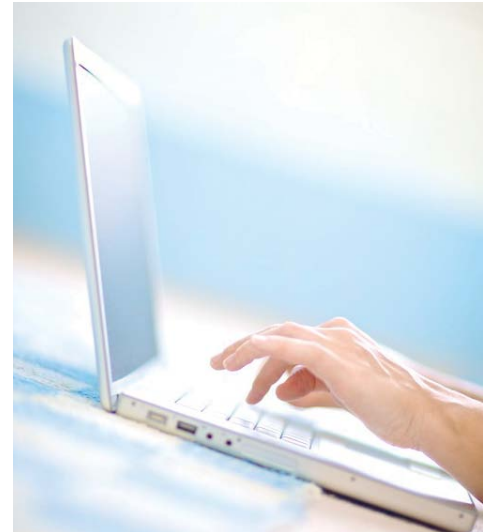
In the U.S., most shops are open seven days a week, typically from 10 a.m. to between 9:00 and 10:00 p.m. Larger chain department stores, such as Target, Nordstrom's or Macy's will have longer hours, whereas small, independent shops may not stay open as late.

Supermarkets operate on the same principle, large stores will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and smaller grocers will not be open as early or late. In most cities, some supermarkets will be open 24 hours, 7 days a week.

You may be pleasantly surprised by the high level of customer service in the U.S. It is often said, "The customer is always right!" When you walk into a store, usually a clerk or attendant will greet you. Also, there are usually employees available throughout the store, to whom you can direct your questions. It is very uncommon for these employees to be rude or even less than friendly. In all shops you will need to line up to pay for your items. Most shops in the U.S. do not ask you to hand in your other shopping bags before you walk around, but do not put anything in your bag or your pocket that you have not paid for. The security staff will think you are "shoplifting," or stealing. Use a shopping basket or cart provided by the store.

Shopping online

More and more Americans shop online today. You can find low prices and good deals with fast delivery services. Remember that when you buy something online you have the right to send it back for any reason within 7 days of receiving it. If you do send anything back, inform the suppliers by email or phone and keep the postal receipt. If you have any problems with shopping online, ask the staff at college or your host family for advice.



Study tip

Make notes on how American people spend their leisure time. Ask yourself these questions:

- How much time do Americans spend watching TV?
- What are the most popular types of programs?
- Do the people you know spend more time playing than watching sports?
- How do American shopping habits compare with those in your country?
- How important are bars to social life in the U.S.?

Restaurants, the cinema and theater

All the cities in which our colleges are based have a wide selection of restaurants. The most common ones are Chinese, Mexican and Italian. Some people eat out regularly and others only do this on special occasions, such as birthdays or wedding anniversaries.

Cinemas might seem expensive in the U.S., but you can often save money if you go before 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday, or if you have a student card. Some people prefer to rent a DVD, as this is much cheaper.

Most times you can sit anywhere, but in some cinemas you may be asked to choose a seat when you buy your ticket. There are smaller cinemas that show independent or foreign films, as well as large cinemas showing blockbusters.

Going to the theater to see concerts, comedians or plays is also a popular pastime with some people. It is not usual to dress up in special clothes, although some people might do this.

Going out to bars

Going out to bars is an important and fun part of life and culture in the U.S. You are allowed to drink alcohol in bars in the U.S. if you are 21 or over. Of course, whatever your age, it is a bad idea to drink too much alcohol - especially if you are here to study hard!

Bars here may be different to bars in your country. In particular you will notice:

- Both men and women drink in bars.
- Some bars do not have waiters to bring drinks to you. You must go to the bar to order your drinks and you pay for them as soon as you receive them. You should leave a tip (usually a dollar a drink).
- You do not have to drink alcohol. Bars offer soft drinks such as cola, lemonade, orange juice and water. Some bars also serve coffee and tea.
- Smoking is not permitted in most bars. Cities in the U.S. are beginning to phase out smoking sections in bars and restaurants and most larger cities have already adopted this practice. It is always best to assume you cannot smoke inside and instead go outside to smoke.

There are many bars to choose from in any town in the U.S. You will find bars that have live sports or live music or a DJ. Many also have games you can play, such as pool, darts or foosball. Some have karaoke or host quiz games on a certain night of the week. You can find bars that serve excellent food and are perhaps more about eating than drinking.

Bars often have a local crowd of people who live in the neighborhood and go to the same place for a drink. These may be good places for you to make friends. Larger cities always have bars that are known for being "gay-friendly." Many bars have areas for quietly eating and drinking with friends and other areas for watching sports, playing games and dancing. Therefore you should be able to find a bar, or part of one, that you like!

