# 50 Great Facts About The 50 States - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep.17)

List Show
https://youtube.com/watch?v=vyYy7dmAnM8
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/vyYy7dmAnM8

Hi there, I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon.

[Aside] Hey there, conjoined twins.

This is mental_floss and today I'm gonna share with you 50 facts about the 50 American states, and I promise you there is at least one interesting fact about every state in the union - even New Jersey. By the way, a Professor of New Jersey geography recently emailed me to criticize me for my long-standing anti-New Jersey bias, and I have a message for her: I'm sorry and I was wrong. I mean, I went to high school in a place that's often maligned. In fact, let's start there and just go in alphabetical order.

[intro music]

1. Alabama's largest city, Birmingham, wasn't founded until 1871. It was intended to be a model of industrialization for the post-civil war South, and that sort of worked. Fortunately for Alabama, that steel mill roller coaster only goes up. In 1921, President Warren G. Harding visited Birmingham for the city's 50th anniversary, and in a speech he advised the people of Birmingham to extend voting equality to African American citizens. This was not a popular sentiment in 1921, but it was kind of the most heroic -- arguably, *only* heroic -- moment of Harding's presidency.

2. 99% of Alaska belongs to the Federal Government, State Government, or Alaska native corporations. Only 1% is held by private citizens.

3. Arizona extended the vote to women in 1912, eight years before the national arrival of women's suffrage. The state would then go on to spend the next 100 years attempting to restrict the voting rights of various groups.

[Aside] Does that come across as partisan? I mean, it is a fact.

4. In 1881, the Arkansas state legislature passed an act to standardize the pronunciation of the state's name. This law was needed to settle a dispute between two US Senators. One wanted to be known as the senator from ar-kan-zas and the other as the senator from ar-kan-saw.

5. The California gold rush that gave the San Francisco 49ers their name began in January of 1848.

6. In 1970, Denver, Colorado, won its bid to host the 1976 Winter Olympics, but in 1972 the city's residents decided they didn't wanna pay to host the games so they rejected the offer. Salt Lake City then offered to take up the now-homeless Winter Olympics, but they ended up in Innsbruck, Austria.

7. Connecticut didn't bother to write a state constitution until 1818, and so until then they operated under the royal charter of 1662, which did not provide for the separation of church and state. Meaning that Connecticut retained the Church of England as its official religious body for 19 years after the US Constitution went into effect.

8. Delaware was involved in a border dispute with Pennsylvania and Maryland that began in 1681. The big surprise there is that Delaware borders Pennsylvania? Anyway, in a 1753 attempt to resolve the dispute, over about one square mile of land, the colonies involved hired Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon to survey the area. The border they drew was called the Mason-Dixon line. It failed to resolve the dispute, incidentally, but it did become important in US history.

9. Although Florida is called "the sunshine state", it actually has more lightning strikes than any other state.

10. In 2010, Georgia tried to seize territory from Tennessee, claiming the border had been incorrectly drawn in 1818, but Tennessee replied by saying "Georgia, its 2010. Is that really your biggest problem?"

11. Sanford B. Dole was instrumental in wresting control of Hawaii from Hawaiians, and in Hawaiian Spanish moss is called "Ê»umiÊ»umi-o-Dole", or "Dole's beard".

12. Idaho potatoes are not native to Idaho. They are an invasive species and a delicious one.

13. In 1839, Joseph Smith Jr., the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, was murdered by an angry mob in Nauvoo, Illinois.

14. As for my adopted home state of Indiana, no one actually knows what "hoosier" means. Stop asking!

15. Brit, Iowa is home to the annual National Hobo Convention. Don't call these hobos "tramps". Hobos think of themselves as migrant workers; tramps are just transient beggars who don't work; and bums are sedentary non-workers who are too lazy even to travel, at least according to hobos.

16. Kansas is the only state with a successful recording career. In the 1970s, the state had several hit singles including "Carry On, My Wayward Son" and "Dust in the Wind". What? Those weren't recorded by the actual state of Kansas? Alright, how about this. The 2005 adaptation of *In Cold Blood* was mainly shot in Manitoba, Canada, presumably because Kansas was too boring to carry a movie. Manitoba, on the other hand... non-stop party.

17. Kentucky is home to the world's largest cave system in Mammoth Cave National Park, and also the world's largest baseball bat.

18. Louisiana ranks 49th in the American state litter score card -- only Kentucky has more roadside littering, but most of it just washes into that big-ass cave, so nobody really minds much.

19. Maine is the only state with a one-syllable name. I can see you thinking about it, but it's true. Utah: fewer letters, more syllables.

20. Maryland's official state sport is jousting.

21. Massachusetts is home to New England Candy Company, maker of that uniquely disgusting confection, the NECCO wafer. The pink one is supposed to be clove-flavored. Clove-flavored! That's not candy, that's poison!

22. In 1846, Michigan became the first state to abolish the death penalty. Some believe this was done simply to spite Canada, which still had public executions at the time.

23. Minnesota is known as "the land of ten thousand lakes", but in fact the state has 11,482 lakes larger than ten acres. They're modest, those Minnesotans.

24. The state of Mississippi produces more farm-raised catfish than any other state in the nation, which I mention primarily because my good friend Townsend Kyser was named Alabama's catfish farmer of the year in 2009.

25. In 1838, before Missouri was even a state, it got into a border dispute with Iowa called "The Honey War". Both territories called their militias to the border and three trees got cut down before the Supreme Court resolved the dispute in favor of Iowa. It was the least fatal war in American history.

26. Montana's Roe River is known as the shortest river in the world at just 201 feet, but this has been disputed by the people of Oregon, who also claim to have the world's shortest river.

27. Nebraska's state government is weird. First off, it's the only state with a unicameral legislature; also, it is non-partisan -- members of legislature are elected without a party affiliation and are supposed to operate in a non-partisan way.

28. Reno, Nevada, is *west* of Los Angeles, California. I know, right?

29. New Hampshire immortalized the famous cliff known as "The Old Man of the Mountain" by submitting it as the state's design for the 50 state quarters issued by the US mint. The Old Man of the Mountain promptly fell off the mountain in 2003, leaving the state looking like a bunch of liars who made the thing up just to put it on a quarter.

30. The phonograph, the movie projector, the drive-in theater, and baseball were all invented in the underrated state of New Jersey.

31. Santa Fe, New Mexico, is the highest state capital in the US, with an elevation of 7260 feet.

32. The New York Post was founded in 1801 by Alexander Hamilton, and for much of its history it was a serious newspaper. It didn't become a tasteless sham until Rupert Murdoch acquired it in 1976.

33. North Carolina is the nation's largest producer of sweet potatoes.

34. North Dakota tried to drop the "north" from its name twice, in 1947 and 1989. The legislature rejected bids to change the state's name to Dakota presumably to make South Dakotans feel like copycats.

35. Akron, Ohio, introduced the first police car in 1899.

36. The Oklahoma state capital building has a working oil derrick on its grounds, which is surprising because Oklahoma's protested the Keystone XL Pipeline.

37. You cannot pump your own gas in Oregon, or New Jersey for that matter.

38. The state college Pennsylvania high school was the first to offer driver's education to teenagers.

39. Rhode Island rejected the 18th amendment in 1990, and that was the amendment that forbid me from reading my favorite book, *Beauty From Ashes*. [opens thick hardcover book with a hip flask inside] Due to the tyranny of the majority, they still weren't allowed to drink.

40. Before South Carolina was called "the palmetto state", it was "the iodine state". So there are no goiters in South Carolina, but there are some Big Macs.

41. South Dakota has a fascination with massive sculptures. Not only is it home to Mount Rushmore, it's also home to the still-uncompleted Crazy Horse Monument, which was begun in 1948.

42. Despite containing relatively few adherents to ancient Greek religion, Tennessee for some reason has a full-scale replica of the Parthenon.

43. The flags of six nations have flown over Texas: Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederate States of America, and the United States of America. If you're wondering where the Six Flags chain of amusement parks got its name, yes.

44. Levan, Utah, which is located in the middle of the state, got its name because it's "navel" spelled backwards.

45. Vermont has the smallest state capital. Montpelier has a population of 7,855, and every one of them is fiercely independent.

46. Virginia has produced eight presidents: Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Harrison, Tyler, Taylor, and Wilson. (Does William Henry Harrison really count? I guess so.)

47. Washington's King County, home to Seattle, was originally named for William R. King, vice president under Franklin Pierce. It was renamed in 1986 for Martin Luther King, Jr..

48. The first federal women's prison opened in West Virginia in 1926, which gave rise to the "women in prison" genre of family entertainment.

49. Monroe, Wisconsin, claims to be the Swiss cheese capital of the world, in spite of the fact that Swiss cheese is from Switzerland. Also, the largest manufacturer of Swiss cheese in the United States is Brewster Dairy, located in Brewster, Ohio, so that claim is dubious.

50. And lastly, we return to the land of conjoined skeletons to discuss Wyoming, which was the first state to have ladies voting, the first state to mine coal, and the last state where any human being would want to live, by which I mean it is our least populous state.

[outro music]

So there you go -- 50 facts about 50 states. Thanks for watching mental_floss, which was made with the help of these nice people [gestures to credits].

Today's question is, "Hey, who's that bronze statue of -- the one by the corn dog?" It so happens that the subject of that statue is also its sculptor: my high school history teacher Raoul Meyer, who writes CrashCourse History. If you have a mind-blowing question (it needn't be about the Cabinet of Curiosities), please ask it in comments. We'll do our best to answer as many of them as we can.

Thank you for watching; best wishes.