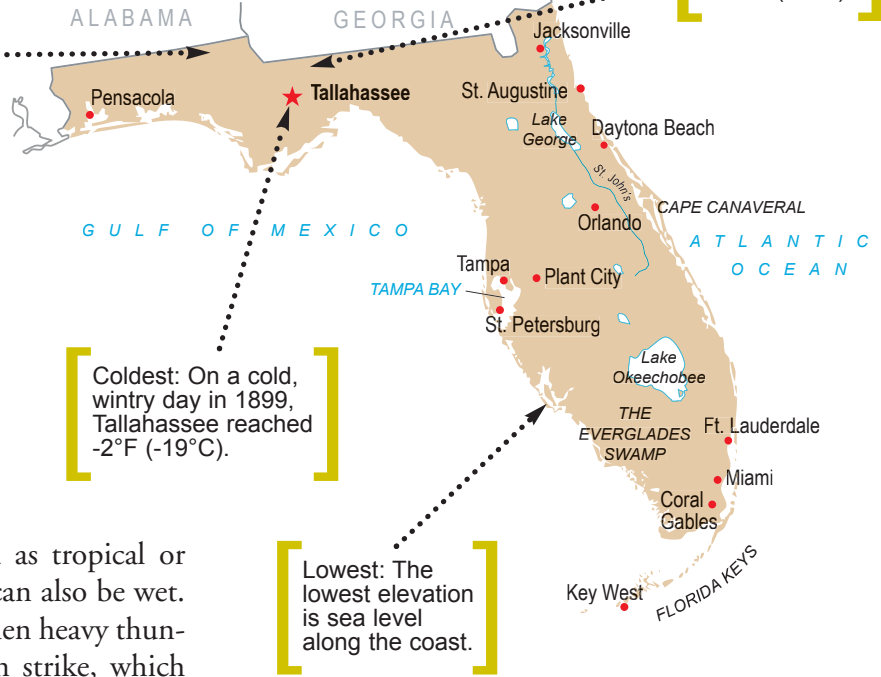


**EXTREMES**

Highest: Britton Hill, in northeast Walton County, is 345 feet (105 m) tall.

Hottest: On 29 June 1931, Monticello hit 109°F (44°C).



Coldest: On a cold, wintry day in 1899, Tallahassee reached -2°F (-19°C).

Lowest: The lowest elevation is sea level along the coast.

**Climate**

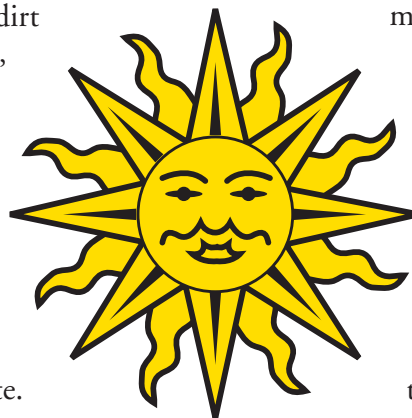
Florida's warm climate and sunny skies draw people to the state year-round. Although the temperature sometimes reaches below freezing in a few areas, winter usually stays at about 60°F to 70°F (16–21°C). Summer temperatures are hot, but breezes from the ocean cool things down. The weather can be classified as tropical or subtropical. It's usually sunny, but it can also be wet. Rain usually comes in the summer, when heavy thunderstorms, floods, and hurricanes can strike, which can wreck everything in their path.

**Geography**

With Florida's miles of beaches, warm coastal waters, and thousands of islands, it's no wonder people come from all over to visit. Only Alaska's ocean coastline is longer than Florida's. However, Florida is much more than just surf and sand. This long peninsula and panhandle is green and lush. Thick forests provide homes to animals like bobcat, deer, and black bear. In the north, sinkholes pop up (or cave in) without warning when the limestone under the dirt collapses. You can find swamps, rivers, and thousands of lakes. Alligators, crocodiles, and four kinds of poisonous snakes live within the state's borders. Offshore, you can find coral reefs, playful dolphins, and gentle manatees (sea cows). This medium-sized state has rolling hills in the north and a flat south. Florida ties with Louisiana as the second lowest state. Florida's total area is about 59,000 square miles (155,100 sq km).

**Resources and Economy**

Weather is considered one of Florida's chief resources. Warm weather draws tourists, who provide the most income for Floridians. When people visit, they spend money in stores, at restaurants, and in hotels and resorts. The warm climate also allows farmers to grow their crops most of the year. In the southern tip of the peninsula, crops can grow 365 days a year! Citrus fruits, and especially oranges, are by far the most important crops. Most of the oranges grown are made into juice, and the rest are shipped all over the country at any time of year. In fact, only Brazil produces more oranges and orange juice than Florida. Nowhere else in the world produces as many grapefruits. Other important agricultural products include sugarcane, vegetables, and cattle. All along the coast, fish, shrimp, crab, lobster, and oysters are plentiful.



# History

## Early Inhabitants

Early Florida inhabitants roamed the land as hunters and gatherers. Over thousands of years, they developed into farmers and began to settle into communities. They grew corn, beans, and other crops and made pottery. When the Spanish explorers came, they found out the Native Americans were also skilled warriors. However, sickness killed many of the natives, who had no resistance to European diseases. But most natives lived peacefully with the Spanish.

## Who Owns This Place Anyway?

Juan Ponce de León first landed on the Atlantic Coast in 1513. He decided to name the land *La Florida* because he found it during Easter (called *pascua florida* in Spanish). Spain began to colonize the area, building forts and missions. Saint Augustine, founded in 1565, became the first permanent European settlement in the United States. The French disputed Spain's right to Florida, so they began to settle the area, too. Both sides attacked the other's settlements, often completely destroying them. Farther north, the English became worried that the Spanish and French would threaten the Carolinas and Georgia. After the French and Indian War ended in 1763, Spain gave Florida to England. After the Revolutionary War, England gave Florida back to Spain. Finally, in 1819, Spain sold Florida to the United States.

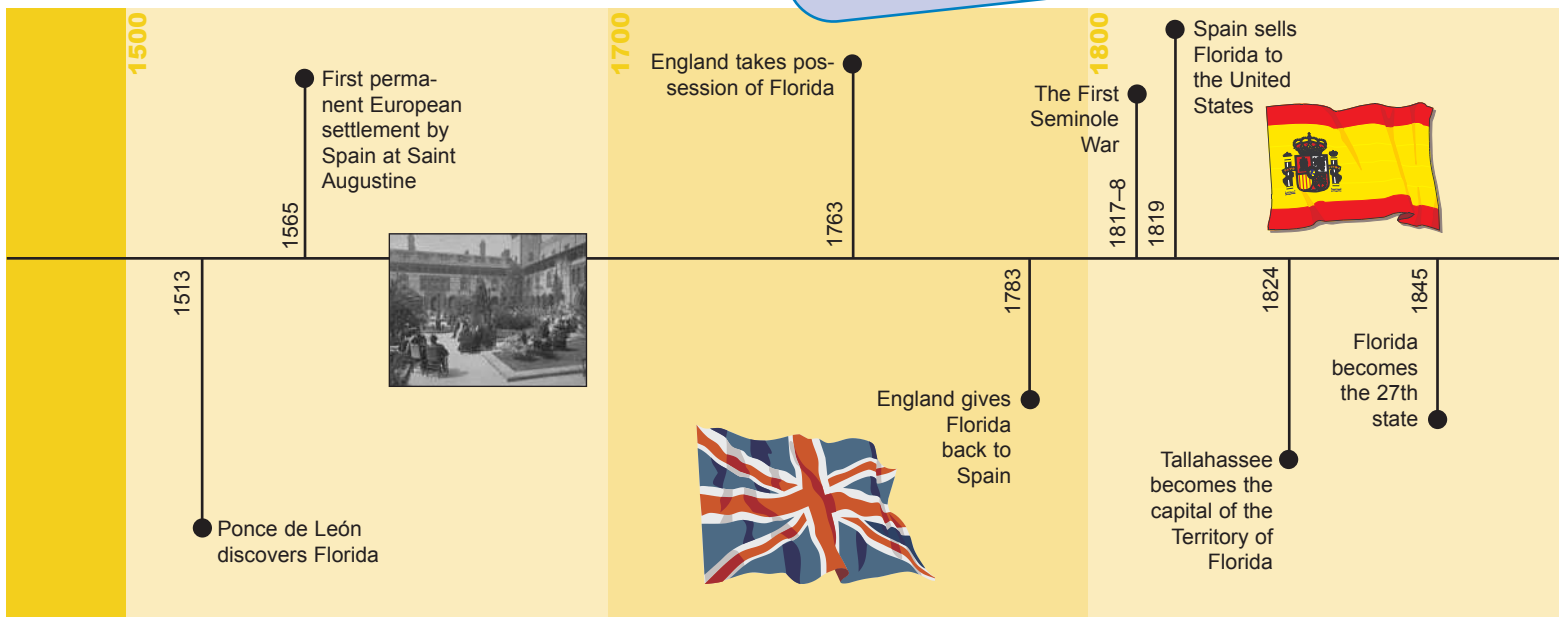


## Seminole Wars

Before Florida was sold to the United States, the Seminole, a Native American tribe, and U.S. settlers in Georgia fought over the border. The First Seminole War took place during 1817 and 1818. Settlers began pushing the tribe out of the area, so Osceola helped his people fight back. The Second Seminole War began in 1855 and lasted for three years. After the war, most Seminole were forced to move out of the state, but others hid in the Everglades, where they remained.

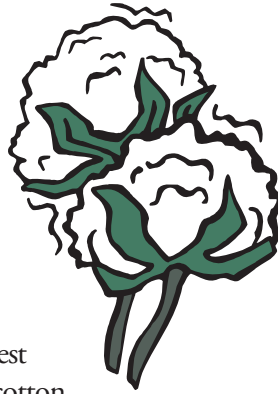
### Cultural Note

In 1969, Neil Armstrong took the first steps on the moon. Many watched as the *Challenger* exploded in 1986, tragically killing all seven people on board. Both missions were launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral. This space center launches more spacecraft than any other place in the world. Someday, technology developed there may let ordinary people take a tour in space or travel to a hotel orbiting the earth. It's no wonder that tourists come from everywhere to visit. Another place tourists visit is, of course, Walt Disney World® in Orlando. In fact, more people visit Orlando each year than just about any other place in the world.



## Statehood and Civil War

As Florida considered becoming a state, slavery presented an obstacle. If Florida joined, the balance between free and slave states would topple. To keep stability, Congress allowed Iowa, a free state, and Florida to join at the same time. Fifteen years later, South Carolina seceded from the Union, and Florida quickly followed. Although some Floridians volunteered for the Confederate army, the state's biggest contribution was meat, salt, and cotton.



## The Twentieth Century

After the Civil War, Florida began developing the economy. Before the war, the state's main product was cotton. After the slaves were freed, harvesting the same amount wasn't possible. Instead, people started to plant citrus groves and other crops. Railroads were built, allowing the crops to be moved and sold in other places. Tourism began to develop, and hundreds of people moved to the state each day. The economy flourished until 1926, when the state hit a deep depression. The people tried to recover somewhat but again lost ground during the Great Depression of the 1930s. As they recovered from that, people flooded into the state once more.

## Reconstruction

Florida didn't rejoin the Union immediately, coming back finally in 1868. In order to be reaccepted, the state had to adjust its constitution to allow African-Americans to vote. However, like other southern states, Florida created Black Codes and poll taxes to keep power in the hands of whites. For many decades after, blacks struggled to receive the same rights whites enjoyed.



Osceola



Thomas



Yulee

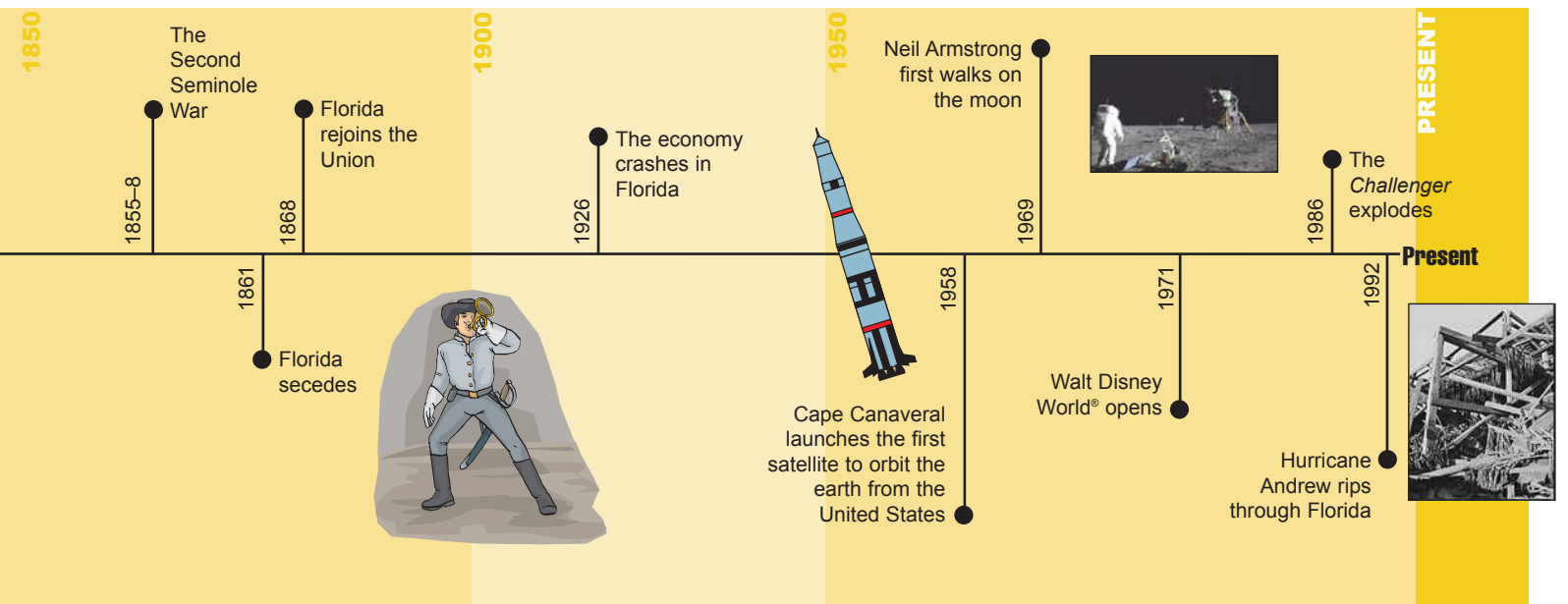


Reno



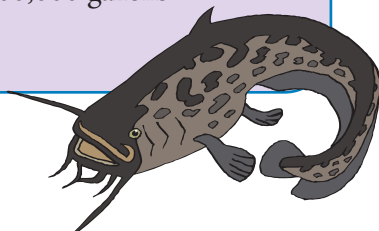
### Famous People

- Little Richard: Singer
- Osceola: Seminole leader
- David Levy Yulee: First Jewish U.S. senator
- Jim Morrison: Singer
- Burt Reynolds: Actor
- Janet Reno: First female attorney general
- Clarence Thomas: Supreme Court judge
- Mary McLeod Bethune: Educator
- Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Environmentalist
- Sidney Poitier: Actor



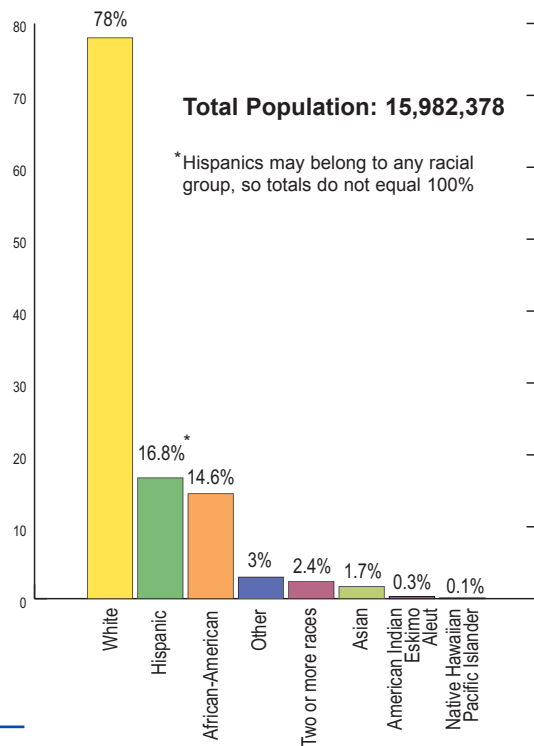
## Did You Know?

- 🌸 Clearwater has more lightning strikes per person than any other city in the nation.
- 🌸 Gatorade® was named after the University of Florida Gators, who first tested the drink.
- 🌸 Saint John's River is one of the few rivers running north instead of south.
- 🌸 The biggest bald eagle nest in the United States was found in Florida. It was 10 feet (3 m) wide and more than 20 feet (6 m) deep!
- 🌸 Walking catfish in Florida got their name because they can breath out of water and can "walk" from one pond to another.
- 🌸 Florida has more than 40 different plant species that can't be found anywhere else in the world.
- 🌸 In 1981, a sinkhole in Winter Park grew to more than 1,000 feet (305 m) wide. When it sunk, it took a house, part of the neighborhood pool, and several Porsches with it.
- 🌸 The Biltmore Hotel's swimming pool is the largest in the United States. Located in Coral Gables, the pool holds 600,000 gallons of water.



## Population

Just like the birds that migrate south every year, many older people (called *snowbirds*) migrate to Florida's warmer climate in winter. These snowbirds aren't the only ones moving to Florida. The many people who have visited and decided to stay have made Florida one of the fastest-growing states in the country. Right now, it is the fourth most populous state. Most of these people, 85 percent, live in cities, especially along the coast.



## State Symbols



**State Animal**  
Florida panther—This powerful cat is on both the state and federal endangered species list.



**State Flower**  
Orange blossom—Since Florida oranges are famous throughout the country, it's no wonder the state chose the orange blossom as its flower.



**State Tree**  
Sabal palm—Palm trees can be seen throughout the state.



**State Bird**  
Mockingbird—The mockingbird's name comes from its ability to mimic the songs of other birds.

**State Motto:** In God We Trust—This familiar motto can be found on U.S. coins and bills.

**For more information:** See [www.state.fl.us](http://www.state.fl.us) or contact Visit Florida, 661 East Jefferson Street, Suite 300, Tallahassee, FL 32301; phone (888) 7FLA-USA; Web site [www.flausa.com](http://www.flausa.com).

## Government

**Capital:** Tallahassee

**Governor:** Jeb Bush

**U.S. Senators:** 2

**U.S. Representatives:** 25

**Counties:** 67

🌸 The governor is related to two presidents: his father, George Bush, and his brother, the current president, George W. Bush.

🌸 Unlike any other state, Florida reviews its constitution every 20 years, just to make sure that it is always current.



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