



The Beaver State

Established 1859

33rd State



Did You Know?

- The largest meteorite in the United States was discovered in Oregon in 1902. It weighs about 40,000 pounds.
- Oregon has more ghost towns than any other state.
- The Columbia River Gorge is considered to be one of the best places in the world for windsurfing.
- Eugene was the first city to have one-way streets.
- At 8,000 feet (2,400 m) deep, Hells Canyon is the deepest river gorge in North America.
- Stark's Vacuum Cleaner Museum in Portland has vacuums dating back to the 1870s.
- Oregon is the only state that has an official state nut—the hazelnut. The hazelnut is also known as the filbert.
- Oregon's state birthday is on Valentine's Day.
- The nation's most photographed lighthouse is the Heceta Head Lighthouse.

The Place

Climate

Oregon has basically two climates. In the western part of the state, ocean breezes help create a mild climate by cooling the land in the summer and warming it in the winter. Summer temperatures along the coast average about 60°F (16°C) and winter temperatures average around 45°F (7°C). Western Oregon also receives a lot of rain, between 50 and 130 inches (1–3 m) a year! But by the time the ocean breezes cross the Cascade Mountains, they have already dropped most of their moisture. So the eastern side of the state is very dry. Some areas receive only about 8 inches (20 cm) of rain a year. Summers in eastern Oregon are hot and winters are cold.

Geography



One of three Pacific Coast states, Oregon covers 98,386 square miles (254,819 sq km). Its diverse landscape includes rain forests, mountains, deserts, valleys, rivers, canyons, waterfalls, plains, and plateaus. Much of western Oregon is mountainous. Between the Coast Ranges and the Cascade Mountains lies the Willamette Valley. More than half of the state's population and most of its major cities are located in this valley. The valley also contains rich farmland. The Columbia Plateau covers most of eastern Oregon. It consists of rolling hills and desert plains. Much of this area must be irrigated to make farming possible. The southeastern part of Oregon is called the Great Basin. Mountains and valleys extend across this region.

Resources and Economy

Because of its abundant forests, Oregon is not only a leading producer of lumber but also of paper products. Other important manufactured items include metalwork, machinery, aluminum, and chemicals. Food processing and high tech industries also contribute to the state's economy. Oregon's rivers help make manufacturing possible because they provide cheap hydroelectric power. They also allow for irrigation. In agriculture, farmers raise such crops as hazelnuts, peppermint, grass seed, wheat, and a variety of berries. The salmon-fishing industry is one of the largest in the world. Even the state's scenic beauty contributes to the economy by supporting a successful tourist industry.

History

Time Line

A.D. 1500	
A.D. 1500	Native American tribes such as the Chinook, Klamath, Modoc, Bannock, Cayuse, and Nez Percé inhabit Oregon
1700	

1778

Captain James Cook discovers the fur wealth of the northwest coast



1792

Robert Gray is the first white person to name and explore the Columbia River

1800

1805

The Lewis and Clark Expedition reaches the Oregon coast

1811

John Astor's Pacific Fur Trading Company begins in Astoria, the first permanent white settlement in Oregon

1843

Nine hundred pioneers make up the first group to arrive via the Oregon Trail

1848

Oregon becomes a territory of the United States

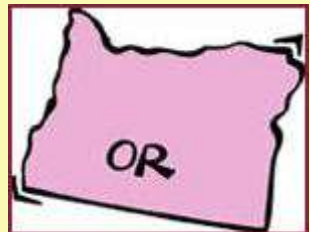
1850

The Oregon Land Donation Act offers free land to settlers



1859

Oregon becomes a state

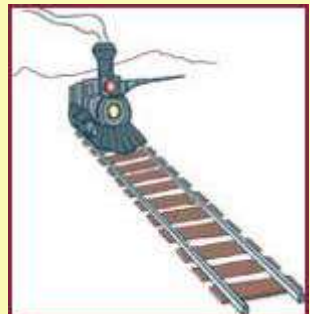


1877

The Nez Percé tribe is ordered to leave their land in Oregon; war breaks out and the Nez Percé are forced to go to Oklahoma

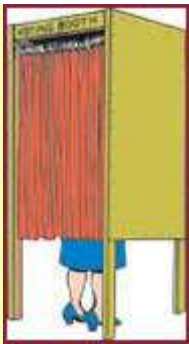
1883

The Northern Pacific Railroad reaches the state



1900

1912 Oregon gives women the right to vote



1937 The Bonneville Dam is completed



1965 Oregon's first conservation laws are passed

1993 The federal government limits logging to protect the spotted owl

PRESENT

Lewis and Clark Expedition

Two of the earliest visitors to the region were Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, explorers who were sent west from Saint Louis by President Thomas Jefferson in hopes of finding a water route connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Although Lewis and Clark and their party failed to discover such a waterway, their expedition succeeded in providing people with valuable information about the geography of the west. They wrote in their diaries about their adventures with bad weather, hunger, hostile Native Americans, and bears. Also, they established peaceful relations with many of the Native American tribes they encountered. Lewis and Clark reached the Oregon coast in 1805. They built and spent the winter in Fort Clatsop, near present-day Astoria, before returning eastward. The expedition inspired great interest in the Pacific Northwest.

Trappers

The first white person to set foot on land in Oregon was fur trader Robert Gray, who sailed into Tillamook Bay in 1788 to trade with the Chinook tribe. American, British, and French traders came to the state in the 1800s. They gave beads, knives, blankets, and other objects to Native Americans in exchange for furs from seals and sea otters. These furs were then sold for a big profit in places like Asia, where fur clothing was popular. Astoria, a trading post founded by John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company,



became Oregon's first white settlement and the first settlement west of the Rocky Mountains. Other trading companies followed. The fur trade brought economic wealth to the area, supported agricultural growth, and led to increased settlement.

Oregon Trail



In the early 1840s, groups of settlers began heading west along the Oregon Trail. The Oregon Trail stretched about 2,000 miles (3,200 km) from Independence, Missouri, to the Oregon Country, and it took about four to six months to cover the distance by wagon. Trappers, missionaries, and explorers were the first ones to travel this path, but it would eventually become one of the most important routes to the northwest. In 1843, about a thousand people arrived in Oregon with the first wagon train.

Nez Percé War



As more white settlers moved to Oregon, these newcomers settled on Native American lands, disrupted their food supply, and spread diseases that killed the native populations. This led to conflict between whites and Native Americans. One example was the Nez Percé War. When gold was discovered on the tribe's land in the 1860s, the Nez Percé were ordered to move to a reservation in Idaho. But some of the Nez Percé refused to move and fought back. In 1877 Chief Joseph led eight hundred of his people, including women and children, in an attempt to escape to Canada. They traveled more than 1,000 miles (1,600 km), chased by federal troops. About a day away from the safety of the Canadian border, Chief Joseph and his band were captured and sent to the reservation. By 1880, all of Oregon's Native Americans were living on reservations.

Oregon and World War II

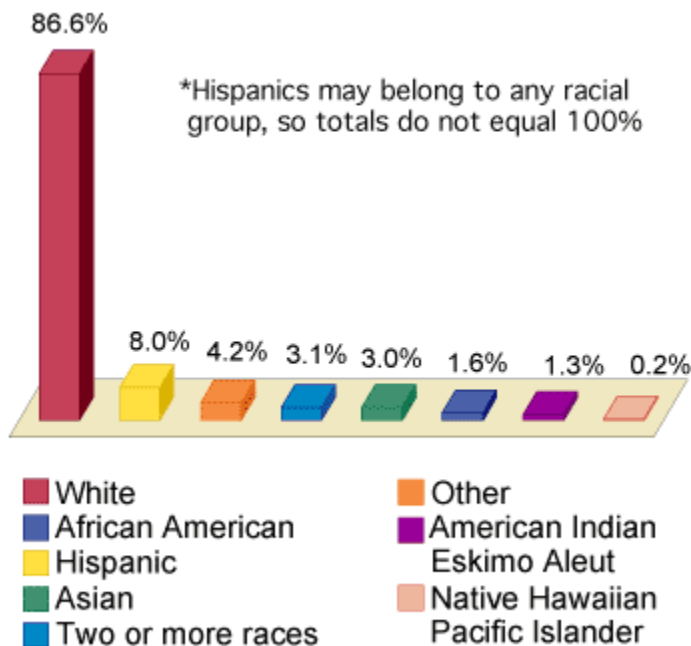
When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the United States was thrust into World War II. Many Oregonians quickly became involved in the war effort. They enlisted in the military, worked in defense industries, participated in rationing, and gathered scrap metal. Unfortunately, after Japan's surprise attack on the U.S., many in the country were suspicious of Japanese-Americans. By order of the president of the United States, more than 120,000 Japanese living in Oregon, Washington, and California were forced to move to internment camps further inland. Many of these Japanese-Americans lost their homes, businesses, savings, and personal possessions.

The People

Population

Oregon's population density (nearly 36 persons per square mile, or 14 per sq km) may seem somewhat sparse because it is less than half of the national average, but the majority of the people live in three urban areas—Portland, Eugene, and Salem. Portland is Oregon's largest city. Most Oregonians are white and American-born. Roman Catholics make up the state's largest religious group. Others include Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Mormons.

Total Population: 3,521,515



Government

Capital: Salem

U.S. Senators: 2

U.S. Representatives: 5

Counties: 36

- Oregon's Legislative Assembly has a 30-member Senate and a 60-member House of Representatives. The assembly meets every two years on odd-numbered years.
- Oregon has nine federally recognized Native American tribes, each of which has significant power to govern itself.

Famous People

- *Ahmad Rashad* — Professional football player and television sportscaster
- *Cecil D. Andrus* — Secretary of the Interior
- *Chief Joseph* — Nez Percé chief
- *Doc Severinsen* — Bandleader
- *Edwin Markham* — Poet
- *Linus Pauling* — Nobel Prize-winning chemist
- *Matt Groening* — Cartoonist and creator of *The Simpsons*
- *Mel Blanc* — Voice of cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck
- *Pat Schroeder* — Politician
- *Phil Knight* — Cofounder and CEO of Nike, Inc.
- *Raymond Carver* — Writer and poet
- *Robert Gray* — Explorer
- *Ursula K. LeGuin* — Writer

Fun Facts & Contacts

State Symbols

State Animal

American beaver—The beaver was prized for its fur by early settlers.



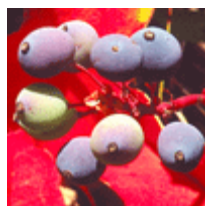
State Bird

Western meadowlark—Native throughout western North America, this bird is known for its beautiful song.



State Flower

Oregon grape—A low growing plant with yellow flowers, the Oregon grape is native to much of the Pacific Coast.



State Tree

Douglas fir—This tree is named after David Douglas, a 19th century Scottish botanist.



Cultural Note



Since the 1960s, Oregon has been a leader in protecting the environment. For example, when the Willamette River became so polluted in the 1960s that fish couldn't live in it, the government passed laws to limit pollution of the state's waterways. Laws were enacted to protect Oregon's forests and coastline as well. Oregon also banned bottles and cans that aren't recyclable and outlawed the use of aerosol cans, which may damage the earth's ozone layer. The state attracted nationwide attention in the 1990s because of controversial efforts to save the spotted owl, an endangered species. Logging threatened the owl's habitat, but the federal government stepped in to limit the number of trees that could be cut. In the future, Oregonians will continue to try balancing economic concerns with the need to protect the environment.

For More Information

See www.oregon.gov or contact the Oregon Tourism Commission, 775 Summer Street NE, Salem, OR 97301; phone (800) 547-7842; web site www.traveloregon.com.

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Axiom Press, Inc.
333 South 520 West, Suite 360
London, Utah 84042 USA
1.800.528.6279; 801.932.6459
fax 801.847.0127
www.culturegrams.com

