



The Ocean State

Established 1790

13th State

EXTREMES

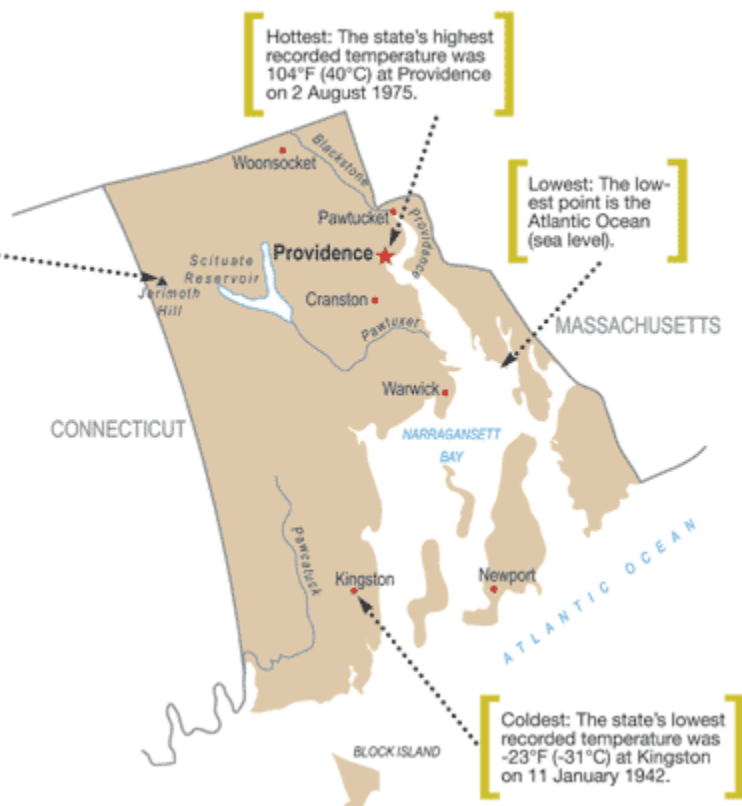
Highest: The highest point is Jerimoth Hill, at 812 feet (248 m).

Hottest: The state's highest recorded temperature was 104°F (40°C) at Providence on 2 August 1975.

Lowest: The lowest point is the Atlantic Ocean (sea level).

CONNECTICUT

MASSACHUSETTS



Coldest: The state's lowest recorded temperature was -23°F (-31°C) at Kingston on 11 January 1942.

Did You Know?

- You can get from one end of Rhode Island to the other in less than an hour.
- The official state name is actually the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.
- Rhode Island was the first of the original colonies to declare independence from England and the last to become a U.S. state.
- It is illegal to sell a toothbrush on Sunday in Providence.
- Rhode Island was one of only two states to never ratify the 18th Amendment (Prohibition), which was eventually repealed.
- America's oldest carousel is the Flying Horse, and the Crescent Park Carousel is the state's official folk art symbol.
- Rhode Island is home to the International Tennis Hall of Fame.
- Ann Franklin was America's first woman newspaper editor. She worked for the *Newport Mercury*.
- The oldest *Torah* (Jewish scripture) in North America is in the Touro Synagogue, the oldest North American synagogue.

- Newport was the first place (in 1904) where anyone was jailed for speeding.

The Place

Climate

Usually, gentle breezes from the ocean and the bay make temperatures milder in Rhode Island than in neighboring states. They cool off the coast more than the center of the state. Average summer temperatures stay around the low 70s (21–23°C). Winter temperatures are in the high 20s (–4 to –2°C). But humidity makes summer seem hotter and winter seem colder. Rhode Island snowstorms generally dump most of the snow in the north, but warm ocean breezes change the snow to rain on the coast. Summer rains are normal, but sometimes droughts hit the state. *Tsunamis* are huge tidal waves. They sometimes come with hurricanes, which hit Rhode Island every 10 to 15 years.

Geography

Little Rhody is small. It's the smallest U.S. state, with only 1,545 square miles (4,001 sq km). There is a Texas ranch bigger than all of Rhode Island. Alaska, the largest state, is 425 times as big. More than 60 percent of the land is covered with forests. Many of the trees are canoe birches, which Native Americans used to make canoes. The area east of Narragansett Bay has almost no trees, however. Narragansett Bay is an *estuary*, or an arm of the ocean cut out by glaciers thousands of years ago. There are more than 30 islands in the bay. You can find rocky peaks, sandy beaches, and flat plains with some salt ponds. These salt ponds are shallow, and the sunlight helps eelgrass and fish to flourish. The northwest part of the state is rocky and forested.

Resources and Economy



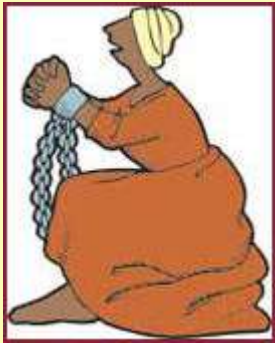


Rhode Island's small size and rocky terrain leaves little room for farming. The state ranks near the bottom for farm production. Instead, manufacturing is one of the biggest parts of Rhode Island's modern economy. Rhode Islanders produce jewelry, silverware, clothing, machinery, toys, and some of the best lace in the United States. Fishing is important along the bay, especially for lobster, quahogs (clams), and squid. The trees aren't good for lumber, but they are good at attracting tourists, especially during the fall when the leaves turn brilliant colors. Tourists also come to see old mansions and to boat and sail.




History

Time Line

A.D. 1500

Native American tribes, including the

A.D. 1500s	Wampanoag and the Narragansett, inhabit what is now called Rhode Island	
1524	Giovanni da Verrazzano explores Narragansett Bay for France	
1600		
1636	Roger Williams establishes the first Rhode Island settlement, now Providence	
1663	King Charles II gives the colony a second charter, promising freedom of religion and government	
1675	King Phillip's War begins	
1696	The slave trade begins in Newport	
1699	The first American Quaker meetinghouse is built	
1700		
1772	Rhode Islanders burn the <i>Gaspee</i> , a British ship, to protest taxes	
1775	The U.S. Navy is started, and Rhode Island native Esek Hopkins is made commander in chief	
1776	Rhode Island is the first colony to declare independence; British troops occupy Newport	
1778	The French aid the Americans in the Battle of Rhode Island against the British	
1784	Rhode Island begins to abolish slavery	
Rhode Island joins the United States as		

1790	the 13th state; Moses Brown and Samuel Slater start the first successful cotton mill in the United States	
1794	Nehemiah Dodge begins Rhode Island's jewelry industry	
1800		
1843	The new state constitution is adopted and expands voting rights	
1900		
1935	Democrats take over the state senate in the "bloodless revolution" led by Governor Green	
1938	The Rhode Island hurricane of 1938 kills hundreds of people and causes millions of dollars in damages	
1951	The state constitutional convention amendment begins home rule for cities and towns	
1971	The state adopts an income tax	
1978	A blizzard shuts down the entire state	
1989	An oil spill occurs off the coast of Newport	
PRESENT		

Early Inhabitants

Hundreds of years ago, several Native American tribes lived in Rhode Island. Some were friendly and peaceful, and others were warlike. Two Native American chiefs gave land to Roger



Williams, a Puritan minister, which he used to establish Providence. Williams respected the Native Americans and they respected him. He learned their language and insisted that colonists buy their land instead of taking it. This friendship grew, and the Native Americans were glad the colonists had come. But greed and prejudice eventually caused the settlers to take the land without paying. Tension grew. In 1637, war broke out. Thousands of Native Americans were killed during King Phillip's War. Others left and went west. Today, less than 1 percent of the population is Native American.

Religious Freedom

The First Amendment to the Constitution promises freedom of religion, but this right hasn't always been guaranteed. Roger Williams started the idea in the United States. While in Massachusetts, he disagreed with many of the Puritan ideas, so the Puritans arrested him and then threw him out of the colony. He fled to Rhode Island, which hadn't yet been settled. Quakers, Jews, Baptists, French Huguenots, and others gathered to Rhode Island because Roger Williams promised them religious freedom. Later, the authors of the Constitution used Williams's ideas to protect freedom of religion. Rhode Islanders didn't want to join the United States until they were promised that right.

American Revolution



When England sent troops to crush the rebellion in America, they landed in Newport—where they didn't get a nice welcome. Earlier, Rhode Islanders had burned a British ship, the *Gaspee*. Once the war began, Rhode Islanders joined in every major battle. General Nathanael Greene, a Rhode Islander, was second in command to General George Washington. The First Rhode Island Regiment, the first-ever all-African-American unit, was one of the bravest. Most were ex-slaves. They fought bravely and won many awards. Ironically, the Rhode Island slave trade was strong before the Revolution. While these brave men fought for freedom from the British, they would still have to fight later for the freedom of all African-Americans from slavery.

America's Industrial Revolution



Samuel Slater was 14 years old when he started working in British cotton mills. He later came to America to gain a fortune and became the “father of the American industrial revolution.” Slater invented the first successful water-powered cotton mill. He also built entire villages around his mills, so he could plan where his workers slept, ate, shopped, and went to church. One of his towns was called Slatersville. More than half of his workers were children. The workers started their jobs before sunrise and stopped only after sunset. Many of them were hurt in accidents at work because they were so tired. The supervisors sometimes hit them. The workers were generally paid less than one dollar a week.

Environment



In 1989, oil spilled off the coast of Newport. One million gallons leaked into the Sound. The Department of Environmental Management made sure it was cleaned up, but the spill made people think about the environment. Now, every Rhode Island city and town has a recycling program. Almost all of these programs are *mandatory*, meaning that people must recycle. The state improved the sewage treatment plant and continues to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to protect wetlands. Dangerous waste sites and polluted water are still some problems that Rhode Islanders face, but they have worked hard to fix them.

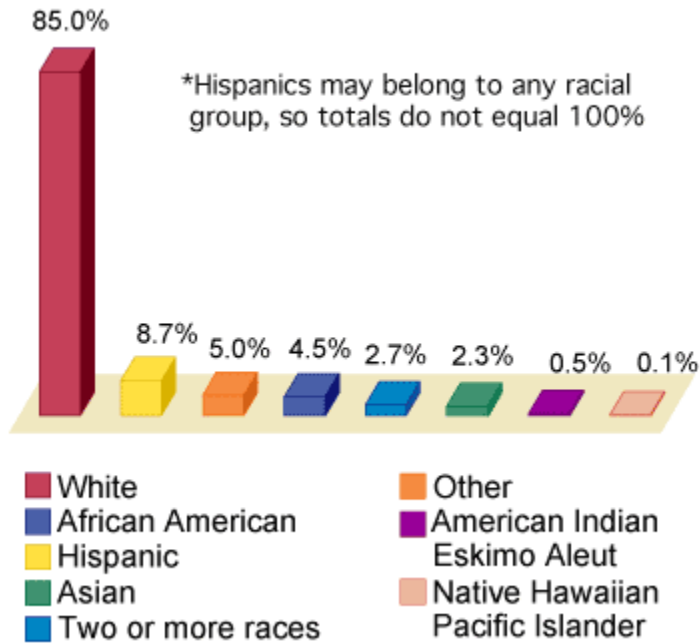
The People

Population

Rhode Island has 692 people per square mile (267 per sq km), making it the second most densely populated state. Its biggest cities—Providence, Pawtucket, Warwick, Cranston, and Woonsocket—are all part of one big urban area. Across the state, people live in anything from expensive vacation homes to homes in small farming villages. The first settlers had different religions, but today, two out of every three Rhode

Islanders are Roman Catholic. Many of them descend from the Irish Catholic immigrants of the 1800s.

Total Population: 1,069,725



Government

Capital: Providence

U.S. Senators: 2

U.S. Representatives: 2

Counties: 5

- Rhode Island is one of only three states without a county government.
- Many Rhode Island towns govern through town meetings. Everyone is invited to attend. They do regular business and vote on laws, budgets, and officials.

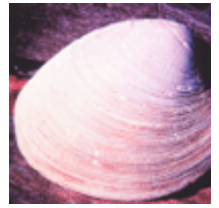
Famous People

- *Christiana Carteaux Bannister* — Philanthropist and supporter of arts and social causes
- *Christopher Grant La Farge* — Architect
- *Edward Benjamin Koren* — Cartoonist
- *George M. Cohan* — “Father of musical comedy”
- *Horace Mann* — “Father of American public education”
- *John Milton Hay* — Statesman
- *Julia Ward Howe* — Abolitionist, suffragist, and poet
- *Leon N. Cooper* — Physicist and educator
- *Matthew C. Perry* — Naval officer
- *Nancy Elizabeth Prophet* — Sculptor
- *William Anders* — Astronaut, pilot, and executive

State Symbols

State Animal

Quahog—Native Americans would use these clamshells as *wampum* (money).



State Bird

Red hen—This breed of chicken was first bred in Little Compton, where they celebrate with a Red Hen Barbeque every July.



State Flower

Violet—You'll find violets in early spring and summer in beautiful purples and blues.



State Tree

Red maple—Native Americans taught the early residents how to make syrup from maple trees.



Cultural Note



In 1793, Rhode Island became one of the birthplaces of the American Industrial Revolution when Samuel Slater built the first successful water-powered textile mill in Pawtucket. Rhode Island also became known for jewelry and silverware making. Silversmiths melted silver and gold and shaped it into jewelry, watches, silverware and other items. Seril and Nehemiah Dodge were the first to discover how to plate semi-precious metals with gold or silver. Today, Rhode Island is still a center for the production of jewelry and silverware.

For More Information

See www.state.ri.us or contact the Rhode Island Tourism Division, One West Exchange Street, Providence, RI 02903; phone (800) 556-2484; web site www.visitrhodeisland.com.