



# State of Washington

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Washington



Washington is one of the great states that make up the United States of America. We have gathered large amounts of information about Washington into one place from various sources such as the state Governor's office, the US Geological Survey (USGS), the US Census, the US Postal Service and many other authorities. So whether you are looking for Washington history, the state bird of Washington, or the best places to visit in Washington, the answers are just a click away.

## General Washington State History

Spokane, Yakima, Cayuse, Okanogan, Walla Walla, and Colville in the interior, and the Nooksak, Chinook, Nisqually, Clallam, Makah, Quinault, and Puyallup in the coastal area.

**Exploration and settlement:** In the 18th century, Europeans were attracted to the coast of present-day Washington by the valuable fur of the sea otter, an animal found there in great numbers. The Spanish explorer, Bruno Heceta, visited the area in 1775 and claimed it for his country. In 1790 Britain and Spain concluded the Nootka Sound Agreement, which opened the coast between California and Alaska to trade and settlement by both nations. In 1792 George Vancouver, a British naval officer, explored Puget Sound. By 1800 British interest had shifted from sea-dwelling furbearers to land animals, particularly the beaver, and the Montreal-based North West Company played a major role in opening Washington to the fur trade.

The first American interested in the Pacific Northwest were merchants who came from Boston as early as the 1780's, among them Robert Gray, who explored the Columbia River in 1792. The Lewis and Clark expedition (1804-06) stimulated public interest, and in 1811 John Jacob Astor established a fur-trading post - Astoria - near the mouth of the Columbia River and a fort at the mouth of the Okanogan River. In 1818, the U.S. and Britain agreed

to a ten-year period of joint occupancy of the Oregon country.

**Territorial status and statehood:** In 1846 the present U.S. - Canadian boundary was established, and Washington became part of the United States territory of Oregon two years later. When it was separated from Oregon in 1853, the new territory contained fewer than 4000 with inhabitants and stretched from the Pacific Ocean to the crest of the Rocky Mountains. The first territorial governor, Isaac I. Stevens, moved quickly to extinguish Native American title to the land and to improve transportation, the two keys to rapid settlement and economic development. The treaties negotiated by Stevens in 1854-55 were an attempt to defuse tensions between natives and settlers, but for various reasons the treaty structure quickly deteriorated, and intermittent warfare took place between 1855 and 1858. Because of this strife, and numerous delays in constructing the northern transcontinental railroad, the territory languished until the 1800s.

Completion of the Northern Pacific (1868) and Great Northern (1893) rail lines boosted Washington's economy, and statehood in 1889 brought political stability, beginning a period of rapid growth that lasted through World War I. During that time the population increased from 75,000 to 1.2 million. Wheat growing and cattle raising in eastern Washington and lumbering and fishing in the western portions of the state were the main economic activities. The Boeing Airplane Company, founded during World War I, became the largest private employer in the state during and after World War II. Lack of diversification and the cyclical nature of the major elements of the economy led to a series of boom-and-bust periods. The availability of inexperienced hydroelectric power after 1940 attracted the energy-intensive aluminum industry.

By the mid-20th century, agriculture had made dramatic gains. Construction of huge dams provided irrigation and flood control, as well as cheap electric power, and led to the development of inland ports and increased river shipping. As the gateway to Alaska, Washington had been moving away from dependence on federal contracts and has encouraged new industries to develop and process Alaskan resources. During the 1960s, 1970s, and the 1980s the population increased rapidly-especially in the Seattle and Puget Sound areas. State authorities tried to encourage industrial growth while protecting the environment.

**The character of the state:** Washington's reputation as a maverick state with citizens who tend toward radicalism in politics and social attitudes springs from its agrarian populist tradition and onetime strong radical labor movement. Both influenced the adoption of the initiative, referendum and recall, the open primary, and workers' compensation and consumer protection laws. Perhaps the most pervasive elements determining the character of the state, however, have been the relative homogeneity of its population, a relaxed pace of life, and a philosophy of harmony with the natural environment. Many citizens have enjoyed Washington's status as an isolated corner of the nation. This isolation was reflected in national politics, in which the state had little impact until after World War II, when Warren G. Magnusen, who represented Washington in the U.S. Senate from 1945 to 1981, and Henry M. Jackson, who served in the Senate from 1953 until his

death, acquired considerable influence in health, consumer affairs, foreign policy, and defense. Another prominent Democrat, Thomas S. Foley of Spokane, became Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1989.

## **Washington State Symbols, Facts & Info**

The United States of America accepted Washington as the 42nd state to enter the union. Below, you will find the official state symbols and interesting facts about Washington.

**State Name:**

Washington

**Abbreviation:**

WA

**Capital of Washington State:**

Olympia

**Date of Statehood:**

November 11, 1889

**Washington State Population:**

6,287,759 (US Census 2005 estimate)

**Current Weather/Time:**



**Primary Agriculture:**

Washington state is a leading lumber producer. The types of lumber include stands of Douglas fir, hemlock, ponderosa and white pine, spruce, larch, and cedar. The state currently ranks first in the nation for apples, pears, edible dry peas, red raspberries, hops, lentils, spearmint oil and sweet cherries. Washington also ranks high in the production of grapes, apricots, asparagus, peppermint oil and potatoes. Livestock and livestock products make important contributions to total farm revenue and the commercial fishing catch of salmon, halibut, and bottomfish makes a significant contribution to the economy of the state.

**Primary Industry:**

The top Washington manufacturing industries include lumber, aircraft/missiles, food processing, shipbuilding, transportation equipment, metals/metal products, chemicals and machinery.

**Washington State Nickname:**

The Evergreen State

**Washington State Motto:**

Al-Ki (Indian word meaning By and By)

**Washington State Flower:**

Coast Rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*)  
(Legislation of 1892)



**Washington State Tree:**

Western Hemlock (Legislation of 1947)

**Washington State Bird:**

American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*)  
(Legislation of 1951)



**Washington State Fish:**

Steelhead Trout (Legislation of 1969)

**Washington State Insect:**

Green Darner Dragonfly (Legislation of 1997)

**Washington State Gemstone:**

Petrified Wood (Legislation of 1975)

**Official State Seal:**



**Official State Flag:**



**State Commemorative Quarter:**

From the 1999-2008 United States Mint [50 State Quarters® Program](#)



### **Washington State Postage Stamp:**

From the 2002 [United States Postal Service](#) Greetings from America series.



### **Washington State License Plate:**

Photo under license from collector Jim Moini



## **Washington State Location**

The image below shows the location of Washington state in relation to the other states in the United States of America.



Note: Alaska and Hawaii are shown out of position for reference only and are not to scale.

**Area:** 66,544 square miles (USGS)

**Highest Elevation:** 14,410 ft (Mt Rainier) (USGS)

**Lowest Elevation:** 0 ft (Pacific Ocean) (USGS)

## **Historic Sites**

**Whitman Mission National Historical Site**

Commemorates one of the area's first missions, founded in 1836 by Dr. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. This was the scene of a massacre by Native Americans in 1847. Located 7 miles west of Walla Walla on Hwy 12. For information call: (509)522-6360

### **Fort Vancouver Historical Site**

From 1825 to 1849, Fort Vancouver was the site of the western headquarters of the Hudson Bay Company's fur trading operations. Under the leadership of John McLoughlin, the fort became the center of political, cultural, commercial and manufacturing activities in the Pacific Northwest. When American pioneers arrived in the Oregon country during the 1830s and 1840s, they came to Fort Vancouver for supplies to begin their farms. Located in Vancouver.

### **San Juan Island National Historical Park**

Commemorates Anglo-American territorial rivalry. The islands were the subject of a territorial debate due to inexact wording in the U.S. - Canada boundary treaty, but also the stage for an international incident commonly referred to as the "Pig War". The islands were occupied by both American and British citizens and military, both encampments are now part of the San Juan Island National Historic Park. In 1859, one of 25 American settlers, Lyman A Cutler, got tired of a British owned pig rooting in his potato patch; he shot and killed it. The owner insisted that Cutler pay for the pig, when he refused, the Englishman insisted he be brought to trial. The American refused to participate. The soldiers, bored most of the time, as no shots were fired, remained there until the matter was settled by arbitration 13 years later by Kaiser Wilhem I, who gave the San Juans to the United States. The pig was the only casualty. For information call: (360)378-2240

### **Pioneer Square**

American's original "Skid Road" and Seattle's oldest and most famous neighborhood is now a 15 block National Historic District. Step into the past and learn about the beginnings of this vibrant city. First settled in 1856, Seattle is a young city, but one with an exciting history.

### **Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park**

News of the gold strike in Canada's Yukon Territory spread from Seattle across the country, and from here most prospector's left for the gold fields. Today the park has a visitor center in the Pioneer Square Historic District, the center of the Gold Rush activity. For information call: (206) 553-7220

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## **Tourist Attractions**

### **Mt. Rainer**

A mountain wonderland famous for dense forests, dazzling wildflower meadows, tremendous snowfields, rugged glaciers, and an active volcano! Mount Rainier National Park is the 5th oldest national park in the nation. For information call: (360)569-221

### **Mt. Saint Helens national Volcanic Monument**

Take time to explore and discover the power and the drama of this volcano. For information call: (360)247-3900

### **Olympic National Forest (Olympic Peninsula)**

The Olympic National Forest is over 632,000 acres in size and is divided into four Ranger Districts: Hood Canal, Quilcene, Quinault and Soleduck. For information call: (360)956-2400

### **Riverfront Park**

Site of the 1974 World Expo. The 20 acre park boasts a permanent carousel with hand carved horses among its many attractions. For information call: (509)625-6200

### **The City of Seattle**

Home of the Space Needle, the Mariners, the SuperSonics, and The Seahawks and Pike's Place Market. Seattle's delights can be found throughout the city from it's impressive downtown to it's surprising neighborhoods. Visitor Information Center: (206) 461-5840