ALABAMA

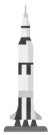
THE YELLOWHAMMER STATE *Became a state December 14, 1819 (22nd)*

Alabama stretches from the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains to the warm waters of the Gulf Coast. It helped send astronauts to the Moon, and one town built a monument to a bug.



Why the Yellowhammer State?

The story goes that during the Civil War, a company of horse soldiers from Huntsville rode into camp in new uniforms trimmed with bright yellow cloth. The soldiers already there, in worn and stained clothes, teased them and called them yellowhammers. A yellowhammer is a woodpecker with yellow under its wings. The name spread to all Alabama soldiers, and later to the state.



Rocket City

In 1950, the Army moved a team of rocket scientists to Huntsville, then a small cotton mill town. Led by Wernher von Braun, they built the rocket that launched America's first satellite in 1958. Then they designed the Saturn V, a rocket 363 feet tall. In 1969 a Saturn V carried the first astronauts to land on the Moon.



A Monument to a Bug

The boll weevil is a small beetle that eats cotton plants. It reached Alabama in 1910 and ruined cotton crops across the state. Farmers around the town of Enterprise switched to peanuts, and in 1917 their county grew the biggest peanut crop in the country. In 1919 the thankful town put up a monument to the bug that made them change.



The Magic City

Making iron takes three things from the ground: iron ore, coal and limestone. Around Birmingham, all three lie close together, which is rare. The city was founded in 1871 at a spot where railroads crossed. Its furnaces and mills grew so quickly that people called it the Magic City.



The River on a Mountain

Most rivers run through valleys. The Little River in northeast Alabama is different. It flows for most of its length along the top of Lookout Mountain. Over a very long time, the river cut a canyon into the mountain. It has sandstone cliffs and is about 600 feet deep in places. One waterfall there, Grace's High Falls, is 133 feet tall.



America's Amazon

Just north of Mobile Bay, several rivers spread out into a maze of swamps, marshes and streams about 45 miles long. This is the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. A delta is the low, wet land that rivers build from mud as they near the sea. Alligators, turtles and about 300 kinds of birds live here. Some people call it America's Amazon.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 5.2 million (24th most)
Size	About 52,400 square miles (30th largest)
Highest point	Cheaha Mountain, 2,407 feet
Counties	67
Neighbors	Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi

DID YOU KNOW?

- Alabama schoolchildren gave about $100,000 in nickels and dimes to help bring the battleship USS Alabama home to Mobile in 1964.
- In 1954 a meteorite crashed through a roof near Sylacauga and bruised a woman napping on her couch.
- Alabama is named for the Alabama River. The river is named for the Alabama people, a Native nation who lived beside it.
- About half of the country's peanuts are grown within 100 miles of Dothan.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to the Boll Weevil Monument?
3. What is Huntsville known as?

Answers: 1. Montgomery 2. Dothan 3. Rocket City, USA