IDAHO

THE GEM STATE *Became a state July 3, 1890 (43rd)*

Idaho is a mountain state in the Northwest, full of tall peaks, deep canyons and huge forests. The Snake River curves across the south, where most Idahoans live and farm.



Why the Gem State?

In 1860 a man named George Willing suggested the name Idaho for a new territory, the one that became Colorado. He said it was a Native American word meaning gem of the mountains. Later he said he had made it up. The name stuck anyway, and it fits. More than 70 kinds of gemstones are found in Idaho, including the rare star garnet.



The Horse of the Nez Perce

The Nez Perce, who call themselves Nimiipuu, were skilled horse breeders. They chose their best horses to be parents, and their spotted horses became famous. Settlers called one a Palouse horse, after the Palouse River, and the name became Appaloosa. Many have striped hooves. A club started in 1938 to save the breed is based in Moscow, Idaho. Today the tribe raises horses in Lapwai.



Why Potatoes Love Idaho

Southern Idaho gets little rain, yet it grows about a third of the country's potatoes. Old volcanoes left the soil light and rich. Summer days are warm and nights are cool, which helps potatoes grow large. Farmers bring the water themselves, through canals filled by the Snake River and melting mountain snow.



A Piece of the Moon

Lava has poured again and again from the Great Rift, a line of cracks in the earth more than 50 miles long. The last time was about 2,000 years ago. The lava cooled into a black land of cones, caves and rivers of rock. In 1969, four astronauts training for a Moon mission came here to learn about volcanic rock.



Four Light Bulbs

On December 20, 1951, scientists in the desert near Arco lit four light bulbs. The power came from a nuclear reactor, a machine that makes heat by splitting atoms. It was the first time a reactor had made a useful amount of electricity. In 1955, Arco became the first town in the world lit entirely by atomic power. It lasted about an hour.



Deeper Than the Grand Canyon

Along Idaho's western border, the Snake River has cut Hells Canyon. The river began carving it only about two million years ago. From the top of He Devil Peak down to the water is 7,993 feet, about a mile and a half. That is about 2,000 feet deeper than the Grand Canyon.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 2 million (37th most)
Size	About 83,600 square miles (14th largest)
Highest point	Borah Peak, 12,662 feet
Counties	44
Neighbors	Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, and Canada to the north

DID YOU KNOW?

- Idaho's capitol building in Boise is heated by hot water from deep underground.
- Lewiston is a seaport about 465 miles from the ocean. Barges reach it by river.
- The story goes that Philo Farnsworth was 14 and working in a potato field near Rigby when he got his idea for electronic television.
- The Coeur d'Alene people and Catholic priests built the Cataldo Mission without using a single nail.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to Shoshone Falls?
3. How tall can a western white pine grow?

Answers: 1. Boise 2. Twin Falls 3. 175 feet