LOUISIANA

THE PELICAN STATE *Became a state April 30, 1812 (18th)*

Louisiana sits at the mouth of the Mississippi River, where swamps and marshes meet the sea. French, Spanish, African and Native peoples all shaped its food, music and language.



Why the Pelican State?

Brown pelicans have long nested along Louisiana's coast, and one appears on the state flag. By 1963 they had vanished from the state. Bug-killing chemicals such as DDT had poisoned birds and made their eggshells too thin. Beginning in 1968, wildlife workers brought young pelicans from Florida to start over. Thousands nest here again.



A Colony Named for a King

In 1682, the French explorer La Salle traveled down the Mississippi River and claimed its whole valley for France. He named it Louisiana for King Louis XIV. In 1714 the French founded Natchitoches, the oldest lasting European town in the state. In 1803 France sold Louisiana to the United States for 15 million dollars.



Land Built by a River

Much of southern Louisiana was made by the Mississippi River. For thousands of years the river flooded and dropped mud that piled up into new land. Today walls called levees keep the river out of towns, but they also send its mud out to sea. Without new mud, the coast is slowly washing away.



Mounds Built by the Basket

More than 3,400 years ago, Native people built a great gathering place at Poverty Point. They had no wheels or work animals. They carried dirt in baskets, millions of loads, to shape six long curved ridges and several mounds. The tallest rises 72 feet. Stones found here came from as far as 800 miles away.



Where Jazz Was Born

On Sundays in the early 1800s, Black New Orleanians gathered at Congo Square to drum, sing and dance. Their rhythms lived on in the city. Around 1900, Black musicians blended them with blues and brass band marches to make jazz. Louis Armstrong, born in New Orleans in 1901, carried it around the world.



How Acadians Became Cajuns

The Acadians were French-speaking farmers in eastern Canada. In 1755 the British made them leave. Beginning in 1764, about 3,000 of them found a new home in southern Louisiana. Over time the word Acadian was shortened to Cajun. Cajun cooks made feasts from what the swamps offered, like crawfish. Cajun bands play accordion and fiddle.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 4.6 million (25th most)
Size	About 52,400 square miles (31st largest)
Highest point	Driskill Mountain, 535 feet
Parishes	64
Neighbors	Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the largest in Louisiana?
2. Which city is closest to Poverty Point?
3. What crosses Lake Pontchartrain?

Answers: 1. New Orleans 2. Monroe 3. A 24-mile bridge

DID YOU KNOW?

- Louisiana is the only state with parishes instead of counties. The word comes from old French and Spanish church districts.
- Avery Island is not really an island. It is a huge dome of rock salt, three miles long, rising above the marsh.
- The state capitol in Baton Rouge is 450 feet tall. It is the tallest capitol building in the country.
- More than two million wild alligators live in Louisiana.