MISSISSIPPI

THE MAGNOLIA STATE *Became a state December 10, 1817 (20th)*

Mississippi is a warm, green state in the Deep South, named for the great river on its western edge. Its rich soil shaped its history, and its music changed the world.



A Gift from the River

The state is named for its river. The name comes from the Ojibwe words Misi-ziibi, meaning great river. For thousands of years the river flooded again and again, spreading mud across the low land beside it. Layer by layer, the floods built the Delta, a wide, flat plain with some of the deepest soil in the country.



A King from Tupelo

Elvis Presley was born in 1935 in a two-room house in Tupelo. At 10 he stood on a chair at a fair and sang in a contest. For his eleventh birthday he wanted a bicycle or a rifle. The story goes that his mother talked him into a guitar instead. He became known as the King of Rock and Roll.



Where the Blues Began

Black farm workers in the Delta sang as they worked in the fields. Out of those songs grew the blues, music about hard times often played on guitar. Players such as Muddy Waters, who grew up near Clarksdale, later carried it north to Chicago. Rock and roll grew partly from the blues.



Forty-Seven Days at Vicksburg

Vicksburg sits on high bluffs above the Mississippi River. During the Civil War, Confederate cannons guarded the river. President Lincoln called the city the key to winning the war. In May 1863 the Union army surrounded Vicksburg and cut off its food. After 47 days, the city surrendered on July 4. Five days later the Union held the whole river.



Fish Farms in the Delta

Not every Delta farm grows plants. In 1965, Mississippi farmers began raising catfish in ponds to sell. Parts of the Delta have thick clay soil that is poor for cotton but holds water well. The land is flat, and there is plenty of water underground to pump into the ponds. Mississippi raises more catfish than any other state.



A Forest That Needs Fire

Longleaf pine forests once covered about 90 million acres of the South, from Virginia to Texas. Only a small part is left, and De Soto National Forest protects some of it. Longleaf pines need fire. Low flames clear away brush so young pines get sunlight, and thick bark protects the older trees. Today foresters set careful fires on purpose.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	Nearly 3 million (35th most)
Size	About 48,400 square miles (32nd largest)
Highest point	Woodall Mountain, 806 feet
Counties	82
Neighbors	Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas

DID YOU KNOW?

- The teddy bear is named for President Theodore Roosevelt, who refused to shoot a tied-up bear on a 1902 hunt in Mississippi.
- Jim Henson, who created Kermit the Frog, spent his early childhood in Leland. The first Kermit was made from his mother's old coat.
- Vardaman calls itself the Sweet Potato Capital of the World. It holds a sweet potato festival the first week of every November.
- Mississippi's state flower and state tree are the same plant, the southern magnolia.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to Elvis Birthplace?
3. Which town is known as the catfish capital?

Answers: 1. Jackson 2. Tupelo 3. Belzoni