RHODE ISLAND

THE OCEAN STATE *Became a state May 29, 1790 (13th)*

Rhode Island is the smallest state, wrapped around a bay full of islands. It began as a home for people of every faith and later built some of the country's first factories.



Why the Ocean State?

Rhode Island is only about 48 miles long and 37 miles wide. Yet it has about 400 miles of coastline. The reason is Narragansett Bay, which cuts 28 miles into the land like a wedge and holds more than 30 islands. Bays and inlets make up about 14 percent of the state.



Free to Believe

In 1636 Roger Williams was forced out of Massachusetts for his religious views. Narragansett leaders let him have land, and he started Providence as a place where people of every faith were welcome. In 1658 fifteen Jewish families settled in Newport. Their synagogue, finished in 1763, still stands. In 1790 President George Washington wrote to its members that the new country gives "to bigotry no sanction."



The Mill in His Memory

In the 1700s, England had machines that spun cotton into thread, and its laws forbade anyone to take the designs out of the country. Samuel Slater, a 21-year-old mill worker, memorized them and sailed to America in 1789. In Pawtucket he rebuilt the machines, and in 1793 he opened a mill powered by the Blackstone River.



A Chicken for a State Bird

The story goes that in 1854 a farmer named William Tripp, in Little Compton, bought a red rooster from a sailor and put it with his hens. Farmers kept breeding the best of the chicks. In time they had a hardy red chicken that gave both meat and 200 to 300 brown eggs a year. It became the state bird in 1954.



Horses That Fly

At Watch Hill in Westerly, 20 small wooden horses hang from chains instead of standing on a floor. When the carousel spins, the horses swing outward as if they were flying. It was built about 1876 for a traveling carnival, which left it behind in 1879. It is the oldest carousel of its kind still running in the country. Only children may ride.



Beads from a Clam Shell

The quahog is a hard clam with deep purple inside its shell. The Narragansett and their neighbors shaped pieces of shell into beads called wampum. Belts of wampum recorded agreements and were given as gifts. English colonists used the beads as money. Narragansett artists still carve quahog shell into jewelry today.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 1.1 million (7th fewest)
Size	About 1,500 square miles, water included (smallest)
Highest point	Jerimoth Hill, 812 feet
Counties	5 in name only, with no county governments
Neighbors	Connecticut, Massachusetts

DID YOU KNOW?

- Rhode Island was the first colony to break from Britain's king. It was the last of the 13 to approve the Constitution.
- Coffee milk, milk mixed with sweet coffee syrup, has been Rhode Island's official state drink since 1993.
- In 1772, people from Providence burned a British ship called the Gaspee to protest British trade rules.
- Mr. Potato Head came from a Rhode Island toy company in 1952. He was the first toy advertised on television.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to Touro Synagogue?
3. How high do the Mohegan Bluffs rise above the ocean?

Answers: 1. Providence 2. Newport 3. 150 feet