

# NORTH AMERICA: SOUTHCENTRAL U.S.

Of the six states shown above, Kansas and Missouri are usually considered Midwestern. The other four are classified as Southern; they all fought for the Confederacy. Oklahoma was still an Indian Territory, but quite a few tribes fought alongside the rebels.

Oil has been the driving force behind the economies of Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana, with natural gas deposits gaining in importance. Alaska became a major oil producer with the discovery of large reserves on its north coast. The economies of these states tend to be dependent upon the international price of oil.

## ARKANSAS<sup>A</sup>

Area: 53,103 sq.mi.(137,537 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 2,740,000. Capital: Little Rock, 185,000. Economy: Timber, rice, broiler chickens, oil, natural gas, bauxite. □ Arkansas (ark' in saw) is best known for its scenery and outdoor attractions, especially the natural springs. The therapeutic waters of over 40 springs in the city of Hot Springs draw millions of visitors each year. The springs are actually in Hot Springs National Park, most of which is within the city limits. Arkansas leads the nation in rice and broiler chicken production. The state has America's only diamond mine—visitors may keep whatever diamonds they find. The eastern part of the state, along the Mississippi, has fertile, alluvial soil. Rich farmland can also be found in the northern Ozark region. Arkansas has one of the highest rural populations in the nation.

## KANSAS<sup>B</sup>

Area: 82,264 sq.mi.(212,899 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 2,730,000. Capital: Topeka, 123,000. Economy: Wheat, cattle, oil, natural gas, aircraft. □ The nation's leading wheat producer has a colorful western past: cattle drives, gunfighters, saloons, and wagon trails. Railroad terminals in Abilene and Dodge City were the destination for many cattle drives coming from as far away as Texas. The geographical center of the 48 states is in central Kansas, near the Nebraska border. The major population centers are in the eastern half of the state, which has rich alluvial soil and adequate rainfall. In the drier west, there are very few trees, and the land is a flat plain gradually ascending to 4,000 ft.(1,220 m) at the foothills of the Rockies. Land conservation, irrigation, dams, and reservoirs have revived Kansas from the "dust bowl" condition of the 1930s. Wichita, the largest city (310,000), is the nation's number-one producer of private aircraft.

## LOUISIANA<sup>C</sup>

Area: 48,522 sq.mi.(125,575 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 5,520,000. Capital: Baton Rouge, 230,000. Economy: Oil and natural gas, chemicals, salt, sulphur, soybeans, sugar, shrimp. □ The huge Delta region was formed by silt (particles of soil suspended in water) donated by states located up the Mississippi River. A massive network of dikes and levees (banks) has been built along the river to protect against flooding. The state's extensive Gulf coastline includes hundreds of inlets, islands, sandbars, bayous, and marshes. This area supports huge pelican and egret populations, and is the winter home for half the wild ducks and geese in North America. New Orleans (480,000), the largest city, lies 100 miles upriver from the Gulf of Mexico. It is a major shipping center and one of America's favorite tourist attractions with its fine restaurants, "Old World" architecture, street art, Dixieland music, and the Mardi Gras. Another "foreign" side of Louisiana is that the state's civil law is based upon France's Napoleonic Code. Many people in the southern half of the state are either Cajuns or Creoles, and most of them are Roman Catholic. Cajuns, who speak a French dialect as well as English, are descendants of early Canadian settlers from Nova Scotia. Creoles are people of French or Spanish ancestry. Northern Louisiana is ethnically different from the South, as it was settled primarily by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants from the other states.

## MISSOURI<sup>D</sup>

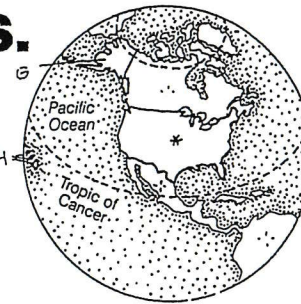
Area: 69,685 sq.mi.(180,345 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 5,700,000. Capital: Jefferson City, 36,000. Economy: Transportation equipment, lead, soybeans, corn, meat-packing. □ Because of its central location and access to the nation's largest rivers, Missouri (muh zoor' ee) was a major 19th century trade and transportation center; the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails led west from the town of Independence. The Pony Express serviced the western half of the country, from St. Joseph, on Missouri's western border, to California. Close to the Mississippi riverfront in St. Louis (345,000) is the nation's tallest monument, the 630 ft. (192 m) Gateway Arch. It is dedicated to the city's historic role as the gateway to the West. St. Louis and Kansas City (450,000) are also major air, rail, and trucking centers, as well as important inland ports. Missouri is a big producer of transportation equipment: autos, planes, railroad cars, buses, and aerospace products. The hilly Ozark Plateau region is a popular recreation area and the center for the nation's largest lead-mining industry.

## OKLAHOMA<sup>E</sup>

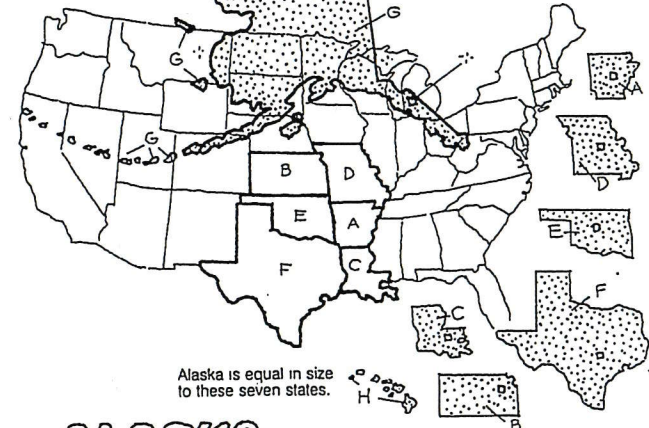
Area: 69,920 sq.mi.(180,953 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 3,500,000. Capital: Oklahoma City, 515,000. Economy: Oil and natural gas, cattle, wheat. □ "Oklahoma" is an Indian term meaning "land of red people." But with the firing of a single pistol shot in 1889, which signaled the start of a massive land grab by white settlers, the Indian population lost most of their treaty rights. Those settlers who raced out to claim their land before the gun was fired were called "Sooners"; the nickname now applies to all Oklahomans. In Oklahoma, oil derricks can be seen everywhere, including on the front lawn of the state capital in Oklahoma City. Tulsa (400,000), the second-largest city, has been called the "oil capital of the world." The city became an important inland port when an enormous navigation project on the Arkansas River opened up commercial traffic to the Mississippi. Grasslands support a huge beef industry, but the soil has never recovered its pre-dust bowl fertility. The effects of the droughts of the 1930s and the emigration of thousands of "Okies" from the state were described by John Steinbeck in "The Grapes of Wrath."

## TEXAS<sup>F</sup>

Area: 267,338 sq.mi.(691,872 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 21,300,000. Capital: Austin, 700,000. Economy: Oil and natural gas, cattle, cotton, sulphur, machinery, electronics, machinery. □ The Alamo was a San Antonio chapel in which Texas revolutionaries (including Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett) were wiped out by a Mexican army. In 1836, the rallying cry "remember the Alamo" led a Texas army to victory and independence from Mexico. Statehood followed nine years later. Although Alaska displaced Texas as the largest state, Texans can still boast of being number one in oil, natural gas, sulphur, asphalt, and gypsum. Texas also has the most ranches and farms, which raise the most cattle, horses, sheep, wool, and cotton; the King Ranch alone is larger than Rhode Island. Texas ranks third, after California and New York, in the value of the goods it produces. Houston (2,100,000), a major seaport, is the trade and manufacturing center for this region of the country. The Johnson Space Center is located close by. Dallas (1,220,000) and Ft. Worth (550,000) are the heart of the oil, banking, and insurance industries, and together with other population centers they form one of the nation's largest metropolitan areas.



# ALASKA & HAWAII



## ALASKA<sup>G</sup>

Area: 586,400 sq.mi.(1,517,603 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 645,000. Capital: Juneau, 32,000. Economy: Oil, natural gas, timber, fishing, gold. □ Alaska means "great land" in Aleut—and it surely lives up to its name. It is more than twice the size of Texas; it has a longer coastline than all other states combined; and it has the tallest mountain peak in North America (Mt. McKinley, 20,320 ft., 6,194 m). In 1867, Secretary of State Seward pressured Congress to buy "Russian America" for \$7.2 million. Even at 2 cents an acre (5 cents a hectare), it was referred to as "Seward's Folly." The U.S. and Russia are separated by the 50 mi.(80 km)-wide Bering Strait. Alaska is America's last frontier—a mostly uninhabited region with a broad range of untapped mineral and natural resources. Its fishing industry (principally salmon) is the nation's largest. The winters are generally frigid, except in the southern and southeastern regions, which have temperatures comparable to many northern U.S. cities. Juneau, the capital, alongside British Columbia, can be reached only by air or sea. Barrow, on the barren Arctic coast, is the largest Eskimo village in the world. East of it, on Prudhoe Bay, a major oil discovery was made in 1968. A pipeline was built to transport oil 800 mi.(1,280 km) to Valdez, a town on Prince William Sound in the Gulf of Alaska. A devastating oil spill occurred there in 1989. Alaska's worst weather and most hostile landscape is in the Aleutian Islands, an archipelago extending westward for 1,700 mi (2,720 km). Japanese troops occupied the two outermost islands during World War II—their only invasion of North America.

## HAWAII<sup>H</sup>

Area: 6,450 sq.mi.(16,706 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 1,230,000. Capital: Honolulu, 375,000. Economy: Military installations, tourism, pineapples, sugar. □ Entirely created by volcanoes, Hawaii (huh wy' ee) is a 1,500 mi.(2,400 km) archipelago of 130 islands in the mid-Pacific, southwest of the mainland and the same distance from San Francisco as is New York City. The islands were settled by Polynesians from Southeast Asia around 750 A.D. They were discovered in 1778 by the English explorer James Cook, who named them the Sandwich Islands. Hawaii has the broadest ethnic mix of any state, including the highest percentage of Asians (58%). Most Hawaiians live on the five largest islands. Hawaii followed Alaska in entering the Union in 1959. Beautiful weather, a lush tropical environment, native hospitality, and jet travel have created a thriving tourist trade. Honolulu, on the island of Oahu, is the business center and has almost a third of the state's population. Also on Oahu is Pearl Harbor, the seaport and naval base that was attacked by the Japanese in 1941, bringing the U.S. into World War II. Hawaii, the "Big Island," was formed by five volcanoes; two are still active. Maui has the world's widest inactive crater (7 mi., 11.2 km). A mountaintop on Kauai, the greenest island, is the wettest spot on the planet, with 460 in.(1,168 cm) of rain annually.



