

# NORTH AMERICA: SOUTHEASTERN U.S.

Long hot summers, mild winters, heavy rainfall, and fertile land make the Southeast a major agricultural producer. Cotton, tobacco, and peanuts are the leading crops. The South, which also includes Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, was once known as the "land of cotton." After World War II, the emphasis shifted to manufacturing; northern companies arrived in search of cheap, non-union labor. New England's textile mills moved closer to their source of cotton. The end of racial segregation removed a stigma long associated with the South. The availability of air conditioning further encouraged migration from the North. Only the West has had more growth. Industrialization and the arrival of "Yankees" have not diminished the South's traditional charm.

The southeastern states have thick, fast-growing softwood forests that produce 40% of the nation's timber. Except for the Florida peninsula, the region slopes eastward from Appalachian crests, down across hilly plateaus (the Piedmont) to the flat Atlantic coastal plain. The major cities are congregated in the Piedmont because of the rushing rivers that provide hydroelectric power. The rivers of the South, particularly the Mississippi and its tributaries, play a vital role in commerce, farming, and recreation. Almost all of the large lakes in this region were created by the damming of rivers.

Washington, D.C. (District of Columbia), the nation's capital, is not part of any state. It has a local government, but it is under the control of Congress. Located on the Maryland side of the Potomac River (it was once a part of Maryland), Washington is 69 sq.mi.(179 km<sup>2</sup>) in area and has a population of 575,000. The metropolitan Washington area is much larger and includes parts of Maryland and Virginia.

## ALABAMA

Area: 51,609 sq.mi.(133,667 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 5,200,000. Capital: Montgomery, 205,000. Economy: Timber and paper, iron and steel, cotton, peanuts, pecans, soybeans, textiles. □ Because the ingredients of steel production (iron, coal, and limestone) are mined locally, Birmingham (240,000) has been the iron, steel, and heavy industry center of the South. The agricultural industry had revolved around cotton until a pest, the boll weevil, nearly wiped out an entire cotton harvest. Farmers were forced to diversify and now grow a wide variety of crops. This has led to prosperity and security, prompting the state to erect a public monument in honor of the boll weevil. Montgomery was the first capital of the Confederacy. One hundred years later, it was the site of a bus boycott, led by Martin Luther King, which accelerated the civil rights movement. The Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville has developed many of the rockets and missiles used in America's space program.

## FLORIDA

Area: 58,664 sq.mi.(151,939 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 16,600,000. Capital: Tallahassee, 155,000. Economy: Tourism, citrus, cattle, phosphates, vegetables, sugarcane, electronics. □ Florida, a long (450 mi., 720 km), low, flat peninsula jutting into subtropical seas, is the one of the fastest-growing states. The balmy climate makes year-round agriculture possible. While retirees have given the state the nation's oldest population, tourists bring their kids to see Disney World in Orlando; the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral; St. Augustine (the first European settlement in the U.S., in 1565); the Florida Keys (a chain of coral islands); and Everglades National Park. The latter is a large, swampy region whose land and water are being devoured by Florida's building boom. Lake Okeechobee is the second-largest freshwater lake (after Lake Michigan) completely within the U.S. Jacksonville (750,000) is physically the largest city in the country. South Florida is dominated by Miami (365,000)—Latin-flavored as a result of Cuban immigration. Florida has a huge citrus industry; nearly all frozen orange juice is processed there. Most of the country's phosphate, a chief ingredient of fertilizer, is mined in Florida. Northern Florida is one the country's leading cattle regions.

## GEORGIA

Area: 58,876 sq.mi.(152,489 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 8,600,000. Capital: Atlanta, 420,000. Economy: Timber, aircraft, marble, cotton, tobacco, soybeans, peanuts, poultry, peaches. □ Georgia was named after King George II. It is the largest state east of the Mississippi and one of the fastest growing. Atlanta, the capital, is the center of business, trade, and finance in the entire Southeast. Many varieties of trees, particularly pines, cover 70% of the state. These pines produce half the world's supply of naval stores (tar, resin, and turpentine). Southeastern Georgia is a flatland covered by marshes and swamps (the Okefenokee is a lush wildlife refuge); bayous (narrow river outlets); and grassy plains called savannas. The city of Savannah is Georgia's third largest (130,000) and a seaport of historic importance. Undamaged by the Civil War, Savannah is a fine example of antebellum architecture.

## KENTUCKY

Area: 40,410 sq.mi.(104,662 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 4,120,000. Capital: Frankfort, 28,000. Economy: Coal, tobacco, timber, bourbon whiskey, racehorses. □ The name "Blue-grass State" comes from the blue tint of the grassy hills of the populated north central region. Most of Kentucky is a hilly plateau that gradually slopes westward to the Mississippi. Along with the breeding of the best racehorses and the making of fine bourbon whiskey, Kentucky is first in the U.S. in coal production and second in tobacco products. The main tourist attraction is Mammoth Cave, the largest system of caves (300 mi., 480 km) in the world. Louisville (255,000), the largest city, is an important inland port on the

Ohio River, and the home of the Kentucky Derby. Fort Knox is reputed to be the storehouse of all the gold owned by the U.S. government.

## MISSISSIPPI

Area: 47,718 sq.mi.(123,494 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 2,900,000. Capital: Jackson, 180,000. Economy: Cotton, timber and paper, naval stores, soybeans, oil. □ Mississippi was governed by the French, British, and Spanish rule before becoming a state. Cotton production once made it one of the most prosperous states, but it took nearly 100 years to recover from the devastation it suffered in the Civil War. There was virtually no industry before World War II. Today, the state has one of the nation's most ambitious reforestation programs. Especially fertile farmland is found in alluvial regions (soil deposited by previous floods) along the Mississippi and in the "Black Belt," a strip of dark, rich soil that runs across Mississippi and Alabama. Pond-raised catfish is a major industry. The Gulf Coast is a popular resort area and home to the shrimp industry. Scenes of Mississippi's rural life have been fictionalized by William Faulkner.

## NORTH CAROLINA

Area: 52,586 sq.mi.(136,198 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 8,330,000. Capital: Raleigh, 285,000. Economy: Tobacco, textiles furniture, timber, cotton. □ North Carolina is the nation's largest producer of tobacco, textiles, and wooden furniture. In the western Blue Ridge Mountains is the tallest peak east of the Mississippi, Mt. Mitchell (6,684 ft., 2,038 m). The hilly, fertile Piedmont region holds the major population and industrial centers as well as the tobacco farms. To the east lie the savannas and swamps of the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Offshore is a chain of narrow islands, sandbars, and reefs, similar to those on Florida's east coast but far more treacherous. Shifting sands and unseen reefs have wrecked many a passing ship. Cape Hatteras has been called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." Kitty Hawk, a little to the north, is the stretch of sand made famous by the first flight of the Wright brothers in 1903.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Area: 31,112 sq.mi.(80,580 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 4,125,000. Capital: Columbia, 200,000. Economy: Tobacco, textiles, paper products, chemicals. □ The busy seaport of Charleston, the second-largest city (85,000), was founded in 1670. Here one can still experience the charm and appearance of the "Old South," where aristocratic plantation owners lived a lifestyle patterned after that of English nobility. Their determination to retain a slave-based economy prompted South Carolina to become the first state to secede from the Union. The opening shots of the Civil War were fired on Ft. Sumter in Charleston harbor. Today, the state's rapidly expanding industrial economy is assisted by hydroelectric power, generated by 12 rivers rushing down from the "up country" in the west to the "low country" in the east. The central location of Columbia, the capital, was a compromise between rival settlers of these two "countries."

## TENNESSEE

Area: 42,110 sq.mi.(108,981 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 5,850,000. Capital: Nashville, 580,000. Economy: Chemicals, food products, vehicles, cotton, tobacco, textiles. □ Tennessee is divided into three parts by the Tennessee River, unusual in the way it returns to Tennessee after swinging south through Alabama. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has erected 32 dams along the river to create reservoirs and recreational lakes, and to provide hydroelectric power for Tennessee and seven neighboring states. Cotton and soybeans are the chief crops in the flat and fertile western region. Memphis, on bluffs above the Mississippi River, is the largest city (660,000) and a busy inland port. Nashville, the capital and second-largest city, is the country music capital of America (home of the Grand Ole Opry). Oak Ridge was the site of the nation's first nuclear reactor, which provided material for the first atomic bomb.

## VIRGINIA

Area: 40,817 sq.mi.(105,716 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 7,250,000. Capital: Richmond, 200,000. Economy: Chemicals, tobacco, tourism, shipbuilding, textiles, foods, timber. □ Sir Walter Raleigh named Virginia for Queen Elizabeth I, the "Virgin Queen." Virginia's history dates back to the founding of Jamestown in 1607, the first English settlement in North America. Other tourist attractions are Williamsburg, a restored colonial village; Mt. Vernon and Monticello, the homes of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson (Virginia was the birthplace of six other presidents); Arlington National Cemetery; the Blue Ridge Mountains; the Shenandoah Valley; and the many Civil War shrines (Virginia was the principal battleground). Proximity to the sea plays an important role in the state's strong economy. Norfolk, the second-largest city (230,000) after Virginia Beach (430,000) as well as the major seaport, and Newport News (182,000) are centers for shipbuilding and U.S. naval installations.

## WEST VIRGINIA

Area: 24,181 sq.mi.(62,629 km<sup>2</sup>). Population: 1,810,000. Capital: Charleston, 54,000. Economy: Coal, iron and steel, timber, chemicals, glassware, marbles. □ Most of West Virginia's population and manufacturing centers are either on or close to the Ohio River. A greater percentage of West Virginia is covered by mountains than any other state. It has the highest average elevation of any state east of the Mississippi. The rugged terrain has bred a highly independent-minded citizenry. John Brown led his famous anti-slavery rebellion in 1859 at Harpers Ferry (now a national park). When the Civil War began, western Virginia residents, who had strong anti-slavery feelings, broke away from secessionist Virginia to form their own state, and then rejoined the Union. West Virginia's economy depends largely upon coal mining and industrial production. Indiscriminate strip mining and lumbering have ravaged many parts of this scenic region. Steps have been taken to restore the landscape.



