

## MISSOURI

1. Name – Missouree or Missourah. It depends on where you are from.
2. Physical Location – practically in the middle of the United States. The mean center of the US population is actually in SW Missouri.
  - a. Is it north or south, east or west? It is a border state that transitions from the eastern US to the western US. St. Louis is sometimes called the western-most eastern city and Kansas City the eastern-most western city.
  - b. The eastern border is defined by the Mississippi River. The Missouri River defines the northern half of the western border. In Kansas City the Missouri turns east and joins the Mississippi River in St. Louis.
  - c. Missouri is actually bordered by 8 other states.
3. History –
  - a. Originally settled by various indigenous tribes.
  - b. The first European settlers were French Canadians who arrived around 1750. It became Spanish territory soon after but was returned to France in the early 19th century.
  - c. In 1803, the United States bought the entire Louisiana Territory, including Missouri, from France. Thomas Jefferson was president then and this leads to the Missouri capital being named Jefferson City.
  - d. Annexation to the US led to the migration of American settlers who owned slaves. This set the stage for an interesting event in American history, the Missouri Compromise. To keep the number of free and slave states in balance, Maine and Missouri were both admitted to the Union in 1821, one being free and the other a slave state.
  - e. The population of Missouri grew rapidly in from 1830 to 1860 and included many Irish and German immigrants, including my great grandfather from Bad Dürkheim in Rhineland. There were many immigrants from the Rhineland since the Missouri River valley was an excellent location to produce wine. Prior to the American Civil War, Missouri was the second largest wine-producing state in the country. Today you can still find a lengthy Weinstrasse and there are nearly 100 operating wineries in Missouri.
  - f. Missouri's location also meant that it played an important role in the development of the western United States. Just after the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark expedition was started in hopes of finding a connection to the Pacific Ocean.
  - g. St. Louis was known as the Gateway to the West and is today symbolized by the Gateway Arch. Kansas City, Independence, and St. Joseph, Missouri were the starting points for many of the wagon trains headed to California after gold was discovered there.

- h. Most people do not know that many Civil War engagements and battles were fought in Missouri. In fact, the Army Register confirms that in 1861 more were fought in Missouri than Virginia and West Virginia combined.
4. Not to brag too much, but Missouri has been home to many names you might recognize.
- a. Presidents – Harry Truman spent his entire life in Independence, Missouri before moving to Washington DC. Following the Civil War, Ulysses S. Grant met his wife in St. Louis and was farmer there. You can still visit Grant’s Farm today.
  - b. Writers and authors – Missouri’s most famous author was Mark Twain, who lived nearly 20 months in Vienna during the late 1890’s. He left here with a very heavy heart and fondly reminisced about his private audience with Emperor Franz Joseph. Though he name deceives him, Tennessee Williams, as was T. S. Elliott. If you ever heard about the Pulitzer prizes for journalism, then you might of heard about Joseph Pulitzer, who settled in St. Louis after leaving his native Austro-Hungary. The famous broadcaster Walter Cronkite was born in St. Joseph, MO, north of Kansas City.
  - c. Missouri’s most famous historic figure in probably Charles Lindbergh. He flew in St. Louis in his early career and raised the money there for his non-stop solo trans-Atlantic flight in the Spirit of St. Louis.
  - d. Missourians are well represented in film, television, and theater. Brad Pitt, Jon Hamm from Mad Men, and Sheryl Crow all attended the University of Missouri. Film director Robert Altman was born in Kansas City and Walt Disney also spent much of his youth there. Jazz guitarist Pat Metheny and the “King of Ragtime” Scott Joplin are from western Missouri. The classic rocker Chuck Berry is from St. Louis as is Nelly the rapper.
  - e. An historic Austrian figure, Kurt von Schuschnigg, taught at St. Louis University for nearly 20 years after World War II.
5. Contemporary history – I cannot close without mentioning my beloved St. Louis Cardinal baseball team. While everyone knows about the New York Yankees, the Cardinals have won more World Series than any other National League team and they did it again last year! Go Redbirds!
6. Come visit Missouri and you will be pleasantly surprised.