

# Tennessee- Big Bend State



**Tennessee** is a state rich in history, culture and natural beauty. Tennessee entered the Union on June 1, 1796, becoming the 16th state. But the story doesn't begin there. Tennessee has been home to many peoples and cultures who have formed what it is today, figuratively and physically.



The first trace of human habitation dates back 11,000 years ago, when the descendants of the people of Siberia crossed the Bering Straits into North America.

These people found shelter in caves along the banks of the rivers of Tennessee. Over centuries people have lived and made their mark on Tennessee's soil; from the pre-historic people who built earthen mounds shaped like the pyramids as grave sites of important chiefs dating back nearly 2000 years ago, to the Native Americans: The Creek, the Cherokee, and the Chickasaw whom inhabited a vast territory of present-day Tennessee until the mid 16th century, and the Spanish soldiers led by Hernando de Soto who entered the territory in the 1500's spending little time in Tennessee yet devastating the population of the native people by exposing them to illnesses such as smallpox and measles, to the people who shaped the history of our country during its infancy, and in more recent times, the people of today who

have changed the land by building large metropolitan cities creating new roads, railways and rivers ways, and the cultural icons who have shaped the sound of country music.

Tennessee has three distinct land regions. The eastern part is a rugged mountain landscape. The Appalachian mountain chain runs through this region. The average altitude of the mountains is 5000 feet above sea level. These mountains were created millions of years ago and at one time, they were probably as high as



the Himalayans of Nepal. The highest point in the state can be found in east Tennessee, known as Clingmans Dome.

Middle Tennessee resembles a deep bowl. It is a relatively low region, with rolling plateaus and grazing land. The state's capital, Nashville is found here.



And finally, west Tennessee is part of the geographical region known as the Gulf Coastal Plain, which stretches northward along the Mississippi River from the Gulf of Mexico to Illinois. This region is known for its rolling hills and streams. Fertile land from the silt that washes down the Mississippi River is abundant in this region. Before the Civil War, it was a home to many large plantations. Towns rose up along the banks of the Mississippi River, such as Memphis.

Tennessee has been home to many people who have formed our country's history and culture. Two U.S. Presidents, Andrew Jackson, and Andrew Johnson and a U.S. Vice President, Al Gore, Jr. came from Tennessee. Elvis Presley and Dolly Parton are just two of Tennessee's most famous musical icons. Famous authors such as Robert Penn Warren (All the King's Men) and Alex Haley (Roots) have also lived in Tennessee.

### **Fast Facts**

*The name "Tennessee" originated from the old Yuchi Indian word, "Tana-see," meaning "The Meeting Place."*

*Capital City: Nashville*

*Population: 5,689,283*

*State Flower: Iris*

*State Bird: Mockingbird*