

Alaska

Intro: Alaska is a former Russian territory of America, bought by the United States in 1867 for 7.2 million dollars. 84.7% of Alaskans speak English, 3.5 % speak Spanish or another Indo-European language, 3,4 % speak an Asian language and about 5.3% speak other languages.

1. **State**. Its nickname is "The last frontier" and " The land of the midnight sun"

- a. **Geographical situation**

Alaska has a longer coastline than all the other U.S. states put together. The state is bordered by the Yukon Territory and British Columbia in Canada, to the east, the Gulf of Alaska and the Pacific Ocean to the south, the Bering Sea, Bering Strait, and Chukchi Sea to the west and the Arctic Ocean to the north. Alaska is the largest state in the United States in land area with 586,412 square miles (1,518,800 km²), over twice the size of Texas, the next largest state. Alaska is larger than all but 18 sovereign countries. Counting territorial waters, Alaska is larger than the combined area of the next three largest states: Texas, California, and Montana. It is also larger than the combined area of the 22 smallest U.S. states.

- b. **Economy**

The oil and gas industry dominates the Alaskan economy, with more than 80% of the state's revenues derived from petroleum extraction. Alaska's main export product (excluding oil and natural gas) is seafood, primarily salmon, cod, Pollock and crab. Agriculture represents only a fraction of the Alaskan economy. Agricultural production is primarily for consumption within the state and includes nursery stock, dairy products, vegetables, and livestock. Manufacturing is limited, with most foodstuffs and general goods imported from elsewhere.

- c. **Population**

People who live in Alaska or who come from Alaska are called Alaskans. The United States Census Bureau, of July 1, 2008, estimated Alaska's population at 686,293, which represents an increase of 59,361, or 9.5%, on the last census in 2000. This includes a natural increase since the last census of 60,994 people (that is 86,062 births minus 25,068 deaths) and a decrease due to net migration of 5,469 people out of the state. Immigration from outside the U.S. resulted in a net increase of 4,418 people, and migration within the country produced a net loss of 9,887 people.

d. **Religion**

Alaska has been identified, along with Pacific Northwest states Washington and Oregon, as being the least religious in the U.S. According to statistics collected by the Association of Religion Data Archives, about 39% of Alaska residents were members of religious congregations. Evangelical Protestants had 78,070 members, Roman Catholics had 54,359, and mainline Protestants had 37,156. After Catholicism, the largest single denominations are The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with 30,169, and Southern Baptists with 22,959.

e. **Climate**

The climate of the interior of Alaska is subarctic. Some of the highest and lowest temperatures in Alaska occur around the area near Fairbanks. The summers may have temperatures reaching into the 90s°F (the low to mid 30s °C), while in winter, the temperature can fall below -60 °F (-52 °C). Precipitation is sparse in the Interior, often less than 10 inches (250 mm) a year, but what precipitation falls in the winter tends to stay the entire winter.

f. **Capital**

JUNEAU

Juneau has been the capital of Alaska since 1906, when the government of the then-District of Alaska was moved from Sitka as dictated by the U.S. Congress in 1900.

2. History

a. Alaskan natives

Numerous indigenous peoples occupied Alaska for thousands of years before the arrival of European peoples to the area. The Tlingit people developed a matriarchal society in what is today Southeast Alaska, along with parts of British Columbia and the Yukon. Also in the Southeast were the Haida, now well known for their unique arts, and the Tsimshian people, whose population were decimated by a smallpox epidemic in the 1860s.

b. Colonization

The first European contact with Alaska occurred in 1741, when Vitus Bering led an expedition for the Russian Navy aboard the St. Peter.

A European settlement was founded in 1784. Between 1774 and 1800 Spain sent several expeditions to Alaska in order to assert its claim over the Pacific Northwest. In 1789 a Spanish settlement and fort were built in Nootka Sound.

The Russians never fully colonized Alaska, and the colony was never very profitable. William H. Seward, the United States Secretary of State, negotiated Alaska's Purchase (also known as Seward's Folly) with the Russians in 1867 for \$7.2 million. Alaska was loosely governed by the military initially, and was unofficially a territory of the United States from 1884 on.

c. Entrance in the U.S.

On March 30, 1867, the United States agreed to purchase Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million dollars, about two cents an acre; "Seward's Folly" many called it,

after Secretary of State William H. Seward. A check for \$7,200,000.00 was issued on August 1, 1868 and made payable to Edouard de Stoeckl, the Russian Minister to the United States.

On January 3, 1959, Alaska, with a land mass larger than Texas, California and Montana combined, became the 49th state in the union. It is a large state, 1/5 the size of all the other states together, reaching so far to the west that the International Date Line had to be bent to keep the state all in the same day. It's also the only U.S. state extending into the Eastern Hemisphere.

3. Famous characters.

Irene Bedard

Irene Bedard is a famous American actress born and brought up in Anchorage, Alaska. Irene has acted in a lot of Hollywood flicks and was voted by People Magazine, as one of the top 50 beautiful people in 1995. She is best known as the voice for the main character in the animated Disney film *Pocahontas*.

Elizabeth Peratrovich

Elizabeth Peratrovich was a civil rights activist who worked for the native Alaskan people. She was the major force behind bringing about a change in the government attitude with regards to Alaska's racial relations. Elizabeth championed the passage of the Anti Discrimination Bill which guaranteed equal treatment in public accommodations for all the citizens.

Scott Gomez

Scott Gomez is the first Alaskan to play in the American National Hockey League (NHL) and also the first player of Latino origin to achieve this distinction. Currently, he is playing for the New York Rangers.

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Ray Mala

Ray Mala was a famous actor of yesteryears and the most famous Alaskan film personality. He starred in *Eskimo/Mala The Magnificent*, an Oscar-winning film, and also the first film to win an Academy Award in the Best Film Editing category.

Sarah Palin

Sarah Palin, the governor of Alaska, captured the world's attention when she was nominated for the post of vice-president by the Republican Party. Although she lost along with Senator John MacCain who was the presidential nominee, her popularity grew manifold. Sarah Palin is one of the most sought-after politicians in the world.

4. **Fauna and Flora**

a. Flowers

Wild Iris

Lupine

Monkshood

Forget-me-not

Fireweed

Bunchberry

Douglas Aster

Salmonberry

Jewelweed

b. State symbols

- State Motto: **North to the Future**
- Nicknames: "**The Last Frontier**" or "**Land of the Midnight Sun**" or "**Seward's Icebox**"
- State bird: **Willow Ptarmigan**, adopted by the Territorial Legislature in 1955. It is a small (15-17 inches) Arctic grouse that lives among willows and on open tundra and muskeg. Plumage is brown in summer, changing to white in winter. The Willow Ptarmigan is common in much of Alaska.
- State fish: **King Salmon**, adopted 1962.
- State flower: **wild/native Forget-Me-Not**, adopted by the Territorial Legislature in 1917. It is a perennial that is found throughout Alaska, from Hyder to the Arctic Coast, and west to the Aleutians.

The Forget-me-not is the state's official flower and bears the same blue and gold as the state flag

- State gem: **Jade**, adopted 1968.
- State insect: **Four-spot skimmer dragonfly**, adopted 1995.
- State land mammal: **Moose**, adopted 1998.
- State marine mammal: **Bowhead Whale**, adopted 1983.
- State song: "**Alaska's Flag**"
- State sport: **Dog Mushing**, adopted 1972.

Conclusion: Alaska is a cold state. But I am interested in this state because I like northern lights and the landscapes are beautiful (mountain, lakes, the ocean...). There are white bears, wolves, foxes, hares, walruses... I love Alaska and I would like to go there !