

US Geographical Oddities and Trivia

You will find many little-known oddities, quirks, or unusual geographical facts about the US. Some may be interesting to visit; others are good to know, and some you can use to stump your family and friends! Of course, some will elicit comments like, “why is **that** included in this list!”

1. North-South-East-West

- a. Reno, NV, is further west than Los Angeles
- b. Atlanta, Georgia, is further west than Detroit, Michigan.
- c. The northernmost point in the Lower 48 states lies in Minnesota, about 100 miles north of any other point in the lower 48. It's due to a surveying error in the late 1700s.
- d. Ten counties in the Florida Panhandle observe Central time.
- e. Mobile, Alabama, is further west than Chicago.
- f. Technically, Alaska could be considered the easternmost state as well as the westernmost and northernmost. The far end of the Aleutian Chain is in the Eastern Hemisphere! However, it's generally accepted that Maine is the easternmost.
- g. Of course, Hawaii is the southernmost, and Florida is the southernmost in the Lower 48.
- h. The easternmost in the Lower 48 is Maine (as above), and the westernmost is Washington.

2. Elevation

- a. The highest elevation (Mt. Whitney at 14,505 feet) in the Lower 48 is a 137-mile drive from the lowest elevation (Death valley at 282 feet below sea level).
- b. There are 96 “fourteeners” in the US. Although Alaska has the tallest mountain in the US, and California has the tallest mountain in the Lower 48, Colorado has the most fourteeners. The only other fourteeners are two in Washington State. Here are the totals: Colorado – 53, Alaska – 29, California – 12, and Washington – 2.
- c. The highest mean elevation is Colorado at 6,800 feet, and the lowest is Delaware at 60 feet.

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- d. The state with the highest mean elevation east of the Mississippi is West Virginia, and 18 states west of the Mississippi have a higher mean elevation!
 - e. The state with the lowest maximum elevation is Florida at 345 feet (Britton Hill in the Panhandle near the Georgia border.)
 - f. The highest elevation east of the Mississippi is Mount Mitchell in North Carolina, at 6,682 feet, less than the mean elevation of Colorado and Wyoming.
3. Comparative latitude
- a. Minneapolis, Minnesota, is further south than Portland, Oregon. And north of Toronto, Ontario, Canada!
 - b. The southernmost point in Canada is south of Chicago. Middle Island is an uninhabited island in Lake Erie, midway between Ontario and Ohio.
 - c. The northernmost point in the Lower 48 is in the US state of Minnesota and is approximately on the same latitude as Le Havre, Normandy, France. Yes, much of Europe is north of the United States.
 - d. The northernmost major city in the Lower 48 is Seattle, Washington.
 - e. The 45th parallel (halfway between the equator and the north pole) runs through Minneapolis and is south of Paris, France. (Authors note: I live 2.75 miles north of the 45th parallel, and it runs through my city.)
4. States in by size
- a. We all know that Alaska is the largest state, and Rhode Island is the smallest, right? In fact, Alaska is larger than the next three largest states combined: Texas, California, and Montana!
 - b. Here's a question your friends will likely get wrong. What is the smallest state west of the Mississippi? It's Hawaii, but most people don't think of that!
 - c. However, Iowa is the smallest state in the Lower 48 west of the Mississippi.

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- d. The largest state east of the Mississippi is Michigan if you count all the land under Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, and Lake Huron. However, if you count just the land area, it's Georgia.
5. Other little-known facts
- a. Route 66 was not the first federal highway to run across at least half the country. That's the Lincoln Highway from Times Square in New York to Lincoln Park in San Francisco. Construction started in 1913 and reached its dedication time in 1922. Route 66 received federal approval in 1926.
 - b. The longest US Interstate is I-90 running from Boston to Seattle. By the way, Interstates 80, 90, and 94 join around the south of Chicago.
 - c. The longest north/south interstate is I-95, running from Houlton, Maine, to Miami, Florida, for 1,924 miles.
 - d. The longest US highway, however, is Route 20, stretching from Boston to Newport, Oregon.
 - e. According to the numbering rules, US Highway 2 should be US Highway 0! The numbering rules decreed that US Highways stretching east/west across the country would end in 0. And the numbering would start in the north, meaning US 2 runs from Maine to Washington. Meanwhile, the US Interstate systems numbers began in the south, with US 10 running from Jacksonville, Florida, to Los Angeles, California.
 - f. Well-known smuggling route (drugs, human trafficking, etc.) is Interstate-35 and runs from the Mexican border at Laredo, TX. It passes through San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, Wichita, Kansas City, Des Moines, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, ending in Duluth, MN.
6. There are over 4,000,000 miles of roads in the US, carrying vehicles more than 3.2 trillion miles a year. And 1, 400,000 are unpaved! And nearly 47,000 miles are Interstate Highways.

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Maybe I'll add more someday. If you have additional items to add, please email me, and I'll add them.

Thanks for persevering!

Stan