

MISSISSIPPI

Hello! My name is Michael. I am a university student visiting Austria, and I am here to give you a small glimpse into the beautiful state of Mississippi.

Mississippi is named after the great Mississippi River along its western border. The name Mississippi comes from the Native American Ojibwe word, "misi-ziibi," meaning "Great River." The state was officially adopted into the Union in 1817, making it the 20th state of our 50. The state flag is unique among its peers, in that it is the only state to bear the Confederate Battle Flag, along with the red, white, and blue color of our nation. Mississippi boasts another unique feature: it is the biggest producer of catfish in the country! Fried catfish is a real treat; it's so great we even have a National Catfish Day every June 25th.

Being one of America's southern states, Mississippi's temperatures range from an average of 12 degrees celsius in January to 33 degrees celsius in July, with the year-average temperature around 23. Mississippi rarely sees snow, but when it does, it's quite the event. Even if it snows just a little bit, schools are usually canceled for the day, sometimes longer if it snows a lot! Mississippi is heavily forested, and the terrain is generally hilly, with the highest point being Woodall Mountain, only 246 meters above sea-level.

The people of Mississippi are some of the nicest in the U.S., which makes sense given the state motto is, "The Hospitality State." Anywhere you go, someone is bound to start a conversation with you; it's a natural part of our culture. Being mainly an agricultural economy, the people of Mississippi often enjoy horse riding and rodeos, as well as hunting for subsistence and sport. There is also a few that enjoy something called "mudding," which is taking a 4-wheel drive truck or SUV out onto mudflats and making as big of a mess as possible!

Speaking of people, Mississippi is also known as, "The Birthplace of America's Music," music such as the Blues and Rock n' Roll. One of our best-known musicians, Elvis Presley, was born in Tupelo, MS! Other world-renown people born in Mississippi include pop idol Britney Spears, actor James Earl Jones, and TV sensation Oprah Winfrey.

Religion is a large part of Mississippi's identity. A Gallup poll in 2009 indicated that 85% of Mississippians considered religion playing a "big role" in their lives and over 60% attend church on a weekly basis. Southern Baptist is the most popular affiliation. Churches there tend to be social centers for people: most churches have after-school programs and other extracurricular activities such as band, baseball, and bible-study. The bigger churches even have gymnasiums and classrooms for anyone who wants to use them.

The buildings of Mississippi and the Deep South are different from the rest of the US. In the 1800s a period of Greek revivalism swept the nation. After the Civil War, Antebellum Architecture -- Antebellum meaning pre-war -- began dominating the scene. A combination of Greek and American South, the houses are a unique twist on a long-existing style.

I hope you enjoyed that small look into Mississippi, and I hope to see you there soon!