

# Delaware

By Tom Kirvan

## THE FIRST STATE IS SMALL IN SIZE AND RICH IN HISTORY

Delaware is renowned for being the “First State” because it was the first of the original 13 colonies to ratify the U.S. Constitution on December 7, 1787.

With a population just over 1 million people, Delaware ranks as the sixth smallest state in the U.S. in terms of population. The state is characterized by a blend of cultures, with significant African American, Hispanic, and Asian populations, particularly in the more urbanized areas of New Castle County. The majority of Delawareans live in the northern part of the state, close to the cities of Wilmington and Dover, while the southern part is more rural and agricultural.

Delaware covers an area of just 1,949 square miles, making it the second smallest state by land area, slightly ahead of Rhode Island. Despite its size, the state boasts a varied geography that includes sandy beaches, rolling hills, and fertile farmland. The state is divided into just three counties: New Castle, Kent, and Sussex. The northern region, particularly around Wilmington, is more industrialized and hilly, while central Delaware features flat, agricultural land, and the southern part is known for its beautiful beaches along the Atlantic coast. The Delaware River forms the state’s eastern boundary, providing vital access to the Atlantic Ocean.

Delaware has a rich history, deeply rooted in its colonial past, with settlements dating back to the early 17th century when Dutch, Swedish, and English settlers first arrived. Wilmington, the state’s largest city, was originally founded as a Swedish settlement. During the American Revolution, Delaware played a crucial role, and its central location made it a key state in the Union during the Civil War. The state’s history is also marked by its early industrialization, particularly in the milling and chemical industries.

Delaware has a strong and diverse economy, with key sectors including finance, healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing. Over the years, the state has been called the chemical capital, the corporate capital, and the credit card capital. The state is particularly well-known for its business-friendly legal and tax environment, which has attracted numerous corporations to incorporate in Delaware. Approximately half of all publicly traded companies in the United States and more than 60 percent of the Fortune 500 companies are incorporated in Delaware, thanks to its favorable corporate laws. The state’s agricultural sector remains significant, with poultry, soybeans, and corn being major products. Tourism, particularly along the Delaware coast, also contributes to the state’s economy.



EMBER 7, 1787



## Fast Facts

Capital: Dover

Population: 1.1 million

Largest University: University of Delaware, 23,000 students

Highest Elevation: 448 feet

Border States: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland

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Dover, the capital of Delaware, is in the central part of the state and serves as the political and administrative heart of Delaware. Dover is known for its historic downtown area, government buildings, and cultural institutions, such as the Biggs Museum of American Art. Wilmington is situated in the northern part of the state along the Delaware River and is a lively city with a diverse economy, cultural attractions, and a rich history, making it the commercial and cultural hub of the state.

## Top 5 Must-See Tourist Destinations

- **Rehoboth Beach:** Known as "The Nation's Summer Capital," Rehoboth Beach is one of the most popular seaside destinations on the East Coast. The beach town is famous for its charming boardwalk lined with shops, restaurants, and arcades, as well as its pristine sandy beaches. Rehoboth Beach is a family-friendly destination, hosting a variety of festivals and events throughout the year, including the Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival and the Sea Witch Halloween & Fiddlers' Festival.
- **Nemours Estate:** Located in Wilmington, Nemours Estate is a grand, 300-acre estate featuring a stunning French-style mansion and elaborate gardens. Built by Alfred I. du Pont in the early 20th century, the estate is a testament to the opulence of the Gilded Age. Visitors can tour the mansion, which is filled with fine art, antiques, and period furnishings, and explore the beautifully landscaped gardens, complete with fountains, sculptures, and reflecting pools.
- **Delaware Seashore State Park:** Stretching along the Atlantic coast between Rehoboth Beach and Bethany Beach, Delaware Seashore State Park is a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. The park offers miles of sandy beaches, perfect for swimming, sunbathing, and beachcombing. Additionally, the park is popular for fishing, boating, and camping, with plenty of opportunities to explore the coastal environment. The Indian River Inlet, located within the park, is a particularly scenic spot, offering stunning views of the ocean and bay.

- **Hagley Museum and Library:** Situated along the banks of the Brandywine River in Wilmington, the Hagley Museum and Library is a unique site that offers a glimpse into the early American industrial era. The museum is located on the original site of the DuPont Company's first gunpowder mills, established in 1802. Visitors can explore the restored mills, the workers' village, and the du Pont family's ancestral home, Eleutherian Mills. The museum also features exhibits on the history of industry, technology, and innovation in America.
- **First State National Historical Park:** First State National Historical Park encompasses several historic sites across Delaware, highlighting the state's early colonial history and its role in the founding of the United States. Key sites include the New Castle Court House Museum, where Delaware declared its independence from Pennsylvania and the British Crown in 1776, and the John Dickinson Plantation, the home of one of the founding fathers of the United States. The park offers a rich historical experience, allowing visitors to explore the birth of the nation and Delaware's unique heritage.