

Mississippi

By Tom Kirvan

A SOULFUL JOURNEY THROUGH THE MAGNOLIA STATE

Cradled by the mighty river that shares its name, Mississippi is a state rich in history, culture, and Southern hospitality.

Known as the Magnolia State, Mississippi blends antebellum charm, blues music roots, and scenic landscapes into a special travel experience. With a population of about 2.9 million people, the state may be small in numbers, but it overflows with hidden gems waiting to be explored.

Located in what has long been known as the “Deep South,” Mississippi is bordered by Tennessee to the north, Alabama to the east, the Gulf of Mexico to the south, and Louisiana and Arkansas to the west, with the Mississippi River forming much of its western boundary. The state features rolling hills, pine forests, fertile plains, and lowlands, with a warm, humid climate that supports a lush, green landscape.

The state capital is Jackson, located near the center of Mississippi. Jackson is the political and cultural hub of the state, home to the Mississippi State Capitol, civil rights landmarks, and a growing arts and food scene. Nicknamed the “City with Soul,” Jackson lives up to its name with a powerful history and lasting musical legacy.

Though not soaring in altitude, Mississippi’s highest point is Woodall Mountain, located in Tishomingo County near the northeastern border. Standing at 806 feet above sea level, the summit offers peaceful views of the surrounding countryside. A small marker and sign commemorate the peak, which played a strategic role during the Civil War’s Battle of Iuka in 1862.

Mississippi’s history is complex and deeply intertwined with America’s own story. Originally inhabited by Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez tribes, the region was colonized by the French in the 17th century and later became part of the United States in 1817.

As a major cotton-producing state, in its early days, Mississippi was heavily dependent on enslaved labor, and its economy, politics, and society were shaped by this legacy. The state joined the Confederacy during the Civil War and was the site of significant battles and Reconstruction struggles.

In the 20th century, Mississippi became a flashpoint for the Civil Rights Movement. Events like the murder of Emmett Till, the Freedom Summer of 1964, and the assassination of NAACP activist Medgar Evers in Jackson galvanized national support for civil rights legislation.

Despite its painful past, Mississippi has also contributed immeasurably to American culture, especially through music, giving birth to the blues, rock ‘n’ roll, gospel, and shaping country music traditions.



Fast Facts

Capital: Jackson

Population: 2.9 million

Highest Point: Woodall Mountain (806 feet)

Trivia: Root beer was invented in Biloxi by Edward Barq Sr. in 1898.

Primerus Member: Young Wells Williams P.A.

Young Wells Williams P.A., a full-service law firm based in Ridgeland.

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Five Must-See Destinations

- **Vicksburg National Military Park:** Overlooking the Mississippi River, Vicksburg is a city deeply tied to Civil War history. The Vicksburg National Military Park preserves the site of the pivotal Siege of Vicksburg in 1863, which gave the Union control over the Mississippi River. Visitors can drive or walk through the battlefield, view more than 1,300 monuments, and visit the USS Cairo Museum, which features a restored Union ironclad gunboat.
- **Natchez:** One of the oldest cities on the Mississippi River, Natchez is a showcase of antebellum architecture, elegant mansions, and Southern grace. With over 500 preserved historic buildings, walking through Natchez feels like stepping back in time. Highlights include Longwood, an unfinished octagonal mansion, and the Natchez Trace Parkway, a scenic drive following an ancient Native American trail.
- **Clarksdale and the Delta Blues:** In the heart of the Mississippi Delta lies Clarksdale, considered the cradle of the blues. This small town celebrates its musical roots at the Delta Blues Museum and legendary venues like Ground Zero Blues Club, co-owned by actor Morgan Freeman. Nearby, the Crossroads – where legend says bluesman Robert Johnson sold his soul for musical talent – is a must-see pilgrimage site for music lovers.
- **Biloxi and the Gulf Coast:** Mississippi's Gulf Coast offers sandy beaches, fresh seafood, casinos, and maritime history. Biloxi is the crown jewel, featuring the Biloxi Lighthouse, Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum, and vibrant festivals year-round. Visitors can enjoy deep-sea fishing, waterfront dining, and sunset strolls along Beach Boulevard. Hurricane Katrina left scars, but the region's resilience and charm shine brightly.
- **Mississippi Civil Rights Museum (Jackson):** Opened in 2017, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson is a powerful and emotional journey through the state's – and the nation's – struggles and triumphs in the fight for racial justice. Interactive exhibits, oral histories, and stirring visual displays document Mississippi's central role in the Civil Rights Movement, from Emmett Till to Medgar Evers and the Freedom Riders.

