

## Fascinating Texas Facts for Kids

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**State Nickname:** The Lone Star State

**Date of Statehood:** December 29, 1845

**State Bird:** Mockingbird

**State Flower:** Bluebonnet

**State Capital:** Austin

**State Motto:** Friendship

**State Tree:** Pecan Tree

**State Dish:** Chili

**State Reptile:** Texas Horned Lizard

**State Butterfly:** Monarch

**State Sport:** Rodeo

**State Flag:** Flag of Texas



### *Did You Know?*

Texas's state flag features the "Lone Star," representing its tradition of independence. A total of six flags have flown over Texas: France, Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederate States of America, and the United States of America. Texas flies all six flags at public displays.

## Fun Facts About Texas

**Fun Fact #1:** Texas is the second largest state after Alaska, at 268,820 square miles. That makes it larger than the country of France!

**Fun Fact #2:** The Congress Avenue Bridge in Austin is home to the largest urban bat colony in the world. Up to 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats call the bridge home in summer. People gather to watch them emerge to hunt at dusk each evening in a spectacular display.

**Fun Fact #3:** Alligators live in Texas, especially in the eastern swamps and wetlands.

**Fun Fact #4:** The largest cities in Texas are Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, and Fort Worth.

**Fun Fact #5:** At the State Fair of Texas in Dallas, there's a giant cowboy statue named Big Tex. He's 55 feet tall, and greets fairgoers with a hearty, "Howdy, folks!"

**Fun Fact #6:** Native peoples used words like tejas, texias, and tayshas to describe other people living in the area; these words are believed to mean "friends." Over time, the words became associated with the region, eventually leading to "Texas" as the name of the state.

**Fun Fact #7:** Dr Pepper was invented at Morrison's Old Corner Drug Store in Waco, Texas, in 1885. That makes it the oldest major soft drink brand in America.

**Fun Fact #8:** High school football is incredibly popular in Texas. Some schools have stadiums that can seat 20,000+ people.

**Fun Fact #9:** Texas's major industries include oil and natural gas, livestock and agriculture, aerospace and aviation, and tourism.

**Fun Fact #10:** The official state motto is "Friendship," but unofficially, people are more likely to say, "Everything's bigger in Texas!"

## Geography Facts About Texas

**Regions:** Gulf Coastal Plains, the Interior Lowlands, the Great Plains, and the Basin and Range Province

**Climate:** Humid subtropical in the east half of the state, semi-arid to arid in the west

**Location:** Bordered by New Mexico to the west, Oklahoma to the north, Arkansas to the northeast, Louisiana to the east, and Mexico to the southwest, with the Gulf of Mexico along its southeastern coast

**Landmarks:** Alamo, San Antonio River Walk, Texas State Capitol, NASA's Johnson Space Center, Padre Island National Seashore, Fort Worth Stockyards, Natural Bridge Caverns

**National Parks:** Big Bend National Park, Guadalupe Mountains National Park

**Mountain Ranges:** Guadalupe Mountains, Davis Mountains, Chisos Mountains, Franklin Mountains

**Chihuahuan Desert:** This is one of the largest deserts in the U.S., and one of only four found in the whole country. It covers 200,000 square miles of Texas and New Mexico.

**Ocean Front:** Southeast Texas stretches for nearly 370 miles along the Gulf of Mexico, from the Louisiana border south to Mexico.

**Rio Grande:** This river forms the border between the U.S. and Mexico along the southern edge of Texas. It's the only major river system in the Chihuahuan Desert, and the longest in Texas.

**Lakes:** The four largest lakes in Texas are Toledo Bend, Amistad, Sam Rayburn, and Texoma. These vast reservoirs support water supply, recreation, and flood control across the state. Some, like Toledo Bend and Texoma, span state borders.

**More River Systems:** Brazos River, Pecos River, Colorado River, Red River, Canadian River

**Highest Point:** Guadalupe Peak, 8,751 feet

## Wildlife and Nature Facts About Texas

**Common Reptiles and Amphibians:** Texas horned lizard, green anole, Texas spiny lizard, western diamondback rattlesnake, american bullfrog, Gulf Coast toad

**Common Mammals:** White-tailed deer, nine-banded armadillo, raccoon, coyote, gray fox, Mexican free-tailed bat, eastern cottontail rabbit, bobcat

**Common Birds:** Northern mockingbird, mourning dove, northern cardinal, blue jay, great-tailed grackle, red-tailed hawk, scissor-tailed flycatcher, barn swallow, American robin, black vulture

**Common Fish:** Largemouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill, white bass, crappie, red drum, spotted seatrout

**Common Trees:** Live oak, pecan tree, mesquite, bald cypress, eastern red cedar, ash juniper, Texas red oak

**Common Plants and Flowers:** Bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush, Texas sage, prickly pear cactus, black-eyed Susan, yucca, little bluestem

**Selected Endangered Species:** Ocelot, whooping crane, Houston toad, Attwater's prairie chicken, golden-cheeked warbler, jaguarundi, black-footed ferret

**Did You Know?** Ocelots are around twice the size of the average house-cat. They're nocturnal, hunting at night for small prey that they swallow without even chewing!

**Selected Invasive Animal Species:** Zebra mussel, quagga mussel, emerald ash borer, giant African snail, feral hogs, fire ants, European starlings, nutria, hammerhead flatworms

**Selected Invasive Plant Species:** tree of heaven, giant reed, hydrilla, common water hyacinth, bamboo, kudzu, chinaberry, salt cedar, Chinese tallow tree

## Texas History Facts

**First Inhabitants:** People first came to Texas more than 13,000 years ago, and maybe even earlier. These early inhabitants used stone tools to hunt animals like mammoths and giant sloths, and were likely part of the Clovis culture.

**Native Americans:** The Caddo in East Texas were farmers who lived in villages and built large, round houses. The Comanche and Apache were strong horse riders who hunted buffalo on the plains. Along the coast, the Karankawa fished and traveled in canoes, while the Tonkawa hunted deer and gathered plants.

**Did You Know?** The Comanche moved into Texas from the Rocky Mountains in the 1700s after being pushed out of their original lands. Their skill with horses (brought by the Spanish) enabled them to control a huge territory for nearly 150 years, until the U.S. took their lands and forced them onto reservations in 1875.

**First Europeans:** The first known European to set foot in what is now Texas was Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. He arrived in 1528 after surviving a shipwreck off the coast, and lived among the indigenous peoples for 8 years as he made his way throughout what would become Texas, and down to Mexico City.

**New Spain:** Texas was part of New Spain, a huge Spanish colony in the Americas started in 1521. It included Mexico, the American Southwest, Florida, Central America, and parts of the Caribbean.

**Mission System:** To control their land claims in New Spain and spread Christianity, the Spanish set up Catholic missions starting in the late 1600s. Missions were like religious community centers, where Native Americans were taught the Catholic faith as well as other European customs like farming.

**Mexican Independence:** In 1821, after an 11-year war, Mexico won its independence from Spain. At the time, the land that would become Texas was still part of Mexico, along with the rest of what had been New Spain.

## Texas History Facts

**Father of Texas:** In 1825, American Stephen F. Austin led a group of 300 families into Texas to begin a new settlement. These families became known as the “Old Three Hundred,” and Austin earned the nickname “Father of Texas.” Today, the state capital is named for him.

**Texas Revolution:** The new colonists often disagreed with the government of Mexico, wanting more control over the land and the people living there (including the ability to allow slavery, which had been abolished by Mexico in 1829). The Texas Revolution was fought in 1835–36, ending at the Battle of San Jacinto, when Sam Houston forced General Santa Anna to sign a treaty giving Texas its independence.

### Did You Know?

In 1836, a small group of Texan defenders, including James Bowie and Davy Crockett, fought bravely against a much larger Mexican army led by General Santa Anna at the Alamo, an old Spanish mission. Although the Texans lost, their story encouraged many people to support the Texans, with the cry “Remember the Alamo!”

**Republic of Texas:** From 1836 to 1845, Texas was an independent country with its own government, president, laws, and flag. The new government was closely modeled on the one established in the United States a few decades earlier.

**U.S. Statehood:** The U.S. government had been trying to purchase Texas from Mexico since 1826, and many Americans came to Texas in the years following the Mexican War of Independence. Finally, on December 29, 1845, Texas was admitted to the U.S. as the 28th state.

**Mexican–American War:** Texas disagreed with Mexico over its southern boundary, and the U.S. went to war with Mexico to defend its new state. In the end, Mexico lost much more than a strip of land in Texas: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded present-day California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and more to the United States.

**Civil War:** During the Civil War, Texas joined the Confederacy and fought alongside the southern states. Texans helped supply the Confederate army and fought in battles, including the Battle of Galveston in 1863.

## Texas History Facts

**Longhorns and Cowboys:** The Spanish first brought cattle to Texas. Americans brought another breed when they arrived later, and the two breeds mixed to become today's famous Texas Longhorns. The cowboy culture in Texas grew up around the massive cattle ranches that have long been a big part of the state.

**Galveston Hurricane:** In 1900, an incredibly powerful hurricane struck Galveston. With no modern warning system in place, the city was completely destroyed and thousands of people died. It's still the deadliest natural disaster in American history.

**Spindletop:** Texas's history and economy changed forever when drillers struck oil at Spindletop, near Beaumont, in 1901. A geyser shot oil 100 feet into the air!

**Did You Know?** Over 153,000,000 barrels of oil had been produced from the Spindletop fields alone by 1985. Today, Texas produces more oil than any other state by far—more than two billion barrels of oil in 2024.

