

Podcast Script: Discovering Missouri

Today, we're traveling to the heart of America to learn about the Show-Me State, Missouri!

Let's begin with Missouri's landscape. The state is incredibly diverse, with rolling plains, lush forests, and the Ozark Mountains in the south. Two major rivers flow through Missouri—the mighty Mississippi River forms the eastern border, and the Missouri River itself cuts through the state. The Missouri arrives in the state having completed an amazing curve, flowing first north from the geysers of Yellowstone National Park, then turning south in Montana, before dropping down to the High Plains. That is important, because it means the Missouri is fed by snowmelt in spring. But these rivers are not only scenic but also vital for transportation and agriculture.

Moving on to the climate, Missouri experiences all four seasons. Summers are hot and humid, while winters can be chilly, especially in the northern parts of the state. Spring and fall bring mild weather, but spring can also bring severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Rainfall is common, which helps keep Missouri's landscapes green and vibrant. But remember how the Missouri River is connected to snowmelt in the Rockies, so river flow is not always connected to local climate.

Now let's talk about Missouri's natural plants and animals. The state has some dense forests filled with oak, hickory, and pine trees. In the spring, you can see beautiful wildflowers like the Missouri primrose. Wildlife includes deer, foxes, and even black bears in some areas. The rivers and lakes are filled with fish like bass and catfish.

Like every state, Missouri faces natural hazards. Tornadoes are a big concern, especially during the spring and early summer. Flooding can happen along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, and occasional winter storms can bring snow and ice.

Now, let's journey through Missouri's history. Before European settlers arrived, Native American tribes like the Osage and Missouria lived in the region. They thrived on hunting, farming, and trade.

During the colonial days, French explorers established trading posts in the area. Missouri became part of the Louisiana Territory, which the United States purchased from France in 1803. This purchase set the stage for one of the most famous explorations in history—the Lewis and Clark Expedition. They started their journey near St. Louis, exploring lands west of the Mississippi River using the Missouri River for the first part of their exploration.

Missouri achieved statehood in 1821 as part of the Missouri Compromise, which dealt with the balance of free and slave states. During the early state times, Missouri became a gateway for pioneers

heading west. It was as far west as steamboats could take people who were headed for Oregon and other destinations. So along the Missouri River they had to find places to 'jump off' as they called it, and then begin their overland wagon trek. The state's location made it a central hub for transportation and trade.

The Gilded Age brought economic growth to Missouri. Mining, especially for lead, became an important industry, and railroads connected cities and towns. Growth was so great that St. Louis hosted the 1904 World's Fair, showcasing Missouri's progress to the world.

Missouri faced challenges during the Great Depression, but programs like the New Deal helped rebuild the economy. Agriculture remained a key part of life, and manufacturing also grew.

Missouri's state capital is Jefferson City, named after President Thomas Jefferson. Its largest city by city limits is Kansas City, although St. Louis is more famous historically, and famous for the Gateway Arch, which symbolizes Missouri's role as the "Gateway to the West." It is also the core of the largest metro area.