

Nevada is known for its stunning and diverse landscape, in large measure because it is Basin and Range country, compressing rift valleys and block mountain ranges that have been formed by earth movements. Did you know that it's the most mountainous state in the contiguous United States? Nevada's terrain features rugged mountain ranges like the Sierra Nevada in the west and the Ruby Mountains in the northeast.

Nevada is also home to vast deserts, including the Mojave Desert in the south and the Great Basin Desert in the north. One of the most famous features in the state is Lake Tahoe, a sparkling freshwater lake nestled in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Another notable waterway is the Colorado River, which forms part of Nevada's southeastern border and powers the Hoover Dam—a remarkable feat of engineering.

Nevada is the driest state in the United States, with most of its land receiving less than 10 inches of rain per year. The climate is mostly arid or semi-arid, with hot summers and cold winters. However, the higher elevations in the mountains experience cooler temperatures and even snow in winter, making them popular destinations for skiing and snowboarding.

In the deserts, temperatures can soar above 100 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer, but nights can be surprisingly cool. This wide range of temperatures is due to Nevada's clear skies and dry air, which allow

heat to escape quickly after sunset.

Despite its arid climate, Nevada has a surprising variety of plant and animal life. The state's deserts are dotted with hardy plants like sagebrush, Nevada's state flower, and Joshua trees. In the mountainous regions, you'll find lush forests of pine and aspen trees.

As for animals, Nevada is home to creatures adapted to its harsh environment. Desert bighorn sheep, the state animal, navigate the rocky terrain with ease. You might also spot coyotes, jackrabbits, and lizards in the deserts. The mountain regions provide habitat for black bears, mule deer, and a variety of birds, including eagles and hawks.

Nevada faces several natural hazards, including droughts, wildfires, and earthquakes. The state's dry climate and strong winds make wildfires a significant risk, especially during the summer months. Nevada is also seismically active due to its location in the Basin and Range Province, so earthquakes can occur, although most are minor.

Flooding can happen in the desert areas after heavy rains, as the dry ground and lack of soil can't absorb water. Additionally, extreme heat in the summer can pose dangers to people and wildlife.

Nevada's history begins with Native American tribes, including the Paiute, Shoshone, and Washoe, who have lived in the region for thousands of years, relying on its natural resources for food, shelter,

and tools.

During the 1800s, Nevada saw an influx of settlers and explorers. The discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859—a massive deposit of silver ore—sparked a mining boom that earned Nevada the nickname “The Silver State.” Mining towns sprang up almost overnight, and the state became a major contributor to the country’s wealth.

Nevada became the 36th state in 1864, right in the middle of the Civil War. Its admission to the Union was hurried to support President Abraham Lincoln’s re-election and the abolition of slavery.

In the early 20th century, Nevada’s economy grew with the expansion of mining, ranching, and the construction of the Hoover Dam in the 1930s. The dam not only provided jobs during the Great Depression but also brought electricity and water to the region.

Las Vegas, Nevada’s largest city, rose to prominence in the mid-20th century as a hub for entertainment, tourism, and gaming. Meanwhile, Carson City, the state capital, remains a quieter, historic center of government.

Today, Nevada continues to thrive as a state of contrasts—from its bustling cities to its serene deserts and majestic mountains.