

Hello. It's real important to know about all of the states. But some books can make it seem complicated. We think they can be packed full of facts no one will remember, which is why we simplified it and created our 'snapshot' books.

But we can go a step farther. We can take you through the basics before you even read a word. And that is what we are going to do here. So listen on – and why not make some notes, too? Then you can expand them as you read. At the end you will have your own state book written in your own words. How great is that!

OK, let's get started!

1. Is there some way we can imagine the shape of New York?

New York is a large state on the East Coast – that's right by the Atlantic Ocean. But it has a tiny ocean coastline. In fact, the state is almost fan-shaped, opening up as it goes inland to the shores of Lake Ontario and Erie.

Because New York began as a colony, and colonists first landed at the mouth of the Hudson River, that is where the oldest, and biggest city is. It's New York City. When New York State expanded to the lakes, a new set of cities, such as Buffalo and Rochester were built. That left them to try to figure out where the best place for a capital was – and so they chose Albany, close to the middle of the state.

Now 20 million people live in New York. But they are far from being evenly spread. Most are near New York City. And to understand why, we need to look at the landscape.

2. Now for the land. Right across New York state, trending from southwest to north east, and making up half the state, are the Appalachian Mountains. They are made of range after range of high wooded hills separated by deep, narrow valleys.

In the north, and making up a quarter of the land, are the Adirondack Mountains, made of granite, and shaped by ice sheets.

Well, that doesn't leave much room for flat land, does it? But there is some. To the north west the mountains, the land leading to the Great Plains Lakes is flat. And to the south east is a narrow strip of flattish land called the Coastal Plains.

Rivers are crucial to New York. They have cut valleys right across the Appalachian mountains. Without these river gaps, getting about in the state would be far harder. The biggest river system is the 300 mile - long Hudson River, and its main tributary, the Mohawk. Its valley was used for one of the nation's earliest canals. And that route opened up the whole of the Mid West to trade. It was one of the most important routes in the history of America.

By the way, you have probably heard of New York's famous Niagara Falls. But that is right on the edge of the state, where it shares a border with Canada. It's a great tourist attraction and it generates power, but it was never important in the growth of the state.

3. Now for the weather. When they arrived, the early Dutch settlers expected New York to have a Mediterranean climate, because it is at the same latitude as southern Europe, and were bewildered by its snowy, freezing winter weather.

But that is because New York is on the eastern seaboard of the continent, and such areas get a very much wider range of temperatures than areas on the western seaboard such as Europe or California. So expect hot summer days and cold winter ones. And on the Appalachians and Adirondacks, expect deep snow. New York City folks call this area 'upstate', and the snowy climate means it has great ski resorts.

4. You won't be surprised to learn that three fifths of New York is forest. Many of these trees are hardwoods, such as beech and oak, They are broadleaved deciduous trees. And those leaves change color in fall, giving one of the world's greatest displays of color – and bringing tourists from far and wide. But farther north and on the higher ridges they give way to conifers, and they, of course are evergreens.

## 5. History

New York State has a long history, and one that stretches far before colonial times. In the centuries before contact with the Europeans, New York was home to Native American Iroquois and Algonquin nations. For example, There may have been 15,000 Native Americans in the New York city area when the first Europeans arrived.

The first European to arrive in the New York area was the Italian navigator Giovanni da Verrazano, who was searching for a sea route to the Pacific Ocean. In 1609, English sailor Henry Hudson similarly came in search of a “northwest passage”.

Hudson eventually sailed into the mouth of the large river, today called the Hudson River. Hudson claimed the entire Hudson River Valley, but not for England - his employers were Dutch. So New York state was first a Dutch colony, and it was then that the first colonial settlement was founded - called New Amsterdam - on present-day Manhattan island.

The Dutch hoped to make their fortunes through the fur trade. But, of course, the Dutch were not the only Europeans who had their eyes on New York lands.

Developing colonies was a competitive business, and the Dutch lost New Netherlands to the English, and New Amsterdam was renamed as New York.

In colonial days New York was not the major colony, and had relatively few people. One reason was that the western frontier of the colony was a battleground, between the French and the British. That became the French and Indian War.

That war ended in 1763 with a British victory. But the victory was not really good news for any of the British colonies in America. The British treasury had been emptied by the wars with France, and in order to raise money, the British increased the taxes on the colonies. These taxes, on everyday items like tea and stamps, as well as exports, so enraged the colonists that many started to urge

the colonies to form their own nation.

And so the Revolutionary War, began. After the Revolutionary War, New York became the eleventh state to join the union.

New York City served as the capital of the U.S. government from 1785 to 1790, and George Washington was inaugurated as the first U.S. president in the city, too.

But some of the other founding fathers were actually more important to the state. New Yorker Alexander Hamilton was the first Secretary of the Treasury. And that helped New York City become the financial center of the new nation.

But the real success of New York was helped by the industrial revolution. Powered machines, factories, canals and railroads, were all invented in Britain, but quickly copied and used to far greater advantage in America, and by New York in particular.

So by 1810 New York was the most populous state in the country. Then the U.S. government wanted to open up the Mid West. But the Mid West had no way of getting its goods to the coast. So cities down the Atlantic seaboard competed to dig canals to the Great Lakes. New York was the most successful in this, with the Erie Canal being opened in 1825. A huge burst of trade followed.

But it was the railroad that really transformed the state, and in particular New York City.

The rail route through the Appalachians already followed by the Erie Canal proved to be the great advantage, giving New York City the key to being the top Atlantic port.

7. Well, that is how it all got started. So let's wrap this up. We have taken you on a journey through landscape and climate to history, colonial days, revolutionary war, trade and industry. That will give you a framework to keep in your head. Now read our books, and watch the videos. Learning can be real easy.