

Nevada

Geographic Alliance in Nevada State Giant Traveling Map Lesson

Mini Lessons

Introduction: Facts – A Human Compass Rose – Nevada’s Neighbors

The State Giant Traveling Map of Nevada was created and given to us by our friends at the National Geographic Education Foundation. There are maps of all 50 states, each costing roughly \$1,200 to design and print. Below are some basic and/or record breaking facts about the Silver State to share with students. Our suggestion is to share the info above and the basic rules about the map (no shoes - no sharp objects or writing utensils - no running) and then give students a minute or two to explore the map on their own. Suggest they find where they live or explore places they’ve been or would like to visit in the future. Then, have students sit along the outside border of the map and share the following facts and places with them. You could have students stand or sit near each place to keep them involved.

- The population of Nevada at the time of the 2010 Census was 2.7 million which ranks us as the 35th largest state.
- Nevada covers 109,781 square miles which gives us the rank of 7th largest among all the United States.
- The capital of Nevada is Carson City – its population is over 55,000.
- The highest point in Nevada is Boundary Peak with an elevation of 13,140 feet above sea level.
- The lowest point in our state is located near the city of Laughlin on the Colorado River and is listed as 470 feet above sea level.
- The largest metropolitan area in Nevada is Las Vegas. At the time of the 2010 Census, it and its neighboring cities of Henderson & North Las Vegas had a combined population of just over 1.9 million people.

Nevada

Geographic Alliance in Nevada State Giant Traveling Map Lesson

- Two of Nevada's most important rivers are the Colorado and the Humboldt. The Colorado River, in southern Nevada, starts in the Rocky Mountains and helps form part of our state's border with the state of Arizona. The Humboldt, in northern Nevada, has the little known distinction of being the longest river in the US that starts and ends in the same state. It's between 290 and 310 miles long.
- Nevada has several important and famous lakes. Lake Tahoe is the largest alpine lake in North America. Lake Mead is still the largest man-made reservoir in the United States and is among the largest in the world when measured by capacity.
- Much of Nevada is located in the Great Basin, North America's largest desert and land of interior drainage. The Mojave, the continent's smallest desert, covers a large portion of southern Nevada.
- Great Basin is also name to the only National Park completely within the state of Nevada. A small portion of Death Valley National Park is located in the state as well.

Now, have students review the four *cardinal directions* by creating a human *compass rose*. Select four students to lie down on the middle of the map with feet touching to represent North, South, East, and West. You can add more students to represent the *intermediate directions* (Northeast – Southeast – Southwest – Northwest) if appropriate.

Lastly, divide your students into five roughly equal groups and have one group stand on each of the five states that border Nevada (California, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Arizona). You could ask which directions each of these states are in relation to Nevada or see how many students have visited each state by having them briefly stand in them and be counted. Students could even record these numbers and determine what percentage of the class has visited each of Nevada's bordering states.

Nevada

Geographic Alliance in Nevada State Giant Traveling Map Lesson

Population Activities

Select 10 students to stand the middle of the map. Tell the class that these students represent the entire population of Nevada. Then have one student stand in Carson City, one in Reno, and one in Elko to identify and locate three of our state's four centers of population. Have the other seven students stand as a group near Las Vegas and have a brief discussion about population distribution within Nevada. Tell students that roughly 70% or 1.9 million of our state's 2.7 million residents live in southern Nevada or Clark County. Introduce or review the terms rural and urban and ask the following geographic questions to stimulate discussion.

- When and why did people first settle in each of these four population clusters? What resources or economic activities support each area? (Hopefully agriculture, mining, ranching, government, tourism, and even water will be part of your discussion).

Lastly, ask students to guess the largest city in Nevada during each of the following years and then locate the correct answers on the map and provide them with the supporting information to stimulate discussion.

1873 – Virginia City had an estimated population of 25,000 because of the discovery of silver and gold associated with the Comstock Lode. The 2010 Census lists Virginia City's population at 855. What happened?

1906 – Goldfield is estimated to have had close to 30,000 residents at the height of a regional gold mining boom that included the nearby towns of Belmont and Tonopah. For a brief time it may have been the largest city between San Francisco and Denver. The population of Goldfield was listed as 268 during the 2010 Census. By comparison, in 1906 the population of Las Vegas was estimated at approximately 500, but by 2010 Las Vegas had nearly 2 million people. Why?

Nevada

Geographic Alliance in Nevada State Giant Traveling Map Lesson

Movement & Patterns: Historic Routes and Current Transportation

Have students explore the connections between past and present with some research and spatial thinking in a fun group activity. Have small groups of students research the following historic routes and current transportation systems online or in print resources. Have students record the completion dates or dates used for each group or route.

1. The California Trail through northern Nevada
2. The Escalante or Fremont expeditions through southern Nevada
3. The Pony Express Route through central Nevada
4. The Transcontinental Railroad through northern Nevada
5. Interstate Highway 15 through southern Nevada
6. US Highway 50 through central Nevada
7. Interstate 80 through northern Nevada

Then, using different colored plastic chains have students approximate the above routes on the giant map one group at a time.

- Groups 1, 4, and 7 should have very similar routes.
- Groups 2 and 5 should have similar routes.
- Groups 3 and 6 should have similar routes.

Finally, have all students reflect on each grouping and ask the following questions to start a discussion on the geographic theme of movement, the history of Nevada, and connections between the past and present.

1. What was the original purpose and time frame of each group (1-4)?
2. Why do you think they followed that particular route?
3. What relationship do the modern highways seem to have with the older routes (5-7)?

* Possible Topics: Topography/Water/Economics/Destinations/Purpose/Communications.