



# Understand Eastern USA

## **EASTERN USA TODAY . . . . . 592**

Economic turmoil, shifting politics and environmental challenges are hot-button topics, plus classic films and books for further insight.

## **HISTORY . . . . . 594**

Native Americans, colonists, revolutionaries, Civil warriors, Reconstructionists, New Dealers and civil rights fighters have all shaped the region.

## **THE WAY OF LIFE . . . . . 604**

Learn about the local culture through lifestyles, immigration, religion and sports.

## **FOOD & DRINK . . . . . 608**

Don't know your clam bake from cheesesteak or gumbo from chowder? Get the lowdown on regional eats and sips.

## **ARTS & ARCHITECTURE . . . . . 612**

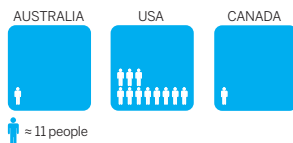
Bluesy music is the East's big claim to fame, along with contributions to literature, film, theater and architecture.

## **THE LAND & WILDLIFE . . . . . 616**

Alligators, whales, manatees and moose are among the creatures sharing the landscape.



## population per sq mile



# Eastern USA Today

## Economic Woes

- » Household income New Hampshire (2008-2010): \$66,300
- » Household income Mississippi (2008-2010): \$36,850
- » Population density New York City: 27,530 per sq mi
- » Population density Maine: 43 per sq mi
- » Cheese produced annually Wisconsin: 2.4 billion pounds
- » Number of vacant homes in Florida (2010): 1.5 million

The East, along with the rest of the country, has experienced a tumultuous economy in recent years. What started as a collapse of the US real estate market in 2007 spread to the banking sector, and some financial institutions subsequently failed. Thus began the nation's largest fiscal crisis since the Great Depression. In 2009, Congress passed an ambitious \$800 billion stimulus package, but it didn't bear much fruit in the eyes of many locals – even though economists estimated the stimulus did soften the blow of the recession.

While the faltering economy has affected the entire country, some states in the East have been especially hard hit. In Florida, home foreclosures flooded the market, so that by 2010, 18% of houses were vacant. Meanwhile, Michigan can't shake one of the nation's highest unemployment rates (more than 11%), which has plagued it since the recession's start, and is due to its economic reliance on the beleaguered car-making industry. Many other Midwestern Rust Belt economies – in northern Ohio, Indiana and Illinois – have also felt the manufacturing pinch, and states there join Florida at the top of the foreclosure rolls.

## Political Fracture

With lost jobs, overvalued mortgages and little relief in sight, the conditions were ripe for the Tea Party. Named after the infamous 1773 event in Boston, during which patriots dumped British tea to protest the government's tax on it, today's Tea Party is a populist movement of politically conservative republicans who decry high taxes and federal spending. Government bailouts (the banking and auto industries) and President Obama's healthcare reform (derisively named Obamacare) particularly capture their ire.

## Classic Reads

- To Kill a Mockingbird** (1960) Harper Lee's Pulitzer winner about racism in Depression-era Alabama.
- A Walk in the Woods** (1998) Humorist Bill Bryson attempts to hike the Appalachian Trail.

- A Confederacy of Dunces** (1980) John Kennedy Toole's tale of a misfit questing for a job.
- Walden** (1854) Thoreau's tale of living simply near a pond.
- The Orchid Thief** (1998) Yankee Journalist Susan Orlean loses her head in the swamp.

## Rock Playlist

- Highway 61 Revisited** Bob Dylan
- My City was Gone** Pretenders
- Atlantic City** Bruce Springsteen
- Sweet Home Alabama** Lynyrd Skynard
- No Sleep till Brooklyn** Beastie Boys