Tallahassee/Leon County, Florida

Brief History of the State of Florida and the City of Tallahassee

Thousands of years of Native American culture preceded the European discovery of the Florida peninsula. An estimated 100,000 Native Americans were living here at the time of its discovery by Juan Ponce de Leon in early 1513. As Ponce de Leon's arrival coincided with the Spring Pascua Florida festivities in Spain, he named the new land "Florida," which meant "filled with flowers." La Florida was also explored by another Spanish adventurer – Hernando de Soto. It is believed that de Soto and his army of over 600 men spent the winter of 1539-40 in an abandoned Apalachee Indian village located in what is now the city of Tallahassee.

Prior to 1821, Florida had consisted of two Spanish colonies that were ceded to Great Britain in the settlement of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). In 1821, President James Monroe appointed Andrew Jackson as territorial governor. One of the new governor's first acts was to organize the territory into two counties, Escambia and St. Johns, with the Suwannee River serving as the dividing line. (In 1822, two more counties were added – Duval in the east and Jackson in the west). The legislative council met at Pensacola, the capital of West Florida, in 1822, and at St. Augustine, the capital of East Florida, in 1823. As these two settlements of the territory were separated by 400 miles of wilderness, it was desirable to select a central site as a capital. Two commissioners appointed by Governor William Pope Duval selected the then uninhabited area known as Tallahassee as the site for the permanent capital and the governor proclaimed it the capital on March 4, 1824. The territorial council met there for the first time in November of that year. Tallahassee had been the site of indigenous settlements prior to and during the Colonial Era. Its name is an Apalachee Tribe phrase generally believed to mean "old town" or "old fields." Florida was admitted to the union as the 27th state on March 3, 1845.

Population Statistics

According to the latest U.S. Census estimates, Florida ranks 3rd in population in the United States of America, Leon county ranks 23rd in population in the state of Florida, and Tallahassee is the 9th largest city in the state.

Metric	Tallahassee	Leon County	Florida	United States
Population 2023 (estimated U.S. Census)	202,221	296,913	22,610,726	334,914,895
Population 2020 (actual U.S. Census)	196,169	292,198	21,538,187	331,449,281
Male	47.4%	47.4%	49.2%	49.5%
Female	52.6%	52.6%	50.8%	50.5%
White	50.5%	56.1%	57.7%	61.1%
African American	35.0%	30.4%	15.1%	12.4%
Asian	4.5%	3.6%	3.0%	6.0%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	1.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Two or More Races	7.5%	7.4%	16.5%	10.2%
Other	2.2%	2.1%	7.3%	8.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	8.5%	7.8%	26.8%	18.7%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	49.2%	47.1%	31.5%	33.7%

Source: United States Census Bureau

Tallahassee/Leon County Weather Facts

The average annual mean temperature in Tallahassee is 68.5°F; the average annual high temperature is 79.7°F, and the average annual low temperature is 57.2°F (based on 1991-2020 for the Tallahassee International Airport). July is typically the hottest month, with an average high temperature of 92.1°F and an average low temperature of 73.0°F. January is the coldest month, with an average high and low temperature of 63.9°F and 40.5°F, respectively. The official record-high temperature is 105°F, which was observed on June 15, 2011. The official record-low temperature is -2°F, which was observed on February 13, 1899, which gives Tallahassee the distinction of being the only location in Florida ever to have recorded a sub-zero temperature. Since that morning in 1899, the lowest temperature recorded in the modern historical record since 1940 was 6°F on January 21, 1985.

The average annual total rainfall is 58.81 inches. June typically ranks as the wettest month, with an average monthly rainfall total of 7.76 inches, and November ranks as the driest month with an average monthly rainfall total of 3.10 inches. Summer is the wettest season, and autumn is the driest on average. The record 24-hour rainfall total in Tallahassee is 10.13 inches, which was observed on June 11-12, 2001. The average annual snowfall is less than a trace. Although snow flurries are seen every few years on average, measurable snow (0.1 inches or greater, by definition) is seldom observed, having occurred eleven times since 1938. The largest snowfall ever observed was 2.8 inches on February 12-13, 1958. Snow last occurred on January 21-22, 2025 when 1.9 inches was reported, which is the second highest snowfall on record in Tallahassee. This most recent snowfall event undoubtedly set a new state snowfall record for Florida, with 10 inches reported near Jay and 9.8 inches in Milton. An official new record will be made once the observations are reviewed and a station is confirmed as holding the new state record.

In 2024, temperatures in Tallahassee ranged from a minimum of 25°F (in January and December) to a maximum of 101°F (in June and September). The mean annual temperature was 71.0°F, which ties as the fourth warmest year on record in Tallahassee. Summer 2024 (June-August) tied as the second hottest summer on record with a mean temperature of 84.8°F (tied with 2011). There was a total of 18 freezes that occurred in 2024, which is below the long-term average for annual freezes for the tenth year in a row (since 2014). The total annual rainfall was 62.46 inches, which ranks as the 32nd wettest year on record since 1940. On May 10, a line of thunderstorms spawned two EF-2 tornadoes that moved through the heart of Tallahassee and caused significant damage. While tornadoes occur every two to three years on average, tornado outbreaks with two or more tornadoes have only been reported a few times in the modern historical record since 1945. The last time Tallahassee experienced two F-2 tornadoes was March 28, 1972.

Source: Florida Climate Center/Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies. Online resource: coaps.fsu.edu