

Europe

Europe is a continent. It is the western part of Eurasia. It is separated from Asia by the Ural Mountains in Russia and the Bosphorus strait in Turkey.

Europe is surrounded by water on three sides. On the west is the Atlantic Ocean. To the north is the Arctic Ocean. The Mediterranean Sea separates Southeastern Europe from Africa.

There are more than 50 countries in Europe. Most of these countries are members of the European Union.

Europe covers about 10,180,000 square kilometers (3,930,000 square miles). This is 2% of the Earth's surface (6.8% of its land area).

As of 2017, about 510 million people lived in Europe.

Europe makes 44% of the world's wine.

Europe contains the world's second most active volcano.

Greenland, in Europe, is the world's biggest island - considering Australia is a continent!

Europe is a major tourist attraction. People come from all over the world to see its many World Heritage Sites and other attractions.



Physical Geography

Europe is the second-smallest continent. Only Oceania has less landmass. Europe extends from the island nation of Iceland in the west to the Ural Mountains of Russia in the east. Europe's northernmost point is the Svalbard archipelago of Norway, and it reaches as far south as the islands of Greece and Malta.

Europe is sometimes described as a peninsula of peninsulas. A peninsula is a piece of land surrounded by water on three sides. Europe is a peninsula of the Eurasian supercontinent and is bordered by the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, and the Mediterranean, Black, and Caspian Seas to the south.

Europe's main peninsulas are the Iberian, Italian, and Balkan, located in southern Europe, and the Scandinavian and Jutland, located in northern Europe. The link between these peninsulas has made Europe a dominant economic, social, and cultural force throughout recorded history.

Europe's physical geography, environment and resources, and human geography can be considered separately.

Europe can be divided into four major physical regions, running from north to south: Western Uplands, North European Plain, Central Uplands, and Alpine Mountains.

Western Uplands

The Western Uplands, also known as the Northern Highlands, curve up the western edge of Europe and define the physical landscape of Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark), Finland, Iceland, Scotland, Ireland, the Brittany region of France, Spain, and Portugal.

The Western Uplands is defined by hard, ancient rock that was shaped by glaciation. Glaciation is the process of land being transformed by glaciers or ice sheets. As glaciers receded from the area, they left a number of distinct physical features, including abundant marshlands, lakes, and fjords. A fjord is a long and narrow inlet of the sea that is surrounded by high, rugged cliffs. Many of Europe's fjords are located in Iceland and Scandinavia.

North European Plain

The North European Plain extends from the southern United Kingdom east to Russia. It includes parts of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Poland, the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), and Belarus.

Most of the Great European Plain lies below 152 meters (500 feet) in elevation. It is home to many navigable rivers, including the Rhine, Weser, Elbe, Oder, and Vistula. The climate supports a wide variety of seasonal crops. These physical features allowed for early communication, travel,

and agricultural development. The North European Plain remains the most densely populated region of Europe.

Central Uplands

The Central Uplands extend east-west across central Europe and include western France and Belgium, southern Germany, the Czech Republic, and parts of northern Switzerland and Austria.

The Central Uplands are lower in altitude and less rugged than the Alpine region and are heavily wooded. Important highlands in this region include the Massif Central and the Vosges in France, the Ardennes of Belgium, the Black Forest and the Taunus in Germany, and the Ore and Sudeten in the Czech Republic. This region is sparsely populated except in the Rhine, Rhne, Elbe, and Danube river valleys.

Alpine Mountains

The Alpine Mountains include ranges in the Italian and Balkan peninsulas, northern Spain, and southern France. The region includes the mountains of the Alps, Pyrenees, Apennines, Dinaric Alps, Balkans, and Carpathians.

High elevations, rugged plateaus, and steeply sloping land define the region. Europe's highest peak, Mount Elbrus (5,642 meters/18,510 feet), is in the Caucasus mountains of Russia. The Alpine region also includes active volcanoes, such as Mount Etna and Mount Vesuvius in Italy.

Flora & Fauna

Much like its physical regions, Europe's plant and animal communities follow a general north-south orientation. The tundra, found in Iceland and the northern reaches of Scandinavia and Russia, is a treeless region where small mosses, lichens, and ferns grow. Huge herds of reindeer feed on these tiny plants.

The taiga, which stretches across northern Europe just south of the tundra, is composed of coniferous forests, with trees such as pine, spruce, and fir. Moose, bear, and elk are native to the European taiga.

Just south of the taiga is a mixture of coniferous and deciduous trees, including beech, ash, poplar, and willow. Although this area remains heavily forested, the continent's forests were drastically reduced as a result of intense urbanization throughout human history. Intense trade introduced many species, which often overtook native plants. The forests and grasslands of western and central Europe have been almost completely domesticated, with crops and livestock dominant.

Finally, small, drought-resistant plants border the Mediterranean Sea, Europe's southern edge. Trees also grow in that southernmost region, including the Aleppo pine, cypress, and cork oak. The only primate native to Europe, the Barbary macaque, inhabits this Mediterranean basin. A small troop of Barbary macaques lives on the tiny island of Gibraltar, between Spain and the African country of Morocco.

The waters surrounding Europe are home to a number of organisms, including fish, seaweeds, marine mammals, and crustaceans. The cold water surrounding northern Britain and Scandinavia is home to unique species of cold-water corals. All of the major bodies of water in Europe have been fished for centuries. In many places, including the Mediterranean and North seas, waters have been overfished. About a quarter of marine mammals are threatened.

Today, around 15 percent of Europe's animal species are threatened or endangered, mainly by habitat loss, pollution, overexploitation, and competition from invasive species. The European bison, the heaviest land animal on the continent, is one of the most threatened species.

Beginning in the 20th century, many governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have worked to restore some of Europe's rich biodiversity. Establishing fishing limits, protecting threatened habitats, and encouraging sustainable consumption habits are some efforts supported by European conservationists.



Climate

The climate of Europe varies from subtropical to polar. The Mediterranean climate of the south is dry and warm. The western and northwestern parts have a mild, generally humid climate, influenced by the North Atlantic Drift. In central and eastern Europe the climate is of the humid continental-type with cool summers. In the northeast subarctic and tundra climates are found. All of Europe is subject to the moderating influence of prevailing westerly winds from the Atlantic Ocean and, consequently, its climates are found at higher latitudes than similar climates on other continents.



Regions

Europe can be divided into seven geographic regions:

- Scandinavia (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark);
- the British Isles (the United Kingdom and Ireland);
- W Europe (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Monaco);
- S Europe (Portugal, Spain, Andorra, Italy, Malta, San Marino, and Vatican City);
- Central Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary);
- SE Europe (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and the European part of Turkey);
- E Europe (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, the European portion of Russia, and by convention the Transcaucasian countries of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan).



Economy

Almost half of European land is unproductive because of climate, relief, soil, or urbanization. A quarter of land is forested; the lumber industry is particularly important in Scandinavia and the mountainous areas of e Europe. Fishing is a major industry in countries with Atlantic or North Sea coastlines. Two-thirds of cultivated land is arable.

Cereals are the principal crop: wheat is the most important, replaced by oats in the n, and sometimes by maize in the s. Rice grows with the aid of irrigation. Sheep graze on many upland areas, but dairy farming is by far the most important form of animal husbandry. In Mediterranean areas many fruits, early vegetables and grapevines (mainly for wine) are cultivated. Europe produces more than one-third of the world's coal. Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, and Russia are the leading producers. Other mineral deposits include bauxite, mercury, lead, zinc, and potash.

Romania was the largest producer of oil in Europe until North Sea states, especially Britain, began to exploit their resources. Europe is highly industrialized, and manufacturing employs a high proportion of the workforce. The largest industrial areas are in w central Europe, in particular n and ne France, the Ruhr, and around the North Sea ports of Antwerp, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Hamburg. Area c.10.36 million sq km (4 million sq mi) Highest mountain Mount Elbrus (Russia) 5633m (18,481ft) Longest river Volga 3750km (2330mi) Population (2000 est.) 728,887,000 Largest cities Moscow (8,296,000); London (6,966,800); St Petersburg (4,661,000); Berlin (2,392,300) See also articles on individual countries



Agriculture

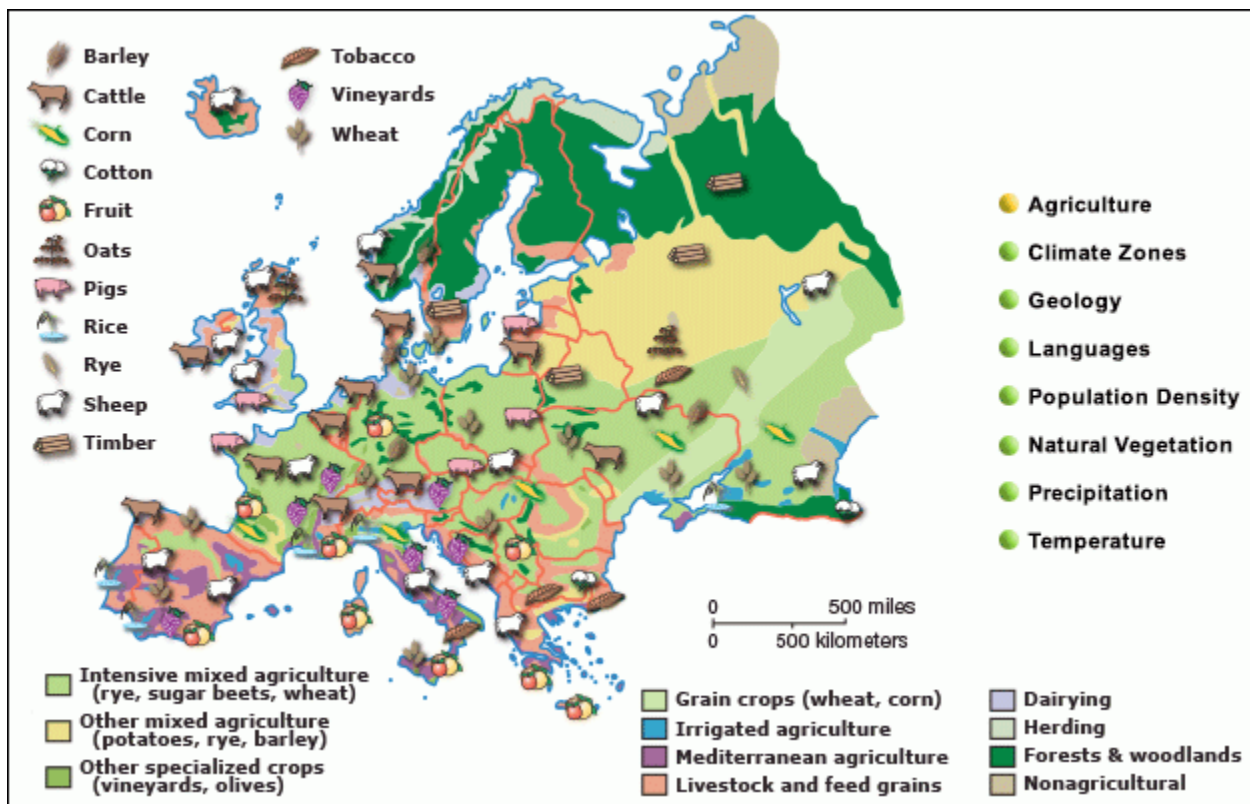
The agricultural sector is one of the main land users in Europe and thus shapes landscapes in rural areas. It has various direct and indirect impacts on the environment and is itself dependent on natural resources.

Agricultural land plays an important role in land use patterns across the EU. Grassland and cropland together make up 39 % of Europe's land cover (EEA, 2017a). The agricultural sector is a major user of natural resources and has a complex relationship with the environment (OECD, 2017). The following data reflect the performance and impacts of the agricultural sector in the EU:

- Around 94 % of ammonia emissions in Europe stemmed from agriculture in 2015, mainly from activities such as manure storage, slurry spreading and the use of inorganic nitrogen fertilisers.
- CO₂ emissions from peat soil that is drained for agriculture make up 100.5 Mt CO₂ per year, while for forestry the figure is 67.6 Mt CO₂. With a total of 173 Mt CO₂ emissions from drained soils, the EU is the second largest hotspot for peatland CO₂ emissions (after Indonesia) (Berge et al., 2017).
- Through irrigation, agriculture exerts major pressure on renewable water resources. Seasonally, the sector consumes more than 50 % of the water used in Europe.
- Agriculture is one of the main sources of nitrates in surface and ground waters. In several regions across Europe, often those with intensive agriculture, nitrate concentrations are still too high.
- Around 9 % of agricultural land is part of Natura 2000 sites — an EU-wide network of nature protection areas.
- Agriculture contributes 25 million tonnes of oil equivalent (12.3 %) to renewable energy production (2015), which is an increase of 15 % from 2013 to 2015 (DG AGRI, 2017).

- Agriculture is an inherent part of food systems and the range of food produced in the EU is diverse.
- The EU is broadly self-sufficient in most agricultural primary commodities. It is also the single largest exporter of agri-food products, which include processed food (EC, 2016a).

Two of the main challenges confronting agriculture in Europe are climate change (EEA, 2017c) and land take, i.e. the conversion of land to, for example, settlements and infrastructure (EEA, 2017a). Climate change requires the adaptation of crop varieties and causes extreme weather events (for further information on climate adaptation, see the EEA's work in this field or the Climate-ADAPT Platform) and thus it demands profound risk management. Land take leads to a reduction in agricultural land in many regions.



Population

Europe is a subcontinent that comprises the westernmost peninsula of Eurasia. It's usually divided from Asia by the watershed divides of the Ural River, the Caspian and Black Seas, the Caucasus and Ural Mountains and waterways that connect the Black and Aegean Seas together. The continent's estimated 2016 population is over 738 million.

Europe is the second-smallest continent by surface area and covers 10.18 million square kilometers (3.93 million square miles), or 2% of the Earth's surface and 6.8% of the world's land area. There are

approximately 50 countries in Europe. The largest by size is Russia with 40% of the continent, and Vatican City is the smallest.

Europe is the third most populous continent behind Asia and Africa. Its population in 2016 is estimated at 738 million, which accounts for 11% of the world's population. The continent is currently growing at a rate of 0.3%. Europe has been in a decline for some time and its population is aging rapidly in most countries.

Most Populous Countries

By far the most populous country in Europe is Russia, which is actually located in both Europe and Asia. Russia's population of 143 million is almost equal to the combined populations of the 2nd and 3rd most populous countries on the continent.

Russia is a very interesting situation, as its population is very hard to determine with Russian and CIA estimates varying by 3 million. The country is also very representative of all of Europe with a rapidly declining population growth and an aging population.

The top 10 most populous countries in Europe are:

- Russia (143.45 million)*
- Germany (81.4 million)*
- France (66.4 million)
- United Kingdom (65.08 million)
- Italy (60.93 million) *
- Spain (46.42 million) *
- Ukraine (42.85 million) *
- Poland (38.49 million) *
- Romania (19.82 million) *
- Kazakhstan (17.54 million)

The asterisks indicate countries with a declining population.

Least Populous Countries

The least populous country in Europe is Vatican City with just over 800 residents. It's also the smallest internationally recognized independent state in the world, both in area and population. Vatican City is a landlocked city-state with a territory consisting of a walled enclave within Rome, Italy. Vatican City is ruled by the Pope and it's the sovereign territory of the Holy See.

The 10 least populous countries (not territories) in Europe are:

- Vatican City (800)
- San Marino (33,000)

- Monaco (37,000)
- Liechtenstein (37,000)
- Andorra (78,000)
- Iceland (331,000)
- Malta (425,000)
- Luxembourg (570,000)
- Montenegro (620,000)
- Cyprus (876,000)

Comparison to Other Continents

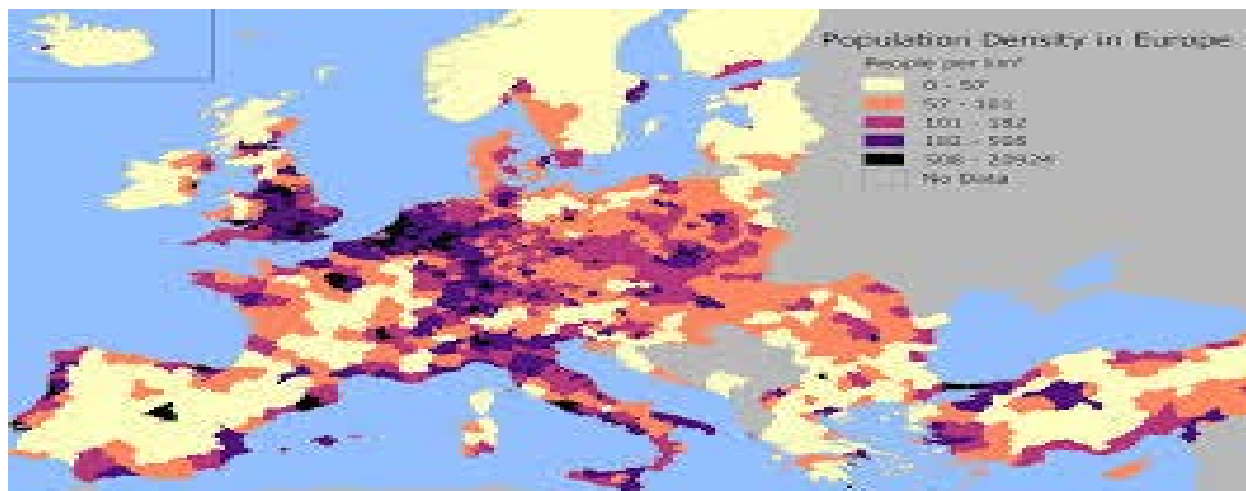
Europe is the second-smallest continent by surface area but the third most populous after Asia and Africa. The population density of Europe as a whole is 143 people per square mile (compared to Asia's 203/square mile), which makes it the second most densely populated continent.

Europe is leading the world in countries with declining population growth and an aging population, but this problem is one that affects most developed countries at some point.

Europe Population Growth

It's projected that Europe will lose 30 million people of working age by 2050, while the number of people in their 80s and 90s will rise dramatically. This New York Times article is an interesting read for learning more about Europe's declining population and fertility rates. ^[1]^[2]^[3]Most European countries are dealing with the effects of an aging population, including fertility rates below replacement level as fewer women have children in favor of a career. The population of the European Union (EU) is now expected to peak in 2040 with the sharpest population declines in Romania and Germany (-19%), Bulgaria (-27%), Latvia (-26%) and Lithuania (-20%).

Europe's largest country, Russia, is expected to drop from today's 143 million to just 107 million by 2050.



Countries

There are 44 countries in Europe. A small number of countries on the continent are transcontinental, meaning they are considered to be a part of both Europe and Asia.

Some dependencies and territories are also found within the continent such as the Aland Islands, two constituent countries of Denmark, British Overseas Territories, and Svalbard. 28 countries of Europe are a member of the European Union (EU). Therefore, the European Union should not be confused with the continent of Europe. Europe is subdivided into four main regions: Southern, Northern, Eastern, and Western Europe

- **Southern Europe**

Southern Europe is the region covering the southern half of the landmass of Europe. It includes the European countries of the Iberian Peninsula, Italian peninsula, Greece, and Malta. Southern Europe may be defined to include Balkan countries that are traditionally placed in Eastern Europe. Southern Europe can be defined as a political, economic, or cultural region. It can also be defined by its natural features. The countries of Southern Europe are Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, the Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, and Vatican City (15 countries).

- **Northern Europe**

Northern Europe covers the northern portion of Europe. The region is defined geographically as consisting of all of Europe above 52nd parallel north with notable geographical features including North European Plain, Baltic Plain, and British Isle. The region consists of Scandinavian and Jutland Peninsula. The Northern European countries are considered to be Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (ten countries).

- **Western Europe**

Western Europe comprises of countries covering the western portion of the continent. The region was defined as countries with dominant Catholics and Protestants for decades. Western Europe includes the nine countries of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

- **Eastern Europe**

Although Eastern Europe covers the eastern portion of Europe, there is no consensus on the exact area it covers since the term has a wide range of socioeconomic and geopolitical connotations. However, the geographical boundaries of the Eastern Europe are well defined with the exception of its boundaries with the Western Europe. According to the UN Geoscheme for Europe, the ten Eastern European countries are: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.



Political map of Europe



Language map of Europe



Administrative map of europe

