

Europe

Location and Physical Features

KEY CONCEPTS

- * Location.
- * Boundaries.
- * Political Divisions (Countries with Capitals).
- * Major Physical Features.

Europe is one of the most densely populated, highly industrialised and urbanised continents of the world. Stretching over an area of 10 million sq. km, it is the sixth largest continent, with only Australia being smaller than it. It is the third most populous continent after Asia and Africa, comprising 11 per cent of the world's population.

Due to its high population density, large volume of trade and highly developed industries, Europe is known as 'the most active of all the Continents.'

Europe generates more international trade than any other continent. Of the world's leading trading countries, six are in Europe, namely, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium. Europe is among the highly industrialised continents of the world. In fact, Europe was the first continent to industrialise — led by the UK in the 18th century — and as a result, it has become the richest continent in the world today. The main reasons for Europe's prosperity include the following:

- * Its climate is neither too hot nor too cold.
- * There are no hot deserts.
- * Most of the land is even and suitable for cultivation.
- * It is rich in mineral resources like coal and iron ore.

- * Its hilly and mountainous topography provides avenues for the generation of hydroelectricity.
- * Even the remote parts in the coastal areas are accessible through the deep inlets.

LOCATION

Europe lies almost at the centre of the northern hemisphere in the North Temperate Zone. Only a small part of its lies in the Frigid Zone beyond the Arctic circle. It extends from 36°N to 72° N latitudes and from 10° W to 60° E longitudes.

In terms of shape, Europe looks like a peninsula (landmass surrounded by water on three sides), extending westwards of the Asiatic landmass. It is, in fact, a collection of connected peninsulas and therefore called **peninsula of peninsulas**. This is because the seas have penetrated deep into the land and have led to the formation of smaller peninsulas. The two largest of these are mainland Europe and Scandinavia to the north, separated from each other by the Baltic Sea. Three smaller peninsulas — *Iberia*, *Italy* and the *Balkans* — emerge from the southern margin of the mainland into the Mediterranean Sea, which separates Europe from Africa.

The numerous peninsulas, bays, islands and fjords give the southern, northern and western Europe a long, irregular and highly indented coastline as the sea frequently extends into the land. The coastline of Europe is estimated at 80,500 km, which is longer than that of Africa.

The major islands of Europe are *Great Britain*, *Ireland* and *Iceland*. The smaller islands include Corsica, Crete, Faroe, Orkney, Shetland, Sicily and Sardinia.

BOUNDARIES

Europe is bound on three sides by water bodies — on the north by the Arctic Ocean and the Barents Sea; on the west by the Atlantic Ocean; and on the south by the Mediterranean Sea. Europe is separated from Africa by the *Strait of Gibraltar*.

Europe's eastern boundary with Asia is not well defined. It is separated from Asia by the Ural mountains, the Caucasus mountains and the Caspian Sea. This made some geographers consider Europe and Asia as one continent, called *Eurasia*. However, Europe has certain distinct characteristic features in terms of physical features and population, which make it a continent by itself.

POLITICAL DIVISIONS

Europe occupies about seven per cent of the total land area of the earth and hosts a large number of independent countries. It comprises both Russia,

the world's largest by area and Europe's largest by population, as well as the Vatican, the smallest country by area and population. Europe can be divided into the following categories:

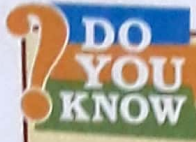
- * *Scandinavia* includes the countries of Norway, Denmark and Sweden and sometimes Finland and Iceland. For all these five countries, the term *Nordic countries* is also used.
- * The *British Isles* are a group of islands, situated to the north-west of Europe in the North Atlantic Ocean. Two countries are included in the British Isles — the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.
- * The *Lowland countries* lie on the mainland, across the English Channel. These include Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. They are so called because of their low altitudes. An alternative term, *Benelux* (Be



Europe — Political Divisions

for Belgium, Ne for Netherlands and Lux for Luxembourg) is also used for these countries.

* The *Balkan States* in South-eastern Europe, include Albania, Bulgaria, European Greece, Kosovo, Turkey, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro (formerly Yugoslavia). The region takes its name from the Balkan mountains which run through the centre of Bulgaria into eastern Siberia.



The erstwhile Soviet Union (USSR) collapsed in 1991 and 15 independent nations have been created from the former USSR. Of these Russia lies in both Europe and Asia. The other nine countries wholly or partially in Europe are Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (Baltic States), Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The other five are in Asia.

Europe: Countries and their Capitals

Country	Capital	Country	Capital
1. Albania	Tirana	26. Liechtenstein	Vaduz
2. Andorra	Andorra la Vella	27. Lithuania	Vilnius
3. Armenia	Yerevan	28. Luxembourg	Luxembourg City
4. Austria	Vienna	29. Macedonia	Skopje
5. Azerbaijan	Baku	30. Malta	Valletta
6. Belarus	Minsk	31. Moldova	Chisinau
7. Belgium	Brussels	32. Monaco	Monaco
8. Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sarajevo	33. Montenegro	Podgorica
9. Bulgaria	Sofia	34. Netherlands	Amsterdam
10. Croatia	Zagreb	35. Norway	Oslo
11. Cyprus	Nicosia	36. Poland	Warsaw
12. Czech Republic	Prague	37. Portugal	Lisbon
13. Denmark	Copenhagen	38. Romania	Bucharest
14. Estonia	Tallinn	39. Russia	Moscow
15. Finland	Helsinki	40. San Marino	San Marino
16. France	Paris	41. Serbia	Belgrade
17. Georgia	Tbilisi	42. Slovakia	Bratislava
18. Germany	Berlin	43. Slovenia	Ljubljana
19. Greece	Athens	44. Spain	Madrid
20. Hungary	Budapest	45. Sweden	Stockholm
21. Iceland	Reykjavik	46. Switzerland	Bern
22. Ireland	Dublin	47. Turkey	Ankara
23. Italy	Rome	48. Ukraine	Kiev
24. Kosovo	Pristina	49. United Kingdom	London
25. Latvia	Riga	50. Vatican City	Vatican City

- * The *Baltic states* are located in northern Europe. These include Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
- * The *Central European* countries include Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic and Switzerland.
- * The *Iberian Peninsula* comprises Spain and Portugal.
- * Italy occupies its own peninsula in southern Europe.

Besides these, Europe includes five tiny nations, namely, the *Vatican City*, *San Marino*, *Monaco*, *Andorra* and *Liechtenstein*.