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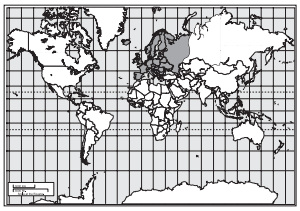
Physical Geography of Europe



Location: Europe is located in the eastern hemisphere. It is west of the continent of Asia and north of the continent of Africa. It is bordered by the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea to the south, and the Ural Mountains to the east. The entire continent is located in the northern hemisphere (above the equator).

Size: Of the seven continents, Europe ranks sixth in area. Only Australia is smaller. Its total area is 4,066,000 square miles (10,532,000 km²), which makes it about 500,000 square miles (1,300,000 km²) larger than the United States. The greatest north-south distance across the continent is about 3,000 miles (4,800 km). From east to west, the greatest distance is about 4,000 miles (6,400 km). The highest point on the continent is on Mount Elbrus 18,481 feet (5,633 m), and the lowest is on the shore of the Caspian Sea, 92 feet (28 m) below sea level.

Climate: The climate of Europe is generally mild; however, there are areas that get very cold or very hot. Except in the far north and south, summers are usually warm to cool and winters mild to cold. Precipitation is moderate. In the far north, short, cool summers are followed by long, cold winters. In the south, summers are usually hot and dry and winters are mild. Little or moderate precipitation falls annually.

The most important feature of Europe's climate is winds that blow across the continent from the Atlantic Ocean. These winds are warmed by the waters of the Atlantic and help keep the climate mild, even in areas close to the Arctic Circle.

Landforms: Europe is basically a gigantic peninsula that is attached to Asia. Among the important landforms are peninsulas, plains, mountains, islands, and rivers.

Of the many European peninsulas the largest are the Scandinavian, Iberian, Apennine, and Balkan peninsulas and Jutland.

A huge plain stretches across the continent from north-central Europe to the Ural Mountains in Russia. The smaller Great Hungarian Plain is located in the center of eastern Europe.

Most of the mountains of Europe are located in the north and south. Iceland, northern United Kingdom, Norway, and Sweden are mountainous areas. The Iberian Peninsula is dominated by a large plateau bordered by mountains of the Pyrenees. The mountainous Apennine Peninsula extends southward from the Alps. The Carpathian Mountains, the mountains of the Balkan Peninsula, and the Caucasus Mountains cover much of southeast Europe.

Included as part of the continent are thousands of islands. The largest are the United Kingdom, Ireland, Iceland, Sardinia, and Sicily. Dozens of small islands are clustered in the British Isles, Baltic Sea, and Aegean Sea.

Many important and useful rivers flow across Europe. The longest, the Volga, is located in eastern Europe. The Danube, Don, and Rhine are principal water routes in their regions.

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Cities of Europe

This map of Europe is labeled with letters that mark the locations of important cities. Match these letters with the correct names. Use the information provided below to help.

_____ **1.** Athens
_____ **2.** Berlin
_____ **3.** Kiev
_____ **4.** London
_____ **5.** Madrid
_____ **6.** Moscow
_____ **7.** Paris
_____ **8.** Rome
_____ **9.** Vienna
_____ **10.** Warsaw

1. This capital city was once the center of an ancient civilization in Greece and the birthplace of democracy. Today it is the capital of Greece, famous for its climate and ancient ruins.
2. Before the two Germanies were united, this city was the capital of West Germany. Today, it is the capital of all Germany. It lies near the border of Poland.
3. Once this city was one of the largest and most important in the Soviet Union. Today, it is the capital and largest city of the country of Ukraine.
4. One of the largest cities in the world, this city is located on the Thames River in England. It is the capital of the United Kingdom.
5. Located on a plateau near the center of the Iberian Peninsula, this city has been the capital of Spain since the 1500s. It is also Spain's largest city.
6. This city is the capital and largest city of Russia and one of the ten largest cities in the world. It has many historic sites, such as Saint Basil's Church and the Kremlin.
7. This city is considered one of the most beautiful in the world and has been an important center of art and learning for hundreds of years. Today, it is the capital and largest city of France.
8. Located on the Tiber River on the Italian Peninsula, this historic city is the capital and largest city of Italy. It is famous for its ruins and beautiful fountains.
9. This city was once the musical capital of Europe and the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Today it is the capital and largest city of Austria in central Europe.
10. This city was almost completely destroyed during World War II. It has been an important city in eastern Europe for hundreds of years and today is the capital and largest city of Poland.

Answer Key: 1. J, 2. C, 3. H, 4. A, 5. F, 6. E, 7. B, 8. I, 9. G, 10. D

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Islands of Europe

Use an atlas to match the latitudes and longitudes of the islands with their names.

7°W, 62°N	10°E, 40°N	15°E, 38°N	2°W, 53°N
1. _____	**2.** _____	**3.** _____	**4.** _____
49°E, 69°N	8°W, 53°N	3°E, 40°N	19°E, 57°N
5. _____	**6.** _____	**7.** _____	**8.** _____
14°E, 36°N	1°W, 60°N	18°W, 65°N	9°E, 43°N
9. _____	**10.** _____	**11.** _____	**12.** _____

A. Balearic	**D.** Faeroes	**G.** Iceland	**J.** Sardinia
B. Kolguyev	**E.** Orkney	**H.** Ireland	**K.** Shetland
C. Corsica	**F.** United Kingdom	**I.** Malta	**L.** Sicily

Answer Key: 1. D, 2. J, 3. L, 4. F, 5. B, 6. H, 7. A, 8. E, 9. I, 10. K, 11. G, 12. C

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