CH. 12 Europe and Russia

Introduction

Europe and Russia occupy part of the huge landmass called Eurasia. Eurasia reaches from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. It is so large that geographers divide it into two continents, Europe and Asia.

Europe is the world’s second smallest continent. Oceans and seas border Europe to the north, south, and west. Asia borders Europe on the east.

Russia is the world’s largest country. It spreads over two continents. Western Russia lies on the continent of Europe, while Eastern Russia stretches across Asia to the Pacific Ocean. The Ural Mountains, at 60°E longitude, mark the dividing line between Europe and Asia and between western Russia and eastern Russia.
Physical Features

Europe and Russia share a landscape of sweeping plains and rugged mountains. Large rivers wander across the broad plains. These rivers drain into three of the world’s five oceans—the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Arctic oceans.

The Alps cut through France, Italy, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Austria, and Slovenia.
Europe

On a map, the European landmass looks like a giant peninsula attached to Eurasia. Smaller peninsulas jut out from all sides of Europe. They include the Balkan Peninsula, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, and Scandinavia. Various seas, bays, and gulfs are tucked in between. Several big islands are also part of Europe.

Much of Europe lies on the Northern European Plain, which is one of the largest expanses of flat land on Earth. It extends almost 2,500 miles from east to west. Several mountain ranges cross Europe. The Alps form a major barrier between central and southern Europe. The Pyrenees separate France and Spain. The Apennines run through Italy.

Europe’s rivers serve as water highways. They also provide drinking water and power for electricity. The Danube River flows through 10 countries, more than any other major river in the world. The Rhine river valley is one of the most productive industrial and farming areas in the world.

Russia

Much of Russia also lies on broad plains. The western, or European, part of Russia shares the Northern European Plain. Western Russia extends to the Ural Mountains in the east and to the Caucasus Mountains in the south.

From the Ural Mountains, eastern Russia spreads across the full width of Asia. This area is called Siberia. The West Siberian Plain is a large area of flat land with many lakes and swamps. To the east lies the Central Siberian Plateau. Rivers have carved narrow canyons through this high, flat plateau.

Russia has thousands of lakes. The largest is Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest lake in the world. It holds one-fifth of Earth’s fresh water. In winter, the lake freezes with ice up to three feet deep.

The Kamchatka Peninsula at the eastern edge of Russia reaches into the Pacific Ocean. More than 100 volcanoes rise from this finger of land. No roads or railroads connect the peninsula to Siberia. Everything must arrive by airplane or boat.
Moscow, the capital of Russia, has a humid continental climate. When are people living in Moscow likely to have very high heating bills?

**Climate**

Three factors shape Europe’s climates. The first is latitude. Areas south of the Alps have more temperate climates than areas to the north.

The second factor is relative location. Areas near the ocean have a marine climate. Marine means “found in or close to the sea.” Ocean winds and warm ocean currents help keep temperatures about the same all year. Inland areas far from the sea have a continental climate. Continental means “influenced by a large landmass.” Ocean winds and currents do not affect places with a continental climate. As a result, summers are usually hotter than near the sea, while winters are colder.
Mountain ranges are the third factor. The Alps and Carpathians block the cold air from the north that influences the climate of southern and eastern Europe.

Europe

Crowds of tourists often head to the Mediterranean Sea for vacation. Southern Europe has a Mediterranean climate. Its summers are longer, hotter, and drier than in northern Europe. Its winters are short and mild.

Most of northern Europe has a marine west coast climate. A warm current that flows across the Atlantic from the Gulf of Mexico keeps winters from being too cold. Cool ocean breezes keep summers from being too hot and bring year-round rain to northern Europe.

Russia

Russia is known for its long, harsh winters. The Arctic Ocean on Russia’s northern border is frozen most of the year. As a result, it does not have a marine influence on Russia’s climate. In some areas, snow covers the ground for eight or nine months of the year.

The most northern part of Russia has a tundra climate. The weather is so cold all year that the land is always frozen. Winter temperatures can drop as low as –90°F.

Much of Siberia has a subarctic climate. Winters are still long and very cold. Summers are too cool and short for farming.

Areas to the south and west have milder climates. Much of western Russia has a humid continental climate. Winters here are still freezing cold, but summers can be hot and steamy. The most southern parts of Russia have a semiarid climate. Here, the hot summers and cool winters are both fairly dry. Most of Russia’s crops are grown in these areas with longer growing seasons.

Summer sun thaws the surface of Siberia’s tundra. With the return of winter, this boggy area will freeze solid.
Vegetation

Europe and Russia have a mix of vegetation zones, but forests are the most common. One of the largest forests on Earth, the Russian taiga, stretches across most of the Eurasian landmass.

Three types of forests are found in this region—deciduous, coniferous, and mixed forests. All three are named for the types of trees that are found in them. Deciduous trees have broad, flat leaves that drop each fall. Coniferous trees have needle-like leaves that stay green all year. Mixed forests have both deciduous and coniferous trees.

Europe

All three types of forests once thrived in Europe. But over time, people cleared the forested areas to use the land for farming. Pockets of deciduous and mixed forests can still be found. Large coniferous forests survive in the far northern parts of the continent.

The coastal parts of Europe bordering the Mediterranean Sea are covered with chaparral. Here, the small trees and bushes are well adapted to long, rainless summers. They send their roots deep into the soil to search for hidden water.
sources. Most have thick bark and small leaves that keep them from losing water during the dry season. Olive trees and cork trees are common in this vegetation zone.

**Russia**

In northern Russia, the **tundra** is treeless. Because the ground is always frozen under the surface, trees cannot send their roots down into the soil. During the short summer, the top layer of soil thaws. Then, for about two months, mosses, grasses, and scrubs cover the ground.

South of the tundra lies the **taiga**, a vast region of thick, dark forests. The taiga consists mainly of coniferous trees such as cedar, fir, pine, and spruce. Further south, the taiga becomes more mixed forest with the addition of aspen, birch, and other deciduous trees.

Far to the south lie the **steppes**, or grassy plains, of Russia. This region of **temperate grasslands** is too dry to support trees. The steppes have mostly been plowed for farms.
Human Geography

The region of Europe is home to 44 countries, including Russia. You’ve learned that Russia is the world’s largest country. It covers about 6.6 million square miles. At the other extreme, Vatican City is the world’s smallest country. It covers only 109 acres. It lies in the center of the city of Rome, Italy.

The people of Europe and Russia are linked together by language and culture. At least 50 languages are spoken here. Yet most of them belong to just three language families: Latin, Germanic, and Slavic. Europeans and Russians also share many elements of culture. These include art, music, and religion.
History

Europeans and Russians are linked by history. For thousands of years, peoples and armies have moved back and forth across this region. Ideas and ways of life have moved with them.

Early Times

Two great civilizations appeared in Europe in ancient times. The first arose on the Greek peninsula in the 700s b.c.e. The Greeks created distinct styles of art and literature. They also invented the idea of democracy.

The second great civilization arose on the Italian peninsula. Around 500 B.C.E., the city of Rome began to grow. It would become a mighty empire. At its peak, the Roman Empire included most of Europe.

Roman rule collapsed in the late 400s. But the Romans left behind their language and ideas about law and government.

The Rise of Nations

After Rome fell, many small kingdoms arose in Europe and Russia. The times seemed dangerous and uncertain to many. People focused on faith and their relationship to God.

In the 1300s, some began looking back to the ideas of ancient Rome and Greece. This began the Renaissance, which means “rebirth.” Thinking focused more on science than on faith. The Renaissance began in the Italian city-states. By the late 1500s, it had spread throughout Northern Europe.

In the meantime, rulers increased their power. They formed modern nations. In 1469, for example, Ferdinand of Aragon married Isabella of Castile. Together, they created the nation of Spain. In 1533, Ivan the Terrible, the Grand Prince of Moscow, began to conquer vast lands. By 1547, he was czar, or ruler, of all Russia.

Soon, rulers looked for new lands to conquer. The Russian czars expanded their control east across Asia. European rulers created colonies in the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

The Modern Era

More recently, two kinds of revolutions shaped Europe and Russia. The first was economic. The Industrial Revolution began in the 1700s. It moved the production of goods out of homes and into factories. Machines began to take over work that had been done by hand. European nations led this revolution. They became the world’s first developed countries.

The second kind of revolution was political. Political revolutions led to changes in how countries were ruled. In some cases, they led to the rise of democratic governments. The Glorious Revolution of 1688–89 is an example. It limited the power of England’s monarchs. This was a step toward democracy.
In other cases, political revolutions led to the rise of dictators. A dictator is a leader who rules a country with absolute power, and often with brutal force. In 1917, the Russian Revolution drove the last czar from power. A series of dictators then ruled for more than 70 years.

Today, elected governments rule most countries in this region.

### Europe and Russia Timeline

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>500 B.C.E. - 500 C.E.</td>
<td>Greek civilization</td>
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<tr>
<td>500 B.C.E. - 500 C.E.</td>
<td>Roman civilization</td>
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<tr>
<td>1459-1492</td>
<td>Ferdinand and Isabel unite Spain</td>
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<td>1300</td>
<td>Renaissance begins</td>
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<td>1547</td>
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<td>1688</td>
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<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>London becomes first modern city over 1 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Russia becomes first modern country over 1 million</td>
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### Population

Europe and Russia are home to almost one-tenth of the world’s people. In 2017, about 742 million people lived in this region. Most of them live west of the Urals.

América Latina: Principales religiones

- Cristianismo, 90.0%
- Budismo, 0.1%
- Hinduismo, 0.1%
- Islam, 0.1%
- Judaísmo, 0.1%
- Indígenas, 1.7%
- Otras, 0.2%
- Sin religión, 7.7%

Europe has long been very urban. Rome was the first city to reach 1 million people. That was 2,000 years ago. In 1810, London became the first modern city to reach a million people. Today, most Europeans and Russians live in towns and cities. Rural eastern Russia is thinly settled.

Most parts of the world have growing populations. But in parts of Europe and Russia, populations have stopped growing. Some are even shrinking. The main reason is a drop in the birth rate, or the number of births per 1,000 people.
Christianity is the most common religion in Europe and Russia. More than one-third of all Europeans belong to the Roman Catholic Church. Most Christians in Russia follow the Russian Orthodox faith. Islam is the second largest faith in this region.

Economic Activity
Europe and Russia are both important industrial areas. Russian factories produce heavy machinery, such as electric motors and tractors. Factories in Denmark turn out sound systems, furniture, dishes, and silverware. German factories produce steel, automobiles, and electronics. Swiss factories turn out watches, chocolate, and medicines. Global trade has made Europe and Russia one of the world’s richest regions.

Resources
Europe and Russia are rich in natural resources. These include fossil fuels and minerals. About one-fourth of the world’s coal reserves are found in Siberia. In addition, Siberia has mines for gold, copper, lead, and diamonds.
In the North Sea and Russia, people drill for petroleum and natural gas. Russia is also a major producer of hydroelectric power. Most of this power comes from dams located along Russia’s rivers.

**Land Use**

Outside of its cities, Europe is largely a land of farms. Commercial farms are spread out along river valleys and across the vast Northern European Plain. In Western Europe, farmers use machines to produce large cash crops. In poorer parts of Eastern Europe, however, some families are limited to subsistence farming on small plots of land.

In Scandinavia, forestry and fishing are both big industries. Even though Norway is very far north, a warm ocean current keeps some of its ports free of ice. As a result, fishing can continue all year. Fishing is also the main industry of Iceland.

Manufacturing has become important to Russia over the last century. But many Russians still use their land in more traditional ways. In southern Russia, farmers grow a wide variety of crops, from wheat to apples. Across the taiga, forestry is a major industry. On the northern tundra, people herd reindeer. Reindeer are a source of meat and hides.

In Poland, much of the land is used for commercial farming.