



Let's explore Europe!





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Let's explore Europe!

Hello! Welcome to Europe!

We come from different countries and speak different languages, but this continent is the home we share.

Come with us and let's explore Europe together! It will be an adventurous journey through time and space and you'll find out loads of interesting things.

As we go along, test yourself to see how much you've learnt. Go to our website europa.eu/kids-corner where you will find the Let's explore Europe! game and many other quizzes and games about Europe.

At school, explore further! Ask your teacher to tell you more about each of the topics in this book. Then do some deeper research in the school library or on the Internet. You could even write your own booklet about what you have discovered.

Ready? Then let's begin!

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A continent to discover



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Mount Elbrus, the highest mountain in Europe.



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Lake Geneva, in the Alps.



Lake Saimaa, in Finland.

Europe is one of the world's seven continents. The others are Africa, North and South America, Antarctica, Asia and Australia/Oceania.

Europe stretches all the way from the Arctic in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south, and from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Ural mountains (in Russia) in the east. It has many rivers, lakes and mountain ranges. The map on page 4 tells you the names of some of the biggest ones.

The highest mountain in Europe is Mount Elbrus, in the Caucasus mountains, on the border between Russia and Georgia. Its highest peak is 5 642 metres above sea level.

The highest mountain in western Europe is Mont Blanc, in the Alps, on the border between France and Italy. Its summit is over 4 800 metres above sea level.

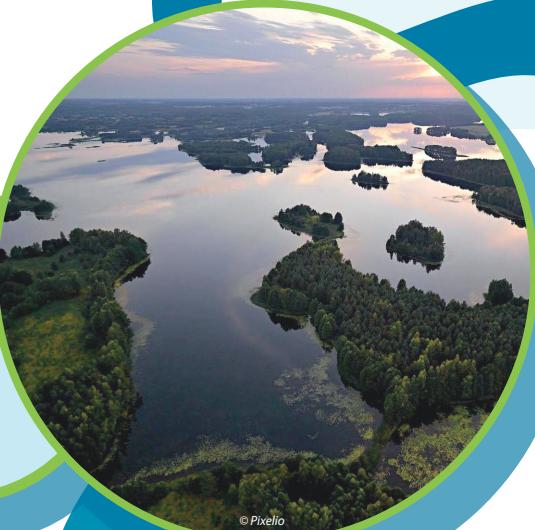
Also in the Alps is Lake Geneva – the largest freshwater lake in western Europe. It lies between France and Switzerland, goes as deep as 310 metres and holds about 89 trillion litres of water.

The largest lake in central Europe is Balaton, in Hungary. It is 77 kilometres (km) long and covers an area of about 600 square kilometres (km^2). Northern Europe has even bigger lakes, including Saimaa in Finland ($1\,147 \text{ km}^2$) and Vänern in Sweden (more than $5\,500 \text{ km}^2$). The largest lake in Europe as a whole is Lake Ladoga. It is located in north-western Russia and it is the 14th largest lake in the world. Its surface covers an area of $17\,700 \text{ km}^2$.

The continent of Europe



The Danube delta, Romania.



The Loire valley is famous for its beautiful castles.



A cargo barge travels up the Rhine.

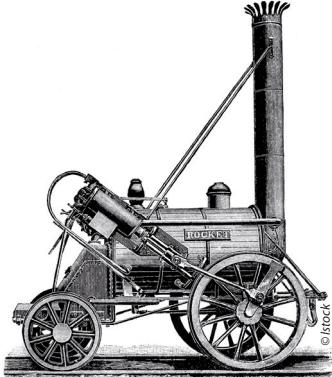


One of Europe's longest rivers is the Danube. It rises in the Black Forest region of Germany and flows eastwards through Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine to Romania, where it forms a delta on the Black Sea coast. In all, it covers a distance of about 2850 km.

Other big rivers include the Rhine (about 1 320 km long) and the Elbe (about 1 170 km), as well as the Loire and the Vistula (both more than 1 000 km). Can you find them on the map?

Big rivers are very useful for transporting things. All kinds of goods are loaded onto barges that carry them up and down the rivers, between Europe's sea ports and cities far inland.

Getting around



Stephenson's 'Rocket'.



Eurostar trains at St Pancras station (London).



Did you know that railways were invented in Europe? It was in England that George Stephenson introduced the first passenger train in 1825. His most famous locomotive was called 'the Rocket' and it reached speeds of more than 40 kilometres per hour (km/h) – which was really fast for those days.

Today, Europe's high-speed electric trains are very different from those first steam engines. They are very comfortable and they travel at speeds of up to 330 km/h on specially built tracks. More tracks are being built all the time, to allow people to travel quickly between Europe's big cities.

Roads and railways sometimes have to cross mountain ranges, wide rivers or even the sea. So engineers have built some very long bridges and tunnels. The longest road tunnel in Europe is the Laerdal tunnel in Norway, between Bergen and Oslo. It is more than 24 km long and was opened in the year 2000.

The longest railway tunnel in Europe is the Channel Tunnel. It carries Eurostar high-speed trains under the sea between Calais in France and Folkestone in England, and it's more than 50 km long.

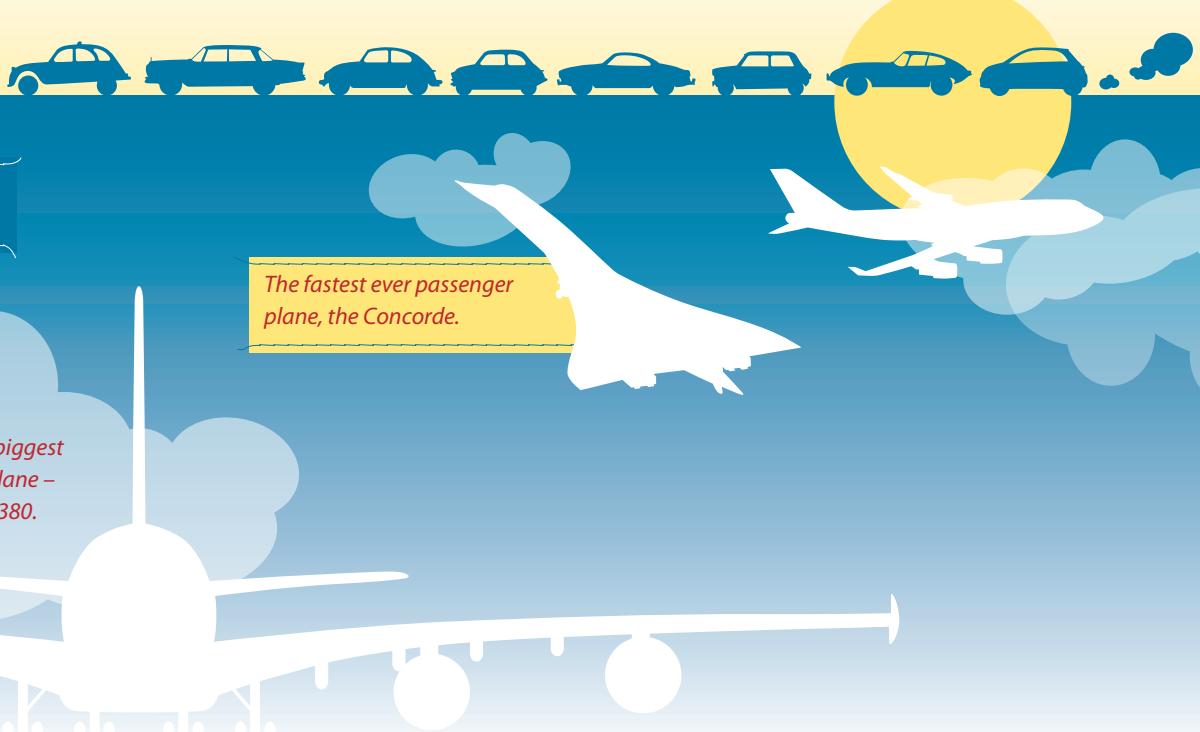


The highest bridge in the world (245 metres tall) is the Millau Viaduct in France, which was opened in 2004.

Two of the longest bridges in Europe are the Oresund road and rail bridge (16 km long) between Denmark and Sweden and the Vasco da Gama road bridge (more than 17 km long) across the river Tagus in Portugal. The Vasco da Gama bridge is named after a famous explorer, and you can read about him in the chapter 'A journey through time'.



The world's highest bridge – the Millau Viaduct (France).



The world's biggest passenger plane – the Airbus A380.

People also travel around Europe by plane, because air travel is quick. Some of the world's best planes are built in Europe – for example, the 'Airbus'. Different European countries make different parts of an Airbus, and then a team of engineers puts the whole plane together.

The fastest ever passenger plane, the Concorde, was designed by a team of French and British engineers. Concorde could fly at 2 160 km/h – twice the speed of sound – and could cross the Atlantic in less than three hours! (Most planes take about eight hours.) Concorde took its final flight in 2003.

Faster than any plane are space rockets, such as Ariane – a joint project between several European countries. People don't travel in the Ariane rocket: it is used to launch satellites, which are needed for TV and mobile phone networks, for scientific research and so on. Most of the world's satellites are now launched using these European rockets.

The success of Concorde, Airbus and Ariane show what can be achieved when European countries work together.



Languages in Europe

People in Europe speak many different languages. Most of these languages belong to three large groups or ‘families’: Germanic, Slavic and Romance.

The languages in each group share a family likeness because they are descended from the same ancestors. For example, Romance languages are descended from Latin – the language spoken by the Romans.

Here's how to say 'Good morning' or 'Hello' in just a few of these languages.

Germanic

Danish	God morgen
Dutch	Goedemorgen
English	Good morning
German	Guten Morgen
Swedish	God morgon

Romance

French	Bonjour
Italian	Buongiorno
Portuguese	Bom dia
Romanian	Bună dimineață
Spanish	Buenos días

Slavic

Bulgarian	Dobró útro
Czech	Dobré ráno
Polish	Dzień dobry
Slovak	Dobré ráno
Slovene	Dobro jutro

