

Europe (pronunciation: [/ˈjʊɹɒp/ YEW-əp](#); [/ˈjuɹɒp/](#) or [/ˈjəɹɒp/ YUR-əp](#)^[1]) is, by convention, one of the world's seven [continents](#). Comprising the westernmost [peninsula](#) of [Eurasia](#), Europe is generally 'divided' from [Asia](#) to its east by the [watershed divides](#) of the [Ural](#) and [Caucasus](#) Mountains, the [Ural River](#), the [Caspian](#) and [Black](#) Seas, and the [waterways](#) connecting the Black and [Aegean](#) Seas.^[2] Europe is bordered by the [Arctic Ocean](#) and other bodies of water to the north, the [Atlantic Ocean](#) to the west, the [Mediterranean Sea](#) to the south, and the Black Sea and connected waterways to the southeast. Yet the borders of Europe—a concept dating back to [classical antiquity](#)—are somewhat arbitrary, as the primarily [physiographic](#) term "continent" can incorporate [cultural and political](#) elements.

Europe is the world's [second-smallest](#) continent by surface area, covering about 10,180,000 square kilometres (3,930,000 sq mi) or 2% of the Earth's surface and about 6.8% of its land area. Of Europe's approximately 50 states, [Russia](#) is the largest by both area and population (although the country has territory in both Europe and Asia), while the [Vatican City](#) is the smallest. Europe is the third-most populous continent after Asia and [Africa](#), with a [population](#) of 733 million or about 11% of the [world's population](#).^[3] In 1900, Europe's share of the world's population was 25%.^[4]

Europe, in particular [Ancient Greece](#), is the birthplace of [Western culture](#).^[5] It played a predominant role in global affairs from the 16th century onwards, especially after the beginning of [colonialism](#). Between the 16th and 20th centuries, European nations controlled at various times [the Americas](#), [most of Africa](#), [Oceania](#), and large portions of Asia. Both [World Wars](#) were largely focused upon Europe, greatly contributing to a decline in [Western European](#) dominance in world affairs by the mid-20th century as the [United States](#) and [Soviet Union](#) took prominence.^[6] During the [Cold War](#), Europe was divided along the [Iron Curtain](#) between [NATO](#) in the west and the [Warsaw Pact](#) in the east. [European integration](#) led to the formation of the [Council of Europe](#) and the [European Union](#) in [Western Europe](#), both of which have been expanding eastward since the [fall of the Soviet Union](#) in 1991.