



Chapter 10

Europe

**Theme 7: Study of Continents:
Europe, Africa, Australia and
Antarctica**



Learning Outcomes

- Locating Europe on the world map
- Identifying countries in Europe
- Locating major physical features of Europe on the map
- Understanding how the geography of Europe affects the lives of residents



21st critical thinking

Thinking Cap

Why do you think Europe is considered a favourite holiday destination? Find out the names of a few famous tourist destinations in Europe. Which of these places would you love to visit if you are in Europe, and why?

Europe is the sixth-largest continent on Earth. It is thrice the size of India. The continent covers an area of approximately 10 million km² and is home to about 11 per cent of the world's population.

The location and geography of Europe has allowed it to greatly influence the world. Some of the greatest civilisations, such as Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire emerged in Europe. It was the centre of Western civilisation and many scientific discoveries and inventions. One of the major events in the history of Europe was the Industrial Revolution (18th–19th century), which marked the rise of modern industry and spread of colonialism.

Most European nations are located within a few hundred kilometres from the sea.

Except in Eastern Europe, the sea has played a prominent role in the development of the continent. The highly irregular coastline along with vast seas have shaped the social, cultural, political and economic structure of the continent.

Europe: Main Features

Total area:	1,01,80,000 km ²
Latitudinal extent:	35°N–72°N
Longitudinal extent:	25°W–65°E
Highest point on land:	Mt Elbrus (5,642 m above sea level)
Lowest point on land:	Caspian Sea (28 m below sea level)
Political divisions:	51 nations

Location

Europe is located entirely in the Northern Hemisphere. The North Atlantic Ocean separates Europe from North America. The Arctic Circle passes through Norway.

SVID



The Prime Meridian passes close to London. The continent lies mostly in the temperate zone.

Europe is known as the 'peninsula of peninsulas' since it is a large peninsula as a whole, surrounded by the Arctic Ocean in the north, Atlantic in the west and Mediterranean Sea in the south. At the same

time, its coastline is divided into smaller peninsulas such as the Scandinavian, Jutland, Iberian, Italian and the Greek peninsulas.



Location of Europe on world map

Boundaries

Europe is separated from Asia in the east by the Ural Mountains, Ural River, the Caspian and the Black seas, and the waterways of the Turkish Straits. The Mediterranean Sea and the Strait of Gibraltar separate Europe from Africa in the south. The Caucasus Mountains separate it from Asia in the south-east.

Unlike other continents, Europe is not a separate landmass in itself. For this reason, many geographers do not consider it a true continent; rather a westward extension of Asia. Hence, the term 'Eurasia' is sometimes used to address the continents of Europe and

Asia together. Due to its unique location and geography, Europe has a distinct climate, flora, fauna, natural resources, industries and population.

European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of almost 28 member countries. In 1999, the European countries adopted a common currency called the Euro.

Political Divisions

Europe is a small continent that comprises 51 countries. It is home to about 748 million people as of 2023. Most countries in Europe

are small in size. These are categorised into groups based on their geographical

similarities, physiography and culture.



Political map of Europe

The **Scandinavian** countries include Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Scandinavian countries combined with Finland and Iceland are known as **Nordic countries**.

The **United Kingdom (UK)** comprises the island of Great Britain, which in turn includes England, Wales and Scotland. The north-eastern part of Ireland along with the British Isles and dependent territories are also part of the UK.

The **Lowland** countries include the low-lying plains in the west such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. A major

portion of the lowland countries lie below the sea level.

The **Central European** countries include Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia.

The **Iberian** countries include Spain and Portugal. These nations are located in the Iberian Peninsula in the south, bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia are known as the

Balkan States, due to their location in the Balkan Peninsula.

In December 1991, the former USSR split into 15 independent states.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are the **Baltic States**, located along the coast of the Baltic Sea.

Formerly known as the Vatican City, the **Holy See** is under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church in Rome. It is located in the Italian Peninsula and is the smallest country in Europe.

Following is the list of European countries with their respective capitals:

Country	Capital	Country	Capital	Country	Capital
1. Albania	Tirana	18. Germany	Berlin	35. Netherlands	Amsterdam
2. Andorra	Andorra la Vella	19. Greece	Athens	36. Norway	Oslo
3. Armenia	Yerevan	20. Hungary	Budapest	37. Poland	Warsaw
4. Austria	Vienna	21. Iceland	Reykjavik	38. Portugal	Lisbon
5. Azerbaijan	Baku	22. Ireland	Dublin	39. Romania	Bucharest
6. Belarus	Minsk	23. Italy	Rome	40. Russia	Moscow
7. Belgium	Brussels	24. Kazakhstan	Nur Sultan	41. San Marino	San Marino
8. Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sarajevo	25. Kosovo*	Pristina	42. Serbia	Belgrade
9. Bulgaria	Sofia	26. Latvia	Riga	43. Slovakia	Bratislava
10. Croatia	Zagreb	27. Liechtenstein	Vaduz	44. Slovenia	Ljubljana
11. Cyprus	Nicosia	28. Lithuania	Vilnius	45. Spain	Madrid
12. Czech Republic	Prague	29. Luxembourg	Luxembourg (city)	46. Sweden	Stockholm
13. Denmark	Copenhagen	30. North Macedonia (FYROM)	Skopje	47. Switzerland	Bern
14. Estonia	Tallinn	31. Malta	Valletta	48. Turkey	Ankara
15. Finland	Helsinki	32. Moldova	Chisinau	49. Ukraine	Kyiv (also known as Kiev)
16. France	Paris	33. Monaco	Monaco	50. United Kingdom	London
17. Georgia	Tbilisi	34. Montenegro	Podgorica	51. Vatican City (Holy See)	Vatican City

* This claim is contested.

The northernmost parts of the Scandinavian countries along with the Kola Peninsula of Russia form the **Lapland**. It lies within the Arctic Circle.

The **former republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)** include nations separated from the former Soviet Union. Countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan are included in this group.

Russia lies partly in Europe and partly in Asia. Cyprus and Turkey also lie in Eurasia, astride Asia and Europe.

Major Physical Features

Despite being the second-smallest continent, the European landmass is unique in many ways:

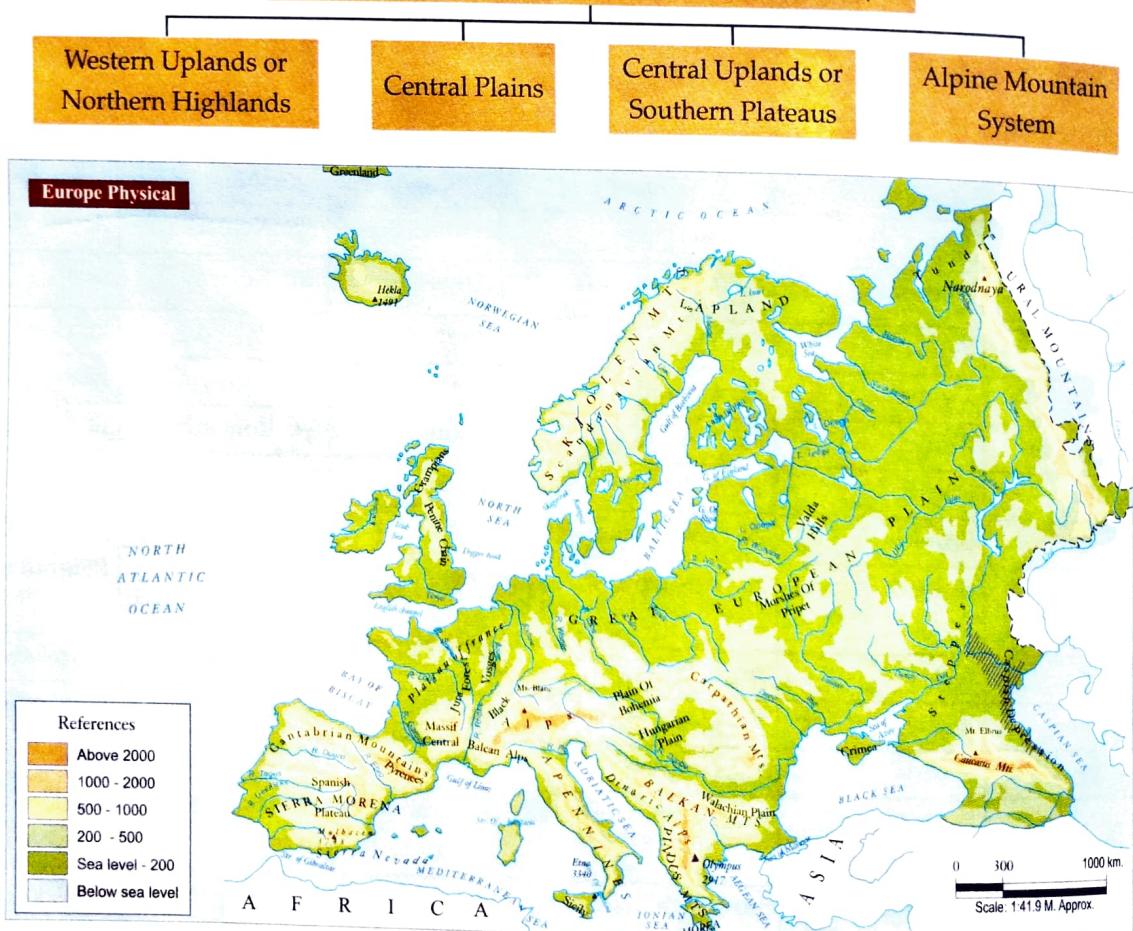
- The continent is itself a huge peninsula with large water bodies on the north, west and the south. It is also comprised of peninsulas, such as the Scandinavian, Iberian, Italian and Greek. It is, therefore, rightly known as the 'Peninsula of Peninsulas'.



The coastlines are extremely indented and broken (fjords and rias) due to glacial and riverine erosions. These broken coastlines have encouraged fishing and overseas navigation as a major economic occupation. Throughout history, Europe has been the birthplace of fearless seafaring people of Scandinavia (Norway) and Scotland.

Europe is divided into four broad, distinct physical divisions:

Major Physiographic Divisions (North to South)



Physical map of Europe

Western Uplands or Northern Highlands

These highlands are located along the northern and north-western borders of Europe. They extend from the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland to Scotland, Iceland, Ireland,

France, Spain and Portugal. The highest elevation in the Scandinavian mountains is **Galdhopiggen** (2,469 m) while that in Scottish Highlands is **Ben Nevis** (1,347 m).

The North-Western Highlands are made up of hard igneous rocks. These highlands were once very lofty and rugged. Erosive action of

glaciers for millions of years have reduced these mountains to low hills with gentle slopes. Their average altitude is 2,000 m.

The coastal regions of the Scandinavian Mountains consist of fjords. These are formed by the drowning of glacier valleys. Fjords are narrow, but deep inlets of water. These are the source of several swift flowing rivers. They have steep sides that break and indent the coastline, making them irregular.

ACTIVITY

21st Information literacy

Find the name of the country that has recently left the EU. Gather information and write a report on this country.

The Central Plains

These are one of the largest uninterrupted plains on Earth and are also known as the Great European Plains or the Central Lowlands.

The Central European Plains lie to the south of the Northern Mountains and are spread across Central Europe. These extend from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Ural Mountains in the east. These are bordered by the North Sea in the north and the Central Uplands in the south.

Did you know?

The rivers flowing through the Central European Plains are used for navigation, and form vital inland waterways of Europe.

The Central European Plains are roughly triangular in shape. This is because the plains are narrower in the west with a width of around 320 kilometres. In Western Russia, these plains are broader and extend for over 3,200 kilometres. These are either flat or gently undulating plains and mostly contain rolling lands with hills.

These plains are partly covered by glacial deposits called moraine and partly by alluvium deposits. Many large rivers such as the Don, the Dnieper, the Volga and the Ural flow through this region, making it very fertile and good for agriculture. Hence, it is one of the most densely populated regions in Europe.

The Central European Plains comprise many smaller plains and basins.

North European Plains

These are plains of erosion comprising the London Basin, Paris Basin, Rhineland and Silesian lowlands. These extend over England, France, Germany and Poland, respectively.

East European Plains

These comprise the plains of Hungary, Wallachia and Lombardy, and the Lowlands of Andalusia. These intermontane plains are surrounded by the Alpine Mountains. The East European Plains cover parts of Hungary, Romania, Italy and Spain.

Submerged Plains

These are the seaward extensions of the Central Lowlands and include the floors of the North, White and Baltic seas.

The Central Uplands or Southern Plateaus

The Central Uplands extend in an east to west direction across Central Europe through western France, Belgium, southern Germany and Czech Republic, and parts of northern Switzerland and Austria.

Major features of this region are:

- They are low altitude (average around 2,000 m) and less rugged compared to the Alpine system.
- They have dense forest cover.

- These areas have sparse population except in the Rhine, Elbe and Danube river valleys.
- Some important highlands are **Massif Central** and **Vosges** in France, **Ardennes** in Belgium, **Black Forest** and **Harz** in Germany, the **Ore** and **Sudeten** in Czech Republic and the **Ural mountains**, which form the eastern boundary between Europe and Asia.

The Alpine Mountain System

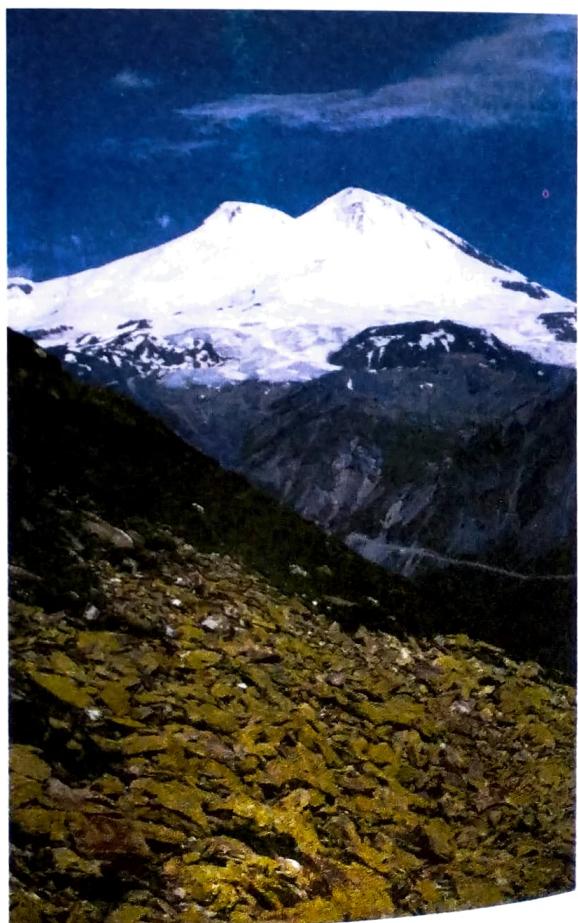
The Alpine mountain system is a chain of young fold mountains in southern Europe. It extends from the Atlantic Coast in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east.

It is an extensive system of parallel mountains characterised by high peaks, deep valleys and rugged slopes. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are common. Active volcanoes such as **Mt Etna** (3,350 m), **Mt Vesuvius** (1,281 m) and **Mt Stromboli** (924 m) are located in these mountains.

The Alpine Mountain System comprises the following ranges:

- In the west, the **Sierra Nevada Mountains** cover southern Spain and the **Cantabrian Mountains** in northern Spain. The **Pyrenees Range** forms a natural boundary between Spain and France.
- The **Alps** is one of the most important mountain systems in the world. It extends like an arc passing through France, Switzerland, Austria and north Italy. The highest peak is Mont Blanc (4,807 m).
- The **Apennines Mountain** range runs southward, forming the physical backbone of Italy.

- The **Dinaric Alps** is the southward extension of the Alps that runs parallel to the Apennines across the Adriatic Sea. It extends to many countries including Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, and the nations constituting former Yugoslavia.
- The **Carpathian Mountains** run eastward from the Alps and the Balkan Mountains lie in the south of the Danube River.
- The **Caucasus Mountains** lie between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The highest peak of Europe, Mt. Elbrus (5,642m), lies here.
- The **Pennine Hills** are a range of mountains and hills in Northern England. These form the physical backbone of the UK.



Mt Elbrus

Did you know?

The slopes of the Alpine Mountain System are suited for terrace farming and animal rearing. The picturesque mountain ranges also attract tourists.

Rivers

The North-Western Highlands and the Alpine Mountain System is the source of most rivers in Europe. These rivers radiate out, flowing in all directions.

Europe has many large rivers, such as the **Volga**, the **Danube**, the **Dnieper** and the **Rhine**. These rivers flow through many countries. The **Volga** is the longest river of Europe. The city of Moscow is situated on its banks. The **Danube** serves as an important waterway and has played a significant role in the development of cities such as Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade. The **Dnieper River** empties into the Black Sea in the east and is known for its dams.

There are several small rivers like the **Don**, the **Dniester**, the **Po** and the **Ebro**, which are important for navigation in their respective countries. The Don flows westwards into the Azov Sea. Dniester, Po and Ebro flow eastwards to empty into the Black Sea, the Adriatic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, respectively.

The **Thames** is an east flowing river in the UK that drains into the North Sea.

The **Guadalquivir**, **Tagus** and the **Douro** drain westwards into the Atlantic Ocean. The Garonne and the Loire also flow towards the west into the Bay of Biscay.

The **Seine** is the only river that empties into the English Channel.

The **Weser** and **Elbe** flow north to drain into

the North Sea. Rivers that flow northward also include the Oder, Vistula and the West Dvina that empty into the Baltic Sea.

European rivers are navigable and interconnected by canals. This creates an efficient system of waterways, used for irrigation and hydropower generation. Hence, several big towns and cities are located along the banks of these rivers. These rivers also create fertile plains that are important for agriculture in the region.

Lakes

After the last **Ice Age**, many surface depressions carved out by large continental glaciers got filled up by glacier melt water to form fresh water lakes of varied dimensions. The lakes are till date fed by rainfall, snowfall or river water and provide picturesque landscape to the surrounding areas.

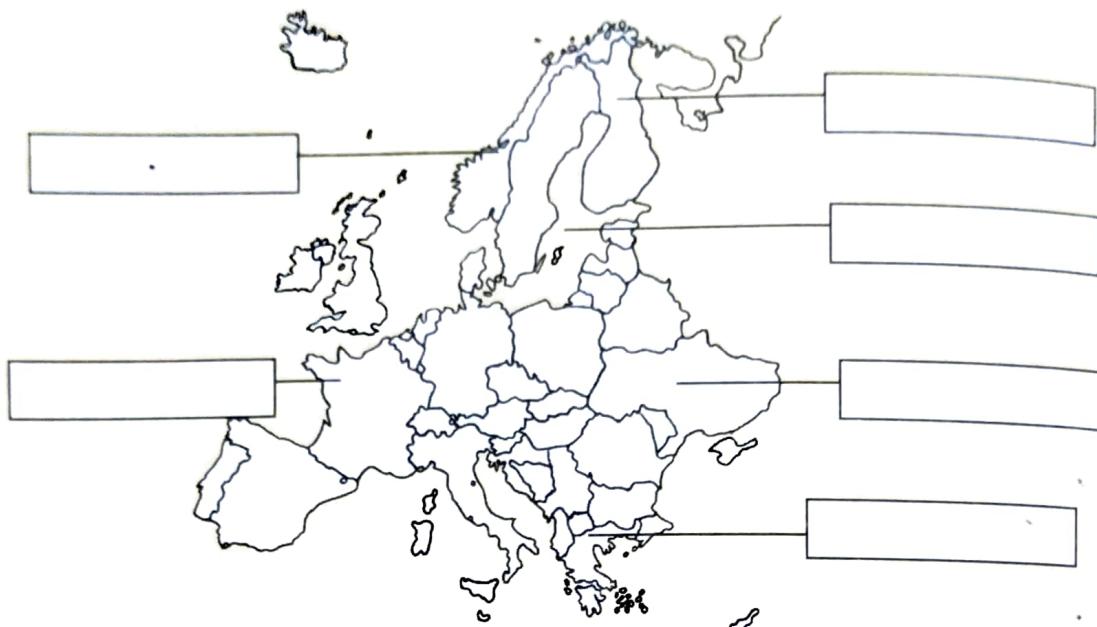
Northern Europe has a number of such freshwater lakes. **Ladoga** and **Onega** lakes are located in Russia. Ladoga is the largest lake of Europe. There are many important lakes in Sweden like Vanern, Vattern and Malaren. Geneva and Constance in Switzerland, and Como and Maggiore in Italy are also important lakes. Finland is also known as 'the land of thousand lakes' due to the presence of over 1,80,000 lakes in the country.

The **Caspian Sea** is the world's largest lake. It is completely surrounded by land. During the dry season, the water of the lake evaporates leaving behind salt and other minerals. Over time, the salt concentration increased, making its water salty.

The Black Sea has a high concentration of algae, which makes it look black in colour.

ACTIVITY

Identify the following countries of Europe.



Case Study: Tourism in Switzerland

The country of Switzerland is one of the most beautiful places in the world. Also known as 'Paradise of the Earth', it is located in the centre of Europe, comprising 20 per cent of the Alps. The country is dotted with small lakes and picturesque villages.

The Alps, which lie in the south of the country, cover 60 per cent of its land area.



View of the city of Saanen in Switzerland

The mountain range has sharp peaks that appear majestic, attracting a lot of tourists. Tourists from all over the world visit this country to enjoy its splendid views.

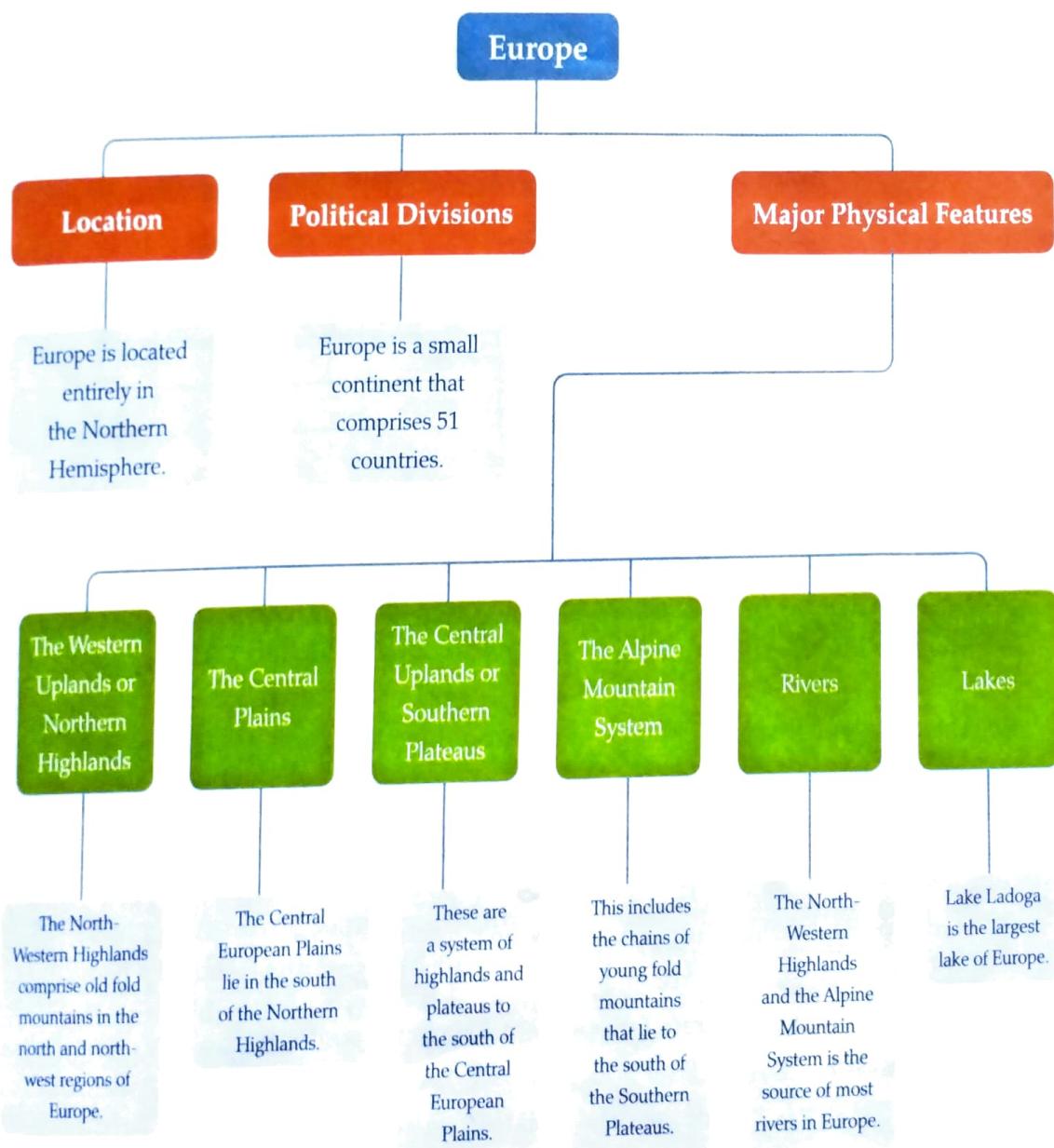
Switzerland has many beautiful places. Popular destinations include the Rhine Falls and the Matterhorn—the iconic peak that rises 4,478 m. The Sphinx observatory at Jungfraujoch, the Great Aletsch glacier and the resort town of Interlaken are other important tourist attractions. Other places of interest include Lucerne and Lake Geneva, near the city of Geneva; this is Europe's largest alpine lake.

Skiing is a popular recreational activity for tourists in Switzerland, followed by climbing, snowboarding, biking, hiking, etc.

The climate of Switzerland is generally temperate. Summers are warm and humid. Winters are long and less humid. Switzerland has a highly developed tourism infrastructure, especially in the mountainous

regions, where trains, cog railways and aerial cable cars allow tourists to move freely. This has helped the tourism industry to grow significantly in Switzerland.

AT A GLANCE



EXERCISE



A. Fill in the blanks.

1. The continent of Europe covers an area of approximately _____ million km².
2. The _____ separates Europe from North America.
3. The Mediterranean Sea and the Strait of _____ separate Europe from Africa in the south.
4. The North-Western Highlands are made up of hard _____ rocks.
5. The _____, which lie at the south of Switzerland, covers 60 per cent of its land area.

INT



B. Match the following.

Group		Member Country	
1.	Scandinavian	a.	Belgium
2.	United Kingdom	b.	Sweden
3.	Lowland	c.	Austria
4.	Central European	d.	Spain
5.	Mediterranean	e.	Scotland

INT



C. State whether true or false.

1. Europe is the sixth-largest continent.
2. The Prime Meridian passes through Europe's eastern parts.
3. Russia lies partly in Europe and partly in Asia.
4. The East European Plains extend from the Atlantic Coast in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east.
5. The climate of Switzerland is generally tropical.

INT



D. Choose the correct answer.

1. What percentage of the global population lives in Europe?
 5 11 22 33
2. Which ocean borders Europe in the north?
 Pacific Atlantic Indian Arctic
3. Which mountains separate Europe from Asia in the southeast?
 Caucasus Ural Alpine Ardennes
4. Which country is part of the Balkan states?
 Denmark Belgium Greece Portugal
5. Which is the largest lake in Europe?
 Lake Onega Lake Geneva Lake Constance Lake Ladoga

INT



E. Give reasons.

1. Europe is referred to as the 'peninsula of peninsulas'.

- Many geographers do not consider Europe a true continent.
- The North-Western Highlands have low average altitude.
- Rivers are important for Europe.

F. Answer in a paragraph or two.

- Explain the location of Europe.
- Describe the features of the East European Plains.
- Write a note on the rivers of Europe.
- Why is tourism well-developed in Switzerland?
- Describe the Alpine Mountain System.



Picture Study

21st media literacy



This is a map of a section of Europe.

- Identify the country highlighted in green.
- What are the major physical features of this country?
- Name a major river that flows through the country.



Integrate



art integration

Since ancient times, there has been a consistent pattern of artistic development in Europe. This development was later adopted and transformed in the Roman period. Later, it spread across the whole of Europe. The influence of the art re-emerged in the Renaissance, giving rise to styles in painting. Identify the styles in painting that have flourished in Europe since the Renaissance.



Life Skills

21st

Information literacy

environmental literacy

At present, the Alps are an original forest cover spread across the central and southern Europe. The European Alpine Programme that the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has initiated, is aimed at preserving biological diversity in the Alps. This programme plans to counter the effects of high-intensity tourism, expansion of urban centres and development of commuter systems. Identify the strategies adopted in the European Alpine Programme to help preserve natural biodiversity.



Project



21st Information literacy

- Gather information about the lifestyle and occupation of people living in parts of Europe and prepare a report in about 300 words. Include pictures.
- Mark and label any five European countries on a political map of Europe.
- Mark and label any two physical divisions of Europe on a physical map of Europe.

