



# A Land of Varied Riches

**TERMS & NAMES**  
Mediterranean Sea  
peninsula  
fjord  
Ural Mountains  
plain

**MAIN IDEA** **WHY IT MATTERS NOW**


Europe is a continent with varied geographic features, abundant natural resources, and a climate that can support agriculture.

The development of Europe's diverse cultures has been shaped by the continent's diverse geography.

**DATELINE** **EXTRA**

**LONDON, ENGLAND, MAY 6, 1994**

Rough waters have always made the English Channel, which separates England and France, difficult to cross. Now, however, you can travel under the water! Today, a tunnel nicknamed "the Chunnel" opens, allowing high-speed trains to travel between London and Paris in about three hours. The Chunnel—short for Channel Tunnel—was carved through chalky earth under the sea floor and took seven years to build. It is the largest European construction project of the 20th century.



**Movement** • Eurostar trains make the 31-mile trip under the English Channel in only 20 minutes. ▲



**Location** • The Channel Tunnel connects England and France. ▲

## The Geography of Europe

Today, cars, airplanes, and trains are common forms of high-speed transportation across Europe. Before the 19th century, however, the fastest form of transportation was to travel by water—on top of it, rather than under it.

### TAKING NOTES

Use your chart to take notes about Western Europe.

| Time Period    | Social Structure | Architecture |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| Ancient Greece |                  |              |
| Ancient Rome   |                  |              |

**Waterways** Look at the map of Europe on page 277. Water surrounds the continent to the north, south, and west. The southern coast of Europe borders the warm waters of the **Mediterranean Sea**. Europe also has many rivers. The highly traveled Rhine and Danube rivers are two of the most important. The Volga, which flows nearly 2,200 miles through western Russia, is the continent's longest. For hundreds of years, these and other waterways have been home to boats and barges carrying people and goods inland across great distances.

**Landforms** Several large **peninsulas**, or bodies of land surrounded by water on three sides, form the European continent. In Northern Europe, the Scandinavian Peninsula is home to Norway and Sweden. Along the jagged shoreline of this peninsula are beautiful fjords (fyawrdz). A **fjord** is a long, narrow, deep inlet of the sea located between steep cliffs. In Western Europe, the Iberian Peninsula includes Portugal and Spain. The Iberian Peninsula is separated from the rest of the continent by a mountain range called the Pyrenees (PEER·uh·NEEZ). The entire continent of Europe, itself surrounded by water on three sides, is a giant peninsula.

**Reading**  
**Social Studies**

**A. Clarifying** Why were waterways important for the movement of people and goods?

**BACKGROUND**

Europe can be divided into four areas: Western Europe, Northern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Russia and its neighboring countries.

**Place** • The Scandinavian Peninsula is the location of many spectacular fjords, such as this one in Norway. ►



**Place** • The Alps remain snowcapped year-round. ▶



**Reading**  
**Social Studies**

**B. Clarifying**  
What natural landform separates Europe from Asia?

Mountain ranges, including the towering Alps, also stretch across much of the continent. Along Europe's eastern border, the **Ural Mountains** (YUR•uhl) divide the continent from Asia. The many mountain ranges of Europe separated groups of people from one another as they settled the land thousands of years ago. This is one of the reasons why different cultures developed across the continent.

**The Great European Plain** Not all of Europe is mountainous. A vast region called the Great European Plain stretches from the coast of France to the Ural Mountains. A **plain** is a large, flat area of land, usually without many trees. The Great European Plain is the location of some of the world's richest farmland. Ancient trading centers attracted many people to this area, which today includes some of the largest cities in Europe—Paris, Berlin, Warsaw, and Moscow.

**Vocabulary**

**Gulf Stream:**  
a warm ocean current that flows northeast from the Gulf of Mexico through the Atlantic Ocean.

## Climate

Although the Gulf Stream brings warm air and water to Europe, the winters are still severe in the mountains and in the far north. In some of these areas, cold winds blow southward from the Arctic Circle and make the average temperature fall below 0°F in January. The Alps and the Pyrenees, however, protect the European countries along the Mediterranean Sea from these chilling winds. In these warmer parts of southern Europe, the average temperature in January stays above 50°F.

The summers in the south are usually hot and dry, with an average July temperature around 80°F. This makes the Mediterranean coast a popular vacation spot. Elsewhere in Europe, in all but the coldest areas of the mountains and the far north, the average July temperature ranges from 50°F to 70°F.

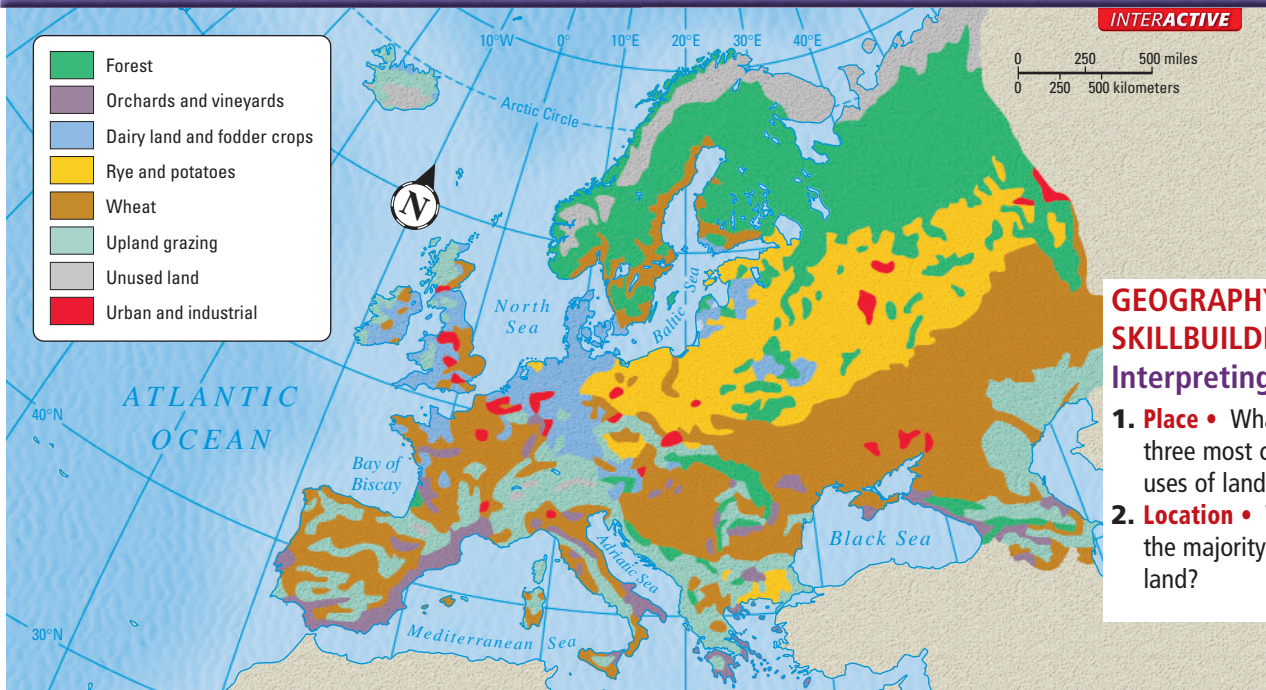
## Natural Resources

Europe has a large variety of natural resources, including minerals. The rich coal deposits of Germany's Ruhr (rur) Valley region have helped to make that area one of the world's major industrial centers. Russia and Ukraine have large deposits of iron ore, which is used to make iron for automobiles and countless other products.

**Region • Western Europe** benefits from a varied landscape rich in natural resources. ▼



## Land Use in Europe Today



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

- Place** • What are the three most common uses of land in Europe?
- Location** • Where is the majority of unused land?

### Vocabulary

**precipitation:** moisture, including rain, snow, and hail, that falls to the ground

Europe also has rich soil and plentiful rainfall. The average precipitation for the Great European Plain, for example, is between 20 and 40 inches per year. The map above shows the agricultural uses of the land, highlighting the major crops. Notice that few parts of the continent are too cold or too hot and dry to support some form of agriculture. These characteristics have made Europe a world leader in crop production.

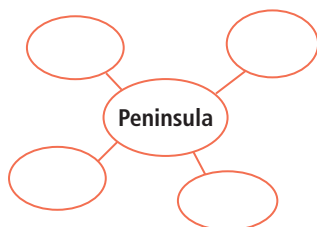
## SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

### Terms & Names

1. Explain the significance of:
- |                       |               |           |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------|
| (a) Mediterranean Sea | (b) peninsula | (c) fjord |
| (d) Ural Mountains    | (e) plain     |           |

### Using Graphics

2. Use a spider map like this one to list the different geographic features of Europe, and give a few specific examples of each.



### Main Ideas

3. (a) How does the Gulf Stream affect the climate of Europe?  
 (b) What separates Europe from Asia?  
 (c) How do waterways, such as rivers and seas, strengthen trade in Europe?

### Critical Thinking

#### 4. Recognizing Effects

How did Europe's many mountain ranges affect its development?

#### Think About

- ♦ climate
- ♦ trade and travel
- ♦ the separation of groups of people

### ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Reread the information about the Chunnel. Write a **short story** in which you imagine what it might have been like to work on the Chunnel's construction.