

**Module: Europe**  
**Topic Content: Physical Features of Europe**

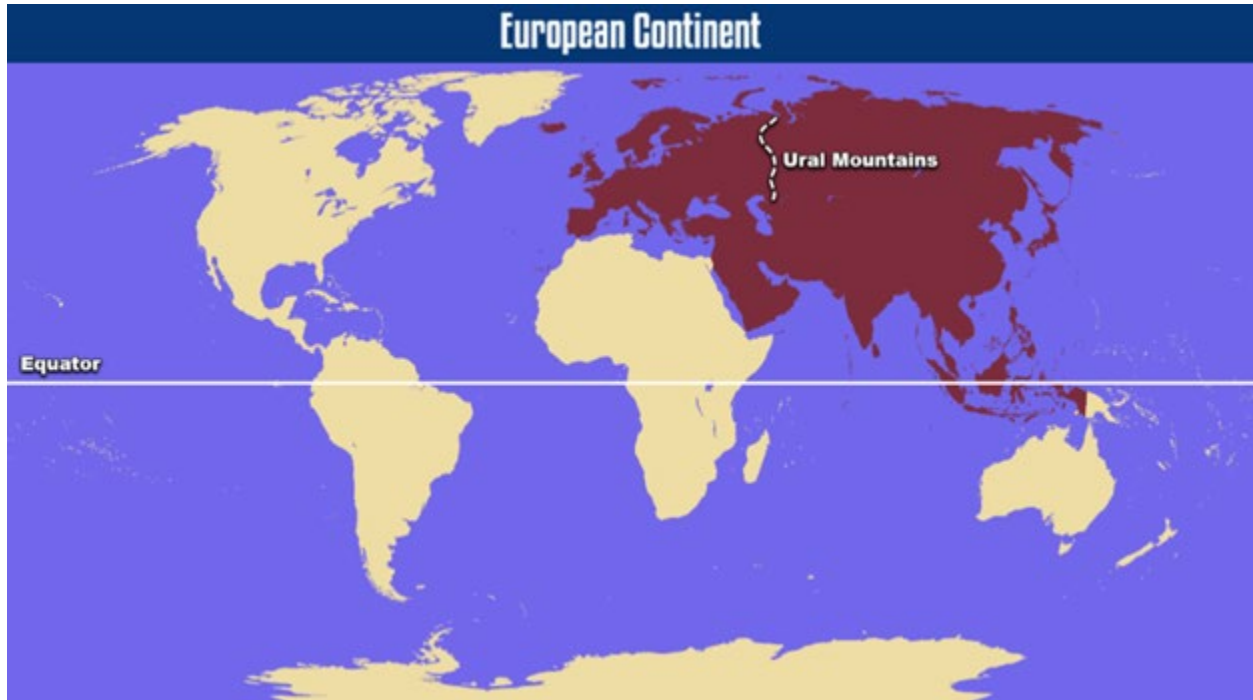
**Physical Features of Europe**



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**European Continent**

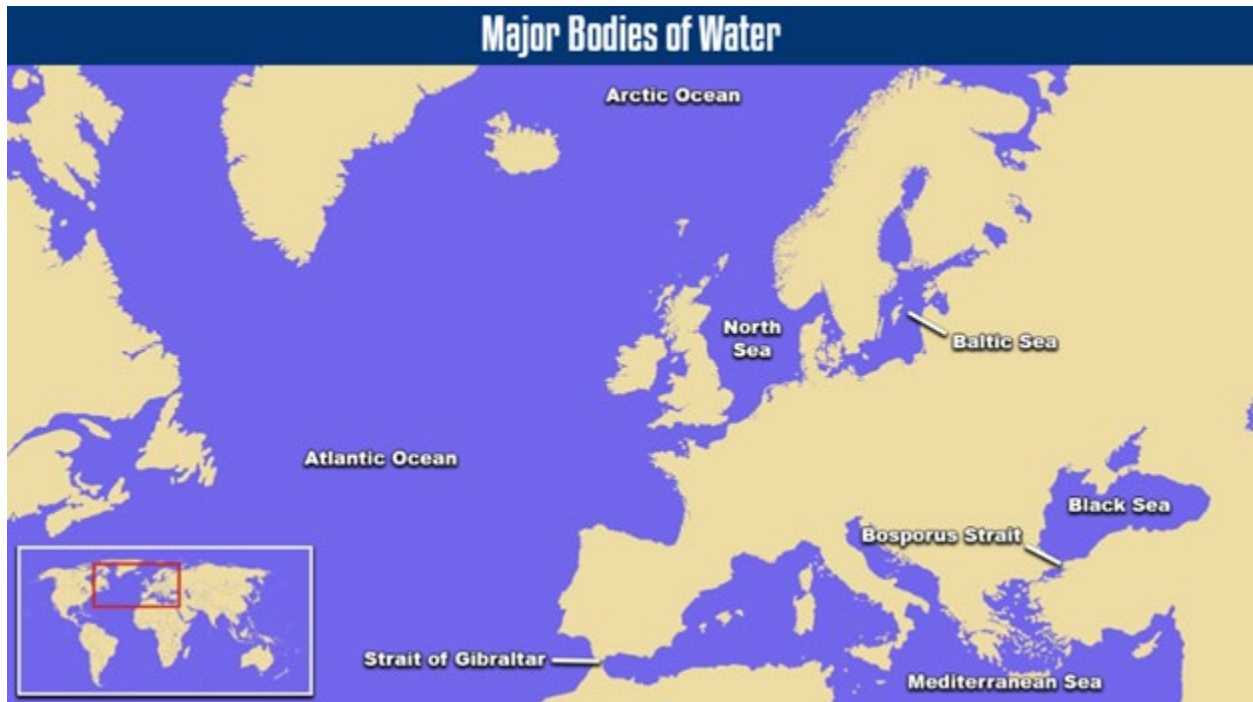


Europe is located entirely within the Northern Hemisphere. It is considered the third-smallest continent in the world; however, it forms part of a larger landmass with Asia. This landmass is called Eurasia. Most continents are divided by oceans or other bodies of water; however, Europe and Asia are separated by a mountain range, called the Ural Mountains.

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### Major Bodies of Water



Europe is surrounded by several major bodies of water. The continent is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Arctic Ocean in the north, the Mediterranean Sea in the south, and the Black Sea in the southeast. The Bosphorus Strait connects the Black Sea to the northern Mediterranean Sea. The Strait of Gibraltar connects the western Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. The North Sea is located north of mainland Europe, between the island of Great Britain and the Scandinavian Peninsula. The Baltic Sea is located east of the North Sea, and is partially enclosed by the Scandinavian Peninsula.

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### Northern Peninsulas

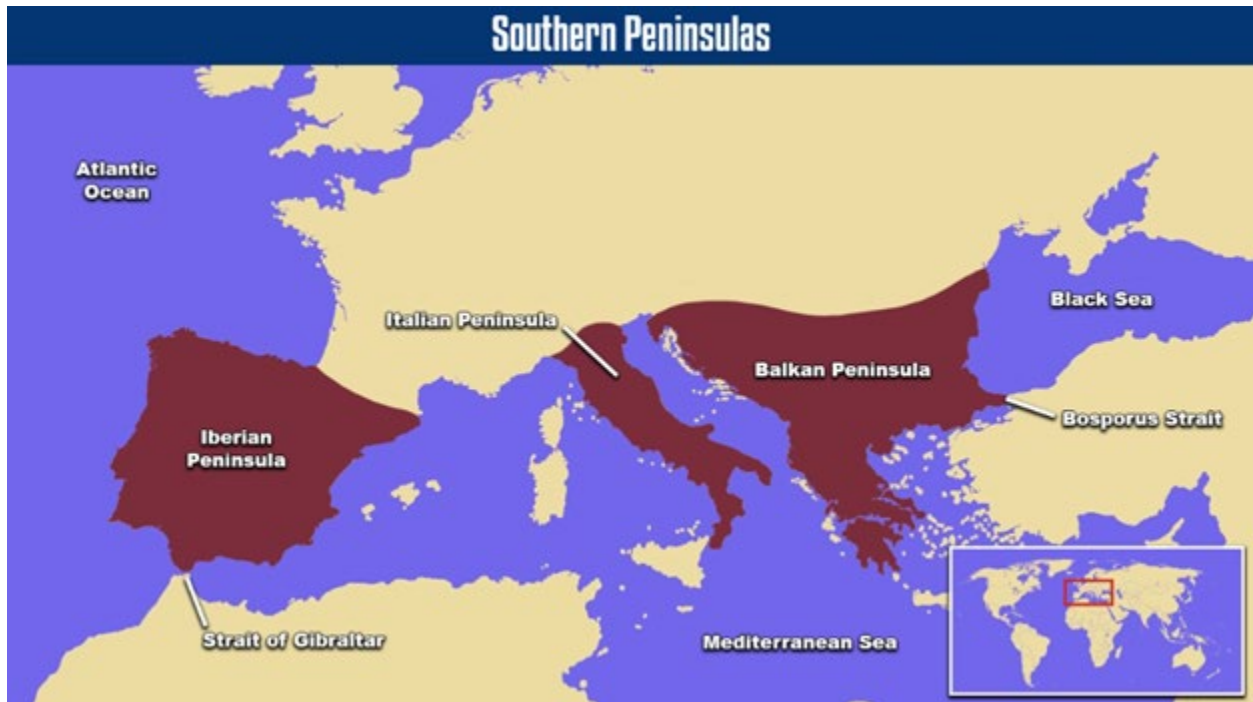


Europe is sometimes described as a peninsula of peninsulas. The continent is composed of multiple peninsulas that collectively form the western peninsula of Eurasia.

The Jutland Peninsula and the Scandinavian Peninsula are located in northern Europe. The Jutland Peninsula contains the nation of Denmark. It is located between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. The Scandinavian Peninsula contains the nations of Norway and Sweden. It is located south of the Arctic Ocean, and encloses the Baltic Sea. The Scandinavian Peninsula was covered with glaciers during the last Ice Age. Over time, these glaciers carved narrow inlets with steep sides, called fjords. These fjords make up the rugged coastline of Norway.

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**Southern Peninsulas**



The Iberian, Italian, and Balkan Peninsulas are located in southern Europe, in the Mediterranean Sea. The Iberian Peninsula encloses the western Mediterranean. It forms the Strait of Gibraltar with North Africa. This peninsula has a large plateau and contains the nations of Spain and Portugal. The Italian Peninsula is located in the central Mediterranean. It is shaped like a giant boot, and contains the nation of Italy. The Balkan Peninsula is located between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. This peninsula has rugged terrain and contains several nations, including Greece.

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### Major Islands



There are several large islands located off the coast of the European mainland. Some of the major islands are Great Britain, Ireland, Iceland, and Sicily. Great Britain is located off Europe's northeastern coast, between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. Ireland is located to the west of Great Britain. This island contains the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Iceland is located in the far northwest, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic Ocean. Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It is located at the "toe" of the Italian Peninsula.

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**Mountain Ranges**



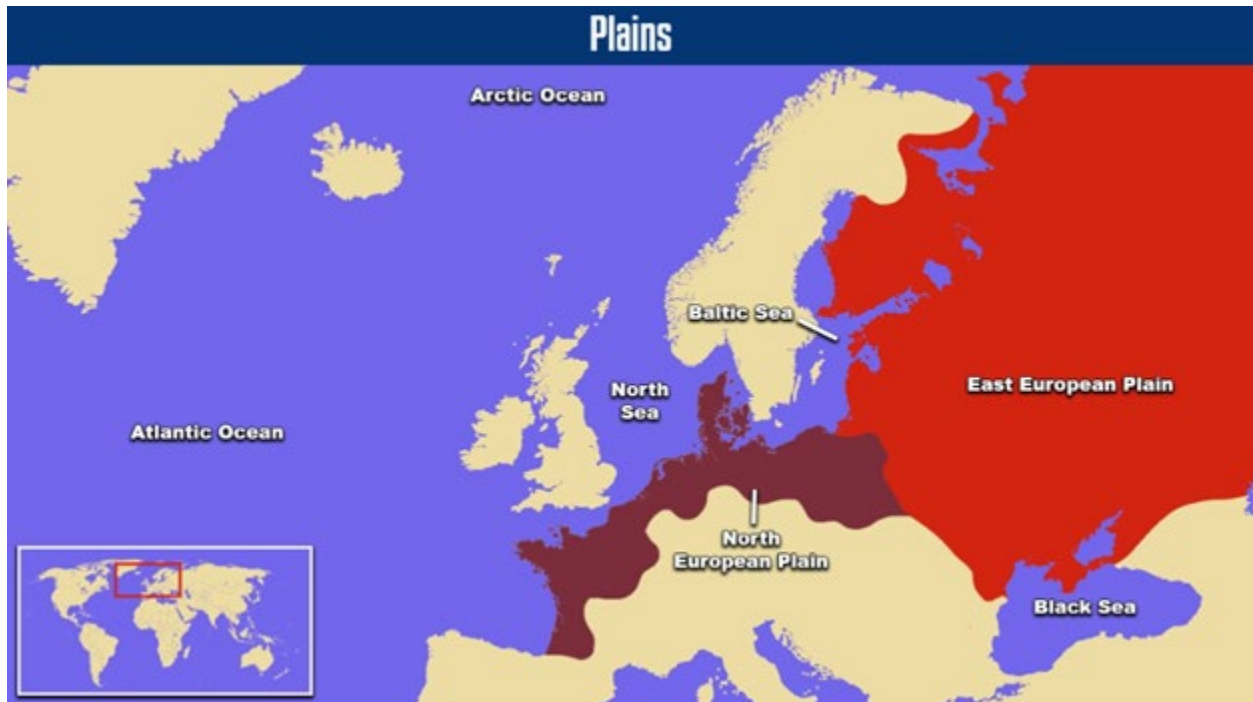
The Alps are the largest mountain range in Europe. These jagged mountains span multiple countries along Italy's northern border, from southern France to the Balkan Peninsula. Mont Blanc is the highest peak of the Alps at 15,780 feet. Mont Blanc is located on the border of France and Italy.

The Pyrenees are another major European mountain range. These mountains divide the Iberian Peninsula from the rest of Europe. They also form a natural border between Spain and France.

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### Plains



Europe's terrain is a mixture of mountainous regions and large flat plains. The biggest plain is the Great European Plain. The plain covers a vast area, from the Pyrenees Mountains in southwestern France to the Ural Mountains in Eastern Europe.

The Great European Plain can be divided into the North European Plain and the East European Plain. The North European Plain extends along the northern coast from France to Poland. The East European Plain covers the area between the Baltic Sea and the Ural Mountains. The North European Plain has fertile soil that is mainly used for farming.



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**Major Rivers**



Europe contains many major rivers that serve as important routes for transportation and trade. The Rhine River is the most important river in Western Europe. It flows from the Swiss Alps to the North Sea. The Rhine marks the borders of several nations.

The Danube River is the most important river in Eastern Europe. It flows from Germany to the Black Sea. The Danube flows through many countries and forms several international borders. There are four capital cities located along the banks of the Danube: Vienna, Austria; Bratislava, Slovakia; Budapest, Hungary; and Belgrade, Serbia.

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**Major Rivers (continued)**



The Rhine and the Danube are connected by a canal system. This system incorporates a tributary of the Rhine, called the Main River. The entire network is called the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal. The Canal creates a navigable waterway from the North Sea to the Black Sea.

Other major European river include the Seine and the Thames. The Seine River flows through northern France and empties into the English Channel. The city of Paris is located on the Seine. The Thames flows through southern England and empties into the North Sea. The city of London is located on the Thames.