

Module: Europe
Topic Content: Mediterranean Europe

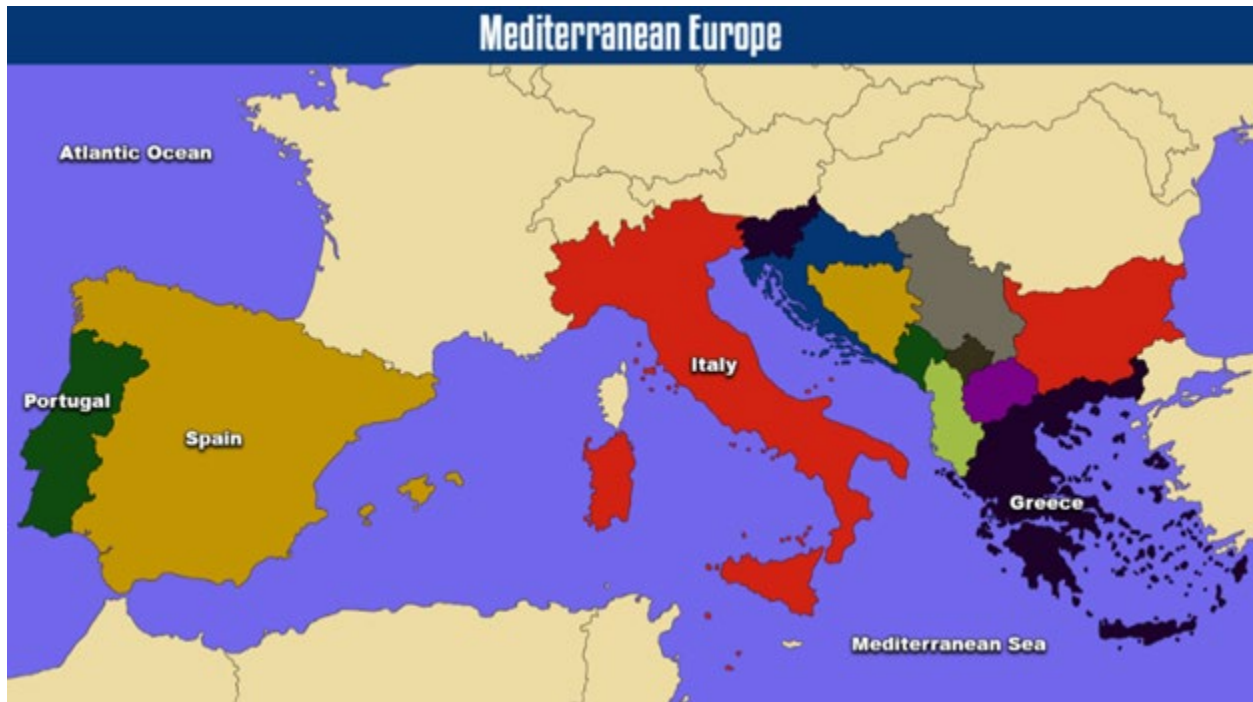
Mediterranean Europe



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Introduction



Mediterranean Europe is located on the southern part of the European continent, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This region, also called Southern Europe, includes the Iberian, Italian, and Balkan Peninsulas. The countries of Mediterranean Europe include Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece. There are also several nations located in the Balkans.

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Portugal



Portugal is located on the Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula. Lisbon is the capital of Portugal, as well as the country's cultural and economic center. This nation spans an area slightly smaller than the state of Virginia. However, it was once the heart of a global empire. The Portuguese Empire established several colonies during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The largest of these colonies was Brazil.

The Portuguese Empire gradually declined over the following centuries. A dictatorship overthrew the Portuguese monarchy in 1910. It controlled the government for decades. In the 1970s, a peaceful revolution established a democratic republic in Portugal. The new government instituted several reforms. It also granted independence to all of Portugal's remaining colonies in Africa.

Portugal has a diverse and developed economy. It is a member of the EU and has adopted the euro as its national currency. Portugal is also one of the founding members of NATO. The population mostly consists of ethnic Portuguese, and more than 80% of the population is Roman Catholic.

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Spain



Spain is located on the Iberian Peninsula, east of Portugal and southwest of France. Spain controls a few islands in the Mediterranean. Madrid, centrally located within the country, is the capital and most populous city of Spain. Exploration and colonization spread Spanish culture to many parts of the world. At its peak, the Spanish Empire included about 13% of the Earth's surface. The Spanish Empire gradually declined and lost most of its colonies by the end of the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century, Spain suffered a violent civil war and a fascist dictatorship under Francisco Franco. Franco ruled Spain until his death in 1975. After his death, Spain peacefully transitioned to a democratic government. The new government instituted political and economic reforms. It also joined NATO and the European Union.

Castilian is the official language of Spain. Outside of Spain, Castilian is known as Spanish. Most of the population speaks Castilian as a first or second language, but there are also several regional languages like Catalan, Galician, Valencian, and Basque. Roughly 70% of the population identifies as Roman Catholic.

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Italy



The nation of Italy spans the Italian Peninsula. Italy includes several nearby islands. The largest two are Sicily and Sardinia. Italy is one of the world's great centers of history, art, architecture, and religion. Its capital, Rome, is centrally located on the Italian Peninsula.

Rome was the center of the Roman Empire. Ancient Rome, along with Ancient Greece, is considered the birthplace of western culture. Latin was the language of Ancient Rome. It is the basis for Romance languages like Italian, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. The Renaissance began in Italy during the fourteenth century, before spreading throughout Europe. Within the city of Rome, lies the world's smallest independent nation, Vatican City. Vatican City is the home of the Roman Catholic Church and St. Peter's Basilica.

Although Italy has greatly influenced western culture, the country was not established until 1861. Prior to this, the Italian Peninsula contained several independent Italian states. During the twentieth century, a fascist dictator named Benito Mussolini gained control of the Italian government. Mussolini allied with Nazi Germany during World War II, but was defeated and executed in 1945. After the war, Italy established a democratic republic and became one of the founders of NATO.

In modern times, Italy has a developed economy and is an important part of the international community. It was a founding member of the European Union. It uses the euro as its national currency.

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Greece



Greece is located on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula. The country includes approximately 6,000 nearby islands, but only 227 of these are inhabited. Athens is the capital and most populous city of Greece. It is located on a peninsula in the southern part of the country.

Athens was the heart of Ancient Greece. It is considered the birthplace of western culture, along with Ancient Rome. The roots of western culture can be traced to Greek history, art, architecture, and philosophy. Even modern democracy is based on ideas developed by ancient Athenians. The Acropolis of Athens is a prominent hill located in the center of the city. There are several ancient ruins located on the Acropolis, including the Parthenon.

Greece's location in the Mediterranean has led to numerous migrations and invasions over thousands of years. This has created an ethnically and linguistically diverse population. However, the Greek government maintains that ethnic minorities do not exist because the country's entire population is Greek. Muslims are the only religious minority officially recognized in the country. Most citizens are Greek Orthodox Christians. Greek is the nation's official language.

Greece is a member of NATO and the EU. It is one of the less developed countries in the EU. While shipping and tourism help support the economy, natural resources are limited, and economic development has been slow.

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Balkan States



The Balkan States include several independent nations located on the Balkan Peninsula. There is discrepancy over how to define this region. Some geographers define the Balkan States as the nations that formed the former country of Yugoslavia. Others classify the Balkan States as Slavic-speaking countries located in the Balkan Peninsula. Some group the region based on its physical geography, and include Greece, Turkey, and Romania. When defining the region in these ways, geographers are considering political, cultural, and physical factors.

With these discrepancies in mind, the Balkan States include Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria.

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Balkans Menu




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Slovenia

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Slovenia



Gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991

Member of the EU and NATO

Ethnic Slovenes make up most of the population

Slovene is the official language

Close


Slovenia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. The country is currently a member of the EU and NATO. Ethnic Slovenes make up most of the population, and Slovene is the official language.

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Croatia

Click each point on the map to learn more

Croatia



Declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991

Member of the EU and NATO

Ethnic Croats make up most of the population

Croatian is the official language

Close


Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. It is currently a member of the EU and NATO. Ethnic Croats make up most of the population, and Croatian is the official language.

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Bosnia and Herzegovina



Gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1992

Bosniaks make up 50% of the population

Serbs make up 30% of the population

Croats make up 15% of the population

Close

Bosnia and Herzegovina gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1992. Bosniaks make up roughly 50% of the population. This group speaks Bosnian and practices Islam. Serbs make up about 30% of the population. This group speaks Serbian and practices Orthodox Christianity. Croats make up roughly 15% of the population. This group speaks Croatian and practices Roman Catholicism.

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Montenegro

Click each point on the map to learn more

Montenegro



- Initially stayed with Serbia after Yugoslavia broke up
- Declared independence in 2006
- Montenegrin is the official language
- Ethnic Montenegrins make up a slight majority
- Other groups are Serbs, Bosniaks, and Albanians
- Joined NATO in 2017

Close

Montenegro stayed unified with Serbia after the initial breakup of Yugoslavia. However, Montenegro declared its independence in 2006. Montenegrin is the country's official language. Ethnic Montenegrins make up a slight majority of the population. The rest of the population mostly consists of Serbs, Bosniaks, and Albanians. Montenegro joined NATO in 2017.

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Albania

Click each point on the map to learn more

Albania



- Gained independence from Ottoman Empire in 1912
- Occupied during WWII
- Under communist rule until the 1990s
- Member of NATO
- Ethnic Albanians make up most of the population
- 56% Muslim and 16% Christian population

Close


Albania gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, but was occupied during World War II. After the war, Albania established a communist government that lasted until the 1990s. It is currently a member of NATO. Ethnic Albanians make up most of the population. Approximately 56% of the population identifies as Muslim, and 16% identifies as Christian.

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Serbia

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Serbia



Former part of Yugoslavia

Montenegro separated from Serbia in 2006

Kosovo declared independence in 2008

Ethnic Serbs make up most of the population

Serbian is the official language

Orthodox Christianity is the predominant religion

Close


Serbia was a part of the former nation of Yugoslavia. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the nation of Serbia and Montenegro remained. Montenegro declared its own independence in 2006, and Kosovo followed in 2008. The population of Serbia mostly consists of ethnic Serbs. Serbian is the official language and Orthodox Christianity is the predominant religion.

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Kosovo

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Kosovo



Declared independence from Serbia in 2008

Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's sovereignty

Division based on ethnic and religious differences

Albanian Muslims are 90% of the population in Kosovo

Close

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Many nations recognize the sovereignty of Kosovo; however, Serbia and many other nations do not. The division between Kosovo and Serbia is based on ethnic and religious differences. Albanian Muslims make up more than 90% of the population in Kosovo, while the population of Serbia mostly consists of Christian Serbs.

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North Macedonia

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North Macedonia



Gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991

Known as Macedonia until 2019

Official language is Macedonian

Ethnic Macedonians make up 64% of the population

Other groups are Albanians, Turks, Romani, and Serbs

Close


North Macedonia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. The country was known as Macedonia until 2019. The name was changed because of a dispute with Greece. The nation's official language is Macedonian. Ethnic Macedonians make up roughly 64% of the population. Other ethnic groups include Albanians, Turks, Romani, and Serbs.

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Bulgaria

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Bulgaria



- Originally founded in the seventh century
- Gained independence in the early twentieth century
- Formed a communist state after WWII
- Shifted from communism to democracy in 1990
- Member of NATO and the EU
- Orthodox Christianity is the predominant religion

Close

Bulgaria was originally founded in the seventh century. The country was conquered by the Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman Empire over its long history. It gained independence in the early twentieth century. After World War II, Bulgaria formed a communist state aligned with the Soviet Union. The communist government fell in the 1990s, and the country transitioned to a democracy. Bulgaria is currently a member of NATO and the EU. Orthodox Christianity is the predominant religion, but many Bulgarians identify as Muslim or non-religious.