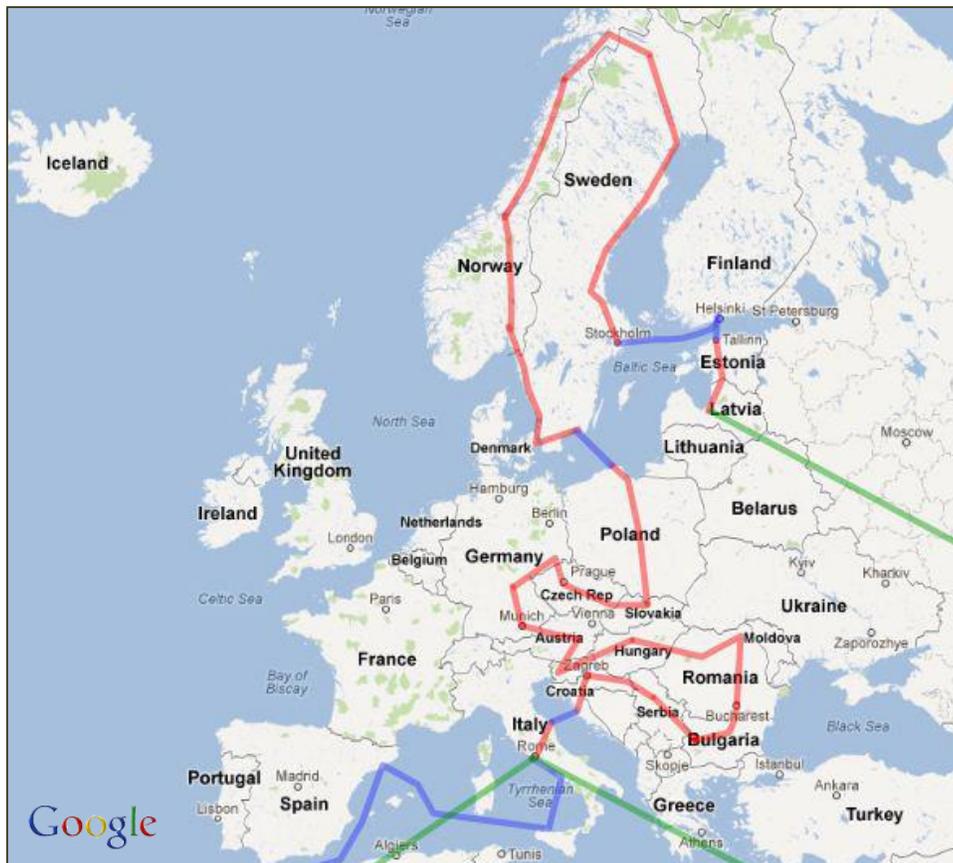




Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Europe – An Overview

- Darren and Sandy plan to spend about 75 days, or 10 1/2 weeks in Europe. Above is a map of the European continent and our route. See page 4 for our plans.
- While Europe is considered to be in the Eastern Hemisphere, the Prime Meridian runs through the United Kingdom, France and Spain, and sections of those countries, as well as Ireland, Portugal and Iceland, are in located the Western Hemisphere.
- We have traveled approximately 28,909 miles (46,525 kilometers) from our starting point in California.

People and Culture

- Europe consists of 49 countries and has an estimated population of 733 million people. This makes it the third most populated continent in the world, after Asia and Africa.
- Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire contributed to the development of Western culture. From the 16th century European countries colonized many areas of the world, including the Americas, Oceania and Africa and Asia. By the end of World War II, many of these colonized countries became independent.
- The two world wars centered in Europe. After World War II, Europe consisted of Western countries and an Eastern bloc, dominated by the Soviet Union. When the Eastern bloc collapsed in the early 1990s many independent countries were formed.
- The European Union (EU) provides a unified currency (the Euro) and an integrated parliament, court and central bank. There are currently 27 countries in the EU, with five candidate countries pending.
- European art, culture and philosophy have been historically influenced by Christianity, which is the majority religion.
- Most of the 60 native European languages are in the Romance, Germanic or Slavic language groups.



Rome, Paris and London are some of Europe's well-known cities (source: personal pictures)

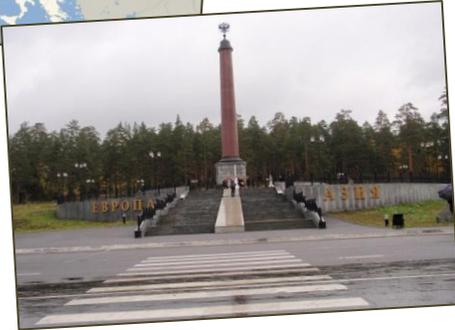
Did you know?

- Europe is named after the Greek mythology princess Europa
- The largest (Russia) and smallest (Vatican City) countries in the world are both in Europe
- Europe is the birthplace of philosophers Socrates, Aristotle and Plato, artists Michelangelo and da Vinci, scientists Newton, Galileo and Einstein and musicians Mozart, Bach and Beethoven
- Many popular sports, such as cricket and golf, began in Europe

source: Infobarrel.com



EU Flag (source: Flagspot.net)



Europe map showing commonly accepted boundaries of the continent; Europe and Asia border sign near Yekaterinburg, Russia (sources: Wikipedia.org, Wikitravel.org)

European Deserts

Europe actually has several deserts within its continent. These include the following locations:

- **Ottenian Sahara**, found in Romania and a result of deforestation in the 1960s, which caused sandy areas
- **Highlands of Iceland**, classified as a desert because precipitation is absorbed so quickly by volcanic soil that no plants can grow
- **Piscinas and Tabernas Deserts**, found in Italy and Spain, respectively

source: Europeword.com

Nature and Environment

- Europe is the world's second smallest continent, covering 3.9 million square miles (10.1 million square kilometers) and accounting for 2% of the total land area on earth. Only Australia is a smaller continent.
- Europe is a peninsula on the Eurasia land mass. There are several natural recognized boundaries with Asia, including the Ural Mountains and Ural River, the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea.
- A series of mountains span Europe. From west to east they are the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Carpathians, the Balkans and the Caucasus. Mt. Elbrus in the Caucasus is the tallest mountain at 18,481 feet (5,633 meters). Mount Blanc and the Matterhorn are two other famous mountains.
- About 60% of Europe's surface is at an elevation of less than 656 feet (200 meters) above sea level and is primarily comprised of plains.
- Estimates are that 80% to 90% of Europe was once covered by forest. Centuries of deforestation have resulted in a current natural forest percentage below 10%. Trees are being replanted and this percentage is increasing.

Our Plans

- We plan to visit 19 countries while we are in Europe. These range from Latvia in the east to Portugal in the west and Norway in the north to Italy in the south. Our stops will include historic cities and natural places.
- We will be taking two treks. The first will be in the Lapland region of northern Sweden in the Arctic Circle. The second trek will be in the Julian Alps in Slovenia.
- Send us your questions about Europe via Twitter, Facebook or by email. We will try to include our answers in the coming weeks!

More Information

- <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/eu.htm>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe>
- <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/interesting-facts-about-europe.html>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_deserts
- [http://www.saveamericasforests.org/europages/history & geography.htm](http://www.saveamericasforests.org/europages/history&geography.htm)
- http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm
- <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Europe>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Hemisphere

Small Countries

Including Vatican City, four of the world's 10 smallest countries are in Europe. They are:

- **Vatican City:** The world's smallest country at only .2 square miles (.5 square kilometers). It is surrounded by Rome, Italy.
- **Monaco:** The world's second smallest country, it is located along the French Riviera
- **San Marino:** The fifth smallest country is on Mt. Titano in north central Italy.
- **Liechtenstein:** This country, the world sixth smallest, is found in the Alps between Austria and Switzerland



San Marino (sources: [About.com](#), [My-world-travelguides.com](#))

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