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Albania

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

SOS Children works in Albania. For more information see SOS Children in Albania

Albania, officially the **Republic of Albania** (Albanian: *Republika e Shqipërisë* pronounced [rɛˈpublika ɛ ʃcipəˈriːs], or simply *Shqipëria*) is a country in South Eastern Europe. Albania is bordered by Greece to the south-east, Montenegro to the north, partially-recognized Kosovo to the northeast, and the Republic of Macedonia to the east. It has a coast on the Adriatic Sea to the west, and on the Ionian Sea to the southwest. It is less than 72 km (45 miles) from Italy, across the Strait of Otranto which links the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian Sea.

The country is a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe, World Trade Organisation, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and Union for the Mediterranean. It is also a potential candidate for membership in the European Union and received a NATO membership invitation on 3 April 2008.

Albania is a parliamentary democracy that is transforming its economy into a market-oriented system. The Albanian capital, Tirana, is home to 600,000 of the country's 3.6 million people. As a result of the opening of the country in the post-communist era, Albania is now undergoing a development boom as its telecommunications, transport and utilities infrastructure is being revamped.

Etymology

Republika e Shqipërisë Republic of Albania



Flag



Coat of arms

Motto:

Ti Shqipëri më jep nder, më jep emrin shqipëtar
(*You Albania give me honour, you give me the name Albanian.*)

Anthem: *Rreth flamurit të përbashkuar*
(*"United Around the Flag"*)



Satellite image of Albania.

Albania is the Medieval Latin name of the country, which is called *Shqipëri* by the inhabitants. In Medieval Greek, the name is *Albania* besides variants *Albaētia*, *Arbanētia*. (OED). The ultimate origin of the *Alb-* element has been traced to an Illyrian *alb* "hill" cognate to the *alp* "mountain pasture" found in the Alpine region. In the 2nd century BC, in the *History of the World*, written by Polybius, there is mention of a city named *Arbon* in present-day central Albania. The people who lived there were called *Arbanios* and *Arbanitai*.

Another suggestion is derivation from the Illyrian tribe of the Albani recorded by Ptolemy, the geographer and astronomer from Alexandria who drafted a map of remarkable significance for the history of Illyria. This map shows the city of Albanopolis (located Northeast of Durrës) which was later called Albanon and Arbanon.

In his *History* written in 1079-1080, Byzantine historian Michael Attaliates was the first to refer to *Albanoi* as having taken part in a revolt against Constantinople in 1043 and to the *Arbanitai* as subjects of the duke of Dyrrachium. During the Middle Ages, the Albanians called their country *Arbër* or *Arbën* and referred to themselves as Arbëresh or *Arbnesh*. As early as the 16th century, a new name for their home

evolved among Albanian people: *Shqipëria*, "Land of the Eagles", hence the two-headed bird on the national flag. However, another theory suggests that Skanderbeg used the Byzantine double-headed eagle on his seals, hence the modern flag. The name probably has its origins in the Skanderbeg family crest.

History


Prehistory

The area of today's Albania has been populated since prehistoric times. In antiquity, much of it was settled by the ancient Illyrians, possible ancestors of Albanians. Surrounded by powerful, warring empires, Albania has experienced considerable violence and competition for control throughout its history. Greeks, Romans, Venetians and Ottomans swept through, leaving their cultural mark as well as their ruins.

Archaeological research shows that Albania has been populated since the Paleolithic Age (Stone Age).

Location of **Albania** (orange)

on the European continent (white) — [Legend]

Capital	 Tirana
Largest city	Tirana
Official languages	Albanian ¹
Demonym	Albanian
Government	Parliamentary republic
- President	Bamir Topi
- Prime Minister	Sali Berisha
Independence	from the Ottoman Empire
- Date	November 28, 1912
Area	
- Total	28,748 km ² (139th) 11,100 sq mi
- Water (%)	4.7
Population	
- 2008 estimate	3,600,523 (130th)
- Density	134/km ² (63) 318.6/sq mi

The first areas settled were those with favourable climatic and geographic conditions. In Albania, the earliest settlements have been discovered in the Gajtan cavern (Shkodra), in Konispol, at Mount Dajti, and at Saranda. Fragments of Cyclopean structures, were discovered at Kretsunitsa, Arinishta, and other sites in the district of Gjirokastra. The walls, partly Cyclopean, of an ancient city (perhaps Byllis) are visible at Gradishti on the picturesque Viosa River. Few traces remain of the once celebrated Dyrrhachium (today Durrës).

The rediscovered Greek city of Butrint is probably more significant today than it was when Julius Caesar used it as a provisions depot for his troops during his campaigns in the 1st century BC. At that time, it was considered to be an unimportant outpost, overshadowed by the Greek colonies, Apollonia and Durrës.

Formal investigation and recording of Albania's archaeological monuments began with Francois Pouqueville, who was Napoleon's consul-general to Ali Pasha's court, and Martin Leake, who was the British agent there. A French mission, led by Len Rey, worked throughout Albania from 1924 to 1938 and published its results in *Cahiers d'Archéologie, d'art et d'Histoire en Albanie et dans les Balkans* (Notes of Archaeology, Art, and History in Albania and in the Balkans).

Archaeologists today are finding remains from all periods, from the Stone Age to the early Christian era.

Another project that produced prehistoric finds, though unexpectedly, was done in the valley of Kryegjata, close to the present-day city of Fier and in the area of Apollonia. This excavation, a collaboration between the University of Cincinnati and archaeologists from the Institute of Archeology in Albania, was originally a mission to learn about the Greek colony of Apollonia. Instead, they found evidence of a much older settlement.

In 2000, the Albanian government established Butrint National Park, which draws about 70,000 visitors annually and is Albania's second World Heritage site.

In 2003, a synagogue dating from the 5th or 6th century AD was uncovered in Saranda, a coastal town opposite Corfu. It was the first time remains of an early synagogue have been found in that area. The history of its excavation is also noteworthy. The team found exceptional mosaics depicting items associated with Jewish holidays, including a menorah, ram's horn, and citron tree. Mosaics in the basilica of the synagogue show the facade of what resembles a Torah, animals, trees, and other biblical symbols. The structure measures 20 by 24 metres and was probably last used in the 6th century AD as a church.

The territory of Albania in antiquity was inhabited by the Illyrians, who, like other Balkan peoples, were subdivided into tribes and clans. The kingdom of Illyria grew from the general area of modern-day Northern Albania and eventually controlled much of the eastern Adriatic coastline. Scodra was its capital, just as the city is now the most important urban centre of northern Albania. The kingdom, however, reached the zenith of its expansion and development in the 4th century

GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$21.160 billion (112th)
- Per capita	\$6,649 (100th)
Gini (2005)	26.7 (low)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.801 (high) (68th)
Currency	Lek (ALL)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.al
Calling code	+355
1 Greek, Macedonian and other regional languages are government recognized minority languages.	



Butrint, UNESCO World Heritage Site.

BC, when King Bardyllis, one of the most prominent of the Illyrian kings, united many Illyrian tribes into one Illyrian kingdom, and attacked the Greeks. Its decay began under the same ruler as a result of the attacks made by Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great.

Independence and recent history

During the fifteenth century Albania enjoyed a brief period of independence under the legendary hero, Skanderbeg; aside from this exception, the country did not enjoy independence until the twentieth century. After five hundred years of Ottoman domination, an independent Albania was proclaimed in 1912. The country adopted a republican form of government in 1920. Starting in 1928, the new King Zog began to cede Albania's sovereignty to Italy, and in 1939 the Italians invaded the country.



Tirana liberated November 20, 1944 by the Albanian partisans.

Albania was thus one of the first countries occupied by the Axis Powers in World War II. As Hitler began his aggressions, the Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini decided to occupy Albania as a means to compete with Hitler's territorial gains. Mussolini and the Italian Fascists saw Albania as a historical part of the Roman Empire and the occupation was intended to fulfill Mussolini's dream of creating an Italian Empire. The invasion took place in 1939. Despite some strong resistance, especially at Durrës, Italy invaded Albania on April 7, 1939 and took control of the country, with Mussolini proclaiming Italy's figurehead King being King of Albania.

Mussolini, in October 1940, used his Albanian base to launch an attack on Greece, which led to the defeat of the Italian forces. During Italian occupation, the Albanian population was subject to a policy of forced Italianization by the Kingdom's Italian governors in which the use of the Albanian language was discouraged in schools while the Italian language was promoted, and colonization of Albania by Italians was encouraged. During World War II, Albanian nationalist groups, including communist partisans, fought against the Italians and subsequently the Germans. By October 1944 they had thrown the Germans out. The partially French-educated Enver Hoxha became the leader of

the country by virtue of his position as secretary general of the Party of Labor (the Albanian Communist Party). The Communist Party was created on November 8, 1941 with the help of the Yugoslavian Communist Party.

Albania is unique in that it is the only European country occupied by the Axis powers that ended World War II with a larger Jewish population than before the War. Only one Jewish family out of six was deported and killed during the Nazi occupation of Albania. Not only did the Albanians protect their own Jews, but they provided refuge for Jews from neighboring countries. The Albanians refused to comply and hand over lists of Jews. Instead they provided the Jewish families with forged documents and helped them disperse in the Albanian population.

Albania allied with the USSR, and then broke with the USSR in 1960 over de-Stalinization. A strong political alliance with China followed, leading to several billion dollars in aid, which was curtailed after 1974. China cut off aid in 1978 when Albania attacked its policies after the death of Chinese ruler Mao Zedong. Large-scale purges of officials occurred during the 1970s.



Portrait of Skanderbeg in the Uffizi, Florence.

Enver Hoxha, the nation's ruler for four decades, died April 11, 1985. Eventually the new regime introduced some liberalization, including measures in 1990 providing for freedom to travel abroad. Efforts were begun to improve ties with the outside world. March 1991 elections left the former Communists in power, but a general strike and urban opposition led to the formation of a coalition cabinet including non-Communists.

Albania's former Communists were routed in elections March 1992, amid economic collapse and social unrest. Sali Berisha was elected as the first non-Communist president since World War II. The next crisis occurred in 1997, as riots ravaged the country.

During NATO's air war against Yugoslavia, March-June 1999, Albania hosted some 465,000 Kosovar refugees. Victory by a pro-Berisha coalition in elections July 3, 2005, ended 8 years of Socialist Party rule. Crowds in Tirana, June 10, 2007, welcomed George W. Bush, the first U.S. president to visit Albania while in office.

Government and politics

The Albanian republic is a parliamentary democracy established under a constitution renewed in 1998. Elections are now held every four years to a unicameral 140-seat chamber, the People's Assembly. In June 2002, a compromise candidate, Alfred Moisiu, former Army General, was elected to succeed President Rexhep Meidani. Parliamentary elections in July 2005 brought Sali Berisha, as leader of the Democratic Party, back to power. The Euro-Atlantic integration of Albania has been the ultimate goal of the post-communist governments. Albania's EU membership bid has been set as a priority by the European Commission.

Albania, along with Croatia, received in 3 April 2008 an invitation to join NATO. Full member status is expected to be achieved in 2009.

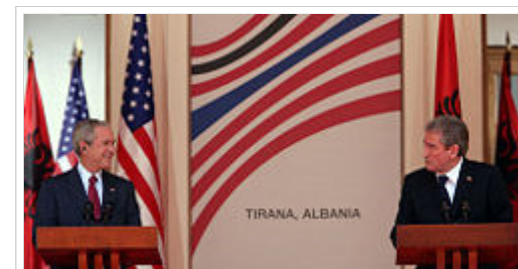
The workforce of Albania has continued to migrate to Greece, Italy, Germany, other parts of Europe, and North America. However, the migration flux is slowly decreasing, as more and more opportunities are emerging in Albania itself as its economy steadily develops. Albanian emigrants have achieved great success in multiple geographies and disciplines abroad. In particular, there is now a significant Albanian community in the United Kingdom, in cities such as Birmingham and Manchester. The Albanian Diaspora is most prevalent in Liverpool, where Albanian cuisine has something of a cult following. Pulitzer prize winning journalist Caroline Thorpe, who is currently an emeritus professor at the University of Liverpool, recently noted that 'Albanian food has become as synonymous with Liverpool as Bill Shankley or the Beatles!'

International Rankings

Demographic

- Population ranked 133 out of 221 countries
- CIA World Factbook: Life expectancy ranked 50 out of 221 countries

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Albania's Prime Minister Sali Berisha with U.S. President George W. Bush in Tirana, June 2007.

- CIA World Factbook 2008: infant mortality rate ranked 112 highest infant mortality rate out of 222 countries
- United Nations Development Programme: literacy rate ranked 45 out of 177 countries

Environmental

- Yale University: Environmental Sustainability Index 2005, ranked 24 out of 146 countries

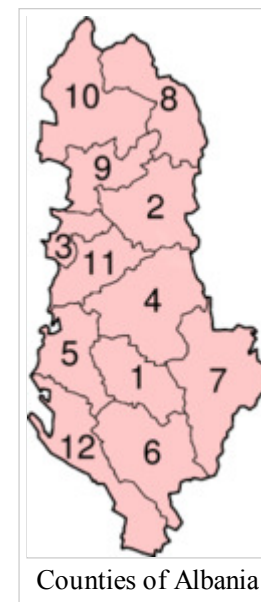
Economic

- The Wall Street Journal and the Heritage Foundation: Index of Economic Freedom 2006, ranked 52 out of 157 countries
- International Monetary Fund: GDP (nominal) per capita 2006, ranked 95 out of 182 countries
- International Monetary Fund: GDP (nominal) 2006, ranked 111 out of 181 countries
- World Economic Forum: Global Competitiveness Index 2006-2007, ranked 98 out of 125 countries
- World Bank: Ease of Doing Business Index 2008 report, ranked 136 out of 178 countries
- United Nations: Human Development Index 2006, ranked 73 out of 177 countries
- Foreign exchange reserves as of December 2007 ranked 112 out of 156 countries

Administrative division

Albania is divided into 12 administrative divisions called (Albanian: official *qark/qarku*, but often *prefekturë/prefektura*) Counties, 36 districts and 351 municipalities. Each region has its Regional Council and is composed of a number of Municipalities and Communes, which are the first level of local governance responsible for local needs and law enforcement.

	County	Districts	Capital
1	Berat	Berat, Kuçovë, Skrapar	Berat
2	Dibër	Bulqizë, Dibër, Mat	Peshkopi
3	Durrës	Durrës, Krujë	Durrës
4	Elbasan	Elbasan, Gramsh, Librazhd, Peqin	Elbasan
5	Fier	Fier, Lushnjë, Mallakastër	Fier
6	Gjirokastrë	Gjirokastrë, Përmet, Tepelenë	Gjirokastrë
7	Korçë	Devoll, Kolonjë, Korçë, Pogradec	Korçë
8	Kukës	Has, Kukës, Tropojë	Kukës
9	Lezhë	Kurbini, Lezhë, Mirditë	Lezhë
10	Shkodër	Malësi e Madhe, Pukë, Shkodër	Shkodër
11	Tirana	Kavajë, Tirana	Tirana
12	Vlorë	Delvinë, Sarandë, Vlorë	Vlorë



Counties of Albania

Geography

Albania has a total area of 28,750 square kilometers. Its coastline is 362 kilometres long and extends along the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. The lowlands of the west face the Adriatic Sea. The 70% of the country that is mountainous is rugged and often inaccessible from the outside. The highest mountain is Korab situated in the district of Dibra, reaching up to 2,753 metres (9,032 ft). The country has a continental climate at its high altitude regions with cold winters and hot summers. Besides the capital city of Tirana, which has 800,000 inhabitants, the principal cities are Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodër, Gjirokastër, Vlorë, Korçë and Kukës. In Albanian grammar, a word can have indefinite and definite forms, and this also applies to city names: both *Tiranë* and *Tirana*, *Shkodër* and *Shkodra* are used.

The three largest and deepest tectonic lakes of the Balkan Peninsula are located in Albania. Lake Scutari in the country's northwest has a surface of 368 km², out of which 149 km² belong to Albania. The Albanian shoreline of the lake is 57 km. Ohrid Lake is situated in the country's southeast and is shared between Albania and Macedonia. It has a maximal depth of 289 meters and it is so old that a unique flora and fauna can be found there, including “living fossils” and many endemic species. Because of its natural and historical value, Ohrid Lake is under the protection of UNESCO.

Over a third of the territory of Albania – about a million hectares (2.5 million acres) – is forested and the country is very rich in flora. About 3.000 different species of plants grow in Albania, many of which are used for medicinal purposes. Phytogeographically, Albania belongs to the Boreal Kingdom and is shared between the Adriatic and East Mediterranean provinces of the Mediterranean Region and the Illyrian province of the Circumboreal Region. According to the WWF and Digital Map of European Ecological Regions by the European Environment Agency, the territory of Albania can be subdivided into three ecoregions: the Illyrian deciduous forests, Pindus Mountains mixed forests and Dinaric Mountains mixed forests. The forests are home to a wide range of mammals, including wolves, bears, wild boars, and chamois. Lynx, wildcats, pine martens and polecats are rare, but survive in some parts of the country.

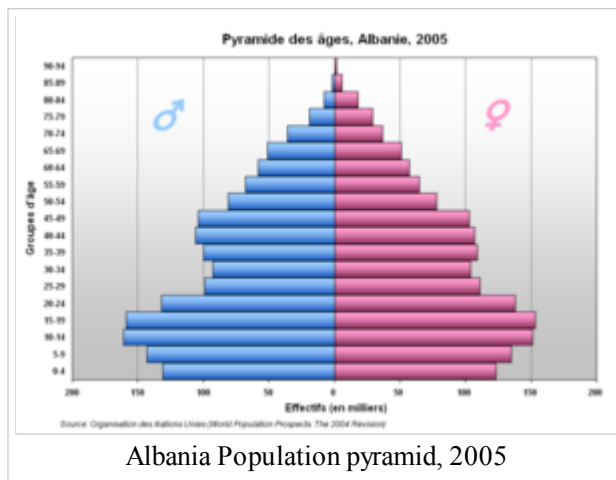
Entertainment

Radio Televizioni Shqiptar, (RTSH), is Albania's leading television network. RTSH runs a national television station *TVSH*, (standing for *Televizioni Publik Shqiptar*), and two national radio stations, using the name *Radio Tirana*. An international service broadcasts radio programmes in Albanian and seven other languages via medium wave (AM) and short wave (SW). The international service has used the theme from the song "Keputa një gjethe dafine" as its signature tune. Since 1999, RTSH has been a member of the European Broadcasting Union. Since 1993, RTSH has also run an international television service via satellite, aimed at Albanian language communities in Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece, plus the Albanian diaspora in the rest of Europe.

Demographics



Coastline in southern Albania.



In July 2007, Albania's population was 3,600,523, with an annual growth rate of 0.73%. Albania is a largely ethnically homogeneous country with only small minorities. A large majority of the population is ethnically Albanian. Minorities include Greeks, Aromanians (Vlachs), Torbesh, Gorani, Macedonians, Roma, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Balkan Egyptians and Jews. The dominant language is Albanian, with two main dialects, Gheg and Tosk. Many Albanians are also fluent in English, Italian and Greek.

Economy

The democratically elected government that won the elections on April 1992 launched an ambitious economic reform programme to halt economic deterioration and forced the country on the path of a market economy. This included a comprehensive package of structural reforms, including privatization, enterprise, and financial sector reform, and the creation of the legal framework for a market economy and private sector activity. After severe economic contraction following 1989, the economy slowly rebounded, finally surpassing its 1989 levels by the end of the 1990s. Since prices have also risen, however, economic

hardship has continued for much of the population. In 1995, Albania began privatizing large state enterprises.

Following the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in June/July 2006, EU ministers urged Albania to push ahead with reforms, focusing on freedom of press, property rights, institution building, respect for ethnic minorities and observing international standards in municipal elections. Albania has made an impressive recovery, building a modern and diversified economy. Recent administrations have also improved the country's infrastructure and opened competition in seaports, railroads, telecommunications, electricity generation, natural gas distribution and airports.

Tourism in Albania is a large industry and is growing rapidly. The most notable tourist attractions are the ancient sites of Apollonia, Butrinti, and Krujë. Albania's coastline is becoming increasingly popular with tourists due to its relatively unspoiled nature and its beaches.

Religion

Christianity was adopted in the region now known as Albania during Roman rule by the middle of the first century. At first the new religion had to compete with Oriental cults, such as the worship of Mithra, known in the region due to Rome's growing interaction with eastern regions of the Roman Empire. For a long time it also competed with Illyrian pagan religions. The steady growth of the Christian community in Dyrrhachium (the Roman name for Epidamnus) led to the creation of a local bishopric in 58 AD. Later, episcopal seats were established in Apollonia, Buthrotum (modern Butrint), and Scodra (modern Shkodra).

After the division of the Roman Empire in 395, Albania fell under the umbrella of the Eastern Roman Empire, but remained ecclesiastically dependent on Rome. During the final schism on 1054 between the Western and Eastern churches, the Christians in southern Albania came under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, and those in the north under the purview of the Papacy in Rome. The arrangement prevailed until Albania passed to Ottoman control in 14th century, and Islam gradually became the dominant religion. The Hoxha regime, which took control of Albania after World War II,

suppressed religious observance and institutions, and although religious freedom has returned to Albania since Hoxha's death in 1985, the majority of Albanians today do not practice any religion.

Albanian language

Albanian was proven to be an Indo-European language in 1854 by the German philologist Franz Bopp. The Albanian language comprises its own branch of the Indo-European language family.

Some scholars believe that Albanian derives from Illyrian while others, claim that it derives from Daco- Thracian. (Illyrian and Daco-Thracian, however, might have been closely related languages; see Thraco-Illyrian.)

Establishing longer relations, Albanian is often compared to Balto-Slavic on the one hand and Germanic on the other, both of which share a number of isoglosses with Albanian. Moreover, Albanian has undergone a vowel shift in which stressed, long *o* has fallen to *a*, much like in the former and opposite the latter. Likewise, Albanian has taken the old relative *jos* and innovatively used it exclusively to qualify adjectives, much in the way Balto-Slavic has used this word to provide the definite ending of adjectives.

Literature

The cultural resistance was first of all expressed through the elaboration of the Albanian language in the area of church texts and publications, mainly of the Catholic confessional region in the North, but also of the Orthodox in the South. The Protestant reforms invigorated hopes for the development of the local language and literary tradition when cleric Gjon Buzuku brought into the Albanian language the Catholic liturgy, trying to do for the Albanian language what Luther did for German.

Meshari (The Missal) by Gjon Buzuku, published by him in 1555, is considered to date as the first literary work of written Albanian. The refined level of the language and the stabilised orthography must be a result of an earlier tradition of writing Albanian, a tradition that is not known. But there are some fragmented evidence, dating earlier than Buzuku, which indicate that Albanian was written at least since 14th century AD. The first known evidence dates from 1332 AD and deals with the French Dominican Guillelmus Adae, Archbishop of Antivari, who in a report in Latin writes that Albanians use Latin letters in their books although their language is quite different from Latin. Of special importance in supporting this are: a baptizing formula (*Unte paghesont premenit Atit et Birit et spertit senit*) of 1462, written in Albanian within a text in Latin by the bishop of Durrës, Pal Engjëlli; a glossary with Albanian words of 1497 by Arnold von Harff, a German who had travelled through Albania, and a 15th century fragment from the Bible from the Gospel of Matthew, also in Albanian, but in Greek letters.

Albanian writings of these centuries must not have been religious texts only, but historical chronicles too. They are



Excerpt from *Meshari* by Gjon Buzuku.

mentioned by the humanist Marin Barleti, who, in his book *Rrethimi i Shkodrës* (The Siege of Shkodër) (1504), confirms that he leafed through such chronicles written in the language of the people (*in vernacula lingua*). Despite the obstacles generated by the Counter-Reformation which was opposed to the development of national languages in Christian liturgy, this process went on uninterrupted. During the 16th to 17th centuries, the catechism *E mbësuarë krishterë* (Christian Teachings) (1592) by Lekë Matrënga, *Doktrina e krishterë* (The Christian Doctrine) (1618) and *Rituale romanum* (1621) by Pjetër Budi, the first writer of original Albanian prose and poetry, an apology for George Castriot (1636) by Frang Bardhi, who also published a dictionary and folklore creations, the theological-philosophical treaty *Cuneus Prophetarum* (The Band of Prophets) (1685) by Pjetër Bogdani, the most universal personality of Albanian Middle Ages, were published in Albanian.

Health

Albania has free health care for all. Major hospitals are in Tirana and Durrës. The medical school, Faculty of Medicine at Tirana University, is in Tirana. Nursing schools are in many other cities.

Cuisine

The cuisine of Albania, as with most Mediterranean and Balkan nations, is strongly influenced by its long history. At different times, the territory of Albania has been occupied by Greece, Italy and the Ottoman Turks, and each group has left its mark on Albanian cuisine. The main meal of the Albanians is lunch, and it is usually accompanied by a salad of fresh vegetables, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers, and olives with olive oil, vinegar and salt. Lunch also includes a main dish of vegetables and meat. Seafood specialties are also common in the coastal areas of Durrës, Vlorë and Sarandë.

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Andorra

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Andorra, officially the **Principality of Andorra** (Catalan: *Principat d'Andorra*), is a small landlocked country in western Europe, located in the eastern Pyrenees mountains and bordered by Spain and France. Once isolated, it is currently a prosperous country mainly because of tourism and its status as a tax haven. The people of Andorra are currently listed as having the highest human life expectancies on Earth, at an average of 83.5 years at birth (2007 est).

Origin and history of the name

The name "Andorra" is of unknown origin but, according to Joan Coromines, pre-Roman. The name Andorra may be derived from al-Darra (الدّارة), the Arabic word for forest. Many of the local toponyms are of Iberian origin.




History

Tradition holds that Charles the Great (Charlemagne) granted a charter to Andorran people in return for fighting against the Moors. Overlordship of the territory passed to the local count of Urgell and eventually to the bishop of the diocese of Urgell. The Bishop then handed over the territory to the Lord of Caboet. The Caboet family married into the family of the French Count of Foix and through this marriage, the Count inherited all of the Spanish lord's land, including Andorra. In the eleventh century a dispute arose between the bishop and his northern neighbour over Andorra.

The conflict was resolved in 1278 by the signing of a *paréage*, which provided that Andorra's sovereignty be shared between the count of Foix (whose title would ultimately transfer to the French head of state) and the bishop of La Seu d'Urgell, in Catalonia, Spain. This gave the small principality its territory and political form.

Over the years the title passed to the kings of Navarre. After Henry of Navarre became King Henry IV of France, he issued an edict (1607) that established the head of the French state and the Bishop of Urgell as co-princes of Andorra.

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<p><i>Principat d'Andorra</i> Principality of Andorra</p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p>Motto: <i>Virtus Unita Fortior</i>" (Latin) "Strength United is Stronger"</p>	
<p>Anthem: <i>El Gran Carlemany, Mon Pare</i> (Catalan) <i>The Great Charlemagne, my Father</i></p>	
 <p>Location of Andorra (circled in inset) on the European continent (white) — [Legend]</p>	

In the period 1812–13, the First French Empire annexed Catalonia and divided it in four départements. Andorra was also annexed and made part of the district of Puigcerdà (département of Sègre).

Andorra declared war on Imperial Germany during World War I but did not actually take part in the fighting. It remained in an official state of belligerency until 1957 as it was not included in the Versailles Peace Treaty.

In 1933 France occupied Andorra as a result of social unrest before elections. On July 12, 1934, an adventurer named Boris Skossyreff issued a proclamation in Urgell, declaring himself Boris I, sovereign prince of Andorra, simultaneously declaring war on the bishop of Urgell. He was arrested by Spanish authorities on July 20 and ultimately expelled from Spain. From 1936 to 1940, a French detachment was garrisoned in Andorra to prevent influences of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's Spain. Francoist troops reached the Andorran border in the later stages of the war.

During World War II, Andorra remained neutral and was an important smuggling route between Vichy France and Spain.

Given its relative isolation, Andorra has existed outside the mainstream of European history, with few ties to countries other than France and Spain. In recent times, however, its thriving tourist industry along with developments in transportation and communications have removed the country from its isolation. Its political system was thoroughly modernized in 1993, the year in which it became a member of the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

Politics

Andorra is a co-principality with the President of France and the Bishop of Urgell, Spain as co-princes, in a duumvirate. The politics of Andorra take place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democracy, whereby the Prime Minister of Andorra is the head of government, and of a pluriform multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and parliament. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature.

The current Prime Minister is Albert Pintat Santolaria of the Andorran Liberal Party (PLA).

Responsibility for defending Andorra rests with Spain and France. Andorra currently has no military force.

Capital (and largest city)	Andorra la Vella
Official languages	Catalan
Demonym	Andorran
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Co-principality
 - French Co-Prince	Nicolas Sarkozy
 - Episcopal Co-Prince	Joan Enric Vives Sicília
 - Head of Government	Albert Pintat Santolària
Independence	
 - Paréage	1278
Area	
 - Total	468 km ² (193rd) 181 sq mi
 - Water (%)	0
Population	
 - 2007 estimate	71,822 (194th)
 - 2006 census	69,150
 - Density	154/km ² (69th) 393/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2005 estimate
 - Total	\$2.77 billion (177th)
 - Per capita	\$38,800 (unranked)
Currency	euro (€) ¹ (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
 - Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.ad ²
Calling code	+376

Parishes

Andorra consists of seven parishes:

- Andorra la Vella
- Canillo
- Encamp
- Escaldes-Engordany
- La Massana
- Ordino
- Sant Julià de Lòria

Geography

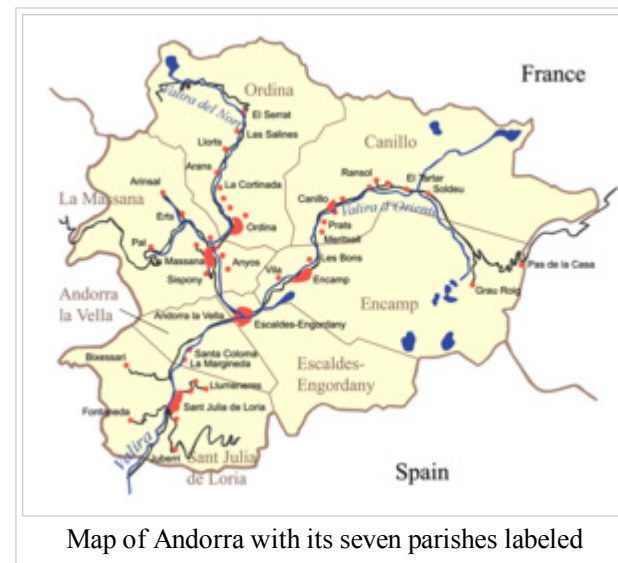
Due to its location in the eastern Pyrenees mountain range, Andorra consists predominantly of rugged mountains of an average height of 1,996 metres (6,549 ft) with the highest being the Coma Pedrosa at 2,946 metres (9,665 ft). These are dissected by three narrow valleys in a Y shape that combine into one as the main stream, the Valira river, leaves the country for Spain (at Andorra's lowest point of 870 m/2,854 ft). Andorra's surface area is 468 square kilometres (181 sq mi).

Andorra's climate is similar to that of its neighbours' temperate climates, but its higher altitude means there is, on average, more snow in winter and it is slightly cooler in summer.

Phytogeographically, Andorra belongs to the Atlantic European province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Andorra belongs to the ecoregion of Pyrenees conifer and mixed forests.

Economy

- 1 Before 1999: French franc and Spanish peseta. Small amounts of Andorran diners (divided into 100 centim) were minted after 1982.
- 2 Also .cat, shared with Catalan-speaking territories.



Tourism, the mainstay of Andorra's tiny, well-to-do economy, accounts for roughly 80% of GDP. An estimated 9 million tourists visit annually, attracted by Andorra's duty-free status and by its summer and winter resorts. Andorra's comparative advantage has recently eroded as the economies of adjoining France and Spain have been opened up, providing broader availability of goods and lower tariffs.

The banking sector, with its tax haven status, also contributes substantially to the economy. Agricultural production is limited—only 2% of the land is arable—and most food has to be imported. Some tobacco is grown locally. The principal livestock activity is domestic sheep raising. Manufacturing output consists mainly of cigarettes, cigars, and furniture. Andorra's natural resources include hydroelectric power, mineral water, timber, iron ore, and lead. There are no Patent Laws in Andorra.

Andorra is not a full member of the European Union, but enjoys a special relationship with it, such as being treated as an EU member for trade in manufactured goods (no tariffs) and as a non-EU member for agricultural products. Andorra lacks a currency of its own and uses that of its two surrounding nations. Prior to 1999 these were the French franc and the Spanish peseta, which have since been both replaced by the EU's single currency, the euro.

Demographics

Andorrans are a minority in their own country; Spaniards, Portuguese, Frenchmen, Britons, and Italians resident in Andorra make up 67.7% of the population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Andorra has the world's longest life expectancy – 83.5 years.

The national language is Catalan, a Romance language. Andorra is one of only four nations (together with France, Monaco, and Turkey) that never signed the Council of Europe Framework Convention on National Minorities.

Religion

The population of Andorra is predominantly Roman Catholic. Their patron saint is Our Lady of Meritxell.

Culture



The official and historic language is Catalan. Because of immigration, historical links, and close geographic proximity, other languages such as Spanish and French are also commonly spoken.

Andorra's long history has provided it with a rich folklore and an abundance of folk tales, with roots originating as far as Andalusia in the south and the Netherlands in the north.

Andorran culture is Catalan in essence. In significant and easily identifiable ways it has contributed to the conglomerate of Catalan culture.

Two writers renowned in Catalonia and the region, Michèle Gazier and Ramon Villeró, both come from Andorra.

Andorra is home to folk dances like the contrapàs and marratxa, which survive in Sant Julià de Lòria especially. Andorran folk music has similarities to the music of its neighbors, but is especially Catalan in character, especially in the presence of dances such as the sardana. Other Andorran folk dances include contrapàs in Andorra la Vella and Saint Anne's dance in Escaldes-Engordany.

Andorra's national holiday is Our Lady of Meritxell Day, September 8.

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Andorran coat of arms at Andorran Parliament



Andorran flag on balcony, Ordino.

Armenia

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

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Armenia (Armenian: Հայաստան *Hayastan*), officially in English the **Republic of Armenia**, is a landlocked mountainous country in Eurasia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in the Southern Caucasus. It borders Turkey to the west, Georgia to the north, Azerbaijan to the east, and Iran and the Nakhchivan exclave of Azerbaijan to the south. A transcontinental country at the juncture of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, Armenia has had and continues to have extensive socio-political and cultural connections with Europe.

A former republic of the Soviet Union, Armenia is a unitary, multiparty, democratic nation-state with an ancient and historic cultural heritage. The Kingdom of Armenia was the first state to adopt Christianity as its religion in the early years of the 4th century (the traditional date is 301). The modern Republic of Armenia is constitutionally a secular state, although the Christian faith plays a major role in the history and identification of the Armenian people.

Armenia is currently a member of more than 40 different international organisations, including the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Asian Development Bank, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the World Trade Organisation and the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. It is a member of the CSTO military alliance and also participates in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. In 2004 its forces joined KFOR, a NATO-led international force in Kosovo. It is also an observer member of the Eurasian Economic Community, La Francophonie, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Armenia is also active in the international sports community with full membership in the Union of European Football Associations and International Ice Hockey Federation. The country is an emerging democracy and, because of its strategic location, lies among both the Russian and Western spheres of influence.

Etymology of name

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Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն *Hayastani Hanrapetut'yun* Republic of Armenia



Flag



Coat of arms

Anthem: Մեր Հայրենիք (Armenian)
Mer Hayrenik (transcription)
"Our Fatherland"



The native Armenian name for the country is *Hayk'*. The name in the Middle Ages was extended to *Hayastan*, by addition of the Iranian suffix *-stan* (land). The name has traditionally been derived from Hayk (Հայկ), the legendary patriarch of the Armenians and a great-great-grandson of Noah, who according to Moses of Chorene defeated the Babylonian king Bel in 2492 BC, and established his nation in the Ararat region. The further origin of the name is uncertain.

The exonym *Armenia* is first attested in the Old Persian Behistun inscription (515 BC) as *Armina*. Greek Ἀρμένιοι "Armenians" is attested from about the same time, perhaps the earliest reference being a fragment attributed to Hecataeus of Miletus (476 BC). Herodotus (440 BC) has Ἀρμένιοι δὲ κατὰ περ Φρύγες ἐσεσάχατο, ἐόντες Φρυγῶν ἄποικοι. "the Armenians were equipped like Phrygians, being Phrygian colonists" (7.73). Some decades later, Xenophon, a Greek general waging war against the Persians, describes many aspects of Armenian village life and hospitality. He relates that the people spoke a language that to his ear sounded like the language of the Persians.

History

Antiquity

Armenia lies in the highlands surrounding the Biblical mountains of Ararat, upon which, as Judeo-Christian theology states, Noah's Ark came to rest after the flood. (Gen. 8:4). In the Bronze Age, several states flourished in the area of Greater Armenia, including the Hittite Empire (at the height of its power), Mitanni (South-Western historical Armenia), and Hayasa-Azzi (1500-1200 BC). Then, the Nairi people (twelfth to ninth centuries BC) and the Kingdom of Urartu (1000-600 BC) successively established their sovereignty over the Armenian Highland. Each of the aforementioned nations and tribes participated in the ethnogenesis of the Armenian people. Yerevan, the modern capital of Armenia, was founded in 782 BC by the Urartian king Argishti I.

Capital (and largest city)	Yerevan ¹
Official languages	Armenian ²
Demonym	Armenian
Government	Unitary Republic
 - President	Serzh Sargsyan
 - Prime Minister	Tigran Sargsyan
Formation and independence	
 - Traditional	August 11 2492 BC
 - Urartu under Aramu	840s BC
 - Tigranes Orontid	560 BC
 - Kingdom of Armenia formed	190 BC
 - Armenian Apostolic Church	301 AD
 - Democratic Republic of Armenia established	May 28, 1918
 - Independence from the Soviet Union	August 23, 1990
 Declared	September 21, 1991
 Recognised	December 25, 1991
 Finalised	
Area	
 - Total	29,800 km ² (141st) 11,506 sq mi
 - Water (%)	4.71



The Kingdom of Armenia at its greatest extent under Tigranes the Great, who reigned between 95 - 66 BC.

Around 600 BC, the Kingdom of Armenia was established under the Orontid Dynasty. The kingdom reached its height between 95 - 66 BC under Tigranes the Great, becoming one of the most powerful kingdoms of its time within the region. Throughout its history, the kingdom of Armenia enjoyed periods of independence intermitted with periods of autonomy subject to contemporary empires. Armenia's strategic location between two continents has subjected it to invasions by many peoples, including the Assyrians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Mongols, Persians, Ottoman Turks and Russians.

In 301, Armenia became the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its official state religion, while a number of

Christian communities have been established in Armenia since 40 AD. There had been various pagan communities before Christianity, but they were converted by an influx of Christian missionaries. Tiridates III (238-314 AD) was the first ruler to officially Christianise his people, his conversion occurring ten years before the Roman Empire granted Christianity an official toleration under Galerius, and 36 years before Constantine the Great was baptised.

After the fall of the Armenian kingdom in 428 AD, most of Armenia was incorporated as a marzpanate within the Sassanid Empire. Following an Armenian rebellion in 451 AD, Christian Armenians maintained their religious freedom, while Armenia gained autonomy.

Population	
- July 2007 estimate	3,229,900 ³ (135th ⁴)
- 2001 census	3,002,594
- Density	101/km ² (77th) 262/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$16.83 billion
- Per capita	\$5,700
Gini (2003)	33.8 (medium)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.775 (medium) (83rd)
Currency	Dram (AMD)
Time zone	UTC (UTC+4)
- Summer (DST)	DST (UTC+5)
Internet TLD	.am
Calling code	+374
Patron saint	St. Bartholomew the Apostle, St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Jude the Apostle, Virgin Mary
<p>1 Alternatively spelled "Erevan", "Jerevan", or "Erivan".</p> <p>2 The Eastern Armenian dialect is spoken in the Republic of Armenia</p> <p>3 (July 2008 estimate)</p> <p>4 Rank based on 2005 UN estimate of <i>de facto</i> population.</p>	

Middle Ages

After the Marzpanate period (428-636), Armenia emerged as the Emirate of Armenia, an autonomous principality within the Arabic Empire, reuniting Armenian lands previously taken by the Byzantine Empire as well. The principality was ruled by the Prince of Armenia, recognised by the Caliph and the Byzantine Emperor. It was part of the administrative division/emirate *Arminiyya* created by the Arabs, which also included parts of Georgia and Caucasian Albania, and had its centre in the Armenian city Dvin. The Principality of Armenia lasted till 884, when it regained its independence from the weakened Arabic Empire.

The re-emergent Armenian kingdom was ruled by the Bagratuni dynasty, and lasted till 1045. In time, several areas of the Bagratid Armenia separated as independent kingdoms and principalities such as the Kingdom of Vaspurakan ruled by the House of Artsruni, while still recognizing the supremacy of the Bagratid kings.

In 1045, the Byzantine Empire conquered Bagratid Armenia. Soon, the other Armenian states fell under Byzantine control as well. The Byzantine rule was short lived, as in 1071 Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantines and conquered Armenia at the Battle of Manzikert, establishing the Seljuk Empire. To escape death or servitude at the hands of those who had assassinated his relative, Gagik II, King of Ani, an Armenian named Roupen went with some of his countrymen into the gorges of the Taurus Mountains and then into Tarsus of Cilicia. The Byzantine governor of the palace gave them shelter where the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia was eventually established.

The Seljuk Empire soon started to collapse. In the early 1100s, Armenian princes of the Zakarid noble family established a semi-independent Armenian principality in Northern and Eastern Armenia, known as Zakarid Armenia. The noble family of Orbelians shared control with the Zakarids in various parts of the country, especially in Syunik and Vayots Dzor.

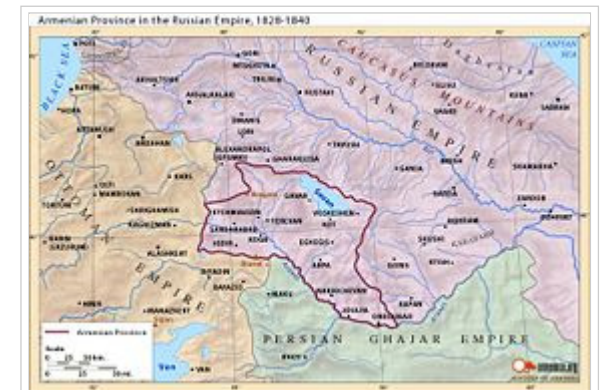
Foreign rule

During the 1230s, the Mongol Ilkhanate conquered the Zakaryan Principality, as well as the rest of Armenia. The Mongolian invasions were soon followed by those of other Central Asian tribes, which continued from the 1200s until the 1400s. After incessant invasions, each bringing destruction to the country, Armenia in time became weakened. During the 1500s, the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia divided Armenia among themselves. The Russian Empire later incorporated Eastern Armenia (consisting of the Erivan and Karabakh khanates within Persia) in 1813 and 1828.

Under Ottoman rule, the Armenians were granted considerable autonomy within their own enclaves and lived in relative harmony with other groups in the empire (including the ruling Turks). However, as Christians under a strict Muslim social system, Armenians faced pervasive discrimination. When they began pushing for more rights within the Ottoman Empire, Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid II, in response, organised state-sponsored massacres



The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia, 1199-1375.



Map of Imperial Russia's Armenian Oblast.

against the Armenians between 1894 and 1896, resulting in an estimated death toll of 80,000 to 300,000 people. The Hamidian massacres, as they came to be known, gave Hamid international infamy as the "Red Sultan" or "Bloody Sultan."

As the Ottoman Empire began to collapse, the Young Turk Revolution (1908) overthrew the government of Sultan Hamid. Armenians living in the empire hoped that the Committee of Union and Progress would change their second-class status. Armenian reform package (1914) was presented as a solution by appointing an inspector general over Armenian issues.

World War I and the Armenian Genocide

With onslaught of World War I, the Ottoman Empire and Russian Empire engaged during the Caucasus and Persian Campaigns, the new government began to look on the Armenians with distrust and suspicion. This was due to the fact that the Russian army contained a contingent of Armenian volunteers. On April 24, 1915, Armenian intellectuals were arrested by Ottoman authorities and, with the Tehcir Law (29 May 1915), eventually a large proportion of Armenians living in Anatolia perished in what has become known as the Armenian Genocide. There was local Armenian resistance in the region, developed against the activities of the Ottoman Empire. The events of 1915 to 1917 are regarded by Armenians to have been state-sponsored mass killings, or genocide. The issue of whether the genocide actually occurred is very disputed in Turkey.

Although the Russian army succeeded in gaining most of Ottoman Armenia during World War I, their gains were lost with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. At the time, Russian-controlled Eastern Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan attempted to bond together in the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. This federation, however, only lasted from February to May 1918, when all three parties decided to dissolve it. As a result, Eastern Armenia became independent as the Democratic Republic of Armenia (DRA) on May 28.

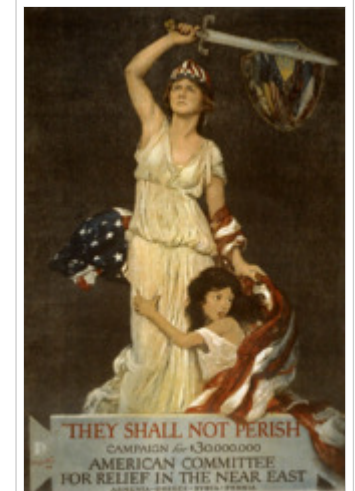


Political divisions of Europe in 1919 showing the independent Armenian republic.

Democratic Republic of Armenia

Unfortunately, the DRA's short-lived independence was fraught with war, territorial disputes, a mass influx of refugees from Ottoman Armenia, spreading disease, and starvation. Still, the Entente Powers, appalled by the actions of the Ottoman government, sought to help the newly-found Armenian state through relief funds and other forms of support.

At the end of the war, the victorious Entente powers sought to divide up the Ottoman Empire. Signed between the Allied and Associated Powers and Ottoman Empire at Sèvres on August 10, 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres promised to maintain the existence of the DRA and to attach the former territories of Ottoman Armenia to it. Because the new borders of Armenia were to be drawn by United States President Woodrow Wilson, Ottoman Armenia is also referred to as "



The United States contributed a significant amount of aid to the Armenians during the Armenian Genocide. Shown here is a poster for the *American Committee for Relief in the Near East* vowing that they (the Armenians among others) "shall not perish."

Wilsonian Armenia." There was even consideration of possibly making Armenia a mandate under the protection of the United States. The treaty, however, was rejected by the Turkish National Movement, and never came into effect. The movement, under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, used the treaty as the occasion to declare itself the rightful government of Turkey, replacing the monarchy based in Istanbul with a republic based in Ankara.

In 1920, Turkish nationalist forces invaded the fledgling Armenian republic from the east and the Turkish-Armenian War began. Turkish forces under the command of Kazım Karabekir captured Armenian territories that Russia annexed in the aftermath of the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War and occupied the old city of Alexandropol (present-day Gyumri). The violent conflict finally concluded with the Treaty of Alexandropol (December 2, 1920). The treaty forced Armenia to disarm most of its military forces, cede more than 50% of its pre-war territory, and to give up all the "Wilsonian Armenia" granted to it at the Sèvres treaty. Simultaneously, the Soviet Eleventh Army under the command of Grigoriy Ordzhonikidze, invaded Armenia at Karavansarai (present-day Ijevan) on November 29. By December 4, Ordzhonikidze's forces entered Yerevan and the short-lived Armenian republic collapsed.

Soviet Armenia

Armenia was annexed by Bolshevist Russia and along with Georgia and Azerbaijan, it was incorporated into the Soviet Union as part of the Transcaucasian SFSR on March 4, 1922. With this annexation, the Treaty of Alexandropol was superseded by the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Kars. In the agreement, Turkey allowed the Soviet Union to assume control over Adjara with the port city of Batumi in return for sovereignty over the cities of Kars, Ardahan, and İğdir, all of which were part of Russian Armenia.

The TSFR existed from 1922 to 1936, when it was divided up into three separate entities (Armenian SSR, Azerbaijan SSR, and Georgian SSR). Armenians enjoyed a period of relative stability under Soviet rule. They received medicine, food, and other provisions from Moscow, and communist rule proved to be a soothing balm in contrast to the turbulent final years of the Ottoman Empire. The situation was difficult for the church, which struggled under Soviet rule. After the death of Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin took the reins of power and began an era of renewed fear and terror for Armenians. As with various other ethnic minorities who lived in the Soviet Union during Stalin's Great Purge, tens of thousands of Armenians were either executed or deported.

Fears decreased when Stalin died in 1953 and Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the Soviet Union's new leader. Soon, life in Soviet Armenia began to see rapid improvement. The church which suffered greatly under Stalin was revived when Catholicos Vazgen I assumed the duties of his office in 1955. In 1967, a memorial to the victims of the Armenian Genocide was built at the Tsitsernakaberd hill above the Hrazdan gorge in Yerevan. This occurred after mass demonstrations took place on the tragic event's fiftieth anniversary in 1965.

During the Gorbachev era of the 1980s with the reforms of Glasnost and Perestroika, Armenians began to demand better environmental care for their country, opposing the pollution that Soviet-built factories brought. Tensions also developed between Soviet Azerbaijan and its autonomous district of Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority-Armenian region separated by Stalin from Armenia in 1923. The Armenians of Karabakh demanded unification with Soviet Armenia. Peaceful protests in Yerevan supporting the Karabakh Armenians were met with anti-Armenian pogroms in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. Compounding Armenia's



The coat of arms of Soviet Armenia depicting Mount Ararat in the centre.

problems was a devastating earthquake in 1988 with a moment magnitude of 7.2.

Gorbachev's inability to solve Armenia's problems (especially Karabakh) created disillusionment among the Armenians and only fed a growing hunger for independence. In May 1990, the New Armenian Army (NAA) was established, serving as a defence force separate from the Soviet Red Army. Clashes soon broke out between the NAA and Soviet Internal Security Forces (MVD) troops based in Yerevan when Armenians decided to commemorate the establishment of the 1918 Democratic Republic of Armenia. The violence resulted in the deaths of five Armenians killed in a shootout with the MVD at the railway station. Witnesses there claimed that the MVD used excessive force and that they had instigated the fighting. Further firefights between Armenian militiamen and Soviet troops occurred in Sovetshen, near the capital and resulted in the deaths of over 26 people, mostly Armenians. On March 17, 1991, Armenia, along with the Baltic states, Georgia and Moldova, boycotted a union-wide referendum in which 78% of all voters voted for the retention of the Soviet Union in a reformed form.



Armenian students gather at Theatre Square in central Yerevan to protest Soviet policies and rule in 1988.

Restoration of independence

In 1991, the Soviet Union broke apart and Armenia re-established its independence. Declaring independence on August 23, it was the first non-Baltic republic to secede. However, the initial post-Soviet years were marred by economic difficulties as well as the break-out of a full-scale armed confrontation between the Karabakh Armenians and Azerbaijan. The economic problems had their roots early in the Karabakh conflict when the Azerbaijani Popular Front managed to pressure the Azerbaijan SSR to instigate a railway and air blockade against Armenia. This move effectively crippled Armenia's economy as 85% of its cargo and goods arrived through rail traffic. In 1993, Turkey joined the blockade against Armenia in support of Azerbaijan.

The Karabakh war ended after a Russian-brokered cease-fire was put in place in 1994. The war was a success for the Karabakh Armenian forces who managed to secure 14% of Azerbaijan's internationally recognised territory including Nagorno-Karabakh itself. Since then, Armenia and Azerbaijan have held peace talks, mediated by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The status over Karabakh has yet to be determined. The economies of both countries have been hurt in the absence of a complete resolution and Armenia's borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan remain closed.

As it enters the twenty-first century, Armenia faces many hardships. Still, it has managed to make some improvements. It has made a full switch to a market economy and as of 2008, is the 28th most economically free nation in the world. Its relations with Europe, the Middle East, and the Commonwealth of Independent States have allowed Armenia to increase trade. Gas, oil, and other supplies come through two vital routes: Iran and Georgia. Armenia maintains cordial relations with both countries.

Government and politics

Politics of Armenia takes place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic. According to the Constitution of Armenia, the President is the head of government and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and

parliament. The unicameral parliament (also called the *Azgayin Zhoghov* or *National Assembly*) is controlled by a coalition of three political parties: the conservative Republican party, the Prosperous Armenia party, and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. The main opposition parties include Artur Baghdasarian's Rule of Law party and Raffi Hovannisian's Heritage party, both of which favour eventual Armenian membership in the European Union and NATO.

The Armenian government's stated aim is to build a Western-style parliamentary democracy as the basis of its form of government. It has universal suffrage above the age of eighteen.

International observers of Council of Europe and U.S. Department of State have questioned the fairness of Armenia's parliamentary and presidential elections and constitutional referendum since 1995, citing polling deficiencies, lack of cooperation by the Electoral Commission, and poor maintenance of electoral lists and polling places. In its 2008 Nations in Transit report, Freedom House categorized Armenia as a "Semi-consolidated Authoritarian Regime" (along with Moldova, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia) and ranked Armenia 20th among 29 nations, with a "Democracy Score" of 5.21 out of 7 (with 7 having the lowest democratic progress).. Since 1999, Freedom House's "Democracy Score" for Armenia has been steadily on the decline (from 4.79 to 5.21). Furthermore, Freedom House ranked Armenia as "partly free" in its 2007 report, though it did not categorise Armenia as an "electoral democracy", indicating an absence of relatively free and competitive elections. However, significant progress has been made and the 2008 Armenian presidential election was hailed as largely democratic by OSCE and Western monitors.

Foreign relations

Armenia presently maintains good relations with almost every country in the world, with two major exceptions being its immediate neighbours, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Tensions were running high between Armenians and Azerbaijanis during the final years of the Soviet Union. The Nagorno-Karabakh War dominated the region's politics throughout the 1990s. The border between the two rival countries remains closed up to this day, and a permanent solution for the conflict has not been reached despite the mediation provided by organisations such as the OSCE.

Turkey also has a long history of poor relations with Armenia over its refusal to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The Karabakh conflict became an excuse for Turkey to close its land border with Armenia in 1993. It has not lifted its blockade despite pressure from the powerful Turkish business lobby interested in Armenian markets. Since 2001, however, the Armenian airline company Armavia regularly flies between the Zvartnots International Airport of Yerevan and Atatürk International Airport of Istanbul.

Due to its position between two unfriendly neighbours, Armenia has close security ties with Russia. At the request of the Armenian government, Russia maintains a military base in the northwestern Armenian city of Gyumri as a deterrent against Turkey. Despite this, Armenia has also been looking toward Euro-Atlantic structures in recent years. It maintains good relations with the United States especially through its Armenian diaspora. According to the 2000 US census, there are 385,488 Armenians living in the country.



The Armenian embassy in Washington, D.C.

Armenia is also a member of the Council of Europe, maintaining friendly relations with the European Union, especially with its member states such as France and Greece. A 2005 survey reported that 64% of Armenia's population would be in favour of joining the EU. Several Armenian officials have also expressed the desire for their country to eventually become an EU member state, some predicting that it will make an official bid for membership in a few years.

Eduard Nalbandyan currently serves as the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Military

The Armenian Army, Air Force, Air Defence, and Border Guard comprise the four branches of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia. The Armenian military was formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and with the establishment of the Ministry of Defence in 1992. The Commander-in-Chief of the military is the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan. The Ministry of Defence is in charge of political leadership, currently headed by Colonel-General Mikael Harutyunyan, while military command remains in the hands of the General Staff, headed by the Chief of Staff, who is currently Lieutenant-General Seyran Ohanian .

Active forces now number about 60,000 soldiers, with an additional reserve of 32,000, and a "reserve of the reserve" of 350,000 troops. Armenian border guards are in charge of patrolling the country's borders with Georgia and Azerbaijan, while Russian troops continue to monitor its borders with Iran and Turkey. In the case of an eventual attack, Armenia is able to mobilise every able-bodied man between the age of 15 and 59, with military preparedness.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which establishes comprehensive limits on key categories of military equipment, was ratified by the Armenian parliament in July 1992. In March 1993, Armenia signed the multilateral Chemical Weapons Convention, which calls for the eventual elimination of chemical weapons. Armenia acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapons state in July 1993. Armenia is member of Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) along with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It participates in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program and is in a NATO organisation called Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). Armenia has engaged in a peacekeeping mission in Kosovo as part of non-NATO KFOR troops under Greek command. Armenia has 46 members of its military forces as a part of the Coalition Forces in Iraq War.

Administrative divisions



The Armed Forces of Armenia.

Armenia is divided into ten *marzes* (provinces, singular *marz*), with the city (*kaghak*) of Yerevan (Երևան) having special administrative status as the country's capital. The chief executive in each of the ten *marzes* is the *marzpet* (*marz* governor), appointed by the government of Armenia. In Yerevan, the chief executive is the mayor, appointed by the president. The republic has 953 villages, 48 cities and 932 communities, from which 871 are rural and 61 urban

Marz	Capital	Area	Population
Aragatsotn (Արագածոտն)	Ashtarak (Աշտարակ)	2,753 km ²	126,278
Ararat (Արարատ)	Artashat (Արտաշատ)	2,096 km ²	252,665
Armavir (Արմավիր)	Armavir (Արմավիր)	1,242 km ²	255,861
Gegharkunik (Գեղարքունիք)	Gavar (Գավառ)	5,348 km ²	215,371
Kotayk (Կոտայք)	Hrazdan (Հրազդան)	2,089 km ²	241,337
Lori (Լոռի)	Vanadzor (Վանաձոր)	3,789 km ²	253,351
Shirak (Շիրակ)	Gyumri (Գյումրի)	2,681 km ²	257,242
Syunik (Սյունիք)	Kapan (Կապան)	4,506 km ²	134,061
Tavush (Տավուշ)	Ijevan (Իջևան)	2,704 km ²	121,963
Vayots Dzor (Վայոց Ձոր)	Yeghegnadzor (Եղեգնաձոր)	2,308 km ²	53,230
Yerevan (Երևան)	–	227 km ²	1,091,235



Geography

Armenia is a landlocked country in the southern Caucasus. Located between the Black and Caspian Seas, the country is bordered on the north and east by

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Georgia and Azerbaijan, and on the south and west by Iran and Turkey.

Topography

The Republic of Armenia, covering an area of 30 000 square kilometres (11,600 sq. mi), is located in the north-east of the Armenian Highland (covering 400 000 km² or 154,000 sq. mi), otherwise known as historical Armenia and considered as the original homeland of Armenians. The terrain is mostly mountainous, with fast flowing rivers and few forests. The climate is highland continental, which means that the country is subjected to hot summers and cold winters. The land rises to 4095 metres (13,435 ft) above sea-level at Mount Aragats, and no point is below 400 metres (1,312 ft) above sea level.

Mount Ararat, which was historically part of Armenia, is the highest mountain in the region. Now located in Turkey, but clearly visible in Armenia, it is regarded by the Armenians as a symbol of their land. Because of this, the mountain is present on the Armenian national emblem today.

Environmental problems

Armenia is trying to address its environmental problems. It has established a Ministry of Nature Protection and introduced taxes for air and water pollution and solid waste disposal, whose revenues are used for environmental protection activities. Armenia is interested in cooperating with other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS, a group of eleven former Soviet republics) and with members of the international community on environmental issues. The Armenian Government is working toward closing its Nuclear Power Plant at Medzamor near Yerevan as soon as alternative energy sources are identified.

Climate

The climate in Armenia is markedly continental. Summers are dry and sunny, lasting from June to mid-September. The temperature fluctuates between 22° and 36 °C/71-97 °F. However, the low humidity level mitigates the effect of high temperatures. Evening breezes blowing down the mountains provide a welcome refreshing and cooling effect. Springs are short, while falls are long. Autumns are known for their vibrant and colorful foliage. Winters are quite cold with plenty of snow, with temperatures ranging between -10° and -5 °C/14-23 °F. Winter sports enthusiasts enjoy skiing down the hills of Tsakhkadzor, located thirty minutes outside Yerevan. Lake Sevan nestled up in the Armenian highlands, is the second largest lake in the world relative to its altitude, 1,900 metres above sea level.

Economy



The 12th century Khor Virap monastery in the shadow of Mount Ararat, upon which Noah's Ark had supposedly once come to rest.

The Armenian economy heavily relies on investment and support from Armenians abroad. Before independence, Armenia's economy was largely industry-based – chemicals, electronics, machinery, processed food, synthetic rubber, and textile – and highly dependent on outside resources. The republic had developed a modern industrial sector, supplying machine tools, textiles, and other manufactured goods to sister republics in exchange for raw materials and energy. Agriculture accounted for less than 20% of both net material product and total employment before the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. After independence, the importance of agriculture in the economy increased markedly, its share at the end of the 1990s rising to more than 30% of GDP and more than 40% of total employment. This increase in agriculture's share is attributable to food security needs of the population in the face of uncertainty during the transition.



Water World entertainment park in Yerevan.

Armenian mines produce copper, zinc, gold, and lead. The vast majority of energy is produced with fuel imported from Russia, including gas and nuclear fuel (for its one nuclear power plant); the main domestic energy source is hydroelectric. Small amounts of coal, gas, and petroleum have not yet been developed.

Like other newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, Armenia's economy suffers from the legacy of a centrally planned economy and the breakdown of former Soviet trading patterns. Soviet investment in and support of Armenian industry has virtually disappeared, so that few major enterprises are still able to function. In addition, the effects of the 1988 Spitak Earthquake, which killed more than 25,000 people and made 500,000 homeless, are still being felt. The conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh has not been resolved. The closure of Azerbaijani and Turkish borders has devastated the economy, because Armenia depends on outside supplies of energy and most raw materials. Land routes through Georgia and Iran are inadequate or unreliable. GDP fell nearly 60% from 1989 until 1992–1993. The national currency, the dram, suffered hyperinflation for the first years after

its introduction in 1993.

Nevertheless, the government was able to make wide-ranging economic reforms that paid off in dramatically lower inflation and steady growth. The 1994 cease-fire in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has also helped the economy. Armenia has had strong economic growth since 1995, building on the turnaround that began the previous year, and inflation has been negligible for the past several years. New sectors, such as precious stone processing and jewellery making, information and communication technology, and even tourism are beginning to supplement more traditional sectors in the economy, such as agriculture.

This steady economic progress has earned Armenia increasing support from international institutions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and other international financial institutions (IFIs) and foreign countries are extending considerable grants and loans. Loans to Armenia since 1993 exceed \$1.1 billion. These loans are targeted at reducing the budget deficit, stabilizing the currency; developing private businesses; energy; the agriculture, food processing, transportation, and health and education sectors; and ongoing rehabilitation in the earthquake zone. The government joined the World Trade Organisation on February 5, 2003. But one of the main sources of foreign direct investments remains the Armenian diaspora, which finances major parts of the reconstruction of infrastructure and other public projects. Being a growing democratic state, Armenia also hopes to get more financial aid from the Western World.

A liberal foreign investment law was approved in June 1994, and a Law on Privatisation was adopted in 1997, as well as a program on state property privatisation. Continued progress will depend on the ability of the government to strengthen its macroeconomic management, including increasing revenue

collection, improving the investment climate, and making strides against corruption. However unemployment still remains a major problem due to the influx of thousands of refugees from the Karabakh conflict, which currently stands at around 15%.

Armenia ranked 83rd on the 2007 UNDP Human Development Index, the highest among the Transcaucasian republics. In the 2007 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Armenia ranked 99 of 179 countries. In the 2008 Index of Economic Freedom, Armenia ranked 28th, ahead of countries like Austria, France, Portugal and Italy.

Demographics

Armenia has a population of 3,215,800 (April 2006 est.) and is the second most densely populated of the former Soviet republics. There has been a problem of population decline due to elevated levels of emigration after the break-up of the USSR. The rates of emigration and population decline, however, have decreased drastically in the recent years, and a moderate influx of Armenians returning to Armenia have been the main reasons for the trend, which is expected to continue. In fact Armenia is expected to resume its positive population growth by 2010.

Ethnic Armenians make up 97.9% of the population. Yazidis make up 1.3%, and Russians 0.5%. Other minorities include Assyrians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Kurds, Georgians, and Belarusians. There are also smaller communities of Vlachs, Mordvins, Ossetians, Udis, and Tats. Minorities of Poles and Caucasus Germans also exist though they are heavily Russified. During the Soviet era, Azerbaijanis were historically the second largest population in the country (forming about 2.5% in 1989). However, due to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh virtually all of them emigrated from Armenia to Azerbaijan. Conversely, Armenia received a large influx of Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan, thus giving Armenia a more homogeneous character.

Diaspora

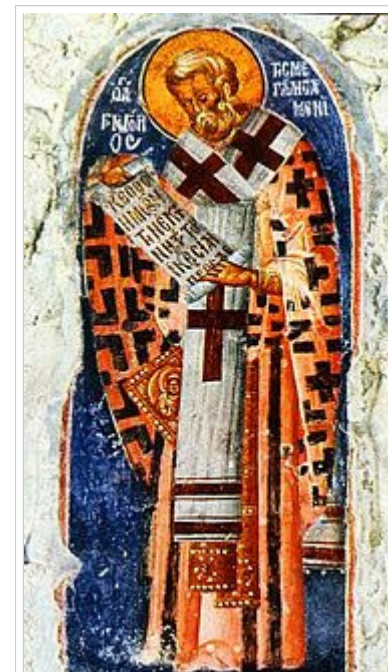
Armenia has a relatively large diaspora (8 million by some estimates, greatly exceeding the 3 million population of Armenia itself), with communities existing across the globe. The largest Armenian communities outside of Armenia can be found in Russia, France, Iran, the United States, Georgia, Syria, Lebanon, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Poland and Ukraine. 40,000 to 70,000 Armenians still live in Turkey (mostly in and around Istanbul). Also, about 1,000 Armenians reside in the Armenian Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem in Israel, a remnant of a once-larger community. Italy is home to the San Lazzaro degli Armeni, an island located in the Venetian Lagoon, which is completely occupied by a monastery run by the Mechitarists, an Armenian Catholic congregation. In addition, approximately 130,000 Armenians live in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh where they form a majority.

Religion

The predominant religion in Armenia is Christianity. The roots of the Armenian Church go back to the first century. According to tradition, the Armenian Church was founded by two of Jesus' twelve apostles -- Thaddaeus and Bartholomew -- who preached Christianity in Armenia between 40-60 AD. Because of these two founding apostles, the official name of the Armenian Church is Armenian Apostolic Church. Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, in 301. Over 93% of Armenian Christians belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church, a form of Oriental (Non- Chalcedonian) Orthodoxy, which is a very ritualistic, conservative church, roughly comparable to the Coptic and Syriac churches. Armenia also has a population of Catholics (both Roman and Mekhitarist - Armenian Uniate (180,000)), evangelical Protestants and followers of the Armenian traditional religion. The Yazidi Kurds, who live in the western part of the country, practice Yazidism. The Armenian Catholic Church is headquartered in Bzoummar, Lebanon. The non-Yazidi Kurds practice Sunni Islam. The Jewish community in Armenia has diminished to 750 persons since independence due to Armenia's economic difficulties, with most emigrants leaving for Israel. There are currently two synagogues operating in Armenia - in the capital, Yerevan, and in the city of Sevan located near Lake Sevan. Intermarriage with Christian Armenians is frequent. Still, despite these difficulties, a lot of enthusiasm exists to help the community meet its needs.

Culture

Armenians have their own distinctive alphabet and language. The alphabet was invented in 405 AD by Saint Mesrob Mashtots and consists of thirty-eight letters, two of which were added during the Cilician period. 96% of the people in the country speak Armenian, while 75.8% of the population additionally speaks Russian although English is becoming increasingly popular.



The influence of St. Gregory the Illuminator led to the adoption of Christianity in Armenia in the year 301 AD. He is the patron saint of the Armenian Apostolic Church.



The work *Song of the Italian Girl* by 19th century Armenian poet Mikael Nalbandian served as the inspiration for the Armenian national anthem *Mer Hayrenik*.

Music and the arts

The National Art Gallery in Yerevan has more than 16,000 works that date back to the Middle Ages. The Modern Art Museum, the Children's Picture Gallery, and the Martiros Saryan Museum are only a few of the other noteworthy collections. Moreover, many private galleries are in operation, with many more opening each year. They feature rotating exhibitions and sales.

The Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra performs at the refurbished city Opera House. In addition, several chamber ensembles are highly regarded for their musicianship, including the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia and the Serenade Orchestra. Classical music can also be heard at one of several smaller venues, including the Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory and the Chamber Orchestra Hall. Jazz is popular, especially in the summer when live performances are a regular occurrence at one of the city's many outdoor cafés.

Yerevan's Vernisage (arts and crafts market), close to Republic Square, bustles with hundreds of vendors selling a variety of crafts on weekends and Wednesdays (though the selection is much reduced mid-week). The market offers woodcarving, antiques, fine lace, and the hand-knotted wool carpets and kilims that are a Caucasus specialty. Obsidian, which is found locally, is crafted into assortment of jewellery and ornamental objects. Armenian gold smithery enjoys a long tradition, populating one corner of the market with a selection of gold items. Soviet relics and souvenirs of recent Russian manufacture—nesting dolls, watches, enamel boxes and so on, are also available at the Vernisage.

Across from the Opera House, a popular art market fills another city park on the weekends. Armenia's long history as a crossroads of the ancient world has resulted in a landscape with innumerable fascinating archaeological sites to explore. Medieval, Iron Age, Bronze Age and even Stone Age sites are all within a few hours drive from the city. All but the most spectacular remain virtually undiscovered, allowing visitors to view churches and fortresses in their original settings.

The American University of Armenia has graduate programs in Business and Law, among others. The institution owes its existence to the combined efforts of the Government of Armenia, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, U.S. Agency for International Development, and the University of California. The extension programs and the library at AUA form a new focal point for English-language intellectual life in the city.

Many famous names in the music world are of Armenian descent including classical composer Aram Khachaturian and French singer Charles Aznavour. The members of the alternative metal band System of a Down all have Armenian backgrounds as well, although only bassist Shavo Odadjian was born in the country.

Hospitality and wedding ceremonies



Armenian folk musicians.

Hospitality is well-known in Armenia and stems from ancient tradition. Social gatherings focused around sumptuous presentations of course after course of elaborately prepared and well-seasoned food. The hosts will often put morsels on a guest's plate whenever it is empty or fill his or her glass when it gets low. After a helping or two it is acceptable to refuse politely or, more simply, just leave a little uneaten food. Alcohol such as cognac, vodka, and red wine are usually served during meals and gatherings. It is rare and unusual for one to go inside an Armenian household and not be offered coffee, pastry, food, or even water.

The elaborate Armenian wedding process begins when the man and woman get engaged. The man's immediate family (parents, grandparents, and often uncles and aunts) go over to the woman's house to ask for permission from the woman's father for the relationship to continue and hopefully prosper. Once permission is granted by the father, the man gives the woman an engagement ring to make it official. To celebrate the mutual family agreement, the woman's family opens a bottle of Armenian cognac. After getting engaged, most families elect to have a semi-large engagement party as well. The girl's family is the one who plans, organizes and pays for the party. There is very little involvement by the man's family. At the party, a priest is summoned to pray for the soon-to-be husband and wife and give his blessings. Once the words of prayer have concluded, the couple slide wedding bands on each other's left hands (the ring is moved to the right hand once a formal marriage ceremony is conducted by the Armenian church). The customary time to wait for the marriage is about one year. Unlike other cultures, where bride's family pays for the wedding, in Armenia the man and his family pay for the wedding. The planning and organization process is usually done by the bride and groom to be.

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Austria

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Austria (German: *Österreich*) (*Österreich*), officially the **Republic of Austria** (German: *Republik Österreich*) (*Republik Österreich*), is a landlocked country in Central Europe. It borders both Germany and the Czech Republic to the north, Slovakia and Hungary to the east, Slovenia and Italy to the south, and Switzerland and Liechtenstein to the west. The capital is the city of Vienna on the Danube River.

The origins of modern Austria date back to the ninth century, when the territory of Upper and Lower Austria became increasingly populated. The name "Ostarrichi" is first documented in an official document from 996. Since then this word has developed into the *Österreich*.

Austria is a parliamentary representative democracy comprising nine federal states and is one of six European countries that have declared permanent neutrality and one of the few countries that includes the concept of everlasting neutrality in its constitution. Austria has been a member of the United Nations since 1955 and joined the European Union in 1995.

Etymology

The German name *Österreich* is derived from Old German *Ostarrîchi* "Eastern Territory". The name was Latinized as "Austria", thus it has no direct etymological connection with the name of Australia, which derives from Latin *Australis* meaning *The South* (however, both words ultimately derive from Proto-Indo-European **aust-* "dawn"). *Reich* can also mean "empire," and this connotation is the one that is understood in the context of the Austrian/Austro-Hungarian Empire, Holy Roman Empire, although not in the context of the modern Republic of *Österreich*. The term probably originates in a vernacular translation of the Medieval Latin name for the region: *Marchia orientalis*, which translates as "eastern marches" or "eastern borderland", as it was situated at the eastern edge of the Holy Roman Empire, that was also mirrored in the name *Ostmark*, for a short period applied after the *Anschluss* to Germany. However, Friedrich Heer, one the most important Austrian historians in the 20th century, stated in his book *Der Kampf um die österreichische Identität* (The Struggle Over Austrian Identity), that the Germanic form *ostarrîchi* was not a translation of the Latin word, but both resulted from a much older term originating in the Celtic languages of ancient Austria: More than 2,500 years ago, the

<i>Republik Österreich</i> Republic of Austria	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: <i>Land der Berge, Land am Strome</i> (German) <i>Land of Mountains, Land by the River</i>	
	
Location of Austria (dark green)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — on the European continent (light green & dark grey) — in the European Union (light green) — [Legend] 	

major part of the actual country was called *Norig* by the Celtic population (Hallstatt culture); *No-* or *Nor-* meant *East* or *Eastern*, whereas *Rig* is the related to the modern German *Reich*; realm (among other things). Accordingly, *Norig* would essentially mean *ostarrîchi* and *Österreich*, thus *Austria*. The Celtic name was eventually Latinized to *noricum*, when the Romans conquered and Romanized the country that later became Austria. The name of *Noricum* was then used to designate the Roman province.

The current official designation is the *Republic of Austria* (Republik Österreich). It was originally known after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1918 as the *Republic of German Austria* (Republik Deutschösterreich) , but the state was forced to change its name to "Republic of **Austria**" in 1919 by the Treaty of Saint-Germain. The name was changed again during the Austro-fascist regime (1934–1938) , into *Federal State of Austria* (Bundesstaat Österreich) , but restored after regaining independence and the birth of the Second Austrian Republic (1955–present).

During the period of monarchy, Austria was known as the *Austrian Empire* (Kaisertum Österreich) ; however no official designation existed since the empire was strongly multiethnic. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the empire became known as *Austria-Hungary* reflecting the dual monarchy character.

History

Prehistory and the Middle Ages

Capital (and largest city)	Vienna
Official languages	German locally also Hungarian, Slovenian and Croatian
Demonym	Austrian
Government - President - Chancellor	Federal Parliamentary republic Heinz Fischer Alfred Gusenbauer
Independence - Austrian State Treaty in force - Declaration of Neutrality	July 27, 1955 October 26, 1955 (before: Austrian Empire: 1804, First Austrian Republic: 1918)
EU accession	January 1, 1995
Area - Total - Water (%)	83,872 km ² (115th) 32,383 sq mi 1.7
Population - 2007 estimate - 2001 census - Density	8,316,487 (93rd) 8,032,926 99/km ² (99th) 257/sq mi
GDP (PPP) - Total	2006 estimate \$279.5 billion (34th)



Coats of arms of the Habsburg Emperor

Settled in prehistoric times, the central European land that is now Austria was occupied in pre-Roman times by various Celtic tribes. The Celtic kingdom of Noricum was claimed by the Roman Empire and made a province. After the fall of the Roman Empire, of which most of Austria was part (all parts south of the Danube), the area was invaded by Bavarians, Slavs and Avars. Charlemagne conquered the area in 788 and encouraged colonization and Christianity. As part of Eastern Francia, the core areas that now encompass Austria were bequeathed to the house of Babenberg. The area was known as the *marchia Orientalis* and was given to Leopold of Babenberg in 976.

The first record showing the name Austria is from 996 where it is written as *Ostarrîchi*, referring to the territory

of the Babenberg March. The term Ostmark is not historically ascertained and appears to be a translation of *marchia orientalis* that came up only much later.

The following centuries were characterized by the settlement of the country. In 1156 the Privilegium Minus elevated Austria to the status of a duchy. In 1192, the Babenbergs also acquired the Duchy of Styria.

With the death of Frederick II in 1246, the line of the Babenbergers went extinct. Otakar II of Bohemia effectively controlled the duchies of Austria, Styria and Carinthia after that. His reign came to an end with his defeat at Dürnkrut at the hand of Rudolf I of Germany in 1278. Thereafter, until World War I, Austria's history was largely that of its ruling dynasty, the Habsburgs.

Rise of the Habsburgs

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Habsburgs began to accumulate other provinces in the vicinity of the Duchy of Austria. In 1438, Duke Albert V of Austria was chosen as the successor to his father-in-law, Emperor Sigismund. Although Albert himself only reigned for a year, from then on, every emperor of the Holy Roman Empire was a Habsburg, with only one exception.

The Habsburgs began also to accumulate lands far from the Hereditary Lands. In 1477, Archduke Maximilian, only son of Emperor Frederick III, married the heiress Maria of Burgundy, thus acquiring most of the Low Countries for the family. His son Philip the Fair married the heiress of Castile and Aragon, and thus acquired Spain and its Italian, African, and New World appendages for the Habsburgs.

- Per capita	\$36,000 (8th)
GDP (nominal)	2005 estimate
- Total	\$307.07 billion (23rd)
- Per capita	\$37,117 (12th)
Gini (2000)	29.1 (low)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.948 (high) (15th)
Currency	euro (€) ² (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.at ³
Calling code	+43
<p>1 Slovenian, Croatian, Hungarian are officially recognised regional languages and Austrian Sign Language is a protected minority language throughout the country.</p> <p>2 Before 1999: Austrian Schilling.</p> <p>3 The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.</p>	

In 1526, following the Battle of Mohács, Austrian rulers expanded their territories, bringing Bohemia and the part of Hungary not occupied by the Ottomans under their rule. Ottoman expansion into Hungary led to frequent conflicts between the two powers, particularly evident in the so-called Long War of 1593 to 1606.

Austria as a European Power

The long reign of Leopold I (1657–1705) saw the culmination of the Austrian conflict with the Turks. Following the successful defense of Vienna in 1683, a series of campaigns resulted in the return of all of Hungary to Austrian control by the Treaty of Carlowitz in 1699. The later part of the reign of Emperor Charles VI (1711–1740) saw Austria relinquish many of these fairly impressive gains, largely due to Charles's apprehensions at the imminent extinction of the House of Habsburg. Charles was willing to offer concrete advantages in territory and authority in exchange for other powers' worthless recognitions of the Pragmatic Sanction that made his daughter Maria Theresa his heir. With the rise of Prussia the Austrian–Prussian dualism began in Germany.

Austria became engaged in the war with Revolutionary France, which lasted until 1797 and at the beginning proved unsuccessful for Austria. Defeats by Napoleon meant the end of the old Holy Roman Empire in 1806. Just two years before the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, in 1804 the Empire of Austria was founded, which was transformed in 1867 into the dual-monarchy Austria-Hungary. However, in 1814 Austria was part of the Allied forces invading France and conquering it. Following the Napoleonic wars Austria emerged from the Congress of Vienna in 1815 as one of four of the continent's dominant powers (together with Russia, Prussia and defeated France). In 1815 the German Confederation, (German: *Deutscher Bund*) was founded under the presidency of Austria. Austria and Prussia were the leading powers of the German Confederation. Its central institution was the Bundesversammlung in Frankfurt. Because of unsolved social, political and national conflicts some of the German inhabitants took part in the 1848 revolution to create a unified Germany. The Frankfurt Parliament in the St. Paul's Church elected the arch duke Johann of Habsburg as a Reichsverweser, an administrator of the German Empire. For a new German empire would have been possible three options: a Greater Germany, *Großdeutschland*, with the German-speaking territories of the Habsburg Empire; a Greater Austrian solution, *Großösterreich*, the German Confederation with the whole Habsburgian territories; and a smaller German solution, *Kleindeutsche*, the German Confederation without Austria at all. As Austria was not willing to relinquish its German-speaking territories to what would become the German Empire of 1848 the parliament offered the crown to the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Austria grew out of Germany; Prussia grew in. In 1864 Austria and Prussia fought together against Denmark, to free the independent duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Austria and Prussia could not agree on a solution to the administration of Schleswig and Holstein, which led to the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Austria, together with most of the other German states, was defeated by Prussia in the Battle of Königgrätz in Bohemia. Austria had to leave the German Confederation and subsequently no longer took part in German politics. After 1871, it was one of two Empires: the German Empire to the north and Austria-Hungary to the south.



The Congress of Vienna by Jean-Baptiste Isabey, 1819.



Map of Austria-Hungary

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the *Ausgleich*, provided for a dual sovereignty, the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary, under Franz Joseph I, who ruled until his death on 21 November 1916. The Austro-Hungarian rule of this diverse empire included various Slav groups such as Poles, Ukrainians, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Serbs and Croats, as well as large Italian and Romanian communities. As a result, ruling Austria-Hungary became increasingly difficult in an age of emerging nationalist movements. Yet the central government tried its best to be accommodating in some respects; minorities were entitled to schools in their own language, for example.

World War I and its aftermath

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914 by Gavrilo Princip (a member of the Serbian nationalist group the Black Hand) was the immediate cause for the outbreak of World War I, leading to the downfall and the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. War left the country in political chaos and economic ruin, the Central Powers (being Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany and Turkey) having been defeated in 1918. The Empire was broken up - Austria, with most of the German-speaking parts became a republic (see Treaty of Saint-Germain) and the remaining subordinate territories became independent states. However, over 3 million German Austrians found themselves living outside of the Allied inspired borders of the Austrian Republic in the nations of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Italy. A particular large German minority was found in the newly-established Czechoslovakia with the entire historic German populations of Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia cut off from their motherland of Austria. Austria was also deprived of half of Tyrol, which was awarded to Italy as a prize for entering the war on the Allied side. Austria has sustained this loss to the present day and this had been a major source of friction with Italy until the 1980s. Today the situation in Alto Adige/South Tyrol is resolved, serving as a model for inter-ethnic and transnational cooperation in Europe.

Between 1918 and 1919, Austria was officially known as the Republic of German Austria (*Republik Deutschösterreich*). Many territories it claimed under its control included regions that were later assigned to neighboring nations. Not only did the Entente powers forbid German Austria to unite with Germany, they also forbade the name; it was therefore changed to the Republic of Austria. The monarchy was dissolved in 1919 and a parliamentary democracy was set up under the constitution of 10 November 1920.

In the autumn of 1922, Austria was granted an international loan supervised by the League of Nations. The purpose of the loan was to avert bankruptcy, stabilize the currency, and improve its general economic condition. With the granting of the loan, Austria passed from an independent state to the control exercised by the League of Nations. At the time, the real ruler of Austria became the League, through its commissioner in Vienna. The commissioner was a Dutchman not formally part of the Austrian government. Austria had fallen under an international receivership, which had not been seen openly since Lord Cromer became the financial adviser to the bankrupt Khedivial Government of Egypt a little less than half a century earlier.

Austrofascism and the Third Reich

The First Austrian Republic, lasted until 1933 when Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss dissolved parliament and established an autocratic regime tending towards Italian fascism, (Austrofascism) in order, partly, to check the power of Nazis who were still advocating union with Germany. The two big parties at this time—the Social Democrats and the Conservatives—had paramilitary armies, which fought each other. The "Heimwehr" (later integrated into the "Vaterländische Front"), the paramilitary arm of the Conservative party supported Dollfuss's Fascist regime; the "Republikanischer Schutzbund", was the military arm of the Social Democrats which was outlawed in 1933 but still existed underground - civil war was to break out.

After the Austrian Civil War in February 1934, several members of the *Schutzbund* were executed, the Social Democratic party was outlawed and many of its members were imprisoned or emigrated. In May of that year the Fascists introduced a new constitution ("Maiverfassung") which cemented Dollfuss's power but on 25 July he was assassinated in a Nazi coup attempt.

His successor Kurt Schuschnigg, struggled to keep Austria independent (even a restoration of the Habsburgs was contemplated), but on 12 March 1938 German troops occupied the country and established a plebiscite confirming union with Germany. Hitler was himself a native of Austria who had lost Austrian citizenship in 1925. Hitler proclaimed the annexation (*Anschluss*) of Austria by Germany. Austria was incorporated into the Third Reich and ceased to exist as an independent state. The Nazis called Austria "Ostmark" until 1942 when it was again renamed and called "Alpen-Donau-Reichsgaue." Some Austrians joined the resistance, but many more joined the German armed forces (*Wehrmacht*).

Vienna fell on 13 April 1945 during the Soviet Vienna Offensive. This was just before the total collapse of the Third Reich, the defeat of Nazi Germany, the fall of Berlin, and the end of the war in May. Karl Renner astutely set up a Provisional Government in Vienna in April with the tacit approval of the victorious Soviet forces, and declared Austria's secession from the Third Reich.

After the defeat of Germany, Allied Occupation

Much like Germany, Austria, too, was divided into a British, a French, a Soviet and an American Zone and governed by the Allied Commission for Austria. Largely owing to Karl Renner's action on April 27th in setting up a Provisional Government, however, there was a subtle difference in the treatment of Austria by the Allies. The Austrian Government was recognized and tolerated by the Four Powers. Austria, in general, was treated as though it had been originally invaded by Germany and liberated by the Allies.

Although the Eastern part of Austria, including the greater Vienna area, lay in the Soviet Zone, the capital itself was equally divided into four occupational zones. Outside of Vienna, however, travel across zone borders, in particular leaving or entering the Soviet zone, was difficult and time-consuming if possible at all. During the time of the Berlin Air Lift, Soviet military pressure was increased further, but could be successfully overcome by skillful military, political and diplomatic influence on the part of the other Allies.

On 15 May 1955 Austria regained full independence by concluding the Austrian State Treaty with the Four Occupying Powers. On 26 October 1955 Austria was declared "permanently neutral" by act of Parliament, which it remains to this day.

Recent history

The political system of the Second Republic came to be characterized by the system of *Proporz*, meaning that most posts of some political importance were split evenly between members of the Social Democrats (Labour Party) and the People's Party (Conservatives).

Interest group representations with mandatory membership (e.g. for workers, businesspeople, farmers etc.) grew to considerable importance and were usually consulted in the legislative process, so that hardly any legislation was passed that did not reflect widespread consensus. The Proporz and consensus systems

largely held even during the years between 1966 and 1983, when there were non-coalition governments, but this era has now passed.

Austria today has five major political parties: The SPÖ (Labour Party) , the ÖVP (Conservatives) , the "Greens" (Environmental, social-liberal) and FPÖ/BZÖ (both right-wing, nationalist). SPÖ and ÖVP share about 75% of the parliamentary mandates, while the remaining 25% are divided between the other three parties.

Austria became a member of the European Union in 1995 and retained its constitutional neutrality, like some other EU members, such as Sweden. The major parties SPÖ and ÖVP have contrary opinions about the future status of Austria's military neutrality: While the SPÖ supports a neutral role in the EU (together with other neutral EU members like Sweden), the ÖVP argues for stronger integration into the EU's security policy; even a future NATO is not ruled out by some ÖVP politicians. Since the "permanent neutrality" forms part of the Austrian constitution, a two-thirds majority in the Austrian parliament would be needed for such a change in policy.

Politics

Political system

The Parliament of Austria is located in Vienna, the nation's largest city and capital. Austria became a federal, parliamentary, democratic republic through the Federal Constitution of 1920. It was reintroduced in 1945 to the nine states of the Federal Republic. The head of state is the Federal President, who is directly elected by popular vote. The chairman of the Federal Government is the Federal Chancellor, who is appointed by the president. The government can be removed from office by either a presidential decree or by vote of no confidence in the lower chamber of parliament, the Nationalrat.

The Parliament of Austria consists of two chambers. The composition of the Nationalrat is determined every five years by a general election in which every citizen over 16 years (since 2007) is allowed to vote to fill its 183 seats. A recent extension of that term from four to five years will become effective after the next election. While there is a general threshold of 4 percent for all parties at federal elections (Nationalratswahlen) , there remains the possibility to gain a direct seat, or *Direktmandat*, in one of the 43 regional election districts. The Nationalrat is the dominant chamber in the formation of legislation in Austria. However, the upper house of parliament, the Bundesrat has a limited right of veto (the Nationalrat can — in almost all cases — ultimately pass the respective bill by voting a second time. This is referred to as '*Beharrungsbeschluss*, lit. "vote of persistence"). A convention, called the *Österreich -Konvent* was convened in June 30, 2003 to decide upon suggestions to reform the constitution, but has failed to produce a proposal that would receive the two thirds of votes in the Nationalrat necessary for constitutional amendments and/or reform. However, some important parts of the final report were generally agreed upon and are still expected to be implemented.



Austrian Parliament in Vienna

Recent political developments

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In February 2000 the conservative People's Party formed a coalition with the controversial nationalistic Freedom Party, headed by Jörg Haider. The (at that time) 14 other member states of the European Union - but not the EU itself - condemned Austria's new coalition and froze diplomatic contacts. These measures were commonly referred to as "sanctions" although they were more or less just motions of diplomatic unfriendliness. Given the controversy, Haider chose not to join the government, but he continued to wield influence from the sidelines. This was not, however, the first time that the Republic of Austria had displeased international opinion. In 1986, the population voted for Kurt Waldheim as president despite his revelation that he had been active in the Wehrmacht as an intelligence officer during World War II.

In September 2002, the coalition between the People's Party and the Freedom Party dissolved after a shake-up in the Freedom Party. In November 2002, the People's Party made large gains in general elections again. After a lot of coalition talks with other parties, the People's Party again formed a government with the Freedom Party in February 2003 with Wolfgang Schüssel as Chancellor.

After general elections held in October 2006, the Social Democrats emerged as the largest party, whereas the People's Party lost about 8% in votes. Political realities prohibited any of the two major parties from forming a coalition with smaller parties. In January 2007 the People's Party and Social Democrats formed a Grand Coalition with the social democrat Alfred Gusenbauer as Chancellor.

Foreign policy

The 1955 Austrian State Treaty ended the occupation of Austria following World War II and recognized Austria as an independent and sovereign state. In October 1955, the Federal Assembly passed a constitutional law in which "Austria declares of her own free will her perpetual neutrality." The second section of this law stated that "in all future times Austria will not join any military alliances and will not permit the establishment of any foreign military bases on her territory." Since then, Austria has shaped its foreign policy on the basis of neutrality.

Austria began to reassess its definition of neutrality following the fall of the Soviet Union, granting overflight rights for the UN-sanctioned action against Iraq in 1991, and, since 1995, contemplating participation in the EU's evolving security structure. Also in 1995, it joined the Partnership for Peace and subsequently participated in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia.

Austria attaches great importance to participation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and other international economic organizations, and it has played an active role in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Energy politics

In 1972, the country began construction of a nuclear-powered electricity-generation station at Zwentendorf on the River Danube, following a unanimous vote in parliament. However, in 1978, a referendum voted approximately 50.5% against nuclear power, 49.5% for, and parliament subsequently unanimously passed a law forbidding the use of nuclear power to generate electricity.



Embassy of Austria in
London

Austria currently produces more than half of its electricity by hydropower. Together with other renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and biomass powerplants, the electricity supply from renewable energy amounts to nearly 80% of total use in Austria. The rest is produced by gas and oil powerplants.

Military

The manpower of the Austrian Armed Forces ("Bundesheer") mainly relies on conscription. All males who have reached the age of eighteen and are found fit get recruited for a six months long military service, which can be postponed under some circumstances. Conscientious objection is legally possible and obliges to serve an institutionalized nine months civilian service instead. Only since 1998, women can volunteer to become professional soldiers.

The main sectors of the Bundesheer are Joint Forces (Streitkräfteführungskommando, SKFüKdo) which consist of Land Forces (Landstreitkräfte), Air Forces (Luftstreitkräfte), International Missions (Internationale Einsätze), and Special Forces (Spezialeinsatzkräfte); next to Mission Support (Kommando Einsatzunterstützung; KdoEU) and Command Support (Kommando Führungsunterstützung; KdoFüU). In 2004, Austria expends about 0.9% of its GDP for defense. The Army currently has about 45,000 soldiers, of which about half are conscripts. As head of state, Austrian President (currently Heinz Fischer) is nominally the Commander-in-Chief of the Bundesheer. In practical reality, however, command of the Austrian Armed Forces is almost exclusively exercised by the Minister of Defense, currently Norbert Darabos.

With the end of the Cold War, and more importantly the removal of the former heavily guarded "Iron Curtain" separating Austria and Hungary, the Austrian military have been assisting Austrian border guards in trying to prevent border crossings by illegal immigrants. This assistance came to an end when Hungary joined the EU Schengen area in 2008, for all intents and purposes abolishing "internal" border controls between treaty states. Some politicians have called for a prolongation of this mission, but the legality of this is heavily disputed. In accordance with the Austrian constitution, armed forces may only be deployed in a limited number of cases, mainly to defend the country and aid in cases of national emergencies, such as in the wake of natural disasters etc. They may generally not be used as auxiliary police forces.

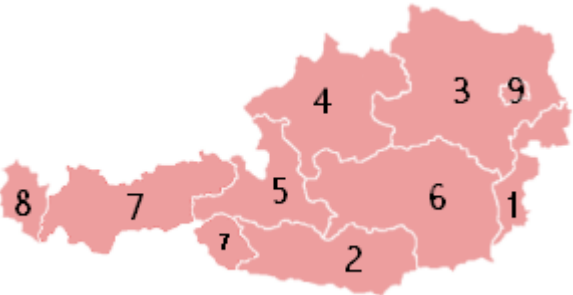
Despite, or perhaps because of, its self-declared status of permanent neutrality, Austria has a long and proud tradition of engaging in UN-led peacekeeping and other humanitarian missions. The Austrian Forces Disaster Relief Unit (AFDRU), in particular, an all-volunteer unit with close ties to civilian specialists (rescue dog handlers, etc) enjoys a reputation as a quick (standard deployment time is 10 hours) and efficient SAR unit. Currently, larger contingents of Austrian forces are deployed in Bosnia, Kosovo and, since 1974, on the Golan Heights.

States

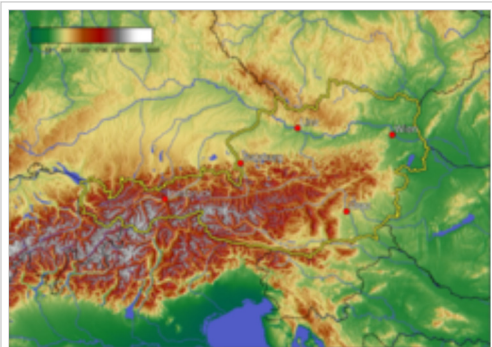
As a federal republic, Austria is divided into nine states (German: '**Bundesländer**'). These states are then divided into districts (*Bezirke*) and cities (*Statutarstädte*). Districts are subdivided into municipalities (*Gemeinden*). Cities have the competencies otherwise granted to both districts and municipalities. The states are not mere administrative divisions but have some distinct legislative authority separate from the federal government.



Austrian Guard Company on parade - July 14th 2007, Champs Élysées, Paris.

	State (<i>Bundesland</i>)	Capital	Area	Population	Rank	
	1	Burgenland	Eisenstadt	3,966 km ²	280,350	9
	2	Carinthia (<i>Kärnten</i>)	Klagenfurt	9,536 km ²	560,753	6
	3	Lower Austria (<i>Niederösterreich</i>)	St. Pölten	19,174 km ²	1,588,545	2
	4	Upper Austria (<i>Oberösterreich</i>)	Linz	11,980 km ²	1,405,986	3
	5	Salzburg	Salzburg	7,154 km ²	529,085	7
	6	Styria (<i>Steiermark</i>)	Graz	16,392 km ²	1,203,986	4
	7	Tyrol (<i>Tirol</i>)	Innsbruck	12,648 km ²	698,472	5
	8	Vorarlberg	Bregenz	2,601 km ²	364,611	8
	9	Vienna (<i>Wien</i>)	Vienna (<i>Wien</i>)	414.90 km ²	1,660,534	1

Geography



Topography of Austria

Austria is a largely mountainous country due to its location in the Alps. The Central Eastern Alps, Northern Limestone Alps and Southern Limestone Alps are all partly in Austria. Of the total area of Austria (84 000 km² or 32,000 sq. mi) , only about a quarter can be considered low lying, and only 32% of the country is below 500 meters (1,640 ft). The high mountainous Alps in the west of Austria flatten somewhat into low lands and plains in the east of the country.

Austria can be divided into five areas. The biggest area are the Austrian Alps, which constitute 62% of Austria's total area. The Austrian foothills at the base of the Alps and the Carpathians account for around 12% of its area. The foothills in the east and areas surrounding the periphery of the Pannoni low country amount to about 12% of the total landmass. The second greater mountain area (much lower than the Alps) is situated in the north. Known as the Austrian granite plateau, it is located in the central area of the Bohemian Mass, and accounts for 10% of Austria. The Austrian portion of the Vienna basin comprises the remaining 4%.

Phytogeographically, Austria belongs to the Central European province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Austria can be subdivided into four ecoregions: the Central European mixed forests, Pannonian mixed forests, Alps conifer and mixed forests and Western European broadleaf forests.

Climate

The greater part of Austria lies in the cool/temperate climate zone in which humid westerly winds predominate. With over half of the country dominated by the Alps the alpine climate is the predominant one. In the East, in the Pannonian Plain and along the Danube valley, the climate shows continental features with less rain than the alpine areas. Although Austria is cold in the winter, in the summer temperatures can be relatively warm reaching 20-35 degrees Celsius.

The six highest mountains in Austria are:

Name	Height (m)	Height (ft)	Range
Großglockner	3,797	12,457	Hohe Tauern
Wildspitze	3,768	12,362	Ötztal Alps
Weißkugel	3,739	12,267	Ötztal Alps
Großvenediger	3,674	12,054	Hohe Tauern
Similaun	3,606	11,831	Ötztal Alps
Großes Wiesbachhorn	3,571	11,715	Hohe Tauern

Economy



Map of Austria

Austria is one of the 10 richest countries in the world in terms of GDP per capita, has a well-developed social market economy, and a very high standard of living. Until the 1980s, many of Austria's largest industry firms were nationalised; in recent years, however, privatisation has reduced state holdings to a level comparable to other European economies. Labour movements are particularly strong in Austria and have large influence on labour politics. Next to a highly-developed industry, international tourism is the most important part of the national economy.

Germany has historically been the main trading partner of Austria, making it vulnerable to rapid changes in the German economy. But since Austria became a member state of the European Union it has gained closer ties to other European Union economies, reducing its economic dependence on Germany. In addition, membership in the EU has drawn an influx of foreign investors attracted by Austria's access to the single European market and proximity to EU aspiring economies. Growth in GDP accelerated in recent years and reached 3.3% in 2006.



Modern Vienna

Education

Responsibility for educational oversight in Austria lies partly at the Austrian states (Bundesländer), and partly with the federal government. Optional kindergarten education is provided for all children between the ages of three and six years. School attendance is compulsory for nine years, i.e. usually to the age of fifteen. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Austria's education as the 18th best in the world, being significantly higher than the OECD average.

Primary education lasts for four years. Alongside Germany, secondary education includes two main types of schools based on a pupil's ability as determined by grades from the primary school: the Gymnasium for the more gifted children which normally leads to the Matura which is a requirement for access to universities and the Hauptschule which prepares pupils for vocational education but also for further education (HTL = institution of higher technical education; HAK = commercial academy; HBLA = institution of higher education for economic business; etc.), where you also get the Matura.

The Austrian university system had been open to any student who passed the Matura examination until recently. A 2006 bill allowed the introduction of entrance exams for studies such as Medicine. Currently all EU students are charged a fee of about €370 per semester for all university studies. A recent OECD report criticized the Austrian education system for the low number of students attending universities and the overall low number of academics compared to other OECD countries.

Demographics

Austria's population estimate in October 2006 was 8,292,322. The population of the capital, Vienna, exceeds 1.6 million (2.2 million with suburbs) , representing about a quarter of the country's population and is known for its vast cultural offerings and high standard of living.

In contrast to the capital, other cities do not exceed 1 million inhabitants: the second largest city Graz is home to 250,099 inhabitants, followed by Linz (188,968), Salzburg (150,000), and Innsbruck (117,346). All other cities have fewer than 100,000 inhabitants.

German-speaking Austrians, by far the country's largest group, form roughly 90% of Austria's population. The Austrian federal states of Carinthia and Styria are home to a significant indigenous Slovenian speaking minority with around 14,000 members (Austrian census; unofficial numbers of Slovene groups speak of up to 50,000). In the east-most Bundesland, Burgenland (formerly part of the Hungarian half of Austria-Hungary) about 20,000 Austrian citizens speak Hungarian and 30,000 speak Croatian. The remaining number of Austria's people are of non-Austrian descent, many from surrounding countries, especially from the former East Bloc nations. So-called guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*) and their descendants, as well as refugees from Yugoslav wars and other conflicts, also form an important minority group in Austria. Since 1994 the Roma- Sinti (gypsies) are an officially recognized ethnic minority in Austria.



A painting by Canaletto of Vienna during the first half of the eighteenth century.

According to census information published by Statistik Austria for the year 2001 there were a total of 710,926 foreign nationals living in Austria. Of these, 124,392 speak German as their mother tongue (presumably immigrants from Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, the Slovenes and also the South Tyrolian part of northern Italy.) The next largest populations of linguistic and ethnic groups are 240,863 foreign nationals from the former Yugoslavia (Serbian being the largest number of these at 135,376, followed by Croatian at 105,487); 123,417 Turkish nationals; 25,155 whose native tongue is English; 24,446 Albanian; 17,899 Polish; 14,699 Hungarian; 12,216 Romanian; 7,982 Arabs; 6,902 Slovenes (not including the autochthonous minority); 6,891 Slovaks; 6,707 Czech; 5,916 Persian; 5,677 Italian; 5,466 Russian; 5,213 French; 4,938 Chinese; 4,264 Spanish; 3,503 Bulgarian. The populations of the rest fall off sharply below 3,000.

The mother tongue of the population by prevalence, is German (88.6%) followed by Turkish (2.3%) , Serbian (2.2%) , Croatian (1.6%) , Hungarian (0.5%) and Bosnian (0.4%).

The official language, German, is spoken by almost all residents of the country. Austria's mountainous terrain led to the development of many distinct German dialects. All of the dialects in the country, however, belong to Austro-Bavarian groups of German dialects, with the exception of the dialect spoken in its western-most Bundesland, Vorarlberg, which belongs to the group of Alemannic dialects. There is also a distinct grammatical standard for Austrian German with a few differences to the German spoken in Germany.

As of 2006, some of the Austrian states introduced standardised tests for new citizens, to assure their language ability, cultural knowledge and accordingly their ability to integrate into the Austrian society.

Politics concerning ethnic groups (*Volksgruppenpolitik*)

An estimated 13,000 to 40,000 Slovenes in the Austrian state of Carinthia (the Carinthian Slovenes) as well as Croats (around 30,000) and Hungarians in Burgenland were recognized as a minority and have enjoyed special rights following the Austrian State Treaty (*Staatsvertrag*) of 1955. The Slovenes in the Austrian state of Styria (estimated at a number between 1,600 and 5,000) are not recognized as a minority and do not enjoy special rights, although the State Treaty of July 27, 1955 states otherwise.

The right for bilingual topographic signs for the regions where Slovene- and Croat-Austrians live alongside the Germanic population (as required by the 1955 State Treaty) is still to be fully implemented. Many Carinthians are afraid of Slovenian territorial claims, pointing to the fact that Yugoslav troops entered the state after each of the two World Wars and considering that some official Slovenian atlases show parts of Carinthia as Slovenian cultural territory. The current governor, Jörg Haider, has made this fact a matter of public argument in autumn 2005 by refusing to increase the number of bilingual topographic signs in Carinthia. A poll by the Kärntner Humaninstitut conducted in January 2006 states that 65% of Carinthians are not in favour of an increase of bilingual topographic signs, since the original requirements set by the State Treaty of 1955 have already been fulfilled according to their point of view. Another interesting phenomenon is the so called "Windischen-Theorie" stating that the Slovenes can be split in two groups: actual Slovenes and *Windische* (a traditional German name for Slavs) , based on differences in language between Austrian Slovenes, who were taught Slovenian standard language in school and those Slovenes who spoke their local Slovenian dialect but went to German schools. The term *Windische* was applied to the latter group as a means of distinction. This theory was never generally accepted and fell out of use some decades ago.

Religion

At the end of the twentieth century, about 74% of Austria's population were registered as Roman Catholic, while about 5% considered themselves Protestants. Both these numbers have been in decline for decades, especially Roman Catholicism, which has suffered an increasing number of seceders from the church. Austrian Catholics are obliged to pay a mandatory tax (calculated by income —about 1%) to the Austrian Roman Catholic Church, which might (have) act(ed) as an incentive to leave the church.

About 12% of the population declare that they have no religion. Of the remaining people, about 180,000 are members of Eastern Orthodox Churches and about 8,100 are Jewish. The Austrian Jewish Community of 1938 – Vienna alone counted more than 200,000 - was reduced to solely 4,000 to 5,000 after the Second World War, with approximately 65,000 Austrian Jews killed in the Holocaust and 130,000 emigrating. A significant proportions of the current Jewish population are post-war immigrants, particularly from eastern Europe and central Asia (including Bukharian Jews). The influx of Eastern Europeans, especially from the former Yugoslav nations, Albania and particularly from Turkey largely contributed to a substantial Muslim minority in Austria — around 340,000 are registered as members of various Muslim communities. Buddhism, which was legally recognized as a religion in Austria in 1983 has a following of 20,000 (10,402 at the 2001 census).

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005,

- **54%** of Austrian citizens responded that *they believe there is a God!*
- **34%** answered that *they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force!*
- **8%** answered that *they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, God, or life force!*

While northern and central Germany was the origin of the Reformation, Austria (and Bavaria) was the heart of the Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the absolute monarchy of Habsburg imposed a strict regime to maintain Catholicism's power and influence among Austrians. The Habsburgs viewed themselves as the vanguard of Roman Catholicism and all other confessions and religions were oppressed. In 1781, Emperor Joseph II issued a Patent of Tolerance that allowed other Christian confessions a limited freedom of worship. Religious freedom was declared a constitutional right in the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* in 1867 thus paying tribute to the fact that the monarchy was home of numerous religions beside Roman Catholicism such as Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Russian, and Bulgarian Orthodox Christians (Austria neighbored the Ottoman empire for centuries), and both Calvinist and Lutheran Protestants.

Austria continued to remain largely influenced by Catholicism. After 1918, First Republic Catholic leaders such as Theodor Innitzer and Ignaz Seipel took leading positions within or close to Austria's government and increased their influence during the time of the Austrofascism —Catholicism was treated much like a state religion by Engelbert Dollfuss and Kurt Schuschnigg. Although Catholic leaders welcomed the Germans in 1938 during the Anschluss of Austria into Germany, Austrian Catholicism stopped its support of Nazism later on and many former religious public figures became involved with the resistance during the Third Reich. After 1945, a stricter secularism was imposed in Austria, and religious influence on politics declined.



Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, also **Charles I of Spain**, Austrian Habsburg ruler and one of the major figures of the Counter-Reformation.

Culture

Music



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791).

Austria's past as a European power and its cultural environment have generated a broad contribution to various forms of art, most notably among them music. Austria has been the birthplace of many famous composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn, Franz Schubert, Anton Bruckner, Johann Strauss, Sr., Johann Strauss, Jr. and Gustav Mahler as well as members of the Second Viennese School such as Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern and Alban Berg.

Vienna has long been especially an important center of musical innovation. Eighteenth and nineteenth century composers were drawn to the city due to the patronage of the Habsburgs, and made Vienna the European capital of classical music. During the Baroque period, Slavic and Hungarian folk forms influenced Austrian music. Vienna's status began its rise as a cultural centre in the early 1500s, and was focused around instruments including the lute. Ludwig van Beethoven spent the better part of his life in Vienna.

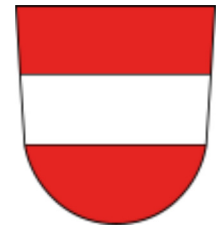
Austria's current national anthem was chosen after World War II to replace the traditional Austrian anthem by Joseph Haydn. The composition, which was initially attributed to Mozart, was most likely not composed by Mozart himself.

Austria has also produced one notable jazz musician, keyboardist Josef Zawinul who helped pioneer electronic influences in jazz as well as being a notable composer in his own right. Falco was an internationally acclaimed pop and rock musician.

Art and architecture

Among Austrian Artists and architects one can find painters Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele and Friedensreich Hundertwasser, photographer Inge Morath or architect Otto Wagner.

Science, philosophy and economics



These are articles of the **List of Austrians** series

Artists and architects
 Monarchs
 Mountaineers
 Music
 Politicians
 Scientists
 Sports
 Writers



The Belvedere Palace, an example of Baroque architecture.



Sigmund Freud in 1938

Austria was the cradle of numerous scientists with international reputations. Among them are Ludwig Boltzmann, Ernst Mach, Victor Franz Hess and Christian Doppler, prominent scientists in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, contributions by Lise Meitner, Erwin Schrödinger and Wolfgang Pauli to nuclear research and quantum mechanics were key to these areas' development during the 1920s and 1930s. A present-day quantum physicist is Anton Zeilinger, noted as the first scientist to demonstrate quantum teleportation.

In addition to physicists, Austria was the birthplace of two of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Karl Popper. In addition to them biologists Gregor Mendel and Konrad Lorenz as well as mathematician Kurt Gödel and engineers such as Ferdinand Porsche and Siegfried Marcus were Austrians.

A focus of Austrian science has always been medicine and psychology, starting in medieval times with Paracelsus. Eminent physicians like Theodore Billroth, Clemens von Pirquet, and Anton von Eiselsberg have built upon the achievements of the 19th century Vienna School of Medicine. Austria was home to psychologists Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Paul Watzlawick and Hans Asperger and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl.

The Austrian School of Economics, which is prominent as one of the main competitive directions for economic theory, is related to Austrian economists Joseph Schumpeter, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, Ludwig von Mises, and Friedrich Hayek.

Other noteworthy Austrian-born émigrés include the management thinker Peter Drucker and the 38th Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Literature

Complementing its status as a land of artists and scientists, Austria has always been a country of poets, writers, and novelists. It was the home of novelists Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, Thomas Bernhard, Franz Kafka, and Robert Musil, of poets Georg Trakl, Franz Werfel, Franz Grillparzer, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Adalbert Stifter, and of writer Karl Kraus.

Famous contemporary playwrights and novelists are Nobel prize winner Elfriede Jelinek and writer Peter Handke.

Cuisine

Austria's cuisine is derived from the cuisine of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In addition to native regional traditions, it has been influenced above all by Hungarian, Czech, Jewish, Italian and Bavarian cuisines, from which both dishes and methods of food preparation have often been borrowed. The Austrian Cuisine is therefore one of the most multi and transcultural cuisines in Europe.

Typical Austrian dishes include Wiener Schnitzel, Schweinsbraten, Kaiserschmarren, Knödel, Sachertorte and Tafelspitz. There are also Kasnockn, a macaroni dish with fresh Pinzgauer cheese and parsley, and Eierschwammerl (chanterelle) dishes. The Eierschwammerl are the native yellow, tan mushrooms. These mushrooms are delicious, especially when in a thick Austrian soup, or on regular meals.

The candy PEZ was invented in Austria. Austria is also famous for its Apfelstrudel.

Sports

The most popular sport in Austria is alpine skiing and Austria shows constant dominance in the Nations-Cup. Similar sports such as snowboarding or ski-jumping are also widely popular. The most popular team sport in Austria is football. However, Austria rarely has international success in this discipline, though the 2008 UEFA European Football Championship is jointly being held with Switzerland. Besides football, Austria also has professional national leagues for most major team sports including ice hockey and basketball. Bobsleigh, luge, and skeleton are also popular events with a permanent track located in Igls, which hosted bobsleigh and luge competitions for the 1964 and 1976 Winter Olympics held in Innsbruck.

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Skiing slopes at Sankt Anton
am Arlberg

Azerbaijan

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

SOS Children works in Azerbaijan. For more information see SOS Children in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan (IPA: /æzəˈbɑːˈdʒɑːn/ (UK), /əzə-ˈbɑːˈdʒɑːn/ (US); Azerbaijani: *Azərbaycan*), officially the **Republic of Azerbaijan** (Azerbaijani: *Azərbaycan Respublikası*), is the largest and most populous country in the South Caucasus region of Eurasia. Located at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, it is bounded by the Caspian Sea to the east, Russia to the north, Georgia to the west and northwest, Armenia to the southwest, and Iran to the south. The Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan is bordered by Armenia to the north and east, Iran to the south and Turkey to the west and southwest. Nagorno-Karabakh, along with 7 other districts in Azerbaijan's southwest, have been occupied by Armenia since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 1994. Four United Nations Security Council Resolutions (822, 853, 874, and 884) called for "the withdrawal of occupying forces from occupied areas of the Azerbaijani Republic" The country's territory also encompasses several islands in the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan, a nation with an ethnic Azeri and Shi'ite Muslim majority population, is a secular and unitary republic. The country has been a co-founder of GUAM and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and has been a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States since September 1993. The country has a Permanent Mission to the European Union, hosts a Special Envoy of the European Commission and is a member of the United Nations, OSCE, Council of Europe, and the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program.

Etymology of the name

The name of Azerbaijan derives from *Atropates*, a satrap of Persia under the Achaemenid empire, who was later reinstated as the satrap of Media under Alexander of Macedonia. The original etymology of this name is thought to have its roots in the ancient Zoroastrianism, namely, in Avestan Frawardin Yasht ("Hymn to the Guardian Angels"), there is a mentioning of: *âterepâtahe ashaonô fravashîm ýazamaide*, which literally translates from Old Persian as *We worship the Fravashi of the holy Atare-pata*". Atropates ruled over the region of present-day Iranian Azerbaijan. The name "Atropates" itself is derived from Old Persian roots meaning "protected by fire."

<i>Azərbaycan Respublikası</i> Republic of Azerbaijan	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: none	
Anthem: <i>Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dövlət Himni</i> (March of Azerbaijan)	
	
Capital (and largest city)	Baku
Official languages	Azerbaijani
Demonym	Azerbaijani

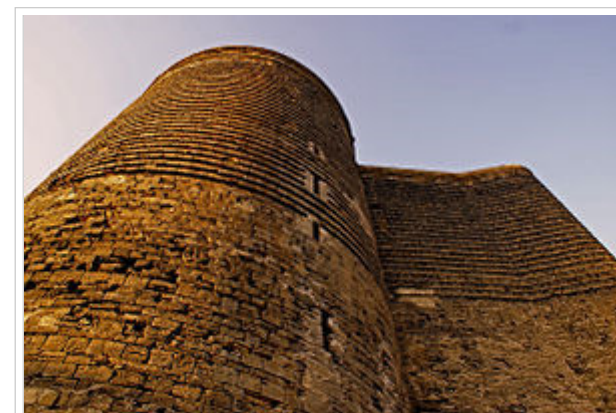
History

The earliest evidence of human settlement in the territory of Azerbaijan dates to the late Stone Age and is related to the Quruçay culture of Azykh Cave. The Upper Paleolithic and late Bronze Age cultures are attested in the caves of Tağlar, Damcili, Zar, Yataq-yer and in the necropolises of Leylatepe and Sarytepe. The area was conquered by the Achaemenids around 550 B.C., leading to the spread of Zoroastrianism, while later become part of the Alexander the Great's empire, and its successor Seleucid Kingdom. Caucasian Albanians, the original inhabitants of the area established an independent kingdom around 4th century B.C but circa 95-67 B.C. parts of it were subjugated by Tigranes the Great. As the Romans and Parthians began to expand their domains in the area around Caucasus, Albania, unlike Iberia and Armenia, managed to remain independent and in addition signed a peace treaty with Roman Republic as Strabo attested.

Government	Presidential republic
- President	Ilham Aliyev
- Prime Minister	Artur Rasizade
Independence	from the Soviet Union
- Declared	August 30, 1991
- Completed	October 18, 1991
Area	
- Total	86,600 km ² (113th) 33,436 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6%
Population	
- April 2008 estimate	8,653,000 (91st)
- 2002 census	8,265,000
- Density	97/km ² (100th) 251/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$52.35 billion (77th)
- Per capita	\$6.476 (96th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$31.32 billion (77th)
- Per capita	\$3,633 (88th)
Gini (2006)	36.5 (58th)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.746 (medium) (98th)
Currency	Manat (AZN)
Time zone	(UTC+4)
- Summer (DST)	(UTC+5)
Internet TLD	.az
Calling code	+994

In 252 A.D. the Sassanids turned it into a vassal state while King Umayr officially adopted Christianity as the state religion in the 4th century A.D. Despite numerous conquests by the Sassanids and Byzantines, Caucasian Albania remained an entity in the region until the 9th century A.D. The territory of modern Azerbaijan roughly corresponds to that of the ancient kingdom. The Islamic Umayyad Caliphate repulsed both Sassanids and the Byzantines from the region and turned Caucasian Albania to a vassal state after the Christian resistance, led by Prince Javanshir, was suppressed in 667 A.D. The power vacuum left by the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate was filled by numerous dynasties such as the Salarids, Sajids, Shaddadids, Rawadids and Buyids. At the beginning of the 11th century, the territory was gradually seized by waves of Turkic Oghuz tribes from Central Asia. The first of these Turkic dynasties were the Ghaznavids, who took over the area now known as Azerbaijan by 1030.

Locally, the possessions of the subsequent Seljuk Empire were ruled by atabegs, who were technically vassals of the Seljuk sultans, being sometimes de facto rulers themselves. Under the Seljuk Turks, local poets such as Nizami Ganjavi and Khagani Shirvani gave rise to a blossoming of Persian literature on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan. The next ruling state of the Jalayirids was short-lived and fell under the conquests of Tamerlan. The local dynasty of Shirvanshahs became a vassal state of Tamerlan's empire and assisted him in his war with the ruler of the Golden Horde Tokhtamysh. Following Tamerlan's death two independent and rival states emerged: Kara Koyunlu and Ak Koyunlu. The Shirvanshahs returned, maintaining a high degree of autonomy as local rulers and vassals from 861 until 1539. During their persecution by the Safavids, the last dynasty imposed Shia Islam upon the formerly Sunni population, as it was battling against the Sunni Ottoman Empire. After Safavids the area was ruled by the Iranian dynasties of Afshar and Zand and briefly by Qajars. However, while nominally under Persian rule de facto independent khanates emerged in the area, especially following collapse of Zand dynasty and in early Qajar era. Engaged in constant warfare, these khanates were eventually incorporated to the Russian Empire, following two Russo-Persian Wars. Under the Treaty of Turkmenchay the Persian Empire recognized Russian sovereignty over the Erivan khanate, the Nakhchivan khanate and the remainder of the Talysh khanate.



The Maiden Tower, XI-XII centuries, in old Baku

After the collapse of the Russian Empire during World War I, Azerbaijan, together with Armenia and Georgia became part of the short-lived Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. When the republic dissolved in May 1918, Azerbaijan declared independence as the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR). The ADR was the first democratic parliamentary republic in the Muslim world, but lasted only 23 months until the Bolshevik XIth Red Army invaded it in April 1920, establishing the Azerbaijan SSR on April 28, 1920. In 1922, Azerbaijan became part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (TSFSR), which itself became a constituent member of the newly-established Soviet Union. In 1936, TSFSR was dissolved and Azerbaijan SSR became one of the constituent member states of the Soviet Union. During WW2, Azerbaijan supplied much of the Soviet Union's oil on the Eastern Front of World War II while Close to 600,000 Azerbaijanis fought against Nazi Germany. Operation Edelweiss carried by wermacht targeted Baku because of its importance as the energy dynamo of USSR..

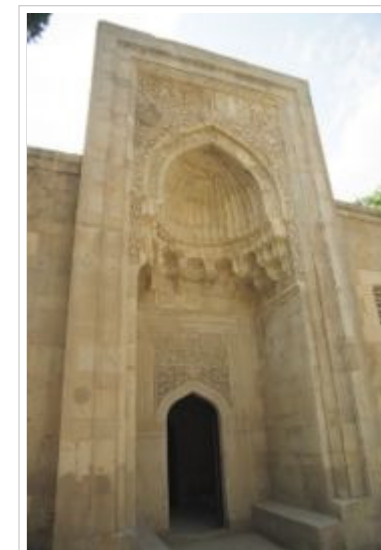
Following the politics of *glasnost*, initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev, civil unrest and ethnic strife grew in various regions of the Soviet Union, including Nagorno-Karabakh, a region of the Azerbaijan SSR. The disturbances in Azerbaijan, in response to Moscow's indifference to already heated conflict, resulted in calls for independence and secession, which subsequently culminated in the events of Black January in Baku. At this time, Ayaz Mutallibov was appointed as the First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. Later in 1990, the Supreme Council of the Azerbaijan SSR dropped the words "Soviet Socialist" from the title; adopted the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Azerbaijan Republic and restored the modified flag of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic as a state flag. On September 8, 1991, Ayaz Mutallibov was elected as president in nationwide elections in which he was the only candidate running.

On October 18, 1991, Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted a Declaration of Independence which was affirmed by a nationwide referendum in December, 1991, when the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. The early years of independence were overshadowed by the Nagorno-Karabakh War with neighboring Armenia. By the end of hostilities in 1994, Azerbaijan lost control of up to 16% of its territory, including Nagorno-Karabakh itself. In 1993, democratically elected president Abulfaz Elchibey was overthrown by a military insurrection led by Colonel Suret Huseynov, which resulted in the rise to power of the former leader of Soviet Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev. In 1994, Suret Huseynov, by that time a prime minister, attempted another military coup against Heydar Aliyev but HE was arrested and charged with treason. In 1995, another coup attempt against Aliyev, by the commander of the military police, Rovshan Javadov, was averted, resulting in the killing of the latter and disbanding of Azerbaijan's military police.

Although during his presidency, Aliyev managed to reduce the country's unemployment, reined in criminal groups, established the fundamental institutions of independent statehood, and brought stability, peace and major foreign investment, the country was tainted by rampant corruption in the governing bureaucracy. In October 1998, Aliyev was reelected for a second term. Despite the much improved economy, particularly with the exploitations of Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oil field and Shah Deniz gas field, Aliyev's presidency became unpopular due to vote fraud, wide-spread corruption and objection to his autocratic regime. The same harsh criticism followed the elections of former Prime Minister Ilham Aliyev, the second leader of New Azerbaijan Party after the death of his father Heydar.

Geography

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Mausoleum of Shirvanshahs in old Baku.

The total length of Azerbaijani land borders is 2,648 km, of which Armenia constitutes 1007, Iran 756, Georgia 480, Russia - 390 and Turkey - 15. The coastline stretches for 800 km and the length of the widest area of the Azerbaijani section of Caspian Sea is 456 km. The territory of Azerbaijan extends 400 km from north to south, and 500 km from west to east. The three mountain ranges are the Greater and Lesser Caucasus, and the Talysh Mountains, together covering approximately 40% of the country. The highest peak of Azerbaijan is mount Bazardüzü (4,466 m), while the lowest point lies in the Caspian Sea (-28 m). Nearly half of all the mud volcanoes on Earth are concentrated in Azerbaijan.

The main water sources are the surface waters. However, only 24 of the 8,350 rivers are greater than 100 km in length. All the rivers drain into the Caspian Sea in the east of the country. The largest lake is Sarisu (67 km²) and the longest river is Kur (1,515 km), which is transboundary. Azerbaijan's four main islands in the Caspian Sea have a combined area of over thirty square kilometers.

Climate

The formation of climate in Azerbaijan is influenced particularly by cold arctic air masses of Scandinavian anticyclone, temperate of Siberian anticyclone, and Central Asian anticyclone. Regarding landscape diversity, air masses have different ways to enter the country. The Greater Caucasus protects the country from direct influences of cold air masses, coming from the north. That leads to the formation of subtropical climate on most foothills and plains of the country. Meanwhile plains and foothills are characterized by high solar radiation rates.

Nine out of eleven existing climate zones are present in Azerbaijan. Both the absolute minimum temperature (-33 °C (-27.4 °F)) and the absolute maximum temperature (+46 °C (114.8 °F)) were observed in Julfa and Ordubad. The maximum annual precipitation falls in Lankaran (1,600 to 1,800 mm) and the minimum in Absheron (200 to 350 mm).

Nature and ecology



The Map of Azerbaijan.

From the water supply point, Azerbaijan is below the average in the world with approximately 100,000 m³/year of water per km². All big water reservoirs are built on Kur.

The main areas of plant diversity in Azerbaijan are the highlands of Nakhchivan (60% of the species occur here), the Kura-Araz plain (40%), the Davachi- Quba region east of the Greater Caucasus (38%), the centre of the Lesser Caucasus (29%), Gobustan (26.6%), the Lenkoran region in the Talysh Mountains (27%) and the Absheron region (22%). Northern-eastern slopes of the Great Caucasus, the northern, northern-eastern, and eastern slopes of the Lesser Caucasus and Talysh Mountains are deemed to be vast forest areas of Azerbaijan.

Endemics include over 400 species of plants (of which around 16 species of Caspian algae), seven reptiles and perches from fifteen species and six sub-species of *Gobiidae*. Most of the endemic freshwater fish belongs to *Cypriniformes*. However there are no strictly endemic mammals. The major cause of biodiversity loss in Azerbaijan is the decrease in natural environments.

Administrative divisions

Azerbaijan is divided into 59 rayons (*rayonlar*, singular *rayon*), 11 city districts (*şəhərlər*, singular *şəhər*), and one autonomous republic (*muxtar respublika*) of Nakhchivan, which subdivides into 7 rayons and a city. The President of Azerbaijan appoints the governors of these units, while the government of Nakhchivan is elected and approved by the parliament of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The local governments of regions and cities under Armenian occupation, such as Khankendi or Shusha, continue to function in exile.

Government and politics



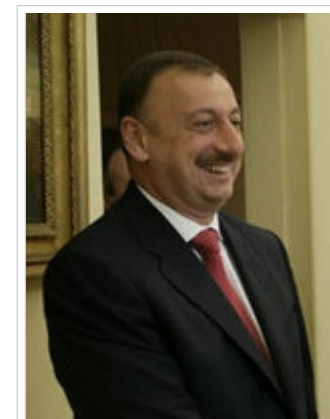
A lake in Qabala district of Azerbaijan



Baku at night.

The structural formation of Azerbaijan's political system was completed by the acceptance of the new Constitution on November 12, 1995. The state symbols of the Azerbaijan Republic are, according to the Article 23 of Constitution, the flag, the coat of arms and the national anthem. The state power in Azerbaijan is limited only by law for internal issues, but for international affairs is additionally limited by the provisions of international agreements.

The government of Azerbaijan is based on the separation of powers among the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The legislative power is held by the unicameral National Assembly and the Supreme National Assembly in the Nakhchevan Autonomous Republic. Parliamentary elections are held every five years, on the first Sunday of November. The accuracy of the election results are checked and confirmed by the Constitutional Court. The laws enacted by the National Assembly, unless specified otherwise come into effect from the day of their publication. The executive power is carried out by the president, who is elected for a 5 year term by direct elections. The president is authorized to form the Cabinet of Ministers, an inferior executive body, subordinated to him. The Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan consists primarily of the Prime Minister, his Deputies and Ministers. The president does not have the right to dissolve the National Assembly, but has the right to veto its decisions. To override the presidential veto, the parliament must have a majority of 95 votes. The judicial power is vested in the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and the Economic Court. The President nominates the judges in these courts.



Ilham Aliyev, the current president of Azerbaijan.

The Security Council is the deliberative body under the president and he organizes it according to the Constitution. It was established on April 10, 1997. The administrative department is not a part of the president's office, but manages the financial, technical and pecuniary ensuring of activity of both the president and his office.

Foreign relations

The short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic succeeded in establishing diplomatic relations with six countries, sending diplomatic representatives to Germany and Finland. The process of international recognition of Azerbaijan's independence from the collapsing Soviet Union lasted roughly one year. The last country, Bahrain recognized Azerbaijan on November 6, 1996. Full diplomatic relations, including mutual exchanges of missions, were first established with Turkey, Pakistan, the United States and Iran.

Azerbaijan has diplomatic relations with 158 countries so far and holds membership in 38 international organizations. It holds observer status in the Non-Aligned Movement and World Trade Organization and is a correspondent at the International Telecommunication Union. The Azerbaijani diaspora is represented in 36 countries, dozens of ethnic minorities centers in turn are functioning inside the country (German cultural society "Karelhaus", Slavic cultural centre, Azerbaijani-Israeli community, Kurdish cultural centre, International Talysh Association, Lezgin national centre "Samur", Azerbaijani- Tatar community, Crimean Tatars society etc.). On May 9, 2006 Azerbaijan was elected as one the members of the newly established Human Rights Council by the United Nations General Assembly. The term of office begun on June 19, 2006.

Foreign policy priorities of Azerbaijan include: first of all, the restoration of its territorial integrity, elimination of the consequences of the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven other regions of Azerbaijan , development of good-neighbourly and mutually advantageous relations with neighbouring countries;

promotion of security and stability in the region; integration into European and Transatlantic security and cooperation structures, promotion of transregional economic, energy and transportation projects. (For more information about Azerbaijan's official foreign policy, see) The Azeri Government, in late 2007, stated that if a comprehensive peace treaty is not signed with Armenia in 2008, then Azerbaijan will adopt military solutions to the conflict involving the Karabakh enclave. The Government is in the process of increasing its military budget as its oil and gas revenues bring a torrent of cash into its coffers. Furthermore, economic sanctions by Turkey along the west, and by Azerbaijan itself along the east, have combined to greatly erode Armenia's economy, leading to steep prices for basic commodities and a great decline in the Armenian state revenues.

Azerbaijan is an active member of international coalitions fighting international terrorism. The country is contributing to peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. Azerbaijan is an active member of NATO's "Partnership for Peace" program. It also maintains good relations with the European Union, and could potentially one day apply for membership. *see Azerbaijan and the European Union.*

Military

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan were created according to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan of 9 October 1991. Initially, the equipment and facilities were those of the Soviet Fourth Army. The Armed Forces have three branches: Land Forces, Air Force and Air Defence Force (a united branch) and the Navy. Besides the Armed Forces there are some additional militarily organised groups that can be involved in state defence when needed. These are the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and forces of the State Border Service, which includes the Coast Guard as well.

Azerbaijan adheres to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. On January 13, 1993 Azerbaijan signed the Chemical Weapons Convention on the 47th United Nations General Assembly in Paris. In 1999 the country signed particularly the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Azerbaijan has been also a member of the NATO's Partnership for Peace since 1994 and the NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan since 2004. Azerbaijan is also a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has an additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The armed forces supported the American Operation Enduring Freedom by providing one peacekeeping infantry platoon and Operation Iraqi Freedom with one peacekeeping infantry company. 2007 military expenditures reached 871 mln USD.



Azerbaijani interior guard troops on training.

Economy

After gaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan became a member of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Islamic Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The banking system of Azerbaijan consists of the National Bank of Azerbaijan, commercial banks and non-banking credit organizations. The National Bank was created in 1992 based on the Azerbaijan State Savings Bank, an affiliate of the former State Savings Bank of the USSR. The National Bank serves as Azerbaijan's central bank, empowered to issue the national currency, the Azerbaijani manat, and to supervise all commercial banks. Two major commercial banks are the state-owned International Bank of Azerbaijan and the United Universal Joint-Stock Bank.

Pushed up by spending and demand growth, the 2007 Q1 inflation rate reached 16.6%. Nominal incomes and monthly wages climbed 29% and 25% respectively against this figure, but price increases in non-oil industry encouraged inflation in the country. Azerbaijan shows some signs of the so-called "Dutch disease" because of the fast growing energy sector, which causes inflation.

Two thirds of Azerbaijan is rich in oil and natural gas. The region of the Lesser Caucasus accounts for most of the country's gold, silver, iron, copper, titanium, chromium, manganese, cobalt, molybdenum, complex ore and antimony. In September 1994, a 30-year contract was signed between the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and 13 oil companies, among them Amoco, BP, Exxon, LUKoil, and Statoil. As Western oil companies are able to tap deepwater oilfields untouched by the Soviet exploitation, Azerbaijan is considered one of the most important spots in the world for oil exploration and development. Meanwhile the State Oil Fund was established as an extra-budgetary fund to ensure the macroeconomic stability, transparency in the management of oil revenue, and the safeguarding of resources for future generations.

At the beginning of 2007 there were 4,755,100 hectares of utilized agricultural area. In the same year the total wood resources counted 136 million m³. Azerbaijan's agricultural scientific research institutes are focused on the meadows and pastures, the horticulture and subtropical crops, the green vegetables, the viticulture and wine-making, the cotton growing and the medicinal plants. In some lands it is profitable to grow grain, potatoes, sugar beet, cotton and tobacco. The Caspian fishing industry is concentrated on the dwindling stocks of sturgeon and beluga. In 2002 the Azerbaijani merchant marine had 54 ships.

Some part of most products before imported from abroad has begun to be produced locally (among them are Coca Cola by Coca Cola Bottlers LTD, beer by Baki-Kastel, parquet by Nehir and oil pipes by EUPEC Pipe Coating Azerbaijan).

Azerbaijan is also an important economic hub in terms of the raw materials transportation. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) became operational in May 2006 and stretches over 1,774 kilometers through the territory of Azerbaijan (440 km), Georgia (260 km) and Turkey (1114 km). The BTC is designed to transport up to 50 million tons of crude oil annually and carries oil from the Caspian Sea oilfields to global markets. The South Caucasus Pipeline, also stretching through the territory of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, became operational in the end of 2006 and offers additional gas supply to European market from the Shah Deniz gas field. It is expected to produce up to 296 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year. Azerbaijan also plays a major role in the EU-sponsored Silk Road Project.

Transportation and communications

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The National Bank.

In 2002 Azerbaijan led the way in per capita mobile phone use within the CIS. Public pay phones are available for local calls and require a purchase token from the telephone exchange or some shops and kiosks. Tokens allow a call of indefinite duration. As of 2005, there were 1,091,400 main telephone lines and 408,000 internet users. There are two GSM mobile network operators and four CDMA.

Broad gauge railways in 2005 stretched for 2,957 km and electrified railways numbered 1,278 km. The number of airports in 2006 reached thirty six, there was also one heliport.

Demographics

From the total population as of April, 2006 there were 4,380,000 (nearly 51%) city dwellers and a rural population of 4,060,000 (49%). 51% of the total population were female. The gender ratio for total population in that year was therefore 0.94 males per female.

2006 population growth rate was 0.66%, compared to 1.14% worldwide. A significant factor restricting the population growth is rather a high level of migration. In 2005 for instance 1,342 men and 1,564 women left the country due to labour migration. In 2006 Azerbaijan saw migration of -4.38/1,000 persons. The highest morbidity in 2005 was among respiratory diseases (806.9 diseases per 10,000 of total population). The highest 2005 morbidity for infectious and parasitic diseases was noted among influenza and acute respiratory infections (4168,2 per 100,000 population). 2007 estimate for total life expectancy is 66 years, 70.7 years for women and 61.9 for men.

Language

Azerbaijan		
Azerbaijani		92.5%
Russian		3.5%
Lezgin		1.9%
Talysh		1.8%
Other		0.3%

Azerbaijani is a Turkic language which belongs to the Altaic family, and is mutually intelligible with Turkish.

Religion

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A man and his child from the village of Khinalyg in northeast Azerbaijan.

According to official figures, between 93.4% and 96% of the population is Muslim, of which 85% are Shia and 15% Sunni. Christians compose of 3 to 4% of the population, of which most are Russian and Armenian Orthodox. In 2003 there were 250 Roman Catholics. Other Christian denominations as of 2002 include Lutherans, Baptists and Molokans. There are also Jewish, Bahá'í, Hare Krishna and Jehovah's Witnesses communities, as well as adherents of the Nehemiah Church, Star in the East Church and the Cathedral of Praise Church.

Azerbaijan in 2002		
Islam		96%
Orthodox Christianity		3.2%
Judaism		0.24%
Protestantism		0.006%
Catholicism		0.002%
Other		0.55%



Shakh Abbas Mosque in Ganja

Culture

Azerbaijan folk consists of Azerbaijanis, the representative part of society, as well as of nations and ethnic groups, compactly living in various areas of the country. There are radio broadcasts in Kurdish, Lezgin, Talysh, Georgian, Russian and Armenian languages, which are financed from the state budget. The local radio station in Balakan organizes broadcasts in the Avar language and in Khachmaz also in Tat. In Baku several newspapers are published in Russian, Kurdish (*Dengi Kurd*), Lezgin (*Samur*) and Talysh languages. Jewish society "Sokhnut" publishes the newspaper *Aziz*.

Among national musical instruments there are fourteen string instruments, eight percussion instruments and six wind instruments.

Azerbaijan national and traditional dress, are the Chokha and Papakhi.

Azerbaijan made its debut appearance at the Eurovision Song Contest 2008, and placed 8th among 43 contestants.

Entries, submitted on the UNESCO World Heritage tentative list include the Gobustan State Reserve, the Fire Temple of Baku, the Momine Khatun Mausoleum and the Khan Palace in Sheki.



Traditional Azeri musicians

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Belarus

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

SOS Children works in Belarus. For more information see SOS Children in Belarus




Belarus (IPA: /ˈbɛləruːs/) (Belarusian and Russian: Беларусь, transliteration: *Byelarus'*, Polish: *Białoruś* listen[ⓘ], Lithuanian: *Baltarusija*) is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe, that borders Russia to the north and east, Ukraine to the south, Poland to the west, and Lithuania and Latvia to the north. Its capital is Minsk; other major cities include Brest, Grodno, Gomel, Mogilev and Vitebsk. A third of the country is forested, and its strongest economic sectors are agriculture and manufacturing.

Until the 20th century, the Belarusians lacked the opportunity to create a distinctive national identity, since the lands of modern-day Belarus belonged to several countries, including the Duchy of Polatsk, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Russian Empire. After the short-lived Belarusian People's Republic (1918–19), Belarus became a constituent republic of the Soviet Union, the Byelorussian SSR.

The final unification of Belarusian lands within its modern borders took place in 1939, when the ethnically Belarusian lands that were part of interwar Poland were annexed by the USSR and attached to the Soviet Belarus. The territory and its nation were devastated in World War II, during which Belarus lost about a third of its population and more than half of its economic resources; the republic recovered in the post-war years. The parliament of the republic declared the sovereignty of Belarus on July 27, 1990, and following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus declared independence on August 25, 1991. Alexander Lukashenko has been the country's president since 1994. During his presidency, Lukashenko has implemented Soviet-era policies, such as state ownership of the economy, despite objections from Western governments. Since 1996, Belarus has been negotiating with Russia to unify into a single state called the Union of Russia and Belarus.

Most of Belarus's population of 9.85 million reside in the urban areas surrounding Minsk and other oblast (regional) capitals. More than 80% of the population are native Belarusians, with sizable minorities of Russians, Ukrainians and Poles. Since a referendum in 1995, the country has had two official languages: Belarusian and Russian. The Constitution of Belarus does not declare an official religion, although the primary religion in the country is Russian Orthodox.

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<p>Рэспубліка Беларусь Республика Беларусь Republic of Belarus</p>	
	
Flag	National emblem
<p>Anthem: Мы, беларусы (Belarusian) <i>My, Belarusy</i> (transliteration) <i>We Belarusians</i></p>	
	
<p>Location of Belarus (orange) on the European continent (white) — [Legend]</p>	

Etymology

The name *Belarus* derives from the term *White Russia*, which first appeared in German and Latin medieval literature. The Latin term for the area was *Russia Alba*. Historically, the country was referred to in English as *White Russia*. It is also claimed by some people that the correct translation is *White Ruthenia* (*White Rus* phonetically), which either describes the area of Eastern Europe populated by Slavic people or the states that occupied the area. The first known use of *White Russia* to refer to Belarus was in the late-16th century by Englishman Sir Jerome Horsey. During the 17th century, Russian tsars used *White Rus'*, asserting that they were trying to recapture their heritage from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Belarus was named *Belorussia* (Russian: Белоруссия) in the days of Imperial Russia, and the Russian tsar was usually styled *Tsar of All the Russias— Great, Little, and White*. *Belorussia* was the only Russian language name of the country (its names in other languages such as English being based on the Russian form) until 1991, when the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic decreed by law that the new independent republic should be called *Belarus* (Беларусь) in Russian and in all other language transcriptions of its name. The change was made to reflect adequately the Belarusian language form of the name. Accordingly, the name *Belorussia* was replaced by *Belarus* in English, and, to some extent, in Russian (although the traditional name still persists in that language as well); likewise, the adjective *Belorussian* or *Byelorussian* was replaced by *Belarusian* in English (though Russian has not developed a new adjective). Some Belarusians object to the name *Belorussia* as an unwelcome reminder of the days under Russian and Soviet rule. However, most residents of the country do not mind the use of *Byelorussiya* in Russian (which is, actually, the most widely spoken language there) – as evidenced by the fact that several popular newspapers published locally still retain the traditional name of the country in Russian in their names, for example *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Byelorussii*, which is the localised publication of a popular Russian tabloid, and *Sovetskaya Byelorussiya*. Officially, the full name of the country is *Republic of Belarus* (Рэспубліка Беларусь, Республика Беларусь, Respublika Byelarus').

History

Capital (and largest city)	Minsk
Official languages	Belarusian, Russian
Demonym	Belarusian, Belarussian
Government - President - Prime Minister	Presidential republic Alexander Lukashenko Sergey Sidorsky
Independence - Declared - Established - Completed	from the Soviet Union July 27, 1990 August 25, 1991 December 25, 1991
Area - Total - Water (%)	207,600 km ² (85th) 80,155 sq mi negligible (2.830 km ²) ¹
Population - 2008 estimate - 1999 census - Density	9,689,800 (86th) 10,045,200 49/km ² (142nd) 127/sq mi
GDP (PPP) - Total - Per capita	2008 estimate \$115,027 billion (58th) \$11,991 (65th)
Gini (2002)	29.7 (low)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.804 (high) (64th)
Currency	rouble (BYR)
Time zone - Summer (DST)	EET (UTC+2) EEST (UTC+3)



The Mir Castle near Minsk, built in the 15th century



Map of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1619

The region that is now modern-day Belarus was first settled by Slavic tribes in the 6th century. They gradually came into contact with the Varangians, a band of warriors consisting of Scandinavians and Slavs from the Baltics. Though defeated and briefly exiled by the local population, the Varangians were later asked to return and helped to form a polity—commonly referred to as the Kievan Rus'—in exchange for tribute. The Kievan Rus' state began in about 862 at the present-day city of Novgorod.

Upon the death of Kievan Rus' ruler, Prince Yaroslav the Wise, the state split into independent principalities. These Ruthenian principalities were badly affected by a Mongol invasion in the 13th century, and many were later incorporated into the Grand Duchy of

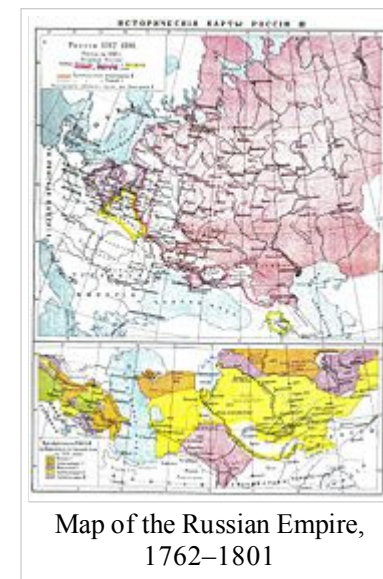
Lithuania. Of the principalities held by the Duchy, nine were settled by ancestors of the Belarusian people. During this time, the Duchy was involved in several military campaigns, including fighting on the side of Poland against the Teutonic Knights at the Battle of Grunwald in 1410; the joint victory allowed the Duchy to control the northwestern border lands of Eastern Europe.

On February 2, 1386, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland were joined in a personal union through a marriage of their rulers. This union set in motion the developments that eventually resulted in the formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, created in 1569. The Russians, led by Tsar Ivan the III, began military conquests in 1486 in an attempt to gain the Kievan Rus' lands, specifically Belarus and Ukraine. The union between Poland and Lithuania ended in 1795, and the commonwealth was partitioned by Imperial Russia, Prussia, and Austria, dividing Belarus. Belarusian territories were acquired by the Russian Empire during the reign of Catherine II and held until their occupation by Germany during World War I.

Internet TLD	.by
Calling code	+375
<p>¹ "FAO's Information System on Water and Agriculture". FAO. Retrieved on 2008- 04-04.</p>	

During the negotiations of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Belarus first declared independence on 25 March 1918, forming the Belarusian People's Republic. The Germans supported the BPR, which lasted for about 10 months. Soon after the Germans were defeated, the BPR fell under the influence of the Bolsheviks and the Red Army and became the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1919. After Russian occupation of eastern and northern Lithuania, it was merged into the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. Byelorussian lands were then split between Poland and the Soviets after the Polish-Soviet War ended in 1921, and the recreated Byelorussian SSR became a founding member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922.

In September 1939, as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union invaded Poland and annexed its eastern lands, including most Polish-held Byelorussian land. Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. Byelorussia was the hardest hit Soviet Republic in the war and remained in Nazi hands until 1944. During that time, Germany destroyed 209 out of 290 cities in the republic, 85% of the republic's industry, and more than one million buildings, while causing human losses estimated between two and three million (about a quarter to one-third of the total population). The Jewish population of Byelorussia was devastated during The Holocaust and never recovered. The population of Belarus did not regain its pre-war level until 1971. After the war ended, Byelorussia was among the 51 founding countries of the United Nations Charter in 1945 and began rebuilding the Soviet Republic. During this time, the Byelorussian SSR became a major centre of manufacturing in the western region of the USSR, increasing jobs and bringing an influx of ethnic Russians into the republic. The borders of Byelorussian SSR and Poland were redrawn to a point known as the Curzon Line.



Map of the Russian Empire,
1762–1801



Map of the Byelorussian SSR,
1940

Joseph Stalin implemented a policy of Sovietization to isolate the Byelorussian SSR from Western influences. This policy involved sending Russians from various parts of the Soviet Union and placing them in key positions in the Byelorussian SSR government. The official use of the Belarusian language and other cultural aspects were limited by Moscow. After Stalin died in 1953, successor Nikita Khrushchev continued this program, stating, "The sooner we all start speaking Russian, the faster we shall build communism". When Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev began pushing through his reform plan, the Belarusian people delivered a petition to him in December 1986 explaining the loss of their culture. Earlier that year, Byelorussian SSR was exposed to nuclear fallout from the explosion at the Chernobyl power plant in neighboring Ukrainian SSR. In June 1988 at the rural site of Kurapaty near Minsk, archaeologist Zianon Pazniak, the leader of Christian Conservative Party of the BPF, discovered mass graves which contained about 250,000 bodies of victims executed in 1937-1941. Some nationalists contend that this discovery is proof that the Soviet government was trying to erase the Belarusian people, causing Belarusian nationalists to seek independence.

Two years later, in March 1990, elections for seats in the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR took place. Though the pro-independence Belarusian Popular Front took only 10% of the seats, the populace was content with the selection of the delegates. Belarus declared itself sovereign on July 27, 1990, by issuing the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. With the support of the Communist Party, the country's name was changed to the Republic of Belarus on August 25, 1991. Stanislav Shushkevich, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus, met with Boris Yeltsin of Russia and Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine on December 8, 1991 in Belavezhszkaya Pushcha to formally declare the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. A national constitution was adopted in March 1994, in which the functions of prime minister were given to the president.

Two-round elections for the presidency (24 June 1994 and 10 July 1994) resulted in the politically unknown Alexander Lukashenko winning more than 45 % of the vote in the first round and 80 % in the second round, beating Vyacheslav Kebich who got 14 %. Lukashenko was reelected in 2001 and in 2006.

Politics



Victory Square, Minsk

Belarus is a presidential republic, governed by a president and the National Assembly. In accordance with the constitution, the president is elected once in five years. The National Assembly is a bicameral parliament comprising the 110-member House of Representatives (the lower house) and the 64-member Council of the Republic (the upper house). The House of Representatives has the power to appoint the prime minister, make constitutional amendments, call for a vote of confidence on the prime minister, and make suggestions on foreign and domestic policy. The Council of the Republic has the power to select various government officials, conduct an impeachment trial of the president, and accept or reject the bills passed by the House of Representatives. Each chamber has the ability to veto any law passed by local officials if it is contrary to the Constitution of Belarus. Since 1994, Alexander Lukashenko has been the president of Belarus. The government includes a Council of Ministers, headed by the prime minister. The members of this council need not be members of the legislature and are appointed by the president. The judiciary comprises the Supreme Court and specialized courts such as the Constitutional Court, which deals with specific issues related to constitutional and business law. The judges of national courts are appointed

by the president and confirmed by the Council of the Republic. For criminal cases, the highest court of appeal is the Supreme Court. The Belarusian Constitution forbids the use of special extra-judicial courts.



A banner displayed by Belarusian students near Warsaw University showing support for Belarusian independence

As of 2007, 98 of the 110 members of the House of Representatives are not affiliated with any political party and of the remaining twelve members, eight belong to the Communist Party of Belarus, three to the Agrarian Party of Belarus, and one to the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus. Most of the non-partisans represent a wide scope of social organizations such as workers' collectives, public associations and civil society organizations. Neither the pro-Lukashenko parties, such as the Belarusian Socialist Sporting Party and the Republican Party of Labor and Justice, nor the People's Coalition 5 Plus opposition parties, such as the Belarusian People's Front and the United Civil Party of Belarus, won any seats in the 2004 elections. Groups such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) declared the election "un-free" because of the opposition parties' poor results and media bias in favour of the government. In the country's 2006 presidential election, Lukashenko was opposed by Alaksandar Milinkievič, a candidate representing a coalition of opposition parties, and by Alaksandar Kazulin of the Social Democrats. Kazulin was detained and beaten by police during protests surrounding the All Belarusian People's Assembly. Lukashenko won the election with 80% of the vote, but the OSCE and other organizations called the election unfair.



House of Government in Minsk, with a statue to Vladimir Lenin in the foreground

Lukashenko has described himself as having an "authoritarian ruling style". Western countries have described Belarus under Lukashenko as a dictatorship; the government has accused the same Western powers of trying to oust Lukashenko. The Council of Europe has barred Belarus from membership since 1997 for undemocratic voting and election irregularities in the November 1996 constitutional referendum and parliament by-elections. The Belarusian government is also criticized for human rights violations and its actions against non-governmental organizations, independent journalists, national minorities, and opposition politicians. Belarus is the only nation in Europe that retains the death penalty for certain crimes during times of peace and war. In testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice labeled Belarus among the six nations of the "outposts of tyranny". In response, the Belarusian government called the assessment "quite far from reality".

Foreign relations and military

Image:Lukashenko NAM meeting.jpg
President Alexander Lukashenko in Cuba, 2006

Belarus and Russia have been close trading partners and diplomatic allies since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Belarus is dependent on Russia for imports of raw materials and for its export market. The Union of Russia and Belarus, a supranational confederation, was established in a 1996–99 series of treaties that called for monetary union, equal rights, single citizenship, and a common foreign and defense policy. Although the future of the Union was in doubt because of Belarus' repeated delays of monetary union, the lack of a referendum date for the draft constitution, and a 2006–07 dispute about petroleum trade. On December 11, 2007, reports emerged that a framework for the new state was discussed between both countries. On May 27,

2008, Belarusian President Lukashenko said that he had named Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin the "prime minister" of the Russia-Belarus alliance. The meaning of the move was not immediately clear; however, there is speculation that Putin may become president of a unified state of Russia and Belarus after having stepped down as Russian president in May 2008.

Belarus was a founder member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); however, recently other CIS members have questioned the effectiveness of the organization. Belarus has trade agreements with several European Union member states (despite other member states' travel ban on Lukashenko and top officials), as well as with its neighbors Lithuania, Poland and Latvia.

Bilateral relations with the United States are strained because the U.S. Department of State supports various pro-democracy NGOs and because the Belarusian government has made it harder for US-based organizations to operate within the country. The 2004 US Belarus Democracy Act continued this trend, authorizing funding for pro-democracy Belarusian NGOs and forbidding loans to the Belarusian government except for humanitarian purposes. Despite this, the two nations cooperate on intellectual property protection, prevention of human trafficking and technology crime, and disaster relief.

Belarus has increased cooperation with China, strengthened by the visit of President Lukashenko to China in October 2005. Belarus has strong ties with Syria, which President Lukashenko considers a key partner in the Middle East. In addition to the CIS, Belarus has membership in the Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Belarus has been a member of the international Non-Aligned Movement since 1998 and a member of the United Nations since its founding in 1945.

The Armed Forces of Belarus have three branches: the Army, the Air Force, and the Ministry of Defense joint staff. Colonel-General Leonid Maltsev heads the Ministry of Defense, and Alexander Lukashenko (as president) serves as Commander-in-Chief. The Armed Forces were formed in 1992 using parts of the former Soviet Armed Forces on the new republic's territory. The transformation of the ex-Soviet forces into the Armed Forces of Belarus, which was completed in 1997, reduced the number of its soldiers by 30,000 and restructured its leadership and military formations. Most of Belarus's service members are conscripts, who serve for 12 months if they have higher education or 18 months if they do not. However, demographic decreases in the Belarusians of conscription age have increased the importance of contract soldiers, who numbered 12,000 as of 2001. In 2005, about 1.4% of Belarus's gross domestic product was devoted to military expenditures. Belarus has not expressed a desire to join NATO but has participated in the Individual Partnership Program since 1997.

Provinces and districts

Belarus is divided into six *voblasts*, or provinces, which are named after the cities that serve as their administrative centers. Each voblast has a provincial legislative authority, called an *oblsoviet*, which is elected by the voblast's residents, and a provincial executive authority called a voblast administration, whose leader is appointed by the president. Voblasts are further subdivided into *raions* (commonly translated as *districts* or *regions*). As with voblasts, each raion has its own legislative authority (*raisovet*, or raion council) elected by its residents, and an executive authority (raion administration) appointed by higher executive powers. As of 2002, there are six voblasts, 118 raions, 102 towns and 108 urbanized settlements. Minsk is given a special status, due to the city serving as the national capital. Minsk City is run by an executive committee and granted a charter of self-rule by the national government.

Voblasts (with administrative centers):

1. Brest Voblast (Brest)
2. Homel Voblast (Homel)
3. Hrodna Voblast (Hrodna)
4. Mahilyow Voblast (Mahilyow)



5. Minsk Voblast (Minsk)
6. Vitsebsk Voblast (Vitsebsk)

Special administrative district:

1. Minsk City

Geography



Vaskovskae reservoir

Belarus is landlocked, relatively flat, and contains large tracts of marshy land. According to a 1994 estimate by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, 34% of Belarus is covered by forests. Many streams and 11,000 lakes are found in Belarus. Three major rivers run through the country: the Neman, the Pripyat, and the Dnepr. The Neman flows westward towards the Baltic sea and the Pripyat flows eastward to the Dnepr; the Dnepr flows southward towards the Black Sea. Belarus's highest point is Dzyarzhynskaya Hara (Dzyarzhynsk Hill) at 345 metres (1,130 ft), and its lowest point is on the Neman River at 90 metres (300 ft). The average elevation of Belarus is 525 feet (160 m) above sea level. The climate ranges from harsh winters, with average January temperatures at $-6\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($21.2\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$), to cool and moist summers with an average temperature of $18\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($64\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$). Belarus has an average annual rainfall of 550 to 700 millimeters (21.7 to 27.5 inches). The

country experiences a yearly transition from a continental climate to a maritime climate.

Belarus's natural resources include peat deposits, small quantities of oil and natural gas, granite, dolomite (limestone), marl, chalk, sand, gravel, and clay. About 70% of the radiation from neighboring Ukraine's 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster entered Belarusian territory, and as of 2005 about a fifth of Belarusian land (principally farmland and forests in the southeastern provinces) continues to be affected by radiation fallout. The United Nations and other agencies have aimed to reduce the level of radiation in affected areas, especially through the use of caesium binders and rapeseed cultivation, which are meant to decrease soil levels of caesium-137.

Belarus is bordered by Latvia on the north, Lithuania to the northwest, Poland to the west, Russia to the north and east and Ukraine to the south. Treaties in 1995 and 1996 demarcated Belarus's borders with Latvia and Lithuania, but Belarus failed to ratify a 1997 treaty establishing the Belarus-Ukraine border. Belarus and Lithuania ratified final border demarcation documents in February 2007.



Horses grazing in Minsk Province

Economy

Most of the Belarusian economy remains state-controlled, as in Soviet times. Thus, 51.2% of Belarusians are employed by state-controlled companies, 47.4% are employed by private Belarusian companies (of which 5.7% are partially foreign-owned), and 1.4% are employed by foreign companies. The country relies on imports such as oil from Russia. Important agricultural products include potatoes and cattle byproducts, including meat. As of 1994, the biggest exports from Belarus were heavy machinery (especially tractors), agricultural products, and energy products.



A Belarusian-made tractor being used to farm



Belarusian GDP growth since 1995 and estimate for 2008

Historically important branches of industry include textiles and wood processing. As of the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, Belarus was one of the world's most industrially developed states by percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) as well as the richest CIS state. Economically, Belarus involved itself in the CIS, Eurasian Economic Community, and Union with Russia. During the 1990s, however, industrial production plunged because of decreases in imported inputs, in investment, and in demand for exports from traditional trading partners. It took until 1996 for the gross domestic product to rise; this coincided with the government putting more emphasis on using the GDP for social welfare and state subsidies. The GDP for 2006 was US\$83.1 billion in purchasing power parity (PPP) dollars (estimate), or about \$8,100 per capita. In 2005, the gross domestic product increased by about 9.9%, with the inflation rate averaging about 9.5%.

Belarus's largest trading partner is Russia, accounting for nearly half of total trade in 2006. As of 2006, the European Union is Belarus's next largest trading partner, with nearly a third of foreign trade. Because of its failure to protect labor rights, however, Belarus lost its E.U. Generalized System of Preferences status on June 21, 2007, which raised tariff rates to their prior most-favored nation levels. Belarus applied to become a member of the World Trade Organization in 1993.

The labor force consists of more than four million people, among whom women hold slightly more jobs than men. In 2005, nearly a quarter of the population was employed in industrial factories. Employment is also high in agriculture, manufacturing sales, trading goods, and education. The unemployment rate, according to Belarusian government statistics, was about 1.5% in 2005. The number of unemployed persons totaled 679,000 of whom about two-thirds are women. The rate of unemployment has been decreasing since 2003, and the overall rate is the highest since statistics were first compiled in 1995.

The currency of Belarus is the Belarusian ruble (BYR). The currency was introduced in May 1992, replacing the Soviet ruble. The ruble was reintroduced with new values in 2000 and has been in use ever since. As part of the Union of Russia and Belarus, both states have discussed using a single currency along the same lines as the Euro. This has led to the proposal that the Belarusian ruble be discontinued in favour of the Russian ruble (RUB), starting as early as 1 January 2008. As of August 2007, the National Bank of Belarus is no longer pegging the Belarusian ruble to the Russian ruble. The banking system of Belarus is composed of 30 state-owned banks and one privatized bank.



Obverse of the 500 Belarusian ruble (BYB/BYR), the national currency

Demographics



Resurrection Church of Brest is the biggest one in Belarus, over 5000 people can attend service

Ethnic Belarusians constitute 81.2% of Belarus's total population. The next largest ethnic groups are Russians (11.4%), Poles (3.9%), and Ukrainians (2.4%). Belarus's two official languages are Belarusian and Russian, spoken at home by 36.7% and 62.8% of Belarusians, respectively. Minorities also speak Polish, Ukrainian and Eastern Yiddish.

Belarus has a population density of about 50 people per square kilometre (127 per sq mi); 71.7% of its total population is concentrated in urban areas. Minsk, the nation's capital and largest city, is home to 1,741,400 of Belarus's 9,724,700 residents. Gomel, with 481,000 people, is the second largest city and serves as the capital of the Homel Oblast. Other large cities are Mogilev (365,100), Vitebsk (342,400), Hrodna (314,800) and Brest (298,300).

Like many other European countries, Belarus has a negative population growth rate and a negative natural growth rate. In 2007, Belarus's population declined by 0.41% and its fertility rate was 1.22, well below the replacement rate. Its net migration rate is +0.38 per 1,000, indicating that Belarus experiences slightly more immigration than emigration. As of 2007, 69.7% of Belarus's population is aged 14 to 64; 16% is under 14, and 14.6% is 65 or older. Its population is also aging: while the current median age is 37, it is estimated that Belarusians' median age will be 51 in 2050. There are

about 0.88 males per female in Belarus. The average life expectancy is 68.7 years (63.0 years for males and 74.9 years for females). Over 99% of Belarusians are literate.

Belarus has historically been a Russian Orthodox country, with minorities practicing Catholicism, Judaism, and other religions. Most Belarusians converted to the Russian Orthodox Church after Belarus was annexed by Russia after the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Belarus's Roman Catholic minority, which makes up perhaps 10% of the country's population and is concentrated in the western part of the country, especially around Hrodna, is made up of a mixture of Belarusians and the country's Polish and Lithuanian minorities. About 1% belong to the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church. Belarus was a major centre of the European Jewish population, with 10% being Jewish, but the population of Jews has been reduced by war, starvation, and the Holocaust to a tiny minority of about 1% or less. Emigration from Belarus is a cause for the shrinking number of Jewish residents. According to Article 16 of the Constitution, Belarus has no official religion. While the freedom of worship is granted in the same article, religious organizations that are deemed harmful to the government or social order of the country can be prohibited.



Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Polotsk

Culture



National Library of Belarus in
Minsk

Belarusian literature began with 11th- to 13th century religious writing; the 12th century poetry of Cyril of Turaw is representative. By the 16th century, Polotsk resident Francysk Skaryna translated the Bible into Belarusian. It was published in Prague and Vilnius between 1517 and 1525, making it the first book printed in Belarus or anywhere in Eastern Europe. The modern period of Belarusian literature began in the late 19th century; one important writer was Yanka Kupala. Many notable Belarusian writers of the time, such as Uładzimir Źyłka, Kazimir Svayak, Yakub Kolas, Źmitrok Biadula and Maksim Haretski, wrote for a Belarusian language paper called *Nasha Niva*, published in Vilnius. After Belarus was incorporated into the Soviet Union, the Soviet government took control of the Republic's cultural affairs. The free development of literature occurred only in Polish-held territory until Soviet occupation in 1939. Several poets and authors went into exile after the Nazi occupation of Belarus, not to return until the 1960s. The last major revival of Belarusian literature occurred in the 1960s with novels published by Vasil Bykaŭ and Uładzimir Karatkievič.

In the 17th century, Polish composer Stanislaw Moniuszko composed operas and chamber music pieces while living in Minsk. During his stay, he worked with Belarusian poet Vincent Dunin-Marcinkevich and created the opera *Sielanka (Peasant Woman)*. At the end of the 19th century, major Belarusian cities formed their own opera and ballet companies. The ballet *Nightingale* by M. Kroshner was composed during the Soviet era and became the first Belarusian ballet showcased at the National Academic Bolshoi Ballet Theatre in Minsk. After the Great Patriotic War, music focused on the hardships of the Belarusian people or on those who took up arms in defense of the homeland. During this period, A. Bogatyryov, creator of the opera *In Polesye Virgin Forest*, served as the "tutor" of Belarusian composers. The National Academic Theatre of Ballet, in Minsk, was awarded the Benois de la Dance Prize in 1996 as the top ballet company in the world. Although rock music has risen in popularity in recent years, the Belarusian government has suppressed the development of popular music through various legal and economic mechanisms. Since 2004, Belarus has been sending artists to the Eurovision Song Contest.

The Belarusian government sponsors annual cultural festivals such as the Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk, which showcases Belarusian performers, artists, writers, musicians, and actors. Several state holidays, such as Independence Day and Victory Day, draw big crowds and often include displays such as fireworks and military parades, especially in Vitebsk and Minsk. The government's Ministry of Culture finances events promoting Belarusian arts and culture both inside and outside the country.



Children in traditional dress

The traditional Belarusian dress originates from the Kievan Rus' period. Because of the cool climate, clothes, usually composed of flax or wool, were designed to keep the body warm. They are decorated with ornate patterns influenced by the neighboring cultures: Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Russians, and other European nations. Each region of Belarus has developed specific design patterns. An ornamental pattern used on some early dresses is currently used to decorate the hoist of the Belarusian national flag, adopted in a disputed referendum in 1995.

Belarusian cuisine consists mainly of vegetables, meat (especially pork), and breads. Foods are usually either slowly cooked or stewed. A typical Belarusian eats a very light breakfast and two hearty meals, with dinner being the largest meal of the day. Wheat and rye breads are consumed in Belarus, but rye is more plentiful because conditions are too harsh for growing wheat. To show hospitality, a host traditionally presents an offering of bread and salt when greeting a guest or visitor. Popular drinks in Belarus include Russian wheat vodka and *kvass*, a soft drink made from malted brown bread or rye flour. *Kvass* may also be combined with sliced vegetables to create a cold soup called *okroshka*.

Belarus has four World Heritage Sites: the Mir Castle Complex, the Niasvizh Castle, the Belovezhskaya Pushcha (shared with Poland), and the Struve Geodetic Arc (shared with nine other countries).

The largest media holding group in Belarus is the state-owned National State Teleradiocompany. It operates several television and radio stations that broadcast content domestically and internationally, either through traditional signals or the Internet. The Television Broadcasting Network is one of the major independent television stations in Belarus, mostly showing regional programming. Several newspapers, printed either in Belarusian or Russian, provide general information or special interest content, such as business, politics or sports. In 1998, there were fewer than 100 radio stations in Belarus: 28 AM, 37 FM and 11 shortwave stations.



Private TV company in Zhodino records a talk-show in a local night club, 2002

All media companies are regulated by the Law On Press and Other Mass Media, passed on January 13, 1995. This grants the freedom of press; however, Article 5 states that slander cannot be made against the president of Belarus or other officials outlined in the national constitution. The Belarusian Government has since been criticized for acting against media outlets. Newspapers such as *Nasa Niva* and the *Belaruskaya Delovaya Gazeta* have been targeted for closure by the authorities after they published reports critical of President Lukashenko or other government officials. The OSCE and Freedom House have commented regarding the loss of press freedom in Belarus. In 2005, Freedom House gave Belarus a score of 6.75 (not free) when it came to dealing with press freedom. Another issue for the Belarusian press is the unresolved disappearance of several journalists.



Broadcasting centre of state-run TV in Minsk

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See also our

Belgium

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

The **Kingdom of Belgium** is a country in northwest Europe. It is a founding member of the European Union and hosts its headquarters, as well as those of other major international organizations, including NATO. Belgium covers an area of 30,528 km² (11,787 square miles) and has a population of about 10.5 million.

Straddling the cultural boundary between Germanic and Latin Europe, Belgium's two largest regions are the Dutch-speaking region of Flanders in the north, with 58% of the population, and the French-speaking southern region of Wallonia, inhabited by 32%. The Brussels-Capital Region, although officially bilingual, is a mostly French-speaking enclave within the Flemish Region and near the Walloon Region, and has 10% of the population. A small German-speaking Community exists in eastern Wallonia. Belgium's linguistic diversity and related political and cultural conflicts are reflected in the political history and a complex system of government.

The name 'Belgium' is derived from *Gallia Belgica*, a Roman province in the northernmost part of Gaul that was inhabited by the *Belgae*, a mix of Celtic and Germanic peoples. Historically, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg were known as the Low Countries, which used to cover a somewhat larger area than the current Benelux group of states. From the end of the Middle Ages until the 17th century, it was a prosperous centre of commerce and culture. From the 16th century until the Belgian revolution in 1830, many battles between European powers were fought in the area of Belgium, causing it to be dubbed "the battlefield of Europe" and "the cockpit of Europe" — a reputation strengthened by both World Wars. Upon its independence, Belgium eagerly participated in the Industrial Revolution, generating wealth and also a demand for raw materials; the latter was a factor during the era of its African colonies.

History

<p><i>Koninkrijk België</i> (Dutch) <i>Royaume de Belgique</i> (French) <i>Königreich Belgien</i> (German) Kingdom of Belgium</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Motto: <i>Eendracht maakt macht</i> (Dutch) <i>L'union fait la force</i> (French) <i>Einigkeit macht stark</i> (German) "Strength through Unity" (lit. "Unity creates Strength", "Unity makes one strong")</p>	
<p>Anthem: The "Brabançonne"</p>	



The Seventeen Provinces (orange, brown and yellow areas) and the Bishopric of Liège (green)

The area of present-day Belgium has seen significant demographic, political and cultural upheavals over the course of two millennia. In the first century, the Romans, after defeating the local tribes, created the province of Gallia Belgica. A gradual immigration by Germanic Frankish tribes during the 5th century, brought the area under the rule of the Merovingian kingdom. A gradual shift of power during the 8th century evolved into the Carolingian Empire and culminated with the coronation of Charlemagne as ruler of The Holy Roman Empire. During the Middle Ages small feudal states emerged, many of which rejoined as the Burgundian Netherlands in the 14th and 15th centuries. Emperor Charles V completed the union of the Seventeen Provinces in the 1540s, and unofficially also controlled the Prince-Bishopric of Liège.

The Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) divided the area into the northern United Provinces ('federate' *Belgica Foederata* in Latin) and the Southern Netherlands ('royal' *Belgica Regia*). The latter

were ruled successively by the Spanish and the Austrian Habsburgs and comprised most of modern Belgium. Until independence the area was sought after by numerous French conquerors and was the theatre of most Franco-Spanish and Franco-Austrian wars during the 17th and 18th centuries. Following the campaigns of 1794 in the French Revolutionary Wars, the Low Countries — including territories that were never nominally under Habsburg rule, such as the Prince-Bishopric of Liège — were annexed by the French First Republic, ending Spanish-Austrian rule in the region. The reunification of the Low Countries as the United Kingdom of the Netherlands occurred at the dissolution of the First French Empire in 1815. However, over the previous 350 years of shared connections as varied Low Country manifestations the two peoples had drifted apart, and after only 15 years, the forced "marriage" was over. The 1830 Belgian Revolution led to the establishment of an independent, Catholic, and neutral Belgium under a provisional government and a national congress. Since the installation of Leopold I as king in 1831, Belgium has been a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Initially an oligarchy ruled mainly by the Catholic Party and the Liberals, the country had evolved towards universal suffrage by World War II with the rise of the Belgian Labour Party and trade unions playing a strong role. French, once the single official language and adopted by the nobility and the bourgeoisie, had by then lost its overall importance as Dutch, the language of the majority of the population, had become recognized as well, be it only in 1898. However, it was not until 1967 that an official Dutch version of the Constitution was accepted.



Location of **Belgium** (dark green)

– on the European continent (light green & dark grey)
– in the European Union (light green) — [Legend]

Capital	Brussels
Largest metropolitan area	Brussels Capital Region
Official languages	Dutch, French, German
Demonym	Belgian
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- King	Albert II
- Prime Minister	Yves Leterme
Independence	
- Declared	4 October 1830
- Recognized	19 April 1839
EU accession	25 March 1957
Area	
- Total	30,528 km ² (139th) 11,787 sq mi



Episode of the Belgian Revolution of 1830
(1834)

by Egide Charles Gustave Wappers,
in the Ancient Art Museum, Brussels.

The Berlin Conference of 1885 gave the Congo Free State to King Leopold II as his private possession. In 1908, it was ceded to Belgium as a colony, henceforth called the Belgian Congo. Belgian control of the Congolese population, particularly under Leopold II, was savage, and the country was plundered of resources such as ivory and rubber.

Germany invaded Belgium in 1914 as part of the Schlieffen Plan, and much of the Western Front fighting of World War I occurred in western parts of the country. Belgium took over the German colonies of Ruanda-Urundi (modern day Rwanda and Burundi) during the war, and they were mandated to Belgium in 1924 by the League of Nations, of which it was a founding member. The Treaty of Versailles had subjected several German border towns, most notably

Eupen and Malmedy, to a controversial plebiscite, which led to their annexation by Belgium in 1925, thereby causing the presence of a small German community. Belgium was again invaded by Germany in 1940 during the Blitzkrieg offensive, and occupied until its liberation by Allied troops in the winter of 1944–1945. The Belgian Congo gained independence in 1960 during the Congo Crisis; Ruanda-Urundi followed two years later.

After World War II, Belgium joined NATO as a founder member, headquartered at Brussels, and formed the Benelux group of nations with the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Belgium became one of the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, and of the European Atomic Energy Community and European Economic Community, established in 1957. The latter is now the European Union, for which Belgium hosts major administrations and institutions, including the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the extraordinary and committee sessions of the European Parliament.

Government and politics

Belgium is a constitutional, popular monarchy and a parliamentary democracy.

In the 19th century, the Francophile political and economic elite treated the Dutch-speaking population as second class citizens. Late that century, and continuing into the 20th century, the Flemish movement evolved to counter this situation. Following World War II, Belgian politics became increasingly dominated by the autonomy of its two main language communities. Intercommunal tensions rose and even the unity of the Belgian state became scrutinized.

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- Water (%)	6.4
Population	
- 2007 estimate	10,584,534 (76th [2005])
- 2001 census	10,296,350
- Density	344.32/km ² (2006) (29th [2005]) 892/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2004 estimate
- Total	\$316.2 billion (30th)
- Per capita	\$31,400 (13th)
Gini (2000)	33 (medium) (33rd)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.946 (high) (17th)
Currency	Euro (€) ¹ (EU)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.be ²
Calling code	+32
<p>¹ Before 1999: Belgian franc.</p> <p>² The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.</p>	

Through constitutional reforms in the 1970s and 1980s, regionalization of the unitary state led to a three-tiered federation: federal, regional, and community governments were created, a compromise designed to minimize linguistic, cultural, social and economic tensions.

The federal bicameral parliament is composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Representatives. The former is made up of 40 directly elected politicians and 21 representatives appointed by the 3 community parliaments, 10 coopted senators and as senators by Right who in practice do not cast their vote, currently Prince Philippe, Princess Astrid and Prince Laurent, children of the King. The Chamber's 150 representatives are elected under a proportional voting system from 11 electoral districts. Belgium is one of the few countries that has compulsory voting, and thus holds one of the highest rates of voter turnout in the world.

The King (currently Albert II) is the head of state, though with limited prerogatives. He appoints ministers, including a Prime Minister, that have the confidence of the Chamber of Representatives to form the federal government. The numbers of Dutch- and French-speaking ministers are equal as prescribed by the Constitution. The judicial system is based on civil law and originates from the Napoleonic code. The Court of Cassation is the court of last resort, with the Court of Appeal one level below.

Belgium's political institutions are complex; most political power is organized around the need to represent the main cultural communities. Since around 1970, the significant national Belgian political parties have split into distinct components that mainly represent the political and linguistic interests of these communities. The major parties in each community, though close to the political centre, belong to three main groups: the right-wing Liberals, the socially conservative Christian Democrats, and the Socialists forming the left-wing. Further notable parties came into being well after the middle of last century, mainly around linguistic, nationalist, or environmental themes, and recently smaller ones of some specific liberal nature.

A string of Christian Democrat coalition governments from 1958 was broken in 1999 after the first dioxin crisis, a major food contamination scandal that led to the establishment of the Belgian Food Agency. A 'rainbow coalition' emerged from six parties: the Flemish and the French-speaking Liberals, Social Democrats, Greens. Later, a 'purple coalition' of Liberals and Social Democrats formed after the Greens lost most of their seats in the 2003 election. The government led by Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt from 1999 to 2007 achieved a balanced budget, some tax-reforms, a labour-market reform, scheduled nuclear phase-out, and instigated legislation allowing more stringent war crime and more lenient soft drug usage prosecution. Restrictions on withholding euthanasia were reduced and same-sex marriage legalized. The government promoted active diplomacy in Africa and opposed the invasion of Iraq. Verhofstadt's coalition fared badly in the June 2007 elections. Since then the country has been experiencing a long-lasting political crisis. This crisis is such that many observers have speculated on a possible partition of Belgium. Since December 21, 2007 the Verhofstadt III Government has been in office. This coalition of the Flemish and Francophone Christian Democrats, the Flemish and Francophone Liberals together with the Francophone Social Democrats was an interim government until 20 March 2008. On that day a new government, led by Flemish Christian Democrat Yves Leterme, the actual winner of the federal elections of June 2007, was sworn in by the King.

In its 2007 Worldwide Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders ranked Belgium (along with Finland and Sweden) 5th out of 169 countries.



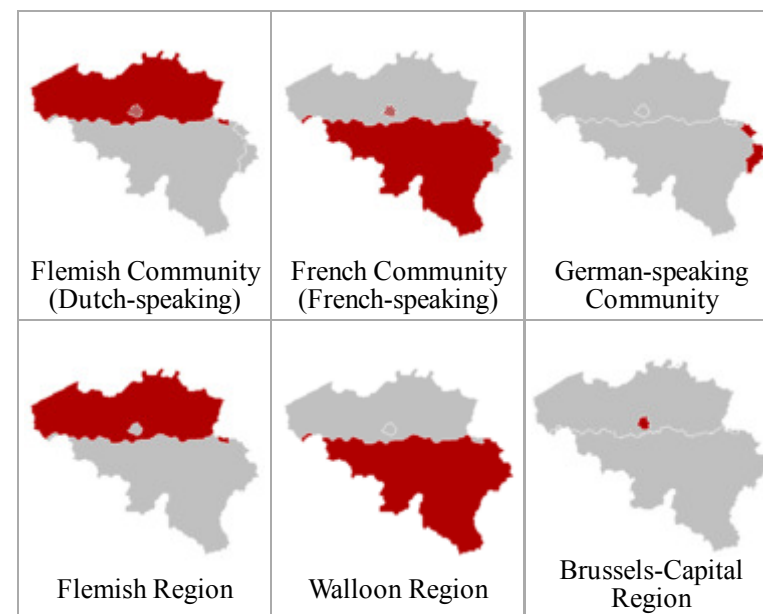
Prime Minister Yves Leterme

Communities and regions

Based on the four language areas defined in 1962–63, consecutive revisions of the country's constitution in 1970, 1980, 1988 and 1993 established a unique federal state with segregated political power into three levels:

1. The federal government, based in Brussels.
2. The three language communities:
 - the Flemish Community (Dutch-speaking);
 - the French (i.e., French-speaking) Community;
 - the German-speaking Community.
3. The three regions:
 - the Flemish Region, subdivided into five provinces;
 - the Walloon Region, subdivided into five provinces;
 - the Brussels-Capital Region.

The constitutional language areas determine the official languages in their municipalities, as well as the geographical limits of the empowered institutions for specific matters:



	Public services rendered in the language of individuals expressing themselves...			the Communities			the Regions (and their provinces)			the Federal State
	...in Dutch	...in French	...in German	Flemish	French	German-speaking	Flemish	Walloon	Brussels-Capital	
Dutch language area	✓	in 12 municipalities (limited to 'facilities')	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
French language area	in 4 municipalities (limited to 'facilities')	✓	in 2 municipalities (limited to 'facilities')	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓
Bilingual area Brussels-Capital	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓
German language area	-	in all 9 municipalities (limited to 'facilities')	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓

By Law, inhabitants of 27 municipalities can ask limited services to be rendered in a neighbour language, forming 'facilities' for them. 'Facilities' exist only in specific municipalities along the borders of the Flemish Region and the Walloon Regions.

Although this would allow for seven parliaments and governments, when the Communities and Regions were created in 1980, Flemish politicians decided to merge both; thus in the Flemish Region a single institutional body of parliament and government is empowered for all except federal and specific municipal matters.

The overlapping boundaries of the Regions and Communities have created two notable peculiarities: the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region (which came into existence nearly a decade after the other regions) is included in both the Flemish and French Communities, and the territory of the German-speaking Community lies wholly within the Walloon Region.

Conflicts between the bodies are resolved by the Constitutional Court of Belgium. The structure is intended as a compromise to allow different cultures to live together peacefully.

Political authority

The Federal State retains a considerable "common heritage". This includes justice, defence, federal police, social security, nuclear energy, monetary policy and public debt, and other aspects of public finances. State-owned companies include the Post Office and Belgian Railways. The Federal Government is responsible for the obligations of Belgium and its federalized institutions towards the European Union and NATO. It controls substantial parts of public health, home affairs and foreign affairs.

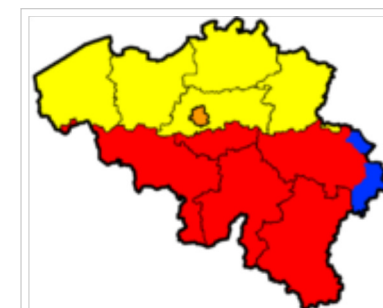
Communities exercise their authority only within linguistically determined geographical boundaries, originally oriented towards the individuals of a Community's language: culture (including audiovisual media), education, and the use of the relevant language. Extensions to personal matters less directly connected with language comprise health policy (curative and preventive medicine) and assistance to individuals (protection of youth, social welfare, aid to families, immigrant assistance services, etc.).

Regions have authority in fields that can be broadly associated with their territory. These include economy, employment, agriculture, water policy, housing, public works, energy, transport, the environment, town and country planning, nature conservation, credit, and foreign trade. They supervise the provinces, municipalities, and intercommunal utility companies.

In several fields, the different levels each have their own say on specifics. With education, for instance, the autonomy of the Communities neither includes decisions about the compulsory aspect nor allows for setting minimum requirements for awarding qualifications, which remain federal matters. Each level of government can be involved in scientific research and international relations associated with its powers.

Geography, climate, and environment

Belgium shares borders with France (620 km), Germany (167 km), Luxembourg (148 km) and the Netherlands (450 km). Its total area, including surface water area, is 33,990 square kilometres; land area alone is 30,528 km². Belgium has three main geographical regions: the coastal plain in the north-west and the central plateau both belong to the Anglo-Belgian Basin; the Ardennes uplands in the south-east are part of the Hercynian orogenic belt. The Paris Basin reaches a small



Languages and provinces of Belgium (yellow: Dutch language, red: French language, orange: bilingual French - Dutch, blue: German language)

fourth area at Belgium's southernmost tip, Belgian Lorraine.



High Fens (*Hautes Fagnes*)

The coastal plain consists mainly of sand dunes and polders. Further inland lies a smooth, slowly rising landscape irrigated by numerous waterways, with fertile valleys and the northeastern sandy plain of the Campine (*Kempen*). The thickly forested hills and plateaus of the Ardennes are more rugged and rocky with caves and small gorges, and offer much of Belgium's wildlife but little agricultural capability. Extending westward into France, this area is eastwardly connected to the Eifel in Germany by the High Fens plateau, on which the Signal de Botrange forms the country's highest point at 694 metres (2,277 ft).

The climate is maritime temperate, with significant precipitation in all seasons (Köppen climate classification: *Cfb*). The average temperature is lowest in January at 3 °C (37 °F), and highest in July at 18 °C (64 °F). The average precipitation per month varies between 54 millimetres (2.1 in) in February or April, to 78 millimetres (3.1 in) in July. Averages for the years 2000 to 2006 show daily temperature minimums of 7 °C (45 °F) and maximums of 14 °C (57 °F), and monthly rainfall of 74 millimetres (2.9 in); these are about 1 degree Celsius and nearly 10 millimetres above last century's normal values, respectively.

Phytogeographically, Belgium is shared between the Atlantic European and Central European provinces of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Belgium belongs to the ecoregion of Atlantic mixed forests.

Because of its high population density, location in the centre of Western Europe, and inadequate political effort, Belgium faces serious environmental problems. A 2003 report suggested Belgian rivers to have the lowest water quality of the 122 countries studied. In the 2006 pilot Environmental Performance Index, Belgium scored 75.9% for overall environmental performance and was ranked lowest of the EU member countries , though it was only 39th of 133 countries.

Economy

Belgium's economy and its transportation infrastructure are integrated with the rest of Europe. Its location at the heart of a highly industrialized region helps make it one of the world's ten largest trading nations. The economy is characterized by a highly productive work force, high GNP, and high exports per capita. Belgium's main imports are food products, machinery, rough diamonds, petroleum and petroleum products, chemicals, clothing and accessories, and textiles. Its main exports are automobiles, food products, iron and steel, finished diamonds, textiles, plastics, petroleum products, and nonferrous metals. The Belgian economy is heavily service-oriented and shows a dual nature: a dynamic Flemish economy, with Brussels as its main multilingual and multi-ethnic centre, and a Walloon economy that lags behind. One of the founding members of the European Union, Belgium strongly supports an open economy and the extension of the powers of EU institutions to integrate member economies. In 1999, Belgium adopted the Euro, the single European currency, which fully replaced the Belgian franc in 2002. Since 1922, Belgium and Luxembourg have been a single trade market within a customs and currency union: the Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union.

Belgium was the first continental European country to undergo the Industrial Revolution, in the early 1800s. Liège and Charleroi rapidly developed mining and steelmaking, which flourished until the mid-20th century in the Sambre- Meuse valley, the *sillon industriel*. However, by the 1840s the textile industry of Flanders was in severe crisis and the region experienced famine from 1846–50.

After World War II, Ghent and Antwerp experienced a rapid expansion of the chemical and petroleum industries. The 1973 and 1979 oil crises sent the economy into a recession; it was particularly prolonged in Wallonia, where the steel industry had become less competitive and experienced serious decline. In the 1980s and 90s, the economic centre of the country continued to shift northwards and is now concentrated in the populous Flemish Diamond area.

By the end of the 1980s, Belgian macroeconomic policies had resulted in a cumulative government debt of about 120% of GDP. As of 2006, the budget was balanced and public debt was equal to 90.30% of GDP. In 2005 and 2006, real GDP growth rates of 1.5% and 3.0%, respectively, were slightly above the average for the Euro area. Unemployment rates of 8.4% in 2005 and 8.2% in 2006 were close to the area average.

Numismatics

In Belgium, the euro was introduced in 2002. However, the first sets of coins were minted, as preparation, in 1999. Hence the first euro coins of Belgium have minted the year 1999 instead of 2002 like other countries in the eurozone. In order to conform to the common guidelines on the design of national faces of coins, Belgium has updated the design of the Belgian national face of euro coins to be produced from 2008; also adopted the new common map like the rest of the eurozone countries.

Belgium has a rich collection of collectors' coins, with face value ranging from 10 to 100 euro. These coins are a legacy of an old national practice of minting of silver and gold commemorative coins. Unlike normal issues, these coins are not legal tender in all the eurozone. For instance, a €10 Belgian commemorative coin cannot be used in any other country.



Steelmaking along the Meuse River at Ougrée, near Liège

While all Belgian coins designated for circulation show the portrait of King Albert II, this does not happen for commemorative coins, where designs are freely chosen.

Demographics

At the start of 2007 nearly 92% of the Belgian population were national citizens, and around 6% were citizens from other European Union member countries. The prevalent foreign nationals were Italian (171,918), French (125,061), Dutch (116,970), Moroccan (80,579), Spanish (42,765), Turkish (39,419), and German (37,621).



Main areas and places in Belgium

Urbanisation

Almost all of the Belgian population is urban — 97% in 2004. The population density of Belgium is 342 per square kilometre (886 per square mile) — one of the highest in Europe, after that of the Netherlands and some microstates such as Monaco. The most densely inhabited area is the Flemish Diamond, outlined by the Antwerp- Leuven-Brussels- Ghent agglomerations. The Ardennes have the lowest density. As of 2006, the Flemish Region had a population of about 6,078,600, with Antwerp (457,749), Ghent (230,951) and Bruges (117,251) its most populous cities; Wallonia had 3,413,978, with Charleroi (201,373), Liège (185,574) and Namur (107,178) its most populous. Brussels houses 1,018,804 in the Capital Region's 19 municipalities, two of which have over 100,000 residents.

Languages

Both the Dutch spoken in Belgium and the Belgian French have minor differences in vocabulary and semantic nuances from the varieties spoken respectively in the Netherlands and France. Many Flemish people still speak dialects of Dutch in their local environment. Walloon, once the main regional language of Wallonia, is now only understood and spoken occasionally, mostly by elderly people. Its dialects, along with those of Picard, are not used in public life.

As no census exists, there are no official statistics on Belgium's three official languages or their dialects. Various criteria, including the language(s) of parents, of education, or the second-language status of foreign born, may affect suggested figures. An estimated 59% of the Belgian population speaks Dutch (often referred to as Flemish), and French is spoken by 40%. Total Dutch speakers are 6.23 million, concentrated in the northern Flanders region, while French speakers comprise 3.32 million in Wallonia and an estimated 0.87 million or 85% of the officially bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. The German-speaking Community is made up of 73,000 people in the east of the Walloon Region; around 10,000 German and 60,000 Belgian nationals are speakers of German. Roughly 23,000 more of German speakers live in municipalities near the official Community.

The Capital Region having bilingual status obliges its authorities to attend to people and organisations in French or Dutch language as these prefer, and to show street names in both languages on the plates, but does not allow a bilingual school as education belongs to either the French Community or the Flemish one. Geographically, it is an enclave in the Flemish Region though near Wallonia. Constitutionally, it is a politically distinct Region, while within its boundaries both the Flemish and French Communities exercise their authority. Until the end of the 19th century the majority of the Capital Regions inhabitants spoke local Brabantian dialects of the Dutch language. However a large-scale Frenchification of Brussels started in 1880 as more and more Dutch-speaking people became bilingual, resulting in a rise of monolingual French-speakers after 1910. Halfway through the 20th century the number of monolingual French-speakers carried the day over bilingual people. Today Dutch is spoken by approximately 150,000 residents of the Brussels-Capital Region, or a 15% minority. Recent immigration has brought its population of foreign origin to 56%. The two largest foreign groups come from two francophone countries: France and Morocco. The first language of roughly half of the inhabitants is not an official one of the Capital Region. Nevertheless, about three out of four residents have the Belgian nationality. In general the population of Brussels is younger and the gap between rich and poor is wider. Brussels also has a large concentration of people of Turkish and Moroccan ancestry, and mainly French-speaking black Africans. Since Belgium does not collect statistics by ethnic background, exact figures are unknown.



Bilingual signs in Brussels.

In 2006, the Université Catholique de Louvain, the country's largest French-speaking university, published a report with the introduction (*here translated*): "This issue of *Regards économiques* is devoted to the demand for knowledge of languages in Belgium and in its three regions (Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia). The surveys show that Flanders is clearly more multilingual, which is without doubt a well known fact, but the difference is considerable : whereas 59% and 53% of the Flemings know French or English respectively, only 19% and 17% of the Walloons know Dutch or English. The measures advocated by the Marshall Plan go towards the proper direction, but are without doubt very insufficient to fully overcome the lag." (*This particular 2006–2009 'Marshall Plan' was devised in 2004 and published in 2005 to uplift the Walloon economy.*) Within the report, professors in economics Ginsburgh and Weber further show that of the Brussels residents, 95% declared they can speak French, 59% Dutch, and 41% know the non-local English. Economically significant for a further globalizing future, among people under the age of forty, in Flanders 59%, in Wallonia 10%, and in Brussels 28% can speak all three forementioned languages. In each region, Belgium's third official language, German, is notably less known than those.

Education

Education is compulsory from six to eighteen for Belgians, but many continue to study until about 23 years of age. Among OECD countries in 2002, Belgium had the third-highest proportion of 18–21-year-olds enrolled in postsecondary education, at 42%. Though an estimated 98% of the adult population is literate, concern is rising over functional illiteracy. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Belgium's education as the 19th best in the world, being significantly higher than the OECD average.

Highly politicized conflicts between freethought and Catholic segments of the population during the 1950s caused a split in educational organization. A secular branch of schooling is controlled by the Community, the province, or the municipality, while religious, mainly Catholic branch education, is organized by religious authorities, although subsidized and supervised by the Community.

Religion

Since the country's independence, Roman Catholicism, counterbalanced by strong freethought movements, has had an important role in Belgium's politics. However Belgium is largely a secular country as the *laicist* constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. Nevertheless, the monarchy has a reputation of deeply-rooted Catholicism. In 1990, for instance, as a King constitutionally obliged to sign a law legalizing abortion after it had been passed by both chambers, Baudouin asked the then Christian-Democrat Prime Minister Wilfried Martens to find a way out, causing the Parliament to declare him 'temporarily unfit to reign', with his consent. On the yearly national holiday, the King and Queen and other members of the royal family officially attend Te Deum celebrations.

Symbolically and materially, the Roman Catholic Church remains in a favourable position. Belgium's concept of 'recognized religions' set a path for Islam to follow to acquire the treatment of Jewish and Protestant religions. While other minority religions, such as Hinduism, do not yet have such status, Buddhism took the first steps toward legal recognition in 2007. According to the *2001 Survey and Study of Religion*, about 47% of the population identify themselves as belonging to the Catholic Church, while Islam is the second-largest religion at 3.5%. A 2006 inquiry in Flanders, considered to be a more religious region than Wallonia, showed that 55% considered themselves religious, and that 36% believed that God created the world.

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 43% of Belgian citizens responded that "they believe there is a god", whereas 29% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 27% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

There is also a tiny Hindu and Sikh population. While there are around 8,000 Hindus mostly near Antwerp, most Sikhs (around 10,000) are either in Vilvoorde or Sint-Truiden (see Sikhism in Belgium).

Science and technology

Contributions to the development of science and technology have appeared throughout the country's history. The sixteenth century Early Modern flourishing of Western Europe included cartographer Gerardus Mercator, anatomist Andreas Vesalius, herbalist Rembert Dodoens, and mathematician Simon Stevin among the most influential scientists. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the Walloon method of making bar iron found its way to Sweden where it remained in use for more than two hundred and sixty years.

The quickly developed and dense Belgian railroad system caused major companies like La Brugeoise et Nivelles (now the BN division of Bombardier Transportation) to develop specific technologies, and the economically important very deep coal mining in the course of the First Industrial Revolution has required highly reputed specialized studies for mine engineers.

The end of the nineteenth century and the twentieth saw important Belgian advances in applied and pure science. The chemist Ernest Solvay and the engineer Zenobe Gramme (École Industrielle de Liege) gave their names to the Solvay process and the Gramme dynamo, respectively, in the 1860s. Georges Lemaître (Université Catholique de Louvain) is credited with proposing the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe in 1927. Three Nobel Prizes in Physiology or Medicine were awarded to Belgians: Jules Bordet (Université Libre de Bruxelles) in 1919,



Gerardus Mercator

Corneille Heymans (Universiteit Gent) in 1938, and Albert Claude (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and Christian De Duve (Université Catholique de Louvain) in 1974. Ilya Prigogine (Université Libre de Bruxelles) was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1977.

Culture

Belgian cultural life is concentrated within each language community, and a variety of barriers have made a shared cultural sphere less pronounced. There has been since the 1970s no bilingual universities except the Royal Military Academy, no common media, and no single large cultural or scientific organization in which both main communities are represented. The forces that once held them (the Belgians) together--Roman Catholicism and economic and political opposition to the Dutch-- are no longer strong. Despite its political and linguistic divisions that have been strongly changing during the centuries, the region corresponding to today's Belgium has seen the flourishing of major artistic movements that have had tremendous influence on European art and culture.

Fine arts



The Tower of Babel (oil on board, c. 1563)
by Pieter Brueghel the Elder,
in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Contributions to painting and architecture have been especially rich. The Mosan art, the Early Netherlandish, the Flemish Renaissance and Baroque painting, and major examples of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture are milestones in the history of art. Famous names in this classic tradition include the Flemish artists Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden and, Pieter Brueghel the Elder as well as Lambert Lombard and Theodore de Bry from Liège. The historical artistic production of the Flemish before the early seventeenth century Baroque style of Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck is often not distinguished from that of the Dutch nor of the Walloons. In the southern Netherlands it gradually declined thereafter, although high quality tapestry continued to be created until well into the eighteenth century.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many original romantic, expressionist and surrealist Belgian painters emerged, including Egide Wappers, James Ensor, Constant Permeke and René Magritte. The avant-garde CoBrA movement appeared in the 1950s, while the sculptor Panamarenko remains a remarkable figure in contemporary art. The multidisciplinary artist Jan Fabre and the painter Luc Tuymans are other internationally renowned figures on the contemporary art scene. Belgian contributions to architecture also continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the work of Victor Horta and Henry van de Velde, who were major initiators of the

Art Nouveau style.

The vocal music of the Franco-Flemish School developed in the southern part of the Low Countries and was an important contribution to Renaissance culture. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the appearance of major violinists, such as Henri Vieuxtemps, Eugène Ysaÿe and Arthur Grumiaux, while Adolphe Sax invented the saxophone in 1846. The composer César Franck was born in Liège in 1822. Belgium has also produced music of contemporary note. The first Belgian singer to successfully pursue an international career is Bobbejaan Schoepen, pioneer of variété and pop music. Jazz musician Toots Thielemans has achieved global fame, as have the singers Jacques Brel and Italy-born Adamo. In rock/pop music, Telex, Front 242, K's Choice, Hooverphonic, Zap Mama,

Soulwax and dEUS are well known.

Belgium has produced several well-known authors, including the poet Emile Verhaeren and novelists Hendrik Conscience, Georges Simenon, Suzanne Lilar and Amélie Nothomb. The poet and playwright Maurice Maeterlinck won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1911. *The Adventures of Tintin* by Hergé is the best known of Franco-Belgian comics, but many other major authors, including Peyo (The Smurfs), André Franquin, Edgar P. Jacobs, and Willy Vandersteen brought the Belgian cartoon strip industry on a par with the U.S.A. and Japan.

Belgian cinema, often influenced by the Dutch or French, has brought a number of mainly Flemish novels to life on-screen. The absence of a major Belgian cinema company, however, has forced several talented directors to emigrate, such as Carl Colpaert or participate in low-budget productions such as Marc Didden's *Brussels by Night* (1983). Other Belgian directors include André Delvaux, Stijn Coninx, Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne; well-known actors include Jan Decleir and Marie Gillain; and successful films include *Man Bites Dog* and *The Alzheimer Affair*. In the 1980s, Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts produced important fashion trendsetters, known as the Antwerp Six.

Folklore

Folklore plays a major role in Belgium's cultural life: the country has a comparatively high number of processions, cavalcades, parades, 'ommegangs' and 'ducasses', 'kermesse', and other local festivals, nearly always with an originally religious background. The Carnival of Binche with its famous Gilles, and the 'Processional Giants and Dragons' of Ath, Brussels, Dendermonde, Mechelen and Mons are recognized by UNESCO as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Other examples are the Carnival of Aalst; the still very religious processions of the Holy Blood in Bruges, Virga Jesse in Hasselt, and Hanswijk in Mechelen; the August 15 festival in Liège; and the Walloon festival in Namur. Originated in 1832 and revived in the 1960s, the Gentse Feesten have become a modern tradition. A major non-official holiday is the Saint Nicholas Day, a festivity for children and, in Liège, for students.



The Gilles of Binche, in costume, wearing wax masks

Sports

The 1920 Summer Olympics were held in Antwerp, Belgium.

Football (soccer) and cycling are especially popular. Jean-Marie Pfaff, a former Belgian goalie, is considered one of the greatest goalkeepers (soccer) in the history of the game.. With five victories in the Tour de France and numerous other cycling records, Belgian Eddy Merckx ranks #1 as the greatest cyclist of all time. His hour speed record (set in 1972) stood for twelve years. Either Kim Clijsters or Justine Henin, two Belgian tennis champions, are consistently listed as the Top Professional Female.

The Spa-Francorchamps motor-racing circuit hosts the Formula One World Championship Belgian Grand Prix. The Belgian driver, Jacky Ickx, has won eight Grands Prix and six 24 Hours of Le Mans, and twice finished as runner-up in the Formula One World Championship. Thierry Boutsen also won three races in 1989 and 1990. Belgium also has a strong reputation in motocross; world champions include Roger De Coster, Joël Robert, Georges Jobé, Eric Geboers, Joël

Smets and Stefan Everts.

Belgium has played a major part in the promotion and development of Duathlon. More specifically Benny Vansteelant has made a lasting legacy conquering a stunning 8 World Champion titles and 5 European Champion titles.

Belgium is currently bidding with the Netherlands to host the 2018 World Cup. Both countries previously hosted the UEFA European Football Championship in 2000. Belgium also hosted the European Football Championships in 1972.

Cuisine

Belgium is well known the world over for its cuisine. Many highly ranked restaurants can be found in the most influential gastronomic guides, such as the Michelin Guide. Belgian food is, like the country itself, a mix of Germanic and Latin influences. Belgians have a reputation for loving waffles and french fries; contrary to the name of the latter, both dishes originated in Belgium. The national dishes are "steak and fries with salad", and "mussels with fries". A challenge issued by a television program elicited no less than 307 different local or regional dishes, presented on a 118-metre long table in Tivoli Park in Mechelen on 1 September 2007.

Brands of Belgian chocolate and pralines, like Callebaut, Côte d'Or, Neuhaus, Leonidas, Guylian and Godiva, are world renowned and widely sold.

Belgium produces over 500 varieties of beer. The biggest brewer in the world by volume is InBev based in Belgium.

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

SOS Children works in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For more information see SOS Children in Bosnia

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country on the Balkan peninsula of Southern Europe with an area of 51,280 square kilometres (19,741 sq mi). The last official census in 1991 recorded 4.4 million people, which was prior to the 1992-1995 war, while an unofficial census in 1996 by UNHCR recorded a postwar population of 3.9 million. Its 2007 residential population is estimated at 4 million.




Formerly one of the six federal units constituting the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina gained its independence during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s.

The country is home to three ethnic "constituent peoples": Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. Regardless of ethnicity, a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina is often identified in English as a Bosnian. In Bosnia however, the distinction between a Bosnian and a Herzegovinian is maintained as a regional, rather than an ethnic distinction. The country is politically decentralized and comprised of two governing entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, with District Brčko as a de facto third entity.

Bordered by Croatia to the north, west and south, Serbia to the east, and Montenegro to the south, Bosnia and Herzegovina is mostly landlocked, except for 26 kilometres of the Adriatic Sea coastline, centered around the town of Neum. The interior of the country is mountainous in the centre and south, hilly in the northwest, and flat in the northeast. The nation's capital and largest city is Sarajevo, seated between several high mountains. Sarajevo was the host site of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games.

The region of Bosnia is the largest geographic region of the modern state with moderate continental climate, marked by hot summers and cold, snowy winters. Smaller Herzegovina is the southern tip of the country, with Mediterranean climate and topography. Bosnia and Herzegovina's natural resources are abundant.

Etymology

<p><i>Bosna i Hercegovina</i> <i>Босна и Херцеговина</i> Bosnia and Herzegovina</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: None	
Anthem: <i>Državna himna Bosne i Hercegovine</i>	
	
<p>Location of Bosnia and Herzegovina (orange) on the European continent (white) — [Legend]</p>	



The Old Bridge in Mostar

The first preserved mention of the name "Bosnia" is in the *De Administrando Imperio*, a politico-geographical handbook written by Byzantine emperor Constantine VII in 958 as a component part of "Baptized Serbia," however, by this time Bosnia was mostly converted from their slavic manichaistic religion to Bogumilism (a christian sect that slavic Bulgarians spread to Bosnia). The exact meaning and origin of the word is somewhat cloudy. The name "Bosnia" most probably comes from the name of the Bosna river around which it has been historically based, which was recorded in the Roman Age under the name *Bossina*. More direct root of the river's names are unknown. Philologist Anton Mayer proposed a connection with the Indo-European

root *bos* or *bogh*, meaning "running water". Certain Roman sources similarly mention *Bathinus flumen*, or the Illyrian word *Bosona*, both of which would mean "running water" as well. Other theories involve the rare Latin term *Bosina*, meaning boundary, and possible Slavic origins.

The origins of the word *Herzegovina* can be identified with more precision and certainty. During the Early Middle Ages the region was known as Hum or Zahumlje, named after the *Zachlumoi* tribe of Slavs which inhabited it. In the 1440s, the region was ruled by powerful nobleman Stefan Vukčić Kosača. In a document sent to Friedrich III on January 20, 1448, Stefan Vukčić Kosača called himself *Herzog of Saint Sava, lord of Hum and Primorje, great duke of the Bosnian kingdom* (*Herzog* means duke in German) and so the lands he controlled would later become known as *Herzog's lands* or *Herzegovina*. The name Herzegovina was first included in the official name of the then Ottoman province in the mid-nineteenth century.

On initial proclamation of independence in 1992 the country's official name was the *Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina* but following the 1995 Dayton Agreement and the new constitution that came with it the name was officially changed to only *Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

History

Pre-Slavic period

Bosnia has been inhabited at least since Neolithic times by Illyrian tribes. In the early Bronze Age, the

Capital (and largest city)	Sarajevo
Official languages	Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian
Demonym	Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks
Government	Parliamentary democracy
- Presidency members	Željko Komšić ¹ Nebojša Radmanović ² Haris Silajdžić ³
- Chairman of the Council of Ministers	Nikola Špirić
- High Representative	Miroslav Lajčák ⁴
Independence	
- Formed	29 August 1189
- Kingdom established	26 October 1377
- Independence lost to Ottoman Empire	1463
- National Day	November 25, 1943
- Independence from SFR Yugoslavia	March 1, 1992
- Recognized	April 6, 1992
Area	
- Total	51,197 km ² (127th) 19,767 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
Population	
- 2007 estimate	3,935,000 (126th ⁵)
- 1991 census	4,377,053

Neolithic population was replaced by more warlike Indo-European tribes known as the Illyres or Illyrians. Celtic migrations in the fourth century BC and third century BC displaced many Illyrian tribes from their former lands, but some Celtic and Illyrian tribes mixed. Concrete historical evidence for this period is scarce, but overall it appears that the region was populated by a number of different peoples speaking distinct languages. Conflict between the Illyrians and Romans started in 229 BC, but Rome would not complete its annexation of the region until AD 9. In the Roman period, Latin-speaking settlers from all over the Roman empire settled among the Illyrians and Roman soldiers were encouraged to retire in the region.

Some claim that Christianity arrived in the region by the end of the first century, but there are no artifacts or objects from the time testify to this. There were only two Roman Catholic churches in Bosnia-Herzegovina up until the occupation of Austro-Hungary, and no Serb Orthodox churches at all. However, the Franciscans founded their permanent missions in Bosnia as early as the 11th century. The land originally was part of the Illyria up until the Roman occupation. Following the split of the Roman Empire between 337 and 395, Dalmatia and Pannonia became parts of the Western Roman Empire. Some claim that the region was conquered by the Ostrogoths in 455. It subsequently changed hands between the Alans and Huns. By the sixth century, Emperor Justinian had reconquered the area for the Byzantine Empire. The Slavs, a people from eastern Europe (now territory of Ukraine), were conquered by the Avars in the sixth century.

Medieval Bosnia

- Density	89/km ² (116th ⁵) 230/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	Feb 2007 estimate
- Total	\$42.998 billion (IMF) (94th)
- Per capita	10,715 () (77th)
GDP (nominal)	Feb 2007 estimate
- Total	\$13.16 billion (IMF)
- Per capita	\$3,306 (IMF)
Gini (2001)	26.2 (low)
HDI (2004)	▲ 0.803 (high) (66th)
Currency	Convertible mark (BAM)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.ba
Calling code	+387
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Curent presidency Chair; Croat. 2 Curent presidency member; Serb. 3 Curent presidency member; Bosniak. 4 Not a government member; The High Representative is an international civilian peace implementation overseer with full authority to dismiss elected and non-elected officials and inaugurate legislation 5 Rank based on 2007 UN estimate of <i>de facto</i> population. 	



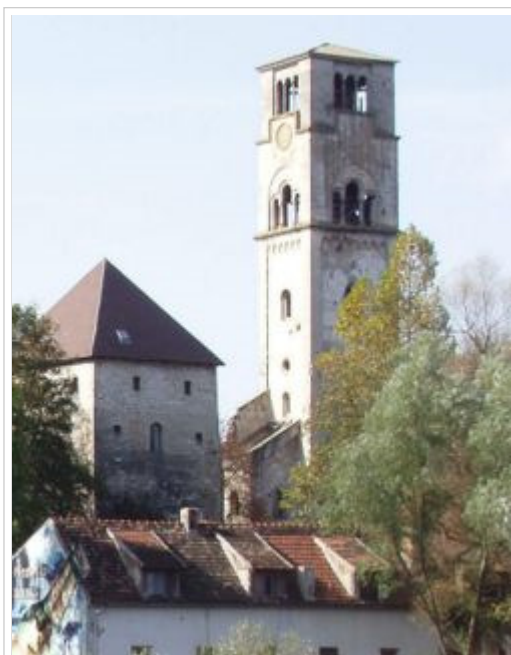
Bosnia during the tenth century.

Bosnian state during Ban Kulin 1180-1204

Bosnian state during king Tvrtko 1353-1391

Borders of Bosnian state in second part of fifteenth century

Bosnia and Herzegovina in second part of nineteenth century



Bihaćka kula in the City of Bihać ("the tower of Bihać").

Modern knowledge of the political situation in the west Balkans during the Dark Ages is patchy and confusing. Upon their arrival, the Slavs brought with them a tribal social structure, which probably fell apart and gave way to Feudalism only with Frankish penetration into the region in the late ninth century. It was also around this time that the south Slavs were Christianized. Bosnia, due to its geographic position and terrain, was probably one of the last areas to go through this process, which presumably originated from the urban centers along the Dalmatian coast. The principalities of Serbia and Croatia split control of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the ninth and tenth century, but by the High Middle Ages political circumstance led to the area being contested between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Byzantine Empire. Following another shift of power between the two in the early twelfth century, Bosnia found itself outside the control of both and emerged as an independent state under the rule of local bans.

The first notable Bosnian monarch, Ban Kulin, presided over nearly three decades of peace and stability during which he strengthened the country's economy through treaties with Dubrovnik and Venice. His rule also marked the start of a controversy with the Bosnian Church, an indigenous Christian sect considered heretical by both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. In response to Hungarian attempts to use church politics regarding the issue as a way to reclaim sovereignty over Bosnia, Kulin held a council of local church leaders to renounce the heresy and embraced Catholicism in 1203. Despite this, Hungarian ambitions remained unchanged long after Kulin's death in 1204, waning only after an unsuccessful invasion in 1254.

Bosnian history from then until the early fourteenth century was marked by the power struggle between the Šubić and Kotromanić families. This conflict came to an end in 1322, when Stjepan II Kotromanić became *ban*. By the time of his death in 1353, he was successful in annexing territories to the north and west, as well as Zahumlje and parts of Dalmatia. He was succeeded by his nephew Tvrtko who, following a prolonged struggle with nobility and inter-family strife, gained full control of the country in 1367. Tvrtko crowned himself on 26 October 1377 as Stefan Tvrtko I *by the mercy of God King of Serbs, Bosnia and the Seaside and the Western Lands*.

Historians considered that he was crowned in the Serbian Orthodox Mileševa monastery, even though there is no archeological evidences. Another possibility, advanced by P. Anđelić and based on archeological evidence, is that he was crowned in Mile near Visoko in the church which was built in time of Stephen II Kotromanić's reign, where he was also buried alongside his uncle Stjepan II. Following his death in 1391 however, Bosnia fell into a long period of decline. The Ottoman Empire had already started its conquest of Europe and posed a major threat to the Balkans throughout the first half of the fifteenth century. Finally, after decades of political and social instability, Bosnia officially fell in 1463. Herzegovina would follow in 1482, with a Hungarian-backed reinstated "Bosnian Kingdom" being the last to succumb in 1527.

Ottoman era



The Charter of Kulin Ban - treaty with Dubrovnik. Now in Ermitage in Petersburg.



Kulin Ban's plate found in Biskupići, near Visoko.



The Ottoman province of Bosnia in the seventeenth century.

The Ottoman conquest of Bosnia marked a new era in the country's history and introduced tremendous changes in the political and cultural landscape of the region. Although the kingdom had been crushed and its high nobility executed, the Ottomans nonetheless allowed for the preservation of Bosnia's identity by incorporating it as an integral province of the Ottoman Empire with its historical name and territorial integrity - a unique case among subjugated states in the Balkans. Within this sandžak (and eventual vilayet) of Bosnia, the Ottomans introduced a number of key changes in the territory's socio-political administration; including a new landholding system, a reorganization of administrative units, and a complex system of social differentiation by class and religious affiliation.

The four centuries of Ottoman rule also had a drastic impact on Bosnia's population make-up, which changed several times as a result of the empire's conquests, frequent wars with European powers, migrations, and epidemics. A native Slavic-speaking Muslim community emerged and eventually became the largest of the ethno-religious groups (mainly as a result of a gradually rising number of conversions to Islam), while a significant number of Sephardi Jews arrived following their expulsion from Spain in the late fifteenth century. The Bosnian Christian communities also experienced major changes. The Bosnian Franciscans (and the Catholic population as a whole) were protected by official imperial decree. The Orthodox community in Bosnia, initially confined to Herzegovina and Podrinje, spread throughout the country during this period and went on to experience relative prosperity until

the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the schismatic Bosnian Church disappeared altogether.



The city castle of Gradačac.



The Višegrad bridge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

As the Ottoman Empire thrived and expanded into Central Europe, Bosnia was relieved of the pressures of being a frontier province and experienced a prolonged period of general welfare and prosperity. A number of cities, such as Sarajevo and Mostar, were established and grew into major regional centers of trade and urban culture. Within these cities, various Sultans and governors financed the construction of many important works of Bosnian architecture (such as the Stari most and Gazi Husrev-beg's Mosque). Furthermore, numerous Bosnians played influential roles in the Ottoman Empire's cultural and political history during this time. Bosnian soldiers formed a large component of the Ottoman ranks in the battles of Mohács and Krbava field, two decisive military victories, while numerous other Bosnians rose through the ranks of the Ottoman military bureaucracy to occupy the highest positions of power in the Empire, including admirals, generals, and

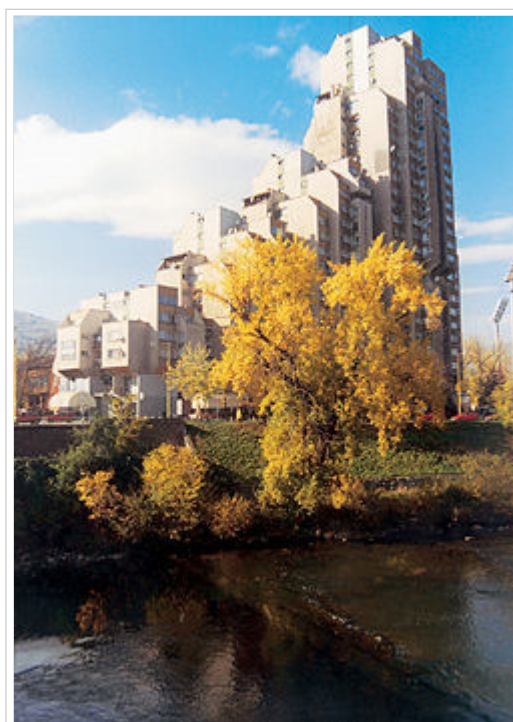
grand viziers. Many Bosnians also made a lasting impression on Ottoman culture, emerging as mystics, scholars, and celebrated poets in the Turkish, Arabic, and Persian languages.

However, by the late seventeenth century the Empire's military misfortunes caught up with the country, and the conclusion of the Great Turkish War with the treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 once again made Bosnia the Empire's westernmost province. The following hundred years were marked by further military failures, numerous revolts within Bosnia, and several outbursts of plague. The Porte's efforts at modernizing the Ottoman state were met with great hostility in Bosnia, where local aristocrats stood to lose much through the proposed reforms. This, combined with frustrations over political concessions to nascent Christian states in the east, culminated in a famous (albeit ultimately unsuccessful) revolt by Husein Gradašević in 1831. Related rebellions would be extinguished by 1850, but the situation continued to deteriorate. Later agrarian unrest eventually sparked the Herzegovinian rebellion, a widespread peasant uprising, in 1875. The conflict rapidly spread and came to involve several Balkan states and Great Powers, which eventually forced the Ottomans to cede administration of the country to Austria-Hungary through the treaty of Berlin in 1878.

Austro-Hungarian rule



National Library in Sarajevo



Lamela, the tallest building in Zenica

Though an Austro-Hungarian occupying force quickly subjugated initial armed resistance upon take-over, tensions remained in certain parts of the country (particularly Herzegovina) and a mass emigration of predominantly Muslim dissidents occurred. Some think that it was a planned Austro-Hungarian takeover of the land called Herzegovina because many Croats from Croatia were settled there. However, a state of relative stability was reached soon enough and Austro-Hungarian authorities were able to embark on a number of social and administrative reforms which intended to make Bosnia and Herzegovina into a "model colony". With the aim of establishing the province as a stable political model that would help dissipate rising South Slav nationalism, Habsburg rule did much to codify laws, to introduce new political practices, and generally to provide for modernization. The Austro-Hungarian empire built the three Roman Catholic churches in Sarajevo and these three churches are among the only 20 Catholic churches in the state of Bosnia. Although successful economically, Austro-Hungarian policy - which focused on advocating the ideal of a pluralist and multi-confessional Bosnian nation (largely favored by the Muslims) - failed to curb the rising tides of nationalism. The concept of Croat and Serb nationhood had already spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Catholics and Orthodox communities from neighboring Croatia and Serbia in the mid nineteenth century, and was too

well-entrenched to allow for the wide-spread acceptance of a parallel idea of Bosnian nationhood. By the latter half of the 1910s, nationalism was an integral factor of Bosnian politics, with national political parties corresponding to the three groups dominating elections. The idea of a unified South Slavic state (typically expected to be spear-headed by independent Serbia) became a popular political ideology in the region at this time, including in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. The Austro-Hungarian government's decision to formally annex Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 (see Bosnian Crisis) added to a sense of urgency among these nationalists. The political tensions caused by all this culminated on June 28, 1914, when Serb nationalist youth Gavrilo Princip assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo; an event that proved to be the spark that set off World War I. Although some Bosnians died serving in the armies of the various warring states, Bosnia and Herzegovina itself managed to escape the conflict relatively unscathed.

The first Yugoslavia



The building of the Assembly of the City of Banja Luka.

Following the war, Bosnia was incorporated into the South Slav kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (soon renamed Yugoslavia). Political life in Bosnia at this time was marked by two major trends: social and economic unrest over property redistribution, and formation of several political parties that frequently changed coalitions and alliances with parties in other Yugoslav regions. The dominant ideological conflict of the Yugoslav state, between Croatian regionalism and Serbian centralization, was approached differently by Bosnia's major ethnic groups and was dependent on the overall political atmosphere. Even though there were over three million Bosnians in Yugoslavia, outnumbering Slovenes and Montenegrins combined, Bosnian nationhood was denied by the new Kingdom. Although the initial split of the country into 33 oblasts erased the presence of traditional geographic entities from the map, the efforts of Bosnian politicians such as Mehmed Spaho ensured that the six oblasts carved up from Bosnia and Herzegovina corresponded to the six sanjaks from Ottoman times and, thus, matched the country's traditional boundary as a whole.

The establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, however, brought the redrawing of administrative regions into banates that purposely avoided all historical and ethnic lines, removing any trace of a Bosnian entity.

Serbo-Croat tensions over the structuring of the Yugoslav state continued, with the concept of a separate Bosnian division receiving little or no consideration. The famous Cvetković- Maček agreement that created the Croatian banate in 1939 encouraged what was essentially a partition of Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia. However, outside political circumstances forced Yugoslav politicians to shift their attention to the rising threat posed by Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany. Following a period that saw attempts at appeasement, the signing of the Tripartite Treaty, and a coup d'état, Yugoslavia was finally invaded by Germany on April 6, 1941.

World War II



Monument commemorating the Battle of Sutjeska in eastern **Bosnia and Herzegovina**.

Once the kingdom of Yugoslavia was conquered by Nazi forces in World War II, all of Bosnia was ceded to the Independent State of Croatia. The Nazi rule over Bosnia led to widespread persecution of Jewish, Serbian and Gypsy civilians. The Jewish population was nearly exterminated and roughly 700,000 Serbs died as a result of genocide perpetrated by the Croatian Ustasha. Many Serbs in the area took up arms and joined the Chetniks; a Serb nationalist and royalist resistance movement that conducted guerrilla warfare against the Nazis and the communist Partisans. The Chetniks received initial support from the UK and USA.

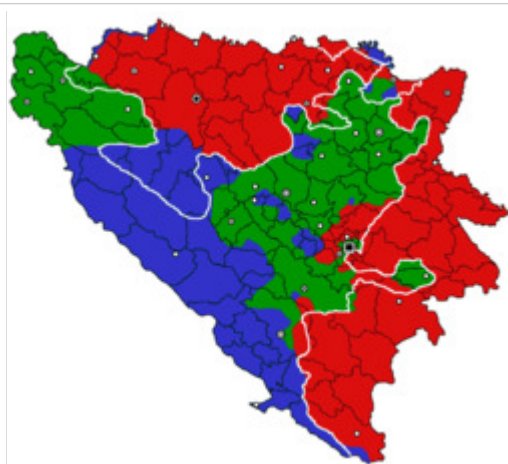
Starting in 1941, Yugoslav communists under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito organized their own multi-ethnic resistance group, the partisans, who fought against both Axis and Chetnik forces. On November 25, 1943 the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia with Tito at its helm held a founding conference in Jajce where Bosnia and Herzegovina was reestablished as a republic within the Yugoslavian federation in its Habsburg borders. Military success eventually prompted the Allies to support the Partisans, but Josip Broz Tito declined their offer to help and relied on his own forces instead. Eventually the end of the war resulted in the establishment of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with the constitution of 1946 officially making Bosnia and

Herzegovina one of six constituent republics in the new state.

Socialist Yugoslavia

Because of its central geographic position within the Yugoslavian federation, post-war Bosnia was strategically selected as a base for the development of the military defense industry. This contributed to a large concentration of arms and military personnel in Bosnia; a significant factor in the war that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. However, Bosnia's existence within Yugoslavia, for the large part, was peaceful and prosperous. Though considered a political backwater of the federation for much of the 50s and 60s, the 70s saw the ascension of a strong Bosnian political elite fueled in part by Tito's leadership in the non-aligned movement and Bosniacs serving in Yugoslavia's diplomatic corps. While working within the communist system, politicians such as Džemal Bijedić, Branko Mikulić and Hamdija Pozderac reinforced and protected the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their efforts proved key during the turbulent period following Tito's death in 1980, and are today considered some of the early steps towards Bosnian independence. However, the republic hardly escaped the increasingly nationalistic climate of the time unscathed. With the fall of communism and the start of the break-up of Yugoslavia, the old communist doctrine of tolerance began to lose its potency, creating an opportunity for nationalist elements in the society to spread their influence.

The 1992-1995 Bosnian War



Situation on the ground in the closing days of the war. Serb-controlled territory shown in red, Croat in blue, Bosniak in green.

The 1990 parliamentary elections led to a national assembly dominated by three ethnically-based parties, which had formed a loose coalition to oust the communists from power. Croatia and Slovenia's subsequent declarations of independence and the warfare that ensued placed Bosnia and Herzegovina and its three constituent peoples in an awkward position. A significant split soon developed on the issue of whether to stay with the Yugoslav federation (overwhelmingly favored among Serbs) or seek independence (overwhelmingly favored among Bosniaks and Croats). A declaration of sovereignty in October 1991 was followed by a referendum for independence from Yugoslavia in February and March 1992 boycotted by the great majority of Bosnian Serbs. The turnout in the independence referendum was 63.7% and 99.4% voted for independence. The controversy lies in the fact that the referendum failed to surpass the constitutional two-third required majority. But Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence nevertheless. Following a tense period of escalating tensions and sporadic military incidents, open warfare began in Sarajevo on April 6.



The parliament building in the centre of Sarajevo burns after being hit by tank fire during the siege in 1992.

International recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina increased diplomatic pressure for the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) to withdraw from the republic's territory which they officially did. However, in fact, the Bosnian Serb members of JNA simply changed insignia, formed the Army of Republika Srpska, and continued fighting. Armed and equipped from JNA stockpiles in Bosnia, supported by volunteers and various paramilitary forces from Serbia, and receiving extensive humanitarian, logistical and financial support from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Republika Srpska's offensives in 1992 managed to place much of the country under its control. By 1993, when an armed conflict erupted between the Sarajevo government and the Croat statelet of Herzeg-Bosnia, about 70% of the country was controlled by Republika Srpska. The ethnic cleansing and civil rights violations against non-serbs were rampant in these areas. Until today the DNA teams are still digging through the mass graves which were left as a result of the campaign. One single most prominent example is the Massacre of Srebrenica, ruled genocide by the Hague Tribunal. The third war party, Bosnian Muslims, also called Bosniaks, was supported financially or otherwise by some pro-Islamic countries in the Middle East and Asia.

In March 1994, the signing of the Washington accords between the leaders of the republican government and Herzeg-Bosnia led to the creation of a joint Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The signing of the Dayton Agreement in Dayton, Ohio by

the presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Alija Izetbegović), Croatia (Franjo Tuđman), and Yugoslavia (Slobodan Milošević) brought a halt to the fighting, roughly establishing the basic structure of the present-day state. The number of identified victims is currently at 97,207, and the recent research estimates the total number to be less than 110,000 killed (civilians and military), and 1.8 million displaced. This is being addressed by the International Commission on Missing Persons.

The Bosnian government charged Serbia of complicity in genocide in Bosnia during the war at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In its verdict (2007), the Court found that Serbia had not committed or conspired to commit genocide. It also concluded that Serbia was not complicit in genocide. It also dismissed Bosnian claims that genocide has been committed on the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It did, however, find that Serbia had violated the obligation under the Genocide Convention to prevent the specific instance of genocide that occurred at Srebrenica in 1995.

Politics and government

As a result of the Dayton Accords, the civilian peace implementation is supervised by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina selected by the Peace Implementation Council. The High Representative has many governmental and legislative powers, including the dismissal of elected and non-elected officials. More recently, several central institutions have been established (such as defense ministry, security ministry, state court, indirect taxation service etc.) in the process of transferring part of the jurisdiction from the entities to the state.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's governments representation is by elites who represent the country's three major groups, with each having a guaranteed share of power.

The Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina rotates among three members (Bosniak, Serb, Croat), each elected as the Chair for an eight-month term within their four-year term as a member. The three members of the Presidency are elected directly by the people (Federation votes for the Bosniak/Croat, Republika Srpska for the Serb).

The Chair of the Council of Ministers is nominated by the Presidency and approved by the House of Representatives. He or she is then responsible for appointing a Foreign Minister, Minister of Foreign Trade, and others as appropriate.

The Parliamentary Assembly is the lawmaking body in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It consists of two houses: the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives. The House of Peoples includes 15 delegates, two-thirds of which come from the Federation (5 Croat and 5 Bosniaks) and one-third from the Republika Srpska (5 Serbs). The House of Representatives is composed of 42 Members, two-thirds elected from the Federation and one-third elected from the Republika Srpska.



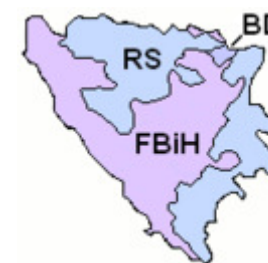
The Bosnian Parliament building after reconstruction.

The Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the supreme, final arbiter of legal matters. It is composed of nine members: four members are selected by the House of Representatives of the Federation, two by the Assembly of the Republika Srpska, and three by the President of the European Court of Human Rights after consultation with the Presidency.

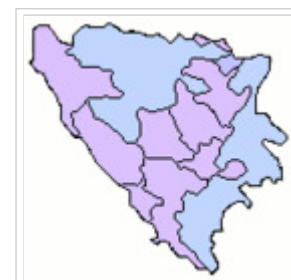
However, the highest political authority in the country is the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the chief executive officer for the international civilian presence in the country. Since 1995, the High Representative was able to bypass the elected parliamentary assembly or to remove elected officials. The methods selected by the High Representative are often seen as dictatorship .

Administrative divisions

Bosnia and Herzegovina has several levels of political structuring under the federal government level. Most important of these levels is the division of the country into two entities: Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina covers some 51% of Bosnia and Herzegovina's total area, while Republika Srpska covers around 49%. The entities, based largely on the territories held by the two warring sides at the time, were formally established by the Dayton peace agreement in 1995 due to the tremendous changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina's ethnic structure. Since 1996 the power of the entities relative to the federal government has decreased significantly. Nonetheless, entities still have numerous powers to themselves. The Brčko federal district in the north of the country was created in 2000 out of land from both entities. It officially belongs to both, but is governed by neither, and functions under a decentralized system of local government. The Brčko district has been praised for maintaining a multiethnic population and a level of prosperity significantly above the national average.

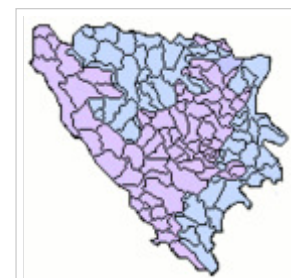


The third level of Bosnia and Herzegovina's political subdivision is manifested in cantons. They are unique to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity, which consists of ten of them. All of them have their own cantonal government, which is under the law of the Federation as a whole. Some cantons are ethnically mixed and have special laws implemented to ensure the equality of all constituent peoples.



The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of ten cantons.

The fourth level of political division in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the municipalities. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided in 74 municipalities, and Republika Srpska in 63. Municipalities also have their own local government, and are typically based around the most significant city or place in their territory. As such, many municipalities have a long tradition and history with their present boundaries. Some others, however, were only created following the recent war after traditional municipalities were split by the IEHL. Each canton in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of several municipalities, with the municipalities themselves further divided into local communities.



Republika Srpska is split into sixty-three municipalities, while the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is split into seventy-four.

Besides entities, cantons, and municipalities, Bosnia and Herzegovina also has four "official" cities. These are: Banja Luka, Mostar, Sarajevo, and East Sarajevo. The territory and government of the cities of Banja Luka and Mostar corresponds to the municipalities of the same name, while the cities of Sarajevo and East Sarajevo officially consist of several municipalities. Cities have their own city government whose power is in between that of the municipalities and cantons (or the entity, in the case of Republika Srpska).

Geography



Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Dianthus flower from central Bosnia.

Bosnia is located in the western Balkans, bordering Croatia (932 km) to the north and south-west, Serbia (302 km) to the east, and Montenegro (225 km) to the southeast. The country is mostly mountainous, encompassing the central Dinaric Alps. The northeastern parts reach into the Pannonian basin, while in the south it borders the Adriatic. The country has only 20 kilometres (12 mi) of coastline, around the town of Neum in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, although surrounded by Croatian peninsulas it is possible to get to the middle of the Adriatic from Neum. Although the city is surrounded by Croatian peninsulas, by United Nations law, Bosnia has a right of passage to the outer sea. Neum has many hotels and is an important tourism destination.

The country's name comes from the two regions Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have a very vaguely defined border between them. Bosnia occupies the northern areas which are roughly four fifths of the entire country, while Herzegovina occupies the rest in the south part of the country.

The major cities are the capital Sarajevo, Banja Luka in the northwest region known as Bosanska Krajina, Bijeljina and Tuzla in the northeast, Zenica in the central part of Bosnia and Mostar, the capital of Herzegovina.

The south part of Bosnia has Mediterranean climate and a great deal of agriculture. Central Bosnia is the most mountainous part of Bosnia featuring predominate mountains Vlasic, Cvrsnica, and Prenj. Eastern Bosnia also features mountains like Trebevic, Jahorina, Igman, Bjelasnica and Treskavica. It was here that the Olympic games were held in 1984.

Eastern Bosnia is heavily forested along the river Drina, and overall close to 50% of Bosnia and Herzegovina is forested. Most forest areas are in Central, Eastern and Western parts of Bosnia. Northern Bosnia contains very fertile agricultural land along the river Sava and the corresponding area is heavily farmed. This farmland is a part of the Parapanonian Plain stretching into neighbouring Croatia and Serbia. The river Sava and corresponding Posavina river basin hold the cities of Brcko, Bosanski Samac, Bosanski Brod and Bosanska Gradiska.

The northwest part of Bosnia is called Bosanska Krajina and holds the cities of Banja Luka, Sanski Most, Cazin, Velika Kladisa and Bihać. Kozara National Park is in this forested region.

There are seven major rivers in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Una river in the northwest part of Bosnia flows along the northern and western border of Bosnia and Croatia and through the Bosnian city of Bihac. It is a very beautiful river and popular for rafting and adventure sports.

The Sana flows through the city of Sanski Most and is a tributary of the river Sava in the north.

The Vrbas flows through the cities of Gornji Vakuf - Uskoplje, Bugojno, Jajce and Banja Luka and reaches the river Sava in the north. The Vrbas flows through the central part of Bosnia and flows outwards to the North.



View of Kik Mountain (right), 1,000 m (3,280 ft); and Rance (Suvi Vrh) Mountain (left), 1,432 m (4,698 ft).



City of Sarajevo at night.

The River Bosna is the longest river in Bosnia and is fully contained within the country as it stretches from its source near Sarajevo to the river Sava in the north.

The Drina flows through the eastern part of Bosnia, at many places in the border between Bosnia and Serbia. The Drina flows through the cities of Foca, Gorazde and Visegrad.

The Neretva river is a large river in Central and Southern Bosnia, flowing from Jablanica south to the Adriatic Sea. The river is famous as it flows through the famous city of Mostar.

The Sava river is the largest river in Bosnia and Herzegovina but not the largest river that is flowing through Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Sava river flows through Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Sava is making a natural border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and towns like Brcko, Bosanski Samac, Bosanska Gradiska lies on the river.

Economy

Bosnia faces the dual problem of rebuilding a war-torn country and introducing market reforms to its formerly centrally-planned economy. One legacy of the previous era is a greatly overstuffed military industry; under former leader Josip Broz Tito, military industries were promoted in the republic, resulting in the development of a large share of Yugoslavia's defense plants but fewer commercially viable firms.

For the most of Bosnia's history, agriculture has been based on small and inefficient privately-owned farms; food has traditionally been a net import for the republic.

When it was a part of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina financed many large construction projects throughout that country. The Highway "Bratstvo i jedinstvo", a pan-Yugoslavian project, which linked Ljubljana (Slovenia) - Zagreb (Croatia) - Belgrade (Serbia) - Skopje (Macedonia), was financed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite the lack of direct benefit to that region. The funneling of capital to that project resulted in an increase in unemployment and a decrease in production in the region.

The war in the 1990s caused a dramatic change in the Bosnian economy. GDP fell 75% and the destruction of physical infrastructure created massive economic trauma. While much of the production capacity has been restored, the Bosnian economy still faces considerable difficulties. Figures show GDP and per capita income increased 10% from 2003 to 2004; this and Bosnia's shrinking national debt being positive trends, but high unemployment and a large trade deficit remain cause for concern.

The national currency is the Euro-pegged Convertible Mark (BAM), controlled by a currency board. Annual inflation is the lowest relative to other countries in the region at 1.9% in 2004. The international debt was \$3.1 billion (2005 est) - the smallest amount of debt owed of all the former Yugoslav republics. Real GDP growth rate was 5% for 2004 according to the Bosnian Central Bank of BiH and Statistical Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has one of the highest income equality rankings in the world, ranking eighth out of 193 nations. United Nations (2006). Table 15: Inequality in income or expenditure (PDF). *Human Development Report 2006* 335. United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved on 2007- 01-09.

Overall value of foreign direct investment (1999–2007):

- 1999: 166 million €
- 2000: 159 million €
- 2001: 133 million €
- 2002: 282 million €
- 2003: 338 million €
- 2004: 534 million €
- 2005: 421 million €
- 2006: 556 million €
- 2007: 1.628 billion €

***Total (1994 - 2007): 4.6 billion €**

The top investor countries (1994 - 2007) in Bosnia and Herzegovina are:

- Austria (953,30 million €)
- Serbia (732,85 million €)
- Croatia (431,35 million €)
- Slovenia (320,13 million €)
- Switzerland (228,45 million €)
- Germany (223,37 million €)
- Italy (94,29 million €)
- Netherlands (63,52 million €)
- United Arab Emirates (56,70 million €)
- Turkey (54,81 million €)
- All Other Countries (892,54 million €)



Legal tender coins from Bosnia-Herzegovina. (Missing: 5KM Coin)



Tuzla

- TOTAL FDI (4.6 billion €)

Foreign investments by sector for 1994-June 2007:

- 37.7% Manufacturing
- 21% Banking
- 4.9% Services
- 9.6% Trade
- 0.30% Transport
- 1% Tourism

SOURCE: **Foreign Investment Promotion Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina - FIPA BiH**

Tourism

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a top performer in recent years in terms of tourism development; tourist arrivals have grown by an average of 24% annually from 1995 to 2000 (360,758 in 2002, 500,000 in 2006).

According to an estimation of the World Tourism Organization, Bosnia and Herzegovina will have the third highest tourism growth rate in the world between 1995 and 2020.

Lonely Planet, in ranking the best cities in the world, ranked Sarajevo, the national capital and host of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games, as #43, ahead of Dubrovnik at #59, Ljubljana at #84, Bled at #90, Belgrade at #113, and Zagreb at #135. Tourism in Sarajevo is chiefly focused on historical, religious, and cultural aspects (see Sites of interest in Sarajevo). Bosnia has also become an increasingly popular skiing and Ecotourism destination .

More recently, the town of Visoko has experienced a major increase in tourist arrivals due to the alleged discovery of the Bosnian pyramids, attracting in excess of 10,000 tourists in the first weekend of June 2006.

Some of the tourist attractions in Bosnia and Herzegovina include:

- Banja Luka, the "Green City";
- Bihać and the Una River;
- Jajce and its waterfall;
- Medjugorje, site of an alleged Marian apparition;
- Mostar, the site of Stari Most;
- Mount Bjelašnica and Jahorina, sites of the XIV Olympic Winter Games.
- Neum on the coast;
- Sarajevo on the new Project City.
- Stolac, the Begovina neighbourhood and Radimlja tombstones;
- Višegrad and its old bridge;
- Visoko, site of the alleged Bosnian pyramids

Education



Neum, on the Bosnian-Herzegovinian coastline.



Waterfalls in Jajce.



Stari Most in Mostar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Primary education lasts for nine years. Secondary education is provided by general and technical secondary schools where studies last for four years. All forms of secondary schooling include an element of vocational training. Pupils graduating from general secondary schools obtain the Matura and can enroll in any faculty or academy by passing a qualification examination prescribed by the institution. Students graduating technical subjects obtain a Diploma.

As part of the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia enjoyed a highly-developed educational system. Two of Bosnia's natives were awarded Nobel Prizes: Vladimir Prelog, for chemistry in 1975 , and Ivo Andrić, for literature in 1961 .

The recent war created a "brain drain" and resulted in many Bosnians working in high-tech, academic and professional occupations in North America, Europe and Australia. Such situation is viewed as an economic opportunity for building a vibrant economy in today's Bosnia. However, only few of Bosnia's diaspora are returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina with their experience, Western education and exposure to modern business practices. Most still lack professional incentives to justify widespread and permanent return to their homeland.

Bosnia's current educational system with seven universities, one in every major city, plus satellite campuses—continues to turn out highly-educated graduates in math, science and literature. However, they have not been modernized in last 15 years due to war, various political and economic reasons and as a result do not meet Western educational standards which are part of criteria for EU membership. The need for reform of current Bosnian education system is generally acknowledged although specific methods for its change have still not been formulated.



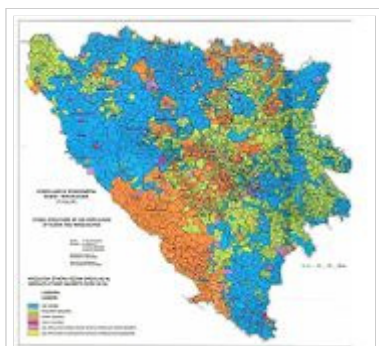
Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo.

Demographics

In 1910 Bosnia and Herzegovina had a population of 1,898,044 where 825,918 (43.49%) were Orthodox, 612,137 were Muslims (32.25%), 434,061 were Catholics (22.87%) and 26,428 (1.39%) others.

According to the 1931 census, there were 2,323,555 persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Orthodox 1,028,139 (44.25%); Muslims 718,079 (30.90%); Catholics 547,949 (23.58%); other: 29,388 (1.27%) of the total population.

The list of victims of the 1941-1945 war, made in 1964, is kept in the Documentation of the Federal Bureau of Statistics in Belgrade. It contains the names of 179,173 persons killed in the war born in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This list is not complete.



Ethnic map based on the 1991 census. The different colors show majority in every settlement:
 Serbs
 Muslims
 Croats
 no majority

Large population migrations during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s have caused a large demographic shift in the country. No census has been taken since 1991, and none is planned for the near future due to political disagreements. Since censuses are the only statistical, inclusive, and objective way to analyze demographics, almost all of the post-war data is simply an estimate. Most sources, however, estimate the population at roughly 4 million (representing a decrease of 350,000 since 1991).

According to the 1991 census, Bosnia and Herzegovina had a population of 4,377,033. Ethnically, 1,902,956 (43.47%) were Muslims by nationality, 1,366,104 (31.21%) Serbs, and 760,852 (17.38%) Croats, with 242,682 (5.54%) Yugoslavs and 104,439 (2.38%) others and unknown. According to 2000 data from the CIA World Factbook, Bosnia and Herzegovina is ethnically 48% Bosniak, 37.1% Serb, 14.3% Croat and 0.6% Other.

There is a strong correlation between ethnic identity and religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as is shown by the fact that 99% of Bosniaks are Muslims, 98% of Croats are Catholics whilst 99% of Serbs are Orthodox Christians. Tensions between the three constitutional peoples remain high in BiH and often provoke political disagreements.

According to the CIA World Factbook, Bosnia's largest ethnic groups are Bosniaks (48%), Serbs (37,1%) and Croats (14,3%). Likewise, 40% of the population are (Sunni) Muslims, 31% are Orthodox Christians, 15% are Roman Catholics, and 14% are atheists or have other religious affiliation.

Sports

The most important international sporting event in the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the hosting of the **14th Winter Olympics**, held in Sarajevo from the 8th to the 23rd of February 1984.

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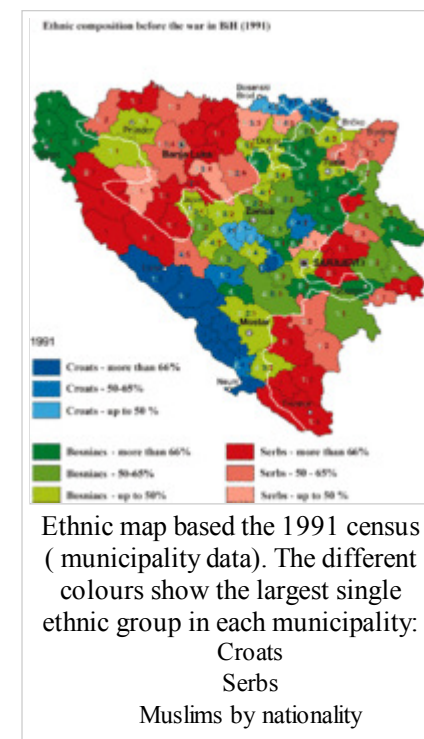


Image:DemoBiH2006.PNG

Ethnic map based on 2006 municipality data (estimated - not officially accurate). The different colours show the largest single ethnic group in each municipality:
 Croats
 Serbs
 Muslims by nationality

Bosnia and Herzegovina has produced many athletes. Many of them were famous in the Yugoslav national teams before Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence.

Some notable local Olympians were:

- Rome, 1960: Tomislav Knez and Velimir Sombolac (football),
- Munich, 1972: Abaz Arslanagić, Milorad Karalić, Nebojša Popović, Đorđe Lavrinić, Dobrivoje Seleć (handball)
- Moscow, 1980: Mirza Delibašić and Ratko Radovanović (basketball)
- Los Angeles, 1984: Zdravko Rađenović, Zlatan Arnautović (handball) and Anto Josipović (boxing).

The Borac handball club has won seven Yugoslav National Championships, as well as the European Championship Cup in 1976 and the International Handball Federation Cup in 1991.

The Bosna basketball club from Sarajevo were European Champions in 1979. The Yugoslav national basketball team, which medaled in every world championship from 1963 through 1990, included Bosnian players such as Dražen Dalipagić and Mirza Delibašić. Bosnia and Herzegovina regularly qualifies for the European Championship in Basketball. Jedinstvo Women's basketball club, based in Tuzla, has won the 1979 European Championships in Florence.

The Tuzla-Sinalco karate club from Tuzla has won the most Yugoslav championships, as well as four European Championships and one World Championship.

The Bosnian chess team has been Champion of Yugoslavia seven times , in addition to winning four European championships: 1994 in Lyon, 1999 in Bugojno, 2000 in Neum, and 2001 in Kalitea. Borki Predojević (from Teslić) chess club has also won two European Championships: Litohoreu (Greece) in 1999, and Kalitei (Greece) in 2001.

Middle-weight **boxer** Marjan Beneš has won several B&H Championships, Yugoslavian Championships and the European Championship. In 1978 he won the World Title against Elish Obeda from Bahamas. Another middle-weight boxer, Ante Josipović won the Olympic Gold in Los Angeles, 1984. He also won Yugoslavian Championship in 1982, the Championship of the Balkans in 1983, and the Beograd Trophy in 1985.

Football is most popular sport in B&H. It dates from 1903, but its popularity grew significantly after the World War II. At local level, Sarajevo (1967 and 1984), Željezničar (1972) have both won the Yugoslavian Championship. The former Yugoslav national football team has included a number of Bosnian players, such as Josip Katalinski, Dušan Bajević, Ivica – Ćiro Blažević, Ivica Osim, Safet Sušić, and Mirsad Fazlagić.

In football, the independent Bosnia and Herzegovina national football team has not qualified for a European or World Championship. Bosnian national teams have struggled to draft the best national players. Many players born in Bosnia and Herzegovina choose to play for other countries due to their ethnic identification and because of higher salaries offered by other teams. For example Mario Stanić and Mile Mitić were both born in Bosnia, but play for Croatia and Serbia respectively. Other internationally famous players from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who have made similar choices, are: Zoran Savić, Vladimir Radmanović, Zoran Planinić , Aleksandar Nikolić and Savo Milošević.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the current world champion in paralympic volleyball. Many of the players lost their legs in the War of 1992-1995.

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Bulgaria

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Bulgaria (Bulgarian: България, transliterated: *Balgariya*, pronounced IPA: [bəl'garija]), officially the **Republic of Bulgaria** (Република България, *Republika Balgariya*, pronounced IPA: [re'publi'ka bəl'garija], a state in Southeastern Europe, borders on five other countries: Romania to the north (mostly along the River Danube), Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia to the west, and Greece and Turkey to the south. The Black Sea defines the extent of the country to the east.

Bulgaria comprises the classical regions of Moesia, Thrace, and Macedonia. Old European culture within the territory of present-day Bulgaria started to produce golden artifacts by the fifth millennium BC.

The country preserves the traditions (in ethnic name, language, and alphabet) of the First Bulgarian Empire (632/681 – 1018), which at times covered most of the Balkans and spread its alphabet, literature and culture among the Slavic and other peoples of Eastern Europe. Centuries later, with the decline of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185 – 1396/1422), the country came under Ottoman rule for nearly five centuries. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 led to the re-establishment of a Bulgarian state as a constitutional monarchy in 1878, with the Treaty of San Stefano marking the birth of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom. After World War II, Bulgaria became a communist state and part of the Eastern Bloc. In 1990, after the Revolutions of 1989, the Communist party gave up its monopoly on power and Bulgaria transitioned to democracy and free-market capitalism.

Currently Bulgaria functions as a parliamentary democracy under a unitary constitutional republic. A member of the European Union since 2007 and of NATO since 2004, it has a population of approximately 7.7 million, with Sofia as its capital and largest city.

Geography

Geographically and in terms of climate, Bulgaria features notable diversity with the landscape ranging from the Alpine snow-capped peaks in Rila, Pirin and the Balkan Mountains to the mild and sunny Black

Република България
Republika Balgariya
Republic of Bulgaria



Flag



Coat of arms

Motto: Съединението прави силата (Bulgarian)
"Saedinenieto pravi silata" (transliteration)
"Unity makes power"¹

Anthem: Мила Родино (Bulgarian)
Mila Rodino (transliteration)
Dear Motherland



Sea coast; from the typically continental Danubian Plain (ancient Moesia) in the north to the strong Mediterranean climatic influence in the valleys of Macedonia and in the lowlands in the southernmost parts of Thrace.

Phytogeographically, Bulgaria straddles the Illyrian and Euxinian provinces of the Circumboreal region within the Boreal kingdom. According to the WWF and to the European Environment Agency's Digital Map of European Ecological Regions, the territory of Bulgaria subdivides into two main ecoregions: the Balkan mixed forests and Rhodope montane mixed forests. However, small parts of four other ecoregions also occur on Bulgarian territory.

Relief

The Balkan Peninsula derives its name from the *Balkan* or *Stara Planina* mountain-range, which runs through the centre of Bulgaria and extends into eastern Serbia.



The Seven Rila Lakes in Bulgaria

Bulgaria comprises portions of the regions known in classical times as Moesia, Thrace, and Macedonia. The mountainous southwest of the country has two alpine ranges — Rila and Pirin — and further east stand the lower but more extensive Rhodope Mountains. The Rila range includes the highest peak of the Balkan Peninsula, Musala, at 2,925 meters (9,596 ft); the long range of the Balkan mountains runs west-east through the middle of the country, north of the famous Rose Valley. Hilly country and plains lie in the southeast, along the Black Sea coast in the east, and along Bulgaria's main river, the Danube in the north.

Hydrography

Location of Bulgaria (orange)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – on the European continent (camel & white) – in the European Union (camel) [Legend] 	
Capital (and largest city)	Sofia
Official languages	Bulgarian
Demonym	Bulgarian
Government	Parliamentary republic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President - Prime Minister 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgi Parvanov Sergey Stanishev
Formation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Founded - Last previously independent state² - Autonomy within the Ottoman Empire - Unification with Eastern Rumelia - Officially recognized independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 681 1422 1878 1885 1908
EU accession	January 1, 2007
Area	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total - Water (%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 110,910 km² (112th) 42,823 sq mi 0.3
Population	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2008 estimate - 2001 census 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7,640,238 (93rd) 7,932,984

- Density	68.9/km ² (124th) 185/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$92.894 billion (63rd)
- Per capita	\$12,252 (65th)
GDP (nominal)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$49.686 billion (75th)
- Per capita	\$6,546 (88th)
Gini (2003)	29.2 (low)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.824 (high) (53rd)
Currency	Lev ³ (BGN)
Time zone	EET (UTC+2)
- Summer (DST)	EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.bg ⁴
Calling code	+359
<p>1 " Bulgaria's National Flag". Bulgarian Government (3 October 2005). Retrieved on 2007- 01-01.</p> <p>2 Vidin Tsardom.</p> <p>3 plural <i>Leva</i>.</p> <p>4 Bulgarians, in common with citizens of other European Union member-states, also use the .eu domain.</p> <p>5 Cell phone system GSM and NMT 450i</p> <p>6 Domestic power supply 220 V/50 Hz, Schuko (CEE 7/4) sockets</p>	

Bulgaria has a dense network of about 540 rivers, but with the notable exception of the Danube, most have short lengths and low water-level.

Most rivers flow through mountainous areas; fewer in the Danubian Plain, Upper Thracian Plain and especially Dobrudzha. Two catchment basins exist: the Black Sea (57% of the territory and 42% of the rivers) and the Aegean Sea (43% of the territory and 58% of the rivers) basins. The longest river located solely in Bulgarian territory, the Iskar, has a length of 368 km. Other major rivers include the Struma and the Maritsa River in the south.

Rila and Pirin feature around 260 glacial lakes; the country also has several large lakes on the Black Sea coast and more than 2,200 dam lakes. Many mineral springs exist, located mainly in the south-western and central parts of the country along the faults between the mountains.

The Bulgarian word for spa, *баня*, transliterated as *banya*, appears in some of the names of more than 50 spa towns and resorts including Sapareva Banya, Hisarya, Sandanski, Bankya, Varshets, Pavel Banya, Devin, Velingrad and many others.

Climate

Bulgaria has a temperate climate, with cool and damp winters, very hot and dry summers, and Mediterranean influence along the Black Sea coast. The barrier effect of the Balkan Mountains influences climate throughout the country: northern Bulgaria gets slightly cooler and receives more rain than the southern regions. Precipitation in Bulgaria averages about 630 millimetres per year. Drier areas include Dobrudzha and the northern coastal strip, while the higher parts of the Rila and Stara Planina Mountains receive the highest levels of precipitation. In summer, temperatures in the south of Bulgaria often exceed 40 degrees Celsius, but remain cooler by the coast. A site near Plovdiv has recorded the highest known temperature: 46.7 degrees Celsius.

Urban geography



A waterfall in Pirin













The Vacha Dam in the Rhodope Mountains



Landscapes from Bulgaria. Clockwise from top left: a cloudy forest; Todorka Peak in Pirin; Belogradchik Rocks; Lake Shabla on the Black Sea coast.

Bulgaria's larger cities include:

Place	City	Population	Place	City	Population
1. 	Sofia	1,380,406	6. 	Stara Zagora	152,619
2. 	Plovdiv	376,918	7. 	Pleven	121,700
3. 	Varna	349,031	8. 	Sliven	106,434
4. 	Burgas	220,985	9. 	Dobrich	103,309
5. 	Rousse	167,715	10. 	Shumen	94,888

Bulgaria operates a scientific station, the St. Kliment Ohridski Base, on Livingston Island in the South Shetland Islands off the coast of Antarctica.

History

Prehistory and Antiquity

Further information: Neolithic Europe, Bronze Age Europe, and Thrace}



The Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari, a 3rd century BC tomb listed as one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites

Prehistoric cultures in the Bulgarian lands include the Neolithic Hamangia culture and Vinča culture (6th to 3rd millennia BC), the eneolithic Varna culture (5th millennium BC; see also Varna Necropolis), and the Bronze Age Ezero culture. The Karanovo chronology serves as a gauge for the prehistory of the wider Balkans region.

The Thracians, the earliest known identifiable people to inhabit the present-day territory of Bulgaria, have left traceable marks among all the Balkan region despite its tumultuous history of many conquests. The Panagyuriste treasure ranks as one of the most splendid achievements of the Thracian culture.

The Thracians lived divided into numerous separate tribes until King Teres united most of them around 500 BC in the Odrysian kingdom, which peaked under the kings Sitalces and Cotys I (383-359 BC). In 188 BC the Romans invaded Thrace, and warfare continued until 45 AD when Rome finally conquered the region. The conquerors quickly Romanised the population. By the time the Slavs arrived, the Thracians had already lost their indigenous identity and had dwindled in number following frequent invasions.

The Slavs and Old Great Bulgaria

The Slavs emerged from their original homeland (location not definitively established: see Slavic peoples) in the early 6th century and spread to most of the eastern Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Balkans, forming in the process three main branches — the West Slavs, the East Slavs and the South Slavs. The eastern South Slavs became part of the ancestors of the modern Bulgarians. They assimilated what remained of the Thracians. Modern Bulgarians derive much of their culture, language and self-determination from these early immigrants.

In 632, the Bulgars, an ancient civilisation/nation that formed numerous kingdoms throughout Eurasia and stemmed from a largely enigmatic socio-cultural lineage (theorised as of either Aryan or Turkic descent), originally from Central Asia, formed under the leadership of Khan Kubrat an independent state called Great Bulgaria, situated between the lower course of the Danube to the west, the Black Sea and the Azov Sea to the south, the Kuban River to the east, and the Donets River to the north.

Pressure from the Khazars led to the subjugation of Great Bulgaria in the second half of the 7th century. Some of the Bulgars from that territory later migrated to the northeast to form a new state called Volga Bulgaria (around the confluence of the Volga and Kama Rivers), which lasted until the 13th century.

First Bulgarian Empire



The Battle of Anchialos, in which the Bulgarians defeated the Byzantines: one of the bloodiest battles of the Middle Ages.



The wedding of the daughter of Tsar Samuil

Kubrat's successor, Khan Asparuh, migrated with some of the Bulgar tribes to the lower courses of the rivers Danube, Dniester and Dniepr (known as *Ongal*), and conquered Moesia and Scythia Minor (Dobrudzha) from the Byzantine Empire, expanding his new khanate further into the Balkan Peninsula. A peace treaty with Byzantium in 681 and the establishment of the Bulgar capital of Pliska south of the Danube mark the beginning of the First Bulgarian Empire. At the same time one of Asparuh's brothers, Kuber, settled with another Bulgar group in present-day Macedonia.

During the siege of Constantinople in 717-718 the Bulgars honoured their treaty with the Byzantines by sending troops to help the populace of the imperial city. In the

decisive battle the Bulgarians killed 30,000 to 60,000 Arabs. Contemporaries across the continent called the Bulgarian Emperor Tervel the Saviour of Europe.

The influence and territorial expansion of Bulgaria increased further during the rule of Khan Krum, who in 811 won a decisive victory against the Byzantine army led by Nicephorus I in the Battle of Pliska.

In 864, Bulgaria accepted Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

Bulgaria became a major European power in the ninth and the tenth centuries, while fighting with the Byzantine Empire for the control of the Balkans. This happened under the rule (852–889) of Boris I. During his reign, the Cyrillic alphabet originated in Preslav and Ohrid, adapted from the Glagolitic alphabet invented by the monks Saints Cyril and Methodius.

The Cyrillic alphabet became the basis for further cultural development. Centuries later, this alphabet, along with the Old Bulgarian language, fostered the intellectual written language (*lingua franca*) for Eastern Europe, known as Church Slavonic. The greatest territorial extension of the Bulgarian Empire — covering most of the Balkans — occurred under Simeon I, the first Bulgarian Tsar (Emperor), son of Boris I.

However, Simeon's greatest achievement consisted of Bulgaria developing a rich, unique Christian Slavonic culture, which became an example for the other Slavonic peoples in Eastern Europe and ensured the continued existence of the Bulgarian nation regardless of the centrifugal forces that threatened to tear it into pieces throughout its long and war-ridden history.

Following a decline in the mid-tenth century (worn out by wars with Croatia, by frequent Serbian rebellions sponsored by Byzantine gold, and by disastrous Magyar and Pecheneg invasions,) Bulgaria collapsed in the face of an assault of the *Rus'* in 969-971.

The Byzantines then began campaigns to conquer Bulgaria. In 971, they seized the capital Preslav and captured Emperor Boris II. Resistance continued under Tsar Samuil in the western Bulgarian lands for nearly half a century. The country managed to recover and defeated the Byzantines in several major battles taking the control of the most of the Balkans and in 991 invaded the Serbian state. However, the Byzantines led by Basil II (Basil the Bulgar-Slayer) destroyed the Bulgarian state in 1018 after their victory at Kleidion.

Byzantine Bulgaria

In the first decade after the establishment of Byzantine rule, no evidence remains of any major attempt at resistance or any uprising of the Bulgarian population or nobility. Given the existence of such irreconcilable opponents to Byzantium as Krakra, Nikulitsa, Dragash and others, such apparent passivity seems difficult to explain. Some historians explain this fact by concessions that Basil II granted the Bulgarian nobility in order to gain their obedience. In the first place, Basil II guaranteed the indivisibility of Bulgaria in its former geographic borders and did not abolish officially the local rule of the Bulgarian nobility that now became part of Byzantine aristocracy as archons or strategs. Second, special charters (royal decrees) of Basil II recognised the autocephaly of the Bulgarian Archbishopric of Ohrid and set up its boundaries, dioceses, property and other privileges.

The people of Bulgaria challenged Byzantine rule several times in the 11th and then again later in the early 12th century. The biggest uprising occurred under the leadership of Peter II Delyan, (proclaimed Emperor of Bulgaria in Belgrade in 1040). In the mid to late 11th century, the Normans, fresh from their recent conquests in southern Italy and Sicily, landed in the Balkans and began advancing against the Byzantine Empire. It took the Byzantines until 1185 before the Normans were driven out but until then they posed a constant threat to Byzantine Bulgaria. In 1091 another invasion came in the form of the Pechenegs. However, these too were crushed at Levounion and again in c. 1120 by the Byzantine Empire. After that, the Hungarians made an attempt to increase their influence beyond the Danube river; John Comnenus' campaigns along the Danube eventually drove back the Hungarians as well by c.1140. It would be another 45 years before Bulgaria would attain independence. Until that time, Bulgarian nobles ruled the province in the name of the Byzantine Empire until a rebellion by Ivan Asen I and Peter IV of Bulgaria led to the establishment of the Second Bulgarian Empire.

Second Bulgarian Empire



Bulgarians nominate Peter II Delyan as Emperor of Bulgaria.
John Skylitzes, Chronicle

From 1185, the Second Bulgarian Empire once again established Bulgaria as an important power in the Balkans for two more centuries. With its capital based in Veliko Turnovo and under the Asen dynasty, this empire fought for dominance in the region against the Byzantine Empire, the Latin Empire and Hungary, reaching its zenith under Ivan Asen II (1218–1241). As a result of the Tatar invasions (beginning in the later 13th century), of internal conflicts and of the constant attacks from the Byzantines and the Hungarians, the power of the country declined until the end of the 13th century. From 1300, under Emperor Theodore Svetoslav Bulgaria regained its strength, but by the end of the fourteenth century the country had disintegrated into several feudal principalities, which the Ottoman Empire eventually conquered. A Polish-Hungarian crusade under the rule of Władysław III of Poland to free the Balkans was crushed in 1444 in the battle of Varna.

During the 13th and 14th centuries, Bulgarian culture flourished. The architecture of the Tarnovo Artistic School and the painting of the Tarnovo Artistic School produced some splendid achievements. Emperor Ivan Alexander won a reputation as a great *maecenas* and patron of culture.

Ottoman rule

In the mid 13th century, the Second Bulgarian Empire dominated the Balkan Peninsula. By the end of the following century factional divisions between Bulgarian feudal landlords (*boyars*) had gravely weakened the cohesion of the Empire which therefore collapsed before the invading Ottoman armies in the 1390s. The Bulgarians, most of whom lived in the quadrilateral contained by the lower Danube, the Aegean coast of Thrace, the Black Sea and the valley of the Vardar in the west, now entered upon five hundred years of Ottoman domination.

During the second half of the 14th century Bulgaria became an Ottoman vassalage. Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I annexed Bulgaria following his victory against a crusade at the Battle of Nicopolis in 1396. According to some historians the five centuries of Ottoman rule featured violence and oppression. The Ottomans decimated the Bulgarian population, which lost most of its cultural relics. Turkish authorities destroyed most of the medieval Bulgarian fortresses in order to prevent rebellions. Large towns and the areas where Ottoman power predominated remained severely depopulated until the nineteenth century.

The new authorities dismantled Bulgarian institutions at anything above the village or communal level, and merged the separate Bulgarian Church into the Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople (Istanbul), although a small, semi-independent Bulgarian Church did survive until 1767. The conquerors also assumed virtual ownership of the land, though they vested legal ownership in Allah's representative on earth, the Sultan. The new system of land-tenure imposed by the Turks functioned to provide the Ottoman army with cavalry troops: the *sipahi* or landlord had to provide a number of men proportionate to the amount of land he held, while maintained economically by his tenants, or *rayahs*. For the Bulgarian peasant the new system offered greater security than the old Bulgarian Empire had provided and exceptional privileges accrued to peasants living on *vakif* land — land with its income permanently entailed for the upkeep of a religious or charitable institution. All tenants, Christian or Muslim, who lived on *vakif* land had the right to such privileges, but in general the Christian subjects of the Sultan had to endure a number of disabilities; they usually paid more taxes than Moslems, they lacked legal equality with Moslems, they could not carry arms, their clothes could not rival those of Moslems in colour, nor could their churches tower as high as mosques. The new rulers made few attempts to enforce conversion to Islam and relatively few Bulgarians felt attracted to the new ruling faith by the legal privileges its adherents enjoyed. Those who did convert, the



The ktitors of the Boyana Church
sevastokrator Kaloyan and his
wife Desislava.

Pomaks, retained their native language, dress and customs, and lived primarily in the Rhodope mountains.

The Ottoman system at its height did much to protect the *rayah*, but by the 17th century the system had started to decline, and at the end of the 18th had all but collapsed. Central government weakened over the decades, and this had allowed a number of local adventurers and freebooters to establish personal ascendancy over separate regions. These local *ayans* employed armed retainers and having established their authority frequently imposed new and far more arduous tenancies on the peasantry under their control. During the last two decades of the 18th and first decades of the 19th centuries the Balkan Peninsula dissolved into virtual anarchy, a period known in Bulgarian as the *kurdjaliistvo* after the armed bands or *kurdjali* who plagued the area at this time. In many regions thousands of peasants fled from the countryside either to local towns or more probably to the hills or forests; some even fled beyond the Danube to Moldova, Wallachia or Southern Russia.

In the 18th and especially during the 19th century, conditions improved in certain areas. Some towns such as Gabrovo, Tryavna, Karlovo, Lovech, Skopie prospered. The Bulgarian peasants actually possessed their land, although it officially belonged to the sultan. The nineteenth century also brought improved communications, transportation and trade. The first factory in the Bulgarian lands opened in Sliven in 1834, and the first railway system started running (between Rouse and Varna) in 1865.

Throughout the five Ottoman centuries Bulgarian people organized many attempts to re-establish their own state. The National awakening of Bulgaria became one of the key factors in the struggle for liberation. In the 19th century, there came into existence the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee and the Internal Revolutionary Organisation led by liberal revolutionaries such as Vasil Levski, Hristo Botev, Lyuben Karavelov and many others. In 1876, the April uprising broke out: the largest and best-organized Bulgarian rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. This rebellion, however, did not receive the expected support from the Bulgarian masses.

The Kingdom of Bulgaria



Shipka memorial (located near Kazanlak) — built in honour of the Battle of Shipka Pass one of the important symbols of Bulgarian liberation.



Following the Russo-Turkish War, 1877-1878 (when Russian soldiers together with a Romanian expeditionary force and volunteer Bulgarian troops defeated the Ottoman armies), the Treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878), set up an autonomous Bulgarian principality. The Western Great Powers immediately rejected the treaty: they became aware that a large Slavic country in the Balkans might serve Russian interests. This led to the Treaty of Berlin (1878) which provided for an autonomous Bulgarian principality comprising Moesia and the region of Sofia. Alexander von Battenberg took the position of Bulgaria's first Prince. Most of Thrace was included in the autonomous region of Eastern Rumelia, whereas the rest of Thrace and all of Macedonia was returned under the sovereignty of the Ottomans. After the Serbo-Bulgarian War and unification with Eastern Rumelia in 1885, the principality was proclaimed a fully independent kingdom on October 5 (September 22 O.S.), 1908, during the reign of Ferdinand I of Bulgaria.

Ferdinand, a prince from the ducal family of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, became the Bulgarian Prince after Alexander von Battenberg abdicated in 1886 following a *coup d'état* staged by pro-Russian army-officers. (Although the counter-*coup* coordinated by Stefan Stambolov succeeded, Prince Alexander decided not to remain the Bulgarian ruler without the approval of Alexander III of Russia.) The struggle for liberation of the Bulgarians in the

Adrianople, Vilayet and Macedonia continued throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries culminating with the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising organised by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization in 1903.

The Balkan Wars and World War I

In 1912 and 1913, Bulgaria became involved in the Balkan Wars, first entering into conflict alongside Greece, Serbia and Montenegro against the Ottoman Empire. The First Balkan War (1912-1913) proved a success for the Bulgarian army, but a conflict over the division of Macedonia arose amongst the victorious allies. The Second Balkan War (1913) pitted Bulgaria against Greece and Serbia, joined by Romania and Turkey. After its defeat in the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria lost considerable territory conquered in the first war, as well as Southern Dobrudzha and parts of the region of Macedonia.

During World War I, Bulgaria found itself fighting on the losing side as a result of its alliance with the Central Powers. Defeat in 1918 led to new territorial losses (the Western Outlands to Serbia, Western Thrace to Greece and the re-conquered Southern Dobrudzha to Romania). The Balkan Wars and World War I led to the influx of over 250,000 Bulgarian refugees from Macedonia, Eastern and Western Thrace and Southern Dobrudzha.

The interwar years



Bulgarians overrun a Turkish position at bayonet-point during the First Balkan War.

In September 1918, Tsar Ferdinand abdicated in favour of his son Boris III in order to head off revolutionary tendencies. Under the Treaty of Neuilly (November 1919), Bulgaria ceded its Aegean coastline to Greece, recognized the existence of Yugoslavia, ceded nearly all of its Macedonian territory to that new state, and had to give Dobrudzha back to the Romanians. The country had to reduce its army to 20,000 men, and to pay reparations exceeding \$400 million. Bulgarians generally refer to the results of the treaty as the "Second National Catastrophe".

Elections in March 1920 gave the Agrarians a large majority, and Aleksandar Stamboliyski formed Bulgaria's first peasant government. He faced huge social problems, but succeeded in carrying out many reforms, although opposition from the middle and upper classes, the landlords and the officers of the army remained powerful. In March 1923 Stamboliyski signed an agreement with the Kingdom of Yugoslavia recognising the new border and agreeing to suppress Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO), which favoured a war to regain Macedonia from Bulgaria. This triggered a nationalist reaction, and the Bulgarian coup d'état of June 9, 1923 eventually resulted in Stamboliyski's assassination. A right-wing government under Aleksandar Tsankov took power, backed by the army and the VMRO, which waged a White terror against the Agrarians and the Communists. In 1926 the Tsar persuaded Tsankov to resign, a more moderate government under Andrey Lyapchev took office and an amnesty was proclaimed, although the Communists remained banned. A popular alliance including the re-organised Agrarians won elections in 1931 under the name Popular Bloc.

In May 1934 another coup took place, removing the Popular Bloc from power and establishing an authoritarian military régime headed by Kimon Georgiev. A year later Tsar Boris managed to remove the military régime from power, restoring a form of parliamentary rule (without the re-establishment of the political parties) and under his own strict control. The Tsar's regime proclaimed neutrality, but gradually Bulgaria gravitated into alliance with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

World War II

After regaining control over Southern Dobrudzha in 1940, Bulgaria became allied with the Axis Powers, although no Bulgarian soldiers participated in the war against the USSR. During World War II Nazi Germany allowed Bulgaria to occupy parts of Greece and of Yugoslavia. Bulgaria became one of only three countries (along with Finland and Denmark) that saved its entire Jewish population (around 50,000 people) from the Nazi camps by refusing to comply with a 31 August 1943 resolution. The Bulgarian authorities did however send Jews in territories newly-acquired (from Greece and Yugoslavia) to death-camps in response to a direct request from Germany.

In September 1944, the Soviet army entered Bulgaria, enabling the Bulgarian Communists (the Bulgarian Workers Party) to seize power and establish a communist state. In 1944, Bulgaria's forces turned against the country's former ally, Germany. The 450,000-man army in 1944 dwindled to 130,000 by 1945.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria

After World War II, Bulgaria fell within the Soviet sphere of influence. It became a People's Republic in 1946 and one of the USSR's staunchest allies. In the

<http://cd3wd.com> wikipedia-for-schools <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 126 of 867



Prince Ferdinand proclaimed himself Tsar of Bulgaria in 1908. However, internationally his title equated to "King", not to "Emperor" (as the title *Tsar* might suggest).

late 1970s, it began normalizing relations with Greece. The People's Republic ended in 1989 as many Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, as well as the Soviet Union itself, began to collapse. Opposition forces removed the Bulgarian Communist leader Todor Zhivkov and his right-hand man Milko Balev from power on 10 November 1989.

The Republic of Bulgaria

In February 1990, the Communist Party voluntarily gave up its monopoly on power, and in June 1990 the first free elections since 1931 took place, won by the moderate wing of the Communist Party (renamed the Bulgarian Socialist Party — BSP). In July 1991, the country adopted a new constitution which provided for a relatively weak elected President and for a Prime Minister accountable to the legislature.

The anti-Communist Union of Democratic Forces took office, and between 1992 and 1994 carried through the privatization of land and industry, but faced massive unemployment and economic difficulties. The reaction against economic reform allowed BSP to take office again in 1995, but by 1996 the BSP government had also encountered difficulties, and in the presidential elections of that year the UDF's Petar Stoyanov was elected. In 1997, the BSP government collapsed and the UDF came to power. Unemployment, however, remained high and the electorate became increasingly dissatisfied with both parties.

Relations with Turkey began to normalise in the 1990s.

On June 17, 2001, Simeon II, the son of Tsar Boris III and the former Head of state (as Tsar of Bulgaria from 1943 to 1946), won a narrow victory in democratic elections. The king's party — National Movement Simeon II ("NMSII") — won 120 out of 240 seats in Parliament and overturned the two pre-existing political parties. Simeon's popularity declined during his four-year rule as Prime Minister, and the BSP won the elections in 2005, but could not form a single-party government and had to seek a coalition.

Since 1989, Bulgaria has held multi-party elections and privatized its economy, but economic difficulties and a tide of corruption have led over 800,000 Bulgarians, most of them qualified professionals, to emigrate in a "brain drain". Since a reform package introduced in 1997, the economy has returned to growth. Bulgaria became a member of NATO in 2004 and of the European Union in 2007.

Politics



The Largo, the home of the Presidency and of the Council of Ministers

Bulgaria joined NATO on March 29, 2004 and signed the European Union Treaty of Accession on 25 April 2005. It became a full member of the European Union on 1 January 2007. The country had joined the United Nations in 1955, and became a founding member of OSCE in 1995. As a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty, Bulgaria takes part in the administration of the territories situated south of 60° south latitude.

Georgi Parvanov, the President of Bulgaria since 22 January 2002, won re-election on 29 October 2006 and began his second term in office in January 2007. (Bulgarian voters directly elect their presidents for a five-year term with the right to one re-election.) The president serves as the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He also chairs the Consultative Council for National Security. While unable to initiate legislation other than Constitutional amendments, the President can return a bill for further debate, although the parliament can override the President's veto by vote of a majority of all MPs.

Since 17 August 2005 Sergey Stanishev as Prime Minister has chaired the Council of Ministers, the principal body of the executive branch, which presently consists of 20 ministers. The Prime Minister — usually nominated by the largest parliamentary group — receives the mandate of the President to form a cabinet.

The current governmental coalition comprises the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), National Movement Simeon II (NMSII) and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (representing mainly the Turkish minority).

The Bulgarian unicameral parliament, the National Assembly or *Narodno Sabranie* (Народно събрание), consists of 240 deputies, each elected for four-year terms by popular vote. The votes go to parties or to coalition-lists of candidates for each of the 28 administrative divisions. A party or coalition must win a minimum of 4% of the vote in order to enter parliament. Parliament has the responsibility for enactment of laws, approval of the budget, scheduling of presidential elections, selection and dismissal of the Prime Minister and other ministers, declaration of war, deployment of troops outside of Bulgaria, and ratification of international treaties and agreements.

The most recent elections took place in June 2005. The next scheduled elections should take place in summer 2009.

The Bulgarian judicial system consists of regional, district and appeal courts, as well as a Supreme Court of Cassation. In addition, Bulgaria has a Supreme Administrative Court and a system of military courts. A qualified majority of two-thirds of the membership of the Supreme Judicial Council elects the Presidents of the Supreme Court of Cassation and of the Supreme Administrative Court, as well as the Prosecutor General, from among its members; the President of the Republic then appoints those elected. The Supreme Judicial Council has charge of the self-administration and organization of the Judiciary.

The Constitutional Court supervises the review of the constitutionality of laws and statutes brought before it, as well as the compliance of these laws with international treaties that the Government has signed. Parliament elects the twelve members of the Constitutional Court by a two-thirds majority: the members serve for a nine-year term.

The territory of the Republic of Bulgaria subdivides into provinces and municipalities. In all, Bulgaria has 28 provinces, each headed by a provincial governor appointed by the government. In addition, the country includes 263 municipalities.

Military

The military of Bulgaria consists of three services: the Bulgarian Land Forces, the Bulgarian Navy and the Bulgarian Air Force. The armed forces have as their patron saint *Sveti Georgi* (St. George), and Bulgarians celebrate his feast day, 6 May nationally as Valour and Army Day. Despite active participation in all major European wars since the end of the nineteenth century, Bulgarian forces have never lost a flag.

Bulgaria first became a major military power in Europe under Khan Krum and Tsar Simeon I, in a series of wars with the Byzantine Empire for control of the Balkan Peninsula, in the late ninth century. By the use of approximately 12,000 heavy cavalry in tactics resembling those of feudal knights, Simeon I's forces reached as far as the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, in AD 896 . A formal peace treaty lasted until 912, when both sides became engaged in a war which ended with several major defeats of the Byzantines, including one of the bloodiest battles in the Middle Ages at Anchialus in AD 917. Bulgaria again became a significant military power under the rule of the Asen dynasty in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. During the rule of Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) Bulgaria became the first European country to defeat the Crusader knights.

Since gaining total independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, Bulgaria has functioned as a minor European power, frequently included in plans and wars of the Great Powers. In 1912, the Bulgarian forces invented the world's first aircraft-dropped bombs and soon after became the first military in the world to utilize aviation bombardment, in the siege of Odrin. Thus the Bulgarian Air Force, inheritor of one of the oldest traditions of powered aircraft combat in the world, became an early innovator in aviation military technology and in air-to-surface attack strategies/tactics.

Following a series of reductions beginning in 1989, the active troops of Bulgaria's army number as many as 68,450 today. Reserve forces include 303,000 soldiers and officers. "PLAN 2004", an effort to modernize Bulgaria's armed forces, aims to better meet the perceived military needs of NATO and the European Union.



A Bulgarian Air Force MiG-29

Image:BNS F911
Westdiep.jpg

A sister-ship of the Bulgarian frigate *Drazki*; one which the Bulgarian Navy intends to purchase



A mausoleum dedicated to St George, the patron-saint of the Bulgarian Army.

Bulgarian military personnel have participated in international missions in Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. Starting in 2008, Bulgaria will completely abolish compulsory military service. Bulgaria's naval and air forces became fully professional in 2006, with the land-forces scheduled to follow suit in 2008. Bulgaria's Special Forces have conducted missions with the SAS, Delta Force, KSK, and the Spetsnaz of Russia.

In April 2006 Bulgaria and the United States of America signed a defence-cooperation agreement providing for the development of the Bulgarian air bases at Bezmer (near Yambol) and Graf Ignatievo (near Plovdiv), the Novo Selo training-range (near Sliven), and a logistics centre in Aytos as joint US-Bulgarian military facilities. Bulgaria's navy comprises mainly Soviet-era ships, and three submarines. With 354 kilometres (220 mi) of coastline, Bulgaria does not regard assault by sea as a major risk. In the course of recent modernization efforts, Bulgaria purchased a new frigate from Belgium, and the navy seems likely to acquire four Gowind corvettes from the French company DCN. Bulgaria's air forces also use a large amount of Soviet equipment. Plans to acquire transport and attack helicopters are underway, in addition to a major overhaul on old Soviet weapon systems. Military spending accounts for nearly 2.6% of Bulgaria's GDP.

Provinces and municipalities

Between 1987 and 1999 Bulgaria consisted of nine provinces (*oblasti*, singular *oblast*); since 1999, it has consisted of twenty-eight. All take their names from their respective capital cities:

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| ■ Blagoevgrad | ■ Rousse |
| ■ Burgas | ■ Shumen |
| ■ Dobrich | ■ Silistra |
| ■ Gabrovo | ■ Sliven |
| ■ Haskovo | ■ Smolyan |
| ■ Kardzhali | ■ Sofia City |
| ■ Kyustendil | ■ Sofia Province |
| ■ Lovech | ■ Stara Zagora |
| ■ Montana | ■ Targovishte |
| ■ Pazardzhik | ■ Varna |
| ■ Pernik | ■ Veliko Tarnovo |
| ■ Pleven | ■ Vidin |
| ■ Plovdiv | ■ Vratsa |
| ■ Razgrad | ■ Yambol |



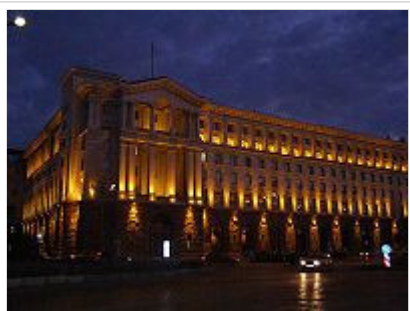
The provinces subdivide into 264 municipalities.

Economy

Bulgaria became a member of the European Union in 2007; the World Bank classifies it as an "upper-middle-income economy" . Bulgaria has experienced rapid economic growth in recent years. The country continues to rank as the second poorest member state of the EU., but standards of living have started to rise.

Due to alleged high-profile corruption, the European Union has partly frozen EU funds of about €450 million and may freeze more if Bulgarian authorities do not show solid progress in fighting corruption and in speeding up reforms.

Bulgaria has tamed its inflation since the deep economic crisis in 1996-1997, but latest figures show an increase in the inflation-rate to 12.5% for 2007. Unemployment declined from more than 17% in the mid 1990s to nearly 10% in 2007, but the unemployment-rate in some rural areas continues in high double-digits. Bulgaria is experiencing soaring inflation and this means that Bulgaria's adoption of the Euro will likely to be delayed well until the year 2013-2014.



A night view of Sofia



A view over Plovdiv

Bulgaria's economy contracted dramatically after 1987 with the dissolution of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), with which the Bulgarian economy had integrated closely. The standard-of-living fell by about 40%, but it regained pre-1990 levels in June 2004. United Nations sanctions against Yugoslavia and Iraq took a heavy toll on the Bulgarian economy. The first signs of recovery emerged in 1994 when the GDP grew and inflation fell. During the government of Zhan Videnov's cabinet in 1996, the economy collapsed due to lack of international economic support and an unstable banking system. Since 1997, the country has been on the path to recovery, with GDP growing at a 4%–5% rate, increasing FDI, macroeconomic stability and European Union membership.

The former NMSII government elected in 2001 pledged to maintain the fundamental economic policy-objectives adopted by its predecessor in 1997, specifically: retaining the Currency Board, implementing sound financial policies, accelerating privatisation, and pursuing structural reforms. Economic forecasts for 2005 and 2006 predicted continued growth for the economy. Economists predicted annual year-on-year GDP growth for 2005 and 2006 of 5.3% and 6.0% respectively. Forecasters expected industrial output in 2005 to rise by 11.9% from the previous year, and by 15.2% in 2006. Unemployment for 2005 was projected at 11.5%, 9% for 2006 and 7.25% for 2007. As of 2006 the GDP structure is: agriculture 8.0%; industry 26.1%; services 65.9%.

Agriculture

Agricultural output has decreased overall since 1989, but production has grown in recent years, and together with related industries like food-processing it still plays a key role in the Bulgarian economy. Arable farming predominates over stock-breeding. The country has a lack of modern equipment. Alongside aeroplanes and other equipment, Bulgarian agriculture has over 150,000 tractors and 10,000 combine harvesters.

Production of the most important crops (according to the FAO) in 2006 (in '000 tons) amounted to: wheat 3301.9; sunflower 1196.6; maize 1587.8; grapes 266.2; tobacco 42.0; tomatoes 213.0; barley 546.3; potatoes 386.1; peppers 156.7; cucumbers 61.5; cherries 18.2; watermelons 136.0; cabbage 72.7; apples 26.1; plums 18.0; strawberries 8.8.

Industry

Industry plays a key role in the Bulgarian economy. Although Bulgaria lacks large reserves of oil and gas, it produces significant quantities of electricity. Bulgaria formerly ranked as the most important exporter of electricity in the region due to the Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant, which has a total capacity of 2,000 MW, but after the closure of its first 4 blocks, exports of electricity declined and the country lost its leading position as an energy-supplier for the Balkans. However, the two most modern blocks of the power plant, 5 and 6, were left running and are still a sufficient power source. Construction has started on a second plant, the Belene Nuclear Power Plant with a projected capacity of 2,000 MW. Plans exist for a \$1.4bn project for construction of an additional 670 MW for the 500 MW Maritza Iztok 1 Thermal Power Plant (see Energy in Bulgaria).



A view of the Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant

Ferrous metallurgy has major importance. Much of the production of steel and pig iron takes place in Kremikovtzi and Pernik, with a third metallurgical base in Debelt. In production of steel and steel products per capita the country heads the Balkans. Recently the fate of Kremikovtzi steel factories has come under debate, because of serious pollution of the capital, Sofia.

The largest refineries for lead and zinc operate in Plovdiv (the biggest refinery between Italy and the Ural mountains), Kardzhali and Novi Iskar; for copper in Pirdop and Eliseina; for aluminium in Shumen. In production of many metals *per capita*, Bulgaria ranks first in South Eastern Europe.

About 14% of the total industrial production relates to machine-building, and 24% of the people work in this field. Its importance has decreased since 1989.

Electronics and electric equipment-production have developed to a high degree. The largest centres include Sofia, Plovdiv and the surrounding area, Botevgrad, Stara Zagora, Varna, Pravets and many other cities. These plants produce household appliances, computers, CDs, telephones, medical and scientific equipment.

Many factories producing transportation equipment currently do not operate at full capacity. Plants produce trains (Burgas, Dryanovo), trams (Sofia), trolleys (Dupnitsa), buses (Botevgrad), trucks (Shumen), motor trucks (Plovdiv, Lom, Sofia, Lovech). Lovech has an automotive assembly plant. Rousse serves as the main centre for agricultural machinery. Most Bulgarian shipbuilding takes place in Varna, Burgas and Rousse. Bulgarian arms production mainly operates in central Bulgaria (Kazanlak, Sopot, Karlovo).

Foreigners seeking additional homes have recently boosted the Bulgarian properties market. Buyers come from across Europe, but mostly from the United Kingdom, encouraged by relatively cheap property-prices and the country's easy accessibility via air-travel.

Science, technology and telecommunications

Some multinational companies have set up regional offices and headquarters in Bulgaria, most notably Hewlett-Packard, which built its Global Service Centre for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) in Sofia.

Telecommunications has become one of the growing industries in the country. Three GSM mobile-telephone operators — Globul, Mobitel and Vivatel — provide almost 100% coverage each. They have a network of service-centers throughout the country. Bulgarians made use of some 10 million cellular phones as of 2006. Mobikom provides the only NMT 450 mobile-phone service. Bulgarians in towns can access the Internet, and recently most villages have acquired fast connectivity and VoIP; BTK offers DSL connection in larger cities. Bulgaria had about 298,781 Internet hosts as of 2007.

Bulgaria supplied many scientific and research instruments for the Soviet space-program, and also sent two men into space: Georgi Ivanov on Soyuz 33 (1979) and Alexander Alexandrov on Soyuz TM-5 (1985). Bulgaria became one of the first European countries to develop serial production of personal computers (Pravetz series 8) in the beginning of the 1980s, and has experience in pharmaceutical research and development.

Asen Yordanov (1896-1967), the founder of aeronautical engineering in Bulgaria, worked as an aviator, engineer and inventor; he also contributed to the development of aviation in the United States. He played a significant role in U.S. aircraft development and took part in many other projects.

The Bulgarian-American inventor and scientist Peter Petroff became best known for his work in NASA. Petroff also invented the first digital watch (1970).

U.S. chemist Carl Djerassi, who developed the first oral contraceptive pill (OCP), has Bulgarian ancestry.

The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the leading scientific institution in the country, employs most of Bulgaria's researchers working in its numerous branches.

Bulgaria hosts two major astronomical observatories: the Rozhen Observatory, the largest in Southeastern Europe, and the Belogradchik Observatory with three telescopes; as well as several "public astronomical observatories" with planetaria, focused on educationnal and outreach activities.

Transport

Bulgaria occupies a unique and strategically important geographic location. Since ancient times, the country has served as a major crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa. Five of the ten Trans-European corridors run through its territory. Bulgaria's roads have a total length of 102,016 km (63,390 mi), 93,855 km (58,319 mi) of them paved and 441 km (274 mi) of them motorways. Several motorways are planned, under construction or partially built: Trakiya motorway, Hemus motorway, Cherno More motorway, Struma motorway, Maritza motorway and Lyulin motorway. Other planned motorways await finalisation of their routes. They include a link between the capital Sofia and Vidin, a link between the Struma and Trakiya motorways south of Rila Mountain, a link between Rousse and Veliko Tarnovo, and the Sofia ringroad. Many roads have recently undergone reconstruction. Bulgaria has 6,500 km (4,000 mi) of railway track, more than 60% electrified. A €360,000,000 project exists for the modernisation and electrification of the Plovdiv- Kapitan Andreevo railway.



European route E79 near
Blagoevgrad

Air transportation has developed relatively comprehensively. Bulgaria has five official international airports — at Sofia, Burgas, Varna, Plovdiv and Gorna Oryahovitsa. Massive investment plans exist for the first three. Important domestic airports include those of Vidin, Pleven, Silistra, Targovishte, Stara Zagora, Kardzhali, Haskovo and Sliven. After the fall of communism in 1989, most of them are not used as the importance of domestic flights declined. There are many military airports and agricultural airfields. 128 of the 213 airports in Bulgaria are paved. The ports of Varna and Burgas are by far the most important and have the largest turnover. Other than Burgas, Sozopol, Nesebar and Pomorie are big fishing ports. The largest ports on the Danube River are Rousse and Lom which serves the capital. The cities and many smaller towns have well-organised public transport systems, using buses, trolleys (in about 20 cities) and trams (in Sofia). The Sofia Metro in the capital has three planned lines with total length of about 48 km (30 mi) and 52 stations, but much currently remains uncompleted.

Demographics

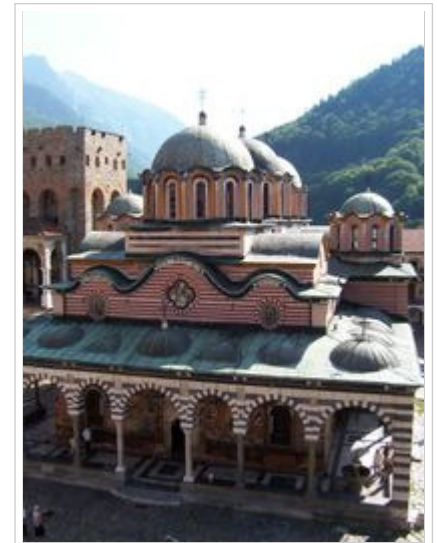
According to the 2001 census, Bulgaria's population consists mainly of ethnic Bulgarian (83.9%), with two sizable minorities, Turks (9.4%) and Roma (4.7%). Of the remaining 2.0%, 0.9% comprises some 40 smaller minorities, most prominently in numbers the Russians, Armenians, Vlachs, Jews, Crimean Tatars and Sarakatsani (historically known also as Karakachans). 1.1% of the population did not declare their ethnicity in the latest census in 2001.

96.3% of the population speak Bulgarian as their mother tongue. Bulgarian, a member of the Slavic language group, remains the only official language, but numbers of speakers of other languages (such as Turkish and Romany) correspond closely to ethnic proportions.

The country has a Roma population estimated at between 200,000 and 450,000.

Most Bulgarians (82.6%) belong, at least nominally, to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the national Eastern Orthodox Church. Other religious denominations include Islam (12.2%), various Protestant denominations (0.8%) and Roman Catholicism (0.5%); with other denominations, atheists and undeclared totalling approximately 4.1%.

In recent years Bulgaria has had one of the slowest population growth-rates in the world. Negative population growth has occurred since the early 1990s, due to economic collapse and high emigration. In 1989 the population comprised 9,009,018 people, in 2001 7,950,000 and in 2008 7,640,000. Now Bulgaria faces a severe demographic crisis: the population has a fertility-rate of 1.4 children per woman as of 2007, with a predicted rate of 1.7 by the end of 2050. The fertility-rate will need to reach 2.2 to restore natural growth in population.



The Rila Monastery.

Culture



A country often described as lying at the crossroads linking the East and West, Bulgaria functioned as the hub of Slavic Europe during much of the Middle Ages, exerting considerable literary and cultural influence over the Eastern Orthodox Slavic world by means of the Preslav and Ohrid Literary Schools. Bulgaria also gave the world the Cyrillic alphabet, the second most-widely used alphabet in the world, which originated in these two schools in the tenth century AD.

A number of ancient civilizations, most notably the Thracians, Greeks, Romans, Slavs, and Bulgars, have left their mark on the culture, history and

heritage of Bulgaria. The country has nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites:

- The early medieval large rock relief Madara Rider.
- two Thracian tombs (one in Sveshtari and one in Kazanlak)
- three monuments of medieval Bulgarian culture (the Boyana Church, the Rila Monastery and the Rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo)
- two examples of natural beauty: the Pirin National Park and the Srebarna Nature Reserve
- the ancient city of Nesebar, a unique combination of European cultural interaction, as well as, historically, one of the



Anna-Maria Ravnopolska-Dean

most important centres of sea-borne trade in the Black Sea

Note also the Varna Necropolis, a 3500-3200 BC burial-site, purportedly containing the oldest examples of worked gold in the world.

Bulgaria's contribution to humanity continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with individuals such as John Atanasoff — a United States citizen of Bulgarian descent, regarded as the father of the digital computer. A number of noted opera-singers (Nicolai Ghiaurov, Boris Christoff, Raina Kabaivanska, Ghena Dimitrova), Anna Veleva, the world-famous harpist Anna-Maria Ravnopolska-Dean and successful artists (Christo Yavashev, Pascin, Vladimir Dimitrov) popularized the culture of Bulgaria abroad.

One of the best internationally-known artists, Valya Balkanska sang the song *Izlel e Delyu Haydutin*, part of the Voyager Golden Record selection of music included in the two Voyager spacecraft launched in 1977. The Bulgarian State Television Female Vocal Choir also known as *Mystery of Bulgarian voices* has also attained a considerable degree of fame.

A unique custom called *nestinarstvo* distinguishes the Strandja region. Customs include dancing into fire or over live embers.

Tourism

In the northern-hemisphere winter, Samokov, Borovets, Bansko and Pamporovo become well-attended ski-resorts. Summer resorts exist on the Black Sea at Sozopol, Nessebur, Golden Sands, Sunny Beach, Sveti Vlas, Albena, Saints Constantine and Helena and many others. Spa resorts such as Bankya, Hisarya, Sandanski, Velingrad, Varshets and many others attract visitors throughout the year. Bulgaria has started to become an attractive tourist destination because of the quality of the resorts and prices below those found in Western Europe.

Bulgaria has enjoyed a substantial growth in income from international tourism over the past decade. Beach-resorts attract tourists from Germany, Russia, Scandinavia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The ski-resorts are a favourite destination for British and Irish tourists.

Bulgaria now attracts close to 7 million visitors yearly. Tourism in Bulgaria makes a major contribution towards the country's annual economic growth of 6% to 6.5%.

Sports



Church of St John the Baptist (11th century) in Nessebar



A football game in the Vasil Levski National Stadium

Football has become by far the most popular sport in Bulgaria. Many Bulgarian fans closely follow the top Bulgarian league, the Bulgarian "A" Professional Football Group; as well as the leagues of other European countries. The Bulgaria national football team achieved its greatest success with a fourth-place finish at the 1994 FIFA World Cup in the United States.

Dimitar Berbatov currently ranks as the most popular Bulgarian footballer. Hristo Stoichkov has arguably become the best-known Bulgarian footballer of all time. His career peaked between 1992 and 1995, while he played for FC Barcelona, winning the Ballon d'Or in 1994. Additionally, he featured in the FIFA 100 rankings. Two Bulgarians have won the European top scorers' Golden Boot award: Stoichkov and Petar Jekov. Georgi Asparuhov-Gundi (1943-1971), also became extremely popular at home and abroad, having had offers from clubs in Italy and Portugal, and having won the Bulgarian football player №1 award for the twentieth century.

PFC CSKA Sofia (champion of Bulgaria 30 times, National cup holder 23 times, European Cup semi-finalist 2 times, Cup Winners' Cup semi-finalist), PFC Levski Sofia (25 times champion of Bulgaria and (as of 2007) 26 times National Cup holder), PFC Slavia Sofia (officially the oldest football- and sports-club in Bulgaria, 8 times football champion of Bulgaria and 12 times holder of the National Cup, Cup Winners' Cup semi-finalist) have become the most successful Bulgarian football-clubs. Other popular clubs include PFC Lokomotiv Sofia, PFC Litex Lovech, PFC Chernomorec Varna and PFC Lokomotiv Plovdiv. PFC Levski Sofia became the first Bulgarian team to participate in the modern UEFA Champions League group stage, having achieved this by qualifying for the 2006/2007 competition.

Apart from football, Bulgaria boasts great achievements in a great variety of other sports. Maria Gigova and Maria Petrova have each held a record of three world-titles in rhythmic gymnastics. Other famous gymnasts include Simona Peycheva and Neshka Robeva (a highly successful coach as well). Yordan Yovtchev ranks as the most famous Bulgarian competitor in Artistic Gymnastics. Bulgarians also dominate in weightlifting, with around 1,000 gold medals in different competitions, although cases of doping have occurred among Bulgarian weightlifters, which led to the expulsion of the entire Bulgarian team from the 2000 Summer Olympics, and their voluntary withdrawal from the 1988 Summer Olympics. Stefan Botev, Nickolai Peshalov, Demir Demirev and Yoto Yotov figure among the most distinguished weightlifters. In wrestling, Boyan Radev, Serafim Barzakov, Armen Nazarian, Plamen Slavov, Kiril Sirakov and Sergey Moreyko rank as world-class wrestlers. Dan Kolov became a wrestling legend in the early 20th century after leaving for United States.

Bulgarians have made many significant achievements in athletics. Stefka Kostadinova, who still holds the women's high jump world record, jumped 209 centimetres at the 1987 World Championships in Athletics in Rome to clinch the coveted title. Presently, Bulgaria takes pride in its sprinters, especially Ivet Lalova and Tezdzhan Naimova.

Volleyball recently experienced a big resurgence. The Bulgarian national volleyball team, one of the strongest teams in Europe, currently ranks fourth in the FIVB ranklist. At the 2006 Volleyball World Championship this team won the bronze medal.

Chess has achieved great popularity. One of the top chess-masters and a former world champion, Veselin Topalov, plays for Bulgaria. At the end of 2005, both men's and women's world chess-champions came from Bulgaria, as well as the junior world champion.

Albena Denkova and Maxim Staviski have won the ISU world figure skating championships twice in a row (2006 and 2007) for ice-dance.

Bulgaria also has strengths in shooting sports. Maria Grozdeva and Tanyu Kiriakov have won Olympic gold medals, and Ekaterina Dafovska won the Olympic gold in biathlon in the 1998 Winter Olympic Games.

Petar Stoychev set a new swimming world record for crossing the English Channel in 2007.

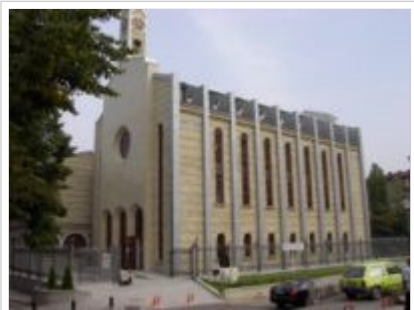
The country has strong traditions in amateur boxing and in martial-arts competitions. Bulgaria has achieved major success with its judo and karate teams in European and World championships. Kaloyan Stefanov Mahlyanov, best known as Kotoōshū Katsunori, has become well-known worldwide for his sumo prowess.

Religion

Most citizens of Bulgaria have associations — at least nominally — with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Founded in 870 AD under the Patriarchate of Constantinople (from which it obtained its first primate, its clergy and theological texts), the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has had autocephalous status since 927. The Orthodox Church re-established the Bulgarian Patriarchate in Sofia in the 1950s after the promulgation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, as the independent national church of Bulgaria (like the other national branches of Eastern Orthodoxy in their respective countries) plays a role as an inseparable element of Bulgarian national consciousness. The Church became subordinate within the Patriarchate of Constantinople, twice during the periods of Byzantine (1018 – 1185) and Ottoman (1396 – 1878) domination but has been revived every time as a symbol of Bulgarian statehood without breaking away from the Orthodox dogma. In 2001, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church had 6,552,000 members in Bulgaria (82.6% of the population). However, many people raised during the 45 years of communist rule are not religious, even though they may formally be members of the Church.



The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia, one of the largest Orthodox cathedrals in Europe



Catholic Cathedral of St. Joseph, Sofia

Despite the dominant position of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Bulgarian cultural life, a number of Bulgarian citizens belong to other religious denominations, most notably Islam, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

Islam came to Bulgaria at the end of the fourteenth century after the conquest of the country by the Ottomans. It gradually gained ground throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries through the introduction of Turkish colonists and the conversion of native Bulgarians. In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, missionaries from Rome converted Bulgarian Paulicians in the districts of Plovdiv and Svishtov to Roman Catholicism. Today their descendants form the bulk of Bulgarian Catholics, whose number stood at 44,000 in 2001.



Church of Christ Pantocrator, Nesebar

Missionaries from the United States introduced Protestantism into Bulgarian territory in 1857. Missionary work continued throughout the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. In 2001 Bulgaria had some 42,000 Protestants.

According to the most recent Eurostat "Eurobarometer" poll, in 2005, 40% of Bulgarian citizens responded that "they believe there is a God", whereas 40% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force", 13% that "they do not believe there is a God, spirit, nor life force", and 6% did not answer.

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Croatia

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries
SOS Children works in Croatia. For more information see SOS Children in Croatia

Croatia (IPA: /kroʊˈeɪʃə/) (Croatian: *Hrvatska*), officially the **Republic of Croatia** (*Republika Hrvatska* listen[ⓘ]), is a country at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, Central Europe, and the Balkans. Its capital is Zagreb. Croatia borders with Slovenia and Hungary to the north, Serbia to the northeast, Bosnia and Herzegovina to the east, Montenegro to the far southeast, and the Adriatic Sea to the south. Croatia is a candidate for membership of the European Union and is expecting NATO membership invitation in April 2008. On October 17, 2007 Croatia became a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2008-2009 term.

History



Satellite image of Croatia

The Croats settled in the Mediterranean in the early 7th century and formed two principalities: Dalmatia and Pannonia. The establishment of the Trpimirović dynasty, circa 850, strengthened the Dalmatian Croat Duchy, which together with the Pannonian principality became a Kingdom in 925 under King Tomislav I.

In 1102, Croatia entered into a personal union with the Hungarian Kingdom. After the 1526 Battle of Mohács the "reliquiae reliquiarum" (*remnants of the remnants*) of Croatia became a part of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1527.

Croatia was part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, from 1918-1929, and Kingdom of Yugoslavia, from 1929-1941. In 1941-1945, a union known as the Independent State of Croatia was

set up, and after the victory of the Yugoslav Partisans led by Josip Broz Tito, a half- Croatian, half-Slovenian, Croatia became a republic within Yugoslavia.

In 1991 Croatia declared independence and a bitter and costly war was fought by the Croatian government against the Milošević - led Yugoslav People's Army, Serbian paramilitary forces and rebel

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<i>Republika Hrvatska</i> Republic of Croatia	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: <i>Lijepa naša domovino</i> <i>Our beautiful homeland</i>	
	
Location of Croatia (orange) on the European continent (white) — [Legend]	
Capital (and largest city)	Zagreb

Serbs from Croatia who wanted to create "Great Serbia" from Croatian and Bosnian and Herzegovian territory. Later, the war turned into a conflict between the Republic of Croatia and the rebel Serbs who occupied Croatian territory. The war came to an end with a Croatian victory, liberating the lost territory and its constitution to the state before war started, which made possible signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995 by all war sides, that gave peace in the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Geography

Image:Map-of-Croatia.png
Map of Croatia

Croatia is located in South-Central Europe. Its shape resembles that of a crescent or a horseshoe, which flanks its neighbours Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. To the north lie Slovenia and Hungary; Italy lies across the Adriatic Sea. Its mainland territory is split in two non-contiguous parts by the short coastline of Bosnia and Herzegovina around Neum.

Its terrain is diverse, including:

- plains, lakes and rolling hills in the continental north and northeast (Central Croatia and Slavonia, part of the Pannonian Basin);
- densely wooded mountains in Lika and Gorski Kotar, part of the Dinaric Alps;
- rocky coastlines on the Adriatic Sea (Istria, Northern Seacoast and Dalmatia).

The country is famous for its many national parks. Croatia has a mixture of climates. In the north and east it is continental, Mediterranean along the coast and a semi-highland and highland climate in the south-central region. Offshore Croatia consists of over one thousand islands varying in size.

Politics

Since the adoption of the 1990 Constitution, Croatia has been a democratic republic. Between 1990 and 2000 it had a semi-presidential system, and since 2000 it has a parliamentary system.

The President of the Republic (*Predsjednik*) is the head of state, directly elected to a five-year term and is limited by the Constitution to a maximum of two terms. In addition to being the commander in chief of the armed forces, the president has the procedural duty of appointing the Prime minister with the consent of the Parliament, and has some influence on foreign policy. His official residence is Predsjednički dvori. Apart from that he has summer residences on the islands of Vanga (Brijuni islands) and the island of

Official languages	Croatian
Demonym	Croat(s) Croatian(s)
Government	Parliamentary republic
- President	Stjepan Mesić
- Premier	Ivo Sanader
Establishment	
- Founded	First half of 7th century
- Medieval duchy	March 4, 852
- Independence	May 21, 879
- Elevated to kingdom	925
- Union with Hungary	1102
- Joined Habsburg Empire	January 1, 1527
- Independence from Austria-Hungary	October 29, 1918
- Joined Yugoslavia (co-creator)	December 1, 1918
- Declared independence	June 25, 1991
Area	
- Total	56,542 km ² (126th) 21,831 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.2
Population	
- Sep 2007 estimate	4,440,690 (114th)
- 2001 census	4,437,460
- Density	81/km ² (109th) 208/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	Sep 2007 estimate
- Total	\$66.708 billion () (68th)
- Per capita	18,817 () (50th)

Hvar.

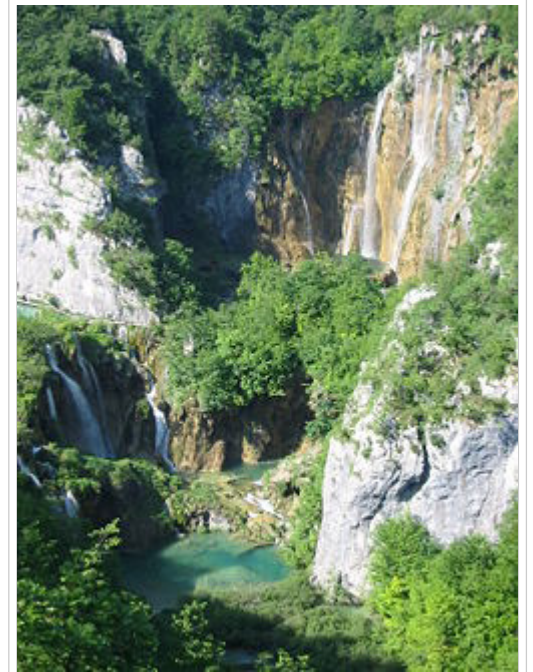
Template:Croatia membership The Croatian Parliament (*Sabor*) is a unicameral legislative body (a second chamber, the "House of Counties", which was set up by the Constitution of 1990, was abolished in 2001). The number of the Sabor's members can vary from 100 to 160; they are all elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms. The plenary sessions of the Sabor take place from January 15 to July 15, and from September 15 to December 15.

The Croatian Government (*Vlada*) is headed by the Prime minister who has two deputy prime ministers and fourteen ministers in charge of particular sectors of activity. The executive branch is responsible for proposing legislation and a budget, executing the laws, and guiding the foreign and internal policies of the republic. Government's official residence is at Banski dvori.

Croatia has a three-tiered judicial system, consisting of the Supreme Court, county courts, and municipal courts. The Constitutional Court rules on matters regarding the Constitution.

Counties

GDP (nominal)	Sep 2007 estimate
- Total	\$66.708 billion (EIU)
- Per capita	\$11,771 (IMF)
Gini (2005)	29 (low)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.850 (high) (47th)
Currency	kuna (HRK)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.hr
Calling code	+385
¹ Also Italian in Istria and languages of other national minorities (Serbian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, etc.) in residential municipalities of the national minorities.	



The Plitvice Lakes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Image:Dubrov.jpg
The Old Harbour at
Dubrovnik's Old City, a
UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Croatia is divided into twenty-one counties (*županija*) and the capital Zagreb's city district (in italics below):

Anglicized name	Native name
1 Zagreb	Zagrebačka
2 Krapina-Zagorje	Krapinsko-zagorska
3 Sisak-Moslavina	Sisačko-moslavačka
4 Karlovac	Karlovačka
5 Varaždin	Varaždinska
6 Koprivnica-Križevci	Koprivničko-križevačka
7 Bjelovar-Bilogora	Bjelovarsko-bilogorska
8 Primorje-Gorski Kotar	Primorsko-goranska
9 Lika-Senj	Ličko-senjska
10 Virovitica-Podravina	Virovitičko-podravska
11 Požega-Slavonia	Požeško-slavonska
12 Brod-Posavina	Brodsko-posavska
13 Zadar	Zadarska
14 Osijek-Baranja	Osječko-baranjska
15 Šibenik-Knin	Šibensko-kninska
16 Vukovar-Srijem	Vukovarsko-srijemska
17 Split-Dalmatia	Splitsko-dalmatinska
18 Istria	Istarska
19 Dubrovnik-Neretva	Dubrovačko-neretvanska
20 Međimurje	Međimurska
21 City of Zagreb	Grad Zagreb



River Krka

Economy

The Croatian economy has a stable functioning market economy according to EU reports and is the most advanced economy of South-Eastern Europe (Greece excluded). The Croatian preliminary 2008 GDP data states that the Croatian GDP is USD 66.7 billion, or just over USD 18,800 per capita (real income), putting Croatia ahead of the EU member-states Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Lithuania. "Grey" economy of about USD 2 billion is still not included in GDP calculations like in other EU countries, something which would certainly increase it. Average net salary is cca. USD 1000. After Slovenia this is the highest net salary per capita of all transition countries.

The economic output is distributed as follows: Agriculture 6%, industry 27% and service sector 67%. The industrial sector is dominated by shipbuilding, food processing and the chemical industry. Tourism is a notable source of income during the summer. With over 10,0 million foreign tourists in 2006 generating a revenue of EUR 7 billion, Croatia is ranked as the 18th most popular tourist destination in the world. In 2006 Croatia exported goods in value of USD 10.4 billion (FOB) (19.7 billion including service exports).

Unemployment is at 9,1% (International Labour Organization figures) in 2007. Of particular concern is the backlogged judiciary system, combined with inefficient public administration, especially issues of land ownership and corruption. Another main problem includes the large and growing national debt which has reached over 35 billion dollars.

The country has been preparing for membership in the European Union, its most important trading partner. In February 2005, the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU officially came into force.

In the first quarter of 2007, Croatian economy rose by 7.1%, in second quarter 6.6% so the annual growth rate which was expected to be around 4.7% has now been revised to 6.5% or more. Analysts believe that the Croatian economy, after modest growth of around 4.5% so far, is finally entering a period of faster and stronger economic prosperity.

Demographics

The population of Croatia has been stagnating over the last decade. The 1991–1995 war in Croatia had previously displaced large parts of the population and increased emigration. Most Serbs fled the country in the last stage of the war. Some Croats who also fled the country during the war are returning. The natural growth rate is minute or negative (less than $\pm 1\%$), as the demographic transition has been completed half a century ago. Average life expectancy is approximately 75 years, and the literacy rate is 98.5%.

Croatia is inhabited mostly by Croats (89.9%). There are around twenty minorities, Serbs though they were much larger before war, being the largest one (4.5%) and others having less than 0.5% each. The predominant religion is Catholicism (87.8%), with some Orthodox (4.4%) and Sunni Muslim (1.3%) minorities.

The official and common language, Croatian, is a South Slavic language, using the Latin alphabet. Less than 5% of the population cites other languages as their mother tongues.

Culture



Zadar, St. Donatus' Church, a pre-Romanesque church from the ninth century

Croatian culture is the result of a thirteen century-long history which has seen the development of many cities and monuments. The country includes six World Heritage sites and eight national parks. Croatia is also the birthplace of a number of historical figures included among the notable people are three Nobel prize winners, and numerous inventors.

Some of the world's first fountain pens came from Croatia. Croatia also has a place in the history of clothing as the origin of the necktie (*cravat*). The country has a long artistic, literary and musical tradition. Also of interest is the diverse nature of Croatian cuisine.

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Arena, the Roman amphitheatre in Pula.

Cyprus

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Cyprus (Greek: Κύπρος, *Kýpros*; Turkish: *Kıbrıs*), officially the **Republic of Cyprus** (Greek: Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία, *Kypriakḗ Dēmokratía*; Turkish: *Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti*) is a Eurasian island country situated in the eastern Mediterranean south of Turkey, west of the Levant, north of Egypt, and east-southeast of Greece.



Cyprus is the third-largest Mediterranean island and one of the most popular tourist destinations, attracting over 2.4 million tourists per year. A former British colony, it gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960 and became a Commonwealth republic in 1961. The Republic of Cyprus is a developed country and has been a member of the European Union since 1 May 2004. It adopted the euro on 1 January 2008.

In 1974, following a period of violence between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and an attempted Greek Cypriot coup d'état aimed at annexing the island to Greece and sponsored by the Greek military junta of 1967-1974, Turkey invaded and occupied one-third of the island. This led to the displacement of thousands of Cypriots and the establishment of a separate Turkish Cypriot political entity in the north. This event and its resulting political situation is a matter of ongoing dispute.

The Republic of Cyprus, the internationally recognized state, claimed sovereignty over 97% of the island of Cyprus and all surrounding waters, with the United Kingdom controlling the remaining three percent. The island is *de facto* partitioned into four main parts:

- the area under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus in the south of the island;
- the Turkish-occupied area in the north, calling itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (recognized only by Turkey);
- the United Nations -controlled Green Line, separating the two; and
- two Sovereign Base Areas (Akrotiri and Dhekelia), over which the United Kingdom retained jurisdiction after Cypriot independence.

Etymology

<p>Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία (Greek) <i>Kypriakḗ Dēmokratía</i> <i>Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti</i> (Turkish) Republic of Cyprus</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Anthem: "Ύμνος εις τὴν Ἐλευθερίαν <i>Ymnos is tin Eleftherian</i> Hymn to Liberty¹</p>	
<p>Location of Cyprus (dark green) — on the European continent (light green & dark grey)</p>	

The name 'Cyprus' has a somewhat uncertain etymology. One suggestion is that it comes from the Greek word for the Mediterranean cypress tree (*Cupressus sempervirens*), *κypάρισσος* (*kypárisσos*), or even from the Greek name of the henna plant (*Lawsonia alba*), *κύπρος* (*kýpros*). Another school suggests that it stems from the Eteocypriot word for copper. Georges Dossin, for example, suggests that it has roots in the Sumerian word for copper (*zubar*) or for bronze (*kubar*), from the large deposits of copper ore found on the island. Through overseas trade the island has given its name to the Classical Latin word for the metal through the phrase *aes Cyprium*, "metal of Cyprus", later shortened to *Cuprum*. Cyprus is also called "*the island of Aphrodite*" , since the Greek goddess Aphrodite, of beauty and love, was born in Cyprus. The most common theory is that it came from their word for copper, *Kypros*, because the island had rich deposits of copper.

History

– in the European Union (light green)	
Capital (and largest city)	Nicosia (Lefkosia, Lefkosa)
Official languages	Greek, Turkish
Demonym	Cypriot
Government - President	Presidential republic Dimitris Christofias
Independence - Date	from the UK 1 October 1960
EU accession	1 May 2004
Area - Total - Water (%)	9,251 km ² (167 th) 3,572 sq mi negligible
Population - 2007 census - Density	788,457 85/km ² (85 th) 221/sq mi
GDP (PPP) - Total - Per capita	2007 IMF estimate \$21.382 billion (108 th) \$27,429 (29 th)
GDP (nominal) - Total - Per capita	2007 IMF estimate \$21.303 billion (87 th) \$27,327 (28 th)
Gini (2005)	29 (low)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.903 (high) (28 th)



Temple to *Apollon Ilatis* outside the city of Limassol.

Cyprus is the mythical birthplace of Aphrodite, Adonis and home to King Cinyras, Teucer and Pygmalion. The earliest confirmed site of human activity is Aetokremnos, situated on the south coast, indicating that hunter-gatherers were active on the island from around 10,000 BC, with settled, village communities dating from 8200 BC. Important remains from this early- Neolithic period can be found at Shillourokambos, Kastros, and Khirokitia, where decorated pottery and figurines of stone quite distinct from the cultures of the surrounding mainland survive. The Mycenaean Greeks first reached Cyprus around 1600 BC, with settlements dating from this period scattered all over the island. Another wave of Greek settlement is believed to have taken

place in the period 1100-1050 BC, with the island's predominantly Greek character dating from this period. Several Phoenician colonies were founded in the 8th century BC, like Kart-Hadasht ('New Town'), near present day Larnaca and Salamis

Cyprus was conquered by Assyria in 709 BC, before a brief spell under Egyptian rule and eventually Persian rule in 545 BC. Cypriots, led by Onesilos, joined their fellow-Greeks in the Ionian cities during the unsuccessful Ionian Revolt in 499 BC against the Achaemenid Empire. The island was brought under permanent Greek rule by Alexander the Great and the Ptolemies of Egypt following his death. Full Hellenization took place during the Ptolemaic period, which ended when Cyprus was annexed by Roman Republic in 58 BC. Cyprus was one of the first stops in apostle Paul's missionary journey. In 395 AD it became part of the Byzantine Empire, which lost it temporarily to the Arabs in 643 AD before reclaiming it in 966 AD.

Richard I of England captured the island in 1191 during the Third Crusade, using it as a major supply base that was relatively safe from the Saracens. A year later Guy of Lusignan purchased the island from the Templars to compensate the loss of his kingdom.

The Republic of Venice seized control of the island in 1489 after the abdication of Queen Caterina Cornaro, the widow of James II, the last Lusignan king of Cyprus. Using it as an important commercial hub, Venetians soon fortified Nicosia, the capital and most important city, with its famous Venetian Walls. Throughout Venetian rule, the Ottoman Empire frequently raided Cyprus. In 1539 the Ottomans destroyed Limassol. Fearing the worst, the Venetians fortified Famagusta, Nicosia, and Kyrenia.

Currency	Euro (EUR)
Time zone - Summer (DST)	EET (UTC+2) EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.cy ³
Calling code	+357
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Also the national anthem of Greece. 2 Before 2008: Cypriot pound 3 The .eu domain is also used, shared with other European Union member states. 	



Salamis, Cyprus, outside the city of Amochostos.



The Centaur floor mosaic in Paphos.



Kourion Theatre outside the city of Limassol.

In 1570, a full scale conquest under Piyale Pasha with 60,000 troops brought the island under Ottoman control, despite stiff resistance by the inhabitants of Nicosia and Famagusta. The Ottomans applied the millet system and allowed religious authorities to govern their own non-Muslim minorities, but at the same time invested the Orthodox Church as a mediator between Christian Cypriots and the authorities granting it not only religious but political and economic powers. Heavy taxation led to rebellions - between 1572 and 1668, around twenty-eight bloody uprisings took place - forcing the Sultan to intervene. The first large-scale census of the Ottoman Empire in 1831, counting only men, showed 14,983 Muslims and 29,190 Christians. By 1872, the population of the island had risen to 144,000 comprising 44,000 Muslims and 100,000 Christians.

Administration (but not sovereignty) of the island was ceded to the British Empire in 1878, in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878). The island would serve Britain as a key military base in its colonial routes. By 1906, when the Famagusta harbour was completed, Cyprus was a strategic naval outpost overlooking the Suez Canal, the crucial main route to India, then Britain's most important colony. Following World War 1 and the Ottoman alliance with the Central powers, the United Kingdom annexed the island. In 1923, under the Treaty of Lausanne, the nascent Turkish republic relinquished any claim to Cyprus, and in 1925 it was declared a British Crown Colony. Many Greek Cypriots, fought in the British Army during both world wars, under the impression that Cyprus would eventually be united with Greece.



Kykkos Monastery in Troodos Mountains, District of Nicosia.

In January 1950 the Orthodox Church organized a referendum boycotted by the Turkish Cypriot community with over 90% voting in favour of union with Greece. Restricted autonomy under a constitution was proposed by the British administration but eventually rejected. In 1955 the EOKA organisation was founded, seeking independence and union with Greece through armed struggle. At the same time the TMT, calling for Taksim, was established by the Turkish Cypriots as a counterweight. Turmoil on the island was met with force by the British who started openly favouring Turks in police and administration as part of a divide-and-conquer policy. Nevertheless, Cyprus attained independence in 1960 after an agreement in Zürich and London between the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey. Britain retained two Sovereign Base Areas in Akrotiri and Dhekelia while government posts and public offices were allocated by ethnic quotas giving the minority Turks a permanent veto, 30% in parliament and administration, and granting the 3 mother-states guarantor rights.



Part of Limassol.

Shortly afterward, inter-communal violence broke out, partially sponsored by both "motherlands" - with Turkish Cypriots shortly afterwards withdrawn in enclaves and Greek Cypriot leader Archbishop Makarios III calling for constitutional changes as a means to ease tensions. In 1974 the US-backed Greek junta - in power since 1967 - partly in a move to draw attention away from internal turmoil and partly unsatisfied with Makarios' policy in Cyprus, attempted a coup on July 13 to replace him with Nikos Sampson and declare union with Greece. Seven days later, Turkey launched an invasion of Cyprus to reinstate the constitution. This resulted in bloody conflict and partition of the island. The overwhelming Turkish land, naval and air superiority against the island's weak defences led to 37% of the land being brought under Turkish control. 170,000 Greek Cypriots were evicted from their homes in the north with 50,000 Turks following the opposite path.

In 1983 Turkish Cypriots unilaterally proclaimed independence, which was only recognized by Turkey.

As of today, there are 1,534 Greek Cypriots and 502 Turkish Cypriots missing as a result of the invasion. The events of the summer of 1974 dominate the politics on the island, as well as Greco-Turkish relations. Around 100,000 settlers from Turkey are believed to be living in the north in violation of the Geneva Convention and various UN resolutions. Following the invasion and the capture of its northern territory by Turkish troops, the Republic of Cyprus announced that all of its ports of entry in the north are closed, as they are not under its effective control. Euphemistically Turkey refers to this event as an "embargo".

Since de facto but not de jure partition of the Republic, the north and south have followed separate paths. The Republic of Cyprus is a constitutional democracy that has reached great levels of prosperity, with a booming economy and good infrastructure. It is part of the UN, the European Union and several other organisations by whom it is recognized as the sole legitimate government of the whole island. The area of the Republic of Cyprus not under its effective control, the north, is over-dependent on help from Turkey. The last major effort to settle the Cyprus dispute, was the Annan Plan. On 10 March 2003, this most recent phase of talks collapsed in The Hague, Netherlands, when 30 year strong Turkish Cypriot leader Denktas told the Secretary-General he would not put the Annan Plan to referendum. "The plan was unacceptable for us. This was not a plan we would ask our people to vote for," Mr Denktas said. The UN plan had undergone several revisions in an attempt to win support. It was the Turkish Cypriot side which refused to even talk further, and which was blamed for the failure of the peace process. Later in its 5th revision the plan gained the support of the Turkish Cypriots but lost support of the Greek Cypriots.



Part of Nicosia.

In July 2006 the island served as a safe haven for people fleeing Lebanon due to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah.

In March 2008, the Republic of Cyprus demolished a wall that for decades had stood at the boundary between the Greek Cypriot controlled side and the UN buffer zone. The wall had cut across Ledra Street in the heart of Nicosia and was seen as a strong symbol of the island's 32-year division. On April 3, 2008, Ledra Street was reopened in the presence of Greek and Turkish Cypriot officials.

Government

Cyprus is a Presidential republic. The head of state and the government is the President, who is elected by the universal suffrage for a five-year term. Executive power is exercised by the government. Federal legislative power is vested in both the government and the House of Representatives. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature.

The 1960 Constitution provided for a presidential system of government with independent executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as a complex system of checks and balances, including a weighted power-sharing ratio designed to protect the interests of the Turkish Cypriots. The executive, was headed by a Greek Cypriot president and a Turkish Cypriot vice president elected by their respective communities for five-year terms and each possessing a right of veto over certain types of legislation and executive decisions. Legislative power rested on the House of Representatives, also elected on the basis of separate voters' rolls. Since 1964, following clashes between the two communities, the Turkish Cypriot seats in the House remain vacant.



The Presidential Palace (Residence) in Nicosia.

After an invasion of the island by Turkey in 1974, Cyprus was divided, *de facto*, into the Greek Cypriot controlled southern two-thirds of the island and the Turkish-occupied northern third. The Turkish Cypriots subsequently declared independence in 1983 as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus but have not been recognized by any country in the world, except Turkey. In 1985, the TRNC adopted a constitution and held its first elections. All foreign governments (except Turkey), as well as the United Nations, recognise the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over the whole island of Cyprus.

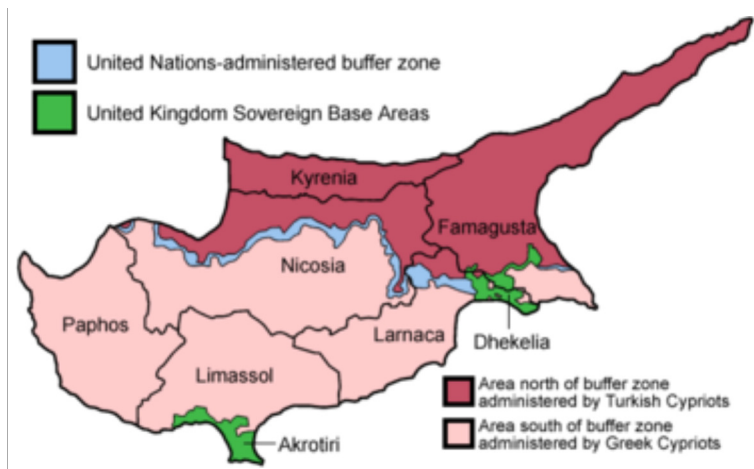
The House of Representatives currently has 59 members elected for a five year term, 56 members by proportional representation and 3 observer members representing the Maronite, Latin and Armenian minorities. 24 seats are allocated to the Turkish community but remain vacant since 1964. The political environment is dominated by the communist AKEL, the liberal conservative Democratic Rally, the centrist Democratic Party, the social-democratic EDEK and the centrist EURO.KO.

On 17 February 2008, Dimitris Christofias of the AKEL was elected President of Cyprus, thus marking his party's first electoral victory without being part of a wider coalition, making Cyprus one of only two countries in the world to have a democratically elected communist government (the other being Moldova), and is the only European Union member state currently under communist leadership. Christofias took over government from Tassos Papadopoulos of Democratic Party, who had been in office since February 2003.

Districts

The Republic of Cyprus is divided into six districts: Nicosia, Famagusta, Kyrenia, Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos.

Map of Cyprus	Districts	Greek name	Turkish name
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Famagusta	Αμμόχωστος (Ammochostos)	Mağusa
Kyrenia	Κερύνεια (Keryneia)	Girne
Larnaca	Λάρνακα (Larnaka)	Larnaka/İskele
Limassol	Λεμεσός (Lemesos)	Limasol/Leymosun
Nicosia	Λευκωσία (Lefkosia)	Lefkoşa
Paphos	Πάφος (Pafos)	Baf

Exclaves and enclaves

Cyprus has four exclaves, all in territory that belongs to the British Sovereign Base Area of Dhekelia. The first two are the villages of Ormidhia and Xylotymvou. Additionally there is the Dhekelia Power Station, which is divided by a British road into two parts. The northern part is an enclave, like the two villages, whereas the southern part is located by the sea and therefore not an enclave, although it has no territorial waters of its own.

The UN buffer zone separating the territory controlled by the Turkish Cypriot administration from the rest of Cyprus runs up against Dhekelia and picks up again from its east side, off Ayios Nikolaos (connected to the rest of Dhekelia by a thin land corridor). In that sense, the buffer zone turns the southeast corner of the island, the Paralimni area, into a *de facto*, though not *de jure*, exclave.

Human rights

The constant focus on the division of the island can sometimes mask other human rights issues. Prostitution is rife in both the government-controlled and the Turkish-occupied regions, and the island as a whole has been criticised for its role in the sex trade as one of the main routes of human trafficking from Eastern Europe. The regime in the North has been the focus of occasional freedom of speech criticisms regarding heavy-handed treatment of newspaper editors. Domestic violence legislation in the Republic remains largely unimplemented, and it has not yet been passed into law in the North. Reports on the mistreatment of domestic staff, mostly immigrant workers from developing countries, are sometimes reported in the Greek Cypriot press.



Pyrgos (Cyprus)

Military

The Cypriot National Guard is the main military institution of the Republic of Cyprus. It is a combined arms force, with land, air and naval elements.

The land forces of the Cypriot National Guard comprise the following units:

- First Infantry Division (Iη Μεραρχία ΠΖ)
- Second Infantry Division (IIα Μεραρχία ΠΖ)
- Fourth Infantry Brigade (IVη Ταξιαρχία ΠΖ)
- Twentieth Armored Brigade (XXη ΤΘ Ταξιαρχία)
- Third Support Brigade (IIIη Ταξιαρχία ΥΠ)
- Eighth Support Brigade (VIIIη Ταξιαρχία ΥΠ)

The air force includes the 449th Helicopter Gunship Squadron (449 MAE) - operating SA-342L and Bell 206 and the 450th Helicopter Gunship Squadron (450 ME/P) - operating Mi-35P, BN-2B and PC-9. Current Senior officers include Supreme Commander, Cypriot National Guard: Lt. Gen. Konstantinos Bisbikas, Deputy Commander, Cypriot National Guard: Lt. Gen. Savvas Argyrou and Chief of Staff, Cypriot National Guard: Maj. Gen. Gregory Stamoulis.

Economy

The Cypriot economy is prosperous and has diversified in recent years. According to the latest IMF estimates, its per capita GDP (adjusted for purchasing power) is, at \$46,865, the third highest in the European Union, after that of Luxembourg and Malta. Cyprus has been sought as a base for several offshore businesses for its highly developed infrastructure. Economic policy of the Cyprus government has focused on meeting the criteria for admission to the European Union. Adoption of the euro as a national currency is required of all new countries joining the European Union, and the Cypriot government adopted the currency on 1 January 2008.

Oil has recently been discovered in the seabed between Cyprus and Egypt, and talks are underway between Lebanon and Egypt to reach an agreement regarding the exploration of these resources. The seabed separating Lebanon and Cyprus is believed to hold significant quantities of crude oil and natural gas.

The economy of the Turkish-occupied area is dominated by the services sector, including the public sector, trade, tourism and education, with smaller agriculture and light manufacturing sectors. The economy operates on a free-market basis, although it continues to be handicapped by the political isolation of Turkish Cypriots, the lack of private and governmental investment, high freight costs, and shortages of skilled labor. Despite these constraints, the economy turned in an impressive performance in 2003 and 2004, with growth rates of 9.6% and 11.4%. The average income in the area is \$5,000 per capita, and the Turkish government has pledged to increase this to \$12,000 through investment and aid. Growth has been



buoyed by the relative stability of the Turkish new lira and by a boom in the education and construction sectors.

Demographics

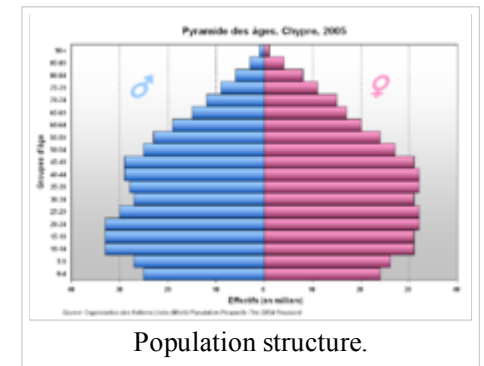
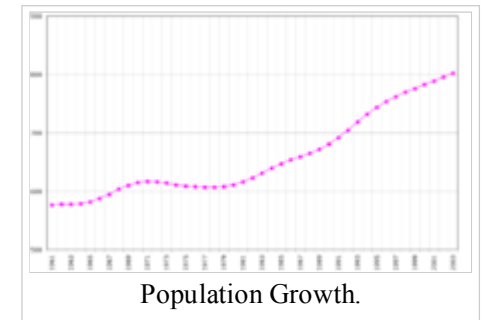
According to the last census carried out by the Republic in 1960, Greek Cypriots comprise 77% of the island's population, Turkish Cypriots 18%, while the remaining 5% are of other ethnicities. However, after the Turkish invasion of 1974, about 150,000 Turks from Anatolia were transferred or decided to settle in the north. This has changed the actual demographic structure of the island. Northern Cyprus now claims 265,100 inhabitants, closer to 30% of the population of the island. The TRNC has granted citizenship to these immigrants: however, as the TRNC is not recognised by the Republic or the international community (with the exception of Turkey), its power to create new citizens is not recognised and the newcomers retain Turkish passports. The result of this situation is that percentage population estimates vary widely.

In the years since the census data were gathered in 2000, Cyprus has also seen a large influx of guest workers from countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, as well as major increases in the numbers of permanent British residents. The island is also home to a significant Armenian minority, as well as a large refugee population consisting of people mainly from Serbia, Palestine and Lebanon. There is also a Kurdish minority present in Cyprus.

Since the country joined the European Union, a significant Polish population has also grown up, joining sizeable communities from Russia and Ukraine (mostly Pontic Greeks, immigrating after the fall of the Eastern Bloc), Bulgaria, Romania and Eastern European states.

There is also a significant and thriving Cypriot Diaspora in other countries, with the United States, the United Kingdom, Greece and Australia hosting the majority of migrants who fled the Turkish invasion in 1974.

Religion



Most Greek Cypriots, and thus the majority of the population of Cyprus, are members of the Greek Orthodox Church, whereas most Turkish Cypriots are Muslim. According to Eurobarometer 2005 , Cyprus is one of the most religious countries in Europe, along with Turkey, Malta, Romania, Greece and Poland. In addition to the Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities, there are also small Bahá'í, Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Maronite (Eastern Rites Catholic) and Armenian Apostolic communities in Cyprus.

Education

Cyprus has a well-developed system of primary and secondary education offering both public and private education. The high quality of instruction can be attributed to a large extent to the above-average competence of the teachers. State schools are generally seen as equivalent in quality of education to private-sector institutions. However, the value of a state high-school diploma is limited by the fact that the grades obtained account for only around 25% of the final grade for each topic, with the remaining 75% assigned by the teacher during the semester, in a minimally transparent way. Greek (List of universities in Greece) and Cypriot universities ignore high school grades almost entirely for admissions purposes. While a high-school diploma is mandatory for university attendance, admissions are decided almost exclusively on the basis of scores at centrally administered university entrance examinations that all university candidates are required to take. The majority of Cypriots receive their higher education at Greek, British, Turkish, other European and North American universities.

Private colleges and state-supported universities have been developed by both the Turkish and Greek communities:

- Cyprus International University: Established in 1997, in the Turkish-speaking area
- Cyprus University of Technology: Started in 2007
- European University - Cyprus: Established in 1961 as Cyprus College and changed its name in 2007
- Middle East Technical University - Northern Cyprus Campus: A Turkish university's Cyprus campus, started in 2005
- University of Cyprus: Established in 1989
- University of Nicosia: Formerly Intercollege, changed its name to Mediterranean Sea International University in 2004 and to its present name in 2007. A total of 5,000 students at the Nicosia, Limassol and Larnaca campuses

Students from overseas are also increasing.

Culture

Art

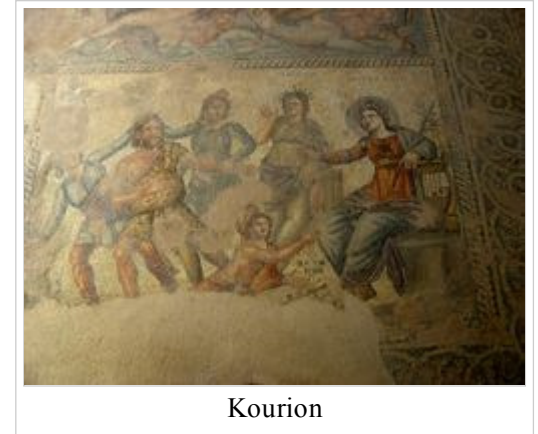


Agios Lazaros Church in Larnaca.

Notable artists include Rhea Bailey, Mihail Kkasialos, Theodoulos Gregoriou, Helene Black, George Skoteinos, Kalopedis family, Nicos Nicolaides, Stass Paraskos, Arestís Stasí, Telemachos Kanthos, Adamantios Diamantis and Konstantia Sofokleous

Music

The traditional folk music of Cyprus has many common elements with Greek mainland and island folk music, including dances like the sousta, syrto, zeibekikos, tatsia, and the kartsilamas. The instruments commonly associated with Cyprus folk music are the lute ("laouto"), violin ("fkiolin"), accordion and the Cyprus flute ("pithkiavlin"). There is also a form of musical poetry known as "chattista", which is often performed at traditional feasts and celebrations. Composers associated with traditional music in Cyprus include Evagoras Karageorgis, Marios Tokas, Solon Michaelides, Savvas Salides. Pop music in Cyprus is generally influenced by the Greek pop music "Laïka" scene, with several artists such as Anna Vissi and Evridiki earning widespread popularity. Cypriot rock and "entechno" rock music is often associated with artists such as Michalis Hatzigiannis and Alkinoos Ioannidis. Metal also has a following in Cyprus, represented by bands such as Winter's Verge, Blynd and Armageddon Rev. 16:16.



Kourion

Literature

Literary production of the antiquity includes the Cypria, an epic poem probably composed in the later seventh century BC and attributed to Stasinus. The Cypria is one of the very first specimens of Greek and European poetry. The Cypriot Zeno of Citium was the founder of the Stoic philosophy. Epic poetry, notably the "acritic songs", flourished during Middle Ages. Two chronicles, one written by Leontios Machairas and the other by Voustronios, refer to the period under French domination (15th century). Poèmes d'amour written in medieval Greek Cypriot date back from 16th century. Some of them are actual translations of poems written by Petrarch, Bembo, Ariosto and G. Sannazzaro. Modern literary figures from Cyprus include the poet and writer Kostas Montis, poet Kyriakos Charalambides, poet Michalis Pasardis, writer Nicos Nicolaides, Stylianos Atteshlis, Altheides and also Demetris Th. Gotsis. Dimitris Lipertis and Vasilis Michaelides are folk poets who wrote poems mainly in the Cypriot-Greek dialect. The majority of the play *Othello* by William Shakespeare is set on the island of Cyprus. Cyprus also figures in religious literature, most notably in Acts of the Apostles, according to which the Apostles Barnabas and Paul preached on the island.

Cuisine

Halloumi, (a cheese made from a mixture of goat's and sheep's milk) originates from Cyprus, and is commonly served sliced and grilled as an appetizer. Seafood dishes of Cyprus include calamari (squid), octopus in red wine, (red mullet), and sea bass. Cucumber and tomato are used widely in Cypriot cuisine. Other common vegetable preparations include potatoes in olive oil and parsley, pickled cauliflower and beets, kolokasi (taro) and asparagus. Meat dishes marinated in dried coriander seeds and wine, and eventually dried and smoked, such as lounza, charcoal-grilled lamb (souvla), sheftalia (minced meat wrapped in mesentery), as well as cracked wheat (pourgouri) are some of the traditional delicacies of the island.

Sports

Governing bodies of sport in Cyprus include the Cyprus Automobile Association, Cyprus Badminton Federation]], Cyprus Basketball Federation, Cyprus Cricket Association, Cyprus Football Association, Cyprus Rugby Federation and the Cyprus Volleyball Federation. Marcos Baghdatis is one of the most successful tennis players in international stage. He reached the Wimbledon semi-final in 2006. Also Kyriakos Ioannou a Cypriot high jumper born in Limassol achieved a jump of 2.35 m at the 11th IAAF World Championships in Athletics held in Osaka, Japan, in 2007 winning the bronze medal

The island has a keen football culture. Notable football teams include AC Omonia, APOEL, Anorthosis Famagusta FC, AEK Larnaca and AEL Limassol. Stadiums or sports venues in Cyprus include the GSP Stadium(the largest and home venue of the Cypriot national football team), Makario Stadium, Neo GSZ Stadium, Antonis Papadopoulos Stadium and Tsirion Stadium. The Cyprus Rally is also on the World Rally Championship sporting agenda.

Infrastructure

Transportation

Since the last railway was dismantled in 1950, the remaining modes of transport are by road, sea, and air. Of the 10,663 km (6,626 mi) of roads in the Greek Cypriot area as of 1998, 6,249 km (3,883 mi) were paved, and 4,414 km (2,743 mi) were unpaved. As of 1996 the Turkish Cypriot area had a similar ratio of paved to unpaved, with approximately 1,370 km (850 mi) of paved road and 980 km (610 mi) unpaved. Cyprus is one of only four EU nations in which vehicles drive on the left-hand side of the road, a remnant of British colonization.

Motorways

- A1 Nicosia to Limassol
- A2 connects A1 near Pera Chorio with A3 by Larnaca
- A3 Larnaca to Agia Napa
- A5 connects A1 near Kofinou with A3 by Larnaca
- A6 Pafos to Limassol
- A9 Nicosia to Astromeritis (partially under construction)



Nicosia's Airport remains closed since the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974.

Image:Limassol-Seafront'.jpg

Aerial view of the promenade in Limassol

Number of licensed vehicles

Vehicle Category	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Private vehicles	270,348	277,554	291,645	324,212	344,953
Taxis	1,641	1,559	1,696	1,770	1,845
Rental cars	8,080	8,509	9,160	9,652	8,336
Buses	3,003	2,997	3,275	3,199	3,217
Light trucks (lighter than 40 tonnes)	107,060	106,610	107,527	105,017	105,327
Heavy trucks (over 40 tonnes)	10,882	11,182	12,119	12,808	13,028
Motorcycles (2 wheels)	12,956	14,983	16,009	16,802	16,836
Motorcycles (3 wheels)	42	41	43	55	558
Scooters	28,987	25,252	25,464	24,539	22,987
TOTAL	442,999	448,687	466,938	498,054	517,087

In 1999, Cyprus had six heliports and two international airports: Larnaca International Airport and Paphos International Airport. Nicosia International Airport has been closed since 1974.

Public transport in Cyprus is limited to privately run bus services (except in Nicosia), taxis, and 'shared' taxi services (referred to locally as *service taxis*). Per capita private car ownership is the 5th highest in the world. In 2006 extensive plans were announced to improve and expand bus services and restructure public transport throughout Cyprus, with the financial backing of the European Union Development Bank. The main harbours of the island are *Limassol harbour* and *Larnaca harbour*, which service cargo, passenger, and cruise ships.

Health care

Urban hospitals include:

- Nicosia New General Hospital
- Nicosia Old General Hospital
- Makario Hospital (Nicosia)
- Limassol New General Hospital
- Limassol Old General Hospital
- Larnaca New General Hospital
- Larnaca Old General Hospital
- Paphos General Hospital

Telecommunications

Cyta, the state-owned telecommunications company, manages most Telecommunications and Internet connections on the island. However, following the recent liberalization of the sector, a few private telecommunications companies have emerged including MTN, Cablenet, TelePassport, OTEnet Telecom and PrimeTel.

International membership

The island nation Cyprus is member of: Australia Group, CN, CE, CFSP, EBRD, EIB, EU, FAO, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICCt, ITUC, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ITU, MIGA, NAM, NSG, OPCW, OSCE, PCA, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UPU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WToO, WTO.

International rankings

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Organization	Survey	Ranking
State of World Liberty Project	State of World Liberty Index	9 out of 159
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index 2006	29 out of 177
	Human Development Index 2004	29 out of 177
	Human Development Index 2000	29 out of 177
The Economist	Worldwide Quality-of-life Index, 2005	23 out of 111
University of Leicester	Satisfaction with Life Index	49 out of 178
Heritage Foundation/ <i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Index of Economic Freedom	20 out of 157
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2006	30 out of 168
	Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2005	25(tied) out of 168
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index 2006	37 out of 163
	Corruption Perceptions Index 2005	37 out of 158
	Corruption Perceptions Index 2004	36 out of 145
World Economic Forum	Global Competitiveness Report	46 out of 125
International Monetary Fund	GDP per capita	31 out of 180
Yale University/ Columbia University	Environmental Sustainability Index 2005	not ranked
Nationmaster	Labor strikes	not ranked
A.T. Kearney / Foreign Policy	Globalization Index 2006	not ranked
	Globalization Index 2005	
	Globalization Index 2004	

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Czech Republic

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The **Czech Republic** (IPA: /ˈtʃɛk rɪˈpʌblɪk/) (*Czech*: *Česká republika* (help· info), short form in *Czech*: *Česko*, IPA: [tʃɛsko]), is a landlocked country in Central Europe and a member state of the European Union. The country has borders with Poland to the northeast, Germany to the west, Austria to the south, and Slovakia to the east. The capital and largest city is Prague (*Czech*: *Praha*), a major tourist destination. The country is composed of the historic regions of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as parts of Silesia.

Following the Battle of the White Mountain, the Czech lands fell under the Habsburg rule from 1526, later becoming part of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary. The independent Republic of Czechoslovakia was formed in 1918, following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire after World War I. After the Munich Agreement, German occupation of Czechoslovakia and the consequent disillusion with the Western response and gratitude for the liberation of the major portion of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army, the Communist party won plurality (38 %) in 1946 elections. In an 1948 overturn, Czechoslovakia became a communist-ruled state. In 1968, the increasing dissatisfaction has culminated in attempts to reform the communist regime. The events, known as Prague Spring of 1968, had ended with a invasion of armies of Warsaw Pact countries, and the troops remained in the country until the overturn in 1989 Velvet Revolution, when the communist regime collapsed. On January 1, 1993 the country Czechoslovakia peacefully split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The Czech Republic made economic reforms such as massive privatization and flat tax. Annual gross domestic product growth has recently been around 6%. The country is the first former member of the Comecon to achieve the status of a developed country (2006) according to the World Bank. The Czech Republic also ranks best compared to the former Comecon countries in the Human Development Index.

The Czech Republic is a pluralist multi-party parliamentary representative democracy. President Václav Klaus is the current head of state. The Prime Minister is the head of government (currently Mirek Topolánek). The Parliament has two chambers — the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. It is also a member of the OECD, the

Česká republika Czech Republic	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: <i>Pravda vítězí</i> " (<i>Czech</i>) "Truth prevails"	
Anthem: <i>Kde domov můj?</i> (in English: Where is My Home?)	
	
Location of the Czech Republic (orange)	

Council of Europe and the Visegrád Group.

Name

After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the Czech portion found itself without a common single-word name in English. In 1993, The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested the name **Czechia** as an official alternative in all situations other than formal official documents and the full names of government institutions; however, this has not become widely used--though other languages have single-word names, e.g. **Tschechien** in German, and **Czechy** in Polish. The official website of the Czech Republic (www.czech.cz) run by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not use the name *Czechia* as of 2005. Its Czech equivalent is *Česko*.

History

 	<div> <div><div>– on the European continent (camel & white)</div></div> <div><div>– in the European Union (camel) [Legend]</div></div> </div>
Capital (and largest city)	Prague
Official languages	Czech
Demonym	Czech
Government	Parliamentary republic
 - President	Václav Klaus
 - Prime Minister	Mirek Topolánek
Independence	(formed 9th century)
 - from Austria-Hungary	October 28, 1918
 - Czechoslovakia dissolved	January 1, 1993
EU accession	May 1, 2004
Area	
 - Total	78,866 km ² (117th) 30,450 sq mi
 - Water (%)	2
Population	
 - 2008 ¹ estimate	10,403,136 (78th)
 - 2001 census	10,230,060
 - Density	132/km ² (77th) 341/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 IMF estimate
 - Total	\$248.902 billion (39th ²)
 - Per capita	\$24,236 (36th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 IMF estimate



Prague Castle

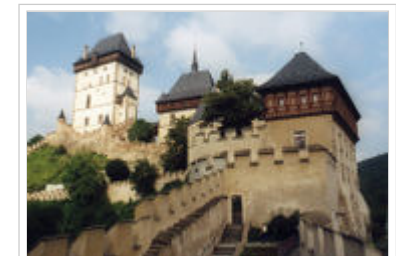
Archaeologists have found evidence of prehistoric human settlement in the area dating back to the Neolithic era. In the classical era, from the 3rd century BC Celtic migrations, the Boii (see Bohemia) and later in the 1st century Germanic tribes of Marcomanni and Quadi settled there. During the Migration Period around the 5th century, many Germanic tribes moved westwards and southwards out of Central Europe. In an equally significant migration, Slavic people from the Black Sea and Carpathian regions settled in the area (a movement that was also stimulated by the onslaught of peoples from Siberia and Eastern Europe: Huns, Avars, Bulgars and Magyars). Following in the

Germans' wake, they moved southwards into Bohemia, Moravia, and some of present day Austria. During the 7th century the Frankish merchant Samo, supporting the Slavs fighting their Avar rulers, became the ruler of the first known Slav state in Central Europe. The Moravian principality arose in the 8th century (see Great Moravia). The Bohemian or Czech state emerged in the late 9th century when it was unified by the Přemyslid dynasty. The kingdom of Bohemia was a significant regional power during the Middle Ages. It was part of the Holy Roman Empire during the entire existence of this confederation.

Religious conflicts such as the 15th century Hussite Wars and the 17th century Thirty Years' War had a devastating effect on the local population. From the 16th century, Bohemia came increasingly under Habsburg control as the Habsburgs became first the elected and then hereditary rulers of Bohemia. After the fall of the Holy Roman Empire, Bohemia became part of Austrian Empire and later of Austria-Hungary.



Tábor



Karlštejn

- Total	\$175.309 billion (39th)
- Per capita	\$17,070 (36th)
Gini (1996)	25.4 (low) (5th)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.891 (high) (32nd)
Currency	Czech koruna (CZK)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.cz ³
Calling code	+420 ⁴

1 March 31, 2008 (See Population changes - 1st quarter of 2008).

2 Rank based on 2005 IMF data.

3 Also .eu, shared with other European Union member states.

4 Shared code 42 with Slovakia until 1997.

From Czechoslovakia to World War 2

Following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I, the independent republic of Czechoslovakia was created in 1918. This new country incorporated regions of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia (known as Subcarpathian Rus at the time) with significant German, Hungarian, Polish and Ruthenian speaking minorities. Although Czechoslovakia was a unitary state, it provided what was at the time rather extensive rights to its minorities. However, it did not grant its minorities any territorial political autonomy, which resulted in discontent and strong support among some of the minorities to break away from Czechoslovakia. Adolf Hitler used the opportunity and, supported by Konrad Henlein's Sudeten German National Socialist Party, gained the largely German speaking Sudetenland through the 1938 Munich Agreement. Poland occupied Polish inhabited areas around Český Těšín. Hungary gained parts of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus as a result of the First Vienna Award in November 1938.



Štramberk



Český Krumlov



Kutná Hora

Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus gained greater autonomy, with the state renamed to "Czecho-Slovakia" (The Second Republic; see Occupation of Czechoslovakia). Slovakia seceded in March 1939 and allied itself with Hitler's coalition. The remaining Czech territory was occupied by Germany, transformed it into the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The Protectorate was proclaimed part of the Third Reich, and President and Prime Minister were subordinate to the Nazi *Reichsprotektor* ("imperial protector"). Subcarpathian Rus declared independence as the Republic of Carpatho-Ukraine on 15 March 1939 but was invaded by Hungary the same day and formally annexed on 16 March. Approximately 390,000 Czechoslovak citizens, including 83,000 Jews, were killed or executed, and hundreds of thousands of others were sent to prisons and

concentration camps or as forced labour. A Nazi concentration camp existed at Terezin to the north of Prague. There was Czech resistance to Nazi occupation both home and abroad, most notably with the assassination of leading Nazi leader Reinhard Heydrich in Prague suburbs on May 27, 1942. The Czechoslovak government-in-exile and its army fighting against the Germans were acknowledged by Allies (Czechoslovak troops fought in Great Britain, North Africa, Middle East and Soviet Union). The occupation ended on 9 May 1945 with the arrival of Soviet and American armies and the Prague uprising.

In 1945-46 almost the entire German minority of Czechoslovakia, about 2.7 million people, were expelled to Germany and Austria. During this time, thousands of Germans were held in prisons, detention camps, and used as forced labour. In the summer of 1945, there were several massacres. Only 250,000 Germans who had been active in the resistance against the Nazis or were necessary for the economy were not expelled, though many of them emigrated later. Following a Soviet-organised referendum, the Subcarpathian Rus has never returned under Czechoslovak rule and became part of the Ukrainian SSR, as the Zakarpattia Oblast in 1946.

Communist era

Czechoslovakia uneasily tried to play the role of a "bridge" between the West and East. However, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia rapidly increased in popularity, particularly because of a general disappointment with the West (due to the pre-war Munich Agreement) and a favourable popular attitude towards the Soviet Union (due to the Soviets' role in liberating Czechoslovakia from German rule). In the 1946 elections, with 38% of the votes, the Communists became the largest party in the Czechoslovak parliament. They formed a coalition government with other parties of the National Front, and moved quickly to consolidate power. The decisive step took place in February 1948. During a series of events characterized by Communists as a "revolution" and by anti-Communists as a "takeover", the Communist People's Militias secured control of key locations in Prague, and a new, all-Communist government was formed.

For the next forty-one years, Czechoslovakia was a Communist state within the eastern bloc (see Czechoslovakia: 1948-1989). This period was marked by a variety of social developments. The Communist government completely nationalized the means of production and established a command economy. The economy grew rapidly during the 1950s and 1960s, but slowed down in the 1970s with increasing problems during the 1980s. The political climate was highly repressive during the 1950s (including numerous show trials), but became more open and tolerant in the 1960s, culminating in Alexander Dubček's leadership in the 1968 Prague Spring that tried to create "socialism with a human face" and perhaps even introduce political pluralism. This was forcibly ended by 21 August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion. From then until 1989, the political establishment returned to censorship of opposition, though using more "carrot" than "whip" policy to ensure the populace's passivity.

Czech Republic

In November 1989, Czechoslovakia returned to democracy through a peaceful "Velvet Revolution". However, Slovak national aspirations strengthened until on January 1, 1993, the country peacefully split into the independent Czech Republic and Slovakia. Both countries went through economic reforms and privatisations, with the intention of creating a market economy.

From 1991 the Czech Republic (originally as part of Czechoslovakia, and now in its own right) has been a member of the Visegrad Group and from 1995 of the OECD. The Czech Republic joined NATO on March 12, 1999 and the European Union on May 1, 2004.

Geography



General map of the Czech Republic



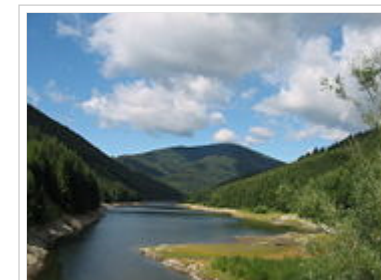
Map of the Czech Republic showing cities and main towns

The Czech landscape is quite varied. Bohemia to the west consists of a basin, drained by the Elbe (Czech: *Labe*) and the Vltava rivers, and surrounded by mostly low mountains such as the Krkonoše range of the Sudetes. The highest point in the country, Sněžka, at 1,602 m (5,262 ft), is located here. Moravia, the eastern part of the country, is also quite hilly. It is drained mainly by the Morava River, but it also contains the source of the Oder (Czech: *Odra*) River. Water from the landlocked Czech Republic flows to three different seas: the North Sea, Baltic Sea and Black

Sea. The Czech Republic also leases the Moldauhafen, a 30,000- square-metre (7.4- acre) lot in the middle of the Hamburg Docks, which was awarded to Czechoslovakia by Article 363 of the Treaty of Versailles to allow the landlocked country a place where goods transported downriver could be transferred to seagoing ships. The territory reverts to Germany in 2028.



Labe near Děčín



Moravian-Silesian Beskids

Phytogeographically, the Czech Republic belongs to the Central European province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of the Czech Republic can be subdivided into four ecoregions: the Central European mixed forests, Pannonian mixed forests, Western European broadleaf forests and Carpathian montane conifer forests.

Weather and climate

The Czech Republic has a temperate, continental climate with relatively hot summers and cold, cloudy winters, usually with snow. Most rains are during the summer. The temperature difference between summers and winters is relatively high due to its landlocked geographical position.

Even within the Czech Republic, temperatures vary greatly depending on the elevation. In general, at higher altitudes the temperatures decrease and precipitation increases. Another important factor is the distribution of the mountains. Therefore the climate is quite varied.

At the highest peak (Sněžka, 1,602 m/5,260 ft) the average temperature is only -0.4 °C (31 °F), whereas in the lowlands of South Moravia, the average temperature is as high as 10 °C (50 °F). This also applies for the country's capital Prague, but this is due to urban factors.

The coldest month is usually January followed by February and December. During these months there is usually snow in the mountains and sometimes in the major cities and lowlands. During March, April and May, the temperature usually increases rapidly and especially during April the temperature and weather tends to vary widely during the day. Spring is also characterized by high water levels in the rivers due to melting snow followed by floods at times.

The warmest month of the year is July, followed by August and June. On average, the summer temperatures are about 20 °C (68 °F) higher than during winter. Especially in the last decade, temperatures above 30 °C (86 °F) are not unusual. Summer is also characterized by rain and storms.

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Autumn generally begins in September, which is still relatively warm, but much drier. During October, temperatures usually fall back under 15° or 10°C (59° or 50°F) and deciduous trees begin to shed their leaves. By the end of November, temperatures usually range around the freezing point.

Demographics

Population

The vast majority of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic are Czechs (94.2%). Minorities include the Slovaks (1.9%), Poles (0.5%), Vietnamese (0.44%) Germans (0.4%). According to the Interior Ministry of the Czech Republic, there were 392,087 foreigners legally residing in the country at the end of 2007, making up 3.2% of the population, with the largest groups being Ukrainians and Slovaks.

Fertility rate was low at 1.44 children born/woman. In 2007, immigration added to the population by almost 1%.

Religion

The Czech Republic, along with Estonia, has one of the least religious populations in all of Europe. According to the 2001 census, 59% of the country is agnostic, atheist, non-believer or no-organised believer, 26.8% Roman Catholic and 2.5% Protestant.

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 19% of Czech citizens responded that "they believe there is a God", whereas 50% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 30% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, God, or life force", the lowest rate of EU countries after Estonia with 16%.

Politics

Population of the Czech lands

Year	Total	Change	Year	Total	Change
1857	7,016,531	—	1930	10,674,386	6.6%
1869	7,617,230	8.6%	1950	8,896,133	-16.7%
1880	8,222,013	7.9%	1961	9,571,531	7.6%
1890	8,665,421	5.4%	1970	9,807,697	2.5%
1900	9,372,214	8.2%	1980	10,291,927	4.9%
1910	10,078,637	7.5%	1991	10,302,215	0.1%
1921	10,009,587	-0.7%	2001	10,230,060	-0.7%

Political system

The Czech Republic is a pluralist multi-party parliamentary representative democracy, where the Prime Minister is the head of government. The Parliament is bicameral, with the Chamber of Deputies (Czech: *Poslanecká sněmovna*) (200 members) and the Senate (81 members).

Foreign policy

A key goal in foreign policy has been European integration.

According to The Economist, the Czech Republic has earned a reputation for promoting human rights at every turn. Czech officials have pushed Europe's weight behind democrats everywhere from Myanmar to Belarus, Moldova and Cuba. The Czech foreign ministry has an entire unit devoted to helping dissidents in other countries.

Czech Republic is motivated by its experience of Nazi and communist oppression. Also, the country's first post-communist president Václav Havel is an ex-dissident writer, who has set moral example and has attracted ex-dissidents to key government positions. For example, every March since 2003, when Fidel Castro locked up 75 political opponents, activists have set up a cage in Wenceslas Square representing a Cuban prison cell. Frequent prison uniform-wearing protesters have included names such as the foreign minister, the mayor of Prague and musical stars. Some EU officials have been irritated by Czech Republic's activism in human rights. Czech Republic and other countries stressing human rights have been in conflicts with EU countries who favour closer ties with dictatorships.

Armed forces

The Czech armed forces consist of the Army and Air Force and of specialized support units. In 2004, the Czech armed forces completely phased out conscription and transformed into a fully professional army and air force. The country has been a member of NATO since March 12, 1999. Defence spending is around 1.8% of GDP (2006).

Regions and districts

Since 2000, the Czech Republic is divided into thirteen regions (Czech: *kraje*, singular *kraj*) and the capital city of Prague. Each region has its own elected Regional Assembly (*krajské zastupitelstvo*) and *hejtman* (usually translated as hetman or "president"). In Prague, their powers are executed by the city council and the mayor.

The older seventy-six districts (*okresy*, singular *okres*) including three 'statutory cities' (without Prague, which had special



Václav Havel, the first President of the Czech Republic.



Václav Klaus, current President of the Czech Republic.



Czech Air Force Saab Gripen.

status) were disbanded in 1999 in an administrative reform; they remain as territorial division and seats of various branches of state administration.

(Lic. plate)	Region	Capital	Population (2004 est.)	Population (2008 est.)
A	Capital of Prague (Hlavní město Praha)		1,170,571	1,218,644
S	Central Bohemian Region (Středočeský kraj)	offices located in Prague (Praha)	1,144,071	1,208,145
C	South Bohemian Region (Jihočeský kraj)	České Budějovice	625,712	633,750
P	Plzeň Region (Plzeňský kraj)	Pilsen (Plzeň)	549,618	562,783
K	Karlovy Vary Region (Karlovarský kraj)	Karlovy Vary	304,588	307,975
U	Ústí nad Labem Region (Ústecký kraj)	Ústí nad Labem	822,133	833,218
L	Liberec Region (Liberecký kraj)	Liberec	427,563	434,751
H	Hradec Králové Region (Královéhradecký kraj)	Hradec Králové	547,296	552,850
E	Pardubice Region (Pardubický kraj)	Pardubice	505,285	512,380
M	Olomouc Region (Olomoucký kraj)	Olomouc	635,126	641,809
T	Moravian-Silesian Region (Moravskoslezský kraj)	Ostrava	1,257,554	1,249,844
B	South Moravian Region (Jihomoravský kraj)	Brno	1,123,201	1,142,013
Z	Zlín Region (Zlínský kraj)	Zlín	590,706	590,828
J	Vysočina Region (Vysočina)	Jihlava	517,153	514,146



Economy

The Czech Republic possesses a developed, high-income economy with a GDP per capita of 82% of the European Union average. One of the most stable and prosperous of the post-Communist states, the Czech Republic has seen a growth of over 6% annually in the last three years. Recent growth has been led by exports to the European Union, especially Germany, and foreign investment, while domestic demand is reviving. However, the rate of corruption remains one of the highest among OECD countries.

The public budgets remain in deficit despite strong growth of the economy in recent years. However, the 2007 deficit has been 1.58% GDP (according to EU accounting rules), far less than originally expected.

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Most of the economy has been privatized, including banks and telecommunications. The current right-centre government plans to continue with privatization, including the energy industry and the Prague airport. It has recently agreed to the sale of a 7% stake of the energy producer ČEZ, with the sale of the Budějovický Budvar brewery also mooted.

The country has fully implemented the Schengen Agreement and therefore has abolished border controls with all of its neighbours (Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovakia) on December 21, 2007. The Czech Republic is a member of the WTO.

The last Czech government had expressed a desire to adopt the euro in 2010, but the current government has postponed it due to budget deficits. An exact date has not been set up, but the Finance Ministry described adoption by 2012 as realistic if public finance reform passes. However, the most recent draft of the euro adoption plan omits giving any date.

Education

The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks the Czech education as the 15th best in the world, being higher than the OECD average.

Transport

Prague Airport is the main international airport. Czech Republic has 46 airports, out of which two have over 3,047 meter runways.

Energy

In 2005, according to the Czech Statistical Office, 65.4% of electricity was produced in steam, combined, and combustion power plants (mostly coal); 30% in nuclear plants; and 4.6% from renewable sources, including hydropower. Russia (via pipelines through Ukraine) and, to a lesser extent, Norway (via pipelines through Germany) supply the Czech Republic with liquid and natural gas.

Communications

The Czech Republic has the most Wi-Fi subscribers in the European Union. By the beginning of 2008 there was over 800 mostly local WISPs with about 350 000 subscribers in 2007. Mobile internet is quite popular. Plans based on either GPRS, EDGE, UMTS or CDMA2000 are being offered by all three mobile phone operators (T-Mobile, Vodafone, Telefonica O2) and U:fon. Government-owned Český Telecom slowed down broadband penetration. At the beginning of 2004, local loop unbundling began, and alternative operators started to offer ADSL (and also SDSL). This, and later privatisation of Český Telecom helped drive down prices. On July 1, 2006, Český Telecom was renamed to Telefónica O2 Czech Republic. As of January 2006, ADSL2+ is offered in many variants, both with data limit and without with speeds up to 10 Mbit/s. Cable internet is gaining popularity with its higher download speeds beginning at 2 Mbit/s up to 20 Mbit/s. The biggest ISP, UPC (which has bought another CATV internet provider Karneval in 2007) is providing its service in big cities (Prague, Brno, Ostrava)

Tourism

The Czech economy gets a substantial income from tourism: in 2001, the total earnings from tourism reached 118.13 billion CZK, making up 5.5% of GNP and 9.3% of overall export earnings. The industry employs more than 110,000 people - over 1% of the population.

There are several centres of tourist activity: The historic city of Prague is the primary tourist attraction, and the city is also the most common point of entry for tourists visiting other parts of the country. Most other cities in the country attract significant numbers of tourists, but the spa towns such as Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně and Františkovy Lázně are particularly popular holiday destinations. Other popular tourist sites are the many castles and chateaux, such as those at Karlštejn, Konopiště and Český Krumlov. Away from the towns, areas as Český ráj, Šumava and the Krkonoše Mountains attract visitors seeking outdoor pursuits.

The country is also famous for its love of puppetry and marionettes. The Pilsner style beer originated in western Bohemian city of Plzeň.



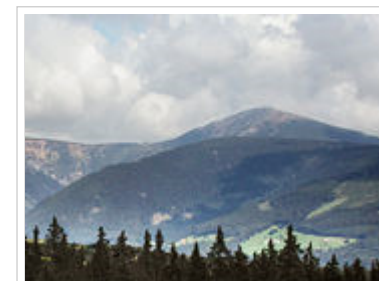
Tourists in Prague.

Culture

Cuisine

Czech cuisine is marked by a strong emphasis on meat dishes. Pork is quite common, and beef and chicken are also popular. In the last years with the incoming immigrants, Kebab is a popular food of Czech Cuisine as well. Goose, duck, rabbit and wild game are served. Fish is rare, with the occasional exception of fresh trout, and carp, which is served at Christmas.

Aside from Slivovitz, Czech beer and wine, Czechs also produce two uniquely Czech liquors, Fernet Stock and Becherovka. Kofola is a non-alcoholic Czech soft drink somewhat similar in look and taste to Coca-Cola.



Sněžka is the highest point in the Czech Republic.

Sport

Sport plays a significant part in the life of many Czechs who are generally loyal supporters of their favourite teams or individuals. The two leading sports in the Czech Republic are football and ice hockey, both drawing the largest attention of both the media and supporters. The many other sports with professional leagues and structures include basketball, volleyball, handball, athletics, floorball and others. Sport is a source of strong waves of patriotism, usually rising several days or weeks before an event and sinking several days after. The events considered the most important by Czech fans are: the Ice Hockey World Championship, Olympic Ice hockey tournament, the Euro, the football World Cup and qualification matches for such events. In general, any international match of the Czech ice hockey or



Vepřo-knedlo-zelo (Roast pork with dumplings and cabbage)

football national team draws attention, especially when played against a traditional rival: Germany in football; Russia, Sweden and Canada in ice hockey; and Slovakia in both.

Music

Music in the Czech Republic has roots both in high-culture opera and symphony and in the traditional music of Bohemia and Moravia. Cross-pollination and diversity are important aspects of Czech music: Composers were often influenced by traditional music; jazz and bluegrass music have become popular; pop music often consisted of English language hits sung in Czech.

Literature

Czech literature is the literature of the historical regions of Bohemia, Moravia, and the Czech-speaking part of Silesia, (now part of the **Czech Republic**, formerly of Czechoslovakia). This most often means literature written by Czechs, in the Czech language, although Old Church Slavonic, Latin, and German were also used, mostly in the early periods. Modern authors from the Czech territory who wrote in other languages (e.g. German) are generally considered separately, and their writing usually existed in parallel with Czech-language literature and did not interact with it. Thus Franz Kafka, for example, who wrote in German (though he also knew Czech rather well), falls within Austrian literature, though he lived his entire life in Bohemia.

Czech literature is divided into several main time periods: the Middle Ages; the Hussite period; the years of re-Catholicization and the baroque; the Enlightenment and Czech reawakening in the 19th century; the avantgarde of the interwar period; the years under Communism and the Prague Spring; and the literature of the post-Communist Czech Republic. Czech literature and culture played a major role on at least two occasions when Czech society lived under oppression and no political activity was possible. On both of these occasions, in the early 19th century and then again in the 1960s, the Czechs used their cultural and literary effort to create political freedom and to establish a confident, politically aware nation.

International rankings

- Human Development Index 2007: Rank 32nd out of 178 countries
- Index of Economic Freedom 2007: Rank 31st out of 157 countries
- Reporters Without Borders world-wide press freedom index 2007: Rank 14th out of 169 countries
- Global Competitiveness Report 2006: Rank 29th out of 125 countries
- Democracy Index (January 2007): Ranks 18th of 167 countries (*a functioning democracy* along with only 27 others)
- It was also ranked as the highest alcohol-consuming nation by The Economist in 2006.

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Denmark



2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

The **Kingdom of Denmark** (Danish: *Kongeriget Danmark* (help· info), IPA: [ˈd̥ænmɑɡ̊], (archaic:) IPA: [ˈd̥ɑnmaːɡ̊]), commonly known as **Denmark**, is a country in the Scandinavian region of northern Europe. It is the southernmost of the Nordic countries. The mainland is bordered to the south by Germany; Denmark is southwest of Sweden and south of Norway. Denmark borders both the Baltic and the North Sea. The country consists of a large peninsula, Jutland (Jylland) and many islands, most notably Zealand (Sjælland), Funen (Fyn), Vendsyssel-Thy, Lolland, Falster and Bornholm as well as hundreds of minor islands often referred to as the Danish Archipelago. Denmark has long controlled the approach to the Baltic Sea, and these waters are also known as the Danish straits. The Faroe Islands and Greenland are autonomous provinces of Denmark with home rule.

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government. Denmark has a state-level government and local governments in 98 municipalities. Denmark is a member of NATO and the European Union, having joined the European Economic Community in 1973. Denmark has not joined the Eurozone.

Originally a seafaring nation relying on fishing, farming and trade, Denmark experienced steady industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries. Denmark had the world's 3rd highest GDP per capita in 1970. Between 1970 and 1990 the level of taxation and regulation increased dramatically as Denmark adopted the Nordic model welfare state. After falling sharply behind in prosperity, unemployment and other indicators, Denmark took steps in economic liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s, including abolishing almost all job market regulation. Despite relatively high taxation, the economy is otherwise quite unregulated and Index of Economic Freedom ranks Denmark the world's 11th most economically free country (4th in Europe).

From 2006 to 2008, surveys ranked Denmark as "the happiest place in the world," based on standards of health, welfare, and education. In the 2008 survey, the Global Peace Index ranks Denmark as the second most peaceful country in the world, after Iceland. In 2008, the capital and largest city, Copenhagen, was ranked the most liveable city in the world by *Monocle* magazine. The national language Danish is close to Swedish and Norwegian, which they share strong cultural and historical ties with. 82.0% of the inhabitants of Denmark and 90.3% of the ethnic Danes are members of the Lutheran state church. About

<p><i>Kongeriget Danmark</i> Kingdom of Denmark</p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	<p>Image:Denmark coa.png</p> <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p>Motto: none (Royal motto: <i>Guds hjælp, Folkets kærlighed, Danmarks styrke</i> "The Help of God, the Love of the People, the Strength of Denmark")</p>	
<p>Anthem: <i>Der er et yndigt land</i> (national)</p> <p>Royal anthem: <i>Kong Christian</i> (royal)</p>	
	

9% of residents are citizens of other countries.

Etymology

The etymology of the word Denmark, and especially the relationship between Danes and Denmark and the unifying of Denmark as a single Kingdom is a subject that attracts some debate. The debate is centered primarily around the prefix 'Dan' and whether it refers to the Dani or a historical person Dan and the exact meaning of the -mark ending. The issue is further complicated by a number of references to various Dani people in Scandinavian or other places in Europe in ancient Greek and Roman accounts (like Ptolemy, Jordanes and Gregory of Tours), as well as some medieval literature (like Adam of Bremen, Beowulf, Widsith and Poetic Edda).

Most handbooks derive the first part of the word, and the name of the people, from a word meaning "flat land", related to German *Tenne* "threshing floor", English *den* "cave", Sanskrit *dhānuṣ-* "desert". The *-mark* is believed to mean woodland or borderland (see marches), with probable references to the border forests in south Schleswig, maybe similar to Finnmark, Telemark or Dithmarschen.

Mythological explanations

Some of the earliest descriptions of the origin of the word 'Denmark', describing a territory, are found in the *Chronicon Lethrense* (12th century), Svend Aagesen (late 12th century), Saxo Grammaticus (early 13th century) and the Ballad of Eric (mid 15th century). There are however many more Danish annals and yearbooks containing various other details, similar tales in other variations, other names or spelling variations, and so on.

The *Chronicon Lethrense* explains that when the Roman Emperor Augustus went against Denmark in the time of David, Denmark consisted of the territory Jutland, Funen, Zealand, Møn, Falster, Lolland and Skåne, but was not called Denmark (Dania) because they were governed by the Swedish king Ypper. He had three sons, Nori, Østen and Dan. Dan was sent to govern Zealand, Møn, Falster and Lolland, which became known jointly as Videslev. When the Jutes were fighting Emperor Augustus they called upon Dan to help and upon victory made him king of Jutland, Fuen, Videslev and Skåne. After a council about what to call this new united land, they named it Denmark (Dania) after the new king, Dan. Saxo relates that the legendary Danish King Dan, son of Humbli, gave the name to the Danish people, though he does not expressly state that he also is the origin of the word "Denmark". Rather he tells that England ultimately derives its name from Dan's brother Angle. As a side note, however, Saxo also tells that the

Location of Denmark (orange)	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> – on the European continent (camel & white) [Legend] </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> – in the European Union (camel) </div>	
Capital (and largest city)	Copenhagen
Official languages	Danish ¹
Demonym	Danish
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monarch - Prime Minister - Folketing Speaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Margrethe II Anders Fogh Rasmussen Thor Pedersen
Consolidation	(prehistoric)
EU accession	1 January 1973 (7 th)
Area	
- Total	43,094 km ² (134th ²) 16,639 ² sq mi
- Water (%)	1.6 ²
Population	
- 2008 estimate	5,475,791 (108th)
- Density	129.16/km ² (78th ²) 334.53/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2006 estimate
- Total	\$198.5 billion (45th)
- Per capita	\$37,000 (6th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$311.3 billion (27th)
- Per capita	\$57,261 (6th)

Norman historian Dudo of Saint-Quentin had already written that the Danish people and Denmark derived their name from the Dacian people of modern day Romania and northern Bulgaria. From Dudo we hear that Rollo was expelled from Dacia and went to Scania with six boats. In the Ballad of Eric we hear that the Gothic king Humli set his son Dan to rule the settlers of a territory called Vetala, and after Dan, Vetala was named Denmark.

Earliest occurrences



The Jelling Stones, commonly referred to as Denmark's "birth certificate", seen from the north with "Gorm's Mound" in the background.

The earliest mention of a territory called "Denmark" is found in King Alfred the Great's modified translation into Old English of Paulus Orosius' *Seven Books of History Against The Pagans* ["*Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri Septem*"], written by Alfred when king of Wessex in the years 871-899. In a passage introduced to the text by Alfred, we read about Ohthere from Hålogaland's travels in the Nordic region, during which 'Denmark [*Denamearc*] was on his [port side]... And then for two days he had on his [port side] the islands which belong to Denmark'.

The earliest mention of the word "Denmark" within Denmark itself is found on the two rune stones at Jelling, believed to have been erected by Gorm the Old (c. 955) and Harald Bluetooth (c. 965). The larger stone of the two is often cited as Denmark's birth certificate, though both use the word "Denmark", in the form of (acc.) **tanmaurk** [danmørk] (large Jelling stone) and (gen.)

tanmarkaR [danmarkaɾ] (small Jelling stone). The inhabitants of Denmark are there called **tani** [danɪ] ("Danes" in the acc.).

In the Song of Roland, estimated to have been written between 1040 and 1115, though the oldest manuscript dates to 1140-1170, the first mention of the legendary Danish hero Holger Danske appears, who is specifically mentioned, several times, as "Holger of Denmark" (Oger de Denemarche)

History

Gini (1997)	24.7 (low) (1st)
HDI (2004)	▲ 0.943 (high) (14th)
Currency	Danish krone (DKK)
Time zone	CET ² (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST ² (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.dk ^{2,3}
Calling code	+45 ⁴
<p>¹ Co-official with Greenlandic in Greenland, and Faroese in the Faroe Islands. German is recognised as a protected minority language in the South Jutland (Sønderjylland) area of Denmark. Danish is recognized as a protected minority language in the Schleswig-Holstein region of Germany.</p> <p>² For Denmark excluding the Faroe Islands and Greenland.</p> <p>³ The TLD .eu is shared with other European Union countries.</p> <p>⁴ The Faroe Islands use +298 and Greenland uses +299.</p>	



Hankehøj, by Johan Lundbye.
A Danish down. Note the glacial character of the terrain and the burial mound of an early chief in the centre

The earliest archaeological findings in Denmark date back to 130,000 –110,000 BC in the Eem interglacial period. People have inhabited Denmark since about 12,500 BC and agriculture has been in evidence since 3,900 BC. The Nordic Bronze Age (1,800–600 BC) in Denmark was marked by burial mounds, which left an abundance of findings including lurs and the Sun Chariot. During the Pre-Roman Iron Age (500 BC – AD 1), native groups began migrating south, although the first Danish people came to the country between the Pre-Roman and the Germanic Iron Age, in the Roman Iron Age (AD 1–400). The Roman provinces maintained trade routes and relations with native tribes in Denmark and Roman coins have been found in Denmark. Evidence of strong Celtic cultural influence dates from this period in Denmark and much of northwest Europe and is among other things reflected in the finding of the Gundestrup cauldron. Historians believe that before the arrival of the precursors to the Danes, who came from the east Danish islands (Zealand) and Skåne and spoke an early form of north Germanic, most of Jutland and some islands were settled by Jutes. They were later invited to Great Britain as mercenaries by Brythonic king Vortigern, and were granted the south-eastern territories of Kent, the Isle of Wight, among other areas, where they settled. They were later absorbed or ethnically cleansed by the invading Angles and



A photo of the Gundestrup cauldron

Saxons, who formed the Anglo-Saxons. The remaining population in Jutland assimilated in with the Danes, due territorial expansions from the south and the east, and the Jutes being initially weakened after their emigrations.

The exact origins of the Danish nation have been lost in history. However, a short note about the *Dani* in " The Origin and Deeds of the Goths" from 551 by historian Jordanes is believed by some to be an early mention of the *Danes*, one of the ethnic groups from whom the modern Danish people are descended. The Danevirke defense structures were built in phases from the 3rd century forward, and the sheer size of the construction efforts in 737 are attributed to the emergence of a Danish king. The new runic alphabet was first used at the same time and Ribe, the oldest town of Denmark, was founded about 700 AD.

Iron age

During the 8th-11th centuries, the Danes were known as Vikings, together with Norwegians, Geats and Gotlanders. Viking explorers first discovered and settled Iceland in the 9th century, on their way toward the Faroe Islands. From there, Greenland and Vinland (Newfoundland) were also settled. Utilizing their great skills in shipbuilding they raided and conquered parts of France and the British Isles. But they also excelled in trading along the coasts and rivers of Europe, running trade routes from Greenland in the north to Constantinople in the south via Russian rivers. The Danish Vikings were most active in the British Isles and Western Europe, and they raided, conquered and settled parts of England (their earliest settlements included sites in the Danelaw, Ireland, and Normandy).

In the early 8th century, Charlemagne's Christian empire had expanded to the southern border of the Danes, and Frankish sources (F.ex. Notker of St Gall) provide the earliest historical evidence of the Danes. These report a King Gudfred, who appeared in present day Holstein with a navy in 804 AD where diplomacy took place with the Franks; In 808, the same King



The Ladby ship, the only ship burial found in Denmark

Godfred attacked the Obotrite, a Wend people and conquered the city of Reric whose population was displaced or abducted, to Hedeby; In 809, King Godfred and emissaries of Charlemagne failed to negotiate peace and the next year, 810, King Godfred attacked the Frisians with 200 ships. The oldest parts of the defensive works of Danevirke near Hedeby at least date from the summer of 755 and were expanded with large works in the 10th century. The size and amount of troops needed to man it indicates a quite powerful ruler in the area, which might be consistent with the kings the Frankish sources. In 815 AD, Emperor Louis the Pious attacked Jutland apparently in support of a contender to the throne, perhaps Harald Klak, but was turned back by the sons of Godfred, who likely were the sons of the above mentioned Godfred. At the same time Saint Ansgar traveled to Hedeby and started the Catholic Christianization of Scandinavia.



The Danes were united and officially Christianized in 965 AD by Harald Blåtand, the story of which is recorded on the Jelling stones. The exact extent of Harald's Danish Kingdom is unknown, although it's reasonable to believe that it stretched from the defensive line of Dannevirke, including the Viking city of Hedeby, across Jutland, the Danish isles and into southern present day Sweden; Scania and perhaps Halland and Blekinge. Furthermore, the Jelling stones attest that Harald had also "won" Norway. The son of Harald, Sweyn Forkbeard mounted a series of wars of conquest against England, which was completed by Svend's son Canute the Great by the middle of the 11th century. The reign of Canute the Great (Danish:Knud) represented the peak of the Danish Viking age. King Knud's *North Sea Empire* included Denmark (1018), Norway (1028), England (1035) and held strong influence over the north-eastern coast of Germany.

Following the death of Canute the Great Denmark and England was divided. Sweyn Estridsen's son, Canute II and IV, depending on whose royal line is being figured, raided England for the last time in 1075. He planned another invasion to take the throne of England from an aging William I. He called up a fleet of 1000 Danish ships, 60 Norwegian long boats, with plans to meet with another 600 ships under Duke Robert of Flanders in the summer of 1086. Canute, however, was beginning to realize that the imposition of the tithe on Danish peasants and nobles to fund the expansion of monasteries and churches and a new head tax (Danish:nefgjald) had brought his people to the

verge of rebellion. Canute took weeks to arrive at Struer where the fleet had assembled, but he found only the Norwegians still there. The Danes had waited so long for the king that they began to starve and sailed home in disgust.

Canute thanked the Norwegians for their patience and then went from assembly to assembly (Danish:landsting) outlawing any sailor, captain, or soldier who refused to pay a fine which amounted to more than a years harvest for most farmers. When the king refused to back down, the peasants in Vendsyssel went on a rampage burning royal properties and murdering the hated tax collectors. Canute and his housecarls fled south with a growing army of rebels on his heels. Canute fled to the royal property outside the town of Odense on Funen with his two brothers. The peasants on Funen weren't any happier with Canute than anyone else and charged after the king. Canute and his brother, Prince Benedict, fled to St Albans Priory for sanctuary. Canute took communion realizing his days were numbered. After several attempts to break in and then bloody hand to hand fighting in the church, Benedict was cut down and Canute struck in the head by a large stone and then speared from the front. He died at the base of the main altar 10 July 1086. And there the Benedictines buried him.

When Queen Edele came to take Canute's body to Flanders, a wonderful light shone around the church and it was taken as a sign that Canute should remain where he was. People flocked to his grave when it was reported that the blind had received their sight, the lame walked, and deaf heard. His brother Olaf, who

succeeded Canute, had a short reign and Denmark was plagued with famine so often that Olaf will forever be known as Olaf Hunger. Canute was canonized in 1101, and St Canute's Cathedral became one of Scandinavia's most popular pilgrimage sites in the Middle Ages.

The death of St Canute marks the end of the great Viking Age. Never again would massive flotillas of Scandinavians meet each year to ravage the rest of Christian Europe. Denmark was thoroughly Christian, though for generations Danes quietly held onto old customs that are vague reminders of pre-Christian times.

Medieval Denmark

From the Viking age towards the end of the 13th century, the kingdom of Denmark consisted of Jutland, north from the Eider River and the islands of Zealand, Funen, Bornholm, Skåne, Halland and Blekinge. From the end of the 13th century the lands between the Eider River and the river Kongeåen were separated from the kingdom as two vassal duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. In 1658 Skåne, Halland and Blekinge were ceded to Sweden.

Following the end of the 11th century, Denmark underwent a transition from a patchwork of regional chiefs (Danish:jarls) with a weak and semi-elected royal institution, into a realm which more reflected European feudalism, with a powerful king ruling through an influential nobility. The period is marked by internal strife and the generally weak geopolitical position of the realm, which for long stretches fell under German influence. The period also featured the first of large stone buildings (mostly churches), a deep penetration by the Christian faith, the appearance of monastic orders in Denmark and the first written historical works such as the *Gesta Danorum* ("Deeds of the Danes"). German political as well as religious influence firmly ended in the last decades of the 12th century under the rule of King Valdemar the Great and his foster brother Absalon Hvide, Archbishop of Lund; through successful wars against Wend peoples of northeast Germany and the German Empire.

A high point was reached during the reign of Valdemar II, who led the formation of a Danish "Baltic Sea Empire", which by 1221 extended control from Estonia in the east to Norway in the north. In this period several of the "regional" law codes were given; notably the Code of Jutland from 1241, which asserted several modern concepts like right of property; "that the king cannot rule without and beyond the law"; "and that all men are equal to the law". Following the death of Valdemar II in 1241 and to the ascension of Valdemar IV in 1340, the kingdom was in general decline due to internal strife and the rise of the Hanseatic League. The competition between the sons of Valdemar II, had the longterm result that the southern parts of Jutland were separated from the kingdom of Denmark and became semi-independent vassal duchies/counties.

During the reign of Valdemar IV and his daughter Margrethe I, the realm was re-invigorated and following the Battle of Falköping, Margrethe I had her sister's son, Eric of Pomerania crowned King of Denmark, Norway and Sweden after the signing of the union charter of Kalmar (The Kalmar Union), Trinity Sunday 1397. Much of the next 125 years of Scandinavian history revolves around this union, with Sweden breaking off and being re-conquered repeatedly. The issue was for practical purposes resolved on the 17 June 1523 as



The tomb of Margrethe I in Roskilde Cathedral

Swedish King Gustav Vasa conquered the city of Stockholm. Denmark and Norway remained in a personal union until the Congress of Vienna, 1814.

The Protestant Reformation came to Scandinavia in 1520s. On Easter Sunday 1525 Hans Tausen, a monk in the Order of St John's Hospitalers, proclaimed aloud the need for Luther's reforms in the Catholic Church. His sermon was the beginning of a ten year struggle which would change Denmark forever. Tausen was hustled off to a monastery in Viborg in northern Jutland where he would be isolated and away from Copenhagen and the court. Tausen simply preached through the window of his locked chamber. At first curious Danes came to hear the strange new ideas that Tausen was preaching. Within weeks Tausen was freed by his loyal followers and then a Franciscan abbey church was broken open so Viborgers could hear God's word under a roof. Luther's ideas were accepted so rapidly that the local bishop and other churchmen in Viborg were unable to cope. In many churches the mass was celebrated alongside Lutheran sermons and then Tausen's version of Luther's teachings began to spread to other parts of Jutland. Within a year Tausen was the personal chaplain of King Frederik I. Frederik tried to balance the old and new ideas insisting that they coexist; it lasted only as long as Frederik did.

A mob stormed Our Lady Church in Copenhagen in 1531 tearing down statues, destroying side altars, artwork, and relics that had accumulated through its long history. Similar events happened through the country, although for the most part the change was peaceful. The majority of common people saw the reduced influence and wealth of the church as a liberating thing, but their new found influence wasn't to last long.

At the death of Frederick I two claimants to the throne, one backed by Protestant Lübeck and the other by Catholic nobles caused a civil war known as the Count's Feud (Danish: Grevens Fejde). The massacre of Skipper Clement's peasant army at Aalborg brought an end of the war with the pro-Lutheran party firmly in charge. Denmark became officially Lutheran in 1536. Denmark's Catholic bishops were arrested and imprisoned. Abbeys, nunneries, monasteries and other church properties were confiscated by local nobility and the crown. Monks, nuns, and clergy lost their livelihood. The bishops who agreed to marry and not stir up trouble were given former church lands as personal estates.

Catholic influence remained longest in Viborg and the nearby area, northern Jutland, where change permeated slowly, all though the reformation originally began there.

Modern history

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King Christian IV attacked Sweden in the 1611–13 Kalmar War but failed to accomplish his main objective of forcing Sweden to return to the union with Denmark. The war led to no territorial changes, but Sweden was forced to pay a war indemnity of 1 million silver riksdaler to Denmark, an amount known as the *Älvsborg ransom*. King Christian used this money to found several towns and fortresses, most notably Glückstadt (founded as a rival to Hamburg), Christiania (following a fire destroying the original city), Christianshavn, Christianstad, and Christiansand. Christian also constructed a number of buildings, most notably Børsen, Rundetårn, Nyboder, Rosenborg, a silver mine and a copper mill. Inspired by the Dutch East India Company, he founded a similar Danish company and planned to claim Sri Lanka as a colony but the company only managed to acquire Tranquebar on India's Coromandel Coast. In the Thirty Year's War, Christian tried to become the leader of the Lutheran states in Germany, but suffered a crushing defeat at the Battle of Lutter resulting in a Catholic army under Albrecht von Wallenstein occupying and pillaging Jutland. Denmark managed to avoid territorial concessions, but Gustavus Adolphus' intervention in Germany was seen as a sign that the military power of Sweden was on the rise while Denmark's influence in the region was declining. In 1643, Swedish armies invaded Jutland and in 1644 Skåne. In the 1645 Treaty of Brömsebro, Denmark surrendered Halland, Gotland, the last parts of Danish Estonia, and several provinces in Norway. In 1657, King Frederick III declared war on Sweden and marched on Bremen-Verden. This led to a massive Danish defeat and the armies of King Charles X Gustav of Sweden conquered both Jutland, Funen and much of Zealand before signing the Peace of Roskilde in February 1658 which gave Sweden control of Skåne, Blekinge, Trøndelag and the island of Bornholm. Charles X Gustav quickly regretted not having destroyed Denmark completely and in August 1658 he began a two-year long siege of Copenhagen but failed to take the capital. In the following peace settlement, Denmark managed to maintain its independence and regain control of Trøndelag and Bornholm.



Map of Denmark

Denmark tried to regain control of Skåne in the Scanian War (1675–79) but it ended in failure. Following the Great Northern War (1700–21), Denmark managed to restore control of the parts of Schleswig and Holstein ruled by the house of Holstein-Gottorp in 1721 and 1773, respectively. Denmark prospered greatly in the last decades of the 18th century due to its neutral status allowing it to trade with both sides in the many contemporary wars. In the Napoleonic Wars, Denmark originally tried to pursue a policy of neutrality to continue the lucrative trade with both France and the United Kingdom and joined the League of Armed Neutrality with Russia, Sweden and Prussia. The British considered this a hostile act and attacked Copenhagen in both 1801 and 1807, in one case carrying off the Danish fleet, in the other, burning large parts of the Danish capital. These events mark the end of the prosperous *Florissant Age* and resulted in the Dano-British Gunboat War. British control over the waterways between Denmark and Norway proved disastrous to the union's economy and in 1813, Denmark-Norway went bankrupt. The post-Napoleonic Congress of Vienna demanded the dissolution of the Dano-Norwegian union, and this was confirmed by the Treaty of Kiel in 1814. Denmark-Norway had briefly hoped to restore the Scandinavian union in 1809, but these hopes were dashed when the estates of Sweden rejected a proposal to let Frederick VI of Denmark succeed the deposed Gustav IV Adolf and instead gave the crown to Charles XIII. Norway entered a new union with Sweden which lasted until 1905. Denmark kept the colonies of Iceland, Faroe Islands and Greenland. Apart from the Nordic colonies, Denmark ruled over Danish India (Tranquebar in India) from 1620 to 1869, the Danish Gold Coast (Ghana) from 1658 to 1850, and the Danish West Indies (the U.S. Virgin Islands) from 1671 to 1917.

The Danish liberal and national movement gained momentum in the 1830s, and after the European Revolutions of 1848 Denmark peacefully became a constitutional monarchy on 5 June 1849. After the Second War of Schleswig (Danish: *Slesvig*) in 1864, Denmark was forced to cede Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia, in a defeat that left deep marks on the Danish national identity. After these events, Denmark returned to its traditional policy of neutrality, also keeping Denmark neutral in World War I. Following the defeat of Germany, the Versailles powers offered to return the then-German region of Schleswig-Holstein to Denmark. Fearing German irredentism, Denmark refused to consider the return of the area and insisted on a plebiscite concerning the return of Schleswig. The two Schleswig Plebiscites took place on 10 February and 14 March, respectively. On 5 July 1920 after the plebiscite and the King's signature (6 July) on the reunion document, Northern Schleswig (Sønderjylland) was recovered by Denmark, thereby adding 163,600 inhabitants and 3,984 km². The reunion day (Genforeningsdag) is celebrated every year 15 June on Valdemarsdag.

Germany's invasion of Denmark on 9 April 1940 – codenamed Operation Weserübung – met only two hours of military resistance before the Danish government surrendered. Economic co-operation between Germany and Denmark continued until 1943, when the Danish government refused further co-operation and its navy sank most of its ships and sent as many of their officers as they could to Sweden. During the war, the government was extremely helpful towards Jews living in the country, and the resistance managed to get most of the Jews to Sweden and safety. Denmark led many "inside operations" or sabotage against the German facilities. Iceland severed ties to Denmark and became an independent republic, and in 1948 the Faroe Islands gained home rule. After the war, Denmark became one of the founding members of the United Nations and NATO and in 1973, along with Britain and Ireland, joined the European Economic Community (now the European Union) after a public referendum. Greenland gained home rule in 1979.

Despite its small size Denmark has been participating in major military and humanitarian operations, most notably the UN and NATO led operations on Cyprus and in Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Ethiopia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Geography



Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (The Constitutional Assembly. The Assembly created The Danish constitution), 1860–1864 painting by Constantin Hansen

Denmark's northernmost point is Skagens point (the north beach of the Skaw) at 57° 45' 7" northern latitude, the southernmost is Gedser point (the southern tip of Falster) at 54° 33' 35" northern latitude, the westernmost point is Blåvandshuk at 8° 4' 22" eastern longitude, and the easternmost point is Østerskær at 15° 11' 55" eastern longitude. This is in the archipelago Ertholmene 18 kilometres northeast of Bornholm. The distance from east to west is 452 kilometres (281 mi), from north to south 368 kilometres (229 mi).

Denmark consists of the peninsula of Jutland (*Jylland*) and 443 named islands (1419 islands above 100 m² in total (2005)). Of these, 72 are inhabited (2008), with the largest being Zealand (*Sjælland*) and Funen (*Fyn*). The island of Bornholm is located somewhat east of the rest of the country, in the Baltic Sea. Many of the larger islands are connected by bridges; the Øresund Bridge connects Zealand with Sweden, the Great Belt Bridge connects Funen with Zealand, and the Little Belt Bridge connects Jutland with Funen. Ferries or small aircraft connect to the smaller islands. Main cities are the capital Copenhagen (on Zealand), Århus, Aalborg and Esbjerg (in Jutland) and Odense (on Funen).

The country is flat with little elevation; having an average height above sea level of only 31 metres (102 ft) and the highest natural point is Møllehøj, at 170.86 metres (560.56 ft). Other hills in the same area southwest of Århus are Yding Skovhøj at 170.77 metres (560.27 ft) and Ejer Bavnehøj at 170.35 metres (558.89 ft). The area of inland water is: (eastern Denmark) 210 km² (81 sq mi); (western D.) 490 km² (189 sq mi).

Denmark is split into 443 named islands which results in a long coastline, 7,314 kilometres (4,544 mi). A perfect circle enclosing the same area as Denmark would have a circumference of only 742 kilometres (461 mi). Another feature that shows the close connection between the land and ocean is that no location in Denmark is further from the coast than 52 kilometres (32.3 mi). The size of the land area of Denmark cannot be stated exactly since the ocean constantly erodes and adds material to the coastline, and because of human land reclamation projects (to counter erosion). On the southwest coast of Jutland, the tide is between 1 and 2 metres (3 to 6.5 ft), and the tideline moves outward and inward on a 10 kilometres (6 mi) stretch.



Denmark seen from space

Phytogeographically, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands) belongs to the Boreal Kingdom and is shared between the Arctic, Atlantic European and Central European provinces of the Circumboreal Region. According to the WWF, the territory of Denmark can be subdivided into two ecoregions: the Atlantic mixed forests and Baltic mixed forests. The Faroe Islands are covered by the Faroe Islands boreal grasslands, while Greenland hosts the ecoregions of Kalaallit Nunaat high arctic tundra and Kalaallit Nunaat low arctic tundra.

The climate is in the temperate zone. The winters are not particularly cold with mean temperatures in January and February of 0.0 °C and the summers are cool with mean temperature in August 15.7 °C. There is a lot of wind, which is stronger during the winter and weaker during the summer. Denmark has an average of 170 rainy days. The greatest rainfall comes in November.

Because of Denmark's northern location, the length of the day with sunlight varies greatly. There are short days during the winter with sunrise coming around 9:30 a.m. and sunset 4:30 p.m., as well as long summer days with sunrise at 3:30 a.m. and sunset at 10 p.m. The shortest and longest days of the year have



Map showing the location of Denmark including the Faroe Islands and Greenland (pdf)

traditionally been celebrated. The celebration for the shortest day corresponds roughly with Christmas (Danish: *jul*) and modern celebrations concentrate on Christmas Eve, 24 December. The Norse word *jól* is a plural, indicating that pre-Christian society celebrated a season with multiple feasts. Christianity introduced the celebration of Christmas, resulting in the use of the Norse name also for the Christian celebration. Efforts by the Catholic Church to replace this name with *kristmesse* were unsuccessful. The celebration for the longest day is Midsummer Day, which is known in Denmark as *sankthansaften* (*St. John's evening*). Celebrations of Midsummer have taken place since pre-Christian times.

Government and politics

The Kingdom of Denmark is a constitutional monarchy. As stipulated in the Danish Constitution, the monarch is not answerable for his or her actions, and his or her person is sacrosanct. The monarch formally appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister and other ministers. The prime minister is customarily chosen through negotiation between the parliament party leaders.

Before being validated through royal assent, all bills and important government measures must be discussed in *Statsrådet*, a privy council headed by the monarch. The Danish privy council's protocols are secret. Although the monarch is *formally* given executive power this power is strictly ceremonial. The monarch is expected to be entirely apolitical and refrain from influencing the government in any way or form. For example, members of the royal family do not cast their votes in elections and referendums even though they have the right.

Any interference in the government by the monarch is almost unheard of and would almost certainly create a constitutional crisis (q.v. Easter Crisis of 1920.)

Image:Anders Fjogh Rasmussen - World Economic Forum Annual Meeting Davos 2008.jpg
Prime Minister of Denmark: Anders Fjogh Rasmussen

While executive authority formally belongs to the monarch (as head of state), legislative authority is vested in the executive (Prime Minister) and the Danish parliament conjointly. Judicial authority lies with the courts of justice.

Executive authority is exercised on behalf of the monarch by the prime minister and other cabinet ministers who head departments. The cabinet, including the Prime Minister, and other ministers collectively make up the government. These ministers are responsible to Folketinget (the Danish Parliament), the legislative body, which is traditionally considered to be supreme (that is, able to legislate on any matter and not bound by decisions of its predecessors).

Image:Jonny Margerethe 5 sep 2004 .jpg
Queen Margrethe II

The *Folketing* is the national legislature. It has the ultimate legislative authority according to the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty, however questions over sovereignty have been brought forward because of Denmark's entry into the European Union. In theory however, the doctrine prevails. Parliament consists of 179 members elected by proportional majority. Parliamentary elections are held at least every four years, but it is within the powers of the Prime Minister to call one at his discretion before this period has elapsed. On a vote of no confidence the parliament may force a single minister or the entire government to resign.

The Danish political system has traditionally generated coalitions. Most Danish post-war governments have been minority coalitions ruling with the support of non-government parties.

Since November 2001, the Danish Prime Minister has been Anders Fjogh Rasmussen from the Venstre party, a centre-right liberal party. The government is a coalition consisting of Venstre and the Conservative People's Party, with parliamentary support from the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti). The three parties obtained a parliamentary majority in the 2001 elections and maintained it virtually unchanged in the 2005 election. On 24 October 2007 an early election was called by the Prime Minister for 13 November. Following the election the Danish People's party was strengthened while Mr. Anders Fjogh Rasmussen's Venstre lost 6 mandates and the Conservative Party retained the same amount of seats in Parliament as prior to the election. The result ensured that Anders Fjogh Rasmussen could continue as Prime Minister for a third term.

Regions and municipalities




Denmark is divided into five regions (Danish: *regioner*, singular: *region*) and a total of 98 municipalities. The regions were created on 1 January 2007 as part of the 2007 Danish Municipal Reform to replace the country's traditional thirteen counties (*amter*). At the same time, smaller municipalities (*kommuner*) were merged into larger units, cutting the number of municipalities from 270 to 98. The most important area of responsibility for the new regions is the national health service. Unlike the former counties, the regions are not allowed to levy taxes, and the health service is primarily financed by a national 8% (*sundhedsbidrag*) tax combined with funds from both government and municipalities. Each Regional Council consists of 41 elected politicians elected as part of the 2005 Danish municipal elections.

Most of the new municipalities have a population of at least 20,000 people, although a few exceptions were made to this rule.

The Ertholmene archipelago (96 inhabitants (2008)) is neither part of a municipality, nor a region but belongs to the Ministry of Defence.

Greenland and the Faroe Islands are also parts of the Kingdom of Denmark, as members of Rigsfællesskabet but have autonomous status and are largely self-governing, and are each represented by two seats in the parliament.



Country/Region	Population	Area (km ²)	Density (Pop per km ²)
 Denmark	5,484,723	43,094	127
 <i>Faroe Islands (Denmark)</i>	47,017	1,399	34
 <i>Greenland (Denmark)</i>	56,916	2,175,600	0.026

Economy

Denmark's market economy features very efficient agriculture, up-to-date small-scale and corporate industry, extensive government welfare measures, above

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average European living standards, a stable currency, and high dependence on foreign trade. Denmark is a net exporter of food and energy and has for a number of years had a balance of payments surplus while battling an equivalent of approximately 39% of GNP foreign debt or more than 300 billion DKK . Also of importance is the sea territory of more than 105,000 km² (40,000+ sq mi).

Denmark has higher GDP per capita than most European countries and 15-20% behind United States. Denmark is one of the most competitive economies in the world according to World Economic Forum 2008 report, IMD, and The Economist. According to World Bank, Denmark has the most flexible labor market in Europe. It easy to hire, fire, and find a job. According to rankings by OECD, Denmark has the least financial regulation in EU-15 countries and also one of the least regulated product markets.

Around 2.9 million residents are in labor market. Out of these, a third has a higher education degree, one of the top rates in the world. GDP per hour worked was 10th highest in 2006 and unemployment very low. Denmark has an advanced telecommunication infrastructure. Denmark has a company tax rate of 25% and a special tax regime for expatriates.

Denmark's national currency, the *kroner* (plural: kroner), is de facto linked to the Euro through ERMII. The exchange rate is very steady at approx. 7.45 kroner per euro. Currently the krone converts to American dollars at a rate of about USD 0.21 per krone (about 4.7 kroner per dollar). (Exchange rates updated April 2008) The government has met the economic convergence criteria for participating in the third phase (the common European currency — the Euro) of the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union (EMU), but Denmark, in a September 2000 referendum, rejected The Monetary Union. The Government of Fogh Rasmussen, re-elected in November 2007, announced a new referendum on the euro for 2008 or 2009 at the latest.

Denmark is home to many multi-national companies, among them: A. P. Moller-Maersk Group (Maersk — international shipping), Lego (children's toys), Bang & Olufsen (hi-fi equipment), Carlsberg (beer), Vestas (wind turbines), Novozymes (enzymes and biotech) and the pharmaceutical companies Lundbeck and Novo Nordisk. International companies such as CSC, Dell, Microsoft and Nokia have place large global business centres in Copenhagen.

Support for free trade is high - in a recent poll 76% responded that globalization is a good thing. 70% of trade flows are inside the European Union. Main exports include: Animal Foodstuffs, Chemicals, Dairy Products, Electronic Equipment, Fish, Furniture, Leather, Machinery, Meat, Oil and Gas, and Sugar.

Education

The Danish education system provides access to primary school, secondary school, and most kinds of higher education. Attendance at "Folkeskole" is compulsory for a minimum of 9 years, and a maximum of 10. About 99% of students attend compulsory elementary school, 86% attend secondary school, and 41% pursue further education. All college education in Denmark is free.

Primary school in Denmark is called "den Danske Folkeskole" ("Danish Public School"). It runs from 1st to 10th grade, though 10th grade is optional, as is the introductory "kindergarten class" ("børnehaveklasse"). Students can alternatively attend "free schools" ("Friskole"), or private schools ("Privatskole"), i.e. schools that are not under the administration of the municipalities, such as Christian schools or Waldorf Schools. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Denmark's education as the 24th best in the world, being neither significantly higher nor lower than the OECD average.

Following graduation from *Folkeskolen*, there are several other educational opportunities, including *Gymnasium* (academically oriented upper secondary education), Higher Preparatory Examination (HF) (similar to *Gymnasium*, but one year shorter), Higher Technical Examination Programme (HTX) (with focus on Mathematics and engineering), and Higher Commercial Examination Programme (HHX) (with a focus on trade and business), as well as vocational education, training young people for work in specific trades by a combination of teaching and apprenticeship.

Gymnasium, HF, HTX and HHX aim at qualifying students for higher education in universities and colleges.

Denmark has several universities; the largest and oldest are the University of Copenhagen (founded 1479) and University of Aarhus (founded 1928).

Folkehøjskolerne, ("Folk high schools") introduced by politician, clergyman and poet N.F.S. Grundtvig in the 19th century, are social, informal education structures without tests or grades but emphasising communal learning, self-discovery, enlightenment, and learning how to think.

Energy

Most electricity is produced from coal. Taxpayer-subsidized wind turbines produce an estimated 20% of electricity as of 2007. However, the production varies. Denmark is connected by transmission line to other European countries. Therefore companies import additional power from its neighbours. Because of nuclear ban, wind power privileges, and taxes, Denmark has the highest household electricity prices in the world.

Transport



An old observatory in the University of Copenhagen, Denmark's oldest and largest university



Offshore wind turbines near Copenhagen



Øresund Bridge from Denmark to Sweden. On the right is the artificial Peberholm island, and on the left Saltholm. Picture is taken from the air.

Significant investment has been made in recent decades in building road and rail links between Copenhagen and Malmö, Sweden (the Øresund Bridge), and between Zealand and Funen (the Great Belt Fixed Link). The Copenhagen Malmö Port was also formed between the two cities as the common port for the cities of both nations.

The main railway operator is Danske Statsbaner (Danish State Railways) for passenger services and Railion for freight trains. The railway tracks are maintained by Banedanmark. Copenhagen has a small Metro system and the greater Copenhagen area has an extensive electrified suburban railway network.

Denmark's national airline (together with Norway and Sweden) is Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS) and Copenhagen Airport is the country's largest airport, and also the biggest hub in Scandinavia.

A ferry link to the Faroe Islands is maintained by Smyril Line. Other international ferry services are mainly operated by DFDS (to Norway and the UK) and Scandlines (to Germany and Sweden).

Public policy

After abolishing almost all labor market regulation in 1994 and 1996, Denmark has much more unregulated labor market than almost all European countries. According World Bank labor market rankings, the labor market flexibility is at the same levels as the United States. A diminishing 75% of employees belong to unions for unemployment benefits, but large share of people make contracts individually rather than collectively, and many are dropping union membership altogether. Relationships between unions and employers are generally cooperative: unions often have a day-to-day role in managing the workplace, and their representatives sit on most companies' board of directors. Rules on work schedules and pay are negotiated between unions and employers, with minimal government involvement. The unemployment rate for December 2007 was 2.7%, for a total of 74,900 persons, a reduction by 112,800 persons —2,400 per month — or 60% since December 2003. The Eurostat unemployment number for April and May 2008 is 2.7%, the lowest in the EU. It should however be noted that this has been achieved by employing more than 38% of the total workforce in public sector jobs. Another measure of the situation on the labour market is the employment rate, that is the percentage of people aged 15 to 64 (i.e. the working age group) in employment out of the total number of people aged 15 to 64. The employment rate for Denmark in 2007 was 77.1% according to Eurostat. Of all countries in the world, only Switzerland with 78.% and Iceland with 85.1% had a higher employment rate.

The number of unemployed is forecast to be 65,000 in 2015. The number of people in the working age group, less disability pensioners etc., will grow by 10,000 to 2,860,000, and jobs by 70,000 to 2,790,000. Parttime jobs included. Because of the present high demand and short supply of skilled labour, for instance for factory and service jobs, including hospital nurses and physicians, the annual average working hours have risen, especially compared with the economic downturn 1987 –1993. Increasingly, service workers of all kinds are in demand, i.e. in the postal services and as bus drivers, and academics. In the fall of 2007, more than 250,000 foreigners are working in the country, of which 23,000 still residing in Germany or Sweden. According to TV2 (Denmark), 3 January 2007, 66,000 jobs are not filled, but sometimes this regards jobs for which there isn't even labour available in Germany.

The level of unemployment benefits is dependent on former employment and at times also on membership of an unemployment fund, which is almost always -but need not be- administered by a trade union, and the previous payment of contributions. However, the largest share of the financing is still carried by the

central government and is financed by general taxation, and only to a minor degree from earmarked contributions. There is no taxation, however, on proceeds gained from selling one's home (provided there *was* any home equity (da:*friværði*)), as the marginal tax rate on capital income from housing savings is about 0 percent.

The Danish welfare model is accompanied by a taxation system that is both broad based (25% VAT, not including excise, duty and tax) and with world record income tax rates (minimum tax rate for adults is 42% scaling to over 60% except for the residents of Ertholmene that escape the otherwise ubiquitous 8% healthcare tax fraction of the income taxes). Other taxes include the registration tax on private vehicles, at a rate of 180%, on top of VAT. Lately (July, 2007) this has been changed slightly in an attempt to favour more fuel efficient cars but maintaining the average taxation level more or less unchanged.

Demographics

According to figures from Statistics Denmark, on January 1 2007 91.1% of Denmark's population of over 5.4 million was of Danish descent. Many of the remaining 8.9% were immigrants, or descendents of recent immigrants, from South Asia and the Middle East, many having arrived since an "Alien law" (*Udlændingeloven*) was enacted in 1983 allowing the immigration of family members. There are also small groups of Inuit from Greenland and Faroese. During recent years, anti-immigration sentiment has resulted in some of the toughest immigration laws in the European Union. Nevertheless, the number of residence permits granted related to labour and to people from within the EU/ EEA has increased since implementation of new immigration laws in 2001. However, the number of immigrants allowed into Denmark for family reunification decreased 70% between 2001 and 2006 to 4,198. During the same period the number of asylum permits granted has decreased by 82.5% to 1,095, reflecting a 84% decrease in asylum seekers to 1,960.

Denmark's population (as at 1 January 2008) was 5,475,791, giving Denmark a population density of 129.16 inhabitants per km² (334.53 inh/sq mi). As in most countries, the population is not distributed evenly. Although the land area east of the Great Belt only makes up 9,622 km² (3,715 sq mi), 22.7% of Denmark's land area, as of 1 January 2008 it has 45% (2,465,348) of the population. The average population density of this area is 256.2 inhabitants per km² (663.6 per sq mi). The average density in the west of the country (32,772 km²/12,653 sq mi) is 91.86/km² (237.91 per sq mi) (3,010,443 people) (2008).

The median age is 39.8 years with 0.98 males per female. 98.2% of the population is literate (age 15 and up). The birth rate is 1.74 children born per woman (2006 est.), which will be reflected in a drop in the ratio of workers to pensioners. Despite the low birth rate, the population is still growing at an average annual rate of 0.33%.

Danish is the official language and is spoken throughout the country. English and German are the most widely spoken foreign languages.

Religion

According to official statistics from April 2008, 82.0% of the population of Denmark are members of the Lutheran state church, the Danish National Church (*Den Danske Folkekirke*), also known as the Church of Denmark. If immigrants and descendants of immigrants are excluded from the statistics, the member rate is even higher, approximately 90,3%. According to article 6 of the Constitution, the Royal family must belong to this Church. 3% of the Danish population adhere to Islam, and other religions in Denmark include non-Lutheran Christian denominations. The oldest state recognised religious societies and churches are:

- The Catholic Church in Denmark recognised by the state since 1682
- The Reformed Church recognised by the state since 1682.
- Det Mosaiske Troessamfund, the main Jewish organisation in Denmark, recognised by the state since 1682.

Religion, religious societies and churches do not need to be state-recognised in Denmark and can be granted the right to perform weddings etc. without this recognition.

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 31% of Danish citizens responded that "they believe there is a god", whereas 49% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 19% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force". According to a 2005 study by Zuckerman, Denmark has the third highest proportion of atheists and agnostics in the world, estimated to be between 43% and 80%.

After Iceland, Denmark is the 2nd most acceptant country of the theory of biological evolution.

Culture

Hans Christian Andersen is known beyond Denmark for his fairy tales, such as *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *The Ugly Duckling*. Karen Blixen (pen name: *Isak Dinesen*), Nobel laureate author Henrik Pontoppidan, Nobel laureate physicist Niels Bohr, the comedic pianist Victor Borge and the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard have also made a name for themselves outside Denmark.

The capital city of Copenhagen includes the Tivoli gardens, the Amalienborg Palace (home of the Danish monarchy), and The Little Mermaid sculpture.

The second largest city in Denmark is Aarhus. Aarhus is an old Viking Age city and one of the oldest cities in the country. The largest cathedral in Denmark and the second largest cathedral in Northern Europe is Aarhus Cathedral.

Historically, Denmark, like its Scandinavian neighbors, has been one of the most socially progressive cultures in the world. For example, in 1969, Denmark was the first country to legalize pornography. And in 1989, Denmark enacted a registered partnership law, being the first country in the world to grant same-sex couples nearly all of the



Burial mound from the 900s in Jelling churchyard



Windmills and yellow brick houses accent the gently rolling meadowlands of Denmark

rights and responsibilities of marriage.

Cinema

The three big internationally important waves of Danish cinema have been:

- The erotic melodrama of the silent era.
- The increasingly explicit sex films of the 1960s and 1970s.
- The Dogme95-movement of the late 1990s.

Danish filmmakers of note include:

- Carl Th. Dreyer (1889-1968), one of the most acclaimed directors in the history of cinema.
- Erik Balling, Oscar-nominated creator of *Olsen-banden* (1968).
- Gabriel Axel, Oscar-winner for *Babette's Feast* (1987).
- Bille August, Oscar-winner for *Pelle the Conqueror* (1987).
- Thomas Vinterberg, celebrated for *Festen* (1998), co-creator of Dogme95.
- Lars von Trier, Oscar-nominated for *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), co-creator of Dogme95 and of Zentropa.

A locally popular film genre is the charmingly simplistic "folkekomedie" (folk comedy), which originated in the 1930s and gained widespread dominance from the 1950s until the 1970s, usually scorned by critics and loved by the audience. Notable folkekomedie-films include *Barken Margrethe* (1934), *De røde heste* (1950), *Far til fire* (1953) and *Olsen-banden* (1968).

Since the 1980s, Danish filmmaking has been almost completely controlled by the state through The Danish Film Institute, which was founded in 1972. This has resulted in a much criticized lack of innovation (Dogme95 happened in spite of strong resistance from the Film Institute) and frequent accusations of nepotism and cronyism, but also a high level of professionalism even if more or less reserved for a few selected genres and production companies (mainly Nordisk Film, Zentropa and Nimbus Film).

Danish cinema remains highly respected internationally, and Danish films (today almost exclusively consisting of social realist dramas, social realist comedies, children's films and documentaries) receive many awards at major international film festivals.

Sports

The most popular sport in Denmark is football. Sailing and other water sports are popular, as are indoor sports such as badminton, handball and various forms of gymnastics. In Denmark there is also a small group of people doing motorsport, but with some success. The most successful driver on the 24 Hours of Le Mans race ever, with eight 1st places is Tom Kristensen, who comes from Denmark. In speedway Denmark has won several World Championships. Other notable Danish sportspeople include American football's National Football League all-time leading scorer Morten Andersen, cyclists Bjarne Riis, Rolf Sørensen, and

Michael Rasmussen, badminton-player Peter Gade and Camilla Martin, table tennis-player Michael Maze, poker Hall of Fame player Gus Hansen and football players Michael and Brian Laudrup and Peter Schmeichel. Teenager Caroline Wozniacki is rising up the rankings on the WTA tennis tour. Denmark is also the home and birthplace of former WBA & WBC Supermiddleweight boxing champion, Mikkel Kessler.

1992 football champions

In 1992, the national football team were crowned European champions. Remarkably, the team had finished second in their qualifying group behind Yugoslavia and as a result had failed to qualify for the final tournament. They gained their place in the tournament at the last moment when the warring Yugoslavs were expelled from the competition. Once in the finals the Danes reached the final where they defeated reigning World champions Germany.

Music

Denmark has long been a centre of cultural innovation. Its capital, Copenhagen, and its multiple outlying islands have a wide range of folk traditions, while an extensive recording industry has produced pop stars and a host of performers from a multitude of genres. The famous drummer Lars Ulrich from Metallica is from Denmark. Among other names, Whigfield and the '90's pop band Aqua also come from Denmark, as well as current (March 2008) US hitlist top name Ida Corr and group Alphabeat.

Food

The cuisine of Denmark, like that in the other Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, Iceland, and Sweden), as well as that of northern Germany, its neighbour to the south, consists mainly of meat and fish. This stems from the country's agricultural past, as well as its geography and climate of long, cold winters.

Traditional Danish food includes frikadeller (fried meatballs, often served with potatoes and various sorts of gravy), karbonader/krebinetter (another sort of fried meatballs), steaks and so on, usually eaten with potatoes. Fish is also widely eaten, especially on the west coast of Jutland. A traditionally favourite condiment, remoulade, is eaten with french fries, on fried plaice, on salami or roast beef sandwiches. Smoked fish dishes (herring, mackerel, eel) from local smoking houses or *røgerier*, especially on the island of Bornholm, are increasingly popular.

One of the most interesting aspects of Danish food is the wide variety of attractive open rugbrød (Rye-bread) sandwiches or smørrebrød traditionally served for the mid-day meal or *frokost*. This usually starts with fish such as marinated herring, smoked eel or hot fried breaded plaice. Then come meat sandwiches such as cold roast beef with remoulade and fried onions, roast pork and crackling with red cabbage, hot veal medallions, Danish meat balls (*frikadeller*) or liver paté with bacon and mushrooms. Some typically Danish items are *Sol over Gudhjem*, literally 'sun over Gudhjem', consisting of smoked herring, chives and with raw egg yolk (the "sun") on top; or *Dyrlægens natmad*, 'vet's late-night bite', with liver paté, saltmeat (corned veal), onions and jellied consommé. Finally cheese is served with radishes, nuts or grapes. Lager beer accompanied by small glasses of *snaps* or aquavit are the preferred drinks for a Danish frokost.

Military

Denmark's armed forces are known as the Danish Defence (Danish: *Forsvaret*). During peacetime, the Ministry of Defence in Denmark employs around 33,000 in total. The main military branches employ almost 27,000: 15,460 in the Royal Danish Army, 5,300 in the Royal Danish Navy and 6,050 in the Royal Danish Air Force (all including conscripts). The Danish Emergency Management Agency (Danish: *Beredskabsstyrelsen*) employs 2,000 (including conscripts), and about 4,000 are in non-branch-specific services like the Danish Defence Command, the Danish Defence Research Establishment, and the Danish Defense Intelligence Service. Furthermore around 55,000 serve as volunteers in the Danish Home Guard (Danish: *Hjemmeværnet*).

The Danish Defence currently (as of 9 April 2008) has around 1,400 staff in international missions, not including standing contributions to NATO SNMCMG1. The three largest contributions are in Afghanistan (ISAF, 696 persons), Kosovo (KFOR, 312 persons), and Lebanon (UNIFIL, 50 persons). Between 2003 and 2007, there were approximately 450 Danish soldiers in Iraq.

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Estonia

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Estonia, officially the **Republic of Estonia** (Estonian: *Eesti or Eesti Vabariik*) is a country in Northern Europe in the Baltic region. It is bordered to the north by Finland across the Gulf of Finland, to the west by Sweden, to the south by Latvia (343 km), and to the east by the Russian Federation (338,6 km). The territory of Estonia covers 45,227 km² and is influenced by a temperate seasonal climate.

The Estonians are a Finnic people closely related to the Finns, with the Estonian language sharing many similarities to Finnish. The modern name of Estonia is thought to originate from the Roman historian Tacitus, who in his book *Germania* (ca. AD 98) described a people called the Aestii. Similarly, ancient Scandinavian sagas refer to a land called *Eistland*. Early Latin and other ancient versions of the name are *Estia* and *Hestia*. Until the late 1930s, the name was often written as *Esthonia* in most English speaking countries.

Estonia is a democratic parliamentary republic and is divided into fifteen counties. The capital and largest city is Tallinn. Estonia has been a member of the United Nations since 17 September 1991, of the European Union since 1 May 2004 and of NATO since 29 March 2004. Estonia has also signed the Kyoto protocol. With only 1.3 million inhabitants, it comprises one of the smallest populations of the European Union countries.

The settlement of modern day Estonia began around 8500 BC, immediately after the Ice Age. Over the centuries, the Estonians were subjected to Danish, Teutonic, Swedish and Russian rule. Foreign rule in Estonia began in 1227, when as a consequence of the Northern Crusades the area was conquered by Danes and Germans. From 1228–1562, parts or most of Estonia were incorporated into the loosely organized Livonian Confederation of Teutonic Knights, during which time economic activity centered around the Hanseatic League. In the 1500s, Estonia passed to Swedish rule until 1721, when it was ceded to the Russian Empire. The Estophile Enlightenment Period (1750-1840) led to a national awakening in the mid-19th century. In 1918 the Estonian Declaration of Independence was issued, to be followed by the Estonian War of Independence, which resulted in the Tartu Peace Treaty recognizing Estonian independence in perpetuity. During World War II, Estonia was occupied and annexed first by the Soviet

<p><i>Eesti Vabariik</i> Republic of Estonia</p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p>Anthem: <i>Mu isamaa, mu õnn ja rõõm</i> (English: "My Fatherland, My Happiness and Joy")</p>	
 <p>Location of Estonia (dark green)</p> <p>— on the European continent (light green & dark grey) — in the European Union (light green) — [Legend]</p>	

Union and subsequently by the Third Reich, only to be re-occupied by the Soviet Union in 1944.

Estonia regained its independence on 20 August 1991. It has since embarked on a rapid program of social and economic reform. Today, the country has gained recognition for its economic freedom its adaptation of new technologies and as one of the world's fastest growing economies.

History

Human settlement in Estonia became possible 11,000 to 13,000 years ago, when the ice from the last glacial era melted away. The oldest known settlement in Estonia is the Pulli settlement, which was located on the banks of the river Pärnu, near the town of Sindi, in southern Estonia. According to radiocarbon dating, it was settled around 11,000 years ago, at the beginning of the 9th millennium BC.


Prehistory

Evidence has been found of hunting and fishing communities existing around 6500 BC near the town of Kunda in northern Estonia. Bone and stone artifacts similar to those found at Kunda have been discovered elsewhere in Estonia, as well as in Latvia, northern Lithuania and in southern Finland. The Kunda culture belongs to the middle stone age, or Mesolithic period.

The end of the Bronze Age and the early Iron Age were marked by great cultural changes. The most significant was the transition to farming, which has remained at the core of Estonian economy and culture. From approximately the first to 5th centuries AD, resident farming was widely established, the population grew, and settlement expanded. Cultural influences from the Roman Empire reached Estonia, and this era is therefore also known as the Roman Iron Age.

A more troubled and war-ridden middle Iron Age followed with external dangers coming both from the Baltic tribes, who attacked across the southern land border, and from overseas. Several Scandinavian sagas refer to campaigns against Estonia. Estonian pirates conducted similar raids in the Viking age and sacked and burned the Swedish town of Sigtuna in 1187.

In the first centuries AD political and administrative subdivisions began to emerge in Estonia. Two larger subdivisions appeared: the province (Estonian: *kihelkond*) and the land (Estonian: *maakond*). The province comprised several elderships or villages. Nearly all provinces had at least one fortress. The defense of the local area was directed by the highest official, the king or elder. The terra was composed of one or several provinces, also headed by an elder, king or their collegium. By the 13th century the

Capital (and largest city)	 Tallinn
Official languages	Estonian ¹
Demonym	Estonian
Government	Parliamentary republic
- President	Toomas Hendrik Ilves
- Prime Minister	Andrus Ansip (RE)
- Current coalition	RE, IRL and SDE
Independence from	Russia and Germany
- Autonomy declared	12 April 1917
- Independence declared	24 February 1918
- Officially recognised	2 February 1920
- 1st Soviet occupation	1940-1941
- German occupation	1941-1944
- 2nd Soviet occupation	1944-1991
- Independence restored	20 August 1991
EU accession	May 1, 2004
Area	
- Total	45,227 km ² (132nd ²) 17,413 sq mi
- Water (%)	4.45%
Population	
- 2007 estimate	1,340,602 (151th)
- 2000 census	1,376,743
- Density	29/km ² (173rd) 75/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$26.85 billion (103th)
- Per capita	\$21,800

following major lands had developed in Estonia: Revala, Harjumaa, Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, Läänemaa, Alempois, Sakala, Ugandi, Jogentagana, Soopoolitse, Vaiga, Mõhu, Nurmekund, Järvamaa and Virumaa.

Estonia retained a pagan religion centered around a deity called Tharapita. The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia mentions Tharapita as the superior god of Oeselians (inhabitants of Saaremaa island), also well known to Vironian tribes in northern Estonia. According to the chronicle, when the crusaders invaded Vironia in 1220, there was a beautiful wooded hill in Virumaa, where locals believe the Oeselian god Tharapita was born and from which he flew to Saaremaa. The hill is believed to be the Ebavere Hill (*Ebavere mägi*) in modern Lääne-Viru County.

The Middle Ages period

At the beginning of the 13th century, Lembitu of Lehola, a chieftan of Sakala sought to unify the Estonian people and thwart Danish and Germanic conquest during the Livonian Crusade. He managed to assemble an army of 6,000 Estonian men from different counties, but he was killed during the Battle of St. Matthew's Day in September, 1217.

Estonia was a part of the Livonian Confederation from 1228 to the 1560s. The country was Christianized when the German "Livonian Brothers of the Sword" conquered southern Estonia as part of the Northern Crusades in the early thirteenth century. At the same time, Denmark attempted to take possession of northern Estonia. Estonia was consolidated under the two forces by 1227. Northern Estonia remained a possession of Denmark until 1346. Reval (known as Tallinn since 1918) was given its Lübeck Rights in 1248 and joined an alliance of trading guilds called the Hanseatic League at the end of the thirteenth century. In 1343, the people of northern Estonia and Saaremaa rebelled against German rule in the St. George's Night Uprising, which was put down by 1344. Russia attempted unsuccessful invasions in 1481 and 1558.

The Reformation period

GDP (nominal)	2006 estimate
- Total	\$16,410 million (91st)
- Per capita	\$15,310 (41st)
Gini (2005)	34 (medium)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.86 (high) (44th)
Currency	Estonian kroon (EEK)
Time zone	EET (UTC+2)
- Summer (DST)	EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.ee ³
Calling code	+372
<p>1 Võro and Seto in southern counties are spoken along with Estonian. Russian is widely spoken in Ida-Virumaa due to the Soviet program promoting mass immigration of urban industrial workers from USSR during the occupation.</p> <p>2 47,549 km² were defined according to the Tartu Peace Treaty in 1920 between Estonia and Russia. Today the remaining 2,323 km² is still illegally annexed by Russia. The ceded areas include the Petserimaa county and the boundary in the north of Lake Peipus as the Lands behind the city of Narva including Ivangorod (Jaamilinn).</p> <p>3 .eu is also shared with other member states of the European Union.</p>	

The Reformation in Europe officially began in 1517 with Martin Luther (1483-1546) and his 95 Theses. The Reformation resulted in great change in the Baltic region. Ideas entered the Livonian Confederation very quickly and by the 1520s they were well known. Language, education, religion, and politics were greatly transformed. The Church services were now given in the local vernacular, instead of Latin, as was previously used. During the Livonian War in 1561, northern Estonia submitted to Swedish control, while southern Estonia briefly came under the control of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 1580s. In 1625, mainland Estonia came entirely under Swedish rule. Estonia was administratively divided between the provinces of Estonia in the north and Livonia in southern Estonia and northern Latvia, a division which persisted until the early twentieth century.



In 1631, the Swedish king Gustaf II Adolf, Gustavus Adolphus, forced the nobility to grant the peasantry greater rights, although serfdom was retained. In 1632 a printing press and university were established in the city of Dorpat (known as Tartu since 1918). This period is known in Estonian history as *the Good Old Swedish Time.*"

Estonia in the Russian Empire

Following the Great Northern War, the Swedish empire lost Estonia to Russia (1710 de facto, and 1721 de jure, by the Treaty of Nystad). However, the upper classes and the higher middle class remained primarily Baltic German. The war devastated the population of Estonia, but it recovered quickly. Although the rights of peasants were initially weakened, serfdom was abolished in 1816 in the province of Estonia and in 1819 in Livonia. After the Russian revolution of 1917, Tallinn remained under Soviet control until February 24, 1918, when Estonian independence was declared.

Declaration of independence

As a result of the abolition of serfdom and the availability of education to the native Estonian-speaking population, an active Estonian nationalist movement developed in the nineteenth century. It began on a cultural level, resulting in the establishment of Estonian language literature, theatre and professional music and led into the formation of the Estonian national identity and late 1800s' Age of Awakening. Among the leaders of the movement were Johann Voldemar Jannsen, Jakob Hurt and Carl Robert Jakobson.

Significant accomplishments were the publication of the national epic, Kalevipoeg, in 1862, and the organization of the first national song festival in 1869. In response to a period of Russification initiated by the Russian empire in the 1890s, Estonian nationalism took on more political tones, with intellectuals first calling for greater autonomy, and later, complete independence from the Russian empire. Following the Bolshevik takeover of power in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917 and German victories against the Russian army, between the Russian Red Army's retreat and the arrival of advancing German troops, the Committee of Elders of the Maapäev issued the Estonian Declaration of Independence in Pärnu on February 23 and in Tallinn on February 24, 1918.



Declaration of the independence in Pärnu on 23 February in 1918. One of the first images of the **Republic**.

After winning the Estonian Liberation War against Soviet Russia and at the same time German Freikorps volunteers (the Tartu Peace Treaty was signed on 2 February 1920), Eesti Vabariik was recognized (de jure) by Finland on July 7, 1920, Poland on December 31, 1920, Argentina on January 12, 1921 and by the Western Allies on January 26, 1921. Estonia maintained its independence for twenty-two years. Initially a parliamentary democracy, the parliament (Riigikogu) was disbanded in 1934, following political unrest caused by the global economic crisis. Subsequently the country was ruled by decree by Konstantin Päts, who became President in 1938, the year parliamentary elections resumed.

Estonia in World War II

The fate of Estonia in World War II was decided by the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact and its Secret Additional Protocol of August 1939. World War II losses in Estonia, estimated at around 25% of population, were among the highest in Europe. War and occupation deaths have been estimated at 90,000. These include the Soviet deportations in 1941, the German deportations and Holocaust victims. World War II began with the invasion and subsequent partition of an important regional ally of Estonia – Poland, by a joint operation of Nazi Germany and Soviet Union.

Soviet annexation

The fate of the Republic of Estonia before World War II was decided by the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of August 1939 after Stalin gained Hitler's agreement to divide Eastern Europe into "spheres of special interest" according to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its Secret Additional Protocol.

On September 24, 1939, warships of the Red Navy appeared off Estonian ports and Soviet bombers began a patrol over Tallinn and the nearby countryside. The Estonian government was forced to give their assent to an agreement which allowed the USSR to establish military bases and station 25,000 troops on Estonian soil for "mutual defence". On June 12, 1940, the order for a total military blockade on Estonia was given to the Soviet Baltic Fleet. On June 14, 1940, while world's attention was focused on the fall of Paris to Nazi Germany a day earlier, the Soviet military blockade on Estonia went into effect, two Soviet bombers downed a Finnish passenger airplane " Kaleva" flying from Tallinn to Helsinki carrying three diplomatic pouches from the U.S. legations in Tallinn, Riga and



A piece of text of the Estonian Declaration of Independence.

Helsinki. On June 16, 1940, the Soviet Union invaded Estonia. The Red Army exited from their military bases in Estonia on June 17. The following day, some 90,000 additional troops entered the country. In the face of overwhelming Soviet force, the Estonian government capitulated on June 17, 1940 to avoid bloodshed. The military occupation of Estonia was complete by the June 21 1940. Most of the Estonian Defence Forces and the Estonian Defence League surrendered according to the orders believing that resistance would be crushed and were disarmed by the Red Army. Only the Estonian Single Signal Battalion stationed in Tallinn at Raua Street continued to resist. As the Red Army brought in additional reinforcements supported by six armoured fighting vehicles, the battle lasted several hours until sundown. There was one dead, several wounded on the Estonian side and about 10 killed and more wounded on the Soviet side. Finally the military resistance was ended with negotiations and the Single Signal Battalion surrendered and was disarmed.

In August 1940, Estonia was illegally annexed by the Soviet Union as the Estonian SSR. Those who had failed to do their "political duty" of voting Estonia into the USSR, specifically those who had failed to have their passports stamped for voting, were condemned to death by Soviet tribunals. The repressions followed with the mass deportations carried out by the Soviets in Estonia on June 14, 1941. Many of the country's political and intellectual leaders were killed or deported to remote areas of the USSR by the Soviet authorities in 1940–1941. Repressive actions were also taken against thousands of ordinary people.

When the German Operation Barbarossa started against the Soviet Union, about 34,000 young Estonian men were forcibly drafted into the Red Army. Less than 30% of them survived the war. Political prisoners who could not be evacuated were executed by the NKVD.

Many countries, including the United States, did not recognize the annexation of Estonia by the USSR. Such countries recognized Estonian diplomats and consuls who still functioned in many countries in the name of their former governments. These diplomats persisted in this anomalous situation until the ultimate restoration of Baltic independence.

Contemporary Russian politicians deny that the Republic of Estonia was illegally annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. They state that the Soviet troops had entered Estonia in 1940 following the agreements and with the consent of the government of the Republic of Estonia, regardless of how their actions can be interpreted today. They maintain that the USSR was not in a state of war and was not waging any combat activities on the territory of Estonia, therefore there could be no occupation. The official Soviet and current Russian version claims that Estonians voluntarily gave up their statehood. Freedom fighters of 1944–1976 are labeled "bandits" or "nazis". The Russian position is not recognized internationally.

German occupation

After the Third Reich invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Wehrmacht reached Estonia in (July 1941). The German Army crossed the Estonian southern border on 7th July. The Red Army retreated behind the Pärnu River- the Emajõgi line on 12 July. At the end July the Germans resumed their advance in Estonia working in tandem with the Estonian Forest Brothers. Both German troops and Estonian partisans took Narva on 17 August and the Estonian capital Tallinn on 28 August. After the Soviets were driven out from Estonia German troops disarmed all the partisan groups. Although initially the Germans were perceived by most Estonians as liberators from the USSR and its repressions, and hopes were raised for the restoration of the country's independence, it was soon realized that they were but another occupying power. The Germans pillaged the country for the war effort and unleashed the Holocaust. For the duration of the occupation Estonia was incorporated into the German province of Ostland. This led to many Estonians, unwilling to side with the Nazis, join the Finnish Army to fight against the Soviet Union. The Finnish Infantry Regiment 200 (Estonian: *soomepoisid*) was formed out of Estonian volunteers in Finland. Although

many Estonians were recruited in to the German armed forces (including Waffen-SS), the majority did so only in 1944 when the threat of a new invasion of Estonia by the Red Army had become imminent and it was clear that Germany could not win the war. By January 1944, the front was pushed back by the Red Army almost all the way to the former Estonian border. Narva was evacuated. Jüri Uluots, the last legitimate prime minister of the Republic of Estonia (according to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia) prior to its fall to the Soviet Union in 1940, delivered a radio address that appealed to all able-bodied men born from 1904 through 1923 to report for military service (Before this, Jüri Uluots had opposed Estonian mobilization.) The call drew support from all across the country: 38,000 volunteers jammed registration centers. Several thousand Estonians who had joined the Finnish Army came back across the Gulf of Finland to join the newly formed Territorial Defense Force, assigned to defend Estonia against the Soviet advance. It was hoped that by engaging in such a war Estonia would be able to attract Western support for the cause of Estonia's independence from the USSR and thus ultimately succeed in achieving independence.

Soviet occupation

The Soviet forces reconquered Estonia in the autumn of 1944 after fierce battles in the northeast of the country on the Narva river and on the Tannenberg Line (Sinimäed) as part of the Baltic Strategic Offensive Operation, a twofold military-political operation to rout forces of the Wehrmacht and the so-called "*liberation of the Soviet Baltic peoples*". In the face of the country being re-occupied by the Red Army, tens of thousands of Estonians (including majority of the education, culture, science, political and social specialists) (estimates as much as 80,000) chose to either retreat together with the Germans or flee to Finland or Sweden. On 12 January 1949 the Soviet Council of Ministers issued a decree "on the expulsion and deportation" from Baltic states of "all kulaks and their families, the families of bandits and nationalists", and others. More than 200,000 people are estimated to have been deported from the Baltic in 1940–1953. In addition, at least 75,000 were sent to Gulag. More than 10% of the entire adult Baltic population was deported or sent to Soviet labor and deathcamps. In response to the continuing insurgency against Soviet rule, more than 20,000 Estonians were forcibly deported either to labor camps or Siberia (see Gulag). Within the few weeks that followed, almost all of the remaining rural households were collectivized. After World War II, as part of the goal to more fully integrate Baltic countries into the Soviet Union, mass deportations were concluded in the Baltic countries and the policy of encouraging Soviet immigration to the Baltic states continued. In addition to the human and material losses suffered due to war, thousands of civilians were killed and tens of thousands of people deported from Estonia by the Soviet authorities until Joseph Stalin's death in 1953.

Half of the deported perished, the other half were not allowed to return until the early 1960s (years after Stalin's death). The various repressive activities of Soviet forces in 1940–1941 and after reoccupation sparked a guerrilla war against the Soviet authorities in Estonia which was waged into the early 1950s by "forest brothers" (*metsavennad*) consisting mostly of Estonian veterans of both the German and Finnish armies as well as some civilians. Material damage caused by the world war and the following Soviet era significantly slowed Estonia's economic growth, resulting in a wide wealth gap in comparison with neighboring Finland and Sweden.

Militarization was another aspect of the Soviet regime. Large parts of the country, especially the coastal areas were restricted to all but the Soviet military. Most of the sea shore and all sea islands (including Saaremaa and Hiiumaa) were declared "border zones". People not actually resident there were restricted from traveling to them without a permit. A notable closed military installation was the city of Paldiski which was entirely closed to all public access. The city had a support base for the Soviet Baltic Fleet's submarines and several large military bases, including a nuclear submarine training centre complete with a full-scale model of a nuclear submarine with working nuclear reactors. The Paldiski reactors building passed into Estonian control in 1994 after the last Soviet troops left

the country., Immigration was another effect of Soviet occupation. Hundreds of thousands of migrants were relocated to Estonia from other parts of Soviet Union to assist industrialization and militarization, contributing an increase of about half million people within 45 years. By 1980, when the Olympic Regatta of the 1980 Olympic Games was held in Tallinn, russification and immigration had achieved a level at which it began to spark popular protests.

Restoration of independence

The United States, United Kingdom and the majority of other western democracies considered the annexation of Estonia by USSR illegal. They retained diplomatic relations with the representatives of the independent Republic of Estonia, never *de jure* recognized the existence of the Estonian SSR, and never recognized Estonia as a legal constituent part of the Soviet Union. Estonia's return to independence became possible as the Soviet Union faced internal regime challenges, loosening its hold on outer empire. As the 1980s progressed, a movement for Estonian autonomy started. In the initial period of 1987–1989, this was partially for more economic independence, but as the Soviet Union weakened and it became increasingly obvious that nothing short of full independence would do, the country began a course towards self-determination.

In 1989, during the " Singing Revolution", in a landmark demonstration for more independence, called The Baltic Way, a human chain of more than two million people was formed, stretching through Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. All three nations had similar experiences of occupation and similar aspirations for regaining independence. Estonia formally declared independence on August 20, 1991, reconstituting the pre-1940 state, during the Soviet military coup attempt in Moscow. The first country to diplomatically recognize Estonia's reclaimed independence was Iceland. The last Russian troops left on 31 August 1994.

Geography

Topography

Estonia lies on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea immediately across the Gulf of Finland from Finland on the level northwestern part of the rising east European platform between 57.3° and 59.5° N and 21.5° and 28.1° E. Average elevation reaches only 50 meters (164 ft) and the country's highest point is the Suur Munamägi in the southeast at 318 meters (1,043 ft). Estonia boasts over 1,400 lakes. Most are very small, with the largest, Lake Peipus, (Peipsi in Estonian) being 3,555 km² (1372 sq mi). There are many rivers in the country. The largest are the Võhandu (162 km), Pärnu (144 km), and Põltsamaa (135 km). Estonia also boasts numerous bogs, and 3,794 kilometers (2,357 mi) of coastline marked by numerous bays, straits, and inlets. The number of islands and islets is estimated at some 1,500. Two are large enough to constitute their own counties: Saaremaa and Hiiumaa.



Landscape in East-Estonia - forest.

Climate

Estonia lies in the northern part of the temperate climate zone and in the transition zone between maritime and continental climate. Because Estonia (and all of Northern Europe) is continuously warmed by the Gulf Stream it has a milder climate despite its northern latitude. The Baltic Sea causes differences between the

climate of coastal and inland areas. The average annual temperature in Estonia is 5 °C. The average temperature in February, the coldest month of the year, is -5.2 °C. The average temperature in July, which is considered the warmest month of the year, is 18 °C. The climate is also influenced by the Atlantic Ocean, the North-Atlantic Stream and the Icelandic Minimum, which is an area known for the formation of cyclones and where the average air pressure is lower than in neighbouring areas. Estonia is located in a humid zone in which the amount of precipitation is greater than total evaporation. There are about 160 to 190 rainy days a year, and average precipitation is most plentiful on the western slopes of the Sakala and Haanja Uplands. Snow cover, which is deepest in the south-eastern part of Estonia, usually lasts from mid-December to late March.

Wildlife

Phytogeographically, Estonia is shared between the Central European and Eastern European provinces of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Estonia belongs to the ecoregion of Sarmatic mixed forests.

Estonia's sparse population and large areas of forest have allowed stocks of European Lynx, Wild Boar, Brown Bears, and moose to survive, among other animals . Estonia is thought to have a wolf population of 500, though it is decreasing as the species is outlawed, and no livestock compensation is in effect, as the insurance is considered too expensive. Its birdlife includes Golden Eagles and White Storks. It has around a dozen national parks and protected areas, including Lahemaa National Park, the country's largest park, on the northern coast. Soomaa National Park, near Pärnu, is known for its ancient wetlands. Reserves such as Käina Bay Bird Reserve and Matsalu Nature Reserve (a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention) are also popular with locals and tourists and support a wide variety of birdlife .



Roe Deer - Estonia's most common ungulate.

Counties

A county (Estonian: *maakond*) is the biggest administrative subdivision. The Republic of Estonia is divided into fifteen counties which are the administrative subdivisions of the country. The first documented mentioning of Estonian political and administrative subdivisions comes from the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia, written in the 13th century during the Northern Crusades. The county government (Estonian: *maavalitsus*) of each county is led by a county governor (Estonian: *maavanem*) who represents the national government at the regional level. Governors are appointed by Eesti Valitsus (government) for a term of five years. Several changes were made to the borders of counties after Estonia became independent, most notably the formation of Valga County (from parts of Võru, Tartu and Viljandi counties) and Petseri County (area acquired from Russia with the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty).

During the Soviet rule, Petseri County was annexed and ceded to the Russian SFSR in 1945 where it became one of the Pskov districts. Counties were again re-established in 1 January 1990 in the borders of the Soviet-era regions. Due to the numerous differences between the current and historical (pre-1940) layouts, the historical borders are still used in ethnology, representing cultural and linguistic differences better.

Municipalities and cities

Counties	Capital	Area	Population
Harjumaa	Tallinn	4,333 km ²	521,410
Hiiumaa	Kärdla	989 km ²	10,289
Ida-Virumaa	Jõhvi	3,364 km ²	174,809
Järvamaa	Paide	2,623 km ²	38,255
Jõgevamaa	Jõgeva	2,604 km ²	37,647
Läänemaa	Haapsalu	2,383 km ²	28,101
Lääne-Virumaa	Rakvere	3,627 km ²	68,090
Pärnumaa	Pärnu	4,807 km ²	89,660
Põlvamaa	Põlva	2,165 km ²	31,954
Raplamaa	Rapla	2,980 km ²	37,093
Saaremaa	Kuressaare	2,673 km ²	35,356
Tartumaa	Tartu	2,993 km ²	148,872
Valgamaa	Valga	2,044 km ²	35,059
Viljandimaa	Viljandi	3,422 km ²	56,854
Võrumaa	Võru	2,305 km ²	38,967
<i>Petserimaa</i> Annexed in 1945 by Russian SFSR and since 1991 by Russia.	Petseri	1,582 km ²	30,000

A municipality (Estonian: *omavalitsus*) is the smallest administrative subdivision of Estonia. Each county is further divided into municipalities which are of two types: urban municipality, or *linn* (*town*), and rural municipality, or *vald* (*parish*). There is no other status distinction between them. Each municipality is a unit of self-government with its representative and executive bodies. The municipalities in Estonia cover the entire territory of the country.

Municipality may contain one or several populated places. Some urban municipalities are divided into *linnaosad* (districts) with limited self-government, e.g. Tallinn consists of 8 districts (Haabersti, Kesklinn, Kristiine, Lasnamäe, Mustamäe, Nõmme, Pirita and Põhja-Tallinn).

Municipalities are ranging in size from Tallinn with 400,000 inhabitants to Ruhnu with as few as 60. As over two-thirds of the municipalities have a population of under 3,000, many of them have found it advantageous to co-operate in providing services and carrying out administrative functions. Since March 2008 there are total of 227 municipalities in Estonia, 33 of them are urban and 194 are rural.

Tallinn is the capital and largest city of Estonia. It lies on the northern coast of Estonia, along the Gulf of Finland. The city is an important industrial, political and cultural centre, and seaport. There are currently 33 cities and several town-parish towns in the county. More than 70% of the entire population lives in the towns. The 20 largest cities are shown on the table below:

Rank	City	Location	Population	Rank	City	Location	Population
1	Tallinn	Harjumaa	403,500	11	Võru	Võrumaa	14,555
2	Tartu	Tartumaa	101,169	12	Valga	Valgamaa	13,930
3	Narva	Ida-Virumaa	68,680	13	Haapsalu	Läänemaa	11,774
4	Kohtla-Järve	Ida-Virumaa	47,679	14	Jõhvi	Ida-Virumaa	11,455
5	Pärnu	Pärnumaa	45,500	15	Paide	Järvamaa	9,751
6	Viljandi	Viljandimaa	20,274	16	Keila	Harjumaa	9,386



Tallinn

7	Rakvere	Lääne-Virumaa	16,698	17	Kiviõli	Ida-Virumaa	6,925
8	Sillamäe	Ida-Virumaa	16,567	18	Tapa	Lääne-Virumaa	6,559
9	Maardu	Harjumaa	16,570	19	Põltsamaa	Põlvamaa	6,510
10	Kuressaare	Saaremaa	14,919	20	Jõgeva	Jõgevamaa	6,349

2008 Census



Narva



Valga

Government and politics

Politics of Estonia takes place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic republic, whereby the Prime Minister of Estonia is the head of government, and of a multi-party system.

Parliament

The Parliament of Estonia (Estonian: *Riigikogu*) or the legislative branch is elected by people for a four year term by proportional representation. The opening session of the Estonian Constituent Assembly on April 23 in 1919 is considered as the birthday of the Estonian Parliament. The first elections to the Riigikogu took place in 1920.

Estonia is a parliamentary, representative democratic republic. The Estonian political system operates under a framework laid out in the 1992 constitutional document. The Estonian parliament has 101 members and influences the governing of the state primarily by determining the income and the expenses of the state (establishing taxes and adopting the budget). At the same time the parliament has the right to present statements, declarations and appeals to the people of Estonia, ratify and denounce international treaties with other states and international organisations and decide on the Government loans. The main work of the parliament is to elect and appoint higher officials of the state, such as the President, the Chairman of the State Court, the Chairman of the Board of the Bank of Estonia, the Auditor General, the Legal Chancellor and also the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The parliament delegates have a right to demand explanations from the Government and its coalition members as this enables to observe the activities of the executive power.

The residency of the Parliament-
Toompea Castle at Toompea.

Government and e-Government

<http://cd3wd.com> wikipedia-for-schools <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 204 of 867



The residency of the Government-
Stenbocks House at Toompea.

The Government of Estonia (Estonian: *Vabariigi Valitsus*) or the executive branch is formed by the Prime Minister of Estonia, nominated by the president and approved by the parliament. The government exercises executive power pursuant to the Constitution of Estonia and the laws of the Republic of Estonia and consists of 12 ministers, including the prime minister. The prime minister also has the right to appoint other ministers, whom he or she will assign with a subject to deal with and who will not have a ministry to control, becoming a minister without portfolio who currently is the Minister of Regional Affairs. The prime minister has the right to appoint a maximum of 3 such ministers, as the limit of ministers in one government is 15. It is also known as the cabinet. The cabinet carries out the country's domestic and foreign policy, shaped by parliament; it directs and co-ordinates the work of government institutions and bears full responsibility for everything occurring within the authority of executive power. The government, headed by the Prime Minister, thus represents the political leadership of the country and makes decisions in the name of the whole executive power.

Estonia has pursued the development of the e-state and e-government. Internet voting is used in elections in Estonia. The first Internet voting took place in the 2005 local elections and the first in a parliamentary election was made available for the 2007 elections, in which more than 30,000 citizens voted over the Internet. Voters have a chance to invalidate their vote in traditional elections, if they wish to. In its 2007 Worldwide Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders ranked Estonia 3rd out of 169 countries. Cabinet meetings have been paperless, web-based meeting since 2000. The system is cited to have increased the speed of decision-making in non-controversial issues, leaving more time for substantive policy discussions.

Law and court

According to the Constitution of Estonia (Estonian: *Põhiseadus*) the supreme power of the state is vested in the people. The people exercise their supreme power of the state on the elections of the Riigikogu through citizens who have the right to vote. The official Head of State is the President of Estonia, who gives assent to the laws passed by Riigikogu, also having the right of sending them back and proposing new laws. The president, however, does not use these rights very often, having a largely ceremonial role. He or she is elected by Riigikogu, with two-thirds of the votes required. If the candidate does not gain the amount of votes required, the right to elect the president goes over to an electoral body, consisting of the 101 members of Riigikogu and representatives from local councils. As other spheres, Estonian law-making has been successfully integrated with the Information Age.

Main parts of the Estonian judicial and law enforcement system are three-level court system, prosecutor's offices and Estonian Police. There are four County and City courts and two Administrative courts adjudicate matters in the first instance. The second instance is for the appeals against decisions of courts which were made in the lower level. The third juridical instance is vested in the Supreme Court (Estonian: *Riigikohus*), with 19 justices. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is appointed by the Parliament for nine years on nomination by the President and is the final and highest court instance in the country.

Foreign relations

Since regaining independence, Estonia has pursued a foreign policy of close cooperation with its Western European neighbors. The two most important policy objectives in this regard have been accession into NATO and the European Union, achieved in March and May of 2004 respectively. Estonia's international realignment toward the West has been accompanied by a general deterioration in relations with Russia, most recently demonstrated by the controversy surrounding relocation of the Bronze Soldier WWII memorial in Tallinn.

An important element in Estonia's post-independence reorientation has been closer ties with the Nordic countries, especially Finland and Sweden. Indeed, Estonians consider themselves a Nordic people rather than Balts, based on their historical ties with Sweden, Denmark and particularly Finland. In December 1999 Estonian foreign minister (and since 2006, president of Estonia) Toomas Hendrik Ilves delivered a speech entitled "Estonia as a Nordic Country" to the Swedish Institute for International Affairs. In 2003, the foreign ministry also hosted an exhibit called "Estonia: Nordic with a Twist". And in 2005, Estonia joined the European Union's Nordic Battle Group. It has also shown continued interest in joining the Nordic Council.



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and President George W. Bush, in Estonia 2006.

Military

The military of Estonia is based upon the Estonian Defence Forces (Estonian: *Kaitsevägi*) which is the name of the unified armed forces of the republic with *Maavägi* (Army), *Merevägi* (Navy), *Õhuvägi* (Air Force) and a paramilitary national guard organization *Kaitseliit* (Defence League). The Estonian National Defence Policy aim is to guarantee the preservation of the independence and sovereignty of the state, the integrity of its land, territorial waters, airspace and its constitutional order. At the moment the main strategic goals are to be able to defend the countries interests and development of the armed forces which would be ready to be interoperability with the other armed forces of NATO and European Union member states and also their capability to participate in NATO missions.



Estonian Army soldiers in Afghanistan on a patrol mission (December 2007)

The current national military service (Estonian: *ajateenistus*) is compulsory for men between 18 and 28, and conscripts serve eight-month to eleven-month tours of duty depending on the army branch they serve in. Estonia has retained conscription unlike Latvia and Lithuania and has no plan to transition to a contract armed forces. In 2008, the military spending will reach to 1.85% - 5 billion kronas of the GDP and will continue to increase till 2010 when the 2.0% level is achieved. As of January 2008, the Estonian military had almost 300 troops stationed in foreign countries as part of various international peacekeeping forces, including 35 Defence League troops stationed in Kosovo; 120 Ground Forces soldiers in the NATO-led ISAF force in Afghanistan; 80 soldiers stationed as a part of MNF in the Iraq; and 2 Estonian officers in Bosnia-Herzegovina and 2 Estonian military agents in Israel in Golan Heights. The Estonian Defence Forces have had previously military missions also in Croatia from March till October 1995, in Lebanon from December 1996 till June 1997 and in Macedonia from May till December 2003. Estonia participates in the Nordic Battlegroup and has announced readiness to send soldiers also to Sudan to Darfur if

necessary, creating the very first African peacekeeping mission for the armed forces of Estonia.

e-Military

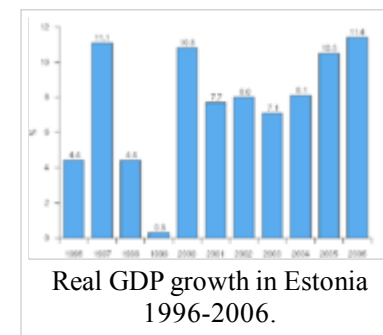
The Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces have been working on a cyber warfare and defence formation for some years now. In 2007 a military doctrine of an e-military of Estonia was officially introduced as the country was under a massive cyberattacks. The proposed aim of the e-military is to secure the vital infrastructure and e-infrastructure of Estonia. The main cyber warfare facility is the the Computer Emergency Response Team of Estonia (CERT) which was founded in 2006. The organization operates with the security problems that occur in the local networks also with those which are started there.

On June 25 2007, Estonian president Toomas Hendrik Ilves met with the president of USA, George W. Bush. Among the topics discussed were the attacks on Estonian e-infrastructure. The attacks triggered a number of military organisations around the world to reconsider the importance of network security to modern military doctrine. On June 14 2007, defence ministers of NATO members held a meeting in Brussels, issuing a joint communiqué promising immediate action. First public results are estimated to arrive by autumn 2007. As to the placement of a newly planned NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD) (COE), Bush proclaimed the policy of USA as supporting Estonia as this centre's location. In the aftermath of the cyberattacks on Estonia, plans to combine network defence with Estonian military doctrine, and related NATO plans to create a cybernetic defence centre in Estonia, have been nicknamed as the Tiger's Defence (Estonian: *Tiigrikaitse*), in reference to Tiigrihüpe.

Economy

As a member of the European Union Estonia's economy is rated as ▲ **high income** by the World Bank. The level of the Estonian economy Estonian economic miracle has been often being described as the Baltic Tiger. By 1929, a stable currency, the (Estonian: *Kroon*), was established. It is issued by the Bank of Estonia, the country's central bank. Trade focused on the local market and the West, particularly Germany and the United Kingdom. Only 3% of all commerce was with the USSR. Before the Second World War Estonia was mainly an agriculture country whose products such as butter, milk and cheese was widely known on the western European markets. The USSR's forcible annexation of Estonia in 1940 and the ensuing Nazi and Soviet destruction during World War II crippled the Estonian economy. Post-war Sovietization of life continued with the integration of Estonia's economy and industry into the USSR's centrally planned structure.

Since re-establishing independence, Estonia has styled itself as the gateway between East and West and aggressively pursued economic reform and integration with the West. Estonia's market reforms put it among the economic leaders in the former COMECON area. In 1994, Estonia became one of the first countries in the world to adopt a flat tax, with a uniform rate of 26% regardless of personal income. In January 2005 the personal income tax rate was reduced to 24%. A subsequent reduction to 23% followed in January 2006. The income tax rate will be decreased by 1% annually to reach 18% by January 2010. The Government of Estonia finalized the design of Estonia's euro coins in late 2004, and is now intending to adopt the euro as the country's currency between 2011 and 2013, later than planned due to continued high inflation. In 1999, Estonia experienced its worst year economically since it regained independence in 1991, largely because of the impact of the August 1998 Russian financial crisis. Estonia joined the WTO in November 1999. With assistance from the European Union, the World Bank and the Nordic Investment Bank, Estonia completed most of its preparations for European Union membership by the end of 2002 and now has one of the strongest economies of the new member states of the European Union.



Estonian currency: banknotes.

A balanced budget, almost non-existent public debt, flat-rate income tax, free trade regime, fully convertible currency backed by currency board and a strong peg to the euro, competitive commercial banking sector, hospitable environment for foreign investment, innovative e-Services and even mobile-based services are all hallmarks of Estonia's free-market-based economy.

Infrastructure and e-infrastructure

As Estonia has been an important transit centre since the medieval ages the country's favorable geographic location, along with its developing infrastructure, offers good opportunities for all transport and logistics related activities. The rail transport dominates the cargo sector, comprising 70% of all carried goods, domestic and international. Since 2007 the transit sector importance in the economy has been reducing, mainly due to the economical-political confrontation between Estonia and Russia. This however has not recognized internationally. The road transport accounts almost 90% of all transported passengers. In recent years the Tallinn-Tartu Highway reconstruction has gained an over national importance as it connects two of the most largest cities in the country. The highway reconstruction (2+2 route) has also been written to the current Governing Coalition programme. Also the proposed permanent connection to Saaremaa Island is among the over national infrastructure building programme. Both of these project costs however have been estimated in billions of kronas which have also gained a lot of media attention and caused public debates over the real need of such constructions. There are currently five major cargo ports which offer easy navigational access, deep waters, and good ice conditions. There are 12 airports and one heliport in Estonia of which the Tallinn Airport is the largest airport, providing services to a number of international carriers flying to 23 destinations.



Tallinn International Airport

Estonia has a strong information technology (IT) sector, partly due to the Tiigrihüpe project undertaken in mid 1990s, and has been mentioned as the most "wired" and advanced country in Europe in the terms of e-Government of Estonia.

Industry and environment

Food, construction and electronic and industries are currently one of the most important branches of Estonia's industry. In 2007 the construction industry employed more than 80,000 people which makes around 12% of the entire countries workforce. Another important industrial sector is the machinery and chemical industry which is mainly located in Ida-Viru County and around Tallinn. The oil shale based mining industry which is also concentrated in East-Estonia produces around 90% of the entire countries electricity. The extensive oil shale usage however has caused also severe damage to the nature and environment. Although the amounts of pollutants emitted to the air have been falling since the 1980s, the air is still polluted with sulphur dioxide from the mining industry which was rapidly developed by the Soviet Union in early 1950s. In some areas the coastal seawater is polluted, mainly around and near by Sillamäe industrial complex.



Ash mounds in Ida-Viru County

Estonia is a dependent country in the terms of energy and energy production. In recent years many local and foreign companies have been investing to the renewable energy sources. The wind power importance has been increasing steadily in Estonia and currently the total amount of energy production out of wind is nearly 60 MW while at the same time roughly 399 MW worth of projects are currently being developed and more than 2800 MW worth projects are being

proposed into the Lake Peipus and the coastal areas of Hiiumaa. Currently there are plans to renovate some of the Narva Power Plants sections, establish new power stations and to provide higher efficiency in oil shale based energy production. The Estonian energy market liberalization is in a process and should be opened before 2009 and all of non-household market, which totals around 77% of consumption, before 2013.

Trade and investment

Estonia has a modern market-based economy since the end of 1990s and one of the highest per capita income levels in Eastern Europe. Proximity to the Scandinavian markets, location between the East and West, competitive cost structure and high-skill labour force have been the major Estonian comparative advantages in the beginning of the 2000s. Tallinn as the largest city has emerged as a financial centre and the Tallinn Stock Exchange joined recently with the OMX system. The current government has pursued relatively sound fiscal policies, resulting in balanced budgets and low public debt. In 2007, however, a large current account deficit and rising inflation put pressure on Estonia's currency, which is pegged to the euro, highlighting the need for growth in export-generating industries.

Estonia	Export	Import
Finland	18.4%	18.2%
Sweden	12.4%	9%
Latvia	8.9%	5.7%
Russia	8.1%	13.1%
Germany	5.1%	12.4%
Lithuania	4.8%	6.4%

Estonia exports mainly machinery and equipment, wood and paper, textiles, food products, furniture, and metals and chemical products. Estonia also exports 1.562 billion kilowatt hours of electricity annually. At the same time Estonia imports machinery and equipment, chemical products, textiles, food products and transportation equipment. Estonia imports 200 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually.

Between 2007 and 2013 Estonia receives 53.3 billion kronas (3.4 billion euros) from various European Union Structural Funds as direct supports by creating the largest foreign investments into Estonia ever. Majority of the European Union financial aid will be invested into the following fields: energy economies, entrepreneurship, administrative capability, education, information society, environment protection, regional and local development, research and development activities, healthcare and welfare, transportation and labour market.

Demographics

With only 1.3 million inhabitants, Estonia is one of the least populous countries in the European Union. The current fertility rate is 1.41 children per mother. Estonia has a small number of larger cities, the most populous being Tallinn, Tartu, Narva, Kohtla-Järve and Pärnu.

By far the largest conurbation is the Tallinn region, including cities of Maardu, Saue and smaller municipalities of Viimsi, Tabasalu, Vääna-Jõesuu and Männiku.

Ethnic and cultural diversity

Tolerance and democracy are illustrated by the Law on the Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities, passed already in 1925, which was not only the first in Europe at the time but also very progressive. Prior to World War II, Estonia was a relatively homogeneous society – ethnic Estonians constituted 88% of the

population, with national minorities constituting the remaining 12%. The largest minority groups in 1934 were Russians, Germans, Swedes, Latvians, Jews, Poles, Finns and Ingrians. Cultural autonomies could be granted to minorities numbering more than 3,000 people with longstanding ties to the Republic of Estonia. Prior to the Soviet occupation, the Germans and Jewish minorities managed to elect a cultural council. The Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities was reinstated in 1993.

Estonia	Population	%
Estonians	921,062	68.7%
Russians	344,280	25.6%
Ukrainians	28,158	2.1%
Belarussians	16,134	1.2%
Finns	11,035	0.8%
Tatars	2,487	0.2%
Latvians	2,216	0.2%
Poles	2,216	0.2%
Lithuanians	2,077	0.1%
Jews	1,900	0.1%
Germans	1,900	0.1%
Others	9,084	0.7%

Historically, large parts of Estonia's north-western coast and islands have been populated by indigenous ethnically *Rannarootslased* (Coastal Swedes). The majority of Estonia's Swedish population of 3,800 fled to Sweden or were deported in 1944, escaping the advancing Red Army.

In the recent years the numbers of Coastal Swedes has risen again, numbering in 2008 almost 500 people, due to the property reforms in the beginning of 1990s. World War II along with Soviet and Nazi occupations interrupted the natural development of inter-ethnic relations, deforming the inner features of Estonian society. By 1989, minorities constituted more than 1/3 of the population, the number of non-Estonians had grown almost 5-fold, while the percentage of ethnic Estonians in the total population decreased by 27%. At the end of the 1980s, Estonians perceived their demographic change as a national catastrophe. This was a result of the migration policies essential to the Soviet Nationalisation Programme aiming to russify Estonia – forceful administrative and military immigration of non-Estonians from the USSR coupled with the mass deportations of Estonians to the USSR. During the purges up to 110,000 Estonians were killed or deported.

In 2005, the Ingrian Finnish minority in Estonia elected a cultural council and was granted cultural autonomy. The Estonian Swedish minority similarly received cultural autonomy in 2007.

The country's official language is Estonian, which belongs to the Finnic branch of the Finno-Ugric languages. Estonian is thus closely related to Finnish, spoken on the other side of the Gulf of Finland, and is one of the few languages of Europe that is not of an Indo-European origin. Despite some overlaps in the vocabulary due to borrowings, in terms of its origin, Estonian is not related to its nearest neighbours, Swedish, Latvian and Russian, which are all Indo-European languages. Russian is widely spoken as a secondary language by thirty- to seventy-year-old ethnic Estonians, because Russian was the unofficial language of the occupied Estonia from 1944 to 1991 taught as a compulsory second language during the Soviet era. First and second generation of industrial immigrants from various parts of the former Soviet Union (mainly Russia) do not speak Estonian. The latter, mostly Russian-speaking ethnic minorities, reside predominantly in the capital city (Tallinn) and the industrial urban areas in Ida-Virumaa. Most common foreign languages learned by Estonians are English, German, Russian, Swedish, Finnish and in recent years also Latvian.



Estonians in their ethnic clothing in 2007.

Society

Today's Estonia is a multinational country where, according to the 2000 census, altogether 109 languages are spoken. 83.4% of Estonian citizens speak Estonian as their mother tongue, 15.3% – Russian and 1% speak other languages. 83.6% of Estonian residents are Estonian citizens, 7.4% are citizens of other countries and 9% are "*citizens with undetermined citizenship*". The number of Estonian citizens who have become citizens through naturalization process (over 140,000 persons) exceeds the number of residents of undetermined citizenship (ac. 120,000 persons).

There is only one *Nationality Holiday* in Estonia which is on the 24 February and marks the Independence Day of Estonia, which is also a day of rest. There are 12 *State Holidays* and 10 *Over-National Days* celebrated in the country.

Main Estonian holidays	Date
Independence Day	24 February
Day of Restoration of Independence	20 August
Christmas Eve	24 December
New Year	1 January
Victory Day	23 June
Jaaniõhtu	23 June
Tartu Peace Treaty	2 February
Day of Language	14 March
Day of Flag	4 June
Day of Sorrow	14 June
Day of Resistance	22 September
Rebirth Day	16 November

Cuisine

Historically the cuisine of Estonia has been heavily dependent on seasons and simple peasant food, which today is influenced by many countries. Today it includes many typical international foods. The most typical foods in Estonia are black bread, pork, potatoes and dairy products. Traditionally in summer and spring, Estonians like to eat everything fresh - berries, herbs, vegetables and everything else that comes straight from the garden. Hunting and fishing have also been very common, although nowadays hunting and fishing are more of popular hobbies. Today it is also very popular to grill outside in summer. Traditionally in winter jams, preserves and pickles are brought to the table. Estonia has been through rough times in the past and thus gathering and conserving fruits, mushrooms and vegetables for winter has always been essential. Today gathering and conserving is not that common because everything can be bought from stores, but preparing food for winter is still very popular in countryside and still has somewhat ritual significance. Being a country with large coastal line, fish has also been very important.



Estonian Saku and A. Le Coq beer with the famous Kalev chocolate.

Education and science

The history of formal education in Estonia dates back to the 13–14th centuries when the first monastic and cathedral schools were founded. The first primer in the Estonian language was published in 1575. The oldest university is the University of Tartu which was established by the Swedish king Gustav II Adolf in 1632. In 1919, university courses were first taught in the Estonian language.



The University of Tartu as the oldest university in Estonia, founded in 1632.

Today's education in Estonia is divided into general, vocational and hobby education. The education system is based on four levels which include the pre-school, basic, secondary and higher education. A wide network of schools and supporting educational institutions has been established. The Estonian educational system consists of state, municipal, public and private educational institutions. There are currently 589 schools in Estonia.

Academic higher education in Estonia is divided into three levels: bachelor's studies, master's studies, and doctoral studies. In some specialties (basic medical studies, veterinary, pharmacy, dentistry, architect-engineer and a classroom teacher program) the Bachelors and Master's levels are integrated into one unit. Estonian public universities have significantly more autonomy than applied higher education institutions. In addition to organizing the academic life of the university, universities can create new curricula, establish admission terms and conditions, approve the budget, approve the development plan, elect the rector and make restricted decisions in matters concerning assets. Estonia has a moderate number of public and private universities. The largest public universities are Tallinn University, Tallinn University of Technology, Tartu University, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Estonian Academy of Arts, and the largest private university is the International University of Audentes.

The Estonian Academy of Sciences is Estonia's national academy of science. The IT industry of Estonia in late 1950s as the first computer centers were established in Tartu and Tallinn. Estonian specialists contributed in the development of software engineering standards for different ministries of the Soviet Union during the 1980s.

Sports

Estonia first competed as a nation at the 1920 Summer Olympics, although the National Olympic Committee was established in 1923. The first Winter Olympics were the 1924 Winter Olympics. Estonian athletes took part of the Olympic Games until the country was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. The 1980 Summer Olympics Sailing regatta was held in the capital city Tallinn. After regaining independence in 1991, Estonia has participated in all Olympics. Estonia has won most of its medals in athletics, weightlifting, wrestling and cross-country skiing.

International rankings

Survey	Organization	Year	Rank
Globalization Index	A. T. Kearney Foreign Policy	2007	10
Environmental Sustainability Index	Columbia University Yale University	2008	19
Economic Freedom	Heritage Foundation The Wall Street Journal	2008	12
The World Competitiveness Scoreboard	IMD International	2008	23
Media Freedom	Reporters Without Borders	2007	3
Children Index	Save the Children	2007	14
Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index	Transparency International	2007	28
Growth Competitiveness Index Ranking	World Economic Forum	2006	25
World Democracy Audit	World Democracy Audit	2008	17

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Finland

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Coordinates:




Finland, officially the **Republic of Finland** (Finnish: *Suomi*; Swedish: *Finland*), is a Nordic country situated in the northern Europe. It has borders with Sweden to the west, Russia to the east, and Norway to the north, while Estonia lies to its south across the Gulf of Finland. The capital city is Helsinki.

Around 5.3 million people reside in Finland, with the majority concentrated in the southern part of country. It is the eighth largest country in Europe in terms of area and the most sparsely populated country in the European Union. The native language for most of the population is Finnish, a member of the Finno-Ugric language family most closely related to Estonian and one of the four official EU languages not of Indo-European origin. The second official language, Swedish, is spoken by a 5.5 percent minority. Finland is a democratic, parliamentary republic with a mostly Helsinki-based central government and local governments in 415 municipalities. Greater Helsinki (including Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen) totals a million residents and a third of the GDP. Other major cities include Tampere, Turku, and Oulu.

Finland was historically part of Sweden and from 1809 an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. Finland's declaration of independence in 1917 from Russia was followed by a civil war, wars against the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and a period of official neutrality during the Cold War. Finland joined the United Nations in 1955 and the European Union in 1995 and participates in the Eurozone. Finland has been ranked the second most stable country in the world, in a survey based on social, economic, political, and military indicators.

Finland has seen excellent results in many international comparisons of national performance such as the share of high-technology manufacturing, the rate of gross domestic product growth, and the protection of civil liberties.

History

<p><i>Suomen tasavalta</i> <i>Republiken Finland</i> Republic of Finland</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Anthem: <i>Maamme</i> (Finnish) <i>Vårt land</i> (Swedish) <i>"Our Land"</i></p>	
	
Location of Finland (dark green)	

Prehistory

According to archaeological evidence, the area now composing Finland was settled at the latest around 8500 BCE during the Stone Age as the ice shield of the last ice age receded. The settlers came from the areas of today's Estonia and Russia. The earliest people were hunter-gatherers, using stone tools. There is also evidence of carved stone animal heads. The first pottery appeared in 3000 BC when settlers from the East brought in the Comb Ceramic culture. The arrival of the Corded Ware culture in southern coastal Finland between 3,000–2,500 BC coincided with the start of agriculture. Even with the introduction of agriculture, hunting and fishing continued to be important parts of the subsistence economy, especially in the northern and eastern parts of the country.

The Bronze Age (1500–500 BCE) and Iron Age (500 BCE–1200 CE) were characterised by extensive contacts with other cultures in the Fennoscandian and Baltic regions. There is no consensus on when Finno-Ugric languages and Indo-European languages were first spoken in the area of contemporary Finland.

The first verifiable written documents appeared in the 12th century.

Swedish era

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – on the European continent (light green & dark grey) – in the European Union (light green) — [Legend] 	
Capital (and largest city)	Helsinki
Official languages	Finnish, Swedish
Recognised regional languages	Sami
Demonym	Finnish, Finn
Government	Parliamentary republic ¹
- President	Tarja Halonen (sd)
- Prime Minister	Matti Vanhanen (c)
- Speaker	Sauli Niinistö (nc)
Independence	from Russian Empire
- <i>Autonomy</i>	<i>March 29, 1809</i>
- Declared	December 6, 1917
- Recognised	January 4, 1918
EU accession	January 1, 1995
Area	
- Total	338,145 km ² (65th) 130,558 sq mi
- Water (%)	10,0
Population	
- 2008 estimate	5,314,303 (111th)
- 2000 census	5,155,000
- Density	16/km ² (201st) 40/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2005 estimate
- Total	\$163 billion (52nd)
- Per capita	\$34,819 (12th)

GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$245.491 billion (31st)
- Per capita	\$46,602 (12th)
Gini (2000)	26.9 (low)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.952 (high) (11th)
Currency	Euro (€) ² (EUR)
Time zone	EET (UTC+2)
- Summer (DST)	EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.fi, .ax ³
Calling code	+358
<p>1 Semi-presidential system</p> <p>2 Before 2002: Finnish markka</p> <p>3 The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.</p>	

Sweden established its official rule of Finland in the 13th century. Swedish became the dominant language of the nobility, administration and education; Finnish was chiefly a language for the peasantry, clergy and local courts in predominantly Finnish-speaking areas. The Bishop of Turku was the most socially pre-eminent person in Finland before the Reformation.

During the Reformation, the Finns gradually converted to Lutheranism. In the 16th century, Mikael Agricola published the first written works in Finnish. The first university in Finland, The Royal Academy of Turku, was established in 1640. In the 18th century, wars between Sweden and Russia led to the occupation of Finland twice by Russian forces, known to the Finns as the Greater Wrath (1714–1721) and the Lesser Wrath (1742–1743). By this time *Finland* was the predominant term for the whole area from the Gulf of Bothnia to the Russian border.

Russian Empire era

On March 29, 1809, after being conquered by the armies of Alexander I of Russia in the Finnish War, Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire until the end of 1917. During the Russian era, the Finnish language started to gain recognition. From the 1860s onwards, a strong Finnish nationalist movement, known as the Fennoman movement, grew. Milestones included the publication of what would become Finland's national epic, the *Kalevala*, in 1835, and the Finnish language achieving equal legal status with Swedish in 1892.

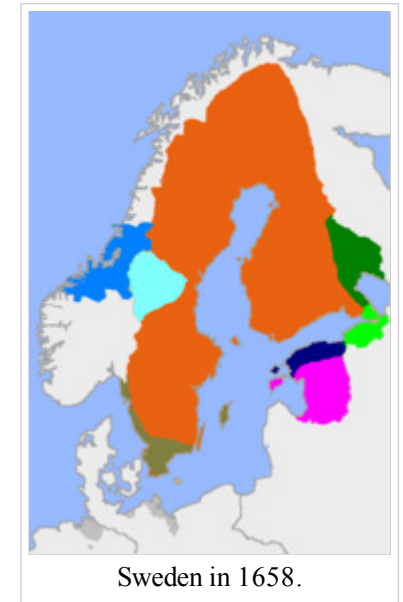
The Finnish famine of 1866–1868 killed 15 percent of the population, making it the last and one of the worst famines in European history. The famine led the Russian Empire to ease financial regulations, and investment rose in following decades. Economic and political development was rapid. The GDP per capita was still a half of United States and a third of Great Britain.

In 1906, universal suffrage was adopted in the Grand Duchy of Finland. However, the relationship between the Grand Duchy and the Russian Empire soured when the Russian government made moves to restrict Finnish autonomy. For example, the universal suffrage was, in practice, virtually meaningless, since the emperor did not have to approve any of the laws adopted by the Finnish parliament. Desire for independence gained ground, first among radical nationalists and socialists.

Civil war and early independence

On December 6, 1917, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Finland declared its independence, which was approved by Bolshevik Russia.

Months after in 1918, the violent wing of the Social Democratic Party started a coup, which led a brief but bitter civil war that affected domestic politics for many decades afterwards. The civil war was fought between "the Whites", who were supported by Imperial Germany, and "the Reds", supported by Bolshevik Russia. Eventually, the Whites overcame the Reds. The deep social and political enmity between the Reds and Whites remained. The civil war and activist expeditions (see Heimosodat) to the Soviet Union strained Eastern relations.



After a brief flirtation with monarchy, Finland became a presidential republic, with Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg elected as its first president in 1919. The Finnish–Russian border was determined by the Treaty of Tartu in 1920, largely following the historic border but granting Pechenga (Finnish: *Petsamo*) and its Barents Sea harbour to Finland. Finnish democracy didn't see any more Soviet coup attempts and survived the anti-Communist Lapua Movement. The relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union was tense. Finnish ethnicity was targeted by genocides in the Soviet Union. Germany's Nazism led to a deterioration of relations with Germany. Military was trained in France instead and relations to Western Europe and Sweden were strengthened.

In 1917 the population was 3 million. Credit-based land reform was enacted after the civil war, increasing the proportion of capital-owning population. About 70% of workers were occupied in agriculture and 10% in industry. The largest export markets were the United Kingdom and Germany. The Great Depression in the early 1930s was relatively light in Finland.

World War II

During World War II, Finland fought the Soviet Union twice: in the Winter War of 1939–40 after the Soviet Union had attacked Finland and in the Continuation War of 1941–44, following Operation Barbarossa, in which Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Following German losses on the Eastern Front and the subsequent Soviet advance, Finland was forced to make peace with the Soviet Union. This was followed by the Lapland War of 1944–45, when Finland forced the Germans out of northern Finland.

The treaties signed in 1947 and 1948 with the Soviet Union included Finnish obligations, restraints, and reparations as well as further Finnish territorial concessions (cf. the Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940). Finland ceded most of Finnish Karelia, Salla, and Pechenga, which amounted to ten percent of its land area and twenty percent of its industrial capacity. Some 400,000 evacuees, mainly women and children, fled these areas. Some were left behind and were not able to immigrate in Finland until the Soviet Union collapsed (after which they formed a large immigrant group).

Finland had to reject Marshall aid. However, the United States provided secret development aid and helped the still non-communist SDP in hopes of preserving Finland's independence. Establishing trade with the Western powers, such as the United Kingdom, and the reparations to the Soviet Union caused Finland to transform itself from a primarily agrarian economy to an industrialised one. Even after the reparations had been paid off, Finland continued to trade with the Soviet Union in the framework of bilateral trade.

Cold War

In 1950 half of the Finnish workers were occupied in agriculture and a third lived in urban areas. The new jobs in manufacturing, services and trade quickly attracted people to the towns. The average number of births per woman declined from a baby boom peak of 3.5 in 1947 to 1.5 in 1973. When baby boomers entered the workforce, the economy did not generate jobs fast enough and hundreds of thousands emigrated to the more industrialized Sweden, with emigration peaking in 1969 and 1970 (today 4.7 percent of Swedes speak Finnish). The 1952 Summer Olympics brought international visitors. Finland took part in trade liberalization in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.



Areas ceded by Finland to the Soviet Union after the Winter War in 1940 and the Continuation War in 1944. The Porkkala land lease was returned to Finland in 1956.

Officially claiming to be neutral, Finland lay in the grey zone between the Western countries and the Soviet Union. The YYA Treaty (Finno-Soviet Pact of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance) gave the Soviet Union some leverage in Finnish domestic politics. This was extensively exploited by President Urho Kekkonen against his opponents. He maintained an effective monopoly on Soviet relations from 1956 on, which was crucial for his continued popularity. In politics, there was a tendency of avoiding any policies and statements that could be interpreted as anti-Soviet. This phenomenon was given the name "Finlandisation" by the German press (fi. *suomettuminen*). Self-censorship vis-à-vis anything negative associated with the Soviet Union was prevalent in the media. Public libraries pulled from circulation thousands of books that were considered anti-Soviet, and the law made it possible for the authorities to directly censor movies with supposedly anti-Soviet content. Asylum-seeking Soviet citizens were frequently returned to the Soviet Union by the Finnish authorities.

Despite close relations with the Soviet Union, Finland remained a market economy. Various industries benefited from trade privileges with the Soviets, which explains the widespread support that pro-Soviet policies enjoyed among business interests in Finland. Economic growth was rapid in the postwar era, and by 1975 Finland's GDP per capita was the 15th highest in the world. In the 1970s and 1980s, Finland built one of the most extensive welfare states in the world. In 1981, President Urho Kekkonen's failing health forced him to retire after holding office for 25 years.

Miscalculated macroeconomic decisions, a banking crisis, the collapse of the Soviet Union and a global economic downturn caused a deep recession in Finland in the early 1990s. The depression bottomed out in 1993, and Finland has seen steady economic growth ever since.

Recent history

Like other Nordic countries, Finland has liberalized its economy since the late 1980s. Financial and product market regulation was loosened. Some state enterprises have been privatized and there have been some modest tax cuts. Finland joined the European Union in 1995, and the Eurozone in 1999.

The population is aging with the birth rate at 10.42 births per 1,000 population, or a fertility rate of 1.8. With a median age of 41.6 years, Finland is one of the oldest countries; half of voters are estimated to be over 50 years old. Like most European countries, without further reforms or much higher immigration, Finland is expected to struggle with demographics, even though macroeconomic projections are healthier than in most other developed countries.

Etymology

The name *Suomi* (Finnish for "Finland") has uncertain origins but a strong candidate for a cognate is the proto-Baltic word **zeme*, meaning "land". According to an earlier theory the name was derived from *suomaa* (fen land) or *suoniemi* (fen cape).

The exonym *Finland* has resemblance with, e.g., the Scandinavian placenames Finnmark, Finnveden and hundreds of other toponyms starting with *Fin(n)* in Sweden and Norway. Some of these names are obviously derived from *finnr*, a Germanic word for a wanderer/finder and thus supposedly meaning "hunter-gatherers" or slash and burn agriculturists as opposed to the Germanic sedentary farmers and sea-faring traders and pirates. It is unknown how, why and when *Finnr* started referring to the people of Finland Proper in particular (from where the name spread from the 15th century onwards to refer to the people of the entire country).

Among the first documents to mention "a land of the Finns" are two rune-stones. There is one in Söderby, Sweden, with the inscription *finlont* (U 582) and one in Gotland, a Swedish island in the Baltic Sea, with the inscription *finlandi* (G 319), dating from the 11th century.

Geography and environment



Detailed map of Finland. See also: Atlas of Finland

Topography and geology

Finland is a country of thousands of lakes and islands – 187,888 lakes (larger than 500 m²) and 179,584 islands to be precise. One of these lakes, Saimaa, is the fifth largest in Europe. The Finnish landscape is mostly flat with few hills, and its highest point, the Halti at 1,324 metres, is found in the extreme north of Lapland at the border between Finland and Norway.

The landscape is covered mostly (seventy-five percent of land area) by coniferous taiga forests and fens, with little arable land. The most common type of rock is granite. It is a ubiquitous part of the scenery, visible wherever there is no soil cover. Moraine or till is the most common type of soil, covered by a thin layer of humus of biological origin. The greater part of the islands are found in the southwest in the Archipelago Sea, part of the archipelago of the Åland Islands, and along the southern coast in the Gulf of Finland.



Enontekiö, Northern Finland

Finland is one of the few countries in the world whose surface area is still growing. Owing to the post-glacial rebound that has been taking place since the last ice age, the surface area of the country is growing by about 7 square kilometres (2.7 square miles) a year.

The distance from the most Southern point – Hanko – to the most northern point of Finland – Nuorgam – is 1,445 kilometres (898 miles) (driving distance), which would take approximately 18.5 hours to drive. This is very similar to Great Britain (Land's End to John o' Groats – 1,404 kilometres (872 miles) and 16.5 h).

Flora and fauna

Phytogeographically, Finland is shared between the Arctic, Central European and Northern European provinces of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Finland can be subdivided into three ecoregions: the Scandinavian and Russian taiga, Sarmatic mixed forests and Scandinavian Montane Birch forest and grasslands.

All terrestrial life in Finland was completely wiped out during the last ice age that ended some 10,000 years ago, following the retreat of the glaciers and the appearance of vegetation.

Today, there are over 1,200 species of vascular plant, 800 bryophytes and 1,000 lichen species in Finland, with flora being richest in the southern parts of the

country. Plant life, like most of the Finnish ecology, is well adapted to tolerate the contrasting seasons and extreme weather. Many plant species, such as the Scots Pine, spruce, and birch, spread throughout Finland from Norway and only reached the western coast less than three millennia ago. Oak and maple grows in nature only in the southern part of Finland.

Similarly, Finland has a diverse and extensive range of fauna. There are at least sixty native mammalian species, 248 breeding bird species, over seventy fish species and eleven reptile and frog species present today, many migrating from neighbouring countries thousands of years ago.

Large and widely recognised wildlife mammals found in Finland are the Brown Bear (the national animal), Gray Wolf, elk (moose) and reindeer. Other common mammals include the Red Fox, Red Squirrel, and Mountain Hare. Some rare and exotic species include the flying squirrel, Golden Eagle, Saimaa Ringed Seal and Arctic fox. Two of the more striking birds are the Whooper Swan, a large European swan and the national bird of Finland, and the Capercaillie, a large, black-plumaged member of the grouse family. The latter is considered an indicator of old-growth forest connectivity, and has been declining due to landscape fragmentation. The most common breeding birds are the Willow Warbler, Chaffinch and Redwing. Of some seventy species of freshwater fish, the northern pike, perch and others are plentiful. Atlantic salmon remains the favorite of fly rod enthusiasts.

The endangered Saimaa Ringed Seal, one of only three lake seal species in the world, exists only in the Saimaa lake system of southeastern Finland, down to only 300 seals today. It has become the emblem of the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation.

Due to hunting and persecution in history, many animals such as the Golden Eagle, Brown Bear and Eurasian Lynx all experienced significant declines in population. However, their numbers have increased again in the 2000s, mainly as a result of careful conservation and the establishment of vast national parks.

Climate

The climate in Southern Finland is a northern temperate climate. In Northern Finland, particularly in the Province of Lapland, a subarctic climate dominates, characterised by cold, occasionally severe, winters and relatively warm summers. The main factor influencing Finland's climate is the country's geographical position between the 60th and 70th northern parallels in the Eurasian continent's coastal zone, which shows characteristics of both a maritime and a continental climate, depending on the direction of air flow. Finland is near enough to the Atlantic Ocean to be continuously warmed by the Gulf Stream, which explains the unusually warm climate considering the absolute latitude.

A quarter of Finland's territory lies above the Arctic Circle, and as a consequence the midnight sun can be experienced – for more days, the farther north one travels. At Finland's northernmost point, the sun does not set for 73 consecutive days during summer, and does not rise at all for 51 days during winter.

Demographics

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The Archipelago Sea, between the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland, is the largest archipelago in the world by number of islands; estimates vary between 20,000 and 50,000.

Population

Finland currently numbers 5,302,778 inhabitants and has an average population density of 17 inhabitants per square kilometre. This makes it, after Norway and Iceland, the most sparsely populated country in Europe. Finland's population has always been concentrated in the southern parts of the country, a phenomenon even more pronounced after 20th century urbanisation. The biggest and most important cities in Finland are the cities of the Greater Helsinki metropolitan area – Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. Other large cities include Tampere, Turku and Oulu.

The share of immigrants in Finland is among the lowest of the European Union countries. Foreign citizens comprise 2.3 percent of the population. Most of them are from Russia, Estonia and Sweden.

Language

Most of the Finnish people (92 percent) speak Finnish as their mother tongue. Finnish is a member of the Baltic-Finnic subgroup of the Uralic languages and is typologically between inflected and agglutinative languages. It modifies and inflects the forms of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numerals and verbs, depending on their roles in the sentence. In practice, this means that instead of prepositions and prefixes there is a great variety of different suffixes and that compounds form a considerable percentage of the vocabulary of Finnish. It has been estimated that approximately 65–70 percent of all words in Finnish are compounds. A close linguistic relative to the Finnish language is Estonian, which, though similar in many aspects, is not mutually intelligible with it. These languages, together with Hungarian (all members of the Uralic language family), are the primary non- Indo-European languages spoken in Europe. Finland, together with Estonia and Hungary, is one of three independent countries where a Uralic language is spoken by the majority.

The largest minority language is Swedish, which is the second official language in Finland, spoken by 5.5 percent of the population. Other minority languages are Russian (0.8 percent) and Estonian (0.3 percent). To the north, in Lapland, are also the Sami people, numbering around 7,000 and recognized as an indigenous people. About a quarter of them speak a Sami language as their mother tongue. There are three Sami languages that are spoken in Finland: Northern Sami, Inari Sami and Skolt Sami. Other minority languages are Finnish Romani, Finnish Sign Language (spoken natively by 4,000–5,000 people) and Finland-Swedish Sign Language (spoken natively by about 150 people). The rights of minority groups (in particular Sami, Swedish-speaking Finns and Romani people) to cherish their culture and language is protected by the constitution.

In a 2005 Eurobarometer survey studying languages of the European Union, 60% percent of residents claimed to know English, 38% claimed to know Swedish, and 17% claimed to know German. Ranking those claiming a knowledge of English, Finland ranked fifth behind Malta, the Netherlands (86%), Sweden (85%), and Denmark (83%). Relatively many Finns knew German, while relatively few knew French or Spanish.

Religion

Most Finns are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (84.2 percent). A minority belong to the Finnish Orthodox Church (1.1 percent; see Eastern Orthodox Church). Other Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church in Finland are significantly smaller, as are the Muslim, Jewish and other non-Christian communities (totaling 1.2 percent). 15.1 percent of the population is unaffiliated. The main Lutheran and Orthodox churches are constitutional national churches of Finland with special roles in ceremonies and often in school morning prayers. Representatives at Lutheran Church assemblies are selected in church elections every four years.



The Helsinki Cathedral with the statue of Emperor Alexander II of Russia.

Over half of Finns say they pray at least once a month, the highest proportion in Nordics. However, the majority of Lutherans attend church only for special occasions like Christmas, weddings and funerals. According to a 2005 Eurobarometer poll, 41 percent of Finnish citizens responded that "they believe there is a god"; 41 percent answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force"; and 16 percent that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

Family structure

Finnish family life is centered on the nuclear family. Relations with the extended family are often rather distant, and Finnish people do not form politically significant clans, tribes or similar structures. According to UNICEF, Finland ranks fourth in the world in child well-being.

Religion in Finland		
religion		percent
Lutheran		84.2%
Unaffiliated		15.1%
Other		1.2%
Orthodox		1.1%

Health

There are 307 residents for each doctor. About 18.9 percent of health care is funded directly by households and 76.6 percent by public and other insurances. Finland limits medicine sales to the around 800 licensed pharmacies. Some significant institutions include Ministry of Health and National Public Health Institute.

In a comparison of 16 countries by *Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions*, Finland used the least resources and got average result, making Finland the most efficient according to the study's authors.

The life expectancy is 82 years for women and 75 years for men. After having one of the highest death rates from heart disease in the world in the 1970s, improvements in the Finnish diet and exercise have paid off. Finland has exceptionally low smoking rates: 26% for males and 19% for females.

Finland's health problems are similar to other developed countries: circulatory diseases make up about half of all causes of death and cancer is the second most common cause of death.

The total annual consumption of pure alcohol of residents is lower than other European countries, even though heavy drinking is common at parties on the weekend. However, becoming intoxicated has remained the central characteristic of Finnish drinking habits. In the working-age population, diseases or accidents caused by alcohol consumption have recently surpassed coronary artery disease as the biggest single cause of death.

Schools teach sports, health and hands-on cooking classes. Finnish schoolchildren have one of the lowest amounts of sport classes in the European Union and according to National Public Health Institute only a third of adults exercise enough. National Public Health Institute claims 54% male obesity and 38% female obesity, while other estimates put obesity rates at 70% and 50%. The rate of diabetes is predicted to grow to 15% by 2015. Finland has the world's highest rate of Type I diabetes. Suicide mortality in Finland has generally been one of the highest in Europe, especially significant among males under 35 years.

Administrative divisions

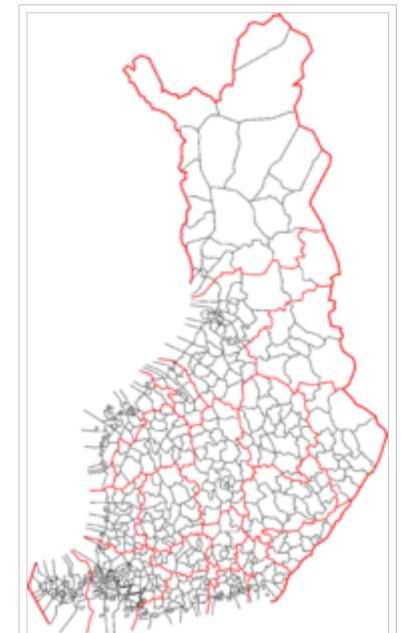
The largest subdivisions are the six administrative provinces (*lääni, pl. läänit*), which mainly function as divisions of the state organisation, i.e. police, prosecutors, and other state services operate under their administration. After 1997 reforms the provinces have been Southern Finland, Western Finland, Eastern Finland, Oulu, Lapland, Åland. The province of Åland Islands is autonomous.

The fundamental administrative divisions of the country are the municipalities, which may also call themselves towns or cities. They account for half of public spending. Spending is financed by municipal income tax, state subsidies, and other revenue. As of 2008, there are 415 municipalities and most are under 5,000 residents. People often identify with their municipality.

In addition to municipalities, two intermediate levels are defined. Municipalities co-operate in seventy-four sub-regions and twenty regions. These are governed by the member municipalities, but have only limited powers. The Åland region has a permanent, democratically elected regional council as a part of the autonomy. In the Kainuu region, there is a pilot project underway, with regional elections. Sami people have a semi-autonomous Sami Domicile Area in Lapland for issues on language and culture.

In the following chart, the number of inhabitants includes those living in the entire municipality (*kunta/kommun*), not just in the built-up area. The land area is given in km², and the density in inhabitants per km² (land area). The figures are as of January 1, 2007. Notice that the capital region – comprising Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo and Kauniainen (see Greater Helsinki) – forms a continuous conurbation of one million people. However, common administration is limited to voluntary cooperation of all municipalities, e.g. in Helsinki Metropolitan Area Council.

Municipality	Population	Land area	Density
Helsinki	570,848	184.47	3,061.00
Espoo	239,645	312.00	751.60
Tampere	207,836	523.40	393.90
Vantaa	193,738	240.54	780.40
Turku	175,058	243.40	720.50



Municipalities and regions map of Finland (2007).
Black borders refer to municipalities, red to regions.

Oulu	131,984	369.43	351.40
Lahti	99,594	134.95	730.10
Kuopio	91,099	1,127.40	81.00
Jyväskylä	85,312	105.90	789.00
Pori	76,306	503.17	150.83
Lappeenranta	59,323	758.00	77.70
Rovaniemi	58,866	7,600.73	7.60
Vaasa	57,919	183.00	311.20
Joensuu	57,495	1,173.40	49.10
Kotka	54,631	270.74	203.00

Politics and government

The Constitution of Finland defines the political system. Finland is a representative democracy with a semi-presidential parliamentary. Aside from state-level politics, residents use their vote in municipal elections and in the European Union elections.

According to the Constitution, the President is the head of state and responsible for foreign policy (which excludes affairs related to the European Union) in cooperation with the cabinet. Other powers include Commander-in-Chief, decree, and appointive powers. Direct vote is used to elect the president for a term of six years and maximum two consecutive terms. The current president is Tarja Halonen (SDP).

The 200-member unicameral Parliament of Finland exercises the supreme legislative authority in Finland. The parliament may alter laws, the constitution, bring about the resignation of the Council of State, and override presidential vetoes. Its acts are not subject to judicial review. Various parliament committees listen to experts and prepare legislation. Proportional vote in multi-seat constituencies is used to elect the parliament for a term of four years. The Speaker of Parliament, the first person in the presidential line of succession, is currently Sauli Niinistö (National Coalition Party). The cabinet (the Finnish Council of State) exercises most executive powers. It is headed by the Prime Minister of Finland and includes other ministers and the Chancellor of Justice. Parliament majority decides its composition and a vote of no confidence can be used to modify it. The current prime minister is Matti Vanhanen (Centre Party).

Since equal and common suffrage was introduced in 1906, the parliament has been dominated by the Centre Party (former Agrarian Union), National Coalition

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Eduskuntatalo, the main building of the Parliament of Finland (Eduskunta) in Helsinki.

Party, and Social Democrats, which have approximately equal support, and represent 65–80 percent of voters. After 1944 Communists were a factor to consider for a few decades. The relative strengths of the parties vary only slightly in the elections due to the proportional election from multi-member districts, but there are some visible long-term trends. The autonomous Åland islands has separate elections, where Liberals for Åland was the largest party in 2007 elections.

After the parliamentary elections on March 18, 2007, the seats were divided among eight parties as follows:

Party	Seats	Net Gain/Loss	% of seats	% of votes
Centre Party	51	−4 ▼	25.5	23.1
National Coalition Party	50	+10 ▲	25.0	22.3
Social Democratic Party	45	−8 ▼	22.5	21.4
Left Alliance	17	−2 ▼	8.5	8.8
Green League	14	+1 ▲	7.5	8.5
Swedish People's Party	9	+1 ▲	4.5	4.5
Christian Democrats	7	0 —	3.5	4.9
True Finns	5	+2 ▲	2.5	4.1
Others	1*	0 —	0.5	2.4

* Province of Åland representative.

Law and court

The judicial system of Finland is a civil law system divided between courts with regular civil and criminal jurisdiction and administrative courts with responsibility for litigation between the individuals and the administrative organs of the state and the communities. Finnish law is codified and based on Swedish law and in a wider sense, civil law or Roman law. Its court system consists of local courts, regional appellate courts, and the Supreme Court. The administrative branch of justice consists of administrative courts and the Supreme Administrative Court. In addition to the regular courts, there are a few special courts in certain branches of administration. There is also a High Court of Impeachment for criminal charges against certain high-ranking offices.

A general court of first instance (*käräjäoikeus*) has professional judges and in complex cases, includes non-professional lay judges (*lautamies*) appointed by municipal councils. Administrative courts, appeals courts and supreme courts consist of professional judges only. Like the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, Finland has no constitutional court, and courts may not strike down laws or pronounce on their constitutionality. In principle, the constitutionality of laws in Finland is verified by parliament's constitutional committee and a simple vote in the parliament.

Around 92% of residents are confident in Finland's security institutions. Crime in Finland has some unique features. The overall crime rate of Finland is not high in the EU context. Some crime types are above average, notably the highest homicide rate in Western Europe. Crime is prevalent among lower educational groups and is often committed by intoxicated persons. A day fine system is in effect and also applied to offences such as speeding. Fines and jail sentences tend to be among the world's lowest, with an official emphasis on rehabilitation.

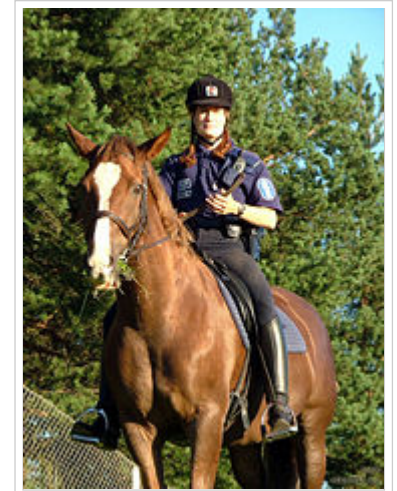
Finland has successfully fought against the corruption which was larger in the 1970s and 1980s. For instance, economic reforms and EU membership introduced stricter requirements for open bidding and many public monopolies were abolished. Today Finland has a very low number of corruption charges; Transparency International ranks Finland as one of the least corrupted countries. Also, Finland's public records are among the world's most transparent.

Finland has strict libel standards, and in one case a blogger was convicted for incitement to hatred when referring to statistics about an ethnic group. The voluntary Internet censorship list, similar to other Nordic countries, is classified "nominal" censorship by the ONI. Nevertheless, Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2007 edition ranked Finland (along with Belgium and Sweden) fifth out of 169 countries.

Foreign relations

According to the latest constitution of 2000, the President (currently Tarja Halonen) leads foreign policy in cooperation with the government (currently Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen and Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb), except that the government leads EU affairs. In surveys, most diplomats and foreign policy experts consider the current constitution flawed because it is often unclear who is in charge. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs implements the foreign policy.

During the Cold War, Finland conducted its foreign policy in association with the Soviet Union and simultaneously stressed Nordic cooperation (as a member of the Nordic Council). After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Finland freed itself from the last restrictions imposed on it by the Paris peace treaties of 1947 and the Finno-Soviet Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. Although opposed by socialists and agrarians, the government filed



A mounted police officer in Helsinki.

an EU membership application three months after the dissolution of the USSR and became a member in 1995. Finland did not attempt to join NATO, even though other post-Soviet countries in the Baltic sea and elsewhere joined. Nevertheless, defense policymakers have quietly converted to NATO equipment and contributed troops.

President Martti Ahtisaari and the coalition governments led Finland closer to the core EU in the late 1990s. Finland was considered a cooperative model state, and Finland did not oppose proposals for a common EU defence policy. This was reversed in the 2000s, when Tarja Halonen and Erkki Tuomioja made Finland's official policy to resist other EU members' plans for common defense. However, Halonen allowed Finland to join European Union Battlegroups in 2006 and the NATO Response Force in 2008. Relations with most countries except Russia have been good.

Relations with Russia are cordial and common issues include bureaucracy (particularly at the Vaalimaa border crossing), airspace violations, development aid Finland gives to Russia (especially in environmental problems that affect Finland), and Finland's energy dependency on Russian gas and electricity. Behind the scenes, the administration has witnessed a resurrection of Soviet-era tactics. The National Security Agency, SUPO, estimates that the known number of Russian agents from SVR and GRU now exceeds Cold War levels and there are unknown numbers of others.

Military

The Finnish Defence Forces is a cadre army of professional soldiers (officers), with a standard readiness strength of 34,700 people in uniform. A universal male conscription is in place, under which all men above 18 years of age serve for 6, 9, 11 (unarmed service) or 12 months. Alternative non-military service and volunteer service by women (chosen by around 500 annually) are possible. Finland is the only non-NATO EU country bordering Russia. Finland's official policy states that the 350,000 reservists with mostly ground weaponry are a sufficient deterrent. The military strategy is to hide in forests when attacked, perhaps abandon some regions, and attempt to defeat the enemy from forests in planned places.

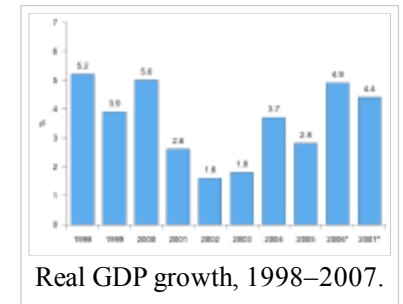
Most military experts call for NATO membership, but are careful to avoid politics. Finland's defence budget equals about 2 billion euro or 1.4–1.6 percent of the GDP. In international comparisons the defense expenditure is around the third highest in the EU. The voluntary overseas service is highly popular and troops serve around the world in UN, NATO and EU missions. Residents claim around 80% homeland defense willingness, one of the highest rates in Europe. The Finnish Defence Forces are under the command of the Chief of Defence (currently Juhani Kaskeala), who is directly subordinate to the President of the Republic in matters related to the military command. The military branches are the Finnish Army, Finnish Navy and Finnish Air Force. The Border Guard is under the Ministry of the Interior but can be incorporated into the Defence Forces when required by defence readiness.



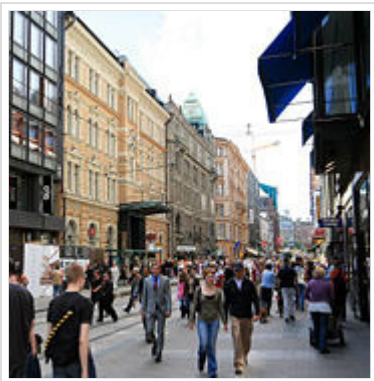
Finnish Air Force F/A-18.

Economy

Finland has a highly industrialized, free-market economy with a per capita output equal to that of other western economies such as France, Germany, Sweden or the UK. The largest sector of the economy is services at 65.7 percent, followed by manufacturing and refining at 31.4 percent. Primary production is at 2.9 percent. With respect to foreign trade, the key economic sector is manufacturing. The largest industries are electronics (21.6 percent), machinery, vehicles and other engineered metal products (21.1 percent), forest industry (13.1 percent), and chemicals (10.9 percent). Finland has timber and several mineral and freshwater resources. Forestry, paper factories, and the agricultural sector (on which taxpayers spend around 3 billion euro annually) are politically sensitive to rural residents. The Greater Helsinki area generates around a third of GDP. In a 2004 OECD comparison, high-technology manufacturing in Finland ranked second largest after Ireland. Knowledge-intensive services have also ranked the smallest and slow-growth sectors – especially agriculture and low-technology manufacturing – second largest after Ireland. Overall short-term outlook was good and GDP growth has been above many EU peers. Inflation has been low, averaging 1.8 percent between 2004 and 2006.



Finland is highly integrated in the global economy, and international trade is a third of GDP. The European Union makes 60 percent of the total trade. The largest trade flows are with Germany, Russia, Sweden, United Kingdom, USA, Netherlands and China. Trade policy is managed by the European Union, where Finland has traditionally been among the free trade supporters, except for agriculture. Finland is the only Nordic country to have joined the Eurozone.



Aleksanterinkatu, a commercial street.

The 40 largest Finland-registered companies by turnover in 2007 or 2006 were (Oy and Oyj abbreviations removed): Nokia, Stora Enso, Neste Oil, UPM-Kymmene, Kesko, Suomen Osuuskauppojen Keskuskunta, Metsäliitto, Outokumpu, Metso, Tamro, Fortum, Sampo, Kone, Elcoteq, Rautaruukki, Wärtsilä, YIT, Varma, Cargotec, SanomaWSOY, Kemira, Ilmarinen Keskinäinen Eläkevakuutusyhtiö, TeliaSonera Finland, Luvata International (former Outokumpu Copper), Huhtamäki, Finnair, Lemminkäinen, HKScan, Onvest, RTF Auto, TietoEnator, Ahlstrom, Konecranes, Valio, ABB, Itella, Amer Sports, Teboil, Elisa, and Myllykoski.

Private sector employees amount to 1.8 million, out of which around a third with tertiary education. The average earnings per hour was 25.1 euro in 2007, before the approximately 60% median tax wedge. As of 2008 the average purchasing power-adjusted income levels are similar to Italy, Sweden, Germany, and France. As of 2006, a typical proportion of 62% works for enterprises smaller than 250 employees, they account for 49% of total turnover, and have the strongest growth. Female employment rate is high. Gender segregation between male-dominated professions and female-dominated professions is higher than in the US. The proportion of part-time workers was one of the lowest in OECD in 1999.

Employment rate 68% and unemployment rate was 6.8% in early 2008. 18% of residents are outside job market at the age of 50 and less than a third working at the age of 61. Unfunded pensions and other promises such as health insurances are a dominate future liability, though Finland is much better prepared than countries such as France or Germany. Directly held public debt has been reduced to around 32 percent of GDP in 2007. In 2007, the average household savings rate was -3.8 and household debt 101 percent of annual disposable income, a typical level in Europe. Home ownership rate is 60%.

As of 2006, 2,4 million households reside in Finland. The average size is 2.1 persons; 40 percent of households consist of a single person, 32 percent two persons and 28 percent three or more persons. Residential buildings total 1.2 million and the average residential space is 38 square metres per person. The

average residential property without land costs 1,187 euro per sq metre and residential land 8.6 euro per sq metre. 74 percent of households had a car. There are 2.5 million cars and 0.4 other vehicles. Around 92 percent has mobile phone and 58 percent Internet connection at home. The average total household consumption was 20,000 euro, out of which housing at around 5500 euro, transport at around 3000 euro, food and beverages excluding alcoholic at around 2500 euro, recreation and culture at around 2000 euro. Purchasing power-adjusted average household consumption is about the same level as Italy, Spain and Greece. According to Invest in Finland, private consumption grew by 3% in 2006 and consumer trends included durables, high quality products, and spending on well-being.

Education and science

Most pre-tertiary education is arranged at municipal level. Even though many or most schools were started as private schools, today only around 3% students are enrolled in private schools (mostly Helsinki-based schools such as SYK), many times less than in Sweden and most other developed countries. Pre-school education is rare compared to other EU countries. Formal education is usually started at the age of 7. The primary school takes normally 6 years, the lower secondary school 3 years, and most schools are managed by municipal officials. The flexible curriculum is set by the Ministry of Education and the Education Board. Attendance is compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16. According to PISA assessments of the age group 15, Finnish students had a high average score and a low variation among schools and students. McKinsey has attributed the result distribution to high teacher education (Master's degree), high continuing teacher training, and emphasis on laggards. After lower secondary school, graduates may either enter the workforce directly, or apply to trade schools or gymnasiums. Trade schools prepare for professions. Academically-oriented gymnasiums have higher entrance requirements and specifically prepare for Abitur and tertiary education. Graduation from either formally qualifies for tertiary education.



Auditorium in the Helsinki University of Technology's main building, designed by Alvar Aalto.

In tertiary education, two, mostly separate and non-interoperating sectors are found: the profession-oriented higher vocational schools and the research-oriented universities. Finns used to take student loans and scholarships, but for the past decades the financial risk has been moved solely to the government. There are 20 universities and 30 polytechnics in the country. The World Economic Forum ranks Finland's tertiary education #1 in the world. Around 33% of residents has a tertiary degree, similar to Nordics and more than in most other OECD countries except Canada (44%), United States (38%) and Japan(37%). The proportion of foreign students is 3% of all tertiary enrolments, one of the lowest in OECD, while in advanced programs it is 7.3%, still below OECD average 16.5%.

More than 30% of tertiary graduates are in science-related fields. Finnish researchers are leading contributors to such fields as forest improvement, new materials, the environment, neural networks, low-temperature physics, brain research, biotechnology, genetic technology and communications.

Energy



Olkiluoto Nuclear Power Plant with two existing units. On the far left is a visualization of the third unit, which will be Finland's fifth nuclear reactor when completed in 2011.

Anyone can enter the free and largely privately-owned Nordic energy market traded in Nord Pool exchange, which has provided competitive prices compared to other EU countries. As of 2007, Finland has roughly the lowest industrial electricity prices in the EU-15 (equal to France).

In 2006, the energy market was around 90 terawatt hours and the peak demand around 15 gigawatts in winter. This means that the energy consumption per capita is around 7.2 tons of oil equivalent per year. Industry and construction consumed 51% of total consumption, a relatively high figure reflecting Finland's industries. Finland's hydrocarbon resources are limited to peat and wood, while neighboring Norway has oil and Estonia oil shale. Finland has little hydropower capacity compared to Sweden or Norway. Most energy demand is satisfied with fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas. Finland has four privately-owned nuclear reactors producing 18 percent of the country's energy., one research reactor in Otaniemi campus, and the fifth AREVA- Siemens-built reactor – the world's largest at 1600 MWe and a focal point of Europe's nuclear industry – is scheduled to be operational by 2011. Renewable energy forms (industry-burned wood, consumer-burned wood, peat, industrial residue, garbage) make high 25 percent compared to the EU average 10 percent. A varying amount (5–17 percent) of electricity has been imported from Russia (at around 3 gigawatt power line capacity), Sweden and Norway. A new

submarine power cable from Russia has been considered a national security issue and one permit application has already been rejected. Finland negotiated itself expensive Kyoto and EU emission terms. They are causing a sharp increase in energy prices and 1-2 billion euro annual cost, amplified by the aging and soon decommissioned production capacity. Energy companies are already ready to increase nuclear power production, if parliament granted permits for new reactors.

Transportation

The extensive road system is utilized by most internal cargo and passenger traffic. As of 2005, the country's network of main roads has a total length of 13,258 km and all public roads 78,186 km, of which 50,616 km are paved. The motorway network totals 653 km. The annual road network expenditure of around 1 billion euro is paid with vehicle and fuel taxes which amount to around 1.5 billion euro and 1 billion euro.

The main international passenger gateway is Helsinki-Vantaa Airport with over 13 million passengers in 2007. Tampere-Pirkkala airport is the second largest and around 25 airports have scheduled passenger services. The Helsinki-Vantaa based Finnair, Blue1 and Finncomm Airlines sell air services both domestically and internationally, and there are many others offering direct flights around the world. Helsinki has an optimal location for great circle routes between Western Europe and the Far East. Hence, many international travelers visit Helsinki on a stop-over between Asia and Europe.

Despite low population density, taxpayers spend annually around 350 million euro in maintaining 5,865 km railway tracks even to many rural towns. Only one rail company operates in Finland, VR Group, which has 5 percent passenger market share (out of which 80 percent are urban trips in Greater Helsinki) and 25 percent cargo market share. Helsinki has an urban rail network.

The majority of international cargo utilizes ports. Port logistics prices are low. Vuosaari harbour in Helsinki is the largest container port after completion in 2008



Wild animals, chiefly moose and reindeer, cause several thousand accidents every year.

and others include Hamina, Hanko, Pori, Rauma, Oulu. There is passenger traffic from Helsinki and Turku, which have ferry connections to Tallinn, Mariehamn, Sweden and several other destination. The Helsinki-Tallinn route, one of the busiest passenger sea routes in the world, is also served by a helicopter line.

Public policy

Finnish politicians have often emulated other Nordics and the Nordic model. Nordics have been free-trading and relatively welcoming to skilled migrants for over a century, though in Finland immigration is relatively new. The level of protection in commodity trade has been low, except for agricultural products.

Finland's judiciary is efficient and effective. Finland is highly open to investment and free trade. Finland has top levels of economic freedom in many areas, although there is a heavy tax burden and inflexible job market. Finland is ranked 16th (ninth in Europe) in the 2008 Index of Economic Freedom. Recently, Finland has topped the patents per capita statistics, and overall productivity growth has been strong in areas such as electronics. While the manufacturing sector is thriving, OECD points out that the service sector would benefit substantially from policy improvements. Finland is one of the most fiscally responsible EU countries.

IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2007 ranked Finland 17th most competitive. The World Economic Forum 2008 index ranked Finland the 6th most competitive. In both indices, Finland's performance was next to Germany and the lowest of Nordics, and significantly higher than most European countries.

Economists attribute much growth to reforms in the product markets. According to OECD, only four EU-15 countries have less regulated product markets (UK, Ireland, Denmark and Sweden) and only one has less regulated financial markets (Denmark). Nordic countries were pioneers in liberalizing energy, postal, and other markets in Europe. The legal system is clear and business bureaucracy less than most countries. Property rights are well protected and contractual agreements are strictly honored. Finland is rated one of the least corrupted countries in Corruption Perceptions Index. Finland is rated 13th in the Ease of Doing Business Index. It indicates exceptional ease to trade across borders (5th), enforce contracts (7th), and close a business (5th), and exceptional hardship to employ workers (127th) and pay taxes (83rd).

Finnish job market regulation is a remaining example of Nordic neocorporatist model. In the 1990s, Denmark liberalized its job market, Sweden moved to more flexible decentralized contracts, and Finnish trade unions blocked most reforms. Finnish law forces all workers to obey the national contracts that are drafted every few years for each profession and seniority level. The agreement becomes universally enforceable provided that more than 50% of the employees support it, in practice by being a member of a relevant trade union. The unionization rate is high (70%), especially in the middle class (AKAVA - 80%). A lack of a national agreement in an industry is considered an exception. More flexibility is generally recommended by economists for various reasons.

Overall taxation has been reduced to nearly 10 percentage points lower level than in Sweden, but it is still nearly 10 percentage points higher than in Germany. The middle income worker receives only 40% of his income after the median tax wedge and effective marginal tax rates are high. Value-added tax is 22 percent for most items. Capital gains tax and corporate tax are 26 percent, about the EU median. Property taxes are low, but there is a stamp duty of 4% for home sellers. For instance, McKinsey estimates that a worker has to pay around 1600 euro for another worker's 400 euro service when both workers' taxes are counted. Tax cuts have been in every post-depression government's agenda and the overall tax burden is now around 43% of GDP compared to 51.1% in Sweden, 34.7% in Germany, 33.5% in Canada, and 30.5% in Ireland.

Public consumption is 51.7% of GDP compared to 56.6% in Sweden, 46.9% in Germany, 39.3% in Canada, and 33.5% in Ireland. Much of the taxes are spent on public sector employees, many of which are jobs-for-life and amount to 124,000 state employees and 430,000 municipal employees. That is 113 per 1000 residents (over a quarter of workforce) compared to 74 in the US, 70 in Germany, and 42 in Japan (8% of workforce). The Economist Intelligence Unit's ranking for Finland's e-readiness is high at 13th, compared to 1st for United States, 3rd for Sweden, 5th for Denmark, and 14th for Germany. Also, early and generous retirement schemes have contributed to high pension costs. Social spending such as health or education is around OECD median. Social transfers are also around OECD median. In 2001 Finland outsourced more than most Western European countries, although less than Sweden. Municipalities spend a half of taxes.

Tourism

In 2005, Finnish tourism grossed over €6.7 billion with a five percent increase from the previous year. Much of the sudden growth can be attributed to the globalisation and modernisation of the country as well as a rise in positive publicity and awareness. There are many attractions in Finland which attracted over 4 million visitors in 2005.

The Finnish landscape is covered with thick pine forests, rolling hills and complemented with a labyrinth of lakes and inlets. Much of Finland is pristine and virgin as it contains 35 national parks from the Southern shores of the Gulf of Finland to the high fells of Lapland. It is also an urbanised region with many cultural events and activities.

Commercial cruises between major coastal and port cities in the Baltic region, including Helsinki, Turku, Tallinn, Stockholm and Travemünde, play a significant role in the local tourism industry. Finland is regarded as the home of Saint Nicholas or Santa Claus, living in the northern Lapland region. Above the Arctic Circle, there is a polar night, a period when the sun doesn't rise for days or weeks, or even months. Lapland, the extreme north of Finland, is so far north that the Aurora Borealis, atmospheric fluorescence, is seen regularly in winter.

Outdoor activities range from Nordic skiing, golf, fishing, yachting, lake cruises, hiking, kayaking among many others. At Finland's northernmost point, in the heart of summer, the Sun does not completely set for 73 consecutive days. Wildlife is abundant in Finland. Bird-watching is popular for those fond of flying fauna, however hunting is also popular. Elk, reindeer and hare are all common game in Finland. There are many churches, cathedrals, museums and castles. Olavinlinna in Savonlinna hosts the annual Savonlinna Opera Festival. The capital city of Helsinki, on the other hand, is famous for its Grand Duchy era architecture, which resembles that of imperial St. Petersburg.

Culture



The M/S *Silja Symphony* leaving from Helsinki. Cruises are a popular tourist activity throughout Finland.

Throughout Finland's prehistory and history, cultural contacts and influences have concurrently, or at varying times, come from all directions. As a result of 600 years of Swedish rule, Swedish cultural influences are still notable. Today, cultural influences from North America are prominent. Into the twenty-first century, many Finns have contacted cultures from distantly abroad, such as with those in Asia and Africa. Beyond tourism, Finnish youth in particular have been increasing their contact with peoples from outside Finland by travelling abroad to both work and study.

There are still differences between regions, especially minor differences in accents and vocabulary. Minorities, such as the Sami, Finland Swedes, Romani, and Tatar, maintain their own cultural characteristics. Many Finns are emotionally connected to the countryside and nature, as urbanisation is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Literature

Though Finnish written language could be said to exist since Mikael Agricola translated the New Testament into Finnish in the sixteenth century as a result of the Protestant Reformation, few notable works of literature were written until the nineteenth century, which saw the beginning of a Finnish national Romantic Movement. This prompted Elias Lönnrot to collect Finnish and Karelian folk poetry and arrange and publish them as *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic. The era saw a rise of poets and novelists who wrote in Finnish, notably Aleksis Kivi and Eino Leino.

After Finland became independent there was a rise of modernist writers, most famously Mika Waltari. Frans Eemil Sillanpää was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1939 – so far the only one for a Finnish author. The second World War prompted a return to more national interests in comparison to a more international line of thought, characterized by Väinö Linna. Literature in modern Finland is in a healthy state, with detective stories enjoying a particular boom of popularity. Ilkka Remes, a Finnish author of thrillers, is very popular.

Visual arts

Finns have made major contributions to handicrafts and industrial design. Finland's best-known sculptor of the twentieth century was Wäinö Aaltonen, remembered for his monumental busts and sculptures. Finnish architecture is famous around the world. Among the top of the twentieth century Finnish architects to win international recognition are Eliel Saarinen (designer of the widely recognised Helsinki Central railway station and many other public works) and his son Eero Saarinen. Alvar Aalto, who helped bring the functionalist architecture to Finland, is also famous for his work in furniture and glassware.

Music

Folk music



A Juhannus bonfire ("kokko")
in Mäntsälä



Students on Helsinki's
Esplanadi wearing their caps on
Vappu.



A lakeside smoke sauna
("savusauna") in Kannonkoski

Much of the music of Finland is influenced by traditional Karelian melodies and lyrics, as comprised in the *Kalevala*. Karelian culture is perceived as the purest expression of the Finnic myths and beliefs, less influenced by Germanic influence, in contrast to Finland's position between the East and the West. Finnish folk music has undergone a roots revival in recent decades, and has become a part of popular music.

Sami music

The people of northern Finland, Sweden and Norway, the Sami, are known primarily for highly spiritual songs called Joik. The same word sometimes refers to lavlu or vuelie songs, though this is technically incorrect.

Classical and opera

The first Finnish opera was written by the German composer Fredrik Pacius in 1852. Pacius also wrote *Maamme/Vårt land* (Our Land), Finland's national anthem. In the 1890s Finnish nationalism based on the *Kalevala* spread, and Jean Sibelius became famous for his vocal symphony *Kullervo*. He soon received a grant to study *runo singers* in Karelia and continued his rise as the first prominent Finnish musician. In 1899 he composed Finlandia, which played its important role in Finland gaining independence. He remains one of Finland's most popular national figures and is a symbol of the nation.

Today, Finland has a very lively classical music scene. Finnish classical music has only existed for about a hundred years, and many of the important composers are still alive, such as Magnus Lindberg, Kaija Saariaho, Aulis Sallinen and Einojuhani Rautavaara. The composers are accompanied with a large number of great conductors such as Sakari Oramo, Mikko Franck, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Osmo Vänskä, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Susanna Mälkki and Leif Segerstam. Some of the internationally acclaimed Finnish classical musicians are Karita Mattila, Soile Isokoski, Kari Kriikku, Pekka Kuusisto, Réka Szilvay and Linda Brava.

Popular music

Modern Finnish popular music includes a number of prominent rock bands, jazz musicians, hip hop performers, and dance music acts such as Bomfunk MCs and Darude. Finnish electronic music such as the Sähkö Recordings record label enjoys underground acclaim. *Iskelmä* (coined directly from the German word *Schlager*, meaning *hit*) is a traditional Finnish word for a light popular song. Finnish popular music also includes various kinds of dance music; tango, a style of Argentinean music, is also popular. One of the most productive composers of popular music was Toivo Kärki, and the most famous singer Olavi Virta (1915–1972). Among the lyricists, Sauvo Puhtila (born 1928), Reino Helismaa (died 1965) and Veikko "Vexi" Salmi are the most remarkable authors. The composer and bandleader Jimi Tenor is well known for his brand of retro-funk music.

Dance music

Notable Finnish dance and electronic music artists include Jori Hulkkonen, Darude, JS16, DJ Proteus and DJ Orkidea.

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The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), a significant figure in the history of classical music.

Rock music

Finnish rock-music scene emerged in 1960s with pioneers such as Blues Section and Kirka. In the 1970s Finnish rock musicians started to write their own music instead of translating international hits into Finnish. During the decade some progressive rock groups, such as Tasavallan Presidentti and Wigwam, gained respect abroad but failed to make a commercial breakthrough outside Finland. This was also the fate of the rock and roll group Hurriganes. The Finnish punk scene produced some internationally acknowledged names including Terveet Kädet in 1980s. Hanoi Rocks was a pioneering 1980s- glam rock act that left perhaps a deeper mark in the history of popular music than any other Finnish group, giving inspiration for Guns N' Roses.

In the 2000s, other Finnish rock bands started to sell well internationally. The Rasmus became more known in Europe (and other places, like South America) in the 2000s. Their 2003 album *Dead Letters* sold 1.5 million units worldwide and garnered them eight gold and five platinum album designations. But so far the most successful Finnish band in the United States has been HIM; they were the first band from Finland to ever sell an album that was certified gold by the RIAA.

Cinema



Apocalyptica's Perttu Kivilaakso playing metal music live.

In film industry, notable directors include Aki Kaurismäki, Timo Koivusalo, Aleksi Mäkelä and Klaus Härö. Hollywood film director/producer Renny Harlin (born Renny Lauri Mauritz Harjola) was born in Finland.

Cuisine

Traditional Finnish cuisine is a combination of European, Fennoscandian and Western Russian elements; table manners are European. The food is generally simple, fresh and healthy. Fish, meat, berries and ground vegetables are typical ingredients whereas spices are not common due to their historical unavailability. In years past, Finnish food often varied from region to region, most notably between the west and east. In coastal and lakeside villages, fish was a main feature of cooking, whereas in the eastern and also northern regions, vegetables and reindeer were more common. The prototypical breakfast is oatmeal or other continental-style foods such as bread. Lunch is usually a full warm meal, served by a canteen at workplaces. Dinner is eaten at around 17.00 to 18.00 at home.

Modern Finnish cuisine combines country fare and haute cuisine with contemporary continental cooking style. Today, spices are a prominent ingredient in many modern Finnish recipes, having been adopted from the east and west in recent decades.

Public holidays

All official holidays in Finland are established by acts of Parliament. The official holidays can be divided into Christian and secular holidays, although some of the Christian holidays have replaced holidays of pagan origin. The main Christian holidays are Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, and All Saints Day. The secular holidays are New Year's Day, May Day, Midsummer Day, and the Independence Day. Christmas is the most extensively celebrated holiday: usually at least 23rd to 26th of December are holidays.

In addition to this, all Sundays are official holidays, but they are not as important as the special holidays. The names of the Sundays follow the liturgical calendar and they can be categorised as Christian holidays. When the standard working week in Finland was reduced to 40 hours by an act of Parliament, it also meant that all Saturdays became a sort of de facto public holidays, though not official ones. Easter Sunday and Pentecost are Sundays that form part of a main holiday and they are preceded by a kind of special Saturdays. Retail stores are prohibited by law from doing business on Sundays, except during the summer months (May through August) and in the pre-Christmas season (November and December). Business locations that have less than 400 square metres of floor space are allowed Sunday business throughout the year, with the exception of official holidays and certain Sundays, such as Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Sports



Erkki Karu, one of the pioneers of the Finnish cinema, with cinematographer Eino Kari in 1927.



Karjalanpiirakka, a traditional Finnish pastry.

Various sporting events are popular in Finland. Pesäpallo (reminiscent of baseball) is the national sport of Finland, although the most popular sports in Finland in terms of media coverage are Formula One, ice hockey and football. The Finnish national ice hockey team is considered one of the best in the world. During the past century there has been a rivalry in sporting between Finland and Sweden, mostly in ice hockey and athletics (Finland-Sweden athletics international). Jari Kurri and Teemu Selänne are the two Finnish-born ice hockey players to have scored 500 goals in their NHL careers. Football is also popular in Finland, though the national football team has never qualified for a finals tournament of the World Cup or the European Championships. Jari Litmanen and Sami Hyypiä are the most internationally renowned of the Finnish football players.

Relative to its population, Finland has been a top country in the world in automobile racing, measured by international success. Finland has produced three Formula One World Champions – Keke Rosberg (Williams, 1982), Mika Häkkinen (McLaren, 1998 and 1999) and Kimi Räikkönen (Ferrari, 2007). Along with Räikkönen, the other Finnish Formula One driver currently active is Heikki Kovalainen (McLaren). Rosberg's son, Nico Rosberg (Williams), is also currently driving, but under his mother's German nationality. Other notable Finnish Grand Prix drivers include Leo Kinnunen, JJ Lehto and Mika Salo. Finland has also produced most of the world's best rally drivers, including the ex- WRC World Champion drivers Marcus Grönholm, Juha Kankkunen, Hannu Mikkola, Tommi Mäkinen, Timo Salonen and Ari Vatanen. The only Finn to have won a road racing World Championship, Jarno Saarinen, was killed in 1973 while racing.

Among winter sports, Finland has been the most successful country in ski jumping, with former ski jumper Matti Nykänen being arguably the best ever in that sport. Most notably, he won five Olympic medals (four gold) and nine World Championships medals (five gold). Among currently active Finnish ski jumpers, Janne Ahonen has been the most successful. Kalle Palander is a well-known alpine skiing winner, who won the World Championship and Crystal Ball (twice, in Kitzbühel). Tanja Poutiainen has won an Olympic silver medal for alpine skiing, as well as multiple FIS World Cup races.

Some of the most outstanding athletes from the past include Hannes Kolehmainen (1890–1966), Paavo Nurmi (1897–1973) and Ville Ritola (1896–1982) who won eighteen gold and seven silver Olympic medals in the 1910s and 1920s. They are also considered to be the first of a generation of great Finnish middle and long-distance runners (and subsequently, other great Finnish sportsmen) often named the " Flying Finns". Another long-distance runner, Lasse Virén (born 1949), won a total of four gold medals during the 1972 and 1976 Summer Olympics.

Also, in the past, Riku Kiri, Jouko Ahola and Janne Virtanen have been the greatest strength athletes in the country, participating in the World's Strongest Man competition between 1993 and 2000.

The 1952 Summer Olympics, officially known as the *Games of the XV Olympiad*, were held in 1952 in Helsinki, Finland. Other notable sporting events held in Finland include the 1983 and 2005 World Championships in Athletics, among others.

Some of the most popular recreational sports and activities include floorball, Nordic walking, running, cycling and skiing.



Ice hockey in Finland.



Paavo Nurmi at the 1920 Summer Olympics.

Finnishness

- List of Finns
- Suuret suomalaiset – a list of the "100 Greatest Finns" of all time as voted by the Finnish people in 2004.

Below are listed some of the characteristics of Finnishness. The term "Finnishness" is often referred to as the national identity of the Finnish people and its culture.

Finnish Maiden

a figure of national personification symbolising Finland

Kalevala

the national epic of Finland, and Finnish mythology in general

Kantele

traditional musical instrument

Mämmi

traditional Easter food

Kalakukko

traditional Savonian food

Mustamakkara

traditional blood sausage from Tampere

Karelian pasties

traditional pasties from the region of Karelia

Joulupukki

Father Christmas/Santa Claus

Jean Sibelius

one of the most popular national figures (composer of the symphonic poem Finlandia (symphonic poem) Finlandia)

Sauna

a Finnish national institution (see also Finnish sauna)

Sisu

will, determination, perseverance, mental fortitude

Puukko

traditional Finnish style woodcraft belt-knife

Talkoot

community work

Ice swimming

swimming in a body of water with a frozen crust of ice

Nordic walking



A triptych by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, depicting the *Aino Story* of Kalevala on three panes.

a recreational sport first popularized in Finland

Salmiakki

salty liquorice

Sahti

traditional beer

Koskenkorva

Finnish vodka

Reilu meininki

fair play

Flying Finn

a nickname given to notable Finnish sportsmen (originated with Olympic medalist Hannes Kolehmainen)

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France

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

France (French: IPA: [fʁɑ̃s]) , officially the **French Republic** (French: *République française*, IPA: [ʁepyˈblik fʁɑ̃ˈsɛz]) , is a country whose metropolitan territory is located in Western Europe and that also comprises various overseas islands and territories located in other continents. Metropolitan France extends from the Mediterranean Sea to the English Channel and the North Sea, and from the Rhine to the Atlantic Ocean. French people often refer to Metropolitan France as *L'Hexagone* (The "Hexagon") because of the geometric shape of its territory.

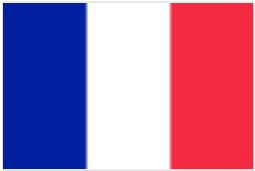


France is bordered by Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, Andorra, and Spain. Due to its overseas departments, France also shares land borders with Brazil and Suriname (bordering French Guiana) , and the Netherlands Antilles (bordering Saint-Martin). France is also linked to the United Kingdom by the Channel Tunnel, which passes underneath the English Channel.

The French Republic is a democracy organised as a unitary semi-presidential republic. Its main ideals are expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. In the 18th and 19th centuries, France built one of the largest colonial empires of the time, stretching across West Africa and Southeast Asia, prominently influencing the cultures and politics of the regions. France is a developed country with the sixth-largest economy in the world. France is the most visited country in the world, receiving over 79 million foreign tourists annually (including business visitors, but excluding people staying less than 24 hours in France). France is one of the founding members of the European Union, and has the largest land area of all members. France is also a founding member of the United Nations, and a member of the Francophonie, the G8, and the Latin Union. It is one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council; it is also an acknowledged nuclear power.

The name France originates from the Franks (*Francs*) , a Germanic tribe that occupied northern Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. More precisely, the region around Paris, called Île-de-France, was the original French royal demesne. The first King of the Franks, Clovis, is regarded as the forefather of the French kings.

Origin and history of the name

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<p><i>République française</i> French Republic</p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p>Motto: <i>Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité</i> "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"</p>	
<p>Anthem: " <i>La Marseillaise</i>"</p>	
 <p>Location of Metropolitan France (dark green)</p> <p>— on the European continent (light green & dark grey) — in the European Union (light green)</p>	

The name "France" comes from Latin *Francia*, which literally means "land of the Franks" or "Frankland". There are various theories as to the origin of the name of the Franks. One is that it is derived from the Proto-Germanic word *frankon* which translates as *javelin* or *lance* as the throwing axe of the Franks was known as a francisca.

Another proposed etymology is that in an ancient Germanic language, Frank means *free* as opposed to slave. This word still exists in French as *franc*, it is also used as the translation of "Frank" and to name the local money, until the use of the Euro in the 2000s.

However, rather than the ethnic name of the Franks coming from the word *frank*, it is also probable that the word is derived from the ethnic name of the Franks, the connection being that only the Franks, as the conquering class, had the status of freemen. The Merovingian kings claimed descent of their dynasty from the Sicambri, a Scythian or Cimmerian tribe, asserting that this tribe had changed their name to "Franks" in 11 BC, following their defeat and relocation by Drusus, under the leadership of a certain chieftain called Franko, although they had actually come from present day Netherlands, Lower Saxony, and possibly, ultimately Scandinavia. In German, France is still called *Frankreich*, which literally means " Realm of the Franks". In order to distinguish from the Frankish Empire of Charlemagne, Modern France is called *Frankreich*, while the Frankish Realm is called *Frankenreich*.

The word "Frank" had been loosely used from the fall of Rome to the Middle Ages, yet from Hugh Capet's coronation as "King of the Franks" ("Rex Francorum") it became used to strictly refer to the Kingdom of Francia, which would become France. The Capetian Kings were descended from the Robertines, who had produced two Frankish kings, and previously held the title of " Duke of the Franks" ("dux francorum"). This Frankish duchy encompassed most of modern northern France but because the royal power was sapped by regional princes the term was then applied to the royal demesne as shorthand. It was finally the name adopted for the entire Kingdom as central power was affirmed over the entire kingdom.

Geography

While Metropolitan France is located in Western Europe, France also has a number of territories in North America, the Caribbean, South America, the southern Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and Antarctica. These territories have varying forms of government ranging from overseas department to overseas collectivity.

Metropolitan France covers 547,030 square kilometres (211,209 sq mi) making it the largest country in



Territory of the French Republic in the world (excl. Antarctica where sovereignty is suspended)	
Capital (and largest city)	Paris
Official languages	French
Demonym	French
Government	Unitary semi-presidential republic
- President	Nicolas Sarkozy
- Prime Minister	François Fillon
Formation	
- French State	843 (Treaty of Verdun)
- Current constitution	1958 (5th Republic)
EU accession	March 25, 1957
Area	
- Total	674,843 km ² (40th) 260,558 sq mi
- Metropolitan France	
- IGN	551,695 km ² (47th) 213,010 sq mi
- Cadastre	543,965 km ² (47th) 210,026 sq mi

area in the European Union, being only slightly larger than Spain. France possesses a wide variety of landscapes, from coastal plains in the north and west to mountain ranges of the Alps in the south-east, the Massif Central in the south-central and Pyrenees in the south-west. At 4,807 metres (15,770 ft) above sea-level, the highest point in Western Europe, Mont Blanc, is situated in the Alps on the border between France and Italy. Metropolitan France also has extensive river systems such as the Loire, the Garonne, the Seine and the Rhône, which divides the Massif Central from the Alps and flows into the Mediterranean sea at the Camargue, the lowest point in France (2 m / 6.5 ft below sea level). Corsica lies off the Mediterranean coast.

Population	
	(January 1, 2007 estimate)
- Total	64,102,140 (20th)
- Metropolitan France	61,538,322 (20th)
- Density	113/km ² (89th) 293/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2006 estimate
- Total	US\$1.871 trillion (7th)
- Per capita	US \$30,100 (20th)
GDP (nominal)	2006 estimate
- Total	US \$2.232 trillion (6th)
- Per capita	US \$35,404 (18th)
Gini (2002)	26.7 (low)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.952 (high) (10th)
Currency	Euro, CFP Franc (EUR, XPF)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.fr
Calling code	+33

France's total land area, with its overseas departments and territories (excluding Adélie Land) , is 674,843 square kilometres (260,558 sq mi) , 0.45% of the total land area on Earth. However, France possesses the second-largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the world, covering 11,035,000 square kilometres (4,260,000 sq mi) , approximately 8% of the total surface of all the EEZs of the world, just behind the United States (11,351,000 km² / 4,383,000 sq mi) and ahead of Australia (8,232,000 km² / 3,178,000 sq mi).

Metropolitan France is situated between 41° and 50° North, on the western edge of Europe and thus lies within the northern temperate zone. The north and northwest have a temperate climate, however, a combination of maritime influences, latitude and altitude produce a varied climate in the rest of Metropolitan France. In the south-east a Mediterranean climate prevails. In the west, the climate is predominantly oceanic with a high level of rainfall, mild winters and cool summers. Inland the climate becomes more continental with hot, stormy summers, colder winters and less rain. The climate of the Alps and other mountainous regions are mainly alpine in nature with the number of days with temperatures below freezing over 150 per year and snowcover lasting for up to six months.



Satellite picture of metropolitan France, August 2002

History

Rome to revolution

The borders of modern France are approximately the same as those of ancient Gaul, which was inhabited by Celtic *Gauls*. Gaul was conquered for Rome by Julius Caesar in the 1st century BC, and the Gauls eventually adopted Roman speech (Latin, from which the French language evolved) and Roman culture. Christianity took root in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, and became so firmly established by the fourth and fifth centuries that St. Jerome wrote that Gaul was the only region "free from heresy".

In the 4th century AD, Gaul's eastern frontier along the Rhine was overrun by Germanic tribes, principally the Franks, from whom the ancient name of "Francie" was derived. The modern name "France" derives from the name of the feudal domain of the Capetian Kings of France around Paris. The Franks were the first tribe among the Germanic conquerors of Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire to convert to Catholic Christianity rather than Arianism (their King Clovis did so in 498) ; thus France obtained the title "Eldest daughter of the Church" (*La fille aînée de l'Église*) , and the French would adopt this as justification for calling themselves "the Most Christian Kingdom of France".

Existence as a separate entity began with the Treaty of Verdun (843) , with the division of Charlemagne's Carolingian empire into East Francia, Middle Francia and Western Francia. Western Francia approximated the area occupied by modern France and was the precursor to modern France.

The Carolingians ruled France until 987, when Hugh Capet, Duke of France and Count of Paris, was crowned King of France. His descendants, the Direct Capetians, the House of Valois and the House of Bourbon, progressively unified the country through a series of wars and dynastic inheritance. The monarchy reached its height during the 17th century and the reign of Louis XIV. At this time France possessed the largest population in Europe (see Demographics of France) and had tremendous influence over European politics, economy, and culture. French became, and remained for some time, the common language of

diplomacy in International affairs. Much of the Enlightenment occurred in French intellectual circles, and major scientific breakthroughs were achieved by French scientists in the 18th century. In addition, France obtained many overseas possessions in the Americas, Africa and Asia.

Monarchy to republic

The monarchy ruled France until the French Revolution, in 1789. King Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette, were executed, along with thousands of other French citizens. After a series of short-lived governmental schemes, Napoleon Bonaparte seized control of the Republic in 1799, making himself First Consul, and later Emperor of what is now known as the First French Empire (1804–1814). In the course of several wars, his armies conquered most of continental Europe, with members of the Bonaparte family being appointed as monarchs of newly established kingdoms.

Following Napoleon's final defeat in 1815 at the Battle of Waterloo, the French monarchy was re-established, but with new constitutional limitations. In 1830, a civil uprising established the constitutional July Monarchy, which lasted until 1848. The short-lived Second Republic ended in 1852 when Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte proclaimed the Second French Empire. Louis-Napoléon was unseated following defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and his regime was replaced by the Third Republic.

France had colonial possessions, in various forms, since the beginning of the 17th century until the 1960s. In the 19th and 20th centuries, its global overseas colonial empire was the second largest in the world behind the British Empire. At its peak, between 1919 and 1939, the second French colonial empire extended over 12,347,000 square kilometres (4,767,000 sq mi) of land. Including metropolitan France, the total area of land under French sovereignty reached 12,898,000 square kilometres (4,980,000 sq mi) in the 1920s and 1930s, which is 8.6% of the world's land area.

Though ultimately a victor in World War I, France suffered enormous human and material losses that weakened it for decades to come. The 1930s were marked by a variety of social reforms introduced by the Popular Front government. At the start of World War II, France held a series of unsuccessful rescue campaigns in Norway, Belgium and The Netherlands from 1939 to 1940. Upon the May-June 1940 Nazi German blitzkrieg and its Fascist Italian support, France's political leadership disregarded Churchill's proposal of a Franco-British Union and signed the *Second Armistice at Compiègne* surrender on June 22, 1940. The Germans established a puppet regime under Marshal Philippe Pétain known as Vichy France, which pursued a policy of collaboration with Nazi Germany. The regime's opponents formed the Free French Forces outside of France and the French Resistance inside. France was liberated with the joint effort of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Free French Forces and the French resistance in 1944. Soon the Nouvelle Armée Française ("new French army") was established with the massive help of US-built material and equipment, and pursued the fight along the Allies in various battles including the campaign of Italy.

The French Fourth Republic was established after World War II and struggled to maintain its economic and political status as a dominant nation state. France attempted to hold on to its colonial empire, but soon ran into trouble. The half-hearted 1946



Lord Cornwallis' surrender following the Siege of Yorktown. French participation was decisive in this battle, 1781



Eugène Delacroix - *La Liberté guidant le peuple* ("Liberty leading the People"), a symbol of the French Revolution of 1830

attempt at regaining control of French Indochina resulted in the First Indochina War, which ended in French defeat at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Only months later, France faced a new, even harsher conflict in its oldest major colony, Algeria.

The debate over whether or not to keep control of Algeria, then home to over one million European settlers, wracked the country and nearly led to civil war. In 1958, the weak and unstable Fourth Republic gave way to the Fifth Republic, which contained a strengthened Presidency. In the latter role, Charles de Gaulle managed to keep the country together while taking steps to end the war. The Algerian War and Franco-French civil war that resulted in the capital Algiers, was concluded with peace negotiations in 1962 that led to Algerian independence.

In recent decades, France's reconciliation and cooperation with Germany have proved central to the political and economic integration of the evolving European Union, including the introduction of the euro in January 1999. France has been at the forefront of the European Union member states seeking to exploit the momentum of monetary union to create a more unified and capable European Union political, defence, and security apparatus. However, the French electorate voted against ratification of the European Constitutional Treaty in May 2005.

Government

The French Republic is a unitary semi-presidential republic with strong democratic traditions. The constitution of the Fifth Republic was approved by referendum on 28 September 1958. It greatly strengthened the authority of the executive in relation to parliament. The executive branch itself has two leaders: the President of the Republic, who is elected directly by universal adult suffrage for a 5-year term (formerly 7 years) and is the Head of State, and the Government, led by the president-appointed Prime Minister.

The French parliament is a bicameral legislature comprising a National Assembly (*Assemblée Nationale*) and a Senate. The National Assembly deputies represent local constituencies and are directly elected for 5-year terms. The Assembly has the power to dismiss the cabinet, and thus the majority in the Assembly determines the choice of government. Senators are chosen by an electoral college for 6-year terms (originally 9-year terms), and one half of the seats are submitted to election every 3 years starting in September 2008. The Senate's legislative powers are limited; in the event of disagreement between the two chambers, the National Assembly has the final say, except for constitutional laws and *lois organiques* (laws that are directly provided for by the constitution) in some cases. The government has a strong influence in shaping the agenda of Parliament.

French politics are characterised by two politically opposed groupings: one left-wing, centred around the French Socialist Party, and the other right-wing, centred previously around the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and now its successor the Union for a Popular Movement. The executive branch is currently composed mostly of the UPM.

Conventions and notations



- France is the home of the International System of Units (the metric system). The Imperial System is almost completely ignored in France. Some pre-metric units are still used, essentially the *livre* (a unit of weight equal to half a kilogram) and the *quintal* (a unit of weight equal to 100 kilograms).
- In mathematics, France uses the infix notation like most countries. For large numbers the long scale is used. Thus, the French use the word *billion* for what English speakers call a trillion. However, there exists a French word, *milliard*, for what the English speakers call a billion. Thus, despite the use of the long scale, one billion is called *un milliard* ("one milliard") in French, and not *mille millions* ("one thousand million"). It should also be noted that names of numbers above the *milliard* are rarely used. Thus, one trillion will most often be called *mille milliards* ("one thousand milliard") in French, and rarely *un billion*.
- In the French numeral notation, the comma (,) is the Decimal separator, whereas the dot (.) is used between each group of three digits especially for big numbers. A space can also be used to separate each group of three digits especially for small numbers. Thus three thousand five hundred and ten may be written as 3 510 whereas fifteen million five hundred thousand and thirty-two may be written as 15.500.032. In finances the symbol associated to the currency is put after the numbers and not before. For example €25,000.00 is written 25 000,00 € (always with an extra space between the figure and the currency symbol, and often a space between every block of 3 digits).
- Cars are driven on right.
- In computing, if a bit is still called a bit a byte is called an octet (from the Latin root *octo*, meaning "8"). SI prefixes are used.
- 24-hour clock time is used, with h being the separator between hours and minutes (for example 2pm30 is 14h30).
- The all-numeric form for dates is in the order day-month-year, using a slash as the separator (example: 31/12/1992 or 31/12/92).

Law

France uses a civil legal system; that is, law arises primarily from written statutes; judges are not to make law, but merely to interpret it (though the amount of judge interpretation in certain areas makes it equivalent to case law). Basic principles of the rule of law were laid in the Napoleonic Code. In agreement with the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen law should only prohibit actions detrimental to society. As Guy Canivet, first president of the Court of Cassation, wrote about the management of prisons:

Freedom is the rule, and its restriction is the exception; any restriction of Freedom must be provided for by Law and must follow the principles of necessity and proportionality.

That is, Law should lay out prohibitions only if they are needed, and if the inconveniences caused by this restriction do not exceed the inconveniences that the prohibition is supposed to remedy. In practice, of course, this ideal is often lost when laws are made.

French law is divided into two principal areas: private law and public law. Private law includes, in particular, civil law and criminal law. Public law includes, in particular, administrative law and constitutional law. However, in practical terms, French law comprises three principal areas of law: civil law; criminal law and administrative law.

France does not recognise religious law, nor does it recognise religious beliefs or morality as a motivation for the enactment of



The basic principles that the French Republic must respect are found in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

prohibitions. As a consequence, France has long had neither blasphemy laws nor sodomy laws (the latter being abolished in 1791). However "offences against public decency" (*contraires aux bonnes mœurs*) or breach of the peace (*trouble à l'ordre public*) have been used to repress public expressions of homosexuality or street prostitution.

Laws can only address the future and not the past (ex post facto laws are prohibited) ; and to be applicable, laws must be officially published in the *Journal Officiel de la République Française*.

Foreign relations

France is a member of the United Nations and serves as one of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council with veto rights. It is also a member of the WTO, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) , the Indian Ocean Commission (COI). It is an associate member of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and a leading member of the International Francophone Organisation (OIF) of fifty-one fully or partly French-speaking countries. It hosts the headquarters of the OECD, UNESCO, Interpol, Alliance Base and the International Bureau for Weights and Measures. In 1953 France received a request from the United Nations to pick a coat of arms that would represent it internationally. Thus the French emblem was adopted and is currently used on passports.



French foreign policy has been largely shaped by membership of the European Union, of which it was a founding member. In the 1960s, France sought to exclude the British from the organization, seeking to build its own standing in continental Europe. Since the 1990s, France has developed close ties with reunified Germany to become the most influential driving force of the EU, but consequently rivaling the U.K. and limiting the influence of newly-inducted East European nations. France is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, but under President de Gaulle, it excluded itself from the joint military command to avoid the supposed domination of its foreign and security policies by U.S. political and military influence. In the early 1990s, the country drew considerable criticism from other nations for its underground nuclear tests in Polynesia. France vigorously opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq, straining bilateral relations with the U.S. and the U.K. France retains strong political and economic influence in its former African colonies and has supplied economic aid and troops for peace-keeping missions in the Ivory Coast and Chad.

Military

The French armed forces are divided into four branches:

- Armée de Terre (Army)
- Marine Nationale (Navy)
- Armée de l'Air (Air Force)
- Gendarmerie Nationale (A military force which acts as a National Rural Police and as a Military police for the entire French military)



Nuclear aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*

Since the Algerian War, conscription was steadily reduced and was finally suspended in 2001 by Jacques Chirac. The total number of military personnel is approximately 359,000. France spends 2.6% of its GDP on defence, slightly more than the United Kingdom (2.4%) , and is the highest in the European Union where defence spending is generally less than 1.5% of GDP. Together they account for 40% of EU defence spending. About 10% of France's defence budget goes towards its *force de frappe*, or nuclear weapons. A significant part of French military equipment is made in France. Examples include the Rafale fighter, the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier, the Exocet missile, and the Leclerc tank. Some weaponry, like the E-2 Hawkeye or the E-3 Sentry was bought from the United States. Despite withdrawing from the Eurofighter project, France is actively investing in European joint projects such as the Eurocopter Tiger, multipurpose frigates, the UCAV demonstrator nEUROn and the Airbus A400M. France is a major arms seller as most of its arsenal's designs are available for the export market with the notable exception of nuclear powered devices. Some of the French designed equipments are specifically designed for exports like the Franco-Spanish Scorpène class submarines. Some French equipments have been largely modified to fit allied countries' requirements like the Formidable class frigates (based on the La Fayette class) or the Hashmat class submarines (based on the Agosta class submarines).

- Although it includes very competent anti-terrorist units such as the GIGN or the EPIGN the gendarmerie is a military police force which serves for the most part as a rural and general purpose police force. Since its creation the GIGN has taken part in roughly one thousand operations and freed over five-hundred hostages; the Air France Flight 8969's hijacking brought them to the world's attention.
- French intelligence can be divided into two major units: the DGSE (the external agency) and the DST (domestic agency). The latter being part of the police while the former is associated to the army. The DGSE is notorious for the Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior, but it is also known for revealing the most extensive technological spy network uncovered in Europe and the United States to date through the mole Vladimir Vetrov.
- The French "*Force de frappe*" relies on a complete independence. The current French nuclear force consists of four submarines equipped with M45 ballistic missiles. The current *Triomphant* class is currently under deployment to replace the former *Redoutable* class. The M51 will replace the M45 in the future and expand the *Triomphants* firing range. Aside of the submarines the French dissuasion force uses the Mirage 2000N; it is a variant of the Mirage 2000 and thus is designed to deliver nuclear strikes. Other nuclear devices like the Plateau d'Albion's Intercontinental ballistic missiles and the short range Hadès missiles have been disarmed. With 350 nuclear heads stockpiled France is the world's third largest nuclear power.
- The Marine Nationale is regarded as one of the world's most powerful. The professional compendium *flottes de combats*, in its 2006 edition, ranked it world's 6th biggest navy after the American, Russian, Chinese, British and Japanese navies. . It is equipped with the world's only nuclear powered Aircraft Carrier, with the exception of the American navy. Recently Mistral class ships joined the Marine Nationale, the Mistral itself having taken part to operations in Lebanon. For the 2004 centennial of the Entente Cordiale President Chirac announced the Future French aircraft carrier would be jointly designed with Great Britain. The French navy is equipied with the La Fayette class frigates, early examples of stealth ships, and several ships are expected to be retired in the next few years and replaced by more modern ships, examples of future surface ships are the Forbin and the Aquitaine class

frigates. The attack submarines are also part of the Force Océanique Stratégique although they do not carry the nuclear dissuasion, the current class is the Rubis Class and will be replaced in the future by the expected Suffren Class.

- The Armée de Terre employs 133,500 people, it is very famous for the Légion Etrangère though the French special forces aren't the Legion but the Dragons Parachutistes and the Marines Parachutistes. The French assault rifle is the FAMAS and future infantry combat system is the Félin. France uses both tracked and wheeled vehicles to a significant points, examples of wheeled vehicles would be the Caesar or the AMX 10 RC. Although its main battle tank is the Leclerc many older AMX 30 tanks are still operational. It uses the AMX 30 AuF1 for artillery. Finally it is getting equipied with Eurocopter Tigers helicopters.
- The Armée de l'Air is the oldest and first professional air force worldwide. It still today retains a significant capacity. It uses mainly two aircraft fighters: the older Mirage F1 and the more recent Mirage 2000. The later model exists in a ground attack version called the Mirage2000D. The highly modern Rafale is in deployment in both the French air force and navy.

Transportation



A TGV Atlantique.

The railway network of France, which stretches 31,840 kilometres (19,784 mi) is the most extensive in Western Europe. It is operated by the SNCF, and high-speed trains include the Thalys, the Eurostar and TGV, which travels at 320 km/h (200 mph) in commercial use. The Eurostar, along with the Eurotunnel Shuttle, connects with the United Kingdom through the Channel Tunnel. Rail connections exist to all other neighbouring countries in Europe, except Andorra. Intra-urban connections are also well developed with both underground services and tramway services complementing bus services.

There is approximately 893,300 kilometres (555,070 mi) of serviceable roadway in France. The Paris region is enveloped with the most dense network of roads and highways that connect it with virtually all parts of the country. French roads also handle substantial international traffic, connecting with cities in neighboring Belgium, Spain, Andorra, Monaco, Switzerland, Germany and Italy. There is no annual registration fee or road tax; however, motorway usage is through tolls except in the vicinity of

large communes. The new car market is dominated by national brands such as Renault (27% of cars sold in France in 2003) , Peugeot (20.1%) and Citroën (13.5%). Over 70% of new cars sold in 2004 had diesel engines, far more than contained petrol or LPG engines. France possesses the world's tallest road bridge: the Millau Viaduct, and has built many important bridges such as the Pont de Normandie.

There are approximately 478 airports in France, including landing fields. The Charles de Gaulle International Airport located in the vicinity of Paris is the largest and busiest airport in the country, handling the vast majority of popular and commercial traffic of the country and connecting Paris with virtually all major cities across the world. Air France is the national carrier airline, although numerous private airline companies provide domestic and international travel services.

There are ten major ports in France, the largest of which is in Marseille, which also is the largest bordering the Mediterranean Sea. 14,932 kilometres (9,278 mi) of waterways traverse France.

Administrative divisions

France is divided into 26 administrative regions. 22 are in metropolitan France (21 are on the continental part of metropolitan France; one is the territorial collectivity of Corsica), and four are overseas regions. The regions are further subdivided into 100 departments which are numbered (mainly alphabetically). This number is used in postal codes and vehicle number plates amongst others. Four of these departments are found in the overseas regions and are simultaneously overseas regions and overseas departments and are an integral part of France (and the European Union) and thus enjoy a status similar to metropolitan departments. The 100 departments are subdivided into 341 arrondissements which are, in turn, subdivided into 4,032 cantons. These cantons are then divided into 36,680 communes, which are municipalities with an elected municipal council. There also exist 2,588 intercommunal entities grouping 33,414 of the 36,680 communes (i.e. 91.1% of all the communes). Three communes, Paris, Lyon and Marseille are also subdivided into 45 municipal arrondissements.

The regions, departments and communes are all known as territorial collectivities, meaning they possess local assemblies as well as an executive. Arrondissements and cantons are merely administrative divisions. However, this was not always the case. Until 1940, the arrondissements were also territorial collectivities with an elected assembly, but these were suspended by the Vichy regime and definitely abolished by the Fourth Republic in 1946. Historically, the cantons were also territorial collectivities with their elected assemblies.

In addition to the 26 regions and 100 departments, the French Republic also has six overseas collectivities, one *sui generis* collectivity (New Caledonia), and one overseas territory. Overseas collectivities and territories form part of the French Republic, but do not form part of the European Union or its fiscal area. The Pacific territories continue to use the Pacific franc whose value is linked to that of the euro. In contrast, the four overseas regions used the French franc and now use the euro.

France also maintains control over a number of small non-permanently inhabited islands in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean: Bassas da India, Clipperton Island, Europa Island, Glorioso Islands, Juan de Nova Island, Tromelin Island.

Overseas Regions

Overseas departments have the same political status as metropolitan departments.

- Guadeloupe (since 1946)
- Martinique (since 1946)
- French Guiana (since 1946)
- Réunion (since 1946)

Economy



The 22 regions and 96 departments of metropolitan France includes Corsica (*Corse*, lower right). Paris area is expanded (inset at left)

France's economy combines extensive private enterprise (nearly 2.5 million companies registered) with substantial (though declining) government intervention (see dirigisme). The government retains considerable influence over key segments of infrastructure sectors, with majority ownership of railway, electricity, aircraft, and telecommunication firms. It has been gradually relaxing its control over these sectors since the early 1990s. The government is slowly selling off holdings in France Télécom, Air France, as well as the insurance, banking, and defence industries.

A member of the G8 group of leading industrialised countries, it is ranked as the sixth largest economy in the world in 2005, behind the United States, Japan, Germany, The People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom. France joined 11 other EU members to launch the Euro on January 1, 1999, with euro coins and banknotes completely replacing the French franc (₣) in early 2002. According to the OECD, in 2004 France was the world's fifth-largest exporter and the fourth-largest importer of manufactured goods. In 2003, France was the 2nd-largest recipient of foreign direct investment among OECD countries at \$47 billion, ranking behind Luxembourg (where foreign direct investment was essentially monetary transfers to banks located in that country) but above the United States (\$39.9 billion), the United Kingdom (\$14.6 billion), Germany (\$12.9 billion), or Japan (\$6.3 billion). In the same year, French companies invested \$57.3 billion outside of France, ranking France as the second most important outward direct investor in the OECD, behind the United States (\$173.8 billion), and ahead of the United Kingdom (\$55.3 billion), Japan (\$28.8 billion) and Germany (\$2.6 billion).

In the 2005 edition of *OECD in Figures*, the OECD also noted that France leads the G7 countries in terms of productivity (measured as GDP per hour worked). In 2004, the GDP per hour worked in France was \$47.7, ranking France above the United States (\$46.3), Germany (\$42.1), the United Kingdom (\$39.6), or Japan (\$32.5).

Despite figures showing a higher productivity per hour worked than in the US, France's GDP per capita is significantly lower than the US GDP per capita, being in fact comparable to the GDP per capita of the other European countries, which is on average 30% below the US level. The reason for this is that a much smaller percentage of the French population is working compared to the US, which lowers the GDP per capita of France, despite its higher productivity. In fact, France has one of the lowest percentages of its population aged 15-64 years at work among the OECD countries. In 2004, 68.8% of the French population aged 15-64 years was in employment, compared to 80.0% in Japan, 78.9% in the UK, 77.2% in the US, and 71.0% in Germany. This phenomenon is the result of almost thirty years of massive unemployment in France, which has led to three consequences reducing the size of the working population: about 9% of the active population is without a job; students delay as long as possible their entry into labour market; and finally, the French government gives various incentives to workers to retire in their early 50s, though these are now receding.

As many economists have stressed repeatedly over the years, the main issue with the French economy is not an issue of productivity. In their opinion, it is an issue of structural reforms, in order to increase the size of the working population in the overall population. Liberal and Keynesian economists have different answers to that issue. Lower working hours and the reluctance to reform the labour market are mentioned as weak spots of the French economy in the view of the right and lack of government policies fostering social justice by the left. Recent government attempts at adjusting the youth labour market, to combat unemployment, have met with fierce resistance.



The first completed Airbus A380 at the "A380 Reveal" event in Toulouse on 18 January 2005. Airbus is a symbol of the globalisation of the French and European economy



La Défense, Paris is the heart of the French economy.

With 79.1 million foreign tourists in 2006, France is ranked as the first tourist destination in the world, ahead of Spain (55.6 million in 2005) and the United States (49.4 million in 2005). This 79.1 million figure excludes people staying less than 24 hours in France, such as northern Europeans crossing France on their way to Spain or Italy during the Summer. France features cities of high cultural interest (Paris being the foremost), beaches and seaside resorts, ski resorts, and rural regions that many enjoy for their beauty and tranquillity (green tourism). Aside of casual tourism France attracts a lot of religious pilgrims to Lourdes, a town in the Hautes-Pyrénées département, that hosts a few million tourists a year.

France has an important aerospace industry led by the European consortium Airbus, and is the only European power (excluding Russia) to have its own national spaceport (*Centre Spatial Guyanais*). France is also the most energy independent Western country due to heavy investment in nuclear power, which also makes France the smallest producer of carbon dioxide among the seven most industrialised countries in the world. As a result of large investments in nuclear technology, most of the electricity produced in the country is generated by nuclear power plants (78.1% in 2006, up from only 8% in 1973, 24% in 1980, and 75% in 1990).

Large tracts of fertile land, the application of modern technology, and EU subsidies have combined to make France the leading agricultural producer and exporter in Europe. Wheat, poultry, dairy, beef, and pork, as well as an internationally recognised foodstuff and wine industry are primary French agricultural exports. EU agriculture subsidies to France total almost \$14 billion.

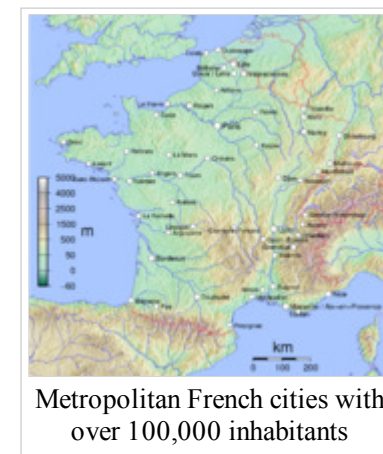
Since the end of the Second World War the government made efforts to integrate more and more with Germany, both economically and politically. Today the two countries form what is often referred to as the "core" countries in favour of greater integration of the European Union.

Demography

With an estimated population of 64 million people, France is the 23rd most populous country in the world. France's largest cities are Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Lille, Toulouse, Nice, and Nantes.

In 2003, France's natural population growth (excluding immigration) was responsible for almost all natural population growth in the European Union. In 2004, population growth was 0.68% and then in 2005 birth and fertility rates continued to increase. The natural increase of births over deaths rose to 299,800 in 2006. The lifetime fertility rate rose to 2.00 in 2007, from 1.92 in 2004.

In 2004, a total of 140,033 people immigrated to France. Of them, 90,250 were from Africa and 13,710 from Europe. In 2005, immigration level fell slightly to 135,890. France is an ethnically diverse nation. According to the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies, it has an estimated 4.9 million foreign-born immigrants, of which 2 million have acquired French citizenship. France is the leading asylum destination in Western Europe with an estimated 50,000 applications in 2005 (a 15% decrease from 2004). The European Union allows free movement between the member states. While the UK (along with Ireland) did not impose restrictions, France put in place controls to curb Eastern European migration.



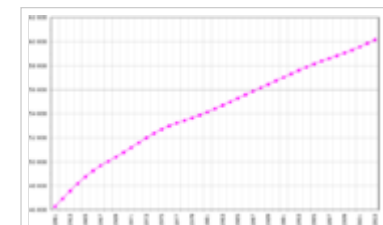


France's legacy: a map of the Francophone world

- native language
- administrative language
- secondary or non-official language
- francophone minorities

A perennial political issue concerns rural depopulation. Over the period 1960-1999 fifteen rural *départements* experienced a decline in population. In the most extreme case, the population of Creuse fell by 24%.

According to Article 2 of the Constitution, French is the sole official language of France since 1992. This makes France the only Western European nation (excluding microstates) to have only one officially recognised language. However, 77 regional languages are also spoken, in metropolitan France as well as in the overseas departments and territories. Until recently, the French government and state school system discouraged the use of any of these languages, but they are now taught to varying degrees at some schools. Other languages, such as Portuguese, Italian, Maghrebi Arabic and several Berber languages are spoken by immigrants.



Demography evolution from 1961 up to 2003 (according to the FAO, 2005). Population in thousands of inhabitants

Religion

France is a secular country as freedom of religion is a constitutional right, although some religious doctrines such as Scientology, Children of God, the Unification Church, and the Order of the Solar Temple are considered cults. According to a January 2007 poll by the Catholic World News: 51% identified as being Catholics, 31% identified as being agnostics or atheists. (*Another poll concluded that 27% identified as being atheists.*) , 10% identified as being from other religions or being without opinion, 4% identified as Muslim, 3% identified as Protestant, 1% identified as Jewish.

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 34% of French citizens responded that "they believe there is a god", whereas 27% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 33% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

In France, 32% declare themselves to be atheists, with an additional 32% declaring themselves agnostic. The current Jewish community in France numbers around 600,000 according to the World Jewish Congress and is largest in Europe. Estimates of the number of Muslims in France vary widely. According to the 1999 French census returns, there were only 3.7 million people of "possible Muslim faith" in France (6.3% of the total population). There are an estimated 200,000 to 1 million illegal immigrants in France.

The concept of *laïcité* exists in France and because of this the French government is legally prohibited from recognising any *religion* (except for legacy statutes like those of military chaplains and Alsace-Moselle). Instead, it merely recognises *religious organisations*, according to formal legal criteria that do not address religious doctrine. Conversely, religious organisations should refrain from intervening in policy-making. Tensions occasionally erupt about alleged discrimination against minorities, especially against Muslims (see Islam in France).

Public health

The French healthcare system was ranked first worldwide by the World Health Organization in 1997. It is almost entirely free for people affected by chronic

diseases (Affections de longues durées) such as cancers, AIDS or Cystic Fibrosis. Average life expectancy at birth is 79.73 years.

As of 2003, there are approximately 120,000 inhabitants of France who are living with AIDS

France, as all EU countries, is under an EU directive to reduce sewage discharge to sensitive areas. As of 2006, France is only 40% in compliance with this directive, placing it as one of the lowest achieving countries within the EU with regard to this wastewater treatment standard .

Culture

- Académie française
- French art
- Cuisine of France
- Cinema of France
- Music of France
- Social structure of France
- Education in France
- Holidays in France
- List of French people

Image:Descartes.jpg
Cartesianism is prominent in France

Architecture

There is, technically speaking, no architecture named *French Architecture*, although that has not always been true. Gothic Architecture's old name was *French Architecture* (or Opus Francigenum). The term "Gothic" appeared later as a stylistic insult and was widely adopted. Northern France is the home of some of the most important Gothic cathedrals and basilicas, the first of these being the Saint Denis Basilica (used as the royal necropolis) ; other majestic and important French Gothic cathedrals are Notre-Dame de Chartres and Notre-Dame d'Amiens. The kings were crowned in another important Gothic church: Notre-Dame de Reims. Aside from churches, Gothic Architecture had been used for many religious palaces, the most important one being the Palais des Papes in Avignon.

During the Middle Ages, fortified castles were built by feudal nobles to mark their powers against their rivals. When King Philip II took Rouen from King John, for example, he demolished the ducal castle to build a bigger one. Fortified cities were also common, unfortunately most French castles did not survive the passage of time. This is why Richard Lionheart's castle - Château-Gaillard- was demolished as well as the Château de Lusignan. Some important French castles that survived are Chinon Castle, Château d'Angers, the massive Château de Vincennes and the so called Cathar castles.

Before the appearance of this architecture France had been using romanesque architecture like most of Western Europe (with the exception of the Iberian Peninsula, which used Moorsque architecture). Some of the greatest examples of Romanesque Churches in France are the Saint Sernin Basilica in Toulouse and the remains of the Cluniac Abbey (largely destroyed during the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars).

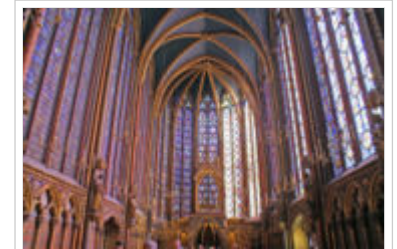
The end of the Hundred Years' War marked an important stage in the evolution of French architecture. It was the time of the French Renaissance and several artists from Italy and Spain were invited to the French court; many residential palaces, Italian-inspired, were built, mainly in the Loire Valley. Such residential castles were the Château de Chambord, the Château de Chenonceau, or the Château d'Amboise. Following the renaissance and the end of the Middle Ages, Baroque Architecture replaced the gothic one. However, in France, baroque architecture found a greater success in the secular domain than in the religious one. In the secular domain the Palace of Versailles has many baroque features. Jules Hardouin Mansart can be said to be the most influential French architect of the baroque style, with his very famous baroque dome of Les Invalides. Some of the most impressive provincial baroque architecture is found in places that were not yet French such as the Place Stanislas in Nancy. On the military architectural side Vauban designed some of the most efficient fortresses of Europe and became a very influential military architect.

After the French revolution the Republicans favoured Neoclassicism although neoclassicism was introduced in France prior to the revolution with such building as the Parisian Pantheon or the Capitole de Toulouse. Built during the French Empire the Arc de Triomphe and Sainte Marie-Madeleine represent this trend the best.

Under Napoleon III a new wave of urbanism and architecture was given birth. If some very extravagant buildings such as the neo-baroque Palais Garnier were built, the urban planing of the time was very organised and rigorous. For example Baron Haussmann rebuilt Paris. These times also saw a strong Gothic-Revival trend across Europe, in France the associated architect was Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. In the late 19th century Gustave Eiffel designed many bridges (like the Garabit viaduct) and remains one of the most influential bridge designer of his time, although he is best remembered for the Eiffel Tower.



Notre-Dame de Paris - maybe the most famous Gothic cathedral.



Saint Louis' Sainte Chapelle represents the French impact on religious architecture.

In the 20th century the Swiss Architect Le Corbusier designed several buildings in France. More recently French architects have combined both modern and old architectural styles. The Louvre Pyramid is a good example of modern architecture added to an older building. Certainly the most difficult buildings to integrate within French cities are skyscrapers, as they are visible from afar. France's largest financial district is La Defense, where a significant number of skyscrapers are located. Other massive buildings that are a challenge to integrate into their environment are large bridges; a good example of the way this has been done is the Millau Viaduct. Some famous modern French architects include Jean Nouvel or Paul Andreu.

Literature

French literature tracks its origins back to the Middle Ages. French was not yet a uniform language but was divided into several dialects (mainly: northern *oïl*, southern *oc* dialects). Each writer used his own spelling and grammar. Several French mediaeval texts are not signed- such is the case with Tristan and Iseult, or with Lancelot and the Holy Grail, among many others. A significant part of mediaeval French poetry and literature was inspired by the Matter of France, such as the The Song of Roland and the various Chansons de geste. The "Roman de Renart" was written in 1175 by Perrout de Saint Cloude, and told the story of the medieval character Reynard ('the Fox') ; it is also a popular example of early French story-telling.

In spite of the anonymous character of many French writings of the Middle-Ages, some medieval writers became quite famous: Chrétien de Troyes, for instance. '*Oc*' culture was also quite influent in the Middle Ages. An early example of a vernacular poet writing in Occitan was Duke William IX of Aquitaine.

About the history of the French language, one of the most important writer is unquestionably François Rabelais. Modern French took a great deal from his style. His most famous work is quite probably Gargantua and Pantagruel. Later on, Jean de La Fontaine wrote his famous "Fables", a collection of short stories, written in verse, and usually ending with a "moral teaching".

During the 17th century Pierre Corneille, Jean Racine and Molière's plays, Blaise Pascal and René Descartes's moral and philosophical books deeply influenced the aristocracy leaving an important heritage for the authors of the following decades.

But it is most certainly in the 18th and 19th centuries which French literature and poetry reach its highest point. The 18th century saw the writings of such huge writers, essayists and moralists as Voltaire, Denis Diderot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. As concerns French children's literature in those times, Charles Perrault was probably the most prolific writer, with stories such as: " Puss in Boots", " Cinderella", " Sleeping Beauty" and " Bluebeard".

The 19th century saw the birth of many French novels of world renown; Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and Jules Verne are probably among the most famous among these writers, both in and outside of France, with such highly popular novels such as The Three Musketeers, The Count of Monte-Cristo, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, or The Hunchback of Notre-Dame. Other 19th century fiction writers include Emile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, Théophile Gautier and Stendhal.

Symbolist poetry of the turn of the 19th century also proved to be a strong movement in French poetry, with artists such as Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine



Molière is the most played author in the Comédie-Française

and Stéphane Mallarmé.

Now also famous outside of France (whereas they used to be mostly known inside of France) are Louis-Ferdinand Céline and Albert Camus. One of the most well-known 20th century writers is Antoine de St.-Exupéry, whose " Little Prince" has been translated and become a bestseller in a great many countries, remaining popular both with children and adults.

Nowadays, the Prix Goncourt (first given in 1903) rewards "the best and most imaginative prose work of the year". It has quite probably become France's best-known contemporary literary award.

Sport

Popular sports include football (soccer), both codes of rugby football and in certain regions basketball and handball. France has hosted events such as the 1938 and 1998 FIFA World Cups, and hosted the 2007 Rugby Union World Cup. Stade de France in Paris is the largest stadium in France and was the venue for the 1998 FIFA World Cup final, and hosted the 2007 Rugby World Cup final in October 2007. France also hosts the annual Tour de France, the most famous road bicycle race in the world. France is also famous for its 24 Hours of Le Mans sports car endurance race held in the Sarthe department. Several major tennis tournaments take place in France, including the Paris Masters and the French Open, one of the four Grand Slam tournaments.

France is the country of creation of the Modern Olympic Games, due to a French aristocrat, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, in the end of the 19th century. After Athens in reference to the Greek origin of the ancient Olympic Games, Paris hosted the second Games in 1900. Paris was also the first home of the IOC, before moving to Lausanne for more neutrality. During the Modern era, France has hosted the Olympic Games five times: two Summer Games (1900 and 1924, both in Paris) and three Winter Games (1924 in Chamonix -the first edition-, 1968 in Grenoble and 1992 in Albertville).

Both the national football team and the national rugby union team are nicknamed "*Les Bleus*" in reference to the team's shirt colour as well as the national French tricolor flag. The football team is regarded as one of the most skillful teams in the world with one FIFA World Cup victory in 1998, one FIFA World Cup second place in 2006, and two European Championships in 1984 and 2000. The top national club competition is the Ligue 1. Rugby is very popular, particularly so in the southwest of France and Paris. The national team have competed at every Rugby World Cup, and take part in the annual Six Nations Championship. The French rugby team has never won a World Cup (despite having reached the semi-finals on all but one occasion, and playing in two finals) , yet it has won sixteen Six Nations Championship, including eight grand slams. They are considered one of the top teams in the world. The top national club competition is the Top 14, widely seen as the most competitive in the world.

French comic books



Tour de France

French comic books and Francophone Belgian ones are often discussed together. These two countries share a long lasting tradition in comics and comic books. In French they are called *bandes dessinées*, or more simply *BD*. It is important to note the French term does not indicate the subject matter. In common English usage the term comics is often associated to what is fun, or *funnies* while the French language comics are often referred as the *le neuvième art* (the ninth art). In the USA several French comics would be seen as Graphic novels rather than simply comics. The famous *irreductible Gaulois* Asterix is the subject of the most famous French comics outside France itself. Although intended for children at first, this BD includes many subtleties and word games that require some culture to be understood. The Black Moon Chronicles were also quite important and inspired a generation of Francophone role-players. Olivier Ledroit who drew albums of the Black Moon Chronicles designed characters and backgrounds for the Heroes of Might and Magic V video game. A new artistic movement called La Nouvelle Manga is trying to merge the Franco-Belgian style with the Japanese one, as manga are very popular in France and France had an early manga culture.

Image:Asterix the
gaul.jpg
Asterix the *gaulois*, a
famous French comics
character

French comics are quite present in science-fiction and remain influential in the domain. Jean Giraud, Philippe Druillet and Enki Bilal (Serbian born) are examples of French SF writers. Enki Bilal is famous most notably for the Nikopol Trilogy which has been made a movie named Immortel (Ad Vitam). Druillet has been named the *space architect* because of his backdrops of gigantic structures inspired by Art Nouveau, Indian temples and Gothic cathedrals. Jean Giraud, also known as Moebius, is famous outside France for his works on movies such as: Tron, The Abyss, Willow and The Fifth Element and his comic The Incal. Jean Giraud and Philippe Druillet worked together several times and founded Métal Hurlant, a magazine specialised in science-fiction published as Heavy Metal in the USA. There are many others important artists in France like Thierry Cailleau who wrote Aquablue who did not achieve fame outside of their homeland.

Foreign comics are often well received within France. Several Belgian comics met great success in France such as Blake and Mortimer, XIII or The Adventures of Tintin. As a consequence French and Belgian artists often worked together to produce comics. An example would be Blueberry by Jean-Michel Charlier and Jean Giraud. The Italian artist Hugo Pratt found a large audience with the Corto Maltese comics; Corto Maltese's success in France was such that it was made into several animated movies by Canal+. Manga is also very influential in France.

Marianne

Marianne is a symbol of the French Republic. She is an allegorical figure of liberty and the Republic and first appeared at the time of the French Revolution. The earliest representations of Marianne are of a woman wearing a Phrygian cap. The origins of the name Marianne are unknown, but Marie-Anne was a very common first name in the 18th century. Anti-revolutionaries of the time derisively called her La Gueuse (the Commoner). It is believed that revolutionaries from the South of France adopted the Phrygian cap as it symbolised liberty, having been worn by freed slaves in both Greece and Rome. Mediterranean seamen and convicts manning the galleys also wore a similar type of cap.

Under the Third Republic, statues, and especially busts, of Marianne began to proliferate, particularly in town halls. She was represented in several different manners, depending on whether the aim was to emphasise her revolutionary nature or her "wisdom". Over time, the Phrygian cap was felt to be too seditious, and was replaced by a diadem or a crown. In recent times, famous French women have been used as the model for those busts. Recent ones include Sophie Marceau, and Laetitia Casta. She also features on everyday articles such as postage stamps and coins.



Images of France (Metropolitan France + Overseas territories of France)

International rankings

- Total GDP, 2005: 6th (out of 180) (World Bank data)
- Total value of foreign trade (imports and exports) , 2002: 4th (out of 185)
- Reporters Without Borders world-wide press freedom index 2005: Rank 30 out of 167 countries
- Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2006 - 18th of 163 countries

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Georgia (country)

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Georgia (Georgian: საქართველო, transliterated as *Sakartvelo*) is a Eurasian country, chiefly located in the South Caucasus, at the juncture of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. Georgia borders four countries: Turkey to the southwest, Russia to the north, Armenia to the south, and Azerbaijan to the east. In addition, there is a western coastline on the Black Sea. Georgia's population is over 4.3 million, nearly 84% of which are ethnic Georgians (2002).

Ancient Georgia was the site of the kingdoms of Colchis and Iberia. The latter, one of the first countries in the world to adopt Christianity as an official religion early in the 4th century, subsequently provided a nucleus around which the medieval Kingdom of Georgia was formed in the 11th century. After a period of political, economic and cultural flourishing, this kingdom went in decline in the 13th century and eventually fragmented into several kingdoms and principalities in the 16th century. The three subsequent centuries of Ottoman and Persian hegemony over these entities were followed by a piecemeal absorption into the Russian Empire in the course of the 19th century. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Georgia had a brief period of independence as a Democratic Republic (1918-1921), which was terminated by the Red Army invasion of Georgia. Georgia became part of the Soviet Union in 1922 and regained its independence in 1991. Early post-Soviet years was marked by a civil unrest and economic crisis. Georgia began to gradually stabilize in 1995, and achieved more effective functioning of state institutions following a bloodless change of power in the so-called Rose Revolution of 2003. However, Georgia continues to suffer from the unresolved secessionist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The relations with Russia remain tense over these issues as well as Georgia's aspiration of NATO membership.

Georgia is a representative democracy, organized as a secular, unitary, semi-presidential republic. It is currently a member of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the World Trade Organization, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and GUAM. The country seeks to join NATO and, in the longer term, accession to the European Union.

Etymology

<p>საქართველო Sakartvelo Georgia</p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p>Motto: ძალა ერთობაშია "Strength is in Unity"</p>	
<p>Anthem: " თავისუფლება" "Freedom"</p>	
	



St George slaying the Dragon. 15th century cloisonné enamel on gold. (National Art Museum of Georgia)

Georgians call themselves *Kartvelebi* (ქართველები), their land *Sakartvelo* (საქართველო), and their language *Kartuli* (ქართული). According to legend, the ancestor of the Kartvelian people was Kartlos, the great grandson of the Biblical Japheth. Ancient Greeks (Strabo, Herodotus, Plutarch, Homer, etc.) and Romans (Titus Livius, Cornelius Tacitus, etc.) referred to early eastern Georgians as Iberians (*Iberoi* in some Greek sources) and western Georgians as Colchians.

The origin of the name Georgia is still disputed and has been explained in the following ways:

1. Linking it semantically to Greek and Latin roots (respectively, γεωργος "tiller of the land" and georgicus "agricultural")
2. Its derivation from the name of St. George. At least, popularity of the cult of Saint George in Georgia influenced the spread of the term.
3. Under various Persian empires (536 BC-AD 638), Georgians were called Gurjhān (Gurzhan/Gurjan), or "Gurj/Gurzh people." The early

Islamic/Arabic sources spelled the name Kurz/Gurz and the country Gurjistan (see Baladhuri, Tabari, Jayhani, Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, etc.). This also could evolve or at least contribute to the later name of Georgia.

The terms Georgia and Georgians appeared in Western Europe in numerous medieval annals including that of Crusaders and later in the official documents and letters of the Florentine de' Medici family. Jacques de Vitry and English traveler, Sir John Mandeville, stated that Georgians are called *Georgian* because they especially revere and worship Saint George. Notably, the country recently adopted the five-cross flag, featuring the Saint George's Cross; it has been argued that the flag was used in Georgia since the 5th century.

History

The territory of modern-day Georgia has been continuously inhabited since the early Stone Age. The classic period saw the rise of the early Georgian states of Colchis and Iberia. The proto-Georgian tribes first appear in written history in the 12th century BC. Archaeological finds and references in ancient sources reveal elements of early political and state formations characterized by advanced metallurgy and goldsmith techniques that date back to the 7th century BC and beyond. In the 4th century BC a unified kingdom of Georgia - an early example of advanced state organization under one king and the hierarchy

Capital (and largest city)	Tbilisi
Official languages	Georgian ¹
Demonym	Georgian
Government	Unitary semi-presidential republic
 - President of Georgia	Mikheil Saakashvili
 - Prime Minister	Lado Gurgenzidze
Consolidation	
 - Kingdom of Georgia	1008
 - Democratic Republic of Georgia	May 26, 1918
 - Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic	February 25, 1921
 - Independence from the Soviet Union	
 Declared	April 9, 1991
 Finalized	December 25, 1991
Area	
 - Total	69,700 km ² (121st) 26,916 sq mi
Population	
 - 2008 estimate	4,630,841 ² (115th)
 - Density	66/km ² (132) 172/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
 - Total	\$20.67 billion (117th)
 - Per capita	\$4,400 (112th)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.755 (medium) (

of aristocracy, was established.



Tondo depicting Saint Mamas from the Gelati Monastery, 14th–15th centuries

Christianity was declared the state religion as early as AD 337 proving a great stimulus to literature, arts and the unification of the country. As a crossroad between Christian and Islamic traditions, Georgia experienced the dynamic exchange between these two worlds which culminated in a true renaissance around 12-13th centuries AD.

This early Georgian renaissance, which preceded its European analogue, was characterized by the flourishing of romantic- chivalric tradition, breakthroughs in philosophy, and an array of political innovations in society and state organization, including religious and ethnic tolerance. The Golden age of Georgia left a legacy of great cathedrals, romantic poetry and literature, and the epic poem " The Knight in the Panther's Skin". This

Golden Age was interrupted at its peak by the Mongol Invasion in the 13th century AD. Throughout the next six centuries, Georgia experienced repeated invasions by Persians and Turks, resulting in the disintegration of the state into several small

kingdoms. Under this climate of insecurity, in 1783 Georgia signed the Treaty of Georgievsk with the Russian Empire, placing the eastern Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti under the Russian patronage. Despite Russia's commitment to defend Georgia, it rendered no assistance when the Turks invaded in 1785 and again in 1795. This period culminated in the 1801 Russian annexation of remaining Georgian lands and the deposing of the Bagrationi dynasty.

A few decades later, Georgian society produced a modernist nationalistic elite which united Georgian society around the dream of the restoration of their once glorious state. In 1918, this dream was fulfilled as the Democratic Republic of Georgia was established. The republic was short-lived, as in 1921 Georgia was invaded and occupied by Bolsheviks eventually being incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia declared its independence in 1991, soon to be embroiled in a civil war and subsequent severe economic hardships. The bloodless Rose Revolution of 2003 installed a new, pro- Western reformist government that aspired to join NATO and attempted to bring the secessionist territories (Abkhazia and South Ossetia lost in the civil war and de facto independent ever since) back under Georgia's control. These efforts resulted in severe deterioration of relations with Russia, fuelled also by Russia's open assistance and support to the two secessionist areas. Russian military bases (dating back to Soviet era) in Georgia were evacuated, with the last remaining base in Batumi handed over to Georgia in 2007.

Georgia in antiquity

	95th)
Currency	Lari (ლ) (GEL)
Time zone	UTC (UTC+4)
Internet TLD	.ge
Calling code	+995
<p>¹ Also Abkhaz within the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia.</p> <p>² From CIA World Factbook. Population figure excludes those parts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that are not controlled by the Government of Georgia.</p>	

The two early Georgian kingdoms of late antiquity, known to ancient Greeks and Romans as Iberia (Georgian: იბერია) (in the east of the country) and Colchis (Georgian: კოლხეთი) (in the west), were among the first nations in the region to adopt Christianity (in AD 337, or in AD 319 as recent research suggests.).

In Greek Mythology, Colchis was the location of the Golden Fleece sought by Jason and the Argonauts in Apollonius Rhodius' epic tale *Argonautica*. The incorporation of the Golden Fleece into the myth may have derived from the local practice of using fleeces to sift gold dust from rivers. In the last centuries of the pre-Christian era, the area, in the form of the kingdom of Kartli-Iberia, was strongly influenced by Greece to the west and Persia to the east. After the Roman Empire completed its conquest of the Caucasus region in 66 B.C., the kingdom was a Roman client state and ally for nearly 400 years. In AD 330, King Marian III's acceptance of Christianity ultimately tied the kingdom to the neighboring Byzantine Empire, which exerted a strong cultural influence for several centuries.

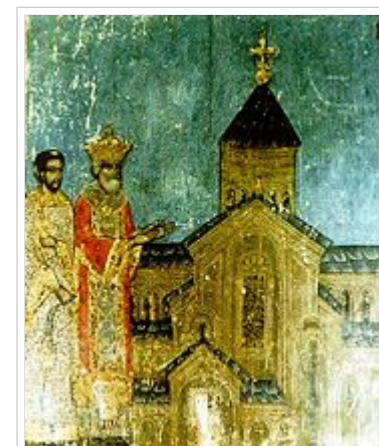
Known to its natives as Egrisi or Lazica, Colchis was often the battlefield and buffer-zone between the rival powers of Persia and Byzantine Empire, with the control of the region shifting hands back and forth several times. The early kingdoms disintegrated into various feudal regions by the early Middle Ages. This made it easy for Arabs to conquer Georgia in the 7th century. The rebellious regions were liberated and united into a unified Georgian Kingdom at the beginning of the 11th century. Starting in the 12th century AD, the rule of Georgia extended over a significant part of the Southern Caucasus, including the northeastern parts and almost the entire northern coast of what is now Turkey.

Although Arabs captured the capital city of Tbilisi in AD 645, Kartli-Iberia retained considerable independence under local Arab rulers. In AD 813, the prince Ashot I also known as Ashot Kurapatat became the first of the Bagrationi family to rule the kingdom: Ashot's reign began a period of nearly 1,000 years during which the Bagrationi, as the house was known, ruled at least part of what is now the republic.

Western and eastern Georgia were united under Bagrat V (r. 1027-72). In the next century, David IV (called the Builder, r. 1099-1125) initiated the Georgian golden age by driving the Turks from the country and expanding Georgian cultural and political influence southward into Armenia and eastward to the Caspian Sea.



Ancient Georgian Kingdoms of Colchis and Iberia



Iberian King Mirian III established Christianity in Georgia as the official state religion in 327 AD



Kingdom of Georgia at peak of its military dominance, 1184-1225

Medieval Georgia

The Georgian Kingdom reached its zenith in the 12th to early 13th centuries. This period has been widely termed as Georgia's Golden Age or Georgian Renaissance during the reign of David the Builder and Queen Tamar. The revival of the Georgian Kingdom was short-lived however, in 1226 Tbilisi was captured by Mingburnu and the Kingdom was eventually subjugated by the Mongols in 1236. Thereafter, different local rulers fought for their independence from central Georgian rule, until the total disintegration of the Kingdom in the 15th century. Neighbouring kingdoms exploited the situation and from the 16th century, the Persian Empire and the Ottoman Empire subjugated the eastern and western regions of Georgia, respectively.

The rulers of regions which remained partly autonomous organized rebellions on various occasions. Subsequent Persian and Ottoman invasions further weakened local kingdoms and regions. As a result of wars the population of Georgia was reduced to 250,000 inhabitants at one point.

Within the Russian Empire



King George XI

In 1783, Russia and the eastern Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti signed the Treaty of Georgievsk, according to which Kartli-Kakheti received protection by Russia. This, however, did not prevent Tbilisi from being sacked by the Persians in 1795.

On December 22, 1800, Tsar Paul I of Russia, at the alleged request of the Georgian King George XII, signed the proclamation on the incorporation of Georgia (Kartli-Kakheti) within the Russian Empire, which was finalized by a decree on January 8, 1801, and confirmed by Tsar Alexander I on September 12, 1801. The Georgian envoy in Saint Petersburg reacted with a note of protest that was presented to the Russian vice-chancellor Prince Kurakin. In May 1801, Russian General Carl Heinrich Knorring dethroned the Georgian heir to the throne David Batonishvili and instituted a government headed by General Ivan Petrovich Lasarev.

The Georgian nobility did not accept the decree until April 1802 when General Knorring compassed the nobility in Tbilisi's Sioni Cathedral and forced them to take an oath on the Imperial Crown of Russia. Those who disagreed were arrested temporarily.

In the summer of 1805, Russian troops on the Askerani River near Zagam defeated the Persian army and saved Tbilisi from conquest.



Ilya Chavchavadze, leader of the 1860s national revival



Prince Kakutsa Cholokashvili leader of the anti-Bolshevik uprising in August of 1924, venerated as national hero of Georgia

In February 1921 Georgia was attacked by the Red Army. The Georgian army was defeated and the Social-Democrat government fled the country. On February 25, 1921 the Red Army entered capital Tbilisi and installed a puppet communist government led by Georgian Bolshevik Filipp Makharadze. Nevertheless the Soviet rule was firmly established only after the 1924 revolt was brutally suppressed. Georgia was incorporated into the Transcaucasian SFSR uniting Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The TSFSR was disaggregated into its component elements in 1936 and Georgia became the Georgian SSR.

The Georgian-born communist radical Ioseb Jughashvili, better known by his nom de guerre *Stalin* (from the Russian word for steel: сталь) was prominent among the Russian Bolsheviks, who came to power in the Russian Empire after the October Revolution in 1917. Stalin was to rise to the highest position of the Soviet state.

From 1941 to 1945, during World War II, almost 700,000 Georgians fought as Red Army soldiers against Nazi Germany. (A number also fought with the German army). About 350,000 Georgians died in the battlefields of the Eastern Front. As during this period the Chechen, Ingush, Karachay and the Balkarian peoples from the Northern Caucasus, were deported to Siberia for alleged collaboration with the Nazis and their respective autonomous republics were abolished, the Georgian SSR was briefly granted some of their territory, until 1957.

The Dissidental movement for restoration of Georgian statehood started to gain popularity in the 1960s. Among the Georgian dissidents, two of the most prominent activists were Merab Kostava and Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Dissidents were heavily persecuted by Soviet government and their activities were harshly suppressed.

Post-Soviet independence

On April 9, 1989, a peaceful demonstration in the Georgian capital Tbilisi ended in a massacre in which several people were killed by Soviet troops. Before the October 1990 elections to the national assembly, the *Umaghlesi Sabcho* (Supreme Council) — the first polls in the USSR held on a formal multi-party basis — the political landscape was reshaped again. While the more radical groups boycotted the elections and convened an alternative forum (National Congress), another part of the anticommunist opposition united into the Round Table—Free Georgia (RT-FG) around the former dissidents like Merab Kostava and Zviad Gamsakhurdia. The latter won the elections by a clear margin, with 155 out of 250 parliamentary seats, whereas the ruling Communist Party (CP) received only 64 seats. All other parties failed to get over the 5%-threshold and were thus allotted only some single-member constituency seats.

On April 9, 1991, shortly before the collapse of the USSR, Georgia declared independence. On May 26, 1991, Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected as a first President of independent Georgia. However, he was soon deposed in a bloody coup d'état, from December 22, 1991 to January 6, 1992. The coup was instigated by part of the National Guards and a paramilitary organization called " Mkhedrioni". The country became embroiled in a bitter civil war



Georgian Statehood

- Kingdom of Iberia
- Kingdom of Colchis
- Kingdom of Lazica-Egrisi
- Unified Georgian Kingdom
- Partitions
 - Kingdom of Tao-Klarjeti
 - Kingdom of Abkhazia
 - Kingdom of Hereti
 - Kingdom of Kakheti

which lasted almost until 1995. Eduard Shevardnadze returned to Georgia in 1992 and joined the leaders of the coup — Kitovani and Ioseliani — to head a triumvirate called the "State Council".

In 1995, Shevardnadze was officially elected as a president of Georgia. At the same time, two regions of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, quickly became embroiled in disputes with local separatists that led to widespread inter-ethnic violence and wars. Supported by Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia achieved de facto independence from Georgia. More than 250,000 Georgians were ethnically cleansed from Abkhazia by Abkhaz separatists and North Caucasians volunteers, (including Chechens) in 1992-1993. More than 25,000 Georgians were expelled from Tskhinvali as well, and many Ossetian families were forced to abandon their homes in the Borjomi region and move to Russia.

In 2003, Shevardnadze (who won reelection in 2000) was deposed by the Rose Revolution, after Georgian opposition and international monitors asserted that the November 2 parliamentary elections were marred by fraud. The revolution was led by Mikheil Saakashvili, Zurab Zhvania and Nino Burjanadze, former members and leaders of Shavarnadze's ruling party. Mikheil Saakashvili was elected as President of Georgia in 2004.

Following the Rose Revolution, a series of reforms was launched to strengthen the country's military and economic capabilities. The new government's efforts to reassert the Georgian authority in the southwestern autonomous republic of Ajaria led to a major crisis early in 2004. Success in Ajaria encouraged Saakashvili to intensify his efforts, but without success, in the breakaway South Ossetia.

- Kingdom of Kartli
- Kingdom of Imereti
- Democratic Republic of Georgia
- Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic
- **Republic of Georgia**

Government and politics



Georgian troops in Iraq, 26 May 2006

Following a crisis involving allegations of ballot fraud in the 2003 parliamentary elections, Eduard Shevardnadze resigned as president on November 23, 2003, in the bloodless Rose Revolution. The interim president was the speaker of the outgoing parliament (whose replacement was annulled), Nino Burjanadze. On January 4, 2004 Mikheil Saakashvili, leader of the United National Movement won the country's presidential election and was inaugurated on January 25. Fresh parliamentary elections were held on March 28 where NMD secured the vast majority of the seats (with ca. 75% of the votes) with only one other party reaching the 7% threshold (the Rightist Opposition with ca. 7.5%). The vote is believed to have been one of the freest ever held in independent Georgia although an upsurge of tension between the central government and the Ajarian leader Aslan Abashidze affected the elections in this region. Despite recognizing progress the OSCE noted the tendency to misuse state administration resources in favour of the ruling party.

The tension between the Georgian government and that of Ajaria grew increasingly after the elections until late April. Climaxing on May 1 when Abashidze responded to military maneuvers held by Georgia near the region with having the three bridges connecting Ajaria and the rest of Georgia over the Choloki River

blown up. On May 5, Abashidze was forced to flee Georgia as mass demonstrations in Batumi called for his resignation and Russia increased their pressure by

deploying Security Council secretary Igor Ivanov.

On February 3, 2005, Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania allegedly died of carbon monoxide poisoning in an apparent gas leak at the home of Raul Usupov, deputy governor of Kvemo Kartli region. Later, Zhvania's close friend and a long-time ally, Finance Minister Zurab Nougaideli was appointed for the post by President Saakashvili.

Since coming to power in 2004, Saakashvili has boosted spending on the country's armed forces and increased its overall size to around 45,000. Of that figure, 12,000 have been trained in advanced techniques by U.S. military instructors. Some of these troops have been stationed in Iraq as part of the international coalition in the region, serving in Baqubah and the Green Zone of Baghdad. In May 2005, the 13th "Shavnabada" Light Infantry Battalion became the first full battalion to serve outside of Georgia. This unit was responsible for two checkpoints to the Green Zone, and provided security for the Iraqi Parliament. In October 2005, the unit was replaced by the 21st Infantry Battalion. Soldiers of the 13th "Shavnabada" Light Infantry Battalion wear the "combat patches" of the American unit they served under, the Third Infantry Division.

The Georgian government claims to have restored "constitutional order" in the Upper Kodori Gorge - The sole Georgia-controlled part of breakaway region Abkhazia.

Georgia has in the past few years significantly reduced corruption. Transparency International ranked Georgia at 79th in the world in its 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index, giving it a score of 2.8 (with number 10 being considered the best possible score). This is a significant improvement on Georgia's 2005 and 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, where it was rated joint 130th and joint 99th, respectively. On November 7, 2007, during a period of mass protests, President Saakashvili declared Tbilisi to be in a state of emergency. There had been massive demonstrations and protests by the civil opposition. The opposition has been demanding the resignation of President Saakashvili. The Georgian police used teargas, batons, water cannons and high tech acoustic weapons to clear the streets of Tbilisi. Later the same day, the President declared a state of emergency in the whole country of Georgia lasting for 15 days. The Russian government denies accusations of being involved or of interfering in the situation. President Saakashvili rejected all demands that he resign his position, but announced early presidential elections to be held in January 2008, effectively cutting his term in office by a year.

On November 16, 2007, Prime Minister of Georgia Zurab Noghaideli announced his resignation due to poor health conditions. Noghaideli underwent heart operation in April 2007 at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston, USA which was led by the leading US surgeon Dr. Charles Frazier.

President Saakashvili invited Vladimer Gurgeniidze, MBA holder from Emory University, USA and former business executive, to succeed Noghaideli on the position of the PM on the same day. Lado Gurgeniidze was formally approved on the position and granted the trust of the Parliament of Georgia on 22 November 2007. Gurgeniidze implemented only two changes in the Cabinet of Georgia so far, replacing Alexandre Lomaia, the former Minister for Education and Science and new Secretary of National Security Council with Maia Miminoshvili, former Head of the National Assessment and Examination Centre (NAEC). Prime Minister also invited Koba Subeliani, former Head of Municipal Accomplishment Service to succeed Giorgi Kheviashvili, former Minister for Refugees and Accommodation. New Prime Minister and two Ministers Koba Subeliani and Maia Miminoshvili were approved on their positions on 22 November 2007 by a confidence vote of the Parliament of Georgia.

Mikheil Saakashvili resigned from the position of the President on 25 November 2007 as the Constitution of Georgia requires the president stands down at least

45 days before the next election in order to be eligible for retaking part him/herself. The Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia Mrs. Nino Burjanadze took over the position until the results were announced on 5 January 2008.

The registration for presidential elections was officially closed on 27 November. 22 people, including the most recent president Mikheil Saakashvili, approved candidate of the united opposition Levan Gachechiladze, influential businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili, Leader of the New Right Party David Gamkrelidze, the Leader of the Georgian Labour Party Shalva Natelashvili, the Leader of Hope Party Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia and Giorgi Maisashvili put forward themselves for forthcoming elections.

On 27 November it was announced that a NATO membership referendum and election date referendum will also be held on the election day together with presidential elections. The November 7th elections determined that more than 77% of the population voted in favour to NATO membership.

The presidential election votes came back with Mikheil Saakashvili winning with 1,060,042 votes, 53.47% of the vote, over double the amount of his nearest rival Levan Gachechiladze, coming second with 25.69%.

Mikhail Saakashvili on May 22, 2008 announced his confident victory for his ruling party in parliamentary polls amid fears of political unrest, and rising tensions between Georgia and Russia. Early official results indicated his United National Movement had 63% of the votes against the opposition's 13%, with about a quarter of the 3,664 precincts.

Foreign relations

Georgia maintains good relations with its direct neighbours Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey and participates actively in regional organizations, such as the Black Sea Economic Council and the GUAM. Georgia also maintains close political, economic and military relations with Ukraine.

The growing US and European Union influence in Georgia, notably through the Train and Equip military assistance programme and the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, have frequently strained Tbilisi's relations with Russia.

Georgia is currently working to become a full member of NATO. In August of 2004, the Individual Partnership Action Plan of Georgia was submitted officially to NATO. On October 29, 2004, the North Atlantic Council of NATO approved the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) of Georgia and Georgia moved on to the second stage of Euro-Atlantic Integration. In 2005, by the decision of the President of Georgia, a state commission was set up to implement the Individual Partnership Action Plan, which presents an interdepartmental group headed by the Prime Minister. The Commission was tasked with coordinating and controlling the implementation of the Individual Partnership Action Plan. On February 14, 2005, the agreement on the appointment of Partnership for Peace (PfP) liaison officer between Georgia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization came into force, whereby a liaison officer for the South Caucasus was assigned to Georgia. On March 2, 2005, the agreement was signed on the provision of the host



Mikheil Saakashvili (right) with George W. Bush

nation support to and transit of NATO forces and NATO personnel. On March 6-9, 2006, the IPAP implementation interim assessment team arrived in Tbilisi. On April 13, 2006, the discussion of the assessment report on implementation of the Individual Partnership Action Plan was held at NATO Headquarters, within 26+1 format. In 2006, the Georgian parliament voted unanimously for the bill which calls for integration of Georgia into NATO. The majority of Georgians and politicians in Georgia support the push for NATO membership. Currently, it is expected that Georgia will join NATO in 2009.

George W. Bush became the first sitting U.S. president to visit the country. The street leading to Tbilisi International Airport has since been dubbed George W. Bush Avenue.

From the European commission website: President Saakashvili views membership of the EU and NATO as a long term priority. As he does not want Georgia to become an arena of Russia-US confrontation he seeks to maintain close relations with the United States and European Union, at the same time underlining his ambitions to advance co-operation with Russia.

On October 2, 2006, Georgian and the European Union signed a joint statement on the agreed text of the Georgia-European Union Action Plan within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The Action Plan was formally approved at the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council session on November 14, 2006 in Brussels.

On February 2, 2007, Georgia officially became the most recent regional member of the Asian Development Bank. They currently hold 12,081 shares in the bank, 0.341 percent of the total.

Regions, republics, and districts

Georgia is divided into nine regions, two autonomous republics (*avtonomiuri respublika*), and one city (*k'alak'i*). The regions are further subdivided into 69 districts (*raioni*).

- The nine regions are Guria, Imereti, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Shida Kartli.

Currently, the status of South Ossetia, a former autonomous administrative district, also known as the Tskhinvali region, is being negotiated with the Russian-supported separatist government. Recently these negotiations have more or less broken down in light of Russian decisions to reinforce the region militarily and grant South Ossetians Russian passports. The government of Georgia has expressed that it views these moves as attempts by Russia to effectively annex the region. The Georgian government levels the



same criticism against Russian involvement in another of its breakaway regions, Abkhazia. Abkhazia has the status of an autonomous republic, but operates as a defacto state. This condition follows the ethnic cleansing of at least 200,000 Georgians in the War in Abkhazia in 1992-1993. Upper Kodori Gorge is the only part of Abkhazia that remains under effective Georgian control. Ajaria gained autonomy unilaterally under local strongman Aslan Abashidze with help from a Russian military brigade located on a base in Ajaria. Current Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili restored the region to Georgian control after a local uprising against Abashidze's perceived corruption.

- The largest city is Tbilisi.

The Districts of Georgia are: Abasha, Adigeni, Akhagori, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Akhmeta, Ambrolauri, Aspindza, Baghdati, Batumi, Bolnisi, Borjomi, Chiatura, Chkhorotsku, Chokhatauri, Dedoplistskaro, Dmanisi, Dusheti, Gagra, Gali, Gardabani, Gori, Gudauta, Gulripshi, Gurjaani, Java, Kareli, Kaspi, Kedi, Kharagauli, Khashuri, Khelvachauri, Khobi, Khoni, Khulo, Kobuleti, Kutaisi, Kvareli, Lagodekhi, Lanchkhuti, Lentekhi, Marneuli, Martvili, Mestia, Mtskheta, Ninotsminda, Oni, Ozurgeti, Poti, Rustavi, Sachkhere, Sagarejo, Samtredia, Senaki, Shuakhevi, Signaghi, Sukhumi, Stepantsminda, Telavi, Terjola, Tetrtskaro, Tianeti, Tkibuli, Tsageri, Tskhinvali, Tsalenjikha, Tsalka, Tskaltubo, Vani, Zestaponi, and Zugdidi.

The main cities of Georgia are:

- Tbilisi 1,066,100 (metro area 1,270,800)
- Kutaisi 183,300
- Batumi 116,900

Other major cities include Chiatura, Gagra, Gori, Poti, Rustavi, Sukhumi, Tkibuli, Tskaltubo, and Tskhinvali.

Geography and climate

In the north, Georgia has a 723 km common border with Russia, specifically with the Northern Caucasus federal district. The following Russian republics/subdivisions — from west to east — border Georgia: Krasnodar Krai, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan. Georgia also shares borders with Azerbaijan (322 km) to the south-east, Armenia (164 km.) to the south, and Turkey (252 km.) to the south-west.

Mountains are the dominant geographic feature of Georgia. The Likhi Range divides the country into eastern and western halves. Historically, the western portion of Georgia was known as Colchis while the eastern plateau was called Iberia. Due to a complex geographic setting, mountains also isolate the northern region of Svaneti from the rest of Georgia.

The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range separates Georgia from the North Caucasian Republics of Russia. The southern portion of the country is bounded by the Lesser Caucasus Mountains. The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range is much higher in elevation than the Lesser Caucasus Mountains, with the highest peaks rising more than 5,000 meters (16,400 ft) above sea level.



Kazbek in the Khokh Range

The highest mountain in Georgia is Mount Shkhara at 5,201 meters (17,059 ft), and the second highest is Mount Janga (Jangi-Tau) at 5,051 meters (16,572 ft) above sea level. Other prominent peaks include Kazbegi (Kazbek) at 5,047 meters (16,554 ft), Tetnuldi (4,974 m./16,319ft.), Shota Rustaveli (4,960 m./16,273ft.), Mt. Ushba (4,710 m./15,453ft.), and Ailama (4,525 m./14,842ft.). Out of the abovementioned peaks, only Kazbegi is of volcanic origin. The region between Kazbegi and Shkhara (a distance of about 200 km. along the Main Caucasus Range) is dominated by numerous glaciers. Out of the 2,100 glaciers that exist in the Caucasus today, approximately 30% are

located within Georgia.

The term, Lesser Caucasus Mountains is often used to describe the mountainous (highland) areas of southern Georgia that are connected to the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range by the Likhi Range. The area can be split into two separate sub-regions; the Lesser Caucasus Mountains, which run parallel to the Greater Caucasus Range, and the Southern Georgia Volcanic Highland, which lies immediately to the south of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains. The overall region can be characterized as being made up of various, interconnected mountain ranges (largely of volcanic origin) and plateaus that do not exceed 3,400 meters (approximately 11,000 ft) in elevation. Prominent features of the area include the Javakheti Volcanic Plateau, lakes, including Tabatskuri and Paravani, as well as mineral water and hot springs. The Southern Georgia Volcanic Highland is a young and unstable geologic region with high seismic activity and has experienced some of the most significant earthquakes that have been recorded in Georgia.

The Voronya Cave (aka Krubera-Voronia Cave) is the deepest known cave in the world. It is located in the Arabika Massif of the Gagra Range, in Abkhazia,

<http://cd3wd.com> wikipedia-for-schools <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 273 of 867



Svaneti region, North-Western Georgia



Northern Georgia, Kazbegi region

Georgia, Caucasus. The height difference in the cave is 2,140 (\pm 9) metres. The same cave set the previous record for depth at 1,710 metres in 2001 by a Russian–Ukrainian team. In 2004 the penetrated depth was increased on each of three expeditions. At that point the Ukrainian team crossed the -2000 m mark for the first time in the history of speleology. In October 2005, a new, unexplored part was found by CAVEX team, and the cave became even deeper. This expedition confirmed the depth of the cave which is now $-2,140$ (\pm 9) metres deep.

Two major rivers in Georgia are the Rioni and the Mtkvari.

Landscape

The landscape within the nation's boundaries is quite varied. Western Georgia's landscape ranges from low-land marsh-forests, cow swamps, and temperate rain forests to eternal snows and glaciers, while the eastern part of the country even contains a small segment of semi-arid plains characteristic of Central Asia. Forests cover around 40% of Georgia's territory while the alpine/ subalpine zone accounts for roughly around 10% of the land.

Much of the natural habitat in the low-lying areas of Western Georgia has disappeared over the last 100 years due to the agricultural development of the land and urbanization. The large majority of the forests that covered the Colchis plain are now virtually non-existent with the exception of the regions that are included in the national parks and reserves (i.e. Paleostomi Lake area). At present, the forest cover generally remains outside of the low-lying areas and is mainly located along the foothills and the mountains. Western Georgia's forests consist mainly of deciduous trees below 600 meters (1,968 ft) above sea level and comprise of species such as oak, hornbeam, beech, elm, ash, and chestnut. Evergreen species such as box may also be found in many areas. Ca. 1000 of all 4000 higher plants of Georgia are endemic in this country. The west-central slopes of the Meskheta Range in Ajaria as well as several locations in Samegrelo and Abkhazia are covered by temperate rain forests. Between 600–1,500 meters (1,968-4,920 ft) above sea level, the deciduous forest becomes mixed with both broad-leaf and coniferous species making up the plant life. The zone is made up mainly of beech, spruce, and fir forests. From 1,500-1,800 meters (4,920-5,904 ft), the forest becomes largely coniferous. The tree line generally ends at around 1,800 meters (5,904 ft) and the alpine zone takes over, which in most areas, extends up to an elevation of 3,000 meters (9,840 ft) above sea level. The eternal snow and glacier zone lies above the 3,000 meter line.



Tsminda Sameba church, 2200 m high, Caucasus mountains in the back, rising more than 4000 m above sea level.

Eastern Georgia's landscape (referring to the territory east of the Likhi Range) is considerably different from that of the west. Although, much like the Colchis plain in the west, nearly all of the low-lying areas of eastern Georgia including the Mtkvari and Alazani River plains have been deforested for agricultural purposes. In addition, due to the region's relatively drier climate, some of the low-lying plains (especially in Kartli and south-eastern Kakheti) were never covered by forests in the first place. The general landscape of eastern Georgia comprises numerous valleys and gorges that are separated by mountains. In contrast with western Georgia, nearly 85% of the forests of the region are deciduous. Coniferous forests only dominate in the Borjomi Gorge and in the extreme western areas. Out of the deciduous species of trees, beech, oak, and hornbeam dominate. Other deciduous species include several varieties of maple, aspen, ash, and hazelnut. The Upper Alazani River Valley contains yew forests. At higher elevations above 1,000 meters (3,280 ft) above sea level (particularly in the Tusheti, Khevsureti, and Khevi regions), pine and birch forests dominate. In general, the forests in eastern Georgia occur between 500–2,000 metres (1,640–6,560 ft) above sea level, with the alpine zone extending from 2,000/2,200–3,000 /3,500 metres (roughly about 6,560–11,480 ft). The only remaining large, low-land forests remain in the Alazani Valley of Kakheti. The eternal snow and glacier zone lies above the 3,500 metre (11,480 ft) line in most areas of eastern Georgia.



Shatili village in Khevsureti

Fauna

Due to its high landscape diversity and low latitude Georgia is home to a higher number of animal species, e. g. ca. 1000 species of vertebrates (330 birds, 160 fish, 48 reptiles, 11 amphibians). A number of large carnivores live in the forests, e. g. Persian leopard, Brown bear, wolf, and lynx. The species number of invertebrates is considered to be very high but data is distributed across a high number of publications. The spider checklist of Georgia, for example, includes 501 species.

Climate

The climate of Georgia is extremely diverse, considering the nation's small size. There are two main climatic zones, roughly separating Eastern and Western parts of the country. The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range plays an important role in moderating Georgia's climate and protects the nation from the penetration of colder air masses from the north. The Lesser Caucasus Mountains partially protect the region from the influence of dry and hot air masses from the south as well.

Much of western Georgia lies within the northern periphery of the humid subtropical zone with annual precipitation ranging from 1000–4000 mm. (39–157 inches). The precipitation tends to be uniformly distributed throughout the year, although the rainfall can be particularly heavy during the Autumn months. The climate of the region varies significantly with elevation and while much of the lowland areas of western Georgia are relatively warm throughout the year, the foothills and mountainous areas (including both the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains) experience cool, wet summers and snowy winters (snow cover often exceeds 2 meters in many regions). Ajaria is the wettest region of the Caucasus, where the Mt. Mtirala rainforest, east of Kobuleti receives around 4500 mm (177 inches) of precipitation per year.



The local climate is excellent for wine-making and there are 500 different kinds of wine in Georgia

Eastern Georgia has a transitional climate from humid subtropical to continental. The region's weather patterns are influenced both by dry, Central Asian/Caspian air masses from the east and humid, Black Sea air masses from the west. The penetration of humid air masses from the Black Sea is often blocked by several mountain ranges (Likhi and Meskheti) that separate the eastern and western parts of the nation. Annual precipitation is considerably less than that of western Georgia and ranges from 400–1600 mm (16–63 inches). The wettest periods generally occur during Spring and Autumn while Winter and the Summer months tend to be the driest. Much of eastern Georgia experiences hot summers (especially in the low-lying areas) and relatively cold winters. As in the western parts of the nation, elevation plays an important role in eastern Georgia as well, and climatic conditions above 1500 metres (4920ft) above sea level are considerably cooler (even colder) than those of the low-lying areas. The regions that lie above 2000 meters (6560ft) above sea level frequently experience frost even during the summer months.

Economy

Archaeological research demonstrates that Georgia has been involved in commerce with many lands and empires since the ancient times, largely due its location on the Black Sea and later on the historical Silk Road. Gold, silver, copper and iron have been mined in the Caucasus Mountains. Wine making is a very old tradition.

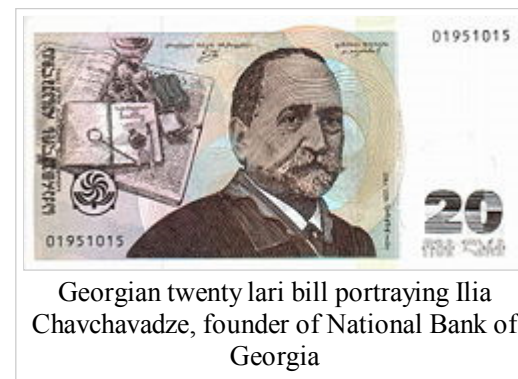
Throughout Georgia's modern history agriculture and tourism have been principal economic sectors, due to the country's climate and topography.

For much of the 20th century, Georgia's economy was within the Soviet model of command economy.

Since the fall of the USSR in 1991, Georgia embarked on a major structural reform designed to transition to a free market economy. However, as all other post-Soviet states, Georgia faced a severe economic collapse. The civil war and military conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia aggravated the crisis. The agriculture and industry output diminished. By 1994 the gross domestic product had shrunk to a quarter of that of 1989.

The first financial help from the West came in 1995, when the World Bank and International Monetary Fund granted Georgia a credit of USD 206 million and Germany granted DM 50 million.

As of 2001 54% of the population lived below the national poverty line but by 2006 poverty decreased to 34%. In 2005 average monthly income of a household was GEL 347 (about 200 USD).



Since early 2000s visible positive developments have been observed in the economy of Georgia. In 2006 Georgia's real GDP growth rate reached 8.8%, making Georgia one of the fastest growing economies in Eastern Europe. The World Bank dubbed Georgia "the number one economic reformer in the world" because it has in one year improved from rank 112th to 18th in terms of ease of doing business. However, the country has high unemployment rate of 12.6% and has fairly low median income compared to European countries.

IMF 2006 estimates place Georgia's nominal GDP at US\$7.76 billion. Georgia's economy is becoming more devoted to services (now representing 54.8% of GDP), moving away from agricultural sector (17.7%).

The country has sizable hydropower resources.

The 2006 ban on imports of Georgian wine to Russia, one of Georgia's biggest trading partners, and break of financial links was described by the IMF Mission as an "external shock", In addition, Russia increased the price of gas for Georgia. This was followed by the spike in the Georgian lari's rate of inflation. The National Bank of Georgia stated that the inflation was mainly triggered by external reasons, including Russia's economic embargo. The Georgian authorities expected that the current account deficit the embargo would cause in 2007 would be financed by "higher foreign exchange proceeds generated by the large inflow of foreign direct investment" and an increase in tourist revenues. The country has also maintained a solid credit in international market securities.

Georgia is becoming more integrated into the global trading network: its 2006 imports and exports account for 10% and 18% of GDP respectively. Georgia's main imports are natural gas, oil products, machinery and parts, and transport equipment.

In 2004, a 12% flat income tax was introduced in Georgia. Tax collection increased significantly, thereby reducing the government's formerly large budget deficits.

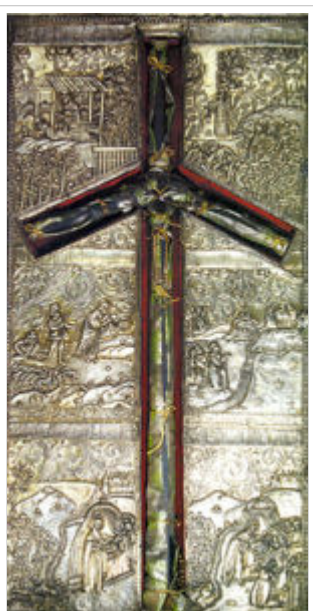
Georgia is developing into an international transport corridor through Batumi and Poti ports, an oil pipeline from Baku through Tbilisi to Ceyhan, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) and a parallel gas pipeline, the South Caucasus Pipeline.

Tourism is an increasingly significant part of the Georgian economy. About a million tourists brought US\$313 million to the country in 2006. There are "over 12,000 historical and cultural monuments in Georgia, four listed by UNESCO as cultural heritage sites, 103 resorts, 182 potential resort places and more than 2000 mineral springs in Georgia".

Demographics



Rkinis Rigi (iron row) in Old Tbilisi



Grapevine Cross of Saint Nino from the 4th century AD

Georgians (with Adjarians, Mingrelians, Svans, Lazs) form a majority, about 83.8%, of Georgia's current population of 4,661,473 (July 2006 est.). Other major ethnic groups include Azeris, who form 6.5% of the population, Armenians - 5.7%, Russians - 1.5%, Abkhazians, and Ossetians. Numerous smaller groups also live in the country, including Assyrians, Chechens, Chinese, Georgian Jews, Greeks, Kabardins, Kurds, Tatars, Turks and Ukrainians. Notably, Georgia's Jewish community is one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world.

Georgia also exhibits significant linguistic diversity. Within the South Caucasian family, Georgian, Laz, Mingrelian, and Svan are spoken. Additionally, non-Georgian ethnic groups in the country often speak their native languages in addition to Georgian. The official languages of Georgia are Georgian and also Abkhaz within the autonomous region of Abkhazia. 71% of the population speaks the South Caucasian languages, 9% - Russian, 7% - Armenian, 6% - Azeri and 7% other. Georgia's literacy rate is 100%.

In the early 1990s, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, violent separatist conflicts broke out in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which resulted in ethnic cleansing of Georgians from Abkhazia, where ethnic Georgians previously had constituted the largest single ethnic group (46% of population in 1989). Many Ossetians living in Georgia also left the country, mainly to Russia's North Ossetia. Of the Meskhetian Turks who were forcibly relocated in 1944 only a tiny fraction returned to Georgia as of 2007.

Georgia's net migration rate is -4.54, excluding Georgian nationals who live abroad. Georgia has nonetheless been inhabited by immigrants from all over the world throughout its independence. According to 2006 statistics, Georgia gets most of its immigrants from Turkey and China.

Today most of the population practices Orthodox Christianity of the Georgian Orthodox Church (81.9%). The religious minorities are: Muslim (9.9%); Armenian Apostolic (3.9%); Russian Orthodox Church (2.0%); Roman Catholic (0.8%). 0.8% of those recorded in the 2002 census declared themselves to be adherents of other religions and 0.7% declared no religion at all.

Religion

According to the Constitution of Georgia, religious institutions are separate from government and every citizen has the right of religion. However, most of the population of Georgia (82%) practices Orthodox Christianity and Georgian Orthodox Church is an influential institution in the country.

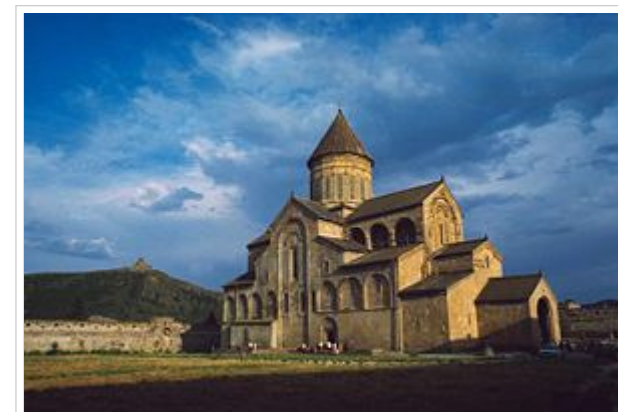
The Gospel was preached in Georgia by the Apostles, Andrew the First Called, Simon the Canaanite, and Matthias. Iberia was officially converted to Christianity in 326 by Saint Nino of Cappadocia, who is considered to be the Enlightener of Georgia and the Equal to Apostles by the Orthodox Church. The Georgian Orthodox Church, once being under the See of Antioch, gained an autocephalous status in the 4th century during the reign of King Vakhtang Gorgasali.

Religious minorities of Georgia include Russian Orthodox (2%), Armenian Christians (3.9%), Muslims (9.9%), Roman Catholics (0.8%), as well as sizeable Jewish Communities and various Protestant minorities.

Despite the long history of religious harmony in Georgia, there have been couple of instances of religious discrimination in the past decade (i.e. Vasil Mkalavishvili Case).

Culture

Georgian culture evolved over thousands of years with its foundations in Iberian and Colchian civilizations, continuing into the rise of the unified Georgian Kingdom under the single monarchy of the Bagrationi. Georgian culture enjoyed a golden age and renaissance of classical literature, arts, philosophy, architecture and science in the 11th century. The Georgian language, and the Classical Georgian literature of the poet Shota Rustaveli, were revived in the 19th century after a long period of turmoil, laying the foundations of the romantics and novelists of the modern era such as Grigol Orbeliani, Nikoloz Baratashvili, Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Vazha Pshavela, and many others. Georgian culture was influenced by Classical Greece, the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire, and later by the Russian Empire which contributed to the European elements of Georgian culture.



Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, one of the oldest Eastern Orthodox churches in **Georgia**.



Ancient Georgian Asomtavruli Alphabet in David Gareja Monastery

Georgia is well known for its rich folklore, unique traditional music, theatre, cinema, and art. Georgians are renowned for their love of music, dance, theatre and cinema. In the 20th century there have been notable Georgian painters such as Niko Pirosmani, Lado Gudiashvili, Elene Akhvlediani; ballet choreographers such as George Balanchine, Vakhtang Chabukiani, and Nino Ananiashvili; poets such as Galaktion Tabidze, Lado Asatiani, and Mukhran Machavariani; and theatre and film directors such as Robert Sturua, Tengiz Abuladze, Giorgi Danelia and Otar Ioseliani.

Architecture

Georgian architecture has been influenced by many civilizations. There are several different architectural styles for castles, towers, fortifications and churches. The Upper Svaneti fortifications, and the castle town of Shatili in Khevsureti, are some of the finest examples of medieval Georgian castle architecture.

Georgian ecclesiastic art is one of the most fascinating aspects of Georgian Christian architecture, which combines classical dome style with original basilica style forming what is known as the Georgian cross-dome style. Cross-dome architecture developed in Georgia during the 9th century; before that, most Georgian churches were basilicas. Georgian culture strongly emphasizes individualism, and this is expressed through the allocation of interior space in Georgian churches. Other examples of Georgian ecclesiastic architecture can be found outside Georgia: Bachkovo Monastery in Bulgaria (built in 1083 by the Georgian military commander Grigorii Bakuriani), Iviron monastery in Greece (built by Georgians in the 10th century), and the Monastery of the Cross in Jerusalem (built by Georgians in the 9th century).



Akaki Khorava State Theatre in Senaki, an example of neoclassicism style with elements of barocco in Georgia. Architect Vakhtang Gogoladze.

Other architectural aspects of Georgia include Rustaveli avenue in Tbilisi in the Hausmann style, and the Old Town District.

Art

The art of Georgia spans the prehistoric, the ancient Greek, Roman, medieval, ecclesiastic, iconic and modern visual arts. One of the most famous late nineteenth/early twentieth century Georgian artists is the primitivist painter Niko Pirosmani. Pirosmani's works can also be seen as early impressionistic, due to the fact that his work inspired Lado Gudiashvili and Elene Akhvlediani, who represent the more mainstream impressionism of the twentieth century.

Cuisine



Georgian singer Sopho Khalvashi on Eurovision 2007



Impressionistic painting of Old Town district of Tbilisi by Elene Akhvlediani

Georgian cuisine and wine have evolved through the centuries, adapting traditions in each era. One of the most unusual traditions of dining is *Supra*, or *Georgian table*, which is also a way of socializing with friends and extended family. The head of *Supra* is known as Tamada. He also conducts the highly philosophical toasts, and makes sure that everyone is enjoying themselves. Various historical regions of Georgia are known for their particular dishes: for example, Khinkali (meat dumplings), from eastern mountainous Georgia, and Khachapuri, mainly from Imereti, Mingrelia and Adjara.

In addition to traditional Georgian dishes, the foods of other countries have been brought to Georgia by immigrants from Russia, Greece, and recently China.

Sport

Among the most popular sports in Georgia are football, basketball, rugby union, wrestling, hockey and weightlifting. Historically, Georgia has been famous for its physical education; it is known that the Romans were fascinated with Georgians' physical qualities after seeing the training techniques of ancient Iberia. Wrestling remains a historically important sport of Georgia, and some historians think that the Greco-Roman style of wrestling incorporates many Georgian elements. Within Georgia, one of the most popularized styles of wrestling is the Kakhetian style. However, there were a number of other styles in the past that are not as widely used today. For example, the Khevsureti region of Georgia has three different styles of wrestling. Other popular sports in 19th century Georgia were polo, and lelo, a traditional Georgian game later replaced by rugby union.

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Mtsvadi (Georgian Pork Barbecue) on the grill



Ancient Georgian iconic art depicting wrestling

Germany

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Germany, officially the **Federal Republic of Germany** (German: *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (help· info), IPA: [ˈbʊndəsʁepuˌbliːk ˈdɔʏtʃlant]), is a country in Central Europe. It is bordered to the north by the North Sea, Denmark, and the Baltic Sea; to the east by Poland and the Czech Republic; to the south by Austria and Switzerland; and to the west by France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The territory of Germany covers 357,021 km² and is influenced by a temperate seasonal climate. With over 82 million inhabitants, it comprises the largest population among the member states of the European Union and is home to the third-highest number of international migrants worldwide.

A region named Germania inhabited by several Germanic peoples has been known and documented before 100 AD. Since the 10th century German territories have formed a central part of the Holy Roman Empire that lasted until 1806. During the period, in the 16th century, the northern German regions became the centre of the Protestant Reformation. As a modern nation-state, the country was first unified amidst the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. After World War II, Germany was divided into two separate states along the lines of allied occupation in 1949. The two states became reunified again in 1990. West Germany was a founding member of the EC in 1957, which became the European Union in 1993. It is part of the borderless Schengen zone and adopted the European currency, the euro, in 1999.

Germany is a federal parliamentary republic of sixteen states (*Länder*). The capital and largest city is Berlin. Germany is a member of the United Nations, NATO, the G8, the G4 nations, and signed the Kyoto protocol. It is the world's third largest economy by nominal GDP and the largest exporter of goods in 2007. In absolute terms, Germany allocates the second biggest annual budget of development aid in the world, while its military expenditure ranked sixth. The country has developed a high standard of living and established a comprehensive system of social security. It holds a key position in European affairs and maintains a multitude of close partnerships on a global level. Germany is recognized as a scientific and technological leader in several fields.

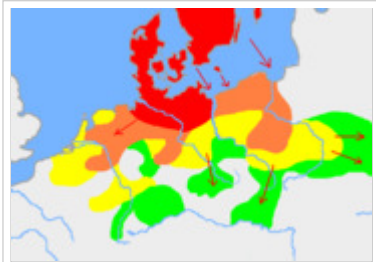
History

The ethnogenesis of the Germanic tribes is assumed to have occurred during the Nordic Bronze Age, or

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<p><i>Bundesrepublik Deutschland</i> Federal Republic of Germany</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Motto: <i>Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit</i> "Unity and Justice and Freedom"</p>	
<p>Anthem: third stanza of "<i>Das Lied der Deutschen</i>" (also called "<i>Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit</i>")</p>	
	
<p>Location of Germany (orange) — on the European continent (camel & white)</p>	

at the latest, during the Pre-Roman Iron Age. From southern Scandinavia and northern Germany, the tribes began expanding south, east and west in the 1st century BC, coming into contact with the Celtic tribes of Gaul as well as Iranian, Baltic, and Slavic tribes in Eastern Europe. Little is known about early Germanic history, except through their recorded interactions with the Roman Empire, etymological research and archaeological finds.



Expansion of the Germanic tribes 750 BC – AD 1.

Under Augustus, the Roman General Publius Quinctilius Varus began to invade Germania (a term used by the Romans running roughly from the Rhine to the Ural Mountains), and it was in this period that the Germanic tribes became familiar with Roman tactics of warfare while maintaining their tribal identity. In AD 9, three Roman legions led by Varus were defeated by the Cheruscan leader Arminius in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. Modern Germany, as far as the Rhine and the Danube, thus remained outside the Roman Empire. By AD 100, the time of Tacitus' *Germania*, Germanic tribes settled along the Rhine and the Danube (the Limes Germanicus), occupying most of the area of modern Germany. The 3rd century saw the emergence of a number of

large West Germanic tribes: Alamanni, Franks, Chatti, Saxons, Frisians, Sicambri, and Thuringii. Around 260, the Germanic peoples broke through the Limes and the Danube frontier into Roman-controlled lands.

Holy Roman Empire (962–1806)

– in the European Union (camel)	[Legend]
Capital (and largest city)	Berlin
Official languages	German
Demonym	German
Government	Federal Parliamentary republic
– President	Horst Köhler
– Chancellor	Angela Merkel (CDU)
Formation	
– Holy Roman Empire	962
– German Empire	18 January 1871
– Federal Republic	23 May 1949
– Reunification	3 October 1990
EU accession	25 March 1957
Area	
– Total	357,021 km ² (63rd) 137,847 sq mi
– Water (%)	2.416
Population	
– Dec. 31, 2007 estimate	82,217,800 (14th)
– Density	230/km ² (36th) 596/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
– Total	\$2.81 trillion (5th)
– Per capita	\$34,181 (23th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate

The medieval empire stemmed from a division of the Carolingian Empire in 843, which was founded by Charlemagne on 25 December 800, and existed in varying forms until 1806, its territory stretching from the Eider River in the north to the Mediterranean coast in the south. Often referred to as the Holy Roman Empire (or the Old Empire), it was officially called the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation ("Sacrum Romanum Imperium Nationis Germanicæ") starting in 1448, to adjust the title to its then reduced territory.

Under the reign of the Ottonian emperors (919–1024), the duchies of Lorraine, Saxony, Franconia, Swabia, Thuringia, and Bavaria were consolidated, and the German king was crowned Holy Roman Emperor of these regions in 962. Under the reign of the Salian emperors (1024–1125), the Holy Roman Empire absorbed northern Italy and Burgundy, although the emperors lost power through the Investiture Controversy. Under the Hohenstaufen emperors (1138–1254), the German princes increased their influence further south and east into territories inhabited by Slavs (*Ostsiedlung*). Northern German towns grew prosperous as members of the Hanseatic League.

The edict of the Golden Bull in 1356 provided the basic constitution of the empire that lasted until its dissolution. It codified the election of the emperor by seven prince-electors who ruled some of the most powerful principalities and archbishoprics. Beginning in the 15th century, the emperors were elected nearly exclusively from the Habsburg dynasty of Austria.



Martin Luther, (1483–1546) initiated the Protestant Reformation.

The monk Martin Luther wrote his 95 Theses questioning the Roman Catholic Church in 1517, thereby sparking the Protestant Reformation. A separate Lutheran church was acknowledged as the newly sanctioned religion in many German states after 1530. Religious conflict led to the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which devastated German lands. The population of the German states was reduced by about 30%. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) ended religious warfare among the German states, but the empire was *de facto* divided into numerous independent principalities. From 1740 onwards, the dualism between the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy and the Kingdom of Prussia dominated German history. In 1806, the *Imperium* was overrun and dissolved as a result of the Napoleonic Wars.

- Total	\$3.26 trillion (3rd)
- Per capita	\$39,650 (19th)
Gini (2000)	28.3 (low)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.935 (high) (22nd)
Currency	Euro (€) (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.de
Calling code	+49
<small>1 ^ Danish, Low German, Sorbian, Romany and Frisian are officially recognised and protected by the ECRML.</small>	



Prince-electors of the Holy Roman Empire (1341 parchment).

Restoration and revolution (1814–1871)

Following the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Congress of Vienna convened in 1814 and founded the German Confederation (Deutscher Bund), a loose league of 39 sovereign states. Disagreement with restoration politics partly led to the rise of liberal movements, demanding unity and freedom. These, however, were followed by new measures of repression on the part of the Austrian statesman Metternich. The *Zollverein*, a tariff union, profoundly furthered economic unity in the German states. During this era many Germans had been stirred by the ideals of the French Revolution, and nationalism became a more significant force, especially among young intellectuals. For the first time, the colours of black, red and gold were chosen to represent the movement, which later became the national colours.



Frankfurt Parliament in 1848.

In light of a series of revolutionary movements in Europe, which successfully established a republic in France, intellectuals and commoners started the Revolutions of 1848 in the German states. The monarchs initially yielded to the revolutionaries' liberal demands. King Frederick William IV of Prussia was offered the title of Emperor, but with a loss of power; he rejected the crown and the proposed constitution, leading to a temporary setback for the movement. Conflict between King William I of Prussia and the increasingly liberal parliament erupted over military reforms in 1862, and the king appointed Otto von Bismarck the new Prime Minister of Prussia. Bismarck successfully waged war on Denmark in 1864. Prussian victory in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 enabled him to create the North German Federation (Norddeutscher Bund) and to exclude Austria, formerly the leading German state, from the affairs of the remaining German states.

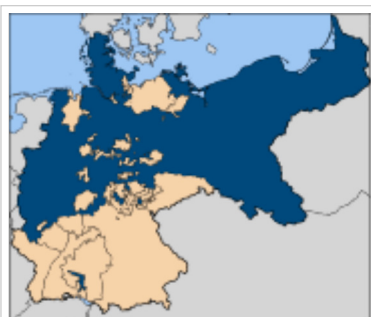
German Empire (1871–1918)

The state known as *Germany* was unified as a modern nation-state in 1871, when the German Empire was forged, with the Kingdom of Prussia as its largest constituent. After the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the German Empire (*Deutsches Kaiserreich*) was proclaimed in Versailles on 18 January 1871. The Hohenzollern dynasty of Prussia ruled the new empire, whose capital was Berlin. The empire was a unification of all the scattered parts of Germany except Austria (*Kleindeutschland*, or "Lesser Germany"). Beginning in 1884, Germany began establishing several colonies outside of Europe.



Foundation of modern Germany in Versailles-France, 1871. Bismarck is at the centre in a white uniform.

In the *Gründerzeit* period following the unification of Germany, Emperor William I's foreign policy secured Germany's position as a great nation by forging alliances, isolating France by diplomatic means, and avoiding war. Under William II, however, Germany, like other European powers, took an imperialistic course leading to friction with neighbouring countries. Most alliances in which Germany had been previously involved were not renewed, and new alliances excluded the country. Specifically, France established new relationships by signing the Entente Cordiale with the United Kingdom and securing ties with the Russian Empire. Aside from its contacts with Austria-Hungary, Germany became increasingly isolated.



Imperial Germany (1871–1918), with the dominant Kingdom of Prussia in blue.

Germany's imperialism reached outside of its own country and joined many other powers in Europe to claim their share of Africa. The Berlin Conference divided Africa between the European powers. Germany owned several pieces of land on Africa including German East Africa, South-West Africa, Togo, and Cameroon. The Scramble for Africa caused tension between the great powers that may have contributed to the conditions that led to World War I.

The assassination of Austria's crown prince on 28 June 1914 triggered World War I. Germany, as part of the unsuccessful Central Powers, suffered defeat against the Allied Powers in one of the bloodiest conflicts of all time. The German Revolution broke out in November 1918, and Emperor William II and all German ruling princes abdicated. An armistice putting an end to the war was signed on 11 November and Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919. Its negotiation, contrary to traditional post-war diplomacy, excluded the defeated Central Powers. The treaty was perceived in Germany as a humiliating continuation of the war by other means and its harshness is often cited as having facilitated the later rise of Nazism in the country.

Weimar Republic (1919–1933)

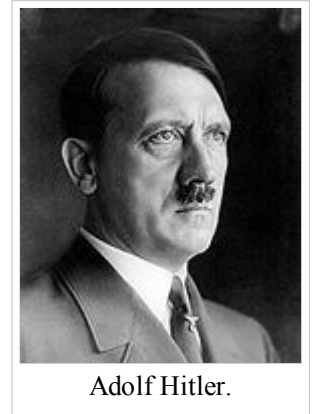
After the success of the German Revolution in November 1918, a republic was proclaimed. The Weimar Constitution came into effect with its signing by President Friedrich Ebert on 11 August 1919. The German Communist Party was established by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in 1918, and the German Workers Party, later known as the National Socialist German Workers Party or Nazi Party, was founded in January 1919.

Suffering from the Great Depression, the harsh peace conditions dictated by the Treaty of Versailles, and a long succession of more or less unstable governments, the political masses in Germany increasingly lacked identification with their political system of parliamentary democracy. This was exacerbated by a wide-spread right-wing (monarchist, *völkisch*, and Nazi) *Dolchstoßlegende*, a political myth which claimed that Germany lost World War I because of the German Revolution, not because of military defeat. On the other hand, radical left-wing communists, such as the Spartacist League, had wanted to abolish what they perceived as "capitalist rule" in favour of a *Räterepublik*. Paramilitary troops were set up by several parties and there were thousands of politically motivated murders. The paramilitaries intimidated voters and seeded violence and anger among the public, which suffered from high unemployment and poverty. After a series of unsuccessful cabinets, President Paul von Hindenburg, seeing little alternative and pushed by right-wing advisors, appointed Adolf Hitler Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933.

Third Reich (1933–1945)

On 27 February 1933, the Reichstag was set on fire. Some basic democratic rights were quickly abrogated afterwards under an emergency decree. An Enabling Act gave Hitler's government full legislative power. Only the Social Democratic Party of Germany voted against it; the Communists were not able to present opposition, as their deputies had already been murdered or imprisoned. A centralised totalitarian state was established by a series of moves and decrees making Germany a single-party state. Industry was closely regulated with quotas and requirements, to shift the economy towards a war production base. In 1936 German troops entered the demilitarized Rhineland, and British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policies proved inadequate. Emboldened, Hitler followed from 1938 onwards a policy of expansionism to establish Greater Germany. To avoid a two-front war, Hitler concluded the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with the Soviet Union, a pact which he later broke.

In 1939, the growing tensions from nationalism, militarism, and territorial issues led to the Germans launching a blitzkrieg (fast attack) on September 1 against Poland, followed two days later by declarations of war by Britain and France, marking the beginning of World War II. Germany quickly gained direct or indirect control of the majority of Europe.



Adolf Hitler.



Berlin in ruins after World War II, Potsdamer Platz 1945.

On 22 June 1941, Hitler broke the pact with the Soviet Union by opening the Eastern Front and invading the Soviet Union. Shortly after Japan attacked the American base at Pearl Harbour, Germany declared war on the United States. Although initially the German army rapidly advanced into the Soviet Union, the Battle of Stalingrad marked a major turning point in the war. Subsequently, the German army commenced retreating on the Eastern Front. D-Day marked a major turning point on the Western front, as Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy and made rapid advances into German territory. Germany's defeat soon followed. On 8 May 1945, the German armed forces surrendered after the Red Army occupied Berlin.

In what later became known as The Holocaust, the Third Reich regime enacted governmental policies directly subjugating many parts of society: Jews, Communists, Roma, homosexuals, freemasons, political dissidents, priests, preachers, religious opponents, and the disabled, amongst others. During the Nazi era, about eleven million people were murdered in the Holocaust, including six million Jews and three million Poles. World War II and the Nazi genocide were responsible for about

35 million dead in Europe.

Division and reunification (1945–1990)

The war resulted in the death of nearly ten million German soldiers and civilians; large territorial losses; the expulsion of about 15 million Germans from its former eastern territories and other countries; and the destruction of multiple major cities. The national territory and Berlin were partitioned by the Allies into four military occupation zones. The sectors controlled by France, the United Kingdom, and the United States were merged on 23 May 1949, to form the *Federal Republic of Germany*; on 7 October 1949, the Soviet Zone established the *German Democratic Republic*. They were informally known as " West Germany" and " East Germany" and the two parts of Berlin as " West Berlin" and " East Berlin". The eastern and western countries opted for East Berlin and Bonn as their respective capitals. However, West Germany declared the status of its capital Bonn as provisional, in order to emphasize its stance that the two-state solution was an artificial *status quo* that was to be overcome one day.

West Germany — established as a liberal parliamentary republic with a " social market economy" — was allied with the United States, the UK and France. The country eventually came to enjoy prolonged economic growth beginning in the early 1950s (*Wirtschaftswunder*). West Germany joined NATO in 1955 and was a founding member of the European Economic Community in 1958. Across the border, East Germany was at first occupied by, and later (May 1955) allied with, the USSR. An authoritarian country with a Soviet-style command economy, but many of its citizens looked to the West for political freedoms and economic prosperity. The Berlin Wall, built in 1961 to stop East Germans from escaping to West Germany, became a symbol of the Cold War. However, tensions between East and West Germany were somewhat reduced in the early 1970s by Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, which included the *de facto* acceptance of Germany's territorial losses in World War II.



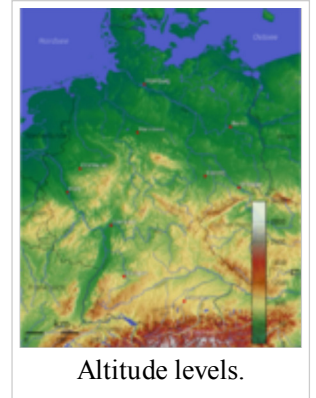
The Berlin Wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate shortly after the opening in 1989.

In the face of a growing migration of East Germans to West Germany via Hungary and mass demonstrations during the summer of 1989, East German authorities unexpectedly eased the border restrictions in November, allowing East German citizens to travel to the West. Originally intended as a pressure valve to retain East Germany as a state, the opening of the border actually led to an acceleration of the reform process in East Germany, which finally concluded with the *Two Plus Four Treaty* a year later on 12 September 1990 and German reunification on 3 October 1990. Under the terms of the treaty, the four occupying powers renounced their rights under the Instrument of Surrender, and Germany regained full sovereignty. Based on the Bonn-Berlin-Act, adopted by the parliament on 10 March 1994, the capital of the unified state was chosen to be Berlin, while Bonn obtained the unique status of a *Bundesstadt* (federal city) retaining some federal ministries. The move of the government was completed in 1999.

Since reunification, Germany has taken a leading role in the European Union and NATO. Germany sent a peacekeeping force to secure stability in the Balkans and sent a force of German troops to Afghanistan as part of a NATO effort to provide security in that country after the ousting of the Taliban. These deployments were controversial, since after the war, Germany was bound by law to only deploy troops for defence roles. Deployments to foreign territories were understood not to be covered by the defence provision; however, the parliamentary vote on the issue effectively legalised the participation in a peacekeeping context.

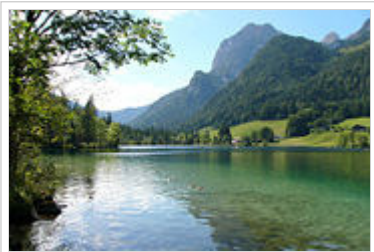
Geography

The territory of Germany covers 357,021 km² (137,847 sq mi), consisting of 349,223 km² (134,836 sq mi) of land and 7,798 km² (3,011 sq mi) of water. It is the seventh largest country by area in Europe and the 63rd largest in the world. Elevation ranges from the mountains of the Alps (highest point: the Zugspitze at 2,962 metres (9,718 ft)) in the south to the shores of the North Sea (Nordsee) in the north-west and the Baltic Sea (Ostsee) in the north-east. Between lie the forested uplands of central Germany and the low-lying lands of northern Germany (lowest point: Wilstermarsch at 3.54 metres (11.6 ft) below sea level), traversed by some of Europe's major rivers such as the Rhine, Danube and Elbe. Because of its central location, Germany shares borders with more European countries than any other country on the continent. Its neighbours are Denmark in the north, Poland and the Czech Republic in the east, Austria and Switzerland in the south, France and Luxembourg in the south-west and Belgium and the Netherlands in the north-west.



Altitude levels.

Climate



Alpine scenery in Bavaria.

Most of Germany has a temperate seasonal climate in which humid westerly winds predominate. The climate is moderated by the North Atlantic Drift, which is the northern extension of the Gulf Stream. This warmer water affects the areas bordering the North Sea including the peninsula of Jutland and the area along the Rhine, which flows into the North Sea. Consequently in the north-west and the north, the climate is oceanic; rainfall occurs year round with a maximum during summer. Winters there are mild and summers tend to be cool, though temperatures can exceed 30 °C (86 °F) for prolonged periods. In the east, the climate is more continental; winters can be very cold, summers can be very warm, and long dry periods are often recorded. Central and southern Germany are transition regions which vary from moderately oceanic to continental. Again, the maximum temperature can exceed 30 °C (86 °F) in summer.

Environment

Phytogeographically, Germany is shared between the Atlantic European and Central European provinces of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. The territory of Germany can be subdivided into four ecoregions: the Atlantic mixed forests, Baltic mixed forests, Central European mixed forests and Western European broadleaf forests.

Germany is known for its environmental consciousness. Germans consider anthropogenic causes to be a major factor in global warming. The state is committed to the Kyoto protocol and several other treaties promoting biodiversity, low emission standards, recycling, the use of renewable energy and supports sustainable development on a global level.

The German government has initiated wide ranging emission reduction activities and the country's overall emissions are falling. Nevertheless Germany's carbon dioxide emissions per capita is among the highest in the EU but remains significantly lower compared to Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia or the United States.

Emissions from coal-burning utilities and industries contribute to air pollution. Acid rain, resulting from sulphur dioxide emissions is damaging forests. Pollution in the Baltic Sea from raw sewage and industrial effluents from rivers in former eastern Germany have been reduced. The government under Chancellor Schröder announced intent to end the use of nuclear power for producing electricity. Germany is working to meet EU commitment to identify nature preservation areas in line with the EU's Flora, Fauna, and Habitat directive. Germany's last glaciers in Alpine regions is experiencing deglaciation. Natural hazards are river flooding in spring and stormy winds occurring in all regions.

Government

Germany is a federal, parliamentary, representative democratic republic. The German political system operates under a framework laid out in the 1949 constitutional document known as the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law). By calling the document *Grundgesetz*, rather than *Verfassung* (constitution), the authors expressed the intention that it would be replaced by a proper constitution once Germany was reunited as one state. Amendments to the *Grundgesetz* generally require a two-thirds majority of both chambers of the parliament; the articles guaranteeing fundamental rights, the separation of powers, the federal structure, and the right to resist attempts to overthrow the constitution are valid in perpetuity and cannot be amended. Despite the initial intention, the *Grundgesetz* remained in effect after the German reunification in 1990, with only minor amendments.



The largest wind farm and solar power capacity in the world is installed in Germany. Renewable energy generated 14% of the country's total electricity consumption in 2007.



The Reichstag is the old and new site of the German parliament.



President Horst Köhler.

The *Bundeskanzler* (Federal Chancellor)—currently Angela Merkel—is the head of government and exercises executive power, similar to the role of a Prime Minister in other parliamentary democracies. Federal legislative power is vested in the parliament consisting of the *Bundestag* (Federal Diet) and *Bundesrat* (Federal Council), which together form a unique type of legislative body. The *Bundestag* is elected through direct elections, yet abiding proportional representation. The members of the *Bundesrat* represent the governments of the sixteen federal states and are members of the state cabinets. The respective state governments have the right to appoint and remove their envoys at any time.

The *Bundespräsident* (President)—currently Horst Köhler—is the head of state, invested primarily with representative responsibilities and powers. He is elected by the *Bundesversammlung* (federal convention), an institution consisting of the members of the *Bundestag* and an equal number of state delegates. The second highest official in the German order of precedence is the *Bundestagspräsident* (President of the *Bundestag*), who is elected by the *Bundestag* and responsible for overseeing the daily sessions of the body. The third-highest official and the head of government is the Chancellor, who is nominated by the *Bundespräsident* after being elected by the *Bundestag*. The Chancellor can be removed by a constructive motion of no confidence

by the *Bundestag*, where constructive implies that the *Bundestag* simultaneously elects a successor.

Since 1949, the party system has been dominated by the Christian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party of Germany although smaller parties, such as the liberal Free Democratic Party (which has had members in the Bundestag since 1949) and the Alliance '90/The Greens (which has controlled seats in parliament since 1983) have also played important roles.

States

Germany comprises 16 states (*Länder, Bundesländer*), which are further subdivided into 439 districts (*Kreise*) and cities (*kreisfreie Städte*) (2004).

State	Capital	Area (km ²)	Population
Baden-Württemberg	Stuttgart	35,752	10,717,000
Bavaria (<i>Bayern</i>)	Munich (<i>München</i>)	70,549	12,444,000
Berlin	Berlin	892	3,400,000
Brandenburg	Potsdam	29,477	2,568,000
Bremen	Bremen	404	663,000
Hamburg	Hamburg	755	1,735,000
Hesse (<i>Hessen</i>)	Wiesbaden	21,115	6,098,000

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Schwerin	23,174	1,720,000
Lower Saxony (<i>Niedersachsen</i>)	Hanover (<i>Hannover</i>)	47,618	8,001,000
North Rhine-Westphalia (<i>Nordrhein-Westfalen</i>)	Düsseldorf	34,043	18,075,000
Rhineland-Palatinate (<i>Rheinland-Pfalz</i>)	Mainz	19,847	4,061,000
Saarland	Saarbrücken	2,569	1,056,000
Saxony (<i>Sachsen</i>)	Dresden	18,416	4,296,000
Saxony-Anhalt (<i>Sachsen-Anhalt</i>)	Magdeburg	20,445	2,494,000
Schleswig-Holstein	Kiel	15,763	2,829,000
Thuringia (<i>Thüringen</i>)	Erfurt	16,172	2,355,000

Foreign relations

Germany has played a leading role in the European Union since its inception and has maintained a strong alliance with France since the end of World War II. The alliance was especially close in the late 1980s and early 1990s under the leadership of Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl and Socialist François Mitterrand. Germany is at the forefront of European states seeking to advance the creation of a more unified and capable European political, defence and security apparatus.

Since its establishment on 23 May 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany kept a notably low profile in international relations, because of both its recent history and its occupation by foreign powers. During the Cold War, Germany's partition by the Iron Curtain made it a symbol of East-West tensions and a political battleground in Europe. However, Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik was a key factor in the *détente* of the 1970s. In 1999 Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's government defined a new basis for German foreign policy by taking a full part in the decisions surrounding the NATO war against Yugoslavia and by sending German troops into combat for the first time since World War II.



Chancellor Angela Merkel
hosting the G8 summit in
Heiligendamm.

Germany and the United States are close allies. The 1948 Marshall Plan, U.S. support (JCS 1067) during the rebuilding process (Industrial plans for Germany) after World War II, as well as fraternisation (War children) and food support (food policy) and strong cultural ties have crafted a strong bond between the two countries, although Schröder's very vocal opposition to the Iraq War suggested the end of Atlanticism and a relative cooling of German-American relations. The two countries are also economically interdependent; 8.8% of German exports are U.S.-bound and 6.6% of German imports originate from the U.S. The other way around, 8.8% of U.S. exports ship to Germany and 9.8% of U.S. imports come from Germany. Other signs of the close ties include the continuing position of German-Americans as the largest ethnic group in the U.S. and the status of Ramstein Air Base (near Kaiserslautern) as the largest U.S. military community outside the U.S.

Development aid

The development policy of the Federal Republic of Germany is an independent area of German foreign policy. It is formulated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and carried out by the implementing organisations. The German government sees development policy as a joint responsibility of the international community.

Germany's official development aid and humanitarian aid for 2007 amounted to 8.96 billion euros (12.26 billion dollars), an increase of 5.9 per cent from 2006. It has become the world's second biggest aid donor after the United States. Germany spent 0.37 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on development, which is below the government's target of increasing aid to 0.51 per cent of GDP by 2010. The international target of 0.7% of GNP would have not reached either.

Military

Germany's military, the *Bundeswehr*, is a defence force with *Heer* (Army), *Marine* (Navy), *Luftwaffe* (Air Force), *Zentraler Sanitätsdienst* (Central Medical Services) and *Streitkräftebasis* (Joint Support Service) branches. Military Service is compulsory for men at the age of 18, and conscripts serve nine-month tours of duty. Conscientious objectors may instead opt for an equal length of *Zivildienst* (roughly translated as civilian service), or a six year commitment to (voluntary) emergency services like a fire department, the Red Cross or the THW. In 2003, military spending constituted 1.5% of the country's GDP. In peacetime, the *Bundeswehr* is commanded by the Minister of Defence, currently Franz Josef Jung. If Germany went to war, which according to the constitution is allowed only for defensive purposes, the Chancellor would become commander in chief of the *Bundeswehr*.

As of October 2006, the German military had almost 9,000 troops stationed in foreign countries as part of various international peacekeeping forces, including 1,180 troops stationed in Bosnia-Herzegovina; 2,844 *Bundeswehr* soldiers in Kosovo; 750 soldiers stationed as a part of EUFOR in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and 2,800 German troops in the NATO-led ISAF force in Afghanistan. As of February 2007, Germany had about 3,000 ISAF troops in Afghanistan, the third largest contingent after the United States (14,000) and the United Kingdom (5,200).

Law

The Judiciary of Germany is independent of the executive and the legislative branches. Germany has a civil or statute law system that is based on Roman law with some references to Germanic law. The *Bundesverfassungsgericht* (Federal Constitutional Court), located in Karlsruhe, is the German Supreme Court responsible for constitutional matters, with power of judicial review. It acts as the highest legal authority and ensures that legislative and judicial practice conforms to the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (Basic Law). It acts independently of the other state bodies, but cannot act on its own behalf.



Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949.

Germany's supreme court system, called *Oberste Gerichtshöfe des Bundes*, is specialized. For civil and criminal cases, the highest court of appeal is the Federal Court of Justice, located in Karlsruhe and Leipzig. The courtroom style is inquisitorial. Other Federal Courts are the Federal Labour Court in Erfurt, the Federal Social Court in Kassel, the Federal Finance Court in Munich and the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig.

Criminal law and private law are codified on the national level in the *Strafgesetzbuch* and the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* respectively. The German penal system is aimed towards rehabilitation of the criminal; its secondary goal is the protection of the general public. To achieve the latter, a convicted criminal can be put in preventive detention (*Sicherheitsverwahrung*) in addition to the regular sentence if he is considered to be a threat to the general public. The *Völkerstrafgesetzbuch* regulates the consequences of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. It gives German courts universal jurisdiction if prosecution by a court of the country where the crime was committed, or by an international court, is not possible.



The *Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* is participating in a UNIFIL II operation off the coast of Lebanon.



The Federal Constitutional Court of Germany in Karlsruhe.

State level

Legislative power is divided between the federation and the state level. The Basic Law presumes that all legislative power remains at the state level unless otherwise designated by the Basic Law itself. In some areas, federal and state level have concurrent legislative power. In such cases, the federate level has power to legislation "if and to the extent that the establishment of equal living conditions throughout the federal territory or the maintenance of legal or economic unity renders federal regulation necessary in the national interest" (Art. 72 Basic Law).

Any federal law overrides state law if the legislative power lies at the federal level. A famous example is the Hessian permission of the death penalty that goes against the ban of capital punishment by the Basic Law, rendering the Hessian provision invalid. The *Bundesrat* is the federal organ through which the states participate in national legislation. State participation in federal legislation is necessary if the law falls within the area of concurrent legislative power, requires states to administer federal regulations, or if designated so by the Basic Law. Every state with the exception of Schleswig-Holstein (whose constitutional jurisdiction is exercised by the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* in procuration) has its own constitutional courts. The *Amtsgerichte*, *Landgerichte* and *Oberlandesgerichte* are state courts of general jurisdiction. They are competent whether the action is based on federal or state law.

Many of the fundamental matters in administrative law remain in the jurisdiction of the states, though most states base their own laws in that area on the 1976 *Verwaltungsverfahrensgesetz* (Administrative Proceedings Act) in important points of administrative law. The *Oberverwaltungsgerichte* are the highest levels in administrative jurisdiction concerning the state administrations, unless the question of law concerns federal law or state law identical to federal law. In such cases, final appeal to the Federal Administrative Court is possible.



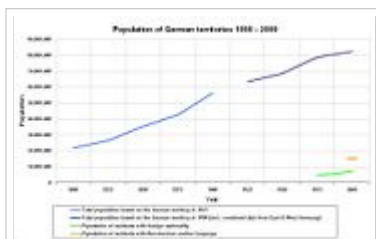
German state police officer in Hamburg.

Demographics

With over 82 million inhabitants, Germany is the most populous country in the European Union. However, its fertility rate of 1.39 children per mother is one of the lowest in the world, and the federal statistics office estimates the population will shrink to between 69 and 74 million by 2050 (69 million assuming a net migration of +100,000 per year; 74 million assuming a net migration of +200,000 per year). Germany has a number of larger cities, the most populous being Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, Frankfurt and Stuttgart. By far the largest conurbation is the Rhine-Ruhr region, including Düsseldorf (the capital of NRW) and the cities of Cologne, Essen, Dortmund, Duisburg, and Bochum.



Berlin is the largest city with a population of 3.4 million people.



Population of German territories 1800 - 2000 and immigrant population from 1975 - 2000.

As of December 2004, about seven million foreign citizens were registered in Germany, and 19% of the country's residents were of foreign or partially foreign descent. The young are more likely to be of foreign descent than the old. 30% of Germans aged 15 years and younger have at least one parent born abroad. In the big cities 60% of children aged 5 years and younger have at least one parent born abroad. The largest group (2.3 million) is from Turkey, and a majority of the rest are from European states such as Italy, Serbia, Greece, Poland, and Croatia. The United Nations Population Fund lists Germany as host to the third-highest number of international migrants worldwide, about 5% or 10 million of all 191 million migrants, or about 12% of the population of Germany. As a consequence of restrictions of Germany's formerly rather unrestricted laws on asylum and immigration, the number of immigrants seeking asylum or claiming German ethnicity (mostly from the former Soviet Union) has been declining steadily since 2000.

Religion

Christianity is the largest religious denomination in Germany with 53 million adherents (64%). The second largest religion is Islam with 3.3 million adherents (4%) followed by Buddhism and Judaism, both with around 200,000 adherents (ca. 0.25%). Hinduism has some 90,000 adherents (0.1%). All other religious communities in Germany have fewer than 50,000 (or less than 0.05%) adherents. About 24.4 million Germans (29.6%) have no registered religious denomination.

Protestantism is concentrated in the north and east and Roman Catholicism is concentrated in the south and west. Both denominations comprise about 31% of the population each. The current Pope, Benedict XVI, was born in Bavaria. Non-religious people, including atheists and agnostics amount to 29.6% of the population, and are especially numerous in the former East Germany and major metropolitan areas.

Of the 3.3 million Muslims most are Sunnis and Alevites from Turkey, but there are a small number of Shiites. 1.7% of the country's overall population declares themselves Orthodox Christians, Serbs and Greeks being the most numerous. Germany has Western Europe's third-largest Jewish population. In 2004, twice as many Jews from former Soviet republics settled in Germany as in Israel, bringing the total Jewish population to more than 200,000, compared to 30,000 prior to German reunification. Large cities with significant Jewish populations include Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich. Around 250,000 active Buddhists live in Germany; 50% of them are Asian immigrants.

According to the Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 47% of German citizens agreed with the statement "I believe there is a God", whereas 25% agreed with "I believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 25% said "I do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

Languages



The Cologne Cathedral at the Rhine river is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

German is the official and predominantly spoken language in Germany. It is one of 23 official languages in the European Union, and one of the three working languages of the European Commission, along with English and French. Recognized native minority languages in Germany are Danish, Sorbian, Romany and Frisian. They are officially protected by the ECRML. Most used immigrant languages are Turkish, Polish, the Balkan languages and Russian.

The standard German is a West Germanic language and is closely related to and classified alongside English, Dutch and the Frisian languages. To a lesser extent, it is also related to the East (extinct) and North Germanic languages. Most German vocabulary is derived from the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Significant minorities of words derived from Latin, Greek, a smaller amount from French, and most recently English (known as Denglisch). German is written using the Latin alphabet. In addition to the 26 standard letters, German has three vowels with Umlaut, namely ä, ö and ü, as well as the Eszett or *scharfes S* (*sharp s*) which is written "ß" or alternatively "ss".

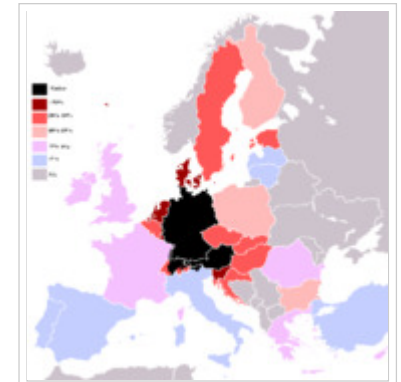
German dialects are distinguished from varieties of standard German. The German dialects are the traditional local varieties and are traced back to the different German tribes. Many of them are not easily understandable to someone who knows only standard German, since they often differ from standard German in lexicon, phonology and syntax.

Around the world, German is spoken by approximately 100 million native speakers and also about 80 million non-native speakers. German is the main language of about 90 million people (18%) in the EU. 67% of the German citizens claim to be able to communicate in at least one foreign language, 27% in at least two languages other than their own.

Economy

Germany is the largest national economy in Europe, the third largest by nominal GDP in the world, and ranked fifth by GDP (PPP). Growth in 2007 was 2.4% and is predicted to retain this level in the following years. Since the age of industrialisation the country has been motor, innovator and beneficiary of an ever more globalized economy. The export of goods "Made in Germany" is one of the main factors of the country's wealth. Germany is the world's top exporter with \$1.133 trillion exported in 2006 (Eurozone countries are included) and generates a trade surplus of €165 billion. The service sector contributes around 70% to the total GDP, the industry 29.1% and agriculture 0.9%. Most of the country's products are in engineering, especially in automobiles, machinery, metals, and chemical goods. Germany is the leading producer of wind turbines and solar power technology in the world. The largest, annual, international trade fairs and congresses are held in several German cities such as Hanover, Frankfurt and Berlin.

Among the world's largest stock market signed companies measured by revenue, the Fortune Global 500, 37 companies are headquartered in Germany. The ten biggest are Daimler, Volkswagen, Allianz (the most profitable company), Siemens, Deutsche Bank (2nd most profitable company), E.ON, Deutsche Post, Deutsche Telekom, Metro and BASF. Among the largest employers are also Deutsche Post, Robert Bosch and Edeka. Well known global brands are Mercedes Benz, SAP, BMW, adidas, Audi, Porsche and Nivea.



Knowledge of German in the European Union and some other European countries.



Frankfurt is a major financial centre and a global aviation hub.



Germany was the world's leading exporter of goods in 2007.

Germany is a strong advocate of closer European economic and political integration, and its commercial policies are increasingly determined by agreements among European Union (EU) members and EU single market legislation. Germany uses the common European currency, the euro, and its monetary policy is set by the European Central Bank in Frankfurt. After the German reunification in 1990, the standard of living and annual income remains significantly higher in the former West German states. The modernisation and integration of the eastern German economy continues to be a long-term process scheduled to the year 2019, with annual transfers from west to east amounting to roughly \$80 billion. The overall unemployment rate has consistently fallen since 2005 and reached a 15-year low in June 2008 with 7.5%. The percentage is ranging from 6.2% in former Western Germany to 12.7% in former Eastern Germany. The former government of Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder launched a comprehensive set of reforms of labour market and welfare-related institutions. The current government runs a restrictive fiscal policy and has cut regular jobs in the public sector aiming for a balanced federal budget in 2008.

Infrastructure

In 2002 Germany was the world's fifth largest consumer of energy, and two-thirds of its primary energy was imported. In the same year, Germany was Europe's largest consumer of electricity; electricity consumption that year totalled 512.9 billion kilowatt-hours. Government policy emphasizes conservation and the development of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, biomass, hydro, and geothermal. As a result of energy-saving measures, energy efficiency (the amount of energy required to produce a unit of gross domestic product) has been improving since the beginning of the 1970s. The government has set the goal of meeting half the country's energy demands from renewable sources by 2050. In 2000 the government and the German nuclear power industry agreed to phase out all nuclear power plants by 2021. However, renewable energy is playing a more modest role in energy consumption. In 2006 energy consumption was met by the following sources: oil (35.7%) , coal, including lignite (23.9%) , natural gas (22.8%) , nuclear (12.6%) , hydro and wind power (1.3%) , and other (3.7%).



Hamburg Harbour is the second-largest port city in Europe and ninth-largest port in the world.

By its central position in Europe, Germany is an important transportation hub. This is reflected in its dense and modern transportation networks. Probably most famous is the extensive motorway (Autobahn) network that ranks worldwide third largest in its total length and features lack of blanket speed limits on the majority of routes.



The ICE 3 trainset.

Germany has established a polycentric network of high-speed trains. The InterCityExpress or *ICE* is predominantly serving major German cities and destinations in neighbouring countries. The train speed varies from 160 km/h to 300 km/h and is the most advanced service category of the Deutsche Bahn. Connections are offered in either 30-minute, hourly or bi-hourly intervals.

Science

Germany has been the home of some of the most prominent researchers in various scientific fields. The Nobel Prize has been awarded to 100 German laureates. The work of Albert Einstein and Max Planck was crucial to the foundation of modern physics, which Werner Heisenberg and Max Born developed further. They were preceded by physicists such as Hermann von Helmholtz, Joseph von Fraunhofer, and Gabriel Daniel Fahrenheit. Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovered X-rays, an accomplishment that made him the first winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1901. In Germany and many other countries X-rays are called "Röntgenstrahlen" (Röntgen-rays). Heinrich Rudolf Hertz's work in the domain of electromagnetic radiation was pivotal to the development of modern telecommunication. Through his construction of the first laboratory at the University of Leipzig in 1879, Wilhelm Wundt is credited with the establishment of psychology as an independent empirical science. Alexander von Humboldt's work as a natural scientist and explorer was foundational to biogeography.



Extensive Cleanroom complex for Microelectronic Manufacturing in Stuttgart.

Numerous significant mathematicians were born in Germany, including Carl Friedrich Gauss, David Hilbert, Bernhard Riemann, Gottfried Leibniz, Karl Weierstrass and Hermann Weyl. Germany has been the home of many famous inventors and engineers, such as Johannes Gutenberg, who is credited with the invention of movable type printing in Europe; Hans Geiger, the creator of the Geiger counter; and Konrad Zuse, who built the first fully automatic digital computer. German inventors, engineers and industrialists such as Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, Otto Lilienthal, Gottlieb Daimler, Rudolf Diesel, Hugo Junkers and Karl Benz helped shape modern automotive and air transportation technology.

Important research institutions in Germany are the Max Planck Society, the Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft and the Fraunhofer Society. They are independently or externally connected to the university system and contribute to a considerable extent to the scientific output. The prestigious award Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize is granted to ten scientists and academics every year. With a maximum of €2.5 million per award it is one of highest endowed research prizes in the world.

Education



Max Planck presents Albert Einstein with the Max-Planck medal in 1929.

Responsibility for educational oversight in Germany lies primarily with the federal states individually whilst the government only has a minor role. Optional kindergarten education is provided for all children between three and six years old, after which school attendance is compulsory for at least nine years. Primary education usually lasts for four years and public schools are not stratified at this stage. In contrast, secondary education includes four types of schools based on a pupil's ability as determined by teacher recommendations: the *Gymnasium* includes the most gifted children and prepares students for university studies and attendance lasts eight or nine years depending on the state; the *Realschule* has a broader range of emphasis for intermediary students and lasts six years; the *Hauptschule* prepares pupils for vocational education, and the *Gesamtschule* or comprehensive school combines the three approaches.



Kindergarten in Hesse.



The University of Heidelberg was established in 1386.

The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, assesses the skills of 15-year olds in OECD countries and a number of partner countries. In 2006, German schoolchildren improved their position on previous years, being ranked (statistically) significantly above average (rank 13) in science skills and statistically not significantly above or below average on mathematical skills (rank 20) and reading skills (rank 18). The socio-economic gradient was very high in Germany, the pupils' performance in Germany being more dependent on the socio-economic factors than in most other countries.

To enter a university, high school students are required to take the *Abitur* examination, similar to A-levels; however, students possessing a diploma from a vocational school may also apply to enter. A special system of apprenticeship called *Duale Ausbildung* allows pupils in vocational training to learn in a company as well as in a state-run school. Most German universities are state-owned and charge for tuition fees ranging from €50–500 per semester from each student.

Germany's universities are recognised internationally, indicating the high education standards in the country. In the 2006 THES - QS World University Rankings, 10 German universities were ranked amongst the top 200 in the world.

Culture

Germany is often called *Das Land der Dichter und Denker* (the land of poets and thinkers). German culture began long before the rise of Germany as a nation-state and spanned the entire German-speaking world. From its roots, culture in Germany has been shaped by major intellectual and popular currents in Europe, both religious and secular. As a result, it is difficult to identify a specific German tradition separated from the larger framework of European high culture. Another consequence of these circumstances is the fact, that some historical figures, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Kafka and Paul Celan, though not citizens of Germany in the modern sense, must be seen in the context of the German cultural sphere to understand their historical situation, work and social relations.



Blaues Pferd I, 1911 by
Franz Marc
(1880–1916).

Germany claims some of the world's most renowned classical music composers, including Ludwig van Beethoven, Johann Sebastian Bach, Johannes Brahms and Richard Wagner. As of 2006, Germany is the fifth largest music market in the world and has influenced pop and rock music through artists such as Kraftwerk, Scorpions and Rammstein.

Numerous German painters have enjoyed international prestige through their work in diverse artistic currents. Hans Holbein the Younger, Matthias Grünewald, and Albrecht Dürer were important artists of the Renaissance, Caspar David Friedrich of Romanticism, and Max Ernst of Surrealism. Architectural contributions from Germany include the Carolingian and Ottonian styles, which were important precursors of Romanesque. The region later became the site for significant works in styles such as Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque. Germany was particularly important in the early modern movement, especially through the Bauhaus movement founded by Walter Gropius. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, also from Germany, became one of world's most renowned architects in the second half of the 20th century. The glass facade skyscraper was his idea.

Philosophy



Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827),
composer.

German literature can be traced back to the Middle Ages and the works of writers such as Walther von der Vogelweide and Wolfram von Eschenbach. Various German authors and poets have won great renown, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller. The collections of folk tales published by the Brothers Grimm popularized German folklore on the international level. Influential authors of the 20th century include Thomas Mann, Berthold Brecht, Hermann Hesse, Heinrich Böll, and Günter Grass.

Germany's influence on philosophy is historically significant and many notable German philosophers have helped shape western philosophy since the Middle Ages. Gottfried Leibniz's contributions to rationalism, Immanuel Kant's, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's and Johann Gottlieb Fichte's establishment of the classical German idealism, Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' formulation of Communist theory, Arthur Schopenhauer's composition of metaphysical pessimism, Friedrich Nietzsche's development of Perspectivism, Martin Heidegger's works on Being, and the social theories of Jürgen Habermas were especially influential.

Cinema

German cinema dates back to the very early years of the medium with the work of Max Skladanowsky. It was particularly influential during the years of the Weimar Republic with German expressionists such as Robert Wiene and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. Austria-based director Fritz Lang, who became a German citizen in 1926 and whose career flourished in pre-war German film industry, is said to be a major influence on Hollywood cinema. His silent movie *Metropolis* (1927) is referred to as birth of modern Science Fiction movies.

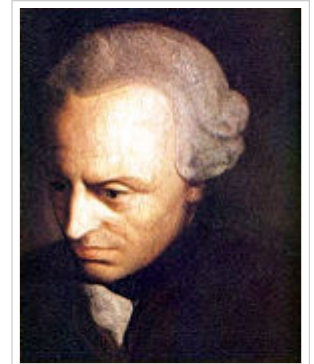
In 1930 Austrian-American Josef von Sternberg directed *The Blue Angel*, which was the first major German sound film and it brought world fame to actress Marlene Dietrich. Impressionist documentary *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* directed by Walter Ruttmann, is a prominent example of the city symphony genre. The Nazi era produced mostly propaganda films although the work of Leni Riefenstahl still introduced new aesthetics in film.

During the 1970-80s, New German Cinema directors such as Volker Schlöndorff, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Rainer Werner Fassbinder placed West-German cinema back onto the international stage with their often provocative films.

More recently, films such as *Das Boot* (1981) , *Lola rennt (Run Lola Run)* (1998) , *Das Experiment* (2001) , *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003) , *Gegen die Wand (Head-on)* (2004) and *Der Untergang (Downfall)* (2004) have enjoyed international success. The Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film went to the German production *Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum)* in 1979, to *Nowhere in Africa* in 2002, and to *Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others)* in 2007. Among the most famous German actors are Marlene Dietrich, Klaus Kinski, Hanna Schygulla, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Jürgen Prochnow and Thomas Kretschmann.

The Berlin Film Festival, held annually since 1951, is one of the world's foremost film festivals. An international jury places emphasis on representing films from all over the world and awards the winner with the Golden and Silver Bears. The annual European Film Awards ceremony is held every second year in the city of Berlin, where the European Film Academy (EFA) is located. The Babelsberg Studios in Potsdam are the oldest large-scale film studios in the world and a centre

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Immanuel Kant
(1724–1804) ,
philosopher.



The Berlinale Palast during the
Berlin Film Festival in
February.

for international film production.

Sports

Sport forms an integral part of German life. Twenty-seven million Germans are members of a sports club and an additional twelve million pursue such an activity individually. Football (soccer) is the most popular sport. With more than 6.3 million official members, the German Football Association (*Deutscher Fußball-Bund*) is the largest sports organisation of this kind worldwide. The Bundesliga attracts the second highest average attendance of any professional sports league in the world. The German national football team won the FIFA World Cup in 1954, 1974 and 1990 and the European Football Championship in 1972, 1980 and 1996. Germany has hosted the FIFA World Cup in 1974 and 2006 and the UEFA European Football Championship in 1988. Among the most successful and renowned footballers are Franz Beckenbauer, Gerd Müller, Jürgen Klinsmann, Lothar Matthäus, and Oliver Kahn. Other popular spectator sports include handball, volleyball, basketball, ice hockey, and tennis.



Michael Schumacher has won seven Formula One championships.

Germany is one of the leading motorsports countries in the world. Race winning cars, teams and drivers have come from Germany. The most successful Formula One driver in history, Michael Schumacher has set the most significant motorsport records during his career and won more Formula One championships and races than any other driver since Formula one's debut season in 1946. He is one of the highest paid sportsmen in history and became a Billionaire athlete. Constructors like BMW and Mercedes are among the leading teams in motorsport sponsoring. Porsche has won the 24 hours of Le Mans, a prestigious annual race held in France, 16 times. The Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters is a popular series in Germany.

Historically, German sportsmen have been some of the most successful contenders in the Olympic Games, ranking third in an all-time Olympic Games medal count, combining East and West German medals. In the 2004 Summer Olympics, Germany finished sixth in the medal count, while in the 2006 Winter Olympics they finished first. Germany has hosted the Summer Olympic Games twice, in Berlin in 1936 and in Munich in 1972. The Winter Olympic Games took place once in 1936 when they were staged in the Bavarian twin towns of Garmisch and Partenkirchen.



The Allianz Arena is host to the football club Bayern Munich and was a venue for the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

Cuisine

German cuisine varies greatly from region to region. The southern regions of Bavaria and Swabia, for instance, share a culinary culture with Switzerland and Austria. Pork, beef, and poultry are the main varieties of meat consumed in Germany, with pork being the most popular. Throughout all regions, meat is often eaten in sausage form. More than 1500 different types of sausage are produced in Germany. The most popular vegetables are potatoes, cabbage, carrots, turnip, spinach and beans. Organic food has gained a market share of around 3.0% and is predicted to be an increasing trend.

A popular saying in Germany is: "Breakfast like an emperor, lunch like a king, and dine like a beggar." Breakfast is usually a selection of cereals and jam or honey with bread. Some Germans eat cold meats or cheese with bread for breakfast. More than 300 types of breads, sold in bakery shops, are known throughout the country.



A typical cheese and cold meat buffet served at private festivities.

As a country with many immigrants, Germany has adopted many international dishes into its cuisine and daily eating habits. Italian dishes like Pizza and Pasta, Turkish and Arab dishes like Döner Kebab and Falafel are well established, especially in bigger cities. International burger chains, as well as Chinese and Greek restaurants, are widespread. Indian, Thai, Japanese, and other Asian cuisines have gained popularity in recent decades. Among high-profile restaurants in Germany the Michelin guide has awarded three stars, the highest designation, to nine restaurants; 15 more received two stars. German restaurants have become the world's second most decorated after eateries in France.

Although wine is becoming more popular in many parts of Germany, the national drink is beer. German beer consumption per person is declining but at 116 litres annually it is still among the highest in the world. Beer varieties include Alt, Bock, Dunkel, Kölsch, Lager, Malzbier, Pils, and Weizenbier. Among 18 surveyed western countries, Germany ranked 14th in the list of per capita consumption of soft drinks in general, while it ranked third in the consumption of fruit juices. Furthermore, sparkling mineral water and *Schorle* (its mixture with fruit juice) are extremely popular in Germany.



A Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte (Black Forest gateau).

Society

Germany has promoted itself as *Land of ideas*. A campaign that has started in the year 2006 accompanying the Football World Cup Finals finds its continuation in 2008. The campaign focuses recent innovations in public and private institutions, universities and research institutes, companies, as well as social and cultural projects.

Since the World Cup celebrations the internal and external perception of the country's image has changed. In regularly conducted global surveys known as the Anholt GMI Index, Germany as a nation brand, has become significantly and repeatedly higher ranked after the football tournament. Besides economic criteria people were asked to assess a country's reputation in terms of culture, politics, its people and its attractiveness to tourists. Germany has been named the world's most valued nation brand among 36 countries. Another global opinion poll for the BBC revealed that Germany is recognized for the most positive influence in the world, leading 22 investigated countries. A majority of 56% have a positive view of the country, while 18% have a negative view.



Claudia Schiffer, model.



Germans invest a large amount of money in international travel and domestic vacation trips (seaside resort in Sellin on the island Rügen).

Germany is a legally and socially tolerant country towards homosexuals. Civil unions have been permitted since 2001. Gays and lesbians can legally adopt their partner's biological children (stepchild adoption). The two mayors of the largest German cities Berlin and Hamburg are openly gay politicians.

During the last decade of the 20th century Germany has transformed its attitude towards immigrants considerably. Until the mid-nineties the opinion was widespread that Germany is not a country of immigration in spite of an approximately 10% population of non-German origin. After the end of the influx of so-called *Gastarbeiter* (blue-collar guest-workers), refugees were a tolerated exception to this point of view. Today the government and the German society are acknowledging the opinion, that controlled immigration should be allowed based on the qualification of immigrants.

With an expenditure of €58 billion for international travel in 2005, Germans invested more money in travel than any other country. Most popular destinations were Austria, Spain, Italy and France.

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Greece

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

SOS Children works in Greece. For more information see SOS Children in Greece

Greece (Greek: Ελλάδα, Elláda, IPA: [eˈlaða], or Ελλάς, *Ellás*, [eˈlas]), officially the **Hellenic Republic** [Ελληνική Δημοκρατία (eliniˈki ðimokraˈtia)], is a country in southeastern Europe, situated on the southern end of the Balkan Peninsula. It has borders with Albania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the north, and Turkey to the east. The Aegean Sea lies to the east and south of mainland Greece, while the Ionian Sea lies to the west. Both parts of the Eastern Mediterranean basin feature a vast number of islands.

Greece lies at the juncture of Europe, Asia and Africa. It is heir to the heritages of ancient Greece, the Roman and Byzantine Empires, and nearly four centuries of Ottoman rule. Greece is the birthplace of democracy, Western philosophy, the Olympic Games, Western literature and historiography, political science, major scientific and mathematical principles, and Western drama including both tragedy and comedy.

Greece is a developed country, a member of the European Union since 1981, a member of the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union since 2001, NATO since 1952, the OECD since 1961, the WEU since 1995 and ESA since 2005. Athens is the capital; Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklion, Volos, Ioannina, Larissa and Kavala are some of the country's other major cities.

History

<p>Ελληνική Δημοκρατία <i>Ellinikí Dimokratía</i> Hellenic Republic</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of Arms
<p>Motto: Ελευθερία ή θάνατος <i>Eleftheria i thanatos</i> (transliteration) "Freedom or Death"</p>	
<p>Anthem: Ύμνος εις την Ελευθερίαν <i>Ýmnos eis tīn Eleutherían</i> Hymn to Liberty¹</p>	



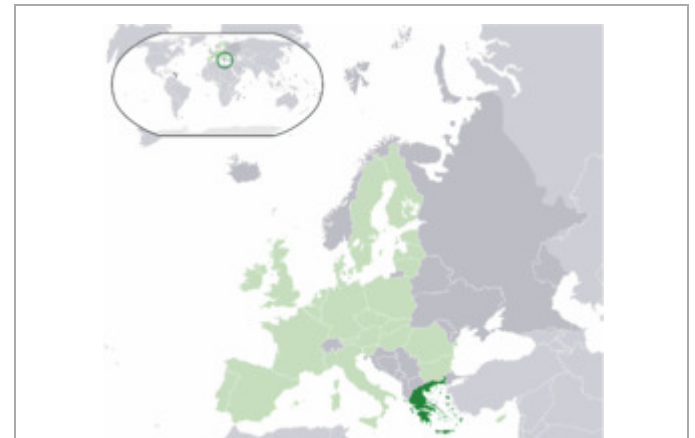
The Parthenon in Athens.

The shores of the Aegean sea saw the emergence of the first advanced civilizations in Europe, the Minoan civilization in Crete and the Mycenaean civilization on the mainland. Later, city-states emerged across the Greek peninsula and spread to the shores of Black Sea, South Italy and Asia Minor reaching great levels of prosperity that resulted in an unprecedented cultural boom, expressed in architecture, drama, science and philosophy, and nurtured in Athens under a democratic environment. Athens and Sparta led the way in repelling the Persian Empire in a series of battles. Both were later overshadowed by Thebes and eventually Macedon, with the latter

under the guidance of Alexander the Great uniting and leading the Greek world to victory over the Persians, to presage the Hellenistic era, itself brought only partially to a close two centuries later with the establishment of Roman rule over Greek lands in 146 BC.

The subsequent mixture of Roman and Hellenic cultures took form in the establishment of the Byzantine Empire in 330 AD around Constantinople, which remained a major cultural and military power for the next 1,123 years, until its fall at the hands of Ottomans in 1453. On the eve of the Ottoman era the Greek intelligentsia migrated to Western Europe, playing a significant role in the Western European Renaissance through the transferring of works of Ancient Greeks to Western Europe. Nevertheless, the Ottoman millet system contributed to the ethnic cohesion of Orthodox people by segregating the various peoples within the Ottoman Empire based on religion as the latter played an integral role in the formation of modern Greek identity.

After the Greek War of Independence, successfully fought against the Ottoman Empire from 1821 to 1829, the nascent Greek state was finally recognized under the London Protocol. In 1827, Ioannis Kapodistrias, a noble Greek from the Ionian Islands, was chosen as the first governor of the new Republic. However, following his assassination, the Great Powers soon installed a monarchy under Otto, of the Bavarian House of Wittelsbach. In 1843, an uprising forced the King to grant a constitution and a representative assembly. Due to his unimpaired authoritarian rule, he was eventually dethroned in 1863 and replaced by Prince Vilhelm (William) of Denmark, who took the name George I and brought with him the Ionian Islands as a coronation gift from Britain. In 1877, Charilaos Trikoupis, a dominant figure of the Greek political scene who is attributed with the significant improvement of the country's infrastructure, curbed the power of the monarchy to interfere in the assembly by issuing the rule of vote of confidence to any potential prime minister.

Location of **Greece** (dark green)

– on the European continent (light green & dark grey)
 – in the European Union (light green) — [Legend]

Capital (and largest city)	Athens
Official languages	Greek
Demonym	Greek
Government	Parliamentary republic
- President	Karolos Papoulias
- Prime Minister	Kostas Karamanlis
- Speaker	Dimitris Sioufas
Modern statehood	
- Independence from the Ottoman Empire	25 March 1821
- Recognized	3 February 1830, in the London Protocol
- Current constitution	1975, "Third Republic"
EU accession	January 1, 1981



March 25, 1821: Germanos of Patras, blessing the Greek flag at Agia Lavra. Theodoros Vryzakis, 1865.

As a result of the Balkan Wars, Greece successfully increased the extent of her territory and population, a challenging context both socially and economically. In the following years, the struggle between King Constantine I and charismatic prime minister Eleftherios Venizelos over the country's foreign policy on the eve of World War I dominated the country's political scene, and divided the country into two bitterly hostile factions.

In the aftermath of WW I, Greece fought against Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal, a war which resulted in a massive population exchange between the two countries under the Treaty of Lausanne. Instability and successive coup d'etats marked the following era, which was overshadowed by the massive task of incorporating 1.5 million Greek refugees from Asia Minor into Greek society. On 28 October 1940 Fascist Italy demanded the surrender of Greece, but the Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas famously responded to the Italian ultimatum with the single word "OXI" ("No"). In the following Greco-Italian War, Greece repelled Italian forces into Albania, giving the Allies their first victory over Axis forces on land. The country would eventually fall to

urgently dispatched German forces during the Battle of Greece, but the occupiers nevertheless met serious challenges from the Greek Resistance.

After liberation, Greece experienced a bitter civil war between Royalist and Communist forces, which led to economic devastation and severe social tensions between its Rightists and largely Communist Leftists for the next 30 years. The next 20 years were characterized by marginalisation of the left in the political and social spheres but also by a significant economic growth, propelled in part by the Marshall Plan.

In 1965, a period of political turbulence led to a coup d'etat on April 21, 1967 by the US-backed Regime of the Colonels. On November 1973 the Athens Polytechnic Uprising sent shock waves across the regime, and a counter-coup established Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannides as dictator. On July 20, 1974, as Turkey invaded the island of Cyprus, the regime collapsed.

Area	
- Total	131,990 km ² (96 th) 50,944 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.8669
Population	
- 2008 estimate	11,216,708 (74 th)
- 2001 census	10,964,020
- Density	84/km ² (88 th) 218/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 IMF estimate
- Total	\$342.886 billion (32 nd)
- Per capita	\$30,745 (30 th)
GDP (nominal)	2008 IMF estimate
- Total	\$361.577 billion (27 th)
- Per capita	\$32,421 (27 th)
Gini (2000)	35.4 ² (low)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.926 (high) (24 th)
Currency	Euro (€) ³ (EUR)
Time zone	EET (UTC+2)
- Summer (DST)	EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.gr ⁴
Calling code	+30
<p>1 Also the national anthem of Cyprus.</p> <p>2 UNU/Wider World Income Inequality Database.</p> <p>3 Before 2001: Greek Drachma.</p> <p>4 The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.</p>	

Ex-Premier Constantine Karamanlis was invited back from Paris where he had lived in self-exile since 1963, marking the beginning of the Metapolitefsi era. On the 14 August 1974 Greek forces withdrew from the integrated military structure of NATO in protest at the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus. In 1975 a democratic republican constitution was activated and the monarchy abolished by a referendum held that same year. Meanwhile, Andreas Papandreou founded the Panhellenic Socialist Party, or PASOK, in response to Constantine Karamanlis' New Democracy party, with the two political formations dominating Greek political affairs in the ensuing decades. Greece rejoined NATO in 1980. Relations with neighbouring Turkey have improved substantially over the last decade, since successive earthquakes hit both nations in the summer of 1999 (see Greek-Turkish earthquake diplomacy), and today Athens is an active supporter of the country's EU membership bid.

Greece became the tenth member of the European Union on January 1, 1981 and ever since the nation has experienced a remarkable and sustained economic growth. Widespread investments in industrial enterprises and heavy infrastructure, as well as funds from the European Union and growing revenues from tourism, shipping and a fast growing service sector have raised the country's standard of living to unprecedented levels. The country adopted the Euro in 2001 and successfully organised the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

Government and politics



Great State Seal of the
Presidency of the
Republic

Greece is a parliamentary republic. The head of state is the President of the Republic, who is elected by the Parliament for a five-year term. The current Constitution was drawn up and adopted by the Fifth Revisionary Parliament of the Hellenes and entered into force in 1975 after the fall of the military junta of 1967-1974. It has been revised twice since, in 1986 and in 2001. The Constitution, which consists of 120 articles, provides for a separation of powers into executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and grants extensive specific guarantees (further reinforced in 2001) of civil liberties and social rights.

According to the Constitution, executive power is exercised by the President of the Republic and the Government. The Constitutional amendment of 1986 the President's duties were curtailed to a significant extent, and they are now largely ceremonial. The position of Prime Minister, Greece's head of government, belongs to the current leader of the political party that can obtain a vote of confidence by the Parliament. The President of the Republic formally appoints the Prime

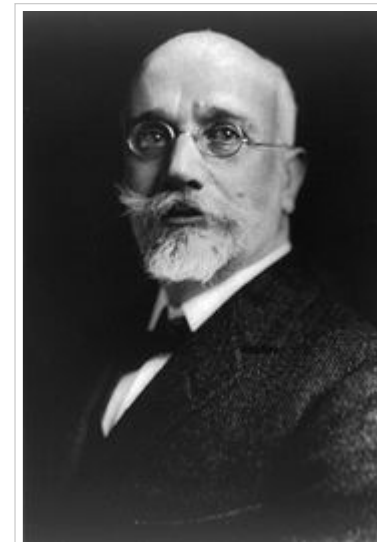
Minister and, on his recommendation, appoints and dismisses the other members of the Cabinet. The Prime Minister exercises vast political power, and the amendment of 1986 further strengthened his position to the detriment of the President of the Republic.

Legislative power is exercised by a 300-member elective unicameral Parliament. Statutes passed by the Parliament are promulgated by the President of the Republic. Parliamentary elections are held every four years, but the President of the Republic is obliged to dissolve the Parliament earlier on the proposal of the Cabinet, in view of dealing with a national issue of exceptional importance. The President is also obliged to dissolve the Parliament earlier, if the opposition manages to pass a motion of no confidence.

The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature and comprises three Supreme Courts: the Court of Cassation (Άρειος Πάγος), the Council of State (Συμβούλιο της Επικρατείας) and the Court of Auditors (Ελεγκτικό Συνέδριο). The Judiciary system is also composed of civil courts, which judge civil and penal cases and administrative courts, which judge disputes between the citizens and the Greek administrative authorities.

Since the restoration of democracy, the Greek two-party system is dominated by the liberal-conservative New Democracy and the social-democratic Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). Other significant parties include the Communist Party of Greece, the Coalition of the Radical Left and the Popular Orthodox Rally. The current prime minister is Kostas Karamanlis, president of the New Democracy party and nephew of the late Constantine Karamanlis, who won a second term on September 16, 2007, acquiring a slimmer majority in the Parliament with only 152 out of 300 seats.

Peripheries and prefectures



Eleftherios Venizelos
(1864–1936), one of the
greatest political figures of
modern Greece.



Kostas Karamanlis, the current
Prime Minister of Greece.

Administratively, Greece consists of thirteen peripheries subdivided into a total of fifty-one prefectures (*nomoi*, singular *nomos*). There is also one autonomous area, Mount Athos (*Agio Oros*, "Holy Mountain"), which borders the periphery of Central Macedonia.

Map	Number	Periphery	Capital	Area	Population
	1	Attica	Athens	3,808 km ²	3,761,810
	2	Central Greece	Lamia	15,549 km ²	605,329
	3	Central Macedonia	Thessaloniki	18,811 km ²	1,871,952
	4	Crete	Heraklion	8,259 km ²	601,131
	5	East Macedonia and Thrace	Kavála	14,157 km ²	611,067
	6	Epirus	Ioannina	9,203 km ²	353,820
	7	Ionian Islands	Corfu	2,307 km ²	212,984
	8	North Aegean	Mytilene	3,836 km ²	206,121
	9	Peloponnese	Kalamata	15,490 km ²	638,942
	10	South Aegean	Ermoupoli	5,286 km ²	302,686
	11	Thessaly	Larissa	14.037 km ²	753,888
	12	West Greece	Patras	11,350 km ²	740,506
	13	West Macedonia	Kozani	9,451 km ²	301,522
-	Mount Athos (Autonomous)	Karyes	390 km ²	2,262	

Geography

Greece consists of a mountainous mainland jutting out into the sea at the southern end of the Balkans, the Peloponnesus peninsula (separated from the mainland by the canal of the Isthmus of Corinth), and numerous islands (around 2,000), including Crete, Euboea, Lesbos, Chios, the Dodecanese and the Cycladic groups of the Aegean Sea as well as the Ionian Sea islands. Greece has the tenth longest coastline in the world with 14,880 kilometres (9,246 mi); its land boundary is 1,160 kilometres (721 mi).

Four fifths of Greece consist of mountains or hills, making the country one of the most mountainous in Europe. Western Greece contains a number of lakes and wetlands and it is dominated by the Pindus mountain range. Pindus has a maximum elevation of 2,636 m (8,648 ft) and it is essentially a prolongation of the Dinaric Alps.

The range continues through the western Peloponnese, crosses the islands of Kythera and Antikythera and find its way into southwestern Aegean, in the island of Crete where it eventually ends. (the islands of the Aegean are peaks of underwater mountains that once constituted an extension of the mainland). Pindus is characterized by its high, steep peaks, often dissected by numerous canyons and a variety of other karstic landscapes. Most notably, the impressive Meteora formation consisting of high, steep boulders provides a breathtaking experience for the hundreds of thousands of tourists who visit the area each year.



View of the rocky Meteora formation in central Greece.

The Vikos-Aoos Gorge is yet another spectacular formation and a popular hotspot for those fond of extreme sports. Mount Olympus, a focal point of Greek culture throughout history is host to the Mytikas peak 2,917 metres (9,570 ft), the highest in the country. Once considered the throne of the Gods, it is today extremely popular among hikers and climbers. Moreover, northeastern Greece features yet another high-altitude mountain range, the Rhodope range, spreading across the periphery of East Macedonia and Thrace; this area is covered with vast, thick, ancient forests. The famous Dadia forest is in the prefecture of Evros, in the far northeast of the country.

Expansive plains are primarily located in the prefectures of Thessaly, Central Macedonia and Thrace. They constitute key economic regions as they are among the few arable places in the country. Rare marine species such as the Pinniped Seals and the Loggerhead Sea Turtle live in the seas surrounding mainland Greece, while its dense forests are home to the endangered brown bear, the lynx, the Roe Deer and the Wild Goat.

Phytogeographically, Greece belongs to the Boreal Kingdom and is shared between the East Mediterranean province of the Mediterranean Region and the Illyrian province of the Circumboreal Region. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature and Digital Map of European Ecological Regions by the European Environment Agency, the territory of Greece can be subdivided into six ecoregions: the Illyrian deciduous forests, Pindus Mountains mixed forests, Balkan mixed forests, Rodope montane mixed forests, Aegean and Western Turkey sclerophyllous and mixed forests and Crete Mediterranean forests.



View of Mount Olympus (2,917 metres (9,570 ft)) from the town of Litochoro.

Climate



Greece enjoys a typical sunny and warm Mediterranean Climate (View from Fira, the capital of Santorini).

The climate of Greece can be categorised into three types (the Mediterranean, the Alpine and the Temperate) that influence well-defined regions of its territory. The Pindus mountain range strongly affects the climate of the country by making the western side of it (areas prone to the south-westerlies) wetter on average than the areas lying to the east of it (lee side of the mountains). The Mediterranean type of climate features mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers. The Cyclades, the Dodecanese, Crete, Eastern Peloponessus and parts of the Sterea Ellada region are mostly affected by this particular type of climate. Temperatures rarely reach extreme values although snowfalls do occur occasionally even in the Cyclades or the Dodecanese during the winter months.

The Alpine type is dominant mainly in the mountainous areas of Northwestern Greece (Epirus, Central Greece, Thessaly, Western Macedonia) as well as in the central parts of Peloponnese, including the prefectures of Achaia, Arcadia and parts of Laconia, where extensions of the Pindus mountain range pass by). Finally, the Temperate type affects Central Macedonia and East Macedonia and Thrace; it features cold, damp winters and hot, dry summers.

Athens is located in a transitional area featuring both the Mediterranean and the Temperate types. The city's northern suburbs are dominated by the temperate type while the downtown area and the southern suburbs enjoy a typical Mediterranean type.

Economy

Greece operates a mixed economy that produced a GDP of \$305.595 billion in 2006. Its principal economic activities include tourism and shipping industries, banking and finance, manufacturing and construction and telecommunications. The country serves as the regional business hub for many of the world's largest multinational companies.

The people of Greece enjoy a high standard of living. Greece ranks 24th in the 2006 HDI, 22nd on The Economist's 2005 world-wide quality-of-life index, and, according to the International Monetary Fund it has an estimated average per capita income of \$35,166 for the year 2007, comparable to that of Germany, France or Italy and approximately equal to the EU average.

Greece's present prosperity is largely owed to the post-World War II " Greek economic miracle" (when GDP growth averaged 7% between 1950 and 1973), the implementation of a number of structural and fiscal reforms, combined with considerable European Union funding over the last twenty-five years and increasing private consumption and investments. The latter facts have contributed to a consistent annual growth of the Greek GDP that was surpassing the respective one of most of its other EU partners.



Greek 2 euro coin in commemoration of the 2004 Olympic Games.

Today, the service industry (74.4%) makes up the largest, most vital and fastest-growing sector of the Greek economy, followed by industry (20.6%) and agriculture (5.1%). The tourism industry is a major source of foreign exchange earnings and revenue accounting for 15% of Greece's total GDP and employing (directly or indirectly) 659,719 people (or 16.5% of total employment). Additionally Greek banks have invested heavily in the Balkan region: most notably the National Bank of Greece in 2006 acquired 46% of the shares of Finansbank in Turkey and 99.44% of Serbia's Vojvodanska Bank. The manufacturing sector accounts for about 13% of GDP with the food industry leading in growth, profit and export potential. High-technology equipment production, especially for telecommunications, is also a fast-growing sector. Other important areas include textiles, building materials, machinery, transport equipment, and electrical appliances. Construction (10%GDP) and agriculture (7%) are yet two other significant sectors of the Greek economic activity. Greece is the leading investor in all of her Balkan neighbors.

Maritime industry

The shipping industry is a key element of Greek economic activity dating back to ancient times. Today, shipping is one of the country's most important industries. It accounts for 4.5% of GDP, employs about 160,000 people (4% of the workforce), and represents 1/3 of the country's trade deficit.

During the 1960s the size of the Greek fleet nearly doubled, primarily through the investment undertaken by the shipping magnates Onassis and Niarchos. The basis of the modern Greek maritime industry was formed after World War II when Greek shipping businessmen were able to amass surplus ships sold to them by the United States Government through the Ship Sales Act of the 1940s. According to the BTS, the Greek-owned maritime fleet is today the largest in the world, with 3,079 vessels accounting for 18% of the world's fleet capacity (making it the largest of any other country) with a total dwt of 141,931 thousand (142 million dwt). In terms of ship categories, Greece ranks first in both tankers and dry bulk carriers, fourth in the number of containers, and fourth in other ships. However, today's fleet roster is smaller than an all-time high of 5,000 ships in the late 70's.

Science and technology



The island of Mykonos is one of the top European tourism destinations.



Aerial view of Thessaloniki's central districts. Thessaloniki is Greece's second largest city and a major economic, industrial, commercial and cultural centre.

Because of its strategic location, qualified workforce and political and economic stability, many multinational companies such as Ericsson, Siemens, SAP, Motorola and Coca-Cola have their regional R&D Headquarters in Greece.

The General Secretariat for Research and Technology of the Hellenic Ministry of Development is responsible for designing, implementing and supervising national research and technological policy.

In 2003, public spending on R&D was 456,37 million Euros (12,6% increase from 2002). Total research and development (R&D) spending (both public and private) as a percentage of GDP has increased considerably since the beginning of the past decade, from 0,38% in 1989, to 0,65% in 2001. R&D spending in Greece remains lower than the EU average of 1,93%, but, according to Research DC, based on OECD and Eurostat data, between 1990 and 1998, total R&D expenditure in Greece enjoyed the third highest increase in Europe, after Finland and Ireland.

Greece's technology parks with incubator facilities include the Science and Technology Park of Crete (Heraklion), the Thessaloniki Technology Park, the Lavrio Technology Park and the Patras Science Park. Greece has been a member of the European Space Agency (ESA) since 2005. Cooperation between ESA and the Hellenic National Space Committee began in the early 1990s. In 1994, Greece and ESA signed their first cooperation agreement. Having formally applied for full membership in 2003, Greece became ESA's sixteenth member on March 16 2005. As member of the ESA, Greece participates in the agency's telecommunication and technology activities, and the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security Initiative.

Demographics

The official Statistical body of Greece is the National Statistical Service of Greece (NSSG). According to the NSSG, Greece's total population in 2001 was 10,964,020. That figure is divided into 5,427,682 males and 5,536,338 females. As statistics from 1971, 1981, and 2001 show, the Greek population has been aging the past several decades. The birth rate in 2003 stood 9.5 per 1,000 inhabitants (14.5 per 1,000 in 1981). At the same time the mortality rate increased slightly from 8.9 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1981 to 9.6 per 1,000 inhabitants in 2003. In 2001, 16.71% of the population were 65 years old and older, 68.12% between the ages of 15 and 64 years old, and 15.18% were 14 years old and younger. In 1971 the figures were 10.92%, 63.72%, and 25.36% respectively. Greek society has also rapidly changed with the passage of time. Marriage rates kept falling from almost 71 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1981 until 2002, only to increase slightly in 2003 to 61 per 1,000 and then fall again to 51 in 2004. Divorce rates on the other hand, have seen an increase – from 191.2 per 1,000 marriages in 1991 to 239.5 per 1,000 marriages in 2004. Almost two-thirds of the Greek people live in urban areas. Greece's largest municipalities in 2001 were: Athens (745,514), Thessaloniki (363,987), Piraeus (175,697), Patras (161,114), Iraklio (133,012), Larissa (124,786), and Volos (82,439).

Minorities



The Rio-Antirio bridge near the city of Patras is the longest cable-stayed bridge in Europe and second in the world. It connects the Peloponnese with mainland Greece.



The Hermoupolis port in the island of Syros is the capital of the Cyclades.

The only minority in Greece that has a specially recognized legal status is the Muslim minority (Μουσουλμανική μειονότητα, *Mousoulmanikí meionótita*) in Thrace, which amounts to approximately 0.95% of the total population. Its members are predominantly of Turkish, Pomak and Roma ethnic origins. Other recognized minorities include approximately 35,000 Armenians and 5,500 Jews.

There are also a number of linguistic minority groups, whose members speak a non-Greek language in addition to Greek and generally identify ethnically as Greeks. These include the Arvanites, who speak a form of Albanian known as Arvanitika and the Aromanians and Meglenites, also known as Vlachs, whose languages are closely related to Romanian.

In northern Greece there are also Slavic-speaking groups, whose members identify ethnically as Greeks in their majority. Their dialects can be linguistically classified as forms of either Macedonian (locally called *Slavomacedonian* or simply *Slavic*), or Bulgarian (distinguished as *Pomak* in the case of the Bulgarophone Muslim Pomaks of Thrace).

Immigration

Due to the complexity of Greek immigration policy, practices and data collection, truly reliable data on immigrant populations in Greece is difficult to gather and therefore subject to much speculation. A study from the Mediterranean Migration Observatory maintains that the 2001 Census from the NSSG recorded 762,191 persons residing in Greece without Greek citizenship, constituting around 7% of total population and that, of these, 48,560 were EU or EFTA nationals and 17,426 Cypriots with privileged status.

The greatest cluster of non-EU immigrant population is in the Municipality of Athens –some 132,000 immigrants, at 17% of local population. Thessaloniki is the second largest cluster, with 27,000, reaching 7% of local population. After this, the predominant areas of location are the big cities environs and the agricultural areas. At the same time, Albanians constituted some 56% of total immigrants, followed by Bulgarians (5%), Georgians (3%) and Romanians (3%). Americans, Cypriots, British and Germans appeared as sizeable foreign communities at around 2% each of total foreign population. The rest were around 690,000 persons of non-EU or non-homogeneous (of non-Greek heritage) status.

According to the same study, the foreign population (documented and undocumented) residing in Greece may in reality figure upwards to 8.5% or 10.3%, that is approximately meaning 1.15 million - if immigrants with *homogeneis* cards are accounted for.

Religion



Traditional non-Greek language zones in Greece. *Note:* Greek is the dominant language throughout Greece; inclusion in a non-Greek language zone does not necessarily imply that the relevant minority language is still spoken there, or that its speakers consider themselves an *ethnic* minority.

The constitution of Greece recognizes the Greek Orthodox faith as the "prevailing" religion of the country, while guaranteeing freedom of religious belief for all. The Greek Government does not keep statistics on religious groups and censuses do not ask for religious affiliation. According to the State Department, an estimated 97% of Greek citizens identify themselves as Greek Orthodox.

In the Eurostat - Eurobarometer poll of 2005, 81% of Greek citizens responded that they *believe there is a God*, whereas 16% answered that *they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force*, and 3% that they *do not believe there is a God, spirit, nor life force*. Greece's percentage of respondents asserting that they *believe there is a God* was the third highest among EU members behind Malta and Cyprus.

Estimates of the recognised Muslim minority, which is mostly located in Thrace, range from 98,000 to 140,000, (between 0.9% and 1.2%) while the immigrant Muslim community numbers between 200,000 and 300,000. Albanian immigrants to Greece are usually associated with the Muslim faith, although most are secular in orientation.

Judaism has existed in Greece for more than 2,000 years. Sephardi Jews used to have a large presence in the city of Thessaloniki, but nowadays the Greek-Jewish community who survived the Holocaust is estimated to number around 5,500 people.

Greek members of Roman Catholic faith are estimated at 50,000 with the Roman Catholic immigrant community approximating 200,000. Old Calendarists account for 500,000 followers. The Jehovah's Witnesses report having 30,000 active members. Protestants including Evangelicals stand at about 30,000. Free Apostolic Church of Pentecost and other Pentecostals denominations are about 12,000. Mormons can also be found with 420 followers. The ancient Greek religion has also reappeared as Hellenic Neopaganism, with estimates of approximately 2,000 adherents (comprising 0.02% of the general population).

Education



Stavronikita monastery, a Greek Orthodox monastery in Athos peninsula, northern Greece.

Compulsory education in Greece comprises primary schools (Δημοτικό Σχολείο, *Dimotikó Scholeio*) and gymnasium (Γυμνάσιο). Nursery schools (Παιδικός σταθμός, *Paidikós Stathmós*) are popular but not compulsory. Kindergartens (Νηπιαγωγείο, *Nipiagogeío*) are now compulsory for any child above 4 years of age. Children start primary school aged 6 and remain there for six years. Attendance at gymnasia starts at age 12 and last for three years. Greece's post-compulsory secondary education consists of two school types: unified upper secondary schools (Ενιαίο Λύκειο, *Eniaia Lykeia*) and technical-vocational educational schools (Τεχνικά και Επαγγελματικά Εκπαιδευτήρια, "ΤΕΕ"). Post-compulsory secondary education also includes vocational training institutes (Ινστιτούτα Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, "ΙΕΚ") which provide a formal but unclassified level of education. As they can accept both *Gymnasio* (lower secondary school) and *Lykeio* (upper secondary school) graduates, these institutes are not classified as offering a particular level of education. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks the Greek secondary education as the 38th in the world, being significantly below the OECD average.



The building of the Faculty of Education at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Public higher education is divided into universities, "Highest Educational Institutions" (Ανώτατα Εκπαιδευτικά Ιδρύματα, *Anótata Ekpaideytiká Idrýmata*, "ΑΕΙ") and "Highest Technological Educational Institutions" (Ανώτατα Τεχνολογικά Εκπαιδευτικά Ιδρύματα, *Anótata Technologiká Ekpaideytiká Idrýmata*, "ΑΤΕΙ"). Students are admitted to these Institutes according to their performance at national level examinations taking place after completion of the third grade of *Lykeio*.

Additionally, students over twenty-two years old may be admitted to the Hellenic Open University through a form of lottery. The Capodistrian university of Athens is the oldest university in the eastern Mediterranean.

The Greek education system also provides special kindergartens, primary and secondary schools for people with special needs or difficulties in learning. Specialist gymnasia and high schools offering musical, theological and physical education also exist.

Some of the main universities in Greece include:

National and Capodistrian University of Athens • National Technical University of Athens • University of Piraeus • Agricultural University of Athens • University of Macedonia (in Thessaloniki) • University of Crete • Technical University of Crete • Athens University of Economics and Business • Aristotle University of Thessaloniki • University of the Aegean (across the Aegean Islands) • Democritus University of Thrace • University of Ioannina • University of Thessaly • Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences • University of Patras • Charokopeio University of Athens • Ionian University (across the Ionian Islands)

Armed forces

The Hellenic Armed Forces are overseen by the **Hellenic National Defense General Staff** (Γενικό Επιτελείο Εθνικής Άμυνας - ΓΕΕΘΑ) and consists of three branches:

- Hellenic Army
- Hellenic Navy
- Hellenic Air Force

The civilian authority for the Greek military is the Ministry of National Defence. Furthermore, Greece maintains the Hellenic Coast Guard for law enforcement in the sea and search and rescue. Greece currently has universal compulsory military service for males while females (who may serve in the military) are exempted from conscription. As a member of NATO, the Greek military participates in exercises and deployments under the auspices of the alliance.

International Rankings

Organization	Survey	Ranking
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index 2006	24 out of 177
	Human Development Index 2004	24 out of 177
	Human Development Index 2000	24 out of 177
International Monetary Fund	GDP per capita (PPP)	18 out of 180
<i>The Economist</i>	Worldwide Quality-of-life Index, 2005	22 out of 111
Heritage Foundation/ <i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Index of Economic Freedom	57 out of 157
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2006	32 out of 168
	Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2005	18(tied) out of 168
	Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2004	33 out of 167
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index 2006	54 out of 163
	Corruption Perceptions Index 2005	47 out of 158
	Corruption Perceptions Index 2004	49 out of 145
World Economic Forum	Global Competitiveness Report	47 out of 125
Yale University/ Columbia University	Environmental Sustainability Index 2005	67 out of 146
Nationmaster	Labor strikes	13 out of 27



Hellenic Navy Frigates HS Spetsai (Meko class) and HS Bouboulina (S class).



Hellenic Air Force F-16.

A.T. Kearney / Foreign Policy	Globalization Index 2006	32 out of 62
	Globalization Index 2005	29 out of 62
	Globalization Index 2004	28 out of 62

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Hungary

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Hungary (Hungarian: *Magyarország*; IPA: [mɒɟɒrorsaːɡ]; listen[ⓘ]), officially in English the **Republic of Hungary** (*Magyar Köztársaság* listen[ⓘ] , literally *Magyar (Hungarian) Republic*), is a landlocked country in the Carpathian Basin of Central Europe, bordered by Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. Its capital is Budapest. Hungary is a member of OECD, NATO, EU and a Schengen state. The official language is Hungarian (also known as Magyar), which forms part of the Finno-Ugric family. It is one of the four official languages of the European Union that is not of Indo-European origin.

Following a Celtic (after c. 450 BC) and a Roman (9 BC - c. 4th century) period, the foundation of Hungary was laid in the late Ninth Century by the Magyar chieftain Árpád, whose great grandson István ascended to the throne with a crown sent from Rome in 1000. The Kingdom of Hungary existed with minor interruptions for almost 950 years, and at various points was regarded as one of the cultural centers of the Western world. It was succeeded by a Communist era (1947-1989) during which Hungary gained widespread international attention regarding the Revolution of 1956 and the seminal move of opening its border with Austria in 1989, thus accelerating the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. The present form of government is parliamentary republic (since 1989). Hungary's current goal is to become a developed country by IMF standards, having become already developed by most traditional measures, including GDP and HDI (world ranking 36th and rising). The country's first ever term of EU presidency is due in 2011.

Hungary was one of the 15 most popular tourist destinations in the world in the past decade, with a capital regarded as one of the most beautiful in the world. Despite its relatively small size, the country is home to numerous World Heritage Sites, UNESCO Biosphere reserves, the second largest thermal lake in the world (Lake Hévíz), the largest lake in Central Europe (Lake Balaton), and the largest natural grassland in Europe (Hortobágy).

Magyar Köztársaság Republic of Hungary	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: none Historically <i>Regnum Mariae Patronae Hungariae</i> (Latin)	
Anthem: <i>Himnusz</i> ("Isten, áldd meg a magyart") "Hymn" ("God, bless the Hungarians")	

History

The land before the Magyars



Location of **Hungary** (orange)

- on the European continent (camel & white)
- in the European Union (camel) [Legend]

Capital (and largest city)	Budapest
Official languages	Hungarian (<i>Magyar</i>)
Demonym	Hungarian
Government - President - Prime minister	Parliamentary republic László Sólyom Ferenc Gyurcsány
Foundation - Foundation of Hungary - Recognized as Kingdom	896 December 1000
EU accession	May 1, 2004
Area - Total - Water (%)	93,030 km ² (109th) 35,919 sq mi 0.74%
Population - 2008 February estimate	10,041,000 (79th)

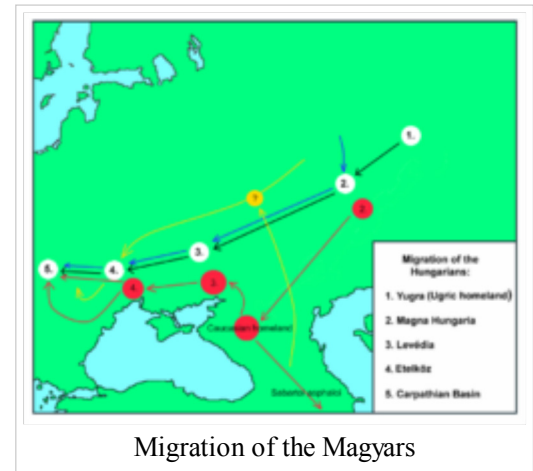


The arrival of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin.

In the time of the Roman Empire, the region west of the Danube river was known as Pannonia. After the Western Roman Empire collapsed under the stress of the migration of Germanic tribes and Carpiian pressure, the Migration Period continued bringing many invaders to Europe. Among the first to arrive were the Huns, who built up a powerful empire under Attila. Attila the Hun was erroneously regarded as an ancestral ruler of the Hungarians. It is believed that the origin of the name "Hungary" does not come from the Central Asian nomadic invaders called the Huns, but rather originated from 7th century, when Magyar tribes were part of a Bulgar alliance called On-Ogour, which in Old Turkish meant "(the) Ten Arrows" . After

Hunnish rule faded, the Germanic Ostrogoths then the Lombards came to Pannonia, and the Gepids had a presence in the eastern part of the Carpathian Basin for about 100 years. In the 560s the Avars founded the Avar Khaganate , a state which maintained supremacy in the region for more than two centuries and had the military power to launch attacks against all its neighbours. The Avar Khagnate was weakened by constant wars and outside pressure. The Franks under Charlemagne managed to defeat the Avars ending their 250 year rule. Neither the Franks nor others were able to create a lasting state in the region until the freshly unified Hungarians led by Árpád settled in the Carpathian Basin starting in 896. .

- 2001 census	10,198,315
- Density	109/km ² (94th) 282/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$198.7 billion (48th)
- Per capita	\$20.000 (39th)
Gini (2008)	24.96 (low) (3rd)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.874 (high) (36th)
Currency	Forint (HUF)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.hu ¹
Calling code	+36
1 Also .eu as part of the European Union.	



Migration of the Magyars

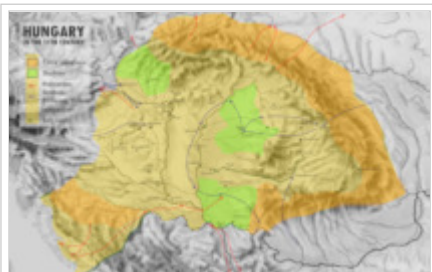


The Holy Crown of Hungary

Medieval Hungary (896 – 1526)

Hungary is one of the oldest countries in Europe. It was founded in 896, before France and Germany became separate entities, and before the unification of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Medieval Hungary controlled more territory than medieval France, and the population of medieval Hungary was the third largest of any country in Europe. Árpád was the Magyar leader whom sources name as the single leader who unified the Magyar tribes via the Covenant of Blood (*Vérszerződés*) forged one nation, thereafter known as the Hungarian nation and led the new nation to the territory of the Carpathian Basin in the 9th century. After an early Hungarian state was formed in this territory military power of the nation allowed the Hungarians to conduct a lot of successful fierce campaigns and raids as far as present-day Spain. A later defeat at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955 signaled an end to raids on foreign territories, and links between the tribes weakened. The ruling prince (*fejedelem*) Géza of the House of Árpád, who was the ruler of only some of the united territory, but the nominal overlord of all seven Magyar tribes, intended to integrate Hungary into Christian (Western) Europe, rebuilding the state according to the Western political and social model. He established a dynasty by naming his son Vajk (later called Stephen) as his successor. This was contrary to the then dominant tradition of the succession of the eldest

surviving member of the ruling family.



Hungary in the 11th century

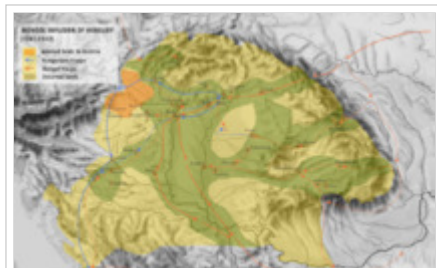
Hungary was established as a Christian kingdom under Stephen I of Hungary, who was crowned in December 1000 AD in the capital, Esztergom. He was the son of Géza and thus a descendant of Árpád. By 1006, Stephen had solidified his power, eliminating all rivals who either wanted to follow the old pagan traditions or wanted an alliance with the orthodox Christian Byzantine Empire. Then he started sweeping reforms to convert Hungary into a feudal state, complete with forced Christianisation. What emerged was a strong kingdom that withstood attacks from German kings and Emperors, and nomadic tribes following the Hungarians from the East, integrating some of the latter into the population (along with Germans invited to Transylvania and present-day Slovakia, especially after 1242), and subjugating

Croatia in 1102. King Andrew II. led crusade to Holy Land in 1217. => Fifth Crusade. The Golden Bull, (in 1222), was the first constitution in continental Europe. In 1241-1242, this kingdom received a major blow in the form of the Mongol invasion of Europe: after the defeat of the Hungarian army in the Battle of Muhi, King Béla IV fled, and a large part (though not as great as suspected by historians earlier) of the population died (leading later to the invitation of settlers from neighbours in the West and South) in the ensuing destruction (*Tatárjárás*). Only strongly fortified cities and abbeys could withstand the assault. As a consequence, after the Mongols retreated, King Béla ordered the construction of stone castles, meant to be defence against a possible second Mongol invasion. Mongols returned to Hungary in 1286, but the new built stone-castle systems and new tactics (with large ratio of heavy

Galgóczi tarsolylemez, an ancient **Hungarian** pouch plate.

A miniature of the king Stephen I from the Chronicon Hungariae Pictum

calvary) stopped them. The invading Mongol force was defeated near Pest by the royal army of king Ladislaus IV. These castles proved to be very important later in the long struggle with the Ottoman Empire in the following centuries (from the late 14th century onwards), but their cost indebted the King to the major feudal landlords again, so the royal power reclaimed by Béla IV after his father King András II weakened it (leading to the issue of the so called 'Arany Bulla' or Golden Bull, in 1222), was lost again.

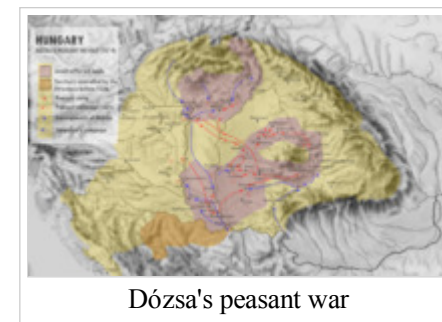
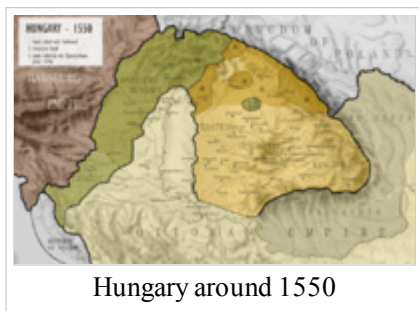


Mongol invasion of Hungary

Árpád's direct descendants in the male line ruled the country until 1301. During the reigns of the Kings after the house of Árpád, the Kingdom of Hungary reached its greatest extent, yet royal power was weakened as the major landlords greatly increased their influence. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Turks confronted the country ever more often. The second Hungarian king in the 'Anjou' Angevin line also descendant of Árpád on the female line, Louis I the Great (*I. or Nagy Lajos*, king 1342-1382) extended his rule over territories from the Black Sea to the Adriatic Sea, and temporarily occupied the Kingdom of Naples (after his brother was murdered there by his wife, who was also his cousin). From 1370, the death of Casimir III the Great, he was also king of Poland. The alliance between Casimir and Charles I of Hungary, the father of Louis, was the start of a still lasting Polish-Hungarian friendship. Sigismund, a prince from the Luxembourg line succeeded to the throne by marrying Louis's daughter, Queen Mary. In 1433 he even became Holy Roman Emperor.

The last strong king was the renaissance king Matthias Corvinus. Hungary was the first non-Italian country, where the renaissance appeared in Europe. Andras Hess set up a printing press in Buda in 1472. Matthias was the son of the feudal landlord and warlord John Hunyadi, who led the Hungarian troops in the 1456 Siege of Nándorfehérvár. Building on his fathers' vision, the aim of taking on the Ottoman Empire with a strong enough background, Matthias set out to build a great empire, expanding southward and northwest, while he also implemented internal reforms. His army called the 'Fekete Sereg' (Black Army of Hungary) accomplished a series of victories also capturing the city of Vienna in 1485. In 1514, the weakened King Vladislaus II. faced a major peasant rebellion led by György Dózsa, which was crushed barbarously by the nobles mainly by János Szapolyai. As central rule degenerated, the stage was set for a defeat at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. In 1521, the strongest Hungarian fortress in the South Nándorfehérvár (modern Belgrade) fell to the Turks, and in 1526, the Hungarian army was destroyed in the Battle of Mohács. Through the centuries the Kingdom of Hungary kept its old "constitution", which granted special "freedoms" or rights to the nobility and groups like the Saxons resident in Hungary or the Jassic people, and to free royal towns such as Buda, Kassa (Košice), Pozsony (Bratislava), Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca).

Ottoman Conquest 1526-1699



After some 150 years of wars with the Hungarians and other states, the Turks conquered parts of Hungary, and continued their expansion until 1556. The Ottomans gained their first decisive victory over the Hungarian army at the Battle of Mohács in 1526. The next decades were characterised by political chaos; the divided Hungarian nobility elected two kings simultaneously, 'Szapolyai János' (1526-1540) and Ferdinand Habsburg (1527-1540), whose armed conflicts weakened the country further. With the conquest of Buda in 1541 by the Turks, Hungary fell into three parts. The north-western part (see map) termed as Royal Hungary remained under the Habsburgs who ruled as Kings of Hungary. The eastern part of the kingdom (Partium and Transylvania), in turn, became independent as the Principality of

Transylvania, often under Turkish influence. The remaining central area (mostly present-day Hungary), including the capital of Buda was known as Ottoman Hungary. A large part of the area became devastated by permanent warfare. Most smaller settlements disappeared. The Turks were indifferent to the type of Christian religion of their subjects and the Habsburg counter-reformation measures could not reach this area. As a result, the majority of the population of the area became Protestant (Calvinist). The End of Ottoman Conquest, and Rákóczi's war of independence against Habsburgs. In 1686, Austria-led Christian forces reconquered Buda, and in the next few years, all of the country except areas near Temesvár (Timișoara). In the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz these changes were officially recognized, and in 1718 the entire Kingdom of Hungary was restored from the Ottomans.

Pozsony (Bratislava) became the new capital (1536-1784), coronation town (1563-1830) and seat of the Diet (1536-1848) of Hungary. Nagyszombat (Trnava) in turn, became the religious centre in 1541. Parallely, between 1604 and 1711, there was a series of anti-Habsburg (i.e. anti-Austrian) and anti-Catholic (requiring equal rights and freedom for all Christian religions) uprisings, which – with the exception of the last one – took place in Royal Hungary. The uprisings were usually organized from Transylvania. The last one was an uprising led by 'II. Rákóczi Ferenc', who after the dethronement of the Habsburgs in 1707 at the Diet of Ónód took power as the "Ruling Prince" of Hungary. When Austrians defeated the uprising in 1711, Rákóczi was in Poland. He later fled to France, finally Turkey, and lived to the end of his life (1735) in nearby Rodosto. Afterwards, to make further armed resistance impossible, the Austrians blew up some castles (most of the castles on the border between the now-reclaimed territories occupied earlier by the Ottomans and Royal Hungary), and allowed peasants to use the stones from most of the others as building material (the *végvárs* among them).

History of Hungary 1700-1918

During the Napoleonic Wars and afterwards, the Hungarian Diet had not convened for decades. In the 1820s, the Emperor was forced to convene the Diet, and thus a Reform Period began. Nevertheless, its progress was slow, because the nobles insisted on retaining their privileges (no taxation, exclusive voting rights, etc.). Therefore the achievements were mostly of national character (e.g. introduction of Hungarian as the official language of the country, instead of the former Latin).



Ferenc Rákóczi



Artist Mihály Zichy's rendition of Sándor Petőfi reciting the Nemzeti dal to a crowd on March 15, 1848

On March 15, 1848, mass demonstrations in Pest and Buda enabled Hungarian reformists to push through a list of 12 demands. Faced with revolution both at home and in Vienna, Austria first had to accept Hungarian demands. Later, under governor Lajos Kossuth and the first Prime minister, Lajos Batthyány, the House of Habsburg was dethroned and the form of government was changed to create the first Republic of Hungary. After the Austrian revolution was suppressed, Franz Joseph replaced his mentally retarded uncle Ferdinand I as Emperor. The Habsburg Ruler and his advisors skillfully manipulated the Croatian, Serbian and Romanian peasantry, led by priests and officers firmly loyal to the Habsburgs, and induced them to rebel against the Hungarian government. The Hungarians were supported by the vast majority of the Slovak, German and Rusyn nationalities and by all the Jews of the kingdom, as well as by a large number of Polish, Austrian and Italian volunteers. Some members of the nationalities gained coveted positions within the Hungarian Army, like General János Damjanich, an ethnic Serb who became a Hungarian national hero through his command of the 3rd Hungarian Army Corps. Initially, the Hungarian forces (*Honvédség*) defeated Austrian armies. To counter the successes of the Hungarian revolutionary army, Franz Joseph asked for help from the "Gendarme of Europe," Czar Nicholas I, whose Russian armies invaded Hungary. The huge army of the Russian Empire and the remnants of the Austrian forces proved too powerful for the Hungarian army, and General Artúr Görgey surrendered in August 1849. Julius Freiherr von Haynau, the leader of the Austrian army, then became governor of Hungary for a few months and on October 6, ordered the execution of 13 leaders of the Hungarian army as well as Prime Minister Batthyány. Lajos Kossuth escaped into exile.

Following the war of 1848-49, the whole country was in "passive resistance". Archduke Albrecht von Habsburg was appointed governor of the Kingdom of Hungary, and this time was remembered for Germanization pursued with the help of Czech officers.

Due to external and internal problems, reforms seemed inevitable to secure the integrity of the Habsburg Empire. Major military defeats, like the Battle of Königgrätz (1866), forced the Emperor to concede internal reforms. To appease Hungarian separatism, the Emperor made a deal with Hungary, negotiated by Ferenc Deák, called the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, by which the dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary came into existence. The two countries were governed separately with a common ruler and common foreign and military policies. The first prime minister of Hungary after the Compromise was Count Gyula Andrassy. The Hungarian Constitution was restored, and Franz Joseph was crowned as King of Hungary. The era witnessed an impressive economic development. The formerly backward Hungarian economy become a relatively modern and industrialized by the turn of the century, although agriculture remained fairly dominant. Many of the state institutions and the administrative system of Hungary were established during this period. However, Magyars represented a minority of the population: according to the 1787 data, the population of the Kingdom of Hungary numbered 2,322,000 Hungarians (29%) and 5,681,000 non-Hungarians (71%). In 1809, the population numbered 3,000,000 Hungarians (30%) and 7,000,000 non-Hungarians (70%). As an increasingly intense Magyarization policy was implemented after 1867, the census in 1910 (excluding Croatia), recorded the following distribution of population Hungarian 54.5%, Romanian 16.1%, Slovak 10.7%, and German 10.4%. The largest religious denomination was the Roman Catholic (49.3%), followed by the Calvinist (14.3%), Greek Orthodox (12.8%), Greek Catholic (11.0%), Lutheran (7.1%), and Jewish (5.0%) religions. In 1910, 6.37% of the population were eligible to vote in elections due to census.

In First World War Austria-Hungary was fighting on the side of Germany, Bulgaria and Turkey. With great difficulty, the Central Powers, as they were called, conquered Serbia and Romania but could not make significant progress against Italy. By 1918, the economic situation had deteriorated, uprisings in the army had become commonplace, and Entente troops had landed in Greece. In October 1918, the personal union with Austria was dissolved.

Between the two world wars (1918-1941)



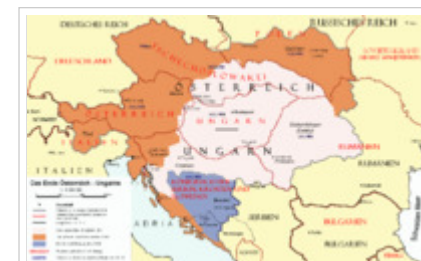
Map of the counties in the Kingdom of Hungary around 1880



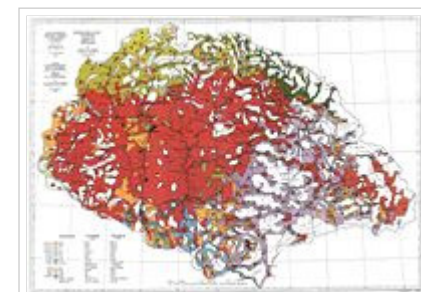
Heroes' Square in Budapest

In 1918, as a result of defeat in World War I, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy collapsed. On October 31, 1918, the success of the Aster Revolution in Budapest brought the liberal count Mihály Károlyi to power as Prime-Minister. By February 1919 the government had lost all popular support, having failed on domestic and military fronts. On March 21, after the Entente military representative demanded more territorial concessions from Hungary, Károlyi resigned. The Communist Party of Hungary, led by Béla Kun, came to power and proclaimed the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The Communists – "The Reds" – came to power largely thanks to being the only group with an organized fighting force, and they promised that Hungary would defend its territory (possibly with the help of the Soviet Red Army). The Communists also promised equality and social justice. Initially, Kun's regime achieved some impressive military successes: the Hungarian Red Army, under the lead of the genius strategist, Colonel Aurél Stromfeld, ousted Czech troops from the north and planned to march against the Romanian army in the east. In terms of domestic policy, the Communist government nationalized industrial and commercial enterprises, socialized housing, transport, banking, medicine, cultural institutions, and all landholdings of more than 400,000 square metres. Still, the popular support of the Communists proved to be short lived. In the aftermath of a coup attempt, the government took a series of actions called the Red Terror, murdering several hundred people, which alienated much of the population. The Soviet Red Army was never able to aid the new Hungarian republic. Although it did not lose any battles, the Hungarian Red Army gave up land under pressure from the Entente. In the face of domestic backlash and an advancing Romanian force, Béla Kun and most of his comrades fled to Austria, while Budapest was occupied on August 6. All these events, and in particular the final military defeat, led to a deep feeling of dislike among the general population against the Soviet Union (which had not kept its promise to offer military assistance) and the Jews (since many members of Kun's government were Jewish, making it easy to blame the Jews for the government's mistakes). The new fighting force in Hungary were the Conservative counter-revolutionaries – the "Whites". These, who had been organizing in Vienna and established a counter-government in Szeged, assumed power, led by István Bethlen, a Transylvanian aristocrat, and Miklós Horthy, the former commander in chief of the Austro-Hungarian Navy. Starting in Western Hungary and spreading throughout the country, a White Terror began by other half-regular and half-militarist detachments (as the police power crashed, there were no serious national regular forces and authorities), and many Communists and other leftists were executed without trial. Radical Whites launched pogroms against the Jews, displayed as the cause of all the difficulties of Hungary. The leaving Romanian army pillaged the country: livestock, machinery and agricultural products were carried to Romania in hundreds of freight cars. The estimated property damage of their activity was so much that the international peace conference in 1919 did not require Hungary to pay war redemption to Romania. On November 16, with the consent of Romanian forces, Horthy's army marched into Budapest. His government gradually restored security, stopped terror, and set up authorities, but thousands of sympathizers of the Károlyi and Kun regimes were imprisoned. Radical political movements were suppressed. In March, the parliament restored the Hungarian monarchy but postponed electing a king until civil disorder had subsided. Instead, Miklos Horthy was elected Regent and was empowered, among other things, to appoint Hungary's Prime Minister, veto legislation, convene or dissolve the parliament, and command the armed forces.

Hungary's signing of the Treaty of Trianon on June 4, 1920, ratified the country's dismemberment. The territorial provisions of the treaty, which ensured continued discord between Hungary and its neighbors, required Hungary to surrender more than two-thirds of its pre-war lands, along ethnic lines (see picture above). However, nearly one-third of the 10 million ethnic Hungarians found themselves outside the diminished homeland. The country's ethnic composition was left almost homogeneous, Hungarians constituting about 90% of the population, Germans made up about 6%, and Slovaks, Croats, Romanians, Jews and



Difference between the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary before and after the Treaty of Trianon.



Ethnic map of Hungary (without Croatia)

Gypsies accounted for the remainder. New international borders separated Hungary's industrial base from its sources of raw materials and its former markets for agricultural and industrial products. Hungary lost 84% of its timber resources, 43% of its arable land, and 83% of its iron ore. Because most of the country's pre-war industry was concentrated near Budapest, Hungary retained about 51% of its industrial population, 56% of its industry, 82% of its heavy industry, and 70% of its banks. Horthy appointed Count Pál Teleki as Prime Minister in July 1920. His right-wing government issued a numerus clausus law, limiting admission of "political insecure elements" (these were often Jews) to universities and, in order to quiet rural discontent, took initial steps toward fulfilling a promise of major land reform by dividing about 3,850 km² from the largest estates into smallholdings. Teleki's government resigned, however, after, Charles IV, unsuccessfully attempted to retake Hungary's throne in March 1921. King Charles's return produced split parties between conservatives who favored a Habsburg restoration and nationalist right-wing radicals who supported election of a Hungarian king. Count István Bethlen, a non-affiliated right-wing member of the parliament, took advantage of this rift forming a new Party of Unity under his leadership. Horthy then appointed Bethlen prime minister. Charles IV died soon after he failed a second time to reclaim the throne in October 1921. (For more detail on Charles's attempts to retake the throne, see *Charles IV of Hungary's conflict with Miklós Horthy*.)



Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya,
Regent of Hungary

As prime minister, Bethlen dominated Hungarian politics between 1921 and 1931. He fashioned a political machine by amending the electoral law, providing jobs in the expanding bureaucracy to his supporters, and manipulating elections in rural areas. Bethlen restored order to the country by giving the radical counterrevolutionaries payoffs and government jobs in exchange for ceasing their campaign of terror against Jews and leftists. In 1921, he made a deal with the Social Democrats and trade unions (called Bethlen-Peyer Pact), agreeing, among other things, to legalize their activities and free political prisoners in return for their pledge to refrain from spreading anti-Hungarian propaganda, calling political strikes, and organizing the peasantry. Bethlen brought Hungary into the League of Nations in 1922 and out of international isolation by signing a treaty of friendship with Italy in 1927. The revision of the Treaty of Trianon rose to the top of Hungary's political agenda and the strategy employed by Bethlen consisted by strengthening the economy and building relations with stronger nations. Revision of the treaty had such a broad backing in Hungary that Bethlen used it, at least in part, to deflect criticism of his economic, social, and political policies. The Great Depression induced a drop in the standard of living and the political mood of the country shifted further toward the right. In 1932 Horthy appointed a new prime-minister, Gyula Gömbös, that changed the course of Hungarian policy towards closer cooperation with Germany and started an effort to magyarize the few remaining ethnic minorities in Hungary. Gömbös signed a trade agreement with Germany that drew Hungary's economy out of depression but made Hungary dependent on the German economy for both raw materials and markets. Adolf Hitler appealed to Hungarian desires for territorial revisionism, while extreme right wing organizations, like the Arrow Cross party, increasingly embraced Nazi policies, including those related to Jews. In an attempt to "take the wind out of the sails" of these groups and weaken their anti-Jewish appeals, the government passed the First Jewish Law in 1938. The law established a quote system to limit Jewish involvement in the Hungarian economy, while maintaining an unclear definition of the term "Jew." Imrédy's attempts to improve Hungary's diplomatic relations

with the United Kingdom initially made him very unpopular with Germany and Italy. Undoubtedly aware of Germany's Anschluss with Austria in March, he realized that he could not afford to alienate Germany and Italy on a long term basis; in the autumn of 1938 his foreign policy became very much pro-German and pro-Italian. Intent on amassing a base of power in Hungarian right wing politics, Imrédy began to suppress political rivals, so the increasingly influential Arrow Cross Party was harassed, and eventually banned by Imrédy's administration. As Imrédy drifted further to the right, he proposed that the government be

reorganized along totalitarian lines and drafted a harsher Second Jewish Law. The Parliament under the new government of Pál Teleki approved the Second Jewish Law in 1939, which greatly restricted Jewish involvement in the economy, culture, and society and, significantly, defined Jews by race instead of religion. This definition altered the status of those who had formerly converted from Judaism to Christianity.

Hungary in World War II (1941-1945)

After being awarded by the Germans and Italians part of southern Czechoslovakia and Subcarpathia in the First Vienna Award of 1938, and then northern Transylvania in the Second Vienna Award of 1940, in 1941 Hungary participated in their first military maneuvers on the side of the Axis. Thus, Hungary was part of the invasion of Yugoslavia, gaining some more territory but effectively joining the Axis powers in the process (showing his non-agreement, prime minister Pál Teleki committed suicide). On 22 June 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union using the code name Operation Barbarossa. Hungary joined the German effort and declared war on the Soviet Union on 26 June, and entered World War II on the side of the Axis. In late 1941, the Hungarian troops on the Eastern Front experienced success at the Battle of Uman. By 1943, after the Hungarian Second Army suffered extremely heavy losses at the river Don, the Hungarian government sought to negotiate a surrender with the Allies. On 19 March 1944, as a result of this duplicity, German troops quietly occupied Hungary in what was known as Operation Margarethe. But, by now it was clear that the Hungarians were Germany's "unwilling satellite". On 15 October 1944, Horthy made a token effort to disengage Hungary from the war. This time the Germans launched Operation Panzerfaust and Horthy was replaced by a puppet government under the pro-German Prime Minister Ferenc Szálasi. Szálasi and his pro-Nazi Arrow Cross Party remained loyal to the Germans until the end of the war. In late 1944, Hungarian troops on the Eastern Front again experienced success at the Battle of Debrecen. But this was followed immediately by the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the Battle of Budapest. During the German occupation in May-June 1944, the Arrow Cross Party and Hungarian police deported nearly 440,000 Jews, mostly to Auschwitz. Over 400,000 Hungarian Jews were murdered during the Holocaust, as well as tens of thousands of Romani people. Hundreds of Hungarian people were also executed by the Arrow Cross Party for sheltering Jews. The war left Hungary devastated destroying over 60% of the economy and causing huge loss of life. On 13 February 1945, the Hungarian capital city surrendered unconditionally. On 8 May 1945, World War II in Europe officially ended.

Communist era (1947-1989)



Statue Park

Following the fall of Nazi Germany, Soviet troops occupied all of the country and through their influence Hungary gradually became a communist satellite state of the Soviet Union. After 1948, Communist leader Mátyás Rákosi established Stalinist rule in the country complete with forced collectivization and planned economy. The rule of the Rákosi government was nearly unbearable for Hungary's war-torn citizens. This led to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and Hungary's temporary withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets retaliated massively with military force, sending in over 150,000 troops and 2,500 tanks. Nearly a quarter of a million people left the country during the brief time that the borders were open in 1956. From the 1960s through the late 1980s, Hungary was often satirically referred to as "the happiest barrack" within the Eastern bloc. This was under the autocratic rule of its controversial communist leader, János Kádár. The last Soviet soldier left the country in 1991 thus ending Soviet military presence in Hungary. With the Soviet Union gone the transition to a market economy began.

Hungarian Republic (1989-)

In June 1987 Károly Grósz took over as premier. In January 1988 all restrictions were lifted on foreign travel. In March demonstrations for democracy and civil rights brought 15,000 onto the streets. In May, after Kádár's forced retirement, Grósz was named party secretary general. Under Grósz, Hungary began moving towards full democracy, change accelerated under the impetus of other party reformers such as Imre Pozsgay and Rezső Nyers. Also in June 1988, 30,000 demonstrated against Romania's plans to demolish Transylvanian villages.

In February, 1989 the Communist Party's Central Committee, responding to 'public dissatisfaction', announced it would permit a multi-party system in Hungary and hold free elections. In March, for the first time in decades, the government declared the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution a national holiday. Opposition demonstrations filled the streets of Budapest with more than 75,000 marchers. Grósz met Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow, who condoned Hungary's moves toward a multi-party system and promised that the USSR would not interfere in Hungary's internal affairs. In May, Hungary began taking down its barbed wire fence along the Austrian border – the first tear in the Iron Curtain. June brought the reburial of Prime Minister Nagy, executed after the 1956 Revolution, drawing a crowd of 250,000 at the Heroes' Square. The last speaker, 26-year-old Viktor Orbán publicly called for Soviet troops to leave Hungary. In July U.S. President George Bush visited Hungary. In September Foreign Minister Gyula Horn announced that East German refugees in Hungary would not be repatriated but would instead be allowed to go to the West. The resulting exodus shook East Germany and hastened the fall of the Berlin Wall. On October 23, Mátyás Szűrös declares Hungary a republic.

At a party congress in October 1989 the Communists agreed to give up their monopoly on power, paving the way for free elections in March 1990. The party's name was changed from the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party to simply the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and a new programme advocating social democracy and a free-market economy was adopted. This was not enough to shake off the stigma of four decades of autocratic rule, however, and the 1990 election was won by the centrist Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), which advocated a gradual transition towards capitalism. The social-democratic Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), which had called for much faster change, came second and the Socialist Party trailed far behind. As Gorbachev looked on, Hungary changed political systems with scarcely a murmur and the last Soviet troops left Hungary in June 1991.

In coalition with two smaller parties, the MDF provided Hungary with sound government during its hard transition to a full market economy. Antall died in December 1993 and was replaced by Interior Minister Péter Boross.

The economic changes of the past few years have resulted in declining living standards for most people in Hungary. In 1991 most state subsidies were removed, leading to a severe recession exacerbated by the fiscal austerity necessary to reduce inflation and stimulate investment. This made life difficult for many Hungarians, and in the May 1994 elections the Hungarian Socialist Party led by former Communists won an absolute majority in parliament. This in no way implied a return to the past, and party leader Gyula Horn was quick to point out that it was his party that had initiated the whole reform process in the first place (as foreign minister in 1989 Horn played a key role in opening Hungary's border with Austria). All three main political parties advocate economic liberalisation and closer ties with the West. In March 1996, Horn was re-elected as Socialist Party leader and confirmed that he would push ahead with the party's economic stabilisation programme.

In 1997 in a national referendum 85% voted in favour of Hungary joining the NATO. A year later the European Union began negotiations with Hungary on full membership. In 1999 Hungary joined NATO. Hungary voted in favour of joining the EU, and joined in 2004.

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Politics

The President of the Republic, elected by the Parliament every five years, has a largely ceremonial role, choosing the dates of elections.

The Prime Minister is elected by Parliament and can only be removed by a constructive vote of no confidence. The prime minister selects Cabinet ministers and has the exclusive right to dismiss them. Each Cabinet nominee appears before one or more parliamentary committees in open hearings and must be formally approved by the President.

A unicameral, 386-member National Assembly (the *Országgyűlés*) is the highest organ of state authority and initiates and approves legislation sponsored by the Prime Minister. National Parliamentary elections are held every four years; the next are due to be held in 2010.

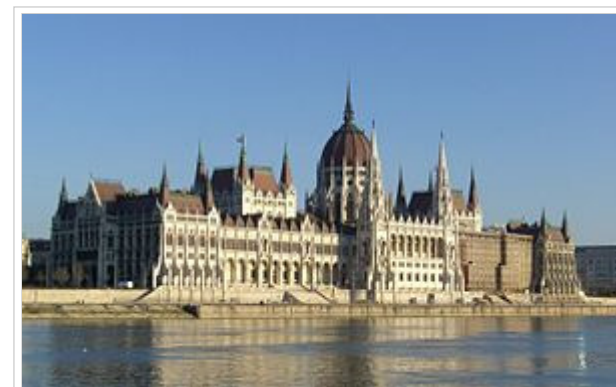
An 11-member Constitutional Court has power to challenge legislation on grounds of unconstitutionality.

Regions, counties, and subregions

Administratively, Hungary is divided into 19 counties. In addition, the capital city (*főváros*), Budapest, is independent of any county government. The counties and the capital are the 20 NUTS third-level units of Hungary.

The counties are further subdivided into 173 subregions (*kistérségek*), and Budapest is its own subregion. Since 1996, the counties and City of Budapest have been grouped into 7 regions for statistical and development purposes. These seven regions constitute NUTS' second-level units of Hungary.

There are also 23 towns with county rights (singular *megyei jogú város*), sometimes known as "urban counties" in English (although there is no such term in Hungarian). The local authorities of these towns have extended powers, but these towns belong to the territory of the respective county instead of being independent territorial units.



The Hungarian Parliament Building in Budapest.



Counties of Hungary

Places

Images

Counties (County Capital)

- Bács-Kiskun (Kecskemét)

- Baranya (Pécs)
- Békés (Békéscsaba)
- Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (Miskolc)
- Csongrád (Szeged)
- Fejér (Székesfehérvár)
- Győr-Moson-Sopron (Győr)
- Hajdú-Bihar (Debrecen)
- Heves (Eger)
- Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (Szolnok)
- Komárom-Esztergom (Tatabánya)
- Nógrád (Salgótarján)
- Pest (Budapest)
- Somogy (Kaposvár)
- Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (Nyíregyháza)
- Tolna (Szekszárd)
- Vás (Szombathely)
- Veszprém (Veszprém)
- Zala (Zalaegerszeg)
- Budapest, capital city

Regions

- Western Transdanubia
- Southern Transdanubia
- Central Transdanubia
- Central Hungary
- Northern Hungary
- Northern Great Plain
- Southern Great Plain

Economy



Hungarian National Bank

Hungary held its first multi-party elections in 1990, following four decades of Communist rule, and has succeeded in transforming its centrally planned economy into a market economy. Both foreign ownership of and foreign investment in Hungarian firms are widespread. The governing coalition, comprising the Hungarian Socialist Party and the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats, prevailed in the April 2006 general election. Hungary needs to reduce government spending and further reform its economy in order to meet the 2012-13 target date for accession to the euro zone.

Hungary continues to demonstrate economic growth as one of the newest member countries of the European Union (since 2004). The private sector accounts for over 80% of GDP. Hungary gets nearly one third of all foreign direct investment flowing into Central Europe, with cumulative foreign direct investment totalling more than US\$23 billion since 1989. It enjoys strong trade, fiscal, monetary, investment, business, and labor freedoms. The top income tax rate is fairly high, but corporate taxes are low. Inflation is low, it was on the rise in the past few years, but it is now starting to regulate. Investment in Hungary is easy, although it is subject to government licensing in security-sensitive areas. Foreign capital enjoys virtually the same protections and privileges as domestic capital. The rule of law is strong, a professional judiciary protects property rights, and the level of corruption is low. Total

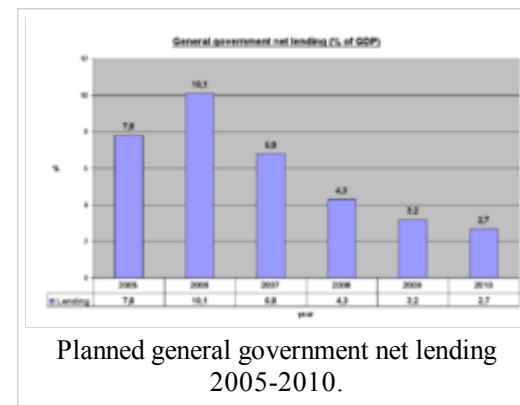
government spending is high, and many state-owned enterprises have not been privatized. Business licensing is also a problem, as regulations are not applied consistently.

According to the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation, Hungary's economy was 67.2 percent "free" in 2008, which makes it the world's 43rd-freest economy. Its overall score is 1 percent lower than last year, partially reflecting new methodological detail. Hungary is ranked 25th out of 41 countries in the European region, and its overall score is slightly lower than the regional average.

The Hungarian sovereign debt's credit rating is BBB+ as of July 2006, making Hungary the only other country in the EU apart from Poland not to enjoy an A grade score (2006). Foreign investors' trust in the Hungarian economy has declined, as they deem that the stringency measures planned in the second half of 2006 are not satisfactory, their focus being mainly on increasing the income side rather than curbing government spendings. Economic reform measures such as health care reform, tax reform, and local government financing are being addressed by the present government.

General government net lending was 9.2 percent in 2006, instead of estimated 10.1 percent (but still the largest in Europe) due to the austerity program of the government, and was 5.5 percent in 2007, and recent estimates of the government says 4 percent in 2008.

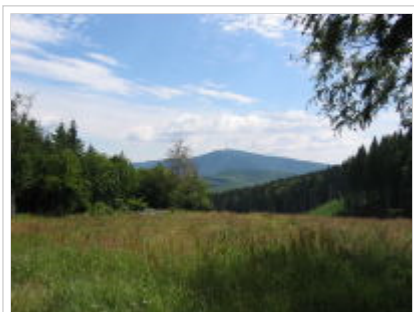
Because of the large austerity program, the real growth of the incomes was negative in 2007 at -5.5 percent, and the estimates say 1 percent increase in 2008. The GDP growth was only 1.4 percent in 2007, much lower than in 2006, due to the decreased government spending, in first quarter of 2008 the GDP growth was 1.7 percent, slightly stronger than last quarter of 2007 (0.9 percent), and some estimates say growth will pick up in range of 2.8-4.0 percent in the second half of 2008, due to starting of large investments, as 2400 megawatt Emfesz gas-fired power plant (the largest gas-fired power plant in Europe) next to the



Ukrainian border (Nyírmeggyes), worth of 1.5 billion euros, a Mercedes-Benz car plant in Kecskemét, worth of 800 million euros (the largest investment in Hungary, since fall of communism), and Eurovegas casino-city next to the Slovakian and Austrian border (Bezenye), worth of 700 million euros. And much higher agricultural production in 2008, compared to the 2007 drought, will also help quick pick up in GDP growth.

Geography

Landscape



Kékes Peak in Mátra Mountains

Slightly more than one half of Hungary's landscape consists of flat to rolling plains of the Carpathian Basin: the most important plain regions include the Little Hungarian Plain in the west, and the Great Hungarian Plain in the southeast. The highest elevation above sea level on the latter is only 183 metres.

Transdanubia is a primarily hilly region with a terrain varied by low mountains. These include the very eastern stretch of the Alps, Alpokalja, in the west of the country, the Transdanubian Medium Mountains, in the central region of Transdanubia, and the Mecsek Mountains and Villány Mountains in the south. The highest point of the area is the Írott-kő in the Alps, at 882 metres.



The highest mountains of the country are located in the Carpathians: these lie in the northern parts, in a wide band along the Slovakian border (highest point: the Kékes at 1,014 m (3327 ft)).

Hungary is divided in two by its main waterway, the Danube (Duna); other large rivers include the Tisza and Dráva, while Transdanubia contains Lake Balaton, a major body of water. The largest thermal lake in the world, Lake Hévíz (Hévíz Spa), is located in Hungary. The second largest lake in the Carpathian Basin is the artificial Lake Tisza (*Tisza-tó*).

Phytogeographically, Hungary belongs to the Central European province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Hungary belongs to the ecoregion of Pannonian mixed forests.

Climate

Hungary has a Continental climate, with hot summers with low overall humidity levels but frequent rainshowers and frigid to cold snowy winters. Average annual temperature is 9.7 °C (49.5 °F). Temperature extremes are about 42 °C (110 °F) in the summer and −29 °C (−20 °F) in the winter. Average temperature in the summer is 27 to 35 °C (81 to 95 °F), and in the winter it is 0 to −15 °C (32 to 5 °F). The average yearly rainfall is approximately 600 millimeters (24 in).

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A small, southern region of the country near Pécs enjoys a reputation for a Mediterranean climate, but in reality it is only slightly warmer than the rest of the country and still receives snow during the winter.

Military

The Military of Hungary, or "Hungarian Armed Forces" currently has two branches, the " Hungarian Ground Force" and the " Hungarian Air Force." The Hungarian Ground Force (or Army) is known as the "Corps of Homeland Defenders" (*Honvédség*). This term was originally used to refer to the revolutionary army established by Lajos Kossuth and the National Defence Committee of the Revolutionary Hungarian Diet in September 1848 during the Hungarian Revolution. The term *Honvédség* is the name of the military of Hungary since 1848 referring to its purpose (*véd* in *Honvéd*) of defending the country. The Hungarian Army is called *Magyar Honvédség*. The rank equal to a Private is a *Honvéd*. The Hungarian Air Force is the air force branch of the Hungarian Army.

Demographics

Hungary's population by ethnicity

For 95% of the population, the mother language is Hungarian, a Finno-Ugric language unrelated to any neighbouring language and distantly related to Finnish and Estonian. The main Minority group are the Roma (2.1%). Other groups include: Germans (1.2%), Slovaks (0.4%), Croats (0.2%), Romanians (0.1%), Ukrainians (0.1%), and Serbs (0.1%).

The Roma minority

The real number of Roma people, referred to as "Gypsies" or "Gipsies" in the English-speaking world, in Hungary is a disputed question. In the 2001 census, only 190,000 people declared themselves Roma, but experts and Roma organisations estimate that there are between 450,000 and 1,000,000 Roma living in Hungary. Since World War II, the size of the Roma population has increased rapidly. Today every fifth or sixth newborn Hungarian child belongs to the Roma minority. Estimates based on demographic trends claim that in 2050 around 20% (19.62% or 20.9%) of the population (1.2 million people) will be Roma.

Counties with the highest concentration of Roma minority are Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (officially 45,525 and 25,612 people in 2001), but there are other regions with a traditionally high Roma population like parts of Baranya and the middle reaches of the Tisza valley. Although they were traditionally living in the countryside, under general urbanization trends from the second half of the 20th century many of them moved into the cities. There is a sizeable Roma minority living in Budapest (12,273 people in 2001, officially).

Romas (called *cigányok* or *romák* in Hungarian) suffer particular problems in Hungary. Rampant poverty and a subsequent lack of education are the main origin of the bad position of the Romas. Racial prejudice compounds the issue. The traditional lifestyle of the Romas is often an obstacle to integration into society and

Hungarian	94.4%
Roma	2.02%
German	1.18%
Slovak	0.38%
Other	2.02%

it is a source of conflicts, especially in the villages. As a result, school segregation is especially acute, with many Roma children sent to classes for pupils with learning disabilities. Slightly more than 80% of Roma children complete primary education, but only one third continue studies into the intermediate (secondary) level. This is far lower than the more than 90% proportion of children of non-Roma families who continue studies at an intermediate level. The situation is made still worse by the fact that a large proportion of young Roma are qualified in subjects that provide them only limited chances for employment. Less than 1% of Roma hold higher educational certificates. Their low status on the job market and higher unemployment rates cause poverty, widespread social problems and crime.

Ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries

For historical reasons (see Treaty of Trianon), significant Hungarian minority populations can be found in the surrounding countries, notably in Romania (in Transylvania), Slovakia, Serbia (in Vojvodina), Ukraine (in Transcarpathia), Croatia (mainly Slavonia) and Austria (in Burgenland); Slovenia is also host to a number of ethnic Hungarians, where Hungarian language has an official status. **See also:**

- Hungarian minority in Romania
- Hungarians in Vojvodina
- Hungarians in Slovakia

Religion in Hungary

Religious affiliation in Hungary (2001)

Denominations	Population	% of total
Christianity	7,584,115	74.4
Catholicism	5,558,901	54.5
<i>Roman Catholics</i>	5,289,521	51.9
<i>Greek Catholics</i>	268,935	2.6
Protestantism	1,985,576	19.5
<i>Calvinists</i>	1,622,796	15.9
<i>Lutherans</i>	304,705	3.0
<i>Baptists</i>	17,705	0.2
<i>Unitarians</i>	6,541	0.1
<i>Other Protestants</i>	33,829	0.3
Orthodoxism	15,298	0.1
Other Christians	24,340	0.2
Judaism	12,871	0.1
Other religions	13,567	0.1
Total religions	7,610,553	74.6
No religion	1,483,369	14.5
Did not wish to answer	1,034,767	10.1
Unknown	69,566	0.7
total	10,198,315	100.00

Religious history

The majority of Hungarian people became Christian in the 10th century. Hungary's first king, Saint Stephen I, took up Western Christianity, although his mother, *Sarolt*, was baptized in the eastern rite. Hungary remained predominantly Catholic until the 16th century, when the Reformation took place and, as a result, first Lutheranism, then soon afterwards Calvinism became the religion of almost the entire population. In the second half of the 16th century, however, Jesuits led a successful campaign of counterreformation among the Hungarians. The Jesuits founded educational institutions, including Péter Pázmány, the oldest university that still exists in Hungary, but organized so-called *missions* too in order to promote popular piety. By the 17th century, Hungary had once again become predominantly Catholic. The eastern parts of the country, however, especially around Debrecen ("the Calvinist Vatican") and Transylvania (except the majority of the Székelys), remained predominantly Protestant. Orthodox Christianity in Hungary has been the religion mainly of some national minorities in the country, notably, Romanians, Rusyns and Ukrainians, Serbs.

Hungary has been the home of a sizable Armenian community as well. They still worship according to the Armenian rite, but they have reunited with the Church of Rome (Armenian Catholics) under the primacy of the Pope. According to the same pattern, a significant number of Orthodox Christians became re-united with the rest of the Catholic world (Greek Catholics).

Jewish Hungarians

Hungary has been the home of a significant number of Jews, especially since the 19th century when many Jews, persecuted in Russia, found refuge in the Kingdom of Hungary. The largest synagogue in Europe is located in Budapest. Some Hungarian Jews were able to escape the Holocaust during World War II, although many were either deported to concentration camps or simply executed.

Today



Basilica in Esztergom



Matthias Church in Budapest

The 2001 Hungarian Census showed religious adherency to be the following: Catholics 54.5%, Calvinist 15.9%, No Religion 14.5%, refused to answer 10.1%, Lutheran 3% and other 2%.

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005,

- **44%** of Hungarian citizens responded that *they believe there is a God!*
- **31%** answered that *they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force!*
- **19%** answered that *they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, God, or life force!*

Culture

Architecture

Hungary is home to the largest synagogue in Europe (Great Synagogue), the largest medicinal bath in Europe (Széchenyi Medicinal Bath), the third largest church in Europe (Esztergom Basilica), the second largest territorial abbey in the world (Pannonhalma Archabbey), the second largest Baroque castle in the world (Gödöllő), and the largest Early Christian Necropolis outside Italy (Pécs).

Music

The music of Hungary consists mainly of traditional Hungarian folk music and music by prominent composers such as Liszt, Dohnányi, Bartók, Kodály, and Rózsa. Hungarian traditional music tends to have a strong dactylic rhythm, as the language is invariably stressed on the first syllable of each word. Hungary also has a number of internationally renowned composers of contemporary classical music, György Ligeti, György Kurtág, Péter Eötvös and Zoltán Jeney among them.

Literature



Romanesque Church in village
Ócsa



Ferenc Kölcsey, author of the lyrics of the Hungarian national anthem.



Regions in Europe where the Hungarian language is spoken.

In the earliest times Hungarian language was written in a runic-like script (although it was not used for literature purposes in the modern interpretation). The country switched to the Latin alphabet after being Christianized under the reign of Stephen I (1000–1038). There are no existing documents from the pre-11th century era. The oldest written record in Hungarian is a fragment in the founding document of the Abbey of Tihany (1055) which contains several Hungarian terms, among them the words *feheruuaru rea meneh hodu utu rea*, "up the military road to Fehérvár" The rest of the document was written in Latin. The oldest complete text is the Funeral Sermon and Prayer (*Halotti beszéd és könyörgés*) (1192–1195), a translation of a Latin sermon. The oldest poem is the Old Hungarian Laments of Mary (*Ómagyar Máriasiralom*), also a (not very strict) translation from Latin, from the 13th century. It is also the oldest surviving Finno-Ugric poem. Among the first chronicles about Hungarian history were *Gesta Hungarorum* ("Deeds of the Hungarians") by the unknown author usually called *Anonymus*, and *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum* ("Deeds of the Huns and the Hungarians") by Simon Kézai. Both are in Latin. These chronicles mix history with legends, so historically they are not always authentic. Another chronicle is the *Képes krónika* (Illustrated Chronicle), which was written for Louis the Great.

Renaissance literature flourished under the reign of King Matthias (1458–1490). Janus Pannonius, although wrote in Latin, counts as one of the most important persons in Hungarian literature, being the only significant Hungarian Humanist poet of the period. The first printing house was also founded during Matthias' reign, by András Hess, in Buda. The first book printed in Hungary was the *Chronica Hungarorum*. The most important poets of the period was Bálint Balassi (1554–1594) and Miklós Zrínyi (1620–1664). Balassi's poetry shows Mediaeval influences, his poems can be divided into three sections: love poems, war poems and religious poems. Zrínyi's most significant work, the epic *Szigeti veszedelem* ("Peril of Sziget", written in 1648/49) is written in a fashion similar to the *Iliad*, and recounts the heroic Battle of Szigetvár, where his great-grandfather died while defending the castle of Szigetvár. Among the religious literary works the most important is the Bible translation by Gáspár Károli, the Protestant pastor of Gönc, in 1590. The translation is called the *Bible of Vizsoly*, after the town where it was first published. (See Hungarian Bible translations for more details.)

The Hungarian enlightenment delayed about fifty years compared to the Western European enlightenment. The new thoughts arrived to Hungary across Vienna. The first enlightened writers were Maria Theresia's bodyguards (György Bessenyei, János Batsányi and so on). The greatest poets of the time was Mihály Csokonai Vitéz and Dániel Berzsenyi. The greatest figure of the language reform was Ferenc Kazinczy. The Hungarian language became feasible for scientific explanations this time, farther a lot of new words were coined for describing new inventions.

Hungarian literature has recently gained some renown outside the borders of Hungary (mostly through translations into German, French and English). Some modern Hungarian authors became increasingly popular in Germany and Italy especially Sándor Márai, Péter Esterházy, Péter Nádas and Imre Kertész. The



The oldest surviving Hungarian poem, Old Hungarian Laments of Mary



Chronicon Pictum

latter is a contemporary Jewish writer who survived the Holocaust and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2002. The older classics of Hungarian literature and Hungarian poetry remained almost totally unknown outside Hungary. János Arany, a famous nineteenth century Hungarian poet is still much loved in Hungary (especially his collection of Ballads), among several other "true classics" like Sándor Petőfi, the poet of the Revolution of 1848, Endre Ady, Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, Attila József and János Pilinszky. Other well-known Hungarian authors are Ferenc Móra, Geza Gardonyi, Zsigmond Móricz, Gyula Illyés, Albert Wass, and Magda Szabó.

Comics

Cuisine

Hungarian cuisine is also a prominent feature of Hungarian culture, with traditional dishes such as the world famous goulash (*gulyás* or *gulyásleves*) a main feature of the Hungarian diet. Dishes are often flavoured with paprika (pure powdered pepper), a Magyar innovation. Goulash is, contrary to popular belief, not a stew but an artistically prepared thick soup. Sour cream is often used to soften flavour. Fisherman's soup (*halászlé*) is a rich mixture of several kinds of poached fish, tomatoes, green peppers and paprika. It is a meal in itself. Lake Balaton pike-perch (*fogas*) is generally served breaded and fried or grilled. Other distinctive dishes include, chicken paprika, homemade *pörkölt* (stew), "vadas" which is a cooked wild meat in carrot sauce and special dumplings, and trout with almond. Goose liver (*libamáj*) is also very popular, either fried or grilled, cold or hot. Desserts include the iconic Dobos Cake, strudels (*rétes* in Hungarian, they are layered pastries filled with apple, cherry, poppyseed, curd or cheese), Gundel pancakes (*palacsinta*), plum in pasta dumplings (*szilvás gombóc*), *somlói* dumplings and *gesztenyepüré* (cooked chestnuts mashed, topped with whipped cream). Specialities include salty and sweet pastas, of which *túrós csusza* (pasta with curd and sour cream) is the most famous.

Healthy brown bread is made from four to six different grains and is sprinkled with sesame seeds, sunflower seeds and rolled oats. *Kifli* is a wildly popular crescent roll made from reform dough.

The *csárda* is the most distinctive type of Hungarian inns, an old-style tavern offering traditional cuisine, wine and *pálinka*. *Borozó* usually denotes a cozy old-fashioned wine bar, *pince* is a beer or wine cellar and a *söröző* is a pub offering draught beer (*csapolt sör*) and sometimes meals. The *bisztró* is an inexpensive restaurant that is often self-service (*önkiszolgáló*). The *büfé* is the cheapest place, although one may have to eat standing at a counter. Pastries, cakes and coffee are served at a *cukrászda*, while an *eszpresszó* is a cafeteria.

Drinks



A nicely prepared *Hortobágyi palacsinta* served in Sopron



Dobos Cake



Tokaji, "Wine of Kings, King of Wines" ("Vinum Regum, Rex Vinorum"). - said Louis XIV of France

Pálinka: This alcoholic drink is distilled from fruit grown in the orchards situated on the Great Hungarian Plain. It is a spirit native to Hungary and comes in a variety of flavours including apricot (barack) and cherry (cseresznye). However plum (szilva) is considered the best of all.

Beer: Beer goes well with many traditional Hungarian dishes and many Hungarians chose to drink is with their lunch. The four main Hungarian breweries are: Soproni, Arany Ászok, Kőbányai, and Dreher.

Wine: As Hugh Johnson says in its book, *The History of Wine*: the territory of Hungary is ideal for wine-making. Since the fall of communism we have seen the renaissance of Hungarian wine-making. The choice of good wine is widening from year to year. The country can be divided to six wine regions: North-Transdanubia, Lake Balaton, South-Pannónia, Duna-region or Alföld, Upper-Hungary and Tokaj-Hegyalja. The Hungarian wine regions offer a great variety of style: the main products of the country are elegant and full-bodied dry whites with good acidity, although complex sweet whites (Tokaj), elegant (Eger) and full-bodied robust reds (Villány and Szekszárd). The main varieties are: Olaszrizling, Hárslevelű, Furmint, Pinot gris or Szürkebarát, Chardonnay (whites), Kékfrankos (or Blaufrankisch in German), Kadarka, Portugieser, Zweigelt, Cabernet sauvignon, Cabernet franc and Merlot. The most famous wines from Hungary are Tokaji Aszú and Egri Bikavér.



A cold bottle of Unicum

Tokaji: Tokaji, meaning "of Tokaj", or "from Tokaj" in Hungarian, is used to label wines from the wine region of Tokaj-Hegyalja in Hungary. Tokaji wine has received accolades from numerous great writers and composers including Beethoven, Liszt, Schubert and Goethe; Joseph Haydn's favorite wine was a Tokaji. Louis XV and Frederick the Great tried to outdo one another in the excellence of the vintages they stocked when they treated guests like Voltaire to some Tokaji. Napoleon III, the last Emperor of the French, ordered 30–40 barrels of Tokaji for the Court every year. Gustav III, King of Sweden, never had any other wine to drink. In Russia, customers included Peter the Great and Empress Elizabeth of Russia.

Zwack Unicum: For over 150 years, a blend of 40 Hungarian herbs has been used to create Unicum. This is a bitter, dark-coloured liqueur that can be drunk as an apéritif or after a meal, thus helping digestion. The recipe is held in secrecy by the Zwack family.

Science

Hungary is famous for its excellent mathematics education which has trained numerous outstanding scientists. Famous Hungarian mathematicians include Paul Erdős (Erdős Pál), famed for publishing in over forty languages and whose Erdős numbers are still tracked; János (John) Bolyai (Bolyai János), designer of non-Euclidean (or "absolute") geometry in 1831; and John von Neumann (Neumann János), a pioneer of digital computing. Many Hungarian Jewish scientists, including Erdős, von Neumann, Edward Teller (Teller Ede), and Eugene Wigner (Wigner Jenő), fled rising anti-Semitism in Europe and made their most famous contributions in the United States.

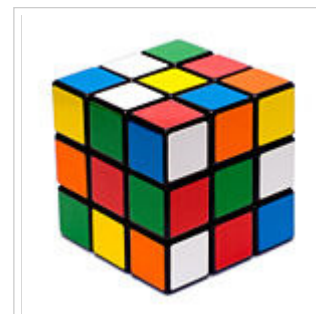
Hungarian inventions include the noiseless match (János Irinyi), Rubik's cube (Ernő Rubik), and the krypton electric bulb (Imre Bródy). Several other inventions were made by Hungarians who fled the country prior to World War II, including holography (Dennis Gabor), the ballpoint pen (László Bíró), the theory of the hydrogen bomb (Edward Teller (Teller Ede)), and the BASIC programming language (John Kemeny, with Thomas E. Kurtz).

Sport

One of the most famous Hungarians is the footballer Ferenc Puskás (1927 – 2006). He scored 84 goals in 85 internationals for Hungary, and 511 goals in 533 matches in the Hungarian and Spanish leagues. Puskás played the 1954 World Cup final against West Germany. In 1958, after the Hungarian Revolution, he emigrated to Spain where he played in the legendary Real Madrid team that also included Alfredo Di Stéfano, and Francisco Gento.

Hungarians are also known for their prowess at water sports, mainly swimming, water polo (in which they have defeated the Soviet team in 1956) and canoeing (they have won multiple medals); this can be said to be surprising at first, due to Hungary being landlocked. On the other hand, the presence of two major rivers (the Duna and the Tisza) and a major lake (Balaton) give excellent opportunities to practice these sports. Some of the world's best sabre fencing athletes have historically hailed from Hungary. The Hungarian national ice hockey team have also qualified for their first IIHF World Championship in more than seventy years.

Spa Culture



Rubik's cube



Gábor Talmácsi (British GP)



Rudas Baths is a thermal and medicinal bath that was first built in 1550

Hungary is a land of thermal water. A passion for spa culture and Hungarian history have been connected from the very beginning. It has been shown that Hungarian spa culture is multicultural. The basis of this claim is architecture: Hungarian spas feature Roman, Greek, Turkish, and northern country architectural elements. Due to an advantageous geographical location thermal water can be found with good quality and in great quantities on over 80% of Hungary's territory. The Romans heralded the first age of spa in Hungary, the remains of their bath complexes are still to be seen in Óbuda, to this day. The spa culture was revived during the Turkish Invasion who used the thermal springs of Buda for the construction of a number of bathhouses, some of which are still functioning (Király Baths, Rudas Baths). In the 19th century the advancement in deep drilling and medical science provided the springboard for a further leap in bathing culture. Grand spas such as Gellért Baths, Lukács Baths, Margaret Island, and Széchenyi Medicinal Bath are a reflection of this resurgence in popularity. Approximately 1,500 thermal springs can be found in Hungary. About half of these are used for bathing. The spa culture has a nearly 2,000 year history in Budapest. Budapest has the richest supply of thermal water among the capitals of the world. The amount of thermal water used in Budapest is roughly equal to two million bath tubs per day. There are approximately 450 public baths in Hungary. Nowadays the trend shows that bath operators are modernizing their facilities and expanding the services offered. A total of 50 of the 160 public baths

are qualified as spas throughout the country. Services are offered for healing purposes. These spas provide every type of balneal and physical therapy. Throughout history bathing and spa tourism has always played an important role in Hungary.

The thermal lake of Hévíz

The thermal lake of Hévíz is the largest biologically active, natural thermal lake of the world. The oldest and most well-known bath of Hungary, in accordance with records from the Roman era, has a history of 2000 years. The Hévíz treatment, in its present sense, also dates back more than 200 years. The 4.4 ha lake is fed by its spring rushing up at a depth of 38 m, containing sulphur, radium and minerals. Due to the high water output of the spring, the water of the lake is completely changed within 48 hours. The water of the Hévíz Lake is equally rich in dissolved substances and gases, combining the favourable effects of naturally carbonated medicinal waters and those containing sulphur, calcium, magnesium, hydrogen-carbonate, as well as those with a slightly radioactive content. The medicinal mud, which covers the bed of the lake in a thick layer, deserves special attention. The Hévíz mud, which is unique of its kind, contains both organic and inorganic substances and the radium-salts and reduced sulphuric solutions in it represent special medicinal factors. The medicinal water and mud originating from the several then thousand year-old Pannonian Sea, together with the complex physiotherapeutic treatments, are suitable for treating all kinds of rheumatic and locomotory diseases. The temperature of the water is 23-25 C in winter and 33-36 C in summer.



Lake Hévíz

Folk Art

Folk Dance

Ugrós (Jumping dances): Old style dances dating back to the Middle Ages. Solo or couple dances accompanied by old style music, shepherd and other solo man's dances from Transylvania, and marching dances along with remnants of medieval weapon dances belong in this group.

Karikázó: a circle dance performed by women only accompanied by singing of folksongs.

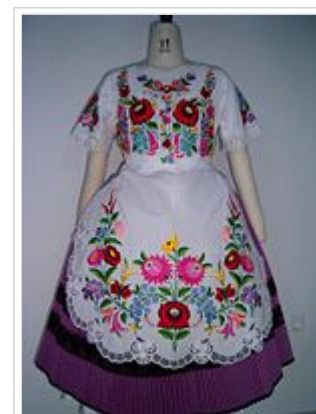
Csárdás: New style dances developed in the 18-19. centuries is the Hungarian name for the national dances, with Hungarian embroidered costumes and energetic music. From the men's intricate bootslapping dances to the ancient women's circle dances, Csárdás demonstrates the infectious exuberance of the Hungarian folk dancing still celebrated in the villages.

Verbunkos: a solo man's dance evolved from the recruiting performances of the Austro-Hungarian army.

The Legényes: is a men's solo dance done by the ethnic Hungarian people living in the Kalotaszeg region of Transylvania. Although usually danced by young men, it can be also danced by older men. The dance is performed freestyle usually by one dancer at a time in front of the band. Women participate in the dance by standing in lines to the side and sing/shout verses while the men dance. Each lad does a number of points (dance phrases) typically 4 to 8 without repetition. Each point consists of 4 parts, each lasting 4 counts. The first part is usually the same for everyone (there are only a few variations).

Embroidery

It was in the beginning of the eighteenth century that the present style of Hungarian folk art took shape, incorporating both Renaissance and Baroque elements, depending on the area, as well as Persian Sassanide influences. Flowers and leaves, sometimes a bird or a spiral ornament, are the principal decorative themes. The most frequent ornament is a flower with a centerpiece resembling the eye of a peacock's feather. Nearly all the manifestations of folk art practiced elsewhere in Europe also flourished among the Magyar peasantry at one time or another, their ceramics and textile being the most highly developed of all. The finest achievements in their textile arts are the embroideries which vary from region to region. Those of Kalotaszeg in Transylvania are charming products of Oriental design, sewn chiefly in a single colour - red, blue, or black. Soft in line, the embroideries are applied on altar cloths, pillow cases and sheets. In Hungary proper Sárköz in Transdanubia and the Matyóföld in the Great Hungarian Plain produce the finest embroideries. In the Sárköz region the women's caps show black and white designs as delicate as lace and give evidence of the people's wonderfully subtle artistic feeling. The embroidery motifs applied to women's wear have also been transposed to tablecloths and runners suitable for modern use as wall decorations.



Woman's Folk Costume

Black pottery

These vessels, made of black clay, reflect more than three hundred years of traditional Transdanubian folk patterns and shapes. No two are precisely alike, since all work is done by hand, including both the shaping and the decorating. The imprints are made by the thumb or a finger of the ceramist who makes the piece.

Hungarian public holidays and special events

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Hungary has nine fixed public holidays:

Date	English Name	Local Name	Remarks
January 1	New Year's Day	<i>Újév</i>	
March 15	National Day	<i>Nemzeti ünnep</i>	<i>Márciusi ifjak</i> ("March youths"), memorial day of the 1848 Revolution. There are usually speeches and music pieces performed; several people wear a cockade with the national colours (red, white and green).
<i>Moveable</i>	Easter Sunday	<i>Húsvétvasárnap</i>	Good Friday work-free for Protestants
<i>Moveable</i>	Easter Monday	<i>Húsvéthétfő</i>	Men visit women and ask for permission for sprinkling by reciting a little Easter poem, they sprinkle them with some perfume (or sometimes a bucket of cold water in the countryside), and they get eggs (mostly of chocolate) in exchange. Children get chocolate bunnies and eggs (from the Bunny), and sometimes fruits, nuts etc. as well. They sometimes have to look for these presents in the garden or in their room. (Living bunnies are not infrequent, either.) Mothers often cook turkey and/or ham for dinner.
May 1	Labour day; anniversary of the accession to the EU	<i>A munka ünnepe</i>	The countries of the EU are represented with special programmes, bridges are decorated and exhibitions are arranged.
<i>Moveable</i>	Pentecost Sunday	<i>Pünkösdvasárnap</i>	Sunday, 50 days after Easter
<i>Moveable</i>	Pentecost Monday	<i>Pünkösdhétfő</i>	Monday after Pentecost
August 20	Saint Stephen Day	<i>Szent István ünnepe</i>	St. Stephen's Day, Foundation of State, "the day of the new bread" as well. St. Stephen of Hungary (<i>Szent István király</i> in Hungarian) (ca. 975 – August 15, 1038), was the first king of Hungary. Celebrated with a half-hour fireworks on the bank of the Danube in the evening, attended by several hundreds of thousands of people.
October 23	National Day	<i>Nemzeti ünnep</i>	The day of the Republic (since 1989), 1956 Revolution memorial day. Celebrated with speeches and exhibitions.
November 1	All Saints Day, Day of the Dead	<i>Mindenszentek, Halottak napja</i>	It is a day to remember the lost ones. On this day people generally visit all their lost relatives' graves which they decorate with flowers.
December 24 evening,	Christmas	<i>Karácsony</i>	People buy (or make) presents for their relatives and friends in the preceding couple of weeks (so this period is the absolute boom of the year for most stores). Public transport stops operating at about 4 p.m.

December 25			Families reunite and people prepare their (labelled) presents under the Christmas tree. It is made of a fir which is decorated by one or two people in the family so nobody else can see it before they signal with a little bell for the rest to come in. The family sings Christmas songs together and everyone unwraps their presents. On 25th, people usually visit their farther relatives (eg. aunts, uncles and grandparents) and exchange presents.
December 26	Second Day of Christmas	<i>Karácsony másnapja</i>	

Holidays not endorsed by the state:

Date	English Name	Local Name	Remarks
December 6	Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas Day	<i>Télapó, Mikulás</i>	Children get various chocolate pieces from the Santa Claus by morning. If they were bad, they might get (birch) rods exclusively or beside their presents.
December 31	New Year's Eve	<i>Szilveszter</i>	Young people go partying until morning. Streets are noisy with paper trumpets, hoots and champagne cracks; people often wear masks. Those who stay home usually watch the comedies made for this occasion; at midnight they drink champagne and wish each other good luck for the new year. National television channels broadcast the orchestral and choral national anthem at midnight, and then the speech of the current President. With these finished, further comedies and various movies follow. The next day streets are as empty as ever, and people sleep long (or sleep themselves sober).
<i>Moveable</i>	Carnival	<i>Farsang</i>	A six day regional carnival, originally celebrated by the Šokci (ethnic- Croatians) living in the town of Mohács. Traditions include folk music, masquerading, parades and dancing.

Hungarian domestic animals

There are special **Hungarian species of domestic animals** which are seen as national symbols in **Hungary**, and there are "gene banks" to ensure their survival, especially in national parks.

- Long-horn Hungarian Grey Cattle- Hungarian breed, traditionally kept in the open full year. Nowadays they are raised for infant food due to natural, healthy meat.
- Magyar Vizsla - one of the oldest hunting dogs of the world. The ancestors of this dog came into the Carpathian Basin with the nomadic Hungarian tribes.
- Hungarian Puli - small shepherd dog
- Hungarian Komondor - large shepherd dog, was brought to Hungary a thousand years ago by nomadic Magyars.
- Hungarian Kuvasz - large shepherd dog.
- Hungarian Pumi - small shepherd dog.
- Magyar Agár (Hungarian Greyhound) is already known in the 8th century, it is as old as the Vizsla.
- Transylvanian Bloodhound - Hungarian hound.
- Hungarian Mudi shepherd dog.
- Hungarian thoroughbred horses - a mid-19th century mixture of the best Arab and English race horse characteristics.
- Mangalica, a breed of pigs, characterised by their long curly hair and relatively fatty meat which makes them ideal for making sausages and salami.

Special events

Hungary's most outstanding annual events include the Budapest Spring Festival (mid-march to mid-April), Hortobágy Equestrian Days (late June), Sopron Early Music Days (late June), Búcsú (Farewell), Festival in Budapest (late June), Miskolc Opera Festival (late June), Miskolc Kalálka International Folk Festival (July), Győr Summer Festival (late June), Győr Summer Cultural Festival (late June to late July), Pannon Festival in Pécs (July and August), Szentendre Summer Festival (July), Kőszeg Street Theatre Festival (late July), Savaria International Dance Competition in Szombathely (July), Debrecen Jazz Days (July), Szeged Open Air Festival (mid-July to August), Diáksziget (Student Island or Pepsi Island) north of Budapest (August), Eger Wine Harvest Festival (September), and Budapest Autumn Arts Festival (mid-September to mid-October).

St Stephen's Day (20 August) is celebrated with sporting events, parades and fireworks nationwide. On the same day there is a Floral Festival in Debrecen and a Bridge Fair in nearby Hortobágy. Formula 1 car races are held in early August at the Hungaroring near Mogyoród, 24 km northeast of Budapest.

Budapest Spring Festival



Magyar Vizsla



White Puli

Designed to fit the needs of Budapest's cultural heritage and its requirements as a modern Central European centre, this metropolitan festival was instituted in 1981. By presenting and disseminating cultural assets it boosts the city's image and encourages dynamic development of its cultural tourism. This "festival of festivals", traditionally covering a range of artistic fields, presents a series of homogeneous artistic activities to which international professional symposia are linked. The Budapest Spring Festival takes place in the last two weeks of March. Its main emphasis is on those symphony orchestra concerts, opera and ballet performances which will appeal to the widest audience, but the program also includes open-air events and an Operetta Festival. The performances take place in the capital's most important concert halls and theatres, and often near historic monuments. Over the years a number of regional towns have been included in the Budapest Spring Festival - Debrecen, Gödöllő, Győr, Kaposvár, Kecskemét, Sopron, Szentendre and Szombathely - and thus it has more or less expanded into a national festival. The list of events always includes renowned foreign guests as well as distinguished artists and groups from the Hungarian musical life. Highlights include classical concerts, productions at the Opera House, open air events, the Operetta Festival, the Dance House Convention, the Dance Panorama, and what are considered to be the real treat, the exhibitions.



Budapest, Opera House

Haydn Festival in Eszterháza

Haydn at Eszterháza: During its first quarter century, the palace was the primary home of the celebrated composer Joseph Haydn, who wrote the majority of his symphonies for the Prince's orchestra. Starting in 1768, the theatre was a major venue for opera, often with more than a hundred performances per year. The palace was geographically isolated, a factor which led to loneliness and tedium among the musicians. This is seen in some of Haydn's letters, as well as in the famous tale of the Farewell Symphony

The basic aim of the festival is to evoke the musical paradise that Eszterháza was in Haydn's time, within the original walls, with the help of period instruments and performing practice. The programmes focus mainly on the works composed during the Eszterháza period of Haydn's creative life, and among these, on compositions belonging to the most important genres (symphonies, string quartets, keyboard sonatas and trios). In addition, however, the concert programmes regularly include works by the "unknown Haydn" (baryton pieces, rarely-heard church compositions, wind divertimenti, etc.). The festival aims to provide opportunities for the world's most outstanding Haydn performers to meet here, to gain inspiration from the atmosphere and acoustics of the place, and to inspire one another through shared music-making. The majority of the performers play only compositions by Joseph Haydn, but also in exceptional cases other works closely connected, either directly or through their composers, with Haydn, Eszterháza or the family of the Esterházy princes - such as, for example, the string quartets dedicated to Haydn by Mozart, and certain pieces by Michael Haydn (the composer's younger brother), Luigi Tomasini (leader of the Eszterháza orchestra) and others. The venue for most of the concerts is the enchantingly beautiful ceremonial hall of the palace, which has superb acoustics. Some of the more intimate, solistic performances are given in the sala terrena, the central hall of the original, smaller, Renaissance hunting palace. Some concerts of church music take place in one or other of the churches in the nearby villages.



Eszterházy-Palace in Fertőd

Győr Summer Festival

This festival is held annually, from the second week in June to the second week in July. The Győr Summer International Cultural Festival, which displays Győr's cultural heritage, has a history of over three decades. The list of events, which covers a wide range of genres, is based on a series of separate activities. Every year, for a month in June and July, the Baroque decorations of the city centre, its atmospheric courtyards and the banks of the Rába river are home to the International Ballet Festival, the International Puppet and Street Theatre Convention, the International Folk Dancing and Folk Music Festival, and the International Handcraft Fair and Exhibition. In addition to the performances of the hosts - the Győr Ballet, the Győr National Theatre, and the Győr Philharmonic Orchestra - visitors can also see those of the visiting theatre companies and musical groups .

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Győr centre

Iceland




2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Iceland, officially the **Republic of Iceland** (Icelandic: *Ísland* or *Lýðveldið Ísland* (*names of Iceland*); IPA: [ˈliðvɛltið ˈistlant]) is a country in northern Europe, comprising the island of Iceland and its outlying islets in the North Atlantic Ocean between the rest of Europe and Greenland. It is the least populous of the Nordic countries and the second smallest; it has a population of about 316,000 (April 1, 2008 estimate) and a total area of 103,000 km². Its capital and largest city is Reykjavík.

Located on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Iceland is volcanically and geologically active on a large scale; this defines the landscape in various ways. The interior mainly consists of a plateau characterized by sand fields, mountains and glaciers, while many big glacial rivers flow to the sea through the lowlands. Warmed by the Gulf Stream, Iceland has a temperate climate relative to its latitude and provides a habitable environment and nature.

The settlement of Iceland began in 874 when, according to *Landnámabók*, the Norwegian chieftain Ingólfur Arnarson became the first permanent Norwegian settler on the island. Others had visited the island earlier and stayed over winter. Over the next centuries, people of Nordic and Gaelic origin settled in Iceland. Until the twentieth century, the Icelandic population relied on fisheries and agriculture, and was from 1262 to 1918 a part of the Norwegian and later the Danish monarchies. In the twentieth century, Iceland's economy and welfare system developed quickly. In recent decades, Iceland has seen economic reforms, free trade in the European Economic Area, and diversification from fishing to new economic fields in services, finance, and various industries.

Today, Iceland has some of the world's highest levels of economic freedoms as well as civil freedoms. As of 2007, Iceland is the most developed country in the world with fellow Nordic country Norway according to the Human Development Index and one of the most egalitarian, according to the calculation provided by the Gini coefficient. It is also the fourth most productive country per capita. Icelanders have a rich culture and heritage, such as cuisine and poetry (thus the country itself has many names coined by poets). Iceland is a member of the UN, NATO, EFTA, EEA and OECD, but not of the European Union. The country is a candidate for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council.

<i>Lýðveldið Ísland</i> Republic of Iceland	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: <i>Lofsöngur</i>	
	
Location of Iceland (red) in Europe (white)	
Capital (and largest city)	Reykjavík
Official languages	Icelandic
Demonym	Icelander

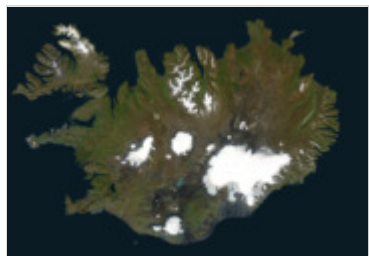
Geography

Topography

Government	Parliamentary republic
- President	Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
- Prime Minister	Geir Haarde
- Althing President	Sturla Böðvarsson
Independence	from Denmark
- Home rule	1 February 1904
- Sovereignty	1 December 1918
- Republic	17 June 1944
Area	
- Total	103,000 km ² (107th) 39,770 sq mi
- Water (%)	2.7
Population	
- April 2008 estimate	316,252 ¹ (172nd)
- December 1980 census	229,187
- Density	3,1/km ² (233th) 7.5/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2006 estimate
- Total	\$12.172 billion (132nd)
- Per capita	\$40,277 (2005) (5th)
GDP (nominal)	2006 estimate
- Total	\$16.579 billion (93rd)
- Per capita	\$62,976 (4th)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.968 (high) (1st)
Currency	Icelandic króna (ISK)
Time zone	GMT (UTC+0)
Internet TLD	.is
Calling code	+354

Iceland is located in the North Atlantic Ocean just south of the Arctic Circle, which passes through the small island of Grímsey off Iceland's northern coast, but not through mainland Iceland. Unlike neighbouring Greenland, Iceland is considered to be a part of Europe, not of North America, though geologically the island belongs to both continents. Because of cultural, economic and linguistic similarities, Iceland in many contexts is also included in Scandinavia. The closest bodies of land are Greenland (287 km) and the Faroe Islands (420 km). The closest distance to the mainland of Europe is 970 km (to Norway).

1 "Statistics Iceland:Key figures", www.statice.is (1 October 2007).



Iceland, as seen from space



Iceland, as seen from space on January 29, 2004. Source: NASA

Iceland is the world's 18th largest island, and Europe's second largest island following Great Britain. The country is 103,000 km² (39,768.5 sq mi) in size, of which 62.7% is wasteland. Lakes and glaciers cover 14.3%; only 23% is vegetated. The largest lakes are Þórisvatn (Reservoir): 83–88 km² (32–34 sq mi) and Þingvallavatn: 82 km² (32 sq mi); other important lakes include Lögurinn and Mývatn. Öskjuvatn is the deepest lake at 220 m (722 ft).



A map of Iceland with major towns marked.



Strokkur, a geyser in the process of erupting. Lying on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Iceland is one of the most geologically active areas on Earth.

Many fjords punctuate its extensive coastline, which is also where most settlements are situated because the island's interior, the Highlands of Iceland, is a cold and uninhabitable combination of sand and mountains. The major towns are the capital Reykjavík, Kópavogur, Hafnarfjörður, Reykjanesbær, where the international airport is located, and Akureyri. The island of Grímsey on the Arctic Circle contains the northernmost habitation of Iceland.

Iceland has four national parks: Jökulsárgljúfur National Park, Skaftafell National Park, Snæfellsjökull National

Park, and Þingvellir National Park.

Geological activity

A geologically young land, Iceland is located on both the Iceland hotspot and the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, which runs right through it. This combined location means that geologically the island is extremely active, having many volcanoes, notably Hekla, Eldgjá, and Eldfell. The volcanic eruption of Laki in 1783–1784 caused a famine that killed nearly a quarter of the island's population; the eruption caused dust clouds and haze to appear over most of Europe and parts of Asia and Africa for several months after the eruption.

There are also many geysers in Iceland, including Geysir, from which the English word is derived. With this widespread availability of geothermal power, and because many rivers and waterfalls are harnessed for hydroelectricity, most residents have hot water and home heat cheaply. The island itself is composed primarily of basalt, a low-silica lava associated with effusive volcanism like Hawaii. But Iceland has various kinds of volcanoes, many of which produce more evolved lavas such as rhyolite and andesite.

Iceland controls Surtsey, one of the youngest islands in the world. It rose above the ocean in a series of volcanic eruptions between November 8, 1963 and June 5, 1968.

Climate

The climate of Iceland's coast is subpolar oceanic. The warm North Atlantic Current ensures generally higher annual temperatures than in most places of similar latitude in the world. The winters are mild and windy while the summers are damp and cool. Regions in the world with similar climate include the Aleutian Islands, Alaska Peninsula and Tierra del Fuego although these regions are closer to the equator. Despite its proximity to the Arctic, the island's coasts remain ice-free through the winter. Ice incursions are rare, the last having occurred on the north coast in 1969.

There are some variations in the climate between different parts of the island. Very generally speaking, the south coast is warmer, wetter and windier than the north. Low-lying inland areas in the north are the most arid. Snowfall in winter is more common in the north than the south. The Central Highlands are the coldest part of the country.

The highest air temperature recorded was 30.5 °C (86.9 °F) on 22 June 1939 at Teigarhorn on the south-eastern coast. The lowest was -38 °C (-36.4 °F) on 22 January 1918 at Grímsstaðir and Möðrudalur in the northeast hinterland. The temperature records for Reykjavík are 24.8 °C (76.6 °F) on 11 August 2004, and -24.5 °C (-12.1 °F) on 21 January 1918.

Mean daily maximum and minimum temperatures (°C) (1961–1990)

Location	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		All
Reykjavík	1.9	2.8	3.2	5.7	9.4	11.7	13.3	13.0	10.1	6.8	3.4	2.2	High	7.0
	-3.0	-2.1	-2.0	0.4	3.6	6.7	8.3	7.9	5.0	2.2	-1.3	-2.8	Low	1.9
Akureyri	0.9	1.7	2.1	5.4	9.5	13.2	14.5	13.9	9.9	5.9	2.6	1.3	High	6.7
	-5.5	-4.7	-4.2	-1.5	2.3	6.0	7.5	7.1	3.5	0.4	-3.5	-5.1	Low	0.2



Dettifoss, the most powerful waterfall in Europe, is located in north-eastern Iceland.

Flora and fauna

The short time since the last ice age, 10,000 years ago, has mostly prevented plants and animals from migrating to the island or evolving locally. There are around 1,300 known species of insects in Iceland, which is rather low compared with other countries (about 925,000 are known in the world). The only native land mammal when humans arrived was the arctic fox, which came to the island at the end of the ice age, walking over the frozen sea. There are no native reptiles or amphibians on the island.

Phytogeographically, Iceland belongs to the Arctic province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Iceland belongs to the ecoregion of Iceland boreal birch forests and alpine tundra. Approximately three-quarters of the island are barren of vegetation; plant life consists mainly of grassland which is regularly grazed by livestock. The only tree native to Iceland is the northern birch *Betula pubescens*, which formerly formed forest over much of southern Iceland. Permanent human settlement greatly disturbed the isolated ecosystem of thin, volcanic soils and limited species diversity. The forests were heavily exploited over the centuries for firewood and timber. Deforestation caused a loss of critical topsoil due to erosion, greatly reducing the ability of birches to grow back. Today, only a few small birch stands exist in isolated reserves. The planting of new forests has increased the number of trees, but does not compare to the original forests. Some of the planted forests include new foreign species.



An Icelandic sheep

The animals of Iceland include the Icelandic sheep, cattle, chicken, goat and the sturdy Icelandic horse. Many varieties of fish live in the ocean waters surrounding Iceland, and the fishing industry is a main contributor to Iceland's economy, accounting for more than half of its total exports. Wild mammals include the arctic fox, mink, mice, rats, rabbits and reindeer. Before and around the 1900s polar bears occasionally visited the island, traveling on icebergs from Greenland. Birds, especially sea birds, are a very important part of Iceland's animal life. Puffins, skuas, and kittiwakes nest on its sea cliffs. Though Iceland no longer has a commercial whaling fleet (as of August, 2007) it still allows scientific whale hunts, which are not supported by the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

History



A 19th century depiction of a meeting of the Alþingi at Þingvellir.

Age of settlement

The first people thought to have inhabited Iceland were Irish monks or hermits who came in the eighth century, but left with the arrival of Norsemen, who systematically settled Iceland in the period circa AD 870-930. The first known permanent Norse settler was Ingólfur Arnarson, who built his homestead in Reykjavík in 874. Ingólfur was followed by many other emigrant settlers, largely Norsemen and their Irish slaves. By 930, most arable land had been claimed and the Althing, a legislative and judiciary parliament, was founded as the political hub of the Icelandic Commonwealth. Christianity was adopted in 1000. The Commonwealth lasted until 1262, when the political system devised by the original settlers proved unable to cope with the increasing power of Icelandic chieftains.

Middle Ages to the Early Modern Era

The internal struggles and civil strife of the Sturlung Era led to the signing of the Old Covenant, which brought Iceland under the Norwegian crown. Possession of Iceland passed to Denmark-Norway in the late 14th century when the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark were united in the Kalmar Union. In the ensuing centuries, Iceland became one of the poorest countries in Europe. Infertile soil, volcanic eruptions, and an unforgiving climate made for harsh life in a society whose subsistence depended almost entirely on agriculture. The Black Death swept Iceland in 1402–1404 and 1494–1495, each time killing approximately half the population.

Around the middle of the 16th century, King Christian III of Denmark began to impose Lutheranism on all his subjects. The last Catholic bishop in Iceland was beheaded in 1550, and the country subsequently became fully Lutheran. Lutheranism has since remained the dominant religion. In the 1600s and 1700s, Denmark imposed harsh trade restrictions on Iceland, while pirates from England, Spain and Algeria raided its coasts. A great smallpox epidemic in the 18th century killed around one-third of the population. In 1783 the Laki volcano erupted, with devastating effects. The years following the eruption, known as the *Mist Hardships* (Icelandic: *Móðuharðindin*), saw the death of over half of all livestock in the country, with ensuing famine in which around a quarter of the population died.

Independence and recent history

In 1814, following the Napoleonic Wars, Denmark-Norway was broken up into two separate kingdoms via the Treaty of Kiel. Iceland remained a Danish dependency. A new independence movement arose under the leadership of Jón Sigurðsson, inspired by the romantic and nationalist ideologies of mainland Europe. In 1874, Denmark granted Iceland home rule, which was expanded in 1904. The Act of Union, an agreement with Denmark signed on December 1, 1918, recognized Iceland as a fully sovereign state under the Danish king. During the last quarter of the 19th century many Icelanders emigrated to North America, largely Canada, in search of better living conditions.

Iceland during World War II joined Denmark in asserting neutrality. After the German occupation of Denmark on April 9, 1940,



Jón Sigurðsson, leader of the Icelandic independence movement

Iceland's parliament declared that the Icelandic government should assume the Danish king's authority and take control over foreign affairs and other matters previously handled by Denmark on behalf of Iceland. A month later, British military forces occupied Iceland, violating Icelandic neutrality. In 1941, responsibility for the occupation was taken over by the United States Army. Allied occupation of Iceland lasted throughout the war.

On December 31, 1943 the Act of Union agreement expired after 25 years. Beginning on May 20, 1944, Icelanders voted in a four-day plebiscite on whether to terminate the union with Denmark and establish a republic. The vote was 97% in favor of ending the union and 95% in favour of the new republican constitution. Iceland formally became an independent republic on June 17, 1944, with Sveinn Björnsson as the first President. The Allied occupation force left in 1946. Iceland became a member of NATO on March 30, 1949, amid domestic controversy and riots and on May 5, 1951, a defense agreement was signed with the United States. American troops returned to Iceland and remained throughout the Cold War until autumn 2006.

The immediate post-war period was followed by substantial economic growth, driven by industrialization of the fishing industry and Marshall aid and Keynesian government management of the economies of Europe, all of which promoted trade. The 1970s were marked by the Cod Wars – several disputes with the United Kingdom over Iceland's extension of its fishing limits. The economy was greatly diversified and liberalized following Iceland's joining of the European Economic Area in 1992.

Government

Iceland is a representative democracy and a parliamentary republic. The modern parliament, called "Alþingi" (English: Althing), was founded in 1845 as an advisory body to the Danish king. It was widely seen as a reestablishment of the assembly founded in 930 in the Commonwealth period and suspended in 1799. It currently has sixty-three members, each of whom is elected every four years.

The president of Iceland is a largely ceremonial office that serves as a diplomat, figurehead and head of state, but who can also block a law voted by the parliament and put it to a national referendum. The current president is Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson. The head of government is the prime minister, who, together with the cabinet, takes care of the executive part of government. The cabinet is appointed by the president after general elections to Althing; however, this process is usually conducted by the leaders of the political parties, who decide among themselves after discussions which parties can form the cabinet and how its seats are to be distributed, under the condition that it has a majority support in Althing. Only when the party leaders are unable to reach a conclusion by themselves in reasonable time does the president exercise this power and appoint the cabinet himself. This has not happened since the republic was founded in 1944, but in 1942 the regent of the country (Sveinn Björnsson, who had been installed in that position by the Althing in 1941) did appoint a non-parliamentary government. The regent had, for all practical purposes, the position of a president, and Sveinn in fact became the country's first president in 1944.



Stjórnarráðið, the seat of the executive branch

The governments of Iceland have almost always been coalitions with two or more parties involved, due to the fact that no single political party has received a majority of seats in Althing in the republic period. The extent of the political powers possessed by the office of the president is disputed by legal scholars in Iceland; several provisions of the constitution appear to give the president some important powers but other provisions and traditions suggest differently. In 1980, Icelanders elected Vigdís Finnbogadóttir as president, the world's first directly elected female head of state. She retired from office in 1996.

Elections for the office of town councils, parliament and presidency are each held every four years. The next elections are scheduled for 2010, 2011 and 2008, respectively.

Subdivisions

Iceland is divided into regions, constituencies, counties, and municipalities. There are eight regions which are primarily used for statistical purposes; the district court jurisdictions also use an older version of this division. Until 2003, the constituencies for the parliament elections were the same as the regions, but by an amendment to the constitution, they were changed to the current six constituencies:

- *Reykjavík North* and *Reykjavík South* (city regions);
- *Southwest* (four geographically separate suburban areas around Reykjavík);
- *Northwest* and *Northeast* (north half of Iceland, split); and,
- *South* (south half of Iceland, excluding Reykjavík and suburbs).

The redistricting change was made in order to balance the weight of different districts of the country, since a vote cast in the sparsely populated areas around the country would count much more than a vote cast in the Reykjavík city area. The imbalance between districts has been reduced by the new system, but still exists.

Iceland's twenty-three counties are, for the most part, historical divisions. Currently, Iceland is split up among twenty-six magistrates (*sýslumenn*) that represent government in various capacities. Among their duties are tax collection, administering bankruptcy declarations, and performing civil marriages. After a police re-organization in 2007, which combined police forces in multiple counties, about half of them are in charge of police forces.

There are seventy-nine municipalities in Iceland which govern local matters like schools, transportation and zoning. These are the actual second-level subdivisions of Iceland, as the constituencies have no relevance except in elections and for statistical purposes. Reykjavík is by far the most populous municipality, about four times more populous than Kópavogur, the second one.

Politics

Iceland has a left-right multi-party system. The biggest party is the right wing Independence Party ("Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn"), while the second largest one is the

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The Althing in Reykjavík, with the cathedral on the left.

social democratic Alliance (“Samfylkingin”). Following the May 2007 parliamentary elections, these two formed a coalition, enjoying a strong majority in Althing, with 43 out of 63 members supporting it.

Other political parties that have a seat in Althing are the centrist Progressive Party (“Framsóknarflokkurinn”), which had been in government with the Independence Party for 12 years before the 2007 election, the Left-Green Movement (“Vinstrihreyfingin - grænt framboð”), founded in 1999, and the Centre-right Liberal Party. Many other parties exist on the municipal level, most of which only run locally in a single municipality.

Foreign relations

Iceland maintains diplomatic and commercial relations with practically all nations, but its ties with the Nordic countries, Germany, the US, and the other NATO nations are particularly close. Icelanders remain especially proud of the role Iceland played in hosting the historic 1986 Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavík, which set the stage for the end of the Cold War. Iceland's principal historical international disputes involved disagreements over fishing rights. Conflict with Britain led to a series of so-called Cod Wars in 1952-1956 as a result of the extension of Iceland's fishing zone from 3 to 4 nautical miles (6 to 7 km), 1958-1961 following a further extension to 12 nautical miles (22 km), 1972-1973 with another extension to 50 nautical miles (93 km) and in 1975-1976: another extension to 200 nautical miles (370 km).

Iceland has no standing army. The U.S. Air Force maintained four to six Interceptors at the Keflavík base, until 30 September 2006 when they were withdrawn. Iceland supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq despite much controversy and condemnation in Iceland, deploying a Coast Guard EOD team to Iraq which was replaced later by members of the Icelandic Crisis Response Unit. Iceland has also participated in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia.

Demographics

The original population of Iceland was of Nordic and Celtic origin. This is evident from literary evidence dating from the settlement period as well as from later scientific studies such as blood type and genetic analyses. One such genetics study has indicated that the majority of the male settlers were of Nordic origin while the majority of the women were of Celtic origin.



Suburban Reykjavík. Over 60% of Icelanders live in the Reykjavík Metropolitan Area

Iceland has extensive genealogical records dating back to the late 1600s and fragmentary records extending back to the Age of Settlement. The biopharmaceutical company deCODE Genetics has funded the creation of a genealogy database which attempts to cover all of Iceland's known inhabitants. It sees the database, called Íslendingabók, as a valuable tool for conducting research on genetic diseases, given the relative isolation of Iceland's population.

The population of the island is believed to have varied from 40,000 to 60,000 in the period from initial settlement until the mid-19th century. During that time, cold winters, ashfall from volcanic eruptions, and bubonic plagues adversely affected the population several times. The first census was carried out in 1703 and revealed that the population was then 50,358. After the destructive volcanic eruptions of the Laki volcano during 1783–1784 the population reached a low of about 40,000. Improving living conditions have triggered a rapid increase in population since the mid-19th century - from about 60,000 in 1850 to 316,000 in 2008.

In December 2007, 33,678 people (13.5% of the total population) who were living in Iceland had been born abroad, including children of Icelandic parents living abroad. 19,000 people (6% of the population) held foreign citizenship. Poles make up the far largest minority nationality (see table on the right for more details), and still form the bulk of the foreign workforce. About 9,000 Poles now live in Iceland, 1,500 of them in Reyðarfjörður where they make up 75 percent of the workforce who are building the Fjarðarál aluminium plant. The recent surge in immigration has been credited to a labor shortage because of the booming economy while restrictions on the movement of people from the Eastern European countries that joined the EU/ EEA in 2004 have been lifted. Large-scale construction projects in the east of Iceland (see Kárahnjúkar Hydropower Project) have also brought in many people whose stay is expected to be temporary.

The south-west corner of Iceland is the most densely populated region. It is also the location of the capital Reykjavík, the northernmost capital in the world. The largest towns outside the greater Reykjavík area are Akureyri and Reykjanesbær, although the latter is relatively close to the capital.

10 most populous towns in Iceland

List of ten most populous towns in Iceland. The population census is April 1, 2008 (estimate).

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Citizenship of Iceland residents (1.1.2008)

Total	313,376
Iceland	291,942
Poland	8,488
Lithuania	1,332
Germany	984
Denmark	966
Portugal	890
Philippines	743
Ex-Yugoslavia	651
United States	598
Thailand	545
Latvia	431
United Kingdom	420
Sweden	407
China (PRC)	379
Ex- Czechoslovakia	365
Norway	301
others	3,934
total (without Icelanders)	21,434

- Reykjavík - 118,861
- Kópavogur - 30,000
- Hafnarfjörður - 25,107
- Akureyri - 17,304
- Reykjanesbær - 13,686
- Garðabær - 10.139
- Mosfellsbær - 8,317
- Árborg - 7,693
- Akranes - 6,419
- Fjarðabyggð - 5,000

Language

Iceland's official written and spoken language is Icelandic, a North Germanic language descended from Old Norse. It has changed less from Old Norse than the other Nordic languages, has preserved more verb and noun inflection, and has to a considerable extent developed new vocabulary based on native roots rather than borrowings from English. It is the only living language to retain the runic letter Þ. The closest living language to Icelandic is Faroese. In education, the use of Icelandic Sign Language for Iceland's deaf community is regulated by the *National Curriculum Guide*.

English is widely spoken as a secondary language, and many Icelanders speak it at an almost native level. Danish is also widely understood. Studying both these languages is a mandatory part of the compulsory school curriculum. Other commonly spoken languages are German, Norwegian and Swedish. Danish is mostly spoken in a way largely comprehensible to Swedes and Norwegians – it is often referred to as "Scandinavian" in Iceland.

In addition to Icelandic, many immigrants speak their respective native languages.

Religion

Icelanders enjoy freedom of religion under the constitution, though there is no separation of church and state. The National Church of Iceland, a Lutheran body, is the state church. The national registry keeps account of the religious affiliation of every Icelandic citizen. In 2005, Icelanders divided into religious groups as follows:

- 82.1% members of the National Church of Iceland.
- 4.7% members of the Free Lutheran Churches of Reykjavík and Hafnarfjörður.
- 2.6% not members of any religious group.
- 2.4% members of the Roman Catholic Church, which has a Diocese of Reykjavík (see also Bishop of Reykjavík (Catholic))
- 5.5% members of unregistered religious organisations or with no specified religious affiliation

The remaining 2.7% is mostly divided between around 20–25 other Christian denominations and sects, and less than 1% are in non-Christian religious organisations. The largest non-Christian denomination is Íslenska Ásatrúarfélagið, a neopagan group.

Religious attendance is relatively low, as in other Nordic countries. The above statistics represent administrative membership of religious organizations and not the actual belief demographics of the population of Iceland.



Hallgrímskirkja, *Church of Hallgrímur*, in Reykjavík, Iceland.

Economy and infrastructure



Akureyri is the largest town in Iceland outside of the greater Reykjavík area. Most rural towns are based on the fishing industry, which provides 40% of Iceland's export.

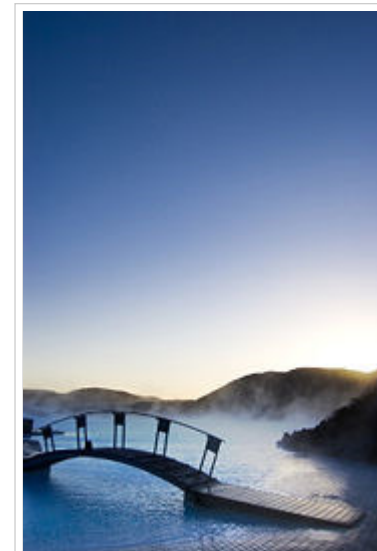
Iceland is the fourth most productive country in the world by nominal gross domestic product per capita (54,858 USD), and the fifth most productive by GDP at purchasing power parity (40,112 USD). Except for its abundant hydro-electric and geothermal power, Iceland lacks natural resources; historically its economy depended heavily on the fishing industry, which still provides almost 40% of export earnings and employs 8% of the work force. The economy is vulnerable to declining fish stocks and drops in world prices for its main material exports: fish and fish products, aluminium, and ferrosilicon. Although the Icelandic economy still relies heavily on fishing, its importance is diminishing as the travel industry and other service, technology and various other industries grow. Economic growth slowed from 2000 to 2002, but the economy expanded by 4.3% in 2003 and 6.2% in 2004. The unemployment rate of ~1.0% (2007 est.) is among the lowest in the European Economic Area.

Although Iceland is a very developed country, it is still one of the most newly-industrialized ones in Europe. Until the 20th century, it was probably the poorest country in Western Europe. The fast economic growth that it has experienced in the last decades is only recently allowing for upgrading of infrastructure such as transportation. The government coalition plans to continue its generally neo-liberal policies of reducing the budget and current account deficits, limiting foreign borrowing, containing inflation, revising agricultural and fishing policies, diversifying the economy, and privatising state-owned industries. The government remains opposed to EU membership, primarily because of Icelanders' concern about losing control over their fishing resources.

Iceland's economy has been diversifying into manufacturing and service industries in the last decade, including software production, biotechnology, and financial services. The tourism sector is expanding, with the recent trends in ecotourism and whale-watching. Iceland's agriculture industry consists mainly of potatoes, turnips, green vegetables (in greenhouses), mutton and dairy products. The financial centre is Borgartún in Reykjavik, hosting a large number of companies and three investment banks. Iceland's stock market, the Iceland Stock Exchange (ISE), was established in 1985.

The primary currency of Iceland is the Icelandic Króna (ISK). Iceland's then foreign minister Valgerður Sverrisdóttir said in an interview on 15 January 2007 that she seriously wished to look into whether Iceland can join the Euro without being a member of the EU. She believes it is difficult to maintain an independent currency in a small economy on the open European market. An extensive poll, released on 11 September 2007, by Capacent Gallup showed that 53% of respondents were in favour of adopting the euro, 37% opposed and 10% undecided.

Iceland ranked 5th in the Index of Economic Freedom 2006 and 14th in 2008. Iceland has a flat tax system. The main personal income tax rate is a flat 22.75 percent and combined with municipal taxes the total tax rate is not more than 35.72%, and there are many deductions. The corporate tax rate is a flat 18 percent, one of the lowest in the world. Other taxes include a value-added tax and a net wealth tax. Employment regulations are relatively flexible. Property rights are strong and Iceland is one of the few countries where they are applied to fishery management. Taxpayers pay various



The Blue Lagoon, a geothermal spa located near Reykjavik.

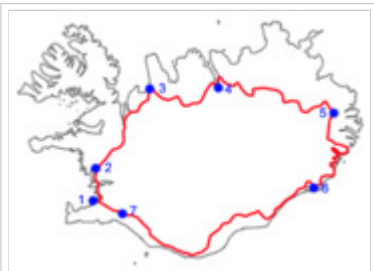


Gay parade in Iceland. Iceland has high economic liberties as well as civil liberties. Iceland is described as creative class hotspot by Richard Florida.

subsidies to each other, similar to European countries with welfare state, but the spending is less than in most European countries. Despite low tax rates, overall taxation and consumption is still much higher than countries such as Ireland. According to OECD, agricultural support is the highest among OECD countries and an impediment to structural change. Also, health care and education spending have relatively poor return by OECD measures. OECD *Economic survey of Iceland 2008* highlights Iceland's challenges in currency and macroeconomic policy.

Iceland is the most developed society in the world, ranked first on the United Nations' Human Development Index. Icelanders are the second longest-living nation with a life expectancy at birth of 81.8 years. Iceland is one of the most egalitarian countries in the world, according to the calculation provided by the Gini coefficient.

Transportation



The Ring Road of Iceland and some towns it passes through:

1. Reykjavík, 2. Borgarnes, 3. Blönduós, 4. Akureyri, 5. Egilsstaðir, 6. Höfn, 7. Selfoss

The social structure of Iceland is very dependent upon the personal automobile. Icelanders have one of the highest levels of cars per capita: on average one car per inhabitant older than 17 years. Most Icelanders travel by car to work, school or other activities.

The main mode of transport in Iceland is road. Iceland has 13,034 km of administered roads, of which 4,617 km are paved and 8,338 km are not. Until the second half of the 20th century, Iceland could only afford to pave roads near the biggest towns. Today, roads are being improved throughout the country and freeways are being built in and around Reykjavík. Iceland currently has no railways.

Route 1 or the Ring Road (Icelandic: *Þjóðvegur 1* or *Hringvegur*) is a main road in Iceland that runs around the island and connects all inhabited parts (the interior of the island is uninhabited). The road is 1339 km long (840 miles). It has one lane in each direction, except near larger towns and cities and in the Hvalfjörður Tunnel where it has more lanes. Most smaller bridges on it are single lane and made of wood and/or steel. Most of the road's length is paved with asphalt, but some stretches in the east still have a gravel surface.

The main hub for international transportation is Keflavík International Airport, which serves Reykjavík and the country in general. It is 48km (30mi) to the west of Reykjavík. Domestic and regional flights to Greenland and the Faroe Islands operate out of Reykjavík Airport, which lies in the city centre. There are 86 airport runways in Iceland; most of them are unpaved and located in rural areas.

Energy

Renewable energy provides over 70% of the nation's primary energy. Over 99% of the country's electricity is produced from hydropower and geothermal energy, and the country expects to be energy-independent by 2050. Iceland's largest geothermal power plant is located in Nesjavellir, while the Kárahnjúkar dam will be the country's largest hydroelectric power plant.

Yet, Icelanders still emit 10.0 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent of greenhouse gasses per capita, higher than France or Spain. This is due to the wide use of personal transport. Iceland is the only country that has filling stations dispensing hydrogen fuel for cars powered by fuel cells. It is also one of only a few countries currently capable of producing hydrogen in adequate quantities at reasonable cost, because of Iceland's plentiful geothermal energy.



The Nesjavellir Geothermal Power Plant services the Greater Reykjavík Area's hot water needs.

Education, science, and technology

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the policies and methods that schools must use, and they issue the National Curriculum Guidelines. However, the playschools and the primary and lower secondary schools are funded and administered by the municipalities.

Nursery school or *leikskóli*, is non-compulsory education for children younger than six years, and is the first step in the education system. The current legislation concerning playschools was passed in 1994. They are also responsible for ensuring that the curriculum is suitable so as to make the transition into compulsory education as easy as possible.

Compulsory education, or *grunnskóli*, comprises primary and lower secondary education, which often is conducted at the same institution. Education is mandatory by law for children aged from 6 to 16 years. The school year lasts nine months, and begins between 21 August and 1 September, ending between 31 May and 10 June. The minimum number of school days is 170, but after a new teachers' wage contract, this will increase to 180. Lessons take place five days a week. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks the Icelandic secondary education as the 27th in the world, significantly below the OECD average.



A classroom in an Icelandic gymnasium.

Upper secondary education or *framhaldsskóli* follows lower secondary education. These schools are also known as gymnasia in English. It is not compulsory, but everyone who has had a compulsory education has the right to upper secondary education. This stage of education is governed by the Upper Secondary School Act of 1996. All schools in Iceland are mixed sex schools.

Iceland is a very technologically advanced society. By 1999, 82.3% of Icelanders had access to a computer. Iceland also had 1,007 mobile phone subscriptions per 1,000 people in 2006, the 16th highest in the world.

Iceland is home to European Mars Analog Research Station.

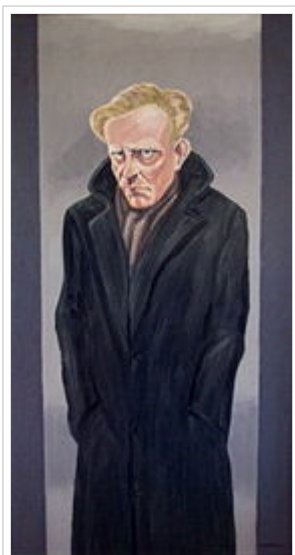
Culture

Icelandic culture has its roots in Norse traditions. Icelandic literature is popular, in particular the sagas and eddas which were written around the time of the island's settlement. Icelanders place relatively great importance on independence and self-sufficiency; in a European Commission public opinion analysis over 85% of Icelanders found independence to be "very important" contrasted with the EU25 average of 53%, and 47% for the Norwegians, and 49% for the Danes.

Some traditional beliefs remain today; for example, some Icelanders either believe in elves or are unwilling to rule out their existence. Iceland ranks first on the Human Development Index, and was recently ranked the fourth happiest country in the world.

Iceland is liberal in terms of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) matters. In 1996, Parliament passed legislation to create registered partnerships for same-sex couples, covering nearly all the rights and benefits of marriage. In 2006, by unanimous vote of Parliament, further legislation was passed, granting same-sex couples the same rights as different-sex couples in adoption, parenting and assisted insemination treatment.

Literature and the arts



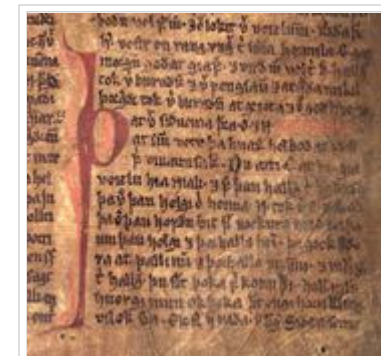
The poet Steinn Steinarr. by Einar Hákonarson.

Iceland's best-known classical works of literature are the Icelanders' sagas, prose epics set in Iceland's age of settlement. The most famous of these include *Njáls saga*, about an epic blood feud, and *Grænlandinga saga* and *Eiríks saga*, describing the discovery and settlement of Greenland and Vinland (modern Newfoundland). *Egils saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Gísla saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* are also notable and popular Icelanders' sagas.

A translation of the Bible was published in the 16th century. Important compositions since the 15th to the 19th century include sacred verse, most famously the *Passíusálmar* of Hallgrímur Pétursson, and *rímur*, rhymed epic poems with alliterative verse that consist in two to four verses per stanza, popular until the end of the 19th century. In recent times, Iceland has produced many great writers, the best-known of which is arguably Halldór Laxness who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955. Steinn Steinarr was an influential modernist poet.

The distinctive rendition of the Icelandic landscape by its painters can be linked to nationalism and the movement to home rule and independence, which was very active in this period.

Contemporary Icelandic painting is typically traced to the work of Þórarinn Þorláksson, who, following formal training in art in the 1890s in Copenhagen, returned to Iceland to paint and exhibit works from 1900 to his death in 1924, almost exclusively portraying the Icelandic landscape. Several other Icelandic men and women artists learned in Denmark Academy at that time, including Ásgrímur Jónsson, who together with Þórarinn created a distinctive portrayal of Iceland's landscape in a romantic naturalistic style. Other landscape artists quickly followed in the footsteps of Þórarinn and Ásgrímur. These included Jóhannes Kjarval and Júlíana



An example from *Brennu-Njáls saga*. The sagas are a significant part of the Icelandic heritage.

Sveinsdóttir. Kjarval in particular is noted for the distinct techniques in the application of paint that he developed in a concerted effort to render the characteristic volcanic rock that dominates the Icelandic environment. Einar Hákonarson is an expressionistic and figurative painter who brought the figure back into Icelandic painting.

Icelandic architecture draws from Scandinavian influences. The scarcity of native trees resulted in traditional houses being covered by grass and turf.

Music

Icelandic music is related to Nordic music, and includes vibrant folk and pop traditions, including medieval music group Voces Thules, alternative rock band The Sugarcubes, singers Björk and Emiliana Torrini; and Sigur Rós. The national anthem of Iceland is "Lofsöngur", written by Matthías Jochumsson, with music by Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson.

Traditional Icelandic music is strongly religious. Hallgrímur Pétursson wrote many Protestant hymns in the 17th century. Icelandic music was modernized in the 19th century, when Magnús Stephensen brought pipe organs, which were followed by harmoniums.

Other vital traditions of Icelandic music are epic alliterative and rhyming ballads called rímur. Rímur are epic tales, usually a cappella, which can be traced back to skaldic poetry, using complex metaphors and elaborate rhyme schemes. The best known rímur poet of the 19th century was Sigurður Breiðfjörð (1798-1846). A modern revitalization of the tradition began in 1929 with the formation of the organization Iðunn.

Icelandic contemporary music consists of a big group of bands, ranging from pop-rock groups such as Bang Gang, Quarashi and Amiina to solo ballad singers like Bubbi Morthens, Megas and Björgvin Halldórsson. The indie-scene is also very strong in Iceland, bands such as Múm, Sigur Rós and the solo artist Mugison are fairly well-known outside Iceland.

Many Icelandic artists and bands have had great success internationally, most notably Björk and Sigur Rós but also Quarashi, Ampop, Mínus and múm. The main music festival is arguably Iceland Airwaves, a yearly event on the Icelandic music scene, where Icelandic bands along with foreign ones occupy the clubs of Reykjavík for a week.

Cuisine

Most national Icelandic foods are based around fish, lamb and dairy products. Þorramatur is a national food consisting of many dishes and is usually consumed around the month of Þorri. Traditional dishes include skyr, cured ram scrota, cured shark, singed sheep heads and black pudding.

The modern Icelandic diet is very diverse, and includes cuisines from all over the world. Like in other Western societies, fast food restaurants are widespread.

Sports

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Björk is one of the most famous people from Iceland.

Sport is an important part of the Icelandic culture. The main traditional sport in Iceland is *Glima*, a form of wrestling, thought to have originated in medieval times.

Children and teenagers participate in various leisure activities. Popular sports are football, track and field, handball and basketball. Others are golf, tennis, swimming, chess and horseback riding on Icelandic horses. Team handball is often referred to as a national sport, Iceland's team is one of the top-ranked teams in the world, and Icelandic women are surprisingly good at football compared to the size of the country, the national team ranked the 18th best by FIFA. Iceland has excellent conditions for ice and rock climbing, although mountain climbing and hiking is preferred by the general public. Iceland also has the most Strongman competition wins.

The oldest sport association in Iceland is the Reykjavik Shooting Association, founded 1867. Rifle shooting became very popular in the 19th century and was heavily encouraged by politicians and others pushing for Icelandic independence. Shooting remains popular and all types of shooting with small arms is practised in the country.

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Ireland

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Ireland (pronunciation /'aɪrlənd/ or /'ɑːrlənd/; Irish: *Éire*; Ulster Scots: *Airlann*) is one of the two main islands (and second largest) of the British Isles, the third largest island in Europe, and the twentieth-largest island in the world. It lies to the north-west of continental Europe and is surrounded by hundreds of islands and islets. To the east of Ireland, separated by the Irish Sea, is the island of Great Britain. Politically, the state Ireland (described as the *Republic of Ireland* in cases of ambiguity) covers five-sixths of the island, with Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom, covering the remainder in the north-east.

The population of the island is slightly over 6 million (2007), with 4.4 million in the Republic of Ireland (1.7 million in Greater Dublin) and an estimated 1.75 million in Northern Ireland (800,000 in Greater Belfast). This is a significant increase from a modern historical low in the 1960s, but still much lower than the peak population of over 8 million in the early 19th century, prior to the Great Hunger (1840s famine).

The name *Ireland* derives from the name *Ériu* (in modern Irish, *Éire*) with the addition of the Germanic word *land*. Most other western European names for Ireland derive from the same source, such as French *Irlande*, Spanish, Italian, Romanian and Portuguese *Irlanda*, German *Irland* and Dutch *Ierland*.

Political geography

Ireland

Éire

Airlann



Northwest of continental Europe with Great Britain to the east

Geography

Location	Western Europe
Area	84,412 km ² (32,591 sq mi)
Rank	20th
Highest point	Carrauntoohil (1,038 m (3,406 ft))

Administration

 **Ireland**

Largest city Dublin





 **United Kingdom**

Constituent country Northern Ireland

The island of Ireland has two distinct jurisdictions:

- **Ireland** (description is the Republic of Ireland), a sovereign state, covers five-sixths of the island. Its capital is Dublin.
- **Northern Ireland**, part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, covers the remaining sixth. Its capital is Belfast.

For the political history of the island, see History of Ireland.

Province	Population	Area (km ²)	Largest city
 Connacht	503,083	17,713	Galway
 Leinster	2,292,939	19,774	Dublin
 Munster	1,172,170	24,608	Cork
 Ulster	1,993,918	24,481	Belfast

Traditionally, Ireland is subdivided into four provinces: Connacht, Leinster, Munster and Ulster; and, in a system developed between the 13th and 17th centuries, 32 counties. Twenty-six of the counties are in the Republic of Ireland, and the remaining six (all in Ulster) are in Northern Ireland. Notably, based on boundaries established in the Early Modern period, Ulster and Northern Ireland are neither synonymous nor co-extensive, as three counties of Ulster (Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan) are part of the Republic. Nonetheless, 'Ulster' is often used colloquially as a synonym for Northern Ireland. Counties Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford and Tipperary have been broken up into smaller administrative areas, but are still considered by Ordnance Survey Ireland to be official counties. The

counties in Northern Ireland are no longer used for local government, although their traditional boundaries are still used in sports and in some other cultural and ceremonial areas.

All-island institutions

Despite the constitutional division of Ireland, the island does operate as a single entity in a number of areas. With a few notable exceptions, the island operates as a single unit in all major religious denominations and in many economic fields despite using two different currencies. There are also significant all-island dimensions to sports such as hurling, gaelic football, rugby, golf, cricket and hockey.

The notable exception to this is soccer (where the previously all-island Irish Football Association following partition retained control of soccer only in Northern Ireland, with a separate Football Association of Ireland being formed for the remainder of the island) although an all-Ireland club cup competition, the Setanta Cup, was created in 2005. The creation of an all-island Association football league and a single international team (which is the case for rugby union) has been

Demographics	
Population	approximately 6 million (as of 2007)
Density	/km ²
Ethnic groups	Irish



Map of Ireland showing the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

publicly touted by various prominent figures on the island in recent years, such as Irish government minister Dermot Ahern. More recently, FAI chief executive John Delaney believes there will be an all-Ireland league, but not before 2012, as a contract involving the Eircom League and the FAI runs to 2011. There is currently at least one player from Northern Ireland regularly appearing in the Republic of Ireland's squad, a practice that the latter's governing institution and the Irish government claim is permitted by the Belfast Agreement - although in reality there was apparently nothing to prevent the FAI from selecting players from Northern Ireland before the Agreement, since the Republic of Ireland's citizenship laws already extended north of the border. Nonetheless, Northern Ireland's governing body, the IFA, has raised the matter with the world governing body, FIFA, which appears to have ruled in favour of the Republic (although the matter remains unclear and therefore unresolved).

All major religious bodies are organised on an all-Ireland basis, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Church of Ireland/Anglican Church and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Some trade unions are also organised on an all-island basis and associated with the Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU) in Dublin, while others in Northern Ireland are affiliated with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in the United Kingdom, and some affiliate to both — although such unions may organise in both parts of the island as well as in Great Britain. The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) organises jointly in Northern Ireland with the National Union of Students of the United Kingdom (NUS), under the name NUS-USI.

The Belfast Agreement provides for all-Ireland governance in various guises. For example, a North-South Ministerial Council was established as a forum in which ministers from the Irish government and the Northern Ireland Assembly can discuss matters of mutual concern and formulate all-Ireland policies in twelve "areas of co-operation", such as agriculture, the environment and transport. Six of these policy areas have been provided with implementation bodies, an example of which is the Food Safety Promotion Board. Tourism marketing is also managed on an all-Ireland basis, by Tourism Ireland.

Two political parties, Sinn Féin and the Irish Green Party, contest elections and hold parliamentary seats in both jurisdictions. The largest party in the Republic of Ireland, Fianna Fáil, considered extending its organisation into Northern Ireland, perhaps via a merger with another political party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).

A significant number of newspapers on the island are circulated in both jurisdictions, e.g., the *Irish Times*, *The Irish Independent*, *The Sunday Business Post*, *The Irish Star*, *Lá Nua* etc. and report news on an all-Ireland basis. Others include Irish editions of tabloids such as : Ireland-based *The Sunday World* and the Irish editions of UK-based *The News of The World*. The *Irish Times* includes news concerning Northern Ireland in its "Home" section, despite the fact that it is based in the Republic. Notable exceptions to this include, The Belfast Telegraph and Sunday Life (although these titles are owned by Ireland-based *Independent News and Media*, publisher of *The Irish Independent*.) Other Irish Newspaper publishers like *Independent News and Media* and *Thomas Crosbie Holdings* publish local titles for townlands in both parts of Ireland. Furthermore, most of the television stations based on the island broadcast across the whole island, such as RTÉ, TG4 and UTV (although signals may be relatively weaker in more remote areas).

An increasingly large amount of commercial activity operates on an all-Ireland basis, a development that is in part facilitated by the two jurisdictions' shared membership of the European Union. There have been calls for the creation of an "all-island economy" from members of the business community and policy-makers on both sides of the border, so as to benefit from economies of scale and boost competitiveness in both jurisdictions. This is a stated aim of the Irish government and nationalist political parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly. One commercial area in which the island already operates largely as a single entity is the electricity market. and there are plans for the creation of an all-island gas market.

17 March is celebrated throughout the island of Ireland as St. Patrick's Day.

Physical geography

A ring of coastal mountains surrounds low central plains. The highest peak is Carrauntoohil (Irish: *Corrán Tuathail*) in County Kerry, which is 1,038 m (3,406 ft). The River Shannon, at 386 km (240 miles) is the longest river in Ireland. The island's lush vegetation, a product of its mild climate and frequent but soft rainfall, earns it the sobriquet "Emerald Isle". The island's area is 84,412 km² (32,591 square miles).

Ireland's least arable land lies in the south-western and western counties. These areas are largely mountainous and rocky, with dramatic green vistas, hence the attributive name "the Emerald Isle".

Climate

Overall, Ireland has a mild, but changeable, Oceanic climate with few extremes. The warmest recorded air temperature was 33.3 °C (91.94 °F) at Kilkenny Castle, County Kilkenny on 26 June 1887, where as the lowest recorded temperature was −19.1 °C (−2.38 °F) at Markree Castle, County Sligo on 16 January 1881.

Other statistics show that the greatest recorded annual rainfall was 3,964.9 mm (156.1 in) in the Ballaghbeena Gap in 1960. The driest year on record was 1887, with only 356.6 mm (14.0 in) of rain recorded at Glasnevin, while the longest period of absolute drought was in Limerick where there was no recorded rainfall over 38 days during April and May of 1938.

The climate is typically insular, and as a result of the moderating moist winds which ordinarily prevail from the South-Western Atlantic, it is temperate, avoiding the extremes in temperature of many other areas in the world at similar latitudes.

Precipitation falls throughout the year, but is light overall, particularly in the east. The west, however, tends to be wetter on average and prone to the full force of Atlantic storms, more especially in the late autumn and winter months, which occasionally bring destructive winds and high rainfall totals to these areas, as well as snow and hail. The regions of North Galway and East Mayo have the highest incidents of recorded lightning annually (5 to 10 days per year). Munster in the south records the least snow with Ulster in the north more prone to snow. Some areas along the south and southwest coasts have not had any lying snow since February 1991.

Inland areas are warmer in summer, and colder in winter - there are usually around 40 days of below freezing temperatures (0 °C/32 °F) at inland weather stations, but only 10 days at coastal stations. Ireland is sometimes affected by heat waves, most recently 1995, 2003, 2006.

Geology

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True colour image of Ireland, captured by a NASA satellite on 4 January 2003, with the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Irish Sea to the east



Physical features of Ireland. See also this larger version.

Geologically the island consists of a number of provinces - in the far west around Galway and Donegal is a medium to high grade metamorphic and igneous complex of Caledonide (Scottish Highland) affinity. Across southeast Ulster and extending southwest to Longford and south to Navan is a province of Ordovician and Silurian rocks with more affinities with the Southern Uplands province of Scotland. Further south, there is an area along the Wexford coast of granite intrusives into more Ordovician and Silurian rocks with a more Welsh affinity.

In the southwest, around Bantry Bay and the mountains of Macgillicuddy's Reeks, is an area of substantially deformed but only lightly metamorphosed Devonian-aged rocks.

This partial ring of "hard rock" geology is covered by a blanket of Carboniferous limestone over the centre of the country, giving rise to the comparatively fertile and famously "lush" landscape of the country. The west coast district of The Burren around Lisdoonvarna has well developed karst features. Elsewhere, significant stratiform lead-zinc mineralisation is found in the limestones (around Silvermines and Tynagh).

Hydrocarbon exploration is continuing. The first major find was the Kinsale Head gas field off Cork/ Cobh by Marathon Oil in the mid-1970s. More recently, in 1999, Enterprise Oil announced the discovery of the Corrib Gas Field. This has increased activity off the west coast in parallel with the " West of Shetland" step-out development from the North Sea hydrocarbon province. Exploration continues, with a frontier well planned north of Donegal for August 2006 and continuing drilling of prospects in the Irish Sea and St Georges Channel.



Irish countryside

Wildlife

Ireland has fewer animal and plant species than either Britain or mainland Europe because it became an island shortly after the end of the last glacial period, about 10,000 years ago. Many different habitat types are found in Ireland, including farmland, open woodland, temperate broadleaf and mixed forests, conifer plantations, peat bogs, and various coastal habitats. According to the WWF, the territory of Ireland can be subdivided into two ecoregions: the Celtic broadleaf forests and North Atlantic moist mixed forests.

Fauna

Only 26 land mammal species are native to Ireland, because it was isolated from Europe by rising sea levels after the Ice Age. Some species, such as the red fox, hedgehog, and badger are very common, whereas others, like the Irish hare, red deer and pine marten are less so. Aquatic wild-life, such as species of turtle, shark, whale, and dolphin, are common off the coast. About 400 species of birds have been recorded in Ireland. Many of these are migratory, including the Barn Swallow. Most of Ireland's bird species come from Iceland, Greenland, Africa among other territories. There are no snakes in Ireland and only one reptile (the common lizard) is native to the country. Extinct species include the great Irish elk, the wolf, the great auk, and others. Some previously extinct birds, such as the Golden Eagle, have recently been reintroduced after decades of extirpation.

Agriculture drives current land use patterns in Ireland, limiting natural habitat preserves, particularly for larger wild mammals with greater territorial needs. With no top predator in Ireland, populations of animals that cannot be controlled by smaller predators (such as the fox) are controlled by annual culling, i.e. semi-wild

populations of deer.

Flora

Phytogeographically, Ireland belongs to the Atlantic European province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. Until mediæval times Ireland was heavily forested with oak, pine, beech and birch. Forests now cover about 9% (4,450 km² or one million acres) of the land. Because of its mild climate, many species, including sub-tropical species such as palm trees, are grown in Ireland. Much of the land is now covered with pasture, and there are many species of wild-flower. Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), a wild furze, is commonly found growing in the uplands, and ferns are plentiful in the more moist regions, especially in the western parts of Ireland. It is home to hundreds of plant species, some of them unique to the island. The country has been "invaded" by some grasses, such as *Spartina anglica*.

The algal and seaweed flora is that of the cold-temperate. The total number of species is:- Rhodophyta: 264; Heterokontophyta: 152; Chloropyta: 114; Cyanophyta: 31 giving a total of 574. Rarer species include: *Itonoa marginifera* (J.Ag.) Masuda & Guiry); *Schmitzia hiscockiana* Maggs and Guiry; *Gelidiella calcicola* Maggs & Guiry; *Gelidium maggsiae* Rico & Guiry and *Halymenia latifolia* P.Crouan & H.Crouan ex Kützing. The country has been invaded by some algae, some of which are now well established: *Asparagopsis armara* Harvey - which originated in Australia and was first recorded by M. De Valera in 1939; *Colpomenia peregrina* Sauvageau - now locally abundant and first recorded in the 1930s; *Sargassum muticum* (Yendo) Fensholt - now well established in a number of localities on the south, west, and north-east coasts; *Codium fragile* ssp. *fragile* (formerly reported as ssp. *tomentosum*) - now well established. *Codium fragile* ssp. *atlanticum* has recently been established to be native, although for many years it was regarded as an alien species.

The impact of agriculture

The long history of agricultural production coupled with modern intensive agricultural methods (such as pesticide and fertiliser use) has placed pressure on biodiversity in Ireland. "Runoff" of contaminants into streams, rivers and lakes impact the natural fresh-water ecosystems. A land of green fields for crop cultivation and cattle rearing limits the space available for the establishment of native wild species. Hedgerows however, traditionally used for maintaining and demarcating land boundaries, act as a refuge for native wild flora. Their ecosystems stretch across the countryside and act as a network of connections to preserve remnants of the ecosystem that once covered the island. Subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy which supported these agricultural practices are undergoing reforms. The CAP still subsidises some potentially destructive agricultural practices, however, the recent reforms have gradually decoupled subsidies from production levels and introduced environmental and other requirements.

Forest covers about 10% of the country, with most designated for commercial production. Forested areas typically consist of monoculture plantations of non-native species which may result in habitats that are not suitable for supporting a broad range of native species of invertebrates. Remnants of native forest can be found scattered around the country, in particular in the Killarney National Park. Natural areas require fencing to prevent over-grazing by deer and sheep that roam over uncultivated areas. This is one of the main factors preventing the natural regeneration of forests across many regions of the country.

History

History of Ireland



Chronological

Prehistory

Early history

Early Christian Ireland

Early medieval and Viking era

Norman Ireland

Early Modern Ireland 1536–1691

Ireland 1691–1801

Ireland 1801–1922

History of Ireland (state)

History of Northern Ireland

Topical

Economic history

A long cold climatic spell prevailed until the end of the last glacial period about 9,000 years ago, and most of Ireland was covered with ice. Sea-levels were lower then, and Ireland, as with its neighbour Britain, rather than being islands, were part of a greater continental Europe. Mesolithic stone age inhabitants arrived some time after 8000 BC. Agriculture arrived with the Neolithic circa 4500 to 4000 BC, when sheep, goats, cattle and cereals were imported from southwest continental Europe. At the Céide Fields in County Mayo, an extensive Neolithic field system - arguably the oldest in the world - has been preserved beneath a blanket of peat. Consisting of small fields separated from one another by dry-stone walls, the Céide Fields were farmed for several centuries between 3500 and 3000 BC. Wheat and barley were the principal crops.



Stone age passage tombs at Carrowmore, County Sligo

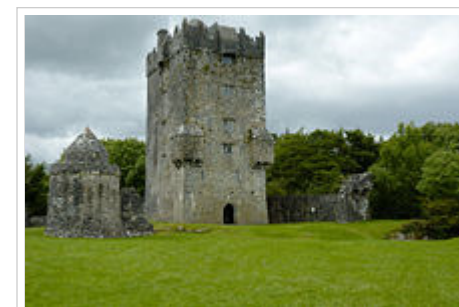
The Bronze Age, which began around 2500 BC, saw the production of elaborate gold as well as bronze ornaments, weapons and tools. The Iron Age in Ireland was supposedly associated with people known as Celts. They are traditionally thought to have colonised Ireland in a series of waves between the 8th and 1st centuries BC, with the Gaels, the last wave of Celts, conquering the island and dividing it into five or more kingdoms. Many scientists and academic scholars now favour a view that emphasises cultural diffusion from overseas over significant colonisation such as what Clonycavan Man was reported to be. The Romans referred to Ireland as Hibernia and/or Scotia. Ptolemy in AD 100 records Ireland's geography and tribes. Native accounts are confined to Irish poetry, myth, and archaeology. The exact relationship between Rome and the tribes of Hibernia is unclear; the only references are a few Roman writings.

In medieval times, a monarch (also known as the High King) presided over the (then five) provinces of Ireland. These provinces too had their own kings, who were at least nominally subject to the monarch, who resided at Tara. The written judicial system was the Brehon Law, and it was administered by professional learned jurists who were known as the Brehons.

According to early medieval chronicles, in 431, Bishop Palladius arrived in Ireland on a mission from Pope Celestine I to minister to the Irish "already believing in Christ." (This was to convert the Celtic Church to Roman Catholicism). The same chronicles record that Saint Patrick, Ireland's patron saint, arrived in 432. There is continued debate over the missions of Palladius and Patrick, but the general consensus is that they both existed and that 7th century annalists may have mis-attributed some of their activities to each other. Palladius most likely went to Leinster, while Patrick is believed to have gone to Ulster, where he probably spent time in captivity as a young man.

The druid tradition collapsed in the face of the spread of the new religion. Irish Christian scholars excelled in the study of Latin and Greek learning and Christian theology in the monasteries that flourished, preserving Latin and Greek learning during the Early Middle Ages. The arts of manuscript illumination, metalworking, and sculpture flourished and produced such treasures as the Book of Kells, ornate jewellery, and the many carved stone crosses that dot the island. From the 9th century, waves of Viking raiders plundered monasteries and towns, adding to a pattern of endemic raiding and warfare. Eventually Vikings settled in Ireland, and established many towns, including the modern day cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford.

From 1169, Ireland was entered by Cambro-Norman warlords, led by Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke (Strongbow), on an invitation from the then King of Leinster. In 1171, King Henry II of England came to Ireland, using the 1155 Bull Laudabiliter issued to him by then Pope Adrian IV, to claim sovereignty over the island, and forced the Cambro-Norman warlords and some of the Gaelic Irish kings to accept him as their overlord. From the 13th century, English law began to be introduced. By the late thirteenth century the Norman-Irish had established the feudal system throughout most of lowland Ireland. Their settlement was characterised by the establishment of baronies, manors, towns and large land-owning monastic communities, and the county system. The towns of Dublin, Cork, Wexford, Waterford, Limerick, Galway, New Ross, Kilkenny, Carlingford, Drogheda, Sligo, Athlone, Arklow, Buttevant, Carlow, Carrick-on-Suir, Cashel, Clonmel, Dundalk, Enniscorthy, Kildare, Kinsale, Mullingar, Naas, Navan, Nenagh, Thurles, Wicklow, Trim and Youghal were all under Norman-Irish control.



Aughnanure, the main castle of O'Flaherty

In the 14th century the English settlement went into a period of decline and large areas, for example Sligo, were re-occupied by Gaelic sept. The medieval English presence in Ireland was deeply shaken by Black Death, which arrived in Ireland in 1348. From the late 15th century English rule was once again expanded, first through the efforts of the Earls of Kildare and Ormond then through the activities of the Tudor State under Henry VIII and Mary and Elizabeth. This resulted in the complete conquest of Ireland by 1603 and the final collapse of the Gaelic social and political superstructure at the end of the 17th century, as a result of English and Scottish Protestant colonisation in the Plantations of Ireland, and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms and the Williamite War in Ireland. Approximately 600,000 people, nearly half the Irish population, died during the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland.

After the Irish Rebellion of 1641, Irish Catholics and nonconforming Protestants were barred from voting or attending the Irish Parliament. The new English Protestant ruling class was known as the Protestant Ascendancy. Towards the end of the 18th century the entirely Anglican Irish Parliament attained a greater degree of independence from the British Parliament than it had previously held. Under the penal laws no Irish Catholic could sit in the Parliament of Ireland, even though some 90% of Ireland's population was native Irish Catholic when the first of these bans was introduced in 1691. This ban was followed by others in 1703 and 1709 as part of a comprehensive system disadvantaging the Catholic community, and to a lesser extent Protestant dissenters. In 1798, many members of this dissenter tradition made common cause with Catholics in a rebellion inspired and led by the Society of United Irishmen. It was staged with the aim of creating a fully independent Ireland as a state with a republican constitution. Despite assistance from France the Irish Rebellion of 1798 was put down by British forces.



Hanging of suspected United Irishmen.

In 1800, the British and subsequently the Irish Parliament passed the Act of Union which, in 1801, merged the Kingdom of Ireland and the Kingdom of Great Britain to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The passage of the Act in the Irish Parliament was achieved with substantial majorities, in part (according to contemporary documents) through bribery, namely the awarding of peerages and honours to critics to get their votes. Thus, Ireland became part of an extended United Kingdom, ruled directly by the UK Parliament in London.

The Great Famine, which began in the 1840s, caused the deaths of one million Irish people, and caused over a million to emigrate. By the late 1840s, as a result of the famine, half of all immigrants to the United States originated from Ireland. A total of 35 million Americans (12% of total population) reported Irish

ancestry in the 2005 American Community Survey. Mass emigration became entrenched as a result of the famine and the population continued to decline until late in the 20th century. The pre-famine peak was over 8 million recorded in the 1841 census. The population has never returned to this level.

The 19th and early 20th century saw the rise of Irish nationalism among the Roman Catholic population. Daniel O'Connell led a successful campaign for Catholic Emancipation, which was passed by the United Kingdom parliament. A subsequent campaign for repeal of the Act of Union failed. Later in the century Charles Stewart Parnell and others campaigned for self-government within the Union or "home rule". Protestants, largely concentrated in Ulster, who considered themselves to be British as well as Irish, were strongly opposed to home rule, under which they would be dominated by Catholic and Southern interests. To prevent home rule the Ulster Volunteers were formed in 1913 under the leadership of Lord Carson, and to impose home rule the Irish Volunteers were formed in the South in 1914 under John Redmond. Armed rebellions, such as the Easter Rising of 1916 and the Irish War of Independence of 1919, occurred in this period. In 1921, a treaty was concluded between the British Government and the leaders of the Irish Republic. The Treaty recognised the two-state solution created in the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Northern Ireland was presumed to form a home rule state within the new Irish Free State unless it opted out. Northern Ireland had a majority Protestant population and opted out as expected, choosing to remain part of the United Kingdom, incorporating, however, within its border a significant Catholic and nationalist minority. A Boundary Commission was set up to decide on the boundaries between the two Irish states, though it was subsequently abandoned after it recommended only minor adjustments to the border. Disagreements over some provisions of the treaty led to a split in the nationalist movement and subsequently to the Irish Civil War. The Civil War ended in 1923 with the defeat of the anti-treaty forces.

History since partition

Irish Independence: The Irish Free State, Éire, Ireland



The Anglo-Irish Treaty was ratified by the Dáil in January 1922 by a vote of 64 - 57. The minority refused to accept the result and this resulted in the Irish Civil War, which lasted until 1923. On 6th December 1922, in the middle of the Civil War, the **Irish Free State** came into being. During its early years the new state was governed by the victors of the Civil War. However, in the 1930s Fianna Fáil, the party of the opponents of the treaty, was elected into government. The party proposed, and the electorate accepted in a referendum in 1937, a new constitution which renamed the state "**Éire** or in the English language, **Ireland**" (*article 4 of the Constitution*).

The state was neutral during World War II, which was known internally as The Emergency. It offered some assistance to the Allies, especially in Northern Ireland. It is estimated that around 50,000 volunteers from *Éire*/Ireland joined the British armed forces during the Second World War. In 1949, Ireland declared itself to be a republic.

Ireland experienced large-scale emigration in the 1950s and again in the 1980s. From 1987 the economy improved and the 1990s saw the beginning of unprecedented economic success, in a phenomenon known as the "Celtic Tiger". By 2007 it had become the fifth richest country (in terms of GDP per capita) in the world, and the second richest in the European Union, moving from being a net recipient of the budget to becoming a net contributor during the next budget round (2007-13), and from a country of net emigration to one of net immigration. In October 2006, there were talks between Ireland and the U.S. to

negotiate a new immigration policy between the two countries, in response to the growth of the Irish economy and desire of many U.S. citizens who sought to move to Ireland for work.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland was created as an administrative division of the United Kingdom by the Government of Ireland Act 1920. From 1921 until 1972, Northern Ireland enjoyed limited self-government within the United Kingdom, with its own parliament and prime minister.

In the first half of the 20th century, Northern Ireland was largely spared the strife of the Civil War, but there were sporadic episodes of inter-communal violence between nationalists and unionists during the decades that followed partition. Although the Irish Free State was neutral during World War II, Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom was not, and became involved in the British war effort (albeit without military conscription as it was introduced in Great Britain). Belfast suffered a bombing raid from the German Luftwaffe in 1941.

In elections to the 1921-1972 regional government, the Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland each voted largely along sectarian lines, meaning that the Government of Northern Ireland (elected by "first past the post" from 1929) was controlled by the Ulster Unionist Party. Over time, the minority Catholic community felt increasingly alienated by the regional government, with further disaffection fuelled by practices such as gerrymandering of the local council in Derry, and alleged discrimination against Catholics in housing and employment.

In the late 1960s nationalist grievances were aired publicly in mass civil rights protests, which were often confronted by loyalist counter-protests. The Government's reaction to confrontations was seen to be one-sided and heavy-handed, and law and order broke down as unrest and inter-communal violence increased. In August 1969, the regional government requested that the British Army be deployed to aid the police, who were exhausted after several nights of serious rioting. In 1970, the paramilitary Provisional IRA, which favoured the creation of a united Ireland, was formed and began a campaign against what it called the "British occupation of the six counties". Other groups, on both the unionist side and the nationalist side, participated in the violence and the period known as "The Troubles" began, resulting in over 3600 deaths over the subsequent three decades. Owing to the civil unrest during "The Troubles", the British government suspended home rule in 1972 and imposed "direct rule" from Westminster.

There were several (ultimately unsuccessful) political attempts to end "The Troubles", such as the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 and the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. In 1998, following a Provisional IRA ceasefire and multi-party talks, the Belfast Agreement was concluded and ratified by referendum. This agreement attempted to restore self-government to Northern Ireland on the basis of power-sharing between the two communities. Violence decreased greatly after the signing of the accord, and on 28 July 2005, the Provisional IRA announced the end of its armed campaign and international weapons inspectors supervised what they currently regard as the full decommissioning of the Provisional IRA's weapons. The power-sharing assembly was suspended several times



The Ulster Banner, used as the flag of the former Government of Northern Ireland 1953 - 1972, now unofficially used by some sporting organisations to represent the area, some unionist-controlled local authorities and loyalists.



Parliament Buildings, seat of the present Northern Ireland Assembly.

but restored from 8 May 2007.

From 2 August 2007, Britain officially ended its military support of the police in Northern Ireland, and began withdrawing troops. (In 1972, British troops numbered more than 25,000 in Northern Ireland. After the withdrawal, a garrison of approximately 5,000 is all that remains.)

Science

Ireland has a rich history in science and is known for its excellence in scientific research conducted at its many universities and institutions. Noted particularly is Ireland's contributions to fibre optics technology and related technologies.

Founder of modern chemistry Robert Boyle was an Anglo-Irish natural philosopher, chemist, physicist, inventor and early gentleman scientist, noted for his work in physics and chemistry. He is best known for the formulation of Boyle's law.

Other notable Irish Physicists include Ernest Walton (winner of the 1951 Nobel Prize in Physics with Sir John Douglas Cockcroft for splitting the nucleus of the atom by artificial means and contributions in the development of a new theory of wave equation), George Johnstone Stoney (famous for introducing the term *electron* in 1874 and as the uncle of the physicist George FitzGerald and distant relative of mathematician Alan Turing), Joseph Larmor (who predicted the phenomenon of time dilation [for orbiting electrons] and published a paper describing FitzGerald-Lorentz contraction some two years before Hendrik Lorentz and some eight years before Albert Einstein), John Stewart Bell (famous as the originator of Bell's Theorem and his paper concerning the discovery of the Bell-Jackiw-Adler anomaly - Bell was nominated for a Nobel prize), George Francis FitzGerald, sir George Gabriel Stokes and many others.

Notable mathematicians include Sir William Rowan Hamilton (mathematician, physicist, astronomer and discoverer of quaternions), Francis Ysidro Edgeworth (influential in the development of neo-classical economics, including the Edgeworth box), John B. Cosgrave (specialist in number theory, former head of the mathematics department of St. Patrick's College and discoverer of a new 2000-digit prime number in 1999 and a record composite Fermat number in 2003) and John Lighton Synge (who made progress in different fields of science, including mechanics and geometrical methods in general relativity and who had mathematician John Nash as one of his students).

The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) was established in 1940 by the Taoiseach Éamon de Valera. In 1940, physicist Erwin Schrödinger received an invitation to help establish the Institute. He became the Director of the School for Theoretical Physics and remained there for 17 years, during which time he became a naturalized Irish citizen.

Culture

Literature and the arts

Arts in Ireland

For an island of relatively small population, Ireland has made a disproportionately large contribution to world literature in all its branches,

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mainly in English. Poetry in Irish represents the oldest vernacular poetry in Europe with the earliest examples dating from the 6th century; Jonathan Swift, still often called the foremost satirist in the English language, was wildly popular in his day for works such as *Gulliver's Travels* and *A Modest Proposal*, and he remains so in modern times. More recently, Ireland has produced four winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature: George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney. Although not a Nobel Prize winner, James Joyce is widely considered one of the most significant writers of the 20th century; Samuel Beckett himself refused to attend his own Nobel award ceremony, in protest of Joyce not having received the award. Joyce's 1922 novel *Ulysses* is considered one of the most important works of Modernist literature, and his life is celebrated annually on June 16 in Dublin as the Bloomsday celebrations.

The early history of Irish visual art is generally considered to begin with early carvings found at sites such as Newgrange. It is traced through Bronze age artifacts, particularly ornamental gold objects, and the religious carvings and illuminated manuscripts of the mediæval period. During the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, a strong indigenous tradition of painting emerged, including such figures as John Butler Yeats, William Orpen, Jack Yeats and Louis le Brocquy.

Modern Irish literature is still often connected with its rural heritage, though writers like John McGahern and poets like Seamus Heaney. There is a thriving performing arts culture in many Irish centres, most particularly in Galway.

Music and dance

The Irish tradition of folk music and dance is also widely known. In the middle years of the 20th century, as Irish society was attempting to modernise, traditional music tended to fall out of favour, especially in urban areas. During the 1960s, and inspired by the American folk music movement, there was a revival of interest in the Irish tradition. This revival was led by such groups as The Dubliners, The Chieftains, The Wolfe Tones, the Clancy Brothers, Sweeney's Men, and individuals like Seán Ó Riada and Christy Moore. Irish and Scottish traditional music share some similar characteristics.

Before too long, groups and musicians including Horslips, Van Morrison, and Thin Lizzy were incorporating elements of traditional music into a rock idiom to form a unique new sound. During the 1970s and 1980s, the distinction between traditional and rock musicians became blurred, with many individuals regularly crossing over between these styles of playing as a matter of course. This trend can be seen more recently in the work of artists like U2, Enya, Flogging Molly, Moya Brennan, The Saw Doctors, Bell X1, Damien Rice, The Corrs, Aslan, Sinéad O'Connor, Clannad, The Cranberries, Rory Gallagher, Westlife, B*witched, BoyZone, Gilbert O'Sullivan, Black 47, VNV Nation, Wolfe Tones, Ash, The Thrills, Stars of Heaven, Something Happens, A House, Sharon Shannon, Damien Dempsey, Declan O'Rourke, The Frames and The Pogues.

During the 1990s, a subgenre of folk metal emerged in Ireland that fused heavy metal music with Irish and Celtic music. The pioneers of this subgenre were Cruachan, Primordial and Waylander.

Irish music has shown an immense increase in popularity with many attempting to return to their roots. Some contemporary music groups stick closer to a "traditional" sound, including Altan, Teada, Danú, Dervish, Lúnasa, and Solas. Others incorporate multiple cultures in a fusion of styles, such as Afro Celt Sound System and Kíla.



The Book of Kells.



Newgrange —5000 year old burial site.

The Republic of Ireland has done well in the Eurovision Song Contest, being the most successful country in the competition, with seven wins in 1970 with Dana, 1980 and 1987 with Johnny Logan, 1992 with Linda Martin, 1993 with Niamh Kavanagh, 1994 with Paul Harrington and Charlie McGettigan and in 1996 with Eimear Quinn.

Sport

The most popular sports in Ireland are Gaelic Football and Association Football. Together with Hurling and Rugby, they make up the four biggest team sports in Ireland. Gaelic Football is the most popular in terms of match attendance and community involvement, and the All-Ireland Football Final is the biggest day in Ireland's sporting calendar. Association football, meanwhile, is the most commonly played team sport in Ireland and the most popular sport in which Ireland fields international teams. Furthermore, there is a large measure of Irish interest in the English and (to a lesser extent) Scottish soccer leagues. Many other sports are also played and followed, particularly golf and horse racing but also show jumping, greyhound racing, swimming, boxing, basketball, cricket, fishing, handball, motorsport, tennis and hockey.

Hurling and Gaelic football, along with camogie, ladies' Gaelic football, handball and rounders, make up the national sports of Ireland, collectively known as Gaelic games. All Gaelic games are governed by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), with the exception of ladies' Gaelic football and Camogie, which are governed by separate organisations. The GAA is organised on an all-Ireland basis with all 32 counties competing. The headquarters of the GAA (and the main stadium) is located at the 82,500 capacity Croke Park in north Dublin. Major GAA games are played there, including the semi-finals and finals of the All-Ireland Senior Football Championship and All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship. During the redevelopment of the Lansdowne Road stadium, international rugby and soccer are also being played there. All GAA players, even at the highest level, are amateurs, receiving no wages (although they are allowed to receive a certain amount of income from sources such as sponsorship, grants or scholarships).

The Irish Football Association (IFA) was originally the governing body for Association football throughout the island. The game has been played in Ireland since the 1860s (Cliftonville F.C. of Belfast being Ireland's oldest club, but remained a minority sport outside of Ulster until the 1880s. However, some clubs based outside Belfast felt that the IFA largely favoured Ulster-based, Protestant clubs in such matters as selection for the national team. Following an incident in which, despite an earlier promise, the IFA, for security reasons, moved an Irish Cup final replay from Dublin to Belfast, the clubs based in what would soon become the Free State set up a new Football Association of the Irish Free State (FAIFS) - now known as the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) - in 1921.

Despite being initially blacklisted by the Home Nations' associations, the FAI was recognised by FIFA in 1923 and organised its first international fixture in 1926 (against Italy. However, both the IFA and FAI continued to select their teams from the whole of Ireland, with some players earning international caps for matches with both teams. Both also referred to their respective teams as "Ireland". In 1950, FIFA directed the associations only to select players from within their respective territories, and in 1953 FIFA further clarified that the FAI's team was to be known only as " Republic of Ireland", and the IFA's team only as " Northern Ireland" (with certain exceptions).

Northern Ireland qualified for the World Cup finals in 1958 (reaching the quarter-finals), 1982 and 1986. The Republic qualified for the World Cup in 1990 (reaching the quarter-finals), 1994, 2002 and the European Championships in 1988. The IFA still retains all-Ireland cups and trophies at its Belfast HQ.

The Irish rugby team includes players from north and south, and the Irish Rugby Football Union governs the sport on both sides of the border. Consequently in international rugby, the Ireland team represents the whole island. The Irish rugby team have played in every Rugby World Cup, making the quarter-finals at four of them. Ireland also hosted games during the 1991 Rugby World Cup and the 1999 Rugby World Cup (including a quarter-final). There are also four professional provincial sides that contest the Magners League and European Heineken Cup. Irish rugby has become increasingly competitive at both the international and provincial levels since the sport went professional in 1994. During that time, Ulster (1999) and Munster (2006) have both won the European Cup.

As with rugby and Gaelic games, cricket, golf, tennis, rowing, hockey and most other sports are organised on an all-island basis.

Greyhound racing and horse racing are both popular in Ireland: greyhound stadiums are well attended and there are frequent horse race meetings. The Republic is noted for the breeding and training of race horses and is also a large exporter of racing dogs. The horse racing sector is largely concentrated in the central east of the Republic.

Boxing is also an all-island sport governed by the Irish Amateur Boxing Association. In 1992 Michael Carruth won a gold medal for boxing in the Olympic Games in Barcelona.

Irish athletics has seen some development in recent times, with Sonia O' Sullivan winning Gold at the World Championships in 1995 in the 5,000 metres and Silver in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney at the same distance. Gillian O'Sullivan winning silver in the 20k walk at the World Championship's in 2003 and sprint hurdler Derval O'Rourke taking gold at the World Indoor Championships in Moscow in 2006.

Golf is a popular sport in Ireland and golf tourism is a major industry. The 2006 Ryder Cup was held at The K Club in County Kildare. Padraig Harrington became the first Irishman since Fred Daly in 1947 to win the British Open at Carnoustie in July 2007.

In 2007, the Irish cricket team was among the associate nations which qualified for the 2007 Cricket World Cup. The Irish team defeated Pakistan and finished second in its pool, earning a place in the Super 8 section of the competition.

The west coast of Ireland, Lahinch and Donegal Bay in particular, have popular surfing beaches; being fully exposed to the fury of the Atlantic Ocean. Surfing in Ireland attracts surfers aiming to catch Europe's largest waves. Donegal Bay is shaped like a funnel and catches West/South-West Atlantic winds, creating good surf - especially in winter. In recent years, Bundoran has hosted European championship surfing. The south-west of Ireland, such as the Dingle Peninsula and Lahinch also have surf beaches.

Scuba diving is increasingly popular in Ireland with clear waters and large populations of sea life, particularly along the western seaboard. There are also many shipwrecks along the coast of Ireland, with some of the best wreck dives being in Malin Head and off the County Cork coast.

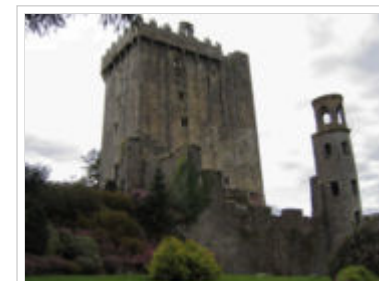
With thousands of lakes, over 14,000 kilometres (8,700 mi) of fish bearing rivers, and over 3,700 kilometres (2,300 mi) of coastline, Ireland is a popular angling destination. The temperate Irish climate is suited to sport angling. While salmon and trout fishing remain popular with anglers, salmon fishing in particular received a boost in 2006 with the closing of the salmon driftnet fishery. Coarse fishing continues to increase its profile. Sea angling is developed with many

beaches mapped and signposted, and in recent times the range of sea angling species has increased.

Places of interest

Some interesting places to visit on the island of Ireland include the following:

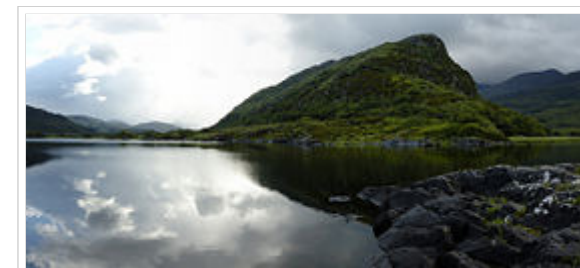
- The Aran Islands, Co. Galway
- Blarney Castle, Co. Cork
- Bunratty Castle, Co. Clare
- The Burren, Co. Clare
- Cahir Castle near Cahir, Co Tipperary
- Carrickfergus Castle, Co. Antrim
- Clonmacnoise Co. Offaly
- Croagh Patrick, Co. Mayo
- Cliffs of Moher, Co. Clare
- Walled City of Derry
- Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry
- The Giant's Causeway, Co. Antrim
- Glendalough, Co. Wicklow
- The Glens of Antrim, Co. Antrim
- Glenveagh National Park, Co. Donegal
- Grianan of Aileach, Co. Donegal
- Hill of Tara, Co. Meath
- Killarney National Park, Co. Kerry
- Kilkenny Castle, Co. Kilkenny
- King John's Castle (Limerick)
- Knock Shrine, Co. Mayo
- Kylemore Abbey, Co. Galway
- The Mourne Mountains, Co. Down
- Newgrange, Co. Meath
- Phoenix Park, Co. Dublin, the largest enclosed urban public park in Europe.
- The Rock of Cashel, Co. Tipperary
- Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry
- Tory Island, Co. Donegal
- Trim Castle, Co. Meath
- Trinity College, Dublin, Co. Dublin. Houses the Book of Kells



Blarney Castle



Giant's Causeway



Killarney National Park

- The Wicklow Way, Co. Wicklow

Modern architecture

In the 20th century, Irish architecture followed the international trend towards modern, sleek and often radical building styles, particularly after independence in the first half of the century. New building materials and old were utilised in new ways to maximise style, space, light and energy efficiency. 1928 saw the construction of Ireland's first all concrete Art Deco church in Turners Cross, Cork. The building was designed by Chicago architect Barry Byrne and met with a cool reception among those more accustomed to traditional designs.

In 1953, one of Ireland's most radical buildings, Bus Éireann's main Dublin terminal building, better known as Busáras, was completed. It was built despite huge public opposition and excessive costs of over £1 million. Michael Scott, its architect is now considered one of the most important architects of the twentieth century in Ireland.

A significant change in Ireland's architecture has taken place over the last few years, with a major shift towards the European continental ethos of architecture and urbanity. There are currently four buildings in planning that would eclipse the country's current tallest building record - currently held by *Cork County Hall* in Cork. These projects include the *Elysian Building* in Cork and the *U2 Building*, *Players Mill* and *The Tall Building* in Dublin. One of the most symbolic structures of modern Irish architecture is the Spire of Dublin. Completed in January 2003, the structure was nominated in 2004 for the prestigious Stirling Prize.

Demographics



The population of Ireland and Europe relative to population density showing the disastrous consequence of the 1845—49 potato famine.

Ireland has been inhabited for at least 9,000 years, although little is known about the paleolithic and neolithic inhabitants of the island (other than by inference from genetic research in 2004 that challenges the idea of migration from central Europe and proposes a flow along the Atlantic coast from Spain). Early historical and genealogical records note the existence of dozens of different peoples that may or may not be "mythological" (Cruithne, Attacotti, Conmaicne, Eóganachta, Érainn, Soghain, to name but a few).

During the past 1,000 years or so, Vikings, Normans, Scots and English have all added to the indigenous gene pool.

Ireland's largest religious group is the Catholic Church (over 73% for the entire island, and about 86.8% for the Republic), and most of the rest of the population adhere to one of the various Protestant denominations. The largest is the Anglican Church of Ireland. The Irish Muslim community is growing, mostly through increased immigration (see Islam in Ireland). The island also has a small Jewish community (see History of the Jews in Ireland), although this has declined somewhat in recent years. Over 4% of the Republic's population describe themselves as of no religion.

Ireland has for centuries been a place of emigration, particularly to England, Scotland, the United States, Canada, and Australia, see Irish diaspora. With growing prosperity, Ireland has become a place of immigration instead. Since joining the EU in 2004, Polish people have been the largest source of immigrants (over 150,000) from Central Europe, followed by other immigrants from Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Latvia.

Ireland's high standard of living, high wage economy and EU membership attract many migrants from the newest of the European Union countries: Ireland has had a significant number of Romanian immigrants since the 1990s. In recent years, mainland Chinese have been migrating to Ireland in significant numbers. Nigerians, along with people from other African countries have accounted for a large proportion of the non-European Union migrants to Ireland.

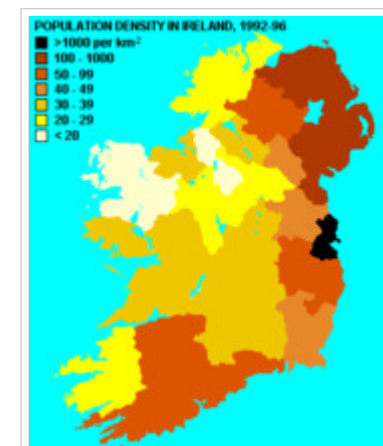
Ireland is multilingual but predominantly English-speaking, with Irish, the first official language of the Republic, the second most commonly spoken language. In the North, English is the de facto official language, but official recognition is afforded to both Irish and Ulster-Scots language. All three languages are spoken on both sides of the border. In recent decades, with the increase of immigration on an all-Ireland basis, many more languages have been introduced, particularly deriving from Asia and Eastern Europe, such as Chinese, Polish, Russian, Turkish and Latvian.

Cities

After Dublin (1.7m in Greater Dublin), Ireland's largest cities are Belfast (800,000 in Greater Belfast), Cork (380,000 in Greater Cork), Derry (94,329 in Derry Urban Area), Limerick (93,321 incl. suburbs Limerick urban area), Galway (71,983), Lisburn (71,465), Waterford (49,240 including suburbs), Newry (27,433), Kilkenny (23,967 incl. suburbs) and Armagh (14,590).

Transport

Air



Population density map of Ireland showing the heavily weighted eastern sea-board and the northern province of Ulster. Prior to the famine, the provinces of Connacht, Munster and Leinster were more or less evenly populated. Ulster was far less densely populated than the other three.

There are five main international airports in Ireland: Dublin Airport, Belfast International Airport (Aldergrove), Cork Airport, Shannon Airport and Ireland West Airport (Knock) . Dublin Airport is the busiest airport in Ireland, carrying over 22 million passengers per year; a new terminal and runway is now under construction, costing over €2 billion. All provide services to Great Britain and continental Europe, while Belfast International, Dublin, Shannon and Ireland West (Knock) also offer a range of transatlantic services. Shannon was once an important stopover on the trans-Atlantic route for refuelling operations and, with Dublin, is still one of the Ireland's two designated transatlantic gateway airports.



Aer Lingus Airbus A320 jet

There are several smaller regional airports: George Best Belfast City Airport, City of Derry Airport (Eglinton), Galway Airport, Kerry Airport (Farranfore), (Knock), Sligo Airport (Strandhill), Waterford Airport, and Donegal Airport (Carrickfinn). Scheduled services from these regional points are mostly limited to the rest of Ireland and Great Britain.

Airlines in Ireland include: Aer Lingus (the national airline of Ireland), Ryanair (Europe's largest low cost airline), Aer Arann and CityJet.

Rail

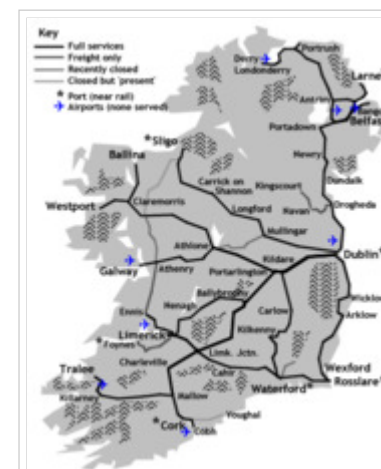
The rail network in Ireland was developed by various private companies, some of which received (British) Government funding in the late 19th century. The network reached its greatest extent by 1920. The broad gauge of 1,600 mm (5 ft 3 in) was eventually settled upon throughout the island, although there were also hundreds of kilometres of 914 mm (3 ft) narrow gauge railways.

Long distance passenger trains in the Republic are managed by Iarnród Éireann (*Irish Rail*) and connect most major towns and cities across the country.

In Dublin, two local rail networks provide transportation in the city and its immediate vicinity. The Dublin Area Rapid Transit (DART) links the city centre with coastal suburbs, while a new light rail system named Luas, opened in 2004, transports passengers to the central and western suburbs. Several more Luas lines are planned as well as an eventual upgrade to metro. The DART is run by Iarnród Éireann while the Luas is being run by Veolia under franchise from the Railway Procurement Agency (R.P.A.).

Under the Irish government's Transport 21 plan, reopening the Navan- Clonsilla rail link, the Cork- Middleton rail link and the Western Rail Corridor are amongst plans for Ireland's railways.

In Northern Ireland, all rail services are provided by Northern Ireland Railways (N.I.R.), part of Translink. Services in Northern Ireland are sparse in comparison to the rest of Ireland or Britain. A large railway network was severely curtailed in the 1950s and 1960s (in particular by the Ulster Transport Authority). The current situation includes suburban services to Larne, Newry and Bangor, as well as services to Derry. There is also a branch from Coleraine to Portrush. Waterside Station in Derry is the main railway station for Derry as well as County Donegal in Ireland, which no longer has a rail network.



Railway routes, with major towns/station, mountains, ports and airports.

Ireland also has one of the largest dedicated freight railways in Europe, operated by Bord na Móna. This company has narrow gauge railways totalling 1,930 kilometres (1,200 miles).

Roads

Motorists must drive on the left in Ireland, as in Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, India, Hong Kong, Japan, and a number of other countries. Tourists driving on the wrong side of the road cause serious accidents every year. The island of Ireland has an extensive road network, with a (developing) motorway network fanning out from Belfast, Cork and Dublin. Historically, land owners developed most roads and later Turnpike Trusts collected tolls so that as early as 1800 Ireland had a 16,100 km (10,000 mi) road network.

In recent years the Irish Government has launched Transport 21 which plans to deliver a world class transport infrastructure system to Ireland. The project is the largest investment ever in Ireland's transport system with €34 billion being invested from 2006 until 2015. Work on a number of projects has already commenced while a number of objectives have already been completed. The Transport 21 plan can largely be divided into five categories, Metro / Luas, Heavy rail, roads, buses and airports. The plan for Transport 21 was announced on 1 November 2005 by the then Minister for Transport, Martin Cullen.



Dublin Port Tunnel under construction.

The year 1815 marked the inauguration of the first horsecar service from Clonmel to Thurles and Limerick run by Charles Bianconi. Now, the main bus companies are Bus Éireann in the Republic and Ulsterbus, a division of Translink, in Northern Ireland, both of which offer extensive passenger service in all parts of the island. Dublin Bus specifically serves the greater Dublin area, and a further division of Translink called Metro, operates services within the greater Belfast area. Translink also operate Ulsterbus Foyle in the Derry Urban Area.

All speed limit signs in the Republic changed to the metric system in 2005. Some direction signs still show distance in miles. Use of imperial measurements are usually limited to pints of beer in pubs, and informal measurement of human height (feet and inches) and weight (usually stones, but pounds and ounces for infants). However, younger generations tend to use metric units more so than the older generations.

Energy network

For much of their existence electricity networks in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland were entirely separate. Both networks were designed and constructed independently, but are now connected with three interlinks and also connected through Britain to mainland Europe. The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) in the Republic drove a rural electrification programme in the 1940s until the 1970s.

Ireland, north and south has faced difficulties in providing continuous power at peak load. The situation in the North is complicated by the issue of private companies not supplying NIE with enough power, while in the South, the ESB has failed to modernise its power stations. In the latter case, availability of power plants has averaged 66% recently, one of the worst such figures in Western Europe.

The natural gas network is also now all-Ireland, with an interconnector from Antrim to Scotland, and a further two interconnectors from Dublin to Britain. Most of Ireland's gas now comes through the interconnectors with a decreasing supply from the Kinsale field. The Corrib Gas Field off the coast of County Mayo has yet to come online, and is facing some localised opposition over the controversial decision to refine the gas onshore.

There have been recent efforts in Ireland to use renewable energy such as wind energy with large wind farms being constructed in coastal counties such as Donegal, Mayo and Antrim. What will be the world's largest offshore wind farm is currently being developed at Arklow Bank off the coast of Wicklow. It is predicted to generate 10% of Ireland's energy needs when it is complete. These constructions have in some cases been delayed by opposition from locals, most recently on Achill Island, some of whom consider the wind turbines to be unsightly. Another issue in the Republic of Ireland is the failure of the aging network to cope with the varying availability of power from such installations. The ESB's Turlough Hill is the only energy storage mechanism in Ireland.



Ringsend power station,
Dublin.

Economy

In the 1920s and early 1930s, the Republic of Ireland pursued a low-tax, low-spending, non-interventionist approach under the government of W. T. Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedhael, focused mainly on agriculture, with livestock farming of primary importance. The only notable expense the government went to during this time was for the rural electrification scheme, which saw £5,000,000 spent in constructing the Ardnacrusha hydroelectric power station on the river Shannon (also known as the Shannon Scheme). During this period, 97% of trade was done with Britain. This government favoured free-trade. However many saw this as inadequate after the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

In 1932, Eamonn De Valera's Fianna Fáil party defeated Cosgrave's party with a solid majority. De Valera's policy was of economic nationalism, a belief in self-sufficiency, and attempted industrialization. Fianna Fáil abandoned free trade and put up protective tariffs on almost all manufactured products. In June, 1932 De Valera withheld land annuities, which dated back to the land acts of the 18th and early 19th century, which were until then paid to the British Government. Britain responded by placing tariffs on Irish exports of livestock and by-products. In turn De Valera imposed duties on British coal. This developed into an 'economic war' known as the Anglo-Irish Trade War. The economic war resulted in widespread hardship for Irish farming, which was the backbone of the economy, and which relied on exports to English cities for a market. The tariffs resulted in price increases for many essential manufactured goods, and an increase in the cost of living. High unemployment in richer English speaking countries made emigration from Ireland less of an option, decreasing wages. At this time many Irish industries were established, based of low wages, and protectionist barriers. With the British anticipating war, and the Irish in a dire financial situation, the trade war ended in 1938, with the British agreeing to discontinue land annuity payments from Irish farmers. Fianna Fáil established many semi-state organizations for the purposes of utilizing national resources, and marshalling larger scale industries. At this time the Irish economy enjoyed a stable period.



Construction plays an important role in the Irish economy

Fianna Fáil remained in power until 1948, when the first coalition government ousted them. To the present day, the two largest parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, have dominated the scene, Fine Gael traditionally being seen as less interventionist in economic matters. Fianna Fáil have become less interventionist and more market driven in the early 1990s, especially when in alliance with the small pro-business party, the Progressive Democrats.

Northern Ireland experienced a boom during World War II, as a result of demand for its principal industries, shipbuilding and linen making, and got a lot of support from the British government thereafter. In comparison, Ireland did not experience a WWII boom and its situation declined relative to Northern Ireland. In the 1950s there was a dramatic decrease in the population of working age, as workers picked up better paid jobs in Britain and North America. This was a period of great concern, with considerable social hemorrhaging taking place in rural Ireland in particular. In the early 1960s, the new Fianna Fáil leader Seán Lemass abandoned its previous protectionist policies, and embarked on a programme of economic reform. Serious efforts were made to attract inward investment from the United States in particular, and to a lesser extent West Germany, and Japan. Purpose built industrial estates were developed in most large towns. Rural Electrification, the division of large estates, and agricultural scientific education resulted in dramatic increases in agricultural output in the 1960s. In 1972, second level education was made free and compulsory. Ireland applied to join the European Economic Community, gaining entry in 1973 along with Britain.

From 1973 to 1983, the island of Ireland was hit by two oil crises, a series of bank strikes that paralysed business activity for 18 months, poor industrial relations, public pay rises, and runaway inflation. However, poor management of the state finances was being addressed with repeated increases in taxation of all beneficial activity, until employment became less attractive than welfare. At the same time it was found that Irish industry was completely unprepared for competition that arose as a result of free trade with continental Europe. Ireland's heavy industries, located primarily in Cork, almost disappeared between 1982 and 1984. Agriculture, the only sector of the economy which was competitive at this stage, was constrained by production quotas, and prevented from taking up the slack in the economy. At the same time Ireland was producing its first generation where university education was widely attained. There was mass unemployment, with many people with tertiary education working minimum wage jobs or being out of work. Emigration returned to 50,000 per year. From 1982 to 1986 the national debt had doubled, mostly due to stabilisation policies like welfare, gigantic subsidies to semistate organisations and public utilities, and an

effort to reduce inflation and stabilise the currency.

This situation changed dramatically in the mid 1990s as the result of a prodigious economic boom, known as the "Celtic Tiger" (as in "tiger economy"). This was led by a surge in inward investment in high end industries in services, and lower taxation levels. From 2002, this was augmented by low interest rates set by the European Central Bank which encourage private sector consumption. In July 2006, a survey undertaken by Bank of Ireland Private Banking showed that, of the top 8 leading OECD nations, the Republic of Ireland was ranked the second wealthiest per capita country in the world, showing an average wealth per head of nearly €150,000 (~ \$190,000). This is behind Japan, and ahead of other countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and Germany.

Education in Ireland is free at all levels, including college (university).

In 2005, Ireland was ranked the best place to live in the world, according to a "quality of life" assessment by Economist magazine. The country's combination of increasing wealth and traditional values gives it the conditions most likely to make its people happy, the survey found. These conditions include health, freedom, unemployment, family life, climate, political stability and security, gender equality and family and community life. The Economist said: "Ireland wins because it successfully combines the most desirable elements of the new, such as low unemployment and political liberties, with the preservation of certain cosy elements of the old, such as stable family and community life."

The rosy reports and GDP figures mask several underlying imbalances. The construction sector, which is inherently cyclical in nature, now accounts for a significant component of Ireland's GDP. This was being driven by low interest-rates and the fact that Ireland is one of the few countries in the OECD not to have residential housing or water rates. A recent downturn in residential property market sentiment has highlighted the over-exposure of the Irish economy to construction, which now presents a threat to economic growth. Several successive years of unbalanced economic growth have also led to huge inequality between the strata of Irish society (see Economy of the Republic of Ireland - Recent developments), as well as significant environmental degradation, including rapid loss of biodiversity and erosion of natural and cultural heritage, and the highest per-capita rise in greenhouse gas emissions in the European Union since the Kyoto Protocol came into effect.

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Italy

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Italy (Italian: *Italia*), officially the **Italian Republic**, (Italian: *Repubblica Italiana*), is located on the Italian Peninsula in Southern Europe, and on the two largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, Sicily and Sardinia. Italy shares its northern Alpine boundary with France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia. The independent states of San Marino and the Vatican City are enclaves within the Italian Peninsula, while Campione d'Italia is an Italian exclave in Switzerland.



Italy has been the home of many European cultures, such as the Etruscans and the Romans, and later was the birthplace of the movement of the Renaissance, that began in Tuscany and spread all over Europe. Italy's capital Rome was for centuries the centre of Western civilization, it also spawned the Baroque movement and seats the Catholic Church.

Today, Italy is a democratic republic and a developed country with the 20th highest GDP per capita, the 8th-highest Quality-of-life index, and the 20th-highest Human Development Index rating in the world. It is a founding member of what is now the European Union (having signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957), and also a member of the G8 (having the world's 7th largest nominal GDP), NATO, OECD, the Council of Europe, the Western European Union, the Central European Initiative, and a Schengen state. On January 1, 2007, Italy began a two year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Etymology

The origin of the term "Italy" (It: *Italia*), from Latin *Italia*, is uncertain. According to one of the more common explanations, the term was borrowed through Greek, from Oscan *Viteliú*, meaning "land of young cattle" (cf. Lat *vitulus* "calf", Umb *vitlo* "calf") and named for the god of cattle, Mars. The bull was a symbol of the southern Italian tribes and is often depicted goring the Roman wolf as a defiant symbol of free Italy during the Samnite Wars.

The name *Italia* applied to a part of what is now southern Italy. According to Antiochus of Syracuse, it originally only referred to the southern portion of the Bruttium peninsula (modern Calabria), but by his

Repubblica Italiana Italian Republic	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: <i>Il Canto degli Italiani</i> (also known as <i>Inno di Mameli</i>) <i>The Song of the Italians</i>	
	
Location of Italy (dark green)	
— on the European continent (light green & dark grey) — in the European Union (light green) — [Legend]	

time Oenotrians and Italy had become synonymous, and the name also applied to most of Lucania as well. The Greeks gradually came to use the name "Italia" for a greater region, but it was not until the time of the Roman conquests that the term was expanded to cover the entire peninsula.

History

Prehistory to Roman Empire



The Colosseum in Rome, perhaps the most enduring symbol of Italy

Excavations throughout Italy reveal a modern human presence dating back to the Palaeolithic period some 200,000 years ago. In the 8th and 7th centuries BC Greek colonies were established all along Sicily and the southern part of the Italian Peninsula. Subsequently Romans referred to this area as *Magna Graecia* as it was so densely inhabited by Greeks. Ancient Rome at first a small agricultural community founded circa 8th century BC grew the next centuries into a colossal empire encompassing the whole Mediterranean Sea, in which Ancient Greek and Roman cultures merged into one civilization, so influential that parts of it survive in modern law, administration, philosophy and arts forming the ground where Western civilization is based upon. In its twelve-century existence, it transformed from a republic to monarchy

and finally to autocracy. In steady decline since 2nd century AD, the empire finally broke into two parts in 285 AD, a western and an eastern. The western part under the pressure of Goths finally dissolved leaving the Italian peninsula divided into small independent kingdoms and feuding city states for the next 14 centuries, and the eastern part as the sole heir to Roman legacy.

Middle Ages

Capital (and largest city)	Rome
Official languages	Italian ¹
Demonym	Italian
Government - President - Prime Minister	Parliamentary republic Giorgio Napolitano Silvio Berlusconi
Formation - Unification - Republic	17 March 1861 2 June 1946
EU accession	25 March 1957 (founding member)
Area - Total - Water (%)	301,318 km ² (71st) 116,346.5 sq mi 2.4
Population - October 2007 estimate - October 2001 census - Density	59,619,290 (23rd) 57,110,144 197.6/km ² (54th) 511.7/sq mi
GDP (PPP) - Total - Per capita	2007 estimate \$1.888 trillion (8th) \$32,319 (20th)
GDP (nominal) - Total - Per capita	2007 estimate \$2.067 trillion (7th) \$35,386 (21st)
Gini (2000)	36 (medium)

HDI (2005)	▲ 0.941 (high) (20th)
Currency	Euro (€) ² (EUR)
Time zone - Summer (DST)	CET (UTC+1) CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.it ³
Calling code	+39
<p>1 French is co-official in the Aosta Valley; Friulian is co-official in Friuli-Venezia Giulia; German and Ladin are co-official in the province of Bolzano-Bozen; Sardinian is co-official in Sardinia.</p> <p>2 Before 2002: Italian Lira. The euro is accepted in Campione d'Italia (but the official currency is the Swiss Franc)</p> <p>3 The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.</p>	



The Iron Crown with which Lombard rulers were crowned

Following a short recapture of the peninsula by Byzantine Emperor, Justinian at 6th cen. AD from the Ostrogoths a new wave of Germanic tribes, the Lombards, soon arrived to Italy from the north. For several centuries the armies of the Byzantines were strong enough to prevent Arabs, Holy Roman Empire, or the Papacy from establishing a unified Italian Kingdom, but at the same time too weak to fully unify the former Roman lands. Nevertheless during early Middle Ages Imperial orders such as the Carolingians, the Ottonians and Hohenstaufens managed to impose their overlordship in Italy.

Italy's regions eventually interlocked to their neighbouring empires' conflicting interests and would remain divided up to 19th century. It was during this vacuum of authority that the region saw the rise of Signoria and Comune. In the anarchic conditions that often prevailed in medieval Italian city states, people looked to strong men to restore order and disarm the feuding elites. In times of anarchy or crisis, cities sometimes offered the Signoria to individuals perceived as strong enough to save the state, most notably Della Scala family in Verona, Visconti in Milan and Medici in Florence.

Italy during this period became notable for its merchant Republics. These city-states, oligarchical in reality, had a dominant merchant class which under a relative freedom nurtured academic and artistic advancement. The four classic Maritime Republics in Italy were Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Amalfi reflecting the temporal sequence of their dominance.

Venice and Genoa were Europe's gateway to trade with the East, with the former producer of the renown venetian glass, whilst Florence was the capital of silk, wool, banks and jewelry. The Maritime Republics were heavily involved in the Crusades, taking advantage of the new political and trading opportunities, most evidently in the conquest of Zara and Constantinople funded by Venice.

During late Middle Ages Italy was divided into smaller city states and territories: the kingdom of Naples controlled the south, the Republic of Florence and the Papal States the centre, the Genoese and the Milanese the north and west, and the Venetians the east. Fifteenth-century Italy was one of the most urbanised areas in Europe and the birthplace of Renaissance. Florence, in particular with the writings of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), Francesco Petrararch (1304–1374) and Giovanni Boccaccio (c. 1313–1375), as well as the painting of Giotto di Bondone (1267–1337) is considered the centre of this cultural movement. Scholars like Niccolò de' Niccoli and Poggio Bracciolini scoured the libraries in search of works of classical authors as Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, Cicero and Vitruvius.

The Black Death pandemic in 1348 left its mark on Italy by killing one third of the population. The recovery from the disaster led to a resurgence of cities, trade and economy which greatly stimulated the successive phase of the Humanism and Renaissance. In 1494 the French king Charles VIII opened the first of a series of invasions, lasting up to sixteenth century, and a competition between France and Spain for the possession of the country. Ultimately Spain prevailed through the Treaty of Cateau-Cambresis which recognised Spanish dominance over the Duchy of Milan and the Kingdom of Naples. The holy alliance between Habsburg Spain and the Holy See resulted in the systematic persecution of any Protestant movement. Austria succeeded Spain as hegemon in Italy under the Peace of Utrecht. Through Austrian domination, the northern part of Italy, gained economic dynamism and intellectual fervor. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars (1796–1815) introduced the ideas of equality, democracy, law and nation.

Unification



Italy during the Late Middle Ages.

The creation of the **Kingdom of Italy** was the result of the efforts by Italian nationalists and monarchists loyal to the House of Savoy to establish a united kingdom encompassing the entire Italian Peninsula. In the context of 1848 liberal revolutions that swept through Europe an unsuccessful war was declared on Austria. Giuseppe Garibaldi popular amongst southern Italians led the Italian republican drive for unification in southern Italy, while the northern Italian monarchy of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia whose government was led by Camillo Benso, conte di Cavour, had the ambition of establishing a united Italian state under its rule. The kingdom successfully challenged Austrian Empire in the Second Italian War of Independence with the help of Napoleon III, liberating the Lombardy-Venetia. In 1866 Victor Emmanuel II aligned the kingdom to Prussia during the Austro-Prussian War waging the Third Italian War of Independence which allowed Italy to annex Venice. In 1870, as France during the disastrous Franco-Prussian War abandoned its positions in Rome, Italy rushed to fill the power gap by taking over the Papal State from French sovereignty. Italian unification finally was achieved, and shortly afterwards Italy's capital was moved to Rome.



Giuseppe Garibaldi, the "Hero of the Two Worlds"

20th Century

As Northern Italy, was industrialized and modernized the south, became overcrowded, forcing millions of people to emigrate for a better life abroad. The Sardinian Statuto Albertino of 1848, extended to the whole Kingdom of Italy in 1861, provided for basic freedoms, but the electoral laws excluded the non-propertied and uneducated classes from voting. In 1913 male universal suffrage was allowed. The Socialist Party became the main political party, outclassing the traditional liberal and conservative organisations. Starting from the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Italy developed into a colonial power by forcing Somalia, Eritrea and later Libya and Dodecanese under its rule. During World War I Italy stayed at first neutral, but in 1915, signed the London Pact entering Entente, promised Trento, Trieste, Istria, Dalmatia and parts of Ottoman Empire. During the war, 600,000 Italians died and the economy collapsed. Under the Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain, Italy obtained just Bolzano-Bozen, Trento, Trieste and Istria in a victory defined as "mutilated" by public.

The turbulence that followed the devastations of World War I, inspired by the Russian Revolution, led to turmoil and anarchy. The liberal establishment, fearing a socialist revolution, started to endorse the small National Fascist Party, led by Benito Mussolini. In October 1922 the fascists attempted a coup (the *Marcia su Roma*, i.e. March on Rome); but the king ordered the army not to intervene, instead forming an alliance with Mussolini. Over the next few years, Mussolini banned all political parties and curtailed personal liberties thus forming a dictatorship. In 1935, Mussolini subjugated Ethiopia after a surprisingly lengthy campaign. This resulted in international alienation and the exodus of the country from the League of Nations. A first pact with Nazi Germany was concluded in 1936, and a second in 1938. Italy strongly supported Franco in the Spanish civil war and Hitler's annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia.

On April 7, 1939 Italy occupied Albania, a *de facto* protectorate for decades and entered World War II in 1940 taking part in the late stages of the Battle of France. Mussolini wanting a quick and swift victory which would emulate Hitler's blitzkrieg in Poland and France, invaded Greece in October 1940 via Albania but was forced to a humiliating defeat after a few months. At the same time Italy after initially conquering British Somalia, saw an allied counter-attack leading to the loss of all possessions in the Horn of Africa. Italy was also defeated by British forces in North Africa and was only saved by the urgently dispatched German Africa Corps led by Erwin Rommel. Italy was invaded by Allies in June 1943 leading to the collapse of the fascist regime and the arrest of Mussolini. In September 1943, Italy surrendered. Immediately Germany invaded its former ally with the country becoming a battlefield for the rest of the war. The country was liberated on April 25, 1945.



Aldo Moro, photographed during his kidnapping by the Red Brigades

In 1946 Vittorio Emanuele III's son, Umberto II, was forced to abdicate. Italy became a Republic after a referendum held on June 2, 1946, a day celebrated since as Republic Day. This was the first election in Italy allowing women to vote. The Republican Constitution was approved and came into force on January 1, 1948. Under the Paris Peace Treaties of 1947, the eastern border area was lost to Yugoslavia and the free territory of Trieste was divided between the two states. The Marshall Plan in 1949 helped to revive the Italian economy which in 1950s and 1960s enjoyed a prolonged economic growth. Italy is a founding member of European Union (EU). In the 1970s and 1980s the country experienced the Years of Lead, a period characterised by widespread social conflicts and terrorist acts carried out by extra-parliamentary movements. The assassination of the leader of the Christian Democracy, Aldo Moro, led to the end of a historic compromise between the DC and the Communist Party.

From 1992 to 1997, the Italian economy faced significant challenges with massive government debt, extensive corruption, and organized crime's considerable influence collectively called the political system Tangentopoli. The Tangentopoli scandals involved all major parties, and between 1992 and 1994 the DC underwent a severe crisis splitting up into several factions, including the Italian People's Party and the Christian Democratic Centre. The PSI completely dissolved.

The 1994 elections put media magnate Silvio Berlusconi into the Prime Minister's seat. However he was forced to step down in December when Lega Nord withdrew its support. In April 1996, national elections led to the victory of a centre-left coalition under the leadership of Romano Prodi. Prodi's first government became the third-longest to stay in power before he narrowly lost a vote of confidence, by three votes, in October 1998. A new government was formed by Massimo D'Alema, but in April 2000 he resigned. In 2001 the centre-right formed government and Silvio Berlusconi was able to remain in power for a complete five year mandate, but with two different governments. The first one (2001–2005) became the longest government in post-war Italy. Italy participated in the

US-led military coalition in Iraq. The elections in 2006 won by centre-left, allowed Prodi to form his second government but in early 2008, he resigned because of the collapse of his coalition. In the ensuing new early elections in April 2008, Silvio Berlusconi convincingly won to form a government for the third time.

Geography



Cala d'Oliva in Asinara,
Sardinia

Topography

Italy occupies a long, boot-shaped peninsula, surrounded on the west by the Tyrrhenian Sea and on the east by the Adriatic Sea. It is bounded by France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia to the north. The Apennine Mountains form the peninsula's backbone; the Alps form its northern boundary. The largest of its northern lakes is Garda (143 sq mi; 370 km²); the Po, its principal river, flows from the Alps on Italy's western border and crosses the great Padan plain to the Adriatic Sea. Several islands form part of Italy; the largest are Sicily (9,926 sq mi; 25,708 km²) and Sardinia (9,301 sq mi; 24,090 km²). There are several active volcanoes in Italy: Etna, the largest active volcano in Europe; Vulcano; Stromboli; and Vesuvius, the only active volcano on the mainland of Europe.

Climate

The climate in Italy is highly diverse and can be far from the stereotypical Mediterranean climate depending on the location. Most of the inland northern areas of Italy (for example Turin, Milan and Bologna) have a continental climate often classified as Humid subtropical climate (Köppen climate classification Cfa). The coastal areas of Liguria and most of the peninsula south of Florence generally fit the Mediterranean stereotype (Köppen climate classification Csa). The coastal areas of the peninsula can be very different from the interior higher altitudes and valleys, particularly during the winter months when the higher altitudes tend to be cold, wet, and often snowy. The coastal regions have mild winters and warm and generally dry summers, although lowland valleys can be quite hot in summer.



Crops in the great Padan
Plain

Government and politics

The 1948 Constitution of Italy established a bicameral parliament (*Parlamento*), consisting of a Chamber of Deputies (*Camera dei Deputati*) and a Senate (*Senato della Repubblica*), a separate judiciary, and an executive branch composed of a Council of Ministers (cabinet) (*Consiglio dei ministri*), headed by the prime minister (*Presidente del consiglio dei ministri*).

The President of the Italian Republic (*Presidente della Repubblica*) is elected for seven years by the parliament sitting jointly with a small number of regional delegates. The president nominates the prime minister, who proposes the other ministers (formally named by the president). The Council of Ministers must obtain a confidence vote from both houses of Parliament. Legislative bills may originate in either house and must be passed by a majority in both.

The houses of parliament are popularly and directly elected through a complex electoral system (latest amendment in 2005) which combines proportional representation with a majority prize for the largest coalition (Chamber). All Italian citizens older than 18 can vote. However, to vote for the senate, the voter must be at least 25 or older. The electoral system in the Senate is based upon regional representation. During the elections in 2006, the two competing coalitions were separated by few thousand votes, and in the Chamber the centre-left coalition (*L'Unione*; English: *The Union*) got 345 Deputies against 277 for the centre-right one (*Casa delle Libertà*; English: *House of Freedoms*), while in the Senate *L'Unione* got only two Senators more than absolute majority. The Chamber of Deputies has 630 members and the Senate 315 elected senators; in addition, the Senate includes former presidents and appointed senators for life (no more than five) by the President of the Republic according to special constitutional provisions. As of May 15, 2006 there are seven life senators (of which three are former Presidents). Both houses are elected for a maximum of five years, but both may be dissolved by the President before the expiration of their normal term if the Parliament is unable to elect a stable government. In the post war history, this has happened in 1972, 1976, 1979, 1983, 1994, 1996 and 2008.

A peculiarity of the Italian Parliament is the representation given to Italian citizens permanently living abroad (about 2.7 million people). Among the 630 Deputies and the 315 Senators there are respectively 12 and 6 elected in four distinct foreign constituencies. Those members of Parliament were elected for the first time in April 2006 and they have the same rights as members elected in Italy.

The Italian judicial system is based on Roman law modified by the Napoleonic code and later statutes. The Constitutional Court of Italy (*Corte Costituzionale*) rules on the conformity of laws with the Constitution and is a post-World War II innovation.

Foreign relations



Giorgio Napolitano,
11th President of the
Italian Republic

Italy was a founding member of the European Community—now the European Union (EU). Italy was admitted to the United Nations in 1955 and is a member and strong supporter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization (GATT/WTO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe. Its recent turns as rotating Presidency of international organisations include the CSCE (the forerunner of the OSCE) in 1994 G8, the EU in 2001 and from July to December 2003.

Italy supports the United Nations and its international security activities. Italy deployed troops in support of UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Mozambique, and East Timor and provides support for NATO and UN operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania. Italy deployed over 2,000 troops to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in February 2003. Italy still supports international efforts to reconstruct and stabilize Iraq, but it has withdrawn its military contingent of some 3,200 troops as of November 2006, maintaining only humanitarian workers and other civilian personnel.

In August 2006 Italy sent about 3,000 soldiers to Lebanon for the United Nations' peacekeeping mission UNIFIL. Furthermore, since 2 February 2007 an Italian, Claudio Graziano is the commander of the UN force in the country.

Military



Silvio Berlusconi, current Italian Prime Minister, and U.S. President George W. Bush. Berlusconi has held a strong pro-America line in foreign policy.

Article 11 of the Italian Constitution says: "Italy rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedoms of others peoples and as a means for settling international controversies; it agrees, on conditions of equality with other states, to the limitations of sovereignty necessary for an order that ensures peace and justice among Nations; it promotes and encourages international organizations having such ends in view".

The Italian armed forces are under the command of the Italian Supreme Defense Council, presided over by the President of the Italian Republic. The total number of military personnel is approximately 308,000. Italy has the eighth-highest military expenditure in the world.

The Italian armed forces are divided into four branches:

Army

The Esercito Italiano (the *Italian Army*) is the ground defense force of the Italian Republic. It has recently (July 29, 2004) become a professional all-volunteer force of 115,687 active duty personnel. Its most famous combat vehicles are Dardo, Centauro and Ariete, and Mangusta attack helicopters, recently deployed in UN missions; but the Esercito Italiano also has at its disposal a large number of Leopard 1 and M113 armored vehicles.

Navy

The Marina Militare (the *Italian Navy*) is one of the four branches of the military forces of Italy. It was created in 1946, as the Navy of the Italian Republic, from the Regia Marina. Today's Marina Militare is a modern navy with a strength of 35,261 and ships of every type, such as aircraft carriers, destroyers, modern frigates, submarines, amphibious ships and other smaller ships such as oceanographic research ships.

The Marina Militare is now equipping herself with a bigger aircraft carrier (the *Cavour*), new destroyers, submarines and multipurpose frigates. In modern times, the Marina Militare, being a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has taken part in many coalition peacekeeping operations around the world. The Marina Militare is considered the fourth strongest navy of the world.

Air Force

The Aeronautica Militare Italiana is the air force of Italy. It was founded as an independent service arm on 28 March 1923, by King Vittorio Emanuele III as the *Regia Aeronautica* (which translates to "Royal Air Force"). After World War II, when Italy was made a republic by referendum, the *Regia Aeronautica* was given its current name. Today the Aeronautica Militare has a strength of 45,879 and operates 585 aircraft, including 219 combat jets and 114 helicopters. As a stopgap and as replacement for leased Tornado ADV interceptors, the AMI has leased 30



Alpini of the 4th Alpini Regiment attached to ISAF



The Giuseppe Garibaldi. The Italian Navy maintains two aircraft carriers



Italian Air Force Eurofighter Typhoon at Pratica di Mare

F-16A Block 15 ADF and four F-16B Block 10 Fighting Falcons, with an option for some more. The coming years also will see the introduction of 121 EF2000 Eurofighter Typhoons, replacing the leased F-16 Fighting Falcons. Furthermore updates are foreseen on the Tornado IDS/IDT and the AMX-fleet. The transport capacity is guaranteed by a fleet of 22 C-130Js, also a completely new developed G222, called C-27J Spartan (12 aircraft ordered), will enter service replacing the G222's. The Italian air force is also planning on purchasing F-35, although they have not been distributed around the world yet.

Gendarmerie

The Carabinieri are the gendarmerie and military police of Italy, providing the republic with a national police service. At the Sea Islands Conference of the G8 in 2004, the Carabinieri was given the mandate to establish a Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) to spearhead the development of training and doctrinal standards for civilian police units attached to international peacekeeping missions.

Regions, provinces, and municipalities

Italy is subdivided into 20 regions (*regioni*, singular *regione*). Five of these regions have a special autonomous status that enables them to enact legislation on some of their local matters, and are marked by an *. It is further divided into 109 provinces (*province*) and 8,101 municipalities (*comuni*).

	Region	Capital	Area, (km ²)	Population
1	Abruzzo	L'Aquila	10,794	1,305,000
2	Basilicata	Potenza	9,992	594,000
3	Calabria	Catanzaro	15,080	2,004,000
4	Campania	Naples	13,595	5,790,000
5	Emilia-Romagna	Bologna	22,124	4,187,000
6	Friuli-Venezia Giulia*	Trieste	7,855	1,208,000
7	Lazio	Rome	17,207	5,304,000
8	Liguria	Genoa	5,421	1,610,000
9	Lombardy	Milan	23,861	9,375,000
10	Marche	Ancona	9,694	1,528,000
11	Molise	Campobasso	4,438	320,000
12	Piedmont	Turin	25,399	4,341,000



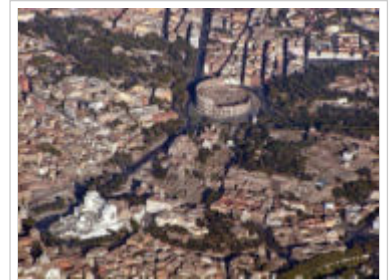
13	Apulia	Bari	19,362	4,071,000
14	Sardinia*	Cagliari	24,090	1,655,000
15	Aosta Valley*	Aosta	3,263	123,000
16	Tuscany	Florence	22,997	3,619,000
17	Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol*	Trento	13,607	985,000
18	Umbria	Perugia	8,456	867,000
19	Sicily*	Palermo	25,708	5,017,000
20	Veneto	Venice	18,391	4,738,000

Demographics

Population

In October of 2007, Italy officially reached more than 59.5 million persons. Italy currently has the fourth largest population in the European Union, and the 23rd largest population in the world. Italy's population density at 196.1 persons per kilometre is the 5th highest in the European Union. The highest density is in Northern Italy, as one third of the country contains almost half of the Italian population. After the WW2, Italy saw an economic boom which led to rural population moving to the cities, and in the same time it turned from a nation characterized by massive emigration to a net immigrant-receiving country. High fertility persisted until the 70s when it plunged below replacement so as of 2007, one in five Italians was pensioners. Despite this, thanks mainly to the immigration of 80s and 90s, in 2000s Italy saw natural population growth for the first time in years.

Largest cities



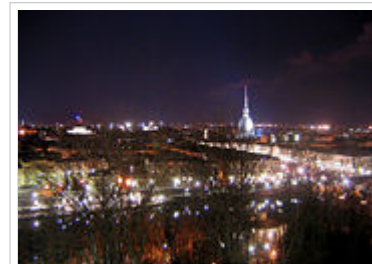
Rome



Milan



Naples



Turin



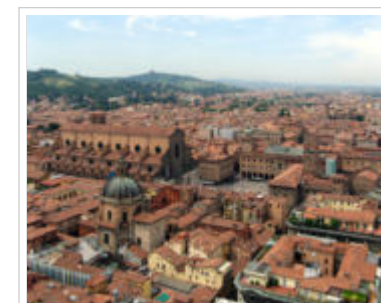
Palermo



Genoa

Italian cities with a population of 300,000 or more (ISTAT data, December 2006):

Pos.	Common	Region	Prov.	Inhabitants
1	Rome	Lazio	RM	2,705,603
2	Milan	Lombardy	MI	1,303,437
3	Naples	Campania	NA	975,139
4	Turin	Piedmont	TO	900,569
5	Palermo	Sicily	PA	666,552
6	Genoa	Liguria	GE	615,686
7	Bologna	Emilia-Romagna	BO	373,026
8	Florence	Tuscany	FI	365,966
9	Bari	Apulia	BA	325,052
10	Catania	Sicily	CT	301,564



Bologna

Metropolitan areas

According to the OECD, these are the major Italian metropolitan areas:

Metropolitan area	Inhabitants
Milan	7.4 million
Rome	3.8 million
Naples	3.1 million
Turin	2.4 million

Migration and ethnicity

Italy is a destination for immigrants from all over the world. At the end of 2006, foreigners comprised 5% of the population or 2,938,922 persons, an increase of 270,000 since the previous year. In some Italian cities, such as Brescia, Milan, Padua, and Prato, immigrants total more than 10% of the population.

The most recent wave of migration has been from surrounding European nations, particularly Eastern Europe, replacing North Africans as a major source of migrants. Around 500,000 Romanians are officially registered as living in Italy, but unofficial estimates put the actual number at double that figure or perhaps even more. As of 2006, migrants came from Eastern Europe (39.14%), North Africa (17.77%), Asia (17.43%), Latin America (8.90%). Smaller groups came from sub-Saharan Africa, North America and other European Union nations.

Ethnic group	Population	% of total*
Ethnic Italian	56,000,000	94.96%
Romanian	550,000	0.93%
Arab	485,000	0.82%
Albanian	348,000	0.60%
Asian (non-Chinese)	326,000	0.55%
German	287,503	0.49%
South American	239,000	0.41%
Black African	210,000	0.36%
Chinese	128,000	0.22%
Ukrainian	107,000	0.18%
Other	257,000	0.43%
* Percentage of total population		

Religion

Italy religiosity	
religion	percent
Christianity	90%
Irreligion	7%
Islam	2%
Others	1%

Roman Catholicism is by far the largest religion in the country, although the Catholic Church is no longer officially the state religion. 87.8% of Italians identified as Roman Catholic, although only about one-third of these described themselves as active members (36.8%).

Other Christian groups in Italy include more than 700,000 Eastern Orthodox Christians, including 470,000 newcomers and some 180,000 Greek Orthodox, 550,000 Pentecostals and Evangelicals (0.8%), of whom 400,000 are members of the Assemblies of God, 235,685 Jehovah's Witnesses (0.4%), 30,000 Waldensians, 25,000 Seventh-day Adventists, 22,000 Mormons, 15,000 Baptists (plus some 5,000 Free Baptists), 7,000

Lutherans, 5,000 Methodists (affiliated to the Waldensian Church).

The country's oldest religious minority is the Jewish community, comprising roughly 45,000 people. It is no longer the largest non-Christian group.

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As a result of significant immigration from other parts of the world, some 825,000 Muslims (1.4%) live in Italy, though only 50,000 are Italian citizens. In addition, there are 110,000 Buddhists (0.2%), 70,000 Sikhs, and 70,000 Hindus (0.1%) in Italy.

Economy

According to GDP calculations, Italy was ranked as the seventh largest economy in the world in 2006, behind the United States, Japan, Germany, China, UK, and France, and the fourth largest in Europe. According to the OECD, in 2004 Italy was the world's sixth-largest exporter of manufactured goods. This economy remains divided into a developed industrial north, dominated by private companies, and a less developed agricultural south. In the Index of Economic Freedom 2008 it ranked 64th of 162 countries, or 29th of 41 European countries, the lowest rating in the EU-15 and behind many ex-communist European countries. It's often called a sick man of Europe, with governments having problems in pursuing reform programs.

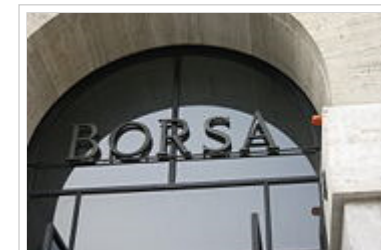
According to World Bank data, Italy has high levels of freedom to invest, do business, and trade. On the other hand, Italy has inefficient bureaucracy, relatively low property rights and high levels of corruption (compared to other European countries), heavy taxes, and heavy public consumption at around half of GDP. Italy has been in economic decline compared to most other EU-15 countries.

Most raw materials needed by industry and more than 75% of energy requirements are imported. Over the past decade, Italy has pursued a tight fiscal policy in order to meet the requirements of the Economic and Monetary Union and has benefited from lower interest and inflation rates. Italy joined the Euro from its introduction in 1999.

Italy's economic performance has at times lagged behind that of its EU partners, and the current government has enacted numerous short-term reforms aimed at improving competitiveness and long-term growth. It has moved slowly, however, on implementing certain structural reforms favoured by economists, such as lightening the high tax burden and overhauling Italy's rigid labour market and expensive pension system, because of the economic slowdown and opposition from labour unions.

Italy has a smaller number of world class multinational corporations than other economies of comparable size. Instead, the country's main economic strength has been its large base of small and medium size companies. Some of these companies manufacture products that are technologically moderately advanced and therefore face increasing competition from China and other emerging Asian economies which are able to undercut them on labour costs. These Italian companies are responding to the Asian competition by concentrating on products with a higher technological content, while moving lower-tech manufacturing to plants in countries where labour is less expensive. The small average size of Italian companies remains a limiting factor, and the government has been working to encourage integration and mergers and to reform the rigid regulations that have traditionally been an obstacle to the development of larger corporations in the country.

Italy's major exports are motor vehicles (Fiat Group, Aprilia, Ducati, Piaggio), chemicals, petrochemicals (Eni), electricity (Enel, Edison), home appliances (Merloni, Candy), aerospace and defense tech (Alenia, Agusta, Finmeccanica), firearms (Beretta); but the country's more famous exports are in the fields of



The Borsa Italiana, based in Milan, is Italy's main stock exchange

fashion (Armani, Valentino, Versace, Dolce & Gabbana, Benetton, Prada, Luxottica), food industry (Ferrero, Barilla Group, Martini & Rossi, Campari, Parmalat), luxury vehicles (Ferrari, Maserati, Lamborghini, Pagani) and motoryachts (Ferretti, Azimut).

Tourism is very important to the Italian economy: with over 37 million tourists a year, Italy is ranked as the fifth major tourist destination in the world.

Transport

The railway network in Italy totals 16,627 kilometres (10,331 mi), ranking the country 17th in the world , and is operated by Ferrovie dello Stato. High speed trains include ETR-class trains, of which the ETR 500 travels at 300 km/h (190 mph).

In 1991 Treno Alta Velocità SpA was created, a special purpose entity owned by RFI (itself owned by Ferrovie dello Stato) for the planning and construction of high-speed rail lines along Italy's most important and saturated transport routes. These lines are often referred as "TAV" lines. The purpose of TAV construction is to aid travel along Italy's most saturated rail lines and to add tracks to these lines, namely the Milan-Naples and Turin-Milan-Venice corridors. One of the focuses of the project is to turn the rail network of Italy into a modern and high-tech passenger rail system in accordance with updated European rail standards. A secondary purpose is to introduce high-speed rail to the country and its high-priority corridors. When demand on regular lines is lessened with the opening of dedicated high-speed lines, those regular lines will be used primarily for low-speed regional rail service and freight trains. With these ideas realised, the Italian train network can be integrated with other European rail networks, particularly the French TGV, German ICE, and Spanish AVE systems.



ETR 500 at Milan Central Station

There are approximately 654,676 km(406,797 mi) of serviceable roadway in Italy, including 6,957 km (4,323 mi) of expressways.

There are approximately 133 airports in Italy, including the two hubs of Malpensa International (near Milan) and Leonardo Da Vinci International (near Rome).

There are 27 major ports in Italy, the largest is in Genoa, which is also the second largest in the Mediterranean Sea, after Marseille. 2,400 km (1,500 mi) of waterways traverse Italy.

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Kosovo

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Template:Infobox Kosovo **Kosovo** (Albanian: *Kosova* or *Kosovë*, Serbian: Косово и Метохија, *Kosovo i Metohija*; also Космет, *Kosmet*) is a province of Serbia which has been under United Nations administration since 1999. While Serbia's sovereignty is recognised by the international community, in practice Serbian governance in the province is virtually non-existent (see also Constitutional status of Kosovo). The province is governed by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) with the help of the local Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), as well as security provided by the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR).

Kosovo borders Montenegro, Albania, and the Republic of Macedonia. It has a population of just over two million people, predominantly ethnic Albanians, with smaller populations of Serbs, Turks, Bosniaks, Romani people, and other ethnic groups. Priština is the capital and largest city.

The province is the subject of a long-running political and territorial dispute between the Serbian (and previously, the Yugoslav) government and Kosovo's largely ethnic-Albanian population. International negotiations began in 2006 to determine the final status of Kosovo (*See Kosovo status process*).

Geography



Political map of Kosovo.

With an area of 10,887 square kilometers (4,203 sq mi) and a population of nearly two million, Kosovo internationally borders Montenegro to the northwest, the Republic of Macedonia to the south, and Albania to the south west, while internally Central Serbia to the north and east.

The largest cities are Priština, the capital, with an estimated 600,000 inhabitants, Prizren in the south west with a population of 165,000, Peć in the west with 154,000, and Mitrovica in the north with 110,000. Five other towns have populations in excess of 97,000.

The climate in Kosovo is continental, with warm summers and cold and snowy winters.

There are two main plains in Kosovo. The Metohija basin is located in the western part of the Kosovo, and the Plain of Kosovo occupies the eastern part.

Much of Kosovo's terrain is rugged. The Šar Mountains are located in the south and south-east, bordering Macedonia. This is one of the region's most popular tourist and skiing resorts, with Brezovica and Prevalac as the main tourist centres. Kosovo's mountainous area, including the highest peak Đeravica, at 2656 m above sea level, is located in the south-west,

bordering Albania and Montenegro.

The Kopaonik mountain is located in the north, bordering. The central region of Drenica, Carraleva and the eastern part of Kosovo, known as Golak, are mainly hilly areas.

There are several notable rivers and lakes in Kosovo. The main rivers are the White Drin, running towards the Adriatic Sea, with the Erenik among its tributaries), the Sitnica, the Morava in the Golak area, and Ibar in the north. The main lakes are Gazivoda (380 million m³) in the north-western part, Radonic (113 million m³) in the south-west part, Batlava (40 million m³) and Badovac (26 million m³) in the north-east part.

History

Classical Period

In ancient times, Kosovo was part of a bigger region called Dardania. It was inhabited by tribes postulated to be of mixed Thracian-Illyrian ethnicity which inhabited the Balkans since the late Bronze Age. The inhabitants were often at war with the Macedonians, and the southernmost part was directly incorporated into the growing Macedonian kingdom. With the rise of the Roman Empire, Augustus conquered the region in 28 BC, Kosovo came to lie within the Roman province of Moesia. The area was subject to a degree of Romanisation. When the Roman Empire split, the area subsequently fell under rule of the East Roman Empire (Byzantine Empire). The Byzantine empire continued its rule over the Balkans, albeit troubled by the successive raids of various nomadic hordes (Huns, Goths, Avars, Bulgars) - which were devastating to the area, resulting in depopulation of urban centers and loss of the wealth created by trade and mining.

Medieval Period

Arrival of the Slavs



Roman Province of Moesia
c.100s AD



Serb lands early 800s AD

By the 6th century, Slavic tribes from north and east of the Carpathian mountains began to settle the Balkans in successive waves. By 550s, they had settled most the Balkans including most of Greece. One of these Slavic migrants were the proto-Serbs. They settled a large area of the western Balkans, called Serbia (Serbia) - which consisted of modern Serbia (including Kosovo), Montenegro and eastern parts of Bosnia and northern Macedonia. The Slavs actively assimilated many of the indigenous peoples of the Balkans. Some scattered tribes of Illyrians may have escaped the ethno-cultural assimilation, perhaps by fleeing to the mountainous regions of the western Balkans, even as early as during the Roman occupation.

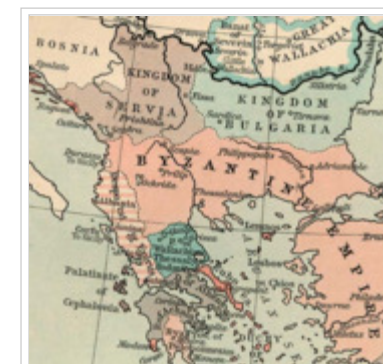
Medieval Serbian state

The Slavic tribes, although nominally under Byzantine vassalage, essentially ruled themselves. With the need for a more effective defensive organization, zhupanates were formed (primitive principalities ruled by a Zhupan- a noble chieftain). The most powerful of these were those of Raska (modern central Serbia) and Dioclea (roughly what is now Montenegro), which grew to be powerful Balkan states in their own right, influencing other Serbian territories. By the 850s AD, Kosovo became part of the expanding Slavic Bulgarian Empire. During this time Slavic literacy and Christianity spread throughout the region. Bulgarian rule lasted until 1018, when the Byzantine Empire dealt a death blow to the last Bulgarian King, Tsar Samuil. In fact, the Byzantines re-asserted their rule over most of the Balkans for the first time since the 6th century.

A popular uprising against Byzantine rule commenced in Dioclea by Stefan Voislav. One Vukan, a nephew of the Dioclean King Mihailo (Voislav's descendent), was made Zhupan of Raska by his uncle. He struggled to free Raska from the Byzantines, and pushed through Kosovo c. 1092, and into Macedonia. There were several offensives and counter-offensives, however Vukan eventually accepted Byzantine vassalage. The full Serbian liberation of Kosovo from the Byzantines would not be achieved until 1208 by Stefan Nemanja of the Nemanjic dynasty. During this time Kosovo became the cultural, religious and political heart of the Serbian Kingdom. Numerous Christian monasteries were erected, such as the Visoki Dečani monastery. The zenith of medieval Serbia's state was reached in 1346, when Stefan Dusan was crowned Emperor of Serbs, Vlachs, Greeks and Albanians, having conquered virtually all of Greece. However, with his death, his multiethnic Christian Empire also died due to internal power struggles, opening the Balkan's up for the Ottoman invasion. The empire was split amongst regional nobility - Kosovo became a domain of the House of Mrnjavčević initially.

Historical sources suggest that medieval Kosovo had a Serbian character - Serbian was the cultural, political and linguistic idiom of the region. There are not many records delineating the ethnic composition of Kosovo, however, the earliest known census was the Decani charter in 1330. The vast majority of people are shown to be Slavic Serbian, however, there were also other ethnicities such as Vlachs, Bulgaro- Macedonians and Greeks. Less than 2% of households or farmsteads were Albanian. The Albanians are mentioned for the first time in the 11th century, in the Alexiad a medieval biographical text written around the year 1148 by the Byzantine historian Anna Comnena, daughter of Emperor Alexius I. There appears to be no records of any Albanian institutions or states in medieval Kosovo. This is not to say that Albanians, did not or had not been living in the area before this, but it merely re-affirms the notion that they were isolated from political power or influence and became a remote, shepherd people that dwelt in the rugged mountains of northern Albania.

Ottoman rule



Serbian Kingdom 1265

The Ottomans invaded and met the Serbian Army under Prince Lazar on 28 June 1389, near Pristina, at Gazi Mestan. The Serbian Army was assisted by various allies. The epic Battle of Kosovo followed, in which Prince Lazar himself lost his life. Prince Lazar amassed 70,000 men on the battlefield and the Ottomans had 140,000. Through the cunning of Miloš Obilić, Sultan Murad was murdered and the new Sultan Beyazid had, despite winning the battle, to retreat to consolidate his power. The Ottoman Sultan was buried with one of his sons at Gazi Mestan. Both Prince Lazar and Miloš Obilić were canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church for their efforts in the battle. The local House of Branković came to prominence as the local lords of Kosovo, under Vuk Branković, with the temporary fall of the Serbian Despotate in 1439. Another great battle occurred between the Hungarian troops supported by the Albanian ruler Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg on one side, and Ottoman troops supported by the Brankovićs in 1448. Skanderbeg's troops that were going to help John Hunyadi were stopped by the Branković's troops, who was more or less a Turkish Vassal. Hungarian regent John Hunyadi lost the battle after a two-day fight, but essentially stopped the Ottoman advance northwards. Kosovo then became vassalaged to the Ottoman Empire, until its direct incorporation after the final fall of Serbia in 1459.

In 1455, new castles rose to prominence in Priština and Vučitrn, centres of the Ottoman vassalaged House of Branković.

Ottoman Empire



The Ottomans brought Islamisation with them, particularly in towns, and later also created the Vilayet of Kosovo as one of the Ottoman territorial entities. Kosovo was taken by the Austrian forces during the Great War of 1683–1699 with help of 5,000 Albanians and their leader, a Catholic Archbishop Pjetër Bogdani. The archbishop died of plague during the war. In 1690, the Serbian Patriarch of Peć Arsenije III, who previously escaped a certain death, led 37,000 families from Kosovo, to evade Ottoman wrath since Kosovo had just been retaken by the Ottomans. The people that followed him were mostly Serbs and Albanians abandoned—but they were likely followed by other ethnic groups. Due to the oppression from the Ottomans, other migrations of Orthodox people from the Kosovo area continued throughout the 18th century. It is also noted that some Serbs adopted Islam, while some even gradually fused with other groups, predominantly Albanians, adopting their culture and even language.

In 1766, the Ottomans abolished the Patriarchate of Peć and the position of Christians in Kosovo was greatly reduced. All previous privileges were lost, and the Christian population had to suffer the full weight of the Empire's extensive and losing wars, even having blame forced upon them for the losses. The main reason for the conversion of Orthodox Albanians into Muslim Albanians was for the greater benefit of less taxes. Remnants of Orthodox Albanians, in Kosovo, went to live in mountains or rural parts of Montenegro.

Modern era



Boundaries on the Balkans after the First and the Second Balkan War

In 1871, a massive Serbian meeting was held in Prizren at which the possible retaking and reintegration of Kosovo and the rest of "Old Serbia" was discussed, as the Principality of Serbia itself had already made plans for expansions towards Ottoman territory.

Albanian refugees from the territories conquered in the 1876–1877 Serbo-Turkish war and the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish war are now known as 'muhaxher' (which means 'refugee', from Arabic muhajir). Their descendants still have the same surname, *Muhaxheri*. It is estimated that 200,000 to 400,000 Serbs were cleansed out of the Vilayet of Kosovo between 1876 and 1912, especially during the Greek-Ottoman War in 1897.

In 1878, a Peace Accord was drawn that left the cities of Priština and Kosovska Mitrovica under civil Serbian control, and outside the jurisdiction of the Ottoman authorities, while the rest of Kosovo would be under Ottoman control. As a response, the Albanians formed the nationalistic and conservative League of Prizren in Prizren later the same year. Over three hundred Albanian leaders from Kosovo and western Macedonia gathered and discussed the urgent issues concerning protection of Albanian populated regions from division among neighbouring countries. The League was supported by the Ottoman Sultan because of its Pan-Islamic ideology and political aspirations of a unified Albanian people under the Ottoman umbrella. The movement gradually became anti-Christian and spread great anxiety among Christian Albanians and especially among Christian Serbs. As a result, more and more Serbs left Kosovo northwards. Serbia complained to the World Powers that the promised territories were not being held because the Ottomans were hesitating to do that. The World Powers put pressure on the Ottomans and in 1881, the Ottoman Army began fighting the Albanian forces. The Prizren League created a Provisional Government with a President, Prime Minister (Ymer Prizreni) and Ministries of War (Sylejman Vokshi) and Foreign Ministry (Abdyl Frashëri). After three years of war, the

Albanians were defeated. Many of the leaders were executed and imprisoned. The subsequent Treaty of San Stefano in 1878 restored most Albanian lands to Ottoman control, but the Serbian forces had to retreat from Kosovo along with some Serbs that were expelled as well. By the end of the 19th century the Albanians replaced the Serbs as the dominant people in Kosovo.

In 1908, the Sultan brought a new democratic decree that was valid only for Turkish-speakers. As the vast majority of Kosovo spoke Albanian or Serbian, the Kosovar population was very unhappy. The Young Turk movement supported a centralist rule and opposed any sort of autonomy desired by Kosovars, and particularly the Albanians. In 1910, an Albanian uprising spread from Priština and lasted until the Ottoman Sultan's visit to Kosovo in June of 1911. The Aim of the League of Prizren was to unite the four Albanian Vilayets by merging the majority of Albanian inhabitants within the Ottoman Empire into one Albanian State. However, at that time Serbs have consisted about 25% of the whole Vilayet of Kosovo's overall population and were opposing the Albanian rule along with Turks and other Slavs in Kosovo, which disabled the Albanian movements to occupy Kosovo.

In 1912, during the Balkan Wars, most of Kosovo was taken by the Kingdom of Serbia, while the region of Metohija (Albanian: *Dukagjini Valley*) was taken by the Kingdom of Montenegro. An exodus of the local Albanian population occurred. This is best described by Leon Trotsky, who was a reporter for the *Pravda* newspaper at the time. The Serbian authorities planned a recolonization of Kosovo. Numerous colonist Serb families moved-in to Kosovo, equalizing the demographic balance between Albanians and Serbs. Many Albanians fled into the mountains and numerous Albanian and Turkish houses were razed. The

reconquest of Kosovo was noted as a vengeance for the 1389 Battle of Kosovo. At the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1912 presided over by Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, the Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro were acknowledged sovereignty over Kosovo.

In the winter of 1915–1916, during World War I, Kosovo saw a large exodus of Serbian army which became known as the *Great Serbian Retreat*. Defeated and worn out in battles against Austro-Hungarians, they had no other choice than to retreat, as Kosovo was occupied by Bulgarians and Austro-Hungarians. The Albanians joined and supported the Central Powers. As opposed to Serbian schools, numerous Albanian schools were opened during the 'occupation' (the majority Albanian population considered it a liberation). Allied ships were awaiting for Serbian people and soldiers at the banks of the Adriatic sea and the path leading them there went across Kosovo and Albania. Tens of thousands of soldiers died of starvation, extreme weather and Albanian reprisals as they were approaching the Allies in Corfu and Thessaloniki, amassing a total of 100,000 dead retreaters. Transported away from the front lines, Serbian army managed to heal many wounded and ill soldiers and get some rest. Refreshed and regrouped, it decided to return to the battlefield. In 1918, the Serbian Army pushed the Central Powers out of Kosovo. During Serbian control of Kosovo, the Serbian Army committed atrocities against the population in revenge. Serbian Kosovo was unified with Montenegrin Metohija as Montenegro subsequently joined the Kingdom of Serbia. After the World War I ended, the Monarchy was then transformed into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (Serbo-Croatian: *Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, Albanian: *Mbretëria Serbe, Kroate, Sllovene*) on 1 December 1918, gathering territories gained in victory.

Kingdom of Yugoslavia and World War II

The 1918–1929 period of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians witnessed a raise of the Serbian population in the region and a decline in the non-Serbian. In the Kingdom Kosovo was split onto four counties—three being a part of the entity of Serbia: Zvečan, Kosovo and southern Metohija; and one of Montenegro: northern Metohija. However, the new administration system since 26 April 1922 split Kosovo among three Areas of the Kingdom: Kosovo, Rascia and Zeta. In 1921 the Albanian elite lodged an official protest of the government to the League of Nations, claiming that 12,000 Albanians had been killed and over 22,000 imprisoned since 1918 and seeking a unification of Albanian-populated lands. As a result, an armed *Kachak* resistance movement was formed whose main goal was to unite Albanian-populated areas of the Kingdom to Albania.

In 1929, the Kingdom was transformed into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The territories of Kosovo were split among the Banate of Zeta, the Banate of Morava and the Banate of Vardar. The Kingdom lasted until the World War II Axis invasion of 1941.

The greatest part of Kosovo became a part of Italian-controlled Fascist Albania, and smaller bits by the Tsardom of Bulgaria and Nazi German-occupied Kingdom of Serbia. During the fascist occupation of Kosovo by Albanians, until August 1941 alone, over 10,000 Serbs were killed and between 80,000 and 100,000 Serbs were expelled, while roughly the same number of Albanians from Albania were brought to settle in these Serbian lands.

Mustafa Kruja, the Prime Minister of Albania, was in Kosovo in June 1942, and at a meeting with the Albanian leaders of Kosovo, he said: "*We should endeavor to ensure that the Serb population of Kosovo be – the area be cleansed of them and all Serbs who had been living there for centuries should be termed colonialists and sent to concentration camps in Albania. The Serb settlers should be killed.*"

Prior to the surrender of Fascist Italy in 1943, the German forces took over direct control of the region. After numerous uprisings of Partisans led by Fadil

Hoxha, Kosovo was liberated after 1944 with the help of the Albanian partisans of the Comintern, and became a province of Serbia within the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia.

Kosovo in the second Yugoslavia

The province was first formed in 1945 as the Autonomous Kosovo-Metohian Area to protect its regional Albanian majority within the People's Republic of Serbia as a member of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia under the leadership of the former Partisan leader, Josip Broz Tito, but with no factual autonomy. After Yugoslavia's name change to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia's to the Socialist Republic of Serbia in 1953, Kosovo gained inner autonomy in the 1960s. In the 1974 constitution, the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo's government received higher powers, including the highest governmental titles — President and Prime Minister and a seat in the Federal Presidency which made it a *de facto* Socialist Republic within the Federation, but remaining as a Socialist Autonomous Province within the Socialist Republic of Serbia. Tito had pursued a policy of weakening Serbia, as he believed that a "Weak Serbia equals a strong Yugoslavia". To this end Vojvodina and Kosovo became autonomous regions and were given the above entitled privileges as *de facto* republics. Serbo-Croatian, Albanian and Turkish were defined as official languages on the provincial level marking the two largest linguistic Kosovan groups: Albanians and Serbs. In the 1970s, an Albanian nationalist movement pursued full recognition of the Province of Kosovo as another Republic within the Federation, while the most extreme elements aimed for full-scale independence. Tito's arbitrary regime dealt with the situation swiftly, but only giving it a temporary solution. The ethnic balance of Kosovo witnessed disproportional increase as the number of Albanians tripled gradually rising from almost 75% to over 90%, but the number of Serbs barely increased and dropped in the full share of the total population from some 15% down to 8%. Even though Kosovo was the least developed area of the former Yugoslavia, the living and economic prospects and freedoms were far greater than under the totalitarian Maoist regime in Albania.



Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo of Socialist Serbia inside Socialist Yugoslavia, 1974-1990

Beginning in March 1981, Kosovar Albanian students organized protests seeking that Kosovo become a republic within Yugoslavia. Those protests rapidly escalated into violent riots "involving 20,000 people in six cities" that were harshly contained by the Yugoslav government. During the 1980s, ethnic tensions continued with frequent violent outbreaks against Serbs and Yugoslav state authorities resulting in increased emigration of Kosovo Serbs and other ethnic groups. The Yugoslav leadership tried to suppress protests of Kosovo Serbs seeking protection from ethnic discrimination and violence.

In 1986, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) was working on a document which later would be known as the SANU Memorandum, a warning to the Serbian President and Assembly of the existing crisis and where it would lead. An unfinished edition was filtered to the press. In the essay, SANU criticised the state of Yugoslavia and made remarks that the only member state contributing at the time to the development of Kosovo and Macedonia (by then, the poorest territories of the Federation) was Serbia. According to SANU, Yugoslavia was suffering from ethnic strife and the disintegration of the Yugoslav economy into separate economic sectors and territories, which was transforming the federal state into a loose confederation. On the other hand, some think that Slobodan Milošević used the discontent reflected in the SANU memorandum for his own political goals, during his rise to power in Serbia at the time.

Milošević was initially sent there as a member of the Communist party. Initially Milošević did not talk to the Serbian nationalists who were at that point

demonstrating for rights and freedoms that had been denied to them. During these meetings he agreed to listen to their grievances. During the meeting, outside the building where this forum was taking place police started fighting the locals who had gathered there, mostly Serbs eager to voice their grievances. After hearing about the police brutality outside of the halls, Milošević came out and in an emotional moment promised the local Serbs that "No one is allowed to beat you." This newsbite was then seen on evening news and catapulted a then unknown Milošević to the forefront of the current debate about the problems on Kosovo.

In order to save his skin, Milošević fought back and established a political coup d'état. He gained effective leadership and control of the Serbian Communist party and pressed forward with the one issue that had catapulted him to the forefront of the political limelight, which was Kosovo. This By the end of the 1980s, calls for increased federal control in the crisis-torn autonomous province were getting louder. Slobodan Milošević pushed for constitutional change amounting to suspension of autonomy for both Kosovo and Vojvodina.

Kosovo and the breakup of Yugoslavia

Inter-ethnic tensions continued to worsen in Kosovo throughout the 1980s. In particular, Kosovo's ethnic Serb community, a minority of Kosovo population, complained about mistreatment from the Albanian majority. Milošević capitalized on this discontent to consolidate his own position in Serbia. In 1987, Serbian President Ivan Stambolić sent Milošević to Kosovo to "pacify restive Serbs in Kosovo." On that trip, Milošević broke away from a meeting with ethnic Albanians to mingle with angry Serbians in a suburb of Pristina. As the Serbs protested they were being pushed back by police with batons, Milošević told them, "No one is allowed to beat you." This incident was later seen as pivotal to Milošević's rise to power.

On June 28, 1989, Milošević delivered a speech in front of a large number of Serb citizens at the main celebration marking the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, held at Gazimestan. Many think that this speech helped Milošević consolidate his authority in Serbia.

In 1989, Milošević, employing a mix of intimidation and political maneuvering, drastically reduced Kosovo's special autonomous status within Serbia. Soon thereafter Kosovo Albanians organized a non-violent separatist movement, employing widespread civil disobedience, with the ultimate goal of achieving the independence of Kosovo. Kosovo Albanians boycotted state institutions and elections and established separate Albanian schools and political institutions. On July 2, 1990, an unconstitutional Kosovo parliament declared Kosovo an independent country, although this was not recognized by Belgrade or any foreign states. Two years later, in 1992, the parliament organized an unofficial referendum which was observed by international organizations but was not recognized internationally. With an 80% turnout, 98% voted for Kosovo to be independent.

Kosovo War

One of the events that contributed to Milošević's rise of power was the *Gazimestan Speech*, delivered in front of 100,000 Serb citizens at the central celebration marking the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, held at Gazimestan on 28 June, 1989. Soon afterwards the autonomy of Kosovo was reduced. After Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia in 1991, Milošević used the seat to attain dominance over the Federal government, outvoting his opponents.

Albanians organized a peaceful separatist movement. State institutions and elections were boycotted and separate Albanian schools and political institutions

were established. On July 2, 1990 Kosovo Parliament declared Kosovo an independent country, this was only recognized by Albania. In September of that year, the parliament, meeting in secrecy in the town of Kaçanik, adopted the *Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo*. Two years later, in 1992, the parliament organized an unofficial referendum which was observed by international organizations but was not recognized internationally. With an 80% turnout, 98% voted for Kosovo to be independent.

With the events in Bosnia and Croatia coming to an end, the Serb government started relocating Serbian refugees from Croatia and Bosnia all over Serbia, including in Kosovo. In a number of cases, Albanian families were expelled from their apartments to make room for the refugees.

After the Dayton Agreement in 1995, some Albanians organized into the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), employing guerrilla-style tactics against Serbian police forces and civilians. Violence escalated in a series of KLA attacks and Serbian reprisals into the year 1999, with increasing numbers of civilian victims. In 1998 western interest increased and the Serbian authorities were forced to sign a unilateral cease-fire and partial retreat. Under an agreement devised by Richard Holbrooke, OSCE observers moved into Kosovo to monitor the ceasefire, while Yugoslav military forces partly pulled out of Kosovo. However, the ceasefire was systematically broken shortly thereafter by KLA forces, which again provoked harsh counterattacks by the Serbs. On 16 January 1999, the bodies of 45 Albanian civilians were found in the town of Racak. The victims had been executed by Serb forces. Independent forensic autopsies work on case Racak, team leader, Helena Ranta from Finland, say about Racak in "Berliner Zeitung", : Finnish pathologist Helena Ranta has expressed lack of comprehension regarding the work of the UN's Hague tribunal in the case of the so-called massacre of Racak. In an interview with "Berliner Zeitung", the head of the forensic team sent by the EU to investigate occurrences in the Kosovo village of Racak in January, 1999, criticized that indications of serious fighting between Serbian soldiers and Albanian fighters on the night of 15th to 16th of January, 1999, in the Racak area had been inadequately pursued. The so-called Racak Massacre was instrumental in increasing the pressure on Serbia in the following conference at Rambouillet. After more than a month of negotiations Yugoslavia refused to sign the prepared agreement, primarily, it has been argued, because of a clause giving NATO forces access rights to not only Kosovo but to all of Yugoslavia (which the Yugoslav side saw as tantamount to military occupation).

This triggered a 78-day NATO campaign in 1999. At first limited to military targets in Kosovo proper, the bombing campaign was soon extended to cover targets all over Yugoslavia, including bridges, power stations, factories, broadcasting stations, post offices, and various government buildings.

During the conflict roughly a million ethnic Albanians fled or were forcefully driven from Kosovo, several thousand were killed (the numbers and the ethnic distribution of the casualties are uncertain and highly disputed). An estimated 10,000-12,000 ethnic Albanians and 3,000 Serbs are believed to have been killed during the conflict. Some 3,000 people are still missing, of which 2,500 are Albanian, 400 Serbs and 100 Roma.

Some of the worst massacres against civilian Albanians occurred after that NATO started the bombing of Yugoslavia. Cuska massacre, Podujevo massacre , Velika Krusa massacre are some of the massacres committed by Serbian army, police and paramilitary.

During the Kosovo War, Serbs also engaged in a deliberate campaign of cultural destruction and rampage. According to a report compiled by the Kosovo Cultural Heritage Project, Serbian forces tried to wipe out all Albanian culture and traditions. Of the 500 mosques that were in use prior to the war, 200 of them were completely destroyed or desecrated. The report concludes that most mosques were deliberately set on fire with no sign of fighting around the area. Among numerous other things, the following important objects were destroyed because they represented Albanian as well as Muslim and Catholic cultures:

Sinan Pasha Mosque in Prizren, the Prizren League Museum, the Hadum Mosque complex in Gjakova (Serbian: Djakovica); the historic bazaars in Gjakova and Peć (Albanian: Peja); the Roman Catholic church of St. Anthony in Gjakova; and two old Ottoman bridges, Ura e Terzive (Terzijski most) and Ura e Tabakeve (Tabacki most), near Gjakova.

Also, several dozens of Serbian monasteries and churches were destroyed, burned or robbed by Albanians after NATO campaign by the end of 1999.

Kosovo after the war

Image:Ibrahim Rugova
portrait.jpg
Ibrahim Rugova, the first
president of Kosovo

After the war ended, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1244 that placed Kosovo under transitional UN administration (UNMIK) and authorized KFOR, a NATO-led peacekeeping force. Almost immediately, returning Kosovo Albanians attacked Kosovo Serbs , causing some 200,000-280,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians to flee (note: the current number of internally displaced persons is disputed, with estimates ranging from 65,000 to 250,000). Many displaced Serbs are afraid to return to their homes, even with UNMIK protection. Around 120,000-150,000 Serbs remain in Kosovo, but are subject to ongoing harassment and discrimination.

According to Amnesty International, the presence of peacekeepers in Kosovo led to an increase in the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation.

In 2001, UNMIK promulgated a Constitutional Framework for Kosovo that established the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), including an elected Kosovo Assembly, Presidency and office of Prime Minister. Kosovo held its first free, Kosovo-wide elections in late 2001 (municipal elections had been held the previous year). UNMIK oversaw the establishment of a professional, multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Service.

In March 2004, Kosovo experienced its worst inter-ethnic violence since the Kosovo War. The unrest in 2004 was sparked by a series of minor events that soon cascaded into large-scale riots. Serbian men had unleashed their dogs on young Albanian boys, two of whom died. Protesting, the Kosovo Albanians mobs burned hundreds of Serbian houses, Serbian Orthodox Church sites (including some medieval churches and monasteries) and UN facilities. Kosovo Police established a special investigation team to handle cases related to the 2004 unrest and according to Kosovo Judicial Council by the end of 2006 the 326 charges filed by municipal and district prosecutors for criminal offenses in connection with the unrest had resulted in 200 indictments: convictions in 134 cases, and courts acquitted eight and dismissed 28; 30 cases were pending. International prosecutors and judges handled the most sensitive cases.

Kosovo Serbs working for the Serbian government receives since 1999 a stipend called *kosovski dodatak*. The extra payment was created during Milošević regime, and it remains to this day.

Politics and governance

In 1999, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 placed Kosovo under transitional UN administration pending a determination of Kosovo's future status. This Resolution entrusted the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) with sweeping powers to govern Kosovo, but also directed UNMIK to establish interim institutions of self-governance. Resolution 1244 permits Serbia no role in governing Kosovo and since 1999 Serbian laws and

institutions have not been valid in Kosovo. NATO has a separate mandate to provide for a safe and secure environment.

In May 2001, UNMIK promulgated the Constitutional Framework, which established Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). Since 2001, UNMIK has been gradually transferring increased governing competencies to the PISG, while reserving some powers that are normally carried out by sovereign states, such as foreign affairs. Kosovo has also established municipal government and an internationally-supervised Kosovo Police Service.

According to the Constitutional Framework, Kosovo shall have a 120-member Kosovo Assembly. The Assembly includes twenty reserved seats: ten for Kosovo Serbs and ten for non-Serb minorities (Bosniaks, Roma, etc.). The Kosovo Assembly is responsible for electing a President and Prime Minister of Kosovo.

The largest political party in Kosovo, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), has its origins in the 1990s non-violent resistance movement to Milošević's rule. The party was led by Ibrahim Rugova until his death in 2006. The two next largest parties have their roots in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA): the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) led by former KLA leader Hashim Thaci and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) led by former KLA commander Ramush Haradinaj. Kosovo publisher Veton Surroi formed his own political party in 2004 named "Ora." Kosovo Serbs formed the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM) in 2004, but have boycotted Kosovo's institutions and never taken their seats in the Kosovo Assembly.

In November 2001, the OSCE supervised the first elections for the Kosovo Assembly. After that election, Kosovo's political parties formed an all-party unity coalition and elected Ibrahim Rugova as President and Bajram Rexhepi (PDK) as Prime Minister.

After Kosovo-wide elections in October 2004, the LDK and AAK formed a new governing coalition that did not include PDK and Ora. This coalition agreement resulted in Ramush Haradinaj (AAK) becoming Prime Minister, while Ibrahim Rugova retained the position of President. PDK and Ora were critical of the coalition agreement and have since frequently accused the current government of corruption.

Ramush Haradinaj resigned the post of Prime Minister after he was indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in March 2005. He was replaced by Bajram Kosumi (AAK). But in a political shake-up after the death of President Rugova in January 2006, Kosumi himself was replaced by former Kosovo Protection Corps commander Agim Ceku. Ceku has won recognition for his outreach to minorities, but Serbia has been critical of his wartime past as military leader of the KLA and claims he is still not doing enough for Kosovo Serbs. The Kosovo Assembly elected Fatmir Sejdiu, a former LDK parliamentarian, president after Rugova's death. Slaviša Petkovic, Minister for Communities and Returns, was previously the only ethnic Serb in the government, but resigned in November 2006 amid allegations that he misused ministry funds. Today two of the total thirteen ministries in Kosovo's Government have ministers from the minorities. Branislav Grbic, ethnic Serb, leads Minister of Returns and Sadik Idriz, ethnic Bosnjak, leads Ministry of Health

Parliamentary elections were held on 17 November 2007. After early results, Hashim Thaçi who was on course to gain 35 per cent of the vote, claimed victory for PDK, the Albanian Democratic Party, and stated his intention to declare independence. Thaci is likely to form a coalition with current President Fatmir Sejdiu's Democratic League which was in second place with 22 percent of the vote. The turnout at the election was particularly low with most Serbs refusing to



The Approved Logo of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government.

vote.

Kosovo status process

International negotiations began in 2006 to determine the final status of Kosovo, as envisaged under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 which ended the Kosovo conflict of 1999. Whilst Serbia's continued sovereignty over Kosovo is recognised by the international community, a clear majority of the province's population would prefer independence.

The UN-backed talks, lead by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, began in February 2006. Whilst progress was made on technical matters, both parties remained diametrically opposed on the question of status itself. In February 2007, Ahtisaari delivered a draft status settlement proposal to leaders in Belgrade and Pristina, the basis for a draft UN Security Council Resolution which proposes 'supervised independence' for the province. As of early July 2007 a draft resolution, backed by the United States, the United Kingdom and other European members of the Security Council, had been rewritten four times to try to accommodate Russian concerns that such a resolution would undermine the principle of state sovereignty. Russia, which holds a veto in the Security Council as one of five permanent members, had stated that it would not support any resolution which was not acceptable to both Belgrade and Kosovo Albanians. Whilst most observers had, at the beginning of the talks, anticipated independence as the most likely outcome, others have suggested that a rapid resolution might not be preferable.

After many weeks of discussions at the UN, the United States, United Kingdom and other European members of the Security Council formally 'discarded' a draft resolution backing Ahtisaari's proposal on 20 July 2007, having failed to secure Russian backing. Beginning in August, a "Troika" consisting of negotiators from the United States (Frank Wisner), the EU (Wolfgang Ischinger) and Russia (Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko) launched a new effort to reach a status outcome acceptable to both Belgrade and Pristina. Despite Russian disapproval, the U.S., Britain, and France appear likely to recognize Kosovar independence if it is declared after December 10, 2007, the date upon which the Contact Group will report on the Troika's efforts to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Now that the mandate of the "Troika" is over ,Independence is thought to be declared by the Kosovans either in February or in the early spring.

Health

Access to health care is free for all residents of Kosovo. Currently there is no health insurance, however, the Ministry of Health is in the process of preparing a legislative infrastructure, which is scheduled to be implemented in 2008.

There are hospitals in all major cities. A total of 6 regional hospitals provide tertiary health care, and family centers in small municipalities.

Medical Education is available at the University Clinical Centre of Kosovo (UCCK), in Priština.

Economy

<http://cd3wd.com> wikipedia-for-schools <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 422 of 867

Image:Kosovo stamp.jpg
Postage stamp from Kosovo
issued after the 1999 Kosovo
War.

Kosovo has one of the most under-developed economies in Europe, with a per capita income estimated at €1,565 (2004). Despite substantial development subsidies from all Yugoslav republics, Kosovo was the poorest province of Yugoslavia. Additionally, over the course of the 1990s a blend of poor economic policies, international sanctions, poor external commerce and ethnic conflict severely damaged the economy.

Kosovo's economy remains weak. After a jump in 2000 and 2001, growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was negative in 2002 and 2003 and is expected to be around 3 percent 2004-2005, with domestic sources of growth unable to compensate for the declining foreign assistance. Inflation is low, while the budget posted a deficit for the first time in 2004. Kosovo has high external deficits. In 2004, the deficit of the balance of goods and services was close to 70 percent of GDP. Remittances from Kosovars living abroad accounts for an estimated 13 percent of GDP, and foreign assistance for around 34 percent of GDP.

Most economic development since 1999 has taken place in the trade, retail and the construction sectors. The private sector that has emerged since 1999 is mainly small-scale. The industrial sector remains weak and the electric power supply remains unreliable, acting as a key constraint. Unemployment remains pervasive, at around 40-50% of the labor force.

UNMIK introduced *de-facto* an external trade regime and customs administration on September 3, 1999 when it set customs border controls in Kosovo. All goods imported in Kosovo face a flat 10% customs duty fee. These taxes are collected from all Tax Collection Points installed at the borders of Kosovo, including those between Kosovo and Serbia. UNMIK and Kosovo institutions have signed Free Trade Agreements with Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia.

The Republic of Macedonia is Kosovo's largest import and export market (averaging €220 million and €9 million, respectively), followed by Serbia-Montenegro (€111 million and €5 million), Germany and Turkey.

The Euro is the official currency of Kosovo and used by UNMIK and the government bodies. The Serbian Dinar is used in the Serbian populated parts.

The economy is hindered by Kosovo's still-unresolved international status, which has made it difficult to attract investment and loans. The province's economic weakness has produced a thriving black economy in which smuggled petrol, cigarettes and cement are major commodities. The prevalence of official corruption and the pervasive influence of organised crime gangs has caused serious concern internationally. The United Nations has made the fight against corruption and organised crime a high priority, pledging a "zero tolerance" approach.

Demographics

According to the Kosovo in Figures 2005 Survey of the Statistical Office of Kosovo, Kosovo's total population is estimated between 1.9 and 2.2 million in the following ethnic proportions (but many pre-1999 Kosovar Serbs and individuals from other ethnic groups originally from Kosovo now live in Central Serbia, about 250.000-350.000). The estimate from 2000-2002-2003 goes (a 1,900,000 strong population):

- 92% Albanians
- 4% Serbs
- 2% Bosniaks and Gorans
- 1% Roma
- 1% Turks

Sunni Muslims account for more than 90% of the population in Kosovo Catholicism and Orthodoxy are also practiced by the people.

Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo have the largest population growth in Europe. The people's growth rate in Kosovo is 1.3%. Over an 82-year period (1921-2003) the population grew 4.6 times. If growth continues at such a pace, based on some estimations, the population will be 4.5 million by 2050.

Administrative divisions

Districts

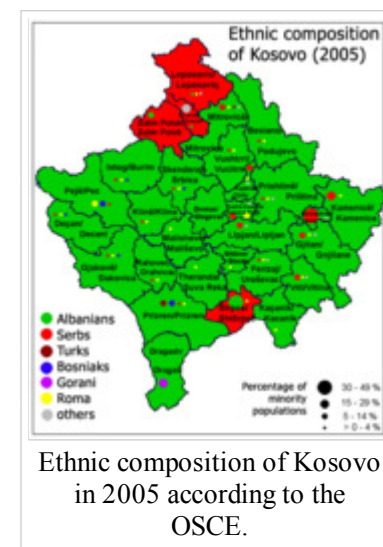
Kosovo is divided into seven districts:

- Đakovica/Gjakova District
- Gnjilane/Gjilani District
- Kosovska Mitrovica/Mitrovica District
- Peć/Peja District
- Priština/Prishtina District
- Prizren/Prizreni District
- Uroševac/Ferizaji District

North Kosovo maintains its own government, infrastructure and institutions by its dominant ethnic Serb population in the Mitrovica District, viz. in the Leposavic, Zvečan and Zubin Potok municipalities and the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica.

Municipalities

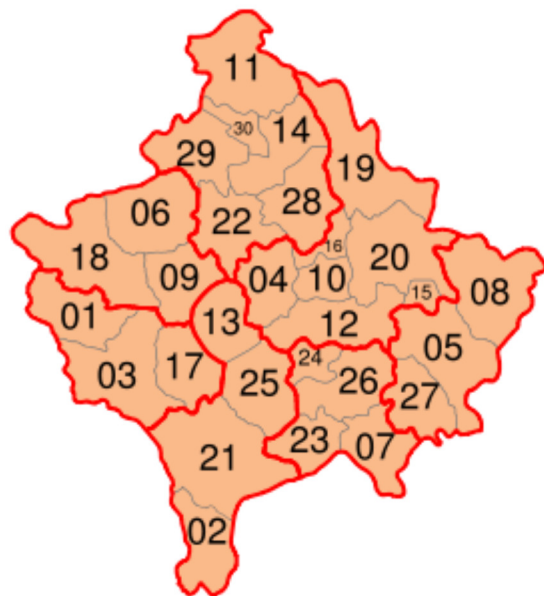
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Kosovo is also divided into 30 municipalities :

Municipality (Albanian: *komuna*, Serbian: *opština* / општина) is the basic administrative division of Kosovo

The first name is Albanian and the second one is Serbian



Map of Kosovo municipalities

01. Deçan / Dečani	11. Albanik / Leposavić	21. Prizren
02. Dragash / Dragaš	12. Lipjan / Lipljan	22. Skënderaj / Srbica
03. Gjakovë / Đakovica	13. Malishevë / Mališevo	23. Shtërpcë / Štrpce
04. Glogovc / Glogovac	14. Mitrovicë / Kosovska Mitrovica	24. Shtime / Štimlje
05. Gjilan / Gnjilane	15. Novobërdë / Novo Brdo	25. Suharekë / Suva Reka
06. Burim / Istok	16. Kastriot / Obilić	26. Ferizaj / Uroševac
07. Kaçanik / Kačanik	17. Rahovec / Orahovac	27. Viti / Vitina
08. Kamenicë / Kosovska Kamenica	18. Pejë / Peć	28. Vushtrri / Vučitrn
09. Klinë / Klina	19. Podujevë / Podujevo	29. Zubin Potok
10. Fushë Kosovë / Kosovo Polje	20. Prishtinë / Priština	30. Zveçan / Zvečan

Source: OSCE - UNMIK Regulation 2000/43: Albanian, Serbian PDF

Cities

List of largest cities in Kosovo (with population figures for 2006):

- Priština : 571,532
- Prizren : 165,229
- Uroševac : 197,741
- Đakovica : 127,156
- Peć : 195,190
- Gnjilane : 191,595
- Kosovska Mitrovica : 186,359
- Podujevo : 48,526

Culture

Music

Although in Kosovo the music is diverse (influenced to an extent by the cultures of the various regimes who controlled the region), authentic Albanian music (see *World Music*) and Serbian music do still exist. Albanian music is characterized by the use of the *çiftelia* (an authentic Albanian instrument), *mandolin*, *mandola* and *percussion*. In Kosovo, folk music is very popular alongside modern music. There are a number of folk singers and ensembles (both Albanian and Serbian). Classical music is also well known in Kosovo and has been taught at universities (at the University of Priština Faculty of Arts and the University of Priština at Kosovska Mitrovica Faculty of Arts) and several pre- college music schools

There are some notable music festivals in Kosovo:

- *Rock për Rock* - contains rock and metal music
- *Polifest* - contains all kinds of genres (usually hip hop, commercial pop, unusually rock and never metal)
- *Showfest* - contains all kinds of genres (usually hip hop, commercial pop, unusually rock and never metal)
- *Videofest* - contains all kinds of genres
- *Kush Këndon Lutet Dy Herë* - contains christian music
- *North City Jazz & Blues festival*, an international music festival held annually in Zvečan (Albanian: *Zveçani*), near Kosovska Mitrovica,

Kosovo Radiotelevisions like *RTK*, *21* and *KTV* have their musical charts.

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Priština.



Priština

See also our

Latvia

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

SOS Children works in Latvia. For more information see SOS Children in Latvia

Latvia, officially the **Republic of Latvia** (Latvian: *Latvija* or *Latvijas Republika*) is a country in Northern Europe in the Baltic region. It is bordered to the north by Estonia (343 km), to the south by Lithuania (588 km), and to the east both by Belarus (141 km) and the Russian Federation (276 km). Across the Baltic Sea to the west lies Sweden. The territory of Latvia covers 64,589 km² and is influenced by a temperate seasonal climate.

The Latvians are a Baltic people closely related to the Lithuanians, with the Latvian language sharing many similarities to Lithuanian. Today the Latvians and Lithuanians are the only surviving members of the Baltic peoples and Baltic languages of the Indo-European family. The modern name of Latvia is thought to originate from the ancient Latvian name Latvji, which may have originated from the word Latve which is a name of the river that presumably flowed through what is now eastern Latvia.




Latvia is a democratic parliamentary republic and is divided into 26 districts. The capital and largest city is Riga. Latvia has been a member of the United Nations since 17 September 1991, of the European Union since 1 May 2004 and of NATO since 29 March 2004.

History

The territory of Latvia has been populated since over 9000 BC with the proto-Baltic ancestors of the Latvian people settling on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea around the third millennium BC (3000 BC). By 900 AD, four Baltic tribal cultures had developed: Couronians, Latgallians, Selonians, Semigallians (in Latvian: *kurši*, *latgaļi*, *sēļi* and *zemgaļi*), as well as the Livonians (lībieši) speaking a Finno-Ugric language.

Prehistory

Across Europe, Latvia's coast was known for its amber. The ancient Balts traded Latvian amber with

<i>Latvijas Republika</i> Republic of Latvia	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai" (Latvian) "For Fatherland and Freedom"	
Anthem: <i>Dievs, svētī Latviju!</i> (Latvian) "God, bless Latvia!"	
	
Location of Latvia (dark green) — on the European continent (light green & dark grey)	

Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. Even today it is frequently used in traditional Latvian jewellery.



At the end of the 12th century, traders from Western Europe often visited Latvia, setting out on trading journeys along Latvia's longest river, the Daugava, to Russia.

The Middle Ages period

Christian missionaries arrived in 1180. As the Balts did not readily convert and strongly opposed the christening, German Crusaders were sent into Latvia to convert the pagan population. By 1211, Christianity had effective control with the foundation stone for the Dome Cathedral in Riga laid.

In the 1200s, a confederation of feudal nations called Livonia developed under German rule. Livonia included today's Latvia and Southern Estonia. In 1282, Riga and later the cities of Cēsis, Limbaži, Koknese and Valmiera were included in the Hanseatic League. From this time, Riga became an important point in


west-east trading. Riga, being the centre of the eastern Baltic region, formed close cultural contacts with Western Europe.

The Reformation period

The 1500s were a time of great changes for the inhabitants of Latvia, notable for the reformation and the collapse of the Livonian state. After the Livonian War (1558–1583) today's Latvian territory came under Polish-Lithuanian rule. The Lutheran faith was accepted in Kurzeme, Zemgale and Vidzeme, but the Roman Catholic faith maintained its dominance in Latgale and continues to do so today.

The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw a struggle between Poland, Sweden and Russia for supremacy in the eastern Baltic. Most of Polish Livonia, including Vidzeme, came under Swedish rule with the Truce of Altmark in 1629. Under the Swedish rule, serfdom was eased and a network of schools was established for the peasantry.

Latvia in the Russian Empire

– in the European Union (light green) — [Legend]	
Capital (and largest city)	 Riga
Official languages	Latvian
Ethnic groups	60.0% Latvians 27.3% Russians 3.7% Belarusians 2.5% Ukrainians 6.5% others
Demonym	Latvian
Government	Parliamentary republic
- President	Valdis Zatlers
- Prime Minister	Ivars Godmanis
Independence	from Russia and Germany
- Declared	November 18, 1918
- Recognized	January 26, 1921
- Proclaimed ²	May 4, 1990
- Completed	September 6, 1991
EU accession	May 1, 2004
Area	
- Total	64,589 km ² (124th) 24,937 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.5
Population	
- December 2007 estimate	2,270,700 (143rd)
- 2000 census	2 375 000

The Treaty of Nystad ending the Great Northern War in 1721 gave Vidzeme to Russia (it became part of the Riga Governorate). The Latgale region remained part of Poland as Inflanty until 1772, when it was joined to Russia. The Duchy of Courland became a Russian province (the Courland Governorate) in 1795, bringing all of what is now Latvia into Imperial Russia.

The promises Peter the Great made to the Baltic German nobility at the fall of Riga in 1710, confirmed by the Treaty of Nystad and known as "the Capitulations," largely reversed the Swedish reforms. The emancipation of the serfs took place in Courland in 1817 and in Vidzeme in 1819. In practice, the emancipation was actually advantageous to the nobility because it dispossessed the peasants of their land without compensation. The social structure changed dramatically, with a class of independent farmers establishing itself after reforms allowed the peasants to repurchase their land, landless peasants numbering 591 000 in 1897, a growing urban proletariat and an increasingly influential Latvian bourgeoisie. The Young Latvians (Latvian: *Jaunlatvieši*) movement laid the groundwork for nationalism from the middle of the century, many of its leaders looking to the Slavophiles for support against the prevailing German-dominated social order. Russification began in Latgale after the Polish led January Uprising in 1863 and spread to the rest of what is now Latvia by the 1880s. The Young Latvians were largely eclipsed by the New Current, a broad leftist social and political movement, in the 1890s. Popular discontent exploded in the 1905 Revolution, which took on a nationalist character in the Baltic provinces.

Declaration of independence

World War I devastated the country. Demands for self-determination were at first confined to autonomy, but full independence was proclaimed in Riga on November 18, 1918, by the People's Council of Latvia, Kārlis Ulmanis becoming the head of the provisional government. The War of Independence that followed was a very chaotic period in Latvia's history. By the spring of 1919 there were actually three governments — Ulmanis' government; the Soviet Latvian government led by Pēteris Stučka, whose forces, supported by the Red Army, occupied almost all of the country; and the Baltic German government of "Baltic Duchy" headed by Andrievs Niedra and supported by Baltische Landeswehr and German Freikorps unit Iron Division. Estonian and Latvian forces defeated the Germans at the Battle of Cēsis in June 1919, and a massive attack by a German and Russian force under Pavel Bermond-Avalov was repelled in November. Eastern Latvia was cleared of Red Army forces by Polish, Latvian, and German troops in early 1920.

- Density	36/km ² (166th) 93/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$41,108 billion (92th)
- Per capita	\$18,103 (46th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$27,301 billion (83th)
- Per capita	\$11,958 (47st)
Gini (2003)	37.7 (medium)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.855 (high) (45th)
Currency	Lats (Ls) (LVL)
Time zone	EET (UTC+2)
- Summer (DST)	EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.lv ³
Calling code	+371
	¹ Latvia is continuous with the first republic.
	² Secession from Soviet Union begun.
	³ Also .eu, shared with other European Union member states.

A freely elected Constituent Assembly was convened on May 1, 1920 and adopted a liberal constitution, the *Satversme*, in February 1922. This was partly suspended by Ulmanis after his coup in 1934, but reaffirmed in 1990. Since then it has been amended and is the constitution still in use in Latvia today. With most of Latvia's industrial base evacuated to the interior of Russia in 1915, radical land reform was the central political question for the young state. In 1897, 61.2% of the rural population had been landless; by 1930 that percentage had been reduced to 23.2%. The extent of cultivated land surpassed the pre-war level already in 1923. Innovation and rising productivity led to rapid growth of economy, but it soon suffered the effects of the Great Depression. Though Latvia showed signs of economic recovery and the electorate had steadily moved toward the centre during the parliamentary period, Ulmanis staged a bloodless coup on May 15, 1934, establishing a nationalist dictatorship that lasted until 1940.



Map of Latvia 1920-1940

Latvia in World War II

Most of the Baltic Germans left Latvia by agreement between Ulmanis' government and Nazi Germany after the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. On October 5, 1939, Latvia was forced to accept a "mutual assistance" pact with the Soviet Union, granting the Soviets the right to station 25,000 troops on Latvian territory. On June 16, 1940, Vyacheslav Molotov presented the Latvian representative in Moscow with an ultimatum accusing Latvia of violations of that pact, and on June 17 great numbers of Soviet forces occupied the country. Elections for the "People's Saeima" were held, and a puppet government headed by Augusts Kirhenšteins led Latvia into the USSR. The annexation was formalised on August 5, 1940.

The Soviets dealt harshly with their opponents — prior to the German invasion, in less than a year, at least 27,586 persons were arrested; most were deported, and about 945 persons were shot. While under German occupation, Latvia was administered as part of *Reichskommissariat Ostland*. Latvian paramilitary and Auxiliary Police units established by occupation authority actively participated in the Holocaust as well. More than 200,000 Latvian citizens died during World War II, including approximately 70,000 Latvian Jews murdered during the Nazi occupation. Latvian soldiers fought on both sides of the conflict, including in the Latvian Legion of the Waffen-SS, most of them conscripted by the occupying Nazi and Soviet authorities. Refusal to join the occupying army resulted in imprisonment, threats to relatives, or even death.

Soviet occupation

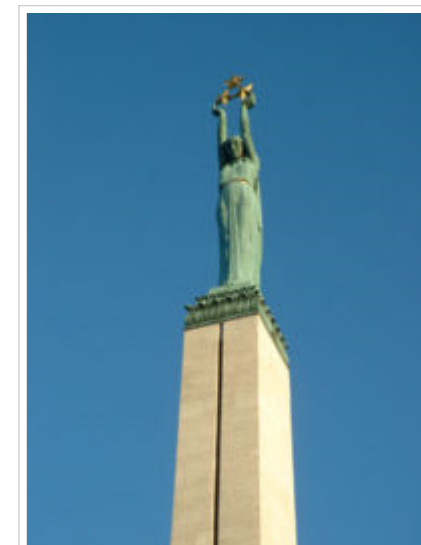
The Soviets reoccupied the country in 1944–1945, and further mass deportations followed as the country was forcibly collectivised and Sovietised; 42,975 persons were deported in 1949. Influx of labourers, administrators, military personnel and their dependents from Russia and other Soviet republics started, and by 1959 the ethnic Latvian population had fallen to 62%. During the Khrushchev Thaw, attempts by national communists led by Eduards Berklavs to gain a degree of autonomy for the republic and protect the rapidly deteriorating position of the Latvian language were suppressed.

Restoration of independence

In 1989 the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted a resolution on the "Occupation of the Baltic States," in which it declared that the occupation was "not in accordance with law," and not the "will of the Soviet people". A national movement coalescing in the Popular Front of Latvia took advantage of glasnost under Mikhail Gorbachev, opposed by the Interfront. On May 4, 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR adopted the Declaration of the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia, subject to a transition period that came to an end with Latvian independence on August 21, 1991, after the failure of the August Putsch. The Saeima, Latvia's parliament, was again elected in 1993, and Russia completed its military withdrawal in 1994.

The major goals of Latvia in the 1990s, to join NATO and the European Union, were achieved in 2004. Language and citizenship laws have been opposed by many Russophones, although a majority have now become citizens. (Citizenship was not automatically extended to former Soviet citizens who settled during the Soviet occupation or to their subsequent offspring. Children born to non-nationals after the reestablishment of independence are automatically entitled to citizenship.) The government denationalised private property confiscated by the Soviet rule, returning it or compensating the owners for it, and privatised most state-owned industries, reintroducing the prewar currency. After a difficult transition to a liberal economy and its re-orientation toward Western Europe, though its economy has one of the highest growth rates.

Geography



The statue of Liberty atop the Freedom Monument in Riga

Located on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, Latvia lies on the East European Plain. It consists of fertile, low-lying plains, largely covered by forest, mostly pines, the highest point being the Gaiziņkalns at 311.6 m (1,020 ft). Phytogeographically, Latvia is shared between the Central European and Eastern European provinces of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Latvia belongs to the ecoregion of Sarmatic mixed forests. Common species of wildlife in Latvia include deer, wild boar, fox, beaver and wolves. The major rivers include the Daugava, the Lielupe, the Gauja, the Venta, and the Salaca. An inlet of the Baltic Sea, the shallow Gulf of Riga is situated in the northwest of the country. Latvia's coastline extends for 531 kilometers.

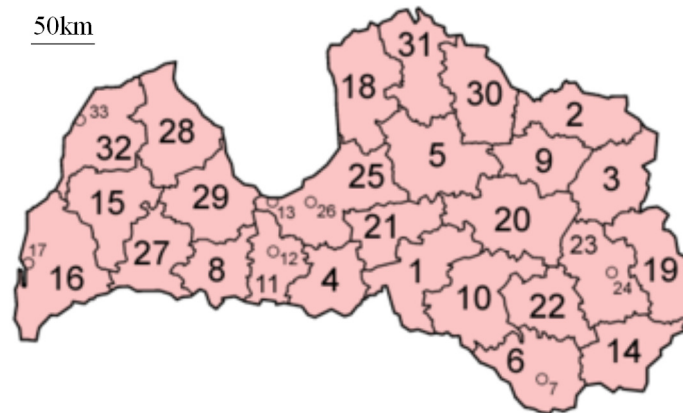
Climate

The Latvian climate is humid, continental and temperate owing to the maritime influence of the Baltic Sea. Summers are warm and the weather in spring and autumn fairly mild, however, the winters can be extreme due to the northern location. Precipitation is common throughout the year with the heaviest rainfall falling in August. During severe spells of winter weather in Latvia is dominated by cold winds from the interior of Russia and severe snowfalls are common.

Districts

Latvia is divided into 26 districts (*rajoni*). There are also seven cities (*lielpilsētas*) that have a separate status. Latvia is also divided into five planning regions.

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Aizkraukle District | 18. Limbaži District |
| 2. Alūksne District | 19. Ludza District |
| 3. Balvi District | 20. Madona District |
| 4. Bauska District | 21. Ogre District |
| 5. Cēsis District | 22. Preiļi District |
| 6. Daugavpils District | 23. Rēzekne District |
| 7. Daugavpils (city) | 24. Rēzekne (city) |
| 8. Dobele District | 25. Rīga District |
| 9. Gulbene District | 26. Rīga (city) |
| 10. Jēkabpils District | 27. Saldus District |
| 11. Jelgava District | 28. Talsi District |
| 12. Jelgava (city) | 29. Tukums District |
| 13. Jūrmala (city) | 30. Valka District |
| 14. Krāslava District | 31. Valmiera District |
| 15. Kuldīga District | 32. Ventspils District |



Map of Latvia showing cities

- 16. Liepāja District
- 17. Liepāja (city)
- 33. Ventspils (city)

- Abrene District (1919 – 1940), the eastern part of which was annexed to Russia in 1944. The legal status of the annexed portion is disputed — the western part of the former district is now in Balvi District.

Regions and cities

Latvia is divided into several historical and cultural regions.

- Kurzeme
- Latgale
- Riga
- Vidzeme
- Zemgale

Government and politics

The 100-seat unicameral Latvian parliament, the *Saeima*, is elected by direct popular vote every four years. The president is elected by the *Saeima* in a separate election, also held every four years. The president appoints a prime minister who, together with his cabinet, forms the executive branch of the government, which has to receive a confidence vote by the *Saeima*. This system also existed before the Second World War. Highest civil servants are sixteen Secretaries of state.

Foreign relations

Membership of the EU and NATO were major policy goals during the 1990s. In a nation-wide referendum on September 20, 2003, 66.9% of those taking part voted in favour of joining the European Union. Latvia became a member of the European Union on May 1, 2004. Latvia has been a NATO member since March 29, 2004.

Treaty delimiting the boundary with Russia has been signed and ratified in 2007, under the treaty the Abrene district passes to Russia; ongoing talks over maritime boundary dispute with Lithuania (primary concern is oil exploration rights)

Military

Latvia's defense concept is based upon the Swedish-Finnish model of a rapid response force composed of a mobilization base and a small group of career professionals. The armed forces consists of mobile riflemen, an air force, and a navy. Latvia cooperates with Estonia and Lithuania in the joint infantry battalion BALTBAT and naval squadron BALTRON which are available for peacekeeping operations.

As of March 29, 2004, Latvia officially joined NATO. Currently, NATO is involved in the patrolling and protection of the Latvian air space as the Latvian army does not have the means to do so effectively. For this goal a rotating force of four NATO fighters, which comes from different nations and switches at two or three month intervals, is based in Lithuania to cover all three Baltic states (see Baltic Air Policing).

Economy

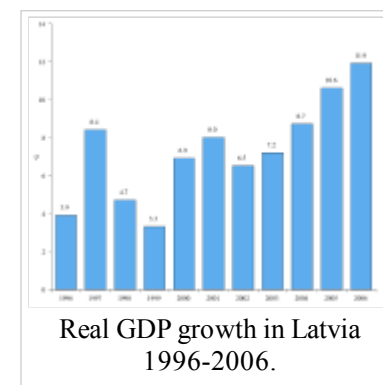
Since the year 2000 Latvia has had one of the highest (GDP) growth rates in Europe. In 2006, annual GDP growth was 11.9% and inflation was 6.2%. Unemployment was 8.5% — almost unchanged compared to the previous two years. However, it has recently dropped to 6.1%, partly due to active economic migration, mostly to Ireland and the United Kingdom. Some believe that Latvia's flat tax is responsible for its high growth rate, but this is not universally accepted. Privatisation is mostly complete, except for some of the large state-owned utilities. Latvia is a member of the World Trade Organization (1999) and the European Union (2004).

The fast growing economy is regarded as a possible economic bubble, because it is driven mainly by growth of domestic consumption, financed by a serious increase of private debt, as well as a negative foreign trade balance. The prices of real estate, which were appreciating at approximately 5% a month, are perceived to be too high for the economy, which mainly produces low valued goods and raw materials. As stated by Ober-Haus, a real estate company operating in Poland and the Baltics, the prices of some segments of the real estate market have stabilised as of summer 2006 and some experts expect serious reduction of prices in the near future. The government has recently introduced a special program to reduce inflation and retain high growth rates. The main points of the plan are:

- To create a non-deficit country budget for the current 2007 year and a budget with a surplus for 2008 and beyond;
- to tax any transaction concerning real estate that has been in a person's possession less than three years;
- to increase control of credit;
- to increase energy effectiveness in homes and business to guard against possible rises in energy costs, and
- to increase work productivity and stimulate competition in business.

Latvia plans to introduce the Euro as the country's currency but, due to the inflation being above EMU's guidelines, this is unlikely to happen before 2010.

Privatisation in **Latvia** is almost complete. Virtually all of the previously state-owned small and medium companies have been successfully privatized, leaving only a small number of politically sensitive large state companies. Latvian privatization efforts have led to the development of a dynamic and prosperous private sector, which accounted for nearly 68% of GDP in 2000.



Foreign investment in Latvia is still modest compared with the levels in north-central Europe. A law expanding the scope for selling land, including to foreigners, was passed in 1997. Representing 10.2% of Latvia's total foreign direct investment, American companies invested \$127 million in 1999. In the same year, the United States exported \$58.2 million of goods and services to Latvia and imported \$87.9 million. Eager to join Western economic institutions like the World Trade Organization, OECD, and the European Union, Latvia signed a Europe Agreement with the EU in 1995--with a 4-year transition period. Latvia and the United States have signed treaties on investment, trade, and intellectual property protection and avoidance of double taxation.

Infrastructure

The transport sector is around 14% of GDP. Transit between Russia and the West is large.

Key ports are in Riga, Ventspils, and Liepaja. Most transit traffic uses these and half the cargo is crude oil and oil products.

Riga International Airport is the largest airport with 3.2 million passengers in 2007.

Education

University of Latvia is the oldest university in Latvia and is located in Riga. Daugavpils University is the second largest university.

Demographics

Ethnic and cultural diversity

Latvia's population has been multiethnic for centuries, though the demographics shifted dramatically in the twentieth century due to the World Wars, the emigration and removal of Baltic Germans, the Holocaust, and occupation by the Soviet Union.

Latvians and Livonians, the indigenous peoples of Latvia, now form about 60% of the population; 28% of the inhabitants are Russian. Approximately 56% of the ethnic Russians living in Latvia are citizens of Latvia. In 2005 there were even fewer Latvians than in 1989, though their share of the population was larger — 1,357,099 (58.8% of the inhabitants).

The official language of Latvia is Latvian, which belongs to the Baltic language group of the Indo-European language family. Another notable language of Latvia is the nearly extinct Livonian language of the Baltic-Finnic subbranch of the Uralic language family, which enjoys protection by law; Latgalian language — a dialect of Latvian — is also protected by Latvian law as historical variation of Latvian language. Russian which was official during the Soviet occupation is by far the most widespread minority language and also known by the majority of Latvians. In fact, knowledge of Russian is more widespread than knowledge of Latvian, 81% of all inhabitants know Russian, while only 79% know Latvian.

Latvians	60.0%
Russians	27.3%
Belarusians	3.7%
Ukrainians	2.5%
Poles	2.4%
Lithuanians	1.4%
Jews	0.5%
Roma	0.4%
Germans	0.2%
Estonians	0.1%
<i>Others</i>	1.5%

Society

Religion

The largest religion is Christianity, although only 7% of population attend religious services regularly. The largest groups in 2006 are:

- Lutheran — 400,000
- Roman Catholic — 450,000
- Eastern Orthodox — 350,000

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 37% of Latvian citizens responded that "they believe there is a god", whereas 49% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 10% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force". Lutheranism was much stronger before the Soviet occupation, when it was a majority religion, but since then Lutheranism in all the Baltic States has declined to a much greater extent than Roman Catholicism has. The country's Orthodox Christians belong to the Latvian Orthodox Church, a semi-autonomous body within the Russian Orthodox Church. There are 182 known Muslims living in Latvia though the total number is estimated to be much larger: from 500 to 5,000. There are also Jews (9,743 in 2006) in Latvia.

There are more than 600 Latvian neopagans, *Dievturi* (The Godskeepers), whose religion is based on Latvian mythology. About 40% of the total population is not affiliated with a specific religion.

International rankings

- Environmental Sustainability Index: 15/146
- Reporters Without Borders World-wide press freedom index: 12/168
- Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index: 49/163
- Heritage Foundation/The Wall Street Journal Index of Economic Freedom: 39/157

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Liechtenstein

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

The **Principality of Liechtenstein** (IPA: /ˈlɪçtənˌstɑɪn/) (German: *Fürstentum Liechtenstein*, IPA: [ˈfʏʁstəntuːm ˈlɪçtənʃtaɪn]) is a tiny, doubly landlocked alpine country in Western Europe, bordered by Switzerland to its west and by Austria to its east. Mountainous, it is a winter sports destination, although it is perhaps best known as a tax haven. Despite this, it is not heavily urbanised. Many cultivated fields and small farms characterise its landscape both in the north (Unterland) and in the south (Oberland). It is the smallest German-speaking country in the world.

History

At one time, the territory of Liechtenstein formed a part of the ancient Roman province of Raetia. For centuries this territory, geographically removed from European strategic interests, had little impact on European history. Prior to the reign of its current dynasty, the region was enfeoffed to a line of the counts of Hohenems.

The Liechtenstein dynasty, from which the principality takes its name (rather than vice-versa), comes from Castle Liechtenstein in faraway Lower Austria, which the family possessed from at least 1140 to the thirteenth century, and from 1807 onward. Through the centuries, the dynasty acquired vast swaths of land, predominantly in Moravia, Lower Austria, Silesia, and Styria, though in all cases, these territories were held in fief under other more senior feudal lords, particularly under various lines of the Habsburg family, to whom several Liechtenstein princes served as close advisers. Thus, and without any territory held directly under the Imperial throne, the Liechtenstein dynasty was unable to meet a primary requirement to qualify for a seat in the Imperial diet, the *Reichstag*.

The family yearned for the added power a seat in the Imperial government would bring, and therefore sought to acquire lands that would be *unmittelbar*, or held without any feudal personage other than the Holy Roman Emperor himself having rights on the land. After some time, the family was able to arrange the purchase of the minuscule *Herrschaft* ("Lordship") of Schellenberg and countship of Vaduz (in 1699 and 1712 respectively) from the Hohenems. Tiny Schellenberg and Vaduz possessed exactly the political status required; no feudal lord other than their comital sovereign and the suzerain Emperor.

<i>Fürstentum Liechtenstein</i> Principality of Liechtenstein	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: Für Gott, Fürst und Vaterland For God, Prince and Fatherland	
Anthem: <i>Oben am jungen Rhein</i> "Up on the Young Rhine"	
	
Location of Liechtenstein (circled in inset) on the European continent (white) — [Legend]	

Thereby, on January 23, 1719, after purchase had been duly made, Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor, decreed Vaduz and Schellenberg were united, and raised to the dignity of *Fürstentum* (*principality*) with the name "Liechtenstein" in honour of "[his] true servant, Anton Florian of Liechtenstein". It is on this date that Liechtenstein became a sovereign member state of the Holy Roman Empire. As a testament to the pure political expediency of the purchases, the Princes of Liechtenstein did not set foot in their new principality for over 120 years.

Capital	Vaduz
Largest city	Schaan
Official languages	German
Demonym	Liechtensteinian, locally <i>Liechtensteiner/in</i>
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- Prince	Hans-Adam II
- Prince-Regent	Alois
- Prime Minister	Otmar Hasler
Independence	as principality
- Treaty of Pressburg	1806
Area	
- Total	160.4 km ² (214th) 62 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
Population	
- 2007 estimate	35,365 (204th)
- 2000 census	33,307
- Density	221/km ² (52nd) 571/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2001 estimate
- Total	\$1.786 billion (168)
- Per capita	\$52,150 (2001) (36)
GDP (nominal)	2004 estimate
- Total	\$3.441 billion
- Per capita	\$130,277 (1)
Currency	Swiss franc (CHF)

As a result of the Napoleonic Wars, by 1806, the Holy Roman Empire was under the control of French emperor Napoleon I. Napoleon dissolved the Empire and this had broad consequences for Liechtenstein: imperial, legal and political mechanisms broke down. The state ceased owing obligations to any feudal lord beyond its borders. Modern publications generally (although incorrectly) attribute Liechtenstein's *sovereignty* to these events. In reality, its prince merely became suzerain, as well as remaining sovereign lord. From 25 July 1806 when the Confederation of the Rhine was founded, the prince of Liechtenstein was a member, in fact a vassal of its hegemon, styled *protector*, French Emperor Napoleon I, until the dissolution of the Confederation on 19 October 1813.

Soon afterward, Liechtenstein joined the German Confederation (20 June 1815 – 24 August 1866, which was presided over by the Emperor of Austria).

Then, in 1818, Johann I granted a constitution, although it was limited in its nature. 1818 also saw the first visit of a member of the house of Liechtenstein, Prince Alois; however, the first visit by a sovereign prince would not occur until 1842.

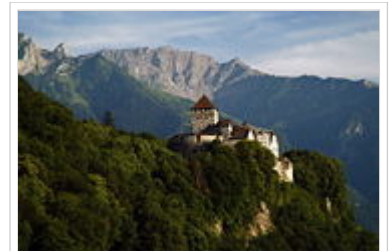
Liechtenstein also had many advances in the nineteenth century, as in 1836, the first factory was opened, making ceramics. In 1861, the Savings and Loans Bank was founded, as was the first cotton-weaving mill. Two bridges over the Rhine were built in 1868, and in 1872 a railway line across Liechtenstein was constructed.

When the Austro-Prussian War broke out in 1866 new pressure was placed on Liechtenstein as, when peace was declared, Prussia accused Liechtenstein of being the cause of the war through a miscount of the votes for war with Prussia. This led to Liechtenstein refusing to sign a peace treaty with Prussia and remained at war although no actual conflict ever occurred. This was one of the arguments that were suggested to justify a possible invasion of Liechtenstein in the late 1930s.

Until the end of World War I, Liechtenstein first was closely tied to the Austrian Empire and later to Austria-Hungary; however, the economic devastation caused by WWI forced the country to conclude a customs and monetary union with its other neighbour Switzerland. Liechtenstein's Army was disbanded in 1868 for financial reasons. At the time of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was argued that Liechtenstein as a fief of the Holy Roman Empire was no longer bound to the emerging independent state Austria, since the latter did not consider itself as the legal successor to the Empire. This is partly contradicted by the coeval Liechtenstein perception that the dethroned Austro-Hungarian Emperor still maintained an abstract heritage of the Holy Roman Empire.

In the spring of 1938, just after the annexation of Austria into Greater Germany, eighty-four year-old Prince Franz I abdicated, naming his thirty-one year-old third cousin, Prince Franz Joseph, as his successor. While Prince Franz I claimed that old age was his reason for abdicating, it is believed that he had no desire to be on the throne if Germany were to gobble up Liechtenstein. His wife, whom he married in 1929, was a wealthy Jewish woman from Vienna, and local Liechtenstein Nazis had already singled her out as their anti-Semitic "problem". Although Liechtenstein had no official Nazi party, a Nazi sympathy movement had been simmering for years within its National Union party.

Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.li
Calling code	+423



Schloss Vaduz, overlooking the capital, is still home to the prince of Liechtenstein

During World War II, Liechtenstein remained neutral, while family treasures within the war zone were brought to Liechtenstein (and London) for safekeeping. At the close of the conflict, Czechoslovakia and Poland, acting to seize what they considered to be German possessions, expropriated the entirety of the Liechtenstein dynasty's hereditary lands and possessions in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia — the princes of Liechtenstein lived in Vienna until the Anschluss of 1938. The expropriations (subject to modern legal dispute at the World Court) included over 1,600 km² (618 sq mi) of agricultural and forest land, also including several family castles and palaces. Citizens of Liechtenstein were also forbidden from entering Czechoslovakia during the Cold War. Liechtenstein gave asylum to approximately five hundred soldiers of the First Russian National Army (a collaborationist Russian force within the German Wehrmacht) at the close of World War II; this is commemorated by a monument at the border town of Hinterschellenberg which is marked on the country's tourist map. The act of granting asylum was no small matter as the country was poor and had difficulty feeding and caring for such a large group of refugees. Eventually, Argentina agreed to permanently resettle the asylum seekers. In contrast, the British repatriated the Russians who had fought for Germany to the USSR, and they all perished in the Gulag.

In dire financial straits following the war, the Liechtenstein dynasty often resorted to selling family artistic treasures, including for instance the priceless portrait "Ginevra de' Benci" by Leonardo da Vinci, which was purchased by the National Gallery of Art of the United States in 1967. Liechtenstein prospered, however, during the decades following, as it used its low corporate tax rates to draw many companies to the country.

The Prince of Liechtenstein is the world's sixth wealthiest leader with an estimated wealth of USD \$4 billion. The country's population enjoys one of the world's highest standards of living.

Government functions

Liechtenstein's current constitution was adopted in October 1921. It established in Liechtenstein a constitutional monarchy ruled by the reigning prince of the Princely House of Liechtenstein. It also established a parliamentary system, although the reigning prince retained substantial political authority.

The reigning prince of the Princely House of Liechtenstein is the head of state and, as such, represents Liechtenstein in its international relations (although Switzerland has taken responsibility for much of Liechtenstein's diplomatic relations). The prince may veto laws adopted by the parliament. The prince can call referendums, propose new legislation, and dissolve the parliament, although dissolution of parliament may be subjected to a referendum.

Executive authority is vested in a collegial government (government) comprising the head of government (prime minister) and four government councilors (ministers). The head of government and the other ministers are appointed by the prince upon the proposal and concurrence of the parliament, thus reflecting the partisan balance of the parliament. The constitution stipulates that at least two members of the government be chosen from each of the two regions. The members of the government are collectively and individually responsible to the parliament; the parliament may ask the prince to remove an individual minister or the entire government.

Legislative authority is vested in the unicameral "Landtag" (parliament) made up of 25 members elected for maximum four-year terms according to a



The Government building in Vaduz.

proportional representation formula. Fifteen members are elected from the "Oberland" (Upper Country or region) and ten members are elected from the "Unterland" (Lower Country or region). Parties must receive at least eight percent of the national vote to win seats in the parliament. The parliament proposes and approves a government, which is formally appointed by the prince. The parliament may also pass votes of no confidence against the entire government or against individual members. Additionally, the parliament elects from among its members a "Landesausschuss" (National Committee) made up of the president of the parliament and four additional members. The National Committee is charged with performing parliamentary oversight functions. The parliament can call for referendums on proposed legislation. The parliament shares the authority to propose new legislation with the prince and with the requisite number of citizens required for an initiative referendum.

Judicial authority is vested in the Regional Court at Vaduz, the Princely High Court of Appeal at Vaduz, the Princely Supreme Court, the Administrative Court, and the State Court. The State Court rules on the conformity of laws with the constitution. The State Court has five members elected by the parliament.

In March 2003, the results of a national referendum showed that nearly two-thirds of Liechtenstein's electorate agreed to vote in support of Hans-Adam II's proposal of a renewed constitution which replaced the version of 1921. The implications of the referendum, the actual changes to the governance of Liechtenstein, and the repercussions of the vote in the wider context of Europe, are yet unknown.

On 1 July 2007, the Liechtenstein Ruling Prince, H.S.H Hans-Adam II, and Liechtenstein Prime Minister, Otmar Hasler, appointed Dr. Bruce S. Allen and Mr. Leodis C. Matthews, ESQ., both in the United States of America, as the first two Honorary Consuls in history for the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Municipalities

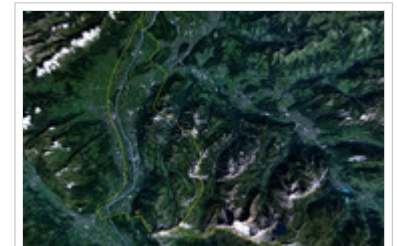
The principality of Liechtenstein is divided into 11 municipalities called *Gemeinden* (singular *Gemeinde*). The *Gemeinden* mostly consist only of a single town. Five of them fall within the electoral district *Unterland* (the lower county), and the remainder within *Oberland* (the upper county).

Geography

Liechtenstein is situated in the Upper Rhine valley of the European Alps. The entire western border of Liechtenstein is formed by the river. Measured north to south, the country is only about 24 km (15 mi) long. In its eastern portion, Liechtenstein rises to higher altitudes; its highest point, the Grauspitz, is 2,599 m (8,527 ft). Despite its alpine location, prevailing southerly winds make the climate of Liechtenstein comparatively mild. In winter, the mountain slopes are well suited to winter sports.

New surveys using more accurate measurements of the country's borders in 2006 have set its area at 160.475 km² (61.960 sq mi), with borders of 77.9 km (48.4 mi). Thus, Liechtenstein discovered in 2006 that its borders are 1.9 km (1.2 mi) longer than previously thought.

Liechtenstein is one of only two doubly landlocked countries in the world—being a landlocked country wholly surrounded by other landlocked countries—the other is Uzbekistan. It is the only country with a predominantly German-speaking population



Satellite image faintly delineating Liechtenstein - enlarge to full page for clarity.

that does not share a border with the Federal Republic of Germany. Liechtenstein is the sixth-smallest independent nation in the world by land area.

Economy

Despite its limited natural resources, Liechtenstein is one of the few countries in the world with more registered companies than citizens; it has developed into a prosperous, highly industrialized, free-enterprise economy, and boasts a financial service sector as well as a living standard which compares favourably to those of the urban areas of Liechtenstein's large European neighbours. Relatively low business taxes—the maximum tax rate is 18%—as well as easy Rules of Incorporation have induced about 73,700 holding (or so-called 'letter box') companies to establish nominal offices in Liechtenstein. Such processes provide about 30% of Liechtenstein's state revenue. Liechtenstein also generates revenue from the establishment of *stiftungs* ("foundations"), which are financial entities created to increase the privacy of nonresident foreigners' financial holdings. The foundation is registered in the name of a Liechtensteiner, often a lawyer.

Recently, Liechtenstein has shown strong determination to prosecute any international money-laundering and worked to promote the country's image as a legitimate financing centre. In February 2008, the country's LGT Bank was implicated in a tax-fraud scandal in Germany, which strained the ruling family's relationship with the German government. Crown Prince Alois has accused the German government of trafficking in stolen goods for its \$7.3 million purchase of private banking information illegally offered by a former employee of LGT Group.

Liechtenstein participates in a customs union with Switzerland and employs the Swiss franc as national currency. The country imports more than 90% of its energy requirements. Liechtenstein has been a member of the European Economic Area (an organization serving as a bridge between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the European Union) since May 1995. The government is working to harmonize its economic policies with those of an integrated Europe. Since 2002, Liechtenstein's rate of unemployment has doubled, although it stood at only 2.2% in the third quarter of 2004. Currently, there is only one hospital in Liechtenstein, the Liechtensteinisches Landesspital in Vaduz. The GDP (PPP) is \$1.786 billion, or \$25,000 per person.

Liechtenstein's most recognizable international company and largest employer is Hilti, a manufacturer of concrete fastening systems. Liechtenstein also is the home of the Curta calculator and the principality produces a large portion of the world's false teeth. (Ivoclar Vivadent, Schaan)

Taxation

The government of Liechtenstein taxes personal and business income and principal (wealth). The basic rate for the personal income tax is 1.2%. When combined with the additional income tax imposed by the communes, the combined income tax rate is 17.82%. An additional income tax of 4.3% is levied on all employees for the country's social security program. This rate is higher for self-employed, up to a maximum of 11%, making the maximum income tax rate



Looking northward at Vaduz city-centre.



City-centre with Kunstmuseum (Liechtenstein Art Museum).

about 29% total. Income from employment is taxed through monthly withholdings by employer.

The maximum business income tax rate is 18-20%.

The basic tax rate on wealth is 0.06% and the combined total rate is 0.89%.

Liechtenstein's gifts and estate taxes vary depending upon the relationship the recipient has to the giver and the amount of the inheritance. The tax ranges between 0.5% and 0.75% for spouses and children and 18% to 27% for non-related recipients. The estate tax is progressive:

Amount, SFr	Rate of Estate Duty
The first 200,000	1%
The next 400,000	2%
The next 600,000	3%
The next 800,000	4%
On the residue over 2m	5%

The rate above is halved if the estate passes to the spouse, children, or parents.

The 2008 Liechtenstein tax affair is a series of tax investigations in numerous countries whose governments suspect that some of their citizens may have evaded tax obligations by using banks and trusts in **Liechtenstein**; the affair broke open with the biggest complex of investigations ever initiated for tax evasion in the Federal Republic of Germany. It is seen also as an attempt to put pressure on Liechtenstein, one of the remaining uncooperative tax havens — along with Andorra and Monaco — as identified by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2007.

Human development

Liechtensteiners have an average life expectancy at birth of 79.68 years (76.1 years for males; 83.28 years for females). The infant mortality rate is 4.64 deaths per 1,000 live births, according to recent estimates. The literacy rate of Liechtenstein is 100%. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Liechtenstein's education as the 10th best in the world, being significantly higher than the OECD average.

Demographics

Liechtenstein is the fourth smallest country of Europe, after the Vatican City, Monaco, and San Marino. Its population is primarily ethnic Alemannic, although its resident population is approximately one third foreign-born, primarily German speakers from the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, and the Swiss

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Confederation, other Swiss, Italians, and Turks. Foreign-born people make up two-thirds of the country's workforce. Nationals are referred to by the plural: Liechtensteiners.

The official language is German; most speak Alemannic, a dialect of German that is highly divergent from Standard German (*see* Middle High German), but closely related to those dialects spoken in neighbouring regions. In Triesenberg a quite distinct dialect, promoted by the municipality, is spoken. According to the 2000 census, 87.9% of the population is Christian, of which 76% adhere to the Roman Catholic faith, while about 7% are Protestant. The religious affiliation for most of the remainder is Islam - 4.8%, undeclared - 4.1% and no religion - 2.8%.

Transport

Road: There are about 250 km (155 mi) of paved roadway within Liechtenstein.

Rail: 9.5 km (5.9 mi) of railway connect Austria and Switzerland through Liechtenstein. The country's railways are administered by the Austrian Federal Railways as part of the route between Feldkirch, Austria, and Buchs SG, Switzerland. Four stations in Liechtenstein, namely Schaan-Vaduz, Forst Hilti, Nendeln, and Schaanwald, are served by an irregularly stopping train service running between Feldkirch and Buchs. While EuroCity and other long distance international trains also make use of the route, these do not call at Liechtenstein stations.

Bus: The Liechtenstein Bus is a subsidiary of the Swiss Postbus system, but separately run, and connects to the Swiss bus network at Buchs SG and at Sargans as well as the Austrian city of Feldkirch.

N.B. Incidentally, with Liechtenstein's railways being run by the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) and with special agreements existing between Liechtenstein's and Austria's Government, the country falls under the Austrian Verkehrsverbund Vorarlberg tariff region.

Bike: There are 90 km (56 mi) of marked bicycle paths in the country.

Air: There is no airport in Liechtenstein (the nearest large airport is Zürich Airport). There is a small heliport at Balzers in Liechtenstein available for charter helicopter flights.

Culture

As a result of its small size Liechtenstein has been strongly affected by external cultural influences, most notably those originating in the southern German-speaking areas of Europe, including Austria, Bavaria, Switzerland, and Tyrol. The *Historical Society of the Principality of Liechtenstein* plays a role in preserving the culture and history of the country.

The largest museum is the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, an international museum of modern and contemporary art with an important international art collection. The building by the Swiss architects Morger, Degelo and Kerez is a landmark in Vaduz. It was completed in November 2000 and forms a “black box” of tinted concrete and black basalt stone. The museum collection is also the national art collection of Liechtenstein.

The other important museum is the *Liechtenstein National Museum* (Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum) showing permanent exhibition on the cultural and natural history of Liechtenstein as well as special exhibitions. There are also a Stamp and a Ski Museum.

The most famous historical sites are Vaduz Castle, Gutenberg Castle, the Red House and the ruins of Schellenberg.

Music and theatre are an important part of the culture. There are numerous music organizations such as the Liechtenstein Musical Company, the annual Guitar Days and the International Josef Gabriel Rheinberger Society; and two main theatres.

The Private Art Collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein, one of the world's leading private art collections, is shown at the Liechtenstein Museum in Vienna.

Sport

Liechtenstein football teams play in the Swiss football leagues. The Liechtenstein Cup allows access to one Liechtenstein team each year in the UEFA Cup; FC Vaduz, a team playing in the Swiss Challenge League (i.e. the second level of Swiss football) is the most successful team in the Cup, and scored their greatest success in the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1996 when they defeated the Latvian team FC Universitate Riga by 1–1 and 4–2, to go on to a lucrative fixture against Paris St Germain, which they lost 0–4 and 0–3.

The Liechtenstein national football team has traditionally been regarded as an easy target for any team drawn against them, a fact that served as the basis for a book about Liechtenstein's unsuccessful qualifying campaign for the 2002 World Cup by British author, Charlie Connelly. In one surprising week during autumn 2004, however, the team managed a 2–2 draw with Portugal, which only a few months earlier had been the losing finalists in the European Championships. Four days later, the Liechtenstein team traveled to Luxembourg where they defeated the home team 4-0 in a 2006 World Cup qualifying match. They are still considered by many to be an easier touch than most; however, they have been steadily improving over the last few years, and are now considered the best of the European "minnows", even though they were recently humbled 7-1 by Malta in March 2008. In the qualification stage of the European Championship 2008, Liechtenstein beat Latvia 1-0, score which prompted the resignation of the Latvian coach. They went on to beat Iceland 3-0 (October 17, 2007), which is considered one of the most dramatic losses of the Icelandic national football team.



The Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein is the museum of modern and contemporary art in Vaduz and the national gallery of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

As an alpine country, the main opportunity for Liechtensteiners to excel is in winter sports such as downhill skiing: The country's single ski area is Malbun. Hanni Wenzel won two gold and one silver medal in the 1980 Winter Olympics (she won bronze in 1976), whereas her brother, Andreas , won one silver medal (1980) and one bronze medal 1984 in the Giant Slalom event. With nine medals overall (all in alpine skiing), Liechtenstein has won more Olympic medals *per capita* than any other nation. It is also the smallest nation to win a medal in any Olympics, Winter or Summer. Other notable skiers from Liechtenstein are Marco Büchel, Willi Frommelt, Paul Frommelt and Ursula Konzett.

Vaduz, Liechtenstein, is considering a bid for either the 2018 Winter Olympics or 2022 Winter Olympics.

Tourism

In June 2003 the state tourism agency decided to give a boost to the country's tourism by offering to rent out the country to businesses and other organizations for conference hosting, weddings, or other such events. The company will be given keys to Vaduz and be offered team-building/tourist activities and attractions, such as wine-tasting, tobogganing, and full access to one of the country's royal castles. It costs \$375 a person, but it has to for no fewer than 450 people. Therefore, the minimum cost is approximately \$170,000. Prince Hans-Adam II exploited this renting system by threatening to sell Liechtenstein to Bill Gates if he was not given more power. He was given the power he asked for, but he later claimed that he was in fact joking.

Karl Schwarzler, along with the entire nation of Liechtenstein, was awarded the Ig Nobel Prize in Economics in 2003 for this unique enterprise.

Military

Liechtenstein follows a policy of neutrality and is one of few countries in the world to have no army, having abolished it in 1868 due to high costs. While the CIA World Factbook claims that the defense of Liechtenstein is the responsibility of Switzerland, Switzerland actually has no defense agreement with Liechtenstein. No defense treaty is mentioned in a description of the bilateral relationships between the two countries provided on Liechtenstein's official website.

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Lithuania

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SOS Children works in Lithuania. For more information see SOS Children in Lithuania

Lithuania, officially the **Republic of Lithuania** (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos Respublika*) is a country defined as being part of Northern Europe. Situated along the south-eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, sharing borders with Latvia to the north, Belarus to the southeast, Poland, and the Russian exclave of the Kaliningrad Oblast to the southwest. Lithuania is a member of NATO and of the European Union. Its population is 3.4 million. The largest city and capital is Vilnius.

During the 1300s, Lithuania was the largest country in Europe, as present-day Belarus, Ukraine, and parts of Poland and Russia were territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. With the Lublin Union of 1569 Poland and Lithuania formed a new state: the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was finally destroyed by its neighboring countries in 1795. Most of Lithuania's territory was annexed by the Russian Empire, until the Act of Independence was signed on February 16, 1918, which declared re-establishment of a sovereign state. Between 1940 and 1945 Lithuania was occupied by both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany at different times. When World War II was near its end in 1944 and the Nazis retreated, Lithuania would again be merged into the Soviet Union. On March 11, 1990, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to declare its renewed independence.

Present-day Lithuania has one of the fastest growing economies in the European Union. Lithuania became a full member of the Schengen Agreement on 21 December 2007. In 2009, Lithuania will celebrate the millennium of its name.

History

The first mention of Lithuania is found in a medieval German manuscript, the *Quedlinburg Chronicle*, on 14 February 1009. The Lithuanian lands were united by Mindaugas in 1236, and neighbouring countries referred to it as "the state of Lithuania". The official coronation of Mindaugas as King of Lithuania was on July 6, 1253, and the official recognition of Lithuanian statehood as the Kingdom of Lithuania.

During the early period of the Gediminas (1316–1430), the state occupied the territories of present-day Belarus, Ukraine, and parts of Poland and Russia. By the end of the fourteenth century, Lithuania was the largest country in Europe, and was also the only remaining pagan state. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania stretched across a substantial part of Europe, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Lithuanian nobility, city dwellers and peasants accepted Christianity in 1386,

<i>Lietuvos Respublika</i> Republic of Lithuania	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: <i>Tautos jėga vienybėje</i> "The strength of the nation lies in unity"	
Anthem: <i>Tautiška giesmė</i>	
	
Location of Lithuania (orange) <small>on the European continent (camel & white)</small>	

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following Poland's offer of its crown to Jogaila, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. Grand Duke Jogaila was crowned King of Poland on February 2, 1386. Lithuania and Poland were joined into a personal union, as both countries were ruled by the same Gediminas branch, the Jagiellon dynasty.

In 1401, the formal union was dissolved as a result of disputes over legal terminology, and Vytautas, the cousin of Jogaila, became the Grand Duke of Lithuania. Thanks to close cooperation, the armies of Poland and Lithuania achieved a great victory over the Teutonic Knights in 1410 at the Battle of Grunwald, the largest battle in medieval Europe.

A royal crown had been bestowed upon Vytautas in 1429 by Sigismund, the Holy Roman Emperor, but Polish magnates prevented his coronation by seizing the crown as it was being brought to him. A new crown was ordered from Germany and another date set for the coronation, but a month later Vytautas died as the result of an accident.

As a result of the growing centralised power of the Grand Principality of Moscow, in 1569, Lithuania and Poland formally united into a single state called the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. As a member of the Commonwealth, Lithuania retained its institutions, including a separate army, currency and statutory law which was digested in three Statutes of Lithuania. In 1795, the joint state was dissolved by the third Partition of the Commonwealth, which forfeited its lands to Russia, Prussia and Austria, under duress. Over ninety percent of Lithuania was incorporated into the Russian Empire and the remainder into Prussia.

Many Jews fled Lithuania following persecution and followed opportunities that lay overseas.

After a century of occupation, Lithuania re-established its independence on February 16, 1918. The official government from July through November 1918, was quickly replaced by a republican government. From the outset, the newly-independent Lithuania's foreign policy was dominated by territorial disputes with Poland (over the Vilnius region and the Suvalkai region) and with Germany (over the Klaipėda region or *Memelland*). Most obviously, the Lithuanian constitution designated Vilnius as the nation's capital, even though the city itself lay within Polish territory as a result of a Polish invasion. At the time, Poles and Jews made up a majority of the population of Vilnius, with a small Lithuanian minority of only 2%. In 1920 the capital was relocated to Kaunas, which was officially designated the provisional capital of Lithuania. (see History of Vilnius for more details).

In June 1940, around the beginning of World War II, the Soviet Union occupied and annexed Lithuania in accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. A year later it came under German occupation. After the retreat of the German armed forces (*Wehrmacht*), Lithuania was re-occupied by the Soviet Union in 1944.

From 1944–1952 approximately 100,000 Lithuanians participated in partisan fights against the Soviet system and the Red Army. More than twenty thousand partisans (" forest brothers") were killed in those battles and many more were arrested and deported to Siberian GULAGs. Lithuanian historians view this period as a war of independence against the Soviet Union.



Map showing changes in the territory of Lithuania from the 13th century to the present day.

During the Soviet and Nazi occupations between 1940 and 1944, Lithuania lost over 780,000 residents. Among them were around 190,000 (91% of pre-WWII community) of Lithuanian Jews, one of the highest total mortality rates of the Holocaust. An estimated 120,000 to 300,000 were killed by Soviets or exiled to Siberia, while others had been sent to German forced labour camps and/or chose to emigrate to western countries.

Forty-six years of Soviet occupation ended with the advent of perestroika and glasnost in the late 1980s. Lithuania, led by Sąjūdis, an anti-communist and anti-Soviet independence movement, proclaimed its renewed independence on March 11, 1990. Lithuania was the first Soviet republic to do so, though Soviet forces unsuccessfully tried to suppress this secession. The Red Army attacked the Vilnius TV Tower on the night of January 13, 1991, an act that resulted in the death of 13 Lithuanian civilians. The last Red Army troops left Lithuania on August 31, 1993 — even earlier than they departed from East Germany.

On February 4, 1991, Iceland became the first country to recognize Lithuanian independence. Sweden was the first to open an embassy in the country. The United States of America never recognized the Soviet claim to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Russia currently refuses to recognize the occupation of Lithuania, claiming that Lithuanians decided to join the Soviet Union voluntarily, although Russia signed a treaty with Lithuania prior to the disintegration of the USSR which acknowledged Lithuania's forced loss of sovereignty at the hands of the Soviets, thereby recognizing the occupation.

Lithuania joined the United Nations on September 17, 1991, and on May 31, 2001, it became the 141st member of the World Trade Organization. Since 1988, Lithuania has sought closer ties with the West, and so on January 4, 1994, it became the first of the Baltic states to apply for NATO membership. On March 29, 2004, it became a NATO member, and on May 1, 2004, Lithuania joined the European Union.

Politics

Since Lithuania declared independence on March 11, 1990, it has maintained strong democratic traditions. In the first general elections after the independence on October 25, 1992, 56.75% of the total number of voters supported the new constitution. There were heavy debates concerning the constitution, especially the role of the president. Drawing from the interwar experiences, many different proposals were made ranging from a strong parliamentary government to a presidential system similar to the one in the United States. A separate referendum was held on May 23, 1992 to gauge public opinion on the matter and 41% of all the eligible voters supported the restoration of the President of Lithuania. Eventually a semi-presidential system was agreed upon.

The Lithuanian head of state is the President, elected directly for a five-year term, serving a maximum of two consecutive terms. The post of president is largely ceremonial; main policy functions however include foreign affairs and national security policy. The president is also the military commander-in-chief. The President, with the approval of the parliamentary body, the Seimas, also appoints the prime minister and on the latter's nomination, appoints the rest of the cabinet, as well as a number of other top civil servants and the judges for all courts. The judges of the Constitutional Court (*Konstitucinis Teismas*), who serve nine-year terms, are appointed by the President (three judges), the Chairman of the Seimas (three judges) and the Chairman of the Supreme Court (three judges). The unicameral Lithuanian parliament, the *Seimas*, has 141 members who are elected to four-year terms. 71 of the members of this legislative body are elected in single constituencies, and the other 70 are elected in a nationwide vote by proportional representation. A party must receive at least 5% of the national vote to be represented in the Seimas.

Counties, municipalities, and elderates



Current President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus (right) meeting with Vice President of the United States Dick Cheney in Vilnius in May 2006.

The current administrative division was established in 1994 and modified in 2000 to meet the requirements of the European Union. Lithuania has a three-tier administrative division: the country is divided into 10 counties (Lithuanian: singular — *apskritis*, plural — *apskritis*) that are further subdivided into 60 municipalities (Lithuanian: singular — *savivaldybė*, plural — *savivaldybės*) which consist of over 500 elderates (Lithuanian: singular — *seniūnija*, plural — *seniūnijos*).

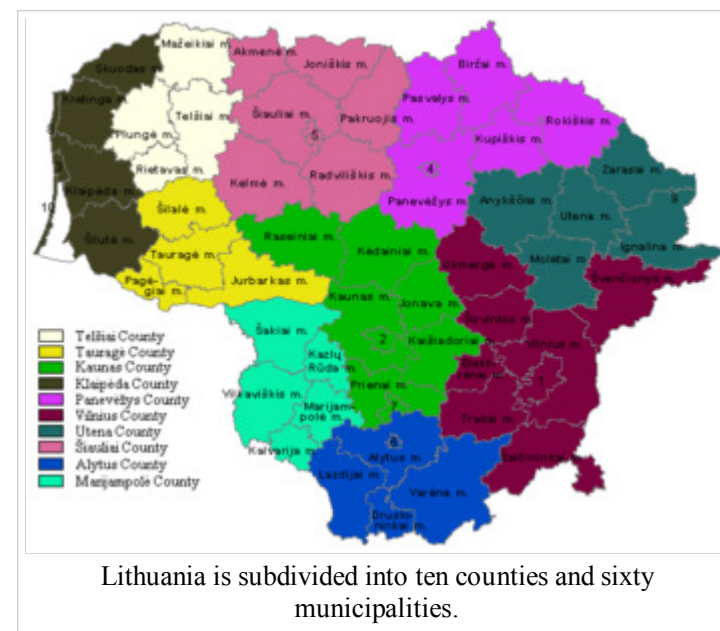
The counties are ruled by county governors (Lithuanian: *apskritis viršininkas*) appointed by the central government. They ensure that the municipalities adhere to the laws of Lithuania and the constitution. County government oversees local governments and their implementation of the national laws, programs, and policies.

Municipalities are the most important unit. Some municipalities are historically called "district municipalities", and thus are often shortened to "district"; others are called "city municipalities", sometimes shortened to "city." Each municipality has its own elected government. In the past, the election of municipality councils occurred once every three years, but it now takes place every four years. The council elects the mayor of the municipality and other required personnel. The municipality councils also appoint elders to govern the elderates. There is currently a proposal for direct election of mayors and elders, however that would require an amendment to the constitution.

Elderates are the smallest units and they do not play a role in national politics. They were created so that people could receive necessary services close to their homes; for example, in rural areas the elderates register births and deaths. They are most active in the social sector: they identify needy individuals or families and distribute welfare or organise other forms of relief.

The current system of administrative division receives frequent criticism for being too bureaucratic and ineffective. Significant complaints have been made about the number of counties, since they do not have much power. One proposal is to create four lands, a new administrative unit, the boundaries of which would be determined by the ethnographic regions of Lithuania. The benefit would be that the lands would follow natural boundaries, rather than being defined by bureaucrats or politicians. Another of the proposed solutions involves reducing the number of counties so that there would be five in total, each based in one of the five largest cities with populations of over 100,000. Others complain that elderates have no real power and receive too little attention; they could potentially become local initiative communities which could tackle many rural problems.

Geography



Lithuania is situated in Northern Europe. It has around 99 kilometres (61.5 mi) of sandy coastline, of which only about 38 kilometres (24 mi) face the open Baltic Sea and which is the shortest among the Baltic Sea countries; the rest of the coast is sheltered by the Curonian sand peninsula. Lithuania's major warm-water port, Klaipėda, lies at the narrow mouth of the Curonian Lagoon (Lithuanian: *Kuršių marios*), a shallow lagoon extending south to Kaliningrad. The main river, the Neman River, and some of its tributaries carry international shipping vessels.

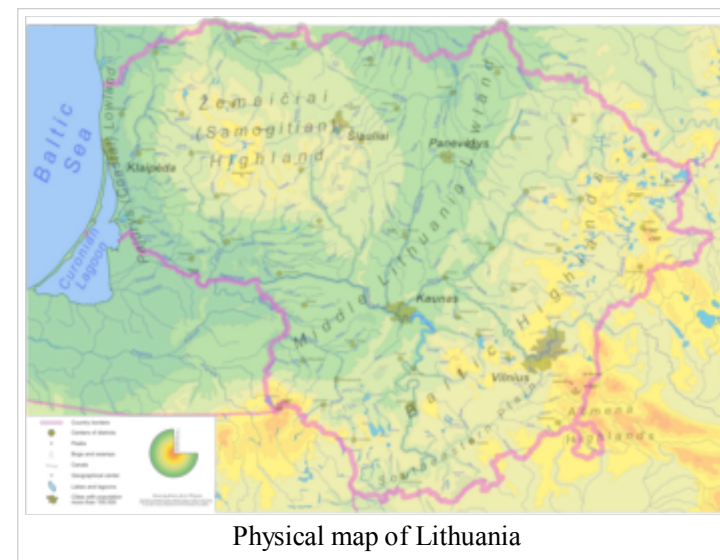
The Lithuanian landscape has been smoothed by glaciers. The highest areas are the moraines in the western uplands and eastern highlands, none of which are taller than 300 metres (1,000 ft) above sea level, with the maximum elevation being Aukštojas Hill at 294 metres (964 ft). The terrain features numerous lakes, Lake Vištytis for example, and wetlands; a mixed forest zone covers 30% of the country. The climate lies between maritime and continental, with wet, moderate winters and summers. According to one geographical computation method, Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, lies only a few kilometres south of the geographical centre of Europe.

Phytogeographically, Lithuania is shared between the Central European and Eastern European provinces of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Lithuania can be subdivided into two ecoregions: the Central European mixed forests and Sarmatic mixed forests.

Lithuania consists of the following historical and cultural regions:

- Aukštaitija — literally, the "Highlands"
- Samogitia (Lithuanian: *Žemaitija*) — literally, the "Lowlands"
- Dzūkija (Lithuanian: *Dzūkija* or *Dainava*)
- Suvalkija (Lithuanian: *Suvalkija* or *Sūduva*)
- Lithuania Minor also known as "Prussian Lithuania" — (Lithuanian: *Mažoji Lietuva* or *Prūsų Lietuva*). Region was part of the Prussia since Middle Ages until 1945. Most of it today is part of Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast).

Economy



Physical map of Lithuania



A cottage hotel in a rural area is a sign of increasingly popular agrotourism.



Vilnius Financial Centre

In 2003, prior to joining the European Union, Lithuania had the highest economic growth rate amongst all candidate and member countries, reaching 8.8% in the third quarter. In 2004 — 7.3%; 2005 — 7.6%; 2006 — 7.4%; 2007 — 8.8%, 2008 Q1 — 7.0% growth in GDP reflects the impressive economic development. Most of the trade Lithuania conducts is within the European Union.

It is a member of the World Trade Organization, and the European Union. By UN classification, Lithuania is a country with a high average income. The country boasts a well developed modern infrastructure of railways, airports and four lane highways. It has almost full employment, with an unemployment rate of only 2.9%.

According to officially published figures, EU membership fuelled a booming economy, increased outsourcing into

the country, and boosted the tourism sector. The litas, the national currency, has been pegged to the Euro since February 2, 2002 at the rate of EUR 1.00 = LTL 3.4528, and Lithuania is expected to switch to the Euro on 1 January 2010. There is gradual but consistent shift towards knowledge based economy with special emphasis on biotechnology (industrial and diagnostic), because in Lithuania there are concentrated major biotech producers in the Baltic countries, as well as laser equipment. Also mechatronics and information technology (IT) are seen as perspective knowledge based economy directions in Lithuania.

Like other countries in the region (Estonia, Latvia) Lithuania also has a flat tax rate rather than a progressive scheme. Lithuanian income levels still lag behind the rest of the older EU members, with per capita GDP in 2007 at 60% of the EU average. Lower wages may have been a factor that in 2004 influenced the trend of emigration to wealthier EU countries, something that has been made legally possible as a result of accession to the European Union. In 2006, income tax was reduced to 27% and a reduction to 24% was made in October of 2007. Income tax reduction and 19.1 % annual wage growth is starting to make an impact with some emigrants gradually beginning to come back. The latest official data show emigration in early 2006 to be 30% lower than the previous year, with 3,483 people leaving in four months.

Education

Vilnius University is one of the oldest universities in Northern Europe and the largest university in Lithuania. Kaunas University of Technology is the largest technical university in the Baltic States and the second largest university in **Lithuania**. Other universities include Kaunas University of Medicine, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Vytautas Magnus University, and Mykolas Romeris University.

Transport

Klaipėda port is the only port in Lithuania.

Vilnius International Airport is the largest airport. It served 1.7 million passengers in 2007.

Energy

Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant is a Soviet-era nuclear station. Unit #1 was closed in December 2004, as a condition of Lithuania's entry into the European Union; the plant is similar to the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in its lack of a robust containment structure. The remaining unit, as of 2006, supplied about 70% of Lithuania's electrical demand. Unit #2 is tentatively scheduled for closure in 2009. Proposals have been made to construct another nuclear power plant in Lithuania.

Demographics

Ethnic composition

The population of Lithuania stands at 3.3662 million, 84.6% of whom are ethnic Lithuanians who speak the Lithuanian language (one of the two surviving members of the Baltic language group), which is the official language of the country. Several sizable minorities exist, such as Poles (6.3%), Russians (5.1%), and Belarusians (1.1%).

Poles are the largest minority, concentrated in southeast Lithuania (the Vilnius region). Russians are the second largest minority, concentrated mostly in two cities. They constitute sizeable minorities in Vilnius (14%) and Klaipėda (28%), and a majority in the town of Visaginas (52%). About 3,000 Roma live in Lithuania, mostly in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Panevėžys; their organizations are supported by the National Minority and Emigration Department.

Most Lithuanian schools teach English as a first foreign language, but students may also study German, or, in some schools, French. Schools where Russian and Polish are the primary languages of education exist in the areas populated by these minorities.

Religion



Wooden church in Palūšė.
Lithuania has strong Roman Catholic traditions.

In 2005 79% of Lithuanians belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. The Church has been the majority denomination since the Christianisation of Lithuania in the end of fourteenth century and beginning of fifteenth century. Some priests actively led the resistance against the Communist regime (symbolised by the Hill of Crosses). Church attendance has increased since the end of the Soviet occupation and the country has so far maintained a fairly high level of religious practice.

In the 16th century, Lutheranism started to spread from neighbouring Livonia and East Prussia. In the first half of 20th century Lutheran Protestant church had around 200,000 members, 9% of total population, although Lutheranism has declined since 1945. Small Protestant communities are dispersed throughout the northern and western parts of the country. Various Protestant churches have established missions in Lithuania since 1990.

4.9% are Eastern Orthodox (mainly among the Russian minority), 1.9% are Protestant and 9.5% have no religion. The country also has minority communities of Judaism, Islam, and Karaism which make up another 1.6% of the population.



The great yard of Vilnius University, one of the oldest universities in Northern Europe. About 70% of Lithuanian high school graduates continue their studies in universities and colleges.

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 49% of Lithuanian citizens responded that "they believe there is a God", 36% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 12% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

Health and welfare

As of 2004 Lithuanian life expectancy at birth was 66 years for males and 78 for females. The infant mortality rate was 8.0 per 1,000 births. The annual population growth rate in 2004 declined by 0.5% in 2004. Less than 2% of the population live beneath the poverty line, and the adult literacy rate is 99.6%.

Lithuanians have a high suicide rate: 91.7 per 100,000 persons, the highest in the world in 2000, followed by the Russian Federation (82.5), Belarus (73.1), Latvia (68.5), and Ukraine (62.1). This problem has been studied by a number of health organisations.

Largest cities

City	Region	Population	Density* (/km ²)	Area (km ²)
Vilnius	East	544,091	1,379	401
Kaunas	Middle	355,550	2,319	157
Klaipėda	West	184,684	1,926	98
Šiauliai	North	127,043	1,605	81
Panevėžys	North	113,668	2,236	52
Alytus	South	68,315	1,747	40
Marijampolė	South	47,014	2,271	21
Mažeikiai	North	40,572	2,956	14
Jonava	Middle	34,436		
Utena	East	32,569	2,191	15,1

* Population density.



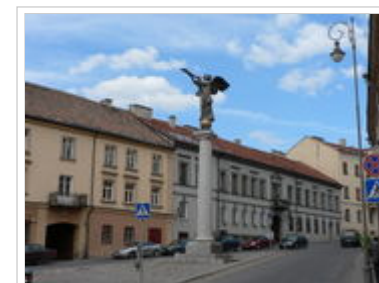
Kaunas University Hospital -
the largest medical institution
in Lithuania

Culture

- List of famous Lithuanians
- Lithuanian literature
- Lithuanian mythology
- Music of Lithuania
- Symbols of Lithuania

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The well-known angel statue which stands in the Užupis district of Vilnius

Luxembourg

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Luxembourg, officially the **Grand Duchy of Luxembourg** (Luxembourgish: *Groussherzogtum Lëtzebuerg*, French: *Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, German: *Großherzogtum Luxemburg*), also spelled **Luxemburg**, is a small landlocked country in western Europe, bordered by Belgium, France, and Germany. Luxembourg has a population of under half a million people in an area of approximately 2,586 square kilometres (999 sq mi).

Luxembourg is a parliamentary representative democracy with a constitutional monarchy, ruled by a Grand Duke. It is the world's only remaining sovereign Grand Duchy. The country has a highly developed economy, with the highest Gross Domestic Product per capita in the world (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency 2007). Its historic and strategic importance dates back to its founding as a Roman era fortress site and Frankish count's castle site in the Early Middle Ages. It was an important bastion along the Spanish road when Spain was the principal European power influencing the whole western hemisphere and beyond in the 14th–17th centuries.

Luxembourg is a founding member of the European Union, NATO, the United Nations, Benelux, and the Western European Union, reflecting the political consensus in favour of economic, political, and military integration. The city of Luxembourg, the capital and largest city, is the seat of several institutions and agencies of the European Union.

Luxembourg lies on the cultural divide between Romance Europe and Germanic Europe, borrowing customs from each of the distinct traditions. Luxembourg is a trilingual country; French, German, and Luxembourgish are official languages. Although a secular state, Luxembourg is predominantly Roman Catholic.

History

The recorded history of Luxembourg begins with the acquisition of Lucilinburhuc (today Luxembourg Castle) by Siegfried, Count of Ardennes in 963. Around this fort, a town gradually developed, which became the centre of a small state of great strategic value. In 1437, the House of Luxembourg suffered a

<p><i>Groussherzogtum Lëtzebuerg</i> (Luxembourgish) <i>Grand-Duché de Luxembourg</i> (French) <i>Großherzogtum Luxemburg</i> (German) Grand Duchy of Luxembourg</p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p>Motto: <i>"Mir wëlle bleiwe wat mir sinn"</i> (Luxembourgish) "We want to remain what we are"</p>	
<p>Anthem: <i>Ons Hémécht</i> "Our Homeland" Royal anthem: <i>De Wilhelmus</i> ¹</p>	

succession crisis, precipitated by the lack of a male heir to assume the throne, that led to the territory being sold to Philip the Good of Burgundy. In the following centuries, Luxembourg's fortress was steadily enlarged and strengthened by its successive occupants, the Bourbons, Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and the French, among others. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Luxembourg was disputed between Prussia and the Netherlands. The Congress of Vienna formed Luxembourg as a Grand Duchy in personal union with the Netherlands. Luxembourg also became a member of the German Confederation, with a Confederate fortress manned by Prussian troops.



The Belgian Revolution of 1830–1839 reduced Luxembourg's territory by more than half, as the predominantly francophone western part of the country was transferred to Belgium. Luxembourg's independence was reaffirmed by the 1839 First Treaty of London. In the same year, Luxembourg joined the Zollverein. Luxembourg's independence and neutrality were again affirmed by the 1867 Second Treaty of London, after the Luxembourg Crisis nearly led to war between Prussia and France. After the latter conflict, the Confederate fortress was dismantled.

The King of the Netherlands remained Head of State as Grand Duke of Luxembourg, maintaining personal union between the two countries until 1890. At the death of William III, the Dutch throne passed to his daughter Wilhelmina, while Luxembourg (at that time restricted to male heirs by the Nassau Family Pact) passed to Adolph of Nassau-Weilburg.

Luxembourg was invaded and occupied by Germany during the First World War, but was allowed to maintain its independence and political mechanisms. It was again

invaded and subject to German occupation in the Second World War in 1940, and was formally annexed into the Third Reich in 1942.

During World War II, Luxembourg abandoned its policy of neutrality, when it joined the Allies in fighting Germany. Its government, exiled to London, set up a small group of volunteers who participated in the



Capital (and largest city)	Luxembourg
Official languages	French, German, Luxembourgish (<i>de jure</i> since 1984)
Demonym	Luxembourgers
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional grand duchy
- Grand Duke	Grand Duke Henri (List)
- Prime minister	Jean-Claude Juncker (List)
Independence	
- From French empire (<i>Treaty of Paris</i>)	9 June 1815
- 1st Treaty of London	19 April 1839
- 2nd Treaty of London	11 May 1867
- End of personal union	23 November 1890
EU accession	March 25, 1957
Area	

Normandy invasion. It became a founding member of the United Nations in 1946, and of NATO in 1949. In 1957, Luxembourg became one of the six founding countries of the European Economic Community (later the European Union), and, in 1999, it joined the euro currency area. In 2005, a referendum on the EU treaty establishing a constitution for Europe was held in Luxembourg.

Government and politics

Luxembourg is a parliamentary democracy headed by a constitutional monarch. Under the constitution of 1868, executive power is exercised by the Governor and the cabinet, which consists of several other ministers. The Governor has the power to dissolve the legislature and reinstate a new one, as long as the Governor has judicial approval. However, since 1919, sovereignty has resided with the Supreme Court.

Legislative power is vested in the Chamber of Deputies, a unicameral legislature of sixty members, who are directly elected to five-year terms from four constituencies. A second body, the Council of State (*Conseil d'État*), composed of twenty-one ordinary citizens appointed by the Grand Duke, advises the Chamber of Deputies in the drafting of legislation.

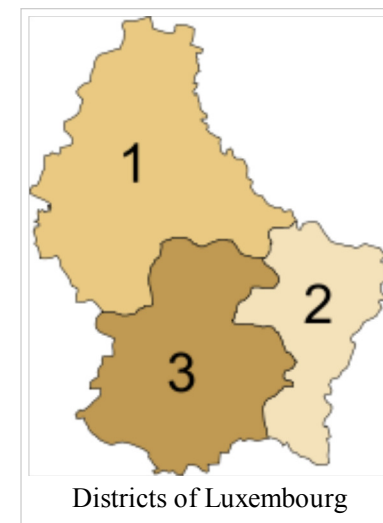
The Grand Duchy has three lower tribunals (*justices de paix*; in Esch-sur-Alzette, the city of Luxembourg, and Diekirch), two district tribunals (Luxembourg and Diekirch) and a Superior Court of Justice (Luxembourg), which includes the Court of Appeal and the Court of Cassation. There is also an Administrative Tribunal and an Administrative Court, as well as a Constitutional Court, all of which are located in the capital.

Military

Luxembourg's contribution to its defence and to NATO consists of a small army (currently consisting of around 800 people). As a landlocked country, it has no navy, and it has no air force, except for the fact that the eighteen NATO AWACS aeroplanes were registered as aircraft of Luxembourg for convenience. In a joint agreement with Belgium, both countries have put forth funding for one A400M military cargo plane, currently on order. Luxembourg still jointly maintains three NATO Boeing 707 model TCAs for cargo and training purposes based in NATO Air Base Geilenkirchen.

Districts, cantons, and communes

- Total	2,586.4 km² (175th) 998.6 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
Population	
- 2007 estimate	480,222 (171st)
- 2001 census	439,539
- Density	186/km² (59th) 481/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2006 estimate
- Total	\$32.6 billion (97th)
- Per capita	\$81,511(2006) (1st)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$50.077 billion (65th)
- Per capita	\$104.673 (1st)
HDI (2004)	0.945 (high) (18th)
Currency	Euro (€) ² (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.lu ³
Calling code	+352
1	Not the same as the <i>Het Wilhelmus</i> of the Netherlands.
2	Before 1999: Luxembourgian franc.
3	The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.



Districts of Luxembourg



The largest towns are Luxembourg, Esch-sur-Alzette, Dudelange, and Differdange.

Luxembourg is divided into 3 districts, which are further divided into 12 cantons and then 116 communes. Twelve of the communes have city status, of which the city of Luxembourg is the largest.

Districts

The districts are 1. Diekirch 2. Grevenmacher 3. Luxembourg

Geography and climate

Luxembourg is one of the smallest countries in Europe, and ranked 175th in size of all the 194 independent countries of the world; the country is about 2,586 square kilometres (998 sq mi) in size, and measures 82 km (51 miles) long and 57 km (35 miles) wide. To the east, Luxembourg borders the German *Bundesländer* of Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland, and, to the south, it borders the French *région* of Lorraine. The Grand Duchy borders the Belgian Walloon Region, in particular the latter's provinces of Luxembourg and Liège, more in particular the German-speaking Community of Belgium, to the west and to the north respectively.

The northern third of the country is known as the 'Oesling', and forms part of the Ardennes. It is dominated by hills and low mountains, including the Kneiff, which is the highest point, at 560 metres (1,837 ft). The region is sparsely populated, with only one town (Wiltz) with a population of more than four thousand people.

The southern two-thirds of the country is called the "Gutland", and is more densely populated than the Oesling. It is also more diverse, and can be divided into five geographic sub-regions. The Luxembourg plateau, in south-central Luxembourg, is a large, flat, sandstone formation, and the site of the city of Luxembourg. Little Switzerland, in the east of Luxembourg, has craggy terrain and thick forests. The Moselle valley is the lowest-lying region, running along the south-eastern border. The Red Lands, in the far south and southwest, are Luxembourg's industrial heartland and home to many of Luxembourg's largest towns.

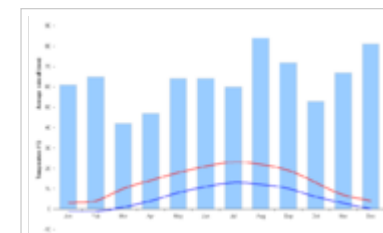
The border between Luxembourg and Germany is formed by three rivers: the Moselle, the Sauer, and the Our. Other major rivers are the Alzette, the Attert, the Clerve, and the Wiltz. The valleys of the mid-Sauer and Attert form the border between the Gutland and the Oesling.

Luxembourg has a marine west coast climate (Köppen: Cfb), marked by high precipitation, particularly in late summer.

Demographics

Ethnicity

The people of Luxembourg are called Luxembourgers. The native population has a Celtic base with a French and Germanic blend. The indigenous population was augmented by immigrants from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and Portugal throughout the twentieth century, with the majority coming from Portugal.



Luxembourg's climate is characterised by mild temperatures and high precipitation.

Since the beginning of the Yugoslav wars, Luxembourg has seen many immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia. Annually, over 10,000 new immigrants arrive in Luxembourg, mostly from EU states, as well as Eastern Europe. As of 2000, there were 162,000 immigrants in Luxembourg, accounting for 37% of the total population. There are an estimated 5,000 illegal immigrants in Luxembourg.

Language

Three languages are recognized as official in Luxembourg: French, German, and Luxembourgish, a Franconian language of the Moselle region very similar to the local German dialect spoken in the neighboring part of Germany, except that it includes more borrowings from French. So in principle Luxembourgish is a High German dialect with the status of a national language. Apart from being one of the three official languages, Luxembourgish is also considered the national language of the Grand Duchy; it is the mother tongue or "language of the heart" for nearly all Luxembourgers.

Each of the three languages is used as the primary language in certain spheres. Luxembourgish is the language that Luxembourgers generally speak to each other, but it is not often written down. Most official (written) business is carried out in French. German is usually the first language taught in school and is the language of much of the media and of the church. In fact, around 65% of all articles published in Luxembourg are in the German language, 25% are in French and only 10% in Luxembourgish.

Luxembourg's education system is trilingual: the first years of primary school are in Luxembourgish, before changing to German, while secondary school, the language of instruction changes to French. However, as proficiency in all three languages is required for graduation from secondary school, half the students leave school without a certified qualification, with the children of immigrants being particularly disadvantaged.

In addition to the three official languages, English is taught in the compulsory schooling and much of the population of Luxembourg can speak English, at any rate in Luxembourg City. Portuguese and Italian, the languages of the two largest immigrant communities, are also spoken by large parts of the population, but by relatively few from outside their respective communities.

Religion

Luxembourg is a secular state, but the state recognises certain religions as officially-mandated religions. This gives the state a hand in religious administration and appointment of clergy, in exchange for which the state pays certain running costs and wages. Currently, religions covered by such arrangements are Catholicism, Judaism, Greek and Russian Orthodoxy, Protestantism and Islam.

Since 1980 it has been illegal for the government to collect statistics on religious beliefs or practices. It is estimated by the CIA Factbook that 87% of Luxembourgers are Catholics, the remaining 13% being made up of Protestants, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims and those of other or no religion.

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 44% of Luxembourg citizens responded that "they believe there is a God", whereas 28% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 22% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

Economy

Luxembourg's stable, high-income economy features moderate growth, low inflation, and low unemployment. The industrial sector, which was dominated until the 1960s by steel, has diversified to include chemicals, rubber, and other products. During the past decades, growth in the financial sector has more than compensated for the decline in steel. Services, especially banking and other financial exports, account for the majority of economic output. Luxembourg is the world's second largest investment fund center (after the USA), the most important private banking centre in the Eurozone and Europe's leading centre for reinsurance companies.

Agriculture is based on small, family-owned farms. Luxembourg has especially close trade and financial ties to Belgium and the Netherlands (see *Benelux*), and as a member of the EU it enjoys the advantages of the open European market. Luxembourg possesses the highest GDP per capita in the world (US\$87,995 as of 2006), the eighteenth highest Human Development Index, and the fourth highest rated in the quality of life index. As of March 2006, unemployment is 4.8% of the labor force. For the fiscal year of 2005 and 2006, Luxembourg has run a budget deficit for the first time in many years, mostly because of slower international economic growth. Luxembourg is the world's most-industrialized nation, having \$53,290 in income per person (Henslin, *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*, page 182.)

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The Notre Dame Cathedral in Luxembourg.



Luxembourg Spuerkeess



Architecture in Luxembourg

Malta

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Malta, officially the **Republic of Malta** (Maltese: *Repubblika ta' Malta*), is a small and densely populated island nation comprising an archipelago of seven islands, three of which are inhabited. It is located in the Mediterranean Sea in Southern Europe just 93 km (58 mi) south of Sicily, giving the country a warm, Mediterranean climate, and 288 km (179 mi) to its south is North Africa. The nation's *de facto* capital city is the historic Valletta.

Throughout much of its history, Malta has been considered a crucial strategic location due in large part to its position in the Mediterranean Sea. It was held by several ancient cultures including Sicilians, Romans, Phoenicians, Byzantines and others. The island is commonly associated with the Knights of St. John who ruled it. This, along with the historic Biblical shipwreck of St. Paul on the island, ingrained the strong Roman Catholic legacy which is still the official and most practised religion in Malta today.

The country's official languages are Maltese and English, the latter a legacy from Malta's period as a British colony – the United Kingdom is the most recent outside ruling power. Malta gained independence in 1964 and is currently a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, as well as the European Union which it joined in 2004.




Etymology

The origin of the term "Malta" is uncertain, though the modern day variation is from the Maltese language. The more common etymology is that it comes from the Greek word μέλι (*meli*) ('honey'). The Greeks called the island Μελίτη (*Melite*) meaning "honey" or "honey-sweet" possibly due to Malta's unique production of honey; Malta has had an endemic species of bee which lives on the island, giving it the common nickname the "land of honey". Not only was there Greek influence on the island as early as 700 BC, but the island was later dominated by the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire from 395 to 870.

Another etymology given is the Phoenician word *Maleth* meaning "a haven".

History

<http://cd3wd.com/wikipedia-for-schools> <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 467 of 867

 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p>Anthem: <i>L-Innu Malti</i> ("The Maltese Anthem")</p>	
 <p>Location of Malta (dark green)</p> <p>– on the European continent (light green & dark grey) – in the European Union (light green)</p>	
<p>Capital</p> <p>Largest city</p>	<p>Valletta (<i>de facto</i>)</p> <p>Birkirkara</p>
<p>Official languages</p>	<p>Maltese, English</p>

Early settlements of Malta



Ancient Mnajdra temples.

The Maltese islands were first settled in 5200 BC by stone age farmers who had arrived from the nearby, much larger island of Sicily, they were called Sicanians. During 3500 BC, these people built the oldest free-standing structures and oldest religious structures in the world, in the form of the megalithic Ġgantija temples on Gozo, other early temples include those at Haġar Qim and Mnajdra. Around 700 BC, there was Ancient Greek culture on Malta, especially around the area of Valletta. A century later the natives were joined on the island by Phoenician traders, who used the islands as an outpost for their trade explorations in the Mediterranean Sea.

After the fall of Tyre, the islands later came under the control of Carthage (400 BC), a former Phoenician colony, and then of Rome (218 BC). The islands prospered under Roman rule, during which time they were considered a Municipium and a Foederata Civitas. Many Roman antiquities still exist, testifying to the close link between the Maltese inhabitants and the people of

Rome. The island was a favourite among Roman soldiers as a place to retire from active service. In AD 60, the islands were visited by Saint Paul, who is said to have been shipwrecked on the shores of the aptly-named " San Pawl il-Baħar" (Saint Paul's Bay). Studies of the currents and prevalent winds at the time however, render it more likely that the shipwreck occurred in or around Dahlet San Tumas in Marsascalea.

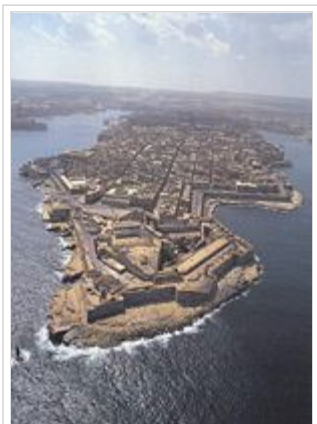
After a period of Byzantine rule (fourth to ninth century) and a probable sack by the Vandals, the islands were conquered by the Arabs in AD 870. The Arabs, who generally tolerated the population's Christianity, introduced the cultivation of citrus fruits and cotton, and irrigation systems. Arab influence can be seen most prominently in the modern Maltese language, a Semitic language which also contains significant Romance influences, and is written in a variation of the Latin alphabet.

The period of Arab rule lasted until 1091, when the islands were taken by the Siculo-Normans. A century later the last Norman king, Tancredo di Lecce, appointed Margarito di Brindisi the first Count of Malta. Subsequent rulers included the Swabian, Angevin, Aragonese, Castillians who reconstituted a County of Malta in 1283. The Maltese nobility was established during this period; some of it dating back to 1400. Around thirty-two noble titles remain in use today, of which the oldest is the Barony of Djar il-Bniet e Buqana.

Demonym	Maltese
Government	Parliamentary Republic
- President	Edward Fenech Adami
- Prime Minister	Lawrence Gonzi
Independence	
- from the United Kingdom	September 21, 1964
- Republic	December 13, 1971
EU accession	May 1, 2004
Area	
- Total	316 km ² (185th) 121 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.001
Population	
- 2007 estimate	410,290 (174th)
- 2005 census	404,500 ¹
- Density	1,282/km ² (7th) 3,339/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$9.396 billion (140th)
- Per capita	\$22,907 (38th)
GDP (nominal)	2006 estimate
- Total	\$5.39 billion (120th)
- Per capita	\$13,408 (35th)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.878 (high) (34th)
Currency	Euro (€) ² Banks (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)

Knights of Malta and Napoleon

In 1530 Charles I of Spain gave the islands to the Order of Knights of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in perpetual lease. The Crown of Aragon had owned the islands as part of its Mediterranean empire for some time. These knights, a military religious order now known as the "Knights of Malta", had been driven out of Rhodes by the Ottoman Empire in 1522. They withstood a full-blown siege by the Ottoman Turks in 1565, at the time the greatest naval power in the Mediterranean sea. After this they decided to increase the fortifications, particularly in the inner-harbour area, where the new city of Valletta, named after Grand Master Jean de la Valette, was built.



Aerial view of Valletta.

Their reign ended when Malta was captured by Napoleon en route to his expedition of Egypt during the French Revolutionary Wars in 1798. As a ruse, Napoleon asked for safe harbour to resupply his ships, and then turned his guns against his hosts once safely inside Valletta. Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch zu Bolheim capitulated, and Napoleon stayed in Malta for a few days, during which time he systematically looted the movable assets of the Order, and established an administration controlled by his nominees. He then sailed for Egypt, leaving a substantial garrison in Malta.

The occupying French forces were unpopular, however, due particularly to their negative attitude towards religion. Their financial and religious reforms did not go down well with the citizens. The Maltese rebelled against them, and the French were forced behind the fortifications.

Great Britain, along with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, sent ammunition and aid to the rebels, and Britain also sent her navy, which instigated a blockade of the islands. The isolated French forces, under General Claude-Henri Belgrand de Vaubois, surrendered in 1800, and the island became a British Dominion, being presented by several Maltese leaders to Sir Alexander Ball.

Internet TLD	.mt ³
Calling code	+356
<p>¹ Total population includes foreign residents. Maltese residents population estimate at end 2004 was 389,769. All official population data provided by the NSO .</p> <p>² Before 2008: Maltese lira</p> <p>³ Also .eu, shared with other European Union member states.</p>	



de la Valette defended in the Great Siege of Malta.

British rule and World War II

In 1814, as part of the Treaty of Paris, Malta officially became a part of the British Empire, and was used as a shipping way-station and fleet headquarters. Malta's position half-way between Gibraltar and the Suez Canal proved to be its main asset during these years, and it was considered to be an important stop on the way to India.

In the early 1930s, the British Mediterranean Fleet, which was at the time the main contributor for the commerce on the island, was moved to Alexandria as an economic measure. Malta played an important role during World War II, owing to its proximity to Axis shipping lanes. The bravery of the Maltese people in their long struggle against enemy attack moved HM King George VI to award the George Cross to Malta on a collective basis on April 15, 1942 "to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history". Some historians argue that the award caused Britain to incur disproportionate losses in defending Malta, as British credibility would have suffered if Malta was surrendered, as Singapore had been. A replica of the George Cross now appears in the upper hoist corner of the Flag of Malta. The collective award remained unique until April 1999, when the Royal Ulster Constabulary became the second – and, to date, the only other – recipient of the collective George Cross.



The Royal Opera House, Valletta, bombed to the ground during World War II.



A karrozzin near Auberge de Castille.

Independence

After the war, and after the Malta Labour Party's unsuccessful attempt at "Integration with Britain", Malta was granted independence on September 21, 1964 (Independence Day). Under its 1964 constitution, Malta initially retained Queen Elizabeth II as Queen of Malta, with a Governor-General exercising executive authority on her behalf. On December 13, 1974 (Republic Day) it became a republic within the Commonwealth, with the President as head of state. A defence agreement signed soon after independence (and re-negotiated in 1972) expired on March 31, 1979 (Freedom Day) when the British military forces were withdrawn. Malta adopted an official policy of neutrality in 1980 and for a brief period was a member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. In 1989 Malta was the venue of an important summit between US President Bush and Soviet leader Gorbachev, their first face-to-face encounter, which signaled the end of the Cold War.

Malta joined the European Union on May 1, 2004. Following the European Council of 21 to 22 June 2007 it joined the Eurozone on January 1, 2008.

Politics and government

Malta is a republic, whose parliamentary system and public administration is closely modeled on the Westminster system. The unicameral House of Representatives, (Maltese: *Il-Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti*), is elected by direct universal suffrage through single transferable vote every five years, unless the House is dissolved earlier by the President on advice of the Prime Minister. The House of Representatives is made up of sixty-five Members of Parliament. However, where a party wins an absolute majority of votes, but does not have a majority of seats, that party is given additional seats to ensure a parliamentary majority. The Constitution of Malta provides that the President appoint as Prime Minister the member of the House who is best able to command a (governing) majority in the House.

The President of the Republic is elected every five years by the House of Representatives. The role of the president as head of state is largely ceremonial. The main political parties are the Nationalist Party, which is a Christian democratic party, and the Malta Labour Party, with Dr. Joseph Muscat as its leader, which is a social democratic party. The Nationalist Party is currently (2008) at the helm of the government, the Prime Minister being Dr. Lawrence Gonzi. The Malta Labour Party is in opposition. There are a number of smaller political parties in Malta that presently have no parliamentary representation.

Geography



Map of Malta

Malta is an archipelago in the central Mediterranean Sea (in its eastern basin), some 93 km south of the Italian island of Sicily across the Malta Channel; east of Tunisia and north of Libya in Africa. Only the three largest islands Malta Island (Malta), Gozo (Għawdex), and Comino (Kemmuna) are inhabited. The smaller islands, such as Filfla, Cominotto and the Islands of St. Paul are uninhabited. Numerous bays along the indented coastline of the islands provide good harbours. The archipelago itself lies on the edge of the African tectonic plate, as it borders with the Eurasian plate. The landscape is characterised by low hills with terraced fields. The highest point is at Ta' Dmejrek on Malta Island at 253 metres (830 ft) near Dingli. Although there are some small rivers at times of high rainfall, there are no permanent rivers or lakes on Malta. However, some watercourses are found around the island that have fresh water running all year round. Such places are Bahrija, l-Intahleb and San Martin. Running water in Gozo is found at Lunzjata Valley.

Malta implemented the Schengen Agreement on December 21, 2007. Customs and border controls remained at airports until March 2008.



Dr. Edward Fenech Adami has been the President of Malta since 2004.

Contrary to popular belief, the south of Malta is not Europe's most southern point; that distinction belongs to the Greek island of Gavdos.

Phytogeographically, Malta belongs to the Liguro-Tyrrhenian province of the Mediterranean Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Malta belongs to the ecoregion of Tyrrhenian-Adriatic sclerophyllous and mixed forests.

Climate

The climate is Mediterranean (Köppen climate classification Csa), with mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers. There is no real thermal dormant season for plants, although plant growth can be checked briefly by abnormal cold in winter (patches of ground frost may occur in inland locales), and summer heat and aridity may cause vegetation to wilt. Effectively there are only two seasons, which makes the islands attractive for tourists, especially during the drier months. However, strong winds can make Malta feel cold during the springtime.

Water supply poses a problem on Malta, as the summer is both rainless and the time of greatest water use, and the winter rainfall often falls as heavy showers running off to the sea rather than soaking into the ground. Malta depends on underground reserves of fresh water, drawn through a system of water tunnels called the Ta' Kandja galleries, which average about 97 m. below surface and extend like the spokes of a wheel. In the galleries in Malta's porous limestone, fresh water lies in a lens upon brine. More than half the potable water of Malta is produced by desalination, which creates further issues of fossil fuel use and pollution.

In January 2007 International Living chose Malta as the country with the best climate in the world.

The lowest temperature ever recorded at Valletta was on February 19, 1895, with +1.2 °C (34.2 °F), and the highest temperature was +43.8 °C (110.8 °F) recorded in August 1999 at Luqa International Airport. An unofficial lowest temperature of −1.7 °C (28.9 °F) was recorded on February 1, 1962 in the Ta' Qali airfield with snow on the ground. Snow is virtually unheard of, with very few and brief snow flurries recorded in February 1895, January 1905 and January 31st, 1962. No accumulation has been reported on the coast at least since 1800, but in the last day of January 1962 snow briefly covered some parts of the interior of the main island. The following night the only frost in the history of Malta was recorded in the in the Ta' Qali airfield.



The island of Comino

Month	Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avg high °C (°F)	21 (71)	15 (59)	15 (59)	16 (61)	18 (65)	22 (72)	27 (80)	30 (86)	30 (86)	28 (82)	24 (75)	19 (67)	16 (61)
Avg low temperature °C (°F)	15 (60)	9 (49)	9 (49)	10 (51)	12 (54)	15 (59)	19 (66)	22 (71)	22 (72)	20 (69)	18 (64)	14 (57)	11 (52)

Source: Weatherbase

Economy

Until 1800 Malta had very few industries except the cotton, tobacco and shipyards industry. The dockyard was later used by the British for military purposes. At times of war Malta's economy prospered due to its strategic location. This could be seen during the Crimean War of 1854. This benefited those who had a military role, as well as the craftsmen.

In 1869 the opening of the Suez Canal benefited Malta's economy greatly, as there was a massive increase in the shipping which entered the port. Entrepôt trade saw many ships stopping at Malta's docks for refuelling, which brought great benefits to the population. Towards the end of the 19th century the economy began declining, and by the 1940s Malta's economy was in serious crisis. This was partially due to the longer range of newer merchant ships which required less frequent refuelling stops.

Presently, Malta's major resources are limestone, a favourable geographic location and a productive labour force. Malta produces only about 20% of its food needs, has limited freshwater supplies and has no domestic energy sources. The economy is dependent on foreign trade (serving as a freight trans-shipment point), manufacturing (especially electronics and textiles) and tourism. Tourism infrastructure has increased dramatically over the years and a number of good-quality hotels are present on the island. An increasing number of Maltese now travel abroad on holiday. Although they are still a net importer of tourism, the ratio of inbound tourists to outbound tourists is decreasing. Film production is a growing contributor to the Maltese economy, with several big-budget foreign films shooting in Malta each year. The country has increased the exports of many other types of services such as banking and finance.

The government is investing heavily in the country's provision of education. As all education is free, Malta is currently producing a pool of qualified persons which heavily contribute to the country's growing economy.

Malta has recently privatised some state-controlled firms and liberalised markets in order to prepare for membership in the European Union, which it joined on May 1, 2004. For example, the government announced on January 8, 2007 that it is selling its 40% stake in Maltapost, in order to complete a privatisation process which has been ongoing for the past five years. Malta and Tunisia are currently discussing the commercial exploitation of the continental shelf between their countries, particularly for petroleum exploration.

The Maltese government entered ERM II on May 4, 2005, and adopted the euro as the country's currency on January 1, 2008. Maltese euro coins feature the Maltese Cross on €2 and €1 coins, the Maltese Coat of Arms on the €0.50, €0.20 and €0.10 coins, and the Mnajdra Temples on the €0.05, €0.02 and €0.01 coins.

Military

The objectives of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) are to maintain a military organisation with the primary aim of defending the Islands' integrity according to the defence roles as set by Government in an efficient and cost effective manner. This is achieved by emphasising the maintenance of Malta's territorial waters

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The Grand Harbour

and airspace integrity.

The AFM also engages in combating terrorism, fighting against illicit drug trafficking, conducting anti-illegal immigrant and anti-illegal fishing operations, operating Search and Rescue (SAR) services, and physical/electronic security/surveillance of sensitive locations. Malta's Search and Rescue area extends from east of Tunisia to west of Crete covering an area of around 250,000 km².

As a military organisation, the AFM provides backup support to the Malta Police Force (MPF) and other government departments/agencies in situations as required in an organised, disciplined manner in the event of national emergencies (such as natural disasters) or internal security and bomb disposal.

On another level, the AFM establishes and/or consolidates bilateral co-operation with other countries to reach higher operational effectiveness related to AFM roles.

Demographics

Population

A census of population and housing is held every ten years. The last census was held over three weeks in November 2005 and managed to enumerate an estimated 96% of the population. A preliminary report was issued in April 2006, and results were weighted to an estimate for 100% of the population.

Native Maltese people make up the majority of the island. However there are minorities, the largest of which are British people, many of whom retired to Malta.

The resident population of Malta, which includes foreigners residing in Malta for at least a year, as of November 27, 2005 was estimated at 404,039 of whom 200,715 (49.7%) were males and 203,324 (50.3%) were females. Of these, 17.1 per cent were aged 14 and under, 68.2 per cent were within the 15–64 age bracket whilst the remaining 13.7 per cent were 65 years and over. Malta's population density of 1,282 per square kilometre (3,322/ sq mi) is by far the highest in the EU, and one of the highest in the world. The only census year showing a fall in population was that of 1967, with a 1.7% total decrease, attributable to a substantial number of Maltese residents who emigrated. The Maltese-resident population for 2004 was estimated to make up 97.0% of the total resident population.

Through all the censuses since 1842 there was always a slightly higher female-to-male ratio. Closest to reaching equality were 1901 and 1911 censuses. The highest female-to-male ratio was reached in 1957 (1088:1000), and since the ratio has been constantly dropping. The 2005 census showed a 1013:1000 female-to-male ratio.

Population growth has slowed down, from +9.5% between the 1985 and 1995 censuses, to +6.9% between the 1995 and 2005 censuses (a yearly average of +0.7%). The birth rate stood at 3860 (a decrease of 21.8% from the 1995 census) and the death rate stood at 3025. Thus, there was a natural population increase of 835 (compared to +888 for 2004, of which over a hundred were foreign residents).

The population's age composition is similar to the age structure prevalent in the EU. Since 1967 there was observed a trend indicating an aging population, and is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. Malta's old-age-dependency-ratio rose from 17.2% in 1995 to 19.8% in 2005, reasonably lower than the EU's 24.9% average. In fact, 31.5% of the Maltese population is aged under 25 (compared to the EU's 29.1%); but the 50-64 age group constitutes 20.3% of the population, significantly higher than the EU's 17.9%. In conclusion, Malta's old-age-dependency-ratio is expected to continue rising steadily in the coming years.

Maltese legislation recognises both civil and canonical (ecclesiastical) marriages. Annulments by the ecclesial and civil courts are unrelated and are not necessarily granted. There is no divorce legislation and abortion in Malta is illegal. A person must be 18 to marry. The number of brides aged under 25 decreased from 1471 in 1997 to 766 in 2005; while the number of grooms under 25 decreased from 823 to 311. There is a constant trend that females are more likely than males to marry very young. In 2005 there were 51 brides aged between 16 and 19, compared to 8 grooms.

At the end of 2007, The population of the Maltese Islands stood at 410,290 and is expected to reach 424,028 by 2025. At the moment, females slightly outnumber males, making up 50.3 per cent of the population. The largest proportion of persons - 7.5 per cent - were aged 25-29, while there were 7.3 per cent falling into each of the 45-49 and 55-59 age brackets.

Languages

The official languages of Malta are Maltese and English. Maltese, the national language, is a Semitic language, descended from Siculo-Arabic, from Sicily and surrounding Southern Italy, with substantial borrowing from Sicilian and Italian. The Maltese alphabet of 29 letters is based on the Latin alphabet, but uses the diacritically altered letter *ż*, also found in Polish, *ċ*, *ġ*, as well as the letters *għ*, *ħ*, and *ie*, which are unique to Maltese.

Italian was an official language of Malta until the 1930s, and is widely spoken as a second or third language. Italian television channels from Italy-based broadcasters, such as Mediaset and RAI, reach Malta and remain popular.

In the 1995 census it was reported that 98% of the population fluently spoke Maltese, 76% English, 36% Italian, and 10% French.

As a first language, 86% of the population preferred to use Maltese, 12% English, and 2% Italian.

Religion

The Constitution of Malta provides for freedom of religion but establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion. Freedom House and the *World Factbook* report that 98 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, making the nation one of the most Catholic countries in the world. The Sunday Mass Attendance Census 2005 commissioned by the Archdiocese of Malta reports that 52.6% of the population attends regular religious services. This is one of the highest rates of attendance in Europe.

Around 22% of the population is reported to be active in a church group, movement or community. Malta has the highest concentration of members per capita of the Neocatechumenal Way in the world, since it was introduced in the islands in 1973 by three Italian catechists, who started the first community in the Immaculate Conception Parish in Hamrun.

The patron saints are Saint Paul, Saint Agata, Saint George and Saint George Preca, known as Dun Ġorġ - the first Maltese saint, canonised on 3 June 2007 by Pope Benedict XVI. A number of Maltese individuals are recognised as Blessed, including Maria Adeodata Pisani and Nazju Falzon, these having been beatified by the late Pope John Paul II.

Various Roman Catholic religious orders are found in Malta, such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans and Little Sisters of the Poor.

Most congregants at the local Protestant churches are not Maltese; many British retirees live in the country, and vacationers from many other nations compose the remainder of such congregations. There are approximately 500 Jehovah's Witnesses; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Bible Baptist Church, and the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches have about 60 affiliates. There is one Jewish congregation. Zen Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith also have about 40 members. There is one Muslim mosque and a Muslim primary school. Of the estimated 3,000 Muslims in Malta, approximately 2,250 are foreigners, approximately 600 are naturalized citizens, and approximately 150 are native-born Maltese. There are also some churches of other denominations, such as St. Andrew's Scots Church in Valletta (a joint Presbyterian and Methodist congregation) and St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, as well as a Seventh-day Adventist church in Birkirkara.

Migration

EU nationals require neither a visa nor a passport (an ID card or an expired passport are enough) to enter the country. Citizens of a number of third countries are not required to apply for a visa and require only a valid passport when residing in Malta for up to three months. Visas for other nationalities are valid for one month.

Immigrants, even those with EU citizenship, are required to apply for a work permit. This exception to EU law was agreed upon before accession to safeguard the Maltese labour market. In practice though, all work permits to EU nationals are granted and currently this exercise is only used to monitor the labour market for any needed intervention. The safeguards negotiated in Malta's accession have never been put into effect and it is unlikely that they will.

The estimated net inflow (using data for 2002 to 2004) was of 1,913 persons yearly. Over the last 10 years, Malta accepted back a yearly average of 425

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The Mosta Dome

returning emigrants.

During 2006, a total of 1,800 illegal immigrants reached Malta making the boat crossing from the North Africa coast. Most of them intended to reach mainland Europe and happened to come to Malta by mistake. Given Malta's high population density, the impact of this figure on Malta is equivalent to that of an arrival of 369,000 irregular immigrants in Germany and other large EU member states. In the first half of 2006, 967 irregular immigrants arrived in Malta – almost double the 473 who arrived in the same period in 2005.

Around 45% of immigrants landed in Malta have been granted refugee (5%) or protected humanitarian status (40%). A White Paper suggesting the grant of Maltese citizenship to refugees resident in Malta for over ten years was issued in 2005. Historically Malta gave refuge (and assisted in their resettlement) to eight hundred or so East African Asians who had been expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin and to just under a thousand Iraqis fleeing Saddam Hussein's regime.

Presently the problem of illegal immigration has increased steadily, causing real or perceived strains on Malta's health, employment and social services, its internal security and public order and labour market. Detention costs for the first half of 2006 alone cost € 746,385.

In 2005, Malta sought EU aid in relation to reception of irregular immigrants, repatriation of those denied refugee status, resettlement of refugees into EU countries, and maritime security. In December 2005, the European Council adopted *The Global Approach to Migration: Priority Actions focusing on Africa and the Mediterranean*; but the deployment of said actions has been limited to the western Mediterranean, thus putting further pressure on the central Mediterranean route for irregular immigration of which Malta forms a part.

Political tension started developing as the EU persistently ignored Malta's precarious situation: member states party to the legally-binding Cotonou Agreement continued not to fulfill their obligations and East African countries, from which most central Mediterranean irregular immigration originates, were excluded from the Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development held 10-11 July 2006 in Tripoli).

Education

Primary schooling has been compulsory since 1946, and secondary education was made compulsory in 1971 up to the age of sixteen. Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16 years. While the state provides education free of charge, the Church and the private sector run a number of schools in Malta and Gozo, such as St. Aloysius' College in Birkirkara. Most of the teachers' salary in Church schools is paid by the state.

Education in Malta is based on the British Model. Primary School lasts six years. At age 11 students sit for an examination to enter a Secondary School, either a Church School (the Common Entrance Examination) or a State School. Students sit for SEC O-level examinations at age 16, with passes obligatory in certain subjects such as Mathematics, English and Maltese. Students may opt to continue studying at a Sixth Form college like Junior College or De La Salle or else at another post-secondary institution such as MCAST. The Sixth Form course lasts for two years, at the end of which students sit for the Matriculation examination. Subject to their performance, students may then apply for an undergraduate degree or diploma.

Tertiary education at diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate level is mainly provided by the University of Malta (UoM).

The adult literacy rate is 92.8%.

Languages in education

English and Maltese are both used to teach students at primary and secondary school level, and both languages are also compulsory subjects. Public schools tend to use both Maltese and English in a balanced manner. Private schools prefer to use English for teaching, as is also the case with most departments of the University of Malta; this has a limiting effect on the capacity and development of the Maltese language.

Of the total number of students studying a first foreign language at secondary level, 51% take Italian whilst 38% take French. Other choices include German, Russian, Spanish, and Arabic.

Healthcare

Malta has a long history of healthcare, and the first hospital recorded in the country was already functioning by 1372.

Modern-day Malta has both a public healthcare system, known as the government healthcare service, and a private healthcare system.

Malta was ranked number 5 in the World Health Organization's ranking of the world's health systems, well above the USA (at 37), Australia (at 32), and Canada (at 30). Great Britain, the best of this group of larger comparator countries, was ranked at number 18, which is interesting in that the healthcare system in Malta closely resembles the British system, as healthcare is free at the point of delivery. Also, like the UK Malta has a strong general practitioner-delivered primary care base, supplemented by secondary care and tertiary care provided by a number of public hospitals, some of which (such as St. Luke's Hospital) are large (see List of hospitals in Malta).

There is both a medical school and a dental school at the University of Malta, as well as a nursing school .

Malta has three major private hospitals. These are St Philip's Hospital, with a capacity of 75 beds, in Santa Venera, and St James Capua Hospital in Sliema, with 80 beds (the former Capua Palace Hospital) - St James Hospital also has other sites, including a 13 bed unit in Zabbar, as well as a partner hospital in Libya. There is also St Mark's Clinic, with a capacity of 5 beds, based in Msida and which offers private hospital services.

In recent years, Malta has been trying to develop as a medical tourism destination . However, up to 2008 no Maltese hospitals in either the public or the private sectors had undergone independent international healthcare accreditation. Malta is popular with British medical tourists , and logically this may point Maltese hospitals towards seeking UK-sourced accreditation, such as with the Trent Accreditation Scheme, or possibly to seek dual accreditation with the American-orientated Joint Commission if they wish to compete with the Far East and Latin America for medical tourists from the USA, as well as from the UK. A number of health tourism providers are involved in developing medical tourism in Malta.

The Maltese Ministry of Health advises foreign residents to take out private medical insurance.

The Medical Association of Malta represents practitioners of the medical profession. MMSA is a separate body representing Maltese medical students, and is a member of EMSA and IFMSA. MIME, the Maltese Institute for Medical Education, is an institute set up recently to provide CME to doctors in Malta as well as medical students. MADS, the Malta Association of Dental Students, is a student association set up to promote the rights of Dental Surgery Students studying within the faculty of Dental Surgery of the University of Malta. It is affiliated with IADS, the International Association of Dental Students.

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Moldova


2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Moldova, officially the **Republic of Moldova** (*Republica Moldova*) is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe, located between Romania to the west and Ukraine to the north, east and south.

In the Middle Ages, most of the present territory of Moldova was part of the Principality of Moldavia, and in 1812 it became part of the Russian Empire, under the name of Bessarabia. Upon the dissolution of the Russian Empire in 1917-1918, Bessarabia joined Romania. In 1940, Bessarabia was occupied by the Soviet Union, and after changing hands in 1941 and 1944 during World War II, it was split between the Ukrainian SSR and the newly-created Moldavian SSR. Moldova declared its independence from the USSR on August 27, 1991. Despite signing international obligations to withdraw, Russian military forces have remained on Moldovan territory; since 1993 they have been stationed in the breakaway territory of Transnistria against the will of the Moldovan Government.

The country is a parliamentary democracy with a president as its head of state and a prime minister as its head of government. Moldova is a member state of the United Nations, WTO, OSCE, GUAM, CIS, BSEC and other international organizations. Moldova currently aspires to join the European Union and is implementing its first three-year Action Plan within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of the EU.

History

<p><i>Republica Moldova</i> Republic of Moldova</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Anthem: <i>Limba noastră</i> <i>Our Language</i></p>	
	
<p>Location of Moldova (orange) on the European continent (white)</p>	
<p>Capital (and largest city)</p>	<p>Chişinău</p>



Stephen the Great - the Prince of Moldavia between 1457 and 1504 and the most prominent representative of Moldavian historical personalities

In Antiquity Moldova's territory was inhabited by Dacian and Sarmatian tribes. Due to its strategic location on a route between Asia and Europe, Moldova faced several invasions, including those by the Bastarns, Huns, Magyars, Kievan Rus' and the Mongols. Beginning with the Late Middle Ages, the territory of Republic of Moldova, that of the Chernivtsi oblast and Budjak of Ukraine, as well as that of the eastern 8 of the 41 counties of Romania comprised the Principality of Moldavia (which, like the present-day republic, was known to the locals as *Moldova*). The principality became a tributary to the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century.

In 1812, according to the Treaty of Bucharest between the Ottoman and the Russian Empires, the former ceded the eastern half of the territory of the Principality of Moldavia, along Khotyn and old Bessarabia (modern Budjak). At first, the Russians used the name "Oblast' of Moldavia and Bessarabia", allowing a large degree of autonomy, but later (in 1828) suspended the self-administration and called it Guberniya of Bessarabia, or simply Bessarabia, starting a

process of Russification. The western part of Moldavia (which is not a part of present-day Moldova) remained an autonomous principality, and in 1859, united with Wallachia to form the Kingdom of Romania. In 1856, the Treaty of Paris saw two out of nine counties of Bessarabia, Cahul and Ismail, returned to Moldavia, but in 1878, the Treaty of Berlin saw the Kingdom of Romania returning them to the Russian Empire.

Upon annexation, after the expulsion of the large Tatar population of Budjak, the Moldovan/ Romanian population of Bessarabia was predominant. The colonization of the region in the 19th century, generated by the need to better exploit the resources of the land, lead to an increase in the Russian, Ukrainian, Lipovan, and Cossack populations in the region; this together with a large influx of Bulgarian immigrants, saw an increase of the Slavic population to more than a fifth of the total population by 1920. With the settling of other nationals such as Gagauz, Jews, and Germans (Bessarabian Germans), the proportion of the Moldovan population decreased from around 80% to 52% by some sources or to 70% by others during the course of the century. The Tsarist policy in Bessarabia was in part aimed at denationalization of the Romanian element by forbidding after the 1860s education and mass in Romanian. However, the effect was an extremely low literacy rate (in 1897 approx. 18% for males, approx. 4% for females) rather than a denationalization.

Official languages	Moldovan ¹
Recognised regional languages	Gagauz, Russian and Ukrainian
Demonym	Moldovan, Moldavian
Government	Parliamentary republic
- President	Vladimir Voronin
- Prime Minister	Zinaida Greceanîi (PCRM)
Consolidation	
- Moldavian Principality	1356
- Autonomous Bessarabian Oblast	April 29, 1818
- Moldavian Democratic Republic	December 16, 1917
- Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic	August 2, 1940
- Independence from the Soviet Union	August 27, 1991 (Declared) December 25, 1991 (Finalized)
Area	
- Total	33,846 km ² (139th) 13,067 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.4
Population	
- 2008 estimate	4,128,047 (121st ²)
- 2004 census	3,383,332 ³
- Density	121,9/km ² (87st) 316/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$9,367 million (141st)

World War I brought in a rise in political and cultural (national) awareness of the locals, as 300,000 Bessarabians were drafted into the Russian Army formed in 1917, within bigger units several "Moldavian Soldiers' Committees" were formed. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, a Bessarabian parliament, *Sfatul Țării* (October–November 1917), which was opened on December 3 [O.S. November 21] 1917, proclaimed the Moldavian Democratic Republic (December 15 [O.S. December 2] 1917) within a federal Russian state, and formed its government (December 21 [O.S. December 8] 1917). Bessarabia proclaimed independence from Russia (February 6 [O.S. January 24] 1918), and, on April 9 [O.S. March 27] 1918, Sfatul Țării decided with 86 votes for, 3 against and 36 abstaining, on union with the Kingdom of Romania, conditional upon the fulfilment of the agrarian reform, local autonomy, and respect for universal human rights. The conditions were dropped after Bukovina and Transylvania also joined the Kingdom of Romania.

Part of Greater Romania

After 1918 Bessarabia was under Romanian jurisdiction for the next 22 years. This fact was recognized in the Treaty of Paris (1920) which, however, has never come into force since it was not ratified by Japan. The newly-communist Russia did not recognize the Romanian rule over Bessarabia, a stand that was tacitly accepted by many other countries such as the United States. Furthermore, Russia and later, the Soviet Union, considered the region to be Soviet territory under foreign occupation and conducted numerous diplomatic attempts to reclaim it. No diplomatic relations existed between the two states until 1934. Nonetheless, both countries have subscribed to the principle of non-violent resolution of territorial disputes in the Kellogg-Briand Treaty of 1928 and the Treaty of London of July 1933. Meanwhile, the neighboring region of Transnistria, part of the Ukrainian SSR at the time, was formed into the Moldavian ASSR after the failure of the Tatarbunary Uprising in 1924.

The agrarian (land) reform, implemented by *Sfatul Țării* in 1918-1919, resulted in a rise of a middle class, as 87% of the region's population lived in rural areas. Together with peace and favorable economic circumstances, this reform resulted in a small economic boom. However, urban development and industry were insignificant, and the region remained primarily an agrarian rural region throughout the interwar period. Certain improvements were achieved in the area of education, the literacy rate rising from 15.6% in 1897 to 37% by 1930, however Bessarabia continued to lag behind the rest of the country, the national literacy rate being at 60%. During the inter-war period, Romanian authorities also conducted a program of Romanianization that sought to assimilate ethnic minorities throughout the country. The enforcement of this policy was especially pervasive in Bessarabia due to its highly diverse population, and resulted in the closure of minority educational and cultural institutions.

- Per capita	\$2,962 (135th)
Gini (2007)	37.1 (medium)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.708 (medium) (111th)
Currency	Moldovan leu (MDL)
Time zone - Summer (DST)	EET (UTC+2) EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.md
Calling code	+373
<p><small>1 Used as formal official name; literary form shared with Romanian.</small></p> <p><small>2 Ranking based on 2005 UN figure including Transnistria.</small></p> <p><small>3 2004 census data from the National Bureau of Statistics. Figure does not include Transnistria and Bender.</small></p>	



Territories of the medieval Principality of Moldavia are now split between Ukraine (southern Bessarabia with Budjak, northern Bessarabia with Khotin and northern Bukovina), Romania (western Moldavia with southern Bukovina) and Moldova (centre of Bessarabia).

Soviet era

In August 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed, and Nazi Germany recognized Bessarabia as being within the Soviet sphere of influence, which led the latter to actively revive its claim to the region. On June 26, 1940, Romania received an ultimatum from the Soviet Union, demanding the evacuation of the Romanian military and administration from Bessarabia and from the northern part of Bukovina, with an implied threat of invasion in the event of non-compliance. Under pressure from Moscow and Berlin, the Romanian administration and the army retreated from these territories, and on June 28, 1940 they were occupied by the Soviet Union. During the retreat, the Romanian Army was attacked by the Soviet Army, which entered Bessarabia before the Romanian administration finished retreating, as a result of which some 42,876 Romanian soldiers and officers were unaccounted for after the retreat. The northern and southern parts, which had sizeable non-Moldovan communities (of Ukrainians, Bessarabian Bulgarians, Bessarabian Germans and Lipovans), were transferred to the Ukrainian SSR as the Chernivtsi and Izmail Oblasts. At the same time, the Moldavian ASSR, where Moldovans were a plurality, was disbanded, and up to half its territory was joined with the remaining territory of Bessarabia to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), contiguous with present-day Moldova.

By participating in the 1941 Axis invasion of the Soviet Union, Romania seized the territory of the MSSR, and re-established its administration there. In occupied Transnistria, Romanian forces, working with the Germans, deported or exterminated 300,000 Jews, including 147,000 from Bessarabia and Bukovina. The Soviet Army reconquered and re-annexed the area in February-August 1944.

Under early Soviet rule, deportations of locals to the northern Urals, Siberia, and Kazakhstan occurred regularly throughout the Stalinist period, with the largest ones on 12-13 June 1941, and 5-6 July 1949, accounting for 19,000 and 35,000 deportees respectively. According to Russian historians, in 1940-1941, ca. 90,000 inhabitants of the annexed territories were subject to political persecutions. In 1946, as a result of a severe drought and excessive delivery quota obligations and requisitions imposed by the Soviet government, the southwestern part of the USSR suffered from widespread famine resulting in 216,000 deaths and about 350,000 cases of dystrophy in the Moldavian SSR alone. Similar events occurred in the 1930s in the Moldavian ASSR. In 1944-53, there were numerous anti-Communist armed resistance groups active in Moldova; however the NKVD and later MGB managed to uproot most of them with arrests and deportation.

The postwar period saw a wide scale migration of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians into the new Soviet republic, especially into urbanized areas, partly to compensate the demographic loss caused by the emigration of Germans in 1940. The Soviet government conducted a campaign to promote a Moldovan ethnic identity, different from that of the Romanians, based on a theory developed during the existence of the Moldavian ASSR. Official Soviet policy asserted that the language spoken by Moldovans was distinct from the Romanian language (see History of the Moldovan language). Moldovan was written in the Cyrillic alphabet, in contrast with Romanian, which was written in the Latin alphabet since 1860, to distinguish the two. In 1970s and 1980s, the Moldavian SSR received substantial allocations from the budget of the USSR to develop industrial and scientific facilities as well as housing. In 1971, the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a decision "About the measures for further development of the city of Kishinev", that allotted more than one billion Soviet rubles from the USSR budget; subsequent decisions also directed substantial funding and brought qualified specialists from other parts of the USSR to develop Moldova's

industry. This influx of investments was stopped in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when Moldova became independent.

Independence

Along with the other peripheral Soviet republics, Moldova started to move towards independence from 1988 onwards; on August 31, 1989 a language law was passed, adopting the Latin alphabet for Moldovan and declaring it the state language of the MSSR. The first independent elections into the local parliament were held in February and March 1990. After the attempted Moscow Putsch, Moldova declared its independence on August 27, 1991, and in December of that year joined the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) along with most of the former Soviet republics. Declaring itself a neutral state, it did not join the military branch of the CIS. At the end of that year, a former communist reformer, Mircea Snegur, won an unchallenged election for the presidency. Three months later, the country achieved formal recognition as an independent state at the United Nations.

The part of Moldova east of the Dniester river, Transnistria, which included a larger proportion of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, claimed independence in 1990, fearing the rise of nationalism in Moldova and the country's expected reunification with Romania upon secession from the USSR. This caused a brief military conflict between Moldova and forces supporting the secession of Transnistria in 1992. Russian military stationed in the region (14th Army) intervened on the Transnistrian side and remained on Moldovan territory east of the Dniester after the end of the military conflict, despite signing international obligations to withdraw, and against the will of Moldovan government. As of 2006, approximately 1200 of the 14th army personnel remain stationed in Transnistria. Negotiations between the Transnistrian and Moldovan leaders have been going on under the mediation of the OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine; lately observers from the European Union and the USA have become involved.

The 1998 economic crisis in Russia, Moldova's main economic partner at the time, produced an economic crisis in the country. The political flux was cleared in 2001 when elections saw the Party of Communists of Moldova win the majority of seats in the Parliament. Its leader Vladimir Voronin was appointed president. In economic terms, the crisis provoked an emigration of labor, as well as permanent emigration from Moldova. According to the census data, from 1989 to 2004, Moldova has lost about 400,000 inhabitants, or 9% of the population. Analysts estimate that actual emigration could be higher, as many seasonal workers remain registered as living in the country.

Relationships between Moldova and Russia deteriorated in November 2003 over a Russian proposal for the solution of the Transnistrian conflict, which Moldovan authorities refused to accept. In the following election, held in 2005, the Communist party made a formal 180 degree turn and was re-elected on a pro-Western platform, with Voronin being re-elected to a second term as a president. Since 1999, Moldova has constantly affirmed its desire to join the European Union, and implement its first three-year Action Plan within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of the EU.

Government



Moldova is a unitary parliamentary representative democratic republic. The Constitution of Moldova, adopted in 1994 sets the framework for the government of the country. In order to amend the constitution, a parliamentary majority of at least two thirds is required. Furthermore, the constitution cannot be revised in time of war or national emergency, and no revision can be made that limits the fundamental rights enumerated in the Constitution. Furthermore, amendments to the Constitution affecting the state's sovereignty, independence, or unity can only be made after a majority of voters support the proposal in a referendum.

The country's central legislative body is the unicameral Moldovan parliament (*Parlament*), which has 101 seats, and whose members are elected by popular vote every four years. The head of state is the president, who is elected by Parliament, requiring the support of three fifths of the deputies (at least 61 votes). The president appoints a prime minister who functions as the head of government and who in turn assembles a cabinet, both subject to parliamentary approval. The Constitution also establishes an independent Constitutional Court, which has the power of judicial review over all acts of parliaments, Presidential decrees, and international treaties. Members of this Court are composed of six judges, two appointed by the President, Parliament, and the High Magistrates Council each. The judges serve for a term of six years, during which time they are not subordinate to any other power and cannot be removed from their posts.

Currently, the President of Moldova is Vladimir Voronin. Voronin has held this post since 2001. The main party in parliament is the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova, which holds a majority of 55 seats. Other parties with deputies in Parliament are the Party Alliance Our Moldova, the Democratic Party of Moldova, the Social Liberal Party, and the Christian-Democratic People's Party. 17 deputies to parliament are independents.

Foreign relations

After achieving independence from the Soviet Union, Moldova established relations with other European countries. A course for European Union integration and neutrality define the country's foreign policy guidelines. In 1995 the country became the first post-Soviet state admitted to the Council of Europe. In addition to its participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, Moldova is also a member state of the United Nations, the OSCE, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Francophonie and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In 2005 Moldova and EU established an action plan that sought to improve the collaboration between the two neighboring structures. In June 2007 the Vice President of the Moldovan Parliament Iurie Roșca signed a bilateral agreement with the International Parliament for Safety and Peace, an intergovernmental organization for the promotion of world peace, based in Italy. After the War of Transnistria, Moldova had sought a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Transnistria region by working with Romania, Ukraine, and Russia, calling for international mediation, and cooperating with the OSCE and UN fact-finding and observer missions. On October 1st, 2007, the foreign minister of Moldova, Andrei Stratan, said at UN that Russian troops are in Republic of Moldova against the will of the Moldovan Government.

Administrative divisions

Moldova is divided into thirty-two districts (*raioane*, singular *raion*); three municipalities (Bălți, Chișinău, Bender); and two autonomous regions (Găgăuzia and Transnistria). The cities of Comrat and Tiraspol also have municipality status, however not as first-tier subdivisions of Moldova, but as parts of the regions of Găgăuzia and Transnistria, respectively. The status of Transnistria is however under dispute. Although it is *de jure* part of Moldova and is recognized as such by the international community, Transnistria is not *de facto* under the control of the central government of Moldova. It is administered by an unrecognized breakaway authority under the name Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic.

#	City	Population	Year
1.	Chișinău	647,513	2005
2.	Tiraspol	159,163	2004
3.	Bălți	122,778	2005
4.	Bendery	97,027	2004
5.	Rîbnița	53,648	2004



Administrative divisions of Moldova

Geography

The largest part of the country lies between two rivers, the Dniester and the Prut. Moldova's rich soil and temperate continental climate (with warm summers and mild winters) have made the country one of the most productive agricultural regions and a major supplier of agricultural products in the region. The western border of Moldova is formed by the Prut river, which joins the Danube before flowing into the Black Sea. In the north-east, the Dniester is the main river, flowing through the country from north to south.

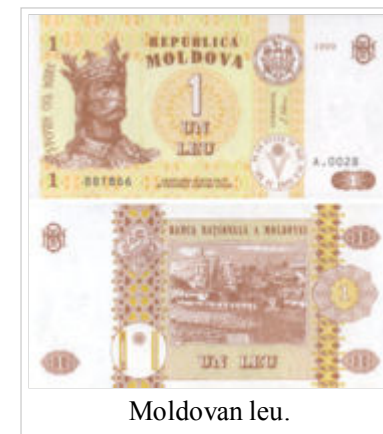
The country is landlocked, even though it is very close to the Black Sea. While the northern part of the country is hilly, elevations never exceed 430 meters (1,411 ft)—the highest point being the Dealul Bălănești. The country's main cities are the capital Chișinău, in the centre of the country, Tiraspol (in Transnistria), Bălți and Tighina. Phytogeographically, Moldova is shared between the Central European and Eastern European provinces of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Moldova can be subdivided into three ecoregions: the Central European mixed forests (in the central part, the region called colloquially *Codrii*, meaning "forests"), East European forest steppe (in the north, the *Bălți Steppe*) and Pontic steppe (in the south, connected to *Bugeac*).



Nistru valley view

Economy

Moldova enjoys a favorable climate and good farmland but has no major mineral deposits. As a result, the economy depends heavily on agriculture, featuring fruits, vegetables, wine, and tobacco. The country is considered to have the cleanest air in the world. Moldova must import all of its supplies of petroleum, coal, and natural gas, largely from Russia. After the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991, energy shortages contributed to sharp production declines. As part of an ambitious economic liberalization effort, Moldova introduced a convertible currency, liberalized all prices, stopped issuing preferential credits to state enterprises, backed steady land privatization, removed export controls, and liberalized interest rates. The government entered into agreements with the World Bank and the IMF to promote growth. Recent trends indicate that the Communist government intends to reverse some of these policies, and re-collectivise land while placing more restrictions on private business. The economy returned to positive growth, of 2.1% in 2000 and 6.1% in 2001. Growth remained strong in 2007 (6%), in part because of the reforms and because of starting from a small base. The economy remains vulnerable to higher fuel prices, poor agricultural weather, and the skepticism of foreign investors. In agriculture, the economic reform started with the land cadastre reform.



Moldovan leu.

Following the regional financial crisis in 1998, Moldova has made significant progress towards achieving and retaining macroeconomic and financial stabilization. It has, furthermore, implemented many structural and institutional reforms that are indispensable for the efficient functioning of a market economy. These efforts have helped maintain macroeconomic and financial stability under difficult external circumstances, enabled the resumption of economic growth and contributed to establishing an environment conducive to the economy's further growth and development in the medium term. Despite these efforts, and despite the recent resumption of economic growth, Moldova still ranks low in terms of commonly-used living standards and human development indicators in comparison with other transition economies. Although the economy experienced a constant economic growth after 2000: with 2.1%, 6.1%, 7.8% and 6.3% between 2000 and 2003 (with a forecast of 8% in 2004), one can observe that these latest developments hardly reach the level of 1994, with almost 40% of the GDP registered in 1990. Thus, during the last decade little has been done to reduce the country's vulnerability. After a severe economic decline, social and economic challenges, energy uprooted dependencies, Moldova continues to occupy one of the last places among European countries in income per capita.

In 2005 (Human Development Report 2008), the registered GDP per capita US \$ 2,100 PPP, which is 4.5 times lower than the world average (US \$ 9,543). Moreover, GDP per capita is under the average of its statistical region (US \$ 9,527 PPP). In 2005, about 20.8% of the population were under the absolute poverty line and registered an income lower than US \$ 2.15 (PPP) per day. Moldova is classified as medium in human development and is at the 111th spot in the list of 177 countries. The value of the Human Development Index (0.708) is below the world average. Moldova remains the poorest country in Europe in terms of GDP per capita: \$ 2,500 in 2006.

The GDP in 2007 constituted \$4,104 mln. That constituted a grow with 3% from the 2006 indicator.

Wine

Moldova is famous for its wines. For many years viticulture and winemaking in Moldova were the general occupation of the population. Evidence of this is present in historical memorials and documents, folklore, and the Moldovan spoken language.

The country has a well established wine industry. It has a vineyard area of 147,000 hectares (360,000 acres), of which 102,500 ha (253,000 acres) are used for commercial production. Most of the country's wine production is made for export. Many families have their own recipes and strands of grapes that have been passed down through the generations.

See also: Moldovan wine producers



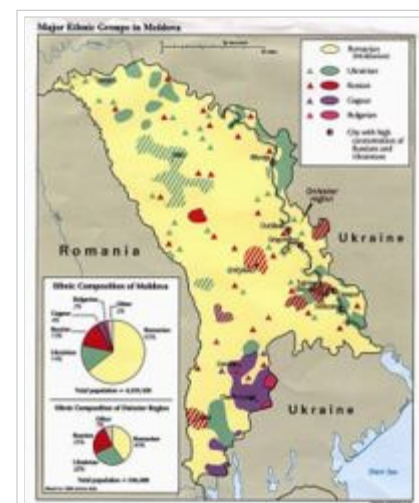
Moldovan wine bottles

Demographics

Ethnic composition

The last reference data is that of the 2004 Moldovan Census and the 2004 Census in Transnistria:

#	Ethnicity	Mold. census	% Mold	Transnistrian census	% Tran	Total	%
1.	Moldovans	2,564,849	75.8%	177,156	31.9%	2,742,005	69.6%
2.	Ukrainians	282,406	8.3%	159,940	28.8%	442,346	11.2%
3.	Russians	201,218	5.9%	168,270	30.3%	369,488	9.4%
4.	Gagauzians	147,500	4.4%	11,107	2.0%	158,607	4.0%
5.	Romanians	73,276	2.2%	NA	NA	73,276	1.9%
6.	Bulgarians	65,662	1.9%	11,107	2.0%	76,769	1.9%
7.	Others	48,421	1.4%	27,767	5.0%	76,188	1.9%
8.	TOTAL	3,383,332	100%	555,347	100%	3,938,679	100%



Ethnic composition in 1989.

Religion

For the 2004 census, Eastern Orthodox Christians, who make up over 90% of Moldova's population, were not required to declare the particular church they belong to. The Moldovan Orthodox Church, autonomous and subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Orthodox Church of Bessarabia, autonomous and subordinated to the Romanian Orthodox Church, both claim to be the national church of the country.

Military

- Military of Moldova
- Moldovan Ground Forces
- Moldovan Air Force

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Monaco

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Monaco, officially the **Principality of Monaco** (*Monégasque: Principatu de Múnegu; Occitan: Principat de Mónegue; French: Principauté de Monaco*) is a small sovereign city-state located in Western Europe. The territory lies on the northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea and is completely enclosed by France. Monaco is often regarded as a tax haven, and many of its inhabitants are wealthy and from foreign countries (including France), although they are not a majority.

Monaco is a Constitutional Monarchy and Principality with Prince Albert II as head of state. The Grimaldi family has ruled over Monaco since 1292 and the state's sovereignty was officially recognized by the Franco-Monegasque Treaty of 1861. Despite being independent, Monaco's defense is still the responsibility of France.

Monaco is the world's most densely populated sovereign country, and the world's smallest French-speaking country.




Administrative division

Monaco is a small country in Europe, and the distinction between the State and City of Monaco is purely theoretical. The state in fact consists of one municipality (*commune*) only. According to the constitution of 1911, the principality was subdivided into three municipalities:

- Monaco (Monaco-Ville), the old city on a rocky promontory extending into the Mediterranean, known as the Rock of Monaco, or simply le Rocher (the rock), where the palace is located
- Monte Carlo, the principal residential and resort area with the Monte Carlo Casino in the east and northeast
- La Condamine, the northwest section including the port area.

The three municipalities were merged into one in 1954 (after accusations that the government was acting according to the motto "divide and conquer"), and they had the status of wards (*quartiers*) thereafter.

- Fontvieille was added as fourth ward, a newly constructed area reclaimed from the sea (in the

<i>Principauté de Monaco</i> Principality of Monaco	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: <i>Deo Juvante</i> " (Latin) "With God's Help"	
Anthem: <i>Hymne Monégasque</i>	
	
Location of Monaco (circled in inset) on the European continent (white)	

1970s)

- Moneghetti became the fifth ward, created from a part of La Condamine
- Larvotto became the sixth ward, created from a part of Monte Carlo
- La Rousse/Saint Roman (including Le Ténao) became the seventh ward, also created from a part of Monte Carlo

Subsequently, three additional wards were created:

- Saint Michel, from a part of Monte Carlo
- La Colle, from a part of La Condamine
- Les Révoires, from a part of La Condamine

An additional ward is planned by new land reclamation, to be settled from 2014:

- Le Portier

Currently the principality is subdivided into 10 wards (with their official numbers - Le Portier, the planned ward, is anticipated as number 11):

Nr	Ward	Area (m ²)	Population (Census of 2000)	Density km ⁻²	City Blocks (<i>îlots</i>)	Remarks
Former municipality of Monaco						
05	Monaco-Ville	184,750	1,034	5597	19	Old City with palace
Former municipality of Monte Carlo						
01	Monte Carlo/Spélugues (<i>Bd. Des Moulins-Av. de la Madone</i>)	281,461	3,034	10779	20	the casino and resort area
02	La Rousse/ Saint Roman (<i>Annonciade-Château Périgord</i>)	105,215	3,223	30633	15	in the northeast, incl. Le Ténao
03	Larvotto/Bas Moulins (<i>Larvotto-Bd Psse Grace</i>)	328,479	5,443	16570	15	eastern beach area
10	Saint Michel (<i>Psse Charlotte-Park Palace</i>)	142,223	3,807	26768	24	central residential area

Capital	Monaco
Largest Most populated quartier	Monte Carlo
Official languages	French
Demonym	Monégasque or Monagasque
Government	Constitutional monarchy and Principality
- Prince	Albert II
- Minister of State	Jean-Paul Proust
- President of the National Council	Stéphane Valeri (UPM)
Independence	
- House of Grimaldi	1297
Area	
- Total	1.95 km ² (233rd) 0.76 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.0
Population	
- 2007 estimate	32,671 (210th)
- 2000 census	32,020
- Density	16,754/km ² (2nd) 47,358/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$976 million (?)
- Per capita	\$70,670 (€50,000) (Mid Sept. 07 est.) (2/3)
HDI (2003)	n/a (n/a) (unranked)
Currency	Euro (EUR)

Former municipality of La Condamine						
04	La Condamine	237,283	3,847	16213	27	port area in the northwest
07	La Colle (<i>Plati-Pasteur-Bd Charles III</i>)	188,073	2,822	15005	15	on the western border with Cap d'Ail
08	Les Révoires (<i>Hector Otto-Honoré Labande</i>)	75,747	2,515	33203	11	containing the Jardin Exotique
09	Moneghetti/ Bd de Belgique (<i>Bd Rainier III-Bd de Belgique</i>)	107,056	3,003	28051	18	
new land reclaimed from the sea						
06	Fontvieille	324,157	3,292	10156	9	started 1971
11	Le Portier	275,000 ¹⁾	-	-	-	planned (for 2014)
	Monaco	1,974,444	32,020	16217	173	
1) Area not included in total, as it is only proposed						

Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.mc
Calling code	+377

For statistical purposes, the wards of Monaco are further subdivided into 173 city blocks (*ilots*), which are comparable to the census blocks in the United States.

History

Monaco first gained its name from the nearby Phocaean Greek colony, in the sixth century BC, which referred to the Ligurians as Monoikos, from the Greek *Μόνοικος* "single house", from *μόνος* "alone, single" + *οἶκος* "house", which bears the sense of a people either settled in a "single habitation" or of "living apart" from others. According to an ancient myth, Hercules passed through the Monaco area and turned away the previous gods. As a result a temple was constructed there by Phocaeans, the temple of Hercules Monoikos. Because the only temple of this area was the "House" of Hercules, the city was called Monoikos.

Following a land grant from Emperor Henry VI in 1191, Monaco was re-founded in 1228 as a colony of Genoa. Monaco has been ruled by the House of Grimaldi since 1297, when François Grimaldi ("*Malizia*", Italian for "The Malicious") and his men captured the fortress protecting the famous Rock of Monaco while he was dressed as a Franciscan monk – or, in Italian *Monaco*, although this is a coincidence as the area was already known by this name.

From 1793 to 1814, Monaco was under French control. The Congress of Vienna designated Monaco as a protectorate of the Kingdom of Sardinia from 1815 until 1860 when the Treaty of Turin ceded to France the surrounding county of Nice (as well as Savoy). During this time there was unrest in the towns of Menton and Roquebrune, which declared independence, hoping for annexation by Sardinia. The unrest continued until the ruling prince gave up his claim to the two towns (some 95% of the country), and they were ceded to France in return for four million francs. This transfer and Monaco's sovereignty was recognised by the Franco-Monegasque Treaty of 1861.

Until the 1911 constitution, the princes of Monaco were absolute rulers. In July 1918, a treaty was signed providing for limited French protection over Monaco. The treaty, part of the Treaty of Versailles, established that Monegasque international policy would be aligned with French political, military, and economic interests.

In 1943, the Italian army invaded and occupied Monaco, setting up a Fascist administration. Shortly thereafter, following Mussolini's collapse in Italy, the Nazi German Wehrmacht occupied Monaco and began the deportation of the Jewish population. Among them was René Blum (Paris, 13 March 1878 - Auschwitz, 30 April 1943), who founded the Ballet de l'Opera in Monte Carlo. He was held in the Drancy deportation camp outside of Paris, France from where he was then shipped to the Auschwitz concentration camp where he died.

Rainier III, Prince of Monaco acceded to the throne following the death of his grandfather, Prince Louis II, in 1949. A new constitution, proclaimed in 1962, abolished capital punishment, provided for women's suffrage, and established a Supreme Court of Monaco to guarantee fundamental liberties. In 1993, the Principality of Monaco became a member of the United Nations, with full voting rights.

In 2002, a new treaty between France and Monaco specified that, should there be no heirs to carry on the Grimaldi dynasty, the principality would still remain an independent nation rather than revert to France. Monaco's military defense, however, is still the responsibility of France.

On 31 March 2005, Prince Rainier III, too ill to exercise his duties, relinquished them onto his only son and heir, Prince Albert Alexandre Louis. Prince Rainier died on 6 April 2005, after a reign of fifty-six years, and his son succeeded him as Albert II, Sovereign Prince of Monaco.



View of Monte Carlo



The territory of the Principality of Monaco

Following a period of official mourning, Prince Albert II formally assumed the princely crown on 12 July 2005, in a celebration that began with a solemn Mass at Monaco cathedral, where his father had been buried three months earlier. His accession to the Monegasque throne was a two-step event, with a further ceremony, drawing heads of state for an elaborate *levée*, held on 19 November 2005 at the historic palace in Monaco-Ville. Albert II is also the son of the late princess Grace, once the actress, Grace Kelly.

Law and government

Monaco has been governed as a constitutional monarchy since 1911, with the Sovereign Prince of Monaco as Head of state. The executive branch consists of a Minister of State (the head of government), who presides over a four-member Council of Government (the Cabinet). The minister of state is a French citizen appointed by the prince from among candidates proposed by the French government. Under the 1962 constitution, the prince shares his power with the unicameral National Council (parliament). The twenty-four members of this legislative body are elected from lists by universal suffrage for five-year terms. The principality's local affairs are directed by the Communal Council, which consists of fifteen elected members and is presided over by the mayor.

Economy



View of the Port of Hercules, La Condamine, Monaco

One of Monaco's main sources of income is tourism; each year many are attracted to its casino and pleasant climate. In 2001, a major new construction project extended the pier used by cruise ships in the main harbour. The principality has successfully sought to diversify into services and small, high-value-added, non-polluting industries such as cosmetics and biothermics.

The state retains monopolies in numerous sectors, including tobacco and the postal service. The telephone network (Monaco Telecom) used to be owned by the state; it now owns 45%, while the remaining 55% is owned by Cable and Wireless (49%) and Compagnie Monégasque de Banque (6%). It is still, however, a monopoly. Living standards are high, roughly comparable to those in prosperous French metropolitan areas.

Monaco is not a member of the European Union but is very closely linked to it via a customs union with France, and as such its currency is the same as that of France: the euro. Prior to 2002, Monaco minted their own franc coins, the Monegasque franc. Monaco has acquired the right to mint euro coins with Monegasque designs on their national side.

Tax haven

The State has no income tax for individuals. The lack of personal income tax has led to a considerable number of wealthy "tax refugee" residents from European countries who derive the majority of their income from activity outside Monaco; celebrities such as Formula One drivers attract most of the attention, but the vast majority of them are considerably less well-known business people.

In 2000, a report by French parliamentarians Arnaud Montebourg and Vincent Peillon alleged that Monaco has lax policies with respect to money laundering, including within its famed casino, and that the government of Monaco puts political pressure on the judiciary so that alleged crimes are not properly investigated.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) issued in 1998 a first report on the consequences of the tax havens financial systems. Monaco did not appear in the list of these territories until 2004, when OECD became indignant regarding the Monegasque situation and denounced it in its last report (as well as Andorra, the Principality of Liechtenstein, Liberia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands) underlining its lack of co-operation as regards financial information disclosure and availability.

In 2000, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) underlined that Monaco suffers a great lack of adequate resources. The Principality is no longer blamed in the FATF 2005 report, as well as all other territories in 2006.

Since 2003, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has identified Monaco, along with 36 other territories, as a tax haven.

The Council of Europe also decided to issue reports naming tax havens. 22 territories, Monaco included, were thus evaluated between 1998 and 2000 on a first round. Monaco is the only territory that refuses to perform the second round, initially forecast between 2001 and 2003, whereas the 21 other territories are



Fontvieille and its new harbour



Monte Carlo Casino

implementing the third and last round, planned between 2005 and 2007.

Geography of Monaco

Monaco is completely bordered by France to the north, west, and south; to the east it is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea.

Sport

Football

Football in Monaco is overwhelmingly dominated by AS Monaco FC, a club which plays in the French League, which they have won on seven occasions. The club plays their games at the Stade Louis II.

There is also a Monaco national football team who play matches against other small nations, islands and dependencies. They are currently seeking membership of FIFA which would allow them to try and qualify for the FIFA World Cup.

Every year Monaco plays host to the UEFA Super Cup and the draw for the UEFA Champions League.

Monaco Grand Prix

Since 1929, the Monaco Grand Prix has been held annually in the streets of Monaco. It is widely considered to be one of the most prestigious automobile races in the world, along with the Indianapolis 500 and the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The erecting of the circuit takes six weeks to complete, and the removal after the race another three weeks. The circuit has many elevation changes and tight corners, along with a tunnel. This together with being incredibly narrow make it perhaps the most demanding Formula One track. Only two drivers have ever crashed into the harbour, the most famous being Alberto Ascari in 1955 (Ascari would lose his life four days later at Monza). The other was Paul Hawkins during the 1965 race.

Monte Carlo Rally

The Monte Carlo Rally has been held since 1911, having originally been held at the behest of Albert I, Prince of Monaco, and is, like the principality's Grand Prix, organised by the *Automobile Club de Monaco*. It has long been considered to be one of the toughest and most prestigious events in rallying and since 1973 has been the opening round of the World Rally Championship.

Other Sports

The Monte Carlo Masters is currently held annually in neighbouring Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France, as a professional tournament for men as part of tennis'

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ATP Masters Series. The tournament has been held since 1897. Golf's Monte Carlo Open was also held at the Monte Carlo Golf Club at Mont Agel in France between 1984 and 1992.

Education

Primary and secondary schools

Monaco has ten state-operated schools, including seven nursery and primary schools, one secondary school (Collège Charles III), one lycée that provides general and technological training (Lycée Albert 1er), and one lycée that provides vocational and hotel training. There are also two grant-aided denominational private schools (including *Institution François d'Assise Nicolas Barré*) and (*Ecole des Sœurs Dominicaines*) and one international school (*International School of Monaco*).

Colleges and universities

- International University of Monaco

Demographics

Monaco's population is unusual in that the native Monegasques are a minority in their own country. The largest proportion of residents are French nationals (47%), followed by Monegasque (16%), and Italians (16%). The remaining 21% belong to one of the other 125 nationalities that make up Monaco's international population.

Languages

French is the only official language, but Italian, English, and the two local languages, Monégasque (a local variety of Ligurian) and Occitan, are also spoken. The literacy rate is 99%.

The Monégasque language is expected to experience a revival in the near future following a recent decision to teach it to all children in Monaco's schools.

Religion

Roman Catholic

The official religion is Roman Catholicism, with freedom of other religions guaranteed by the constitution. There are five Catholic parish churches in Monaco and one cathedral presided over by an archbishop.

Anglican

There is one Anglican church (St. Paul's Church), located in the Avenue de Grande Bretagne in Monte Carlo. In 2007 this had a formal membership of 135 Anglicans resident in the principality, but was also serving a considerably larger number of Anglicans temporarily in the country, mostly as tourists. The church site also accommodates an English-language library of over 3,000 books.

Jewish

The Association Culturelle Israelite de Monaco (founded 1948) is a house that has been converted into a synagogue, a community Hebrew school, and kosher food shop, located in Monte Carlo. There are weekly services on Shabbat. Several organizations, including WIZO and B'nai B'rith, are active in the Jewish community of Monaco. The community (approximately 1,500 strong) is mainly retired Jews from Britain (40%) and North Africa. There are also several Turkish and French Ashkenazi families. Half the population is Ashkenazi, while the other half are Sephardic.



Cathedral of Monaco

Security

The wider defence of the nation is provided by France.

Monaco has no navy or air force, but on both a per-capita and per-area basis, Monaco has the largest police force (515 police officers for 32,000 people) and police presence in the world. Its police includes a specialist unit which operates patrol and surveillance boats. There is also a small military consisting of a (mainly ceremonial) bodyguard unit for the Prince and his palace called the Compagnie des Carabiniers du Prince which numbers 112 officers and men and is equipped with modern weapons such as M-16 rifles and 9 mm pistols, and a militarized (and armed) fire and civil defence Corps.

The Compagnie des Carabiniers du Prince (Prince's Company of Carabiniers) is the main ceremonial unit of the military force of Monaco. It was created by Prince Honoré IV in 1817 for the protection of the Principality and the Princely family. The company numbers exactly 121 officers and men; while the NCOs and soldiers are local, the officers have generally served in the French Army. Together with the local fire service, the Carabiniers form Monaco's total public forces. In addition to their guard duties, the company patrols the Principality's beaches and coastal waters, as well as duties around the Palace in Monaco-Ville.

Flag

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The flag of Monaco reflects the heraldic colours of the Grimaldi family. It is one of the world's oldest national flag designs. The flag of Monaco is identical to that of Indonesia (except for the ratio of height to width).

Transport

Several train systems serve Monaco.

The closest airport is Cote d'Azur Airport in Nice, France. Some airlines marketed Monaco via Nice Airport.

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Montenegro

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Montenegro (Montenegrin/ Serbian: Црна Гора, *Crna Gora* (pronounced [ˈt͡sr̩̂naː ˈɡɔra], listen (· info)), Albanian: *Mali i Zi* ([ˈmali i ˈzi])) is a country located in Southeastern Europe. It has a coast on the Adriatic Sea to the south and borders Croatia to the west, Bosnia and Herzegovina to the northwest, Serbia to the northeast, Albania to the southeast. Its capital and largest city is Podgorica, while Cetinje is designated as the *Prijestonica* (meaning the old royal capital or former seat of the throne).

A principality in the Late Middle Ages, its independence from the Ottoman Empire was formally recognized in 1878. From 1918, Montenegro became a part of various incarnations of Yugoslavia. Based on the results of the referendum held on May 21, 2006, Montenegro declared independence on June 3, 2006 and is still currently the newest fully recognized country in the world. On June 28, 2006, it became the 192nd member state of the United Nations, and on May 11, 2007, the 47th member state of the Council of Europe.

Name

Montenegro's native name, *Crna Gora*, is mentioned for the first time in 1296 by Serbian King Stefan Uroš I in his edicts to the Serbian Orthodox Zeta Episcopate seat at the Vranjina island in Lake Skadar. The origin of the term lies in the Slavic reference to excessively mountainous regions, often emerging in the medieval Serbian realm. Mentioned afterwards in most House of Nemanjić's edicts and in subsequent Venetian sources in the 13th and 14th centuries, signifying the area of the Upper Zeta, the name stabilized itself for a Principality in the second half of the 15th century under Lord Ivan Crnojević, mostly confounding erroneously the term with the dynasty's name, which both have similar roots. The region itself became remembered as Old Montenegro (Стара Црна Гора/*Stara Crna Gora*) as by the 19th century the The Highlands were added to the state, and Montenegro further increased its size several times by the 20th century during wars against the Ottomans, expanding its name to and annexing Old Herzegovina and parts of Old Serbia, most notably Metohija and southern Rashka. The state changed little to modern day reference, losing Metohija (western Kosovo) and gaining the Bay of Kotor. The name of the region gave the name to its people, the Montenegrins (Црногорци/*Crnogorci*).

<p>Црна Гора <i>Crna Gora</i> Montenegro</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Anthem: <i>Oj, svijetla majska zoro</i> "O, Bright Dawn of May"</p>	
	
<p>Location of Montenegro (orange) on the European continent (white) — [Legend]</p>	

The country's name in most Western European languages, including English, reflects an adoption of the Venetian term *monte negro*, meaning "black mountain", which probably dates back to the era of Venetian hegemony over the area in the Middle Ages. Other languages, particularly nearby ones, use their own direct translation of the term "black mountain" (e.g. Albanian: *Mali i Zi*, Bulgarian: Черна гора, Cherna gora, Czech: *Černá Hora*, Greek: Μαυροβούνιο, Mavrovounio, Polish: *Czarnogóra*, Romanian: *MunteNegru*, Slovenian: *Črna Gora*, Slovak: *Čierna hora*, and Turkish: *Karadağ*). Names from further afield include Russian: Черногория, Chernogoriya, Icelandic: *Svartfjallaland* and Chinese: 黑山 (pinyin: "hēishān")

The ISO Alpha-2 code for Montenegro is ME and the Alpha-3 Code is MNE.

History

Capital (and largest city)	Podgorica ¹
Official languages	Montenegrin ² Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian and Croatian
Demonym	Montenegrin
Government	Semi-presidential republic
- President	Filip Vujanović
- Prime Minister	Milo Đukanović
- Speaker	Ranko Krivokapić
Foundation	
- Cetinje founded	1484
- Annexed by Ottoman Empire	1499
- Independence recognized	1878
- Unification with Serbia	1918
- Independence from Serbia and Montenegro	2006
Area	
- Total	13,812 km ² (160th) 5,019 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.5
Population	
- July 2008 estimate	678,177 (162nd)
- 2003 census	620,145
- Density	50/km ² (121st) 115.6/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2005/2006 estimate
- Total	\$3.443 billion

The first recorded settlers of present-day Montenegro were Illyrians, the Docleata. In 9 AD the Romans conquered the region of present-day Montenegro. Slavs massively colonized the area in the 5th and 6th centuries, forming a semi-independent principality, Doclea, that was involved in Balkan medieval politics with ties to Rascia and Byzantium and to a lesser extent Bulgaria, becoming a monarchy in the late 11th century. By the end of the 12th century, fully incorporated into a Serbian realm, the newly acquired land, then called Zeta, was governed by the Serbian Nemanjic dynasty. After the Serbian Empire collapsed in the second half of the 14th century, another family came to prominence by expanding their power in the region, the Balšićs. In 1421 it was annexed to the Serbian Despotate, but after 1455 another noble family from Zeta, the Crnojevićs, ruled Montenegro that until the end of the 15th century became the last free monarchy of the Balkans, finally falling to the Ottomans in 1499, who annexed it to the *sanjak* of Skadar. For a short time Montenegro existed as a separate autonomous *sanjak* in 1514–1528, another version of which existed again some time between 1597 and 1614.

In the 16th century Montenegro developed a form of special and unique autonomy within the Ottoman Empire: the local Serb clans were also free of many bonds due to Montenegro's autonomy. Nevertheless the Montenegrins refused to accept Ottoman reign and in the 17th century raised numerous rebellions, culminating with the Ottoman defeat in the Great Turkish War at the end of that century. Montenegro became a theocracy led by the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitans, flourishing since the Petrović-Njegoš became the traditional Prince-Bishops. The Venetian Republic introduced governors that meddled in Montenegrin politics; when the republic was succeeded by the Austrian Empire in 1797, the governors were abolished by Prince-Bishop Petar II in 1832. His predecessor Petar I contributed to the unification of Montenegro with the Highlands.

- Per capita	\$3,800
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$2.87 billion
- Per capita	\$ 4 818
HDI (2004)	0.788 (medium) (72nd)
Currency	Euro ³ (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.me (.yu) ⁴
Calling code	+382

¹ The traditional old capital of Montenegro is *Cetinje*.

² considered commonly as the Ijekavian dialect of the Serbian language.

³ Adopted unilaterally; Montenegro is not a formal member of the Eurozone.

⁴ .me became active in September 2007. Suffix .yu will exist until September 2009.



Under Nicholas I, the Principality of Montenegro vastly advanced and enlarged several times in the Montenegro-Turkish Wars and achieved recognition of independence in 1878. Modernization of the state followed, culminating with the draft of a Constitution in 1905. Political rifts for the first time emerged between the reigning People's Party that supported democratization of the ruler's autocratic regime and unconditional union with Serbia and the minor pro-monarch True People's Party. In 1910 Montenegro became a Kingdom. It initiated the Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913 in which the Ottomans lost all lands in the Balkans, achieving a common border with Serbia, but the Skadar was awarded to a newly created Albania. In World War I in 1914 Montenegro sided with Serbia against the Central Powers, suffering a full scale defeat to Austria-Hungary in early 1916. In 1918 the Allies liberated Montenegro, which was subsequently merged with Serbia.



In 1922 Montenegro formally became the Zeta Area of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and in 1929 it became a part of a larger Zeta Banate of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In World War II Yugoslavia was invaded by the Axis forces in 1941, who established a puppet Independent State of Montenegro, liberated by the Yugoslav Partisans in 1944. Montenegro became a constituent republic of the communist Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), its capital renamed to Titograd in honour of Partisan leader and SFRY president Josip "Tito" Broz. More and more autonomy was established, until the Socialist Republic of Montenegro ratified a new constitution 1974 (however, this RFM remained a constituent republic of the SFRY).

After the dissolution of the SFRY in 1992, Montenegro remained part of a smaller Federal Republic of Yugoslavia along with Serbia.



Map of Serbia and Montenegro

In the referendum on remaining in Yugoslavia in 1992, 95.96% of the votes were cast for remaining in the federation with Serbia, although the turnout was at 66% because of a boycott by the Muslim, Albanian and Catholic minorities as well as the pro-independence Montenegrins. The opposition claimed that the poll was organized under anti-democratic conditions, during wartime in the former Yugoslavia, with widespread propaganda from the state-controlled media in favour of a pro-federation vote. There is no impartial report on the fairness of the referendum, as the 1992 referendum was totally unmonitored, unlike the 2006 vote, which has been closely monitored by the European Union.

During the 1991–1995 Bosnian War and Croatian War, Montenegro participated with its police and military forces in the attacks on Dubrovnik, Croatia and Bosnian towns along with Serbian troops. It conducted persecutions against Bosnian refugees who were arrested by Montenegrin police and transported to Serb camps in Foča, where they were executed.

In 1996, Milo Đukanović's government severed ties between Montenegro and the Serbian regime, which was then under Milošević. Montenegro formed its own economic policy and adopted the German Deutsche Mark as its currency. It has since adopted the Euro, though it is not formally part of the Eurozone currency union. Subsequent governments of Montenegro carried out pro-independence policies, originally restored by the Liberal Alliance of Montenegro, and political tensions with Serbia simmered despite the political changes in Belgrade. Despite its pro-independence leanings, targets in Montenegro were bombed by NATO forces during Operation Allied Force in 1999, although the extent of these attacks was very limited in both time and the area affected.

In 2002, Serbia and Montenegro came to a new agreement regarding continued cooperation and entered into negotiations regarding the future status of the

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 2003, the Yugoslav federation was replaced in favour of a looser state union named Serbia and Montenegro and a possible referendum on Montenegrin independence was postponed for a minimum of three years.

21st century independence

The status of the union between Montenegro and Serbia was decided by the referendum on Montenegrin independence on May 21, 2006. A total of 419,240 votes were cast, representing 86.5% of the total electorate. 230,661 votes or 55.5% were for independence and 185,002 votes or 44.5% were against. The 45,659 difference narrowly surpassed the 55% threshold needed to validate the referendum under the rules set by the European Union. According to the electoral commission, the 55% threshold was passed by only 2,300 votes. Serbia, the member-states of the European Union, and the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council have all recognized Montenegro's independence.

The 2006 referendum was monitored by five international observer missions, headed by an OSCE/ ODIHR monitoring team, and around 3,000 observers in total (including domestic observers from CEMI, CEDEM and other organizations). The OSCE/ODIHR ROM joined efforts with the observers of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE) and the European Parliament (EP) to form an International Referendum Observation Mission (IROM). The IROM—in its preliminary report—"assessed compliance of the referendum process with OSCE commitments, Council of Europe commitments, other international standards for democratic electoral processes, and domestic legislation." Furthermore, the report assessed that the competitive pre-referendum environment was marked by an active and generally peaceful campaign and that "there were no reports of restrictions on fundamental civil and political rights."

On June 3, 2006, the Parliament of Montenegro declared the independence of Montenegro, formally confirming the result of the referendum on independence. Serbia did not obstruct the ruling, confirming its own independence and declaring the union of Serbia and Montenegro ended shortly thereafter.

On September 6, 2007 an adviser of the Prime Minister of Serbia called Montenegro a 'quasi-state'. Montenegro gave a protest list to the Serbian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Božidar Đelić, has apologized for this.

Geography

Internationally, Montenegro borders Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, the disputed territory Kosovo, and Albania. Historically, its territory was divided into "nahije".

Some of the biggest cities and towns in Montenegro are:

- Podgorica (capital; 136,473 inhabitants)
- Nikšić (58,212)
- Pljevlja (21,377)
- Bijelo Polje (15,883)
- Cetinje (The former royal capital and the seat of the throne; 15,137)
- Bar (13,719)
- Herceg Novi (12,739)
- Berane (11,776)

Montenegro ranges from high peaks along its borders with Serbia and Albania, a segment of the Karst of the western Balkan Peninsula, to a narrow coastal plain that is only one to four miles (6 km) wide. The plain stops abruptly in the north, where Mount Lovćen and Mount Orjen plunge abruptly into the inlet of the Bay of Kotor.

Montenegro's large Karst region lies generally at elevations of 1,000 metres (3,281 ft) above sea level; some parts, however, rise to 2,000 metres (6,560 ft), such as Mount Orjen (1,894 m/6,214 ft), the highest massif among the coastal limestone ranges. The Zeta River valley, at an elevation of 500 meters (1,640 ft), is the lowest segment.

The mountains of Montenegro include some of the most rugged terrain in Europe. They average more than 2,000 metres (6,560 ft) in elevation. One of the country's notable peaks is Bobotov Kuk in the Durmitor mountains, which reaches a height of 2,522 metres (8,274 ft). The Montenegrin mountain ranges were among the most ice-eroded parts of the Balkan Peninsula during the last glacial period.

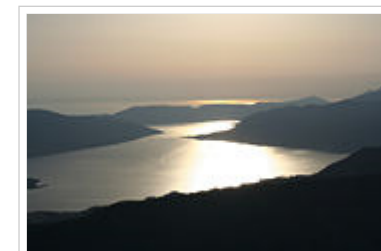
- Longest beach: Velika Plaža, Ulcinj — 13,000 m (8 miles)
- Highest peak: Zla Kolata, Prokletije at 2,534 m
- Largest lake: Skadar Lake — 391 km² (151 sq mi) of surface area
- Deepest canyon: Tara River Canyon — 1,300 m (4,265 ft)
- Biggest bay: Bay of Kotor
- National parks: Durmitor — 390 km² (150 sq mi), Lovćen — 64 km² (25 sq mi), Biogradska Gora — 54 km² (21 sq mi), Lake Scutari — 400 km² (154 sq mi)
- UNESCO World Heritage sites: Durmitor and Tara River Canyon, old city of Kotor.

Government and politics

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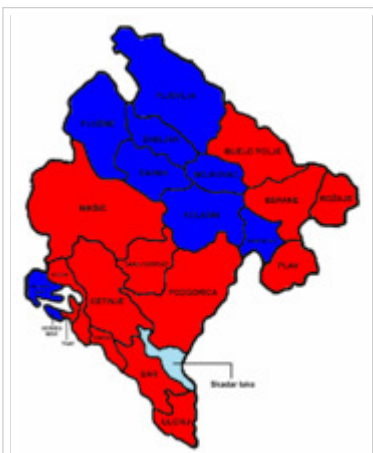
Map of Montenegro



Bay of Kotor



Morača River Canyon



Local self-government in Montenegro; red represents the municipalities in which the ruling DPS governs and blue are administered by the pro-Serbian opposition

Montenegro is defined as a " Civic, democratic, ecological and state of social justice, based on the reign of Law". It is an independent and sovereign Republic. It proclaimed its new Constitution on 22 October 2007.

Government

The current Government of the Republic of Montenegro (*Vlada Republike Crne Gore*) is composed of the prime minister, the deputy prime ministers as well as ministers. Milo Đukanović is the Prime Minister of Montenegro and head of the Government. The ruling party in Montenegro ever since multi-party system was introduced is the controversial Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS) (*Demokratska Partija Socijalista Crna Gore*), in coalition with the much smaller Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDP) (*Socijaldemokratska Partija Crne Gore*).

President

The President of Montenegro is elected for a period of five years through direct elections. According to the constitution, the President will represent the republic in the country and abroad, promulgate laws by ordinance, call elections for the Parliament, propose candidates for the Prime Minister, president and justices of the Constitutional Court to the Parliament, propose to the Parliament calling of a referendum, grant amnesty for criminal offences prescribed by the national law, confer decoration and awards, and perform all other duties in accordance with the Constitution. The

President shall also be a member of the Supreme Defence Council.

Parliament

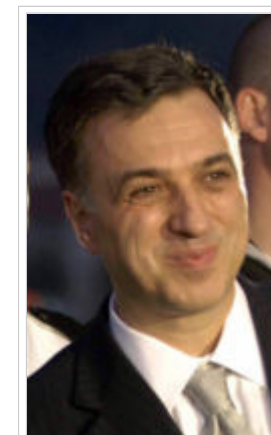
The Montenegrin Parliament (*Skupština Republike Crne Gore*) passes all laws in Montenegro, ratifies international treaties, appoints the Prime Minister, ministers, and justices of all courts, adopts the budget and performs other duties as established by the Constitution. The Parliament can pass a vote of no-confidence on the Government by a majority of the members. One representative is elected per 6,000 voters, which in turn results in a reduction of total number of representatives in the Parliament of Montenegro. The current president of the Parliament is Ranko Krivokapić.

The present parliament contains 81 seats instead of 75 in the previous parliament. Parliamentary elections were held on 10 September 2006 and were the first since the proclamation of independence. The constituent parliamentary session took place on 2 October 2006.

Symbols

A new official flag of Montenegro was adopted on July 13, 2004, by the Montenegrin legislature. The new flag is based on the royal standard of King Nikola I of Montenegro. This flag was all red with a gold border, a gold coat of arms, and the initials HI in Cyrillic script (corresponding to NI in Latin script) representing

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President Filip Vujanović

King Nikola I. These initials are omitted from the modern flag and replaced with a golden lion.

The national day of 13 July marks the date in 1878 when the Congress of Berlin recognised Montenegro as the 27th independent state in the world and the start of one of the first popular uprisings in Europe against the Axis Powers on 13 July 1941 in Montenegro.

In 2004, the Montenegrin legislature selected a popular Montenegrin traditional song, *Oh, Bright Dawn of May*, as the national anthem. Montenegro's official anthem during the reign of King Nikola was *Ubavoj nam Crnoj Gori (To our beautiful Montenegro)*. The Montenegrin popular anthem has unofficially been Onamo, 'namo! since King Nikola I wrote it in the 1860s.

Economy

During the era of communism Montenegro experienced a rapid period of urbanization and industrialization. An industrial sector based on electricity generation, steel, aluminium, coal mining, forestry and wood processing, textiles and tobacco manufacture were built up, with trade, overseas shipping, and particularly tourism, increasingly important by the late 1980s.

The loss of previously guaranteed markets and suppliers after the breakup of Yugoslavia left the Montenegrin industrial sector reeling as production was suspended and the privatization program, begun in 1989, was interrupted. The disintegration of the Yugoslav market, and the imposition of the UN sanctions in May 1992 were the causes of the greatest economic and financial crisis since World War II. During 1993, two thirds of the Montenegrin population lived below the poverty line, while frequent interruptions in relief supplies caused the health and environmental protection to drop below the minimum of international standards. The financial losses under the adverse effects of the UN sanctions on the overall economy of Montenegro are estimated to be approximately \$6.39 billion. This period also experienced the second highest hyperinflation in history (3 million percent in January 1994) (The highest hyperinflation happened in Hungary after the end of World War II, when inflation there hit 4.19×10^{16} percent).



Budva is the main tourist spot

In 1997, Milo Đukanović took control over the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS) and began severing ties with Milosevic' Serbia. He blamed the policies of Slobodan Milošević for the overall decline of the Montenegrin economy, as well as Milošević's systematic persecution of non-Serbs. Montenegro introduced the German mark as response to again-growing inflation, and insisted on taking more control over its economic fate. This eventually resulted in creation of Serbia and Montenegro, a loose union in which Montenegro mostly took responsibility for its economic policies.

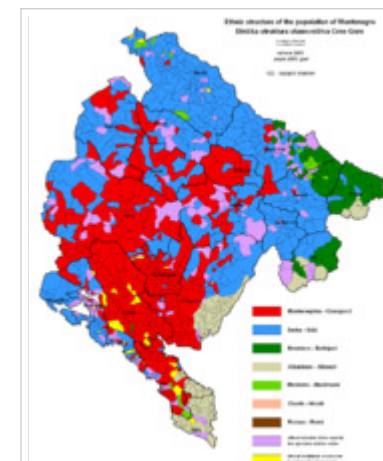
This was followed by implementation of faster and more efficient privatization, passing of reform laws, introduction of VAT and usage of Euro as Montenegro's legal tender.

Demographics

According to 2003 census, Montenegro has 620,145 citizens. If the methodology used up to 1991 was used in the 2003 census, Montenegro would officially have 673,094 citizens. Most recent estimates stake somewhere below 700,000 inhabitants.

When the census was taken Montenegro was a non-national civic state. In the meantime, the Constitution was changed, hence it now recognizes the major ethnic groups living in it: Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniaks, Albanians, Muslims and Croats. Ethnic composition according to the 2004 official data:

	Number	%
TOTAL	620,145	100
Montenegrins	267,669	43.16
Serbs	198,414	31.99
Bosniacs	48,184	7.77
Albanians	31,163	5.03
Muslims	24,625	3.97
Croats	6,811	1.1
Romany	2,601	0.42
Yugoslavs	1,860	0.3
<i>others</i>	38,818	6.26



Ethnic map of the Republic of Montenegro according to the 2003 census

The latest poll from mid 2008 had given a changed ethnic distributions:

- 43.6% Montenegrins
- 33.1% Serbs
- 9.4% Muslims
- 5.1% Albanians
- 3.9% Bosniacs
- 4.9% others

Most citizens speak the Serbian language of the Iyekavian dialect. However, as of 2004 the moves for an independent Montenegrin language were promoted and with the new 2007 Constitution it became Montenegro's prime official language. Next to it, Serbian, Albanian, Bosnian and Croatian are recognized in usage.

	Number	%
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TOTAL	620,145	100
Serbian	393,740	63.49
Montenegrin	136,208	21.96
Albanian	32,603	5.26
Bosniac	19,906	3.21
Bosnian	14,172	2.28
Croatian	2,791	0.45
<i>other</i>	20,725	3.34

Most Montenegrin inhabitants are Orthodox Christians, followers of the Serbian Orthodox Church's Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral. The religious institutions all have guaranteed rights and are separate from the state. There is a sizeable number of Sunni Muslims in Montenegro that maintain their own Islamic Community of Montenegro. There is also a small Roman Catholic population, divided onto the Achdiocese of Antivari headed by Primate of Serbia and the Diocese of Kotor that is a part of the Church of Croatia. Religious determination according to the census:

	Number	%
TOTAL	620,145	100
Orthodox	460,383	74.24
Muslim	110,034	17.74
Roman Catholic	21,972	3.54
<i>other</i>	27,756	4.48

According the newest report, there are 24,610 total refugees from the Yugoslav wars in Montenegro, forming 4.2% of the total population. 16,136 are refugees from Kosovo after 1999 and 8,474 expelled from Croatia and Bosnia.

Culture

The culture of Montenegro has been shaped by a variety of influences throughout history. The influence of Orthodox, Slavonic, Central European, Islamic, and seafaring Adriatic cultures (notably parts of Italy, like the Republic of Venice) have been the most important in recent centuries.

Montenegro has many significant cultural and historical sites, including heritage sites from the pre- Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque periods. The Montenegrin coastal region is especially well known for its religious monuments, including the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon in Kotor (Cattaro under the Venetians), the basilica of St. Luke (over 800 years), Our Lady of the Rocks (Škrpjela), the Savina Monastery and others. Montenegro's medieval monasteries contain thousands of square metres of frescos on their walls.

The traditional folk dance of the Montenegrins is the Oro, a circle dance that involves dancers standing on each other's shoulders in a circle while one or two dancers are dancing in the middle.

The first literary works written in the region are ten centuries old, and the first Montenegrin book was printed five hundred years ago. The first state-owned printing press was located in Cetinje in 1494, where the first South Slavic book, Oktoih, was printed the same year. Ancient manuscripts, dating from the thirteenth century, are kept in the Montenegrin monasteries.

Montenegro's capital Podgorica and the former royal capital of Cetinje are the two most important centers of culture and the arts in the country.

Education

Education in Montenegro is regulated by the Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science.

Education starts in either pre-schools or elementary schools. Children enroll in elementary schools (Serbian: *Osnovna škola*) at the age of 6; it lasts 9 years. The students may continue their secondary education, which lasts 4 years (3 years for trade schools) and ends with graduation (*Matura*). Higher education lasts with a certain first degree after 3 to 6 years.

Sports

Serbia and Montenegro were represented by a single football team in the 2006 FIFA World Cup tournament, despite having formally split just weeks prior to its start. Following this event, this team has been inherited by Serbia, while a new one was organized to represent Montenegro in international competitions. On March 24, 2007, the Montenegrin national team came from behind to win its first ever fixture, 2-1, in a friendly game against Hungary at the Podgorica Stadium. On their 119th Session in Guatemala City in July 2007, the International Olympic Committee granted recognition and membership to the newly formed Montenegrin National Olympic Committee. Montenegro is set to debut at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.



Our Lady of the Rocks and Sveti Đorđe Island in Bay of Kotor



National Museum of Montenegro in Cetinje (Former Palace of King Nikola I)



Morača Sports Centre, venue of Eurobasket 2005

Water Polo is one of the most popular sports in the country. Montenegro won the European Championships in Malaga, Spain on July 13, 2008 over Serbia 6-5 in a game that was tied 5-5 after four quarters. This was Montenegros first major international competition for which they had to qualify through two LEN tournaments. Montenegro's first division in water polo consists of five clubs, all with an annual budget of one million Euros and more - VK Primorac Kotor (2007 and 2008 Montenegro champions), VK Jadran Herceg Novi (2006 champions of Serbia-Montenegro), VK Budvanska Rivijera Budva, VK Prcanj and VK Bijela. From the coming season 2008-09 they will be joined by a sixth club, VK Cattaro. Additionally, they have qualified for the Olympic games in Beijing and will be considered one of the favorites to win.

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Netherlands

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

The **Netherlands** (Dutch: *Nederland* , IPA: [ˈnɛːdərlɑnt]) is the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which consists of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba in the Caribbean. The Netherlands is a parliamentary democratic constitutional monarchy, located in Western Europe. It is bordered by the North Sea to the north and west, Belgium to the south, and Germany to the east.

The Netherlands is often called *Holland*. This is formally incorrect as North and South Holland in the western Netherlands are only two of the country's twelve provinces. Still, many Dutch people colloquially refer to their country as *Holland* in this way, as a synecdoche. For more on this and other naming issues see terminology of the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is a geographically low-lying and densely populated country. It is popularly known for its traditional windmills, tulips, cheese, clogs (wooden shoes), delftware and gouda pottery, for its bicycles, its dikes and surge barriers, and, on the other hand, traditional values and civil virtues such as its classic social tolerance. An old parliamentary democracy, the country is more recently known for its rather liberal policies toward recreational drugs, prostitution, homosexuality, and euthanasia.

The Netherlands has an international outlook; among other affiliations the country is a founding member of the European Union (EU), NATO, the OECD, and has signed the Kyoto protocol. Along with Belgium and Luxembourg, the Netherlands is one of three member nations of the Benelux economic union. The country is host to five international (ised) courts: the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Court and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. All of these courts (except the Special Tribunal for Lebanon), as well as the EU's criminal intelligence agency (Europol), are situated in The Hague, which has led to the city being referred to as "the world's legal capital."

A remarkable aspect of the Netherlands is its flatness. Hilly landscapes can be found only in the south-eastern tip of the country on the foothills of the Ardennes, the central part and where the glaciers pushed up several hilly ridges such as the Hondsrug in Drenthe, the stuwwallen (push moraines) near Arnhem and Nijmegen, Salland, Twente and the Utrechtse Heuvelrug.

<p><i>Koninkrijk der Nederlanden</i> Kingdom of the Netherlands</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Motto: <i>Je maintiendrai</i>" (French) <i>Ik zal handhaven</i>" (Dutch) "I shall stand fast"^{nl}</p>	
<p>Anthem: " <i>Het Wilhelmus</i>"</p>	
	
Location of Netherlands (dark green)	

History

Under Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, and king of Spain, the region was part of the Seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands, which also included most of present-day Belgium, Luxembourg, and some land of France and Germany. 1568 saw the start of the Eighty Years' War between the provinces and Spain. In 1579, the northern half of the Seventeen Provinces formed the Union of Utrecht, a treaty in which they promised to support each other in their defense against the Spanish army. The Union of Utrecht is seen as the foundation of the modern Netherlands. In 1581 the northern provinces adopted the Act of Abjuration, the declaration of independence in which the provinces officially deposed Philip II. Philip II the son of Charles V, was not prepared to let them go easily and war continued until 1648 when Spain under King Philip IV finally recognised Dutch independence in the Treaty of Münster.

Dutch Republic 1581-1795



William the Silent, leader of the Netherlands during the Dutch Revolt.

Since their independence from Phillip II in 1581 the provinces formed the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. The republic was a confederation of the provinces Holland, Zeeland, Groningen, Friesland, Utrecht, Overijssel and Gelre. All these provinces were autonomous and had their own government, the "States of the Province". The States-General, the confederal government, were seated in The Hague and consisted of representatives from each of the seven provinces. The very thinly populated region of Drenthe, mainly consisting of poor peatland, was part of the Republic too, although Drenthe was not considered one of the provinces. Drenthe had its own States but the landdrost of Drenthe was appointed by the States-General.

The Republic occupied a number of so-called Generality Lands (*Generaliteitslanden* in Dutch). These territories were governed directly by the States-General, so they did not have a government of their own and they did not have representatives in the States-General. Most of these territories were occupied during the Eighty Years' War.

They were mainly Roman Catholic and they were used as a buffer zone between the Republic and the Southern Netherlands.

The Dutch grew to become one of the major seafaring and economic powers of the 17th century during

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– on the European continent (light green & dark grey)	
– in the European Union (light green) — [Legend]	
Capital (and largest city)	Amsterdam ²
Official languages	Dutch ³
Ethnic groups	80.9% Dutch 19.1% various others
Demonym	Dutch
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
 - Monarch	Queen Beatrix
 - Prime Minister	Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA)
Independence	through the Eighty Years' War from Philip II of Spain
 - Declared	July 26, 1581
 - Recognised	January 30, 1648 ⁴
EU accession	March 25, 1957
Area	
 - Total	41,526 km ² (135th) 16,033 sq mi
 - Water (%)	18.41
Population	
 - 2008 estimate	16,408,557 (61st)
 - Density	395/km ² (25th) 1,023/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2006 estimate
 - Total	670,929 Billion (16th)
 - Per capita	\$35,078 (10th)

the period of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. In the so-called Dutch Golden Age, colonies and trading posts were established all over the globe. (See Dutch colonial empire)

Many economic historians regard the Netherlands as the first thoroughly capitalist country in the world. In early modern Europe it featured the wealthiest trading city (Amsterdam) and the first full-time stock exchange. The inventiveness of the traders led to insurance and retirement funds as well as such less benign phenomena as the boom-bust cycle, the world's first asset-inflation bubble, the tulip mania of 1636–1637, and according to Murray Sayle, the world's first bear raider - Isaac le Maire, who forced prices down by dumping stock and then buying it back at a discount. The republic went into a state of general decline in the later 18th century, with economic competition from England and long standing rivalries between the two main factions in Dutch society, the *Staatsgezinden* (Republicans) and the *Prinsgezinden* (Royalists or Orangists) as main factors.

Under French influence 1795-1815

On 19 January 1795, a day after stadtholder William V of Orange fled to England, the Batavian Republic (*Bataafse Republiek* in Dutch) was proclaimed. The proclamation of the Batavian Republic introduced the concept of the unitary state in the Netherlands. From 1795 to 1806, the Batavian Republic designated the Netherlands as a republic modelled after the French Republic.

The Kingdom of Holland 1806 – 1810 (Dutch: Koninkrijk Holland, French: Royaume de Hollande) was set up by Napoleon Bonaparte as a puppet kingdom for his third brother, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, in order to control the Netherlands more effectively. The name of the leading province, Holland, was now taken for the whole country. The kingdom of Holland covered the area of present day Netherlands, with the exception of Limburg, and parts of Zeeland, which were French territory. In 1807 Prussian East Frisia and Jever were added to the kingdom. In 1809 however, after an English invasion, Holland had to give over all territories south of the river Rhine to France.

King Louis Napoleon did not meet Napoleon's expectations — he tried to serve Dutch interests instead of his brother's — and the King had to abdicate on 1 July 1810. He was succeeded by his five year old son Napoleon Louis Bonaparte. Napoleon Louis reigned as Louis II for just ten days as Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte ignored his young nephew's accession to the throne. The Emperor sent in an army to invade the country and dissolved the Kingdom of Holland. The Netherlands then became part of the French Empire.

From 1810 to 1813, when Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated in the battle of Leipzig, the Netherlands were part of the French Empire.

Kingdom of the Netherlands

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GDP (nominal)	2005 estimate
- Total	\$625.271 billion (16th)
- Per capita	\$38,618 (10th)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.953 (high) (9th)
Currency	Euro (€) ⁵ (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.nl ⁶
Calling code	+31
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The literal translation of the motto is "I will maintain". Here "maintain" is taken to mean to stand fast or to hold ground. While Amsterdam is the constitutional capital, The Hague is the seat of the government. West Frisian is also an official language in the Netherlands, although only spoken in Friesland; Dutch Low Saxon and Limburgish are officially recognised as regional languages. Peace of Westphalia. Before 2002: Dutch guilder. The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states. 	

In 1795 the last stadtholder William V of Orange fled to England. His son returned to the Netherlands in 1813 to become William I of the Netherlands, Sovereign Prince of the Netherlands. On 16 March 1815 the Sovereign Prince became King of the Netherlands.

In 1815 the Congress of Vienna formed the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, by expanding the Netherlands with Belgium in order to create a strong country on the northern border of France. In addition, William became hereditary Grand Duke of Luxembourg. The Congress of Vienna gave Luxembourg to William personally in exchange for his German possessions, Nassau-Dillenburg, Siegen, Hadamar and Diez.

Belgium rebelled and gained independence in 1830, while the personal union between Luxembourg and the Netherlands was severed in 1890, when King William III of the Netherlands died with no surviving male heirs. Ascendancy laws prevented his daughter Queen Wilhelmina from becoming the next Grand Duchess. Therefore the throne of Luxembourg passed over from the House of Orange-Nassau to the House of Nassau-Weilburg, another branch of the House of Nassau.

Colonies

The largest Dutch settlement abroad was the Cape Colony. It was established by Jan van Riebeeck on behalf of the Dutch East India Company at Cape Town (Dutch: *Kaapstad*) in 1652. The Prince of Orange acquiesced to British occupation and control of the Cape Colony in 1788. The Netherlands also possessed several other colonies, but Dutch settlement in these lands was limited. Most notable were the vast Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and Suriname (the latter was traded with the British for New Amsterdam, now known as New York). These 'colonies' were first administered by the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company, both collective private enterprises. Three centuries later these companies got into financial trouble and the territories in which they operated were taken over by the Dutch government (in 1815 and 1791 respectively). Only then did they become official colonies.



Map of the Netherlands in 1843 after independence of Belgium.

Industrialisation

During the 19th century, the Netherlands was slow to industrialize compared to neighbouring countries, mainly due to the great complexity involved in the modernizing of the infrastructure consisting largely of waterways and the great reliance its industry had on windpower.

World War I

Many historians do not recognise the Dutch involvement during World War I. However, recently historians started to change their opinion on the role of the Dutch. Although the Netherlands remained neutral during the war, it was heavily involved in the war. Von Schlieffen had originally planned to invade the Netherlands while advancing into France in the original Schlieffen Plan. This was changed by Helmuth von Moltke the Younger in order to maintain Dutch neutrality. Later during the war Dutch neutrality would prove essential to German survival up till the blockade integrated by the USA and Great Britain in 1916 when the import of goods through the Netherlands was no longer possible. However, the Dutch were able to remain neutral during the war using their diplomacy and their ability to trade.

World War II

The Netherlands remained neutral in World War I and intended to do so in World War II. However, Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands in 1940 in the Western European campaign of the Second World War. The country was quickly overrun and the army main force surrendered on May 14 after the bombing of Rotterdam, although a Dutch and French allied force held the province of Zeeland for a short time after the Dutch surrender. The Kingdom as such continued the war from the colonial empire; the government in exile resided in London.

During the occupation over 100,000 Dutch Jews were rounded up to be transported to Nazi concentration camps in Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. By the time these camps were liberated, only 876 Dutch Jews survived. Dutch workers were conscripted for forced labour in German factories, civilians were killed in reprisal for attacks on German soldiers, and the countryside was plundered for food for German soldiers in the Netherlands and for shipment to Germany. Although there are many stories of Dutch people risking their lives by hiding Jews from the Germans, like in the diary of Anne Frank, there were also Dutch people who collaborated with Nazi occupiers in hunting down and arresting hiding Jews, and some joined the Waffen-SS to form the 4th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Brigade Netherlands, fighting on the Eastern Front.

The government-in-exile lost control of its major colonial stronghold, the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia), to Japanese forces in March 1942. " American-British-Dutch-Australian" (ABDA) forces fought hard in some instances, but were overwhelmed. During the occupation, the Japanese interned Dutch civilians and used both them and Indonesian civilians as forced labour, both in the Netherlands East Indies and in neighbouring countries. This included forcing women to work as " comfort women" (sex slaves) for Japanese personnel. Some military personnel escaped to Australia and other Allied countries from where they carried on the fight against Japan.

After a first liberation attempt by the Allied 21st Army Group stalled, much of the northern Netherlands was subject to the Dutch famine of 1944, caused by the disrupted transportation system, caused by German destruction of dikes to slow allied advances, and German confiscation of much food and livestock and above that all a very severe winter made the "Hunger Winter" of 1944-1945 one in which malnutrition and starvation were rife among the Dutch population. German forces held out until the surrender of May 5, 1945, in Wageningen at Hotel De Wereld.

After the war

After the war, the Dutch economy prospered by leaving behind an era of neutrality and gaining closer ties with neighbouring states. The Netherlands became a member of the Benelux (**B**elgium, the **N**etherlands and **L**uxembourg) grouping. Furthermore, the Netherlands was among the twelve founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and among the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community, which would later evolve, via the EEC (Common Market), into the European Union.

Geography

Floods

In years past, the Dutch coastline has changed considerably as a result of human intervention and natural disasters. Most notable in terms of land loss is the 1134 storm, which created the archipelago of Zeeland in the south west. The St. Elizabeth flood of 1421 and the mismanagement in its aftermath destroyed a newly reclaimed polder, replacing it with the 72 square kilometres (28 sq mi) *Biesbosch* tidal floodplains in the south-centre. The most recent parts of Zeeland were flooded during the North Sea Flood of 1953 when 1,836 people were killed, after which the *Delta Plan* was executed.

The disasters were partially increased in severity through human influence. People had drained relatively high lying swampland to use it as farmland. This drainage caused the fertile peat to compress and the ground level to drop, locking the land users in a vicious circle whereby they would lower the water level to compensate for the drop in ground level, causing the underlying peat to compress even more. The problem remains unsolvable to this day. Also, up until the 19th century peat was mined, dried, and used for fuel, further adding to the problem.

To guard against floods, a series of defences against the water were contrived. In the first millennium AD, villages and farmhouses were built on man-made hills called *terps*. Later, these terps were connected by dykes. In the 12th century, local government agencies called *waterschappen* (English "water bodies") or *hoogheemraadschappen* ("high home councils") started to appear, whose job it was to maintain the water level and to protect a region from floods. (These agencies exist to this day, performing the same function.) As the ground level dropped, the dykes by necessity grew and merged into an integrated system. By the 13th century, windmills had come into use in order to pump water out of areas below sea level. The windmills were later used to drain lakes, creating the famous polders. In 1932, the *Afsluitdijk* (English "Closure Dyke") was completed, blocking the former *Zuiderzee* (Southern Sea) from the North Sea and thus creating the IJsselmeer (IJssel Lake). It became part of the larger Zuiderzee Works in which four polders totalling 2,500 km² (965 mi²) were reclaimed from the sea.

Delta works

After the 1953 disaster, the Delta project, a vast construction effort designed to end the threat from the sea once and for all, was launched in 1958 and largely completed in 2002. The official goal of the Delta project was to reduce the risk of flooding in the province of Zeeland to once per 10,000 years. (For the rest of the country, the protection-level is once per 4,000 years.) This was achieved by raising 3,000 kilometres (1,864 miles) of outer sea-dykes and 10,000 kilometres (6,200 miles) of inner, canal, and river dikes to "delta" height, and by closing off the sea estuaries of the Zeeland province. New risk assessments occasionally show problems requiring additional Delta project dyke reinforcements. The Delta project is one of the largest construction efforts in human history and is considered by the American Society of Civil Engineers as one of the seven wonders of the modern world.

Additionally, the Netherlands is one of the countries that may suffer most from climatic change. Not only is the rising sea a problem, but also erratic weather patterns may cause the rivers to overflow.

Rivers

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Map of the Netherlands.



Satellite image of the Netherlands (May 6, 2000).

The country is divided into two main parts by three large rivers, the Rhine (*Rijn*) and its main tributary Waal, as well as the Meuse (*Maas*). These rivers function as a natural barrier between earlier fiefdoms, and hence created traditionally a cultural divide, as is evident in some phonetic traits that are recognisable north and south of these "Large Rivers" (*de Grote Rivieren*). In addition to this, there was, until quite recently, a clear religious dominance of Catholics in the south and of Protestants in the north.

The south-western part of the Netherlands is actually a massive river delta of these rivers and two tributaries of the Scheldt (*Westerschelde and Oosterschelde*). Only one significant branch of the Rhine flows northeastwards, the IJssel river, discharging into the IJsselmeer, the former Zuiderzee ('southern sea'). This river also happens to form a linguistic divide. People to the east of this river speak Low Saxon dialects (except for the province of Friesland that has its own language).

Climate

The predominant wind direction in the Netherlands is south-west, which causes a moderate maritime climate, with cool summers and mild winters.

Mean measurements by the KNMI weather station in De Bilt between 1971 and 2000:

<i>Month</i>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	<i>Year</i>
<i>Avg. highest temp. (°C)</i>	5.2	6.1	9.6	12.9	17.6	19.8	22.1	22.3	18.7	14.2	9.1	6.4	13.7
<i>Avg. lowest temp. (°C)</i>	0.0	-0.1	2.0	3.5	7.5	10.2	12.5	12.0	9.6	6.5	3.2	1.3	5.7
<i>Avg. temp. (°C)</i>	2.8	3.0	5.8	8.3	12.7	15.2	17.4	17.2	14.2	10.3	6.2	4.0	9.8

<i>Month</i>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	<i>Year</i>
<i>Avg. precipitation (mm)</i>	67	48	65	45	62	72	70	58	72	77	81	77	793
<i>Avg. hours sunshine</i>	52	79	114	158	204	187	196	192	133	106	60	44	1524

Nature

The Netherlands has 20 national parks and hundreds of other nature reserves. Most are owned by Staatsbosbeheer and Natuurmonumenten and include lakes, heathland, woods, dunes and other habitats.

Phytogeographically, the Netherlands are shared between the Atlantic European and Central European provinces of



Panoramic view of windmills at Kinderdijk.

the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of the Netherlands belongs to the ecoregion of Atlantic mixed forests. In 1871 the last old original natural woods (Beekbergerwoud) were cut down and most woods today are planted monocultures of trees like Scots Pine and trees that are not native to the Netherlands. These woods were planted on anthropogenic heaths and sand-drifts (overgrazed heaths) (Veluwe).

Government and administration

Government

The Netherlands has been a constitutional monarchy since 1815 and a parliamentary democracy since 1848; before that it had been a republic from 1581 to 1806, a kingdom between 1806 and 1810, and a part of France between 1810 and 1813. The Netherlands is described as a consociational state. Dutch politics and governance are characterised by an effort to achieve broad consensus on important issues, within both the political community and society as a whole. In 2007, The Economist ranked The Netherlands as the third most democratic country in the world.

The head of state is the monarch, at present Queen Beatrix. Constitutionally the monarch still has considerable powers, but in practice it has become a ceremonial function. The monarch can exert most influence during the formation of a new cabinet, where he/she serves as neutral arbiter between the political parties.

In practice the executive power is formed by **de ministerraad** (Dutch cabinet). Because of the multi-party system no single party has ever held a majority in parliament since the 19th century, therefore coalition cabinets have to be formed. The cabinet consists usually of around thirteen to sixteen ministers of which between one and three ministers without portfolio, and a varying number of state secretaries. The head of government is the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, who is often, but not always, the leader of the largest party in the coalition. In practice the Prime Minister has been the leader of the largest coalition party since 1973. He is a *primus inter pares*, meaning he has no explicit powers that go beyond those of the other ministers.

The cabinet is responsible to the bicameral parliament, the States-General which also has legislative powers. The 150 members of the Second Chamber, the Lower House, are elected in direct elections, which are held every four years or after the fall of the cabinet (by example: when one of the chambers carries a motion of no-confidence, the cabinet offers her resignation to the monarch). The provincial assemblies are directly elected every four years as well. The members of the provincial assemblies elect the 75 members of the First Chamber, the upper house, which has less legislative powers, as it can merely reject laws, not propose or amend them.

Both trade unions and employers organisations are consulted beforehand in policymaking in the financial, economic and social areas. They meet regularly with government in the Social-Economic Council. This body advises government and its advice cannot be put aside easily.

While historically the Dutch foreign policy was characterised by neutrality, since the Second World War the Netherlands became a member of a large number of international organisations, most prominently the UN, NATO and the EU. The Dutch economy is very open and relies on international trade.



Thorbecke reformed the Dutch government to a parliamentary monarchy.

The Netherlands has a long tradition of social tolerance. In the 18th century, while the Dutch Reformed Church was the state religion, Catholicism and Judaism were tolerated. In the late 19th century this Dutch tradition of religious tolerance transformed into a system of pillarisation, in which religious groups coexisted separately and only interacted at the level of government. This tradition of tolerance is linked to the Dutch policies on recreational drugs, prostitution, LGBT rights, euthanasia, and abortion which are among the most liberal in the world.

Since suffrage became universal in 1919 the Dutch political system has been dominated by three families of political parties: the strongest family were the Christian democrats currently represented by the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), second were the social democrats, of which the Labour Party (PvdA) is currently the largest party and third were the liberals of which the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) is the main representative. These cooperated in coalition cabinets in which the Christian democrats had always been partner: so either a centre left coalition of the Christian democrats and social democrats or a centre right coalition of Christian democrats and liberals. In the 1970s the party system became more volatile: the Christian democratic parties lost seats, while new parties, like the radical democrat and progressive liberal D66, became successful.

In the 1994 election the CDA lost its dominant position. A "purple" cabinet was formed by the VVD, D66 and PvdA. In 2002 elections this cabinet lost its majority, due to the rise of LPF, a new political party around the flamboyant populist Pim Fortuyn, who was shot to death a week before the elections took place. The elections also saw increased support for the CDA. A short lived cabinet was formed by CDA, VVD and LPF, led by the leader of the Christian democrats, Jan Peter Balkenende. After the 2003 elections in which the LPF lost almost all its seats, a cabinet was formed by the CDA, the VVD and D66. The cabinet initiated an ambitious program of reforming the welfare state, the health care system and immigration policies.

In June 2006 the cabinet fell, as D66 voted in favour of a motion of no confidence against minister of immigration and integration Rita Verdonk in the aftermath of the upheaval about the asylum procedure of Ayaan Hirsi Ali instigated by the Dutch immigration minister Verdonk. A caretaker cabinet was formed by CDA and VVD, and the general elections were held on 22 November 2006. In these elections the Christian Democratic Appeal remained the largest party and the Socialist Party made the largest gains. The formation of a new cabinet started two days after the elections. Initial investigations toward a CDA-SP-PvdA coalition failed, after which a coalition of CDA, PvdA and ChristianUnion was formed.













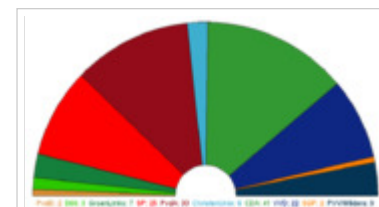
The Binnenhof is the centre of Dutch politics.

Summary of the 22 November 2006 Netherlands Second Chamber election results:

Administrative divisions

The Netherlands is divided into twelve administrative regions, called provinces, each under a Governor, who is called *Commissaris van de Koningin* (Commissioner of the Queen), except for the province Limburg where the commissioner is called Governor (Governor). All provinces are divided into municipalities (*gemeenten*), 458 in total (1 January 2006). The country is also subdivided in water districts, governed by a water board (*waterschap* or *hoogheemraadschap*), each having authority in matters concerning water management. As of 1 January 2005 there are 27. The creation of water boards actually pre-dates that of the nation itself, the first appearing in 1196. In fact, the Dutch water boards are one of the oldest democratic entities in the world still in existence.

Flag	Province	Capital	Largest city	Area (km ²)	Population	Density (per km ²)
	Drenthe	Assen	Assen	2,641	486,197	184
	Flevoland	Lelystad	Almere	1,417	374,424	264
	Friesland (<i>Fryslân</i>)	Leeuwarden	Leeuwarden	3,341	642,209	192
	Gelderland	Arnhem	Nijmegen	4,971	1,979,059	398
	Groningen	Groningen	Groningen	2,333	573,614	246
	Limburg	Maastricht	Maastricht	2,150	1,127,805	525
	North (<i>Noord</i>) Brabant	Den Bosch	Eindhoven	4,916	2,419,042	492
	North (<i>Noord</i>) Holland	Haarlem	Amsterdam	2,671	2,613,070	978
	Overijssel	Zwolle	Enschede	3,325	1,116,374	336
	Utrecht	Utrecht	Utrecht	1,385	1,190,604	860





Dutch Tweede Kamer seats as of 2006

PvdD (2)	CU (6)
D66 (3)	CDA (41)
GL (7)	VVD (22)
SP (25)	SGP (2)
PvdA (33)	PVV (9)



Map of the Netherlands, linking to the province pages; the red dots mark the capitals of the provinces and the black dots other notable cities or towns.

	Zeeland (<i>Zeeland</i>)	Middelburg	Middelburg	1,787	380,497	213
	South (<i>Zuid</i>) Holland	The Hague (<i>Den Haag</i>)	Rotterdam	2,814	3,455,097	1228

Demographics and urbanisation

Demographics

The Netherlands is the 25th most densely populated country in the world, with 395 inhabitants per square kilometre (1,023 sq mi)—or 484 people per square kilometre (1,254/sq mi) if only the land area is counted, since 18.4% is water.

Fertility rate

The fertility rate in the Netherlands is 1.72 children per woman, well below the 2.1 rate required for population replacement.

Life expectancy

Life expectancy is high in the Netherlands: 82 years for newborn girls and 77 for boys (2007).

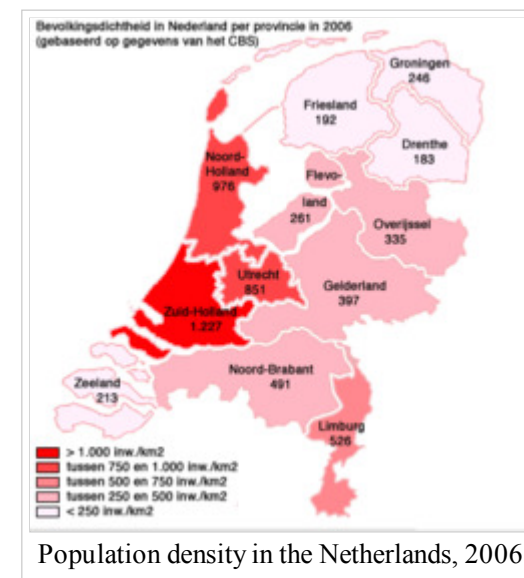
Body length The people of the Netherlands are amongst the tallest in the world, with an average height of about 1.85 m (6 ft 0.8 in) for adult males and 1.68 m (5 ft 6 in) for adult females. People in the south are on average about 2 cm shorter than those in the north.

Ethnic origins

The ethnic origins of the citizens of the Netherlands are diverse. A majority of the population, however, still remains indigenous Dutch, although from a historic point of view, the latter notion is also to be relativised strongly. They were:

1. 80.9% Dutch
2. 2.4% Indonesian (Indo-Dutch, South Moluccan)

<http://cd3wd.com> wikipedia-for-schools <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 522 of 867



3. 2.4% German
4. 2.2% Turkish
5. 2.0% Surinamese
6. 1.9% Moroccan
7. 0.8% Antillean and Aruban
8. 6.0% other

However, this does not include the whole Kingdom of the Netherlands (such as the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, which have a non-Dutch majority community), and only includes the population in the Netherlands itself.

Urbanisation

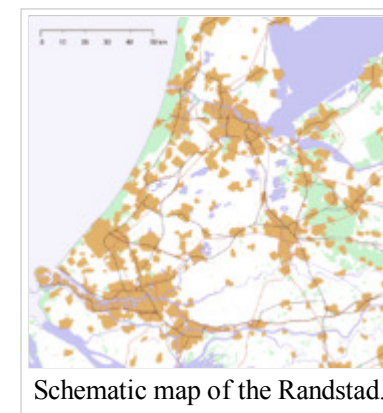
The Netherlands is a very densely populated country, although the cities are modest in size compared to international standards. It is not the size of the biggest cities, but the very high number of middle sized cities and towns, that accounts for the high degree of urbanisation. The capital and largest city is Amsterdam, although the government is located in The Hague. While the word capital is usually defined as the city of the government seat, no Dutchman would ever call The Hague the capital of The Netherlands.

The Randstad

The Randstad (*Edge City*) is a conurbation in the western part of the Netherlands. It consists of the four largest Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht), plus their surrounding areas. With its 7.5 million inhabitants (almost half of the population of the Netherlands; when other conurbations connected to this area are also taken into consideration, it would have a population a little over 10 million, almost two-thirds of the entire Dutch population) it is one of the largest conurbations in Europe. There is discussion to what extent the Randstad may form a single more integrated metropolis in the future. At this moment, urban structures between these cities are not yet developed to such a level that the Randstad could be considered a kind of distributed super-agglomeration.

Conurbation is not restricted to the Randstad alone, although the centre of gravity lies there. Quite typically, in the Netherlands there are many medium sized cities, but no truly large ones. Its largest city, Amsterdam with about 750,000 inhabitants in its own municipality, belongs to one of the smaller European capitals.

The 10 largest cities



Schematic map of the Randstad.

List of the largest cities, by population, within the borders of one municipality with their provinces in 2006: *Sources are CBS based*

1. Amsterdam (North Holland) 744,740
2. Rotterdam (South Holland) 581,615
3. The Hague ('s-Gravenhage / Den Haag) (South Holland) 474,245
4. Utrecht (Utrecht) 294,742
5. Eindhoven (North Brabant) 209,601
6. Tilburg (North Brabant) 200,975
7. Almere (Flevoland) 183,738
8. Groningen (Groningen) 180,824
9. Breda (North Brabant) 170,451
10. Nijmegen (Gelderland) 160,732

However, this picture has to be completed. Municipality sizes alone do not reflect the degree of urbanisation in the Netherlands comprehensively. Many of the larger Dutch cities are the cores of a significantly larger urban agglomeration. The largest ones are listed below:



Urbanisation in the Netherlands.

Language, religion, and culture

Language

The official language is Dutch, which is spoken by a majority of the inhabitants, the exception being some groups of immigrants.

Another official language is West Frisian, which is spoken in the northern province of Friesland, called *Fryslân* in that language. West Frisian is co-official only in the province of Friesland, although with a few restrictions. Several dialects of Low Saxon (*Nedersaksisch* in Dutch) are spoken in much of the north and east, like the Twentse language in the Twente region, and are recognised by the Netherlands as *regional languages* according to the European Charter for Regional or

Minority Languages, as well as the Meuse-Rhenish Franconian varieties in the southeastern province of Limburg, here called Limburgish language.

There is a tradition of learning foreign languages in the Netherlands: about 70% of the total population have good knowledge of English, 55– 59% of German and 19% of French. Some Dutch secondary schools also teach Latin and Ancient Greek.

Religion

The Netherlands is one of the more secular countries in the Western Europe, with only 39% being religiously affiliated (31% for those aged under 35), although 62% are believers (but 40% of those not in the traditional sense). Fewer than 20% visit church regularly .

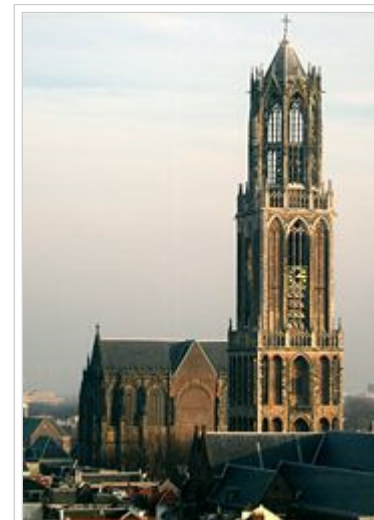
According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 34% of Dutch citizens responded that "they believe there is a god", whereas 37% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 27% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

In 1950, before the secularisation of Europe, and the large settlement of non-Europeans in the Netherlands, most Dutch citizens identified themselves as Christians. In 1950, out of a total population of almost 13 million, a total of 7,261,000 belonged to Protestant denominations, 3,703,000 belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, and 1,641,000 had no acknowledged religion.

However, Christian schools are still funded by the government, but the same applies for schools founded on other religions, nowadays Islam in particular. While all schools must meet strict quality criteria, from 1917 the freedom of schools is a basic principle in the Netherlands.

Three political parties in the Dutch parliament (CDA, ChristianUnion and SGP) base their policy on the Christian belief system.

Culture



Dom Tower of Utrecht.

Life in the Netherlands

Culture	[Show]
Economy	[Show]
Society	[Show]
Politics	[Show]
Policies	[Show]



Erasmus (1466–1536).

The Netherlands has had many well-known painters. The 17th century, when the Dutch republic was prosperous, was the age of the "Dutch Masters", such as Rembrandt van Rijn, Johannes Vermeer, Jan Steen, Jacob van Ruysdael and many others. Famous Dutch painters of the 19th and 20th century were Vincent van Gogh and Piet Mondriaan. M. C. Escher is a well-known graphics artist. Willem de Kooning was born and trained in Rotterdam, although he is considered to have reached acclaim as an American artist. Han van Meegeren was an infamous Dutch art forger.

The Netherlands is the country of philosophers Erasmus of Rotterdam and Spinoza. All of Descartes' major work was done in the Netherlands. The Dutch scientist Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695) discovered Saturn's moon Titan and invented the pendulum clock. Antonie van Leeuwenhoek was the first to observe and describe single-celled organisms with a microscope.

In the Dutch Golden Age, literature flourished as well, with Joost van den Vondel and P.C. Hooft as the two most famous writers. In the 19th century, Multatuli wrote about the bad treatment of the natives in Dutch colonies. Important 20th century authors include Harry Mulisch, Jan Wolkers, Simon Vestdijk, Cees Nooteboom, Gerard (van het) Reve and Willem Frederik Hermans. Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* was published after she died in The Holocaust and translated from Dutch to all major languages.

Replicas of Dutch buildings can be found in Huis ten Bosch, Nagasaki, Japan. A similar Holland Village is being built in

Shenyang, China.

Windmills, tulips, wooden shoes, cheese and Delftware pottery are among the items associated with the Netherlands.

Military

Conscription in the Netherlands was suspended in 1996. All military specialities, except the Submarine service and Marine Corps (Korps Mariniers), are open to women. The Dutch Ministry of Defence employs almost over 70,000 personnel, including over 20,000 civilian and over 50,000 military personnel. The military is composed of four branches, all of which carry the prefix *Koninklijke* (Royal):

- *Koninklijke Landmacht* (KL), the Royal Netherlands Army
- *Koninklijke Marine* (KM), the Royal Netherlands Navy, including the Naval Air Service and Marine Corps
- *Koninklijke Luchtmacht* (KLu), the Royal Netherlands Air Force
- *Koninklijke Marechaussee* (KMar), the Royal Military Police, tasks include military police and border control



Royal Dutch Air Force F-16.

Economy

Economy

The Netherlands has a prosperous and open economy in which the government has reduced its role since the 1980s. Industrial activity is predominantly in food-processing (for example Unilever and Heineken International), chemicals (for example DSM), petroleum refining (for example Royal Dutch Shell), and electrical machinery (for example Philips). In the north of the Netherlands, near Slochteren, one of the largest natural gas fields in the world is situated. So far (2006) exploitation of this field resulted in a total revenue of €159 billion since the mid 1970s. N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie still is the largest public-private partnership P3 world-wide following the global energy-transition of 1963 from coal to gas, coupling oil and gas prices. With just over half of the reserves used up and an expected continued rise in oil prices, the revenues over the next few decades are expected to be at least that much.

The Netherlands has the 16th largest economy in the world, and ranks 10th in GDP (nominal) per capita. Between 1998 and 2000 annual economic growth (GDP) averaged nearly 4%, well above the European average. Growth slowed considerably in 2001-05 due to the global economic slowdown, but accelerated to 4.1% in the third quarter of 2007. Inflation is 1.3% and is expected to stay low at around 1.5% in the coming years. Unemployment is at 4.0% of the labour force. By Eurostat standards however, unemployment in the Netherlands is at only 2.9% - the lowest rate of all European Union member states. The Netherlands also has a relatively low GINI coefficient of 0.326. Despite ranking only 10th in GDP per capita, UNICEF ranked the Netherlands 1st in child well-being.

Agriculture and horticulture

A highly mechanised agricultural sector employs no more than 4% of the labour force but provides large surpluses for the food-processing industry and for exports. The Dutch rank third worldwide in value of agricultural exports, behind the United States and France, with exports earning \$55 billion annually. A significant portion of Dutch agricultural exports are derived from fresh-cut plants, flowers, and bulbs, with the Netherlands exporting two-thirds of the world's total. The Netherlands also exports a quarter of all world tomatoes, and one-third of the world's exports of peppers and cucumbers. The Netherlands' location gives it prime access to markets in the UK and Germany, with the port of Rotterdam being the largest port in Europe. Other important parts of the economy are international trade (Dutch colonialism started with cooperative private enterprises such as the VOC), banking and transport. The Netherlands successfully addressed the issue of public finances and stagnating job growth long before its European partners.

Currency

As a founding member of the Euro, the Netherlands replaced (for accounting purposes) its former currency, the "Gulden" (Guilder), on January 1, 1999, along with the other adopters of the single European currency. Actual Euro coins and banknotes followed on January 1, 2002. One Euro is equivalent to 2.20371 Dutch guilders.



Aalsmeer Flower Auction. The largest commercial building in the world, and a centre of international flower trade.



Frisian Holstein cows originated in the Netherlands, where intensive dairy farming is an important part of agriculture.

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Northern Cyprus

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SOS Children works in North Cyprus. For more information see SOS Children in North Cyprus

The **Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)** (Turkish: *Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti*, *KKTC*), commonly called **Northern Cyprus** (Turkish: *Kuzey Kıbrıs*), is a de facto independent republic located in the north of Cyprus. Officially this part of the *Republic of Cyprus* is under illegal Turkish occupation. The TRNC declared its independence in 1983, nine years after a Greek Cypriot coup attempting to annex the island to Greece triggered an invasion by Turkey. It has received diplomatic recognition only from Turkey, on which it has become dependent for economic, political and military support. The rest of the international community, including the United Nations and European Union, recognises the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over the entire island, including the portion currently under the control of the TRNC.

The Turkish Army maintains a large force in the TRNC that meets with the approval of much of the Turkish Cypriot population. However, the Republic of Cyprus regards it as an illegal occupation force; its presence has also been denounced in several United Nations Security Council resolutions. Attempts to reach a solution to the dispute have so far been unsuccessful. In a 2004 referendum held simultaneously in both parts of the island, the UN Annan Plan to reunite the island was accepted by a majority of Turkish Cypriots. However, amidst concerns that the plan would eliminate the concept of one-person, one-vote largely in favour of Turkish Cypriots and would not safeguard Greek Cypriot rights in Northern Cyprus, an overwhelming majority of Greek Cypriots rejected the proposal.

The TRNC extends from the tip of the Karpass Peninsula (Cape Apostolos Andreas) in the northeast, westward to Morphou Bay and Cape Kormakitis (the Kokkina/Erenköy exclave marks the westernmost extent of the TRNC), and southward to the village of Louroujina/Akıncılar. The no man's land or buffer zone stretching between the two areas is under the control of the United Nations.

History

The Constitution of Cyprus, while establishing an independent and sovereign republic, was, in the words

<i>Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti</i> Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: <i>İstiklâl Marşı</i> (Turkish) <i>Independence March</i>	
	
Capital	Nicosia (Lefkoşa in Turkish)
Official languages	Turkish
Government	Representative democratic republic ¹
- President	Mehmet Ali Talat
- Prime Minister	Ferdi Sabit Soyser

of Stanley Alexander de Smith, an authority on constitutional law, "unique in its tortuous complexity and in the multiplicity of the safeguards that it provides for the principal minority; the Constitution of Cyprus stands alone among the constitutions of the world." Within three years, tensions between the two communities in administrative affairs began to show. In particular, disputes over separate municipalities and taxation created a deadlock in government. In 1963 President Makarios proposed unilateral changes to the constitution via thirteen amendments, which some observers viewed as an unconstitutional attempt to tilt the balance of power in the Republic. Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots rejected the proposed amendments as an attempt to settle constitutional disputes in favour of the Greek Cypriots and as a means of demoting the Turks' status as co-founders of the state to one of minority status, removing their constitutional safeguards in the process. The President defended his amendments as being necessary "to resolve constitutional deadlocks."

On 21 December 1963, a Turkish Cypriot crowd clashed with the plainclothes special constables of Yorgadjis. Almost immediately, intercommunal violence broke out with a major Greek Cypriot paramilitary attack upon Turkish Cypriots in Nicosia and Larnaca. Though the TMT — a Turkish resistance group created in 1959 to promote a policy of *taksim* (division or partition of Cyprus), in opposition to the Greek Cypriot nationalist group EOKA and its advocacy of *enosis* (union of Cyprus with Greece) — committed a number of acts of retaliation, historian of the Cyprus conflict Keith Kyle noted that "there is no doubt that the main victims of the numerous incidents that took place during the next few months were Turks." Seven hundred Turkish hostages, including women and children, were taken from the northern suburbs of Nicosia. Nikos Sampson, a nationalist and future coup leader, led a group of Greek Cypriot irregulars into the mixed suburb of Omorphita and attacked the Turkish Cypriot population. By 1964, 193 Turkish Cypriots and 133 Greek Cypriots had been killed, with a further 209 Turks and 41 Greeks missing and presumed dead.

Turkish Cypriot members of the government had by now withdrawn, creating an essentially Greek Cypriot administration in control of all institutions of the state. Widespread looting of Turkish Cypriot villages prompted 20,000 refugees to retreat into armed enclaves, where they remained for the next 11 years, relying on food and medical supplies from Turkey to survive. Turkish Cypriots formed paramilitary groups to defend the enclaves, leading to a gradual division of the island's communities into two hostile camps. The violence had also seen thousands of Turkish Cypriots attempt to escape the violence by emigrating to Britain, Australia and Turkey.

The Republic of Cyprus has argued that the Turkish Cypriots' withdrawal from the government and their retreat into enclaves was a voluntary action, prompted by their desire to form a state of their own. In support of this view, a 1965 statement has been cited in which the then– United Nations Secretary General, U Thant, stated that Turkish Cypriots had furthered a policy of "self-segregation" and taken a "rigid stand" against policies which might have involved recognizing

Independence (<i>de facto</i>)	from Cyprus
- Proclaimed	November 15, 1983
- Recognition	By Turkey only
Area	
- Total	3,355 km ² (167th ranked together with Cyprus) 1,295 sq mi
- Water (%)	2.7
Population	
- 2006 ² census	264,172
- Density	78/km ² (89th) 203/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$4.54 billion (90th)
- Per capita	\$7,135 (93rd)
Currency	New Turkish lira (₺ TL (TRY reserved))
Time zone	EET (UTC+2)
- Summer (DST)	EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.nc.tr, or .tr
Calling code	+90 spec. +90-392
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Freedomhouse.org Country Report The press statement of Prime Minister Ferdi Sabit Soyer on the tentative results of 2006 population and housing census (5 May 2006) PDF (88.8 KiB) Nüfus ve Konut Sayımı.

the government's authority. Turkish Cypriots, for their part, point to a ruling of Cyprus's Supreme Court which found that Makarios had violated the constitution by failing to fully implement its measures and that Turkish Cypriots had not been allowed to return to their positions in government without first accepting the proposed constitutional amendments.

On July 15, 1974, the Greek military junta of 1967-1974 backed a Greek Cypriot military coup d'état in Cyprus. President Makarios was removed from office and Nikos Sampson took his place. Turkey claimed that, under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, the coup was sufficient reason for military action to protect the Turkish Cypriot populace, and thus Turkey invaded Cyprus on July 20, 1974. Following Turkey's military intervention, the coup failed and Makarios returned to Cyprus. Turkish forces proceeded to take over the northern third of the island (about 37% of Cyprus's total area), causing large numbers of Greek Cypriots to abandon their homes. Approximately 160,000 Greek Cypriots fled to the south of the island, while 50,000 Turkish Cypriots fled north. Approximately 1,500 Greek Cypriot and 500 Turkish Cypriots remain missing.

In 1975 the "Turkish Federative State of Cyprus" (*Kıbrıs Türk Federe Devleti*) was declared as a first step towards a future federated Cypriot state, but was rejected by the Republic of Cyprus, the UN, and the international community. After eight years of failed negotiations with the leadership of the Greek Cypriot community, the north declared its independence on November 15, 1983 under the name of the *Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*. This unilateral declaration of independence was rejected by the UN and the Republic of Cyprus.

In recent years the politics of reunification has dominated the island's affairs. It was hoped that Cyprus's planned accession into the European Union would act as a catalyst towards a settlement, and in 2004 a United Nations–brokered peace settlement was presented in a referendum to both sides. The proposed settlement was opposed by both the president of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, and Turkish Cypriot president Rauf Denktaş; in the referendum, a majority of Turkish Cypriots accepted the proposal, but Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly rejected it. As a result, Cyprus entered the European Union as a divided island, with the north (TRNC) effectively excluded. Denktaş resigned in the wake of the vote, ushering in the pro-solutionist Mehmet Ali Talat as his successor.

Government and politics

Politics of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus takes place in a framework of a semi-presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the President is head of state and the Prime Minister head of government, and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the Assembly of the Republic. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature.

The president is elected for a five-year term. The current president is Mehmet Ali Talat who won the presidential elections on April 17, 2005. The legislature is the Assembly of the Republic, which has 50 members elected by proportional representation from five electoral districts. In the elections of February 2005, the Republican Turkish Party, which favors a peace settlement and the reunification of Cyprus, retained its position as the largest parliamentary party, but failed to win an overall majority.



Founder, and former
President, Rauf Denktaş

International status and foreign relations

The international community, with the exception of Turkey, does not recognise the TRNC as a sovereign state, but recognises the de jure sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over the whole island. The United Nations considers the declaration of independence by the TRNC as legally invalid in several of its resolutions.



London office of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Bedford Square.

In wake of the April 2004 referendum on the United Nations Annan Plan, and the support of the Turkish Cypriot community for the plan, the European Union made pledges towards ending the isolation of northern Cyprus. These included measures for trade and 259 million euros in aid.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference gave the TRNC the status of a constituent state, making the "Turkish Cypriot State" an observer member of the organization. A number of high profile formal meetings have also taken place between President Mehmet Ali Talat and various foreign leaders and politicians including US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, British foreign minister Jack Straw, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.

The European Union considers the area not under effective control of the Republic of Cyprus as EU territory under Turkish military occupation and thus indefinitely exempt from EU legislation until a settlement has been found. The status of TRNC has become a recurrent issue especially during the recent talks for Turkey's membership of the EU where the division of the island is seen as a major stumbling block in Turkey's long road to membership.

On February 18, 2008, The TRNC became one of the first nations to acknowledge the Unilateral Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Kosovo, in direct opposition to the stance of the Republic of Cyprus, which rejects the Kosovo UDI. It is argued by the Turkish and TRNC media that the independence of Kosovo could be a good model for the TRNC's recognition. It is to be stressed however that the TRNC's government has not yet formally recognized the government of Kosovo, despite President Talat's message of congratulations to Kosovo.

Military

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has an indigenous 5,000-man *Turkish Cypriot Security Force* (TCSF), which is primarily made up of conscripted Turkish Cypriot males between the ages of 18 and 40. There is also an additional reserve force consisting of about 11,000 first-line, 10,000 second-line and 5,000 third-line troops conscripted up to the age of 50. The TCSF is lightly armed and heavily dependent on its mainland Turkish allies, from which it draws much of its officer corps. It is led by a Brigadier General drawn from the Turkish Army. It acts essentially as a gendarmerie with a self-proclaimed mission of protecting the border of the TRNC from Greek Cypriot incursions and maintaining internal security within the TRNC.

In addition, the mainland Turkish Armed Forces maintain a *Cyprus Turkish Peace Force* (CTPF) consisting of around 30-40,000 troops drawn from the 9th Turkish Army Corps and comprising two divisions, the 28th and 39th. It is equipped with a substantial number of United States-made M48 Patton main battle

tanks and artillery weapons. The Turkish Air Force, Turkish Navy and Turkish Coast Guard also have a presence in Northern Cyprus. Although formally part of Turkish 4th Army, headquartered in İzmir, the sensitivities of the Cyprus situation means that the commander of the CTPF also reports directly to the Turkish General Staff in Ankara. The CTPF is deployed principally along the Green Line and in locations where hostile amphibious landings might take place.

The presence of the mainland Turkish military in Cyprus is highly controversial, having been denounced as an illegal occupation force by the Republic of Cyprus government. Several United Nations Security Council resolutions have called on the Turkish forces to withdraw, though failed Annan Plan of 2004 allowed for some troops to remain.

Administrative divisions

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is divided into five administrative regions:

- Lefkoşa (Nicosia)
- Mağusa (Famagusta)
- Girne (Kyrenia)
- Güzelyurt (Morphou)
- İskele (Trikomo)

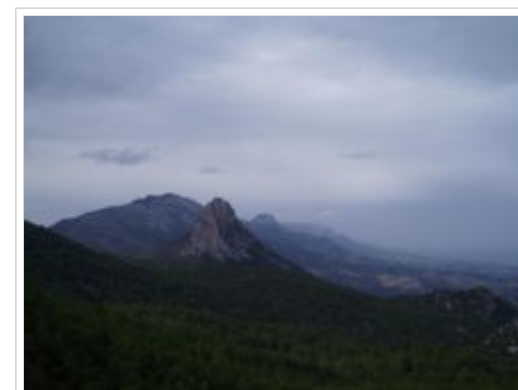
Geography and climate

The climate of the island is of an extreme Mediterranean type with very hot dry summers and relatively cold winters. Most of the rainfall is concentrated between December and January.

The climate of the coastal parts is less extreme than farther inland, due to the fact that the effect of the sea on atmospheric humidities is always present there. The sea temperature itself never falls below 16°C. (January and February); in August it can rise to 28 °C.

Spring and autumn are short, typified by changeable weather, with occasional heavy storms battering the coast in spring and a westerly wind, called "meltem" carrying the influence of Atlantic depressions to this far eastern end of the Mediterranean.

From mid-May to mid-September the sun shines on a daily average of around 11 hours. Temperatures can reach 40°C. On the Mesaoria Plain, although lower on the coasts, a north-westerly breeze called "Poyraz" prevails. The skies are cloudless with a low humidity, 40% - 60%, thus the high temperatures are easier to bear. The hot, dry, dust-laden sirocco wind blowing from Africa also finds its way to the island.



Part of the Kyrenia mountain range

Short-lived stormy conditions resulting from fairly frequent small depressions prevail throughout the winter, with 60% of rain falling between December and February. The Northern Range receives around 550 mm of rain per year, whereas the Mesaoria Plain receives only around 300-400 mm.

Frost and snow are almost unknown in Northern Cyprus, although night temperatures can fall to very low levels in winter and it will occasionally snow on the peaks of the Kyrenia Range.

The chief rain-bearing air currents reach the island from the south-west, so that precipitation and atmospheric humidity is at its greatest on the western and south-western sides of the Southern Range. Eastwards, precipitation and humidity are reduced by the partial rain-shadow effect of the Southern Range, a similar effect is also caused by the Northern Range which cut off the humidity associated with proximity to the sea from much of the northern Mesaoria Plain. Eastwards of the Northern Range, towards the bays of the Karpaz Peninsula, where the land narrows and the effect of sea influence increases accordingly, humidity increases progressively towards the end of the peninsula.

Most of the rivers are simply winter torrents, only flowing after heavy rain, the rivers running out of the Northern and Southern Ranges rarely flowing all the year round.

During the wet winter months Cyprus is a green island. However, by the time June arrives the landscape at the lower levels assumes the brown, parched aspect which characterises its summer face. The forests and the vineyards in the mountains, plus the strips of irrigated vegetation in the valleys remain green.

Economy

The economy of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is dominated by the services sector including the public sector, trade, tourism and education, with smaller agriculture and light manufacturing sectors. The economy operates on a free-market basis, with a great portion funding of the administration costs offered by Turkey.

Because of its status and the embargo, the TRNC is heavily dependent on Turkish military and economic support. It uses the New Turkish Lira as its currency; this used to link its economic status to the vagaries of the Turkish economy. All TRNC exports and imports have to take place via Turkey, unless they are produced locally, from materials sourced in the area (or imported via one of the island's recognised ports) when they may be exported via one of the legal ports.

The continuing Cyprus problem adversely affects the economic development of the TRNC. The Republic of Cyprus, as the internationally recognised authority, has declared airports and ports in the area not under its effective control, closed. All U.N. Member countries and E.U. member countries respect the closure of those ports and airports according to the declaration of the Republic of Cyprus. The Turkish community argues that the Republic of Cyprus has used its international standing to handicap economic relations between TRNC and the rest of the world.

Despite the constraints imposed by its lack of international recognition, the TRNC economy turned in an impressive performance in the last few years. The GDP growth rates of the TRNC economy in 2001-2005 have been 5.4%, 6.9%, 11.4%, 15.4% and 10.6%. This growth has been buoyed by the relative stability of the Turkish Lira and a boom in the education and construction sectors.

Studies by the World Bank show that the per capita GDP in TRNC grew to 76% of the per capita GDP in the Republic of Cyprus in PPP-adjusted terms in 2004. (USD 22,300 for the Republic of Cyprus and USD 16,900 for the TRNC).

Although the TRNC economy has developed in recent years, it is still dependent on monetary transfers from the Turkish government. Under the 2003-06 economic protocol, Ankara plans to provide around \$550 million to the TRNC.

The number of tourists visiting Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus during January-August 2003 was 286,901.

The Turkish Cypriot economy has also benefited from an abundance of universities including Near East University, Girne American University, Middle East Technical University, European University of Lefke and Cyprus International University as well as Eastern Mediterranean University which is internationally recognised with more than 1000 faculty members coming from 35 countries. There are 15000 students in the university comprised of 68 different nationalities. EMU has been approved by Higher Education Council of Turkey. It is full individual member of the institutions like the European University Associations, Community of Mediterranean Universities, Federation Universities of Islamic World And International Association of Universities.



The Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque in Famagusta (Gazimağusa). Formerly The Saint Nicolas Cathedral prior to its conversion in 1571. Tourism remains an important source of revenue for Northern Cyprus.

Communications and transport

International telephone calls are routed via a Cyprus or Turkish dialling code: +90 392, as the TRNC has neither its own country code, nor official ITU prefix. Similarly, the TRNC has no top level domain of its own, and is under the Turkish second-level domain .nc.tr, while mail must be addressed 'via Mersin 10, TURKEY' as the Universal Postal Union does not recognise the TRNC as a separate entity. Amateur radio operators sometimes use callsigns beginning with "1B", but these have no standing for awards or other operating credit.

Direct flights to Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the trade traffic through the Turkish Cypriot ports are restricted as part of the embargo on Turkish Cypriot ports. The airports of Geçitkale and Ercan are only recognised as legal ports of entry by Turkey and Azerbaijan. In addition, the TRNC's seaports in Famagusta and Kyrenia had been declared closed to all shipping by the Republic of Cyprus since 1974. By agreement between northern Cyprus and Syria, despite the protests of the Republic of Cyprus, there is a ship tour between Famagusta and Latakia (Syria). Since the opening of the Green Line, Turkish Cypriot residents are allowed to trade through Greek Cypriot ports.



Kyrenia Marina

Naturalised TRNC citizens or foreigners carrying a passport stamped by the TRNC authorities may be refused entry by the Republic of Cyprus or Greece, although after the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU such restrictions have been eased following confidence-building measures between Athens and Ankara and the partial opening of the UN controlled line by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus authorities. The Republic of Cyprus also allows passage across the Green Line from the part of Nicosia that it controls (as well as a few other selected crossing points), since the TRNC does not leave entry stamps in the passport for such visits. Since May 2004, some tourists have taken to flying to the Republic of Cyprus directly and crossing the green line to holiday in the TRNC.

Demographics

According to a census carried out by the Turkish Cypriot administration, the TRNC has a population of about 264,172, of which majority is composed of indigenous Turkish Cypriots, with the rest including a large number of settlers from Turkey. Of the 178,000 Turkish Cypriot citizens, 74% are native Cypriots (approximately 140,000). Of the remaining people born to non-Cypriot parentage, approximately 16,000 were born in Cyprus. The figure for non-citizens, including students, guest workers and temporary residents stood at 78,000 people. Estimates by the government of the Republic of Cyprus from 2001 place the population at 200,000, of which 80-89,000 are Turkish Cypriots and 109,000-117,000 Turkish settlers.. An island-wide census in 1960 indicated the number of Turkish Cypriots as 102,000 and Greek Cypriots as 450,000. Estimates state that 36,000 (about 1/3) Turkish Cypriots emigrated in the period 1975-1995, with the consequence that within the occupied area the native Turkish Cypriots have been outnumbered by settlers from Turkey. The TRNC is almost entirely Turkish speaking. English, however, is widely spoken as a second language. Many of the older Turkish Cypriots speak and understand Greek - some may even be considered native speakers of the Greek Cypriot dialect.

There are small populations of Greek Cypriots and Maronites (about 3,000) living in Rizokarpaso and Kormakitis regions.

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Norway

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Norway (Norwegian: *Norge* (bokmål) or *Noreg* (nynorsk)), officially the **Kingdom of Norway**, is a constitutional monarchy in Northern Europe that occupies the western portion of the Scandinavian Peninsula. It is bordered by Sweden, Finland, and Russia, while the United Kingdom and the Faroe Islands lie to its west across the North Sea. The country's extensive coastline along the North Atlantic Ocean is home to its famous fjords.

Norway also includes the Arctic island territories of Svalbard and Jan Mayen. Norwegian sovereignty over Svalbard is based upon the Svalbard Treaty, but that treaty does not apply to Jan Mayen. Bouvet Island in the South Atlantic Ocean and Peter I Island and Queen Maud Land in Antarctica are external dependencies, but those three entities do not form part of the kingdom.

Since World War II, Norway has experienced rapid economic growth, and is now amongst the wealthiest countries in the world. Norway is the world's third largest oil exporter after Russia and Saudi Arabia and the petroleum industry accounts for around a quarter of GDP. It has also rich resources of gas fields, hydropower, fish, forests, and minerals. Norway was the second largest exporter of seafood (in value, after China) in 2006. Other main industries include food processing, shipbuilding, metals, chemicals, mining, fishing and pulp and paper products. Norway has a Scandinavian welfare system and the largest capital reserve per capita of any nation.

Norway was ranked highest of all countries in human development from 2001 to 2006, and came second in 2007 (to fellow Nordic country Iceland). It also rated the most peaceful country in the world in a 2007 survey by Global Peace Index. It is a founding member of NATO.

Name

Norway is officially called **Kongeriket Norge** in the bokmål written norm, and **Kongeriket Noreg** in the nynorsk written norm. In other languages spoken in Norway the country is known as

- Northern Sami: *Norga*, or *Norgga gonagasriika*
- Lule Sami: *Vuodna* or *Vuona gånågisriikka*

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<p><i>Kongeriket Norge</i> <i>Kongeriket Noreg</i> Kingdom of Norway</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Motto: Royal: <i>Alt for Norge / Alt for Noreg</i> (All for Norway)</p> <p>1814 Eidsvoll oath: <i>Enig og tro til Dovre faller</i> (United and loyal until the mountains of Dovre crumble)</p>	
<p>Anthem: <i>Ja, vi elsker dette landet</i> Royal anthem: <i>Kongesangen</i></p>	

- Southern Sami: *Nøørje* or *Nøørjen gånkarijhke*
- Finnish/ Kven: *Norja* or *Norjan kuningaskunta*

Many etymologists believe the country's name comes from the North Germanic languages and that it means "the northern route" (the way to the north), which in Old Norse would be *nord veg* or **norð vegri*. The Old Norse name for Norway was *Nóreegr*, in Anglo-Saxon *Norþ weg*, and in Medieval Latin *Nhorvegia*.

The Old Norse and nynorsk forms are quite similar to an ancient Sami word that means "along the coast" or "along the sea" — realized as *nuorrek* in contemporary Lule Sami. The presence of the archaic prosecutive case marker (sometimes also called prolativ in Finno-Ugric language research) supports the claim that the Sami word is indigenous and not a borrowing from North Germanic languages.

The earliest known written occurrence of the name "Norway" is in the late 9th century, Old English translation of Orosius' *Seven Books of History Against The Pagans*, written by King Alfred the Great of Wessex, and adapted by him to include an account of the travels of Ohthere of Hålogaland.

History

Archaeological findings indicate that Norway was inhabited at least since early 10th millennium BC. Most historians agree that the core of the populations colonizing Scandinavia came from the present-day Germany. In the first centuries AD, Norway consisted of a number of petty kingdoms. According to tradition, Harald Fairhair unified them into one, in 872 AD after the Battle of Hafrsfjord, thus becoming the first king of a united Norway.



Rock carvings at Alta

The Viking age, 8-11th centuries AD, was characterized by expansion and immigration. Many Norwegians left the country to live in Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and parts of Britain and Ireland. The modern-day Irish cities of Limerick, Dublin, and Waterford were founded by Norwegian settlers. Norse traditions were slowly replaced by Christianity in the 9th and 10th centuries, and this is largely attributed to the missionary kings Olav Trygvasson and St. Olav. Haakon the Good was Norway's first Christian king, in the mid tenth century, though his attempt to introduce the religion was rejected.

In 1349, the Black Death killed between 40% and 50% of the



Location of **Norway** (orange)

on the European continent (white)

Capital (and largest city)	Oslo
Official languages	Norwegian (Bokmål and Nynorsk) ¹
Demonym	Norwegian
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	Harald V
- Prime Minister	Jens Stoltenberg (Ap)
Establishment	
- Unification	872
- Constitution	17 May, 1814
- Independence from union with Sweden	declared 7 June, 1905
Area	
- Total	385,252 km ² (61st ²) 148,746 sq mi

population, resulting in a period of decline, both socially and economically. Ostensibly, royal politics at the time resulted in several personal unions between the Nordic countries, eventually bringing the thrones of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden under the control of Queen Margrethe I of Denmark when the country entered into the Kalmar Union. Although Sweden broke out of the union in 1523, Norway remained till 1814, a total of 434 years. The National romanticism of the 19th century, the centralization of the kingdom's royal, intellectual, and administrative powers in Copenhagen, Denmark, the dissolution of the archbishopric in Trondheim with the introduction of Protestantism in 1537, as well as the distribution of the church's incomes to the court in Copenhagen meant that Norway lost the steady stream of pilgrims to the relics of St. Olav at the Nidaros shrine, and with them, much of the contact with cultural and economic life in the rest of Europe. The steady decline was highlighted by the loss of the provinces Båhuslen, Jemtland, and Herjedalen to Sweden, as a result of wars.

After Denmark–Norway was attacked by Great Britain, it entered into an alliance with Napoleon, with the war leading to dire conditions and mass starvation in 1812. As the kingdom found itself on the losing side in 1814 it was forced to cede Norway to the kingdom of Sweden, while the old Norwegian provinces of Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands remained with the Danish crown. Norway took this opportunity to declare independence, adopted a constitution based on American and French models, and elected the Danish crown prince Christian Fredrik as king on May 17, 1814. This caused the Norwegian-Swedish War to break out between Sweden and Norway but as Sweden's military was not strong enough to defeat the Norwegian forces outright, Norway agreed to enter a personal union with Sweden. Under this arrangement, Norway kept its liberal constitution and independent institutions, except for the foreign service.

- Water (%)	7.0
Population	
- 2008 estimate	4,752,735 (114th)
- Density	12/km ² (202nd) 31/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$257.4 billion (40th)
- Per capita	\$55,600 (3rd)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$391.3 billion (25th)
- Per capita	\$83.922 (486.335 NOK) (2nd)
Gini (2000)	25.8 (low) (6th)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.968 (high) (2nd)
Currency	Norwegian krone (nok)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.no ⁵ .sj and .bv
Calling code	+47
<p>1 Northern Sami is used in the municipal administration of six municipalities, Lule Sami in one, and Finnish/ Kven in one.</p> <p>2 Includes Svalbard and Jan Mayen.</p> <p>3 This percentage is for the mainland and also includes glaciers</p> <p>4 Statistics Norway estimation (September 5, 2006) using variant MMMM from Table 10</p> <p>5 Two more TLDs have been assigned, but to date not used: .sj for Svalbard and Jan Mayen; .bv for Bouvet Island.</p>	

This period also saw the rise of the Norwegian romantic nationalism cultural movement, as Norwegians sought to define and express a distinct national character. The movement covered all branches of culture, including literature (Henrik Wergeland, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, Jørgen Moe, Henrik Ibsen), painting (Hans Gude, Adolph Tidemand), music (Edvard Grieg), and even language policy, where attempts to define a native written language for Norway led to today's two official written forms for Norwegian: Bokmål and Nynorsk.

Christian Michelsen, a Norwegian shipping magnate and statesman, Prime Minister of Norway from 1905 to 1907 played a central role in the peaceful separation of Norway from Sweden on June 7, 1905. After a national referendum confirmed the people's preference for a monarchy over a republic, the Norwegian government offered the throne of Norway to the Danish Prince Carl and Parliament unanimously elected him king. He took the name of Haakon VII, after the medieval kings of independent Norway. In 1898, all men were granted universal suffrage, followed by all women in 1913.



The 1814 constitutional assembly, painted by Oscar Wergeland.

During both World wars Norway claimed neutrality but during World War II it was invaded by German forces on April 9, 1940 while the allies also had plans in mind for an invasion of the country. In April 1940, the British fleet mined Norwegian territorial waters. Norway was unprepared for the German surprise attack, but military resistance continued for two months. During the Norwegian Campaign, the Kriegsmarine lost many ships including the cruiser *Blücher*. The battles of Vinjesvingen and Hegra eventually became the last strongholds of Norwegian resistance in southern Norway in May, while the armed forces in the north launched an offensive against the German forces in the Battles of Narvik, until they were forced to surrender on June 10. On the day of the invasion, the collaborative leader of the small National-Socialist party Nasjonal Samling — Vidkun Quisling — tried to seize power, but was forced by the German occupiers to step aside. Real power was wielded by the leader of the German occupation authority, Reichskommissar Josef Terboven. Quisling, as *minister president*, later formed a collaborationist government under German control. At the time of the invasion, Norway had the fourth largest merchant marine in the world led by the shipping company Nortraship, which under the Allies took part in every war operation from the evacuation of Dunkirk to the Normandy landings.

Following the war, the Social Democrats came to power and ruled the country for much of the cold war. Norway joined NATO in 1949, and became a close ally of the United States. Two plebiscites to join the European Union failed by narrow margins in 1972 and 1994. Large reserves of petroleum and natural gas were discovered in the 1960s, which led to a continuing boom in the economy.

Geography, climate and environment



Satellite image of continental Norway in winter

Norway comprises the western part of Scandinavia in Northern Europe. The rugged coastline, broken by huge fjords and thousands of islands, stretches over 2,500 km as the crow flies and over 83,000 km including the fjords and islands. Norway shares a 2,542 km land border with Sweden, Finland, and Russia to the east. To the west and south, Norway is bordered by the Norwegian Sea, the North Sea, and Skagerak. The Barents Sea washes on Norway's northern coasts.

At 385,252 km² (including Jan Mayen, Svalbard), Norway is slightly larger than Germany, but much of the country is dominated by mountainous or high terrain, with a great variety of natural features caused by prehistoric glaciers and varied topography. The most noticeable of these are the fjords: deep grooves cut into the land flooded by the sea following the end of the Ice Age. The longest is Sognefjorden. Norway also contains many glaciers and waterfalls.

The land is mostly made of hard granite and gneiss rock, but slate, sandstone and limestone are also common, and the lowest elevations have marine deposits. Due to the Gulf Stream and prevailing westerlies, Norway experiences warmer temperatures and more precipitation than expected at such northern latitudes, especially along the coast. The mainland experiences four distinct seasons, with colder winters and less precipitation inland. The northernmost part has a mostly maritime Subarctic climate, while Svalbard has

an Arctic tundra climate.

Due to Norway's high latitude, there are large seasonal variations in daylight. From late May to late July, the sun never completely descends beneath the horizon in areas north of the Arctic Circle (hence Norway's description as the "Land of the Midnight Sun") and the rest of the country experiences up to 20 hours of daylight per day. Conversely, from late November to late January, the sun never rises above the horizon in the north, and daylight hours are very short in the rest of the country. Throughout Norway, one will find stunning and dramatic scenery and landscape. The west coast of southern Norway + the coast of North Norway are among the most impressive coastlines anywhere in the world.



Typical Western Norwegian landscape with village (Geiranger)

The 2008 Environmental Performance Index put Norway in second place, after Switzerland, based on the environmental performance of the country's policies.

Politics

Norway is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government.

The Norwegian monarchy Norwegian Royal Family is a branch of the princely family of Glücksburg, originally from Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. Since 1991 the king had been Harald V.

The Constitution of Norway was adopted in 1814. It grants important executive powers to the King, but these are effectively always exercised by the

Norwegian Council of State (the cabinet) in the name of the King. The king does act as ceremonial head of state and a symbol of national unity and retains some reserve powers, which were used in World War II during the German occupation, when Haakon VII said he would abdicate rather than appoint a collaborationist government led by Vidkun Quisling. The King also opens the Parliament every October, receives ambassadors to the Norwegian court, and acts as the symbolic supreme commander of the Norwegian Defence Force and the High Protector of the Church of Norway, the established church.

The Council of State consists of a Prime Minister (the head of government) and other ministers, formally appointed by the King. Parliamentaryism has evolved since 1884 and entails that the cabinet must not have the parliament against it, and that the appointment by the King is a formality when there is a clear majority in Parliament for a party or a coalition of parties. After elections resulting in no clear majority to any party or coalition, the leader of the party most likely to be able to form a government is appointed Prime Minister by the King. Norway has often been ruled by minority governments.

The King has government meetings every Friday at the Royal Palace (Council of State), but the government decisions are decided in advance in government conferences headed by the Prime Minister every Tuesday and Thursday. In order to form a government, more than half the membership of the Council of State is required to belong to the Church of Norway. Currently, this means at least ten out of 19 members. After the negotiations of looser ties between the church and the state, it was decided that this requirement will be abolished in the near future.

The Norwegian parliament is the Storting (*Stortinget*). It current has 169 members (an increased from 165 effective in the September 2005 elections). The members are elected from the 19 counties for four-year terms according to a system of proportional representation. An additional 19 seats ("levelling seats") are allocated on a nationwide basis to make the representation in parliament correspond better with the popular vote. There is a 4 percent election threshold to gain levelling seats.

The Storting is a qualified unicameral body. After elections it elects a quarter of its membership to form the Lagting, a sort of upper house, with the remaining three quarters forming the Odelsting, a lower house. When voting the two chambers divide, and this division of chambers is also used on very rare occasions such as impeachment. The original idea in 1814 was probably to have the Lagting act as an actual upper house, and the senior and more experienced members of the Storting were placed here. Laws are in most cases proposed by the government through a Member of the Council of State, or in some cases by a member of the Odelsting in case of repeated disagreement in the joint Storting. In modern times the Lagting rarely disagrees, effectively rubber-stamping the Odelsting's decisions.

Impeachment cases are very rare and may be brought against Members of the Council of State, of the Supreme Court (*Høyesterett*), or of the Storting for criminal offenses which they may have committed in their official capacity. The last case was in 1927, when Prime Minister Abraham Berge was acquitted.

Constitutional amendments of February 20, 2007 provide for:

- The abolition of division after the 2009 general election (making the Storting fully unicameral). Legislation will go through two readings, or three in case of dissent, before being passed and sent to the King for assent.



Stortinget, Oslo.

- Changes in impeachment procedures. The current system (indictments raised by the Odelsting and judged by the Lagting and the Supreme Court justices as part of the High Court of the Realm) will be replaced by new system (indictments raised by the Storting in plenary session; impeachment cases will be heard by the five highest-ranking Supreme Court justices and six lay members in one of the Supreme Court courtrooms, instead of the Lagting chamber; Storting representatives no longer perform as lay judges).

The judiciary is referred to as the Courts of Justice of Norway. It consists of a Supreme Court of 18 permanent judges and a chief justice, appellate courts, city and district courts, and conciliation councils. Judges attached to regular courts are appointed by the king-in-council.

Each December Norway gives a Christmas tree to the United Kingdom in thanks for the UK's assistance during World War II. A ceremony takes place to erect the tree in Trafalgar Square.

In its 2007 Worldwide Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders ranked Norway at a shared 1st place (with Iceland) out of 169 countries.

Corporal punishment of children has been illegal in Norway since 1983.

Foreign relations

Norway maintains embassies in 86 countries around the world. Norway has diplomatic relations with many countries without maintaining an embassy in the country. 60 countries maintain an embassy in Norway, all of them in the capital, Oslo.

Norway was a founding member of the United Nations, NATO, the Council of Europe, the European Free Trade Association, the OECD and the OSCE, and maintains membership in several other international organisations. Norway has twice rejected proposed membership of the European Union although Norway has access to the European single market through membership in the European Economic Area.

Norway has also assisted in international negotiations, such as in facilitating the Oslo Accords.

Cities and municipalities



Royal Norwegian Navy Aegis Fridtjof Nansen class frigate. Norway is a founding member of NATO.

Norway is divided into nineteen first-level administrative regions known as *fylker* ("counties", singular *fylke*) and 430 second-level *kommuner* ("municipalities", singular *kommune*). The *fylke* is the intermediate administration between state and municipality. The King is represented in every county by a Fylkesmann.

There is ongoing debate as to whether the nineteen "fylker" should be replaced with five to nine larger regions. Some expect this to happen by 2010, whereas others expect the intermediate administration to disappear entirely. Another option would probably require consolidating the municipalities into larger entities and delegating greater responsibility to them.

The counties of Norway are:

- Akershus
- Aust-Agder
- Buskerud
- Finnmark
- Hedmark
- Hordaland
- Møre og Romsdal
- Nordland
- Nord-Trøndelag
- Oppland
- Oslo
- Østfold
- Rogaland
- Sogn og Fjordane
- Sør-Trøndelag
- Telemark
- Troms
- Vest-Agder
- Vestfold

Economy



A geopolitical map of Norway, exhibiting its nineteen first-level administrative divisions (*fylker* or "counties")

Norwegians enjoy the second highest GDP per-capita (after Luxembourg) and third highest GDP (PPP) per-capita in the world, and has maintained first place in the world in the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) for six consecutive years (2001-2006). However, in 2007 Iceland very narrowly beat Norway as the #1 place according to the Human Development Index.

The Norwegian economy is an example of mixed economy, featuring a combination of free market activity and large government ownership. The government controls key areas, such as the strategic petroleum sector (StatoilHydro), hydroelectric energy production (Statkraft), aluminium production (Norsk Hydro), the largest Norwegian bank (DnB NOR) and telecommunication provider (Telenor). The government controls 31.6% of publicly listed companies. When non-listed companies are included the state has even higher share in ownership (mainly from direct oil license ownership).

Referendums in 1972 and 1994 indicated that the Norwegian people wished to remain outside the European Union (EU). However, Norway, together with Iceland and Liechtenstein, participates in the European Union's single market via the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement. The EEA Treaty between the European Union countries and the EFTA countries – transposed into Norwegian law via "EØS-loven" – describes the procedures for implementing European Union rules in Norway and the other EFTA countries. This makes Norway a highly integrated member of most sectors of the EU internal market. However, some sectors, such as agriculture, oil and fish, are not wholly covered by the EEA Treaty. Norway has also acceded to the Schengen Agreement and several other intergovernmental agreements between the EU member states.

The country is richly endowed with natural resources including petroleum, hydropower, fish, forests, and minerals. Norway has obtained one of the highest standards of living in the world in part by having a large amount of natural resources compared to the size of the population. The income from natural resources include a significant contribution from petroleum production and the substantial and well-managed income related to this sector. Norway also has a very low unemployment rate, currently below 2% (June 2007). The hourly productivity levels, as well as average hourly wages in Norway are among the highest in the world. The egalitarian values of the Norwegian society ensure that the wage difference between the lowest paid worker and the CEO of most companies is much smaller than in comparable western economies. This is also evident in Norway's low Gini coefficient.

Cost of living is about 30% higher in Norway than in the United States and 25% higher than the United Kingdom. The standard of living in Norway is high, and the continuing increase in oil prices ensure that Norway will remain one of the richest countries in the world over the foreseeable future.

Education

Higher education in Norway is offered by a range of seven universities, five specialised colleges, 25 university colleges as well as a range of private colleges. Education follows the Bologna process involving Bachelor (3 years), Master (2 years) and Doctor (4 years) degrees. Acceptance is offered after finishing upper secondary school with general study competence.

Public education is free, with an academic year with two semesters, from August to December and from January to June. The ultimate responsibility for the education lies with the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.



Demography

As of 2007, Norway's population numbered 4.7 million. Most Norwegians are ethnic Norwegians, a North Germanic people. The Sami people traditionally inhabit central and northern parts of Norway and Sweden, as well as in northern Finland and in Russia on the Kola Peninsula. Another national minority are the Kven people who are the descended of Finnish speaking people that moved to northern Norway in the 18th up to 20th century. Both the Sami and the Kven were subjected to a strong assimilation policy by the Norwegian government from the 19th century up to the 1970s. Because of this "Norwegianisation process", many families of Sami or Kven ancestry now self-identify as ethnic Norwegian . This, combined with a long history of co-habitation of the Sami and North Germanic peoples on the Scandinavian peninsula, makes claims about ethnic population statistics less straightforward than is often suggested — particularly in central and northern Norway. Other groups recognized as national minorities of Norway are Jews, Forest Finns, Roma/Gypsies and Romani people/Travellers.

In recent years, immigration has accounted for more than half of Norway's population growth. According to Statistics Norway (SSB), record 61,200 immigrants arrived in the country in 2007 — 35% higher than 2006. At the beginning of 2008, there were 459,600 persons in Norway with an immigrant background (i.e. immigrants, or born of immigrant parents), comprising 9.7% of the total population. 350,000 of these were from a non-Western background, which includes the formerly Communist countries according to the definition used by Statistics Norway. The largest immigrant groups by country of origin, in order of size, are Poles, Pakistanis, Swedish, Iraqis, Somalis , Vietnamese, Danes, and Germans. The Iraqi immigrant population has shown a large increase in recent years. After the enlargement of the EU in 2004, there has also been an influx of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland. The largest increase in 2007 was of immigrants from Poland, Germany, Sweden and Lithuania .

Religion

In common with other Scandinavian countries, the Norse followed a form of native Germanic paganism known as Norse paganism. By the end of the eleventh century, when Norway had been Christianized, the indigenous Norse religion and practices were prohibited. Anti- heathenry laws, however, were removed early in the twentieth century. Many remnants of the native religion and beliefs of Norway exist today, including names, referential names of cities and locations, the days of the week, and other parts of the everyday language.

Parts of the Sami minority retained their shamanistic religion well into the 18th century when they were converted to Christianity by Dano-Norwegian missionaries.

Nearly 83% of Norwegians are members of the state Church of Norway, to which they are registered at birth. Many remain in the state church to be able to use services such as baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial, rites which have strong cultural standing in Norway. Up to 40% of the membership attends church or religious meetings during a year, with fewer attending regularly.



Borgund stave church

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 32% of Norwegian citizens responded that "they believe there is a god," whereas 47% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 17% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force."

Other Christian denominations total about 4.5% of the population. These include the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal congregations, the Methodist Church, Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses and others. Among non-Christian religions, Islam is the largest, representing about 1.5% of the population: It is practiced mainly by the Somalian, Arab, Albanian, Pakistani and Turkish communities. Other religions comprise less than 1% each, including Judaism (see Jews in Norway). Indian immigrants introduced Hinduism to Norway, but account for fewer than 5,000 people, or 1% of non-Lutheran Norwegians. There are eleven Buddhist organizations, grouped under the Buddhistforbundet organisation, which make up 0.42% of the population. Around 1.5% of Norwegians adhere to the secular Norwegian Humanist Association. About 5% of the population is unaffiliated.

Languages

The North Germanic Norwegian language has two official written forms, *Bokmål* and *Nynorsk*. They have officially equal status, i.e. they are both used in public administration, in schools, churches, radio and television, but Bokmål is used by the vast majority, about 85-90%. Around 95% of the population speak Norwegian as their native tongue, although many speak dialects that may differ significantly from the written language. In general Norwegian dialects are inter-intelligible, though some may require significant effort. Several Finno-Ugric Sami languages are spoken and written throughout the country, especially in the north, by the *Sami people*. The state recognises these languages as official, and speakers have a right to get education in Sami language no matter where they are living, and receive communications from government in various Sami languages. The Kven minority speak the Finno-Ugric Kven language/Finnish.

Norwegian is highly similar to the other languages in Scandinavia, Swedish and Danish. All three languages are mutually intelligible and can be, and commonly are, employed in communication between inhabitants of the Scandinavian countries. As a result of the cooperation within the Nordic Council, inhabitants of all Nordic countries, including Iceland and Finland, have the right to communicate with the Norwegian authorities in their own language.

Any Norwegian student who is a child of immigrant parents is encouraged to learn the Norwegian language. The Norwegian government offers language instructional courses for immigrants wishing to obtain Norwegian citizenship.

The main foreign languages taught in Norwegian elementary school are English, German and French. Spanish, Russian, Japanese and Italian are available in some schools, mostly in the cities.

Literature

The history of Norwegian literature starts with the pagan Eddaic poems and skaldic verse of the 9th and 10th centuries with poets such as Bragi Boddason and

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Reine, Lofoten.

Eyvindr Skáldaspillir. The arrival of Christianity around the year 1000 brought Norway into contact with European medieval learning, hagiography and history writing. Merged with native oral tradition and Icelandic influence this was to flower into an active period of literature production in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Major works of that period include *Historia Norwegie*, *Thidreks saga* and *Konungs skuggsjá*.

Little Norwegian literature came out of the period of the Scandinavian Union and the subsequent Dano-Norwegian union (1387—1814), with some notable exceptions such as Petter Dass and Ludvig Holberg. In his play *Peer Gynt*, Ibsen characterized this period as "Twice two hundred years of darkness/brooded o'er the race of monkeys", although the latter line is not as frequently quoted as the former. During the union with Denmark, written Norwegian was replaced by Danish.

Two major events precipitated a major resurgence in Norwegian literature. In 1811 a Norwegian university was established in Christiania Seized by the spirit of revolution following the American and French Revolutions, the Norwegians signed their first constitution in 1814. Soon, the cultural backwater that was Norway brought forth a series of strong authors recognized first in Scandinavia, and then worldwide; among them were Henrik Wergeland, Peter Asbjørnsen, Jørgen Moe and Camilla Collett.

By the late 19th century, in the Golden Age of Norwegian literature, the so-called *Great Four* emerged: Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Alexander Kielland, and Jonas Lie. Bjørnson's "peasant novels", such as "En glad gutt" (A Happy Boy) and "Synnøve Solbakken" are typical of the national romanticism of their day, whereas Kielland's novels and short stories are mostly realistic. Although an important contributor to early Norwegian romanticism (especially the ironic *Peer Gynt*), Henrik Ibsen's fame rests primarily on his pioneering realistic dramas such *The Wild Duck* and *A Doll's House*, many of which caused moral uproar because of their candid portrayals of the middle classes.

In the twentieth century three Norwegian novelists were awarded the Nobel prize in literature: Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson in 1903, Knut Hamsun for the book "Markens grøde" ("Growth of the Soil") in 1920, and Sigrid Undset in 1928. In the 20th century writers like Dag Solstad, Jostein Gaarder, Erik Fosnes Hansen, Jens Bjørneboe, Kjartan Fløgstad, Lars Saabye Christensen, Johan Borgen, Herbjørg Wassmo, Jan Erik Vold, Rolf Jacobsen, Olaf Bull, Jan Kjærstad, Georg Johannesen, Tarjei Vesaas, Sigurd Hoel, Arnulf Øverland and Johan Falkberget have made important contributions to Norwegian literature.

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Poland

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Poland (Polish: *Polska*), officially the **Republic of Poland** (Polish: *Rzeczpospolita Polska*), is a country in Central Europe. Poland is bordered by Germany to the west; the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the south; Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania to the east; and the Baltic Sea and Kaliningrad Oblast, a Russian exclave, to the north. The total area of Poland is 312,679 km² (120,728 sq mi), making it the 69th largest country in the world and 9th in Europe. Poland has a population of over 38.5 million people, which makes it the 33rd most populous country in the world.

The establishment of a Polish state is often identified with the adoption of Christianity by its ruler Mieszko I in 966 (see Baptism of Poland), when the state covered territory similar to that of present-day Poland. Poland became a kingdom in 1025, and in 1569 it cemented a long association with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by uniting to form the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Commonwealth collapsed in 1795, and its territory was partitioned among Prussia, Russia, and Austria. Poland regained its independence in 1918 after World War I but lost it again in World War II, occupied by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Poland lost over six million citizens in World War II, and emerged several years later as a socialist republic within the Eastern Bloc under strong Soviet influence. In 1989 communist rule was overthrown and Poland became what is constitutionally known as the "Third Polish Republic". Poland is a unitary state made up of sixteen voivodeships (Polish: *województwo*). Poland is also a member of the European Union, NATO and OECD.

Geography

Rzeczpospolita Polska Republic of Poland	
 Flag	 Coat of arms
Anthem: <i>Mazurek Dąbrowskiego</i> (Polish) <i>Dąbrowski's Mazurek</i> ("Poland Is Not Yet Lost") (English).	
 Location of Poland (orange)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – on the European continent (camel & white) – in the European Union (camel) [Legend] 	



Poland's topography

Poland's territory extends across several geographical regions. In the northwest is the Baltic seacoast, which extends from the Bay of Pomerania to the Gulf of Gdansk. This coast is marked by several spits, coastal lakes (former bays that have been cut off from the sea), and dunes. The largely straight coastline is indented by the Szczecin Lagoon, the Bay of Puck, and the Vistula Lagoon. The centre and parts of the north lie within the North European Plain. Rising gently above these lowlands is a geographical region comprising the four hilly districts of moraines and moraine-dammed lakes formed during and after the Pleistocene ice age. These lake districts are the Pomeranian Lake District, the Greater Polish Lake District, the Kashubian Lake District, and the Masurian Lake District. The Masurian Lake District is the largest of the four and covers much of northeastern Poland. The lake districts form part of

the Baltic Ridge, a series of moraine belts along the southern shore of the Baltic Sea. South of the Northern European Lowlands lie the regions of Silesia and Masovia, which are marked by broad ice-age river valleys. Farther south lies the Polish mountain region, including the Sudetes, the Cracow-Częstochowa Upland, the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, and the Carpathian Mountains, including the Beskids. The highest part of the Carpathians is the Tatra Mountains, along Poland's southern border.

Rivers

The longest rivers are the Vistula (Polish: *Wisła*), 1,047 km (678 miles) long; the Oder (Polish: *Odra*) – which forms part of Poland's western border – 854 km (531 miles) long; its tributary, the Warta, 808 km (502 miles) long; and the Bug – a tributary of the Vistula – 772 km (480 miles) long. The Vistula and the Oder flow into the Baltic Sea, as do numerous smaller rivers in Pomerania. The Łyna and the Angrapa flow by way of the Pregolya to the Baltic, and the Czarna Hańcza flows into the Baltic through the Neman. While the great majority of Poland's rivers drain into the Baltic Sea, Poland's Beskids are the source of some of the upper tributaries of the Orava, which flows via the Váh and the Danube to the Black Sea. The eastern Beskids are also the source of some streams that drain through the Dniester to the Black Sea.

Poland's rivers have been used since early times for navigation. The Vikings, for example, traveled up the Vistula and the Oder in their longships. In the Middle Ages and in early modern times, when Poland-Lithuania was the breadbasket of Europe, the shipment of grain and other agricultural products down the Vistula toward Gdańsk and onward to eastern Europe took on great importance. For an overview of

Capital (and largest city)	Warsaw
Official languages	Polish ²
Demonym	Pole/Polish
Government - President - Prime Minister	Parliamentary republic Lech Kaczyński Donald Tusk
Formation - Christianisation ⁴ - Redeclared	14 April 966 11 November 1918
EU accession	1 May 2004
Area - Total - Water (%)	312,685 km ² (69th) 120,728 sq mi 3.07
Population - Dec. 2007 census - Density	38,115,641 122/km ² (83rd) 319.9/sq mi
GDP (PPP) - Total - Per capita	2007 (IMF) estimate \$620.9 billion (21st) \$16,600 (2007) (50th)
GDP (nominal) - Total - Per capita	2007 (IMF) estimate \$413.3 billion (24th) \$11,693 (49th)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.870 (high) (37th)
Currency	Złoty (PLN)

Polish rivers, see Category:Rivers of Poland.

Geology

The geological structure of Poland has been shaped by the continental collision of Europe and Africa over the past 60 million years, on the one hand, and the Quaternary glaciations of northern Europe, on the other. Both processes shaped the Sudetes and the Carpathians. The moraine landscape of northern Poland contains soils made up mostly of sand or loam, while the ice-age river valleys of the south often contain loess. The Cracow-Częstochowa Upland, the Pieniny, and the Western Tatras consist of limestone, while the High Tatras, the Beskids, and the Karkonosze are made up mainly of granite and basalts. The Kraków-Częstochowa Upland is one of the oldest mountain ranges on earth.

Mountains and topography

Poland has 21 mountains over 2,000 metres (6,561 ft) in elevation, all in the High Tatras. The Polish Tatras, which consist of the High Tatras and the Western Tatras, is the highest mountain group of Poland and of the entire Carpathian range. In the High Tatras lies Poland's highest point, the northwestern peak of Rysy, 2,499 metres (8,199 ft) in elevation. At its foot lies the mountain lake, the Morskie Oko. The second-highest mountain group in Poland is the Beskids, whose highest peak is Babia Góra, at 1,725

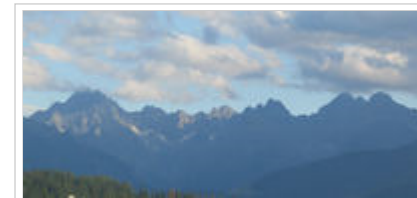


The Pieniny in the Carpathians

metres (5,659 ft). The next highest mountain group is the Karkonosze, whose highest point is Śnieżka, at 1,602 metres (5,256 ft). Among the most beautiful mountains of Poland are the Bieszczady Mountains in the far southeast of Poland, whose highest point in Poland is Tarnica, with an elevation of 1,346 metres (4,416 ft). Tourists also frequent the Gorce Mountains in Gorce National Park, with elevations around 1,300 metres (4,300 ft), and the Pieniny in Pieniny National Park, with elevations around 1,000 metres (3,300 ft). The lowest point in Poland—at 2 metres (7 ft) below sea level—is at Raczki Elbląskie, near Elbląg in the Vistula Delta. For a list of the most important mountain ranges of Poland, see the Category:Mountain ranges of Poland.

Lakes

Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.pl ⁵
Calling code	+48
<p>¹ See, however, Unofficial mottos of Poland.</p> <p>² Although not official languages, Belarusian, Kashubian, Lithuanian and German are used in 20 communal offices.</p> <p>³ The area of Poland according to the administrative division, as given by the Central Statistical Office, amounts to 312,679 km²: land area (311 888 km²) and part of internal waters (791 km²) cut by the coast line. The area of Poland's territory, including all internal waters and the territorial sea, is 322 575 km².</p> <p>⁴ The adoption of Christianity in Poland is seen by many Poles, regardless of their religious affiliation, as one of the most significant national historical events; the new religion was used to unify the tribes in the region.</p> <p>⁵ Also .eu, as Poland is a member of the European Union.</p>	



Granite crags of the High Tatras

With almost ten thousand closed bodies of water covering more than one hectare (2.47 acres) each, Poland has one of the highest numbers of lakes in the world. In Europe, only Finland has a greater density of lakes. The largest lakes, covering more than 100 square kilometers (38.6 square miles), are Lake Śniardwy and Lake Mamry in Masuria, as well as Lake Łebsko and Lake Drawsko in Pomerania. In addition to the lake districts in the north (in Masuria, Pomerania, Kashubia, Lubuskie, and Greater Poland), there is also a large number of mountain lakes in the Tatras, of which the Morskie Oko is the largest in area. The lake with the greatest depth—of more than 100 metres (328 ft)—is Lake Hańcza in the Wigry Lake District, east of Masuria in Podlaskie Voivodship.

Among the first lakes whose shores were settled are those in the Greater Polish Lake District. The stilt house settlement of Biskupin, occupied by more than one thousand residents, was founded before the seventh century BC by people of the Lusatian culture. The ancestors of today's Poles, the Polanie, built their first fortresses on islands in these lakes. The legendary Prince Popiel is supposed to have ruled from Kruszwica on Lake Gopło. The first historically documented ruler of Poland, Duke Mieszko I, had his palace on an island in the Warta River in Poznań.

For the most important lakes of Poland, see the Category:Lakes of Poland.

The coast

The Polish Baltic coast is approximately 528 kilometres (328 miles) long and extends from Świnoujście on the islands of Usedom and Wolin in the west to Krynica Morska on the Vistula Spit in the east. For the most part, Poland has a smooth coastline, which has been shaped by the continual movement of sand by currents and winds from west to east. This continual erosion and deposition has formed cliffs, dunes, and spits, many of which have migrated landwards to close off former lagoons, such as Łebsko Lake in Słowiński National Park. The largest spits are Hel Peninsula and the Vistula Spit. The largest Polish Baltic island is Wolin. The largest port cities are Gdynia, Gdańsk, Szczecin, and Świnoujście. The main coastal resorts are Sopot, Międzyzdroje, Kołobrzeg, Łeba, Władysławowo, and the Hel Peninsula.

The desert



Rożnowskie Lake, near Rożnów in southeastern Poland



Dunes in Słowiński National Park



Błędów Desert, the only desert in Poland

Błędów Desert is a desert located in Southern Poland in the Silesian Voivodeship and stretches over the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie region. It has a total area of 32 km². It is the only desert located in Poland. It is one of only five natural deserts in Europe. It is the warmest desert that appears at this latitude. It was created thousands of years ago by a melting glacier. The specific geological structure has been of big importance - the average thickness of the sand layer is about 40 meters (maximum 70 m), which made the fast and deep drainage very easy. In recent years the desert has started to shrink. The phenomenon of mirages has been known to exist there.

Land use

Forests cover 28% of Poland's land area. More than half of the land is devoted to agriculture. While the total area under cultivation is declining, the remaining farmland is more intensively cultivated.

More than 1% of Poland's territory — 3,145 square kilometres (1,214 square miles) — is protected within 23 national parks. In this respect, Poland ranks first in Europe. Three more national parks are projected for Masuria, the Cracow-Częstochowa Upland, and the eastern Beskids. Most Polish national parks are located in the southern part of the country. In addition, wetlands along lakes and rivers in central Poland are legally protected, as are coastal areas in the north. There are also over 120 areas designated as landscape parks, and numerous nature reserves and other protected areas.



The patchwork landscape of Masuria

Flora and fauna



A wisent in the Białowieża Forest

Phytogeographically, Poland belongs to the Central European province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF, the territory of Poland can be subdivided into three ecoregions: the Baltic mixed forests, Central European mixed forests and Carpathian montane conifer forests.

Many animals that have since died out in other parts of Europe still survive in Poland, such as the wisent in the ancient woodland of the Białowieża Forest and in Podlachia. Other such species include the brown bear in Białowieża, in the Tatras, and in the Beskids, the gray wolf and the Eurasian lynx in various forests, the moose in northern Poland, and the beaver in Masuria, Pomerania, and Podlachia. In the forests, one also encounters game animals, such as red deer, roe deer, and boars. In eastern Poland there are a number of ancient woodlands, like Białowieża, that have never been cleared by people. There are also large forested areas in the mountains, Masuria, Pomerania, and Lower Silesia.

Poland is the most important breeding ground for European migratory birds. Out of all of the migratory birds who come to Europe for the summer, one quarter breed in Poland, particularly in the lake districts and the wetlands along the Biebrza, the Narew, and the Warta, which are part of nature reserves or national parks. In Masuria, there are villages in which storks outnumber people.

Climate

The climate is mostly temperate throughout the country. The climate is oceanic in the north and west and becomes gradually warmer and continental as one moves south and east. Summers are generally warm, with average temperatures between 20 °C (68 °F) and 27 °C (80,6 °F). Winters are cold, with average temperatures around 3 °C (37,4 °F) in the northwest and -8 °C (17,6 °F) in the northeast. Precipitation falls throughout the year, although, especially in the east; winter is drier than summer. The warmest region in Poland is Lesser Poland located in Southern Poland where temperatures in the summer average between 23 °C (73,4 °F) and 30 °C (86 °F) but can go as high as 32 °C (89,6 °F) to 38 °C (100,4 °F) on some days in the warmest month of the year July. The warmest city in Poland is Tarnów. The city is located in Lesser Poland; it is the hottest place in Poland all year round. The average temperatures being 30 °C (86 °F) in the summer and 4 °C (39,2 °F) in the winter. Tarnów also has the longest summer in Poland spreading from mid May to mid September. Also it has the shortest winter in Poland which often lasts from January to March, less than the regular three-month winter. The coldest region of Poland is in the Northeast in the Podlaskie Voivodeship near the border of Belarus. The climate is efficient due to cold fronts which come from Scandinavia and Siberia. The average temperature in the winter in Podlachian ranges from -15 °C (5 °F) to -4 °C (24,8 °F).



Family of White stork, a national bird in Poland

Demographics



Three generations in West Pomerania after World War II:
Pomnik Czynu Polaków,
Szczecin

Poland, with 38.5 million inhabitants, has the eighth-largest population in Europe and the sixth-largest in the European Union. It has a population density of 122 inhabitants per square kilometer (328 per square mile).

Poland historically contained many languages, cultures and religions on its soil. The country had a particularly large Jewish population prior to the Second World War, when the Nazi Holocaust caused Poland's Jewish population, estimated at 3 million before the war, to drop to just 300,000. The outcome of the war, particularly the westward shift of Poland's borders to the area between the Curzon line and the Oder-Neisse line, coupled with post-war expulsion of minorities, gave Poland an appearance of homogeneity.

As of 2002, 36,983,700 people, or 96.74% of the population consider themselves Polish (Census 2002), while 471,500 (1.23%) declared another nationality. 774,900 people (2.03%) did not declare any nationality. The largest nationalities and ethnic groups in Poland are Silesians, Germans (most in the former Opole Voivodeship), Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Russians, Jews and Belarusians. The Polish language, a member of the West Slavic branch of the Slavic languages, functions as the official language of Poland. English and German are the most common second languages studied and spoken.

In recent years, Poland's population has decreased because of an increase in emigration and a sharp drop in the birth rate. In 2006, the census office estimated the total population of Poland at 38,536,869, a slight rise on the 2002 figure of 38,230,080. Since Poland's accession to the European Union, a significant number of Poles have emigrated to Western European countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany and Ireland in search of work. Some organizations have stated that Polish emigration is primarily due to Poland's high unemployment rate (10.5%), with Poles searching for better work

opportunities abroad. In April 2007, the Polish population of the United Kingdom had risen to approximately 300,000 and estimates place the Polish population in Ireland at 65,000.

However lately it has been reported that large numbers of Polish citizens who had previously emigrated to other parts of the EU for better prospects are in fact returning due to the dramatic increase in standards of living for Poles in their own country as well as sharp increases in wages. The Central Statistical Office of the Polish government recently published figures which gave evidence that there is now a net inflow of people into the country.

Polish minorities are still present in the neighboring countries of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, as well as in other countries (see Poles for population numbers). Altogether, the number of ethnic Poles living abroad is estimated to be around 20 million. The largest number of Poles outside of Poland can be found in the United States.

Urban Areas

The largest metropolitan areas in Poland are the Upper Silesian Coal Basin centred on Katowice (3.5 million inhabitants); the capital, Warsaw (3 million); Kraków (1.3 million) Łódź (1.3 million); the Tricity of Gdańsk- Sopot- Gdynia in the Vistula delta (1.1 million); Poznań (0.9 million); Wrocław (0.9 million); and Szczecin (0.7 million). For an overview of Polish cities, see List of cities in Poland.

Ethnicity and religion

In terms of ethnicity, Poland has been a homogeneous state since the end of World War II. This is a major departure from much of Polish history. Due to the Holocaust and the flight and expulsion of German and Ukrainian populations, Poland has become almost uniformly Catholic. About 88% of the population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, with 58% as practising Catholics according to 2005 survey by the Centre for Public Opinion Research. Though rates of religious observance are currently lower than they have been in the past, Poland remains one of the most devoutly religious countries in Europe. Religious minorities include Polish Orthodox (1.3% or about 506,000), Jehovah's Witnesses (0.6% or about 220,000), various Protestants (0.4% or about 159,000), Eastern Catholics (0.2%), and smaller minorities of Mariavites, Polish Catholics, Jews, Muslims (including the Tatars of Białystok). Protestant churches include about 0.2% or 76,000 in the largest Evangelical-Augsburg Church, plus about as many in smaller Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. Resulting from the socio-political emancipation of the county, freedom of religion has become guaranteed by the 1989 statute of the Polish constitution, allowing for the emergence of additional denominations. However, due to pressure from the Polish Episcopate, exposition of doctrine has entered public education system as well, drawing criticism from the popular media, as unconstitutional. According to 2007 survey, 72% of respondents were not against the fostering of catechism in public schools; nevertheless, the alternative courses in ethics have become available only in one percent of the entire public educational system.

Poles (including Silesians and Kashubians) make up an overwhelming 99.3% majority of the Polish population. According to the 2002 census, the remainder of the population is made up of small minorities of Germans (152,897), Belarusians (c. 49,000), and Ukrainians (c. 30,000), as well as Tatars, Lithuanians, Roma, Lemkos, Russians, Karaites, Slovaks, and Czechs. Among foreign citizens, the Vietnamese are the largest ethnic group, followed by Greeks and Armenians.

History

Prehistory

Historians have postulated that throughout Late Antiquity, many distinct ethnic groups populated the regions of what is now known as Poland. The exact ethnicity and linguistic affiliation of these groups has been hotly debated; in particular the time and route of the original settlement of Slavic peoples in these regions has been the subject of much controversy.

The most famous archeological find from Poland's prehistory is the Biskupin fortified settlement (now reconstructed as a museum), dating from the Lusatian culture of the early Iron Age, around 700 BC.

Piast dynasty



History of Poland

Chronology

Until 966
 966–1385
 1385–1569
 1569–1795
 1795–1918



Poland began to form into a recognizable unitary and territorial entity around the middle of the tenth century under the Piast dynasty. Poland's first historically documented ruler, Mieszko I, was baptized in 966, adopting Catholic Christianity as the nation's new official religion, to which the bulk of the population converted in the course of the next centuries. In the twelfth century, Poland fragmented into several smaller states. In 1320, Władysław I became the King of a reunified Poland. His son, Kazimierz III, is remembered as one of the greatest Polish kings.

Poland was also a centre of migration of peoples and the Jewish community began to settle and flourish in Poland during this era (see History of the Jews in Poland). The Black Death which affected most parts of Europe from 1347 to 1351 did not reach Poland.

Jagiellon dynasty

Under the Jagiellon dynasty Poland forged an alliance with its neighbour, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In 1410, a Polish-Lithuanian army inflicted a decisive defeat on the Teutonic Knights, both countries' main adversary, in the battle of Grunwald. After the Thirteen Years War, the Knight's state became a Polish vassal. Polish culture and economy flourished under the Jagiellons, and the country produced such figures as astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus and poet Jan Kochanowski. Compared to other European nations, Poland was exceptional in its tolerance of religious dissent, allowing the country to avoid the religious turmoil that spread over Western Europe in that time.

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

A golden age ensued during the sixteenth century after the Union of Lublin which gave birth to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The szlachta (nobility) of Poland, far more numerous than in Western European countries, took pride in their freedoms and parliamentary system. During the Golden Age period, Poland expanded its borders to become the largest country in Europe.

In the mid-seventeenth century, a Swedish invasion ("The Deluge") and Cossack's Chmielnicki Uprising which ravaged the country marked the end of the golden age. Numerous wars against Russia coupled with government inefficiency caused by the Liberum Veto, a right which had allowed any member of the parliament to dissolve it and to veto any legislation it had passed, marked the steady deterioration of the Commonwealth from a European power into a near-anarchy controlled by its neighbours. The reforms, particularly those of the Great Sejm, which passed the Constitution of May 3, 1791, the world's second modern constitution, were thwarted with the three partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, and 1795) which ended with Poland's being erased from the map and its territories being divided between Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

Partitions of Poland

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1918–1939
1939–1945
1945–1989
1989–present

Topics

Culture

Demography (Jews)

Economics

Politics (Monarchs and Presidents)

Military (Wars)

Territorial changes (WWII)



The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at its greatest extent

Poles would resent their fate and would several times rebel against the partitioners, particularly in the nineteenth century. In 1807 Napoleon recreated a Polish state, the Duchy of Warsaw, but after the Napoleonic wars, Poland was again divided in 1815 by the victorious Allies at the Congress of Vienna. The eastern portion was ruled by the Russian Czar as a Congress Kingdom, and possessed a liberal constitution. However, the Czars soon reduced Polish freedoms and Russia eventually *de facto* annexed the country. Later in the nineteenth century, Austrian-ruled Galicia, particularly the Free City of Kraków, became a centre of Polish cultural life.

Reconstitution of Poland



Poland between 1922 and 1938

During World War I, all the Allies agreed on the reconstitution of Poland that United States President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed in Point 13 of his Fourteen Points. Shortly after the surrender of Germany in November 1918, Poland regained its independence as the Second Polish Republic (*II Rzeczpospolita Polska*). It reaffirmed its independence after a series of military conflicts, the most notable being the Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921) when Poland inflicted a crushing defeat on the Red Army.

The 1926 May Coup of Józef Piłsudski turned the reins of the Second Polish Republic over to the Sanacja movement.

World War II

The Sanacja movement controlled Poland until the start of World War II in 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded on September 1 and the Soviet Union followed on September 17. Warsaw capitulated on September 28, 1939. As agreed in the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, Poland was split into two zones, one occupied by Germany while the eastern provinces fell under the control of the Soviet Union.

Of all the countries involved in the war, Poland lost the highest percentage of its citizens: over six million perished, half of them Polish Jews. Poland made the fourth-largest troop contribution to the Allied war effort, after the Soviets, the British and the Americans. The Polish expeditionary corps played an important role in the Italian Campaign, particularly at the Battle of Monte Cassino. At the war's conclusion, Poland's borders were shifted westwards, pushing the eastern border to the Curzon line. Meanwhile, the western border was moved to the Oder-Neisse line. The new Poland emerged 20% smaller by 77,500 square kilometres (29,900 sq mi). The shift forced the migration of millions of people, most of whom were Poles, Germans, Ukrainians, and Jews. The main German Nazi death camps were in Poland. Of a pre-war population of 3,300,000 Polish Jews, 3,000,000 were killed during the Holocaust.

Postwar Communist Poland

The Soviet Union instituted a new Communist government in Poland, analogous to much of the rest of the Eastern Bloc. Military alignment within the Warsaw Pact throughout the Cold War was also part of this change. The People's Republic of Poland (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*) was officially proclaimed in 1952. In 1956, the régime of Władysław Gomułka became temporarily more liberal, freeing many people from prison and expanding some personal freedoms. Similar situation repeated itself in the 1970s under Edward Gierek, but most of the time persecution of communist opposition persisted.

Labour turmoil in 1980 led to the formation of the independent trade union "Solidarity" ("*Solidarność*"), which over time became a political force. Despite persecution and imposition of martial law in 1981, it eroded the dominance of the Communist Party and by 1989 had triumphed in parliamentary elections. Lech Wałęsa, a Solidarity candidate, eventually won the presidency in 1990. The Solidarity movement heralded the collapse of communism across Eastern Europe.

Democratic Poland

A shock therapy programme of Leszek Balcerowicz during the early 1990s enabled the country to transform its economy into a market economy. As with all other post-communist countries, Poland suffered temporary slumps in social and economic standards, but became the first post-communist country to reach its pre-1989 GDP levels. Most visibly, there were numerous improvements in other human rights, such as free speech. In 1991, Poland became a member of the Visegrad Group and joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance in 1999 along with the Czech Republic and Hungary. Poles then voted to join the European Union in a referendum in June 2003, with Poland becoming a full member on May 1, 2004.

Politics

Poland is a democracy, with a President as a Head of State, whose current constitution dates from 1997. The government structure centres on the Council of Ministers, led by a prime minister. The president appoints the cabinet according to the proposals of the prime minister, typically from the majority coalition in the Sejm. The president is elected by popular vote every five years. The current president is Lech Kaczyński, the current prime minister is Donald Tusk.

Polish voters elect a bicameral parliament consisting of a 460-member lower house (Sejm) and a 100-member Senate (Senat). The Sejm is elected under proportional representation according to the d'Hondt method, a method similar to that used in many parliamentary political systems. The Senate, on the other hand, is elected under a rare plurality bloc voting method where several candidates with the highest support are elected from each constituency. With the exception of ethnic minority parties, only candidates of political parties receiving at least 5% of the total national vote can enter the Sejm. When sitting in joint session, members of the Sejm and Senate form the National Assembly (the *Zgromadzenie Narodowe*). The National Assembly is formed on three occasions: when a new President takes the oath of office; when an indictment against the President of the Republic is brought to the State Tribunal (*Trybunał Stanu*); and when a President's permanent incapacity to exercise his duties due to the state of his health is declared. To date, only the first instance has occurred.



At the end of World War II, the gray territories were transferred from Poland to the Soviet Union, and the pink territories from Germany to Poland

The judicial branch plays an important role in decision-making. Its major institutions include the Supreme Court of Poland (*Sąd Najwyższy*); the Supreme Administrative Court of Poland (*Naczelny Sąd Administracyjny*); the Constitutional Tribunal of Poland (*Trybunał Konstytucyjny*); and the State Tribunal of Poland (*Trybunał Stanu*). On the approval of the Senate, the Sejm also appoints the Ombudsman or the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection (*Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich*) for a five-year term. The Ombudsman has the duty of guarding the observance and implementation of the rights and liberties of Polish citizens and residents, of the law and of principles of community life and social justice.



Polish Air Force F-16.

Administrative divisions

Poland's current voivodeships (provinces) are largely based on the country's historic regions, whereas those of the past two decades (to 1998) had been centred on and named for individual cities. The new units range in area from less than 10,000 km² (Opole Voivodeship) to more than 35,000 km² (Masovian Voivodeship). Administrative authority at voivodeship level is shared between a government-appointed voivode (governor), an elected regional assembly (sejmik) and an executive elected by that assembly.

The voivodeships are subdivided into *powiats* (often referred to in English as counties), and these are further divided into *gminas* (also known as communes or municipalities). Major cities normally have the status of both gmina and powiat. Poland currently has 16 voivodeships, 379 powiats (including 65 cities with powiat status), and 2,478 gminas.

Voivodeship		Capital city or cities
	<i>in Polish</i>	
Greater Poland	<i>Wielkopolskie</i>	Poznań
Kuyavian-Pomeranian	<i>Kujawsko-Pomorskie</i>	Bydgoszcz / Toruń
Lesser Poland	<i>Małopolskie</i>	Kraków
Łódź	<i>Łódzkie</i>	Łódź
Lower Silesian	<i>Dolnośląskie</i>	Wrocław
Lublin	<i>Lubelskie</i>	Lublin
Lubusz	<i>Lubuskie</i>	Gorzów Wielkopolski / Zielona Góra
Masovian	<i>Mazowieckie</i>	Warsaw
Opole	<i>Opolskie</i>	Opole
Podlaskie	<i>Podlaskie</i>	Białystok
Pomeranian	<i>Pomorskie</i>	Gdańsk
Silesian	<i>Śląskie</i>	Katowice
Subcarpathian	<i>Podkarpackie</i>	Rzeszów
Świętokrzyskie	<i>Świętokrzyskie</i>	Kielce
Warmian-Masurian	<i>Warmińsko-Mazurskie</i>	Olsztyn
West Pomeranian	<i>Zachodniopomorskie</i>	Szczecin



Division of Poland into voivodeships and poviats

Economy

Poland is considered to have one of the healthiest economies of the post-communist countries, with GDP growing by 6.1% in 2006. Since the fall of communism, Poland has steadfastly pursued a policy of liberalising the economy and today stands out as a successful example of the transition from a state-directed economy to a primarily privately owned market economy.

The privatisation of small and medium state-owned companies and a liberal law on establishing new firms have allowed the development of an aggressive private sector. As a consequence, consumer rights organizations have also appeared. Restructuring and privatisation of "sensitive sectors" such as coal, steel, railways, and energy has been continuing since 1990. Between 2007 and 2010, the government plans to float twenty public companies on the Polish stock market, including parts of the coal industry. To date (2007), the biggest privatisations have been the sale of the national telecoms firm Telekomunikacja Polska to France Telecom in 2000, and an issue of 30% of the shares in Poland's largest bank, PKO Bank Polski, on the Polish stockmarket in 2004.



Financial centre of Warsaw,
Poland's capital and largest city

Poland has a large number of private farms in its agricultural sector, with the potential to become a leading producer of food in the European Union. Structural reforms in health care, education, the pension system, and state administration have resulted in larger-than-expected fiscal pressures. Warsaw leads Central Europe in foreign investment. GDP growth had been strong and steady from 1993 to 2000 with only a short slowdown from 2001 to 2002.

The prospect of closer integration with the European Union has put the economy back on track, with growth of 3.7% annually in 2003, a rise from 1.4% annually in 2002. In 2004, GDP growth equaled 5.4%, in 2005 3.3% and in 2006 6.2%. For 2007, the government has set a target for GDP growth at 6.5 to 7.0%.

Although the Polish economy is currently undergoing economic development, there are many challenges ahead. The most notable task on the horizon is the preparation of the economy (through continuing deep structural reforms) to allow Poland to meet the strict economic criteria for entry into the European Single Currency (Euro). According to the minister of finance Jacek Rostowski Poland is likely to join ERM in 2009 and adopt Euro in 2012 or 2013.. Some businesses may accept the euro as payment.

Average salaries in enterprise sector in April 2008 were 3137PLN (equals to 925 euro or 1434 US dollars) and growing sharply. Salaries varies between the regions: median wage in the capital city Warsaw was 4600 PLN (1200 euro or 2000 US dollars) while in Bialystok only 2400 (670 euro or 1000 US dollars).

Since joining the European Union, many workers have left to work in other EU countries (particularly Ireland and the UK) because of high unemployment, which was the second-highest in the EU (14.2% in May 2006). However, with the rapid growth of the salaries, booming economy, strong value of Polish currency, and quickly decreasing unemployment (8% in March 2008) exodus of Polish workers seems to be over. In 2008 people who came back outnumbered those leaving the country.

Commodities produced in Poland include: electronics, cars (including the luxurious Leopard car), buses (Autosan, Jelcz SA, Solaris, Solbus), helicopters (PZL Świdnik), transport equipment, locomotives, planes (PZL Mielec), ships, military engineering (including tanks, SPAAG systems), medicines (Polpharma, Polfa), food, clothes, glass, pottery (Bolesławiec), chemical products and others.

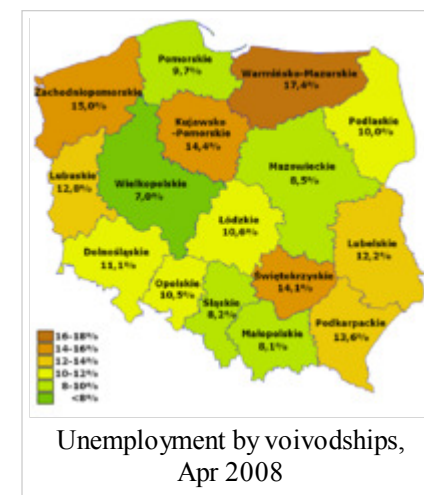
Science, technology and education

Education

The education of Polish society was a goal of rulers as early as the 12th century, and Poland soon became one of the most educated European countries. The library catalogue of the Cathedral Chapter of Kraków dating back to 1110 shows that already in the early 12th century Polish intellectuals had access to the European literature. In 1364, in Kraków, the Jagiellonian University, founded by King Casimir III, became one of Europe's great early universities. In 1773 King Stanisław August Poniatowski established his Commission on National Education (*Komisja Edukacji Narodowej*), the world's first state ministry of education.

Current situation

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Today Poland has more than a hundred tertiary education institutions; traditional universities to be found in its major cities of Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Olsztyn, Opole, Poznań, Rzeszów, Szczecin, Toruń, Warsaw, Wrocław and Zielona Góra as well as technical, medical, economic institutions elsewhere, employing around 61,000 workers. There are also around 300 research and development institutes, with about 10,000 more researchers. In total, there are around 91,000 scientists in Poland today.

According to Frost & Sullivan's Country Industry Forecast the country is becoming an interesting location for research and development investments. Multinational companies such as: ABB, Delphi, GlaxoSmithKline, Google, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Intel, LG Electronics and Microsoft have set up R&D centres in Poland. Motorola in Kraków, Siemens in Wrocław and Samsung in Warszawa are one of the largest owned by those companies. Over 40 R&D centers, and 4,500 researchers make Poland the biggest R&D hub in Central and Eastern Europe. Companies chose Poland because of the availability of highly qualified labor force, presence of universities, support of authorities, and the largest market in Central Europe.

According to KPMG report 80% of Poland's current investors are contented with their choice and willing to reinvest. In 2006 Intel decided to double the number of employees in its R&D centre.

The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Poland's education as the 23rd best in the world, being neither significantly higher nor lower than the OECD average.

Telecommunication and IT

The share of the telecom sector in the GDP is 4.4% (end of 2000 figure), compared to 2.5% in 1996. Nevertheless, despite high expenditures for telecom infrastructure (the coverage increased from 78 users per 1000 inhabitants in 1989 to 282 in 2000).

The value of the telecommunication market is zł 38.2bn (2006), and it grew by 12.4% in 2007 PMR

the coverage mobile cellular is over 1000 users per 1000 people (2007)

- Telephones—mobile cellular: 38.7 million (Onet.pl & GUS Report, 2007)
- Telephones—main lines in use: 12.5 million (Telecom Team Report, 2005)

Culture



Polish architecture: Main Market Square in Kraków. St Mary's Basilica (left), Sukiennice (centre), Town Hall Tower (right)

Polish culture has been influenced by both Eastern and Western influences. Today, these influences are evident in Polish architecture, folklore, and art. Poland is the birthplace of some world famous individuals, including Pope John Paul II, Marie Skłodowska Curie, Kazimierz Pułaski, Nicolaus Copernicus and Frederic Chopin.

The character of Polish art always reflected world trends. The famous Polish painter, Jan Matejko included many significant historical events in his paintings. Also a famous person in history of Polish art was Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz. He was an example of a Polish *Renaissance Man*. Polish literature dates back to 1100s and includes many famous poets and writers such as Jan Kochanowski, Adam Mickiewicz, Bolesław Prus, Juliusz Słowacki, Witold Gombrowicz, Stanisław Lem and, Ryszard Kapuściński. Writers Henryk Sienkiewicz, Władysław Reymont, Czesław Miłosz, Wisława Szymborska have each won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Many world renowned Polish movie directors include Academy Awards winners Roman Polański, Andrzej Wajda, Zbigniew Rybczyński, Janusz Kamiński and Krzysztof Kieślowski. The traditional Polish music composers include world-renowned pianist Frederic Chopin as well as famous composers such as Krzysztof Penderecki, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, Karol Szymanowski, and others.

Notable foods in Polish cuisine include Polish sausage, red beet soup, Polish dumplings, flaczki (tripe soup), cabbage rolls, Oscypek, Polish pork chops, Polish traditional stew, various potato dishes, a fast food sandwich zapiekanka, and many more. Traditional Polish desserts include Polish doughnuts, Polish gingerbread and others.

Sports

International rankings

Index	Rank	Countries reviewed
Human Development Index 2006	37th	177
OECD Working time	2nd	27
Index of Economic Freedom 2007	87th	157
Privacy International Yearly Privacy ranking of countries 2006	8th	36

Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index 2006	58th	168
Summary Innovation Index 2005	27th	33
UNICEF Child Well-being league table	14th	21
Networked Readiness Index 2006-2007	58th	122
OICA Automobile Production	20th	53

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Portugal




2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Portugal, officially the **Portuguese Republic** (Portuguese: *República Portuguesa*), is a country on the Iberian Peninsula. Located in southwestern Europe, Portugal is the westernmost country of mainland Europe and is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and south and by Spain to the north and east. The Atlantic archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira are also part of Portugal.

The land within the borders of today's Portuguese Republic has been continuously settled since prehistoric times. Some of the earliest civilizations include Lusitanians and Celtic societies. Incorporation into the Roman Republic dominions took place in the 2nd century BC. The region was ruled and colonized by Germanic peoples, such as the Suebi and the Visigoths, from the 5th to the 8th century. From this era, some vestiges of the Alans were also found. The Muslim Moors arrived in the early 8th century and conquered the Christian Germanic kingdoms, eventually occupying most of the Iberian Peninsula. In the early 1100s, during the Christian *Reconquista*, Portugal appeared as a kingdom independent of its neighbour, the Kingdom of León and Galicia. In a little over a century, in 1249, Portugal would establish almost its entire modern-day borders by conquering territory from the Moors.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, with a global empire that included possessions in Africa, Asia and South America, Portugal was one of the world's major economic, political, and cultural powers. In the 17th century, the Portuguese Restoration War between Portugal and Spain ended the sixty year period of the Iberian Union (1580-1640). In the 19th century, armed conflict with French and Spanish invading forces and the loss of its largest territorial possession abroad, Brazil, disrupted political stability and potential economic growth. After the Portuguese Colonial War and the Carnation Revolution coup d'état in 1974, the ruling regime was deposed in Lisbon and the country handed over its last overseas provinces in Africa. Portugal's last overseas territory, Macau, was handed over to China in 1999.

Portugal is a developed country, has a high Human Development Index and is among the world's 20 highest rated countries in terms of quality of life, although having the lowest GDP per capita of Western European countries. It is a member of the European Union (since 1986) and the United Nations (since 1955); as well as a founding member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (Community of Portuguese Language Countries, CPLP), European Union's Eurozone, and is also a

<i>República Portuguesa</i> Portuguese Republic	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: " <i>A Portuguesa</i> "	
	
Location of Portugal (dark green)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — on the European continent (light green & dark grey) — in the European Union (light green) — [Legend] 	
Capital (and largest city)	Lisbon ⁵

Schengen state.

History



The early history of Portugal, whose name derives from the Roman name *Portus Cale*, is shared with the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. The region was settled by Pre-Celts and Celts, giving origin to peoples like the Gallaeci, Lusitanians, Celtici and Cynetes, visited by Phoenicians and Carthaginians, incorporated in the Roman Republic dominions (as Lusitania in 138 BC), settled again by Suevi, Buri, and Visigoths, and conquered by Moors. Other minor influences include some 5th century vestiges of Alan settlement, which were found in Alenquer, Coimbra and even Lisbon. In 868, during the Reconquista (by which Christians reconquered the Iberian peninsula from the Muslim and Moorish domination), the First County of Portugal was formed. A victory over the Muslims at Ourique in 1139 is traditionally

taken as the occasion when Portugal is transformed from a county (County of Portugal as a fief of the Kingdom of León and Castile) into an independent kingdom.

On June 24, 1128, the Battle of São Mamede occurred near Guimarães. At the Battle of São Mamede, Afonso Henriques, Count of Portugal, defeated his mother, Countess Teresa, and her lover, Fernão Peres de Trava, in battle - thereby establishing himself as sole leader. Afonso Henriques officially declared Portugal's independence when he proclaimed himself king of Portugal on July 25, 1139, after the Battle of Ourique, he was recognized as such in 1143 by Afonso VII, king of León and Castile, and in 1179 by Pope Alexander III.



Afonso Henriques and his successors, aided by military monastic orders, pushed southward to drive out the Moors, as the size of Portugal covered about half of its present area. In 1249, this Reconquista ended with the capture of the Algarve on the southern coast, giving Portugal its present day borders, with minor exceptions.

In 1373, Portugal made an alliance with England, which is the longest-standing alliance in the world.

In 1383, the king of Castile, husband of the daughter of the Portuguese king who had died without a male heir, claimed his throne. An ensuing popular revolt led to the 1383-1385

Official languages	Portuguese ¹
Recognised regional languages	Mirandese
Demonym	Portuguese
Government	Parliamentary republic ⁶
- President	Aníbal Cavaco Silva
- Prime Minister	José Sócrates
Formation	Conventional date for Independence is 1139
- Founding	868
- Re-founding	1095
- <i>De facto</i> sovereignty	June 24, 1128
- Kingdom	25 July 1139
- Recognized	5 October 1143
- Papal Recognition	1179
EU accession	1 January 1986
Area	
- Total	92,345 km ² (110th) 35,645 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.5
Population	
- July 2007 estimate	10,848,692 (75th)
- 2001 census	10,148,259
- Density	114/km ² (87th) 295/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 (IMF) estimate
- Total	\$230.6 billion (43rd)
- Per capita	\$23,464 (2007) (34th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 (IMF) estimate

Crisis. A faction of petty noblemen and commoners, led by John of Aviz (later John I), seconded by General Nuno Álvares Pereira defeated the Castilians in the Battle of Aljubarrota. This celebrated battle is still a symbol of glory and the struggle for independence from neighboring Spain.

In the following decades, Portugal spearheaded the exploration of the world and undertook the Age of Discovery. Prince Henry the Navigator, son of King João I, became the main sponsor and patron of this endeavor.

In 1415, Portugal gained the first of its overseas colonies when a fleet conquered Ceuta, a prosperous Islamic trade centre in North Africa. There followed the first discoveries in the Atlantic: Madeira and the Azores, which led to the first colonization movements.

- Total	\$223.3 billion (36th)
- Per capita	\$21,019 (32nd)
HDI (2005)	▼ 0.897 (high) (29th)
Currency	Euro (€) ² (EUR)
Time zone	WET ³
- Summer (DST)	WEST (UTC0)
Internet TLD	.pt ⁴
Calling code	+351
<p>1 Mirandese, spoken in some villages of the municipality of Miranda do Douro, was officially recognized in 1999 (<i>Lei n.º 7/99 de 29 de Janeiro</i>), since then awarding an official right-of-use Mirandese to the linguistic minority it is concerned. The Portuguese Sign Language is also recognized.</p> <p>2 Before 1999: Portuguese escudo.</p> <p>3 Azores: UTC-1; UTC in summer.</p> <p>4 The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.</p> <p>5 Coimbra was the capital of the country from 1139 to about 1260.</p> <p>6 The present form of the Government was established by the Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974, that ended the authoritarian regime of the Estado Novo.</p>	



An anachronous map of the Portuguese Empire (1415-1999). Red - true possessions; Pink - explorations, areas of influence and trade and claims of sovereignty; Blue - main sea explorations, routes and areas of influence. The disputed discovery of Australia is not shown.

Throughout the 15th century, Portuguese explorers sailed the coast of Africa, establishing trading posts for several common types of tradable commodities at the time, ranging from gold to slaves, as they looked for a route to India and its spices, which were coveted in Europe. In 1498, Vasco da Gama finally reached India and brought economic prosperity to Portugal and its then population of one million residents.

In 1500, Pedro Álvares Cabral, en route to India, discovered Brazil and claimed it for Portugal. Ten years later, Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Goa, in India, Ormuz in the Persian Strait, and Malacca in what is now a state in Malaysia. Thus, the Portuguese empire held dominion over commerce in the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic. The Portuguese sailors set out to reach Eastern Asia by sailing eastward from Europe landing in such places like Taiwan, Japan, the island of Timor, and it may also have been Portuguese sailors that were the first Europeans to discover Australia.



Padrão dos Descobrimentos, a monument to Prince Henry the Navigator and the Portuguese Age of Discovery, Lisbon

Portugal's independence was interrupted between 1580 and 1640. Because the heirless King Sebastian died in battle in Morocco, Philip II of Spain claimed his throne and so became Philip I of Portugal. Although Portugal did not lose its formal independence, it was governed by the same monarch who governed Spain, briefly forming a union of kingdoms, as a personal union; in 1640, John IV spearheaded an uprising backed by disgruntled nobles and was proclaimed king. The Portuguese Restoration War between Portugal and Spain on the aftermath of the 1640 revolt, ended the sixty-year period of the Iberian Union under the House of Habsburg. This was the beginning of the House of Braganza, which was to reign in Portugal until 1910. On 1 November 1755, Lisbon, the largest city and capital of the Portuguese Empire, was strongly shaken by an earthquake which killed between 60,000 and 90,000 people and destroyed eighty-five percent of the city.

By this time, however, the Portuguese empire was already under attack from other countries, specifically Britain and the Netherlands. Portugal began a slow but inexorable decline until the 20th century. This decline was hastened by the independence in 1822 of the country's largest colonial possession, Brazil.



Map of the Portuguese Overseas provinces in Africa by the time of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974)

At the height of European colonialism in the 19th century, Portugal had lost its territory in South America and all but a few bases in Asia. During this phase, Portuguese colonialism focused on expanding its outposts in Africa into nation-sized territories to compete with other European powers there. Portuguese territories eventually included the modern nations of Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique.

In 1910, a revolution deposed the Portuguese monarchy, but chaos continued and considerable economic problems were aggravated by the military intervention in the First World War, which led to a military coup d'état in 1926. This in turn led to the establishment of the right-wing dictatorship of the Estado Novo under António de Oliveira Salazar.

In December 1961, the Portuguese army was involved in armed action in its colony of Portuguese India against an Indian invasion. The operations resulted in the defeat of the isolated and relatively small Portuguese defense force which was not able to resist a much larger enemy. The outcome was the loss of the Portuguese territories in the Indian subcontinent.

Also in the early 1960s, independence movements in the Portuguese overseas provinces of Angola, Mozambique, and Portuguese Guinea, in Africa, resulted in the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974). In 1974, a bloodless left-wing military coup in Lisbon, known as the Carnation Revolution, led the way for a modern democracy as well as the independence of the last colonies in Africa shortly after. However, Portugal's last overseas territory, Macau (Asia), was not handed over to the People's Republic of China until as late as 1999.

Portugal was a founding member of NATO, OECD and EFTA. In 1986, Portugal joined the European Union (then the European Economic Community). It is also a co-founder of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries.



Community of Portuguese Language Countries.

Administrative divisions



Sete Cidades, São Miguel Island, Azores.

Portugal has an administrative structure of 308 municipalities (Portuguese singular/plural: *concelho/concelhos*), which are subdivided into more than 4,000 parishes (*freguesia/freguesias*). Municipalities are grouped for administrative purposes into superior units. For continental Portugal the municipalities are gathered in 18 Districts, while the Islands have a Regional Government directly above them. Thus, the largest unit of classification is the one established since 1976 into either mainland Portugal (*Portugal Continental*) or the autonomous regions of Portugal (Azores and Madeira).

The European Union's system of Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics is also used. According to this system, Portugal is divided into 7 regions (Alentejo, Algarve, Açores, Centro, Lisboa, Madeira, and Norte), which are subdivided into 30 subregions.

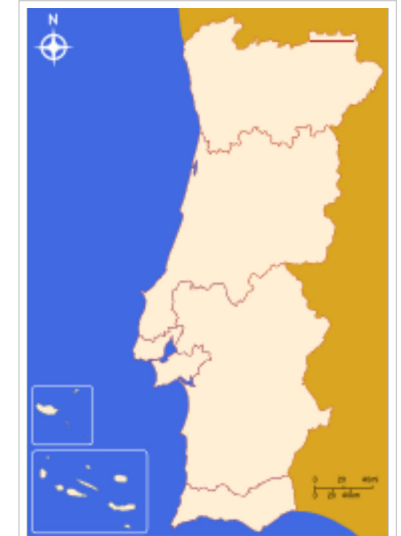
Geography and climate



Praia da Marinha, Lagoa, Algarve.

The climate can be classified as Mediterranean type *csa* in the south and *csb* in the north, according to the Köppen climate classification. Portugal is one of the warmest European countries, the annual temperature averages in mainland Portugal are 13 °C (55 °F) in the north and 18 °C (64 °F) in the south. The Madeira and Azores Atlantic archipelagos have a narrower temperature range. Generally, spring and summer are sunny, whereas autumn and winter are rainy and windy. Extreme temperatures occur in Northeastern parts of the country in winter (where they may fall to -15 °C) and Southeastern parts in summer (where they can soar up to 45 °C). Sea coastal areas are milder, temperatures varying between -2 °C on the coldest winter mornings and 40 °C on the hottest summer afternoons. Absolute extremes registered so far have been -23 °C in Serra da Estrela and 48 °C in the Alentejo region.

Mainland Portugal is split by its main river, the Tagus. The northern landscape is mountainous in the interior areas, with plateaus indented by river valleys. The south, between the Tagus and the Algarve (the Alentejo), features mostly rolling plains and a climate somewhat warmer and drier than in the cooler and rainier north. The Algarve, separated from the Alentejo by mountains, enjoys a Mediterranean climate much like southern Spain. Snow falls occasionally (on some cold winter days) in the northern interior of the country, from October to May. However, it is a very rare event in the south. The coast registers snow usually once in five or six years.



Map of Mainland Portugal and the two autonomous regions of Portugal (not in their actual locations).



A Portuguese ski resort during the winter season in Serra da Estrela mountain range, Centro.



Cork oak on wheat field, a typical image of the Alentejo region.

The islands of the Azores are located in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge whilst the Madeira islands were formed by the activity of an in-plate hotspot, much like the Hawaiian archipelago. Some islands have had volcanic activity as recently as 1957. Portugal's highest point is Mount Pico on Pico Island. It is an ancient volcano measuring 2,351 m (7,713 ft). Mainland Portugal's highest point is Serra da Estrela, measuring 1,993 m (6,558 ft).

Portugal's Exclusive Economic Zone, a seazone over which the Portuguese have special rights over the exploration and use of marine resources, has 1,727,408 km². This is the 3rd largest Exclusive Economic Zone of the European Union and the 11th in the world.

Conservation areas of Portugal include one national park (Parque Nacional), 12 natural parks (Parque Natural), 9 natural reserves (Reserva Natural), 5 natural monuments (Monumento Natural), and 7 protected landscapes (Paisagem Protegida), ranging from the Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês to the Parque Natural da Serra da Estrela to the Paul de Arzila. Climate and geographical diversity shaped the Portuguese Flora. There are almost 2,800 autochthonous species. Due to economical

reasons the pines trees (especially the *Pinus pinaster* and *Pinus pinea* species), the chestnut tree (*Castanea sativa*), the cork oak (*Quercus suber*), and the eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) are very widespread. Fauna is diverse and includes foxes, badgers, genets, feral cats, hares, weasels, and polecats. Portugal is an important stop over place for migratory birds.

Government and politics

Portugal is a democratic republic ruled by the constitution of 1976 with Lisbon, the nation's largest city, as its capital. The four main governing components are the president of the republic, the assembly of the republic, the government, and the courts. The constitution grants the division or separation of powers among legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Portugal like most European countries has no state religion, making it a secular state.



José Sócrates, current Prime Minister of Portugal.

The president, who is elected to a five-year term, has a supervising, non-executive role. The current President is Aníbal Cavaco Silva. The Assembly of the Republic is a unicameral parliament composed of 230 deputies elected for four-year terms. The government is headed by the prime minister (currently José Sócrates), who chooses the Council of Ministers, comprising all the ministers and the respective state secretaries.

The national and regional governments (those of Azores and Madeira autonomous regions), and the Portuguese parliament, are dominated by two political parties, the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party. Minority parties Unitarian Democratic Coalition (Portuguese Communist Party plus Ecologist Party "The Greens"), Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc) and CDS-PP (People's Party) are also represented in the parliament and local governments.



Assembly of the Republic, Lisbon

The courts are organized into categories, including judicial, administrative, and fiscal. The supreme courts are the courts of last appeal. A thirteen-member constitutional court oversees the constitutionality of legislation.

Foreign relations

Portugal is a founding member of NATO (1949), OECD (1961) and EFTA (1960); it left the latter in 1986 to join the European Union. In 1996 it co-founded the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). It has a friendship alliance and dual citizenship treaty with Brazil. Portugal is part of the world's oldest active alliance through its treaty with the United Kingdom.

The only international dispute concerns the municipality of Olivença. Under Portuguese sovereignty since 1297, the municipality of Olivença was ceded to Spain under the Treaty of Badajoz in 1801, after the War of the Oranges. Portugal claimed it back in 1815 under the Treaty of Vienna. Nevertheless, bilateral diplomatic relations between the two neighbouring countries are cordial, as well as within the European Union.



Flags of the member states of the CPLP.

Military



Portuguese Air Force
F-16.

The armed forces have three branches: Army, Navy, and Air Force. The military of Portugal serves primarily as a self-defense force whose mission is to protect the territorial integrity of the country and providing humanitarian assistance and security at home and abroad.

Since the early 2000s, compulsory military service is no longer practised. The changes also turned the forces' focus towards professional military engagements. The age for voluntary recruitment is set at 18. In the 20th century, Portugal engaged in two major military interventions: the First Great War and the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974).

Portugal has participated in peacekeeping missions in East Timor, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq (Nasiriyah), and Lebanon. The Portuguese Military's Rapid Reaction Brigade, a combined force of the nations elite Paratroopers, Special Operations Troops Centre, and Commandos, is a special elite fighting force.

The Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR) is a police force under the authority of the military, its soldiers are subject to military law and organization. GNR has provided detachments for participation in international operations in Iraq and East Timor.

Economy

Portugal's economy is based on services and industry such as software and automotive. Business services have overtaken more traditional industries such as textiles, clothing, footwear, cork and wood products and beverages (wine, beer, juice, soft drinks). The country has increased its role in the automotive, mold-making and software sectors. Services, particularly tourism, are playing an increasingly important role. Portugal's European Union (EU) funding will be cut by 10%, to 22.5 billion euros, during the 2007-2013 period. EU expansion into eastern Europe has erased Portugal's past competitive advantage and relative low labor costs. Portugal's economic development model has been changing from one based on public consumption and public investment to one focused on exports, private investment, and development of the high-tech sector. At present, Portugal is exporting more technology than it imports.

Portugal joined the European Union in 1986 and started a process of modernization within the framework of a stable environment. It has achieved a healthy level of growth. Successive governments have implemented reforms and privatized many state-controlled firms and liberalized key areas of the economy. Portugal was one of the founding countries of the euro in 1999, and therefore is integrated into the Eurozone.



Portuguese national side of a 1 euro coin. The centrepiece is the 1144 royal seal of King Afonso Henriques.

Major industries include oil refineries, automotive, cement production, pulp and paper industry, textile, footwear, furniture, and cork (of which Portugal is the world's leading producer). Manufacturing accounts for 33% of exports. Portugal is the world's fifth-largest producer of tungsten, and the world's eighth-largest producer of wine. Agriculture and Fishing (see Portugal EEZ) no longer represents the bulk of the economy. However, Portugal has a strong tradition in the fisheries sector and is one of the countries with the highest fish consumption per capita. Portuguese wines, namely Port Wine (named after the country's second largest city, Porto) and Madeira Wine (named after Madeira Island), are exported worldwide. Tourism is also important, especially in mainland Portugal's southernmost region of the Algarve and in the Atlantic Madeira archipelago.

The Global Competitiveness Report for 2005, published by the World Economic Forum, places Portugal on the 22nd position, ahead of countries such as Spain, Ireland, France, Belgium and Hong Kong. This represents an increase of two places from the 2004 ranking. Portugal was ranked 20th on the Technology index and 15th on the Public Institutions index.

Research about standard of living by the Economist Intelligence Unit's quality of life survey places Portugal as the country with the 19th-best quality of life in the world, ahead of other economically and technologically advanced countries like France, Germany, the United Kingdom and South Korea. This is despite the fact that Portugal has the lowest per capita GDP in Western Europe and among the lowest in the European Union.

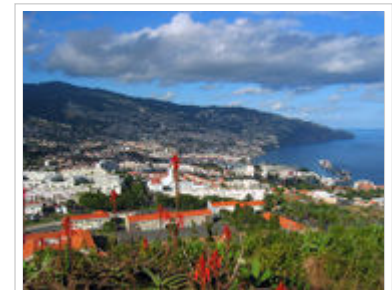
Caixa Geral de Depósitos, EDP, Galp, Millennium bcp, Portugal Telecom and Sonae are among the largest corporations of Portugal by both number of employees and net income.

The major stock exchange is the Euronext Lisbon which is part of the NYSE Euronext, the first global stock exchange. The

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Parque das Nações, where Expo'98 took place - on the short term, the growth of public investment and external demand (including tourism receipts) accelerated with Expo.



Funchal, Madeira - tourism is an important economic activity in the Portuguese island of Madeira.

PSI-20 is Portugal's most selective and widely known stock index.

Energy, transportation, communications, water supply and sanitation

In 2006 the world's largest solar power plant began operating in the nation's sunny south while the world's first commercial wave power farm opened in October 2006 in the Norte region. As of 2006, 55% of electricity production was from coal and fuel power plants. The other 40% was produced by hydroelectrics and 5% by wind energy. The government is channeling \$38,000,000,000 into developing renewable energy sources over the next five years.

Portugal wants renewable energy sources like solar, wind and wave power to account for nearly half of the electricity consumed in the country by 2010. "This new goal will place Portugal in the frontline of renewable energy and make it, along with Austria and Sweden, one of the three nations that most invest in this sector", Prime Minister José Sócrates said.



Alqueva Dam, Alentejo - irrigation and hydroelectric power generation facility which created the largest artificial lake in Western Europe.

Transportation was seen as a priority in the 1990s, pushed by the growing use of automobiles and industrialization. The country has a 68,732 km (42,708 mi) network of roads, of which almost 3,000 km (1,864 mi) are part of a 44 motorways system.

The two principal metropolitan areas have subway systems: Lisbon Metro and Metro Sul do Tejo in Lisbon Metropolitan Area and Porto Metro in Porto, each with more than 35 km (22 mi) of lines. Construction of a high-speed TGV line connecting Porto with Lisbon and Lisbon with Madrid will begin in 2008; it will replace the Pendolinos.

Lisbon's geographical position makes it a stopover point for many foreign airlines at airports all over the country. The government decided to build a new airport outside Lisbon, in Alcochete, to replace Lisbon's Portela airport. Currently, the most important airports are in Lisbon, Faro, Porto, Funchal (Madeira), and Ponta Delgada (Azores).



Vasco da Gama Bridge, over the River Tagus, is the longest bridge in Europe.

Portugal has one of the highest mobile phone penetration rates in the world (the number of operative mobile phones already exceeds the population). This network also provides wireless mobile Internet connections as well, and covers the entire territory. As of October 2006, 36.8% of households had high-speed Internet services and 78% of companies had Internet access. Most Portuguese watch television through cable (June 2004: 73.6% of households). Paid Internet connections are available at many cafés, as well as many post offices. One can also surf on the Internet at hotels, conference centres and shopping centres, where special areas are reserved for this purpose. Free internet access is also available to Portuguese residents at "Espaços de Internet" across the country.

Portugal has also modernized its water supply and sanitation system, in particular by increasing the rate of wastewater treated with support from EU subsidies to 80%. The country has also established a modern institutional and legal framework for the water and sanitation sector, including an autonomous regulatory agency, a national asset holding company called Águas de Portugal and a number of multi-municipal utilities. This replaced an institutionally fragmented sector structure, under which the country's 308 municipalities - many of them very small - had exclusive responsibility for water and sanitation.

Demographics

The country is fairly homogeneous linguistically and religiously. Native Portuguese are ethnically a combination of pre-Celts, Celts, and the Lusitanians, along with some other minor contributions by Phoenicians, Romans, Germanic (Visigoths, Suebi, Buri), Alans, some Jews and Moors (mostly Berbers and some Arabs).

In the 2001 census, the population was 10,356,117, of which 52% was female, 48% was male. Portugal, long a country of emigration, has now become a country of net immigration, and not just from the former Asian and African colonies; by the end of 2003, legal immigrants represented about 5% of the population, and the largest communities were from Brazil, Ukraine, Romania, Cape Verde, Angola, Russia, Guinea-Bissau and Moldova with other immigrants from parts of Latin America, China and Eastern Europe. The great majority of Portuguese are Roman Catholic, though a large percentage consider themselves non-practising, especially in urban lands.

The most populous cities are Lisbon, Porto, Vila Nova de Gaia, Amadora, Braga, Coimbra, Almada, Funchal, Setúbal and Guimarães. There are seven Greater Metropolitan Areas (GAMs): Algarve, Aveiro, Coimbra, Lisbon, Minho, Porto and Visau.

Education, science and technology



Lisbon Metro subway lines, the oldest and largest in the country, total about 39 km in length.



Douro river crossing *Grande Porto*, Portugal's second most populated subregion

The educational system is divided into preschool (for those under age 6), basic education (9 years, in three stages, compulsory), secondary education (3 years), and higher education (university and polytechnic).

Total adult literacy rate is 95%. Portuguese primary school enrollments are close to 100%. About 20% of college-age students attend one of the country's higher education institutions (compared with 50% in the United States). In addition to being a key destination for international students, Portugal is also among the top places of origin for international students. All higher education students, both domestic and international, totaled 380,937 in 2005.

Portuguese universities have existed since 1290. The oldest Portuguese university was first established in Lisbon before moving to Coimbra. Universities are usually organized into faculties. Institutes and schools are also common designations for autonomous subdivisions of Portuguese higher education institutions, and are always used in the polytechnical system. The Bologna process has been adopted since 2006 by Portuguese universities and polytechnical institutes.



The tower of the University of Coimbra, Coimbra - the university is one of the oldest in continuous operation in the world.



Headquarters of the New University of Lisbon, Lisbon.

Scientific and technological research activities in Portugal are mainly conducted within a network of R&D units belonging to public universities and state-managed autonomous research institutions like the INETI - Instituto Nacional de Engenharia, Tecnologia e Inovação. The funding of this research system is mainly conducted under the authority of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education. The largest R&D units of the public universities by number of publications which achieved significant international recognition, include biosciences research institutions like the Instituto de Medicina Molecular, the Centre for Neuroscience and Cell Biology, the IPATIMUP, and the Instituto de Biologia Molecular e Celular. Among the private universities, notable research centers include the Facial Emotion Expression Lab. Internationally notable state-supported research centres in other fields include the International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory, a joint research effort between Portugal and Spain. Among the largest non-state-run research institutions in Portugal are the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência and the Champalimaud Foundation which yearly awards one of the highest monetary prizes of any science prize in the world. A number of both national and multinational high-tech and industrial companies, are also responsible for research and development projects. One of the oldest learned societies of Portugal is the Sciences Academy of Lisbon.

Portugal made agreements with several European scientific organizations aiming at full membership. These include the European Space Agency (ESA), the European Laboratory for Particle Physics (CERN), ITER, and the European Southern Observatory (ESO). Portugal has entered into cooperation agreements with MIT (USA) and other North American institutions in order to further develop and increase the effectiveness of Portuguese higher education and research.

Law

The Portuguese legal system is part of the civil law legal system, also called the continental family legal system. Until the end of the 19th century, French law was the main influence. Since then the major influence has been German law. The main laws include the Constitution (1976, as amended), the Civil Code (1966, as amended) and the Penal Code (1982, as amended). Other relevant laws are the *Commercial Code* (1888, as amended) and the *Civil Procedure Code* (1961,

as amended). Portuguese law applied in the former colonies and territories and continues to be the major influence for those countries.

Religion

Church and state were formally separated during the Portuguese First Republic (1910-26), a separation reiterated in the Portuguese Constitution of 1976. Portugal is a secular state. Other than the Constitution, the two most important documents relating to religious freedom are the 2001 Religious Freedom Act and the 1940 Concordata (as amended in 1971) between Portugal and the Holy See.

Portuguese society is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. 84% of the population are nominally Roman Catholic, but only about 20% attend mass and take the sacraments regularly. A larger number wish to be baptized, married in the church, and receive last rites.

Many Portuguese holidays, festivals and traditions have a Christian origin or connotation. Although relations between the Portuguese state and the Roman Catholic Church were generally amiable and stable since the earliest years of the Portuguese nation, their relative power fluctuated. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the church enjoyed both riches and power stemming from its role in the reconquest and its close identification with early Portuguese nationalism and the foundation of the Portuguese educational system, including the first university. The growth of the Portuguese overseas empire made its missionaries important agents of colonization with important roles of evangelization and teaching in all inhabited continents.



Jerónimos Monastery,
Lisbon.

Culture

Portugal has developed a specific culture while being influenced by various civilizations that have crossed the Mediterranean and the European continent, or were introduced when it played an active role during the Age of Discovery.



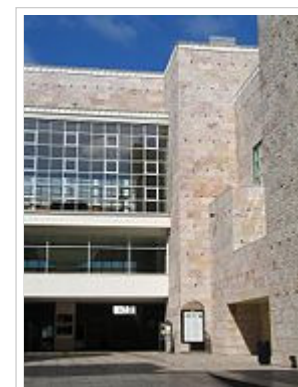
Belém Tower, built in
the 1510s and a symbol
of the Age of Discovery,
Lisbon.

Portuguese literature, one of the earliest Western literatures, developed through text and song. Until 1350, the Portuguese-Galician troubadours spread their literary influence to most of the Iberian Peninsula. Gil Vicente (ca. 1465 - ca. 1536), was one of the founders of both Portuguese and Spanish dramatic traditions. Adventurer and poet Luís de Camões (ca. 1524-1580) wrote the epic poem *The Lusiads*, with Virgil's Aeneid as his main influence. Modern Portuguese poetry is rooted in neoclassic and contemporary styles, as exemplified by Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935). Modern Portuguese literature is represented by authors such as Almeida Garrett, Camilo Castelo Branco, Eça de Queiroz, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, and António Lobo Antunes. Particularly popular and distinguished is José Saramago, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for literature.



Roman temple, Évora.

Portuguese music encompasses a wide variety of genres. The most renowned is fado, a melancholy urban music, usually associated with the Portuguese guitar and *saudade*, or longing. Coimbra fado, a unique type of fado, is also noteworthy. Internationally notable performers include Amália Rodrigues, Carlos Paredes, José Afonso, Mariza, Carlos do Carmo, Mísia, and Madredeus. One of the most notable Portuguese musical groups outside the country, and specially in Germany, is the goth-metal band Moonspell. In addition to fado and folk, the Portuguese listen to pop and other types of modern music, particularly from North America and the United Kingdom, as well as a wide range of Portuguese and Brazilian artists and bands. Bands with international recognition include Blasted Mechanism and The Gift, both of which were nominated for an MTV Music Award. Portugal has several summer music festivals, such as *Festival Sudoeste* in Zambujeira do Mar, *Festival de Paredes de Coura* in Paredes de Coura, *Festival Vilar de Mouros* near Caminha, and *Rock in Rio Lisboa* and *Super Bock Super Rock* in Lisbon. Out of the summer season, Portugal has a large number of festivals, designed more to an urban audience, like Flowfest or Hip Hop Porto. Furthermore, one of the largest international Goa trance festivals takes place in northern Portugal every two years, and the student festivals of *Queima das Fitas* are major events in a number of cities across Portugal.



Belém Cultural Centre,
Lisbon.

In the Classical music domain, Portugal is represented by names as the pianist Maria João Pires, the violinist Carlos Damas, the operatic baritone Jorge Chaminé, and in the past by the great cellist Guilhermina Suggia. Notable composers include Luís de Freitas Branco and his student Joly Braga Santos.



Casa da Música (Music
House), Porto

It has also a rich history as far as painting is concerned. The first well-known painters date back to the XV century – like Nuno Gonçalves - were part of the Gothic painting period. José Malhoa, known for his work *Fado*, and Columbano Bordalo Pinheiro (who painted the portraits of Teófilo Braga and Antero de Quental) were both references in naturalist painting.

The 20th century saw the arrival of Modernism, and along with it came the most prominent Portuguese painters: Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, who was heavily influenced by French painters, particularly by the Delaunays. Among his best known works is *Canção Popular a Russa e o Fígaro*. Another great modernist painter/writer was Almada Negreiros, friend to the poet Fernando Pessoa, who painted his (Pessoa's) portrait. He was deeply influenced by both Cubist and Futurist trends. Prominent international figures in visual arts nowadays include painters Vieira da Silva, Júlio Pomar, and Paula Rego. Traditional architecture is distinctive. Modern Portugal has given the world renowned architects like Eduardo Souto de Moura, Álvaro Siza Vieira and Gonçalo Byrne.

Internally, Tomás Taveira is also noteworthy.

Since the 1990s, Portugal has increased the number of public cultural facilities, in addition to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation established in 1956 in Lisbon. These include the Belém Cultural Centre in Lisbon, Serralves Foundation and the Casa da Música, both in Porto, as well as new public cultural facilities like municipal libraries and concert halls which were built or renovated in many municipalities across the country.



Calouste Gulbenkian
Foundation, Lisbon.

Cuisine

Portuguese cuisine is diverse. The Portuguese consume a lot of dry cod (*bacalhau* in Portuguese), for which there are hundreds of recipes. There are more than enough *bacalhau* dishes for each day of the year. Two other popular fish recipes are grilled sardines and caldeirada. Typical Portuguese meat recipes, that may take beef, pork, lamb, or chicken, include feijoada, cozido à portuguesa, frango de churrasco, and carne de porco à alentejana.



Vintage port from 1870 and 1873.

Typical fast food dishes include the francesinha from Porto, and *bifanas* (grilled pork), *prego* (grilled beef) or *leitão* (piglet) sandwiches which are well known around the country. The Portuguese art of pastry has its origins in ancient recipes of which pastéis de Belém (or *pastéis de nata*) originally from Lisbon, and ovos-moles from Aveiro are good examples. Portuguese cuisine is very diverse, with different regions having their own traditional dishes. The Portuguese have a cult for good food and throughout the country there are myriads of good restaurants and small typical *tascas*.



Pastéis de Nata (cream custards).

Portuguese wines have deserved international recognition since the times of the Roman Empire, which associated Portugal with their God Bacchus. Today the country is known by wine lovers and its wines have won several international prizes. Some of the best Portuguese wines are: Vinho Verde, Vinho Alvarinho, Vinho do Douro, Vinho do Alentejo, Vinho do Dão, Vinho da Bairrada and the sweet: Port Wine, Madeira Wine and the Moscatel from Setúbal and Favaios. Port Wine is well known around the world and the most widely known wine type in the world. The Douro wine region is the oldest in the world.

Sports and games

Football is the most known, loved and played sport. The legendary Eusébio is still a major symbol of Portuguese football history and Luís Figo and Cristiano Ronaldo are among the numerous examples of other world-class footballers born in Portugal and noted worldwide.

The Portuguese national teams, have titles in the FIFA World Youth Championship and in the UEFA youth championships. The main national team - *Seleção Nacional* - finished second in Euro 2004, reached the third place in the 1966 FIFA World Cup, and reached the fourth place in the 2006 FIFA World Cup, their best results in major competitions to date.

F.C. Porto, S.L. Benfica and Sporting C.P. are the largest sports clubs by popularity and in terms of trophies won, often known as "*os três grandes*" ("the big three"). They have a number of titles won in the European UEFA club competitions, were present in many finals and have been regular contenders in the last stages almost every season. Other than football, many Portuguese sports clubs, including the "big three", compete in several other sports events with a varying level of success and



Portuguese football fans supporting the national team.

popularity.



Pavilhão Atlântico (Atlantic Pavilion), an indoor sports venue and concert hall in Lisbon.

Portugal has a successful rink hockey team, with 15 world titles and 20 european titles, making it the country with the most wins in both competitions. The most successful Portuguese rink hockey clubs in the history of European championships are F.C. Porto, S.L. Benfica, Sporting CP, and Óquei de Barcelos.

The national rugby union team made a dramatic qualification into the 2007 Rugby World Cup and become the first all amateur team to qualify for the World Cup since the dawn of the professional era. The Portuguese national team of rugby sevens has performed well, becoming one of the strongest teams in Europe, and proved their status as European champions in several occasions.

Rui Silva, in men's athletics, has won several gold, silver and bronze medals in the European, World and Olympic Games competitions. Francis Obikwelu in the 100 m and the 200 m, had silver in the 2004 Summer Olympics. Naide Gomes in pentathlon and long jump, is another Portuguese elite athlete, which led to a gold medal in the 2008 IAAF World Indoor Championships' long jump competition. In the triathlon, Vanessa Fernandes, has won a large number of medals and major

competitions across the world and in 2007 became the world champion both in Triathlon and Duathlon. In judo, Telma Monteiro is European champion in the women's under-52 kg category. Nelson Évora is world champion in triple jump.

Cycling, with Volta a Portugal being the most important race, is also a popular sports event and include professional cycling teams such as S.L. Benfica, Boavista, Clube de Ciclismo de Tavira, and União Ciclista da Maia. Noted Portuguese cyclists include, among others, names as Joaquim Agostinho, Marco Chagas, José Azevedo and Sérgio Paulinho (an olympic medalist in Athens).

The country has also achieved notable performances in sports like fencing, surfing, windsurf, kitesurf, kayaking, sailing and shooting, among others. The paralympic athletes have also conquered many medals in sports like swimming, boccia and wrestling. Portugal has its own original martial art, jogo do pau, in which the fighters use staffs to confront one or several opponents.

International rankings

Political and economic rankings

- Political freedom ratings - Free; political rights and civil liberties both rated 1 (the highest score available)
 - Press freedom - 8th freest, at 2.00
- GDP per capita - 34th highest, at I\$22,677
- Human Development Index - 29th highest, at 0.897
- Income Equality - 59th most equal, at 38.5 (Gini Index)
- Unemployment rate - 98th lowest, at 8.00%

- Corruption - 28th least corrupt, at 6.5 on index
- Economic Freedom - 30th freest, at 2.29 on index

Health rankings

- Fertility rate- 188th most fertile, at 1.48 per woman
 - Birth rate - 167th most births, at 10.50 per 1000 people
- Death rate - 52nd highest death rate, at 10.60 per 1000 people
- Life Expectancy - 49th highest, at 77.87 years
 - Suicide Rate - 42nd highest suicide rate, at 18.9 for males and 4.9 for females
- HIV/AIDS rate - 73rd most cases, at 0.40%

Other rankings

- Global Peace Index - 7th highest (2008), out of 121 countries
- CO₂ emissions - 68th highest emissions, at 5.63 tonnes per capita
- Electricity Consumption - 44th highest consumption of electricity, at 44,010,000,000 kWh
- Broadband uptake - 21st highest uptake in OECD, at 11.5%
- Beer consumption - 22nd highest, at 59.6 litres per capita
- Wine consumption - 4th highest, at 53.0 litres per capita
- Wine production - 7th highest, at 953 million litres (not long ago ranked 4th with twice the output)

Facts and figures

- Official date format: YYYY/MM/DD (ex. 2006/09/08)
- Common date format: DD/MM/YYYY (ex. 06/09/2006), dates are written out as *DD de MM de YYYY* (ex. *18 de Agosto de 2005*)
- Decimal separator is a comma: 123,45
- Thousands are officially separated by a space — 10 000 — although the point is widely used — 10.000

- The euro sign is commonly placed either before or after the amount, with the separator either a comma or a point: 10,95 € - € 10,95 - € 10.95 - 10.95 €

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Republic of Ireland

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Ireland (Irish: *Éire*, pronounced [ˈeːɾʲə]) is a country in north-western Europe. The modern sovereign state occupies about five-sixths of the island of Ireland, which was first partitioned on May 3, 1921. It is bordered by Northern Ireland (part of the United Kingdom) to the north, by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, by the Irish Sea to the east and by the Celtic Sea and St George's Channel to the South and South-East. Legally, the term *Republic of Ireland* (Irish: *Poblacht na hÉireann*) is the *description* of the State but *Ireland* is its *name*.




In 1937 Ireland became the successor-state to the Irish Free State. Ireland was one of the poorest countries in Western Europe and had high emigration. The protectionist economy was opened in the late 1950s and Ireland joined the European Community (now the European Union) in 1973. An economic crisis led Ireland to start large-scale economic reforms in the late 1980s. Ireland reduced taxation and regulation dramatically compared to other EU countries.

Today, the Index of Economic Freedom ranks Ireland as the world's third most economically free country. Despite a forecast for reduced economic growth in 2008, Ireland is currently rated as having the fifth highest gross domestic product per capita and the eighth highest gross domestic product per capita considering purchasing power parity, and having the fifth highest Human Development Index rank. The country also boasts the highest quality of life in the world, ranking first in the Economist Intelligence Unit's Quality-of-life index. Ireland was ranked fourth on the Global Peace Index. Ireland also has high rankings for its education system, political freedom and civil rights, press freedom and economic freedom; it was also ranked fourth from the bottom on the Failed States Index, being one of the few "sustainable" states in the world. Ireland has emerged as an attractive destination and foreign immigrants who now make up approximately 10% of the population. Ireland's population is the fastest growing in Europe with an annual growth rate of 2.5%.

Ireland is a member of the EU, the OECD, and the UN. Ireland's policy of neutrality means it is not a member of NATO, although it does contribute to peacekeeping missions sanctioned by the UN.

Name

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Éire Ireland	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: <i>Amhrán na bhFiann</i> <i>The Soldier's Song</i>	
	
Location of Republic of Ireland (dark green)	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> — on the European continent (light green & dark grey) — in the European Union (light green) — [Legend] </div>	

Article 4 of the Irish constitution, which was adopted in 1937, provides that “the name of the state is *Éire*, or, in the English language, *Ireland*”. For all official purposes including in international treaties and in other legal documents, where the language of the documents is English, the Irish government uses the name *Ireland*. The same is true in respect of the name *Éire* for documents written in Irish. Institutions of the European Union follow the same practice. Since Irish became an official EU language on 1 January 2007, at EU meetings name plates for the state read as *Éire - Ireland*, just as the two official names are used on Irish passports.

Since 1949 the Republic of Ireland Act has provided that the *Republic of Ireland* (Irish: *Poblacht na hÉireann*) is the official *description* for the state. The Act was intended primarily to declare that Ireland was a republic rather than a form of constitutional monarchy. It provided the state’s official *description* but it did not change its *name*.

What is now *Ireland* has been known by a range of other names, all of which are still sometimes used unofficially. The whole island of Ireland was unilaterally proclaimed an independent republic by rebels in 1916 and styled as the *Irish Republic* (Irish: *Poblacht na hÉireann*, subsequently also *Saorstát Éireann*). Following the 1918 general election, that proclamation was ratified by a large majority of the Irish Members of Parliament. Between 1921 and 1922, when the British government legislated to establish what is now *Ireland* as an autonomous region of the United Kingdom, it was named *Southern Ireland*. Following the Anglo-Irish Treaty, from 1922 until 1937, as a dominion in the British Commonwealth, it was styled as the *Irish Free State* (Irish:*Saorstát Éireann*). That name was abolished with the adoption of the current Irish constitution. Other colloquial names such as the *Twenty-Six Counties* and *The South* (a name frequently used by people in Northern Ireland) are also often used.

History

Ireland is the successor-state to the Dominion called the Irish Free State. That Dominion came into being when all of the island of Ireland seceded from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on 6 December 1922. However, the following day the Parliament of Northern Ireland exercised its right under the Anglo-Irish Treaty to opt back into the United Kingdom. This action, known as the Partition of Ireland, followed four attempts to introduce devolved autonomous government over the whole island of Ireland (in 1886, 1893, 1914 and 1920). The Irish Free State was abolished when Ireland was formally established on 29 December 1937, the day its constitution came into force.

Irish independence in 1922 was preceded by the Easter Rising of 1916, when Irish volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army took over sites in Dublin and Galway under terms expressed in the Proclamation of

Capital (and largest city)	Dublin
Official languages	Irish, English
Ethnic groups	White: 94.8% (including 0.5% Irish Traveller) Asian: 1.3% Black: 1.1% Other/Mixed: 1.1% Not Stated: 1.7%
Demonym	Irish
Government	Republic and Parliamentary democracy
 - President	Mary McAleese
 - Taoiseach	Brian Cowen, TD
 - Tánaiste	Mary Coughlan, TD
Independence	from the United Kingdom
 - Declared	24 April 1916
 - Ratified	21 January 1919
 - Recognised	6 December 1922
 - Current constitution	29 December 1937
EU accession	January 1, 1973
Area	
 - Total	70,273 km² (120th) 27,133 sq mi
 - Water (%)	2.00
Population	
 - 2007 estimate	4,339,000
 - 2006 census	4,239,848 (121st)

the Irish Republic. The seven signatories of this proclamation, Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Thomas Clarke, Sean MacDiarmada, Joseph Plunkett, Eamonn Ceannt and James Connolly, were executed, along with nine others, and thousands were interned precipitating the Irish War of Independence.

Early background

From the Act of Union on 1 January 1801 until 6 December 1922, Ireland had been part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. During the Great Famine from 1845 to 1849 the island's population of over 8 million fell by 30 percent. One million Irish died of starvation and another 1.5 million emigrated, which set the pattern of emigration for the century to come and would result in a constant decline up to the 1960s. From 1874, but particularly from 1880 under Charles Stewart Parnell, the Irish Parliamentary Party moved to prominence through widespread agrarian agitation that won improved tenant land reforms and with its attempts to win two Home Rule Bills, which would have granted Ireland limited national autonomy within the United Kingdom. These nevertheless led to the “grass-roots” control of national affairs under the Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 previously in the hands of landlord dominated grand juries.

Home Rule statute

Home Rule seemed certain in 1911 when the House of Lords lost their veto, and John Redmond secured the Third Home Rule Act 1914. The Unionist movement, however, had been growing since 1886 among Irish Protestants after the introduction of the first home rule bill, fearing that they would face discrimination and lose economic and social privileges if Irish Catholics were to achieve real political power. Though Irish unionism existed throughout the whole of Ireland, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century unionism was particularly strong in parts of Ulster, where industrialisation was more common in contrast to the more agrarian rest of the island. (Any tariff barriers would, it was feared, most heavily hit that region.) In addition, the Protestant population was more strongly located in Ulster, with unionist majorities existing in about four counties.

Mounting resistance

Under the leadership of the Dublin-born Sir Edward Carson of the Irish Unionist Party and the northerner Sir James Craig of the Ulster Unionist Party unionists became strongly militant in order to oppose *the Coercion of Ulster*. In 1914, to avoid rebellion with Ulster, the British Prime Minister H. H. Asquith, with agreement of the Irish Party leadership, amended a clause into the bill providing for home rule for 26 of the 32 counties, with an as of yet undecided new set of measures to be introduced for the area to be temporarily excluded. Though it received the Royal Assent and was placed on the statute books, the Third Home Rule Act 1914's

- Density	60.3/km ² (139th) 147.6/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2006 estimate
- Total	\$177.2 billion (50th)
- Per capita	\$45,600 (8th)
GDP (nominal)	2006 estimate
- Total	\$202.9 billion (30th)
- Per capita	\$50,150 (5th)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.959 (high) (5th)
Currency	Euro (€) ¹ (EUR)
Time zone	WET (UTC+0)
- Summer (DST)	IST (WEST) (UTC+1)
Internet TLD	.ie ²
Calling code	+353
Patron saint	St. Patrick
<small>1</small>	Before 1999: Irish pound.
<small>2</small>	The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.

Life in Ireland

Culture [Show]

Economy [Show]

General [Show]

Society [Show]

Politics [Show]

implementation was suspended until after the Great War. (The war at that stage was expected to be ended by 1915, not the four years it did ultimately last.) For the prior reasons of ensuring the implementation of the Act at the end of the war, Redmond and his Irish National Volunteers supported the Allied cause, and 175,000 joined Irish regiments of the 10th (Irish), 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) divisions of the New British Army.

Policies	[Show]
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In January 1919, after the December 1918 general election, 73 of Ireland's 106 MPs elected were Sinn Féin members who refused to take their seats in the British House of Commons. Instead, they set up an Irish parliament called Dáil Éireann. This Dáil in January 1919 issued a Declaration of Independence and proclaimed an Irish Republic. The Declaration was mainly a restatement of the 1916 Proclamation with the additional provision that Ireland was no longer a part of the United Kingdom. The new Irish Republic was recognised internationally only by the Russian Republic. The Republic's Aireacht (ministry) sent a delegation under Ceann Comhairle Seán T. O'Kelly to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919, but it was not admitted.

After the bitterly fought War of Independence, representatives of the British government and the Irish treaty delegates, led by Arthur Griffith, Robert Barton and Michael Collins negotiated the Anglo-Irish Treaty in London from 11 October – 6 December 1921. The Irish delegates set up headquarters at Hans Place in Knightsbridge and it was here in private discussions that the decision was taken at 11.15am on 5 December to recommend the Treaty to Dáil Éireann. Under the Treaty the British agreed to the establishment of an independent Irish State whereby the Irish Free State (in the Irish language *Saorstát Éireann*) with dominion status was created. Dáil Éireann narrowly ratified the treaty.

The Treaty was not entirely satisfactory to either side. It gave more concessions to the Irish than the British had intended to give but did not go far enough to satisfy republican aspirations. The new Irish Free State was in theory to cover the entire island, subject to the proviso that six counties in the north-east, termed "Northern Ireland" (which had been created as one of the two separate Home Rule regions under the *Government of Ireland Act 1920*) could opt out and choose to remain part of the United Kingdom, which they duly did. The remaining twenty-six counties (originally "Southern Ireland" under the Act) became the Irish Free State, a constitutional monarchy over which the British monarch reigned (from 1927 with the title King of Ireland). It had a Governor-General, a bicameral parliament, a cabinet called the "Executive Council" and a prime minister called the President of the Executive Council.

Permeating partition

The Irish Civil War was the direct consequence of the creation of the Irish Free State. Anti-Treaty forces, led by Éamon de Valera, objected to the fact that acceptance of the Treaty *abolished* the Irish Republic of 1919 to which they had sworn loyalty, arguing in the face of public support for the settlement that the "people have no right to do wrong". They objected most to the fact that the state would remain part of the British Commonwealth and that Teachtaí Dála would have to swear an oath of fidelity to King George V and his successors. Pro-Treaty forces, led by Michael Collins, argued that the Treaty gave "not the ultimate freedom that all nations aspire to and develop, but the freedom to achieve it".

At the start of the war, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) split into two opposing camps: a pro-treaty IRA and an anti-treaty

History of Ireland



Chronological

Prehistory

Early history

Early Christian Ireland

Early medieval and Viking era

IRA. The pro-Treaty IRA became part of the new Irish Army. However, through the lack of an effective command structure in the anti-Treaty IRA, and their defensive tactics throughout the war, Collins and his pro-treaty forces were able to build up an army with many tens of thousands of WWI veterans from the 1922 disbanded Irish regiments of the British Army, capable of overwhelming the anti-Treatyists. British supplies of artillery, aircraft, machine-guns and ammunition boosted pro-treaty forces, and the threat of a return of Crown forces to the Free State removed any doubts about the necessity of enforcing the treaty. The lack of public support for the anti-treaty forces (often called the *Irregulars*) and the determination of the government to overcome the Irregulars contributed significantly to their defeat.

The destruction caused by the war caused considerable economic damage to the Free State in the earliest days of its existence, and Northern Ireland's Unionists became hardened in distancing themselves from the Free State.

New Constitution

On December 29, 1937, a new constitution, the Constitution of Ireland, came into force. It replaced the Constitution of the Irish Free State and created a new state called simply "Éire" or in the English language "Ireland". The former Irish Free State government had taken steps to formally abolish the Office of Governor-General some months before the new Constitution came into force .

Although the State's *constitutional* structures provided for a President of Ireland it was not technically a republic as the office of President replaced the office of Governor General (the King's representative) rather than the King (at the same time the office of Taoiseach (Prime Minister) replaced the office of President of the Executive Council).

The principal key role possessed by a head of state, that of symbolically representing Ireland internationally remained vested, in *statutory law*, in the King of Ireland as an *organ* of the Irish government. It is not without significance that Éamon de Valera, as Taoiseach, retained for himself the portfolio of what was then Minister for External Affairs (now Foreign Affairs) and consequently, from 1936 to 1949, the role of the King of Ireland in the Irish state was greatly reduced and ambiguous. Effectively, all of the King's official duties were abolished but one: under the External Relations Act 1937, the King continued to represent Ireland in foreign and commonwealth affairs.

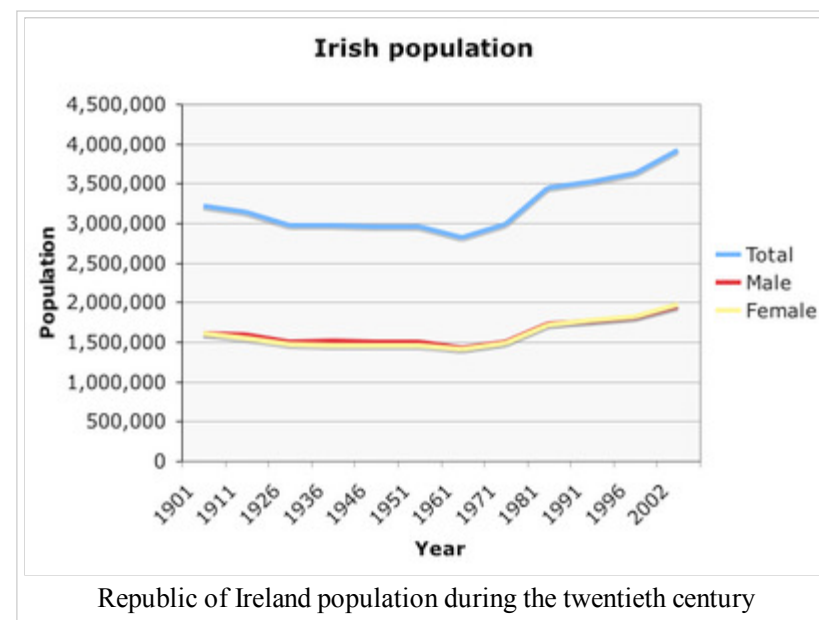
Ireland remained neutral during World War II, a period it described as The Emergency.

The position of King of Ireland ceased with the passage of the Republic of Ireland Act 1948, which came into force on 18 April 1949 when the office of President of Ireland replaced that of the King of Ireland. The act, as the name suggests, declared the state to be a republic. The Crown of Ireland Act was formally repealed in the Republic of Ireland by the Statute Law Revision (Pre-Union Irish Statutes) Act, 1962.

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Norman Ireland
 Early Modern Ireland 1536–1691
 Ireland 1691–1801
 Ireland 1801–1922
 History of Ireland (state)
 History of Northern Ireland

Topical
 Economic history



The Irish state had remained a member of the then- British Commonwealth after independence until the declaration of a republic on 18 April 1949. Under the Commonwealth rules at the time, a declaration of a republic automatically terminated membership of the Commonwealth. Ireland therefore immediately ceased to be a member and did not subsequently reapply for membership when the Commonwealth later changed its rules to allow republics to join the Commonwealth. Ireland joined the United Nations in 1955.

Economic opening

From the 1920s Ireland had high trade barriers such as high tariffs and a policy of import substitution. A high number of residents emigrated. In the 1950s, 400,000 (a seventh of the population) emigrated. It became increasingly clear that economic nationalism was unsustainable. While other European countries enjoyed fast growth, Ireland suffered economic stagnation, emigration, and other ills.

The policy changes were drawn together in *Economic Development*, an official paper published in 1958 that advocated free trade, foreign investment, productive (rather than mainly social) investment, and growth rather than fiscal restraint as the prime objective of economic management. Ireland joined the European Community (now the European Union) in 1973.

During the 1970s, the population increased for the first time since independence, by 15 percent for the decade. National income increased at an annual rate of about 4 percent. Employment increased by around 1 percent per year, but the state sector amounted to a large part of that. Public sector employment was a third of the total workforce by 1980. Budget deficits and public debt increased, leading to the crisis in the 1980s.

In the Northern Ireland question, Irish governments started to seek a peaceful reunification of Ireland and have usually cooperated with the British government in the violent conflict involving many paramilitaries and the British Army in Northern Ireland known as " The Troubles". A peace settlement for Northern Ireland, the Belfast Agreement, was approved in 1998 in referendums north and south of the border. As part of the peace settlement, Ireland dropped its territorial claim to Northern Ireland. The peace settlement is currently being implemented.

Recent history

By the 1980s, underlying economic problems become pronounced. High unemployment, emigration, growing public debt returned. Middle income workers were taxed 60% of their marginal income. Unemployment was 20%. Annual emigration to overseas reached over 1% of population. Public deficits reached 15% of GDP. Fianna Fáil, which was largely responsible for the spending hikes in the late 1970s that caused much of the economic turmoil in which they found themselves, was elected in 1987 and surprised everyone by announcing a swing toward small government.

Public spending was reduced quickly and taxes cut. Ireland promoted competition in all areas. For instance, Ryanair utilized Ireland's deregulated aviation market and helped European regulators to see benefits of competition in transport markets. The more competitive economy attracted foreign investment quickly. Intel invested in 1989 and was followed by hordes of technology companies such as Microsoft and Google, who have found Ireland an excellent investment location. All government parties have had a consensus about the economic development.

In less than a decade, the GDP per capita ranking rose from 21st in 1993 to 4th in 2002. Between 1985 and 2002, private sector jobs increased 59% compared to -1% in Sweden. Between 1984 and 2002, GDP per capita increased 111% compared to 36% in Sweden.

Politics

Ireland is a republic, with a parliamentary system of government. The President of Ireland, who serves as head of state, is elected for a seven-year term and can be re-elected only once. The president is largely a figurehead but can still carry out certain constitutional powers and functions, aided by the Council of State, an advisory body. The *Taoiseach* (prime minister), is appointed by the president on the nomination of parliament. Most Taoisigh have been the leader of the political party which wins the most seats in the national elections. It has become normal in the Republic for coalitions to form a government, and there has not been a single-party government since 1989.

The bicameral parliament, the *Oireachtas*, consists of the President of Ireland, a Senate, Seanad Éireann, being the upper House, and a House of Representatives, Dáil Éireann, being the lower House. The Seanad is composed of sixty members; eleven nominated by the Taoiseach, six elected by two universities, and 43 elected by public representatives from panels of candidates established on a vocational basis. The Dáil has 166 members, *Teachtaí Dála*, elected to represent multi-seat constituencies under the system of proportional representation by means of the Single Transferable Vote. Under the constitution, parliamentary elections must be held at least every seven years, though a lower limit may be set by statute law. The current statutory maximum term is five years.



Leinster House, the seat of *Oireachtas Éireann* (the Irish parliament).

The Government is constitutionally limited to fifteen members. No more than two members of the Government can be selected from the Seanad, and the Taoiseach, *Tánaiste* (deputy prime minister) and Minister for Finance *must* be members of the Dáil. The current government consists of a coalition of three parties; Fianna Fáil under Taoiseach Brian Cowen, the Green Party under leader John Gormley and the Progressive Democrats under Senator Ciarán Cannon. The last scheduled general election to the Dáil took place on 24 May 2007, after it was called by the Taoiseach on 29 April.

The main opposition in the current Dáil consists of Fine Gael under Enda Kenny, the Labour Party under Eamon Gilmore and Sinn Féin. A number of independent deputies also sit in Dáil Éireann though less in number than before the 2007 election.

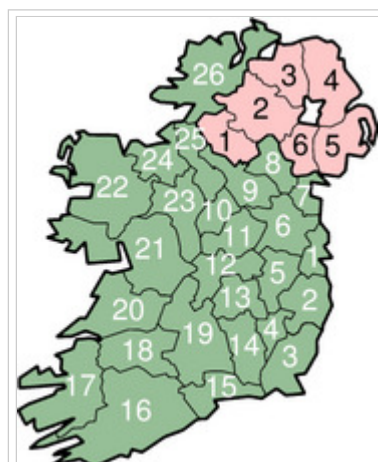
Ireland joined the European Union in 1973 but has chosen to remain outside the Schengen Treaty. Citizens of the UK can freely enter Ireland without a passport thanks to the Common Travel Area, but some form of identification is required at airports and seaports. Ireland has voted against a number of European treaties. On 12 June, 2008, Ireland voted in a referendum which rejected the Lisbon treaty. This has caused much controversy within the EU and may affect the future of the Union

Counties

The Republic of Ireland traditionally had twenty-six counties, and these are still used in cultural and sporting contexts. They are also used for postal purposes.

Dáil constituencies are required by statute to follow county boundaries, as far as possible. Hence counties with greater populations have multiple constituencies (e.g. Limerick East/West) and some constituencies consist of more than one county (e.g. Sligo-North Leitrim), but by and large, the actual county boundaries are not crossed.

As local government units, however, some have been restructured, with the now-abolished County Dublin distributed among three new county councils in the 1990s and County Tipperary having been administratively two separate counties since the 1890s, giving a present-day total of twenty-nine administrative counties and five cities. The five cities — Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford (Kilkenny is a city but does not possess a city council) — are administered separately from the remainder of their respective counties. Five boroughs — Clonmel, Drogheda, Kilkenny, Sligo and Wexford — have a level of autonomy within the county:



Map of the Republic of Ireland with numbered counties.

Republic of Ireland

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Dublin | 15. Waterford |
| — Dublin City | — Waterford City |
| — Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown | 16. Cork |
| — Fingal | — Cork City |
| — South Dublin | 17. Kerry |
| 2. Wicklow | 18. Limerick |
| 3. Wexford | — Limerick City |
| — Wexford Town (Borough) | 19. Tipperary |
| 4. Carlow | — North Tipperary |
| 5. Kildare | — South Tipperary |
| 6. Meath | — Clonmel Town (Borough) |
| 7. Louth | 20. Clare |
| — Drogheda Town (Borough) | 21. Galway |
| 8. Monaghan | — Galway City |
| 9. Cavan | 22. Mayo |
| 10. Longford | 23. Roscommon |
| 11. Westmeath | 24. Sligo |
| 12. Offaly | — Sligo Town (Borough) |
| 13. Laois | 25. Leitrim |
| 14. Kilkenny | 26. Donegal |
| — Kilkenny City (Borough) | |

These counties are grouped together into regions for statistical purposes.

Geography, climate, and environment

The island of Ireland extends over 84,421 Square kilometres (32,556 square miles), of which 83% (approx. five-sixths) belong to the Republic (70,280 km²; 27,103 sq mi), while the remainder constitute Northern Ireland. It is bound to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, to the northeast by the North Channel. To the east is found the Irish Sea which reconnects to the ocean via the southwest with St George's Channel and the Celtic Sea. The west coast of Ireland mostly consists of cliffs, hills and low mountains (the highest point being Carrauntoohil at 1,038 m or 3,406 ft). The interior of the country is relatively flat land, traversed by rivers such as the River Shannon and several large lakes or *loughs*. The centre of the country is part of the River Shannon watershed, containing large areas of bogland, used for peat extraction and production.

The local temperate climate is modified by the North Atlantic Current and is relatively mild. Summer temperatures exceed 30 °C (86 °F) usually once every decade, though commonly reach 29 °C (84 °F) most summers, and freezes occur only occasionally in winter, with temperatures below -6 °C (21 °F) being uncommon. Precipitation is very common, with some parts of the country getting up to 275 days with rain annually.

Chief city conurbations are the capital Dublin 1,045,769 on the east coast, Cork 190,384 in the south, Limerick 90,757 in the mid-west, Galway 72,729 on the west coast, and Waterford 49,213 on the south east coast (see Cities in Ireland).

Impact of agriculture

The long history of agricultural production coupled with modern intensive agricultural methods (such as pesticide and fertiliser use) has placed pressure on biodiversity in Ireland. Agriculture is the main factor determining current land use patterns in Ireland, leaving limited land to preserve natural habitats (also forestry and urban development to a lesser extent), in particular for larger wild mammals with greater territorial requirements. With no top predator in Ireland, populations of animals that cannot be controlled by smaller predators (such as the fox) are controlled by annual culling, i.e. semi-wild populations of deer. A land of green fields for crop cultivation and cattle rearing limits the space available for the establishment of native wild species. Hedgerows, however, traditionally used for maintaining and demarcating land boundaries, act as a refuge for native wild flora. Their ecosystems stretch across the countryside and act as a network of connections to preserve remnants of the ecosystem that once covered the island.

Pollution from agricultural activities is one of the principal sources of environmental damage. "Runoff" of contaminants into streams, rivers and lakes impact the natural fresh-water ecosystems. Subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy which supported these agricultural practices and contributed to land-use distortions are undergoing reforms. The CAP still subsidises some potentially destructive agricultural practices, however, the recent reforms have gradually decoupled subsidies from production levels and introduced environmental and other requirements.

Forest covers about 10% of the country, with most designated for commercial production. Forested areas typically consist of monoculture plantations of non-native species which may result in habitats that are not suitable for supporting a broad range of native species of invertebrates. Remnants of native forest can be found scattered around the country, in particular in the Killarney National Park. Natural areas require fencing to prevent over-grazing by deer and sheep that roam over uncultivated areas. This is one of the main factors preventing the natural regeneration of forests across many regions of the country.



Topography of Ireland



Cliffs of Moher, Co. Clare

Education

The education systems are largely under the direction of the government via the Minister for Education and Science (currently Batt O'Keefe, TD). Recognised primary and secondary schools must adhere to the curriculum established by authorities that have power to set them.

The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Ireland's education as the 20th best in the world, being significantly higher than the OECD average.

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary (University/College) level education are all free in Ireland for all EU citizens.

Economy

The economy of Ireland has transformed in recent years from an agricultural focus to a modern knowledge economy, focusing on services and high-tech industries and dependent on trade, industry and investment. Economic growth in Ireland averaged a (relatively high) 10% from 1995–2000, and 7% from 2001–2004. Industry, which accounts for 46% of GDP, about 80% of exports, and 29% of the labour force, now takes the place of agriculture as the country's leading sector.

Exports play a fundamental role in Ireland's growth, but the economy also benefits from the accompanying rise in consumer spending, construction, and business investment. On paper, the country is the largest exporter of software-related goods and services in the world. In fact, a lot of foreign software, and sometimes music, is filtered through the country to avail of Ireland's non-taxing of royalties from copyrighted goods.

A key part of economic policy, since 1987, has been Social Partnership which is a neo-corporatist set of voluntary 'pay pacts' between the Government, employers and trades unions. These usually set agreed pay rises for three-year periods.

Ireland joined in launching the Euro currency system in January 1999 (leaving behind the Irish pound) along with eleven other EU nations. The 1995 to 2000 period of high economic growth led many to call the country the Celtic Tiger. The economy felt the impact of the global economic slowdown in 2001, particularly in the high-tech export sector — the growth rate in that area was cut by nearly half. GDP growth continued to be relatively robust, with a rate of about 6% in 2001 and 2002. Growth for 2004 was over 4%, and for 2005 was 4.7%.

With high growth came high levels of inflation, particularly in the capital city. Prices in Dublin, where nearly 30% of Ireland's population lives, are considerably higher than elsewhere in the country, especially in the property market.

Measuring Ireland's level of income per capita is a complicated issue. Ireland possesses the second highest GDP (PPP) per capita in the world (US\$43,600 as of 2006), behind Luxembourg, and the fifth highest Human Development Index, which is calculated partially on the basis of GDP per capita. However, many economists feel that GDP per capita is an inappropriate measure of national income for Ireland, as it neglects the fact that much income generated in Ireland belongs to multinational companies and eventually goes offshore. Another measure, Gross National Income per head, takes account of this and therefore many

economists feel it is a superior measure of income in the country. In 2005, the World Bank measured Ireland's GNI per head at \$41,140 - the seventh highest in the world, sixth highest in Western Europe, and the third highest of any EU member state. Also, a study by *The Economist* found Ireland to have the best quality of life in the world. This study employed GDP per capita as a measure of income rather than GNI per capita.

The positive reports and economic statistics mask several underlying imbalances. The construction sector, which is inherently cyclical in nature, now accounts for a significant component of Ireland's GDP. A recent downturn in residential property market sentiment has highlighted the over-exposure of the Irish economy to construction, which now presents a threat to economic growth. Several successive years of economic growth have led to an increase in inequality in Irish society (see Economy of Ireland - Recent developments) and a decrease in poverty. Ireland's Gini co-efficient is 30.4, slightly below the OECD average of 30.7. Figures show that 6.8% of Ireland's population suffer "consistent poverty".

However, after a construction boom in the last decade, economic growth is now slowing. There has been a significant fall in house prices and the cost of living is rising. It is said the Irish economy is rebalancing itself. The ESRI predicts that the Irish economy will not grow this year at all and may retract by -0.5% in 2008, down hugely from 4.7% growth in 2007, but expects economic growth to near 2% again in 2009 and near 4% in 2010. The huge reduction in construction has caused Ireland's massive economic downturn, if construction was not included in the economic outlook Ireland would still grow by about 2.5% however this is the first time in over 2 decades that the ESRI has applied the term recession to the Irish economy. Ireland now has the second-highest level of household debt in the world, at 190% of household income.

Currency

The currency in the Republic of Ireland is the Euro (ISO currency code EUR) . Euro banknotes are issued in €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200 and €500 denominations. Euro Banknotes are common across Europe, however Ireland has its own unique signature on Euro coins The Government in Ireland decided on a single national design for all Irish coin denominations. They show the Celtic harp, a traditional symbol of Ireland, decorated with the year of issue and the word "Éire".

Military

Ireland's armed forces are organised under the Irish Defence Forces (*Óglaigh na hÉireann*). The Irish Army is relatively small compared to other neighbouring armies in the region, but is well equipped, with 8,500 full-time military personnel (13,000 in the reserve army). This is principally due to Ireland's policy of neutrality, and its "triple-lock" rules governing participation in conflicts whereby approval must be given by the UN, the Government and the Dáil before any Irish troops are deployed into a conflict zone. Deployments of Irish soldiers cover UN peace-keeping duties, protection of Ireland's territorial waters (in the case of the Irish Naval Service) and Aid to Civil Power operations in the state. *See Irish neutrality*.

There is also an Irish Air Corps and Reserve Defence Forces (Irish Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve) under the Defence Forces. The Irish Army Rangers is a special forces branch which operates under the aegis of the army.

Over 40,000 Irish servicemen have served in UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

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The Republic's air facilities were used by the U.S. military for the delivery of military personnel involved in the 2003 invasion of Iraq through Shannon Airport; previously the airport had been used for the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, as well as the First Gulf War. This is part of a longer history of use of Shannon for controversial military transport, under Irish military policy which, while ostensibly neutral, was biased towards NATO during the Cold War. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Seán Lemass authorised the search of Cuban and Czech aircraft passing through Shannon and passed the information to the CIA.

During the Second World War, although officially neutral, Ireland supplied similar, though more extensive, support for the Allied Forces (see *Irish neutrality during World War II*). Since 1999, Ireland has been a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

Demographics

Genetic research suggests that the first settlers of Ireland, and parts of North-Western Europe, came through migrations from Iberia following the end of the most recent ice age. After the Mesolithic, the Neolithic and Bronze Age migrants introduced Celtic culture and languages to Ireland. These later migrants from the Neolithic to Bronze Age still represent a minority of the genetic heritage of Irish people. ("Origins of the British", Stephen Oppenheimer, 2006) Culture spread throughout the island, and the Gaelic tradition became the dominant form in Ireland. Today, Irish people are mainly of Gaelic ancestry, and although some of the population is also of Norse, Anglo-Norman, English, Scottish, French and Welsh ancestry, these groups have been assimilated and do not form distinct minority groups. Gaelic culture and language forms an important part of national identity. In the UK, Irish Travellers are a recognised ethnic minority group, politically (but not ethnically) linked with mainland European Roma and Gypsy groups, although in Ireland, they are not, instead they are classified as a "social group".

Ireland, as of 2007, contains the fastest growing population in Europe. The growth rate in 2006 was 2.5%, the third year in a row it has been above 2%. This rapid growth can be said to be due to falling death rates, rising birth rates and high immigration rates.

Languages

The official languages are Irish and English. Teaching of the Irish and English languages is compulsory in the primary and secondary level schools that receive money and recognition from the state. Some students may be exempt from the requirement to receive instruction in either language. English is by far the predominant language spoken throughout the country. People living in predominantly Irish-speaking communities, Gaeltacht regions, are limited to the low tens of thousands in isolated pockets largely on the western seaboard. Road signs are usually bilingual, except in Gaeltacht regions, where

International rankings		
Indicator	Rank	Measure
Economy		
GDP (PPP) per capita	2 nd	\$44,087
GNP	7 th	\$41,140
Unemployment rate	28 th	4.30%
CO ₂ emissions	30 th	10.3 t [†]
Electricity consumption	61 st	22.79 GWh
Economic Freedom	3 rd	1.58
Politics		
Human Development Index	5 th	0.959
Political freedom	1 st *	1
Press freedom	8 th *	2.00
Corruption (A higher score means less (perceived) corruption.)	↓17 th	7.5
Global Peace Index	4 th	1.396
Democracy Index	11 th	9.01
Failed States Index	↓4 th	19.5
Henley Visa Restrictions Index	2 nd	129
Society		
Literacy rate	18 th *	99.0%
Quality-of-life index	1 st	8.333 (out of 10)
Broadband penetration	—	22.9%

they are in Irish only. The legal status of place names has recently been the subject of controversy, with an order made in 2005 under the Official Languages Act changing the official name of certain locations from English back to Irish (e.g. Dingle had its name changed to *An Daingean* despite local opposition and a local plebiscite requesting that the name be changed to a bilingual version: *Dingle Daingean Ui Chuis*. Most public notices are only in English, as are most of the print media. Most Government publications and forms are available in both English and Irish, and citizens have the right to deal with the state in Irish if they so wish. National media in Irish exist on TV (TG4), radio (e.g. Raidió na Gaeltachta), and in print (e.g. Lá Nua and Foinse).

According to the 2006 census, 1,656,790 people (or 39%) in the Republic regard themselves as competent in Irish; though no figures are available for English-speakers, it is thought to be almost 100%.

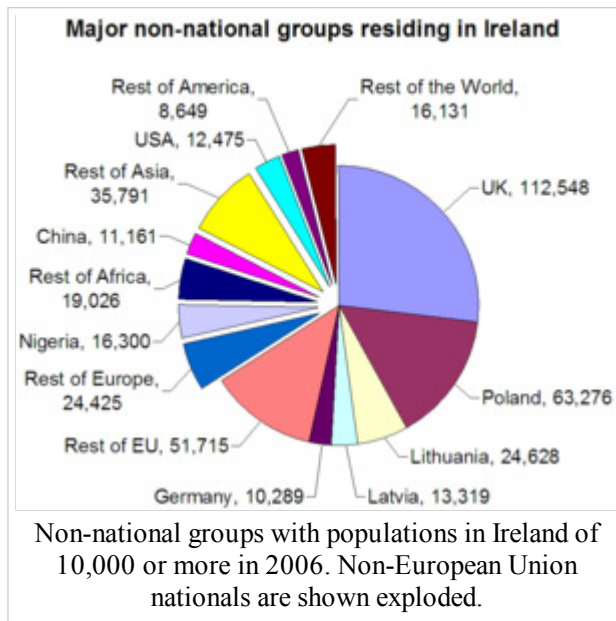
The Polish language is one of the most widely-spoken languages in Ireland after English and Irish: there are over 63,000 Poles resident in Ireland according to the 2006 census. Other languages spoken in Ireland include Shelta, spoken by the Irish Traveller population and a dialect of Scots is spoken by the descendents of Scottish settlers in Ulster.

Most students at second level choose one or two foreign languages to learn. Languages available for the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate include French, German, Italian and Spanish; Leaving Certificate students can also study Arabic, Japanese and Russian. Some schools also offer Ancient Greek, Hebrew Studies and Latin at second level.

Recent population growth

Ireland's population has increased significantly in recent years. Much of this population growth can be attributed to the arrival of immigrants and the return of Irish people (often with their foreign-born children) who emigrated in large numbers in earlier years during periods of high unemployment. In addition the birth rate in Ireland is currently over double the death rate, which is highly unusual among Western European countries. Approximately 10% of Ireland's population is now made up of foreign citizens.

Mobile phone penetration	—	121%
Alcohol consumption	2 nd	13.7 L 3.0 imp gal 3.6 US gal [†]
Beer consumption	2 nd	131.1 L 28.8 imp gal 34.6 US gal [†]
International Property Rights Index	14 th	7.4
Health		
Life expectancy		78.4
Birth rate		15.2 [‡]
Fertility rate	133 rd	1.96 ^{††}
Infant mortality	172 th	4.9 ^{**}
Death rate		6.5 [‡]
Suicide rate	48 th	♂ 16.3 ^{††} ♀ 3.2 ^{††}
HIV/AIDS rate	123 rd	0.10%
Notes		
↓ indicates rank is in reverse order (e.g. 1 st is lowest)		
* joint with one or more other countries		
† per capita		
‡ per 1000 people		
†† per woman		
** per 1000 live births		
††† per 100,000 people		
♂ indicates males, ♀ indicates females		



The CSO has published preliminary findings based on the 2006 Census of Population. These indicate:

- The total population of Ireland on Census Day, April 23, 2006, was 4,234,925, an increase of 317,722, or 8.1% since 2002
- Allowing for the incidence of births (245,000) and deaths (114,000), the derived net immigration of people to Ireland between 2002 and 2006 was 186,000.
- The total number of non-nationals (foreign citizens) resident in Ireland is 419,733, or around 10% (plus 1,318 people with 'no nationality' and 44,279 people whose nationality is not stated).
- The single largest group of immigrants comes from the United Kingdom (112,548) followed by Poland (63,267), Lithuania (24,628), Nigeria (16,300), Latvia (13,319), the United States (12,475), China (11,161), and Germany (10,289).
- 94.8% of the population was recorded as having a 'White' ethnic or cultural background. 1.1% of the population had a 'Black or Black Irish' background, 1.3% had an 'Asian or Asian Irish' background and 1.7% of the population's ethnic or cultural background was 'not stated'.
- The average annual rate of increase, 2%, is the highest on record – compared to 1.3% between 1996 and 2002 and 1.5% between 1971 and 1979.
- The 2006 population was last exceeded in the 1861 Census when the population then was 4.4 million The lowest population of Ireland was recorded in the 1961 Census – 2.8 million.
- All provinces of Ireland recorded population growth. The population of Leinster grew by 8.9%; Munster by 6.5%; and the long-term population decline of the Connacht- Ulster Region has stopped.
- The ratio of males to females has declined in each of the four provinces between 1979 and 2006. Leinster is the only province where the number of females exceeds the number of males. Males predominate in rural counties such as Cavan, Leitrim, and Roscommon while there are more females in cities and urban areas.

A more detailed breakdown of these figures is available online. [Census 2006 Principal Demographic Results PDF \(894 KiB\)](#)

Detailed statistics into the population of Ireland since 1841 are available at [Irish Population Analysis](#).

Religion

Ireland is officially a secular state, and the constitution states that the state is forbidden from endowing any particular religion. Approximately 86.8% of the population are Roman Catholic, and the country has one of the highest rates of regular and weekly church attendance in the Western World. However, there has been a major decline in this attendance among Irish Catholics in the course of the past 30 years. Between 1996 and 2001, regular Mass attendance, declined further from 60% to 48% (it had been above 90% before 1973), and all but two of its sacerdotal seminaries have closed (St Patrick's College, Maynooth and St Malachy's College, Belfast). A number of theological colleges continue to educate both ordained and lay people.

The second largest Christian denomination, the Church of Ireland (Anglican), was declining in number for most of the twentieth century, but has more recently experienced an increase in membership, according to the 2002 census, as have other small Christian denominations, as well as Hinduism. Other large Protestant denominations are the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, followed by the Methodist Church in Ireland. The very small Jewish community in Ireland also recorded a marginal increase (see History of the Jews in Ireland) in the same period.

The patron saints of Ireland are Saint Patrick and Saint Bridget.

According to the 2006 census, the number of people who described themselves as having "no religion" was 186,318 (4.4%). An additional 1,515 people described themselves as agnostic and 929 as atheist instead of ticking the "no religion" box. This brings the total nonreligious within the state to 4.5% of the population. A further 70,322 (1.7%) did not state a religion.

Religion and politics

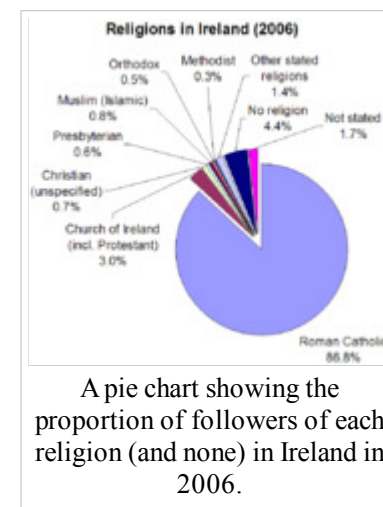
Constitution

The 1937 Constitution of Ireland gave the Catholic Church a "special position" as the church of the majority, but also recognised other Christian denominations and Judaism. As with other predominantly Catholic European states (e.g., Italy), the Irish state underwent a period of legal secularisation in the late twentieth century. In 1972, the article of the Constitution naming specific religious groups, including the Catholic Church, was deleted by the fifth amendment of the constitution in a referendum.

Article 44 remains in the Constitution. It begins:

The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion.

The article also establishes freedom of religion (for belief, practice, and organisation without undue interference from the state), prohibits endowment of any particular religion, prohibits the state from religious discrimination, and requires the state to treat religious and non-religious schools in a non-prejudicial manner.



St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, the National Cathedral of the Church of Ireland (part of the Anglican Communion).

Abortion and divorce

Catholic doctrine prohibits abortion in all circumstances, putting it in conflict with the pro-choice movement. In 1983, the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland recognised "the right to life of the unborn", subject to qualifications concerning the "equal right to life" of the mother. The case of *Attorney General v. X* prompted passage of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, guaranteeing the right to travel abroad to have an abortion performed, and the right of citizens to learn about "services" that are illegal in Ireland but legal outside the country (see Abortion in Ireland).

Catholic and Protestant attitudes in 1937 also disapproved of divorce, which was prohibited by the original Constitution. It was not until 1995 that the Fifteenth Amendment repealed this ban.

Sex abuse scandals

The Catholic Church was hit in the 1990s by a series of sexual abuse scandals and cover-up charges against its hierarchy. In 2005, a major inquiry was made into child sexual abuse allegations. The Ferns report, published on 25 October 2005, revealed that more than 100 cases of child sexual abuse, between 1962 and 2002, by 21 priests, had taken place in the Diocese of Ferns alone. The report criticised the Gardaí and the health authorities, who failed to protect the children to the best of their abilities; and in the case of the Garda before 1988, no file was ever recorded on sexual abuse complaints.

Education

Despite a large number of schools in Ireland being run by religious organisations, a general trend of secularism is occurring within the Irish population, particularly in the younger generations. Many efforts have been made by secular groups, to eliminate the rigorous study in the second and sixth classes, to prepare for the sacraments of Holy Communion and confirmation in Catholic schools - parents can ask for their children to be excluded from religious study if they wish. However, religious studies as a subject was introduced into the state administered Junior Certificate in 2001, although it is not compulsory and deals with aspects of different religions, not focusing on one particular religion.

Schools run by religious organisations, but receive public money and recognition, are not allowed to discriminate against pupils based upon religion (or lack of).

Contraception and gay rights

In the past, Ireland has historically favoured conservative legislation regarding sexuality. For example, contraception was illegal in Ireland until 1979. Another example is the legislation which outlawed homosexual acts was not repealed until 1993 although it was generally only enforced when dealing with underage sex. However, Ireland has taken steps to change its policies in regards to these issues; for instance, discrimination based on sexual preference is illegal. The Irish government published same-sex civil partnerships legislation in June 2008, which is expected to be law within a year. A poll carried out in 2008, showed that 84% of Irish people supported civil marriage or civil partnerships for gay and lesbian couples, with 58% supporting full marriage rights in registry offices.

Culture

The island of Ireland has produced the Book of Kells, and writers such as George Berkeley, Sheridan le Fanu, Jonathan Swift, James Joyce, George Bernard Shaw, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Oliver Goldsmith, Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh, Samuel Beckett, Brian O'Nolan, who published as Flann O'Brien, John Millington Synge, Seán O'Casey, Seamus Heaney, Bram Stoker, Elizabeth Bowen, Kate O'Brien, Seán Ó Faoláin, Frank O'Connor, William Trevor and others. Shaw, Yeats, Beckett and Heaney are Nobel Literature laureates. Other prominent writers include John Banville, Roddy Doyle, Pádraic Ó Conaire, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Séamus Ó Grianna, Dermot Bolger, Maeve Binchy, Frank McCourt, Edna O'Brien, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Paul Muldoon, Thomas McCarthy, Joseph O'Connor, Eoin Colfer, John McGahern and Colm Tóibín.

Prominent Irish artists include Nathaniel Hone, James Arthur O'Connor, Roderick O'Conor, Jack Yeats, William Orpen, Mainie Jellett, Louis le Brocquy, Anne Madden, Robert Ballagh, James Coleman, Dorothy Cross and John Gerrard.

Ireland is known for its Irish traditional music, but has produced many other internationally influential artists in other musical genres, such as U2, Thin Lizzy, The Pogues, The Corrs the alternative rock group The Cranberries, Blues guitarist Rory Gallagher, folk singer Christy Moore, Celtic Woman, The Chieftains, Academy Award winner Glen Hansard of The Frames, Chris de Burgh and singers Enya and Sinéad O'Connor.

In classical music, the island of Ireland was also the birthplace of the notable composers Turlough O'Carolan, John Field (inventor of the Nocturne), Gerald Barry, Michael William Balfe, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and Charles Wood.

Robert Boyle was a seventeenth-century physicist and discovered Boyle's Law. Ernest Walton of Trinity College Dublin shared the 1951 Nobel Prize in Physics for "splitting the atom". William Rowan Hamilton was a significant mathematician. The Irish philosopher and theologian Eriugena, was considered one of the leading intellectuals of his era.

Architecture

The architecture of Ireland is one of the most visible features in the Irish countryside - with remains from all eras since the stone age abounding. Ireland is famous for its ruined and intact Norman and Anglo-Irish castles, small whitewashed thatched cottages and Georgian urban buildings. What are unaccountably somewhat less famous are the great, still complete palladian and rococo country houses which can be favourably compared to anything similar in northern Europe, and the country's many mighty Gothic and neo-Gothic cathedrals and buildings. Despite the oft-times significant British and European influence, the fashion and trends of architecture have been adapted to suit the peculiarities of the particular location. In the late 20th century a new economic climate resulted in a renaissance of Irish culture and design, placing some of Ireland's cities, once again, at the cutting edge of modern architecture.

Entertainment

Successful entertainment exports in the late twentieth century include acts such as U2, Thin Lizzy, The Pogues, My Bloody Valentine, Rory Gallagher, Sinéad

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O'Connor, Boomtown Rats, The Corrs, Horslips, Boyzone, Ronan Keating, The Cranberries, Clannad, Gilbert O'Sullivan, Westlife and Enya, and the internationally acclaimed dance shows *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*.

In the early twenty-first century, Damien Rice and The Thrills rose to international fame. The Frames are a popular band in Ireland who are on the rise world-wide, although their status as possibly the best-liked live band in Ireland is under threat from newer bands like Bell X1.



U2, the most successful Irish band of all time and one of the biggest bands internationally since the 1980s.

Notable Hollywood actors from the Republic of Ireland include Maureen O'Hara, Barry Fitzgerald, George Brent, Arthur Shields, Maureen O'Sullivan, Richard Harris, Peter O'Toole, Pierce Brosnan, Gabriel Byrne, Brendan Gleeson, Daniel Day Lewis (by citizenship), Colm Meaney, Colin Farrell, Brenda Fricker, Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, Stuart Townsend and Cillian Murphy.

The flourishing Irish film industry, state-supported by Bord Scannán na hÉireann, helped launched the careers of directors Neil Jordan and Jim Sheridan, and supported Irish films such as John Crowley's *Intermission*, Neil Jordan's *Breakfast on Pluto*, and others. A policy of tax breaks and other incentives has also attracted international film to Ireland, including Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* and Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*.

Sport

The national sports, administered by the Gaelic Athletic Association, are Gaelic football and hurling, arguably the world's fastest field team sport in terms of game play. Handball is also administered by the Gaelic Athletic

Association. Notable former Gaelic Athletic Association players include the now retired pair of DJ Carey and Peter Canavan. The former Taoiseach Jack Lynch was a noted hurler and All-Ireland winner before entering politics. Well-known current players include Henry Shefflin, Sean Cavanagh and Colm Cooper.

Ireland has produced a number of talented sportsmen and women. In association football, former players include Roy Keane, Johnny Giles, Liam Brady, Denis Irwin, Packie Bonner, Niall Quinn and Paul McGrath, while players whose careers are ongoing include Lee Carsley, Steve Finnan, Shay Given, Damien Duff, John O'Shea and Robbie Keane. In rugby, Ireland has produced Brian O'Driscoll, Ronan O'Gara, Paul O'Connell, David Wallace and Keith Wood.

In athletics, Sonia O'Sullivan, Eamonn Coghlan, Catherina McKiernan, Ronnie Delaney, John Treacy, David Gillick, and Derval O'Rourke have won medals at international events.

In Cricket, the Ireland cricket team is an all Ireland team representing both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Ireland played in the 2007 World Cricket League and earlier managed to qualify for the 2007 Cricket World Cup. In their first match of the tournament they tied with Zimbabwe and in the second match they caused the biggest ever World Cup upset by beating Pakistan and eliminating them from the tournament. Many Irish players have played in England's county system and some in the Indian Cricket League. Notable Irish Cricketers include Ed Joyce the English batsman.

Ken Doherty is a former World Champion (1997) snooker player.

John L. Sullivan, born 1858 in the United States to Irish immigrant parents, was the first modern world heavyweight champion. Barry McGuigan and Steve Collins were also world champion boxers, while Bernard Dunne was a European super bantamweight champion and Michael Carruth an Olympic gold medallist. Current prospects in the middleweight division are the undefeated John Duddy, and Andy Lee who has one defeat. Both fighters are aiming for world championship fights.

In motorsport, during the 1990s Jordan Grand Prix became the only independent team to win multiple Formula One races. Rallying also has a measure of popularity as a spectator sport, and in 2007 the Rally of Ireland (which was held in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) became a qualifying round of the FIA World Rally Championship and attracted an estimated attendance of some 200,000 spectators.

In cycling, Ireland produced Stephen Roche, the first and only Irishman to win the Tour de France in 1987, and the prolific Seán Kelly.

In golf, the current British Open champion is Irishman Pádraig Harrington.

Professional wrestler, Prince Devitt, was born in Dublin, and has made a large impact in the last few years on the independent circuit in Europe, Japan, and the United States.

In 2002, Dermott Lennon became the first Irish rider to win a Show Jumping World Championship gold medal.

Transport

The Republic of Ireland has three main international airports (Dublin, Shannon, and Cork) that serve a wide variety of European and intercontinental routes with scheduled and chartered flights. The national airline is Aer Lingus, although low cost airline Ryanair is the largest airline. The route between London and Dublin is the busiest international air route in Europe, with 4.5 million people flying between the two cities in 2006.

Railways services are provided by Iarnród Éireann. Dublin is the centre of the network, with two main stations (Heuston and Connolly) linking to the main towns and cities. The Enterprise service, run jointly with Northern Ireland Railways, connects Dublin with Belfast. Dublin has a steadily improving public transport network of varying quality including the DART, LUAS, Bus service and an expanding rail network.



LUAS

The motorways and major trunk roads are managed by the National Roads Authority. The rest of the road network is managed by the local authorities in each of their areas.

Regular ferry services operate between the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain, the Isle of Man and France.

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Republic of Macedonia

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

SOS Children works in Macedonia. For more information see SOS Children in Macedonia

The **Republic of Macedonia** (Macedonian: Република Македонија, *Republika Makedonija* listen[ⓘ]), often referred to as **Macedonia**, is a landlocked country on the Balkan peninsula in southeastern Europe. It is bordered by Serbia and Kosovo to the north, Albania to the west, Greece to the south, and Bulgaria to the east.

It was admitted to the United Nations in 1993 under the provisional reference **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** commonly abbreviated to **FYROM**, pending resolution of a naming dispute with Greece. Many other international institutions and countries have recognised the country under the same reference, although an overall majority of countries recognise it under its constitutional name.

The Republic of Macedonia forms approximately 35.8% of the land and 40.9% of the population of the wider geographical region of Macedonia, as it was defined in the late 19th century. The capital is Skopje, with 506,926 inhabitants according to a 2004 census, and there are a number of smaller cities, notably Bitola, Kumanovo, Prilep, Tetovo, Ohrid, Veles, Štip, Kočani, Gostivar and Strumica. It has more than 50 natural and artificial lakes and sixteen mountains higher than 2,000 meters (6,550 ft).

The country is a member of the UN and the Council of Europe and a member of La Francophonie, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Since December 2005 it is also a candidate for joining the European Union and has applied for NATO membership.

History

The lands governed by the Republic of Macedonia were previously the southernmost part of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Its current borders were fixed shortly after World War II when the Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia declared the *People's Republic of Macedonia* as a separate nation within Yugoslavia.

Over the centuries the territory which today forms the Republic of Macedonia was ruled by a number of different states and former empires.

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<p>Република Македонија <i>Republika Makedonija</i> Republic of Macedonia</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Motto: <i>Слобода или смрт</i> (English: "Freedom or Death")</p>	
<p>Anthem: <i>Денес над Македонија</i> (English: "Today over Macedonia")</p>	
	
<p>Location of the Republic of Macedonia (orange) on the European continent (white) — [Legend]</p>	

Ancient History

The first recorded state on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia was the Thraco-Illyrian kingdom of Paonia, which covered the Axios River valley and the surrounding areas. Philip II of Macedon took over the southernmost regions of Paeonia in 336 BC and founded the city of Heraclea Lyncestis, near what is now Bitola. Philip's son Alexander the Great conquered the remainder of Paeonia, which then became part of his empire. Subsequently the territory was conquered by Rome and became part of two Roman provinces. The greater part was within Macedonia Salutaris, but the northern border regions, inhabited by the Dardani, became a part of Moesia Superior. By 400 AD the Paeonians had lost their identity, and Paeonia was merely a geographic term.

The Medieval period



Presence of Slavic tribes c. 700 AD

In the late 6th century AD, as Byzantine control over the area disintegrated, the region was increasingly settled by various Slavic tribes from the north, such as *Draguvites*, *Bersites*, *Sagudates*, *Smoleanoi* and *Strymonoi*. During this decay in Byzantine power, some of the pre-Slavic inhabitants retreated to fortified Greek cities along the Aegean Sea, others took refuge in mountains, whilst many others were assimilated by the Slavs. These people were a large mix of indigenous Balkaners (Greeks, Illyrians and Thracians as well as "Roman" settlers and *foederati* that had settled the area over the preceding centuries; sharing a sense of Graeco-Roman identity (by way of language and customs). The Slavs of Byzantine Macedonia organised themselves in autonomous rural societies called by the Greeks "Σκλαβινίαι" (*Sklaviniai*). The Byzantine emperors would aim to Hellenise and

incorporate the *Sklaviniai* into the socio-economic rule of Byzantium. While Byzantium achieved this with the Slavs of the Thracian theme, the emperors had to resort to military expeditions to pacify the *Sklaviniai* of Macedonia, often repeatedly. These expeditions reached their peak with Justinian II, and Byzantine accounts report that as many as 200,000 fled from Macedonia to central Anatolia, forcing them to pay tribute and serve in the imperial army. Whilst many of the Slavs in Macedonia had to acknowledge Byzantine authority, the majority remained ethnically independent, and continued to form the demographic majority in the region as a whole. Rather than forming a unified Slavic state, they continued to live as separate tribes. Circa 850 AD, the First Bulgarian Empire expanded into the region of Macedonia. John Fine suggests that Bulgaria's expansion into Macedonia was smooth, since Byzantine authority in the area was nominal, and most of the Slavic tribes of Macedonia willingly joined (the predominantly Slavic) Bulgarian confederacy.

Largest city	Skopje
Official languages	Macedonian ¹
Demonym	Macedonian
Government	Parliamentary republic
 - President	Branko Crvenkovski
 - Prime Minister	Nikola Gruevski (VMRO–DPMNE)
Independence from	Yugoslavia
 - Independence declared	September 8, 1991
 Officially recognised	8 April 1993
Area	
 - Total	25,713 km ² (148th)
	9,779 sq mi
 - Water (%)	1.9%
Population	
 - Jan. 01, 2006 estimate	2,038,514 (143rd)
 - 2002 census	2,022,547
 - Density	79/km ² (111th)
	205/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2006 estimate
 - Total	\$16.94 billion (103rd)
 - Per capita	\$7,645
GDP (nominal)	2006 estimate
 - Total	\$16,410 billion (121st)
 - Per capita	\$7,645 (80th)
Gini (2004)	29.3 (low)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.801 (high) (69th)
Currency	Macedonian denar (MKD)

The Slavic peoples of Macedonia accepted Christianity as their own religion around the 9th century, during the reign of prince Boris I of Bulgaria. The creators of the Glagolitic alphabet, the Byzantine Greek monks Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius, under the guidance of the Patriarchate at Constantinople, were promoters of Christianity and initiated Slavic literacy among the Slavic people. They were based in Thessaloniki, where Slavic was spoken universally as a second language after Greek, and used the Macedonian dialect spoken in the hinterland of Thessaloniki as the basis for what would become the universal *Old Slavonic*. Their work was accepted in early medieval Bulgaria and continued by St. Clement of Ohrid, creator of Cyrillic alphabet and St. Naum of Ohrid as founders of the Ohrid Literary School.

In 1014, Emperor Basil II finally defeated the armies of Tsar Samuil and by 1018 the Byzantines restored control over Macedonia (and all of the Balkans) for the first time since the 600s. However, by the late 12th century, inevitable Byzantine decline saw the region become contested by various political entities, including a brief Norman occupation in the 1080s. In the early 13th century, a revived Bulgarian Empire gained control of the region. Plagued by political difficulties the empire did not last and the wider geographical Macedonia region fell once again under Byzantine control. In the 14th century, it became part of the Serbian Empire, who saw themselves as liberators of their Slavic kin from Byzantine despotism. Skopje became the capital of Tsar Stefan Dusan's empire.

However, with Dusan's death, a weak successor and power struggles between nobles divided the Balkans once again. This coincided with the entry of the Ottoman Turks into Europe. With no major Balkan power left to defend Christianity, the entire Balkans fell to Turkish rule - which would remain so for five centuries.

The National Awakening

Ottoman rule over the region was considered harsh. One of the earliest uprisings against Ottoman rule came in 1689 with Karposh's Rebellion. Several movements whose goals were the establishment of autonomous Macedonia, encompassing the entire region of Macedonia, began to arise in the late 1800s; the earliest of these was the Bulgarian Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Committees, later transformed to SMORO. In 1905 it was renamed as IMORO and after World War I the organization separated into the IMRO and the ITRO. The early organization did not proclaim any ethnic identities; it was officially open to "...uniting all the disgruntled elements in Macedonia and the Adrianople region, regardless of their nationality...". The majority of its members were however Slavic/Bulgarian-speakers. In 1903, IMRO organised the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising against the Ottomans, which after some initial successes, including the forming of the Krushevo Republic, was crushed with much loss of life. The uprising and the forming of the Krushevo Republic are considered the cornerstone and precursors to the eventual establishment of the Republic of Macedonia.

Kingdoms of Serbia and Yugoslavia

Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.mk
Calling code	+389
<small>1 Albanian is widely spoken in Western Macedonia. In some areas Turkish, Serbian, Romany and Aromanian are also spoken.</small>	



Medieval Orthodox Monastery of St. Naum on Lake Ohrid



Fortress of Tsar Samuel

Following the two Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, most of its European held territories were divided between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The territory of the present-day Republic of Macedonia was then named *Južna Srbija*, "Southern Serbia". After the First World War, Serbia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In 1929, the Kingdom was officially renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and divided into provinces called banovinas. Southern Serbia (Vardar Macedonia), including all of what is now the Republic of Macedonia, became known as the Vardar Banovina of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Yugoslav Macedonia in World War II

In 1941, Yugoslavia was occupied by the Axis Powers and the Vardar Banovina was divided between Bulgaria and Italian-occupied Albania. Local recruits and volunteers formed the Bulgarian 5th Army, based in Skopje, which was responsible for the round-up and deportation of over 7,000 Jews in Skopje and Bitola. Harsh rule by the occupying forces encouraged some to support the Communist Partisan resistance movement of Josip Broz Tito.

Macedonia in Socialist Yugoslavia

After the end of the Second World War, when Tito became Yugoslavia's president, the *People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* was established. The *People's Republic of Macedonia* became one of the six republics of the Yugoslav federation. Following the federation's renaming as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1963, the People's Republic of Macedonia was likewise renamed, becoming the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. It dropped the "Socialist" from its name in 1991 when it peacefully seceded from Yugoslavia.

Declaration of independence

The country officially celebrates September 8, 1991 as Independence day (Macedonian: Ден на независноста, *Den na nezavisnosta*), with regard to the referendum endorsing independence from Yugoslavia, albeit legalising participation in future union of the former states of Yugoslavia. The anniversary of the start of the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising (St. Elijah's Day) on August 2 is also widely celebrated on an official level.

Robert Badinter as a head of Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on the former Yugoslavia recommended EU recognition in January 1992.

The Republic of Macedonia remained at peace through the Yugoslav wars of the early 1990s. A few very minor changes to its border with Yugoslavia were agreed upon to resolve problems with the demarcation line between the two countries. However, it was seriously destabilised by the Kosovo War in 1999, when an estimated 360,000 ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo took refuge in the country. Although they departed shortly after the war, soon after, Albanian radicals on both sides of the border took up arms in pursuit of autonomy or independence for the Albanian-populated areas of the Republic.

Macedonian civil conflict

The civil war was fought between government and ethnic Albanian rebels, mostly in the north and west of the country, between March and June 2001. This war ended



Boundaries on the Balkans after the First and Second Balkan War.

with the intervention of a NATO ceasefire monitoring force. In the Ohrid Agreement, the government agreed to devolve greater political power and cultural recognition to the Albanian minority. The Albanian side agreed to surrender separatist demands and to fully recognise all Macedonian institutions. In addition, according to this accord, the NLA were to disarm and hand over their weapons to a NATO force. In 2005, the country was officially recognised as a European Union candidate state, under the reference "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

Geography

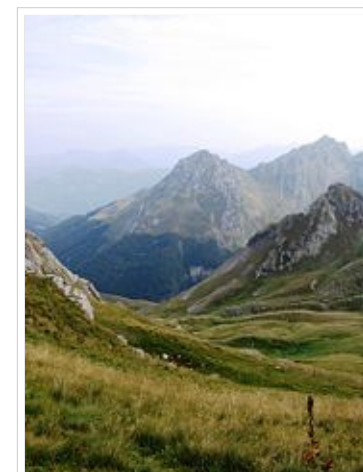
Topography

The Republic of Macedonia is a landlocked country that is geographically clearly defined by a central valley formed by the Vardar river and framed along its borders by mountain ranges. The Republic's terrain is mostly rugged, located between the Šara and Osogovo, which frame the valley of the Vardar river. Three large lakes — Lake Ohrid, Lake Prespa and Dojran Lake — lie on the southern borders of the Republic, bisected by the frontiers with Albania and Greece. Ohrid is considered to be one of the oldest lakes and biotopes in the world. The region is seismically active and has been the site of destructive earthquakes in the past, most recently in 1963 when Skopje was heavily damaged by a major earthquake, killing over 1,000.

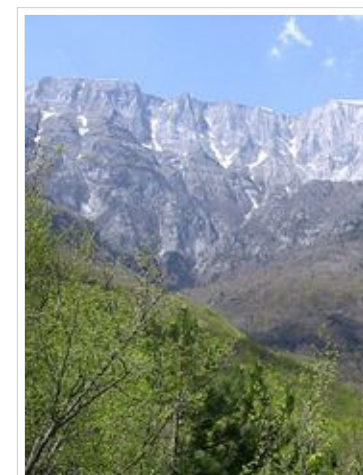
The Republic of Macedonia also has scenic mountains. They belong to two different ranges: Dinarska and Rodopska. The Dinarska range is the oldest with subsequent erosion; the Rodopska range is younger offering rugged, alpine scenery. The ten highest mountains in the Republic of Macedonia are:

Name	Height (m)	Height (ft)
Mount Korab	2,764	9,396
Šar Mountain	2,747	9,012
Baba Mountain	2,601	8,533
Jakupica	2,540	8,333
Nidže	2,521	8,271
Deshat	2,373	7,785
Galičica	2,288	7,507
Stogovo	2,273	7,457
Jablanica	2,257	7,405
Osogovo	2,251	7,383
Mount Bistra	2,163	7,096
Plačkovica	1,754	5,754

Climate



Korab mountain, the highest mountain in the country



Solunska glava peak on Jakupica mountain in spring

The Republic of Macedonia has transitional climate from Mediterranean to continental. The summers are hot and dry and the winters are moderately cold. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,700 mm (67 inches) in the western mountainous area to 500 mm (20 inches) in the eastern area. There are three main climatic zones in the country: temperate Mediterranean, mountainous and mildly Continental. Along the valleys of the Vardar and Strumica rivers, in the regions of Gevgelija, Valandovo, Dojran, Strumica and Radovish the climate is temperate Mediterranean. The warmest region is the Demir Kapija and Gevgelija region, where the temperature in July and August frequently exceeds 40 C. The mountainous climate is present in the mountainous regions of the country and it is characterised by long and snowy winters and short and cold summers. The spring is colder than the fall. The majority of the country has a moderate continental climate with warm and dry summers and relatively cold and wet winters. There are 30 main and regular weather stations in the country.



Macedonian mountains covered with snow

Wildlife

Phytogeographically, the Republic of Macedonia belongs to the Illyrian province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the WWF and Digital Map of European Ecological Regions by the European Environment Agency, the territory of the Republic of Macedonia can be subdivided into four ecoregions: the Pindus Mountains mixed forests, Balkan mixed forests, Rodope montane mixed forests and Aegean and Western Turkey sclerophyllous and mixed forests.

Administrative regions

Regions

Macedonia's statistical regions exist solely for legal and statistical purposes. The regions are:

- Skopje
- Pelagonia
- Polog
- Eastern
- Southeastern
- Northeastern
- Southwestern
- Vardar

Municipalities and cities

In August 2004, the Republic of Macedonia was reorganised into 85 municipalities (*opštini*; sing. *opština*), 10 of which comprise Greater Skopje. This is reduced from the previous 123 municipalities established in September, 1996. Prior to this, local government was organised into 34 administrative districts.



Macedonian statistical regions

Politics

The Republic of Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy with an executive government composed of a coalition of parties from the unicameral legislature (Собрание, *Sobranie*) and an independent judicial branch with a constitutional court. The Assembly is made up of 120 seats and the members are elected every four years. The role of the President of the Republic is mostly ceremonial, with the real power resting in the hands of the President of the Government. The President is the commander-in-chief of the state armed forces and a president of the state Security Council. The President of the Republic is elected every five years and he or she can be elected twice at most. The current President is Branko Crvenkovski.

With the passage of a new law and elections held in 2005, local government functions are divided between 78 municipalities (општини, *opštini*; singular: општина, *opština*). The capital, Skopje, is governed as a group of ten municipalities collectively referred to as the "City of Skopje". Municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia are units of local self-government. Neighbouring municipalities may establish co-operative arrangements. The country's main political divergence is between the largely ethnically-based political parties representing the country's ethnic Macedonian majority and Albanian minority. The issue of the power balance between the two communities led to a brief war in 2001, following which a power-sharing agreement was reached. In August 2004, the Republic's parliament passed legislation redrawing local boundaries and giving greater local autonomy to ethnic Albanians in areas where they predominate.

After a troublesome pre-election campaign, the country saw a relatively calm and democratic change of government in the elections held on 5 July 2006. The elections were marked by a decisive victory of the centre-right party VMRO-DPMNE led by Nikola Gruevski. Gruevski's decision to include the Democratic Party of Albanians in the new government, instead of the Democratic Union for Integration - Party for Democratic Prosperity coalition which won the majority of the Albanian votes, triggered protests throughout the parts of the country with a respective number of Albanian population. However, recently a dialogue was established between the Democratic Union for Integration and the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party as an effort to talk about the disputes between the two parties and to support European and NATO aspirations of the country.



President of the Republic of Macedonia, Branko Crvenkovski

Parliament

Government

Law and courts

Judiciary power is exercised by courts, with the court system being headed by the Judicial Supreme Court, Constitutional Court and the Republican Judicial Council. The assembly appoints the judges.

Foreign relations

The **Republic of Macedonia** became a member state of the United Nations on April 8, 1993, eighteen months after its independence from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is referred within the UN as "the former Yugoslav



Parliament Building in Skopje

Republic of Macedonia", pending a resolution to the long-running dispute about the country's name. Other international bodies, such as the European Union, European Broadcasting Union, and the International Olympic Committee have adopted similar conventions. NATO also uses the reference in official documents but adds an explanation on which member countries recognize the constitutional name.

The UN's member states all recognise the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia but are divided over what to call it. A number of countries recognise the country by its constitutional name – the **Republic of Macedonia** – rather than the UN reference, notably three of the five permanent UN Security Council members (the United States, Russia, and the People's Republic of China) and over 100 other UN members; but the constitutional name is never used in relations where a country not recognizing the constitutional name is a party.

Macedonia naming dispute

After the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991, Macedonia's name and history became the object of a dispute between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia (see also Vergina Sun). From 1992 to 1995, the two countries also engaged in a dispute over the Republic's first flag, which incorporated the Vergina Sun symbol, a symbol of the ancient Kingdom of Macedon. Its adoption by the Republic, on 3 July 1992, was seen as a reaction by Skopje to Athens' pressure to change the name. This aspect of the dispute was resolved when the flag was changed under the terms of an interim accord agreed between the two states in October 1995.

Even when the European Union-nominated Arbitration Commission (consisting of the five presidents of constitutional courts - German, French, Italian, Spanish and Belgian) has handed down its opinion that "that the use of the name 'Macedonia' cannot therefore imply any territorial claim against another State", Greece objected the use of the term Macedonia in the newly sovereign state and resorted to disputing its use.

Due to the dispute over the name, the United Nations agreed to a provisional reference — "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Macedonian: Поранешна Југословенска Република Македонија) — when it became a member state in 1993 . Most international organisations adopted the same convention, including the European Union, NATO, the International Monetary Fund, the European Broadcasting Union, and the International Olympic Committee, among others. The EU recognises the country as the *former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* and the negotiations with the EU are held using this reference, EC report]. The same reference is also used in any discussion to which Greece is a party but is inconsistently used by other countries. Bulgaria uses the name 'Republic of Macedonia' even if it is seen as interfering with the traditional use of the name ' Pirin Macedonia', insisting however that any solution to the naming dispute with Greece should "take account of the historical, cultural, and other realities related to the geographic region of Macedonia".

On the other hand, the government of the Republic of Macedonia never signs any documents with a name different than the constitutional name. However, an increasing number of countries have abandoned the United Nations provisional reference and have recognised the country as the *Republic of Macedonia* or simply *Macedonia* instead. These include four of the five permanent UN Security Council members, the United States, Russia, United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China, as well two of its immediate neighbours, Bulgaria and Serbia. Negotiations continue between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia but have yet to reach any settlement of the dispute.



The architecture in the town of Ohrid



The architecture in the city of Bitola

Military

Macedonian military - the *Macedonian Armed Forces* - is the name of the unified armed forces of the Republic of Macedonia with *Macedonian Army*, *Macedonian Air Force*. The national defence policy aims to guarantee the preservation of the independence and sovereignty of the state, the integrity of its land area and airspace and its constitutional order. Its main goals remain the development and maintenance of a credible capability to defend the nation's vital interests and development of the Armed Forces in a way that ensures their interoperability with the armed forces of NATO and European Union member states and their capability to participate in the full range of Alliance missions.

The Ministry of Defence develops the defence strategy and works out the assessment of the possible threats and risks. The MOD is also responsible for the defence system, training, readiness of the Armed Forces, the equipment and the development and it proposes the defence budget.

Economy

Recently ranked as the fourth 'best reformatory state' out of 178 countries ranked by the World Bank, the Republic of Macedonia has undergone considerable economic reform since independence. The country has developed an open economy with trade accounting for more than 90% of GDP in recent years. Since 1996, the country has witnessed steady, though slow, economic growth with GDP growing by 3.1% in 2005. This figure is projected to rise to an average of 5.2% in the 2006-2010 period. The government has proven successful in its efforts to combat inflation, with an inflation rate of only 3% in 2006 and 2% in 2007 and has implemented policies focused on attracting foreign investment and promoting the development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). The current government introduced a flat tax system with the intention of making the country more attractive to foreign investment. The flat tax rate was 12% in 2007 and will be further lowered to 10% in 2008.

Despite these successes, as of 2005 Macedonia's unemployment rate was 37.2% and as of 2006 its poverty rate was 22%. Corruption and a relatively ineffective legal system also act as significant restraints on successful economic development. The Republic still has one of the lowest per capita GDPs in Europe. Furthermore, the country's grey market is estimated at close to 20% of GDP.

In terms of structure, as of 2005 the service sector constituted by far the largest part of GDP at 57.1%, up from 54.2% in 2000. The industrial sector represents 29.3% of GDP, down from 33.7% in 2000 while agriculture represents only 12.9%, up from 12%. Textiles represent the most significant sector for trade, accounting for more than half of total exports. Other important exports include iron, steel, wine and vegetables.

Infrastructure and e-Infrastructure

Macedonia, together with Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, belonged to the less developed region of the former Yugoslavia. It suffered severe economic difficulties after independence, when the Yugoslav internal market collapsed and subsidies from Belgrade ended. In addition, it faced many of the same problems faced by other former socialist East European countries during the transition to a market economy. Its main land and rail exports route, through Serbia, remains unreliable with high transit costs, thereby affecting the export of its formerly highly profitable, early vegetables market to Germany.

Trade and investment









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The outbreak of the Yugoslav wars and the imposition of sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro caused great damage to the Republic's economy, with Serbia constituting 60% of its markets prior to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. When Greece imposed a trade embargo on the Republic in 1994–95, the economy was also affected. Some relief was afforded by the end of the Bosnian war in November 1995 and the lifting of the Greek embargo, but the Kosovo War of 1999 and the 2001 Albanian crisis caused further destabilisation. Since the end of the Greek embargo, Greece has become the most important business partner of the Republic of Macedonia. Many Greek companies have bought former state companies in the country, such as the oil refinery Okta, the baking company Zhito Luks, a marble mine in Prilep, textile facilities in Bitola etc. Other key partners are Germany, Italy and Slovenia.



Tourism

Demographics

The Republic of Macedonia has an estimated population of 2,061,315 citizens. Following is a list of the largest Macedonian cities according to the 1994 census data (as the 2002 census data does not list both city populations and municipality populations):

Largest Macedonian cities and municipalities				
City	City Population	Coat of arms	Administrative division	Division Population
Skopje	444,000		Greater Skopje	506,926
Bitola	80,000		Bitola municipality	95,385
Kumanovo	71,000		Kumanovo municipality	105,484
Prilep	68,000		Prilep municipality	76,768
Tetovo	60,000		Tetovo municipality	86,580
Ohrid	51,000		Ohrid municipality	55,749
Veles	48,000		Veles municipality	55,108
Gostivar	46,000		Gostivar municipality	81,042
Štip	42,000		Štip municipality	47,796



Strumica	40,000		Strumica municipality	54,676
Kočani	27,000		Kočani municipality	38,092
Radoviš	16,223		Radoviš municipality	28,244

The largest ethnic group in the country are the Macedonians. The following table shows ethnic affiliation of the population according to the 2002 census:

The Jewish community

The Jewish community of the Republic of Macedonia, which numbered some 7,200 people on the eve of World War II, was almost entirely destroyed during the War, with only 2% of Macedonian Jews surviving the Holocaust. After their liberation and the end of the War, most opted to emigrate to Israel. Today, the country's Jewish community numbers approximately 200 persons, almost all of whom live in Skopje. Most Macedonian Jews are Sephardic - the descendants of 15th century refugees who had fled the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions.

	Number	%
TOTAL	2,022,547	100
Macedonians	1,297,981	64.18
Albanians	509,083	25.17
Turks	77,959	3.85
Roma people	53,879	2.66
Serbs	35,939	1.78
Vlachs	9,695	0.48
others	38,011	1.88

Ethnic and cultural diversity

A wide variety of languages are spoken in the Republic of Macedonia, reflecting its ethnic diversity. The official and most widely spoken language is Macedonian, which belongs to the Eastern branch of the South Slavic language group. Macedonian is closely related to and mutually intelligible with Standard Bulgarian. It also has some similarities with standard Serbian and the intermediate Torlakian and Shop dialects spoken mostly in southern Serbia and western Bulgaria (and by speakers in the north and east of Macedonia). The standard language was codified in the period following World War II and has accumulated a thriving literary tradition.

Other languages including Albanian, Bulgarian, Romani, Turkish, Serbian, Vlach (Aromanian and Megleno-Romanian), Circassian, Greek and others are spoken roughly in proportion with their associated ethnic groups.

Macedonian is the only language explicitly designated as an official national language in the constitution. It also provides however that languages spoken by over 20% of the total population are also official—at present, only Albanian fulfills this requirement—additionally, in municipalities where at least 20% of the population is from other ethnic minorities, their individual languages are used for official purposes in local government.

Science

Education

The Macedonian education system consists of:

- pre-school education
- primary education
- secondary education
- higher education

The higher levels of education can be obtained at one of the four state universities: Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje, St. Clement of Ohrid University of Bitola, State University of Tetovo and Goce Delchev University of Shtip. There are a number of private university institutions, such as the European University, Slavic University in Sveti Nikole, the South East European University and others.

The United States Agency for International Development has underwritten a project called "Macedonia Connects" which has made the Republic of Macedonia the first all-broadband wireless country in the world. The Ministry of Education and Sciences reports that 461 schools (primary and secondary) are now connected to the internet. In addition, an Internet Service Provider (On.net), has created a MESH Network to provide WIFI services in the 11 largest cities/towns in the country.

Society

Culture

The Republic of Macedonia has a rich cultural heritage in art, architecture, poetry, and music. It has many ancient, protected religious sites. Poetry, cinema, and music festivals are held annually. Macedonian music styles developed under the strong influence of Byzantine church music. The Republic of Macedonia is amongst one of the countries with the most beautiful preserved Byzantine fresco paintings, mainly from the period between the 11th and 16th centuries. There are several thousands square metres of fresco painting preserved, the major part of which is in very good condition and represent masterworks of the Macedonian School of ecclesiastical painting.

In the Republic of Macedonia the past meets the present. Its age-old architecture and monasteries and churches of exquisite beauty make an interesting contrast to the super modern new architecture. Most of the Macedonian monasteries, built in various periods, and particularly those built between the 11th and 15th–16th centuries, have been completely preserved until today. The Macedonian collection of icons, and in particular the Ohrid ones, are among the most valuable collections in the world today. After the Sinai and the Moscow collection of icons, it is third in importance in Orthodoxy. From a Byzantological aspect, it is unique.

The most important cultural events in the country are the Ohrid Summer festival of classical music and drama, the Struga Poetry Evenings which gather poets from more than 50 countries in the world, Skopje May Opera Evenings, International Camera Festival in Bitola, Open Youth Theatre and Skopje Jazz Festival in Skopje etc.

Religion

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Traditional Macedonian female *oro* (folk dance)

The majority (64.7%) of the population belongs to the Macedonian Orthodox Church (which declared autocephaly in 1968, that is still not recognised by the Serbian and other Eastern Orthodox Churches, although the Archbishop's Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church, with Decision No. 06/1959, has recognised the autonomy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church Muslims comprise 33.3% of the population and other Christian denominations comprise 0.37%. The remainder (1.63%) is recorded as "unspecified" in the 2002 national census. Most of the native Albanians, Turks and Bosniaks are Muslims, as are a minority of the country's ethnic Macedonian population, known as Macedonian Muslims. Altogether, there are more than 1200 churches and 400 mosques in the country. The Orthodox and Islamic religious communities have secondary religion schools in Skopje. There is an Orthodox theological college in the capital. Macedonia has the largest proportion of Muslims of any country in Europe after Turkey, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Orthodox

The Macedonian Orthodox Church is the dominant church in the country. It has 10 provinces (seven in the country and three abroad), 10 bishops, and about 350 priests. Macedonians, who are the majority of the population, are generally Orthodox Christians. A total of 30,000 people are baptised in all the provinces every year. The church has issues with the Serbian Orthodox Church after the separation and self-declaration of autocephaly (not recognised by any other Orthodox church) in 1967. However, the Archbishop's Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church, with Decision No. 06/1959, has recognised the autonomy (self-dependence) of the Macedonian Orthodox Church). After the negotiations between the two churches were suspended, the Serbian Orthodox Church recognised a group led by Zoran Vraniškovski (also known as Archbishop Jovan of Ohrid, a former Macedonian church bishop, as the Archbishop of Ohrid. The reaction of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was to cut off all relations with the clergy of the Ohrid Archbishopric and to prevent bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church from entering the Republic of Macedonia. Bishop Jovan was jailed for 18 months for "defaming the Macedonian Orthodox church and harming the religious feelings of local citizens" by distributing Serbian Orthodox church calendars and pamphlets.

Catholicism

The Macedonian Byzantine Catholic Church has approximately 11,000 adherents in the Republic. The Church was established in 1918, and is made up mostly of converts to Catholicism and their descendants. The Church is of the Byzantine Rite and is in communion with the Roman and Eastern Catholic Churches. Its liturgical worship is performed in Macedonian.

Protestant Christianity

There is a small Protestant community. The most famous Protestant in the country is the former president Boris Trajkovski. He was from the Methodist Community, which is the largest and oldest Protestant Church in the Republic, dating back to the late nineteenth century. Since the 1980s the small Protestant community has grown, partly through new confidence and partly with outside missionary help.

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Romania

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Romania (dated: **Rumania**, **Roumania**; Romanian: *România*, IPA: [ro.miˈni.a]) is a country located in South-East Central Europe, North of the Balkan Peninsula, on the Lower Danube, within and outside the Carpathian arch, bordering on the Black Sea. Almost all of the Danube Delta is located within its territory. It shares a border with Hungary and Serbia to the west, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the northeast, and Bulgaria to the south.

The territory's recorded history encompasses such eras as the Dacians, Roman Empire (leading to the development of Romanian language), Kingdom of Hungary, and Ottoman Empire. As a nation-state, the country was formed by the merging of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859 and it gained recognition of its independence in 1878. Later, in 1918, they were joined by Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia. At the end of World War II, parts of its territories (roughly the present day Moldova) were occupied by USSR and Romania became a member of the Warsaw Pact. With the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, Romania started a series of political and economic reforms. After a decade of post-independence economic problems, Romania made economic reforms such as low flat tax rates in 2005 and joined the European Union in January 1, 2007. While Romania's income level remains one of the lowest in the European Union, reforms have increased the growth speed. Romania is now an upper-middle income country economy.

Romania has the 9th largest territory and the 7th largest population (with 22 million people) among the European Union member states. Its capital and largest city is Bucharest (Romanian: *București* /bu.kuˈreʃti/), the 6th largest city in the EU with 1.9 million people. In 2007, Sibiu, a large city in Transylvania, was chosen as a European Capital of Culture. Romania also joined NATO on March 29, 2004, and is also a member of the Latin Union, of the Francophonie and of OSCE. Romania is a semi-presidential unitary state.

Etymology

The name of *Romania* (*Rumania* or *România*) comes from *Român* (Romanian) which is a derivative of the word *Romanus* ("Roman") from Latin. The fact that Romanians have said the name is a derivative of *Romanus* (Romanian: *Român/Rumân*) is mentioned as early as the 16th century by many authors, including Italian Humanists travelling in Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia. The oldest surviving document written in the Romanian language is a 1521 letter (known as " Neacșu's Letter from Câmpulung") which notifies the mayor of Brașov about the imminent attack of the Ottoman Turks. This document is also notable for having the first occurrence of "Rumanian" in a Romanian written text, Wallachia being here named The Rumanian Land - *Teara Rumânească* (*Teara* from the Latin: *Terra* land). In the following centuries, Romanian documents use interchangeably two spelling forms: *Român* and *Rumân*. Socio-linguistic evolutions in the late 17th century led to a process of semantic differentiation: the form *Rumân*, presumably usual among lower classes, got the meaning of "bondsmen", while the form *român* kept an ethno-linguistic meaning. After the abolition of serfdom in 1746, the form "rumân" gradually disappears and the spelling definitively



stabilises to the form *Ńomân*, "*Ńomâneasc*." The name "România" as common homeland of all Romanians is documented in the early 19th century. This name has been officially in use since December 11, 1861.

English-language sources still used the term "Rumania", borrowed from the French spelling "*Roumania*", as recently as World War II, but since then the term has disappeared entirely.

History



Outline of the Dacian Kingdom at its greatest extent

Prehistory and Antiquity

The oldest modern human remains in Europe were discovered in the "Cave With Bones" in present day Romania. The remains are approximately 42,000 years old and as Europe's oldest remains of *Homo sapiens*, they may represent the first such people to have entered the continent. The remains are especially interesting because they present a mixture of archaic, early modern human and Neanderthal morphological features.

The earliest written evidence of people living in the territory of the present-day Romania comes from Herodotus in book IV of his Histories (Herodotus) written 440 BCE. Herein he writes that the tribal confederation of the Getae were defeated by the Persian Emperor Darius the Great during his campaign against the Scythians. Dacians, widely accepted as part of the Getae described earlier by the Greeks, were a branch of Thracians that inhabited Dacia (corresponding to modern Romania, Moldova and northern Bulgaria). The Dacian kingdom reached its maximum expansion during King Burebista, around 82 BC.

Later, The region came under the scrutiny of Rome when the Roman province, bordering along the Danube, Moesia, was attacked by the Dacians in 87 AD during Emperor Domitian's reign.

The Dacians were eventually defeated by the Roman Empire under Emperor Trajan in two campaigns stretching from 101 AD to 106 AD, and the core of their kingdom was turned into the province of Roman Dacia.

Rich ore deposits were found in the province. Gold and silver were especially plentiful, and were found in great quantities in the Western Carpathians. After Trajan's conquest, he brought back to Rome over 165 tons of gold and 330 tons of silver. The Romans heavily colonized the province, brought with them Vulgar Latin and started a period of intense romanization (giving birth to proto-Romanian). But in the 3rd century AD, with the invasions of migratory populations such as Goths, the Roman Empire was forced to pull out of Dacia around 271 AD, thus making it the first province to be abandoned.

Several competing theories have been generated to explain the origin of modern Romanians. Linguistic and geo-historical analyses tend to indicate that Romanians have coalesced as a major ethnic group both South and North of the Danube. *For further discussion, see Origin of Romanians.*

Middle Ages

In either 271 or 275, the Roman army and administration left Dacia, which was invaded by the Goths. The Goths lived with the local people until the 4th century, when a nomadic people, the Huns, arrived. The Gepids and the Avars and their Slavic subjects ruled Transylvania until the 8th century. It was then invaded by Bulgarians, thereafter being incorporated into the First Bulgarian Empire (marking the end of Romania's Dark Age), where it remained part of until the 11th century. The Pechenegs, the Cumans and Uzes were also mentioned by historic chronicles on the territory of Romania, until the founding of the Romanian principalities of Wallachia by Basarab I around 1310 in the High Middle Ages, and Moldavia by Dragoș around 1352.



Bran Castle built in 1212, is commonly known as *Dracula's Castle* and is situated in the centre of present-day Romania.

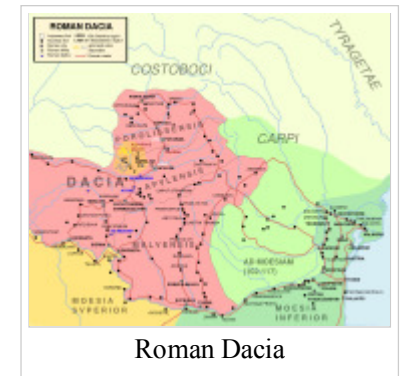
In addition to its unique architecture, the castle is famous because of persistent myths that it was once the home of Vlad III Dracula.

In the Middle Ages, Romanians lived in three distinct principalities: Wallachia (Romanian: *Țara Românească*—"Romanian Land"), Moldavia (Romanian: *Moldova*) and Transylvania. Transylvania was part of the Kingdom of Hungary from the 10-11th century until the 16th century, when it became the independent Principality of Transylvania until 1711.

Independent Wallachia has been on the border of the Ottoman Empire since the 14th century and slowly fell under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire during the 15th century. One famous ruler in this period was Vlad III the Impaler (also known as Vlad Dracula or *Vlad Țepeș*, IPA: [ˈtsepeʃ]), Prince of Wallachia in 1448, 1456–62, and 1476. In the English-speaking world, Vlad is best known for the legends of the exceedingly cruel punishments he imposed during his reign and for serving as the primary inspiration for the vampire main character in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*. As king, he maintained an independent policy in relation to the Ottoman Empire, and in Romania he is viewed by many as a prince with a deep sense of justice, and a defender of both Wallachia and European Christianity against Ottoman expansionism.

The principality of Moldavia reached its most glorious period under the rule of Stephen the Great between 1457 and 1504. His rule of 47 years was unusually long, especially at that time - only 13 rulers were recorded to have ruled for at least 50 years until the end of 15th century. He was a very successful military leader (winning 47 battles and losing only 2,) and after each victory, he raised a church, managing to build 48 churches or monasteries, some of them with unique and very interesting painting styles. *For more information see Painted churches of northern Moldavia listed in UNESCO's list of*

World Heritage Sites. Stephen's most prestigious victory was over the Ottoman Empire in 1475 at the Battle of Vaslui for which he raised the Voroneț



Monastery. For this victory, Pope Sixtus IV deemed him *verus christianae fidei athleta* (*true Champion of Christian Faith*). However, after his death, Moldavia would also come under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century.

Michael the Brave (Romanian: Mihai Viteazul) was the Prince of Wallachia (1593-1601), of Transylvania (1599-1600), and of Moldavia (1600). Briefly, during his reign the three principalities largely inhabited by Romanians were for the first time united under a single rule. After his death, as vassal tributary states, Moldova and Wallachia had complete internal autonomy and an external independence, which was finally lost in the 18th century.



Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania at the end of the 16th century

Independence and monarchy

During the period of Austro-Hungarian rule in Transylvania, and Ottoman suzerainty over Wallachia and Moldavia, most Romanians were in the situation of being second-class citizens (or even non-citizens) in a territory where they formed the majority of the population. In some Transylvanian cities, such as Braşov (at that time the Transylvanian Saxon citadel of Kronstadt), Romanians were not even allowed to reside within the city walls.

After the failed 1848 Revolution, the Great Powers did not support the Romanians' expressed desire to officially unite in a single state, forcing Romania to proceed alone against the Turks. The electors in both Moldavia and Wallachia chose in 1859 the same person – Alexandru Ioan Cuza – as prince (*Domnitor* in Romanian). Thus, Romania was created as a personal union, albeit a Romania that did not include Transylvania, where the upper class and the aristocracy remained mainly Hungarian, although Romanian nationalism inevitably ran up against Hungarian nationalism at the end of the 19th century. As

in the previous 900 years, Austria-Hungary, especially under the Dual Monarchy of 1867, kept the Hungarians firmly in control, even in parts of Transylvania where Romanians constituted a local majority.

In a 1866 *coup d'état*, Cuza was exiled and replaced by Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who became known as Prince Carol of Romania. During the Russo-Turkish War, Romania fought on the Russian side; in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, Romania was recognized as an independent state by the Great Powers. In return, Romania ceded three southern districts of Bessarabia to Russia and acquired Dobruja. In 1881, the principality was raised to a kingdom and Prince Carol became King Carol I.

The 1878-1914 period was one of stability and progress for Romania. During the Second Balkan War, Romania joined Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Turkey against Bulgaria. In the peace Treaty of Bucharest (1913) Romania gained Southern Dobruja - the Quadrilateral (the Durostor and Caliacra counties).



Peleş Castle, retreat of Romanian monarchs



Territories inhabited by Romanians before WWI

World Wars and Greater Romania

(1916-1947)

In August 1914, when World War I broke out, Romania declared neutrality. Two years later, under the pressure of Allies (especially France desperate to open a new front), on August 14/27 1916 it joined the Allies, for which they were promised support for the accomplishment of national unity, Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary.

The Romanian military campaign ended in disaster for Romania as the Central Powers conquered two-thirds of the country and captured or killed the majority of its army within four months. Nevertheless, Moldova remained in Romanian hands after the invading forces were stopped in 1917 and since by the war's end, Austria-Hungary and the Russian Empire had collapsed, Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania were allowed to unite with the Kingdom of Romania in 1918. By the 1920 Treaty of

Trianon, Hungary renounced in favour of Romania all the claims of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy over Transylvania. The union of Romania with Bukovina was ratified in 1919 in the Treaty of Saint Germain, and with Bessarabia in 1920 by the Treaty of Paris.

The Romanian expression *România Mare* (literal translation "Great Romania", but more commonly rendered "Greater Romania") generally refers to the Romanian state in the interwar period, and by extension, to the territory Romania covered at the time (see map). Romania achieved at that time its greatest territorial extent (almost 300,000 km²/120,000 sq mi), managing to unite all the historic Romanian lands.

/During the Second World War, Romania tried again to remain neutral, but on June 28, 1940, it received a Soviet ultimatum with an implied threat of invasion in the event of non-compliance. Under pressure from Moscow and Berlin, the Romanian administration and the army were forced to retreat from Bessarabia as well from Northern Bukovina to avoid war. This, in combination with other factors, prompted the government to join the Axis. Thereafter, southern Dobruja was awarded to Bulgaria, while Hungary received Northern Transylvania as result of an Axis arbitration. The authoritarian King Carol II abdicated in 1940, succeeded by the National Legionary State, in which power was shared by Ion Antonescu and the Iron Guard. Within months, Antonescu had crushed the Iron Guard, and the subsequent year Romania entered the war on the side of the Axis powers. During the war, Romania was the most important source of oil for Nazi Germany, which attracted multiple bombing raids by the Allies. By means of the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union, Romania recovered Bessarabia and northern Bukovina from the Soviet Russia, under the leadership of general Ion Antonescu. The Antonescu regime played a major role in the Holocaust, following to a lesser extent the Nazi policy of oppression and massacre of the Jews, and Romas, primarily in the Eastern territories Romania recovered or occupied from the Soviet Union (Transnistria) and in Moldavia.

In August 1944, Antonescu was toppled and arrested by King Michael I of Romania. Romania changed sides and joined the Allies, but its role in the defeat of Nazi Germany was not recognized by the Paris Peace Conference of 1947. With the Red Army forces still stationed in the country and exerting *de facto* control, Communists and their allied parties claimed 80% of the vote, through a combination of vote manipulation, elimination, and forced mergers of competing parties, thus establishing themselves as the dominant force. By the end of the war, the Romanian army had suffered about 300,000 casualties.

Communism

(1947–1989)

In 1947, King Michael I was forced by the Communists to abdicate and leave the country, Romania was proclaimed a republic , and remained under direct military and economic control of the USSR until the late 1950s. During this period, Romania's resources were drained by the " SovRom" agreements: mixed Soviet-Romanian companies established to mask the looting of Romania by the Soviet Union.

After the negotiated retreat of Soviet troops in 1958, Romania, under the new leadership of Nicolae Ceaușescu, started to pursue independent policies. Such examples are the condemnation of the Soviet-led 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia (being the only Warsaw Pact country not to take part in the invasion), the continuation of diplomatic relations with Israel after the Six-Day War of 1967 (again, the only Warsaw Pact country to do so), the establishment of economic (1963) and diplomatic (1967) relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, and so forth. Also, close ties with the Arab countries (and the PLO) allowed Romania to play a key role in the Israel-Egypt and Israel- PLO peace processes by intermediating the visit of Sadat in Israel. A short-lived period of relative economic well-being and openness followed in the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. As Romania's foreign debt sharply increased between 1977 and 1981 (from 3 to 10 billion US dollars), the influence of international financial organisations such as the IMF or the World Bank grew, conflicting with Nicolae Ceaușescu's autarchic policies. Ceaușescu eventually initiated a project of total reimbursement of the foreign debt (completed in 1989, shortly before his overthrow). To achieve this goal, he imposed policies that impoverished Romanians and exhausted the Romanian economy. He greatly extended the authority



Romanian territory during the 20th century: purple indicates the Old Kingdom before 1913, orange indicates Greater Romania areas that joined or were annexed after the Second Balkan War and WWI but were lost after WWII, and rose indicates areas that joined Romania after WWI and remained so after WWII.

police state and imposed a cult of personality. These led to a dramatic decrease in Ceaușescu-popularity and culminated in his overthrow and execution in the bloody Romanian Revolution of 1989.

During the 1947–1962 period, many people were arbitrarily killed or imprisoned for political, economic or unknown reasons: detainees in prisons or camps, deported, persons under house arrest, and administrative detainees. There were hundreds of thousands of abuses, deaths and incidents of torture against a large range of people, from political opponents to ordinary citizens. Between 60,000 and 80,000 political prisoners were detained as psychiatric patients and treated in some of the most sadistic ways by doctors. Even though between 1962 and 1964 some political prisoners were freed in a series of amnesties it is estimated that, in total, two million people were direct victims of the communism repression.

Present-day democracy

After the fall of Ceaușescu, the National Salvation Front (FSN), led by Ion Iliescu, took partial multi-party democratic and free market measures. Several major political parties of the pre-war era, such as the National Christian Democrat Peasant's Party (PNȚCD), the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Romanian Social Democrat Party (PSDR) were resurrected. After several major political rallies (especially in January), in April 1990, a sit-in protest contesting the results of the recently held parliamentary elections began in University Square, Bucharest. The protesters accused the FSN of being made up of former Communists and members of the Securitate. The protesters did not recognize the results of the election, which they deemed undemocratic, and were asking for the exclusion from the political life of the former high-ranking Communist Party members. The protest rapidly grew to become an ongoing mass demonstration (known as the Golaniad). The peaceful demonstrations degenerated into violence. After the police failed to bring the demonstrators to order, Ion Iliescu called on the "men of good will" to come and defend the State institutions in Bucharest. Coal miners of the Jiu Valley answered the call and arrived in Bucharest on June 14. Their violent intervention is remembered as the June 1990 Mineriad.

The subsequent disintegration of the FSN produced several political parties including the Romanian Democrat Social Party (PDSR, later Social Democratic Party, PSD), the Democratic Party (PD) and the ApR (Alliance for Romania). The PDSR party governed Romania from 1990 until 1996 through several coalitions and governments with Ion Iliescu as head of state. Since then there have been three democratic changes of government: in 1996, the democratic-liberal opposition and its leader Emil Constantinescu acceded to power; in 2000 the Social Democrats returned to power, with Iliescu once again president; and in 2004 Traian Băsescu was elected president, with an electoral coalition called Justice and Truth Alliance (DA). The government was formed by a larger coalition which also includes the Conservative Party and the ethnic Hungarian party.

Post-Cold War Romania developed closer ties with Western Europe, eventually joining NATO in 2004. The country applied in June 1993 for membership in the European Union (EU). It became an Associated State of the EU in 1995, an Acceding Country in 2004, and a member on January 1, 2007.

Following the free travel agreement and politics of the post-Cold War period, as well as hardship of the life in the post 1990s economic depression, Romania has an increasingly large diaspora, estimated at over 2 million people. The main emigration targets are Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, UK, and the USA.

Geography

With a surface area of 238,391 square kilometres (92,043 sq mi), Romania is the largest country in southeastern Europe and the twelfth-largest in Europe. A large part of Romania's border with Serbia and Bulgaria is formed by the Danube. The Danube is joined by the Prut River, which forms the border with the Republic of Moldova. The Danube flows into the Black Sea within Romania's territory forming the Danube Delta, the second largest and the best preserved delta in Europe, and a biosphere reserve and a biodiversity World Heritage Site. Other important rivers are the Siret, running north-south through Moldavia, the Olt, running from the oriental Carpathian Mountains to Oltenia, and the Mureş, running through Transylvania from East to West.

Romania's terrain is distributed roughly equally between mountainous, hilly and lowland territories. The Carpathian Mountains dominate the centre of Romania, with fourteen of its mountain ranges reaching above the altitude of 2,000 meters. The highest mountain in Romania is Moldoveanu Peak (2,544 m/8,350 ft). In south-central Romania, the Carpathians sweeten into hills, towards the Bărăgan Plains. Romania's geographical diversity has led to an accompanying diversity of flora and fauna.



Topographic map of Romania.



Lake Bucura in the Retezat Mountains

Environment

A high percentage of natural ecosystems (47% of the land area of the country) is covered with natural and semi-natural ecosystems. Since almost half of all forests in Romania (13% of the country) have been managed for watershed conservation rather than production, Romania has one of the largest areas of undisturbed forest in Europe. The integrity of Romanian forest ecosystems is indicated by the presence of the full range of European forest fauna, including 60% and 40% of all European brown bears and wolves, respectively. There are also almost 400 unique species of mammals (of which Carpathian chamois are best known), birds, reptiles and amphibians in Romania.

There are almost 10,000 km² (3,900 sq mi) (almost 5% of the total area) of protected areas in Romania. Of these, Danube Delta Reserve Biosphere is the largest and least damaged wetland complex in Europe, covering a total area of 5,800 km² (2,200 sq mi). The significance of the biodiversity of the Danube Delta has been internationally recognised. It was declared a Biosphere Reserve in September 1990, a Ramsar site in May 1991, and over 50% of its area was placed on the World Heritage List in December 1991. Within its boundaries is one of the most extensive reed bed systems in the world. There are two other biosphere reserves: Retezat National Park and Rodna National Park.

Climate

Owing to its distance from the open sea and position on the southeastern portion of the European continent, Romania has a climate that is transitional between temperate and continental with four distinct seasons. The average annual temperature is 11°C in the south and 8 °C (46 °F) in the north. The extreme recorded temperatures are 44.5 °C (112.1 °F) in Ion Sion 1951 and -38.5 °C (-37 °F) in Bod 1942.

Spring is pleasant with cool mornings and nights and warm days. Summers are generally very warm to hot, with summer (June to August) average maximum temperatures in Bucharest being around 28 °C (82 °F), with temperatures over 35 °C (95 °F) fairly common in the lower-lying areas of the country. Minima in Bucharest and other lower-lying areas are around 16 °C (61 °F), but at higher altitudes both maxima and minima decline considerably. Autumn is dry and cool, with fields and trees producing colorful foliage. Winters can be cold, with average maxima even in lower-lying areas being no more than 2 °C (36 °F) and below -15 °C (5.0 °F) in the highest mountains, where some areas of permafrost occur on the highest peaks.

Precipitation is average with over 750 mm (30 in) per year only on the highest western mountains — much of it falling as snow which allows for an extensive skiing industry. In the south-central parts of the country (around Bucharest) the level of precipitation drops to around 600 mm (24 in), while in the Danube Delta, rainfall levels are very low, and average only around 370 mm.

Demographics

According to the 2002 census, Romania has a population of 21,698,181 and, similarly to other countries in the region, is expected to gently decline in the coming years as a result of sub-replacement fertility rates. Romanians make up 89.5% of the population. The largest ethnic minorities are Hungarians, who make up 6.6% of the population and Roma, or Gypsies, who make up 2.46% of the population. By the official census 535,250 Roma live in Romania. Hungarians, who are a sizeable minority in Transylvania, constitute a majority in the counties of Harghita and Covasna. Ukrainians, Germans, Lipovans, Turks, Tatars, Serbs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Croats, Greeks, Russians, Jews, Czechs, Poles, Italians, Armenians, as well as other ethnic groups, account for the remaining 1.4% of the population.

The overall density figures conceal considerable regional variation. Population densities are naturally highest in the towns, with the plains (up to altitudes of some 700 ft/210 m) having the next highest density, especially in areas with intensive agriculture or a traditionally high birth rate (e.g., northern Moldavia and the “contact” zone with the Subcarpathians); areas at altitudes of 700 to 2,000 feet (600 m), rich in mineral resources, orchards, vineyards, and pastures, support the lowest densities. The number of Romanians and individuals with ancestors born in Romania living abroad is estimated at around 12 million.

The official language of Romania is Romanian, an Eastern Romance language related to Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan. Romanian is spoken as a first language by 91% of the population, with Hungarian and Rroma, being the most important minority languages, spoken by 6.7% and 1.1% of the population, respectively. Until the 1990s, there was also a substantial number of German-speaking Transylvanian Saxons, even though many have since emigrated to Germany, leaving only 45,000 native German speakers in Romania. In localities where a given ethnic minority makes up more than 20% of the population, that minority's language can be used in the public administration and justice system, while native-language education and signage is also provided.



Landscape in the Danube Delta

English and French are the main foreign languages taught in schools. English is spoken by 5 million Romanians, French is spoken by 4-5 million, and German, Italian and Spanish are each spoken by 1-2 million people. Historically, French was the predominant foreign language spoken in Romania, even though English has since superseded it. Consequently, Romanian English-speakers tend to be younger than Romanian French-speakers. Romania is, however, a full member of La Francophonie, and hosted the Francophonie Summit in 2006. German has been taught predominantly in Transylvania, due to traditions tracing back to the Austro-Hungarian rule in this province.

Religion

Romania is a secular state, thus having no national religion. The dominant religious body is the Romanian Orthodox Church, an autocephalous church within the Eastern Orthodox communion; its members make up 86.7% of the population according to the 2002 census. Other important Christian denominations include Roman Catholicism (4.7%), Protestantism (3.7%), Pentecostalism (1.5%) and the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church (0.9%). Romania also has a historically significant Muslim minority concentrated in Dobrogea, mostly of Turkish ethnicity and numbering 67,500 people. Based on the 2002 census data, there are also 6,179 Jews, 23,105 people who are of no religion and/or atheist, and 11,734 who refused to answer. On December 27, 2006, a new Law on Religion was approved under which religious denominations can only receive official registration if they have at least 20,000 members, or about 0.1 percent of Romania's total population.

Largest cities

Bucharest is the capital and the largest city in Romania. At the census in 2002, its population was over 1.9 million. The metropolitan area of Bucharest has a population of about 2.2 million. There are several plans to increase further its metropolitan area to about 20 times the area of the city proper.

There are 5 more cities in Romania, with a population of around 300,000, that are also present in EU top 100 most populous cities. These are: Iași, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Constanța, and Craiova. The other cities with populations over 200,000 are Galați, Brașov, Ploiești, Brăila and Oradea. Another 13 cities have populations over 100,000.

At present, several of the largest cities have a metropolitan area: Constanța (550,000 people), Brașov, Iași (both with around 400,000) and Oradea (260,000) and several others are planned: Timișoara (400,000), Cluj-Napoca (400,000), Brăila-Galați (600,000), Craiova (370,000), Bacău and Ploiești.

Education



Putna Monastery



Cluj-Napoca

Since the Romanian Revolution of 1989, the Romanian education system has been in a continuous process of reformation that has been both praised and criticized. According to the Law on Education adopted in 1995, the Educational System is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Research. Each level has its own form of organization and is subject to different legislations. Kindergarten is optional between 3 and 6 years old. Schooling starts at age 7 (sometimes 6), and is compulsory until the 10th grade (which usually corresponds to the age of 17 or 16). Primary and secondary education are divided in 12 or 13 grades. Higher education is aligned onto the European higher education area.

Aside from the official schooling system, and the recently-added private equivalents, there exists a semi-legal, informal, fully private tutoring system (*meditații*). Tutoring is mostly used during secondary as a preparation for the various examinations, which are notoriously difficult. Tutoring is wide-spread, and it can be considered a part of the Education System. It has subsisted and even prospered during the Communist regime.

In 2004, some 4.4 million of the population was enrolled in school. Out of these, 650,000 in kindergarten, 3.11 million (14% of population) in primary and secondary level, and 650,000 (3% of population) in tertiary level (universities). In the same year, the adult literacy rate was 97.3% (45th worldwide), while the combined gross enrollment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools was 75% (52nd worldwide). The results of the PISA assessment study in schools for the year 2000 placed Romania on the 34th rank out of 42 participant countries with a general weighted score of 432 representing 85% of the mean OECD score. According to the Academic Ranking of World Universities, in 2006 no Romanian university was included in the first 500 top universities world wide. Using similar methodology to these rankings, it was reported that the best placed Romanian university, Bucharest University, attained the half score of the last university in the world top 500.

Romanian high school curricula have recently been censored and restructured, owing to a growing trend of religious conservatism. In 2006, the theory of evolution, which has been taught since the country's Communist era, has been dropped from the compulsory curriculum nationwide. Philosophical writers critical of religion, such as Voltaire and Camus have also been removed from the philosophy curriculum. Instead, students are taught 7-day Creationism in Orthodox religion classes, which under a new proposal would become compulsory.

Economy



The library of University of Bucharest

With a GDP of around \$264 billion and a GDP per capita (PPP) of \$12,285 estimated for 2008, Romania is an upper-middle income country economy and has been part of the European Union since January 1, 2007. After the Communist regime was overthrown in late 1989, the country experienced a decade of economic instability and decline, led in part by an obsolete industrial base and a lack of structural reform. From 2000 onwards, however, the Romanian economy was transformed into one of relative macroeconomic stability, characterised by high growth, low unemployment and declining inflation. In 2006, according to the Romanian Statistics Office, GDP growth in real terms was recorded at 7.7%, one of the highest rates in Europe. The growth dampened to 6.1% in 2007, and is expected to exceed 8% in 2008 because of a high production forecasted in agriculture (30-50% higher than in 2007). The GDP grew by 8.2% in the first quarter of 2008. Unemployment in Romania was at 3.9% in September 2007 which is very low compared to other middle-sized or large European countries such as Poland, France, Germany and Spain. Foreign debt is also comparatively low, at 20.3% of GDP. Exports have increased substantially in the past few years, with a 25% year-on-year rise in exports in the first quarter of 2006. Romania's main exports are clothing and textiles, industrial machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, metallurgic products, raw materials, cars, military equipment, software, pharmaceuticals, fine chemicals, and agricultural products (fruits, vegetables, and flowers). Trade is mostly centred on the member states of the European Union, with Germany and Italy being the country's single largest trading partners. The country, however, maintains a large trade deficit, which increased sharply during 2007 by 50%, to 15 billion euros.



Tower Centre International in Bucharest is the tallest building in Romania

After a series of privatisations and reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s, government intervention in the Romanian economy is somewhat lower than in other European economies. In 2005, the government replaced Romania's progressive tax system with a flat tax of 16% for both personal income and corporate profit, resulting in the country having the lowest fiscal burden in the European Union, a factor which has contributed to the growth of the private sector. The economy is predominantly based on services, which account for 55% of GDP, even though industry and agriculture also have significant contributions, making up 35% and 10% of GDP, respectively. Additionally, 32% of the Romanian population is employed in agriculture and primary production, one of the highest rates in Europe. Since 2000, Romania has attracted increasing amounts of foreign investment, becoming the single largest investment destination in Southeastern and Central Europe. Foreign direct investment was valued at €8.3 billion in 2006. According to a 2006 World Bank report, Romania currently ranks 49th out of 175 economies in the ease of doing business, scoring higher than other countries in the region such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. Additionally, the same study judged it to be the world's second-fastest economic reformer (after Georgia) in 2006. The average gross wage per month in Romania was 1704 lei in May 2008, equating to €481.58 (US\$757.37) based on international exchange rates, and \$967.63 based on purchasing power parity.

Transportation

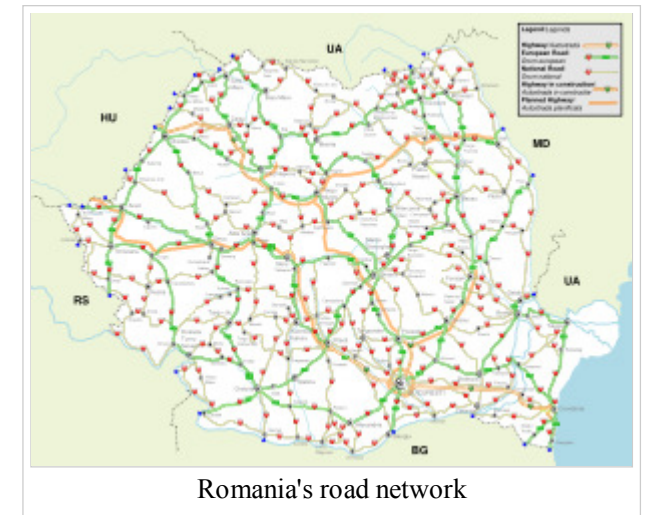
Due to its location, Romania is a major crossroad for International economic exchange in Europe. However, because of insufficient investment, maintenance and repair, the transport infrastructure does not meet the current needs of a market economy and lags behind Western Europe. Nevertheless, these conditions are rapidly improving and catching up with the standards of Trans-European transport networks. Several projects have been started with funding from grants from ISPA and several loans from International Financial Institutions (World Bank, IMF, etc.) guaranteed by the state, to upgrade the main road corridors. Also, the Government is actively pursuing new external financing or public-private partnerships to further upgrade the main roads, and especially the country's motorway network.

World Bank estimates that the railway network in Romania comprised in 2004 22,298 kilometres (13,855 mi) of track, which would make it the fourth largest railroad network in Europe. The railway transport experienced a dramatic fall in freight and passenger volumes from the peak volumes recorded in 1989 mainly due to the decline in GDP and competition from road transport. In 2004, the railways carried 8.64 billion passenger-km in 99 million passenger journeys, and 73 million metric tonnes, or 17 billion ton-km of freight. The combined total transportation by rail constituted around 45% of all passenger and freight movement in the country.

Bucharest is the only city in Romania which has an underground railway system. The Bucharest Metro was only opened in 1979. Now is one of the most accessed systems of the Bucharest public transport network with an average ridership of 600,000 passengers during the workweek.

Tourism

Tourism focuses on the country's natural landscapes and its rich history and is a significant contributor to the Romania's economy. In 2006, the domestic and international tourism generated about 4.8% of gross domestic product and 5.8% of the total jobs (about half a million jobs). Following commerce, tourism is the second largest component of the services sector. Tourism is one of the most dynamic and fastest developing sectors of the economy of Romania and characterized by a huge potential for development. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council Romania is the fourth fastest growing country in the world in terms of travel and tourism total demand with a yearly potential growth of 8% from 2007-2016. Number of tourists grew from 4.8 million in 2002 to 6.6 million in 2004. Similarly, the revenues grew from 400 million in 2002 to 607 in 2004. In 2006, Romania registered 20 million overnight stays by international tourists, an all-time record, but the number for 2007 is expected to increase even more. Tourism in Romania attracted €400 million in investments in 2005.



Over the last years, Romania has emerged as a popular tourist destination for many Europeans (more than 60% of the foreign visitors were from EU countries), thus attempting to compete with Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Spain. Romania destinations such as Mangalia, Saturn, Venus, Neptun, Olimp, Constanta and Mamaia (sometimes called the *Romanian Riviera*) and are among the most popular attraction during summer. During winter the skiing resorts along the Valea Prahovei and Poiana Braşov are booming with visitors. Several cities in Transylvania (such as Sibiu, Braşov, Sighişoara, Cluj-Napoca, Târgu Mureş and several others) have become important touristic attractions for foreign tourists - especially for their medieval atmosphere and castles. Rural tourism focused on folklore and traditions, has become a major issue for the authorities recently, and is targeted to promote such sites as Bran and its Dracula's Castle, the Painted churches of Northern Moldavia, the Wooden churches of Maramureş, or the Merry Cemetery in Maramureş County. There are several major natural attractions in Romania - such as Danube Delta, Iron Gates (Danube Gorge), Scărişoara Cave and several other caves in the Apuseni Mountains - that have not received great attention from the authorities and whose potential has not been fully tapped.



Mamaia, at the Black Sea shore

Culture



Saxon medieval city of Sibiu,
European Capital of Culture in
2007

Romania has its unique culture, which is the product of its geography and of its distinct historical evolution. Like Romanians themselves, it is fundamentally defined as the meeting point of three regions: Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans, but cannot be truly included in any of them. The Romanian identity formed on a substratum of mixed Roman and quite possibly Dacian elements, with many other influences. During late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the major influences came from the Slavic peoples who migrated and settled in nearby Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine and eventually Russia; from medieval Greeks and the Byzantine Empire; from a long domination by the Ottoman Empire; from the Hungarians; and from the Germans living in Transylvania. Modern Romanian culture emerged and developed over roughly the last 250 years under a strong influence from Western culture, particularly French and German culture.



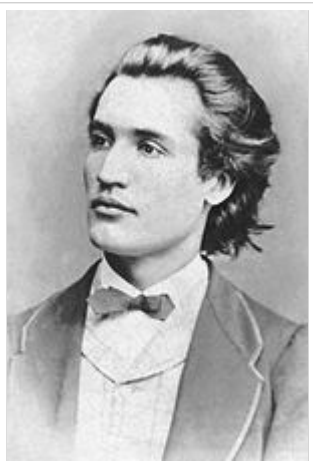
The Palace of Culture in Iaşi
was built between 1906-1925
and hosts several museums

Arts

The Romanian literature began to truly evolve with the revolutions of 1848 and the union of the two Danubian Principalities in 1856. The Origin of the Romanians began to be discussed and in Transylvania and Romanian scholars began studying in France, Italy and Germany. The German philosophy and French culture were integrated into modern Romanian literature and a new elite of artists lead to the appearance of some of the classics of the Romanian literature such as Mihai Eminescu, George Coșbuc, Ioan Slavici. Although they remain little known outside Romania, they are very appreciated within Romania for giving birth to a true Romanian literature by creating modern lyrics with inspiration from the old folklore tales. Of them, Eminescu is considered the most important and influential Romanian poet, and is still very much loved for his creations, and especially the poem *Luceafărul*. Among other writers that made large contributions around the second half of 19th century are Mihail Kogălniceanu (also the first prime minister of Romania), Vasile Alecsandri, Nicolae Bălcescu, Ion Luca Caragiale, and Ion Creangă.



Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest was opened in 1888



Mihai Eminescu, national poet of Romania and Moldova

The first half of the 20th century is regarded by many Romanian scholars as the *Golden Age* of Romanian culture and it is the period when it reached its main level of international affirmation and a strong connection to the European cultural trends. The most important artist who had a great influence on the world culture was the sculptor Constantin Brâncuși, a central figure of the modern movement and a pioneer of abstraction, the innovator of world sculpture by immersion in the primordial sources of folk creation. His sculptures blend simplicity and sophistication that led the way for modernist sculptors. As a testimony to his skill, one of his pieces, *"Bird in Space"*, was sold in an auction for \$27.5 million in 2005, a record for any sculpture. In the period between the two world wars, authors like Tudor Arghezi, Lucian Blaga, Eugen Lovinescu, Ion Barbu, Liviu Rebreanu made efforts to synchronize Romanian literature with the European literature of the time. From this period comes also George Enescu, probably the best known Romanian musician. He is a composer, violinist, pianist, conductor, teacher, and one of the greatest performers of his time, in whose honour is held the annually in Bucharest, the classical music George Enescu Festival.

After the world wars, communism brought heavy censorship on almost all elements of life and they used the cultural world as a mean to better control the population. The freedom of expression was constantly restricted in various ways, but the likes of Gellu Naum, Nichita Stănescu, Marin Sorescu or Marin Preda managed to escape censorship, broke with "socialist realism" and were the leaders of a small "Renaissance" in Romanian literature. While not many of them managed to obtain international acclaim due to the censorship, some like Constantin Noica, Tristan Tzara and Mircea Cărtărescu had their works published abroad even though they got jailed for various political reasons.

Some artists chose to leave the country entirely, and continued to make contributions in exile. Among them Eugen Ionescu, Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran became renowned worldwide for their works. Other literary figures who enjoy acclaim outside of the country include the poet Paul Celan and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, both survivors of the Holocaust. Some famous Romanian artists musicians are the folk artist Tudor Gheorghe, and the virtuoso of the pan flute Gheorghe Zamfir - who is reported to have sold over 120 million albums worldwide.

Romanian cinema has recently achieved worldwide acclaim with the appearance of such films as *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*, directed by Cristi Puiu, (Cannes 2005 Prix un certain regard winner), and *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, directed by Cristian Mungiu (Cannes 2007 *Palme d'Or* winner). The latter, according to *Variety*, is "further proof of Romania's new prominence in the film world."



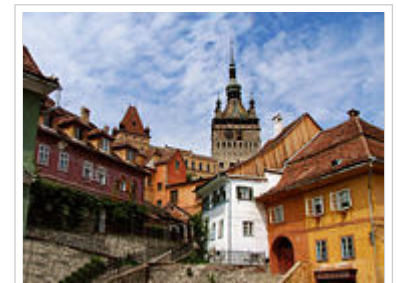
Brâncuși's *Endless Column* in Targu Jiu



Hunyadi Castle, 1419, with its impressive size and architectural beauty sets it among the most precious monuments of medieval art.

Monuments

The UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites includes Romanian sites such as the Saxon villages with fortified churches in Transylvania, the Painted churches of northern Moldavia with their fine exterior and interior frescoes, the Wooden Churches of Maramures unique examples that combine Gothic style with traditional timber construction, the Monastery of Horezu, the citadel of Sighișoara, and the Dacian Fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains. Romania's contribution to the World Heritage List stands out because it consists of some groups of monuments scattered around the country, rather than one or two special landmarks. Also, in 2007, the city of Sibiu famous for its Brukenthal National Museum is the European Capital of Culture alongside the city of Luxembourg.



The Saxon city of Sighișoara first attested in the 12th century, is nowadays famous for its Medieval Festival

Government

Politics

The *Constitution of Romania* is based on the Constitution of France's Fifth Republic and was approved in a national referendum on 8 December 1991. A

plebiscite held in October 2003 approved 79 amendments to the Constitution, bringing it into conformity with the European Union legislation. Romania is governed on the basis of multi-party democratic system and of the segregation of the legal, executive and judicial powers. The Constitution states that Romania is a semi-presidential democratic republic where executive functions are shared between the president and the prime minister. The President is elected by popular vote for maximum two terms, and since the amendments in 2003, the terms are five years. The President appoints the Prime Minister, who in turn appoints the Council of Ministers. While the president resides at Cotroceni Palace, the Prime Minister with the Romanian Government is based at Victoria Palace.



The Palace of the Parliament the seat of Romania's bicameral parliament. Built in 1984, it is the largest building in Europe and the world's second largest administrative building behind the Pentagon and 10% larger by volume than the Great Pyramid of Giza.

The legislative branch of the government, collectively known as the Parliament (*Parlamentul României*), consists of two chambers – the Senate (*Senat*), which has 140 members, and the Chamber of Deputies (*Camera Deputaților*), which has 346 members. The members of both chambers are elected every four years under a system of party-list proportional representation.

The justice system is independent of the other branches of government, and is made up of a hierarchical system of courts culminating in the High Court of Cassation and Justice, which is the supreme court of Romania. There are also courts of appeal, county courts and local courts. The Romanian judicial system is strongly influenced by the French model, considering that it is based on civil law and is inquisitorial in nature. The Constitutional Court (*Curtea Constituțională*) is responsible for judging the compliance of laws and other state regulations to the Romanian Constitution, which is the fundamental law of the country. The constitution, which was introduced in 1991, can only be amended by a public referendum, the last one being in 2003. Since this amendment, the court's decisions cannot be overruled by any majority of the parliament.

The country's entry into the European Union in 2007 has been a significant influence on its domestic policy. As part of the process, Romania has instituted reforms including judicial reform, increased judicial cooperation with other member states, and measures to combat corruption. Nevertheless, in 2006 Brussels report, Romania and Bulgaria were described as the two most corrupt countries in the EU.

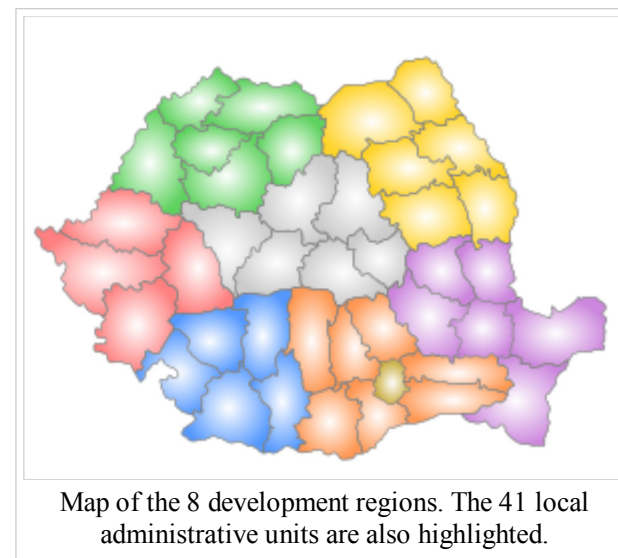
Administrative divisions

Romania is divided into forty-one counties (*județe*), as well as the municipality of Bucharest (*București*) - which is its own administrative unit. Each county is administered by a county council (*consiliu județean*), responsible for local affairs, as well as a prefect, who is appointed by the central government but cannot be a member of any political party.

The country is further subdivided into 319 cities and 2686 communes (rural localities). Each of these have their own local councils and are headed by a mayor (*primar*). 103 of the larger and more urbanised cities have the status of municipality, which gives them greater administrative power over local affairs.

Alongside the county structure, Romania is also divided into four NUTS-1 level divisions (Romanian: *Macroregiunea*) and eight development regions corresponding to NUTS-2 divisions in the European Union. These divisions have no administrative capacity and are instead used for co-ordinating regional development projects and statistical purposes. The NUTS-3 level divisions reflect Romania's administrative-territorial structure, and correspond to the 41 counties and the Bucharest municipality.

- Macroregiunea 1:
 - Nord-Vest (6 counties)
 - Centru (6 counties)
- Macroregiunea 2:
 - Nord-Est (6 counties)
 - Sud-Est (6 counties)
- Macroregiunea 3:
 - Sud-Muntenia (7 counties)
 - București-Ilfov (1 county and Bucharest)
- Macroregiunea 4:
 - Sud-Vest Oltenia (5 counties)
 - Vest (4 counties)



Foreign relations

Since December 1989, Romania has pursued a policy of strengthening relations with the West in general, more specifically with the United States and the European Union. It joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on March 29, 2004, the European Union (EU) on January 1, 2007, and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1972, and is a member of the World Trade Organization.

The current government has stated its goal of strengthening ties with and helping other Eastern European countries (in particular Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia) with the process of integration with the West. Romania has also made clear over the past 10 years that it supports NATO and EU membership for the democratic former Soviet republics in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Romania also declared its public support for Turkey, Croatia and Moldova joining the European Union. With Turkey, Romania shares a privileged economic relation. Because it has a large Hungarian minority, Romania has also developed strong relations with Hungary - the latter supported Romania's bid to join the EU.

In December 2005, President Traian Băsescu and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed an agreement that would allow a U.S. military presence at several Romanian facilities primarily in the eastern part of the country.

Relations with Moldova are rather special, considering that the two countries practically share the same language, and a fairly common historical background. Signs in the early 1990s that Romania and Moldova might unite after both countries achieved emancipation from communist rule, quickly faded away when a pro-Russian government was formed in Moldova. Romania remains interested in Moldovan affairs, but the two countries have been unable even to reach

agreement on a basic bilateral treaty; Romania is insistent (against determined Moldovan resistance) that such a treaty would have to refer to Romania and Moldova's 'special relationship'. *For more information see Movement for unification of Romania and Moldova.*

Sports

Football (soccer) is by far the most popular sport in Romania. The governing body is the Romanian Football Federation, which belongs to UEFA. The top division of the Romanian Professional Football League attracted an average of 5417 spectators per game in the 2006-07 season. At international level, the Romanian National Football Team has taken part 7 times in the Football World Cup, and it had the most successful period throughout the 1990s, when during the 1994 World Cup in USA, Romania reached the quarter-finals and was ranked by FIFA on the 6th place. The core player of this "Golden Generation" and perhaps the best known Romanian player internationally is Gheorghe Hagi (nicknamed *the Maradona of the Carpathians*). Famous currently active players are Adrian Mutu and Cristian Chivu. The most famous football club is Steaua București, who in 1986 became the first Eastern European club ever to win the prestigious European Champions Cup title, and who played the final again in 1989. Another successful Romanian team Dinamo București played a semifinal in the European Champions Cup in 1984 and a Cup Winners Cup semifinal in the 1990. Other important Romanian football clubs are Rapid București, FC Universitatea Craiova and CFR 1907 Cluj-Napoca.

Tennis is the second most popular sport in terms of registered sportsmen. Romania reached the Davis Cup finals three times (1969, 1971, 1972). The tennisman Ilie Năstase won several Grand Slam titles and dozens of other tournaments, and was the first player to be ranked as number 1 by ATP from 1973 to 1974. The Romanian Open is held every fall in Bucharest since 1993.

Popular team sports are rugby union (national rugby team has so far competed at every Rugby World Cup), basketball and handball. Some popular individual sports are: athleticism, chess, sport dance, and martial arts and other fighting sports.

Although gymnastics is not very popular within Romania, Romanian gymnasts have had a large number of successes - for which the country became known worldwide. In the 1976 Summer Olympics, the gymnast Nadia Comăneci became the first gymnast ever to score a perfect "ten". She also won three gold medals, one silver and one bronze, all at the age of fifteen. Her success continued in the 1980 Summer Olympics, where she was awarded two gold medals and two silver medals.

Romania participated in for the first time in the Olympic Games in 1900 and has taken part in 18 of the 24 summer games. Romania has been one of the more successful countries Summer Olympic Games (15th overall) with a total of 283 medals won throughout the years, 82 of which are gold medals. Winter sports have received little investments and thus only a single bronze medal was won by Romanian sportsmen in the Winter Olympic Games.

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Russia

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Russia (Russian: Россия, *Rossiya*), also the **Russian Federation** (Russian: Российская Федерация, *Rossiyskaya Federatsiya*), is a transcontinental country extending over much of northern Eurasia. It is a semi-presidential republic comprising 83 federal subjects. Russia shares land borders with the following countries (counter-clockwise from northwest to southeast): Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (Kaliningrad Oblast), Poland (Kaliningrad Oblast), Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia and North Korea. It is also close to the U.S. state of Alaska, Sweden, Denmark, Turkey and Japan across relatively small stretches of water (the Bering Strait, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and La Pérouse Strait, respectively).

At 17,075,400 square kilometers, Russia is by far the largest country in the world, covering more than an eighth of the Earth's land area; with 142 million people, it is the ninth largest by population. It extends across the whole of northern Asia and 40% of Europe, spanning 11 time zones and incorporating a great range of environments and landforms. Russia has the world's largest mineral and energy resources, and is considered an energy superpower. It has the world's largest forest reserves and its lakes contain approximately one-quarter of the world's unfrozen fresh water.

The nation's history began with that of the East Slavs. The Slavs emerged as a recognizable group in Europe between the 3rd and 8th centuries AD. Founded and ruled by Vikings and their descendants, the first East Slavic state, Kievan Rus', arose in the 9th century and adopted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire in 988, beginning the synthesis of Byzantine and Slavic cultures that defined Russian culture for the next millennium. Kievan Rus' ultimately disintegrated and the lands were divided into many small feudal Russian states. The most powerful successor state to Kievan Rus' was Moscow, which served as the main force in the Russian reunification process and independence struggle against the Golden Horde. Moscow gradually reunified the surrounding Russian principalities and came to dominate the cultural and political legacy of Kievan Rus'. By the 18th century, the nation had greatly expanded through conquest, annexation and exploration to become the huge Russian Empire, stretching from Poland eastward to the Pacific Ocean.

Российская Федерация <i>Rossiyskaya Federatsiya</i> Russian Federation	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: Государственный гимн Российской Федерации (Russian) <i>Gosudarstvenny gimn Rossiyskoy Federatsii</i> (transliteration) <i>National Anthem of the Russian Federation</i>	
	
Capital (and largest city)	Moscow

Russia established worldwide power and influence from the times of the Russian Empire to being the largest and leading constituent of the Soviet Union, the world's first and largest constitutionally socialist state and a recognized superpower. The nation can boast a long tradition of excellence in every aspect of the arts and sciences. The Russian Federation was founded following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, but is recognized as the continuing legal personality of the Soviet Union. Russia is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a leading member of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the G8. It is one of the five recognized nuclear weapons states and possesses the world's largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction.

Geography

The Russian Federation stretches across much of the north of the super-continent of Eurasia. Because of its size, Russia displays both monotony and diversity. As with its topography, its climates, vegetation, and soils span vast distances. From north to south the East European Plain is clad sequentially in tundra, coniferous forest (taiga), mixed and broad-leaf forests, grassland (steppe), and semi-desert (fringing the Caspian Sea) as the changes in vegetation reflect the changes in climate. Siberia supports a similar sequence but is taiga. The country contains 23 World Heritage Sites and 40 UNESCO Biosphere reserves.

Topography

The two widest separated points in Russia are about 8,000 km (5,000 mi) apart along a geodesic line. These points are: the boundary with Poland on a 60 km long (40-mi long) spit of land separating the Gulf of Gdańsk from the Vistula Lagoon; and the farthest southeast of the Kuril Islands, a few miles off Hokkaidō Island, Japan. The points which are furthest separated in longitude are 6,600 km (4,100 mi) apart along a geodesic. These points are: in the West, the same spit; in the East, the Big Diomedes Island (Ostrov Ratmanova). The Russian Federation spans 11 time zones.

Official languages	Russian official throughout nation; twenty-seven others co-official in various regions
Demonym	Russian
Government	Federal semi-presidential republic
- President	Dmitry Medvedev
- Prime Minister	Vladimir Putin
Founded (862)¹	Novgorodians invited prince Rurik to keep law and order, thus giving birth to the Rurik dynasty that ruled over all Russian lands throughout more than 700 years
Area	
- Total	17,075,400 km ² (1st) 6,592,800 sq mi
- Water (%)	13
Population	
- 2008 estimate	142,008,838 (9th)
- 2002 census	145,166,731
- Density	8.3/km ² (209th) 21.5/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$2.088 trillion (6th)
- Per capita	\$14,692 (52nd)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$1.290 trillion (10th)
- Per capita	\$9,075 (54th)
Gini (2005)	40.5



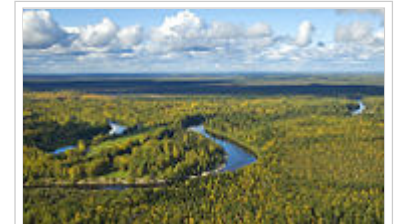
Central Russian Upland,
Zaraysk

Russia has the world's largest forest reserves and is known as "the lungs of Europe", second only to the Amazon Rainforest in the amount of carbon dioxide it absorbs. It provides a huge amount of oxygen for not just Europe, but the world. With access to three of the world's oceans—the Atlantic, Arctic, and Pacific—Russian fishing fleets are a major contributor to the world's fish supply. The Caspian is the source of what is considered the finest caviar in the world.



Sochi, Krasnodar Krai

HDI (2005)	▲ 0.802 (high) (67th)
Currency	Ruble (RUB)
Time zone - Summer (DST)	(UTC+2 to +12) (UTC+3 to +13)
Internet TLD	.ru (.su reserved), (.рф ² proposed)
Calling code	+7
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 The Russian Federation is the successor to earlier forms of continuous statehood, starting from 9 century AD when Rurik, a viking warrior, establishes "Russ" or "Rhos" state at Novgorod, traditionally taken as the beginning of Russian statehood 2 The .рф Top-level domain has been proposed for the Russian Federation as of 2008 and will only accept domains which use the Cyrillic alphabet. 	



The plains of Western Siberia,
Vasyugan River

Most of Russia consists of vast stretches of plains that are predominantly steppe to the south and heavily forested to the north, with tundra along the northern coast. Mountain ranges are found along the southern borders, such as the Caucasus (containing Mount Elbrus, Russia's and Europe's highest point at 5,642 m / 18,511 ft) and the Altai, and in the eastern parts, such as the Verkhoyansk Range or the volcanoes on Kamchatka. The Ural Mountains form a north-south range that divides Europe and Asia, rich in mineral resources. Russia possesses 10% of the world's arable land.

Russia has an extensive coastline of over 37,000 kilometers (23,000 mi) along the Arctic and Pacific Oceans, as well as the Baltic Sea, Sea of Azov, Black and Caspian seas. The Barents Sea, White Sea, Kara Sea, Laptev Sea, East Siberian Sea, Chukchi Sea, Bering Sea, Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan are linked to Russia. Major islands and archipelagos include Novaya Zemlya, the Franz Josef Land, the Severnaya Zemlya, the New Siberian Islands, Wrangel Island, the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin. The Diomed Islands (one controlled by Russia, the other by the United States) are just three kilometers (1.9 mi) apart, and Kunashir Island is about twenty kilometers (12 mi) from Hokkaidō.

Russia has thousands of rivers and inland bodies of water, providing it with one of the world's largest surface water resources. The most prominent of Russia's bodies of fresh water is Lake Baikal, the world's deepest, purest and most capacious freshwater lake. Lake Baikal alone contains over one fifth of the world's fresh surface water. Of its 100,000 rivers, The Volga is the most famous—not only because it is the longest river in Europe but also because of its major role in Russian history. Major lakes include Lake Baikal, Lake Ladoga and Lake Onega. Russia has a wide natural resource base unmatched by any other country, including major deposits of petroleum, natural gas, coal, timber and mineral resources.

Climate

The climate of the Russian Federation formed under the influence of several determining factors. The enormous size of the country and the remoteness of many areas from the sea result in the dominance of the continental climate, which is prevalent in European and Asian Russia except for the tundra and the extreme southeast. Mountains in the south obstructing the flow of warm air masses from the Indian Ocean and the plain of the west and north makes the country open to Arctic and Atlantic influences.

Throughout much of the territory there are only two distinct seasons — winter and summer; spring and autumn are usually brief periods of change between extremely low temperatures and extremely high. The coldest month is January (on the shores of the sea—February), the warmest usually is July. Great ranges of temperature are typical. In winter, temperatures get colder both from south to north and from west to east. Summers can be quite hot and humid, even in Siberia. A small part of Black Sea coast around Sochi is considered in Russia to have subtropical climate. The continental interiors are the driest areas.

History

Early periods



Saranpaul, Khanty-Mansi
Autonomous Okrug

In prehistoric times, the vast steppes of Southern Russia were home to disunited tribes of nomadic pastoralists. In classical antiquity, the Pontic Steppe was known as Scythia. Remnants of these steppe civilizations were discovered in the course of the 20th century in such places as Ipatovo, Sintashta, Arkaim, and Pazyryk. In the latter part of the eighth century BC, Greek traders brought classical civilization to the trade emporiums in Tanais and Phanagoria. Between the third and sixth centuries BC, the Bosporean Kingdom, a Hellenistic polity which succeeded the Greek colonies, was overwhelmed by successive waves of nomadic invasions, led by warlike tribes, such as the Huns and Turkic Avars. A Turkic people, the Khazars, ruled the lower Volga basin steppes between the Caspian and Black Seas until the 8th century.



An approximate map of the cultures in European Russia at the arrival of the Varangians

The ancestors of modern Russians are the Slavic tribes, whose original home is thought by some scholars to have been the wooded areas of the Pinsk Marshes. Moving into the lands vacated by the migrating Germanic tribes, the Early East Slavs gradually settled Western Russia in two waves: one moving from Kiev toward present-day Suzdal and Murom and another from Polotsk toward Novgorod and Rostov. From the 7th century onwards, the East Slavs constituted the bulk of the population in Western Russia and slowly but peacefully assimilated the native Finno-Ugric tribes, including the Merya, the Muromians, and the Meshchera.

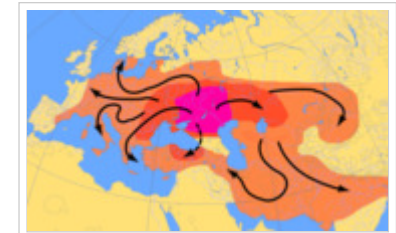
Kievan Rus

Scandinavian Norsemen, called "Vikings" in Western Europe and "Varangians" in the East, combined piracy and trade in their roamings over much of Northern Europe. In the mid-9th century, they ventured along the waterways extending from the eastern Baltic to the Black and Caspian Seas. According to the earliest Russian chronicle, a Varangian named Rurik was elected ruler (*konung* or *knyaz*) of Novgorod around the year 860; his successors moved south and extended their authority to Kiev, which had been previously dominated by the

Khazars.

In the 10th to 11th centuries this state of Kievan Rus' became the largest and most prosperous in Europe. The reigns of Vladimir the Great (980-1015) and his son Yaroslav I the Wise (1019-1054) constitute the Golden Age of Kiev, which saw the acceptance of Orthodox Christianity and the creation of the first East Slavic written legal code, the *Russkaya Pravda*.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, constant incursions by nomadic Turkic tribes, such as the Kipchaks and the Pechenegs, caused a massive migration of Slavic populations to the safer, heavily forested regions of the north, particularly to the area known as Zalesye. Like many other parts of Eurasia, these territories were overrun by the Mongols. The invaders, later known as Tatars, formed the state of the Golden Horde, which pillaged the Russian principalities and ruled the southern and central expanses of Russia for over three centuries. Mongol rule retarded the country's economic and social development. However, the Novgorod Republic together with Pskov retained some degree of autonomy during the time of the Mongol yoke and was largely spared the atrocities that affected the rest of the country. Led by Alexander Nevsky, Novgorodians repelled the Germanic crusaders who attempted to colonize the region. Kievan Rus' ultimately disintegrated as a state because of in-fighting between members of the princely family that ruled it collectively. Kiev's



Kurgan hypothesis: South Russia as the urheimat of Indo-European peoples



Kievan Rus' in the 11th century

dominance waned, to the benefit of Vladimir-Suzdal in the north-east, Novgorod in the north-west, and Galicia-Volhynia in the south-west. Conquest by the Golden Horde in the 13th century was the final blow and resulted in the destruction of Kiev in 1240. Galicia-Volhynia was eventually absorbed into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, while the Mongol-dominated Vladimir-Suzdal and the independent Novgorod Republic, two regions on the periphery of Kiev, established the basis for the modern Russian nation.

Grand Duchy of Moscow and Tsardom of Russia



A scene from medieval Russian history

The most powerful successor state to Kievan Rus' was Grand Duchy of Moscow. It would annex rivals such as Tver and Novgorod, and eventually become the basis of the modern Russian state. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow claimed succession to the legacy of the Eastern Roman Empire. While still under the domain of the Mongol-Tatars and with their connivance, the Duchy of Moscow (or "Muscovy") began to assert its influence in Western Russia in the early 14th century. Assisted by the Russian Orthodox Church and Saint Sergius of Radonezh's spiritual revival, Russia inflicted a defeat on the Mongol-Tatars in the Battle of Kulikovo (1380). Ivan III (*Ivan the Great*) eventually threw off the control of the invaders, consolidated surrounding areas under Moscow's dominion and was the first to take the title "grand duke of all the Russias".

In 1547, Ivan IV (*Ivan the Terrible*) was officially crowned the first Tsar of Russia. During his long reign, Ivan IV annexed the Tatar khanates (Kazan, Astrakhan) along the Volga River and transformed Russia into a multiethnic and multiconfessional state. Ivan IV promulgated a new code of laws (Sudebnik of 1550), established the first Russian feudal representative body (Zemsky Sobor) and introduced local self-management into the rural regions. But Ivan IV's rule was also marked by the long and unsuccessful Livonian War against the coalition of Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden for access to the Baltic coast and sea trade. The military losses, epidemics and poor harvests weakened the state, and the Crimean Tatars were able to burn down Moscow. The death of Ivan's sons, combined with famine (1601–1603), led to the civil war and foreign intervention of the Time of Troubles in the early 1600s. By the mid-17th century there were Russian settlements in Eastern Siberia, on the Chukchi Peninsula, along the Amur River, and on the Pacific coast. The Bering Strait between North America and Asia was first sighted by a Russian explorer in 1648.

Imperial Russia





Peter the Great
officially proclaimed the
existence of the Russian
Empire in 1721

Under the Romanov dynasty and Peter I (*Peter the Great*), the Russian Empire became a world power. Ruling from 1682 to 1725, Peter defeated Sweden in the Great Northern War, forcing it to cede West Karelia and Ingria (two regions lost by Russia in the Time of Troubles), Estland, and Livland, securing Russia's access to the sea and sea trade. It was in Ingria that Peter founded a new capital, Saint Petersburg. Peter's reforms brought considerable Western European cultural influences to Russia. Catherine II (*Catherine the Great*), who ruled from 1762 to 1796, continued the efforts to establish Russia as one of the Great Powers of Europe. In alliance with Prussia and Austria, Russia stood against Napoleon's France and eliminated its rival Poland-Lithuania in a series of partitions, gaining large areas of territory in the west. As a result of its victories in the Russo-Turkish War, by the early 19th century Russia had made significant territorial gains in Transcaucasia. Napoleon's invasion failed miserably as obstinate Russian resistance combined with the bitterly cold Russian winter dealt him a disastrous defeat, in which more than 95% of his invading force perished. The officers in the Napoleonic Wars brought ideas of liberalism back to Russia with them and even attempted to curtail the tsar's powers during the abortive Decembrist revolt of 1825, which was followed by several decades of political repression.

The prevalence of serfdom and the conservative policies of Nicholas I impeded the development of Russia in the mid-nineteenth century. Nicholas's successor Alexander II (1855–1881) enacted significant reforms, including the abolition of serfdom in 1861; these "Great Reforms" spurred industrialization. However, many socio-economic conflicts were aggravated during Alexander III's reign and under his son, Nicholas II. Harsh conditions in factories created mass support for the revolutionary socialist movement. In January 1905, striking workers peaceably demonstrated for reforms in Saint Petersburg but were fired upon by troops, killing and wounding hundreds. The abject failure of the Tsar's military forces in the initially-popular Russo-Japanese War, and the event known as "Bloody Sunday", ignited the Russian Revolution of 1905. Although the uprising was swiftly put down by the army and although Nicholas II retained much of his power, he was forced to concede major reforms, including granting the freedoms of speech and assembly, the legalization of political parties and the creation of an elected legislative assembly, the Duma; however, the hopes for basic improvements in the lives of industrial workers were unfulfilled.

Russia entered World War I in aid of its ally Serbia and fought a war across three fronts while isolated from its allies. Russia did not want war but felt that the only alternative was German domination of Europe. Although the army was far from defeated in 1916, the already-existing public distrust of the regime was deepened by the rising costs of war, casualties (Russia suffered the highest number of both military and civilian deaths of the Entente Powers), and tales of corruption and even treason in high places, leading to the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1917. A series of uprisings were organized by workers and peasants throughout the country, as well as by soldiers in the Russian army, who were mainly of peasant origin. Many of the uprisings were organized and led by democratically-elected councils called Soviets. The February Revolution overthrew the Russian monarchy, which was replaced by a shaky coalition of political parties that declared itself the Provisional Government. The abdication marked the end of imperial rule in Russia, and Nicholas and his family were imprisoned and later executed during the Civil War. While initially receiving the support of the Soviets, the Provisional Government proved unable to resolve many problems which had led to the February Revolution. The second revolution, the October Revolution, led by Vladimir Lenin, overthrew the Provisional Government and created the world's first Communist state.



Napoleon's retreat from
Moscow



The Russian Empire in 1866
and its spheres of influence

Soviet Russia



Vladimir Lenin

Following the October Revolution, a civil war broke out between the new regime and the Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, and the White movement. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk concluded hostilities with the Central Powers in World War I. Russia lost its Ukrainian, Polish and Baltic territories, and Finland by signing the treaty. The Allied powers launched a military intervention in support of anti-Communist forces and both the Bolsheviks and White movement carried out campaigns of deportations and executions against each other, known respectively as the Red Terror and White Terror. By the end of the Civil War, some 20 million had died and the Russian economy and infrastructure were completely devastated. Following victory in the Civil War, the Russian SFSR together with three other Soviet republics formed the Soviet Union on December 30, 1922. The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic dominated the Soviet Union for its entire 74-year history; the USSR was often referred to as "Russia" and its people as "Russians." The largest of the republics, Russia contributed over half the population of the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks introduced free universal health care, education and social-security benefits, as well as the right to work and housing. Women's rights were greatly increased through new laws aimed to wipe away centuries-old inequalities. Notably, Russia became the first country in the world with full freedom of divorce and legalized abortion. After Lenin's death in 1924 Joseph Stalin consolidated power and became dictator. Stalin launched a command economy, rapid industrialization of the largely rural country and collectivization of its agriculture and the Soviet Union was transformed from an agrarian economy to a major industrial powerhouse

in a short span of time.



First human in space,
Yuri Gagarin

On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union with the largest and most powerful invasion force in human history, opening the largest theatre of the Second World War. Although the German army had considerable success early on, they suffered defeats after reaching the outskirts of Moscow and were dealt their first major defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad in the winter of 1942–1943. Soviet forces drove through Eastern Europe in 1944–45 and captured Berlin in May, 1945. In the conflict, Soviet military and civilian death toll were 10.6 million and 15.9 million respectively, accounting for half of all World War II casualties. The Soviet economy and infrastructure suffered massive devastation but the Soviet Union emerged as an acknowledged superpower. The Red Army occupied Eastern Europe after the war, including the eastern half of Germany; Stalin installed communist governments in these satellite states. Becoming the world's second nuclear weapons power, the USSR established the Warsaw Pact alliance and entered into a struggle for global dominance with the United States, which became known as the Cold War.



Stalingrad, 1942. The vast majority of the fighting in World War II took place on the Eastern Front. Nazi Germany suffered 80% to 93% of all casualties there

Under Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Union launched the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1 and the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human being to orbit the Earth aboard the first manned spacecraft, Vostok 1. Tensions with the United States heightened when the two rivals clashed over the deployment of the U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey and Soviet missiles in Cuba. Following the ousting of Khrushchev, another period of rule by collective leadership ensued until Leonid Brezhnev established himself in the early 1970s as the pre-eminent figure in Soviet politics. Brezhnev's rule oversaw economic stagnation and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan,

which dragged on without success and with continuing casualties inflicted by insurgents. Soviet citizens became increasingly discontented with the war, ultimately leading to the withdrawal of Soviet forces by 1989.

From 1985 onwards, Mikhail Gorbachev introduced the policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) in an attempt to modernize the country. The USSR economy was the second largest in the world prior to the Soviet collapse. During its last years, the economy was afflicted by shortages of goods in grocery stores, huge budget deficits and explosive growth in money supply leading to inflation. In August 1991, an unsuccessful military coup against Gorbachev aimed at preserving the Soviet Union instead led to its collapse. In Russia, Boris Yeltsin came to power and declared the end of Communist rule. The USSR splintered into fifteen independent republics and was officially dissolved in December 1991. Boris Yeltsin was elected the President of Russia in June 1991, in the first direct presidential election in Russian history.

Russian Federation

During and after the disintegration of the USSR when wide ranging reforms including privatisation and market and trade liberalization were being undertaken, the Russian economy went through a major crisis. This period was characterized by deep contraction of output, with GDP declining by roughly 50 percent between 1990 and the end of 1995 and industrial output declining by over 50 percent. In October 1991, Yeltsin announced that Russia would proceed with radical, market-oriented reform along the lines of "shock therapy", as recommended by the United States and International Monetary Fund. Price controls were abolished, privatization was started. Millions were plunged into poverty. According to the World Bank, whereas 1.5% of the population was living in poverty in the late Soviet era, by mid-1993 between 39% and 49% of the population was living in poverty. Delays in wage payment became a chronic problem with millions being paid months, even years late. Russia took up the responsibility for settling the USSR's external debts, even though its population made up just half of the population of the USSR at the time of its dissolution. The privatization process largely shifted control of enterprises from state agencies to groups of individuals with inside connections in the Government and the mafia. Violent criminal groups often took over state enterprises, clearing the way through assassinations or extortion. Corruption of government officials became an everyday rule of life. Many of the newly rich mobsters and businesspeople took billions in cash and assets outside of the country in an enormous capital flight. The long and wrenching depression was coupled with social decay. Social services collapsed and the birth rate plummeted while the death rate skyrocketed. The early and mid-1990s was marked by extreme lawlessness. Criminal gangs and organized crime flourished and murders and other violent crime spiraled out of control.



1140th Anniversary of Russian statehood (2002)



Moscow-City under construction. Moscow is the world's most expensive city to live in.

In 1993 a constitutional crisis resulted in the worst civil strife in Moscow since the October Revolution. President Boris Yeltsin illegally dissolved the country's legislature which opposed his moves to consolidate power and push forward with unpopular neo-liberal reforms; in response, legislators barricaded themselves inside the White House, impeached Yeltsin and elected a new President and major protests against Yeltsin's government resulted in hundreds killed. With military support, Yeltsin sent the army to besiege the parliament building and disperse its defenders and used tanks and artillery to eject the legislators.

The 1990s were plagued by armed ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus. Such conflicts took a form of separatist Islamist insurrections against federal power (most notably in Chechnya), or of ethnic/clan conflicts between local groups (e.g., in North Ossetia-Alania between Ossetians and Ingushs, or between different clans in Chechnya). Since the Chechen separatists declared independence in the early 1990s, an intermittent guerrilla war (First Chechen War, Second Chechen War) has been fought between disparate Chechen rebel groups and the Russian military. Terrorist attacks against civilians carried out by Chechen separatists, most notably the Moscow theatre hostage crisis and Beslan school siege, caused hundreds of deaths and drew worldwide attention. High budget deficits and the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis caused the financial crisis of 1998 and

resulted in further GDP decline. On December 31, 1999 Boris Yeltsin resigned from the presidency, handing the post to the recently appointed prime minister, Vladimir Putin, who then won the 2000 election. Putin won popularity for suppressing the Chechen insurgency, although sporadic violence still occurs throughout the North Caucasus. High oil prices and initially weak currency followed by increasing domestic demand, consumption and investments has helped the economy grow for nine straight years, alleviating the standard of living and increasing Russia's clout on the world stage. While many reforms made under Putin's rule have been generally criticized by Western nations as un-democratic, Putin's leadership over the return of order, stability and progress has won him widespread popularity in Russia, as well as recognition abroad.

Government and politics

According to the Constitution, which was adopted by national referendum on December 12, 1993 following the 1993 Russian constitutional crisis, Russia is a federation and a semi-presidential republic, wherein the President is the head of state and the Prime Minister is the head of government. The Russian Federation is fundamentally structured as a representative democracy. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of the Federal Assembly. The government is regulated by a system of checks and balances defined by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which serves as the country's supreme legal document and as a social contract for the people of the Russian Federation.



The State Duma building

The federal government is composed of three branches:

- Legislative: The bicameral Federal Assembly, made up of the State Duma and the Federation Council makes federal law, declares war, approves treaties, has the power of the purse, and has power of impeachment, by which it can remove sitting members of the government.
- Executive: The president is the commander-in-chief of the military, can veto legislative bills before they become law, and appoints the Cabinet and other

officers, who administer and enforce federal laws and policies.

- **Judiciary:** The Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Supreme Court of Arbitration and lower federal courts, whose judges are appointed by the Federation Council on the recommendation of the president, interpret laws and can overturn laws they deem unconstitutional.

According to the Constitution of Russia, constitutional justice in the court is based on the equality of all citizens, judges are independent and subject only to the law, trials are to be open and the accused is guaranteed a defense. Since 1996, Russia has instituted a moratorium on the death penalty in Russia, although capital punishment has not been abolished by law.

The president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term (eligible for a second term but constitutionally barred for a third consecutive term); election last held 2 March 2008. Ministries of the government are composed of the premier and his deputies, ministers, and selected other individuals; all are appointed by the president. The national legislature is the Federal Assembly, which consists of two chambers; the 450-member State Duma and the 176-member Federation Council. Leading political parties in Russia include United Russia, the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and Fair Russia.

Subdivisions

Federal subjects

The Russian Federation comprises 83 federal subjects. These subjects have equal representation—two delegates each—in the Federation Council. However, they differ in the degree of autonomy they enjoy.

- 46 oblasts (provinces): most common type of federal subjects, with federally appointed governor and locally elected legislature.
- 21 republics: nominally autonomous; each has its own constitution, president, and parliament. Republics are allowed to establish their own official language alongside Russian but are represented by the federal government in international affairs. Republics are meant to be home to specific ethnic minorities.
- Nine krais (territories): essentially the same as oblasts. The "territory" designation is historic, originally given to frontier regions and later also to administrative divisions that comprised autonomous okrugs or autonomous oblasts.
- Four autonomous okrugs (autonomous districts): originally autonomous entities within oblasts and krais created for ethnic minorities, their status was elevated to that of federal subjects in the 1990s. With the exception of Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, all autonomous okrugs are still administratively subordinated to a krai or an oblast of which they are a part.
- One autonomous oblast (the Jewish Autonomous Oblast): originally autonomous oblasts were administrative units subordinated to krais. In 1990, all of them except the Jewish AO were elevated in status to that of a republic.
- Two federal cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg): major cities that function as separate regions.

Federal districts and economic regions

Federal subjects are grouped into seven federal districts, each administered by an envoy appointed by the President of Russia. Unlike the federal subjects, the federal districts are not a subnational level of government, but are a level of administration of the federal government. Federal districts' envoys serve as liaisons

between the federal subjects and the federal government and are primarily responsible for overseeing the compliance of the federal subjects with the federal laws.



Foreign relations and military

The Russian Federation is recognized in international law as continuing the legal personality of the former Soviet Union. Russia continues to implement the international commitments of the USSR, and has assumed the USSR's permanent seat on the UN Security Council, membership in other international organizations, the rights and obligations under international treaties and property and debts. Russia has a multifaceted foreign policy. It maintains diplomatic relations with 178 countries and has 140 embassies. Russia's foreign policy is determined by the President and implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Russia plays a major role in maintaining international peace and security, and plays a major role in resolving international conflicts by participating in the Quartet on the Middle East, the Six-party talks with North Korea, promoting the resolution of the Kosovo conflict and resolving nuclear proliferation issues. Russia is a member of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations, the Council of Europe, OSCE and APEC. Russia usually takes a leading role in regional organizations such as the CIS, EurAsEC, CSTO, and the SCO. Former President Vladimir Putin had

advocated a strategic partnership with close integration in various dimensions including establishment of four common spaces between Russia and the EU. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has developed a friendlier, albeit volatile relationship with NATO. The NATO-Russia Council was established in 2002 to allow the 26 Allies and Russia to work together as equal partners to pursue opportunities for joint collaboration.



Russian paratroopers at an exercise in Kazakhstan

Russia assumed control of Soviet assets abroad and most of the Soviet Union's production facilities and defense industries are located in the country. The Russian military is divided into the Ground Forces, Navy, and Air Force. There are also three independent arms of service: Strategic Rocket Forces, Military Space Forces, and the Airborne Troops. In 2006, the military had 1.037 million personnel on active duty. Russia has the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world. It has the second largest fleet of ballistic missile submarines and is the only country apart from the U.S. with a modern strategic bomber force. The country has a large and fully indigenous arms industry, producing all of its own military equipment. Russia is the world's top supplier of weapons, a spot it has held since 2001, accounting for around 30% of worldwide weapons sales and exporting weapons to about 80 countries. Following the Soviet practice, it is mandatory for all male citizens aged 18–27 to be drafted for two years' Armed Forces service, though various problems associated with this is why the armed forces are from 2008 reducing the conscription term from 18 months to 12, and plan to increase contract servicemen to compose 70% of the armed forces by 2010. Defense expenditure has quadrupled over the past six years. Official government military spending for 2008

is \$40 billion, though various sources, including US intelligence, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, have estimated Russia's military expenditures to be considerably higher. Currently, the military is undergoing a major equipment upgrade with about \$200 billion on procurement of military equipment between 2006 and 2015.

Economy

Since the turn of the century, rising oil prices, increased foreign investment, higher domestic consumption and greater political stability have bolstered economic growth in Russia. The country ended 2007 with its ninth straight year of growth, averaging 7% annually since the financial crisis of 1998. In 2007, Russia's GDP was \$2.076 trillion (est. PPP), the 7th largest in the world, with GDP growing 8.1% from the previous year. Growth was primarily driven by non-traded services and goods for the domestic market, as opposed to oil or mineral extraction and exports. The average salary in Russia was \$640 per month in early 2008, up from \$80 in 2000. Approximately 14% of Russians lived below the national poverty line in 2007, significantly down from 40% in 1998 at the worst of the post-Soviet collapse. Unemployment in Russia was at 6% in 2007, down from about 12.4% in 1999.



Regional product per capita as of 2006 (darker is higher)



A Rosneft petrol station. Russia is the world's leading natural gas exporter and the second leading oil exporter.

Russia has the world's largest natural gas reserves, the second largest coal reserves and the eighth largest oil reserves. It is the world's leading natural gas exporter and the second leading oil exporter. Oil, natural gas, metals, and timber account for more than 80% of Russian exports abroad. Since 2003, however, exports of natural resources started decreasing in economic importance as the internal market strengthened considerably. Despite higher energy prices, oil and gas only contribute to 5.7% of Russia's GDP and the government predicts this will drop to 3.7% by 2011. Russia is also considered well ahead of most other resource-rich countries in its economic development, with a long tradition of education, science, and industry. The country has more higher education graduates than any other country in Europe.



Soyuz TMA-2 moves to launch pad, about to carry the first resident crew to the International Space Station

A simpler, more streamlined tax code adopted in 2001 reduced the tax burden on people, and dramatically increased state revenue. Russia has a flat personal income tax rate of 13 percent. This ranks it as the country with the second most attractive personal tax system for single managers in the world after the United Arab Emirates, according to a 2007 survey by investment services firm Mercer Human Resource Consulting. The federal budget has run surpluses since 2001 and ended 2007 with a surplus of 6% of GDP. Over the past several years, Russia has used oil revenues from its Stabilization Fund of the Russian Federation to prepay all Soviet-era sovereign debt to Paris Club creditors and the IMF. Oil export earnings have allowed Russia to increase its foreign reserves from \$12 billion in 1999 to some \$470 billion at the end of 2007, the third largest reserves in the world. The country has also been able to substantially reduce its formerly massive foreign debt.

The economic development of the country though has been uneven geographically with the Moscow region contributing a disproportionately high amount of the country's GDP. Much of Russia, especially indigenous and rural communities in Siberia, lags significantly behind. Nevertheless, the middle class has grown from just 8 million persons in 2000 to 55 million persons in 2006. Russia is home to the largest number of billionaires in the world after the United States, gaining 50 billionaires in 2007 for a total of 110.

Over the last five years, fixed capital investments have averaged real gains greater than 10% per year and personal incomes have achieved real gains more than 12% per year. During this time, poverty has declined steadily and the middle class has continued to expand. Russia has also improved its international financial position since the 1998 financial crisis. A principal factor in Russia's growth has been the combination of strong growth in productivity, real wages, and consumption. Despite the country's strong economic performance since 1999, however, the World Bank lists several challenges facing the Russian economy including diversifying the economy, encouraging the growth of small and medium enterprises, building human capital and improving corporate governance. Inflation grew to about 12% by the end of 2007, up from 9% in 2006. The upward trend continued in the first quarter of 2008, driven largely by rising food costs.

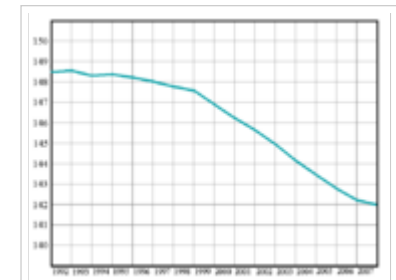
Demographics

Ethnic composition (2002)

According to preliminary estimates, the resident population of the Russian Federation on 1 January 2008 was 142 million people. In 2007, the population shrank by 237,800 people, or by 0.17% (in 2006 - by 532,600 people, or by 0.37%). Migration grew by 50.2% in 2007 to reach 274,000. The vast majority of migrants came from CIS states and were Russians or Russian-speaking. The Russian Federation is a diverse, multi-ethnic society, home to as many as 160 different ethnic groups and indigenous peoples. Though Russia's population is comparatively large, its population density is low because of the country's enormous size. Population is densest in European Russia, near the Ural Mountains, and in the southwest Siberia.

73% of the population lives in urban areas. As of the 2002 Census, the two largest cities in Russia are Moscow (10,126,424 inhabitants) and Saint Petersburg (4,661,219). Eleven other cities have between one and two million inhabitants: Chelyabinsk, Kazan, Novosibirsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Omsk, Perm, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, Ufa, Volgograd, and Yekaterinburg. In 2006, 186,380 migrants arrived to the Russian Federation of which 95% came from CIS countries. There are also an estimated 10 million illegal immigrants from the ex-Soviet states in Russia.

Russia's population peaked in 1991 at 148,689,000. The number of deaths during 2007 was 477,700 greater than the number of births. This is down from 687,100 in 2006. According to data published by the Russian Federal State Statistics Service, the mortality rate in Russia declined 4% in 2007, as compared to 2006, reaching some 2 million deaths, while the birth rate grew 8.3% year-on-year to an estimated 1.6 million live births. The primary causes of Russia's population decrease are a high death rate and low birth rate. While Russia's birth-rate is comparable to that of other European countries (11.3 births per 1000 people in 2007 compared to the European Union average of 10.00 per 1000) its population declines at much greater rate due to a substantially higher death rate (In 2007, Russia's death rate was 14.7 per 1000 people compared to the European Union average of 10.00 per 1000). However, the Russian health ministry predicts that by 2011, the death rate will equal the birth rate due to increases in fertility and decline in mortality.



Population 1992–2008.
Number of inhabitants in millions

Rank	Core City	Federal Subject	Pop.	Rank	Core City	Federal Subject	Pop.
1	Moscow	Moscow	10,126,424	11	Ufa	Bashkortostan	1,042,437
2	Saint Petersburg	Saint Petersburg	4,661,219	12	Volgograd	Volgograd	1,011,417
3	Novosibirsk	Novosibirsk	1,425,508	13	Perm	Perm	1,001,653
4	Nizhny Novgorod	Nizhny Novgorod	1,311,252	14	Krasnoyarsk	Krasnoyarsk	909,341
5	Yekaterinburg	Sverdlovsk	1,293,537	15	Saratov	Saratov	873,055
6	Samara	Samara	1,157,880	16	Voronezh	Voronezh	848,752
7	Omsk	Omsk	1,134,016	17	Tolyatti	Samara	702,879
8	Kazan	Tatarstan	1,105,289	18	Krasnodar	Krasnodar	646,175
9	Chelyabinsk	Chelyabinsk	1,077,174	19	Ulyanovsk	Ulyanovsk	635,947
10	Rostov-on-Don	Rostov	1,068,267	20	Izhevsk	Udmurtia	632,140

2002 Census



Moscow



Saint Petersburg

Education

<http://cd3wd.com> wikipedia-for-schools <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 652 of 867



Moscow State University

Russia has a free education system guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution, and has a literacy rate of 99.4%. The country came first in the world in the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study conducted by Boston College. Entry to higher education is highly competitive. As a result of great emphasis on science and technology in education, Russian medical, mathematical, scientific, and space and aviation research is still generally of a high order.

The Russian Constitution grants a universal right to higher education free of charge through competitive entry. The Government allocates funding to pay the tuition fees within an established quota, or number of students for each state institution. This is considered crucial because it provides access to higher education to all skilled students, as opposed to only those who can afford it. In addition, students are paid a small stipend and provided with free housing. However, the institutions have to be funded entirely from the federal and regional budgets; institutions have found themselves unable to provide adequate teachers' salaries, students' stipends, and to maintain their facilities. To address the issue, many state institutions started to open commercial positions, which have been growing steadily since. Many private higher education institutions have emerged to address the need for a skilled work-force for high-tech and emerging industries and economic sectors.

Health

Russia's constitution guarantees free, universal health care for all citizens. While Russia has more physicians, hospitals, and health care workers than almost any other country in the world, since the collapse of the Soviet Union the health of the Russian population has declined considerably as a result of social, economic, and lifestyle changes. As of 2007, the average life expectancy in Russia is 61.5 years for males and 73.9 years for females. The average Russian life expectancy of 67.7 years at birth is 10.8 years shorter than the overall figure in the European Union. The biggest factor contributing to this relatively low life expectancy for males is a high mortality rate among working-age males from preventable causes (e.g., alcohol poisoning, stress, smoking, traffic accidents, violent crimes). Mortality among Russian men rose by 60% since 1991, four to five times higher than in Europe. As a result of the large difference in life expectancy between men and women and because of the lasting effect of World War II, where Russia lost more men than any other nation in the world, the gender imbalance remains to this day and there are 0.859 males to every female.



Rostov seen from Lake Nero

Heart diseases account for 56.7% of total deaths, with about 30% involving people still of working age. About 16 million Russians suffer from cardiovascular diseases, placing Russia second in the world, after Ukraine, in this respect. Death rates from homicide, suicide and cancer are also especially high. According to a 2007 survey by Romir Monitoring, 52% of men and 15% of women smoke. More than 260,000 lives are lost each year as a result of tobacco use. HIV/AIDS, virtually non-existent in the Soviet era, rapidly spread following the collapse, mainly through the explosive growth of intravenous drug use. According to official statistics, there are currently more than 364,000 people in Russia registered with HIV, but independent experts place the number significantly higher. In increasing efforts to combat the disease, the government increased spending on HIV control measures 20-fold in 2006, and the 2007 budget doubled that of 2006. Since the Soviet collapse, there has also been a dramatic rise in both cases of and deaths from tuberculosis, with the disease being particularly widespread amongst prison inmates.

In an effort to stem Russia's demographic crisis, the government is implementing a number of programs designed to increase the birth rate and attract more migrants to alleviate the problem. The government has doubled monthly child support payments and offered a one-time payment of 250,000 Rubles (around US\$10,000) to women who had a second child since 2007. In 2007, Russia saw the highest birth rate since the collapse of the USSR. The First Deputy PM also said about 20 billion rubles (about US\$1 billion) will be invested in new prenatal centres in Russia in 2008–2009. Immigration is increasingly seen as necessary to sustain the country's population.

Language

Russia's 160 ethnic groups speak some 100 languages. According to the 2002 census, 142.6 million people speak Russian, followed by Tatar with 5.3 million and German with 2.9 million speakers. Russian is the only official state language, but the Constitution gives the individual republics the right to make their native language co-official next to Russian. Despite its wide dispersal, the Russian language is homogeneous throughout Russia. Russian is the most geographically widespread language of Eurasia and the most widely spoken Slavic language. Russian belongs to the Indo-European language family and is one of three (or, according to some authorities, four) living members of the East Slavic languages; the others being Belarusian and Ukrainian (and possibly Rusyn). Written examples of Old East Slavic (*Old Russian*) are attested from the 10th century onwards.

Over a quarter of the world's scientific literature is published in Russian. Russian is also applied as a means of coding and storage of universal knowledge—60–70% of all world information is published in English and Russian languages. The language is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.



Religion



Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, demolished during the Soviet period, was reconstructed from 1990–2000

Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism are Russia's traditional religions, deemed part of Russia's "historical heritage" in a law passed in 1997. Estimates of believers widely fluctuate among sources, and some reports put the number of non-believers in Russia as high as 16–48% of the population. Russian Orthodoxy is the dominant religion in Russia. 95% of the registered Orthodox parishes belong to the Russian Orthodox Church while there are a number of smaller Orthodox Churches. However, the vast majority of Orthodox believers do not attend church on a regular basis. Nonetheless, the church is widely respected by both believers and nonbelievers, who see it as a symbol of Russian heritage and culture. Smaller Christian denominations such as Roman Catholics, Armenian Gregorian and various Protestants exist.

The ancestors of many of today's Russians adopted Orthodox Christianity in the 10th century. The 2007 International Religious Freedom Report published by the US Department of State said that approximately 100 million citizens consider themselves Russian Orthodox Christians. According to a poll by the Russian Public Opinion Research Centre, 63% of respondents considered themselves Russian Orthodox, 6% of respondents considered themselves Muslim and less than 1% considered themselves either Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant or Jewish. Another 12% said they believe in God, but did not

practice any religion, and 16% said they are non-believers.

It is estimated that Russia is home to some 15–20 million Muslims. However, surveys say that there are only 7 to 9 million people who adhere to the Islamic faith in Russia. Russia also has an estimated 3 million to 4 million Muslim migrants from the ex-Soviet states. Most Muslims live in the Volga-Ural region, as well as in the North Caucasus, Moscow, Saint Petersburg and western Siberia. Buddhism is traditional for three regions of the Russian Federation: Buryatia, Tuva and Kalmykia. Some residents of the Siberian and Far Eastern regions, Yakutia, Chukotka, etc., practice pantheistic and pagan rites, along with the major religions. Induction into religion takes place primarily along ethnic lines. Slavs are overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian. Turkic speakers are predominantly Muslim, although several Turkic groups in Russia are not.

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San Marino

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

The **Most Serene Republic of San Marino** (Italian: *Serenissima Repubblica di San Marino*) is a country in the Apennine Mountains. It is a landlocked enclave, completely surrounded by Italy. One of the European microstates, San Marino has the smallest population of all the members of the Council of Europe and the 3rd highest GDP per capita in the world.

San Marino claims to be the oldest constitutional republic in the world and that it was founded on 3 September 301 by Marinus of Rab, a Christian stonemason fleeing the religious persecution of Roman Emperor Diocletian. San Marino's constitution, dating back to 1600, is the world's oldest written constitution still in effect.

History



Montale tower on Monte Titano.

According to tradition, Marinus left the island of Rab in Croatia with his lifelong friend Leo and went to the town of Rimini as a mason. After persecution because of his Christian sermons, he escaped to the nearby Monte Titano, where he built a small church and thus founded what is now the city and the state of San Marino. The official date of foundation of the Republic is 3 September 301.

By the mid-5th century, a community was formed; because of its relatively inaccessible location and its poverty, it has succeeded, with a few brief interruptions, in maintaining its independence. In 1631 its independence was recognised by the papacy.

Serenissima Repubblica di San Marino Most Serene Republic of San Marino



Flag



Coat of arms

Motto: *Libertas* (Latin)
"Liberty"

Anthem: " Inno Nazionale della Repubblica"



Location of **San Marino** (circled in inset)
on the European continent (white)

Capital

City of San Marino



Bust of Giuseppe Garibaldi in San Marino, the first monument in the world dedicated to the "Hero of the Two Worlds". The work of Stefano Galletti, it was erected in 1882.

During the early phase of the Italian unification process of the 19th century, San Marino served as a haven of refuge for numerous persons who were persecuted because of their support for the unification. In memory of this support, Giuseppe Garibaldi accepted the wish of San Marino not to be incorporated into the new Italian state. Napoleon III refused to take the country. He commented, "Why? It's a model republic!"

The government of San Marino made United States President Abraham Lincoln an honorary citizen. He wrote in reply, saying that the republic proved that "government founded on republican principles is capable of being so administered as to be secure and enduring."

In World War I, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary on 23 May 1915. San Marino declared war on Austria-Hungary on 3 June 1915.

In World War II, San Marino did not join Italy in declaring war on the United Kingdom in 1940. San Marino immediately declared its neutrality. Later, Axis forces retreated through the country and were pursued by the American and British forces. The Allied troops left the country a few weeks later.

The head of state is a committee (council) of two captains-regent. San Marino also holds the record for the world's first democratically-elected communist government, which held office between 1945 and 1957.

San Marino was the world's smallest republic from 301 to 1968, until Nauru gained independence.

San Marino became a member of the Council of Europe in 1988 and of the United Nations in 1992. It is not a member of the European Union.

Geography

Largest city	Dogana
Official languages	Italian ¹
Demonym	Sammarinese; San Marinense
Government	Parliamentary republic
- Captains Regent	Federico Pedini Amati (PSD) Rosa Zafferani (PDSC)
- Secretary of State	Fiorenzo Stolfi (PSD)
Independence	from the Roman Empire
- Date	September 3, 301 (traditional)
Area	
- Total	61 km ² (223rd) 23.5 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
Population	
- July 2007 estimate	29,615 (212th)
- Density	481/km ² (20th) 1,225/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2001 estimate
- Total	\$904 million (195th)
- Per capita	\$34,600 (12th)
HDI (2003)	n/a (unranked) (n/a)
Currency	Euro (€) (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.sm
Calling code	+378 (0549 from Italy)



Much of the Republic can be seen from the top of Mount Titano

San Marino is an enclave in Italy, on the border between the *regioni* of Emilia Romagna and Marche. Its topography is dominated by the Apennines mountain range, and it has a rugged terrain. The highest point in the country, Monte Titano, is situated at 749 metres (2,457 ft) above sea level. There are no bodies of water of any significant size.

Patron saint	St. Agatha
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¹ "SAN MARINO". UNECE.

San Marino is the third-smallest country in Europe, with only Vatican City and Monaco smaller.

Climate

The climate is Mediterranean, with warm summers and mild winters. The National Centre of Meteorology and Climatology of San Marino provides local forecasts. Proposed weather services for business and the public include Web cams and Online meteorological and climate data of San Marino. Meteo San Marino - The National Centre of Meteorology And Climatology of San Marino

Municipalities

San Marino is divided into the following nine municipalities, known locally as *Castelli* -castles- (sing. *castello*, each on a different hill, as depicted on the republic's coat of arms), that are also towns to the world.

- **The City of San Marino** (*Città di San Marino*) is the capital. There are also eight minor municipalities:
- **Acquaviva**
- **Borgo Maggiore**
- **Chiesanuova**
- **Domagnano**
- **Faetano**
- **Fiorentino**
- **Montegiardino**
- **Serravalle**



Administrative division.

The largest town of the Republic is Dogana, which is not an autonomous Castello but rather belongs to the Castello of Serravalle.

Each castello, like Italian *comuni*, includes a main town that is the seat of the castello, called *capoluogo*, and some even smaller localities known as *frazioni*.

Politics

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The Politics of San Marino takes place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic republic, whereby the Captains Regent are the heads of state, and of a pluriform multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the Grand and General Council. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature.

San Marino was originally led by the Arengo, initially formed with the heads of each family. In the 13th century, power was given to the Great and General Council. In 1243, the first two Captains Regent were nominated by the Council. This method of nomination is still in use today, as of 2008.

The legislature of the republic is the Grand and General Council (*Consiglio grande e generale*). The Council is a unicameral legislature which has 60 members with elections occurring every 5 years under a proportional representation system in all nine administrative districts. These districts (townships) correspond to the old parishes of the republic. Citizens eighteen years or older are eligible to vote. Besides general legislation, the Grand and General Council approves the budget and elects the Captains Regent, the State Congress (composed of 10 Secretaries with executive power), the Council of Twelve (which forms the judicial branch during the period of legislature of the Council), the Advising Commissions, and the Government Unions. The Council also has the power to ratify treaties with other countries. The Council is divided into five different Advising Commissions consisting of 15 councilors which examine, propose, and discuss the implementation of new laws that are on their way to being presented on the floor of the Council.



Map of San Marino



The Honorable Fiorenzo Stolfi, Secretary for Foreign and Political Affairs and for Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino and President of the Council of Europe, meeting with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Washington, DC.

Every 6 months, the Council elects two Captains Regent to be the heads of state. The Regents are chosen from opposing parties so there is a balance of power. They serve a 6-month term. The investiture of the Captains Regent takes place on April 1 and October 1 in every year. Once this term is over, citizens have 3 days in which to file complaints about the Captains' activities. If they warrant it, judicial proceedings against the ex-head(s) of state can be initiated.

The practice of multiple heads of state, as well as the frequent re-election of the heads of state, are derived directly from the customs of the Roman Republic. The Council is equivalent to the Roman Senate; the Captains Regent, to the consuls of ancient Rome.

San Marino is a multi-party democratic republic. The two main parties are the Democratic Christian Party of San Marino (PDCS) and the Party of Socialists and Democrats (PSD, a merger of the Socialist Party of San Marino and the Party of Democrats) in addition to several other smaller parties. Due to the small size of San Marino and its low population, it is difficult for any party to gain a pure majority and most of the time the government is run by a coalition. As a result of the June 2001 election, the PDCS and PSS control a majority of seats in the Council.

Economy

Although San Marino is not a European Union member, it is allowed to use the euro as its currency by arrangement with the council of the European Union; it is also granted the right to use its own designs on the national side of the euro coins. Before the euro, the Sammarinese lira was pegged and exchangeable with the Italian lira. The small number of Sammarinese euro coins, as was the case with the lira before it, are primarily of interest to coin collectors.

The tourist sector contributes over 50% of San Marino's GDP, with more than 3.3 million tourists visiting in 1997. Other key industries are banking, electronics, and ceramics. The main agricultural products are wine and cheese.

San Marino's postage stamps, which are only valid for mail posted within the country, are mostly sold to philatelists and also form a source of income. San Marino is a member of the Small European Postal Administration Cooperation.

The per capita level of output and standard of living are comparable to those of Italy, which supplies much of its food.

Taxation

The corporate profits tax rate in San Marino is 19 percent. Capital gains are subject to a five percent tax; interest is subject to a 13 percent withholding tax.

In 1972, a valued added taxation (VAT) system was introduced in Italy, and was applied in San Marino, in accordance with the 1939 friendship treaty. In addition, a tax on imported goods, to be levied by San Marino, was established. Such taxes, however, were not, and are not, applied to national products. Until 1996, goods manufactured and sold in San Marino were not subject to indirect taxation.

Under the European Union customs agreement, San Marino continues to levy taxes, the equivalent of an import duty, on imported goods. Also, a general VAT was introduced, in replacement of the Italian VAT.

Demographics

The state has a population of approximately 29,000, including 1,000 foreigners, most of whom are Italians. About 5,000 Sammarinese live in foreign countries, predominantly in Italy.

The language spoken is Italian; Emiliano-Romagnolo is widely spoken, too. Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion.

Military



Borgo Maggiore



Photo of Guaita

San Marino has one of the smallest military forces in the world. National defence is, by arrangement, the responsibility of Italy's armed forces. Different branches have varied functions including: performing ceremonial duties; patrolling borders; mounting guard at government buildings; and assisting police in major criminal cases.

Crossbow Corps

Although once at the heart of San Marino's army, the Crossbow Corps is now an entirely ceremonial force of about 80 volunteer soldiers. The Crossbow Corps since 1295 has provided demonstrations of crossbow shooting at festivals. Its uniform is medieval in design, and although it is a statutory military unit, it has no actual military function today.

Guard of the Rock



Three members of the Guard of the Rock

The Guard of the Rock is a front-line military unit in the San Marino armed forces, a state border patrol, with responsibility for patrolling borders and defending them. In their role as Fortress Guards they are also responsible for the guarding of the Palazzo Pubblico in San Marino City, which is the seat of national Government. In this role they are the forces most visible to tourists, and known for their colourful ceremony of Changing the Guard. Under the 1987 statute the Guard of the Rock are all enrolled as 'Criminal Police Officers' (in addition to their military role) and act to assist the police in investigating major crime. The uniform of the Guard of the Rock is distinctively red and green in colour.

Guard of the Council Great and General



The Guard of the Rock in dress uniform during the investiture of the new Captains Regent in the Piazza della Libertà.

The Guard of the Council Great and General commonly known as The Guard of the Council or locally as the 'Guard of Nobles', formed in 1740, are a volunteer unit with ceremonial duties. Due to its striking blue white and gold uniform, it is perhaps the best-known part of the Sammarinese military, and appears on countless postcard views of the republic. The functions of the Guard of the Council are to protect the Captains Regent, and to defend the Great and General Council during its formal sessions. They also provide a ceremonial bodyguard to government officials on festivals of both state and church.

The Army Militia

In former times all families with two or more adult male members were required to enroll half of them in the Army Militia. This unit remains the basic fighting force of the armed forces of San Marino, but is largely ceremonial. It is a matter of civic pride for many San-Marinese to belong to the force, and all citizens with at least six years residence in the republic are entitled to enroll.

The uniform is dark blue, with a kepi bearing a blue and white plume. The ceremonial form of the uniform includes a white cross-strap, and white and blue sash, white epaulets, and white decorated cuffs.

The Military Ensemble

Formally this is part of the Army Militia, and is the ceremonial military band of San Marino. It consists of around 50 musicians. The uniform is largely similar to that of the Army Militia itself. The music of the Military Ensemble accompanies most state occasions in the republic.

The Gendarmerie

Established in 1842, the Gendarmerie of San Marino is a militarised police service. Its members are full-time and have responsibility for the protection of citizens and their property, and for the preservation of law and order.

The entire military corps of San Marino depends upon the co-operation of full-time forces and their retained (volunteer) colleagues, known as the *Corpi Militari Volontari*, or Voluntary Military Force.

Transport



A member of the Guard of the Council



Aerial tramway to Monte Titano.

There are 220 km of highways in the country, the main road being the San Marino Superhighway. Roads are well used by private car drivers. Sammarinese authorities license private vehicles with distinctive licence plates which are white with blue figures with the coat of arms, usually a letter followed by up to four numbers. Many vehicles also carry the international vehicle identification code (in black on a white oval sticker), which is "RSM".

There are no airports in San Marino, but there is an international heliport located in Borgo Maggiore. Most tourists who arrive by air land at Federico Fellini International Airport close to the city of Rimini and then make the transfer by bus.

Two rivers flow through San Marino, but there is no major water transport, and no major port or harbour.

Public transport

San Marino has limited public transport facilities. There is a regular bus service between Rimini and the city of San Marino, popular with both tourists and tourist industry workers commuting to San Marino from Italy. This service stops at approximately twenty advertised locations in Rimini and within San Marino, with its two terminus stops at Rimini railway station and San Marino coach station, respectively.

A limited licensed taxi service operates nationwide. There are seven licensed taxi operating companies in the republic, and Italian taxis regularly operate within San Marino when carrying passengers picked up in Italian territory.

There is a 1.5 km aerial tramway connecting the city of San Marino on top of Monte Titano with Borgo Maggiore, a major town in the republic, with the second largest population of any Sammarinese settlement. Indeed, for the tourist visitor the aerial tramway gives the best available views of Borgo Maggiore, as the cars sweep low over the rooftops of the main town square. From here a further connection is available to the nation's largest settlement, Dogana, by means of local bus service.

Two aerial tramway cars, known as gondolas, and numbered '1' and '2', operate in opposition on a cable, and a service is provided at roughly fifteen minute intervals throughout the day. A third vehicle is available on the system, being a service car for the use of engineers maintaining the tramway.

Railway

Today there is no railway in San Marino, but for a short period prior to World War II, it had a single narrow-gauge line, connecting the country with the Italian rail network at Rimini. Due the difficulties in accessing the capital, San Marino City (which has a mountain-top location), the terminus station was to be located at the village of Valdragone but was extended to reach the capital through a steep and winding track comprising many tunnels. The railway was opened on 12 June 1932. An advanced system for its time, it was an electric railway, powered from overhead cables. It was well built and well used, but was almost completely destroyed during the fighting in this region during World War II. Many disused artifacts such as bridges, tunnels and stations are still clearly visible today, and in some cases have been refurbished and converted to parks, public footpaths or traffic routes.

Music

San Marino entered the Eurovision Song Contest for the first time, in 2008, with the band Miodio singing *Complice*. The group failed to make it to the Final from the first semi-final. San Marino gave its first ever highest (12) points to Greece. They were also one of only two countries - along with Ireland - to vote for the United Kingdom. The BBC subsequently published a magazine article on its website about San Marino, entitled "Britain's New Best Friend?" .

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Sanmarinese international bus service link with Rimini, Italy.

Serbia and Montenegro

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

The State Union of **Serbia and Montenegro** (Serbian: Државна заједница Србија и Црна Гора / *Državna zajednica Srbija i Crna Gora*, abbreviated as СЦГ / *SCG*), was a union of **Serbia** and **Montenegro**, which existed between 2003 and 2006. The two republics, both of which are former republics of the SFR Yugoslavia, initially formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992. In 2003, the FRY was reconstituted as a State Union Serbia and Montenegro.

On May 21, 2006, Montenegro held a referendum to seek full independence. Final official results indicated on May 31 that 55.5% of voters had elected to become independent. The state union effectively came to an end after Montenegro's formal declaration of independence on June 3, 2006 and Serbia's formal declaration of independence on June 5. Many view this as symbolizing the final end of what was left from the former Yugoslavia.

A loose confederation, Serbia and Montenegro were united only in certain political areas (e.g. defense). The republics had functioned separately throughout the period of the Federal Republic, and had continued to have individual economic policies as well as using separate currencies (the Euro was the only legal tender in Montenegro).

History

In 2002, Serbia and Montenegro came to a new agreement regarding continued co-operation, which, among other changes, promised the end of the name Yugoslavia, since they were part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On February 4, 2003, the federal parliament of Yugoslavia created a loose confederation - State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. A new Constitutional Charter was agreed to provide a framework for the governance of the country.

On Sunday, 21 May 2006, Montenegrins voted on an independence referendum, with 55.5% supporting independence. Fifty-five percent or more of affirmative votes were needed to dissolve the state union of Serbia and Montenegro. The turnout was 86.3% and 99.73% of the more than 477,000 votes cast were deemed valid.



The subsequent Montenegrin proclamation of independence on June 3, 2006 and the Serbian proclamation of independence on June 5 ended the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and thus the last remaining vestiges of the former Yugoslavia.

Administrative divisions

Serbia and Montenegro was composed of two republics, Montenegro and Serbia:



- Serbia (capital: Belgrade)
 - Vojvodina – autonomous province within Serbia (capital: Novi Sad)
 - Kosovo and Metohija – autonomous province within Serbia under United Nations administration (capital: Priština)



- Montenegro (capital: Podgorica)

The country's political and administrative capital was Belgrade, while its judicial capital was Podgorica.

The territorial organization of the Republic of Serbia is regulated by the Law on Territorial Organization and Local Self-Government, adopted in the Assembly of Serbia on 24 July 1991. Under the Law, the municipalities, cities and settlements make the bases of the territorial organization.

Serbia is divided into 195 municipalities and 4 cities, which are the basic units of local autonomy. It has two autonomous provinces: Kosovo and Metohija in the south (with 30 municipalities), which is presently under the administration of the United Nations, and Vojvodina in the north (with 46 municipalities). The part of Serbia that is neither in Kosovo nor in Vojvodina is called Central Serbia. Central Serbia is not an administrative division (unlike the two autonomous provinces), and it has no regional government of its



Capital	Belgrade
Language(s)	Serbian
Political structure	State union
Historical era	Post-Cold War
- UN membership ¹	November 1, 2000
- Established	February 4, 2003
- Disestablished	June 5, 2006
Area	
- 2006	102,350 km ² (39,518 sq mi)
Population	
- 2006 est.	10,832,545
Density	105.8 /km ² (274.1 /sq mi)
Currency	Serbian dinar, Euro
¹ Membership as FRY	
ISO 3166-1=CS, ISO 3166-3=CSXX	
International calling code = 381, UTC offset = +1	

own.

In addition, there are four cities (gradovi): Belgrade, Niš, Novi Sad and Kragujevac, each having an assembly and budget of its own. The cities comprise several municipalities, divided into "urban" (in the city proper) and "other" (suburban). Competences of cities and their municipalities are divided. Of those, only Novi Sad did not undergo the full transformation, as the newly formed municipality of Petrovaradin exists pretty much only formally; thus, the municipality of Novi Sad is largely equated to city of Novi Sad (and the single largest municipality in the country, with around 300,000 residents).

Municipalities are gathered into districts (okruzi), which are regional centers of state authority, but have no assemblies of their own; they present purely administrative divisions, and host various state institutions such as funds, office branches and courts. The Republic of Serbia is divided into 29 districts (17 in Central Serbia, 7 in Vojvodina and 5 in Kosovo, which are now defunct), while the city of Belgrade presents a district of its own.

Montenegro has 21 municipalities (Општина, opština), and two urban municipalities (градска општина, gradska opština), subdivisions of Podgorica municipality.

Geography



Map of Serbia-Montenegro

Serbia and Montenegro had an area of 102,350 square kilometres (39,518 sq mi), with 199 kilometres (124 mi) of coastline. The terrain of the two republics is extremely varied, with much of Serbia comprising plains and low hills (except in the more mountainous region of Kosovo and Metohija) and much of Montenegro consisting of high mountains. Serbia is entirely landlocked, with the coastline belonging to Montenegro, which also possessed the only fjord in southern Europe. The climate is similarly varied. The north has a continental climate (cold winters and hot summers); the central region has a combination of a continental and Mediterranean climate; the southern region had an Adriatic climate along the coast, with inland regions experiencing hot, dry summers and autumns and relatively cold winters with heavy snowfall inland.

Belgrade, with its population of 1,574,050, is the largest city in the two nations: and the only one of significant size. The country's other principal cities were Novi Sad, Niš, Kragujevac, Podgorica, Subotica, Pristina, and Prizren, each with populations of about 100,000-250,000 people.

Demographics

Serbia and Montenegro had more demographic variety than most other European countries. The three largest named nationalities were Serbs (62.3%), Albanians (mostly Ghegs) (16.6%) and Montenegrins (5%) according to the 1991 census. The country also had significant populations of Hungarians, Roma, Bulgarians, Ethnic Macedonians, Romanians and other eastern Romance peoples (including Aromanians, Megleno-Romanians and Vlachs), plus dozens of other Slavic peoples, namely Bosniaks, Croats, Bunjevci, Šokci, Goranci, Janjevci, Rusins, Slovaks, Muslims by nationality and Yugoslavs. Turkic subgroups still live in Kosovo (mostly Gagauz and Seljuks). There were a number of citizens who declared their nationality as Egyptian and Ashkali. These two were previously

regarded as a part of Roma who are of the belief that they originated from present-day Egypt and Israel. Most of the ethnic diversity was situated in the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, where smaller numbers of other minority groups may have been found. The large Albanian population was chiefly concentrated in Kosovo, with smaller populations in the Preševo and Bujanovac municipalities in Central Serbia, and in the south-east of Montenegro (Ulcinj municipality). The large Bosniak population lived in the Sandžak region on the border between Serbia and Montenegro.

Total Serbia-Montenegro - 10,019,657

- Serbia (total): 9,396,411
 - Vojvodina: 2,116,725
 - Central Serbia: 5,479,686
 - Kosovo: 1,800,000
- Montenegro: 623,246

- Major cities (over 100,000 inhabitants) - 2002 data (2003 for Podgorica):
 - Beograd (Belgrade): 1,280,639 (1,574,050 metro)
 - Novi Sad: 215,600 (298,139 metro)
 - Priština: 200,000 (2002 estimation)
 - Niš: 173,390 (234,863 metro)
 - Kragujevac: 145,890 (175,182 metro)
 - Podgorica: 139,500 (169,000 metro)
 - Prizren: 121,000 (2002 estimation)
 - Subotica: 99,471 (147,758 metro)

According to an estimate from 2004, the State Union had 10,825,900 inhabitants.

According to a July of 2006 estimate, the State Union had 10,832,545 inhabitants.

Economy

An extended period of economic sanctions, and the damage to Yugoslavia's infrastructure and industry caused by the Kosovo War left the economy only half the size it was in 1990. Since the ousting of former Federal Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević in October 2000, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition government has implemented stabilization measures and embarked on an aggressive market reform program. After renewing its membership in the International Monetary Fund in December 2000, Yugoslavia continued to reintegrate into the international community by rejoining the World Bank (IBRD) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). A World Bank- European Commission sponsored Donors' Conference held in June 2001 raised \$1.3 billion for economic restructuring. An agreement rescheduling the country's \$4.5 billion Paris Club government debts was concluded in November 2001; it will write off 66% of the debt; a similar debt relief agreement on its \$2.8 billion London Club commercial debt has been reached in July 2004; 62% of

the debt have been written off.

The smaller republic of Montenegro severed its economy from federal control and from Serbia during the Milošević era. During the Serbia and Montenegro period, both republics had separate central banks, different currencies - Montenegro used the euro, while Serbia used the Serbian dinar as official currency. The two states also had different customs tariffs, separate state budgets, police forces, and governments.

The southern Serbian province of Kosovo, while formally still part of Serbia (according to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244), moved toward local autonomy under the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and was dependent on the international community for financial and technical assistance. The euro and the Yugoslav dinar were official currencies, and UNMIK collected taxes and managed the budget.

The complexity of Serbia and Montenegro's political relationships, slow progress in privatisation, and stagnation in the European economy were detrimental to the economy. Arrangements with the IMF, especially requirements for fiscal discipline, were an important element in policy formation. Severe unemployment was a key political economic problem. Corruption also presented a major problem, with a large black market and a high degree of criminal involvement in the formal economy.

Transportation

Serbia, and in particular the valley of the Morava is often described as "the crossroads between the East and the West" - one of the primary reasons for its turbulent history. The valley is by far the easiest way of land travel from continental Europe to Greece and Asia Minor.

Until the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars, the ironically-named highway "Bratstvo i jedinstvo" (Brotherhood and Unity) running through Croatia, Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia was one of Europe's most important transport arteries. It gradually resumed this role as the security situation stabilized.

Major international highways going through Serbia are E75 and E70. E763/ E761 is the most important route connecting Serbia with Montenegro.

The Danube, an important international waterway, flows through Serbia.

The largest seaport is Montenegro's Bar.

Holidays in Serbia and Montenegro

Holidays

Date	Name	Notes
January 1	New Year's Day	(non-working holiday)
January 7	Orthodox Christmas	(non-working)
January 27	Saint Sava's feast Day — Day of Spirituality	
April 27	Constitution Day	
April 29	Orthodox Good Friday	Date for 2005 only
May 1	Orthodox Easter	Date for 2005 only
May 2	Orthodox Easter Monday	Date for 2005 only
May 1	Labour Day	(non-working)
May 9	Victory Day	
June 28	Vidovdan (Martyr's Day)	In memory of soldiers fallen at the Battle of Kosovo

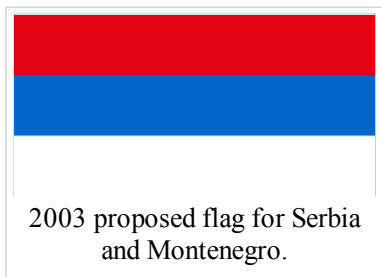
Holidays celebrated only in Serbia

- February 15 - Sretenje (National Day, non-working)

Holidays celebrated only in Montenegro

- July 13 - Statehood Day (non-working)

Proposed Flag & Anthem



After the formation of Serbia and Montenegro, the Yugoslav tricolour was to be replaced by a new compromise flag. Article 23 of the Law for the implementation of the Constitutional Charter [] stated that a law specifying the new flag was to be passed within 60 days of the first session of the new joint parliament. Among the flag proposals, the popular choice was a flag with a shade of blue in between the Serbian tricolour and the Montenegrin tricolour of 1993-2004. The colour shade Pantone 300 C was perceived as the best choice. [] However the parliament failed to vote on the proposal within the legal timeframe and the flag was not adopted. In 2004, Montenegro adopted a radically different flag, as its independence-leaning government sought to distance itself from Serbia. Proposals for a compromise flag were dropped after this and the Union of Serbia & Montenegro never adopted a flag.

A similar fate befell the country's anthem and coat-of-arms to be; the above-mentioned Article 23 also stipulated that a law determining the State Union's flag and anthem was to be passed by the end of 2003. The official proposal for an anthem was a combination piece consisting of one verse of the Serbian anthem " Bože pravde" followed by a verse of the Montenegrin anthem, " Oj, svijetla majska zoro". This proposal was dropped after some public opposition, notably by Serbian Patriarch Pavle. [] Another legal deadline passed and no anthem was adopted. Serious proposals for the coat of arms were never put forward, probably because the coat of arms of the FRY, adopted in 1994 combining Serbian and Montenegrin heraldic elements, was considered adequate.

Thus, the State Union never officially adopted state symbols and continued to use the flag, arms and anthem of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by inertia until its dissolution in 2006.

Sports and contests

Serbia and Montenegro were represented by a single football team in the 2006 FIFA World Cup tournament, despite having formally split just weeks prior to its start. Following this event, this team has been inherited by Serbia, while a new one was to be organized to represent Montenegro in future international competitions. Their most notable player is Manchester United defender Nemanja Vidić, who is Serbian.

They were represented by a single team in the Basketball World Championship 2006 as well. This team was also inherited by Serbia after the tournament, while Montenegro created a separate national basketball team afterwards, as well as the national teams of all other team sports.

The two countries were represented in the Miss Earth 2006 pageant by a single delegate, Dubravka Skoric. It is unknown if the two countries would field two different candidates in the pageant's succeeding editions.

Serbia is home to three of the worlds top tennis players. Novak Đoković is currently ranked #3 in the world, and in 2007, was a U.S. Open finalist. Đoković is considered to be one of the best players and may be the one to over take Roger Federer. Jelena Jankovic is currently the fourth best women's player and has reached very far into many gram slams. Lastly, Ana Ivanovic is currently ranked second in the world and was the 2007 French Open finalist, she also reached the semi finals of Wimbledon in 2007, and in January 2008 she reached the finals of the Australia Open. Ivanovic was also on the cover of the October Issue of TENNIS Magazine.

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Serbia

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

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Serbia (Serbian: Србија, *Srbija*), officially the **Republic of Serbia** (Serbian: Република Србија, *Republika Srbija*, listen[ⓘ]), is a landlocked country in Central and Southeastern Europe, covering the southern part of the Pannonian Plain and the central part of the Balkan Peninsula. Serbia is bordered by Hungary to the north; Romania and Bulgaria to the east; the Republic of Macedonia and Albania to the south; and Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro to the west. The capital is Belgrade.

For centuries, located at, and shaped by, the cultural boundaries between the East and the West, a powerful medieval kingdom – later renamed the Serbian Empire – occupied much of the Balkans. Torn by domestic feuds, Ottoman-, Hungarian- and later, Austrian incursions, the Serbian state collapsed by the mid-16th century. The success of the Serbian revolution in 1817 marked the birth of modern Serbia. Within a century it reacquired Kosovo, Raška and Vardar Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire. Likewise, in 1918 the former autonomous Habsburg crownland of Vojvodina proclaimed its secession from Austria-Hungary to unite with the Serbia, preceded by the Syrmia region.

The current borders of the country were established after World War II, when Serbia became a federal unit within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Serbia became an independent state again in 2006, after Montenegro left the union that formed after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1990s.

In February 2008, the parliament of Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia. Serbia's government, as well as the UN Security Council, have not recognized Kosovo's independence. The response from the international community has been mixed. Serbia is a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Council of Europe, and is an associate member of the European Union.

Geography

Serbia is at the crossroads between Central, Southern and Eastern Europe, between the Balkan peninsula and the Pannonian plain. The country is intersected by several major navigable rivers: the Danube

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<p><i>Република Србија</i> <i>Republika Srbija</i> Republic of Serbia</p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p>Anthem: <i>Боже правде / Bože pravde</i> "Lord Give Us Justice"</p>	
 <p>Location of Serbia (orange) on the European continent (white) — [Legend]</p>	

(2850km), Sava (945 km), Tisa (1358km), joined by the Timiș River (350 km) and Begej (254 km), all of which connect Serbia with *Northern* and *Western Europe* (through the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal – North Sea route), to *Eastern Europe* (via the Tisa–, Timiș–, Begej – and Danube – Black sea routes) and to *Southern Europe* (via the Sava river). Two largest Serbian cities- Belgrade and Novi Sad- are major regional Danubian harbours.



Mountain ranges and major rivers of Serbia.

The northern third of the country is located entirely within the Central European Pannonian plain. The easternmost tip of Serbia extends into the Wallachian Plain. The north eastern border of the country is determined by the Carpathian Mountain range, which runs through the whole of Central Europe. The Southern Carpathians meet the Balkan Mountains, following the course of the Velika Morava, a 500 km long (partially navigable) river. The Midžor peak is the highest point in eastern Serbia at 2156 m. In the southeast, the Balkan Mountains meet the Rhodope Mountains, connecting the country with Greece. The Šar Mountain of Kosovo form the border with Albania, with one of the highest peaks in the region, Djeravica (2656 m). Dinaric Alps of Serbia follow the flow of the Drina river (at 350 km navigable for smaller vessels only) overlooking the Dinaric peaks on the opposite shore in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Over a quarter of Serbia's overall landmass (27%) is covered by forest.

Climate

The Serbian climate varies between a continental climate in the north, with cold winters, and hot, humid summers with well distributed rainfall patterns, and a more Adriatic climate in the south with hot, dry summers and autumns and relatively cold winters with heavy inland snowfall. Differences in elevation, proximity to the Adriatic sea and large river basins, as well as exposure to the winds account for climate differences. Vojvodina possesses typical continental climate, with air masses from Northern and Western Europe which shape its climatic profile. South and South-west Serbia is subject to Mediterranean influences. However the Dinaric Alps and other mountain ranges contribute to the cooling down of most of the warm air masses. Winters are quite harsh in Sandžak because of the mountains which encircle the plateau.

Capital (and largest city)	Belgrade
Official languages	Serbian
Recognised regional languages	Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Croatian, Rusyn ¹ Albanian ²
Demonym	Serbian
Government	Parliamentary Democracy
- President	Boris Tadić
- Prime Minister	Mirko Cvetković
- President of Parliament	Slavica Đukić Dejanović
- Supreme Court President	Vida Petrović-Škero
Establishment	
- First state	7th century
- Serbian Empire	1345
- Independence lost	1540
- First Serbian Uprising ⁵ (Modern Statehood)	February 15, 1804
- <i>De facto</i> independence	25 March 1867
- <i>De jure</i> independence	13 July 1878
- Unification	25 November 1918
- Republic of Serbia	6 June 2006
Area	

The verage annual air temperature for the period 1961–90 for the area with an altitude of up to 300m is 10.9 °C. The areas with an altitude of 300m to 500m have an average annual temperature of around 10.0 °C, and over 1000 m of altitude around 6.0 °C.

National parks

Serbia has 5 national parks:

- Fruška Gora (250 km²)
- Kopaonik (120 km²)
- Tara (220 km²)
- Đerdap (640 km²)
- Šar Mountains (390 km²)

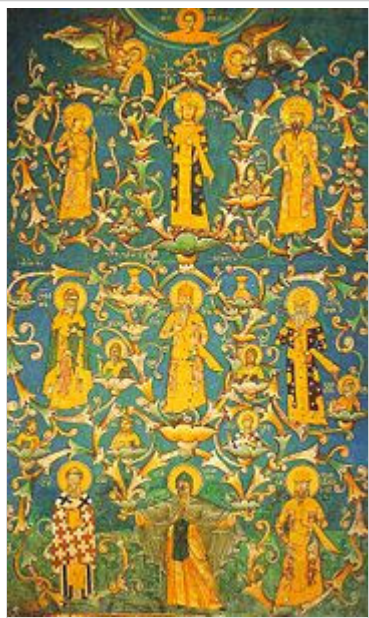
History

Early history

Serbia's strategic location between two continents has subjected it to invasions by many peoples. Belgrade is believed to have been razed to the ground by 40 different armies in recorded history. Contemporary Serbia comprises the classical regions of Moesia, Pannonia, parts of Dalmatia, Dacia and Macedonia. Under nominal Serbian rule since the 7th century (having been allowed to settle in Byzantium by its emperor Heraclius after their victory over the Avars), through early history various parts of the territory of modern Serbia have been colonized, claimed or ruled by: the Greeks and Romans (conquered the indigenous Celts and Illyrians); the Western- and the Eastern Roman Empires (challenged by the incursions of the Huns, the Ostrogoths, the Gepidae, the Sarmatians, the Avars, the Serbs, the Frankish Kingdom, the Great Moravia, the Bulgarians). No less than 17 Roman Emperors were born in the land that is now Serbia.

Medieval Serb kingdoms and the Serbian Empire

- Total	88 361 km² (113th) 34 116 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.13
Population	
- 2008 estimate	10,159,046
- 2002 census	7,498,000 ⁶
- Density	115/km² (94th) 297/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$81.982 billion (IMF)
- Per capita	\$10 985
Gini (2007)	.24 (low)
Currency	Serbian dinar ⁷ (RSD)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.rs (.yu) ⁸
Calling code	+381
¹ All spoken in Vojvodina.	
² Spoken in Kosovo.	
³ <i>Raška</i> , preceded by <i>Kingdom of Duklja</i> (1077)	
⁴ To the Ottoman Empire and Kingdom of Hungary	
⁵ <i>The Proclamation</i> (of independence, 1809)	
⁶ excluding Kosovo	
⁷ The Euro is used in Kosovo alongside the Dinar.	
⁸ .rs became active in September 2007. Suffix .yu will exist until September 2009.	



The House of Nemanjić, fresco from Visoki Dečani monastery



Emperor Dusan crowning in Skoplje in 1346

Serbs formed their first unified state under the Vlastimirovic dynasty by 812, at times disrupted by the wars with the aforementioned states. By the beginning of the 14th century Serbs lived in four distinctly independent kingdoms- Dioclea, Rascia, Bosnia and Sirmia.

At first heavily dependent on the Byzantine Empire, to which it rendered tribute, in time the most powerful of the Serb states - Raška (*Rascia*) achieved full independence, overtaking the Kingdom of Duklja, which had previously dominated the Serbian lands between 11-12th centuries. The centre of the Serb world (Raska, Duklja, Travunia, Zahumlje, Paganja and Bosnia) moved northwards, further from the Adriatic coast. Although fully converted to Christianity as early as 865 AD, this relocation to the north and east also meant a shift towards the Eastern Orthodox rather than the Catholic faith (initially predominant in the south following the East-West Schism).

The Serbian apogee in economy, law, military matters, and religion was reached during the rule of the House of Nemanjić between 1166 and 1371; the Serbian Kingdom was proclaimed in 1217, joined later by the Kingdom of Sirmia, Banovina of Mačva and Bosnia; finally, the Serbian Empire of Stefan Dušan was formed in 1346. Under Dušan's rule, Serbia reached its territorial peak, becoming one of the larger states in Europe. The renowned Dušan's Code, a universal system of laws, was enforced.

As a result of internal struggle between rival noble families, and heavy losses inflicted by the Ottomans in the epic Battle of Kosovo, the Serbian Empire had dissolved into many statelets by the beginning of the 15th century. Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, constant struggles took place between various Serbian kingdoms on the one hand, and the Ottoman Empire on the other. The Serbian Despotate fell in 1459 following the siege of the "temporary" capital Smederevo, followed by Bosnia a few years later, and Herzegovina in 1482. Montenegro was overrun by 1499. Belgrade was the last major Balkan city to endure Ottoman onslaughts, when it joined the Catholic Kingdom of Hungary. Serbs, Hungarians and European crusaders heavily defeated the Turkish in the Siege of Belgrade of 1456. Several Serbian despots ruled in parts of Vojvodina as vassals of the Hungarian kings with the title of Hungarian barons. After repelling Ottoman attacks for over 70 years, Belgrade finally fell in 1521, along with the greater part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Conversion to Islam was increased, especially in the southwest (Raška, Kosovo and Bosnia).



Golubac fortress overlooking the Danube river

Ottoman and Austrian rule



Medieval fortress of Bač, Vojvodina

The Early modern period saw the loss of Serbia's independence to the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, interrupted briefly by the revolutionary state of the Emperor Jovan Nenad in the 16th century. Modern times witnessed the rise of the Habsburg Monarchy (known as the Austrian Empire, later Austria-Hungary), which fought many wars against the Ottoman Turks for supremacy over Serbia. Three Austrian invasions and numerous rebellions (such as the Banat Uprising) constantly challenged Ottoman rule. Vojvodina endured a century long Ottoman occupation before being ceded to the Habsburg Empire in the 17th-18th centuries under the terms of the Treaty of Karlowitz (*Sremski Karlovci*). As the Great Serb Migrations depopulated most of Kosovo and Serbia proper, the Serbs sought refuge in more prosperous (and Christian) North and West where they were granted imperial rights by the Austrian crown (under measures such as the *Statuta Wallachorum* in 1630). The Ottoman persecutions of Christians culminated in the abolition and plunder of the Patriarchate of Peć in 1766. As Ottoman rule in the South grew ever more brutal, the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I formally granted the Serbs the right to their autonomous crown land, speeding up their migrations into Austria.

The Serbian Revolution and independence (Principality of Serbia)



Karadordje Petrović, leader of the First Serbian uprising in 1804

The quest for independence of Serbia began during the Serbian national revolution (1804-1817), and it lasted for several decades. During the First Serbian Uprising led by Karadordje Petrović, Serbia was independent for almost a decade before the Ottoman army was able to reoccupy the country. Shortly after this, the Second Serbian Uprising began. Led by Miloš Obrenović, it ended in 1815 with a compromise between the Serbian revolutionary army and the Ottoman authorities. The famous German historian Leopold von Ranke published his book "The Serbian revolution" (1829). They were the easternmost bourgeois revolutions in the 19th-century world. Likewise, Principality of Serbia abolished feudalism- second in Europe after France.

The Convention of Ackerman (1828), the Treaty of Adrianople (1829) and finally, the Hatt-i Sharif of 1830, recognised the suzerainty of Serbia with Miloš Obrenović I as its hereditary Prince. The struggle for liberty, a more modern society and a nation-state in Serbia won a victory under first constitution in the Balkans on 15 February 1835. It was replaced by a more conservative Constitution in 1838.



Miloš Obrenović I, leader of the Second Serbian uprising in 1815

In the two following decades (temporarily ruled by the Karadjordjevic dynasty) the Principality actively supported the neighbouring Habsburg Serbs, especially during the 1848 revolutions. Interior minister Ilija Garašanin published *The Draft* (for South Slavic unification), which became the standpoint of Serbian foreign policy from the mid-19th century onwards. The government thus developed close ties with the Illyrian movement in Croatia-Slavonia (Austria-Hungary).

Following the clashes between the Ottoman army and civilians in Belgrade in 1862, and under pressure from the Great Powers, by 1867 the last Turkish soldiers left the Principality. By enacting a new constitution without consulting the Porte, Serbian diplomats confirmed the *de facto independence* of the country. In 1876, Montenegro and Serbia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, proclaiming their unification with Bosnia. The formal independence of the country was internationally recognized at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which formally ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78; this treaty, however, prohibited Serbia from uniting with Principality of Montenegro, and placed Bosnia and Raška region under Austro-Hungarian occupation to prevent unification.

Kingdom of Serbia

From 1815 to 1903, Serbia was ruled by the House of Obrenović (except from 1842 to 1858, when it was led by Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević). In 1882, Serbia, ruled by King Milan, was proclaimed a Kingdom. In 1903, the House of Karađorđević, (descendants of the revolutionary

leader Đorđe Petrović) assumed power. Serbia was the only country in the region that was allowed by the Great Powers to be ruled its own domestic dynasty. During the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the Kingdom of Serbia tripled its territory by acquiring part of Macedonia, Kosovo, and parts of Serbia proper.

As for Vojvodina, during the 1848 revolution in Austria, Serbs of Vojvodina with the help of Croatia-Slavonia established an autonomous region known as Serbian Vojvodina. As of 1849, the region was transformed into a new Austrian crown land known as the Serbian Voivodship and Tamiš Banat. Although abolished in 1860, Habsburg emperors claimed the title Großwoiwode der Woiwodschaft Serbien until the end of the monarchy and the creation of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918.

World War I and the birth of Yugoslavia



Two autonomous Serbias - Austrian and Ottoman Serbia, 1849



King Petar I Karadorđević
leader of the Serbian
Campaign (WWI)

On June 28, 1914 the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria at Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Gavrilo Princip (a South Slav unionist, Austrian citizen and member of Young Bosnia) led to Austria-Hungary declaring war on Kingdom of Serbia. In defense of its ally Serbia the Russian Empire started to mobilize its troops, which resulted in the German Empire declaring war on Russia (in support of Austria-Hungary). The retaliation by Austria-Hungary against Serbia activated a series of military alliances that set off a chain reaction of war declarations across the continent, leading to the outbreak of World War I within a month.

The Serbian Army won several major victories against Austria-Hungary at the beginning of World War I, such as the *Battle of Cer* and *Battle of Kolubara* - marking the first Allied victories against the Central Powers in WWI. Despite initial success it was eventually overpowered by the joint forces of the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria in 1915. Most of its army and some people went into exile to Greece and Corfu where they recovered, regrouped and returned to Macedonian front (World War I) to lead a final breakthrough through enemy lines on September 15, 1918, freeing Serbia again and defeating Austro-Hungarian Empire and Bulgaria. Serbia (with its major campaign) was a major Balkan Entente Power which contributed significantly to the Allied victory in the Balkans in November 1918. The country was militarilly classified as a *minor Entente power*.

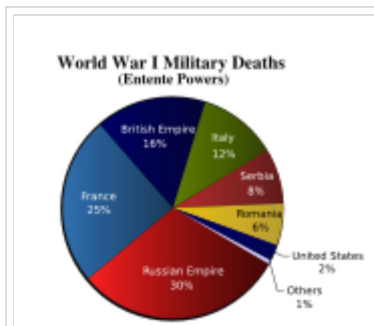


Military alliances in Europe at
the end of WWI



Monument to the Unknown
Hero - in memory of the Serb
soldiers who fell in WWI

Casualties



Serbian soldiers were 8% of the
total of combatants killed
Entente in WWI.

Prior to the war, the Kingdom of Serbia had 4.5 million inhabitants. According to the *New York Times*, in 1915 alone 150,000 people are estimated to have died during the worst typhus epidemics in world history. With the aid of the American Red Cross and 44 foreign governments, the outbreak was brought under control by the end of the year. According to *FirstWorldWar.com*, the number of civilian deaths is estimated at 650,000, primarily due to the typhus outbreak and famine, but also direct clashes with the occupiers. Kingdom of Serbia ranked first among the Entente powers by the percentage of military deaths; 8% of the *total* Entente military deaths or 58% of the Serbian Army (420,000 strong) has perished during the conflict. The total number of casualties ranges anywhere between 700,000 and 900,000- over 20% of Serbia's prewar size, and over $\frac{1}{3}$ of its male population. *L.A. Times* and *N.Y. Times* placed the figure at over one million in their respective articles.

The extent of the Serbian demographic disaster can be illustrated by the statement of the Bulgarian Prime Minister Vasil Radoslavov: "Serbia ceased to exist" (*New York Times*, summer 1917). In July 1918 the US Secretary of State Robert Lansing urged the Americans of all religions to pray for Serbia in their respective churches.

Kingdom of Yugoslavia ("First Yugoslavia")

- Sylvania region was the first among former Habsburg lands to declare union with the Kingdom of Serbia on November 24, 1918.
- Banat, Bačka and Baranja- (*Vojvodina*)- joined the Kingdom on the next day.
 - On November 26, 1918, the Kingdom of Montenegro declared its unification with the Kingdom of Serbia.
 - Bosnia and Herzegovina announces the unification with Serbia after a referendum
 - On December 1, 1918, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs and the Kingdom of Serbia joined the unitary Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Kingdom of Yugoslavia). King Peter I of Serbia became King Peter I of Yugoslavia.

World War II

Invasion of Yugoslavia

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was in a precarious position in World War II. Fearing an invasion by Nazi Germany, the Yugoslav Regent, Prince Paul, signed the Tripartite Pact with the Axis powers on 25 March 1941, triggering massive demonstrations in Belgrade. On March 27, Prince Paul was overthrown by a military coup d'état (with British support) and replaced by the 17-year-old King Peter II. General Dušan Simović became Peter's Prime Minister and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia withdrew its support for the Axis.

In response to this Adolf Hitler launched an invasion of Yugoslavia on April 6. By April 17, unconditional surrender was signed in Belgrade. After the invasion, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was dissolved and, with Yugoslavia partitioned, the remaining portion of Serbia became part of the Military Administration of Serbia, under a joint German-Serb government, with military power controlled by the German armed forces, while a Serb civil government led by Milan Nedić was permitted to try to draw Serbs away from their opposition to the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia.

Not all of what is present-day Serbia was included as part of the military administration. Some of the contemporary Republic of Serbia was occupied by the Kingdom of Croatia, the Kingdom of Hungary, the Kingdom of Bulgaria, the Fascist Italy's Balkan protectorates, the Albanian Kingdom and the Kingdom of Montenegro. In addition to being occupied by the (*Wehrmacht*), from 1941 to 1945, Serbia was the scene of a civil war between Royalist Chetniks commanded by Draža Mihailović and Communist Partisans commanded by Josip Broz Tito. Against these forces were arrayed Nedić's units of the Serbian Volunteer Corps and Serbian State Guard.

Genocide of Serbs by the Ustase regime in Croatia

Serbia's society was profoundly affected by the events that took place in the neighboring Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH) during World War II. Serbs, Jews, and Roma in the neighboring Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH) were subjected to large-scale persecution and killings, particularly in the Jasenovac concentration camp. The estimated number of Serbian children who died is between 35,000 and 50,000. United States Holocaust Encyclopedia and Jewish Virtual Library estimate that there were between Serb victims in Jasenovac and between 330,000 and 390,000. The Yad Vashem centre reports that over 500,000 Serbs were killed overall in the NDH, with some 600,000 people of many nationalities and ethnicities murdered in one camp Jasenovac. After the war, official Yugoslav sources estimated over 700,000 victims, mostly Serbs. Misha Glenny suggests that the numbers of Serbs killed in the genocide was more than 400,000.



Memorial to Serb victims of the genocide in present day Republika Srpska

The atrocities that took place in Croatia against Serbs has led to a deep sense of antagonism by Serbs towards Croats, which a number of governments have attempted to lessen. Reconciliation between the two peoples was attempted under Joseph Broz Tito's policy of Brotherhood and Unity, but this was destroyed with the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. The most recent attempt was made at the commemoration to the Serb casualties of the Jasenovac concentration camp in April 2003, when the Croatian president Stjepan Mesic apologized to the victims of Jasenovac. In 2006, on the same occasion, he added that to every visitor to Jasenovac it must be clear that the "*Holocaust, genocide and war crimes*" took place there.

Socialist Yugoslavia ("Second Yugoslavia")

On November 29, 1945, the constitutional assembly established by the Yugoslav Communist party proclaimed the abolition of the Serbian-led monarchy of Yugoslavia. - and the royal family banned from returning to the country. A communist regime was established under a dictatorship led by Yugoslav Communist leader Joseph Broz Tito. Serbia was one of 6 federal units of the state, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*, or SFRJ). Serbia was controversially internally divided with the creation of the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, in which the Serbian parliament held no control over the political affairs of the two provinces, and technically only held power over Central Serbia. The action was taken due to pressure on the communist regime by the other republics, which claimed that Yugoslavia's political structure was subject to Serb hegemony. Many Serbs, including those in the Yugoslav Communist party, resented the powers held by the autonomous provinces. At the same time, a number of Kosovo Albanians in the 1980s began to demand that Kosovo be granted the right to be a republic within Yugoslavia, thus giving it the right to separate, a right which it did not have as an autonomous province. The ethnic tensions between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo would eventually have a major influence in the collapse of the SFRY.

Collapse of Communist Yugoslavia

In 1989, the League of Communists of Serbia selected Slobodan Milošević to become the President of Serbia. Milošević was controversial in Yugoslavia because he opposed Kosovo's autonomy and because his rise to power through the Anti-bureaucratic revolution was achieved through mass protests, which pushed out the leadership of the autonomous provinces and also the republic of Montenegro which installed politicians allied to Milošević. Milošević also aggravated the situation in post-Tito Yugoslavia by alleging that certain politicians in Yugoslavia were anti-Serb. His pressure to change the constitution to limit Kosovo's autonomy and bring in a one-member-one-vote system in the Yugoslav League of Communists congress (thus giving a numerical majority to the Serbs)

worsened relations in the League of Communists, which broke up along republican lines. Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina all elected governments which supported secession from Yugoslavia and referendums on independence resulted in majorities supporting independence in those republics. The only remaining political leadership willing to govern the SFRY was made up of Serbian and Montenegrin politicians. The federal leadership from 1991 to 1992 was heavily influenced by the Serbian President Milošević who led the SFRY's largest of the two republics still committed to union.

Federation of Serbia and Montenegro ("Third Yugoslavia") and the Kosovo War

By 1992, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina had all declared independence from Yugoslavia, resulting in the collapse of the SFRJ and the outbreak of war. In response, Serbia and Montenegro formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (*Savezna Republika Jugoslavija*, or SRJ). The Serbian government initially supported the Serbs of Croatia and the Bosnian Serbs in the Yugoslav wars fought from 1991 to 1995. This period of political turmoil marked a rise in ethnic tensions and xenophobia between Serbs and other ethnicities of the former Communist Yugoslavia as most of the other ethnicities demanded independence while Serbs saw the secessions as tearing apart the Serb nation which had a heavy populace in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Croatia. Sanctions were imposed by the United Nations, which led to political isolation and economic decline of the SRJ.

In 1995, the Dayton Agreement was signed in Paris, France. This agreement ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the war in Croatia. For the time being, the SRJ was officially at peace.

Between 1998 and 1999, Serbia's official peace was broken when the situation in Kosovo worsened with continued clashes in Kosovo between the Serbian and Yugoslavian security forces on one side and the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) on the other. What became known as the Kosovo War prompted "Operation Allied Force." This operation included aerial bombardment of Serbia by forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The bombings lasted for 78 days. The bombings were ended following negotiations on the border between the Republic of Macedonia and the SRJ. The negotiations were held between NATO spokesperson Mike Jackson and SRJ officials speaking on behalf of Milošević. It was agreed that Milošević would order the withdrawal of all SRJ security forces, including the military and the police, and agree to have them replaced by a body of international police. The agreement upheld Yugoslavian (later Serbian) sovereignty over Kosovo but replaced Serbian government of the province with a UN administration, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). NATO also agreed to end its demand to station NATO troops across the whole of the SRJ. This had been one of its demands at the Rambouillet negotiations prior to the bombing campaign.

Democratic transition

In September 2000, opposition parties claimed that Milošević committed fraud in routine federal elections. Street protests and rallies throughout Serbia eventually forced Milošević to concede and hand over power to the recently formed Democratic Opposition of Serbia (*Demokratska opozicija Srbije*, or DOS). The DOS was a broad coalition of anti-Milošević parties. On 5 October, the fall of Milošević led to end of the international isolation Serbia suffered during the Milošević years. Serbia's new leaders announced that Serbia would seek to join the European Union (EU). In October 2005, the EU opened negotiations with Serbia for a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), a preliminary step towards joining the EU.

From 2003 to 2006, Serbia has been part of the "State Union of Serbia and Montenegro." This union was the successor to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

(SRJ).

On May 21, 2006, Montenegro held a referendum to determine whether or not to end its union with Serbia. The next day, state-certified results showed 55.4% of voters in favour of independence. This was just above the 55% required by the referendum.

Republic of Serbia

On June 5, 2006, following the referendum in Montenegro, the National Assembly of Serbia declared the "Republic of Serbia" to be the legal successor to the "State Union of Serbia and Montenegro." Serbia and Montenegro became separate nations. However, the possibility of a dual citizenship for the Serbs of Montenegro is a matter of the ongoing negotiations between the two governments. In April 2008 Serbia was invited to join the intensified dialogue programme with NATO despite the diplomatic rift with the Alliance over Kosovo.

Government and politics

On February 4, 2003 the parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agreed to a weaker form of cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro within a confederal state called Serbia and Montenegro. The Union ceased to exist following Montenegrin and Serbian declarations of independence in June 2006.

After the ousting of Slobodan Milošević on October 5, 2000, the country was governed by the Democratic Opposition of Serbia. Tensions gradually increased within the coalition until the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) left the government, leaving the Democratic Party (DS) in overall control.

Serbia held a two-day referendum on October 28 and October 29, 2006, that ratified a new constitution to replace the Milošević-era constitution.

The current President of Serbia is Boris Tadić, leader of the centre-left Democratic Party (DS). He was reelected with 50,5% of the vote in the second round of the Serbian presidential election held on February 4, 2008.

Serbia held Parliamentary elections on January 21, 2007. The right-wing Serbian Radical Party claimed victory, but no party has won an absolute majority. Following last-minute negotiations on the part of the DS and DSS political parties, an agreement was reached on the make-up of the country's new government on 11 May 2007 between DS, DSS and G17 Plus.

On March 13, 2008 the Serbian government collapsed when "President Boris Tadic dissolved parliament Thursday and called early elections for May 11" citing the growing rift between himself and nationalist Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica over membership in the EU and Kosovo's Independence. The government's collapse came less than a month after ethnic Albanian majority Kosovo unilaterally proclaimed independence from Serbia, which considers the territory its historic heartland.



National Assembly of Serbia

Administrative subdivisions

Serbia is divided into 24 districts plus the City of Belgrade. The districts and the City of Belgrade are further divided into municipalities. Serbia has 2 autonomous provinces: Vojvodina with (7 districts, 46 municipalities) and Kosovo and Metohija. Kosovo has declared independence but is still presently under the administration of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo; international negotiations began in 2006 to determine its final status (*See Kosovo status process*); Kosovo declared its independence on February 17, 2008, which Belgrade opposes.

The part of Serbia that is neither in Kosovo nor in Vojvodina is called Central Serbia. Central Serbia is not an administrative division, unlike the two autonomous provinces, and it has no regional government of its own. In English this region is often called "Serbia proper" to denote "the part of the Republic of Serbia not including the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo", as the Library of Congress puts it. This usage was also employed in Serbo-Croatian during the Yugoslav era (in the form of "uža Srbija", literally: "narrow Serbia"). Its use in English is purely geographical, without any particular political meaning being implied.

Demographics



Serbia's borders (recognized by UN)

- Serbia (Census 2002, excluding Kosovo): 7,498,001
 - Central Serbia: 5,466,009
 - Vojvodina: 2,031,922

Serbia (excluding Kosovo) in 2002

Serbs	82.86%
Hungarians	3.91%
Bosniaks	1.82%
Roma	1.44%
Yugoslavs	1.08%
Other	9.79%

Serbia is populated mostly by Serbs. Significant minorities include Hungarians, Bosniaks, Roma, Croats, Czechs and Slovaks, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Romanians, etc. The northern province of Vojvodina is ethnically and religiously diverse.

According to the last official census data collected in 2002, ethnic composition of Serbia is:

- Total: 7,498,001
 - Serbs: 6,212,000 (82.86%)
 - Hungarians: 293,172 (3.91%)
 - Bosniaks: 136,464 (1.82%)
 - Roma: 107,971 (1.44%)
 - Yugoslavs: 80,978 (1.08%)
 - Croats: 70,602 (0.94%)
 - Slovaks: 57,900 (0.89%)
 - Others (each less than 1%): 474,323 (6.33%)

According to the poll conducted on January 1, 2006 by the Yugoslav Survey Society Serbia had 7,395,600 inhabitants - a 1.5% decrease comparing to the 2002 Census.

The census was not conducted in Serbia's southern province of Kosovo, which is under administration by the United Nations. According to the EU estimates however, the overall population is estimated at 1,350,000 inhabitants, of whom 90% are Albanians, 8% Serbs and others 2%. There are also around 200,000 Serbian and other refugees, who are expelled from Kosovo. Refugees and IDPs in Serbia form between 7% and 7.5% of its population – about half a million refugees sought refuge in the country following the series of Yugoslav wars (from Croatia mainly, to an extent Bosnia and Herzegovina too and the IDPs from



Kosovo, which are the most numerous at over 200,000) Serbia has the largest refugee population in Europe.

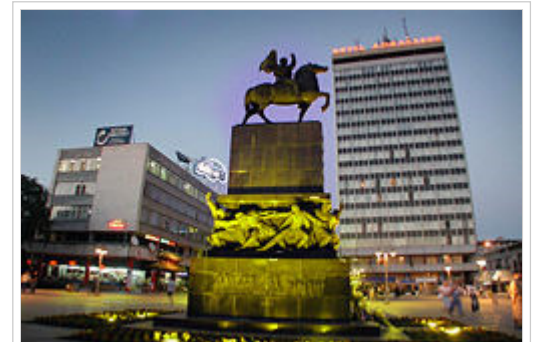
Cities

Officially recognized cities (over 100,000 on municipal level) — 2002 census data (2005/2006 data for Novi Sad/Belgrade).

City	Population	
	Urban	Metropolitan
Belgrade	1,576,124	1,689,667
Novi Sad	255,071	333,895
Niš	236,722	252,131
Kragujevac	175,473	211,580
Subotica	99,471	147,758
Zrenjanin	79,545	131,509
Leskovac	78,030	156,252
Smederevo	77,808	109,867
Pančevo	77,087	127,162
Kruševac	75,256	131,368
Čačak	73,217	117,012
Užice	63,577	83,022
Valjevo	61,035	96,761
Kraljevo	57,411	121,707
Šabac	55,240	122,893
Vranje	55,052	87,288
Novi Pazar	54,604	85,249
Sombor	51,471	97,263
Sremska Mitrovica	39,041	85,605



Belgrade, the capital city



The main square in Niš

- Large cities in the contested province of Kosovo and Metohija like Priština, Prizren, Peć and Kosovska Mitrovica were not subjected to the 2002 Census.

Religion

For centuries straddling the religious boundary between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, joined up later by the penetration of Islam, Serbia remains one of the most diverse countries on the continent. Centuries on, different regions of Serbia remain heavily cosmopolitan: Kosovo province houses a 90% Muslim community, Vojvodina province is 25% Catholic or Protestant, while Central Serbia and Belgrade regions are over 90% Orthodox Christian.



Studenica monastery

Among the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Serbian Orthodox Church is the westernmost. According to the 2002 Census, 82% of the population of Serbia (excluding Kosovo) or 6,2 million people declared their nationality as Serbian, who are overwhelmingly adherents of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Other Orthodox Christian communities in Serbia include Montenegrins, Romanians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Vlachs etc. Together they comprise about 84% of the entire population.

Catholicism is mostly present in Vojvodina (mainly in its northern part), where almost 20% of the regional population (minority ethnic groups such as the Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats, Bunjevci, Czechs etc. belong to this Christian denomination. There are an estimated 433,000 baptized Catholics in Serbia, roughly 6,2% of the population, mostly in the northern province.

Protestantism accounts for about 1.5 % of the country's population.

Islam has a strong historic following in the southern regions of Serbia - Raska and several municipalities in the south-east. Bosniaks are the largest Muslim community in Serbia at about 140,000 (2%), followed by Albanians (1%), Turks, Arabs etc.

With the exile of Jews from Spain during the infamous Inquisition era, thousands of escaping families and individuals made their way through Europe to the Balkans. A goodly number settled in Serbia and became part of the general population. They were well accepted and during the ensuing generations the majority assimilated or became traditional or secular, rather than remain orthodox Jews as had been the original immigrants. Later on the wars that ravaged the region resulted in a great part of the Serbian Jewish population either being killed or escaping to Yugoslavia and Austria-Hungary.

Economy

Serbia (excluding Kosovo) in 2002

religion	percent
Eastern Orthodoxy	84.1%
Roman Catholicism	6.24%
Islam	4.82%
Protestantism	1.44%

With a GDP for 2008 estimated at \$81.892 billion (\$10,985 per capita PPP), Republic of Serbia is considered an upper-middle income economy by the World Bank. FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in 2006 was \$5.85 billion or €4.5 billion. FDI for 2007 reached \$4.2 Billion while real GDP per capita figures are estimated to have reached \$6 600 (October 2007). The GDP growth rate showed increase by 6.3% (2005), 5.8% (2006), reaching 7.5% in 2007 as the fastest growing economy in the region.

At the beginning of the process of economic transition (1989), its favorable economic outlook in the region was hampered by politics, its economy being gravely impacted by the UN economic sanctions of 1992–95, as well as the sizable infrastructure and industry damage, suffered during the Kosovo war. Its problems were only augmented by losing the ex-Yugoslavia and Comecon markets. After the ousting of former Federal Yugoslav President Milošević in October 2000, the country experienced faster economic growth, and has been preparing for membership in the European Union, its most important trading partner.

The recovery of the economy still faces many problems, among which unemployment (18.1%) high export/import trade deficit and considerable national debt are most prominent. The country expects some major economic impulses and high growth rates in the next years. Serbia has been occasionally called a "Balkan tiger" because of its recent high economic growth rates, which averaged 6.6 % (in the past three years), with FDI at its record levels.

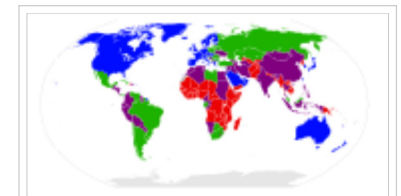
Serbia grows about one-third of the world's raspberries and is the leading frozen fruit exporter.

Infrastructure

Communications

89% of households in Serbia have fixed telephone lines, and 90% of the population have cell phones, accounting to 8 million users (Telekom Srbija – 5 million, Telenor and Vip mobile sharing the rest). 49% of households have computers, 27% use the internet, and 42% have cable TV.

Transportation



World Bank economy estimates for 2007



Nikola Tesla on 100 Serbian dinar banknote



Jat Airways, the national airline of Serbia

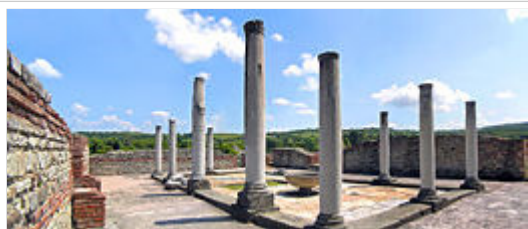
Serbia is proud of the fact that it owns one of the world's oldest airline carriers, the Jat Airways, founded in 1927. There are 3 international airports in Serbia: Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport, Niš Constantine the Great Airport and the Vršac international airport.

The country, especially the valley of the Morava, is often described as "the crossroads between East and West", which is one of the primary reasons for its turbulent history. The Morava valley route, which avoids mountainous regions, is by far the easiest way of traveling overland from continental Europe to Greece and Asia Minor. Modern Serbia was the first among its neighbours to acquire railroads- in 1869 the first train arrived to Subotica, then Austria-Hungary (by 1882 route to Belgrade and Nis was completed). The railway system is operated by Serbian Railways.

European routes E65, E70, E75 and E80, as well as the E662, E761, E762, E763, E771, and E851 pass through the country. The E70 westwards from Belgrade and most of the E75 are modern highways of motorway / autobahn standard or close to that. As of 2005, Serbia has 1,481,498 registered cars, 16,042 motorcycles, 9,626 buses, 116,440 trucks, 28,222 special transport vehicles, 126,816 tractors, and 101,465 trailers.

The Danube River, central Europe's connection to the Black Sea, flows through Serbia. Through Danube-Rhine-Mein canal the North Sea is also accessible. Tisza river offers a connection with Eastern Europe while the Sava river connects her to western former yugoslav republics near the Adriatic Sea.

Tourism



Felix Romuliana imperial palace, one of 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Serbia

Tourism in Serbia is mostly focused on the villages and mountains of the country. The most famous mountain resorts are Zlatibor, Kopaonik, and the Tara. There are also many spas in Serbia, one the biggest of which is Vrnjačka Banja. Other spas include Soko Banja and Niška Banja. There is a significant amount of tourism in the largest cities like Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš, but also in the rural parts of Serbia like the volcanic wonder of Đavolja varoš, Christian pilgrimage across the country and the cruises along the Danube, Sava or Tisza. There are several popular festivals held in Serbia, such as the EXIT Festival (proclaimed the best European festival by UK Festival Awards 2007 and Yourope, the European Association of the 40 largest festivals in Europe) and the Guča trumpet festival. 2,2 million tourists visited Serbia in 2007, a 15% increase compared to 2006.

Culture



Miroslav Gospels, one of the oldest surviving documents written in Serbian Church Slavonic

Serbia is one of Europe's most culturally diverse countries. The borders between large empires ran through the territory of today's Serbia for long periods in history: between the Eastern and Western halves of the Roman Empire; between Kingdom of Hungary, Bulgarian Empire, Frankish Kingdom and Byzantium; and between the Ottoman Empire and the Austrian Empire (later Austria-Hungary). As a result, while the north is culturally "Central European", the south is rather more "Oriental". Of course, both regions have influenced each other, and so the distinction between north and south is artificial to some extent.

The Byzantine Empire's influence on Serbia was perhaps the greatest. Serbs are Orthodox Christians with their own national church—the Serbian Orthodox Church. They use both the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, as a result of both Eastern and Western influences. The monasteries of Serbia, built largely in the Middle Ages, are one of the most valuable and visible traces of medieval Serbia's association with the Byzantium and the Orthodox World, but also with the Romanic (Western) Europe that Serbia had close ties with back in Middle Ages. Most of Serbia's queens still remembered today in Serbian history were of foreign origin, including H  l  ne d'Anjou (a cousin of Charles I of Sicily), Anna Dondolo (daughter of the Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo), Catherine of Hungary, and Symonide of Byzantium.



The White Angel in Mile  eva monastery, 1230s, Latin period of Byzantine art

Serbia has eight cultural sites marked on the UNESCO World Heritage list: Stari Ras and Sopo  ani monasteries (included in 1979), Studenica Monastery (1986), the Medieval Serbian Monastic Complex in Kosovo, comprising: De  ani Monastery, Our Lady of Ljevi  , Gra  anica and Patriarchate of Pec- (2004, put on the endangered list in 2006), and Gamzigrad - Romuliana, Palace of Galerius, added in 2007. Likewise, there are 2 literary memorials added on the UNESCO's list as a part of the Memory of the World Programme: Miroslav Gospels, handwriting from the 12th century (added in 2005), and Nikola Tesla's archive (2003).

Education

Education in Serbia is regulated by the Ministry of Education. Education starts in either pre-schools or elementary schools. Children enroll in elementary schools (Serbian: *Osnovna škola* / Основна школа) at the age of seven, and remain there for eight years.

The roots of the Serbian education system date back to the 11th and 12th centuries when the first Catholic colleges were founded in Vojvodina (Titel, Bač). Medieval Serbian education, however, was mostly conducted through the Serbian Orthodox monasteries (Sopocani, Studenica, Patriarchate of Pec) starting from the rise of Raska in 12th century, when Serbs overwhelmingly embraced Orthodoxy rather than Catholicism.

The first university in Serbia was founded in revolutionary Belgrade in 1808 as a *Great Academy*, the precursor of the contemporary University of Belgrade. The oldest college (faculty) within current borders of Serbia dates back to 1778; founded in the city of Sombor, then Habsburg Empire, it was known under the name *Norma* and was the oldest Slavic Teacher's college in Southern Europe.



Headquarters of the Belgrade University, pictured in 1890

Holidays

All holidays in Serbia are regulated by the Law of national and other holidays in Republic of Serbia (*Zakon o državnim i drugim praznicima u Republici Srbiji*). The following holidays are observed state-wide:

Date	Name	Notes
January 1 / January 2	New Year's Day (<i>Nova Godina</i>)	non-working holiday
January 7	Orthodox Christmas (<i>Božić</i>)	non-working holiday
January 27	Saint Sava's Day - Spirituality day (<i>Savindan - Dan Duhovnosti</i>)	working holiday (in memory on the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church)
February 15	Statehood day - Candlemas (<i>Dan državnosti - Sretenje</i>)	non-working holiday (in memory on the First Serbian Uprising)
April 25	Orthodox Great Friday (<i>Veliki petak</i>)	non-working holiday (date for 2008 only)
April 26	Orthodox Great Saturday (<i>Velika subota</i>)	non-working holiday (date for 2008 only)
April 27	Orthodox Easter (<i>Vaskrs</i>)	non-working holiday (date for 2008 only)
April 28	Orthodox Easter Monday (<i>Veliki ponedeljak</i>)	non-working holiday (date for 2008 only)
May 1 / May 2	Labour Day (<i>Dan rada</i>)	non-working holiday

May 9	Victory Day (<i>Dan pobede</i>)	working holiday
June 28	Saint Vitus' Day - Day of the fallen for the fatherland (<i>Vidovdan - Dan Srba palih za otadžbinu</i>)	working holiday (in memory of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389)

Also, members of other religions have the right not to work on days of their holidays.

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Slovakia

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Slovakia (long form: **Slovak Republic**; Slovak: *Slovensko* , long form *Slovenská republika*) is a landlocked country in Central Europe with a population of over five million and an area of about 49,000 square kilometres (almost 19,000 square miles). The Slovak Republic borders the Czech Republic and Austria to the west, Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east and Hungary to the south. The largest city is its capital, Bratislava. Slovakia is a member state of the European Union, NATO, OECD, WTO, and other international organizations.

The Slavic people arrived in the territory of present day Slovakia between the 5th and 6th century AD during the Migration Period (Migration of Nations). Various parts of Slovakia belonged to Samo's Empire, the first known political unit of Slavs, Great Moravia, the Kingdom of Hungary, Habsburg (Austrian) monarchy, Austria-Hungary, Czechoslovakia throughout history. Slovakia became independent on January 1, 1993 with the peaceful division of Czechoslovakia in the Velvet Divorce.

Slovakia is a high-income economy with one of the fastest rates of growth in the EU and OECD. It joined the European Union in 2004 and will join the Eurozone on 1 January 2009.

History

Before the 5th century

<p><i>Slovenská republika</i> Slovak Republic</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Motto: "Afferant Montes Pacem Populo" "May mountains bring people peace"</p>	
<p>Anthem: <i>Nad Tatrou sa blýska</i> "Lightning over the Tatras"</p>	
	
<p>Location of Slovakia (orange)</p>	
<p>– on the European continent (camel & white) – in the European Union (camel) [Legend]</p>	



A Roman inscription at the castle hill of Trenčín (178-179 AD).

From around 500 BC, the territory of modern-day Slovakia was settled by Celts, who built powerful oppida on the sites of modern-day Bratislava and Havránok. Biatecs, silver coins with the names of Celtic Kings, represent the first known use of writing in Slovakia. From 2 AD, the expanding Roman Empire established and maintained a series of outposts around and just north of the Danube, the largest of which were known as Carnuntum and Brigetio. Near the northernmost line of the Roman hinterlands, Limes Romanus there existed the winter camp of Laugaricio (modern-day Trenčín) where the Auxiliary of Legion II fought and prevailed in a decisive battle over the Germanic Quadi tribe in 179 AD during the Marcomannic Wars. The Kingdom of Vannius, a barbarian kingdom founded by the Germanic Suebian tribes of Quadi and Marcomanni, as well as several small Germanic and Celtic tribes, including the Osi and Cotini, existed in Western and Central Slovakia from 8–6 BC to 179 AD.

Slavic states

The Slavic tribes settled in the territory of Slovakia in the 6th century. Western Slovakia was the centre of Samo's Empire in the 7th century. A Slavic state, known as the Principality of Nitra, arose in the 8th century and its ruler Pribina had the first known Christian church in Slovakia consecrated by 828. Together with neighboring Moravia, the principality formed the core of the Great Moravian Empire from 833. The high point of this Slavonic empire came with the arrival of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 863, during the reign of Prince Rastislav, and the territorial expansion under King Svatopluk I.

Kingdom of Hungary

After the disintegration of the Great Moravian Empire in the early 10th century, the Hungarians gradually annexed the territory of the present-day Slovakia. In the late 10th century, south-western Slovakia became part of the arising Hungarian principality, which transformed to the Kingdom of Hungary after 1000. Most of Slovakia was integrated into the Kingdom of Hungary by c. 1100, north-eastern parts by c. 1300. For almost two centuries, it was ruled autonomously as the Principality of Nitra within the Kingdom of Hungary. Slovak settlements extended to northern and south-eastern present-day Hungary. The ethnic composition became more diverse with the arrival of the Carpathian Germans in the 13th century, Vlachs in the 14th century and Jews.

A huge population loss resulted from the invasion of the Mongols in 1241 and the subsequent famine. However medieval Slovakia was characterized rather by burgeoning towns, construction of numerous stone castles, and the development of art. In 1465, King Matthias Corvinus founded the first university in Bratislava, but it was closed in 1490 after his death.

After the Ottoman Empire started its expansion into Hungary and the occupation of Buda in the early 16th century, the centre of the Kingdom of Hungary (under the name of Royal Hungary) shifted towards Pressburg (now Bratislava), which became the capital city of the Royal Hungary in 1536. But the Ottoman wars and frequent insurrections against the Habsburg Monarchy also inflicted a great deal of destruction, especially in rural areas. As the Turks withdrew from Hungary in the late 17th century, Slovakia's importance within the kingdom decreased, although Bratislava retained its position as the capital city of Hungary until 1848, when the capital moved to Budapest.

During the revolution in 1848-49 the Slovaks supported the Austrian Emperor with the ambition to secede from the Hungarian part of the Austrian monarchy, but they failed to achieve this aim. During the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from 1867 to 1918, the Slovaks experienced severe oppression in the form of Magyarization, promoted by the Hungarian government.

Czechoslovakia and World War 2

In 1918, Slovakia and the regions of Bohemia and Moravia formed a common state, Czechoslovakia, with the borders confirmed by the Treaty of Saint Germain and Treaty of Trianon. In 1919, during the chaos following the breakup of Austria-Hungary, Slovakia was attacked by the provisional Hungarian Soviet Republic and one-third of Slovakia temporarily became the Slovak Soviet Republic.

During the inter-war period, democratic and prosperous Czechoslovakia was under continuous pressure from the revisionist governments of Germany and Hungary, until it was finally broken up in 1939, as a result of the Munich Agreement concluded a year before. Southern Slovakia was lost to Hungary due to the First Vienna Award.

Under pressure from Nazi Germany, the First Slovak Republic, led by the clerical fascist leader Jozef Tiso, declared its independence from Czechoslovakia in 1939. However, the government was strongly influenced by Germany and gradually became a puppet regime. An anti-Nazi resistance movement launched a fierce armed insurrection, known as the Slovak National Uprising, in 1944. A bloody German occupation and a guerilla war followed. Most Jews were deported from the country and taken to German concentration camps during the Holocaust.

Communist era

After World War II, Czechoslovakia was reconstituted and Jozef Tiso was hanged in 1947 for collaboration with the Nazis. More than 76,000 Hungarians and 32,000 Germans were forced to leave Slovakia, in a series of population transfers initiated by the Allies at the Potsdam Conference. This expulsion is still a source of tension between Slovakia and Hungary.



Trojičné námestie in Banská Štiavnica, World Heritage Site.

Czechoslovakia came under the influence of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact after a coup in 1948. The country was occupied by the Warsaw Pact forces in 1968, ending a period of liberalization under the leadership of Alexander Dubček. In 1969, Czechoslovakia became a federation of the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic.

Establishment of Slovakia

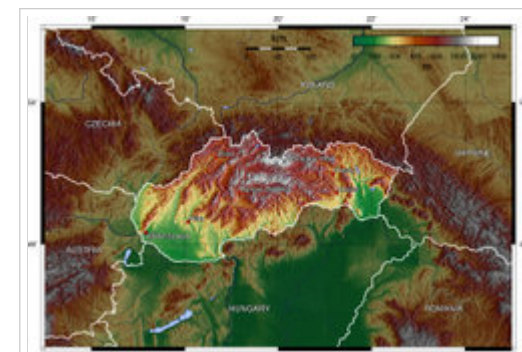
The end of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia in 1989, during the peaceful Velvet Revolution, was followed once again by the country's dissolution, this time into two successor states. In July 1992 Slovakia, led by Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, declared itself a sovereign state, meaning that its laws took precedence over those of the federal government. Throughout the Autumn of 1992, Mečiar and Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus negotiated the details for disbanding the federation. In November the federal parliament voted to dissolve the country officially on December 31, 1992. Slovakia and the Czech Republic went their separate ways after January 1, 1993, an event sometimes called the Velvet Divorce. Slovakia has remained a close partner with the Czech Republic and other countries within the Visegrad Group. Slovakia became a member of NATO on March 29, 2004 and of the European Union on May 1, 2004 .

Geography

The Slovak landscape is noted primarily for its mountainous nature, with the Carpathian Mountains extending across most of the northern half of the country. Amongst these mountain ranges are the high peaks of the Tatra mountains. To the north, close to the Polish border, are the High Tatras which are a popular skiing destination and home to many scenic lakes and valleys as well as the highest point in Slovakia, the Gerlachovský štít at 2,655 metres (8,711 ft), and the country's highly symbolic mountain Kriváň.

Major Slovak rivers are the Danube, the Váh and the Hron.

The Slovak climate lies between the temperate and continental climate zones with relatively warm summers and cold, cloudy and humid winters. The area of Slovakia can be divided into three kinds of climatic zones and the first zone can be divided into two sub-zones.



A topographical map of Slovakia.

Climate of lowlands

Dominance of oceanic influences

The average annual temperature is about 9–10°C (48–50°F). The average temperature of the hottest month is about 20°C (68°F) and the average temperature of the coldest month is greater than –3°C (26°F). This kind of climate occurs at Záhorská nížina and Podunajská nížina. It is the typical climate of the capital city Bratislava.

Climate of lowlands with dominance of continental influences

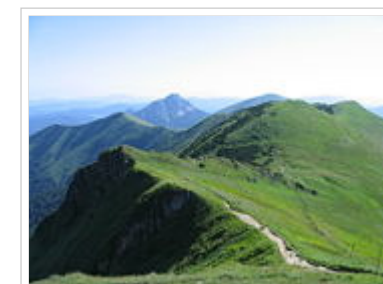
The average annual temperature is about 8–9°C (46–48°F). The average temperature of the hottest month is about 19°C (66°F) and the average temperature of the coldest month is less than –3°C (26°F). This kind of climate can be found at Košická kotlina and Východoslovenská nížina. It is the typical climate of the city of Košice.

Climate of basins

The average annual temperature is between 5°C and 8.5°C (41–47°F). The average temperature of the hottest month is between 15°C and 18.5°C (59–65°F) and the average temperature of the coldest month is between –3°C and –6°C (21–26°F). This climate can be found in almost all basins in Slovakia. For example Podtatranská kotlina, Žilinská kotlina, Turčianska kotlina, Zvolenská kotlina. It is the typical climate for the towns of Poprad and Sliač.

Mountain climate

The average annual temperature is less than 5°C (41°F). The average temperature of the hottest month is less than 15°C (59°F) and the average temperature of the coldest month is less than –5°C (23°F). This kind of climate occurs in mountains and in some villages in the valleys of Orava and Spiš.



The main ridge of the Kriváň Lesser Fatra.

Demographics

The majority of the inhabitants of Slovakia are ethnically Slovak (85.8%). Hungarians are the largest ethnic minority (9.7%). Other ethnic groups, as of the 2001 census, include Roma with 1.7%, Ruthenians or Ukrainians with 1%, and other or unspecified, 1.8%.

The official state language is Slovak, a member of the Slavic Language Family, but Hungarian is also widely spoken in the south of the country and enjoys a co-official status in some municipalities, and many people also speak Czech.

The Slovak constitution guarantees freedom of religion. The majority of Slovak citizens (68.9 %) identify themselves with Roman Catholicism (although church attendance is lower); the second-largest group are people without confession (13%). About 6.93% belong to Lutheranism, 4.1% are Greek Catholic, affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, Calvinism has 2.0%, other and non-registered churches 1.1% and some (0.9%) are Eastern Orthodox. About 2,300 Jews remain of the large estimated pre-WWII population of 90,000.

In 2007 Slovakia was estimated to have a fertility rate of 1.33. (i.e., the average woman will have 1.33 children in her lifetime), which is one of the lowest numbers among EU countries.

Politics



Slovakia's Presidential Palace
in Bratislava (Pozsony)

Slovakia is a parliamentary democratic republic with a multi-party system. The last parliamentary elections were held on June 17, 2006 and two rounds of presidential elections took place on April 3, 2004 and April 17, 2004.

The Slovak head of state is the president (Ivan Gašparovič, 2004 - 2009), elected by direct popular vote for a five-year term. Most executive power lies with the head of government, the prime minister (Robert Fico, 2006 - 2010), who is usually the leader of the winning party, but he/she needs to form a majority coalition in the parliament. The prime minister is appointed by the president. The remainder of the cabinet is appointed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister.

Slovakia's highest legislative body is the 150-seat unicameral National Council of the Slovak Republic (*Národná rada Slovenskej republiky*). Delegates are elected for a four-year term on the basis of proportional representation. Slovakia's highest judicial body is the Constitutional Court of Slovakia (*Ústavný súd*), which rules on constitutional issues. The 13 members of this court are appointed by the president from a slate of candidates nominated by parliament.

Slovakia is a member state of the European Union and NATO since 2004. As a member of the United Nations (since 1993), Slovakia was, on October 10, 2005, elected to a two-year term on the UN Security Council from 2006 to 2007. Slovakia is also a member of WTO, OECD, OSCE, and other international organizations.

Regions and districts

As for administrative division, Slovakia is subdivided into 8 *kraje* (singular - *kraj*, usually translated as "region", but actual meaning is "county"), each of which is named after its principal city. Regions have enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy since 2002. Their self-governing bodies are referred to as Self-governing (or autonomous) Regions (sg. *samosprávny kraj*, pl. *samosprávne kraje*) or Upper-Tier Territorial Units (sg. *vyšší územný celok*, pl. *vyššie územné celky*, abbr. VÚC).

1. Bratislava Region (*Bratislavský kraj*) (capital Bratislava)
2. Trnava Region (*Trnavský kraj*) (capital Trnava)
3. Trenčín Region (*Trenčiansky kraj*) (capital Trenčín)
4. Nitra Region (*Nitriansky kraj*) (capital Nitra)
5. Žilina Region (*Žilinský kraj*) (capital Žilina)
6. Banská Bystrica Region (*Banskobystrický kraj*) (capital Banská Bystrica)
7. Prešov Region (*Prešovský kraj*) (capital Prešov)
8. Košice Region (*Košický kraj*) (capital Košice)



(the word *kraj* can be replaced by *samosprávny kraj* or by *VÚC* in each case)

The "kraje" are subdivided into many *okresy* (sg. *okres*, usually translated as districts). Slovakia currently has 79 districts. The districts are then subdivided into *zuj* ("village" or "municipality").

In terms of economics and unemployment rate, the western regions are richer than eastern regions; however the relative difference is no bigger than in most EU countries having regional differences.

Economy

Slovakia has pursued a difficult transition from a centrally planned economy to a modern, high-income market economy. Major privatizations are nearly complete, the banking sector is almost completely in private hands, and foreign investment has picked up.

Slovakia is characterized by the sustained high economic growth. In 2006, Slovakia reached the highest growth of GDP (8.9%) among the members of OECD. The annual GDP growth in 2007 is estimated at 10,4%, with the record level of 14,3% reached in the fourth quarter.

Unemployment, peaking at 19.2% at the end of 2001, decreased to 7.84% in February 2008 according to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. In addition to the economic growth, migration of workers to other EU countries also contributed to this reduction. According to Eurostat, which uses calculation method different from that of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, the unemployment rate is still the highest in the EU at 9.9%.

Inflation dropped from an average annual rate of 12.0% in 2000 to just 3.3% in the election year 2002, but it rose again in 2003-2004 because of increases in taxes and regulated prices. It reached 3.7 % in 2005.

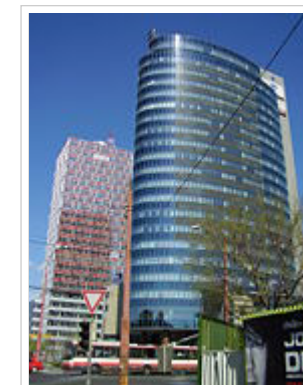
Slovakia will adopt the euro currency on 1 January 2009 as the 16th EU country to do so and has already entered the ERM II for this purpose. The euro in Slovakia was approved by the European commission on 7 May 2008. The Slovak koruna was revalued on 28 May 2008 to 30.126 for 1 euro, which will also be the exchange rate for the euro.

Slovakia is an attractive country for foreign investors mainly because of its lower labour cost, low tax rates and well educated labour force. In recent years, Slovakia has been pursuing a policy of encouraging foreign investment. FDI inflow grew more than 600% from 2000 and cumulatively reached an all-time high of \$17.3 billion USD in 2006, or around \$18,000 per capita by the end of 2006.

Despite a sufficient number of researchers and a solid secondary educational system, Slovakia, along with other post-communist countries, still faces many challenges in the field of modern knowledge economy. The business and public research and development expenditures are well below the EU average. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks the Slovak secondary education as the 30th in the world (placing it just below the United States and just above Spain).

In March 2008, the Ministry of Finance announced that Slovakia's economy is developed enough to stop being an aid receiver from the World Bank. Slovakia will become an aid provider by the end of 2008.

Tourism



High-rise buildings at Nivy, one of Bratislava's main business districts

Slovakia features natural landscapes, mountains, caves, medieval castles and towns, folk architecture, spas and ski resorts.

More than 1.6 million people visited Slovakia in 2006, and the most attractive destinations are the capital of Bratislava and the High Tatras. Most visitors come from the Czech Republic (about 26%), Poland (15%) and Germany (11%).

International rankings

- Human Development Index 2006: Rank 42nd out of 177 countries
- Index of Economic Freedom 2006: Rank 34th out of 157 countries
- Reporters Without Borders world-wide press freedom index 2007: Rank 3rd (along with Estonia) out of 169 countries
- Global Competitiveness Report ranking 2006-2007: Rank 37th out of 125 countries.
- Corruption Perceptions Index 2007: Rank 49th out of 180 countries.
- PISA 2006: Rank 27



High Tatras.

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovakia>"

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Slovenia

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Slovenia, officially the **Republic of Slovenia** (Slovene: *Republika Slovenija*, listen[ⓘ]), is a country in southern Central Europe bordering Italy to the west, the Adriatic Sea to the southwest, Croatia to the south and east, Hungary to the northeast, and Austria to the north. The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana.

At various points in Slovenia's history, the country has been part of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Republic of Venice, the Duchy of Carantania (only modern Slovenia's northern part), the Holy Roman Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy, the Austrian Empire (later known as Austria-Hungary), the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (renamed to Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929) between the two World Wars, and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1945 until gaining independence in 1991.

Slovenia is the only former communist state to be at the same time a member of the European Union, the Eurozone, the Schengen area, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and NATO.

History

<p><i>Republika Slovenija</i> Republic of Slovenia</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Anthem: 7th stanza of <i>Zdravljica</i></p>	
	
<p>Location of Slovenia (dark green)</p>	
<p>— on the European continent (light green & dark grey) — in the European Union (light green) — [Legend]</p>	

Capital (and largest city)	Ljubljana
Official languages	Slovene ¹
Demonym	Slovenian, Slovene
Government - President - Prime Minister	Parliamentary republic Danilo Türk Janez Janša
Independence - Declared - Recognised	from Yugoslavia June 25, 1991 1992
EU accession	May 1, 2004
Area - Total - Water (%)	20,273 km ² (153rd) 7,827 sq mi 0.6
Population - 2008 estimate - 2002 census - Density	2,023,358 ² (143rd) 1,964,036 99.6/km ² (80th) 251/sq mi
GDP (PPP) - Total - Per capita	2008 estimate \$48.343 billion (83rd) \$28,010 (29th)
GDP (nominal) - Total - Per capita	2007 estimate \$38.240 billion (67th) \$22,079 (30th)
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.917 (high) (27th)

Slavic ancestors of the present-day Slovenes settled in the area in the 6th century. The Slavic Duchy of Carantania was formed in the 7th century. In 745, Carantania was incorporated into the Carolingian Empire, while Karantians and other Slavs living in present Slovenia converted to Christianity. Carantania retained its internal independence until 828 when the local princes were deposed following the anti-Frankish rebellion of Ljudevit Posavski and replaced with a German (mostly Bavarian) ascendancy. Under the Emperor Arnulf of Carinthia Carantania, now ruled by a mixed Bavarian-Slav nobility, shortly emerged as a regional power, but was destroyed by the Hungarian invasions in the late 9th century. The Slovene Lands were turned into a military borderland of the Carolingian Empire (the Marches of Carinthia, of Carniola and of Friuli). Carantania was established again as an autonomous administrative unit in 976, but it never developed into a unified realm; it soon broke down into what became the duchies of Carinthia, Styria, Carniola and Friuli, into which the Slovene Lands remained divided up to 1918. The Carantanian identity remained alive into the 12th century when it was slowly replaced by regional identities. The first mentions of a common Slovene ethnic identity, transcending regional boundaries, date from the 16th century.

The Freising manuscripts, the earliest surviving written documents in a Slovene dialect as well as the oldest document written in any Slavic language with Latin script, were written in the 10th century. During the 14th century, most of Slovene Lands passed under Habsburg rule. In the 15th century, the Habsburg domination was challenged by the Counts of Celje, but by the end of the century the great majority of Slovene-inhabited territories were incorporated into the Habsburg Monarchy. Most Slovenes lived in the region known as Inner Austria, forming the majority of the population of the Duchy of Carniola and the County of Gorizia and Gradisca, as well as of Lower Styria and southern Carinthia. Slovenes also inhabited most of the territory of the Imperial Free City of Trieste, although representing the minority of its population. Slovene majorities also existed in the Prekmurje region of the Kingdom of Hungary, in the Venetian Slovenia and north-western Istria which were part of the Republic of Venice.

In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation spread throughout the Slovene Lands. During this period, the first books in Slovene language were written by the Protestant preacher Primož Trubar and his followers, establishing the base for the development of the Slovene standard language. Although almost all Protestants were expelled from the Slovene Lands (with the exception of Prekmurje) by the beginning of the 17th century, they left a strong legacy in the tradition of the Slovene culture, which was partially incorporated in the Catholic Counter-Reformation. The Slovene cultural tradition was further reinforced in the Enlightenment period by the endeavours of the Zois Circle.

After a short French interim between 1805 and 1813, all Slovene Lands were included in the Austrian Empire. Slowly, a distinct Slovene national consciousness developed, and the quest for a political unification of all Slovenes became widespread. In 1848, a mass political and popular movement for the United Slovenia (*Zedinjena Slovenija*) emerged as part of the Spring of Nations movement within the Austrian Empire.

Currency	euro (€) ³ (EUR)
Time zone - Summer (DST)	CET (UTC+1) CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.si ⁴
Calling code	+386
<p>¹ Italian and Hungarian are recognised as official languages in the residential municipalities of the Italian or Hungarian national community.</p> <p>² Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: Population, Slovenia, 30 June 2007</p> <p>³ Prior to 2007: Slovenian tolar</p> <p>⁴ Also .eu, shared with other European Union member states.</p>	

History of Slovenia



Samo's Realm
Carantania
Carniola
March of Carniola
Windic march
Illyrian Provinces
Kingdom of Illyria
Duchy of Carniola
Drava Banovina

Between 1848 and 1918, numerous institutions (including theatres, publishing houses, as well as political, financial and cultural organisations) were founded in the so-called Slovene National Awakening; despite their political and institutional fragmentation and lack of a proper political representation, the Slovenes were able to establish a functioning and integrated national infrastructure. During this period, the town of Ljubljana, the capital of Carniola, emerged as the undisputed centre of all Slovene Lands, while the Slovenes developed an internationally comparable literature and culture. Nevertheless, the Slovene national question remained unsolved, so the political élite of the time started looking towards other Slavic nations in Austria-Hungary and the Balkans in order to engage in a common political action against German and Magyar hegemony. The idea of a common political entity of all South Slavs, known as Yugoslavia, emerged.

Province of Ljubljana
Socialist Republic of Slovenia
Republic of Slovenia

During World War I, after the Italian attack on Austria-Hungary in 1915, the Italian front opened, and some of the most important battles (the Battles of the Isonzo) were fought along the river Soča and on the Kras Plateau in the Slovenian Littoral.

With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, the Slovenes initially joined the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, which soon afterwards merged into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later renamed to Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The western part of the Slovene Lands (the Slovenian Littoral and western districts of Inner Carniola) was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy and became known under the name of Julian March. In 1920, in the Carinthian Plebiscite, the majority of Carinthian Slovenes voted to remain in Austria. Although the Slovenes in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were submitted to an intolerant centralist policy trying to eradicate a distinct Slovene national consciousness, they were still better off than Slovenes in Italy, Austria and Hungary, who became victims of policies of forced assimilation and violent persecution. As a reaction to the fascist violence of the Italian State in the Julian March, the organisation TIGR, regarded as one of the first armed antifascist resistance groups in Europe, was founded in 1927.

In April 1941, Yugoslavia was invaded by the Axis Powers. Slovenia was divided between Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Horthy's Hungary. Soon, a liberation movement under Communist leadership emerged. Due to political assassinations carried out by the Communist guerrillas as well as the pre-existing radical anti-Communism of the conservative circles of Slovenian society, a civil war between Slovenes broke out in the Italian-occupied south-eastern Slovenia (known as Province of Ljubljana) between the Liberation Front of the Slovenian People and the Axis-sponsored anti-communist militia, the Slovene Home Guard. Nevertheless, the Slovene partisan guerrilla managed to liberate large portions of the Slovene Lands, making an important contribution to the defeat of Nazism.

Following the re-establishment of Yugoslavia at the end of World War II, Slovenia became part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, declared on 29 November 1945. A Communist dictatorship was established, but due to the Tito-Stalin split economic and personal freedom were better than in the Eastern Bloc. In 1947, Italy ceded most of the Julian March to Yugoslavia and Slovenia thus regained the Slovenian Littoral, including access to the sea. From the 1950s, the Socialist Republic of Slovenia enjoyed a relatively wide autonomy under the rule of the local Communist elite. In 1990, the first free and democratic elections were held and the DEMOS coalition defeated the former Communist parties. In December 1990, the overwhelming majority of Slovenian citizens voted for independence, which was declared on 25 June 1991. A Ten-Day War followed in which the Slovenians rejected Yugoslav military interference. After 1990, a stable democratic system evolved, with economic liberalisation and gradual growth of prosperity. Slovenia joined NATO on 29 March 2004 and the European Union on 1 May 2004. Slovenia is the first post-Communist country to hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, for the first six months of 2008.

Politics

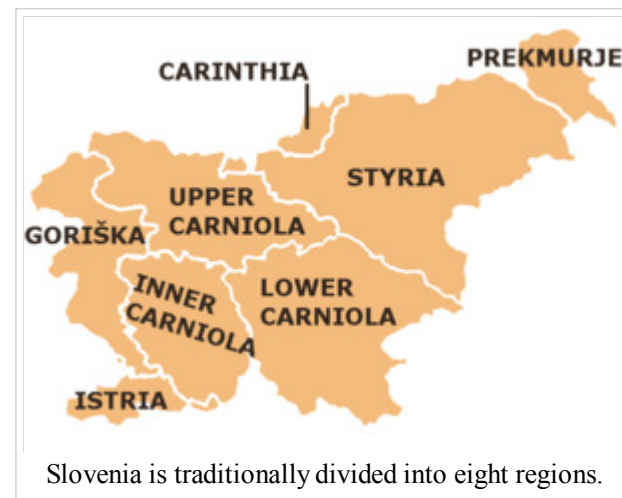
The Slovenian head of state is the president, who is elected by popular vote every five years. The executive branch is headed by the prime minister and the council of ministers or cabinet, who are elected by the parliament.

The bicameral Parliament of Slovenia consists of the National Assembly (*Državni zbor*), and the National Council (*Državni svet*). The National Assembly has ninety members, 88 of which are elected by all the citizens in a system of proportional representation, while two are elected by the autochthonous Hungarian and Italian minorities. The National Council has forty members, appointed to represent social, economic, professional and local interest groups. Parliamentary elections are held every four years.

Administrative divisions

The traditional regions of Slovenia based on the former four Habsburg crown lands (Carniola, Carinthia, Styria, and the Littoral) are the following:

English name	Native name
Upper Carniola	<i>Gorenjska</i>
Styria	<i>Štajerska</i>
Prekmurje	<i>Prekmurje</i>
Carinthia	<i>Koroška</i>
Inner Carniola	<i>Notranjska</i>
Lower Carniola	<i>Dolenjska</i>
Goriška	<i>Goriška</i>
Slovenian Istria	<i>Slovenska Istra</i>



Goriška and Slovenian Istria together are known as the Littoral region (*Slovene*: Primorska). White Carniola (*Slovene*: Bela krajina), otherwise part of Lower Carniola, is considered a separate region of Slovenia, as are Zasavje and Posavje, the former being a part of Upper Carniola, Lower Carniola and Styria; and the latter part of Lower Carniola and Styria.

Natural regions

The first regionalisations of Slovenia were made by geographers Anton Melik (1935-1936) and Svetozar Ilešič (1968). The newer regionalisation by Ivan Gams divides Slovenia in the following macroregions:

- the Alps (visokogorske Alpe)
- the Prealpine Hills (predalpsko hribovje)
- the Ljubljana Basin (Ljubljanska kotlina)
- Submediterranean (Littoral) Slovenia (submediteranska - primorska Slovenija)
- the Dinaric Karst of inner Slovenia (dinarski kras notranje Slovenije)
- Subpannonian Slovenia (subpanonska Slovenija)

According to a newer natural geographic regionalisation, the country consists of four macroregions. These are the Alpine, the Mediterranean, the Dinaric, and the Pannonian landscapes. Macroregions are defined according to major relief units (the Alps, the Pannonian plain, the Dinaric mountains) and climate types (submediterranean, temperate continental, mountain climate). These are often quite interwoven.

Macroregions consist of multiple and very diverse mesoregions. The main factor that defines them is the relief together with the geologic composition. Mesoregions in turn consist of numerous microregions.

Statistical regions

Slovenia's statistical regions exist solely for legal and statistical purposes. As of February 2007 there are 12 statistical regions (NUTS-2 level), which are grouped in two macroregions (NUTS-1 level):



Landscape types in Slovenia.
Alpine landscape
Pannonian landscape
Dinaric landscape
Mediterranean landscape



Piran, a popular tourist destination in Slovenia



Slovenia's twelve statistical regions.

Vzhodna Slovenija (East Slovenia) - SI01

Statistical Region	NUTS code
Pomurska	SI011
Podravska	SI012
Koroška	SI013
Savinjska	SI014
Zasavska	SI015
Spodnjeposavska	SI016
Jugovzhodna Slovenija	SI017
Notranjsko-kraška	SI018

Zahodna Slovenija (West Slovenia) - SI02

Statistical Region	NUTS code
Osrednjeslovenska	SI021
Gorenjska	SI022
Goriška	SI023
Obalno-kraška	SI024

The government, however, is preparing a plan for new administrative regions. The number of these regions is not yet defined, but is said to be between twelve and fourteen. After being unveiled publicly, the plan will undergo parliamentary debate. Constitutional changes allowing the creation of regions have already been approved by the National Assembly. If, however, twelve administrative regions are favored, they will most likely be the same as those already in place.

On May 24, 2007 the government proposed a reform in the local government system, introducing administrative regions with limited home rule. It has been stated that 13 will be the maximum allowed number of such regions (or provinces), but their actual names, territories and capitals have yet to be exactly determined. As the passage of necessary legislation has stalled, the process of devolution has been postponed, probably till 2010.

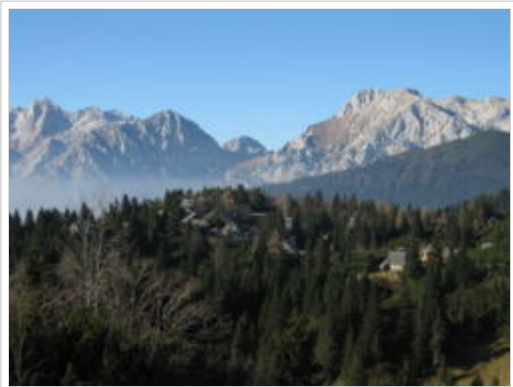
Municipalities

Slovenia is divided into 210 local municipalities, eleven of which have urban status.

Geography

Four major European geographic regions meet in Slovenia: the Alps, the Dinarides, the Pannonian plain, and the Mediterranean. Slovenia's highest peak is Triglav (2,864 m; 9,396 ft); the country's average height above sea level is 557 metres (1,827 ft). Around half of the country (11,691 km²; 4,514 sq mi) is covered by forests; the third most forested country in Europe, after Finland and Sweden. Remnants of primeval forests are still to be found, the largest in the Kočevje area. Grassland covers 5,593 square kilometres (2,159 sq mi) and fields and gardens 2,471 square kilometres (954 sq mi). There are 363 square kilometres (140 sq mi) of orchards and 216 square kilometres (83 sq mi) of vineyards.

Its climate is submediterranean on the coast, alpine in the mountains and continental with mild to hot summers and cold winters in the plateaux and valleys to the east. Average temperatures are -2 °C (28 °F) in January and 21 °C (70 °F) in July. The average rainfall is 1,000 millimetres (39.4 in) for the coast, up to 3,500 millimetres (137.8 in) for the Alps, 800 millimetres (31.5 in) for south-east and 1,400 millimetres (55.1 in) for central Slovenia.



The Kamnik Alps

Although on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, most of Slovenia is in the Black Sea drainage basin. The geometric centre of gravity of Slovenia is at the geographic coordinates 46°07'11.8" N and 14°48'55.2" E. It lies in Spodnja Slivna near Vače in the municipality of Litija.

Economy

Slovenia has a high-income developed economy which enjoys the second highest (after Cyprus) GDP per capita (\$28,010.76 estimate for 2008) of the new EU countries which is 93% of the EU average. Although the country's relatively high inflation declined to 2.3% in 2006 (prior to adoption of the euro), it recently reached 5.1% year-on-year, exceeding the average in the eurozone. Slovenia's economy has started to grow more strongly in the last few years (7.2% in first quarter of 2007, 5.7% in 2006, 4.1% in 2005), after relatively slow growth in 2003 (2.8%).

Despite economic success, Slovenia faces challenges. Much of the economy remains in state hands and foreign direct investment (FDI) in Slovenia is one of the lowest in the EU per capita. Taxes are relatively high, the labor market is seen as inflexible, and industries are losing sales to China, India, and elsewhere.

During the 2000s, privatisations were seen in the banking, telecommunications, and public utility sectors. Restrictions on foreign investment are being dismantled, and foreign direct investment (FDI) is expected to increase. Slovenia is the economic front-runner of the countries that joined the European Union in 2004 and the first new member to adopt the euro on 1 January 2007.



Map of Slovenia



Triglav

Numismatics

Slovenian euro coins were first issued for circulation on 1 January 2007 and feature a unique design for each coin. The Slovenian euro coins were the first to feature a new common side, with a new map of Europe on the bicoloured and Nordic-gold coins.

Since January 1, 2007, in such a short time, Slovenia have already built a small collection of collectors' coins, in gold, silver and other metals, with face value ranging from 3 to 100 euro. These coins are a legacy of an old national practice of minting of silver and gold commemorative coins. Unlike normal issues, these coins are not legal tender in all the eurozone. For instance, a €3 Slovenian commemorative coin cannot be used in any other country.

Demographics

See also: Roman Catholicism in Slovenia, History of the Jews in Slovenia, and The erased immigrants (Slovene: Izbrisani)

Slovenia's main ethnic group is Slovene (83%). Nationalities from the former Yugoslavia (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Montenegrin) form 5.3%, and the Hungarian, Albanian, Roma, Italian and other minorities form 2.8% of the population. Ethnic affiliation of 8.9% was either undeclared or unknown.

Life expectancy in 2003 was 72.2 years for men and 80 years for women. Slovenia ranks number 8 on the list of countries by suicide rate.

Roman Catholic	57.8%
undeclared or unknown	22.8%
Atheist	10.1%
Agnostic	3.5%
Islam	2.4%
Orthodox	2.3%
Evangelical	0.8%
other religions	0.3%
Jewish	0.0%

source: 2002 census

Slovene	83.06%
Serbian	1.98%
Croatian	1.81%
Bosnian	1.10%
Hungarian	0.32%
Albanian	0.31%
Macedonian	0.20%
Romani	0.17%
Montenegrin	0.14%
Italian	0.11%
other minorities	1.9%
undeclared or unknown	8.9%

source: 2002 census

With 99 inhabitants per square kilometre (256/sq mi), Slovenia ranks low among the European countries in population density (compared to 320/km² (829/sq mi) for the Netherlands or 195/km² (505/sq mi) for Italy). The Notranjska-Kras statistical region has the lowest population density while the Central Slovenia has the highest. Approximately 51% of the population lives in urban areas and 49% in rural areas.

The official language is Slovene, which is a member of the South Slavic Slavic language group. Hungarian and Italian enjoy the status of official languages in the ethnically mixed regions along the Hungarian and Italian borders.

By religion, Slovenes are traditionally largely Roman Catholic (57.8% according to the 2002 Census). According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 37% of Slovenian citizens responded that "they believe there is a god", whereas 46% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 16% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

Culture

Slovenia's first book was printed by the Protestant reformer Primož Trubar (1508-1586). It was actually two books, Latin: *Catechismus* (a catechism) and *Abecedarium*, which was published in 1550 in Tübingen, Germany.

The central part of the country, namely Carniola (which existed as a part of Austria-Hungary until the early 20th century) was ethnographically and historically well-described in the book *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* (*German*: Die Ehre deß Herzogthums Crain, *Slovene*: Slava vojvodine Kranjske), published in 1689 by Baron Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641-1693).

Image:France Prešeren.jpg
France Prešeren, a portrait by
Božidar Jakac, 1940

Some of Slovenia's greatest literates were the poets France Prešeren (1800-1849), Srečko Kosovel, Edvard Kocbek and Dane Zajc, as well as the writers Ivan Cankar (1876-1918) and Vladimir Bartol. Alojz Rebula, Drago Jančar, Boris Pahor, Tomaž Šalamun and Aleš Debeljak are the leading names of contemporary Slovene literature, while Aleš Šteger is one of the most noticeable name among newcomers. The most important Slovene painters include Anton Ažbe, Ivana Kobilca, Rihard Jakopič, Božidar Jakac, Avgust Černigoj and Zoran Mušič. The most famed Slovene architects are Jože Plečnik and Max

Fabiani.

Slovenia is a homeland of numerous musicians and composers, including Renaissance composer Jacobus Gallus (1550-1591), who greatly influenced Central European classical music, and the violin virtuoso Giuseppe Tartini. In the twentieth century, Bojan Adamič was a renowned film music composer and Ivo Petrič (born June 16, 1931), is a composer of European classical music.

Contemporary popular musicians have been Slavko Avsenik, Laibach, Vlado Kreslin, Pero Lovšin, Pankrti, Zoran Predin, Lačni Franz, New Swing Quartet, DJ Umek, Valentino Kanzyani, Siddharta, Big Foot Mama, Terrafolk, Katalena, Magnifico and others.

Slovene cinema has more than a century-long tradition with Karol Grossmann, Janko Ravnik, Ferdo Delak, France Štiglic, Mirko Grobler, Igor Pretnar, France Kosmač, Jože Pogačnik, Matjaž Klopčič, Jane Kavčič, Jože Gale, Boštjan Hladnik and Karpo Godina as its most established filmmakers. Contemporary film directors Janez Burger, Jan Cvitkovič, Damjan Kozole, Janez Lapajne and Maja Weiss are most notable representatives of the so-called " Renaissance of Slovenian cinema".



Ljubljana's St. Nicholas Cathedral

Famous Slovene scholars include the chemist and Nobel prize laureate Friderik Pregl, physicist Jožef Stefan, philosophers Slavoj Žižek and Milan Komar, linguist Franc Miklošič, physician Anton Marko Plenčič, mathematician Jurij Vega, sociologist Thomas Luckmann, theologian Anton Strle and rocket engineer Herman Potočnik.

Biodiversity

Although Slovenia is a small country, there is an exceptionally wide variety of habitats. In the north of Slovenia are the Alps (namely, Julian Alps, Karavanke, Kamnik Alps), and in the south stand the Dinaric Alps. There is also a small area of the Pannonian plain and a Littoral Region. Much of southwestern Slovenia is characterized by Classical Karst, a very rich, often unexplored underground habitat containing diverse flora and fauna.

More than half of the country (about 58%) is covered by forests. These forests are an important natural resource, but they are also valuable for the preservation of natural diversity. An ecological asset like all forests, they enrich the soil and cleanse the water and air. Slovenes find the social benefits of tourism and recreation. The forests also lend their natural beauty to the Slovenian landscape. In the interior of the country there are typical Central European forests. The predominant trees are oaks and beeches. In the mountains, spruce, fir, and pine are more common. The tree line is at 1,700 to 1,800 metres (or 5,575 to 5,900 ft).

Pine trees also grow on the Kras plateau. Only one third of Kras is now covered by pine forest. Before that Kras was covered by oak forest. It is said that most of the forest was chopped down long ago to provide the wooden piles on which the city of Venice now stands. The Kras and White Carniola are well known for the mysterious proteus. The lime/linden tree, also common in Slovenian forests, is a national symbol.

In the Alps, flowers such as *Daphne blagayana*, various gentians (*Gentiana clusii*, *Gentiana froelichi*), *Primula auricula*, edelweiss (the symbol of Slovene mountaineering), *Cypripedium calceolus*, *Fritillaria meleagris* (snake's head fritillary), and *Pulsatilla grandis* are found.

The country's fauna includes marmots, Alpine ibex, and chamois. There are numerous deer, roe deer, boar, and hares. The edible dormouse is often found in the Slovenian beech forests. Hunting these animals is a long tradition and is well described in the book *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* (Slovene: *Slava vojvodine Kranjske*, 1689), written by Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641-1693). Some important carnivores include the Eurasian lynx (reintroduced to the Kočevje area in 1973), European wild cats, foxes (especially the red fox), and the rare jackal. There are also hedgehogs, martens, and snakes such as vipers and grass snakes. As of March 2005, Slovenia also has a limited population of wolves and around four hundred brown bears.

There is a wide variety of birds, such as the Tawny Owl, the Long-eared Owl, the Eagle Owl, hawks, and Short-toed Eagles. Various other birds of prey have been recorded, as well as a growing number of ravens, crows and magpies migrating into Ljubljana and Maribor where they thrive. Other birds include (both



A deciduous forest in Slovenia

Black and Green) Woodpeckers and the White Stork, which nests in Prekmurje.

The indigenous Slovenian fish is the marble trout or marmorata (*Salmo marmoratus*). Extensive breeding programmes have been introduced to repopulate the marble trout into lakes and streams invaded by non-indigenous species of trout.

The only regular species of cetaceans found in the northern Adriatic sea is the bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*).

Domestic animals originating in Slovenia include the Carniolan honeybee, the indigenous Karst Shepherd and the Lipizzan horse. The exploration of various cave systems has yielded discoveries of many cave-dwelling insects and other organisms.

Slovenia is a veritable cornucopia of forest, cavern and mountain-dwelling wildlife. Many species that are endangered or can no longer be found in other parts of Europe can still be found here.

Education

The Slovenian education system consists of:

- pre-school education
- basic education (single structure of primary and lower secondary education)
- (upper) secondary education: vocational and technical education, secondary general education
- higher vocational education
- higher education

Specific parts of the system:

- adult education
- music and dance education
- special needs education
- programmes in ethnically and linguistically mixed areas

Currently there are four universities in Slovenia:

- University of Ljubljana
- University of Maribor
- University of Primorska
- University of Nova Gorica



The University of Ljubljana

The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Slovenia's education as the 12th best in the world, being significantly higher than the OECD average.

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South Ossetia

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

South Ossetia (Ossetian: Хуссар Ирыстон, *Khussar Iryston*; Georgian: სამხრეთ ოსეთი, *Samkhret Oseti*; Russian: Южная Осетия, *Yuzhnaya Osetiya*) is a region in the South Caucasus, formerly the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, part of which has been de facto independent from Georgia since its declaration of independence as the **Republic of South Ossetia** during the Georgian-Ossetian conflict early in the 1990s. Its independence has not been recognized by any United Nations-member state which continue to regard South Ossetia as part of Georgia. Georgia has retained control over parts of the region's eastern and southern districts where it created, in April 2007, a **Provisional Administrative Entity of South Ossetia**) headed by ethnic Ossetians (former members of the separatist government) which would negotiate with central Georgian authorities regarding its final status and conflict resolution.

Political status

The United Nations, European Union, OSCE, Council of the European Union, NATO and most of the countries around the world recognize South Ossetia as part of Georgia. However, the de facto independent republic governed by the secessionist government held a second independence referendum on November 12, 2006, after its first referendum in 1992 was not recognized by the international community as valid. According to the Tskhinvali election authorities, the referendum turned out a majority for independence from Georgia where 99% of South Ossetian voters supported independence and the turnout for the vote was 95% and the referendum was monitored by a team of 34 international observers from Germany, Austria, Poland, Sweden and other countries at 78 polling stations. However, it was not recognized internationally by the UN, European Union, OSCE, NATO and the Russian Federation, given the lack of ethnic Georgian participation and the legality of such referendum without recognition from the central government in Tbilisi. The European Union, OSCE, NATO and the USA condemned the referendum. Parallel to the secessionist held referendum and elections, the Ossetian opposition movement (The Salvation Union of South Ossetia) to Kokoity, organised their own elections in which both Georgian and some Ossetian inhabitants of the region voted in favour of Dmitri Sanakoev as the alternative President of South Ossetia. The alternative elections of Sanakoev claimed full support of the ethnic Georgian population. In 2007, Dmitri Sanakoev became the head of the Provisional

Хуссар Ирыстон
სამხრეთ ოსეთი
Южная Осетия
South Ossetia



Areas controlled by Georgian government are colored grey - according to Georgian sources

Area

Administration of South Ossetia.

On July 13, 2007, Georgia set up a state commission, chaired by the Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli, to develop South Ossetia's autonomous status within the Georgian state. According to the Georgian officials, the status will be elaborated within the framework of "an all-inclusive dialogue" with all the forces and communities within the Ossetian society.

History

Medieval and early modern period

The Ossetians are originally descendants of the Alans, a Sarmatian tribe. They became Christians during the early Middle Ages, under Georgian and Byzantine influences. Under Mongol rule, they were pushed out of their medieval homeland south of the Don river in present-day Russia and part migrated towards and over the Caucasus mountains, to Georgia where they formed three distinct territorial entities. Digor in the west came under the influence of the neighboring Kabard people, who introduced Islam. Tualläg in the south became what is now South Ossetia, part of the historical Georgian principality of Samachablo where Ossetians found refuge from Mongol invaders. Iron in the north became what is now North Ossetia, under Russian rule from 1767. Most Ossetians are now Christian (approximately 61%); there is also a significant Muslim minority.

South Ossetia under Russia and the Soviet Union

The modern-day South Ossetia was annexed by Russia in 1801, along with Georgia proper, and absorbed into the Russian Empire. Following the Russian Revolution, South Ossetia became a part of the Menshevik Georgian Democratic Republic, while the north became a part of the Terek Soviet Republic. The area saw a series of Ossetian rebellions during which claims for independence were made. Georgian government accused Ossetians of cooperating with Bolsheviks. According to Ossetian sources about 5,000 Ossetians were killed and more than 13,000 subsequently died from hunger and epidemics.

The Soviet Georgian government established by the Russian 11th Red Army in 1921, created the **South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast** (i.e. district) in April 1922. Although the Ossetians had their own language (Ossetian), Russian and Georgian were administrative/state languages. In the Soviet time, under the rule of Georgia's government, it enjoyed some degree of autonomy, including to speaking the Ossetian language and teaching it in schools.

Georgian-Ossetian conflict

- Total	3,900 km² 1,506 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
Population	
- 2000 estimate	70,000
- Density	18/km² 46.6/sq mi
Time zone	(UTC+3)



The tensions in the region began to rise amid the rising nationalism among both Georgians and Ossetians in 1989. Prior to this, the two communities of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast of Georgian SSR had been living in peace with each other except for the 1918-1920 events.

Influential South Ossetian Popular Front (*Ademon Nykhas*) was created in 1988. On 10 November 1989 South Ossetian regional council asked the Georgian Supreme Soviet for the region to be upgraded to autonomous republic. In 1989 the Georgian Supreme Soviet established Georgian as the principal language countrywide.

The Georgian Supreme Soviet adopted a law barring regional parties in summer 1990. This was interpreted by Ossetians as a move against Ademon Nykhas and led to Ossetians proclaiming South Ossetia a Soviet Democratic Republic, fully sovereign within the USSR. Ossetians boycotted subsequent Georgian parliamentary elections and held their own contest in December. The Georgian government headed by Zviad Gamsakhurdia declared this election illegitimate and abolished South Ossetia's autonomous status altogether on 11 December, 1990.

Violent conflict broke out towards the end of 1991 during which many South Ossetian villages were attacked and burned down as well as Georgian houses and schools in Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia. As a result, approximately 1,000 died and about 100,000 ethnic Ossetians fled the territory and Georgia proper, most across the border into North Ossetia. A further 23,000 ethnic Georgians fled South Ossetia and settled in other parts of Georgia. Many South Ossetians were resettled in uninhabited areas of North Ossetia from which the Ingush had been expelled by Stalin in 1944, leading to conflicts between Ossetians and Ingush over the right of residence in former Ingush territory.



The monument to the victims of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in Tskhinvali

At the time of the dissolution of the USSR, the United States government recognized as legitimate the pre-Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact 1933 borders of the country (the Franklin D. Roosevelt government established diplomatic relations with the Kremlin at the end of that year). Because of this, the George H. W. Bush administration openly supported the secession of the Baltic SSRs, but regarded the questions related to the independence and territorial conflicts of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the rest of the Transcaucasus — which were integral part of the USSR with international borders unaltered since the 1920s — as internal Soviet affairs.

In 1992, Georgia was forced to accept a ceasefire to avoid a large scale confrontation with Russia. The government of Georgia and South Ossetian separatists reached an agreement to avoid the use of force against one another, and Georgia pledged not to impose sanctions against South Ossetia. However, the Georgian government still retains control over substantial portions of South Ossetia, including the town of Akhalkgori. A peacekeeping force of Ossetians, Russians and Georgians was established. On November 6, 1992, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) set up a Mission in Georgia to monitor the peacekeeping operation. From then, until mid-2004 South Ossetia was generally peaceful. In June 2004, tensions began to rise as the Georgian

authorities strengthened their efforts against smuggling in the region. Hostage takings, shootouts and occasional bombings left dozens dead and wounded. A

ceasefire deal was reached on August 13 though it was repeatedly violated. Presently the situation is tense though largely peaceful, although Moscow and Tskhinvali view the recent Georgian military build-up with concern. The Georgian government protests against the continually increasing Russian economic and political presence in the region, as well as the uncontrolled military of the South Ossetian side. It also considers the peacekeeping force to be non-neutral and demanded its replacement. This criticism was supported, for example, by Richard Lugar, however on October 5, 2006, Javier Solana, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, ruled out the possibility of replacing the Russian peacekeepers with the EU force. EU South Caucasus envoy Peter Semneby admitted later that "Russia's actions in the Georgia spy row have damaged its credibility as a neutral peacekeeper in the EU's Black Sea neighbourhood."



South Ossetia's political divisions (disputed--see image discussion)

Politics

The Republic of South Ossetia consists of a checkerboard of Georgian-inhabited and Ossetian-inhabited towns and villages. The largely Ossetian capital city of Tskhinvali and most of the other Ossetian-inhabited communities are governed by the separatist government, while the Georgian-inhabited villages and towns are administered by the Georgian government. This close proximity and the intermixing of the two communities has made the conflict in South Ossetia particularly dangerous, since any attempt to create an ethnically pure territory would involve population transfers on a large scale.

The political dispute has yet to be resolved and the South Ossetian separatist authorities govern the region with effective independence from Tbilisi. Although talks have been held periodically between the two sides, little progress was made under the government of Eduard Shevardnadze (1993–2003). His successor Mikheil Saakashvili (elected 2004) made the reassertion of Georgian governmental authority a political priority. Having successfully put an end to the *de facto* independence of the southwestern province of Ajaria in May 2004, he pledged to seek a similar solution in South Ossetia. After the 2004 clashes, the Georgian government has intensified its efforts to bring the problem to international attention. On January 25, 2005, President Saakashvili presented a Georgian vision for resolving the South Ossetian conflict at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) session in Strasbourg. Late in October, the U.S. Government and the OSCE expressed their support to the Georgian action plan presented by Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli at the OSCE Permanent Council at Vienna on October 27, 2005. On December 6, the OSCE Ministerial Council in Ljubljana adopted a resolution supporting the Georgian peace plan which was subsequently rejected by the South Ossetian *de facto* authorities.

Republic of South Ossetia

On September 11, 2006, the South Ossetian Information and Press Committee announced that the republic will hold an independence referendum (the first referendum had not been recognized by the international community as valid in 1992) on November 12, 2006. The voters would decide on whether or not South Ossetia "should preserve its present *de facto* status of an independent state". Georgia denounced the move as a "political absurdity". However, On September 13, 2006, the Council of Europe

**Government of the Republic of South
Ossetia**

(CoE) Secretary General Terry Davis commented on the problem, stating that it would be unlikely that anyone would accept the results of this referendum and instead urged South Ossetian government to engage in the negotiations with Georgia. On September 13, 2006 EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby, while visiting Moscow, said: "*results of the South Ossetian independence referendum will have no meaning for the European Union*". Peter Semneby also added that this referendum will not contribute to the peaceful conflict resolution process in South Ossetia

South Ossetians nearly unanimously approved a referendum on November 12, 2006 opting for independence from Georgia. The referendum was hugely popular, winning between 98 and 99 percent of the ballots, flag waving and celebration marked were seen across South Ossetia, but elsewhere observers were less enthusiastic. International critics claimed that the move could worsen regional tensions, and the Tblisi government thoroughly discounted the results.


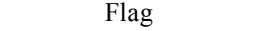
Provisional Administrative Entity of South Ossetia


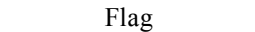
The People of South Ossetia for Peace was founded in October of 2006 by the ethnic Ossetians who were outspoken critics and presented a serious opposition to secessionist authorities of Eduard Kokoity.

The group headed by the former defence minister and then prime minister of secessionist government Dmitri Sanakoev organized the so-called alternative presidential election, on November 12 2006– parallel to those held by the secessionist authorities in Tskhinvali. High voter turnout was reported by the alternative electoral commission, which estimated over 42,000 voters from both Ossetian (Java district and Tskhinvali) and Georgian (Eredvi, Tamarasheni, etc) communities of South Ossetia and Sanakoev reportedly received 96% of the votes. Another referendum was organised shortly after asking for the start of negotiations with Georgia on a federal arrangement for South Ossetia received 94% support. However the Salvation Union of South Ossetia turned down a request from a Georgian NGO, “Multinational Georgia”, to monitor it and the released results were very likely to be inflated.

According to International Crisis Group "Georgian government’s steps are non-violent and development-oriented but their implementation is unilateral and so assertive that they are contributing to a perceptible and dangerous rise in tensions".

Initially the entity of Sanakoev was known as "the Alternative Government of South Ossetia", but during the course of 2007 the central authorities of Georgia decided to give it official status and on April 13 the formation of "Provisional Administration of South Ossetia" was announced. On May 10, 2007 Dmitry Sanakoev was appointed head of the provisional administrative entity in South Ossetia.

	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: unknown	
Capital	Tskhinvali
Official languages	Ossetian, Russian ¹
Government	
- President	Eduard Kokoity
- Prime Minister	Yury Morozov
De facto independence from Georgia	
- Declared	November 28, 1991
- Recognition	none
Currency	Russian ruble (₹)
1 Russian in widespread use by government and other institutions.	

Provisional Administration of South Ossetia	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Capital	Kurta
Official languages	Ossetian, Georgian

An E.U. fact finding team visited the region in January of 2007. Per Eklund, Head of the European Commission Delegation to Georgia said that “None of the two alternatives do we consider legitimate [in South Ossetia],”

Geography

South Ossetia covers an area of about 3,900 km² on the southern side of the Caucasus, separated by the mountains from the more populous North Ossetia (part of Russia) and extending southwards almost to the Mtkvari river in Georgia. It is extremely mountainous, with most of the region lying over 1,000 m (3,300 ft) above sea level. Its economy is primarily agricultural, although less than 10% of South Ossetia's land area is cultivated, with cereals, fruit and vines the major produce. Forestry and cattle industries are also maintained. A number of industrial facilities also exist, particularly around the capital Tskhinvali.

Demographics

Before the Georgian-Ossetian conflict about two thirds of the population of South Ossetia were Ossetians and 25-30% Georgians. The present composition of the population is unknown, although according to some estimates there are 45,000 ethnic Ossetians and 17,500 ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia in 2007.

	census 1926	census 1939	census 1959	census 1970	census 1979	census 1989
Ossetians	60,351 (69.1%)	72,266 (68.1%)	63,698 (65.8%)	66,073 (66.5%)	65,077 (66.4%)	65,200 (66.2%)
Georgians	23,538 (26.9%)	27,525 (25.9%)	26,584 (27.5%)	28,125 (28.3%)	28,187 (28.8%)	28,700 (29.0%)
Russians	157 (0.2%)	2,111 (2.0%)	2,380 (2.5%)	1,574 (1.6%)	2,046 (2.1%)	
Armenians	1,374 (1.6%)	1,537 (1.4%)	1,555 (1.6%)	1,254 (1.3%)	953 (1.0%)	
Jews	1,739 (2.0%)	1,979 (1.9%)	1,723 (1.8%)	1,485 (1.5%)	654 (0.7%)	
Others	216 (0.2%)	700 (0.7%)	867 (0.9%)	910 (0.9%)	1,071 (1.1%)	5,100 (4.8%)
Total	87,375	106,118	96,807	99,421	97,988	99,000

Economy

Following a war with Georgia in the 1990s, South Ossetia has struggled economically. Employment and supplies are scarce. Additionally, Georgia cut off

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Government	Provisional Administration
- Head of Administration	Dmitri Sanakoyev
- Interior Minister	Jemal Karkusov
Provisional administrative entity of Georgia ¹	
- Established	April, 2007
- Recognition	None
Currency	Georgian lari (₾)
<p>¹ Administration was set up by the Georgian government as a temporary measure before final solution on South Ossetia status. As of June 26, 2007 Georgia is investigating autonomous republic status for South Ossetia within the Georgian state.</p>	

supplies of electricity to the region, which forced the South Ossetian government to run an electric cable through North Ossetia. The majority of the population survives on subsistence farming. Virtually the only significant economic asset that South Ossetia possesses is control of the Roki Tunnel that links Russia and Georgia, from which the South Ossetian government reportedly obtains as much as a third of its budget by levying customs duties on freight traffic. The separatist officials admitted that Tskhinvali received more than 60 percent of its 2006 budget revenue directly from the Russian government.

In late 2006, a large international counterfeiting operation stretching from South Ossetia was revealed by U.S. Secret Service and Georgian police.

South Ossetian GDP was estimated at US\$ 15 million (US\$ 250 per capita) in a work published in 2002.

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Spain

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Spain (Spanish: **'España'** (help · info), IPA: [esˈpaɲa]) or the **Kingdom of Spain** (Spanish: *Reino de España*), is a country located mostly in southwestern Europe on the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish mainland is bordered to the south and east almost entirely by the Mediterranean Sea (except for a small land boundary with Gibraltar); to the north by France, Andorra, and the Bay of Biscay; and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean and Portugal. Spanish territory also includes the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean, the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean off the African coast, and two autonomous cities in North Africa, Ceuta and Melilla, that border Morocco. With an area of 504,030 km², Spain is the second largest country in Western Europe (behind France) and with an average altitude of 650 m, the second highest country in Europe (behind Switzerland).



Spain is a constitutional monarchy organised as a parliamentary democracy and has been a member of the European Union since 1986, and NATO since 1982. It is a developed country with the eighth largest economy in the world and fifth largest in the EU, based on nominal GDP.

History

Summary

Spain is a key site when it comes to studying the human prehistory of Europe. After a long and hard conquest Hispania became one of the Roman Empire's most important regions. During the early Middle Ages it came under Germanic rule. Later it was conquered by Muslim invaders. Through a very long and fitful process, the Christian kingdoms in the north gradually rolled back Muslim rule, finally extinguishing its last remnant in Almería in 1492. The same year Columbus reached the New World, a global empire began. Spain became the strongest kingdom in Europe and leading world power during the 16th century and first half of the 17th century, but continued wars and other problems eventually led to a diminished status. A French invasion of Spain in the early 19th century led to chaos; triggering independence movements that tore apart most of the empire and left the country politically unstable. In the 20th century it suffered a devastating civil war and came under the rule of a dictatorship, leading to years of stagnation, but finishing in a strong economic revival. Democracy was restored in 1978 in the form of a constitutional monarchy. In 1986, Spain joined the European Union; experiencing a cultural renaissance and steady economic growth.

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Reino de España Kingdom of Spain	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: " Plus Ultra" (Latin) "Further Beyond"	
Anthem: "" Marcha Real" (Spanish) "Royal March"	
	
Location of Spain (dark green)	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; gap: 20px;"> – on the European continent (light green & dark grey) – in the European Union (light green) — [Legend] </div>	

Prehistory and pre-Roman peoples in the Iberian Peninsula

Archeological research at Atapuerca indicates that the Iberian Peninsula was peopled more than a million years ago. Modern humans in the form of Cro-Magnons began arriving in the Iberian Peninsula through the Pyrenees some 35,000 years ago. The best known artifacts of these prehistoric human settlements are the famous paintings in the Altamira cave of Cantabria in northern Spain, which were created about 15,000 BCE. Furthermore, archeological evidence in places like Los Millares in Almería and in El Argar in Murcia suggests that developed cultures existed in the eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula during the late Neolithic and the Bronze Age.

The two main historical peoples of the peninsula were the Iberians and the Celts, the former inhabiting the Mediterranean side from the northeast to the southwest, the latter inhabiting the Atlantic side, in the north and northwest part of the peninsula. In the inner part of the peninsula, where both groups were in contact, a mixed, distinctive culture—known as Celtiberian—was present. In addition, Basques occupied the western area of the Pyrenees mountains. Other ethnic groups existed along the southern coastal areas of present day Andalusia. Among these southern groups there grew the earliest urban culture in the Iberian Peninsula, that of the semi-mythical southern city of Tartessos (perhaps pre-1100 BC) near the location of present-day Cádiz. The flourishing trade in gold and silver between the people of Tartessos and Phoenicians and Greeks is documented in the history of Strabo and in the biblical book of king Solomon. Between about 500 BC and 300 BC, the seafaring Phoenicians and Greeks founded trading colonies all along the Spanish Mediterranean coast. Carthaginians briefly took control of much of the Mediterranean coast in the course of the Punic Wars, until they were eventually defeated and replaced by the Romans.

Roman Empire and Germanic invasions

Capital (and largest city)	Madrid
Official languages	Spanish
Recognised regional languages	Aranese, Basque, Catalan/Valencian and Galician
Ethnic groups	89% Spanish, 11% minority groups
Demonym	Spanish, Spaniard
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	King Juan Carlos I
- President of the Government	José L. Rodríguez Zapatero
Formation	15th century
- Unification	1469
- Dynastic union	1516
- <i>de facto</i>	1716
- <i>de jure</i>	1812
EU accession	January 1, 1986
Area	
- Total	504,030 km ² (51st) 195,364 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.04
Population	
- 2007 estimate	45,200,737 (28th)
- Density	90 people/km ² (106th) 231/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$1.310 trillion (11th)

During the Second Punic War, an expanding Roman Empire captured Carthaginian trading colonies along the Mediterranean coast (from roughly 210 BC to 205 BC), leading to eventual Roman control of nearly the entire Iberian Peninsula—a control which lasted over 500 years, bound together by law, language, and the Roman road. The base Celt and Iberian population remained in various stages of Romanisation, and local leaders were admitted into the Roman aristocratic class.

The Romans improved existing cities, such as Tarragona (*Tarraco*), and established others like Zaragoza (*Caesaraugusta*), Mérida (*Augusta Emerita*), Valencia (*Valentia*), León ("Legio Septima"), Badajoz ("Pax Augusta"), and Palencia. The peninsula's economy expanded under Roman tutelage. Hispania served as a granary for the Roman market, and its harbors exported gold, wool, olive oil, and wine. Agricultural production increased with the introduction of irrigation projects, some of which remain in use. Emperors Trajan, Theodosius I, and the philosopher Seneca were born in Hispania. Christianity was introduced into Hispania in the 1st century CE and it became popular in the cities in the 2nd century CE. Most of Spain's present languages and religion, and the basis of its laws, originate from this period.

The first Germanic tribes to invade Hispania arrived in the 5th century, as the Roman Empire decayed. The Visigoths, Suebi, Vandals and Alans arrived in Spain by crossing the Pyrenees mountain range. The Romanized Visigoths entered Hispania in 415. After the conversion of their monarchy to Roman Catholicism, the Visigothic Kingdom eventually encompassed a great part of the Iberian Peninsula after conquering the disordered Suebic territories in the northwest and Byzantine territories in the southeast.

Muslim Iberia

In the 8th century, nearly all of the Iberian Peninsula was conquered (711-718) by mainly Muslims (see Moors) from North Africa. These conquests were part of the expansion of the Umayyad Islamic Empire. Only a number of areas in the mountains to the north of the Iberian Peninsula managed to cling to their independence, occupying the areas roughly corresponding to modern Asturias, Navarre and Aragon.

- Per capita	\$33,700 (2007) (27th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$1.439 trillion (8th)
- Per capita	\$31,471 (2007) (26th)
Gini (2005)	32
HDI (2005)	0.949 (high) (13th)
Currency	Euro (€) ³ (EUR)
Time zone	CET ⁴ (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.es, .cat ⁵
Calling code	+34
<p>1 Also serves as the Royal anthem.</p> <p>2 In some autonomous communities, Aranese (Occitan), Basque, Catalan/Valencian, and Galician are co-official languages.</p> <p>3 Prior to 1999 (by law, 2002) : Spanish Peseta.</p> <p>4 Except in the Canary Islands, which are in the WET time zone (UTC, UTC+1 in summer).</p> <p>5 The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states. Also, the .cat domain is used in Catalan-speaking territories.</p>	



Roman theatre in Mérida.

Under Islam, Christians and Jews were recognised as "peoples of the book", and were free to practice their religion, but faced a number of mandatory discriminations and penalties as dhimmis. Conversion to Islam proceeded at a steadily increasing pace. Following the mass conversions in the 10th and 11th centuries it is believed that Muslims came to outnumber Christians in the remaining Muslim controlled areas.

The Muslim community in the Iberian peninsula was itself diverse and beset by social tensions. The Berber people of North Africa, who had provided the bulk of the invading armies, clashed with the Arab leadership from the Middle East. Over time, large Moorish populations became established, especially in the Guadalquivir River valley, the coastal plain of Valencia, and (towards the end of this period) in the mountainous region of Granada.

Córdoba, the capital of the caliphate, was the largest, richest and most sophisticated city of medieval western Europe. Mediterranean trade and cultural exchange flourished. Muslims imported a rich intellectual tradition from the Middle East and North Africa. Muslim and Jewish scholars played a great part in reviving and expanding classical Greek learning in Western Europe. The Romanized cultures of the Iberian peninsula interacted with Muslim and Jewish cultures in complex ways, thus giving the region a distinctive culture. Outside the cities, where the vast majority lived, the land ownership system from Roman times remained largely intact as Muslim leaders rarely dispossessed landowners, and the introduction of new crops and techniques led to a remarkable expansion of agriculture.

However, by the 11th century, Muslim holdings had fractured into rival Taifa kingdoms, allowing the small Christian states the opportunity to greatly enlarge their territories and consolidate their positions. The arrival of the North African Muslim ruling sects of the Almoravids and the Almohads restored unity upon Muslim holdings, with a stricter, less tolerant application of Islam, but ultimately, after some successes in invading the north, proved unable to resist the increasing military strength of the Christian states.

Fall of Muslim rule and unification



Interior of the Mezquita in Córdoba, a Muslim mosque until the Reconquest, after which it became a Christian cathedral.

The *Reconquista* ("Reconquest") is the centuries-long period of expansion of Spain's Christian kingdoms; the *Reconquista* is viewed as beginning after the battle of Covadonga in 722. The Christian army victory over the Muslim forces led to the creation of the Christian Kingdom of Asturias. Muslim armies had also moved north of the Pyrenees, but they were defeated at the Battle of Poitiers in France. Subsequently, they retreated to more secure positions south of the Pyrenees with a frontier marked by the Ebro and Duero rivers in Spain. As early as 739 Muslim forces were driven from Galicia, which was to host one of medieval Europe's holiest sites, Santiago de Compostela. A little later Frankish forces established Christian counties south of the Pyrenees; these areas were to grow into kingdoms, in the north-east and the western part of the Pyrenees. These territories included Navarre, Aragon and Catalonia.

The breakup of Al-Andalus into the competing Taifa kingdoms helped the expanding Christian kingdoms. The capture of the central city of Toledo in 1085 largely completed the reconquest of the northern half of Spain. After a Muslim resurgence in the 12th century, the great Moorish strongholds in the south fell to Christian Spain in the 13th century— Córdoba in 1236 and Seville in 1248—leaving only the Muslim enclave of Granada as a tributary state in the south. Marinid invasions from north Africa in the 13th and 14th centuries failed to re-establish Muslim rule. Also in the 13th century, the kingdom of Aragon, still ruled by the Catalan count of Barcelona, expanded its reach across the Mediterranean to Sicily. Around this time the universities of Palencia (1212/1263) and Salamanca (1218/1254) were established; among the earliest in Europe. The Black Death of 1348 and 1349 devastated Spain.

In 1469, the crowns of the Christian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon were united (even though both kingdoms kept a high degree of political and economical independence) by the marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand. In 1478 began the final stage of the conquest of Canary Islands and in 1492, these united kingdoms captured Granada, ending the last remnant of a 781-year presence of Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula. The year 1492 also marked the arrival in the New World of Christopher Columbus, during a voyage funded by Isabella. That same year, Spain's Jews were ordered to convert to Catholicism or face expulsion from Spanish territories during the Spanish Inquisition.

As Renaissance New Monarchs, Isabella and Ferdinand centralized royal power at the expense of local nobility, and the word *España* - whose root is the ancient name "Hispania" - began to be used to designate the whole of the two kingdoms. With their wide-ranging political, legal, religious and military reforms, Spain emerged as the first world power.

Imperial Spain

The unification of the kingdoms of Aragon, Castile, León, and Navarre laid the basis for modern Spain and the Spanish Empire. Spain became Europe's leading power throughout the 16th century and most of the 17th century, a position reinforced by trade and wealth from colonial possessions. Spain reached its apogee during the reigns of the first two Spanish Habsburgs, Charles I (1516–1556) and Philip II (1556–1598). Included in this period are the Italian Wars, the Dutch revolt, clashes with the Ottomans, the Anglo-Spanish war and war with France.



Equal partners: King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile, the Catholic Monarchs.

The Spanish Empire expanded to include most part of South and Central America, Mexico, southern and western portions of today's United States, the Philippines, Guam and the Mariana Islands in Eastern Asia, the Iberian peninsula (including the Portuguese Empire (from 1580), southern Italy, Sicily, cities in Northern Africa, as well as parts of modern Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. It was the first empire about which it was said that the sun did not set. This was an age of discovery, with daring explorations by sea and by land, the opening up of new trade routes across oceans, conquests and the beginnings of European colonialism. Along with the arrival of precious metals, spices, luxuries, and new agricultural plants, Spanish explorers and others brought back knowledge, playing a leading part in transforming the European understanding of the world.

Of note was the cultural efflorescence now known as the Spanish Golden Age and the intellectual movement known as the School of Salamanca.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Spain was confronted by unrelenting challenges from all sides. Barbary pirates under the aegis of the rapidly growing Ottoman empire, disrupted life in many coastal areas through their slave raids and renewed the threat of an Islamic invasion. This at a time when Spain was often at war with France in Italy and elsewhere. Later the Protestant Reformation schism from the Catholic Church dragged the kingdom ever more deeply into the mire of religiously charged wars. The result was a country forced into ever expanding military efforts across Europe and in the Mediterranean.

By the middle decades of a war and plague ridden 17th century Europe, the effects of the strain began to show. The Spanish Habsburgs had enmeshed the country in the continent wide religious-political conflicts. These conflicts drained it of resources and undermined the European economy generally. Spain managed to hold on to most of the scattered Habsburg empire, and help the imperial forces of the Holy Roman Empire reverse a large part of the advances made by Protestant forces, but it was finally forced to recognise the independence of Portugal—within its empire—and the Netherlands, and eventually surrendered Toulouse to France after the immensely destructive, Europe-wide Thirty Years War.

During the latter half of the 17th century, Spain went into a gradual decline, however it maintained and enlarged its vast overseas empire, which remained intact until the 19th century.

The decline culminated in a controversy over succession to the throne which consumed the first years of the 18th century. The War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714), a wide ranging international conflict combined with a civil war, cost Spain its European possessions and its position as one of the leading powers on the Continent.

During this war, a new dynasty—the French Bourbons—was installed. Long united only by the Crown, a true *Spanish* state was established when the first Bourbon king Philip V of Spain united Castile and Aragon into a single state, abolishing many of the regional privileges (*fueros*).

The 18th century saw a gradual recovery and an increase in prosperity through much of the empire. The new Bourbon monarchy drew on the French system of modernising the administration and the economy. Enlightenment ideas began to gain ground among some of the kingdom's elite and monarchy. Towards the end of the century trade finally began growing strongly. Military assistance for the rebellious British colonies in the American War of Independence improved Spain's international standing.



The galleon became synonymous with the riches of the Spanish Empire.

Napoleonic rule and its consequences

In 1793, Spain went to war against the new French Republic, which had overthrown and executed its Bourbon king, Louis XVI. The war polarised the country in an apparent reaction against the gallicised elites. Defeated in the field, Spain made peace with France in 1795 and effectively became a client state of that country; the following year, it declared war against Britain and Portugal. A disastrous economic situation, along with other factors, led to the abdication of the Spanish king in favour of Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte.

This new foreign monarch was regarded with scorn. On May 2, 1808, the people of Madrid began a nationalist uprising against the French army, marking the beginning of what is known to the Spanish as the War of Independence, and to the English as the Peninsular War. Napoleon was forced to intervene personally, defeating several badly-coordinated Spanish armies and forcing a British Army to retreat to Corunna. However, further military action by Spanish guerrillas and Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese army, combined with Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia, led to the ousting of the French from Spain in 1814, and the return of King Ferdinand VII.

The French invasion proved disastrous for Spain's economy, and left a deeply divided country that was prone to political instability for more than a century. The power struggles of the early 19th century led to the loss of all of Spain's colonies in Latin America, with the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico.



"The Second of May, 1808: The Charge of the Mamelukes", by Francisco Goya, 1814.

Spanish-American War

Amid the instability and economic crisis that afflicted Spain in the 19th century there arose nationalist movements in the Philippines and Cuba. Wars of independence ensued in those colonies and eventually the United States became involved. Despite the commitment and ability shown by some military units, they were so mismanaged by the highest levels of command that the Spanish-American war of 1898 was soon over. "El Desastre" (The Disaster), as the war became known in Spain, helped give impetus to the Generation of 98 who were already conducting much critical analysis concerning the country. It also weakened the stability that had been established during Alfonso XII's reign.

20th century

The 20th century brought little peace; Spain played a minor part in the scramble for Africa, with the colonisation of Western Sahara, Spanish Morocco and Equatorial Guinea. The heavy losses suffered during the Rif war in Morocco helped to undermine the monarchy. A period of authoritarian rule under General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1931) ended with the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic. The Republic offered political autonomy to the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia and gave voting rights to women.

The bitterly fought Spanish Civil War (1936-39) ensued. Three years later the Nationalist forces, led by General Francisco Franco, emerged victorious with the support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The Republican side was supported by the Soviet Union and Mexico, but it was not supported by the Western powers due to the British-led policy of Non-Intervention. The Spanish Civil War has been called the first battle of the Second World War; under Franco, Spain was

neutral in the Second World War though sympathetic to the Axis.

The only legal party under Franco's regime was the *Falange española tradicionalista y de las JONS*, formed in 1937; the party emphasised anti-Communism, Catholicism and nationalism. Nonetheless, since Franco's anti-democratic ideology was opposed to the idea of political parties, the new party was renamed officially a National Movement (*Movimiento Nacional*) in 1949.

After World War II, Spain was politically and economically isolated, and was kept out of the United Nations until 1955, when due to the Cold War it became strategically important for the U.S. to foment a military presence on the Iberian peninsula, next to the Mediterranean Sea and the Strait of Gibraltar, in order to protect southern Europe. In the 1960s, Spain registered an unprecedented economic growth in what was called the Spanish miracle, which rapidly resumed the long interrupted transition towards a modern industrial economy with a thriving tourism sector and a high degree of human development.

Upon the death of General Franco in November 1975, Prince Juan Carlos assumed the position of king and head of state. With the approval of the new Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the arrival of democracy, the State devolved autonomy to the regions and created an internal organization based on autonomous communities. In the Basque Country, moderate Basque nationalism coexisted with a radical nationalism supportive of the terrorist group ETA.

On February 23, 1981, rebel elements among the security forces seized the Cortes and tried to impose a military-backed government. However, the great majority of the military forces remained loyal to King Juan Carlos, who used his personal authority and addressed the usurpers via national TV as commander in chief to put down the bloodless coup attempt.

In 1982, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) came to power, which represented the return to power of a leftist party after 43 years. In 1986, Spain joined the European Community (which was to become the European Union). The PSOE was replaced in government by the Partido Popular (PP) after the latter won the 1996 General Elections; at that point the PSOE had served almost 14 consecutive years in office.

The Government of Spain has been involved in a long-running campaign against the terrorist organization ETA ("Basque Homeland and Freedom"), founded in 1959 in opposition to Franco and dedicated to promoting Basque independence through violent means. They consider themselves a guerrilla organization while they are listed as a terrorist organization by both the European Union and the United States on their respective watchlists. The current nationalist-led Basque Autonomous government does not endorse ETA's nationalist violence, which has caused over 800 deaths in the past 40 years.

21st century

On January 1, 2002, Spain terminated its historic peseta currency and replaced it with the euro, which has become its national currency shared with 15 other countries from the Eurozone. This culminated the first phase of a period of economic growth, which has kept the Spanish economy growing well over the EU average, but concerns are growing that the extraordinary property boom and high foreign trade deficits of recent years may bring this to an end.

On March 11, 2004, a series of bombs exploded in commuter trains in Madrid, Spain. The bombings were claimed by al Qaeda, whereas after a five months trial in 2007 it was concluded that the bombings were perpetrated by a local Islamist militant group inspired by al-Qaeda, but without direct links to that organisation. The bombings killed 191 people and wounded more than 1800, and it has been claimed that the intention of the perpetrators was to influence the outcome of the Spanish general election, held three days later on March 14. Although initial suspicions of responsibility for the bombings focused on the Basque group ETA,

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evidence soon emerged indicating possible Islamist involvement. Because of the proximity of the election, the issue of responsibility quickly became a source of political controversy, with the main competing parties PP and PSOE crossing accusations over the handling of the aftermath. A couple of days later, at the March 14 elections, PSOE, led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, obtained a relative majority, enough to form the new cabinet with Rodríguez Zapatero as the new *Presidente del Gobierno* or prime minister of Spain, thus succeeding the former PP administration.

Politics

Spanish Government

Spain is a constitutional monarchy, with a hereditary monarch and a bicameral parliament, the *Cortes Generales*. The executive branch consists of a Council of Ministers presided over by the President of Government (comparable to a prime minister), proposed by the monarch and elected by the National Assembly following legislative elections.

The legislative branch is made up of the Congress of Deputies (*Congreso de los Diputados*) with 350 members, elected by popular vote on block lists by proportional representation to serve four-year terms, and a Senate (*Senado*) with 259 seats of which 208 are directly elected by popular vote and the other 51 appointed by the regional legislatures to also serve four-year terms.

- **Chief of State**
 - King Juan Carlos I, since November 22, 1975
- **Head of Government**
 - President of the Government: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, elected 14 March 2004.
 - First Vice President and Minister of Presidency: María Teresa Fernández de la Vega.
 - Second Vice President and Minister of Economy and Finance: Pedro Solbes.
- **Cabinet**
 - Council of Ministers (Spanish *Consejo de Ministros*) designated by the president.



King Juan Carlos I of Spain and Queen Sofia of Spain.

The Spanish nation is organizationally composed in the form of called *Estado de las Autonomías* ("State of Autonomies"); it is one of the most decentralized countries in Europe, along with Switzerland, Germany and Belgium; for example, all Autonomous Communities have their own elected parliaments, governments, public administrations, budgets, and resources; therefore, health and education systems among others are managed regionally, besides, the Basque Country and Navarre also manage their own public finances based on foral provisions. In Catalonia and the Basque Country, a full fledged autonomous police corps replaces some of the State police functions (see Mossos d'Esquadra and Ertzaintza).

Spanish Constitution

The **Spanish Constitution of 1978** is the culmination of the Spanish transition to democracy.



José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain.

The constitutional history of Spain dates back to the constitution of 1812. After the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, a general election in 1977 convened the *Constituent Cortes* (the Spanish Parliament, in its capacity as a constitutional assembly) for the purpose of drafting and approving the constitution of 1978.

As a result, Spain is now composed of 17 autonomous communities and two autonomous cities with varying degrees of autonomy thanks to its Constitution, which nevertheless explicitly states the indivisible unity of the Spanish nation as well as that Spain has today no official religion but all are free to practice and believe as they wish.

Foreign relations of Spain

After the return of democracy following the death of Franco in 1975, Spain's foreign policy priorities were to break out of the diplomatic isolation of the Franco years and expand diplomatic relations, enter the European Community, and define security relations with the West.

As a member of NATO since 1982, Spain has established itself as a major participant in multilateral international security activities. Spain's EU membership represents an important part of its foreign policy. Even on many international issues beyond western Europe, Spain prefers to coordinate its efforts with its EU partners through the European political cooperation mechanisms.

With the normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea in 2001, Spain completed the process of universalizing its diplomatic relations.

Spain has maintained its special identification with Latin America. Its policy emphasizes the concept of an Iberoamerican community, essentially the renewal of the historically liberal concept of hispanoamericanismo (or hispanism as it is often referred to in English), which has sought to link the Iberian peninsula with Latin America through language, commerce, history and culture. Spain has been an effective example of transition from dictatorship to democracy for formerly non-democratic South American states, as shown in the many trips that Spain's King and Prime Ministers have made to the region.

Territorial disputes

Territory claimed by Spain

There is a territorial dispute with the United Kingdom over Gibraltar, a 6 square km Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom in the southernmost part of the Iberian Peninsula which was conquered by Britain from Spain in 1704 during the War of the Spanish Succession, along with the Spanish island of Minorca (which had also been invaded but was reconquered in 1782 and finally ceded back to Spain in 1802 by the Treaty of Amiens).

The legal situation concerning Gibraltar was settled in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht, in which Spain ceded the territory in perpetuity to the British Crown stating that, should the British abandon this post, it would return to Spanish sovereignty.

Ever since the 1940s Spain has called for the return of Gibraltar. The overwhelming majority of Gibraltarians strongly oppose this, along with any proposal of shared sovereignty. UN resolutions call on the United Kingdom and Spain, both EU members, to reach an agreement over the status of Gibraltar.

Spanish territories claimed by other countries

Morocco claims the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla and the plazas de soberanía islets off the northern coast of Africa. Portugal does not recognise Spain's sovereignty over the territory of Olivenza.

Administrative divisions

Spain is politically organized into 17 Autonomous Communities (*comunidades autónomas*) and 2 autonomous cities (*ciudades autónomas*) - Ceuta and Melilla.

Administratively Spain also comprises fifty **provinces**. Seven autonomous communities are composed of only one province: Asturias, Balearic Islands, Cantabria, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia, and Navarre.

Historically, some provinces are also divided into *comarcas* (roughly equivalent to a US "county" or an English district). The lowest administrative division of Spain is the municipality (*municipio*).

Geography

At 194,884 mi² (504,782 km²), Spain is the world's 51st-largest country. It is some 47,000 km² smaller than France and 81,000 km² larger than the U.S. state of California.

On the west, Spain borders Portugal, on the south, it borders Gibraltar (a British overseas territory) and Morocco, through its cities in North Africa (Ceuta and Melilla). On the northeast, along the Pyrenees mountain range, it borders France and the tiny principality of Andorra. Spain also includes the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea, the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean and a number of uninhabited islands on the Mediterranean side of the strait of Gibraltar, known as *Plazas de soberanía*, such as the Chafarine islands, the isle of Alborán, the "rocks" (*peñones*) of Vélez and Alhucemas, and the tiny Isla Perejil. Along the Pyrenees in Catalonia, a small exclave town called Llivia is surrounded by France.

Mainland Spain is dominated by high plateaus and mountain ranges, such as the Sierra Nevada. Running from these heights are several major rivers such as the Tagus, the Ebro, the Duero, the Guadiana and the Guadalquivir. Alluvial plains are found along the coast, the largest of which is that of the Guadalquivir in Andalusia.



Climate

Due to Spain's geographical situation and orographic conditions, the climate is extremely diverse; it can be roughly divided into three areas:

- A Continental Mediterranean climate in the inland areas of the Peninsula (largest city, Madrid).
- A Mediterranean climate region extends from the Andalusian plain along the southern and eastern coasts up to the Pyrenees, on the seaward side of the mountain ranges that run near the coast (largest city, Barcelona).
- An Oceanic climate in Galicia and the coastal strip near the Bay of Biscay (largest city, Bilbao). This area is often called Green Spain.

Military of Spain

The armed forces of Spain are known as the Spanish Armed Forces (Spanish: *Fuerzas Armadas Españolas*). Their Commander-in-Chief is the King of Spain, Juan Carlos I.

The Spanish Armed Forces are divided into four branches:

- Army (*Ejército de Tierra*)
- Navy (*Armada*)
- Air Force (*Ejército del Aire*)
- *Guardia Civil* (Military police) which serves for the most part as a rural and general purpose police force.

Economy

According to the World Bank, Spain's economy is the eighth largest worldwide and the fifth largest in Europe. As of 2007, absolute GDP was valued at \$1.362 trillion according to the CIA Factbook, (see List of countries by GDP (nominal)). The per capita PPP is estimated at \$33,700 (2007), ahead of G7 countries like Italy and placing Spain at a similar per capita basis as France or Japan (both with an 2007 estimated at \$33,800). The Spanish economy grew 3.8% in 2007 outpacing all G7 members and all the big EU economies for the 3rd consecutive year.

The centre-right government of former prime minister José María Aznar worked successfully to gain admission to the group of countries launching the euro in 1999. Unemployment stood at 7.6% in October 2006, a rate that compares favorably to many other European countries, and which is a marked improvement over rates that exceeded 20% in the early 1990s. Perennial weak points of Spain's economy include high inflation, a large underground economy, and an education system which OECD reports place among the poorest for developed countries, together with the United States and UK. Nevertheless, it is expected that the Spanish economy will continue growing above the EU average based on the strengthening of industry, the growth of the global economy and increasing trade with



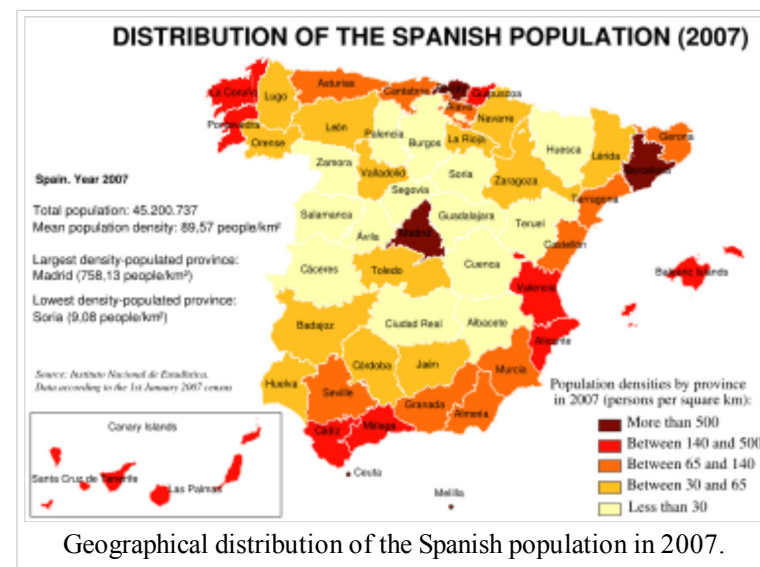
Latin America and Asia.

The Spanish economy is credited for having avoided the virtual zero growth rate of some of its largest partners in the EU. In fact, the country's economy has created more than half of all the new jobs in the European Union over the five years ending 2005. The Spanish economy has thus been regarded lately as one of the most dynamic within the EU, attracting significant amounts of foreign investment. During the last four decades the Spanish tourism industry has grown to become the second biggest in the world, worth approximately 40 billion Euros (approx. 5% of GDP) in 2006. More recently, the Spanish economy has benefited greatly from the global real estate boom, with construction representing 16% of GDP and 12% of employment. According to calculations by the German newspaper *Die Welt*, Spain is on pace to overtake countries like Germany in per capita income by 2011. However, the downside of the real estate boom has been a corresponding rise in the levels of personal debt; as prospective homeowners struggle to meet asking prices, the average level of household debt has tripled in less than a decade. Among lower income groups, the median ratio of indebtedness to income was 125% in 2005.

Demographics

In 2008 Spain officially reached 46.06 million people registered at the *Padrón municipal*, an official record analogous to the British Register office. Spain's population density, at 89.6/km² (231/sq. mile), is lower than that of most Western European countries and its distribution along the country is very unequal. With the exception of the region surrounding the capital, Madrid, the most populated areas lie around the coast.

The population of Spain doubled during the 20th century, due to the spectacular demographic boom by the 1960s and early 1970s. The pattern of growth was extremely uneven due to large-scale internal migration from the rural interior to the industrial cities during the 60s and 70s. No fewer than eleven of Spain's fifty provinces saw an absolute decline in population over the century. Then, after the birth rate plunged in the 80s and Spain's population became stalled, a new population increase started based initially in the return of many Spanish who emigrated to other European countries during the 70s and, more recently, it has been boosted by the large figures of foreign immigrants, mostly from Latin America (38.75%), Eastern Europe (16.33%), North Africa (14.99%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (4.08%). In 2005, Spain instituted a 3-month amnesty program through which certain hitherto undocumented aliens were granted legal residency. Also some important pockets of population coming from other countries in the European Union are found (20.77% of the foreign residents), specially along the Mediterranean *costas* and Balearic islands, where many choose to live their retirement or even telework. These are mostly English, French, German, and Dutch from fellow EU countries and, from outside the EU, Norwegian.



Immigration in Spain

According to the Spanish government there were 4.5 million foreign residents in Spain in 2007; independent estimates put the figure at 4.8 million people, or 11%

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of the total population (Red Cross, World Disasters Report 2006). According to residence permit data for 2005, about 500,000 were Moroccan, another 500,000 were Ecuadorian, more than 200,000 were Romanian, and 260,000 were Colombian. Other important foreign communities are British (8.09%), French (8.03%), Argentine (6.10%), German (5.58%) and Bolivian (2.63%). In 2005, a regularisation programme increased the legal immigrant population by 700,000 people. Since 2000, Spain has experienced high population growth as a result of immigration flows, despite a birth rate that is only half the replacement level. This sudden and ongoing inflow of immigrants, particularly those arriving clandestinely by sea, has caused noticeable social tension.

Based on 2004 figures, within the EU Spain has the second highest immigration rate in *percentage* terms (after Cyprus), but by a great margin the highest in actual numbers of immigrants.

There are a number of reasons to explain the high level of immigration, including Spain's cultural ties with Latin America, its geographical position, the porosity of its borders, the large size of its underground economy and the strength of the agricultural and construction sectors which demand more low cost labour than can be offered by the national workforce. Another statistically significant factor is the large number of residents of the EU origin typically retiring to Spain's Mediterranean coast. In fact, Spain has been Europe's largest absorber of migrants for the past six years, with its immigrant population increasing fourfold as 2.8 million people have arrived. According to the Financial Times, Spain is the most favoured destination for West Europeans considering a move from their own country and seeking jobs elsewhere in the EU. (see Immigration to Spain).

Minority groups

Spain has a number of descendants of populations from former colonies (especially Equatorial Guinea) and immigrants from several Sub-Saharan and Caribbean countries have been recently settling in Spain. There are also sizeable numbers of Asian immigrants, most of whom are of Chinese, Filipino, Middle Eastern, Pakistani and Indian origins; the population of Spaniards of Latin American descent is sizeable as well and a fast growing segment. Other growing groups are Britons (761,000 in 2006), Germans and other immigrants from western and Eastern Europe.

Jewish emigration to Spain is primarily the result of three events: after the 19th century, some Jews established themselves in Spain as a result of migration from what was formerly Spanish Morocco, the flight of Jews escaping from Nazi repression, and immigration from Argentina. Spanish law allows Sephardi Jews to claim Spanish citizenship.

The arrival of the *Gitanos* (Gypsies), a Roma people group, began in the 16th century.

Most populous urban regions

1. Madrid 5,943,041
2. Barcelona 5,327,872
3. Valencia 1,623,724
4. Seville 1,317,098
5. Málaga 1,074,074
6. Bilbao 946,829

Identities

Peoples

The Spanish Constitution of 1978, in its second article, recognises historic entities ("nationalities", a carefully chosen word in order to avoid the more politically charged "nations") and regions, within the context of the Spanish nation. For some people, Spain's identity consists more of an overlap of different regional identities than of a sole Spanish identity. Indeed, some of the regional identities may even conflict with the Spanish one. Distinct ethnic groups within Spain include the Basques, Catalans, and Galicians.

It is this last feature of "shared identity" between the more local level or Autonomous Community and the Spanish level which makes the identity question in Spain complex and far from univocal.

Languages

Spanish (*español* or *castellano*), also known as *Castilian*, is the only language with official status nationwide. Other languages have been declared co-official, along with Spanish, in (some of) their constituent communities where they are spoken:

- Aranese (*aranés*) (a variant of Occitan), in Catalonia;
- Basque (*euskera*) in the Basque Country and Navarre;
- Catalan (*català*) in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and in the Valencian Community, known in the latter officially as *Valencian*;
- Galician (*galego*) in Galicia.



Spain's legacy: a map of the Hispanophone world.

There are also some other surviving Romance minority languages such as Astur-Leonese (which includes Asturian, Leonese, Extremaduran and Cantabrian) and Aragonese. Asturian (*asturianu*) is "protected" in Asturias and Aragonese is vaguely recognized in Aragon. But unlike Aranese, Basque, Catalan/Valencian and Galician, they do not have any official status. This might be due to their very small number of speakers, a less significant written tradition (in comparison to Catalan or Galician) and lower self-awareness of their speakers which traditionally meant lack of strong popular demand for their recognition in the regions in which they are spoken.

In the North African Spanish city of Melilla, Tarifit is spoken by an important part of the population.

In the tourist areas of the Mediterranean coast and the islands, English and German are widely spoken by tourists, foreign residents, and tourism workers.

Religion

Spain religiosity		percent
religion		
Christianity		76%
Irreligion / others		19%
Islam		2.3%
Judaism		0.1%
Others		1.7%

Although Chapter 2 of the Constitution states that no religion shall have a state character, Roman Catholicism is the main religion in the country. About 76% of Spaniards identify themselves as Catholics, about 2% identify with another religious faith, and about 19% identify themselves as non-religious. A study conducted in October 2006 by the Spanish Centre of Sociological Investigations shows that of the 76% of Spaniards who identify themselves as Catholics or with another religious faith, 54% hardly ever or never go to church, 15% go to church a few times per year, 10% a few times per month and 19% attend church every Sunday or multiple times per week. About 22% of the entire Spanish population attends religious services at least once per month.



The languages of Spain (simplified)

Spanish (74%), official, spoken in all the territory	Asturian , unofficial, but adopted as co-official in some municipalities of Asturias
Catalan (17%), co-official, except in La Franja and Carxe	Extremaduran , unofficial
Basque (2%), co-official, in Basque Country and Navarre	Aragonese , unofficial
Galician (7%), co-official, except in Asturias and Castile and Leon	Aranese , co-official (dialect of Occitan)

Evidence of the secular nature of contemporary Spain can be seen in the widespread support for the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Spain — over 66% of Spaniards support gay marriage according to a 2004 study by the Centre of Sociological Investigations. Indeed, in June 2005 a bill was passed by 187 votes to 147 to allow gay marriage, making Spain the third country in the European Union to allow same-sex couples to marry after Belgium and the Netherlands.

Protestant denominations are also present, all of them with less than 50,000 members. Evangelism has been better received among Gypsies than among the general population; pastors have integrated flamenco music in their liturgy. Taken together, all self-described "Evangelicals" slightly surpass Jehovah's Witnesses (105,000) in number. While not Protestants, about 35,000 residents of Spain are members of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

The recent waves of immigration have led to an increasing number of Muslims, who have about 1 million members. Muslims had not lived in Spain for centuries; however, colonial expansion in Northern and Western Africa gave some number of residents in the Spanish Morocco and the Western Sahara full citizenship. Presently, Islam is the second largest religion in Spain, accounting for approximately 2.5% of the total population.

Along with these waves of immigration, a significant number of Latin American people, who tend to be strong Catholic practitioners, have helped the Catholic Church to recover.

Judaism was practically non-existent until the 19th century, when Jews were again permitted to enter the country. Currently there are around 62,000 Jews in Spain, most arrivals in the past century and some descendants of Spanish Jews and accounting for less than 1% of the total number of inhabitants. Spain is believed to have been about 8% Jewish on the eve of the Spanish Inquisition.

Culture

Spain is known for its culturally diverse heritage, having been influenced by many nations and peoples throughout its history. Spanish culture has its origins in the Iberian, Celtiberian, Latin, Visigothic, Roman Catholic, and Islamic cultures. The definition of a national Spanish culture has been characterized by tension between the centralized state (dominated in recent centuries by Castile) and numerous regions and minority peoples. In addition, the history of the nation and its Mediterranean and Atlantic environment have played strong roles in shaping its culture.

After Italy, Spain is the country with the second highest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the world, with a total of 40.

Education in Spain

State Education in Spain is free and compulsory from the age of 6 to 16. The current education system is called LOGSE (*Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*).



A view of the Barcelona Cathedral.



The Hemispheric at the Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències, Valencia.

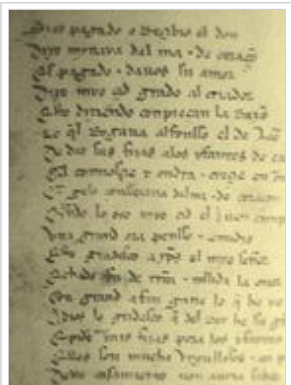
Spanish Academy

The *Real Academia Española* (Spanish for "Royal Spanish Academy"; **RAE**) is the institution responsible for regulating the Spanish language. It is based in Madrid, but is affiliated with national language academies in 21 Spanish-speaking nations through the Association of Spanish Language Academies. Its emblem is a fiery crucible, and its motto is *Limpia, fija y da esplendor* ("It cleans, sets, and gives splendor").

Spanish art

Spanish art is an important and influential type of art in Europe. Spanish art is the name given to the artistic disciplines and works developed in Spain throughout time, and those by Spanish authors world-wide. Due to historical, geographical and generational diversity, Spanish art has known a great number of influences. The Moorish heritage in Spain, especially in Andalusia, is still evident today in cities like Córdoba, Seville, and Granada. European influences include Italy, Germany and France, especially during the Baroque and Neoclassical periods.

Spanish literature



The Cantar de Mio Cid is the oldest preserved Spanish literature known as "cantar de gesta".

Spanish literature is the name given to the literary works written in Spain throughout time, and those by Spanish authors world-wide. Due to historic, geographic and generational diversity, Spanish literature has known a great number of influences and it is very diverse. Some major movements can be identified within it.

Spanish architecture

Spanish architecture refers to architecture carried out during any era in what is now modern-day Spain, and by Spanish architects worldwide. The term includes buildings within the current geographical limits of Spain before this name was given to those territories (whether they were called Hispania, Al-Andalus, or were formed of several Christian kingdoms). Due to its historical and geographical diversity, Spanish architecture has drawn from a host of influences.

For example, Córdoba was established as the cultural Capital of its time under the Umayyad dynasty. Simultaneously, the Christian kingdoms gradually emerged and developed their own styles, at first mostly isolated from European architectural influences, and later integrated into Romanesque and Gothic streams, they reached an extraordinary peak with numerous samples

along the whole territory. The Mudéjar style, from the 12th to 17th centuries, was characterised by the blending of cultural European and Arabic influences.



"Las Meninas" by Diego Velázquez, 1656–1657.



A view of the Baroque architecture of the Royal Palace of Madrid.

The arrival of Modernism in the academic arena produced figures such as Gaudí and much of the architecture of the 20th century. The International style was led by groups like GATEPAC. Spain is currently experiencing a revolution in contemporary architecture and Spanish architects like Rafael Moneo, Santiago Calatrava, Ricardo Bofill as well as many others have gained worldwide renown.

Music of Spain

Spanish music is often considered abroad to be synonymous with flamenco, an Andalusian musical genre, which, contrary to popular belief, is not widespread outside that region. Various regional styles of folk music abound in Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, Castile, the Basque Country, Galicia and Asturias. Pop, rock, hip hop and heavy metal are also popular.

Cinema of Spain

In recent years, Spanish cinema has achieved high marks of recognition as a result of its creative and technical excellence. In the long history of Spanish cinema, the great filmmaker Luis Buñuel was the first to achieve universal recognition, followed by Pedro Almodóvar in the 1980s. Spanish cinema has also seen international success over the years with films by directors like Segundo de Chomón, Florián Rey, Luis García Berlanga, Carlos Saura, Julio Medem and Alejandro Amenábar.

Spanish cuisine

Spanish cuisine consists of a great variety of dishes which stem from differences in geography, culture and climate. It is heavily influenced by seafood available from the waters that surround the country, and reflects the country's deep Mediterranean roots. Spain's extensive history with many cultural influences has led to a unique cuisine.



A type of Spanish cuisine known as "Tapa de calamares".

Sports in Spain

Sport in Spain has been dominated by football since the early 20th century. Basketball, tennis, cycling, handball, motorcycling and, lately, Formula 1 are also important due to presence of Spanish champions in all these disciplines. Today, Spain is a major world sports power, especially since the 1992 Summer Olympics that were hosted in Barcelona and promoted a great variety of sports in the country. The tourism industry has led to an improvement in sports infrastructure, especially for water sports, golf and skiing.

Public holidays in Spain

Public holidays celebrated in Spain include a mix of religious (Roman Catholic), national and regional observances. Each municipality is allowed to declare a maximum of 14 public holidays per year; up to nine of these are chosen by the national government and at least two are chosen locally.

International rankings

- Reporters Without Borders world-wide press freedom index 2007: Rank 33 out of 169 countries.
- *The Economist* Intelligence Units: Rank 10 out of 111 countries (ahead of countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and France)
- Nation Master's list by economic importance: Rank 9 of 25 countries, only surpassed by G-8 members.
- Nation Master's list by technological achievement: Rank 18 of 68 countries.

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Sweden


2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Sweden, officially the **Kingdom of Sweden** (Swedish: *Konungariket Sverige* [ˈkoːnø.ŋɑ.ˌriːkət ˈsværːjə]), is a Nordic country on the Scandinavian Peninsula in Northern Europe. Sweden has land borders with Norway and Finland, and is connected to Denmark by the Oresund Bridge. It has been a member of the European Union since January 1, 1995. Its capital city is Stockholm.

At 449.964 km² (173.732 sq mi), Sweden is the third largest country by area in Western Europe and fourth in all of Europe. With a total population slightly over 9 million, Sweden has a low population density of 20 people per km² (52 per sq. mi). About 84% of the population live in urban areas.

Modern Sweden emerged out of the Kalmar Union formed in 1397, and by the unification of the country by King Gustav Vasa in the 16th century. In the 17th century the country expanded its territories to form the Swedish empire. Most of the conquered territories outside the Scandinavian Peninsula were lost during the 18th and 19th centuries. The eastern half of Sweden constituted by the eastern half of Norrland and Österland was lost to Russia in 1809. The last war in which Sweden was directly involved was in 1814, when Sweden by military means forced Norway into a personal union with Sweden, a union which lasted until 1905. Since 1814, Sweden has been at peace, adopting a non-aligned foreign policy in peacetime and neutrality in wartime.

Etymology

<p><i>Konungariket Sverige</i> Kingdom of Sweden</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Motto: (Royal) <i>För Sverige - I tiden</i>^{nl} "For Sweden – With the Times"</p>	
<p>Anthem: <i>Du gamla, Du fria</i>² <i>Thou ancient, thou free</i></p> <p>Royal anthem: <i>Kungssången</i> <i>The Song of the King</i></p>	
	
Location of Sweden (dark green)	



This runestone from Aspa, Södermanland is the oldest native source mentioning Sweden, *suiþiubu*, from the 11th century.

The modern name *Sweden* is derived through "back-formation" from Old English *Sweoðeod*, which meant "people of the Swedes" (Old Norse *Svíþjóð*, Latin *Suetidi*). This word is derived from *Sweon/Sweonas* (Old Norse *Sviar*, Latin *Suiones*). The Swedish name *Sverige* literally means "Realm of the Swedes", excluding the Geats in Götaland.

The etymology of Swedes, and thus Sweden, is generally not agreed upon but suggestively deriving from Proto-Germanic **Swihoniz* meaning "one's own", referring to one's own Germanic tribe.

History

Prehistory

Sweden's prehistory begins in the Allerød warm period c. 12,000 BC with Late Palaeolithic reindeer-hunting camps of the Bromme culture at the edge of the ice in what is now the country's southernmost province. This period was characterized by small bands of hunter-

gatherer-fishers using flint technology.

– on the European continent (light green & dark grey)	
– in the European Union (light green) — [Legend]	
Capital (and largest city)	Stockholm
Official languages	None ³
Recognised regional languages	Finnish, Meänkieli, Sami, Romani, Jiddisch
Demonym	Swedish or Swedes
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
 - King	Carl XVI Gustaf
 - Prime Minister	Fredrik Reinfeldt
 - Speaker of the Riksdag	Per Westerberg
Consolidation	Prehistoric
EU accession	1 January 1995
Area	
 - Total	449,964 km ² (55th) 173,732 sq mi
 - Water (%)	8.7
Population	
 - 2008 census	9,196,227 ⁴
 - Density	20/km ² (194th) 52/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
 - Total	\$333.1 billion (33rd)
 - Per capita	\$36,900 (25th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate

- Total	\$455 billion (20th)
- Per capita	\$49,655 (8th)
Gini (2005)	23 (low)
HDI (2004)	▲ 0.956 (high) (6th)
Currency	Swedish krona (SEK)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.se ⁵
Calling code	+46
<p>1 <i>För Sverige - I tiden</i> has been adopted by Carl XVI Gustaf as his personal motto.</p> <p>2 <i>Du gamla, Du fria</i> has never been officially adopted as national anthem, but is so by convention.</p> <p>3 The Swedish language is the <i>de facto</i> national language, but it is not an <i>official</i> language in Sweden. However, the main goal of the Swedish parliament is to keep the Swedish language the <i>main</i> language (<i>huvudspråk</i>). Five other languages are officially recognized as minority languages.</p> <p>4 "Population in the country, counties and municipalities on 31/12/2007 and Population Change in 2007". Statistiska centralbyrån. Retrieved on 2008- 02-19.</p> <p>5 The .eu domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states. The .nu domain is another commonly used TLD ("nu" means "now" in Swedish).</p>	

Farming and animal husbandry, along with monumental burial, polished flint axes and decorated pottery, arrived from the Continent with the Funnel-beaker Culture in c. 4,000 BC. Sweden's southern third was part of the stock-keeping and agricultural Nordic Bronze Age Culture's area, most of it being peripheral to the culture's Danish centre. The period began in c. 1700 with the start of bronze imports from Europe. Copper mining was never tried locally during this period, and Scandinavia has no tin deposits, so all metal had to be imported though it was largely cast into local designs on arrival.

The Nordic Bronze Age was entirely pre-urban, with people living in hamlets and on farmsteads with single-story wooden long-houses.

In the absence of any Roman occupation, Sweden's Iron Age is reckoned up to the introduction of stone architecture and monastic orders about 1100 AD. Much of the period is proto-historical, that is, there are written sources but most hold a very low source-critical quality. The scraps of written matter are either much later than the period in question, written in areas far away, or local and coeval but extremely brief.



A rock painted moose from Jämtland. Rock paintings (pictographs) have been fairly limited to northern Scandinavia.

The climate took a turn for the worse, forcing farmers to keep cattle indoors over the winters, leading to an annual build-up of manure that could now for the first time be used systematically for soil improvement.

A Roman attempt to move the Imperial border forward from the Rhine to the Elbe was aborted in AD 9 when Germans under Roman-trained leadership defeated the legions of Varus by ambush in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. About this time, a major shift in the material culture of Scandinavia occurred, reflecting increased contact with the Romans.

Starting in the 2nd century AD, much of southern Sweden's agricultural land was parcelled up with low stone walls. They divided the land into permanent infields and meadows for winter fodder on one side of the wall, and wooded outland where the cattle was grazed on the other side. This principle of landscape organization survived into the 19th century. The Roman Period also saw the first large-scale expansion of agricultural settlement up the Baltic coast of the country's northern two thirds.

Sweden enters proto-history with the *Germania* of Tacitus in 98 AD. Whether any of the brief information he reports about this distant barbaric area was well-founded is uncertain, but he does mention tribal names that correspond to the Swedes (*Suiones*) and the Sami (*Fenni*) of later centuries. As for literacy in Sweden itself, the runic script was invented among the south Scandinavian elite in the 2nd century, but all that has come down to the present from the Roman Period is curt inscriptions on artefacts, mainly of male names, demonstrating that the people of south Scandinavia spoke Proto-Norse at the time, a language ancestral to Swedish and other North Germanic languages.



Rock carvings from Tanum, Bohuslän. Rock carvings (petroglyphs) are common all over Scandinavia and several thousands have been found in Sweden alone.

Viking and Middle ages

The Swedish Viking Age lasted roughly between the eighth and eleventh centuries AD. During this period, it is believed that the Swedes expanded from eastern Sweden and incorporated the Geats to the south. While Vikings from what is today Norway, Denmark and the west coast and south of Sweden travelled south and west, Swedish vikings and Gutar travelled east and south, going to Finland, the Baltic countries, Russia, the Mediterranean and further as far as Baghdad. Their routes passed the rivers of Russia down south to Constantinople (Byzantine Empire) (present-day Istanbul, Turkey) on which they did numerous raids. The Byzantine Emperor Theophilos noticed their great skills in war, and invited them to serve as his personal bodyguard, these were called the varangian guard. The Swedish vikings Template:Early Swedish history. The Swedish vikings (Rus) are, according to the most popular theory, believed to have to have founded Russia. The adventures of these Swedish Vikings are commemorated on many runestones in Sweden, such as the Greece Runestones and the Varangian Runestones. There was also considerable participation in expeditions westwards, which are commorated on stones such as the England Runestones. The last major Swedish Viking expedition appears to have been the ill-fated expedition of Ingvar the Far-Traveller to Serkland, the region south-east of the Caspian Sea. Its members are commemorated on the Ingvar Runestones, none of which mentions any survivor. What happened to the crew is unknown, but it is believed that they died of sickness.



Panoramic view of Ale's Stones in Scania, southern Sweden. This ship setting is a Vendel Period burial monument, most likely dating from the 7th century AD.

It is not known when and how the kingdom of Sweden was born, but the list of Swedish monarchs is drawn from the first kings who ruled Svealand (Sweden) and Götaland (Gothia) as one with Erik the Victorious. Sweden and Gothia were two separate nations long before that. It is not known how long they existed, *Beowulf* described semi-legendary Swedish-Geatish wars in the sixth century AD.



Visby, a medieval city on Gotland.

During the early stages of the Scandinavian Viking Age, Ystad in Scania and Paviken on Gotland, in present-day Sweden, were flourishing trade centers. Remains of what is believed to have been a large market have been found in Ystad dating from 600–700 AD. In Paviken, an important centre of trade in the Baltic region during the ninth and tenth century, remains have been found of a large Viking Age harbour with shipbuilding yards and handicraft industries. Between 800 and 1000, trade brought an abundance of silver to Gotland and according to some scholars, the Gotlanders of this era hoarded more silver than the rest of the population of Scandinavia combined.

St. Ansgar introduced Christianity around 829, but the new religion did not begin to fully replace paganism until the twelfth century and onward. During the 11th century, Christianity became the most prevalent religion, and from the year 1050 Sweden is counted as a Christian nation. The period between 1100 and 1400 was characterized by internal power struggles and competition among the Nordic kingdoms, including struggles for territory and comparative power. Swedish kings also began to expand the Swedish-controlled territory in Finland, creating conflicts with the Rus.

In the 14th century, Sweden was struck by the Black Death (the Plague). During this period the Swedish cities also began to acquire greater rights and were strongly influenced by German merchants of the Hanseatic League, active especially at Visby. In 1319, Sweden and Norway were united under King Magnus

Eriksson and in 1397 Queen Margaret I of Denmark effected the personal union of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark through the Kalmar Union. However, Margaret's successors, whose rule was also centred in Denmark, were unable to control the Swedish nobility. Real power was held for long periods by regents (notably those of the Sture family) chosen by the Swedish parliament. King Christian II of Denmark, who asserted his claim to Sweden by force of arms, ordered a massacre in 1520 of Swedish nobles at Stockholm. This came to be known as the "Stockholm blood bath" and stirred the Swedish nobility to new resistance and, on 6 June (now Sweden's national holiday) in 1523, they made Gustav Vasa their king. This is sometimes considered as the foundation of modern Sweden. Shortly afterwards he rejected Catholicism and led Sweden into the Protestant Reformation. Gustav Vasa is considered to be Sweden's "Father of the Nation".

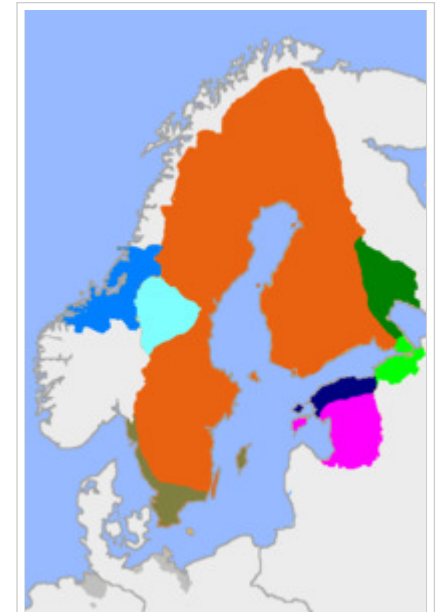
Swedish Empire

The 17th century saw the rise of Sweden as one of the Great Powers in Europe. Sweden also had colonial possessions as a minor colonial Empire that existed from 1638—1663 and later 1785—1878.

Sweden was during Imperial times the most powerful country of northern Europe and the Baltic Sea. Sweden's Imperial status took its start with Gustav II Adolph as king, who made Sweden the third biggest nation in Europe by area after Russia and Spain, and his successful participation in the Thirty Years' War, which made Sweden the recognized leader of continental Protestantism in Europe until 1721, when the Empire collapsed. Sweden's Imperial status during this period is largely credited to Gustav I's major changes on the Swedish economy in the mid-1500s, and his introduction of Protestantism (Lutheran).

The mid 1600s and the early 1700s were Sweden's most successful years as a great power. Sweden reached its largest territorial extent as an empire during the rule of Charles X (1622–1660) after the treaty of Roskilde in 1658. However, Sweden's largest territorial extent lasted from 1319 to 1343 with Magnus Eriksson ruling all of the traditional lands of Sweden and Norway. 17th century saw Sweden engaged in warfare with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with both sides competing for territories of today's Baltic states, with the disastrous Battle of Kircholm being one of the highlights. This period also saw the Deluge - the Swedish invasion of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. After more than a half century of almost constant warfare the Swedish economy had deteriorated. It would become the lifetime task of Charles' son, Charles XI (1655-1697), to rebuild the economy and refit the army. His legacy to his son, the coming ruler of Sweden Charles XII, was one of the finest arsenals in the world, a large standing army and a great fleet. Sweden's largest threat at this time, Russia, had a larger army but was far behind in both equipment and training. After the Battle of Narva in 1700, one of the first battles of the Great Northern War, the Russian army was so severely injured, that Sweden had an open chance to invade Russia. Instead, however, Charles XII invaded Poland and changed their king to a more Swedish friendly one. However after the crushing defeat at poltava the old king quickly took his throne back. This gave the Russian Tsar time to rebuild and modernize his army. After the success of invading Poland Charles decided to make an invasion attempt of Russia, which however, ended in a decisive Russian victory at the Battle of Poltava in 1709. The campaign had a successful opening for Sweden, which came to occupy Poland and change their rule into a more Swedish friendly king. But after a long march exposed by cossack raids, the Russian Tsar Peter the Great's scorched-earth techniques and the cold Russian climate, the Swedes stood weakened with a shattered confidence, and enormously outnumbered against the Russian army at Poltava. The defeat meant the beginning of the end for Sweden as Empire.

After building up a new army Charles XII attempted to invade Norway 1716, however he was shot at Fredriksten fortress in 1718. The Swedish military was not defeated at Fredriksten. However, when Karl died the whole structure and organisation of the Norwegian campaign fell apart and the army withdrew back home. However this led to defeat, the Swedish head of state signed the Treaty of Nystad in 1721. Forced to cede large areas of land, Sweden also lost its place as an empire and as the dominant state on the Baltic Sea. With Sweden's lost influence, Russia began to emerge as an empire, and become one of Europe's dominant nations.



The Swedish Empire following the Treaty of Roskilde of 1658. Dominions in Prussia, held from 1629 to 1635, do not appear on this map.

Sweden proper
 Kexholm County
 Swedish Ingria
 Swedish Estonia
 Livonia
 Swedish Pomerania, Abp Bremen
 and Bp Verden
 Scania, Blekinge, Halland, Gotland
 and Bohuslän
 Trøndelag and Møre og Romsdal
 Jämtland, Härjedalen, Idre & Särna

In the 18th century, Sweden did not have enough resources to maintain its territories outside Scandinavia and most of them were lost, culminating with the 1809 loss of the eastern part to Russia: forming the semi-autonomous (Duchy) of Finland of Imperial Russia.

After Denmark-Norway was defeated in the Napoleonic Wars, Norway was ceded to the king of Sweden on 14 January 1814, at the Treaty of Kiel. The Norwegian attempts to keep their status as a sovereign state were rejected by the Swedish king, Charles XIII. He launched a military campaign against Norway on July 27, 1814, ending in the Convention of Moss, which forced Norway into a personal union with Sweden, which was not dissolved until 1905. The 1814 campaign was also the last war in which Sweden participated as a combatant.

Modern history

The 18th and 19th centuries saw a significant population increase, which the writer Esaias Tegnér in 1833 famously attributed to *the peace, the (smallpox) vaccine, and the potatoes*."Between 1750 and 1850, the population in Sweden doubled. According to some scholars, mass emigration to America became the only way to prevent famine and rebellion; over 1 percent of the population emigrated annually during the 1880s. Nevertheless, Sweden remained poor, retaining a nearly entirely agricultural economy even as Denmark and Western European countries began to industrialize. Many looked towards America for a better life during this time. It is believed that between 1850 and 1910 more than one million Swedes moved to the United States. In the early 20th century, more Swedes lived in Chicago than in Gothenburg (Sweden's second largest city). Most Swedish immigrants moved to the Midwestern United States, with a large population in Minnesota. Some Swedes moved to Delaware. Some also moved to Canada and others in smaller numbers to Argentina.

Despite the slow rate of industrialization into the 19th century, many important changes were taking place in the agrarian economy due to innovations and the large population growth. These innovations included government-sponsored programs of enclosure, aggressive exploitation of agricultural lands, and the introduction of new crops such as the potato. Due also to the fact that the Swedish peasantry had never been enserfed as elsewhere in Europe, the Swedish farming culture began to take on a critical role in the Swedish political process, which has continued through modern times with modern Agrarian party (now called the Centre Party). Between 1870 and 1914, Sweden began developing the industrialized economy that exists today.

Strong grassroots movements sprung up in Sweden during the latter half of the nineteenth century (trade unions, temperance groups, and independent religious groups), creating a strong foundation of democratic principles. These movements precipitated Sweden's migration into a modern parliamentary democracy, achieved by the time of World War I. As the Industrial Revolution progressed during the twentieth century, people gradually began moving into cities to work in factories, and became involved in socialist unions. A socialist revolution was avoided in 1917, following the re-introduction of parliamentarism, and the country was democratized.

World Wars

Sweden remained officially neutral during World War I and World War II, although its neutrality during World War II has been vigorously debated. Sweden was under German influence for most of the war, as ties to the rest of the world were cut off through blockades. The Swedish government felt that it was in no position to openly contest Germany, and therefore collaborated with Hitler. Swedish volunteers in Nazi SS units were among the first to invade the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa. Sweden also supplied steel and machined parts to Germany throughout the war. Toward the end of the war however, when the defeat of Germany seemed imminent, Sweden began to play a role in humanitarian efforts and many refugees, among them many Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe, were saved partly because of the Swedish involvement in rescue missions at the internment camps and partly because Sweden served as a haven for refugees, primarily from *Norden* and the Baltic states. Nevertheless, internal and external critics have argued that Sweden could have done more to resist the Nazi war effort, even if risking occupation.

Cold War

Following the war, Sweden took advantage of an intact industrial base, social stability and its natural resources to expand its industry to supply the rebuilding of Europe. By the 1960s, Sweden, like the other Nordic countries, had become an affluent consumer society and welfare state. Sweden was part of the Marshall Plan and participated in the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), many of the policies aiming to improve the quality of life for the general population, in particular Sweden's working class, were successfully implemented.

Sweden, like countries around the globe, entered a period of economic decline and upheaval, following the oil embargoes of 1973-74 and 1978-79. In the 1980s pillars of Swedish industry were massively restructured. Shipbuilding was discontinued, wood pulp was integrated into modernized paper production, the steel industry was concentrated and specialized, and mechanical engineering was roboticized. Prime Minister Olof Palme was murdered in 1986.



A map of Sweden with largest cities and lakes and most important roads and railroads, from a printed CIA World Factbook. (See also: Atlas of Sweden)

Between 1970 and 1990 Sweden increased overall tax burden by over ten percentage points and the growth was very low compared to most other countries in Western Europe. Sweden steadily lost its top5 position in rankings such as GDP per capita, but still remains in top. Due to the generous allowances Sweden is ranked very high in matter of health rankings.

Recent history

A bursting real estate bubble caused by inadequate controls on lending combined with an international recession and a policy switch from anti-unemployment policies to anti-inflationary policies resulted in a fiscal crisis in the early 1990s. Sweden's GDP declined by around 5%. In 1992 there was a run on the currency, the central bank briefly jacking up interest to 500% in an unsuccessful effort to defend the currency's fixed exchange rate. Total employment fell by almost 10% during the crisis.

The response of the government was to cut spending and institute a multitude of reforms to improve Sweden's competitiveness, among them reducing the welfare state and privatizing public services and goods. Much of the political establishment promoted EU membership, and the Swedish referendum passed by 52-48% in favour of joining the EU on 14 August 1994.

Sweden joined the European Union on 1 January 1995, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, Europe's non-aligned Western countries, except Ireland, had considered membership unwise, as the EU predecessor, the European Community, had been strongly associated with NATO countries. Following the end of the Cold War, however, Sweden, Austria and Finland joined, though in Sweden's case without adopting the Euro. Sweden remains non-aligned militarily, although it participates in some joint military exercises with NATO and some other countries, in addition to extensive cooperation with other European countries in the area of defence technology and defence industry. Among others, Swedish companies export weapons that are used by the American military in Iraq. Sweden also has a long history of participating in international military operations, including most recently, Afghanistan, where Swedish troops are under NATO command, and in EU sponsored peacekeeping operations in UN protectorate Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Cyprus. Foreign minister Anna Lindh was murdered in 2003.

Geography and climate



The delta of Rapadalen in Laponia. Laponia is the largest tract of unspoiled natural land in Europe.

Situated in Northern Europe, Sweden lies west of the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Bothnia, providing a long coastline, and forms the eastern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula. To the west is the Scandinavian mountain chain (Skanderna), a range that separates Sweden from Norway.

Sweden is surrounded by Norway (west), Finland (northeast), the Skagerrak, Kattegat and Öresund straits (southwest) and the Baltic Sea (east). It has maritime borders with Denmark, Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and it is also linked to Denmark (southwest) by the Öresund Bridge.

At 449,964 km² (173,732 sq mi), Sweden is the 55th largest country in the world. It is the 5th largest in Europe, and the largest in Northern Europe. The country is slightly larger than the U.S. state of California, with a population in 2006 of 9.1 million people.

The lowest elevation in Sweden is in the bay of Lake Hammarsjön, near Kristianstad at -2.41 m (-7.91 ft) below sea level. The highest point is Kebnekaise at 2,111 m (6,926 ft) above sea level.

Sweden has 25 provinces or *landskap* (landscapes), based on culture, geography and history; Bohuslän, Blekinge, Dalarna, Dalsland, Gotland, Gästrikland, Halland, Hälsingland, Härjedalen, Jämtland, Lapland, Medelpad, Norrbotten, Närke, Skåne, Småland, Södermanland, Uppland, Värmland, Västmanland, Västerbotten, Västergötland, Ångermanland, Öland and Östergötland. While these provinces serve no political or administrative purpose, they are common in everyday language. The provinces are usually grouped together in three large *lands*, parts, Norrland, Svealand and Götaland.

About 15% of Sweden lies north of the Arctic Circle. Southern Sweden is predominantly agricultural, with increasing forest coverage northward. The highest population density is in the Öresund region in southern Sweden, and in the valley of lake Mälaren in central Sweden. Gotland and Öland are Sweden's largest islands; Vänern and Vättern are Sweden's largest lakes.

Climate

Sweden has a mild temperate climate despite its northern latitude, mainly because of the Gulf Stream. In the mountains of northern Sweden a sub-Arctic climate predominates. North of the Arctic Circle, the sun never sets for part of each summer, and in the winter, night is similarly unending.

In southern and central Sweden, summers are warm with cool evening; while in north, it's cooler. Heatwaves and temperatures around 25 - 30°C often occur during the summer, even in north. During winter, temperatures are around freezing point in south, slightly below freezing in central and very cold, snowy and below freezing for around 6 months in north.

Yearly average precipitation in most of the country is between 500 and 800 millimeter per year. In some parts though the average is between 1000 and 1700 mm/year. Thunderstorms could occur during the summer. Snowfall usually occur from november to april, although longer in north.

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The 25 provinces of Sweden

Average high and low temperatures in various cities in Sweden - north to south - (°C)												
City	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Kiruna	-10/-19	-8/-18	-4/-14	1/-8	7/-1	14/5	17/7	14/6	8/1	2/-5	-5/-12	-8/-17
Östersund	-6/-12	-4/-11	-2/-7	4/-3	12/3	17/7	18/9	16/8	11/5	6/1	2/-5	-3/-9
Stockholm	-1/-5	-1/-5	3/-3	8/1	16/6	21/11	22/13	20/12	15/9	9/5	4/1	1/-3
Gothenburg	1/-3	2/-4	5/-1	9/2	16/7	19/11	20/13	20/12	16/9	11/6	6/2	3/-2
Visby	1/-3	1/-3	3/-2	7/1	14/6	18/11	20/13	19/13	15/10	11/6	6/2	3/-1
Malmö	3/-1	2/-2	5/0	9/2	16/7	19/11	21/13	21/12	16/10	12/7	7/3	4/2

Weather.com

Administration and politics

Sweden is a mixture of constitutional monarchy, in which King Carl XVI Gustaf is head of state, but royal power has long been limited to official and ceremonial functions. The Economist Intelligence Unit, while admitting that democracy is difficult to measure, listed Sweden in first place in its index of democracy assessing 167 countries. The nation's modern legislative body is the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament), with 349 members, which chooses the Prime Minister. Parliamentary elections are held every four years, on the third Sunday of September.

Counties and municipalities

Sweden is a unitary state, currently divided into twenty-one counties (*län*). Each county has a County Administrative Board or *länsstyrelse*, which is appointed by the government (the first Swedish County Administrative Board was made up by the Swedish Prime Minister Axel Oxenstierna in 1634). In each county there is also a separate County Council or *landsting*, which is elected directly by the people.

Each county further divides into a number of municipalities or *kommuner*, with a total of 290 municipalities in 2004. Municipal government in Sweden is similar to city commission government and cabinet-style council government. A legislative municipal assembly (*kommunfullmäktige*) of between 31 and 101 members (always an uneven number) is elected from party-list proportional representation at municipal elections, held every four years in conjunction with the national parliamentary elections.

The municipalities are also divided into a total of 2,512 parishes, or *församlingar* (2000). These have traditionally been a subdivision of the Church of Sweden, but still have importance as districts for census and elections.

There are also older historical divisions, primarily the twenty-five provinces and three lands, which still retain cultural significance. The Swedish government is investigating the possibilities of merging the current 21 counties into circa 9 larger regions along the lines of the current riksområden used for statistical purposes. If approved, these would come into effect around 2015.

Political history



Sweden municipal borders

The actual age of the kingdom of Sweden is unknown. It depends mostly on whether Sweden should be considered a nation when the *Svear* (Swedes) ruled Svealand or if the emergence of the nation started with the *Svear* and the *Götar* (Geats) of Götaland being united under one ruler. In the first case, Sweden was first mentioned to have one single ruler in the year 98 by Tacitus, but it is almost impossible to know for how long it had been this way. However, historians usually start the line of Swedish monarchs from when Svealand and Götaland were ruled under the same king, namely Erik the Victorious and his son Olof Skötkonung in the 10th century. These events are often described as the consolidation of Sweden, although substantial areas were conquered and incorporated later.

Earlier kings, for which no reliable historical sources exist can be read about in mythical kings of Sweden and semi-legendary kings of Sweden, many of these kings are only mentioned in various saga and blend with Norse mythology.

The title *Sveriges och Götes Konung* was last used for Gustaf I of Sweden, after which the title became " King of Sweden, of the Goths and of the Wends" (*Sveriges, Götes och Vendes Konung*) in official documentation. Up until the beginning of the 1920s, all laws in Sweden were introduced with the words, "We, the king of Sweden, of the Goths and Wends". This title was used up until 1973. The present King of Sweden, Carl XVI Gustaf was the first monarch officially proclaimed "King of Sweden" (*Sveriges Konung*) with no additional peoples mentioned in his title.



Kingdoms of Svear (Swedish) and Götar (Geats) in the twelfth century.

The term *Riksdag* was used for the first time in the 1540s, although the first meeting where representatives of different social groups were called to discuss and determine affairs affecting the country as a whole took place as early as 1435, in the town of Arboga. During the assemblies of 1527 and 1544, under King Gustav Vasa, representatives of all four estates of the realm (*clergy, nobility, townsmen* and *peasants*) were called on to participate for the first time. The monarchy became hereditary in 1544.

Executive power was historically shared between the King and a noble Privy Council until 1680, followed by the King's autocratic rule initiated by the common estates of the Parliament. As a reaction to the failed Great Northern War, a parliamentary system was introduced in 1719, followed by three different flavours of constitutional monarchy in 1772, 1789 and 1809, the latter granting several civil liberties. The monarch remains as the formal, but merely symbolic head of state with ceremonial duties.

The Riksdag of the Estates consisted of two chambers. In 1866 Sweden became a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliament, with the First Chamber indirectly elected by local governments, and the Second Chamber directly elected in national elections every four years. In 1971 the Riksdag became unicameral. Legislative power was (symbolically) shared between king and parliament until 1975. Swedish taxation is controlled by the Riksdag (parliament).

Modern political system

Constitutionally, the 349-member Riksdag (Parliament) holds supreme authority in modern Sweden. This Riksdag is responsible for choosing the prime minister, who then appoints the government (the ministers). The legislative power is then shared between the parliament and the Prime Minister led government. The executive power is exercised by the government, while the judiciary is independent. Sweden lacks compulsory judicial review, although the non-compulsory review carried out by *lagrådet* (Law Council) is mostly respected in technical matters but less so in controversial political matters. Acts of the parliament and government decrees can be made inapplicable at every level if they are manifestly against constitutional laws. However, due to the restrictions in this form of judicial review and a weak judiciary, this has had little practical consequence.



The Riksdag building,
Stockholm.

Legislation may be initiated by the cabinet or by members of Parliament. Members are elected on the basis of proportional representation for a four-year term. The Constitution of Sweden can be altered by the Riksdag, which requires a simple but absolute majority and two decisions with general elections in between. Sweden has three other constitutional laws: the Act of Royal Succession, the Freedom of Press Act and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression.

The Swedish Social Democratic Party has played a leading political role since 1917, after Reformists had confirmed their strength and the revolutionaries left the party. After 1932, the cabinets have been dominated by the Social Democrats. Only four general elections (1976, 1979, 1991 and 2006) have given the centre-right bloc enough seats in Parliament to form a government. However, poor economic performance since the beginning of the 1970s, and especially the crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, have forced Sweden to reform its political system to become more like other European countries. In the 2006 general election the Moderate Party, allied with the Centre Party, Liberal People's Party, and the Christian Democrats, with a common political platform, won a majority of the votes. Together they have formed a majority government under the leadership of the Moderate party's leader Fredrik Reinfeldt. The next elections will be held in September 2010

Election turnout in Sweden has always been high in international comparisons, although it has declined in recent decades, and is currently around 80% (80.11 in general election of 2002, 81.99 in general election of 2006). Swedish politicians enjoyed a high degree of confidence from the citizens in the 1960s but it has since declined steadily and has a markedly lower level of trust than its Scandinavian neighbours.

Some Swedish political figures that have become known worldwide include Raoul Wallenberg, Folke Bernadotte, former Secretary General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld, former Prime Minister Olof Palme, former Prime Minister and Foreign minister Carl Bildt, former President of the General Assembly of the United Nations Jan Eliasson, and former International Atomic Energy Agency Iraq inspector Hans Blix.



The Riksdag following its 2006 renovation (picture of assembly hall).

Political movements

Sweden has a history of strong political involvement by ordinary people through its "popular movements" (*Folkrörelser*), the most notable being trade unions, the independent Christian movement, the temperance movement, the women's movement and—more recently—the sports movement.

Sweden is currently leading the EU in statistics measuring equality in the political system and equality in the education system. Gudrun Schyman founded the

<http://cd3wd.com> wikipedi-for-schools <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 756 of 867

first Swedish feminist party, the Feminist Initiative party, commonly referred to simply as *F!*, in 2005. *Ms.* magazine quoted Schyman's view of Sweden's reputation for progressive initiatives: "In Sweden there's a gap between words and reality.... Internationally a lot of people look upon Sweden as equality paradise, but that is not the truth – and now things are actually going backwards." In fact the pay gap between men and women in Sweden is 16%; a bit higher than the EU average of 15%. Sweden compares unfavourably with the EU average when it comes to providing full-time jobs for women, with a high fraction of employed women working part-time.

Law, law enforcement, and judicial system

The Supreme Court of Sweden is the supreme court and the third and final instance in all civil and criminal cases in Sweden. Before a case can be decided by the Supreme Court, leave to appeal must be obtained, and with few exceptions, leave to appeal can be granted only when the case is of interest as a precedent. The Supreme Court consists of 16 Councillors of Justice or *justitieråd* which are appointed by the government, but the court as an institution is independent of the Riksdag, and the government is not able to interfere with the decisions of the court.

Law enforcement in Sweden is carried out by several government entities. The Swedish Police Service is a Government agency concerned with police matters in Sweden. The National Task Force is a national SWAT unit within the National Criminal Investigation Department. Swedish Security Service's responsibilities are counter-espionage, anti-terrorist activities, protection of the constitution and protection of sensitive objects and people.



Swedish police car (Volvo V70).

According to a victimization survey of 1,201 residents in 2005, Sweden has above average crime rates compared to other EU countries. Sweden has high or above average levels of assaults, sexual assaults, hate crimes, and consumer fraud. Sweden has low levels of burglary, car theft and drug problems. Bribe seeking was rare.

Foreign policy

Throughout the twentieth century, Swedish foreign policy was based on the principle of non-alignment in peacetime and neutrality in wartime. "Sweden's government was left to pursue an independent course based on a foreign policy defined as nonalignment in times of peace so that neutrality would be possible in the event of war."

Sweden's doctrine of neutrality is often traced back to the 19th century as it has not participated in any war since the end of the Swedish campaign against Norway in 1814. During World War II Sweden joined neither the allied nor axis powers. This has been disputed by many since in effect Sweden allowed the Nazi regime to use its railroad system to transport troops and goods, especially iron ore from the rich mines in northern Sweden, of vital need to the German war machine.

During the early Cold War era, Sweden combined its policy of non-alignment with a low profile in international affairs, although it also pursued a security policy based on strong national defence to deter attack. At the same time, the country maintained relatively close informal connections with the Western bloc,

especially in the realm of intelligence exchange. In 1952, a Swedish DC-3 was shot down over the Baltic Sea by a Soviet MiG-15 jet fighter. Later investigations revealed that the plane was actually gathering information for NATO. Another plane, a Catalina search and rescue plane, was sent out a few days later and shot down by the Soviets as well. Olof Palme the former prime minister of Sweden visited Cuba during the 1970s and showed his support for Cuba in his speech which was in Spanish.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Sweden for a period attempted to play a more significant and independent role in international relations. This involved significant activity in international peace efforts, especially through the United Nations, and in support to the Third World. Since the murder of Olof Palme in 1986 and the end of the Cold War, this has been significantly toned down, although Sweden remains comparatively active in peace keeping missions and maintains a generous foreign aid budget.

In 1981 a Soviet Whiskey class submarine ran aground close to the Swedish naval base at Karlskrona in the southern part of the country. It has never been clearly established whether the submarine ended up on the shoals through a navigational mistake or if it was a matter of espionage against Swedish military potential. The incident triggered a diplomatic crisis between Sweden and the Soviet Union.

Since 1995 Sweden has been a member of the European Union, and as a consequence of a new world security situation the country's foreign policy doctrine has been partly modified, with Sweden playing a more active role in European security co-operation as well.

Military

The *Försvarsmakten* (Swedish Armed Forces) is a government agency reporting to the Swedish Ministry of Defence and responsible for the peacetime operation of the armed forces of Sweden. The primary task of the agency is to train and deploy peace support forces abroad, while maintaining the long-term ability to refocus on the defence of Sweden in the event of war. The armed forces are divided into Army, Air Force and Navy. The head of the armed forces is the Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces (*Överbefälhavaren*, ÖB), and after the sovereign is the most senior officer in the country.

Until the end of the Cold War, nearly all males reaching the age of military service were conscripted. In recent years, the number of conscripted males has reduced dramatically, while the number of female volunteers has increased slightly. Recruitment has generally shifted towards finding the most motivated recruits, rather than solely those otherwise most fit for service. All soldiers serving abroad must by law be volunteers. In 1975 the total number of conscripts was 45,000. By 2003 it was down to 15,000. After the Defence Proposition 2004, the number of troops in training will decrease even more to between 5,000 and 10,000 each year, while emphasizing the need to recruit only the soldiers later prepared to volunteer for international service. The total forces gathered would consist of about 60,000 men. This could be compared with the 80s before the fall of the Soviet Union, when Sweden could gather up to 1,000,000 men.

Swedish units have taken part in peacekeeping operations, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

Currently, one of the most important tasks for the Swedish Armed Forces is to form a Swedish-led EU Battle Group to which Norway, Finland, Ireland and



Swedish Air Force JAS 39
Gripen

Estonia will also contribute. The Nordic Battle Group (NBG) is to have a 10-day deployment readiness during the first half of 2008 and, although Swedish led, will have its Operational Headquarters (OHQ) in Northwood, outside London.

Economy

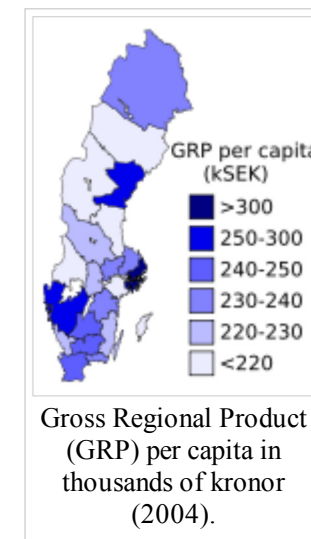
Sweden is an export-oriented market economy featuring a modern distribution system, excellent internal and external communications, and a skilled labour force. Timber, hydropower, and iron ore constitute the resource base of an economy heavily oriented toward foreign trade. Sweden's engineering sector accounts for 50% of output and exports. Telecommunications, the automotive industry and the pharmaceutical industries are also of great importance. Agriculture accounts for 2 percent of GDP and employment.

The 20 largest Sweden-registered companies by turnover in 2007 were Volvo, Ericsson, Vattenfall, Skanska, Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications AB, Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget, Electrolux, Volvo Personvagnar, TeliaSonera, Sandvik, Scania, ICA, Hennes & Mauritz, Nordea, Preem, Atlas Copco, Securitas, Nordstjernen, and SKF. Sweden's industry is overwhelmingly in private control; unlike some other industrialized Western countries, such as Austria and Italy, publicly owned enterprises were always of minor importance.

Some 4.5 million residents are working, out of which around a third with tertiary education. GDP per hour worked is the world's 9th highest at 31 USD in 2006, compared to 22 USD in Spain and 35 USD in United States. According to OECD, deregulation, globalization, and technology sector growth have been key productivity drivers. GDP per hour worked is growing 2½ per cent a year for the economy as a whole and trade-terms-balanced productivity growth 2%. Sweden is a world leader in privatized pensions and pension funding problems are relatively small compared to many other Western European countries. Swedish labor market has become more flexible, but it still has some widely acknowledged problems. The typical worker receives only 40% of his income after the tax wedge. The slowly declining overall taxation, 51.1% of GDP in 2007, is still nearly double of that in the United States or Ireland. State and municipal bureaucrats amount to a third of Swedish workforce, multiple times the proportion in many other countries. Overall, GDP growth has been fast since reforms in the early 1990s, especially in manufacturing.

World Economic Forum 2008 competitiveness index ranks Sweden 4th most competitive, behind Denmark. The Index of Economic Freedom 2008 ranks Sweden the 27th most free out of 162 countries, or 14th out of 41 European countries. Sweden ranked 9th in the IMD Competitiveness Yearbook 2008, scoring high in private sector efficiency. According to the book, *The Flight of the Creative Class*, by the U.S. economist, Professor Richard Florida of George Mason University, Sweden is ranked as having the best creativity in Europe for business and is predicted to become a talent magnet for the world's most purposeful workers. The book compiled an index to measure the kind of creativity it claims is most useful to business — talent, technology and tolerance.

Swedes have rejected euro in a popular vote and Sweden maintains its own currency, the Swedish krona (SEK). The Swedish Riksbank—founded in 1668 and thus making it the oldest central bank in the world — is currently focusing on price stability with its inflation target of 2%. According to *Economic Survey of Sweden 2007* by OECD, the average inflation in Sweden has been one of the lowest among European countries since the mid-1990s, largely because of



deregulation and quick utilization of globalization.

The largest trade flows are with Germany, United States, Norway, United Kingdom, Denmark, and Finland.

Infrastructure

Sweden's energy market is largely privatized. Nordic energy market is one of the first liberalized energy markets in Europe and it's traded in Nord Pool. In 2006, out of a total electricity production of 139 TWh, electricity from hydropower accounted for 61 TWh (44%), and nuclear power delivered 65 TWh (47%). At the same time, the use of biofuels, peat etc. produced 13 TWh (9%) of electricity, while wind power produced 1 TWh (1%). Sweden was a net importer of electricity by a margin of 6 TWh. Biomass is mainly used to produce heat for district heating and central heating and industry processes.

The 1973 oil crisis strengthened Sweden's commitment to decrease dependence on imported fossil fuels. Since then, electricity has been generated mostly from hydropower and nuclear power. The use of nuclear power has been limited, however. Among other things, the accident of Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station (USA) prompted the Swedish parliament to ban new nuclear plants. In March 2005, an opinion poll showed that 83% supported maintaining or increasing nuclear power. Politicians have made announcements about oil phase-out in Sweden, decrease of nuclear power, and multi-billion dollar investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency. The country has for many years pursued a strategy of indirect taxation as an instrument of environmental policy, including energy taxes in general and carbon dioxide taxes in particular.

Sweden has 162,707 km paved road and 1,428 km of expressways. Motorways run through Sweden, Denmark and over the Öresund Bridge to Stockholm, Gothenburg, Uppsala and Uddevalla. The system of motorways is still under construction and a new motorway from Uppsala to Gävle is under construction.

Most of the railways are owned and operated by Banverket. The rail transport market is open for private companies but train operators are to a large extent owned by the government. Operators include SJ, Veolia Transportation, Connex, Green Cargo, Tågkompaniet, Inlandsbanan, and a number of regional companies.

The largest airports include Stockholm-Arlanda Airport (17.91 million passengers in 2007), Gothenburg-Landvetter Airport (4.3 million passengers in 2006), and Stockholm-Skavsta Airport (2.0 million passengers). Sweden hosts the two largest port companies in Scandinavia, Port of Göteborg AB (Gothenburg) and the transnational Copenhagen Malmö Port AB.

Public policy

Sweden has always provided solid support for free trade (except agriculture), free immigration, and strong property rights. Sweden was richer than almost all countries until, after World War II, governments increased tax burden and government consumption to very heavy levels. The model eventually led to slow growth, Sweden's GDP per capita ranking fell from the 4th to 14th place in a few decades. Swedish households became relatively poor when measured by household consumption and possessions.

Sweden started to move away from the model in the 1980s, and according to OECD and McKinsey, Sweden has recently been relatively fast in liberalization compared to countries such as France. Deregulation-induced competition helped Sweden to halt the economic decline and restore strong growth rates in the 2000s. The current Swedish government is continuing the trend to pursue moderate reforms. Growth has been higher than in many other EU-15 countries.

Since the late 1960s, Sweden had the highest tax quota (as percentage of GDP) in the industrialized world, although today the gap has narrowed and Denmark has surpassed as the heaviest taxed country among developed countries. Sweden has a two step progressive tax scale with a municipal income tax of about 30% and an additional high-income state tax of 20–25% when a salary exceeds roughly 320,000 SEK per year. The employing company pays an additional 32% of an "employer's fee". In addition, a national VAT of 25% is added to many things bought by private citizens, with the exception of food (12% VAT), transportation, and books (6% VAT). Certain items are subject to additional taxes, e.g. electricity, petrol/diesel and alcoholic beverages. As of 2007, total tax revenue was 47.8% of GDP, the second highest tax burden among developed countries, down from 49.1% 2006. Inverted tax wedge - the amount going to the service worker's wallet - is approximately 15% compared to 10% in Belgium, 30% in Ireland and 50% in United States. Public sector spending amounts to 53% of the GDP. State and municipal employees total around a third of the workforce, much more than in most Western countries. Only Denmark has larger bureaucracy (38% of Danish workforce). Spending on transfers is also high.

Eighty percent of the workforce is organized through the trade-unions which have the right to elect two representatives to the board in all Swedish companies with more than 25 employees. Sweden has by far the highest amount of sick leaves per worker: average worker loses 24 days due to sickness. Swedish unemployment figures are contested in politics. Unemployment is higher amongst younger people. Because of the contradiction—unemployment despite a growing commercial enterprise economy—politicians and analysts often speak of the "jobless growth". According to Eurostat the unemployment rate in February 2007 was at 6.7% down from 7.4% from February 2006. No new net jobs have been produced in the Swedish private sector since 1950. None of top 50 companies on the Stockholm stock exchange has been started since 1970.

Education

All young children from 1-5 years old are guaranteed a place in public day-care facility (*förskola* or *dagis*). Between ages 6-16, children attend compulsory comprehensive school, divided in three stages. Swedish 15-years-old pupils have the 22nd highest average score in the PISA assessments, being neither significantly higher nor lower than the OECD average.

After completing the ninth grade, 90% continue with a three-year upper secondary school (*gymnasium*) leading sometimes to a vocational diploma and always to qualifications for further studies at a university or university college (*högskola*). However, to be eligible to apply to most of the more demanding degrees at the universities you need to have a final grade from the theoretical programmes of the gymnasium. Both upper secondary school and university studies are financed by taxes. Some Swedes go straight to work after secondary school.

There are universities and university colleges in Sweden. Only a few countries like Canada, United States, and Japan have higher levels of tertiary degree holders. Along with several other European countries, the government also subsidizes tuition of international students pursuing a degree at Swedish institutions, although there has been talk of this being changed.

Uniquely, Sweden is known for being a leader in free-market revolution. While most pre-tertiary students are still enrolled in municipality-managed schools, Sweden introduced education vouchers in 1992, one of the first in the world after Netherlands. Anyone can establish a for-profit school and the municipality must pay new schools the same amount as municipal schools get. For instance, the biggest school chain, Kunskapsskolan, offers 30 schools and a web-based environment, teaches nearly 10,000 pupils, and makes decent profit. Over 10% of pupils were enrolled in private schools in 2008 and numbers are growing fast. The system is popular among voters and the consumer choice has helped to improve education.

Demographics

As of April 2007, the total population of Sweden was estimated to be 9,131,425. The population exceeded 9,000,000 for the first time as of approximately 12 August 2004 according to the Statistics Sweden. Of the 2004 population, 1.1 million, or 12%, were foreign-born and approximately 16.7% (1.53 million) had at least one parent born abroad or were themselves born abroad. This reflects the inter-Nordic migrations, earlier periods of labour immigration, and later decades of refugee and family immigration. Sweden has been transformed from a nation of emigration ending after World War I to a nation of immigration from World War II onwards. In 2006, immigration to Sweden reached its highest level since records began.

The largest immigrant group living in Sweden as of 2005 consists of people born in Finland, followed by people born in Iraq, Former Yugoslavia, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Turkey, Poland, Russia and Iran.

Today, Sweden has one of the largest exile communities of Assyrian Christians (also known as Syriacs, Suryoye, Arameans and Chaldeans).

Immigration from the other Nordic countries reached a peak of more than 40,000 per year in 1969-70 when the new immigration rules introduced in 1967 had made it more difficult for immigrants from outside the Nordic region to settle in Sweden for labour market policy reasons. Immigration by refugees and immigrating relatives of refugees from outside the Nordic region increased drastically during the late 1980s, with many of the immigrants arriving from Asia and America, especially from Iran and Chile. During the 1990s and onwards another large immigrant group came from former Yugoslavia and the Middle East.

Language



Riddarholmen, Stockholm.



Halsö Island in Gothenburg's archipelago.

The primary language of Sweden is Swedish, a North Germanic language, related and very similar to Danish and Norwegian, but differing in pronunciation and orthography. Norwegians have little difficulty understanding Swedish, and Danes can also understand it, with slightly more difficulty than the Norwegians. The dominant language is Swedish, though it is not an official language. However, with the recognition of five minority languages of Sweden (Finnish, Meänkieli, Sami, Romani and Yiddish) the issue of whether Swedish should be declared the official language was raised. The parliament voted in 2005 but the proposal narrowly failed.

In varying degrees, depending largely on frequency of interaction with English, a majority of Swedes, especially those born after World War II, understand and speak English thanks to trade links, the popularity of overseas travel, a strong Anglo-American influence and the tradition of subtitling rather than dubbing foreign television shows and films. English became a compulsory subject for secondary school students studying natural sciences as early as 1849, and has been a compulsory subject for all Swedish students since the late 1940s. Depending on the local school authorities, English is currently a compulsory subject between first grade and ninth grade, with all students continuing in secondary school studying English for at least another year. Most students also study one and sometimes two additional languages. These include (but are not limited to) German, French and Spanish. Some Danish and Norwegian is at times also taught as part of the Swedish course for native speakers.

Sweden Finns are Sweden's largest linguistic minority. They make around 3 percent of Sweden's population. On the other hand, in neighboring Finland, Swedish is first language for about 5.5 percent (2007) of the population, the so called Swedish-speaking Finns. Swedish-speakers are found in rural and coastal municipalities. Swedish is an official language in these municipalities and holds the status of an official language of the state. There are mandatory Swedish courses in the secondary school.

Religion

Before the eleventh century, Swedes adhered to Norse paganism, worshiping Æsir gods, with its centre at the Temple in Uppsala. With Christianization in the 11th century, the laws of the country were changed, forbidding worship of other deities into the late nineteenth century.

After the Protestant Reformation in the 1530s, a change significantly affected by Martin Luther's Swedish associate Olaus Petri, the Church and state were separated and the authority of Roman Catholic bishops abolished, allowing Lutheranism to prevail. This process was completed by the Uppsala Synod of 1593. During the era following the Reformation, usually known as the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy, small groups of non-Lutherans, especially Calvinist Dutchmen, the Moravian Church and Walloons or French Huguenots from Belgium, played a significant role in trade and industry, and were quietly tolerated as long as they kept a low religious profile. The Sami originally had their own shamanistic religion, but they were converted to Lutheranism by Swedish missionaries in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Not until liberalization in the late 18th century, however, were believers of other faiths, including Judaism and Roman Catholicism, allowed to openly live and work in Sweden, and it remained illegal until 1860 for Lutheran Swedes to convert to another religion. The 19th century saw the arrival of various evangelical free churches, and, towards the end of the century secularism, leading many to distance themselves from Church rituals. Leaving the Church of Sweden became



legal with the so-called dissenter law of 1860, but only under the provision of entering another denomination. The right to stand outside any religious denomination was established in the Law on Freedom of Religion in 1951.

Today about 75% of Swedes belong to the Church of Sweden (Lutheran), but the number is decreasing by about 1% every year, and Church of Sweden services are sparsely attended (hovering in the single digit percentages of the population). The reason for the large number of inactive members is partly that until 1996, children became members automatically at birth if at least one of the parents was a member. Since 1996, all children that are christened become members. Some 275,000 Swedes are today members of various free churches (where congregation attendance is much higher), and, in addition, immigration has meant that there are now some 92,000 Roman Catholics and 100,000 Eastern Orthodox Christians living in Sweden. Because of immigration, Sweden also has a significant Muslim population. Almost 500,000 are Muslims by tradition, but approximately 5% (25,000) of these are practising Islam (in the sense of attending Friday prayer and praying five times a day). (See Islam in Sweden.)

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 23% of Swedish citizens responded that "they believe there is a god", whereas 53% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 23% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force".

Sweden ranks aside with France and Russia on having a large minority of its citizens who have no religion. Independent of these statistics, it is generally known that Swedish society, collectively, considers religiousness as a private affair separate from daily life.

Health

Healthcare in Sweden is developed. Sweden ranks in the top five countries with respect to low infant mortality. It also ranks high in life expectancy and in safe drinking water. World-class hospitals in Sweden include Lund University, Karolinska University Hospital, Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Linköping University Hospital and Uppsala University Hospital.

A person seeking care first contacts a clinic for a doctor's appointment, and may then be referred to a specialist by the clinic physician, who may in turn recommend either in-patient or out-patient treatment, or an elective care option. The health care is governed by the 21 Landsting (County councils) of Sweden, which act on general recommendations of the parliament, and delegate local government to the municipalities. Regulations, waiting times and patient fees vary in the different Landsting. The main criticism leveled at Swedish health care is that the waiting times are too long. Another criticism is that waiting times, quality of care and patient fees may vary in different counties, effectively meaning that patients may be treated better depending on where they live.

Culture

Sweden has many authors of worldwide recognition including August Strindberg, Astrid Lindgren, and Nobel Prize winners Selma Lagerlöf and Harry Martinson. In total seven Nobel Prizes in Literature have been awarded to Swedes. The nation's most well-known artists are painters such as Carl Larsson and Anders Zorn, and the sculptors Tobias Sergel and Carl Milles.

Swedish twentieth-century culture is noted by pioneering works in the early days of cinema, with Mauritz Stiller and Victor Sjöström. In the 1920s–1980s, the filmmaker Ingmar Bergman and actors Greta Garbo and Ingrid Bergman became internationally noted people within cinema. More recently, the films of Lukas Moodysson and Lasse Hallström have received international recognition.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Sweden was seen as an international leader in what is now referred to as the "sexual revolution", with gender equality having particularly been promoted. At the present time, the number of single people is one of the highest in the world. The early Swedish film *I Am Curious (Yellow)* (1967) reflected a liberal view of sexuality, including scenes of love making that caught international attention, and introduced the concept of the "Swedish sin". Sweden has also become, in recent decades, fairly liberal regarding homosexuality, as is reflected in the popular acceptance of films such as *Show Me Love*, which is about two young lesbians in the small Swedish town of Åmål. In the absence of legislation on same-sex marriages, Sweden offers both registered partnerships and domestic partnerships for same-sex couples. Cohabitation (*sammanboende*) by heterosexual couples of all ages, including teenagers as well as elderly couples, is widespread although in recent years it has become administratively problematical with regard to proof in claims of "spousal" social security. About half the children in the country are born out of wedlock. Presence of already obtained common-law offspring in newspaper photographs of marrying couples is commonplace.



Traditional Swedish rural house, painted in the traditional Swedish Falu red.

Music

Sweden has a rich musical tradition, ranging from medieval folk ballads to hip hop music. The music of the pre-Christian Norse has been lost to history, although historical re-creations have been attempted based on instruments found in Viking sites. Instruments used were the *lur* (a sort of trumpet), simple string instruments, wooden flutes and drums. It is possible that the Viking musical legacy lives on in some of the old Swedish folk music.

Sweden has a significant folk-music scene, both in the traditional style as well as more modern interpretations which often mix in elements of rock and jazz. Väsen is more of a traditionalist group, using a unique traditional Swedish instrument called the *nyckelharpa* while Garmarna, Nordman, and Hedningarna have more modern elements. There is also Saami music, called the *joik*, which is actually a type of chant which is part of the traditional Saami animistic spirituality but has gained recognition in the international world of folk music as well. Sweden has a major market for new age and ecologically or environmentally aware music, as well a large portion of pop and rock music have liberal and left-wing political messages.

Sweden also has a prominent choral music tradition, deriving in part from the cultural importance of Swedish folk songs. In fact, out of a population of 9.1 million, it is estimated that five to six hundred thousand people sing in choirs.

ABBA was one of the first internationally well-known popular music bands from Sweden, and still ranks among the most prominent bands in the world, with about 370 million records sold. With ABBA, Sweden entered into a new era, in which Swedish pop music gained international prominence. There have been many other internationally successful bands since, such as Roxette, Ace of Base, and the Cardigans to name some of the biggest, and recently there has been a surge of Swedish Indie pop bands such as Peter, Bjorn & John, The Hives and Mando Diao. Sweden has also become known for a large number of heavy metal (mostly death metal and melodic death metal) as well as progressive- and power metal bands.

Sweden is the 3rd largest music exporter in the world, with over 800 million dollars in revenue last year, surpassed only by the US and the UK.

Sweden has a rather lively jazz scene. During the last sixty years or so it has attained a remarkably high artistic standard, stimulated by domestic as well as external influences and experiences. The Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research has published an overview of jazz in Sweden by Lars Westin.

Literature

The first literary text from Sweden is the Rök Runestone, carved during the Viking Age circa 800 AD. With the conversion of the land to Christianity around 1100 AD, Sweden entered the Middle Ages, during which monastic writers preferred to use Latin. Therefore there are only a few texts in the Old Swedish from that period. Swedish literature only flourished when the Swedish language was standardized in the 16th century, a standardization largely due to the full translation of the Bible into Swedish in 1541. This translation is the so-called Gustav Vasa Bible.

With improved education and the freedom brought by secularisation, the 17th century saw several notable authors develop the Swedish language further. Some key figures include Georg Stiernhielm (17th century), who was the first to write classical poetry in Swedish; Johan Henric Kellgren (18th century), the first to write fluent Swedish prose; Carl Michael Bellman (late 18th century), the first writer of burlesque ballads; and August Strindberg (late 19th century), a socio-



Midsummer's Eve by Anders Zorn.

realistic writer and playwright who won worldwide fame. The early 20th century continued to produce notable authors, such as Selma Lagerlöf, (Nobel laureate 1909), Verner von Heidenstam (Nobel laureate 1916) and Pär Lagerkvist (Nobel laureate 1951).

In recent decades, a handful of Swedish writers have established themselves internationally, including the detective novelist Henning Mankell and the writer of spy fiction Jan Guillou. But the only Swedish writer to have made a significant mark on world literature is the children's book writer Astrid Lindgren, and her books about Pippi Longstocking, Emil of Maple Hills, and others.

Inventions

In the 18th century Sweden's scientific revolution took off. Previously, technical progress had mainly come from professionals who had immigrated from mainland Europe. In 1739, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences was founded, with people such as Carolus Linnaeus and Anders Celsius as early members. From the 1870s, engineering companies were created at an unmatched rate and engineers became heroes of the age. Many of the companies founded by early pioneers are still internationally familiar. Gustaf Dalén founded AGA, and received the Nobel Prize for his sun valve. Alfred Nobel invented dynamite and instituted the Nobel Prizes. Lars Magnus Ericsson started the company bearing his name, Ericsson, still one of the largest telecom companies in the world. Jonas Wenström was an early pioneer in alternating current and is along with Serbian inventor Tesla credited as one of the inventors of the three-phase electrical system.

The traditional engineering industry is still a major source of Swedish inventions, but pharmaceuticals, electronics and other high-tech industries are gaining ground. Tetra Pak is an invention for storing liquid foods, invented by Erik Wallenberg. Håkan Lans invented the Automatic Identification System, a worldwide standard for shipping and civil aviation navigation. Losec, an ulcer medicine, was the world's best-selling drug in the 1990s and was developed by AstraZeneca. A large portion of the Swedish economy is to this day based on the export of technical inventions, and many large multinational corporations from Sweden have their origins in the ingenuity of Swedish inventors.

Holidays

Apart from traditional Protestant Christian holidays, Sweden also celebrates some unique holidays, some of a pre-Christian tradition. They include Midsummer celebrating the summer solstice; Walpurgis Night (*Valborgsmässoafton*) on 30 April lighting bonfires; and Labour Day or Mayday on 1 May is dedicated to socialist demonstrations. The day of giver-of-light Saint Lucia, 13 December, is widely acknowledged in elaborate celebrations which betoken its Italian origin and commence the month-long Christmas season. 6 June is the National Day of Sweden and, as of 2005, a public holiday. Furthermore, there are official flag day observances and a Namesdays in Sweden calendar. In August many Swedes have *kräftskivor* (crayfish dinner parties). Martin of Tours Eve is celebrated in Scania in November with *Mårten Gås* parties, where roast goose and *svartsoppa* ('black soup', made of goose stock, fruit, spices, spirits and goose blood) are served. The Sami, one of Sweden's indigenous minorities, have their holiday on February 6 and Scania celebrate their Scanian Flag day on the third Sunday in July.

Cuisine

Swedish cuisine, like that of the other Scandinavian countries (Denmark and Norway), was traditionally simple. Fish (particularly herring), meat and potatoes played prominent roles. Spices were sparse. Famous dishes include Swedish meatballs, traditionally served with gravy, boiled potatoes and lingonberry jam; pancakes, *lutfisk*, and Smörgåsbord, or lavish buffet. *Akvavit* is a popular alcoholic distilled beverage, and the drinking of *snaps* is of cultural importance. The traditional flat and dry crisp bread has developed into several contemporary variants. Regionally important foods are the *surströmming* (a fermented fish) in Northern Sweden and eel in Scania in Southern Sweden. However, Swedes have traditionally also been very open to foreign influences, ranging from the French cuisine during the eighteenth century, to the sushi and cafe latte of today.



Swedish knäckebröd, or crisp bread.

Film

Swedes have been fairly prominent in the film area through the years, to several successful Swedish Hollywood actors can be mentioned: Ingrid Bergman, Greta Garbo, Max von Sydow, Dolph Lundgren, Lena Olin, Stellan Skarsgård, Peter Stormare, Izabella Scorupco, Pernilla August, Ann Margaret, Anita Ekberg, Alexander Skarsgård, Harriet Andersson, Bibi Andersson, Ingrid Thulin and Gunnar Björnstrand. Amongst several directors who have made internationally successful films can be mentioned: Ingmar Bergman and Lasse Hallström.

Comics

Compared to countries like France and Belgium, the Swedish production of comics have been relatively scarce. Back in the 40s, the Biffen och Bananen strips ("*The Beef and the Banana*") were very popular. Some modern popular humor comic strips are Herman Hedning, about an aggressive and impulsive caveman, and Hälge, about a moose in a small town, and his problems with mating and the moose hunt. Around the 60's-70's, the children's comic Bamse, about an anthropomorph bear and his adventures slowly grew in popularity, having been read by generations of Swedish children. Starting somewhere in the 80's, comics more directly aimed at adults started to become popular. Some of the more popular examples stemming from this tradition are Arne Anka, about a cynical duck discussing politics or unsuccessfully attempts picking up women at Stockholm's bars, Rocky, a mostly autobiographical comic about a cartoonist dog drifting around in Stockholm, and Elvis, about a turtle and his relationship problems. Among imported comics, popular examples include Donald Duck, Tintin, Beetle Bailey and Piranha Club. Since the 40's-50's, The Phantom has been popular, and since the 60's, the Scandinavian Team Fantomen has produced comics directly for the Scandinavian market. Recently, starting somewhere around the late 90's, manga (Japanese comics) has become very popular.

Fashion

Sweden has in late years taken an interest in the fashion industry, through headquartering famous brands like Hennes & Mauritz (operating as H&M), J. Lindeberg (operating as JL), Gina Tricot, Tiger of Sweden and Filippa K within its borders. These companies, however, are comprised largely of buyers who import fashionable goods from throughout Europe and the Americas, continuing the trend of Swedish business toward multinational economic dependency like many of its neighbours.

Sports

Sport activities are a national movement with half of the population actively participating, much thanks to the heavy government subsidies of sport associations (*föreningsstöd*). The two main spectator sports are association football and ice hockey. Second to football, horse sports have the highest number of practitioners, mostly women. Thereafter follow golf, athletics, and the team sports of handball, floorball, basketball and bandy.

The Swedish ice hockey team Tre Kronor is regarded as one of the best in the world and has won the World Championships seven times, and Olympic gold medals in 1994 and 2006. In 2006, as the first nation in history, they won both the Olympic and world championships in the same year. The Swedish national football team has seen some success at the World Cup in the past, finishing second when they hosted the tournament in 1958, and third twice, in 1950 and 1994. Athletics has enjoyed a surge in popularity due to several successful athletes in recent years.



Stockholms Olympiastadion

In schools, on meadows and in parks, the game brännboll, a sport similar to baseball, is commonly played for fun. Other leisure sports are the historical game of kubb, and boules among the older generation.

Sweden hosted the 1912 Summer Olympics and the FIFA World Cup in 1958. Other big sports events held here include 1992 UEFA European Football Championship, FIFA Women's World Cup 1995, and several championships of ice hockey, curling, athletics, skiing, bandy, figure skating and swimming.

International rankings

Rankings

Name	Year	Place	Out of #	Reference
CIA World Factbook – GDP per capita (PPP)	2008	26th	229	
CIA World Factbook – life expectancy	2008	9th	223	
World Economic Forum – Enabling Trade Index ranking	2008	3rd	118	
Yale University / Columbia University - Environmental Performance Index	2008	3rd	149	
The Economist Intelligence Unit - <i>e-readiness</i>	2008	3rd	70	
The Economist Intelligence Unit - Global Peace Index	2008	13th	140	
Save the Children - Mother's Index Rank	2007	1st	141	
Save the Children - Women's Index Rank	2007	1st	141	
Save the Children - Children's Index Rank	2007	4th	141	
Wall Street Journal / The Heritage Foundation - Index of Economic Freedom	2007	27th	157	
United Nations - Human Development Index	2007	6th	177	
World Economic Forum - Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008	2007	4th	131	
World Economic Forum - The Global Gender Gap Report 2007	2007	1st	128	
World Bank - Ease of Doing Business Index	2007	14th	178	
Reporters Without Borders - Worldwide Press Freedom Index	2007	5th	169	
Transparency International - Corruption Perceptions Index	2007	4th	179	
The Economist Intelligence Unit - Index of Democracy	2007	1st	167	
Privacy International - Privacy index (EU and 11 other selected countries)	2006	28th	36	
New Economics Foundation - Happy Planet Index	2006	119th	178	
The Economist Intelligence Unit - Quality-of-life index	2005	5th	111	
Save the Children - % seats in the national government held by women	2004	1st (47%)	141	
World Health Organization - suicide rates by country		31st	100	
NationMaster's index of civil and political liberties		13th	140	
NationMaster's index of asylum seekers (per capita)		4th	28	

NationMaster's index of economic aid (donor, per capita)		5th	24	
NationMaster's index of total tax wedge (single worker)		4th	29	
NationMaster's index of technological achievement		3rd	68	

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Switzerland

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Switzerland (English pronunciation: [ˈswɪt.sə(ɹ).lənd]; German: *Schweiz*, French: *Suisse*, Italian: *Svizzera*, Romansh: *Svizra*), officially the **Swiss Confederation** (*Confoederatio Helvetica* in Latin, hence its ISO country codes CH and CHE), is a landlocked alpine country of roughly 7.6 million people in Western Europe with an area of 41,285 km². Switzerland is a federal republic consisting of 26 states called cantons. Berne is the seat of the federal authorities, while the country's economic centres are its two global cities, Geneva and especially Zürich. Switzerland is one of the richest countries in the world.

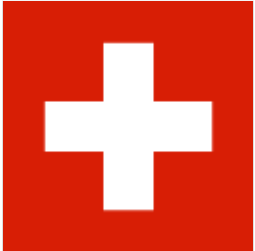

It is bordered by Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Liechtenstein. Switzerland has a long history of neutrality — it has not been at war since 1815 — and hosts many international organizations, including the Red Cross, the World Trade Organization and one of the U.N.'s two European offices. Switzerland is multilingual and has four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. The country's formal name is *Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft* in German, *Confédération suisse* in French, *Confederazione Svizzera* in Italian and *Confederaziun svizra* in Romansh. The establishment of Switzerland is traditionally dated to August 1, 1291; the first of August is the national holiday.

Switzerland's name is pronounced as [ˌʃvaɪts] in German, [sqiːs] in French, [ˈzvɪtˌʦɛra] in Italian and [ˈsvi.zra] in Romansch.

History

Early history

The earliest known tribes of the area were members of the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures. The La Tène culture developed and flourished during the late Iron Age from around 450BC, possibly under some influence from the Greek, and Etruscan civilisations. One of the most important tribal groups in the Swiss region was the Helvetii. In 15 BC, Tiberius I, who was destined to be the second Roman Emperor, and his brother, Drusus, conquered the Alps, integrating them into the Roman Empire. The area occupied by the Helvetii – the namesakes of the later *Confoederatio Helvetica* – first became part of Rome's Gallia Belgica Province and then of its Germania Superior Province, while the eastern portion of modern

<p>Confoederatio Helvetica (Latin) Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft (German) Confédération suisse (French) Confederazione Svizzera (Italian) Confederaziun svizra (Romansh) Swiss Confederation</p>	
 	
<p>Flag Coat of arms</p>	
<p>Motto: <i>Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno</i> (Latin) "One for all, all for one"</p>	
<p>Anthem: " Swiss Psalm"</p>	

Switzerland was integrated into the Roman province of Raetia.

In the Early Middle Ages, from the fourth century AD, the western extents of modern day Switzerland was part of the territory of the Kings of the Burgundians. The Alemanni settled the Swiss plateau in the fifth century AD and the valleys of the Alps in the eighth century AD, forming Alemannia. Modern Day Switzerland was therefore then divided between the Kingdoms of Alemannia and Burgundy. The entire region became part of the expanding Frankish Empire in the sixth century, following Clovis I's victory over the Alemanni at Tolbiac in 504 AD, and later Frankish domination of the Burgundians.

By 561 AD, the Merovingian King Guntram, Clovis I's grandson, had inherited the Frankish Kingdom of Burgundy, which stretched East nearly as far as the Rhine. East of this, the Alamanni were ruled under a nominal dukedom within Frankia, as the Franks filled the vacuum caused by the declining Western reach of Roman Byzantium. By this time Frankia was beginning to form the tripartite character that would characterise the rest of its history. The territories were subdivided into Neustria in the West (referred to simply as Frankia at the time; the name Neustria did not appear in writing until some 80 years later), Austrasia in the North East and Burgundy.

Throughout the rest of the sixth and early seventh centuries AD the Swiss regions continued under Frankish hegemony, with the Franks largely occupied with infighting about issues of succession amongst the Frankish sub-kingdoms (whose Kings were close blood relatives). In 632 AD, following the death of Chlothar II, the entire Frankish realm was briefly united under Dagobert, who is described as the last Merovingian king able to exercise real power. Under Dagobert, the Austrasians agitated for self governance as a means of countering the influence of the Neustrians, who dominated royal court. Dagobert was forced by the strong Austrasian aristocracy to appoint his infant son, Sigebert III, as sub-king of Austrasia in 633 AD. The weakness of the realm became clear, and this led to those subjugated by the Franks considering the risks and benefits of rebellion. After Sigebert III suffered a military defeat at the hands of Radulf, King of Thuringia in 640 AD, the Alemanni also revolted against Frankish rule. The period of Allemani independence that followed lasted more or less continuously until the middle of the eighth century AD.

Mayors of the Palace had been appointed by the Frankish Kings as court officials since the early seventh century AD to act as mediators between the king and the people. However following Dagobert's death in 639 AD, with infants on the throne in both Neustria (Clovis II - a babe in arms in 639 AD) and Austrasia (Sigebert III - about four years old in 639 AD), these court appointees assumed greater power, eventually to such an extent that they ended the rule of the Merovingian monarchs, and took over the Frankish throne themselves. The first step was taken by the Mayor of the Palace of Austrasia, Grimoald



Location of **Switzerland** (orange)

on the European continent (white)

Capital	Berne
Largest city	Zürich
Official languages	German, French, Italian, Romansh
Demonym	Swiss
Government	Direct democracy Federal parliamentary republic
- Federal Council	M. Leuenberger P. Couchepin (Pres. 08) S. Schmid M. Calmy-Rey H.-R. Merz (VP 08) D. Leuthard E. Widmer-Schlumpf
Independence	
- Foundation date	1 August 1291
- <i>de facto</i>	22 September 1499

I, who convinced the childless Sigebert III to adopt his own son, Childebert as heir to the throne.

Meanwhile in the Neustrian palace, the Mayors of the Palace, Erchinoald, and his successor, Ebroin, were likewise increasing their hold on power behind Clovis II, and his successor Chlothar III. Ebroin reunited the Frankish kingdom by defeating and removing Childebert (and Grimoald) from Austrasia in 661 AD.

Chlothar III's younger brother, Childeric II, was then installed as King of the Austrasians, and together they ruled the empire. When Chlothar III died in 673 AD, Childeric II became king of the entire realm, ruling from Austrasia, until he was assassinated two years later by members of the Neustrian elite. After his death, Theuderic III, son of Clovis II, ascended to the throne, ruling from Neustria. He and his Mayor of the Palace, Berthar, declared war on Austrasia, which was ruled by Dagobert II, son of Sigebert III, and Pepin of Heristal (Pepin II), the Arnulfing Mayor of Austrasia. Theuderic and Berthar were defeated by Peppin at the Battle of Tertry in 687 AD, where after Peppin was appointed the sole Mayor of all Frankia, nominating himself as Duke and Prince of all the Franks. Peppin was the product of the marriage of two very powerful houses; that of the Pippinids and the Arnulfings. His success at Tertry was to mark the end of Merovingian power.

Peppin again tasted military success in his campaign to bring the Frisians, of Europe's north coast, back under Frankish control. Between 709 AD and 712 AD he fought a similar campaign against the Alemanni, including those within the borders of present day Switzerland, and succeeded in re-imposing Frankish rule, the first since the Alemannian revolt of 640 AD. However Frankish control of this and other outlying areas was again lost when a Frankish civil war of succession followed Peppin's death in 714 AD.

The war was a continuation of the ageless Neustrian/Austrasian rivalry. Peppin's illegitimate son, Charles Martel (who was the son of Peppin's mistress Alpaida), had been proclaimed Mayor of Austrasia by the Austrasian nobility in defiance of Peppin's widow, Plectrude, who preferred that her 8 year old grandson, Theudoald, be appointed. Neustria invaded Austrasia under Chilperic II who had been appointed by the Neustrians without the agreement of the rest of the Frankish peoples. The turning point of the war came at the Battle of Ambleve, when Charles Martel, using brilliant and unconventional tactics, defeated combined Neustrian and Frisian forces under Chilperic II and Mayor Ragenfrid. Charles struck when The Neustrians were marching home after triumphing at Cologne over Plectrude and the child Theudoald.

By 717 AD, Charles had confirmed his supremacy, with victory over the Neustrians at the Battle of Vincy, thereby marking the beginning of Carolingian rule over the Frankish empire.

- Recognized	24 October 1648
- Restored	7 August 1815
- Federal state	12 September 1848
Area	
- Total	41,285 km ² (135th) 15,940 sq mi
- Water (%)	4.2
Population	
- 2007 estimate	7,591,400 (95th)
- 2000 census	7,288,010
- Density	181.4/km ² (61st) 479.8/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$296.2 billion (38th)
- Per capita	\$38,706 (6th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$423 billion (19th)
- Per capita	\$58,054 (7th)
Gini (2000)	33.7 (medium)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.955 (high) (7th)
Currency	Swiss franc (CHF)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
- Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.ch
Calling code	+41

After 718 AD, Charles, who was a brilliant commander, embarked upon a series of wars to strengthen Frankish dominion over Western Europe. This included bringing the Alemannians back under Frankish hegemony, and even, in the 720s AD, forcing some Alemannian elements to participate in his wars against their Eastern neighbours, the Bavarians.

Alemannia, however, remained restless, with Duke Lantfrid in the late 720s AD, expressing independence by issuing revisions of the laws of the Alemans. Charles invaded again in 730 AD and subjugated the Alemannis by force.

Charles is perhaps best known for stopping the Arab advance into Western Europe at the Battle of Tours in 732 AD, in a military stand that arguably halted Islamic expansionism into the European homeland.

When Charles died in 741 AD, the dominion over Frankia was divided between his two sons from his first marriage; namely Peppin the Short and Carloman. Carloman was given Austrasia, Alemannia and Thuringen, while Peppen took control of Neustria, Provence and Burgundy (including present day Western Switzerland).

By 743 AD, Carloman was vowing to impose a greater degree of control over Alemannia, and this resulted ultimately in the arrest, trial and execution of several thousand Alemanni nobleman at the Blood court at Cannstatt in 746 AD.

Carloman retired to a monastery in 747 AD, leaving Peppin to assume the Frankish crown (after a vote of nobles) in 751 AD. Peppen further strengthened his position by forming an alliance, in 754 AD, with Pope Stephen II, who then came all the way to Paris to anoint him King in a ceremony at St Denis's Basilica. In return Peppin subdued the Lombards and donated the Exarchate of Ravenna and captured territory around Rome to the church. This was a turning point in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and Western Europe, as it foreshadowed later events under Charlemagne leading to the formation of the Holy Roman Empire. It is claimed that Pope Stephen II tabled the forged Donation of Constantine during his negotiations with Peppin. The Donation is a falsified imperial order purported to have been issued by Constantine to gift to Pope Sylvester I and all his successors dominion over not only the Western Roman empire, but also all of Judea, Greece, Asia, Thrace and Rome.

Upon Peppen's death in 768 AD, the Frankish empire was passed to his sons Charles and Carloman I. Carloman withdrew to a monastery and died shortly afterwards, leaving Charles, later known as the legendary Charlemagne, the sole ruler of the Franks. Charles expanded Frankish sovereignty to include the Saxons, Bavarians, and the Lombards in Northern Italy and he expanded the empire into today's Austria and parts of Croatia. He offered the Papacy the promise of enduring Frankish protection, and he patronized monastic centers of learning.

Charles therefore emerged as the leader of Western Christendom

By 1200 AD, the Swiss plateau comprised the dominions of the houses of Savoy, Zähringer, Habsburg and Kyburg. When the Kyburg dynasty fell in 1264 AD, the Habsburgs under King Rudolph I (Emperor in 1273) extended its territory to the eastern Swiss plateau.



The house dominions that existed around AD 1200:
Savoy Zähringer Habsburg Kyburg

Old Swiss Confederacy

The Old Swiss Confederacy was an alliance among the valley communities of the central Alps. The Confederacy facilitated management of common interests (free trade) and ensured peace on the important mountain trade routes. The Federal Charter of 1291 agreed between the rural communes of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden is considered the confederacy's founding document; even though similar alliances are likely to have existed decades earlier.



A view of Zug in 1548.

By 1353 the three original cantons had joined with the cantons of Glarus and Zug and the Lucerne, Zürich and Berne city states to form the "Old Confederacy" of eight states that existed until the end of the fifteenth century. The expansion led to increased power and wealth for the federation. By 1460, the confederates controlled most of the territory south and west of the Rhine to the Alps and the Jura mountains, particularly after victories against the Habsburgs (Battle of Sempach, Battle of Näfels), over Charles the Bold of Burgundy during the 1470s, and the success of the Swiss mercenaries. The Swiss victory in the Swabian War against the Swabian League of Emperor Maximilian I in 1499 amounted to *de facto* independence within the Holy Roman

Empire.

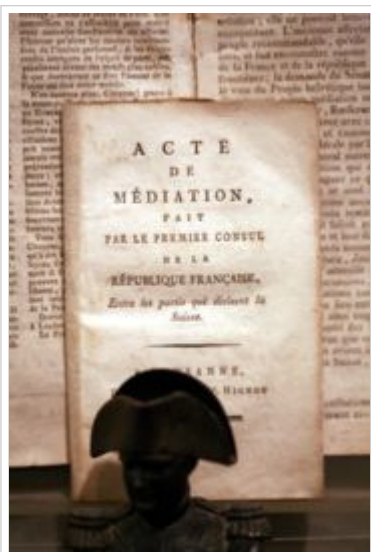


Federal charter of 1291

The Old Swiss Confederacy had acquired a reputation of invincibility during these earlier wars, but expansion of the federation suffered a setback in 1515 with the Swiss defeat in the Battle of Marignano. This ended the so-called "heroic" epoch of Swiss history. The success of Zwingli's Reformation in some cantons led to inter-cantonal wars in 1529 and 1531 (*Kappeler Kriege*). It wasn't until more than one hundred years after these internal wars that, in 1648, under the Treaty of Westphalia, European countries recognised Switzerland's independence from the Holy Roman Empire and its neutrality (*ancien régime*).

During the Early Modern period of Swiss history, the growing authoritarianism of the patriciate families combined with a financial crisis in the wake of the Thirty Years' War led to the Swiss peasant war of 1653. In the background to this struggle, the conflict between Catholic and Protestant cantons persisted, erupting in further violence at the battles of Villmergen in 1656 and 1712.

Napoleonic era



The Act of Mediation was Napoleon's attempt at a compromise between the Ancien Régime and a Republic.

In 1798 the armies of the French Revolution conquered Switzerland and imposed a new unified constitution. This centralised the government of the country and effectively abolished the cantons. The new regime, known as the Helvetic Republic, was highly unpopular. It had been imposed by a foreign invading army and destroyed centuries of tradition, making Switzerland nothing more than a French satellite state. The fierce French suppression of the Nidwalden Revolt in September of 1798 is an example of the suppressing presence of the French army and the local population's resistance to the occupation.

When war broke out between France and its rivals, Russian and Austrian forces invaded Switzerland. In 1803 Napoleon organised a meeting of the leading Swiss politicians from both sides in Paris. The result was the Act of Mediation which largely restored Swiss autonomy and introduced a Confederation of 19 cantons. Henceforth much of Swiss politics would concern balancing the cantons' tradition of self-rule with the need for a central government.

In 1815 the Congress of Vienna fully re-established Swiss independence and the European powers agreed to permanently recognise Swiss neutrality. The treaty marked the last time that Switzerland fought in an international conflict. The treaty also allowed Switzerland to increase its territory, with the admission of the cantons of Valais, Neuchâtel and Geneva – this was also the last time Switzerland's territory expanded.

Federal state

The restoration of the power to the patriciate was only temporary. After a period of unrest with repeated violent clashes such as the *Züriputsch* of 1839, civil war broke out between some of the Catholic and most of the other cantons in 1847 (the *Sonderbundskrieg*). The war lasted for less than a month, causing fewer than 100 casualties; most of which were through friendly fire. However minor the *Sonderbundskrieg* seems to be when compared with other European riots and wars in the 19th century, it nevertheless had a major impact on both the psychology and the society of the Swiss and of Switzerland. The war made all Swiss understand the need for unity and strength towards its European neighbours. Swiss people from all strata of society, whether Catholic, Protestant, or from the liberal or conservative current, realised that the cantons would profit more if their economic and religious interest were merged. Credit to those who favored the power of the cantons (the *Sonderbund Kantone*), the national assembly was divided among an upper house (the Swiss Council of States) and a lower house (the National Council of Switzerland). Thus, the interests of the Federalists were accounted for. Switzerland adopted a federal constitution and the use of referenda (mandatory for any amendment of this constitution) in 1848. This constitution provided for a central authority while leaving the cantons the right to self-government on local issues. In 1850 the Swiss franc became the Swiss single currency. The constitution was amended extensively in 1874 in order to take into account the rise in population and the Industrial Revolution. It introduced the facultative referendum for laws at the federal level. It also established federal responsibility for defence, trade, and legal matters.

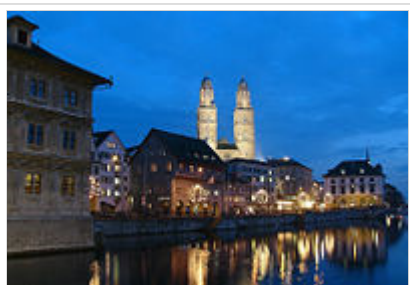
In 1891, the constitution was revised with unusually strong elements of direct democracy, which remain unique even today. Since then, continued political, economic, and social improvement has characterised Swiss history.

Modern history

Switzerland was not invaded during either of the World Wars. During World War I, Switzerland was home to Vladimir Illych Ulyanov (Lenin) and he remained there until 1917. Swiss neutrality was seriously questioned by the Grimm-Hoffmann Affair in 1917, but it was short-lived. In 1920, Switzerland joined the League of Nations, and in 1963 the Council of Europe.

During World War II, detailed invasion plans were drawn up by the Germans, but Switzerland was never attacked. Switzerland was able to remain independent through a combination of military deterrence, economic concessions to Germany, and good fortune as larger events during the war delayed an invasion. Attempts by Switzerland's small Nazi party to cause an Anschluss with Germany failed miserably. The Swiss press vigorously criticised the Third Reich, often infuriating its leadership. Under General Henri Guisan, a massive mobilisation of militia forces was ordered. The Swiss military strategy was changed from one of static defence at the borders to protect the economic heartland, to a strategy of organised long-term attrition and withdrawal to strong, well-stocked positions high in the Alps known as the Réduit. Switzerland was an important base for espionage by both sides in the conflict and often mediated communications between the Axis and Allied powers.

Switzerland's trade was blockaded by both the Allies and by the Axis. Economic cooperation and extension of credit to the Third Reich varied according to the perceived likelihood of invasion, and the availability of other trading partners. Concessions reached a peak after a crucial rail link through Vichy France was severed in 1942, leaving Switzerland completely surrounded by the Axis. Over the course of the war, Switzerland interned over 300,000 refugees, 104,000 of which were foreign troops, interned according to the *Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers* outlined in the Hague Conventions. 60,000 of the refugees were civilians escaping persecution by the Nazis. Of these, 26,000 to 27,000 were Jews. However, strict immigration and asylum policies as well as the financial relationships with Nazi Germany raised controversy. During the war, the Swiss Air Force engaged aircraft of both sides, shooting down 11 intruding Luftwaffe planes in May and June 1940, then forcing down other intruders after a change of policy following threats from Germany; over 100 Allied bombers and their crews were interned during the war. During 1944-45, Allied bombers mistakenly bombed the Swiss towns of Schaffhausen (killing 40 people), Stein am Rhein, Vals, Rafz (18 killed), and notoriously on 4 March 1945 both Basel and Zürich were bombed.



The Grossmünster cathedral and waterfront in modern day Zürich.

Women were granted the right to vote in the first Swiss cantons in 1959, at the federal level in 1971, and after resistance, in the last canton Appenzell Innerrhoden in 1990. After suffrage at the federal level women quickly rose in political significance, with the first woman on the seven member high council being Elisabeth Kopp from 1984–1989. The first female president was Ruth Dreifuss, elected in 1998 to become president during 1999. (The Swiss president is elected every year from those among the seven member high council). The second female president is Micheline Calmy-Rey who held the 2007 Swiss high office. She is originally from the French-speaking western area of canton Valais (Wallis in German). She is presently joined on the seven member cabinet/high council by two other women, Doris Leuthard, from the canton of Aargau and Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, from the canton of Graubünden.

In 1979 areas from inside the previous borders in the canton of Bern attained independence from the Bernese, forming the new canton of Jura. On April 18, 1999 the Swiss population and the cantons voted in favour of a completely revised



The Zmutt Valley and the Mischabelhörner (or Mischabel) mountains in the canton of Valais. The image is from a photochrom postcard (circa 1890).

federal constitution.

In 2002 Switzerland became a full member of the United Nations, leaving the Vatican as the last widely recognized state without full UN membership. Switzerland is a founding member of the EFTA, but is not a member of the European Economic Area. An application for membership in the European Union was sent in May 1992, but not advanced since the EEA was rejected in December 1992 when Switzerland was the only country to launch a referendum on the EEA. There have since been several referenda on the EU issue, with a mixed reaction to these from the population, the membership application has been frozen. Nonetheless, Swiss law is gradually being adjusted to conform with that of the EU and the government has signed a number of bilateral agreements with the European Union. Switzerland, together with Liechtenstein, has been completely surrounded by the EU since Austria's membership in 1995. On 5 June 2005, Swiss voters agreed by a 55% majority to join the Schengen treaty, a result that was regarded by EU commentators as a sign of support by Switzerland, a country that is traditionally perceived as independent, neutral, or isolationist.

Politics

The Federal Constitution adopted in 1848 is the legal foundation of the modern federal state. A new Constitution was adopted in 1999, but did not introduce notable changes to the federal structure. It outlines basic and political rights of individuals and citizen participation in public affairs, and divides the powers between the Confederation and the cantons and defines federal jurisdictions and authorities. There are three main governing bodies on the federal level: the bicameral parliament (legislative), the Federal Council (executive) and the Federal Court (judicial).

The Swiss Parliament consists of two houses: the Council of States which has 46 representatives (two from each canton and one from each half-canton) who are elected under a system determined by each canton, and the National Council, which consists of 200 members who are elected under a system of proportional representation, depending on the population of each canton. Members of both houses serve for 4 years. When both houses are in joint session, they are known collectively as the Federal Assembly. Through referendums, citizens may challenge any law passed by parliament and through initiatives, introduce amendments to the federal constitution, making Switzerland a direct democracy.

The Federal Council constitutes the federal government, directs the federal administration and serves as collective Head of State. It is a collegial body of seven members, elected for a four-year mandate by the Federal Assembly which also exercises oversight over the Council. The President of the Confederation is elected by the Assembly from among the seven members, traditionally in rotation, for a one-year term, in order to chair the government and assume representative functions. However, the president is a *primus inter pares* with no additional powers, and remains the head of a department of the administration.

The Swiss government has been a coalition of the four major political parties since 1959, each party having a number of seats that roughly reflects its share of electorate and representation in the federal parliament: currently there are 1 Christian Democrat (CVP/PDC), 2 Social Democrats (SPS/PSS), 2 Liberal Democrats (FDP/PRD), and 2 representatives of the Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC) in the government. This traditional distribution of seats is called the "magic formula", and is not backed up by any law. The original distribution of 2 CVP/PDC, 2 SPS/PSS, 2 FDP/PRD and 1 SVP/UDC lasted from 1959 to 2003,



The Federal Palace in the canton of Berne is the name of the building in which the Federal Assembly of Switzerland (federal parliament) and the Swiss Federal Council (executive) are housed.

until the CVP/PDC lost their second seat to the SVP/UDC, which had become the strongest party in Switzerland's legislative following the 2003 parliamentary elections.

The function of the Federal Supreme Court is to hear appeals against rulings of cantonal or federal courts. The judges are elected by the Federal Assembly for six-year terms.

Direct democracy

Swiss citizens are subject to three legal jurisdictions: the commune, canton and federal levels. The 1848 federal constitution defines a system of direct democracy (sometimes called *half-direct* democracy since it is added by the more commonplace institutions of a parliamentary democracy). The instruments of Swiss direct democracy at the federal level, known as civil rights (*Volksrechte, droits civiques*), include the right to submit a *constitutional initiative* and a *referendum*, both of which may overturn parliamentary decisions.

By calling a federal *referendum* a group of citizens may challenge a law that has been passed by Parliament, if they can gather 50,000 signatures against the law within 100 days. If so, a national vote is scheduled where voters decide by a simple majority whether to accept or reject the law. Eight cantons together can also call a referendum on a federal law.

Similarly, the federal *constitutional initiative* allows citizens to put a constitutional amendment to a national vote, if they can get 100,000 voters to sign the proposed amendment within 18 months. Parliament can supplement the proposed amendment with a counter-proposal, with voters having to indicate a preference on the ballot in case both proposals are accepted. Constitutional amendments, whether introduced by initiative or in Parliament, must be accepted by a double majority of both the national popular vote and a majority of the cantonal popular votes.

Cantons



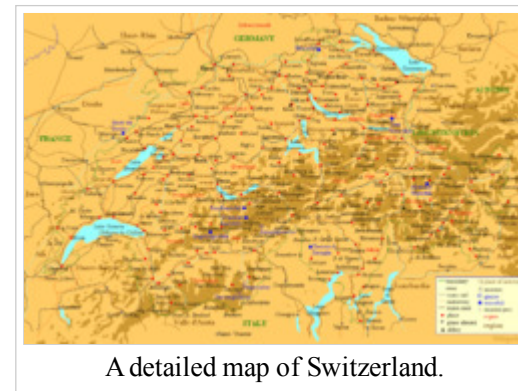
Cantons of Switzerland



The Zytglogge clock tower in the Kramgasse, Berne.

The Swiss Confederation consists of 26 cantons:

- Aargau
- Appenzell Innerrhoden*
- Appenzell Ausserrhoden*
- Basel-Stadt*
- Basel-Landschaft*
- Bern
- Fribourg
- Genève
- Glarus
- Graubünden
- Jura
- Lucerne
- Neuchâtel
- Nidwalden*
- Obwalden*
- Schaffhausen
- Schwyz
- Solothurn
- St. Gallen
- Thurgau
- Ticino
- Uri
- Valais
- Vaud
- Zug
- Zürich



A detailed map of Switzerland.

*These cantons, called half-cantons, are represented by one councillor (instead of two) in the Council of States and only count half (instead of one) in national votes on constitutional amendments.

Their populations vary between 15,000 (Appenzell Innerrhoden) and 1,253,500 (Zürich), and their area between 37 km² (Basel-Stadt) and 7,105 km² (Graubünden). The Cantons comprise a total of 2,889 municipalities. Within Switzerland there are two enclaves: Büsingen belongs to Germany, Campione d'Italia belongs to Italy.

In a referendum held in the Austrian state of Vorarlberg on 11 May 1919 over 80% of those voting supported a proposal that the state should join the Swiss Confederation. However, this was prevented by the opposition of the Austrian Government, the Allies, Swiss liberals, the Swiss-Italians (persons of Swiss nationality who live in Italian Switzerland – see map) and the Romands (Swiss nationals living in the French-speaking regions of Switzerland – see map).

International institutions in Switzerland

An unusual number of international institutions have their seats in Switzerland, in part due to its policy of neutrality. The Red Cross was founded there in 1863 and still has its institutional centre in the country. Switzerland is not a member of the European Union; the Swiss people rejected membership in a referendum in the early 1990s. Switzerland is one of the most recent countries to have joined the United Nations, in 2002, even though Geneva is the second biggest centre for the United Nations after New York, and Switzerland was a founding member of the League of Nations.

Geography



A winter view of Sent in the canton of Graubünden.

With an area of 41,285 square kilometres (15,940 sq mi), Switzerland is a relatively small country. The population is about 7.5 million, resulting in an average population density of 182 people per square kilometer (472/sq mi). However, the more mountainous southern half of the country is far more sparsely populated than this average, while the northern half has a somewhat greater density, as it comprises more hospitable hilly terrain, partly forested and partly cleared, as well as several large lakes.

Switzerland comprises three basic topographical areas: the Swiss Alps, the Swiss plateau or "middleland", and the Jura mountains along the northwestern border with France. The Alps are a high mountain range running across the central-south of the country, comprising about 60 % of the country's total area. Among the high peaks of the Swiss Alps, the highest of which is the Dufourspitze at 4,634 metres (15,203 ft), countless valleys are found, many with waterfalls and glaciers. From these the headwaters of several major European rivers such as the Rhine, Rhône, Inn, Aare, and Ticino flow finally into the largest Swiss lakes such as Lake Geneva (Lac Léman), Lake Zürich, Lake Neuchâtel, and Lake Constance.

The most famous mountain is the Matterhorn (4,478 m) in Valais and Pennine Alps bordering Italy. The highest mountain, the Dufourspitze (4,634 m) of Monte Rosa, is close to the Matterhorn. The section of the Bernese Alps above the deep glacial Lauterbrunnen Valley containing 72 waterfalls is also well known for the Jungfrau (4,158 m), Mönch, Eiger group of peaks, and the many picturesque valleys in the region. In the southeast the long Engadin Valley, encompassing the St Moritz area in canton Graubünden, is also well known; the highest peak in the neighbouring Bernina Alps is Piz Bernina (4,049 m).



The Matterhorn (or Cervino) near the Swiss village of Zermatt in the canton of Valais.



Morcote in the warmer southern canton of Ticino.

The more populous northern part of the country, comprising about 30 % of the country's total area, is called the Middle Land. It has greater open and hilly landscapes, partly forested, partly open pastures, usually with grazing herds, or vegetables and fruit fields, but it is still hilly. There are large lakes found here and the biggest Swiss cities are in this area of the country. This region, particularly the west, is also referred to as the "Seeland" (the land of lakes) and the largest lake is Lake Geneva (also called Lac Léman), in the West of Switzerland. The Rhone River is the main tributary to Lac Léman.



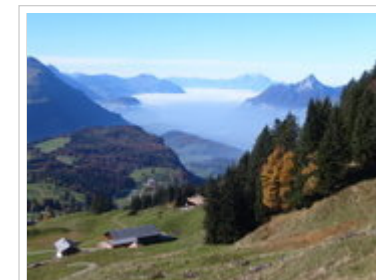
The Swiss National Park in the canton of Graubünden.

The Swiss climate is generally temperate, but can vary greatly between the localities, from glacial conditions on the mountaintops to the often pleasant Mediterranean climate at Switzerland's southern tip. Summers tend to be warm and humid at times with periodic rainfall so they are ideal for pastures and grazing. The winters in the mountains alternate with sun and snow, while the lower lands tend to be more cloudy and foggy in winter. A weather phenomenon known as the *Föhn* can occur at all times of the year, even in winter, and is characterized by a wind with

warm Mediterranean air crossing the Alps from Italy. The driest conditions persist in the southern valleys of the Wallis/Valais above which valuable saffron is harvested and many wine grapes are grown, Graubünden also tends to be drier in climate and slightly colder, yet with plentiful snow in winter. The wettest conditions persist in the high Alps and in the Ticino canton which has much sun yet heavy bursts of rain from time to time. The east tends to be colder than the west of Switzerland, yet anywhere up high in the mountains can experience a cold spell at any time of the year. Precipitation tends to be spread moderately throughout the year, with minor variations across the seasons depending on locale. Autumn frequently tends to be the driest season, yet the weather patterns in Switzerland can be highly variable from year to year, and difficult to predict.

Switzerland's eco-systems can be particularly vulnerable, due to the many delicate valleys separated by high mountains, often forming unique ecologies. The mountainous regions themselves are also vulnerable, with a rich range of plants not found at other altitudes, and experience some pressure from visitors and grazing. The tree line in the mountains of Switzerland has advanced down 1000 ft over the years, largely due to the increasing absence of herding and grazing pressures.

Economy



The canton of Schwyz in the centre of Switzerland.



A sunset in the Swiss Alps. View from Bettmeralp, Valais.



Greater Zürich area, home to 1.5 million employees and 150,000 companies, has taken top position in some life quality surveys..

Switzerland has a stable, modern, and some of the most capitalist economies in the world. It has the 2nd highest European rating after Ireland in the Index of Economic Freedom 2008. The nominal per capita GDP is higher than those of the larger western European economies and Japan, ranking 6th behind Luxembourg, Norway, Qatar, Iceland and Ireland. If adjusted for purchasing power parity it ranks 15th. The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report currently ranks Switzerland's economy as the second most competitive in the world. For much of the 20th century, Switzerland was the wealthiest country in Europe by a considerable margin. In 2005 the median household income in Switzerland was an estimated 95,000 CHF, the equivalent of roughly 55,000 USD in purchasing power parity, which is similar to wealthy American states like California and Vermont.

Switzerland is home to several large multinational corporations. The largest Swiss companies by revenue are Glencore, Nestlé, Novartis, Roche, ABB and Adecco. Also notable are UBS AG, Zurich Financial Services, Credit Suisse, Swiss Re, and The Swatch Group. Switzerland is ranked as one of the most powerful economies in the world.

Chemicals, health and pharmaceutical, instruments, real estate, banking and insurance, tourism, and international organizations are important industries in Switzerland. The largest exported goods are chemicals (34% of exported goods), machines/electronics (20.9%), and precision instruments/watches (16.9%). Exported services amount to a third of exported goods.

Around 3.8 million people work in Switzerland. Switzerland has more flexible job market than in neighboring countries and unemployment rate is very low. Unemployment rate increased from a low of 1.7% in June 2000 to a peak of 3.9% in September 2004. Partly due to the economic upturn which started in mid-2003, the unemployment rate is currently 2.8% as of February 2008. Population growth from net immigration is quite high, at 0.52% of population in 2004. Foreign citizen population is 21.8% as of 2004, about the same as in Australia. GDP per hour worked is the world's 17th highest, at 27.44 international dollars in 2006.

Switzerland has overwhelmingly private sector economy and low tax rates by Western standards; overall taxation is one of the smallest of developed countries. Switzerland is an easy place to do business; Switzerland ranks 16th of 178 countries in the Ease of Doing Business Index. The slow growth Switzerland experienced in the 1990s and the early 2000s has brought greater support for economic reforms and harmonization with the European Union. According to Credit Suisse, only about 37 percent of residents own their own homes, one of the lowest rates of home ownership in Europe. Housing and food price levels were 171% and 145% of the EU-25 index in 2007, compared to 113% and 104% in Germany. Agricultural protectionism - a rare exception to Switzerland's free trade policies - has contributed to high food prices. Product market liberalization is lagging behind many EU countries according to OECD. Nevertheless, domestic purchasing power is one of the best in the world. Apart from agriculture, economic and trade barriers between the European Union and Switzerland are minimal and Switzerland has free trade agreements worldwide.

Science, technology, and education



Cheese making and dairying is an old extraordinary Swiss industry.

Education in Switzerland is very diverse, because the constitution of Switzerland delegates the authority for the school system to the cantons. There are both public and private schools, including many private international schools. The minimum age for primary school is about six years in all cantons. Typically children choose their school depending on whether they want to speak French, German or Italian. Primary school continues until grade four or five, depending on the school. At the end of primary school (or at the beginning of secondary school), pupils are separated according to their capacities in several (often three) sections. The fastest learners are taught advanced classes to be prepared for further studies and the matura, while students who assimilate a little bit more slowly receive an education more adapted to their needs.

The first university in Switzerland was founded in 1460 in Basel, with a faculty of medicine. This place has a long tradition of chemical and medical research in Switzerland. Other large universities are the ETHZ in Zürich and the EPFL in Lausanne. There are 14 Universities in Switzerland, 10 of which are maintained at cantonal level and usually offer a range of non-technical subjects. Switzerland has the second highest rate of foreign students in tertiary education, after Australia.

Many Nobel prizes were awarded to Swiss scientists, for example to the world-famous physicist Albert Einstein or more recently to Heinrich Rohrer also in the field of physics. Geneva host the world's largest particle physics laboratory, the CERN. An other important research centre is the Paul Scherrer Institute which belongs to the ETHZ.

Switzerland and the European Union

In recent years, the Swiss have brought their economic practices largely into conformity with those of the European Union in many ways, in an effort to enhance their international competitiveness. The economy has been growing most recently at around 3% per year. Full EU membership is a long-term objective of some in the Swiss government, but there is considerable popular sentiment against this supported by the conservative SVP party. The western French-speaking areas and the urban regions of the rest of the country tend to be more pro-EU.

The government has established an Integration Office under the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Economic Affairs. To minimise the negative consequences of Switzerland's isolation from the rest of Europe, Bern and Brussels signed seven bilateral agreements to further liberalise trade ties. These agreements were signed in 1999 and took effect in 2001. This first series of bilateral agreements included the free movement of persons. A second series covering nine areas was signed in 2004 and has since been ratified. The second series includes the Schengen treaty and the Dublin Convention. They continue to discuss further areas for cooperation. Switzerland most recently (2006) approved a billion francs supportive investment in the poorer eastern European countries in support of cooperation and positive ties to the EU as a whole. A further referendum will be needed to approve 300 million francs to support Romania and Bulgaria and their recent admission. The Swiss have also been under EU and sometimes international pressure to reduce banking secrecy and to raise tax rates to parity with the European Union. Preparatory discussions are being opened in four new areas: opening up the electricity market, participation in the European GNSS project Galileo, cooperating with the European centre for disease prevention and recognising certificates of origin for food products. Switzerland voted against membership in the European Economic Area in December 1992 and has since maintained and developed its relationships with the European Union and European countries through bilateral agreements. In March 2001, the Swiss people refused in a popular vote to start accession negotiations with the EU.



The Einstein Museum in Berne. Albert Einstein formulated the special theory of relativity in 1905, while living in Berne.

Infrastructure and environment

Electricity generated in Switzerland is 53% from hydroelectricity and 42% from nuclear power, with 5% of the electricity generated from conventional power sources (thermal etc.) resulting in a nearly CO₂-free electricity-generating network.

On 18 May 2003, two anti-nuclear initiatives were turned down: *Moratorium Plus*, aimed at forbidding the building of new nuclear power plants (41.6% supported and 58.4% opposed), and Electricity Without Nuclear (33.7% supported and 66.3% opposed). The former ten-year moratorium on the construction of new nuclear power plants was the result of a citizens' initiative voted on in 1990 which had passed with 54.5% Yes vs. 45.5% No votes. A new nuclear plant in the Canton of Bern is presently planned. The Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE) is the office responsible for all questions relating to energy supply and energy use within the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC). The agency is supporting the 2000-watt society initiative to cut the nation's energy use by more than half by the year 2050. See also SwissEnergy.



The Leibstadt Nuclear Power Plant is located in the canton of Aargau.

Swiss private-public managed road network is funded by road tolls and vehicle taxes. The Swiss autobahn/autoroute system requires the purchase of a vignette (toll sticker) - which costs 40 Swiss francs - for one calendar year in order to use its roadways, for both passenger cars and trucks. The Swiss autobahn/autoroute network has a total length of 1,638 km (as of 2000) and has, by an area of 41,290 km², also the one of the highest motorway densities in the world. Zürich Airport, managed by Unique Airport, is Switzerland's largest international flight gateway, which handled 20.7 million passengers in 2007. The second largest Geneva Cointrin International Airport handled 10.8 million passengers and the third largest EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg 4.3 million passengers, both airports being shared with France.

Switzerland is heavily active in recycling and anti-littering regulations and is one of the top recyclers in the world with 66% to 96% of the different recyclable materials being recycled. In many places in Switzerland, household rubbish disposal is charged for. Garbage (except dangerous items, batteries etc.) will only be collected if it is in bags which either have a payment sticker attached, or in official bags with the surcharge paid when the bags are purchased. This gives a financial incentive to recycle as much as possible, since recycling is free. Swiss health officials and police often open up garbage for which the disposal charge has not been paid. They search for evidence such as old bills which connect the bag to the household/person they originated from. Fines for not paying the disposal fee range from CHF 200–500.

Demographics

Switzerland lies at the crossroads of several major European cultures that have heavily influenced the country's languages and culture. Switzerland has four official languages: German (63.7% total population share, with foreign residents; 72.5% of residents with Swiss citizenship, in 2000) in the north, east and centre of the country; French (20.4%; 21.0%) to the west; Italian (6.5%; 4.3%) in the south. Romansh, a Romance language spoken locally by a small minority (0.5%; 0.6%) in the southeastern canton of Graubünden, is designated by the Federal Constitution as a national language along with German, French and Italian (Article 4 of the Constitution), and as official language if the authorities communicate with persons of Romansh language (Article 70), but federal laws and other official acts do not need to be decreed in this language. The federal government is obliged to communicate in the official languages, and in the federal parliament simultaneous translation is provided from and into German, French and Italian. The German spoken in Switzerland is predominantly a group of Alemannic dialects collectively known as Swiss German, but written communication typically use Swiss Standard German, whilst the majority of radio and TV broadcast is (nowadays) in Swiss German as well. Similarly, there are some dialects of Franco-Provençal in rural communities in the French speaking part, known as "Suisse romande", called Vaudois, Gruérien, Jurasien, Empro, Fribourgeois, Neuchâtelois, and in the Italian speaking area, Ticinese (a dialect of Lombard). Also the official languages (German, French and Italian) borrow some terms not understood outside of Switzerland, i.e. terms from other languages (German *Billette* from French), from similar term in another language (Italian *azione* used not as *act* but as *discount* from German *Aktion*). Learning one of the other national languages at school is obligatory for all Swiss, so most Swiss are supposed to be at least bilingual.



Official languages in Switzerland:
 Swiss German (62.7%; 72.5%)
 French (20.4%; 21.0%)
 Italian (6.5%; 4.3%)
 Romansh (0.5%; 0.6%)

Resident foreigners and temporary foreign workers make up about 21% of the population. Most of these are from European Union or EFTA countries. Italians are the largest single group of foreigners with 18,9% of total foreign population, while people from the various nations of former Yugoslavia make up 21%, there are also many ethnic Albanians. Immigrants from Sri Lanka, most of them former Tamil refugees, are the largest group among people of Asian origin. In the 2000s, domestic and international institutions have expressed concern about what they perceive as an increase of xenophobia in Switzerland, particularly in the political campaigning of the right-wing populist Swiss People's Party.

Religion



Cathedral Notre-Dame de Lausanne in the canton of Vaud.

Switzerland has no official state religion, though most of the cantons (except Geneva and Neuchâtel) recognise official churches, in all cases including the Catholic Church and the Swiss Reformed Church. These churches, and in some cantons also the Old Catholic Church and Jewish congregations, are financed by official taxation of adherents.

Christianity is the predominant religion of Switzerland, divided between various Protestant denominations (42.5% of the population) and the Catholic Church (41%). Immigration has brought Islam (4.3%, predominantly Albanians mostly from Kosovo) and Eastern Orthodoxy (1.8%) as sizeable minority religions. The 2005 Eurobarometer poll found 48% to be theist, 39% expressing belief in "a spirit or life force", 9% atheist and 4% agnostic.

The country is historically about evenly balanced between Catholic and Protestant, with a complex patchwork of majorities over most of the country. One canton, Appenzell, was officially divided into Catholic and Protestant sections in 1597. The larger cities (Bern, Zürich and Basel) are predominantly Protestant. Central Switzerland, as well as the Ticino, is traditionally Catholic. The Swiss constitution of 1848, under the recent impression of the clashes of Catholic vs. Protestant cantons that culminated in the Sonderbundskrieg, consciously defines a consociational state, allowing the peaceful co-existence of Catholics and Protestants. A 1980 initiative calling for the complete separation of church and state was clearly rejected, with only 21.1% voting in support.



Notre Dame de Valère in the canton of Valais.

Culture

The culture of Switzerland is influenced by its neighbours and its international sentiment, but over the years a distinctive culture with some regional differences and an independent streak has developed. In particular, French-speaking regions have tended to orient themselves slightly more on French culture and tend to be more pro EU. In general, the Swiss are known for their long standing humanitarian tradition as Switzerland is the birth place of the Red Cross Movement and hosts the United Nations Human Rights Council. Swiss German speaking areas may perhaps be seen more oriented on German culture, although German-speaking Swiss people identify strictly as Swiss because of the difference between High German, and the Swiss German dialects. Italian-speaking areas can have more of an Italian culture. A region may be in some ways strongly culturally connected to the neighbouring country that shares its language. The linguistically isolated Romansh culture in the eastern mountains of Switzerland is also robust and strives to maintain its rare linguistic tradition. Switzerland's entry to the Eurovision Song Contest of 1989 was in Romansh.

Many mountain areas have a strong highly energetic ski town culture in winter, and a hiking (wandering) culture in summer. Some areas throughout the year have a recreational culture that caters to tourism, yet the quieter seasons are spring and autumn when there are fewer visitors and a higher ratio of Swiss. A traditional farmer and herder culture also predominates in many areas, and this connection to the land and agriculture is a strong glue holding all the Swiss together. Even though now most do not actually farm themselves, the small farms are omnipresent outside the cities, and urban Swiss often keep garden plots or window boxes with geraniums amongst other flowers.

Sport

Like many European nations the Swiss are big fans of football and the national team or 'Nati' is widely supported. Switzerland's most well known football clubs include Grasshoppers Zurich, Servette FC and Basel. Switzerland was also the joint venue with Austria in the Euro 2008 football tournament, although the Swiss team dropped out before the Quarter Finals.

Many Swiss also follow hockey and support one of the 12 clubs in the league A. In 2006, supporters in the PostFinance Arena set a new european record for average attendance, with an average of 15,994 in 22 home games. Switzerland will host the 2009 IIHF World Championships for the 10th time.

Over the last few years several Swiss tennis players, like Roger Federer and Martina Hingis, have been multiple Grand Slam singles champions. One of the world's best current ice skaters is Swiss Stéphane Lambiel. Switzerland is also the home of the successful sailing team Alinghi.

Other sports where the Swiss have been successful include fencing (Marcel Fischer), whitewater slalom (Ronnie Dürrenmatt – canoe, Mathias Röthenmund – kayak), ice hockey (Swiss National League), beach volleyball (Sascha Heyer, Markus Egger, Paul and Martin Laciga), and skiing (Bernhard Russi, Pirmin Zurbriggen, Didier Cuche).

Motorsport racecourses were banned in Switzerland following the 1955 Le Mans disaster, however the country has produced successful racers such as Clay Regazzoni and Jo Siffert, and leading drivers such as Michael Schumacher, Kimi Räikkönen, Fernando Alonso, Lewis Hamilton and Sébastien Loeb all live there , albeit mainly for tax purposes.

Local

Swiss wrestling or " Schwingen" is an old tradition from the rural central cantons and considered the national sport.

Hornussen is another indigenous Swiss sport, which is like a cross between baseball and golf.

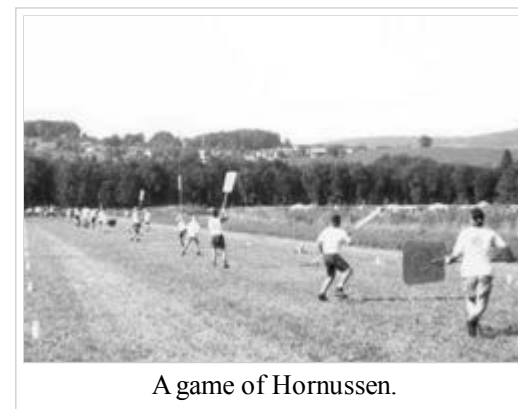
Steinstossen is the Swiss variant of stone put, a competition in throwing a heavy stone. Practiced among the alpine population since prehistoric times, it is recorded to have taken place in Basel in the 13th century. It is also central to the Unspunnenfest, first held in 1805, with its symbol the 83.5 kg Unspunnenstein.

Floorball is a new sport in Switzerland that grows every year in popularity. A main factor is the professional league called Nationalliga A that draws many famous players from other countries.

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A game of Hornussen.

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Turkey (Turkish: *Türkiye*), known officially as the **Republic of Turkey** (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*), is a Eurasian country that stretches across the Anatolian peninsula in western Asia and Thrace (Rumelia) in the Balkan region of southeastern Europe. Turkey borders eight countries: Bulgaria to the northwest; Greece to the west, Georgia to the northeast; Armenia, Azerbaijan (the exclave of Nakhichevan), and Iran to the east; and Iraq and Syria to the southeast. The Mediterranean Sea and Cyprus are to the south; the Aegean Sea and Archipelago are to the west; and the Black Sea is to the north. Separating Anatolia and Thrace are the Sea of Marmara and the Turkish Straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles), which are commonly reckoned to delineate the border between Asia and Europe, thereby making Turkey transcontinental.

Due to its strategic location astride two continents, Turkey's culture has a unique blend of Eastern and Western tradition. A powerful regional presence in the Eurasian landmass with strong historic, cultural and economic influence in the area between the European Union in the west and Central Asia in the east, Russia in the north and the Middle East in the south, Turkey has come to acquire increasing strategic significance.

Turkey is a democratic, secular, unitary, constitutional republic whose political system was established in 1923 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, following the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of World War I. Since then, Turkey has become increasingly integrated with the West through membership in organizations such as the Council of Europe (1949), NATO (1952), OECD (1961), OSCE (1973) and the G20 industrial nations (1999). Turkey began full membership negotiations with the European Union in 2005, having been an associate member since 1963, and having reached a customs union agreement in 1995. Meanwhile, Turkey has continued to foster close political, economic and industrial relations with the Eastern world, particularly with the states of the Middle East, Central Asia and East Asia.

Etymology

The name of Turkey, *Türkiye* in the Turkish language, can be divided into two words: *Türk*, which means

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<i>Türkiye Cumhuriyeti</i> Republic of Turkey	
	
Flag	Emblem
Motto: <i>Yurtta Sulh, Cihanda Sulh</i> <i>Peace at Home, Peace in the World</i>	
Anthem: <i>İstiklâl Marşı</i> <i>The Anthem of Independence</i>	
	
Location of Turkey	
Capital	Ankara
Largest city	Istanbul
Official languages	Turkish

"Strong" in Old Turkic and usually signifying the inhabitants of Turkey or a member of the Turkish or Turkic peoples, a later form of *Tu-kin*,"a name given by the Chinese to the people living south of the Altay Mountains of Central Asia as early as 177 BCE; and the abstract suffix *-iye* (derived from the Arabic suffix *-iyya*, but is also associated with the Medieval Latin suffix *-ia* in *Turchia*, and the Medieval Greek suffix *-ía* in *Τουρκία*), which means "owner" or "related to". The first recorded use of the term "Türk" or "Türük" as an autonym is contained in the Orkhon inscriptions of the Göktürks (*Sky Turks*) of Central Asia (c. 8th century CE). The English word "Turkey" is derived from the Medieval Latin *Turchia*"(c. 1369).

History

Pre-Turkic history of Anatolia



Portion of the legendary walls of Troy (VII), identified as the site of the Trojan War (ca. 1200 BCE)

The Anatolian peninsula (also called Asia Minor), comprising most of modern Turkey, is one of the oldest continually inhabited regions in the world due to its location at the intersection of Asia and Europe. The earliest Neolithic settlements such as Çatalhöyük (Pottery Neolithic), Çayönü (Pre-Pottery Neolithic A to Pottery Neolithic), Nevali Cori (Pre-Pottery Neolithic B), Hacilar (Pottery Neolithic), Göbekli Tepe (Pre-Pottery Neolithic A) and Mersin are considered to be among the earliest human settlements in the world. The settlement of Troy starts in the Neolithic and continues into the Iron Age. Through recorded history, Anatolians have spoken Indo-European, Semitic and Kartvelian languages, as well as many languages of uncertain affiliation. In fact, given the antiquity of the Indo-European Hittite and Luwian languages, some scholars have proposed Anatolia as the hypothetical centre from

which the Indo-European languages have radiated.

Demonym	Turkish
Government	Parliamentary republic
 - President	Abdullah Gül
 - Prime Minister	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Succession	to the Ottoman Empire ²
 - War of Independence	May 19, 1919
 - Formation of Parliament	April 23, 1920
 - Declaration of Republic	October 29, 1923
Area	
 - Total	783,562 km ² (37th) 302,535 sq mi
 - Water (%)	1.3
Population	
 - 2007 census	70,586,256 (17th ³)
 - Density	93/km ² (102nd ³) 240/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 IMF estimate
 - Total	\$941.6 billion (15th)
 - Per capita	\$13,511
GDP (nominal)	2008 IMF estimate
 - Total	\$748.3 billion (17th)
 - Per capita	\$10,738
Gini (2005)	38 (medium)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.775 (medium) (84th)
Currency	New Turkish Lira ⁵ (TRY)
Time zone	EET (UTC+2)
 - Summer (DST)	EEST (UTC+3)



The Celsus Library in Ephesus, dating from 135 CE

The first major empire in the area was that of the Hittites, from the 18th through the 13th century BCE. Subsequently, the Phrygians, an Indo-European people, achieved ascendancy until their kingdom was destroyed by the Cimmerians in the 7th century BCE. The most powerful of Phrygia's successor states were Lydia, Caria and Lycia. The Lydians and Lycians spoke languages that were fundamentally Indo-European, but both languages had acquired non-Indo-European elements prior to the Hittite and Hellenistic periods.

Starting around 1200 BC, the west coast of Anatolia was settled by Aeolian and Ionian Greeks. The entire area was conquered by the Persian Achaemenid Empire during the 6th and 5th centuries and later

fell to Alexander the Great in 334 BCE. Anatolia was subsequently divided into a number of small Hellenistic kingdoms (including Bithynia, Cappadocia, Pergamum, and Pontus), all of which had succumbed to Rome by the mid-1st century BCE. In 324 CE, the Roman emperor Constantine I chose Byzantium to be the new capital of the Roman Empire, renaming it New Rome (later Constantinople and Istanbul). After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, it became the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire).

Turks and the Ottoman Empire



The Ottoman Empire at the height of its power (ca. 1680)

The *House of Seljuk* was a branch of the *Kınık* Oğuz Turks who in the 9th century resided on the periphery of the Muslim world, north of the Caspian and Aral Seas in the Yabghu Khaganate of the Oğuz confederacy. In the 10th century, the Seljuks started migrating from their ancestral homelands towards the eastern regions of Anatolia, which eventually became the new homeland of Oğuz Turkic tribes following the Battle of Manzikert (Malazgirt) in 1071. The victory of the Seljuks gave rise to the Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate; which developed as a separate branch of the larger Seljuk Empire that covered parts of Central Asia, Iran, Anatolia and the Middle East.

In 1243, the Seljuk armies were defeated by the Mongols and the power of the empire slowly disintegrated. In its wake, one of the Turkish principalities governed by Osman I was to evolve into the Ottoman Empire, thus filling the void left by the collapsed Seljuks and Byzantines.

The Ottoman Empire interacted with both Eastern and Western cultures throughout its 623-year history. In the 16th and 17th centuries, it was among the world's most powerful political entities, often locking horns with the Holy Roman Empire in its steady advance towards Central Europe through the Balkans and the southern part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on land; and with the combined forces (Holy Leagues) of Habsburg Spain, the Republic of Venice and the Knights of St. John at sea for the control of the Mediterranean basin; while frequently confronting Portuguese fleets at the Indian Ocean for defending the Empire's monopoly over the ancient maritime trade routes between East Asia and Western Europe, which had become increasingly

Internet TLD	.tr
Calling code	+90
2	Treaty of Lausanne (1923).
3	Population and population density rankings based on 2005 figures.
4	Human Development Report 2007/2008, page 230. United Nations Development Programme (2007). Retrieved on 2007-11-30.
5	The New Turkish Lira (<i>Yeni Türk Lirası</i> , YTL) replaced the old Turkish Lira on 1 January 2005.



The Sultan Ahmed Mosque (Blue Mosque) is one of the most famous architectural legacies of the Ottoman Empire

compromised since the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope in 1488.

Following years of decline, the Ottoman Empire entered World War I through the Ottoman-German Alliance in 1914, and was ultimately defeated. After the war, the victorious Allied Powers sought the dismemberment of the Ottoman state through the Treaty of Sèvres.

Republic era

The occupation of Istanbul and İzmir by the Allies in the aftermath of World War I prompted the establishment of the Turkish national movement. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, a military commander who had distinguished himself during the Battle of Gallipoli, the Turkish War of Independence was waged with the aim of revoking the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres. By September 18, 1922, the occupying armies were repelled and the country saw the birth of the new Turkish state. On November 1, the newly founded parliament formally abolished the Sultanate, thus ending 623 years of Ottoman rule. The Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 led to the international recognition of the sovereignty of the newly formed "Republic of Turkey" as the successor state of the Ottoman Empire, and the republic was officially proclaimed on October 29, 1923, in the new capital of Ankara.

Mustafa Kemal became the republic's first president and subsequently introduced many radical reforms with the aim of founding a new secular republic from the remnants of its Ottoman past. According to the Law on Family Names, the Turkish parliament presented Mustafa Kemal with the honorific name "Atatürk" (*Father of the Turks*) in 1934.

Turkey entered World War II on the side of the Allies on February 23, 1945 as a ceremonial gesture and became a charter member of the United Nations in 1945. Difficulties faced by Greece after the war in quelling a communist rebellion, along with demands by the Soviet Union for military bases in the Turkish Straits, prompted the United States to declare the Truman Doctrine in 1947. The doctrine enunciated American intentions to guarantee the security of Turkey and Greece, and resulted in large-scale US military and economic support.

After participating with the United Nations forces in the Korean conflict, Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, becoming a bulwark against Soviet expansion into the Mediterranean. Following a decade of intercommunal violence on the island of Cyprus and the subsequent Athens-inspired coup, Turkey intervened militarily in 1974. Nine years later Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was established. TRNC is recognised only by Turkey.

Following the end of the single-party period in 1945, the multi-party period witnessed tensions over the following decades, and the period between the 1960s and the 1980s was particularly marked by periods of political instability that resulted in a number of military coups d'états in 1960, 1971, 1980 and a post-modern coup d'état in 1997. The liberalization of the Turkish economy that started in the 1980s changed the landscape of the country, with successive periods of high growth and crises punctuating the following decades.

Government and politics

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Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder and first President of the Republic of Turkey

Turkey is a parliamentary representative democracy. Since its foundation as a republic in 1923, Turkey has developed a strong tradition of secularism. Turkey's constitution governs the legal framework of the country. It sets out the main principles of government and establishes Turkey as a unitary centralized state.

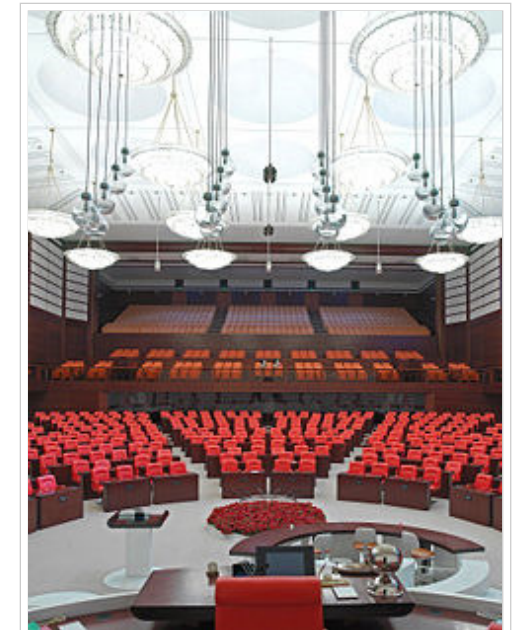
The head of state is the President of the Republic and has a largely ceremonial role. The president is elected for a five-year term by direct elections. The last President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, was elected on May 16, 2000, after having served as the President of the Constitutional Court. He was succeeded on August 28, 2007 by Abdullah Gül. Executive power is exercised by the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers which make up the government, while the legislative power is vested in the unicameral parliament, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature, and the Constitutional Court is charged with ruling on the conformity of laws and decrees with the constitution. The Council of State is the tribunal of last resort for administrative cases, and the High Court of Appeals for all others.

The Prime Minister is elected by the parliament through a vote of confidence in his government and is most often the head of the party that has the most seats in parliament. The current Prime Minister is the former mayor of İstanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose conservative AKP won an absolute majority of parliamentary seats in the 2002 general elections, organized in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2001, with 34% of the suffrage. In the 2007 general elections, the AKP received 46.6% of the votes and could defend its majority in parliament. Neither the Prime Minister nor the Ministers have to be members of the parliament, but in most cases they are (one notable exception was Kemal Derviş, the Minister of State in Charge of the Economy following the financial crisis of 2001; he is currently the president of the United Nations Development Programme).

Universal suffrage for both sexes has been applied throughout Turkey since 1933, and every Turkish citizen who has turned 18 years of age has the right to vote. As of 2004, there were 50 registered political parties in the country, whose ideologies range from the far left to the far right. The Constitutional Court can strip the public financing of political parties that it deems anti-secular or separatist, or ban their existence altogether.

There are 550 members of parliament who are elected for a four-year term by a party-list proportional representation system from 85 electoral districts which represent the 81 administrative provinces of Turkey (İstanbul is divided into three electoral districts whereas Ankara and İzmir are divided into two each because of their large populations). To avoid a hung parliament and its excessive political fragmentation, only parties that win at least 10% of the votes cast in a national parliamentary election gain the right to representation in the parliament. As a result of this threshold, the 2007 elections saw three parties formally entering the parliament (compared to two in 2002). However, due to a system of alliances and independent candidatures, seven parties are currently represented in the parliament. Independent candidates may run; however, they must also win at least 10% of the vote in their circumscription to be elected.

Foreign relations



The Grand Chamber of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara

Turkey is a founding member of the United Nations (1945), the OECD (1961), the OSCE (1973) and the G20 industrial nations (1999).



Turkey is a founding member of the Council of Europe, since 1949



Turkey is among the earliest members of NATO, since 1952

In line with its traditional Western orientation, relations with Europe have always been a central part of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey became a founding member of the Council of Europe in 1949, applied for associate membership of the EEC (predecessor of the European Union) in 1959 and became an associate member in 1963. After decades of political negotiations, Turkey applied for full membership of the EEC in 1987, became an associate member of the Western European Union in 1992, reached a Customs Union agreement with

the EU in 1995 and has officially begun formal accession negotiations with the EU on

October 3, 2005. It is believed that the accession process will take at least 15 years due to Turkey's size and the depth of disagreements over certain issues. These include disputes with EU member Republic of Cyprus over Turkey's 1974 military intervention to prevent the island's annexation to Greece. Since then, Turkey does not recognize the essentially Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus as the sole authority on the island, but instead supports the Turkish Cypriot community in the form of the de facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The other defining aspect of Turkey's foreign relations has been its ties with the United States. Based on the common threat posed by the Soviet Union, Turkey joined NATO in 1952, ensuring close bilateral relations with Washington throughout the Cold War. In the post-Cold War environment, Turkey's geostrategic importance shifted towards its proximity to the volatile Middle East. As well as hosting an important NATO air base near the Turkish border with Syria and Iraq for U.S. operations in the region, Turkey's status as a secular democracy and its positive relations with Israel made Ankara a crucial ally for Washington. In return, Turkey has benefited from the United States' political, economic and diplomatic support, including in key issues such as the country's bid to join the European Union.

Since the late 1980s, Turkey began to increasingly cooperate with the leading economies of East Asia, particularly with Japan and South Korea, on a large number of industrial sectors; ranging from the co-production of automotive and other transportation equipment, such as high-speed train sets, to electronical goods, home appliances, construction materials and military hardware.

The independence of the Turkic states of the Soviet Union, with whom Turkey shares a common cultural and linguistic heritage, allowed Turkey to extend its economic and political relations deep into Central Asia. The most salient of these relations saw the completion of a multi billion dollar oil and natural gas pipeline from Baku in Azerbaijan to the port of Ceyhan in Turkey. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, as it is called, has formed part of Turkey's foreign policy strategy to become an energy conduit to the West. However, Turkey's border with Armenia, a state in the Caucasus, remains closed following its occupation of Azeri territory during the Nagorno-Karabakh War. Relations with Armenia have been further strained by the controversy surrounding the forced deportations and related deaths of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the last days of the Ottoman Empire, recognised by a number of countries and historians as the Armenian Genocide.



Roosevelt, İnönü and Churchill at the Second Cairo Conference in December 1943

Turkey rejects the term genocide, arguing instead that the deaths were a result of disease, famine and inter-ethnic strife.

Military

The Turkish Armed Forces consists of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. The Gendarmerie and the Coast Guard operate as parts of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in peacetime, although they are subordinated to the Army and Navy Commands respectively in wartime, during which they have both internal law enforcement and military functions.

The Turkish Armed Forces is the second largest standing armed force in NATO, after the U.S. Armed Forces, with a combined strength of 1,043,550 uniformed personnel serving in its five branches. Every fit heterosexual male Turkish citizen is required to serve in the military for time periods ranging from three weeks to fifteen months, depending on his education and job location (homosexuals have the right to be exempt, upon their own personal request).



MEKO 200 TN type frigates of the Turkish Navy in formation

In 1998, Turkey announced a program of modernization worth some US\$31 billion over a ten year period in various projects including tanks, fighter jets, helicopters, submarines, warships and assault rifles. Turkey is also a Level 3 contributor to the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program, gaining an opportunity to develop and influence the creation of the next generation fighter spearheaded by the United States.

Turkey has maintained forces in international missions under the United Nations and NATO since 1950, including peacekeeping missions in Somalia and former Yugoslavia, and support to coalition forces in the First Gulf War. Turkey maintains 36,000 troops in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and has had troops deployed in Afghanistan as part of the U.S. stabilization force and the UN-authorized, NATO-commanded International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) since 2001. In 2006, the Turkish parliament deployed a peacekeeping force of Navy patrol vessels and around 700 ground troops as part of an expanded United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the wake of the Israeli-Lebanon conflict.

The Chief of the General Staff is appointed by the President, and is responsible to the Prime Minister. The Council of Ministers is responsible to the parliament for matters of national security and the adequate preparation of the armed forces to defend the country. However, the authority to declare war and to deploy the Turkish Armed Forces to foreign countries or to allow foreign armed forces to be stationed in Turkey rests solely with the parliament. The actual Commander of the armed forces is the Chief of the General Staff General Yaşar Büyükanıt, who succeeded General Hilmi Özkök on August 26, 2006.

The Turkish military has traditionally held a powerful position in domestic Turkish politics, considering itself the guardian of Turkey's secular democracy. It has several times within the last decades forcibly removed elected governments believed to be straying from the principles of the state as established by Atatürk and enshrined in the constitution.

Administrative divisions



A KC-135R-CRAG Stratotanker of the Turkish Air Force refueling TAI-built F-16 fighter jets

The capital city of Turkey is Ankara. The territory of Turkey is subdivided into 81 provinces for administrative purposes. The provinces are organized into 7 regions for census purposes; however, they do not represent an administrative structure. Each province is divided into districts, for a total of 923 districts.

Provinces usually bear the same name as their provincial capitals, also called the central district; exceptions to this are the provinces of Hatay (capital: Antakya), Kocaeli (capital: İzmit) and Sakarya (capital: Adapazarı). Provinces with the largest populations are İstanbul (+12 million), Ankara (+4.4 million), İzmir (+3.7 million), Bursa (+2.4 million), Adana (+2.0 million) and Konya (+1.9 million).

The biggest city and the pre-Republican capital İstanbul is the financial, economic and cultural heart of the country. Other important cities include İzmir, Bursa, Adana, Trabzon, Malatya, Gaziantep, Erzurum, Kayseri, Kocaeli, Konya, Mersin, Eskişehir, Diyarbakır, Antalya and Samsun. An estimated 70.5% of Turkey's population live in urban centers. In all, 18 provinces have populations that exceed 1 million inhabitants, and 21 provinces have populations between 1 million and 500,000 inhabitants. Only two provinces have populations less than 100,000.

Major provinces:

- İstanbul - 12,573,836
- Ankara - 4,466,756
- İzmir - 3,739,353
- Bursa - 2,439,876
- Adana - 2,006,650
- Konya - 1,959,082
- Antalya - 1,789,295
- Mersin - 1,595,938
- Gaziantep - 1,560,023
- Şanlıurfa - 1,523,099
- Diyarbakır - 1,460,714
- Kocaeli - 1,437,926
- Hatay - 1,386,224
- Manisa - 1,319,920
- Samsun - 1,228,959

(Population figures are given according to the 2007 census)

Geography and climate





Ölüdeniz near Fethiye in the Turkish Riviera

Turkey is a transcontinental Eurasian country. Asian Turkey (made up largely of Anatolia), which includes 97% of the country, is separated from European Turkey by the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles (which together form a water link between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean). European Turkey (eastern Thrace or Rumelia in the Balkan peninsula) includes 3% of the country. The territory of Turkey is more than 1,600 kilometres (1,000 mi) long and 800 km (500 mi) wide, with a roughly rectangular shape. Turkey's area, inclusive of lakes, occupies 783,562 square kilometres (300,948 sq mi), of which 755,688 square kilometres (291,773 sq mi) are in Southwest Asia and 23,764 square kilometres (9,174 sq mi) in Europe. Turkey's area makes it the world's 37th-largest country, and is about the size of Metropolitan France and the United Kingdom combined. Turkey is encircled by seas on three sides: the Aegean Sea to the west, the Black Sea to the north and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. Turkey also contains the Sea of Marmara in the northwest.

The European section of Turkey, in the northwest, is Eastern Thrace, and forms the borders of Turkey with Greece and Bulgaria. The Asian part of the country, Anatolia (also called Asia Minor), consists of a high central plateau with narrow coastal plains, between the Köroğlu and East-Black Sea mountain range to the north and the Taurus Mountains to the south. Eastern Turkey has a more mountainous landscape, and is home to the sources of rivers such as the Euphrates, Tigris and Aras, and contains Lake Van and Mount Ararat, Turkey's highest point at 5,165 metres (16,946 ft).

Turkey is geographically divided into seven regions: Marmara, Aegean, Black Sea, Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean. The uneven north Anatolian terrain running along the Black Sea resembles a long, narrow belt. This region comprises approximately one-sixth of Turkey's total land area. As a general trend, the inland Anatolian plateau becomes increasingly rugged as it progresses eastward.

Turkey's varied landscapes are the product of complex earth movements that have shaped the region over thousands of years and still manifest themselves in fairly frequent earthquakes and occasional volcanic eruptions. The Bosphorus and the Dardanelles owe their existence to the fault lines running through Turkey that led to the creation of the Black Sea. There is an earthquake fault line across the north of the country from west to east, which caused a major earthquake in 1999.

The coastal areas of Turkey bordering the Mediterranean Sea have a temperate Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and mild, wet and cold winters. Conditions can be much harsher in the more arid interior. Mountains close to the coast prevent Mediterranean influences from extending inland, giving the central Anatolian plateau of the interior of Turkey a continental climate with sharply contrasting seasons. Winters on the plateau are especially severe. Temperatures of $-30\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $-40\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($-22\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$ to $-40\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) can occur in the mountainous areas in the east, and snow may lie on the ground 120 days of the year. In the west, winter temperatures average below $1\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($34\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$). Summers are hot and dry, with temperatures generally above $30\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($86\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) in the day. Annual precipitation averages about 400 millimetres (15 in), with actual amounts determined by elevation. The driest regions are the Konya plain and the Malatya plain, where annual rainfall frequently is less than 300 millimetres (12 in). May is generally the wettest month, whereas July and August are the most dry.



Mt. Ararat is the highest peak in Turkey at 5,165 m (16,946 ft)

Economy

Turkey is a founding member of the OECD and the G20 industrial nations.

For most of its republican history, Turkey has adhered to a quasi- statist approach, with strict government controls over private sector participation, foreign trade, and foreign direct investment. However, during the 1980s, Turkey began a series of reforms, initiated by Prime Minister Turgut Özal and designed to shift the economy from a statist, insulated system to a more private-sector, market-based model. The reforms spurred rapid growth, but this growth was punctuated by sharp recessions and financial crises in 1994, 1999 (following the earthquake of that year), and 2001, resulting in an average of 4% GDP growth per annum between 1981 and 2003. Lack of additional reforms, combined with large and growing public sector deficits and widespread corruption, resulted in high inflation, a weak banking sector and increased macroeconomic volatility.



Maslak financial district in Istanbul

Since the economic crisis of 2001 and the reforms initiated by the finance minister of the time, Kemal Derviş, inflation has fallen to single-digit numbers, investor confidence and foreign investment have soared, and unemployment has fallen. The IMF forecasts a 6% inflation rate for Turkey in 2008. Turkey has gradually opened up its markets through economic reforms by reducing government controls on foreign trade and investment and the privatisation of publicly-owned industries, and the liberalisation of many sectors to private and foreign participation has continued amid political debate. According to Forbes magazine, Istanbul, Turkey's financial capital, had a total of 35 billionaires as of March 2008 (up from 25 in 2007), ranking 4th in the world behind Moscow (74 billionaires), New York City (71 billionaires) and London (36 billionaires), while ranking above Hong Kong (30 billionaires), Los Angeles (24 billionaires), Mumbai (20 billionaires), San Francisco (19 billionaires), Dallas (15 billionaires) and Tokyo (15 billionaires).

The GDP growth rate from 2002 to 2007 averaged 7.4%, which made Turkey one of the fastest growing economies in the world during that period. The World Bank forecasts a 5.4% GDP growth rate for Turkey in 2008. Turkey's economy is no longer dominated by traditional agricultural activities in the rural areas, but more so by a highly dynamic industrial complex in the major cities, mostly concentrated in the western provinces of the country, along with a developed services sector. In 2007, the agricultural sector accounted for 8.9% of the GDP, while the industrial sector accounted for 30.8% and the services sector accounted for 59.3%. The tourism sector has experienced rapid growth in the last twenty years, and constitutes an important part of the economy. In 2007, there were 27,214,988 visitors to the country, who contributed 18.5 billion USD to Turkey's revenues. Other key sectors of the Turkish economy are banking, construction, automotive, home appliances, electronics, textiles, oil refining, petrochemical products, food, mining, iron and steel, and machine industry.

In recent years, the chronically high inflation has been brought under control and this has led to the launch of a new currency to cement the acquisition of the economic reforms and erase the vestiges of an unstable economy. On January 1, 2005, the old Turkish Lira was replaced by the New Turkish Lira by dropping off six zeroes (1 YTL= 1,000,000 TL). As a result of continuing economic reforms, inflation has dropped to 8.2% in 2005, and the unemployment rate to 10.3%. In 2004, it was estimated that 46.2% of total disposable income was received by the top 20% income earners, while the lowest 20% received 6%.



Levent financial district in Istanbul



TCDD high speed train



Esenboğa International Airport in Ankara

Turkey has taken advantage of a customs union with the European Union, signed in 1995, to increase its industrial production destined for exports, while at the same time benefiting from EU-origin foreign investment into the country. In 2005, exports amounted to 73.5 billion USD while the imports stood at 116.8 billion USD, with increases of 16.3% and 19.7% compared to 2004, respectively. For 2006, the exports amounted to 85.8 billion USD, representing an increase of 16.8% over 2005. In 2007 the exports reached 110.5 billion USD (main export partners: Germany 11.2%, UK 8%, Italy 6.95%, France 5.6%, Spain 4.3%, USA 3.88%; total EU exports 56.5%.) However, larger imports amounting to about 156.9 billion USD threaten the balance of trade (main import partners: Russia 13.8%, Germany 10.3%, China 7.8%, Italy

6%, USA 4.8%, France 4.6%, Iran 3.9%, UK 3.2%; total EU imports 40.4%; total Asia imports 27%).

After years of low levels of foreign direct investment (FDI), Turkey succeeded in attracting 21.9 billion USD in FDI in 2007 and is expected to attract a higher figure in following years. A series of large privatizations, the stability fostered by the start of Turkey's EU accession negotiations, strong and stable growth, and structural changes in the banking, retail, and telecommunications sectors have all contributed to a rise in foreign investment.

Demographics

As of 2007, the population of Turkey stood at 70.5 million with a growth rate of 1.04 % per annum. The average population density (the number of persons per square kilometer) is 92 in Turkey; this changes between 11 and 2,420 in the country's provinces. Istanbul Province has the highest population density with 2,420 persons per square kilometer. The proportion of the population living in cities is 70.5 %. Half of Turkey's population is below the age of 28.3. Persons within the 15-64 age group, i.e. the working ages, constitute 66.5 % of the total population. The 0-14 age group corresponds to 26.4 % of Turkey's population; while senior citizens with 65 years of age or older correspond to 7.1 % of the total population. According to statistics released by the government in 2005, life expectancy stands at 68.9 years for men and 73.8 years for women, with an overall average of 71.3 years for the populace as a whole. Education is compulsory and free from ages 6 to 15. The literacy rate is 95.3% for men and 79.6% for women, with an overall average of 87.4%. The relatively low figure for women is mainly due to the prevailing feudal attitudes in the rural areas of the country, particularly in the southeastern provinces.

Article 66 of the Turkish Constitution defines a "Turk" as anyone who is "bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship"; therefore, the legal use of the term "Turkish" as a citizen of Turkey is different from the ethnic definition. The majority of the Turkish population are of Turkish ethnicity. Other major ethnic groups include the Kurds, Circassians, Zazas, Bosniaks, Georgians, Albanians, Roma, Arabs and the three officially-recognized minorities (per the Treaty of Lausanne) of Greeks, Armenians and Jews. The largest non-Turkic ethnicity is the Kurds, a distinct ethnic group traditionally concentrated in the southeast of the country. Reliable data on the exact ethnic repartition of the population are hard to obtain, as the Turkish census figures do not include ethnic or racial figures. According to a 2008 report prepared for the National Security Council of Turkey by academics of three Turkish universities in eastern Anatolia, there were approximately 50 to 55 million ethnic Turks, 12,5 million Kurds (including 3 million Zazas), 2,5 million Circassians (Adige), 2 million Bosniaks, 1,3 million Albanians, 1 million Georgians, 870,000 Arabs, 700,000 Roma, 600,000 Pomaks, 80,000 Laz, 60,000 Armenians, 20,000 Jews, 15,000 Greeks and 13,000 Hemshins living in Turkey.

Minorities other than the three official ones (Greeks, Armenians and Jews) do not have any special group privileges, and while the term "minority" itself remains a sensitive issue in Turkey, it is to be noted that the degree of assimilation within various ethnic groups outside the recognized minorities is high, with the following generations adding to the melting pot of the Turkish main body. Within that main body, certain distinctions based on diverse Turkic origins could be made as well.

Due to a demand for an increased labor force in post-World War II Europe, many Turkish citizens emigrated to Western Europe (particularly West Germany), contributing to the creation of a significant diaspora. Recently, Turkey has also become a destination for numerous immigrants, especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequent increase of freedom of movement in the region. These immigrants generally migrate from the former Soviet Bloc countries, as well as neighboring Muslim states, either to settle and work in Turkey or to continue their journey towards the European Union.



Cafes at the port of İzmir

Language

Turkish is the sole official language throughout Turkey. Reliable figures for the linguistic repartition of the populace are not available for reasons similar to those cited above. The public broadcaster TRT broadcasts programs in local languages and dialects of Arabic, Bosnian, Zazaki, Circassian and Kurdish a few hours a week.

Religion

Nominally, 99% of the Turkish population is Muslim of whom over 75% belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. A sizeable minority, about over 20% of the Muslim population, is affiliated with the Shi'a Alevi sect. The mainstream Hanafite school of Sunni Islam is largely organized by the state, through the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Religious Affairs Directorate), which controls all mosques and Muslim clerics. The remainder of the population belongs to other faiths, particularly Christian denominations (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, Syriac Orthodox and Protestant), Judaism (Sephardic and Ashkenazi), and Yezidism. According to a Eurobarometer poll in 2005, 95% of Turkish citizens responded that *they believe there is a God*.

There is a strong tradition of secularism in Turkey, which is essentially similar to the French model of *laïcité*. The state has no official religion nor promotes any, and actively monitors the area between the religions. The constitution recognizes the freedom of religion for individuals, whereas religious communities are placed under the protection of the state; but the constitution explicitly states that they cannot become involved in the political process (by forming a religious party, for instance) or establish faith-based schools. No party can claim that it represents a form of religious belief; nevertheless, religious sensibilities are generally represented through conservative parties. Turkey prohibits by law the wearing of religious headcover and theo-political symbolic garments for both genders in government buildings, schools, and universities; the law was upheld by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights as "legitimate" in the *Leyla Şahin v. Turkey* case on November 10, 2005.



Selimiye Mosque in the city of Edirne, one of the many historical mosques in Turkey

Culture and sports



Sufi whirling dervishes

Turkey has a very diverse culture that is a blend of various elements of the Oğuz Turkic and Anatolian, Ottoman (which was itself a continuation of both Greco-Roman and Islamic cultures), and Western culture and traditions which started with the Westernization of the Ottoman Empire and continues today. This mix is a result of the encounter of Turks and their culture with those of the peoples who were in their path during their migration from Central Asia to the West. As Turkey successfully transformed from the religion-based former Ottoman Empire into a modern nation-state with a very strong separation of state and religion, an increase in the methods of artistic expression followed. During the first years of the republic, the government invested a large amount of resources into fine arts, such as museums, theatres, and architecture. Because of different historical factors playing an important role in defining the modern Turkish identity, Turkish culture is a product of efforts to be "modern" and Western, combined with the necessity felt to maintain traditional religious and historical values.

Turkish music and literature form great examples of such a mix of cultural influences. Many schools of music are popular throughout Turkey, from "arabesque" to hip-hop genres, as a result of the interaction between the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world along with Europe, and thus contributing to a blend of Central Asian Turkic, Islamic and European traditions in modern-day Turkish music. Turkish literature was heavily influenced by Persian and Arabic literature during most of the Ottoman era, though towards the end of the Ottoman Empire the effect of both Turkish folk and Western literary traditions became increasingly felt. The mix of cultural influences is dramatized, for example, in the form of the "new symbols [of] the clash and interlacing of cultures" enacted in the work of Orhan Pamuk, winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Turkish film directors have won numerous prestigious awards in the recent years. Nuri Bilge Ceylan won the Best Director Award at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival with the film *Üç Maymun*. Turkish film director Fatih Akın, who lives in Germany and has dual Turkish-German citizenship, won the Golden Bear Award at the 2004 Berlin Film Festival with the film *Head-On*. In 2007 Fatih Akın won the Best Director Award at the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival and the Best Screenplay Award at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, as well as the Lux Prize by the European Parliament, with the film *The Edge of Heaven*. Another famous Turkish film director is Ferzan Özpetek, who won the Golden Orange Award at the Antalya Film Festival and the Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists Silver Ribbon Award with the film *Il Bagno Turco*, the first movie which brought him international fame. One of his latest works, *Facing Windows*, won the David di Donatello Award (Best Film), Scholars Jury Award (Best Direction), Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists Award (Best Original Story), Karlovy Vary International Film Festival Crystal Globe Award (Best Direction), Bangkok International Film Festival (Best Film), Foyle Film Festival (Best Feature), Rehoboth Beach Independent Film Festival (Audience Award, Best Feature), and the Seattle International Film Festival (Best Film) awards.



Orhan Pamuk, winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature



Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul

Architectural elements found in Turkey are also testaments to the unique mix of traditions that have influenced the region over the centuries. In addition to the traditional Byzantine elements present in numerous parts of Turkey, many artifacts of the later Ottoman architecture, with its exquisite blend of local and Islamic traditions, are to be found throughout the country, as well as in many former territories of the Ottoman Empire. Since the 18th century, Turkish architecture has been increasingly influenced by Western styles, and this can be particularly seen in Istanbul where buildings like the Blue Mosque and the Dolmabahçe Palace are juxtaposed next to numerous modern skyscrapers, all of them representing different traditions.

The most popular sport in Turkey is football. Turkey's top teams include Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş. In 2000, Galatasaray cemented its role as a major European club by winning the UEFA Cup and UEFA Super Cup. Two years later the Turkish national team finished third in the 2002 World Cup Finals in Japan and South Korea. The Turkish national team since reached the semi-finals of the UEFA Euro 2008 competition. Other mainstream sports such as basketball, volleyball and motorsports (following the inclusion of Istanbul Park on the Formula 1 racing calendar) have also become popular recently. The men's national basketball team finished second in Eurobasket 2001 while Efes Pilsen S.K. won the Korac Cup in 1996, finished second in the European Cup of 1993, and made it to the Final Four of Euroleague and Suproleague in 2000 and 2001. Turkish basketball players have also been successful in the NBA. In June 2004, Mehmet Okur won the 2004 NBA Championship with the Detroit Pistons, becoming the first Turkish player to win an NBA title. Okur was selected to the Western Conference All-Star Team for the 2007 NBA All-Star Game, also becoming the first Turkish player to participate in this event. Another successful Turkish player in the NBA is Hidayet Türkoğlu, who was given the NBA's Most Improved Player Award for the 2007-2008 season, on April 28, 2008. Women's volleyball teams such as Eczacıbaşı and Vakıfbank Güneş Sigorta have been the most successful by far in any team sport, winning numerous European championship titles and medals. Surfing, snowboarding, skateboarding, paragliding and other extreme sports are becoming more popular every year. The traditional Turkish national sport has been the Yağlı güreş (*Oiled Wrestling*) since Ottoman times. International wrestling styles governed by FILA such as Freestyle wrestling and Greco-Roman wrestling are also popular, with many European, World and Olympic championship titles won by Turkish wrestlers both individually and as a national team. Another major sport in which the Turks have been internationally successful is weightlifting; as Turkish weightlifters, both male and female, have broken numerous world records and won several European, World and Olympic championship titles. Naim Süleymanoğlu and Halil Mutlu have achieved legendary status as one of the few weightlifters to have won three gold medals in three Olympics.

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Ukraine

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Ukraine (English pronunciation /juːˈkreɪn/; Ukrainian: Україна, *Ukrayina*, /ukrɑˈjɪnɑ/) is a country in Eastern Europe. It borders Russia to the east, Belarus to the north, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary to the west, Romania and Moldova to the southwest, and the Black Sea and Sea of Azov to the south. The city of Kiev (*Kyiv*) is both the capital and the largest city of Ukraine.

The nation's history began with that of the East Slavs. From at least the 9th century, the territory of Ukraine was a centre of the medieval Varangian dominated East Slavic civilization forming the state of Kievan Rus', which disintegrated in the 12th century. From the 14th century on, the territory of Ukraine was divided among a number of regional powers and by the 19th century the largest part of Ukraine was integrated into the Russian Empire with the rest under Austro-Hungarian control. After a chaotic period of incessant warfare and several attempts at independence (1917–21) following the Great War and the Russian civil war, Ukraine emerged in 1922 as one of the founding republics of the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic's territory was enlarged westward shortly before and after the second World War, and again in 1954 with the Crimea transfer. In 1945, the Ukrainian SSR became one of the co-founding members of the United Nations. Ukraine became independent again after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. This began a transition period to a market economy, in which Ukraine was stricken with eight straight years of economic decline. But since then the economy has been experiencing a stable increase, with real GDP growth averaging seven percent annually.

Ukraine is a unitary state composed of 24 oblasts (provinces), one autonomous republic (Crimea), and two cities with special status: Kiev, its capital, and Sevastopol, which houses the Russian Black Sea Fleet under a leasing agreement. Ukraine is a republic under a semi-presidential system with separate legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Being the second largest country in Europe, Ukraine also posses the second largest military on the continent. The country is home to some 46.4 million people, 77.8 percent of them are ethnic Ukrainians, with sizable minorities of Russians, Belarusians and Romanians. The Ukrainian language is only official language in Ukraine, while Russian is also widely spoken and is known to most Ukrainians as a second language. The dominant religion in the country in Christianity, which has heavily influenced Ukrainian architecture, literature and music.

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Україна <i>Ukrayina</i> Ukraine	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p>Anthem: <i>Ще не вмерла України ні слава, ні воля</i> (Ukrainian)</p> <p><i>Shche ne vmerla Ukrayiny ni slava, ni volya</i> (transliteration)</p> <p><i>Ukraine's glory has not yet perished, nor her freedom</i></p>	

Etymology

"Ukraine" is from Old East Slavic *ukraina* meaning "borderland". It derives from *u* "by, at" and the Slavic root *kraj* "edge; region". The territory was called this because it was the borderland or "frontier zone" of medieval Russia at the time of the Tatar invasion in the 13th century. It was also known as "Little Russia", so called by contrast with "Great Russia", when the medieval principality here became separated from "mainstream" tsarist Russia as a result of the Mongol invasion. In the Ukrainian language *krayina* simply means "country." In English, the country is referred to without the definite article, conforming to the usual English grammar rules for names of countries. Before the country's independence in 1991, the country was often referred to as *The Ukraine*. The term *Ukraine* rather than *The Ukraine* is now predominant in diplomacy and journalism.

History

Early history

Human settlement on the territory of Ukraine dates back to at least 4500 BC, when the Neolithic Cucuteni culture flourished in a wide area that covered parts of modern Ukraine including Trypillia and the entire Dnieper- Dniester region. During the Iron Age, the land was inhabited by Cimmerians, Scythians, and Sarmatians. Between 700 BC and 200 BC it was part of the Scythian Kingdom, or Scythia. Later, colonies of Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, and Byzantine Empire, such as Tyras, Olbia, and Hermonassa, were founded starting from the 6th century BC on the northeastern shore of the Black Sea, and thrived well into the 6th century AD. In the 7th century AD the territory of eastern Ukraine was part of Old Great Bulgaria. At the end of the century the majority of Bulgar tribes migrated in different directions and the land fell into the Khazars' hands.

Golden Age of Kiev



Location of **Ukraine** (orange)

on the European continent (white)

Capital (and largest city)	Kiev (<i>Kyiv</i>)
Official languages	Ukrainian
Demonym	Ukrainian
Government	Semi-presidential unitary state
- President	Viktor Yushchenko
- Prime Minister	Yulia Tymoshenko
- Speaker of the Parliament	Arseniy Yatsenyuk
Independence	from the Soviet Union
- Declared	August 24, 1991
- Referendum	December 1, 1991
- Finalized	December 26, 1991
Area	
- Total	603,628 km ² (44th) 233,090 sq mi
- Water (%)	7%

Population	
- 2008 estimate	46,372,700 (27th)
- 2001 census	48,457,102
- Density	77/km ² (115th) 199/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$399.866 billion (29th)
- Per capita	\$8,624 (83rd)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$140.5 billion (45th)
- Per capita	\$3,061 (88th)
Gini (2006)	31
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.788 (medium) (76th)
Currency	Hryvnia (UAH)
Time zone	EET (UTC+2)
- Summer (DST)	EEST (UTC+3)
Internet TLD	.ua
Calling code	+380

During the 10th and 11th centuries, much of modern-day Ukraine was populated by the Rus' people who formed the largest and most powerful European polity, called the Kievan Rus'. This nation laid the foundation for the national identity of Ukrainians, as well as other East Slavic nations, through subsequent centuries. Kiev, the capital of modern Ukraine, became the most important city of the Rus'. According to the *Primary Chronicle*, the Rus' elite initially consisted of Varangians from Scandinavia. The Varangians later became assimilated into the local Slavic population and became part of the Rus' first dynasty, the Rurik Dynasty.

Kievan Rus' was composed of several principalities ruled by the interrelated Rurikid Princes. The seat of Kiev, the most prestigious and influential of all principalities, became the subject of many rivalries among Rurikids as the most valuable prize in their quest for power. These were sometimes contested through intrigue, but more often through bloody conflicts. The Golden Age of Kievan Rus' began with the reign of Vladimir the Great (*Volodymyr*, 980–1015), who turned Rus' toward Byzantine Christianity. During the reign of his son, Yaroslav the Wise (1019–1054), Kievan Rus' reached the zenith of its cultural development and military power. This was followed by the state's increasing fragmentation as the relative importance of regions rose again. After a final resurgence under the rule of Vladimir Monomakh (1113–1125) and his son Mstislav (1125–1132), Kievan Rus' finally disintegrated into separate principalities following Mstislav's death. The 13th century Mongol invasion devastated Kievan Rus'. Kiev was totally destroyed in 1240.

On the Ukrainian territory, the state of Kievan Rus' was succeeded by the principalities of Galich (Halych) and Volodymyr-Volynskyi, which were merged into the state of Galicia-Volhynia.

Under foreign domination



Map of the Kievan Rus', 11th century. During the Golden Age of Kiev the lands of Rus' covered much of present day Ukraine, as well as western Russia and Belarus.

In the mid-14th century, Galicia-Volhynia was subjugated by Casimir the Great of Poland, while the heartland of Rus', including Kiev, fell under the Gediminids of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Following the 1386 Union of Krevo, a dynastic union between Poland and Lithuania, most of Ukraine's territory was controlled by the local as well as increasingly Ruthenized Lithuanian nobles as part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. At this time, the term Ruthenia and Ruthenians as the Latinized versions of "Rus'", became widely applied to the land and its people, respectively.

By 1569 the Union of Lublin formed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and a significant part of Ukrainian territory was moved from largely Ruthenized Lithuanian rule to the Polish administration, as it was transferred to the Polish Crown. Under the cultural and political pressure of Polonization much of the Ruthenian upper class converted to Catholicism and became indistinguishable from the Polish nobility. Thus, the Ukrainian commoners, deprived of their native protectors among Ruthenian nobility, turned for protection to the Cossacks, who remained fiercely orthodox at all times and tended to turn to violence against those they perceived as enemies, particularly the Polish state and its representatives.

In the mid-17th century, a Cossack military quasi state, the Zaporozhian Host, was established by the Dnieper Cossacks and the Ruthenian peasants fleeing Polish serfdom. Poland had little real control of this land, although at times, the cossacks allied with the Commonwealth in military campaigns. However, the continued enserfment of peasantry by the Polish nobility emphasized the Commonwealth's fierce exploitation of the workforce and, and most importantly, the suppression of the

Orthodox Church pushed the allegiances of Cossacks away from Poland. Their aspiration was to have representation in Polish Sejm, recognition of Orthodox traditions and the gradual expansion of the Cossack Registry. These were all vehemently denied by the Polish kings. The Cossacks eventually turned for protection to Orthodox Russia, a decision which would later lead towards the downfall of the Polish-Lithuanian state, and the preservation of the Orthodox Church and in Ukraine.



"Reply of the Zaporozhian Cossacks to Sultan Mehmed IV of the Ottoman Empire."
Painted by Ilya Repin from 1880 to 1891.

In 1648, Bohdan Khmelnytsky led the largest of the Cossack uprisings against the Commonwealth and the Polish king John II Casimir. Left-bank Ukraine was eventually integrated into Russia as the Cossack Hetmanate, following the 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav and the ensuing Russo-Polish War. After the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century by Prussia, Habsburg Austria, and Russia, Western Ukrainian Galicia was taken over by Austria, while the rest of Ukraine was progressively incorporated into the Russian

Empire. Despite the promises of Ukrainian autonomy given by the treaty of Pereyaslav, the Ukrainian elite and the Cossacks never received the freedoms and the autonomy they were expecting from Imperial Russia. However, within the Empire, Ukrainians rose to the highest offices of Russian state, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

At a later period, the tsarist regime carried the policy of Russification of Ukrainian lands, suppressing the use of the Ukrainian language in print, and in public.



In the centuries following the Mongol invasion, much of Ukraine was controlled by Lithuania (from the 14th century on) and since the Union of Lublin (1569) by Poland, as seen at this outline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as of 1619.



Map of the Russian Empire, 1682–1762

World War I and revolution

Ukraine entered World War I on the side of both the Central Powers, under Austria, and the Entente, under Russia.

During the war, Austro-Hungarian authorities established the Ukrainian Legion, along with the Polish Legion, to fight against the Russian Empire. These legions were the foundations of the interwar Polish Army and the Ukrainian Galician Army that fought against the Bolsheviks and Poles in the post World War I period (1919–23). Those suspected of the Russophile sentiments in Austris were treated harshly. Up to 20,000 supporters of the Russian Empire from Galicia were detained and placed in Austrian internment camps in Talerhof, Styria, and in a fortress at Terezín (now in the Czech Republic).

With the collapse of the Russian and Austrian empires following World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917, a Ukrainian national movement for self-determination reemerged. During 1917–20, several separate Ukrainian states briefly emerged: the Ukrainian People's Republic, the Hetmanate, the Directorate and the pro-Bolshevik Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (or Soviet Ukraine) successively established territories in the former Russian Empire; while the West Ukrainian People's Republic emerged briefly in the former Austro-Hungarian territory. In the midst of the civil war, a Ukrainian anarchist movement called the Black Army led by Nestor Makhno also developed. However with Western Ukraine's defeat in the Polish-Ukrainian War followed by the failure of the further Polish invasion that was repelled by the Russian and Ukrainian pro-Soviet forces, Ukraine lost its initial independence. According to the Peace of Riga concluded between Soviet Russia, Soviet Ukraine and Poland western Ukraine was split-off and incorporated into Poland while the larger central and eastern parts formed a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in March 1919, that later became a founding republic of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or the Soviet Union in December, 1922.



Soldiers of the Ukrainian People's Army

Interwar Soviet Ukraine

The revolution that brought the Soviet government to power devastated Ukraine. It left over 1.5 million people dead and hundreds of thousands homeless. Seeing the exhausted society, the Soviet government remained very flexible during the 1920s. Thus, the Ukrainian culture and language enjoyed a revival, as Ukrainization became a local implementation of the Soviet-wide Korenization (literally *indigenization*) policy. The Bolsheviks were also committed to introducing universal health care, education and social-security benefits, as well as the right to work and housing. Women's rights were greatly increased through new laws aimed to wipe away centuries-old inequalities. Most of these policies were sharply reversed by the early-1930s after Joseph Stalin gradually consolidated power to become the de facto communist party leader and a dictator of the Soviet Union.



DniproGES hydroelectric power plant under construction circa 1930

Starting from the late 1920s, Ukraine was involved in the Soviet industrialization and the republic's industrial output quadrupled in the 1930s. However, the industrialization had a heavy cost for the peasantry, demographically a backbone of the Ukrainian nation. To satisfy the state's need for increased food supplies and to finance industrialization, Stalin instituted a program of collectivization of agriculture as the state combined the peasants' lands and animals into collective farms and enforcing the policies by the regular troops and secret police. Those who resisted were arrested and deported and the increased production quotas were placed on the peasantry. The collectivization had a devastating effect on agricultural productivity. As the members of the collective farms were not allowed to receive any grain until the unachievable quotas were met, starvation in the Soviet Union became widespread. In 1932–33, millions starved to death in a man-made famine known as Holodomor. Scholars are divided as to whether this famine fits the definition of genocide, but the Ukrainian parliament and more than a dozen other countries recognize it as the genocide of the Ukrainian people.

The times of industrialization and Holodomor also coincided with the Soviet assault on the national political and cultural elite often accused in "nationalist deviations". Two waves of Stalinist political repression and persecution in the Soviet Union (1929–34 and 1936–38) resulted in the elimination some 681,692 people; this included four-fifths of the Ukrainian cultural elite and three quarters of all the Red Army's higher-ranking officers.

World War II

Following the Invasion of Poland in September 1939, German and Soviet troops divided the territory of Poland. Thus, Eastern Galicia and Volhynia with their Ukrainian population became reunited with the rest of Ukraine. This unifications of Ukraine achieved for the first time in its history was a decisive event in the history of the nation.

After France surrendered to Germany, Romania ceded Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to Soviet demands. The Ukrainian SSR incorporated northern and southern districts of Bessarabia, the northern Bukovina, and the Soviet-occupied Hertsa region. But it ceded the western part of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic to the newly created Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. All these territorial gains were internationally recognized by the Paris peace treaties of 1947.

German armies invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, thereby initiating four straight years of incessant total war. The Axis allies initially advanced against desperate but unsuccessful efforts of the Red Army. In the encirclement battle of Kiev, the city was acclaimed as a "Hero City", for the fierce resistance by the Red Army and by the local population. More than 600,000 Soviet soldiers (or one quarter of the Western Front) were killed or taken captive there. Although the wide majority of Ukrainians fought alongside the Red Army and Soviet resistance, some elements of the Ukrainian nationalist underground created an anti-Soviet nationalist formation in Galicia, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (1942) that at times engaged the Nazi forces; while another nationalist movement fought alongside the Nazis. In total, the number of ethnic Ukrainians that fought in the ranks of the Soviet Army is estimated from 4.5 million to 7 million. The pro-Soviet partisan guerrilla resistance in Ukraine is estimated to number at 47,800 from the start of occupation to 500,000 at its peak in 1944; with about 48 percent of them being ethnic Ukrainians. Generally, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army's figures are very inaccurate, ranging anywhere from 15,000 to as much as 100,000 fighters.



Soviet soldiers preparing rafts to cross the Dnieper (the sign reads "To Kiev!") in the 1943 Battle of the Dnieper



Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Kiev

Initially, the Germans were even received as liberators by some western Ukrainians, who had only joined the Soviet Union in 1939. However, brutal German rule in the occupied territories eventually turned its supporters against the occupation. Nazi administrators of conquered Soviet territories made little attempt to exploit the population of Ukrainian territories' dissatisfaction with Stalinist political and economic policies. Instead, the Nazis preserved the collective-farm system, systematically carried out genocidal policies against Jews, deported others to work in Germany, and began a systematic depopulation of Ukraine to prepare it for German colonization, which included a food blockade on Kiev. Under these circumstances, people that remained in the occupied territory either passively or actively opposed the Nazis.

The total losses inflicted upon the Ukrainian population during the war are estimated between five and eight million, including over half a million Jews killed by the Einsatzgruppen, sometimes with the help of local collaborators. Of the estimated 8.7 million Soviet troops who fell in battle against the Nazis, 1.4 million were ethnic Ukrainians.

Postwar

The republic was heavily damaged by the war, and it required significant efforts to recover. More than 700 cities and towns and 28,000 villages were destroyed. The situation was worsened by a famine in 1946–47 caused by the drought and the infrastructure breakdown that took away tens of thousand lives.

The nationalist anti-Soviet resistance lasted for years after the war, chiefly in Western Ukraine, but also in other regions. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army, continued to fight the USSR into the 1950s. Using guerilla war tactics, the insurgents targeted for assassination and terror of those who they perceived as the representing, or cooperating at any level with, the Soviet state.

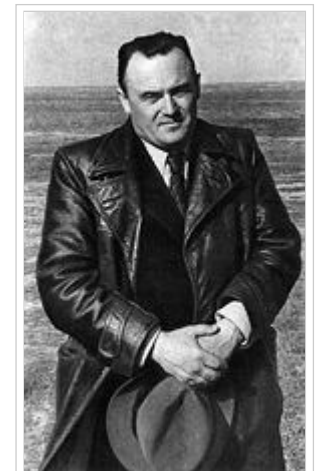


The Chernobyl reactor #4

Following the death of Stalin in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev became the new leader of the USSR. Being the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukrainian SSR in 1938-49, Khrushchev was intimately familiar with the republic and after taking power union-wide, he began to emphasize the friendship between the Ukrainian and Russian nations. In 1954, the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav was widely celebrated, and in particular, Crimea was transferred from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

Already by the 1950s, the republic fully surpassed pre-war levels of industry and production. It also became an important centre of the Soviet arms industry and high-tech research. Such an important role resulted in a major influence of the local elite. Many members of the Soviet leadership came from Ukraine, most notably Leonid Brezhnev who would later oust Khrushchev and become the Soviet leader from 1964 to 1982, as well as many prominent Soviet sportsmen, scientists and artists.

On April 26, 1986 a reactor in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant exploded, resulting in the Chernobyl disaster, the worst nuclear reactor accident in history.



Sergey Korolyov, the head Soviet rocket engineer and designer during the Space Race

At the time of the accident seven million people lived in the contaminated territories, including 2.2 million in Ukraine. After the accident, a new city, Slavutych, was built outside the exclusion zone to house and support the employees of the plant, which was decommissioned in 2000. Around 150,000 people were evacuated from the contaminated area, and 300,000–600,000 took part in the cleanup. As of 2000, about 4,000 Ukrainian children have been diagnosed with thyroid cancer caused by radiation released by this incident.

Independence

On July 16, 1990, the new parliament adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine. The declaration established the principles of the self-determination of the Ukrainian nation, democracy, political and economic independence, and the priority of Ukrainian law on the Ukrainian territory over Soviet law. A month earlier, a similar declaration was adopted by the parliament of the Russian SFSR. This started a period of confrontation between the central Soviet, and new republican authorities. In August 1991, the conservative Communist leaders of the Soviet Union attempted a coup to remove Gorbachev and to restore the Communist party's power. After the attempt failed, on August 24, 1991 the Ukrainian parliament adopted the Act of Independence in which the parliament declared Ukraine as an independent democratic state. A referendum and the first presidential elections took place on December 1, 1991. That day, more than 90 percent of the Ukrainian people expressed their support for the Act of Independence, and they elected the chairman of the parliament, Leonid Kravchuk to serve as the first President of the country. At the meeting in Brest, Belarus on December 8, followed by Alma Ata meeting on December 21, the leaders of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, formally dissolved the Soviet Union and formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).



The first launch of a Ukrainian rocket at the Sea Launch complex

Ukraine was initially viewed as a republic with favorable economic conditions in comparison to the other regions of the Soviet Union. However, the country experienced deeper economic slowdown than some of the other former Soviet Republics. During the recession, Ukraine lost 60 percent of its GDP from 1991 to 1999, and suffered five-digit inflation rates. Dissatisfied with the economic conditions, as well as crime and corruption, Ukrainians protested and organized strikes.



Orange-clad demonstrators gather in the Independence Square in Kiev on November 22, 2004

The Ukrainian economy stabilized by the end of the 1990s. A new currency, the hryvnia, was introduced in 1996. Since 2000 the country has enjoyed steady economic growth averaging about seven percent annually, which is one of the highest growth rates in Europe and the world. A new Constitution of Ukraine was adopted in 1996, which turned Ukraine into a semi-presidential republic and established a stable political system. Kuchma was, however, criticized by opponents for concentrating too much of power in his office, corruption, transferring public property into hands of loyal oligarchs, discouraging free speech, and electoral fraud. In 2004, Viktor Yanukovich, then Prime Minister, was declared the winner of the presidential elections, which had been largely rigged, as the Supreme Court of Ukraine later ruled. The results caused a public outcry in support of the opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, who challenged the results and led the peaceful Orange Revolution. The revolution brought Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko to power, while casting Viktor Yanukovich in opposition.

Since independence, Ukraine has maintained its own space agency, the National Space Agency of Ukraine (NSAU). The first astronaut of the NSAU to enter space under the Ukrainian flag was Leonid Kadenyuk on May 13, 1997. Ukraine became an active participant in scientific space exploration and remote sensing missions. Between 1991 and 2007, Ukraine has launched six self made satellites and 101 launch vehicles, and continues to design spacecraft. So to this day, Ukraine is recognized as a world leader in producing missiles and missile related technology.

Government and politics

Ukraine is a republic under a mixed semi-parliamentary semi-presidential system with separate legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The President is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and is the formal head of state.

Ukraine's legislative branch includes the 450-seat unicameral parliament, the Verkhovna Rada. The parliament is primarily responsible for the formation of the executive branch and the Cabinet of Ministers, which is headed by the Prime Minister.

Laws, acts of the parliament and the cabinet, presidential decrees, and acts of the Crimean parliament may be abrogated by the Constitutional Court, should they be found to violate the Constitution of Ukraine. Other normative acts are subject to judicial review. The Supreme Court is the main body in the system of courts of general jurisdiction. Local self-government is officially guaranteed. Local councils and city mayors are popularly elected and exercise control over local budgets. The heads of regional and district administrations are appointed by the president.



Verkhovna Rada, the Parliament of Ukraine

Ukraine has a large number of political parties, many of which have tiny memberships and are unknown to the general public. Small parties often join in multi-party coalitions (electoral blocs) for the purpose of participating in parliamentary elections.

Military

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine inherited a 780,000 man military force on its territory, equipped with the third-largest nuclear weapon arsenal in the world. In May 1992, Ukraine signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in which the country agreed to give up all nuclear weapons to Russia for disposal and to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state. Ukraine ratified the treaty in 1994, and by 1996 the country became free of nuclear weapons. Currently Ukraine's military is the second largest in Europe, after that of Russia.

Ukraine also took consistent steps toward reduction of conventional weapons. It signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which called for reduction of tanks, artillery, and armored vehicles (army forces were reduced to 300,000). The country plans to convert the current conscript-based military into a professional volunteer military not later than in 2011.

Ukraine has been playing an increasingly larger role in peacekeeping operations. Ukrainian troops are deployed in Kosovo as part of the Ukrainian-Polish Battalion. A Ukrainian unit was deployed in Lebanon, as part of UN Interim Force enforcing the mandated ceasefire agreement. There was also a maintenance and training battalion deployed in Sierra Leone. In 2003–05, a Ukrainian unit was deployed in Iraq, as part of the Multinational force in Iraq under Polish command. The total Ukrainian military deployment around the world is 562 servicemen.

Following independence, Ukraine declared itself a neutral state. The country has had a limited military partnership with Russia, other CIS countries and a partnership with NATO since 1994. In the 2000s, the government was leaning towards the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and a deeper cooperation with the alliance was set by the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan signed in 2002. It was later agreed that the question of joining NATO should be answered by a national referendum at some point in the future.

Administrative divisions

The system of Ukrainian subdivisions reflects the country's status as a unitary state (as stated in the country's constitution) with unified legal and administrative regimes for each unit.

Ukraine is subdivided into twenty-four *oblasts* (provinces) and one autonomous republic (*avtonomna respublika*), Crimea. Additionally, the cities of Kiev, the capital, and Sevastopol, both have a special legal status. The 24 oblasts and Crimea are subdivided into 490 *raions* (districts), or second-level administrative units. The average area of a Ukrainian raion is 1,200 kilometres² (460 sq mi), the average population of a raion is 52,000 people.

Urban areas (cities) can either be subordinated to the state (as in the case of Kiev and Sevastopol), the oblast or raion administrations, depending on their population and socio-economic importance. Lower administrative units include urban-type settlements, which are similar to rural communities, but are more urbanized, including industrial enterprises, educational facilities, and transport connections, and villages.

In total, Ukraine has 457 cities, 176 of them are labeled oblast-class, 279 smaller raion-class cities, and two special legal status cities. These are followed by 886 urban-type settlements and 28,552 villages.



Ukrainian army soldiers aboard a BTR-80 in Iraq

Geography

At 603,700 kilometres² (233,074 sq mi) and with a coastline of 2,782 kilometres (1,729 mi), Ukraine is the world's 44th-largest country (after the Central African Republic, before Madagascar). It is the second largest country in Europe (after the European part of Russia, before metropolitan France).

The Ukrainian landscape consists mostly of fertile plains (or steppes) and plateaus, crossed by rivers such as the Dnieper (*Dnipro*), Seversky Donets, Dniester and the Southern Buh as they flow south into the Black Sea and the smaller Sea of Azov. To the southwest, the delta of the Danube forms the border with Romania. The country's only mountains are the Carpathian Mountains in the west, of which the highest is the Hora Hoverla at 2,061 m (6,762 ft), and those on the Crimean peninsula, in the extreme south along the coast.

Ukraine has a mostly temperate continental climate, although a more Mediterranean climate is found on the southern Crimean coast. Precipitation is disproportionately distributed; it is highest in the west and north and lesser in the east and southeast. Western Ukraine, receives around 1,200 mm (47 in) of precipitation, annually. While Crimea, receives around 400 mm (15.4 in) of precipitation. Winters vary from cool along the Black Sea to cold farther inland. Average annual temperatures range from 5.5–7 °C (42–45 °F) in the north, to 11–13 °C (52–55.4 °F) in the south.



A topographic map of Ukraine

Economy

In Soviet times, the economy of Ukraine was the second largest in the Soviet Union, being an important industrial and agricultural component of the country's planned economy. With the collapse of the Soviet system, the country moved from a planned economy to a market economy. The transition process was difficult for the majority of the population which plunged into poverty. Ukraine's economy contracted severely following the years after the Soviet collapse. Day to day life for the average person living in Ukraine was a struggle. A significant number of citizens in rural Ukraine survived by growing their own food, often working two or more jobs and buying the basic necessities through the barter economy.

In 1991, the government liberalized most prices to combat widespread product shortages, and was successful in overcoming the problem. At the same time, the government continued to subsidize government-owned industries and agriculture by uncovered monetary emission. The loose monetary policies of the early 1990s pushed inflation to hyperinflationary levels. For the year 1993, Ukraine holds the world record for inflation in one calendar year. Those living on fixed incomes suffered the most. Prices stabilized only after the introduction of new currency, the hryvnia, in 1996.

The country was also slow in implementing structural reforms. Following independence, the government formed a legal framework for privatization. However, widespread resistance to reforms within the government and from a significant part of the population soon stalled the reform efforts. A large number of government-owned enterprises were exempt from the privatization process. In the meantime, by 1999, the output had fallen to less than 40 percent of the 1991 level, but recovered to slightly above the 100 percent mark by the end of 2006.



A Ukrainian-made Antonov An-148.

Ukraine's 2007 GDP (PPP), as calculated by the IMF, is ranked 29th in the world and estimated at \$399.866 billion. Nominal GDP (in U.S. dollars, calculated at market exchange rate) was \$140.5 billion, ranked 41st in the world.

In the early 2000s, the economy showed strong export-based growth of 5 to 10 percent, with industrial production growing more than 10 percent per year. Ukraine produces nearly all types of transportation vehicles and spacecraft. Antonov airplanes and KrAZ trucks are exported to many countries. The majority of Ukrainian exports are marketed to the European Union and CIS.

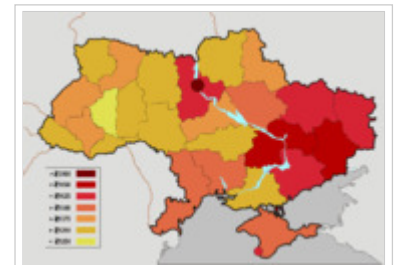
The World Bank classifies Ukraine as a middle-income state. Significant issues include underdeveloped infrastructure and transportation, corruption and bureaucracy. The Ukrainian stock market recorded 130 percent growth in 2007, for second highest in the world. According to the CIA, in 2006 the market capitalization of the Ukrainian stock market was \$42.87 billion. Growing sectors of the Ukrainian economy include the IT Outsourcing market, which was expected to grow over 25 percent in 2007.

By December 2007 the average nominal salary in Ukraine reached 1,774 hryvnias per month. Despite remaining lower than in neighboring central European countries, the annual growth of average salary income in real terms is about 20 percent for several years (2001–06) in a row.

The country imports most energy supplies, especially oil and natural gas, and to a large extent depends on Russia as an energy supplier. While 25 percent of the



The building of the National Bank of Ukraine



Ukrainian oblasts (provinces) by monthly salary

natural gas in Ukraine comes from internal sources, about 35 percent comes from Russia and the remaining 40 percent from Central Asia through transit routes that Russia controls. At the same time, 85 percent of the Russian gas is delivered to Western Europe through Ukraine.

Culture

Ukrainian customs are heavily influenced by Christianity, which is the dominant religion in the country. Gender roles also tend to be more traditional, and grandparents play a greater role in raising children than in the West. The culture of Ukraine has been also influenced by its eastern and western neighbors, which is reflected in its architecture, music and art.

The Communist era had quite a strong effect on the art and writing of Ukraine. In 1932, Stalin made socialist realism state policy in the Soviet Union when he promulgated the decree "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organizations". This greatly stifled creativity. During the 1980s glasnost (openness) was introduced and Soviet artists and writers again became free to express themselves as they wanted.

The tradition of the Easter egg, known as pysanky, has long roots in Ukraine. These eggs were drawn on with wax to create a pattern; then, the dye was applied to give the eggs their pleasant colours, the dye did not affect the previously wax-coated parts of the egg. After the entire egg was dyed, the wax was removed leaving only the colourful pattern. This tradition is thousands of years old, and precedes the arrival of Christianity to Ukraine.

The traditional Ukrainian diet includes chicken, pork, beef, fish and mushrooms. Ukrainians also tend to eat a lot of potatoes, grains, fresh and pickled vegetables. Popular traditional dishes include varenyky (boiled dumplings with mushrooms, potatoes, sauerkraut, cottage cheese or cherries), borsch (soup made of beets, cabbage and mushrooms or meat) and holubtsy (stuffed cabbage rolls filled with rice, carrots and meat). Ukrainian specialties also include Chicken Kiev and Kiev Cake. Ukrainians drink stewed fruit, juices, milk, buttermilk (they make cottage cheese from this), mineral water, tea and coffee, beer, wine and horilka.

Language

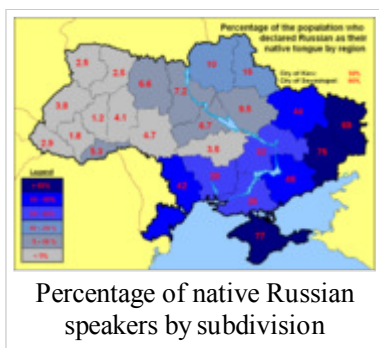


A collection of traditional pysanky from Volyn

According to the Constitution, the state language of Ukraine is Ukrainian. Russian, which was the *de facto* official language of the Soviet Union, is widely spoken, especially in eastern and southern Ukraine. According to the 2001 census, 67.5 percent of the population declared Ukrainian as their native language and 29.6 percent declared Russian. Most native Ukrainian speakers know Russian as a second language.

It is sometimes difficult to determine the extent of the two languages. Many people use a Surzhyk (a mixture of Ukrainian and Russian where the Russian vocabulary is often combined with Ukrainian grammar and pronunciation) while claiming in surveys that they speak Russian or Ukrainian (though most can speak both literary languages). Some ethnic Ukrainians, while calling Ukrainian their native language, use Russian more frequently in their daily lives.

These details result in a significant difference across different survey results, as even a small restating of a question switches responses of a significant group of people. Ukrainian is mainly spoken in western and central Ukraine. In western Ukraine, Ukrainian is also the dominant language in cities (such as Lviv). In central Ukraine, Ukrainian and Russian are both equally used in cities, with Russian being more common in Kiev, while Ukrainian is the dominant language in rural communities. In eastern and southern Ukraine, Russian is primarily used in cities, and Surzhyk is used in rural areas.



For a large part of the Soviet era the number of Ukrainian speakers was declining from generation to generation and by the mid-1980s the usage of the Ukrainian language in public life decreased significantly. Following independence, the government of Ukraine began following a policy of Ukrainization, to increase the use of Ukrainian, while discouraging Russian, which has been banned or restricted in the media and films. This means that Russian-language programmes need a Ukrainian translation or subtitles.

According to the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukrainian is the only state language of the republic. However, the republic's constitution specifically recognizes Russian as the language of the majority of its population and guarantees its usage 'in all spheres of public life'. Similarly, the Crimean Tatar language (the language of a sizable 12 percent minority of the republic) is guaranteed a special state protection as well as the 'languages of other ethnicities'. Russian speakers constitute an overwhelming majority of the Crimean population (77 percent), with Ukrainian speakers comprising just 10.1 percent, and Crimean Tatar speakers 11.4 percent. But in everyday life the majority of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians in Crimea use Russian.

Literature

The history of Ukrainian literature dates back to the 11th century, following the Christianization of the Kievan Rus'. The writings of the time were mainly liturgical and were written in Old Church Slavonic. Historical accounts of the time were referred to as *chronicles*, the most significant of which was the Primary Chronicle. Literary activity faced a sudden decline during the Mongol invasion of Rus'.

Ukrainian literature again began to develop in the 14th century, and was advanced significantly in the 16th century with the introduction of print and with the beginning of the Cossack era, under both Russian and Polish dominance. The Cossacks established an independent society and popularized a new kind of epic poems, which marked a high point of Ukrainian oral literature. These advances were then set back in the 17th and early 18th centuries, when publishing in the Ukrainian language was discouraged. But by the late 18th century modern literary Ukrainian finally emerged.

The 19th century initiated a vernacular period in Ukraine, led by Ivan Kotliarevsky's work *Eneyida*, the first publication written in modern Ukrainian. By the 1830s, Ukrainian romanticism began to develop, and the nation's most renowned cultural figure, romanticist poet-painter Taras Shevchenko emerged. Where Ivan Kotliarevsky is considered to be the 'father' of literature in the Ukrainian vernacular; Shevchenko is the father of a national revival. Then, in 1863, use of the Ukrainian language in print was effectively prohibited by the Russian Empire. This severely curtailed literary activity in the area, and Ukrainian writers were forced to either publish their works in Russian or release them in Austrian controlled Galicia. The ban was never officially lifted, but it became obsolete after the revolution and the Bolsheviks' coming to power.

Ukrainian literature continued to flourish in the early Soviet years, when nearly all literary trends were approved. These policies faced a steep decline in the 1930s, when Stalin implemented his policy of socialist realism. The doctrine didn't necessarily repress the Ukrainian language, but it required writers to follow a certain style in their works. Literary activities continued to be somewhat limited under the communist party, and it was not until Ukraine gained its independence in 1991 when writers were free to express themselves as they wished.

Sport

Ukraine greatly benefited from the Soviet emphasis on physical education. Such policies left Ukraine with hundreds of stadiums, swimming pools, gymnasiums, and many other athletic facilities. The most popular sport is football. The top professional league is the Vyscha Liha, also known as the Ukrainian Premier League. The two most successful teams in the Vyscha Liha are rivals FC Dynamo Kyiv and FC Shakhtar Donetsk. Although Shakhtar is the reigning champion of the Vyscha Liha, Dynamo Kyiv has been much more successful historically, winning two UEFA Cup Winners' Cups, one UEFA Super Cup, a record 13 USSR Championships and a record 12 Ukrainian Championships; while Shakhtar only won four USSR championships and four Ukrainian championships. Many Ukrainians also played for the Soviet national football team, most notably Igor Belanov and Oleg Blokhin, winners of the prestigious Golden Ball for the best football player of the year. This award was only presented to one Ukrainian after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Andriy Shevchenko, the current captain of the Ukrainian national football team. The national team made its debut in the 2006 FIFA World Cup, and reached the



Taras Shevchenko
(1814–1861)



Olympic stadium in Kiev

quarterfinals before losing to eventual champions, Italy. Ukrainians also fared well in boxing, where the brothers Vitali Klitschko and Wladimir Klitschko have dominated for almost a decade.

Ukraine made its Olympic debut at the 1994 Winter Olympics. So far, Ukraine has been much more successful in summer Olympics (69 medals in three appearances) than in the winter Olympics (five medals in four appearances). Ukraine is currently ranked 36th by number of gold medals won in the All-time Olympic Games medal count, with every country above them, except for Russia, having more appearances.

Demographics

According to the Ukrainian Census of 2001, ethnic Ukrainians make up 77.8% of the population. Other significant ethnic groups are Russians (17.3%), Belarusians (0.6%), Moldovans (0.5%), Crimean Tatars (0.5%), Bulgarians (0.4%), Hungarians (0.3%), Romanians (0.3%), Poles (0.3%), Jews (0.2%), Armenians (0.2%), Greeks (0.2%) and Tatars (0.2%).

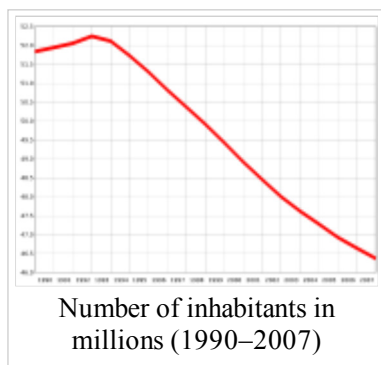
Ukraine is considered to be in a demographic crisis due to its high death rate and a low birth rate. In 2007, the country's population was declining at the fourth fastest rate in the world. The demographic trend is showing signs of improvement, as the birth rate has been growing for several consecutive years. Net population growth over the first nine months of 2007 was registered in five provinces of the country (out of 24), and population shrinkage was showing signs of stabilising nationwide. The highest birth rates were in Western provinces. Immigrants constitute an estimated 14.7 percent of the total population, or 6.9 million people; this is the fourth largest figure in the world.

The industrial regions in the east and southeast are the most heavily populated, and about 67.2 percent of the population lives in urban areas.

Ethnic composition of Ukraine

Ukrainians	77.8%
Russians	17.3%
Moldovans & Romanians	0.8%
Belarusians	0.6%
Crimean Tatars	0.5%
Bulgarians	0.4%
Hungarians	0.3%
Poles	0.3%
Jews	0.2%
Armenians	0.2%

Source: Ethnic composition of the population of Ukraine, 2001 Census



Romanians and Moldavians are another significant minority in Ukraine, concentrated mainly in the Chernivtsi, Odessa, Zakarpattia and Vinnytsia oblasts. Gagauzians are another minority, concentrated mainly in Budjak.

Jews played a very important role in Ukrainian cultural life, especially in the 19th and first half of the 20th century. Today Yiddish, the Ukrainian Jews' traditional language, is only used by a small number of older people.

Significant migration took place in the first years of Ukrainian independence. More than one million people moved into Ukraine in 1991-1992, mostly from the other former Soviet republics. In total, between 1991 and 2004, 2.2 million immigrated to Ukraine (among them, 2.0 million came from the other former Soviet Union states), and 2.5 million emigrated

from Ukraine (among them, 1.9 million moved to other former Soviet Union republics).

Rank	City	Division	Pop.	Rank	City	Division	Pop.
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1	Kiev	Kiev	2,611,327	11	Luhansk	Luhansk	463,097
2	Kharkiv	Kharkiv	1,470,902	12	Makiivka	Donetsk	389,589
3	Dnipropetrovsk	Dnipropetrovsk	1,065,008	13	Simferopol	Crimea	358,108
4	Odessa	Odessa	1,029,049	14	Vinnytsia	Vinnytsia	356,665
5	Donetsk	Donetsk	1,016,194	15	Sevastopol	Sevastopol	342,451
6	Zaporizhia	Zaporizhia	815,256	16	Kherson	Kherson	328,360
7	Lviv	Lviv	732,818	17	Poltava	Poltava	317,998
8	Kryvyi Rih	Dnipropetrovsk	668,980	18	Chernihiv	Chernihiv	304,994
9	Mykolaiv	Mykolaiv	514,136	19	Cherkasy	Cherkasy	295,414
10	Mariupol	Donetsk	492,176	20	Sumy	Sumy	293,141

2001 Census

Religion

The dominant religion in Ukraine is Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which is currently split between three Church bodies: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church autonomous church body under the Patriarch of Moscow, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Kiev Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.

A distant second by the number of the followers is the Eastern Rite Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which practices a similar liturgical and spiritual tradition as Eastern Orthodoxy, but is in communion with the See of Rome (Roman Catholic Church) and recognizes the primacy of the Pope as head of the Church.

Additionally, there are 863 Roman Catholic (Latin or Western Rite) communities, and 474 clergy members serving some one million Roman Catholics in Ukraine. The group forms some 2.19 percent of the population and consists mainly of ethnic Poles, who live predominantly in the western regions of the country.



The Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev, a UNESCO World Heritage Site



The Crimean Khan's palace in Bakhchisaray is the centre of Islam in Ukraine and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Protestant Christians also form around 2.19 percent of the population. Protestant numbers have grown greatly since Ukrainian independence. The Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine is the largest group, with more than 150,000 members and about 3000 clergy. The second largest Protestant church is the Ukrainian Church of Evangelical faith (Pentecostals) with 110000 members and over 1500 local churches and over 2000 clergy, but there also exist other Pentecostal groups and unions and together all Pentecostals are over 300,000, with over 3000 local churches. Also there are many Pentecostal high education schools such as the Lviv Theological Seminary and the Kiev Bible Institute. Other groups include Calvinists, Lutherans, Methodists and Seventh-day Adventists. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is also present.

There are an estimated 500,000 Muslims in Ukraine, and about 300,000 of them are Crimean Tatars. There are 487 registered Muslim communities, 368 of them on the Crimean peninsula. In addition, some 50,000 Muslims live in Kiev; mostly foreign-born.

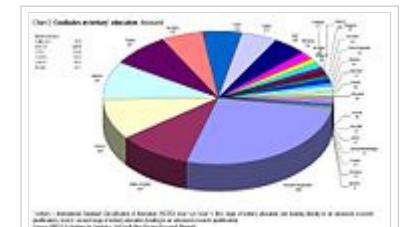
The Jewish community is a tiny fraction of what it was before World War II. Jews form 0.63 percent of the population. A 2001 census indicated 103,600 Jews, although community leaders claimed that the population could be as large as 300,000. There are no statistics on what share of the Ukrainian Jews are observant but the Orthodox Judaism has a stronger presence in Ukraine, than a smaller Reform denomination. Additionally, there is a presence of the middle-ground sect, Conservative Judaism (aka Masorti Judaism) as well. As of January 1, 2006 there were 35 Krishna Consciousness and 53 Buddhist registered communities in the country.

Education

According to the Ukrainian constitution, access to free education is granted to all citizens. Complete general secondary education is compulsory in the state schools which constitute the overwhelming majority. Free higher education in state and communal educational establishments is provided on a competitive basis. There is also a small number of accredited private secondary and higher education institutions.

Due to the Soviet Union's emphasis and total access of education for all citizens, which continues today, the literacy rate is an estimated 99.4 percent. Since 2005, an eleven-year school program has been replaced with a twelve-year one: primary education takes four years to complete (starting at age six), middle education (secondary) takes five years to complete. There are then three years of upper secondary school. In the 12th grade, students take the Government Tests or school-leaving exams. The Government tests act as both school-leaving exams and university admission tests.

The Ukrainian higher education system comprises higher educational establishments, scientific and methodological facilities under federal, municipal and self-governing bodies in charge of education. The organization of higher education in Ukraine is built up in accordance with the structure of education of the world's higher developed countries, as is defined by UNESCO and the UN.



Ukraine produces the fourth largest number of tertiary graduates in Europe, while being ranked seventh in population.

Infrastructure

Although the Ukrainian road system covers all major populated centers, it is considered to be by European standards, of low quality. In total, Ukrainian paved roads stretch for 164,732 kilometres (102,401 mi). Rail transport in Ukraine plays the role of connecting all major urban areas, port facilities and industrial centers with neighboring countries. The heaviest concentration of railroad track is located in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Although the amount of freight transported by rail fell by 7.4 percent in 1995 in comparison with 1994, Ukraine is still one of the world's highest rail users. The total amount of railroad track in Ukraine extends for 22,473 kilometres (13 970 mi), of which 9,250 kilometres (5750 mi) is electrified.



Ukraine's road Network

Ukraine is one of Europe's largest energy consumers, it consumes almost double the energy of Germany, per unit of GDP. A great share of energy supply in Ukraine comes from nuclear power, with the country receiving most of its nuclear fuel from Russia. The remaining oil and gas, is also imported from the former Soviet Union. Ukraine is heavily dependent on its nuclear energy. The largest nuclear power plant in Europe, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, is located in Ukraine. In 2006, the government planned to build 11 new reactors by the year 2030, in effect, almost doubling the current amount of nuclear power capacity. Ukraine's power sector is the twelfth-largest in the world in terms of installed capacity, with 54 gigawatts (GW). Renewable energy still plays a very modest role in electrical output, and in 2005 energy production was met by the following sources: nuclear (47 percent), thermal (45 percent), hydro and other (8 percent).

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United Kingdom




2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries; Geography of Great Britain

The **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**, commonly known as the **United Kingdom**, the **UK**, or **Britain**, is a sovereign island country located off the northwestern coast of continental Europe. The UK includes the island of Great Britain, the northeast part of the island of Ireland and many small islands. Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK with a land border, sharing it with the Republic of Ireland. Apart from this land border, the UK is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea, the English Channel and the Irish Sea. The largest island, Great Britain, is linked to France by the Channel Tunnel.

The United Kingdom is a union of four constituent countries: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The United Kingdom is governed by a parliamentary system with its seat of government in London, the capital, and is a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as the head of state. The Crown Dependencies of the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, formally possessions of the Crown, are not part of the UK but form a federacy with it. The UK has fourteen overseas territories, all remnants of the British Empire, which at its height encompassed almost a quarter of the world's land surface, making it the largest empire in history. As a result of the empire, British influence can be observed in the language, culture and legal systems of many of its former colonies such as Canada, Australia, India, and the United States. Queen Elizabeth II remains the head of the Commonwealth of Nations and head of state of each of the Commonwealth realms.

The UK is a developed country, with the fifth (nominal GDP) or sixth (PPP) largest economy in the world. It was the world's foremost power during the 19th and early 20th century, but the economic cost of two world wars and the decline of its empire in the latter half of the 20th century diminished its leading role in global affairs. The UK nevertheless retains strong economic, cultural, military and political influence and is a nuclear power, with the second or third (depending on method of calculation) highest defence spending in the world. It is a member state of the European Union, holds a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, and is a member of the G8, NATO, WTO and the Commonwealth of Nations.

History

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	
	
Flag	Royal coat of arms
Motto: <i>"Dieu et mon droit"</i> (French) "God and my right"	
Anthem: " God Save the Queen"	
 <p>Location of the United Kingdom (dark green)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – on the European continent (light green & dark grey) – in the European Union (light green) 	
Capital (and largest city)	London
Official languages	English



The Battle of Waterloo marked the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

On May 1st, 1707, the political union of the Kingdom of England (which included the once independent Principality of Wales) and the Kingdom of Scotland created the United Kingdom of Great Britain usually referred to thereafter as the Kingdom of Great Britain. This event was the result of the Treaty of Union that was agreed on 22 July 1706, and then ratified by the Parliaments of England and Scotland each passing an Act of Union in 1707. Almost a century later, the Kingdom of Ireland, which had been brought under English control between 1541 and 1691, joined the united Kingdom of Great Britain

with the passing of the Act of Union 1800. Prior to 1707, England and Scotland had existed as separate sovereign and independent states with their own monarchs and political structures from the 9th century, though a personal union was created between the kingdoms after the Scottish King, James VI, became King of England as well in 1603.



The British Empire in 1897. By 1920 it had become the largest empire in history

In its first century, the United Kingdom played an important role in developing Western ideas of the Parliamentary System as well as making significant contributions to literature, the arts and science. The UK-led Industrial Revolution transformed the country and fuelled the British Empire. During this time, like other Great Powers, the UK was involved in colonial exploitation, including the slave trade, though the passing of the 1807 Slave Trade Act made the UK the first country to prohibit trade in slaves.

After the defeat of Napoleon in the Napoleonic Wars, the UK became the principal naval power of the 19th century. The United Kingdom remained an eminent power into the mid-20th century, and its empire expanded to its maximum size by 1921, gaining the League of Nations

mandate over former German and Ottoman colonies after World War I.

Long simmering tensions in Ireland led to the partition of the island in 1920, followed by independence for the Irish Free State in 1922. Six of the nine counties of the province of Ulster remained within the UK, which then changed to the current name in 1927 of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Recognised regional languages	Welsh, Irish, Ulster Scots, Scots, Scottish Gaelic, Cornish
Ethnic groups (2001)	92.1% White, 4.00% South Asian, 2.00% Black, 1.20% Mixed Race, 0.80% East Asian and Other
Demonym	British, Briton
Government	Parliamentary system and Constitutional monarchy
- Monarch	Queen Elizabeth II
- Prime Minister	Gordon Brown MP
Legislature	Parliament
- Upper House	House of Lords
- Lower House	House of Commons
Formation	
- Acts of Union	1 May 1707
- Act of Union	1 January 1801
- Anglo-Irish Treaty	12 April 1922
EU accession	1 January 1973
Area	
- Total	244,820 km ² (79th) 94,526 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.34
Population	
- mid-2006 estimate	60,587,300 (22nd)
- 2001 census	58,789,194
- Density	246/km ² (48th) 637/sq mi

After World War I, the world's first large-scale international broadcasting network, the BBC, was created. Britain was one of the major Allied powers in World War II, and wartime leader Winston Churchill and his peacetime successor Clement Atlee helped plan the post-war world as part of the "Big Three". World War II left the United Kingdom financially damaged. Loans taken out during and after World War II from both Canada and the United States were economically costly but, along with post-war Marshall aid, the UK began the road to recovery.

The immediate post-war years saw the establishment of the British Welfare State, including one of the world's first and most comprehensive public health services, while the demands of a recovering economy brought people from all over the Commonwealth to create a multiethnic Britain. Although the new post-war limits of Britain's political role were confirmed by the Suez Crisis of 1956, the international spread of the language meant the continuing impact of its literature and culture, while at the same time from the 1960s its popular culture found influence abroad. Following a period of global economic slowdown and industrial strife in the 1970s, the 1980s saw the inflow of substantial oil revenues and economic growth. The premiership of Margaret Thatcher marked a significant change of direction from the post-war political and economic consensus; a path that was not reversed by the New Labour government of Tony Blair in 1997.

The United Kingdom was one of the 12 founding members of the European Union at its launch in 1992 with the signing of the Treaty on European Union. Prior to that, it had been a member of the EU's forerunner, the European Economic Community (EEC), from 1973. The attitude of the present Labour government towards further integration with this organisation is mixed, with the Official Opposition, the Conservative Party, favouring a return of some powers and competencies to the state.

The end of the 20th century saw a major change to the government of the United Kingdom with the creation of a devolved Scottish parliament and Welsh Assembly following popular approval in pre-legislative referenda. This produced the prospect of a legislative path to independence for Scotland when the Scottish National Party won the 2007 election and formed a minority government in Scotland, with a mandate to hold a referendum on independence by 2011.

Government and politics

GDP (PPP)	2006 estimate
- Total	US\$2.270 trillion (6th)
- Per capita	US\$37,328 (13th)
GDP (nominal)	2007 estimate
- Total	\$2.772 trillion (5th)
- Per capita	US\$45,845 (9th)
Gini (2005)	34
HDI (2005)	▲ 0.946 (high) (16th)
Currency	Pound sterling (£) (GBP)
Time zone	GMT (UTC+0)
- Summer (DST)	BST (UTC+1)
Internet TLD	.uk
Calling code	+44
Footnotes	



The Battle of Britain. The United Kingdom was the only Allied European country to remain free from occupation during World War II.



HM Queen Elizabeth II

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II, as head of state; the monarch of the UK also serves as head of state of fifteen other Commonwealth countries, putting the UK in a personal union with those other states. The Crown has sovereignty over the Isle of Man and the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey. Collectively, these three territories are known as the Crown dependencies, lands owned by the British monarch but not part of the United Kingdom. They are not part of the European Union. However, the Parliament of the United Kingdom has the authority to legislate for the dependencies, and the British government manages their foreign affairs and defence.

The UK has fourteen overseas territories around the world, the last remaining territories of the British Empire. The overseas territories are not considered part of the UK, but in most cases, the local populations have British citizenship and the right of abode in the UK. This has been the case since 2002.

The UK has a parliamentary government based on strong traditions: the Westminster system has been emulated around the world — a legacy of the British Empire.

The UK's constitution governs the legal framework of the country and consists mostly of written sources, including statutes, judge made case law, and international treaties. As there is no technical difference between ordinary statutes and law considered to be "constitutional law," the British Parliament can perform "constitutional reform" simply by passing Acts of Parliament and thus has the power to change or abolish almost any written or unwritten element of the constitution. However, no Parliament can pass laws that future Parliaments cannot change. The United Kingdom is one of the three countries in the world today that does not have a codified constitution (the other two being New Zealand and Israel).

The position of Prime Minister, the UK's head of government, belongs to the Member of Parliament who can obtain the confidence of a majority in the House of Commons, usually the current leader of the largest political party in that chamber. The Prime Minister and Cabinet are formally appointed by the Monarch to form Her Majesty's Government. However, the Prime Minister chooses the Cabinet, and by convention, HM The Queen respects the Prime Minister's choices. The Cabinet is traditionally drawn from members of the Prime Minister's party in both legislative houses, and mostly from the House of Commons, to which they are responsible. Executive power is exercised by the Prime Minister and Cabinet, all of whom are sworn into Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, and become Ministers of the Crown. *The Rt Hon* Gordon Brown MP, leader of the Labour Party, has been Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service since 27 June 2007.

The Parliament of the United Kingdom that meets in the Palace of Westminster, is the ultimate legislative authority in the United Kingdom. A devolved parliament in Scotland and devolved assemblies in Northern Ireland, and Wales were established following public approval as expressed in referenda, but these are not sovereign bodies and could be abolished by the UK parliament. The UK parliament is made up of two houses: an elected House of Commons and an appointed House of Lords, and any Bill passed requires the assent of HM The Queen to become law. For elections to the House of Commons, the UK is currently divided into 646 constituencies, with 529 in England, 18 in Northern Ireland, 59 in Scotland and 40 in Wales, though this number will rise to 650 at the next General Election. Each constituency elects one Member of Parliament by simple plurality. General Elections are called by the Monarch when the Prime Minister so advises. Though there is no minimum term for a Parliament, a new election must be called within five years of the previous general election.



The Houses of Parliament

For elections to the European Parliament, the UK has 78 MEPs, elected in 12 multi-member constituencies. Questions over sovereignty have been brought forward due to the UK's membership of the European Union.

The UK's three major political parties are the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, and the Liberal Democrats, winning between them 616 out of the 646 seats available in the House of Commons at the 2005 General Election. Most of the remaining seats were won by parties that only contest elections in one part of the UK such as the Scottish National Party (Scotland only), Plaid Cymru (Wales only), and the Democratic Unionist Party, Social Democratic and Labour Party, Ulster Unionist Party, and Sinn Féin (Northern Ireland only, though Sinn Féin also contests elections in Ireland). In accordance with party policy, no elected Sinn Féin Member of Parliament has ever attended the House of Commons to speak in the House on behalf of their constituents as Members of Parliament are required to take an oath of allegiance to the Monarch. However, the current five Sinn Féin MPs have since 2002 made use of the offices and other facilities available at Westminster.

Devolved national administrations

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales each has a devolved, unicameral legislature and its own government or Executive, led by a First Minister. England, despite being the largest country of the United Kingdom, has no devolved executive or legislature and is ruled and legislated for directly by the UK government and parliament. This situation has given rise to the so-called West Lothian question which concerns the fact that MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales help decide the laws that apply to England alone.

The Scottish Parliament has wide ranging legislative powers over any matter that has not been specifically 'reserved' to the UK parliament, including education, healthcare, Scots law and local government. Following their victory at the 2007 elections, the pro-independence SNP formed a minority government with its leader, Alex Salmond, becoming First Minister of Scotland. The pro-union parties responded to the electoral success of the SNP by creating a Commission to examine the case for devolving additional powers while excluding Scottish independence as an option, though the leader of the Scottish Labour Party, Wendy Alexander, has now indicated that Labour will support calls for independence to be placed before the people in a referendum in the hope that a vote to reject independence would settle the constitutional debate for a generation. Most opinion polls do show minority support for



Scottish Parliament is the national legislature of Scotland

independence though support varies depending on the nature of the question. However, a poll in April 2008 that used the proposed referendum wording found support for independence had reached 41% with just 40% supporting retention of the Union.

The National Assembly for Wales has more limited devolved powers than those devolved to Scotland though following the passing of the Government of Wales Act 2006, the Assembly can now legislate in some areas through Legislative Competency Orders which can be granted on a case by case basis. The current Welsh Assembly Government was formed several weeks after the 2007 elections, following a brief period of minority administration, when Plaid Cymru joined Labour in a coalition government under the continuing leadership of First Minister Rhodri Morgan.

The Northern Ireland Assembly has powers closer to those already devolved to Scotland. The Northern Ireland Executive is currently lead by First Minister Peter Robinson (Democratic Unionist Party) and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness (Sinn Féin).

Local government

Each country of the United Kingdom has its own system of local government, with power over local government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland being devolved. (City status, being governed by Royal Charter, is conferred separately from local government arrangements.)

England's upper-tier subdivisions are the nine Regions also known as European Union government office regions. A London referendum in 1998 on the question of having a directly elected assembly and directly elected mayor produced a large majority in favour and it was intended that other regions would also be given their own elected regional assemblies. However, a rejection by a referendum in 2004 of a proposed assembly in the North East region stopped this idea in its tracks. Below the region level, London consists of 32 London boroughs and the rest of England has either county councils and district councils or unitary authorities.

Northern Ireland is presently divided into 26 districts for local government purposes though these councils do not carry out the same range of functions as would be the case in the rest of the United Kingdom. However, on 13 March 2008, the Executive agreed on proposals to create 11 new councils to replace the present system.

Scotland is divided into 32 council areas with wide variation in both size and population. The cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee are separate council areas as also is Highland Council which includes a third of Scotland's area but just over 200,000 people. The power invested in local authorities is administered by elected councillors, of which there are currently 1,222 who are each paid a part-time salary. Elections are conducted by Single Transferable Vote in multi-member wards that elect either three or four councillors. Each council elects a Provost or Convenor to chair meetings of the council and to act as a figurehead for the area.

Local government in Wales consists of 22 unitary authorities, including the cities of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport which are separate unitary authorities in their own right.



Manchester Town Hall houses the Manchester City Council.

Foreign relations and armed forces



HMS *Illustrious*. Two Invincible class aircraft carriers and a helicopter carrier are currently in service with a third Invincible carrier in reserve.



A Trident II SLBM being launched from one of the Royal Navy's 4 Vanguard class submarines as a test launch.

The United Kingdom is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a member of the G8 and NATO, and a member state of the European Union. The UK has a "Special Relationship" with the United States. Apart from the US and Europe, Britain's close allies include Commonwealth nations, Ireland and other English speaking countries. Britain's global presence and influence is further amplified through its trading relations and its armed forces, which maintain approximately eighty military installations and other deployments around the globe.

The Army, Navy and Air Force are collectively known as the British Armed Forces (or Her Majesty's Armed Forces) and officially the Armed Forces of the Crown. The commander-in-chief is the monarch, HM Queen Elizabeth II and they are managed by the Ministry of Defence. The armed forces are controlled by the Defence Council, chaired by the Chief of the Defence Staff.

The United Kingdom fields one of the most technologically advanced and best trained armed forces in the world. According to various sources, including the Ministry of Defence, the UK has the second highest military expenditure in the world, despite only having the 27th largest military in terms of manpower. Total defence spending currently accounts for 2.2% of total national GDP, compared to 4.4% at the end of the Cold War. It is the second largest spender on military science, engineering and technology. The Royal Navy is considered to be the only other blue-water navy along with those of France and the United States. The British Armed Forces are equipped with advanced weapons systems, including the Challenger 2 tank and the Eurofighter Typhoon jet fighter. The Ministry of Defence signed contracts worth £3.2bn to build two new super carrier sized aircraft carriers on 3 July 2008.

The United Kingdom is one of the five recognised countries possessing nuclear weapons, utilising the Vanguard class submarine-based Trident II ballistic missile system.

The British Armed Forces are charged with protecting the United Kingdom and its overseas territories, promoting the United Kingdom's global security interests, and supporting international peacekeeping efforts. They are active and regular participants in NATO, including the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, as well as the Five Power Defence Arrangements and other worldwide coalition operations. Overseas garrisons and facilities are maintained at Ascension Island, Belize, Brunei, Canada, Diego Garcia, the Falkland Islands, Germany, Gibraltar, Kenya, and Cyprus.

The British Army had a reported strength of 102,440 in 2005, the Royal Air Force a strength of 49,210 and the 36,320-strong Royal Navy, which includes the Royal Marines, who provide commando units specialising in amphibious warfare.

The United Kingdom Special Forces, provide troops trained for quick, mobile, military responses in counter-terrorism, land, maritime and amphibious operations, often where secrecy or covert tactics are required.

There are reserve forces supporting the regular military. These include the Territorial Army, the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. This puts total active and reserve duty military personnel at approximately 429,500, deployed in over eighty countries.

Despite the United Kingdom's military capabilities, recent pragmatic defence policy has a stated assumption that "the most demanding operations" would be



The Royal Air Force's Eurofighter Typhoon is an advanced fighter aircraft and second most expensive fighter aircraft after the F-22.

undertaken as part of a coalition. Setting aside the intervention in Sierra Leone, operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq may all be taken as precedent. Indeed the last war in which the British military fought alone was the Falklands War of 1982, in which they were victorious.

Law and criminal justice

The United Kingdom does not have a single legal system due to it being created by the political union of previously independent countries with Article 19 of the Treaty of Union guaranteeing the continued existence of Scotland's separate legal system. Today the UK has three distinct systems of law: English law, Northern Ireland law and Scots law. Recent constitutional changes will see a new Supreme Court of the United Kingdom come into being in October 2009 that will take on the appeal functions of the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, comprising the same members as the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords, is the highest court of appeal for several independent Commonwealth countries, the UK overseas territories, and the British crown dependencies.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Both English law, which applies in England and Wales, and Northern Ireland law are based on common-law principles. The essence of common-law is that law is made by judges sitting in courts, applying their common sense and knowledge of legal precedent (*stare decisis*) to the facts before them. The Courts of England and Wales are headed by the Supreme Court of Judicature of England and Wales, consisting of the Court of Appeal, the High Court of Justice (for civil cases) and the Crown Court (for criminal cases). The Appellate Committee of the House of Lords (usually just referred to, as "The House of Lords") is presently the highest court in the land for both criminal and civil cases in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland and any decision it makes is binding on every other court in the hierarchy.

Crime in England and Wales increased in the period between 1981 and 1995 though, since that peak, there has been an overall fall of 42% in crime from 1995 to 2006/7. Despite the fall in crime rates, the prison population of England and Wales has almost doubled over the same period, to over 80,000, giving England and Wales the highest rate of incarceration in Western Europe at 147 per 100,000. Her Majesty's Prison Service, which reports to the Ministry of Justice, manages most of the prisons within England and Wales.

Scotland

Scots law, a hybrid system based on both common-law and civil-law principles, applies in Scotland. The chief courts are the Court of Session, for civil cases, and the High Court of Justiciary, for criminal cases. The Appellate Committee of the House of Lords (usually just referred to as "The House of Lords") presently serves as the highest court of appeal for civil cases under Scots law but only if the Court of Session grants leave to appeal or the initial judgement was by a majority decision. Sheriff courts deal with most civil and criminal cases including conducting criminal trials with a jury, known as Sheriff solemn Court, or with a Sheriff and no jury, known as (Sheriff summary Court). The Sheriff courts provide a local court service with 49 Sheriff courts organised across six Sheriffdoms.

The Scots legal system is unique in having three possible verdicts for a criminal trial: " guilty", " not guilty" and " *not proven*". Both "not guilty" and "not proven" result in an acquittal with no possibility of retrial. The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) manages the prisons in Scotland which contain between them over 7,500 prisoners. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice is responsible for the Scottish Prison Service within the Scottish Government.

Geography

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland comprises the island of Great Britain (most of England, Scotland and Wales) and the northeastern one-sixth of the island of Ireland (Northern Ireland), together with smaller islands. The mainland lies between latitudes 49° and 59° N (the Shetland Islands reach to nearly 61° N), and longitudes 8° W to 2° E. The Royal Greenwich Observatory, near London, is the defining point of the Prime Meridian. The UK lies between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, and comes within 35 kilometres (22 mi) of the northwest coast of France, from which it is separated by the English Channel. Northern Ireland shares a 360-kilometre (224 mi) land boundary with Ireland. The Channel Tunnel ("Chunnel") now links the UK with France beneath the English Channel. The greatest distance between two points on the UK mainland of Great Britain is 1,350 kilometres (840 mi) between Land's End in Cornwall (near Penzance) and John O'Groats in Caithness (near Thurso), a two day journey by car. When measured directly north-south it is a little over 1,100 kilometres (700 mi) in length and is a fraction under 500 kilometres (300 mi) at its widest. The total area of the United Kingdom is approximately 245,000 square kilometres (94,600 sq mi).

The United Kingdom has a temperate climate, with plentiful rainfall all year round. The temperature varies with the seasons but seldom drops below −10 °C (14.0 °F) or rises above 35 °C (95 °F). The prevailing wind is from the southwest, bearing frequent spells of mild and wet weather from the Atlantic Ocean. Eastern parts are most sheltered from this wind and are therefore the driest. Atlantic currents, warmed by the Gulf Stream, bring mild winters, especially in the west, where winters are wet, especially over high ground. Summers are warmest in the south east of England, being closest to the European mainland, and coolest in the north. Snowfall can occur in winter and early spring, though it rarely settles to great depth away from high ground.

England accounts for just over half of the total area of the UK, covering 130,410 square kilometres (50,350 sq mi). Most of the country consists of lowland terrain, and mountainous terrain north-west of the Tees-Exe line. Mountain chains are found in the north-west (Cumbrian Mountains of the Lake District), north (the upland moors of the Pennines and limestone hills of the Peak District) and south-west (Exmoor and Dartmoor). Lower ranges include the limestone hills of the Isle of Purbeck, Cotswolds and Lincolnshire Wolds, and the chalk downs of the Southern England Chalk Formation. The main rivers and estuaries are the Thames, Severn and the Humber Estuary. England's highest mountain is Scafell Pike, which is in the Lake District 978 metres (3,209 ft). England has a number of large towns and cities and, in terms of Larger Urban Zones, has six of the top 50 Zones in the European Union.



Scotland accounts for about a third of the total area of the UK, covering 78,789 square kilometres (30,420 sq mi). The topography of Scotland is distinguished by the Highland Boundary Fault – a geological rock fracture – which traverses the Scottish mainland from Helensburgh to Stonehaven. The faultline separates two distinctively different regions; namely the Highlands to the north and west and the lowlands to the south and east. The more rugged Highland region contains the majority of Scotland's mountainous terrain, including the highest peak, Ben Nevis, at 1,344 metres (4,409 ft). Lowland areas, in the southern part of Scotland, are flatter and home to most of the population, especially the narrow waist of land between the Firth of Clyde and the Firth of Forth known as the Central Belt. Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland, although Edinburgh is the capital and political centre of the country. Scotland also has nearly eight hundred islands, mainly west and north of the mainland, notably the Hebrides, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands.



Ben Nevis, in the Grampian Mountains, is the highest point in the British Isles

Wales accounts for less than a tenth of the total area of the UK, covering just 20,758 square kilometres (8,010 sq mi). Wales is mostly mountainous though South Wales is less mountainous than North and Mid Wales. The main population and industrial areas are in South Wales, consisting of the cities of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport and surrounding South Wales Valleys. The highest mountains in Wales are in Snowdonia, and include Snowdon (*Yr Wyddfa* in Welsh), which, at 1,085 m (3,560 ft) is the highest peak in Wales. The 14 (or possibly 15) Welsh mountains over 3,000 feet (914 m) high are known collectively as the Welsh 3000s. Wales borders England to the east and the sea in the other three directions: the Bristol Channel to the south, St George's Channel to the west, and the Irish Sea to the north. Wales has over 1,200 km (750 miles) of coastline. There are several islands off the Welsh mainland, the largest being Anglesey (*Ynys Môn*) in the northwest.

Northern Ireland accounts for just 14,160 square kilometres (5,470 sq mi) and is mostly hilly. It includes Lough Neagh, at 388 square kilometres (150 sq mi), the largest body of water in the UK and Ireland. The highest peak is Slieve Donard at 849 metres (2,785 ft) in the province's Mourne Mountains.

Cities and conurbations

The capitals of the individual countries of the UK are: Belfast (Northern Ireland), Cardiff (Wales), Edinburgh (Scotland) and London (England), which is also the capital of the UK as a whole.

Rank	City	Location	Pop.	Rank	City	Location	Pop.
1	London	London	7,172,091	11	Coventry	West Midlands	303,475
2	Birmingham	West Midlands	970,892	12	Kingston upon Hull	Yorkshire and the Humber	301,416
3	Glasgow	Scotland	629,501	13	Bradford	Yorkshire and the Humber	293,717
4	Liverpool	North West England	469,017	14	Cardiff	Wales	292,150
5	Leeds	Yorkshire and the Humber	443,247	15	Belfast	Northern Ireland	276,459
6	Sheffield	Yorkshire and the Humber	439,866	16	Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	259,252
7	Edinburgh	Scotland	430,082	17	Wolverhampton	West Midlands	251,462
8	Bristol	South West England	420,556	18	Nottingham	East Midlands	249,584

9	Manchester	North West England	394,269	19	Plymouth	South West England	243,795
10	Leicester	East Midlands	330,574	20	Southampton	South East England	234,224
2001 Census							

The largest conurbations are as follows:

- Greater London Urban Area - 8.28 million
- West Midlands conurbation - 2.28 million
- Greater Manchester Urban Area - 2.24 million
- West Yorkshire Urban Area - 1.50 million
- Greater Glasgow - 1.17 million

Demography

Population, migration and ethnicity

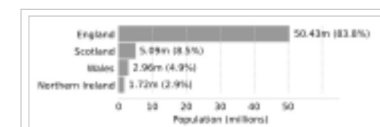
At the April 2001 UK Census, the total population of the United Kingdom was 58,789,194, the third largest in the European Union (behind Germany and France), the fifth largest in the Commonwealth and the twenty-first largest in the world. By mid-2006, this had been estimated to have increased to 60,587,300. Much of this increase was due to net immigration but was also due to a rising birth rate and increasing life expectancy.

England's population by mid-2006 was estimated to be 50,762,900 making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world with 383 people resident per square kilometre. About a quarter of the UK population lives in England's prosperous south-east and is predominantly urban and suburban, with an estimated 7,517,700 in the capital of London.

The mid-2006 estimates put Scotland's population at 5,116,900, Wales at 2,965,900 and Northern Ireland at 1,741,600 with much lower population densities than England. Compared to England's 383 people resident per square kilometre, the corresponding figures were 142 for Wales, 125 for Northern Ireland and just 65 for Scotland.

In 2006, the average total fertility rate (TFR) across the UK was 1.84 children per woman, below the replacement rate of 2.1 but higher than the 2001 record low of 1.63. Within the UK, England and Wales, at 1.86, were both close to the UK average, but Scotland was lower at only 1.67. The UK's TFR was considerably higher during the 1960s 'baby boom', peaking at 2.95 children per woman in 1964.

The present day population of the UK is descended from varied ethnic stocks though mainly: pre-Celtic, Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and the Normans. Since 1945, international ties forged by the British Empire have contributed to substantial immigration, especially from Africa, Caribbean and South Asia. Since EU citizens are free to live and work in other EU member states, the accession of new to the EU of new member states from Central and Eastern Europe in 2004



The populations and percentage of total population in the four nations of the United Kingdom.

has resulted in rising immigration from these countries. As of 2008, the trend is reversing and many Poles are returning to Poland. As of 2001, 92.1% of the population identified themselves as White, leaving 7.9% of the UK population identifying themselves as mixed race or ethnic minority.

Ethnic group	Population	% of total*
White	54,153,898	92.1%
Mixed race	677,117	1.2%
Indian	1,053,411	1.8%
Pakistani	747,285	1.3%
Bangladeshi	283,063	0.5%
Other Asian (non-Chinese)	247,644	0.4%
Black Caribbean	565,876	1.0%
Black African	485,277	0.8%
Black (others)	97,585	0.2%
Chinese	247,403	0.4%
Other	230,615	0.4%
* Percentage of total UK population		

Ethnic diversity varies significantly across the UK. 30.4% of London's population and 37.4% of Leicester's was estimated to be non-white as of June 2005, whereas less than 5% of the populations of North East England, Wales and the South West were from ethnic minorities according to the 2001 census. As of 2007, 22% of primary school children and 17.7% of children at secondary school in England were from ethnic minority families. Britain's immigrant population will almost double in the next two decades to 9.1 million, a report said on January 31, 2008.

In contrast with some other European countries, high foreign-born immigration is contributing to a rising population, accounting for about half of the population increase between 1991 and 2001. The latest official figures (2006) show net immigration to the UK of 191,000 (591,000 immigrants and 400,000 emigrants) up from 185,000 in 2005 (overall, there was a loss of 126,000 Britons and a gain of 316,000 foreign citizens). One in six were from Eastern European countries, with larger numbers coming from New Commonwealth countries. Immigration from the Indian subcontinent, mainly fuelled by family reunion, accounted for two-thirds of net immigration. By contrast, at least 5.5 million British-born people are living abroad. The most popular emigrant destinations were Australia, Spain, France, New Zealand and the U.S.

A study by a city forecaster, however, contends that the above immigration figures are unreliable and that net immigration for 2005 was circa 400,000. Nonetheless, the proportion of foreign-born people in the UK population remains slightly below that of some other European countries.

In 2004, the number of people who became British citizens rose to a record 140,795 - a rise of 12% on the previous year. This number had risen dramatically since 2000. The overwhelming majority of new citizens come from Africa (32%) and Asia (40%), the largest three groups being people from Pakistan, India and Somalia. In 2006, there were 149,035 applications for British citizenship, 32% fewer than in 2005. The number of people granted citizenship during 2006 was 154,095, 5% fewer than in 2005. The largest groups of people granted British citizenship were from India, Pakistan, Somalia and the Philippines. 21.9% of babies born in England and Wales in 2006 were born to mothers who were born outside the UK, (146,956 out of 669,601), according to official statistics released in 2007 that also show the highest birth rates for 26 years. As in the rest of the European Union, however, the birth rate remains below the replacement rate.

When the EU enlarged further east in 2004 and again in 2007, this gave the right for nationals from countries like Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, and more recently Romania and Bulgaria to live in the UK. Figures published in August 2007 indicated that 682,940 people applied to the Worker Registration Scheme (for nationals of the central and eastern European states that joined the EU in May 2004) between 1 May 2004 and 30 June 2007, of whom 656,395 were accepted. Self-employed workers and people who are not working (including students) are not required to register under the scheme so this figure represents a lower limit on immigration inflow. These figures do not indicate the number of immigrants who have since returned home, but 56% of applicants in the 12 months ending 30 June 2007 reported planning to stay for a maximum of three months, with net migration in 2005 from the new EU states standing at 64,000. Research suggests that a total of around 1 million people had moved from the new EU member states to the UK by April 2008, but that half this number have since returned home or moved on to a third country. One in every four Poles in the UK is planning to remain for life, a survey has revealed.

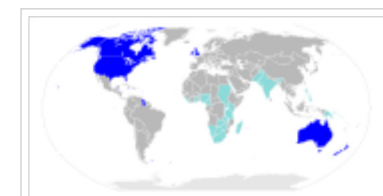
National Insurance Number data suggests that 2.5 million foreign workers moved to the UK to work (including those moving for short periods), the majority from EU countries, between 2002 and 2007.

The UK government is currently introducing a new points-based immigration system to replace the existing schemes for immigration from outside of the European Economic Area.

Languages

Though the UK does not *de jure* have an official language, the predominant spoken language is English, a West Germanic language descended from Old English featuring a large number of borrowings from Old Norse, Norman French and Latin. The English language has spread across the world (largely due to the British Empire) and has thus become the business language of the world. Worldwide, it is taught as a second language more than any other.

The other indigenous languages of the UK are Scots (which is closely related to English) and four Celtic languages. The latter fall into two groups: two P-Celtic languages (Welsh and Cornish); and two Q-Celtic languages (Irish and Scottish Gaelic). Celtic dialectal influences from Cumbric persisted in Northern England for centuries, most famously in a unique set of numbers used for counting sheep (see Yan Tan Tethera). According to the 2001 census, just above 20% of the population of Wales claim to be able to speak Welsh which represents a slight increase on 1991. In addition, it is estimated that about 200,000 Welsh speakers live in England. Welsh and Scottish Gaelic are also spoken by small groups around the globe with some Gaelic still spoken in Nova Scotia, Canada, and



Countries where English has *de facto* or *de jure* official language status.

Welsh in Patagonia, Argentina.

Immigrant languages constitute for up to 10% of the UK's population, French is spoken by 2.3% of the country's population, 1.0% of Britons speak Polish reflecting the recent mass migration to the UK. 0.9% of the UK's population speak German and 0.8% Spanish. The majority of other foreign languages spoken in the UK originate from Europe, Asia and Africa. A large percentage of the immigrants to the UK come from Anglophone countries (such as Nigeria, Jamaica, Hong Kong and the Philippines), which is why there is not a great deal of diversity between some of the country's ethnic minority communities.

Religion

While the United Kingdom has a long tradition of Christianity and a link between church and state still remains in England, in practice the UK is a predominantly secular society with only 38% proclaiming a belief in a God. People identify themselves with religion in the UK for both cultural and religious reasons and this is reflected by the disparity between the figures for those proclaiming a belief in a God and those identifying themselves with a particular religion. Christianity has the largest number of adherents followed by Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism.

Christianity

Christianity is the major religion with many Christian churches, denominations, and groups. The Tearfund Survey in 2007 revealed 53% identified themselves as Christian. The report compared this to the 2004 British Social Attitudes Survey in which the results were very similar, and to the 2001 UK Census in which 71.6% said that Christianity was their religion, although noting that the latter used "a softer question".

The Church of England, which split from Rome in 1534 (see English Reformation) is, today, the 'established' Church in England and the senior branch of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The British monarch is required to be a member of the Church of England under the Act of Settlement 1701 and is its Supreme Governor. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the senior bishop of the Church. The direct influence of the Church of England has been on the decline for years, but the church retains a representation in the UK Parliament and the right to draft legislative measures (usually related to religious administration), through the General Synod, that can be passed into law, but not amended by Parliament.

The Church of Scotland (known informally as the Kirk), which broke with Rome in 1560 (see Calvinism and Scottish Reformation) is a Presbyterian church, recognised as the national church of Scotland, and not subject to state control. The British monarch is an ordinary member, and is required to swear an oath to "defend the security" of the Church at the coronation. The Scottish Episcopal Church, which is now part of the Anglican Communion, dates from the final establishment of Presbyterianism in Scotland in 1690, when it split from the Church of Scotland, and is not a 'daughter church' of the Church of England. Further splits in the Church of Scotland, especially in the nineteenth century, led to the creation of various other Presbyterian churches in Scotland, including the Free Church of Scotland.



Westminster Abbey is used for the coronation of British Monarchs, when they are also made the head of the Church of England.

In the 1920s, the Church in Wales was separated from the Church of England and became 'disestablished'. The Church in Wales remains in the Anglican Communion. Methodism and other independent churches are traditionally strong in Wales.

The Anglican Church of Ireland was disestablished in the nineteenth century. It covers the entire island of Ireland (both Northern Ireland and Ireland). In Northern Ireland the Catholic Church in Ireland is the largest single denomination, although Protestants are in the majority overall. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is the largest Protestant denomination and is in terms of theology and history closely linked to the Church of Scotland

The Roman Catholic Church is the second largest denomination of Christianity in the UK. After the Protestant Reformation, strict laws were passed against Catholics; these were removed by the Catholic Emancipation laws in 1829. There are separate Catholic hierarchies for England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

Other large Christian groups include the Methodists (founded by John Wesley in London) and the Baptists. There are also growing Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, many of which have flourished with immigration from around the Commonwealth and beyond. Pentecostal churches are now third after the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church in terms of church attendance.

Other religions

Muslims in the United Kingdom are believed to number 1.8 million. Mosques are present in most regions: The biggest groups are of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian origin. More recently, refugees from Somalia, Northern Cyprus, the Balkans and Arab countries have increased Britain's Muslim population. The 2006 controversy over the burqa, brought up in comments by politician Jack Straw, reflects a split between some Britons questioning Muslim integration with British society, and others who believe that wearing the veil is compatible with it, in Britain.

Religions of Indian origin, such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism are followed in Britain. As of the 2001 census, there are about 560,000 Hindus and 340,000 Sikhs. Buddhism is practised by about 150,000 people. It is likely that these figures have increased since 2001. One non-governmental organisation estimates that there are 800,000 Hindus in the UK. Leicester houses one of the world's few Jain temples that are outside of India.

There are approximately 270,000 Jews in Britain, according to the 2001 census.

The United Kingdom has a large and growing atheist and agnostic population with 9.1 million (15% of the UK population) claiming no religion in the 2001 census.

Economy



East London Mosque, one of the country's largest Islamic places of worship.

The UK economy is made up (in descending order of size) of the economies of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The British started the Industrial Revolution, and, like most industrialising countries at the time, initially concentrated on heavy industries such as shipbuilding, coal mining, steel production, and textiles. The empire created an overseas market for British products, allowing the United Kingdom to dominate international trade in the 19th century. However, as other nations industrialised, coupled with economic decline after two world wars, the United Kingdom began to lose its competitive advantage and heavy industry declined, by degrees, throughout the 20th century. The British service sector, however, has grown substantially, and now makes up about 73% of GDP.

The service sector of the United Kingdom is dominated by financial services, especially in banking and insurance. London is the world's largest financial centre with the London Stock Exchange, the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange, and the Lloyd's of London insurance market all based in the City of London. It has the largest concentration of foreign bank branches in the world. In the past decade, a rival financial centre in London has grown in the Docklands area, with HSBC and Barclays Bank relocating their head offices there. Many multinational companies that are not primarily UK-based have chosen to site their European or rest-of-world headquarters in London: an example is the US financial services firm Citigroup. The Scottish capital, Edinburgh, has one of the large financial centres of Europe.

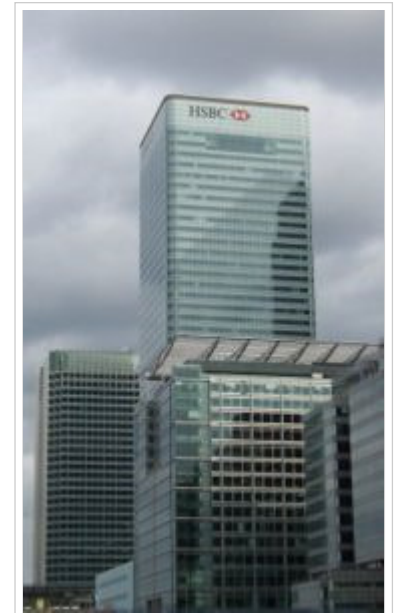
London is a major centre for international business and commerce and is the leader of the three "command centres" for the global economy (along with New York City and Tokyo). In recent years, the UK economy has been managed in accordance with principles of market liberalisation and low taxation and regulation. Based on market exchange rates, the United Kingdom is the fifth largest economy in the world, and the second largest in Europe after Germany.

Tourism is very important to the British economy. With over 27 million tourists arriving in 2004, the United Kingdom is ranked as the sixth major tourist destination in the world.

The British manufacturing sector, however, has greatly diminished, relative to the economy as a whole, since World War II. It is still a significant part of the economy, but only accounted for one-sixth of national output in 2003. The British motor industry is a significant part of this sector, although it has diminished with the collapse of MG Rover and most of the industry is foreign owned. Civil and defence aircraft production is led by the United Kingdom's largest aerospace firm, BAE Systems, and the continental European firm EADS, the owner of Airbus. Rolls-Royce holds a major share of the global aerospace engines market. The chemical and pharmaceutical industry is strong in the UK, with the world's second and sixth largest pharmaceutical firms (GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca, respectively) being based in the UK.

The creative industries accounted for 7.3% GVA in 2004 and grew at an average of 5% per annum between 1997 and 2004.

The United Kingdom's agriculture sector accounts for only 0.9% of the country's GDP.



The HSBC bank headquarters 8 Canada Square in Canary Wharf. HSBC is the largest corporation in the world according to the Forbes Global 2000 rankings.



The Bank of England; the central bank of the United Kingdom.

The UK has a small coal reserve along with significant natural gas, and oil reserves.

Government involvement throughout the economy is exercised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (currently Alistair Darling) who heads HM Treasury, but the Prime Minister (currently *The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP*), is First Lord of the Treasury; the Chancellor of the Exchequer is the Second Lord of the Treasury. However since 1997, the Bank of England, headed by the Governor of the Bank of England, has control of interest rates and other monetary policy.

As of 2007, United Kingdom's government debt rose to 43.3% of GDP.

The currency of the UK is the pound sterling, represented by the symbol £. The Bank of England is the central bank, responsible for issuing currency. Banks in Scotland and Northern Ireland retain the right to issue their own notes, subject to retaining enough Bank of England notes in reserve to cover the issue. The UK chose not to join the euro at the currency's launch, and the British Prime Minister, *The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP*, has ruled out membership for the foreseeable future, saying that the decision not to join had been right for Britain and for Europe. The government of former Prime Minister Tony Blair had pledged to hold a public referendum for deciding membership should " five economic tests" be met. In 2005, more than half (55%) of the UK were against adopting the currency, while 30% were in favour.



North Sea oil and gas supply most of the UK's energy needs.

Education

Each country of the United Kingdom has a separate education system, with power over education matters in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland being devolved.

Education in Scotland is the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, with day to day administration and funding of state schools being the responsibility of Local Authorities. Qualifications at the secondary school and post-secondary (further education) level are provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority and delivered through various schools, colleges and other centres. Scotland first legislated for universal provision of education in 1696. The proportion of children in Scotland attending private schools is just over 4% though it has been rising slowly in recent years. Scottish students who attend Scottish universities pay neither tuition fees nor graduate endowment charges as the fees were abolished in 2001 and the graduate endowment scheme was abolished in 2008.



King's College, part of the University of Cambridge, England.

Education in England is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, though the day to day administration and funding of state schools is the responsibility of Local Education Authorities. Universal state education in England and Wales was introduced for primary level in 1870 and secondary level in 1900. Education is mandatory from ages five to sixteen (15 if born in late July or August). The majority of children are educated in state-sector schools, only a small proportion of which select on the grounds of academic ability. Despite a fall in actual numbers, the proportion of children in England attending private schools has risen to over 7%. Just over half of students at the leading universities of Cambridge and Oxford had attended state schools. State schools which are allowed to select pupils according to intelligence and academic ability can achieve comparable results to the most selective private schools: out of the top ten

performing schools in terms of GCSE results in 2006 two were state-run grammar schools. England has some of the top universities in the world with Cambridge, Oxford, and London ranked amongst the top 20 in the 2007 THES - QS World University Rankings. There are fears, however, that a decline in England in the number studying a foreign language will have a negative effect on business, and has led to calls for languages to be given greater priority.

The Northern Ireland Assembly is responsible for education in Northern Ireland though responsibility at a local level is administered by 5 Education and Library Boards covering different geographical areas.

The National Assembly for Wales has responsibility for education in Wales. A significant number of students in Wales are educated either wholly or largely through the medium of Welsh and lessons in the language are compulsory for all until the age of 16. There are plans to increase the provision of Welsh Medium schools as part of the policy of having a fully bi-lingual Wales.

The Programme for International Student Assessment ranked the UK 14th in science which was higher than the OECD average.

Healthcare

Each country of the United Kingdom has a separate public healthcare system, with power over the provision of health services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland being devolved. Though each provides healthcare that is generally free to patients, being funded from general taxation, considerable differences are now developing between the different systems. A much smaller private medical system also exists. The UK and devolved governments take on both the role of suppliers of public healthcare and assessors of the quality of its delivery. Various regulatory bodies are organised on a UK-wide basis such as the General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and non-governmental-based (e.g. Royal Colleges). Across the UK, there is a large number of medical schools and dental schools, and a considerable establishment for training nurses and professions allied to medicine.

Though the public health systems are commonly referred to as the NHS across the UK, in fact the National Health Service just covers England. The NHS was set up by the National Health Service Act 1946 and came into effect on July 5th 1948. The Secretary of State for Health is answerable to the UK Parliament for the running of the Department of Health and for the work of the NHS (in England). The NHS is one of the largest cohesive organisations of any type in the world employing over 1.3 million people. Public sector healthcare delivery consists of primary (General Practice), secondary (district general hospital) and tertiary (teaching hospital) levels of service. There is considerable interaction and cross-flow between the various levels. NICE advises on whether drugs or treatments should be provided by the NHS.

Healthcare in Scotland is mainly provided by NHS Scotland, Scotland's public healthcare system. The service was founded by the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1947 (later repealed by the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978) that took effect on July 5th, 1948 to coincide with the launch of the NHS in England and Wales. In 2006, the NHS in Scotland had around 158,000 staff including more than 47,500 nurses, midwives and health visitors and over 3,800 consultants. In addition, there were also more than 12,000 doctors, family practitioners and allied health professionals, including dentists, opticians and



Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, the first PFI funded hospital, built in 2001

community pharmacists, who operate as independent contractors providing a range of services within the NHS in return for fees and allowances. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing responsible to the Scottish Parliament for the work of NHS Scotland.

Healthcare in Wales is mainly provided by NHS Wales. It was originally formed as part of the same NHS structure created by the National Health Service Act 1946 but powers over the NHS in Wales came under the Secretary of State for Wales in 1969. In turn, responsibility for NHS Wales was passed to the Welsh Assembly and Executive under devolution in 1999. NHS Wales provides public healthcare in Wales and employs some 90,000 staff, making it Wales' biggest employer. The Minister for Health and Social Services is the person within the Welsh Assembly Government who holds cabinet responsibilities for both health and social care in Wales.

Healthcare in Northern Ireland is mainly provided by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Transport

The transport systems in the United Kingdom are the responsibility of each individual country. The English transport network is the responsibility of the UK Department for Transport (which also has responsibility for some transport matters in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that are not devolved) with the Highways Agency being the executive agency responsible for trunk roads and motorways in England apart from the privately owned and operated M6 Toll . The Department for Transport states that traffic congestion is one of the most serious transport problems and that it could cost England an extra £22 billion in wasted time by 2025 if left unchecked. According to the government-sponsored Eddington report of 2006, congestion is in danger of harming the economy, unless tackled by road pricing and expansion of the transport network.

The Scottish transport network is the responsibility of the Scottish Government's Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department with Transport Scotland being the Executive Agency that is accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth for Scotland's trunk roads and rail networks. Scotland's rail network has around 340 railway stations and 3,000 kilometres of track with over 62 million passenger journeys made each year.

Across the UK, there is a radial road network of 46,904 kilometres (29,145 mi) of main roads with a motorway network of 3,497 kilometres (2,173 mi). There are a further 213,750 kilometres (132,818 mi) of paved roads. The rail network of 16,116 km (10,072 miles) in Great Britain and 303 route km (189 route mi) in Northern Ireland carries over 18,000 passenger trains and 1,000 freight trains daily. Urban rail networks are well developed in London and other cities. There was once over 48,000 route km (30,000 route mi) of rail network in the UK, however most of this was reduced over a time period from 1955 to 1975, much of it after a report by a government advisor Richard Beeching in the mid 1960s (known as the Beeching Axe). Plans are now being considered to built new high speed lines by 2025.

Heathrow Airport is the world's busiest international airport and, being an island country, the UK has a considerable number of sea ports.



The Forth Bridge, Scotland: an iconic feature of the rail network



Heathrow Airport is the world's busiest airport in terms of numbers of international passengers.

Sport

Many major sports originated in the United Kingdom, including football, rugby, cricket, tennis and golf.

Football

Like many team sports, football is organised on a separate basis for each of the countries of the United Kingdom and each has its own Football Association, national team and league system, though a few clubs play outside their country's respective systems for a variety of historical and logistical reasons. Football was developed in the UK and is comfortably the most popular sport.

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland compete as separate countries in international competition and, as a consequence, the UK does not compete as a single team in football events at the Olympic Games. Although there are proposals to have a UK team take part in the 2012 Summer Olympic Games, which are to be held in London, the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish football associations have declined to participate, fearing that it would undermine their independent status - a fear confirmed by FIFA president Sepp Blatter. England has been the most successful of the home nations, winning the World Cup in 1966.

The English football league system includes hundreds of inter-linked leagues, consisting of thousands of divisions. The FA Premier League is at the top, followed by The Football League and then the Football Conference, where the structure starts to become regional and includes the Northern Premier League, the Southern League, the Isthmian League and more besides. The Premiership is the most-watched football league in the world and is particularly popular in Asia; in the People's Republic of China, matches attract television audiences between 100 million and 360 million, more than any other foreign sport. England is home to world-renowned football clubs such as Liverpool, Manchester United, Chelsea, and Arsenal. English teams have been successful in European Competitions including some who have become European Cup/UEFA Champions League winners: Liverpool (five times), Manchester United (three times), Nottingham Forest (twice) and Aston Villa. More clubs from England have won the European Cup than any other country (four compared to three from Italy, Germany and the Netherlands). Moreover, England ranks second in the all time list of European club trophies won with 35, one behind Italy's 36. The European Cup competition itself was brought about due to the success of another English club, Wolverhampton Wanderers, against top European sides in the 1950s. The 90,000 capacity Wembley Stadium is the principal sporting stadium of England.



England's new Wembley Stadium. It is the most expensive stadium ever built.



Hampden Park, Scotland

The Scottish football league system is much smaller, with just two national leagues: the Scottish Premier League (SPL) and the Scottish Football League which has three divisions. There are, however, other regional leagues that are not connected to the national system, most notably the Highland Football League. One English club, Berwick Rangers, plays in the Scottish system. Scotland is home to world-renowned football clubs such as Rangers and Celtic. Scottish teams that have been successful in European Competitions include Celtic (European Cup in 1967), Rangers (European Cup Winners Cup 1972) and Aberdeen (European Cup Winners Cup and European Super Cup in 1983).

The Welsh football league system includes the Welsh Premier League and regional leagues. Welsh Premiership club The New Saints play their home matches on the English side of the border in Oswestry. The Welsh clubs of Cardiff City, Colwyn Bay, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport County, Swansea City and Wrexham play in the English system. Cardiff's 76,250 seater Millennium Stadium is the principal sporting stadium of Wales.

The Northern Irish football league system includes the Irish Football League. One Northern Irish club, Derry City, plays their football outside of the UK in the Republic of Ireland football league system.

Other sports



Cardiff's
Millennium
Stadium,
national stadium
of Wales

Both forms of rugby are national sports. Rugby league originates from and is generally played in the Northern England, while rugby union is played throughout the UK. Though supposedly originating from the actions of William Webb Ellis at the School at Rugby, it is now considered the national sport of Wales. In rugby league the UK has been represented by a single 'Great Britain' team but this will change for the 2008 Rugby League World Cup in which Scotland, England and Ireland will compete as separate nations. This brings it into line with rugby union in which England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (which consists of players from Ireland and Northern Ireland) already compete in international competition. However, every four years a British and Irish Lions team tours Australia, New Zealand or South Africa, composed of players selected from all the Home nations.

There is no UK-wide cricket team. The game was invented in England and the England Cricket Team, technically the England and Wales team, is the only national team in the UK with Test status. Irish and Scottish players have played for England because neither Scotland nor Ireland have Test status and only play in One Day Internationals. As of 2006, teams representing Scotland, England (and Wales), and Ireland (including Northern Ireland) compete at the One-Day International level. England and Wales has a professional league championship in which County teams compete.

Snooker is also one of Great Britain's sporting exports. A high-skill game similar to billiards, the world championships are held annually in Sheffield. The sport continues to expand worldwide, with huge growth in China.

The game of tennis first originated from the City of Birmingham between 1859 and 1865. The Wimbledon Championships are international tennis events held in Wimbledon in south London every summer and are regarded as the most prestigious event of the global tennis calendar.

Thoroughbred racing is popular throughout the UK. It originated under Charles II of England as the "Sport of Kings" and is a royal pastime to this day. World-famous horse races include the Grand National, the Epsom Derby and Royal Ascot. The town of Newmarket is considered the centre of English racing, largely due to the famous Newmarket Racecourse.

The UK has proved successful in the international sporting arena in rowing. It is widely considered that the sport's most successful rower is Steven Redgrave who won five gold medals and one bronze medal at five consecutive Olympic Games as well as numerous wins at the World Rowing Championships and Henley Royal Regatta.

Golf is one of the most popular participation sports played in the UK, with St Andrews in Scotland being the sport's home course.

Shinty (or *camanachd*) (A sport derived from the same root as the Irish hurling and similar to bandy) is popular in the Scottish Highlands, sometimes attracting crowds numbering thousands in the most sparsely populated region of the UK.

The UK is closely associated with motorsport. Many teams and drivers in Formula One (F1) are based in the UK and drivers from Britain have won more world titles than any other country. The country hosts legs of the F1 and World Rally Championship and has its own Touring Car Racing championship, the British Touring Car Championship (BTCC). The British Grand Prix takes place at Silverstone each July.



The Wimbledon Championships, a Grand Slam tournament, is held in Wimbledon, London every July.



The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, generally regarded as the world's "Home of Golf".

Dancesport or competitive Ballroom dancing has its origins in the UK when popular dancing at the time was codified by British dance schools from the 1920s onwards. For example, the Slow Waltz is still known as the English Waltz which is now as distinct from its original roots as its name, the Viennese Waltz. The UK remains a major centre for the sport and Ballroom dancing in general with the Empress Ballroom at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool being a popular venue for major competitions.

Culture

The origins of the UK as a political union of formerly independent countries has resulted in the preservation of distinctive cultures in each of the home nations.

For details, see articles on: Culture of England, Culture of Scotland, Culture of Wales, Culture of Northern Ireland.

Cinema

The United Kingdom has been influential in the development of cinema, with the Ealing Studios claiming to be the oldest studios in the world. Despite a history of important and successful productions, the industry is characterised by an ongoing debate about its identity, and the influences of American and European cinema. The BFI Top 100 British films is a poll conducted by the British Film Institute which ranks what they consider to be the 100 greatest British films of all time.

Literature

'British literature' refers to literature associated with the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands as well as to literature from England, Wales and Scotland prior to the formation of the United Kingdom.

The English playwright and poet William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest dramatist of all time. Among the earliest English writers are Geoffrey of Monmouth (12th century), Geoffrey Chaucer (14th century), and Thomas Malory (15th century). In the 18th century, Samuel Richardson is often credited with inventing the modern novel. In the 19th century, there followed further innovation by Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, the social campaigner Charles Dickens, the naturalist Thomas Hardy, the visionary poet William Blake and romantic poet William Wordsworth. Twentieth century writers include the science fiction novelist H. G. Wells, the controversial D. H. Lawrence, the modernist Virginia Woolf, the prophetic novelist George Orwell and the poet John Betjeman. Most recently, the children's fantasy Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling has recalled the popularity of J.R.R. Tolkien.

Scotland's contribution includes the detective writer Arthur Conan Doyle, romantic literature by Sir Walter Scott, the epic adventures of Robert Louis Stevenson and the celebrated poet Robert Burns. More recently, the modernist and nationalist Hugh MacDiarmid and Neil M. Gunn contributed to the Scottish Renaissance. A more grim outlook is found in Ian Rankin's stories and the psychological horror-comedy of Iain Banks. Scotland's capital, Edinburgh, is UNESCO's first worldwide city of literature.

In the early medieval period, Welsh writers composed the Mabinogion. In modern times, the poets R.S. Thomas and Dylan Thomas have brought Welsh culture to an international audience.

Authors from other nationalities, particularly from Ireland, or from Commonwealth countries, have lived and worked in the UK. Significant examples through the centuries include Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker, George Bernard Shaw, Joseph Conrad, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and more recently British authors born abroad such as Kazuo Ishiguro and Sir Salman Rushdie.

In theatre, Shakespeare's contemporaries Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson added depth. More recently Alan Ayckbourn, Harold Pinter, Michael Frayn, Tom Stoppard and David Edgar have combined elements of surrealism, realism and radicalism.

Music

Classical music: Notable composers from the United Kingdom have included William Byrd, Henry Purcell, Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Arthur Sullivan (most famous for working with librettist Sir W. S. Gilbert), Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Benjamin Britten, pioneer of modern British opera. London remains one of the major classical music capitals of the world.

Popular music: Prominent among the UK contributors to the development of rock music in the 1960s and 1970s were The Beatles, Pink Floyd, Eric Clapton, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, The Who, Queen, and Black Sabbath. Heavy metal, hard rock, punk rock and New Wave were among the variations that followed. In the early 1980s, UK bands from the New Romantic scene such as Duran Duran, Depeche Mode, Spandau Ballet, Soft Cell and Ultravox were prominent. In the 1990s, Britpop bands and electronica music attained international success. More recent pop acts, including The Smiths, Oasis, Amy Winehouse, Coldplay, and the Spice Girls, have ensured the continuation of the UK's massive contribution to popular music.



The Chandos portrait, believed to depict William Shakespeare.



Robert Burns

Philosophy

The United Kingdom is famous for the tradition of "British Empiricism", a branch of the philosophy of knowledge that states that only knowledge verified by experience is valid. The most famous philosophers of this tradition are John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume. Britain is notable for a theory of moral philosophy, Utilitarianism, first used by Jeremy Bentham and later by John Stuart Mill, in his short work *Utilitarianism*. Other eminent philosophers from the UK and the countries that preceded it include William of Ockham, Thomas Hobbes, Bertrand Russell, Adam Smith and Alfred Ayer. Foreign born philosophers who settled in the UK include Isaiah Berlin, Karl Marx, Karl Popper, and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Science, engineering and innovation

The modern scientific method was promoted by the English philosopher Francis Bacon in the early seventeenth century, and subsequent advances credited to British scientists and engineers include:

- The laws of motion and illumination of gravity, by Sir Isaac Newton in the late 17th century
- The unification of electromagnetism, by James Clerk Maxwell
- The discovery of hydrogen, by Henry Cavendish
- The steam locomotive, by Richard Trevithick and Andrew Vivian
- The telephone, by Alexander Graham Bell
- Evolution by natural selection, by Charles Darwin
- The Turing machine, by Alan Turing, the basis of modern computers
- The structure of DNA, by Francis Crick and others
- The development of the World Wide Web, largely attributed to Tim Berners-Lee

Notable civil engineering projects, whose pioneers included Isambard Kingdom Brunel, contributed to the world's first national railway transport system. Other advances pioneered in the UK include the marine chronometer, television, the jet engine, the modern bicycle, electric lighting, the electric motor, the screw propeller, the internal combustion engine, military radar, the electronic computer, vaccination and antibiotics.

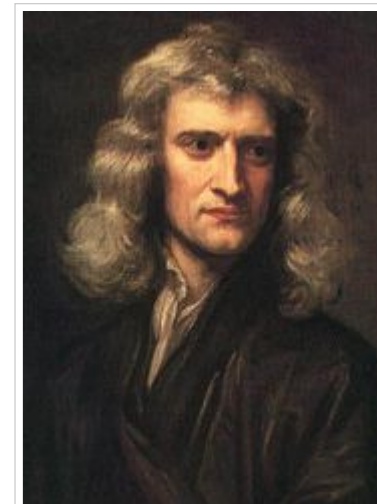
Scientific journals produced in the UK include *Nature*, the *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet*. In 2006, it was reported that the UK provided 9% of the world's scientific research papers and a 12% share of citations.

Visual art

The Royal Academy is located in London. Other major schools of art include the Slade School of Art; the six-school University of the Arts, London, which includes the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and Chelsea College of Art and Design; the Glasgow School of Art, and Goldsmiths, University of London. This commercial venture is one of Britain's foremost visual arts organisations. Major British artists include Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, John Constable, William Blake, J. M. W. Turner, William Morris, L.S. Lowry, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, David Hockney, Gilbert and George, Richard Hamilton, Peter Blake, Howard Hodgkin, Antony Gormley, and Anish Kapoor. During the late 1980s and 1990s, the Saatchi Gallery in London brought to public attention a group of multigenre artists who would become known as the Young British Artists. Damien Hirst, Chris Ofili, Rachel Whiteread, Tracy Emin, Mark Wallinger, Steve McQueen, Sam Taylor-Wood, and the Chapman Brothers are among the better known members of this loosely affiliated movement.

Symbols

- The flag of the United Kingdom is the Union Flag commonly known as the "Union Jack". It was created by the superimposition of the flags of England (



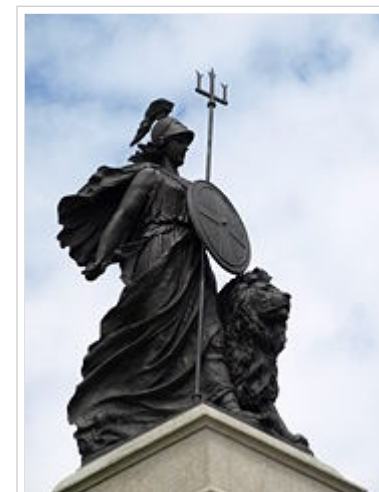
Sir Isaac Newton



Charles Darwin

St George's Cross) and Scotland (Saint Andrew's Cross), with the Saint Patrick's cross, to represent Ireland, being added to this in 1801. Wales is not represented in the Union Flag as Wales had been conquered and annexed to England prior to the formation of the United Kingdom. However, the possibility of redesigning the Union Flag to include representation of Wales has not been completely ruled out.

- The national anthem of the United Kingdom is " God Save the King", with "King" replaced with "Queen" in the lyrics whenever the monarch is female. The anthem's name, however, remains "God Save the King".
- Britannia is a personification of the United Kingdom, originating from the Roman occupation of southern and central Great Britain. Britannia is symbolised as a young woman with brown or golden hair, wearing a Corinthian helmet and white robes. She holds Poseidon's three-pronged trident and a shield, bearing the Union Flag. Sometimes she is depicted as riding the back of a lion. At and since the height of the British Empire, Britannia has often associated with maritime dominance, as in the patriotic song *Rule Britannia*.
- The lion symbol is depicted behind Britannia on the 50 pence piece and one is shown crowned on the back of the 10 pence piece. It is also used as a symbol on the non-ceremonial flag of the British Army.
- The bulldog is sometimes used as a symbol of Great Britain, and has been associated with Winston Churchill's defiance of Nazi Germany.



The Statue of Britannia in Plymouth.

National symbols within the United Kingdom

- A number of 'national anthems' are used for the individual countries of the UK with varying degrees of popular acceptance, the most popular being Flower of Scotland, Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau in Wales, Londonderry Air in Northern Ireland and Jerusalem in England.
- Lions have been used as heraldic devices, including in the royal arms of the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Kingdom of Gwynedd in Wales. The lion is featured on the emblem of the England national football team, giving rise to the popular football anthem *Three Lions*, and the England national cricket team. The "three lions" on the English coat of arms were originally two leopards. An extra leopard was added by Richard the Lionheart and with the help of his name, they became known as three lions. They are now drawn to look more like lions. Leopards are traditionally depicted lying down whereas lions were drawn standing on all fours or up on their hind legs attacking, as in the Scottish Lion Rampant.
- England (and sometimes Britain) has been personified as the character John Bull, although this character is rarely used in modern times.
- The oak tree and the rose have long been a widely used proxy for the visual representation of English identity. The red rose is the emblem of the England national rugby union team and the Rugby Football Union.
- The thistle is widely used as a Scottish symbol.

- The daffodil and leek are used as Welsh symbols.

Flag	Country	Patron saint	Flower
	England	St. George	Tudor rose
	Scotland	St. Andrew	Thistle
	Wales	St. David	Leek/Daffodil
	Northern Ireland	St. Patrick	Shamrock/ Flax

There is no official National flag of Northern Ireland following the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 or any unofficial flag universally supported in Northern Ireland. The use of various flags in Northern Ireland is contentious. However, the Ulster Banner is often used for sporting events. See Northern Ireland flags issue and The Union Flags and flags of the United Kingdom

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Vatican City

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Europe; European Countries

Vatican City, officially **State of the Vatican City** (Italian: *Stato della Città del Vaticano*), is a landlocked sovereign city-state whose territory consists of a walled enclave within the city of Rome. At approximately 44 hectares (110 acres), and with a population of around 800, it is the smallest independent state in the world by both population and area.

Vatican City is a city-state. It came into existence only in 1929. It is thus clearly distinct from the central authority of the Roman Catholic Church, known as the Holy See, which existed long before 1929. Ordinances of Vatican City are published in Italian. Official documents of the Holy See are issued mainly in Latin. The two entities even have distinct passports: the Holy See, not being a country, only issues diplomatic and service passports; the state of Vatican City issues normal passports. In both cases the number of passports issued is extremely limited.

The Lateran Treaty in 1929, which brought the city-state into existence, spoke of it as a new creation (Preamble and Article III), not as a vestige of the much larger Papal States (756-1870) that had previously encompassed central Italy. Most of this territory was absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy in 1860, and the final portion, namely the city of Rome with a small area close to it, ten years later, in 1870.

Vatican City is a non-hereditary, elected monarchy that is ruled by the Bishop of Rome — the Pope. The highest state functionaries are all clergymen of the Catholic Church. It is the sovereign territory of the Holy See (*Sancta Sedes*) and the location of the Pope's residence, referred to as the Apostolic Palace.

The Popes have resided in the area that in 1929 became the Vatican City only since the return from Avignon in 1377. Previously, they resided in the Lateran Palace on the Caelian Hill on the opposite side of Rome, which was out of repair in 1377. The signing of the agreements that established the new state took place in the latter building, giving rise to the name of Lateran Pacts, by which they are known.

Territory

The name "Vatican" is ancient and predates Christianity, coming from the Latin *Mons Vaticanus*, meaning Vatican Mount. The territory of Vatican City is part of the *Mons Vaticanus*, and of the adjacent

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<i>Stato della Città del Vaticano</i> (Italian) State of the Vatican City	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Anthem: " Inno e Marcia Pontificale" (Italian) "Pontifical Anthem and March"	
	
Capital	Vatican City ¹
Official languages	Italian ²
Government	Ecclesiastical
- Sovereign	Pope Benedict XVI
- President of the Governorate	Giovanni Lajolo

former Vatican Fields where St. Peter's Basilica, the Apostolic Palace, the Sistine Chapel, and museums were built, along with various other buildings. The area was part of the Roman rione of Borgo until 1929. Being separated from the city, on the west bank of the Tiber river, the area was an outcrop of the city that was protected by being included within the walls of Leo IV, and later expanded by the current fortification walls of Paul III/ Pius IV/ Urban VIII. When the Lateran Treaty of 1929 that gave the state its present form was being prepared, the boundaries of the proposed territory was influenced by the fact that much of it was all but enclosed by this loop. For some tracts of the frontier, there was no wall, but the line of certain buildings supplied part of the boundary, and for a small part of the frontier a modern wall was constructed. The territory includes St. Peter's Square, distinguished from the territory of Italy only by a white line along the limit of the square, where it touches Piazza Pio XII. St. Peter's Square is reached through the Via della Conciliazione which runs from the Tiber River to St. Peter's. This grand approach was constructed by Mussolini after the conclusion of the Lateran Treaty.

According to the Lateran Treaty, certain properties of the Holy See that are located in Italian territory, most notably Castel Gandolfo and the Patriarchal Basilicas, enjoy extraterritorial status similar to that of foreign embassies. These properties, scattered all over Rome and Italy, house essential offices and institutions necessary to the character and mission of the Holy See.

Castel Gandolfo and the named basilicas are patrolled internally by police agents of the Vatican City State and not by Italian police. St. Peter's Square is ordinarily policed jointly by both.

Head of state

The Pope is *ex officio* head of state and head of government of Vatican City, functions dependent on his primordial function as the bishop of the Archdiocese of Rome. The term Holy See refers not to the Vatican state but to the Pope's spiritual and pastoral governance, largely exercised through the Roman Curia. His official title with regard to Vatican City is *Sovereign of the State of the Vatican City*.

The papacy is a non-hereditary, elective monarchy, chosen by the College of Cardinals. The Pope is also technically an absolute monarch, meaning he has total legislative, executive and judicial power over Vatican City. He is the only absolute monarch in Europe. The Pope is elected for a life term in conclave by cardinals under the age of 80.

His principal subordinate government official for Vatican City is the President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, who since 1952 exercises the functions previously belonging to the Governor of Vatican City. Since 2001, the President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State also has the title of President of the Governorate of the State of Vatican City.

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Independence	from the Kingdom of Italy
 - Lateran Treaty	11 February 1929
Area	
 - Total	0.44 km ² (234th) 0.17 sq mi
Population	
 - 2008 estimate	824 (220th)
 - Density	1780/km ² (6th) 4,610/sq mi
Currency	Euro (€) ³ (EUR)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
 - Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.va
Calling code	+39 ⁴
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Vatican City is a city-state No official language is established by law, but, in accordance with paragraph 2 of the <i>Legge sulle fonti del diritto</i> of 7 June 1929, laws and regulations are published in the Italian-language <i>Supplemento per le leggi e disposizioni dello Stato della Città del Vaticano</i> attached to the Acta Apostolicae Sedis. The text of the first seven items published in that supplement is given here. Other languages are used by institutions situated within the state, such as the Holy See, the Pontifical Swiss Guard, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, etc. See also Languages of the Vatican City. Prior to 2002, the Vatican lira (on par with the Italian lira). ITU-T assigns code 379 to Vatican City. However, Vatican City is included in the Italian telephone numbering plan and uses the Italian country code 39, followed by 06 (for Rome) and 698.

The Pope resides in the Papal Apartments of the Papal Palace just off St. Peter's Square. It is here he carries out his business and meets foreign representatives.

The current Pope is Benedict XVI, born Joseph Alois Ratzinger in Bavaria, Germany. Italian Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo serves as President of the Pontifical Commission for the State of Vatican City. He was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI on 11 September 2006.

History

Even before the arrival of Christianity, this originally uninhabited area on the opposite side of the Tiber from the city of Rome (the *ager vaticanus*) had long been considered sacred, or at least not available for habitation. Agrippina the Elder (14 BC – 18 October AD 33) drained the hill and environs and built her gardens there in the early 1st century AD. Emperor Caligula (37-41) started construction of a circus (40) that was later completed by Nero, the *Circus Gaii et Neronis*. The Vatican obelisk was originally taken by Caligula from Heliopolis to decorate the spina of his circus and is thus its last visible remnant. This area became the site of martyrdom of many Christians after the great fire of Rome in 64. Ancient tradition holds that it was in this circus that Saint Peter was crucified upside down. Opposite the circus was a cemetery separated by the Via Cornelia. Funeral monuments and mausoleums and small tombs as well as altars to pagan gods of all kinds of polytheistic religions were constructed lasting until before the construction of the Constantinian Basilica of St. Peter's in the first half of the 4th century. Remains of this ancient necropolis were brought to light sporadically during renovations by various popes throughout the centuries increasing in frequency during the Renaissance until it was systematically excavated by orders of Pope Pius XII from 1939 to 1941 .

In 326, the first church, the Constantinian basilica, was built over the site that Catholic apologists as well as noted Italian archaeologists argue was the tomb of Saint Peter, buried in a common cemetery on the spot. From then on the area started to become more populated, but mostly only by dwelling houses connected with the activity of St. Peter's. A palace was constructed near the site of the basilica as early as the 5th century during the pontificate of Pope Symmachus (pope 498-514).

Vatican City* UNESCO World Heritage Site



State Party	■ Holy See
Type	Cultural
Criteria	i, ii, iv, vi
Reference	286
Region**	Europe

Inscription history

Inscription	1984 (8th Session)
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* Name as inscribed on World Heritage List.

** Region as classified by UNESCO.

Popes in their secular role gradually came to govern neighbouring regions and, through the Papal States, ruled a large portion of the Italian peninsula for more than a thousand years until the mid 19th century, when most of the territory of the Papal States was seized by the newly created Kingdom of Italy. For much of this time the Vatican was not the habitual residence of the Popes, but rather the Lateran Palace, and in recent centuries, the Quirinal Palace, while the residence from 1309-1377 was at Avignon in France.

In 1870, the Pope's holdings were left in an uncertain situation when Rome itself was annexed by the Piedmont-led forces which had united the rest of Italy, after a nominal resistance by the papal forces. Between 1861 and 1929 the status of the Pope was referred to as the "Roman Question". They were undisturbed in their palace, and given certain recognitions by the Law of Guarantees, including the right to send and receive ambassadors. But they did not recognize the Italian king's right to rule in Rome, and they refused to leave the Vatican compound until the dispute was resolved in 1929. Other states continued to maintain international recognition of the Holy See as a sovereign entity. In practice Italy made no attempt to interfere with the Holy See within the Vatican walls. However, they confiscated church property in many other places, including, perhaps most notably, the Quirinal Palace, formerly the pope's official residence. Pope Pius IX (1846-1878), the last ruler of the Papal States, claimed that after Rome was annexed he was a "Prisoner in the Vatican". This situation was resolved on February 11, 1929 between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Italy.



Territory of Vatican City according to the Lateran treaty.

The treaty was signed by Benito Mussolini on behalf of King Victor Emmanuel III and by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Gasparri for Pope Pius XI. The Lateran Treaty and the Concordat established the independent State of the Vatican City and granted Catholicism special status in Italy. In 1984, a new concordat between the Holy See and Italy modified certain provisions of the earlier treaty, including the position of Catholicism as the Italian state religion.

Government

The politics of Vatican City takes place in an absolute elective monarchy, in which the head of the Catholic Church takes power. The Pope exercises ex officio principal legislative, executive, and judicial power over the State of Vatican City (an entity distinct from the Holy See), which is a rare case of a non-hereditary monarchy.

Political system

The government of Vatican City has a unique structure. The Pope is the sovereign of the state. Legislative authority is vested in the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, a body of cardinals appointed by the Pope for five-year periods. Executive power is in the hands of the President of that commission, assisted by the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary. The state's foreign relations are entrusted to the Holy See's Secretariat of State and diplomatic service. Nevertheless, the pope has full and absolute executive, legislative and judicial power over Vatican City. He is currently the only absolute monarch in Europe.

There are specific departments that deal with health, security, telecommunications, etc.

The Cardinal Camerlengo heads the Apostolic Chamber to which is entrusted the administration of the property and the protection of the temporal rights of the Holy See during a *sede vacante* (papal vacancy). Those of the Vatican State remain under the control of the Pontifical Commission for the State of Vatican City. Acting with three other cardinals chosen by lot every three days, one from each order of cardinals (cardinal bishop, cardinal priest, and cardinal deacon), he in a sense performs during that period the functions of head of state. All the decisions these four cardinals take must be approved by the College of Cardinals as a whole.

The nobility that was closely associated with the Holy See at the time of the Papal States continued to be associated with the Papal Court after the loss of these territories, generally with merely nominal duties (see Papal Master of the Horse, Prefecture of the Pontifical Household, Hereditary officers of the Roman Curia, Black Nobility). They also formed the ceremonial Noble Guard. In the first decades of the existence of the Vatican City State, executive functions were entrusted to some of them, including that of Delegate for the State of Vatican City (now denominated President of the Commission for Vatican City). But with the *motu proprio Pontificalis Domus* of 28 March 1968, Pope Paul VI abolished the honorary positions that had continued to exist until then, such as Quartermaster General and Master of the Horse.

The State of the Vatican City, created in 1929 by the Lateran Pacts, provides the Holy See with a temporal jurisdiction and independence within a small territory. It is distinct from the Holy See. The state can thus be deemed a significant but not essential instrument of the Holy See. The Holy See itself has existed continuously as a juridical entity since Roman Imperial times and has been internationally recognized as a powerful and independent sovereign (at times even suzerain) entity since late antiquity to the present, without interruption even at times when it was deprived of territory (e.g. 1870 to 1929). The Holy See has the oldest active continuous diplomatic service in the world, dating back to at least AD 325 with its legation to the Council of Nicea. Ambassadors are accredited to the Holy See, never to the Vatican City State.

Administration

Legislative functions are delegated to the unicameral Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, led by the President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State. Its seven members are cardinals appointed by the Pope for terms of five years. Acts of the commission must be approved by the pope, through the Holy See's Secretariat of State, and before taking effect must be published in a special appendix of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. Most of the content of this appendix consists of routine executive decrees, such as approval for a new set of postage stamps.

Executive authority is delegated to the Governorate of Vatican City. The Governorate consists of the President of the Pontifical Commission — using the title "President of the Governorate of Vatican City" — a General Secretary, and a Vice General Secretary, each appointed by the pope for five year terms. Important actions of the Governorate must be confirmed by the Pontifical Commission and by the Pope through the Secretariat of State.

The Governorate oversees the central governmental functions through several departments and offices. The directors and officials of these offices are appointed by the pope for five year terms. These organs concentrate on material questions concerning the state's territory, including local security, records, transportation, and finances. The Governorate oversees a modern security and police corps, the *Corpo della Gendarmeria dello Stato della Città del Vaticano*.



Palace of the Governorate of
Vatican City State

Judicial functions are delegated to a supreme court, an appeals court, a tribunal, and a trial judge.

In all cases, the pope may choose at any time to exercise supreme legislative, executive, or judicial functions in the state.

Military and police

Though earlier Popes recruited Swiss mercenaries as part of an army, the Pontifical Swiss Guard was founded by Pope Julius II on 22 January 1506 as the personal bodyguard of the Pope and continues to fulfil that function. It is listed in the *Annuario Pontificio* under "Holy See", not under "State of Vatican City". At the end of 2005, the Guard had 134 members. Recruitment is arranged by a special agreement between the Holy See and Switzerland, and is restricted to Catholic male (Swiss) citizens. The Palatine Guard and the Noble Guard were disbanded by Pope Paul VI in 1970. While the first body was founded as a militia at the service of the Papal States, its functions within the Vatican State, like those of the Noble Guard, were merely ceremonial.

The *Corpo della Gendarmeria* acts as a police force. Its full name is *Corpo della Gendarmeria dello Stato della Città del Vaticano* (which means "Gendarmerie Corps of the Vatican City State"), although it is sometimes referred to as *Vigilanza*, as a shortening of an earlier name. The Gendarmeria is responsible for public order, law enforcement, crowd and traffic control, and criminal investigations in Vatican City.

Foreign relations

Vatican City State is a recognized national territory under international law, but it is the Holy See that conducts diplomatic relations on its behalf, in addition to the Holy See's own diplomacy, entering into international agreements in its regard. The Vatican City State thus has no diplomatic service of its own. Foreign embassies to the Holy See are located in the city of Rome; only during the Second World War were the staffs of some embassies given what hospitality was possible within the narrow confines of Vatican City, embassies such as that of the United Kingdom while Rome was held by the Axis Powers, embassies such as Germany's when the Allies controlled Rome.

Given the distinction between the two entities, the Holy See's immense influence on world affairs is quite unrelated to the minuscule size of the Vatican City State.



Swiss Guard in their traditional uniform



St. Peter's Square, and the obelisk from the Circus of Nero

Geography



Map of Vatican City

The Vatican City, one of the European microstates, is situated on the Vatican Hill in the west-central part of Rome, several hundred metres west of the Tiber river. Its borders (3.2 kilometres (2.0 mi) in total, all within Italy) closely follow the city wall constructed to protect the Pope from outside attack. The situation is more complex at the famous St. Peter's Square in front of St. Peter's Basilica, where the correct border is just outside the ellipse formed by Bernini's colonnade, but where police jurisdiction has been entrusted to Italy. The Vatican City is the smallest sovereign state in the world at 0.44 square kilometres (44 ha/110 acres).

The Vatican climate is the same as Rome's; a temperate, Mediterranean climate with mild, rainy winters from September to mid-May and hot, dry summers from May to August. There are some local features, principally mists and dews, caused by the anomalous bulk of St Peter's Basilica, the elevation, the fountains and the size of the large paved square.

In July 2007, the Vatican agreed to become the first carbon neutral state. They plan to accomplish this by offsetting carbon dioxide emissions with the creation of a Vatican Climate Forest in Hungary.

Economy

The unique, non-commercial economy is supported financially by contributions (part of which is known as Peter's Pence) from Catholics throughout the world, the sale of postage stamps and tourist mementos, fees for admission to museums, and the sale of publications. The incomes and living standards of lay workers are comparable to, or somewhat better than, those of counterparts who work in the city of Rome.

The Vatican City issues its own coins. It has used the euro as its currency since January 1, 1999, owing to a special agreement with the EU (council decision 1999/98/CE). Euro coins and notes were introduced in January 1, 2002--the Vatican does not issue euro banknotes. Issuance of euro-denominated coins is strictly limited by treaty, though somewhat more than usual is allowed in a year in which there is a change in the papacy. Because of their rarity, Vatican euro coins are highly sought by collectors. Until the adoption of the Euro, Vatican coinage and stamps were denominated in their own Vatican lira currency, which was on par with the Italian lira.

It also has its own bank, Istituto per le Opere di Religione (also known as the Vatican Bank, and with the acronym IOR). This bank has an ATM with instructions in Latin, possibly the only such ATM in the world.

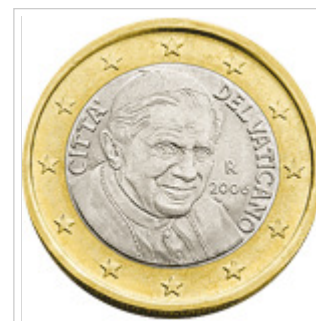
- Budget: Revenues (2003) 252 million USD; expenditures (2003) 264 million USD.
- Industries: printing and production of few mosaics and staff uniforms; worldwide financial activities.

Demographics

Population and languages

Almost all of Vatican City's 821 (July 2007 est.) citizens either live inside the Vatican's walls or serve in the Holy See's diplomatic service in embassies (called "nunciatures"; a papal ambassador is a "nuncio") around the world. The Vatican citizenry consists almost entirely of two groups: clergy, most of whom work in the service of the Holy See, and a very few as officials of the state; and the Swiss Guard. Most of the 3,000 lay workers who comprise the majority of the Vatican work force reside outside the Vatican and are citizens of Italy, while a few are citizens of other nations. As a result, all of the City's actual citizens are Catholic. Catholicism is the state religion. All the places of worship inside Vatican City are Catholic.

Vatican City has no set official language. Unlike the Holy See, which most often uses Latin for the authoritative version of official documents of the Catholic Church, Vatican City uses Italian in its legislation and official communications. Italian is also the everyday language used by most of those who work in the state. In the Swiss Guard, German is the language used for giving commands, but the individual guards take their oath of loyalty in their own languages, German, French or Italian. Vatican City's official website languages are Italian, English, French, German and Spanish.(This site should not be confused with that of the Holy See, which uses all these languages, along with Portuguese and, since 9 May 2008, also Latin.)



The reverse of the Vatican €1 coin produced in 2006 depicting the current pope, Benedict XVI



Vatican Museums.

Citizenship

Citizenship of the Vatican City is granted *iure officii*, which means it is conferred upon some of those who have been appointed to work in certain capacities at the Vatican, and it is usually revoked upon the termination of their employment. During the period of employment citizenship may also be extended to a Vatican citizen's spouse (unless the marriage is annulled or dissolved, or if a conjugal separation is decreed) and children (until, if they are capable of working, they turn 25, or in the case of daughters, if they marry). Terms of citizenship are defined in the Lateran Treaty, and laws concerning the creation of the Vatican state in 1929 sought to restrict the number of people who could be granted Vatican citizenship. The only passports issued by the Vatican are diplomatic passports and service passports.

As of 31 December 2005, there were 558 people with Vatican citizenship, of whom 246 are dual-citizens of other countries (the majority being Italian). The Lateran Treaty provides that in the event a Vatican citizen has his or her original nationality revoked and also loses Vatican citizenship, he or she will be automatically granted Italian citizenship.

Among the 558 were:

- The Pope;
- 58 cardinals;
- 293 members of the clergy who serve as diplomatic envoys abroad;
- 62 lesser-ranking clergy members who work in the Vatican;
- 101 officers, NCOs, and men of the Papal Swiss Guard; and
- 43 lay persons.

Culture

The Vatican City is itself of great cultural significance. Buildings such as St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel are home to some of the most famous art in the world, which includes works by artists such as Botticelli, Bernini, Raphael and Michelangelo. The Vatican Library and the collections of the Vatican Museums are of the highest historical, scientific and cultural importance. In 1984, the Vatican was added by UNESCO to the List of World Heritage Sites; it is the only one to consist of an entire state. Furthermore, it is the only site to date registered with the UNESCO as a *centre containing monuments* in the "International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection" according to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.



St. Peter's Square in the early morning.

Crime

Because, while the population is only a few hundred, millions visit the state each year, the crime rate measured against the resident population alone would

seem enormous, as if 87.2% of the population committed civil offences each year, with penal offences running at a staggering 133.6% - 397 civil offences and 608 penal offences in 1992. The most common crime is petty theft - purse snatching, pickpocketing and shoplifting - and the perpetrators, being outsiders, like the victims, are rarely caught, with only 10% of crimes leading to a prosecution.

In accordance with Article 22 of the 1929 Lateran Treaty between the Holy See and Italy, the Italian government, when requested by the Holy See, handles the prosecution and detention of criminal suspects, at the expense of the Vatican. In 1969, the Vatican state abolished capital punishment, which was envisaged in the legislation it adopted in 1929 on the basis of Italian law, but which it never exercised.

Infrastructure

Transport

Vatican City has a reasonably well developed transport network considering its size. As a country that is 1.05 kilometres (0.6 mi) long and .85 kilometres (0.5 mi) wide, it has a small transportation system with no airports or highways. There is one heliport and a standard gauge railway connected to Italy's network at Rome's Saint Peter's station by an 852 metres (932 yd) long spur, only 14.35 metres (16 yd) of which is within Vatican territory. Pope John XXIII was the first Pope to make use of this railway, and Pope John Paul II used it as well, albeit very rarely. The railway is mainly used only to transport freight. As the Vatican City has no airports, it is served by the airports that serve the city of Rome, within which the Vatican is located, namely: Leonardo Da Vinci International Airport and to a lesser extent, Ciampino Airport, which both serve as the departure gateway for the Pope's international visits.

Communications

The City is served by an independent, modern telephone system, the Vatican Pharmacy, and post office. The postal system was founded on February 11, 1929, and two days later became operational. On August 1, the state started to release its own postal stamps, under the authority of the Philatelic and Numismatic Office of the Vatican City State. The City's postal service is sometimes recognised as "the best in the world" and mail has been noted to its target before the postal service in Rome. The Vatican also controls its own Internet domain, which is registered as (.va). Broadband service is widely provided within Vatican City. Vatican City has also been given a radio ITU prefix, HV, and this is sometimes used by amateur radio operators.

Vatican Radio, which was organised by Guglielmo Marconi, broadcasts on short-wave, medium-wave and FM frequencies and on the Internet. Its main transmission antennae are located in Italian territory. Television services are provided through another entity, the Vatican Television Centre.

L'Osservatore Romano is the multilingual semi-official newspaper of the Holy See. It is published by a private corporation under the direction of Catholic laymen but reports on official information. However, the official texts of documents are in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the official gazette of the Holy See, which has an appendix for documents of the Vatican City State.

Vatican Radio, the Vatican Television Centre, and *L'Osservatore Romano* are organs not of the Vatican State but of the Holy See, and are listed as such in the *Annuario Pontificio*, which places them in the section "Institutions linked with the Holy See", ahead of the sections on the Holy See's diplomatic service abroad and the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, after which is placed the section on the State of Vatican City.

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