



Continent Close-up

Europe is the second-smallest of Earth's seven continents. Located entirely in the Northern Hemisphere, it stretches from the Mediterranean Sea in the south to the icy Arctic Circle in the north. Its western side is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. However, Europe is not completely surrounded by water. The Ural Mountains, which cross Russia from north to south, lie on the eastern side. Europe is actually the western **peninsula** of a huge landmass called Eurasia. Eurasia contains both Europe and Asia, another of the seven continents.

Land area	Just over 4 million square miles (10.4 million square kilometers)
Number of independent countries	At least 50 (five of them with land in Asia)
Estimated population (2017)	About 742 million
Languages spoken	More than 50
Largest country	Russia
Smallest country	Vatican City
Fast fact	Istanbul, Turkey's capital city, has land in both Europe and Asia. The Bosphorus is a narrow strait of water between the two continents.

Vernazza was founded
about 1,000 years ago.



CHAPTER



Land and Climate

Many millions of years ago, the movement of pieces of Earth's crust created the seven continents we know today. In Europe, this movement shaped a land with wide plains and rugged mountains surrounded by a long, zigzagging coast. It created a number of big and small peninsulas, such as Scandinavia in the north and Iberia in the south.

The famous town of Vernazza, Italy, is located along the coast of the Ligurian Sea.

THE BIG TRUTH!

Mountains of Garbage

The average EU citizen produces about 3 pounds (1.4 kilograms) of trash each day. Plastic and paper packaging, electronic gadgets, and food scraps pile up to create so much trash that it has become a major problem.

What is the solution to Europe's trash troubles? Many countries in Europe are working to achieve zero waste in the near future! In the meantime, this is how Europeans get rid of all this trash:



Collection

People leave their waste in containers along the street or at home. The trash is then collected by workers.

Incineration

Trash can be burned at special facilities, reducing its bulk by more than 90 percent. However, burning trash can release poisonous fumes that harm the environment.



Landfills

These are giant holes where solid trash is piled and buried. Even if trash is isolated, landfills can leak and hazardous waste can move into the soil, air, and water surrounding it. This harms the environment.



Recycling

This process turns used products into raw materials that can be made into new products. Plastic, glass, metals, paper, and textiles can be recycled. About 44 percent of Europe's waste is recycled. This percentage increases every year.



Export

Europe has also kept itself clean by sending huge amounts of waste to China. However, in 2018, this Asian country passed a law that put restrictions on the import of foreign waste.



Composting

This process turns organic waste into fertilizer, which can be used to help produce crops.

