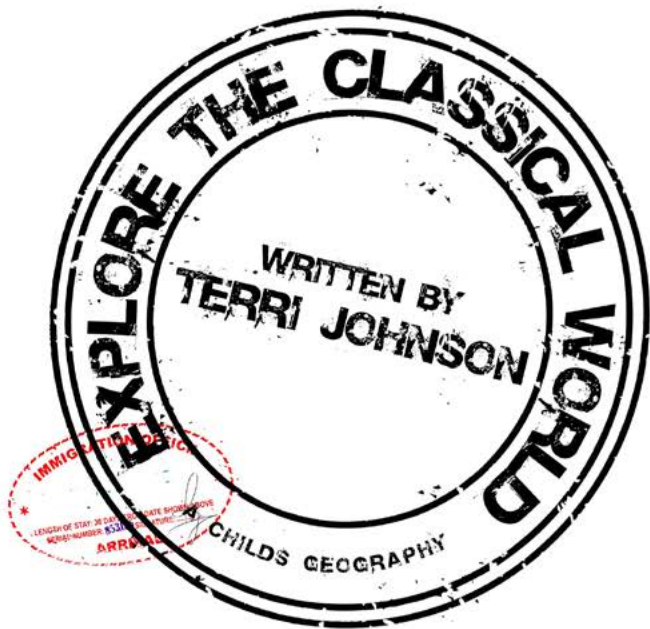


# A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Volume III



# A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

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Timelines, Map Work, Activities, Recipes, Prayer Guide and more can be found on the CD-ROM in the back of your book.



# "THE CLASSICAL WORLD"

ITALY, GREECE, MALTA, AND THE BALKANS

KNOWLEDGE QUEST MAPS



**CROATIA**

**BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA**

**SERBIA**

**MONTENEGRO**

**MACEDONIA**

**ALBANIA**

**GREECE**

**TURKEY**

ZAGREB

BELGRADE

SARAJEVO

MOKRA GORA

BOBOTOV KUK

MOUNT LOVCEN

(KOSOVO)

PRIZREN

SHKODER

SKOPJE

DURRES

TIRANA

LAKE OHRID

BITOLA

THESSALONICA

MOUNT OLYMPUS

CORFU

**AEGEAN SEA**

**IONIAN SEA**

PINDUS MOUNTAINS

SKYROS

EUBOEA

(ATTICA PENINSULA)

CORINTH CANAL

ATHENS

(PELOPONNESE PENINSULA)

SARONIC GULF

MYKONOS

PAROS

NAXOS

IOS

SANTORINI

**SEA OF CRETE**

RHODES

CHANIA

HERAKLION

**CRETE**

KNOSSOS



DANUBE RIVER

ADRIATIC SEA

SPLIT

MOSTAR

DUBROVNIK

KOTOR

BAY OF KOTOR

CETINJE

BARI

**BLACK SEA**

TRACIA

**MEDITERRANEAN SEA**

*For my family, who believed in me, rejoiced  
with me and parted with me for two weeks  
while I explored the "Classical World." I can  
never thank you enough for that gift!*

*Todd, my beloved  
Nicole, my traveler  
Brady, my support  
Rachel, my helper  
Lydia, my enthusiast  
Autumn, my tender one  
Levi, my energy*

## Explore the Classical World: INTRODUCTION

Grab your passport and your map. Strap on your backpack and tie your shoes! In this book, the third in the Child's Geography series, we'll take a grand adventure through the countries that surround the sparkling Mediterranean Sea. This area was once known as The Classical World and is considered to be the birthplace of Western Civilization, that is, the "way of life" for all people living in the western hemisphere of our planet. These countries are both very old and very new at the same time. How can this be? They are old because the very first European colonies began and flourished in this little corner of the world. Did you know that the oldest wooden wheel has been found in Slovenia, a country in Europe, not the Middle East. They are new because country lines have been redrawn recently, new names have been given to them and new governments have been formed. Of course, the redrawing of imaginary lines on a map cannot change the people, culture or landforms of a geographical area. So, we will rediscover these old places together. Are you ready?

As we travel around the Classical World, we'll learn about Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, San Marino, Vatican City and Malta. Some of these countries are tiny islands and others are peninsulas that jut into the sea; some are hot and dry while others are cool and snowy; but each of these countries have at least one thing in common—these lands were the center of world power during the Classical Age, from over 2000 BC to AD 500. They also relied upon the Mediterranean Sea for travel, trade and conquest. It was known as The Great Sea in ancient times for it stretches from the Holy Land of Israel to the "very edge of the world" as it was considered then, which we know now as the Iberian Peninsula, or Spain. The ancient people didn't know there was any land further west than this. (In fact, Jonah tried to flee to Tarshish in Spain, because this was as far as anyone could travel back in his day. Do you remember what happened to him?) This great body of water is also where three continents meet—Africa, Asia and Europe.

While the Mediterranean is one great big salty sea, it is called by different names at various places. Here are the names of portions of the Mediterranean waters—Aegean Sea, Sea of Crete, Ionian Sea, Adriatic Sea, Tyrrhenian Sea, Ligurian Sea, Balearic Sea and the Alborian Sea. These eight seas all mix and run together in one great body of water, but like land, have different names at its different locations. We will concentrate on just the first five, as they are the ones that surround Greece, the northern Balkan countries, Italy, and Malta.

See the map on the next page!



### A FEW THOUGHTS BEFORE EMBARKING...

This book is a stand-alone book and can be read straight through without any additional resources. We have provided pronunciation and glossary assistance, along with photos and maps to help you get everything you need out of this volume. However, there are a few things that you should know...

1. This is Volume 3 of *A Child's Geography*. Two volumes precede it—*A Child's Geography: Explore His Earth* and *A Child's Geography: Explore the Holy Land*. These books do not need to be read in order, but they do complement each other nicely. The first two volumes were written by best-selling author Ann Voskamp. She set the stage for a great series of books that teach history and geography using a “living book” approach, engaging the reader while bringing greater understanding and appreciation for distant corners of our globe. *Explore His Earth* lays a foundation for geography by covering earth science topics such as components of our planet, layers of the atmosphere, continents and seas, tectonic plates, earthquakes, volcanoes, latitude, longitude and so much more. *Explore the Holy Land* dives straight down into the Middle East, exploring the beautiful countryside and exposing the cultures and people who live there.

2. Volumes 2 and 3 would be the perfect companions to an ancient history study. We hope to publish *The Far East* soon, then hopefully *Western Europe*, the *Viking Lands* and *England and Her Neighbors* in the near future. Ambitious, we know! But *A Child's Geography* is a GREAT way to study history and geography together in a seamless way.



3. A single volume of *A Child's Geography* can be studied over the course of a semester or an entire year. If you plan to use only one book this year, then aim to cover one chapter every two weeks. The first week, you can read the chapter and discuss the narration questions. The second week, you and your students can work on additional projects, such as writing in your journals, keeping a timeline, labeling maps, doing extra reading and tackling some fun projects, especially (I hope!) cooking up some of the recipes provided. If you would prefer to finish the book in half the time—one semester—then plan on spending one week on each chapter, reading the content and choosing one or two additional activities per country.

4. The extra activities are located on the CD-ROM in the back of your book. There, you will find timelines for each chapter, map labeling suggestions, hands-on activities (including authentic recipes), extra reading suggestions and an optional prayer guide.

5. A *Child's Geography* series is intended for students in 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades, but it can work equally well with middle school students. Feel free to adjust the activities and assignments according to the necessary grade level and/or maturity level.

6. This book is your book and you are the teacher. Please use this book, along with its many optional activities, as you see fit. We hoped to provide you with MORE than you need or want to do. That way, you can pick and choose what works best for your family or group of students. Our goal is to equip you with resources, not shackle you to a pile of extra work.

If you have any questions or comments, please send them to me at [terri@knowledgequestmaps.com](mailto:terri@knowledgequestmaps.com). I would love to discuss them with you. Oh, that reminds me... yes, I, Terri Johnson, am the author of this book. While Ann Voskamp began the series several years ago, she is unable to continue it at this point in her life. I hope that I have been able to do this volume justice, following on her heels and trying to fit into her awfully large shoes (no, her feet aren't big, but her reputation as an extremely gifted author is great indeed). Any mistakes that you find are mine alone. Anything that you love about the first two books and the series concept as a whole can be credited to Ann.

I hope that you enjoy this fascinating journey around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. I cannot wait to show these places to you. It will be like traveling there without leaving the comfort of your own home. Together, we will embrace new cultures and appreciate people different from ourselves. It will be an adventure you will not soon forget. Do you have your map? Let's go!



# ANCIENT GREECE





## GREECE, PT 1: ISLAND HOPPING

Long, long ago, on a small crescent-shaped island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, there lived a people called the Minoans [mi-NO-ens]. This ancient civilization grew and became a great power around 2500 BC. The Minoans lived on Crete for over one thousand years. They are believed to have built the earliest civilization in Europe shortly after the worldwide flood as recorded in Genesis 7. They lived in grand palaces and explored the Great Sea (as the Mediterranean was known at that time) in large sailboats. The Minoans are especially remembered for the way they celebrated special holidays. Young people displayed their bravery and acrobatic skills by vaulting over charging bulls!

Yes, the Minoans were a daring people, and Crete, which now belongs to the nation of Greece, is a great place to start our journey through the countries that surround the sparkling Mediterranean Sea.



Greek islands as seen from space. Photo courtesy of NASA.

Have you ever lain on your back on the soft grass and gazed up at the drifting clouds overhead? Sometimes the clouds look like cotton balls floating across the blue sky. This is what the central part of the Mediterranean Sea looks like. You would spy thousands of islands dotting the blue sea if you were to look down at it from above. Crete is just one of those many islands in the Mediterranean, but it is one of the largest.

So, to begin this journey, just as we begin all journeys, we will need a map. It is important to know where we are now and where we are going—or we might get lost!

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Grab your globe or use the map at the beginning of this book to locate the island of Crete. Its crescent shape makes it easy to find. Crete is the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean and is located below and between mainland Greece and Turkey. It sits like a jewel in the center of the enormous crystal sea!

Over 4,000 years ago, a seafaring people—the Minoans—founded and settled the island of Crete, which is 100 miles south of mainland Greece. The Minoans were master storytellers. Around their fires at night, they told of a king named Minos, the son of the

mythological god Zeus and his wife Europa. Minos was very clever, but also very cruel. This tyrant of a king built an elaborate maze, called a **labyrinth**, which became the home of the Minotaur, a creature with the body of a man but with the head and tail of a bull. This monstrous Minotaur was a ferocious man-eating beast. Every nine years, the cruel King Minos would send seven young men and seven young women to their doom down the corridors of the labyrinth. He wanted them to become hopelessly lost and disoriented before being eaten by the Minotaur monster. As you can imagine, the people of Crete were afraid of their king. They needed a hero!

Word of the Minotaur and the cruelty of King Minos spread far and wide until it reached the city of Athens on the mainland of Greece. The Prince of Athens, Theseus, also a son of the gods, despaired for his distant neighbors and resolved to slay the beast. Before another nine years had passed and before seven more men and seven more women would be sentenced to their doom, Prince Theseus set off across the seas with his black sail raised, promising his father that he would return with a white sail in its place to signal his safe and victorious return.

Once in Crete, Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, fell instantly in love with Theseus. When she learned of his plot to secretly take the place of one of the sentenced youths so that he might slay the dreaded Minotaur, she pleaded with him to reconsider his heroic plan. Theseus would not be dissuaded. But he promised her that if he survived and returned from the death maze, he would bring her back with him across the seas to Athens.

On the day he was to enter the labyrinth, Theseus, like all the others, was stripped of his weapons. With one final touch, Ariadne pressed into Theseus' hand a ball of string to help him find his way out of the labyrinth and back to her. Once inside, Theseus tied the string to the doorpost and pulled out



Photo courtesy of NASA, taken from the International Space Station. Notice the sun glint in the sea to the northwest of the island, which occurs from light reflecting towards the astronaut photographer.



Image of Theseus and the Minotaur on 6th-century black-figure pottery. Photo is public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

the small sword that he had concealed from the guards beneath his tunic. Following Ariadne's directions, he moved ever forward and ever downward, never to the left or to the right. At the center of the labyrinth, he met the hungry Minotaur and slashed him in the throat with his dagger, killing the monster instantly. Theseus managed to get himself and the other thirteen youths safely out of the labyrinth by following the string back to the entrance.

Once outside, he collapsed from exhaustion on the beach. In a dream, his mother, the goddess Athena, told him to sail quickly for Athens but not to bring Ariadne with him. Reluctantly, he followed her instructions, but in his misery at the loss of Ariadne, he forgot to raise the white sail. Theseus' father, King Aegean [ah-GEE-un], was anxiously awaiting his son's return. When he saw the black sail far off in the distance, he believed that Theseus had perished. In grief and despair, he jumped off a cliff into the sea and drowned. That region of the Mediterranean waters was named the Aegean Sea in his honor.

Back on Crete, Ariadne wept bitterly for the loss of Theseus.

This does not make for a very happy ending, but that is how the story goes... Or so we are told by famous ancient Greek storytellers such as Homer, Ovid, and Plutarch, who penned this exciting story and many others after hundreds of years of people telling them to their children and grandchildren—something we call “oral tradition.” Even today, the Cretans tell stories because they are a people proud of their heritage, their traditions, and their history.

After more than a thousand years, the Mycenaeans [my-se-NEE-ens] conquered the Minoans, who had been weakened by the terrible destruction of a tsunami—a massive wave that rolls across the sea in the aftermath of a large earthquake or volcanic explosion. Later, the island of Crete was taken over by the Romans, then the Byzantines, the Venetians and finally the Ottomans. Crete ruled itself for a short time about a hundred years ago and then joined forces with Greece before the beginning of World War I in 1914.

And that brings us to the Crete of today...



The kri-kri on the island of Crete.

Although Crete is now part of Greece, the islanders are unique and have their own way of speaking (dialect) and dressing, as well as distinct musical tastes. Families on Crete are large and have long histories. Not unlike the Montagues and Capulets, the feuding families of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, or the Hatfields and McCoys of Appalachia, the family clans of Crete are known for their long-standing quarrels with one another. Most families who live outside the cities have guns, whether or not they have permission. So, while we're traipsing through the countryside of Crete, we should stick to the roads and not trespass through a farmer's field!

The countryside of Crete, however, is lovely. The island is mountainous, and its mountain caps are blanketed with snow in the wintertime. From the tops of these jagged mountains, home to the kri-kri (a wild goat) and the Cretan wildcat, we have a breathtaking view of the wide Mediterranean Sea and the white beaches encircling the island. Natural harbors surround Crete,

providing **moorage** for boats of every size and kind, from small dinghies to towering cruise ships. Crete is a popular holiday destination for local and international tourists alike, as one in five travelers to Greece make a stop in Crete.

While we are in Crete, let's visit some landmark sites. On the northwest coast is Chania [HAN-ya] Town on Chania Harbor, a popular tourist destination and favorite stop for the locals. Let's take a walk through the narrow and colorful streets with their mixture of Venetian and Turkish architecture to see what the local **artisans** are selling. We can have a light breakfast at a quaint cafe, sip some Greek coffee or hop on a **catamaran** to visit some of the smaller islands nearby.

Now let's leave Chania and head east toward the middle of the island along the northern coast to the city of Heraklion [ear-RACK-lee-yon], Crete's largest city and its capital. We can see that the Greeks, Italians, and Turks have been here. During the Crusades, the Republic of Venice conquered the island of Crete and its footprint has been left behind. We see Venetian structures such as mighty fortresses, giant walls, and canal systems in the old city. Around the corner, we notice Turkish mosques



Photo in the public domain, taken by Tango7174, available at Wikipedia.org.

and government buildings dating from the time when the Ottoman Turks conquered the island—after 21 long years of siege during the 17<sup>th</sup> century (known as the Cretan War).

If we go just three miles south-east of the center of Heraklion, we reach the ancient ruins of the Palace at Knossos, the oldest and best-preserved ruins on the island and the fabled home of the cruel King Minos. If these walls could speak, they would tell stories indeed. Actually, the artwork that has been left behind does!



The north portico at Knossos, taken by Bernard Gagnon.

**Frescoes** of dolphins leaping through the sea and of youths bull-jumping adorn the walls and columns of this 3500-year-old palace.

As you may have already guessed, the bull was celebrated and worshipped by the ancient Minoans, as well as by other nearby Mediterranean civilizations. The scenes in these old frescoes show young athletes vaulting over bulls as part of a ceremonial ritual, not unlike how modern gymnasts flip, twist and turn over the vault during the Olympic games—only this vault moves! How would you like to leap over a charging bull? Watch an incredible Olympic vaulter at this link—<http://knowledgequestmaps>.





The island of Santorini (Thera). Image courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

[com/blog/2013/05/would-you-leap-over-a-charging-bull/](http://com/blog/2013/05/would-you-leap-over-a-charging-bull/)

The Minoan civilization was ultimately destroyed by a terrific and terrifying volcanic eruption on the nearby island of Thera (known as Santorini today) that resulted in a great tsunami in 1420 BC, around the same time that the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt down in Africa. The Minoan eruption of Thera was one of the largest volcanic explosions that ever occurred on Earth. It blew off half the island of Thera and devastated many of the surrounding islands as well, including the island of Crete. Its explosion and tsunami were likely felt in far-off Egypt.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Well, here we are in Greece, the birthplace of the Ancient Classical World. What do you think of it so far? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**The early Minoan civilization on Crete:**

*Tell me about King Minos, Theseus and the Minotaur. Have you read or watched any modern stories that remind you of this ancient myth? What do you think about bull jumping?*

**The geography of Crete:**

*What do you remember about the lay of the land - the shape, the interior, the coastline?*

**Must-see sites of Crete:**

*Tell me about Chania Town, Heraklion, and the ruins at Knossos.*

~::~::~~



Since Santorini (or Thera as it was known in ancient times) is one of the few **Cyclades** [ki-KLAH-dees] Islands with an airport, let's hop on a small jet and visit this volcanic island that caused such a stir in the Mediterranean waters in 1420 BC. This island also belongs to Greece. Did you know that there are 140 inhabited Greek islands? However, if you count every outcropping in the **Aegean Sea** (which is the northern part of the Mediterranean between Greece and Turkey), the count soars to over 3000!



Close-up view of Santorini (Thera). Image courtesy of NASA.

Santorini, located about 120 miles (200 km) southeast of mainland Greece, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Its picturesque towns perched high atop steep cliffs surrounding a sparkling lagoon, draw vacationers, photographers, and hikers from around the world. But don't let its beauty fool you! Santorini is home to the most active and dangerous volcano in the Aegean Sea. Volcanic eruptions have devastated this island and its neighbors on numerous occasions.

From the air, Santorini looks a bit like a "J" with two smaller islands lining its gap. Before the enormous Minoan eruption, Thera was probably one large circular island. Parts of its circle were blown to bits by the massive force of the explosion, forming a **caldera** in the middle. A caldera is a cauldron-like geological feature usually formed by the collapse of land following a volcanic eruption. In this case, the land collapsed right into the sea!

In fact, this "sinking into the sea" event of the greater portion of Ancient Thera may have inspired Plato's account of Atlantis. The islanders of Atlantis, according to Plato, were a great naval super-power from the sea beyond "the pillars of Hercules"—a people who had conquered a large portion of Europe and Africa and were now ready to attack Athens, Greece, on the mainland. They failed in their attempt to invade the Greek capital and, it is told, "after a day and a night of misfortune," the island of Atlantis sank into the sea. Indeed, a great volcanic explosion would certainly cause great misfortune! Ancient scholars never believed the tale, but many modern historians do, and the hunt for Atlantis continues to this day.

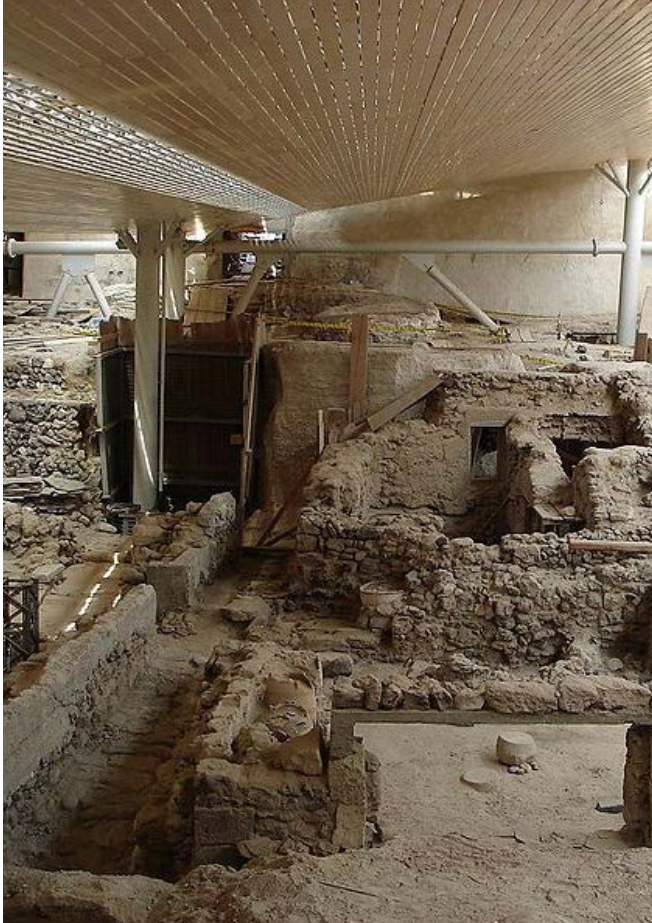


Photo of excavation site of Akrotiri courtesy of Klearchoskapoutsis at en.wikipedia.org.

Perhaps scholars need to look within the caldera of Santorini or maybe below the very rock of the island itself to find some clues. Rather recently, less than 50 years ago, the ancient town of Akrotiri [ack-row-TEE-ree] was discovered below the lava-rock on the southern end of the island (in the curve of the J), revealing a well-preserved Minoan settlement. Only a small portion of the town has been uncovered so far, yet a complex civilization has been revealed. Buildings up to three stories high, as well as streets, squares and staircases were found still intact. Houses in Akrotiri had a dual-pipe plumbing system, indicating that families enjoyed both hot and cold running water. Their hot water probably came from underground volcanic hot springs. Archaeologists have also discovered many colorful wall frescoes here along with other fine artwork such as painted pottery, carved sculptures and delicate jewelry. They have concluded that this was a wealthy and civilized society. Could it be that Plato was inspired by this advanced Minoan civilization that sank into the sea one terrible day in 1420 BC, triggering his account of Atlantis? What do you think?

Let's travel up the rocky coastline of Santorini from Akrotiri to the city of Fira [FEE-ruh]. This beautiful **whitewashed** city sits atop the cliff walls blanketing the bare rocks that overlook the blue lagoon. See the steep, zigzag footpath allowing visitors access to the town from the seaport 400 feet below? If you would rather not walk, you may ride a donkey to the top or take a ride on the cable car that transports guests from the terminal at the port to the city on the cliff.



On this rocky bluff, buildings appear to be stacked on top of one another and connected to each other with shared walls. Let's walk along the narrow streets through small passageways and staircases to browse the vendor stalls. Afterwards, we'll have lunch in an outdoor café with a blue umbrella over our table. It does not get more quaint or "Mediterranean" in appearance than this. Fira is the epitome of a Mediterranean Sea town with the warmth of a white-hot sun, the cool of man-made shade, the brightness of whitewashed buildings and the blue of the crystal sea. The sun is almost always shining here in Santorini, as the island only gets about twelve inches of rain each year.



Photo in the public domain, taken by Tango7174, available at Wikipedia.org.

Let's head back down that zigzag footpath to the port below. We'll hop on a ferry that will take us to another beautiful Greek island in the Aegean Sea. We'll travel north by ferry and pass the islands of Ios [ee-YOSS], Naxos, and Paros to arrive at Mykonos [MEE-ko-noss], a popular tourist destination for beach lovers, windsurfers, and photographers. Can you find all of these islands on your map?

As we step off our ferry, we can see why tourists flock to enjoy the beaches at Mykonos. The golden sand where the granite island meets the glistening waters of the Aegean Sea feels soft and luxurious



Image of Fira, courtesy of Wikimedia. Buildings in the Greek isles are usually whitewashed—painted with inexpensive mixture of slaked lime and chalk—to keep their interiors cool under the hot Mediterranean sun. The whitewash reflects the sunlight and keeps them cool to the touch. Domes are usually painted blue, or cyan, to represent the color of the sea and sky. The word "cyan" comes from the Greek word *kyanos*, which means "blue".



Image of Elias Beach on Mykonos, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

under our feet. Sunbathers line the beaches, escaping from the heat when necessary under umbrellas woven from palm fronds.

After a refreshing dip in the salty sea, it's time to see a little more of the island. Mykonos is the main city on this island with the same name and is located on the western coast. Although the buildings look decidedly Greek, we can still see influences of past civilizations as we walk the narrow streets of this old town. Mykonos was originally inhabited by the Carians [KAHR-ree-

ans], a group of people from Anatolia (Turkey). Later, the seafaring Phoenicians used this island as a trading post in their vast Mediterranean trade network. Still later, Egyptians inhabited the island, followed by the Ionians [eye-O-nee-ins], a major civilization of Ancient Greece.

Let's take a peek at Little Venice, a quaint old neighborhood on the west side of Mykonos Town. Here the buildings and houses are built so close to the water's edge that the balconies actually hang over the sea. Many of these dwellings were built several hundred years ago during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when pirating was still common and merchants needed to be able to load and unload their goods quickly before moving on to the next seaport.

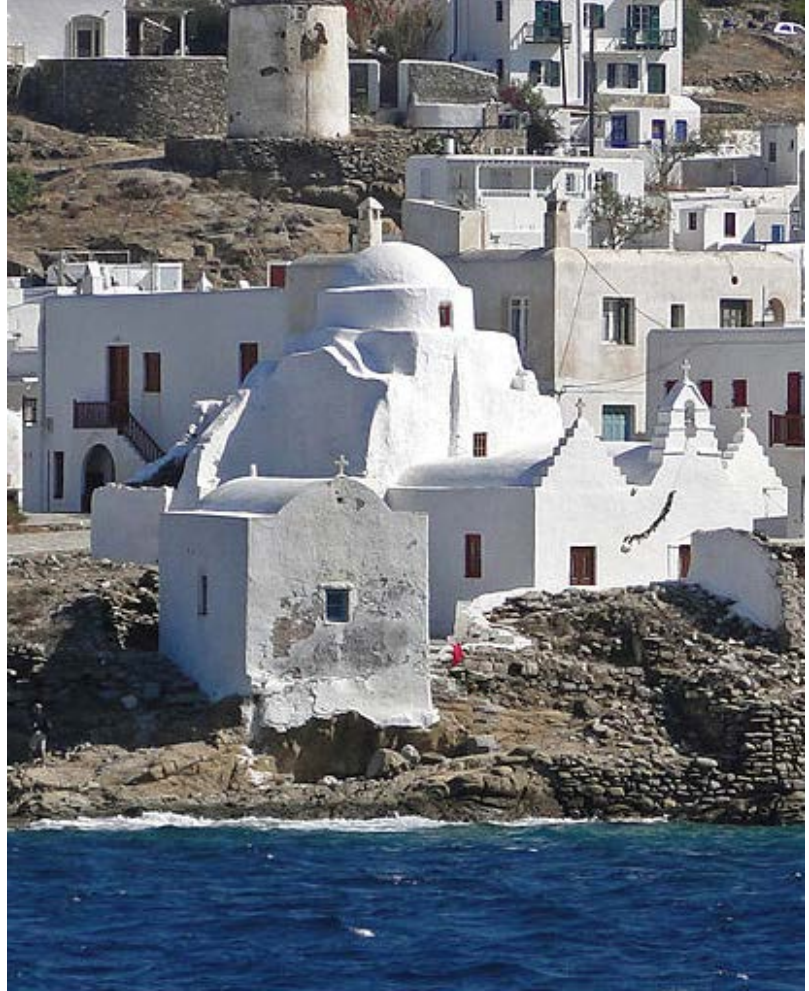


Photo in the public domain, taken by Zitumassen, available at Wikipedia.org.

Despite the pungent smell of seaweed and fish, travelers will often pay three times the going rate for a five-star ho-

tel just to stay in a small fisherman’s hut in Little Venice. This is a painter and novelist’s paradise as it stirs the imagination and takes us back in time to an older world of romance and adventure.

We have two more stops here in Mykonos before we continue on our journey through the Greek Islands. The oldest standing structure on the island is the Paraportiani [pa-ra-por-tee-AH-nee], the old church built in 1425 AD. This humble whitewashed church acted as a gateway through the thick medieval walls that encircled the old town of Chora (modern Mykonos). Its name, Paraportiani, means “Our Lady of the Side Gate.” Photographers flock to this landmark site to capture the essence of this impressive church, which has stood proud for nearly six hundred years.



The Paraportiani Church at Mykonos, taken by Bernard Gagnon.

As the sun begins to set, the lights of the city turn on, the music is turned up, and the party begins. It turns out that Mykonos is a center for party life and draws a crowd of nightclub hoppers. This doesn’t appear to be a good place for children (or for me either!), so let’s sneak out now before it gets too rowdy.

From the ferry, I can point out the last landmark I want you to see. The old windmills of Mykonos are giant sentinels guarding the island and can be seen from nearly any point in Mykonos as they stand proudly on a hill overlooking the town and busy harbor. Built by the Venetians during the sixteenth century, they were used primarily as grain mills. The mills have not been in operation since the middle of the last century (1950s), but they represent the economy and hardworking nature of a people who lived and worked here in days gone by. Are you interested to know how windmills operate to grind grain? Learn more from these videos—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/windmills-used-to-grind-grain/>.

I don’t know about you, but I am ready to leave the crowds and the tourists behind us and cruise north through the Aegean waters toward the Greek island of Skyros [SKEE-ross]. We pass the last of the



Two of the windmills at sunset, taken by Christina Milioni.

Cyclades and enter into more open waters. Standing at the rail of the ferryboat and looking out at the deep midnight blue waters, it is not hard to imagine the Achaeans [ah-KAY-ens] of Sparta (a city-state of Greece) setting sail across the sea to besiege the city of Troy in what is now the country of Turkey. We visited Turkey in our last adventure in *Explore the Holy Land*, the second volume of *A Child's Geography* on that wonderfully magic flying carpet. Do you remember that fantastic adventure?

Let me tell you this story...

The Spartan Greeks sailed furiously across the Aegean Sea to seek revenge on Paris, the man who insulted the Achaeans when he stole away their king's wife, Helen, to the distant city of Troy. In righteous anger, they lifted their battle cry and prepared to restore Helen to her rightful place, no matter the cost. The waters churned beneath their boats as it churns beneath ours. It was ten long years of siege before the Greeks finally defeated the Trojans through the clever use of the Trojan horse. Ten years of encampment outside the gates of Troy gave the Greeks plenty of time to think and this is the plan they conceived... What if they could build a great horse on wheels that could be presented to the Trojans as a peace offering? It would be so big that a great number of soldiers could be hidden inside its hollow belly. It was an outrageous but tempting plan. So, they built the horse, set it before

the gates of Troy then sailed their sparsely manned ships out to sea. The curious Trojans wheeled the horse inside their walled city to inspect the supposed gift more closely. How surprised the people of Troy must have been when they saw those clever Greeks spilling out from the inside of the towering wooden horse! This surprise attack won the battle and ultimately the war for the Greeks.

The gentle sway of the water, the hum of the ferry engine, and the satisfaction of a good story lulls us to sleep until we reach our last island stop.

Pulling into the Skyros harbor, the sun blazing golden on the eastern horizon, we notice that this is a very different island indeed. There are no crowds. And instead of bare rock, we are greeted with pine forests and empty beaches. Skyros is the southernmost island in the **archipelago** of **Sporades** [sp-RAH-dees]. The northern portion of the island is covered in pine forests, and its peak is called Mount Olympus. The southern half is bare and rocky. Its capital is also named Skyros (or Chora, as the locals refer to it) and is built along the slopes of a rocky butte overlooking the sea. Skyros is famous for its ancient Byzantine castle and monastery.



The earliest known depiction of the Trojan Horse, from the Mykonos vase ca. 670 BC. Image courtesy of Wikimedia.



Image of the city of Chora built along the slopes of a rocky butte, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

According to Greek Mythology, Theseus, our hero from the labyrinth on Crete, died here on this island of Skyros, as did the famous English poet Rupert Brooks. It truly is a peaceful place—a good place to spend one's final years.

How did you enjoy our hop around the Greek Isles? These are some fascinating islands, steeped in history and picturesque in landscape. If we had more time here in the islands, I would show you two more places—the islands of Rhodes and Corfu. Rhodes, the island of roses, is located in the southeast part of the Aegean Sea just off the coast of Turkey. It has a rich medieval past with strong fortresses, majestic castles, and serene monasteries to explore. Can you find it on your map?

Another island that I think you would find intriguing is Corfu, which is located on the other side of mainland Greece in the Ionian Sea. Corfu and its surrounding islands mark the northwest border of the nation of Greece. Corfu Town is the charming capital of Corfu and if you didn't know better, you might begin to wonder if you are in Italy instead of Greece. Of course, you wouldn't be far from Italy when on the island of Corfu. Check its location on your map. This island, along with so many other islands that surround Greece, was once under the control of the Republic of Venice and like the others,



has a Venetian flair.

It is time to head over to the mainland of Greece to continue our journey. There is so much more to see and learn about Greece.



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*The Greek Isles are spectacular, aren't they? What do you think of our visit to Greece so far? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Santorini (Thera):**

*Tell me about the great volcanic explosion on the island of Thera during the age of the Minoans. Can you imagine an explosion large enough to blow off half the island? Tell me about Plato's legend of Atlantis. Do you think he could have been inspired by the volcanic eruption on Thera? Tell me about Akrotiri. What was found there? What do you think of the beautiful city of Fira?*

**Mykonos:**

*What do you remember about the island of Mykonos? What would you most like to see - Little Venice, the windmills or the old church?*

**Skyros:**

*Tell me about the island of Skyros. How is it different from the other islands that we have visited so far? What do you think of the city of Chora, built on the side of a mountain? Would you like to live there?*



Photo of Chania Harbor, Crete is courtesy of Niki J. Photography.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Chapter 1 Timeline Events	
2500 BC	Growth of Minoan Civilization
1420 BC	Minoan Civilization of the Grecian island of Crete destroyed by tsunami, as a result of a devastating volcanic eruption on the Grecian island of Thera.
1425 AD	Paraportiani church built on the Grecian island of Mykonos in the town of Chora
16th C	Venetians built granary windmills on the island of Mykonos

## 2

### GREECE, PT 2: IN THE BEGINNING

As we disembark from our ferry onto the mainland of Greece, we spy a boy with his father selling sesame rings from a small wooden vendor cart sandwiched between the busy marina and the chic waterfront cafés. Since visiting some of the Greek islands and spending hours getting tossed about on the waters of the Aegean, we feel a bit disoriented. We ask the man and his son, “Which way is Athens and how far of a drive is it?”

“What is your hurry?” the man asks. “While our capital city is a feast for the eyes, the ears and the belly, there is much to see and do between here and there.” He winks good-naturedly and his son straight-



ens their hand-painted wooden sign that reads *KOULOURI* [koo-LOO-ree]. The yeasty and nutty smell of these beautiful sesame bread rings piled high atop their cart reminds us that we are hungry and we decide to buy a few.

“Yum, these are so good! So, do tell us, what is there for us to do before we reach Athens?” The father nods to his son who pulls out some folding chairs hanging from a peg on the side of his cart. He motions for us to sit and enjoy our snack.

“Are you just now arriving on the mainland of Greece?” We nod, our mouths full of the delicious bread. “Then you must start at the beginning.”

“Not far from here is the great mountain where the world began.” He pauses to let that sentence sink in. “Well, that is what our ancient forefathers used to think. The Ancient Greeks

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

believed that there were twelve gods and goddesses who ruled our world and even threw it into being from the mighty **Mt. Olympus**, just west of here. Of course, we—my son, Nikolos and I—we know that it was the spoken word of the one true God that brought the earth into existence as it is recorded in the first chapter of Genesis.” (Most Greeks are Christian by faith, belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church.)

The vendor continued, “But you must stop in the village of Litochoro [lee-to-HO-ro] at the base of Mt. Olympus, so that you can get a good look at it. It will take your breath away, really. It is almost 10,000 feet in elevation and capped with snow. Mt. Olympus is our tallest mountain. When you see the majesty of the mountain, you can appreciate why our ancestors believed it was the home of the gods, misled as they were.” He winks again and his leathery face breaks open into a wide smile. “Perhaps you will want to hike to the top? Thousands of people do it every year, but it’s a rigorous adventure.”

“What else?” I ask. “You have definitely convinced us to stop at Mt. Olympus, but are there other sights you think we should see on our way to Athens?”

“Yes,” he grins. “You should definitely see the monasteries at Metéora [met-TE-or-a] and the Oracle of Delphi. Our family has visited both of those sites. They are **UNESCO World Heritage sites** and are absolutely worth the stop. You may want to check out the island of Euboea too, on your way. It is very pretty with white beaches, steep cliffs and lush green forests. Don’t you think so, Nikolos? It is easy to get to. Just cross the Chalkida [kael-KEE-dah] Bridge and you’re there.”



I guess we ought to get going, but our view here of the waterfront is spectacular!

As he sees us licking our fingers for the remains of that toasted sesame flavor, Nikolos hands us extra napkins and asks us if we would like any more to eat.

Nikolos’ father continues, “You see, Euboea [you-BEE-ya]—Greece’s second largest island after Crete—is very close to the

mainland. In fact, many geographers believe it was attached to mainland Greece at one time, but was separated by a large and destructive earthquake. That is a reasonable assumption since it is located on a fault line. But it has been an island as long as we Greeks can remember. In fact, the first bridge to cross the Euripus [Yur-RIP-us] Strait was constructed during the Peloponnesian War around 400 BC.”

He pauses and rubs his chin.

“Well, those are our favorite stops between here and Athens, although there are plenty more. When you get to Athens, make sure you visit the **Acropolis** and **Mars Hill**. It is such an amazing privilege to walk in the very footsteps of the **Apostle Paul**, don’t you think?”

We smile and nod in agreement. Having long since finished our delicious snack, we thank our gracious hosts and decide that we must be on our way.

Nikolos shouts a kind farewell, “Drive safely. Look out for goats crossing the road!”

With that word of caution, we are on our way. In our tiny rental car, we follow the winding road to Litochoro, the small village with the big view. This is the base camp for the 10,000 hikers who make the trek to the top of Mt. Olympus each year.

Mt. Olympus is grand indeed! Isn’t our God amazing to create such marvels as we have seen so far—deep blue oceans, green valleys and majestic mountains?

According to Greek mythology, the twelve Olympian gods ruled from Mt. Olympus. Zeus was the king of the gods and the god of the sky and of thunder. With his wife Hera, the goddess of family, they had two sons: Ares [AIR-ees], god of war, and Hephaestus [hay-FEST-us], god of fire. Zeus had six other children as well—Dionysus [dy-oh-NEE-sus], Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Athena and Aphrodite. Finally, to bring the full number to twelve, there was Poseidon, god of the sea, and Demeter, goddess of nature. These two were the brother and sister of Zeus. Hades, the god of the underworld, is rarely



Satellite image showing Euboea on the right, and the Greek mainland on the left, courtesy of NASA.



Mt. Olympus rises 9,573 ft above sea level. Over 10,000 hikers make the trek to the top starting from the town of Litichoro, which took the name City of the Gods because of its location at the base of the mountain (image in public domain).

counted among the twelve Olympian gods, although he was another brother to Zeus.

The ancient Greeks believed that this **dysfunctional** family explained both the common and extraordinary events of life, such as love, birth, growth, **famine, war**, earthquakes and **thunderstorms**. Good things happened when the family got along, but destruction occurred when there was anger and fighting among them and when evil family members got the upper hand.

Greek mythology, the stories of the gods and goddesses who held council here on this magnificent mountain, dates back to the sixth century BC, around the time when Esther was Queen of **Persia** in modern-day **Iraq** to the east. Greek mythology makes its first written appearance in Homer's epic poems, The Iliad and The Odyssey. Remember Homer from our last chapter about the Greek islands? He wrote down the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. These myths may have been told even earlier during the **Greek dark ages**, but no writing remains from that time, only **geometric** shapes etched into pottery that have been dug up from the ground.

Here is one Greek myth that explains a common aspect of life—the seasons. One day Demeter and her daughter, Persephone [Per-SEF-oh-nee], were picking wildflowers in the field. Hades came along and stole Persephone away to his underworld home. While his action was wrong, he was good to her, and she grew to love him. But her mother Demeter was heartbroken without her. She searched the world over and could not find her beloved Persephone. She asked Zeus to help her, and he sent a messenger, Hermes, to the underworld to search for her there. He found her in pleasant spirits, but informed Persephone that her mother was grieving for her. Hades told her that she must go



*“Olympus was not shaken by winds nor ever wet with rain, nor did snow fall upon it, but the air is outspread clear and cloudless, and over it hovered a radiant whiteness.”* From *The Odyssey* by Homer.

and care for her mother, so she returned to the world of the living. Her mother leapt for joy, and the flowers of the field sprung up to celebrate the return of Persephone. However, Persephone had made a bargain with Hades, saying that she would return to him in due time. Several months passed, and she decided it was time to return to the underworld. Above, the trees and flowers withered and died at the loss of the beautiful Persephone as Demeter, her mother, wandered again in despair. To keep both Hades and Demeter happy, Persephone lived half of each year in the underworld and half of each year in the world above. Parents who lived in Ancient Greece told this myth to their children to explain why the seasons change—why there is new growth in the spring and the withering of nature in the fall.

Another tale they told explained the abundance of olive trees that grow all around this countryside. When a great and powerful city of Greece was seeking a **patron** god to protect it, Poseidon and Athena both volunteered. To help them decide between the two, the people of the city asked both Poseidon and Athena to present a gift. Poseidon, the god of the sea, gave the gift of seawater, which would allow the people to expand and trade with other countries. Athena, the goddess of war, offered the first domesticated olive tree to grow for food, oil and wood. According to Sophocles [SOF-oh-klees], an ancient Greek playwright, the olive tree is “the tree that feeds the children.” The citizens accepted Athena’s gift and named their city Athena (or Athens) after their new patron goddess. That is how the **capital** and largest city of Greece received its name.

This reminds me... we need to get going. We still have quite a bit of ground to cover before we reach the capital city.



Many olive trees in groves around the Mediterranean are said to be hundreds of years old, and some even as ancient as 2,000 years old (image of Greek olive grove is in the public domain).

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*What do you think of mainland Greece so far? Isn't Mt. Olympus breathtaking? The Ancient Greeks had some intriguing myths to explain the aspects of everyday life. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Mt. Olympus:**

*Tell me about the great mountain that is located on the mainland of northeast Greece. How tall is it? How many hikers climb it each year? Tell me about the 12 mythological gods and goddesses that lived on this mountain? Can you retell a story from Greek mythology?*

~::~::~~

Back on the road and heading south, we decide to save the monasteries of Metéora for later when we double back up through central Greece on our way to Albania. Our next stop is the Oracle at Delphi.

Running down through the center of Greece from north to south, like a backbone, is the Pindus mountain range. We'll stay on this side—the eastern side—for now. The interior of Greece, the re-



gion known as Thessaly and Central Greece, is rather mountainous, but dotted with rolling hills and wide green valleys. As we travel down through the Thessalian Plain, we can see that this is good land for growing grain and raising cattle and sheep. There are large farms and ranches scattered about the countryside. Flocks of goats and sheep nibble on the lush grasses fed by melting snows and rains from the Pindus Mountains. There are also orchards, both large and small, growing olive trees and nut trees, such as almond, pistachio, and walnut. It reminds me a little of the area just north of where I grew up in northern California. The temperature is pleasant, not too hot and not too cold, just right.

Heading toward Delphi on the main highway running north-south in Central Greece, we approach the coastal pass of Thermopylae [ther-MOP-uh-lee], which is translated as “The Hot Gates” [thermo=hot; pylae=gates]. This area is best known for the Battle of Thermopylae fought between the independent **city-states** of Greece and the mighty **Persian Empire** in 480 BC. This war had started twelve years earlier when Darius the Great of Persia wanted to conquer the whole known world and had reached the gates of



Image of Thessian Plain is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikipedia.

Greece. He was defeated at the first invasion attempt at the Battle of Marathon (more on that later). After he passed away, his son Xerxes (the husband of Queen Esther) took up his father’s design to conquer Greece and brought the full force of Persia down on Greece at this pass of Thermopylae for a second invasion attempt. The Greeks probably would have won this battle too, as they had the high ground and the gritty determination to defend their beautiful little country. But there was a traitor among their ranks who revealed a little-known path that led right behind the Greek lines. While Greece didn’t win this battle, they did go on to win the war on another day.

We’ll take an exit off the main highway and follow a winding mountain road until we reach Delphi. What we see takes our breath away. Opening before us is the slope of Mount Parnassus, the site of the Oracle of Delphi and the theater and temple dedicated to the god, Apollo. The temple was built here because, according to legend, this is the site where Apollo slew the Python, a fierce mythological dragon. To commemorate, athletes from all over Greece would gather and compete in the Pythian [PITH-ee-un] Games, one of four such competitions held on the Greek **peninsula** every four years. Winners of various athletic feats were crowned with wreaths woven from laurel branches. These ancient **games** began in 776 BC and continued for over a thousand years. They were the precursors to our **modern Olympic Games** held every four years.

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Standing on the steps of the theater and gazing down at the temple of Apollo, it is almost hard to believe that these ruins have been here for nearly 3,000 years. In ancient times, people came from every corner of Greece to meet with the **Oracle**—an elderly woman chosen from among the poor peasants of the area. This “oracle” was supposed to have magical powers and insight. It was believed that she could hear Apollo’s voice when she sat over the very spot where the Python dragon was slain. People wanted to talk to Apollo about everything under the sun—from whom their next ruler should be to how to choose a good wife. And so the Oracle was consulted before any big decisions were made in Greece, especially such things as declaring war or establishing a new **colony**, a Greek outpost on a distant shore of the Mediterranean.

When a major earthquake rumbled through the area in 83 BC, the temple crumbled and fell into disrepair. About 150 years later, when **Nero** became the **emperor** of the **Roman Empire**, he took 500 of the finest **statues** from Delphi to Rome. Some of these were later returned to Delphi.

I lift my gaze from Apollo’s temple at the base of this theater and look towards the heavens. I am so thankful that I do not consult a god who speaks from one single spot on earth but that I can pray to God who speaks to me any time, any place, as long as I have ears to hear. Psalm 121 says, “I lift up my





Images of the Oracle of Delphi (left) and the Plain of Marathon (above) are in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.

eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.”

Let’s go to Athens and see what adventures await us there!

We are now traveling southeast down the Attica Peninsula, the most populous region of Greece. Attica is a triangular-shaped peninsula, bordered by the Kithairon [KITH-hair-ron] Mountains to the north, the island of Euboea off its eastern coast, and the Saronic Gulf at its southwestern coast. It was once connected to the Peloponnese by the Isthmus of Corinth but is now separated by a man-made canal. The sprawling city of Athens, one of the world’s oldest cities, dominates the Attica Peninsula. Before reaching Athens, we’ll pass by the town of Marathon. That sounds like a running race, doesn’t it? Let me tell you how the race got its name...

In the year 490 BC, Darius the Great of Persia was attempting to conquer the whole known world. After many successful battles across Lydia (modern-day Turkey) and the Aegean Sea, Persia was ready to take on Greece. Persia’s first invasion attempt occurred on the shore of the Attica Peninsula at a little town called Marathon. The Greek soldiers successfully blocked the two exits from the Marathon Plain for five days, tiring the Persians who finally admitted a temporary defeat and withdrew their fleet from the bay. A messenger was sent to announce the victory to the citizens of Athens, twenty-six

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

miles to the west. It is said that he ran the entire distance from Marathon to Athens without stopping. But moments after declaring his message “Nenikēkamen” [nay-nee-KEE-kah-men] (“We have won!”) to the city, he collapsed and died from exhaustion.

When the first modern Olympics were held in Athens in 1896, the Olympic Committee decided that an endurance race would be included which would follow the footsteps of the ancient messenger who declared the good news to Athens in 490 BC. So, a twenty-six-mile marathon race was run from Marathon to Athens during the first modern Olympic Games and has continued ever since. But you don't have to wait for an Olympic Games to watch a marathon. Over five hundred marathon races are held throughout the world each year.

As we enter Athens, we are struck by its contrasts—it is both old and new, small and large, crowded yet spread out. The most impressive site by far is the Acropolis, an ancient **citadel** situated on a rocky outcropping high above the city. It includes the ruins of several ancient civic and religious buildings, the most famous being the Parthenon, the temple dedicated to the goddess Athena. Located at its base is Plaka, the old town of Athens—old but not as old as the Acropolis. Not too far from the Plaka, we can see ultra-modern graffiti-marked buildings side-by-side with the ancient ones.

Let's find a coffee shop in Old Town and enjoy the sights, sounds, and tastes of this ancient city. Winding our way through a maze of narrow cobblestone streets lined with little shops and crowded



Image of the Acropolis in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

cafés, we are surprised when we come to a large open square. We find a place to sit and enjoy some Greek coffee and **baklava** at a little outdoor café with an amazing view of the Acropolis. (Greek coffee has gritty grounds at the bottom. It is strong and slightly bitter, so you may want to add some cream and sugar to yours to make it taste better.) Our wooden chairs are hard and a little uncomfortable, but the people who pass by, who smile or nod a greeting, warm our hearts and make us want to stay awhile. The people of Greece are very friendly and persuasive. They laugh. They smile. They argue. They pat each other hard upon the back. Such exuberance! We keep our emotions much more controlled and checked where I come from. Yet, I like this difference in cultures and would like to linger awhile longer.

It's a beautiful but windy day in Athens. It seems that most days here are beautiful, temperature-wise. Athens has a subtropical Mediterranean climate, which means that it is hot and dry in the summer and the winters are cool and somewhat rainy. Athens gets about sixteen inches of rain each year, much less than other cities in the **Balkans** because Mt. Parnitha creates a **rainshadow** for the city. A rainshadow is the dry area on the **leeward** (or back) side of a mountain, blocking the passage of rainclouds and casting a "shadow" of dryness. In comparison, Tirana in Albania to the north receives over three times more rainfall than Athens; and Shkodra, also in Albania, gets about five times as much rain.

The coffee and pastries are delicious and the people-watching fascinating, but let's take in a few more sights in this city of wonders. Not far from here is the Ancient Agora, the meeting place for the Ancient Greeks. Public meetings were held here in this open square in true democratic fashion. City councils and courts of law met here beginning around 509 BC when the city-state of Athens became a democracy. The jurors were chosen among the adult male citizens of Athens and anyone who hap-



Image of Acropolis courtesy of Niki J. Photography.



Image of the Agora in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

pened by the Agora could witness a court trial or city council meeting. The word **agoraphobia** gets its name and meaning from the Agora. It means a fear of open spaces or public gatherings. So, if you are agoraphobic, then the Agora isn't the place for you.

Just to the southwest of the Agora is the hill of the Areopagus, also known as the “Rock of Ares,” which functioned as the high court of appeals in early ancient times. Later, during Roman times, it was given a new name—Mars Hill—to honor the Roman god of war, Mars. The Apostle Paul stood upon this hill and looking out over the Agora and towards the Acropolis, proclaimed, “Athenians, I see that you are very religious. As I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—but I am here to tell you about Him. The one true God made the whole world and everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth and doesn't dwell in temples made from human hands. Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything. He Himself gives life and breath to all things.” (Acts 17:22-24)

This was a radically new concept for the Ancient Greeks, but struck a deep and profound chord with them. Paul went on to explain about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and how a God bigger and more powerful than the ones that they had invented through their stories and myths could save them from their sins once and for all. After Paul finished his sermon, many Athenians became followers of Jesus and friends to Paul.

I get chills just thinking about it. This city is so historically rich, one of the oldest cities on the planet, so well-preserved and full of life. These old neighborhoods, wide plazas, rocky outcroppings and ancient ruins are so breathtaking. Our western culture and democratic societies sprang up from this center of the Classical World. This is our heritage, our history, our ancestry. We were once shackled

by the trappings of ancient **polytheism** (belief in many gods), but were rescued by a Savior who was not created by human hands or dependent upon mortal men. He reached down into our chaos and brought us order and life.

The bright Athens sunshine and the warmth of the dry air invite us to bask in this amazing hope. We are God's children, whether we live in the Balkans, the Holy Land, or the Americas. We are united in this. I smile and nod my head to the passers-by engaged in animated conversation and give you a hearty pat on the back as I revel in this truth!

Let's see what we can find on the other side of the Isthmus of Corinth, the land bridge that connects Athens on the Attica Peninsula with the Peloponnese.

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**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Isn't Greece an old and fascinating place? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*



Image of Mars Hill courtesy of Niki J. Photography.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

### **Topography:**

*What is the Thessalian Plain like? What mountain range runs from the North to the South of Greece like a backbone? Where is the Attica Peninsula? What big city is located there?*

### **Thermopylae:**

*What can you tell me about the Battle of Thermopylae? How did the race called "marathon" get its name? Tell me about first marathon runner and his ambitious run to Athens. What are the similarities and differences between his run and a modern marathon run?*

### **Athens:**

*What do you remember about Athen's climate? Can you explain what a rainshadow is? What is the name of the big rocky bluff that rises high above Athens skyline? Which god or goddess was the Parthenon built for? Can you tell me what polytheism means? What was the Agora? What does it mean to be agoraphobic? What famous man of the Bible spoke on the Rock of Ares or Mars Hill?*



Image of steps to Mars Hill courtesy of Niki J. Photography.

Chapter 2 Timeline Events	
8th C, BC	Iliad and Odyssey of Homer composed
776 BC	First Olympic Games held
509 BC	Public democratic meetings held at open square of Agora
490 BC	Battle of Marathon of the Greco-Persian Wars
480 BC	Battle of Thermopylae of the Greco-Persian Wars
400 BC	First bridge crossing the Euripus Strait constructed (during Peloponnesian War)
83 BC	Earthquake destroys Temple of Apollo
1896	First modern Olympic Games held in Athens



# 3

## GREECE, PT 3: THE FOUR-FINGERED HAND

When I was little, I liked to draw pictures of people, usually my family. But the hands were so hard to draw. Usually they ended up too big and the fingers looked too round and chubby, more like balloons than fingers. If I had known that the Peloponnese Peninsula of Greece looked like a hand, I could have traced it and the hands in my pictures would have looked pretty good. Not perfect though, because the Peloponnese only has four fingers. It is missing a thumb!

Take a look at your map of Greece and notice the portion of land called the Peloponnese. It has three peninsulas jutting south and one more stretching to the southeast. It looks like a hand without a thumb. Or maybe it has a thumb, but it is missing an index finger. What do you see when you look at the shape of the Peloponnese?



The Peloponnese peninsula. Image courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

The Peloponnese, known as Achaia [ah-KAY-uh] in ancient times, is considered a peninsula because the four-mile-wide Isthmus of Corinth connects it to the Attica Peninsula where Athens is located. An **isthmus** is a land bridge that connects two larger landmasses, in this case two peninsulas. Do you remember what a **peninsula** is? It is a portion of land that is bordered by water on three of its sides, but still connected to the mainland. However, the Peloponnese is technically surrounded on all sides by water. How could this be, you ask? Well, it touches water on all sides only because a man-made **canal** was dug right through the isthmus so that boats could take a shortcut from the Ionian Sea to the Aegean Sea without having to sail around the peninsula. Now, what do we call a landmass that is com-



pletely surrounded by water? An **island**, right? Still, no one calls the Peloponnese an island because the waterway that separates the peninsula from Attica is narrow, shallow, and man-made. You can see it from the air. It is the waterway that is as straight as an arrow. Can you spot it?

Throughout history, sailing around the Peloponnese Peninsula was a treacherous ordeal, as strong gales frequently blew up around the jutting **headlands**, smashing ships onto the rocky coast. It was



Excavated western end of Diolkos road close to the Gulf of Corinth, courtesy of Wikipedia.org.

the Ancient Greeks who dreamed up a shortcut to connect the calm waters of the Gulf of Corinth to the Saronic Gulf. Find these two gulfs on your map. A shortcut would make sense, wouldn't it? A tyrant of Corinth named Periander made the first attempt at a shortcut—a canal—in the seventh century BC. He soon abandoned the project, blaming the failure on technical difficulties. Instead, he constructed a stone ramp and **portage road** across the isthmus. This allowed ancient vessels to be rolled across the neck of land on logs; much like the Egyptians rolled their blocks of granite when building the **pyramids**. This portage road was called Diolkos [dee-OL-kos] and you can still see remnants of it alongside the modern canal. About seven hundred years after the Diolkos was constructed, the Roman Emperor Nero ordered six thousand slaves to hand-dig a canal with spades. They advanced about half a kilometer (547 yards) during that first year, and then Nero died. His successor abandoned the project because it was too expensive.

And so the canal was never finished and the old Diolkos road continued to be used for the hard work of dragging ships overland for hundreds, even thousands, of years. Then in 1893, after Greece won its independence from the Ottoman Empire, the canal was finally completed following eleven years of construction.



Image of submersible bridge over the Corinth Canal in Greece taken by Aspasia Coumiotis.

Let's cross the canal and see what's on the other side on this four-fingered peninsula. We can cross

by train or by car on one of the five bridges spanning the canal. We'll cross on one of the submersible bridges located at either end of the canal. A **submersible bridge** is a type of movable bridge that lowers into the water when a ship is coming. It is a rather unique type of bridge as most bridges spanning a canal or waterway lift or rise up to allow ships to pass underneath. Here comes a ship! We'll have to wait to cross over the canal. Of course, we don't mind a bit, because we can watch the bridge lower, lower, lower, and then disappear below the surface of the water. After several minutes, the large ship passes, and our bridge seems to magically rise from the water until it reaches the top of the canal and becomes level with our roadway. The line of waiting traffic is now free to pass over the bridge. You can watch the bridge in action here—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/submersible-bridge-on-the-corinth-canal/>.

After we drive past Corinth, the modern city and the ancient village of the same name, we head into a mountainous region. The Pindus mountain range that runs down through central Greece like a backbone continues right down through the Peloponnese Peninsula. In fact, the Pindus mountain range continues across the sea and ends on the island of Crete. Nearly 80% of Greece is covered in mountains or rolling hills, making it one of the most mountainous countries in Europe. The jagged coastline is steep and rocky, the deep blue waters littered with the remains of **shipwrecks** and ancient treasure hidden below.

The Peloponnese Peninsula was home to the legendary Spartans from the ancient city-state of Sparta. They were the sworn enemy of the Athenians. These two city-states really didn't like each other at all; each thought the other too powerful, too close, and too different. While the Athenians were demo-



Image of Peloponnese coastline in the public domain, courtesy of Wikipedia.org.

cratic, artistic and scholarly, the Spartans were strong, militant and swift. In the English language, the word **spartan** means, “sternly disciplined and rigorously simple, frugal, or austere.” Our English word comes from the Ancient Spartans, who sacrificed food and comfort for the glory of discipline and honor.

Perhaps you are wondering what it would be like to grow up in Ancient Sparta? All boys were required to leave home at the age of seven and enter a **military academy** where they trained to become **warriors**. The boys lived together under strict conditions. Their food was rationed so that they were always hungry. They were expected to steal and learn other survival skills. The boys who showed the most leadership and survival skills were moved into the secret police. At the age of twenty, young men became full-time soldiers until the age of sixty. Spartan warriors were known for their long hair and red cloaks, which intimidated their foes.

Spartan girls were raised at home and were allowed more freedoms than in other Greek civilizations. They were formally educated and allowed to participate in athletic competitions, including **javelin throwing** and wrestling. Young women also sang and danced competitively. As adults, Spartan women were allowed to own property and personal **slaves**, who relieved them of much of their domestic responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning and making clothing.

While the Spartans were growing in strength and military might on the Peloponnese Peninsula, the Athenians were growing in culture and democratic refinement on the Attica Peninsula just across the Isthmus of Corinth. Their societies clashed in every way and eventually the two city-states went

to war in 431 BC. The war was long and ended with a Spartan victory in 404 BC. Their disciplined military society as a whole, coupled with each warrior's personal sacrifices, won the day for Sparta.



Image of Spartan ruins in Achaia in the public domain, courtesy of Wikipedia.org.

Let's make one more stop before we leave the southern portion of Greece known as Achaia. It is the town of Olympia, the home of the ancient Olympic Games.

This town built an athletic complex to host the most famous athletic competitions in history. The Olympic Games were first held in 776 BC and continued every four years for more than a **millennium** (that is, 1000 years). Athletes came from all over Greece and the surrounding regions to compete in these historic games.

While only ruins remain today, we can walk around and see the buildings that were built to house the athletes and hold their competitions. A massive **hippodrome** hosted horse and chariot racing, and another large stadium featured field sports, such as foot races, hurdles and jumping competitions. We also see the remains of ancient temples dedicated to Zeus and Hera; the **Gymnasium**, a gathering place for intellectual conversation and for exercise; **hostels** for living accommodations; **public baths** for social and cleansing purposes; various government buildings; and palaces for royalty and diplomats to live in luxury while enjoying the festivities.

This Olympic compound was large and accommodated thousands of visitors who came to watch the games. Because the games did not move around to different host cities like our modern Olympics do, the Greeks could re-use their Olympic complexes every four years.

~::~::~~

**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*This region of Greece is steeped in history. I can't wait to hear what you will tell me about...*



1: North-East Propylon – 2: Prytaneion – 3: Philippeion – 4: Temple of Hera – 5: Pelopion – 6: Nymphaeum of Herodes Atticus – 7: Metroon, – 8: Treasuries – 9: Crypt (arched way to the stadium) – 10: Stadium – 11: Echo stoa – 12: Building of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II – 13: Hestia stoa – 14: Hellenistic building – 15: Temple of Zeus – 16: Altar of Zeus – 17: Ex-voto of Achaeans – 18: Ex-voto of Mikythos – 19: Nike of Paeonius – 20: Gymnasion – 21: Palaestra – 22: Theokoleon – 23: Heroon – 24: Phidias' workshop and paleochristian basilica – 25: Baths of Kladeos – 26: Greek baths – 27 and 28: Hostels – 29: Leonidaion – 30: South baths – 31: Bouleuterion – 32: South stoa – 33: Villa of Nero



**The Peloponnese Peninsula:**

*What is a peninsula? An isthmus? A canal? What does the Peloponnese Peninsula look like? Is it located in the northern or southern part of Greece? What connects the Peloponnese to the Attica region where Athens is located?*

**Submersible Bridge:**

*Tell me about the canal that crosses the Isthmus of Corinth. How many bridges span the canal? What is a submersible bridge? Explain how it works. What is the Diolkos?*

**The Spartans:**

*Tell me about the ancient city-state of Sparta. Would you enjoy growing up in Sparta? What would you like? What wouldn't you like?*

**Ancient Olympia:**

Tell me about the ancient city of Olympia. Describe how the ancient Olympic Games were like our modern games. How were they different? Describe a couple of the buildings in the ancient Olympic village.

~::~::~~

It's time to drive north and leave this region of Greece by way of the one bridge located on the northern coast of the peninsula—the Charilaos Trikoupis [ha-REE-la-oss tree-KOO-pis] Bridge near the city of Patras. Nearly two miles in length, this bridge is the longest multi-span cable bridge in the world, connecting the towns of Rio and Antirrio. Looking out the window, it is mesmerizing to watch the thick cables as we pass by each one. It's very windy today in this gorge, and when we slow for some traffic congestion, it feels as if the bridge is swaying. Perhaps it is, just a little! This bridge was built to withstand and absorb **seismic** activity, up to 7.0 on the **Richter** scale. The feeling is a bit sickening, as we are fairly high up, but we are confident that this bridge is sturdy and constructed to accommodate large amounts of traffic, gusty winds and strong earthquakes. In fact, this bridge would be one of the safer places during an earthquake!

Do you remember the street vendor selling *koulouri* (sesame bread rings) who told us that we must stop at the monasteries at Metéora? Let's go there now. We'll be driving along some winding mountain roads to get there so, why not roll down the window, get some fresh air and enjoy the view.



Image of the Charilaos Trikoupis bridge in the public domain, courtesy of Wikipedia.

It's usually not wise to read a book on roads such as these or you might get carsick.

In a way, we are traveling forward in time as we wind our way up the Pindus Mountains to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site** of Metéora. We've learned about the Ancient Greeks while visiting Attica and the Peloponnese; now we'll find out more about a faction of Greek **monks** who lived during the more recent Middle Ages—the era of knights and castles. Over a

thousand years ago, in the ninth century AD, an **ascetic** group of **hermit** monks moved up to the **limestone pinnacles** known today as Metéora. They were trying to get away from all of the worldly influences and distractions of their day.



These holy, **solitary** men were not the first people to live in this pillared landscape, but they are the most extraordinary. They lived in the **hollows** and **fissures** of the rock towers, some as high as 1800 feet (550 meters) above the valley floor below. Because of this great height, along with the sheer cliff walls, all but the most determined visitors were discouraged from calling. Each of the cave-dwelling hermits led a life of solitude, but they did meet together on Sundays and other special holidays to worship and pray in the chapel built at the base of a rock known as Dhoupiani [doo-pi-AH-nee].

A few hundred years later, when Turkish raiders were threatening Central Greece, the monks of Metéora determined to build a refuge that would provide them with greater protection. In total, they built twenty **monasteries** on the very tops of these pillars. To gain access, they dangled long **rope ladders**, which were drawn up whenever they felt threatened. The monks believed that entering the monasteries should be an

exercise in faith, so they only replaced the ropes “when the Lord let them break.” Woe to the monk on the ladder when the ropes began to creak and tear!

Today, only six of the monasteries remain. Some fell into disrepair over the years and others were destroyed by bombings during WWII. Four of these housed men while **nuns** lived in the other two. Until recently, these lofty **eyries** remained very medieval and inaccessible from below. Supplies were transported to the monks and nuns using





baskets on ropes. Then, in the 1920s, steps were cut into the rocks and bridges were built to span **chasms** allowing easier access to the medieval hermitages. These fortresses are no longer used for religious purposes or as shelters from danger. The monasteries are open to the public so that travelers like us can understand an earlier time in history and have a peek into a different way of living.

Let's continue our journey to the east, down through the mountains, past Mt. Olympus and Katerini where we first disembarked from our ferryboat. If we continue north and east, we should arrive at Thessalonica [AKA Thessaloniki], the second largest city in Greece and the capital of the northern region of Macedonia. The road signs are not translated into English in these parts, so it is easy to miss a turn and get lost. Now we understand the phrase, "It's all Greek to me," as the Greek alphabet is very different from the Latin one we are used to.

Thessalonica received its name in 312 BC when it was named after Alexander the Great's sister, Thessalonike, and means "Victory!" This city is a major transportation hub and port city for southeast Europe. It is also famous for its festivals and cultural events. People come from all over the world to attend its fairs, festivals and trade shows.



Thessalonica is mentioned in the Bible in the book of Acts. In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote the first letter of the New Testament to the Thessalonians from another city in Greece, probably either Corinth or Athens. Paul wrote this **epistle**, or letter, to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica to continue being strong in their faith and to set good example for others. He writes in the first chapter of I Thessalonians, “You have become an example to all the believers in Greece, throughout both Macedonia (northern Greece) and Achaia (southern Greece). And even now, the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for everywhere we go we find people telling us about *your* faith in God.” (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, emphasis mine)

During the days of the early Christian Church, Thessalonica was an important city for its work in spreading the gospel message around the Mediterranean Sea and eventually the whole world.

Oh, there is so much to do and see here in the country of Greece. But we must press on and visit some other countries in the **Balkans**. Our next stop is Macedonia and we will travel by train from Thessalonica to Skopje [SKO-pch], the capital city. We can look out our windows as we travel through the

ancient land of Macedonia. This is beautiful countryside!



The name “Macedonia” is a little confusing because it refers to at least three regions, sometimes four. The region of Northern Greece is known as Macedonia. Also, there is a country north of Greece that is named Macedonia (Officially FYROM—Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Then there is the ancient Empire of Macedonia, which was expanded greatly by a ruler named Philip II of Macedon to include all of the land belonging to Greece. Later, his son, Alexander the Great, expanded this Macedon empire further to include the whole known world at the time, from Greece in the west to India in the east, even spreading south to include the mighty Kingdom of Egypt.

Map of Macedonia in the public domain, courtesy of Wikipedia.org.

Clearly, Macedonia is more than just a place on a map. It is a people of determination and purpose. It is a spirit of pride and innovation. But those eyelids of yours are looking heavy. Perhaps you should close your eyes for this leg of the journey. Before you know it, we'll be in Macedonia. I'll wake you when we get there.



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*This region of Greece is intriguing. I can't wait to hear what you will tell me about...*

**The Charilaos Trikoupis Bridge:**

*Did the description of the Charilaos Trikoupis Bridge scare you just a little? How would you feel driving over it? Tell me about the bridge and why it sways.*

**Metéora:**

*Tell me about the monasteries in Metéora. What can you tell me about the life of a monk living there during the Middle Ages? Would you like living in a place like that?*

**Macedonia:**

*How many 'Macedonias' are there? What areas have been called Macedonia? How are they different? Who was the city of Thessalonica named after?*



Chapter 3 Timeline Events	
9th C, BC	An ascetic group of hermit monks moved to Metéora, to get away from all worldly influences and distractions.
776 BC	First Olympic Games held
7th C, BC	First attempt to build canal between Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf; when the attempt failed, the Corinthian tyrant Periander instead built the portage road, Diolkos.
431 BC	Wars between Athens and Sparta
404 BC	Sparta conquers Athens
312 BC	Thessalonica named by Alexander the Great after his sister, Thessalonike
67 AD	Roman emperor Nero attempts to build canal between the gulfs, personally removing the first basketful of debris after striking the ground with his pickaxe; Nero died shortly thereafter, and construction came to a halt.
1893	Corinth Canal was built by newly independent Greek state
1920's	Steps cut into limestone rocks to provide monks and nuns better access to their hermitages at Metéora

# 4

## MACEDONIA: A LAND OLDER STILL

We are traveling due north into the small country of Macedonia [Ma-suh-DOE-nee-uh]. Have you heard of it before? While the country lines of Macedonia have changed considerably over the years, some very important events in world history have taken place within its shifting borders. In fact, you have probably read several stories that happened in the land of Macedonia, a name that comes from the Greek language, meaning “tall people” or “mountain people.” Macedonians certainly live in the mountains, but I do not know if they are particularly tall.

While we wait for our train to pull into the station in the capital city of Skopje, we can talk about some world-changing events that happened here in this small country. The man that put Macedonia on the map in ancient times was Alexander the Great. We call him “great” because he controlled the largest empire the world had ever known. It is said that Alexander conquered the whole “known” world. This



Alexander fighting the Persian King, Darius III. Alexander Mosaic located in the Naples National Archaeological Museum.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

means that every land and country that the people of the Classical World knew were under the sole power of one man, Alexander the Great, and his army.

Alexander was born in the city of Pella in Macedonia in 356 BC. His father was King Philip II of Macedon. Alexander was tutored until the age of sixteen by none other than the famous Greek philosopher, Aristotle. When he turned twenty, his father was **assassinated** and Alexander became king. With a strong kingdom and an experienced army, Alexander began to launch his father's plans to extend the kingdom. First, he invaded the vast empire of Persia, then continued east into India and south into Egypt. Within ten years, his kingdom stretched from the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the Himalayan Mountains in central Asia!



*Saint Paul* by Bartolomeo Montagna (1450-1523)—  
Image courtesy of Wikimedia.org

Alexander founded many cities (naming many of them *Alexandria* after himself and one after his horse *Bucephalus* [byew-SE-fa-lis]) and spread Greek culture throughout his empire. He has been studied and honored throughout the years for his swift military campaigns and strong leadership style.

At the young age of thirty-two, Alexander the Great died of a fever in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. After his death, his vast kingdom was divided between his four generals, Cassander [ka-SAN-der], Lysimachus [lie-SIM-uh-kus], Ptolemy [TOL-em-ee], and Seleucus [sil-OO-kus].

Four hundred years later, another great man came to Macedonia and changed the world too. His name was Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul was traveling and preaching in the country of Turkey when he had a vision. In the vision, a man asked Paul to visit Macedonia to help the people who lived there (Acts 16:9). Paul answered the call. He left Turkey, which is in Asia, and journeyed to Macedonia, which is in Europe, to share God's love and message.

Paul's visit to Macedonia was one of the most important events in his life and for the Christian Church. He preached in a city called Philippi, which was then part of Macedonia. This was the first city in Europe to hear the Apostle's teaching. It was in Philippi that Paul met Lydia. She was a seller of purple cloth and other fine goods. The Apostle Paul baptized Lydia, and she became the first per-

son in Europe to be converted to Christianity. Her home was the first place in Europe that a Christian church met together to worship.

Later, Paul and his friend and fellow missionary Silas, were thrown into prison in Philippi. At midnight, an earthquake shook the land. The prison doors swung open and the chains on the prisoners came loose. The jailer awoke and saw the prison doors wide open. Assuming the prisoners had escaped, he drew his sword to kill himself! But Paul stopped him, shouting, “Do not harm yourself! We are all here!” The jailer was so relieved and so amazed by the work of the Lord and the kindness of His people, that he became a Christian right there in that dank dungeon cell. Even though it was the middle of the night, the jailer took Paul and Silas to his home and washed and dressed their wounds. Then he and his entire family were baptized because they believed in God. (Acts 16:22-34)

There is more to this story, for Paul had many adventures in Macedonia. In fact, Macedonia is mentioned at least twenty-five times in the New Testament. Macedonia was the birthplace of Christianity in Europe. And the birth of Christianity was certainly a world-changing event!

In Paul’s day, Macedonia was a very large area that included much of modern-day Greece. It also had several seaports on the Mediterranean Sea. Today, the Republic of Macedonia is much smaller and **landlocked**. That means that it is surrounded by other countries and has no access to the sea. It is bordered by Greece to the south and Serbia to the north, Bulgaria to the east and Albania to the west. Although it is landlocked, Macedonia has over one thousand sources of natural water, including three large and beautiful lakes.

Lake Ohrid is the deepest lake on the Balkan Peninsula and one of the oldest lakes in the world. The waters of Lake Ohrid are home to many plants and animals that are found nowhere else in the world, including the Ohrid Trout and some spectacular sponges. We call such plants and animals **endemic** to the region.



Photo of Lake Ohrid, taken by Raso Mk, resides in the public domain.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

The Vardar River runs right through the middle of Macedonia then down through Greece, emptying into the Aegean Sea. The river is crucial in supplying water to the valley, allowing crops to grow. Macedonians consider this river so important that it appears on Skopje's flag.

On either side of this wide valley are two mountain ranges, the Šar Mountains and the Rhodope Range, with the tallest peak called Mount Korab. That snow-capped mountain is on the western border that Macedonia shares with Albania.

Here we are at the train station. It's a cool and cloudy day here in Macedonia. The climate and temperature can vary greatly depending on where you are in the country. It is colder and wetter in the north, but the southern and eastern parts of Macedonia have a more Mediterranean climate, meaning warm and dry.

Skopje is the largest city in Macedonia and also its capital. One out of every three Macedonians lives in Skopje. That's over a half a million people. This city is very old. It was considered ancient even in ancient times! Because this town was located on a central ancient trade route, its history can be traced back over six thousand years.



Public domain image of Skopje Fortress, Wikimedia.org.

On a hill high above the city is Skopje Fortress. It was built 1,500 years ago during the Byzantine Empire. On the way to the old fortress, we'll cross over the old Stone Bridge. It has thirteen arches and spans the Vardar River. Like the Skopje Fortress, the original Stone Bridge was built 1,500 years ago by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. It has been destroyed and rebuilt countless times. A sultan of the Ottoman Empire built the current bridge about five hundred years ago.

Do you remember what landmark is shown on the Skopje's flag? That's right, the Vardar River. Two other symbols appear on the flag—the fortress and the Stone Bridge, with the Vardar River flowing beneath it. These three symbols represent the city and the history of Skopje and are important to the Macedonian people.

On this side of the Stone Bridge is the Macedonia Square. In the center is a statue called, "The Warrior on a Horse." Most people here would say that the statue represents Alexander the Great, even though



his name isn't on it. Surrounding the great warrior on his horse are eight lions spouting water from their mouths.

Let's cross the Stone Bridge and check out the Old Town. A famous oriental bazaar attracts many people to this part of the city. Around the bazaar are several churches, mosques, shops and restaurants. There is also a famous clock tower. Why do you think there is a clock tower near an oriental bazaar? Many of the shops in the bazaar were, and still are, run by Turkish Muslims. They are required to pray five times a day at specific times, so they check the clock tower and listen for its chimes that tell them when to pray!

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**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Macedonia is a beautiful country. I can't wait to hear what you will tell me about...*



Public domain image of Warrior on a Horse, Wikimedia.org.

**The Lay of the Land:**

*What does it mean to be “landlocked”? What significant bodies of water are in Macedonia? What’s the weather like in Macedonia?*

**Alexander the Great:**

*Why was Alexander called “great”? What do people remember about Alexander the Great? What was his upbringing like? Did he live a long time? How big was his empire?*

**Skopje:**

*Describe Skopje, the capital city, as well as the Skopje Fortress. What do you remember about entering the city? How old is it? Is there anything unusual about it? What is the bazaar like? What symbols or pictures are on the flag of Skopje? Why?*

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Speaking of restaurants, are you hungry? You are? Good, because I am too! Let's try one of the many restaurants here in Old Town. Macedonian food is a mixture of Mediterranean, Balkan and Middle Eastern cuisine, so we're sure to find something good to eat here. Let's have a look at the menu in this restaurant window:

It all sounds good to me. Let's go inside. Our waitress, Ivana, takes our order and then brings us plates heaped with steaming food. Everything smells and tastes delicious. In broken English, Ivana asks us where we are from. We tell her and then ask her what language is her **native tongue**. She tells us that Macedonian is the primary language spoken in Macedonia. It is a Slavic language, similar to Bulgarian and Serbian. She says that there are other languages spoken here too, such as Albanian and Turkish.

Ivana suggests that we visit the city of Ohrid [AW-rid] on the shores of Lake Ohrid. She says it's a beautiful town and we will probably see something very special there. She won't tell us what it is, but she smiles and locks her mouth, gesturing that she won't say anything more about it.

"Stop in Bitola [BEE-toh-la] on your way," she waves as we walk out the door.

Macedonia, like much of Europe, has an excellent public transportation system. It will be easy for us to find a bus that is running out to Lake Ohrid. Sure enough, our bus makes a stop in Bitola on its way to the lake. Michal, our driver, tells us that Bitola is the modern city that was built on the ruins of Heraclea Lyncestis [he-ra-KLEY-a LYN-kes-tees]. Heraclea Lyncestis was an ancient Greek city that was founded by Philip II of Macedon. Yes, you remembered correctly. He was the father of Alexander the Great.





Public domain image of the ruins at Heraclea Lyncestis, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

The first part of the name “Heraclea” refers to Heracles, who was a famous hero in Greek mythology. You may know Heracles by his Roman name “Hercules.” “Lyncestis” means “Land of the Lynx” in the Greek language. Michal informs us that many lynx do indeed live in Macedonia.

“So what makes Heraclea Lyncestis so important?” we ask Michal.

“Heraclea Lyncestis was in a good central location, which helped Philip rule his Kingdom of Macedon well. Later, a Roman road called Via Egnatia [vee-ya eg-na-tya] ran through this city. Because there was so much trade going up and down this main road, the city became very wealthy. Even after the Roman Empire divided down the middle, Heraclea Lyncestis remained an important trade center for the Byzantine Empire. With trade comes people, and with people come churches. That is the reason for the large number of beautiful churches in this area. If you were to peek inside one, you would see some very old and very beautiful mosaics—some of the finest examples of early Christian art.”

Michal continues, “Mosaics are an ancient art form where a large scene or subject is made up of tiny bits of stone, glass or tile cemented together. From a distance, you see the picture as a whole. But if you get up close, you see all of the little tiles or glass bits that were painstakingly put together to form



Public domain image of the Eurasian Lynx, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

the bigger image. Many of these works of art have lasted for hundreds and hundreds of years!”

The bus is now leaving Bitola and heading for Lake Ohrid. Perhaps on the way, we will see a lynx. A lynx is a medium-sized wildcat, with tufts of black hair at the tips of its ears. Under its white chin, there is a bit of black fur too, almost making him look like he’s wearing a bow tie. There are several types of lynxes in the world, but the one that lives here in Macedonia is called the Eurasian Lynx. There’s one! Did you see it?

~::~::~~

**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*How do you like Macedonia so far? I can’t wait to hear what you will tell me about...*

**The Menu:**

*Tell me what you remember about the food in the restaurant. Would you feel adventurous enough to try some of the foods offered? What sounded the most delicious to you?*

**Heraclea Lyncestis:**

*When we stopped at Bitola, we found out it was built on top of Heraclea Lyncestis. Who founded Heraclea Lyncestis? Was he related to someone else we have learned about on our journey? Who?*

**The Next Stop:**

*Where did Ivana recommend you go? How will you get there? What did Michal say you might see on the way?*





Public domain image of the Church of St. John Kaneo overlooking Lake Ohrid, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

The city of Ohrid is on the eastern shore of the lake. The Greeks called it Lychnidos [LEEK-nee-doss], and the Romans called it Lychnidus. Either way, the name means, “a precious stone that emits light.” Those who named the city were probably referring to the color and **clarity** of the lake’s water. Later, the Slavs changed the name to Ohrid, which means “on the hill.” If we stand on the hill above the city, we can see how pretty and blue the lake is.

A plaque here tells us that both the lake and the city are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Maybe that was what Ivana meant when she said that there is something very special about the lake and the town. The plaque reads that this is one of the deepest and oldest lakes in all of Europe. It also says that the town of Ohrid is one of the oldest cities in Europe. Scientists have found evidence that people lived here long before Philip II and the Greeks. There are more than 250 **archaeological** sites around the lake.

It might feel like a scavenger hunt to find out what Ivana was excited about. Let’s look around.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

As we walk through the town, one thing that stands out to us right away is the number of churches, just as Michal said. While there are not so many now, there was once a time when Ohrid had 365 church buildings, one for each day of the year. It was nicknamed the “Jerusalem of the **Balkans**.” There are several other old buildings, such as the monastery called St. Naum [na-oom], an ancient theater, and the Museum of Slavic Writing Culture.

After the decline of the Byzantine Empire in these parts, Macedonia was ruled by Bulgaria for a time. One of the Bulgarian kings was Boris I. He was concerned about the wide spread and use of the Greek language. He feared that the **Slavonic** language would disappear. He asked two local priests, Saint Clement and Saint Naum, to teach all the new priests how to communicate in the Slavonic language.

Saint Clement has been credited with the invention of the Cyrillic alphabet, as he taught the priests how to speak and write in Slavonic. English-speakers and most European languages, such as Spanish, French, Italian, German and Swedish, use the Latin alphabet; however, Slavic languages, such as Russian and Croatian, use a totally different alphabet, known as Cyrillic.

Ohrid is the birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet and the place where the Slavic languages took root.



Public domain image of the town of Ohrid along Lake Ohrid, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.



Public domain image of the Balkan Music Festival of 2009 in Ohrid, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Look, there is a bazaar in Ohrid too, but it is quite small compared to the one we saw in Skopje. On the square of Ohrid's bazaar, there is a beautiful fountain and a tree that is over one thousand years old. There is a clock tower here in Ohrid too!

The houses in town are packed in tightly. They almost look as if they are leaning on each other as they stretch up from the cobblestone streets. During the reign of the Ottoman Empire in this area, the Christians continued to live inside the city walls, while the Turks built their homes outside the walls. As building continued, space grew tighter, and soon the residents started building their houses over the streets. That's why the alleys are so narrow and why tunnels pass right underneath the houses.

Our day is coming to an end. Why, we wonder, did Ivana want us to come to Ohrid? Was it the beautiful lake? The old churches? Or the unusual houses? Was it because everything is just so old here?

We are not sure, although we enjoyed all of it. I wonder where all of those people are headed? Everyone in town seems to be walking in the same direction. Let's follow them.

I hear music. Let's ask that man leaning against his home what is going on today. He introduces himself to us as Lazar, born and raised in Ohrid. He tells us that we are hearing Balkan folk music. The huge annual folk music festival held here in town is about to start.

"It's called the 'Balkan Folklore Festival,'" says Lazar. "It has been held here in Ohrid every summer for more than fifty years. It's an international festival, and musicians come from all over the world to play and sing. Groups come from as far away as Asia and Africa. Many of them will be wearing their traditional costumes and playing traditional instruments. You really must go and listen for a while."

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

We tell him that indeed we will. What a great way to end the day, learning and listening to Macedonian music, and music from many other lands as well. But we cannot stay long as we must head to the airport for our short flight to Albania. Thankfully, we do not have to drive back to Skopje where the Alexander the Great Airport is located. Ohrid may be a small city, but it does have an airport. Can you guess for whom this airport is named? If the airport in Skopje is named after Macedonia's favorite leader, why not name this airport after Macedonia's favorite Biblical hero? That's right, we are flying out of the Apostle Paul Airport! See you in Albania!



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Macedonia is so interesting! I can't wait to hear what you will tell me about...*

### **Lake Ohrid and the City:**

*What do you remember about Lake Ohrid? What makes it so interesting? Did you like the color of the water? Why was Ohrid nicknamed "Jerusalem of the Balkans"? What were the buildings like in the town? Are they similar to where you come from? Would you like to live there? Who was the airport named after and why?*

### **The Surprise:**

*What was the surprise Ivana was excited about? Tell me about the Balkan Folklore Festival...*

Chapter 4 Timeline Events	
mid 4thC, BC	Heraclea Lyncestis an important trade center for the Byzantine Empire
356 BC	birth of Alexander the Great, in Pella, Macedonia
336 BC	Alexander becomes king after his father's assassination
326 BC	Alexander's kingdom extends from Mediterranean Sea to Himalayas
323 BC	Alexander dies of a fever, and his kingdom is divided between 4 generals
9th C, AD	Macedonia ruled by Bulgarian kings, and St Clement and St Naum teach priests the Slavonic language, development of Cyrillic alphabet in Ohrid.
51 AD	Paul preaches in Philippi, Macedonia. He meets Lydia, she is saved and becomes the first European convert and her home their first Christian church there.
a little later	Paul and Silas jailed in Philippi, but set free by an angel of God, causing the jailer's family to believe and be baptized.
6th C, AD	Skopje fortress built by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian





## ALBANIA: LAND OF THE SOARING EAGLE

So you are too excited to sleep, are you? Then take a look out your small airplane window as we travel over the Macedonian region. Aren't the Pindus Mountains beautiful from the air? To our left is the Vikos [VEE-kos] Canyon, the steepest canyon in all of Europe. Are we almost there, you ask? It won't be long, but let's make the time go by faster with a little game. We can play an alphabet game... How many countries can you name that begin with the letter A?

There's America, of course, often referring to the United States of America. And then there's Argentina, which is located in South America. Can you name a country, which is also a **continent** that starts with A? Yes, that's right—Australia! Are there any countries in Africa that start with an A? Good, Angola and Algeria.

How about Europe? Can you think of any countries in Europe that begin with the letter A? There are, in fact, three small European countries that start with an A. There's Austria, not too far from here, but north, high up in the chilly Alps; and Andorra, which is sandwiched between France and Spain; and one more, Albania, which is our next stop on our tour around the Mediterranean Sea.



Public domain image of the national symbol of Albania—the eagle—taken by Richard Bartz, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

There are others, of course, but of all the countries that start with an A, can you guess which one St. Paul visited? That's right, Albania. During the time of the Roman Empire, about two thousand years ago, Albania was a Roman province called "Illyricum." [EE-le-ree-kum] In Romans 15:18-19 Paul says, "For I will not dare to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed—through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

Isn't it amazing that the Apostle Paul traveled this far from home to preach the gospel? Once we land, we will be able to visit the two places where it is believed that Paul preached.

Since it's not a very long flight, we should pull out our maps now and learn a little bit about the geography of Albania so that when we get there, we'll know where we are and in which direction we want to go.

When you are looking at the Mediterranean Sea on your map, find the country of Italy. It looks like a boot, doesn't it? At the toe of the boot, to the left (which is west), you can see the island of Sicily. Now look at the high heel of the boot and then look to the right (which is east), across the water. Only 45 miles from Italy, you will find the Republic of Albania. It's just north of the country of Greece, which we visited in the first three chapters of this book and now has such a special place in our hearts. Soon, I trust, we'll be feeling the same way about Albania.

Although it's all a part of the Mediterranean Sea, the body of water between Italy and Albania is called the Adriatic Sea. Just below the Adriatic, you will find the Ionian Sea. The northern seacoast of Albania is on the Adriatic Sea, and the southern coast is on the Ionian Sea.

Albania is a Balkan country. Do you know what that means? It means that it is found on the Balkan **Peninsula** in southeastern Europe. The Balkan Peninsula also includes Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia



Satellite image of Albania in the public domain, courtesy of NASA.



Public domain image of the mountain region of Albania, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

and Herzegovina, Croatia and the bottom third of Slovenia. Can you find these countries on your large map of the rion? They surround Albania.

Although Albania is a small country, it is home to about three million people. Albanians call their country “Shqiperi” [SHEE-pe-ree] which means, “Land of the Eagles.” The golden eagle that soars proudly over this beautiful countryside is the national symbol of Albania and is honored by Albanians.

As our airplane approaches Tirana, the capital of Albania, we can see to the west the deep blue water of the Adriatic Sea, sandy-white beaches, many tiny little islands, and some towns along the 303-mile-long coastline. Before we land at the airport, let’s learn a little more about the make-up of Albania.

The country can be divided into several different areas. About seventy percent of the land is hilly or mountainous. In this small coastal country, there are actually three distinct mountain ranges—one in the north, one in the south (the Pindus Mountains, which we just flew over and that also run through Greece like a backbone), and one in central Albania. The mountains are very rugged, and many sections of them are **inaccessible** to hikers and tourists, so we won’t be able to visit those areas.

The mountains, however, are beautiful and stand guard around several **glacial** and **alpine** lakes, such as the lakes found in Lura National Park in the northern part of Albania. People enjoy skiing, biking,



Image of Albanian farm workers in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

hiking, mountain climbing, and rafting in these spectacular canyons. The highest mountain in Albania, Mount Korab, is almost ten thousand feet high—about the same **elevation** as Mt. Olympus in Greece.

The coastal region of Albania is not mountainous; rather, it is flat. The soil found on these flat areas—the plains of Albania—is not very good soil. During some times of the year it is very dry; at other times, it floods from heavy rains. The soil around the rivers and lakes is a little bit better for farming. Farmers in Albania grow such crops as corn, potatoes, sugar beets, tomatoes, leafy vegetables and wheat, alongside orchards of fruit trees. Ranchers raise cattle, pigs and chickens. Besides meat and produce, Albania also produces other natural resources such as bauxite, chromite, copper, nickel, iron ore, natural gas, petroleum, hydropower, salt and timber. Have you ever heard of bauxite? How about chromite? Both are minerals that are mined from the earth's **mantle**. Chromite is used to make steel and stainless steel, and bauxite is the ore from which we get aluminum.

We are now starting our descent into the Tirana International Airport Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa? Have you heard of her? I'll bet you didn't know that Mother Teresa, the missionary to India, was originally from Albania. She was born here in Albania and is probably the most famous per-

son from this small European country. Her name was Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu [agness GOHN-jay BOH-yah-joo], which is a classic Albanian name, and she was born in 1910. Agnes became known to her friends and the world as Mother Teresa as she worked among some of the poorest, most despised people in the world—the “untouchables” who lived in the garbage dumps of India’s most populated city, Calcutta. The organization that she started in India continues today and is called the “Missionaries of Charity.” Mother Teresa passed away in 1997. She was an amazing, selfless woman who is very dear to the Albanian people.



Public domain photo of Mother Teresa, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

The Mother Teresa Airport is located about ten miles north of Tirana, the capital and largest city in Albania. From here, we can hop on a bus in front of the airport. The bus is called the “Rinas Express” and it will take us to Skanderbeg Square in Tirana.

We have to wait a little while for the bus, but we don’t mind. It is pleasant to sit outside as we wait, because the temperature is just lovely and the sun is shining. Albania enjoys a Mediterranean climate, which means that the temperature in the winter averages about 45° F, and about 75 °F in the summer.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Albania begins with the letter A. Do you think it would be fun to make up your own alphabet game on your next trip? Sounds like a lot of fun to me! I can’t wait to hear what you will tell me about...*

### **The Land:**

*What do you remember about the geography of Albania? What does it mean to be a Balkan country? Can you name a few other Balkan countries? What seas are located near Albania? With the poor soil in Albania, what are some of the crops they grow? Do you recall any of the natural resources they produce?*

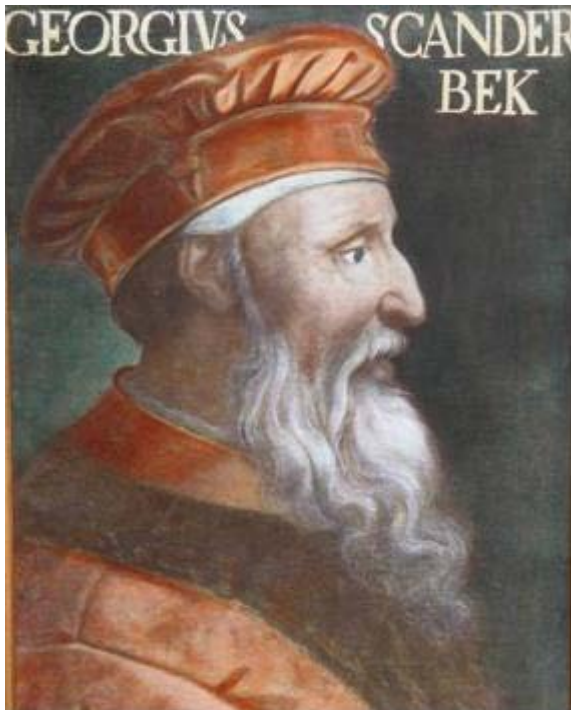
**Mother Teresa:**

*Wow, Mother Teresa was born in Albania! Tell me something you learned about Mother Teresa. Why did the Albanians name their airport after her?*

~::~::~~

Here comes the bus, so let's go!

Tirana has a population of about 400,000 people, and there are many things to see in and around the capital city. Let's get off the bus at Skanderbeg Square, which is the main square in Tirana. It is named after an Albanian national hero, and there is a statue of him in the center of the square. Do you see him there sitting on top of his horse? Come, sit with me on the lush green grass at the base of the statue and I will tell you about this most honored of all Albanian heroes who lived six hundred years ago during the Middle Ages.



Portrait of George Skanderberg located in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy.

The year was 1405 when George Kastrioti Skanderbeg was born to the Lord of Middle Albania, Gjon Kastrioti [jon kas-tree-AW-tee] and his wife, the princess Vojsava Tripalda [voy-SAH-vah tree-PAL-dah] of Macedonia. George was the youngest son in a family of nine children. Because his father had sworn allegiance to the Turks of the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan took Skanderbeg hostage when he turned eighteen years old, as a way to keep his family and the country of Albania loyal to him. Despite being a hostage, he was treated well and trained for the military while under the Sultan's command. In fact, Skanderberg fought for the Ottoman Empire for the next twenty years, patiently waiting for the perfect time to desert the army. He seized his opportunity to flee the Ottoman Turks during the Battle of Nis where they fought against the Crusaders. Proclaiming himself the avenger of his family and country,

he rallied together all of the Albanian princes and took back his father's land and then some. He raised a red flag with the silhouette of a double-headed eagle, a symbol still used by Albanians today.

Skanderbeg fought for Albanian independence for the next twenty-four years. He and his allies won over twenty battles in the field and withstood three sieges of his capital city, Krujë [kro-jah]. George Skanderbeg died in 1468 and is remembered as a good Christian prince and soldier who stood firm against the advancing Muslim Turks, successfully holding back the encroaching Ottoman Empire.



Image of Petrele Castle in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Let's look around this wide square in the center of Tirana. Alongside the Tirana International Hotel, the Palace of Culture, and the National Historical Museum, we notice also the Clock Tower of Tirana. It was built in 1822. Do you want to climb all ninety steps? I'll race you to the top!

From up here, we have a great view of the city and several medieval castles in the Tirana area. One of the castles is called Petrele Castle. The tower in the castle is over 1500 years old! It sits up there on that rocky hill, and was built in the shape of a triangle. Another castle in Tirana is called Preza Castle, and it is about six hundred years old. It is quite close to the Mother Teresa Airport.

The beautiful city of Tirana is surrounded by trees and mountains, and if we go up to Mount Dajt [dayt], we will have an even better view of the whole city. We can take the Dajti [day-tee] Express Cable Car up to the top. Have you ever taken a ride on a **gondola** or a **funicular**? Let's go!

Although in the middle of a busy city, Mount Dajt Park is home to a variety of wildlife. Up here we might see an eagle or a hawk; it's also possible we might see a gray bear or a wolf, so let's stick together and be on the lookout!

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Would you like to know about some of the other animals that live in Albania? There are about sixty different kinds of mammals living in Albania today, animals such as antelopes, bats, bears, deer, foxes, hedgehogs, jackals, lynxes, mice, rabbits, seals, and whales. There is an **endangered** animal called the Mediterranean Monk Seal, so great care must be taken to preserve these seals.

Many familiar birds live in this area too—birds such as cuckoos, doves, ducks, flamingos, geese, gulls, hawks, owls, pelicans, pheasants, pigeons, sparrows, storks, swans, and woodpeckers. Of course, eagles also live in Albania.

Those birds are familiar to us, but several Albanian birds might be new to you. One is called “Thick-knees.” Isn’t that a funny name for a bird? These birds wade in the water looking for food. Another bird is called “Hoopoe” and still another one “Waxwings,” because the tips of its wings look like they have been dipped into wax.



Photos from the public domain—from left to right: the thick-knee, waxwing and hoopoe—courtesy of Wikimedia.org. Image below of the endemic Ohrid Trout was taken by Nikostrat Saronski in 2007.

In Lake Ohrid in Albania, a special fish called the “Ohrid Trout” is **endemic**: this means that this particular fish is found only in this lake, and nowhere else on earth. Isn’t that amazing?

Well, we saw some birds, but that’s about it, so maybe it’s time to visit another part of Albania. We’ll go back down the Dajti Express Cable Car and find the train station.







**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Isn't Tirana a lovely city? I can't wait to hear what you will tell me about...*

**Tirana:**

*What is Tirana like? Do you remember the hero whose statue is in the main square? What do you remember about him? Can you name a few of the older buildings in Tirana? Which one would you like to visit most?*

**The Animals:**

*What mammals and birds do you find here? What does "endemic" mean? What animal is "endemic" to Lake Ohrid?*

~::~::~~

Riding the train through the countryside is not only great fun, but also a great opportunity to learn more about this area. We'll be able to get a good look at the Albanian **landscape**, the Albanian farmers working in the fields, and the Albanian towns and villages. And we will be able to meet some local people on the train, who may help us to better understand their culture.



Image of Albanian Railways in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Where should we start?

It is believed that Paul preached in two places in Illyricum, or Albania, as we know it—the town of Shkoder and the town of Durres—so let's visit those two places first.

We'll hop on a train heading for the city of Shkoder, which is north of the capital. The scenery along this train route, cutting straight through the flatland of Albania, is known for its idyllic and quaint farms.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

On the train, a friendly Albanian woman named Lena greets us. She recognizes that we are not from around here but extends a traditional greeting anyway—“*Tungjatjeta*” [toon-jah-TYEH-tah]. Lena is a teacher and she speaks excellent English. She is delighted to tell us a little about the history of her country.



Photo of Illyrian helmet from the National Archaeological Museum in Athens used with permission, courtesy of Niki J. Photography.

Lena, looking comfortable in her train seat but with eyes sparkling intensely, tells us that her country's history started about five thousand years ago. It's hard for us to imagine anything that old, except for maybe the pyramids of Ancient Egypt or the Minoan bull-jumpers that we learned about on Crete, but apparently this region of the world has a very long history too. Illyria (Albania) was mentioned in very early Greek and Roman writings. It was a Roman province during the Roman Empire and later a part of the Bulgarian Empire. Later still, about five hundred years ago, it became a part of the Ottoman Empire, which had expanded from Turkey. It gained independence just one hundred years ago, in 1912, and became the country we know today as Albania.

After World War II, Albania became a **communist** country, and was ruled by Enver Hoxha [hod-ja] who died in 1985. The communist form of government ended five years later in 1990, and Albania's first elections were held in 1992. With 5000 years of history, but only twenty years of independence, Albania is both very old and very young at the same time!

Lena says that life in Albania was very difficult during the communist era. Although Albania is still a poor country, things are getting better, and hopefully her country will become a part of the European Union (EU) one day soon.

Lena, like others on the train, speaks English very well. Albanian (*Shqip*) is one of Europe's oldest languages. Several languages are spoken in Albania: two-thirds of the population speak “Tosk,” which is the dialect of Shqip [sh-chip] spoken in the south; and about one-third of the population speak “Gheg,” which is the dialect of northern Albania. (See map on page 66.) Most Albanians can also speak English, Italian, and Greek.

It has been an absolute pleasure to meet Lena, to listen to her beautiful, lilting voice with its eastern European accent, and to soak in her knowledge of her country's history, but we just heard the name “Shkoder” [sh-KO-duh] over the intercom, so we know that the train is pulling into our first destination. “Thank you, Lena!” we call back to her with genuine gratitude.

Shkoder sits inland, about ten miles from the Adriatic Sea. It is also nestled alongside Lake Shkoder, which is the largest lake in the entire Balkan Peninsula. Shkoder is the largest city in northern Albania, as well as the oldest and most historic city in the area. This city is also known as the capital of Albanian culture, so perhaps we will learn some things about the customs and traditions of Albania while we visit this important city.

But before we tour this city, let me ask... Are you hungry? Lunch is the main meal of the day in Albania, so let's get something to eat.

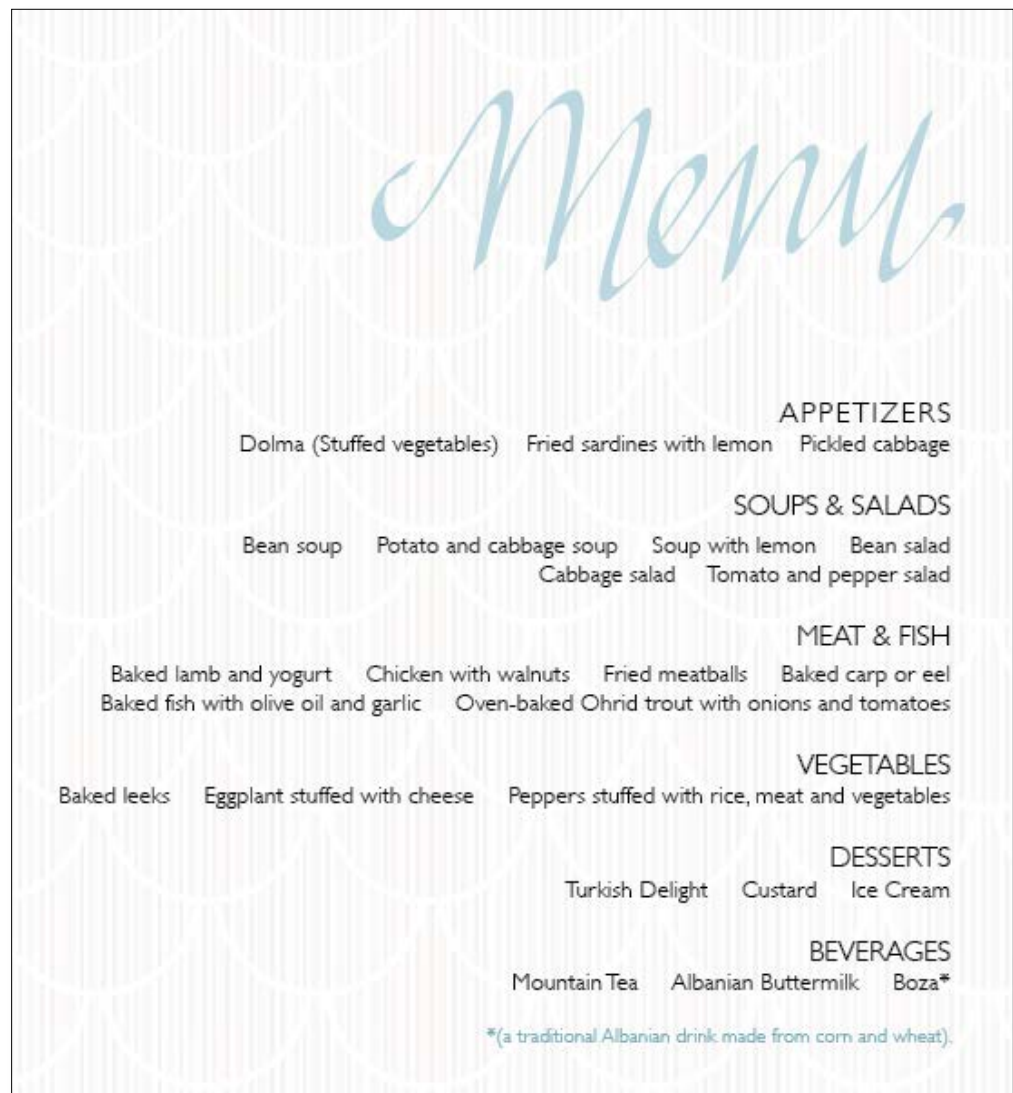
It seems there are restaurants on every corner in Albania. Some of the dishes are recognizable as they are similar to food from Turkey, Greece, and Italy, but every area of Albania has its own special and unique dishes. These dishes often contain Mediterranean herbs, such as basil, oregano, and rosemary. Most dishes use olive oil or butter. Beef, chicken, lamb, rabbit, and seafood are popular main courses. Seafood choices include carp, crabs, mussels, and trout harvested from the waters off the Albanian coast.

A typical Albanian lunch consists of a stewed main dish of meat and potatoes, alongside a salad of cucumbers, green peppers, olives, onions, and tomatoes.

This looks like a nice restaurant. Let's have a look at the menu:

Some of the dishes sound unusual, don't they? But I think we can find something that we will enjoy here. What will you choose?

~::~::~~





**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Albania is an interesting place, don't you think? I can't wait to hear what you will tell me about...*

**The History:**

*What did Lena tell us about the history of Albania? Do you remember how old it is? Why is it both old and young at the same time? How many empires ruled over Albania over the years?*

**The Menu:**

*Do you think you would like the traditional Albanian meal? Why or why not? Which foods are you curious to try from the Albanian menu?*



Photo of Shkoder viewed from Rozafa Castle is in the public domain.

**The Language:**

*Do you like that people in Albania speak different languages? Why or why not? Do you think this could present any problems? What good things can be a result of this?*

~::~::~~

Satisfied with our filling lunch, our next stop should be Rozafa Castle. Shkoder is known as the bicycle capital of Albania because the city is very flat, so let's explore the city by bicycle. The waitress at the restaurant tells us that we can rent bicycles from a shop around the corner, just half a block from here. The place is easy to find and with our helmets on and our bikes at the ready, the shop manager points us in the direction of the castle. We can hardly miss it as it's on the top of a nearby hill. Do you think we can make it to the top on our bicycles?

Rozafa Castle sits high on a rocky bluff, about four hundred feet above sea level, overlooking the city below. It has been

a stronghold for over two thousand years. It was built by the Illyrians, but it was overtaken by the Romans, and then later the Venetians. Rozafa Castle was the site of a huge battle about five hundred years ago, when the armies of the Ottoman Empire of Turkey tried to take the castle from the Venetians of Italy.



Photo of the wall at Rozafa Castle is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

This old fortress stands in stark contrast to the modern

city below. It's bright outside with the sunshine of a noonday sun, but it is dark in the corridors of the medieval castle. A prepared explorer and geographer always carries along a flashlight. Let's explore the inside of the castle using our flashlights, and then we can enjoy the great views over the surrounding area.

When we are finished, we hop on our bicycles and head back down the hill toward the city. As we wind our way back to the center of the town, we hear music. Should we check out what's going on?

It's a local wedding being held in a city park. Since this city of Shkoder is known for being the center of northern Albanian culture, this would be a good opportunity to learn a little about the clothing, dances, and music of Albania. Let's watch and listen.

The first thing we notice is the interesting clothing that the people are wearing. In many parts of Albania, local people wear their unique traditional costumes for special occasions. The women's clothing in particular is very colorful. A wedding is a good place to observe these beautiful costumes of the Northern Albanians.

Many of the men are wearing a white rounded skullcap made of wool. Some wear a skirt-like garment similar to a Scottish kilt, and a jacket. Others are dressed in a white shirt, white pants, red vest, and a black and red belt (the colors of the national flag). The typical dress for women includes a black headdress, a white blouse and skirt, blue sweater, black apron, and a bright red belt.

We can also learn something from the music that the musicians are playing. What we are hearing is the traditional folk music of the Ghegs, the people of northern Albania. Some of the songs that the



Ghegs sing are about Skanderbeg. Do you remember him? We saw the statue of him on his horse in Tirana. He was the legendary medieval warrior who helped the Albanian people in their struggles against the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. As he is so very special to the Albanian people, they like to sing songs about him.

What are some of the instruments you can see and hear?

There's a clarinet. That one is easy: it's a woodwind instrument. There's another wind instrument in the mix: it's made of a very pretty wood, and it's called a *surlja* [soor-l-YA]. What is that instrument that looks a little like a banjo, but has only two strings? That is called a *cifteli* [chif-te-li], and the strings are plucked. There is a second stringed instrument, but this one is played with a bow, and it is called a *lahuta*. There are several kinds of drums—a *qypi* [chi-PEE], a *dajreja* [day-re-YUH] a *lodra*, and a *toubeleki*—and a tambourine, which is called a *defi* in Albanian.

The wedding ceremony is now over and the celebration continues with beautiful dancing. These people certainly do like to dance, don't they? This is traditional folk dancing. If we watch, maybe we can learn how to do it and join in! Do you want to try? Two dances that are often performed at weddings are the *Napoloni* and the *Shota*. The *Shota* is the most popular dance in Albania.

Just as the folk songs often tell stories about Albanian heroes, some of the dances also tell a story. A well-known Albanian dance called the “Dance of Osman Taka” tells the story of another Albanian leader who fought against the Ottoman Empire. Here is his story:

Osman Taka was a leader, but also a famous performer of traditional Albanian dances. When the armies of the Ottoman Empire captured him, they threw him in jail and sentenced him to death. His captors gave him one last wish, and he asked if he could dance. They were so amazed at his skill that they decided not to execute him.

Oops! Look at the time! We must hurry back to the train station to catch our train to Durres, the second city where St. Paul is thought to have preached in this land of the soaring eagle.

Today, Durres is the second largest city in Albania, and it is one of Albania’s main seaports. It sits on the Adriatic Sea directly west of Tirana, and our train takes us right into the heart of the city. It is one of the oldest cities in the country; the Greeks founded this city over 2700 years ago in the area called Illyria. The Greeks called the city Dyrrhachion [di-RACK-ee-on], but it eventually became known as Durres [doo-res]. Later, it became a part of the Roman province of Dalmatia and was a popular stop for boats traveling along the Adriatic Coast. This might explain why St. Paul may have stopped here during one of his missionary journeys.



Photo of the old city walls of Durres is in the public domain.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

The history of Durres helps us to understand the religions that are present today in Albania. Durres was one of the first cities to hear the Gospel and convert to Christianity, and it became the seat of a **bishopric** (the place where a Roman Catholic bishop holds office). Later, during the fifteenth century, under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Islam became the major religion in this area, and many mosques were built. Later still, in the early 1800s, the Protestant missionary group called the “British and Foreign Bible Society” began printing Bibles in both of the major Albanian languages— Tosk and Gheg.

As Lena told us earlier, Albania was a communist country for many years after World War II. In fact, in 1967, all religion was banned in Albania, making it the first **atheist** state ever created. In 1991, when the communist regime was brought to an end, the country was given back its religious freedom. Today, Islam is the predominant religion in Albania, followed by Christianity.

There are several things we can see while we are in Durres. The ancient Roman **amphitheater** is one of the largest in the Balkan Peninsula, once holding cheering crowds of over twenty thousand people. This is where the Romans watched gladiator fights and chariot races.



Photo of the roman amphitheater in Durres is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.



Another favorite tourist destination is the Durres Castle. Like Rozafa Castle in Shkoder, it too was built over two thousand years ago and has very thick walls. The round Venetian Tower was added to the castle much later, about five hundred years ago.

The old walls of the city are also very thick. At one time, they surrounded the entire city, and a moat filled with water encircled the city walls. The only way to cross the moat was to walk over a draw-bridge. In this way, the city was protected from outside forces or advancing armies, at least for a time. How would you like to live in a walled city with only one way in or out?

There is a lovely beach in Durres. Let's go take a look. The sandy beach is golden and soft beneath our feet, and the water is warm. We've walked and bicycled quite a bit today. Shall we take a refreshing swim?

Many Albanians enjoy swimming, as a sport, but can you guess which sport is the most popular in Albania? Football (called soccer in America), of course! Many Albanians follow the FIFA World Cup. Other group sports that are especially popular include basketball, volleyball, and gymnastics.



Photo of Durres beach is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Drying off after our swim, we notice that there are many people here at the beach, enjoying this pleasant, sunny day. I wonder why? This is not the weekend! A friendly man named Aleksander tells us that today is actually a public holiday called May Day, and many people have the day off from work.

“Thank you, Aleksander. That explains the crowds here today. What are the other holidays that the Albanian people celebrate?”

Aleksander tells us that in addition to the familiar holidays, such as New Year's Day, Mother's Day, April Fools' Day, Easter, Independence Day, and Christmas, Albania also has some unusual holidays. Teacher's Day is observed on March 7 to remember the day in 1887 when the small city of Korce [KORcha] opened the first school where lessons were taught in the local Albanian language. On March 14, Albanians celebrate the end of winter with something called the Summer Festival. To celebrate Summer Festival, a big circus is held in a park in the capital city of Tirana with lots of big animals and death-defying acrobats. June 1 is Children's Day (I'll bet you wish your country had a Children's Day). On this special day, children are given gifts, and parades are held in many towns in Albania. Lastly, Mother Teresa is remembered on October 19th.

Speaking of Mother Teresa, it's time to catch our final train back to the airport where we'll hop on a bus to our next country stop—Montenegro. Did you enjoy our visit to Albania? I hope you learned some new and interesting things about this small European country that begins with an A.



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Albania is an interesting place, don't you think? I can't wait to hear what you will tell me about...*

### **Rozafa Castle:**

*Describe Rozafa Castle, including some of its history.*

### **Durres:**

*Tell me about Durres. Where is it located? How was Durres protected from its enemies? How would you like living in a city with a moat?*

### **The Holidays:**

*What are some of the special holidays in Albania? Describe the traditional clothing worn by the men and women. Tell about some of the musical instruments in Albania. Do you think America should celebrate Children's Day? If so, how would you like to celebrate it?*

*Timeline Events for Chapter 5 are located on the CD-ROM, along with map work, activities, recipes and more!*



## MONTENEGRO: IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLACK MOUNTAIN

Get comfortable; we have a three-hour bus ride ahead of us. I don't think we'll mind, though, because there is plenty to see outside our windows and to talk about before we reach our destination. This is going to be an exciting adventure! Make sure you have your map and camera handy. You'll want them for this leg of our journey.

We are heading for a brand new country with a very long history. "How can that be?" you ask? It is because Montenegro became an independent country very recently, in 2006, but its history goes back more than two thousand years. Let's find out more.

If you look out the windows on the left-hand side of our bus, you'll see the Adriatic Sea. We are traveling due north to our destination, Montenegro. Now, pull out your map. If you look towards the top of your map, you will see that Croatia is northwest of Montenegro, and so is another country with a very long name—Bosnia and Herzegovina. All of these countries used to be a part of a larger country, a federation of six republics called Yugoslavia. We'll talk more about the history of this region later once we've arrived. But before we do, let's look on the right-hand side of the map. That's Serbia, a country that was once united with Montenegro as a single country—Serbia and Montenegro—but they are now separate nations.





Photo of Mount Lovcen is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Montenegro is a small **Balkan** country with a population of 625,000 people. Do you remember what “Balkan” means? It means that Montenegro is located on the Balkan **Peninsula**, which is in southeastern Europe. What are some of the other countries that are part of the Balkan Peninsula? You might already know some of them. There’s Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. How many were you able to guess?

As we travel north, we can see the beautiful beaches along the Adriatic Coast of Montenegro. If we were further inland, we might have seen Skadar Lake. This is a huge lake that Montenegro shares with Albania, its neighbor to the south.

By the way, “Montenegro” is kind of a funny name for a country, isn’t it? Can you guess what it means? Let’s start with “Monte.” What do you think that means? It means “mountain.” Great! Do you know what “Negro” means? This word refers to the color “black” in several languages. So when you put “monte” and “negro” together, you get “Black Mountain.” Is there a black mountain in Montenegro? Yes, and it is called Mount Lovćen [LOVE-chen]. Let’s talk a little more about the **topography** of this small country.

In northern Montenegro there are high mountains, while along the coast, the land is flat with many beaches. The mountains in Montenegro are about 6,500 feet high on average, but the tallest peak, the Bobotov Kuk [bo-bo-tov-KOOK] peak in the Durmitor Mountains, is 8,278 feet high. Do you know how many feet are in a mile? That's right: 5,280 feet. That means that Bobotov Kuk is about one and a half miles high! These mountains of Montenegro get more rainfall than any of the other mountains in all of Europe. Not surprisingly, there are many lakes nestled among these mountains.

On the Montenegro coast, there are several little villages stretching along the waterfront. The coastline is less than 200 miles long. There are almost no islands along the Adriatic Coast of Montenegro. Montenegro might not have many islands, but its coastline has something else that makes it special. At the northern end, there is something quite different from the flat land to the south, where the beaches and villages are found.

At the northern end of Montenegro, there is a gulf called the Bay of Kotor. Here the coastline isn't flat. The mountains plunge right down to the sea, creating something like a **fjord** [fyord]. Do you know what a fjord is? What language does that word come from? You might think it is from one of the languages spoken by the people of Montenegro. But it is not. It is a word that comes from Norway, a country that is a long way from Montenegro, on the northern end of the European continent. However, we can use this Norwegian word to describe the Bay of Kotor in Montenegro, because a fjord is an inlet or bay, where the steep sides of the mountains touch the water. This bay is ruggedly beautiful! Some people think it is one of most beautiful bays in all of Europe!



The islands of St. George and Our-Lady-of-the-Reef in the Bay of Kotor, in public domain and photographed by LeCardinal.



Photo by gagapg—<http://img190.imageshack.us/img190/3773/dsc07890b.jpg>.

Between the mountains and the flat southern coastline, there is a wide plain called the Zeta Plain. This plain is named after the Zeta River that flows through it. Most of the people of Montenegro live in the Zeta Plain where the capital and largest city of Montenegro, Podgorica, is located. In fact, that's where we'll get off this bus.

Approximately one third of the population of Montenegro lives in this city. You can see the cityscape of Podgorica as our bus pulls into

town. Montenegro might be a small country, about the size of the state of Connecticut, but there are many things to see and do here. I can't wait to show you around.

After arriving at the Podgorica bus station, we notice how comfortable the temperature is at this time of the year in late spring. Montenegro's climate varies greatly depending on the time of year and the part of the country. For example, in the summertime, along the coast, the temperature can get as hot as 100° F, but it can plunge down to 25° F or colder in the mountains during the winter.

As we ride from the airport into the capital city of Podgorica in a passenger van, we strike up a conversation with our driver about the city and the history of the country. His name is Drago and he tells us that he was born in this city. "Podgorica" is an unusual name and we ask him what it means. Drago tells us that it means "under the small hill" in the **Montenegrin** language, the official language of Montenegro. Drago points to a hill overlooking the city that is covered in **cypress** trees. Podgorica is a fitting name for this city.

Drago drives us just a little north of the city to show us the ruins of an old town called Doclea. He tells us that the ancient Greeks and Romans once lived in this town, and a very famous Roman Emperor, named Diocletian, was born in this area. Many centuries later, the name of the town was changed to Birziminium [bur-zi-MIN-ee-um]. Later still, about 700 years ago, it became known as Podgorica. After the fall of the Roman Empire, two tribes, the Slavs and the Avars, moved in and settled here.

Drago turns out to be a chatty driver, which we like, and he tells us more about the history of this area. “About 500 years ago, the city was conquered by the Ottoman Turks,” Drago explains. “Although the Ottomans conquered Podgorica, the country of Montenegro was on the outskirts of the empire and not controlled too strictly by the Turks. We still had some freedom. One hundred years later, the Montenegrins defeated the Turks in the Great Turkish War. After we defeated the Ottomans, Podgorica and Montenegro were completely free from Turkish rule. But we weren’t independent quite yet.

“After the Turks left, the Austrians swept down and Montenegro was swallowed up into the Austrian Empire. But in 1878, Montenegro gained its complete independence with the help of Nicholas I. Nicholas I founded the Kingdom of Montenegro, which lasted only 8 years, from 1910 to 1918. He was the only king who ever ruled in Montenegro,” Drago tells us with a mixture of pride and disappointment.

He goes on to tell us that in 1918, at the end of World War I, Montenegro merged with the neighboring Kingdom of Serbia. Eleven years later, after drawing, erasing and re-drawing lines on the European map, world leaders assigned Montenegro to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia ruled by the Serbian King Alexander, along with Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia.

During World War II, Montenegro came under the rule of Italy for a short time, and then under German control. Many bombs were dropped on Podgorica, creating havoc and destruction in the city. After World War II, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia became the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under President Josip Tito. This was the federation of six republics and Montenegro was one of them. In 1992, as the other countries left the federation, Montenegro voted to remain with Serbia as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (dropping the word *Socialist* from the name).

As the years passed, tensions began to mount between the two countries. Going against Serbia’s wishes, Montenegro adopted the euro as its form of currency. The Montenegrins began to push more strongly for independence by 1996 and just ten years later, their independence became a reality.



Photo of Podgorica taken by Nije Bitno in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Drago proudly tells us that since the bombing and destruction of World War II, his city has been beautifully rebuilt and today it prospers. He says that many people live in Podgorica because of its proximity to the Adriatic Sea and Lake Skadar for swimming in the summertime, and its proximity to the mountains for snow skiing in the wintertime.

Drago tells us that Podgorica is not only a beautiful city, but is also a cultural center on the Balkan Peninsula. There are several theaters here including the Montenegrin National Theater and the City Theater, which includes a children's theater and a puppet theater. Would you like to stop in and see a puppet show?



Image of puppet theater in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Passing several ballparks, it is plain to see how popular several sports are here, particularly soccer and basketball. But Drago tells us that the people of Montenegro also enjoy volleyball, water polo, boxing, judo, table tennis, karate, and chess. There are a few big stadiums and indoor soccer fields too. He is proud to announce that Montenegro won its first Olympic medal at the 2012 Olympics in London—a silver medal in women's handball. Did you happen to see that event?

We ask Drago what kind of church that is on the right. He says, "That old church is an Eastern Orthodox Christian Church called Christ's Resurrection Church. Podgorica is the home of several religions, but most of the population is Eastern Orthodox Christians, followed by a smaller percentage of Muslims, and then Roman Catholics."



Drago asks us if we are hungry. He takes us to a nearby restaurant so we can get something to eat before we continue on our tour of Montenegro. “Thank you, Drago.” We wave goodbye and step inside the dimly lit restaurant.

Let’s take a look at the menu. We can choose from several familiar Italian dishes. There’s cheese, meat, stuffed peppers, and meatballs. There is also food from Turkey, Greece, and Hungary, and bread similar to what you would find in Vienna, Austria. The desserts have a Croatian flair: doughnuts, cakes, biscuits and jam.

Are you ready to order? What will you have?

After lunch, what shall we do? Montenegro has some beautiful countryside, so let’s take a bus tour and get out of the city to see some of the interesting Montenegrin landscapes.

We’ll travel up to the Bay of Kotor first. If we never get to Norway, at least we can say we’ve seen a fjord, right?

~::~::~~

**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)





*Well, here we are in Montenegro. What do you think of it so far? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**The Topography:**

*Describe the topography—the physical features, such as mountains, valleys, etc.—of Montenegro. Tell me what a fjord is. How did you feel looking up at Bobotov Kuk? Do you remember how high it is?*

**The Food:**

*What do you think was the most unusual food item you saw on the menu for Montenegro? Would you like to try that?*

~::~::~~



As our bus leaves the city of Podgorica and winds its way toward the Bay of Kotor, we see lots of farms dotting the countryside. There are over 50,000 farms in Montenegro. **Agriculture** is an extremely important part of the country's economy.

We see old gnarled olive trees—some standing alone and others growing in groves. Did you know that there is a law in Montenegro that says that when two people get married, they have to plant an olive tree? It was originally a tradition that **symbolized** a new marriage, but during the reign of King Nikolas, the tradition became law.



Speaking of traditions, the people of Montenegro have another interesting tradition—a folk dance called Oro. As the dance commences, a group of young men and women form a large circle and they begin to sing. Then, one of the young men enters the circle and dances, trying to look like an eagle. Why an eagle? Just like in Albania, the eagle is honored by the people of Montenegro and is represented on the country's flag.

If the singers in the circle like the young man's interpretation of the eagle, they will sing a song that tells him they approve. But if they don't like his dance, they will sing a different song.

Sometimes the young man's girlfriend will join him inside the circle. She also dances like an eagle, and the other singers tell her by the songs they sing whether or not she has represented

Europea Olive trees in the public domain, courtesy of Nickfraser and Bratislav Tabas.

the eagle well. When she and her boyfriend have completed their dance, they kiss each other on the cheek and rejoin the circle.

At the end of the Oro dance, the young men form a second smaller circle inside the larger circle. This smaller circle is a two-story circle. How do they do this? They stand on each other's shoulders!

Make sure to have your cameras ready to take a photo of this unusual folk dance. We may actually see it, because today is a holiday in Montenegro and people are celebrating in the streets and squares of the city. You can watch it here (the two-story circle is about 2/3 of the way through the video, so sit tight!)— <http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/montenegro-oro-dance/>.



What are some of the other holidays observed in this country? There's New Year's Day on January 1st and then Christmas. What? How can Christmas come after New Year's Day? It is because Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on January 7th instead of December 25th. Then there's Good Friday and Easter Sunday and Easter Monday in the spring. Did you know that Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Easter on a different day than Western churches? There are several holidays in May: May 1st is Labor Day; May 9th is Victory Day; and May 21st is Independence Day. And there's one more: Statehood Day is celebrated on July 13th.

When we arrive at the Bay of Kotor, the largest bay in Montenegro, we can see the sheer cliffs towering above the crystal blue water below. Take some pictures. The folks at home will love to see this! Let's

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

take a walk through the little town of Kotor.

Kotor is a **fortified** town: this means that it is surrounded by **fortifications**, or walls. It is a very old city, about 2000 years old, but the walls were added about 500 years later. Because it sits on the Bay of Kotor and is surrounded by tall cliffs, it is a well-protected town. We can walk around the old cobblestone streets and see many church buildings. There are also many **piazzas**, or open squares, like the "Square of Arms," surrounded by restaurants, cafés, and shops. There's the old historic St. Tryphon Cathedral, built in 1166 AD. It is so lovely there with the mountain rising up behind it.

Let's burn some energy and take a hike. Do you see those steps on the mountainside? If we walk up those steps, we will have a great view down over the tiny city and the glistening bay. Are you counting? You're right: 1,500 steps! Whew! But it was worth it. Not only is the view spectacular, but we can also see the old city ruins from up here on the hill.

After our hike, we'll need something cold to drink, so let's go back down to the heart of this old city and find an outdoor café in one of the piazzas.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Montenegro is steeped in tradition. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

### **The Traditions:**

*Traditions are strong in Montenegro. Isn't it interesting how when two people are married in Montenegro, they are required by law to plant an olive tree? What do you think of that? Describe the Oro dance? Does your family have any special traditions? Do you know where they came from?*

~::~::~~

The sun is high up in the sky and it's getting hot. Time to jump back on the bus. An old historic road connects Kotor to Cetinje [seh-TIN-yeh], our next destination on the other side of the bay. Cetinje is a small town and was the old royal capital of Montenegro, where King Nikolas reigned. Coincidentally, the current President of Montenegro lives in Cetinje. This city was founded 500 years ago, and is still considered the **honorary** capital of Montenegro.

In Cetinje we can visit the Cetinje **Monastery**, Vlaška Church, Zetski Dom Royal Theater, and the National Museum of Montenegro, once the palace of King Nikolas I.

Have you ever heard of the **Gutenberg printing press**? In the year 1455, Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press and printed the first book, the Holy Bible, in Germany. The brand-new book printing trade caught on quickly in Cetinje where bookmakers began churning out printed books about 50 years after that first historic book, the Gutenberg Bible, was printed. There are many libraries here as well, and some of the oldest libraries in Montenegro are found in Cetinje.

Do you want to try something exciting? Let's head up into the mountains where the people of Montenegro pursue outdoor activities, such as kayaking, mountain biking, rock-climbing, horseback riding, and hiking. Shall we be brave and go white water rafting?

In the northern part of the country we will find Durmitor National Park. In the park, we will see exotic wildlife, towering mountain peaks, crystal clear glacier lakes, and deep canyons. The Tara River Canyon in Durmitor National Park is the deepest canyon in Europe and the second deepest canyon in the world! Its steep banks rise up over 4,000 feet above the Tara River.

Are you ready for an adventure? This is where we put on our life preservers and jump into our rafts for some real fun! We must follow our instructor's commands. When he shouts, "paddle," paddle! And when he tells us to lean in, let's make sure we do it so we don't bounce out of the raft! The entire rafting trip is 62 miles long, but we will only do a part of that. As we bounce along the rapids, we can look up and see that we are surrounded by untouched wild nature. No people live in this area, so we might spot some rare birds and maybe we'll even see a bear, a wolf, or a **lynx**.

That was a wet and wild adventure. We'd better dry off a bit before we get on the bus and make our way back down the mountains to the Monastery of Ostrog. Of all the churches and monasteries in Montenegro, the Serbian Orthodox Monastery of Ostrog is the most surprising one. It was built into the side of a vertical cliff face about 400 years ago. You have to see it to believe it!



Photo of Upper Church by Etan J. Tal in the public domain. Would you like to visit this monastery built right into the cliff wall.



Photo of Lower Church in the public domain, taken by Gavinevans. Visitors to Ostrog Monastery come from all over the world.

There are actually two monasteries here. The lower monastery is larger and it includes the Church of the Holy Trinity. But the upper monastery is the more fascinating one. It is built into the rocky mountainside, and includes two small cave-churches. One of these cave-churches is called the Church of the Holy Cross, and there are beautiful **frescoes** painted on the rock walls inside. The setting sun streaming in sideways makes the images look somber and almost mysterious. The frescoes are paintings of scenes from the life of Christ, as well as paintings of several saints and religious holidays. Like most other monasteries in Montenegro, the Ostrog Monastery holds many old books and **manuscripts** on its old wooden built-in shelves.

Tomorrow we can go for a swim in the sea and even try snorkeling. We'll get on the bus and head over to the Adriatic Coast. Our first stop will be Budva. This is the most popular place in all of Montenegro for visitors. Several nice beaches are strung along a ten-mile stretch of the Adriatic Coast called "The Riviera of Sandy Beaches." Budva is an ancient fortified city. Its old town is full of narrow streets, historic buildings, small piazzas, and churches. In the center of town there's a fortress called the Citadela.

We can either swim at the beach at Budva or head further down the Adriatic Coast. If we go a bit further, we will come to two other popular beach towns, Bar and Ulcinj [ool-sing]. Ulcinj has the longest

beach in Montenegro. It's called Velika Plaza (which means "great beach") because it's over eight miles long! There are also sea caves there. If we want to try snorkeling, we will have to take a big deep breath so that we can explore the underwater caves. The water is so clear; it is very easy to see all of the underwater wildlife.

After our swimming and snorkeling, we will have to say goodbye to Montenegro and continue our adventure to another country on the Balkan Peninsula. We've seen some memorable sights in Montenegro: big cities and walled towns, steep mountains and a fjord, tucked-away monasteries and churches, fortresses and folk dances, olive trees and pretty beaches. Our next adventure is on the horizon. Together, we'll board a hopper jet to our next destination—Serbia!

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Montenegro is a mysterious place. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Monasteries:**

*Tell me what a monastery is. What do you think it would be like to live in one? Would you like to visit the Monastery of Ostrog built right into the side of the cliff?*

**Durmitor National Park:**

*There is something special here! In fact, it is the deepest one in Europe. What is it? Which river flows through it? And what is the adventurous activity we can do on that river?*

Chapter 6 Timeline Events	
1166 AD	St Tryphon Cathedral built in Kotor
700 yrs ago	Podgorica became known
600 yrs ago	Montenegro defeats Turkish in Great Turkish War to gain freedom for itself and Podgorica
500 yrs ago	Podgorica conquered by the Ottoman Turks
500 yrs ago	City of Cetinje founded (old royal capital)
400 yrs ago	Monastery of Ostrog built into the side of a cliff face
1455	Johann Gutenberg invents printing press
1465	Bookmakers in Cetinje started making printed books
1878	Kingdom of Montenegro established under the only king, Nicholas I
1918	Montenegro merges with neighboring Kingdom of Serbia
1929	Montenegro assigned to Kingdom of Yugoslavia
during WWII	Montenegro under short rule by Italy, then Germany
after WWII	Montenegro one of 6 republics in the newly re-named Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
1992	Montenegro remains with Serbia as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
1996	Montenegro gains independence
2012	First Montenegrin to win an Olympic gold medal in women's handball





## SERBIA: OLD FORTRESSES AND HIDDEN MONASTERIES

Are you ready for another adventure? Fasten your seatbelts and keep them fastened tight! This plane will be coming back down before you know it. We'll be landing in less than an hour!

Serbia is currently a **land-locked** country, but that has not always been the case. Do you remember what land-locked means? If a country is land-locked, it is surrounded on all sides by land. Serbia has only been land-locked since 2006. That was the year it became a separate nation, apart from Montenegro, which had once given it access to the sea. Losing its seaside was a blow for Serbia, but the separation has given each of these two countries a stronger national identity, which has been good for both of them. However, Serbia still has a very important waterway that flows through its territory, which we will learn about in a minute.

Serbia is a fascinating place for us to explore. Are you ready? Let's go!



Our small jet takes off from the Podgorica [pod-gor-IT-za] airport and heads northeast to the city of Belgrade. We can see a good slice of the landscape from our airplane window. The first thing you will notice is that there are several mountain ranges, including the Balkan Mountains and the Carpathian Mountains in eastern Serbia, and the Dinaric Alps in western Serbia. There is also a very large area of flat land called the Pannonian Plain.

From our jet window, we can also see that there are several rivers that flow through Serbia, including the Sava, the Tisza [TEE-sa], and the Drina Rivers. But the most important waterway is very well



Photo of the Belgrade Kalemegdan Fortress at the confluence of the Danube and Sava Rivers, taken by Igor Jeremić.

known and you may have heard of it before. Can you name a major river that flows through ten countries including Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine? If you guessed the Danube [DAN-yoob] River, you are correct!

The Danube River, Europe's second longest, is a very famous and majestic river. Not only does it pass through all of those countries, but it also passes through some prominent cities, such as Vienna, the capital of Austria; Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia; Budapest, the capital of Hungary; and Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. The Danube River has played a very significant role in the history of Europe, and has also been the **inspiration** for writers, artists, and musicians.

There is one thing about the Danube River that has become very important to Serbia: shipping. Because Serbia is a land-locked country, the Danube River provides the means by which products can be shipped from Serbia to other countries in Europe. And because the Danube River eventually empties into the Black Sea, which connects to the Mediterranean Sea via the Bosphorus [BOS-per-us] Strait, the people of Serbia can use the Danube River to ship merchandise around the globe.

This is the river we see as our jet approaches the Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport, the main airport of Belgrade, the country's capital and largest city. Nikola Tesla? Who is that, you ask?

Nikola Tesla was a famous Serbian-American scientist and inventor, well known for his work with electricity. Have you ever heard of Thomas Edison? Most people think that Thomas Edison invented electricity as we know it today, but it was really Nikola Tesla. Edison developed one kind of electricity called “**direct current**” or DC. This is the type of electricity or power generated from batteries that we use in flashlights or in the engine of a car. But Tesla discovered “**alternating current**” or AC. This is the type of electricity that we use in our homes and schools and offices all around the world. The next time you watch television, use your computer, or turn on a light, you can thank Nikola Tesla!

Have you heard of Tesla Motors? This Silicon Valley car company is named after Nikola Tesla. In fact, the Tesla Roadster, the company’s first vehicle, uses an AC motor descended directly from Tesla’s original 1882 design.

It is fitting that the Serbian people named the airport in Belgrade after him. His scientific achievements have made a tremendous impact on our world.



Nikola Tesla’s image appears on the 100 Serbian dinar banknote (issued 2006).

After a safe landing, we step out of our small jet onto the tarmac to find that the air temperature is a pleasant 70° F. In Serbia the average winter temperature is 32° F, the freezing point, but often dips down even colder. The average summer temperature is 72° F, but the highest temperature ever recorded was in 2007 when it reached a very hot 112° F. Wow! I’m glad it’s not that hot today as we wait for our bus to take us into the city.

Belgrade is less than 10 miles from the airport, so it is a quick ride into the center of the city. What can we learn about the city during the bus ride? It is a large city with a population of nearly 2 million people. It has a very long history, dating back to the **Year of our Lord**, 2000 years ago! A barbarian tribe, known as the **Celts**, first settled this area. How did they get here, you ask?

Originally, the Celts were a tribe of people who all spoke the same language and all shared the same culture in Central Europe about 3000 years ago, during the **Iron Age**. It is known as the Iron Age because it was during this time in history that people began to use tools made out of iron. Later, during the expansion of the Roman Empire, the Celtic people were pushed farther and farther north and out of Central Europe. That is why we associate the Celtic people with the regions of Brittany, an area in

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northwestern France, and the more northern countries of Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

A little over two thousand years ago, the Celts built several forts in this area where the city of Belgrade now stands. Later this **settlement** was absorbed into the Roman Empire and the city was named Singidunum [SING-a-dum]. We will see Roman ruins when we visit Kalemegdan [kal-e-MAG-dun] Fortress. During the Middle Ages, the Serbian people settled here. It was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1878 when Serbia became independent. At that time, Belgrade became the capital of Serbia.

Although it's a big city, the old part of the city is small enough that we can walk around and explore on foot. Let's start at the Kalemegdan Fortress. It was originally a Roman military fortress, but now it is a city park that sits right where the Sava

River joins the Danube River (see photo on previous page). There is much to see and do here. See the old Roman well? It looks quite out of place alongside the modern day additions to the park: tennis and basketball courts, quaint cafés, several museums and church buildings, the Belgrade Zoo, and a **planetarium**.

Speaking of cafés, are you hungry yet? Do you see those barges down on the river? Those are actually restaurants. Have you ever eaten on a barge docked along the bank of a river before? Neither have I. Let's go and find out what is on the menu.

There are some familiar items on the menu from other cultures around the Mediterranean Sea, especially Greek and Turkish dishes; and I can see that there are Austrian and Hungarian desserts too. The national dishes of Serbia are ground beef patty and grilled minced meat.





**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Wow, what do you think about Serbia? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Rivers:**

*What important river runs through this country? Why is the Danube River so important to Serbia?*

**History:**

*What do the Celts have to do with Serbia? What scientist from this country invented electricity? Where is this type of electricity used today?*

~::~::~~

Now that we have full tummies, let's continue our explorations through Belgrade. At Republic Square, the main square in Belgrade, there is a crowd of people. Apparently, this is normal as many people meet here to talk or share lunch. We'll head over to Skadarska Street. This is a **pedestrian** street, which means that no cars are allowed, only people on foot. The streets have uneven cobblestones where we are walking, so take care not to trip and fall! There are musicians performing live music in the street. There's also something else here that is interesting. Look up on that wall. Do you see



Photo of historic Skadarska Street in the public domain, taken by Zoran Životić.



Photo of trompe-l'oeil in the public domain, taken by besopha.

the painting of a shop on the side of that building? It looks like we can walk right in, but it is a solid concrete wall. That's called "trompe-l'oeil" [tromp-luoy] which means "trick the eye" in French. Skadarska Street has become a popular place for artists to create these impressive "trick" paintings.

There's the Old Royal Palace, which was built in 1881. The Serbian kings once lived there, but today it is used as the Town Hall of Belgrade. The other palace, right next to the Old Royal Palace, is called the New Palace. The New Palace was built in 1922 and was the residence of King Peter I. Now it is the home of the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Have you noticed how many church buildings there are in Belgrade? Eighty-five percent of Serbians belong to the Serbian Orthodox Church, an offshoot of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The remaining 15% are Catholic, Protestant, or Muslim.

Serbia is a big country and Belgrade is just a small part of it. Let's get out of the city. Would you like to take a train ride? There is an old historic steam train up in the mountains that chugs through several tunnels and over many bridges. Before we go, we need to make sure that today is not a holiday, so we can be certain that the train will be running. Let's check the holiday schedule in Serbia. There's New Year's Day on January 1; Eastern Orthodox Christmas on January 7; Orthodox New Year on January 14; Saint Sava's Feast Day on January 27; Serbian National Day on February 15; Labor Day on May 1; Victory Day on May 9; and St. Vitus Day on June 28. Some Roman Catholics and Protestants observe Christmas on December 25 instead of on January 7.



Since the train is running today, we'll drive

Photo of the Mokra Gora station taken by Herbert Ortner in the public domain.

to Mokra Gora in the western part of Serbia. This is the **picturesque** village where our little train will start. During the ten-mile train ride, we will go through 20 tunnels and over 10 bridges. The view from the window is outstanding; so make sure you have your camera ready. The train stops a couple of times for brief periods, making it easy to take some good photos. At one little village we will stop for about 20 minutes. There we can grab something to drink or a snack at the tiny café in the railway station. What a great way to see Serbia! The train affords us a unique prospect of this lovely country. From high up in the mountains, we can look out over the valley far below. What do you think of those farms laid out like a patchwork quilt below us?



That train ride was one I will never forget. I wish it could have lasted a little bit longer, but it's a great day to be outside and in the country. Let's head up to northern Serbia next to visit the Fruška Gora [fr-oosh-ka go-ra] National Park. While we're riding, let me tell you more about Serbia's history. **Archaeologists** have discovered evidence of very ancient civilizations along the Danube River. Archaeologists are scientists who dig in the earth and find things that people made and used a long time ago, such as tools or pottery. From these ancient **artifacts**, they can learn more about the people who

lived there at that time.



Constantine, illustrated by Darla Dixon

After the Celtic tribes left this area, Serbia became part of the Roman Empire and, amazingly, seventeen Roman emperors came from Serbia! Only Italy produced more Roman emperors than Serbia did. The most famous Roman emperor born in Serbia was Constantine the Great. Constantine is well known for being the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity.

The story goes that Constantine had a vision of a cross shining like the sun emblazoned with the words, "By this sign, you shall conquer." The following night, on the eve of an important battle, he had a similar dream. In his dream, he was instructed to raise the standard of the cross before his approaching army to receive God's protection. He did this the following day and they won the battle. Not only was Constantine the first emperor to become a Christian, but he also became Christianity's biggest advocate. By the



King Peter I of Serbia, public domain

Edict of Milan in the year AD 313, Constantine proclaimed freedom of religion for all.

After the end of the Roman Empire, various Serbian leaders ruled the area. The Kingdom of Serbia officially began in the year 1217 when Stephan II was crowned king. Parts of Serbia were conquered by the Ottoman Empire, but later, in 1835, Serbia fought and gained independence from the Turks. Battles continued to rage between the Serbs and the Turks, until finally, in 1878, Serbia was fully independent from the Ottoman Empire.

After World War I, King Peter I of Serbia was named king of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Do you remember King Peter's palace in Republic Square in Belgrade? Later his son, King Alexander, changed the name of the country to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The name changed yet again after World War II. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which included Serbia, became the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Then, Yugoslavia became a **communist** country and was ruled by Josip Tito for many years.

In 1989, something happened that drastically changed the way people lived in communist countries across Eastern Europe. That was the year the Berlin Wall came down, smashing the barrier between the communist and free portions of Germany. This caused a chain reaction of events throughout Europe. Over the next two years, all of the former communist countries in Eastern Europe declared their independence. Freedom was reborn in Yugoslavia, as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia broke away and formed their own governments. Only Serbia and Montenegro remained united for several more years until they too eventually split apart and became separate countries.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*I like Serbia, how about you? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Roman Emperors:**

*There is only one other country that has produced more Roman Emperors than Serbia. Do you remember which one it was? Constantine became the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity. He had visions from God. Did he listen to the visions? What happened? Can you tell me why Constantine decided to become a Christian?*

~::~::~~



Well, here we are at Fruška Gora National Park. A popular pastime here is riding bicycles, so that's what we're going to do. The park has rolling hills, grassy fields and old growth forests. We might see some animals, so we should be on the lookout for woodpeckers and eagles overhead, as well as deer, wild boars, wild cats, badgers and weasels along the trail.

This park is a history lover's paradise. Along the bike path, we'll see several old fortresses and monasteries. In a beautiful little wood, there is a cluster of fifteen Serbian Orthodox monasteries. Originally there were 35 monasteries all built between 300 and 600 years ago, but more than half of them no longer exist. We won't have time to see all of them, but we can enjoy a few.

Why were there so many monasteries, you ask? They were built during the time when Serbia was ruled by the Ottoman Empire and fighting for its independence. It was the monks hidden away in these monasteries who preserved the traditions and ethnic identity of the Serbian people.



Serbian Orthodox monastery, licensed through iStockphoto.

After our bicycle ride, let's visit the southern part of Serbia, an area called Kosovo [KOH-soh-voh]. Have you heard of Kosovo before? Is it a country, or is it a part of Serbia? It depends on who is answering the question. Kosovo is a **disputed** area. This means that some countries recognize the Republic

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of Kosovo as a separate country from Serbia, but Serbia and many other countries still consider it a part of Serbia. What happened to cause this problem?

If you look on your map, you will see that the western part of Kosovo shares its border with Albania. There are many Albanians living in Kosovo. As a matter of fact, 92% of the population is Albanian. Serbia wants to keep Kosovo in Serbia. They have fought over this land for many centuries. But the people of Kosovo want to break away from Serbia, a Christian nation, because they are not Serbian nor are they Christian. Most of the people of Kosovo are ethnic Albanians who are Muslim by faith. Kosovo declared its independence in 2008, but the Serbian officials in government do not acknowledge this.

When entering Kosovo, some people would say it's another country, and other people will disagree. But if we go to a little city called Prizren [pronounced "prison"] in Kosovo, we will feel like we're in another country, because it is really different from anything we've seen so far in Serbia.



Are you hungry again? I thought you might be. Let's go to the piazza, the main square in Prizren, called "Shadervan." This gathering place for the local people has many cafés and restaurants. We can sit outside and enjoy something to eat and drink, while we watch people walking around the beautiful fountain in the middle of the piazza. If you want to try something that is a traditional Kosovo dish, then you should order "Tava of Prizren." It is a casserole that originates from the time of the Ottoman Empire. The flavors are strong yet pleasing. It has lamb and eggplant, green peppers, onions, and tomatoes in it. It sounds delicious, doesn't it?

What makes Prizren so different from the other parts of Serbia we've visited so far? What do you see here that you hadn't noticed before? Yes, the buildings have more of a Turkish or Middle Eastern appearance because of the Muslim influence in this region.

Do you see the mosques? That mosque there is the Bajraki Mosque, also known as the Mosque of Sultan Mehmed [meh-met] the Conqueror. It is nearly 500 years old and is very beautiful inside and out

with an abundance of woodcarvings and blue and white paintings. The other mosque we see is the Sofi Sinan Pasha Mosque. This mosque was built about 400 years ago, and its walls are about six feet thick! There are over 50 windows, and the **minaret** is very tall and impressive, don't you agree?

The other interesting building that dates back to the Ottoman Empire is the Gazi Mehmet Pasha Hamam. Do you know what a **hamam** is? It is a public bath where the people could bathe after walking around on the dusty streets. This hamam, like the two mosques, is very old. It was built about 500 years ago. Its **architecture** is grand with two large domes and nine smaller domes on its roof.

On the ride back to Belgrade, leaving Muslim Kosovo behind and re-entering Christian Serbia, we can talk more about Serbian culture. One unusual tradition of Serbians is called “Slava.” Serbian families celebrate the birthday of their **patron** saint. This celebration usually takes place once a year, but sometimes a patron saint has two special days. If this is the case, then the second day, which is less important than the main day of celebration, is called the “Preslava,” or “Little Slava.”

Serbs celebrate their saints’ special days with food, of course! A special cake is made, called the “Slava Cake,” but it is more like bread than cake. The top of the Slava Cake is decorated with either a cross or a dove of peace. Another traditional dish made for Slava Day is Koljivo [KOL-ye-vo]. It is made with boiled wheat and flavored with honey, walnuts, and spices. The wheat **symbolizes** Christ’s resurrection.

The family members go to church on their saint’s day and take communion. After the service, the family invites the priest to come to their house to celebrate Slava with them. At the house, the priest performs a short service and blesses the Slava Cake and the Koljivo, and lights a Slava candle. The Slava feasts are celebrated for St. Demetrius, St. George, St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, St. Nicholas, and St. Sava. Sometimes whole villages and cities join together and celebrate the patron saint of their community.

Christmas in Serbia is also unique. As mentioned before, it is celebrated on January 7, because Serbian Orthodox Christians follow the Eastern Orthodox calendar, not the Roman Catholic one. In Serbia, early on the morning of Christmas Eve day, families trek into the woods and cut down a small oak tree—not an evergreen



Slava cake to honor St. John the Baptist, image in the public domain. Delicious!

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tree like we are used to. They take the tree to their local church for the priest to bless it. The floor of the church is covered with hay to remind people of the stable in Bethlehem.

When they get home from church, the family burns the oak tree along with wheat and other grains in the fireplace. This fire is a burnt offering, a sacrifice to God. The family then eats a meal, often of roasted pig, and a special bread with a coin baked inside. Whoever gets the slice of bread with the coin is supposed to have a good year. Most families don't exchange presents on Christmas, but some do on New Year's Day.

We've arrived back in Belgrade now, and are nearly at the airport. We've seen some amazing things in Serbia that we will never forget: cities and villages, trains and tunnels, bridges and barges, mosques and monasteries. Let's jot down some notes in our travel log while these memories are still fresh.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*I hope you liked learning about Serbia. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Kosovo:**

*Why do some people think of Kosovo as a separate country from Serbia?*

**Christmas:**

*How is Christmas celebrated in Serbia? Do Orthodox Christians in Serbia celebrate Christmas on the same day that your family celebrates? Discuss the Christmas traditions of the Serbian people. How are they different from yours? How are they the same?*

*Timeline Events for Chapter 7 are located on the CD-ROM, along with map work, activities, recipes and more!*



## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: LIKE PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY

I hope you like to fly because we are off again. In less than 50 minutes, we'll be landing in a country with a very long name—Bosnia and Herzegovina [hurt-ze-go-VEE-na]. Do you wonder why it has two names? It has two names because it is two geographical areas and cultures that are distinctly different but sandwiched together as one. Like peanut butter and jelly, which are not at all alike, they go together very nicely.

Bosnia is the larger section and makes up four-fifths of the country's land area. Herzegovina, in the southern corner, is the remaining fifth of the land.

As our plane flies west from Belgrade, Serbia and towards the Adriatic Sea, we can get our bearings by consulting our map. As you already know, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a small country found on the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe.

Let's review the names of the Balkan Peninsula countries. There's Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Some would argue that Kosovo should be included in this list; while others say that Kosovo is a region of Serbia. What do you think?

Looking at our map, we can see that Bosnia and Herzegovina is located on the western half of the Balkan Peninsula. Croatia is on its northern and western border; Serbia to the east; and Montenegro to the south. Bosnia and Herzegovina is almost a land-locked country—al-



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most, but not quite! This country has a very narrow twelve-mile stretch of coastline along the Adriatic Sea that cuts through Croatia. Can you find it on your map? Along this coast is the port city of Neum. Although it already has a small shipping port, there are plans in the works to enlarge the port and widen the roads that lead into the rest of the country.

Our plane is beginning to make its descent. Take a look out your window. Do you see those snow-covered mountains? Those are the Dinaric Alps. One of those mountains is called Treskavica where the 1984 Winter Olympics were held. Spectacular, aren't they?



The Dinaric Alps near the mountain Treskavica, home of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games. Photo taken by Frfincon.

South of these mountains are beautiful rolling hills. What else can you see out your window? Yes, trees! Spreading out like a green blanket before us, we see acre upon acre, mile after mile of trees. Nearly half of Bosnia and Herzegovina is covered in forest. And there's the Bosna River, where the country gets its name. But that is not the largest river. That distinction belongs to the Sava River, which flows through a flat and wide valley known as the Parapannonian Plain. The land near the river is very fertile and farmers grow a wide variety of crops.

Our plane is flying low enough that you can get a good look at the dam controlling the flow of the river. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a land rich in natural resources, such as wood, coal, copper and zinc, but also hydropower. *Hydro* means water, so hydropower is the energy we can get from water flowing over a dam.

We are now landing in Sarajevo, the capital and largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Button up your coats because it is chilly outside, even though it is one of the warmest months of the year. Summers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are cool and don't last very long. The temperature rarely rises above 67° F. In the wintertime, it gets quite cold and the red of the thermometer stays below the freezing point for a few months.

Sarajevo is considered a small city with a population under half a million. While it is a European city, it has an Asian atmosphere. Perhaps this is because east met west here during a significant period in the history of western civilization. In the year AD 285, the Roman emperor Diocletian divided the Roman Empire into two halves—East and West. Sarajevo is where that split occurred. As a result, there is a great diversity of religions and cultures here and doubtless the root of many conflicts throughout the years. Roman Catholics from Western Europe, Orthodox Christians from Eastern Europe and Muslims from the former Ottoman Empire have all lived here. It is home to three different groups of people—the Bosniaks, the Croats, and the Serbs. Indeed, Sarajevo is a hotbed of cultural and political activity. We'll learn more about these people and their cultures very soon.

Let's begin our adventure here in the Old Town of Sarajevo, the Baščaršija [bosh-char-ZHI-ya]. Besides the cobblestone streets and the fountain in the center of the square, this doesn't look much like a European city, does it? It looks like we have landed somewhere in the Middle East! As we pass by the mosques and bazaar, we can hear the Muslim call to prayer in the distance. Some of the smells wafting past our noses make us hungry for lunch, but it's rather early





The Latin Bridge where Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, which set WWI into motion. Photo taken by anjči is in the public domain.

for that. Let's take a walk along the Miljacka [meel-YAK-sa] River that runs through Sarajevo.

There is the Latin Bridge! This bridge holds great historical significance. Almost 100 years ago, in the year 1914, the archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Franz Ferdinand, was visiting Sarajevo. Here on this very

bridge, he was **assassinated**. That means that he was killed for political reasons. The man who killed him, Gavrilo Princip [preen-tsip], was a Bosnian Serb who wanted independence from the empire. Shocked and outraged, the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war on Serbia. The gunshot of this radical assassin set in motion the First World War!

If we hike to the Yellow Fortress up on that hill, we can get a good view of the whole city. By the time we get back down, we will really be hungry! This is a good place to snap some photos.



Now I'm really hungry! That hike worked up my appetite and the smells coming from these street cafés are making my stomach growl. This menu posted on the window of a busy restaurant looks good:

I think I'll try the baked layers of potatoes and minced beef. Then I would love to try the stewed apples stuffed with a walnut filling for dessert. How about you?

Our waitress, Aida, is very friendly. While we wait for our meal to arrive, she tells us that tomorrow is a holiday, but the restaurant will still be open for business. She says that there are nineteen



official holidays in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is a lot of holidays each year! She tells us that seven of them are to honor various saints.

“Like St. Patrick?” we ask.

Aida smiles politely and says, “Yes, but St. Patrick’s Day is not one of the holidays celebrated here.”

After our delicious lunch, we decide to head out of town. There is a train leaving Sarajevo for Mostar, the largest city in Herzegovina. The trip will take about an hour. As we travel through the beautiful Bosnian countryside, we can talk about the **tumultuous** history of this area.

Long, long ago, the people who lived here were called Illyrians. This was before the rise of the Roman Empire that conquered this region along with the others surrounding it. Later, when the Roman Empire split into two halves, this land was divided down the middle—the western portion remained with the Western Roman Empire

# menu

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## BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

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### SOUPS AND STEWS

Bey’s Stew of Meat and Vegetables  
 Stew of Bell Peppers, Eggplants, Onions and Tomatoes  
 Pea Stew  
 Green Bean Stew  
 Vegetable Stew  
 Okra and Veal Stew

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### MEAT DISHES

Kebabs of Lamb and Beef Serviced with Onions, Sour Cream and Bread  
 Fried Bell Peppers Stuffed with Minced Meat  
 Meat and Rice Rolled in Pickled Cabbage  
 Spicy Beef Sausage  
 Baked Layers of Potatoes and Minced Beef

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### VEGETABLE DISHES

Cornmeal and Potatoes  
 Pickled Vegetables  
 Baked Potatoes Mixed with Flour and Water  
 Grape Leaves Stuffed with Rice

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### DESSERTS

Stewed Apples Stuffed with a Walnut Filling  
 Pastry Filled with Nuts and Honey  
 Rice Pudding  
 Pastry Stuffed with Apples

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### BEVERAGES

Kompot (a cold sweet drink made from cooked fruit)  
 Elder Juice  
 Bosnian Coffee

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and the eastern part went to the Eastern Roman Empire, which became known as the Byzantine Empire. This occurred around AD 300.

Later, after the fall of the Roman Empire, Slavic tribes from the north moved down into the area and settled here. Bosnia became a kingdom in its own right during the Middle Ages, until it was conquered by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. Bosnia and Herzegovina remained under Ottoman control for hundreds of years until the Turks were defeated during the Great Turkish War of 1683.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was not yet to be free. With great battles for territory among the major kingdoms of Europe, the area was swallowed up yet again by a new empire—the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was this tension that led to the assassination on the bridge in Sarajevo, which in turn led to the beginning of World War I.

After the First World War, Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, along with Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia. Because of its central position within Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina was chosen as the place to grow and strengthen its military might. Here, soldiers were trained and weapons were amassed to create one of the world's largest armies.



Bosnian-Herzegovinian soldiers armed with Yugoslavian-made SKS rifles. Photo taken by kseverovic 2010 in the public domain.

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, many communist countries declared their independence, including Croatia and Slovenia to the north. As Yugoslavia crumbled, a power vacuum remained, meaning that a strong leader was not ready to take control.

This realm has experienced a great deal of turmoil throughout its long history as large empires have swept in and conquered it time and time again, but its greatest trouble was about to begin. Let's put together a few facts that we now know about Bosnia and Herzegovina:

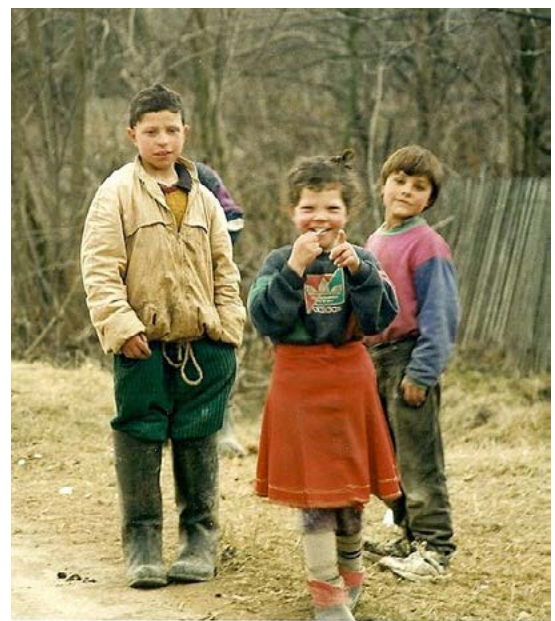
1. There are three ethnic groups that live in this small land area: the Serbs, the Bosniaks and the Croats.
2. There are three different religious affiliations: the Eastern Orthodox Christians (Serbs), Muslims (Bosniaks), and the Roman Catholics (Croats).
3. This was the center of Yugoslavia's military might, which means there were stockpiles of guns and ammunition here as well as an abundance of trained soldiers.
4. A vacuum of power was left behind when Yugoslavia crumbled.

If you add up these four things, what do you get? War!

Croatia had already declared its independence from Yugoslavia, so the Croats living in Bosnia wanted to secede as well. The Bosniaks were in agreement with the Croats. However, the Serbs wanted to remain united as Yugoslavia, just as their neighbors in Serbia did. The Bosniaks and Croats voted for independence, but the Serbs **boycotted** the vote, which means that they refused to participate in the voting process.

This is when the fighting began. For a time, the Bosniaks and Croats were in agreement with each other and fought together against the Serbs, but then they turned against one another as well. It was a real mess for a long time! The three groups within Bosnia all fought one another, and the Serbian government joined the fray to expand Serbia's territory into the disputed region. Eventually, the Bosniaks and Croats became friends again and neighboring Croatia helped them push back the Serbs who had broken the rules of war by setting up concentration camps and killing many civilians.

After years of bitter fighting, sieges and bombings, the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO) intervened. The leaders of these three groups met in Dayton, Ohio to sign the Dayton Agreement, officially ending the



Children often do not understand the causes of war, but are affected as much as the adults. These children were displaced from their homes. Photo by Paalso 1996.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

war in 1995. As you may imagine, with the war so recent and because of all the terrible things they did to each other, there are still bad feelings between these three culturally diverse groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Croatia and Serbia.



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Bosnia and Herzegovina is complex and perhaps a little hard to understand. That's okay! The more you read about a place, the better you can understand it. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

### **Balkan Countries:**

*Can you remember the names of two Balkan countries and one fact about each? Why does Bosnia and Herzegovina have such a long name? Is it a land-locked country? Why or why not? What is the climate like here in Bosnia and Herzegovina? Explain why Sarajevo has a culture that is both European and Asian.*

### **History:**

*Why did war break out in this area during the 1990's? What factors contributed to the onset of war? What does it mean to "boycott the vote?" How did the war end?*



Photo of Mostar and the Stari Most was taken by Ramirez and was awarded Wikipedia's 2nd place Picture of the Year in 2010.

Ah, but here we are in the city of Mostar in Herzegovina. Mostar has the nickname, “The City of Sunshine.” The first thing we need to see is the Stari Most (Old Bridge), which is where the city gets its name. The Stari Most is the famous old Ottoman bridge that spans the Neretva River. It was built about 450 years ago, but was destroyed during the Bosnian War. It was rebuilt in 2004 and is a symbol of the peace that spans this area, uniting a once divided country.

Look! A man is about to jump from the bridge! While this is very dangerous because the Neretva River is icy cold and the bridge is high above the water, people have been jumping from this bridge for hundreds of years. In fact, since 1968, a formal diving competition is held on this bridge every year. I think I would rather not participate in that competition!

After we wander through the quaint and narrow streets of this town, we can travel a little further south to see the Kravice [kra-VEE-cha] Waterfall. This waterfall on the Trebizat [tre-BEE-zhat] River is a popular place for locals of Mostar and visitors alike to visit. There is a rope swing dangling high over the water that is exhilarating to jump from. Near the waterfall, we can explore a hidden cave, an abandoned mill and even an old sailing ship.

Since we have been learning about bridges in Bosnia and Herzegovina, let me show you one more. We’ll travel up to the Drina River where we can take a riverboat ride. Long ago, the Drina was a small



Photo of the Kravice Waterfalls in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the public domain, taken by Matěj Batha.



Photo of the bridge over the Drina River is in the public domain, taken by Aleksandar Bogicevic.

river that was crossed using small wooden rafts, like the kind you would imagine Huck Finn paddling down the river. Then a dam was built across the river forming a beautiful peaceful lake on one side.

We'll board our boat upriver at Višegrad [VEE-sheh-grad] near the historic bridge and disembark at the lake. There's the bridge I wanted to show you. Let's walk across it before boarding the riverboat. It is a beautiful old bridge and in the center is a plaque with information about its history and construction. At least, that is my best guess, as I cannot read either of the languages that are engraved upon it.

The language spoken here was until very recently called Serbo-Croatian, but is now known as Bosnian or simply "our language." Even though there are three distinct dialects for the three people groups, they can all understand one another. One unusual aspect of this language is that it is the only one that uses two alphabets—the Latin alphabet (which is the same one we use for the English language) and the Cyrillic alphabet, the one used for the Russian language among others. No wonder we can't understand any of the letters on the plaque!

Our boat is down below. Thankfully, it's not a rickety wooden raft, but a freshly painted white double-decker boat. Our captain, Captain Danvor, shares information over the intercom system about the river and the sights that we will see. Before we set out on the river, he talks about the bridge we just crossed on foot.

*“The bridge you see there is called the Mehmed Paša Sokolović [pa-sha sow-ko-lo-vitch] Bridge. It was built over 450 years ago by a famous architect, Mimar Sinan, during the reign of the Ottoman Empire. Mimar Sinan has an interesting story. He was born to Orthodox Christian parents, but was taken from his home to serve a powerful Sultan, Mehmed Paša Sokolović. Sokolović was the Grand Vizier who ordered the construction of this bridge in 1571. Mimar Sinan became very famous and built hundreds of buildings for the Ottoman Empire during a time in history known as the Renaissance period.”*

As we continue our trip downriver, we enter a magnificent canyon with steep rocky walls. Old growth forests and an abundance of wildlife tell us that this area has been largely untouched by man. See the red squirrels chattering in and amongst the trees? Wouldn't it be exciting if we saw a fox or a bear? Keep your eyes peeled.

The small lake at the end of our boat ride is calm and glittering in the late afternoon sun. There is a little island in the middle of the lake. That looks like a fun place to explore, but we must be on our way. Another country awaits us—Croatia!

We have learned so much here in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Let us pray for the people of this nation that something more than grim tolerance and superficial peace would truly unite them. We can pray that they would learn to completely forgive one another and unite in brotherly love. While peanut butter and jelly couldn't be more different, they are better together!

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*How do you like Bosnia and Herzegovina? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**The Bridges:**

*Tell me about the Stari Most? What activity do people like to do from this bridge? What does this bridge symbolize for the people that live in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What language is spoke here? Which alphabet does it use? Can you tell me about Mimar Sinan, the famous bridge architect? What did you like best about Bosnia and Herzegovina?*

Chapter 8 Timeline Events	
285 AD	Roman Emperor Diocletian divides Roman Empire into East and West halves at Sarajevo
Middle Ages	Bosnia became a kingdom
16th Century	Stari Most bridge over the Neretva River built
1683	Bosnia under Ottoman control until The Great Turkish war in this year
1571	Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge built by Mimar Sinan for the powerful Grand Vizier after whom the bridge is named.
1914	Archduke Franz Ferdinand assassinated on the Latin Bridge in Sarajevo, leading to the start of WWI.
1968	Start of the diving competition from the Stari Most Bridge into the icy waters of the Neretva River each year.
1989	Berlin Wall came down, creating a power vacuum in Yugoslavia
1995	Dayton Agreement signed in Dayton, Ohio between Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats to end the Bosnian War
2004	The Stari Most Bridge rebuilt, after being destroyed during the Bosnian War

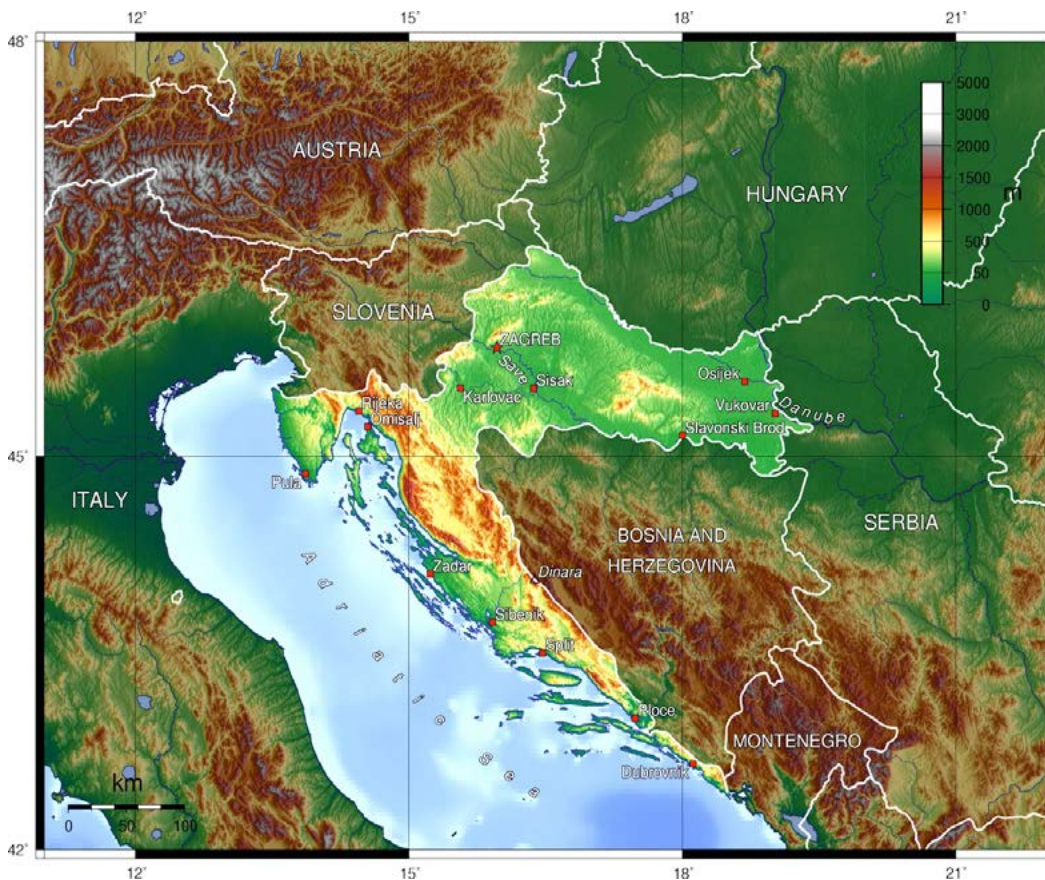




## CROATIA: DALMATIANS, DUKEDOMS, AND DEEP-SEA DIVING!

Traveling up the coastline, it won't take us long to reach our next country—Croatia. This will be an unforgettable journey. Croatia is considered to have one of the most beautiful coastlines in Europe, maybe even in the whole world. Jagged and craggy like the fjords of Norway, this is a sight you have to see to believe. Before we get there, let's take a look at our maps so we can know what to expect during our visit to Croatia.

Croatia is located across the northwest border of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has a most unusual shape, don't you think? Some say it looks like a boomerang, but others think it looks more like the open mouth of a crocodile ready to chomp down and devour Bosnia and Herzegovina. Let us hope that is not the case!



The other countries surrounding Croatia are Serbia to the east, Hungary to the north-east and Slovenia on its northern border. The pristine blue Adriatic Sea bounds its western edge.

Take a look at that coastline! Croatia has 1,246 islands to its name, and most of them are **uninhabited**. There are people



living on fewer than 50 of its islands, mainly fishermen and their families. Most of the islands are small and rocky. Some of them have stone huts, which tourists enjoy renting for quiet getaways. Krk [kerr-k] is the largest island and it is located at the northwest tip of Croatia.

What else can we notice from our maps? Along the western coast runs a mountain range called the Dinaric Alps. As we travel up the rugged and windy coastline, we'll come to the first mountain range in the Alps known as Dalmatia. Does that sound familiar to you? Yes, it reminds us of Dalmatian dogs, of course! Those adorable white dogs with the black spots originally came from Dalmatia in Croatia. Hey, that rhymes!

Driving along the Croatian coast, we can visit some quaint towns along the pebbly shore. The main cities along the southern Croatian seaside are Split and Dubrovnik. Split, formerly known as Spalatum, was originally built as a Greek outpost over 600 years before the time of Christ. Later it became a Roman citadel complete with a palace built in AD 295 for the Roman Emperor Diocletian. The palace, largely unchanged since its original construction, is still the dominant feature in the center of town. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site. This means that it will be preserved for generations to come. There are only 690 World Heritage sites in the world and six of them are located in the country of Croatia. Way down at the very southern end of Croatia lies the other main city of Dubrovnik. Take a look at



Photo of the Dubrovnik wall is in the public domain, taken by Daniel Ortmann.

your map to see this. Do you see that this city is located on the other side of the little stretch of Bosnia and Herzegovina that juts out to the coast? That little 12-mile stretch of coastline belonging to Bosnia and Herzegovina cuts straight through the country of Croatia. Dubrovnik is quite a bit out of our way, so I'll just tell you about it.

Dubrovnik is called the “pearl of the Adriatic.” That’s a lovely name, isn’t it? Dubrovnik is a walled city and has been for over a thousand years. No cars are allowed in this old town, so visitors have to explore the marble streets on foot. They are so worn by people walking on them for hundreds of years that they are smooth and slippery. There is a cable car in the center of town that runs to the top of a hill overlooking Dubrovnik. The city looks like it was frozen in time during the Middle Ages, except for some sections that were rebuilt in 1667 following a devastating earthquake that shook the area. Then, more recently, during Croatia’s War for Independence of 1991-1995, Serbia dropped bombs on Dubrovnik, damaging much of the ancient city and leaving **pockmarks** on the marble streets. The city has been largely restored to its original condition and is now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Traveling further north, we come to the next section of the Dinaric Alps. It is called the Velebit Range. This is perhaps the most enchanting area of Croatia. Let me tell you about it. These mountains are extremely close to the Adriatic Sea. On the side facing the sea, they plunge down steeply into the foam-



Photo of the Velebit Range (karst topography) is in the public domain, taken by Martin Brož.



The Dinaric Alps are dotted with mysterious caves because of the water soluble rock which erodes quickly.

ing water. In this area, there are hundreds of caves, some of them very large. One cave—Lukina Jama [loo-KEE-nah YAH-mah]—is one of the deepest caves on the planet. The inland side of the Velebit Range is thickly forested.

The Velebit is dear to the Croatian people, not only for its impressive beauty, but for the folklore surrounding it. Nymphs, which are mythical fairy creatures, are said to dwell in these enchanting woods and deep mysterious caves. The Vila Velebita is the most famous and beloved nymph of all. A good nymph, she is known as the “Fairy of the Velebit.” She works her good magic from these mountains. She is the subject of many Croatian stories and songs.

These mountain ranges that line the western edge of Croatia are an excellent example of **Karst topography**. *Karst* means that the rocks that make up the Dinaric Alps consist mostly of dolomite and limestone,

both highly **soluble** in water. The resulting erosion gives these mountains a smooth rounded appearance (see photo on previous page). The make-up of these rocks has also contributed to the abundance of caves and underground lakes that have formed here. The thousands of caves in the Velebit region are largely unexplored. However, **spelunkers**, people who explore caves, come from all over the world to discover the mysteries found here.

Do you feel that wind? That delightful breeze is called the *Maestral* (or Mistral) wind. The Maestral is a welcome wind. It blows every day from spring through autumn, but blows the strongest in the summertime. It blows in from the Adriatic Sea in the morning and dies down in the afternoon. This mild wind is caused by temperature differences between the sea and land. The greater the difference in those temperatures, the stronger the wind blows.

People who live along the sea develop a deep intuition about the weather as it greatly affects their everyday lives. This is especially true for the people on the Croatian Adriatic coast; so much so that the ancient Croatians named their winds. In addition to the Maestral, there are two other winds of significance to the Croatians—the *Bura* [BOO-rah] and the *Jugo* [YOO-go].

The Bura comes from the Greek word meaning “north wind.” This is a cold wind that sweeps down from the Velebit Mountains towards the sea. The Bura wind is also caused by a temperature difference

between the chilly temperatures of the Dinaric Alps and the warmer temperatures of the Mediterranean Sea. This wind blows frequently during the winter; blowing up to 150 miles per hour and lasting as long as two weeks at a stretch. The coastal highways are often closed when such extreme winds occur, and many of the pine trees along the coast lean halfway to the ground. Have you heard the expression, “hold on to your hats,” when gusty winds blow? The Croatians wink and say “hold on to your children!” What do you think about that?

As fierce as Bura winds can be, they often do blow bad storms back out to sea and leave behind them beautiful, crystal-clear skies. The Croatians welcome these winds.

There is a third wind that the people of Croatia do not like at all. It is called the *Jugo* (which means *south* in Croatian) and it is the first part of the country’s former name—Yugoslavia. This wind comes up from the south, a hot wind that originates in the Sahara Desert, and brings warm, muggy air from far-away Africa. The Jugo, unlike the Bura or Maestral, starts slowly and then gets stronger and stronger over time. This wind can sometimes be as strong as a hurricane! The Jugo will often bring clouds and rain along with unbearable humidity. Since ancient times, Croatians have associated humid weather with disease and so call the Jugo an unhealthy wind.



Fierce Bura winds blow up quickly in the Adriatic Sea. Photo by Angusprain.

Let’s head east to the capital city of Zagreb. What a small world this is! When we get there, we’ll be meeting up with a friend of a friend along with his wife. Filip and Sophie are native Croatians who make their home in Zagreb. Filip attended college in the United States and he and his wife both speak fluent English. On the way to Zagreb, we will be driving through Plitvice [PLEET-vee-tze] Lakes National Park, another UNESCO World Heritage Site and the largest **national park** in Croatia. We’ll have a chance to see some of the sixteen cascading lakes, which are considered by many to be the most beautiful lakes in the world. The Plitvice Lakes are world-renown for their distinctive colors, ranging from cobalt blue to emerald green, smoky grey to brilliant turquoise. The colors change constantly depending on the quantity of minerals and organisms present in the water and the angle of the sunlight on the waters.



The colors of the lakes in the Plitvice Lakes National Park are breathtaking! Photo in the public domain, taken by Kweniston.

After a visit to the lakes, we'll drive to Zagreb. Croatia is a rather small country so it won't take us long to get to there. You can look out the window as we drive.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Croatia is like a gem along the Adriatic Sea. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**The Mountains:**

*What dog breed came from Croatia? Tell me about the Velebit Range. What does Karst topography mean? What do you remember about the "Fairy of the Velebit?"*

**The Winds:**

*What do you think of the different types of winds? What is a Maestral wind? A Bura? A Jugo? Do you agree with the Croatians' ancient beliefs about winds?*

On the eastern side of the mountains is the Pannonian Plain. This is the fertile **basin** through which the Sava and Drava Rivers flow, both major tributaries of the mighty Danube River. We pass by several farms and small villages along the way.

Zagreb is a very old and historic city. Founded by the Romans over 2,000 years ago, it was once called Andautonia. It was renamed Zagreb about a thousand years ago. Under the rule of King Ladislaus, the city existed as two settlements. The eastern one, Kaptol, was home to a great cathedral and housed the clergy. The western one, called Gradec, was home to the merchants and farmers. In 1851, these two areas expanded and united to form one larger city. Zagreb is now home to over one million residents and is the largest city in Croatia.

Turning through the narrow streets, we find the restaurant where we will meet our friends for lunch. The cuisine in Croatia varies greatly from region to region. Over on the Adriatic seaboard, the dishes are more typical of what you would find throughout the Mediterranean, such as Italian, Greek and French dishes. But the food here in Zagreb is more like what you would find in Austria or Hungary.

There's Filip and Sophie, waving to us. It must be obvious that we are the out-of-town visitors that they have agreed to show around their city.

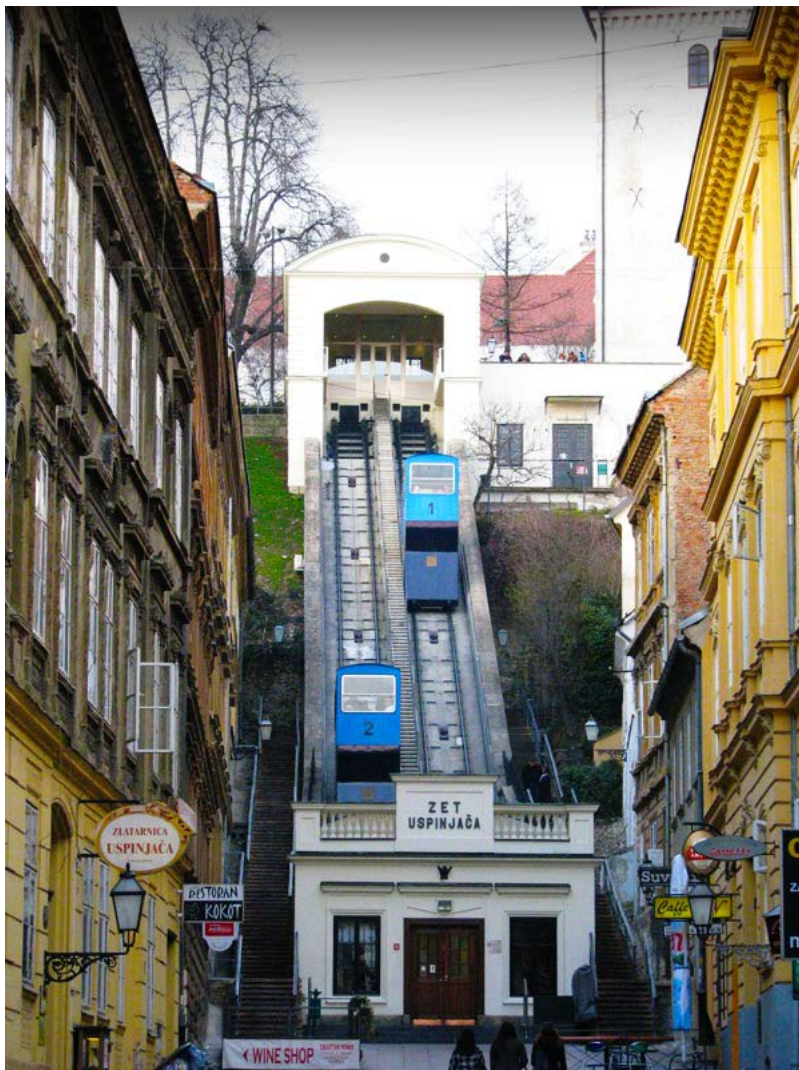
This is one of Sophie's favorite cafés along the Sava River. She tells us that if we eat outside, we can watch the high-speed commuter train whiz past on the opposite side of the river on its way to Ban Jelačić [YEH-la-chich] Square. From the menu, we can choose from a wide selection of Croatian food. What will you have?



## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Over lunch, Filip tells us a little about the rich and long history of Croatia. He says that people have been living in these river valleys of Croatia for thousands of years. The Greeks traveled up the coast from the south and settled on some of the islands and along the seashore. Then the Romans from the west moved in and colonized these lands. Later, after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Slavs invaded the region from the east. Later still, the Austro-Hungarians stepped in from the north to hold back the Ottoman invasion into Western Europe. “So, you can see,” Filip says, “that Croatia has been bullied and oppressed from all sides!”

During medieval times, Croatia established two **dukedom**s. A dukedom is smaller than a kingdom and ruled by a duke, instead of a king. One of its dukedom was called Pannonia and the other, Dalmatia. Shortly after, the Croatians united and crowned their first king, King Tomislav. This kingdom lasted about 100 years before Croatia was swallowed up by the Hungarian Empire.



This is known as the Zagreb funicular and is the shortest cable car in the world—66 meters long. Photo taken by Ex13 is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Following the First World War, Croatia united with the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, forming the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. During the Second World War, Yugoslavia was controlled by both Italy and Germany at different times. After the war ended, Yugoslavia became a communist country ruled for many years by Josip Tito.

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, Croatia, along with many other communist countries, declared its independence. However, the Serbs living in Croatia didn't want to divide from Serbia. This resulted in the Croatian War for Independence that began in 1991 and lasted for four years. After their defeat, many Croatian Serbs left this newly formed country and moved to Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After lunch, we walk across the river on a bicycle bridge and take the cable



car to the top of the hill. This is Gornji [GORN-ye] Grad, or Upper Town, and it is the most historic and well-preserved portion of the city. Up on this hill is St. Mark's Church, a historic landmark that dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and has a beautiful mosaic roof illustrating the Croatian coats of arms. It is very beautiful up here with its wide-open squares and narrow streets. It feels as though we have gone back in time. We need to take several pictures to send home.

According to Filip, we need to go see the Zagreb Cathedral, which is a little ways past the Ban Jelačić Square, the main square in the center of Zagreb. Sophie says that on the way there we'll pass through the Dolac Market, one of the most famous outdoor farmers' markets in all of Europe. You will love it, she says.

Sure enough, Sophie is right—it takes our breath away. Walking downhill out of the Upper Town through the Stone Gate, our eyes meet with a sea of red



Image of the Dolac Market in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.



striped umbrellas. Row upon row, stall by stall, the street vendors line up and shade their wares and produce under bright red awnings. This is a sight to behold. This market would look cheery and welcoming even on a gloomy day. Sophie buys some apples and walnuts on our way through the market.

Look there! Rising up on the other side of the Dolac Market is the famous Zagreb Cathedral. It is spectacular, rising high above the surrounding buildings. I can't wait to look inside. Let's go! We'll take some photos to show our friends at home.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

After a lovely afternoon exploring this great city, we leave Filip and Sophie at the Ban Jelačić Square, where they will board a tram for home. Filip gives us a hearty handshake and Sophie hugs us like we are old friends. Now we have friends in this part of the world as well. We promise to send their greetings to our mutual friend.

We wave and we are off to our final destination in Croatia, the northern coastal town of Pula on the Istrian Peninsula. Pula is known for its shipbuilding industry. In many ways, this is a typical modern city with traffic congestion and urban sprawl. But Pula also has some of the most well preserved Roman ruins in all of Croatia, including arches, columns, and temples. Particularly well preserved is the old Roman **amphitheater** that was constructed around AD 100. No longer used for gladiator fights, this arena now hosts music concerts and film festivals for the cheering crowds that flock here.



This aerial view of Pula on the Istrian Peninsula is in the public domain, taken by Darko D.

If you will pull out your map one more time, you will see that when we are here on the northern Croatian coast, we are not very far from Italy. See Venice there, just across this northern tip of the Adriatic Sea? Venice was once more than just a city, it was a sprawling republic that dominated this entire territory for hundreds of years. So, this Istrian Peninsula has been part of Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia, and now Croatia.

There are two official languages here in Istria—Italian and Croatian. Both languages are taught in the schools. When asked if the people here are Italian or Croatian, they will bristle and say that they are Istrian.



The waters of Adriatic Sea off Brijuni Islands are pristine! Photo in the public domain, taken by ЉубишаС.

This beautiful coastal region is also a popular resort area, particularly the Brijuni [bree-YOO-nee] Islands off the coast. The rich and powerful flock here, not unlike the Amalfi Coast in Italy. There is an old olive tree that is worth seeing on the island of Veli Brijun, also known as Grand Brijun Island. It is over 1600 years old and still produces olives. This area is well known for its fine olive products, especially olive oil.

Vacationers come to the Croatian coast for many reasons, including fishing and deep-sea diving. But another reason is this: the weather! For many months of the year, the weather is sunny and warm. It is very similar to the weather found further south on the islands in the Mediterranean Sea. Croatia is one of the sunniest countries in Europe with over 2600 hours of sunlight each year. Some of the resorts along the coast have been known to give their customers a discount if their arrival is met with cloudy or rainy weather. That sounds like a good guarantee for a lovely vacation.

This northern tip of the Adriatic Sea is well known for its clear, pristine waters. You can see objects on the sea floor as far down as 100 feet. The abundance of marine life living in these waters is attributed to its purity. Below the sparkling blue surface live vast numbers of tuna, albacore, and mahi mahi, as well as colorful crustaceans and translucent squid. This is truly a fisherman and seafood lover's para-

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

dise! From these larger fish to the very small, such as sardines and anchovies, the boats of fisherman, both sport and commercial, return full throughout the fishing season. In fact, a fishing championship competition is regularly held in these waters.

Fish of every shape and kind are not the only spectacular sight you will see beneath the surface of the water. There is a whole network of brightly colored coral reefs for scuba divers to explore. And perhaps even more exhilarating is this: the sea floor is littered with the remains of shipwrecks from days gone by, some of them thousands of years old. There are wreckages from ancient Rome and the Venetian Republic alongside more modern naval ships from the two world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The lure of buried treasure has attracted deep-sea divers from all over the world.

Croatia is indeed an enchanting land, with nymphs and caves, Roman ruins and towering cathedrals, sunken treasure and coral reefs. I will not soon forget this place. Let's come back here again soon.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*I hope you liked Croatia. I know I do! I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

### **Zagreb:**

*How old is the capital city of Zagreb? How did it come to be such a large city? What is a funicular? Tell me what is so striking about the Dolac Market.*

### **The Istrian Peninsula:**

*Can you name two or three things that make the Istrian Peninsula so unique? What languages are spoken here? What is unusual about the waters surrounding Croatia? Would you like to scuba dive here? Name some of the kinds of fish that live in those waters. Have you ever eaten any of them?*

*Timeline Events for Chapter 9 are located on the CD-ROM, along with map work, activities, recipes and more!*

# 10

## SLOVENIA: AT THE CROSSROADS

Here on the Istrian Peninsula, we are just a hop, skip, and a jump from our next destination—the lovely little country of Slovenia. Let's travel up the coast to visit there now. We'll arrive at the quaint seaside town of Piran in about 30 minutes. Let's be good geographers and pull out our maps so that we know where we are going and what lies in store for us in Slovenia.



What do you notice about the shape of the country? Many people say it looks like a darling little chicken. In fact, Slovene residents might comment that they live in the head or the body or foot of the chicken. Do you see the head pointing toward Hungary to the east? It looks like it is walking away from Italy, which is directly west. Austria is located on its northern border, with Croatia to the south.

Slovenia is located at the crossroads of western and eastern Europe as well as southern and central Europe. It is the westernmost **Slavic** country, both in location and culture. It sits smack dab in the center of major trade routes that run between several of the main transportation hubs of Europe.

Slovenia is the place where four diverse geographical features collide—the Alps of the north; the Dinaric Alps of the south; the Pannonian Plain of the east; and the Adriatic Sea along its western shore. This mosaic of diverse landscapes creates a land with very distinct seasons and a variety of activities to enjoy. There is so much to see and do in this small country!

Slovenia is certainly a small country with a population of two million people. Ljubljana [loo-blee-AH-nah], the capital of Slovenia, has a quarter of a million residents and is considered to be the only large town in the republic. Slovenia is also one of the oldest and one of the newest countries in the world.



Photo of reconstructed pile dwelling in the public domain, taken by ANKAWÜ.

How can this be, you ask?

**Archaeological** digs in Slovenia have uncovered an amazing array of stone-age tools and devices. The oldest musical instrument ever discovered in the world was a pierced bear bone flute found in Divje Babe [dew-YEH BA-beh] cave outside of Cerčno [tserkno]. Bone needles and other delicate hand-made instruments have been excavated from Potok cave, indicating the presence of early civilizations in this area.

Perhaps some of the most exciting finds have been in the marshes outside of Ljubljana. The remains of ancient pile dwellings, or stilt houses, have been discovered along the edges of several lakes, rivers and wetlands in the Alps, dating as far back as 5000 BC. These houses were built on marshy ground near water, erected on piles to protect against occasional flooding. Out of the Ljubljana marshes, near these pile remains, was pulled the oldest wooden wheel ever found in the world. The wheel was sent to Vienna for **carbon dating**, which revealed that the wheel is approximately 5,250 years old. Indeed, that is old.

So, while humans have been living in this area of Europe for many **millennia**, the Republic of Slovenia is only a couple of decades old. Along with several of her southern neighbors on the Balkan Peninsula, Slovenia broke away from communist Yugoslavia and declared independence in 1991. In 2004, Slovenia joined the European Union. It was the first former communist country to adopt the Euro as its currency in 2007.

Oh look, we have arrived in Piran. With its narrow streets and **medieval** architecture, Piran is a popular tourist destination. Until quite recently, Italian was the language spoken in this old world town, but now that the country enjoys its independence, more and more people speak Slovene, the official language of Slovenia.

Piran is situated on a triangular point of land jutting out into the Adriatic Sea. Surrounding the old town are medieval walls and towers that provide a great view over the city and the Gulf of Trieste. Tartini Square in the center of town turns out to be not a square at all, but rather an **ellipse**. And there, on the edge of the peninsula, we can see the beautiful St. Clements Church rising up from the sea of



Photo of Piran taken by Federico Orsini from the medieval town wall above the city, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

red-roofed buildings. Off in the distance there, on the other side of the gulf, is Italy! I am looking forward to that adventure next! Are you?

Down below these medieval ramparts, we can walk through the narrow streets of Piran and take in its long history. If these walls could speak, they would tell us of pirates who disrupted Roman trade in the Adriatic Sea and peaceful fishermen whose livelihood depended upon the varied sea life below the glistening water. We would learn of Slavs, Byzantines, and Franks, all fighting for this outcropping of land, and the Venetians who finally conquered the entire coast, all the way down through Croatia. Oh, what an interesting conversation we would have, if these walls could speak...

Standing in the center of Tartini Square, named for composer and violinist Giuseppe Tartini, we find out something so remarkable we can hardly believe it. This square used to be a marina in the very center of town, crowded with small boats of every kind. But in 1894, it was filled in and is now the center of Piran culture and a popular meeting place for locals and visitors alike.

Let's venture inland and see some more of Slovenia, where wonders are to be found both above ground and underground. We'll stop at Škocjan [shkots-yan] Caves near Divača [di-VAH-tcha] on our way to Ljubljana, the capital city. This region of western Slovenia continues with the **Karst topography** that we found so fascinating in Croatia along the Velebit Mountains. The Karst Plateau, composed primarily of limestone and dolomite, runs up through Croatia, Slovenia, and northern Italy. This region is famous for the caves that have resulted from tremendous water erosion over these water-soluble **crags**. The Slovenian caves include Vilenica Cave (the oldest tourist cave in Europe), Lipica [LEE-pit-zuh] Cave, Divača Cave, Kačna [ka-tch-na] Cave, Postojna [po-STONE-yah] Cave, and the Škocjan Caves.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

The Škocjan Caves are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which means that they have special cultural or physical significance to mankind. In this case, the caves have special physical significance and Slovenia is committed to preserving their natural beauty for generations to come. This cave system is considered to be one of the most important in the world. For thousands of years, people have been attracted to the gorge where the Reka River disappears underground beneath a rocky ledge. Mysterious cave entrances and large cavernous **vaults** have made scientists conclude that the Škocjan Caves are one of the finest natural treasures of our planet.

After the Reka River disappears at Škocjan, it continues underground for two kilometers before it resurfaces. The sight of the swollen river, especially during the rainy season, vanishing completely under the rock wall, is both majestic and frightening. The volume of water that runs under Škocjan is what sets these caves apart. At some points along its watery passage, the river expands into underground lakes inside huge caverns. The grandest of these is Martel's Chamber with a volume of 2.2 million cubic meters. It is the largest underground chamber discovered in Europe and one of the most magnificent in the world.



Photo of Reka River where it enters the Škocjan Caves taken by Husond, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.





Photo of Predjama Grad, the castle built right into the mouth of a karst cave, was taken by Niki J. Photography. All rights reserved.

Above ground, if we continue northeast, we come to the town of Postojna. The cave found here is very famous as well and draws large crowds of visitors. Postojna Cave is actually the longest publicly accessible cave system in the world—over 20 kilometers long! Visitors can ride a train through the winding tunnels of the cave and see wonders only imagined above ground. One cavern can hold up to 10,000 people at a time and is said to have amazing **acoustics**. Concerts are actually held here in this cave. Wouldn't it be fun to sing in a cave like that?

Also at Postojna is Predjama [pred-YAH-ma] Grad, a magnificent castle built into the mouth of a karst cave. In Slovene, the word “pred” means *before*, “jama” means *cave* and “grad” means *castle*, so “Predjama Grad” literally means *the castle in front of the cave*. Come on up the grassy hill and let me show it to you. The Knights of Adelsberg built the castle in 1274. Constructed under a natural rocky arch high up in the stone face of the mountain, Predjama was well protected from its enemies.

There is an old legend that is told about this castle and it is difficult to tell which parts of it are true and which parts are exaggerations or downright false. Here's how the story goes...

Once there was a knight whose name was Erazem Luegger. He was a renowned **robber baron** in these parts, which meant that he was dishonest in his dealings with his **serfs** and his superiors, as well as

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his fellow nobles. He was the son of the Imperial Governor of Trieste and made Predjama Castle, a family fortress, his home during the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

According to legend, Erazem killed a commander in the Imperial Army in a duel and fell out of favor with the **Holy Roman Emperor**. He allied himself with the Hungarian King, and being a real troublemaker, began attacking local Habsburg estates. The Emperor had enough and sent the Imperial Army to seize his castle.

For a year and a day, the Predjama fortress was besieged. But Erazem, to the amazement of the attacking soldiers, continued to survive. In fact, Erazem taunted the soldiers by pelting them with cherries. They couldn't figure out how he was getting his supplies, as they knew of only one way in and out of the valley, and the castle.

But Erazem had a secret. He had a hidden tunnel, leading from the castle down into Postojna Cave, which allowed him to travel to the nearby village of Vipava to collect supplies, including hoards of fresh cherries when they were ripe.

However, the soldiers did have the last laugh in the end. When it seemed that Erazem would never be starved out of his castle and they began to lose hope, one of Erazem's servants betrayed him. This ser-



Photo of the castle's "outhouse" was taken by Niki J. Photography. All rights reserved.

vant knew of the one place in the castle that wasn't **impregnable**. It was the toilet room, which was situated on the very edge, indeed over the edge, of the castle wall. During a vulnerable moment, the treacherous servant raised a flag as a signal. A single cannon ball was launched and the errant knight was caught... with his pants down, literally.

Well, that's how the legend goes, anyway...

After the siege and destruction of the original fortress, the castle was restored and then destroyed again shortly afterward by an earthquake. Then in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was rebuilt from the ground up in the new **renaissance** style and it has remained virtually unchanged to the present day.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Isn't Slovenia a special place to explore? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**The Caves:**

*The cave system in Slovenia is amazing. Why are there so many caves in Slovenia? Would you like to explore some of these caves? What do you think you would see?*

**Prejamski Grad:**

*What does "Predjama Grad" mean in the Slovene language? Can you retell the legend of Erazem Luegger in your own words, using respectful language? What do you think of a castle backing right up into a cave like that? Imagine the fun you could have with all of the secret passages between the castle and the cave!*

~::~::~~

Let's get back on the expressway so that we can arrive in the capital city of Ljubljana in time for a late lunch. We are meeting a friend who is a missionary here in Slovenia with an organization known as Josiah Ventures. She will be able to show us around the historic and beautiful city.

The closer we get to Ljubljana and the higher the sun reaches into the sky, the warmer we get. It's humid too, but when we roll down our windows, the breeze feels good on our arms and faces. Slovenia's climate varies greatly from season to season; and from location to location. Up in the Alps during the wintertime, the temperature can plunge below 0° F with heavy snowfall. During the summer months down in the valleys or along the western coast, it is not uncommon for temperatures to approach 90° F or above.

Late spring in Slovenia is a lovely time of year. The countryside is a crisp verdant green with bursts of yellow, pink and violet in the fields and on the trees. The city of Ljubljana gleams and looks inviting under the warm golden sun. It feels like a great day to eat lunch outside. There's Jenna, reserving a table for us at a café that has outdoor seating along the riverfront.

She gives us a hug and tells us how good it is to see a friendly face from home. She loves it here, but she often gets homesick and misses her family and friends.

"Let me order in Slovene," requests Jenna. "That way I can practice and you will get to hear the language. If we order in English, our waiter will want to practice on us! It seems that everyone here wants to learn English and will use every opportunity to practice on an American." She winks as we look over the menu.



What a wonderful selection of dishes on the menu! What will you have? I will try the čevapčiči [che-VAP-chi-chi], roasted potatoes, and kremšnita [kremsh-NEET-za] for dessert.

Jenna orders successfully in Slovene and we settle in for some good conversation and people watching. This seems like a good time to learn about the chequered history of Slovenia, so we pepper Jenna with questions. It turns out that she has been a good student of her adopted country and so, starting back thousands of years ago, she gives us a condensed overview of the area's history.



Riverfront cafes in Ljubljana along the Ljubljanica River. Photo in the public domain taken by Mihael Grmek.

Evidence of very early civilizations have been found among the karst caves of Slovenia. Down in the Postojna, Škocjan and Potok Caves, many artifacts have been found dating back thousands of years. While there are no written records, carbon dating has been used to approximate the dates of various objects. From that information we can piece together a rough picture of what life may have been like in these ancient settlements.

The more recent history of Slovenia starts with the Illyrians who lived here before the Ancient Greeks or Romans came on the scene. Then the Ancient Romans claimed this land as part of Italia and established outposts for trade and military operations. During the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Huns swept down from Central Asia and raided Slovenia. Then came the Celts and the Germanic Lombards from the north, the Slavs and Avars from the Caucasus Mountains and the Eurasian Avars from Turkey.

During the Middle Ages, more foreign invaders conquered the area—the Bavarians, the Magyars, and the Franks. Slovenia, centrally located between the Germanic, Latin, and Slavic tribes of Europe, was literally owned and fought over by them all. While they never experienced true peace or independence on a large scale, the Slovene people did live in relative peace under the Holy Roman Empire. Many local families rose to power during the medieval time period, forming **dukedom**s and estates over local counties and principalities.

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With the invasion of the Ottoman Turks in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this peace was shattered and riots broke out among the people. Again threatened by another crushing empire, the ethnic bonds of the Slovene people were tightened, even though they were being pulled apart from outside forces. Together with the Croats, the Slovenes eventually drove the Turks out, only to have the Austro-Hungarian Empire drag them under their thumb by the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Industrialization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about a crisscrossing of Slovene lands by railroads, linking major cities and markets of Europe. Mass **emigration** followed as one in six Slovenes moved to other parts of the world at the **turn of the century**. The people of Slovenia increased in number and solidarity despite these forces that could have driven them apart.

After World War I, Slovenia was incorporated into the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia along with Croatia and Serbia. As World War II approached, Slovenia was once again ruled by Italy. At that time, Italy was trying to gobble up as much of Europe as it could. Following the war, Yugoslavia emerged as a communist country and remained so until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Two years later, Slovenia was the first to declare its independence and break from communist Yugoslavia. Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia soon followed.

Since 1991, Slovenia has been an independent nation for the first time in centuries. The people are enjoying this new freedom. They stand a little taller, walk a little prouder, and smile a little more of-



Photo of the “Lock Bridge” was taken by Niki J. Photography. All rights reserved.



Photo of Ljubljana Castle was taken by Niki J. Photography. All rights reserved.

ten. We enjoy watching the passers-by mingle and talk as they walk past our outdoor table at the café. Jenna tells us that the youth here are very friendly and open to new ideas. It is a great time to live and work and minister to the people of Slovenia.

We set down our euros to pay for our meal, then leave to take a walk through the wide cobblestone streets toward the “Lock Bridge.” That is not its official name, but it is what the local people call it. It is a walking bridge on which lovers fastened their padlocks and together throw away the key into the swirling waters of the river below. It’s a romantic gesture that symbolizes their enduring love for each other.

On the far side of the bridge, we can see the outdoor market and a crowded ice-cream shop. We’ll grab a cone for our long trek up Castle Hill to Ljubljana Castle that overlooks the city. While strongholds of various armies have been in this area since 1200 BC, this particular castle dates back to AD 1112, when it was the residence of nobleman Rudolf of Tarcento. In the year 1335, it became the property of the **House of Habsburg** and was almost completely demolished and rebuilt with fortified walls and towers and a drawbridge for access.

The castle has been used for various purposes throughout the years—a defense against invaders, a military hospital, a prison, a watch-tower, and a home for the poor, to name a few. Since the 1990’s,



however, it has functioned mainly as a venue for special events, such as weddings. The Ljubljana Castle **funicular**, a tram-like cable railway built in 2006, transports guests up and down Castle Hill.

After we enjoy this view and a short rest from our hike, we'll take the funicular back down to Krek Square so that we can see the Cathedral of St. Nicholas, or "the Cathedral" as locals refer to it. There are not many churches in Ljubljana, or Slovenia for that matter. And those that do exist are not well attended on Sundays. Slovenia is considered a **secular** state, mostly due to its recent communist past. But its deeper roots stretch back to Roman Catholicism. Even still, most families do not practice

any religion. Josiah Venture, Jenna tells us, is working to bring Christianity back to Slovenia. There are small churches sprouting up here and there in the capital city and around the country.



Jenna has decided to join us as we drive north through the quaint alpine town of Kranj [krah-n] to Lake Bled. This lake, with its picturesque island in the center, is the most photographed spot in all of Slovenia. This lake is gorgeous all throughout the year, but in the winter it looks like a frozen fairyland with the magnificent Alps rising beyond its northern shore. We must snap some shots here to show family and friends back home.

If we continue north, we'll come to Soča [SOH-tcha] Gorge through which the Soča River runs. This is perhaps the second most photographed landscape in this country and has also made its appearance in several films, most notably the second movie from the Chronicles of Narnia series, Prince Caspian. You can see why

Photo by MarcusObal of Soca River is in public domain.



it was chosen as a film location when we look down from the cliff edge into its enchanting aqua waters enclosed by high canyon walls and cool white beaches.

This area is covered in beautiful beech forest. These are the kind of woods that makes you feel as though you are in Sherwood Forest and will perhaps catch a glimpse of Robin Hood and his merry men. Jenna informs us that over half of the Slovenian landscape is forested, making it the most forested country on the continent of Europe. How lovely!



Image of the Alps in Slovenia taken by Matijap is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Eager to show us everything Slovenia has to offer, Jenna insists that we rent some kayaks to enjoy a closer look at the river. She tells us that it's very quiet down in the gorge, except for the noises made by wild animals that make this area their home. We might see a jackal, a lynx, or even a bear!

This sounds like a fantastic adventure and we decide to kayak down the Soča tomorrow, as it is getting late. Tonight, we have the privilege of staying in a lovely Bavarian cabin in the Alps, surrounded by these steep and terrifying mountain peaks. We can see why so many stories and legends come out of these mountains and why Slovenes love their winter sports in these majestic Alps. The beauty here is unmatched, absolutely spectacular.

After an abundant Slovene breakfast of eggs, ham, potica, cereal with warmed milk and cappuccino, we'll have an exhilarating kayak adventure in the early morning, and then head back down to the Kranj train station to board a train for the city of Venice in Italy. Maybe on the way out the country, we'll catch a glimpse of the famous white Lipizzaner [lip-it-ZAHN-er] horses that are raised exclusively in Slovenia and Austria. I hear they are a sight to behold. I am very excited for our next adventure, but sad to say goodbye to my friend Jenna and this land that she loves as her own.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*What do you think about Slovenia? It is one of my favorite countries in the whole world. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*



Photo of Lipica Stallions in Slovenia, taken by Keith Roper, is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

**The History:**

*What is the oldest artifact found in Slovenia? Can you name some of the countries that have ruled over Slovenia? In recent history, when did Slovenia become an independent nation for the first time in centuries?*

**The Landscape:**

*What is the name of the lake that is the most photographed place in all of Slovenia? What makes it so lovely? What type of forest covers a good portion of Slovenia? What is the name of the river that has become famous because it has been filmed in several movies?*

*Timeline Events for Chapter 10 are located on the CD-ROM, along with mapwork, activities, recipes and more!*

# 11

## ITALY, PT 1: A CITY WITH NO STREETS

Imagine a city with no streets! Cars are barred access, but our train pulls right into old Venice, the capital of Veneto, Italy, leaving **Terra Firma** behind and crossing over the marshy Venetian Lagoon. A **lagoon** is a partially enclosed area of seawater separated from the larger and rougher sea by islands or reefs. Venice is located in this lagoon but connected to the mainland by a two-mile long bridge, *il Ponte della Libertà* [il PAHN-teh de-la li-BER-tah] (the Freedom Bridge). At the end of this bridge is a parking lot. No cars are allowed beyond this point, because there are no streets in the city of Venice.

It is a little hard to comprehend that this entire city is built on **piles**, alder tree trunks harvested from the vast forests of Croatia and Slovenia. There is no land here, nor streets, nor cars. This floating city requires residents and visitors alike to walk or boat wherever they want to go. Take a glance at your map. The watery city of Venice is shaped like a fish. How appropriate! Do you think that was planned or accidental?



Satellite image of the islands of Venice in the public domain, courtesy of NASA.



Photo of vaporetto by Niki J. Photography.

The Santa Lucia Train Station is located at the northern end of the Grand Canal. Let's board a **vaporetto**, a public transportation waterbus, which will take us anywhere we want to go in this historic city. And we have many places to go! Much like a bus on wheels, this vaporetto makes regular stops along the Grand Canal, the large waterway that winds through the heart of Venice. We'll travel to the far southern end and disembark at St. Mark's Square.

The island-city of Venice is crisscrossed by a network of canals that operate much like roads in other cities. Waterbuses, **gondolas** and other watercraft travel up and down these canals, staying to the left to allow other boats to pass. Traffic congestion occurs here, just as it does in every other large city of the world. But we don't mind the boat traffic in the water as it allows us to soak in the view of this old-world town.

Venice is actually a conglomeration of 118 islands, with over 400 bridges to connect them together. This engineering feat is truly a modern-day marvel. Why on earth would an ancient society build their city out here where there is no land? Here's what happened...

Around the fall of the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, **barbarian** hordes, such as the Huns and Lombards, invaded Italy in seemingly endless waves, driving the Romans into hiding and to places of refuge. Refugees from northern Italian towns and the undefended countryside fled to the **marshes** and found safety there. And so Venice was originally built as a sanctuary, inaccessible by outsiders.



However, the Venetians soon came to realize the advantages of living on water.

Venetian homes have boats parked outside, not cars. Photo by Niki J. Photography. all rights reserved.



Even in modern times, all goods are transported as in ancient days - by water! Photo by Niki J. Photography. all rights reserved.

They could rule themselves with virtually no involvement from outside forces. During ancient times, transporting goods by water was easier than it was by land. Roads weren't smooth and paved like modern highways. In fact, they were slow, bumpy, and oftentimes muddy. The Venetians held an advantage over other cities as they used boats exclusively for transport. Over time, these factors made Venice a very important and prosperous port city along the northeastern coast of Italy.

The Republic of Venice grew in strength and made the seas safer for travel by removing **pirate** strongholds along the Dalmatian and Istrian coasts of modern-day Croatia. Then, in the year 1204, Venice supported the efforts of the **Fourth Crusade** and successfully sacked and plundered the city of Constantinople in Turkey. Venetian knights brought back wondrous treasures from that city and Venice became one of the wealthiest and most influential capitals of the Western world.

Around this same time, people from Venice began traveling all over the known world to trade. One particularly famous Venetian **explorer** was Marco Polo. You have probably heard of him. Marco, together with his father and uncle, both wealthy **merchants** by trade, traveled on foot to far-away China. There he became an **advisor** to the powerful Mongol lord, Kublai Khan. Marco Polo did not return to Venice for 24 years. That is a very long time to be away from home, don't you think? Unfortunately, when Marco finally did return home, Venice was at war with Genoa, another Italian port city. Marco

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was taken captive by a Genoese admiral and thrown into prison. While in chains, he dictated the story of his travels to a fellow prisoner, which was published under the title The Travels of Marco Polo. His time in prison did not go to waste.



The Bridge of Sighs is elegant on the outside, but grim on the inside. Photo by Niki J. Photography. all rights reserved.

Speaking of prison, we are passing by the Bridge of Sighs. Do you wonder why the Venetians called it that? Long ago, captives of Venice were led across this bridge to the dungeon, which invoked heavy sighs from the prisoners as they took in their final view of the outside world. Let me show you—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/bridge-of-sighs/>. Here is where we get off our waterbus. We will disembark at the main square, named for St. Mark.

~::~::~~

**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Here we are in Italy, where the great Roman and Venetian Empires were born. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Venice:**

*At the beginning of our trip, we learn Venice Is a floating city. What would it be like to travel around on boats? Do you think it would be difficult to get around by boat? Would you miss cars? Who was Marco Polo? Tell me a little about him.*

Crowds can be dense at this time of year. At least we can be thankful that this is not the time of **Acqua Alta** [ak-wa AHL-tah], or seasonal flooding. During the winter months, the whole city may find itself submerged under several inches, or even feet, of briny seawater as the tides of the Adriatic Sea rise during rough storms.

When that happens, residents pull on their **gaiters** and go about their normal business. A little flooding can't keep the people of Venice indoors. Visitors who don't come prepared will find that they might

get a little wet. However, there are wooden sidewalks that fold down from many buildings or stretch across wide piazzas, providing a raised platform for people to walk above the rising tide. Would you like to see that—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/piazza-san-marco/>?

Here is the Piazza San Marco (St. Mark’s Square). In Venice, it is known simply as “the Piazza.” The great church at the south side of the square is St. Mark’s Basilica and the bell tower located in front is the Campanile. The Doge’s Palace is also there to the right. This palace was the residence of the **Doge** [DOH-zje] (Venetian word for Duke) of Venice for over a thousand years. Today it is a museum. We have been told that a tour of the palace is one that every visitor to Venice should take.

Around the square are several shops and eateries, but they all look rather expensive. Let’s walk down some side streets and see what we can find off the beaten path. If we head in the direction of the Dorsoduro district, we’ll find the places where the locals and students eat and we can possibly save a few euros. I’ve heard that Venice has the worst pizza in Italy, so we can skip that. Although surely even the worst Italian pizza is still delicious!

As we wander down several side alleys and over some tiny bridges, we come to a quaint corner **trattoria** [trah-to-REE-ah] where we can order **cicchetti** [chi-KET-tee], little bite-sized sandwiches and appetizers, along with a soda. We find out that if we are seated at a table our food will cost twice as much than if we stand and eat at the bar. Let’s stand! We still have so much to see and do that we might as well not get too comfortable.

There are some wonderful little shops here in Venice, selling everything from chic clothing and accessories to exquisite Murano glass. The island of Murano, which is one of the outlying islands on the outskirts of Venice, is world renowned for its excellent glass blowing and



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sculpting. We see signs in many store windows wooing passersby to step in to purchase their glassware. But be careful. Always read the tag to find out where the glass was made as many of these “one-of-a-kind” treasures have “Made in China” stamped on the back.

One beautiful little path leads to a small old bridge over a tiny canal. We find another intriguing passageway between large renaissance homes in a state of elegant decay that have been converted into apartments, inns, and restaurants. This little passageway leads us further into the heart of historic Venice, where the wealthiest families of Europe once lived for part of each year. One passageway leads to the next, over bridges and through tunnels that pass right under a building. Before we know it, we are hopelessly lost. Our map doesn't seem to be very helpful either.



It is easy to get lost in Venice, but the good news is that because it is an island, you can't get too lost. Photo by Niki J. Photography. all rights reserved.

There is a saying that “all roads lead to Rome.” Well, here in Venice, the people say, “all roads lead to the Piazza San Marco.” If we keep walking and follow in the direction that most people are going, we should eventually arrive back at the square. Thankfully, after many twists and turns, we find this to be true. Of course the signs along the way were helpful too!

Before we leave this old-world town, let's hop aboard a gondola and take a ride through the canals. At one time, this city used gondolas exclusively for transportation and there were tens of thousands of them in operation. Now, gondolas are used only for tourists and seasonal racing events, such as the “Regata Storica” held each September. There is a **gondolier** beckoning us to his craft. He has space available and his price is reasonable. His boat is exquisite with benches covered in fine fabric with silk pillows on which to rest. And the graying gondolier looks debonair in his traditional black-striped shirt and straw hat.





Gondoliers in Venice are proud of their trade and enjoy their work. Would you? Photo by Niki J. Photography. all rights reserved.

Our gondolier tells us that his name is Giancarlo and that he will give us the best tour of the back canals of his city. He tells us that he has been a gondolier since he was a strapping young man, as was his father before him, and his grandfather before him. In fact, his family has been in the trade for more than 400 years. This is true of most gondoliers in Venice. It is a family trade, passed from generation to generation. But, the tradition is strong that gondoliers must be native Venetian men. It is nearly impossible for a woman or an outsider to open a gondola business in Venice. See a gondolier in action here—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/gondolier/>.

Giancarlo tells us that his favorite time of year is Carnival, which typically falls in the month of March. Carnival is a celebration known for its good food and spectacular costumes. The word Carnival comes from the Latin words “carne vale” which can be translated to mean, “meat begone!” or “goodbye flesh!” Either translation signifies that the people of Venice throw a big goodbye party for meat and fleshly desires before Lent begins.

“Carnival is a Catholic holiday that occurs just before Lent,” says Giancarlo. “During Lent, we devote ourselves to prayer and fasting from meat for 40 days to remember the forty days that our Lord Jesus fasted in the wilderness.” (Mark 1:13)

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“So, before this season of Lent, we celebrate and fatten ourselves like bears before hibernation.” Giancarlo winks and then sinks his oar into the water for a stronger pull. “We also wear beautiful masks and dance in the streets. We enjoy giving out treats to children and love to sing at the top of our lungs.” He sings a few bars to prove his point. “We need Lent just to recover from all the fun and food that we eat!”

It has been a glorious tour of Venice's little side canals, lovely with overhanging balconies entwined with flowering vines and laden with potted trees. We ask Giancarlo if he will kindly let us disembark somewhere along the Grand Canal so that we can get back onto a vaporetto for our return journey back to the St. Lucia Train Station. We wish we had more time to explore the glass factory on Murano and the beautiful little island of Burano that looks like a fairy tale town, with its rainbow of colorful houses lined up side-by-side along the canals. But alas, we have many more places to see in Italy. This is just a small piece of the whole.

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**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*What do you think about Venice? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

### **Acqua Alta:**

*The Acqua Alta or seasonal flooding occurs annually in Venice. Why do you think this happens? Would you like to live where this seasonal flooding occurs?*

### **Carnival:**

*Who can be a gondolier in Venice? Would you like to be one? Can you explain why they celebrate Carnival in Venice? What season and Christian holiday does this precede?*

~::~::~~

As we speed across il Ponte della Libertà on our westbound train, we marvel again at what we have seen in the city with no streets. We re-enter the world of cars, noise, and pollution, but we will long remember the sights of the floating city.

We begin to notice something interesting amidst the chatter of the train passengers. There are two languages spoken in this region of the world. One is Italian; the other is Venetian. Nearly everyone in this district of Veneto speaks, or at least understands, both. Some say that Venetian, the language of the old Republic of Venice, is a dialect of Italian. However, it is not. It is not even related, such as French and Spanish are distantly related to Italian in the **romance language** family. It just so happens



Venice is a beautiful and friendly place. It is hard to say goodbye. Photo by Niki J. Photography. all rights reserved.

that Venetian is more similar to Russian than it is to Italian. You may recognize some of the words we have adopted from Venetian, such as **quarantine**, **regatta**, **ghetto**, **contraband**, and **arsenal**. I'll bet you will learn something new if you look up these words in the glossary at the back of this book.

Veneto is just one region in the country of Italy. There are a total of twenty. Some of the others you may have heard of before, such as Tuscany, Lombardy, and Sicily. Others are perhaps less familiar, such as Umbria, Piedmont, and Campagna. Our train is heading due west to the town of Verona, which is located on the western edge of Veneto.

The windows of our train afford us a spectacular view of the Italian countryside, but I would like to give you a bigger view, or rather a higher view, of Italy. Imagine with me for a moment that we are not on this train, but higher up. No, not even in a plane. Let's go a little higher still. Imagine with me that we are above the clouds in the cockpit of a spaceship orbiting the earth.

There, now you can see it (see map on the following page). If you could imagine that the shapes of Croatia and Slovenia on our maps looked like an alligator and a chicken, then surely you can see that the country of Italy looks like a boot—a high-heeled, knee-high boot at that. There is an island located right off the “toe” of the boot, which is called Sicily.



From this vantage point, you can see that Italy is a **peninsula**. Do you remember what a peninsula is? We learned about peninsulas in Chapter 3 when we read about the Peloponnese Peninsula of Greece. A peninsula is a landmass that is surrounded on three of its sides by water. Yes, we can see from this satellite view that Italy is indeed surrounded on three sides by the Mediterranean Sea. Its fourth side, the northern part of Italy, is connected to the mainland of Europe.

Do you see that white swath of color at the northern border of Italy? Those are the Alps, the tallest mountain range in Europe. We visited the eastern edge of these Alps during our visit to Slovenia. The Alps were nature's shield, providing ancient Italy protection from the barbarian tribes of the north and allowed the early society of Rome to prosper.

Rome is the capital of Italy located about halfway down the boot near the western coast on the Tiber River. We will visit that great city in Chapter 13. Although it is only a city now, it was once the birthplace and seat of government for the mighty Roman Empire that stretched from Spain in the west to India in the east; from Great Britain in the north to Egypt in the south. The ancient Roman Empire once occupied more than 50 modern-day countries on three continents and lasted over one thousand years.

For now, let's settle back in our train seats because we are pulling into the town of Verona, nicknamed the "City of Love." Verona is the setting of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, one of his most famous tragic plays. It tells the story of two star-crossed lovers, Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet, who grew up in rivaling families in Verona.

As the story goes, their parents disapproved of their relationship, so their romance turned complicated and tragic. Disregarding their parents' wishes, they met secretly under the cover of darkness. Perhaps you would like to see the famous balcony, known as Juliet's balcony, where she uttered those famous lines, "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" While Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* is fictional, it was inspired by a true story that occurred in a real place at a real time. We can stroll under the vine-covered balcony that inspired Shakespeare to craft these captivating lines, perhaps the most famous lines from any play throughout history.



Photo of "Juliet's Balcony" taken by Vivaverde is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

A less famous line from *Romeo and Juliet* is, “There is no world for me outside the walls of Verona, except purgatory, torture, and hell itself. So to be banished from Verona is like being banished from the world, and being banished from the world is death.” Romeo spoke these words in Act 3, so I guess it is safe to say that he liked this place. Do you?

While Verona may not be one of the largest or most famous cities, it is a favorite place for many people to visit. It is not too far from the largest lake in Italy, called Lake Garda. It is also home to the finest preserved amphitheater in Italy built in the year AD 30. It is known simply as the Arena and can seat about 16,000 people. While this arena may not be as famous as the Colosseum in Rome, it is older.

Imagine sitting on the same smooth stones upon which ancient Roman spectators sat to watch athletic competitions, theatrical performances, or gladiator games. It was a wild and noisy stadium where people howled and cheered for their favorite contender. However, you don't have to work too hard to imagine it, because even today, after nearly two thousand years, the Arena is still used for operas and plays during the warm summer season.



Photo of the Verona Arena taken by Vuvueffino is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

An opera is a theatrical performance in which the actors sing their lines, rather than speak them, accompanied by the rich and melodic sounds of classical music. If we grab a pillow and sit on these ancient stones, we can watch a classical production of *Aida* or even *Romeo and Juliet*. How would you like that?

At the Arena, the opera begins at dusk. As it gets darker and darker and we wait patiently for the stage lights to come on and the music to start, we participate in the mass display of illuminated cell phone screens around the vast amphitheater, creating a sparkling array of colorful lights. If we had come 10 years ago, the audience would have used lighters to create the effect. Longer ago still, spectators lit candles as they awaited the opening music and lights of the performance.

The opera lasts nearly three hours. It's late and we are tired. We need to get up and stretch since we are sore from sitting on stone benches for such a long time. However, an opera at the Arena is an experience that we will never forget. Truly marvelous!

The Romans built some incredible structures during the classical time period. This arena is just one of them. They built cities, strongholds, amphitheaters, and aqueducts along the whole length of the peninsula and throughout the entire Mediterranean region. With their strong army, they conquered most of the known world at that time, even as far away as Israel.

Perhaps you remember from our study of the Holy Land in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of [A Child's Geography](#), that the Romans controlled Israel during the time when Jesus lived. While Rome was a cruel master, Jesus loved the Roman people all the same.

*And to the Roman centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the soldier's servant was healed at that very moment. – Matthew 8:13*

And later, while hanging on a Roman cross, Jesus prayed for the Roman soldiers and jeering crowds, when he said:



Photo of roman soldiers taken by Adsek is in the public domain.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

*“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” – Luke 23:34*

We have a great deal more to learn about the Roman Empire, their cities and buildings, people and monuments, roads and aqueducts. We’ll talk about all of these and more as we continue to discover Italy in the chapters to come.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*There is so much more to Italy than just Venice. I’m so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

### **The Map:**

*What does the shape of Italy look like? Is Italy a peninsula or an isthmus? Is Venice located in northern or southern Italy? What is the name of the mountain range that is located on the northern border of Italy?*

### **Veneto Region:**

*What is the other language spoken in the Veneto region of northern Italy, besides Italian? Do you remember what famous play takes place in the city of Verona? Who wrote it? What do they use the old Roman amphitheater for now?*

*Timeline Events for Chapter 11 are located on the CD-ROM, along with mapwork, activities, recipes and more!*



# 12

## ITALY, PT 2: A FEAST FOR THE EYES AND STOMACH

Italy is world-renowned for its food and Renaissance artwork. When you say the word “Italy,” these are the images that flash through most people’s minds. Go ahead and try it. Turn to the person closest to you and ask, “What is the first thing you think of when I say ‘Italy?’”

Did you know that both pizza and pasta come from Italy? And did you know that two of the most world famous artists of all time were born and raised in this small country? Their names were Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti. They both lived over 500 years ago.

I have great news! Today, we will experience the classic food and art of old-world Italy. Before we head south to the charming region of Tuscany, there is a special treat in store for us. Our friends, Carlo and Cecilia [chi-CHEE-lia], have invited us into their home to see what a real Italian kitchen looks and smells like.

Carlo and Cecilia live on a farm in the Veneto countryside not far from Venice. Most of their relatives live in the nearby town. They like to have everyone out to the farmhouse for big family gatherings. Cecilia loves to cook. She is an Italian mama who runs her family with a loud voice, but a soft heart. Her big smile on her tiny frame beckons us into her homey kitchen with its brick oven and gigantic island. Large pots and utensils hang from a rack in the middle of the kitchen and dried herbs and garlic bulb braids adorn the walls.



This is not Cecilia’s kitchen. It is the kitchen in the Castle of Dozza, Italy, taken by Roberto Ferrari



Photo of gnocchi potato dumplings taken by cyclonebill is in the public domain.

“Come in friends!” She waves excitedly and pointing to a large pot, says, “Let’s make some *pasta e fagioli* [fah-JOE-lee] and gnocchi [NYOK-kee] today.” *Pasta e fagioli* is a regional soup made with mashed white beans that make it thick and satisfying. Throw in some zesty herbs and local Veneto salami or prosciutto [pro-SHOO-toh] (dry-cured ham from northern Italy) and

you’ve got a tasty meal. It sounds delicious, doesn’t it? Gnocchi is a potato dumpling made throughout Italy, but each region prides itself on its distinct regional twist. Here in Veneto, we’ll be adding fresh basil to ours. Gnocchi can be served with sauce or featured in a soup. Cecilia prepares a hearty red sauce for our noontime meal.

With the *pasta e fagioli* ready and simmering on the stovetop and the gnocchi drained and ready to be adorned with its sauce, Cecilia calls the family into the farmhouse kitchen to sit down to supper. Carlo prays for our meal:

*Benedici Signore noi e il cibo che stiamo per prendere, fà che non manchi mai a nessuno in nessuna parte del mondo, specialmente ai bambini. Amen*

[Pronunciation – bey-neh-DEE-tchi See-NYO-reh noy eh eel CHEE-bo keh stee-AH-mo per pren-deh-reh, fah keh non man-key may a ne-SOO-no in ne-SOO-na pahr-tay del mawn-doe, spe-see-al-MEN-teh ay bam-BEE-nee. Ah-men.]

[Translation – *Lord bless us and the food we are about to eat, may it be that none are ever lacking in any part of the world, especially the children.*]

The food is passed around the large table and everyone begins to eat and talk at once. Wine is poured as freely as water. Not only are we served soup and pasta, but there is also a salad and sliced salami, polenta and crusty bread. Our meal is not finished until we are served fresh fruit, *panna cotta* (a light and creamy custard) and coffee. This is a true Italian feast!

We linger over the meal and the conversation. The young children run off to play while Carlo tells us about local customs, the dialect and why he loves this area of Italy so much. But before we know it, it is time to go.

“Grazie!” [GRA-tzee-eh] We thank Carlo and Cecilia for their lovely hospitality and for giving us an inside peek into an Italian farmhouse kitchen. The pleasant sights, rich aromas and hearty laughter made our day!

Now let’s be off! If we had more time to explore northern Italy, we would certainly want to take in the lake country and Italian Riviera (known as the Cinque Terre [chink-wa-TEHR-eh]) to the west, as well as Milan, the fashion capital of the world. Due to our limited amount of time and pages in this book, we need to make difficult choices. It’s time to travel south into central Italy for the next leg of our journey.

We are heading for Tuscany, another one of Italy’s regions. Just as the United States of America is made up of 50 states, so Italy is the union of 20 regions. Tuscany is probably the most recognizable region for those who live outside of Italy. Movies are filmed here, postcards photographed here, and travel and cooking shows recorded here. The countryside is incredibly picturesque with its gently undulating hills covered with row upon row of grapevines, tree-lined lanes and charming stone cottages. The cities here—Florence, Siena, and Pisa—are the pinnacles of high culture, impeccably preserved art and historical centers. This is the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance.



Photo of the Tuscan countryside taken by Vignaccia76 is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

We will have to travel along the winding *autostrade* [ow-toe-strahd] before we arrive at our first destination in Tuscany—Florence. While it is not far, it will be an arduous journey over a rugged and steep mountain range. The mountain range is called the Apennines and while these peaks are not as high as the Alps that tower along Italy's northern border, they are jagged and rocky all the same. They run north to south along the entire length of Italy, like the scales along the back of a stegosaurus. The country is virtually cut in two lengthwise by the Apennines, creating different weather patterns for the two halves of the country.



Photo of the Apennines taken by Grifomaniacs is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Within the Apennine range is the Calderone [cal-dee-ROE-neh] Glacier, the southernmost **glacier** on the European continent. A glacier is a large mass of ice that has been accumulating for years, sometimes centuries, in a very cold climate. Glaciers are usually found in very northern latitudes or at the tops of mountains where temperatures remain below freezing most of the year.

On the eastern side of this mountain range is a particular peak called Monte Titano. Nestled into the side of this jagged mountain is the city and microcountry of San Marino, also known as the Most Serene Republic of San Marino. That is quite a name, isn't it? A very small independent country in its own right, the Republic of San Marino is completely surrounded on all sides by Italy. When a small country is

completely enclosed within a larger country, it is called an **enclave**. San Marino is not the only enclave that we will learn about on our journey through Italy.



Since we're here, let's stop in and have a closer look. There is no border crossing, so we can drive right in. San

Marino claims to be the oldest continuously surviving country in the world, with its founding dating all the way back to AD 301. The town, also called San Marino, is especially quaint with its red-roofed brick houses and narrow streets. We are just in time to see the *Guardia di Rocca* (Guard of the Rock) in their colorful uniforms perform the changing of the guards ceremony outside the Palazzo Pubblico, their government building.

We can take a tram to the top of Monte Titano to look out over the entire country—all 24 square miles of it. There are three distinct peaks on Monte Titano and from each one rises a medieval tower. There is *Guaita* [gwah-ee-tah], the oldest of the three, built over 1000 years ago. *Cesta* [ses-ta] is located on the tallest of Monte Titano's summits. And finally, *Montale* is located on the smallest summit and still privately owned.

The bakers of San Marino are famous for a cake known as *Torta di Tre Monti*, the Cake of the Three Peaks, which is a layered wafer cake covered in chocolate icing. Sounds delicious! Let's share a slice when we get back down the mountain.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Here we are in Tuscany! I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

### **The Food:**

*Italians love food and love to spend time enjoying it. Describe a typical Italian meal. Try to remember one of your favorite family meals. Who was there? What did you eat? Were you celebrating something or just enjoying each other's company? What did you talk about?*

### **The Appenines:**

*Describe the mountain range that runs north and south through Italy and its effects on climate. What is a small country that is completely surrounded by a larger country called?*

~::~::~~

Are you ready to make our way to our next stop, Florence? Just on the other side of these mountains, along the shoulders of the foothills, lies one of the most visited cities in all the world. Florence is an art and history lover's paradise. Some of the most intriguing architecture and elaborate art can be seen in the city of Florence.

Let's begin our tour in the center of town at the old cathedral the locals call "the Duomo." [doo-OH-mo] It has a longer name—the *Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore* [fee-or-eh]—meaning the **Basilica** of



Photo of the Duomo and the Florence cityscape taken by Scott Raymond is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Saint Mary of the Flower. Isn't that a lovely name? The cathedral was built in three parts: the dome, the **baptistry** and the bell tower. The dome, or main part of the cathedral, is octagonal in shape, which means it has eight sides. Can you think of anything else that has the shape of an octagon? Yes, that's right! A stop sign.

Until recently, this was the largest cathedral in the world. (We'll learn about the current largest cathedral in an upcoming chapter.) The architect, Filippo Brunelleschi, faced a monumental challenge when he designed this massive dome toward the end of the Middle Ages. The city council leaders rejected the popular gothic style of cathedrals, ruling that **flying buttresses** could no longer be used to prevent the sides of large buildings from falling outward. So, Filippo researched and studied the geometric formulas of the ancient Romans and designed his miniature model using classical techniques for building magnificent structures (such as the Pantheon, which we will visit in Chapter 13). He presented his model to the city elders and was awarded the job as master architect. Filippo went on to build the largest cathedral the world had ever known. It looks especially glorious at night when the lights illumine the dome and bell tower.

Another spectacular site, whether you see it by night or by day, is the Ponte Vecchio [VEH-kyoh], which means "old bridge" in Italian. This old medieval stone bridge spans the Arno River at its nar-



The shops "hanging" off the sides of the bridge are held up by braces. Photo by Niki J. Photography. all rights reserved.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

rowest point. It is an enclosed arch bridge that was originally built by the Etruscans, the people who lived here before and during the time of the Roman Republic. What makes this bridge unique are the little shops hanging on the sides of the bridge, held up by braces such as you might use to hang a shelf on your wall.

This was once a common sight—shops suspended along the sides of well-traveled bridges. However, the practice has nearly died out, except here on the Ponte Vecchio. While the medieval shop owners were once butchers and wool merchants, the vendors now are jewelers and exclusive art dealers. This is an expensive place to shop, but the souvenirs bought here are exquisite and one of a kind.

An animated shop owner tells us that our word and concept of “bankrupt” began on this very bridge. When a merchant could not pay his debts, soldiers would physically break (Italian word for break is *rotto*) the table (*banco*) on which he sold his wares. The merchant was barred from selling again at this location. This practice was called “banco rotto,” literally meaning “broken table.”

Look there! Do you see those windows along the top of the bridge? That is a section of Vasari's Corridor, an elevated passageway that connects the Palazzo Vecchio (meaning “old palace”—now Florence's town hall) with the Palazzo Pitti [pah-LAT-zo pit-ee], one of the magnificent homes that belonged to the powerful Medici [meh-DEE-chees]. The Medici family, prominent Florentine bankers, became one of the noble families of Italy. They ruled over Tuscany, produced four Popes, and married into European royalty.

Some sections of it are closed to the public, but let's follow Vasari's Corridor as far as we can and see where it takes us. The corridor was built during the 16<sup>th</sup> century so that the royal Medici family would not have to walk about in public among the common people below. They could walk safely and privately from their home, which is now one of Florence's largest art galleries, to the government palace.



Photo of Vasari's Corridor taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved



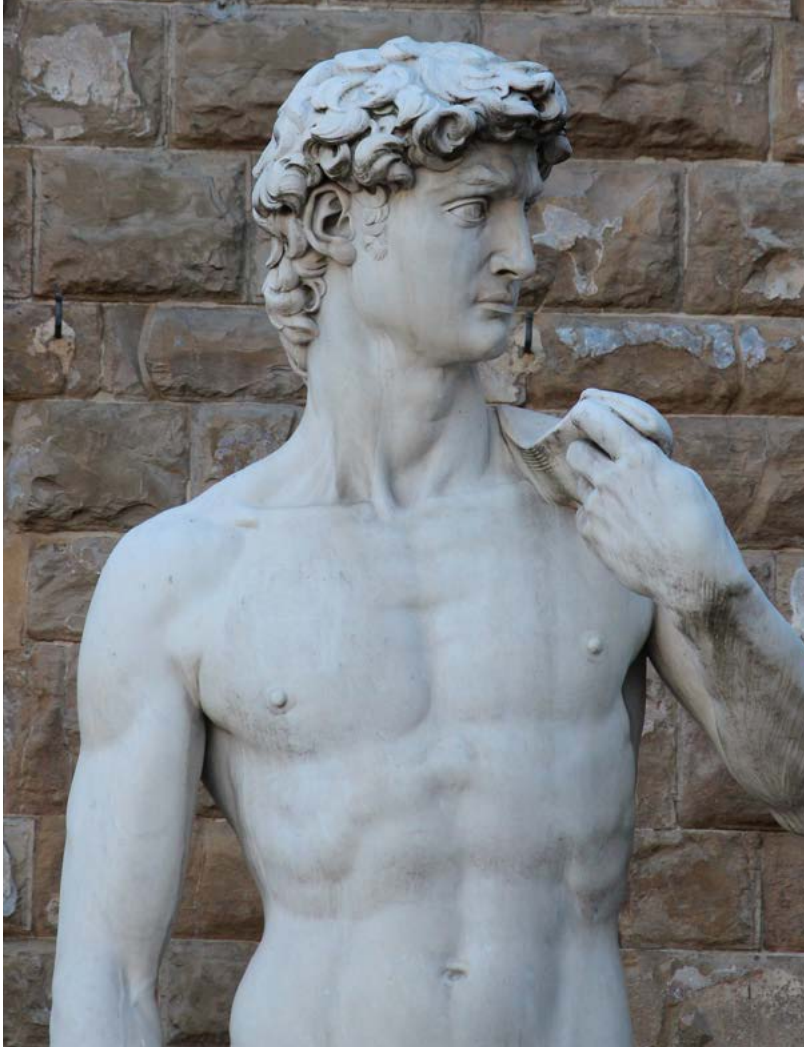


Photo of the replica of Michelangelo's David outside the Palazzo Vecchio taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

If we start at the Palazzo Pitti, the long narrow passage snakes its way over the tops of many houses until it meets the Arno River. It passes over the top of the Ponte Vecchio and then follows the north bank of the river. From there, it runs through the Uffizi [oof-FEET-si] Gallery, once an office building for city leaders (*uffizi* means “offices” in Italian) but now one of the oldest and most famous museums in the entire world. Finally, Vasari’s Corridor ends at the Palazzo Vecchio.

At one place, just past the Ponte Vecchio, the corridor passes through the church of Santa Felicità [fuh-LEE-see-tah]. There, it opens up to a private balcony protected by a thick railing. The Grand Duke’s family could look down and participate in the church services without leaving their corridor and mingling with the commoners below.

Outside the entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio stands Michelangelo’s *David*. This is the famous statue of the biblical hero, David, who would become a king of Israel. Perhaps you’ve seen it before and said something like, “Ew, he has no clothes on!” That’s true, but it is a stunning work of art as his marble body is so life-like. This statue represents David before his encounter with Goliath, the Philistine giant. That’s what makes this statue so special. You can feel the mounting tension when you look upon him. His face is tense, his brow furrowed, and his eyes seem to focus keenly on something in the distance. The tendons in his neck are taut and veins bulge on his hands. However, his body is relaxed and his sling is thrown casually over his shoulder. He awaits the giant with confidence in the Lord... You can read about David and Goliath in I Samuel 17.

We can learn a lesson from Michelangelo’s *David*. Although we may face a problem, even one that feels gigantic like Goliath, we can trust in the Lord for it says in the Bible:

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

*“The Lord is my light and my salvation—  
So why should I be afraid?  
The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger,  
So why should I tremble?”*

It was David himself who penned those very words in Psalm 27:1.

However, I should mention that this statue is not the real *David*; it is a **replica**. To preserve the original marble sculpture that was completed by Michelangelo in 1504, the statue was moved indoors over 100 years ago. *David* is now protected from damaging weather and bird droppings. Thanks to the internet, however, you can see the real *David* up close.

Ask your parents if you can go inside and take a closer look at Michelangelo's *David*. If they say “yes,” then grab one of them by the hand and watch this presentation by the Khan Academy—<http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/Michelangelo-David.html> [**Parental caution:** *David* is nude.]

Florence can be an art-overload on the senses. Some of the most famous works of art are located here in this renaissance city. It takes determination, comfortable shoes, and an open mind to appreciate them all. I don't know about you, but I'm getting hungry. While we should probably eat something more substantial, I see a **gelateria** [jeh-lah-te-REE-ah] across the street. Come on, let's go!

Gelato is the Italian version of ice cream; only it is richer and more intense. And Florence is world famous for its gelato. Frozen treats in Italy date back to Ancient Rome, but gelato wasn't perfected until 1565 when it was presented to Catherine de Medici. As you can imagine, she loved it! It became the



favorite dessert among French and Italian royalty. It wasn't introduced to the general public until the 1920s when the first *gelateria* cart was seen on the streets of Florence.

What will you have—*gianduia* [jahn-DOO-yuh] (chocolate and hazelnut), *fragola* [FRAH-goh-lah] (strawberry), *amarona* [ah-ma-RAY-na] (sour cherries and cream) or one of the many other delectable and colorful flavors?

Photo of Italian gelato taken by Aaron Logan (Solitude) is in the public domain, Wikimedia.

It is getting late and we have more to see in the region of Tuscany. Let's take our gelato to go. We will travel west to the coastal town of Pisa and there we will find one of the most famous landmarks of Italy—the leaning Tower of Pisa.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Florence is the birthplace of the Renaissance. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**The Duomo:**

*What challenge did the cathedral's designer face and what did he do to solve it? What is the shape of the dome if you were to look down on it from above (or below)?*

**The Corridor:**

*What is Vasari's Corridor? Which bridge does it cross over? What is unique about this bridge? The corridor winds its way between two buildings. Do you remember what they are? Which famous statue of a bible character is replicated outside the Palazzo Vecchio?*

~::~::~~

The town of Pisa is located near the mouth of the Arno River where it empties into the Tyrrhenian Sea. Back in the days of Ancient Rome, the city of Pisa was written about as an "old city." If it was old then, it is really old now. Pisa has Etruscan roots, just like the old bridge over the Arno River in Florence, the Ponte Vecchio.

The leaning tower is actually the campanile, or bell tower, of the main cathedral in Pisa. The tower is famous for its accidental tilt to one side. It looks like it is going to fall right over, doesn't it? Have you ever made a mistake, but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise? Sometimes that happens to me in the kitchen when I fail to follow a recipe correctly, but it doesn't turn out too bad. In fact, sometimes we'll record the mistake so that we can do it again another time. Good mistakes are rare, however, and bad mistakes can be difficult to correct.

In some ways, this is what happened with the Tower of Pisa. The bell tower was built on partly firm ground and partly softer soil. The builders began to notice the tilting of the tower right away during construction of the second floor in AD 1178. No matter how many adjustments the engineers made to the original design, they could not right the building. They tried to correct the problem by building the upper floors on one side of the tower taller than on the other side. Because of this, the tower not



only tilts, but is curved and asymmetrical as well. Over the next several decades and centuries, the bell tower continued to lean dangerously until it was stabilized very recently during the 1990's. It was closed to the public for 10 years while engineers and architects sank the higher side a little further into the ground.

The Italian government wanted to preserve the tilt, the mistake made during the original construction. You may be wondering why... The tilt has made the building, and indeed the city, famous. Had the bell tower never leaned, it would not be the symbol of Italy that it is today. People from all over the world come to see the Leaning Tower, to walk along its dizzying passageways and gaze out upon the city from the bell with its spectacular towering view. This crazy and terrifying mistake turned out to be a good thing. The leaning Tower of Pisa re-opened in 2001 and continues to attract record crowds of tourists.

The sun is beginning to set. Let's go to the top of the tower! I will not ask you to race, though, as the combination of tilt, uneven sides and a lack of handrails makes me feel a little unsteady. In fact, it almost feels like one is going downhill on the low side even though we continue to steadily climb the steps—all 295 of them to the top. Watch your feet on these unevenly worn marble stairs!



What a beautiful view! From up here, we notice that there is plenty more to see down in the square. The Duomo is the main cathedral and the baptistry is located in the front of the cathedral. For many centuries, baptisms were not held at the small local churches in Italy. Every infant was baptized in the large baptistry or at the duomo itself. Many people do not realize that these two buildings lean too, but because they are shorter and

Photos of Leaning Tower and worn marble steps taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

wider, their tilts are not as noticeable or precarious.

Scientists have recently discovered that the acoustics in this particular baptistry are remarkable. Individuals and groups will test this for themselves by singing a few lines of a song or by clapping their hands. For this



Photo of the baptistry in the Field of Miracles was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

reason, concerts were probably held here as well. Listen to this: <http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/harmonize-with-yourself/>. The singer is able to harmonize with himself because the notes are reverberated around the building's dome for such a long time—a full 10 seconds.

Pisa is a remarkable place that reminds us that imperfect people make mistakes. Mistakes can't always be corrected but they can be appreciated and learned from. I wonder if the original architects of the cathedral, baptistry and bell tower at Pisa would have reconsidered their building plan or their location had they known what the word "Pisa" meant in the first place. It's a Greek word that means "marshy land." Now that would have been good to know beforehand, wouldn't it?

During the Roman Empire, it was said that "all roads lead to Rome." Yes, we are definitely going there, but we've got one more stop to make before we do. Let's turn off this road and visit the town of Siena in the heart of Tuscany. Do you like to read about knights and horses and castles? If so, then you will love Siena!

Walking into Siena is like walking back in time to an age when a knight won the hand of a fair maiden through combat and athletic feats; when lords and ladies hosted spectacular events that would be talked about all year; when respect was earned through chivalrous deeds and displays of bravery.

In the center of town is the Piazza del Campo. The streets we must pass through first are narrow, winding, and in some places, quite steep. Balconies and arches overhang the streets on the upper floors of the towering buildings that squeeze in on both sides, blocking out all but a tiny sliver of blue



Photo of typical Siena street taken by o2ma is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

sky. Plaques inset along the walls indicate that many of these buildings are nearly a thousand years old. Colorful medieval banners hang from almost every window and door, telling all who pass that this house is loyal to a particular knight, or **town ward**.

Speaking of knights, these streets were obviously built with horses in mind, not cars. You can almost hear the echoing sound of horse hooves on the cobblestones as we walk along these narrow streets. Horses were extremely important during medieval times, but here in Siena, they are still a central part of life. Siena is world famous for its horses and its horse race, known as the *Palio di Siena*. This race is held on two separate days each year and today is one of those days. The noise, the crowds, the excitement of the Palio is like nothing you have ever experienced before.

Here is the Piazza del Campo where the race will be held later today. This main square in Siena has been covered with several inches of dirt in preparation for the race. They have blocked off the circular track so that the enthusiastic spectators do not get trampled. Let's find a good place where we can watch the race.

While the race itself lasts less than two minutes, the Palio is steeped in history and culture, a Siennese tradition that continues year-round. Ten horses will race, each representing one of ten contrade, or



Photo of Piazza Del Campo before the Il Palio taken by Wpopp is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

districts, within the city of Siena. There are seventeen contrade in total, but seven contrade will have to wait to be represented in a future race. During the year, the jockeys are trained and ten horses are randomly selected and assigned to the town districts. The night before the race, each contrada, or district, holds a feast for its neighbors, which is celebrated on the streets of town. Then, on the morning of the event, each horse is taken to a church in its contrada to be blessed.

Before the actual race, once the piazza is packed with thousands of spectators and sealed off, the festivities begin with a colorful parade, complete with mounted police wielding swords and flag wavers dressed in medieval costumes. The flags [the Italian word for flag is *palio*] represent the 17 contrade of the city. As the colorful banners pass by the crowd, the loyal and excited spectators cheer loudly for their contrada.

As evening approaches, the tension builds. The pop of a gun signals that the race will begin shortly. Horses with their jockeys line up behind a cord that is used as a starting gate. This is a dangerous race, as each horse and rider will circle the small and uneven piazza three times in about 90 seconds. Jockeys ride bareback and often fall off their mounts. However, the horse that crosses the finish line first, whether or not he still has a rider, is the winner of the race. Riderless horses have been known to bring victory for their contrada.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Get ready; the race is about to begin! Another blast from the gun and they are off. Ten horses charge around the piazza, navigating sharp turns, the jostling of the other horses and the pressing in of the screaming crowds. The shouts and excitement of their fans drive the horses and riders to even greater, more reckless speeds. Which contrada will win this time—the Dragon, the Tortoise, the Shell, the She-Wolf, the Owl, the Snail, the Goose, the Panther, the Unicorn, the Caterpillar, the Porcupine, the Eagle, the Giraffe, the Ram, the Wave, the Tower, or the Forest? Watch here to find out—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/hold-your-horses/>.

Il Palio di Siena certainly conjures up a time gone by, when lives were lived with boldness and determination; when a knight defined himself by his brave deeds; when an attentive wink from the town hero melted the heart of a maiden; when a race could bring a city together in celebration...

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*What do you think about Pisa and Siena? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

### **Pisa:**

*What famous mistake put this little town on the map? Why do you think the builders continued to build even when the tower began to lean so early during the construction? Not only does it lean, but the Leaning Tower of Pisa is also asymmetrical. How would you like to climb its 295 steps to the top?*

### **Siena:**

*What is Siena famous for? Imagine you are a jockey in the Palio. Tell me what it might feel like as you prepare for the start of the race. Is there excitement in the air, is your horse anxious, do you think you will win? Which town ward would you like to race for?*

*Timeline Events for Chapter 12 are located on the CD-ROM, along with mapwork, activities, recipes and more!*





## ITALY, PT 3: ROME, THE ETERNAL CITY

Let's hop on this train leaving Siena that will deliver us right into the heart of Old Rome. After validating our tickets, we can settle comfortably into our train seats next to the window so that we can watch the passing countryside. We are excited to be traveling to Rome, the once mighty capital of the largest empire on earth and still one of the largest cities on the European continent with 3.8 million inhabitants.

They say that only locals and fools drive in Rome. The network of Roman streets is complicated and the drivers there are bold and fearless. Visitors driving rental cars in Rome can easily become overwhelmed and lost. The train is the perfect solution. We will disembark at Termini Station and after a very short bus ride, we will be ready to enjoy this city on foot—the way it was meant to be.

We are sitting next to a young couple with a sleeping baby. It's hard to imagine sleeping on this train car with the rumble of the tracks below and the loud cacophony of voices trying to be heard over one another, but the baby sleeps peacefully and his parents look relaxed and happy.

They are curious where we are from and strike up a conversation. It is nice to have someone local to talk with. They tell us their names are Giovanni and Caterina and their baby boy is named Pietro. They tell us that they live in Rome but were visiting grandparents in the hill town of Montepulciano. They are on their way back home now.



Photo of Trenitalia train was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.



We ask them what they like about Rome and they tell us that they love the rich history of the place and the small town feeling of their neighborhood.

“Rome was founded nearly 3,000 years ago way back in 753 BC,” Giovanni tells us. “At that time, it was just a tiny little town on the bank of the Tiber River. Who could have known then what Rome would become—the greatest city and empire the ancient world had ever known.”

“Rome gets its name from Romulus and Remus. Have you heard of them?” asks Caterina.

We tell her that we have, but that we don’t remember the story very well. She and Giovanni are happy to retell the legend for us.

“Once there were twin boys named Romulus and Remus. They were sons of the god, Mars, but they were abandoned as infants. They were found along the shore of the Tiber River by a she-wolf, who nursed them and raised them as her own pups. With the help of the other woodland animals, they were given plenty to eat and were well cared for. After a few years, a shepherd and his wife discovered these young and rambunctious boys frolicking through the fields and forest and determined to raise them as their own sons.

They grew into strong, powerful young men who were good workers, but they were not content to live out their lives as humble shepherds. They left their adoptive parents and set out to build a town and a new life for themselves. They returned to the place where the she-wolf had originally found them as babies and set their shoulders to the hard work of building a town. The boys had a disagreement that turned into a bloody fight. They fought over possession of the hill known today as Capitoline Hill and Romulus killed his brother Remus there. For this reason, the city was named Rome after Romulus, the victor.”

“That’s terrible!” Our sense of compassion and cooperation clashes with this story’s abrupt ending.

“Oh, it’s just a myth,” Caterina reassures us. “Ancient Romans, just like the Ancient Greeks, liked to tell stories to explain how things came into being or why things are the way they are. And, as I’m sure you know, the Ancient Romans were not the soft-hearted type. They were power-hungry and enjoyed a good fight. Oh, you’ll see what I mean when you visit the Colosseum.” She winks good-naturedly at us.

“What happened next?” we ask.

“Well, Rome grew. And grew and grew and grew. Eventually, Rome was no longer just a city; it became a vast territory that gained control over all the land that surrounded the Mediterranean Sea. It started as a republic, which meant that Rome’s leaders were voted in. They had to earn the respect of the people to win their vote. That was an exciting time to live in Rome. Many great thinkers, poets, and philosophers lived during the time of the Roman Republic. Then, just a few years before the time of Christ’s birth, the republic became an empire. Julius Caesar was the first Caesar (the Roman word for *emperor*), followed by many more over the next several hundred years. The Caesar, no longer an elected official, ruled over the vast Roman Empire. It stretched from Italy in the north to Egypt in the south; from Spain in the west to Israel in the east. In fact, as it continued to grow, it swallowed up much of mainland Europe and even spread into Great Britain far north and west of here.

“In fact, it got so big, that it became very difficult to manage. Barbarian tribes from the north began to raid its border towns. To the ears of the Ancient Romans, the only sounds these neighboring tribes could mutter was ‘bar bar.’ Because they couldn’t speak Latin, the language of the civilized Romans, the Romans called them ‘barbarians.’”

“That’s funny,” we laugh. “So what happened next?”

“Well, its hard to summarize more than two thousand years of history into a short train ride, but the Roman Empire eventually fell to the raiding barbarian tribes such as the Huns, the Ostrogoths, the Lombards, and the Vandals. After more than one thousand years of power, Rome became again what

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

it once was—just a city. But it has always been an important city and still is. Vatican City, which is an independent country located right in the middle of Rome, is the home to the Pope and the center of the Catholic Church.”

“Oh, you mean it’s an enclave! We learned about that when we stopped in San Marino. An enclave is a country inside another country!”

“That’s exactly right! Because the Pope took up residence here, Rome continued to be a powerhouse after the Dark Ages and all throughout medieval times. As the center of the Catholic Church, it continued to rise in importance during the age of the Renaissance and into modern times. Today, Rome is a big bustling city, the fourth largest in Europe, but it still remembers its roots. The entire center of town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Colosseum, the Pantheon, and the Roman Forum have been well preserved through the years. When you walk through Old Rome, you will be able to see what it was like to live in the ancient classical world. It is like nothing else you have ever seen. I think you will like it.”

We think so too. Our train is pulling into Termini Station, so we thank Giovanni and Caterina for their friendly conversation and wave goodbye to sweet Pietro, just waking from his nap.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*How exciting to be in Rome, the birthplace of one of the largest empires the world has ever known! I’m so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

### **The Founding of Rome:**

*Re-tell in your own words the myth about the founding of Rome? What type of people were the ancient Romans? Why did the Romans call the neighboring people “barbarians”?*

~::~::~~

Rome is home to a large gang of artful-Dodger-type\* **pickpockets**, so we’d better hold onto our bags tightly as we make our way out of the train station and into an awaiting bus, ready to transport us into the heart of Old Rome.



\*Referring to Fagin’s Gang from *Oliver* by Charles Dickens, pickpockets are sly thieves who steal undetected. Painting by de la Tour 1633.



Photo of Colosseum in Rome was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

Look out your window! There is the Colosseum. It is bigger than I imagined, even bigger than the arena in Verona (although not quite as well preserved). What a spectacular sight to see that massive arena rising up in the cityscape ahead. Let's make the Colosseum our first stop.

Before we know it, we are off the bus and crossing the street. Just ahead is the Arch of Constantine. We'll walk past this huge entrance on our way to the impressive Colosseum that was built in AD 72. The crowds are sparse at this time of day, so we can walk right in. Here we go... up the wide steps, then through a dark corridor. My heart is pounding in my chest. Is yours? I can almost imagine that we'll be walking into the open stadium packed with jeering crowds awaiting a spectacle of violence.

At the end of the dark corridor, we step out into the blazing sunshine. Today, the Colosseum only holds a large number of meandering tourists. There are no **gladiators** or wild animals; no wild screams from the throats of 50,000 bloodthirsty spectators. Only a hush of wonder lingers as modern day citizens of the planet contemplate the world of ancient Rome. Arenas, such as these, were the center of Roman entertainment. It is said that the Romans flooded the amphitheater to watch naval battle re-enactments, complete with galleys, crew and weaponry. What an incredible spectacle that must have been!

Let's sit on one of these stone benches smoothed by 2,000 years of wear and talk about this place. The Colosseum was the largest amphitheater ever built in the Roman Empire. The builders chose this

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

site because it is the prime span of flat land in this **city of the seven hills**. Just a decade before its construction, the valley floor was crowded with the homes and businesses of middle-class Romans, but the **Great Fire of Rome** devastated the town in AD 64. The fire, perhaps started by the Roman Emperor Nero himself, was blamed on the Christians who lived here.

See that network of passages at the base of the Colosseum? Those were once the very tunnels underneath the floor of the stadium that led gladiators, wild animals and even Christians awaiting execution to their entrances. They would be raised in small elevators to the arena using pulleys and **hydraulic** machinery. The Romans were a violent people who enjoyed watching fights between man and beast; and gladiator against gladiator. The Caesar and his senators had special box seats in the center of the stadium for the best view of the action below. The Caesar held the power to issue or stay an execution by simply pointing his thumb up or down.

After the Christians were blamed for the burning of Rome in AD 64, Emperor Nero began persecuting Christians **en masse** and continued over the next few decades. This very stadium was the location of countless deaths, including the murder of thousands of Christians and innocent human beings. While we may marvel at the amazing ingenuity of Roman architects and the enormous size of this well-preserved ruin, we cannot call it beautiful. This was once a place of unspeakable horror for our God-fearing brothers and sisters, who died for their faith in Jesus Christ.



Photo of Colosseum in Rome was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.



Photo of Roman Forum was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

Let's step outside and see some other ancient ruins. There, across the street, is the Roman Forum. It looks like a tangled jumble of chipped columns, arches and rocks, but this was once the very center of Roman life and government. The Forum was the place to debate, make speeches, hold elections, and conduct criminal trials. Triumphal processions, like our modern-day parades, would file down the center of the Forum between the two grand arches on special occasions or national holidays.

Many of the ruins date back well over 2,000 years. Some were built by early Roman kings during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC; others were built much later by Julius Caesar and his great-nephew, Caesar Augustus, just before the birth of Christ.

Speaking of Jesus, no trip to Rome would be complete without visiting the Vatican, an enclave established as the Holy See of the Catholic Church and dedicated to the worship of Jesus Christ. The Vatican is the capitol of the Catholic Church and the home of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. To get there, we'll get back on a bus that will take us over the Tiber River to the holy city. When we enter this new country, established in 1929, we walk first through the enormous Piazza San Pietro, or St. Peter's Square. At the center of the square is a four thousand year old Egyptian obelisk, erected here in 1586. And there, directly in front of us, is St. Peter's Basilica, the largest cathedral on Earth.



Photo of St. Peter's Cathedral was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

According to Roman Catholic tradition, the basilica is the burial site of its namesake, St. Peter, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. His tomb is located directly below the altar of the church. The apostle Peter was brought to Rome by the Emperor Nero, who ordered him to be crucified. Peter felt he was unworthy to die in the same manner as his beloved Lord Jesus and asked to be crucified upside down. St. Peter has been

declared the first Bishop of Rome and this stunning cathedral, designed by great Renaissance artists and architects (Donato Bramante, Michelangelo, Carlo Maderno and Gian Lorenzo Bernini) is a beautiful tribute to the humble fisherman to whom Jesus said, "Upon this rock, I will build my church." Matthew 16:15-19

The cathedral is massive, dwarfing any church building you have ever stepped foot inside before. The dome is the highest peak in the city of Rome. The Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, declared in 1936 that no building in the capital city could be built taller than the dome of St. Peter's Basilica. We can take the elevator to the roof, then climb the 323 stairs to the top of the **cupola** [KYEW-poluh] to enjoy the incredible view over the sprawling city of Rome. From up here, we can see the other great dome of Rome, the Pantheon. We'll be going there soon.

While there is an entrance fee to the Vatican Museums, it will certainly be worth the expense. The only way to see the Sistine Chapel is to walk through the 54 museum galleries, with the Sistine Chapel as the final reward. Let's go there next.



Photo of St. Peter's Cathedral taken by Myrabella is in the public domain.





Pope Julius II founded the museums in 1506 and the Vatican celebrated its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006. Over five million people visited the Vatican museums in 2011. Lines can wrap around the building in peak season during the hottest part of the day. But as the sun reaches its zenith in the sky this afternoon, we smile and pat our pockets that hold our pre-purchased tickets. With these, we can bypass the incredibly long line and walk right on in.

A gorgeous spiral staircase, a parade of ancient Roman busts, and a magnificent statue of Caesar Augustus impress us as we walk through four miles of galleries in this maze of museums. As remarkable as the galleries are, they all pale in comparison to the lofty ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo Buonarroti spent more than four years of his life lying on his back high on scaffolding, painting these magnificent scenes from the Bible across 12,000 square feet of vaulted ceiling. The Creation of Adam and the Last Judgment are perhaps some of the most well recognized portions of the painting, but there are several more to gaze upon. Would you like to learn more about the symbolism and artwork on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? The Khan Academy has a fascinating video about it here—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/no-photography-please/>.

These paintings are considered to be Michelangelo's crowning achievement in painting, a high compliment to this great renaissance man whose art is displayed all over Italy, Europe, and the world.

One of the main functions of the Sistine Chapel is the election of a new Pope. The cardinals meet here, as they did in the spring of 2013 after the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, to discuss possible candidates. Smoke is sent up the chimney to alert the awaiting crowd outside of their progress. If the smoke is black, created by burning the ballots along with wet straw and chemicals, the cardinals have dismissed a potential candidate. If the smoke is white, created by burning the ballots alone, a new Pope has been elected. A candidate must receive at least two-thirds of the majority vote to be elected as the next Pope.

It's getting late. Let's visit the Pantheon before the sun goes down, because the only light to illumine the ancient building comes from the sun through the **skylight** at the dome's **apex**. We can get there quickly by taking the subway that runs under the city streets.



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*How do you like Rome so far? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Colosseum:**

*When was the Colosseum built? What was it used for? Why were there tunnels beneath the floor?*

**Vatican City:**

*How is it possible that a country can be located within another country, even within the boundaries of another city? What makes this country so special? The largest cathedral in the world is named in honor of which apostle of Jesus Christ? Describe the journey to the Sistine Chapel? Who painted the ceiling and how long did it take to finish the work?*



Photo of the Pantheon in Rome was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved. Do you see the gladiators in the foreground?

You may have heard of the Pantheon before, or you may have only heard of the Parthenon. Many people get these two structures confused; so let's talk about the differences. The Parthenon was the huge temple that we saw in Chapter 2, which is located in Athens, Greece way up on the top of the Acropolis hill overlooking the city. You might remember that the Parthenon was built to honor the Greek goddess Athena.

The Pantheon here in Rome was inspired by the Greeks, as you can see from the great columns on the façade. It takes four people holding hands to reach all the way around one of these ancient marble Corinthian columns. They are huge. Pantheon means “all gods” and was built as a temple to worship any and every Roman god. After the ancient belief in many gods began to fade away it was replaced with the belief in one God. With the help of early missionaries such as Paul and Peter and the testimony and heart-change of the Roman Emperor Constantine, the Pantheon became a Catholic Church. And it still is today.



Photo of the dome of the Pantheon was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.



That's me in front of a column at the Pantheon! Photo was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

The Pantheon is one of the best preserved of all ancient Roman buildings. Marcus Agrippa originally commissioned the building of the Pantheon in 27 BC. Later, the great façade was moved to its new location here and the building was finished under the supervision of Emperor Hadrian in AD 126. Almost two thousand years later, the Pantheon's dome is still the largest unreinforced concrete dome in the entire world. Most domes have four or more marble pillars to support their weight and unique shape. Modern builders marvel at the amazing mathematical and architectural genius that was needed to build such a heavy, unsupported dome.

Let's wander through the historic part of town known as *il Campo de Fiori*—The Field of Flowers—and grab something to eat. We can sit at an outdoor table and listen to the jazz band playing in the square. Italians serve dinner in four courses—first to come is the *antipasti* (appetizers), then the *prima pasta* (first course,

usually pasta), followed by the *secondi* (second or main course which usually includes meat), and finally *dolci* (dessert). For the locals, dinner is the main event of the evening and waiters expect diners to stay for several hours. Evening is also the time when families and couples take their daily stroll, or laps, to burn off the calories they consumed at dinner. Rome is magical at night with spotlights illuminating historic ruins, bubbling fountains, and quaint piazzas. The residents of the town come out at this time of the day to socialize. This is people-watching at its finest.



Photo of a catacomb passageway taken by Bgabel is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

After a peaceful night sleeping in a quiet convent run by Catholic nuns, we will check out some final sites on our way out of town. Just outside the ancient city walls on the south side of Rome are several Christian catacombs, huge **aqueduct** ruins and the famous Appian Way. While not as glamorous as the Colosseum or Palatine Hill, the catacombs give an insightful look into the lives of early Christians during the Roman Empire. No one was allowed to be buried within the city walls of Rome, so the Christians, who didn't believe in cremation, dug huge underground crypts with multiple stories, long passageways and bunk-style graves carved out of the rock. These subterranean vaults tell the tragic stories of persecuted Christians, young and old, wealthy and poor, famous and obscure. Many believers in Jesus Christ were martyred for their faith during the 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, including a number of popes. Centuries later, the Ottoman Turks raided most of these tombs looking for buried treasure. However, the only treasures found here are the stories of brave men and women, and even young children, who lived and

died for their Lord during a time of great religious unrest. Watch a short video here—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/beneath-this-very-ground/>.

After a quick jaunt along the traffic-congested Appian Way, the largest, fastest and most traveled of all the ancient Roman Roads, we'll be off on our next adventure—Southern Italy! We will eat pizza in Naples, where it was originally invented as a food for the poor; scramble over the ruins of Pompeii; travel the zigzagging, cliff-hugging highway along the Amalfi Coast, the playground of the rich and famous; then eat pizza again in Sicily so we can compare the regional differences. To round out our tour of Italy, we'll visit the second-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea—Sardinia.

Until then, **ciao!**



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Rome is a busy and bustling urban center. It is also the home to some incredibly old buildings and historical sites. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**The Pantheon:**

*What does "pantheon" mean? What is the building used for now? Some people get the Pantheon confused with the Parthenon. Explain some of the differences between these two historical places.*

**Dinner:**

*Tell me about the four courses of a typical Italian dinner. Which is your favorite?*

**The Catacombs:**

*What are the Christian catacombs? Why did the Christians bury their dead in these underground vaults outside the city walls of Rome? Which famous roman road can be found just south of Rome?*

Chapter 13 Timeline Events	
753 BCE	Founding of Rome on Tiber River
	Rome became a republic as her leaders were voted in.
just before Christ's birth	The Roman Republic became an Empire with Julius Caesar as its first Emperor.
27 BCE	Marcus Agrippa commissions the building of the Pantheon - a temple to worship "all gods".
64 AD	The Great Fire of Rome devastated the town, and was blamed on the Christians by the Emperor Nero, starting large-scale persecutions.
72 AD	The Colosseum was built as a center of entertainment for the Romans.
126 AD	The Pantheon's great façade moved and completed under Emperor Hadrian.
1000 yrs later	Rome succumbed to the constantly raiding barbarian tribes and became again, just a city
1506	Pope Julius II founds the Vatican Museums of 54 galleries, finishing off with the Sistine Chapel.
	St Peter's cathedral designed and built by great Renaissance architects, a tribute to the apostle Peter buried beneath it.
1586	A large Egyptian obelisk erected in St Peter's square.
1929	The Vatican established as a country.
2006	The 500th Anniversary of the Sistine Chapel celebrated.

# 14

## ITALY, PT 4: LAND OF PIZZAS, VENDETTAS AND VOLCANOES

Italy is a land of contrasts. The northern regions can get quite cold, with snow in the wintertime as Italy shivers below the cut-glass peaks of the Alps. In the south, the temperature rises and can get blisteringly hot, especially in summertime. While the north displays a rather refined and cultured charm, the south holds nothing back. It is wild and intense. Voices are louder, personalities are stronger, food is more flavorful, and drivers are more reckless, because Southern Italians give you themselves, nothing less and nothing more. They are uninhibited, which means, I think, that we will receive a warm and friendly welcome as we travel south.

Rome marks the northernmost city of Southern Italy. If the traffic was crazy there, it's even more so further south. If the crime was bad there, it's even worse here. In fact, we are heading for the city of Naples, the birthplace of the Italian mafia. But don't be afraid. Italians treat their visitors with courtesy and respect, even if they do hold **vendettas** against each other.

Naples is also the birthplace of pizza. Pizza was originally a cheap food made to fill the bellies of the poor, but it quickly became popular with the upper classes. The ingredients are strictly controlled



Photo of Pizza Margherita taken by ElfQrin is in the public domain, Wikimedia.org.

for Neapolitan style pizza. Traditionally, these crispy pizzas are cooked on a stone in a wood-fired oven. The ingredients are simple but delicious—wheat flour, yeast, salt, and olive oil for the crust. The dough must be hand-kneaded and hand-formed. No rolling pin should ever touch this dough. It must be less than 3mm thick so that the thin crust only takes 60-90 seconds to cook in the fiery 905-degree furnace. The toppings are simple too—sliced mozzarella cheese, tomato, garlic, oregano,



Photo of Via dei Tribunali in historic Naples taken by Mattia Luigi Nappi is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

and olive oil. Basil is optional but delicious on a Pizza Margherita from Naples. In fact, the colors of the pizza—green basil, white mozzarella, and red tomatoes—represent the colors of the Italian flag. How patriotic!

I'm glad we are on a high-speed train into Naples from Rome as this chapter is already making me hungry. Here you can watch a video on the history and making of this famous Neapolitan pizza before we arrive:

[http://www.unesco.org/archives/multi-media/index.php?s=film\\_details&id\\_page=33&id\\_film=1062](http://www.unesco.org/archives/multi-media/index.php?s=film_details&id_page=33&id_film=1062).

The city of Naples is over 3,000 years old and people have lived here continuously throughout its history. During the Golden Age of Greece, the city of Naples was called Neapolis and was the chief city of Magna Graecia, or Greater Greece, the Greek outpost on the Italian peninsula.

Later, it became swallowed up into the Roman Empire, but its Greek roots had an incredible impact on the government and architecture of a new and larger empire. There are many well-preserved Greek ruins in this part of Italy. The Greek language was spoken in southern Italy for many years and Naples was considered a place of high culture.

Later still, the area was Christianized when the apostles Peter and Paul preached in this city. There is a rich heritage here with layers of culture, education, and refinement as Naples led the way into the medieval age.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the geographical region of Italy was fragmented into many city-states with a strong division between the north and the south—until it was unified into one country in 1861. During that time of separation, southern Italy developed its own customs, dialect, and way of life. The southern region of Italy was controlled by a series of foreign powers, including France and Spain, who brought revolutionary ideas and luscious ingredients, including tomatoes, back from the New World, America.



Naples is a beautiful and large city that will make a great jumping off point for visiting other sites in this area. Let's grab our pizza to go and board an awaiting bus that is departing from the city center to Pompeii, the city of ruins from the great explosion of Mount Vesuvius way back in AD 79. We can get a good glimpse into ancient Roman life when we walk through the ghost town of Pompeii now frozen in stone.

What makes Pompeii so special is that the entire city-town is an outdoor museum. We can walk its streets and enter the homes and buildings of a community that lived nearly 2,000 years ago. It has been impeccably preserved because of its abrupt and tragic ending, triggered by the terrifying eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

The people of Pompeii had gotten used to the continual rumblings of the mountain and grew to ignore it. They never dreamed that it would wipe out their town located on the Bay of Naples. The unexpected eruption occurred in August of the year AD 79 and the entire town was buried under 25 meters (over 80 feet) of ash. In fact, the mountain lost its top just like Mount Saint Helens in the state of Washington in 1980. Ask your parents or grandparents if they remember that eruption.



Photo of home in Pompeii was taken by Leslie Strout and used with her permission, all rights reserved.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Because of the quick and complete burial of Pompeii, the town was frozen in time until it was rediscovered nearly 1,700 years later. What archaeologists found when they began to dig down into the city of Pompeii was a well-preserved Roman town providing intimate and detailed insight into the lives of its citizens. We can walk around the excavated town and see the baths, the forum, the temples, and the villas. The streets were narrow, but well maintained. The homes were lavishly decorated with frescos on the walls and tiled artwork on the floors. Families enjoyed indoor plumbing, and large aqueducts brought fresh water into the city.

We can learn about the foods that they enjoyed and the clothes they wore. Fresh produce and oven-baked bread were well preserved because of their sudden and instant ash burial. Without access to light and moisture, they were found intact, but hard as stone. Paintings on walls, ceilings, and floors portray the fashions of the day as well as other aspects of everyday life, such as farming techniques and types of games and entertainment.



Photo of the interior of a bakery was taken by Leslie Strout and used with her permission, all rights reserved.

The destruction of Pompeii is sad, but its discovery in 1748 has truly helped modern historians understand and appreciate ancient life like no other archaeological dig has.

Let's travel down the coast a little ways and visit the seaside town of Sorrento, the gateway to the Amalfi Coast. Sorrento is located in the province of Campania, just like Naples and Pompeii. The Sorrentine

Peninsula has become a very popular tourist destination, especially for the rich and famous.

Here the air is warm and dry and the aquamarine waters are clear and inviting. The mountains reach right to the very edge of the coastline, making large sandy beaches something you won't find in this part of Italy. Instead, what you do find are small, almost hidden bays where sunbathers come to relax and play. The waves crash loudly and playfully into the cove, spraying water into the air and causing children and sunbathers to scoot back from time to time. With all of the walking and sightseeing we have done, it sounds dreamy to lie in the sun and squish our toes in the sand, don't you think? Oh, you would rather play in the rolling waves? That sounds wonderful too.

If you look north across the bay, you can see Mount Vesuvius off in the distance. Directly on the other side of the bay is the city of Naples. Now, if you look due west you can see an island on the distant horizon. That is the beautiful and mysterious Isle of Capri. Capri is home to the enchanting Blue Grotto. Have you ever heard of it? The Blue Grotto is a sea cave, famous for its glowing blue waters. Mysteriously, sunlight shines through an underwater cavity and illuminates the waters creating the blue glow. The cave is tricky to get into, but well worth the effort. This looks like the perfect place for pirate treasure, don't you think? Take a look here—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/what-makes-the-blue-grotto-blue/>.



Photo of the Blue Grotto at Capri taken by Arnaud Gaillard is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

In southern Italy's coastal towns, the Italian mamas shout at their children not to wander too far or the Saracen Pirates will "take you away, never to return!" Don't worry. There are no pirates patrolling these waters any more, but there were about 600 years ago. Turkish raiders would steal from these coastal fishing villages during the years of Ottoman dominance. Pirates would take boats, weapons, food and yes, children. The captured children would be placed into the service of the Sultan or other Turkish lords. Do you remember Prince Skandenberg from Albania, who was raised as a servant to the Sultan and served in the Turkish army for 20 years before deserting and rallying the other Albanian princes together to overthrow the Turks in Albania? He will always be a hero to the Albanians, just east of here.



Photo of Amalfi Beach was taken by Greg Willis of Denver, CO and in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

From Sorrento, we can drive along the Amalfi Coast on the tiny road that winds its way between Sorrento and Amalfi. Let's take the bus! This will be an experience you will not soon forget.

Danilo, our bus driver, greets us warmly and tells us to sit near the front so that he can tell us what we are seeing. Here we go. Oh dear, this cliff-hugging highway is very narrow and feels unsafe. It is literally carved out of the high cliffs towering above the Tyrrhenian Sea.

"This road was originally built by the Romans," Danilo informs us. "It stretches 50 miles along this mountainous shoreline."

The road is so narrow at times that Danilo has to stop and edge the bus to the side of the road, often without guard rails, to allow for cars and buses in the oncoming lane to pass by. He hangs his head out the window and shouts at the other drivers. Every driver seems to be honking and shouting at the other drivers as the cars clog up on the narrow road.

"This is supposed to be a two-lane highway," Danilo tells us over his shoulder. "But it just isn't wide enough to hold two lanes of traffic in some places. When we yell at each other, we are not mad, just

impatient. We each want to go first.” He winks and leans his head out the window once more to shout something in Italian that we cannot understand.

Along the highway are several small towns. While the drivers around here seem to be worked up and in a hurry, the people along the side of the road certainly are not. We see groups of men sitting on benches in the shade passing the time away. There are people sitting outside coffee shops chatting with each other and playing cards.

Maybe it’s the heat or the time of day, but everyone looks relaxed and unhurried, vacationers and locals alike. Time seems to march forward more slowly here.

Danilo speaks over his shoulder, “Unemployment is high in southern Italy. The vacation industry employs local Italians, but many still struggle to find work.”

“See those beaches below us with the matching umbrellas all lined up in straight rows and columns? The color and pattern of the umbrella identifies the hotel it belongs to. That section of beach belongs to a specific hotel and the guests who are staying there. Now look up above us out the windows on your left. Those large buildings hanging on the side of the cliffs are the hotels that employ many people in this area and where most of the vacationers are staying.”

“Whether one works or plays on the Amalfi Coast, the pace here is slow. The southern Italians trust what the Good Book says about worry, *‘Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.’*” (Matthew 6:34)

“So, southern Italians worry only about today; they do not concern themselves with tomorrow. It will take care of itself. And it usually does, doesn’t it?” Danilo laughs loudly and stretches out his hands to make his point. Italians certainly like to talk with their hands, even when they drive.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*I thought Rome was somewhat loud and chaotic. Now, we get to experience southern Italy! I’m so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Pizza:**

*How is Neapolitan pizza different from American pizza? Would you like to try some? There is a recipe you can try in the activities section at the end of this chapter.*

**Pompeii:**

*Why are the ruins of Pompeii special? What happened to this little roman villa? Tell me about the houses, the streets, the clothes, the food...*

**The Amalfi Coast:**

*Tell me about the Blue Grotto on the Isle of Capri off the coast of Italy. Why does it have a blue glow? What do the mothers say to their children when they stray too far from them at the beach? Tell me about the winding drive between Sorrento and Amalfi. What can you see lined up on the beaches?*

~::~::~~

If we continue our drive past the town of Amalfi to the city of Salerno, we can board a **hydrofoil** watercraft to the island of Sicily, which is part of the country of Italy. Let's pan out to our larger map and look at the complete shape of Italy for a big overview. We can see once again that it is shaped like a woman's high-heeled boot. Off the toe of the boot is an island. Some say that it looks like a folded paper football that is getting kicked by the Italian boot. This triangular island is the land of Sicily.

Sicily is the largest island in the whole Mediterranean Sea and sits right in the middle of it. The tiny Strait of Messina separates Sicily from the mainland, which is less than two miles wide at its narrowest point.

The most prominent geographical feature of the island is Mount Etna, which rises more than 10,000 feet above sea level. It is two and a half times taller than Mount Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii in AD 79. Mount Etna is the tallest active volcano in Europe. It is also one of the most active volcanoes in the world, spewing out ash and smoke almost continually. There are smaller and less active volcanoes scattered about the island.



Photo of Mt. Etna was taken by BenAveling and is in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Sicily was once an important Greek outpost during ancient times, and then the Romans passed through, followed by barbarian hordes, Byzantines, Arabs, and Normans. Sicily regained its independence for hundreds of years during the medieval and Renaissance time periods, from 1130 to 1816. It was known during this time as the Kingdom of Sicily. In fact, at one point, Naples on the mainland and the surrounding region belonged to the Kingdom of Sicily also. So the Sicilians changed their country's name to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Sicily joined with Italy when the Italian states unified and became one country in 1861.

Sicily is world renowned for its fabulous Mediterranean climate, with mild winters and hot summers. It is home to a great variety of animals, such as the Pine Marten, the Crested Porcupine, the Peregrine Falcon, and the Hoopoe. You've never heard of a Hoopoe? It is a colorful and distinctively crowned bird found only in Northern Africa and Southern Europe. Yes, Sicily is very close to the continent of Africa. Take a look on your map.

Perhaps what Sicily is best known for is its rich and unique culture, especially with regard to music and food. Sicily has been nicknamed *God's Kitchen* because of the wonderfully delicious foods made and served on the island. Every region of Sicily has its own culinary specialties, such as biscotti cookies, cannoli pastry, pecorino cheese and of course, Sicilian pizza.

Let's see how Sicilian pizza differs from the pies made in Naples:



Photo of Italian specialties taken by OneArmedMan is in the public domain, Wikimedia.org.

<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/sicilian-pizza/>

The Sicilian pizza is quite different from the Neapolitan pizza. It is typically square instead of round and has more dough, sauce, and cheese. Sometimes it is topped with little fish called anchovies, which are caught in the Tyrrhenian Sea to the north. It seems to have more of everything, but it also feeds more people.



Photo of Tuaredda Beach in Sardinia was taken by emmequadro61 and in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

Anchovies remind me of sardines and sardines remind me of Sardinia, our last stop in Italy. Let's go there now!

Sardinia is the second largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, just a little smaller than Sicily and also belongs to the united Italy. It is located northwest of Sicily. To the north of Sardinia is Corsica, which does not belong to Italy, but to France, so we'll save a visit to Corsica for a future volume of [A Child's Geography](#) when we get to learn about France. That will be a great adventure!

Sardinia is a breathtaking island, with long stretches of white sandy beaches and crystal clear aquamarine waters. Many sections of the coastline are steep and rocky with jagged headlands and deep bays and inlets. Some smaller islands dot the coastline. The weather is delightful with a typical Mediterranean climate. It has cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers. Sardinia gets more rainfall than the rest of the country, with many heavy showers in the spring and fall.

Inland, the country is known for its gently rolling fields of green, ideal for raising sheep and goats. In fact, one third of all **ovines** (sheep and goats) in Italy are shepherded on the island of Sardinia. The wide fields and valleys here are a fine place to breed and raise horses too.

Sardinia is world famous for its special cheeses. The two favorite local cheeses are the Pecorino Sar-





Photo of cheese shop taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

do and the Pecorino Romano. The name *pecorino* comes from the Italian word *pecora*, which means sheep. Yes, pecorino is made from sheep's milk. While Pecorino Sardo, a firm but mild cheese, is made exclusively on the island of Sardinia (*Sardo* is the root word for Sardinia) and from a local Sardinian breed of sheep, Pecorino Romano is made in Rome and other parts of Italy as well. In truth, Pecorino Romano, a hard, salty cheese, is an old cheese variety with a long history. It was a staple in the diet of legionaries, or soldiers, of ancient Rome. Italians proudly keep their cheese-making traditions alive and are passionate about their old-world artisan craft.

Would you like to watch how Pecorino cheese is made?

<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/how-to-make-pecorino-cheese/>

Sardinia is known for other specialty foods as well, such as wild boar roasted on a spit or boiled in a stew with beans and vegetables and thickened with bread. Sardinians wash this strong dish down with beer. Sardinian cuisine includes a great variety of seafood as well, including rock lobster, shrimp, bottarga (fish eggs), squid, tuna and sardines.

Sardinians may eat a lot of sardines, but that is not where the island gets its name. Sardinia comes from the word *Sardus*, the ancient name for the island. *Sardus* was the Romanized word from its

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earlier Greek name of *Sandalion*, meaning sandal. The people here speak two languages—Italian and Sardinian, or Sardo. Sardinian is not an Italian dialect, but a unique and unrelated language (like Venetian), which most residents here prefer to speak.

Sardinia is home to a unique style of singing and music, called *cantu a tenore* [KAN-too ah ten-OR-eh]. It is one of the oldest forms of vocal **polyphony** [pol-IF-an-ee], which means to sing more than one melody at a time. As you know, we have mentioned many UNESCO World Heritage sites in this book. Well, a song cannot be a site, but UNESCO has classified this beautiful and unique singing style a world heritage **intangible**. Intangible means that you cannot see it or touch it, but it is still there. Thanks to UNESCO, this style of music will be protected and preserved for future generations.

Several groups of musicians are resurrecting this irresistible musical sound. The most well known is the music group known as Tenores di Bitti, because they hail from the small town of Bitti in the central mountainous region of Sardinia. You can listen to them at the following link. Listen, in particular to the low guttural sounds that are produced deep in the throat.

<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/a-special-way-of-singing/>

Well, how did you like our grand tour of Italy? It is amazing that such a small country can have such a large impact on our world with its long and rich history. We have one last stop in the Mediterranean Sea before we leave the Classical World—the independent island country of Malta. See you there!

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*How did you like these large Italian islands? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

### **Sicily:**

*Tell me about Mt. Etna. How tall is it? How is Sicilian pizza different from the pizza of Naples? Which style of pizza would you rather make and eat?*

### **Sardinia:**

*What type of cheese do they make in Sardinia? Where does Sardinia get its name? Tell me about the cantu a tenore. What makes this musical style so special?*

*Timeline Events for Chapter 14 are located on the CD-ROM, along with mapwork, activities, recipes and more!*



## MALTA: SHIPWRECKED!

We have explored more than half of the Mediterranean Sea together on this amazing whirlwind adventure through the Classical World. We have one more country to visit before we finish our trip.



Look at your map of the entire Mediterranean and place your finger on the very center of the sea. Now peek underneath your fingertip and you will probably find the tiny country of Malta!

Malta is our last stop and the smallest island country of them all. In this case, last is certainly not least! The island nation of Malta has a long and fascinating history. You may just fall in love with Malta before we close the pages of this book.

With its central location in the Great Sea, Malta was an ancient rest area for Phoenician cargo ships, Greek **biremes** and Roman galleys. In fact, that is how it got its name. Malta means **shelter** and the island of Malta provided shelter and hospitality to all who visited its shores. Not only was Malta a great place to rest and restock supplies on a long journey, but it was often necessary for passing boats to seek shelter in the bays and harbors of Malta during violent winter storms.



Map of Malta and reconstructed Greek biremes in public domain.

Malta is an **archipelago**, which means that it is a group of several islands, not just one. The largest island is called Malta; the second largest is Gozo and the third is Comino. These three islands are

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home to the people of Malta. There are 18 additional islands, but they are all very small and **uninhabited**, which means that no one lives on them.

The islands of Malta are located south of Sicily, Italy's largest island. Malta, however, is not part of Italy. It is an independent nation, not subject to outside rule by any other country. Malta sits in the center of the sea, where east meets west and north meets south. Cultures meet on Malta, but they do not collide, as the islands offer a refreshing blend of African climate and European architecture, eastern tradition and western advancement.

However, currents do collide where Malta rises from the foaming waters of the sea. While there are no other names for the Mediterranean at this particular juncture of the waters of the Great Sea, the currents are certainly going in different directions where they meet at St. Thomas' Bay. With your parents' permission, watch the waves collide off the coast of Malta in this YouTube video—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/waves-collide-and-shipwrecks-happen/>

Smashing currents and raging tempests make the Malta islands a shipwreck disaster zone when storms blow up. The turquoise waters surrounding Malta are a scuba diver's paradise, as hundreds of pieces of shipwrecked boats have been pulled up from the tangle of seaweed just off shore. The iron crossbars of ancient Roman anchors found at 90 feet deep off the coast give evidence to Malta's most famous shipwreck.



In October of the year AD 60, a Roman galley was caught in a terrible storm on its way to Rome. The sailors battled the storm and fought to keep the ship afloat for two weeks before spotting land. However, with the colliding sea currents and the howling winds of a **nor'easter**, the crew was unable to prevent the great boat from smashing into the reefs and running aground.

The Roman galley was sailing from Jerusalem to Rome, carrying a famous prisoner, the Apostle Paul. After the ship ran aground, the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners onboard to make sure they didn't swim to shore and escape, but the commanding officer wanted to spare them, especially Paul. Every last man jumped overboard and swam toward land or floated on the debris of the broken ship. All two hundred and seventy six men survived, dragging themselves ashore on an unknown beach, hungry, exhausted, and soaked to the bone.

Once they were safe on shore, they learned that they were on the island of Malta. The islanders were very kind and showed great hospitality to the shipwrecked men. They stayed for three months and then continued their journey to Rome on another ship that had wintered on the island. You can read the unabridged story in Acts 27 and 28.

Our ferry is pulling into the harbor of the big island now. Let us hope that our arrival in Malta will be smoother than the Apostle Paul's! The capital city is Valletta and it sits on a peninsula with a large harbor on either side. This is a very old and beautiful city. The streets are narrow and the buildings look very medieval. Let's board this brightly painted bus that will take us around the island.

Outside the city, the landscape begins to change. We are driving through countryside of rolling hills and fields of grain. The day is hot and the air is dry, so the farmers are **irrigating** their fields today. Besides grain, the Maltese people also grow a variety of vegetables, such as cauliflower, potatoes, peppers, and tomatoes. There are vineyards and orchards scattered about the countryside as well. They are growing grapes and apricots, peaches and pears, tangerines and grapefruit. Such an abundance of healthy and colorful food!



Photo of outdoor produce market was taken by Niki J. Photography, all rights reserved.

Over there, you can see cattle grazing on the hillside. The Maltese raise chickens, pigs, rabbits, turkeys, and cows on these lush green hills and valley floors.

There are no lakes or streams on the island, but the waters surrounding Malta are teeming with delicious seafood, such as bass, swordfish, flounder, mackerel, sole, and snapper. There are tiny fish, such as sardines and anchovies, in abundance. Octopus, squid, and eels are caught off shore too.

The Maltese diet is very wholesome and diverse. And all this talk about food is making me hungry. We'll stop for a bite when we arrive in Mdina and Rabat.

On a hill in the distance, we can see the city of Mdina. It is pronounced “im-dina” and is known as the **Silent City**. It used to be the capital of Malta and is the home of the medieval Dungeons of the Magisterial Vilhena Palace. Let’s not go there! While the museum recreates true medieval Maltese history, this place is not for the faint of heart and the cruelty represented from that bygone era is best left in the past.

The town of Rabat is **adjacent** to Mdina. In Rabat are the ruins of an old Roman villa known as Domus Romana. Just outside the city are the **catacombs**. These are like the catacombs that we visited outside Rome, only smaller. Would you like to go down the steep steps and see this ancient burial chamber? There are plenty of lights in the tunnels, so it isn’t scary like the dungeons of Mdina. Just like in Rome, this is where the Christians buried their dead over 1800 years ago.

After that hike, I am really getting hungry. Let’s grab some lunch. There’s a restaurant around the corner where we can sit outside under an umbrella and enjoy this beautiful Maltese sunshine.

# menu

## MALTA

### APPETIZERS

Angels on Horseback (chicken liver wrapped in bacon) from England  
Bebbux (snails in red wine or ale with mint, basil and marjoram) from France  
Ful bit-tewm (beans with garlic) from Northern Africa

### SOUPS

Aljotta [al-yot-ta] (fish soup like bouillabaisse) from France  
Minestra (vegetable minestrone) from Italy

### MAIN DISHES

Imqarrun (baked macaroni with meat sauce and egg)  
Ross il-forn (baked rice)  
Bragioli (pan-fried beef) from Italy  
Klamari mimlija (stuffed calamari squid)  
Pixxispad [pi-shee-spad] (fried swordfish)  
qarnit bit-tewm (octopus with garlic)

### EGGS AND CHEESES

Forga (egg omelette made with gbejna cheese and beans or meat)  
Gbejna [je-bay-nya] (goat or sheep cheese made on the island of Gozo)

### VEGETABLES AND SAUCES

Kapunata (fried eggplant in a sweet and sour sauce) from Sicily  
Qarabaghli mimli (stuffed zucchini)  
Patata l-Forn (baked sliced potatoes)

### DESSERTS

Helwa tal-Tork (sweet made from nuts, sesame seed and sugar) from the Middle East  
Kannoli tal-irkotta (crispy fried pastry tubes filled with ricotta cheese) from Sicily  
Ravjul moqli [ray-vyool mok-li] (fried sweet ravioli) from Sicily

### BEVERAGES

Imbuljuta tal-Qastan (cocoa, chestnuts, cloves and citrus)  
Ruggata (milk, vanilla, cinnamon, sugar and bitter almonds) from Italy.

The cuisine of Malta is a blend of flavors from other lands including Sicily, Spain, France, England, and several North African countries. Let's take a look at the menu.

Because I am certain that I cannot pronounce these names well at all, I point to the menu to indicate that I will have the Pixxispad and Kapunata, then finish with the Ravjul moqli. How about you? What would you like to try?

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Besides the two enclaves that we learned about—San Marino and Vatican City—Malta is the smallest nation we have learned about in this book. I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Shipwreck:**

*Which famous shipwreck happened off the coast of Malta? Who was on board? Were all of the men saved? How did they get off the island?*

**Maltese Diet:**

*Tell me about some of the food grown on Malta. How do they irrigate their fields if they have no lakes or streams on the islands? What types of fish are caught in the waters surrounding Malta?*

~::~::~~

After our abundant and leisurely lunch, we should be on our way. Not far from here are the Blue Grotto caves. Do you remember the other Blue Grotto on the Isle of Capri off the coast of southern Italy? While no two caves are alike, the glowing effect of the blue waters is created in the same way—sunlight filtering into the cave from an underwater fissure in the rock. The effect is glorious! Even more exciting, perhaps, are the chattering dolphins that like to jump and play in the pristine waters outside the cave.

Let's take a bus back inland. We are about to see the oldest structure we have seen yet on this adventure. It is older than the Palace of Knossos on Crete, the Parthenon in Athens and the ruins of Philip II's city in Macedonia. The buildings we are about to see are the oldest structures ever found on the face of our planet. They are called megalithic temples. Megalith means a structure that has been assembled using enormous stones. Have you ever heard of Stonehenge in England? Stonehenge is a very famous example of a megalithic structure, but the temples on Malta are much older.

The three temples on the islands of Malta are Hagar Qim [har-jer EEM], Mnajdra [nigh-DRA], and

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Ggantija [jig-an-TI-yah]. The Ggantija Temple is on the neighboring island of Gozo, but the other two are not far from the Blue Grotto. We'll be there before you know it.

The temples are impressive. Thousands of years ago, these colossal stones were hauled to this location and stacked on top of each other. Nothing was used to hold the pieces together (such as cement). We need to take some pictures to send home because this feat of human construction and ingenuity is almost too hard to believe without seeing. Knives and animal bones have been found around the temples leading scientists to believe that animal sacrifices were performed at these temple sites.

Many artifacts have been dug out of the Maltese soil, some roughly dating about 7,000 years old. Archaeologists have found tools made from animal bones, pottery, and even evidence of cereal grains in the area of the megalithic temples.

While scientists speculate that the earliest people probably came from the Italian island of Sicily, Malta has been inhabited by a diverse mix of ethnic groups throughout its long history. Approximately 3,000 years ago, the Greeks settled in the area of Valletta. Later, the Phoenicians established Malta as a trading colony in their vast Mediterranean empire. Shortly thereafter, Carthaginians from modern-day Tunisia in Africa took control of the islands until Malta fell into the hands of the Romans during the Roman Empire.



Photo of megalithic temple at Mnajdra was taken by Alecastorina93 and in the public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.



After the Romans came the Arabs, who introduced irrigation to the Maltese. Christian Crusaders arrived next, establishing an outpost and rest stop between France and their final destination, Israel. Over the next several hundred years, the control of the islands was passed back and forth between various powers in Europe, like a fast game of ping-pong. Napoleon Bonaparte, a French emperor, conquered the island in 1798. Just two years later, it became part of the British Empire. Malta finally gained its independence in 1964.

A trip to Malta would not be complete without visiting the island of Gozo, the second largest in the Maltese archipelago. To get there, we'll board a large ferryboat that transports both people and cars between Malta and Gozo. On the way to Gozo, we'll see the other inhabited island, called Camino, off the **starboard** side, which is the right side. The left side of the ship is called the **port** side.



Blue Lagoon (off Comino Island) taken by Erik1980 is in the public domain, Wikimedia.org.

On the ferry, we meet a nice man named Xandru who has lived on the island of Gozo his entire life. He is happy to tell us about the culture, customs, and traditions of the Maltese people. He settles back in the mid-afternoon sunshine and tips his hat down to cover his eyes.

“Many Mediterranean customs are celebrated here in Malta. We are a unique blend of cultures. While we have the striking good looks of southern Europeans, we have a strong British heritage too. That’s why we speak English so well.” Xandru winks as he says this. He does speak perfect English, but he looks more Sicilian than British. “Most of the people of Malta speak two or more languages. Everyone speaks Maltese and English, and many speak French or Italian too.

“Today is my daughter Marija’s first birthday, so I am hurrying home to celebrate. It is a Maltese tradition to throw a special party for a baby’s first birthday and play a game called il-quccija [eel uuch-ya]. We’ll place several objects around Marija that are within her reach, such as a Bible, a book, a cross, a

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hard-boiled egg, a wooden spoon, a pen, and a pencil. We will watch to see which object she reaches for first. The object she chooses is supposed to determine what she will become as an adult, such as:

- A book = a teacher
- A pen or pencil = a writer
- A wooden spoon = a chef, or someone with a healthy appetite.
- Hard-boiled egg = someone with a long life and many children
- The Bible or cross = a nun (for a girl); a priest or monk (for a boy)

“I cannot wait to get home. It will be so much fun to see what she chooses!” Xandru’s eyes sparkle with delight.

“We have a great many customs and traditions here. We like to celebrate festivals together as a community too. We celebrate over 90 feast and festival days a year. The Maltese people love a good excuse for a party.

“Soon, we will celebrate the festival called Gostra. We play a medieval game with a heavily greased flagpole, suspended over the water. The young people try to climb to the top of the pole to grab the flag. If the climber falls in the water, he’s ‘out’ and it is someone else’s turn to try.

“One of my favorite festivals is Mnarja. It is a national holiday to honor both St. Peter and St. Paul. We have been celebrating this festival for over 500 years since the days of the Knights of Malta. We will decorate the streets with colorful banners and flags and there will be parades in every town. We will watch fireworks, listen to loud music, and eat all the rabbit stew we can hold,” Xandru laughs.



Photo of the Grand Harbour of Valetta taken by Harry Trotter is in the public domain, Wikimedia.org.

Seeing our puzzled expressions, he continues, “We eat rabbit stew because the common folk were not allowed to hunt wild rabbits during the days of the Knights of Malta. Only the knights were allowed to do this. But on this one special day, during the festival of Mnarja on June 29, everyone was allowed to hunt rabbits. This is why we eat fenkata, or rabbit stew, on Mnarja.”

Now we understand. We thank Xandru for telling us a little about his customs and traditions and we wish his daughter a happy first birthday. He smiles, removes his hat, and bows like a true English gentleman before he hurries away to find his car and disembark from the ferryboat.

The largest town on the island of Gozo is Victoria. It sits on a hill in the center of the island. In the middle of the town is a once-fortified citadel, complete with cannons, offering a spectacular view of the whole island of Gozo. From up here, we can see the third megalith, the Ggantija Temple. That sounds like “gigantic,” doesn’t it? That is exactly what it is!

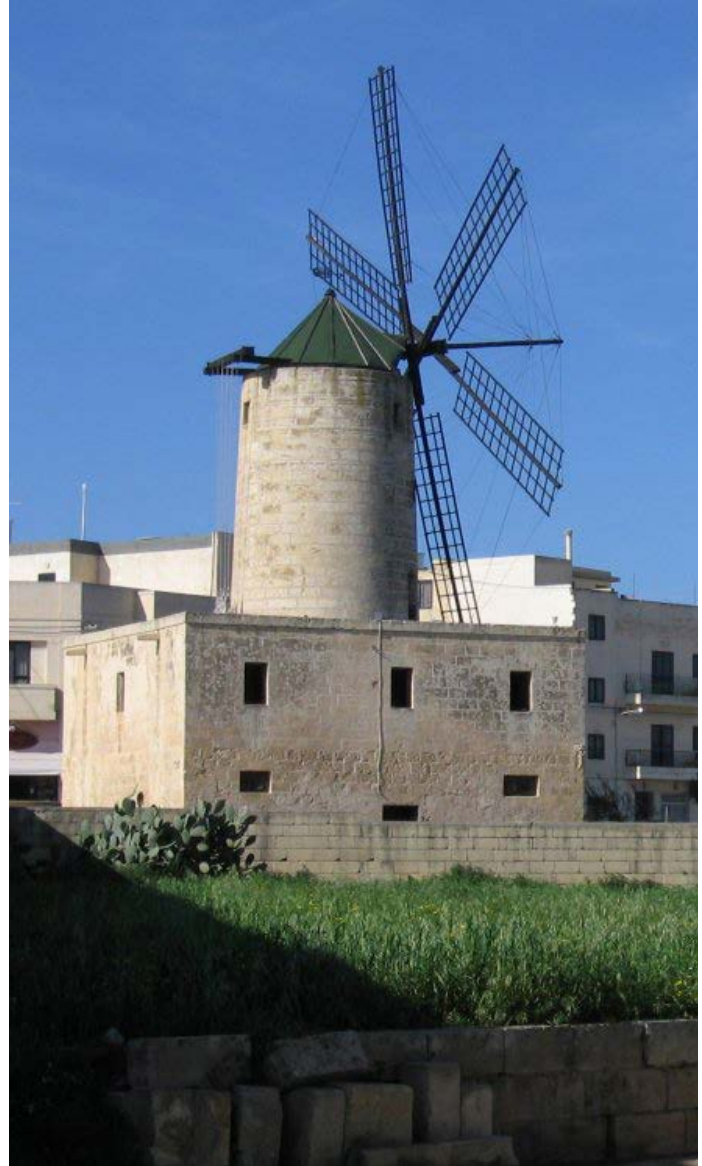


Photo of windmill on Malta is in the public domain, Wikimedia.org.

And there, not far from Ggantija is a large windmill. The Ta’Kola Windmill was built in 1725. It no longer operates as a mill, but as a museum open to the public. For more than 200 years, the wind powered the mill to grind wheat into flour for bread. The millers used to live and work in the windmill. Would you like to live in a windmill?

What do you think of Malta? After learning about twelve countries around the Great Sea, we have finished our tour of the Classical World. While it is sad to say goodbye to the Mediterranean region, we will come back to Europe when we continue our journey in a future volume of *A Child’s Geography*, exploring the lands just to the west of here—Spain, France, Germany, and a small country whose landscape is dotted with windmills like these, so quaint you will be ready to move in.



Photo of Azure Window on Gozo is in the public domain, Wikimedia.org.

At the end of every trip, we must unpack and settle back into regular life. But the best way to hold onto the memories is to create a notebook with your favorite photos and experiences. There are so many things to write about. I have provided some ideas for journaling within each chapter and many photos that you can use to decorate its pages. Journal your thoughts and experiences from this wonderful imaginary trip to real places that we have come to love. And who knows... maybe one day, you will see these places with your very own eyes. I hope you do.

Are you ready for another adventure? It won't be long before we'll be packing our bags again, grabbing our passports, maps, and cameras, and heading out to new and exotic lands.

Come. Let's explore our Father's world together...

~::~::~~

**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*How did like the islands of Malta? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*



**Megaliths:**

*What is a megalith? Can you tell me the names of the three megaliths that are located on the islands of Malta? How old might they be? (Parent/teacher: please note and discuss that modern dating methods give a rough estimate at best.)*

**Customs:**

*Tell me about some Maltese customs. Which item do you think you would have reached for when you were a baby? Describe at least one Maltese game or holiday that you remember from the chapter.*

Chapter 15 Timeline Events	
3000 yrs ago	Greeks settled on Malta in area of Valletta. Phoenicians later establish it as a trading colony.
shortly after	Carthaginians, and later Romans take control of Malta.
just after	Arabs introduce irrigation to Maltese.
next few hundred years	control passes between various European powers.
60 AD	The Apostle Paul's ship ran aground and all were saved on to the island of Malta.
1800 yrs ago	The Christians buried their dead in the catacombs outside the city of Rabat.
1725	The Ta'Kola Windmill was built to grind wheat into flour for bread. The millers lived and worked here.
1798	Napoleon Bonaparte, French Emperor, conquers Malta.
1800	Malta becomes part of the British Empire.
1964	Malta gains independence.

GLOSSARY

<b>A</b> acoustics	The qualities or characteristics of a room, auditorium, stadium, etc., that determine the audibility or fidelity of sounds in it.
Acqua Alta	Acqua Alta occurs when the level of water in the Venice lagoon overflows ground level in Venice.
Acropolis	The Acropolis is an ancient citadel located on a high rocky outcrop above the city of Athens and containing the remains of several ancient buildings of great architectural and historic significance, the most famous being the Parthenon. The word acropolis comes from the Greek words (akron, "edge, extremity") and (polis, "city").
adjacent	Lying near, close, or contiguous; adjoining; neighboring.
advisor	An advisor is normally a person with deeper knowledge or expertise in a specific area who gives advice to others.
Aegean Sea	An arm of the Mediterranean Sea off southeast Europe between Greece and Turkey.
agoraphobia	A condition characterized by an irrational fear of public or open spaces.
agriculture	The occupation or business of cultivating the land, producing crops, and raising livestock.
alpine	Relating to the Alps, a European mountain range.
alternating current	An electric current that regularly reverses direction.
amphitheater	A large circular building without a roof, and with rows of seats that slope up and away from a central area, used for entertainments such as sports competitions or plays.
apex	The highest point of something, especially of a pointed object eg. a triangle or mountain.
Apostle Paul	Prominent apostle who helped spread the Christian Gospel to early Christian communities across the Roman Empire, established churches, and credited with being the author of almost half of the New Testament writings.
aqueduct	A bridge that was constructed to transport water over an obstacle, such as a ravine or valley commonly used by Ancient Romans.
archaeological	The scientific study of ancient cultures through the examination of their material remains such as buildings, graves, tools, and other artifacts usually dug up from the ground.
archaeologist	One who undertakes the scientific study of ancient cultures through the examination of their material remains such as buildings, graves, tools, and other artifacts usually dug up from the ground.
archipelago	A group or chain of islands.
architecture	A style or fashion of building, especially one that is typical of a period of history or of a particular place.
arsenal	A stockpile of weapons and military equipment.

artifacts	An object made by a human being, especially one that has archaeological or cultural interest.
artisans	Somebody who is skilled at a craft.
ascetic	Somebody who is self-denying and lives with minimal material comforts.
assassinated	To kill somebody, especially a political leader or other public figure, by a sudden violent attack.
atheist	Somebody who does not believe in God or deities.
<b>B</b> baklava	A dessert of filo pastry layered with nuts, with syrup or honey poured over it after baking.
Balkans	A group of countries in SE Europe, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Serbia.
baptistry	A part of a Christian church, sometimes with a pool, used for baptisms.
barbarian	Especially in ancient times, a member of a people whose culture and behaviour was considered uncivilized, aggressive or violent.
Basilica	In ancient Rome, a building with a central nave, a columned aisle on each side, and typically a terminal semicircular apse. It was used as a court of justice, an assembly hall, or an exchange.
basin	A broad area of land drained by a single river and its tributaries, or draining into a lake.
biremes	An ancient warship with two ranks of oars on each side.
bishopric	The rank or office of a bishop, or an area that a bishop is in charge of.
boycotted	To cease or refuse to deal with something such as an organization, a company, or a process, as a protest against it or as an effort to force it to become more acceptable.
<b>C</b> caldera	A large, basin-like depression resulting from the explosion or collapse of the center of a volcano. It may later contain a lake.
canal	An artificial waterway constructed for use by shipping, for irrigation, or for recreational use. A canal may take in parts of natural rivers along its course.
capital	A city that is the seat of government of a country, state, or province.
carbon dating	A method of finding out the age of a very old object by measuring the amount of radioactive carbon it contains.
catacombs	Underground cemeteries consisting of passages or tunnels with rooms and recesses used as burial chambers leading off them. In ancient Rome, Christians used catacombs for burial.
catamaran	A sailing boat or engine-powered boat that has two identical hulls fixed together by a rigid framework.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Celts	The ancient Indo-European people who lived in central and western Europe. They were driven to the western fringes of the continent by the Romans and some Germanic peoples, especially the Angles and Saxons.
chasm	A deep crack or hole in the ground.
cicchetti	Cicchetti are little snacks that are served at bars in Venice.
citadel	A fortress or strongly fortified building in or near a city, used as a place of refuge.
city of the seven hills	The Seven Hills of Rome east of the river Tiber form the geographical heart of Rome, within the walls of the ancient city.
city-states	An independent state consisting of a sovereign city and its surrounding territory.
clarity	The quality of being clear, pure, or transparent.
colony	Any people or territory separated from but subject to a ruling power.
communist	A supporter of Communism - a social system based on the holding of all property in common, with actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or to the state.
continent	Any of the seven large continuous land masses that constitute most of the dry land on the surface of the Earth. They are Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America.
contraband	Goods that are illegally imported or exported, e.g. goods that evade duty or are prohibited by law from being taken into or out of a country.
crag	A steep rough mass of rock forming part of a cliff or mountain peak.
cupola	A roof or ceiling in the form of a dome.
Cyclades	The Cyclades are a group of Greek Islands located in the southern part of the Aegean Sea. The archipelago contains some 2,200 islands, islets and rocks.
cypress	A coniferous evergreen tree with dark green leaves resembling scales and rounded cones. Native to: Europe, Asia, North America. Genus: Cupressus

<b>D</b> direct current	Electrical current that flows in only one direction and has a fairly constant average value.
disputed	To question or doubt the truth or validity of something.
Doge	The chief magistrate in Venice or Genoa during the Renaissance.
dukedom	The area that a duke owns or rules over.
dysfunctional	Abnormal or impaired functioning, especially of a bodily system or social group.

<b>E</b> elevation	The height above a specific reference point, especially sea level.
ellipse	A two-dimensional shape like a stretched circle with slightly longer flatter sides.



emigration	To leave a place, especially a native country, to go and live elsewhere.
emperor	A man who rules an empire.
en masse	All together as a group.
enclave	An enclave is a territory entirely surrounded by another territory.
endangered	In danger of becoming rarely found or rarely occurring.
endemic	A species of organism that is confined to a particular geographical region such as an island or river basin.
epistle	A long formal letter, often intended to provide instruction, written by the apostle Paul or other early Christian writers and included as a book of the Bible
explorer	Somebody who travels to distant or unfamiliar places to find out more about them.
eyries	Any high and inaccessible place, often a fortified one.
<b>F</b> famine	A severe shortage of food resulting in widespread hunger.
fissures	A long narrow crack or opening, especially in rock.
fjord	A fjord is a long, narrow inlet with steep sides or cliffs, created in a valley carved by glacial activity.
flying buttresses	The flying buttress is a masonry arch extending off the outside of a building, often along the length of the nave of a cathedral, which transfers the thrust of the roof outwards and down to a pier.
fortifications	A structure built in order to strengthen a place's defences, e.g. a wall, ditch, or rampart, or a position or place that can be defended.
fortified	To strengthen or reinforce the structure of something.
Fourth Crusade	The Fourth Crusade (1202–1204), originally designed to conquer Jerusalem through an invasion of Egypt, instead, in 1204, invaded and conquered the Eastern Orthodox city of Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire.
frescoes	A painting on a wall or ceiling done by rapidly brushing watercolours onto fresh damp or partly dry plaster.
funicular	A cable railway ascending a mountain; especially one in which an ascending car counterbalances a descending car.
<b>G</b> gaiters	A strip of fabric, leather, or waterproof material covering the leg from the instep to either the ankle or the knee. Modern gaiters are usually made of waterproof fabric and are worn by climbers, walkers, and skiers.
gelateria	Italian ice-cream parlour.
geometric	Using straight lines and simple shapes such as circles or squares.
ghetto	An area of a city lived in by a minority group, especially a run-down and densely populated area lived in by a group that experiences discrimination.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

glacial	Characterized by the presence of ice masses relating to or caused by a glacier or glaciers.
glacier	A large body of continuously accumulating ice and compacted snow, formed in mountain valleys or at the poles, that deforms under its own weight and slowly moves.
gladiators	In ancient Rome, a professional fighter who fought another combatant or a wild animal in public entertainments set in an arena. Often gladiators were criminals or slaves who were equipped with nets, nooses, swords, or other weapons.
gondola	A narrow flat-bottomed boat, used on the canals of Venice, that has a curved prow and stern and is moved along with a long pole.
gondolier	Somebody who guides a gondola through water, especially on the canals of Venice.
Great Fire of Rome	An urban fire that occurred beginning 19 July AD 64.
Greek Dark Ages	The period between the fall of the Mycenaean civilizations and the re-adoption of writing in the eighth or seventh century BC. After the Trojan Wars the Mycenaeans went through a period of civil war, the country was weak and a tribe called the Dorians took over.
Gutenberg printing press	The inventor's method of printing from movable letters, including the use of metal molds, a special press, and oil-based inks, which allowed for the first time the mass production of printed books.
gymnasium	A hall equipped for physical exercise or physical training of various kinds, e.g. in a school or a private club.

<b>H</b> hamam	A Turkish bath, wherein one first relaxes in a warm room that is heated by a continuous flow of hot, dry air, allowing the bather to perspire freely. Bathers may then move to an even hotter room before splashing themselves with cold water. After performing a full body wash and receiving a massage, bathers finally retire to the cooling-room for a period of relaxation.
headlands	A narrow piece of land jutting out into water, usually with steep high cliffs.
hermit	Somebody who chooses to live alone and to have little or no social contact.
hippodrome	An open-air stadium in ancient Greece or Rome with an oval track that was used for horse or chariot racing.
hollows	An empty space or cavity in something created by removing the contents.
Holy Roman Emperor	A term used by historians to denote a medieval ruler who had also received the title of "Emperor of the Romans" from the Pope.
hostels	A place providing accommodation for people who are travelling or homeless.

House of Habsburg	Also known as House of Austria, is one of the most important royal families of Europe and is best known for being an origin of all of the formally elected Holy Roman Emperors between 1438 and 1740, as well as rulers of the Austrian and Spanish Empires and several other countries.
hydraulic	Operated by the pressure created by forcing water, oil, or another liquid through a comparatively narrow pipe or opening.
hydrofoil	1. A boat equipped with hydrofoils. Also called <i>hydroplane</i> . 2. A winglike structure attached to the hull of a boat that raises all or part of the hull out of the water when the boat is moving forward, thus reducing drag.
<b>I</b> impregnable	Too strong to be captured or entered by force.
inaccessible	Difficult or impossible to gain access to or reach.
inspiration	Stimulation for the human mind to creative thought or to the making of art.
intangible	lacking material qualities, and so not able to be touched or seen, difficult to define or describe clearly, but nonetheless perceived.
Iraq	Iraq has been known to the west as 'Mesopotamia' (Land between the rivers) and has been home to continuous successive civilizations since the 6th millennium BC.
Iron Age	The period in the history of humankind, following the Stone Age and the Bronze Age, marked by the use of implements and weapons made of iron.
irrigating	To bring a supply of water to a dry area, especially in order to help crops to grow.
island	An area of land, smaller than a continent, that is completely surrounded by water.
isthmus	A narrow strip of land that joins two larger areas of land.
<b>J</b> javelin throwing	A javelin is a light spear designed primarily to be thrown, historically as a ranged weapon, but today predominantly for sport.
<b>K</b> Karst topography	Karst is a distinctive topography in which the landscape is largely shaped by the dissolving action of water on carbonate bedrock (usually limestone, dolomite, or marble).
<b>L</b> labyrinth	An intricate combination of paths or passages that make it difficult to find the exit; a maze.
lagoon	An area of shallow water separated from the sea by low sandy dunes.
landlocked	Entirely or almost entirely surrounded by land.
landscape	The aspect of the land characteristic of a particular region.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

leeward	On or toward the side to which the wind is blowing ie. downwind from a point of reference.
limestone pinnacles	A tall pointed formation, such as a mountain peak made of limestone.
lynx	A lynx is any of the four species within the Lynx genus of medium-sized wildcats. The lynx has a short tail and characteristic tufts of black hair on the tips of its ears.

<b>M</b> mantle	The part of Earth or another planet that lies between the crust and core.
manuscript	A book or other text written by hand, especially one written before the invention of printing.
Mars Hill	The Areopagus or Mars Hill is a bare marble hill next to the Acropolis in Athens. It is especially popular with travelers for its connections with a speech made by Paul the Apostle.
marshes	Areas of low-lying waterlogged land, often beside water, that are poorly drained and liable to flood, difficult to cross on foot, and unfit for agriculture or building.
medieval	Relating to, involving, belonging to, or typical of the Middle Ages.
merchants	People who buy and sell goods, especially as wholesalers or internationally.
military academy	A secondary school or college that prepares students to enter the military at officer level, and that typically emphasizes rigorous discipline.
millennia	Plural of millenium.
millennium	A period of 1,000 years, especially a period that begins or ends in a year that is a multiple of 1,000.
minaret	A tall slender tower attached to a mosque, from which the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer.
modern Olympic games	The leading international sporting event featuring summer and winter sports, in which thousands of athletes participate in a variety of competitions.
monastery	A building or buildings with grounds in which a group of people observing religious vows, especially monks, live together.
monk	A man who withdraws entirely or in part from society and goes to live in a religious community to devote himself to prayer, solitude, and contemplation.
Montenegrin	A nation and the South Slavic people mainly living in the Balkans, primarily inhabiting Montenegro.
moorage	A place where a boat, ship, or aircraft can be made fast by means of a cable, chain, or rope used to stop it from drifting away.
Mt. Olympus	Traditionally regarded as the heavenly abode of the Greek gods and the site of the throne of Zeus.

<b>N</b> national park	A park in use for conservation purposes, Often it is a reserve of natural, semi-natural, or developed land that a sovereign state declares or owns, and used for the preservation of local fauna and flora.
native tongue	A first language (also native language, mother tongue, arterial language, or the language(s) a person has learned from birth or within the critical period, or that a person speaks the best and so is often the basis for sociolinguistic identity.
Nero	Nero was Roman Emperor from 54 to 68 AD, and the last in the Julio-Claudian dynasty. He was also a persecuter of the Christians in Rome.
nettle	a tall plant with pointed leaves and small hairs that sting if you touch them
nor'easter	A storm that gets its name from the direction the wind is coming from.
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)	A security alliance of 28 countries from North America and Europe, formed after WWII, to safeguard their freedom and security by political and military means.
nuns	A member of a religious community of women who dedicate their lives to religious devotion and undertake not to marry.
<b>O</b> Oracle	Somebody or something considered to be a source of knowledge, wisdom, or prophecy, in ancient Greece and Rome, a shrine dedicated to a particular god where people went to consult a priest or priestess in times of trouble or uncertainty. One of the most famous was the Delphic Oracle of Apollo.
ovines	Relating to or characteristic of sheep.
<b>P</b> patron	A person who supports with money, gifts, efforts, or endorsement an artist, writer, museum, cause, charity, institution, special event, or the like.
pedestrian	A person who goes or travels on foot; walker.
peninsula	A piece of land that is bordered by water on three sides but connected to mainland.
Persia	The old alternate name for the Asian country today known as Iran.
Persian Empire	The Persian empire was established by Cyrus the Great in the 6th century BC, conquered and changed by Alexander the Great in 330 BC, and finally overthrown by the rise of the Islamic civilization in 537 AD.
piazzas	A large open square, especially one in an Italian town.
pickpocket	A thief who steals from people's pockets and bags in public places, usually unnoticed.
picturesque	Visually very appealing or impressive, seeming fit for a painting or photograph.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

piles	A cylindrical or flat member of wood, steel, concrete, etc., often tapered or pointed at the lower end, hammered vertically into soil to form part of a foundation or retaining wall.
pirate	People who rob or otherwise attack shipping on the high seas.
planetarium	A building with a domed ceiling onto which movable images of the stars, planets, and other objects seen in the night sky are projected for an audience.
pockmarks	A small hollow mark disfiguring a surface.
polyphony	Musical composition that uses simultaneous, largely independent, melodic parts, lines, or voices.
polytheism	The worship of or belief in more than one deity, especially several deities.
pomegranate	a round reddish fruit with a tough rind enclosing numerous seeds within a tart juicy red pulp
port	A place by the sea, or by a river or other waterway, where ships and boats can dock, load, and unload.
portage road	An overland route used when transporting a boat or its cargo from one waterway to another.
public baths	In ancient times public bathing included saunas, massages and relaxation therapies. Members of the society considered it as a place to meet and socialize. Public bathing could be compared to the spa of modern times.
pyramids	The ancient Egyptians built pyramids as tombs for the pharaohs and their queens. They were 4-sided structures, having smooth, steeply sloping sides meeting at a point.

**Q** quarantine      Enforced isolation or restriction of free movement imposed to prevent the spread of contagious disease.

**R** rainshadow      A rain shadow is a dry area on the lee back side of a mountainous area. The mountains block the passage of rain-producing weather systems casting a “shadow” of dryness behind them.

regatta      A boat race or a series of boat races.

renaissance      The activity, spirit, or time of the great revival of art, literature, and learning in Europe beginning in the 14th century and extending to the 17th century, marking the transition from the medieval to the modern world.

replica      Any close or exact copy or reproduction.

Richter      The Richter magnitude scale was developed in 1935 by Charles F. Richter as a mathematical device to compare the size of earthquakes. It assigns a single number to quantify the energy released during the earthquake.

robber baron	Unscrupulous feudal lords who amassed personal fortunes by using illegal and immoral business practices, such as illegally charging tolls to passing merchant ships.
Roman Empire	The Roman Empire is defined as that period of time, between 27 BCE and 476 CE, when the city of Rome ruled the known world.
romance language	The Romance languages are a language family in the Indo-European languages. They started from Vulgar Latin. The biggest Romance languages are Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and Romanian. The name “Romance” for the languages means they originate from a language spoken by Romans.
rope ladders	A ladder is a vertical or inclined set of rungs or steps. There are two types: rigid ladders that can be leaned against a vertical surface such as a wall, and rope ladders that are hung from the top.
<b>S</b> secular	Not pertaining to or connected with religion.
seismic	Seismic waves are waves of energy that travel through the Earth’s layers, as a result of an earthquake, explosion, or a volcano’s eruption.
settlement	A collection of dwellings forming a community, esp on a frontier.
shipwreck	The sinking, destruction, or damaging of a ship while at sea.
skylight	An opening in a roof or ceiling that is fitted with glass to let in daylight.
slaves	Someone who belongs by law to another person as their property and has to obey them and work for them.
Slavic	Relating to the people of Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and other countries of central and eastern Europe, or their languages or cultures.
Slavonic	Old Church Slavonic, also known as Old Bulgarian or Old Church Slavic was the first Slavic literary language. The 9th century Byzantine Greek missionaries Saints Cyril and Methodius are credited with standardizing the language and using it in translating the Bible and other Ancient Greek ecclesiastical texts as part of the Christianisation of the Slavic peoples.
solitary	Without the company of other people.
soluble	Able to be dissolved in another substance. The level of solubility often varies with temperature.
spartan	Relating to the ancient Greek city-state of Sparta, or its people or culture, marked by stern discipline, frugality, simplicity, or courage.
spelunker	A person who explores caves, especially as a hobby.
Sporades	An archipelago along the east coast of Greece, northeast of the island of Euboea, in the Aegean Sea, which consists of 24 islands.
starboard	On, towards, or from the right-hand side of somebody facing the front of a ship or aircraft.
statues	A three-dimensional image of a human being or animal that is sculpted, modelled, cast, or carved.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

submersible bridge	The submersible bridge lowers its deck into the water. It has no height restriction on the boats passing through. However, submersion of the deck limits the passage of vessels with hulls that extend far below the water line.
symbolizes	To represent something by means of a symbol or icon.
<b>T</b> terra firma	Terra firma is a Latin phrase meaning “solid earth” (from terra “earth” and firma “solid”).
thunderstorms	A storm with thunder, lightning, heavy rain, and sometimes hail.
topography	The study and mapping of the features on the surface of land, including natural features such as mountains and rivers and constructed features such as roads and railways.
town ward	A division or district of a city or town, as for administrative or political purposes.
trattoria	An Italian restaurant, especially one that is simple in style.
tumultuous	Involving great excitement, confusion, and emotional agitation.
turn of the century	Refers to the transition from one century to another.
<b>U</b> UNESCO World Heritage site	A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site is a place (such as a forest, mountain, lake, desert, monument, building, complex, or city) that is listed by the UNESCO as of special cultural or physical significance.
uninhabited	A place that is uninhabited has no people living there.
<b>V</b> vaporetto	A motorboat for transporting passengers along the canals in Venice.
vault	An arched structure of stone, brick, wood, or plaster that forms a ceiling or roof.
vendettas	Prolonged bitter feuds or quarrels.
<b>W</b> war	A period of hostile relations between countries, states, or factions that leads to fighting between armed forces, especially in land, air, or sea battles.
warriors	Somebody who takes part in a struggle or conflict or is experienced in warfare.
whitewashed	Lime suspended in water, often with glue or sizing, and used like paint for whitening walls.
<b>Y</b> Year of our Lord	The purpose of the BC/AD dating system was to make the birth of Jesus Christ the dividing point of world history. BC was “before Christ” and since His birth, we have been living “in the year of our Lord”.