



Alpine Adventure

When the bright sunlight flooded through our windows at daybreak, casting a rosy alpenglow on snowy Mount Blanc outside, we decided it would be a shame to leave Chamonix without one last zip up the mountainside to behold her glory one final time. And now, as we stand here on the top floor of Europe, gazing upon the majestic White Mountain to our right and the craggy Matterhorn straight ahead on the distant horizon, we are actually overlooking three individual countries, all Alpine yet uniquely different.

The gondola below transports people across that wide snowy expanse stretching between the two famous mountains, connecting France with Italy. From this perch, we could probably throw a stone that would land on Italian snow. But that's not where we are going next. See the Matterhorn directly in front of us? That's Switzerland and we are heading there today!



Gondola connecting France to Italy, taken by Brady Johnson, all rights reserved.

Getting from France to Switzerland is not as easy as traveling from France to Italy, riding the gondola to Helbronner, the Italian border station. After we ride the téléphérique back down the sheer mountain incline, we will take a bus that will transport us across the French-Swiss border. The thought of a wide,



Matterhorn, Adobe Stock Photos, licensed for publication.

bulky bus on a narrow, winding alpine highway makes me nervous, but these drivers make the journey several times a day. I'm sure we'll make it into Switzerland just fine!

Switzerland is made up of three geographic areas. More than half of the country—the southern half—is covered by these mountains, the Swiss Alps. The Alps provide more than beauty and grandeur to the landscape; they are extremely important to the rest of Europe because they form a **watershed**. A watershed means that the snowpack supplies water to other places in Europe. Melting snow and glaciers turn into streams, and streams turn into rivers. Some of these rivers, like the mighty Rhine River, flow north and empty into the North Sea. Others, like the Rhone, flow south and drain into the Mediterranean Sea. And one river, the Inn River, flows east and becomes the great Danube, which in turn flows into the Black Sea, providing water to Eastern Europe.

The second part of the country is a large area located in the middle of Switzerland that is called the Central Plateau. This area is not completely flat, like some plateaus. Rushing rivers and pristine lakes are interposed between gently rolling hills. This area makes up about a third of Switzerland, and is the most populated.

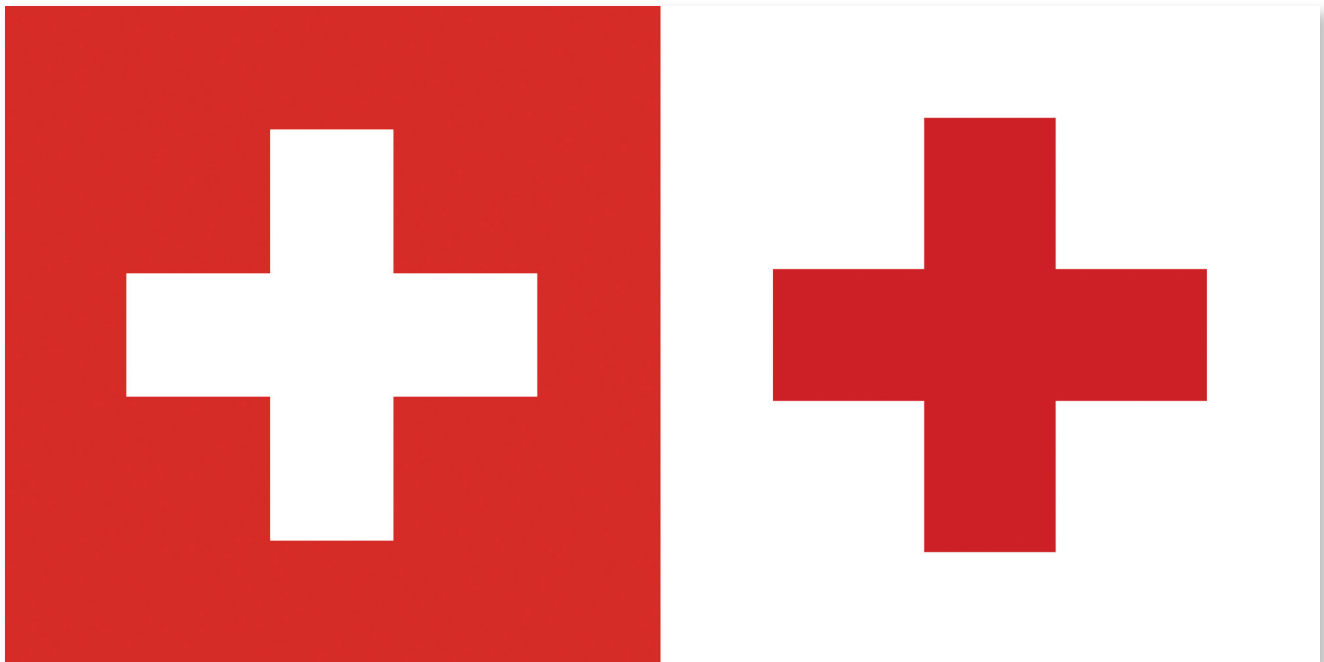
The third and smallest region of the country is the Jura. The Jura Mountains make up only 10% of the country and they are in the northern part of Switzerland. These mountains are not nearly as impressive as the Alps, but there is something very fascinating about them.

Have you heard of the word “jurassic”? Does the word conjure up dinosaurs in your mind? The words “jurassic” and “jura” are related. Many fossilized dinosaur tracks and bones have been found in these limestone mountains. Near the Swiss village of Courtedoux in the Jura Mountains, over 13,000 dinosaur footprints have been found. Incredible, isn't it, that we can walk in the footsteps of dinosaurs?

We'll get off the bus in the big city of Geneva, which is just inside the Swiss border after leaving France. Geneva is located at the tip of an immense lake that shares its name, and is the **headwaters** of the Rhone River. Geneva is the second largest city in Switzerland after Zürich. Because of its proximity to France, the culture here is very French, including the language and food.

Geneva is famous for many things, one of them being their superior dairy products. Switzerland produces many varieties of cheeses, and it is world famous for its high-quality chocolate.

Geneva is also home to the International Red Cross. As you may already know, the Red Cross enters countries where disasters have occurred and brings aid and medical help to hurting people. Isn't it interesting that the Red Cross symbol and the Swiss flag are inverse images of the same design?



From here, we'll ride a special train called the Glacier Express to see the heart of Switzerland. This train is designed to maximize the view with curved glass windows that continue straight overhead. The Glacier Express is a masterpiece of railway engineering, as it crosses 291 bridges and cuts through 91 tunnels as it zips through the Swiss countryside.

The scenery outside the train windows is truly spectacular, with jutting mountains (many of them higher than 13,000 feet), deep valleys, and winding ridges. Hiking trails wind throughout the Swiss Alps and hikers by the thousands tromp through them each year. The trails are sprinkled with little mountain huts and guesthouses where a weary traveler can bed down for the night. In fact, you can hike from France to Slovenia, stopping each night at a small remote village or secluded hut, and never come out of the Alps.



Photos on this page (Glacier Express) and opposite page (Staubbach Falls) are licensed through Adobe Stock Photos.

We'll be getting off the train in Lauterbrunnen, a small village located right in the middle of Switzerland. Lauterbrunnen and the nearby town of Interlaken are popular destinations for locals and tourists alike. The towns sit on a valley floor with steep mountains rising up around them on all sides. Lifts, trains, and gondolas take adventure seekers anywhere they want to go.

A total of 72 waterfalls plunge down the vertical cliff faces to the Lauterbrunnen Valley below. The closest waterfall, the towering Staubbach Falls, is one of the highest in Europe. The water drops 1,000 feet (305 meters) down into the valley and by the time it hits the valley floor, it is only mist. The mist refracts the sunlight into vibrant rainbows, which makes for an excellent photograph. Get your camera out and take your time composing a good shot. This is a photo that you will want to show everyone back home.

Lauterbrunnen is the home to another spectacular waterfall; this waterfall plummets inside a mountain! The water for Trummelbach Falls comes from glaciers high up in the Alps, forming a series of ten waterfalls that gush down through the inside of the mountain. The Trummelbach falls are the world's only glacial waterfalls that are accessible underground by lifts, tunnels, paths, and platforms. Walking through the caves, the sound of the rushing water is almost deafening! And this is just a small frac-



tion of the water that runs off the glaciers as they melt. Now you can see, hear, and understand how the Alps provide water to the entire European continent.

Back down in Interlaken, we can hop on the Jungfrauoch [jung-frow-yok] Mountain Railway and ride to the highest railroad station in Europe. The overhead lights inside the train cars turn on as we depart because this train travels almost entirely through dark mountain tunnels. Part way up the tracks, two holes have been cut out on the side of the rocky mountain tunnel that serve as windows so we can see how high up the mountain we have climbed.

At the Jungfrauoch train station, there are restaurants, a post office, and a display of ice sculptures that do not melt. From here, you can also walk on the Aletsch Glacier, the largest glacier in Europe. The Aletsch Glacier is 14 miles (23 km) long and covers 50 square miles (80 square km). That's an enormous amount of ice!

With all of this ice, snow, and freezing temperatures, you wouldn't think any plants or animals could survive here. Some can and actually thrive here.

Are you familiar with Edelweiss [ay-del-vice]? It is the name of a song from the movie, *The Sound of Music*, filmed in the 1960's, but it is also the name of an alpine flower that grows up here. The hearty

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Edelweiss by Böhringer Friedrich, license CC BY-SA 2.5.

rhododendron bush with its brilliant red flowers also thrives in these cold temperatures. A wide variety of animals live in the Swiss Alps too, such as bear, chamois (which is like an antelope), ibex, and the golden eagle.

I don't know about you, but I am ready to warm up. Let's leave the Alpine **climate** and head north to Zürich, the largest city in Switzerland, located on the Central Plateau. We can get there quickly by train, once we get back down to Interlaken. The city of Zürich is unique. I think you will like it. Let's go!

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Geography:

What are the three areas of Switzerland? Name at least one fact about each area. The Alps provide more than just beauty to Switzerland; they also form a watershed. What is a watershed and why is it so important to the country? Describe the waterfalls of the Lauterbrunnen Valley.

Vocabulary:

What word is "jura" related to? I'll give you a hint: it has something to do with dinosaurs. Would you like to walk where dinosaurs have walked?

Culture:

Name two things that Geneva is famous for. Yum! Geneva is home to the International Red Cross. What does the Red Cross do?



From Big City to Back Country

As we ride to Zürich, let's learn a little bit about the history of Switzerland. Learning this region's history will help us understand some of the fascinating places that we will visit and explore.

Like many other countries in Europe, people have been living in Switzerland for thousands of years. One of the earliest tribes that lived here was called the "Helvetii" tribe. In fact, the people of Swit-

Switzerland still associate themselves very closely with the ancient Helvetii people. The abbreviation for Switzerland is CH. It stands for “Confoederatio Helvetica” which is the official name of the country we English-speakers call Switzerland.

The Helvetii tribe was attacked by the Romans and defeated 50 years before the birth of Christ. The battle occurred during the reign of Julius Caesar, and it was at that time that this region became part of the ever-expanding Roman Empire.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the land was divided between two barbarian kingdoms—the Alemanni and Burgundian Kingdoms. This period was short-lived. It wasn't much later that the more powerful Franks moved in and took control. The Franks of the Frankish Kingdom are the people group that gave one of Switzerland's neighbors her name. That's right... France!

Eventually, Switzerland became absorbed into the “Holy Roman Empire.” This extensive empire, run by a powerful pope, ruled over several lesser kingdoms and dukedoms for over a thousand years. About 700 years ago, several of these smaller communities, called **cantons**, formed an alliance. An alliance is a union, or joining together, of groups to form a larger and more powerful community. An alliance is formed for some greater purpose, usually to preserve peace and prosperity in the area.

The 26 Cantons of Switzerland



Swiss Cantons by KarZA, public domain SVG file, no license required.

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This alliance became the “Old Swiss Confederacy” and was the beginning of the modern nation of Switzerland. As more cantons joined the alliance, it became stronger, eventually winning its independence from the Holy Roman Empire. Switzerland has enjoyed its independence for hundreds of years, except for one brief period of 15 years when Napoleon claimed it for France.

While its neighbors on every side were fighting over land and religion at the beginning of the 19th century, the people of Switzerland were forming a revolutionary constitution. They decided to put their religious and political differences aside and unite themselves as a nation. Protestants, Catholics, and people of every tribe and tongue joined together to make their country stronger. The Swiss people modeled their government after the newly formed American colonies. Only instead of states, Switzerland has cantons.

A surprising fact about Switzerland is that it was not invaded during WWI or WWII. While all the other countries of Europe were fighting, Switzerland stayed neutral and remains neutral to this day.

Today, Switzerland is a modern republic with 26 cantons and is a member of the United Nations. However, Switzerland is not a member of the European Union; it trades the Swiss Franc instead of the Euro for currency—one of the only European countries to do so.

Perfect timing! We've reached the end of our history lesson just as we have arrived in Zürich. Many people assume that Zürich is the capital of Switzerland, but it is not. Bern is the country's capital city.



Zurich funicular by JuergenG, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.

There are four official languages in Switzerland. In Zürich, you will hear all four of them—German, French, Italian, and Romansch. Very few people still speak the Romansch language, which is a direct descendant of the language of ancient Rome: Latin!

There is a funicular in Zürich that will take us to the top of a hill for a sweeping view over this grand, **cosmopolitan**



Zurich cityscape by Chensiyuan, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.

city. Do you remember what a funicular is? We rode one back in Lisbon, Portugal. It is a cross between a train and a gondola. Passengers step into a car that goes up the side of the hill like a gondola, but it's on a track like a train. Up we go!

This funicular is quite old. It began operating more than a hundred years ago. It has just two cars and each car can hold fifty people. When it began hauling people up and down the side of the hill back in 1889, it was powered by water and steam. Now, it runs on electricity.

From up here, we can see that Zürich sits on the north side of a lake. In English, the name of the lake is Lake Zürich; its German name is Zürichsee. The Limmat River that flows from the lake divides the city in half. Zürich is crisscrossed by several bridges that span this river.

We can also see the great cathedral. The name of this magnificent church is Grossmünster [gross-moon-ster]. The name sounds funny to us in English, but in the German language, “gross” means “great” and “münster” means “church.” So the name translates to “great church.”

What is so “great” about this church? It is considered great because it is so old—over 900 years old—and because it is so imposing and handsome in appearance, with two majestic towers rising on either side of its massive front doors.

From the Grossmünster, it is just a four-minute walk to Zürich's Rathaus. In Germany, every town has a “rathaus,” which is the German word for town hall. It doesn't have anything to do with rats, so you don't need to worry!

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Zürich's rathaus is situated right alongside the Limmat River. In fact, it looks like it's sitting directly in the water. There are two tunnels that go under the ground floor of the rathaus and the water from the Limmat River flows through these tunnels.

Zürich is famous for many things, but as it is dinnertime, I can only think of one thing right now—food! Zürich is an international city with over 1500 restaurants, so we'll need to narrow it down. We could have Chinese food or Indian food, but how about Swiss food? What do you think of when you think of Swiss food? Fondue! Have you ever eaten fondue? There are several types of fondue, but cheese fondue is the most popular. When you order cheese fondue, they will bring you a big pot of hot melted cheese along with pieces of bread, potatoes, or vegetables to dip into it. Should we give it a try?

Here's a restaurant that serves fondue. They also have several other dishes on the menu. Let's take a look.

Many of the dishes seem to be in different languages. That's because the food of Switzerland is a combination of dishes from different parts of the country. On the menu, there are some Italian dishes from southern Switzerland; French dishes from western Switzerland; and German dishes from northern Switzerland.

What about eastern Switzerland, you ask? That area is called Graubünden [graw-boon-den], and it's the only area of Switzerland, outside of Zürich, where some people still speak the fourth national language, Romansch. Some of the dishes from that part of the country are the Chur Meat Pie, Pizokel with Cabbage, and the Bündner Nusstorte dessert.

Let's make Graubünden our final stop in Switzerland before crossing the border into Austria.



Explore Medieval Kingdoms

The train will take us to Appenzell where we can board a boat on the Rhine River that flows through Graubünden, the largest canton in Switzerland. In this easternmost region of the country, the villages cling to the sides of the mountains as though hanging on for dear life. While the population speaks mostly German, a small percentage of the people still speak the “old language” of Romansch.

This part of Switzerland is where we’ll find the most traditional Swiss culture. Today, the drovers are bringing the cows and goats home from the high pastures and there is a celebration in town as they parade their herds through the streets. Everyone is dressed in traditional costumes of black and red. Horns are blaring, bells are jangling, and people are singing as the town celebrates the simple pleasures of life.

This region is famous for one other thing. Can you name a very famous children’s book that was set in the high country of Switzerland? That’s right! *Heidi*! The story of *Heidi*, written by Johanna Spyri, takes place in the canton of Graubünden. Written over 100 years ago, *Heidi* is an endearing glimpse into Swiss culture. It is one of the best-selling books of all time. Have you read it?

Our tour of Switzerland is coming to a close. What did you like best... the Alps, the waterfalls, the glaciers? Or maybe you enjoyed the cities, the history or the food? Whatever you liked best, it’s a fact that there is much to like in Switzerland!

Tomorrow, we explore Austria, the land of music, mountains, and Mozart. But first, let us get a little shuteye in one of these quaint inns clinging to the cliff side. It’s not fancy, but it’s cozy. And there is nothing like drifting off to sleep with the faint sounds of cowbells jangling and shepherds **yodeling** off in the distance. Sleep tight!

But first, tell me what you remember about...

History:

What is the official name of the country we just learned about? Which city is the capitol of Switzerland and which four languages are spoken in the country? What currency does it use? What is a canton? Tell me about the purpose of an alliance. What was the name of Switzerland’s alliance? Did Switzerland participate in WWI or WWII?

Culture:

Describe Grossmünster, located in Zürich. What does the name mean? Have you read the book, Heidi? If you have, tell me about your favorite part. If you haven’t read it, you might want to!

(Switzerland timeline can be found on page 230.)



Map of Austria by David Liuzzo, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.



The Sound of Music

Just across the eastern border of Switzerland is the land of Austria. This country is also situated high up in the Alps. Unlike Switzerland, Austria has only one official language, but it's not Austrian. There is no such language; the people of Austria speak German. They also speak the language of music. Austria is the birthplace of some of the greatest musicians of all time and has long been considered the classical music center of the world.

Austria is located in the very center of Europe. It is south of Germany and the Czech Republic; west of Hungary and Slovakia; north of Italy and Slovenia; and east of Liechtenstein and Switzerland. How quickly can you find it on your map?

Surrounded on all sides by other countries, Austria is a **landlocked** country, which means Austria has no coastline along an ocean or a sea. But that doesn't mean that Austria has no access to water.



Just like Switzerland, Austria's glaciers and snowmelt provide plenty of water for the Austrian people. Its largest river, the Danube, provides Austria access to the Black Sea, which ultimately connects to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Danube River starts in Germany and runs through Austria

The Danube River by Sahehco, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.

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on its way to the Black Sea. Austrian composer, Johann Strauss, made this river famous with his song, *The Blue Danube*. However, it's not very blue. It looks more like a muddy green. The Danube is the only river in Europe that flows from west to east, making it the most unusual river in Europe.

In 1992, the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal was completed, joining the Danube and the Rhine Rivers. Now, it is possible for a boat to travel from the North Sea, at the northwest corner of Europe, down to the Black Sea, at the southeastern corner. That's pretty incredible!

Several other rivers are found in Northern Austria: the Inn River, the Salzach River, and the Enns River. These three rivers flow into the great Danube, which makes them **tributaries** of the Danube River.

Besides rivers, Austria is also home to some beautiful lakes, such as Lake Constance and Lake Neusiedl [noi-see-del]. But the geographic feature that stands out like the cake topper on a wedding cake is the Alps. Over three-quarters of the country is covered by majestic mountains or rolling foothills. The grandeur of these Alps is breathtaking!

They call the climate here "alpine," which is, of course, derived from the word "Alps." An "alpine" climate means that Austria is cold during the winter—extremely cold—and there can be an abundance of snow. Believe it or not, it can also get quite hot in the summer. In 2013, the temperature reached a record high of 105° F (41° C)! But today is a gorgeous day in Austria, with a cloudless sky overhead and no snow or rain in the forecast. A perfect day to explore all that Austria has in store for us.



Franz Klammer, Innsbruck, 1976, by Fischersports CC BY-SA 3.0.

After a few hours on the train, we arrive in the city of Innsbruck in western Austria. The fifth largest city in the country, it is a popular destination for winter athletes. Innsbruck celebrates winter sports so much that it has hosted the Winter Olympics not once, but twice! People call it "the largest ski resort in the Alps." Innsbruck was instrumental in making snowboarding an accessible and popular sport in the 1990's and beyond.

Innsbruck is located on the Inn River and sits at the bottom of the Inn Valley between two high mountain peaks. It's an old city, founded in 1429. It is

Explore Medieval Kingdoms

pleasant to walk through the streets and admire the original Town Tower built during the 15th century, the Imperial Palace built in 1460, and the Gothic Hofkirche [hof-ker-ka] (court church) built in 1553, but that's not why we're here. Everyone comes to Innsbruck for the sports.



Innsbruck by Flik, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0. (Don't be alarmed! The ground is just below the edge of the photo.)

Let's hop on the aerial tram that will take us up the side of the mountain to the nearby village of Igls. The Patscherkofel [pat-sheer-kof-el] Ropeway will transport us to the top of the mountain. Even on a sunny summer afternoon, there is still snow up there.

The winter sports people play here and in the surrounding countryside include alpine skiing, bobsledding, luge, ski jumping, snowboarding, and ice hockey. The athletes of Austria have won many gold medals for their country during the Olympics, mainly in downhill skiing and ski jumping.

Let's head back down the mountain and travel to Salzburg. Only a couple hours by train, we'll be there before you know it. On our way, we can learn about the customs and traditions of the Austrian people.

The family is the foundation of Austrian society. Families are generally small and close knit. Many people live their whole lives in the same town or village where they were born. Families eat meals



Salzburg by Joergsam, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.

together and visit grandparents on Sunday afternoons. They also enjoy outdoor sports and activities together on the weekends. Austrian families love to participate in local festivals and celebrations.

Typically, Austrians are neat and tidy people. They keep the insides of their homes clean, as well as the steps and sidewalks outside. Austrians usually only invite family and close friends into their homes, so they can relax and talk freely. Austrians always bring gifts, often handsomely wrapped boxes of chocolates, when invited to dinner at another family's house.

We have arrived in Salzburg! Steeped in history and music, Salzburg is the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, perhaps the most famous composer of all time. On another musical note, Salzburg was the location and set for a very famous movie, *The Sound of Music*. The musical tells the true story of the von Trapp family who lived here and fled over the Alps to Switzerland to escape from the Germans during World War II.

Speaking of World War II, Salzburg had remained an independent state for over a thousand years, until the time of Napoleon. The city was always able to escape the ravages of war until World War II. During that war, bombs destroyed much of the town, but the historic old center along the bank of the Salzach River survived.

Salzburg, with its quaint cobbled lanes, can become jam-packed with tourists during the summer months. Most of them are here because of one man—Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Mozart was born

in Salzburg and spent most of his first 25 years in this city. He was the organist in the great Salzburg Cathedral and it was here that he composed most of his boy-genius masterpieces. For Mozart fans, visiting Salzburg is a **pilgrimage**.

Many people adore the music of Mozart. He was an incredibly talented child. He began writing music when he was only four years old! Mozart's father and sister were also musicians and they toured together through Europe, entertaining both commoners and kings. Mozart wrote his first **symphony** when he was eight years old. He went on to compose many great pieces of music, some in Salzburg and others later in Vienna.

Dominating the skyline of Salzburg is the Hohensalzburg Fortress towering 400 feet (122 meters) above the Salzach River. It is one of the largest medieval castles in Europe. We can walk up, if we want, or we can ride the funicular. Let's ride the funicular! The cannons are impressive and the castle square is enormous. During the Middle Ages, this fortress could be a self-sufficient refuge for a community of a thousand people. The shops of merchants, such as blacksmiths, bakers, and tailors, surrounded the square, and the well located in the center provided abundant water for them all.

Jump onto the wide ramparts that surround the castle. Wow, what a view of the town and the mountains! Don't forget to snap a few photos to send home before you hop back down.

Throughout the ages, Salzburg has been a wealthy town. Its wealth came primarily from salt. In fact, Salzburg means "salt fortress." The river is named "Salzach," not because it is salty, but because of the precious cargo it carried on boats and barges. Local salt mines shipped salt down smaller tributaries to the mighty Danube and to the world beyond. Cargo boats would float the salt downstream, and then a team of horses on the riverbank would drag the boats back upstream. Today, these old towpaths worn deep into the earth are used by bikers and picnickers to enjoy the surrounding countryside.

Salt mines are still in operation around Salzburg. To visit one, we need to go underground, deep underground. Once there, we can appreciate salt and discover why it was called "white gold."



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, painted by Barbara Krafft 1819

A Child's Geography

To get there, we'll travel through Austria's Salzkammergut [salts-kammer-goot] Lake District, where "the hills are alive." This *Sound of Music* country, which caused Maria to burst into song, is both idyllic and majestic—a land of gently rolling hills, serene lakes, and storybook villages. In less than two hours, we'll arrive at Lake Hallstatt, take a boat to a town of the same name, and then head deep under the ground for a glimpse into an operating salt mine. First, let's see what you remember so far about Austria.

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Geography/Climate:

What does it mean to be landlocked? Why makes the Danube River so unique? Have you ever heard the song, "The Blue Danube," by Johann Strauss? If not, now might be a good time to listen to it! Describe what is meant by an "alpine" climate?

Culture:

What is the official language of Austria? What makes Innsbruck so popular? Have you ever tried one of the winter sports that is popular in the Alps? Austria has a history rich in music! Which famous composer is from Salzburg? Have you listened to his music? Describe some of the customs and traditions of Austria. How are they similar to traditions in your family?

Economy:

Do you remember what product helped to make Salzburg wealthy? How did the cargo boats that carried this precious cargo travel back up the river before engines?



The Powerful Habsburgs

After traveling for two hours southeast of Salzburg by train, we reach the sparkling Lake Hallstatt. We need to cross the lake to get to our destination; no one gets to Hallstatt, except by boat. There are no train tracks or roads in or out of the postcard-perfect town.

Tiny Hallstatt rests on a small ledge that is cradled between a mountain and a swan-studded lake. A local boat service meets each arriving train and ferries passengers across the pristine water. With its cascading waterfall that divides the town in two, Hallstatt is a scenic and peaceful oasis away from the busy modern world. While there are many other salt mines we can tour in this region of Austria, none is more idyllic or located so far off the beaten path.



Photo of Hallstatt, Austria from Adobe Stock Photos, licensed for publication.

The town of Hallstatt is one of Europe's oldest civilizations, dating back centuries before the time of Christ. Before there was a Rome in Italy, there was a Hallstatt right here in Austria. In fact, an entire era—the Hallstatt Era, from 800-400BC—was named for this once prominent spot and its vital natural resource. If you were to dig under these existing buildings that cling to the rocky ledge, you would find pavement dating back to pre-Roman and Roman times.

The history of salt goes back thousands of years. Salt from this ancient salt depot and others gave the era its name. Because it could preserve meat before the advent of refrigeration, salt changed the culture spreading from France's Atlantic coast to the Black Sea. Salt was nicknamed "white gold" and was often traded as currency. And if a person was worth his "salt," well then, he was worth quite a lot!

A funicular takes us up the steep mountain to the Hallstatt Salt Mine, which claims to be the oldest mine in the world. At the top, we need to don white coveralls, which will protect our clothes while we are inside the tunnel. Then, we journey back down, but this time, we're going deep into the earth. A train will carry us 1,300 feet (396 meters) down into the belly of the mountain. Our tour guide, Franz, greets us as we disembark.

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“Welcome to the Hallstatt Salt Mine! Today, I will be telling you a very old story—a story about an ancient people and the mineral that they were willing to dig for as though it were gold or diamonds. Archaeologists, who study human history by excavating the earth and analyzing the **artifacts** they find, claim that people have been coming here for salt since 7000 BC. Others would say people have been coming here since the beginning of time.” Franz winks.

“It all started when someone stumbled upon a **briny** spring that pushed salt water up from the earth. Salt has always been, and always will be, a necessity of life. You don’t realize how much you like it until you don’t have it. Salt can be used to preserve meat, season bland food, disinfect, whiten, and clean almost anything, including teeth. There are over 14,000 documented uses for salt. In fact, salt was once measured out and traded as currency. And so eventually, because of its remarkable contributions to the quality of life, miners began to dig tunnels into this mountain to extract the salt in rock form.

“To transport the salt more efficiently than hoisting the heavy rock up and out of the mountain tunnels, miners dissolved it into a brine and sent it splashing down through miles of pipes to the town below. Once extracted from the mountain, the salty brine was boiled until only the salt remained. Then cargo boats would ship it to neighboring towns, kingdoms, and even distant countries around the globe.

“The townsfolk of Hallstatt and other neighboring mining towns, such as Hallein, still boil down the salty brine into some of the world’s best salt.”



Brudly filmed his descent down the slide here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfYFIQGxHSo>

Franz shows us how the salt is mined and transported, and then he demonstrates how the miners would quickly descend from one floor to the next—by slide! We get to ride down the wooden slide too. Wow, who knew that mining could be this much fun!

We must be on our way to Vienna! Vienna is the capital and largest city of Austria. Once the great capital of the mighty Habsburg Empire for more than 600 years, the city was given the nickname “a head without a body.” Vienna lost its empire when it lost World War I: the war it started, ironically, following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie.

While the city is no longer a political powerhouse, it’s still regal and elegant. Historically and culturally, Vienna is still a grand capital city.

On the way, take a peek out your train window. Since most of Austria is mountainous, the farmland is sparse. But Austrians make good use of the flat fields they do have. Some of the crops farmers grow in Austria are cereal grains such as oats, barley, rye, and wheat. They also grow fruits and vegetables such as apples, grapes, potatoes, and sugar beets.

The flat and rolling fields are also home to ranchers and their herds. Animals that are raised in Austria include goats, sheep, horses, pigs, and cows. Austria is known for its superior dairy products such as milk, cheese, and yogurt, thanks to these happily grazing, grass-munching cows.

Not all of Austria is tame. In fact, Austria is one of the most heavily forested countries in Europe and there are many wild animals in these woods, including deer, badger, fox, marten, rabbit, and stag. Keep a sharp eye out the window and maybe you’ll spot one. The Austrian forests are unique to the area and unlike forests you may be used to visiting. While there are some evergreen pine and fir forests in Austria, we will see beech, larch, and oak forests outside our train windows. The forests are home to an array of delicate wildflowers, such as the carnation, Alpine rose, heather, and of course, edelweiss, the national flower of Austria and the flower that Captain von Trapp sang about in *The Sound of Music*. The Edelweiss melody is one of my favorite bedtime songs.

The forest is thinning out and I see buildings on the horizon. We must be getting close to Vienna. Vienna straddles the banks of the Danube River and is home to nearly two million people. It began



Archduke Franz Ferdinand with his family in 1910.

A Child's Geography

as a Roman outpost back in the first century AD to protect the empire from attacks by local barbarian tribes. The Romans called this place “Vindobona.” You can still see the remains of the Roman fort today; it is located in an area of Vienna called Hoher Markt, which means “High Market.”

After the Romans, several generations of kings rose to power and ruled over Vienna. The power and extent of their kingdoms grew with each succeeding king until a **dynasty** bloomed here called the Habsburg Empire, a vast empire that controlled all of Austria, neighboring Hungary and several other surrounding countries.

The downtown center of the city is so rich in history and cultural heritage that the whole city center is being preserved as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. The Habsburg Dynasty ushered in an appreciation for the finer things in life—art, food, and music—as well as a dedication to science and the discovery of greater knowledge.

For this reason, Vienna became a greenhouse for musicians, such as Mozart and Beethoven, to stretch and grow their musical talents. Both of these famous musicians began their careers here, composing and playing the music they loved.



St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, taken by Debarshi Ray, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.

Not far from the train station is the Ringstrasse, a road that corrals the historical center of Vienna, with its tram that can transport you to anywhere you want to go within a 3-mile radius. Let's hop off at St. Stephens Cathedral. This **Gothic** cathedral is large and ornate. Much of this church was destroyed during World War II, but the community rallied with a generous gift that made the rebuilding of the church in its original, colorful splendor a reality. See those colorful tiles on the rooftop? Those are replicas created exactly like the originals.

Inside the cathedral are several side chapels and 18 altars. And there's the organ! This is where Mozart composed many of the musical pieces for the services here.

Not far from St. Stephens is the Hofburg Palace, the main residence of the Habsburg family. Generations of powerful Habsburgs lived here until 1918, when the end of World War I meant the end of the Habsburg dynasty. It began as a castle, but there have been many additions to it over the years, such as a grand library and stables for their collection of horses. Now, this palace is the home of the famous Spanish Riding School. The horses that are bred and trained here are called Lipizzaner stallions. Let's peek in at a rehearsal going on now:

<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/media-files-acg4-ch10-austria/>

Did you know that the white Lipizzaner horse is born dark brown? That means when you see one of these magnificent horses, but they have grey or brown coloring in their coats, they are still young.

The Habsburg family also had a summer residence, the Schönbrunn Palace, which was their second home located just outside of town. It is well worth taking a ride out there to see it. It is a sprawling palace of pale yellow, surrounded by serene and lovely gardens that the public can now enjoy. And did I mention that it is huge? The Schönbrunn Palace has 1,441 rooms! Don't worry; we won't be walking through them all.

This palace was given as a wedding present for one of the Habsburgs. Empress Maria Theresa was the only woman to rule the Habsburg Empire. She inherited the throne when her father, Emperor Charles VI, died. She was the people's queen, beloved by her subjects during her 40-year-long reign.



Lipizzaner by Machoxx, license CC BY-SA 3.0



Empress Maria Theresa married Francis I and together they had 16 children. You might think that is quite a lot of children, but then again, they did have 1,441 rooms to play in! Clever as she was, she never declared war to expand her empire; instead, she married her children into Europe's finest royal families and expanded her territory peacefully. I'm sure you remember the story of Marie Antoinette, the young Queen of France whose life and reign came to an abrupt end during the French Revolution. Marie Antoinette was the youngest daughter of Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa and Francis I who secured the most powerful alliance of all by marrying into France's royal family when she married Louis XVI, the Dauphin of France.

All this talk of children and playing has made me hungry. How about you? Vienna is known for its food almost as much as its music, so let's find a restaurant that we can duck into.

Here's one, but the menu looks very strange. Would you like to try any of these dishes?

Our tour of Austria has come to an end, but not our tour of Europe's medieval kingdoms. There are still many places to see and explore. Here in Austria, we have learned quite a bit of history, including the histories of salt, *The Sound of Music*, the Habsburg family, and more. We've seen cities, countryside, and large amounts of snow. We won't forget the snow!





Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna, taken by Simon Matzinger, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Hallstatt:

How can you travel to Hallstatt? Describe the town of Hallstatt. How old is it? What is “white gold”? What do you remember about the history of salt? How was it transported out of the mines? Why was it so vital to the culture? What were some of its uses?

Agriculture/landscape:

What are some of the crops that are grown by farmers in Austria? Which are your favorites to have on your table? Describe the forests in Austria. What kind of trees and flowers are found there? Do you remember the animals that live in Austria’s forests?

Habsburg Dynasty:

Tell me about the Habsburg Dynasty. What ideals became important to the culture while this dynasty was in power? How did Empress Maria Theresa expand her empire?

(Austria timeline can be found on the page 230.)





Map of Germany by Kelisi, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.



Germany, Part I

Trotting Through Bavaria

Today, we are trotting over the border from Austria into Germany on the backs of Bavarian Warmbloods, horses that have been bred for centuries in the southern region of Germany, known as Bavaria. We are still in the mountains, the Northern Limestone Alps to be exact, and we are about to pass under the shadow of the Zugspitze [tsoog-shpit-zuh], Germany's tallest mountain at 9,718 feet (2,962 meters). The region we are traveling through is the Zugspitzplatt [tsoog-shpit-plaht], a high **karst** plateau with many caves.



Map of Bavaria by TUBS, license CC BY-SA 3.0

In the third volume of *A Child's Geography*, we learned about a limestone mountain range that runs through Croatia and Slovenia on the Balkan Peninsula. Perhaps you remember the abundance of caverns we found in the smooth stone landscape known as karst. "Karst" means that the rock, comprised mostly of limestone and dolomite, is soluble. It washes away with rushing water, creating sinkholes and caves.

Zip up your jackets, as the **westerly** winds are fierce here in southern Germany. This wind will blow your hat off, so tuck it in your backpack and pull your collar up tight around your neck. Come, let's explore this cave. We'll leave the horses outside, as the dark cavities and shadows tend to spook them. Duck out of this wind for a moment and let us see what's inside.



“Cave bacon” taken by DanielCD, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.

Most of this area was blanketed by a glacier until about 100 years ago. The stone around the cave opening is smooth, having been polished by the mass of moving ice. The caves in this area are well preserved with numerous **stalactite** and **stalagmite** formations. Stalactites are the pointed pendants that hang “tight” from the ceiling and the stalagmites are the other ones that push up from the ground with all their “might.” This word picture will help you remember how to identify them.

The formations that hang from the ceiling in thin, wavy sheets are called “curtains,” unless different colored bands run through the drapery. Then they are called “cave bacon.”

We had better be on our way as we need to make it to Grainau before it gets too late and the weather turns even colder. Grainau is a charming town, unspoiled by time, situated on a sparkling green glacial lake. Once there, we’ll board a train to Munich, the third largest city in Germany and the capital city of Bavaria. Bavaria is the largest state in Germany, making up one fifth of the entire country, and it has a long history.

Bavaria was inhabited by Celtic tribes before the Romans showed up around the time of Christ. Later, in the year AD 555, the Duchy of Bavaria was formed. A **duchy** is a land area that is ruled by a duke. The duchy had lasted over one thousand years before it became part of the Holy Roman Empire, which ruled most of central Europe until 1806.

Once the Holy Roman Empire ended, Bavaria became the Kingdom of Bavaria until the year 1918, when it became a republic and was incorporated as a state of Germany.

Munich lies at the feet of the Bavarian Alps and sits along the banks of the Isar River. The name of the city—Munich—comes from an old German word that means “by the monks.” At one time, monks ran a monastery in the heart of this old city.

Here, in the old town at the Marienplatz (Mary’s Place, or Mary’s Square), is the Rathaus-Glockenspiel. As you may remember from Austria, *rathaus* means “town hall” (not house of rats!). And *glockenspiel* means “chimes” or “bells.” We are here at the perfect time, because every day at eleven o’clock in the morning, the bells chime and 32 life-sized figures move around to tell two well-known tales from old German folklore.

Very close to Marienplatz is Peterskirche [pay-tairs-keer-shuh]. *Kirche* means church, so this is St. Peter’s Church, the oldest Catholic cathedral in Munich. While most of Germany became Protestant after the Protestant Reformation, this corner of the country is still well-rooted in Catholicism.



Rathaus-Glockenspiel by HighContrast, license CC BY-SA 3.0

While there is much to see and do in Munich, the city is most famous for its annual festival—Oktoberfest—that is held every year during the month of September. What? Then why, you ask, isn’t it called Septemberfest? The festival celebrates the changing seasons as well as the local beer and cuisine of Bavaria. The celebration begins in September and continues for sixteen days leading up to the first Sunday in October.

Giant tents are set up to serve food and beverages for the nearly seven million people that come to Oktoberfest. We can step into this *biertgarten* (beer garden) and taste some of the typical German fare that is served during the festival and in Munich all year around. We’ll pass on the beer, but you might want to try another German specialty drink—*schorle* [shore-luh]. It is a refreshing mixture of fruit juice and mineral water. What would you like to eat? Take a look at the menu (next page):

Our next destination is a sight to behold. Southwest of Munich is a place that might seem familiar to you even if you have never been to this part of the world before. Back in the mountains, we ascend over the crest of a hill. You might experience *déjà vu*—that feeling of being somewhere before—be-



cause rising up before us is the castle that inspired Walt Disney's imagination when he decided to build the famous Sleeping Beauty Castle in Disneyland. This is the castle that has been replicated in two of his theme parks. (As you probably recall, the Segovia Castle in Spain was the inspiration for Cinderella's Castle in Disney World.) Neuschwanstein [noy-shvawn-shtine] Castle, built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria, sits like a crown atop a steep hill. It's a hike to get there, but worth it, so let's go.

The castle was built between the years 1869 and 1892, but was never completed. When the king died, construction stopped, so only 15 of the 200 rooms were finished. But we can look around the throne room, the ballroom, the dining room, theater, study, and King Ludwig's personal apartments.

The outside of the castle is more spectacular than the inside. The building stretches across the top of a ridge along the edge of a cliff. There are multiple balconies, towers, and spires jutting up and out from the fantasy castle. Ludwig built Neuschwanstein well after the Middle Ages were over, but it was designed to look like medieval knights and ladies lived here.

While this castle may look like a fairy tale, it is certainly not the only castle in Germany. In fact, the rivers, hilltops, and lakeshores are speckled with medieval and romantic castles from ages past. We'll see an abundance of them later during our trek through this old country.

Not far from the castle, to the west, is a crystal blue lake. It will take less than an hour to drive from here to Lake Constance, the largest lake in Germany and the third largest lake in Europe. It sits on the borders of Switzerland, Austria, and Germany.

Lake Constance is part of the Rhine River system, which is the second largest waterway in Europe after the Danube. The Alpine Rhine, which forms high up in the Alps along the border of Switzerland and Liechtenstein empties into Lake Constance. The water then flows from the Obersee, which is the



Origin unknown, color photo lithograph of Neuschwanstein from approximately 1890-1905, public domain image.

upper lake, to the Untersee, which is the lower lake, and then empties into the mighty Rhine that flows along the western boundary of Germany, through the Netherlands, and finally out to the Atlantic Ocean.

Lake Constance is an important source of drinking water for the people that live in southern Germany. A desirable place to live, its shores and 13 islands are dotted with spectacular homes that enjoy this lovely view. Let's eat our snack in that park on the shore of Lindau Island. We just have to cross a short bridge to get there. We can feed our bread crusts to the ducks.

While we must leave Lake Constance behind, this is not the last we will see of the Rhine River. As we crisscross back and forth across the large country of Germany, we'll find our way back later to the Rhine River Valley, which is further north. I cannot wait to show you the treasures that await us there.

Until then, we are heading into the interior of the fabled Black Forest. While the forest is not exactly black, it is very dark. The canopy of densely packed evergreen trees blocks out most of the sun's rays overhead, making the forest very dark even during the daytime.



Photo of the Black Forest in Germany, licensed through Adobe Stock Photos.

The Black Forest is not in the state of Bavaria. It is located in the southwestern corner of Germany very close to the French border. You have learned that Germany borders Austria, Switzerland, and France, but did you know that she has nine neighbors altogether? The other countries bordering Germany are Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, and the Czech Republic. That's a lot of neighbors and sometimes numerous neighbors means trouble. Germany has not always managed to get along well with her neighboring countries, but she does now and that's what matters.

It will take nearly 90 minutes by train to arrive at our destination, which is plenty of time to sit back and learn a little more about the history of Germany. One of the earliest recorded events in the German history books is the Germanic Wars. This was a series of wars between the barbarian tribes that lived in Germany and the Roman Empire that was trying to creep into their territory. The fighting started in 113 BC and did not end until AD 596. That's over 700 years of fighting!

These tribes had come down from Scandinavia in the north and were descending into southern Germany just as the Romans were moving up to expand their empire. Each side wanted to claim the land for their own. War erupted. At first, the Romans were winning, then the tide turned when the barbarian tribes won a major victory in AD 9. The barbarians continued to press into the regions once occupied by the Roman Empire, including Bavaria, until the Romans were driven out completely.

Later, the Franks from the west moved in, conquered the Scandinavian tribes, and expanded their empire into what is now Germany. Some famous Frankish rulers were Clovis I, Charles Martel, and the most famous of them all, Charlemagne, also known as Charles the Great.

Charlemagne expanded the Frankish Empire down into Italy and was crowned by the Pope as the first Holy Roman Emperor in the year 800. After his death, the Frankish Kingdom became divided into several parts and one of these parts eventually became Germany. Henry the Fowler assumed the title of king and ruled the Germanic people, which marked the advent of the Kingdom of the Germans.

We have more history to learn, but we have arrived at the spooky Black Forest. The Black Forest is thick with legends and intrigue. The thickly forested mountain region is home to tales and legends of all kinds, from the fanciful to the frightful. The Brothers Grimm wrote many fairytales that were set in this dense forest, including Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, Rumpelstiltskin, Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, and Rapunzel. When you walk through these dark and damp woods, you can imagine the scurrying of little dwarves just out of sight or a fanciful cabin on the path ahead made out of intricately designed gingerbread.

Other storytellers have imagined darker and scarier things in and amongst the trees, such as werewolves, sorcerers, and **sirens**. They have told tales of water **nymphs** swimming beneath the surface of the deep blue lakes.

Now the lakes are brimming with water-skiers and the woods crawling with hikers. The Black Forest is a popular summer destination for outdoorsmen and sports enthusiasts. Baden-Baden is a trendy resort town in the Black Forest for spa seekers, golfers, and snow skiers. *Baden* means “bath” in German and this town is world famous for its natural **hot springs** and world-class spas.



Charlemagne woodcut by Albrecht Dürer, 1512

A Child's Geography

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Geography:

While traveling through the Northern Limestone Alps, we passed under Germany's tallest Mountain. What is it named? What does karst mean? If the region of Zugspritzplatt is a high karst plateau, what geographical features can you expect to find there? Describe the difference between stalactites and stalagmites. What is "cave bacon?"

How many neighbors does Germany have? Name the countries that border Germany. What do you remember about the Black Forest? Have you read any fairy tales set in this forest? If so, which one is your favorite and why?

Culture:

What is a Bavarian Warmblood? How would you feel about riding one?

Would you like to visit Oktoberfest? What sights, smells and sounds do you think you would experience there? Which Bavarian castle was the Sleeping Beauty Castle in Disneyland modeled after? Tell me about it!

Fairytale River Cruise

As you may have already guessed, Germany is a big country. It's about the size of Montana, but with twice the population of California. The Federal Republic of Germany (its official name) is the seventh largest country in Europe. Home to 81 million people, Germany is the most populated country on the continent. After the United States, it is the second most popular migration destination in the world. People from around the globe are moving to Germany, setting down roots, and calling it home.



Courtyard of the Imperial Castle in Nuremberg's Old Center by Altervista, public domain license CC BY-SA 3.0.

Today, we are heading north into central Germany. Our first stop is Nuremberg. Nuremberg is in Bavaria and is the state's second largest city. During medieval times, it was situated on a major trade route, which caused it to grow quickly in size. The emperor of the Holy Roman Empire lived in Nuremberg from time to time. Its culture grew with the city, becoming a major hub for the arts, such as literature, theater, and music.

The old city center is quaint with its medieval half-timbered buildings that extend out over the street. There is a castle on the hill overlooking the town. If we climb the castle's tower, we will be at the highest point in the city. What a great view!

Nuremberg has certainly experienced its share of ups and downs during the last several hundred years. Located at a crossroads, it found itself caught in the middle of scuffles over religion, politics, and trade. It also survived no less than eight bouts with the plague, known as the **Black Death**.

The Black Death was one of the most devastating **epidemics** in human history, reducing the population in Europe by more than 30%. That means that one out of every three people who lived in Europe died from the terrible disease. It is believed that the bacteria originated in Central Asia, where it traveled along the Silk Road (a major trade route) to the Crimea on the Black Sea during the year 1343. From there, it was most likely carried to distant parts of Europe and the Mediterranean by fleas living on the backs of black rats, who were regular passengers on merchant ships.

Nuremberg, like the surrounding cities, rebounded somehow from this horrible ordeal. It moved through seasons of splendor with wealth flooding in because of the exceptional craftsmanship and trade of its people, followed by seasons of struggle and hardship when calamity would strike.

Nuremberg reached one of its lowest points in the last century. Between 1945 and 1946, the notorious Nuremberg Trials were held here. Nazi German officers, who were involved in war crimes against their fellow human beings during World War II, were tried in Nuremberg. It was a dark time in the city's history. Nuremberg was chosen for the location of the trials because of its entanglement in Nazi affairs, such as political rallies. Its Palace of Justice was selected for its spacious and largely undamaged hall (one of the few that survived the Allied bombing of Germany).



Black Death, interactive map by TimeMaps, www.knowledgequestmaps.com

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But Nuremberg survives as a beautiful city with beautiful people who wish to erase the wrongs of the past by showing great hospitality and friendship to all who come to visit.

While there is plenty more to see and do in Nuremberg, there is another town, not too far from here, that you are sure to enjoy—the ultimate walled city. It may be the most visited place in all of Germany by world-traveling tourists because it has preserved the heart and soul of an era long since faded into the past. At Rothenburg ob der Tauber, you will step back in time to the Middle Ages.

First, you may be wondering what the name means. *Rot* means red and *burg* means city or fortress. The Tauber is the name of the river that flows beside it. Therefore, the name means “red fortress above the Tauber River.” Most likely, the *rot* in Rothenburg refers to the numerous red roofs in the town.



Photo of the Rothenburg ob der Tauber, licensed through Adobe Stock Photos.

Rothenburg was founded in 1170. The city prospered and grew quickly. During its heyday—between 1200 and 1400—Rothenburg was one of the largest cities in Germany. It was located at the intersection of two main trading routes: from Prague to Paris and Hamburg to Venice. Many homes were built inside the city wall to share in its success and its protection. However, the wall could not protect the citizens from the Black Death that struck here as it did throughout the rest of Europe. With few peo-

ple left to carry on business, the once flourishing city stagnated.

Rothenburg experienced its worst setback during the Thirty Years' War, when it was attacked and raided multiple times. Even after peace was restored, Rothenburg was never quite the same. The town went into hibernation for a few hundred years until medieval enthusiasts discovered it and brought it back to life to serve as a living museum of an era long past.



Christmas Market by Charlie1965, license CC BY-SA 3.0

Today, time stands still in the city of Rothenburg. The entire walled town is like a museum displaying life as it was during the Middle Ages. The *Herrengasse*—the street named for the *herren*, or wealthy townspeople—is a showcase of the finest houses in town. The commoners built their homes closer to the mile-long enclosed wall. Like in many other towns with walls that prevented expansion, these homes are practically built right on top of each other, often sharing outside walls to save space and building materials.

All along the streets hang original shop signs advertising what was once for sale inside the thick wooden doors—armor, knives, meat, bread. We can visit the **blacksmith**, the **apothecary**, the **armory**, and even the **millinery** (the hat maker's shop).

We can also duck into the year-round Christmas Village where German Christmas traditions are celebrated. Germany was the first country to use decorated trees as part of their Christmas celebration. Originally, the evergreen trees were ornamented with cookies, apples, nuts, and sugar sticks. Later, candles were strapped to the tree limbs to provide light for families gathering around to exchange gifts. Eventually, tinsel and glass bulbs joined the party, followed shortly by ornaments of every kind. As we wander through the electrical light display of today's Christmas traditions of Germany, we can hear the soft musical notes of *O Tannenbaum* playing gently in the background. O Christmas Tree. How fitting!

Before we leave Rothenburg, we must visit the Criminal Museum. The museum demonstrates how criminals were punished in the town square during the Middle Ages. A thief received the death penalty; a murderer received the death penalty as well, only slower. Bad social behavior was penalized

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through public embarrassment: gluttons had to wear pig masks; gossips were locked into a contraption with a constantly clanging bell; bickering people would be locked into a double-necked **yoke** until they worked out their problems.

Three hours west of Rothenburg ob der Tauber is the most picturesque valley in all of Germany. While much of this country is modern and industrial, the Rhine River Valley looks like it was pulled from the pages of a storybook. One of the best ways to see this area is by boat. It might take a little longer than traveling by train or car, but the sights along the river are worth it.



Stocks for public humiliation was a common medieval punishment, photo: Terri Johnson

The Rhine is over 800 miles (1,287 km) long from its source in the Alps to its destination of the Atlantic Ocean, but the 36-mile (58 km) stretch from Mainz to Koblenz is the highlight of this waterway. Since ancient times, the Rhine has been one of the world's busiest rivers and main trading routes. Even today, a steady flow of barges moves up and down the river, each loaded with cartons of merchandise to be bought and sold.

Our tour of the Rhine River Valley begins in Mainz. While we wait for our boat, I'll share a story with you about this town. Mainz was the childhood home of a man who designed one of the greatest inventions since the creation of the wheel. It wasn't the invention of gunpowder, automobiles, or the Internet. Johannes Gutenberg changed the world when he invented the printing press.

Gutenberg, the son of a **coin minter**, grew up in Mainz during a time of religious and political upheaval in Germany, right before the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. In fact, Gutenberg's invention of the movable type printing press sparked the Reformation of the next century, when people wanted to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. This wasn't even a possibility before Gutenberg produced the first printed Bible in 1453.

Johannes Gutenberg was born into a world where books had to be painstakingly copied by hand. Usually performed by monks in monasteries who checked and re-checked the copied books for accuracy, the task of copying a single book by hand could take years to complete.

Even as a boy, Johannes began to dream of making books faster and cheaper. He conceived the idea of making letters, called type, which could be arranged and rearranged to make words. The words could be placed side by side to form lines of type. Line by line, entire pages of type were assembled, then stamped, or printed, onto paper or **vellum**. These pages could be printed multiple times to produce many copies of a page that were exactly alike.

Gutenberg and his partners encountered many difficulties and disasters during the development of his invention, from failed contracts to deadly plagues. However, he pressed on tirelessly and his perseverance eventually paid off. Gutenberg had invented the printing press with movable type, a system that would print and replicate billions of books over the next 500 years.

Oh, our boat has pulled up to the docks. It is time to board! Do you have your ticket ready? The top deck is open and affords the best view of the river and the passing countryside.

The hilltops and riverbanks are dotted with once-mighty medieval castles and towers, many of which were occupied by **robber-barons** who collected taxes and fees from ships cruising the river. In fact, the Pfalz Castle was built mid-stream and closed off river-traffic with thick, heavy chains stretched across the water. After merchants paid their taxes at the castle, the chains were lowered and their boats could pass.

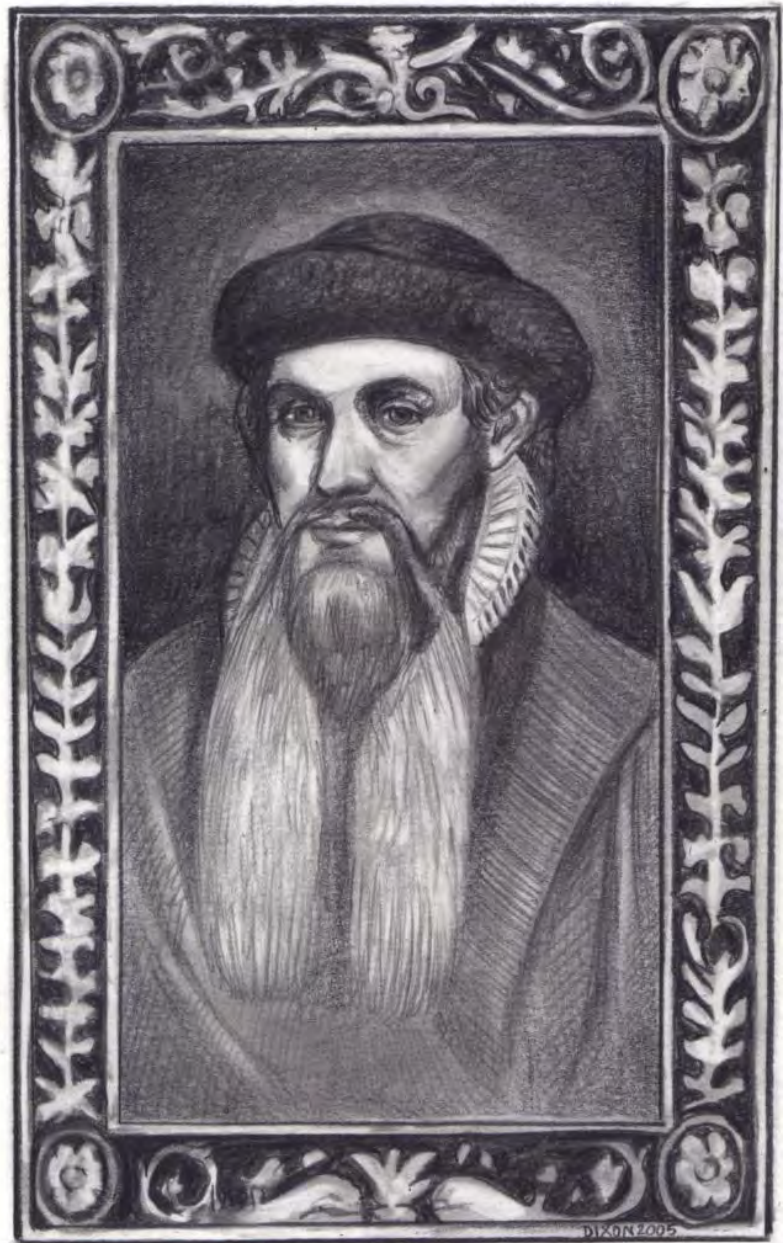


Illustration of Johannes Gutenberg by Darla Dixon, 2005, *What Really Happened During the Middle Ages*, all rights reserved.

A Child's Geography

Along this stretch of river, there were customs stops like this one about every six miles. No wonder merchants banded together in **guilds** to fight for better laws and fairer trade practices.

Most of these castles were built in the 11th century, but were later destroyed by the French in their pursuit to claim this valley as their own. Since then, many of them have been restored and are now enjoyed as restaurants, hotels, **hostels**, and museums.

Typically, ships pass on the right, like cars on a highway, but there is a dangerous bend in the river up ahead. There is a rocky **bluff** called the Loreley where ships have to maneuver around the tight corner, making sure not to plow into an oncoming boat or run aground on the shallows on the other side. Many ships never made it safely past the Loreley, so sailors blamed their misfortunes on a legendary siren with long blonde hair who sang and distracted the crews from the cliff. Modern shipmates salute the flag on the bluff and say a prayer of thanks as they pass by the treacherous Loreley multiple times per week.

We pass by the prestigious winemaking towns of Bacharach and St. Goar [sang-gore]. Upstream, the mighty Rhine is joined by the gentle Mosel River at the town of Koblenz. While the Mosel has fewer castles along its banks, it has plenty of dreamy little villages with charming houses, restaurants, and bed and breakfasts.



The original post office (literally “post house”) in Bacharach, photo by Brady Johnson, all rights reserved.

Explore Medieval Kingdoms

We are alighting from the riverboat at the Cochem dock and embarking on a 5k hike (just over 3 miles) through the secluded woods to Burg Eltz. Do you remember that *burg* means fortress? Well, Eltz is the owner's last name. Since the year 1200, this castle has been owned by the Eltz family. That's eight centuries and 33 generations that the Eltz family has lived here!

Burg Eltz is still furnished as it was 500 years ago, with the same beds, chairs, and tables, and even the same paintings on the wall. Beds were raised several steps off the floor on platforms, because the air was warmer higher up. Heavy curtains encased the raised beds to trap the heat in and keep the bugs out. Today, the family allows tourists to stroll through these old rooms in one half of the castle. They furnish the other private half with all the trappings of a modern home—comfy couches, big screen TV, and lightning-fast internet connection.

We have reached the end of our tour of southern Germany, but we have only seen one half of this great country. Stick around and we'll head up north to learn about the modern and urban half of Germany in Part II.

We had such an adventure in southern Germany—we rode on horseback through the high karst plateau, sampled sauerkraut and bratwurst in Munich, climbed up to Neuschwanstein (a.k.a. Sleeping



Burg Eltz by Francisco Conde Sanchez, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

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Beauty's) Castle, toured around Lake Constance, hiked through the Black Forest, and cruised down the Rhine River. How can it get any better than that?

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Cities:

What do you remember about Nuremberg? Describe the Black Death and how it impacted the city. What were the Nuremberg Trials?

How did the city of Rothenburg most likely get its name? Tell me what you remember about the Rothenburg during the Middle Ages. What were the punishments for bickering and gossiping?

Innovation:

Which invention from Germany is considered one of the greatest inventions since the creation of the wheel? Who invented it and how did it change society?

Why was the Rhine River so dangerous for ships?



The Rhine River at St. Goar, photo by Brady Johnson, all rights reserved.



Germany, Part II

Firestorm in Germany

It's time to trek the 3 1/2 miles (5 km) back to the train station and travel a little further north to the city of Aachen. While we are chugging along, let's finish talking about the history of Germany that we started earlier.

When we took a break from our history discussion, we were talking about Charlemagne and the end of the Frankish Empire. Henry the Fowler rose to power and formed the Kingdom of the Germans.

One of the greatest kings of Germany was crowned in Aachen Cathedral in AD 936. His name was Otto I, often referred to as Otto the Great. Otto was the son of Henry the Fowler. Like his father, Otto tried to unify all of the tribes in Germany into one kingdom. He was a strong leader who fought and won many battles, including the battle against the Hungarian Magyars, stopping their invasion into Western Europe. Because the Magyar people were not of the Christian faith, the people of Germany hailed Otto as the savior of Christianity.

Otto expanded his kingdom south by conquering the Kingdom of Italy. Like Charlemagne in 800, Otto too was crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 962 by the Pope in Rome.

Otto ruled his empire from Rome for a time. The Roman Empire was split into two halves, the Western and Eastern Empires. The Eastern Empire, known as the Byzantine Empire, was ruled from Constantinople (now called Istanbul) in Turkey. Otto wanted to re-join these empires, so he arranged the marriage of his son, Otto II, to the Byzantine princess named Theophanu. Otto returned to Germany in 972 and died the following year.

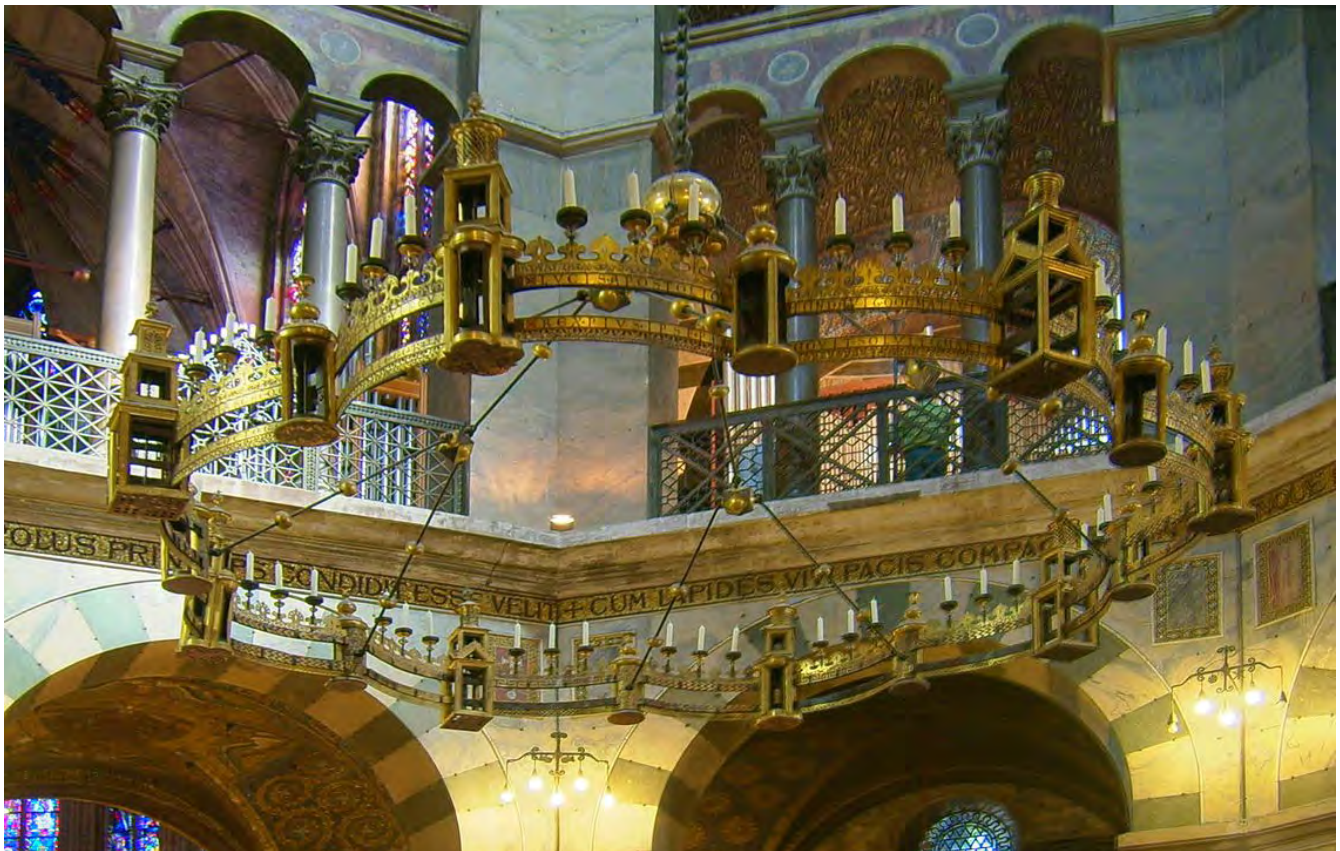
The history of Germany and the Holy Roman Empire are tightly entwined. The Holy Roman Emperors ruled the area of Germany for 900 years. In 1814, after the wars with Napoleon of France, the German **Confederation** was formed. The confederation was comprised of 39 states. Later, in 1871, the German Empire was established. The empire grew in strength until 1918, when Germany lost World War I. In 1945, Germany was defeated again in World War II.

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At the end of World War II, Germany was split into two parts—West Germany and East Germany. We'll learn more about the division later when we visit Berlin, the capital of Germany, where a huge wall was erected to keep the two halves separate. In 1989, the Berlin Wall was torn down and East and West were once again united into one nation. Today, Germany is one of the most industrious and powerful countries in Europe.

Perfect timing! We have arrived in Aachen and there is Aachen Cathedral! This is where Charlemagne, Otto the Great and other Holy Roman Emperors were crowned. Charlemagne commissioned the building of the cathedral. At first, it was just a chapel attached to Charlemagne's palace. Over the next several hundred years, more additions were built and renovations made to the cathedral. The Throne of Charlemagne is in the Octagon of the Church. The coronations of thirty-one German kings were held on this throne. However, Charlemagne was not, as the throne that bears his name was built after his death.

The massive Barbarossa Chandelier dangles from a long chain attached to the high arched ceiling above us. I hope it holds! Only four Romanesque wheel chandeliers are still in existence in Germany, including the Barbarossa. Even today, on solemn occasions, the forty-eight candles on the chandelier are lit to add ambiance and soft, golden light to the cavernous cathedral.



Barbossa Chandelier in Aachen Cathedral by Lokitech, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

Explore Medieval Kingdoms



Cologne Cathedral by ger1axg, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

There is still plenty more to see in Germany, for now we travel further north to discover the upper half of the country. While southern Germany is mostly mountainous, the northern region is relatively flat. In fact, the further north you go, the flatter it gets. There are a couple of main rivers that flow through northern Germany—the Rhine and the Elbe. We’ve seen quite a bit of the 800 mile long Rhine River and we will see it one more time before heading east, because the city of Cologne sits along the northern section of the Rhine.

In English, we pronounce the city’s name like the word for perfume, which rhymes with “alone.” In German, Cologne is spelled Köln. Because of the umlaut (the two dots over the “o”), it is pronounced more like “kern,” like a kernel of corn, or a colonel in the army. Cologne is a timeworn city, well situated on the busy river. It dates back to the 1st century AD when the Romans lived here. After the Romans had been driven out, the Franks moved in. It continued to grow, and its importance increased with its size since the Rhine River has always been a vital trade route and gateway to the ocean. Today, Cologne is Germany’s fourth largest city after Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich.

The most visited building in Cologne and Germany is the Kölner Dom [kern-er-dohm] (*dom* means cathedral). Construction on the cathedral began in 1248 and was completed in 1880. It took 632 years to finish Germany’s largest Gothic church because work on the Kölner Dom was halted until the 19th century. There are two majestic towers in front with 533 steps to the viewing platform in the south tower—more than Notre Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, or the first floor of the Eiffel Tower. It will be our highest climb so far, but we should do it. Imagine the view from that high up! The noise could be deafening if the bells begin to ring. The air reverberates when the eleven enormous church bells toll on the hour. How fun is that?

Whew! Catch your breath. From up here, we can see the old Rathaus, or city hall, that dates back to 1135—one hundred years before this cathedral—and St. Martin Church, which also dates back to 1150. There is the river and on the other side is Rheinpark. After we climb down, we can grab a bite to eat in one of the cafés near the park. This café looks lovely. The weather is pleasant, and many locals

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and tourists are sitting outside enjoying the scenery and the fascinating parade of people that pass by. Here's a menu, what looks good to you?

From Cologne, we'll take a high-speed train toward Berlin. It only makes a couple of stops and we'll get off just before we reach the capital city. When touring around Germany, it just makes sense to take a train. The German people have a unique set of strengths that make train travel exceptional in this country. Germans are efficient, hard-working, and technologically advanced. They are also very hospitable and want to make sure you are comfortable, so their trains are fast, comfortable, and almost always on time—a good combination for traveling.

We are crossing Germany from west to east, nearly all the way across the country, so we will be on the train for a while. We'll get to see quaint half-timbered villages from our over-sized train windows and some of the farmland and countryside of this great nation. **Agriculture** is not as important as industry and technology in Germany, but there are still farmers who grow crops in the northern part of the country—mostly cereal grains and sugar beets. In the hillier regions, farmers grow crops on **terraces** cut into the hillsides. Many different types of vegetables are grown in northern Germany, especially an abundance of grapes and berries. We can also see many pastures with cows and goats grazing.

However, Germany is an industrial country, recognized for its industries, not its crops. The top industries in Germany include the production of cars, trucks, machinery, metals, chemicals, plastic, and rubber. Germany is also known for its research in the fields of science and technology. One of the

menu

APPETIZERS AND SIDE DISHES

Grunkohl - Cooked Kale with Potatoes
Halve Hahn - Cheese Sandwich
Kartoffelsalat - Potato Salad
Kohlroulade - Cabbage Rolls
Mopkenbrot - Sausage
Pumpernickel - Bread
Reibekuchen - Fried Potato Dumplings
Sauerkraut - Fermented Shredded Cabbage
Westfälischer Schinken - Ham

MAIN DISHES

Bratkaroffeln - Fried Potatoes with Bacon
Bratwurst - Sausage
Grunkohl und Kohlwurst - Kale and Cabbage Sausage
Himmel und Aad - Mashed Potatoes with Stewed Apples
Muscheln Rheinische Art - Mussels with Vegetables
Pickert - Potato Pancakes
Rheinischer Sauerbraten - Marinated Beef
Rumpsteak - Roast Beef with Potatoes and Vegetables

DESSERTS

Aachener Printen - Cookie
Bratapfel - Baked Apples
Herrencreme - Vanilla Jelly with Cream
Kuchen - Cake

BEVERAGES

Coffee
Hot Chocolate
Soft Drinks

greatest scientists in the world was born in Germany: Albert Einstein. Einstein developed the Theory of Relativity, one of the two main branches of modern physics. He also developed the “world’s most famous equation”—the mass-energy formula known as $E=mc^2$. The “E” stands for energy, the “m” for mass, and the “c” for the speed of light. The equation means that energy equals mass multiplied by the speed of light squared. Einstein was a brilliant man who was able to explain lofty concepts in a way that made sense to his curious students.

The train is pulling into the Wittenberg station. There is only one reason this city is on the map and the train stops here: Martin Luther.

Martin Luther lived from 1483 to 1546. About 500 years ago, Luther started a spiritual firestorm that sent ripples of restlessness from Wittenberg, throughout Germany; from Europe to the rest of the world. He was born just southeast of here in the small town of Eisleben. Back in those days, there was only one church **denomination**—the Roman Catholic Church, controlled by the Pope in Rome. Luther was a Roman Catholic priest, who began to disagree with some of the things taught by the Roman Catholic Church. Luther did not agree with the church allowing people to pay money to have their sins forgiven. Luther preached that forgiveness and eternal life were gifts given by God alone. Also, Luther passionately believed every Christian should be able to own and read a Bible written in his own language. During the Middle Ages, Bibles were only available in one language—Latin.

Finally, Luther could stand it no longer. He had to communicate his intense displeasure with the way the Pope was running the church from Rome. Knowing the church would be filled with worshippers and clergy the next morning for All Saints’ Day, Martin Luther nailed a list of 95 grievances to the large wooden church door. His list, known as the *Ninety-Five Theses*, was a set of grievances he harbored against the Church during his lifetime. Little did he know that he would begin an inferno of rebellion against the church and its beliefs that would burn for the next hundred years.



Martin Luther, 1526, public domain image

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Luther's ideas grew and spread. Eventually, the people of Germany were reading the Bible in their native tongue. However, the changes didn't come easily. There was a significant division in the church—known as the Protestant Reformation—when many people were protesting the ideas taught by the Catholic Church. Wars were fought, people were killed, and families were split apart. In the end, a whole new group of churches was formed: Protestant churches. Lutheran churches were also born from the Reformation; the denomination named for Martin Luther.

There is not too much more to see in Wittenberg besides this blessed old church. Let's hop back on the train and finish our journey to Berlin, the capital and largest metropolis in Germany. Berlin is one of the sixteen states of Germany. With over 3.5 million people, Berlin is the second largest city in Europe after London and the most populated city on the continent.

When we get there, we'll check into our hotel and rest for the night, because bright and early, we will be meeting up with a local history guide who speaks English. His name is Wil, short for Wilhelm, and he will be taking us on a Segway tour of the city. In case you have never seen one before, a Segway is a two-wheeled electric vehicle that you stand on, using your balance and forward leaning motion to propel you forward. The name of the Segway comes from its homonym *segue*, which literally means "to follow." These scooter-like vehicles are becoming a popular way to see densely packed cities, such as Rome, Paris, and Berlin. I can't wait until tomorrow!



Segway Tour by UCFFool, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

But first, tell me what you remember about...

History:

Who was Otto the Great? What kind of leader was he? How did he try to join the Western and Eastern Roman Empires? What do you remember about Aachen and the Aachen Cathedral? What was significant about the Aachen Cathedral?

Who was Albert Einstein and what was he known for?

Who was Martin Luther and what did he decide to speak up about? What do you think your life would be like if you could not own or read a Bible? How would your life be different?

Modern Germany:

In which city is the Kölner Dom located? Tell me interesting facts that you learned about it.

What are the main industries of Germany?



Gleaming Berlin

It is a beautiful morning in Berlin. A slight chill is in the air, but it will warm up to t-shirt weather before we know it. Wil is meeting us downstairs in the hotel lobby. He'll give us a little orientation to the city before he turns us loose on the Segways in this huge metropolis. Berlin is a bicycle and scooter town, so we'll have to share the road with them along with the pedestrians and automobiles.

There's Wil. He raises his hand and greets us with a warm, "Guten tag!"

"Are you ready for a fun day? Ach," he exclaims, smiling, "it will be wunderbar [vooon-der-bahr]! But first, I must tell you a little about my great city, Berlin.

"Berlin is situated on an expansive plain that stretches all the way from northern France to western Russia, so it is very flat here. That is why you will



Berlin city skyline by Philipp von Ostau, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

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see so many bicyclists and pedestrians. We must watch out for them because we are motorized and have more power than they do. Always follow me. I will show you the way to go. Some of our sights today are spread out, but many of them are congregated in the heart of the old town.

“Berlin is not your typical European city. It is a striking contrast of old and new, but mostly new. Berlin is a relatively young city by European standards. It is only about 800 years old. People are moving into the city all the time, so it is very difficult to find someone who was born and raised here. The city was built on this plain because this is where the Havel and the Spree Rivers meet. Berlin is a lush green city; about one-third of it is covered in forests, gardens, lakes, parks, and rivers.

“You already know that Berlin is the capital of modern Germany, but it was the capital of several kingdoms that preceded it—first Brandenburg (1417-1701), then Prussia (1701-1871), then the German Empire (1871-1918), the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), the Third Reich (1933-1945), and now the Federal Republic of Germany. After World War II, the city was divided between the two countries of East Germany and West Germany with a wall that was built down the center. I will show you remnants of the Berlin Wall today. In fact, it is our first stop. In 1989, the wall came down, reuniting East and West, and Berlin became the capital of all of Germany once again.

“Okay, are you ready to roll?” Wilhelm asks in his thick German accent.

“Yes! Yes!” we answer and off we go.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-597361
Foto: Kielhaus | 7. Juli 1950

Photo of bear enclosure by Kielhaus, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

Across the street is a park where we can test-drive our new wheels. The Segways take some getting used to, but once you know how to lean forward to make the scooter move and lean back to make it stop, it's just a matter of working on your balance. Don't worry. You'll get it!

At the edge of the park is the River Spree.

Wilhelm stops and

tells us that this city was once two towns (Cölln and Berlin) that developed on each side of the river. As the population grew, the towns merged and became Berlin. After a little more practice in maneuvering in Köllnischer [ker-nish-air] Park, named for the city of Cölln, Wil leads us to the center of the park where quite a few people, including children, are congregating. In the middle of the park is an enclosure with two bears inside that will be fed soon. They represent the symbol of Berlin, which is two bears.

We are ready to take to the streets. Wil leads us along the river until we arrive at the East Side Gallery where a large part of the Berlin Wall remains intact. This wall has become a work of art as graffiti artists have left their mark here, but in an artistic way. Wil pulls off his helmet and gives us our own private history lesson.

“In 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. He was the leader of the Nazi Party. Hitler wanted to purify Germany by having only people of the **Aryan** race live in this country. Aryans are fair-haired, blue-eyed people. Although it was despicably wrong, he convinced his Nazi Party followers that this would be the best thing for Europe and he set out to rid Germany of any people who did not fit his standard. The people he despised the most were the Jews. At first, he rounded them up and sent them out of Germany. As his unfounded hatred grew, he began sending them to **concentration camps** where most of them died or were killed.

“At this time, he was also trying to conquer all of the countries surrounding Germany to grow his empire. The world revolted. Nations around the world stood up and said, ‘You cannot treat people differently because of the color of their hair, their skin, or their eyes.’ And so World War II began. In the end, Germany lost the war and the country was divided into a free half, and a **communist** half-controlled by the Soviet Union. Both sides wanted Berlin, so it was divided right down the middle. After the war, a thick wall was built topped by large coils of barbed wire so that the people on the communist side could not leave to live on the free side.

“Berlin existed like this for nearly forty years until a rebellion ignited among the youth in Berlin. They would not stand for being locked up in their city like criminals. They wanted out and they wanted the wall down. To pacify the angry mob, the East German government announced on November 9, 1989 that citizens could freely visit West Germany without retaliation. Crowds of both East and West



Adolf Hitler from Bundesarchiv, license CC BY-SA 3.0

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Berliners stormed the wall, climbed atop it, and tore it to pieces. City workers finished the demolition the following year. This fragment of wall remains. We keep it here to remind ourselves about what happened, so that it never happens again. We will never blindly follow any one man again. Adolf Hitler killed millions of people during his lifetime and destroyed the lives of millions of Germans even after his death.

“Not far ahead is the most visited site in Berlin, Checkpoint Charlie. It was the most infamous Berlin Wall border crossing station between East and West Berlin. Countless East Berliners attempted to cross into free Germany at this checkpoint. Some made it and some did not. This is also where a major standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union armies took place. Now, it is a tourist site, to remember what happened here and to celebrate the victories and mourn the defeats.”

The wall and Checkpoint Charlie behind us, we zoom through the broad boulevards of Berlin to the Potsdamer Platz [potsdah-mer-plahts], the modern section of town. While Berlin is definitely an old city, most of the old buildings have been destroyed over the years. The first big hit was the Thirty Years' War, which occurred between 1618 and 1648. One third of all the buildings and houses



Explore Medieval Kingdoms

in Berlin were damaged or destroyed, and half of the population died. The Thirty Years' War was one of the longest and most destructive conflicts in European history. It began as a scuffle between the Protestant and Catholic states when the Holy Roman Empire was crumbling. Then it developed into a more general conflict between the great powers of Europe, no longer fighting for religion, but for land.

Berlin rebuilt itself and then was terribly destroyed again during World War II in the 20th century. What you see here in Potsdamer Platz is all new architecture and construction. This is gleaming, resilient Berlin at its finest.

Beyond Potsdamer Platz is the Brandenburg Gate. Before there was the country of Germany, there was the Kingdom of Prussia. And before the Kingdom of Prussia, there was the Kingdom of Brandenburg. At one point these two kingdoms united and built this gate between 1788 and 1791 as a symbol of peace. Look how enormous it is with twelve mammoth columns and a sculpture of a chariot with four horses riding along the top!



The sun has reached its **zenith** in the sky and we are getting both warm and hungry. Let's stop along Unter den Linden Strasse (street under the linden tree). This beautiful shady avenue that joins the two halves of the city is the perfect place to stop for lunch. How about schnitzel? Schnitzel is a piece

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of meat (beef or pork) that has been pounded thin, breaded, and then fried. It's delicious. Or maybe you would like to try a Berlin specialty called "currywurst." It's a bratwurst covered in ketchup and curry powder. With a side of potatoes and sauerkraut, we will have ourselves a scrumptious and satisfying meal.

We have just one more destination before our Segway tour comes to an end—the Berlin Cathedral. We have seen many fine-looking cathedrals on this trip, but this one is different. The Berliner Dom is not an old cathedral. The original church that stood here was destroyed and this one was built in 1905, only a little over 100 years ago. This church is massive and so is the pipe organ that was installed. So, what do you think? Do you prefer the old churches or new churches?

Our Segway tour of Berlin has come to an end. We have come full circle (almost) and are turning in our Segways on Museum Island in the heart of Berlin, known as the Mitte [mit-tuh]. There are several museums here on this island situated in the middle of the Spree River. We can wander through them at our leisure this afternoon, but it is time to say goodbye to Wil, our excellent guide.

"Thank you, *danke*, for showing us your city, Wil," we call, waving to him before we turn down the main street of Museum Island.



Photo of Potsdamer Platz by Michael J. Zirbes, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

“*Bitteschön* [bit-tah-shern], you’re welcome!” he calls back.

Berlin is the meeting of two worlds, mixing the old with the new—a place of contrasts and resilient people. I’m glad we enjoyed this tour together.

There is still so much to see in Germany. There’s Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munster—you would think that the German people name their cities after delicious food. It is quite the opposite. Many delectable dishes have been created here in Germany, in places such as Hamburg, that the food has been named after the city, not the other way around. But we only have time to make two more stops before our Germany tour comes to an end. So, if you ever get to Munster, enjoy the cheese; or the sausages, if you are ever in Frankfurt!

Today, we travel further north to Lubeck. The “autobahns” are Germany’s freeways without speed limits. It feels both exhilarating and slightly unsafe on these highways as the average car is traveling 88 miles (142 km) per hour, but Germans are excellent drivers. Let’s hope the tourists are too!

Lubeck is a very historic and important port city. It lies on the Trave River and is quite photogenic because of its characteristic old brick buildings. The oldest part of Lubeck is situated on an island in the middle of the river.

We’ve talked at length about what life was like during the Middle Ages; how the nobility and robber barons taxed the tradesmen, which made earning a living difficult at best. Lubeck fought against the standard way of medieval life and formed the Hanseatic League, an organization that made trade in the Baltic and North Seas possible. The league lasted from 1400 to 1800. Lubeck, known as the “Queen of the Hanseatic League,” became very wealthy and powerful. This small town created its own army and its own laws, defying the rule of the Holy Roman Empire.

Large ships carried goods in and out of this port to countries in Scandinavia, England, and beyond. Lubeck has an old ship museum that would be fun to explore. The old Rathaus dates back to the 12th century and is still in use as the city hall today.

Our final stop is not far from Lubeck. We will travel up the neck of Germany to the very top, close to the border of Denmark. We’ll take a right, cross the bridge, and arrive at Germany’s largest island. Known for its rugged landscape, the island of Rugen lies in the Baltic Sea. Rugen boasts of sandy beaches, bays, **lagoons**, **fjords**, and peninsulas. However, the island is most famous for its white chalk cliffs. The largest of the cliffs is *Konigsstuhl* [kern-ig-shtool], which means “the King’s Chair.”

There are two ways to see this incredible chalk cliff—from the top and from the bottom. Let’s start at the bottom and then hike to the top. You can truly appreciate the magnificent size of the King’s Chair

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from its base. It's huge. The brilliant green trees and the crystal blue water framing the great cliff will make a memorable photo. Now, I'll race you to the top! Whew! There are lots of steps, but nothing like the 533 steps to the top of the Cologne Cathedral Tower.

From the top of the King's Chair is a breathtaking view of the sparkling blue Baltic Sea. The distant shores of Denmark are almost visible from here. But those mysteries must wait for a future adventure and volume of *A Child's Geography* when we explore the lands of the Vikings.

This is the perfect place to say goodbye to Germany. What a beautiful and diverse country—a land that has experienced difficulty, defeat, and growth. Modern Germany is a great place to live and visit. Maybe you'll get a chance to come back some day.

Auf Wiedersehen [owf-vee-dair-zay-en]!

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Berlin:

Describe the city of Berlin. What is the symbol of the city?

History:

Name the kingdoms that Berlin was the capital of before it was the capital of modern Germany?



Photo of the King's Chair by Thomas Wolf, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

Who was Adolf Hitler? Which party did he lead and what was his goal for Germany? What caused World War II?

What was the Berlin Wall and why did Germany build it? How was Berlin different after the Wall came down? Why was a fragment of the Berlin Wall left behind as a reminder? What was Checkpoint Charlie?

Rugen:

Describe the landscape of the island of Rugen. What is the King's Chair and where is it located?

Timeline of Germany

113 BC – 596 AD	Germanic Wars
555	The Duchy of Bavaria is formed.
800	Charlemagne crowned as the first Holy Roman Emperor
936	Aachen crowned king of Germany
962	Otto crowned Holy Roman empire
1135	Berlin City Hall built
1150	St. Martin Church built
1170	Rothenburg founded
1248 – 1880	Construction on the Kolner Dom
1343	Black Death spreads across Europe
1400 – 1800	Hanseatic League
1417 – 1701	Brandenburg Empire
1453	Gutenberg produced the first printed Bible
1483 – 1546	Martin Luther
1618 – 1648	Thirty Years War
1701 – 1871	Prussian Empire
1788 – 1791	Construction of the Brandenburg Gate
1806	Holy Roman Empire ends and Bavaria becomes the Kingdom of Bavaria
1814	German Confederation formed
1869	Construction on Neuschwanstein Castle begins
1871	German Empire established
1871 – 1918	German Empire
1905	Berliner Dom built
1918	Bavaria is incorporated into Germany
1918	Germany loses World War I
1919 – 1933	Weimar Republic
1933	Adolf Hitler comes to power in Germany
1933 – 1945	Third Reich
1945	Germany loses World War II
1945 – 1946	Nuremberg Trials held
1990	Berlin Wall torn down





Tiny Kingdoms, Part II

Liechtenstein: Pint-sized Principality

Early in our adventure together, we visited two tiny micro-countries—Andorra and Monaco—but these are not the only minuscule kingdoms in Europe. We are about to explore two more—Liechtenstein and Luxembourg.

Some of these countries are so small that they can be difficult to find on a globe. You need a bigger map or even a digital Google map, so that you can really zoom in and see the countries that we are discovering. Liechtenstein is one of those countries.



Liechtenstein by Clemens V. Vogelsang, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

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Liechtenstein is a 24km (15-mile) long principality sandwiched between Austria and Switzerland. This German-speaking country is best known for its medieval castles, alpine chalets, and remote villages linked together by a network of serene nature trails.

Geographically, Liechtenstein is defined by the mighty Alps to the east and the baby Alpine Rhine to the west. A stalwart fortress stands guard at the mouth of the valley on its south side, as if to protect it from threatening invaders.

Liechtenstein is one of two double-landlocked countries in the world. A double-landlocked country is a landlocked country that is completely surrounded by other landlocked countries. The only other country in the world in the same predicament is Uzbekistan. Not only is Liechtenstein landlocked and double landlocked with no access to a seaport, but it also has no airport. There is truly no easy way in to this 62 square mile (100 square kilometer) country, the sixth smallest nation in the world.

There are about 35,000 Liechtensteiners who live here. They hail from the same ancient tribe as the Swiss—the Helvetii. Their history follows closely with their two neighbors—Switzerland and Austria—as they were ruled by the same various empires and kingdoms throughout the centuries—the Romans, the Alemanni, the Franks, and the Habsburgs. Until 1608, that is, when the Liechtenstein Dynasty was born.



Vaduz Castle, the home of the Prince of Liechtenstein, taken by Michael Gredenberg, public domain, license CC BY-SA 3.0

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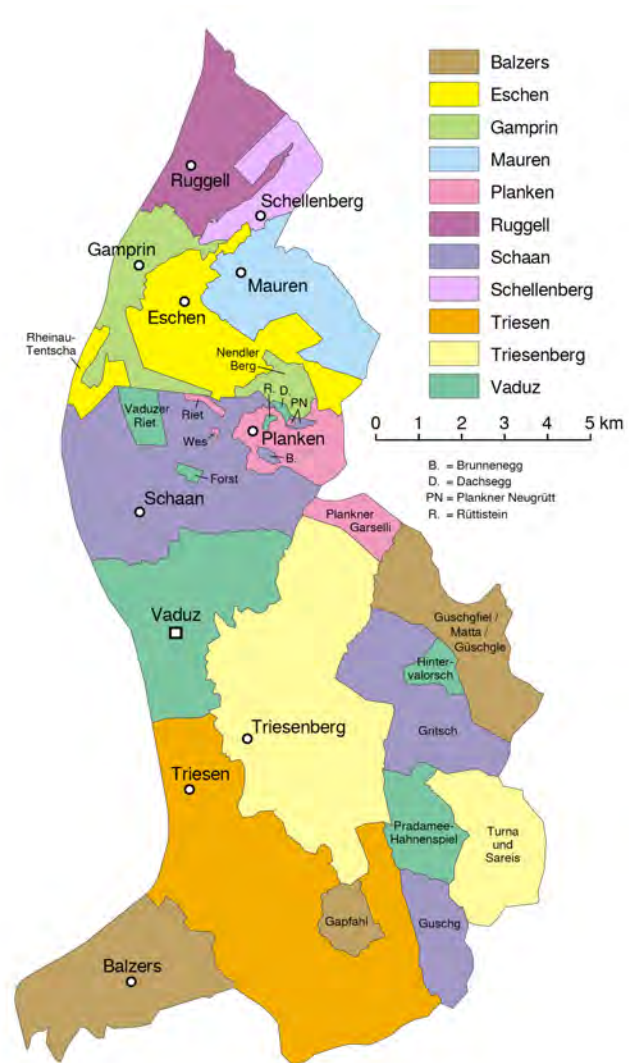
The Liechtenstein family was living in Austria. Throughout the centuries, this family acquired vast swaths of land throughout Switzerland and Austria, mostly through outdated medieval feudalism politics by serving as close advisors to the Habsburg family of Austria. In 1719, Charles IV, the Holy Roman Emperor at the time, decreed that the regions of Vaduz and Schellenberg unite as a principality by the name of “Liechtenstein,” in honor of his loyal servant, Anton Florian of Liechtenstein.

Can you imagine someone creating a country in your name and telling you that you are now prince (or princess) of that country? It’s hard to imagine. The newly royal Liechtenstein princes must have had a hard time believing that they had a whole country to run because they didn’t move in, or even bother to visit their newly formed country for several decades. Finally, over a hundred years later, the first member of the Liechtenstein family, the reigning Prince Aloys, set foot in the principality that bore his name. It wasn’t until the 20th century that the first Liechtenstein prince actually moved in to set up his kingdom.

Today’s billionaire prince takes his job very seriously. With his impressive castle built overlooking the 6x12 mile country, His Serene Highness Hans-Adam II wields more political power over his realm than any other European royalty.

The country is comprised of eleven villages, called Gemeinden [guh-mine-den]. Strung together like gems on a necklace, each Gemeinden consists of only one single town or village. Six villages are located within the Oberland (the upper country), while the other five are nestled in the Unterland (the lower country). The capital town of Vaduz sits on the valley floor, while many of the other villages are located in the mountains, high above the valley. While most Liechtensteiners speak German, the people living in the mountain village of Triesenberg speak a dialect called Walser even to this day.

The capital of Vaduz has a population of just 5,000. The main street through town is lined with modern art, glitzy hotels, and glossy office buildings. Historically, Europe’s microstates have offered businesses special tax incentives to relocate



Gemeinden by Maximilian Dorrbecker, license CC BY-SA 2.5

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to their countries. To recover from the financial struggles that resulted from both World Wars, Liechtenstein provided merchants with these tax incentives, successfully boosting its economy. For such a tiny country, Liechtenstein boasts a large number of businesses. In fact, Liechtenstein is one of the few countries in the world that has more registered companies than citizens—twice as many, in fact.

We can get to Liechtenstein by train, but not from where we are at the tip of northern Germany. We'll have to fly into Zurich and then take the east-west train that runs from Zurich, Switzerland to Innsbruck, Austria. His Serene Majesty has consented to let this railway pass through his country on a direct line to connect those countries, with one stop in Vaduz.

We've been very close to Liechtenstein at three points in our journey so far; once when we were in eastern Switzerland, a second time in western Austria, and then again in southern Germany. Because the country is so small, we have easily traveled right past it each time without even knowing it. The closest we came to this tiny kingdom was when we were visiting Lake Constance in Germany. When we were feeding the ducks our bread crusts, we didn't even realize that we were just a hop, skip, and a jump from Liechtenstein.

We are finally on our way there now. We will be able to visit another country with a rich medieval history on our tour of Western Europe. Like Switzerland, Liechtenstein has opted not to join the European Union, which means they do not use the Euro as their currency. Liechtensteiners trade the Swiss Franc instead.

While we travel by plane and train to Liechtenstein, let's learn a little more about the fascinating history of this pint-size principality.

When the Liechtenstein family accepted the offer to rule the newly formed country named in their honor—with a hefty price tag, that is—they did so with some strings attached. The Liechtenstein family had served the great Habsburg family as advisors for centuries, which is why they were awarded the land in the first place. But under feudal politics, land was always given in exchange for loyalty and service. Now, Liechtenstein was obligated to pledge its loyalty and protection to the Habsburgs, who had risen in rank to become the ruling family of the Holy Roman Empire at the time. Trapped in an archaic medieval agreement, Liechtenstein was not an independent nation yet, but remained duty-bound to the Holy Roman Empire.

However, in 1805, after Napoleon conquered much of Europe, bringing several smaller countries under France's control, all outdated feudal obligations were dissolved. Liechtenstein was no longer obligated to serve or swear loyalty to Austria or the Habsburg family. However, now it was ruled by France, who created a new territory known as the Confederation of the Rhine that included Liechtenstein, along with Switzerland and Austria.



Prince Hans Adam II by GuentherZ, license CC BY-SA 3.0

In 1815, Liechtenstein gained its true independence. Several years later, it declared itself neutral like Switzerland, so it would not get entangled in the affairs and squabbles of its neighbors. The decision to remain neutral kept Liechtenstein out of World Wars I and II that waged all around them during the 20th century.

We are almost to Vaduz. If you look out your train window, you can see that Liechtenstein is just as beautiful as its other Alpine neighbors. The country may be small, but the mountains are towering, the villages are quaint, and the countryside is green and lush. While Liechtenstein must import 85% of its products from surrounding countries, it does produce some of its own natural resources. You can see the cows

grazing on the verdant hills. Liechtenstein is a premier producer of dairy products, such as cheese and milk, and of beef. Wine grapes are grown on those terraced hillsides, and wheat, barley, corn, and potatoes are grown on the valley floor.

Liechtenstein is also world-renowned for its craftsmanship in ceramics. It is the largest producer of false teeth in the world. That is an unusual specialty! Liechtenstein also produces top-quality power tools, precision instruments, electronics, and calculators. However, it is tourism that brings in a good percentage of the country's wealth.

The quality of living here is some of the best in the world. The climate is continental; it gets chilly in the wintertime but not too hot during the summer. The unemployment rate is the second lowest in the world at 1%—out of 100 people, 99 of them have jobs, and those jobs are good-paying jobs.

Are you ready to move to Liechtenstein? While you may not want to relocate here (because home is where



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your family is), this is a top destination for vacations and winter sports, especially downhill skiing. Like its neighbor to the west, Switzerland, and its neighbor to the east, Austria, Liechtenstein flourishes because of tourism and its winter sports attractions. Visitors also flock here to enjoy its dramatic natural beauty. Ski lifts, packed during both the summer and winter seasons, ferry nature lovers to the dizzying crest that forms its border with Austria.

Even in the land of little Liechtenstein, one of the tiniest countries on the planet, the views are big and spectacular, the nature trails wind on and on, and the winter adventures never end.

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Geography:

The country of Liechtenstein may be small but it is packed with beauty and has a rich culture! Where is Liechtenstein located and what language(s) do they speak? What is a double-landlocked country? Name the only two in the world.

People:

How did Liechtenstein get its name? Would you like to have a country named after you? What would it be named? Liechtenstein has more of these than actual citizens... what are they?



Alzette River in Luxembourg, taken by Wolfgang Staudt, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0



Adolphe Bridge in Luxembourg City, taken by Paul Sejourne, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

Luxembourg: Banks and Big Business

We have one final tiny kingdom to visit on this journey—Luxembourg. Compared to the other microstates in Western Europe that we have visited so far on our tour of medieval kingdoms—Andorra, Monaco, and Liechtenstein—Luxembourg might seem quite large at first glance. At 998 square miles (1,601 square kilometers), it is five times bigger than Andorra; ten times bigger than Liechtenstein; and one thousand times the size of itty-bitty Monaco. And yet, out of 50 total European countries, Luxembourg is still the seventh smallest, about the size of Rhode Island in the United States. After we explore Luxembourg, we will have seen all seven of Europe’s miniature countries, because we visited the other three in the third volume of *A Child’s Geography: Explore the Classical World*. The tiny ones we visited on that adventure were Malta, San Marino, and Vatican City (which is essentially the size of a large city block).

The quickest way to travel from Liechtenstein to Luxembourg is to go back the way we came, boarding the train for Zurich, Switzerland. From there, we’ll fly into the capital of Luxembourg City. I have a friend there who will show us around.

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It's just a quick hopper flight. It will take us less than an hour to get there, but we can use this time to pull out our maps and get our bearings before landing in Luxembourg.

Luxembourg is a nearly triangular land-locked country bordered by three nations. France is to the south, Germany to the east, and Belgium to the west. Geographically, Luxembourg is comprised of two principal regions, the Oesling [oos-ling] region in the north and the Gutland [goot-land] in the south. The Oesling region is part of the Ardennes Massif. A **massif** is a geological term that means large mountain mass or series of connected mountains forming a range on the earth's crust. The Gutland region means "good land" in German, and Luxembourg City is located right in the heart of the "Good Land."

Half a million people live in Luxembourg. Most of the country's citizens live in the southern half of the country. In the northern region, only one town, Wiltz, has a population over 4,000 people. The majority of Luxembourgers live in small, quaint towns scattered throughout the Gutland with only 85,000 people making the capital city their permanent home.

While the Oesling is dominated by hills and small mountains, the Gutland is much more diverse. The Luxembourg plateau is a large, flat, sandstone formation, which marks the site of the city of Luxembourg. East of the city is Little Switzerland, an area of craggy terrain and thick forests. South of Little Switzerland is the Moselle Valley, slicing through Luxembourg by the Moselle River on its peaceful journey from the Alsace in France to join the mighty Rhine in Germany. Further south still are the Red Lands, the industrial heartland of Luxembourg.

Luxembourg's central location, at the crossroads between Romantic and Germanic Europe, creates a cultural fusion of the best of Europe. Luxembourg's educational system is **trilingual**, and most of its citizens are fluent in three languages—French, German, and Luxembourgish. The first years of primary school are taught in Luxembourgish; in the higher grades, the children are instructed in German. Once students reach secondary school, classes are taught in French. Proficiency in all three languages is a requirement for graduation.

Henri is the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, the world's last remaining grand duchy. As a tiny country in a vulnerable geographic location, the Grand Duke has formed an **alliance** with Belgium and the Netherlands to increase its power and security as a nation. An alliance means that the countries have sworn loyalty to one another, vowing to protect and support each other during times of trial or difficulty, and choosing to cooperate in matters of money and trade. The alliance has been appropriately named Benelux (be = Belgium, ne = Netherlands, lux = Luxembourg).

That's about all there is to know about the geography of Luxembourg from this high altitude and our timing is perfect since we are coming in for a landing at the Luxembourg airport. Just outside the main terminal, we see a woman with curly blond hair holding up a sign with our names written across it. Standing beside her are two small children clinging to her dress. I haven't met my friend David's family yet; this must be his wife, Agatha and their children, Eliot and Gretel.

"David's stuck at work for a few more hours," greets Agatha.

She kisses both of our cheeks, welcoming us. The kids wave shyly, and we all pile into their mini-van to drive the quick 6km (4 miles) back to the city.

After winding through the narrow city streets, we arrive at our destination—a small apartment on Rue de L'eau (Water Street). From the third floor apartment window, we can just see over the thick stone wall across the street that surrounds a park-like area and a gravel parking lot jammed with black sedans and a vintage Rolls-Royce. On the far side of the park is an ornate building with pointy turrets, graceful balconies, and richly draped curtains in every window.

"Oh, that is the Palais Grand Ducal—the Grand Duke's Palace," Agatha explains.

"He lives across the street?" we ask incredulously.

"Only when he is in town," our host clarifies for us. "And we know when he is in residence because the flag will fly proudly.



Grand Ducal Palace by Cayambe, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0



But today, the flag doesn't wave, so he is not here. Royal families always have more than one home and this is their city residence. It is fun living across the street, though, because we can watch the changing of the guards."

"So, are you an actual Luxembourger or do you hail from somewhere else?" I ask Agatha.

"Well, as you know, David is an American who works in the banking industry. Luxembourg is the second largest banking center in the world, after the United States, and we met here when I was working in the city. My parents live east of here near the German

border in the town of Echternach, the oldest city in Luxembourg. That's where I grew up. David and I and our children hop back and forth between New York City and Luxembourg City, living about half the year in each country. It's only about a 6-hour flight, so it's not hard for us to do. We keep an apartment in both cities.

"But to answer your question, yes, I am an honest-to-goodness Luxembourger. I have lived here my whole life and so did my parents before me. We are a rare breed. Almost 70% of the people that live in this country are from somewhere else—such as Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Plus, a large percentage of the people that work here do not actually live here. They commute from neighboring Belgium, France, or Germany.

"Come, let's walk around town while we wait for David to finish his work. He will meet us for lunch a little later. Since we are close to everything here, it's easiest to walk anywhere we want to go."

Out on the street, Agatha and the kids point to the Bock, a massive rock outcropping that juts up between the **oxbow** bend of the Alzette River and upon which stands a thousand-year-old castle. Eliot and Gretel grab our hands excitedly, pulling us in that direction to show us a hidden secret that the castle holds. Deep below the castle, inside the Bock, is an extensive network of tunnels, dug from the rock and earth to hide an entire army along with their horses.

After exploring through the cavernous tunnels with lanterns and headlamps for a time, we are glad to come back out into the bright afternoon sunshine to warm up our hands and faces. While it is not exactly warm out today, it is warmer outside than it was down inside the deep tunnels. Luxembourg has an oceanic climate—summers are cool and winters are mild.



The Bock in Luxembourg City, taken by Gabi Agu, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

Walking back along Rue de L'eau, we snake our way to the Marché aux Poisson. The children run ahead, but Agatha doesn't appear to be concerned. Luxembourg has been named "the safest country in the world." The Marché aux Poisson—old Medieval fish market—has been converted into a dining paradise called the Île Gastronomique, which means "the island of fine dining." There are a number of excellent restaurants here. A couple of the restaurants have even received one or more Michelin stars, the most prestigious and sought-after award in the restaurant world.

Curiously, the same Michelin company that sells tires also doles out the restaurant ratings. Back in the year 1900, the Michelin Tire Company launched its first dining guidebook to encourage travelers to road trip through France. By 1926, the company began sending out anonymous, "chameleon" restaurant reviewers to taste and rate local dishes for their guidebooks.

In the restaurant world, Michelin stars posted outside a restaurant mean that you will experience extraordinary food and excellent service inside.

There's David, my American friend. He is waving us over to a restaurant across the courtyard. After kissing his lovely wife and swooping up his kids in a warm embrace, he reaches out to shake our hands and welcome us to his home away from home.

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“What brings you to Luxembourg?” he asks. “We don’t get many tourists here. Travelers who find themselves in Luxembourg are usually passing through on their way to somewhere else, such as France, Germany, or the Netherlands.”

“Oh no, we came here on purpose,” I tell him. “My friends and I are exploring the medieval kingdoms of Western Europe.”

“Well then, you have certainly come to the right place. Come, sit down and have a bite to eat for lunch. My wife and I will catch you up on some history before we set out farther afield to explore her homeland and my adopted country.”

There are so many dishes on the menu that have strange names. We ask our friends for a recommendation. Agatha loves the Bouneschlupp, which is the Luxembourgish national dish; David prefers the Judd mat Gaardenbounen; and Eliot and Gretel are set on having their favorite, Gromperkichelchen. What will you try?

“The city of Luxembourg was founded over a thousand years ago in AD 963,” David begins. “Because Luxembourg was built at a major crossroads in Europe, the city became heavily fortified with extensive city walls and lookout towers. For a long time, Luxembourg was owned by the powerful Habsburg family, who formed a duchy that included a much larger territory stretching into present-day Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, and France.

“After the Napoleonic Wars, the Duchy of Luxembourg was given to the Netherlands. Every European country wanted to possess it because of its strategic location, especially Germany. But in 1815, it was whittled down in size and given the title of ‘Grand Duchy.’ Finally, in 1867, Luxembourg was granted its complete independence.





Spring menu in Vertig'O, taken by Hotel de la Paix, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 2.0

“However, during the 20th century, Luxembourg was overrun twice by Germany during World War I and World War II when they violated Luxembourg’s **neutrality** (neutrality means that the country chooses not to pick sides during a war). In fact, this was the site of one of the major battlefields of the Battle of the Bulge during the winter of 1944-45. After the war, Luxembourg ended its neutrality when it entered into the Benelux union in 1948. Later, in 1957, Luxembourg became one of the six founding countries of the European Union, regulating currency, trade, and transportation between the countries of Europe.

“Over the years, Luxembourg has been transformed from a poor farming country into a modern land of high finance and high-tech industries. Big companies, such as Skype and Amazon, have relocated their regional headquarters here. Today, Luxembourg is the second richest country in the world and plays a prominent role in the world of banking.

“And that’s what brings me here,” David says. “My company straddles the Atlantic Ocean and has offices in both New York and Luxembourg, so we make both cities our home and we like it that way.” David winks toward his family.

Eliot and Gretel ask if we can stop talking and start our adventure. David, Agatha, and the kids are excited to drive up to the Müllerthal [meuh-luhr-tall] (better known as Little Switzerland) for a hike along the beautiful trails that wind through the craggy terrain. After our hike, we’ll drive north a short distance more to Vianden, the romantic village with a stunning medieval castle, a favorite of

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tourists and locals alike. The picturesque location of the fortress in the Our River Valley on a lake graced with swans and surrounded by thick forests, gives the castle a fairytale appearance as it rises up from the misty lake.

We'll end our day at the home of Agatha's parents, who have invited us for supper and insisted that we spend the night before we catch the train to Belgium tomorrow. While the apartment would have suited us fine, we accept their offer so that we don't wake the kids when we get up early tomorrow to start our next adventure—Belgium, the curious country that has invented some of our favorite things.

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Geography:

What a small but powerful country! Name the countries that border Luxembourg. Luxembourg is one of three Benelux countries. What is the Benelux and what is the purpose of it? How did Luxembourg become the second richest country in the world?

Culture:

What three languages do all Luxembourgers speak? Why do you think they learn all three languages? What is a Michelin star? Would you like to try any of the dishes that David's family had for lunch? Or maybe go for a hike in the Our River Valley?

(Country timelines can be found in the Timeline File on the "Extras" download page - see Introduction.)



Vianden Castle in Luxembourg, taken by Johnny Chicago, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0



Waffles, Lace, and French Fries

How did you like visiting the tiny countries? Today, we are traveling by train from Luxembourg City to another capital city in a slightly larger country. This country, similar to Luxembourg, is not often traveled *to*, but traveled *through*. It is well known for many delicious things, such as chocolate, waffles, and french fries. No, we are not going back to France! We are on our way to Belgium and its capital city of Brussels.

Did you know that french fries were invented in Belgium? We'll learn about this and much more as we visit this charming country and find out how it earned its place on the world map.

Belgium's official name is the Kingdom of Belgium, because it is ruled by a king, King Philippe of the Belgians.

During our train ride, let's pull out our maps and learn about the lay of the land. Belgium is pretty far west on the European continent. In fact, the shoreline of the North Sea creates its northwestern boundary. France borders Belgium to the south, Luxembourg and Germany to the east, and the Netherlands to the north.

Belgium is upside down in the same way that Egypt in Africa is upside



Belgium map by Krzysztof, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

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down. Just like Egypt, where Lower Egypt is actually in the north, not the south, so Belgium's Low Country is located in the north. In Egypt and Belgium, "low" and "lower" do not represent places on a map, but instead refer to the **elevation** of the land. Egypt's lower region is where the Nile River empties into the Mediterranean Sea and Belgium's low country is where the Rhine River empties into the North Sea. These areas are sitting low at sea level, or in Belgium's case, below **sea level**. How can that be? We'll visit the Low Country later, when we travel up north, to find out!

While most of Belgium's topography is flat with coastal plains and central plateaus, the area that we are exploring from Luxembourg City to Brussels is mountainous and thickly forested. The Ardennes Uplands is a beautiful wooded mountain range that runs through France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the western edge of Germany. This lush and rugged region is rocky with plenty of caves for hikers to explore. Our train is speeding through tunnels and thick forests as it passes through the high country of Belgium to the central plateau.

Belgium could be divided into two halves. Not only is the countryside different in the two halves, but so are the people. The southern (or upper) region of Belgium is called Wallonia. The Walloon people live in this half and they speak French, like their neighbors to the south in France. The low country is known as Flanders. The people that live in Flanders are Flemish and they speak Dutch, like their neighbors to the north in the Netherlands.



Dinant on the Meuse River, taken by jiujuangw, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

We are on our way to the capital city of Brussels, in the heart of Belgium, located between these two distinct halves of the country. The city of Brussels and the surrounding area is **bilingual**, due to its proximity to Wallonia and Flanders. That means that everything is marked or written in two languages. The street signs are labeled in both French and Dutch, as are the cereal boxes and the items on a restaurant menu. You may have noticed that each time we pull into a new station, the voice on the intercom speaks instructions in both French and Dutch.

“Bienvenue en Belgique!”

“Onthaal aan België!”

Welcome to Belgium!

We just passed through the train station in Dinant. The town hosts a unique festival held annually in August, the Dinant International Bathtub **Regatta**. By far the quirkiest race in Belgium or anywhere in Europe for that matter, the Bathtub Regatta is a 1K race down the River Meuse alongside the town of Dinant, southeast of Brussels. While speed is important, the main competition is boat design. Race participants bedeck their tubs in decorative elements, limited by the competition’s only rules. Rule #1 states that the boat must use a bathtub as a flotation device; and Rule #2 asserts that the vessel must be propelled only by human force. Contestants are encouraged to decorate their tub in a way that represents their region of the world. This race is international, after all. Let’s watch the fun event here:

<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/dev/media-files-acg4-ch14-belgium/>

The Meuse River Valley is famous for more than just the Dinant Bathtub Regatta. This is the region where french fries were invented. In the 17th century, Dinant and the neighboring towns of Namur and Andenne were little more than small fishing villages nestled along the Meuse. The fishermen would set off in their boats and troll up and down the river, pulling up small fish by the hundreds and thousands. Local families enjoyed frying up the tiny fish and eating them in handfuls, as fish was the main staple of their diet. Then, one cold, dark evening in the dead of winter, when the river had frozen solid and fishing had become challenging, a hungry, resourceful peasant decided to cut up some potatoes from his root cellar into the shape of small fish and drop them into the fish fryer.

It didn’t take long for this delicious side dish to sweep the country and surrounding nations, especially France, where they are known as *pommes frites*, which simply means “fried potatoes.”



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Flower carpet at the Grand Palace, taken by Wouter Hagens, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

So, you may be wondering why they are called french fries in many parts of the world if they did not originate from France. It is believed that they received their current name during World War I, when British and American soldiers arrived in Belgium and tasted the crispy fried potato wedges. Supposedly, they mistakenly called them “French” because the language spoken in the region was French and they believed themselves to be in France. Whether the story is true or not, the name has stuck and the fried strips of potato will forever be known as “french fries.”

Before we arrive in the metropolis of Brussels, let me give you a little background information. The country of Belgium has a population of 11 million people. Over one million Belgians live in the city of Brussels or about one out of ten. It's a big city, the largest city in the country.

This city dates a long way back. It began as a small village in AD 580 on an island situated on the Senne River (not to be confused with the Seine River that runs through Paris). Located on the trade route between the seaport city of Bruges, Belgium, and Cologne, Germany, Brussels grew quickly. The area around the city was very swampy, so the residents of Brussels drained the water from the swamps. In this way, the city could be expanded without fear of flooding. The people of Brussels constructed a thick wall around their city to protect it and keep invaders out. However, the city continued to grow so rapidly that less than a hundred years later, the city built a second wall around the original wall. Remains of both walls are still visible today.

Not long after the walls were built, Brussels was named the capital of the Low Countries. At that time, the Low Countries comprised the whole area of Belgium and the Netherlands today. Several kings



Grote Markt in Brussels, taken by Paul IJsendoorn, public domain image, license CC BY-SA 3.0

ruled from here until the fateful year of 1695, the year Louis XIV of France attacked Brussels and the city caught on fire. This was the most destructive event in Brussels' history as the city was razed to the ground. The Grand Palace, along with 4,000 other buildings, was completely destroyed.

It was a devastating event, but the people of Brussels proved how strong and resilient they were and rebuilt the city to all its former glory and then some. Most of the buildings you will see are 300 years old or less, relatively young by European standards.

The city of Brussels has changed hands a few times over the years. It was owned by Austria, then France, then Austria again, then France again. In 1830, the Belgian people had had enough of this ping-pong match. They began a revolution and won back their city for good. Brussels then became the capital of the newly independent Kingdom of Belgium, as it is today.

Leopold I was the first king of the Belgians. His reforms made the city a safer and healthier place to live. The River Senne, for example, had become dangerous to the health of the citizens of Brussels, so he had the river covered over where it runs through the city.

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After World War II, Brussels began to host many international events and it became the home of many international organizations. It is now the capital of the European Union (EU), a union of 28 countries in Europe that regulates trade, economic laws, and foreign policies. The EU exists to ensure the free movement of people, goods, services, and money within the European continent.

The first place we will visit after we disembark from the train is the *Grote Markt*, which is Dutch for the “Grand Place.” It is a large central square in Brussels surrounded by grand, ornately decorated buildings that are 300 years old, which means they were built after the great fire of 1695.

Two buildings pre-date the fire—the town hall and the Breadhouse. The town hall has been standing since the Middle Ages. There is a tower in the center of the building that rises 310 feet (95 meters) high and is topped by a statue of the **archangel** Michael. The other older building—the Breadhouse—is the Museum of the City of Brussels. The Breadhouse, built in 1504, once housed the old markets on the main street, including the cloth and bread markets.

Other buildings around the square were once the homes of wealthy merchants and the powerful guilds of Brussels. Guilds were organizations of craftsmen that banded together to protect their rights to trade fairly. A wide variety of guilds were formed, each representing specific crafts and trades: **goldsmiths, silversmiths, plumbers, weavers, tapestry makers, linen weavers, tailors, barbers, watchmakers, painters, basket weavers, bakers, shoemakers, lace makers, and more.**

Down a little side street from the Grote Markt is a restaurant with outdoor seating. Let's find a seat before the big lunchtime crowd arrives. There is quite a variety of delicious foods on the menu. What do you think? What will you try? As for me, I will try the *Gegratineerde witloof* as a main course, with waffles for dessert!





That was delicious, but I hope you saved a little room for one more tiny dessert: chocolate. There's a famous Belgian chocolate shop just around the corner. Let's go and see what they have for sale.

Belgium is world-renowned for its fine chocolate. The history of Belgian chocolate dates back to 1635 when Spain ruled the region (this was before the ping-pong match between Austria and France). When chocolate first made its grand entrance into the chef's kitchen, the most popular way to consume it was in the form of hot chocolate. Later, Belgian **chocolatiers** began to create other chocolate confections. In fact, the chocolate bar was invented in Belgium!

A chocolate shop is a feast for the senses. First, let's look at the window display. Dozens of chocolates are presented on silver trays to showcase the assortment of mouthwatering morsels: milk chocolates and dark chocolates, chocolates filled with creams, nuts, or dried fruits, chocolates rolled in nuts or sprinkled with sea salt. And look at all the different shapes! Seafood **pralines** don't have seafood in them; they are chocolates molded into seashells, sea stars, and fish. Many Belgian chocolatiers still make all of their chocolates by hand.

Stepping inside, we are overwhelmed by the pleasant aroma of chocolate. It doesn't matter what you choose; they are all delicious. Let's select a small bag of **truffles**; some to eat now and some to enjoy later on the train.

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Next, we are heading for Bruges, another city in Belgium, also famous for its chocolate, but mostly famous for its lace. Let's go!

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Geography:

What do you think of Belgium so far? Do you remember the official name of Belgium? Why is it named this? Belgium could be divided into two halves. Describe these two regions of the country. What languages are spoken in Belgium?

What is the capital city of Belgium? Why is it bilingual? How did the people of this capital city expand without fear of flooding from the surrounding swamps?

History and Food:

What devastating event happened to Brussels in 1695? How has affected the city and the people of Brussels?

Belgium is known for which foods? What would you like to try first on a visit? I would definitely head for a chocolatier!



The Venice of the North

We're back on the train, and our next stop is Bruges. Before we arrive, let's discover more about the history of Belgium, not just Brussels. While some of Belgium's history parallels the capital city's historical events, the saga of Belgium starts 2,000 years ago.

The name of the country dates back to the Romans who ruled this part of Europe. At that time, this area was a Roman province called Gallia Belgica.



Bruges canals, by Giorgio Galeotti, public domain, CC BY 2.0



Medieval Ghent on the way to Bruges, licensed through Adobe Stock Photos.

The Romans chose this name from the name of the people group that they had conquered who lived here before they did. They were known as the Belgae, a mix of Germanic and Celtic people.

After the Romans were driven out, Merovingian kings ruled Belgium in the 5th century AD. The Merovingian Kingdom ruled the expansive region known as Gaul during ancient times. Gaul included modern-day Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and parts of the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland. It was a vast territory. The most famous Merovingian king was King Clovis I, who united Gaul into one kingdom.

After several hundred years, the Merovingian Kingdom began to weaken and another mighty empire stepped in to rule in its place during the 8th century AD. Charles Martel was the leader of the Carolingian Dynasty, but it was his grandson, Charlemagne, who was the most famous emperor of the Carolingian Dynasty. As we learned earlier in our journey through France and Germany, Charlemagne was the first king to become crowned the Holy Roman Emperor of Europe.

After Charlemagne's death, the empire was divided into two parts known as Middle Francia and West Francia. For hundreds of years, these areas were ruled by either the King of France or by the Holy Roman Emperor.

After this time, during the 14th and 15th centuries, many tiny kingdoms were united to form the Burgundian Netherlands. This area included parts of Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and northern France. One hundred years later, the Burgundian Netherlands became known as the Seventeen Provinces, which were now under the rule and control of the House of Habsburg. I'm sure you remember this über-powerful royal house of Europe from our jaunts through France and Austria. Empress

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Maria Therese of Austria was a member of the Austrian Habsburg family as was her daughter Marie Antoinette of France. This house produced many kings, queens, and emperors who ruled over vast sections of the European continent during the later Middle Ages and Renaissance era.

Then came the “Eighty Years’ War” (wars were often named by how long they lasted, such as the Hundred Years’ War, Thirty Years’ War, Seven Years’ War) which lasted from 1568 to 1648. The Low Countries were divided into two parts. The northern part was called the United Provinces, or the Federated Netherlands; and the southern part was called the Southern Netherlands, or the Royal Netherlands. This southern part comprised most of what is Belgium today.

During the next several hundred years, the Southern Netherlands was controlled by various countries and kingdoms. Spain ruled over the Southern Netherlands for a time. Later, the Habsburgs of Austria regained control. During the 17th and 18th centuries, there were several wars fought in the Southern Netherlands. France fought against Spain, then Austria fought against France.

In the late 18th century, the Low Countries, which included Belgium, became part of the French First Republic. This event finally concluded the rule of the Austrians in the Low Countries. When Napoleon was defeated in 1815, the French reign ended and the Low Countries were united to become the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Belgian Revolution occurred in 1830, establishing the Kingdom of Belgium, independent from the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1831, Belgium crowned its first king, Leopold I. And while Belgium became involved in both world wars, Belgium remained intact as a nation and rebuilt any damages that resulted from the fighting.

Which brings us up to the present. And just in time, as we are pulling into the train station in Bruges in a couple of minutes.

Bruges is a city in West Flanders, in the Flemish area of Belgium. With so many canals, Bruges has earned the nickname “The Venice of the North.” We’ll take a boat tour through the canals and see the stately houses and gardens of Bruges. Finn is our master boatman and tour guide.

“You know, at one time, Bruges was the most important trading city in the world,” Finn tells us proudly. “Bruges was the entrance to the Amber Road trade route that started long ago in ancient times, as early as 1600 BC. Later, the Romans built a fort here to protect this area from pirates. In time, Bruges became an important city, ideally situated on the ‘Golden **Inlet**,’ the body of water that connected the city to the North Sea. Because of its proximity to the water, Bruges became an extremely wealthy city. Ships from all over the world sailed into the seaport of Bruges, loaded with grain, wool, spices, cloth, and anything else you can imagine.

“But then disaster struck! The ‘Golden Inlet’ started **silting** around the year 1500. Silting means that too much soil and fine sediment began to fill in the ‘Golden Inlet,’ and there was no way for ships to get into and out of Bruges. Sadly, the golden years of Bruges ended when the ‘Golden Inlet’ filled up with silt.

“But the good news,” says Finn with a wink, “is that because of this, Bruges has become frozen in time. All of the beautiful houses, churches, and other old buildings are still standing today just as they were back in 1500. Bruges is one of the best-preserved, ancient cities in Europe. And today is a glorious day to see the city by boat along the canals.”

After more than an hour of boating along the canals, our tour has come to an end. We are not far from the Grote Markt. That is right, Bruges, just like Brussels, has its own Big Market. Here in the square is one of the most famous landmarks in Bruges—the Belfry of Bruges. The **belfry** is a medieval bell tower built around 1240 when Bruges was still a pivotal trading city. Do you want to climb to the top? It’s only 366 steps!

We’ve climbed many towers during our tour of Western Europe. These towers should get easier to climb, but my legs start to scream “Stop!” at about 150 steps. But let us press on to the top. There is always a magnificent view up there.

First used in 1240, the bell tower was a **treasury** and a place to store important papers and documents. It was also used as an observation lookout for spotting fires and other dangers to the city. The belfry has been rebuilt and repaired many times over the centuries.

The bells were an integral part of daily life for the people of Bruges. They rang on the hour, alerted the city to fires, and announced special events. Today, there are 47 bells in the tower, each ranging in weight from two pounds to 11,000 pounds.



Belfry of Bruges, Wolfgang Stoudt, public domain, CC BY 2.0

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Lace shop in Bruges, public domain photo by Zorro2212, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Ah, we have made it to the top! The view is spectacular on a sunny day like today. We can see the Grote Markt and the canals, as well as other squares and markets further in the distance. There is another handsome church with a tall tower not far from here. Let's go there next.

On our way to the church, we see an intricate window display of lace upon lace upon more stunning lace. **Doilies**, tablecloths, napkins, and collars are displayed in wonderful abundance. This is a lace shop! Remember what we learned earlier about Bruges being famous for its lace? Lace crafters still make lace by hand. Isn't it fabulous?

The church we saw from the bell tower is the Church of Our Lady, referring to the mother of Jesus. This church dates back to the 13th century and its tower is the tallest in Bruges—taller even than the belfry. In fact, this tower is the second tallest tower made out of bricks in the whole world.

The church is magnificent both inside and out, but there is something inside this church that is very special. It is a sculpture of the **Madonna and Child**, again referring to Mary and Jesus. While the subjects of this sculpture are very precious, it is the fame of the sculptor that makes this piece so valuable. Yes, it was Michelangelo who sculpted this beautiful white marble into the lovely figures of Mary and Jesus. Michelangelo was the artist who painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and sculpted the Pietà in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, which depicts a later scene in the lives of Mary and Jesus. That sculpture expresses Mary's grief when her grown son Jesus was taken down from the cross, lifeless.

The *Madonna and Child* in Bruges is probably the only sculpture by Michelangelo that left Italy during his lifetime.

There are many other old and historic buildings to see in Bruges, such as the old hospital and city hall, but something interesting is happening down in the historic city center. People are crowding around and cheering. Let's find out what is happening.

Tonight is the opening night of the Christmas Market. The crowd has gathered for the lighting of the square. Enormous ornaments hung and colorful lights strung, the trees are ready to be lit aglow, ushering in winter. The courtyard, converted into an ice-skating rink for the season, is picture-perfect. It is still six weeks before Christmas, but Bruges is ready to celebrate.

3... 2... 1... Go!

The lights blink on and it looks like a fairy world. It is truly magical. Take some photos to send home. The market square glitters like Christmastime in New York. If you need to buy some last minute gifts to bring home, this is the place to find something unique and very special.



Madonna and Child by Michelangelo, photo by Jean Pol Grandmont, public domain, CC BY 2.0

In the morning, we'll make one quick stop before we leave Belgium. Our final destination is both significant and practical for us. It is significant because the city plays a prominent part in the history and culture of Belgium. It is practical because it is located right next to the border Belgium shares with the Netherlands, so we can roll right across the country line on bicycles when it's time to leave.

The city of Liege, located in Wallonia, is in the French speaking part of Belgium. It is situated on the Meuse River in the southeast region of the country, very close to both the Netherlands and Germany. People have been living in this area since Roman times, but it wasn't until AD 558 that the name of the city first appeared in official documents. Between 985 and 1345, prince-**bishops** governed the city. Liege's prestige grew and it became a center of culture, religion, and education.

In 1345, the people of the city rebelled and overthrew the reigning prince-bishop. For a time, Liege was ruled by its 32 guilds, the organizations of craftsmen who wielded tremendous power and influence in the city. Then several battles were waged over the city, and it too fell under the rule of the

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Habsburgs, the Spanish, the Bavarians, the French, and the Dutch, like so many cities and regions in the surrounding area. Liege finally gained its independence after the Belgian Revolution in 1830.

After we explore through some old medieval churches and climb the Montagne de Bueren to see the ruins of the old citadel, built to protect Liege during the turbulent Middle Ages, it will be time to say goodbye to Belgium, the home of chocolate, waffles, french fries, and exquisite lace. We will not say goodbye to the Low Countries for good, though, because our next and final stop on this western European adventure is the Netherlands. The Netherlands shares some characteristics with Belgium, such as cities below sea level, watery canals that function as streets, quirky festivals, ancient customs, and delicious food. Get a good rest so that we can experience and enjoy all that the Netherlands has in store for us!

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Geography:

Why is Bruges called the Venice of the North? Which region of Belgium is located in? What was the Golden Inlet? Why was it important to Bruges? Why are there so many well-preserved buildings in Bruges?

History and Culture:

Describe the Belfry of Bruges. Why were the bells so important to daily life in Bruges? Tell me what you remember about the Church of Our Lady and the sculpture of the "Madonna and Child"? What product is Bruges famous for? What do you think it would be like to be at the Christmas Market on opening night?

Timeline of Belgium

400s	Merovingians rule Belgium
558	The city of Liege is first recorded
580	Brussels begins as a small village
700s	Carolingian Empire
985 - 1345	Liege ruled by prince-bishops
1240	The Belfry of Bruges is built
1300-1400	Many kingdoms united to form the Burgundian Netherlands
1345	The people of Liege rebel against the prince-bishop; Liege is ruled by its guilds
1500	The "Golden Inlet" begins to fill up with silt
1568 - 1648	Eighty Years' War
1600	Trade commences on the Amber Road trade route starting in Bruges
1695	Louis XIV of France attacks Brussels and the city burns to the ground
1815	Napoleon defeated; Low Countries united as United Kingdom of the Netherlands
1830	Brussels starts a revolution and wins back their city
1830	The Belgian Revolution
1830	Liege gains independence after the Belgian Revolution
1831	Leopold I crowned first king of Belgium



The Netherlands

Reclaimed from the Sea

Are you ready? We've got our helmets on and our packs are laden with healthy energy bars and bottles of water. We have a 25km (or 15 mile) bicycle journey ahead of us into the city of Maastricht in the Netherlands and it should take us less than two hours to get there. We'll be sticking to the country

roads so that we can enjoy the tranquil Dutch scenery along the way.

Many people mistakenly refer to the country of the Netherlands as "Holland," but Holland is just a region and a former province on the western coast of the Netherlands, which is actually the shortened version for the official name of the country—The Kingdom of the Netherlands.

When we get to the border of the Netherlands, we'll take a little break, eat a snack, and I'll tell you more about this next and final country we are going to visit before our journey comes to an end.



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Ancient tribes have settled in the area of the Netherlands since the earliest recorded history. These early people groups farmed and fished for their living. In fact, the oldest canoe in the world was found here in the Netherlands.

The Romans, under Julius Caesar, ventured this far north and conquered most of this part of Europe during the Gallic Wars between 57 BC and 53 BC. After the Romans were driven out, the Franks claimed the northern territory as their own. Some of the Franks moved south and started to use a language that would eventually become French. Other Franks stayed in the north and continued to speak their old Frankish language, which eventually became Old Dutch. This was the beginning of the Dutch-French language boundary that we learned about in Belgium, where the people in the north speak Dutch while the people in the south speak French. What language do you think that the people of Maastricht in southern Netherlands speak? We'll find out very soon! But since we are not there yet, let's finish up our history lesson.

The Frankish Carolingian Empire ruled most of Western Europe. In 843, it was divided into three parts: East, Middle, and West Francia. The Netherlands was included in Middle Francia. Various kingdoms governed the land over the years. Even the Vikings ruled this area for a while, setting up outposts from which to send forth raiders to other settlements along the coast.



Battle at Haarlemmermeer, 26 May 1573 by Hendrick Cornelisz Vroom, public domain image, CC BY-SA 3.0.

When the Viking reign came to an end, the Netherlands was included in the territory ruled by the Holy Roman Empire during the 10th and 11th centuries. However, at about the same time, the Netherlands was growing wealthier. Farmers were planting crops for export, and cities and towns began to grow. In France, Philip the Good of Burgundy united the lands of the Netherlands and Belgium in 1433. His Burgundian Kingdom and the Spanish Habsburg Empire ruled the Low Countries until 1581. But with more wars over this region, the Netherlands didn't receive their full independence until 1648.

Their independence ushered in the “Golden Age” when the Dutch Republic ruled itself. The capital city of Amsterdam, in particular, became very wealthy during the Golden Age. Later, The Kingdom of the Netherlands was formed and King William I became its first king.

Much later, after the world wars of the 20th century, the Netherlands formed an alliance with Belgium and Luxembourg. Benelux, which we learned about during our Luxembourg adventure, reflects the names of their three countries. All three of these nations were founding members of the European Union.

We have now arrived at the present and at our destination—Maastricht, the capital city of the province of Limburg. The Meuse River that we crossed both in Dinant and Liege also flows through this city.

But the question remains... Which language is spoken in Maastricht? Believe it or not, the residents of this **university** city speak five languages. Dutch is the national language; many schools teach French, and several schools and universities also teach German and English. What is the fifth language? It is Limburgish, which is a Dutch/Belgian dialect with a French influence.

There is the Helpoort Gate, translated as “Hell’s Gate.” Built around 1230, it is the oldest gate in the Netherlands. It was named “Helpoort” because it once held prisoners within its tower. This gate is one of the last remaining portions of the old wall. We’ll return our bicycles to the bike rental shop in Vrijthof Square, the living room of Maastricht. This lively city center is surrounded by outdoor cafés and hosts concerts, festivals, and special events throughout the year. This quaint, cobblestoned square is ideal for enjoying the sunshine, sitting on benches, and strolling along the tree-covered lanes. There are many people riding bikes through this part of town, just like us.

Past the Markt, the old medieval marketplace turned modern shopping center, we’ll find the train station. We are on our way north to Gouda, the city famous for its delicious cheese of the same name. It seems that there are many towns named after cheese, or cheese named after towns, in this region—Gouda, Limburger, and Muenster, to name a few.

The Netherlands is not only famous for its cheese, but also for its ships, flowers, wooden shoes, and windmills. We’ll get to see all of these things as we travel through Dutch country.

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We'll pass through two major cities on our way to little Gouda—Rotterdam and The Hague. Rotterdam is the largest seaport in Europe, and The Hague is where the Dutch government resides.

Pull out your map of the Netherlands. Do you see anything unusual about the shape or appearance of the country? Belgium borders the Netherlands to the south, Germany to the east, and the North Sea rims its north and west sides. Three massive **estuaries** form the southwest corner of the country. An estuary is the tidal mouth of a large river where it joins the sea. These are the three mighty rivers—the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Scheldt—that empty into the ocean along with their tributaries, forming a large **delta**. A delta is a triangular landform created from **sediment** deposited at the mouth of a river, where it divides into several outlets. Another great river—the Waal—divides the country in two. The wide waterway triggered a cultural and **linguistic** distinction between the two halves. The people of the north speak low Dutch, whereas the people in the south speak French.

The word *Netherlands* means “low countries” because the prefix *nether* means “low” or “below” (just like *netherworld* means “under world” or *nethermost* that means the “lowest or farthest down”). This *nether* land is very low and very flat. Since half of the country is less than one meter (or three feet) above sea level, this is a fitting name. Even more astonishing, over a quarter of the country is sitting below sea level. Perhaps you are wondering how this can be. We'll discover that soon, but here is another thought to ponder: about 17% of the Netherlands's land area has been reclaimed from the sea and lakes.

Since the 16th century, the Dutch people have added more land area to their country by taking it back from the North Sea! They have built a very complicated system of canals, **dikes**, and pumping stations that have turned swampy land covered with water, into dry land, suitable for settlements and agriculture. This is how they have reclaimed land from the ocean. This newly claimed land is called **polder**.



Polder, reclaimed land, by Martina Nolte, public domain image, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Can you guess what they used to pump the water out of the areas that are below sea level? That's right! Windmills! Starting back in the 13th century, Dutch engineers began using the power of the wind to pump the water out of the areas that they wanted to dry out to use for growing crops. The Dutch people are incredibly ingenious and forward thinking to make the most of their land and also to protect it from flooding.

<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/dev/media-files-acg4-ch15-netherlands/>

The train is pulling into the town of Gouda. There is a square here appropriately named the Cheese Market, which has been selling Gouda cheese since the High Middle Ages. Right past the Stadhuis, or Old Townhall, is a quaint little cheese shop that is passing out samples for people to taste. The cheese made from cow's milk is a creamy shade of yellow and has a mild, almost nutty flavor. Perhaps that is why it is one of the most preferred cheeses in the world. Do you like it?



That little bite of cheese reminds us that it is time for lunch! A block from here is a restaurant that serves Rijsttafel, which means “rice table” in Dutch. We don’t even need to look at a menu because the food will be served directly to our table, family-style.

Rijsttafel is an Indonesian meal that became popular in the Netherlands during the time when the Dutch settled a colony in Indonesia. Rice, of course, is the main part of the meal, with up to 40 side dishes served in small portions alongside it, so we can taste several. Some of the side dishes include egg rolls, pickles, vegetables, fruit, fish, and other tantalizing bite-sized morsels. One dish is called gado-gado. It is a vegetable dish served with a peanut sauce. Pisang goreng is a plate of banana fritters; and perkedel is a meat and potato patty. There are several types of satay—chicken, pork, and seafood—skewered on a stick and grilled to perfection.

Delicious! Even though the individual servings were small, there were several. Our lunch was a true feast.

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It's time to head back to the train station and travel to Lisse. Lisse is a small town in the Dutch Bulb Region of the Netherlands. Springtime is the ideal time to see tulips in bloom. Keukenhof Gardens, outside the town of Lisse, is one of the largest flower gardens in the world. Often referred to as the Garden of Europe, Keukenhof Gardens is the former hunting grounds of the Keukenhof Castle. In the 15th century, the garden was originally a source of herbs for the countess of the castle, Jacqueline. In 1949, the mayor of the city decided that the grounds should serve as a show-stopping flower exhibit, where growers from all over the country, even the world, could show off their prize blooms.

There are over seven million flower bulbs—in 800 varieties—planted at Keukenhof that bloom each spring. The garden, which is nearly 80 acres in size, displays an astonishing array of tulips in every color imaginable. Other types of flowers are planted in the garden as well, including narcissi, hyacinths, lilies, and dahlias. The rainbow of field flowers is also punctuated by a water garden and a Japanese garden for visitors to enjoy as they meander through the colorful fields.

The afternoon sun is lowering in the sky and a breeze is picking up. Pull your sweater around yourself a bit tighter and let's head back to the town center to find a hotel for the night. It's a bit chilly today. The Netherlands is considered a moderate maritime climate. The word *maritime* refers to the sea, which is usually rather chilly, and *moderate* means that the winters are mild, but the summers are cool. In other words, it never gets very warm here.

Let's get a good rest and then tomorrow, we'll pick up where we left off. Our first stop in the morning will be the capital of the Netherlands: Amsterdam!



Keukenhof Gardens, by Gnuckx, public domain image, CC BY-SA 3.0.

But first, tell me what you remember about...

Geography:

What is different about the shape of the Kingdom of the Netherlands? Name the countries that border the Netherlands. Describe the topography of the country – the physical features such as estuaries, mountains, rivers and deltas.

Why was the country named the Netherlands? Describe how the Netherlands reclaims land area from the sea and protects its land from flooding. What is the newly claimed land called?

Iconic Netherlands:

What is the Netherlands famous for? Which city is nicknamed the “Garden of Europe” and why? What would you find during a visit to Keukenhof Gardens? Which of these do you think would be your favorite?



Dam on the River Amstel

Here in Lisse, we are very close to the capital city of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. There is an intercity train that departs from Lisse in a few minutes, makes a stop at the airport, and then continues to downtown Amsterdam. We'll be there in less than an hour.

Amsterdam is a very populated city with over 1.5 million residents living within the **metropolitan** area. About 16 million people live in the entire country, which means that about 10% of them live in or around the capital.

The name Amsterdam comes from the word *Amstelredamme*, meaning “a **dam** on the river Amstel” for which the city was named. In the 12th century, Amsterdam was little more a small fishing village. After the floods of 1170 and 1173, the residents built a bridge and a dam to protect the village from future flooding.

The city grew and over the centuries, it became more and more powerful and exceedingly wealthy through trade with other cities and nearby states. For a little while, Amsterdam and the larger Netherlands were ruled by Spain. But the Dutch people did not like answering to Spain, a Roman Catholic nation that did not allow Protestants and other religious groups in the Netherlands to worship freely. The Dutch people rebelled and pushed the Spanish out of their city and out of their country.

The Netherlands became a sanctuary where everyone could worship as they pleased. **Jews** from Spain flocked into Amsterdam; Protestant **Huguenots** flooded in from France; **Puritans** sailed across the

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English Channel. People from every nation, tongue, and tribe came to the Netherlands to celebrate religious freedom.

Amsterdam ushered in the “Golden Age” during the 17th century and became the wealthiest city in the world. Ships sailed from Amsterdam’s ports to places around the world, far and near, to trade with other countries for their exquisite treasures. Dutch ships sailed the ocean blue to exotic places, such as India, Brazil, Indonesia, Africa, Sri Lanka, North America, and ports in the Baltic Sea.

With transactions occurring across the globe, large trading organizations—such as the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company—formed to handle the massive network of trade. Not only did the Dutch form a worldwide business conglomeration, they also established settlements in far-off places on the earth—settlements that would become strategic Dutch colonies, further increasing their trade opportunities around the globe.

The “Golden Age” ended, and Amsterdam’s opulence crumbled. The Netherlands lost control during the wars with England and France. Then, France merged the Netherlands into their empire. However, in 1815, the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was founded and the Dutch people ruled themselves once again.

Germany invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg in 1940. But the Dutch people are resilient and clever, as we learned earlier. Many citizens of Amsterdam refused to be bullied by the Nazi **regime** and hid Jewish people in their homes to keep them safely out of the clutches of the Germans. One of the most visited places in Amsterdam is the house of Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl who was hidden for several years in the home of a brave family of Amsterdam.

The train is pulling into Centraal Station near the Old Centre in the medieval part of the city. This is Dam Square, which was named after the dam on the Amstel River, of course. From the middle of the square, we can see the Royal Palace, which was built during the “Golden Age” using yellow sandstone brought over from Germany. At the top of the palace is a weather vane in the shape of a ship, highlighting Amsterdam’s long history in shipping and trade. It was once a palace for the Dutch royal family.

Did you know there was a king of the Netherlands? You probably guessed it since we already learned that the name of the country is the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The current king’s name is Willem-Alexander and now he only uses this palace for official events, such as receptions for leaders of other countries.

The building next to the Royal Palace is called the Nieuwe Kerk, which means the “new church.” The new church looks rather old, doesn’t it? It was once a new church, but that was back in 1408. Later, a fire destroyed the Nieuwe Kerk, so it was rebuilt in 1645. The old church became new again.



Photo of Amsterdam in Autumn, licensed through Adobe Stock Photos.

Now the church is not even used as a church. While the people of the Netherlands still pride themselves on their freedom of religion, not many people here attend church services. Now, the church is used for special occasions, such as royal weddings and music concerts.

Just down the street is the Walloon Church. In the late 15th century, Roman Catholics built this Protestant church before the dawn of Protestantism. “Walloon,” you may recall, refers to the French-speaking people who came from the southern part of the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. In 1586, the church was given to French-speaking Protestants, who had fled from Southern Netherlands and France looking for religious freedom in Amsterdam. The church has held services in French every Sunday since, for over 400 years. In 1877, the famous painter, Vincent van Gogh, regularly attended services here to listen to sermons delivered by his uncle Johannes Paulus, the pastor of Walloon Church at that time.

A little further down the road is the old headquarters of the Dutch East India Company. Once a building that housed important maps, documents, ships, and crewmembers, the building is now used by the University of Amsterdam.

Amsterdam is a bustling city, with many people getting around on foot, bicycle, car, bus, and boat. While Amsterdam is famous for many things, there is one image that is conjured up by many when

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they hear the name of this old city—canals! Canals have been used to get around by boat during the summer and on ice skates during the winter. Today, we get to take a boat tour through the canals of Amsterdam.

We'll retrace our steps to get back to the place where the boat tour begins. Look there to your left! Do you see that narrow house? It is a miniature version of a typical Amsterdam canal house squished between the other row houses, measuring only 2 meters (6 feet 8 inches) wide and just 5 meters (16 feet 5 inches) long, it is the smallest and narrowest house on the whole European continent.

Here we are at the Canal Ring. During the 17th century, the Canal Ring was built for wealthy homeowners—which you may remember was the “Golden Age” of Amsterdam. There is the Anne Frank House, which is now a museum to tell her story. Do you know it?

During World War II, German soldiers invaded the Netherlands. In an attempt to create a society of only **Aryan** people (that is, those with blond hair and blue eyes), they invaded cities and rounded up all of the people of Jewish heritage or other nationalities and sent them off by train to prison camps.



Narrowest house, by Rudolfous, public domain image, CC BY-SA 3.0.

The people of Amsterdam were outraged and many families hid their neighbors and friends in secret rooms or basements in their homes. Anne Frank was a Jewish girl in hiding, who wrote down the things that happened during this scary time in history. After the war, her journal was published as *The Diary of a Young Girl*. The title was later changed to *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Maybe you have heard of it.

Anne's story began in 1942. On Anne's 13th birthday, her father bought her a red-checkered notebook, in which she began to record her thoughts and musings within a couple days of receiving it. About three weeks later, her sister was summoned to report to a Nazi work camp. Instead of complying, she and her family—her father, mother, and older sister—chose to hide out in a tiny back room of this building along with her father's business partner and three members of his family. A movable bookcase concealed the door from view.

Sadly, the Frank family was betrayed. Someone informed the German soldiers about their secret hiding place. Both families, including Anne, were taken from the house and sent to prison camps in Poland and Germany. All of them died there, except Anne's father, who published Anne's diary in 1947, a couple of years after the war ended.

This museum and Anne's story are crucial to understanding what happened during World War II and learning to accept all people—regardless of their race or religion.

Here is our boat. This glass-bottomed vessel will take us through many of the canals that flow through old town Amsterdam. There are 165 canals in total, so we won't get to see them all!

The houses along the canals are called canal houses. Tall and narrow, builders were trying to squeeze as many people into this city as possible. Instead of building out, they built up. Most houses in these neighborhoods are three or four stories tall. Protruding out from the top of many of the canal houses are stout wooden beams. These were used to haul furniture and other large items to the upper floors with thick ropes and pulleys because the staircases inside were too narrow to accommodate them.

There are many things to notice when boating up and down the canals. There are several bridges and most of the lower ones are **drawbridges**—they can be pulled up to allow the boats to pass by. On the narrow canals, there is barely enough room for two boats to pass by each other. The larger canals, however, have **houseboats** lined up on both sides. Like the permanent houses on the streets, houseboat residents decorate their windowsills with flower boxes filled with colorful blooms of every shade and variety. How would you like to live on a houseboat? Here is one thing to consider: if you discovered that you cannot get along with your neighbor, it's easy to move.



Amsterdam houseboat, by Valerie Everett, public domain image, CC BY-SA 3.0.

A Child's Geography

Speaking of moving, it's time to get going. Our train departs from Centraal Station very soon. We have one more quick train ride. We are heading north of Amsterdam to a place called Zaanse Schans. I cannot wait to show it to you!

The Netherlands is famous for many things—cheese, flowers, canals—but nothing is more Dutch than the churning of a windmill on a blustery day. Zaanse Schans is a collection of some of the finest preserved windmills and their houses in all of the Netherlands. It's like an open-air, living history museum.



Photo of a windmill at Zaanse Schans, licensed through Adobe Stock Photos.

The path to the windmills is serene. The setting is perfect. Ducks paddle through the canals and under bridges. Old traditional green wooden houses dot the path on our way to the windmills. People live in these houses, so we can't go inside but they are lovely to look at from the outside. The residents keep their homes and yards tidy, decorating their windowsills with vibrant flower boxes.

The Zaan River and the windmills are just ahead. They date from the 1600's to the 1800's. We can go inside all eight of them, and they are still in perfect working condition. The mills have been used for different purposes over the years—sawmills, oil mills, a dye mill, and a mustard mill. Each of them has a name that sounds like a title of a nursery rhyme or an **Aesop's Fable** in English.

Here they are: the Cat, the Cloverleaf, the Crowned Poelenberg, the Houseman, the Ox, the Seeker, the Spotted Hen, and the Young Sheep.

And so our journey through the Netherlands has come to an end, but we couldn't have ended it on a better note. We have tasted cheese, strolled through endless tulips, floated down canals, and watched operational windmills at work. The Dutch people are ingenious for sure, but they are also courageous and sacrificial, hospitable to the very end.

Our tour of Medieval Kingdoms may have come to an end, but not our geographic adventures. We can explore more regions of our glorious globe together through previous and future volumes of *A Child's Geography*. Our next adventure together is just a book away. In the meantime, keep asking questions, recording notes, and taking photographs, storing these memories in your mind and heart. Having the heart of a geographer means having a heart for the world. Come! Let's go into all the world together!

But first, tell me what you remember about...

History:

The Kingdom of the Netherlands has such a rich history! Tell me what you remember about the capital city of the Netherlands. How was Amsterdam's trade affected by the "Golden Age"? What does the name Amsterdam mean? Why did people of other nations migrate to the Netherlands centuries ago?

How did the people of the Netherlands respond to Germany during World War II? Tell me about Anne Frank.

Culture:

What do you remember about the churches that we visited in Amsterdam? Would you like to attend a church service given in the French language?

How do people in the bustling city of Amsterdam get around? What makes traveling in and around this city different from many others?

When I think of the Netherlands, I always think of windmills! Name some of the various uses for windmills.

Conclusion:

Now that we are at the end of our tour of Medieval Kingdoms, which country would you like to visit the most? Tell me why?



Timeline of Switzerland

- AD 1291 ↑ Old Swiss Confederacy formed
- AD 1889 ↓ Funicular built in Zurich

Timeline of Austria

- 7000 BC ↑ People start mining salt in Hallstatt
- 800-400 BC Hallstatt Era
- AD 1429 Innsbruck founded
- AD 1460 Imperial Palace built in Innsbruck
- AD 1553 Gothic Hofkirche built in Innsbruck
- AD 1918 World War I and the Habsburg dynasty end
- AD 1992 ↓ Rhine-Main-Danube Canal completed

Timeline of the Netherlands

- 57 – 53 BC ↑ The Netherlands become part of the Roman Empire
- AD 1170 Amsterdamers build a bridge and a dam to protect the village from flooding
- AD 1200s Dutch people begin using windmills to pump water away from their land
- AD 1230 The Helpoort Gate is constructed
- AD 1408 Nieuwe Kerk built
- AD 1433 Belgium and the Netherlands are united by Phillip the Good Of Burgundy
- AD 1586 Walloon Church begins holding services
- 1600 – 1800 The Zaanse Schans windmills are built
- 1600s Amsterdam becomes the wealthiest city in the world
- 1645 Nieuwe Kerk rebuilt after being destroyed in a fire
- 1648 The Netherlands receive their full independence
- 1815 The Dutch people gain independence
- 1940 Germany invades the Netherlands
- 1942 Anne Frank begins her diary
- 1947 ↓ The Diary of Anne Frank is published after her death

Glossary

A Aesop's Fables	A collection of short stories written in Ancient Greece between 620 and 560 BC, by a writer named Aesop. Each story contains a moral, or life lesson. One of the most famous is "The Tortoise and the Hare."
Agriculture	The science or practice of growing crops or raising animals.
Allegiance	Devotion or loyalty to a person, country or cause.
Alpine	Relating to the Alps, a European mountain range.
Altitude	Height or elevation.
Amphibious	Suitable for use/life both on land and in the water.
Apothecary	A person or shop that prepared and sold medicines.
Aqueduct	A bridge-like structure that carried water from one place to another, often over an obstacle like a valley or ravine.
Archaeology	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.
Archangel	A high-ranking angel.
Archipelago	A group or chain of islands.
Armory	A place where armor and weapons are made or stored.
Artifacts	A man-made object, especially one of cultural or archaeological significance.
Aryan	A term used by the Nazis for their idea of the ideal race of people. Aryan people are characterized by Nordic features, namely tall with blond hair and blue eyes.

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B Baguette	A thin, long loaf of French bread.
Barbarians	In ancient Rome and Greece, this word referred to people of another country or race. It can also be used to refer to people who are uncivilized.
Barges	Large boats used to transport merchandise.
Baroque	A style of art and music that was common in the 17th and 18th centuries. The defining characteristic of the Baroque style was its complex and dramatic decorations.
Basilica	A large church building.
Belfry	A bell tower.
Black Death	Also known as the Bubonic Plague, the Black Death was an epidemic spread by rats. This disease killed about 1/3rd of the European population between 1348 and 1352 AD.
Blacksmith	A person who makes things with iron, such as horseshoes.
Bluff	A steep bank or cliff.
Briny	Salty.
Brogue	A regional accent, usually Irish or Scottish.
Bullet Train	A high-speed train for transporting passengers.
C Calanque	A steep-walled inlet or cove formed out of water soluble dolomite or limestone usually found in a karstic region along the Mediterranean Sea.
Canals	A man-made waterway used for irrigation or transport.
Cantons	Smaller territorial divisions of a country.
Carbon Dating	A method of finding out the age of a very old object by measuring the amount of radioactive carbon it contains.
Cathedral	A large church that is run by a bishop.
Catholic	Relating to the Roman Catholic Church.
Chivalry	A set of rules and values that knights in the Middle Ages were expected to follow.
Chocolatier	A person who makes or sells chocolate.

Circumnavigate	To go all the way around something.
Citadel	A fortress or strongly fortified building in or near a city, used as a place of refuge.
City-State	An independent state consisting of a sovereign city and its surrounding territory.
Climate	The weather of a certain area.
Coin minter	A person who makes coins and currency.
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.
Concentration camps	A type of prison where many people are held, often under terrible conditions.
Confederation	A group of nations or people that are united in some activity or cause.
Convent	A place where a group of nuns live.
Corniche	A road that has been carved into the edge of a cliff, especially one that runs along the coast
Coronation	A ceremony for crowning a new King or Queen.
Cosmopolitan	A person or place that shows a wide interest in many different cultures.
Crepes	Thin pancakes, usually folded and filled with something.
Cupola	A rounded roof or ceiling. A dome.
D Dam	A barrier built across a body of water to restrict water flow.
Dauphin	A prince of France.
Delta	A piece of land where a river spits into many smaller rivers before meeting the ocean.
Denominations	Different types of churches that hold different beliefs.
Dialect	A variation on a language that is used in a certain region, characterized by different accents, words, pronunciations, etc.
Dikes	Man-made banks built to prevent flooding or to control water flow.

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Doilies	A round piece of lace used for decoration.
Double Helix	Two parallel lines that twist around each other.
Drawbridge	A bridge that can be pulled up or down to allow or prevent passage.
Duchy	A territory controlled by a Duke or Duchess.
Dukedoms	A territory controlled by a Duke.
Dynasty	A family whose descendants rule an area for a long time.
E Elevation	How high something is located, often measured in relation to sea level.
Enclave	An enclave is a country, or portion of a country, that is entirely surrounded by another country.
Entourage	A group of people who follow and assist someone of importance.
Epidemic	Something that effects a large number of a population.
Estuaries	The part of a river that meets the sea.
European Union	A political and economic organization of many of the countries in Europe.
F Feudal/Feudalism	A medieval social system characterized by lords ruling over people who pledged loyalty and service in return for protection.
Fiefdoms	Areas ruled over by feudal lords.
Fjord	A narrow channel of the sea between high cliffs or hills.
Fleur-de-lis	A stylized flower used in medieval and renaissance designs.
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.
Foothills	Hills next to higher hills or mountains.
Frescoes	Paintings that were created by painting on wet plaster.
Funicular	A railway or cable system that carries passengers up and down a hill or mountain.
G Gallic	Relating to the people of France.

Game preserve	A piece of land where fishing and hunting are carefully controlled for the preservation of certain animals.
Gargoyles	A drain spout formed in the shape of a grotesque animal or human figure.
Gilded	Covered with a thin layer of gold.
Glaciers	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.
Goldsmith	A person who makes things out of gold.
Gorge	A narrow canyon.
Gothic	A style of architecture that was popular in Europe between the 12th and 16th centuries. Thin, pointed arches and large windows characterize the Gothic style.
GPS	Global Positioning System. A navigational system that uses satellites and radio signals to pinpoint a user's location or to give directions.
Grappling hooks	A multi-pronged hook attached to a rope, typically used for climbing.
Guilds	An organization of people in the same occupation.
Guillotine	A machine with a sliding blade used for executions.
H Half-timbered	Constructed with wood framing filled in with masonry.
Hamlet	A small village or town.
Headwaters	The place where a river or stream starts.
Hemispheres	The two regions of the Earth as divided by the Equator into North and South.
Heresy/Heretics	Someone who believes and/or teaches a belief that goes against what is taught by the Christian Church.
Hostel	An inexpensive place to stay, usually for youth.
Hot springs	A place where hot water comes up out of the ground.
Houseboats	A boat that is built for use as a home.
Huguenots	Members of the French Reformation.

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I	Inlet	A narrow bay off of a lake or the sea.
	Insurrection	A revolt against an authority or government.
J	Jews	A people group or those who practice the religion of Judaism.
K	Karst/Karstic	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).
L	Lagoon	A pool of water that is separated from the main body of water by a reef or sandbar or other barrier.
	Land Bridge	A strip of land that connects two different landmasses.
	Landlocked	Entirely or almost entirely surrounded by land.
	Linguistic	Relating to language.
	Locks	A segment of a canal that is closed off with gates and is used to raise boats up and down.
	Lugers	People who practice the sport of luge, which is racing down an ice track on a small sled.
M	Madonna	Mary, the mother of Jesus.
	Maritime	Relating to navigation or commerce conducted on the sea.
	Massif	A principal mountain mass.
	Megalith	A large, rough-hewn rock used as a monument or as part of a building.
	Metropolitan	Relating to a large city and its surrounding towns.
	Micronation	A piece of land that claims to be its own nation, but is not officially recognized by other governments.
	Microstates	An extremely small nation, both in size and in population.
	Millinery	A business that makes and/or sells women's hats.
	Mistral	A strong, cold, northerly wind in southern France.
	Moat	A deep and wide ditch usually filled with water, dug around a fortified place to keep out intruders.
	Monarchy	A country ruled by a king or queen.

Monument	A statue, building, etc. built to honor a person or event.
Mosaic	An artistic image created from small bits of colored glass, stone, or other available materials.
Muslin	Thin cotton cloth.
N Nave	The long central part of a church.
Neoclassical	A style of art, music, architecture, etc., that sought to mimic the old Classical style of the Greeks and Romans.
Neolithic	Relating to the Stone Age.
Neutrality/neutral	A person or country that does not choose a side during a war or political conflict.
Nymph	A mythical spirit in the form of a young woman that lived in the forests, waters or mountains.
O Omen	A sign or warning of a future event.
Outpost	A military camp that is far away from the main center of activity.
Oxbow	A section of a river that forms a “U” shape.
P Papal	Relating to the Pope or the Roman Catholic Church.
Paparazzi	Photographers that aggressively follow celebrities to try to get photos to sell to newspapers and magazines.
Peninsula	A piece of land that is bordered by water on three sides but connected to mainland.
Pilgrimage	A journey taken for religious purposes.
Pinnacle	A narrow tower, or the highest point of something.
Plateau	A flat piece of land that is higher than the surrounding areas.
Pralines	A crunchy candy made of sugar and nuts.
Protestant	A member of any Christian church that is not part of the Roman Catholic Church.
Proxy	A person who is authorized to act on behalf of another.

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Puritans	A group of Protestants in England and New England during the 16th and 17th centuries who opposed many of the beliefs of the Church of England.
Pyramid	A structure with a square base and four triangular sides.
Q Quarry	A place from which rock and stone is extracted.
R Ramparts	Tall, thick walls built for protection.
Razed	Completely destroyed.
Regatta	A boat race or a series of boat races.
Regime	A form of government or management.
Renewable Resource	A renewable resource is a resource that is replaced naturally and can be used again.
Robber Barons	Unscrupulous feudal lords who amassed personal fortunes by using illegal and immoral business practices, such as illegally charging tolls to passing merchant ships.
Rural	Relating to the country.
S Sea level	The average height of the sea's surface. Often used as the baseline for measuring elevation.
Sediment	Matter, such as sand, that is carried along or settles in water.
Silt/silting	Sand, mud, soil, etc., that is carried along by water and settles at the bottom of rivers, ponds, etc.
Silversmith	A person who makes things out of silver.
Siren	A mythological creature that looked like a beautiful woman and lured sailors to their deaths by singing to them from the rocks.
Spanish Inquisition	The Inquisition (or investigation) in Spain from 1480 to 1834 to guard the orthodoxy (or beliefs) of the Catholic Church, marked by the extreme cruelty of its proceedings during the 16 th century.
Spire	A pointed upper part of a tower.
Stained glass windows	Windows made of small pieces of colored glass that form a pattern or picture.

Stalactite	A pointed structure hanging from the roof of a cave, formed by mineral deposits left by dripping water.
Stalagmite	A pointed structure sticking out of the floor of a cave, formed by mineral deposits left by dripping water.
Strait	A narrow strip of water that connects two larger bodies of water.
Stronghold	A fortified place where people can defend themselves from attack.
Suspension Bridge	A bridge held up by cables.
Swedish Caterpillar	A tractor intended for rough terrain, propelled by two endless belts, or tracks, that pass over a number of wheels.
Symphony	A long piece of music performed by an orchestra.
T Tapas	A wide variety of appetizers served in Spain.
Tapestry	A heavy woven cloth, often embroidered or woven with pictures.
Telepherique/ Gondola	A vehicle suspended from a cable used to transport passengers up a mountain.
Terraces	Flat areas created on the side of a hill.
Topography	The characteristics of an area of land, including hills, valleys, etc.
Transatlantic	Involving people or places on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.
Transepts	A part of a church that is perpendicular to the nave, and gives the church the shape of a cross.
Treasury	A place where valuables and money are kept.
Trench warfare	A style of fighting where both sides fight each other from trenches dug into the ground.
Tributaries	A stream that feeds a larger stream or river.
Trilingual	Speaking three languages.
Trolled	To fish, or seek to capture prey, by moving up and down a waterway in a slow-moving boat.
Trolley	A vehicle that runs on tracks embedded in the street.

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Truffle	A chocolate candy with a soft center.
U Uber	Extreme.
UNESCO Word Heritage Site	A place designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as a place of historical or cultural significance.
University	A college offering degree programs.
V Vellum	A smooth material made from animal skin used for making books.
Villa	A large house in the country.
W Watershed	An area of land where all water drains into one river or lake.
Westerly	A wind that blows from the west.
World's Fair	An international event featuring exhibitions from all over the world.
Y Yodeling	A style of singing in which the singer repeatedly switches from a natural pitch to falsetto and back again.
Yoke	A bar attached to the heads of two oxen or horses so that they can pull a plow or other heavy load.
Z Zenith	The highest point that the sun or moon reaches in the sky.



About the author...

Terri has been married to Todd for 27 years and is mom to six delightful children, whom she has taught at home for 18 years. She is the author of *Map Trek*, *Wonders of Old*, *What Really Happened* and two volumes of the *Child's Geography* series. She is a self-professed homebody, except when she is traveling. She hopes to visit all seven continents one day. Some of the things that Terri loves are coffee, photography, coconut, Jesus, the Word, chocolate, writing, reading, walking, smoothies, marketing, country living and running two businesses (not in that order). You can learn more about her at these places online: knowledgequestmaps.com, terristake.com, countrysidepetspa.com.

Colophon: The fonts used in this book are Chaparral Pro, Helvetical Neue, Cardinal, and Prince Valiant. The paper is 70lb stock, glossy finish and the binding has been Smyth-sewn.