

Federal Republic of Germany

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Berlin
Language: German
Currency: Euro
Population: 83 million, 232 per km² (2018)
Surface: 357 578 km²

2) History:

In the past Germany was made up by numerous principalities and several kingdoms. After the wars against Austria and France the German Empire was founded in 1871. This fell apart after World War I. In 1918 the Weimar Republic was established, which came to an end in 1933, with Hitler and the National Socialists coming into power.

After World War II (1939 – 1945) Germany was divided and the FRG and GDR were founded. In 1961 a wall was built to separate the two states.

In 1990 Germany was reunited, and ever since October 3rd has been celebrated as the Day of German Unity.

Germany has been a member of the EU since 1992.

3) The Danube:

The Danube is made up by the confluence of the rivers Brigach and Breg near Donaueschingen, but the river is navigable only from Kelheim onwards. With 618 km it is the fourth longest river, but plays an important role only in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. The Danube is seen as a symbol of the European reunification and extension, because it flows from the west to the east. In addition, it links historic events like the Swabian migration with recent events, like the falling of the Berlin Wall. Consequently, countries formerly separated by the Iron Curtain, are accessible again.

4) Special features:

Geography: lowlands, low mountain ranges, the Alps (with the Zugspitze 2962 m)

Famous people: J.W. Von Goethe, F. Schiller, J.S. Bach, L.v. Beethoven, Immanuel Kant, Hans and Sophie Scholl

Word box: Swabian settlers of the Danube, the tailor from Ulm, the Ulmer Schachtel (a historic ship), the International Donaufest Ulm/Neu-Ulm, football world

Republic of Bulgaria

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Sofia
Language: Bulgarian (Cyrillic)
Currency: Lew (0,51Euro in 3/2019)
Population: 7,02 million, 64 per km² (2018)
Surface: 110 910 km²

2) History:

The first settlements of the Thracian tribes go back 7 000 years into the past. From that time precious pieces of gold work were found. At the end of the 13th century the Thracian state declined and became part of the Ottoman empire. The Ottomans occupied the country up to 1878.

In the year 1908 Bulgaria became an independent tsarist empire. After World War II the country fell under the influence of the Soviet Union. 1990 marked the end of the Communist era.

In 2007 Bulgaria became a member of the European Union.

3) The Danube:

The Danube flows ca. 500 km along the border between Bulgaria and Romania and allows transportation for trade. However, due to the sparsely populated regions in the area, it isn't of great importance. The so-called „Bridge of Freedom“ is the only bridge that connects Bulgaria and Romania.

4) Special features:

Geography: the largest part of the country is covered by forests (poplars, willows, elms)

Famous people: Elias Canetti (writer), Peter Petrov (inventor of the first digital clock)

Word box: rose oil, Marteniza, tourist destinations of the Black Sea

Republic of Moldova

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Chisinau
Language: Romanian
Currency: Moldavan Lew (1 MDL=0,05 Euro 3/2019)
Population: 3 547 million, 105 per km² (2018)
Surface: 33 847 km²

2) History:

In the 14th century the region of Moldova became a part of the principality of that name, and again and again was at the mercy of the surrounding nations.

In the 16th century it fell under the rule of the Ottomans, followed by a constant change of rule in the ensuing centuries.

In 1812 Moldova became a part of Russia, and in 1918 the country was annexed by the Romanian monarchy. In 1941 Moldova declared its independence of the Soviet Union, to which it had belonged for one year. There are two separate regions: Transnistria and Gagauzia.

3) The Danube:

It touches the country on a length of 500 m only.

4) Special features:

Geography: fertile soil for viniculture and fruit growing, a warm and dry climate, with Cricova as the biggest wine-cellar in the world

Word box: Sheriff, the harbour of Giurgiulesti, the band Lautari

Austria

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Vienna
Language: German
Currency: Euro
Population: 8,82 million, 105 per km² (2018)
Surface: 83 879 km²

2) History:

Through the migration of the peoples, which started already in the time B.C. and went on until 800 A.D., different ethnic groups, like Slavs and Southern Germans, mixed in Austria. From 976 A.D. the House of Habsburg ruled over the country, which constantly expanded and became one of the most powerful empires in Europe. Vienna as the centre of the Habsburg Monarchy has always been of great historic importance for the idea of a shared Danube space, since it united peoples and ideas.

From 1867 until 1918 there was the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. After the defeat in World War II the Habsburg empire broke apart and the First Austrian Republic was founded. In 1938 Austria was integrated into national socialist Germany and given the name of „the Ostmark“.

Only after the end of World War II the country regained its independence. Since 1995 Austria has been a member of the EU.

3) The Danube:

The Danube flows through Austria over a length of 349 km. Between Passau and Linz it changes its course by 180° („Schlögenger Schlinge“). In the south of Vienna there is the national park of the „Donauauen“, one of the largest, mostly untouched pasture landscapes in Central Europe.

4) Special features:

Geography: the largest proportion of the land is covered by the Alps.

Famous people: Sigmund Freud, Bertha von Suttner, Mozart and other composers, Klimt and other artists, Schwarzenegger, Elyas M'Barek

Word box: the Danube Monarchy, the Hofburg of Vienna, the Viennese Stephansdom, Schönbrunn Palace, the Vienna Walz, Swarovski

Romania

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Bukarest
Language: Romanian
Currency: Leu (1 Leu 0,21 Euro 3/2019)
Population: 18 969 million, 80 per km² (2018)
Surface: 238 391 km²

2) History:

Romania was formed out of the principalities of Walachei and Moldau, which became united in 1878 as a monarchy. After World War I it was joined by Transsilvania (Siebenbürgen). In World War II Romania was allied to Germany, but changed sides in the course of the war and became an ally of the Soviet Union. That's why it was dependent on the USSR, politically and economically, after its collapse. In that time the politician Nicolae Ceausescu succeeded in getting into power. As a cruel dictator he oppressed the population. In 1989 the people demonstrated against the government and Ceausescu was assassinated.

Since 1991 Romania is independent, and in 2007 became a member of the EU.

3) The Danube:

1075 km of the Danube flow along the Romanian border- that is more than a third of its total length- and a length of 608 km is shared with Bulgaria. A part of the Danube delta is situated on Romanian soil. Most of the big cities, however, lie remote of the river.

4) Special features:

Geography: mountains (the Carpathians), forests, rocky areas

Famous people: Eugene Ionescu (playwright), Mihai Eminescu (poet), George Enescu (composer) Sergiu Celibidache (orchestra conductor), Nicolae Paulescu (inventor of insuline), Herta Müller, Peter Maffay

Word box: Swabians of the Danube, Saxons of Siebenbürgen, Klaus Johannis, Danube delta, Earl Dracula

Serbia (Republica Srpska)

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Belgrad
Language: Serbian (alphabets: Latin + Cyrillic)
Currency: Dinar (1 Dinar 0,0085 Euro in 3/2019)
Population: 7 million, 90 per km² (2018)
Surface: 77 484 km²

2) History:

In the 12th century the Slavs founded their first state in Serbia. In the following centuries foreign powers ruled over it, like the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy or the Ottoman empire. At the end of the 19th century the Kingdom of Serbia was declared. After World War I Serbia became a part of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia breaks down into individual states, which, from 1991 onwards, have declared independence, leading to wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

From 2003 to 2006 there was the federation of Serbia-Montenegro, then the Republic of Serbia was founded. 1998/99 there was the Kosovo War, in 2008 the Kosovo declared its independence of Serbia.

3) The Danube:

The length of the Danube in Serbia is 588 km, its width ranges from 150 m to 7 km. At the „Iron Gates“ the power of the Danube is most striking.

4) Special features:

Geography: 5 national parks, 20 natural reserves and 590 protected areas, raspberry plantations

Famous people: Emperor Konstantin the Great (4th century), Robert Zollitsch (Arch Bishop)

Word box: Vojvodina (linguistic variety), the Kosovo issue, the Iron Gate, EU subsidies

Slovakia (Slovenska republica)

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Bratislava
Language: Slovak
Currency: Euro
Population: 5.4 million, 110 per km² (2019)
Surface: 49 034 km²

2) History:

Already in the 6th century tribes of Slavs settled in Slovakia, from which developed the Slavian empire. After 300 years the country became a Hungarian province, but after World War I it declared its independence of Hungary. In 1918 it became a part of the Czech Republic.

Slovakia has been a member of the EU since 2004.

3) The Danube:

The Danube flows through Slovakia over a length of 171 km. Near the capital it forms a river branch, the so-called „Small Danube“, and thus creates an island, with 1 800 km² the largest river island in Europe.

4) Special features:

Geography: Two thirds of the land are covered by the Carpathians, an important tourist attraction, with more than 4000 caves.

Famous people: Alexander Dubcek, the Saints Kyrill and Method, Andy Warhol

Word box: the Fortress of Bratislava, the Gerlsdorfer Spitze (the highest mountain in the east of Central Europe), ice-hockey, cheese specialties, the Velvet Revolution

Ukraine

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Kiev
Language: Ukrainian, also Russian (Cyrillic)
Currency: Hryvnia (0,03 Euro in 2019)
Population: 42,2 million (without the Crimean), 73 per km² (2018)
Surface: 577 620 km² (without the Crimean)

2) History:

In the 9th century the „Rus of Kiev“ was founded. This empire, with Kiev at its centre, was the beginning of the Ukraine. In the following centuries it was under foreign rule by different peoples, like the Mongols, the Polish and the Russians.

In 1919 two parts of the Ukraine were united and, for some time, formed an independent country, but already in 1922 it was integrated into the territory of the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Ukraine became an independent state.

In its recent history the Ukraine hit the headlines because of the nuclear disaster of Chernobyl in 1989. In 2014 there was a military conflict, the so-called Crimean crisis. The Crimean was split off and declared to belong to the Russian federation. There are still great political tensions and the problem hasn't been solved yet. Already before that the part in the west of the Dnieper showed leanings towards the EU, whereas the eastern part tended more towards Russia.

3) The Danube:

Only 50 km of the Danube and only a small part of its delta are situated in the Ukraine and thus the river doesn't play an important role for the country.

4) Special features:

Geography: The Ukraine, the largest country of Europe, is made up by flat plains and swamp areas and rivers in the north

Famous people: Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko

Word box: Majdan, Julija Timoschenko, European football championship 2012, Holodomor

Hungary

1) Facts and figures:

Capital: Budapest
Language: Hungarian
Currency: Forint (1 HUF 0,003 Euro in 2019)
Population: 9,78 million, 105 per km² 2018
Surface: 93 000 km²

2) History:

In the 9th century the Magyares, originally from the area between the Wolga and Ural, settled in Hungary. In 1000 Stephan I founded Hungary and so became its first king. After an eventful history, with Mongoles, Polish and Ottomans occupying the country, Hungary was united with the Habsburg Empire of Austria-Hungary. In 1918 this empire came to an end. After World War II the Treaty of Jalta put Hungary under Soviet rule, against which the population rebelled in 1956. In the 1960s a liberation process was started, which became known as the so-called „Goulash Communism“. Hungary also played an important role in the Revolution of 1989, at the end of which the Republic of Hungary was declared.

3) The Danube:

The Danube flows through the country over a length of 417 km. It offers an interesting natural sight called the „Knee of the Danube“. About 30 km north of Budapest the river carves its way through the Visegrad Mountains, forming an almost rectangular bend.

4) Special features:

Geography: The Danube divides the country into two types of landscape, Transnubia, with hills and forests, and the Puszta, a vast savannah. Also there are thermal springs and dripstone caves.

Famous people: Franz Liszt, Bela Bartok, Ernő Rubik (inventor of the „magic cube“), Laslo Jozsef Biro (inventor of the biro)

Word box: Balaton, Eszergom, the Fishermen's Fortress in Budapest, chain bridge, Pecs, the Visegrad group

Croatia

1) Facts and figures:

Capital : Zagreb
Language: Croatian
Currency: Kuna (0,135 Euro 2019)
Population: 4.18 million, 74 per km² in 2018
Surface: 56 538 km²

2) History:

In the 12th century the kingdom of Croatia, which had existed since the Middle Ages, got under foreign rule, in the 19th century the empire of Austria-Hungary ruled over it, in 1919, after World War I, Croatia became a part of Yugoslavia.

It was only in 1941 that Croatia became an independent state, but after World War II it became again a part of Yugoslavia. After the slow decline of Yugoslavia Croatia was given back its independence in 1991, although the war continued until 1995. As the country had been under foreign rule again and again, different influences can be seen still today in its culture. The north has been marked by the influence of Austria, in the east the Turkish influence can be felt, and along the Adriatic seaboard it's the Venetian culture and that of the Antiquity.

Since July 2013 Croatia has been a member of the EU.

3) The Danube:

The Danube, which flows through Croatia over a length of 137 km, almost throughout forms the natural border between Croatia and Serbia.

4) Special features:

Geography: 1/3 of the territory is water, there are over 1200 islands with a diverse flora and fauna. There are pasture landscapes and swamps, and there is a long coast in the triangle between the Danube, the Drau and the town of Osijek.

Famous people: Nicola Tesla (inventor of alternating current), Ivo Andric (born in Bosnia), Josip Broz Tito, Marco Polo (of Dalmatian origin)

Word box: the Lakes of Plitwitz, the water tower of Vukova, Dubrovnik