



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



In-Cult



Knowledge Section

Country descriptions

Bulgaria

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

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.

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.

Special features

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

Famous people: Elias Canetti (Nobel Laureate for Literature), Petar Petrov (inventor of the first digital clock), Boris Hristov (opera singer), John Atanasov (inventor of the computer)

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

Germany

Facts and figures

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

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.

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.

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

Italy

Facts and figures

- Capital: Rome
- Language: Italian (official), German, Ladino, French, Slovenian
- Currency: Euro
- Population: 59,258,000 inhabitants. (estimates 2021) 232 per Km² (2018)
- Surface: 302,068 km²

History

The history of Italy is characterized by periods in which it was one of the largest centers of political, cultural and civil development on our planet, in others one of the peripheries. The highest moments are those of the Roman age, when Italy, first republican and then imperial, (3rd century BC-4th century AD) was the greatest power of the Western world, and in the Renaissance (15th-16th centuries), when the country, although divided into regional states unable to preserve their political independence, was the seat of a splendid civilization. Italy regained its political unity, which was lost in 476 AD. following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, only in 1860-61, with the formation of the national state following the Risorgimento under the dynasty of the Savoy kings. After the fall of the fascist regime and the Second World War, in '45, Italy chose the republican form of government in a referendum. Italy was one of the founding countries of the current EU, established in 1957.

Special features

Geography: Reliefs: The Alps arc around mainland Italy to the north. Highest peak Mont Blanc 4810 m. The Apennines form the backbone of peninsular Italy. Highest peak Gran Sasso 2914 m.

Plains: Po Valley, Tavoliere delle Puglie.

Rivers: Po, Adige, Tiber.

Famous people: Giulio Cesare, Giotto, Dante Alighieri, Cristoforo Colombo, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Raffaello Sanzio. Alessandro Manzoni, Giuseppe Verdi.

Romania

Facts and figures

- Capital: Bucharest
- Language: Romanian (Romance language)
- Currency: Romanian Leu RON (1 Leu=0,20 euro 6/2022)
- Population: 19,201,662 inhab (2020)
- Surface: 238 391 km²

History

Romania is a southeastern European country, with a territory that has been inhabited since Paleolithic Age. Romania was founded in 1859 by the union of the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. The new state, officially called Romania since 1866, gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1877. In December 1918, took place the Great Union of 1918, when the historical provinces inhabited by Romanians were united within the same national state.

After World War II the country fell under Communist rule, although the leadership pursued a foreign policy independent of that of the Soviet Union. In December 1989, started the revolution in Romania and the city of Timisoara became the first Romanian city free of communism.

Romania, a semi-presidential republic, is divided into 41 counties and the municipality of Bucharest. It is member of the EU since January 2007 and member NATO since March 2004.

The Danube

Over a third of the Danube length flows through the country. Danube Delta is the best preserved delta on the continent and the greater part of it lies in Romania (3,446 from 4,152 km²).

Special features

Geography: Romania enjoys the Carpathians Mountains, the Black Sea and virgin forests (the second-largest area of virgin forests in Europe after Russia). The Carpathian Mountains provide habitat for the largest European populations of brown bears, wolves, chamois, and lynxes, with the highest concentration in Romania.

Famous people: George Enescu (composer), Constantin Brancusi (sculptor), Mihai Eminescu (poet), Eugen Ionescu (playwright), Sergiu Celibidache (orchestra conductor), Nicolae Paulescu (inventor of insulin), Nadia Comaneci (the first gymnast to be awarded a perfect score of 10.0 at the Olympic Games).

Word box: Bran Castle, Peles Castle, Voronet Monastery, Putna Monastery, Wooden Churches of Maramures

Serbia

Facts and figures

- Capital: Belgrade
- Language: Serbian (alphabets: Cyrillic as the official + Latin as widely used)
- Currency: Dinar (1 Dinar 0,0085 Euro in 12/2021)
- Population: 7 million, 90 per km²
- Surface: 77 484 km²

History

Territory of nowadays Serbia had been inhabited since prehistory times. On this territory lot of cultures were developed during Stone Age, among which culture of Lepenski Vir is the most famous.

Later on, during Roman Empire, Serbia was a part of provinces of Dalmatia, Pannonia and Moesia. and 18 Roman emperors were born at this territory. In the 6th century, Serbia was inhabited by South Slaves tribes. During next six centuries, more than 40 dukes changes on the throne, until 1217, when Serbia was proclaimed kingdom and then started rules of Nemanjic dynasty, which will bring about 11 rulers.

In the next few centuries Serbia was occupied territorially, military, economically by Ottoman Empire, Austrian-Hungarian Empire, depending of geographic position.

After victory in the World Word I, on the initiative of Serbian King Alexander the First Slavic states unite each other forming Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia has been established.

By the end of World War II, Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was formed. During unhappy historical development in 90s year of XX century, Yugoslavia was dissolved and 2006 an independent Serbia was proclaimed.

The Danube

The length of the Danube through Serbia counts of 588,5 km, with highest depth of 90 meters. There are 7 medieval fortresses along Danube flow, four archeological locality, two national parks and biggest gorge in Europe- Iron Gate (Djerdap gorge).

Special features

Geography: 5 National parks, 28 landscapes of outstanding features, 13 Parks of Nature, 74 Nature reserve park i 253 Monuments of Nature.

Serbia is one of the centers of biological biodiversity with about 3000 plant species, some of them could be found only in Serbia, such as great number of animal species, and some of them are at the red list of endangered species.

There are two UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Golija-Studenica and Gornje Podunavlje and form 2020-year Djerdap is included at the UNESCO list of Geoparks.

Famous people: Emperor Constantine the Great (4th century, bearer of Edict of Milano and founder of Constantinople), Nikola Tesla (born in Croatia, inventor of alternative elctrical current and more than 300 patents), Mihajlo Pupin (scientist famous for development of

phones , X-rays and 39 patents), Milutin Milanković (ranked one of 15 most significant scientists of all time that explored planet Earth by NASA, and according to whom one crater at the Moon and Mars are named), Novak Djoković (the best tennis player in the world of all time).

Spain

Facts and figures

- Capital: Madrid
- Language: Spanish
- Currency: Euro
- Population: 47,450,795 inhab (2020)
- Surface: 505,370 km²

History

Spain is a country located in southern Europe which, together with Portugal, forms the Iberian Peninsula. The Balearic Islands, the cities of Ceuta and Melilla (in Africa) and the Canary Islands also belong to Spain. Ruled by a parliamentary monarchy, its capital city is Madrid. It comprises 17 autonomous regions and 2 autonomous cities and its population exceeds 47 million inhabitants.

Spain's complex, exciting history has been marked by various civilisations (Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, and Arabs), and it once became the largest empire in the world after the discovery of America. All those cultures left their legacy, providing this country with huge cultural wealth and plenty of contrasts.

Special features

Regarding heritage, it boasts more than 40 natural parks and biosphere reserves. Likewise, 20 of its cultural expressions and practices have been listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

As for its economy, Spain is ranked as one of the world's leading countries in the field of renewable energies and has one of the best high-speed rail networks, also being the second European country with the highest rate of optical fibre penetration in households. It owns one of the largest fishing fleets and ranks first in global fruit and vegetable exports. It is additionally the world's largest producer of olive oil and offers more than 100 genuine products with Designation of Origin. It stands out both as the second most visited country and as one of the international gastronomy hubs, with several restaurants and chefs that are considered world referents.

From a social point of view, it has one of the most advanced public health systems in the world and enjoys one of the highest life expectancy rates, to which must be added its status as a world leader in organ donations and transplants.