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GERMANY





Germany

After World War II, Germany was divided into two countries—West Germany and East Germany. Even Berlin, the capital city, was divided by a wall, further emphasizing the separateness of these two nations. This division forced the West German government to create a provisional capital in the city of Bonn. Many neighborhoods and families were split apart when the wall was built. East Germany was a political satellite of the Soviet Union and West Germany was an ally of the United States. Then on October 3, 1990, East and West Germany were formally reunited. Although the German government enacted a law on March 10, 1994, to return the seat of government officially to Berlin, the process will take some time. The reunification of Germany has been the cause of much rejoicing for its people. It will also call for many changes as two very different countries again become one.

Official Name—*Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Federal Republic of Germany)

Population—81,912,000 (in 1995)

Size—137,778 square miles (358,222 square kilometers)

Climate—temperate

Major Cities—*Most people live in cities.*

Berlin—the past and present capital

Bonn—the capital of West Germany when the country was divided

Frankfurt—the commercial center

Hamburg—the country's largest seaport

Munich—the capital of Bavaria

Leipzig—the host of the well-known Leipzig Book Fair

Dresden—a cultural center for hundreds of years



Language—The national language of Germany is High German, though a number of German dialects are also spoken in different parts of the country. Many people also speak English.

Flag—The German flag has three horizontal stripes of equal size. The top stripe is black, the middle is red, and the bottom is gold.

In Your Classroom

Make a German flag. Use construction paper or paints. Use the flag on a bulletin board as a centerpiece for a display of pictures and information about Germany.

Trace or copy a map of Germany. Remember to trace all of Germany—not just the East or the West. Show children the border along which Germany was once divided. Be sure they realize Berlin was also divided between East and West.

Physical Features

There are several different landscapes in Germany. The Northern Lowlands are sandy plains that were formed by glaciers. The Central Uplands have large rock masses and mountain ranges that are old and worn down by erosion. These mountain ranges, which include the Ore, the Harz, the Thuringian Forest, the Taunus, and the Rhineland Slate, are heavily wooded. Trees found in this area include pine, beech, spruce, and oak. The southern hill country and the Black Forest are popular with tourists. Some people say the Black Forest was given its name because of the dark green color of its pine trees; others believe it earned its name due to the density of the trees that allowed very little light into the forest. A small section of the Alps, known as the Bavarian Alps, stretches into Germany. One of the Alps' highest peaks is located there. It is called the Zugspitze and is 9,721 feet (2,916 meters) high.

The climate in Germany is moderate even though the country is far north. One reason for the mild temperatures is the North Atlantic Drift, an ocean current that warms western winds in the winter and cools them in the summer. Temperatures vary by region. Winter temperatures may range from 21° to 34° F (-6° to 1° C), while summer temperatures may reach anywhere from 61° to 70° F (16° to 21° C). It rains frequently in Germany.

Germany has many rivers, including the Danube, the Rhine, the Elbe, and the Oder. Rivers are used for recreation, as well as for transportation and industry.

The area around the Rhine provides the best farmland in Germany. Farmers in this area primarily grow berries, fruit trees, and grapes for wine. Wheat, rye, potatoes, and sugar beets are grown in other areas of Germany.

Wildlife native to Germany includes deer, wild boar, bears, wolves, foxes, otters, badgers, wildcats, sea eagles, and white storks. Most of these animals can only be found deep in the forest. White storks may be seen nesting on chimneys of houses in more rural areas. Herring, mackerel, and cod abound in coastal waters.

Because Germany is an industrialized nation, pollution is a concern for many people. Although laws now prevent the dumping of chemicals into rivers, many rivers have already become polluted, causing many fish to die. Many of the trees in Germany, especially in the famous Black Forest, are diseased or dead due to acid rain and other pollutants. These concerns have led to the organization of a new political party called the Green Alternative.