BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT GERMANY

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Abstract: This article provides brief information about the Federal Republic of Germany.

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INTRODUCTION

Germany, officially **Federal Republic of Germany**, German **Deutschland** or **Bundesrepublik Deutschland**, country of north-central Europe, traversing the continent's main physical divisions, from the outer ranges of the Alps northward across the varied landscape of the Central German Uplands and then across the North German Plain.

MAIN PART

One of Europe's largest countries, Germany encompasses a wide variety of landscapes: the tall, sheer mountains of the south; the sandy, rolling plains of the north; the forested hills of the urbanized west; and the plains of the agricultural east. At the spiritual heart of the country is the magnificent east-central city of Berlin, which rose phoenixlike from the ashes of World War II and now, after decades of partition, is the capital of a reunified Germany, and the Rhine River, which flows northward from Switzerland and is celebrated in visual art, literature, folklore, and song.

The name Germany has long described not a particular place but the loose, fluid polity of Germanic-speaking peoples that held sway over much of western Europe north of the Alps for millennia. Although Germany in that sense is an ancient entity, the German nation in more or less its present form came into being only in the 19th century, when Prussian Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck brought together dozens of German-speaking kingdoms, principalities, free cities, bishoprics, and duchies to form the German Empire in 1871. This so-called Second Reich quickly became Europe's leading power and acquired colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. That overseas empire was dismantled following Germany's defeat in World War I and the abdication of Emperor William II.

The constitution of the republic, adopted in 1949 by West Germany, created a federal system that gives significant government powers to its constituent Länder (states). Before unification there were 11 West German *Länder* (including West Berlin, which had the special status of a *Land* without voting rights), but, with the accession of East Germany, there are now 16 *Länder* in the unified republic. The largest of the states is Bavaria (Bayern), the richest is Baden-Württemberg, and the most populous is North Rhine–Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen).

Germany is bounded at its extreme north on the Jutland peninsula by Denmark. East and west of the peninsula, the Baltic Sea (Ostsee) and North Sea coasts, respectively, complete the northern border. To the west, Germany borders The Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg; to the southwest it borders France.

It is a common assumption that surface configuration reflects the underlying rock type; a hard resistant rock such as granite will stand out, whereas a softer rock such as clay will be weathered away. However, this assumption is not always borne out. The Zugspitze, for example, is Germany's highest summit not because it is composed of particularly resistant rocks but

because it was raised by the mighty earth movements that began some 37 to 24 million years ago and created the Alps, Europe's highest and youngest fold mountains.

Because of the preponderance of mountainous and forested areas, the remainder of German soil types range from sand to loam, from loam to clay, and from clay to rocky outcrops. Timber production thrives where the land is all but unarable, and viticulture in the southern hill regions flourishes in an otherwise inhospitable type of soil.

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