European Mountain Ranges

Europe is the second smallest continent in the world and yet it has over 10 major mountain ranges and many more minor ones. From the Urals in the east to the Alps in the west, Europe is home to some of the most stunning mountain scenery. Some of these mountain ranges are the most popular destinations in the world for tourists who can enjoy hiking, skiing and many other activities at various mountainous resorts.
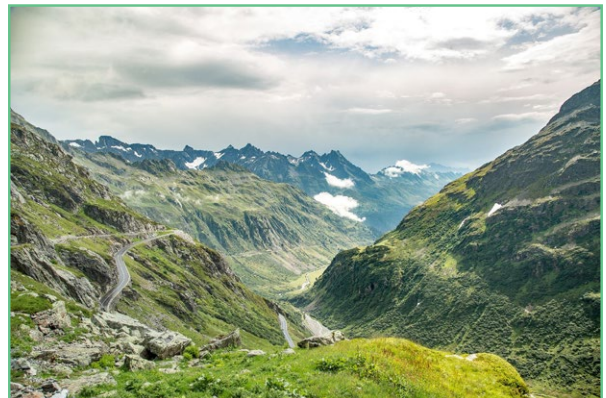
The Pyrenees

Located in south west Europe, the Pyrenees form a high border between France and Spain, stretching 270 miles (435km) from the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean Sea. The highest peak is Pico de Aneto, which is 3404 metres high.

There are two rail lines which cross the Pyrenees, along with a number of roads. Some of the major roads use tunnels but others are high routes which become impassable during the winter months due to extreme weather conditions.

The Alps

Perhaps the most famous European mountain range is the Alps. The Alps stretch 750 miles from Slovenia to Austria, passing through countries such as Italy, Switzerland, France and Germany. During the warmer months, people come to visit to see the wonderful scenery, to go mountaineering, hiking, mountain biking and even paragliding. In the winter, people mainly visit to ski or snowboard.

The highest peak here is Mont Blanc (White Mountain) which stands at 4,810m in height, making it the highest peak in western Europe. A nearby town named Chamonix was where the first ever Winter Olympics took place in 1924.
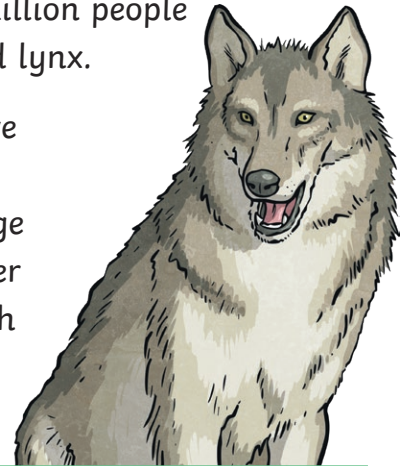
The Alps play an important role when it comes to the weather too. They act as a wind barrier meaning that south of the Alps is slightly drier and warmer.
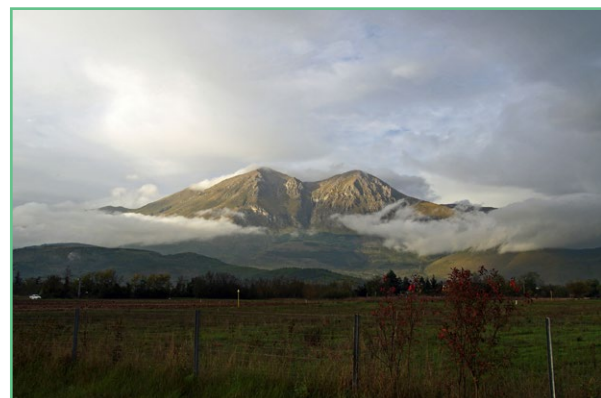
The Carpathians

This vast and varied mountain range stretches through seven different countries; the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia. The mountains are home to 18 million people as well as variety of animals such as wolves, bears and lynx.

In the Carpathian Mountains, tourists can visit old cave paintings and thousands of caves where fossils of big carnivorous animals that disappeared during the ice age were discovered. Great quantities of iron, gold and silver were also discovered in the Carpathians, much of which the Romans took back to Rome with them to build their empire.

The Apennines

This mountain range runs straight down the centre of Italy, ending on the island of Sicily. Acting like Italy's spine, the mountains separate the east from the west. They stretch for 830 miles (1,350km) and are the source of almost every river in Italy, including the Tiber and Volturno. The highest point is Mount Corno which is nearly 3,000 metres tall.
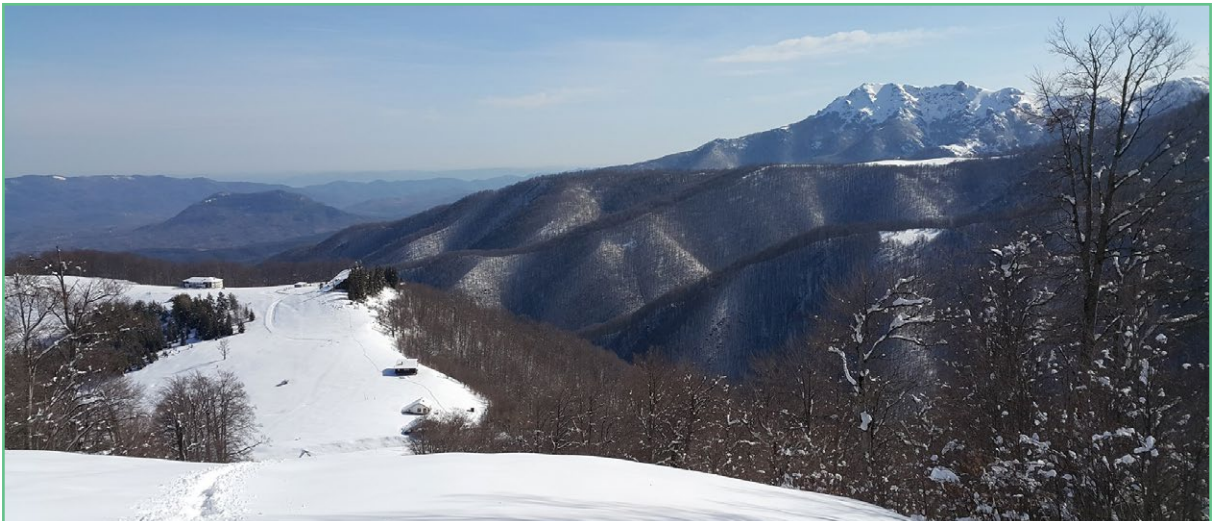
The Urals

Forming the border between Europe and Asia, the Urals are around 1,550 miles long (2,500 km). They run from the north to the south of Western Russia and are about 300 million years old. The highest peak is Mount Narodnaya which is 1,895 metres tall.

The Balkan Mountains

This range stretches for 560km, from the Bulgarian/Serbian border, through Bulgaria and to the Black Sea. The highest peak is known as Botev (2,376 metres) and is located in Bulgaria. The large mountain range can be further broken down into three mountain ranges – the Central, Western and Eastern Balkan Mountain Ranges. Bulgaria's widest river, the Iskar, also flows through these mountains.

Questions

1. Fill in the missing words:

    From the _____ in the east to the _____ in the west, Europe is home to some of the most _____ mountain scenery.

2. **Find** and **copy** a word which means **blocked**.

    _____

3. Which of the following countries do the Alps NOT pass through. Tick **one**.

    ○   France
    ○   Germany
    ○   Bulgaria
    ○   Switzerland

4. What part of the Alps would be warmer; the north or the south? Explain how you know.

    _____

    _____

    _____

5. Put the following mountains in order from lowest to highest. 1 = the lowest, 5 = the highest.

    ☐   Pico de Aneto
    ☐   Botev
    ☐   Mount Corno
    ☐   Mont Blanc
    ☐   Mount Narodnaya

6. Explain why the Carpathians would be a great place for people who are interested in history to visit.

    _____

    _____

    _____

7. Which mountain range is a natural source for the river Tiber and Volturno?

   _____

8. Which mountain range would you like to visit most and why? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

   _____

   _____

   _____

Answers

1. Fill in the missing words:
From the **Urals** in the east to the **Alps** in the west, Europe is home to some of the most **stunning** mountain scenery.

2. **Find** and **copy** a word which means **blocked**.
impassable

3. Which of the following countries do the Alps NOT pass through. Tick **one**.

   ○ France
   ○ Germany
   ⊘ **Bulgaria**
   ○ Switzerland

4. What part of the Alps would be warmer; the north or the south? Explain how you know.
Pupil's own response, such as: The south of the Alps would be warmer because the Alps act as a wind barrier and stop the wind from blowing so much in the south.

5. Put the following mountains in order from lowest to highest. 1 = the lowest, 5 = the highest.

4	Pico de Aneto
2	Botev
3	Mount Corno
5	Mont Blanc
1	Mount Narodnaya

6. Explain why the Carpathians would be a great place for people who are interested in history to visit.
Pupil's own response, such as: The Carpathians would be a great place to visit for people who are interested in history because there are thousands of caves there which have cave paintings in them and fossils of animals that disappeared during the ice age were discovered in them. It is also a place where large quantities of iron, gold and silver were found and taken by the Romans.

7. Which mountain range is a natural source for the river Tiber and Volturno?
    The Apennines

8. Which mountain range would you like to visit most and why? Use evidence from the text
    to support your answer.
    **Pupil's own response, such as: I would most like to visit the Alps because I am a very
    active person and in the Alps, lots of people go mountaineering, hiking, mountain biking
    and paragliding. In the winter, I could also go skiing or snowboarding. The scenery is
    also described as 'wonderful'.**