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## The sea



*The sea shaped these chalk cliffs*

Europe has thousands and thousands of kilometres of coastline, which Nature has shaped in various ways. There are tall rocky cliffs, and beaches of sand or colourful pebbles formed by the sea as it pounds away at the rocks, century after century.

In Norway, glaciers have carved the coast into steep-sided valleys called fjords.



*A glacier carved this fjord*



*The Pyla sand dune - Europe's tallest*

In some other countries, the sea and wind pile up the sand into dunes. The highest dune in Europe (117 metres tall) is the Dune du Pyla, near Arcachon in France.



Many kinds of fish and other animals live in the sea around Europe's coasts. They provide food for seabirds, and for marine mammals such as seals.



Where rivers flow into the sea, flocks of waders come to feed, at low tide, on creatures that live in the mud.

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### People and the sea

The sea is important for people too. The Mediterranean was so important to the Romans that they called it *Mare nostrum*: "our sea". Down through the centuries, Europeans have sailed the world's oceans, discovered the other continents, explored them, traded with them and made their homes there. In the chapter "A journey through time" you can find out more about these great voyages of discovery.

Cargo boats from around the world bring all kinds of goods (often packed in containers) to Europe's busy ports. Here they are unloaded onto trains, lorries and barges. Then the ships load up with goods that have been produced here and which are going to be sold on other continents.



Container ships carry goods to and from Europe



Some of the world's finest ships have been built in Europe. They include Queen Mary 2 – one of the biggest passenger liners in the world. She made her first trans-atlantic voyage in January 2004.



Europe's seaside resorts are great places for a holiday. You can enjoy all kinds of water sports, from surfing and boating to water-skiing and scuba diving. Or you can just relax - sunbathing on the beach and cooling off in the sea.





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### Fishing



*Europeans eat many kinds of fish.  
Tuna is one of the biggest!*

Fishing has always been important for people in Europe. Whole towns have grown up around fishing harbours, and thousands of people earn their living by catching and selling fish or doing things for the fishermen and their families.

Modern fishing boats, such as factory trawlers, can catch huge numbers of fish. To make sure that enough are left in the sea, European countries have agreed rules about how many fish can be caught, and about using nets that let young fish escape.



*A modern factory trawler off the Orkney Islands, Scotland.*



Another way to make sure we have enough fish is to farm them. On the coasts of northern Europe, salmon are reared in large cages in the sea. Shellfish such as mussels, oysters and clams can be farmed in the same way.

### Protecting Europe's coasts

Europe's coasts and the sea are important to wildlife and to people. So we need to look after them. We have to prevent them becoming polluted by waste from factories and towns. Oil tankers sometimes have accidents, spilling huge amounts of oil into the sea. This can turn beaches black and kill thousands of seabirds.

European countries are working together to try to prevent these things from happening again and to make sure that our coastline will remain beautiful for future generations to enjoy.

