

EUROPE – A STUDY OF THE ALPINE REGION:

Where should we go on holiday?

Unit overview

In this unit, the children learn about the Alpine region of Europe, how the Alps were formed and how homes are adapted to the climate. They create a storyboard or digital book on mountain formation, design an Alpine home, and produce literature for visitors to the area using geographical vocabulary.

The unit builds on previous work the children may have done investigating their local area and other regions of the UK earlier in this series.

Knowledge, skills and concepts

In this unit, the children will:

- use maps to focus on countries, cities and regions in Europe
- be taught to understand a region of another European country
- be taught to understand some of the physical and human processes that shape a region
- extend their knowledge and understanding beyond the local area to include Europe. This will include the location and characteristics of a range of the world's more significant human and physical features.

Background information

The Alps are one of the great European mountain ranges, and spread across eight countries: France, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany, Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Monaco. The mountains formed over millions of years as the African and Eurasian tectonic plates collided. This caused marine sedimentary rocks to thrust and fold upwards into high mountain peaks such as Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn. Mont Blanc spans the border of France and Italy, and is the highest mountain in the Alps at 4810 m (15,781ft).

Prevailing winds bring warm air from the temperate climate of lower areas to higher altitudes. The air is forced to rise and cools. This causes the water vapour in the air to condense to form clouds. The water vapour falls as rain or – if the temperature is below 0°C – as snow.

More than 120 million visitors visit the Alps each year – tourism provides essential income. Other chief industries include forestry, farming, cheese-making and baking, woodworking and carpentry.

Cross-curricular links

- **English:** writing discussion texts on tourism in the Alps (Week 4); non-chronological report writing (Week 6).
- **Science:** learning about forces and friction in mountain formation (Week 2).
- **Art & Design:** modelling the Alps in 3-D (Week 2); designing local and Alpine houses (Week 3); designing an eco-resort (Week 4); modelling avalanche management, simulating an avalanche (Week 5).
- **Computing:** creating a digital book with photos and captions on mountain formation (Week 2); creating mobile apps to inform tourists about the Alpine region, and their own area (Week 6).
- **Modern Foreign Languages:** French, German and Italian are spoken in the countries studied.

The Big Finish

The children will work in groups to create their very own mobile app about the Alpine region. The app will be a digital guidebook for visitors to the region, based on the children's learning throughout the unit. It can then be shared with the school community to inform them about the region, or even be used on holiday!

Map work

This unit has numerous opportunities for using both physical and political maps and globes, particularly during Week 1. The children will use maps to locate the Alps and identify the physical features of the region. They will also use base maps to create their own maps of the region.

Fieldwork

This unit focuses on a distant location, but you could create opportunities for local fieldwork. The children could investigate the local tourist industry, and consider the impact on the region. You may also wish to compare the topography of the Alps to that of the local area, e.g. by visiting the highest local peak.

Independent learning area

Create an Alpine Tourist Information Centre where children can pool information about the Alps. Provide maps, books, photographs, leaflets and a list of useful websites. Encourage children to research areas of interest to them, sharing their findings in the form of posters, leaflets, fact sheets, etc., for display to the rest of the class. Include a postbox where 'tourists' can ask questions about the region. Start with a few questions of your own, and ask the children to leave answers, as well as posting new questions for others to answer.

Assessment

All children can:

- use physical and political maps to locate places and regions
- learn that the Alps were formed over a long period of time, millions of years ago
- understand that the Alpine region is unique
- select geographical information for a specific purpose
- know and share information about a European region that may be useful to tourists.

Most children can:

- understand that fold mountains occur when two tectonic plates meet
- explain the climate patterns of the Alpine region
- explain that there are advantages and disadvantages to tourism in the Alps
- explain how avalanches are caused
- explain some of the ways avalanches can be prevented.

Some children can:

- understand the importance of sustainable development in the Alps
- explain how the Alps have changed over time.