

# The River Danube



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The River Danube is 2860 km long, which makes it the second longest river in Europe. Located in Central and Eastern Europe, it originates in the Black Forest in Germany, where several smaller rivers join to become the Danube. After passing through or alongside 10 countries the river empties into the Black Sea at the Danube Delta in Romania and Ukraine. The countries that the Danube flows through or borders are Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine.

The River Danube is not only significant for its rich flora and fauna but is also one of Europe's most important shipping routes and supplies drinking water to millions of people.

Above: The Danube Bend is a curve of the Danube in Hungary, near the city of Visegrád.

Below: Map of the countries through which the Danube flows.



Image courtesy of NASA

The Danube River Delta, where the river meets the Black Sea.

## The Danube's Wildlife

The River Danube is home to many mammals, birds and fish species, including numerous endangered ones, most of which are aquatic or water-dependent. Important bird species are cormorant, pelican species, white-tailed eagles, saker falcons, mute swans and the European kingfishers.

The Danube River Delta is among the largest and best preserved of the European deltas and consists of numerous lakes and marshes. The delta is home to more than 300 species of birds and 45 freshwater fish species as well as several water plant species. During the winter months various goose colonies visit the delta, as it is a very important habitat for several migratory bird species.

Many mammal species live along the shores of the River Danube and in the higher areas of the Danube Delta, which are not reached by water. Otters, weasel, minks, foxes, wolves and black bears can be found, along with turtles and colonies of snakes.

The Danube River Basin is home to the longest marshland of the European continent and has one of the greatest stretches of reedbeds in the world to grow on the bed of a river. Along with other important plants many different water lilies species grow in the river.



Pelicans on the Danube Delta



## Protecting the River

Despite its importance the river's unique aquatic biodiversity is under threat by invasive alien species, overfishing and increasing water pollution.

Native Danube species can be reduced by the 'killer shrimp' that originally lived in the Caspian Sea region, while the Chinese Mitten Crab can transmit diseases fatal to native European crayfish.

The countries along the river are now working together to protect the River Danube from pollution and to restore it back to its original condition. Several projects are targeting specific parts of the river or particular species, such as one to conserve the White-tailed Sea Eagle.

