

What is the smallest continent? Breaking down Earth's seven continents by size

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Across the planet, water makes up 71% of Earth's surface. The remaining space is covered by land—continents and islands. Before Earth's land formed the seven continents in the present day, all the

planet's landmass was joined together as a single, supercontinent known as "Pangaea."

Millions of years of Earth's inner tectonic activity broke Pangaea apart and formed several divisions of land that became the seven [continents](#): Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Antarctica and Australia.

According to National Geographic, the positions of these continents are constantly changing. But with their current positions across the globe and their ever-evolving changes, which is the smallest continent?

What is the smallest continent?

Located in Earth's southern hemisphere, Australia is the smallest continent among the seven, spanning over 8 million square kilometers or 3 million square miles, National Geographic reports.

Australia is both a country and a continent by itself. It is sparsely populated with a little more than 25 million residents, according to the most recent census. Only Antarctica has a smaller population than Australia.

Australia is sometimes referred to as Oceania, which includes Australia, New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and other tiny islands of the Central Pacific and South Pacific. However, Australia as a continent includes the nation of Australia, the nation of Papua New Guinea and the island nation of New Zealand.

What are the 3 smallest continents?

The smallest continent by [surface area](#) after Australia is Europe.

Although Europe contains only 7% of world's land, it has a population more than twice that of South America, according to National Geographic. The continent also holds is made up of more than 40 countries and is bordered by water on all sides—the Arctic Ocean in the north, the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Caspian Sea in the southeast, and the Mediterranean and Black Seas in the south.

Following Europe, Antarctica is the third smallest continent. Because it's home to the coldest place on Earth, Antarctica doesn't support a permanent civilization or agricultural activities. The continent has no countries and is mostly used for research purposes. Various countries have established research stations in Antarctica to study geological, meteorological and oceanographic characteristics of Earth.

All 7 continents listed in order of size

From the smallest to largest continent by land area, here are Earth's seven continents:

1. Australia (approx. 3 million square miles)
2. Europe (approx. 3.8 million square miles)
3. Antarctica (approx. 5.5 million square miles)
4. South America (approx. 6.9 million square miles)
5. North America (approx. 9.4 million square miles)
6. Africa (approx. 11.6 million square miles)
7. Asia (approx. 17.2 million square miles)

All 7 continents listed in order of population

From the most populous continent to the continent with the lowest population, here are Earth's seven continents ranked by population:

- Asia

- Africa
- Europe
- South America
- North America
- Australia
- Antarctica

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