

Topic Page: [Bessarabia \(Moldova and Ukraine\)](#)

Definition: **Bessarabia** from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*
Former region in southeastern Europe, bordering on the Black Sea and standing between the Prut and Dniester rivers. Its capital was at Kishinev. The region is now divided between the states of Moldova and Ukraine.

Bessarabia takes its name from the Basarabs, a Moldavian princely dynasty that ruled the territory in the Middle Ages. It came under the control of the Ottoman Empire from 1504. Bessarabia was annexed by Russia after the Russo-Turkish War of 1812, but broke away at the Russian Revolution to join Romania. Russia never recognized this secession in the peace treaties following World War I, and the USSR reoccupied Bessarabia in 1940, dividing it between the Moldavian and Ukrainian Soviet republics.

Summary Article: **Bessarabia**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(bĕsĕrĕā'bĕĕ), historic region, c.17,600 sq mi (45,600 sq km), largely in Moldova and Ukraine. It is bounded by the Dniester River on the north and east, the Prut on the west, and the Danube and the Black Sea on the south. Consisting mainly of a hilly plain with flat steppes, it is an extremely fertile agricultural area, especially for wine grapes, fruits, corn, wheat, tobacco, sugar beets, and sunflowers. Dairy cattle and sheep raising are also important. Agricultural processing is the chief industry. There are some stone quarries and lignite deposits. Bessarabia's leading cities are Chişinău and Tiraspol in Moldova and Izmayil and Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyy in Ukraine. The population consists of Moldovans (about two thirds), Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, and Bulgarians. As the gateway from Russia into the Danube valley, Bessarabia has been an invasion route from Asia to Europe. Greek colonies were planted on the Black Sea coast of Bessarabia as early as the 7th cent. B.C. The region was later part of Roman Dacia, but after the 4th cent. A.D. it was subject to incursions by Goths, Huns, Avars, and Magyars. Slavs first settled in Bessarabia in the 7th cent. in the midst of these incursions. From the 9th to the 11th cent., the area was part of Kievan Rus, and in the 12th cent. it belonged to the duchy of Halych-Volhynia. Cumans and later Mongols overran Bessarabia; after the latter withdrew it was included (1367) in the newly established principality of Moldavia. The region probably derives its name from the Walachian princely family of Bassarab, which once ruled S Bessarabia. In 1513 the Turks and their vassals, the khans of the Crimean Tatars, conquered Bessarabia. After the Russo-Turkish wars, the region was ceded to Russia by the Treaty of Bucharest (1812). The Crimean War resulted (1856) in Russia's cession of S Bessarabia to Moldavia; but the Congress of Berlin (1878) returned the district to Russia. After the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) the anti-Soviet national council of Bessarabia proclaimed the region an autonomous republic; however, in 1918, Bessarabia renounced all ties with Soviet Russia and declared itself an independent Moldovan republic, later voting for union with Romania. Although the Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union, Russia never accepted it. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia to the USSR; the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed Bessarabia as part of the USSR. The larger part of the region was merged with the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic to form the Moldavian SSR (now Moldova); the southern and northern sections, with a predominantly Ukrainian-speaking population, were incorporated into Ukraine.

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