

## Topic Page: [Hesse \(Germany\)](#)

Summary Article: **Hesse**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Administrative region (German *Land*) in central Germany, bordered to the west by the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, to the south by Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, to the east by Thuringia, and to the north by North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony; area 21,115 sq km/8,153 sq mi; population (2003 est) 6,045,200. The capital is Wiesbaden, and other major cities include Frankfurt-am-Main, Kassel, Darmstadt, Fulda, Giessen, and Offenbach-am-Main. Most of Hesse is a hilly, agricultural land, heavily forested in parts. The region includes the valleys of the rivers Rhine, Main, and Fulda; the Taunus Mountains and Vogelsberg Mountains; and the Odenwald Forest.

**Economy** The chief industries are timber, chemicals, textiles, automobiles, electrical engineering, optical instruments, computers, telecommunications, printing, and publishing. Agriculture is based on the cultivation of oats, wheat, potatoes, barley, flax, fruit, and sugar beet, and on cattle-raising; some of Germany's finest wines are produced in the west of the state, in the Rheingau area bordering the Rhine. Wiesbaden, Bad Homburg, and Bad Nauheim are among the region's numerous health resorts.

**History** From the 6th century onwards, the area now encompassed by Hesse was under the control of the Franks. Christianity was spread throughout the region under St Boniface during the 7th and 8th centuries. The area was part of the landgraviate of Thuringia from the early 12th century to the mid-13th century, after which it became a separate landgraviate in 1247. Hesse was at the forefront of the Protestant Reformation; the prestigious University of Marburg was founded as a Protestant institution in 1527.

In 1567, following the death of landgrave Philip the Magnanimous, Hesse split into two parts, **Hesse-Kassel** (later an electorate) to the north, and the landgraviate (later Grand Duchy) of **Hesse-Darmstadt** to the south, which also included territory on the left bank of the Rhine. Another distinct region, independent from the 12th century, was the county formed by the area around the town of Nassau on the lower River Lahn. In addition, Hesse-Kassel was further split, with the creation of **Hesse-Homburg** in 1622. All of these areas suffered great privations during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48).

In the revolutions which swept central Europe 1848–49, Frankfurt was the seat of a short-lived liberal National Assembly, which was crushed by Prussian opposition. Hesse's fragmentation began to be reversed in 1866, when Hesse-Kassel and Nassau, which had sided with Austria against Prussia in the Seven Weeks' War, were annexed by Prussia. A corridor of land, which included the city of Frankfurt-am-Main, was also ceded to Prussia by Hesse-Darmstadt, separating its territories north of the River Main from those to the south. The Prussians named their new Hessian province **Hesse-Nassau**. All areas of Hesse became part of the German Second Empire on its formation in 1871, though the two regions comprising Hesse-Darmstadt retained their grand duchy status within the empire until 1918. After Germany's defeat in World War II and the subsequent formation of the Federal Republic from the western zones of occupation, most of Hesse-Nassau and the northern part of Hesse-Darmstadt were united to form the *Land* of **Gross-Hesse** (Greater Hesse), later simply Hesse. Areas of these former provinces lying to the west of the Rhine were incorporated into the Rhineland-Palatinate. Modern-day Hesse was formed in 1945 through the consolidation of Hesse-Nassau, a former Prussian province, and most of Hesse-Darmstadt, a former grand duchy.

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## APA

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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## MLA

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