

Western Europe Is Burning! (August 1, 2026)

TEACHING GUIDE

What? Massive forest fires have been ravaging several European countries since the beginning of summer 2026. 🔥🔥🔥

Who? Hundreds of thousands of Europeans have been forced to leave their homes, and thousands of firefighters are battling the flames day and night.

Where? The fires are particularly intense in southern Europe: in Spain, France, Portugal, Greece, and Italy.

When? They began in the summer of 2026, following a record-breaking June, the hottest ever recorded in Western Europe.

Why is it important? These fires demonstrate that climate change is making droughts and heat waves increasingly frequent and dangerous in Europe.

🎯 **For this activity, your goal will be to learn more about these gigantic wildfires in Western Europe.**



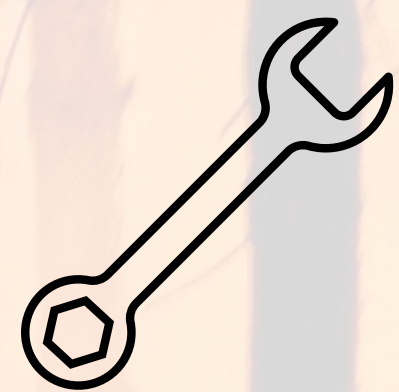
OBJECTIVES

- Understand the scale of the 2026 summer fires in Europe through a video report
- Explore an interactive satellite map to locate fire-affected areas
- Orient yourself geographically using Google Earth and cardinal directions
- Read and interpret a combined graph (histogram and line graph)
- Identify trends in twenty-year data



SUBJECTS

- **English**
 - Listening and understanding a video report
 - Written expression (short answers)
- **Mathematics**
 - Reading and interpreting a combination graph
 - Comparing numbers
 - Identifying maximum values in a dataset
- **Social Studies / Geography**
 - Countries and cities of Europe
 - Rivers and oceans
 - Using digital geography tools (EFFIS, Google Earth)
- **Science**
 - Satellite observation and fire detection
 - Climate change and its effects



COMPETENCIES

- Understand a video report and extract precise information
- Use digital tools for geography and environmental monitoring
- Read and interpret a combined graph (bar and line)
- Locate oneself on a map using cardinal directions
- Express a reasoned opinion based on data



DURATION

- Approximately 45 minutes



GETTING STARTED

- Ask the students if they have heard about the forest fires in Europe this summer.
- Ask them if they know which countries are most affected.
- Show them a map of Europe and locate France, Spain, and Portugal.
- Gather their hypotheses: Why are there more fires in summer than in winter?

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STEP 1 — A Real Catastrophe. Watching of a France 24 report on the Gironde fire, near Bordeaux, then answers to four comprehension questions.

Q1 — Residents, volunteers, and farmers.

Q2 — Because they can no longer control the fire.

Q3 — Gas tanks can explode.

Q4 — There's a water shortage. A volunteer arrives with a tank.

STEP 2 — Hell from the Sky. Exploration of the European EFFIS website to observe fires detected by satellite, then usage of Google Earth to explore the southwest region of France and answers to geography questions.

Q5 — Bordeaux.

Q6 — The Garonne River.

Q7 — In the Atlantic Ocean.

Q8 — This is Spain.

STEP 3 — A Growing Trend. Reading and interpretation of a combined graph (histogram and line) showing twenty years of data on forest fires in France (source: EFFIS, Copernicus). Answers to four observation questions.

Q9 — In 2019, with nearly 300 fires.

Q10 — In 2022, with approximately 66,000 hectares.

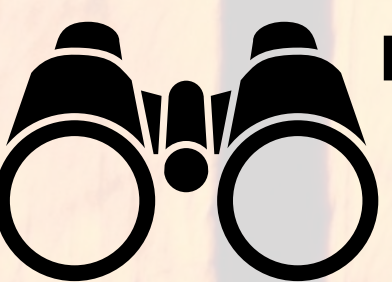
Q11 — That's right!

Q12 — It's increasing. Heat waves and lack of rain are responsible.



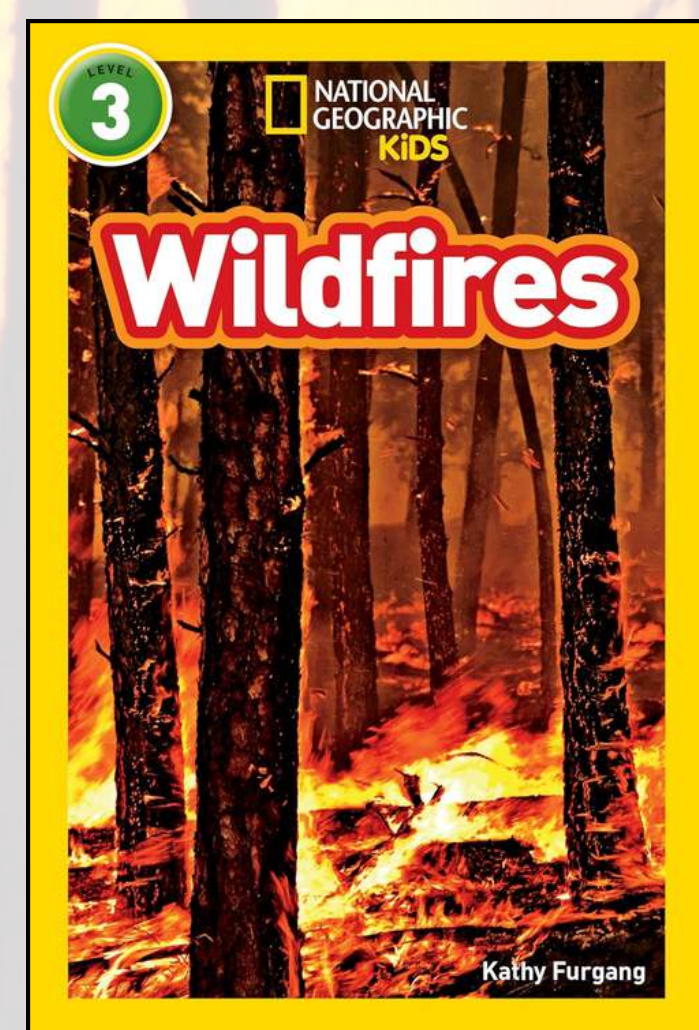
WRAPPING UP

- Conduct a group discussion about what the students have learned.
- Discuss what struck them most (the courage of the volunteers, the extent of the burned areas on the satellite map, the projected increase in fire risk by 2026).
- Ask: What could be done to reduce the risk of fires in the future?
- Connect this to other natural disasters linked to climate change that they are familiar with (floods, hurricanes, heat waves).



FURTHER EXPLORATION

 Katy Furgang. *Wildfires*. National Geographic



Paris: $95,000 \div 10,500 \approx 9$ times

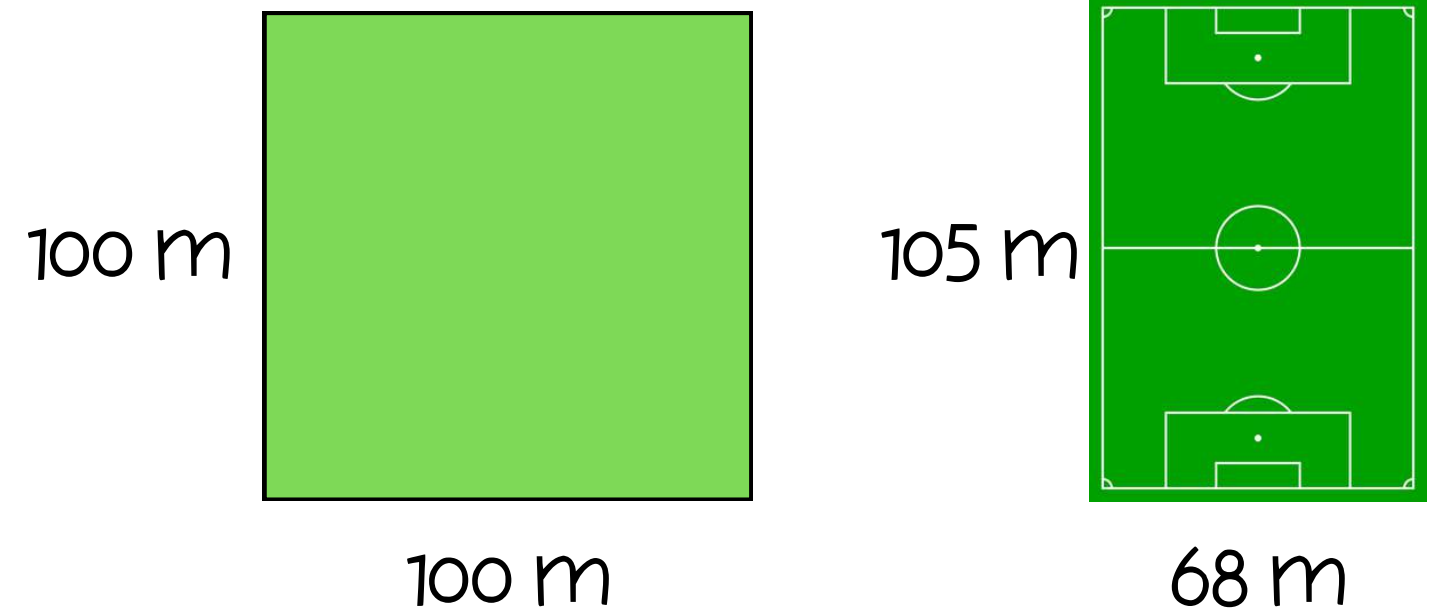
Manhattan: $95,000 \div 6,000 \approx 16$ times

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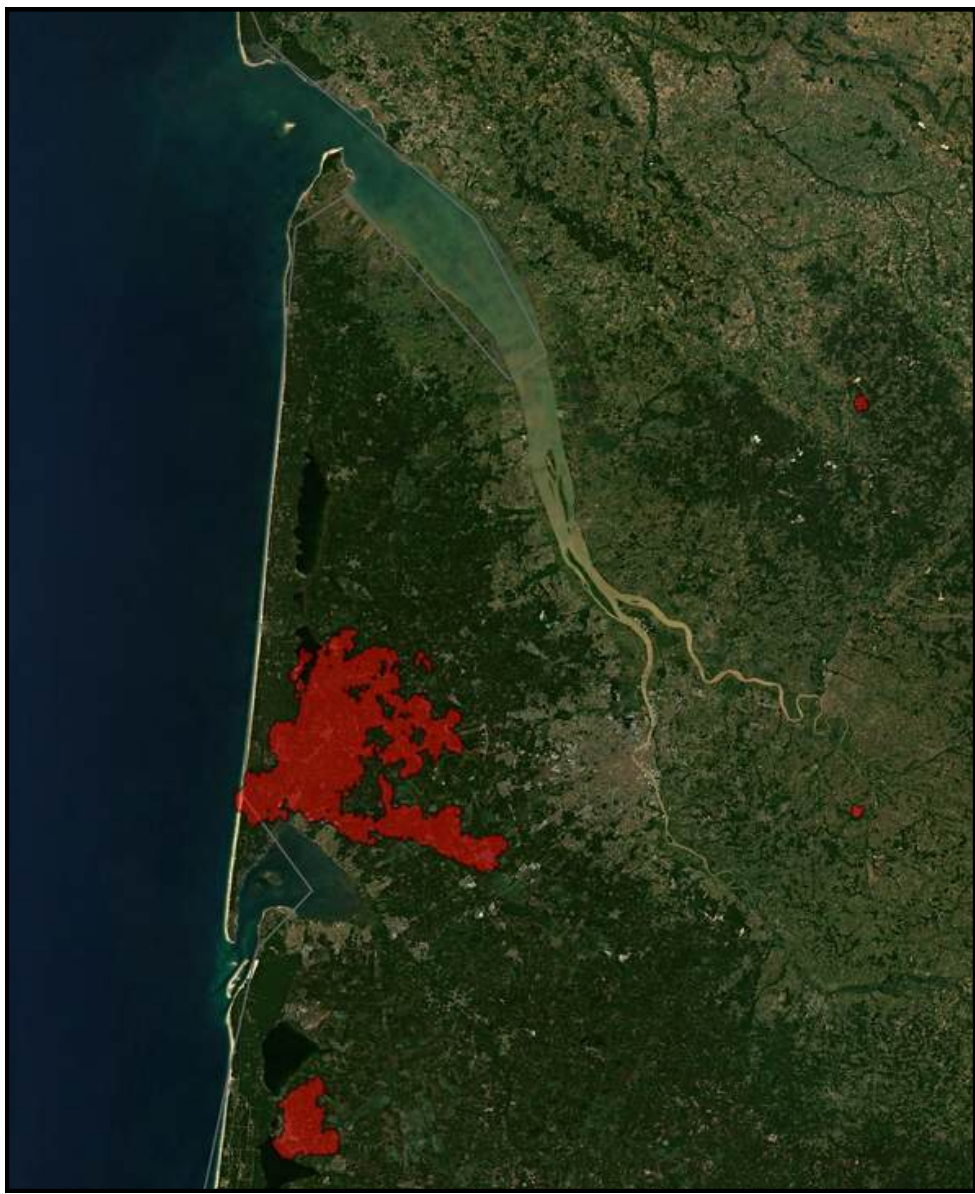


A Story of Hectares

Do you know what a hectare is? **It's a square with sides of 100 meters.** You can compare what a hectare represents to a football field.

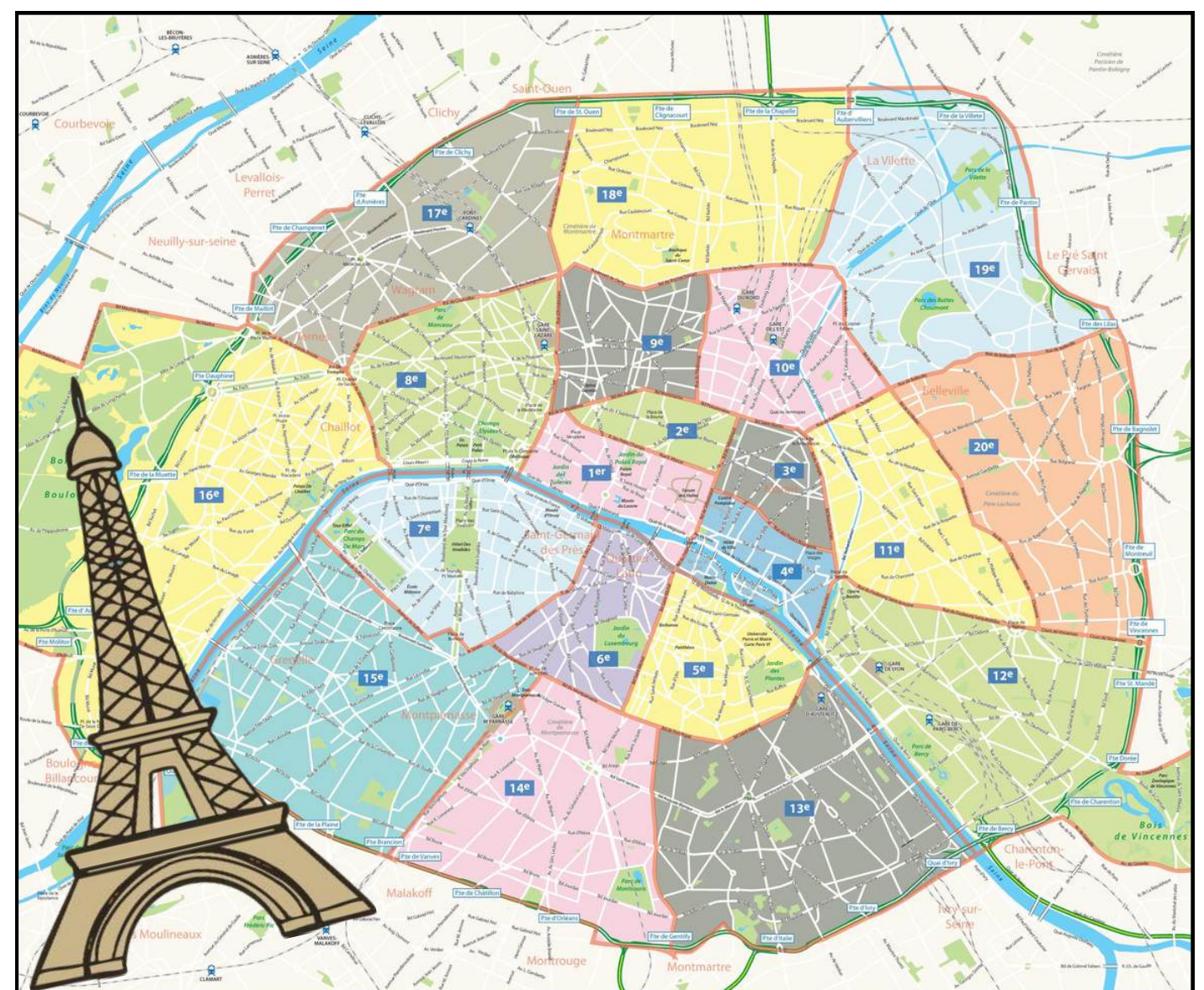


Fires have burned **nearly 95,000 hectares** in France since the beginning of the year, and it's not over yet... To better understand the area this represents, let's compare it with Paris and Manhattan Island in New York.



The city of Paris covers approximately **10,500 hectares.**

How many times larger is the area projected to be affected by wildfires in 2026?



We do the same exercise, but for Manhattan Island, in New York! The area of this island is **nearly 6,000 hectares.**

How many times larger is the area projected to be affected by wildfires in 2026?



Write a short letter (5 to 8 sentences) to thank the volunteers. Draw on what you learned from the news report: courage, gas canisters, the water shortage during the night, and the refusal to abandon their land.

