

27. RUSSIAN FEDERATION



Russia is the country of superlatives, by far it is world's largest country, it covers nearly twice the territory of Canada, the second largest. It extends across the whole of northern Asia and the eastern third of Europe, spanning 11 time zones and incorporating a great range of environments and landforms, from deserts to semiarid steppes, deep forests and Arctic tundra.

- area: 16,377,742 km² (the largest country in the world)
- the capital: Moscow
- population: 142,257,519 (2017)
- official language: Russian at the national level
- (although 35 languages are considered official in various parts)
- formation: the Russian Federation (25.12.1991; the Soviet Union: 1922)
- member: the Eurasian Economic Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
- currency: Russian ruble (RUB)

The Russian Federation was created after dissolution of the Soviet Union (former USSR) in 1991. According to the Russian Constitution, the Russian Federation consists of republics, krais, oblasts and various other administrative units, all of which are equal subjects of the federation. Russia nowadays struggles to establish a Western-style democracy and economy. The country is a subject of controversy, especially recently due to annexation of Crimea and being accused of supporting separatists in eastern Ukraine (ongoing Donbass conflict).

Location and natural conditions

Russia is located on both continents, with the European part divided from Asia by the Ural mountains. Most of the European part lies on the East European Plain. Except of the Ural in the east, it is bordered by the Caucasus mountains in the south.

Climate in the European part of Russia varies from subtropical near the Caspian Sea and Black Sea to the Arctic in the north near the Arctic Circle. Similarly varies the vegetation from steppe regions in the south to tundra in the Arctic. The longest rivers here are the Volga, Don, Dvinia and Pechora.

East from the Ural across the continent up to the Bering Strait and the Pacific Ocean stretches Siberia (Russian Sibir, from the Tatar term for „sleeping land“). Siberia makes up roughly 77% of Russia's total territory and almost 10% of Earth's land surface.



Major geographical parts of Siberia are the West Siberian Plain and the Central Siberian Plateau. The most significant mountain ranges are the Verkhoyansk Range, Chersky Range, Altai and Sayan mountains. The longest rivers in Siberia are the Ob, Lena, Yenesei, Angara and Irtysh. The largest lake in Siberia is Baikal which is also the deepest lake in the world.

The climate of Siberia varies dramatically, but it typically has short summers and long, brutally cold winters. Vegetation in Siberia is mostly taiga, with a tundra belt on the northern fringe, and a temperate forest zone in the south. Almost all the population lives in the south, along the Trans-Siberian Railway. A large part of Siberia is covered by permafrost, only southern part – steppe close to Kazakhstan, has fertile soils.



Koryaksky volcano towering over Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky on the Kamchatka Peninsula



The highest part of the Altai Mountains, located in southern Siberia. The Altai is a large mountain range extending to Russia, China, Mongolia and Kazakhstan.

Population

Although ethnic Russians comprise more than 4/5 of the country's population, Russia is a diverse, multiethnic society. More than 120 ethnic groups, many with their own national territories, speaking some 100 languages live within Russia's borders. The largest of these groups are Tatars, Ukrainians, Chuvash and Chechens. The dominant religion is Orthodox Christianity, various small ethnic groups kept their religions (Islam, Jewish and even small groups with traditional beliefs in Siberia).

During the 1990s Russia began experiencing a negative population growth rate. There was also a steep drop in life expectancy beginning in the early 1990s, a result of inadequacies in the health-care system and poor nutrition; high smoking, and environmental pollution were also considered contributing factors. The long-declining Russian birth rate has led to a progressive ageing of the population.



Novosibirsk (left) is the largest city in Siberia. Other large cities in Asian part of Russia are Omsk, Irkutsk, Yekaterinburg and Vladivostok, all along the line of the Trans-Siberian Railway. The railway was built to connect European Russia with Vladivostok - Russia's most important Pacific Ocean port.

Economy

The harshness of the Russian environment is reflected in the small proportion of land that is used for farming. About three-fifths of Russian farmland is used to grow crops. The main product of Russian farming has always been grain, which occupies more than half of the cropland. Wheat is the main cereal, followed by barley, rye, and oats. Russia contains the world's largest forest reserves, and its lumbering, pulp and paper industries are particularly important. A significant part of economy is also fishing. Russia produces about one-third of all canned fish and some one-fourth of the world's total fresh and frozen fish.

Russia has enormous energy resources and significant deposits of many different minerals. Its most important resources are coal, natural gas, crude oil, iron ore, cobalt, chrome, copper, gold, nickel, platinum etc.

For transportation of raw materials are very significant long railroads, systems of pipelines and large ports (Murmansk, Kaliningrad, St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, Rostov-on-Don).

- Most important industries: machine engineering, energetics, chemical industry, timber industry
- Tourism: Moscow (Kremlin, St. Basil Cathedral, Red Square, Lenin's Mausoleum), St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Sochi, Caucasus, Lake Baikal, Trans-Siberian Railway



Russia is the country that put first man in space and space industry is still significant here.



Six of the ten largest companies in Russia are important export players in global petroleum industry. Largest Gazprom owns the longest network of pipelines in the world.

TASKS:

- 1, Think about the main differences between European and Asian part of Russia
- 2, Name four large cities in Siberian part of Russia
- 3, Write five countries that were created from the Soviet Union
- 4, Which resources are very significant part of the trade between Russia and Slovakia?
- 5, In summer 2018 Russia hosted FIFA World Cup. Which other big sport event did Russia host in 2014?

key words:

Siberia, Ural, East European Plain, Caucasus, Kamchatka, Vladivostok, St. Petersburg, Crimea, Trans-Siberian Railway, Kremlin, Sochi, Eurasian Economic Union