

Russia

Facts and Statistics

Location: Northern Asia, bordering Azerbaijan 284 km, Belarus 959 km, China (southeast) 3,605 km, China (south) 40 km, Estonia 294 km, Finland 1,313 km, Georgia 723 km, Kazakhstan 6,846 km, North Korea 19 km, Latvia 217 km, Lithuania (Kaliningrad Oblast) 227 km, Mongolia 3,485 km, Norway 196 km, Poland (Kaliningrad Oblast) 206 km, Ukraine 1,576 km

Capital: Moscow

Climate: ranges from steppes in the south through humid continental in much of European Russia; subarctic in Siberia to tundra climate in the polar north; winters vary from cool along Black Sea coast to frigid in Siberia; summers vary from warm in the steppes to cool along Arctic coast

Population: 143,782,338 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Russian 81.5%, Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 3%, Chuvash 1.2%, Bashkir 0.9%, Belarusian 0.8%, Moldavian 0.7%, other 8.1% (1989)

Religions: Russian Orthodox, Muslim, other

Government: federation

The Russian Language

Of Russia's estimated 150m population, it is thought that over 81% speak the official language of Russian as their first and only language. Most speakers of a minority language are also bilingual speakers of Russian. There are over 100 minority languages spoken in Russia today, the most popular of which is Tartar, spoken by more than 3% of the country's population. Other minority languages include Ukrainian, Chuvash, Bashir, Mordvin and Chechen. Although few of these populations make up even 1% of the Russian population, these languages are prominent in key regional areas.

Why not learn some useful Russian phrases?

Russian Society & Culture

The Russian Family

- . The Russian family is dependent upon all its members.
- . Most families live in small apartments, often with 2 or 3 generations sharing little space.
- . Most families are small, often with only one child because most women must also work outside of the house in addition to bearing sole responsibility for household and childrearing chores.

Russian Pride

- . Russians are proud of their country.
- . Patriotic songs and poems extol the virtues of their homeland.
- . They accept that their lives are difficult and pride themselves on being able to flourish in conditions that others could not.
- . They take great pride in their cultural heritage and expect the rest of the world to admire it.

Communal Mentality

- . For generations until the 1930's, Russian life centred on the agricultural village commune, where the land was held in common and decision-making was the province of an assembly of the heads of households.

. This affinity for the group and the collective spirit remains today. It is seen in everyday life, for example most Russians will join a table of strangers rather than eat alone in a restaurant.

. Everybody's business is also everyone else's, so strangers will stop and tell someone that they are breaking the rules.