

RUSSIA AND NEIGHBOURS

RUSSIA



AREA 17,075,400 sq km
POPULATION 138,740,000
MONEY Russian ruble

KAZAKHSTAN



AREA 2,724,900 sq km
POPULATION 15,522,000
MONEY Tenge

TURKMENISTAN



AREA 488,100 sq km
POPULATION 4,998,000
MONEY Manat

RUSSIA stretches across two continents, Europe and Asia. Most of the people live in the European part, west of the Ural Mountains. Some people have moved east to new towns in Siberia.

Because Russia is so huge, there are many different climates and almost all crops can be grown. The far north is snow-covered for most of the year (see page 88). Further south is the largest forest in the world – a vast area of coniferous trees stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Sea of Okhotsk in the far east. Grassy plains, called the steppes, are found south of the forest.

In some parts, grain is grown on huge farms. Russia also has large deposits of many different minerals and can supply most of the needs of its many factories.

The republics of central Asia are mostly in a desert area – hot in summer but bitterly cold in winter. With irrigation, crops such as sugar-cane and cotton grow well. Space rockets are launched from the 'Cosmodrome' in the desert of Kazakhstan.



▲ **St Basil's cathedral, Moscow**, is at one end of Red Square. It is famous for its brightly coloured domes: each one is different. In the background are the domes and towers of buildings inside the Kremlin walls. 'Kremlin' means 'fortress'. The Moscow Kremlin has a cathedral and offices of the government of Russia.



▲ **In Uzbekistan**, people still use traditional looms like this one, for weaving silk, cotton and wool – but there is modern industry as well. Uzbekistan is one of the 15 countries created when the USSR broke up in 1991. Can you name them? (Page 37 will help; answers on page 97.)

THE ARAL SEA ...



... **is getting smaller.** This ship was once in the Aral Sea, but is now on dry land. This salty lake is drying up because rivers do not refill it with enough water. The water is used to irrigate fields instead.



▲ **Siberia** has the world's largest forest. It stretches from the Ural Mountains to the far east of Russia. Most of the trees are conifers. They can survive the Siberian winters, which are long and extremely cold.

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А Б В Г Д Е Ё Ж З И Й К Л М Н О П Р С Т У Ф Х Ц Ч Ш Щ Ю Я

▲ **The Cyrillic alphabet.** Russian is written in the Cyrillic alphabet. This is partly based on Latin letters (the same as English letters) and partly on Greek letters (see page 35).

The alphabet was invented centuries ago by St Cyril, so that the Russian church could show it was separate from both the Roman and the Greek churches. In Cyrillic, R is written Р, and S is written С. So the Metro is written МЕТРО.

CAN YOU UNDERSTAND THIS MESSAGE?

Use the key above: X A B A P O B C K (square S4) is on the River A M Y P (see square S3 on the map). Now work out what the sign on the railway carriage (right) says. It is not as hard as it looks! Uzbekistan and some other republics of Central Asia are keeping the same language but changing their alphabet from Cyrillic to 'Latin' (as used in English and many other languages).



TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

It takes a week to cross Russia by train, and you must change your watch seven times. Here is the distance chart and timetable (only the main stops are shown).

МОСКВА-ВЛАДИВОСТОК

DISTANCE (in km)	TOWN	TIME (in MOSCOW)	DAY
0	Moscow	15:05	1
957	Kirov	04:00	2
1818	Yekaterinburg	16:25	2
2716	Omsk	03:13	3
3343	Novosibirsk	10:44	3
4104	Krasnoyarsk	22:31	3
5184	Irkutsk	16:23	4
5647	Ulan Ude	00:02	5
6204	Chita	09:23	5
7313	Skovorodino	05:20	6
8531	Khabarovsk	01:10	7
9297	Vladivostok	13:30*	7

* This is 20:30 local time in Vladivostok.

This is the plate on the side of the train. The translation is on page 97. This is one of the world's most exciting train journeys.

At these stations, there is time for a quick walk – and some bartering. But don't forget to allow another week to come back!

