**Our country**

**Geographical outline**

- Where is Russia situated?

- Russia stretches over a vast expanse of eastern Europe and northern Asia. It is the world's largest country. Russia covers almost twice the territory of either the United States or China. In the west Russia boarders on Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland through Kaliningrad province. In the south our country boarders on Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China, and North Korea.

- What is Russia washed by?

- Russia is washed by twelve seas and three oceans. It confronts the Baltic Sea in the west. The Black, Caspian, and Azov Seas wash Russia in the south. The Arctic Ocean and conjoined seas such as the White, Barents, Kara, Laptev, East-Siberian Seas are in the north. The Pacific Ocean and conjoined seas including the Bering, Okhotsk, and Japanese Seas wash Russia in the east.

- What are Russia's main regions?

- Russia's main regions are the Russian (or East European) Plain, the Ural Mountains, the West Siberian Plain, the Central Siberian Plateau, and the Far East.

- What can you tell us about each region?

- The Russian Plain takes up the European part of Russia. There are low, rolling uplands and broad rivers there. In the north the relief of the plain is scattered with lakes and swamps. In the southern part of the plain the river basins are cut by valleys and ravines. In the south, the Russian Plain is edged by the Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian seas. The Urals form the eastern boundary of the Russian Plain. It is held that the Urals separate Europe from Asia. The Urals stretch for about 2,100 km from north to south. The highest peak, Mount Narodnaya, reaches 1,895 m, and other maintain tops range from 900 to 1,500 m. The West Siberian Plain merges in the east with the Central Siberian Plateau. The easternmost part of Russia is bounded by various mountain chains. The Far East of Russia includes the Kamchatka and Chukchi peninsulas and the Kuril and Sakhalin islands.

- What are the most important rivers in Russia?

- The most important rivers in the European part of Russia are the Don and Volga. The Volga River, which flows in the Caspian Sea, is of great historic, economic, and cultural importance to Russia. It has become the cradle of such ancient Russian cities as Vladimir, Tver, Yaroslavl, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod. In the West Siberia the greatest rivers are the Ob and Yenisey. They flow along the most extensive lowland in the world. The Yenisey flows into the Kara Sea.

- What is the deepest lake in Russia?

- The Baikal is the deepest lake in the world.

- What can you say about the population of Russia?

- Russia ranks sixth in the world in the size of its population. The great majority of the population of Russia are Russians. Russia is inhabited by sixty other nationalities, and about twenty five of these minorities have their own autonomous republics within the Russian Federation. The population in Russia is unequally distributed. The bulk of the people live in the European part of the republic. Siberia is insufficiently populated, though its economic development was rapid in the second half of the 20th century. The northern part of Russia is practically uninhabitable because of the length and severity or its winter. About three-quarters of Russia's population is classified as urban.

- What types of climate are there on the territory of Russia?

- There are various types of climate on the territory of Russia. Continental climate, with cold winters and mild or warm summers prevails. Continental weather extremes increase eastward and are obvious in eastern Siberia, which experiences bitterly cold winters. The harshness of the Russian climate limits the amount of arable land to about one-seventh of the total territory.

- Is Russia's flora rich?

- Different latitudinal climatic regimes are mirrored in Russia's flora. A treeless tundra with mosses and grasses extends along the entire Arctic coast. In the south it gives way to taiga. This coniferous forest growing on swampy ground covers more than half of the country. In European Russia, towards the south the taiga is replaced by a zone of mixed coniferous and deciduous forest which in the south transfers into mixed forest-steppe and finally into the almost treeless, grass-covered steppe.

- How is farmland used in Russia?

- About three-fifths of Russian farmland is used to grow crop. The rest of it is given to pasture and meadow. Grain has always been the chief product - mainly wheat, rye, barley, and oats - along with such fodder crops as grasses, clover, root crops, and corn. Russia's industrial crops are sunflower seeds, sugar beets, and flax. Such consumer crops as potatoes and other vegetables are grown widely in Russia.

- What does Russia's access to the oceans promote?

- Russia's access to both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans promotes the development of its fishing industry. Russian fishing fleets ply not only the seas around Russia but also fishing grounds off North America and West Africa. There are also important inland fisheries on lakes and rivers. For example, the Caspian sturgeon is the source of the finest caviar.

- Is Russia rich in natural resources?

- Russia has the riches deposits of mineral resources in the world. It is one of the world's biggest producers of coal, oil and natural gas, as well as of iron ore, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, aluminium, and tin.

- Is Russia's industry well-developed?

- The development of the Russian economy is determined by its natural resources. Russia's heavy industries are well-developed. They produce much of the nation's steel and most of its heavy machinery, such as steam boilers, grain-harvesting combines, automobiles, locomotives, and machine tools. Russia's chemical industry is also well developed. Light industry centres on the production of textiles.

- What transports are used in Russia?

- All kinds of transports are used in Russia. Some of them are well-developed, others leave much to be desired. Railways account for about 90 percent of the country's movement of freight. The Trans-Siberian Railroad is rightfully famous. Highways link major cities. Maritime transport is very important, both on sea and by river and canal. Aeroflot is among the world's largest airlines in terms of quantity of equipment and flights.