The Physical Geography of Russia
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Chapter Objectives

- Identify the physical features and natural resources of Russia.
- Discuss the effects of Russia’s climate and vegetation on life in the region.
THE LAND

Section 1
Section Objectives

- Describe the size of Russia’s land area.
- Discuss how Russia’s interconnected plains and mountain ranges shape settlement in the country.
- Identify Russia’s natural resources.
Terms to know

- chernozem
- hydroelectric power
- permafrost
A Geographic View

Sunbathers, Volga River
Many active volcanoes are found in far eastern Russia, where the Kamchatka Peninsula lies within the Ring of Fire, the belt of volcanic activity surrounding the Pacific Ocean. Four volcanoes in Kamchatka—Kliuchevskoi, Tolbachik, Shiveluch, and Bezymianny—last erupted in 1999.
A Vast and Varied Land

- **Mountains and Plateaus**  Stretching across parts of Europe and Asia, Russia is a huge land of plains divided and bordered by mountains and plateaus.

- The Urals are old, worn-down mountains that mark the boundary between European and Asian parts of Russia.

- The Caucasus Mountains in the southwest reach their highest elevation at Mount Elbrus, 18,510 ft. (5,642 m), Russia’s highest point.

- Mountain ranges also form a rugged natural boundary between Russia and China.
Vast and Varied Land
Vast and Varied Land

- Plains Areas The North European Plain covers most of European Russia.
- The southern part of the plain has rich soil, and about 75 percent of the Russian population lives there.
- Coasts, Seas, and Lakes Russia has the longest continuous coastline of any country, at 23,400 miles (37,650 km).
- The coastline touches the Arctic and Pacific Oceans and the Baltic, Black, and Caspian Seas.
Vast and Varied Land
Rivers

- Most of Russia’s longest rivers are in sparsely populated Siberia.
- Siberians enjoy a surplus of freshwater, but European Russians often face water shortages or problems with water quality.
- **The Volga River** The Volga is the fourth-longest river in Russia and the longest river in Europe.
- **Siberian Rivers** Siberian rivers flow north to the Arctic Ocean. Blocked by ice, meltwaters often flood the land and create vast swamps.
Natural Resources

- **Minerals and Energy**  Russia has huge mineral resources. It is especially rich in mineral fuels, such as oil, natural gas, and coal.

- Russia’s rivers make it a leading producer of hydroelectric power.

- **Soil and Forest Land**  Because of Russia’s generally cold climate, only about 10 percent of Russia’s land is suitable for farming.

- A rich, fertile “Black Earth Belt,” however, stretches from Ukraine to southwestern Russia, supplying the country with grains, sugar beets, and other produce.
Natural Resources

• About one-fifth of the world’s forested land is in Siberia. Russian forests supply much of the world’s timber.

• **Russia’s Fishing Industry**  Fish is a staple food in Russia and also an important export.
Section 2
Objectives

• List Russia’s major climates.
• State what seasons are like in Russia.
• Explain how climate affects the way Russians live.
• Classify the types of natural vegetation found in each of Russia’s climate regions.
Terms to Know

- Tundra
- Taiga
- Steppe
Geographic View

Mountain range, Kamchatka Peninsula
Geographic Literacy

The coldest temperature ever recorded in Asia was in Russia. On February 6, 1933, the temperature in the Siberian town of Oimekon was -90°F. The same temperature was recorded on February 7, 1892, in Verkhoyansk, another Siberian location.
Russia’s Climate and Vegetation

- Most of Russia has a harsh climate with long, cold winters and short, relatively cool summers.
- Lying well within the Eurasian landmass, most of the country is far away from any moderating ocean influences.
High Latitude Climates

- **Tundra** The *tundra*, a vast, treeless plain, covers about 10 percent of Russia.
- The weather is always cold, and little grows there because of the short growing season and the thin acidic soil.
- **Subarctic** The subarctic lies just south of the tundra. The subarctic has snow for up to 250 days of the year.
- The *taiga* is a forest belt in the subarctic that is the world’s largest coniferous forest.
High Latitudes

- **Living in a Cold Climate**  Russians must be creative to live in an extremely cold climate.
- Builders plan for the cold when they construct buildings, and cars are made from a special type of steel that will not crack in the cold.
- Large amounts of oil, gas, wood, and coal are used to keep warm.
High Latitudes
Mid Latitudes

- **Humid Continental**  Most of the North European Plain and some of southern Siberia have a humid continental climate, with long, snowy, relatively mild winters.
- In humid continental areas of Russia, the coniferous taiga of the north gives way to mixed coniferous-deciduous forests.
- **War and Winter**  Russia’s cold climate was helpful in World War II because Russian soldiers, who were used to the cold, fought well against the German soldiers, who were unprepared for a brutal winter.
- **Steppe**  The steppe climate region has dry summers and long, cold, dry winters. Its rich soil enables a variety of grasses and plants to flourish.
Mid Latitudes
Section 1 – Summary

- Russia is the largest country in the world, spanning Europe and Asia.
- Russia’s land consists of interconnected plains and plateaus and is bordered on the south and east by mountain ranges.
- Most rivers in Russia flow northward and are frozen for much of the year.
- Russia is rich in resources, such as petroleum, coal, minerals and gems, and timber.
Most of Russia has a harsh climate with wide extremes of temperatures, which creates challenges in all aspects of Russian life.

Russian winters are long and cold, and its summers are short and relatively cool.

Permanently frozen subsoil, or permafrost, lies beneath much of Siberia.

The vegetation in Russia is varied, with treeless tundra in the far north, densely wooded taiga in the north and central areas, and temperate steppe grasslands in the southwest.