



Technology Integration

October 2008



DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

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Profile

Introduction

The Russian people have experienced considerable change since the fall of the Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, the Russian Federation became the successor state, and the country transitioned from a command economy to a privatized economy. Initially, the country's standard of living dropped sharply, but it rose again in the 2000s. Under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, the president of the Russian Federation from 2000 to 2008, the government attempted to achieve stability, control breakaway regions, and install labor, banking, and property reforms. Although many Russians have benefited from the newly structured, globalized economy, the quality of life has lowered for others. In general, political change has forced the Russian people to adapt to an economy and social structure that is vastly different from what existed during the Soviet era. Today, Dmitriy Medvedev is the nation's president.^{1,2}



Russia's recent military incursion into Georgia in response to Georgia's attack on the province of South Ossetia on 7 August 2008 has been widely criticized by a number of Western countries. As a result of Russia's military actions, the country has received international condemnation from the European Union (EU) and the U.S., as well as threats of sanctions. Russia will withdraw from Georgia by a set date if certain conditions are met, but resolution of this complex issue is far from sight. Overall, the situation carries serious implications for future U.S.–Russian relations.³

Geography⁴

Russia is the world's largest country, constituting over one ninth of the earth's total land area. It is more than 17 million sq km (6.5 million sq mi), extending from Eastern Europe across northern Asia to the Pacific Ocean. From west to east, Russia spans 11 time zones and almost half of the earth's circumference. The section of the country west of the Ural Mountains is known as European Russia, and the eastern Asian regions are collectively known as Siberia.⁵

¹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

² MSN Encarta. "Russia: III. People and Society of Russia." c.1993–2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_5/Russia.html#s18

³ BBC News. "Russians 'Agree Georgia Deadline.'" 8 September 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7604376.stm>

⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 4 September 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

⁵ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia." c. 1993–2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000/Russia.html#s1

Russia borders a record number of 14 countries, a figure presently matched only by China. Beginning in the far southeast region of the country, on the coast of the Sea of Japan, China shares a small border with North Korea 17.5 km (11 mi). Moving west, Russia borders the northeastern region of China 3,605 km (2,240 mi) and northern Mongolia 3,441 km (2,138 mi). West of Mongolia, Russia shares another small border with China 40 km (25 mi) and an extensive border with Kazakhstan, which stretches 6,846 km (4,254 mi) to the northern Caspian Sea. In the Caucasus region between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, Russia borders the countries of Azerbaijan 284 km (176 mi) and Georgia 723 km (449 mi). Beginning north of the Black Sea and tracking northwest along its western boundary with Europe, Russia abuts Ukraine 1,576 km (979 mi), Belarus 959 km (596 mi), Latvia 292 km (181 mi), and Estonia 290 km (180 mi). To its northwest, in Scandinavia, Russia shares a border with Finland 1,313 km (816 mi) and Norway 196 km (122 mi). Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast, an administrative division, is an exclave in Eastern Europe that lies along the Baltic Sea. The Kaliningrad Oblast borders Lithuania 227 km (141 mi) and Poland 432 km (268 mi).



To Russia's north lies the Arctic Ocean and its coastal subdivisions, which include the Barents Sea (in the west), the Kara Sea and the Laptev Sea (to the north of central Russia), and the East Siberian Sea (in the east). The Chukchi Sea lies off Russia's far northeast, and to the south, the Bering Strait separates Alaska and Russia. South of the strait lies the Bering Sea, which bounds the eastern side of Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula and extends into the North Pacific Ocean. On the western side of the Kamchatka Peninsula lies the Sea of Okhotsk, which bounds northeastern Russia to the south and southeastern Russia to the east. Finally, the Sea of Japan lies on Russia's far southeastern coast.

Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

The Russian land mass exhibits a wide range of geological features. In general, the western half of the country consists of two immense plains separated by the Ural Mountains, which mark the division between European and Siberian Russia. An extensive belt of plateaus and mountains covers most of Siberia, or eastern Russia.

Kola Peninsula

Covering an area of 100,000 sq km (40,000 sq mi), the Kola Peninsula lies mostly north of the Arctic Circle in Russia's far northwestern region. The Barents Sea lies to its north and the White Sea (an inlet of the Barents Sea) lies to its south and southeast. The peninsula's land mass consists of glaciers, and its interior has provided a wealth of various ores and minerals. In the north, the land is tundra (Arctic plains with permafrost soil). The entire peninsula receives less than 25 cm (10 in) of rainfall annually, and few plants can survive in the infertile soil and cold



climate. The city of Murmansk, the home of the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet, is located on the northern coast of the peninsula.⁶

*Russian Plain*⁷

Also called the East European Plain because it comprises most of European Russia, the Russian Plain is relatively flat and low, with an average elevation of 200 m (600 ft). Over the millennia, its surface has been layered with sedimentary rock by the forces of glaciers, streams, and winds. This massive plain extends from the Caspian and Black Seas in southern Russia to the Arctic Ocean in the north. In the east, it extends to the base of the Ural Mountains.

The Russian Plain is home to several of Russia's major cities, including two of the largest: Moscow, in the west, and St. Petersburg in the northwest, near the Gulf of Finland. The northern region of the plain contains several lakes and swamps amid an expanse of poorly drained terrain. Farther south, the soil is rich, with agricultural lands receiving irrigation from the Volga and Don rivers.

In the southern Russian Plain, the Caspian Lowland (Caspian Depression) surrounds the northern side of the Caspian Sea and extends through both Russian and Kazakhstani territory. As it spans the boundary between Europe and Asia, the Caspian Lowland is the site of some of both continents' lowest elevations. The region is also where some of Europe's largest natural gas deposits have been discovered.⁸

Caucasus Mountains

Forming a southern boundary between Russia and the Caucasian countries of Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Greater Caucasus Mountains extend approximately 1,200 km (750 mi) from the northeastern edge of the Black Sea to the western shore of the Caspian Sea. The Kura River forms a watershed on the eastern side of the range and drains into the Caspian Sea. Several mountains above 4,570 m (15,000 ft) in elevation are found in the northern Caucasus. This includes the extinct volcanic peak known as Mount Elbrus, which, as Europe's highest peak, stands at an altitude of 5,642 m (18,510 ft). Crystalline rock and granite form these mountains, and glaciers and volcanic ridges are spread throughout the area.⁹



⁶ MSN Encarta. "Kola Peninsula." c. 1997–2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_762508943/Kola_Peninsula.html

⁷ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia: Great European Plain." c. 1993–2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000/Russia.html

⁸ MSN Encarta. "Caspian Depression." c. 1997–2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761563320/Caspian_Depression.html

⁹ MSN Encarta. "Caucasus Mountains." c. 1997–2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572933/Caucasus_Mountains.html

Ural Mountains

The Russian Plain and the European region of Russia end at the Ural Mountains. Spanning north–south across the country, this range extends into the Arctic Ocean in the form of an archipelago known as Novaya Zemlya. The range has eroded over time to an average altitude of approximately 600 m (2,000 ft). The Ural Mountains are an important source of ores and minerals for Russian industry.¹⁰

West Siberian Plain

Spanning the vast area between the Arctic Ocean in the north and the central Asian steppes to the south, the West Siberian Plain is the largest region in Russia. It begins east of the Ural Mountains and covers an area of more than 2.6 million sq km (1 million sq mi). Its eastern border is the Yenisey River in central Siberia. In addition to sizable oil and gas deposits, some of the biggest swamps in the world are found in the poorly drained central and northern parts of this region. Much of the plain is less than 100 m (300 ft) in elevation. The land is higher and dryer in the south, where the majority of the regional population is located.^{11, 12}

The North Siberian Lowland extends to the northeast from the West Siberian Plain, separating the Taymyr Peninsula's Byrranga Mountains from the Central Siberian Plateau. The lowland's east–west length is 3,000 km (1,850 mi), and it lies approximately 50–70 m (165–230 ft) above sea level. This region is intermittently covered with swamps.¹³

Central Siberian Plateau

Extending from the Yenisey River in the west to the Lena River in the east, the Central Siberian Plateau ranges between 300–700 m (1,000–2,300 ft) in altitude. Erosion from regional rivers has formed deep canyons in the plateau, and complex geologic processes have layered it in unusual ways. Specifically, the plateau consists of a mix of metamorphic, igneous, and sedimentary rock that is covered in places by volcanic lava. Black coal is believed to be present in significant amounts in this region. The plateau is bordered on



© Wing-Chi Poon
Aerial View of Siberian Sunrise

¹⁰ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia: Ural Mountains." c. 1993–2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_2/Russia.html

¹¹ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia: West Siberian Plain." c. 1993–2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_2/Russia.html

¹² Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: Land: Relief: West Siberian Plain." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia—Britannica-Online-Encyclopedia>

¹³ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Northern Siberian Lowland." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/419440/North-Siberian-Lowland#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=North-Siberian-Lowland> Britannica-Online Encyclopedia

the north by the North Siberian Lowland and the Taymyr Peninsula, and on the northwest by the volcanic Putoran Mountains, which rise as high as 1,701 m (5,581 ft). The southern part of the plateau is bordered by the Eastern Sayan Mountains.^{14, 15}

Taymyr Peninsula

Located in north-central Siberia, the Taymyr Peninsula is the northernmost extension of land in all of Asia and Europe. Its territory covers around 400,000 sq km (150,000 sq mi), with tundra-covered lowlands spreading north and south from the central Byrranga Mountains. The peninsula is bounded by the Laptev Sea to its east and the Gulf of Yenisey and the Kara Sea to its west. To the north of the peninsula lies Vilkitsky Strait, a string of large islands (known as Sevrnaya Zemlya), and the Arctic Ocean.¹⁶

Mountains of the South and East^{17, 18}

Approximately one fourth of Russia's land mass consists of an extensive series of high mountain ranges that wrap around the southern and eastern regions of the country. Beginning at the western end of this region, the Altai Mountains border eastern Kazakhstan, a small strip of northern China, and the northwestern region of Mongolia. The highpoint of this chain is 4,506 m (14,783 ft). Moving east, the Sayan Mountains surround the Tuva Basin and span a segment of the Russian–Mongolian frontier. These mountains are slightly lower in elevation than the Altai Mountains to their west.

Near Lake Baikal in southern Siberia, additional mountain ranges spread to the northeast. The Yablonovy and Stanovoy Ranges extend eastward toward the Sea of Okhotsk, dividing the drainage systems of eastern Siberia's longest rivers, the Lena and Amur Rivers. At the eastern end of the Stanovoy Range, the Dzhugdzur Mountains fan northeastward along the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk, eventually merging into the Verhoyansk Mountains, which rise to heights of 2,389 m (7,838 ft). The Chersky Range lies to the northeast of the Verhoyansk Range and follows a similar course. At the eastern end of these mountain chains lies the Kolyma Range, which extends northeastward. North of these converging mountain ranges lies the Kolyma Lowland, a swampy region that extends north to the East Siberian Sea.

¹⁴ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia: Central Siberian Plain." c. 1993–2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_2/Russia.html

¹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: Land: Relief: Central Siberian Plateau." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title>

¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Taymyr Peninsula." 2008. [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/584942/Taymyr-Peninsula#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Taymyr Peninsula—Britannica-Online Encyclopedia](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/584942/Taymyr-Peninsula#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Taymyr%20Peninsula—Britannica-Online-Encyclopedia)

¹⁷ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia – Far Eastern Russia." c. 1993–2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_2/Russia.html

¹⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: Land: Relief: The Mountains of the South and East." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia—Britannica-Online-Encyclopedia>

The Kamchatka Peninsula extends southward from the far northeastern region of Russia into the North Pacific Ocean, separating the Sea of Okhotsk from the Bering Sea. The peninsula's two mountain chains include 120 volcanoes, 23 of which are active; this region comprises the northwestern section of the seismic "ring of fire" that encircles the Pacific. The highest volcano is Klyuchevskaya Sopka, which reaches an elevation of 4,750 m (15,584 ft). Several others rise to over 3,050 m (10,000 ft) in altitude. Offshore, the peninsula extends in the form of the Kuril Islands, which similarly contain a number of active and inactive volcanoes. The Kuril Islands extend in a chain southward, ending to the immediate northeast of Japan.

Climate^{19, 20}

Because more than half of Russia lies north of the 60th parallel (latitude 60° N) and most of its territory is at least 400 km (250 mi) from the sea, the climate is generally continental and cold. The extensive mountain chains in eastern and southern Russia block any moderating oceanic influences from the Pacific Ocean to the east and the Indian Ocean to the south. Equally strong in effect, the absence of any mountain chains on Russia's northern and western frontiers leaves the country vulnerable to oceanic influences from both the Arctic and Atlantic oceans. The Arctic Ocean influence is especially harsh. Because of these general conditions, essentially only two seasons exist in Russia: winter, which is long and cold, and summer, which is short and generally fairly cool. Spring and fall are merely short transitional seasons between the two climate extremes.

Average annual temperatures in most of Russia are cold, ranging from freezing to well below freezing. However, there are extreme shifts in temperature. Excluding Antarctica, the coldest January temperature in the world, -71° C (-96° F), was recorded at Oymyakon in the eastern mountains of Siberia. On the other hand, in summer, several places in Russia have experienced temperatures over 38° C (100° F). Generally, however, the summer temperatures are more moderate and vary more according to latitude than in the winter months, when temperature variations are greater moving west to east than north to south. Average summer temperatures (July) measure between 4° C (39° F) in the northern Arctic islands, to 20° C (68° F) across southern Russia.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Snowfall in Barnaul, Russia

Despite its generally cold conditions, Russia has a variety of distinct climate zones. In the southern region of western Russia, a steppe climate begins at the Black Sea and extends to the immediate northeast, encompassing the North Caucasian Plain, the southern

¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: Land: Climate." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia—Britannica-OnlineEncyclopedia>

²⁰ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia: Russia's Climate." c. 1993–2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_4/Russia.html

reaches of the Volga Valley and the Ural Mountains, and southwestern Siberia. This climate is characterized by cold winters and generally dry conditions. Beginning in the central region of western Russia, a continental climate extends from the Baltic and Black Seas to the Ural Mountains. The climate in this zone is temperate and less harsh than in the colder regions.

In northern Russia, a subarctic climate zone stretches east from St. Petersburg, across the Urals, and over most of Siberia. Farther north, a tundra climate zone spans the Arctic coast from west to east, reaching into eastern Siberia. This climate is characterized by dry and extremely cold winters, interrupted by a short summer. Finally, another climate zone is found on the Arctic islands and is characterized by extreme polar desert conditions.

Rivers and Lakes^{21, 22}

Some of the longest rivers in the world are found in Russia. Although some of them serve as important transportation networks, many of them are obstructed by ice blocks for extended periods of the year. In addition to transport, many of the country's rivers and waterways also provide hydroelectric power and, of course, irrigation waters. In general, Russia is disadvantaged by a lack of access to some of the world's major sea lanes even though it has the longest continuous coastline of any nation in the world.^{23, 24} Many of its coastal waters and river deltas are icebound for most or all of the year.

Volga River

The Volga is the longest river in Europe, but only the fourth longest in Russia. It originates in the hills that lie to the northwest of Moscow. The Volga drains much of the East European Plain, winding 3,530 km (2,193 mi) toward the Caspian Sea in the south, where it empties. The Volga has two main tributaries, the Kama and Oka rivers, and several linking canals. Altogether, the entire Volga system carries two thirds of the nation's riverine traffic.



²¹ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia: Rivers and Lakes of Russia." c. 1993–2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_3/Russia.html

²² Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: Land: Drainage: Rivers." 2008.
2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

²³ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 4 September 2008.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

²⁴ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Land and Resources of Russia: Russia's Coastline." c. 1993–2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_3/Russia.html

Don River

Beginning southeast of Moscow, the Don River runs 1,870 km (1,162 mi) on its course across the southwestern region of European Russia. It empties into the Sea of Azov, a northeastern extension of the Black Sea. At Volgograd, the Don River links to the Volga River through the Volga–Don Canal, which is 100 km (63 mi) in length.²⁵ Much of the Don River is frozen during the winter and extremely shallow in late summer.

Ob River and Irtysh River

The Ob River and its tributary, the Irtysh River, comprise the largest river system in Asia. Measuring a combined length of 5,410 km (3,362 mi), the Ob and the Irtysh drain the West Siberian Plain as they flow to the northwest from their respective sources in the Altai Mountains. The two rivers converge in central Russia, thereafter flowing north as the Ob River and emptying into the Arctic Ocean. Before it enters Russia, the Irtysh River passes through northeastern Kazakhstan from its source in northwestern China. Both rivers are blocked by ice for a portion of the year.

Yenisey River

Located on the eastern edge of the West Siberian Plain, the Yenisey River runs north from its headwaters in the eastern Sayan Mountains. It follows a course along the western edge of the Central Siberian Plateau and empties into the Arctic Ocean's Kara Sea. In terms of volume, the Yenisey is the sixth largest river in the world, carrying more water than any of Russia's other river systems.

Lena River

The world's 10th longest river, the Lena River originates in southern Siberia near Lake Baikal. It runs generally northeast before curving north on the western side of the Verkhoyansk Range, thus separating Russia's eastern mountain territory from the Central Siberian Plateau. Emptying into the Arctic Ocean at the Laptev Sea, this river's drainage area covers approximately 2,490,000 sq km (961,000 sq mi). For most of its length, the river is blocked by ice for at least half of the year.



Lake Baikal

Formed approximately 20–25 million years ago, Lake Baikal is the world's deepest 1,620 m (5,315 ft) and oldest freshwater lake. Averaging 48 km (30 mi) wide, the lake is 636 km (395 mi) long and covers an area of roughly 31,500 sq km (12,200 sq mi). More than

²⁵ MSN Encarta. "Volga-Don Canal." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559489/Volga-Don_Canal.html

330 streams and rivers flow into the lake, which holds about one fifth of the total fresh water on the earth's surface. The lake is surrounded by mountains that rise steeply from its western shores to heights of over 2,560 m (8,400 ft) above sea level. Several hot mineral springs are found within the region, and the area is prone to earthquakes of significant magnitude. Although once famed for its crystal clear waters, industrial activity on the lake's shores, most notably that of a paper mill, has seriously polluted the lake and nearby forests.^{26, 27}

Major Cities

Moscow^{28, 29}

Situated on the Moscow River in the western region of European Russia, Moscow is the nation's capital and its largest city, with a population of 10.4 million.³⁰ Moscow is the country's political, economic, industrial, scientific, educational, and cultural center, as well as the capital of the Moscow Oblast. (Oblasts are administrative districts, similar to a province or state).

Historically, the first written reference to Moscow stems from 1147 C.E., when it was still a relatively small city. Mongol–Tatar tribes destroyed the city in 1237 and 1238, and in 1367, construction began on the stone walls of the medieval fortress known as the Kremlin. Tsars (Russian rulers) used Moscow as their command base from 1547, when Ivan IV assumed the role of tsar, until 1712, when St. Petersburg became the nation's capital. Moscow was largely destroyed by fire when Napoleon I ended his military occupation of the city in 1812. The city was subsequently rebuilt and, from the 1830s, it became an important metallurgical and textile center and, later, a center for the Russian labor movement. In 1918, the capital was transferred from St. Petersburg back to Moscow, and between 1922 and 1991, the city served as capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R., or Soviet Union). After the Soviet Union dissolved, the city's infrastructure suffered from a lack of public funding. Later, however, foreign investment funds helped to restore many of its structures. In recent years, Russia's adoption of a market economy has led to a surge of growth and affluence within the city.

²⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Lake Baikal." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/49177/Lake-Baikal#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Lake Baikal - Britannica Online Encyclopedia>

²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: Land: Relief: The Mountains of the South and East." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia - Britannica Online Encyclopedia>

²⁸ RusNet. "Moscow." c. 2003–2008. <http://www.rusnet.nl/encyclo/m/moscow.shtml>

²⁹ MSN Encarta. "Moscow." c.1993–2008.
[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761562480/Moscow_\(city_Russia\).html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761562480/Moscow_(city_Russia).html)

³⁰ Bureau of European and Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008.
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

The layout of Moscow follows a pattern of rings, with the center ring encircling the Kremlin. Surrounded by fortified walls capped with 20 towers, the Kremlin contains numerous domed Orthodox cathedrals dating from the 15th and 16th centuries. Also inside the Kremlin is the Palace of Congresses, where the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) formerly met; this structure is now used for cultural performances. Other features of the Kremlin include the Russian president's residence and offices and the Great Kremlin Palace, which was built in 1849 for Tsar Nicholas I. The Red Square is located near the Kremlin's eastern wall, along with the V. I. Lenin Mausoleum, which holds the embalmed remains of the Soviet Union's first leader, Vladimir Ilich Lenin.



Moscow is home to Moscow State University and 75 other institutions of higher education. The city also houses the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian State Library, which maintains one of the world's largest collections. Moscow's cultural institutions include the Bolshoi Theater and the Bolshoi Ballet, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, and several monasteries. As a remnant of Soviet planning, public gardens and parks occupy 30% of the city's land. The famous Gorky Park lies near the Moscow River. Here, the famous Moscow Zoo and the Botanical Gardens are overseen by the Russian Academy of Science.

*Saint Petersburg*³¹

With a population of 4.6 million,³² Saint Petersburg is Russia's largest seaport and second largest city. Occupying both banks of the Neva River and several of its islands, the city is located northwest of Moscow on the Gulf of Finland, an extension of the Baltic Sea. Because of the cold climate, the harbor is frozen for three or more months each year, and icebreakers are used to keep it open for shipping. The city was known as Leningrad from 1924 to 1991, but its name changed back to Saint Petersburg six months before Russia achieved independence.

Between 1712 and 1918, Saint Petersburg was Russia's capital, and it remains one of the nation's major cultural, industrial, and scientific centers. The city is known as the site of two historic revolutions in 1917, the first overthrowing the monarchy and the second installing the Bolsheviks. Culturally, Saint Petersburg is known as Russia's most European city, as it contains lavishly built cathedrals, palaces, libraries, and universities. The city is a center of theater, music, and



³¹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "St. Petersburg." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/518092/Saint-Petersburg#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Saint Petersburg - Britannica Online Encyclopedia>

³² Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

dance, and is home to the famed Kirov Ballet (now named the Mariinsky Opera and Ballet Theater) and, at various times, artists such as Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov. Saint Petersburg has a great literary heritage as well, serving as inspiration to such Russian authors as Dostoyevsky, Pushkin, and Gogol. The Hermitage, founded by Catherine the Great, is one of the world's most famous museums. It is housed in the city's Winter Palace, which was formerly the winter residence of the tsars. Inside the Peter and Paul Cathedral, which stands within an island fortress, lie the tombs of the tsars who ruled Russia until the 20th century.

As Saint Petersburg is located at the river's entrance, the city is intersected with delta waterways and over 300 bridges connect its various parts. People commonly use ferries or small boats to negotiate the city's many canals. During the White Nights, which usually occur between 1 June and 2 July, the city experiences remarkably long days, reaching upwards of 19 hours. During this period, you may find people walking along the canals, watching the bridges open as ships travel up and down the river.

*Novosibirsk*³³

Novosibirsk, originally named Novonikolaevsk, lies in south-central Russia (southwestern Siberia) on the banks of the Ob River. Now Russia's third largest city, Novosibirsk began as a small settlement where a Trans-Siberian Railroad bridge was built on the Ob River. The village subsequently became a center to store grain for transportation on the railroad. From its beginnings as a transportation hub, Novonikolaevsk grew to become a commercial and industrial center. It was also one of the first of Russia's cities to accept the compulsory primary education system that was implemented in 1913.



Russia's civil war tore Novonikolaevsk apart between 1917 and 1919, when both the Red and White armies struggled to control the city. Fighting between the two forces was intense, resulting in substantial casualties and infrastructural damage, including the destruction of the Ob River bridge. Corresponding cholera and typhus epidemics led to additional fatalities. After Lenin's New Economic Policy in 1921, the city began to revive. It was renamed Novosibirsk in 1926, and under Stalin's economic policies, it became one of Siberia's largest industrial centers. As post-Soviet Russia adopted new policies in the 1990s, the city became a gateway into the Siberian market.

*Nizhniy Novgorod*³⁴

Located east of Moscow on the banks of the Volga River at its confluence with the Oka River, Nizhniy Novgorod (formerly named "Gorky") is Russia's fourth largest city. The

³³ Novosibirsk City Guide. "History." c. 1999–2008. <http://www.alliberia.com/novosibirsk/Nskhistory.htm>

³⁴ Nizhny Novgorod City Administration Official Site. "The History of the City of Nizhny Novgorod." 7 August 2007. http://www.admcity.nnov.ru/english/historynn_eng.html

city was founded in 1221 as a military fortress to defend the region from invading tribes, such as the Tatars and Mordvinians. Due to its strategic location in the central part of the Russian Plain (European Russia), it became an important trading hub, where fish, salt, and goods from the Orient were exchanged. It was also a center of orthodox religion.

In the 18th century, Nizhniy Novgorod developed into a regional administrative center equipped with medical facilities and various cultural institutions, such as theaters, schools, and a printing press. The famed Russian writer Aleksandr Pushkin visited in 1833 and wrote some of his impressions of the city in his classic novel *Eugene Onegin*. Novelist Maxim Gorky was born in the city and many Russians known for their contributions to the sciences and arts lived there, as well. The city is the home of the Makaryev Fair, which began in 1817 and was held annually, attracting travelers from all over the world.

In terms of industry, Nizhniy Novgorod developed a number of manufacturing plants for the production of automobiles, steam and diesel engines, and ships. During the Soviet era, Nizhniy Novgorod became a base for military production and research. Today, the city remains a center for industrial activity.

*Yekaterinburg*³⁵

Located in central Russia on the eastern side of the Ural Mountains, Yekaterinburg was founded in 1723 and named after Empress Catherine I, wife of Peter the Great. The city's initial development was the result of Peter's plan to harness the natural resources in the region, and it soon grew into an industrial center, which it remains today. The city has also long served as an important center of trade for goods passing between Central Asia, Siberia, and Europe. Today, the city's most significant industries include steel-making, timber processing, pulp and paper production, and chemicals.



Yekaterinburg is also a center for research, with particular focus on industry. The largest local research facility is the Urals Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and its 18 institutes. Culturally, the city maintains an active performing arts scene. In addition to opera and theatre, the city is home to the Urals Philharmonic Orchestra, the largest symphony orchestra in the region.

Yekaterinburg was the site of an important historical event that signaled the country's transition from monarchic to communist rule. In 1918, Russia's last tsar, Nicholas II, and his family were assassinated by Bolsheviks of the newly formed Soviet government. In the midst of a civil war, the event occurred in the basement of the Ipatiev House, which

³⁵ U.S. Consulate General. "Yekaterinburg Russia: Yekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk Oblast." No date. <http://yekaterinburg.usconsulate.gov/en/district/yekat.php>

was later torn down and replaced by a church known as the Cathedral-on-the-Blood. Today, the church is a site of pilgrimage.³⁶

*Vladivostok*³⁷

Located in extreme southeast Russia, Vladivostok is Russia's main port on the Pacific Ocean (via the Sea of Japan) and the eastern terminating point of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. The city was founded in 1860 and became Russia's primary Pacific Ocean naval base in 1872. Icebreakers are used to keep the waters of its bay open during winter.

During World War I, Vladivostok was used as a supply base by Allied forces, who occupied the city after the 1917 Russian Revolution. (The occupying forces were mainly Japanese but included Europeans and Americans as well.) The Soviets regained control of the city in 1922, and, after World War II, they closed the port to ships from the West. It was not until 1990 that the port reopened to foreign vessels.

In modern times, Vladivostok has been a port for whaling and fishing fleets. It is also the cultural center of far eastern Russia, serving as home to a number of higher learning institutions, including Far Eastern University and the Russian Academy of Sciences, Far Eastern branch. In Russian, the name Vladivostok loosely translates as "Lord of the East."³⁸

History

*Early History*³⁹

Although the territory comprising modern-day Russia has been inhabited since Paleolithic times, the modern Russian state can only be directly traced back to the ninth century C.E. Kievan Rus, founded in Kiev, was the first established political entity in the region, ruling from the 10th to the 12th centuries. (Before this time, a variety of distinct tribes had occupied the western region of Russia.) During the Kievan Rus era, the ruler Vladimir I instituted Christianity as the state religion, thereby providing the foundation for the later development of the Russian Orthodox Church. Tied to Kievan Rus through the practice of Christianity, Byzantine culture became influential in Russia during this time. Specifically, Byzantine forms appeared and endured not only in the church but also in Russian architecture, art, and music, as well as in other arenas of Russian culture.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Biltower, Kieven Rus Period

³⁶ Ekaterinburg Travel. "Romanov's Family Assassination in Ekaterinburg." c. 2008. <http://www.ekaterinburg.tv/Romanovs.htm>

³⁷ Answers.com. "Columbia Encyclopedia: Vladivostok." c. 2008. <http://www.answers.com/topic/vladivostok>

³⁸ FocalPointf8. "Vladivostok." c. 1995. <http://www.f8.com/FP/Russia/Avlad.html>

³⁹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

*Middle History*⁴⁰

A series of Mongolian invasions in the 13th century contributed to the decline of Kievan Rus, which had become fractured by internal strife. Amid the period of Mongolian control and occupation, the principality of Muscovy (later Moscow) rose as a regional power, ultimately consolidating the area comprising modern European Russia. During this time, Muscovy produced a series of powerful leaders, including Ivan III (1462–1505), also known as Ivan the Great, who expanded the empire and adopted the title of tsar.⁴¹ Following Ivan III, the notorious Ivan IV (1530–1584), also known as Ivan the Terrible, assumed the throne. During this time, Muscovy experienced a period of both continued territorial expansion and internal strife as Ivan IV consolidated power through brutal methods of conquest and control. After a subsequent reign by Boris Godunov and the tumultuous “time of troubles,” the rule of the Romanov dynasty began in 1613 and would last for 300 years, until the revolution in 1917.

During his rule from 1689 to 1725, Peter the Great (after whom Saint Petersburg was named) utilized western models to modernize the Russian state, including its military, government, and educational system. A remnant of the profound changes made by Peter the Great was a rivalry between the forces of Western reform and the nationalist tendencies tied to Slavic identity and tradition. This often strong opposition has endured throughout Russia’s history, frequently manifesting itself in the country’s literature and political thought.

*Russia as a European Power*⁴²

Building upon the successes of Peter the Great, Catherine the Great (reigning from 1762–1796) transformed Russia into a European power. She further expanded the empire by incorporating the territories of Ukraine, Crimea, and a section of Poland. Catherine’s policies empowered the nobility with status and wealth, and she was an ardent supporter of the arts and education, particularly in regard to European tastes. Catherine also engineered a mass relocation of Jewish peoples in Russia, placing them in the “Pale of Settlement,” where they were later brutally attacked in pogroms.

The 19th and early 20th centuries brought momentous change to Russia as the country experienced both nation-building and decline. Under the rule of Alexander I (1801–1825), a variety of reforms were carried out, but they were later reversed as the Russian leader grew more conservative after his battle with Napoleon, whom he defeated in 1812. In the years following the reign of Alexander I, Russia continued its expansion by incorporating further regions of Central Asia, Siberia, and the Caucasus. Some developments from this

⁴⁰ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Russia.” July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

⁴¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Muscovy: The Rise of Muscovy.” July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/estdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0016\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/estdy:@field(DOCID+ru0016))

⁴² Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Russia.” July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

period signaled positive change, such as the opening of the Pacific port of Vladivostok in 1860 and the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Russian culture made its mark on history during this period. Literary giants such as Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Pushkin gained international fame, and a number of other artists, musicians, and literary figures made significant contributions to Russian and world culture.

In other ways, however, Russia could not compete with the West. The nation's economy lacked an industrial base and unemployment increased as the cities grew. As part of a series of reforms, the serfs (indentured peasants) were freed by Tsar Alexander II (1855–1881), who was more liberal than his predecessors. However, Alexander II was assassinated by revolutionaries in 1881, and his successor, Alexander III, reinstated conservative, reactionary policies that allied the tsarist government with the nobility. The freed serfs continued to live in impoverished conditions, and riots against the government were common through the turn of the century.

*Revolution in Russia*⁴³

Under the conservative tsar Alexander III, a number of counter-reforms had been put in place in a failed effort to control the restive population. The government monitored the press, prohibited peasant and working-class children from attending secondary school, banned the political activity of university students, and imprisoned or exiled dissenters. After Japan defeated Russia in the unpopular Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, the tsarist government began its steep decline, brought about in part by the actions of members of the disaffected working class, peasants, and the educated middle class. Nicholas II, son of Alexander III, was to be the last tsar.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Portrait of Alexander III

The first revolution occurred during the Russo-Japanese War, which was followed by widespread strikes. In 1905, Tsar Nicholas II (1894–1917) was forced to install a constitution and a democratic governing body (known as the Duma), as well as some minor governmental reforms. At the same time, his government suppressed the rebellion and channeled people's anger into pogroms against the Jewish population.⁴⁴

World War I, which the Russian government entered to avoid German domination, signaled the end of the Russian monarchy. Although the Russian landowners and nobility supported the war, the majority of peasants and working-class Russians saw it as simply another hardship. The Russian war effort thus split along class lines as internal dissent against the tsar, corruption in the nobility, and widespread poverty reached a critical point. In 1917, revolution broke out in St. Petersburg. The army mutinied, and Duma leaders forced Nicholas II to step down. Later in that same year, the Bolshevik Red Army

⁴³ TheCorner.org. "Russian Revolutions: 1905–1917." c. 1979.
http://www.thecorner.org/hist/russia/revo1905.htm#THE_REIGN_OF_CZAR_ALEXANDER_II

⁴⁴ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

(communists) took power and a Soviet government was installed. Known as the Whites, counterrevolutionary forces fought against the newly formed communist government, thus spawning the Russian Civil War. The Bolsheviks won the civil war, and led by Vladimir Ilich Lenin, they formed the U.S.S.R. in 1922.⁴⁵

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.)⁴⁶

After Lenin died in 1924, Josef Stalin became General Secretary of the Communist Party and oversaw the nation until his death in 1953. As a dictator, Stalin ruled Russia with complete authority, controlling all aspects of the country's domestic and foreign policy. Under his rule, millions of Russians died in political purges, in famines created by the state, and in the process of being forced into huge industrial and agricultural collectives. He sent millions of people, including ethnic minorities, writers, scientists, army and party officials, and anyone whom he perceived as an enemy, to Siberia to live in *gulags*, or prison camps.

The Axis powers attacked the U.S.S.R. in 1941, and the country entered World War II on the side of the Allies, losing more than 20 million people in the sustained conflict. After the war ended, the U.S.S.R. joined the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member. The country developed nuclear weapons in 1949.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Soviet Propaganda Poster

Subsequent Soviet leaders included Nikita Krushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, and others, with Mikhail Gorbachev becoming the last Secretary General of Russia's Communist Party. Gorbachev tried to reform the Soviet Union, implementing policies such as *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). However, the Soviet system was too unwieldy to be reformed and it collapsed in 1991, accompanied by Gorbachev's resignation as president. Elections were held, and in 1991 Boris Yeltsin became the Russian Federation's first president. That same year, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine reconstituted themselves as the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Russian Federation^{47, 48}

During the 1990s, the newly formed Russian Federation had to negotiate new alliances as well as manage internal dissent. The Yeltsin government adopted a pro-American



© Brian Jeffery Begerly
Symbol of Soviet Era

⁴⁵ MSN Encarta. "Russia: History." c. 1993–2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_20/Russia.html

⁴⁶ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

⁴⁷ MSN Encarta. "Russia: History." c. 1993–2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_20/Russia.html

⁴⁸ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

foreign policy, which drew opposition from some groups, and it drafted a new constitution, which was approved by voters. The public also elected a new parliament, which carried representation from a variety of political parties. In the following years, the government strongly opposed the incorporation of Russia's former satellites into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which had previously served as an alliance against the Soviet state. In Russia, there was also a general sentiment that the country remained underrepresented in Europe's political bloc. To extend its reach, Russia renewed its alliances with China and a few Middle Eastern countries while remaining committed to international trade and the global economy.

Elected in 2000, Vladimir Putin became Russia's next president, and he rapidly strengthened the central government, asserting dominance over potential separatist republics. Internally, Putin reformed and stabilized the economy. After 11 September 2001, Russia's ties with the U.S. once again strengthened, resulting in the formation of the NATO–Russian council in 2002.

Recent Events

Inhabitants of the world's largest country, the Russian people have seen their nation's international influence fluctuate since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia occupies a permanent place on the UN Security Council, and it also gained a voice in NATO after the NATO–Russia Council was established. For several years, Russia worked to develop stronger diplomatic relationships and cultural exchanges with the European Union (EU), the



U.S., and Asian countries. The country's trade sector has also become significantly stronger as its economy has expanded. Militarily, the country has made efforts to develop a more mobile and professional army, but progress has been limited and, overall, its military leaders remain committed to a large nuclear force for self defense.⁴⁹

Of late, relations between Russia, the EU, and the U.S. have been strained as a result of the recent South Ossetia–Georgia conflict. After Georgian forces attacked the province of South Ossetia on 7 August 2008, Russia responded with military force against Georgia. The issue has deep historical roots which trace back to the 19th century, when Georgia was absorbed by the Russian empire. Georgia briefly gained independence from 1918 to 1921, before it was forced to become part of the U.S.S.R.. When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, Georgia became an independent country. Separatist movements arose in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both of which are provinces of Georgia, and in the 1990s, South Ossetia achieved de facto (informal) independence from Georgia. Russia has supported South Ossetia in its continued struggle for full independence, while the Georgian government has strongly opposed such efforts. Russia's recent intervention on

⁴⁹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

the side of South Ossetia took the fight deep into Georgian territory.⁵⁰ Hundreds of civilians, both South Ossetians and Georgians, were killed in the fighting. As a consequence of Russian intervention, the EU and the U.S. have condemned Russia and threatened sanctions against it. Russia has made a conditional agreement to withdraw from Georgia by a set date, but resolution of this complex issue is remote and, overall, the situation signals a deterioration in U.S.–Russian relations.^{51, 52}

Economy

Overview of the National Economy^{53, 54, 55}

Much of the industrial base that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) is antiquated. Since the government transitioned to a free-market economy in the 1990s, it has made efforts to modernize the industrial base and privatize the country's commercial operations. Other persistent economic problems include a small, but growing, banking sector, a lack of diversification in exports, and a deficiency of public trust in institutions, which undermines their operations. Both the rule of law and the regulatory environment in Russia are weak, and strengthening these areas is seen as a necessary component of overall economic reform.



In 1998, a crisis developed as a result of the government's loan deficits, its overall low revenue, and the fallout from the Asian financial crisis. Recovery has occurred, however, and the Russian economy is now the world's eighth largest. Since 1999, Russia's annual GDP growth has averaged 7%, initially due to the high price of oil and Russia's fairly cheap ruble. Since 2000, the country's economic growth has been estimated as the fastest among the world's large countries, with its real GDP growth rate reaching 8.1% in 2007.⁵⁶ Much of the growth is fueled by exports of oil and gas, which will likely remain the foundation of the country's economy for the foreseeable future.

⁵⁰ BBC News. "Q & A: Conflict in Georgia." 4 September 2008.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7549736.stm>

⁵¹ BBC News. "Russians 'Agree Georgia Deadline.'" 8 September 2008.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7604376.stm>

⁵² Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Georgia." 4 September 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁵³ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia."

September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

⁵⁴ Australian Government. Austrade. "Russian Federation: Economic Climate." 19 August 2008.

<http://www.austrade.gov.au/Russia-profile/default.aspx>

⁵⁵ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 21 August 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

⁵⁶ The World Bank in Russia. "Russian Economic Report [p. 3]." June 2008.

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRUSSIANFEDERATION/Resources/rer16_Eng.pdf

In general, the middle class has expanded in the last decade and poverty has decreased. Consumer demand has grown since 2003 due to increases in personal income. However, in the second half of 2007, rising inflation and higher food prices presented a setback for the country's economic gains.

Industry

In terms of growth, Russian industry is increasingly driven by manufacturing and construction rather than the extraction of resources.⁵⁷ The highest areas of growth are geared toward domestic consumption and include plastics and rubber products, machinery, and associated equipment. Lower rates of growth have been reported for food products, electro-technical equipment, and chemicals, most likely due to the appreciation of the ruble and higher labor costs.⁵⁸

In general, Russia's industrial production capacity is strained and its infrastructure is in need of modernization. Russia's new president, Dmitry Medvedev, has indicated that the government will focus on improving infrastructure and diversifying investment as part of the country's long-range plan for economic growth.



© Christian Toennesen
Nickel Industry

Exports and Imports

Russia's main exports include natural gas, oil, and petroleum products. Other major exported goods include chemicals, metals, and wood, as well as wood products. Exports were valued at USD 365 billion for 2007 (est.). In 2006, Russia's top export partners were Germany (9.5%), Netherlands (7.5%), Turkey (6%), and Italy (5.6%). Exports to the U.S. accounted for 4.8%.⁵⁹

In 2006, a 30% (approximate) growth rate was reported for Russia's imports, and a double-digit rate is expected to continue beyond 2010.⁶⁰ For 2007, the value of imports was estimated to be over USD 260 billion. Imported products include consumer goods, meat, sugar, medicine, machinery, and equipment. Russia's two leading import partners are Germany (16.3%) and China (12.4%).⁶¹

⁵⁷ The World Bank in Russia. "Russian Economic Report [pp. 3–4.]" June 2008.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRUSSIANFEDERATION/Resources/rer16_Eng.pdf

⁵⁸ The World Bank in Russia. "Russian Economic Report [p. 5.]" June 2008.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRUSSIANFEDERATION/Resources/rer16_Eng.pdf

⁵⁹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 21 August 2008.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

⁶⁰ Australian Government. Austrade. "Russian Federation: Economic Climate." c. 2008.
<http://www.austrade.gov.au/Russia-profile/default.aspx>

⁶¹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 21 August 2008.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

Effective September 2008, Russia has indicated it will stop importing poultry from several large U.S. producers, many of whom rely heavily on the Russian market. The official reason stated for the ban is health concerns due to excessive antibiotics and other substances found in the chicken. Political reasons, however, are thought to be playing a role in the new policy, likely stemming from the tense relations between Russia and the U.S. over the Georgia–South Ossetia conflict. At the same time, Russia also wants to promote its domestic poultry industry.⁶²

*Energy*⁶³

Russia is rich in energy resources. The country possesses the world's largest reserves of natural gas. It also holds the world's second largest recoverable reserves of coal and its eighth largest reserves of oil. The country ranks first in the world in natural gas exports, and it ranks second in oil exports. Russia is the world's third largest consumer of energy.

Of late, natural gas production has been declining in four of Gazprom's largest fields (Gazprom is a major energy corporation in Russia). The development of new fields is a possibility that requires additional sources of investment. In terms of oil, Saudi Arabia's production is usually the highest in the world, but, occasionally, Russia surpasses it. However, because Russia's field base is mature and government taxes are high, production levels are expected to show some decline. Still, oil production remains a major source of economic growth for the country. Electricity is another area of future development. Russia has made efforts to reform this sector in order to produce more electricity and lower its consumption of natural gas.



Agriculture

Russia's agricultural sector forms a relatively small part of the economy, contributing only 4.7% to the GDP, as compared to 39% for industry (2007). Because of the country's geography and harsh, cold climate, the percentage of arable land in Russia is only 7.17%.⁶⁴ The most productive areas are found in the south-central part of the Russian Plain along the Volga River and in southwestern Siberia. The country's primary crops include grains (wheat and barley), sunflower seeds, vegetables, and sugar beets.⁶⁵

⁶² Forbes.com. Laurent, Lionel. "The New Cold (Chicken) War." 29 August 2008. http://www.forbes.com/markets/2008/08/29/russia-poultry-tyson-markets-equity-cx_11_0829markets10.html

⁶³ Energy Information Administration. "Russia Energy Profile." 20 August 2008. http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=RS

⁶⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 21 August 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

⁶⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. "Chapter 6: The Economy: Agriculture." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0120\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0120))

The agricultural sector was disrupted after 1991, when the Soviet Union dissolved and large government subsidies to state farms suddenly ceased. Agricultural yields fell, inventories of livestock declined, and farms were unable to buy new equipment. The adoption of a market-oriented economy has led to some recovery, although farmers still struggle to acquire the resources they need.⁶⁶

Tourism

Although still quite undeveloped, Russia's tourism market has been growing and various development projects are underway. The International Olympic Committee has selected Sochi, a resort near the Black Sea, as the site of the 2014 Winter Olympics. President Putin announced an eight-year plan to develop the region and its facilities for alpine sports.⁶⁷ Also, popular tourist destinations such as Saint Petersburg and Moscow, which hold a number of historical and cultural sites, have been attracting tourists. More remote locations are opening up to tourism as well.



© Mr Tickle / Flickr
Russian Tourism Sign

Some of the problems that have blocked the growth of tourism include complex visa entry rules and the need to modernize transportation, services, and infrastructure. In particular, Russia needs to construct more middle-class and luxury hotels throughout the country, develop a tourist work force, and improve its telephone, medical, and related services.

Ethnic Groups

Although over 100 nationalities were listed in the last official Soviet census (1989), many of these people now live in countries that gained their independence upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A vast array of national minorities continue to live in Russia, but the majority of the population now belongs to the Slavic group, which consists of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. Russian is the national language of the Russian Federation. The Tatar, Bashkir, and Chuvash minority ethnic groups speak languages in the Turkic language family.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Production Estimates and Crop Assessment Division, Foreign Agriculture Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Russia: Agricultural Overview." 5 September 2003.

http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad2/highlights/2005/03/Russia_Ag/index.htm

⁶⁷ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. "Europe: Russia Economic Report: July–September 2007." 18 July 2008. <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Foreign-Relations/Europe/0-russiaecoreport-nov07.php>

⁶⁸ Federal Research Division, U.S. Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. "Chapter 4: Ethnic, Religious, and Cultural Setting: Ethnic Composition." July 1996. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

Russian (Slavic)

Russians make up approximately 79.8% of the Russian Federation’s population.⁶⁹ They are spread throughout the country, from the population centers in the west to the sparsely populated east coast. Ethnic Russians originated from the East Slavs, one of three groups into which the Slavic people divided prior to the 7th century C.E. The East Slavs settled in the region that now comprises Ukraine before migrating to the north and east, the area that is now modern-day Russia. In the 10th century, the East Slavs made Christianity their state religion, which bonded them politically and culturally. However, by the 12th century, the East Slavs had developed into three different cultural and linguistic groups: Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. Kiev and the regions to its south and southwest became the center for Ukrainians. The Russians were distributed in the region to the north and northeast of Kiev, whereas the Belarusians lived to Kiev’s northwest.⁷⁰

Ukrainian (Slavic)

Today, the Ukrainian people are the world’s second largest Slavic group, but they comprise only 2% of Russia’s total population.⁷¹ Ukrainians share a number of cultural customs and practices with Russians and Belarusians, the other descendents of the East Slavic group. These include the maintenance of a grain-based diet and a regard for the extended family and the village commune. The three groups also share a number of annual celebrations, including Christmas and Easter, and similar wedding and other social traditions. Ukrainians are, of course, primarily concentrated in Ukraine, which gained independence in 1991 and adjoins Russia’s southwestern border. Many Ukrainians still live in Russia, however, in various regions throughout the country.⁷²



© Adam Blicharski
Ukrainian musicians

Tatar (Turkic)

Comprising approximately 3.8% of Russia’s population,⁷³ the Tatars live primarily in western Russia, in the Volga River and Ural Mountain regions. During the time of the Tsars, the government referred to its Muslim subjects as Tatars. After the Bolsheviks came to power, they named the Tatar region of Russia “Tatarstan” and designated it as an

⁶⁹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. “Russia.” 21 August 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

⁷⁰ Federal Research Division, U.S. Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. “Chapter 4: Ethnic, Religious, and Cultural Setting: Ethnic Composition: The Russians.” July 1996. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

⁷¹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. “Russia.” 21 August 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

⁷² World Culture Encyclopedia. Friedrich, Paul. “Introduction to Russia and Eurasia.” c. 2008. <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Introduction-to-Russia-and-Eurasia.html>

⁷³ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. “Russia.” 21 August 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

autonomous republic. Today, the name Tatar refers to national and cultural identity rather than religious background.⁷⁴

Bashkir and Chuvash (Turkic)

Forming a very small percentage of the Russian population, the Bashkir (1.2%) and the Chuvash (1.1%) are members of the broad Turkic linguistic group.⁷⁵ Bashkirs live in European Russia, in the middle Volga River region and the southern part of the Ural Mountains. Traditionally, they live in small villages on collective farms, although many have migrated to the cities to work in industrial jobs. Although Bashkirs practice Islam, Christianity is also prevalent in the area where they live. However, no religious conflict has been reported in the region.⁷⁶

The Chuvash live in western Russia near Tatarstan and the Bashkir region. They belong to the Turkic linguistic group, although many of those who live in urban areas also speak Russian. In the 18th century, they were often forced by the Russians to work as unpaid hard laborers, performing such tasks as building fortresses and hauling barges. Today, the Chuvash work in both agriculture and in large commercial enterprises found along the middle Volga River.⁷⁷

Mongol

Although they are widely distributed throughout the country, ethnic Mongolians form a very small percentage of the population. Consisting of a variety of subgroups, ethnic Mongolians live in southern Siberia around Lake Baikal (the Buryat group), northern Siberia, and north of the Caspian Sea. The language of the Buryats, a subdivision of the larger Mongolian ethnic group, is related to other Mongol dialects, although they split up to 1,000 years ago. Mongol-related groups in northern Siberia are linked ethnically but differ linguistically. Many Mongols earn their livelihood as farmers or by raising cattle and horses. Mongols in Russia have often been referred to as Tatars, whose tribes they have lived among in the past. However, the two groups may be unrelated as they demonstrate religious, linguistic, and ethnographic differences.^{78, 79, 80}

⁷⁴ Karahan, Devlet, Nadir. "The Question of National Identity among Tatars in the 20th Century." c. 1999–2002. <http://www.vatankirim.net/tarih/tatarkimleng.htm>

⁷⁵ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 21 August 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

⁷⁶ World Culture Encyclopedia. "Bashkirs: History and Cultural Relations." c. 2008. <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Bashkirs-History-and-Cultural-Relations.html>

⁷⁷ World Culture Encyclopedia. "Chuvash: History and Cultural Relations." c. 2008. <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Chuvash-History-and-Cultural-Relations.html>

⁷⁸ Western Washington University. Vajda, Edward J. "The Mongols." No date. <http://pandora.cii.wvu.edu/vajda/ea210/mongol.htm>

⁷⁹ Enotes.com. Russia Text. "Russia: Chapter XIV: The Mongol Domination." c. 2008. <http://www.enotes.com/russia-text/chapter-xiv---mongol-domination>

⁸⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Russia: People: Ethnic Groups and Language: Other Groups.” c. 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

Religion

Overview^{81, 82}

Russian Orthodox, a form of Christianity, is the predominant religion in the Russian Federation. Christianity came to Russia from Byzantium in the 10th century C.E., when missionaries converted Prince Vladimir I. As the leader of Kievan Rus, Vladimir I instituted Christianity as the official state religion, and for the next 1,000 years, the Russian Orthodox Church dominated the country's religious landscape. Russia's religious climate changed dramatically in 1917, when the Bolsheviks took power. As atheistic communists, the Bolsheviks opposed organized religion, and they instituted restrictive measures on its practice. Although the Russian Orthodox Church experienced a brief revival during World War II, it was not until the 1980s, when the Gorbachev regime took power, that the government restored tolerance for religious worship. After the Soviet Union dissolved, religious practice once again became a visible and openly accepted part of life in the Russian Federation.



© Vladimir Menkov
Russian Orthodox Church in Bezvodnoe

Islam is Russia's second largest religion and is one of several minority religions or alternative belief systems practiced in Russia. In 1997, the Russian government recognized only a few "traditional religions": Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. Many practitioners synthesize aspects of these faiths with elements of various ancient or folk religions, such as animism, shamanism, astrology, witchcraft, New Age views, and others. Of the many Russian people who identify themselves as religious, a large percentage of them are not active participants in their stated religion.⁸³ Finally, many people in Russia are nonreligious, preferring to remain unaffiliated with any organized church or belief system.

The Russian constitution provides for freedom of religion, the separation of church and state, and the legal equality of different religions. However, a law passed in 1997 that required a religion must be established for 15 years before it can be officially registered, and thus sanctioned, in the country. This has prevented the Church of Scientology and several other organized belief systems from operating in Russia.⁸⁴ Overall, despite the constitution's legal protections, many minority religious groups continue to face

⁸¹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: People: Religion." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

⁸² MSN Encarta. "Russia: People and Society of Russia: Religion." c.1993–2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_6/Russia.html

⁸³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. "International Religious Freedom Report 2008: Russia." 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108468.htm>

⁸⁴ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

discrimination or persecution, with often limited prosecution of offending groups or individuals.⁸⁵

Major Religions in Russia^{86, 87, 88}

Christianity

The majority of religious practitioners in Russia belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, which has its origin in the Byzantine Christianity of the Eastern Roman Empire. For many people throughout the country, the Russian Orthodox Church is representative of Russian history and culture. This is particularly true for people of Slavic background, who are predominantly Orthodox Christian. Although the Orthodox Church has not regained the strong role it had prior to the advent of communism, many representatives of the government are now church members, and the state has adopted Orthodox holidays. While a faction of the church generally follows a somewhat liberal and ecumenical religious approach, a nationalistic anti-Semitic faction still exists alongside it, creating some tension.



A number of other Christian denominations are also practiced in Russia, including Roman Catholicism and various denominations of Protestantism. Some of these denominations were initially excluded by the 1997 law that approved some religions and restricted others based on their practices and history within the country. According to the law, unrecognized churches are not allowed to distribute religious materials or operate religious schools. Since that time, many of the Protestant churches have gained full status, and the Catholic Church has established a presence in some areas of Russia. Additional Christian dominations include the Old Believers (who split from the Orthodox Church centuries ago), Baptists, Evangelicals, and several others.

Islam

In Russia, most members of the Turkic linguistic group practice Islam, the second largest religion in the country. (A few of the Turkic-speaking groups are, however, predominantly Christian; one such group is the Chuvash ethnic group, which lives in

⁸⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. "International Religious Freedom Report 2008: Russia." 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108468.htm>

⁸⁶ MSN Encarta. "Russia: People and Society of Russia: Religion." c.1993–2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_6/Russia.html

⁸⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: People: Religion." 2008. [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia – Britannica Online Encyclopedia](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia%20-%20Britannica%20Online%20Encyclopedia)

⁸⁸ ReligiousTolerance.org. "Religious Tolerance & Oppression in Russia: A 1997 Law Restricting Freedom." 11 May 2007. http://www.religioustolerance.org/rt_russil.htm

Chuvashia, a region adjacent to the predominantly Muslim republic of Tatarstan.)⁸⁹ Numbering between 14–23 million,⁹⁰ Russia’s Muslims are concentrated in certain ethnic republics, such as Bashkortostan and Tatarstan in the Volga River region of western Russia.

Judaism

A small percentage of the Russian population is Jewish. Although they have traditionally lived throughout the country, most Jews in Russia now live in Moscow or Saint Petersburg. For many years, Jews were subject to severe discrimination and periodic purges in Russia. Pogroms, or ethnic massacres directed against Jewish communities, were common, particularly during the 19th century under the rule of the tsars and in the 20th century under the regime of Josef Stalin. In the 1980s, when Gorbachev initiated a series of reforms, Jews were allowed greater freedom to emigrate from Russia to Israel or other countries, which led to a decrease in Russia’s Jewish population. There are still severe strains of anti-Semitic fervor in Russia.⁹¹



© Karen Horton
The Edmond J. Safra Grand Choral Synagogue

Yevreyskaya, an autonomous Jewish province (*oblast*) on the Amur River in Russia’s far east, was established in 1934 as a territory for Russia’s Jews. However, it never attracted a large Jewish population, likely because of its remote location and difficult living conditions. (The land in this region is swampy and densely forested in areas, and the climate is harsh, with severely dry, cold winters and humid, hot summers.) Most of the settlers in this region were instead ethnic Ukrainians and Russians.⁹²

Buddhism

The Buddhist religion is practiced by many members of Turkic linguistic groups who inhabit the area near the Russian–Mongolian border. Buddhists also live in the Russian republic known as Kalmykia, which is located on the northwestern side of the Caspian Sea. Descendants of the western Mongols who originated in central Asia, the Kalmyks form less than half of the population of the republic. Their language is related to the Mongolian languages spoken by the Buryats, Tuvans, and other groups found in south-

⁸⁹ Asia.ru. “Religion in Russia.” c. 2006–2008.

<http://travel.asia.ru/travel2russia/russia/information/document3305.shtml>

⁹⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “International Religious Freedom Report 2008: Russia.” 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108468.htm>

⁹¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. “International Religious Freedom Report 2008: Russia.” 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108468.htm>

⁹² Encyclopædia Britannica. “Yevreyskaya.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/653112/Yevreyskaya#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Yevreyskaya> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

central Russia (southwestern Siberia).⁹³ Traditionally, the Kalmyks practice a form of Tibetan Buddhism known as “Yellow-Hat” Buddhism.⁹⁴

The Role of Religion in the Russian Government

Between 1917 and the late 1980s, the Russian government was led by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which severely restricted religious practice. Specifically, the early Soviet regime passed the Land Decree of 26 October 1917, which stripped the Russian Orthodox Church of its territory and closed its monasteries, thereby evicting the church’s monks. A subsequent decree in January 1918 by the governmental Council of People’s Commissars separated church and state (including schools), and the church effectively became powerless.^{95, 96}

Official government views concerning religion were liberalized in the late 1980s. In 1988, the state registered over 1,600 mostly Orthodox religious communities, and in 1990, it passed laws removing many restrictions on the general practice of religion. The government also returned the ownership rights of several monasteries and churches to the Russian Orthodox Church.⁹⁷ Still, the government continues to exercise some measure of control over Russia’s churches. The Moscow Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church established a collaborative relationship with the KGB and the Kremlin during the Soviet era. The ongoing repercussions of this relationship have caused tension between detractors and advocates of Russia’s current church-state relationship, which is relatively close.^{98, 99, 100} In recent years, the two institutions have sought mutual support, with the Russian government embracing the Orthodox Church as an essential element of Russian identity, values, and culture.¹⁰¹



⁹³ MSN Encarta. “Kalmykia.” 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761580556/Kalmykia.html

⁹⁴ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. Richmond, Simon, et al. “The Culture [p. 81].” 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁹⁵ Embassy of the Russian Federation. “Religion in Russia.” No date.

<http://www.russianembassy.org/RUSSIA/religion.htm>

⁹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Russia: People: Religion.” 2008.

[http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia – Britannica Online Encyclopedia](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia-Britannica%20Online%20Encyclopedia)

⁹⁷ Embassy of the Russian Federation. “Religion in Russia.” No date.

<http://www.russianembassy.org/RUSSIA/religion.htm>

⁹⁸ Stetson University. *Wall Street Journal*. Kizenko, Nadia. “Houses of Worship: Church Merger, Putin Acquisition.” 25 May 2007. <http://www.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/0705f.html>

⁹⁹ Stetson University. *Mir Religii*. “Patriarchate Disagrees with Barshchevsky.” 25 May 2007.

<http://www.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/0705f.html>

¹⁰⁰ Johnson’s Russia List. Alexander-Davey, Ethan. “Re: Paul Goble, Clericalism/JRL #66.” 20 March 2006. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2006-69-15.cfm>

¹⁰¹ The Christian Science Monitor. Weir, Fred. “Russia’s Orthodox Church Regains Lost Ground.” 14 November 2007. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1114/p06s02-woeu.html?page=1>

Religion and Daily Life¹⁰²

Attendance at religious services in Russia has grown since the 1990s, when official state regulations concerning organized religion began to change. People at all levels of society attend church, and their right to do so is guaranteed by the Russian constitution. Ties between the Russian Orthodox Church and the government are often strong, and Premier Vladimir Putin, the head of Russia's government, is himself a member of the Russian Orthodox Church.



Russians who lived during the Soviet era are less likely to be religious than younger citizens, who never experienced the period of official atheism. In addition to Orthodox Christians, Russia's other religious groups have also experienced a revival since the fall of communism. In recent years, registered religious organizations have opened new sites of worship and gained larger followings. In general, the government privileges the Orthodox Church, and members of other Christian churches sometimes experience unequal treatment from the bureaucracy. Furthermore, the Orthodox Church and its bureaucratic allies occasionally discriminate against Muslims, Jews, and members of alternative faiths.¹⁰³ Still, the country's various religious organizations are both active and visible to the extent that Russia has been described as a "multifaith society," as opposed to a strictly Orthodox one.¹⁰⁴

Religious Events and Holidays^{105, 106}

During the communist era, religious holidays were not publicly observed in Russia. Since the fall of communism, however, the celebration of traditional religious holidays has revived. Today, some of these events are designated as public holidays, allowing government offices, banks, and post offices to close. A few of the more notable events are:

New Year's Day

¹⁰² The Atlantic.com. Starobin, Paul. "The Accidental Autocrat." March 2005. <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200503/starobin>

¹⁰³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. "International Religious Freedom Report 2008: Russia." 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108468.htm>

¹⁰⁴ Times Online. Bourdeaux, Michael. "The Religious Maelstrom of Modern Russia." 8 July 2006. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article684578.ece>

¹⁰⁵ Russia-InfoCentre. "Russian Holidays." 25 December 2006. http://www.russia-ic.com/culture_art/traditions/338/

¹⁰⁶ Embassy of the Russian Federation. "Observed National Holidays." No date. <http://www.russianembassy.org/RUSSIA/holid.htm>

An official state holiday, New Year's Day (January 1) is one of the most celebrated events of the year. After the communists banned religious holidays, including Orthodox Christmas, many Russians compensated by emphasizing the New Year's Day holiday. Christmas has since returned to the Russian calendar, but Russians still celebrate New Year's Day with greater exuberance.



© Milan Garbier
Russian New Year

Russians celebrate the holiday with a decorated Christmas tree (renamed the "New Year tree") and the exchange of gifts. Before the holiday arrives, people clean their houses and cook a variety of dishes for the special New Year's Eve dinner, which is shared with family and friends. Before midnight on New Year's Eve, the Russian president traditionally gives a speech, and, as in many places, celebrants toast the coming year with champagne and beer or vodka. Fireworks are also involved in the celebration. Both adults and children typically try to stay awake for much of the night, and the holiday typically extends for several days.

Russian Orthodox Christmas

After communism fell, the sacred holiday of Orthodox Christmas returned to its prominent place on the calendar, 7 January. For its observers, the day is celebrated by honoring and praising Jesus Christ in Christian church services throughout the country. In general, Russians emphasize the religious nature of the day, and gift-giving is less common. Christmas is also a state holiday.

Old-Style New Year

Although it is not a state holiday, 14 January is recognized as an alternate day for celebrating the New Year. This holiday is smaller and less festive than the equivalent celebration that marks the beginning of January. The Old-Style New Year stems from the Julian calendar, which was used in Russia until 1918. On this calendar, 1 January corresponds to 14 January on the Gregorian calendar (which is in use today), and for this reason, the New Year is celebrated twice.

Orthodox Easter

For Orthodox Christians, Easter is the most significant religious holiday in Russia. Russians celebrate Easter in the latter part of April or the first part of May. (The date changes from year to year and usually falls later than that of the same celebration in the U.S.) Those who observe the holiday attend church services to worship and reflect on their religious faith. It is also common to color Easter eggs and share a special meal with family and friends. Easter is not a state holiday.

Buildings of Worship

Russian Orthodox Churches

Before the revolution of 1917, approximately 56,000 Russian Orthodox churches operated throughout the



© Craig Nagy
Saint Basil's Cathedral

country.¹⁰⁷ Many of these buildings were destroyed during the first half-century of Soviet rule, while others were made property of the state. After the fall of communism, the Orthodox Church revived, and, today, there are over 12,000 registered Orthodox groups practicing in Russia.¹⁰⁸ Many of the Church's cathedrals have been reclaimed from the government and restored, and others have been newly built.

Mosques, Monasteries, and Synagogues

There are approximately 800 or more Muslim mosques or parishes in Russia.¹⁰⁹ In the Buddhist regions of the country, there are small numbers of monasteries. Sites of worship for other religious denominations, including Judaism (synagogues), Catholicism, and Protestantism, can be found throughout the country, although in lesser frequency than that of Russian Orthodox churches.

St. Basil's Cathedral

One of Russia's most famous Orthodox churches is St. Basil's Cathedral, which is located in Moscow's Red Square. Ivan the Terrible ordered its construction in the 16th century in honor of his army's victory over the Tatar Mongols in 1552. The cathedral's striking design, which is rich in religious symbolism, is famous for the brightly painted onion-shaped domes that top each of the church's nine chapels. During the Soviet era, the cathedral was almost destroyed by Stalin. However, Petr Baranovsky, the architect assigned to complete the demolition, refused to follow through on his orders—an act of disobedience that earned him five years in prison. Stalin then dismissed his own plan to destroy the church.¹¹⁰

Cathedral of Christ the Savior

The Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow is Russia's largest church. Emperor Alexander I originally commissioned it in 1812, but its actual construction (1839–1881) did not take place until Alexander's successor, Nicholas I, ruled the country. The church was built in honor of Russia's victory over Napoleon's army. Stalin ordered that the church be demolished in 1933; the government commissioned its reconstruction (in replica form) in the 1990s.¹¹¹

Kazan Cathedral

¹⁰⁷ Adherents.com. "Russian Orthodox." 23 April 2007. http://www.adherents.com/Na/Na_574.html

¹⁰⁸ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. "International Religious Freedom Report 2008: Russia." 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108468.htm>

¹⁰⁹ Embassy of the Russian Federation. "Religion in Russia." No date. <http://www.russianembassy.org/RUSSIA/religion.htm>

¹¹⁰ Moscow-Taxi.com. "St. Basil's Cathedral." c. 2001–2007. <http://www.moscow-taxi.com/churches/st-basils-cathedral.html>

¹¹¹ Moscow-Taxi.com. "The Cathedral of Christ the Savior." c. 2001–2007. <http://www.moscow-taxi.com/churches/cathedral-of-christ-savior.html>

Kazan Cathedral in Moscow is another famous Russian landmark. The cathedral was originally built in 1636, but it was demolished on its 300th anniversary (1936) by the Bolshevik government. In the late 1980s, the government made plans to build a replica of the original church, which opened to the public in 1993. Kazan Cathedral was originally built to honor a religious icon and its perceived role in Russia’s successful resistance of Polish forces in 1662.¹¹² The cathedral’s ornate architecture is similar to that of other early Muscovite churches in Russia.¹¹³



Small-Scale Wooden Churches

In contrast to the large, elaborate churches built in Russia’s cities, small wooden churches are common in the countryside. Although in some respects these churches are simple, many of them have complex features such as onion domes, a Byzantine design that symbolizes heaven according to Orthodox belief. A number of these small-scale wooden churches can be seen on the island of Kizhi (near Saint Petersburg), where settlements were built as early as the 14th century. The Kizhi settlement was officially designated as an open-air museum in 1960 in order to preserve its unique wooden architecture.¹¹⁴

Behavior in Places of Worship

Russian Orthodox churches are symbolic of Russia’s religious and cultural background, and they should be treated with respect. Likewise, images of Christ are sacred to Russian Orthodox Christians and should be approached quietly and with a respectful attitude.



Exchange 1: May I enter the church?

Soldier:	May I enter the church?	mozhna mnye voytee v tseRkaf?
Local:	Yes.	daa

¹¹² Moscow-Taxi.com. “Kazan Cathedral.” c. 2001–2007. <http://www.moscow-taxi.com/churches/kazan-cathedral.html>

¹¹³ Photographs of other churches in Russia can be viewed through the following site: English Russia. “Color Photos of Russian Churches 100 Years Ago and Today.” c. 2008. <http://www.englishrussia.com/?p=282>

¹¹⁴ About.com. Architecture. “Wooden Churches on Kizhi Island.” c. 2008. <http://architecture.about.com/od/countriescultures/ig/Russia-Architecture/Kizhi-Wooden-Churches.htm>

Visitors to sites of worship in Russia should dress conservatively and avoid wearing skimpy, revealing, or dirty clothing. Appropriate dress includes clean shirts and pants for men and long skirts or pants with blouses or sweaters for women. Men should remove any head coverings they may be wearing, while, conversely, women should typically cover their head with a scarf (this may not be mandatory in all instances).

Exchange 2: Do I need to cover my head?

Soldier:	Do I need to cover my head?	mnye noozhna pakRyt golavoo?
Local:	Yes.	nyet

Visitors should also mind their body language; crossed arms or hands placed in pockets may be considered inappropriate.¹¹⁵ Inside a church, visitors should refrain from touching sacred images and objects.

As in many places, functioning mosques in Russia do not typically allow entry to non-Muslims. If visitors are invited to enter a mosque, it is imperative that they remove their shoes.¹¹⁶

Exchange 3: Must I take off my shoes inside the church?

Soldier:	Must I take off my shoes inside the church?	mnye noozhna sneemat oboof f-tseRkvee?
Local:	Yes	nyet

When visiting mosques, women may need to cover their head with a scarf, and, in general, both sexes should wear loose-fitting clothing that covers much of the body, including the arms and legs.

¹¹⁵ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. Richmond, Simon, et al. “The Culture [p. 79].” 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹¹⁶ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. Richmond, Simon, et al. “The Culture [p. 79].” 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

When visiting any site of worship, visitors should remain quiet as talking can interrupt prayers or be interpreted as rude behavior. Visitors should also not bring food or drink into a church or temple, and they should not take photographs inside or outside places of worship without permission.

Finally, visitors should not attempt to promote their religion to practitioners of other faiths. In addition to government restrictions on certain religious organizations, there is a history of tense relations between a number of religions in Russia, and discrimination or conflict resulting from such tensions is not uncommon.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. "International Religious Freedom Report 2008: Russia." 19 September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108468.htm>

Traditions

Traditional Economy¹¹⁸

Until the early part of the 20th century, Russia's economy was primarily agricultural. The majority of the Russian people lived in rural areas, and they historically practiced small-scale farming. Major crops, depending on the region, have included grain (wheat, barley, and oats) and vegetables. The use of technology in farming was rare, even in the last half of the 19th century. Peasants traditionally did all the agricultural work by hand, and even on the few large estates, agricultural work processes were not efficient.



© Victor Szalvay
Russian Agriculture

Limited industrial development took place in Russia in the late 1800s around Moscow, St. Petersburg, cities along the Baltic Sea and in central European Russia. Industry also developed in parts of the southern region of the Ural Mountains. By 1890, the number of factory workers in the country was fewer than 1.5 million, mostly working in textiles. By the same time, iron, steel, coal, and oil production had substantially increased; although, production still remained too low to support the country's economic needs. A half million people died from famine in 1891; and by the end of the century, the country was in a depression.¹¹⁹

For over 60 years in the 20th century, the Soviet government centralized the economy and controlled all decisions concerning production, consumption, pricing, and investment. Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), which started in 1921, decreed that government would control heavy industry, but it allowed limited private activity in light industry and agriculture. Beginning in the regime of Josef Stalin (1927–53), thousands of peasants were forced to work in large state-owned collective farms, organized to meet specific agricultural production goals. Stalin also tried to transform the entire economy by industrializing rapidly, forcing the growth of industry by diverting resources from other areas of the economy. Industrial jobs opened up and the working class grew, but the standard of living declined countrywide during the Soviet period. Shortages of consumer goods were common.¹²⁰

Greetings, Communication, and Conduct^{121, 122}

¹¹⁸ Library of Congress. A Country Study: Russia. "Chapter 1 – Historical Setting: Early History to 1917. Transformation of Russia in the Nineteenth Century." July 1996. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

¹¹⁹ Library of Congress. A Country Study: Russia. "Chapter 1 – Historical Setting: Early History to 1917. Transformation of Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Witte and Accelerated Industrialization." July 1996. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

¹²⁰ Mongabay.com. "Russia – The Economy." No date. http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/russia/ECONOMY.html

¹²¹ Kwantessential Cross Cultural Solutions. "Russia – Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette." No date. <http://www.kwantessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/russia-country-profile.html>

Russians typically greet foreigners with a firm handshake, looking directly into their eyes. Although one should not stare, it may be considered evasive or rude to break off appropriate eye contact. However, if a man has not been introduced to a woman who is single, he should avoid making prolonged or overly direct eye contact with her. Similarly, if a man is shaking hands with a woman, he should let her initiate the handshake; to do otherwise could appear overly aggressive. Embracing or kissing on the cheek is not acceptable except among family members or close friends.



Exchange 4: Good morning.

Soldier:	Good morning.	dobRaay ootRa
Local:	Good morning.	dobRaay ootRa

Good manners suggest that visitors should be polite and friendly in their interactions. Also, it is important to note that Russians have great pride in their culture. A visitor who knows something about the culture and is openly willing to learn more will earn respect for holding and conveying such a positive attitude. This approach is likely to lead to the most cooperation from local people.

Exchange 5: How are you?

Soldier:	How are you?	dobRaay vyechyeR!
Local:	Fine, very well.	dobRaay vyechyeR!

Generally speaking, visitors should conduct themselves conservatively when in the company of Russians. They should use formal address and avoid first names, even with Russians they have met previously, unless they have been told otherwise. When walking, they should maintain good posture, as slouching or standing around casually with hands in pockets may be considered lazy. When sitting, it is advisable to sit up straight and

¹²² Travel Etiquette. "Travel Etiquette When Travelling in Russia." c. 2000–2008.
<http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/travel-etiquette-when-travelling-russia.html>

avoid crossing the legs and extending them (as is commonly seen in the U.S.). Chewing gum—especially with one’s mouth open—is inappropriate public behavior. Also, whistling indoors, whether one is with a Russian host or simply among Russian people in general, is considered poor form. There is still a superstition that whistling indoors will have a negative effect on financial transactions. Shaking hands through a doorway is another superstition; it is believed to result in a quarrel. A visitor should enter the doorway and then shake hands once inside.¹²³



Making simple, polite inquiries about another’s wellbeing is always appreciated.

Exchange 6: Hello, Mr. Smirnov.

Soldier:	Hello, Mr. Smirnov.	zdRaavstvooytye, gaspaadeen smeeRnof
Local:	Hello!	zdRaavstvooytye!
Soldier:	Are you doing well?	oo vaas fsyo f-paRyaadkye?
Local:	Yes.	daa

Because Russians have very strong collective traditions, they have a strong affinity for group, as opposed to individual, behavior. In general, they prefer being among other people to being alone; of course, there are exceptions depending on circumstance. Typically, they tend to be open and interactive with members of the group they are in. American culture generally expects people to hold back from giving their personal opinions when among strangers, especially if they think their opinions are inappropriate or might hurt someone else’s feelings. Russians, however, will not hesitate to tell someone (including a stranger) that he or she is doing something out of order. This openness should not be interpreted as rudeness; it simply means that the private domain is less important than the public. The attitude “it’s nobody’s business but my own” may be widespread and respectable in the U.S., but it is much less common in Russia.

During initial exchanges with a Russian person, it is important to ask about his or her family, without being overly personal or inquisitive.

¹²³ Way to Russia. “How to Be Like Russians – Customs, Business Etiquette and Laws.” c. 2001–2005. <http://www.waytorussia.net/Practicalities/Traditions.html>

Exchange 7: How is your family?

Soldier:	How is your family?	kaak seemyaa?
Local:	They are doing fine, thank you.	fsyo Kharaasho, spaseeba

Russian people tend to express strong opinions quite openly themselves. However, as a guest in their culture, it is a good idea to avoid criticizing the country, the Russian culture, or anything controversial that is taking place.¹²⁴ In general, conversational exchanges should be direct and polite.

Exchange 8: Good afternoon.

Soldier:	Good afternoon.	dobRaay dyen
Local:	Good afternoon.	dobRoy dyen

Many of the social exchanges or ways of speaking and behaving that Americans or Europeans find normal are also the standard in Russia.

Hospitality and Gift Giving¹²⁵

Being invited into a Russian person's home is an honor, and the guest should acknowledge this by being on time (no more than 15 minutes late) and displaying good manners. When entering the home, visitors should observe the customs and behavior of the host and of others, and generally follow what they do. Some customs are fairly standard across cultures. For instance, guests should dress in clean and modest clothing, preferably



¹²⁴ Way to Russia. "How to Be Like Russians – Customs, Business Etiquette and Laws." c. 2001–2005. <http://www.waytorussia.net/Practicalities/Traditions.html>

¹²⁵ Kwintessential Cross Cultural Solutions. "Russia – Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette." No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/russia-country-profile.html>

somewhat formal and conservative. The host will often ask guests to remove their shoes before entering the house, providing a pair of slippers.

It is customary to bring a gift when invited into a Russian person's home. An appropriate gift would be flowers (but not an even number, all yellow or all red), a dessert, or a bottle of wine. Even numbers of flowers are reserved for funerals, yellow represents a bad omen, and red symbolizes love. If the host declines the gift, offer it again, pointing out that it is "just a little something." Typically, the host will accept it the second time it is offered.

Exchange 9: This gift is for you.

Soldier:	This gift is for you.	eta padaaRak dlyaa vaas
Local:	I cannot accept this.	yaa nye magoo eta pReenyaat

If your hostess is pregnant, do not offer her a gift for the baby. It is customary to wait until after a baby is born before bringing a gift. To do otherwise may be considered bad luck for the family.

Russians are known to be very generous with their guests, and guests are not expected to refuse anything that is offered. When your host or hostess offers a drink or an appetizer, accept it with gratitude.

Exchange 10: I really appreciate your hospitality.

Soldier:	I really appreciate your hospitality.	yaa tsenyoo vaashye gastyepReemstva
Local:	It is nothing.	nye stooeet blaagadaaRnastee

Rejecting the host's hospitality (or anything he offers) indicates poor manners and could be seen as a personal rejection of the host. If you must refuse an alcoholic beverage, give

a suitable reason, such as health or religious restrictions that prevent you from accepting.¹²⁶ If in doubt about something you drink or eat, simply ask what it is.

Exchange 11: What is the name of this dish?

Soldier:	What is the name of this dish?	kak nazvyfaayetsyaa eta blyooda?
Local:	This is borsch.	eta boRshch

Good manners in a Russian home include serving the oldest (or most honored) guest first. Guests should not begin eating until after their host has begun. Guests should also avoid putting their elbows on the table, and they should remain seated until the host gets up to leave the table. Finally, they should not fail to compliment the host or hostess on the quality of the food.

Exchange 12: This food is very good.

Soldier:	This food is very good.	eta oachyen fkoosnoye blyooda
Local:	It's pelmeni.	eta pyelmyenee

One way to express appreciation for the invitation is to offer to help the hostess with food preparation or clean-up after dinner. Showing interest in the food that is served can lend itself to interesting conversation around the dinner table.

Exchange 13: What ingredients are used to make.

Soldier:	What ingredients are used to make.	eez kakeeKh pRadooktaf pReegatovlyen boRshch?
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¹²⁶ Russia – Cultural Awareness Training. “Learn Russian Customs and Russian Business Culture Before Doing Business in Russia.” No date. <http://www.anysubject.com/doing-business-in-russia-russian-culture-customs-russian-etiquette-working-in-russia.asp>

Local:	Red beetroot, cabbage, carrots, potatoes, onions, and beef.	svyokla, kaapoosta, maRkof,kaaRtoshka, look ee myaasa, gavyaadeeny
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Eating Customs and Types of Food

Table manners are quite casual in Russia, and there are few strict rules about serving or eating. Some customs may be similar to those experienced in formal situations in the U.S. For instance, it is customary in Russia for men seated at the table to pour drinks for the women at the table, or for guests to wait until the most honored guest has been served before they begin eating. Other Russian dining customs may seem quite informal, such as using bread to soak up any sauce or gravy that remains on a diner’s plate. This practice is considered polite, acceptable manners.¹²⁷



In an average day, Russians eat a meal in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Breakfast (*zavtrak*) may include fare as light as tea and bread, or it may be more substantial food, such as buckwheat pancakes (*kasha*) or porridge with cheese and sour cream. Dinner (*obed*) is served in the afternoon as the primary meal of each day. The first course may be appetizers (*zakuski*), possibly caviar, chilled meats, hard-boiled eggs, or salted fish. This meal may also start off with *borshch*, a popular soup made of beets cooked in broth, with sour cream provided on the side. Generally the main course will include meat such as pork, beef, or chicken. Sour cream is a common ingredient used in cooking. Many people are fond of the well-known *bifstroganov*, beef slices served over noodles with a sour cream sauce. The evening meal (*uzhin*) is usually light, sometimes consisting of nothing more than appetizers served with tea or coffee.¹²⁸

Most meals include some kind of bread, a Russian specialty made in many different ways. Other popular foods include sauerkraut, small meat pies, and pickled, boiled, or fried mushrooms. Beer or vodka may also be served in the evening.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Kwintessential Cross Cultural Solutions. “Russia – Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette.” No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/russia-country-profile.html>

¹²⁸ MSN Encarta. “Russia: Way of Life.” c. 1993–2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_7/Russia.html

¹²⁹ Russian Embassy. “Russian Cuisine.” No date. <http://www.russianembassy.org/RUSSIA/cuisine.htm>

Russian vodka, traditionally made from rye, but now more often from wheat, is world-famous and includes many different varieties. Vodka, which means “little water” or “dear water,” has been called “bread wine” in times past and is also nicknamed “the green dragon.” Alternately glorified—as the basis of camaraderie, of fine dining with caviar—and condemned as the basis of Russia’s high rates of alcoholism; vodka is perceived as a characteristic part of Russian culture. Whether gulped to avoid tasting or sipped to savor fine quality, vodka is immediately followed by snacks.¹³⁰



When eating dinner in a Russian person’s home, try to eat everything on the plate except for a very small amount. This signals to the host and hostess that they have provided well.

A guest should try everything that is offered, but at the same time, it is not necessary to eat everything on the plate, just most of it.

Exchange 14: The food tastes so good.

Soldier:	The food tastes so good.	eta oachyen fkoosna
Local:	Thank you.	spaaseeba

Dress Codes¹³¹

In Russia, clothing should be adapted to the harsh, cold weather that is so prevalent throughout the country during most of the year. Because radical temperature or weather shifts can take place in the spring or autumn, people often dress in layers, starting (when cold weather is expected) with long underwear. Over that, jeans or slacks are worn, a heavy shirt with long sleeves, and one or two pairs of thermal socks. If the weather is extremely cold, people will wear ski pants, heavy boots, and a sweater or insulated jacket. Depending on the intensity of the cold, nylon or plastic zippers are better than metal ones, which can freeze and jam in severe cold. A warm hat and gloves are also essential.¹³²



¹³⁰ Garant-InfoCentre. “Russian Vodka.” 8 November 2007. http://www.russia-ic.com/culture_art/traditions/613/

¹³¹ Worldwide-Tax.com. “Russia Business Practice and Business Etiquette Tips.” September 2008. <http://www.worldwide-tax.com/russia/ruspractice.asp>

Exchange 15: How should I dress?

Soldier:	How should I dress?	kak mnye slyedooyet adyetsyaa?
Local:	Wear loose fitting clothes which cover your body.	aadyentee bRyookeee ee Roobshkoo s-dleeneem Rookaavoom

In urban areas, formal business attire is worn for meetings and official events. The clothing, always on the modest and conservative side, includes suits in dark or subdued colors. For women, the blouses worn under the suits have a high neckline, and the skirts should be at least knee-length. Dress shoes worn by both women and men should be well polished. Women should wear minimal makeup and jewelry and avoid anything that is showy or too noticeable. Perfume should be worn very lightly, if at all.

In rural areas, people dress more casually and functionally, since they often work outdoors. Still, they remain conservatively dressed and well covered, as should any visitors. It is acceptable for women to wear long slacks in most places.

If visiting a church or religious shrine, besides dressing conservatively (including a long skirt in an Orthodox Church), women may also need to wear a headscarf. This custom depends on the region and the type of establishment, and visitors can determine what is appropriate by watching how local people dress.

If a visitor is uncertain as to what to wear, asking is a good policy.

Exchange 16: Is this acceptable to wear?

Soldier:	Is this acceptable to wear?	eta mozhnaa aadyet?
Local:	Yes.	daa

When visitors enter a building or a restaurant, they need to hang their coats in a cloakroom, not place them on the backs of chairs. The latter is seen as too casual and even improper.

¹³² RussianWomenWordpress.com. "How to Dress for a Russian Siberian Winter." 24 October 2006. <http://russianwomen.wordpress.com/2006/10/24/how-to-dress-for-a-russian-siberian-winter/>

Non-Religious Holidays^{133,134}

There are several non-religious public holidays in Russia. They are described in the following list.

Fatherland Defender's Day, February 23

On this day, Russians show honor to those who have performed military service, both past and present.

International Women's Day, March 8

Women receive honor on this day for their contributions to society and to the family. It is similar to Mother's Day in the U.S.

Labor Day and Spring, May 1

Traditionally a celebration of spring, this day—similar to Labor Day in the U.S.—now remembers those who have contributed their labor to the building of society. It honors common working men and working women. On some years, it is celebrated concurrently with Russian Orthodox Easter.



Victory Day, May 9

A parade passes through Moscow on this day to celebrate the Russian victory over Nazi Germany during World War II. The holiday honors the millions of Russians who died in the war, and family members lay wreaths and flowers on wartime graves.

Russia Day, June 12

On this day in 1990, the Russian Parliament made the announcement that Russia is a sovereign nation. It was not until 2002 that the change became official.

Day of National Unity, Nov 4

This relatively new national holiday is also called “Day of Reconciliation and Harmony.” It celebrates Russia’s independence.

Social Events

Weddings^{135, 136}

¹³³ Language Learning Library. “Russian Culture.” c. 2007.
<http://www.languagelearninglibrary.org/russian/culture.htm>

¹³⁴ Russian Embassy. “Observed National Holidays.” No date.
<http://www.russianembassy.org/RUSSIA/holid.htm>

Wedding traditions vary in Russia, depending on region and the degree to which older customs prevail in a district. The tradition of a Christian church wedding began to form in the early 10th century, but did not become an established custom until sometime in the 16th century. For many years thereafter, pagan Slavic rites mingled with official church rites at weddings. Traditionally, parents were involved in matchmaking, and various social rituals took place as the plans proceeded. At the conclusion of the church ceremony, guests would shower the newlyweds with seeds, hops, or coins, a tradition that dates from antiquity. After the wedding, a number of feasts take place to celebrate the sacred occasion.¹³⁷



Before the Russian Revolution in 1917, most weddings were held in a Russian Orthodox Church. This convention changed during the Soviet era, when weddings became civil, state affairs. But now, many people once again are choosing to marry in the church. Furthermore, weddings today can be a mixture of styles, incorporating Russian, European, and even American (U.S.) traditions. Young people today choose their own marriage partners and decide how the wedding will take place.

Exchange 17: I wish you both, happiness.

Soldier:	I wish you both, happiness.	zhelaayoo vam schaastya!
Local:	We are honored.	mvy vaam oochen pReeznaatyelne

Following the church service, a reception for the newly married couple takes place in a restaurant, a large hall, or a private home. The groom’s parents receive the couple, and the mother of the groom often follows the Russian tradition of giving the newlyweds bread and salt. Together they eat the bread, and the person who eats the larger portion (typically the man) is assumed to be head of the household.

Exchange 18: Congratulations on your wedding!

¹³⁵ EnzineArticles.com. Githinji, Francis K. “Ideas for Your Perfect Wedding – Wedding Customs in Russia.” 28 August 2008. <http://ezinearticles.com/?Ideas-For-Your-Perfect-Wedding---Wedding-Customs-in-Russia&id=1449314>

¹³⁶ Russia-IC.com. “About Wedding Dress of Russian Brides.” 2004–2008. http://www.russia-ic.com/culture_art/traditions/671/

¹³⁷ Russia-IC.com. “On Russian Wedding Traditions of the Past.” 11 December 2007. http://www.russia-ic.com/culture_art/traditions/640/

Soldier:	Congratulations on your wedding!	pazdRavlaayoo s-bRakaasochetaneeyem!
Local:	We are honored you could attend.	pachtyom zaa chyest vaashye pReesootstveeye

In times past, the predominant color used in weddings was red symbolizing joy, a traditional feature that lasted until the Soviet era. Rich embroidery in designs of berries, leaves, or birds decorated the blouse worn under the gown, and the sleeves were often extremely long. Frequently the bride made and embroidered her own dress. She wore a headdress or (depending on the region) a beaded crown with gold threads. European designs became prevalent in the 17th century, but among villagers, the traditional Russian style prevailed until the Russian Revolution. At that time, when weddings became civil ceremonies, married couples began wearing everyday clothing. Today, as church weddings again become more usual, brides wear wedding dresses of many creative styles and degrees of formality.¹³⁸



© Chronop / Flickr
Newlyweds in St. Petersburg

Funerals

The funerary tradition in Russia has remained essentially stable for centuries, in spite of tremendous social changes as late as the 20th century. First, Russia lost around 25 million people in World War II and another 5–7 million people (mostly rural) as a result of Stalin’s collectivist policies, which led to famine in 1933.¹³⁹ This loss of life combined with restructuring of government and society during the Soviet period was deeply disruptive of Russia’s communal culture. Religion, so deeply embedded in the Russian way of life, was officially attacked beginning in the 1920s; and in the 1930s, Stalin discouraged commemoration because...

“he feared a resurgence of religious belief in the wake of a general mood combining thanksgiving for victory and mourning for the dead. As a substitute, the population was exhorted to believe in the

¹³⁸ Russia-IC.com. “About Wedding Dress of Russian Brides.” 29 January 2008. http://www.russia-ic.com/culture_art/traditions/671/

¹³⁹ Between 1914 and 1953, it is reported that 50 million Russians lost their lives to war, disease, and famine. Source: University College London. School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Wigzell, Faith. Review of *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth Century Russia* by Catherine Merridale [pp. 42–43.] 2002. http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/SEEFA/Vol_VIII_No_2_2003_page42.pdf

socialist utopian future and focus on heroism rather than personal mourning.”¹⁴⁰

Although these efforts had some effect on religious practice and funerary ritual, traditional attitudes toward death and mourning have persisted into the 21st century. Many Russian folk beliefs that were practiced in rural areas centuries ago are still observed in the modern era. This may be especially true about customs and beliefs concerning death ceremonies, which once again follow the rites of the Russian Orthodox Church, just as they did in the 16th century.¹⁴¹



© FurgalJoe / Flickr.com
Russian Funeral

Funeral traditions today vary, depending on whether the location is remote and rural, or in a place where the family has access to a morgue or funeral home. First, as the person lies on his or her deathbed, family members gather around to offer their support during this difficult time. According to old traditions, after a person dies, an appointed person would wash the body. The water used for washing was then discarded in an area where no one would come across it. It was believed that if someone walked across the area, the dead person could return to frighten the living. Although a range of such beliefs (which many would call superstitions) still exist in some rural areas, they have largely been forgotten. Today, it is usually a funeral home that prepares the body for Christian burial. The corpse is dressed in formal clothing, preferably new and often dark in color for men, and light for women. (In times past, white cloth was preferred for covering all the dead.) The body is then placed in a coffin for burial and the funeral takes place on the third day. Cremation, once considered forbidden, is often practiced in cities such as Moscow because of the high cost of a funeral.^{142, 143}

Exchange 20: I would like to give my condolences.

Soldier:	I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.	yaa byy Khatyel vyRaazeete svoee cabalyeznavaaneeeyaa vaam ee vaashyyee syemye
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¹⁴⁰ University College London. School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Wigzell, Faith. Review of *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth Century Russia* by Catherine Merridale [p. 43.] 2002. http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/SEEFA/Vol_VIII_No_2_2003_page42.pdf

¹⁴¹ University College London. School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Wigzell, Faith. Review of *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth Century Russia* by Catherine Merridale [p. 43–44.] 2002. http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/SEEFA/Vol_VIII_No_2_2003_page42.pdf

¹⁴² Rekviem.org. “Russian Folk Customs, Connected with Death, Funeral, and Commemoration, Popular Ideas of Death.” No date. <http://www.rekviem.org.ua/english/traditions/orthodox.html>

¹⁴³ The Moscow News Weekly. Ballard, Alisa. “Memorial Traditions.” 10 March 2008. <http://www.mnweekly.ru/local/20080724/55338788.html>

Local:	Thank you.	spaaseeba
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Russian customs require that a mourning ceremony be held when an individual dies. At this wake, which contains some pagan elements, family and friends honor the deceased by eating and drinking together as they remember the good qualities of the deceased. They make toasts, usually with vodka, avoiding both the drinking of champagne and the clinking of glasses as they toast each other and say farewell. The family members cover the chair of the deceased (to be occupied by the deceased's unseen presence) with a towel, and they place a serving of bread and vodka close to the table. This particular ritual continued to be practiced during the communist regime, by party members as well as ordinary citizens.¹⁴⁴

Exchange 21: Please be strong.

Soldier:	Please be strong.	dyeRzheetyes
Local:	We will try.	mvy pastaaRaayemsyaa

In villages that do not have a morgue, after a person dies, family members may light candles and watch over the body during the night in a “home mourning” ceremony. They may read from a Christian text as they observe, or they may simply converse about the deceased, recollecting his or her life. According to Orthodox tradition, the funeral would take place on the third day after death. In some villages, a funeral procession may still be led by a man holding a cross.¹⁴⁵

One tradition that started in pre-Christian Russia and that has endured for more than five centuries is called “feasting the dead.” It centers on the belief that the deceased person’s soul must struggle to leave the body and then spend time in both heaven and hell. The mourners are charged with helping the soul find its way by maintaining a relationship with the dead, visiting the grave regularly and holding feasts in the deceased’s honor. It is believed that the soul leaves the body on the ninth day after death, and on this day mourners gather for dinner and a church service. The 40th day after death is also a special

¹⁴⁴ World Cultural Psychiatry Research Review. Korolenko, Caesar P. “The Revival of Pagan Traditions and Their Influence On The Content of Mental Disorders in Contemporary Russia” [p. 18.] January 2006. <http://www.wcpr.org/pdf/JAN06/JAN061220.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ Rekviem.org. “Russian Folk Customs, Connected with Death, Funeral, and Commemoration, Popular Ideas of Death.” No date. <http://www.rekviem.org.ua/english/traditions/orthodox.html>

occasion, as mourners believe that the soul travels on this day to the other world. Once again, they gather for a dinner and religious service.^{146, 147}

Do's and Don'ts^{148, 149, 150}

Do be aware of all official regulations and follow them.

Do remove your shoes before you enter a private home, temple, or mosque.

Do wear a headscarf (for women) before entering a Russian Orthodox Church.

Do remove your gloves before shaking hands.

Do not show the soles of your feet publicly.

Do not criticize or show any disrespect to Russian officials, citizens, or the country.

Do not stare at or engage in overt expressions of affection with the opposite sex.

Do not stand around casually with your hands in your pockets.

Do not chew gum in public.

Do not whistle indoors, considered by many to bring bad luck.

Do not hang a coat over the back of a chair; hang it up instead.

Do not point to anybody with a finger. Use the entire *right* hand instead.

Do not point upward with the middle finger. It is an obscene gesture in the U.S. and equally so in Russia.

Do not use obscene or indecent language within earshot of Russian citizens. Many may be familiar with American slang.

¹⁴⁶ Science Direct. Abstract. "Graveyards: Russian Ritual and Belief Pertaining to the Dead." October 2004. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6WWN-4DSWB4N-2&_user=10&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&view=c&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=1587308460a44f937666c306056a2ea0

¹⁴⁷ PBS.org. Huang, Judy. "Death: Cultural Traditions." c. 2000. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/onourown/terms/articles/cultural.html>

¹⁴⁸ Travel Etiquette. "Travel Etiquette When Travelling in Russia." c. 2000–2008. <http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/travel-etiquette-when-travelling-russia.html>

¹⁴⁹ Worldwide-Tax.com. "Russia Business Practice and Business Etiquette Tips." No date. <http://www.worldwide-tax.com/russia/ruspractice.asp>

¹⁵⁰ International Business Center.org. "Russia." c. 1998–2007. <http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/russia.htm>

Urban Life

Pattern of Urbanization

Russia's population began to urbanize in the 1930s under Stalin, the nation's leader (whose formal title was General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union). Stalin's administration took steps to rapidly centralize the economy around heavy industry, mostly located near densely populated urban areas. A demographic study for 2003 shows that the process of urbanization continued throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. Urbanization peaked in 1991, with 74% of Russia's population categorized as urban.¹⁵¹ After that, the percentage of urban population gradually began to reverse. The demographic reversal has reached a general crisis throughout Russia, where "births lag far behind deaths."¹⁵² The demographic reversal is partly due to a lowered life expectancy that resulted when the state-sponsored health care system unraveled and collapsed along with the Soviet Union.^{153, 154}



Another urbanization pattern shows that the majority of Russia's industrialized cities with large populations are located in the western, European part of the country.¹⁵⁵ This pattern has not always been stable. In the 20th century until 1959, cities in the eastern part of the country experienced more growth than those in the western U.S.S.R.¹⁵⁶ In post-Soviet Russia, however, thousands of people began migrating from cities in Siberia and Soviet Central Asia to European Russia as a result of the change from central planning to a market economy. Cities that were located in inaccessible, remote locations with harsh climates experienced population loss because the costs of transportation and energy, no longer subsidized, increased sharply. As the price of housing, food, and production of goods also rose steeply, thousands migrated to the cities of western Russia with their

¹⁵¹ Russia and Eurasia Centre of the Institute of International Affairs. Plakoudas, Spyros. "Russian Demographic Transition in the 21st Century: Prospects, Implications and Challenges [p. 6.]" No date. http://www.cere.gr/upload/news_20070214_2.pdf

¹⁵² Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

¹⁵³ Russia and Eurasia Centre of the Institute of International Affairs. Plakoudas, Spyros. "Russian Demographic Transition in the 21st Century: Prospects, Implications and Challenges [pp. 5–6, 8–10.]" No date. http://www.cere.gr/upload/news_20070214_2.pdf

¹⁵⁴ U.S. Library of Congress. "Russia – Demographics. No date. <http://countrystudies.us/russia/29.htm>

¹⁵⁵ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Principal Cities of Russia." c. 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_5/Russia.html#s18

¹⁵⁶ Wiley InterScience. Lewis, Robert A, and Richard H. Rowland. "Urbanization in Russia and the USSR: 1897–1966." 2007. <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119704371/abstract>

stronger transportation networks and developed industrial sites.¹⁵⁷ Countrywide, approximately 78% of Russia's people now reside in cities.¹⁵⁸

Urban Labor Issues

Millions of industrial workers lost their jobs in post-Soviet Russia as the government abandoned subsidies, the economy contracted, and industry declined. A financial crisis in 1998 led to devaluation of the ruble and loss of life savings as well as job layoffs for millions of people.^{159, 160} Two thirds of Russia's poor people resided in cities, according to a World Bank study reported in 2002.¹⁶¹ Although wages have since increased and the economy has improved, many people remain underemployed, unable to find jobs that match their level of training in technology and science.¹⁶² Even so, the country's manufacturing and industrial capacities (mostly urban) hold potential, and development of the market has increased over the last decade.



Trade union leaders in Russia have recently expressed concern over the possibility of a financial emergency in Russia, triggered by the global financial crisis. The head of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (which began in the Soviet era and still represents organized labor) has warned of impending job losses and social unrest. Union leaders are asking the Russian government to take a stronger role in averting such a collapse.¹⁶³

Urban Lifestyle and Living Conditions¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁷ Rowman & Littlefield. *Cities of the World*. [p. 227.] Brunn, Stanley D., Jack Francis Williams, and Donald J. Zeigler. 2003.

http://books.google.com/books?id=1Yt7Pb4D0uUC&pg=PA227&lpg=PA227&dq=Russia+and+urbanization+in+21st+century&source=web&ots=gNm2Of33E3&sig=R353T_PSWu9yZdb2EVXmZHWawwk&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=8&ct=result#PPA227,M1

¹⁵⁸ USAID. "Making Cities Work - Eastern Russia & Europe Brief." c. 2002–06.

<http://www.makingcitieswork.org/urbanWorld/eastern-europe>

¹⁵⁹ Encyclopedia of the Nations. "Russia: Working Conditions." c. 2008.

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Europe/Russia-WORKING-CONDITIONS.html>

¹⁶⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia: Economy." c. 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia- Britannica Online Encyclopedia>

¹⁶¹ USAID. "Making Cities Work - Eastern Russia & Europe Brief." c. 2002–06.

<http://www.makingcitieswork.org/urbanWorld/eastern-europe>

¹⁶² Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

¹⁶³ RIA NOVOSTI. "Russian Opposition, Trade Unions See Economy on Brink of Crisis." October 2008. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20081007/117539345.html>

¹⁶⁴ USAID. "Making Cities Work - Eastern Russia & Europe Brief." c. 2002–06.

<http://www.makingcitieswork.org/urbanWorld/eastern-europe>

The urban lifestyle in Russia varies greatly, depending on one's material status. For the poor, "life is a daily grind of survival and many people spend hours each day selling their belongings or other goods on the street."¹⁶⁵ Middle-class people, found mostly in Russia's large cities, often benefit from having purchased their apartments at relatively cheap prices during the privatization of the 1990s. They are able to spend more on material goods, compared to renters who now pay more of their income on housing. People at the wealthier extremes often live extravagantly, following a westernized lifestyle that revolves around trends and consumption. Television (including soap operas and game shows) and video games are popular as entertainment. Reading continues to be a widespread activity, although lighter reading such as pulp fiction, detective novels, and science fiction are now preferred over the classics of literature. Musical concerts by Western groups often are held in large cities such as Moscow. The middle and upper classes participate in sports such as tennis, and traditional Russian sports or games such as soccer and chess remain popular among all classes of people. Many of the rich own a *dacha*, a country house where they spend weekends during the summer.¹⁶⁶



© Emi Turkeshi
At a cafe in Russia

Russians are known for their strong social and family ties. They maintain contact with friends and neighbors by calling and visiting frequently.

Exchange21: What is your telephone number?

Soldier:	What is your telephone number?	kakoy oo vaas noomaR tyelyefona?
Local:	My phone number is 1325477.	moy noomaR cheteeRyesta dyevyanosta pyaat dyevyat vosyemdyesyaat vosyem vosyemdyesyaat dvaa dyevyanosta dvaa

Many of Russia's cities grew unnaturally because of the planned industrialization that took place under Soviet leadership. Within this system, villages throughout the U.S.S.R. were dismantled, their rural populations forced to move to the cities and work in factories. Urban planning for housing and living arrangements was minimal.

¹⁶⁵ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Way of Life." c. 1993–2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_7/Russia.html

¹⁶⁶ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Way of Life" and "Russia: Social Structure." c. 1993–2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_7/Russia.html

Environmental conditions around the cities in Russia have generally worsened because of the infrastructure problems. Electricity, gas, and water services were neglected and denied capital investment in the economic transformation of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In addition, waste storage has become a concern, with the need for storage space exceeding current capacity. When toxic waste is not properly handled, as has often been the case, health standards are violated. Waste water leaving Russian cities is treated very little if at all, resulting in pollution of the larger bodies of water it flows into. Agricultural contaminants as well as toxic waste pollute the groundwater used for drinking.



In Russia’s cities, the communications infrastructure has been upgraded to serve the developing market. Telephone service is modern in most areas, and digital and analog cellular service is also widely available. In 2007, there were 170 million mobile phone subscribers compared to “fewer than 1 million in 1998.”¹⁶⁷

Exchange22: May I use your phone?

Soldier:	May I use your phone?	mozhna vaspolzoovaatsyaa vaasheem tyelyefonam?
Local:	Sure.	kanyeshna

Housing can be difficult to find for residents in Russia, because of spiraling property values and deteriorating urban infrastructure. In the Soviet era, the state owned almost all urban housing. Rents were low, and upkeep of housing was minimal.¹⁶⁸ Several families often lived together in one apartment, sharing kitchens and bathrooms. Today, many families who have not been able to find their own apartments are still sharing space this way, living under extremely crowded conditions. The buildings are neglected, run down, and slated for demolition if the state has not been able to provide maintenance.¹⁶⁹ Other families, however, have managed to find their own private living quarters.¹⁷⁰ Those who

¹⁶⁷ CIA World Factbook. “Russia.” 23 October 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

¹⁶⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Russia – Government and Society: Housing.” 2006. [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia – Britannica Online Encyclopedia](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia–Britannica%20Online%20Encyclopedia)

¹⁶⁹ Russia-InfoCentre. “Moscow’s Historic Buildings Under Threat.” 25 September 2008. http://russia-ic.com/reg_cit/in_depth/829/

¹⁷⁰ Over half of all housing was under private ownership by the mid 1990s. Source: Encyclopædia Britannica. “Russia – Government and Society: Housing.” 2008.

have secured a middle or upper class lifestyle as a result of the new economy can acquire private housing, especially in urban areas. Luxury housing is widely available in cities such as Moscow, for those who can afford it.

In Novosibirsk, a large city in Siberia, most people live in five-story block apartments divided into small living units. Built in the Soviet era, they are equipped with electricity or gas for heating and cooking, and half or more of them have telephones. There are few private homes in the city. Those that do exist are owned either by wealthy people whose homes are in good condition or by poor people whose houses are old and rundown.¹⁷¹

Many of Russia's cities have been undergoing transformation since the collapse of the communist system, superseded by market economies. In Moscow, for instance, the rapid urban development that took place between 1990 and 2000 has been threatening the city's historical sites and monuments. Every year, "hundreds" of such sites are demolished, including structures in Red Square, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The demolished buildings are being replaced with high-rise buildings: apartments and luxury units, hotels, and offices. For years, the state has neglected the upkeep on many of the old structures, and real estate developers have no interest in preserving them. The many immigrants moving into Moscow also have no interest in restoring historical buildings. Against this indifference, a group of international historical site managers, historians, and architects has formed the Moscow Architecture Preservation Society. The group has petitioned government officials, including Russian leader Vladimir Putin, to intervene and stop the demolition of historical buildings.¹⁷²



Health Care^{173, 174}

During part of the Soviet era, mortality declined for a number of reasons, including improved, widely accessible health care and greater control over infectious diseases. However, after the elimination of state-sponsored health care in 1991, the quality of medical care in Russia deteriorated. Health facilities and medical schools experienced lack of funding and shortages of medical staff and instructors. Specialization became limited so that services such as hospice and maternity care could not be provided.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

¹⁷¹ E-Novosibirsk.com. "Novosibirsk Quick Take: City and Region." No date. <http://www.e-novosibirsk.com/nsk.php>

¹⁷² Russia-InfoCentre. "Moscow's Historic Buildings Under Threat." 25 September 2008. http://russia-info.com/reg_cit/in_depth/829/

¹⁷³ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Social Services in Russia" and "Russia: Social Issues." c. 1993–2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_7/Russia.html

¹⁷⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia – Government and Society: Health and Welfare." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

In 1993, the government instituted mandatory health insurance to replace the Soviet state-funded system. The new insurance is funded by government and employers, but low finances and corruption have weakened the plan. Many doctors, for instance, accept bribes to provide superior health care, thus supplementing the low pay the plan provides. It has been estimated that corrupt practices siphon off up to 35% of money spent annually on health care in Russia.¹⁷⁵ For all these reasons, a large number of citizens have not been able to obtain the medical treatment they need.



Because of the poor health care system as well as the deterioration of food, water, and air quality, life expectancy in Russia dropped sharply in the 1990s. Infectious diseases began spreading rapidly. Illnesses such as tuberculosis, cancer, and heart disease began to take a large toll on the overall population. In the mid 1990s, 40% of the children in Russia suffered from chronic sickness or “severe abnormalities.”¹⁷⁶

Exchange 23: Is Dr. Ivanov in, sir?

Soldier:	Is Dr. Ivanov in, sir?	doktaR eevaanoof oo syebyaa?
Local:	No.	nyet

Various social problems that impact health have also arisen since the Soviet health care system was dismantled. These problems include use of illegal drugs, which are now more easily available, especially among young people. The increased use of needles has in turn led to a rapid upswing of cases of AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, caused by human immunodeficiency virus or HIV) often spread by shared needle usage. This one causal factor was responsible for 65% of the new HIV cases in Russia that occurred in 2007.¹⁷⁷ The consumption of alcohol has also increased, and alcohol poisoning from homemade or other unreliable sources has become a major cause of death. This particular problem is believed to be one of the significant causes of low life expectancy for Russian men, which is 59 years compared to 73 years for Russian women, according to 2008

¹⁷⁵ The Heartland Institute. Shah, Rina. “Russia’s Failed Universal Health Care Program Exposes the Perils of Single Payer Systems.” June 2008. <http://www.heartland.org/policybot/results.html?articleid=23228>

¹⁷⁶ USAID. “Making Cities Work - Eastern Russia & Europe Brief.” c. 2002–06. <http://www.makingcitieswork.org/urbanWorld/eastern-europe>

¹⁷⁷ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Russia.” July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

estimates.¹⁷⁸ Other factors in the high death rate among men include cardiovascular disease, cancer, smoking, violence, and car accidents.¹⁷⁹

Exchange 24: Is there a hospital nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a hospital nearby?	zdyes yest pableezastee balneetsaa?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	daa, f-tsyentye goRadaa

In 2007, Vladimir Putin (president at the time) approved a program in Russia that would improve health, reduce the mortality rate, and increase life expectancy. The program was also designed to have the effect of reversing Russia’s “demographic crisis,” as the population has been declining over the years.¹⁸⁰ New funding has been made available to construct high-tech medical centers and to purchase new equipment such as ambulances and X-ray machines.¹⁸¹ Although there has been some success over the short term, the program’s long-term effects cannot be predicted.

Exchange25: Can you help me?

Soldier:	My arm is broken doctor, can you help me?	oo myenyaa slomaanaa Rookaa.vy mozhyetye mnye pamoach?
Local:	Yes, I can help you.	daa, yaa magoo vaam pamoach

¹⁷⁸ CIA World Factbook. “Russia.” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html#People>

¹⁷⁹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Russia.” July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

¹⁸⁰ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Russia.” July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

¹⁸¹ Los Angeles Times. “Russia’s Outdated Healthcare Mired in Corruption.” 16 March 2008. <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/mar/16/world/fg-russia16plr>

*Hospitals, Equipment, and Drugs*¹⁸²

Hospitals in Russia are generally understaffed and lacking in modern medical equipment.

Often, trained personnel are simply not available to operate specialized medical machinery. Older equipment in hospitals is often in disrepair and allowed to remain so. Few facilities offer medical specialization. For instance, the country's only high-tech centers for heart surgery are located in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Sanitation practices in hospitals are lax, and patient care is not well coordinated between or within care centers.¹⁸³

Urgently needed drugs and medicines are often not available to doctors or patients. Patients with critical illnesses such as tuberculosis, AIDS, severe asthma, multiple sclerosis, and cerebral palsy have a right to receive free drugs for their conditions. Unfortunately, these patients are often turned away because of shortages. If people are wealthy, however, they are frequently able to pay high prices and obtain the medicines they need.

Education

Russia's educational system today has produced "nearly 100% literacy."¹⁸⁴ It continues to emphasize technology and science and remains relatively strong in these areas. Ongoing reform of education is needed, however, as Russia continues to adapt to a market economy. Specialized knowledge and skills are needed in order to implement this change.



Compulsory education in Russia begins at age 6 and ends at age 15, with options to continue. Before entering formal school, around 80% of children between the ages of 3 and 6 attend kindergarten.¹⁸⁵ They then enter primary school, which lasts for four years, from age 6 or 7 to age 10. Basic secondary school is a five-year program, from age 10 to age 15. Students then have the option to continue in a two-year, upper-secondary program that ends at age 17 with a degree in Secondary Complete General Education. If

¹⁸² Johnson's Russia List. Cited from *Moscow Times*. August 2008.

<http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-155-35.cfm>

¹⁸³ Bio-Medicine. "Russian Health Care Marred by Corruption." June 2007. <http://www.bio-medicine.org/medicine-news/Russian-Health-Care-Marred-by-Corruption-22420-1/>

¹⁸⁴ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

¹⁸⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia – Government and Society: Education." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

they wish, they may pursue a non-university or vocational higher education program, which lasts four years and offers a diploma.¹⁸⁶

Higher education is possible in both public and state schools. Students may enroll in a four-year university degree program, followed by postgraduate studies. Scientific postgraduate studies lead to two different doctoral degrees. The first level is called Candidate of Sciences, which equals a PhD, and the second level is called Doctor of Sciences.¹⁸⁷

History of Public Education in Russia

Public education has evolved in Russia since its beginnings in the early 18th century. In the mid 1700s, universities were founded in St. Petersburg and Moscow; education there was based on European models (especially German) and considered highly prestigious.¹⁸⁸ Subsequently, in Soviet Russia, the state owned all schools and widely expanded public schooling. The Soviets strongly centralized the foundations of education. Various kinds of educational reform began following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The government enacted legislation in 1992 that promoted educational autonomy in regions that were predominantly non-Russian. Regional areas began to receive more latitude in shaping their curricula in the humanities and social sciences and in using broader teaching methods that borrowed from local traditions. Still, the central government retained control in areas of science, math, and the Russian language. The central government has also kept the responsibility for licensing teachers and both the design and distribution of textbooks.^{189, 190}

Transportation and Traffic^{191, 192}

Russia's transportation system was developed during the Soviet era to serve the country's economic development and promote the rapid expansion of heavy industry. In general, planners designed a system that would transport the maximum volume of products and people at the lowest cost, with little thought for convenience.

¹⁸⁶ EuroEducation.net. "Russia." 2005–06. <http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/russco.htm>

¹⁸⁷ EuroEducation.net. "Russia." 2005–06. <http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/russco.htm>

¹⁸⁸ The School of Russian and Asian Studies. "Public Education in Russia from Peter I to the Present." 1999-2008. <http://www.sras.org/news2.phtml?m=410>

¹⁸⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russia – Government and Society: Education." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

¹⁹⁰ U.S. Library of Congress. Country Studies. "Russia: Education." c. 1996.

<http://countrystudies.us/russia/52.htm>

¹⁹¹ The World Bank Group. "Transport - Russia." 3 January 2005.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/EXTECAREGTOPTRANSPORT/0,,contentMDK:20647578~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:571121,00.html>

¹⁹² MSN Encarta. "Russia: Transportation." c. 1993–2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_12/Russia.html

Railroads, which lost much of their traffic after the Soviet Union broke up, originally dominated the transportation system. For many years they carried most of the country's freight and provided most of the long-distance travel services for passengers. The Trans-Siberian Railroad, completed in 1905, connected western Russia to Vladivostok on Russia's east coast and opened the entire region of Siberia to development. It now connects with several other railroad lines and continues to be an important means of transportation for both passengers and freight. The direct line between Moscow and Vladivostok is 9,310 km (5,785 mi) in length, and electric service was completed for the entire line in 2002.¹⁹³



© Melvin Schlubman
Heavy traffic in Moscow

Exchange 26: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	Ryadom yest vookzaal?
Local:	No.	nyet

Driving a private car in Russia is not a preferred means of travel. Maintaining a private car is expensive, which discourages driving. Although more people can afford to buy cars, the infrastructure cannot accommodate them. Because of the country's vast size and harsh weather conditions, the cost of building and maintaining roads has always been extremely high. For this reason, the Soviet government found it inefficient to invest large amounts of funding in a roadway infrastructure.

Even today, trucking accounts for only a relatively small percentage of goods transported. The condition of roads throughout the country is badly deteriorated, and many roads are unpaved or unsafe—impassable in winter or during spring thaw. In the cities, traffic is heavy, gridlock is common, and drivers ignore traffic laws. The crowded mix of vehicles, speeds, and aggressive driving on the roads in Russia is a continual problem.¹⁹⁴ For these reasons, driving is dangerous and leads to many accidents.

Exchange 27: Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?

¹⁹³ Infoplease. "Trans-Siberian Railroad." c. 2007. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0849291.html>

¹⁹⁴ OSAC - Overseas Security Advisory Council. "Russia 2008 Crime and Safety Report: Moscow, Yekaterinburg, and Vladivostok." 2 April 2008. <https://www.osac.gov/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=82276>

Soldier:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	yest zayes nyedaalyeko KhaRosheey myeKhaaneek?
Local:	Yes.	daa

Metered taxis are available in large cities such as Moscow or St. Petersburg, where they first appeared in 1906. During the Russian Revolution, which began in 1917, the government confiscated all taxis in St. Petersburg for its own use and for that of the Red Army. Taxi service was not reintroduced in the city until 1929.¹⁹⁵ It is now widely available, and taxis, which cater to both well-to-do passengers and budget travelers, are marked with distinctive colors or brightly-lit signs.

Because the roads are so crowded, it can be difficult to get a cab. It is always an option to ask someone if he is willing to share a cab.

Exchange 28: Can I share this cab with you?

Soldier:	Can I share this cab with you?	gdye yaa magoo fzyaat taaksee?
Local:	No, wait for another.	taam

In both Moscow and St. Petersburg, a well-designed metro (subway) system operates with trains arriving every 2 to 3 minutes during non-peak hours. Passengers can purchase tokens at metro station booths, or they can buy a monthly pass. The Moscow Metro, which became operational in 1935, is Russia's largest subway system and is considered to be the most efficient way to travel long distances within the city.¹⁹⁶

Public transportation in Moscow and St. Petersburg also includes trams and trolleys (both of which are inexpensive and run from early morning until after midnight) and buses. Buses offer local and long-distance routes and are a popular form of transportation.

¹⁹⁵ Saint-Petersburg.com. "Taxi in St. Petersburg." c. 2001–2008. <http://www.saint-petersburg.com/transport/taxi/index.asp>

¹⁹⁶ Travel in Russia. "Public Transportation System of Moscow." No date. http://www.travelinrussia.com/moscow_getting_around/public_transport.html

Different levels of service are available, such as express buses, taxi-buses that only accept cash, and regular buses for which passengers purchase a monthly pass.

Exchange 29: Will the bus be here soon?

Soldier:	Will the bus be here soon?	aaftoboos skooRo pReedyot?
Local:	Yes.	daa

A new monorail system opened in Moscow in 2004, providing additional public transportation. Although the service was considered efficient and was slated for expansion when it opened, city officials terminated its further development in 2007. The monorail, which provides services mostly for visitors and tourists, was scheduled to have paid for itself within a 10-year period. However, it has carried less than half the number of passengers it was projected to carry, and it still operates at a loss. This loss is partly because tickets are more expensive than for other forms of public transportation and also because of operational difficulties. In winter, for instance, the monorail has had problems braking because of ice and snow collecting on the rails. The system proved too expensive to maintain and keep running.¹⁹⁷

Restaurants and Marketplace

*Restaurants*¹⁹⁸

In Russia's cities, restaurants appeal to a range of tastes and eating styles. Local restaurants usually offer traditional Russian food including *pelmeni* (meat dumplings), *piroshky* (meat-filled fried rolls), and *blini* (pancakes stuffed with fish or cavier). International restaurants, found more often in larger cities, also offer many dining choices. St. Petersburg in particular is well-known for its culinary range.¹⁹⁹ The restaurants here offer a diversity of dishes from traditional Russian to specialties from all around the world.



© Vmenkov/ Wikipedia
Russian Restaurant

¹⁹⁷ The Moscow News Weekly. "End of the Line for City Monorail." 30 August 2007.

<http://www.mnweekly.ru/local/20070830/55271357.html>

¹⁹⁸ World Travel Guide. "Russian Federal Travel Guide – Going Out." c. 2008.

<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/236/entertainment/Europe/Russian-Federation.html>

¹⁹⁹ The New York Times. "36 Hours in St. Petersburg, Russia." 13 May 2007.

<http://travel.nytimes.com/2007/05/13/travel/13hours.html>

If a diner orders a meal and needs to know exactly the ingredients in it, asking the waiter or another diner is the best way to determine the contents.

Exchange 30: What type of meat is this?

Soldier:	What type of meat is this?	kakoye eta myaasa?
Local:	Lamb.	baaRaaneena

Most restaurants offer a variety of drinks, including coffee and Russian tea. The national drinks in Russia, available at most restaurants, are sweet tea (*chai*), different varieties of vodka, and an assortment of wines flavored with fruits, herbs, leaves, or flowers.

Exchange 31: I would like coffee or tea.

Soldier:	I would like coffee or tea.	yaa bvy Khatyel kofye eelee chaay
Local:	Sure.	kanyeshna

Depending on the time of day and type of restaurant, diners may have to adjust their eating expectations. Diners can expect that a Russian breakfast will usually consist of food similar to that found in Scandinavian countries, such as bread and cold meats. Lunch and supper may be regional, traditional dishes.

Exchange 32: Are you still serving breakfast?

Soldier:	Are you still serving breakfast?	mozhna pazaftRaakaat?
Local:	Yes.	daa

A group of people eating at a restaurant may wish to pay their bills separately, or put it all on one tab. Regardless of the manner of payment, the patrons should find out in advance what kind of payment method is accepted in order to be prepared when they ask for the

bill. Hotel restaurants and mid-level to expensive, upscale restaurants generally take international credit cards—except for American Express, which is accepted mainly in prominent restaurants in Moscow and St. Petersburg. It is necessary to have cash on hand in the event other payment methods are not accepted.²⁰⁰

Exchange 33: Can I have my total bill, please?

Soldier:	Can I have my total bill, please?	mozhnoo mnye schyot, pazhaalooystaa?
Local:	Yes sir!	daa, kanyeshna

Leaving a tip is not a standard practice in Russia, although in some places tipping is becoming more expected. Porters who carry bags do expect a small tip, and in large cities such as St. Petersburg and Moscow, hotels and high-end restaurants will include a 5–15% service charge.²⁰¹

*Marketplace*²⁰²

Although shops and department stores have fixed prices, bargaining is the norm when purchasing goods in Russian markets.²⁰³ Here, advertised prices are usually more than the seller expects to receive for the product. In bargaining, it is not a good idea for the buyer to reveal in the beginning what he or she wants to pay; it is better to wait until the end of the bargaining process to make such a statement.



A buyer should examine an item closely to be sure that the quality matches the price he or she is willing to pay.

Exchange 34: May I examine this close up?

²⁰⁰ World Travel Guide. “Russian Federation Travel Guide – Money.” c. 2008.
<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/236/money/Europe/Russian-Federation.html>

²⁰¹ Lonely Planet. “Russia: Money & Costs.” 2008.
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/russia/money-and-costs>

²⁰² World Travel Guide. “Russian Federal Travel Guide – Going Out.” c. 2008.
<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/236/entertainment/Europe/Russian-Federation.html>

²⁰³ Lonely Planet. “Russia: Money & Costs.” 2008.
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/russia/money-and-costs>

Soldier:	May I examine this close up?	mozhnoo pasmatRyet pableezhye?
Local:	Sure.	kanyeshna

Buyers also need to be aware that antiquities and manuscripts other than those legally sold in retail outlets may not be removed from the country. An exception is made if the procurer has an export license, in which case, it is legal to take such goods or works of art out of the Russian Federation.

There is no obligation to buy goods, even after browsing and asking about prices. Since prices vary considerably, a buyer should shop around and return to the establishment where he or she has found the best deal.

Exchange 35: How much longer will you be here?

Soldier:	How much longer will you be here?	skoolka yeshchyo vy boodyetye zdyes?
Local:	Three more hours.	yeshchyo tRee chaasaa

Food is available at numerous street stalls in the cities. Patrons can buy dried fruit, fried doughnuts, Russian pancakes, snacks, tea, and other products from these outdoor eateries. The prices at such informal places are fixed and cash is required. According to a new regulation put into effect by then-president Putin in 2007, only Russians can operate food stalls; the many immigrants who formerly managed them are now prohibited from such work. As a result, the prices at food stalls have risen because wages are higher for Russian vendors than for immigrants.²⁰⁴

It is a good idea to establish in advance the kind of currency a seller will accept. The ruble is Russia's official currency. In many establishments, proprietors prefer rubles for

²⁰⁴ International Herald-Tribune. "In Russia, Food Markets Ail After Crackdown on Foreigners." 5 April 2007. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/04/05/business/migrant.php>

transactions, although some shops accept credit cards. Travelers can exchange foreign currency at certain banks and change bureaus.²⁰⁵

Exchange 36: Do you accept U.S. currency?

Soldier:	Do you accept U.S. currency?	vy pReeneemaayetye dool-laaRy s-shchaa?
Local:	No we only accept	nyet, mvy pReeneemaayem talko Rooblee

Also, a buyer may have a currency denomination that seems too large for the cost of the item being purchased. In that case, asking in advance whether the seller can give change is advisable.

Exchange 37: Can you give me change for this?

Soldier:	Can you give me change for this?	vy moozhyetye sdaat mnye sdaachoo?
Local:	No.	nyet

ATMs are widely available in Russian cities.

Dealing with Beggars

Many beggars live and work in Russia’s cities. They may be those from poor, rural areas who have moved to the cities in search of jobs and find themselves begging as a profession when they cannot find employment. Beggars also work in organized rings headed by leaders, competing with other begging rings. The people employed as beggars are often disabled, including veterans from the wars in Chechnya or other areas.



²⁰⁵ World Travel Guide. “Russian Federation Travel Guide – Money.” c. 2008.
<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/236/money/Europe/Russian-Federation.html>

It is best to ignore beggars if others are around; otherwise, you may feel pressure to give to a larger group of people. If other beggars see someone handing out money, they are likely to aggressively pursue the source.

Exchange 38: Give me money

Local:	Give me money	dyenyeg daaytye
Soldier:	I don't have any.	oo myenyaa nyet dyenyeg

If someone is insistent on making an unwanted sale to obtain money, the target of the sale should decline the offer with directness. The best solution can be to simply say “I’m sorry” and just keep walking.

Exchange 39: Please, buy something from me.

Local:	Please, buy something from me.	pazhaalooystaa, koopeetye oo myenyaa shto-neebood
Soldier:	Sorry, I have no money left.	eezveeneetye, dyenyeg bolshye nye ostaaloos

Ringleaders who manage beggars often send begging rings off to European countries to work, using different strategies with different national populations. Begging was illegal in Russia until 1993, but it is becoming more common, especially in the cities. The Russian government still prohibits the use of children under 14 for this purpose.²⁰⁶

Urban Crime

In Russian cities, crime—often linked to poverty—is widespread. Westerners, affluent in appearance, are frequent targets of both violent and non-violent crime such as theft, physical assault, and racial or ethnic violence. Pick-pocketing, practiced often by young



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Gangs in Russia

²⁰⁶ Project OUTSIDE. Erkan, Serap. “Begging.” 16 June 2008. <http://www.udenfor.dk/uk/Menu/News+&+Views/Begging>

children, is a commonly reported crime. It may occur in crowded areas such as train or metro stations, tourist areas, and markets. Vehicles are often burglarized. People have been robbed of their valuables after drugs are placed in their drinks in a bar or nightclub, rendering them unconscious. Robbers may also pose as police officials or taxi drivers to gain access to their targets.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ OSAC - Overseas Security Advisory Council. "Russia 2008 Crime and Safety Report: Moscow, Yekaterinburg, and Vladivostok." 2 April 2008.
<https://www.osac.gov/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=82276>

Rural Life

Rural Economy

For centuries, Russians in rural areas have practiced farming to earn a living. The main crops grown today are similar to those grown in years past: wheat and barley, flax and oilseeds, and fodder crops. Production has been low because of primitive farming methods as well as mismanagement of land and resources during the Soviet years. In the 1970s and 1980s, the higher-paid members of rural society earned money by operating and repairing agricultural equipment.²⁰⁸ Still, similar to farmers, agricultural machinery specialists in the countryside lacked upward mobility.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Girls with Strawberries

Farming today is hampered by a variety of policies. The government has placed restrictions on exports in order to counter inflation, resulting in low domestic prices for grain. For a limited number of people (mainly investors), new agricultural technologies and reclamation of fallow lands are leading to some signs of recovery in Russia's agricultural sector. New policies of land ownership have provided possibilities for development in that area.²⁰⁹ For the majority of rural Russians, however, poverty has become the norm as Russia's collective farms gradually ceased operating. Many villages that were thriving only 20 years ago have now become almost deserted, and those who remain there are hard-pressed to find jobs.²¹⁰

Land Distribution

Serfdom and Its Legacy

From the Middle Ages until the 19th century, the institution of serfdom was the law of the land for Russian peasants. Under this system, rich nobles or officials owned large tracts of land, and serfs—legally bound to their overseers' estates—farmed the land in an arrangement similar to that of 'tenant farmers.' They were able to use a small part of the land for their own support, but they had to surrender most of their profits to the estate owner. They also had to pay the landowner taxes and fees for inheritance and death, permission to see their daughters married, and use of the grain mill and other



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Group of workers harvesting tea

²⁰⁸ U.S. Library of Congress. "Russia: A Country Study – Rural Life." 1996.
<http://countrystudies.us/russia/48.htm>

²⁰⁹ Spiegel Online International. Bush, Jason. "Farming Makes a Comeback in Russia." 10 October 2008.
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/0,1518,583314,00.html>

²¹⁰ BBC News. "Wealth Gap Leaves Rural Russia Behind." 29 May 2007.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6698797.stm>

essential facilities. In return, the lord provided protection from raids from other landowners or outlaws and support in times of crop failure. In theory, serfs could purchase their own freedom, but it seldom happened in practice because they could not escape from debt.²¹¹ If the land was transferred, the serfs were transferred along with it because of their legal attachment to the land. Agricultural work was organized into peasant communes in the 17th century, when collective responsibility became an enduring rural feature.²¹² Serfdom as an institution ended in Western Europe as a result of the French Revolution of 1789, but it continued in Russia until Tsar Alexander II abolished it in 1861. He did not bestow land ownership to the peasants, however; they could purchase land if they could afford it.

By the late 19th century, the majority of Russians lived in rural parts of the country. Former serfs and peasants, who made up approximately 80% of the rural population, practiced small-scale farming, using the same methods of planting and harvesting they had used in centuries past.²¹³ Most of the farms were small, and the acreage was used mainly for grain fields and gardens.

Soviet Land Policy

When the Bolsheviks gained power in Russia in 1917, they adopted a decree that prohibited private land ownership. They codified this further in the 1930s, when state ownership of all land was legally set forth.²¹⁴ Under the huge collectives that Stalin established during this period, peasants were forced to combine their farms and work on state-dictated agricultural projects. On state farms, the workers received wages and benefits, and on collective farms, workers shared the proceeds according to their work contribution. In all cases, the Stalinist government restricted the peasants' movements and confiscated their property, including their livestock, machinery, and stored grain.²¹⁵ Agricultural productivity declined for decades to come, and the short-term results severely diminished the lives of rural Russians:



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Family evacuated from areas ceded to USSR

The effect of this restructuring was to reintroduce a kind of serfdom into the countryside. Although the program was designed

²¹¹ MSN Encarta. "Serfdom." c. 1993-2008.

http://uk.encyclopedia.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567780/serfdom.html

²¹² Answers.com. "History, 1450-1789: Serfdom in Russia." c. 2004.

<http://www.answers.com/topic/serfdom-in-russia>

²¹³ U.S. Library of Congress. A Country Study: Russia. "Chapter 1 – Historical Setting: Early History to 1917. Transformation of Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Economic Developments." 1996.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

²¹⁴ Lexuniversal Global Virtual Law Connection. "Land Ownership in Russia." 2001.

<http://www.lexuniversal.com/en/articles/887>

²¹⁵ Mongabay.com. "Russia – Economy: Agricultural Policy." No date.

http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/russia/ECONOMY.html

to affect all peasants, Stalin in particular sought to eliminate the wealthiest peasants, known as *kulaks*. Generally, *kulaks* were only marginally better off than other peasants, but the party claimed that the *kulaks* had ensnared the rest of the peasantry in capitalistic relationships. In any event, collectivization met widespread resistance not only from the *kulaks* but from poorer peasants as well, and a desperate struggle of the peasantry against the authorities ensued. Peasants slaughtered their cows and pigs rather than turn them over to the collective farms, with the result that livestock resources remained below the 1929 level for years afterward. The state in turn forcibly collectivized reluctant peasants and deported *kulaks* and active rebels to Siberia. Within the collective farms, the authorities in many instances exacted such high levels of procurement that starvation was widespread.²¹⁶

Land Reform

During the final years of Soviet rule, the government began to attempt land reform, recognizing that the system in place had led to low productivity, as well as to ecological damage. In 1990, citizens gained some rights to lease and inherit land. Although the state still legally owned all land, the government amended the law to permit very limited private ownership of agricultural land for state-approved individual purposes. People who farmed individual plots of land were able to grow food for their own private use and also sell crops for a profit. Since that time, teachers, doctors, and other members of the rural professional class, have continued to use such farming activity to supplement their income.²¹⁷



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Harvesting Tea in Chakva

Exchange 40: Do you own this land?

Soldier:	Do you own this land?	vy vlaadyelyets etoy zyemlee?
Local:	Yes.	daa

²¹⁶ U.S. Library of Congress. A Country Study: Russia. “Chapter 2 – Historical Setting: 1917 to 1991. Transformation and Terror. Industrialization and Collectivization.” 1996.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

²¹⁷ Lexuniversal Global Virtual Law Connection. “Land Ownership in Russia.” 2001.

<http://www.lexuniversal.com/en/articles/887>

After Russia gained independence, the government again took up land reform. Although the constitution of 1993 provided that Russian citizens could own land, the law was very unevenly applied. Structural reforms (such as land ownership) were delayed in rural, agricultural parts of the country. Consequently, “the conversion to market-based agriculture was slow, as many clung to the old, familiar collective system.”²¹⁸ Many rural workers today continue to work in Soviet-style collective farms that now function privately, renamed as cooperatives. Such farms are often not efficiently managed, and their ability to create profits relies largely on their access to urban markets.^{219,220}

Exchange 41: Where do you work, sir?

Soldier:	Where do you work, sir?	kyem vy Raabotaayetye?
Local:	I am a farmer, sir.	yaa RaaznaRaabocheey

In general, rural citizens of the immediate post-Soviet era found it very difficult to survive by farming. As the market economy emerged, they were unable to adapt to new practices. Many had no means to migrate to urban areas, but frequently those who did migrate then returned to the countryside, unable to find jobs and afford housing in the city. Those who returned often received farm products in lieu of wages from the large farms where they worked, surviving by trading goods with others in similar situations.²²¹

Current Agricultural and Land Policy

A land reform law that passed in 2003 widely permitted Russian citizens to own private land, while also prohibiting foreign nationals from owning land in Russia. However, any land transactions required registration, which meant that shareholders would have to prepare complex records. The legal requirements discouraged many people from taking advantage of the new law and exercising their rights.²²² To date, only 3–4% of Russia’s

²¹⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Russia: Economy.” 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

²¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Russia: Economy – Agriculture.” 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

²²⁰ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Russia.” July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

²²¹ MSNBC.com. “Russia’s Bitter Farmers Stay Put.” 7 August 1998.
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3072226/>

²²² Johnson’s Russia List. “Major Changes in Land Ownership Take Effect in Russia Today.” 28 January 2003. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/7036-4.cfm>

land shareholders have registered their land and taken title.²²³ Under this interim situation, shareholders still have the right to farm or lease their land, but they cannot sell it. Lacking outright ownership, farmers cannot gain access to credit to purchase new equipment, without which they cannot increase productivity.

In spite of all the obstacles, farming in Russia is becoming an active enterprise in some areas. Large corporate food processors, shippers, and commodities traders have been buying land at fairly cheap prices (some of it from former state farms) and investing in agribusiness. Even foreign investors have been buying Russian land, using a loophole that allows them to use joint capital and identify as a subsidiary of a Russian business. They have been investing in modern agricultural equipment and producing increased yields of wheat and other grains. Meanwhile, the need for rural labor has actually declined. One large company, Agro-Invest, reports that it can produce more crops by hiring only 340 people on an area of land farmed by 3,000 during the Soviet era.^{224,225}



Courtesy of Wikipedia
The First Tractor by Vladimir Krikhatsky

Exchange 42: Do you know this area very well?

Soldier:	Do you know this area very well?	vy KhaRasho znaayetye etoo myestnast?
Local:	Yes.	daa

Rural Transportation

Roadways

In the Soviet era, very little emphasis was placed on private automobiles, and minimal effort was put into building a road infrastructure.²²⁶ The effects of this policy continue

²²³ USDA. Foreign Agricultural Service. Commodity Intelligence Report. "Russia: Grain Production Prospects and Siberia Trip Report." 20 August 2008.

http://www.pecad.fas.usda.gov/highlights/2008/08/rs_20Aug2008/

²²⁴ Spiegel Online International. Bush, Jason. "Farming Makes a Comeback in Russia." 10 October 2008.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/0,1518,583314,00.html>

²²⁵ USDA. Foreign Agricultural Service. Commodity Intelligence Report. "Russia: Grain Production Prospects and Siberia Trip Report." 20 August 2008.

http://www.pecad.fas.usda.gov/highlights/2008/08/rs_20Aug2008/

²²⁶ U.S. Library of Congress. "Russia: A Country Study – Transportation." 1996.

<http://countrystudies.us/russia/65.htm>

today, especially in rural areas where the roads are often unpaved and in disrepair. Often, reliable road connections may not exist between small villages and mid-size towns.²²⁷ In small towns, regional bus service is usually available, and many rely on this service rather than driving private automobiles, a luxury they can seldom afford.²²⁸

Severe weather is likely to negatively affect the roads in rural areas, leaving them so muddy or full of potholes as to be impassable.²²⁹ The regional authorities charged with improving and maintaining roads and rural wooden bridges often lack the necessary funds, so needed repairs are simply not made.²³⁰ It is also not unusual for people to drive under the effects of drugs or alcohol. Russian police arrest drivers for these offenses, but there are fewer police in rural areas in Russia. Additionally, the speed limit is much higher in rural areas than in cities. All these factors combined lead to high automobile accident rates.

Railroads

The Soviets laid thousands of miles of railroad track, spanning the country's vast reaches from west to east. Railroads were used predominantly for cargo traffic, but they have remained an important means of passenger travel into remote areas. Although the railway system accounts for close to half of Russia's passenger travel, the density of its routes is higher in western and central Russia compared to the region east of the Urals.²³¹ Still, many Russians rely on major routes such as the Trans-Siberian Railroad to travel from Moscow to eastern parts of the country, all the way to port towns of the Pacific Ocean.



Russian Railways is the “government-owned rail monopoly” that operates Russia's railway network.²³² Including both freight and passenger service, Russian Railways is responsible for close to 80% of Russia's transportation needs.²³³ Different kinds of trains and levels of passenger train service are available, from first class through fourth class. The least expensive class (4th class), train service is likely to be slow, and the carriages

²²⁷ The Jamestown Foundation. “On the Road in Russia.” 11 May 2004.

http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=401&issue_id=2948&article_id=236682

²²⁸ Way to Russia. “Traveling Around Russia by Bus.” c. 2002-2005.

<http://www.waytorussia.net/Transport/Domestic/Bus.html>

²²⁹ About.com. “Roads in Russia.” 29 March 2007. <http://goeasteurope.about.com/b/2007/03/29/roads-in-russia.htm>

²³⁰ The World Bank. “Transport: Russia Roads.” c. 2008.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/EXTECAREGTOPTRANSPORT/0,,contentMDK:20772889~isCURL:Y~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:571121,00.html>

²³¹ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Russia: Economy – Transportation and Telecommunications.” 2008.

[http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia – Britannica Online Encyclopedia](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia%20-%20Britannica%20Online%20Encyclopedia)

²³² JSC Russian Railways. “The Company.” 2007. http://eng.rzd.ru/wps/portal/rzdeng?STRUCTURE_ID=4

²³³ JSC Russian Railways. “Profile.” 2007. http://eng.rzd.ru/wps/portal/rzdeng?STRUCTURE_ID=168

may be uncomfortable. Train travel is considered relatively safe since one or two conductors are on each carriage for 24 hours a day, managing the service.^{234,235}

Airlines

Air travel is used to journey into remote Siberia, where in some cases this is the only possible way to reach a destination.²³⁶ Although it is believed that operating standards have improved for air travel, many accidents have resulted from aircraft being poorly maintained. Because of this ongoing problem, some Russian airlines have in the past been banned from operating in European air space.²³⁷

Rural Health

As the Soviet Union disintegrated, the health care system declined, particularly in rural parts of the country. No longer the guarantor of social services, the central state stopped providing needed medical supplies or equipment to remote areas. Since local governments did not have funding to procure medical essentials, they “cobbled together their own health care system.”²³⁸



Furthermore, even under the universal Soviet health care system, emphasis was never placed on prevention or on educating people to a healthy lifestyle. Instead, the priority was fighting epidemics. The system never adapted to chronic care, treating ailments such as cancer or cardiovascular diseases, and few reforms have been made to this infrastructure. The direct result is twofold: First, people living in Russia have simply gone without basic, preventive health care. Second, treatment for chronic disease varies from being very uneven in quality to completely nonexistent. In particular, cardiovascular disease remains a major cause of death for Russian men, whose average life span has dropped from 64 in the late Soviet era (late 1980s) to 59 years of age as of 2007.^{239,240}

²³⁴ Way to Russia. “Traveling Around Russia by Train.” c. 2002.

<http://www.waytorussia.net/Transport/Domestic/Train.html>

²³⁵ EuromostInfo. “Russia Country Profile – Business & Tourist Travel Information: Rail Travel in Russia.” c. 2004-2009.

http://www.euromost.info/russia_country_profile_national_information_economy_history.php

²³⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica. “Russia: Economy – Transportation and Telecommunications.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Russia> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

²³⁷ EuromostInfo. “Russia Country Profile – Business & Tourist Travel Information: Air Travel in Russia.” c. 2004-2009.

http://www.euromost.info/russia_country_profile_national_information_economy_history.php

²³⁸ Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. “Scholar Looks at Russia’s Health Care Woes.”

2008. http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=sf.item&news_id=452913

²³⁹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Russia.” July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

²⁴⁰ Johnson’s Russia List. Bigg, Claire. “Russia: A Robust State Fails to Resuscitate Health Care.” 1 March 2008. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-46-23.cfm>

Increasingly marginalized, rural Russians have also experienced a growing problem of alcoholism and drug addiction.

People who live in the countryside find it necessary to travel to the nearest towns to receive medical care in a clinic or hospital for treatment of serious illness or injury. Even then, there is a wide variance in the quality of treatment they may receive. Only in the large cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg do Russians have access to well-equipped hospitals with diagnostic equipment.

Exchange 43: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	zdyes yest pableezastee balneetsa?
Local:	Yes, over there.	daa, von taam

According to the Russian constitution, all citizens have the right to free medical care.²⁴¹ However, this right is in name only. In practice, patients must provide bribes and extra fees for doctors, most of whom earn barely a subsistence unless they charge outside their approved fee structure. Few rural patients, however, can afford these out-of-pocket costs. According to one nongovernmental medical organization, over half of Russia’s citizens are not receiving the medical help that they need.²⁴² Of these people, the majority live in remote, rural parts of the country.^{243,244} Increasingly marginalized, rural Russians are also experiencing growing rates of drug addiction and alcoholism, for which no treatment is available.²⁴⁵

Rural Education

As with most other services, the quality of education declined after the Soviet Union collapsed and state-sponsored services were no longer available. Educational



²⁴¹ Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. “Scholar Looks at Russia’s Health Care Woes.” 2008. http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=sf.item&news_id=452913

²⁴² Johnson’s Russia List. Bigg, Claire. “Russia: A Robust State Fails to Resuscitate Health Care.” 1 March 2008. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-46-23.cfm>

²⁴³ The Heartland Institute. “Russia’s Failed Universal Health Care Program Exposes the Perils of Single-Payer Systems.” June 2008. <http://www.heartland.org/policybot/results.html?articleid=23228>

²⁴⁴ Bio-Medicine. “Russian Health Care Mired by Corruption.” c. 2003-2008. <http://www.bio-medicine.org/medicine-news/Russian-Health-Care-Marred-by-Corruption-22420-2/>

²⁴⁵ University of Plymouth, UK. Alekseyev, Alexander, Prof. “Rural Areas of Russia: Post-Soviet Transformation and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century.” c. 2006. <http://www.ruralfuturesconference.org/2006/Alekseyev.pdf>

reforms have been made during the transition period to a free market economy. Even now, however, high quality job training and advanced education in Russia are almost entirely available only in the larger cities, where universities are located. Furthermore, in rural Russia, the number of schools and kindergartens for children has declined.²⁴⁶

Exchange 44: Is there a school nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a school nearby?	Ryaadam yest shkoolaa?
Local:	Yes.	daa

In the late and post-Soviet years, public funding was not available to repair school facilities. Consequently, schools began to rely on private and local funding sources. Overall, school buildings and equipment deteriorated, and textbooks and educational materials were in short supply.²⁴⁷

Exchange 45: Do your children go to school?

Soldier:	Do your children go to school?	vaashee dyetee Khodyaat f-shkoloo?
Local:	Yes.	daa

The structure of the educational process is the same in rural areas as in the cities. Formal schooling is free and compulsory for students at age 6, when they enter primary school for four years. They attend intermediate school from grades five through nine. After completing this level, students can attend vocational school, often with on-the-job training, or they can attend universities and pursue higher degrees.

Village Life

²⁴⁶ University of Plymouth, UK. Alekseyev, Alexander, Professor. "Rural Areas of Russia: Post-Soviet Transformation and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century." c. 2006.
<http://www.ruralfuturesconference.org/2006/Alekseyev.pdf>

²⁴⁷ MSN Encarta. "Education in Russia." c. 1993-2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_6/Russia.html

In the years between 1960 and 1995 (just after the Soviet Union dissolved), thousands of small Russian villages disappeared. This was true for approximately two third of villages with populations under 1,000, whose residents either moved away or died.²⁴⁸ Since then, Russians have continued to migrate to the cities, as there is little chance of acquiring jobs and almost no upward mobility in villages. Most rural dwellers in Russia are poor, with very few attaining the status of middle class. Even professionals, such as teachers, receive lower pay in villages than they would in the cities. These professional people often have to supplement their income with a second job or private garden plot to provide food for the household.



In the countryside, there are fewer cultural offerings for leisure activities, and rural people have less money to use for entertainment. Their lifestyle centers on home life, spending time working and socializing with family members and friends.

In many remote villages, there is very little activity and few businesses still operate. People live isolated lives, with tenuous connections to the outside world. The number of people who have chosen to stay in their declining villages rather than move to the cities is small. In most cases, they have only other villagers to rely on, and life is difficult for those who are old and sick.²⁴⁹

Checkpoints

After the Georgia-Russia conflict began in August 2008 (over the breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia), Russia established several military checkpoints in the region. The Russian military began disbanding its Georgian checkpoints on 5 October 2008, in advance of the deadline for Russian withdrawal from buffer zones around South Ossetia and Abkhazia.²⁵⁰ The first post-war talks between Russia and Georgia broke down on 15 October 2008, and Russian forces remain inside the two disputed regions.²⁵¹



Military checkpoints are in place along Russia's numerous borders with other countries. On the northwestern side, the border includes Norway (where the Norwegian government reportedly installed a radiation detector at Storskog in 2003), Latvia, and Estonia. Altogether, Russia has over 400 relatively modern border checkpoints, established in the

²⁴⁸ U.S. Library of Congress. A Country Study: Russia. "Rural Life." 1996.
<http://countrystudies.us/russia/48.htm>

²⁴⁹ BBC News. "Wealth Gap Leaves Rural Russia Behind." 29 May 2007.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6698797.stm>

²⁵⁰ The New York Times. "Russian Forces Begin to Shut Georgian Checkpoints." 5 October 2008.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/06/world/europe/06georgia.html>

²⁵¹ BBC News. "Georgia-Russia Talks Move Fails." 15 October 2008.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7670897.stm>

1990s. Lines at border crossings tend to be long, and inspections can last from a brief 20–30 minutes to a tedious several hours. Violating border crossing regulations in Russia is a criminal offense that can result in being sentenced to time in prison.^{252,253,254,255}

Land Mines

Thousands of land mines are located in the region of Chechnya (just north of Georgia), which has had a long history of conflict with Russia (and before that, the Soviet Union). After Chechnya declared its independence, Russia invaded in 1994, and periods of warfare have since followed. Both Chechen rebels and Russian forces have planted land mines regularly. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines reported that around 6,000 people here were either injured or killed by land mines in 2003, and the casualty rate is one of the highest in the world.²⁵⁶ Chechnya obtains land mines from the Russian military and also makes its own improvised explosive devices (IEDs). UNICEF has reported that as of April 2006, over 3,000 civilians had been victims of land mines since 1995, suffering either injury or death.²⁵⁷ The mines are heavily placed along roadways and railway lines, and in random fields.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Soviet TM-46 Anti-Personnel Mine

Land mines and unexploded ordnance are found in other areas as well. In Georgia, Soviet soldiers had lined their bases with land mines, and the Georgian military reclaimed many of them after the Soviets left. As part of its war with Afghanistan, Russia mined the Tajik-Afghan border in 2001.^{258,259}

Russia is one of several countries in the world that continue to produce land mines and refuse to sign the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. Under the treaty's terms, it is illegal to produce, stockpile, use, or transfer land mines. Other countries that continue to reject the Ottawa

²⁵² NTI. "Radiation Detector Installed on Russian-Norwegian Border." 9 December 2003. <http://www.nti.org/db/nisttraff/2003/20030840.htm>

²⁵³ Cross-Border Cooperation. "Latvia Upgrades Border Checkpoints with Russia." 22 May 2007. <http://soderkoping.org.ua/page14495.html>

²⁵⁴ Yahoo News. "Briton Held in Russia After Straying Over Border." 26 September 2008. http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080926/wl_uk_afp/estoniabritainrussiabordearresttourism_080926143906

²⁵⁵ UNECE. "Single Window Development and Implementation, Experience of the Russian Federation: Workshop on United Nations Electronic Documents for Single Window Facilities in Asia and the Pacific." 10-14 December 2007. http://www.unece.org/trade/workshop/unedocs-Bangkok_dec07/Session4antipov.pdf

²⁵⁶ CDI Russia Weekly. Mite, Valentinas. "Russia: Land Mines Kill, Injure More in Chechnya Than Anywhere Else." 2004. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/273-10.cfm>

²⁵⁷ Landmine Monitor. "Chechnya." 2006. <http://www.icbl.org/lm/2006/chechnya.html>

²⁵⁸ Landmine Monitor. "Russia." 2001. <http://www.icbl.org/lm/2001/russia/>

²⁵⁹ Landmine Monitor. "Georgia." 1999. <http://www.icbl.org/lm/1999/georgia>

Convention that would ban land mine usage include China, the United States, India, and Pakistan.^{260,261}

²⁶⁰ CDI Russia Weekly. Mite, Valentinas. "Russia: Land Mines Kill, Injure More in Chechnya Than Anywhere Else." 2004. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/273-10.cfm>

²⁶¹ Arms Control Association. "The Ottawa Convention: Signatories and States-Parties." June 2008. <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/ottawasigs>

Family Life

Introduction

Russia's demographic shift has adversely affected family life throughout the countryside. The population in general has declined by 700,000 or more people yearly, leading to depopulation of the eastern and northern rural areas.²⁶²

Overall, thousands of small villages have simply disappeared as the country urbanized, even though a few rural ethnic groups, such as Muslims, Chechens, and others who live in the North Caucasus have experienced rapid population growth.²⁶³ The depopulation of villages was especially intense between 1960 and 1995; only a small number of the country's villages with populations under 1,000 were still in existence by the mid 1990s. Of the villages that remained, over half had an aged population over 65 years of age.²⁶⁴ Adding to this, in the last ten years alone, migration and death have caused sweeping areas of the Russian countryside to become deserted.²⁶⁵ The shrinking population is in itself a sign of disruption to Russia's rural family structure, which was once based on communal family traditions. In the 19th century, a rural extended family could include children, their parents—including married brothers and their respective families—and all the grandparents.²⁶⁶ Now, since the Soviet communal farms have disappeared, young people have no option but to migrate to the cities in search of jobs. Consequently, the rural family is declining in size and has fewer support networks.^{267,268,269}



© Sonnyand Sandy
A Russian Family

²⁶² BBC News. Eke, Steven. "Russia Faces Demographic Disaster." 7 June 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5056672.stm>

²⁶³ BBC News. Eke, Steven. "Russia Faces Demographic Disaster." 7 June 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5056672.stm>

²⁶⁴ U.S. Library of Congress. "Chapter 3: Physical Environment and Population. Population: Demographic Conditions." July 1996. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

²⁶⁵ The World Bank. "Russian Demographic Crisis: A Threat to Country's Prosperity." 27 January 2006. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/EXTECAREGTOPEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20794074~menuPK:444614~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:444608,00.html>

²⁶⁶ Google Books. *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia* [pp. 16–17]. Vucinich, Wayne S., and John Shelton Curtiss. 1968. Santa Clara: Stanford University Press. http://books.google.com/books?id=LIVYJaLBDMYC&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=birth+ceremonies+in+Russia&source=web&ots=RMcOq4_EoZ&sig=sqgppq59guJ3a1NAnAL5tkei_pks&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=result#PPA17,M1

²⁶⁷ WashingtonPost.com. Dmitracova, Olesya. "Priest's Death Shows Russia's Rural Rot." 1 January 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/01/AR2007010100535.html>

²⁶⁸ NPR.org. Feifer, Gregory. "Rural Russia Left Barren by Economic Exodus." 6 April 2007. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9243522>

²⁶⁹ BBC World News. "Wealth Gap Leaves Rural Russia Behind." 31 May 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_6700000/newsid_6709800/6709851.stm?bw=nb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1

Exchange 46: Does your family live here?

Soldier:	Does your family live here?	zdyes zheevyot vaashaa syemyaa?
Local:	Yes.	daa

Family Structure

During the Soviet era, Russian family structure was in many ways different from its current form. At that time, rural couples tended to marry young and have children when they were in their teens or early 20s. The state invested in childcare, and young children were often cared for in kindergartens or by their grandmothers while both parents worked. Husbands and wives were often separated by working schedules that assigned them to different hours or locations. Their state-mandated schedules disrupted even their leisure time together, sometimes requiring separate vacations. Due to all these factors, including a high level of government assistance that helped people to live independently, the divorce rate was high. After the Soviet Union collapsed, the family structure changed:



“Money became a more decisive factor; grants and benefits for children were worth much less; kindergarten fees rose, and students could find a job by themselves, rather than go where the state sent them.”²⁷⁰

The average number of children born declined dramatically during the Soviet era. In 1920, for instance, statistically a woman was expected to bear an average of 7.5 children during her lifetime. By 1994, however, the birthrate average had dropped to 1.4, although this low figure did not necessarily apply to rural areas, where families traditionally were larger.^{271,272} Still, family size declined during this period even among the rural population.

Today in Russia, both rural and urban couples tend to marry later in life, and the birthrate remains low. In the cities, better housing is available for those with a secure income, and opportunities exist for families to spend their leisure time together. In the countryside,

²⁷⁰ OpenDemocracy. Dejevsky, Mary. “Russia: What Demographic Crisis?” 26 September 2006.

http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-institutions_government/russia_demography_3941.jsp

²⁷¹ Rand.org. Rand Issue Paper. DaVanzo, Julie, and David Adamson. “Russia’s Demographic ‘Crisis’: How Real Is It?” July 1997. http://www.rand.org/pubs/issue_papers/IP162/index2.html

²⁷² SpringerLink. Shoemaker, Susan. “The Status of Women in the Rural U.S.S.R.” 4 November 2004. <http://www.springerlink.com/content/p37106m122k30606/>

income is much lower. Not only jobs but also job training and medical services deteriorated or largely disappeared after the Soviet Union’s disintegration. Since so many young people have moved to the cities to acquire education and work, the rural family structure has become fragmented.²⁷³

Exchange 47: How many people live in this house?

Soldier:	How many people live in this house?	skolka chyeloovyek zheevyot v-etom domye?
Local:	Ten.	pyaat

The further elimination of entitlement programs in 2004–05 resulted in additional lowering of wages and benefits for Russia’s population.^{274,275} The subsidized social services, electricity, and public transport that Russians had once received were replaced by cash stipends that failed to cover the same level of services. Especially hard hit were people in villages, who have been left without access either to shopping or to transportation for travel to the cities.²⁷⁶ These changes, in turn, have impacted the social structure and the ability of rural families to survive.

Exchange 48: Is this your entire family?

Soldier:	Is this your entire family?	eta fsyaa vaashaa syemvyaa?
Local:	Yes.	daa

²⁷³ BBC World News. “Wealth Gap Leaves Rural Russia Behind.” 31 May 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_6700000/newsid_6709800/6709851.stm?bw=nb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1

²⁷⁴ The New York Times. Arvedlund, Erin E. “Russian Inflation Magnifies Sting of Welfare Changes.” 1 February 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/01/business/worldbusiness/01inflation.html?fta=y>

²⁷⁵ PBS.org. “Putin’s Russia.” 23 February 2005. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june05/putin_2-23.html

²⁷⁶ The New York Times. Chivers, C.J. “Cash vs. Benefits: Efficiency, or Assault on Russia’s Soul?” 18 June 2004. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C00EFDB1739F93BA25755C0A9629C8B63>

Status of Women, Children, and Elderly

Women

Women in the Russian countryside grow up within an authoritarian, male-led family structure. Traditionally, they have been viewed as the “great binding force” for their strong, central role in the family.²⁷⁷ In modern times, their status is lower than that of their urban counterparts, and they receive a lower level of institutional support for childcare.²⁷⁸ They are generally bound within the domestic sphere, responsible for housework and gardens, and caring for children, doing all of the cooking, sewing, and cleaning. In rural Russia, women have few opportunities to venture outside these boundaries. Within the Soviet Union, their role as mothers and as emotional caregivers to men was emphasized to the point that they were held almost entirely responsible for the family’s wellbeing.²⁷⁹



Exchange 49: Did you grow up here?

Soldier:	Did you grow up here?	vy vyRaslee zdyes?
Local:	Yes.	daa

Shortly after the Russian Federation came into being and industry began to privatize and restructure, social tensions and unemployment became widespread. The pressure that emerged from attempts to adapt socially led to a “resurgence of stereotyping of the role of women and to calls for their return to their ‘natural functions.’”²⁸⁰ Over time, women

²⁷⁷ Google Books. *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia* [pp. 17–18]. Vucinich, Wayne S., John Shelton Curtiss. 1968. Santa Clara: Stanford University Press.
http://books.google.com/books?id=LIVYJaLBDMYC&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=birth+ceremonies+in+Russia&source=web&ots=RMcOq4_EoZ&sig=sqgpq59guJ3a1NAnAL5tkei_pks&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=result#PPA17,M1

²⁷⁸ SpringerLink. Shoemaker, Susan. “The Status of Women in the Rural U.S.S.R.” 4 November 2004.
<http://www.springerlink.com/content/p37106m122k30606/>

²⁷⁹ Google Books. *Women in Russia and Ukraine* [pp. 242–43]. Marsh, Rosalind J. 1996. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
http://books.google.com/books?id=GXSsgcs953cC&pg=PA242&lpg=PA242&dq=alcoholism+in+rural+Russia&source=web&ots=qF1fKm7ZJY&sig=w7IciK_eduTYOnAR-9HYZJf0dd8&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=5&ct=result#PPA243,M1

²⁸⁰ University of Minnesota. “Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding Observations: Russian Federation, U.N. Doc. A/50/38, paras. 496-552.” 1995.
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/cedaw/cedaw-russianfederation.htm>

were increasingly excluded from the political and professional realms, and their domestic position within the family was reinforced.

Many urban Russian women do hold professional jobs outside the family, working in business, education, medicine, and other fields. But because jobs such as these require higher education, they are not within the reach of rural women, who have fewer opportunities to attend school beyond primary grades. Whether rural or urban, however, an employed woman retains her fundamental role as family caregiver.

Exchange 50: Are these people part of your family?

Soldier:	Are these people part of your family?	etee lyoodee vaashee Rodstvyeneek?
Local:	No.	nyet

Children

According to tradition, Russian children learn at an early age to help with household work. Daughters are taught to sew, cook, clean, and help care for babies. Sons learn to chop firewood, care for farm animals, and work in the fields. In times past, they often practiced carving wood items, to sell in nearby markets. If a school was located nearby, the children would attend when their parents did not need them to stay at home and help with household work.²⁸¹



© bobz / Flickr
Russian children outside the Kremlin

Children in modern Russia have been affected by the pervasive rural poverty that now exists. Frequently they live in families headed by women, who struggle to support their children and themselves. The children have little access to books, toys, and other such objects, and their homes may lack heat and running water. Funding for education has so declined that rural children have little opportunity for schooling, although they still attend when possible. Concerning health prospects, the infant, maternal, and child mortality

²⁸¹ Google Books. *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*. [p. 23] Vucinich, Wayne S., John Shelton Curtiss. 1968. Santa Clara: Stanford University Press.
http://books.google.com/books?id=LIVYJaLBDMYC&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=birth+ceremonies+in+Russia&source=web&ots=RMcOq4_EoZ&sig=sqgpq59guJ3a1NAnAL5tkei_pks&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=result#PPA17,M1

rates in Russia are among Eastern Europe’s highest.²⁸² Because of the breakdown of a social safety net, Russian children are vulnerable to malnutrition, disease, HIV/AIDS, and drug or alcohol addiction. They are also subject to the psychological stress of living on the streets or in institutions and of being displaced as a result of war, conflict, or domestic violence.^{283,284,285}

Exchange 51: Are these your children?

Soldier:	Are these your children?	eta vaashee dyetee?
Local:	Yes.	daa

In both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, rural mothers typically worked in the fields, leaving their children at home. Mothers breast-fed their babies in early morning and then in the evening after they came home from work. During the day, babies often had minimal nutrition, and children frequently suffered from severe diarrhea and other childhood illnesses.²⁸⁶ Some villages were so remote that parents could access medical care only by making long trips to other towns. Often these trips left other young siblings behind, who were then vulnerable to accidents or dietary neglect. The injury rate was also high, for when young children stayed home unattended, they could easily be injured in a number of ways. Problems resulted from accidents with livestock, accidental burnings, falling out of hanging cribs, and unsupervised play with other children, as well as from domestic violence.^{287, 288}

Elderly

²⁸² UNICEF. “Russian Federation: Issues Facing Children in Russia.” c. 2003-2008. http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/russia_background.html

²⁸³ UNICEF. Carel de Rooy. “Children in the Russian Federation.” 16 November 2004. <http://www.unicef.org/media/files/BackgroundRussFedNov.pdf>

²⁸⁴ UNICEF. “Situation Analysis of Children in the Russian Federation 2007.” [pp. 70-78.] 2007. http://www.unicef.org/russia/ru_en_situation-analysis_170907.pdf

²⁸⁵ BBC World News. Rodgers, James. “Putin Boom Passes Rural Russia By.” 29 February 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7269431.stm>

²⁸⁶ Women had greater access to health care for their children during the era of the Soviet Union.

²⁸⁷ Suite101.com. Kubilius, Kerry. “Common Dangers to Children in Rural Russia.” 27 July 2008. http://eeuropeanhistory.suite101.com/article.cfm/common_dangers_to_children_in_rural_russia

²⁸⁸ Suite101.com. Kubilius, Kerry. “Infant Care in Peasant Russia.” 18 July 2008. http://russian-ukrainian-belarus-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/infant_care_in_peasant_russia

The elderly in Russia have traditionally occupied an important position within the extended, interdependent rural household. Charged with caring for children and helping with household chores, grandparents were appreciated for contributing to the family's needs and sharing family life. They often read to children or told stories to them, thus passing along tradition.²⁸⁹ In the last few years, however, the role of grandparents has declined as large numbers of young people have left the countryside. Many elderly people in rural Russia have been left on their own, living alone without access to transportation or health care. They may have to walk long distances to obtain supplies or medications from the nearest town. Some may have a small pension, and they supplement their diet with food they grow in their own gardens. Many are in ill health or have succumbed to alcoholism, which is rampant among Russia's rural population, including the elderly.^{290,291,292}



© Dasha Gaian
A Group of Elderly Russian Women

Exchange 52: Do you have any brothers?

Soldier:	Do you have any brothers?	oo vaas yest bRaatyaa?
Local:	Yes.	daa

Because the life expectancy of men in Russia is lower than that for women, many villages consist almost entirely of elderly women. The rate of alcoholism is much lower among women. This one factor is believed to contribute significantly to women's longer lifespan; alcoholism is believed responsible for a high number of male deaths in Russia. In some villages, a social worker may periodically visit to offer basic assistance to the women, and family members from out of town may visit occasionally.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ Google books. *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*. [pp. 16-17]. Vucinich, Wayne S., and John Shelton Curtiss. 1968. Santa Clara: Stanford University Press.
http://books.google.com/books?id=LIVYJaLBDMYC&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=birth+ceremonies+in+Russia&source=web&ots=RMcOq4_EoZ&sig=sqgpq59guJ3a1NAnAL5tkei_pks&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=result#PPA17,M1

²⁹⁰ NPR.org. Feifer, Gregory. "Rural Russia Left Barren by Economic Exodus." 6 April 2007.
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9243522>

²⁹¹ Derkeiler.com. "Alcohol Destroying Rural Russia." 17 December 2005.
<http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.russian/2005-12/msg00362.html>

²⁹² BBC World News. "Concern for Russia's Shrinking Population." 16 November 2005.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4440000/newsid_4441500/4441502.stm?bw=nb&mp=wm&news=1&ms3=6&ms_javascript=true&bbcws=2

²⁹³ Guardian.co.uk. "No Country for Old Men." 11 February 2008.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/11/russia>

Marriage, Divorce, and Birth

Marriage

Marriage, arranged by the couple, most often takes place in a church ceremony following a secular civil wedding service.²⁹⁴ After marrying, couples may live with their parents for a period of time. This is because young people's finances may be low, and affordable housing can be difficult to find.



Exchange 53: Are you married?

Soldier:	Are you married?	vy zhyenaaty?
Local:	No.	nyet

Married couples in rural Russia tend to have more children compared to those in urban areas. It is likely that both husband and wife will be employed, but the woman remains responsible for domestic work and childcare. If grandparents live in the home as part of an extended family, they help to care for the young children and assist the parents with errands such as shopping and cooking.²⁹⁵

Exchange 54: Is this your wife?

Soldier:	Is this your wife?	eta vaashaa zhyenaa?
Local:	Yes.	daa

Divorce

In the decade before the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's divorce rate was exceeded only by that of the United States. The high divorce rate in Russia was attributed to crowded

²⁹⁴ Ezine Articles. "Russian Marriage Traditions." c. 2008. <http://ezinearticles.com/?Russian-Marriage-Traditions&id=534615>

²⁹⁵ MSN Encarta. "Customs of Russia: Marriage and Family." Finch, Peter. 20 April 2007. http://encarta.msn.com/sidebar_631522251/Customs_of_Russia.html

housing conditions, infidelity, drinking and its associated problems, and lack of privacy.²⁹⁶ Also, the ease of getting a divorce was a likely factor, one which also led to maternal rights for custody of children.²⁹⁷ Since independence, even though the family remains an important social institution, the divorce rate in Russia has risen.²⁹⁸

When a divorce is granted, whichever parent is no longer living in the household will be required to pay child support. A divorced person is also entitled to claim spousal support if she is pregnant, or raising a young child (under three years of age), or if she is disabled or close to retirement.²⁹⁹ When agreement cannot be reached over which parent a child will live with, child custody is usually granted to the mother.³⁰⁰



If a woman obtains a divorce in rural Russia, it is often not possible for her to move into a separate residence and live on her own. Lacking both income and mobility, a woman may be forced to remain in the same household with an ex-husband. These women can benefit from being able to have a garden and grow much of their own food under these circumstances. However, the lack of jobs, medical services, mobility, and education is a detriment to any possibility of independence for rural women. Even divorced, they are not likely under these conditions to be able to escape from any domestic violence, widespread in rural families and associated with the high rate of alcoholism.^{301,302}

Childbirth

It is customary for newlyweds to look forward to the birth of a child, since life in rural Russia remains family-centered. In poor villages and households, children represent a source of assistance. They can help the family with farm work, housework, and caring for

²⁹⁶ U.S. Library of Congress. Country Studies. "Russia: The Family." No date. <http://www.country-studies.com/russia/the-family.html>

²⁹⁷ Google Books, *Human Rights in Russia: A Darker Side of Reform*. [p. 78]. Weiler, Jonathan Daniel. 2004. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. http://books.google.com/books?id=dHwfh2kl79UC&pg=PA78&lpg=PA78&dq=ease+of+divorce+in+Russia&source=web&ots=j6gwOVSVLm&sig=Cb6CNNUQoHTRQKL3m40Rd451P4s&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=10&ct=result

²⁹⁸ MSN Encarta. "Russia: Social Issues." c. 1993-2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_7/Russia.html

²⁹⁹ Divorce in Russia. Kalaschnikova, Catherine. "Alimony and Child Support." c. 2006.

<http://www.divorceinrussia.com/alimony>

³⁰⁰ Divorce in Russia. Kalaschnikova, Catherine. "Child Custody in Russia." c. 2006.

<http://www.divorceinrussia.com/custody>

³⁰¹ "Gender Issues in Transition: Urban and Rural Russia." Kalabikhina, Irina. 2005.

<http://iussp2005.princeton.edu/download.aspx?submissionId=51546>

³⁰² WashingtonPost.com. Dmitracova, Olesya. "Priest's Death Shows Russia's Rural Rot." 1 January 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/01/AR2007010100535.html>

younger brothers and sisters. Children are also seen as part of a social security network which increases the odds that the parents will be cared for in their old age.

In 19th century Russia, babies were customarily delivered by village midwives, a tradition that has endured.^{303,304} If a birth was difficult, the midwives sometimes resorted to superstitions, such as the “magic of untying knots, unlocking locks... symbolic of the unbinding of vital forces.”³⁰⁵ The child would be baptized three days after birth, with the godparents playing an active role in the ceremony. Family and friends gathered at the baptism, sharing special foods afterwards. After the third day, the new mother typically went back to work in the fields.³⁰⁶

In 1951, the French doctor Fernand Lamaze began to popularize a birthing method based on his observations of childbirth in Russia. What is now known as the Lamaze method has its roots in Dr. Lamaze’s studies of Russian women who practiced certain relaxation methods to reduce pain in childbirth.³⁰⁷

Today, the services of midwives are still used for home birth in Russia and for a variety of reasons. Women may not have access to a hospital, or they may not trust the services that hospitals offer. In rural areas, it is likely that women cannot afford the additional expense for quality maternity care. Even though hospitals are required by law to provide free services for childbirth, many women fear maltreatment in the maternity wards of hospitals.³⁰⁸



© Radiospike / Flickr
Mother and Newborn Child

³⁰³ Google Books. *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*. [p. 22.]. Vucinich, Wayne S., John Shelton Curtiss. 1968. Santa Clara: Stanford University Press.
http://books.google.com/books?id=LIVYJaLBDMYC&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=birth+ceremonies+in+Russia&source=web&ots=RMcOq4_EoZ&sig=sqppq59guJ3a1NAnAL5tkei_pks&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=result#PPA17,M1

³⁰⁴ BNET. International Midwifery. Beresford, Greta. “Russian Midwives: ‘They Have Strength and Determination and They Share a Vision.’ Greta Beresford Writes About the Past and Present of the Inter-Regional League of Midwives of Russia, and Her Own Involvement in Their Continued Endeavors.” 2004.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0KTL/is_2_17/ai_n17207075

³⁰⁵ Google Books. *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*. [p. 22.]. Vucinich, Wayne S., John Shelton Curtiss. 1968. Santa Clara: Stanford University Press.
http://books.google.com/books?id=LIVYJaLBDMYC&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=birth+ceremonies+in+Russia&source=web&ots=RMcOq4_EoZ&sig=sqppq59guJ3a1NAnAL5tkei_pks&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=result#PPA17,M1

³⁰⁶ Suite101.com. Kubilius, Kerry. “Childbirth in Peasant Russia: Rural Mothers Often Gave Birth Without Professional Medicine.” 18 July 2008. http://russian-ukrainian-belarus-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/childbirth_in_peasant_russia

³⁰⁷ Google Books. *Pushed: The Painful Truth About Childbirth and Modern Maternity Care*. [p. 169]. Block, Jennifer. 2007. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Lifelong.
http://books.google.com/books?id=acqLU9vCYdYC&pg=PA169&lpg=PA169&dq=childbirth+in+Russia&source=web&ots=PnS063BUrm&sig=t1n4dVPqNzILc5mmplAMVrvoL9U&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=6&ct=result

³⁰⁸ Johnson’s Russia List. Babich, Dmitry, and Alena Dushka. “Cash on Delivery.” 24 August 2006.
<http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2006-192-17.cfm>

Naming Conventions³⁰⁹

Russian names consist of three parts. First is the assigned name, otherwise known as the first name. The middle name is more complex. It consists of a name taken from the father's first name, with an addition to designate gender. If the named child is male, "vich" or "ovich" is added to complete the name (as in the name "Ivanovich" for the son of Ivan). If the named child is female, "avna" or "ovna" is added to complete the name (as in the name "Ivanovna" for the daughter of Ivan). Finally, the person's third name, the last name, represents the surname, or the family name.

In formal situations, acquaintances or business associates should address Russians by using all three names. Friends at more of a distance may also include the middle name. First names are used by family members and close friends.

Family Celebrations

Families get together to celebrate on birthdays, marriages, and other special events. Their gatherings, which include extended family and friends, are accompanied by the sharing of specially prepared foods for the occasion.

On birthdays, a child may receive a gift from his or her teacher at school and small, homemade gifts from other students. At home, children celebrate with a birthday pie, rather than a cake. The child is served first, then the guests.³¹⁰



© alexpp / Flickr
Russians having fun at dinner

³⁰⁹ Kwintessential Cross Cultural Solutions. "Russia – Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette." No date. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/russia-country-profile.html>

³¹⁰ AustralianMedia.com. BirthdayCelebrations.net. "Traditions From Around the World: Birthday Celebrations from Russia." c. 2000-2008. <http://www.birthdaycelebrations.net/russianbirthdays.htm>