### Russia

1) With the area of 6,592, 800 square miles (17,075,300 sq km), Russia is the world’s largest country, almost twice the size of either China or the United States. It covers more than one-eighth of the Earth’s inhabited land area.

Russia has an extensive coastline of over 37,000km (22,991mi). Russia has the longest border of any country on the Earth. In the west it borders on Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland through the Kaliningrad Region. In the south our country borders on Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China and North Korea.

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

Russia is a country of thick forests and wide valleys, of high mountains and bare deserts. Russian’s main regions are the Russian (or the East European) Plain, the Ural Mountains, the West Siberian Plain, the Central Siberian Plateau, and the Far East. The Russian Plain takes the European part of Russia. The Urals form the eastern boundary of it. It is held that the Urals separate Europe from Asia. The Urals stretch for about 2,100km from north to south. The highest peak, Mount Narodnaya, reaches 1,895m. The most important rivers in the European part of Russia are the Don and Volga. The Volga is the most famous, because it is the longest river in Europe. The Volga River, which flows to the Caspian Sea, is one of great historic, economic, and cultural importance to Russia. It has become the cradle of such ancient Russian cities as Vladimir, Tver, Yaroslavl, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod. In Western Siberia the greatest rivers are the Ob and Yenisey. They flow along the most extensive lowland in the world. The largest lakes are Ladoga and Baikal. Baikal is the deepest lake in the world and its water is the purest on the Earth. It contains a fifth of the world’s fresh water supplies, more than all five of the Great Lakes of North America combined. Truly unique on the Earth, Baikal is home to more than 1,700 species of plants and animals, two thirds of which can be found nowhere else in the world.

2) Russia’s population density is 8.4 people per square kilometre (22 per square mile), making it one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world. Russia ranks eighth in the world in the size of its population. The current population is about 143 million people. The great majority of the population of Russia is Russians. Russia is inhabited by sixty other nationalities, and about twenty-five of these minorities have their own autonomous republics within the Russian Federation. The population in Russia is unequally distributed. The bulk of the people live in the European part of the country. Siberia is insufficiently populated, though its economic development was rapid in the second half of the 20th century. The northern part of Russia is practically uninhabitable because of the length and severity of its winter.

3) There are different types of climate on the territory of Russia. Great ranges of temperature are typical. It is very cold in the north even in summer. The central part of the country has mild climate: winters are cold, springs and autumns are warm or cool, and summers are hot and warm. In the south the temperature is usually above zero all the year round, even in winter. Summer

is really hot. The climate there is very favourable. The climate of Siberia is continental: summers are hot and dry, sometimes humid, winters are very cold.

4) Different climatic regimes are mirrored in Russian’s flora. A treeless tundra with mosses and grasses extends along the entire Arctic coast. In the south it gives the way to taiga. Southwards taiga is replaced by a zone of mixed forest which in the south transfers into mixed forest-steppe and finally into steppe.

Russia has the world’s largest forest reserves, which supply timber, pulp and paper, and raw materials for woodworking industries.

Because of the severity of the Russian environment, less than one sixth of the land is used as farmland for growing wheat, barley, rye, oats, rice, buckwheat and doing farming.

5) Russia has the richest deposits of mineral resources in the world. The development of the Russian economy is determined by its natural resources. It is one of the world’s biggest producers of coal, crude oil, and natural gas, as well as of iron ore, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, aluminum, tin, etc. Extensive pipeline systems link producing districts to all parts of Russia and across the border to many European countries. Much of the country’s fuel is converted to electricity, but about a third of the electricity is produced by hydroelectric plants. The largest of these are on the Volga, Kama, Ob, Yenisey and Angara rivers. Russia’s heavy industries are well-developed. They produce much of the nation’s steel and most of its heavy machinery. Russia’s chemical industry is also well-developed.