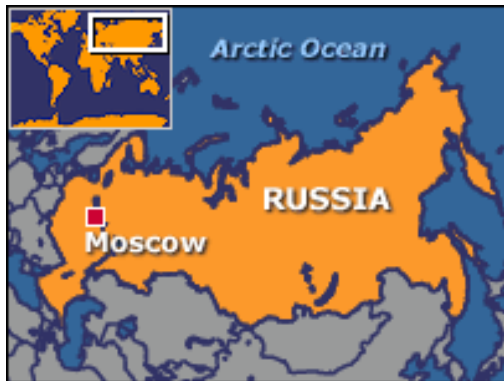


Russia



Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has been striving to overcome the legacy of Communism. Creating a democratic political system and a market economy to replace the bureaucracy and centralism of the past has proved an elusive goal. The country impresses with its diversity and size. Spanning 10 time zones, this Eurasian land mass covers over 17m sq kms. Its climate ranges from the Arctic north to the generally temperate south.

RUSSIA FACTS

Population: 143.2 million (UN, 2003)

Capital: Moscow

Major language: Russian

Major religions: Christianity, Islam

Life expectancy: 61 years (men), 73 years (women) (UN)

Monetary unit: 1 rouble = 100 kopecks

Main exports: Oil and oil products, natural gas, wood and wood products, metals, chemicals, weapons and military equipment

Average annual income: US \$1,750 (World Bank, 2001)

Internet domain: .ru

International dialing code: +7

Russia has a rich literary tradition stretching from Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoyevskiy in Tsarist times to Solzhenitsyn in the Soviet era. Composers from Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov to Prokofiev and Shostakovich have left a lasting musical legacy.



Flag Description: three equal horizontal bands of white (top), blue, and red. To listen to the Russian national anthem, go to

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1102275.stm