



# Russia

## Welcome

Russians will expect a very firm handshake and direct eye contact when you greet them. You may see Russian men hugging or slapping each other on the back and women exchanging kisses – but this happens, in the main, between friends and family. Try to be as formal and polite as possible and give as much individual attention to Russian visitors as you can.

**“Welcome!”**  
(Dobraw pazhalovat)  
Добро пожаловать!

You should use their title and surname until you are invited to use their first name, which may only be once they get to know and trust you. Russians usually have three names – their first name, a name derived from their father’s name and finally their surname, so don’t be surprised when they use all three. Women’s surnames usually end with an ‘-a’.

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## The Language

More English is being taught in schools now, but this is a relatively recent development. Don’t expect many older people to have a high level of English – try to speak slowly and be patient.

**Hello**  
(Privyet)  
Привет

**Goodbye**  
(Dosvidanya)  
До свиданья

**Please**  
(Pazhalooista)  
Пожалуйста

**Thank you**  
(Spasyibaw)  
Спасибо

Russian is spoken as a first language by about 80% of the Russian population as well as many people who live in parts of the former Soviet Union or neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe. It is written in the Cyrillic alphabet, as in the phrases shown here.

Russia officially recognises about 100 regional languages.

### Did you know?

There are more graduates of higher education in Russia than anywhere else in Europe. Over 1.4 million Russians have earned at least one degree.



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## The Culture

Russians take great pride in their country and have strong national values. Their achievements as a global superpower are a source of pride. They were the first country to send someone into space and they have given the world some of its best chess players, such as Boris Spassky and Gary Kasparov.

They often place a high value on the arts and some of the world's finest museums can be found in Russia, such as the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg.

### Did you know?

In St Petersburg alone, there are 221 museums, 2,000 libraries, over 80 theatres, 45 galleries and 62 cinemas.

Russians view the family as very important and will turn to them when making important decisions. Families are often small and live together in small city apartments, so will particularly appreciate spacious accommodation while in the UK.

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## Customer Service Advice

Russians visiting the UK expect high levels of service. An increasingly large number of Russian visitors have high disposable incomes that give them access to luxurious services and surroundings.

Visitors will appreciate a calm, formal and polite welcome with straightforward answers to their questions, rather than small talk. Remember that it is not their custom to automatically smile at strangers – though they will smile when they get to know you better.

- **DO** remember that they use a different alphabet and may take time or need assistance in reading notices or brochures.
- **DO** ensure that the establishment is clean and well organised.
- **DO** try not to set too many rules and explain those that are necessary. You may need to explain *why* the smoking restrictions are important, for example.
- **DO** address the whole group rather than an individual.
- **DO** provide an interpreter for a group of older visitors as their English may be limited.



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## A Land of Contrasts

Russia is by far the largest country in the world, extending over 11 time zones. It's almost as big as the USA and China combined. Russia's economy is booming, with strong growth in science and computer technology, as well as a wealth of natural resources.

Nearly 80% of the population are ethnic Russians. There are another 160 ethnic groups living throughout the country, making it one of the most diverse nations in the world. Currently, there are about 200,000 Russians living in the UK.

### Key Facts

- **Population** – approx 142,000,000
- **Capital City** – Moscow
- **Language** – Russian, c. 100 regional languages
- **Religions** – Russian Orthodox 63%, Muslim 6%, others including Buddhism and Judaism <1% each
- **Currency** – Rouble
- **Exchange Rate** – 50 roubles = £1.00
- **Dialling Code** – +7
- **Time Difference** – GMT+3 (Moscow), GMT +2 to +12 countrywide



## Where to go next

For more information about languages, culture and welcoming international visitors, go to:

[www.talkingtotheworld.co.uk/welcoming](http://www.talkingtotheworld.co.uk/welcoming).

### Remember!

These are general guidelines on how people from different cultures *might* act and the customer service they *might* expect. These guidelines can't predict every individual's behaviour in every situation.

*'Welcoming the World' is an initiative which aims to help people in frontline roles to give great customer service to international visitors. We have endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this country profile, which is one of a wider series. However, views or opinions presented by the contributing author do not necessarily represent those of the programme co-ordinator.*