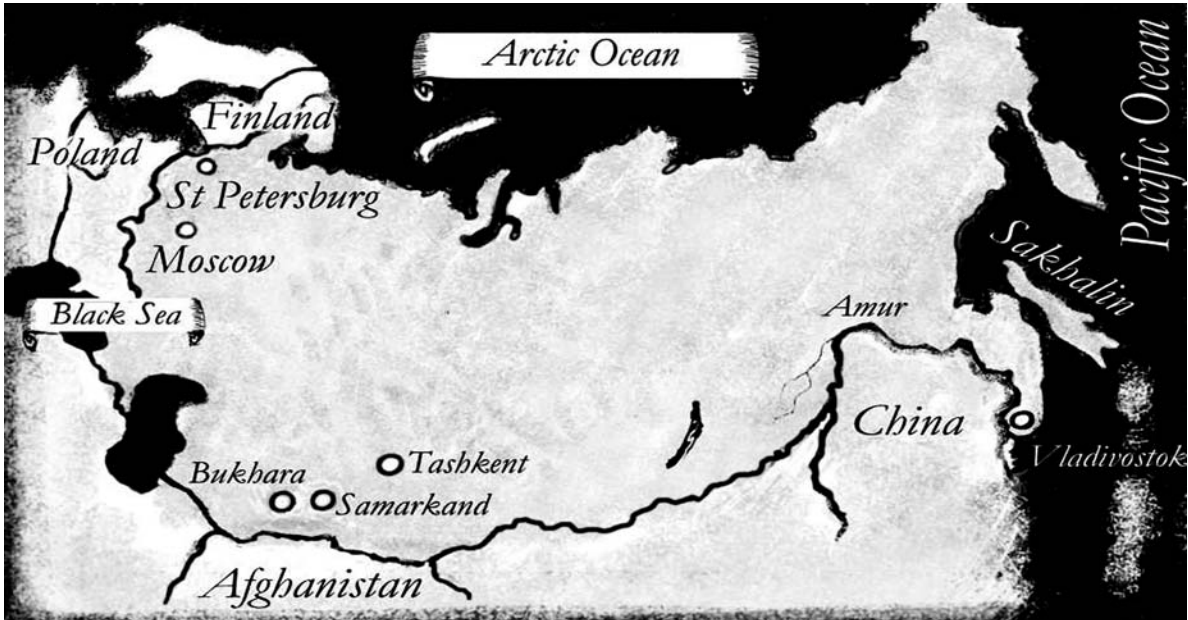


## Unit 1

## Russian geography and exploration

Read the two texts and answer the questions on page 6.



## Russian expansion in the 19th century

The territory of the Russian Empire reached its greatest extent in the 1880s, despite the sale of Alaska to the USA in 1867. It included Poland and Finland in the west and Sakhalin in the east. It stretched from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Black Sea in the south.

During the nineteenth century, Russia was searching for a warm-water port that would give its navy access to the sea all year round. Slowly, but steadily the Empire was advancing south to India and east to the Pacific Ocean. In 1850 a Russian settlement was established on the estuary of the Amur River, and the northern half of the island of Sakhalin was occupied in 1855 and the southern half became Russian twenty years later. Three years later, the entire Amur region and the coast southwards from there were annexed from the Chinese. This single act increased the territory of the Russian Empire by 600,000 square kilometres. The city of Vladivostok was founded in 1860 and developed as Russia's main port on the Pacific. In central Asia the empire extended almost to the frontiers of Afghanistan. Later that decade,

cities such as Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarkand, became Russian administrative centres after they were captured during military expeditions. Russian settlers soon followed and the empire continued to expand. By the end of the nineteenth century the Russian Empire had conquered the greater part of central Asia in a series of wars in which fewer than 1000 Russian soldiers lost their lives.

This large territory needed a system of communications in order to hold it together. Telegraph lines between east and west were unreliable, and news travelled slowly. Communications improved with the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Plans for the railway were drawn up in 1891 by Czar Alexander III. The project was rushed to completion with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War and the 10,000 kilometre line was finished in 1905. This linked Vladivostok in the east with Moscow and St Petersburg in the west. Towns and cities grew along the railway and were now connected by improved telegraph and telephone lines, as well as by the railway itself.



## Przhevalsky's expeditions

*Ever since I was a child, I have always wanted to explore far away lands. I have made four expeditions to east and central Asia and have spent eleven years of my life travelling. So, here is the story of my travels and the things I have seen.*

*On my first expedition, in 1869, I travelled from Irkutsk to central Siberia. I saw Lake Baikal, visited Urga (we call it Ulaan Bataar, nowadays), crossed Mongolia and the Gobi and into China. I arrived at a place near Beijing in 1873 before returning home. I returned to China in 1876, crossing the Tien Shen mountains this time. On my third expedition, I hoped to reach Tibet. In fact, I came within 270 km of Lhasa, the capital, but to my great disappointment foreigners were forbidden to enter the country. My fourth trip began from Urga, in 1883. Once again, I crossed the Gobi and then to Ysyk-Kul, one of the largest mountain lakes in the world.*

*In all my expeditions I covered a distance of 31,500 kilometres. Quite a distance when you think that the equator - the circumference of the earth - is a little over 40,000 kilometres. I tried three times to enter Tibet, but always without success. Still, I was able to explore the mountain regions between there and Mongolia.*

*My expeditions were not only about travelling. I made maps of the places I visited, brought back new plants and discovered animals we had not seen before. It is the animals that please me most. I discovered the wild camel, but it is the horse that made me famous. It is called Przhevalsky's Horse now and I first saw it near the Altai Mountains. The horse is small, about the size of a pony. Its coat is a red colour, but its mane and tail are dark. It has a white nose, a long face and a very strong lower jaw.*

*I hope that my expeditions have added to our knowledge of the geography of Asia. That alone is a great honour. It is amazing that people are talking about naming a lake, a mountain, a glacier, animals and plants, even a city after me.*



### Pronunciation guide

Urga /'ɜ:gə/

Ulaan Bataar /'ʊ,læn bə'tɑ:/

Beijing /beɪ'tʃɪŋ/

Tien Shen /tʃen 'ʃen/

Lhasa /'lɑ:sə/

## Comprehension

### 1 Read the first text on page 4 again and choose the best ending for each sentence.

- 1 The Russian Empire was at its largest in the 1880s . . .
  - A now that Alaska was part of the USA.
  - B because it stretched from the Arctic to the Black Sea.
  - C even though Alaska was part of the USA.
  - D including Finland and Sakhalin.
- 2 The Empire expanded eastwards . . .
  - A and southwards at the same time.
  - B just before it expanded southwards.
  - C just after it expanded southwards.
  - D by 600,000 square kilometres.
- 3 The wars in central Asia . . .
  - A killed 1000 people.
  - B cost many soldiers their lives.
  - C conquered the greater part of Asia.
  - D cost less than 1000 Russian soldiers' lives.
- 4 To hold the empire together, it needed . . .
  - A an improved communications system.
  - B better telegraph lines.
  - C a trans-continental railway line.
  - D Czar Alexander III's plans.
- 5 The railway was finished quickly . . .
  - A because of the war with Japan.
  - B because it was rushed.
  - C to link Moscow with Vladivostock.
  - D and linked east to west.

### 2 Read the second text on page 5 again and choose the best title for each paragraph.

#### Paragraph 1

- A The story of my life
- B Four expeditions
- C My travels and discoveries
- D East and central Asia

#### Paragraph 3

- A Exploring the mountains
- B Three times to Tibet
- C How far I travelled
- D The equator

#### Paragraph 5

- A The geography of Asia
- B My honours
- C My name
- D A Great Honour

#### Paragraph 2

- A Places I have visited
- B My expeditions
- C My first expedition
- D Across the Gobi to China

#### Paragraph 4

- A Przevalsky's Horse
- B My discoveries
- C New animals
- D A small horse

## Vocabulary

### Complete the sentences using these words from both texts.

discovered	travelled	increased	expanded	settlements
extended	territory	connect	expeditions	explored

- 1 Christopher Columbus . . . America in 1492.
- 2 He made several . . . . . to the New World.
- 3 The first . . . . . were on the east coast.
- 4 People . . . . . the new land along the rivers.
- 5 They . . . . . by small boat or on foot.
- 6 The . . . . . of the USA reached from the coast to the Mississippi by 1850.
- 7 It . . . . . westwards after the Civil War.
- 8 The population . . . . . dramatically in the 19th century.
- 9 Eventually it . . . . . from the Atlantic to the Pacific.
- 10 Roads and planes . . . . . the major cities.

## Speaking

Discuss these questions with your partner.

- Where did you go for your last holiday?
- What did you do there?
- What did you like about it?

### SPEAKING TIPS

- Always take an active part in the conversation.
- Come up with ideas.
- Find out your friend's opinions and take them into account.
- Be polite.

### TASK

You are going on holiday with a friend. Discuss the places you like going to on your holidays. Then decide on ONE place to go to. Choose from these places:

- The mountains
- The beach
- A city
- The forest

Remember to:

- discuss all the places.
- say what you like and dislike about each place.
- make suggestions and invite your friend to make suggestions.
- give good reasons for your choices.
- come to an agreement.

*Greeting: Dear + Name: friendly and informal*

*Paragraph 1:*

*Why are you writing? What is the letter about? What is your opinion of the place?*

*Paragraph 2:*

*What can you see, hear, smell? Describe the best/worst thing you can see. Say what you think about it.*

*Paragraph 3:*

*How do you spend the morning, afternoon, evening? What is the most/least interesting thing you have seen or done? Would you like to come home, or stay there?*

*Paragraph 4:*

*Closing remark. Will you write again? Do you want your friend to write back?*

*Ending:*

*Friendly and informal.*

## Writing

### A PERSONAL LETTER

You are away from home. First decide where, why and for how long. Then write a letter to a friend telling him/her what the place looks like and what there is to do and see.

- 1 Think about a place you have visited. Note down five words about the place. Use them in your letter.
- 2 Now write your letter. Use these notes to help you.

Write 100–140 words.