

## Louisiana PASS



### Russia's Sleeping Giant

The Tatar name Siberia means "Sleeping Land," and you could imagine this vast land mass that makes up 75% of Russia, as hibernating in endless winter. Temperatures in the subarctic climate of Siberia range from cold to colder—temperatures in eastern Siberia are the coldest of the northern hemisphere, and can drop to -71° Celsius. Nearly two-thirds of Siberia is blanketed by frost all year round.

Because of its reputation as a land for exiled political prisoners and criminals, its immense area, and its freezing climate, Siberia might be mistaken for a barren wasteland—a perception that is far from the truth. In fact, Siberia has many beautiful wilderness areas, including the region of Kamchatka.

Kamchatka was closed to Westerners until a decade ago because of its usefulness to the Soviet military and its close proximity to the United States. Even now, only 400,000 people live in Kamchatka, and all of them must be cleared by the military. Most of the area is populated only by animals, as three-quarters of the people in Kamchatka live in the capital of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. Grizzly bears roam freely, and millions of salmon swim up the rivers and streams in the summer. From the 1700s until the 1930s, Kamchatka was a hunter's paradise. Hunters frequently traveled to Kamchatka to hunt sable, fur seals, foxes, sea otters, and bears. The demand for fur was so great that the wildlife became endangered. Fortunately, a natural conservation act was passed in 1934, and the Kronotsky Nature Reserve was established.

For more information about Siberia, click on one of these links:

[Kamchatka: Siberia's Forbidden Wilderness](#)

[The CIA World Factbook: Russia](#)

To read more about Lake Baikal and for pictures of Lake Baikal in Siberia, click on this link:

[Facts about Baikal](#)

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