

Culture—The Internet

Though Internet use became widespread in Western countries starting in 1993 when the Mosaic web browser appeared, the boom in Russia and other Eastern European countries came about 10 years later because few people had computers, most of the World Wide Web was still in English, and computers often mangled the Cyrillic alphabet.

See Also

- [Vocabulary 15—Computers](#)

Internet Service Providers

High-speed service may cost as little as \$6 a month. A public IP address may cost extra. Rather than using existing cable TV or telephone lines, providers often wire a town using Ethernet over fiber optic cables strung between buildings.

Mobile Internet

Mobile Internet also costs around \$6 a month. Smartphone ownership is widespread and for some this their primary way to use the Internet.

E-Mail

Russians are not big users of e-mail. Many do not remember their e-mail addresses or what program they need to open to read it. If you offer to send someone a photo and he seems confused or hesitant when you ask for his e-mail address, that is probably why. Consider offering to use an instant messaging app instead.

Instant Messaging

Internet messaging programs like Whatsapp, Viber, Telegram, and Signal are very popular. (Telegram is no longer blocked in Russia.) In Russian they are called “мессенджеры”. You can use them to send text messages and photos as well as make voice and video calls.

Messaging apps are not just for chatting with friends. People use them instead of e-mail to communicate with businesses and government officials. Elderly people use them to order groceries.

Social Networking

People in Eastern Europe use Western social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube extensively. Russian social networks such as Одноклассники (ok.ru) and Вконтакте (vk.com) are also popular.

The users of Russian social networks are sometimes prosecuted for posting “extremist material” or even just having such material among their private files. How the police learn about “extremist” private files is unclear.

Online Shopping

Quite a number of online retailers are active in Russia and neighboring countries. Buyers choose a neighborhood pickup point where they collect their purchases a few days later. For an extra fee a courier will bring the goods, knock, and hand them to the purchaser. The courier may phone to arrange the delivery.

Few of the goods on Amazon.com are available for delivery to Eastern Europe. Determined buyers have their orders delivered to friends in the US who ship them on or they subscribe to a commercial parcel forwarding service.

The Chinese online retail site Aliexpress is popular with Russian-speaking buyers. Delivery to Moscow is relatively quick, about 10 days.

News Sites

Russian speakers have access to a huge variety of news and opinion sites. These vary greatly in quality from top-notch investigative reporting to click bait drawn from the British tabloids. Prominent sites include those of the state wire service TASS, the commercial Moscow-based Lenta.ru, the opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta, Meduza based in Latvia, the BBC, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty which is funded by the US government.