



ВСЕРОССИЙСКАЯ ОЛИМПИАДА ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ  
«Trip to Kamchatka»



Credit...Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times

**Read the text and choose the correct answer**

Roaming bears hunt wild Pacific salmon among alpine meadows on this Russian peninsula, a compact, volcanic Eden.

“If you can find me a

1. a) good  
b) better  
c) the best

place than Kamchatka on this earth, I will argue with you!” exclaimed Alexei Ozerov, the exuberant chief volcanologist on the entrancing peninsula hanging off Russia’s Pacific Coast.

Leaping from behind his cluttered desk at the Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, he tore a tabletop globe from its stand and traced his finger around the “Ring of Fire,” the chain of volcanoes

2. a) encircling  
b) to encircle  
c) encircle  
d) encircled

the Pacific Ocean.

Only the Kamchatka Peninsula stands directly over the grinding tectonic forces that forged its volcanoes, he said, with about 30 still active among more than 300. Four to seven erupt annually. That makes it a unique

3. a) profit  
b) account  
c) vantage  
d) vigorish

point for volcanologists and everybody else, said Mr. Ozerov.

Indeed, say “Kamchatka” to a Russian, and many will respond with a dreamy look and a wistful “Oh!” The peninsula, farther east than Japan, represents a distant otherworld of majestic, magnetic wilderness.



That's not exactly wrong. Famous for its exceptional flora and fauna, the peninsula

4. a) does not resemble  
b) didn't resemble  
c) hasn't resembled  
d) wouldn't resemble

anyplace else in Russia, or many other parts of the planet.



Vilyuchinsky volcano seen from a boat near the regional capital of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. Credit...Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times

Kamchatka, roughly the length of California at just under 800 miles, is shaped like one of the peninsula's plentiful fish, with its head pointed down toward

5. a) a  
b) an  
c) the  
d) \_\_\_

Japan and its tail attached to the rest of Russia.

In late summer, Kamchatka's abundant rivers run red with the crush of salmon racing upstream; it is the only place left where all six species of wild Pacific salmon return to spawn. An estimated 20,000 brown bears roam its enchanted forests of Russian rock birch and other trees, growing fat and mostly happy off salmon.

Giant Steller's eagles wheel overhead while offshore, orcas cavort and Kamchatka's king crabs grow bigger than footballs.

During the brief window between the last snows of May and the first in mid-September, a rich variety of plants

6. a) bloom  
b) get agitated  
c) set in  
d) flood

at turbo force, adapted to their short, spectacular lives. The plants exude an unexpected tropical luxuriance.

Emerald forests and mauve tundra cover the foothills amid volcanoes in various hues of gray and dusty red,

7. a) many  
b) most  
c) more  
d) the most

dotted with glaciers and snow. Alpine meadows burst with blossoms and colors including yellow rhododendron, purple mountain heather, pink azaleas, fuchsia fireweeds, and the white stars of the eschscholtz starwort. Lower down, fields of wild grass can grow more than 11 feet tall.

## Editors' Picks



The landscape in Kamchatka was forged by the movement of the tectonic plates below the

8. a) ground's  
b) land's  
c) earth's  
d) overworld

surface.

Kamchatkans insist that this is where Russia begins, where the first of her 11 time zones wakes up. In previous centuries, it took a year to reach the peninsula from Moscow. To this day, no paved roads traverse the swampland separating it from mainland Russia.

Kamchatka's isolation has gradually ebbed, with tension emerging between preserving it and developing its natural resources. Visitors come for its unusual, pristine nature and the plethora of outdoor activities in a relatively compact area — trekking, fishing, rafting, surfing and mountain climbing. Intrigued by Kamchatka's mythical allure, we

9. a) has decided  
b) are deciding  
c) will decide  
d) decided

to make our last trip of a five-year assignment in Moscow to the region that most Russians consider the obscure end of their country.

### To a volcano's rim on massive tires

As our Aeroflot flight from Moscow traced an 8-hour arc above the Arctic Circle, we delighted as the red-orange disc of the sun seemed to roll along with us, never setting. Blissfully unaware of how Kamchatka's capricious, sub-Arctic weather

10. a) plays  
b) play  
c) is playing  
d) has played

havoс with travel plans, we had decided that six days was enough to hit the highlights.

Soon after we landed, the wispy fleece around the dazzling volcanoes circling the regional capital of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky thickened and they disappeared. "Neil, heli excursions canceled for tomorrow," read the WhatsApp message from our travel company.



Kamchatka has only about 370 miles of paved roads, mainly concentrated around the three southern cities, home to 80 percent of its shrinking population of just under 315,000. Pricey helicopters provide

11. a) a  
b) an  
c) \_\_\_\_  
d) the

only quick access to some of the more spectacular sights.

Grounded, we headed for Mutnovsky volcano, a famous peak of more than 7,600 feet. While less than 40 miles from the capital, reaching the top required a bumpy, four-hour drive on dirt roads and across boulder-strewn lava fields.



To get to the Mutnovsky volcano required a four-hour ride in a ‘Mad Max’ style vehicle. Credit...Neil MacFarquhar/The New York Times

Our camouflage-wearing volcano guide, Sergei Y. Lebedev, was

12. a) a  
b) in  
c) an  
d) the

originator of the idea of building Mad Max vehicles mounted on massive tires to haul tourists up to the very lip of various volcanoes. He had added a double axle to the back of his current model, a silver Toyota minivan. Its six tires, each four-feet-tall and 27- inches- wide, meant we climbed a short ladder to get in.

Wherever we stopped, tourists ignored the nature and photographed our hulking vehicle. The other guides had given it the affectionate Russian nickname of “Malysh” or “Baby.”

As the road ascended, 30-foot poles appeared at regular intervals along its edge. They measured the formidable height of the winter snow, Mr. Lebedev said.

After

13. a) sliding  
b) slid  
c) slide  
d) to slide

across a couple of glaciers, we parked and began hiking into Mutnovsky’s crater. The barren landscape — the soil is too sulfurous for plants — and the shifting mists lent the entire scene a Kurosawa-like foreboding. No signs cautioned about the risks, but a small white cross honoring a young scientist who died collecting data served as sufficient warning.

Mr. Lebedev described one previous visit, when the mountain rumbled fiercely and suddenly in the fog, giant boulders materialized in a field. “It is so strange and stunning that you can

14. a) to walk  
b) walking  
c) walk

into an active volcano,” he told us.

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We threaded our way through a narrow valley covered with ice, volcanic rocks and small, ash-covered piles of snow. It took 90 minutes to approach the heart of the crater. The hissing and sulfurous smell arrived first, as if the Devil was nearby, breathing heavily.

From atop the last ridge, we saw white steam billowing skyward from open holes in the earth. These wheezing, roaring fumaroles dyed much of the landscape a bright yellow. As we stared into their murky depths, a sudden gust of steam stung the eyes and prickled the skin.

On a clear day you can hike to a lake, but thick fog prevented us from venturing further. On the way down, the clouds finally

15. a) cleared  
b) clears  
c) are clearing  
d) have cleared,

revealing the snow-flecked splendor of Vilyuchinsky Volcano with its lopsided, 7,135-foot cone.



Brown bears hunting for salmon, which are so plentiful the rivers run red after they spawn. Credit...Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times

## A land built on salmon

Volcanoes

16. a) formed  
b) form  
c) forms  
d) have formed

the backbone of the Kamchatka peninsula and the base layer of its natural wonders. Calderas, fumaroles, volcanic lakes and thermal springs dot the landscape.

Clouds driven by high winds either from Siberia or off the Pacific tend to stall on this mountain chain, dropping prodigious amounts of snow and rain that feed lakes as well as some 14,000 rivers and streams.

While salmon inhabit the waterways year round, millions return to spawn every

17. a) a  
b) an  
c) the  
d) \_\_\_\_\_

summer. After laying their eggs, they die, and their carcasses turn into a biomass that stokes the fecund nature.

“This entire biomass migrates to different areas, on the land, in the forests, in the meadows, in the rivers themselves, and it shapes the ecosystem,” said Yevgeny G. Lobkov, a jovial, goateed professor of biology at Kamchatka State Technical University. “In essence, the entire ecosystem of Kamchatka is built on the carcasses of spawning salmon.”

Bears, trees, everything grows

18. a) more big  
b) bigger  
c) the biggest  
d) big.

Researchers at Kronotsky Nature Reserve, a Federal protected area, found that boom years for spawning salmon produced wider tree rings.

That natural bounty also brings trouble, however. The animals, especially in a region lacking economic resources, have attracted poachers for decades.

First, almost the entire population of wild reindeer

19. a) had been wiped out  
b) had been wiping out  
c) was wiped out  
d) wiped out.

Then Western trophy hunters shot the largest bears and big-horned sheep. Arab princes pay \$50,000 and up for falcons smuggled off Kamchatka, while Asian pirate ships used to vacuum up king crabs from the Sea of Okhotsk.

But the biggest poaching prize has long been the salmon and their roe, which underpin the local economy and constitute the staple diet for some 14,000 indigenous residents.

The crux of the problem, explained Sergey Vakhrin, a conservationist who founded a nonprofit organization called “[Country of Fish and Fish Eaters](#),” was that fishing companies, corrupt politicians and enforcement agents, along with the criminal “poaching mafia,” worked in concert. They vastly overshot the quotas meant to preserve fish.

Still, conservationists point to the bumper crop of legally caught salmon last year

20. a) indicating  
b) to indicate  
c) indicate  
d) indicated

that the area is now on the right track. Major fishing companies and some tourist organizations, for example, having bought exclusive rights to certain estuary fishing grounds or whole rivers, police their areas to protect their investment.

Kamchatka’s position as a frontier territory also helped to shape an unusual history.

It is the cradle of a common Russian and American culture.

Some 22,000 years ago, lower water levels in what is now the Bering Sea

21. a) create  
b) was created  
c) had created  
d) created

a land bridge between the two continents later dubbed “Beringia.” Some indigenous people migrated to what is today Alaska, along with reciprocal movements of fauna and flora.



Sea lions jump from the rocks of Russkaya Bay, where orcas also lurk. Credit...Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times

It was Kamchatka’s furs — sable, mink, red fox, silver fox, sea otter and ermine — that prompted Russian Cossacks to colonize the area in the 17th century. “The skins of animals were gold for Czarist Russia,” said Irina V. Viter, a local historian. Then Peter the Great, seeking to make Russia a maritime power, dispatched Vitus Bering, a Danish officer in the Russian navy, on two early 18th Century expeditions. Bering explored the sea that bears his name, and founded Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.

Historians have never established the source of the name Kamchatka, with theories ranging from the surname of an initial explorer to a supposed indigenous word for a land that trembles.

Kamchatka became the jumping off point for Russian exploration and control of Alaska as well as parts of California and Hawaii. Then in 1867, needing money, Russia sold its North American territories, and Kamchatka stagnated. It served as an occasional place of exile for Czarist political prisoners.

World War II largely bypassed the peninsula, but the conflict with Japan prompted

22. a) the  
b) an  
c) a  
d) \_\_\_\_

Soviet Union to transform Kamchatka into a warren of military installations. During the Cold War, it was closed to all foreigners and most Russians, which helped to preserve it.

## Stuck in 'PK'

The weather repeatedly thwarted our attempts to reach the interior, with the clouds hanging ever lower. Hiking on nearby Avachinsky Volcano to admire the view seemed pointless. But options were limited.

The rain did not prevent fishing expeditions, so we boarded a small yacht, the Princess, and motored out of giant Avacha Bay into the Pacific. Puffins skimmed the surface as the crew handed out fishing poles.

While the captain's wife

23. a) transformed  
b) had transformed  
c) was transforming  
d) had been transforming

the day's catch of halibut and crab into a feast, the rest of us lurched on the pitching deck, listening to the guttural rumblings of the sea lions and watching the bobbing otters.

Suddenly, magically, a family of orcas leapt in front of the boat. It was the first of two lucky sightings.

Our luck did not endure. Rain washed out our fourth day, so we drove around Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, or "PK." Many of its older, battered Soviet buildings have been fortified with metal rods against earthquakes. The constant tectonic activity means minor temblors roll through every few months.

We visited the Vulcanarium,

24. a) an  
b) the  
c) a  
d) \_\_\_\_

small, engaging museum, which offers 90-minute tours and displays in both Russian and English.

By that stage we pored hourly over three newly downloaded weather apps to check the height of the cloud ceiling. The chilly rain did not ground the helicopters, but the pilots needed visibility over the peaks.

With sinking hearts, we ate dinner in our hotel room — creating wraps from deliciously fresh coho salmon roe bought at the local fish market. Then suddenly we received an encouraging text.

If the southern skies cleared as expected, the helicopters would fly to Kurilskoye Lake the next day. Visitors can get close — but not too close — to bears hunting salmon.

Almost every local

25. a) have  
b) has  
c) have had  
d) had

a bear story. Bears plod through the woods in quest of blueberries, cranberries and honeysuckle berries, which Kamchatkans also collect by the bushel.

"Of course, we can only pick them if the bears share," said Anastasia Takatly, our enthusiastic and enterprising main guide, who runs an English school in the off season. "One time I was picking from one side of the bush and I looked up and saw a bear picking from the other side. That was scary."

Mr. Lobkov, the biologist, said that Kamchatkans think of the bears as too stuffed with fish to be belligerent. Some seen regularly are even given names.

"I have met bears 1,000 times," he said, grinning. "I have had to run; I have had to climb trees. But here I am in one piece; I never had a real problem."



There are an estimated 20,000 bears in Kamchatka. Credit...Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times