

Can You Really See Russia From Alaska?

Well, yes. But not in the way you would think.



55 miles

The narrowest stretch along the Bering Strait, and the shortest distance between the mainlands of Russia and Alaska.

2.5 miles

The distance between Little Diomed, an island off the coast of Alaska, and Big Diomed which sits in Russian territory.

1867

The year president Andrew Jackson purchased the Alaska territory from Russia.

110

The number of Alaskan residents living on Little Diomed.

0

The number of Russian residents living on Big Diomed.

3 miles

The distance a 5 foot 7 inch tall person can see while standing at sea level before the curvature of the earth blocks their view.



THE DIOMEDE ISLANDS

Located in the center of the Bering Strait and separated by the International Date Line, two tiny islands show how close Russia and Alaska truly are. A thick fog typically blankets the islands. However, on a clear day, one can stand on the shore of Little Diomed and see Russian territory in the horizon. During the months of January through June, you can even walk to Big Diomed across the frozen headwaters. But, it's not as though one can see into the heart of Russia. Big Diomed is home to a lone weather station, and the land beyond holds a massive, desolate expanse known as the Chukotka autonomous district.

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

This map may look more familiar to you than the map shown to the left. That's because we are accustomed to maps centered on the prime meridian, a line of longitude running through London. At a quick glance, Russia and Alaska appear to be far apart. However, we know this isn't the case. The Russia-Alaska map is centered on the Bering Strait. This projection makes it easier for us to discern distances on a part of the globe we don't normally look at.



MAP PROJECTIONS

The earth is round

Projections are an attempt to portray the curved surface of the earth on a flat surface, like this page. As a result, we get an approximate representation of the earth that is always a little bit distorted. There are many different kinds of projections. When making a map, we choose the projection that works best for our purpose. For example, we can preserve:

- 1.) Distance
- 2.) Direction
- 3.) Area

The Russia-Alaska map uses an *Azimuthal Equidistant* projection and the world map above uses a *Winkel-Tripel* projection.