

The Northern Sea Route

The development of transportation in the Arctic is a vital issue in Russia.



The official marine way is called *The Northern Sea Route*. It starts from Novaya Zemlya and runs along the Arctic coast, across five Arctic Seas, to the Bering Strait. Officially, the length of the route is 5600 km and it is the shortest sea route linking Europe and Asia.

In 1932, the expedition led by Otto Schmidt completed a voyage through the North Route in a single season. They travelled aboard the icebreaker — a ship specially designed to break its way through the ice. It was a hard voyage, full of life-threatening challenges and risks. Nevertheless, it took the expedition only two months and three days to achieve the Bering Strait.

The navigation is the most active in summer, of course, and the navigation season usually lasts between 2 to 4 months. The icebreakers can make the navigation longer but not much. The climate of the northern seas is too severe to fight with. The winter temperature of 35 degrees below zero stops any navigation in the region. And even when it gets warmer, it doesn't guarantee that navigation is safe or even possible. The problem is that the icefields of the seas are very unstable. As the ice melts, shipping becomes easier, but the ships can be damaged by floating icebergs. The coastal waters are not deep enough for big ships either.

However, most economists find the Northern Sea Route suitable and even effective for shipping due to a number of reasons. Firstly, the route is shorter than the conventional Suez Canal Route. Secondly, due to the shorter distance, the shipping companies can save a lot of money on fuel. Experts say that if the Northern Sea Route is used more extensively, international trade can rise dramatically. And they expect this to happen in the 2030s.

Another thing that can stimulate navigation is the melting of ice caps. If, due to global warming, the ice caps melt, the route may get ice-free.

On the other hand, it's obvious that extensive navigation in the Arctic region can cause lots of environmental problems. Wild animals and sea creatures may suffer from water pollution, and fuel leakages may be fatal for lots of species. Fragile coastal vegetation will be affected too.

To prevent the negative effects of navigation, the Northern Sea Route has been officially managed and administered since 1932. Nowadays, monitoring the situation is even more important. The government regulates transportation and all possible ecological issues. For example, it is against the law to throw rubbish from ships out into the sea. By now, the modernisation of the route has become a federal programme. It includes different projects such as modernising ports and building new ships and icebreakers.

Прочитайте текст и запишите в поле ответа цифру **1, 2 или 3**

13. The Northern Sea Route is the shortest possible way to get from Europe to Asia by sea.

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) Not stated

14. Otto Schmid's expedition was the first one that managed to complete the Northern Sea Route successfully.

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) Not stated

15. Nowadays, navigation through the Northern Sea Route is possible all year round.

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) Not stated

16. Floating icebergs are dangerous even to modern ships.

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) Not stated

17. Shipping through the Northern Sea Route is more expensive than through the Suez Canal Route.

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) Not stated

18. Navigation through the Northern Sea Route is absolutely eco-friendly.

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) Not stated

19. According to the federal programme experts, the number of icebreakers passing through the Northern Sea Route should be limited.

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) Not stated

