

Vodka Shot - 6 days

highlights

- St Petersburg - UNESCO-listed city area - Nevsky Prospekt, Musuem and Universtiy Districts, Church on Spilled Blood, The Bronze Horseman, Admiralty Square, St Petersburg Hermitage at the Winter Palace, Peter & Paul Fortress, St Isaac cathedral, Catherine Palace
- Other sites of St Petersburg included on the optional Pukka Pass
- Moscow - UNESCO-listed Red Square, Kremlin, Lenin's Mausoleum and St Basil's Cathedral

inclusions

- 5 breakfasts
- 4 nights 3 star hotels
- 1 overnight train St Petersburg to Moscow - (open sleeper carriage, including linen)
- Airport arrival transfer on day 1
- Guided sightseeing - St Petersburg city tour, Hermitage at Winter Palace, Moscow's Red Square and Kremlin
- Escorted by an English speaking Russian tour leader, for groups of 6 or more
- Specialist guides at local sights
- Relevant transfers and transportation

tour map



go guide

Your guide to on the ground...

visa requirements

Visas are required by all visitors to Russia. Booking through GOBUS will allow us in the first instance to procure your invitation to enter Russia, a copy of which will be forwarded to the Embassy in your country and held on record until your visa application, passport and fees are received. If a resident of the UK, we'll provide visa forms and can arrange visa procurement. If resident overseas, please contact a specialist visa company to procure visa forms and to arrange visa issue. Further information is also available online at thegobus.com. Please ensure you have at least six months validity on your passport from the date of return. It is your responsibility to ensure you procure your visa in a timely fashion.

climate

Continental, with distinct periods of warm and very cold weather. Summer days from mid-May - early Sept are warm and very long. Autumn is brief, and by end Nov, temps plummet and the snow arrives. Spring arrives bringing with it the great thaw in March and April.

time

Western Russia is 3 Hours ahead of GMT.

health requirements

Recommendations - Diphtheria, Polio and Tetanus. Vaccination requirements can change so please check with your local health care provider.

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on our trips.

voltage

220 Volts. Sockets are of the European, 2 pronged variety. Check www.kropla.com/electric2 for more info

money

GBP 1.00 = RUB45 USD 1.00 = RUB30 EUR 1.00 = RUB41 (subject to fluctuation). The Rouble is exchangeable only in Russia. Exchange USD, GBP and Euro notes in pristine condition. Bureau de Change and ATMs exist in Moscow and St Pete's. Changing traveller cheques is cumbersome. Credit cards are more rarely accepted than in the West.

entrance fees

Please Note: Entrance fees are payable by you, locally. Budget approximately USD\$60 for your entire tour. This amount will include entrance fees for the Moscow Kremlin, St Petersburg Hermitage and other sites visited on your tour.

tipping

As in many countries tipping is becoming the norm in Russia. In better restaurants it is suggested that you tip 10% of the bill if you were pleased with the food/service. If you would like to express your appreciation to your driver, local guide or tour leader, as a recommendation we would suggest an amount of approx **USD\$25 - 30** per person for your tour leader for a job well done. Naturally, though, the amount is entirely up to you. Tipping is an entirely personal gesture.

bits & bobs

- Can of coke, 330ml RUB30
- Mineral water (local brand, 500ml or 1L) RUB30
- Meal (entree, main, 1 beer, local cafe) RUB750-1000
- Beer (local brew Baltika - 500ml approx) RUB50-80
- Chocolate candy bar (local brand) RUB40-50

Please note that meals are not included (except 1 picnic lunch), so please budget accordingly.

good advice

bright ideas:

- Bring spare camera batteries/film
- If bringing any cash for exchange - bring pristine notes
- Buy a phrasebook and practice your holiday Russian.
- Bring a small daypack for your day-to-day needs.
- Keep a supply of small notes for local transactions.
- Keep a photocopy of your passport data pages.

5 things to do/see:

- Stroll along Red Square, Moscow and spot famous St Basil's and the Kremlin
- Steamy windows. Experience a Russian banya (sauna) with birch twigs.
- Explore St Pete's Winter Palace, taking in the stunning decor and prized art exhibits
- Have a night Russian style on the vodka and fill up on Russia's answer to bar snacks - zakuski
- Pay your respects to the wax-like Lenin (Grandfather of Communism) at his granite mausoleum in Red Square.

5 things to buy:

- It's got to be a wooden Matryoshka doll. Available in myriad designs and comprising 5 to many pieces!
- A 'ushanka' or furry Russian military hat. A dime a dozen on Red Square. Go green and by a synthetic job
- Blinis with ikra - pancakes & black caviar!
- A bottle of Russia's finest drop. VODKA. Many brands available. Look out for Stolichnaya Crisall - tops.
- The soundtrack to Tchaikovski's Swan Lake

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F R E E S T Y L E A D V E N T U R E

day 1 - st petersburg

Tuesday. Welcome to Russia and the start of your holiday! Arrival transfer from the airport to hotel and check in. Tonight, around 8pm, our tip-filled Welcome Meeting takes place. Rest of evening free. Your trip leader will recommend some local bars and restaurants for you to try out. Overnight - St Petersburg.

An arrival transfer is included for all those arriving on day 1 or those arriving earlier who have booked pre tour accommodation through GOBUS. Our transfer representatives wait 90 minutes from the time your flight has landed and they will be holding a visible GOBUS/GOBUS sign. As the transfer representative will not personally recognise you, it is important you keep an eye out for the sign. It is also important if you are delayed that you contact our Moscow or St Petersburg office (as detailed on your tour voucher) to advise that you have been delayed for whatever reason. If your luggage has been misplaced, head to 'Information' or your airline's desk prior to exiting Customs to find out how you may lodge a 'lost luggage' report beyond Customs, in 'Arrivals'. That way, you may rendezvous with your transfer representative in a timely fashion.

day 2 - the hermitage

St Petersburg - breakfast. Welcome to St Petersburg - city of tsars! Founded by Peter the Great in 1703, St Petersburg is designed around an intrinsic network of canals and rivers built in lavish and grandiose style.

Known as the cradle of Revolution, in the 20th century St Petersburg underwent three name changes, three revolutions and a whopping 900-day siege. St Petersburg, or 'Piter', as the residents of the city affectionately refer to their home, has been known by many monikers during the course of its often-turbulent existence. Russia's 'Venice or Amsterdam of the North', 'Window to the West', Petrograd and of course-Leningrad are but a few of the names the city has been called. All of these names embody in some way what St Petersburg has represented to the Russian people.

St Petersburg celebrated its Tercentenary in 2003. As a result of the important anniversary, the city had benefited greatly. Hundreds of historical buildings and churches have been restored to their former glory, new metro stations have opened, dozens of new shops and boutiques have appeared, and new museums, theatres, bars and restaurants have enlivened the cultural scene.

A city coach tour gives us a run-down of St Pete's key areas. Travelling by vehicle is a really effective way of getting one's bearings in St Petersburg. Driving along Nevsky Prospekt, through the museum and university district and Admiralty End, with stops at the Church on Spilled Blood and the Bronze Horseman.

Later, we enjoy a guided visit of the Hermitage Collection at the Winter Palace. Housing some 2.8 million pieces of art, with collections ranging from Egyptian mummies to Greek vases and a vast and dazzling array of Old Masters, we'll view the highlights.

The remains of the day are free for you to enjoy. Most of the city sights are dotted along and just off the main thoroughfare - Nevsky Prospekt. It's an easy city to find your bearings and get around. St Petersburg has a spirited restaurant, bar and jazz club scene. Overnight - St Petersburg.

day 3 - free time to explore

St Petersburg - Moscow - breakfast. Free day. If you purchase the pukka pass, you will enjoy additional guided sightseeing inclusive of transport today. Touring will include Peter & Paul Fortress (where the city began), St Isaac's Cathedral (the world's biggest) and dependent upon opening hours and availability either a visit to the gardens of Peter the Great's palatial Peterhof which overlooks the Gulf of Finland (in summer) or a visit to Catherine Palace at Tsarskoe Selo (or Pavlosk Palace on winter tours if Catherine Palace is closed). Professional guided commentary and a Russian lunch.

Peter and Paul Fortress was built on the orders of Peter the Great. At one time a gruesome prison, within the compound is SS Peter and Paul Cathedral - housing the tombs of the Romanov monarchs. St Isaac's Cathedral is the world's largest cathedral and the construction was a colossal engineering feat. Thousands of wood piles were sunk into the city's marshy ground to support its weight of 300,000 tonnes! From the dome are panoramic views that sweep across the city. The lavish imperial palace at Tsarskoe Selo was designed for Tsarina Elizabeth, who named it Catherine Palace in honour of her mum, Catherine I. The Amber Room is a stunning drawcard. Peterhof on the Gulf of Finland is Russia's 'Versailles' and popular in summer with its lavish gold fountains - the centre piece of which is the 'Grand Cascade' are amazing.

Congregating back at the hotel later at an agreed time, we gather our bags and travel to the railway station for our overnight journey by

train to Moscow. Overnight - train

day 4 - moscow/red square

Moscow. On arrival in Moscow, we proceed to our hotel. Moscow lies in the centre of what is known as European Russia. The border between Europe and Asia runs down the West Side of the Ural Mountains just 1300 km (805 miles) east of Moscow. Also to the east of Moscow is the mighty Volga River. Moscow's origins stretch back 850 years and despite a chequered history, Moscow is considered the heart of Russia in all ways. Moscow is a city where ancient Russia meets the Soviet Union and capitalism-boldly illustrated by the golden onion domes of the Kremlin's Orthodox Churches which peer out past Lenin's austere red granite mausoleum and over the massive GUM shopping complex-home to Barbie and Levi jeans. The city is the barometer and epicentre of the changes sweeping through Russia. The city's vitality, chaos and extremes are a direct result of the collapse of Communism and the efforts of its some 9 million citizens to reinvent their lives.

The Kremlin, a north-pointing triangle with 750 metre sides, is at Moscow's heart in every way. Red Square lies along its eastern side, the Moskva River flows to the south. From here, Moscow is best described as spreading out in four distinctive rings of development- each area having its own cluster of museums, elegant buildings, shops and monasteries. Most of Moscow's sights are within the first circle-an area that is easily covered on foot. Good news - Moscow lacks steep hills!

Today, we'll ride the capital's efficient Metro to Red Square. From here, we'll take in the jewels of Russia's capital on a guided walk in the Kitay-Gorod and Lubyanka area that takes in sights such as the epitome of Russian power - the Kremlin where we enjoy a guided tour on day 5. In Red Square, feast your eyes on the wildly coloured turban domed St Basil's Cathedral - an enduring Russian symbol. If open, we can see the eerie Lenin Mausoleum where the grandfather of Russian Communism - Vladimir Lenin still lies in state. The rest of the day is free for you to explore more of Moscow. Cultured out? Moscow's restaurants and clubs are open 'til very late! Overnight - Moscow.

NOTE: Please don't carry gigantic day - packs/ rucksacks for our visit to Red Square (Lenin's Mausoleum - if open) and the Moscow Kremlin tomorrow, as you'll need to store them before entry into the Kremlin and Lenin's Mausoleum on Red Square (which is closed during the opening times of the Mausoleum).

The go guide & information contained herein has been compiled with care and in good faith. It is as accurate an illustration as can be given with regard to the proposed itinerary. Circumstances beyond our control such as inclement weather or local conditions could force us to amend the proposed itinerary. This document does not form part of a contract between the client and GOBUS and their affiliates. Any costs shown may be subject to change but are an accurate reflection of costs at the time of writing this go guide. Please also be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and remain the responsibility of the traveller and not that of GOBUS

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FREESTYLE ADVENTURE

day 5 - the kremlin

Moscow. On arrival in Moscow, we proceed to Moscow - breakfast. Today, we ride the Metro to Red Square, from where we continue inside the Kremlin and undertake a guided walk through the grounds. We'll see numerous government buildings, gold-domed cathedrals and the tsar bell. Citadel of the tsars, headquarters of the since defunct Soviet Union and now the residence of the Russian president, for centuries the Kremlin has been symbol of the power of the state.

The rest of the day is free for you to explore Moscow. The city offers amazing galleries, museums, plenty of cafes, shops and bars all within walking distance. Overnight - Moscow.

day 6- moscow

Sunday. Moscow - breakfast. Hotel checkout marks the end of the tour.

NOTE: In Russia GOBUS use 3 star accommodation as classified by the Russian Ministry of Tourism. However, please be aware that the 3 star standards through-out Russia vary greatly and cannot be compared to hotels of a similar standard in Western Europe or, and in particular, the United States.

Russia is suffering from a severe shortage of quality 3 star hotels. Tourism is relatively new to the land, resulting in demand for hotels far outweighing the supply. With demand being high, hoteliers have unified with massive price increases, yet continue to paint a rose coloured picture as to what constitutes '3 star' hotel.

GOBUS in Russia have taken great lengths to locate the best quality hotels at realistic prices in each of the cities we travel to. All the hotels we provide are clean, comfortable and functional, as well as being within close proximity to public transport, amenities and local sights.

tour changes from 11 Feb 2011

Please note, as of 01 Feb 2011, the Vodka Shot itinerary will include a guided tour of Peter and Paul Fortress and touring arrangements will be rearranged as follows:

Day 1 - Arrive St Petersburg and transfer to your hotel. Spend the remains of the day at leisure. Welcome meeting at around 8pm. Overnight - St Peterburg

Day 2 - St Petersburg - breakfast. This morning enjoy a city coach tour of St Petersburg which will include a guided tour of Peter and Paul Fortress. Afternoon visit to the Hermitage in the Winter Palace. Overnight St Petersburg

Day 3 - St Petersburg - Moscow - breakfast. Free day or optional Pukka Pass.

Pukka Pass - From 1st Feb 2011 touring of Peter and Paul Fortress and St Isaacs Cathedral will be replaced by a tour of the interior of The Church on Spilled Blood and lunch at Tinkoff Beer Restaurant with tastings and a tour of Tinkoff beer factory. You will also visit the Gardens of Peterhof in summer or either Catherine Palace or Pavlosk Palace in winter, as standard. Overnight - sleeper train.

Day 4 - Arrive Moscow. This morning enjoy a guided walk in the Kitay-Gorod and Lubyanka area that takes in sights such the Kremlin and Red Square. If open you can visit Lenin's Mausoleum. Later take a guided walk through the grounds of the mighty Kremlin. Overnight - Moscow

Day 5 - Moscow - breakfast. Free day or the optional Inside a Soviet Bunker bolt on. Take a guided tour of the Underground Cold War Museum - a formerly top secret Soviet Bunker. Our bolt-on allows you to head 65 meters underground to explore a Stalinist-era bunker that up until recently was a top secret symbol of Soviet Power. See the giant tunnels and get a guided tour of the rooms and secret paraphernalia. See our brochure or website for further details. Overnight - Moscow

Day 6 - Moscow - breakfast. Tour ends.

optional activities

Ballet - St Pete's Moscow	from USD\$80
Taste of Russia	from USD\$50
Russian Cossacks/ Folk Show - St Pete's	from USD\$60
Boat Cruise - St Pete's (summer only)	from USD\$25
Circus - Moscow	from USD\$30
Moscow by night	from USD\$40
Russian National Show - Moscow	from USD\$50

All optional excursions are subject to availability and may only be offered at specific times of the year. Tours purchased locally are payable in USD/ EURO cash or Russian Roubles. All optional excursions will need to be booked/ paid in full on the evening of day one or morning of day two of your tour.