

XMAS IN RUSSIA - 7 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
- Moscow - UNESCO-listed Red Square, Kremlin, Lenin's Mausoleum and St Basil's Cathedral

INCLUSIONS

- 5 nights in a centrally located hostel - max 6 fellow passengers per room. (breakfast not included)
- 1 overnight train St Petersburg to Moscow - 6 berth open sleeper carriage, including bed linen
- 1 picnic lunch on day 4
- Orientation walk in St Petersburg and Moscow
- English speaking Russian tour organiser (not historical guide)

Rejoice in Russia and celebrate Xmas in St Pete's on day 3!

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

GBP1.00 = RUB45 USD1.00 = RUB30 EUR1.00 = 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

Entrance fees are not included in your tour. Please budget approximately USD\$60

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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FREESTYLE ADVENTURE

GO GUIDE

XMAS IN RUSSIA: ITINERARY

DAY 1 - ST PETERSBURG

23rd Dec 2010. Welcome to Russia and the start of your holiday! Make your way from the airport to the group hostel and check-in. Tonight, around 2000hrs, our Welcome Meeting takes place. Rest of evening free. Your tour organiser will recommend some local bars and restaurants for you to try out. Overnight - St Petersburg.

DAY 2 - WALKING TOUR

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. As with all pioneering founding fathers and wanna-be town-planners, Peter had his work cut out. He probably chose the most desolate and windswept piece of swamp in all of the Imperial Russian Empire and should have known it was a bad idea to found a city here. The first flood, just three months after he started building the Peter and Paul Fortress in 1703, swept away all his building materials. He pushed on relentlessly, though. The water rises dangerously high on average once a year, though four floods, in 1777, 1824, 1924 and 1955, wrought mighty damage. Indeed, in 1824 the whole city was submerged and 462 buildings were destroyed. Fortunately, in 1989 construction of a dam was begun to prevent a future catastrophic flood.

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.

This morning enjoy an orientation walk around St Petersburg with the tour organiser, which is a great way to learn about the city, as we visit the main sites of interest.

The remains of the day are free for you to continue your exploration. 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, plus some of Russia's best beers - so why ration your passion? Don't forget to check out 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, there's plenty to keep you busy. Overnight - St Petersburg.

DAY 3 - XMAS IN ST PETERSBURG

Celebrate Xmas in Russia with your new found friends! If you purchase the St Pete's city pass, day 3 will include additional guided sightseeing inclusive of transport. See website or contact us for details. The timetable of events will incorporate a visit to Peter and Paul Fortress on the Petrogradskaya Side, St Isaac's Cathedral - one of the world's largest cathedrals, Catherine Palace at Tsarskoe Selo and 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. Peterhof on the Gulf of Finland is Russia's 'Versailles' and popular in summer. The gold fountains are to die for.

When evening hits, its time to party and if you feel brave, pay homage to the popular drink - the White Russian! Overnight - St Petersburg

DAY 4 - WINTER FUN!

St Petersburg - Moscow. Today you can take some time out, and leave the bright lights of the city, to experience some rural life in Russia. We head into the snowy countryside in the outskirts of St Pete's for a bit of winter sports. All the necessary equipment can be hired here (at your own expense) for various activities, from sledging, mountain skiing or skating, each choice giving you the opportunity to see the countryside from an unusual and extra fun perspective. A tasty picnic lunch is included today. Once we are all tired out and ready to return to city life, we head back to St Petersburg where we board the overnight train to Moscow. Lunch & overnight - train

DAY 5 - MOSCOW - RED SQUARE

Moscow. On arrival in Moscow, we proceed to our hostel. 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, it 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!

We take an orientation walk to familiarise ourselves with the city, visiting Red Square and the stunning St Basil's Cathedral, famous for its turban domes and bright colours. We also visit the impressive GUM department store - need any gifts for those back home? This is just the place!

The rest of the day is free for you to take in the jewels of Russia's capital such as the epitome of Russian power - the mighty Kremlin and its various palaces. If you are feeling cultured out then it's probably time to visit one of Moscow's many restaurants then why not check out the underground club scene, don't worry they are open 'til very late! Overnight - Moscow.

NOTE: If you plan to go to the Kremlin or Lenin's Mausoleum, please don't carry gigantic day - packs/rucksacks as you'll need to store them before entry into these places on Red Square (the Square is closed during the opening times of the Mausoleum).

DAY 6 - MOSCOW

Moscow. Today is a free day to explore Moscow your way, why not ride the efficient Metro, with its ornate stations and socialist art to Red Square, where you can visit the Kremlin if you missed it yesterday or perhaps pay your respects to the founder of Russian communism at Lenin's mausoleum.

If art is your thing the Tretyakov Galleries, both old and new, provide pre-Revolutionary paintings in the former and Soviet and contemporary artwork in the latter. Works of Monet, Cezanne and Picasso can all be found in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. If you feel the need to get back to nature, why not find one of the 96 parks and 18 gardens dotted about the city.

The evening gives you one last chance to party Russian style - why not visit the playground of the rich and famous - the southern part of Tverskaya Street, but bring some extra cash as its well known to be luxurious but expensive. Overnight - Moscow.

DAY 7 - MOSCOW

29th Dec 2010. Hostel checkout marks the end of the tour.

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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