

EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Moscow and St. Petersburg

8 days

Russia - Trip code WR



Moscow and St. Petersburg

On this short trip, we explore Russia's two most important cities in-depth. In Moscow, we take-in the Kremlin, the 16th century Saint Basil's Cathedral and have the chance to see Lenin's embalmed body in its Red Square mausoleum. Later, we discover the contrasting architecture of St. Petersburg, with its European influences and vast, flamboyant palaces. For 2017 we will be using the famous Red Arrow Train, which in Soviet times carried the Communist Party elite between Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and has been operating since 1931. The train has been kept in its original style, so it's a unique experience and like taking a step back in time to an era when train travel was at its prime.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Moscow** - Explore the city's main sights such as the Red Square, Saint Basil's Cathedral and Lenin's Mausoleum
- ★ **Kremlin** - Visit the historic fortified complex at the heart of Moscow including the Armoury Museum housing the imperial jewels
- ★ **St. Petersburg** - Visit the world famous Hermitage Museum and the gargantuan Winter Palace
- ★ **Peterhof Palace** - Discover the exquisite palace and gardens including its fountains and opulent decor

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Moscow

After checking in to our hotel in Moscow and meeting the rest of the group, there may be time to explore some of Russia's capital at our leisure. Moscow is one of the largest cities in the world. It has grown rapidly in recent decades, creating a sprawl of high-rise suburbs. However, its historic centre remains relatively compact, maintaining a great deal of its fascinating architecture.



Accommodation: Hotel Izmailovo Gamma (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available




Meals Provided: None


DAY 2 - Orientation tour of Moscow including the Red Square


Moscow is the pivotal centre of Russia and there is much to see and do here. Rather than battle with the traffic on a bus tour, we will use the metro system to get around this morning - an experience in itself. Many of the stations are cavernous underground halls, elaborately decorated with chandeliers and we'll get to see the most iconic stations during our metro tour. Our metro tour will end in the famous Red Square, still paved in its original stones, where we can gaze in awe at the colourful onion-domes of Saint Basil's Cathedral. Surely one of the most remarkable architectural edifices in the world, Ivan the Terrible commissioned the work in the 16th century. Living up to his name, legend has it that he gorged out the eyes of its architect once completed, so that he could never again design a building of such brilliance. After the opportunity to grab some lunch in the famous GUM department store, we head to the outskirts of the city by bus, where we should get a great panoramic view of the city from the Lenin Hills. On our return to the city, we will pass Novodevichy Convent - a beautiful cloister that has remained intact since the 17th century and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This evening, you may choose to experience Moscow's vibrant nightlife, which truly offers something for everyone. There are wine bars, blues bars, exceptional restaurants and classical concerts, to name just a few options. Your Explore Leader will be able to offer you advice.



Accommodation: Hotel Izmailovo Gamma (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Swimming pool available

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 3 - Take Moscow's metro to the Kremlin including the Armoury Museum


This morning, we take the metro to the massive Moscow Kremlin - a city within a city. The triangular walls enclose an incredible complex of buildings, including three fine palaces, cathedrals, belfries and towers that represent Russia throughout its glorious past. Whilst here we visit the Armoury Museum, which contains a stunning collection of Imperial jewels and regalia. Included in this exhibit is the 16th century English silver sent to Ivan the Terrible by Queen Elizabeth I, with an eye towards securing matrimony. This afternoon is free to discover more of Russia's capital on your own. You may choose to visit the State Central Museum of Contemporary History, where you can gain a good insight into Russia from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day.



Accommodation: Hotel Izmailovo Gamma (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Swimming pool available

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Free in Moscow; overnight Red Arrow Train to St. Petersburg

Today has been left free for you to explore the many other sights Moscow has to offer. With the exception of holidays, Mondays and Fridays, you have the opportunity to visit Lenin's Mausoleum. Open between 10.00 and 13.00, entry is free, but there is often a bit of a queue. Other options include a visit to one of the many fine art galleries such as Tretyakova or the Bolshoi Theatre or to take a stroll in Gorky Park. Maybe you will revisit the impressive GUM department store, with its beautiful glass roof. If you're looking for something a bit different, then you could visit Muzeon Park, where you can view over 700 sculptures that have fallen from grace, including old Soviet statues that have been removed from Russia's main parks and squares. Alternatively, you might like to take an optional tour to Sergiev Posad - the beautiful monastery 60 kilometres from Moscow that is one of the most important pilgrimage sites in the country. This evening, we reunite to transfer to Moscow's main station to board our overnight train to St. Petersburg. For 2017 we will be using the famous Red Arrow Train, which in Soviet times carried the Communist Party elite between Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and has been operating since 1931. The train has been kept in its original style, so it's a unique experience and like taking a step back in time to an era when train travel was at its prime. Our accommodation is in four-berth compartments with bedding provided.



Accommodation: Red Arrow Overnight Train

 Simple Overnight Train

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Orientation tour of St Petersburg

On arrival this morning we'll have breakfast in a local restaurant and then head off for our tour of the city. Built on the hundred

islets that form the delta of the Neva River, St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) was founded by Peter the Great as his 'Window on the West'. Regarded as one of the most beautiful and romantic cities in the world, its picturesque canals and baroque and neoclassical architecture give the city a European feel. St. Petersburg has always been a city of ideas and ideals. Not only was it the home of great writers such as Pushkin and Dostoyevsky, but it was here that the Russian Revolution began, and where, arguably, the first shoots of democracy sprouted, 70 years later. After arriving into the city by train, a guided coach tour will show us some of the highlights of this great city. We will take in Saint Isaac's Cathedral, Alexander Nevsky Convent, the Church of the Saviour of the Spilled Blood and Palace Square. Our afternoon is free to explore any of these places in more detail or alternatively, you may choose to relax before the opportunity to visit the ballet or opera this evening.



Accommodation: Hotel Moskva (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Visit to the Winter Palace and Hermitage Museum

We have some free time before our visit to the Hermitage Museum later in the morning. You may choose to visit the St Peter and Paul Fortress - the original 18th century citadel of St Petersburg. The Hermitage is unquestionably one of the finest art galleries in the world, containing the works of masters like Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Raphael, Velázquez, Rubens and Rembrandt, as well as contemporary pieces by Matisse and Picasso. Collections are split between buildings, with much on display at the Winter Palace. The official residence of Russia's Tsars from the 18th century until Nicolas II's forced abdication in 1917, this monumental building contains no less than 1,500 rooms. Stormed by Red Army soldiers in a defining moment that marked the beginning of the Soviet era, the following month-long looting of the palace's wine cellars led to what some describe as 'the greatest hangover in history'. This afternoon is free to enjoy the city at your leisure.



Accommodation: Hotel Moskva (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Excursion to the Peterhof Palace and Gardens

This morning we travel by bus to the Peterhof Palace and Gardens, which is often referred to as the Russian Versailles. The opulent palace is set within gardens filled with golden statues and elaborate fountains including the centre-piece of the Grande Cascade. The palace was originally built by Peter the Great, as his Grand Palace, and it was also much loved by his daughter Empress Elizabeth who expanded it and added the famed fountains. The Palace like most in Russia was unfortunately badly damaged by the invading Nazi soldiers during World War II, but it was one of the first to be restored and was reopened to the public fully by 1952. This afternoon is free for you to further explore St. Petersburg or you have the option to visit the Yusupov Palace where the 'mad monk' Rasputin was famously murdered.



Accommodation: Hotel Moskva (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trip ends in St Petersburg

Our trip ends in St. Petersburg this morning, after breakfast.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7



Transport

Bus
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

6 nights standard hotel
1 nights simple overnight train

Trip information

Country information

Russia Holidays & Tours

Climate

In European Russia snows usually start in November and stay till late March/early April, when a great thaw occurs with temperatures ranging from about 5°C in October and April to -15°C in January.

Time difference to GMT

+3

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Orthodox Christianit, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism

Language

Russian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Moscow: Kremlin Armoury Museum €35.00 (€40.00 for groups under 10) with a guide or 700 RUB for entrance only with audio guides available in English. Opera or ballet €50-150.00. This optional is subject to availability and performances may sell out. If there is a particular concert or venue you wish to visit, or you just want to ensure you're able to get a ticket to a performance, then we recommend booking your tickets online directly with the theatre production company before leaving the UK. Visit to Sergiev Posad €35.00 (€40.00 for groups under 10). Concert of Maestro Borodiansky which usually held at Glazunov Museum €25-30.00. Please note this optional is subject to availability and your Explore Leader will advise of this on arrival. The cost shown here is just for the ticket to the concert and and museum/gallery entrance fee, transport will be paid for separately and locally. St. Petersburg: Saint Peter and Paul Fortress €25.00. Opera or ballet €40-180.00. This optional is subject to availability and performances may sell out. If there is a particular concert or venue you wish to visit, or you just want to ensure you're able to get a ticket to a performance, then we recommend booking your tickets online directly with the theatre production company before leaving the UK. Yusupov Palace €28.00. Alexander Nevsky Lavra (Monastery) €5.00. Prices for the above optional trips include guide fee, entrance fee to the site and necessary transport unless it states otherwise.

Clothing

Pack a warm jumper, thermals, gloves, scarf, hat and a warm waterproof coat for trips in the winter. Layers work best as it will often be very warm inside buildings and on the overnight train, but much colder outside. July and August are the hottest months and lightweight cotton clothing is best. During spring and autumn temperatures can be lower or drop during the evenings and there is also a stronger possibility of rain, although light rainwear may be needed at any time of year. A warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings. Ladies should take a headscarf and ensure their shoulders are covered when entering churches.

Footwear

We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing. During winter, conditions maybe icy or snowy so we recommend taking warm boots with good grip.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daysac for personal items.

Equipment

Spare camera batteries can be useful as these do not last long in cold weather. A torch is useful in case of powercuts/ emergencies.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

You should allow approximately 20 Euros for tips.

Country Information

Russia Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£12.00 - 16.00

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£1

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Rouble.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

We recommend that you take your money in Sterling, Euros or US Dollars cash. For US Dollars notes should be in good condition (not torn or marked), issued after 1990 (pre-1990 are often refused) and ideally in small denominations. Euros, Sterling and Dollars are easily transferable into the local currency, Roubles.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Cash can be withdrawn both in Moscow and St. Petersburg

Credit Card Acceptance

Local currency (Russian Roubles) can also be drawn on credit cards from ATM's in both Moscow and St Petersburg.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are accepted in Moscow and St Petersburg but are very time-consuming to change and attract unfavourable exchange rates

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

For the overnight train journey we will use sleeper carriages with four bunk beds with bedding provided (two beds on floor level and two above) per compartment and with a shared toilet and wash basin in each carriage. There are no shower facilities on board. Luggage is stored under the bottom bunk beds and above the cabin door for the top bunks. There is the possibility that you will be sharing with non-Explore clients in the same cabin. There is no air-conditioning on board and it's not always possible to open the windows, so we recommend light weight bed clothes. You can experience authentic rail travel with the local people and it's a great way of getting from place to place during the night, so you maximise on the amount of time you have in each city during the day to explore. Take snacks, drinks, toilet roll, hand sanitiser and an open mind with you for maximum enjoyment. For 2017 we will be using the famous Red Arrow Train, which in Soviet times carried the Communist Party elite between Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and has been operating since 1931. The train has been kept in its original style, so it's a unique experience for us and like taking a step back in time to an era when train travel was at its prime. In Russia the majority of buildings including the hotels still use the old Soviet District Heating System. Large power plants supply both electricity and hot water and from autumn to spring the central heating provided is at a set temperature, which can't be individually adjusted. So this means that it can be hotter inside the hotel bedrooms than you'd expect, but this can't be turned down, so it's best to open a window if you are too warm. Most of the hotels in the main cities were constructed during Soviet times and so tend to be large and can have ostentatious decor. The hotels we use in both Moscow and St. Petersburg are in this style and are just a short journey by metro from the city centres. In Moscow our hotel is by Partizanskaya metro station and is approximately 15 minutes from the Red Square. Within walking distance of our hotel is the Kremlin in Izmailovo where you can visit a number of museums and see different Russian architectural styles. Here you'll find the Russian Toys Museum, Russian Fleet Museum and the Russian Vodka History Museum. Next door to here is a flea market and the Vernissage where folk crafts and antiques are on sale. Nearby there's also Izmailovsky Island surrounded by the Serebryano-Vinogradnye ponds. The island contains 18-19th centuries architectural monuments and was created by the second Tsar of the Romanov family. One of the largest city parks in Europe, Izmailovo Park, is also close by. In St. Petersburg our hotel is situated near to Nevsky Prospekt on the Neva River embankment. The metro station is in the hotel building and it takes approximately 20 minutes to reach the Hermitage. Within walking distance of our hotel is Alexander Nevsky Lavra. This monastery complex is home to some of the oldest buildings in the city and the graves of some of Russia's most famous composers and writers including Tchaikovsky, Dostoevsky and Glinka.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Russia: All nationalities require a single entry visa in order to enter Russia. As part of the visa requirements you will need to obtain a Russian Travel Voucher and Authorisation from the local Russian authorities. Explore will request this on your behalf approximately 8 weeks prior to departure. Please allow a minimum of 5 working days for the travel voucher and authorisation to be processed. Due to the visa processing times, Explore are unable to accept bookings within one month of travel. For British passport holders: All applicants must present themselves in person to the Russia Visa Processing Centre in London, Manchester or Edinburgh, on the day of application, to provide biometric information (fingerprints). There is currently no appointment system in place for this new process, so applicants will be seen on a first come, first serve basis. It is likely this will mean lengthy queues and waiting times. The biometric process is not optional, and any applicant who refuses to provide their fingerprints will automatically be refused a visa. This information is not stored and applicants will therefore need to travel to the Processing Centre each time a visa is required. In the event an application is rejected due to inaccurate or incomplete information, fingerprints must be resubmitted as part of the revised application. For more information regarding this process - we recommend contacting the Russian Embassy direct, their website is <http://rusemb.org.uk/visa/> It is essential that you provide Explore with the correct passport information at the time of booking, as this will be required in order to request the travel voucher and letter of invite, as well as pre-book any applicable train tickets. Corrections and amendments will incur additional charges, so please double check that the information we have for you is up to date and correct, this includes your passport number, full name as per passport (including middle names), date of birth and place of birth; if customers renew or reissue their passports from the details initially given to Explore, train tickets must be cancelled and purchased again, which involves extra costs and may result in customers being in differing train carriages to the rest of the group. If you intend to renew your passport please let Explore know at the point of booking and please ensure that you have the new passport no later than 8 weeks prior to travel. You will be required to enter a reference number and a confirmation number on your visa application. These can be found at the top of your authorisation letter under the heading 'Voucher Number'. The 6 digit long number is the reference and the 4 digit number is the confirmation number. In order for Explore to provide the necessary documentation to support your visa application (i.e. your visa authorisation), all pre and post tour accommodation must be booked through Explore and not booked independently. Please ensure that your passport has a minimum of 6 months validity from the date of return to your home country. All visa information is subject to change regularly, so please check with your local consulate for the most up to date advice for the countries you are visiting. All other nationalities should check with the Russian embassy. For nationalities that require proof of their travel insurance through Explore as part of their visa application, please contact us for a copy of this.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour

only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station. Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers. If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Included activities

Please note for many attractions and sites you visit during the tour, you will not be allowed to take coats or bags inside. These will have to be checked into the cloakrooms available and so customers are advised to carry a small bag for wallets/purses, mobile phone, personal docs etc in whilst inside the venue.

Non refundable permits

Russia Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and diphtheria. Consult your travel clinic for further advice. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. The Russian government advises that certain medications must be declared upon entry into the country, and you may also be required to carry a prescription with you. You should consult your local consulate for up to date information prior to travel.