

EXPLORE!

Cycle Russia - Moscow to St. Petersburg
9 days

Russia - Trip code CRU



Cycle Russia - Moscow to St. Petersburg

Completing our journey by bicycle and bus we travel from Moscow to St. Petersburg to gain a glimpse of the real Russia between the great cities. From the iconic buildings of Moscow's Red Square we travel through a rural landscape dotted with onion-domed Orthodox churches, enormous lakes, forests and vast horizons. Finally we discover the contrasting and flamboyant architecture of St. Petersburg.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Moscow** - Explore the capital's main sites such as the Red Square, St. Basil's Cathedral, Lenin's Mausoleum and the Kremlin
- ★ **Rural hinterland** - Explore vast lakes, important monasteries and forts as we make our way between the great cities by bike and bus
- ★ **St. Petersburg** - Discover the architectural splendours, Peterhof Gardens and soak up the culture with an optional visit to the ballet or opera
- ★ **Veliky Novgorod** - One of Russia's most important historic cities
- ★ **Russian Orthodox** - We visit the impressive Nilov, Valday and St. George Monasteries
- ★ **Wild nature** - Cycle beside Lake Seliger, Lake Ilmen and through Valdaisky National Park

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.

CYCLING GRADE:

Easy

Suitable for anyone who enjoys easy and relatively short rides on flat or gently undulating terrain. Ideal if you simply want to explore a region by bike at a relaxed pace.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

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 Moscow

Our journey begins in Moscow, Russia's dynamic capital. Lying on the banks of the Moskva River, the city has lain at the heart of Russian politics and culture for centuries and today it is home to some of the world's most iconic landmarks, a number of World Heritage Sites and one of the deepest underground metro systems in the world. If you're booking your own flights then please ensure that you let us know whether you're arriving into Domodedovo International or Sheremetyevo International Airport so we can arrange your transfer accordingly.



Accommodation: Aerostar Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Moscow Sightseeing


First thing this morning we will take a tour of some of the city's most famous landmarks, with a visit to Red Square and the Kremlin. A city within a city, the Kremlin is a masterpiece of Russian art and architecture, filled with a collection of palaces, cathedrals and towers that span over four centuries of Russian history. Lying to the west of St Basil's Cathedral, this stunning medieval fortress was primarily the creation of Ivan the Terrible, who saw it as a fitting centrepiece to the expanding power of a unified Russian state. We'll travel through the city today by Moscow's famous metro system, whose elaborately ornate chandeliers, mosaics and murals have become as much a part of the city's history as the palaces and churches above ground. This afternoon is free.

No cycling today.



Accommodation: Aerostar Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Train and drive to Balashutino. Cycle to Staritskiy. Drive to Lake Seliger


Leaving Moscow behind this morning we'll catch the fast train to Tver (2hrs) then drive for an hour to the start of our first ride in Balashutino. Playing a part in the early history of Russia, this was the site of the Battle of Bortenevo where Mikhail of Tver defeated the Tatar Mongols in 1317. According to local ethnographers this victory carried the same importance as the Battle on the Ice and Kulikov's Battle. Our cycle route today is largely on the flat, through forests and fields, on surfaced roads in poor condition. After getting fitted and comfortable with the bikes, our first cycle ride is a chance to get used to the bikes and takes us through Stepurino village and finishes in Staritsa, home to the 16th century Holy Assumption Monastery. After a late lunch (not included) we will drive another three hours (200km) to our hotel, situated on the shores of Lake Seliger, in the Volga Basin.


Our total cycling distance today is approximately 38 kilometres



Accommodation: SDL Park Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 4 - Cycle to Nilov Monastery on Lake Seliger. Drive to Valday


We check out of the hotel after breakfast and drive firstly to the village of Svyatoe. From here we cycle to the expansive setting of Nilov Monastery on Stolbnyi Island, home to a collection of Eastern European Neoclassical architecture. There is the option to climb the stairs up the bell tower for great views. Later today we will drive for about three and a half hours (205km) on to Valday, set on the shores of Lake Valdayskoye, our gateway into Valdaysky National Park.


Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres



Accommodation: Valdayskie Zori (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 5 - Cycling in Valdaysky National Park

We spend today cycling in Valdaysky National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve that is one of Central Russia's most popular destinations for locals. Leaving from the hotel this morning, we drive a short distance to Uzhyn village, located north of Lake Valdayskoye. From here we cycle through the forest on a compacted sand 4WD track that is relatively free of traffic. Our route leads us to the lakeshore and Valday Iversky Monastery, which during the 17th century was one of the most influential Russian Orthodox monasteries in the country. After some free time to visit the monastery, we cycle the short distance on busier paved roads back to Valday for a second night. The rest of the afternoon is then free. You may like to visit the Valday Bell museum or have a swim in the lake.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 37 kilometres



Accommodation: Valdayskie Zori (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 6 - Veliky Novgorod and St George's Monastery

We start the day with a drive (2.5hrs) to the town of Borksi. We then cycle on towards the beautiful setting of the 12th century Monastery of St George, lying on the outskirts of Novgorod. The route takes us close to the shores of Lake Ilmen and through the local villages, as we meander our way through the Russian countryside. The route is flat, paved and relatively quiet, although traffic increases as we approach the monastery and Novgorod. Founded by Prince Yaroslav the Wise in 1030, the monastery is considered to be the oldest in Russia and is part of a World Heritage site that encompasses the historic monuments of Novgorod and its surroundings. We plan to have a break at a local cafe close to the monastery where you also have the opportunity to visit the open-air Russian wooden architecture museum. From here it is a short ride into the city of Veliky Novgorod, one of the most important historic cities in Russia. We end our ride outside the Novgorod Kremlin on the Volkhov River where it is possible to swim from the 'beach' time permitting.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 38 kilometres



Accommodation: Volkhov (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Drive to St. Petersburg; cycle the Peterhof road

Today we head for the beautiful city of St Petersburg, Peter the Great's dazzling 'Window on the West'. Originally built as a naval base on the Baltic coast, the city went on to attract a wealth of writers and artists to its elegant streets including Pushkin and Dostoyevsky. The cultural heart of the city still retains much of that romantic charm and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1990, due in no small part to its impressive collection of historic buildings, museums and bridges. We drive 3.5 hours to

reach the outskirts of the city where today's ride commences. The route links up the extensive gardens and parks of a sequence of historic maritime residences along the 'Peterhof road'. We start at Peterhof in Alexandria Park, a landscaped parkland in the English style that once belonged to Alexander II. Our route continues to the lower park of Peterhof where we take a break from the bikes for an hour to explore the remarkable and beautiful landscaped gardens and fountains of Peterhof Grand Palace. Note that entrance to the Palace itself is not included. We continue by bike to Kolonistskij Park and our ride ends in Lomonosov Park. After the ride we travel by bus to our hotel in St. Petersburg to check in.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 32 kilometres. Approximately half of today's cycle route is in parks on gravel paths with few pedestrians.



Accommodation: Hotel Kravt (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - St Petersburg Sightseeing

Founded by Peter the Great, St Petersburg has been acclaimed by many as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. Built on the hundred islands that form the Neva River delta, the city's historic centre is home to a wonderful collection of 18th and 19th century buildings and monuments. This morning we travel by metro and take a tour of the stunning Hermitage, the largest and certainly one of the finest art galleries in the world, containing great works by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Rubens, Matisse and Picasso. There may also be the option whilst we are in the city to soak up some Russian culture with a visit to the opera or the ballet.

No cycling today



Accommodation: Hotel Kravt (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Trip ends St Petersburg

Trip ends after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information

DAILY DISTANCE



General cycling information

On this trip we cycle 175 km over five days (an average of 35 km per day). We cycle mainly on quiet country roads and some gravel tracks. The route is mostly on the flat and many provincial roads have potholes though it is easy to avoid them on a bike. The Explore Leader will lead the rides and a support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout. We have graded the route as easy.

Bike included

8 gear Kalkhoff Voyager hybrid bikes with front suspension

Bike information

Your included bike is an 8 gear Kalkhoff Voyager hybrid bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. A water bottle holder and rear pannier is included as well as the facility to fit your own saddle (male frame stem size 27.2 mm, female frame stem size 30.5 mm). It is NOT possible to fit your own pedals to the bike. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

Easy



Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 8
Dinner: 3



Transport

Bus
Bicycle



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Cycle
guide
Driver(s)



Accommodation

8 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Russia

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

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Nilov Monastery - Bell Tower access 100 Roubles
Valday - Bell Museum 100 Roubles
Veliky Novgorod - Wooden Russian architecture museum 150 Roubles
St. Petersburg - Peterhoff Palace by boat. City canal tour.

Clothing

When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts, lightweight wind and water proof jacket and warmer breathable layers where local conditions require. Respectful clothing is required for the monastery visits, with shoulders covered.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to trips that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to bring along are insect repellent, a sunhat and sun cream, torch and earplugs. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

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

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

Russia

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 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 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, Bicycle

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.

Standard - Our 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.

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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport 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: From the Dec 10th 2014 onwards, 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 new 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.

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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full

amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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.

Russia

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and diphtheria. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to 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 [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling. 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.
