

EXPLORE!

Winter in Russia

RUSSIA - TRIP CODE RUW

WINTER ACTIVITY

Why book this trip?

This winter trip begins in the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, before heading north to explore the lesser-known Republic of Karelia. Here discover the UNESCO-Listed wooden churches on Kizhi Island by hovercraft and explore the Kivach Nature Reserve.

- **Moscow and St. Petersburg** - Explore each city, including the Red Square and the world famous Hermitage Museum
- **Dog** - sledding - Spend time with the huskies and experience dog-sledding in the snow laden forest
- **Kinerma** - Experience traditional Karelian life in this tiny village which has been voted the most beautiful in Russia



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 8
Lunch: 3



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



TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat
Train



ACCOMMODATION



TRIP PACE:
Moderate



GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

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

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.

Moscow:

On day two you could visit the Kremlin Armoury Museum. It is 2,750 RUB (Russian Rubles) per person for 11 or more people or 4,000 RUB per person for groups of under 10 people for a guided tour.

Entrance only with audio guides available in English is 1,000 RUB per person, plus a refundable deposit of 1,500 RUB.

Opera or ballet £45-£135 depending on the show and seats you choose. Tickets for performances at the Bolshoi Theatre are typically between £135-£200. If you would like to visit the opera or the ballet during the evenings of days one and two then we strongly recommend booking tickets before your arrival, as the shows are very popular and sell out quickly. You can book your tickets online directly with the theatre production company before leaving the UK. As we have limited time in Moscow, you may wish to extend your trip to see the opera or ballet if this a must for you. To get to the Bolshoi Theatre, you will need to take the metro from Partizanskaya Metro Station, travelling west on the dark blue line for five stops to Ploshchad Revolyutsii. From here it is a short walk to the theatre (less than 10 minutes) and is very clearly signposted.

St. Petersburg:

On day seven you could choose to visit one of the following:

Saint Peter and Paul Fortress entrance is 8150 RUB one person or 1815 RUB per person for groups of 4-15

Yusupov Palace entrance is 8050 RUB one person or 3215 RUB per person for groups of 4-15

Prices for the above optional trips include a guide, entrance fee to the site and necessary transport.

Opera or ballet £35-£160 depending on the show and seats you choose. If you would like to visit the opera or the ballet during the evenings of days seven or eight then we'd strongly recommend booking tickets before your arrival, as the shows are very popular and sell out quickly. You can book your tickets online directly with the theatre production company before leaving the UK. As we have limited time in St. Petersburg, you may wish to extend your trip to see the opera or ballet if this a must for you.

Other entrance fees in St. Petersburg for attraction you may like to visit on days seven or eight are:

Saint Isaacs Cathedral entrance is 350 RUB person.

Church of the Saviour of the Spilled Blood entrance is 350 RUB person.

Cruiser Aurora Museum entrance is 600 RUB person.

Alexander Nevsky Lavra Monastery entrance is 400 RUB per person.

Clothing

In Russia weather conditions can change rapidly - sunshine, drizzle, rain and snow may all occur in the same day. In winter, temperatures can drop to -20 degrees centigrade. Very warm clothing for outdoor activities is essential, so pack warm layers of breathable fabrics. A good quality heavy-duty wind and waterproof jacket and trousers are essential.

We'd also strongly recommend packing thermal underwear, fleece under trousers, a fleece jumper, woolly hat, thick walking socks, scarf or snood and gloves (and glove liners for when you're taking

photos). You may also find ski trousers or salopettes and a ski face and neck mask useful.

Ladies should take a headscarf and ensure their shoulders are covered when entering churches.

Footwear

Bring warm waterproof walking boots that have sufficient grip for icy conditions and are waterproof in case of snow. You may wish to bring a spare pair in case your feet get wet and your boots don't dry out overnight. You may also find a pair of snow boots useful and trainers for using indoors in the hotels.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a day pack for personal items

Equipment

Spare camera batteries can be useful as these do not last as long in cold weather. In case of emergency, we also recommend that you carry a torch and a first aid kit. Sunglasses, sun hat and sunscreen may be beneficial on clear blue-sky days as the sun can be very strong even in winter. We also recommend bringing your own water bottle and reusable shopping bag to reduce plastic consumption. You may find taking some over shoe ice grips to be of use and walking poles in case of icy conditions.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that has done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It is a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we would recommend £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

Local crew

Although 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. Accordingly, you should allow approximately £30 of local currency for tipping.

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.

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 | Beer price | Water price |
| £12.00 - 16.00 | £2.00 - 4.00 | £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, Boat, Train

Accommodation notes

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 washbasin 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 a cabin with non-Explore passengers and they cabins are mixed gender. 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.

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 hotel we use in Moscow is in this style.

In Moscow our hotel is by Partizanskaya Metro Station and is approximately 15 minutes metro journey 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 a short walk from Kazan Cathedral. It's around 20 minutes' walk from the city centre or 5 minutes' walk from Tekhnologicheskyy Institut Metro Station. Our hotel is in the Admiralteyskiy District where you'll find the Mariinsky Theatre and a number of restaurants, bars and cafes nearby.

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 Invitation/Voucher from the local Russian authorities. Explore will request this on your behalf approximately eight weeks prior to departure. Please allow a minimum of five working days for the invitation letter 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 fill out the online visa application form for a tourist visa, which is found at:

<https://visa.kdmid.ru/PetitionChoice.aspx>

Before your application can be completed, you must then go in person to the Russia Visa Processing Centre in London, Manchester or Edinburgh to provide biometric information (fingerprints). There is currently no appointment system in place, so you will be seen on a first come, first serve basis. 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 that 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 directly. Their website is: <http://rusemb.org.uk/visa/>

Our local agent is the Russian National Tourist Office and if you are able to travel to their London office then you can take advantage of a special visa rate of £160 per visa, which includes the Consulate Fee, Visa Centre Fee and VAT. The service includes their pre-check service, assistance with the visa form, biometric submission at their office and submission to the Russian Embassy. You can visit them on any weekday (except bank holidays) between 9am to 1pm to submit your application. If you would like to use this service then please quote 'Explore' at the time of making your application to receive this special rate.

Russian National Tourist Office address is:

202 Kensington Church Street

Kensington

London

W8 4DP

For further information regarding this service, please visit their website: www.visitrussia.org.uk/tourist-visa.php

Once your application is made and your visa is being processed, your passport will be held by the Russian Embassy for around 20 days. If you need your passport returning more urgently than this, then this is a possibility, but further express visa charges will apply.

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 Russian Travel Invitation/Voucher, as well as pre-book your 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 you renew or reissue your passport after submitting the details to us then train tickets must be cancelled and purchased again, which involves extra costs and may result in you being in a different train carriage 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 we have your new passport information no later than eight 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 Russian Travel Invitation/Voucher under the heading 'Voucher Number'. The six-digit long number is the reference and the four-digit number is the confirmation number.

In order for Explore to provide the necessary documentation to support your visa application, all pre and post tour accommodation must be booked through Explore and not booked independently.

Please ensure that your passport has a minimum of six months validity from the date of return to your home country and that you have at least two adjacent blank pages. You will also need one recent colour passport-size photograph taken against a white background.

All other nationalities not holding a British passport 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.

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.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply 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 complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the

joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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.

Included activities

Please note that at 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 and so you are advised to carry a small bag for wallets and purses, mobile phones, personal docs etc. for whilst you are inside the venue.

Ability to swim

No

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.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

When you think of Russia, many people picture the famous sights of Saint Basil's Cathedral and The Hermitage in Moscow and St. Petersburg. On this winter trip you will not only discover these highlights, but also head north to the Republic of Karelia, known for its beautiful natural scenery and wooden villages peeking through a layer of snow. Discover a lesser visited area of Russia and explore a true winter wonderland. Picture frozen waterfalls and lakes, dog-sledding with huskies through snow covered pine forest, and eating hot Karelian pies to warm you up from the sub-zero temperatures.

Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS