

DISCOUNTED

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
7 nights
comfortable hotel
1 nights simple
overnight train



TRIP PACE:
Moderate



GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip in Moscow

Arrive in Moscow. It is one of the largest cities in the world, yet the historic centre is relatively compact and easily navigable on foot or by using the famed Moscow metro, with its ornate decorative statues and crystal chandeliers at a number of stations. Within the historic centre, there is grand and captivating architecture around every corner.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 7pm for the welcome meeting and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Moscow at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into either Moscow Domodedovo International Airport (DME) or Sheremetyevo International Airport (SVO), which are both around one and a half hours' drive from our hotel, depending on the traffic conditions, which can be busy. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to explore some of Russia's capital independently. Our hotel is situated a few minutes' walk from the Partizanskaya Metro Station making it easy to travel in to the historic centre, reaching Red Square in approximately 15 minutes. Next door to our hotel are a flea market and the Vernissage, where folk crafts and antiques are on sale.

If you have extended your stay for a night or have a flight arriving in the early morning today, then you might like to visit Lenin's Mausoleum. It's open between 10am and 1pm, entry is free, but it can be closed at times for restoration work and it is always closed on public holidays, Mondays and Fridays and there is often a bit of a queue.

If you would like to visit the opera or the ballet during one of your evenings in Moscow then we'd strongly recommend booking tickets before your arrival, as the shows are very popular and sell out quickly.

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:

Hotel Izmailovo Gamma (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Tour of Moscow including Red Square and Kremlin

The day begins with a guided tour of Moscow using the metro to get around the city. This also allows the chance to see some of the impressive underground metro stations including the particularly impressive Komsomolskaya and Novoslobodskaya stations, en route to sites including the Kremlin and Saint Basil's Cathedral. Our tour of Moscow will end in Red Square, and at this time of year, it may be possible to witness the iconic Saint Basil's Cathedral in the snow. In winter, Moscow is at its most iconic, with locals dressed in big coats and fluffy hats, and onion-domed churches speckled with snow. At night, the GUM Department Store is lit up, which just adds to the charm of this winter urban landscape.

We'll visit the massive Moscow Kremlin, which is like 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 you will have the opportunity to 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.

For lunch, you may wish to visit the canteen in the GUM Department Store. This was the main shopping mall during Soviet times, and is worth a visit to see the large, opulent and brightly lit hallways and beautiful glass roof. The Soviet-style canteen has a large array of tasty foods to warm you up including authentic dishes like the classic borscht beetroot soup that can be found across Russia, or you could try the moreish Pelmeni stuffed dumplings.

After lunch, we will travel to some of the more outlying areas of Moscow by road, including Lenin Hills where we should get a great panoramic view of the city. We will also see the facade of the UNESCO-listed Novodevichy Convent and Cemetery, considered one of Moscow's most attractive monasteries with its red walls and golden dome.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Izmailovo Gamma (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Free day in Moscow, overnight train to Petrozavodsk

Today is free for you to explore the many other sights that Moscow has to offer. Options include a visit to one of the many fine art galleries such as Tretyakova or the Bolshoi Theatre. You could wrap up warmly and take a stroll in Gorky Park, where many a spy novel has been set. 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 Petrozavodsk, where we enter the Republic of Karelia. Our accommodation is in four-berth compartments with bedding provided. The overnight train we plan to use departs at around 8pm and arrives to Petrozavodsk at about 9.30am the following day.



ACCOMMODATION:
Overnight Train to Petrozavodsk



Grade: Simple Overnight Train



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Visit Karjala Park Husky and discover the rural village of Kinerma

The Karelian region is renowned for its charming wooden villages, churches, and its countryside full of lakes, rivers and forests. Situated on the shores of the ice-covered Lake Onega, the city of Petrozavodsk will be our base for the next three days.

After disembarking the train and having breakfast at a local restaurant, we'll visit the Karjala Husky Park where we'll have a masterclass on how to cook the local Karelian speciality of lohikeitto soup made with salmon, potatoes and leeks. We'll tuck-in to our soup along with meat and potato dishes that will be served in a tchum; the traditional tent dwelling used by the reindeer herders from north western Siberia that is covered in reindeer hide to protect it from the harsh winters.

We drive on to the tiny rural village of Kinerma that was voted one of Russia's most attractive villages. Here we can see original Karelian wooden architecture. A very small number of people still reside here permanently, continuing to live and farm the land using traditional methods. In winter, the snow-capped wooden roofs create a true winter wonderland atmosphere. Here we see a living example of a traditional Russian settlement, and visit the Chapel of Our Lady of Smolensk in the heart of the village. We'll also have tea and homemade berry pies in a Karelian house.

Arriving back in Petrozavodsk we have the evening free to have dinner.



ACCOMMODATION:
Karelia Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

DAY 5 - Travel by hovercraft to see the UNESCO-listed wooden churches on Kizhi Island

This morning we board a hovercraft travelling to Kizhi Island in the centre of Lake Onega. In winter the lake is normally frozen, so we'll have the surreal experience of floating above the icy waters as we cruise across on board the hovercraft. During the times of the Soviet Union, various pieces of wooden architecture were collected from around the country and brought to Kizhi to protect and preserve them. Today there are nearly 100 wooden structures showcasing true examples of traditional Russian wooden architecture, symbolised by their octagonal shapes, and spires topped with magnificent domes. During our visit we will see the Kizhi Pogost; a UNESCO-listed wooden church - one of the tallest wooden buildings in the world. The structures here are considered to be among the most beautiful in Russia.

After spending time exploring the island, we visit the local cafe in the harbour where we'll have a traditional herbal tea tasting along with sampling Karelian pasties, also known as kalitka. After warming up, we travel back by hovercraft to Petrozavodsk.

This afternoon we explore the city of Petrozavodsk and become acquainted with the history of the capital of Karelia. Founded by Peter the Great in 1703 initially as an iron factory and quarrying centre; the name Petrozavodsk literally meaning 'Peter's factory'. Today the city has fine examples of 18th century Neo-Classical architecture, this tour will visit the main sites including Lenin Square and we'll see the surrounding historical buildings, Kirov Square, and take a walk along the lakefront promenade, where we can see monuments that have been gifted to the city over time. With strong ties both culturally and linguistically to neighbouring Finland, Petrozavodsk has been described as a Russian city with a dash of European influence.



ACCOMMODATION:
Karelia Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

DAY 6 - Go dog-sledding and explore the Kivach Nature Reserve

This morning we drive to the Nordic Husky Farm. After an introductory briefing, we spend time getting acquainted with the beautiful huskies, learning some facts about their breed and characters. The musher will advise on how to harness the dogs and how to control the sledge. The sledding route follows approximately three kilometres through the snowy forest. Depending on the size of our group we'll either be accompanied by a musher or manage the huskies ourselves on our sleds.

After a barbecue lunch at a nearby cafe we'll drive onwards to Kivach Nature Reserve where the natural beauty of the region becomes apparent, especially in winter. Visit the impressive frozen Kivach Waterfall surrounded by snow covered pine forest, and learn more about the local flora and fauna at the museum and dendarium - botanical park.

Next we drive onto Marcial Waters where the first ever Russian spa was created. In Soviet times it was the best sanatorium in Karelia and is still very popular today. Whilst at the spa we'll have the chance to taste the waters that are reputed to have healing properties. We'll also visit the ancient Church of Saint Peter, which was designed by Peter the Great.

Returning to Petrozavodsk this evening you are free to have dinner in one of the many restaurants that serve creamy fish soups, meat stews and hearty mushroom dishes, perhaps followed by a glass of Karelian balm; an alcoholic drink infusing 30 types of berries and herbs.



ACCOMMODATION:

Karelia Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

DAY 7 - Early morning train to St. Petersburg; free day in St. Petersburg

In order to make the most of our time in St. Petersburg we will board the early morning train to the city, which will mean leaving our hotel at about 5.30am. Whilst on board you'll be able to rest and watch out the window as the wintery scenery rolls by. We'll be given a packed breakfast from our hotel and it is possible to purchase other refreshments and snacks on board. Our train will arrive into the city at around midday and we'll be able to check-in to our hotel by about 2pm.

The rest of the day is free for you to get your first impressions of this elegant city and so you can choose to do as little or as much exploring as you please. You may choose to visit the Saint Peter and Paul Fortress - the original 18th century citadel of St. Petersburg or Yusupov Palace where the 'mad monk' Rasputin was famously murdered.

St. Petersburg, formerly known as Leningrad, was founded by Peter the Great as his 'window on the West'. Built on the Neva River, the city is considered to be Russia's cultural capital and one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, with its intricate architecture, and picturesque bridges crossing the river and canals that are often frozen at this time of year.

If you would like to visit the opera or the ballet during one of your evenings in Moscow then we'd strongly recommend booking tickets before your arrival, as the shows are very popular and sell out quickly.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Golden Age (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Tour of St. Petersburg and visit to the Hermitage Museum

St. Petersburg has a wealth of history for us to uncover, and we begin this morning with a guided tour by road to see the many historically important monuments and buildings in the city. We'll see the exteriors of Saint Isaac's Cathedral, Smolny Cathedral and the Church of the Saviour of the Spilled Blood.

This afternoon we will visit the Hermitage Museum, one of the largest and most prestigious art galleries in the world, with works by artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Raphael, Velazquez, Rubens and Rembrandt, as well as contemporary pieces by Matisse and Picasso. Founded by Catherine the Great in the late 18th century, the Hermitage collection is so large that if you were to see all the works on display and stop for one minute at each, it would take approximately nine years to complete.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Golden Age (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Trip ends in St. Petersburg

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in St. Petersburg.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from St. Petersburg at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from Pulkovo Airport (LED), which is around one hours' drive.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and 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	Plugs	Religion
+3	2 Pin Round	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

Russian Roubles can be obtained in advance from all the usual UK currency exchange providers but it may need to be pre-ordered and the rate might be better in Russia. If you do not wish to use ATMs, we recommend you take your money in Euros or US Dollars cash which are easily exchangeable into Roubles. US Dollar notes should be issued after 1990 and in good condition (not torn or marked).

Where To Exchange

Most major towns and cities – your tour leader will advise.

ATM Availability

Widely available in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in most restaurants, museums and larger shops in Moscow and St. Petersburg. A few smaller shops and restaurants may accept cash only. In other parts of Russia credit and debit cards may not always be accepted.

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

Government Travel Safety 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, Commonwealth & Development 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.

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 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



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