



The world's largest and perhaps most least understood country definitely deserves the visit of any inquisitive and adventurous traveller. Whether it be for a short history and museum-focussed trip through Moscow and discovering St. Petersburg's cultural treasures, or a more wide-ranging trip that could include: the mountains of the Caucasus, the beaches of the Black Sea, the vast Volga River, the endless tracts of Taiga in Siberia, magical Lake Baikal and or the volcanoes of Kamchatka. Russia is more of an experience than just a destination and is more likely to be a great adventure rather than your typical holiday. Reading up about Russian history, being aware of the cultural norms and knowing some of the language, will enormously enhance your visit to Russia. With Travel Talk you will visit extraordinary sights and explore some of the unique treasures of Russia. This information is not written with the intention of being anything other than general information that we hope will help you come more prepared for your holiday. The philosophy of Travel Talk is simple: to provide excellent value for money to the budget conscious and adventurous travellers without compromising their experiences. We do this by providing quality transportation, accommodation, sightseeing and information services. We hope that our philosophy will exceed your expectations and the following information will help to ensure you have a memorable time in Russia.

VISAS

All foreign nationals are required to have entry visas to travel to the Russian Federation. It cannot be obtained at the border, therefore you should apply for it before travelling. You can find the forms online along with the documents required to submit your application at your local Russian Embassy or Consulate. Processing time and fees vary with nationality and time requirements. Tourist visas are issued for a maximum of 30 days and cannot be extended.

To apply for a Russian Tourist Visa you will need many documents including the following:

- Original passport, valid for more than 6 months with at least 2 blank pages for visa
- Application form
- One passport-style photograph
- Other documents including proof of address
- Tourist visa support documents (will be provided by Travel Talk upon full payment)
- Applicable fee

ESSENTIALS

Before you leave your country, we recommend you to make sure you have followings with you ;

- ➔ Passport
- ➔ Airline or transportation ticket
- ➔ Tour voucher
- ➔ Insurance policy documents
- ➔ Visas (if necessary)
- ➔ Label on your travel bag
- ➔ Pre-departure information
- ➔ Money (cash and/or travellers cheques)
- ➔ Credit card

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is recommended to all passengers travelling on Travel Talk tours to have insurance cover to assist with any unforeseen costs, especially medical expenses. It is advised to take a copy of your policy with you. Bottled water is readily available throughout your tour and we recommend that you purchase this rather than drink the local tap water. Whilst the local water is usually heavily chlorinated and safe, some people find they get an upset stomach after consumption. In Russia, it is often difficult to find required medication that is easily obtainable in one's home country. For this reason we recommend that you carry your current medication with you. Alternative medicine and homeopathy is also not popular in Russia. Certain medicines fall under regulations where a certain amount of dosages requires special permission. It would be wise to do some research prior and if you have any concerns on tour to contact your tour guide.

WHAT TO WEAR...

Russia is quite a cold country, especially during the autumn and winter periods. We recommend bringing a big, warm coat, gloves and hats. In summer and spring; a jacket or wool sweater would suffice, plus a rain jacket, walking shoes, flip-flops or waterproof sandals, light slacks (males) and loose -fitting pants or long skirts (females).

WEATHER

Russia has a highly continental influenced climate. The winters are very cold (below freezing point in some areas) and can sometimes bring heavy snowfall and snowstorms. Russia remains covered with thick sheets of snow for almost six months at a stretch. The summers vary depending on the region from warm and dry summers in central Russia to short, hot and wet summers in areas like Siberia.

Month Moscow St. Petersburg

Month	Moscow		St. Petersburg	
	Day C High	Day C Low	Day C High	Day C Low
Jan	-9	-15	-6	-12
Feb	-5	-13	-5	-11
March	0	-7	0	-7
April	10	2	8	1
May	19	8	15	6
June	21	11	20	11
July	22	13	21	13
Aug	22	12	20	12
Sept	16	8	15	9
Oct	9	3	9	4
Nov	1	-3	2	-2
Dec	-4	-9	-3	-7

EATING & DRINKING

Original and varied, Russian cuisine is famous for exotic soups, cabbage schi and solyanka (which is made of assorted meats). Russians are great lovers of pelmeni; small Siberian meat pies boiled in broth. Every housewife has her own recipes for pies, pickles, and sauerkraut. Even more varied is the choice of serving method for mushrooms; they can be fried, pickled, salted, boiled and the list goes on. "No dinner without bread," is the Russian saying and the wheat loaves have dozens of varieties. Rye bread is a staple food in their diet with Russians eating more of it than any other nation in the world. Part of Russian customs is that a festive table isn't worth the name without a bottle of vodka.

Russians are traditionally hearty drinkers and vodka from Russia is the world's best. There is an amazing variety to try, from the clear and colourless Moskovskaya and Stolichnaya to numerous bitters with herbs and spices. As for soft drinks, kvass is the most well-known and made of brown bread or malted rye flour. If you add kvass to chopped-up meat and vegetables, you get Okroshka; an exquisite cold soup. A basic lunch or dinner in a local restaurant will cost you between £12.00 and £15.00 (€15 and €20.00) and a soft drink around £3. A bottle of beer will cost you between £3 and £3.50 (€4.50 and €5) in a backpacker pub/bar.



SHOPPING

Visitors to Russia will find plenty of ways to spend their money, particularly in Moscow and St. Petersburg where there are shops everywhere, catering to the tastes of tourists. You will stumble across art and antique stores, souvenir shops, department stores and outdoor flea markets. Russia's shops, stalls and department stores sell many items attractive to travellers, including crystal bowls, leather bags and woollen sweaters. They also offer fine amber jewellery, paintings and sculptures.

It is advised to allocate extra time to hunting down a souvenir as shopping can be a very time-consuming activity, owing to the chaotic state of the retail trade in the Russian Federation. It is also advisable to shop around, as prices vary significantly. Kholui and Palekh lacquered boxes make attractive souvenirs and the traditional and amusing Matryoshka dolls (wooden dolls within dolls) are very popular and widely available. Khokhloma wooden cups, saucers and spoons also make a good souvenir. Engraved amber, Gzhel porcelain, Vologda lace, Fabergé eggs (Easter eggs) and jewellery are highly sought after goods in Russia.

OPENING HOURS

Banks are open Monday to Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 6:00p.m., except public holidays. Shops are open Monday to Friday 9:00a.m. until 1:00p.m. and from 3:00p.m. until 6:00p.m. On Saturdays most shops will close at 1:00p.m., though there are some that will stay open later. Most shopping centres open the doors at 10:00a.m. and close around 11:00p.m. or midnight, every day of the week. Museums are open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00p.m

ELECTRICITY

All appliances require a double round pin type plug for 220 volts AC, 50- hertz.

TIPPING

Tips are a common reward for service staff in Russia. Your tour guide and crew will be especially appreciative and honoured with this kind of traditional gratitude at the end of your tour.

DISTANCES

The following information will give you a better idea of the times travelled to help you plan your day:

➔ St. Petersburg - Moscow: 633 kms 9 hrs

ARRIVAL

The arrival airport transfer from St. Petersburg International Airport on the first day of the tour is included. You will be met by our local representative at the airport who arranges the transfers from the airport to your hotel.

Please remember that if you miss your transfer at the airport (due to the rescheduling your flight, delay or any other reason) you will need to make your own way to the arrival hotel.

Guide Meeting

Please note that your tour guide will meet you for a quick and informal briefing on Day 1. The meeting will be at your arrival hotel at 6:30pm and will inform you about the next days of your tour and allow you to meet the other passengers on tour.

AIRPORT TRANSFER

Your arrival airport transfer is included if:

- *You fly into the city in which your tour starts
- * You arrive on the first day of your tour
- *You forward your flight details to us, at least 10 days in advance, including:
 - Date of flight
 - Flight number
 - Arrival time
 - Name of traveller/s to be picked up

If you do not want an airport transfer to the hotel, please let us know by either phoning the office (0208 099 95 96) or sending us an email (info@traveltalktours.com). Please note that the hotel check-in time is from 1:00pm.

ACCOMMODATION

The hotels used on Travel Talk Russia tours are rated 4-star. Our main criteria for the hotel selection process are cleanliness, private bathroom facilities and location (usually central). If you are travelling on your own, you will be allocated into either a twin or triple room with another group member/s of the same gender. Travellers who have paid a single supplement will stay in single rooms. Unfortunately we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds for couple travellers. Your tour leader will organise the rooming arrangements when checking into the hotels according to the rooming lists. Therefore we can also not guarantee any last minute changes.

PRE&POST TOUR ACCOMMODATION

Should you require pre or post tour accommodation, please notify us (or your agent) at the time of booking and we can make the arrangements for you. This information will be clearly stated on your voucher.

TOUR LEADER

Your tour leader's role is to ensure that all aspects of the trip run smoothly. He/she will share their local knowledge, advise you on ways to spend your free time and coordinate the day-to-day running of the tour. From time to time situations can occur and things may not go according to plan, and your leader may require your cooperation and understanding. If you have any problems on tour, please let your leader know so that the correct steps can be taken.

MONEY

The currency in Russia is the Russian Ruble(RUB)

1GBP is converted is approxiamtely 75RUB. There is no official symbol but you may see this sign "py6" used. There are plenty of places to withdraw and convert money. Credit cards are accepted in most larger shops and nicer restaurants



ENTRANCE FEES

Almost nothing is free in Russia and below are approximate entrance fees to some of the major attractions:

- Kremlin : 700 Roubles,
- Hermitage : 650 Roubles
- St. Basil Cathedral: 950 Rubles

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

→ **TT sar's Route - St.Petersburg:**
Minimum pax : 5 Price : 70 Euro
Duration :7 hours
Inclusions :Transportation, guiding,entrance fees, lunch

Sights Visited

Winter: Pavlovsk palace+ Peter and Paul Fortress.

Summer: Catherines palace+ Peterhof gardens.

Please note that Peterhof Grand Palace is closed on Mondays.

→ **Folk Show - 60 Euro (St. Petersburg)**

→ **Circus - Moscow**
Minimum pax : 5,Price :from 50 Euro,
Duration 4 hours
Inclusions: Transportation, tour leader, entrance fee

MOSCOW GENERAL INFO

Moscow is the capital city and the most populous federal subject of Russia. The city is a major political, economic, cultural and scientific centre in Russia and in Europe. According to Forbes 2011, Moscow has the largest community of billionaires in the world. Moscow is the northernmost megacity on Earth, the second (after Istanbul) most populous city in Europe, and the 6th largest city proper in the world. It's also the largest city in Russia with a population, according to the 2010 Census, of 11,503,501 By its territorial expansion on July 1, 2012 southwest into the Moscow Oblast, the capital increased its area 2.5 times; from about 1,000 square kilometres (390 sq. mi) up to 2,500 square kilometres (970 sq. mi), and gained additional population of 230,000 people. Moscow is situated on the Moskva River in the Central Federal District of European Russia. In the course of its history the city has served as the capital of a progression of states, from the medieval Grand Duchy of Moscow and the subsequent Tsardom of Russia to the Soviet Union. Moscow is the site of the Moscow Kremlin, an ancient fortress that is today the residence of the Russian president. The Kremlin is also one of several World Heritage Sites in the city. Both chambers of the Russian parliament (the State Duma and the Federation Council) also sit in Moscow. The city is served by an extensive transit network, which includes four international airports, nine railway terminals, and one of the deepest underground metro systems in the world, the Moscow Metro, third to Tokyo and Seoul in terms of passenger numbers. It is recognized as one of the city's landmarks due to the rich and varied architecture of its 188 stations. Over time, Moscow has acquired a number of epithets, most referring to its size and preeminent status within the nation: The Third Rome, The Whitestone One, The First Throne, The Forty Forties. In Old Russian the word "Сорок" (forty) also meant a church administrative district, which consisted of about forty churches. The demonym for a Moscow resident is Moskvitch, rendered in English as Muscovite.

ST. PETERSBURG GENERAL INFO

Saint Petersburg is a city and a federal subject of Russia located on the Neva River at the head of the Gulf of Finland on the Baltic Sea. In 1914 the name of the city was changed to Petrograd, in 1924 to Leningrad, and in 1991, back to Saint Petersburg.

Saint Petersburg was founded by the Tsar Peter the Great on May 27 1703. From 1713 to 1728 and from 1732 to 1918, Saint Petersburg was the Imperial capital of Russia. In 1918 the central government bodies moved from Saint Petersburg (then named Petrograd) to Moscow. It is Russia's second-largest city after Moscow, with 5 million inhabitants reached in September 2012.Saint Petersburg is a major European cultural centre, and also an important Russian port on the Baltic Sea. Saint Petersburg is often described as the most Westernized city of Russia, as well as its cultural capital. It is the northernmost city in the world to have a population of over one million. The Historic Centre of Saint Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments constitute a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Saint Petersburg is also home to The Hermitage, one of the largest art museums in the world. A large number of foreign consulates, international corporations, banks and other businesses are located in Saint Petersburg. Unlike in Moscow, in Saint Petersburg the historic architecture of the city centre, mostly consisting of Baroque and neoclassical buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries, has been largely preserved; although a number of buildings were demolished after the Bolsheviks' seizure of power, during the Siege of Leningrad and in recent years.

LANGUAGE

The language of Russia is Russian. Below you will find some important phrases that will hopefully make your stay in Russia a little easier:

Hello	Privet
Goodbye	Paka
Yes	Da
No	Net
Please	Pozhalusta
Thank you	Spasibo
Excuse me	Izvinite
How are you	Kak Dela
How much is it ?	Skolko
Water	Voda
Coffee	Koffee
Tea	Chai
The Bill	Schot
one	adin
Two	Dva
Three	Tri
Four	Chetire
Five	Pyat
Six	Shest
Seven	Sem
Eight	Vosem
Nine	Deyyat
Ten	Desyat
Twenty	Dvadsat
Fifty	Pyatdesyat
Hundred	Sto