

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Treasures of the Tsars (GR 2017)



TRIP DURATION
10
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: GR

Trip Highlights - Treasures of the Tsars

- ✓ Moscow - See the city's main sites including the Red Square and St Basil's Cathedral
- ✓ Kremlin - Visit the historic fortified complex at the heart of Moscow
- ✓ The Golden Ring - Visit to the fascinating Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius, Zagorsk and Suzdal, one of Russia's oldest towns
- ✓ St. Petersburg - Explore this fascinating city with an expert local guide and visit the Hermitage Museum
- ✓ Pushkin - Marvel at the majestic Catherine's Palace

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 8 nights Standard Hotel
1 night Simple
Overnight Train

Included Meals: 8 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Moscow

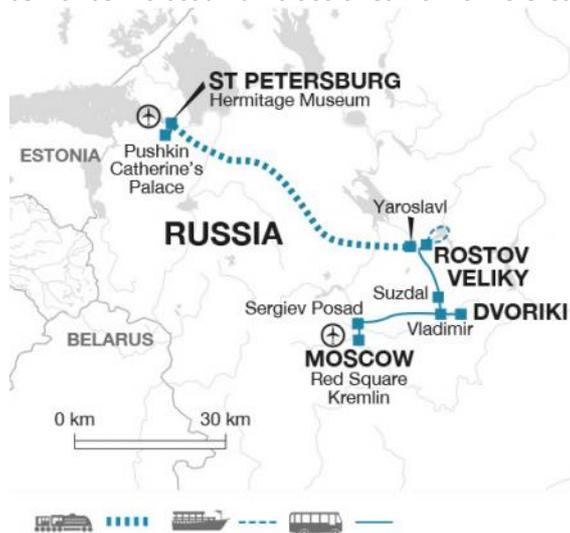
End Point: Trip ends: St Petersburg

Transport: Bus, Train, Boat

Countries: Russia

Treasures Of The Tsars

We begin this trip in the megacity of Moscow, travel by train to St. Petersburg and discover Russia's 'golden ring': the historic cities of Sergiev Posad, Vladimir and Suzdal. The golden ring, shows you another side to Russia, away from it's main bustling cities, you can experience the rolling countryside and see classic Russian architecture in some of its oldest towns and cities. We'll also see the Red Square and Kremlin in Moscow and visit the majestic Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, as well as the beautiful Palace of Catherine the Great at Pushkin.



Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: 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.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

An Explore Leader is an integral part of any Explore trip and your trip will be led by one of our experienced Explore Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Explore Leaders are the key to the success of our trips; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Explore Leader will also take care of all the planning

and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this trip fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join trip in Moscow

Arrive in Moscow and check in to hotel. Moscow is one of the largest cities in the world. It has grown rapidly in recent decades, and, as a result, comprises high-rise suburbs surrounding a relatively compact historic centre with plenty of fascinating ancient architecture.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Orientation tour of Moscow including the Red Square

Moscow is the pivotal centre of Russia and there is much to see and do here. We start our journey today with a metro orientation tour which ends at the Red Square, still paved in its original stones. The metro itself is an experience being elaborately decorated with chandeliers and mosaics and we'll get to see the most iconic stations during our metro tour. Here you will have an option to visit Lenin's Mausoleum and St Basils or visit one of the many fine art galleries before setting out on a bus to visit outlining areas of Moscow including Lenin Hills and get to see Novodevichy Convent and Cemetery from the outside, with red and white crenelated walls and golden dome, it is one of Moscow's most attractive monasteries. We end our day today at the city centre.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Excursion to the Kremlin with the chance to visit the Armoury

On our second day we visit the famous Moscow Kremlin on Red Square - a city within a city. The triangular walls of this incredible complex of buildings enclose three fine palaces, cathedrals, belfries and towers, representing Russia throughout its glorious past. Later we recommend an optional visit to the Kremlin Armoury, which contains a stunning collection of imperial jewels and regalia, including the 16th century English silver sent to Ivan the Terrible by Queen Elizabeth I, with an eye to matrimony.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 See St. Sergius Trinity Monastery and Vladimir; arrive in Dvoriki

Today we begin our visit by road to the famous cities known as the Zolotoye Koltso or the 'Golden Ring'. Each of these ancient towns in its own way represents the historic soul of the Russian people. We make a slight detour en route to Vladimir to visit Sergiev Posad. Here we will marvel at the golden domes and great bell-tower of the Trinity Monastery of Saint Sergius, which is a main centre for the Russian Orthodox Church. Founded in the 1340's by the crusading monk, Sergei Radonezhsky, who lies buried here under the Trinity Cathedral, the church buildings copy the style of a Byzantine Cruciform. Peter the Great regularly used this monastery. Today, the town is famed for the craftsmanship of its wooden toys, particularly the Matrioshka; nests of wooden dolls which fit one inside the other. This afternoon we continue to Vladimir, which is situated on a semi-circular hill on the Klyazma riverside. Founded in 1108 by Prince Vladimir Monomakh, the Grand Prince of Kiev, many of its striking 12th century monuments still remain intact. Among the splendid sights here are the Cathedrals of the Assumption and Saint Demetrius. The latter is a Medieval gem and one of the finest in the whole country. Its high reliefs, carved on the front of the cathedral, depict strangely mixed characters from classical history, such as King Solomon and Alexander the Great. Also of note are Vladimir's Golden Gates, which were ambitiously modelled on the gates of Kiev and acted as important fortifications to defend the city. After our guided tour of Vladimir we'll drive to the nearby village of Dvoriki and to our unique woodland hotel. Our accommodation for tonight is in splendid isolation within a picturesque forest and the buildings are log built. The hotel has its own restaurant, bar, indoor pool, spa and horses on site. It a great spot to relax in for the evening and enjoy the Russian wilderness.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Visit the historic town of Suzdal en route to Rostov Veliky

This morning our first stop is in Suzdal, which is perhaps the most beautiful of all the old cities in the Golden Ring. It was already a settlement in the 10th century, but began to flower architecturally in the 12th century under Yury Dolgoruky. We will be able to see the exterior of the Kremlin, which was rebuilt after being pillaged and burnt by the Mongols in 1238. We'll also visit to the north of the town, the great Spaso-Evfimiyevesky Monastery, which was founded 14th century and was once one of the five largest

monasteries in all of Russia. However, from 1767 to 1907 the monastery took on a darker purpose as a prison, for those classed as being lunatics, which includes disgraced nobles, free-thinkers and opposition politicians. The most outstanding building within its walls is the Cathedral of the Transfiguration, with five domes and several superb murals. On the far side of the river we see the Convent of the Intercession, which was also long used as a prison for the unwanted wives of nobles (Ivan the Terrible, his father, and Peter the Great, all exiled their wives here for various reasons). Further down the river we visit the remarkable Field Museum of Wooden Architecture, which has a distinctive collection of ancient wooden churches, manor houses and windmills that were all dismantled and re-erected here from across northern Russia. Continuing our journey we head to Rostov Veliky. Located on the shores of Lake Nero, Rostov Veliky (Rostov the Great), is one of Russia's oldest cities. We visit the Kremlin, considered by many locals to be the finest outside Moscow. Its strategic position on top of a hill and the impressive kilometre long white walls, make the Kremlin the main landmark in this picturesque town in the Golden Ring. Also included in our sightseeing is the Enamel Museum inside the Kremlin. The art of enamel work was developed in this town at the end of the 18th century. We'll get to appreciate both ancient and modern examples of this beautiful technique.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 **Tour of Yaroslavl; overnight train to St. Petersburg**

This morning we drive to Yaroslavl which stands proudly at the meeting point of the two rivers, Volga and Kotorosl, and is rich in ancient monuments. It takes its name from Prince Yaroslavl of Rostov who captured the settlement here. The town can also claim to have founded Russian dramas: Fyodor Volkov established the first professional theatre company here in 1748. On arrival we'll have an orientation tour of the main attractions, visit one of Yaroslavl's famed churches and the Transfiguration Monastery. We'll then enjoy a short boat trip on the River Volga followed by free time to relax and have dinner before we take the overnight train to St. Petersburg. Our accommodation is in four-berth compartments with bedding provided.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 **Orientation tour of St. Petersburg**

St. Petersburg is famous for its romantic 'White Nights', the period from May until July when the sun practically never sets. The city (formerly known as Leningrad) was founded by Peter the Great as his 'Window on the West', and built on the hundred islets that form the delta of the Neva river. It must surely be acclaimed as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe - some would say the most beautiful. Peter's original idea for its location as a naval base on the Baltic Coast was certainly a huge mistake as the port is ice-bound for one third of the year. Nevertheless, it became the city of great writers like Pushkin and Dostoyevski and it still retains much of the romantic spirit of those bygone days. On arrival this morning we will conduct a sightseeing tour of the city by bus, before going to our hotel to check in. Please note breakfast is not included on the train.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 8 **Visit to the Winter Palace and Hermitage Museum**

This morning we visit the magnificent Hermitage Museum, which was augmented by Catherine the Great. The Hermitage is unquestionably one of the finest art galleries in the world, containing the works of masters like Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Raphael, Velazquez, Rubens and Rembrandt, as well as contemporary pieces by Matisse and Picasso. This afternoon you have the option to visit St. Peter and Paul's fortress, the final resting place of many of Russia's tsars and their families.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 **Excursion to Catherine the Great's Palace at Pushkin**

This morning we shall travel by bus to Pushkin (formerly Tsarskoe Selo, the 'Tsar's Village') where Pushkin's 19th century wooden house is located (currently under restoration). The Tsar's royal estates were built here, including the summer residence of 'Catherine the Great', a majestic palace styled in blue and gold rococo. We may stroll around the lakes and gardens of the palace after viewing its sumptuous interior including the grand gold and crystal ballroom as well as the recently restored Amber Room. This afternoon we return to the city and you may have the option to visit the Yusupov Palace where the 'mad monk' Rasputin was famously (eventually), murdered.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **10** Trip ends in St. Petersburg

Tour ends in St Petersburg after breakfast.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Included Activities

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

Accommodation and Meals

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 wash basin in each carriage. There are no shower facilities on board. Luggage is stored under the bottom bunk beds and above the cabin door for the top bunks. There is the possibility that you will be sharing with non-Explore clients in the same cabin. There is no air-conditioning on board and it's not always possible to open the windows, so we recommend light weight bed clothes. You can experience authentic rail travel with the local people and it's a great way of getting from place to place during the night, so you maximise on the amount of time you have in each city during the day to explore. Take snacks, drinks, toilet roll, hand sanitiser and an open mind with you for maximum enjoyment.

In Russia the majority of buildings including the hotels still use the old Soviet District Heating System. Large power plants supply both electricity and hot water and from autumn to spring the central heating provided is at a set temperature, which can't be individually adjusted. So this means that it can be hotter inside the hotel bedrooms than you'd expect, but this can't be turned down, so it's best to open a window if you are too warm.

Most of the hotels in the main cities were constructed during Soviet times and so tend to be large and can have ostentatious decor. The hotels we use in both Moscow and St. Petersburg are in this style and are just a short journey by metro from the city centres.

In Moscow our hotel is by Partizanskaya metro station and is approximately 15 minutes from the Red Square. Within walking distance of our hotel is the Kremlin in Izmailovo where you can visit a number of museums and see different Russian architectural styles. Here you'll find the Russian Toys Museum, Russian Fleet Museum and the Russian Vodka History Museum. Next door to here is a flea market and the Vernissage where folk crafts and antiques are on sale. Nearby there's also Izmailovsky Island surrounded by the Serebryano-Vinogradnye ponds. The island contains 18-19th centuries architectural monuments and was created by the second Tsar of the Romanov family. One of the largest city parks in Europe, Izmailovo Park, is also close by.

In St. Petersburg our hotel is situated near to Nevsky Prospekt on the Neva River embankment. The metro station is in the hotel building and it takes approximately 20 minutes to reach the Hermitage. Within walking distance of our hotel is Alexander Nevsky Lavra. This monastery complex is home to some of the oldest buildings in the city and the graves of some of Russia's most famous composers and writers including Tchaikovsky, Dostoevsky and Glinka.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 8 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

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.

Russia

Lunch £: 6.00 - 10.00

Dinner £: 12.00 - 16.00

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Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Russia

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00 - 4.00

Water £: 1.00

Other Sightseeing & 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.

Optional Excursions

Moscow:

Kremlin Armoury Museum €35.00 (€40.00 for groups under 10) with a guide or 700 RUB for entrance only with audio guides available in English.

Opera or ballet €50-150.00. This optional is subject to availability and performances may sell out. If there is a particular concert or venue you wish to visit, or you just want to ensure you're able to get a ticket to a performance, then we recommend booking your tickets online directly with the theatre production company before leaving the UK.

Visit to Sergiev Posad €35.00 (€40.00 for groups under 10).

Concert of Maestro Borodiansky which is usually held at Glazunov Museum €25-30.00. Please note this optional is subject to availability and your Explore Leader will advise of this on arrival. The cost shown here is just for the ticket to the concert and museum/gallery entrance fee, transport will be paid for separately and locally.

St. Petersburg:

Saint Peter and Paul Fortress €25.00.

Opera or ballet €40-180.00. This optional is subject to availability and performances may sell out. If there is a particular concert or venue you wish to visit, or you just want to ensure you're able to get a ticket to a performance, then we recommend booking your tickets online directly with the theatre production company before leaving the UK.

Yusupov Palace €28.00.

Alexander Nevsky Lavra (Monastery) €5.00.

Prices for the above optional trips include guide fee, entrance fee to the site and necessary transport unless it states otherwise.

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

Tipping - 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. Accordingly you should allow approximately 30 Euros for tips. 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.

Foreign Exchange

Russia

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

Local Currency: Rouble.

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

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Trip

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 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 on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

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.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

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

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The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

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 follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

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We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

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.

Visa Information

Russia: All nationalities require a single entry visa in order to enter Russia. As part of the visa requirements you will need to obtain a Russian Travel Voucher and Authorisation from the local Russian authorities. Explore will request this on your behalf approximately 8 weeks prior to departure. Please allow a minimum of 5 working days for the travel voucher and authorisation to be processed. Due to the visa processing times, Explore are unable to accept bookings within one month of travel.

For British passport holders: All applicants must present themselves in person to the Russia Visa Processing Centre in London, Manchester or Edinburgh, on the day of application, to provide biometric information (fingerprints). There is currently no appointment system in place for this new process, so applicants will be seen on a first come, first serve basis. It is likely this will mean lengthy queues and waiting times. The biometric process is not optional, and any applicant who refuses to provide their fingerprints will automatically be refused a visa. This information is not stored and applicants will therefore need to travel to the Processing Centre each time a visa is required. In the event an application is rejected due to inaccurate or incomplete information, fingerprints must be resubmitted as part of the revised application. For more information regarding this process - we recommend contacting the Russian Embassy direct, their website is <http://rusemb.org.uk/visa/>

It is essential that you provide Explore with the correct passport information at the time of booking, as this will be required in order to request the travel voucher and letter of invite, as well as pre-book any applicable train tickets. Corrections and amendments will incur additional charges, so please double check that the information we have for you is up to date and correct, this includes your passport number, full name as per passport (including middle names), date of birth and place of birth; if customers renew or reissue their passports from the details initially given to Explore, train tickets must be cancelled and purchased again, which involves extra costs and may result in customers being in differing train carriages to the rest of the group. If you intend to renew your passport please let Explore know at the point of booking and please ensure that you have the new passport no later than 8 weeks prior to travel.

You will be required to enter a reference number and a confirmation number on your visa application. These can be found at the top of your authorisation letter under the heading 'Voucher Number'. The 6 digit long number is the reference and the 4 digit number is the confirmation number.

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

Please ensure that your passport has a minimum of 6 months validity from the date of return to your home country.

All visa information is subject to change regularly, so please check with your local consulate for the most up to date advice for the countries you are visiting. All other nationalities should check with the Russian embassy.

For nationalities that require proof of their travel insurance through Explore as part of their visa application, please contact us for a copy of this.

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

Vaccinations & Protection

Russia

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

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Russia

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.

Clothing

July and August are the hottest months and lightweight cotton clothing is best. During spring and autumn temperatures can be lower or drop during the evenings and there is also a stronger possibility of rain, although light rainwear may be needed at any time of year. A warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings.

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

Equipment

Take some insect repellent for the Golden Ring and St. Petersburg. A money belt is essential, especially in Russia. A swimsuit for saunas may also be taken.

Footwear

We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac for personal items. Remember that you'll have to carry your own luggage, so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Russia

Population: 143,600,000

Size of Country: 17,075,400 sq km

Major Language: Russian

Religion: Orthodox Christianit, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism

Time Difference to GMT: +3

Electric Supply & Plugs

Russia

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet.

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We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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