



Day 1: Fly to Russia

Meet your group and travel on an overnight flight to Moscow.

Day 2: Moscow

Arrive in Moscow: Touch down in Moscow, the Russian capital. After clearing customs, you are greeted by your Russian guide and your Tour Director, who will remain with you throughout your stay.

Day 3: Moscow

Sightseeing tour of Moscow: A local guide introduces you to Moscow, beginning with a visit to the city's nucleus: Red Square. The square is large enough to accommodate more than 2 million people. Then marvel at the colorful mismatched cupolas of St. Basil's Cathedral. According to legend, Ivan the Terrible took drastic measures to ensure that the architect would never build anything more beautiful.

Kremlin: You'll also enjoy a visit to the Kremlin. At one time, all of Moscow was contained within its 15th-century walls. Discover a vast "hidden" world of palaces, museums and cathedrals. Walk across the czarist Square of Cathedrals. Each cathedral had a particular purpose: one for marrying, one for burying and a third for coronations. You also can see the world's largest bell, weighing more than 200 tons. Its only flaw? It never worked.

Armory Palace Museum: A local guide will acquaint you with the Armory Palace, the oldest and most richly furnished museum of the Kremlin. Exhibits include gold and silver jewelry from the past millennium, Russian armor and ornate Fabergé eggs.

Evening performance: Tonight, you'll witness a spectacular performance by either a Russian folklore troupe or one of the country's world-class circuses. (Depending upon availability, the performance may take place in St. Petersburg.)

Day 4: Moscow

✚ **Sergiev Posad:** Opt to join an excursion to Sergiev Posad, about an hour from Moscow. Visit the Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius, a stunning fortress monastery that is the center of Russian Orthodoxy and an important pilgrimage site in the country. You will also see Cathedral of the Assumption, modeled after the Kremlin in Moscow, and the Refectory Church of St. Sergius. The town is also famous for its matryoshka dolls, or Russian nesting dolls, and you will visit the toy factory that makes them.

Day 5: Moscow | St. Petersburg

Train to St. Petersburg: After exploring Moscow at your pace this morning, board a train bound for St. Petersburg and then settle in to your hotel for the evening.

Day 6: St. Petersburg

Sightseeing tour of St. Petersburg: Peter the Great transformed St. Petersburg into a showplace of architecture and landscaping; encounter the magnificent results on your guided tour. Visit the Winter Palace, once the residence of Catherine the Great and where the Russian monarchy was finally overthrown in 1917. The Winter Palace now is part of the vast Hermitage, where the czars' spectacular art collection is on display.

Hermitage Museum: By order of the Tsar, visitors to the magnificent Hermitage Museum were required to dress in evening attire, no matter the time of day. Recall that age of grandeur with your first glimpse of the museum. The

Hermitage, founded on the extensive art collection of Catherine the Great and opened in 1852, now boasts more than three million works of art, including the world's largest collection of paintings. As part of your museum tour, you'll visit the Winter Palace, originally the royal residence. This block-long structure, with its imposing Baroque exterior, was designed to symbolize the power of Imperial Russia. Ironically, the monarchy was overthrown here in 1917.

Peter and Paul Fortress: You'll also visit the Peter and Paul Fortress, located on a small island on the Neva River. Trotsky, Gorky and Dostoevsky all were imprisoned here. Peter the Great built this dungeon, and one of the first prisoners was his son, who was put to death here in 1718. The fortress has since become the final resting place of all the czars except Peter II.

Day 7: St. Petersburg

Explore St. Petersburg: Today's walking tour takes you down Nevsky Prospekt, one of St. Petersburg's oldest streets. View a monument to Alexander Pushkin, Russia's beloved poet, and see where Rasputin was murdered.

St. Petersburg Museum of History: Discover Russia's rich cultural heritage at this museum in the Rumyantsev Mansion dedicated to preserving the history of St. Petersburg. A main focus of the museum is the time Russians refer to as the Blockade, the 900 days of bombing and starvation between September 1941 and January 1944, when German forces surrounded Leningrad. There is an impressive repository of items from that time, as well as displays of painting, graphics and posters created by artists during the blockade.

Day 8: St. Petersburg

✚ **Petrodvorets:** Take an optional excursion to Petrodvorets, Peter the Great's summer palace. Inspired by the palace at Versailles, architect Jean Baptiste Leblond built Petrodvorets in 1715. Stroll through the ornate rooms, making sure to check out the portraits of the Romanov family in the Throne Room and the impressive floor in the Western Chinese Study. Then wander through the beautiful gardens; check out the grotto and fountains, especially the Samson Fountain, which symbolizes Peter the Great's victory over Sweden in 1709.

Day 9: Depart for home

Transfer to the airport, where you'll check in for your return flight home.

✚ 3-DAY TOUR EXTENSION

Days 9-11: Tallinn | Helsinki

Travel to Tallinn: Head to Tallinn, capital of Estonia that lies on the northern coast of Estonia. You'll tour through its two old towns, (Lower Town and Toompea) which are both easily explored on foot. Then, transfer by ferry to Helsinki, Finland's capital. Geographically sandwiched between Sweden and Russia, the country was ruled by one or the other until after the Russian Revolution in 1917. Meet in Senate Square, the heart of Helsinki, for a walking tour.

Sightseeing tour of Helsinki: Pass the red granite Parliament, the green-domed cathedral dominating Helsinki's skyline, and the 1952 Olympic Stadium. You'll also see a monument to composer Jean Sibelius and the harborside fish and fruit market. Then continue on for a visit to the Temppeliaukko Church. An excellent example of modern Finnish architecture, the church is carved into the side of a rocky bluff.

Day 12: Depart for home

Transfer to the airport, where you'll check in for your return flight home.