



Moscow & St Petersburg

Cultural highlights of Russia's greatest cities

6–14 September 2021 (MH 881)

9 days • £4,440

Lecturer: Dr Alexey Makhrov

The two great cities of Russia, monumental and vibrant, both historically and today.

Spectacular art collections, spanning the finest icons to masterpieces of Impressionism.

Baroque palaces, onion-domed cathedrals and a country estate, centre of the Slavophile art movement in the 19th century.

The art and architecture are enhanced by a private concert with the Dominant Quartet, one of Russia's leading string ensembles.

Moscow, the older of the two metropolises, is the more modern. It developed as the chief city of Muscovy from the 12th century and became capital of the Russian Empire as it expanded in later centuries. Though abandoned by Peter the Great and his successors, it continued to grow and to some extent remained the spiritual and artistic centre of Russia. It regained its status as capital in 1918, and in the last two decades has undergone massive changes – with restoration, painting and gilding, as well as a vibrant commercial and cultural life transforming its economy and appearance, all but banishing the drabness of the Communist era. The Tretyakov Gallery and Pushkin Fine Arts Museum are not to be missed, nor are the great treasures of the Kremlin Armoury.

Founded by Peter the Great in 1703, St Petersburg is perhaps the grandest city in Europe, certainly one of the most beautiful. Laid out on a virgin site, on a monumental scale, its magnificent buildings reflect all the classical styles of the 18th and 19th centuries; little of the fabric of the city has changed since. The Hermitage is one of the world's greatest art museums and the largest, with an immensely rich collection of paintings, sculpture, antiquities and decorative arts filling the enormous Winter Palace of the Romanov Tsars. There are also other great galleries to see, including the Russian Museum, which houses a wonderful collection of Russian art, from icons onwards.

Itinerary

Day 1: London to Moscow. Fly at c. 11.00am from London Heathrow to Moscow (British Airways). There is time to settle into the hotel before dinner. First of four nights in Moscow.



Moscow St Basil's

Day 2: Moscow. A short coach tour provides orientation and an overview of the capital. Red Square, part framed by the walls of the Kremlin and crowned by St Basil's Cathedral, is best seen on foot. The Tretyakov Gallery holds the finest collection of Russian icons in the country, as well as examples of portraits and landscapes by leading Russian artists of the 18th and 19th centuries. After lunch, return to the Gallery for further exploration and time to take in significant history paintings.

Day 3: Moscow. Walk through Alexandrov Gardens to the Kremlin. Many of the tsarist and ecclesiastical buildings have survived the Communist era, among these a spectacular group of cathedrals. The Armoury Museum has a remarkable collection of gold and silver, and other precious objets d'art, gifts to the tsars. In the afternoon, see the superb Impressionist paintings at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, central repository for Russia's extensive European art collection. *Evening concert with the Dominant Quartet, one of the country's foremost string ensembles, who perform an all-Russian programme exclusively for our group.*

Day 4: Moscow, Abramtsevo. A day's excursion into the countryside 50 miles north of Moscow. Owned in the 1840s by a well-connected Muscovite, Sergey Aksakov, and subsequently by the railway magnate, Savva Mamontov, the estate at Abramtsevo became known throughout the 19th century as a creative colony for the Slavophile movement. Many well-known artists and writers stayed there, engaging a distinctly Russian artistic identity, one which included a revival of interest in traditional arts and crafts.

Day 5: Moscow to St Petersburg. The Novodivichy Convent, baroque-style Moscow architecture at its finest, was a retreat – at times enforced – for some of Russia's most famous noblewomen. In the afternoon travel by train (business class) from Moscow to St Petersburg. Dinner is included in the hotel upon arrival.

Day 6: St Petersburg. In the morning, a tour by coach, taking in the sumptuous Marble Palace (exterior), designed by Rinaldi in baroque and neo-classical style, and the wonderful group of Smolny Convent and Cathedral by Rastrelli. Explore the north bank of the

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continued

Neva and Vasilyevsky Island, which, as the original intended site of the city, has some of St Petersburg's earliest buildings including the Twelve Colleges and the Peter-Paul Fortress. Visit the Menshikov Palace, an early 18th-century residence with impressive Petrine decoration. In the afternoon, see the Russian Museum in the imposing Mikhailovsky Palace, which houses Russian paintings from medieval icons to the vast canvases of the Romantics and Realists of the 19th century.

Day 7: St Petersburg. Walk to the Hermitage, one of the world's greatest art collections, housed in Rastrelli's Winter Palace and contiguous buildings; walk around to understand the layout and to see the magnificent interiors. Continue on foot to the remarkable neo-classical buildings of the Synod, Senate and Admiralty. In the afternoon, drive via the Kazan Cathedral with colonnaded forecourt to the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, an extensive baroque layout and cemetery with graves of many famous Russians.

Day 8: St Petersburg. A morning excursion to Peterhof (return by hydrofoil, weather permitting), the magnificent palace on the Gulf of Finland with cascades and fountains. In the afternoon, a private backstage tour of the Mariinsky theatre before some free time. *The date and time of this appointment can only be confirmed by the theatre one week prior to the tour and is dependent on rehearsal schedules. There is a chance we may not be able to include this visit.*

Day 9: St Petersburg. A morning visit and time for lunch at the summer palace at Pavlovsk, a well restored, graceful neo-classical Great Palace with encircling wings, built in part by Scotsman Charles Cameron. Continue by coach and fly to London Heathrow, arriving at c. 6.00pm.

Lecturer

Dr Alexey Makhrov. Russian art historian and lecturer. He graduated from the St Petersburg Academy of Arts and obtained his PhD from the University of St Andrews followed by post-doctoral work as a Research Fellow at Exeter University. He now lives in Switzerland where he has studied International History and Politics at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies Geneva and teaches courses on Russian art.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £4,440 or £4,150 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,990 or £4,700 without flights.

Included: inbound flights direct (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus A320) and outbound (two flights with a stop) SAS Scandinavian Airlines (Airbus A 320); business class train travel from Moscow to St Petersburg (a meal is included), travel by private coach throughout; a private concert in Moscow with the Dominant Quartet; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 1 picnic lunch, 5 dinners with wine; all admissions; all tips for drivers, restaurant staff, guides; all state and airport taxes; the services of the lecturer and a national guide.

Optional music: details of opera and ballet performances in St Petersburg will be sent to participants about one month before the tour and tickets can be requested.

Visas: British citizens and most other foreign nationals require a tourist visa. The current cost for UK nationals is around £141, including service charge. This is not included in the price of the tour because you have to procure it yourself. You will need to complete an online application in the two-month period before departure, and submit this along with your passport. As of 10th December 2014, it is obligatory for UK residents of all nationalities to attend one of three application centres, in London, Manchester or Edinburgh, in order to submit biometric data (fingerprints) as part of the visa application process. Visa issuing times vary from country to country but UK residents should expect to be without their passport for approximately one week.

Accommodation: Hotel National (national.ru): an elegant and comfortable 5-star hotel in the city centre, within easy walking distance of the Kremlin; **Hotel Angleterre** (angleterrehotel.com): an excellently located 5-star hotel in the city centre, within easy walking distance of the Hermitage. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is a fair amount of standing in galleries and walking on this tour. Traffic congestion means coach journeys can be long and frustrating. Average coach travel per day: 24 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.