



## St Petersburg

Pictures and palaces in the imperial capital

**6–13 May 2022 (MI 338)**

8 days • £3,410

Lecturer: Dr Alexey Makhrov

**16–23 September 2022 (MI 488)**

8 days • £3,410

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St Petersburg is perhaps the grandest city in Europe, and one of the most beautiful.

Magnificent architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries, especially the palaces of the Romanovs, nobility and merchants.

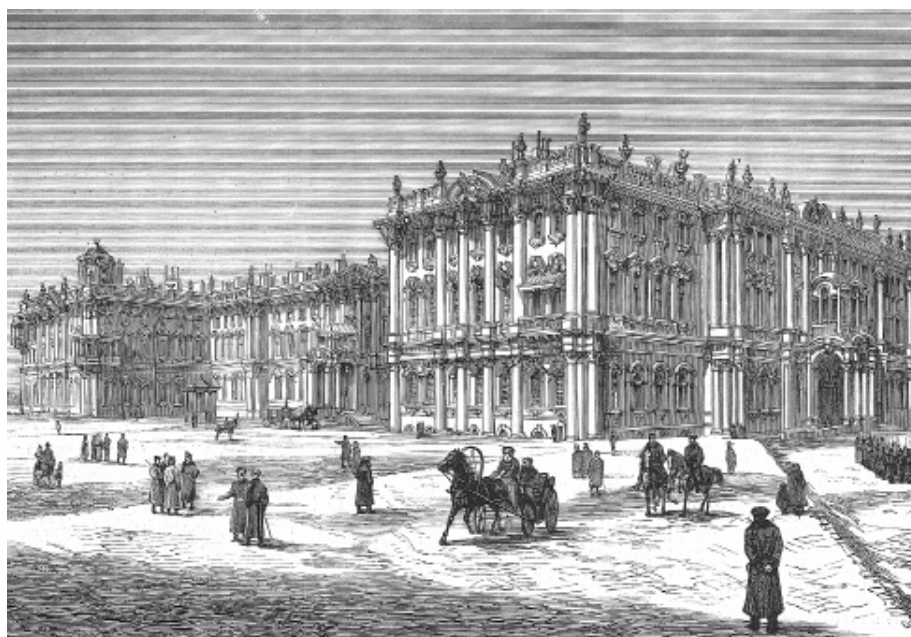
Outstanding art collections, the Hermitage being the largest art museum in the world.

Founded by Peter the Great in 1703, the city of St Petersburg was intended to demonstrate to the world not only that Russia was a European rather than an Asian nation, but also that it was an immensely powerful one. This 'Window on the West' became the capital of the Russian Empire until the government moved back to Moscow in 1918.

Peter's wish was amply fulfilled: with the assistance of Dutch, Italian and French architects – Russians were to take over later in the century once they had mastered the mysteries of Western art and architecture – St Petersburg was laid out as the grandest city in Europe, with buildings on a monumental scale. The palaces of the imperial family and of the fabulously wealthy magnates vied with each other, and with the military establishments and government institutions to dominate the river front, the broad avenues and the vast squares.

Although one of the newest of Europe's great cities, St Petersburg is the one least affected by 20th-century building. Despite the well-publicised economic and political troubles Russia has undergone in recent years, there has been a surge of cleaning and restoration which has accentuated the beauty of the city.

As impressive as the architecture of St Petersburg are the contents of the museums and art galleries. The Hermitage is one of the world's greatest art museums, with an immensely rich collection of paintings, sculpture, antiquities and decorative arts filling the enormous Winter Palace of the Romanovs. The Russian Museum comes as a revelation to most visitors, for apart from icons (and there is a wonderful collection) the great achievements of Russian painters, particularly during the



*St Petersburg, Winter Palace, wood engraving c. 1880.*

19th century, are scarcely known outside the country.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly at c. 10.00am from London Heathrow to St Petersburg via Helsinki (Finnair; time in the air: c. 6 hours 30 minutes). Dinner is in the hotel.

**Day 2.** Explore the north bank of the 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, visit the Russian Museum in the imposing Mikhailovsky Palace, which houses Russian painting from medieval icons to the vast canvases of the Romantics and Realists of the 19th century.

**Day 3.** The first of two visits 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. Walk to the remarkable Neo-Classical buildings of the Synod, Senate and Admiralty. Continue 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.

*Early access to the Hermitage by special arrangement is subject to confirmation two weeks before each visit.*

**Day 4.** A full-day excursion to two of the summer palaces about 20 miles from St Petersburg, both set in extensive landscaped parks with lakes and pavilions. At Tsarskoye Selo, formerly Pushkin, the main building is the outsized Rococo Catherine Palace by Rastrelli, its richly ornamented interiors painstakingly restored after war damage. At Pavlovsk, also well restored, the graceful Neo-Classical Great Palace with encircling wings was in part built by Scotsman Charles Cameron.

**Day 5.** A morning excursion to Peterhof (by hydrofoil, weather permitting), the magnificent palace on the Gulf of Finland with cascades and fountains. Some free time for independent exploration.

**Day 6.** A second visit to the Hermitage to concentrate on specific aspects of the collections and to pursue individual passions. Drive through the city. The Baroque Cathedral of St Nicholas, with its gilded domes, is a memorial to Russian navy sailors who perished

## St Petersburg continued

at sea. Visit the late 19th-century Yusupov Palace, one of the finest in the city and scene of Rasputin's murder.

**Day 7.** A visit to the world's largest collection of Fabergé works, displayed in the Shuvalov Palace. 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.** A free morning; perhaps the Hermitage again, or places not yet visited such as the Dostoyevsky Museum, Academy of Arts, or Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood. Fly to London Heathrow via Helsinki, arriving at c. 5.00pm.

## 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 in May 2022 (MI 338) and September 2022 (MI 488).**

**Two sharing:** £3,410 with flights, or £3,160 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,800 with flights or £3,550 without flights.

**Included:** flights (economy class) with Finnair (Airbus 350-900; ATR 72); travel by private coach throughout; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 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.

**Music:** details of opera and ballet performances 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 Angleterre** ([angleterrehotel.com](http://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: 13 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.