

Kaliningrad Excursion

Sandwiched by Poland to the south and Lithuania to the east and north, and with 148km of Baltic coastline to the west, Kaliningrad is a small Russian enclave that's intimately attached to the Motherland yet also a world apart.

In the last few years the region has started squaring up to its tourist-friendly Baltic neighbours by asserting its potential as a holiday destination. In this 'Little Russia' you'll find plenty of fine hotels and restaurants, a youthful outlook, plus all the traditions of the big parent, wrapped in a manageable package of beautiful countryside, splendid beaches and fascinating historical sights.

Annexed by Russia in 1945 (after one of the fiercest battles of WWII), Kaliningrad was previously the German kingdom of Prussia, its roots stretching back to the Teutonic Knights who ruled the Baltic in the Middle Ages from the city of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad). While Stalin ethnically cleansed the land of all Germans, centuries of Germanic culture and a legacy of castles, fortifications and domestic architecture were not as easily removed. In the go-ahead capital Kaliningrad, beside glitzy new shopping malls, the old cathedral has been rebuilt and there are plans to resurrect the castle and obliterated medieval core of the city.

If you plan to visit areas outside the region's capital, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Russia & Belarus* guide.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 15,100 sq km (region)
- **Birthplace of** Immanuel Kant; numerous cosmonauts
- **Country** Russia
- **Country code** ☎ 2 within the region, ☎ 4012 from elsewhere
- **Departure tax** none
- **Money** rouble; €1 = R39.25; US\$1 = R28; UK£1 = R42.15
- **Population** 423,000
- **Official language** Russian
- **Visa** You need a Russian visa to enter Kaliningrad (see p399). Citizens of Schengen countries, the UK, Switzerland and Japan can enter with an on-demand 72-hour tourist visa. These need to be arranged via local tourist agencies, such as those listed on p384.



KALININGRAD

Pop 423,000 / ☎ 4012

A fascinating, affluent city that's clearly going places, Kaliningrad is an excellent introduction to Russia's most liberal region. Interesting museums and historical sights sprout in between shiny new shopping centres and the leafy parks and landscaped areas that soften swathes of brutal Soviet architecture. Plentiful transport options and good hotels mean you can use the city as a base to see the rest of the region.

Old photos attest that the former Königsberg was once a Middle European architectural gem equal to Prague or Krakow. The combined destruction of WWII and the Soviet decades put paid to all that. However, there are lovely prewar residential suburbs that evoke the Prussian past and make for rewarding exploration. The authorities also have big plans to remodel Kaliningrad with a mix of futuristic and heritage-inspired building projects – watch this space!

ORIENTATION

Leninsky pr, a north–south avenue, is the city's main artery, running over 3km from the bus and main train station, Yuzhny vokzal (South Station), to Severny vokzal (North Station). About halfway it crosses the Pregolya River and passes the cathedral, the city's major landmark. The city's modern heart is further north, around pl Pobedy.

INFORMATION

Baltma Tours (☎ 931 931; www.baltma.ru; pr Mira 94, 4th fl) The efficient, multilingual staff here can arrange visas, hotel accommodation, tailored city tours and a surprising array of local excursions, including one to Yantarny (42km northwest of the city), home to a huge amber mine.

Emergency Hospital (☎ 466 989; ul Nevskogo 90; ☎ 24hr)

Kaliningrad Regional Informative Educational Centre of Tourism (☎ 655 055; www.tourismkalinin grad.ru; Fish Village, ul Oktyabrskaya 2; ☎ 10am–8pm) Staffed by helpful, English-speaking staff.

King's Castle (☎ 350 782; www.kaliningradinfo.ru; Hotel Kaliningrad, Leninskiy pr 81; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat) A private tourist agency that also operates as a very efficient tourist office. You can access the internet here and book city tours.

Königsberg.ru (www.konigsberg.ru) Web-based tour agency through which you can arrange visas, including the 72-hour express visa, and book hotels.

Post office (ul Chernyakhovskogo 32; internet per hr R50; ☎ post office 10am–2pm & 3–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm & 3–6pm Sat, internet room 10am–2pm & 3–10pm Mon–Sat) Internet access and postal services.

PVU (☎ 563 809, 563 804; Sovetsky pr 13, room 9) For questions or problems regarding Russian visas during your stay.

Russkaya Evropa (www.russeuropa.com) Publishes the free quarterly listings magazine *Welcome to Kaliningrad*, available in hotel lobbies, which has useful information in English on the city and region; see the website for more information.

Telekom (ul Teatralnaya 13; internet per hr R50; ☎ 9am–7pm) For long-distance calls, fax and internet access.

University Guides (foreign.lit.dep@gmail.com) Drop an email to these guys if you're looking for a student guide to show you around town.

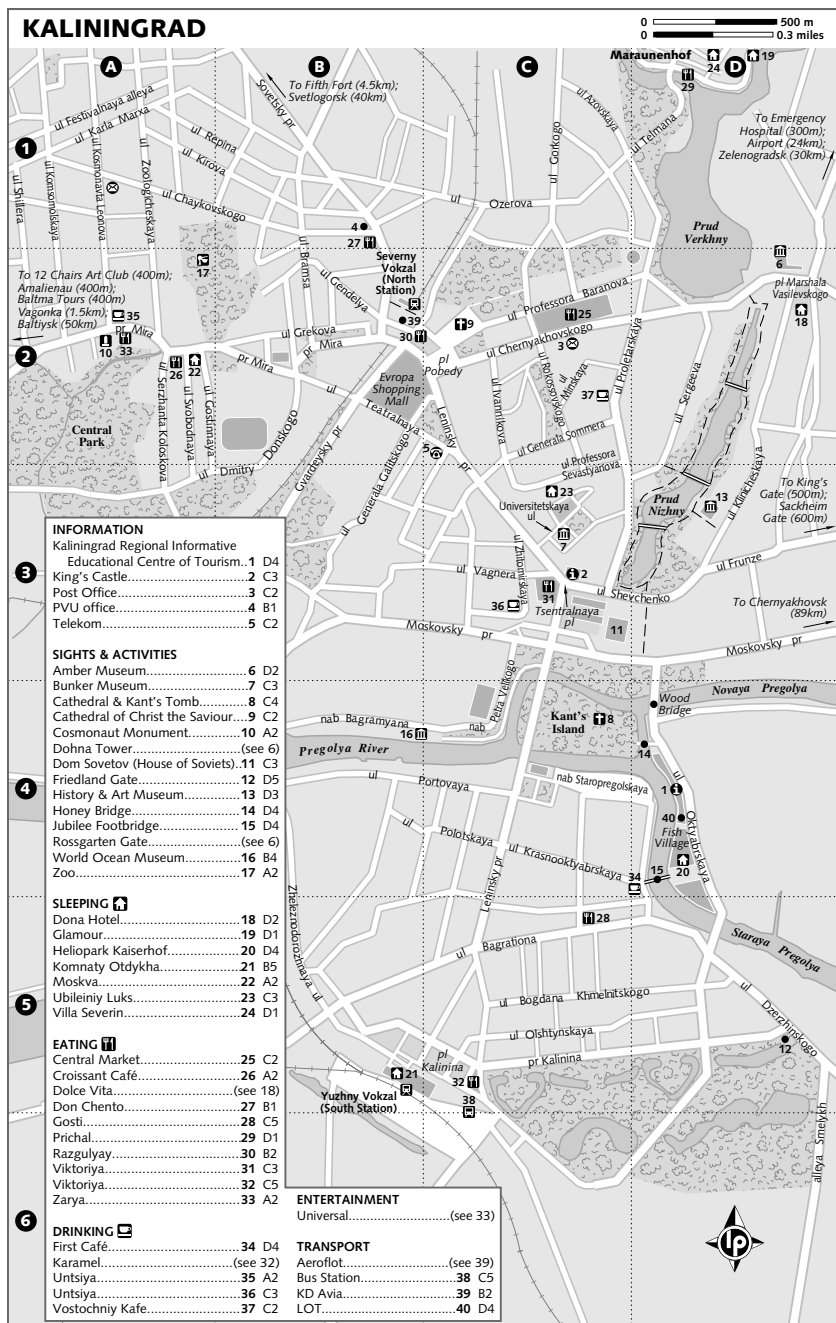
SIGHTS

Cathedral & Around

A Unesco World Heritage site, the majestic red-brick Gothic **cathedral** (☎ 646 868; adult/student R100/50; ☎ 9am–5pm) dates back to 1333. For decades after WWII its ruins rose above the once densely populated Kant Island – now all parkland dotted with sculptures. Rebuilt during the 1990s, the cathedral is occasionally used for concerts and its ground floor has small Lutheran and Orthodox chapels. Upstairs you'll find the reconstructed carved-wood Wallenrodt Library, interesting displays of old Königsberg and objects from archaeological digs. On the top floor is an austere room with the death mask of Immanuel Kant, whose rose-marble **tomb** lies outside on the outer north side.

Crossing the nearby **Honey Bridge**, the oldest of the city's bridges, you can ponder the many padlocks that hang off its iron railings: it's customary for newlyweds to hang locks carved with their names off bridges. On the other side of the bridge is the half-timbered riverside development known as **Fish Village** (Ribnaya Derevnnya). Disneylandish it may be, but this collection of hotels, tourist office, shops and restaurants is a laudable attempt to reprise some of the city's destroyed architectural heritage. The village's first phase, including the handsome new **Jubilee Footbridge**, is complete.

Königsberg's majestic castle, dating from 1255, once stood on Tsentralnaya ploshchad, north of the cathedral. Severely damaged during WWII and dynamited out of existence in the late 1960s, it was replaced by the



outstandingly ugly Dom Sovetov (House of Soviets). During the eyesore's construction it was discovered that the land below it was hollow, with a (now flooded) four-level underground passage connecting to the cathedral. The decaying half-finished building has never been used.

World Ocean Museum

Two boats and a submarine can be explored at the excellent **World Ocean Museum** (☎ 538 915; www.vitiaz.ru; nab Petra Velikogo 1; adult/student R200/120, individual vessels R120/80; 🕒 11am-6pm Wed-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Nov-Mar) strung along the banks of the Pregolya River. The highlight is the handsome former expedition vessel *Vityaz*, which during its heyday conducted many scientific studies around the world. It's moored alongside the *Viktor Patsaev*, named after one of Kaliningrad's famous cosmonauts; once part of the 'space flotilla', its exhibits relate to space research. Inside the B-413 submarine you can get an idea of what life was like for the 300 submariners who once lived and worked aboard.

Also part of the complex is the Maritime Hall in a newly restored old storehouse building, housing interesting displays on fishing and the sea-connected history of Kaliningrad as well as the remains of a 19th-century wooden fishing boat. There's also a pavilion with the skeleton of a 16.8m-long sperm whale, and halls with small aquariums and general information about the ocean. Visits to the *Vityaz* and *Viktor Patsaev* are by guided tour (every 45 minutes or so); you can wander freely through the sub.

Amber Museum

On the edge of Prud Verkhny (Upper Pond), the **Amber Museum** (☎ 466 888; www.ambermuseum.ru; pl Marshala Vasilevskogo 1; adult/student R90/60; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) has some 6000 examples of amber artworks, the most impressive being from the Soviet period. In addition to enormous pieces of jewellery containing prehistoric insects suspended within, some of the more fascinating works include an amber flute and a four-panelled amber-and-ivory chalice depicting Columbus, the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*. You can buy amber jewellery in the museum or from the vendors outside.

City Fortifications and Gates

The Amber Museum is housed in the attractive **Dohna Tower**, a bastion of the city's old defensive ring. The adjacent **Rossgarten Gate**, one of Königsberg's city gates, contains a decent restaurant.

Several other bits of the fortifications and gates remain scattered around the city. The impressively renovated **King's Gate** (☎ 581 272; ul Frunze 112; adult/student R80/40; 🕒 11am-6pm Wed-Sun) houses a museum with cool models of old Königsberg and exhibits on the personalities who shaped the region's history. A little south of here is the twin-towered **Sackheim Gate** (nr pr Moscovsky & Litovsky Val).

Newly restored **Friedland Gate** (pr Kalinina 6; adult/child R20/10; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) contains a small museum with a great map plotting the locations of the 13 original city gates. There's an intriguing arms display, and the original cobblestone road that ran through the gate is visible inside.

At the city's northern border, along Soviety sky pr, is the **Fifth Fort** (Pyaty Fort). One of the city's 15 forts constructed between 1872 and 1892 as a second line of defence, it's a heavily wooded ruin that's fun to explore for its hidden passages. Take trolleybus 1 to the Pyaty Fort stop.

Other Museums

The **History & Art Museum** (☎ 453 844; ul Klinicheskaya 21; adult/student R70/50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), housed in a reconstructed 1912 concert hall by the banks of the pretty Prud Nizhny (Lower Pond), is worth a visit. Though it mainly focuses on Soviet rule, the German past is not ignored in the many interesting displays. There are chilling posters of the castle's destruction.

Cross the footbridge over Prud Nizhny and walk west towards the university to discover the fascinating **Bunker Museum** (☎ 536 593; Universitetskaya ul 2; adult/student R70/50; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Sun), the buried German command post in 1945, where the city's last German commander, Otto van Lasch, capitulated to the Soviets.

Amalienau & Maraunenhof

Casual strolls through the linden-scented, tree-lined neighbourhoods of **Amalienau** to the city's west along pr Mira, and **Maraunenhof** at the north end of Prud Verkhny, are the best way to get an idea of genteel pre-WWII Königsberg. Amalienau is particularly

lovely, with an eclectic range of villas along ul Kutuzova and the streets connecting prs Pobedy and Mira. In Maraunenhof you'll find several appealing small hotels as well as the German consulate with its strikingly colourful visa section.

Ploshchad Pobedy & Prospekt Mira

Pl Pobedy is the site of several modern shopping centres and the new **Cathedral of Christ the Saviour**, its gold domes visible from many points in the city.

Extending west of the square is pr Mira, lined with shops and cafes leading to some of the city's prettiest areas. Along here you'll find the **Zoo** (☎ 218 924; pr Mira 26; adult/student R100/40; 🕒 9am-9pm Jun-Aug, 10am-5pm Sep-May), which before WWII was considered the third best in the world, but is now in a sorry state.

Further west is the striking **Cosmonaut Monument**, a gem of Soviet iconography. This honours the several cosmonauts who hail from the region. Just west, as pr Pobedy branches out from pr Mira, is the entrance to **Central Park**, a splendid, forest-like park on the grounds of an old German cemetery.

SLEEPING

Kaliningrad is well served with midrange and top-end hotels but it's crying out for a decent hostel or budget accommodation.

Komnaty Otdykha (☎ 586 447; pl Kalinina; r R800) Inside the south train station, the 'resting rooms' are surprisingly quiet and clean, with OK shared bathrooms. Find them by turning right down the corridor after the ticket hall and walking up to the 3rd floor.

our pick Villa Severin (☎ 365 373; www.villa-severin.ru; ul Leningradskaya 9A; s/d from R950/1900; 🏠 📺) There's a homely atmosphere at this pretty villa, set back from Prud Verkhny, with nine comfortably furnished rooms including simple student rooms. There's also a small sauna and a cafe.

Moskva (☎ 352 300; www.hotel.kaliningrad.ru; pr Mira 19; s/d from R1950/2400) Kaliningrad's oldest hotel has been reborn after extensive renovations and boasts bright spacious rooms, friendly atmosphere and a good location.

Glamour (☎ 340 000; www.glamour-hotel.ru; ul Verkhnezernaya 26; r incl breakfast from R2300; 🏠 📺) Aspiring to boutique hotel status, the Glamour offers romantically decorated rooms, some with balconies overlooking Prud Verkhny.

Ubileiniy Luks (☎ 519 024; www.ubilejny-lux.ru; ul Universitetskaya 2; r/apt from R2500/3800; 🏠 📺) Atop a business centre, this hotel's central, quiet location is ideal. Its 13 rooms are all enormous, and most have kitchens. Wi-fi available.

Dona Hotel (☎ 351 650; http://dona.kaliningrad.ru; pl Marshala Vasilevskogo 2; s/d incl breakfast from R2550/3050; 🏠 📺) Featuring design touches worthy of a Philippe Starck protégé, the Dona is a tribute to sleek modernism. It has friendly English-speaking staff, buffet breakfasts, and Dolce Vita (p388), one of the city's best restaurants.

our pick Heliopark Kaiserhof (☎ 592 222; www.heliopark.ru/eng; ul Oktyabrskaya 8; s/d incl breakfast from R3350/4150; 🏠 📺) Anchoring Fish Village, this is a nicely designed and furnished hotel, with a central atrium and superstylish rooms.

EATING

our pick Croissant Café (pr Mira 24; meals R100; 🕒 9am-11pm Sun-Thu, 24hr Fri & Sat) A chic baked-goods heaven. Indulge in flaky pastries, quiches, muffins, biscuits and cakes, as well as omelettes and *bliny* (Russian-style pancakes) for breakfast.

Don Chento (☎ 937 672; Sovetsky pr 9-11; meals R100-200; 🕒 11am-11pm) No need to endure a depressing Soviet-throwback *stolovaya* (cafeteria) for budget meals when you can dig in at the self-serve salad bar or pick a slice of pizza at this stylish chain with several branches across the city.

Razgulyay (☎ 533 689; pl Pobedy 1; meals R100-200; 🕒 8am-10pm) The extensive buffet here features roasted meats, salads, fresh juices and other tasty selections in a cheery, folk-style setting. There's also a more formal restaurant on-site.

Zarya (☎ 213 929; pr Mira 43; meals R200-300; 🕒 10am-3am) Fashionable brasserie in the lobby of the Scala cinema that also has an attractive outdoor area. Service can be hit-and-miss but the food is reliable.

Prichal (☎ 703 030; ul Verkhnezernaya 2A; meals R200-500; 🕒 noon-1am Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) Private huts in a pretty garden overlooking Prud Verkhny make this spruced up Soviet-era Georgian restaurant a memorable dining experience.

our pick Gosti (☎ 384 747; Maliy per 32; meals R400-800; 🕒 noon-midnight) Attached to the city's technical college, this charming restaurant has a wonderful homely atmosphere, inventive food

and attentive service. At lunch everything is half-price.

Dolce Vita (☎ 351 612; <http://dolcevita.kaliningrad.ru>; pl Marshala Vasilevskogo 2; mains R500-1000; ☎ noon-midnight) Bust your budget for the fantastic food at this elegant restaurant next to the Dona Hotel. The melon-and-mint gazpacho is inspired.

Self-caterers should visit the lively central market on ul Chernyakhovskogo or **Viktoriya** (Kaliningrad Plaza, Leninsky pr 30; ☎ 10am-10pm), a large Western-style supermarket that also has a handy branch opposite the bus and train station at pl Kalinina.

DRINKING

First Café (☎ 644 829; ul Yepronovskaya 21) Kaliningrad's answer to Starbucks has three other locations in the city besides this branch opposite Fish Village. It's a stylish cafe-bar operation with a wide range of drinks, snacks and free wi-fi.

Untsiya Zhitomirskaya (ul Zhitomirskaya 22) Mira (pr Mira 58-60) Two outlets of an elegant old-world teashop and cafe serving all manner of black, green, white and fruit-flavoured teas and infusions.

Vostochniy Kafe (☎ 147 121; ul Proletarskaya 3a; meals R150-300) Paper lanterns, cushions and New Age music set the scene for lounging over pipefuls of flavoured tobacco and potfuls of green tea at this basement spot.

12 Chairs Art Club (☎ 955 900; pr Mira 67; mains R200-300) Dark and atmospheric, this arty cellar with mismatched furniture in an old German house serves cocktails, coffee and tea as well as food.

Karamel (Kaliningrad Plaza, Leninsky pr 30; ☎ 24hr) On the 7th floor of a shopping centre, Karamel offers splendid city views, a DJ spinning top sounds and a wide range of drinks and dishes.

ENTERTAINMENT

Major DJs from Russia and Western Europe jet in for gigs at Kaliningrad's many clubs. Top picks include:

Universal (☎ 952 996; www.club-universal.com; pr Mira 43; admission from R300) Kaliningrad's classiest club.

Vagonka (☎ 956 677; www.vagonka.net; Stanochnaya ul 12; admission from R150) Best option for the under-21 crowd; drinks are cheap.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Kaliningrad's **Khrabrovo Airport** (☎ 459 426), 24km north of the city, is the hub of **KD Avia** (☎ 355 815; www.kdavia.eu; pl Pobedy 4) which has flights to 12 destinations in Russia, including Moscow and St Petersburg, as well as to France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK and Ukraine. Russia's largest airline, **Aeroflot** (☎ 954 805; pl Pobedy 4), flies four times daily to/from Moscow. Other airlines serving Kaliningrad include **Air Baltic** (☎ 890-6216 6872; www.airbaltic.com) serving Riga, and **LOT** (☎ 592 121; www.lot.com; ul Oktyabrskaya 4) with flights to Warsaw.

Bus

The **bus station** (☎ 643 635; ul Zheleznodorozhnaya 7) has services to every part of the region. International destinations include: Klaipėda (R240, three hours, four daily), Kaunas/Vilnius (R465/640, six/eight hours, twice daily), Riga (R660, nine hours, twice daily), Tallinn (R1192, 14 hours, daily), Olshtyn/Gdansk (R350/500, four/five hours, twice daily) and Warsaw (R650, nine hours, daily).

Train

There are two stations in the city: **Severny vokzal** (North Station; ☎ 601 838) and the larger **Yuzhny vokzal** (South Station; ☎ 600 888). All long-distance and many local trains go from Yuzhny vokzal, passing through but not always stopping at Severny vokzal. It's important to note that *all* trains, including local ones, run on Moscow time (minus one hour), so if a train is scheduled to depart at 10am on the timetable it will leave at 9am Kaliningrad time.

There are four trains daily to Vilnius (R1700, six hours), one daily to Berlin (R2900, 14 hours), three daily to Moscow (R2700, 23 hours) and one daily to St Petersburg (R3000, 26 hours); and every other day to Kyiv (R2500, 25 hours).

GETTING AROUND

To get to the airport, take bus 138 from the bus station (R30). Taxis ask at least R700 from the airport, and less to the airport.

Tickets for trams, trolleybuses, buses and minibuses are sold onboard (R10).

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