



Russia Россия

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Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel Metropol (p782)
- » Home From Home Hostel (p782)
- » Alexander House (p799)
- » Anichkov Pension (p799)
- » Chaika (p812)

Best Places to Eat

- » Delicatessen (p783)
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- » Teplo (p803)
- » Sadko (p803)
- » Dolce Vita (p813)

Why Go?

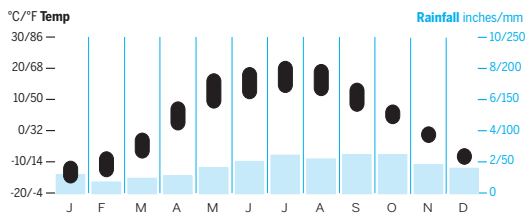
Could there be a more iconic image of Eastern Europe than Moscow's awe-inspiring Red Square? Intimately associated with this vision is the lingering impression that Russia remains a closed-off, difficult and unfriendly place in which to travel. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Two decades on from the demise of the Soviet Union, an economically and politically resurgent Russia is a brash, exciting and fascinating place to visit. All the fruits of capitalism, including good hotels, restaurants and fully stocked shops, stand alongside things that the country has long got right, such as beautiful architecture and an elegant cultural scene of classical music and art.

Outside the major cities covered in this chapter – namely Moscow, St Petersburg, Veliky Novgorod and Kaliningrad – there are also the simple pleasures of a countryside dotted with timeless wooden cottages and deserted beaches to discover. Don't let the matter of a little visa red tape deter you.

When To Go

Moscow



9 May Big military parades and a public holiday mark the end of WWII.

June-July Party during St Petersburg's White Nights; bask on the beaches of Kaliningrad.

December-January Winter arts festivals and snow make Moscow and St Petersburg look magical.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** rouble (R)
- » **Language** Russian
- » **Visas** Required by all – apply at least a month in advance of your trip. For more details, see p824.

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 16,995,800 sq km
- » **Capital** Moscow
- » **Telephone code** 7
- » **Emergency** ambulance 03, emergency assistance 112, fire 01, police 02

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	R29.71
Canada	C\$1	R29.26
euro	€1	R40.45
Japan	¥100	R33.93
New Zealand	NZ\$1	R22.32
UK	UK£1	R45.81
USA	US\$1	R28.13

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room Moscow/elsewhere** R3000/1000
- » **Two-course meal** R600 to R1200
- » **Museum entrance** R350
- » **Beer** R70
- » **Metro ticket Moscow/St Petersburg** R26/22

Resources

- » **Visit Russia** (www.visitrussia.org.uk)
- » **The Moscow Expat Site** (www.expat.ru)
- » **Way to Russia** (www.waytorussia.net)

Connections

Bordering Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, Russia has excellent train and bus connections with the rest of Europe. Routes connecting Kaliningrad with St Petersburg will take you through the Baltic countries, while trains between Kaliningrad and Moscow head through Belarus. Trains from Kharkiv in Ukraine transit via Kursk, Oryol and Tula to terminate in Moscow. Pskov, just 30km from Estonia, is a great place to either say goodbye or hello to Russia.

ITINERARIES

Three days in Moscow

See Red Square, the Kremlin and the spectacular collection at the State Tretyakov Gallery. Also don't miss the magnificent Novodevichy Convent or a show at a contemporary gallery such as Garazh. Take a trip to Sergiev Posad or sweat it out in the luxurious Sanduny Baths.

Three days in St Petersburg

Wander up Nevsky Pr, see Palace Sq, the mighty Neva River then tour the magnificent collection of the Hermitage. Visit St Peter and Paul Fortress, the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood and the wonderful Russian Museum. Make an excursion either to Petrodvorets or Tsarskoe Selo.

Two days in Kaliningrad

Admire the reconstructed Gothic Cathedral, then wander along the river to the excellent World Ocean Museum. The Amber Museum is also impressive. Enjoy either the old Prussian charm of the spa town of Svetlogorsk or the sand dunes and forests of the Kurshskaya Kosa National Park.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Soups** For example, the lemony, meat *solyanka* or the hearty fish *ukha*.
- » **Bliny** (pancakes) Served with *ikra* (caviar) or *tvorog* (cottage cheese).
- » **Salads** A wide variety usually slathered in mayonnaise, including the chopped potato one called Olivier.
- » **Pelmeni** (dumplings) Stuffed with meat and eaten with sour cream and vinegar.
- » **Central Asian dishes** Try *plov* (fried rice with vegetables and lamb), *shashlikiy* (kebabs) or *lagman* (noodles).
- » **Vodka** The quintessential Russian tippie.
- » **Kvas** A refreshing, beer-like drink, or the red berry juice mix *mors*.