



Kaliningrad Excursion

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Why Go?

Inside Russia's smallest territory you'll find all the traditions of the big parent, alongside plenty of fine hotels and restaurants, welcoming locals, beautiful countryside, splendid beaches and fascinating historical sights.

The Teutonic Knights ruled the Baltic in the Middle Ages from Königsberg (now the region's capital, Kaliningrad) in a land once known as Prussia. Although little remains to indicate that Königsberg was once a Middle European architectural gem equal to Prague or Krakow, there are attractive residential suburbs and remnants of the city's old fortifications that evoke the Prussian past. Interesting museums, slick shopping centres and a multitude of leafy parks also soften the vast swaths of brutal Soviet-era architecture.

Plentiful transport options make Kaliningrad an ideal base from which to see the rest of the region – nothing is more than a few hours' drive away. If you plan to visit areas outside the region's capital, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Russia* guide.

When to Go

In mid-May there's free entry to Kaliningrad's museums on Museum Night, plus special events including music and dance performances and fire and body-art shows. Russian Navy Day at the start of the fourth week of July offers a rare chance to visit the nearby naval port of Baltiysk, which is usually off-limits to tourists unless they are on pre-organised tours. The Don Chento Jazz Festival is held in Kaliningrad every August, the main shows taking place in the city's Central Park.

KALININGRAD AT A GLANCE

- » **Area** 15,100 sq km (region)
- » **Country code** 72 within the region, 4012 from elsewhere
- » **Departure tax** none
- » **Money** rouble; €1 = R41.40; US\$1 = R29.1; UK£1 = R47.2
- » **Population** 423,000
- » **Official language** Russian
- » **Visa** You need a Russian visa to enter Kaliningrad (see p403). 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 private travel agencies.

Sights

KANT ISLAND & AROUND

This once densely populated island – now all parkland dotted with sculptures – is dominated by the reconstructed Gothic cathedral. A few nearby buildings – the **former stock exchange** from the 1870s (now housing various community clubs) and the neo-traditional row of shops, restaurants and hotels known as **Fish Village** – just hint at what this riverside area looked like pre-WWII.

Kaliningrad Cathedral

MUSEUM

(7631 705; www.sobor-kaliningrad.ru; adult/student R150/75; 9am-5pm) Photos displayed inside this Unesco World Heritage cathedral show how thoroughly in ruins it was until the early 1990s when German donations helped it to be rebuilt; the original dates back to 1333. The lofty interior is dominated by an ornate organ used for regular **concerts** that are worth attending; the Russian version of the website has the schedule. Upstairs is the carved-wood Wallenrodt Library, interesting displays of old Königsberg and objects from archaeological digs. On the top floor is an exhibition devoted to Immanuel Kant, including his death mask. The philosopher's rose-marble **tomb** can be found on the outer north side of the building.

Museum of the World Ocean

MARITIME MUSEUM

(http://world-ocean.ru/en/; nab Petra Velikogo 1; adult/student R250/170, individual vessels R120/

80; 10am-6pm Wed-Sun) Strung along the banks of the Pregolya River are several ships, a sub, maritime machinery and a couple of exhibition halls that make up this excellent museum. Explore 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; its exhibits relate to space research. Inside the B-413 submarine, sample what life was like for the 300 submariners who once lived and worked aboard.

A restored old storehouse building houses interesting displays on fishing and the sea-connected history of Kaliningrad, as well as a rare archaeological find of 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.

CITY FORTIFICATIONS & GATES

Scattered around the city are the remains of Königsberg's red-brick fortification walls, bastions and gates, built in stages between the 17th and 19th centuries. Sections have been rescued from ruin and turned into museums.

Amber Museum

MUSEUM

(www.ambermuseum.ru; pl Marshala Vasilevskogo 1; adult/student R120/90; 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Housed in the **Dohna Tower** this museum has some 6000 examples of amber artworks, the most impressive being from the Soviet period. In addition to enormous pieces of jewellery containing suspended prehistoric insects, one of the more fascinating works is 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. Adjacent to the museum the **Rossgarten Gate** now houses a restaurant.

Friedland Gate

MUSEUM

(www.fvmuseum.ru; ul Dzerzhinskogo 30; adult/student R50/20; 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) The best way to see what pre-WWII Königsberg looked like is to attend the 40-minute **multi-media show** (R30; ☺on the hour, noon-5pm) screened in the halls of this well-put-together museum occupying one of the 13 original city gates. The evocative show is made up of projections of photos taken in the city