

Russia

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Why Go?

Could there be a more iconic image of eastern Europe than the awe-inspiring architectural ensemble of Moscow's Red Square? Russia's brash, exciting and economically powerful capital is a must on any trip to the region.

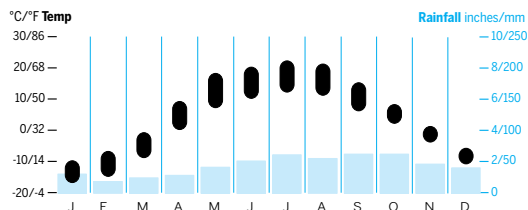
St Petersburg, on the Baltic coast, also shouldn't be missed. The former imperial capital is still Russia's most beautiful and alluring city, with its colourful and often crumbling Italianate mansions, winding canals and enormous Neva River.

Emulating the tourist-friendly nature of its Baltic neighbours is little Kaliningrad, wedged between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic Sea. It's a fascinating destination, combining all the best elements of its enormous mother.

Visa red tape deters many travellers from visiting Russia (Россия) – don't let it keep you from experiencing the incredible things to see and do in the European part of the world's largest country.

When to Go

Moscow



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

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

Dec-Jan Snow makes Moscow and St Petersburg look magical, while hotel rates drop.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Ruble (R)
- » **Language** Russian
- » **Money** Plenty of ATMs, most accept foreign cards
- » **Visas** Required by all – apply at least a month in advance of your trip

Fast Facts

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

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	R32.44
Canada	C\$1	R30.58
Euro Zone	€1	R39.69
Japan	¥100	R32.91
New Zealand	NZ\$1	R26.00
UK	UK£1	R46.99
USA	US\$1	R31.06

Set Your Budget

- » **Bed in a hostel** R500–1000
- » **Two-course meal** R300–700
- » **Museum entrance** R350
- » **Beer** R50–120
- » **Metro ticket** R28

Resources

- » **Visit Russia**
(www.visitrussia.org.uk)
- » **Moscow Expat Site**
(www.expatriate.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. Be careful, however: many routes connecting St Petersburg and Moscow with points west – including Kaliningrad – go through Belarus, for which you'll need a transit visa. Buses are the best way to get from St Petersburg to Tallinn. St Petersburg to Helsinki can be done by boat, bus or train.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Spend three days in Moscow. See Red Sq, the Kremlin and the spectacular collections at the Tretyakov, New Tretyakov and Pushkin art museums. Journey out of the centre to the magnificent Novodevichy Convent & Cemetery, and the revamped Gorky Park. Sweat it out in the luxurious Sanduny Baths or do a metro tour. The last three days are reserved for splendid St Petersburg. Wander up Nevsky pr, see Dvortsovaya pl, and spend a half-day at the Hermitage. Tour the canals and the mighty Neva River by boat. Visit Peter & Paul Fortress, the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood and the wonderful Russian Museum.

Two Weeks

With two extra days in Moscow, venture outside the centre to explore Gorky Park, and take a day trip to charming Sergiev Posad. In St Petersburg, spend more time in the Hermitage and other museums. Head to Kaliningrad and admire the reconstructed Gothic Cathedral and wander along the river to the excellent World Ocean Museum. The Amber Museum is also impressive. Explore the 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* (Uzbek pilaf), *shashlyk* (kebab) or *lagman* (noodles).
- » **Vodka** The quintessential Russian tipple.
- » **Kvas** A refreshing, beerlike drink, or the red berry juice mix *mors*.