

# Northern European Russia

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Karelskaya Gornitsa (p305)
- » El Fuego (p343)
- » Puzatyi Patsyuk (p333)
- » Traktir Zhily-Bily (p326)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel Onega (p303)
- » Hotel Priyut (p316)
- » Hotel Dvina (p341)
- » Hotel 69 Parallel (p325)
- » Hotel Anglitter (p332)

## Why Go?

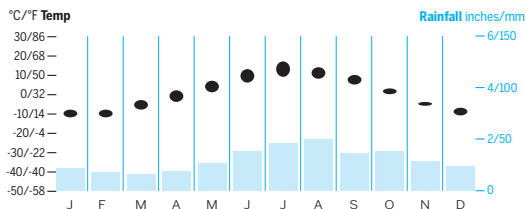
Cold hands, warm heart? The idiom has never rung more true than in this land of polar winters and cliché-busting Russian hospitality, where those braving daunting long hauls and off-radar destinations are rewarded with a hearty reception by curious locals.

But the allure of Northern European Russia (Северно-Европейская Россия) goes deeper than vodka shots and convivial conversation: the realm that spawned the epic poetry of the *Kalevala* is home to a profound historical and scenic landscape that includes the iconic wooden architecture of Kizhi Island, the far-flung Solovetsky Islands' imposing monastery/erstwhile Gulag camp, and a vast, lush wilderness that's just beginning to recognise its tourism potential. It's also one of the best places to witness the eerie northern lights.

For all its trademark Arctic majesty, the region's short summer is also a great time to visit, perfect for making boat connections, fishing for prize salmon and frolicking beneath the midnight sun.

## When to Go

### Murmansk



**Late Apr–May**  
Watch winter melt away as the landscape transforms almost overnight.

**Late May–late Jul**  
The fleeting summer is ideal for island access and fun in the midnight sun.

**Late Nov–mid-Jan**  
Scan the perpetually sunless skies for the gasp-inducing aurora borealis.



## Northern European Russia Highlights

- 1** Marvel at the glorious ancient wooden architecture of **Kizhi** (p307), including the iconic multidomed Transfiguration Church
- 2** Go monastery-hopping at the sylvan retreat of **Valaam** (p310) and the ever-evocative **Solovetsky Islands** (p312)
- 3** Swim with the human walruses then board a nuclear icebreaker in **Murmansk** (p322), the world's biggest Arctic city
- 4** Stuff your stocking in **Veliky Ustyug** (p336), home to the Russian Santa, Ded Moroz
- 5** Hunt for the aurora borealis or bask in the midnight sun on the all-or-nothing **Kola Peninsula** (p301)
- 6** Try your hand at traditional folk art in the tranquil town of **Kargopol** (p338)