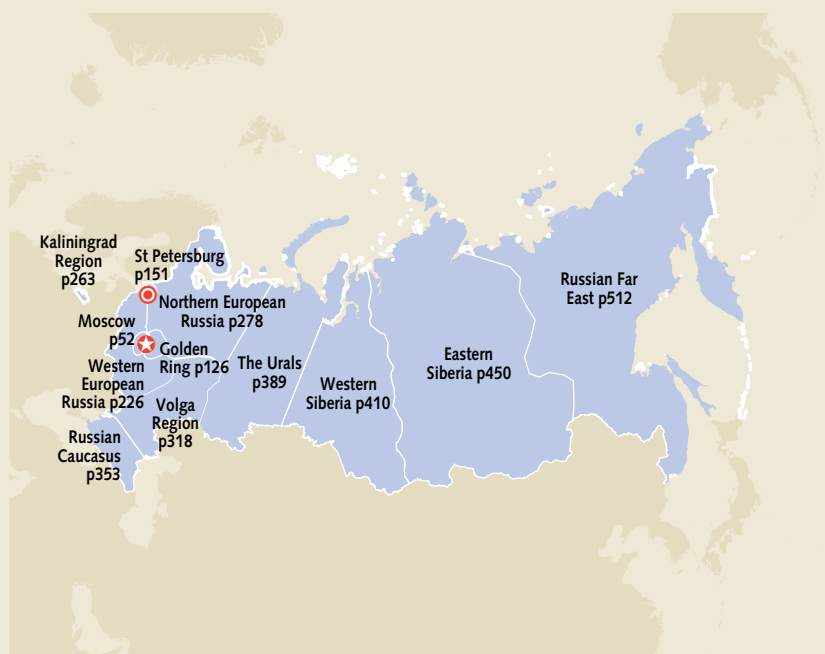




Russia



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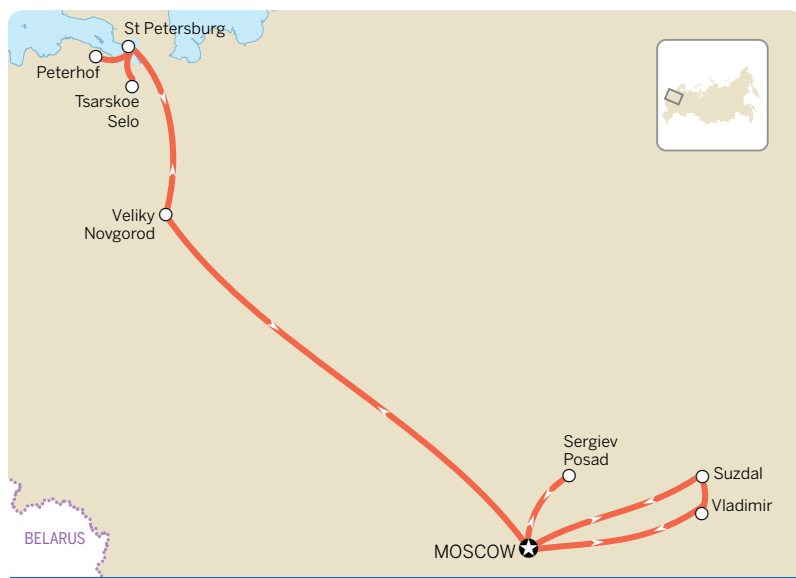
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Itineraries



2 WEEKS Russian Capitals

In **Moscow** don't miss the historic Kremlin, glorious Red Square, classic Tretyakov Gallery, a performance at the Bolshoi Theatre, exciting contemporary-arts scene and extensive metro system with stations that are a sight in themselves. Stretch your legs in the revamped Gorky Park and along the embankments of the Moscow River.

From Moscow it's easy to make trips to the historic Golden Ring towns of **Sergiev Posad**, **Suzdal** and **Vladimir**, where you will be rewarded with a serene slice of rural Russian life.

Practically a museum of architecture, the historic heart of St Petersburg offers the incomparable Hermitage and Russian Museum, as well as cruising the city's rivers and canals. Enjoy some of Russia's top restaurants and bars, and attend first-rate performances at the Mariinsky and Mikhailovsky Theatres.

St Petersburg is ringed by grand palaces set in beautifully landscaped grounds, such as **Peterhof** and **Tsarskoe Selo**.

Between the two big cities, tourist-friendly **Veliky Novgorod** deserves a couple of days too. It's home to an impressive riverside kremlin, ancient churches and a wonderful open-air museum of wooden architecture.



3-4
WEEKS

Trans-Siberian Odyssey

The classic Russian adventure is to travel the Trans-Siberian Railway, an engineering wonder that spans and holds together the world's largest country. So you can finish up with a grand party in either Moscow or, better yet, St Petersburg, go against the general flow by commencing your journey at **Vladivostok**. Situated on a stunningly attractive natural harbour, the Pacific-coast port was spruced up for its hosting of the 2012 APEC summit.

An overnight journey west is **Khabarovsk**, a lively city with a lingering tsarist-era charm located on the banks of the Amur River. Two more days down the line hop off the train at **Ulan-Ude**, the appealing capital of Buryatiya where Russian, Soviet and Mongolian cultures coexist; from here you can venture into the steppes to visit Russia's principal Buddhist monastery, **Ivolginsk Datsan**.

The railway then skirts around the southern shores of magnificent **Lake Baikal**. Allow at least three days (preferably longer) to soak up the charms of this beautiful lake, basing yourself on beguiling **Olkhon Island**; also check out historic **Irkutsk** on the way to the lake or back.

Flush with oil wealth, happening **Krasnoyarsk**, on the Yenisey River, affords the opportunity for scenic cruises along one of Siberia's most pleasant waterways. Detour slightly from the main Trans-Sib line to **Tomsk**, the 'cultural capital of Siberia', to hang with its lively student population and admire the city's treasure trove of wooden architecture.

Crossing the Urals into European Russia, spend a day or so in **Yekaterinburg**, a historic, bustling city well stocked with interesting museums and sites connected to the murder of the last tsar and his family. **Perm** is also doing an excellent job of reinventing itself as a cultural centre; use it as a base from which to make trips to an ice cave at **Kungur** and the Gulag labour camp Perm-36, preserved as a museum.

Finally, fortify yourself for the bustle of **Moscow** or **St Petersburg** by taking a reviving break in the Golden Ring towns of **Yaroslavl** or **Vladimir**, which is also the access point for the idyllic village of **Suzdal**: all are stacked with beautiful, old, onion-domed churches.

3
WEEKS

Lakes of the Russian North

From **Moscow** begin your water-themed journey towards the Arctic Circle by following the Volga River north to **Tver**, an appealing historic town that Catherine the Great used to pause in on her court's cross country journeys. Make a side trip to **Lake Seliger**.

Top up on big-city culture in **St Petersburg** then take the train to **Petrozavodsk** to access **Lake Ladoga** and the island of **Valaam**, home to a beguiling working monastery. Return to Petrozavodsk where you can board a hydrofoil that will zip you across **Lake Onega** to another island – **Kizhi**, an architectural reserve that includes the astounding Transfiguration Church, a symphony of wooden domes, gables and decoration.

The White Sea is the location of the **Solovetsky Islands**; the beautiful landscapes and monastery here were also the setting for some of the most brutal scenes in Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*. More offbeat adventures, including top fishing sites, await in the **Kola Peninsula**.

Finish in **Murmansk** by checking out a decommissioned nuclear icebreaker and the giant concrete soldier 'Alyosha'. In summer the sun never fully sets, while in winter you may witness the amazing northern lights.

3
WEEKS

Volga Route to Astrakhan

The mighty Volga flows east from **Moscow** towards **Nizhny Novgorod**, where the major aquatic highway can be viewed from above on a cable-car ride. Spend a day or so here enjoying the town's kremlin, museums and its 'Food and Culture' movement, and making a short trip by hydrofoil to the small town of **Gorodets**, known for its folk arts.

The next major stop is the intriguing Tatarstan capital of **Kazan**. The highlight here is the World Heritage-listed kremlin that includes an enormous mosque and small satellite branch of St Petersburg's Hermitage. The Volga continues to guide you south past Lenin's birthplace of **Ulyanovsk** and **Samara**, from where you could go hiking in the rocky Zhiguli Hills or search out the town's several offbeat design and cultural sights.

An amazing 72m-tall statue of Mother Russia wields her sword over **Volgograd**, a city entirely rebuilt after Russia's bloodiest battle of WWII. The Volga spills into the Caspian Sea at **Astrakhan**, jumping-off point for exploring the glorious natural attractions, including rare flamingos, of the Volga Delta, home to the endangered sturgeon, the source of Beluga caviar.



4 WEEKS Siberia's Deep South

For a journey covering some of Siberia's lesser-known locations begin in the oil-rich city of **Tyumen**, which includes several picturesque areas of traditional architecture. Journey northeast in the footsteps of the Siberian conqueror Yermak Timofeevich, the exiled writer Fyodor Dostoevsky and the last tsar to **Tobolsk**, whose splendid kremlin lords it over the Tobol and Irtysh Rivers. Next, head south to **Barnaul**, gateway to the mountainous Altai Republic. Here you can arrange a white-water rafting expedition or plan treks out to beautiful **Lake Teletskoe** and the pretty village of **Artybask**. Drive along the panoramic **Chuysky Trakt**, a helter-skelter mountain road leading to yurt-dotted grasslands, first stopping in **Gorno-Altai** to register your visa. Return to **Biysk**, take a bus to **Novokuznetsk** then a train to **Abakan** to arrange onward travel to Tuva. This remote and little-visited region, hard up against Mongolia (with which it shares several cultural similarities), is famed for its throat-singing nomads and mystical shamans. **Kyzyl** has a good new National Museum and Cultural Centre and can be used as a base for expeditions to pretty villages and the vast Central Asian steppes.



4 WEEKS Russian Far-East Circuit

From the 'wild east' port of **Vladivostok** head via **Khabarovsk** to lively **Blagoveshchensk** with its splendid tsarist architecture. Take the overnight train to **Tynda**, the main hub on the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM), from where there's a choice. Tough-travel fanatics can train it to **Neryungri** then endure a very bumpy all-day ride in a Russian UAZ jeep to **Yakutsk**, the extraordinary permafrost-bound capital of the Sakha Republic. Alternatively, board the BAM through to the attractive city of **Komsomolsk-na-Amure** and back to Khabarovsk, from where there are flights to Yakutsk. Once in Yakutsk, visit the city's eccentric Permafrost Kingdom and Mammoth Museum. If it's the summer sailing season, cruise to the scenic **Lena Pillars** on the Lena River. Backtrack to Khabarovsk or Vladivostok from where you can fly to spectacular Kamchatka, to cap off your adventures by climbing one of the snowcapped volcanoes rising behind the rugged peninsula's capital, **Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky**. Or make your way north to **Esso**, newly friendly to independent travellers with its cheap guesthouses, public hot springs and well-mapped trails for trekking.



Anthony Haywood

The Urals After studying literature and later Russian language at university, Anthony travelled to Moscow during the post-Soviet, pre-anything days of January 1992. Journeys in Russia since that chaotic time have taken him to many different regions, including Siberia to research his book *Siberia, A Cultural History*, as well as Moscow, St Petersburg, and to the Volga Region and Urals to research various editions of this book. He coordinated the 5th edition of Lonely Planet's *Trans-Siberia Railway* guidebook. Find out more at www.anthonijhaywood.com.

Read more about Anthony at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/anthonijhaywood



Anna Kaminski

Northern European Russia A native of Russia, Anna had repeatedly crossed her homeland east to west and back again, but this is her first time venturing into the Arctic north. For her, trip highlights have included exploring the shores of the Barents Sea, discovering that traditional Sami crafts are alive and well on the Kola Peninsula, poking around the remains of a snow village and a barbecue with rock climbers from Murmansk amidst post-apocalyptic rubble. Anna has contributed to over a dozen Lonely Planet titles.



Tom Masters

St Petersburg Tom first came to St Petersburg in 1996 while studying Russian at the School of Slavonic & East European Studies, part of the University of London. He loved the city so much that he came back after graduating and worked as a writer and editor at the *St Petersburg Times*, a job that allowed him to get to know the city in intimate detail. While since living in London and Berlin, Tom has always retained a strong link with the city, authoring the last three editions of Lonely Planet's *St Petersburg* guide. You can see more of Tom's work at www.tommasters.net.

Read more about Tom at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/tommasters



Leonid Ragozin

Golden Ring Leonid Ragozin studied beach dynamics in the Moscow State University, but for want of decent beach in Russia, he switched to journalism and spent 12 years voyaging through different parts of the BBC, with a break for a four-year stint as a foreign correspondent for the Russian Newsweek. Leonid is currently a freelance journalist, largely focusing on the war in Ukraine, a country he has also covered for Lonely Planet.



Tamara Sheward

Western European Russia & Kaliningrad Tamara has been coming to Russia since the early 2000s, when she embarked on a quest to discover her family roots and consume as much vodka and *smetana* (not together) as humanly possible. This trip involved far less combustible spirits than previous visits (travel with a five-month-old will do that), but the urge to nose about and gorge on dairy products proved as irresistible as ever. Tamara has also written for Lonely Planet about Serbia and tropical Australia, the incongruous destinations she divides her time between.

Read more about Tamara at:
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Regis St Louis

Russian Far East An early fan of Gogol and Dostoevsky, Regis spent his university years in America and Moscow immersed in the world of Rus, in pursuit of a rather impractical degree in Slavic Languages and Literatures. On this trip across the vast Far East, Regis dined on frozen fish and fermented mare's milk in Yakutsk, searched for secret hot springs in Kamchatka and spent far too many hours on overnight trains. A full-time travel writer since 2003, Regis has contributed to more than 40 Lonely Planet titles. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Read more about Regis at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/regisstlouis



Mara Vorhees

Moscow Mara's first visit to Moscow was in 1990, when the lines inside GUM were dwarfed only by the lines outside Lenin's Tomb. She witnessed the postcommunist transition from her vantage point in the Urals. During those years in the Wild East, the capital was a frequent destination for 'recovery trips' – which often required a recovery afterward. The pen-wielding traveller has worked on dozens of Lonely Planet titles, including *Russia* and *Trans-Siberian Railway*. Her stories about Russia have appeared in magazines and newspapers around the world. Nowadays, she often travels with her worldly twins (who celebrated their 4th birthday in Moscow). Follow their adventures at www.havetwinwilltravel.com.

Read more about Mara at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/mvorhees



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Simon Richmond

Coordinating Author

Simon first visited Russia in 1994 spending time in St Petersburg and Moscow and travelling by train from there to Central Asia. He's since travelled the breadth of the nation from Kamchatka in the Far East to Kaliningrad in the far west, stopping off at many points between. An award-winning travel writer and photographer, Simon has co-authored the last four editions of the *Russia* guide for Lonely Planet as well as the first three editions of the *Trans-Siberian Railway* guide. He's contributed to many other titles for the company, ranging from Cape Town to Korea. Read more about his travels at www.simonrichmond.com

Read more about Simon at: auth.lonelyplanet.com/members/simonrichmond



Marc Bennetts

Russian Caucasus

Marc is a journalist and writer whose work has appeared in the UK's *Guardian* and *Times*, as well as other UK and US newspapers. He is the author of two books: *Football Dynamo* (Virgin, 2008) about Russia's football culture, and *Kicking the Kremlin* (2014, Oneworld), about the anti-Putin protest movement. He has lived in Russia since 1997.



Greg Bloom

Western Siberia

Greg cut his teeth in the former Soviet Union as a journalist and later editor-in-chief of the *Kyiv Post*. He left Ukraine in 2003, but returns frequently to the region. In the service of Lonely Planet, he has been detained in Uzbekistan, taken a shlagbaum to the head in Kyiv, swam in the dying Aral Sea, snowboarded down volcanoes in Kamchatka, and hit 100km/h in a Latvian bobsled. These days Greg divides his time between Cambodia and the Philippines. Read about his trips at www.mytripjournal.com/bloomblogs.

Read more about Greg at: lonelyplanet.com/members/gbloom4



Marc Di Duca

Eastern Siberia

Marc has spent over two decades crisscrossing the former communist world, half of that time as a travel guide author. Stints on previous editions of Lonely Planet's *Russia* and *Trans-Siberian Railway* were preceded by other guides to Moscow, St Petersburg and Lake Baikal. Stalking Decembrists across four million square kilometres, ice fishing on frozen Lake Baikal, and munching through cholesterol-elevating amounts of Buryat *buuzy* all formed part of research in Siberia's east this time round.

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OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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