

Golden Ring

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Chaynaya (p135)
- ➔ Gostevaya Izba (p149)
- ➔ Dudki Bar (p144)
- ➔ Podbelka (p144)
- ➔ Salmon & Coffee (p130)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Surikov Guest House (p134)
- ➔ Yablonevy Sad (p139)
- ➔ Godzillas Suzdal (p134)
- ➔ Romanov Les (p137)
- ➔ Volzhskaya Zhemchuzhina (p143)

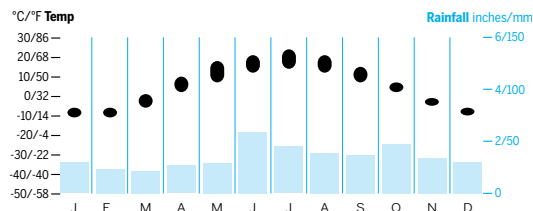
Why Go?

The Golden Ring (Золотое кольцо) is textbook Russia: onion-shaped domes, kremlins and gingerbread cottages with cherry orchards. It is a string of the country's oldest towns that formed the core of eastern Kyivan Rus. Too engrossed in fratricide, they failed to register the rise of Moscow, which elbowed them out of active politics. Largely untouched by Soviet industrialisation, they now attract flocks of Russian tourists in search of the lost idyll. The travel boom has led to the proliferation of new hotels and guesthouses, while competition keeps prices at bay.

When travelling here, brace for a flow of images that are quite literally iconic. Themselves architectural icons, local churches contain Russia's oldest religious art. There is more – picturesque country roads are inviting for a bicycle adventure, while steam baths will clear your mind after mead-drinking sessions. Moose milk may also help, but science is silent on that.

When to Go

Vladimir



Late Jan The air is crisp, the snow is fluffy and a hot *banya* is readily available.

Jun Fields are covered in wild flowers – Russian nature never looks more beautiful.

Aug Thousands flock into forests to pick mushrooms and wild berries.

Vladimir

Владимир

📍 4922 / POP 340,000 / 🌐 MOSCOW

Vladimir may look like another Soviet Gotham City, until you pass the medieval Golden Gate and stop by the cluster of exquisite churches and cathedrals, some of

the oldest in Russia. Hiding behind them is an abrupt bluff with spectacular views of the Oka Valley. Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky chose Vladimir as his capital in 1157 after a stint in the Holy Land where he befriended European crusader kings, such as Friedrich Barbarossa. They sent him their best



Golden Ring Highlights

- 1 Criss-cross beautiful **Suzdal** (p131) by bicycle or on foot, listening to the music of church bells and nightingales.
- 2 Count church domes on a stroll in Yaroslavl, then try counting as many beers at **Dudki Bar** (p144).
- 3 Ponder the landscape artist's career in **Plyos** (p136).
- 4 Sample moose milk at **Sumarokovskaya Moose Farm** (p140).
- 5 Admire the stunning simplicity of Bogolyubovo's **Church of the Intercession on the Nerl** (p131).
- 6 See the universe reflected in Christ's eyes at **Sergiev Posad's Trinity Cathedral** (p149).
- 7 Take a dip in Lake Nero and watch the sun set under the pink walls of **Rostov-Veliky's kremlin** (p145).
- 8 Steam off church fatigue at **Helio Spa** (p134) in Suzdal or **Azimut** (p139) in Kostroma.
- 9 Log your Golden Ring memories in your log house at **Romanov Les** (p137) in Lunyovo.