

Russian Caucasus

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Dombay & Teberda	378
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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Khachapuri (p365)
- ➔ Cafe 2200 (p371)
- ➔ Restoran Zamok (p378)
- ➔ Restaurant Sosruko (p384)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Grand Hotel & Spa Rodina (p364)
- ➔ Grand Hotel Polyana (p370)
- ➔ Hotel Zamok (p377)
- ➔ Tarelka (p381)

Why Go?

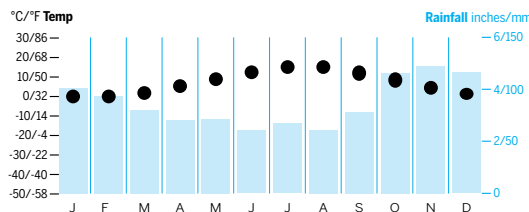
For most Russians, the word Caucasus (Кавказ) summons up images of fiery mountain folk, the high-tempo *lezginka* dance and the troubled history of volatile regions such as Chechnya. But there's more to this ethnically rich region than the stereotypes and the horror stories. Come to also experience relaxing spa towns, breathtaking scenery and world-class ski resorts near Sochi, host city for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

On top of that, there's superb trekking and horse riding amid soaring peaks, as well as the chance to climb Mt Elbrus, Europe's highest mountain. Black Sea resort towns offer coastal intrigue – sun and sea, festive nightlife – while the Caucasus also boasts its own regional cuisine.

This may not be the easiest area to travel in, with taxis and infrequent buses the only way to reach some destinations, but for anyone looking to get off the tourist trail, the Caucasus offers wide-open spaces, bustling markets and rugged mountain roads with stunning views around every corner.

When to Go

Sochi



Jan Ski season kicks off at resorts in Krasnaya Polyana and Mt Elbrus.

May Enjoy sunny days and lower prices at Black Sea resorts and spa towns.

Jun-Sep Best time for climbing and hiking in the mountains. Peak season on the Black Sea.

Russian Caucasus Highlights

- 1 Stroll along the lively promenade of post-Olympic **Sochi** (p361).
- 2 Check out the Olympic ski slopes at **Krasnaya Polyana**'s resorts (p369).
- 3 Walk in the footsteps of Stalin at the Soviet dictator's former dacha, **Zelenaya Roscha** (p367).
- 4 Take a journey to the dramatic snow-capped peaks and glaciers of **Dombay** (p378).
- 5 Admire the breathtaking views from Europe's highest peak, **Mt Elbrus** (p384).
- 6 Drink the carbonic Narzan spring waters in the relaxing **Starocherkassk** (p358).
- 7 Immerse yourself in Cossack history in spa town of **Kislovodsk** (p376).

