

# St Petersburg

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Teplo (p197)
- ➔ Yat (p195)
- ➔ Duo Gastrobar (p195)
- ➔ Dom Beat (p196)
- ➔ Koryushka (p199)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Soul Kitchen Hostel (p192)
- ➔ Baby Lemonade Hostel (p189)
- ➔ Andrey & Sasha's Homestay (p193)
- ➔ Rossi Hotel (p191)
- ➔ Rachmaninov Antique Hotel (p189)

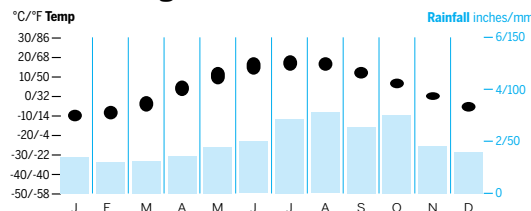
## Why Go?

Beautiful, complex and imperious, with a hedonistic, creative temperament, St Petersburg (Санкт-Петербург) is the ultimate Russian diva. From her early days as an uninhabited swamp, the 300-year-old city has been nurtured by a succession of rulers, enduring practically everything that history and nature's harsh elements could throw at her. Constantly in need of repair but with a carefree party attitude, Piter (as she's affectionately known by locals) still seduces all who gaze upon her grand facades, glittering spires and gilded domes. Such an environment has inspired many of Russia's greatest artists, including Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich.

The long summer days of the White Nights season are particularly special – the fountains flow, parks and gardens burst into colour and locals hit the streets to party. With a little preparation, though, the icy depths of winter have their own magic, and are the perfect time for warming body and soul in all those museums and palaces.

## When to Go

### St Petersburg



**Mid-May–mid-Jul** Visit during the White Nights, when the sun never truly sets.

**May & Sep A** great time to visit St Petersburg, avoiding the crowds of the peak months.

**Nov–Jan** Freezing, dark and blanketed in snow, winter in St Petersburg is magical.

## NEED TO KNOW

While the majority of St Petersburg's museums close on a Monday, always check your Lonely Planet guide before you head off somewhere. Many museums also open at lunchtime Wednesday until late.

## Fast Facts

- **Telephone area code**  
812
- **Population** 4.8 million
- **Number of metro stations** 67
- **Name changes** 3
- **Number of bridges** 342
- **St Petersburg Time**  
Moscow (GMT/USC +3 hours)

## Don't Drink the Water

Tiny traces of *Giardia lamblia*, a nasty parasite that causes stomach cramps, nausea, bloated stomach, diarrhoea and frequent gas, have been found in St Petersburg's water. There's no preventative drug so it's best to only drink bottled water during your stay.

## Resources

- **St Petersburg Tourist Information** (<http://eng.ispb.info>)
- **St Petersburg Times** ([www.sptimes.ru](http://www.sptimes.ru))
- **In Your Pocket** ([www.inyourpocket.com/russia/st-petersburg](http://www.inyourpocket.com/russia/st-petersburg))
- **Way to Russia** ([www.waytorussia.net](http://www.waytorussia.net))

## Arriving in St Petersburg

Most people arrive at St Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport (p207), a brand new terminal from where an official taxi costs between P800 and P1000 to the city centre. Those on a budget can take a bus (P25) to the nearby Moskovskaya metro station and then connect from there to elsewhere in the city (P28). Arrivals from Helsinki by train will come into Finland Station, next to Ploshchad Lenina metro, while those coming by train from Moscow will arrive at Moscow Station next to Ploshchad Vosstaniya metro. Boats arrive at one of five ports scattered around the city.

## GUIDED TOURS

Those arriving on a cruise ship or by ferry at any of St Petersburg's various ports are able to profit from 72-hour visa-free entry into Russia. The only conditions are that you also leave the city by boat and that you book a guided tour from a licensed operator. These include:

**DenRus** ([www.denrus.ru](http://www.denrus.ru))

**Peter's Walking Tours** (p187)

**Red October** ([www.redoctober.ru](http://www.redoctober.ru))

These operators are used to working with cruise-ship and ferry passengers, and tend to offer a far higher standard of tour than the mass-market ones the cruise ships promote. It's important to know that you are still able to use the visa-free entry if you do not book the tour sold by the cruise ship, as long as you privately arrange a tour with one of these companies.

## Bridges Up!

From April to November, all bridges across the Neva River rise at around 1.30am nightly to let ships pass through the city and on to the rest of the world, or into Russia's deep interior. Don't find yourself on the wrong side of the river when the bridges go up, or you'll have to wait until they go back down again at around 5am. Alternatively you can take the metro between Sportivnaya and Admiralteyskaya, which shuttles back and forth between 1am and 3am.

## Want More?

Head to **Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/russia/st-petersburg](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/russia/st-petersburg)) for planning advice, author recommendations, traveller reviews and insider tips.