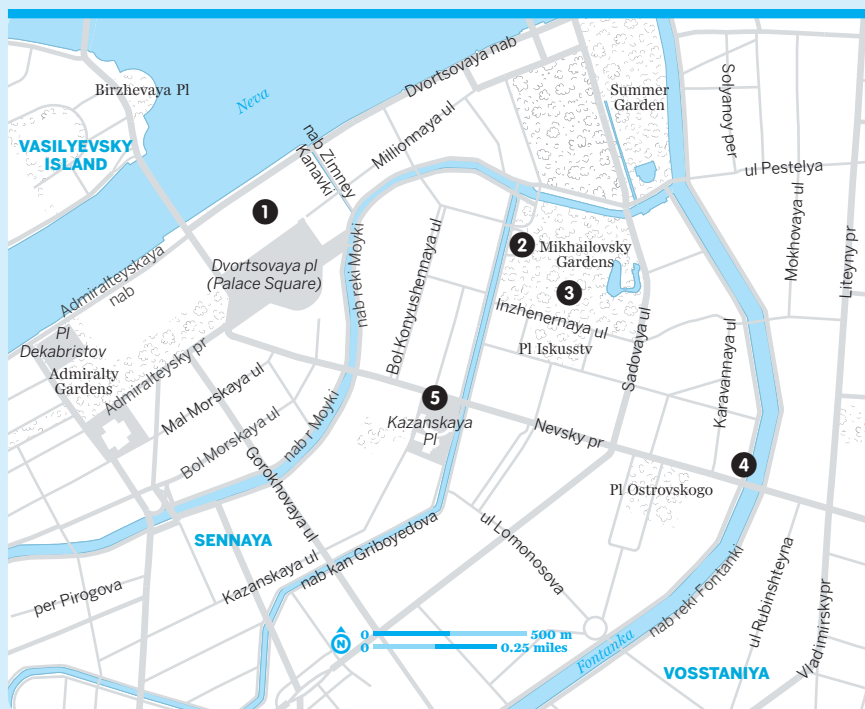


# Historic Heart

## Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Spend an entire day in the **Hermitage** (p44), taking a tour through millennia of art and culture from around the world, get lost in the apartments of the Romanovs, see the latest temporary exhibits in the Great Hall and take a tour of the dazzling Golden Rooms.
- 2 Gawp at the view of the **Church on the Spilled Blood** (p64) from Kanal Griboyedov, and then be awestruck by the mosaics inside.
- 3 See perhaps the world's best collection of Russian art at the fantastic **Russian Museum** (p57).
- 4 Take a **cruise** (p65) on the rivers and canals of the Historic Heart, the best way to see this watery city!
- 5 Enter the embrace of the architectural mishmash that is the **Kazan Cathedral** (p65) and see atmospheric Orthodox ritual in full swing inside.



## Explore: Historic Heart

Home to most of St Petersburg's top sights, the Historic Heart is where most people will spend most of their time in the city. The area is packed full of palaces, churches, museums, canals and parks, and there's almost no limit to the amount of things to see and do here.

A good place to start is impressive Palace Sq, where you'll see the Hermitage in all its glory along with the amazing panorama of the General Staff Building and the great Neva River: an unforgettable St Petersburg first impression. From there, cherry-pick your way through the rest of the neighbourhood over a couple of days or so.

Nevsky pr, the city's main avenue, dominates every itinerary of course, and you'll find yourself back on its crowded pavements throughout your visit, whether you like it or not. Do try to spend some time off the main drag though, as this fascinating district deserves to be fully explored.

## Local Life

➔ **Parks** On a sunny day the vast Mars Field (p69) is a great place for a picnic and some sunbathing, especially while the ever-popular nearby Summer Garden remains under restoration. Another alternative is the lovely Mikhailovsky Gardens (p57), behind the Russian Museum.

➔ **Free Art** Locals flock to the Hermitage (p44) on the first Thursday of each month when entrance is free, although the crowds can be huge!

➔ **Hangouts** At the weekend the bars on ul Dumskaya (p77) are party central for St Petersburg's cool kids and a local experience not to be missed. The even more 'in the know' crowd hangs out in the bars around nearby Bankovsky per.

## Getting There & Away

➔ **Metro** This neighbourhood is served by three metro stations: the interconnecting Nevsky Prospekt (Line 2) and Gostiny Dvor (Line 3) and the brand-new Admiralteyskaya (Line 5), right around the corner from the Hermitage.

➔ **Trolleybus** The number 7 bus, which runs the length of Nevsky pr, goes past Palace Sq and then crosses Dvortsovy most to Vasilyevsky Island.

➔ **Marshrutka** Very useful for getting up or down Nevsky pr in a matter of minutes, hundreds of minibuses run this route – but to check they don't turn off halfway, ask the driver if they go down 'vyess Nyevsky' (all of Nevsky pr).

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Due to a long-standing problem with empty tables at lunchtime, even pretty upmarket restaurants in the historic heart offer excellent-value *biznes lunch* (business lunch), a set meal (often with elements of choice) that can be enjoyed between noon and 4pm. Even when lunch deals aren't offered, many places offer reductions of up to 20% on meal prices if you eat before the evening, making this a great time to eat out for those on a tight budget.

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ MiX in St Petersburg (p72)
- ➔ Terrassa (p73)
- ➔ Soup Vino (p72)
- ➔ Baku (p73)

For reviews, see p72 ➔

## Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Radiobaby (p75)
- ➔ Datscha (p77)
- ➔ MiXup Bar (p75)
- ➔ Bar Without a Name (p75)

For reviews, see p75 ➔

## Best Parks

- ➔ Summer Garden (p69)
- ➔ Mars Field (p69)
- ➔ Mikhailovsky Gardens (p57)
- ➔ Plushchad Ostrovskogo (p70)

For reviews, see p65 ➔