

Historic Heart

Neighbourhood Top Five

1 Surveying a millennium of global art and culture in the **Hermitage** (p54) and be dazzled by the gilded apartments of the Romanovs.

2 Gawping at the jewel-box-bright exterior of the **Church on the Spilled**

Blood (p77), then being awestruck by the epic mosaics inside.

3 Getting to know the world's best collection of Russian art at the fantastic **Russian Museum** (p70).

4 Climbing the 262 steps to the golden dome of the

monumental **St Isaac's Cathedral** (p78) for breathtaking views.

5 Taking a **cruise** (p97) on the rivers and canals of the historic heart, one of the best ways to see this watery city!



For more detail of this area see Map p256 ➔

Explore: Historic Heart

Radiating out from the golden spire of the Admiralty towards the Fontanka River, the historic heart has plenty of obvious attractions, including grand palaces, churches and museums, but also quirky gems like the Museum of Soviet Arcade Machines and a quartet of lovely parks. This is where you will be spending most of your time in St Petersburg, especially as the area is also blessed with great dining and drinking options.

For an unforgettable first impression, head straight to vast Palace Sq, where you'll see the Winter Palace, home to the Hermitage, in all its glory along with the amazing panorama of the General Staff Building and the great Neva River. 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, and you'll find yourself back on its broad, busy 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** The vast Mars Field (p83), Summer Garden (p80), Mikhailovsky Gardens (p82) and Alexander Garden (p82) are delightful green spaces for taking a breather from sightseeing to enjoy a picnic and do some sunbathing on sunny days.

➔ **Free art** Locals flock to the Hermitage (p54) on the first Thursday of each month when entrance is free, although the crowds can be huge!

➔ **Hang-outs** Check out the events, including free concerts, at anti-cafes such as Ziferberg (p92) and Miracle (p92); see if the Museum of Soviet Arcade Machines (p85) is holding one of its ping-pong DJ nights.

Getting There & Away

➔ **Metro** This neighbourhood is served by three metro stations: the interconnecting Nevsky Prospekt (Line 2) and Gostiny Dvor (Line 3), and Admiralteyskaya (Line 5) 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 Vasilevsky Island.

➔ **Bus** Hop on bus 7, 10, 24, 27, 181 or 191 to save some footwork along Nevsky.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

A great boon for time-challenged visitors, or those wanting to avoid daytime crowds – especially tour and school groups – has been the extension of opening hours until 9pm once a week at major city museums and galleries, including the Hermitage (Wednesday) and the Russian Museum (Thursday).

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Yat (p90)
- ➔ Marketplace (p85)
- ➔ Jack & Chan (p85)
- ➔ Gosti (p90)

For reviews, see p85 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Radiobaby (p92)
- ➔ Borodabar (p91)
- ➔ Ziferberg (p92)
- ➔ Sidreria (p92)

For reviews, see p91 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Taiga (p95)
- ➔ Kupetz Eliseevs (p96)
- ➔ Perinnye Ryady (p95)
- ➔ Passage (p96)

For reviews, see p95 ➔