



St Petersburg

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Best Places to Eat

- » Dom Beat (p111)
- » Botanika (p111)
- » Kompot Café (p111)
- » Teplo (p111)
- » Makarov (p111)

Best Places to Stay

- » Rossi Hotel (p106)
- » Casa Leto (p106)
- » Andrey & Sasha's Homestay (p106)
- » Rachmaninov Hotel (p106)
- » Hostel Ligovsky 74 (p111)

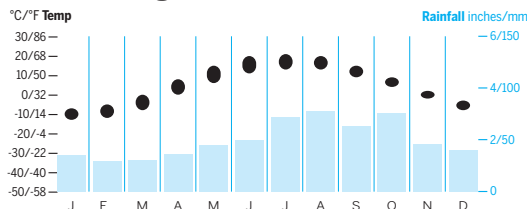
Why Go?

Beautiful, complex and imperious, with a hedonistic, creative temperament, St Petersburg (Санкт-Петербург) is the ultimate Russian diva. From its 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, Petersburg still seduces all who gaze upon her grand facades, glittering spires and gilded domes.

Even if you don't plan to start or end your train journey in St Petersburg, it would be a shame not to visit the city. The long summer days of the White Nights season are particularly special – the fountains flow and parks and gardens burst into colour. 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
The White Nights, when the sun never sets, is the most popular time to visit.


May & Sep
A great time to visit summery St Petersburg without the crowds of the peak months.

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

NEED TO KNOW

Trains to Irkutsk depart from Ladozhsky vokzal (reached by  Ladozhskaya). Trains to Moscow depart from Moskovsky vokzal (reached from  Ploshchad Vosstaniya).

Fast Facts

- » Telephone code:  812
- » Population: 4,848,000
- » Number of metro stations: 65
- » Number of bridges: 342

Getting into the City from the Airport

From Pulkovo-1 take bus 39 (R21, every 15 minutes, 5.30am to 12.30am) to Moskovskaya metro. From Pulkovo-2 take bus K-13 (R27, every 10 minutes, 5.30am to 12.30am) to Moskovskaya metro. A taxi from either terminal to the city centre should cost around R700.

Resources

- » St Petersburg Tourist Information (eng.ispb.info)
- » St Petersburg Times (www.sptimes.ru)
- » In Your Pocket St Petersburg (www.inyourpocket.com/russia/st-petersburg)
- » Way to Russia (www.waytorussia.net)

Art Attack

St Petersburg, long Russia's artistic engine, has recently seen the opening of several new museums and galleries that are really putting the city on the international art map. As well as the incredible world-class collections at the Hermitage and the Russian Museum, the recent opening of the Erarta Museum of Contemporary Art (p104), Russia's largest private art museum with over 2000 works of modern Russian art, has made St Petersburg about far more than classical art. Add to that two very interesting contemporary galleries, Loft Project ETAGI (p104) and the Rizzordi Art Foundation (p104), and art lovers will find plenty to keep themselves entertained.

PALACES UNDERGROUND

The St Petersburg metro isn't quite as palatial as Moscow's, but you shouldn't miss the stations on the southern half of Line 1 (that's the red line on the official metro map). Some highlights are detailed below.

Avtovo

Check out the Babylonian lavishness of marble and cut-glass clad columns holding up the roof, the relief of soldiers in the ticket hall, and the temple-like entrance.

Narvskaya

A fantastic sculpted relief of Lenin and the rejoicing proletariat hangs over the escalators, and carvings of miners, engineers, sailors and teachers grace the platform columns.

Ploshchad Vosstaniya

Lenin and Stalin are depicted together in the rondels at either end of the platform, as well as Lenin on a tank, Lenin alone, and the Kronshtadt sailors.

Bridges Up!

From the end of April to November all bridges across the Neva River rise at around 1am nightly to let ships pass through the city and on to the rest of the world, or into Russia's deep interior. The spectacle is well worth seeing, but it's also well worth planning for – don't find yourself on the wrong side of the water when the bridges go up, or you'll have a long night ahead of you until they go back down again at around 4.30am. See p117 for more specific times.