



St Petersburg

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Best Places to Eat

- ▶ Teplo (p105)
- ▶ Yat (p105)
- ▶ Duo Gastrobar (p105)
- ▶ Dom Beat (p105)
- ▶ Koryushka (p106)

Best Places to Stay

- ▶ Soul Kitchen Hostel (p103)
- ▶ Baby Lemonade Hostel (p103)
- ▶ Andrey & Sasha's Homestay (p104)
- ▶ Rachmaninov Antique Hotel (p104)
- ▶ Rossi Hotel (p104)

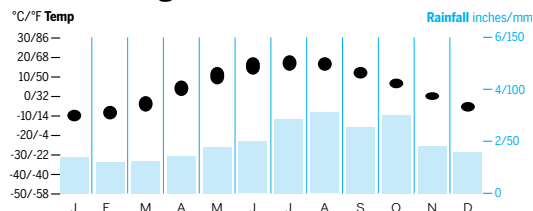
Why Go?

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.

Arriving in St Petersburg

Most people arrive at St Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport (p111), a brand-new terminal from where an official taxi costs between R800 and R1000 to the city centre. Those on a budget can take a bus (R25) to the nearby Moskovskaya metro station and then connect from there to elsewhere in the city (R28). Arrivals from Helsinki by train come into the Finland Station, next to Ploshchad Lenina metro, while those coming by train from Moscow will arrive at the 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:



- **Red October** (www.redoctober.ru)
- **DenRus** (www.denrus.ru)
- **Peter's Walking Tours** (www.peterswalk.com)

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.

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: 4.8m
- Number of metro stations: 67
- Number of bridges: 342
- St Petersburg time: GMT+4

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 the best advice is to only drink bottled water during your stay here.

Resources

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