The Big Chill 9 days

Seasons greetings from Russia! Enjoy a relaxed yuletide in St Petersburg - northern city of the tsars, relax and defrost in a traditional banya (sauna) in ancient Novgorod and frost up for New Year in hedonistic Moscow, Russia's mighty capital city.

TOUR DETAILS:

- Starts in: St Petersburg / Ends in: Moscow
- Departs: 24 Dec 2013
- No local payment required
- Breakfast:8, Lunch: 0, Dinner: 2
- Hotel Rating: 3 star
- Tour Guide: Yes - For groups of 6 or more

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- For a detailed GO GUIDE - click here
- To book this trip - click here
- To enquire about this trip - click here

TOUR MAP:

QUICK WEB LINKS

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Day 1:

Welcome to St Petersburg and the start of your Xmas and New Year holiday! Arrival transfer from St Petersburg Pulkovo Airport to your hotel and check in. Tonight, our Welcome Meeting takes place. Rest of evening free. Your tour leader will recommend some local bars and restaurants for you to try out. Overnight - St Petersburg

Day 2:

Merry Christmas! Founded by Peter the Great in 1703, grandiose St Petersburg is designed around an intrinsic network of canals and rivers. Known as the cradle of Revolution, in the 20th century the city underwent three name changes, three revolutions and a 900-day siege. Enjoy a coach orientation of St Pete's and a tour of Peter and Paul Fortress.

Afterwards, we enjoy a guided visit at the Hermitage - which houses one of the biggest and best art and antiquity collections on earth, the bulk of which was amassed by Catherine the Great. With some 2.8 million pieces of art, including collections ranging from a dazzling array of Great Masters to Egyptian mummies and Greek vases, Catherine was, to put it lightly, one heck of a collector. The rest of the day is free for you to enjoy St Pete's your way. Tonight, head out on the town or enjoy a Christmas drink in local bar, cafe or at our hotel. Cheers! Overnight - St Petersburg

Day 3:

Today you can spend the day at leisure or if you fancy, join our optional pukka pass bolt-on. A full day of sightseeing in St. Petersburg including all transportation, guiding, entrance fees and lunch. A visit to Catherine Palace at Tsarskoe Selo and Pavlosk Palace and a stop for lunch overlooking Griboyedov Canal.

This evening enjoy a night at one of St Pete's many great clubs or bars or join us for an evening at the ballet or Russian Cossacks performance (book/ pay locally, if available). Overnight - St Petersburg

Day 4:

St Petersburg – Novgorod. Today gives the opportunity to shop for souvenirs, maybe some wooden dolls or Russian memorabilia found at the canal side market near the striking Church on Spilled Blood. Or take a walk along St Petersburg main street - Nevsky Prospekt.

Later we travel by coach or train to ancient Novgorod, where we enjoy a steamy Russian banya (sauna) and dinner. Overnight - Novgorod

Day 5:

Novgorod – Moscow. Novgorod is one of Russia's oldest cities, located within reach of the Volkhov river and Lake Ilmen. It was formed as a town in the middle of the 10th century. A tour of Novgorod takes in the riverside fortified kremlin, cathedral and other sights. The fortress was mentioned in chronicles as early as in 1044, whilst today's walls and towers, despite being re-built in 15th century, are impressive all the same. Tonight we have dinner before travelling by overnight sleeper train from Novgorod to Moscow. Overnight - Sleeper Train

Day 6:

Early this morning, we arrive into Moscow - the capital that spawned dozens of spy novels! Today we will ride on the capital's efficient Metro to Red Square. From here, we'll take in the jewels of Russia's capital on a guided walk in the Kitay-Gorod and Lubyanka area, taking in sights such as the epitome of Russian power – the Kremlin (guided tour on the 31 Dec) and Red Square, home to the ritzy GUM department store and Lenin's Mausoleum. If open we can visit the father of communism himself, who lays sallow and embalmed inside the eerie mausoleum.

At the south end of Red Square, feast your eyes on the wildly coloured, turban domed St Basil's Cathedral, an enduring Russian symbol commissioned by Ivan IV (also known as Ivan the terrible) in 1555. This evening why not sample Moscow's lively nightlife in some of the many bars and clubs which are open until very late! Overnight - Moscow

Day 7:

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Enjoy a day at leisure in Moscow. Perhaps visit one of the cities many museums or galleries. For souvenirs head to the wonderful Izmailovsky market, boasting a massive collection of stalls hocking everything from Soviet Red Army memorabilia to bootleg CDs, fluffy hats and Matryoshka dolls.

The remainder of the afternoon is free for your explore on your own or why not sign up for our Inside a Soviet Bunker bolt on? Head 65 meters underground to explore a Stalinist-era bunker that up until recently was a top secret symbol of Soviet Power. See the giant tunnels and get a guided tour of the rooms and secret paraphernalia before a tour of some of Russia's most luxurious Stalin era metro stations. Overnight - Moscow

Day 8:

Today, we head into Red Square where, we enjoy a guided tour of the Moscow Kremlin - Russia's bastion of power. Walking through the grounds we'll see numerous government buildings, gold-domed cathedrals and the tsar bell. Rest of day free to enjoy the last day of the year your way.

Get the party started in Red Square or at one of Moscow's many restaurants, cafes and bars - the nightlife is fantastic. Have your own private Moscow New Year's celebration! Overnight - Moscow

Day 9:

Happy New Year! Our tour concludes after breakfast and hotel check out at 12 noon.

WHAT YOU SEE AND WHAT YOU GET:

Below is a list of key highlights and what is included on this tour. Further, where appropriate, we have listed the items that are not included in the tour price.

Trip Highlights

- **St Petersburg** - UNESCO-listed city area including Nevsky Prospekt, Peter and Paul Fortress, Museum and University districts, Church on Spilled Blood, The Bronze Horseman and Admiralty End
- St Petersburg Hermitage at the Winter Palace
- Other sites of St Petersburg included on the optional pukka pass
- **Novgorod** - ancient city by the Volkhov River - kremlin, cathedral and other sights
- **Moscow** - UNESCO-listed Red Square, Kremlin and Lenin's Mausoleum and St Basil's Cathedral

What's Included

- 8 breakfasts, 2 dinners
- 7 nights 3 star hotels
- 1 overnight train Novgorod - Moscow (open sleeper carriage) including bed linen. Upgrade to 4 berth enclosed sleeper cabin available, contact us for details.
- Airport arrival transfer on day 1
- Guided sightseeing - St Petersburg city coach tour,Peter and Paul Fortress, Hermitage at Winter Palace, Novgorod, Moscow city and Kremlin
- Russian banya (sauna) experience
- Moscow Metro travel card - 6 journeys
- Escorted by an English speaking Russian tour leader
- Specialist Russian guides at local sights
- All relevant transfers and transportation on tour
- NOTE: In Russia on the go use 3 star and 4 star accommodation as classified by the Russian Ministry of Tourism. However, please be aware that 3 star and 4 star standards throughout Russia vary greatly and cannot be compared to hotels of a similar standard in Western Europe or, and in particular, the United States.

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture
- Entrance Fees: $50-60 USD

BOLT-ONS:

Make the most of your time away! Listed below are the optional activities that are available on this trip. Please note that you will need to book these prior to travel as we cannot always guarantee availability of these activities once you are on holiday.

Pukka Pass - USD $149

Start the day with a visit to either the gardens of palatial Peterhof, overlooking the Gulf of Finland in the summer OR Catherine Palace at Tsarskoe Selo in the winter (Pavlosk Palace is viewed if Catherine Palace is closed). We stop for lunch at the popular restaurant, where we enjoy a hearty meal, before exploring inside the beautiful Church on Spilled Blood.

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Catherine Palace or Peterhof - USD $89

Take a step back in time - enjoy a guided tour of the stunning Royal Residences of the Russian Tsars, located in the outskirts of St Pete's and admire the beautiful Russian countryside on the way. Our Catherine Palace (winter) or Peterhof Gardens (summer) bolt on is available on all tours visiting St Petersburg.

Inside a Soviet Bunker - USD $109

Head 65 meters underground to the Underground Cold War Museum - a Stalinist-era Soviet Bunker that up until recently was a top secret symbol of Soviet Power. This mighty 75,000-square-foot facility was constructed covertly in the 1950s, to protect the select few against a US nuclear attack. Step back in time to the clandestine and tense era of the Cold War and enjoy an interactive tour of this bunker turned museum, followed by a tour of the most luxurious and extravagant of the Stalinist era metro stations with their marble columns and chandeliers all with an English speaking guide.

Novgorod Countryside Stay - USD $549

Escape the bustling city of St Petersburg with an overnight stay in a country house in ancient Novgorod. Your visit begins with a tour of the historic Kremlin (Fortress) grounds and the open air museum of Russian wooden architecture. You've free time to admire Novgorod - listed by UNESCO as one of the top 100 cities of the world. Why not soak up the views from a leisurely walk along the Volkhov river, visit one of the great medieval abbeys, or wander round the quaint shops and bars.

PRICES AND DATES: from USD $1,639

Prices shown are per person travelling. 'Twin/Double' prices per person apply when there are 2 people travelling, sharing a room. The 'Single supplement' applies for single travellers who require their own room and needs to be added to the 'Twin/Double' price. If you are happy to be paired up with another single traveller of the same sex on your tour, this can be arranged, thus avoiding the single person supplement. All our group tours are guaranteed to depart subject to a minimum of 2 travellers.

2013

Date	Price/Person	Single Supp.
24 DEC - 01 JAN	USD $1,639	USD $659

2014

Date	Price/Person	Single Supp.
24 DEC - 01 JAN	USD $1,639	USD $659

Supplementary Prices

	Price/Person	Single Supp.
4 Berth Sleeper Train Upgrade Novgorod - Moscow	USD $109	USD $0

POSTCARDS:

Here's what some of our past travellers have written in to us and said about their experiences on this trip.

I had a lovely time and really enjoyed my Russia experience. Olga was very friendly and outgoing - pleasure to be around.

Danielle Brooks, Jan 2010

An excellent tour.Olga was organized, efficient and calm. Related well to all members of the group and all our needs. Will be recommending on the go to all my friends. Thanks guys.

Amanda Smith, Jan 2010

I have to say that we could not have had a better choice of guide. Katya was incredible knowledgeable, coordinated, caring and most of all fun. She made this trip full of wonderful memories :-)

Tanya Morrison, Dec 2008

Katya was incredible. She really knows Russia and its' history. From a good beat down at the Banya to the details of seemingly every building in St Pete's, Moscow and every work of art in the Hermitage… very impressive. I wish I knew this much about Canada.

Dennis Harnet, Dec 2008

The tour leader was excellent, covering everything from politics, economics, life in Russia, job industry etc. such an eye opener for the group. Good mix of history and free time and NY partying.

Luke Strong, Dec 2008