

# WATERWAYS OF THE TSARS



operatunity

*Travel*

Romantic and turbulent history  
of the Tsars, Volga River Cruise,  
St Petersburg, Moscow

27 JUNE - 19 JULY 2020

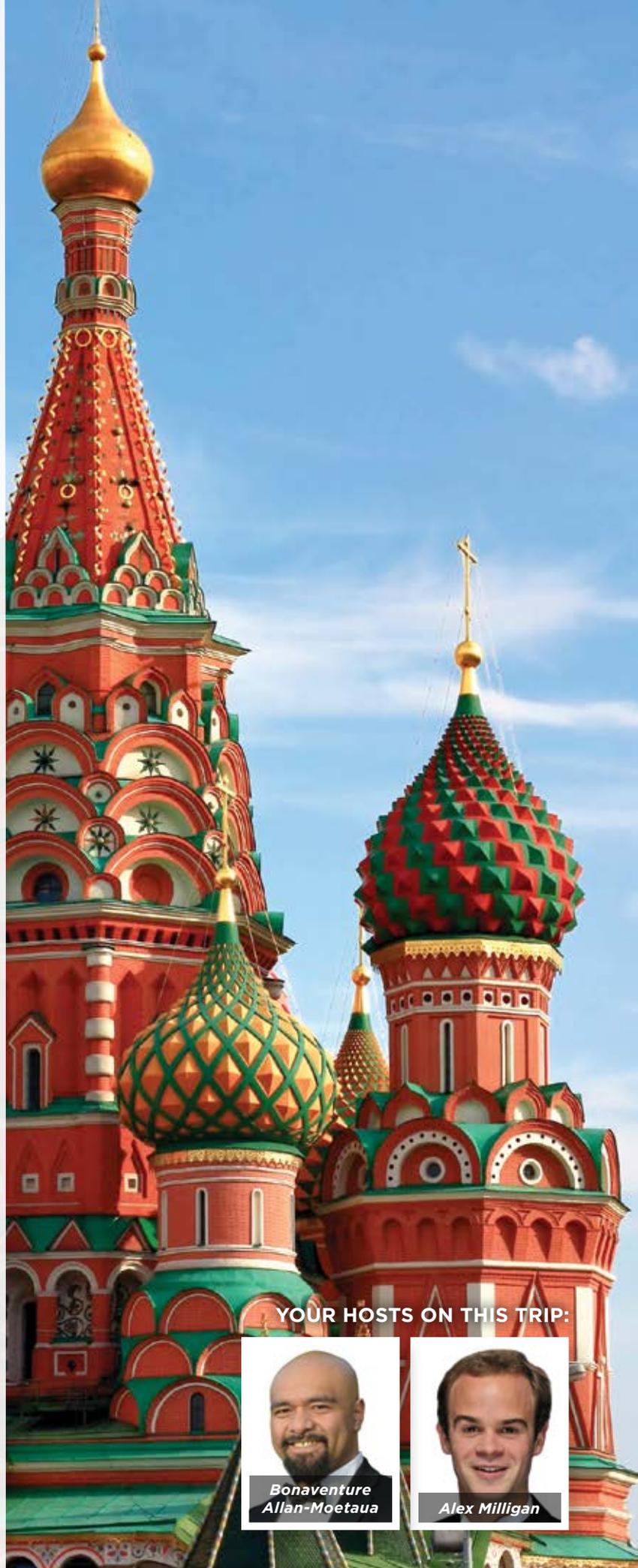
# WATERWAYS OF THE TSARS

27 JUNE - 19 JULY 2020

Join Bonnie and Alex in Russia on our music tour to see and experience all its hidden gems, along with its splendour, jaw dropping grandeur and alluring, turbulent history.

## Experience the Exceptional...

- We start with five nights in Moscow to experience the Kremlin, the Bolshoi and Red Square.
- We enjoy a six-night cruise on the Volga River to discover the real Russia, with its small rural towns abundant in historical landmarks, tiny settlements preserving centuries-old traditions, and Russia's unique inspiring nature. We delve into the history of the Tsars, the culture of Russia with exceptional, captivating speakers on board our cruise.
- Then it's six nights in St. Petersburg with visits to the Hermitage and Fabergé museums with some of the finest art, gems and treasures in the world.
- Along the way, there's incredible musical events including at the Mariinsky Theatre, Russian Army Choir, opera or ballet at the Bolshoi Theatre, a Russian folklore concert, Moscow Circus, *Swan Lake* at the Hermitage Theatre or similar, concert of choral music and a concert at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall or State Kremlin Concert Hall.
- All of this with the love and care of Bonnie and Alex, as well as our own special music events presented by them along the way!



### YOUR HOSTS ON THIS TRIP:



Bonaventure  
Allan-Moetaua



Alex Milligan

## PLACES WE STAY

### Grand Hotel Europe, St Petersburg

A cultural and culinary landmark, the Grand Hotel Europe has played a central role in the life of St. Petersburg for over 130 years. A truly iconic Orient-Express hotel, it stands on Nevsky Prospekt among the city's great architectural treasures, renowned for its impressive façade and decorative interiors. (From Sue and John) It is one of the finest hotels we have ever stayed in!

The **M.S. Volga Dream** offers an unprecedented level of luxury cruising, as well as the finest accommodation, delicious food, best service and care in the industry. The advent of the boutique Volga Dream reveals tsarist-era luxury and provides superior service, confirming the ship as the most luxurious on the waterway. With 60 crewmembers and a capacity for just over 100 passengers, the ship has the highest crew-to-passenger ratio among Russian river cruise ships. The superb restaurant on board offers truly delectable, international cuisine. With so few guests amid the ship's spacious arrangement, it feels like sailing aboard a private yacht.

### St. Regis Hotel, Moscow

Just steps away from Red Square, the Bolshoi Theatre and St. Basil's Cathedral, the St. Regis Moscow Nikolskaya is an award winning, brand new hotel. It combines a rich cultural legacy with modern design. It is within a stepping stone of the historic landmarks and exclusive shops of Russia's vibrant capital. The Spa and indoor swimming pool offer a tranquil retreat, whilst the Rooftop Hall promises panoramic views of the Kremlin.



Grand Hotel Europe, St Petersburg



M.S. Volga Dream



St. Regis Hotel, Moscow

## **DUBAI (4 nights - stopovers return including early check in)** **- Sheraton Dubai Mall of the Emirates**

We begin and end our Waterways of the Tsars Tour with flights to and from Dubai on Emirates. As we arrive into Dubai early in the morning, we have arranged another night's accommodation so we can go to our rooms immediately. On return we arrive into Dubai late at night so we will again have access to our rooms immediately.

## **MOSCOW (5 nights)** **- St. Regis Hotel, Moscow**

Moscow, on the Moskva River in western Russia, is the nation's cosmopolitan capital. In its historic core is the Kremlin, a complex that's home to the president and tsarist treasures in the Armoury. With a population of 13 million, it combines the historic with modern architecture all in one city.

### **HIGHLIGHTS in Moscow include:**

- A specially arranged backstage tour of the Bolshoi Theatre.
- Tretyakov Gallery, the largest museum dedicated exclusively to Russian fine art.
- Explore Moscow's Metro, known for its architectural splendour.

- A visit to the Kremlin Armoury Museum to view its collection of opulent coronation finery, hand-forged armour and weapons, royal carriages and sleighs, and dazzling Fabergé eggs.
- View the ornate gems of the Diamond Fund, including Catherine the Great's diamond-encrusted coronation crown and the 190-carat Orlov Diamond, and continue to the Square of Four Cathedrals.
- Visit the famous Red Square to see its famous landmarks - Lenin's Tomb and St. Basil's cathedral.
- An orientation city tour of Moscow.
- See a remarkable collection of French Impressionists and Old Master paintings housed in the Pushkin.
- Museum of Fine Arts.
- Attend an opera or ballet performance at the famous Bolshoi Theatre.
- Visit the Novodevichy convent.
- Day tour to Leo Tolstoy's house.
- A concert at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall or State Kremlin Concert Hall.
- Attend a performance of the Moscow Circus.
- Full free day to explore Moscow at your leisure.
- Welcome dinner with music.



*Red Square with Kremlin and St Basil's Cathedral, Moscow*

## **VOLGA RIVER CRUISE (6 nights)**

### **- MS Volga Dream**

We transfer to the luxurious MS Volga Dream to begin sailing along the Russian waterways.

The Volga River, Europe's longest and largest river, stretches through history, from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great to Catherine the Great, and into today where everything looks very much like it always has — the churches, the villages, the people, comprising scenes from an old painting you may swear you have seen in a gallery.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS on the Volga Dream include:**

- **UGLICH**

After a full day of cruising through forested countryside, we dock in the ancient trading town of Uglich, one of the towns that make up Russia's renowned Golden Ring. We explore the impressive Church of St. Dmitry-on-the-Blood, erected on the site where Dmitry, son of Ivan the Terrible, was murdered in 1591, and we attend an enchanting concert of choral music at St. John's Church. We will also enjoy a Costumed Russian Tea Ceremony and Russian Cooking Class.

- **YAROSLAVL**

Founded in 1010, Yaroslavl is one of the oldest cities in central Russia and the Volga's first port.

In the Spassky Monastery we see the Transfiguration of the Christ and admire the mosaics at the Church of Elijah the Prophet. We take part in a costumed reception at the governor's house, and then re-board the MS Volga Dream in time for lunch.

- **GORITSY**

We enjoy an early morning cruise across Lake Belove, the white lake.

In the tiny settlement of Goritsy, we visit the Kirillo- Belozersky Monastery, founded in 1397, and now home to one of the best collections of Russian icons in the world. We end our day with a Russian Dinner and Vodka Tasting.

- **KIZHI**

The Karelia region, which spans the area from St. Petersburg to the Arctic Circle, is a vast wilderness of forest and water. Discover Lake Onega, fed by 58 rivers and home to 1,369 islands, including Kizhi.

We see a collection of ancient Russian wooden houses and windmills, and the famous Church of the Transfiguration, built in 1714 without a single nail. We'll also enjoy a beautiful Tchaikovsky piano recital on board.



*Volga Dream alongside Church of St. Catherine*

- **SVIR RIVER AND THE VILLAGE OF MANDROGI**

While cruising along the 139-mile-long Svir River, we appreciate the quiet understated beauty of a region that has long inspired artists and poets.

The ship passes quaint riverside hamlets before reaching Lake Ladoga. We step ashore for a brief visit to the vacation village of Mandrogi to experience daily life in a quaint wooden village on our own.

A visit to a local school and World War Two memorial. Final cruise gala dinner tonight.

## **ST. PETERSBURG (6 nights)**

### **- Grand Hotel Europe**

St. Petersburg was founded by Tsar Peter the Great on May 27, 1703. From 1713 to 1728 and from 1732 to 1918, Saint Petersburg was the Imperial Capital of Russia. It remains Russia's cultural centre, with numerous museums and art galleries as well as the famous Mariinsky Theatre where we will enjoy an opera or concert.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS in St. Petersburg include:**

- Dinner with entertainment, at one of the finest hotels in the world!
  - City tour of St. Petersburg which includes Spit of Basil Island, Spilled Blood Church, Peter and Paul Fortress (founded in 1703 by Peter the Great and the burial place of most of Russia's Tsars and Tsarinas from the eighteenth century onwards, including Peter the Great), St. Isaac Cathedral and a drive through Nevsky Prospekt.
  - Visit to the Fabergé Museum housing the world's largest collection of works by Peter Carl Fabergé, including nine Easter eggs commissioned by the Russian royal family.
  - Attend a specially arranged performance by the Russian Army Choir, then celebrate a welcome dinner at one of St. Petersburg's finest restaurants.
  - We have arranged early entrance to the State Hermitage Museum, before official working hours to avoid heavy crowds to see one of the greatest collections of art in Europe. Part of our time will be with a guide, the rest will be free time to explore at leisure. Following the Hermitage, we enjoy high tea at a five-star hotel.
- Travel to Tsarskoye Selo (Catherine the Great's Palace) which houses the extraordinary Amber Room, its six tons of solid amber deftly carved and framed in gold leaf. Once deemed the "eighth wonder of the world," the room was stripped by the Nazis in 1941, but majestically reconstructed in honour of St. Petersburg's 300th birthday.
  - Folklore concert at Nikolaevsky Palace.
  - Opera or ballet performance at the famous Mariinsky Theatre.

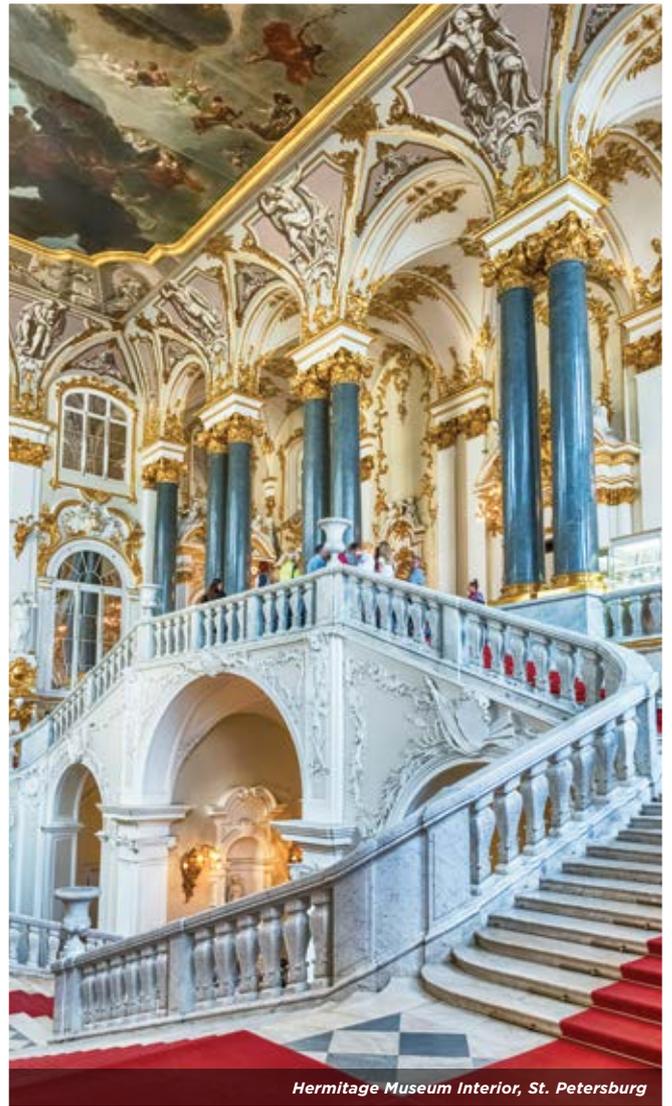


*St. Isaac Cathedral, St, Petersburg*

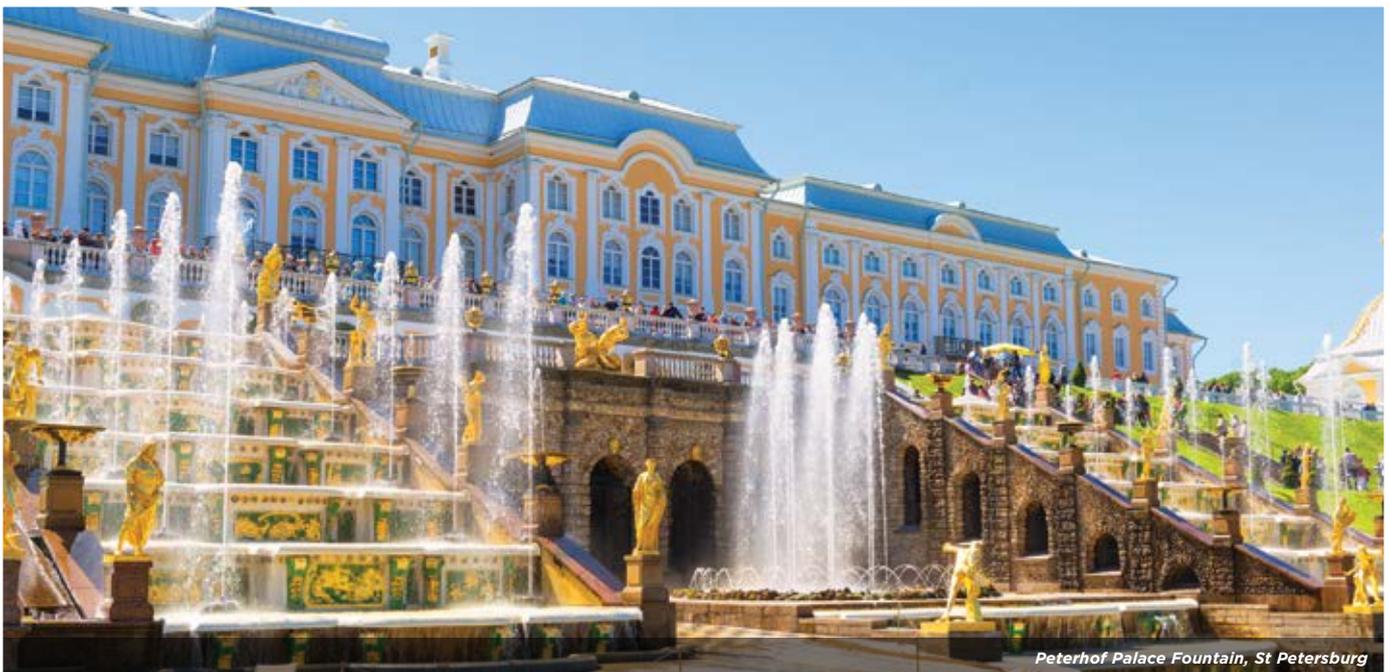


*Experience Cossack Dancing*

- A classical concert at the outrageously ornate Yusupov Palace. The private theatre is an elaborate yet intimate venue and was the home entertainment centre for one of the city's foremost aristocratic families.
- Swan Lake at the Hermitage in Catherine the Great's private theatre.
- Explore at leisure one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It is home to many other great museums or you may like to revisit one of the places we have already experienced such as the Hermitage and delve deeper into the treasures of this incredible city.
- Canal cruise of the waterways of St Petersburg to experience the glorious architecture from the canals and see many buildings you simply cannot see from simply driving around.
- Imperial Porcelain Factory - painting class.
- Tour of Peterhof, St. Petersburg's most famous and spectacular Imperial estate, often cited as the Versailles of Russia. Stroll in the vast Lower Park with 176 fountains of various forms and styles and four cascades, majestic palaces and numerous gilded statues of ancient gods and heroes.
- Tour of the General Staff Building, built in 1819, this is the iconic bow shaped building situated in front of the Winter Palace.
- Final night dinner with entertainment at our magnificent hotel.



*Hermitage Museum Interior, St. Petersburg*



*Peterhof Palace Fountain, St Petersburg*



**\$18,990** *per person  
twin share*

*Single Room supplement add \$5,950*

**Initial Deposit on booking** **\$3,000**

**Second Deposit due 13 December 2019** **\$4,000**

**Final Balance due 13 March 2020**

#### **THIS TRIP INCLUDES:**

- Return airfares, Auckland - Dubai - Moscow // St. Petersburg - Dubai - Auckland on Emirates, including taxes.
- Incredible musical events including performances at the famous Bolshoi Theatre, Mariinsky Theatre, Russian folklore concert, Moscow Circus, Swan Lake at Hermitage Theatre or similar, concert of choral music and a concert at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall or State Kremlin Concert Hall.
- St. Petersburg (6 nights) staying at the incredible Grand Hotel Europe, includes tours and entry to Hermitage Museum, Peterhof Palace, Catherine the Great Palace.
- Canal City Boat Cruise, city highlights tour including St. Peter and Paul Fortress.
- Volga River Cruise on the luxurious Volga Dream (6 nights) cruise to many rural villages and waterways along the Volga River, including visits, activities and shore excursions to Mandrogi, Kizhi, Goritsy, Yaroslavl and Uglich.
- Moscow (5 nights) staying at the five-star St. Regis Hotel, including visits to the Kremlin, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Diamond Fund to see the Russian Crown Jewels, Novodevichy Convent and tour of Leo Tolstoy's house.
- Special events include Faberge Museum tour, Russian tea ceremony, tour of the Bolshoi Theatre and private concert at the Yusupov Palace where Rasputin was murdered.
- All tours, tips, taxes, music experiences, entrances, and transport while in Russia as per our itinerary.
- All breakfasts, 15 lunches and 11 dinners included.
- Escorted with love and care by Bonnie and Alex.

#### **EXPLORING TOUR**

**This is still a moderately paced tour, but you will be required to walk longer distances, walk on cobblestones and stand in museums. To really get the best out of this tour you need to be able to stand or walk for a couple of hours comfortably, be it at a leisurely pace.**

*"I like to spend most of the day exploring. Whether walking historic neighbourhoods on cobblestones at a moderate pace or out and about on a coach, I want my days full. Stairs don't bother me and I am keen to see and do as much as I can with the odd day off to recuperate."*

**Please note: No booking will be accepted for this trip without the initial deposit.**

#### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- All trips are subject to change but any changes will be of equal or greater value.
- Deposits refundable until final payment date minus any costs incurred, or an administration fee of up to \$300.
- Travellers need to be independently mobile and fit to travel.
- Travellers are required to obtain comprehensive travel insurance for all international trips.
- Please refer to terms & conditions on our booking form.



operatunity

**Toll Free: 0508 886 489**

**email: [travel@operatunity.co.nz](mailto:travel@operatunity.co.nz) | [www.operatunity.co.nz](http://www.operatunity.co.nz)**

**PO Box 132 150 Sylvia Park, Auckland 1644, New Zealand**