

WATERWAYS OF THE TSARS



operatunity

Travel

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

07 ~ 29 MAY 2018

WATERWAYS OF THE TSARS 2018

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

07 - 29 MAY 2018

Join us on our five star tour of St Petersburg, Moscow and a luxury cruise of the Volga River. We provide you with incredible musical events including performances at the famous Bolshoi Theatre, Mariinsky Theatre, Russian Army Choir, 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.

Russia is one of the most romantic countries in the world, filled with incredible history and beautiful landscapes and landmarks. We delve into the history of the Tsars, the culture of Russia, Faberge and some of the finest arts, gems and treasures in the world, as well as extravagant, iconic palaces and churches.

But Russia is not just about its two brilliant cities Moscow and St Petersburg. The real Russia is also about small rural towns abundant in historical landmarks, tiny settlements preserving centuries-old traditions, and Russia's unique inspiring nature.

Our music tour is an exceptional way to see and experience all these hidden gems of Russia, along with its splendour, jaw dropping grandeur and alluring, turbulent history.



Cathedral of Vasily, Moscow



Russia Grand Cascade in Peterhof Palace St Petersburg

PLACES WE STAY

A cultural and culinary landmark, **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 facade and decorative interiors.

Positioned adjacent to Arts Square, the hotel has strong associations with the world of theatre, music and dance. Past guests include Tchaikovsky and Pavarotti, crowned heads and world leaders. (From Sue and John) It is one of the finest hotels we have ever stayed in!

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

Ararat Park Hyatt Moscow – named the best hotel in Russia in 2011 by Bloomberg International Hotel Awards – is located in the heart of the capital of Russia, near the Bolshoi Theatre and only a few steps from the Kremlin and Red Square. In 2012 with the help of renowned designer Tony Chi, the hotel renovated all of its rooms and most public areas. Ararat Park Hyatt Moscow is a world class hotel, designed specifically for travellers who appreciate privacy, personalised service and outstanding quality.



Grand Hotel Europe



Volga Dream



Ararat Park Hyatt Moscow

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

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.

ST PETERSBURG (6 nights) ~ Grand Hotel Europe

Saint 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 at the hotel with entertainment, 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 Nevsky Prospekt drive.

- ☞ Visit Faberge Museum housing the world's largest collection of works by Carl Faberge, including 9 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.
- ☞ Classical concert in a palace or Swan Lake at Hermitage in St Catherine the Great's private theatre.
- ☞ Full free day to explore at leisure.



- 👁️ Canal cruise of the waterways of St Petersburg.
- 👁️ Imperial Porcelain Factory - painting class.
- 👁️ Tour of Peterhof, St. Petersburg's most famous and spectacular Imperial estate, often cited as the Versailles of Russia. Visit Bath cottage and 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.

VOLGA RIVER CRUISE (6 nights)

~ **MS Volga Dream** (Imperial Programme)

Today we transfer to the awaiting luxurious MS Volga Dream to begin sailing along the Russian waterways.

We embark on our extraordinary Volga River Cruise, Europe's longest and largest river stretches through history, Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great to Catherine the Great, and on 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:

- 👁️ Captain's welcome reception and dinner as we begin our cruise.
- 👁️ Bread, Salt & Vodka Welcome Aboard Ceremony.

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.

- 👁️ Barbeque on the Open Deck.

KIZHI

The Karelia region, which spans the area from St. Petersburg to the Arctic Circle, is 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 Transfiguration church, built in 1714 without a single nail.



Volga River



Village Churches



Wooden Village

- 👁️ Piano Concert – pieces by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff.

GORITSY

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. After a guided tour, we continue cruising toward majestic Lake Onega.

- 👁️ Russian Dinner with Vodka Tasting.

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.

- 👁️ Volga Dream Experience: Costumed Russian Tea Ceremony & Russian Cooking Class.

UGLICH

After a full day of cruising through forested countryside, we dock in the ancient trading town of Uglich, one of the spokes of Russia's renowned Golden Ring. We explore the impressive Church of St. Dmitri-on-the-Blood, erected on the site where Dmitri, son of Ivan the Terrible, was murdered in 1591, and we attend an enchanting concert of choral music at St. John's Church.

- 👁️ Documentary Film "Construction of the Moscow Canal".



Chinese Bridges, Pushkin



Church of the Annunciation



Church of St Catherine

MOSCOW (5 nights)

~ Hotel Ararat Park Hyatt 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 biggest museum dedicated exclusively to Russian fine art.
- 👁️ Explore Moscow's Metro, known for its architectural splendour.
- 👁️ A visit to the Kremlin to the Armoury Museum to view its collection of opulent coronation finery, hand-forged armour and weapons, royal carriages and sleighs, and dazzling Faberge 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 - and visit GUM, Moscow's largest department store.
- 👁️ 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 St Sergius Monastery and inside visit. Then on to Matryoshka Museum and the Matryoshka factory of Russian dolls.
- 👁️ 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.
- 👁️ Farewell dinner with music.



