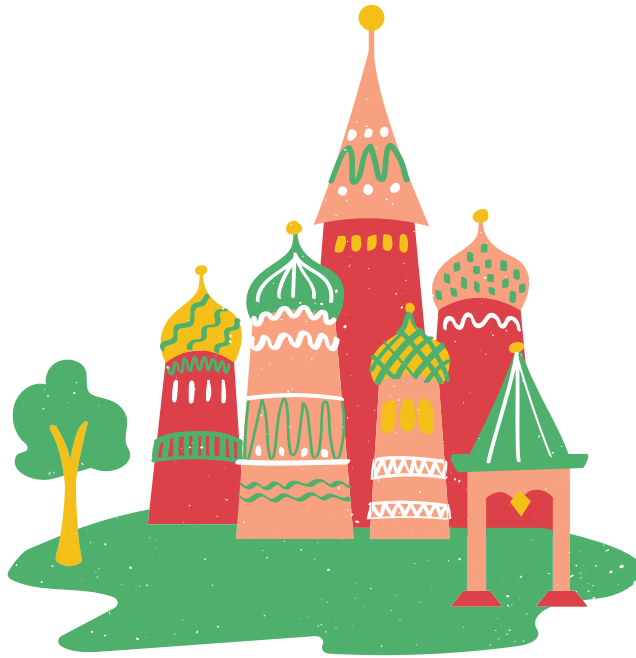


Russia



for tourists

**THE GUIDE THAT WILL HELP YOU ENJOY
YOUR TRIP TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO THE FULLEST**

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THE COUNTRY

The Russian Federation is the World's biggest country with an area of 17.800.000 km², 145 million citizens and 14 neighbouring countries. It is also a very powerful one, indeed the Russian Federation, it even has the veto power in the United Nations as successor of the Soviet Union.

The capital is Moscow, and it is in the European quarter of the country. Other big and important cities are: Saint Petersburg, Ekatherinensburg and Saranks.



Throughout history the Capital has changed several times, and also the names of the cities...Saint Petersburg was originally called Petrograd Петроград in honour of Tsar Peter the Great who built it. In 1924 it became Leningrad Ленинград and in 1991 it became, as what is now known, Saint Petersburg Санкт-Петербург.

Russia has a variated geography, half of the country is covered in bushlands, but there are also different mountain chains, such as the Urals, which divide the European part of the country from the Asiatic one.



Moreover Russia faces different seas, even though the temperatures are preferable for city tours holidays!

One thing to remember when travelling to Russia is that the currency used is different, indeed the value used is the Russian Ruble.

You can easily change your money in cities or at international airports, even though it is preferable to come prepared to make the change in urban centers where the change is lower.

HISTORY

The history of Russia dates back to the 9th century with Ruz-Byzantine wars, even though the city of Moscow appears only in the 13th century with the beginning of the Rurikids Dynasty. Later on, in 1549, Ivan IV ruled a new empire in continuous expansion, Russia. In 1615 the Dynasty became that of the Romanovs, who will remain until the end of the Russian Empire.

With Tsar Peter I, also the flag changed and now included the three red, blue and white stripes.

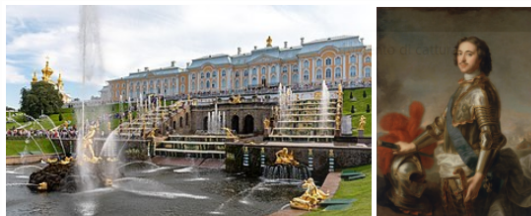
From this point on, the history of Russia can be divided in 3 main eras: the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and finally, the Russian Federation.

Russia's culture and traditions changed over the centuries too, and nowadays it is a mixture of the one of the Empire and that of the Soviet Union.

THE ROMANOVS

The Romanov dynasty started in 1613 and it lasted 300 years in which 18 sovrans took the power. Among these 18 the most important and significant ones have been (in chronological order) Peter the Great, Catherine the Great and Nikolai the Second.

The Tsar who made Russia a world power is Peter the First, also known as Peter the Great. He expanded the territories of Russia through several wars and thanks to that his country became a leader of both the Baltic and Black sea. Peter the First changed the state of Russia from Tsardom to Kingdom, which he reigned until 1725, year of his death. During his time at the Throne Peter I ordered the building of the Peterhof in Saint Petersburg, a major Russian city holding his name. The Peterhof is a series of palaces designed to be the house of the country's leader. These palaces, for their richness and beauty, are nowadays a rinomated touristic attraction, as well as a UNESCO world heritage site.



Catherine the Great ruled from 1762 to 1796. She brought Western innovation in russian's culture and philosophy. Being a sovereign dedicated to arts, the years in which Catherine II was on the throne are considered Russia's Golden Age.



The last Russian Tzar was Nikolai II, ruling from 1894 to 1917. His reign was signed by political instabilities and civilian riots, indeed his family was killed by army officers in the name of the population. Following the Tzar's family shooting is a legend about princess Anastasia whose bones were considered missing for many years.

After the shock of the end of the Romanov dynasty Russia was ruled by chaos. Two Revolutions, one in February and one in October 1917 resulted with the power being in the Bolcheviks' hands.



THE SOVIET UNION

The situation was unstable until a man arrived in April 1924, Lenin. He rose to power and created the Soviet Union based on socialist ideals. Under Lenin, the newly formed Union started being unified even though it included different populations, but the main changes came with Stalin, indeed he conquered many countries and banned things such as religions (during the Tsars period Russians were mainly Orthodox).

With the death of Stalin in 1953 different leaders followed, such as Khrushchev, who started the process of destalinization.

The last USSR leader has been Gorbachev. With him many countries started gaining independence and the Soviet Union came to an end.



Even though the Soviet Union imposed a harsh regime, people were granted a job and could provide the necessary for their family, which is still very important in Russia. For this reason even in today's society the Soviet Union is sometimes missed by natives and the culture is mixed with that of the 20th century and that of the preceding years with the Tsars.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

In 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation was born with first President Boris Yeltsin, followed by Vladimir Putin, Dimitry Medvedev and once again Vladimir Putin. Many territories claimed independence with Russia resulting in a smaller country. The new country also has different ethnicities since the Soviet Union used to include different populations with different cultures which are now starting to exist again.



The country has anyways kept many traditions which date back to the 20th century, for example almost every family in Russia has a Dacha, a house in the countryside which everyone had the opportunity to build when the Soviet government gave every family a piece of land in the country's grassland and bushes. A dacha is a house where people go during the weekends and live a life more connected to nature. There is even a term in the Russian language to indicate those people who go to their countryside house every weekend.

Another cultural aspect that is very important to Russians and dates back in time is the concept of family. There it is very important to get married and have children, indeed the government incentivizes the birth of children by helping financially the families.

Russia is therefore very tied to its past and the culture is a reflection of its history.

THE REGIONS OF RUSSIA

The Russian Federation is divided into 85 regions, which stretch from the European side of the country to the Asiatic one.

Being Russia a very big country, all its regions are different and unique in their own way. Not only factors such as climate change, but also the traditions and celebrations, indeed Russia is a country made of more than 180 ethnicities!

The climate of the country can be generally described as continental, with very cold winters and warm summers. Temperatures go from -30°C (or even less) during winter to $15/20^{\circ}\text{C}$ during summer, so if you suffer cold temperatures, you might consider going to Russia in June which is the hottest month!



CULTURAL HOLIDAY

If you are looking for a holiday based on culture, Russia is surely a great choice! There are plenty of museums, theatres, churches and attractions to see. Next to the main cities you will also find estates and old palaces dating to the Tsars era, which are a rich representation of Russia's culture.

While visiting the Russian Federation you can't miss going to the ballet, whether it is the Bolshoi in Moscow, or the Marijnski in Saint Petersburg, the ballet will make you live a truly Russian experience.

This discipline is indeed very important in Russia since it is a symbol of hard work and rigour.

Another aspect of the culture which you can't miss is surely trying all the local dishes. One of the most widely spread dish, which is also the national one, is pelmeni. Here is the original recipe of пельмени:

- 200g beef
- salt
- pepper
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 onions
- 2 tbs oil
- 300g flour
- 100ml water
- 100ml milk
- 1 egg
- bailey
- pepper corns
- 1 pot vegetable stock

Dough: Mix the water, milk, 1 egg and 1 tbs of oil into a bowl. Slowly add this mixture to the flour and keep mixing. Knead the dough with your hands, then cover it with saran wrap and leave it to rest in the fridge for 30min.

Filling: Put the onions and a few garlic cloves in a food processor. You might want to add some water to make everything blend together. Place the mixture into a bowl with beef, salt and pepper too and combine everything together.

Pelmeni: Take the dough out of the fridge, roll it and cut circles out of it. Place 1 tsp of filling in the center of a dough circle and cover it with another dough circle.

Then close your dumpling, it should look like this.



Cook the pelmeni in boiling vegetable stock with a bailey leaf and a few pepper corns. Once they float they are ready!

RELAXING HOLIDAY

If your journey is mainly to relax, on the other hand, you can still live the russian culture trying the traditional russian spa!

Outside of the cities, Russians are used to taking purifying spa, which dates back to when people did not take as many showers, so it was fundamental to clean properly when done. The process, as a result, eliminates all toxins through snow, stick beatings and showers and saunas at different temperatures.

It is not an experience for everybody, but it surely is a full immersion in the russian culture!

MAJOR CITIES

MOSCOW

Russia's capital city, Moscow, is surely one of the two most visited cities of the country. With 3 UNESCO World Heritage sites and more than 900 between museums and monuments, you will discover something new every day of your trip!

Walking around the city, you must go check out the iconic Red square, which takes its name from the red brick walls of the Kremlin. The square is home not only to the heart of Russia's government, the Kremlin, but also to many museums and Saint Basil's Cathedral, widely recognized as the symbol of Russia. It is also interesting to acknowledge how the work going on in this square changed over time and the effects still remain today, indeed in the Red square tourists can find old cannons and bells built on order of Tsars, and the remains of the religious centers that were not destroyed by the Soviet Union.

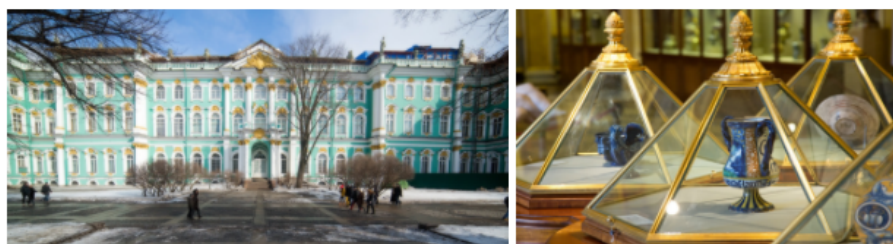


Next to the Kremlin walls there is another touristic spot, the Alexandrovsky gardens, which are home to many towers, bridges and of course are a green spot in a frenetic capital.

SAINT PETERSBURG

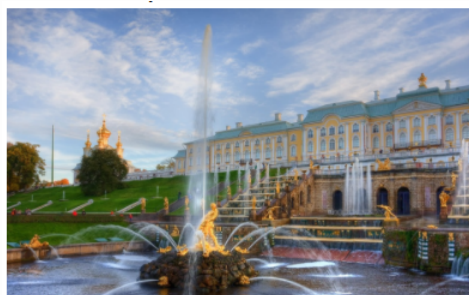
Russia's second biggest city and the ex-capital, Saint Petersburg, is an urban area immersed in history...and water! The city, indeed, rises above islands and many channels pass through it. To connect the islands there are bridges which sometimes close at night, so make sure to check that you are near your accommodation for dinner time.

In Saint Petersburg there is so much to see, there are palaces, museums and so much more. In the city center there is the Hermitage, the museum which has the National Gallery of art. The Museum's exhibitions take place in different palaces with the main ones being 6 and called Complex. Between these 6 palaces, one is particularly visited and it is the Winter Palace, which used to be the residence of the Tzars.



If you are planning to spend a few days in this city, considered the cultural capital of Russia, you might want to visit the Peterhof, a group of palaces just a few kilometers outside of the city center, which constituted the Royal family's abitations.

The biggest palace is the Grand Palace, master representation of the Baroque and Neoclassical styles.



SCARLET SAILS

If you have not decided on the dates of your trip yet, try to book an accomodation by the end of June, to be able to live a magical experience unique to Saint Petersburg. During the last week of June, indeed, the city lights up for the Scarlet Sails, at night there are fireworks and lighting red boats in the city's canals, while throughout the day there are concerts and the city is full of festive spirit, so if you have the opportunity do not miss this days!



Russia's culture is unique and includes many celebrations which are all tied to the country's history (see the Russia section at page 3 to learn more about it).

Each celebration is an opportunity for different traditions to come out.

NEW YEAR'S

Each year in January a new year is celebrated. Since Russians used a different calendar in their history, New Year's is celebrated both on January 1st and January 14th, making this a great time to travel to Russia. Even though the temperature will be quite cold the streets of the major cities will be full of lights and fireworks will brighten up the nights in magical surroundings.

Nowadays the official New Year's date is January 1st. Families usually gather on December 31st, they have dinner all together, exchange toasts and thoughtful wishes and finish the night by listening to the President's speech and the Russian anthem playing on their televisions.



One thing to note if travelling to Russia during this period of the year is that public transport and some working activities might be closed or have a reduced schedule due to the weeks of National holiday.

CARNIVAL

Carnival is a big celebration in Russia, although it is not a bank holiday. Celebrations last for an entire week of February and they are mainly about family and good luck for the spring, indeed every day is dedicated to a member of the family and during this holiday people eat as many blini as they can. This is because, as the legend says, these pancakes resemble the sun, so the more blini you eat during the carnival week, the sunnier spring will be.

Here is a simple recipe for traditional russian blinis **блины**:

- 3 eggs
- 500 ml milk
- 3 tbs sugar
- 3 g salt
- 340 g flour
- 1 tbs baking powder
- 2 tbs oil



Firstly mix eggs, sugar, salt and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the milk, then add the baking powder and flour and combine everything together. Add the remaining milk and after that the oil.

Once you obtain a homogeneous mixture you can cook the блины on a pan and eat them with a dressing of your choice!

DEFENDER OF THE FATHERLAND DAY

On February 23 in Russia it is Defender of the Fatherland Day, a national holiday celebrating the men who served the military and the country. Local authorities usually organize parades to commemorate the veterans of the army.



This holiday firstly appeared in 1922 as the anniversary of the Red Army and it has always been celebrated under different names for the different governments, even though as more and more women join the army it is losing the tradition linked to man.

WOMEN'S DAY

While men have their holiday on February 23, its women's turn on March 8 with the International Women's Day.

During this day women are celebrated by their families and their partners buy them flowers and other presents. Also the national TV channels pay tribute to women by showing programmes about the achievements of Russian women throughout history.

The symbol of this holiday is surely flowers, which are very present in Russia's culture to accompany gifts from boys to girls.



SPRING AND LABOUR DAY

On May 1 in Russia it isn't only Labour Day, but also Spring Day. The population usually uses this day to relax and gather with family in their dachas right outside of the cities.

This holiday is seen as a day to relax and connect with family and nature, while in the past it had a different meaning. During the last years of the Russian Empire, indeed, the population would revolt to ask for more working rights and better conditions. On the other hand, during the decades of the Soviet Union, Labour Day was a fundamental celebration, commemorating collaboration and hard work, bases of the communist government, and parades would be organized for workers.

Spring and Labour Day as it is now, so a symbol of relax after the busy routine and an opportunity to spend time with families, only appeared in 1992.



VICTORY DAY

Victory Day is a National Holiday which occurs on May 9 and it commemorates the victory of the Second World War. Despite this celebration starting during the USSR, it was not of much importance until 1995.

During Victory Day there are fireworks and military parades to pay tribute to the country's army. The most famous and biggest one is the parade in the Red Square in Moscow, Russia's capital, right in front of the Kremlin.

A symbol of this celebration are red flowers, which are a homage to those deceased during the war and also to the Soviet Union.



RUSSIA DAY

On June 12 it is Russia Day, a celebration of patriotism in which Russia's achievements are commemorated. During this holiday, established in 1994, the President attributes the National Award to Russian poets, artists, scientists and so on.

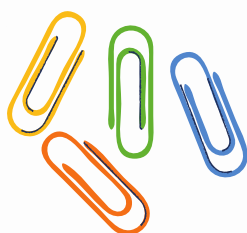
Even though Russians are generally patriotists, some of them refuse to celebrate Russia Day on June 12, as it is the anniversary of the day in which the dissolution of the Soviet Union was decided upon. Those who decide to oppose this holiday usually spend time in their dachas away from the cities where events like concerts are usually run.



KNOWLEDGE DAY

Knowledge Day is a Russian observance occurring on September 1. This date is not a public or national holiday, but it is a rather important time of the year, indeed all the schools in the country open and welcome their students from the summer holidays.

As the name suggests this day is dedicated to culture and education, and although it does not change much adults' schedules, it surely changes the time of the year for russian kids and teenagers.



CHRISTMAS

The Russian Christmas is celebrated on January 7 due to the fact that when the power was held by the Tsar, the Julian calendar was in use. This date is the Orthox Christmas, the religion which is mostly spread throughout the Russian population. During this day people go to church and have dinner with their families even though many consider New Years a more important holiday since it signs the beginning of a new chapter in life. Kids are thrilled in other periods too, indeed the russian Santa Clause Дед Мороз (Father of the cold) brings presents on December 6th, Saint Nikolas.

Moreover this holiday was banned during the Soviet Union as no religion was accepted, and this results in this holiday not being fully comprehended by the population.

Anyhow Russians enjoy toasting and spending time with their families, so on January 7 they gather to celebrate the birth of Christ and exchange other wishes for the new year that just began.



ALPHABET

The Russian Language uses the cyrillic alphabet which was invented in 863 by two greek men who are now Saints and it was later modified by Peter the Great.

This alphabet has 33 letters in total, 21 consonants, 10 vowels and 2 phonetic signs.

А → A as in banana

Б → B as in Bottle

В → V as in Vladimir

Г → GH as in Get

Д → D as in Dad

Е → E as in Yellow

Ё → EO as IO together

Ж → G as in Ginny

З → ZH as in Zhara

И → I as in Cheers

Й → I as in rain

К → K as in Kettle

Л → L as in Love

М → M as in Mom

Н → N as in Need

О → O as in Hotel

П → P as in Park

Р → R as in Road

С → S as in Street

Т → T as in Tower

У → U as in House

Ф → F as in butterfly

Х → H as in Hurricane

Ц → Z as in Zoo

Ч → C as in Chat

Ш → SC as in Shoot

Щ → SCIA as you would pronounce Ч, but say shch instead

Ъ → harsh sign

Ы → as И but pronounced with the tongue at the back of the mouth

Ь → soft sign

Э → E as in Hello

Ю → EU as in YOU

Я → EA as in mA

PRONUNCIATION

The letters of the alphabet are pronounced as spelled, with a few exceptions:

- The О, when not marked becomes an A
- Ъ makes the preceding consonant strog
- Ь makes the preceding consonant soft

Letter	В	Д	Ж	З	Г
What it becomes	Ф	Т	Ш	С	К

In Russian letters divide in two group: *soft* and *harsh*:

- among the soft ones there are: Ъ, е, й, я, ю, и, ё
- all the other letters are harsh

To read correctly a sentence you should memorize how to pronounce each word since there is no rule for accents

BASICS

- Articles do not exist
- Words can be either masculine, feminine or neutral
 - Masculine words usually end with consonants СТОЛ → table
 - Feminine words usually end with А or Я ЖЕНА → woman
 - Neutral words usually end with О ОКНО → window
- In Russian there are 6 declinations with different desinences for:
 - gender
 - quantity
 - harsh/soft
- The verb to be is almost never used
- There are 2 types of verbs → perfective and imperfective
 - The imperfective verbs are used for actions which keep going or do not have specific timings
 - Have present/past/future
 - Present: see table in the section "Verbs"
 - Past: take out ТЬ from the verb and add Л for male, ЛА for female, ЛО for neutral and ЛИ for plurals
 - Future: verb to be in the future form* + verb in the infinitive form
 - The perfective verbs are used for finished actions or for actions that happen only once Have present conjugation only

VERBS

All of the verbs in the Russian language are either applied to the first or second conjugation.

	First conjugation	Second conjugation	FUTURE*
	знать (to know)	говорить (to speak)	есть (to be)
я	знаю	говорю	Буду
ты	знаешь	говоришь	Будешь
он	знает	говорит	Будет
мы	знаем	говорим	Будем
вы	знаете	говорите	Будете
они	знают	говорят	Будут

Some useful verbs are:

- To eat → есть
- To be → быть (есть in the present tense)
- To walk → идти
- Can → может
- Want → хотеть
- To work → работать
- To call → Звонить
- To rest → Отдыхать
- To read → Читать
- To write → Написать
- To change → Изменить

USEFUL PHRASES AND SENTENCES

GREETINGS

Good morning → Добрый утро

Good afternoon → Добрый день

Good evening → Добрый вечер

Good night → Добрый ночи

Good bye → До свидания

Hello → Привет

Bye Bye → пока пока

My name is ... → Меня зовут...

How are you? → Как тебя

I am happy/everything is fine → Все хорошо

I am tired → я устал(а)

Thank you → Спасибо

You are welcome → пожалуйста

QUESTIONS

Where is the hotel? → Где находится отель?

Where is ... square? → Где ... площадь?

Where is the nearest metro station? → Где ближайшая станция метро?

Where is the nearest train station? → Где ближайшая вокзала?

Where is ... street? → Где ... улица?

Where is ... restaurant? → Где ... ресторан?

Can I? → Можно я?

MONEY

Bank → банка

Money → Деньги

Rubli → Рубли

To change → Изменить

Where can I change my money → Где я могу поменять деньги?

TRANSPORTATION

Taxi → Такси

Metro → метро

Train → Поезд

Bus → Автобус

Aeroport → Аэропорт

Train station → Вокзала

Metro station → станция метро

FOOD

Meat → Мясо

Fish → Рыба

Vegetables → Овощи

Fruit → Фрукты

Sweets → Сладости

I am full → Я всё

I am allergic → У меня аллергия

TOURISTIC PLACES

Museum → Музей

Theatre → Театр

Square → Площадь

Street → Улица

Boulevard → Бульвар

Closed → Закрыто

Open → открыто

EMERGENCIES

Ambulance → Скорая помощь

Hospital → Больница

Police → Полиция

Embassy → Посольство

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