



MIR
CORPORATION

A *TOUR*
FOR ALL
TASTES

2012
SMALL GROUP
JOURNEYS



Journeys to Legendary Destinations
at the Crossroads of Europe & Asia



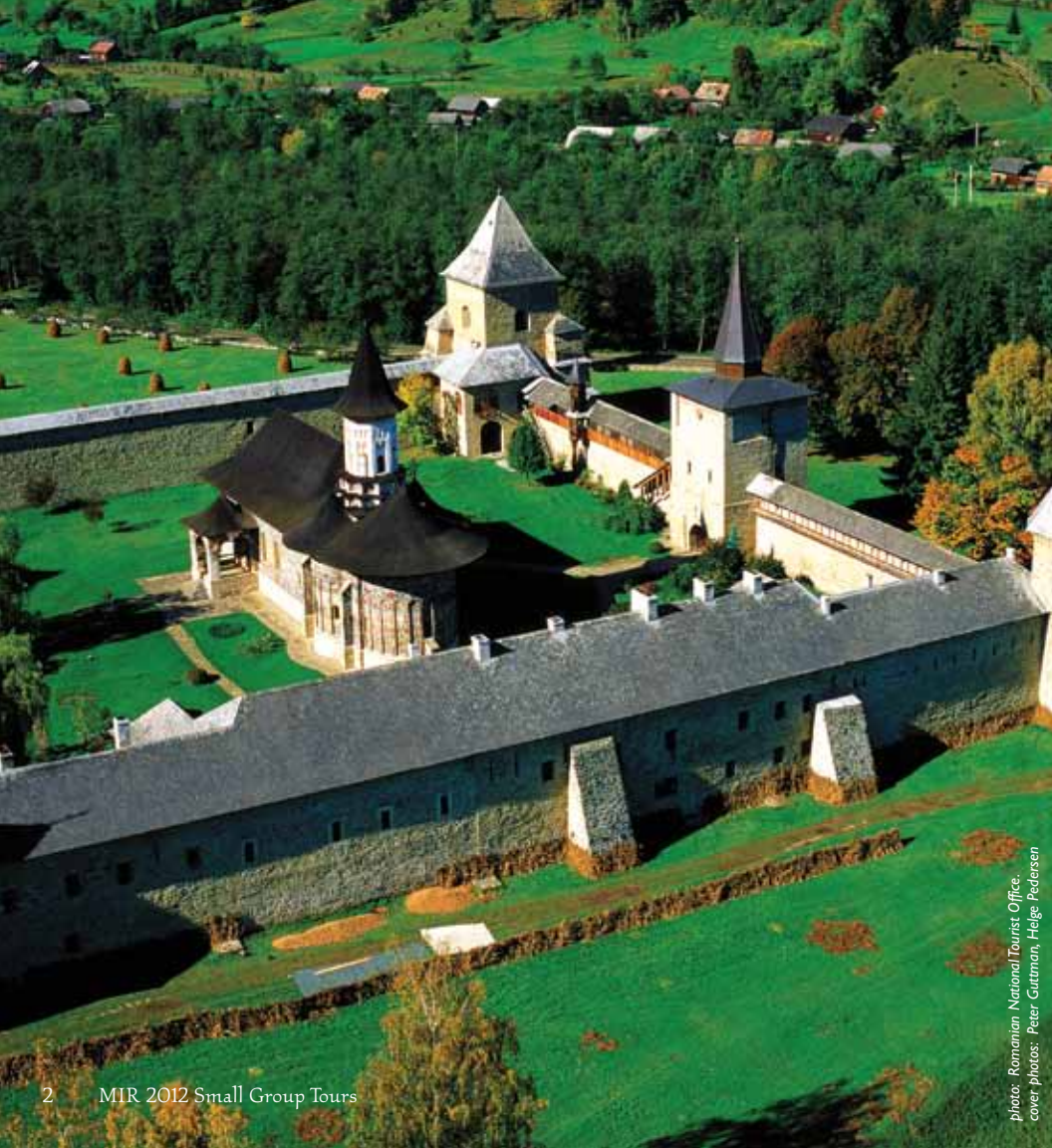


photo: Romanian National Tourist Office.
cover photos: Peter Guttman, Håge Pedersen

C O N T E N T S

FESTIVAL & SPECIAL EVENT

- Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses**
- Mongolian Explorer: The Gobi & Beyond with Naadam Festival**
- Inside the Russian Space Program**

ADVENTURE

- Siberia & Mongolia: Spirits & Nomads**
- Siberian Odyssey: Legends of Buryatia, Lake Baikal & Tuva**
- Russia's Southern Steppe: Land of Cossacks, Kalmyks & Caviar**
- The Pamir Highway & Across Fabled Frontiers**
- Kamchatka: Reindeer Herders & the Ring of Fire**
- Eastern Turkey & Georgia: Legacy of Empire**

CULTURAL CLASSIC

- Classic Western Russia: Moscow, Novgorod & St. Petersburg**
- Journey Through Central Asia: The Five 'Stans**
- Kaliningrad & The Baltics**
- Russia's Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages**
- Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova**
- Balkan Odyssey: Crossroads of Culture**
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WINTER HOLIDAY

- Christmas Traditions of Poland**
- Russian Winter Wonder Land**

A TOUR FOR ALL TASTES

MIR (from the Russian word meaning both “peace” and “world”) specializes in bringing people together to discover more about the world and, consequently, about themselves. Over the past 25 years we’ve developed quite a few ways to do so, including our stellar small group journeys. These innovative tours offer a great way to escape from the ordinary to encounter and embrace the extraordinary — no matter what your interests.

Imagine exploring Russia’s pristine Kamchatka peninsula, encountering semi-nomadic reindeer breeders and their herds along the way; or experiencing the pageantry of Mongolia’s one-of-a-kind Naadam Festival paired with a relaxing stay at an award-winning lodge in the Gobi Desert. Imagine discovering the backroads of Eastern Turkey and savoring the deep red wines and fantastic cuisine of Georgia; or wandering the bazaars of Bukhara, stacked with handwoven carpets looking as if they had just arrived on the backs of Silk Road camels.

Imagine joining a small yet diverse group of world travelers every morning for an expertly guided exploration of a world-class site, knowing that your leader will be looking out for your comfort and safety. Your group is intimate and manageable: MIR’s Signature Small Group Tours have a firm upper limit of 16 participants (Explorer Series trips are capped at 12).

Your MIR tour manager is a combination of personal guide, destination expert, magician and diplomat, and is on the spot to ensure that

you get the most out of your trip. He or she can smooth out the wrinkles or shake things up with unexpected opportunities to interact with the locals.

MIR – Small Group Tour Experts – Celebrating 26 Years

MIR’s small group tours will take you places you didn’t even know you wanted to go. You can expect an itinerary filled with surprise and delight, access to a knowledgeable and dedicated travel planner throughout the pre-trip process, personalized airfare services and all-inclusive land tour pricing. (For details, turn to page 23.)

We invite you to flip through the following pages and get inspired. Whether you prefer festivals, adventure, cultural classics or winter holidays, we can match you with a great small group tour. And if you don’t find the perfect trip, we can create a private journey just for you. Give us a call!

Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE ROSES TO THE PAINTED MONASTERIES



May 29-June 13 (features Rose Festival) ♦ September 4-19, 2012

Explore the complex history and fascinating culture of Bulgaria and Romania. Discover the luminous frescoes of the painted monasteries, breathe in the fragrance of the Valley of the Roses, and spend an afternoon visiting with villagers in a tiny Transylvanian town. Begin the journey in Sofia, Bulgaria, a city with more than 7,000 years of history. Visit the serene Rila Monastery and pause in the Thracian settlement of Plovdiv to meet a master potter, before setting off through the beautiful countryside of the Valley of Roses, site of the annual Rose Festival (featured on the May departure). After a stop in Veliko Tarnovo, cross the Danube into Romania, and tour its capital, Bucharest, before setting out north to Transylvania. In Sinaia,

admire Peles Castle. Explore the birthplace of Vlad Dracul in the citadel of Sighisoara, and visit Bran Castle of Bram Stoker fame. Drive via dramatic Bicz Canyon to four of the UNESCO-listed painted monasteries of Bucovina, and enjoy lunch and a demonstration of traditional egg painting in a private home. Meet a Romanian costume designer in the village of Salva and spend an evening with actors from a Tirgu Mures theater. Stroll the Old Town Square in Sibiu before heading to Bucharest for a farewell dinner.

16 Days – Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour – \$5,895 per person double, occupancy

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



Mongolian Explorer: The Gobi & Beyond with Naadam Festival

OVERLAND EXPEDITION ACROSS THE LAND OF NOMADS

June 30-July 13, 2012

Mongolia: The name conjures up images of vast grasslands, wind-swept steppe and endless sky. Cover the incredible distances at the heart of Mongolia and experience the spectacle of the **Naadam Festival**. Begin in UlaanBaatar and tour some of the city's treasures before flying north to the sacred alpine Lake Hovsgol. Sleep in traditional gers, and explore the summer pastureland of reindeer and yak on foot and horseback. Set off overland to Kara Korum and view the splendid Erdene Zhu monastery. On the drive out to the former capital, stop at Hustai Nuruu National Park, home to the Przewalski horse, the last remaining species of truly wild horse in the world. Continue on an adventurous overland route through the Mongolian outback to the Gobi, stopping en route at lost monasteries and remote ger camps. During the epic journey, discover the Flaming Cliffs and the Yol Am Canyon, encountering nomads who call this formidable environment home. Fly back to UlaanBaatar to experience the pageantry of the fascinating Naadam Festival and finish with a performance of Mongolian throat-singing.

14 Days – Explorer Series Small Group Land Tour – \$5,895 per person, double occupancy

Plus internal air \$700 (economy class, subject to change)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Heige Pedersen



photo: Heige Pedersen

Inside the Russian Space Program

FROM STAR CITY TO THE BAIKONUR COSMODROME

NEW!

September 20-29, 2012

This electrifying exploration of the Russian Space program is an incredibly close encounter with space flight – the launch of a Soyuz spacecraft. In Moscow, tour the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in once-classified Star City, the premier training facility for Russian cosmonauts, where you can choose to participate in cosmonaut training yourself. The optional cosmonaut day includes a breathtaking Zero-G flight. Those not participating in the optional training day will tour the fascinating Monino Aviation Museum. Board a special flight to the Baikonur Cosmodrome on the Kazakh steppe. Walk alongside the Soyuz Rocket during its roll-out to the launch pad and enjoy VIP seating at the International Space Station Crew Press Conference at the Cosmonaut Hotel. From the VIP viewing area, witness the thrilling manned launch of the Soyuz to the International Space Station. Experience compelling behind-the-scenes events, including the send-off of the space crew from the Cosmonaut Hotel. Back in Moscow, tour the Kremlin and Armory Museum and Novodevichy Cemetery. Gather in a VIP seating gallery at Mission Control Center for the live satellite feed of the Soyuz docking and celebrate with a farewell dinner.

10 Days – Special Small Group Land Tour – \$13,995 per person, double occupancy
(includes internal air, subject to change)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Douglas Grimes

Siberia & Mongolia: Spirits & Nomads

THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY, LAKE BAIKAL, THE GOBI, NAADAM FESTIVAL

June 25-July 13, 2012

Let the legendary Trans-Siberian Railway carry you through the taiga's unbroken forest to Siberia's deep UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, teeming with unusual wildlife, and south to the immense sky of the vast Mongolian desert and grasslands, where nomads celebrate the annual Naadam Festival. This epic two-country sojourn begins with a tour of Vladivostok. Board the celebrated train on its most remote and scenic leg to Ulan Ude. Visit a village of Old Believers, wind your way through the remote Barguzin Valley to homestays in rural Ust Barguzin, and search for elusive freshwater seals near the Ushkaniye Islands. Hydrofoil across the lake to Listvyanka and relax in an enchanting Siberian lakeside lodge. Spend a day aboard the old Circumbaikal Railway en route to Irkutsk, known for its traditional wooden houses. Fly to the Gobi Desert via UlaanBaatar, Mongolia, to experience the luminous Flaming Cliffs. Return to UlaanBaatar and explore the capital city's museums and monasteries. Enjoy the pageantry of the Naadam opening ceremony and take a day trip to the grasslands of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, mingling with nomads along the way. Toast the journey back in UlaanBaatar with a farewell dinner.

19 Days – Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour

– \$8,395 per person, double occupancy

Plus internal air \$600 (economy class, subject to change)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Heige Pedersen



photo: Heige Pedersen

Information & Reservations:
1-800-424-7289 • www.mircorp.com

Siberian Odyssey: Legends of Buryatia, Lake Baikal & Tuva

FROM OLKHON ISLAND TO THE VALLEY OF THE CZARS

August 3-18, 2012

Explore South Siberia, a remote and atmospheric land. Meet the Buryats of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal and the Tuvan and Khakass people, whose Mongolian neighbors imbued them with Buddhism, shamanism and throat-singing. Assemble in Moscow, then fly to Ulan Ude, the capital of Siberia's Buryat Republic. Visit Russia's most important Buddhist monastery, and enjoy a home-cooked meal and concert with modern-day Old Believers. Board a boat crossing UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal to Listvyanka. Ferry to forested Olkhon Island to search for elusive fresh-water seals and meet an Olkhon shaman. Attend a private concert in the Decembrist Museum in Irkutsk, then take an overnight ride on the fabled Trans-Siberian Railway to Krasnoyarsk. Fly to Kyzyl, capital of remote and beautiful Tuva to attend a shamanist ceremony and discover Tuvan throat-singing. Drive to the village of Samagaltai and visit with a nomadic family. Here, learn the art of making Tuvan cheese and get a private throat-singing lesson. Visit the famous Arzhan II excavations in Turan. Continuing overland, stop in Shushenskoye, where Lenin was exiled, and Abakan, capital of Khakassia, a small South Siberia republic. Enjoy a Khakassian folk performance before flying back to Moscow for one last night.

16 Days – Explorer Series Small Group Land Tour
– \$7,095 per person, double occupancy

Plus internal air \$1,200

(economy class, subject to change)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Martin Klimenta



photo: Martin Klimenta

Russia's Southern Steppe: Land of Cossacks, Kalmyks & Caviar

OVERLAND FROM THE CASPIAN TO THE KUBAN

NEW!



August 18-31, 2012

Discover the southern Russian steppe, an unfamiliar region spiced with a spirited array of independent cultures, including freedom-loving Cossacks and descendants of the Golden Horde. Begin in Volgograd, known during WWII as Stalingrad, and visit the immense Mother Russia monument on Mamaev Kurgan, the high ground where much of the fighting took place. Travel overland to Astrakhan, Russia's 17th century "window on the East" guarding the rich Volga River Delta. Sample local cuisine at a *dastarkhan* demonstration and learn about the modern Caspian caviar industry, which is cultivated sustainably. Head inland to Elista. Populated by Kalmyk people, remnants of the Golden Horde, Elista boasts the largest Buddhist temple in Europe, visited regularly by the Dalai Lama. Tour a breeding reserve for the endangered Saiga Antelope. Continue west to two major Cossack centers. In Rostov-on-Don, tour the former island capital of the Don Cossacks and in Krasnodar, learn about the exploits of the Kuban Cossacks. Enjoy dinner with a family in a private home in Krasnodar. Trace the lush Black Sea coastline to Sochi, "Russian Riviera" resort and 2014 Olympics site. Admire the subtropical Botanical Garden and taste local teas.



photo: Saga Voyages

14 Days – Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour – \$5,995 per person, double occupancy

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.

The Pamir Highway & Across Fabled Frontiers

THE SILK ROAD LESS TRAVELED FROM KYRGYZSTAN TO TAJIKISTAN

August 6-23, 2012

The Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan are some of the most rugged and beautiful on Earth. This adventurous journey over the Pamir Highway is an ancient and breathtaking route. Explore Bishkek, enjoying a Kyrgyz folk performance. In Tokmok village, attend traditional Kyrgyz horse games and visit a handicraft cooperative. Continue to Naryn and overnight in yurts near Tash Rabat, a 15th century caravanserai. Cross the 12,000-foot Torugart Pass, the most spectacular route into or out of Kyrgyzstan. Visit Kashgar's lively animal market and enjoy a performance of Uighur folk dances. Set out on the stunning drive over Irkeshtam Pass back into Kyrgyzstan. Pick up the Pamir Highway near Sary Tash and take it into Tajikistan, up the dramatic Ak-Baital Pass, at almost 15,200 feet, and down to Murgab. Enjoy views of the surrounding mountains, visiting ancient petroglyph sites, summer pastures and hot springs. Stop in little mountain towns and converse with local people. Drive along the Panj River, which forms the natural border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan,

overnighting in the village of Kalaikhumb. Continue to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, and explore the nearby Gissar fortress.

18 Days – Explorer Series Small Group Land Tour – \$7,495 per person, double occupancy

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: James Carmelton

Kamchatka: Reindeer Herders & the Ring of Fire

VOLCANOES, GEYSERS, HOT SPRINGS AND REINDEER OF RUSSIA'S FAR EAST

August 24-September 1, 2012

This uncommon journey focuses on the wild Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia's east coast. Spend nine days exploring this spectacular region by cross-country vehicle and helicopter, meeting its diverse people and experiencing its ruggedly beautiful landscapes en route. Arrive in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, a remote seaside town surrounded by three soaring volcanoes. Enjoy a boat ride around Avacha Bay. Board a helicopter for a ride up Kamchatka's backbone of volcanic peaks to the Valley of the Geysers, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This natural preserve seethes with geysers, steaming hot springs, mud kettles and aromatic sulfur pools. Venture north of Petropavlovsk to the rarely visited region around the small town of Esso. Learn more about the lives of the semi-nomadic locals during a helicopter visit to a reindeer camp. Enjoy an authentic folk performance of traditional song and dance in the nearby settlement of Anavgai. Head back to Petropavlovsk and spend a day hiking at the foot of Avacha volcano. Return to town for a festive dinner to toast the conclusion of the adventure.

9 Days – Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour – \$5,895 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal helicopter flights \$1,000 (subject to change)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



Photo: Martin Klimenta



photo: Martin Klimenta

Eastern Turkey & Georgia: Legacy of Empire

FROM THE BLACK SEA TO THE CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS

August 21-September 9, 2012

Begin this unusual back road exploration among the folded hills of the Anatolian Plateau of Eastern Turkey, and continue along the Black Sea Coast to Georgia, where guests are welcomed at tables laden with some of the finest food and wine on earth. Admire the intricate Roman mosaics in Gazientep and make a pilgrimage to Mt. Nemrut to see the beautifully carved stone heads in the luminous glow of sunrise. Inspect the medieval black basalt walls of Diyarbakir and visit its flourishing Kurdish quarter. Explore Van, crossing blue-green Lake Van to Akhtamar Island. Stop in Dogubayazit and enjoy lunch at a women's cooperative restaurant. Admire the old Citadel of Kars and visit Ani. Explore the Kurdish Ishak Pasha Palace, a tiny gem set in the looming shadow of Mt. Ararat, before driving through the rugged Pontic Mountains to Trabzon. Skirt the luxuriant coast to the Georgian resort of Batumi, and on to the UNESCO-listed Gelati Monastery near Kutaisi. Visit a master potter in his private workshop and drive to alpine Bakuriani. Enjoy the beauty of Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park and the cave town of Uplistsikhe. Pay a visit to the fascinating cave town of Vardzia and to Stalinist Gori. Return to Tbilisi for a lavish farewell "Georgian Table" dinner.

**20 Days – Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour
– \$6,895 per person, double occupancy**

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



Classic Western Russia: Moscow, Novgorod & St. Petersburg

AN INSIDER'S VIEW OF RUSSIA'S GREAT CITIES



photo: Helge Pedersen

May 4-13 ♦ July 20-29 ♦ August 17-26 ♦ September 28-October 7, 2012

This indispensable introduction to some of Russia's great cities gives an insider's view of the real Russia, spotlighting not only the glittering palaces, but also a birch bark crafts class, Stalin's underground bunker, and the unforgettable warmth of a meal in a Russian home. Gather in Moscow and admire the simple beauty of Red Square. Learn secrets of the past at Stalin's Underground Bunker, and soak up the literary atmosphere at Tolstoy's House Museum. Tour the Armory Museum housing Russian treasures, wander through Izmailovo Park, and spend an evening dining in a Russian home. Drive out to Klin to enjoy a short concert and tour at the Tchaikovsky estate. Next is Veliky Novgorod, one of Russia's most ancient cities.

Explore its UNESCO-listed kremlin, and learn from a master craftsman at a hands-on class on traditional birch bark crafts. Drive to St. Petersburg to observe the lifestyles of the czars at Catherine's Palace and explore the elegant Usupoff Palace. Spend a morning exploring the world-class Hermitage Museum, take a stroll along broad Nevsky Prospekt and enjoy a romantic evening at one of the city's sophisticated theaters.

10 Days – Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour – \$4,695 per person, double occupancy

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Peter Sukonik

Journey Through Central Asia: The Five 'Stans

A CLASSIC SILK ROAD SURVEY

**April 10-30 ♦ May 1-21 (Sold Out) ♦ August 21-September 10 ♦
September 18-October 8 ♦ October 9-29, 2012**

Join a modern-day caravan on an epic journey to five exotic countries – **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan**. Begin the tour in Almaty, Kazakhstan, driving into the majestic Tien Shan mountain range. Venture on to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, enjoying a demonstration of traditional nomadic horse games along the way. Fly to the fabled Fergana Valley and visit villages renowned for silk and ceramics. Cross the border into Tajikistan for an overnight in historic Khujand. Journey overland to Tashkent and on to Tamerlane's capital, Samarkand, to admire its blue-tiled mosaics. Visit UNESCO-listed Shakhrisabze, appreciate the interlocking brickwork of Bukhara with its fabulous covered bazaar, and explore the winding alleys of Khiva. Drive through the Kara Kum Desert to the astonishing Savitsky Museum in remote Nukus. Cross into Turkmenistan, and once there explore Kunya Urgench, the ruins of the Parthian city of Nisa and those of mythical Merv, all three UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Get a final taste of Turkmen culture as

you browse the Altyn Asyr Oriental Market, one of the largest markets in Central Asia, admiring the deep red carpets and handcrafted jewelry.

21 Days – Premier Series Small Group Land Tour
– **\$7,195 per person, double occupancy**
Plus internal air \$200 (economy class, subject to change)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Ana Filonov



photo: Michel Belar

Kaliningrad & The Baltics

DEFINITIVE JOURNEY THROUGH ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA AND KALININGRAD

April 30-May 12 ♦ August 6-18, 2012

This overland journey roves the countryside and urban centers of four distinct nations: the three independent Baltic countries — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — and Kaliningrad, an exclave of Russia. Begin in Tallinn, Estonia with an exploration of the narrow cobblestone streets and the Dome Cathedral on Toompea Hill. Skirting Riga Bay, pause at Sigulda, entrance to Gauja National Park, before coming to Latvia's capital, Riga. Travel across the countryside to the Lithuanian seaport of Klaipeda, stopping en route to explore the baroque Rundale Palace and the inspiring Hill of Crosses. Continue to Kaliningrad via the narrow UNESCO-listed Curonian Spit, passing fishing villages, white sand dunes and the wood carvings of the Hill of Witches. In Kaliningrad, wander the Gothic cathedral and Hansa Square. The final stop is Lithuania's beautiful capital, Vilnius. An exploration of Vilnius ranges from the medieval, at the restored Brick Gothic castle of Trakai, to the more recent, at the KGB museum, commemorating the travails of thousands of Lithuanians. Stroll the cobbled streets of the Old Town, shopping for linen and glowing amber jewelry.

13 Days – Premier Series Small Group Land Tour
– \$6,295 per person, double occupancy

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Latvia Tourism



photo: Lithuanian Tours

Information & Reservations:
 1-800-424-7289 • www.mircorp.com

Russia's Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages

MOSCOW, THE GOLDEN RING AND ST. PETERSBURG

June 1-11 ♦ July 13-23 ♦ September 7-17, 2012

Discover where Russian art, architecture and culture began. In between the urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, experience the Russian countryside. Begin in Moscow and explore the Kremlin, Red Square, St. Basil's Cathedral and the Armory Museum, and UNESCO-listed Novodevichy Convent with its famous cemetery. Set out through the Russian countryside, passing clusters of *dachas* and tiny villages. Stop at Vladimir and Suzdal to see the UNESCO-listed 12th and 13th century churches. Drive to Plyos and enjoy authentic Russian cuisine in a private home. In 12th century Kostroma, visit the Romanov family chambers. Explore historic Yaroslavl and Rostov's immense kremlin. Pause at Sergiev Posad to learn about *matrioshka* doll making. Visit the Museum of Lacquer Miniatures in Fedoskino and return to Moscow to board the afternoon train to St. Petersburg. Spend three exhilarating days in St. Petersburg, dipping into the riches of the Hermitage, touring St. Isaac's Cathedral, wandering the imperial estate of Peterhof with its gilded fountains, and admiring the expertly-restored Amber Room at Catherine's Palace.

**11 Days – Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour –
\$5,995 per person, double occupancy**

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova

AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THREE UNSUNG COUNTRIES

May 13-28 ♦ August 19-September 3, 2012

Traverse a little-known region that has changed hands from its earliest history. Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova are three of the least-frequented and least-familiar countries in Europe. Time slowed drastically here after the devastation of World War II, but these beautiful countries are emerging from the shadows.

Begin in Minsk, capital of Belarus, for a fascinating glimpse into the socialist past. Visit an artist's studio for conversation and dessert and stop at the manor house of Polish and American hero Tadeusz Kosciuszko. In Brest, admire the massive UNESCO-listed stone Brest Fortress. Crossing the Ukrainian border, arrive in Lviv and wander its UNESCO-listed Old Town Square, surrounded by 16th-18th century merchant dwellings. Fly to Kiev and visit some of Ukraine's most important sites, including St. Sophia Cathedral and the Caves Monastery. Fly to Simferopol and drive to beautiful Yalta on the sunny Black Sea coast. Explore the remnants of the Crimean Khanate in Bakhchysaray. At seaside Livadia Palace, trace the steps of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, who met here to decide the fate of post-war Europe. Drop in to Odessa, climbing its much-filmed Potemkin Steps and exploring its Partisan Caves, where resistance fighters hid during WWII. Next is Moldova's capital, Chisinau, a tree-lined city of only 600,000. Survey some of Moldova's ancient monasteries and sample some of the deep red wines for which the country is gaining a reputation.

16 Days – Premier Series Small Group Land Tour – \$7,095 per person, double occupancy

Plus internal air \$600 (economy class, subject to change)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Michel Belar

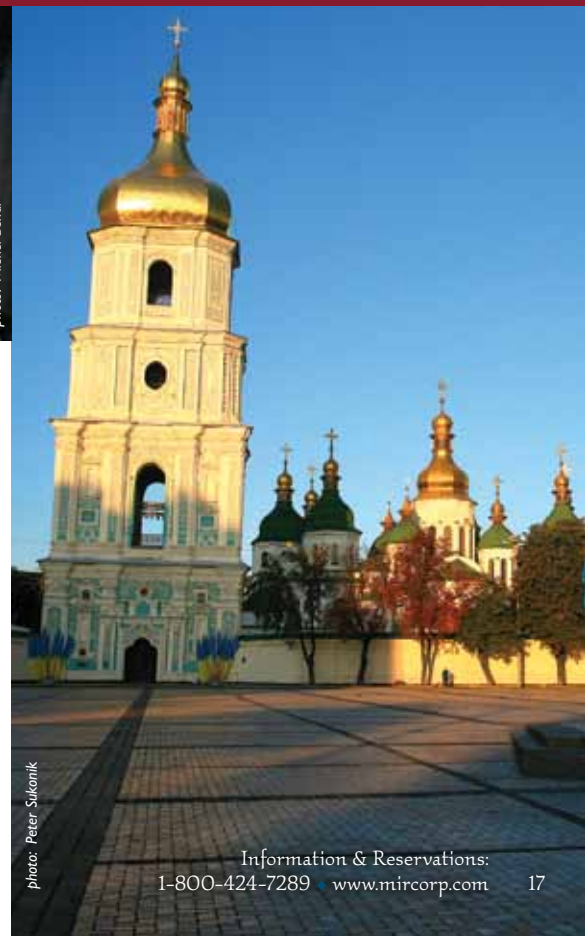


photo: Peter Sukonik

Balkan Odyssey: Crossroads of Culture

A SEVEN NATION JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY

NEW!

September 20-October 5, 2012

From low-lying Belgrade up through the Dinaric Alps, down to the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia and back up to mountainous Macedonia, this overland journey ties together seven of the wildly divergent Balkan countries. Begin in Serbia's capital, Belgrade, an old city swiftly becoming one of the hippest places in Europe. Travel overland to Sarajevo, and visit the sobering Sarajevo Tunnel Museum with a survivor who used the tunnel to escape the Serbian shelling. Continue west to Dubrovnik, making stops in Mostar, with its UNESCO-listed Old Bridge from Ottoman times and in Medjugorje, where the Virgin Mary is said to appear daily. Travel south along the Adriatic coast to Montenegro, visiting UNESCO-listed Kotor on the way to Budva, an early walled Roman city. Continue to Tirana, Albania's capital and visit Petrela Castle, the Roman amphitheater in Durrës, the ruins of Apollonia and the dramatic Ottoman architecture of Berat. Continue to Macedonia and spend two nights in red-roofed Ohrid, located on the beautiful lake of the same name. Head north through Macedonia to Skopje, and take a day trip into Kosovo. Celebrate the trip with a Macedonian feast.

**16 Days – Premier Series Small Group Land Tour –
\$7,695 per person, double occupancy**

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Calveados Club

photo: Dragan Bosnic, Branislav Jovanovic, Stefan Veljovic,
NTOS archive



Ancient Persia – Modern Iran

IRAN FROM TOP TO BOTTOM



April 3-20 ♦ April 10-27 ♦ September 11-28, 2012

Explore Iran’s fabulous bazaars, admire its splendid architecture, discover its formidable archaeological sites, and converse with the people who call it home. Begin in Tehran, before a foray into the Caspian Sea region. Wind along the coast from Bandar-e Anzali to the mountain village of Masuleh, built into the side of a steep hill. Fly to the desert town of Yazd, famous for its wind towers and silk textiles. Drive to Kerman and the ancient citadel of Rayen. In and around Mahan, visit textile weaving centers, carpet workshops and local bazaars. Journey on to Shiraz and spend a day at the astonishing ruins of Persepolis. Visit Firuzabad, winter quarters of the Qashqai tribe, and tour the weaving workshops of this nomadic settlement. Continue along a

mountainous road to Kazerun to see the remains of the old city of Shapur and its imposing palace. In Isfahan, admire the magnificent Islamic buildings of Imam Square. Lose yourself at the covered Grand Bazaar, overflowing with jewelry, carpets, beaten copper, spices, silks and block-printed textiles. Return to Tehran and enjoy a farewell dinner.

18 Days – Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour – \$5,895 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air \$150 (economy class, subject to change)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: James Carmelton

Treasures of the South Caucasus

CLASSIC SURVEY OF AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

CULTURAL
CLASSIC

**April 29-May 13 (Sold Out) ♦ September 9-23 ♦
September 23-October 7, 2012 (New Departure)**

Georgia's renowned winemaking traditions, Azerbaijan's Zoroastrian and Islamic background, and Armenia's multitude of ancient churches combine to make this distinctive journey more than the sum of its parts. The journey begins in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, exploring the cobbled medieval Old Town, then enjoying a private reception at the Nobel House Museum. Traveling overland, visit charming Sheki; then cross the Georgian border to explore the fortress town of Signagi. Enjoy a traditional "Georgian Table," laden with fine examples of the country's rich culinary and winemaking legacy. Tour Tbilisi and take a day trip to the fascinating David Gareja monastery complex. Journey along the Georgian Military Highway to the alpine villages of Kazbegi and Gudauri, seated in the shadow of the Caucasus Mountains. Pause at UNESCO-listed Mtskheta, en route to Gori, then explore the remarkable cave town of Uplistsikhe. Once in Armenia, stop at UNESCO-listed Haghbat Monastery. Take a day trip to the shores of Lake Sevan, and visit Khor Virap, where the view of Mt. Ararat is superb. Tour Yerevan and explore the monastery of Geghard, carved from solid rock.

**15 Days – Premier Series Small Group Land Tour –
\$6,895 per person, double occupancy**

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



photo: Martin Klimenta



photo: Devin Mitchell



NEW!

WINTER
HOLIDAY

Christmas Traditions of Poland

BRILLIANT HOLIDAYS IN KRAKOW, WARSAW AND THE POLISH HIGHLANDS

December 18-25, 2012

Celebrate the heartfelt holiday traditions of Poland, wandering the brilliant Christmas Markets of Krakow and Warsaw and joining a Polish family in their home for the intimate Christmas Eve feast called *Wigilia*.

In Krakow's UNESCO-listed medieval Market Square, browse through handcrafted gifts at the Christmas Market and sample regional delicacies and hot mulled wine. Make Polish *pierogi* under the guidance of a private chef and take a magical torch-lit sleigh ride bundled in blankets; then warm yourself at a bonfire, roasting *kielbasa* and tasting Polish vodka. Participate in a workshop showing how old-time Polish villagers made their Christmas decorations by hand and tour a hand-blown glass ornament factory. Travel by train to Warsaw and explore the Christmas Market, displaying hand-painted pottery, crèches and gingerbread ornaments. Visit some of the city's churches to admire their Nativity scenes. Gather in a Polish home for a traditional family-style *Wigilia*, the Christmas Eve vigil and dinner. Taste each of the 12 dishes served and join the family at the midnight church service of Christmas carols sung by the whole congregation together.



photo: Polish National Tourist Board

photo: Polish National Tourist Board

8 Days - Cultural Series Small Group Land Tour – \$3,095 per person, double occupancy

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.



Russian Winter Wonder Land

NEW YEAR'S IN ST. PETERSBURG WITH MOSCOW AND SUZDAL

WINTER
HOLIDAY

December 29, 2012-January 7, 2013

This celebratory tour revolves around New Year's in glorious St. Petersburg, with Moscow merrymaking and a visit to 12th century Suzdal to round out the festivities. An elegant champagne reception greets you in St. Petersburg. Then for four days explore this 300-year-old imperial capital, visiting Alexander's Palace, majestic St. Isaac's Cathedral and the Usupoff Palace. Join a backstage tour at one of St. Petersburg's premier theaters before enjoying an evening ballet or opera performance. Ring in the New Year at a late-night dinner in a Russian home, feasting, raising toasts and singing songs. Or, opt to don gown and tux and join the crème de la crème at the glittering Czar's Ball at Catherine's Palace. Board the afternoon express train to Moscow and visit the splendid Tretyakov Gallery. Visit the 12th century Cathedral of the Assumption in Vladimir before driving to little Suzdal, once the grand capital of several medieval principalities. Return to Moscow for a visit to the Kremlin and the Armory Museum, including an exclusive tour of the Diamond Fund with its crown jewels.



photo: Genia Staschenko

10 Days – Premier Series Small Group Land Tour – \$5,495 per person, double occupancy
(Czar's Ball tickets not included)

Contact us for more details/terms and a descriptive daily itinerary.

MIR's Signature Small Group Tours

– WHAT'S INCLUDED?

While each of our trips offers great value, we have made it easier for you to select your ideal journey by sorting our small group tours into three separate categories — **Premier, Cultural and Explorer.**

MIR's Premier and Cultural Series programs feature some of our most distinctive tour concepts and include uncommon and educational experiences, including visits to small towns and villages outside the major urban areas and capital cities. What differentiates them from each other is the level of accommodation: while all trips feature comfortable, well-located hotels, Premier Series trips take advantage of five star (or best in class) properties along the way, wherever possible.

For those seeking a more active adventure, **MIR's Explorer Series** trips may be the perfect match. These interactive cross-cultural journeys are more limited in size (maximum 12 travelers) and more spacious in depth and focus. We use a variety of accommodations ranging from small private hotels to bed-and-breakfasts to rustic lodges and homestays, and trips may feature hiking or kayaking opportunities.

Aside from their creative itineraries and ingenious extras, our scheduled small group tours offer some of the best value on the market – innovative programs designed by experts, access to a knowledgeable and dedicated travel planner

throughout the pre-trip process, personalized airfare services, excellent leaders, really small groups and all-inclusive land tour pricing.

By “all-inclusive,” we mean that we include well-located accommodations, the majority of your meals, access to spectacular sites, cultural performances and special visits, the services of an experienced tour manager, gratuities to local guides and drivers, arrival/departure transfers (whether we book your air or not) and internal ground transportation per itinerary.

Descriptive daily itineraries are available for every program.



photo: Martin Kuznetsov



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A **TOUR**
FOR ALL
TASTES

2012 SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS

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