



photo: Bruce Jones

Essential St. Petersburg 2020



Essential St. Petersburg

Imperial Splendors of the Czars

Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 7 Days

Your choice of dates, start any day of the week.

St. Petersburg, home of the czars and their courts, is a rich repository of extravagant palaces, brilliant museums and renowned theaters overflowing with music and dance. Its fashionable boulevards and serene canals glisten in the “White Nights” of summer and dazzle on sunny winter days. This in-depth exploration of the architecture, art and history of St. Petersburg reveals many of Russia’s hidden treasures. Visit the sumptuous imperial palaces and gracious nobleman’s mansions, which provide an insider’s view into the pre-Revolutionary era of masquerade balls, concerts, and ballets. Marvel at the magnificent Amber Room at Catherine’s Palace and explore the Hermitage’s incredible collection of art and artifacts. Soak up the cosmopolitan atmosphere, enjoy traditional Russian cuisine in a private home, and attend a world-class theater performance in the evening. Built by Peter the Great as Russia’s Window to the West, St. Petersburg is one of the world’s great cities.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Saturday	Arrive St. Petersburg, Russia
Day 2, Sunday	St. Petersburg
Day 3, Monday	St. Petersburg
Day 4, Tuesday	St. Petersburg
Day 5, Wednesday	St. Petersburg • day trip to Peterhof
Day 6, Thursday	St. Petersburg • day trip to Pushkin & Pavlovsk
Day 7, Friday	Depart St. Petersburg



Tour Highlights

St. Petersburg	Historic center of St. Petersburg (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Nevsky Prospekt, Bronze Horseman, Peter I's wooden house, Peter and Paul Fortress, Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, St. Isaac's Cathedral, Usupoff Palace, Russian Museum, Church of the Savior on the Blood (Church of the Spilt Blood), folk performance at Nikolaevsky Palace, Hermitage with Gold Room, performance at one of St. Petersburg's world-class theaters, traditional Russian dinner at a private home
Peterhof Pushkin	Grand Palace, palace grounds with famous gravity-fed fountains (operating in season) Catherine's Palace with Amber Room, Alexander's Palace – favorite of Nicholas and Alexandra, lunch of traditional Russian favorites
Pavlovsk	Pavlovsk Park and grounds

Daily Itinerary

Day One, Saturday Arrive St. Petersburg, Russia

Upon arrival to St. Petersburg, transfer to the centrally located hotel. The afternoon is yours to relax or explore the neighborhood around the hotel. St. Petersburg is often described as one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Its miles of canals, laced together with graceful bridges set amidst 18th century buildings, have earned it the name, "Venice of the North." Conceived of by Peter the Great and designed by his favorite European architects, St. Petersburg was meant to be Peter's link to the western world. Capital of Russia from 1712 until just after the revolution, the city celebrated its 300th anniversary in 2003.

This evening meet your guide to discuss the program, then get settled into the hotel.
Meals: Independent – *Helvetia Hotel or similar*

Day Two, Sunday St. Petersburg

Following breakfast at the hotel, begin touring the city of St. Petersburg. Set off along **Nevsky Prospekt**, the three-mile avenue that is the backbone of the city. The first stop today is to see the **Bronze Horseman statue**. Catherine the Great commissioned the monument to honor her hero, Peter the Great, in 1768. Sculptor Etienne Falconet, after 12 years of work, produced what is known as the "Bronze Horseman," a mounted figure surveying his capital from the top of Thunder Rock. The 1,600-pound rock was brought from six miles away to be Peter's pedestal, taking a year to get it to its final resting place. The monument is called the "Bronze Horseman" after the Pushkin poem.

Continue with a visit to **Peter the Great's original house**, built in 1703. Peter's log house was the first living quarters built in St. Petersburg. This 645-square-foot cabin was where Peter lived while he planned and worked on the new city of St. Petersburg. Now enclosed by a small stone building, Peter's house still contains some of his belongings.

Next, tour the **Peter and Paul Fortress**. Across the Neva River from the Hermitage on Hare Island, the Fortress of Peter and Paul was one of the first structures in St. Petersburg. Peter the Great laid the cornerstone of the earthen fortress in May 1703, intending it to be used to repel a Swedish invasion.



After the Swedes capitulated, the fortress was transformed into a prison in 1718. Most importantly, it is the burial place for most of the czars, beginning with Peter the Great. After strolling the grounds of the compound, visit the **Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul**, the first stone church built in the city and considered the heart of the fort.

After an independent lunch, tour the 333-foot tall **St. Isaac's Cathedral** with its 72-foot dome that dominates the St. Petersburg skyline. St. Isaac's Cathedral took 40 years to complete. The 48 red granite columns around the lower part of the building each weigh 110 tons, and the upper columns around the rotunda weigh 67 tons apiece. The dome is covered with 220 pounds of gold, and the interior columns are faced with lapis lazuli and malachite. The cathedral is bursting with sculptures, frescoes, stained glass works and woodcarvings.

The day concludes with a visit to the exquisite **Usupoff Palace**. Although ordinary from the outside, the interior of the palace is elaborate and ornate, with a marble staircase, crystal chandeliers, gilded candelabras and magnificently painted ceilings. Owned by the very rich and powerful Usupoff family, the palace has its own miniature theater. This is the place where the plot against the sinister Rasputin came to fruition.

Return to the hotel for an independent dinner and overnight. Throughout the trip, your St. Petersburg guide will be happy to make restaurant suggestions for you.

Meals: B – *Helvetia Hotel or similar*



Day Three, Monday St. Petersburg

Following breakfast at the hotel, start the day with a tour of the **Russian Museum**. Opened in 1898, the Russian Museum now houses about a half-million works of art. It displays the most comprehensive and moving collection of Russian art in the world. Exhibits progress chronologically from icons – including *Angel with the Golden Hair* by Rublev – and mosaics to classical artwork, huge Romantic canvases and modern Socialist Realism. The Russian Museum's main structure, the magnificent Mikhailovsky Palace, was extensively renovated in 1998 in honor of its hundredth anniversary. Spend the morning exploring the collection here before an independent lunch.

Afterwards, visit the beautiful **Church of the Savior on the Blood** (Church of the Spilt Blood), built on the spot where Czar Alexander II was felled by a bomb in 1881. It was commissioned in the style of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow by his son and successor, Alexander III. Just off Nevsky Prospekt on the Griboyedov Canal, the emblematic cathedral with its blue and green patterned domes has become a symbol of St. Petersburg. The interior walls and cupolas are covered in fine mosaics of Biblical scenes, and four jasper columns mark the spot where the czar fell.



The afternoon is free, with an independent lunch. There is a good souvenir market near the Church of the Savior on the Blood, and the “Book House” (*Dom Knigi*) makes a good stop as well for souvenirs or just to browse. This evening, enjoy a special event at the Nikolaevsky Palace before an independent dinner. **Nikolaevsky Palace**, built in 1910 for the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich Romanov with a grand staircase, is the setting for an authentic Russian folk show. *Zakuski* (Russian snacks) are served during the break.

Meals: B – *Helvetia Hotel or similar*

Day Four, Tuesday

St. Petersburg

After a leisurely breakfast at the hotel, walk to the **Hermitage Museum**. The Winter Palace, part of the Hermitage ensemble, was built in 1754-62 as the principal home of the czars and was lavishly rebuilt in 1839 after it was destroyed by fire. Originally a small private palace gallery begun by Catherine the Great with a purchase of 255 paintings from Berlin, the Hermitage today houses one of the largest museum collections in the world. It includes works by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, and Rubens. The fabulous rooms with their inlaid floors and gilded woodwork, and the grand entry staircase are works of art in themselves.

Those travelers who wish to can enjoy their independent lunch in the Hermitage cafe and continue exploring the museum this afternoon, since the afternoon is otherwise left free to explore St. Petersburg independently. Your guide can make suggestions, which might include a walking tour of Nevsky Prospekt or perhaps a visit to Kazan Cathedral, built during the early 1800s by Alexander I in an effort to duplicate the Vatican. Alternately, ask your guide to suggest some of St. Petersburg’s gold-domed cathedrals, local art galleries or open-air markets for additional sightseeing or shopping opportunities.

This evening attend a performance at one of **St. Petersburg’s renowned theaters**. Russia has long been known as a place where the arts are held in high regard. It is the home of some of the world’s finest ballet companies, and Russian composers, musicians and opera singers have always held places in the pantheon of global cultural luminaries. Attend a memorable ballet or opera performance in Russia’s cultural capital. (Please note: the theater evening may be shifted to another night based on performance schedules.)

Meals: B – *Helvetia Hotel or similar*



Day Five, Wednesday

St. Petersburg • day trip to Peterhof

The morning begins with a trip outside the city. First, pass by Konstantinovsky Palace. Peter the Great conceived of **Konstantinovsky Palace** in Strelna as a diplomatic



window on the west. Today, after many owners, a fire, German bombardments and various unsavory post-revolutionary incarnations (a school for young criminals and a Soviet mental institution are two examples), Konstantinovsky Palace has been resurrected as the diplomatic compound that Peter envisioned.

Continue to grand **Peterhof**, Peter the Great's grand estate built on a ridge by the Gulf of Finland 19 miles outside St. Petersburg. The former imperial residence is surrounded with extensive parks and gardens intended to rival Versailles, complete with an array of gilded statues, magnificent palaces and gravity-fed fountains. The exterior of the massive Grand Palace with its parquet floors, lavish rooms, and grand galleries was designed by Rastrelli, who also designed the Winter Palace.

Peter the Great's **famed fountains** are Peterhof's main attraction. More than 150 glistening, gilded, sculpted marble, granite and limestone fountains and cascades adorn the Lower Park. The gravity-fed collection pools in Peterhof's Upper Garden discharge their waters nearly 50 feet down to the Lower Park's cascades and jets, creating enormous force and powering fountains all over the park. The fountains generally operate beginning with the warm weather in mid-May and are typically turned off by the end of September.

Tour the massive **Grand Palace**. Crowning the top of the bluff above the Grand Cascade, the palace is an imposing sight. Inside, 30 beautiful rooms run the length of the narrow building. Some of them retain their baroque décor, while others underwent renovations into the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Nazis occupied Peterhof from 1941 to 1944, and maliciously smashed statuary and set fire to the rooms after the Siege of Leningrad was broken. Since then the palace has been carefully restored.

This evening, return to the city to **dine in the home of a Russian family** and experience firsthand the meaning of Russian hospitality.

Meals: B, D – *Helvetia Hotel or similar*

Day Six, Thursday

St. Petersburg • day trip to Pushkin & Pavlovsk

This morning drive 16 miles south of St. Petersburg to **Pushkin, or Tsarskoye Selo (Czar's Village)**, the location of two imperial palaces.

The first royal residence to visit in Pushkin is **Catherine's Palace**, originally built in 1717 by architects commissioned by Catherine I. In 1752, famed architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli enlarged and embellished the palace, extending the facade to its current grandeur. The estate and palace buildings were almost completely destroyed by the Germans during World War II, but they have been carefully and expertly restored into a brilliant architectural monument. The fully restored **Amber Room** inside Catherine's Palace has been years in the making. The wall coverings of amber panels, created in the time of Peter the Great, were taken by the Nazis during



the Second World War and never recovered. The beautifully crafted amber panels seen today were re-created from photos and descriptions of the originals, and have become one of the highlights of Catherine's Palace.

Next, explore Alexander's Palace, the favorite of Nicholas and Alexandra. Catherine the Great built the neoclassical **Alexander's Palace** around 1795 to celebrate the marriage of her grandson, Alexander I. Nicholas II was born here, and maintained apartments in the palace as he grew up. He and his royal wife, Alexandra, remodeled a wing into a comfortable and modern family home, and raised their children here. Alexander's Palace is where the young family was kept under house arrest before they were sent into exile in Siberia after the 1917 revolution. Following exploration of the palace's lovely interior, stroll through Alexander's Park, where the royal families enjoyed gala picnics and rode horses.



Enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant before continuing on. The next stop is the **gardens at Pavlovsk**, or Paul's Residence, the last imperial summer palace estate to be completed. Given to Czar Paul I and his wife by Catherine the Great, Pavlovsk was designed by Scottish architect Charles Cameron. Set in a lovely park, the palace holds a special place in the hearts of city residents. Although the Nazis destroyed the palace itself during the Second World War, most of its treasures were hidden in advance of the attack. Reconstruction began immediately after the German withdrawal. The park was reopened in 1950 and the first renovated rooms in 1957; touring today will include the grounds and park.

Return to the city. Dinner is independent this evening.
Meals: B, L – *Helvetia Hotel or similar*

Day Seven, Friday
Depart St. Petersburg

Following breakfast, the trip concludes with a transfer to the airport.
Meals: B



Private Journey Prices

Four star hotels as listed in the itinerary – *tour start date:*
January 1-March 31 or November 1-December 31
2 traveler minimum, from \$3,495 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$495
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,495

Tour start date: April 1-May 12 or July 18-October 31
2 traveler minimum, from \$3,695 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$645
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,895

Tour start date: May 13-July 17
2 traveler minimum, from \$3,995 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$975
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$6,595

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Hotel upgrade prices depend on the dates/days of travel, and are subject to change based on availability and other factors. Hotel upgrade is based on using the five star Lotte Hotel, Hotel Moika 22 Kempinski, or similar.

Five star hotels – *tour start date:*
January 1-March 31 or October 16-December 31
2 traveler minimum, from \$3,695 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$695
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,895

Tour start date: April 1-30 or August 1-October 15
2 traveler minimum, from \$3,995 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$895
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, from \$6,495

Tour start date: May 1-July 31
2 traveler minimum, from \$4,395 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$1,245
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, from \$7,195

*Flexible Essential trip prices vary significantly by season and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Tour start dates in **June, mid-August and early September** may be further affected by higher rates and availability constraints. Additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.*

Your Private Journey Includes

- Accommodations per the itinerary. **Please see above for upgrade rates.** All room types, even in upgraded properties, are standard entry-level doubles or twins; please call for room category upgrade pricing and information.
- Breakfast daily, one lunch and one dinner, per the itinerary. Other meals are left free to allow independent exploration.
- Restaurant tips for included meals.
- One arrival and one departure airport transfer. (Additional arrival and departure transfers available at

additional cost.) MIR will arrange for travelers to be met upon arrival and seen off on departure, whether we make your air arrangements or not.

- Ground transportation throughout itinerary by private vehicle (size of vehicle depends on number of travelers in your group).
- Evening cultural performances per the itinerary.
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
- Services of experienced, English-speaking local guides, drivers and other staff.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
- Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates, and more.

Not Included

- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
- Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Baggage handling.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers.
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Flexible Essential Private Trips are compact, well-designed private tour itineraries – researched and ready to book on the dates you choose. They work perfectly as brief overviews of a country or as effortless extensions to group tours – great for solo travelers, couples, or private parties who prefer to travel independently but appreciate a savvy pre-designed program.



Start Planning Next Year Now

2021 Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 7 Days

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Please call if you're ready to book now.

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the day of your choice in 2021. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Private Journey Prices – 2021

Four star hotels as listed in the itinerary – *tour start date:*

January 1-March 31 or November 1-December 31

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,595 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$525

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,595

Tour start date: April 1-May 12 or July 18-October 31

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,795 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$695

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,995

Tour start date: May 13-July 17

2 traveler minimum, from \$4,095 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$995

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$6,595

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Hotel upgrade prices depend on the dates/days of travel, and are subject to change based on availability and other factors. Hotel upgrade is based on using the five star Lotte Hotel, Hotel Moika 22 Kempinski, or similar.

Five star hotels – *tour start date:*

January 1-March 31 or October 16-December 31

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,795 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$795

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,995

Tour start date: April 1-30 or August 1-October 15

2 traveler minimum, from \$4,095 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$995

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, from \$6,495

Tour start date: May 1-July 31

2 traveler minimum, from \$4,495 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$1,295

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, from \$7,295

*Flexible Essential trip prices vary significantly by season and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Tour start dates in **June, mid-August and early September** may be further affected by higher rates and availability constraints. Additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.*



Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

While the planned hotel is a very comfortable four star property, please keep in mind that some aspects of the tourism infrastructure in Russia are not up to the standards North American travelers expect. Services are improving in the region; however you may encounter problems with bureaucratic service, road conditions and availability and quality of public restrooms. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets and sidewalks are uneven, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases. Some museums may not have elevators.

We believe that this program is designed to be as comfortable as possible for travel in this region. It is rated as **rigorous touring** because of the daily walking involved and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least a mile a day. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this itinerary.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this schedule is accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We do our best to inform participants in advance of any changes, but, due to the nature of travel in Russia, this may not always be possible.

Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Russia here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/russia-travel-advisory.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Weather

St. Petersburg is a wonderful city to visit any time of the year. In spring and fall, expect flowers and fall foliage, respectively. Temperatures range from 50-70 degrees Fahrenheit and rain is possible.

The summers are warm with temperatures usually in the 70-90 degree range. July is a particularly good (and busy) time to travel to St. Petersburg, during the White Nights when complete darkness never falls. The White Nights also bring a full range of acclaimed musical and art performances. Plan as far in advance as possible if traveling in June and July as hotels book up early and availability can be limited. Early August is a great time to visit, with excellent weather and, in general, fewer crowds.

Winter has its own charms and definitely provides the most authentic setting to enjoy the sights of the city. Winter is high season for the arts and ensures that a wonderful variety of entertainment is available.

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. This information comes from weatherbase.com and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region you will be visiting.



International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers, and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Lufthansa, Swiss Air, and Aeroflot as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to Russia.

Please call us at 800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

Visas

At the time of writing, U.S. passport holders require one visa for this tour: Russian. You may also need a visa for any additional country you fly via to join the tour.

An estimate of current visa costs for U.S. passport holders, based on standard processing time, is \$312. Your exact visa fees may differ as visa costs can depend on a number of factors, such as state of residence, processing time, and return shipping. Visa fees are always subject to change. At the time of writing, the Russian Embassy is offering U.S. passport-holders three-year multiple-entry visas at the same price as single- or double-entry visas (the \$312 estimated above). Travelers who need to expedite their processing may not have the same option of getting the multi-entry visa at the single-entry visa cost. Please call for information.

Standard visa processing in the Russian visa section is ten to fifteen days for this tour. Travelers should prepare to be without their passports for that amount of time. If you plan to travel extensively in the time leading up to your MIR tour, you may need to obtain a second valid passport or use expedited processing, depending on your plans. Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding the timeline for visa processing.

Extensive pre-tour paperwork is necessary to apply for this visa, which requires an overseas approval authorization to be issued prior to submission of your application materials to the Embassies/Consulates. A valid passport with six months validity from the end of the tour is also required.

In the past, some travelers have made their own visa arrangements instead of using MIR's preferred provider for their visa processing; either using their own visas service or attempting to process directly with the embassies/consulates. We strongly recommend you discuss it with us before choosing an alternate visa processing method, to help avoid difficulties and visa problems. **In the event that you plan to process visas without going through MIR's preferred provider, please contact us first so we can pass you detailed instructions with critical trip-specific information.**

Pre-and Post-Tour Options

MIR can arrange an extended program before or after your tour. Please call us for suggestions and rates.



Also Nearby...

For more tours to this region, you may want to check out:

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Essential Russia, 7 days. A compact and compelling survey of Russia's political capital, Moscow, and its cultural capital, St. Petersburg, this tour communicates the character of Western Russia in a succinct and meaningful series of experiences.

Essential Ukraine, 8 days. Ukraine is the new borderland between Europe and Russia. Explore this resilient region influenced by Polish princes, Cossack *hetmen*, Turkish khans, Russian communists and Ukrainian poets and nationalists.

Essential Poland, 6 days. On this focused tour, visit four Polish UNESCO sites in six days – Warsaw's Old Town, Krakow's Historic Center, the Auschwitz/Birkenau camp and the Wieliczka Salt Mine.

Essential Balkans, 14 days. Visit seven Balkan countries in 14 days on this compact overland journey through history. A remarkably complex region, the mountainous Balkan Peninsula is fascinating, diverse and incredibly beautiful.

Essential Baltics, 7 days. Take an overland survey of the Baltic capitals – Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn – exploring their UNESCO-listed Old Towns, featuring cobbled streets and red-tiled roofs. Visit important rural sites such as Lithuania's Hill of Crosses and Latvia's baroque Rundale Castle.

Small Group Tours

Russia's Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages, 11 days. Discover where Russian art, architecture and culture began. In between the urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, experience the Russian countryside. The oldest and loveliest churches in Russia, Sergiev Posad's wooden crafts and Fedoskino's glowing lacquer boxes all put a shine on Russia's Golden Ring.

Kaliningrad & The Baltics, 13 days. This overland journey roves the countryside and urban centers of four distinct nations: the three independent Baltic countries – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – and Kaliningrad, an exclave of Russia.

Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses, 16 days. Explore the complex history and fascinating culture of Bulgaria and Romania, two Balkan countries whose rugged terrain and consequent isolation have helped preserve their heritage. 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.

Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova, 14 days. 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.



Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Air fares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary).

Flexible Essential Trips

Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.

References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).





30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.

Recommended & Respected


MIR has twice been rated one of the "Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth" by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books such as *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.

More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

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