



## Russian Dreams

Classic Tour | 15 Days | Comfortable

Moscow – Tula – Volga River Cruise – St. Petersburg

A complex, bizarre and spectacular country, Russia has so much to discover. Its roots lie in the currents of the Volga River – embark on a six-night cruise from Moscow to St Petersburg, discovering serene countryside, historical towns and age-old traditions as you go.

- Wander through the Red Square and visit the Kremlin
- Discover Stalin's secret bunker
- Visit the estate of author Leo Tolstoy
- Immerse yourself in scenic beauty along the Volga River
- Explore the grand palaces of St Petersburg



### Russian Dreams tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals (including drinks on the *Volga Dream*, excluding drinks in Moscow and St Petersburg)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- Porterage
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) and local guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

*The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.*

### Worldwide Tours:

With these worldwide tours you can expect exactly the same Wendy Wu Tours experience. You'll get to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Russia on an excellent value group tour, whilst also getting to travel with like-minded people. This tour includes all meals, so you'll get to taste a range of delicious local foods at handpicked local restaurants. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escort throughout, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

### Comfortable Tours:

'Russian Dreams' is a **comfortable** tour. Although this is the easiest grading of tour Wendy Wu Tours offers it still requires a reasonable level of fitness.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time.

Of course, our National Escort and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

## Itinerary – Russian Dreams

### Day 1: Fly to Moscow

Fly to Moscow's Domodedovo International Airport. Transfer into the city, approximately 1 hour 30 minutes, stopping en route at the Sparrow Hills viewing deck for a glass of champagne and panoramic views over the city. Take some time to relax before joining the group for a welcome dinner.



#### Destination Information

**Moscow** – Known as the heart of Russia, Moscow is home to perhaps the country's most historically important buildings and legends. The city has developed into a cultural centre since the decline of Communism but there is still a large selection of Soviet architecture spread throughout the city in a reminder of the recent past.

### Day 2: Moscow

This morning you will visit some of Russia's most iconic sights. Stroll through Red Square to reach the Kremlin, both of which were stages for significant historical events. Within the Kremlin you will visit the Armoury, home to plenty of intriguing Russian treasures, weapons and armour, including the chainmail of former Russian Regent Boris Godunov. Dinner tonight is 21 floors above the city, where the views will be mesmerising.



#### Destination Information

**Red Square** – This celebrated square is at the very centre of Russia and its history. Significant buildings can be seen from every direction including Lenin's mausoleum, Saint Basil's Cathedral and the Kremlin.

**The Kremlin** – Perhaps Russia's most significant building. Tsars, Dictators and Presidents have all played their hands from within, forging Russia into the country it is today.

### Day 3: Moscow

Start the day with a visit to Stalin's bunker, an intriguing view into the life of the notorious Soviet leader. Next, take a 2-hour cruise along the Moskva River and enjoy lunch on board as you admire the cityscapes before taking an afternoon excursion to the GUM department store, a magnificent 19th-century built structure which now houses Russia's most distinguished shopping mall.



#### Destination Information

**Stalin's Bunker** – This bunker was built in the 1930s in anticipation of the Nazi's conquering Moscow. Now a branch of the Central Museum of Armed Forces the bunker has been converted into a museum style exhibition whilst maintaining its original presentation.

**GUM Department Store** – Overlooking Red Square, the GUM department store is a magnificent 19<sup>th</sup> century building which houses Russia's largest and most established shopping centre. Within the complex are beautiful fountains, terraces and over 1,200 shops.

### Day 4: Tula

Travel from Moscow to Tula by train, a journey of 2 to 3 hours. This afternoon, visit one of Russia's most iconic estates, Yasnaya Polyana, the former home of highly influential writer Leo Tolstoy. The estate has now been converted into a writer's museum and features beautiful gardens through which you can wander.



#### Destination Information

**Yasnaya Polyana** – On the southern outskirts of Tula is Yasnaya Polyana, the former estate of the iconic author, Leo Tolstoy. It is said that he wrote War and Peace in its entirety whilst on the estate. The house itself has now been converted into a writer's museum which gives a personal insight into Tolstoy's life.

## Day 5: Tula

Visit Tula's charming 16th century Kremlin fortress before touring a Samovar Factory where you can learn about the craftsmanship behind these elaborate Russian tea containers. Return to Moscow by train. This evening enjoy a fabulous dinner in Pushkin, one of Moscow's best restaurants



### Destination Information

**Tula Kremlin** – The Tula Kremlin is the centrepiece of the city. The fortress was originally constructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and houses two cathedrals, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Assumption Cathedral and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Epiphany Cathedral. The architecture of the complex stands out against the old Soviet industrial city.

**Samovar Factory** – Learn about the craftsmanship and cultural importance of the Russian Samovar. The Samovar is an elaborate container used to boil and heat water and Tula is renowned as the best place for crafting quality examples.

## Day 6: Board your Volga River Cruise

Spend your last morning in Moscow at the Tretyakov Museum which houses some 170,000 of Russia's most celebrated pieces of art, spanning a period of a thousand years. After lunch take a ride on the Moscow Metro like a true Muscovite, admiring the historic beauty of the underground architecture. Board the Volga Dream cruise ship this evening and enjoy the Captain's welcome reception and a delicious dinner on board. Cast off on your six-night cruise along the Volga River.



### Destination Information

**Tretyakov Museum** – One of the largest museums in Russia with 62 different rooms, the Tretyakov is a source of endless art. It is world renowned for its collection of Russian Realism from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Moscow Metro** – The world's fourth busiest underground train network started operating in 1932. Famed for its architectural magnificence, numerous stations are defined by their marble décor and extravagantly decorated high ceilings. The metro has been described as a network of underground palaces.

**Volga River** – The Volga is the longest river in Europe and is spread across 3530km of Western Russia. The river has been a significant cultural, economic and historical life source for numerous towns and cities and is therefore one of the world's most important rivers.

## Day 7: Uglich

Cruise along the Volga River to Uglich appreciating the passing lush woodland and peaceful nature. Uglich is one of the ancient towns of Russia's Golden Ring and has retained its traditions and character over hundreds of years. Explore the Church of St Dmitry-on-the Blood, said to be constructed on the exact spot where Dmitry, son of the first Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible was murdered. This evening, attend a charming concert of Russian choral music at St. John's Church.



### Destination Information

**The Golden Ring** – A selection of Russia's oldest cities and towns to the Northeast of Moscow, all bound to the Volga River and untouched by the country's recent Communist past. The Golden Ring route is perfect for showcasing Russia's peaceful countryside, traditional lifestyles and ancient architecture.

**Uglich**– A popular quiet retreat from Moscow, Uglich was founded in approximately 937 and has stood the test of time. Graced with a beautiful cathedral and princely Palace among many other interesting structures, the city is one of the highlights along the Golden Ring route.

## Day 8: Yaroslavl

Cruise on to the Golden Ring town of Yaroslavl, one of Russia's oldest port towns, founded in the year 1010. Its old centre has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit the 11th-century Spassky Monastery where you can view the 16<sup>th</sup> century frescoes, the Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour and the Church of Elijah the Prophet, all perfect examples of Russia's historical architecture. Later this morning take part in a costumed reception at the governor's house before re-boarding the ship for lunch.



### Destination Information

**Yaroslavl** – Located on the confluence of the Volga and Kotorosl rivers, Yaroslavl is the capital of the Yaroslavl Oblast region. The city has a religious zeal with multiple monasteries and religious buildings which overlook the serene river banks.

**Spassky Monastery** – Founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Spassky monastery is the oldest building in Yaroslavl and a shining example of traditional Russian architecture. The building was designed to look different from all angles and this is noticeable from its deliberately non-symmetrical presentation.

## Day 9: Goritsy

Disembark at the charming riverside town of Goritsy. Famous for its monasteries, you will visit Kirillo-Belozersky, a vast complex founded in 1397 and home to a large selection of Russian icons. After exploring the monastery climb back aboard your boat and sail northwards to Lake Onega.



### Destination Information

**Goritsy** – A tiny settlement in one of Russia's most peaceful areas, the river town is a spiritual and religious haven with multiple monasteries and nunneries

**Kirillo-Belozersky Complex** – Completed in 1397 the monastery was named after its founder, Reverend Kirill. He built the monastery as a spiritual retreat in his quest to seek a more remote place closer to God.

## Day 10: Lake Onega

Cruise across the beautiful Lake Onega amongst its 1,369 islands, stopping for a wander on the timeless Kizhi Island. Stroll through the traditional Russian wooden houses and windmills to the famous Church of the Transfiguration. On board the ship this evening watch a piano concert featuring pieces from Russian greats Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky.



### Destination Information

**Lake Onega** – The second largest lake in Europe covers an area of 3,753 square miles and is 50km at its widest point. The lake connects to the even greater Lake Ladoga and the White Sea.

**Kizhi Island** – The largest and most popular island on the lake, the highlight is the charming Church of the Transfiguration. Constructed in 1714, the church has 22 domes and, more intriguingly, was built without a single nail and made entirely of wood.

## Day 11: Svir River

Join the Svir River, one of the 58 rivers feeding out of Lake Onega. Considered one of the most scenic river routes in Russia the surrounding region has been an inspiration for many authors, poets and composers throughout Russian history. Cruise past the many quaint river hamlets and villages stopping at Mandrogi, a popular holiday village with exquisitely carved wooden houses, a recreation of 19th century architecture. Reach Lake Ladoga later in the afternoon, the largest lake in Europe. Dinner this evening will be a deck-top barbecue.



### Destination Information

**Mandrogi** – A small village founded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century on the banks of the Svir River. The village was badly damaged during World War II but was restored to its current condition between 1996-1999 after the demise of the Soviet era.

**Lake Ladoga**– The largest lake in Europe covers an area of 6,700 square miles. The basin was originally carved out by glaciers and during World War II the lake was used as a route from many towns and villages to provide vital supplies to St Petersburg.

## Day 12: St Petersburg

Arrive in St Petersburg and disembark the Volga Dream. Take a city tour this morning visiting the Peter and Paul Fortress, the first structure to be built in St Petersburg and the birthplace of the city. Within the fortress is the Peter and Paul Cathedral and the former prison, Trubetskoy Bastion, where you'll find many fascinating historical exhibitions. The afternoon is at leisure until a truly authentic Russian dinner at a vodka house including a special vodka tasting experience.



### Destination Information

**St Petersburg** – Russia's second largest city and the former capital between 1712-1918. The city is the country's unofficial cultural capital and has numerous architecturally stunning palaces, fortresses and churches which define its character.

**Peter and Paul Fortress** – The Fortress was originally built as a defence, to protect the city from naval attacks. Within the fortress is a cathedral, cemetery and a former prison.



### Day 13: Peterhof Palace and Park

This morning travel out of St Petersburg to the majestic Peterhof, approximately 1 hour, a former Tsar's Palace often compared to the Palace of Versailles. After lunch return to St Petersburg, stopping en route at the Petrodeverets Watch Factory.



#### Destination Information

**Peterhof Palace and Park** – A striking palatial complex set within meticulous French-styled gardens, the Peterhof Palace and Park is possibly the most exquisite Russian Palace ever constructed and is an example of the luxurious living quarters of the former Russian Tsars.

**Petrodeverets Watch Factory** – Russia's oldest watch factory and now a manufacturer of Raketa watches, traditionally produced for the Red Army and the Soviet Navy.

### Day 14: St Petersburg

Explore the Yusupov Palace on the Moika River this morning. This afternoon, visit St Isaac's Cathedral, the largest cathedral in Russia and a dominant feature of the St Petersburg skyline. The interior is incredibly lavish and the walls are adorned with numerous intricate mosaics, statues, paintings and sculptures. Enjoy a special farewell dinner at a traditional restaurant.



#### Destination Information

**Yusupov Palace** - Numerous architects were assigned to construct the interior of this palace which has created a perfect and unique example of all styles of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian interior. More notoriously, the palace basement is renowned as the place where Rasputin, Tsar Nicholas II's advisor was assassinated.

**St Isaac's Cathedral** – Similar to London's St Paul's Cathedral, St Isaac's Cathedral was completed in 1727. Originally commissioned by Peter the Great in 1706 the structure has undergone two major reconstructions, the first due to poorly constructed foundations and the other due to Tsar Alexander I's will to create a cathedral, the current structure standing today.

### Day 15: Fly to the UK

Take in the last of St Petersburg's extensive culture at the Hermitage Museum. Included in the touring is a ticket to the Diamond Room in the Treasure Galleries. This afternoon, transfer to the airport, approximately 45 minutes, for your return flight to the UK, arriving the same day.



#### Destination Information

**Hermitage Museum** - one of the world's largest and oldest museums. Within the complex is a vast collection of art, antiquities and jewellery and many interesting exhibitions.

**The Diamond Room** - The heavily guarded Diamond Room in the Treasure Galleries, home to the most valuable collection of artefacts in the world.

## Russian Dreams Travel Information

### Visas

A visa is required for entry into Russia. Due to the difficulties in acquiring the necessary documentation needed from you to get a visa (your fingerprint), Wendy Wu Tours do not provide these visas. To partake in this tour you will require a tourist visa which can be purchased at the Russia Visa Application Centre in London. Please note that application forms must be printed off online and an appointment must be made at the Application Centre before your visa can be authorised. As of 10 December 2014 a scanned fingerprint is required for all applicants over the age of 12. For more information, please visit the following websites:

UK Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/russia/entry-requirements>

Russian Embassy website: <http://www.rusemb.org.uk/>

VFS Global Russia Visa: <http://ru.vfsglobal.co.uk/>

### Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

### Eating in Russia

Russia is such a huge and multicultural expanse that it's not much a surprise that its food is a reflection of this. Influenced by culture, tradition, available ingredients and even the Soviets, it was between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century that the Russian cuisine became more refined. Traditional crops such as rye, wheat, barley and millet were used for breads, pies, cereals, beer and vodka, whilst there was plentiful fish, pork, chicken, caviar, mushrooms, berries and honey – ingredients that are still the basis of food today. Soups still play an important role in meals here, and porridge is another traditional, still much eaten dish, particularly for breakfast. Meat is traditionally served in three ways – boiled as a soup, offal baked with cereals and baked in the oven. Pelmeni, a kind of dumpling are popular, as is Shashlyk, a form of shish kebab, and Pirozhki, stuffed buns and blini, which can be accompanied with smoked salmon, mushrooms, jams or even caviar. One of Russia's best known dishes internationally is stroganoff – you'll find this dish served in its native land to be tastier, smoother and creamier! Plenty of international options are also available in Russia, and although vegetarianism was actually banned in Russia under the Soviet rule, it is starting to be embraced in the big cities, so options are available.

### Accommodation

Your accommodation in Moscow and St Petersburg are selected for convenience of location, comfort and character. The hotels that you are staying in are rated as local four-star to five-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality may exist between the UK and Russia. All group tour hotels have private bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone.



The *Volga Dream* is a five-star rated river cruise vessel which accommodates just 109 passengers. There is a rich onboard programme to introduce you to Russia's fascinating culture, including lecturers, language lessons and music recitals. You are able to upgrade your cabin on request, subject to availability.

If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

**Coaches:** Luxury coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short

### Transport

excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads around major cities are generally well-maintained whilst in the more rural areas they often aren't – however on this tour, you will be venturing into more rural areas by boat. Please note that traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Whilst you will spend six nights aboard the *Volga Dream*, cruising through the beautiful landscapes of the Volga River, shore excursions will be conducted, with a guide, by coach or on foot.

### Optional activities

A list of optional activities and approximate costs will be provided with your final documents. These can be arranged by your guide and are paid for locally.

### Souvenirs

Whilst this extensive itinerary doesn't leave much time or opportunity for shopping, you should be able to pick up a few souvenirs of your trip. The most famous thing, of course, are matryoshka dolls (nesting dolls) but there are also other wooden crafts, such as palekh (lacquered boxes) and khohloma (spoons, plates and bowls). Textiles-wise there are plentiful, colourful shawls and scarves or you could get traditional Russian winter boots or a samovar (though these are quite big!).

### Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by both a national escort and local guides. There will usually be no more than 30 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

## Tipping Policy

Tipping etiquette in Russia is fairly similar to the rest of Europe, generally leaving some money for excellent service, be it 10% to restaurant staff or a couple of roubles for the maid in the hotel. However, tipping is an essentially part of the tourism industry the world over and so here are some guidelines for who and how much you should consider tipping:

Local guides - \$15 (970 roubles) per full day of sightseeing, per person  
Transfer driver - \$5 (325 roubles) per single transfer, per person  
Tour driver - \$10 (650 roubles) per full day of sightseeing, per person  
Volga Dream crew - \$10 (650 roubles) per full day itinerary, per person

## Climate

Due to Russia's massive size, it is difficult to give a guide to the overall climate, but as your travels are based around a relatively smaller area, this quick summary will focus on that. In Moscow and St Petersburg, the summers (June, July, August) are hot and humid, whilst the winters (November – March) are long and cold, with temperatures dropping to as low as -10°C.

## After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

## Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

**Last updated: October 2016**