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# **Russia Revealed**

## **RIVER CRUISE**

*Plus optional extensions in*

**Transylvania, Romania; Helsinki, Finland & Tallinn,  
Estonia**

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**OZZ/OZR/OZT/OSZ/OZB 2015**

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# Grand Circle Cruise Line

## Russia Revealed

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# 1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



## Passport Required

You need a passport for this itinerary.

### Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:

- It should be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- It should have the recommended number of blank pages (see below for details).
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable.

### Recommended number of blank pages:

This recommendation is based on a “worst case” scenario. When you are on this trip, you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration official on duty that day. Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we feel that it’s better to be safe than sorry, and we strongly recommend that you follow these guidelines.

- **Main trip only:** 2 blank “Visa” page.
- **Optional post-trip extension to Tallinn, Estonia & Helsinki, Finland:** 2 additional pages.
- **Optional extension to Transylvania, Romania:** 1 additional page.

Please take a moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If not, you could be refused entry into a country. And if that happens, you might be required by that country to return to the U.S. immediately, **which would be at your own expense.**

### If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

**NOTE:** When updating your passport, it is worthwhile to check the prices on all the different services that might apply to you. For example, it might be less expensive to renew your passport than to have pages added, depending on the number of pages you need.

*For your safety and convenience your passport will be taken and held by the hotel manager after embarkation and returned to you on disembarkation day. This is standard ship’s procedure when crossing borders and during potential controls in our ports of call.*



**Visa Required—Russia (main trip)**  
**Visa Not Required—Estonia, Finland, and Romania**  
**(optional extensions)**

For U.S. citizens, visas are required for entry into Russia. For further information, you can contact the countries' tourist boards at the phone numbers and addresses listed in this handbook in the "Reference Materials" section, under Tourist Board Addresses.

- **RUSSIA—visa required:** We will send you the visa application and an instruction sheet explaining how to complete it approximately 100 days before your departure. You should send your completed application to PVS approximately 90 days before your departure. **Applying for your visa within 30 days of your departure will result in additional expenses and fees.** The additional fees are charged directly by the Russian Embassy and can range between \$100-\$300 per person, depending on how close to departure you apply.
- **ESTONIA, FINLAND, and ROMANIA—visa NOT required for U.S. citizens.**

**It is very important that you apply for your visa through PVS International**—obtaining a Russian visa on your own through an embassy or consulate is a complicated and bureaucratic process. **It requires a letter of sponsorship that must be supplied by the Russian government.** PVS is able to work within this restriction when your application is processed through them, but for legal reasons cannot assist you with applying directly to the embassy.

Travelers who do choose to apply for this visa on their own often encounter problems with processing their visa and may be prohibited from entry into Russia. Details on obtaining your visa through PVS International will be included with your application.

## **No U.S. Passport?**

**Non-U.S. citizens or non-U.S. passport holders:** If you are not a U.S. citizen or if you possess a passport from a country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate or embassy about possible visa requirements. For your convenience, we recommend the services of PVS International, who can also assist in this regard.

**PVS International**  
Passport & Visa Services  
1700 N Moore Street  
Rosslyn Center, suite 310  
Arlington, VA 22209  
Telephone: 1-800-556-9990  
Website: [www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org)

## **Backup Photocopies**

The smartest security precaution you can take is to make photocopies of your passport's personal information pages, your air tickets, your traveler's check serial numbers (if you're using them), and your credit cards. Also, bring extra passport-sized photos. Make a list of the phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, your travel protection plan company (if you have an optional travel protection plan) and medical emergency network. Keep these documents separate from the originals, and they can save you immeasurable time, money, and trouble if your originals are lost or stolen as you travel. In addition, scan these photocopies and email them to your email address; you can then print out replacement copies if necessary.

## 2. YOUR HEALTH



### Keep Your Abilities In Mind

We've worked closely with our local Program Directors and regional associates to identify the aspects of this adventure that you should be aware of, from physical requirements to cultural factors. **Please carefully review the information below prior to departing on this trip.**

#### Pacing

- 15 days, with 14 nights aboard the *M/S Rossia*

#### Physical Requirements

- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- You must be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs

#### Climate

- Daytime temperatures typically range from 47-71°F during cruising season
- June-August are the warmest months; temperatures can reach 90°F
- October weather can be unpredictable and change quickly within a short period of time

#### Terrain

- Travel over uneven walking surfaces, including cobblestones, steep or unpaved paths, hills, and stairs

#### Transportation

- Travel by 45-seat coach, ferry, and 216-passenger river ship
- Expect traffic jams of up to 1.5 hours when traveling in Moscow and St. Petersburg

#### River Cruising

- Throughout the River Cruise season, weather conditions and tides affect Volga River depths; water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary

#### Program Directors

- We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience

#### Cuisine

- Meals will be based on local and international cuisine
- Meals onboard feature a variety of entrée options, including vegetarian





## Health Check and Inoculations

If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date. Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your international itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling. You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential if you want to fully enjoy your trip abroad. Please consider this program only if you are in good physical condition. If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition.

If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip, as obtaining refills of your medication can be difficult during your cruise. Pack these medications in your carry-on bag, and keep them in their original, labeled containers. To be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications, you should also bring copies of the prescriptions, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name.

### Vaccinations

**Check with the CDC:** To ensure you receive any needed vaccinations we suggest that you check the current recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for your destination. You can contact them at:

**On-line** — if you have access to the Internet, we suggest you visit the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel), where you will find comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.

**By phone**—at the CDC's Hotline toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Please note that automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

**Consult your doctor:** After checking the CDC's recommendations we strongly suggest that you consult your family physician concerning any vaccinations or medications that you may need on this trip. At the time of print there were no specific vaccinations required for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.

### 3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS



#### Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current <b>standard</b> is <b>50lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-on bags</b> .
Size restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> .
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Both extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person:</b> Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Enforcement of published restrictions by countries and airlines is a matter of governmental and corporate policy. Enforcement may include spot checks and may be inconsistently applied. Expect penalties and fines to be imposed immediately, however, when and if enforced. Before you choose to ignore the published restrictions you should ask: <i>Do I feel lucky?</i> And, even if you answer yes, you should make sure that you have the ability to pay the fine.</p>	

#### Should I confirm luggage restrictions with my U.S./international airline(s) before departure?

Absolutely, confirm current restrictions about a week or so before your departure. You should take this step no matter if your vacation has a lower limit than the average international flight or not, because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations, or an update to the standard weight/size allowances. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our webpage in the *FAQ* section.

**You should also check with the airlines on luggage fees—many airlines charge to check luggage,** even on international flights. Others may charge a fee if you bring a second carry-on item, like a purse or a laptop. **These fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines. If you are making a connecting flight, you should also confirm if your luggage can be checked through to your final destination. For more information about air travel, see the “Air Travel” section of your *Important Information* booklet.

## Luggage Suggestions

**Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your checked luggage.** Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

**Consider a daypack or small backpack as your carry-on bag.** It will do double duty during excursions and walking trips. A daypack leaves your hands free and distributes its weight onto your back. Packed with daily travel needs (sweater, camera, rain/wind jacket, water bottle, etc.), it will compress to fit the storage space of foreign motorcoaches, and yet still have room for an impulse buy at a local street market.

***Tip:** Bring a second, empty lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home – but remember that you may incur extra luggage fees. If you're traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing," i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion's luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*

## Airport Security/TSA

**Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage may change.** To avoid inadvertently packing restricted items in your carry-on, we suggest that you consult the Transportation Security Administration website at [www.tsa.gov/public](http://www.tsa.gov/public), which keeps a current list of restricted items. From the main website click on *Our Travelers*, then *Air Travel*, and then you will see a link for *Prohibited Items*..

**Liquids and your carry on:** Follow the **TSA's 3-1-1 rule**: Liquids must be in a 3.4 ounce or less (100ml) bottle (by volume); all bottles must be in a 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag; 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin. One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. The 3.4 ounce (100ml) container size is a security measure. Note that this rule is used increasingly throughout the world.

### **Locking your luggage:**

To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, *either* do not lock your bags when checking in for flights that originate in the U.S. *or* use TSA-approved locks. (These are locks that TSA screeners can open and relock with a special tool, avoiding damage to your luggage or lock if a physical inspection is required. Look for the words "TSA" or "TSA-approved" on the lock's packaging.) Outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend that you lock your luggage as a preventative measure against theft.

## 4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE



### GCCL Air Travelers

**U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, a GCCL Airport Representative will assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. The Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time and at the gate one hour before your departure time (security permitting).

*Please note: If you are arriving at your international gateway city via a connecting domestic flight, the Grand Circle Cruise Line Representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.*

**Overseas Arrival:** If you are purchased international flights or an airport transfer with Grand Circle Cruise Lines, a GCCL Representative will meet you at the airport after you exit customs and escort you to a private motorcoach for your transfer to the pier or hotel.

**U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCCL Airport Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights.

### Flying with a Travel Companion

If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

### Bucharest Air Routing Information

Because Romania remains a largely undiscovered tourist destination, air service between the U.S. and Bucharest is limited. As a result, your U.S. flight to or from Bucharest (depending on your itinerary selection) may not be direct and may require a layover of between one and five hours, according to airline schedules.

## 5. MONEY MATTERS



### How to Carry Your Money

We offer these general guidelines that are pertinent throughout your River Cruise when you are away from your ship. Information specific to a particular city on the main itinerary or to a destination on an optional extension is in the section that directly follows these general travel tips.

**Traveler's checks—not recommended:** We urge you not to rely on traveler's checks for your personal expenses. They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's most practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last "cash" resort in the event of a special situation.

**We recommend that you wait to exchange your money until you arrive in Russia** (especially large sums), as you will get a better exchange rate in Russia than you will in the U.S. We also recommend that you avoid exchanging money in the Customs section of the airport, as the exchange rate is also high here. Your Program Director can show you the best places to exchange money throughout your trip. In general, you can change money at banks and money exchange offices (to exchange cash you may be asked to show your passport). Please note that torn, dirty, or taped bills may not be accepted.

**\*\*Please note that your shipboard account can only be paid in Russian rubles or by credit card, and onboard purchases can only be paid by Russian rubles. To make sure you have enough Russian rubles, it is a good idea to change a large amount at the beginning of your trip, as the ship cannot change money and exchange facilities may not be convenient.**

### ATMs

When traveling, typically PLUS, Cirrus, and other bank networks are available throughout large cities and small towns. Always notify your bank before you leave home that you are going abroad so that they may remove any blocks on your account and also ask them about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad. For cash withdrawals, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's 4-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits.

***Note on ATM use:** Many banks have begun imposing a fee ranging from \$1 to \$5 every time you use an ATM in a foreign city. You may want to limit the number of withdrawals that you make. Your Program Director/Hospitality Desk Representative can advise you on locations, but when to exchange money is left to your discretion.*

### Credit (and Debit) Cards

Even if you do not plan on using it, having a credit or debit card as a "backup" is helpful in an emergency. Though major American credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) and debit cards with a credit card logo are accepted abroad, card acceptance varies by shop. It is best to ask if your type of card is accepted *before* deciding on your purchase. Having several different cards can be advantageous. Please note that Discover cards are not widely accepted outside the U.S.

Keep your receipts in case you have questions about the conversion or exchange rate. Also, keep your receipts as proof of purchase for items to be shipped home.

## Currency

### Russia

The unit of money in Russia is the *ruble*. On price tags, *ruble* is abbreviated to *p*. Ruble banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 10, 50, 100, 500, 1,000 and 5,000 *rubles*
- Coins: 1, 5, 10, 50 *copecks* and 1, 2, 5, 10 *rubles*

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director can advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to our website, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper. On our website select the region and then click on the country you'll be visiting. A link to the currency converter is included in the menu on the page of each individual country.

According to Russian legislation (federal law #173 from 12/10/2003, article 15), residents and **nonresidents** of the Russian Federation may:

- Bring in/out **without any restrictions and Customs declaration** the amount **of rubles in equivalent value of \$1-\$3,000**.
- Bring in/out without any restrictions but subject to declaration at the Customs office the amount **of rubles in equivalent value of \$3,000-\$10,000**
- To bring in/out the amount **of rubles in equivalent value over \$10,000**, the person should have a confirmation of the origin of this amount of money.

**Moscow & St. Petersburg Banking hours:** Banking hours vary from bank to bank. In general, hours are 9 am to 6 pm, Monday through Friday.

### Helsinki and Tallinn

**Currency:** The official currency of both Finland and Estonia is the euro. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 euro

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director can advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to our website, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Banking hours:** Generally banks are open 9 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday

### Romania

Romania's official currency is the leu (plural lei), and 1 leu = 100 bani. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 1, 5, 10, 50, 100, 200 and 500
- Coins: 1, 5, 10, 20, and 50 bani

## Onboard Ship

Two separate bills will be issued:

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for onboard purchases (drinks at the bar, purchases at the reception desk gift shop location, laundry, etc) and is calculated in Russian rubles. You may pay for your shipboard account via American Express, MasterCard or Visa credit cards. Debit cards, personal checks and Discover credit cards are not accepted. You may use cash, but only Russian Rubles are accepted.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for optional tours taken during the trip; it is calculated in U.S. dollars. Credit or Debit Cards with Visa or MasterCard logos are accepted. The card must allow you to *sign* for purchases — you will *not* be able to enter a PIN. You will need to sign an optional tour form as proof of payment. *Personal checks, cash, Discover card, or PIN-only debit cards are not accepted.*

**Please note:** Shipboard and optional tour account payments made by credit card may take up to 3 months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "OPT Boston" (depending on your credit card company).

**Concessionaires onboard (including photographers and concessionaire the gift shop):** Photography services must be paid on the spot in Russian rubles (credit cards are not accepted). Purchases from the concessionaire gift shop (but *not* the reception desk store) must also be paid on the spot, but you may use credit cards.

**Exchange services:** There are no exchange services aboard the ship.

**ATM:** There is no ATM aboard the ship.



## Shopping

There is **no** requirement to make a purchase during stops at local shops or markets, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. **Grand Circle Cruise Line cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.** If you plan a major purchase, we strongly recommend that you research the prices and quality available at home before your trip. Just one visit to an import shop or gold dealer will put you way ahead when you go shopping. This is the only way to know if you are getting a good price.

## By Destination

### Moscow

Moscow's city center offers the more popular shopping venues, including Tverskaya Street and both Arbat and Novy Arbat. The streets of Kuznetsky Most, Kutuzovsky Prospekt, and Stoleshnikov Pereulok also offer nice stores. In addition to GUM, the Manezh shopping mall, right next to the Kremlin under the main square, is a pleasant place to browse. For shopping in a lavish setting, ask for directions to Petrovsky Passazh to walk its boutiques and antique shops. Note that stores do not accept traveler's checks. One of the largest offerings of handicrafts and souvenirs, at decent prices, is at the Izmailovsky Park flea market. Mixed in with current-day craft items, you might find a Soviet gas mask or army

helmet. And you might make the trip home a little more flavorful by buying some delectable Russian-made chocolates. Note, however, that handicraft goods are often found in more variety and at better values in the countryside — outside the major Russian cities.

## **St. Petersburg**

Among the best buys in Russia are black caviar (sold in small sealed jars), the traditional Russian wooden nest of dolls (matryoshkas), hand-embroidered shirts and blouses, balalaikas, samovars, watches (Raketa brand and military watches), chess sets, pure wool scarves, lacquer boxes, hats, vodka, amber, malachite jewelry, porcelain and books. You'll also find a variety of small Christmas and Easter gifts made by Russian craftsmen for sale throughout the year that make great unique presents for friends.

To bring back a little of Russia with you, you have some traditional items to choose from. The blue and white Russian porcelain Gzhel is used for vases, table settings, some delicate toys, and figurines. Nesting dolls are also widely available in Moscow, as well as Russian and Ukrainian style shirts with intricate embroidery. Palekh boxes (brightly colored and lacquered with native artwork) are on sale in better souvenir shops. Kiosks offer amber and silver jewelry, and some churches allow you to purchase Russian Orthodox religious items.

One of the oldest places to buy souvenirs is Gostinny Dvor (35 Nevsky Prospekt), the most famous of St. Petersburg's department stores. Another option is Passage (48 Nevsky Prospekt), another big department store that specializes in women's clothing.

## **Helsinki**

Handicrafts, jewelry, hand-woven *ryijy* rugs, furniture, glassware, ceramics, furs, and textiles are some of the world-renowned specialties. Shops are open Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 or 6 pm, and Saturday 9 am to 2 or 3 pm. Some shops and department stores are open until 8 pm on weekdays and until 6 pm on Saturdays.

Helsinki Railway Station has an underground shopping center, where the shops are open from 10 am to 10 pm., Sundays and holidays from noon until 10 pm. Elsewhere in the city, some shops are open on Sundays from June to August at the Kiseleff Bazaar Hall, on the Esplanade, and at the shopping center Forum.

## **Tallinn**

The Old Town has quite a lot of handicraft, art, and antique shops, and even a couple of fashion houses. Prices are still fairly low by Western standards. Amber is one of the most distinctive souvenirs of the Baltic region. Modern amber jewelry, particularly necklaces, is widely available.

Other popular buys include fine knitted sweaters, linen tablecloths, napkins, and ceramics. Paintings and prints are sold at galleries, shops, and open-air art markets. You can buy some quite attractive city views or landscapes, offered at a wide range of prices.



## Romania

Romania is renowned for its hand-woven carpets, which can be purchased from several authorized retailers in Bucharest. For real bargains consider crystal, porcelain, ceramics, and china, of which good-quality items can be purchased at relatively low prices in local shops. Arts and crafts can be purchased at Artizanat stores that specialize in dolls, masks, and embroidered objects made by local craftspeople.

In Bucharest, the giant department store Unirea Shopping Center is a leftover from the days of communism, when everything was sold under one roof, and it is worth a look. The main food market in Bucharest is Piata Amzei. It is a bustling marketplace where the locals shop for cheeses, fruits, fishes, and meats.

## U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the *export* duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the *import* duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

## Problem with a Purchase?

The best way to address a problem with a purchase is to not have one in the first place! Examine your merchandise before paying, check contracts or agreements before signing, and review your receipt before leaving the shop. For major purchases, ask in advance about the return policy. Local practice may vary from U.S. standards; don't assume that you have "x" number of days after the purchase to speak up.

But what if you do discover an issue with an item later on? In that case, your best recourse is to contact the vendor directly. For this reason we recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. due to delays in communication, the complexities of international shipping/customs duties, and even cultural differences in how business is conducted.

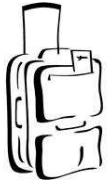


## To Tip or Not to Tip

Sometimes *that* is the question. Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. For those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Your tour price includes gratuities on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours for all local guides and motorcoach drivers that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your vacation. Listed below are our recommendations for the tips that are not included in your tour price. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director at the end of your trip. We recommend \$4-\$6 per person for each day your Program Director is with you. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash, and local currency is appreciated. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Shipboard:** Gratuities to cruise personnel are not included. The ships’ tipping guidelines recommend a flat tip of \$10-\$12 U.S. per person, per day, which will be pooled among all cruise staff. Please note that tips for the cruise staff can only be in cash.
- **Hotels:** For your hotel housekeeping staff, a tip worth about \$1 per day is sufficient. (Note: If you are low on local currency, you can use U.S. dollars.)
- **During free time:** During your free time, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. If a service charge is included in your bill at a restaurant, there is no need to leave an additional tip; otherwise, we suggest you leave bartenders and waiters about 5-10% of the check when dining on your own. In taxis, a good rule of thumb is to round up your fare. These suggestions would also apply to the optional extensions.

## 6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP



### In General

**Travel light.** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe—yet keep your luggage light—we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated pants and shirts, skirts and blouses, or pantsuits that can be mixed to create different outfits.

**Pack casual clothes.** Comfortable, low-key apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations and aboard ship. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses and skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes are recommended. At dinner, you will not need to don "dressy" clothing; men do not need a tie or jacket. You may want one or two "smart casual" outfits for the Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.

**Showing respect through clothing.** In religious buildings—such as Russian Orthodox churches—conservative dress is strongly preferred. Travelers of both sexes are encouraged to cover their legs to the knee and their shoulders. In many churches, women will be encouraged to cover their heads with a scarf. If an excursion will require more conservative clothing, it will be announced in advance.

**Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 30s or 40s, depending on your travel season. For warmer conditions, a mixture of cotton sweaters, sweatshirts, long-sleeved shirts, summery tops, pants, skirts, and walking shorts is recommended. Evenings call for a warm outfit and a heavy sweater and jacket.

A sturdy windproof shell over a heavy sweatshirt, sweater, or fleece top is ideal for being out on deck at night. On land excursions, dress in layers. You can then easily adjust to any temperature shifts by removing or adding a layer. For possible showers, take a folding travel umbrella and/or rain hat. A waterproof jacket with a hood is ideal.

**Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. Supportive, waterproof sports shoes are ideal for daytime shore excursions. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. Bring five to seven pairs of socks. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.



### Packing Your Carry-On

Using a daypack as a carry-on bag for your flights is a smart solution. We **strongly urge** you to pack your carry-on with at least one full change of clothes, your camera gear, medications, changes of socks and underwear, your important travel documents, and other irreplaceable items, in case your checked bags go astray. Store camera gear and important papers in plastic bags to protect them from dirt and moisture. With a daypack you can then remove these items on arrival and load your bag with the gear you'll need on walking tours and excursions.



## Clothing Options

The luggage weight and size restrictions imposed by travel realities today have made traveling light an absolute necessity. With modern fabrics – Gore-Tex, Polarfleece, polypropylene, etc. – lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any on-line or local sporting goods/outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary.



## Travel Gear Suggestions

Though it's often fun to do things as the locals do, it can be frustrating when daily necessities or conveniences from home aren't available. To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical constraints of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a transfer motorcoach, a small ship or a day-long trek on a camel. You'll have to distinguish between what you **must** have, what you'd *like* to have, whether you can zip your suitcase closed, and what you can reasonably expect to wrestle through airport hallways and security checkpoints. Consult the following items to create your personal checklist – ignoring what you don't need and making the tough decisions over borderline cases. Remember that many airlines today will charge you extra for added luggage.

**Cabin amenities include:** shampoo, body lotion, hair dryer, liquid soap, and towels. We have still mentioned some of these items in the checklists below in case you have preferred brands you want to bring with you on your cruise.

## General Clothing Recommendations

- Conservative "smart casual" clothing will be most useful for daytime touring. Jeans are popular in Russia and would be versatile choice. However, you might want to add one dressier outfit for more formal occasions, such as the ballet or opera. It's not compulsory, but the locals do dress up for these events, so you might want to do the same.
- In Russian Orthodox churches it is generally preferred that visitors of both genders cover their legs to the knee and cover their shoulders. Many churches will also prefer that female visitors cover their hair with a scarf. If a visit to a church or religious site is on the itinerary, your Program Director will announce it in advance so you can plan ahead.
- Shoes: If you're intending to see as many sights as possible during your trip (and there is a lot to see) then you'll be doing a good deal of walking. Be sure to pack some comfortable walking shoes!
- Light sweater. During colder times of year, this is useful for layering. During hotter times of year this can still be useful because the air-conditioning on the bus can be cold.
- Some sort of rain gear—a raincoat, a waterproof jacket, an umbrella, etc. Rain can be expected any time of year.
- Dressing in layers will help you with the temperature changes during the day, whatever time of year you visit.
- Underwear and sleepwear

## Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

### For spring (April and May)

- Spring is especially tricky to define. Because of the long Russian winter, snow can occur as late as April, and even early May can be cold—highs are usually in the 50s to low 70s range.
- You'll want a mix of long jeans/trousers, plus a mix of long- and short-sleeved shirts.
- Layers (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.) are key for this season, so you can adjust to the varied weather.
- A coat, gloves, a hat and warm scarf are recommended for April and early May.
- Warm shoes or boots would be best, especially if they are water resistant or waterproof.

### For summer (June-August)

- Mostly lightweight summer clothes: T-shirts, polo shirts, walking shorts, light trousers, etc.
- However, the weather throughout summer is still unpredictable so you'll still want a pair or two of jeans/trousers and a layering piece like a sweater/fleece/jacket.
- Sunhat or visor and sunglasses.
- The hot summer season is quite short and by late August it will have already cooled down substantially.

### For fall (September and October)

- Fall is short – by early October it can already feel like winter.
- You'll want long sleeves and trousers or jeans, not summer clothes.
- Like spring, layers (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.) are key for this season, so you can adjust to the varied weather. As the season progresses, the more warm layers become useful.
- A coat, gloves, a hat and warm scarf are recommended.
- Warm shoes or boots would be best, especially if they are water resistant or waterproof.

## Consider ...

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Insect repellent with DEET
- Travel money bag or money belt
- Moisturizer, lip balm
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- Compact umbrella
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Extra passport-sized photos
- A day pack or shoulder bag to carry your sightseeing essentials is handy.

## Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed, Dristan, etc.
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/aspirin/Naproxen
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach relief: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

## Other Gear

- Travel alarm
- Compact binoculars
- Toiletry bag, with hook and pockets
- Washcloth
- Handkerchiefs
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/ravel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapter--see the "Regional Electricity" section below
- Travel journal/note pad
- Home address book
- Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Water bottle for land excursions
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rate
- Reading material

## 7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION



We can't predict the weather you'll have on your travels – our local weathermen are lucky to get tomorrow right! So, as your departure nears, it's a great idea to visit the *My Account* feature of [www.gct.com](http://www.gct.com) for a current 10-day forecast of temperatures and conditions at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites ([www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com) is very comprehensive) for those forecasts and tweak your wardrobe accordingly. You'll find historical averages and general information on local climates below – but, given recent weather extremes, it's even more important to consult up-to-the-minute resources.

**Russia in General:** You should also be prepared for variable weather and temperature drops. During the height of midsummer, the sun shines continuously for 19-20 hours. These daylight hours decrease as you head into the fall. Autumn comes early in this region of the world; summer typically ends at the close of August, and peak fall foliage is in September. It's best to be ready for these variable weather conditions by bringing clothes you can wear in layers. Be prepared for intermittent spells of wet, cloudy weather, though extended spells of fine settled weather are also likely.

**Moscow:** During your travel season, most days are likely to be at least partly sunny, although you may experience some showers. During some of the warm spells of summer Moscow can be somewhat hot, when temperatures in July and August may reach into the 80s and occasionally even the 90s. As autumn approaches, it usually starts to cool off pretty quickly, and “sweater-weather” becomes the norm.

**St. Petersburg (main trip):** Summer is often comfortably warm and bright, but hot spells also occur, as do afternoon rain showers. By the middle of August, autumn has arrived and by October, the temperatures usually have dropped to the 50s and 40s, and a crispness has entered the air or there may even be snow.

**Helsinki & Tallinn (optional extension):** Helsinki is at the same latitude as the southern regions of Alaska, but the temperatures here are moderated by the warmth of the Atlantic Ocean's Gulf Stream, and in the summer and fall by the shallowness of the Baltic. Traveling at this time of year in Helsinki and Tallinn, you are likely to encounter long hours of sun and temperatures that require just a jacket for comfort.

**Romania (optional extension):** Romania's climate is temperate, with few extreme weather conditions. Mid-summer is generally quite hot—summer temperatures in Bucharest can reach into the 90s. Spring and fall bring delightful, sunny days and comfortable temperatures. Winters bring cold temperatures and abundant snowfall, along with a cold wind known as the crivat that blows from Russia. No matter the season, temperatures in Transylvania are generally cooler because of the influence of the Carpathian Mountains. From late fall, through winter, and into early spring it will be cold in Transylvania. During your stay in Sinaia, a mountain pass town, temperatures can fluctuate by 40 degrees or more. It can be in the upper 70s in the afternoon in July and August ... but the *average* high is around 50 degrees.

Here is the data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations.

<b>WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?</b>						
<i>Average highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.</i>						
	<b>MAY</b>	<b>JUN</b>	<b>JUL</b>	<b>AUG</b>	<b>SEP</b>	<b>OCT</b>
<b>Moscow</b>						
High	63	69	71	68	57	45
Low	44	51	55	52	43	33
<b>St. Petersburg</b>						
High	60	66	70	66	56	45
Low	44	52	56	54	45	37
<b>Helsinki, Finland (optional extension)</b>						
High	59	66	70	66	56	46
Low	41	49	53	51	43	36
<b>Transylvania, Romania (optional extension)</b>						
High	39	45	49	50	42	37
Low	29	35	39	39	32	26
<b>Tallinn, Estonia (optional extension)</b>						
High	59	66	70	68	58	48
Low	41	50	54	53	45	38

**Please note:** The data cited here reflect *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions, and serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. A 60 degree *average* high temperature means that days may be as warm as 80 or as cool as 40 – but it's most likely you'll encounter temperatures in the 50 to 70 degree range.



## 8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY



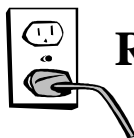
### In General

Smartphone, tablet, digital camera/camcorder, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't exist even five years ago. The usefulness of digital devices is enormous: smartphones can keep you connected and offer up-to-the-minute information via your cell plan or a local Wi-Fi connection. With a tablet (or smartphone) you can store multiple country guidebooks, access maps and connect to the internet in a small, lightweight device. (**Tip:** you can download *this* document from the Grand Circle Travel website and import it into your tablet or e-reader, many of which can display PDF files.)

Compact and lightweight, digital camcorders and cameras take high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit. For robust use a laptop may be effective; for occasional use it's wiser to rely on Internet cafes or a tablet and hotel Internet access rather than shoulder the heft and size of a laptop.

To use these devices you should first consider the services available at your destinations. You'll encounter a range of electrical standards, varied plug configurations to access the local current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and differing technological standards.

You'll need to assess your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices. Finally, it's smart to read the owner's manual *before* you depart. Pay particular attention to electrical, power and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need. Thorough preparation is the best guarantee that your devices will work up to their potential.



### Regional Electricity

The standard U.S. electrical system — 110V 60Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system — is rare elsewhere. The overwhelming choice for the rest of the world is 220-240V and 50/60Hz current with a variety of plug shapes, sizes, and configurations. Some plugs will work with multiple receptacles, while others won't. Europe is largely standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. We suggest that you bring *dual* voltage appliances (widely available) that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances are inexpensive and need only plug adapters.

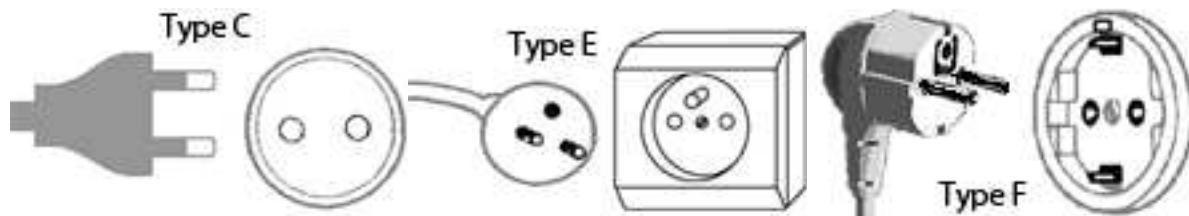
If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) in addition to plug adapters. Regional transformer/adaptor kits can often be found at hardware or online stores but transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave those larger items at home.

Electricity in the Baltics and Russia is generally 220 volts, 50 Hz. (The exception is Estonia where 230 volt electricity is common). *Type F* plugs are the most common, and are generally used in new construction. In older buildings you may find Type C instead. Type C plugs, which are sometimes called “*Europlugs*”, will fit in Type F outlets. You may also encounter Type E plugs. Because electric plugs are not standardized in this region, you may wish to purchase a travel kit with more than one plug adapter—often available in regionally appropriate packages.

## Onboard

Aboard ship, the cabins are equipped with both 110V and 220V, European-style outlets.

**Please note:** Aboard ships, a limited number of transformers and adapter plugs are available at the ship’s reception desk for occasional use. If you need these items for the duration of the cruise, we recommend you bring your own.



Because you’ll need various plug types on this trip, it may be a good idea to invest in a versatile and lightweight all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, and MP3 player for instance – it’s also handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressor and USB-style port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without the use of device-specific plugs.



## Smartphones

It will require some effort to get the most out of your smartphone when you travel. Even with an international roaming plan, costs can add up quickly – those handy apps often pile up download fees. The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of the apps via available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual – albeit at some cost. If your phone doesn’t support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

## Cell Phones

If you want to use a standard cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check with your service provider ([www.verizon.com](http://www.verizon.com), [www.t-mobile.com](http://www.t-mobile.com) etc.) to see if your phone will work outside the U.S. or whether you're better off renting an international phone. The websites [www.travelcell.com](http://www.travelcell.com) and [www.globalcellularrental.com](http://www.globalcellularrental.com) have good information on rentals. Or, consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

## Phone Calling Cards

If you don't carry a phone, you can use a prepaid calling card to call the U.S. with minimal additional charges. Besides the prepaid long distance charges, you might have a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at a hotel. Check with the reception desk prior to using it to avoid unexpected charges.

Calling cards purchased locally are usually less expensive than those purchased in the U.S. and are more likely to work with the local system. Note that dialing a U.S. 1-800 number outside the continental United States will incur costly long distance fees, since 1-800 does not work outside the U.S.



## Photo Gear

For many people, capturing the highlights of their travel experiences in photographs or movies and sharing them is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the journey. Remember, however: some individuals and cultures are less tolerant of photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs. And in some places you may be charged for photography at specific sites, or restricted from any photography at all.

Digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel companions—and many do dual duty by recording movies *and* still images. Fist sized camcorders can capture HD movies and high quality still photos; cameras the size of a deck of cards are great for snapshots and casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can record your whole trip with a small, lightweight package.

But you must remember the batteries. Recharging batteries is sometimes impossible, cameras can drain batteries *very* quickly, and replacements may be unavailable. Whether you need standard or proprietary batteries, it's good to have spares. Be sure your charger will work with the local electrical system, and bring more than enough memory cards—they may be hard or impossible to find. Memory cards are small, thin and light: you can never have too much storage.

Compact cameras are impractical for distant subjects. Some models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is good for middle distances. For distant subjects a *megazoom* (with a zoom lens of at least 300mm) or a single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with up to a 300mm telephoto lens are good choices. With a DSLR you can use multiple lenses, though your gear can quickly get complex, weighty and cumbersome. Cameras or lenses that need a tripod are impractical for travel photography. A single mid-range telephoto lens coupled with a small, fast prime lens (for low light/no flash situations) is an effective, flexible and compact kit. Consider mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras (MILC), which combine small bodies and multiple, small lenses with high quality for both still and HD movie images.

If you use a DSLR or MILC camera, protect the lenses with a UV filter and bring lens caps, covers, cleaning paper and a waterproof bag (a heavy duty Ziploc-style bag is good) to protect your gear. Be sure your camera has a flash that you can turn off, and if it's detachable, remember to pack it. (At many sites and museums, flashes are *not* permitted.)

Consider disposable cameras, as well. They are inexpensive and capable of acceptable photos as long as the light is not too dim *or* bright. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so pose no problems for travelers using digital cameras.

## 9. ABOARD GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE'S RUSSIAN RIVER SHIP



### **M/S Rossia**

The *Rossia* is nautically equipped for sailing Russian rivers, while also catering to our travelers' needs, yet is somewhat limited due to its general structure. Because it is structurally different from other ships in our European fleet, you'll find smaller common areas. There is no lounge onboard big enough to accommodate all passengers at one time. Most activities onboard will take place in the top deck bar. For briefings we will split passengers into two groups, but each group will always receive the same information.

The *Rossia* can accommodate 216 passengers and features all outside cabins, Western decor, and a friendly, Russian staff. You'll enjoy English-only shipboard announcements, a comfortable dining area with regional and international cuisine, and panoramic views from the lounge and sun deck. Your cabin features a picture window, twin beds that are convertible to a double, color TV, refrigerator, and private, European-style bath with shower.

Please note that, unlike the crew aboard our other European cruise ships, the Russian crew of the *Rossia* does not speak fluent English and may, at times, have difficulty communicating.

#### **Included cabin features of the M/S Rossia:**

- All outside cabins
- Twin beds that can be pushed together to create a full size bed
- Individual climate control (features both heating and air conditioning units)
- Sufficient closet
- Table and two chairs
- Picture window that can be opened
- Color TV
- In-room safe
- Telephone
- Hair dryer
- Private bath with shower
- Small personal refrigerator

**An important word:** Please keep in mind that this ship is a river vessel, not a large ocean cruise ship. Riverboat cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

**Please note:** *This ship is not equipped with wheelchair access. The ship has one elevator; however, it only provides access from the main deck to the boat deck. It does not go to the sun deck.*

### **Cabin Assignments**

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Account at [www.gct.com/myaccount](http://www.gct.com/myaccount). However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.



## Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor, large windows, and white-linen and china table settings. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Included with dinner is two glasses of complimentary house wine per guest, per meal. Also fine wines, beer, and Russian and Ukrainian vodkas are available for purchase. In addition, there is complimentary coffee and tea at the coffee station on the main deck for early risers and throughout the day.

Passengers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately €10 (Euros) per bottle, charged to your passenger account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available at meals and from the machine at the coffee station on the main deck.

**Open-table, single seating for all meals:** Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

**Dining times:** Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

**Early riser coffee/tea:** 6:00-7:30 am

**Breakfast:** 7:00-9:00 am

**Lunch:** 1:00-2:30 pm

**Dinner:** 7:00-9:00 pm

**Special diets & celebrations:** Special diets, such as low-cholesterol or vegetarian, can be accommodated, as well as the recognition of an anniversary or birthday. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure. Religious dietary regimens, such as kosher or halal meals, cannot be prepared aboard ship.

**Dress code:** The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

**Non-smoking policy:** The entire dining room is non-smoking at all times.

## Dock and Landing Etiquette

River waterways are simply not big enough to support large landing docks such as those built on ocean shorelines. It is common for river ships to tie up alongside each other at some piers—particularly in ports where docking area is restricted. While we try to arrange the most convenient mooring available in each port of call, outboard boats may occasionally obstruct views, and you may have to step across other ships when you want to go ashore. Also, due to the location of the docks and navigational regulations the ship will dock on both sides during any given itinerary regardless of the direction of the cruise. In other words, the side your ship will dock on can vary throughout the cruise.



### **Drinking Water**

Bottled water is available onboard ship, and there will be one complimentary bottle of spring water in your cabin. This bottle will be replaced once a day as needed. We recommend you avoid drinking the ship's tap water. The ice machine produces ice from purified water. For all port stops, it is best to drink bottled water.



### **Elevator/Chairlift**

The ship has one elevator; however, the elevator only provides access from the main deck to the boat deck. It does not go to the sun deck. The ship is not equipped with wheelchair access.



### **Embarkation/Disembarkation**

On the day you board ship, your cabin will be available at around 2:00 pm. On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after breakfast. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the sun deck until disembarkation.



### **Headsets**

Throughout your trip, complimentary headsets will be provided on all of your included tours and most optional tours, so that you can better hear your Program Director or local guide. (Note: Headsets will not be used during the optional pre- and post-trip extensions.) Bring your own earbuds or headsets if you'd like – a standard 3.5 mm (mini) earphone plug is required.



### **Laundry and Linen Service**

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. Bed linens are changed twice a week; towels are changed daily.

## **Onboard Activities**

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, such as classical and local music entertainment, theme dinners, organized discussions, group activities that relate to the region (may include a language lesson), and talks on upcoming ports of call.



### **Medical Care**

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. In addition to an emergency call button in all cabins, ships also feature fully staffed reception desks, 24 hours a day. A physician is onboard to provide professional first aid and medical advice in case you need these services.



## Recreational Facilities

These include a sun deck with lounge, library, and lounge with bar and dance floor. There are **two** bars onboard, open from 10 am to midnight. The bars offer soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquors for sale. Prices are in Russian rubles and payment is accepted only in Russian rubles. U.S. dollars and euros are not accepted.

## Shore Excursions

Many sightseeing tours are included on your River Cruise; and your Program Director will also provide information on optional excursions, available for purchase, when you arrive.

## Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

All cabins are non-smoking. Smoking is only permitted outside on the sun deck. Smoking is not allowed anywhere else on the ship.

## Souvenir Shop

Onboard your ship you will find a small souvenir shop that sells only certified authentic local products. (Please note that the shop does not sell personal items like toothbrushes or toiletries.)



## Wi-Fi Access and Email

Limited Wi-Fi service is available for free in the lounge, library, reception and bar areas on board the *Rossia*. Wi-Fi service is **not** available in individual cabins, restaurants or other common areas. If you want to use the Wi-Fi connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. To use the Wi-Fi service, please visit Reception after you board for access information. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong 3G cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration.



## **Ship Specifications & Crew *m/s Rossia***

<b>Registry:</b>	Russia
<b>Entered Service:</b>	Refurbished in 2006/7 in Romania
<b>Length:</b>	125 m
<b>Passenger capacity:</b>	216 maximum
<b>Crew/Nationality:</b>	Russian
<b>Decks:</b>	5 including lower deck
<b>Elevator:</b>	Yes, up to the boat deck

## **Your GCCL Program Directors**

During your exclusive Grand Circle Cruise Line River Cruise, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from six onsite Grand Circle Cruise Line Travel Program Directors. Your Program Directors are fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. Supporting them, local tour guides will take you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle Cruise Line, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable.

Your Program Directors will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of a Program Director throughout your cruise.

## 10. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your River Cruise. If you expect to explore in depth on your own, we recommend that you consult one of the many available book-length guides to your destinations. If you have one or two specific sites, museums or features that you're interested in, an Internet search is the ideal way to get-up-to-date information and details. And of course your Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director or Hospitality Desk Representative will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.

### Moscow in Brief



#### City Layout and Details

The heart of Moscow is the historic Kremlin and Red Square, with the city spreading outward from the fortress in a series of circles. Downtown's major streets begin at the Kremlin and extend out, crossing the Boulevard Ring and the Garden Ring. This Garden Ring encloses most of the well-known Moscow sights. The Kremlin still has an air of mystery and intrigue within its battlement walls and among its many towers, cathedrals, and museums. Along the east side of the Kremlin is the enormous GUM (pronounced *goom*), the State Department Store. This long building houses three stories of shops lining three main passages and a maze of side hallways. You might want to browse a series of shops (you can find both Western and Russian goods for purchase) or just take in the liveliness of this famed shopping destination from one of its many bridges or balconies. If you walk to the southeast of GUM through Red Square you will approach the cupolas, domes, and spires of St. Basil's Cathedral, a colorful Russian Orthodox church built in the mid 1500s. Behind St. Basil's you can stroll along Varvarka Street to see its many historic buildings and churches.

Just beyond Red Square is the oldest section of the city outside the Kremlin, known as Kitai Gorod. These old and winding streets are home to the city's financial and commercial district, and the buildings are busy centers for major banks, a multitude of shops, and influential trading companies. The concentration here of markets and trading businesses dates back to the 14th century, and you may still come upon remnants of a 16th-century fortified wall constructed to protect the business centers. In Theater Square is a large granite monument to Karl Marx, and across the avenue is the grand Bolshoi Theater, Moscow's oldest and notable for its splendid external architecture as well as its world-famous opera and ballet companies. This area of the city also includes the Museum of the History of Moscow, if you want to learn more detail of the city's history, and the Polytechnical Museum, with a large exhibit of antique Russian autos.

If you want to see the finery offered by some of Moscow's biggest and most opulent stores, take a stroll along Tverskaya Street. This wide, bustling avenue offers a wide range of shops, bookstores, and cafés, along with many examples of the attractive and varied architectural styles of the local buildings. If you want to see a grocery store extraordinaire, bedecked with chandeliers and decorations of stained glass, stop in at Yeliseyevsky's at No. 14 Tverskaya Street. This area also has many museums, including the small Dostoyevsky Memorial Apartment, where he lived for his first sixteen years, the English Club with its Museum of the Contemporary History of Russia, and the Russian Folk Art Museum.

Bolshaya Nikitskaya Street runs almost parallel to Tverskaya Street to the northeast. Near the Kremlin and the start of Bolshaya Nikitskaya is Russia's oldest university, Moscow State University, founded in 1755. Nearby is also the Zoological Museum, with its exhibits of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. The section of Bolshaya Nikitskaya Street that begins near the Kremlin is lined with mansions dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Further from the city's heart along the avenue are stately houses of art nouveau style.

One of Moscow's interesting streets is Arbat, which runs parallel to the more modernized Novy Arbat (New Arbat). Dating from the 16th century, Arbat is one of the oldest districts of the city. It was favored in the 1800s by the aristocracy, and today, with no vehicles allowed, its cobblestone path is a wonderful place to take a leisurely stroll. In this popular shopping area, you can take in the lively city scene of street musicians, boutiques, and cafés.

About an equal distance from the Kremlin as Arbat, but to the southeast of Arbat and stretching along the bank of the Moskva River, is Gorky Park. Officially titled the Central Park of Culture and Leisure, Gorky Park is a phrase that gained fame from Martin Cruz Smith's novel set in the Cold War. The park is the recreational destination for Moscow's residents and visitors alike. Its 275 acres include a Ferris wheel, a roller coaster, a boating pond, an open-air theater, a "Happy Garden," and an array of eateries. Across the street from the park is the Art Gallery, housing part of the Tretyakov Gallery exposition, where you can view some of Russia's great masterpieces of art.



### **Local Transportation**

The heart of Moscow near the Kremlin, the inner ring of the city, is an area that is covered easily on foot. You can take advantage of the city's buses, trams, and trolleys to explore the sights within the next few rings of avenues spreading out from Red Square. You can purchase tickets, each good for one ride only (if you change buses you will need another ticket) at kiosks and from the drivers.

You can also ride Moscow's Metro, one of the best subway systems worldwide. Some stations are even decorated with chandeliers and handsome mosaics, reflecting their original designation as public palaces. Trains run frequently, every minute during rush hour, and they are inexpensive. Of course, you should be able to recognize your stop, as it is written in Russian. If you travel by taxi, hire only those marked as taxicabs, as many nonprofessional drivers will offer a ride in exchange for a fee.

## **St. Petersburg in Brief**



### **City Layout and Details**

St. Petersburg is Russia's largest seaport and second-largest city, with a population of around five million. It lies on the same latitude as southern points of Alaska and Greenland, and yet its climate—which to a large extent depends on the proximity to the sea and the many waterways that crisscross the city—is frequently described as fairly mild.

The city straddles over 40 islands at the mouth of the great Neva River, which sweeps majestically through its center. The Neva River flows southwest from Lake Ladoga to the Baltic Sea. The Neva branches into three arms and separates the Petrograd side and Vasilevsky Island from the mainland. Today, granite embankments (built in the time of Catherine the Great) contain the 65 rivers, canals, channels, and streams that separate the islands, but flooding still occurs when gales drive in from the Baltic. These waterways, Lake Ladoga, and the sea freeze over in winter, but icebreakers keep the seaport open all year. There are 365 bridges joining the islands.

From the Admiralty on the south embankment, the main streets radiate like spokes of a wheel; the canals and other streets cross these spokes running parallel to the main channel of the Neva. On Vasilevsky Island the streets are divided up into numbered Liniya (lines). In the months after the renaming of Leningrad to St. Petersburg, streets began to revert to their original, pre-Revolutionary names, a process which continues and can cause confusion. Fortunately, many of the most interesting sites, especially those on the left bank of the Neva, along and around the embankments, are located in a relatively compact area, which can be easily explored on foot.



## Local Transportation

During your St. Petersburg stay you will be provided with some included sightseeing tours. If you wish to do some additional exploring on your own, you may find the following information useful.

**Buses, trams and trolleybuses:** These run from 6 am to midnight. To make full use of the system, it is essential to buy a special map.

Stops marked by an “A” sign serve buses, while stops marked “T” serve trolleybuses. The latter are less crowded than buses during rush hour. Tram signs hang from wires above the middle of the road. You can get a ticket from the conductor or bus driver.

**Taxis:** St. Petersburg taxis can be different colors with a “T” sign or checkerboard design. If you hire a taxi, negotiate the price FIRST. A tip to the driver is at your discretion; locals generally do not tip taxi drivers.

**The Metro:** Like St. Petersburg’s buses and trams, the Metro runs from 6 am to 0:30 am (no entry after midnight), and like the Moscow Metro, it is famous for its architecture and murals. This is the fastest way to get around St. Petersburg, and it is well worth the effort to learn its routes and destination signs

## Cultural Insight

**Service with a smile?:** That the Soviet era left its mark on Russia is understandable and expected. But what might surprise you is its effect on customer service standards, even today. A famous story illustrates this influence: when the first McDonald’s opened in Moscow, the new employees were given extensive customer service training, to which one of the puzzled newcomers asked “Why do we have to be so nice to the customers? After all, we have the hamburgers and they don’t!”

This is not to say that you won’t experience genuine kindness and good service while in Russia, but rather that you should be prepared—service in restaurants and shops may not be what you expect. And don’t be surprised if the sales or wait staff don’t smile, because in Russian culture smiles are for people you know, not strangers.

(We'd just like to take this moment to point out that the average excellence rating for our Russian Program Directors is 94%. Not that we're bragging...)

**Visiting a home:** When visiting a Russian home, it is customary to remove your “outdoor” shoes and replace them with “indoor” slippers provided by the host. Because many of the families we visit are accustomed to hosting Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers, this tradition may be relaxed when you visit—just follow the host’s lead. In Russian etiquette, it is polite to let the guests, not the host, determine when it is time to leave. No matter how late it is getting, the host doesn’t want to be seen as getting rid of the guests!

**Truth behind the stereotypes:** Despite the many years of closer understanding between the U.S. and Russia, many of the current stereotypes of Russian society are holdovers from the Cold War era. Although Russians (like many Europeans) may be critical of the U.S. government, this does not mean that Russians dislike the American people; in fact, surveys reveal that many Russians aspire to a lifestyle similar to their U.S. counterparts. Vodka, although still popular, is not usually drunk with a meal the way beer and wine are. And religion is making a steady comeback from the oppression of the Soviet years.



## Russian Cuisine

Original and varied, Russian cuisine is famous for exotic soups, cabbage *shi*, and *solyanka*, which is made of assorted meats. Russians are great lovers of *pelmeni*, small Siberian meat pies boiled in broth.

"No dinner without bread," goes the Russian saying. Wheat loaves have dozens of varieties. As to rye bread, Russians eat more of it than any nation in the world—a peculiarity of the Russian diet.

As the Russian custom has it, a festive table isn't worth this name without a bottle of vodka. Russians are traditionally hearty drinkers: as good whiskey shall come from Scotland, and port from Portugal, so Russian wheat vodka is the world's best.

## Russian Phrase Guide

Basic words and phrases you may find useful:

ENGLISH	PRONUNCIATION IN RUSSIAN
Hello!	Pri-vEt!
How are you?	Kak dee-lAh?
How can I get to ...?	Kak prai-tEE k...?
Where is the metro?	Gde met-rO?
Thank you!	Spa-sEE-ba !
It's delicious/ very tasty!	O-chen' vkU-sna !
Can I have it? (in a store)	MOzh-na mne E-ta?
How much does this cost?	SkOI-ka stO-it?
It's very expensive (for bargaining)	O-chen' dO-ra-ga
I don't speak Russian	Ya ne ga-va-rU pa-rUs-ki
I don't need it	Nee-nA-da
I don't have any money.	Net dEneG

**Pick Pocketing:** Pick pocketing exists in any major tourist city. In recent years pick pocketing has become especially prevalent in the areas that attract travelers for their architectural, historical, or artistic significance. For this reason we ask that you are extra cautious of your belongings when visiting these areas.

## Helsinki & Tallinn in Brief—Optional Extension

### Helsinki, Finland



#### City Layout and Details

Established 450 years ago on the order of the Swedish King Vasa, Helsinki is a youngster of a city by European standards, and it's still the smallest in the world to host the Olympic Games.

But its ideal location on lovely peninsulas that jut into the Baltic Sea, its compact size and efficient design, and its stunning architectural variety combine to make a city that is easy to explore on leisurely walks and that holds wonders around every corner.

The bustling Market Square, located on South Harbor, is the charming site of wooden stands and colorful awnings that springs to life every morning. Only a few blocks away is the Helsinki Cathedral, done in the Byzantine-Slavonic style with domes and an exquisite interior decorated by Russian artists in the 19th century. Providing a modern contrast is the Art Nouveau-style Jugendsali, now a tourist information office but first a bank when it was built in 1906.

Another reason for Helsinki's distinctive small-town ambience is the absence of high-rise buildings. No structure here stands more than 12 stories. Nestled near the harbor is the Esplanade, a broad expanse of trees and gardens in the middle of a boulevard that runs from Market Square west to the Swedish Theater. This is the beginning of Mannerheimintie, the city's main thoroughfare. With small shops, large department stores, churches, and outdoor cafes, Mannerheimintie is a visitor's delight. Alive with motion and color from the start of day, Helsinki is no less invigorating at night. The Esplanade was the 1999 winner of the Edison Award for excellence in lighting design, offering a stunning combination of architecture and illumination.

Equally vivid is the work of the internationally honored Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, whose genius sprouts in structures all over Helsinki, from the winged, white marble facade of Finlandia Hall to the cooper-clad curtains of the Academic Bookshop.



#### Drinking Water

The tap water in Helsinki is safe to drink. Many of the sights of beauty in this region are the fjords, fjord, and natural waterways, but of course you should never drink from a mountain stream, or river, regardless of how clean it might appear.



#### Local Transportation

You will receive a one-day "Transportation Card," providing free travel on the city's buses, trams, metro, and local trains. Your Program Director will provide further information on specific routes and times of operation. You may want to take a ride on the tram, which passes some of the principal sights of the city. If you want to hire a taxi, you can signal one from the street. Taxis have an illuminated yellow sign taksi/taxi. When the sign is lit, the taxi is vacant.

## Tallinn, Estonia



### City Layout and Details

Tallinn's historic Old Town consists of the hill called Toompea and the larger Lower Town to its east. In medieval times, Toompea was the headquarters of the Estonian government, while the Lower Town was distinct from it as a center for Hanseatic traders. A stone wall still separates the two, and another city wall encircles much of the Lower Town. Two streets connect the upper and lower parts of town: the *Luhike Jalg* (short leg), a steep, cobblestone lane leading through a gate in the wall, and the *Pikk Jalg* (long leg).

Old Town Square (*Raekoja Plats*) in the Lower Town is a central point from which to explore the city, and is the location of the English-speaking Tourism Office. Here you can purchase a Tallinn Card, which covers public transportation and admission to many sites, for a single day or for longer periods. The entire Old Town is fairly compact and lends itself to exploration on foot.



### Drinking Water

The safest course of action is to drink bottled water while traveling in Tallinn. Mineral water is fairly inexpensive, and there are many brands from which to choose, the best being Varska.



### Local Transportation

The Old Town of Tallinn is best explored on foot (trams, buses, and trolleybuses circumvent it, and cars need a permit to enter it). To explore other sections of the city, there is an easy-to-use tram system whose hub is located in front of the Viru Shopping Center just east of the Old Town. Single-ride tickets can be purchased onboard, and multi-day passes are sold near tram stops at kiosks that are labeled *sõidutalongid*. If you wish to take a taxi, fares are relatively inexpensive in Tallinn. Your hotel concierge can arrange for a cab for you and ascertain the appropriate fare.

## Transylvania in Brief—Optional Extension



### City Layout and Details

Located in central Romania and surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains, Transylvania is a region with scenic views and a rich historical background. Due to references in literature and film, many have come to associate Transylvania with vampires. And, while certain sites are sure to evoke that spooky imagery some have come to expect, you're likely to leave with a sense that this reputation is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what makes Transylvania memorable. Because of its diverse ancestry, Transylvania offers many towns, each with their own unique cultures and traditions.



### Cuisine

Romanian cuisine was rather famous before the country fell behind the Iron Curtain, when the food became as drab as everyday life under communism. Today, however, Romanian cuisine is inching its way back to sumptuousness.

**Breakfast:** Romanian breakfasts are large and varied, with cold meats, cheeses, eggs, and skinless sausages. Pork or chicken in aspic is called *piftie* and often served.

**Soups:** A national favorite is the hearty soup called *ciorba*. This is a sour soup made from fermented bran, vegetables, parsley, dill, and beef or chicken. Try it with a bit of sour cream and green or pickled pepper, and the taste will grow on you. For the more adventurous, try Ciorba de burta, a tripe soup made with sour cream, vinegar, and garlic sauce. Or a rich bean soup with vegetables and smoked pork. This is usually eaten with onions and vinegar or lemons to balance the richness.

**Main courses:** Pork stuffed with ham and cheese under a sauce, and beef stuffed with mushrooms, bacon, peppers, and a tomato puree are both popular. *Sarmale* is a spicy dish of cabbage leaves stuffed with meat. *Mititei* is small, skinless, grilled sausages made of a mix of minced pork, lamb, beef, and spices. If ever a meal could be considered truly Romanian, it would be mititei with mustard and a cold beer!

The Danube carp cooked on a spit is a well-known treat. Other Danube fish, like zander, pike, perch, and catfish are delicious served grilled with a light garlic sauce and polenta. Rainbow trout from the Carpathians are also served grilled, usually with a potato salad as a side dish.

**Cheeses:** Sheep's milk cheese is very popular and typically served with polenta (in the summer and autumn) or with a vegetable salad.

**Desserts:** Pastries and doughnuts, usually with a cheese filling, are excellent and a matter of some local pride.

**Wines:** Romania is a wine producing country, specializing in reds and dry and demi-sec whites.



### **Drinking Water**

The quality of water in Romania varies greatly. Expect to drink only bottled water, sold in hotels, restaurants, and food shops.



# 11. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY

## Russia

**Area:** 6,601,668 square miles, the largest country on Earth

**Capital:** Moscow

**Language:** Russian.

**Location:** Russia spans two continents, with the part west of the Urals considered to be in Europe while the rest of the country is in Asia. On its west, Russia is bordered by Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Black Sea. On the south, the Russian border touches Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and China. The North Pacific Ocean defines Russia's eastern edge, and the Arctic Ocean lies to Russia's north.

**Population (2013 estimate):** 142,500,482

**Religion:** Russian Orthodox 15-20%, Muslim 10-15%, other Christian ~2%

**Time zone:** From April through most of September, Moscow and St. Petersburg are 8 hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Daylight Time, 11 hours ahead of U.S. Pacific Daylight Time.

**Holidays** (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events):

01/01	New Year's Day
01/07	Orthodox Christmas Day
02/23	Defender of the Fatherland Day
02/24	Defender of the Fatherland Day observed
03/08	International Women's Day
03/09	International Women's Day observed
05/01	Labor Day
05/09	Victory Day observed
06/12	Russia Day
11/04	Unity Day

**The largest of the former Soviet republics**, the Russian Federation occupies 6,591,027 square miles in both Europe and Asia; it has a population of almost 142 million and is made up of more than 40 nationalities.

The huge territory is divided by the Urals into two main areas: European Russia and Siberia. The former occupies the lesser half of the Republic's territory but the majority of its population lives here. To the east, the European half is bordered by the Ural Mountains; to the southwest is the "second Baku," the oil fields between the Volga and the Ural Rivers, lying north of the border with Kazakhstan; southwest again are the Caspian plains, the wheat-growing expanse of Krasnodar and Stavropol, and the Black Sea Riviera as far as Sochi. To the west, it is bordered by the iron ore deposits on the edge of the Ukraine, the district of Kursk, the forests of Bryansk, and further north by Belarus, Latvia, Estonia, and the Baltic (in the Gulf of Finland).

## **Early History**

The term "Rhos," or "Rus," first came to be applied to the Varangians and later also to the Slavs who peopled the region currently known as Russia in the 10th to 11th centuries. Like many other parts of Eurasia, these territories were overrun by the Mongol invaders, who formed the state of Golden Horde, which would pillage the Russian principalities for over three centuries. Later known as the Tatars, they ruled the southern and central expanses of present-day Russia, while the territories of present-day Ukraine and Belarus were incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, thus dividing the Russian people in the north from the Belarusians and Ukrainians in the west. This long-lasting nomadic rule slowed the country's economic and social development.

## **Muscovy**

While still under the domain of the Mongols and with their connivance, the duchy of Moscow began to assert its influence in Western Russia in the early 14th century. Assisted by the Russian Orthodox Church, Muscovy inflicted a defeat on the Mongols in the Battle of Kulikovo (1389). Ivan the Great (ruled 1456-1505) eventually tossed off the control of the invaders, consolidated surrounding areas under Moscow's dominion and first took the title "grand duke of all the Russias."

In the beginning of the 16th century the Russian state set the national goal to return all Russian territories lost as a result of the Mongolian invasion and to protect the southern borderland against attacks of Crimean Tatars and other Turkic peoples.

In 1547, Ivan the Terrible was officially crowned the first Tsar of Russia. During his long reign, Ivan annexed the Muslim polities along the Volga River and transformed Russia into a multiethnic and multireligious state. By the end of the century, Russian Cossacks established the first settlements in Western Siberia. The colonization of the Asian territories was largely peaceful, in sharp contrast to the build-up of other colonial empires of the time.

## **Imperial Russia**

Peter the Great (ruled in 1689-1725), after defeating Sweden in the Great Northern War, founded a new capital, St. Petersburg. Peter succeeded in bringing ideas and culture from Western Europe to a severely underdeveloped Russia. After his reforms, Russia emerged as a major European power.

Catherine the Great, ruling from 1762 to 1796, continued efforts at establishing Russia as one of the great powers of Europe. In 1812, having gathered nearly half a million soldiers from France, as well as from all of its conquered states in Europe, Napoleon invaded Russia but, after taking Moscow, was forced to retreat back to Europe. Almost 90% of the invading forces died as a result of ongoing battles with the Russian army, guerillas and winter weather. The Russian armies ended their pursuit of the enemy by taking his capital, Paris.

The officers of the Napoleonic Wars brought back to Russia the ideas of liberalism and even attempted to curtail the tsar's powers during the abortive Decemberist revolt (1825), which was followed by several decades of political repression. Another result of the Napoleonic Wars was the incorporation of Bessarabia, Finland, and Congress Poland into the Russian Empire.

The perseverance of Russian serfdom and the conservative policies of Nicholas I of Russia impeded the development of Imperial Russia in the mid-19th century. As a result, the country was defeated in the Crimean War, 1853–1856, by an alliance of major European powers, including Britain, France, Ottoman Empire, and Piedmont-Sardinia. Nicholas's successor Alexander II (1855–1881) was forced to undertake a series of comprehensive reforms and issued a decree abolishing serfdom in 1861. The Great Reforms of Alexander's reign spurred increasingly rapid capitalist development and Sergei Witte's attempts at industrialization.

The failure of agrarian reforms and suppression of the growing liberal intelligentsia were continuing problems however. Repeated devastating defeats of the Russian army in the Russo-Japanese War and World War I and the resultant deterioration of the economy led to widespread rioting in the major cities of the Russian Empire and to the overthrow in 1917 of the Romanovs.

At the close of the Russian Revolution of 1917, a Marxist political faction called the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd and Moscow under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin. The Bolsheviks changed their name to the Communist Party. A bloody civil war ensued, pitting the Bolsheviks' Red Army against a loose confederation of anti-socialist monarchist and bourgeois forces known as the White Army. The Red Army triumphed, and the Soviet Union was formed in 1922.

### **Russia as part of the Soviet Union**

The Soviet Union was meant to be a transnational worker's state free from nationalism. The concept of Russia as a separate national entity was therefore not emphasized in the early Soviet Union. Although Russian institutions and cities certainly remained dominant, many non-Russians participated in the new government at all levels.

One of these was a Georgian named Joseph Stalin. A brief power struggle ensued after Lenin's death in 1924. Stalin gradually eroded the various checks and balances which had been designed into the Soviet political system and assumed dictatorial power by the end of the decade. Leon Trotsky and almost all other "Old Bolsheviks" from the time of the Revolution were killed or exiled. As the 1930s began, Stalin launched the Great Purges, a massive series of political repressions. Millions of people whom Stalin and local authorities suspected of being a threat to their power were executed or exiled to Gulag labor camps in remote areas of Siberia.

Stalin forced rapid industrialization of the largely rural country and collectivization of its agriculture. Most economic output was immediately diverted to establishing heavy industry. Civilian industry was modernized and heavy weapon factories were established. The plan worked, in some sense, as the Soviet Union successfully transformed from an agrarian economy to a major industrial powerhouse in an unbelievably short span of time, but widespread misery and famine ensued for many millions of people as a result of the severe economic upheaval.

In 1936 the USSR was in strong opposition to Nazi Germany, and supported the republicans in Spain who struggled against German and Italian troops. However, in 1938 Germany and the other major European powers signed the Munich Treaty. Germany then divided Czechoslovakia with Poland. The Soviet government, afraid of a German attack on the USSR, began diplomatic maneuvers. In 1939 after Poland's refusal to participate in any measures of collective deterrence the USSR signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany which in effect stated that each country would occupy a portion of Poland, which they did, thus obliterating the independent state of Poland.

In June 17, 1940, the Red Army occupied the whole territory of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and installed new, pro-Soviet governments in all three countries. Following elections, in which only pro-communist candidates were allowed to run, the newly elected parliaments of the three countries formally applied to join USSR in August 1940.

Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. Although the Wehrmacht had considerable success in the early stages of the campaign, they suffered defeat when they reached the outskirts of Moscow. The Red Army then stopped the Nazi offensive at the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943, which became the decisive turning point for Germany's fortunes in the war. The Soviets drove through Eastern Europe and captured Berlin before Germany surrendered in 1945. During the war the Soviet Union lost more than 27 million citizens (including eighteen million civilians).

Although ravaged by the war, the Soviet Union emerged from the conflict as an acknowledged superpower. The Red Army occupied Eastern Europe after the war, including the eastern half of Germany. Stalin installed loyal communist governments in these satellite states.

The Soviet Union consolidated its hold on Eastern Europe. The United States helped the Western European countries establish democracies, and both countries sought to achieve economic, political, and ideological dominance over the Third World. The ensuing struggle became known as the Cold War. Stalin died in early 1953, presumably without leaving any instructions for the selection of a successor. His closest associates officially decided to rule the Soviet Union jointly, but the secret police chief Lavrenty Beria appeared poised to seize dictatorial control. General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev and other leading politicians organized an anti-Beria alliance and staged a coup d'état. Beria was arrested in June of 1953 and executed later that year; Khrushchev became the undisputed leader of the USSR.

Under Khrushchev, the Soviet Union launched the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, and the Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first person to orbit the Earth. Khrushchev's reforms in agriculture and administration, however, were generally unproductive, and foreign policy toward China and the United States suffered reverses, notably the Cuban Missile Crisis, when he began installing nuclear missiles in Cuba (after the United States installed Jupiter missiles in Turkey, which nearly provoked a war with the Soviet Union).

Following the ousting of Khrushchev, another period of rule by collective leadership ensued, lasting until Leonid Brezhnev established himself in the early 1970s as the pre-eminent figure in Soviet political life. Brezhnev is frequently derided by historians for stagnating the development of the Soviet Union. In contrast to the revolutionary spirit that accompanied the birth of the Soviet Union, the prevailing mood of the Soviet leadership at the time of Brezhnev's death in 1982 was one of aversion to change.

In the mid 1980s, the reform-minded Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. He introduced the landmark policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring), in an attempt to modernize Soviet communism. Glasnost meant that the harsh restrictions on free speech that had characterized most of the Soviet Union's existence were removed, and open political discourse and criticism of the government became possible again. Perestroika meant sweeping economic reforms designed to decentralize the planning of the Soviet economy. However, his initiatives provoked strong resentment amongst conservative elements of the government, and an unsuccessful military coup that attempted to remove Gorbachev from power instead led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin came to power and declared the end of exclusive Communist rule. The USSR splintered into fifteen independent republics, and was officially dissolved in December of 1991.

### **Post-Soviet Russia**

Prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin had been elected President of Russia in June 1991 in the first direct presidential election in Russian history. After the disintegration of the USSR, the Russian economy went through a crisis. Russia took up the responsibility for settling the USSR's external debts, even though its population made up just half of the population of the USSR at the time of its dissolution. The largest state enterprises (petroleum, metallurgy, and the like) were controversially privatized for the small sum of \$US 600 million, far less than they were worth, while the majority of the population plunged into poverty.

Yeltsin disbanded the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies by decree, which was illegal under the constitution. On the same day there was a military showdown, the Russian constitutional crisis of 1993. With military help, Yeltsin held control. The conflict resulted in a number of civilian casualties, but was resolved in Yeltsin's favor. Elections were held and the current Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted on December 12, 1993.

Vladimir Putin was elected in 2000. Although President Putin is still the most popular Russian politician, his policies raised serious concerns about civil society and human rights in Russia. The West and particularly the United States expressed growing worries about the state control of the Russian media through Kremlin-friendly companies, government influence on elections, and law enforcement abuses.

At the same time, high oil prices and growing internal demand boosted Russian economic growth, stimulating significant economic expansion abroad and helping to finance increased military spending. Putin's presidency has shown improvements in the Russian standard of living, as opposed to the 1990s. Even with these economic improvements, the government is criticized for lack of will to fight widespread crime and corruption and to renovate deteriorated urban infrastructure throughout the country. Despite the economic distress and decreased military funding following the fall of the Soviet Union, the country retains its large weapons and especially nuclear weapons arsenal.

In March of 2008 Russian Dmitry Medvedev was chosen as the President of Russia. During this period, Vladimir Putin served as Prime Minister. In March of 2012, Putin was elected to a third term as president.

### **Finland (Optional Helsinki & Tallinn Extension)**

**Area:** 130,559 square miles

**Capital:** Helsinki

**Language:** Finnish 92% (official), Swedish 5.6% (official), other 2.4%

**Location:** Finland is bordered to the north and west by Norway and Sweden, and to the east by Russia.

**Population (2013 estimate):** 5,266,114

**Religion:** Evangelical Lutheran 89%, Russian Orthodox 1%, none 9%, other 1%

**Time zone:** Finland is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, seven hours ahead of U.S. EST.

**Holidays** (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events):

01/01	New Year's Day
01/06	Epiphany
04/03	Good Friday
04/05	Easter Day
04/06	Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day
05/14	Ascension Day
05/24	Whit Sunday
06/20	Midsummer
10/31	All Saints
12/06	Independence Day
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	St. Stephen's Day

Covering an area of 130,558 square miles, Suomi (its Finnish name) is one of the largest countries of Europe. It extends about 700 miles in length, and has a maximum breadth of 335 miles. The coastline is approximately 682 miles long. Geographically, Finland can be divided into three distinct areas—the coastal plain, the lake district, and the highland in the north—each characterized by a slightly different climate and topography.

Until 1917, Finland was under the domination of its nearest neighbors, Sweden and Russia, who fought over it for centuries. After over 600 years under Swedish rule and 100 under the tsars, the country inevitably bears many traces of these two cultures, including a small (6%) but influential Swedish-speaking population and a scattering of Russian Orthodox churches. But the Finns themselves are neither Scandinavian nor Slavic. All that is known of their origins is that they are descended from wandering groups of people who probably came from west of the Ural Mountains before the Christian era and settled on the shores of the Gulf of Finland.

Helsinki, the capital city, was originally founded in 1550 on orders of the Swedish king Gustavus Vasa, halfway between Stockholm and St. Petersburg, and is still known to the Swedes as Helsingfors. Surrounded by water on three sides and fringed by islands, Helsinki grew up around a natural harbor overlooking the Gulf of Finland. A city of wide streets, squares, and parks, it was one of the world's first planned municipalities and is noted for its 19th-century neoclassical architecture. Because the city is relatively compact, most of it can be explored on foot.

With more than 25% of Finland's people living in Helsinki, the city is not only the center of the country's government, but also the hub of its entertainment and culture. Additionally, Helsinki's opportune location in the Baltic has opened the gates to a strong eastern trade, and many goods pass through it on their way to Russia and the rest of Asia. As a result, Helsinki is fast becoming the major crossroad between Western and Eastern Europe.

## **Estonia (Optional Helsinki & Tallinn Extension)**

**Area:** 17,462 square miles

**Capital:** Tallinn

**Language:** Estonian is the official language, with some Russian, Ukrainian, and Finnish also spoken.

**Location:** Estonia is bordered on the west by Russia and on the east by the Baltic Sea. To the south is Latvia and to the north is the Gulf of Finland. Estonia has numerous lakes and forests and many rivers, most of which drain northward into the Gulf of Finland or eastward into Lake Peipus.

**Population (2013 estimate):** 1,266,375

**Religions:** Evangelical Lutheran 78%, Russian Orthodox and Estonian Orthodox 19%; also represented are Baptist, Methodist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Word of Life, and Jewish.

**Time zone:** Estonia is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, 7 hours ahead of Eastern Time. The country observes daylight savings time from late March until late September.

**Holidays** (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events):

01/01	New Year's Day
02/24	Independence Day
04/03	Good Friday
04/05	Easter Sunday
05/01	Labor Day
05/24	Whitsunday
06/23	Victory Day
06/24	Midsummer Day
08/20	Restoration Day
12/24	Christmas Eve
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	Boxing Day

**Estonia is the smallest and northernmost of the three Baltic States**, covering an area slightly bigger than Denmark. Estonia's capital, Tallinn, is in the north of the country on the Gulf of Finland, which is an eastern arm of the Baltic Sea. Tallinn, a well-preserved city of the old Hanseatic League, is the republic's largest industrial and cultural center, and is also an important Baltic harbor. The country of Finland is about 50 miles further north across the Gulf, and its proximity contributes to Estonia's being the most Scandinavian of the Baltic States. In fact, Finland is so close that many Finns make weekend pleasure trips from Helsinki to Tallinn.

Most of Estonia's terrain is flat and low-lying, although the tallest hill in the Baltic States, 1040-foot Suur Munamägi, rises in the southeast. About 10% of the country consists of islands in the Baltic Sea, of which Saaremaa and Hiiumaa are the largest. Estonia's eastern border with Russia runs for many miles through Lake Peipus, whose area of 1370 square miles makes it the fourth-largest lake in Europe. Another large and shallow lake in Estonia, Vortsjärve, covers 104 square miles and is the largest lake lying entirely within any of the Baltic countries.

The ancestors of today's Estonians arrived in the area over 3,000 years ago. They were a Finno-Ugric people related to others who populated Finland, Lapland, and Hungary, with societies based on hunting and nature-centered religions. The written history of the area begins with the arrival of German "Knights of the Sword" in the 13th century, who conquered the area and converted the inhabitants to Christianity. Denmark then ruled northern Estonia for over a century, and the name of Tallinn is derived from the Estonian words Taani linn, meaning "Danish town."

Although the Estonian natives retained their identity and language, the country was dominated by other European powers until the early 20th century. Germans ruled medieval Tallinn during the 14th to 16th centuries, when it was known as Reva; the city thrived as a seat of the Hanseatic League of traders. Sweden governed from the late 16th through the 17th centuries, a time remembered as a prosperous golden age. Tsarist Russia then held sway for the next 200 years. In 1920, Estonia gained independence, but lost it to Soviet rule in 1944. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Estonia in 1991 regained the independence it enjoys today.

## Romania (optional extension)

**Area:** 91,699 square miles

**Capital:** Bucharest

**Languages:** Romanian is the official language. Hungarian and German are also spoken.

**Ethnicities:** Romanian 89.5%, Hungarian 6.6%, Roma 2.5%, Ukrainian 0.3%, German 0.3%, Russian 0.2%, Turkish 0.2%, other 0.4%

**Location:** Romania's location is sometimes described as being in central Europe or sometimes a southeastern Europe.

**Geography:** The Carpathian Mountains cross the northern half of Romania and connect with the Transylvanian Alps near the central region of the country. Northwest of this mountainous arc is the Transylvanian plateau, and the great plains of Moldavia and Walachia lie to the southeast. The Danube River forms the southern boundary with Bulgaria, and then flows north and then east through Romania, entering the Black Sea through its large delta just south of Ukraine.

**Population (2013 estimate):** 21,790,479

**Religions:** Eastern Orthodox 87%, Protestant 7%, Roman Catholic 5%, other (mostly Muslim) 0.9%, unaffiliated 0.1%

**Time Zone:** Romania is seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Bucharest.

## Historical Overview

### Early History

Human remains dating from 40,000 year ago have been found in Romania – humans have been there at least that long. The earliest written reference to people in the region of modern Romania is in book IV of Herodotus' Histories. Between 440 BC and 271 AD, Romania was generally known as Dacia, and was a powerful state that underwent turmoil from both within and without. By 106 AD Dacia had been conquered by the Roman Emperor Trajan, and became a province of the Roman Empire. The Romans heavily colonized the province, and exploited it for the gold and silver found in the Carpathians. The region was, however, difficult to defend, and the Goths overran it around 271 AD, pushing the Romans out.

### The Middle Ages

From around 271 until 1352 Dacia swung between a number of different occupiers – from Goths to Huns to Slavs to Magyars and Tatars, among others. By the Middle Ages Romanians occupied three distinct principalities: Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania. Transylvania became a largely autonomous part of the Kingdom of Hungary. In the 14th century the larger principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia joined to fight the expansion of the Ottoman Turks into the area. Wallachia eventually fell under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. (This is the historical period that saw Vlad III, the Impaler—aka Vlad Dracula or Vlad Tepes—as the Prince of Wallachia. The prince later served as the inspiration for Bram Stoker's Dracula character, in the novel of the same name.)

Moldavia's military leader Stephen the Great ruled between 1457 and 1504 and defeated the Ottoman Empire in 1475 at the Battle of Vaslui. After his death, however, Moldavia also came under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire.



## **Ottoman Empire**

By 1541, the Balkan Peninsula and most of Hungary were Ottoman provinces, while Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania, under Ottoman suzerainty, had retained internal autonomy and, until the 18th century, some external independence. The political situation in the region continued in flux, with the three principalities united briefly under Michael the Brave, the Prince of Wallachia (1593–1601), of Transylvania (1599–1600), and of Moldavia (1600). The unification did not survive his death in 1601. 1848 brought unsuccessful revolutionary attempts to Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania; however, the populations of the three principalities came to recognize their unity of language and interests. In 1877, Romania declared independence from the Ottoman Empire and, following a Russian-Romanian-Turkish war, and the Treaty of Berlin recognized that independence in 1878, making Romania the first independent national state in the eastern half of Europe.

## **World Wars**

At the outset of WW I, Romania declared neutrality, but eventually joined the allies. During the war two-thirds of the country were lost to the Central Powers. By war's end in 1918 the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires allowed the creation of the state of Greater Romania – joining most regions with clear Romanian majorities into a single state.

Until 1938, Romania was a liberal constitutional monarchy. From 1938 to until the end of World War II, it was a dictatorship and/or carved up by the politics of World War II. During the Second World War, Romania tried again to remain neutral, but on June 28, 1940, a Soviet ultimatum with an implied threat of invasion coerced the Romanian army to retreat from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to avoid war. The government then joined the Axis powers, and southern Dobruja was awarded to Bulgaria, while Hungary received Northern Transylvania in the course of Axis arbitration.

During World War II, in league with Germany and under the regime of Ion Antonescu Romania regained much of its lost land. Antonescu supported the Nazi policy of oppression and massacre of Jews and Romas, and played a significant role in the Holocaust. The Paris Peace Treaty at the end of World War II resulted in Northern Transylvania returned to Romania, but Bessarabia, northern Bukovina and southern Dobruja were not recovered.

## **The Soviet Era & Ceausescu**

Soviet occupation following World War II led to the formation of a communist People's Republic in 1947, and the looting of Romania's resources by the Soviet Union. The leader of Romania from 1948 to 1965 was Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who sowed the seeds of greater independence from the Soviet Union by persuading Nikita Khrushchev to withdraw troops from Romania in 1958.

In 1974, under the new leadership of Nicolae Ceaușescu, Romania started to pursue independent policies that made the country seem more liberal than most Soviet style governments. However, Ceaușescu's autocratic policies inside Romania itself led to his overthrow and execution in the bloody Romanian Revolution of 1989. Under both regimes people were arbitrarily killed for political, economic, or other reasons, and the country ended up under harsh austerity rules. The revolution resulted in more than 1,000 deaths and the end of the Communist regime. The Ceausescu's were tried and convicted of genocide and other crimes by a kangaroo court and were executed on December 25, 1989. Ion Iliescu became the leader of an impromptu governing coalition that proclaimed the restoration of democracy and civil liberties on December 22, 1989.

### **Modern Independence**

The struggle to become a democratic, free-market country has been hampered by in-fighting, residual power struggles between old-line Communist and Security elements, pre-war parties and protests by the population at large. Iliescu won the elections of May 1990; and a new constitution was drafted in December of 1991. Iliescu continued to rule through 1996 via several coalition governments. Since then the government has changed democratically three times, including the election in 2004 of president Traian Băsescu. Post-Cold War Romania developed closer ties with Western Europe, eventually joining NATO in 2004, and becoming a member of the EU on January 1, 2007.

## 12. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### Books, Maps, and Movies

If your local store or library doesn't stock the books or movies below, the Internet offers a wide variety of options for finding older or rare stock – try AbeBooks (abebooks.com), Alibris (alibris.com), Amazon (amazon.com) or Barnes & Noble (bn.com) — or any of the smaller websites. Of course, this selection is not meant to be comprehensive, and is offered as a starting point for your research.

***Insight Guides: Russia, Belarus, & Ukraine*** by Jane Hutchings (Guidebook)

Noted for their lavish photography, Insight guides are a real treat to browse before heading off to a foreign destination—and a good guidebook once you're there.

***A Traveler's History of Russia*** by Peter Nefille (History)

Nefille manages to condense Russia's highly eventful history into one volume that's both readable and lively.

***Reeling in Russia*** by Fen Montaigne (Travel Account)

In 1996, after finishing a stint as Moscow bureau chief for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Montaigne went on a three-month fly-fishing adventure across 7,000 miles of Russia. His exploits are less about fishing and more about the Russian people he met along the way.

***The Singing Revolution*** by Clare Thomson (Travel Account)

Traces the Baltic States' path towards their new independence through an account of travels there in 1989 and 1990. It also provides background on Soviet and other periods of outside rule.

***Chernobyl: Nuclear Disaster*** by Nichol Bryan (History)

Good description of the world's worst nuclear disaster.

***Russian Journal*** by John Steinbeck (Memoir)

A recount of the prominent American writer's journey through Moscow, Stalingrad, the Ukrainian countryside, and the Caucasus.

***Crime and Punishment*** and ***The Brothers Karamazov*** by Fyodor Mikhailovitch Dostoyevsky. (Fiction)

Two of the most compelling and influential psychological novels ever written.

### Optional extensions:

***Fodor's Scandinavia: Complete Guide to Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden*** (Guidebook) Provides thorough coverage of the major attractions of these countries and their capital cities—Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo, and Stockholm.

***Of Finnish Ways*** by Aini Rejanen (Fiction)

A sometimes amusing, sometimes heartbreaking tale of what makes a Finn a Finn, and of the people who have fought 42 wars with Russia and lost every one.

***A History of Scandinavia*** by T. K. Derry (History)  
Chronicles the history of each of the Scandinavian countries.

***The Baltic Revolution*** by Anatol Lieven (History) Lieven explores the culture and personality of the Baltic peoples, their religious and national differences and relations with Russia and the West. Written by a London Times correspondent who interweaves interviews, observations and history to reveal post-Glasnost Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This book was written shortly after the Baltic independence, so it may not be in stock at your local bookstore, but it should be available online.

***The Baltic, A New History of the Region and Its People*** by Alan Palmer (History) In this vivid chronicle of the region, Palmer sketches the history of the Baltic with narrative sweep and telling anecdote, covering developments, personalities and conflicts from the Viking era to the growth of the powerful Hanseatic League, 17th-century politicking, Russian takeover and modern independence.

***A Concise History of Romanians*** by Neagu Djuvara, Iulia Banica and Constantin Banica (History) This short volume is exactly what the title says it is.

***In Search of Dracula*** by Raymond T. McNally (History) Examines the fictional vampire who made Transylvania world-famous, and traces the history of the legend and its roots in the historical Transylvanian figures of Vlad Dracul and his son, Vlad the Impaler.

***Never Mind the Balkans, Here's Romania*** by Mike Ormsby (Short Stories) This collection of over 50 short stories by BBC journalist, author, and resident of Romania Mike Ormsby is at times sweet, funny, frankly honest, and quirky.

***Out of the Transylvania Night*** by Aura Imbarus (Memoir) An engaging memoir that addresses life in Romania under the dictator Ceausescu, his assassination and its aftermath, plus the immigrant experience in America.

### **Guidebooks:**

Your Program Director Leader will be happy to provide recommendations and suggestions during the trip, so a guidebook is not a necessity. But a good one can be invaluable as a one-stop reference, so for those travelers who have asked for suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Since different guidebook series each have their own target audience and structure, it is well worth your time to browse your local library or bookstore to find the one(s) you like best. To get you started, here is some general information on the most popular series:

***Culture Smart!*** – Focuses on local customs and etiquette instead of sights, dining, etc.

***DK Eyewitness*** – Innovative visuals make these books easy to use and a nice souvenir once the trip is over. The focus is primarily on the sights and activities.

***Fodor's*** – A classic guidebook with strong information on activities, shopping, and dining. Good mix of upscale recommendations and budget suggestions.

***Frommer's*** – A comprehensive guide series that is known for its restaurant recommendations.

***Insight*** – Offers more information on history and culture than usual, nice visuals, good maps.

***Lonely Planet*** – Practical guides geared towards a more adventurous traveler on a budget.

***National Geographic*** – From the same company that publishes the magazine. Excellent photographs, good information on history, nature, and culture.

***Rough Guides*** – For the independent traveler on a budget. Particularly known for their maps.

### **Maps:**

Most hotels will provide maps free of charge at the reception desk or in your room. These maps are usually sufficient for our travelers, but if you plan on any independent exploration, you may wish to consider purchasing a map before your departure. This can be especially useful in a country that doesn't use the Roman alphabet as the hotel maps may only be printed in the local language.

Some recommended map series include: Rand McNally international maps (especially the StreetWise series), Insight's FlexiMaps, and Rough Guide's destination maps. We suggest that you visit your local bookstore or library to get a better sense of which type of map is best for your needs before making a purchase.

### **Suggested Movies**

Here are few of our favorite movies that are about, or set in, or from the region you'll be traveling. Most are available at movie rental stores and websites—or even your public library. Sometimes films produced outside of the US may be hard to find, but they are usually available online. Lists are highly subjective – if your favorites are missing, start a chat with fellow travelers and you'll likely find even more treasured movies to share.

### **Russia**

***Pan Tadeusz: Last Foray into Lithuania*** (Period Drama, in Polish with subtitles): A family feud set against the backdrop of Russia's rule of Poland/Lithuania at the turn of the century.

***Russia: Land of the Tsars*** (History/Biography): Filmed on location in Russia by the A&E crew, this documentary captures the imperial history of the Tsars. Look for the special edition set that includes bonus episodes from the TV show A&E Biography on Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible, and Rasputin.

***The Shoe*** (Drama, in German with subtitles) This interesting, tense, and dramatic take on the Cinderella story was an official selection at the Cannes Film Festival. When the Soviet border patrol find a woman's shoe in the sands of the coast of Latvia, an investigation ensues—one that requires each woman in the nearby town to see if the shoe fits. The black and white photography and recreation of 1950s Latvia is especially striking.

***The Treasures of Hermitage*** (Art & Culture) The six-part documentary television series, presented as a two-disc boxed set and with a running time of almost three hours. Each of the 12 programs runs 30 minutes, covering the full scope of the collection. Part of the "Museums of the World" series.

### **Finland**

***The Winter War*** (*Pekka Parikka, 1989*) *Starring Taneli Mäkelä, Vesa Vierikko*

A chronicle of the resistance of a platoon of Ostrobothnian Finns, when Russia attacked Finland in November of '39. Parikka based it on a novel by Antti Tuuri, and co-wrote the script. The Finns fought hard against overwhelming odds, with meager supplies, and the movie faithfully presents their action in the forbidding snowy landscape.

***The Unknown Soldier*** (*Edvin Laine, 1955*) *Starring Kosti Klemelä, Heikki Savolainen*

An adaptation of Väinö Linna's novel this is a story about the Continuation War between Finland and the Soviet Union, told from the view of ordinary Finnish soldiers. Gritty and realistic, the film has no single star—it begins and ends with an ironic play on the narrator's omniscience, and its focus is on the soldier's varied responses to their experiences. One of Finland's most popular films, there is a 1985 version that is updated technically, but holds fast to the revered text.

***Steam of Life*** (Joonas Berghäll/Mika Hotakainen, 2010; Documentary) Starring Timo Aalto, Pekka Ahonen

This film travels around Finland finding men in different saunas willing to share their stories about love, death, birth, and friendship — about life. The steam reveals the men's souls in an intimate and poetic journey to the film's emotional end.

***The Man Without a Past*** (Aki Kaurismäki, 2002) Starring Markku Peltola, Kati Outinen

The second part of Aki Kaurismäki's "Finland" trilogy, the film follows a man who awakens after a brutal mugging with no memory. A poor family nurses him to health and a Salvation Army worker gets him a job. He builds a new self, despite a society that is unable to deal with his lack of established identity and history. The film quietly evolves into funny portrait of the possibilities of life.

***Pelikaanimies*** (Liisa Helminen, 2004) Starring Kari Ketonen, Roni Haarakangas

A pelican becomes a gawky young man who learns to speak, thanks to his talent for imitation. He befriends two children who--unlike adults--see that their new neighbor 'Mr Berd' is not a man but a bird in a suit. The Pelican Man lands a job at the opera and falls in love. When adults discover the truth, trouble starts in this unusual and charming film.



## Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites

If you have access to the Internet, the following sites offer a wealth of information:

**Visit the Grand Circle Community** website for a world of travel news and information:

[www.gct.com/community](http://www.gct.com/community)

### **Government websites:**

**International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

**U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information**

[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel)

**Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency responsible for screening luggage in U.S.**

[www.tsa.gov/public](http://www.tsa.gov/public)

**National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### **General travel information websites:**

#### **Travel books**

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

#### **World weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

**Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages**

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

**Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

**Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe**

[www.cybercafes.com](http://www.cybercafes.com)

**Electric current and plug types**

[www.kropla.com/electric2.htm](http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm)

**Foreign exchange rates**

[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

#### **ATM locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm) for **Cirrus ATMs**

[www.visa.com/pd/atm](http://www.visa.com/pd/atm) for **PLUS ATMs**

### **Country information:**

[www.moscowcity.com/](http://www.moscowcity.com/) **Moscow**

[www.geographia.com/russia/peter01.htm](http://www.geographia.com/russia/peter01.htm) / **St. Petersburg**

<http://www.romaniatourism.com/> **Romania**

[www.russia-travel.com/](http://www.russia-travel.com/) **Russia Tourist Information**

[www.goscandinavia.com](http://www.goscandinavia.com) **Scandinavia Tourist Boards**

[www.visitestonia.com](http://www.visitestonia.com) **Estonia**

[www.tourism.tallinn.ee/](http://www.tourism.tallinn.ee/) **Tallinn**

[www.visiteurope.com/](http://www.visiteurope.com/) **Links to countries**

[www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html](http://www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html)