
Russia Revealed

RIVER CRUISE

Plus optional extensions in

**Kiev, Ukraine; Helsinki, Finland & Tallinn, Estonia;
Stockholm, Sweden**

OZZ/OZO/OZR/OZT/OSZ 2013

Grand Circle Cruise Line Russia Revealed

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

We've gathered some introductory information that may prove helpful for this Grand Circle Cruise Line itinerary. For detailed and timely information, it's wise to visit appropriate websites and confirm luggage regulations, weather conditions and other variable elements of your trip. If you expect to embark on personal exploration, or wish to discover more about the countries you visit, we suggest that you consult your choice of the many in-depth travel guidebooks devoted to your destinations. Refer to our additional resources section (at the end of the handbook) for other sources of insight.

ABOUT GRAND CIRCLE TRAVEL

Grand Circle Travel, founded in 1958 to serve the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), is the leader in international travel, adventure and discovery for Americans aged 50 and over. Grand Circle vacations have been recommended by *The New York Times*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Travel+Leisure*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel*, among other publications. But our most impressive reviews come from the more than one million people who have traveled with us and from readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* who placed Grand Circle Cruise Lines, the cruise branch of Grand Circle, in the Top 10 of the World's Best Cruise Lines for eight years — in 2012 ranking Grand Circle Cruise Lines the #1 World's Best River Cruise Line. Grand Circle has earned a spot on the prestigious *Condé Nast Traveler* Gold List for seven consecutive years as well. For 2011 *Condé Nast Traveler* named seven Grand Circle Cruise Line river ships among the 20 best river ships in the world; for 2012 the Grand Circle Cruise Lines was named to their Platinum Circle of top cruise lines.

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.

1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



Passport Required

You need a passport for this itinerary.

Note

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:** 1 blank “Visa” page.
- **Optional pre-trip extension to Kiev, Ukraine:** 1 additional page.
- **Optional post-trip extension to Tallinn, Estonia & Helsinki, Finland:** 2 additional pages.
- **Optional extension to Stockholm, Sweden:** 2 additional pages.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** A total of 4 pages.

Please take 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** for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You can renew your passport by mail if it is not damaged, you obtained it within the last fifteen years, and it’s in the name you want on your new passport. Many local post offices carry forms for renewing by mail or obtaining extra pages. Allow several weeks for processing your passport. 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.*



**Visa Required—Russia (base trip)
Visa Not Required—Ukraine, Estonia, Finland, and
Sweden (optional extensions)**

For U.S. citizens, visas are required for entry into Russia. Ukraine (an optional extension) does not require a visa for entry. 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.
- **UKRAINE, ESTONIA, FINLAND, and SWEDEN—Visa NOT required** for U.S. citizens for a maximum stay of 90 days.

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.

Layover in Moscow on pre-trip: If you are taking the pre-trip extension to Kiev and your flight has a layover in Moscow, it is extremely important that you remain in the passenger transit area of the airport and do not go through immigration and enter Russia. If you go through immigration and enter Russia it will void your Russia visa and you will be unable to re-enter at the start of your river cruise.

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

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

You can encounter unaccustomed challenges on even the shortest journey — river cruises, for instance, mean adapting to life aboard ship, with the potential for rocky moments, awkward docking sites and wet, slippery terrain. At some docks you may have to step from ship to ship before reaching shore. In addition, terrain onshore can be uneven, rocky, cobble stoned or precarious; both included and optional tours can require extended walking (the Kremlin, the Hermitage and Catherine’s Palace can take one and a half to four hours of walking) to guarantee a truly rewarding experience. Some of the places you’ll visit have not been improved with elevators, escalators, ramps, railings or other aids. While some ships have elevators, they do not necessarily go to all decks—and you may have to use stairs to reach some events. If you have difficulty walking in terms of balance or stamina, or are generally inactive in your daily life consider an exercise program to tone up for your cruise. If in doubt, consult your physician describing the length and type of rigors you’ll encounter. If you have difficulty walking, please consider a different Grand Circle vacation. *Please note that this trip is **not** wheelchair, walker, or rollator accessible; nor can Grand Circle Cruise Line accommodate motorized scooters of any kind.*



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.

Basic Illness Prevention

It’s common for people traveling in contained spaces to be more susceptible to easily transmitted viral and bacterial illnesses such as flu, stomach and respiratory bugs, and colds. The single most effective way to prevent this is frequent hand washing. We ask all travelers to be extra diligent in their normal hand-washing hygiene, and to drink plenty of fluids for proper hydration. Simple steps like these will help ensure that everyone enjoys the comfortable, carefree vacation they looked forward to.

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, 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.

Jet Lag Relief

You will feel better on the first days of your trip if, shortly before you leave home, you start to adjust to the different time zone of your destination. Since you will cross several time zones to reach your destination, you may lose many hours of regular sleep. On arrival, your body then will have to suddenly adjust to new sleeping and eating patterns. The result is jet lag. Its symptoms are fatigue—often compounded by insomnia and general restlessness—irritability, and vague disorientation. You cannot totally avoid jet lag but you can minimize it. Here's how:

- Start your trip well rested. Try to begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave.
- Switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane. Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Try to sleep on overnight flights.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying.
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane, and make an effort to get up and walk about the cabin a few times to keep your blood circulation normal.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.



3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS

Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

It may seem early to discuss luggage and packing, but if you know current industry standards for international flights you can start to plan what type of luggage you'll use, how much clothing to bring, etc. The following information can help you in your trip preparations. We'll remind you to confirm your U.S./international luggage limits (and update regional limits, if applicable) in your final documents (arriving about two weeks before your departure).

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags .
Size restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (<i>length+width+depth</i>). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches .
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>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: 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>Note: 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.

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.

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.

For flights that originate in the U.S:

To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, do not lock your bags when checking in for flights originating in the U.S. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is responsible for screening all checked luggage at commercial airports throughout the U.S. TSA baggage-handling agents may need access to your luggage and will break locks if required. TSA "accepted and recognized" locks are widely available: screeners can open and re-lock bags using these locks if a physical inspection is required.

For flights originating outside the U.S.:

On all flights outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend you lock your luggage. This is not a legal requirement but merely a precaution against theft. Have the keys handy, as you may need to open your luggage for a security screening or for customs in the U.S. or Europe.

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.

Arrival: 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.

Important note: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the Customs hall area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and then will move through Customs (carts are sometimes available for a small fee). When you exit the airport building, your motorcoach driver will load your luggage onto your motorcoach.

U.S. Return: At the end of your cruise or post-cruise extension, you'll be transferred to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. 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.

Important Note: Please remember to wear your Grand Circle Cruise Line nametag when you exit Customs, upon arrival and when you return to the U.S., so that you are readily identifiable as a GCCL traveler.

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.

If your luggage has not arrived

If you haven't found your luggage on the luggage carousel, please fill out a lost luggage claim at the lost luggage office at the airport. Your Program Director will make a copy of the claim to track the search and delivery of the missing luggage to the ship.

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.

In General

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. Note that the Discover credit card is 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

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.

Money Basics By Destination

Onboard Ship

Two separate bills will be issued:

- 1) **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.

Payment Options:

Cash: Rubles are accepted

Credit card: American Express, MasterCard, or Visa are accepted

NOT accepted: *Debit cards, Discover card, and personal checks.*

- 2) **Optional tour account:** This bill is for optional tours taken on the trip; it is calculated in U.S. dollars.

Payment Options:

Credit card: American Express, MasterCard, or Visa cards are accepted

Debit card: 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.

NOT accepted: *Personal checks, cash, Discover card or PIN-only debit cards.*

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.

Kiev

Currency: The unit of currency in Ukraine is the *hryvnia* (UHR). One *hryvnia* is worth 100 kopecks. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 *hryvnias*
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 25, and 50. In addition, there are 1, 2, and 5 *hryvnia* coins

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 6 pm, Monday through Friday. For cashing checks or credit card advances: 10 am to 5 pm. (A commission or service charge of 5 percent is common.) Exchange offices are frequently open on Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm.

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

Stockholm

The official monetary unit in Sweden is the krona (written Kr. on price tags; the plural is kronor). Sweden did not adopt the euro. The krona is divided into 100 ore. (Although the legal tender of Denmark and Norway is also the krona, kronor can only be used in their country of origin—they are not interchangeable.) Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- banknotes: 20, 50, 100, 500, and 1,000
- coins: 50 ore; 1, 5 and 10 kronor

Banking Hours: Normal bank hours are Monday through Friday, 9:30 am – 6 pm.



Shopping

It is Grand Circle Cruise Line's goal to identify and provide you with shopping opportunities that highlight unique, locally produced products with good value from reliable vendors. For this reason there may be scheduled visits to local shops during your trip. There is **no** requirement to make a purchase during these stops, 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

Best buys: 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.

Kiev

Best buys: Most shops and businesses accept major credit cards, but please be prepared to pay cash. There is a nice flea market conveniently located next to the Petrovka metro station on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Look for old coins, medals, and mementoes. The Saksaganskoho Antique Shop on Saksaganskoho offers a variety of icons, samovars, and other collectibles. The Globus Mall, under Independence Square, is a western-style mall with a variety of shops. The Besarabska Market on Besarabska Ploscha 2 is a farmer's market that offers all sorts of fruits and vegetables.

Helsinki

Best buys: 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

Best buys: 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.

Stockholm

Swedish artisans create wonderful handmade glass and crystal (including Orrefors), which will make collectors proud. Swedish designer jewelry is also popular. Other traditional arts and crafts of the region include hand painted wooden Dalecarlian (Dala) horses, Viking and troll figures. If you have a sweet tooth, try Marabou chocolate, or try Glogg – a Scandinavian alcoholic drink served hot.

U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

Exemption Amounts

Articles totaling \$800, at fair retail value where they were acquired, may be imported free of charge if you bring them with you. A flat rate of duty—usually a percentage—will be applied to the next \$1,000 worth (fair retail value) of merchandise. The U.S. Customs Inspector determines the value of your items when you enter, and is not bound by your bill of sale. In almost every case, however, a genuine bill of sale will be honored.

Fees on Items Shipped Home

Items shipped home are *always* subject to duty when received in the U.S. There will also be charges for shipping. Although some shops abroad may offer to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the customs facility closest to you and payment of the *export* duties (the fee to remove an item from its country of origin) not door-to-door shipping or *import* duties (the fee the U.S. government charges to bring an item into the U.S.). All additional duties or shipping charges would be the responsibility of the purchaser—you.

Therefore unless the item is small enough to mail or to be sent by a global parcel service (like FedEx) you should be prepared to pay customs duties and for shipping or pick-up from the nearest customs facility. This is why the U.S. Customs & Border Protection service states: “The most cost-effective thing to do is to take your purchases with you if at all possible.”

Illegal Items

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. For more information on what you may or may not bring back into the United States, you can obtain the publication “Know Before You Go” from the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection by phone, mail or from their website:

U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229
Tel. **1-877-227-5511**
www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

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. The good news is twofold: we're fresh out of Shakespearean soliloquies, so no thesauri will get hurt here; and the answer to the question "**to tip or not to tip** (and how much to tip if you so choose)" is *always* a personal decision. Tipping is a common practice both at home and abroad and we offer these guidelines to answer requests for appropriate tipping amounts. It can be useful to have this information on site – when the question *must* be answered – and ahead of time for travel budgeting purposes. Tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars (personal/traveler's checks should *never* be used 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, especially if he/she has provided you with individual assistance. We recommend \$4-\$6 per person, per day. Please note that tips for our Program Directors can only be in the form of cash. Tips in local currency are appreciated and you need only tip the Program Director assigned to your group.
- **Tours & Excursions:** During your vacation, you have the opportunity to participate in included and optional tours. (See optional tour payments section above for details and restrictions). A tip to your motorcoach driver (and local tour guide, if one accompanies the tour) is customary: \$2 per person for each half-day tour, \$3 per person for each full-day tour.
- **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.)
- **Kiev, Ukraine—Optional Extension:** Although service charges are not required, a tip of 5-10% is usually expected in restaurants. Check your bill to see whether a service charge is already included. Tipping is not required wherever food is ordered at the counter. Taxi drivers are not ordinarily tipped, though it is always appreciated in return for good service.
- **Tallinn, Estonia, Helsinki, Finland; and Stockholm, Sweden—Optional Extensions:** If a service charge is included in your bill, there is no need to leave an additional tip; otherwise, we suggest you leave bartenders and waiters about 5-10% of the check. In taxis, a good rule of thumb is to round up your fare.

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.

Style hints: In religious buildings such as Russian Orthodox churches, it is customary to wear pants or skirts below the knee rather than shorts. It is also customary to cover one's shoulders and in some places, to cover one's head. 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.

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.

Inner bags: Packing is easier if you use inner bags to help organize your gear. Use plastic bags, nylon stuff sacks, or packing cubes to organize inside your suitcase. Isolate liquids, store camera gear and important papers in heavy-duty Ziploc style bags.

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.



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.

NOTE: Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage change frequently. To avoid inadvertently packing any restricted items in your carry-on luggage, we strongly suggest that you consult the Transportation Security Administration website, at www.tsa.gov, 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*.



Clothing Options

We've included information below on the weather you can expect for the regions you'll be visiting on your travels. Taking into account the climate you'll encounter and the general suggestions we offer above will enable you to create a flexible wardrobe that's light enough for sophisticated travel and will guarantee comfort in all the conditions you can expect to encounter. 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.

Do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. Also avoid packing glass bottles; use plastic containers instead. Leave at home checkbooks and any credit cards not essential for your trip,

valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose. For more packing and luggage tips, you might want to visit www.travelite.org.

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.

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

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
- Swimsuit, if your ship or hotel has a pool or a whirlpool
- 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 for a current 10-day forecast of temperatures and conditions at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites (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.

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), Helsinki, & Tallinn (optional extension): The weather in St. Petersburg is similar to that of its neighbors, Helsinki and Tallinn. 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 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. However, you should also be prepared for variable weather and temperature drops. During midsummer, the sun is about halfway between the zenith and the horizon at noontime, and it shines continuously across southern Finland 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. The climate and weather along coastlines in particular is very much influenced by sea condition fluctuations and is changeable throughout the year, sun changing to misty skies even within an hour. 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.

Kiev (optional extension): Most of the Ukraine, including Kiev, enjoys a temperate continental climate. The typical weather during the months of your travel is warm and sunny. Only the southern coast of the Black Sea, quite a bit farther south than your route, is considered Mediterranean climate. The Kiev region has four clearly recognized seasons. As the hottest month is July, temperatures will be quite comfortable during your August or September sojourn, and the local flora will be showing their first changes of autumn.

Stockholm, Sweden (optional extension): Despite its northern location, Stockholm has relatively mild weather compared to other locations at similar latitude. Summers have average daytime highs of 68–72 °F and lows of around 55 °F, but temperatures can reach the mid-eighties. Winters are sometimes snowy with average temperatures ranging from 23 to 34 °F, and sometimes drop below 5 °F. Spring and autumn are generally cool to mild. Yearly precipitation averages 21.2 inches with around 170 wet days and light to moderate rainfall throughout the year. Snowfall occurs mainly from December through March with some snow-rich winters, while others are milder with more rain than snow.

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

WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?						
<i>Average highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.</i>						
	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT
Moscow						
High	63	69	71	68	57	45
Low	44	51	55	52	43	33
St. Petersburg						
High	60	66	70	66	56	45
Low	44	52	56	54	45	37
Kiev, Ukraine (optional extension)						
High	68	73	75	74	66	53
Low	47	54	56	54	47	37
Helsinki, Finland (optional extension)						
High	59	66	70	66	56	46
Low	41	49	53	51	43	36
Tallinn, Estonia (optional extension)						
High	59	66	70	68	58	48
Low	41	50	54	53	45	38
Stockholm, Sweden (optional extension)						
High	60	67	70	68	58	48
Low	41	49	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 rest of the world overwhelmingly uses 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 choose *dual* voltage appliances (widely available) that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances need only plug adapters.

If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or a shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) as well as plug adapters. Regional transformer/adaptor kits can be found at hardware or online stores. However, transformers can be unreliable and a broken one will leave you lugging a useless 110V appliance. Battery-operated alternatives are an option, but will need a supply of batteries.

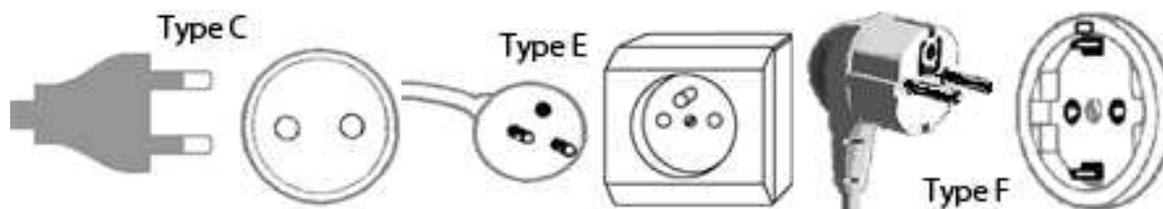
Electricity in the Baltics, Russia, Ukraine, and Sweden is generally 220 volts, 50 Hz. (The exception is Estonia where 230 volt electricity is common). *Type F* plugs are the most common, and are generally

in new construction. In older buildings and in the Ukraine 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.



If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, MP3 player, etc. – it’s handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressors and USB port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without carrying 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 your phone via any 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 added cost. If your phone doesn’t support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

App quality, availability and costs vary – as do platforms (iPhone, Android, Blackberry ...), so again you’ll need to do some legwork. Apps come in all forms: packing lists, currency converters, language translators, maps, journals, Wi-Fi hotspot finders ... one problem is going to be searching through the vast array of available apps to uncover what works best and what you’re likely to use most. Smartphones have a lot to offer, but their small size can be a drawback for some uses (maps, extended reading, etc.)

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, 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 and 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 countries you might be charged for photography at specific sites, or banned from taking any photographs 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 wise 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 and are often weak in dim light. 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 (18-200mm) 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* and the M/S *Tikhi Don*

The *Rossia* and the *Tikhi Don* are nautically equipped for sailing Russian rivers, while also catering to our travelers' needs, yet are somewhat limited due to their general structure. Because they are 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.

Both the *Rossia* and the *Tikhi Don* can accommodate 216 passengers. Both ships also feature 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* and the *Tikhi Don* do not speak fluent English and may, at times, have difficulty communicating.

Included features of all Grand Circle Cruise Line Russian river ship cabins:

- 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: *These ships are not equipped with wheelchair access. The ships have one elevator; however, it only provides access from the main deck to the boat deck. It does not go to the sun deck.*

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.

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.



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.



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.

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.



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.

Onboard Facilities



Internet Access

Limited Wi-Fi service is available for free in the lounge, library, reception and bar areas on board the *Tikhi Don* and *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.



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.



Lounge/Bar

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.



Hair Salon

There is a hair salon/hairdresser available. The appointments are to be made through the ship reception desk.



Laundry Service

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available.



Linen Service

Bed linens are changed twice a week; towels are changed daily.



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.

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.)



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.

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.

Ship Specifications & Crew *m/s Rossia*

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

Ship Specifications & Crew *m/s Tikhi Don*

Registry:	Russia
Entered Service:	Refurbished in 2004/5 in Romania
Length:	125 m
Passenger capacity:	216 maximum
Crew/Nationality:	Russian
Decks:	5 including lower deck
Elevator:	Yes, up to the boat deck

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.



Newspapers & Magazines

Moscow's *Moscow Times* is an informative English-language daily. There are several other newspapers published in English, including the *Moscow News*, *Pravda—English Version*, *Prima News—English Version*, *Russia Journal*, and *Russia Today*.

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 Vasilievsky 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 Vasilievsky 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?	SkOl-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



Newspapers & Magazines

The city of St. Petersburg publishes many newspapers in English, *The St. Petersburg Times*, *Where* magazine and the *Neva News* being the most popular.

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

Kiev in Brief—Optional Extension



City Layout and Details

Established in the 5th century, Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, remains one of the great gateways to Ukraine and Russia. Kiev's Old Town in the northeastern section of the city contains many of the city's great and historic landmarks, including the 11th-century St. Sophia Cathedral. Considered one of the most remarkable structures from the Kievan Rus period, the church is a UNESCO designated landmark with ancient icons and frescoes, as well as old columns that retain the scribbling of people who visited the church centuries ago.

Kiev's main commercial street is the Vulitsya Khreshchatyk, a busy thoroughfare lined with shops and houses. The famous Bessarabsky Market is at the southern end of the street and is a great place to stop and shop for fruits and vegetables. The Andriyivsky Uzviz runs from Old Town to the Podil district, where galleries, shops, restaurants, and cafés abound. The Kontraktova Ploshcha is a huge public square in the heart of the Podil with old buildings and still more restaurants and shops. The Chernobyl Museum is nearby with its exhibits depicting the worst nuclear disaster in history.

Kiev is a river town, and the Pechersk district, south of Old Town, is a good place to see some of the ancient and historic buildings that once dominated this city and its riverfront. Kiev also supports a rich mixture of green and beautiful public parks and gardens, as well as some forestland right in the city. The open space of the city is great for walking, though it's best to enjoy these spaces during the daylight hours. The Central Botanical Garden is famous for its lilacs and for its setting in a neighborhood of beautiful old domed churches. The Hidropark is a summer spot with fine beaches and a variety of cafés, restaurants, and bars. Shevchenko Park is an island of green in the middle of the bustling downtown opposite the National University and the Russian Art Museum. Several traditional Ukrainian restaurants are nearby.



Drinking Water

We recommend you drink only bottled water, which is readily available throughout Kiev. Food is inexpensive and plentiful. Kiev's restaurants offer a variety of cuisine from ethnic dishes to international ones.



Local Transportation

Kiev has an extensive public transportation system with trams, trolleys, and buses, as well as a Metro. Tickets are valid for bus, trolley, or tram and can be bought for 1.5 hryvnias from the driver. Tokens for the Metro cost 2 hryvnias for one trip with the right to transfer free from line to line.

line. Minibuses called *marshrutkas* also roam around the city duplicating the routes of buses, trolleys, and trams. They are faster than public transportation, but more expensive. Taxis are commonplace but also more expensive than public transportation, however drivers expect to negotiate price.



Newspapers & Magazines

There are over a dozen newspapers available in Kiev. *Segodva* is the daily Russian Ukrainian newspaper and covers regional and national news. The *Kyiv Post* is an interesting weekly that publishes in English and offers an excellent online as well as hardcopy edition.

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 and natural waterways, but of course you should never drink from a mountain stream, fjord, 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.



Newspapers & Magazines

Helsingin Sanomat (International Edition) is the English language edition of Finland’s major daily newspaper, offering coverage of national and world news. You can also usually find *USA Today* at newsstands and many hotels.

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.



Newspapers & Magazines

Tallinn This Week is published in English with entertainment listings and other useful local information. You can always find it at the local tourism office. *The Baltic Times* offers English-language coverage of regional news in the Baltic States. Imported English-language newspapers and magazines are harder to find. They show up in spurts at local newsstands, sometimes every few days, sometimes only every few weeks. They include *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *USA Today*, and *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines.

Stockholm in Brief—Optional Extension



City Layout

Stockholm is built on 14 islands in Lake Malaren, which marks the beginning of an archipelago of 24,000 islands, skerries, and islets stretching all the way to the Baltic Sea. Stockholm's major streets—Kungsgatan (the main shopping street), Birger Jarlsgatan, and Strandvagen (which leads to Djurgarden)—are on Norrmalm (north of the Old Town). Stureplan, which lies at the junction of the major avenues Kungsgatan and Birger Jarlsgatan, is the commercial hub of the city.

East of Stureplan rises Hotorget City, a landmark of modern urban planning, which includes five 18-story skyscrapers. Its main, traffic-free artery is Drottninggatan, a three-block shopper's promenade that eventually leads to Sergels Torg, with a modern sculpture in its center.

South of Sergels Torg, at Gustav Adolfs Torg, sits the Royal Opera House. A block east of the flaming torches of the opera house is the verdant north-to-south stretch of Kungstradgarden—part avenue, part public park—which serves as a popular gathering place for students and a resting stop for shoppers. From here it is a short walk to the Royal Dramatic Theater and the Royal Opera House, as well as two other city landmarks: the Grand Hotel and the National Museum.

Kungsholmen (King's Island) lies across a narrow canal from the rest of the city, and is the site of the elegant Stadshuset (City Hall). South of Gamla Stan (Old Town), and separated from it by a narrow but much-navigated stretch of water, is Sodermalm, the southern district of Stockholm. Quieter than its northern counterpart, it's an important residential area with a distinctive flavor of its own. To the east of Gamla Stan, on a large and forested island completely surrounded by the complicated waterways of Stockholm, is Djurgarden, part of Sweden's first city national park. This summer pleasure ground of Stockholm is also the site of many of its most popular attractions, including the *Vasa* Ship museum.



Dining, Evening Entertainment

The city's favorite spot for both indoor and outdoor evening events is Djurgården. Don't miss the nightclubs and jazz venues, some of which stay open until 3 or 4 in the morning, and which keep the city hopping.

All the major opera, theater, and concert seasons begin in the fall, except for special summer festival performances. Most of the major opera and theatrical performances are funded by the state, so ticket prices are reasonable.

Stockholm's restaurant scene began revitalizing some 15 years ago and continues to innovate. What was once a dour landscape of overpriced, uninspiring eateries is now a hotbed of culinary creativity: Stockholm's best chefs have stayed way ahead of the game. Increasingly, their talents are rubbing off on mid-price restaurants – and many of those mid-range restaurants now represent the best dining value in town. Recent trends have seen some of the city's better restaurants pick up on this and offer more set-priced tasting menus and increasing numbers of wine by the glass—making otherwise expensive restaurants relatively affordable. In terms of food, *New Swedish* is still tops, and chefs look to fine, seasonal, traditional ingredients, prepared with a modern twist. Many less-expensive restaurants offer traditional Swedish cooking. Among Swedish dishes, the best bets are wild game and fish, particularly salmon, and the smorgasbord buffet, which usually offers a good variety at a decent price. Reservations are generally necessary.



Local Transportation

All *tunnelbana* (*T* or *T-bana*), metro, and local trains, and buses in the city are run by Storstockholms Lokaltrafik (*SL*; www.sl.se). A Stockholm Card (available for varied time periods) covers travel on all SL trains and buses. SL Tourist Cards are primarily for transport, but also give free entry to some attractions. Or, purchase individual coupons: the minimum fare is two coupons, and each additional zone costs another coupon (up to five coupons for four or five zones).

Tunnelbanna (T-Bana) Metro

The *tunnelbana* is the most efficient way around Stockholm. Lines converge on *T-Centralen*, and are connected by an underground walkway to Centralstationen. There are three main lines, numerous branches and more than 100 stations, making the major sites easy to get to. The blue line features a collection of modern art decorating the underground stations. Stations at other lines are also decorated.

Bus

The bus system contains a number of lines that make stops throughout the city, often servicing areas like the Djurgården neighborhood, which is out of the *T-bana's* reach. Some night buses run from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. and are a good alternative to taxis. Bus timetables and route maps are complicated but the system offers useful connections to suburban attractions.

Taxi

Readily available, but *very* expensive: the meter starts at around \$45 and moves up rapidly. Drivers are required to publish prices, and prices are *not* regulated. Make sure you know the fare before you get into the taxi.

Bicycle

In good weather cycling around the city is a great option. Getting through central Stockholm' can take around 30 minutes on a bike—and may be faster than the metro. Cycle paths are plentiful and quite safe.



Drinking Water

Tap water throughout Sweden is safe to drink. Mineral water is fairly expensive, but available if you prefer to drink that.

Websites, Newspapers, & Magazines

English language newspapers are rapidly losing favor to by news-related websites. *What's On*, which is widely available, lists upcoming entertainment and cultural events. Most local papers are in Swedish, and imported English-language newspapers and magazines can hard to find. They show up in spurts at local newsstands, sometimes every few days, sometimes only every few weeks.

11. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY

Russia

Area: 6,591,027 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 (2007 estimate): 141,377,725

Religion: Russian Orthodox 85%, Muslim 13%, other 0.7%

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
02/25 Defender of the Fatherland Day observed
03/08 International Women's Day
05/01 Labor Day
05/09 Victory Day
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.

Ukraine (Optional Kiev Extension)

Area: 233,028 square miles

Capital: Kiev

Languages: Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, Polish, and Hungarian

Location: Occupying an area slightly smaller than Texas in Eastern Europe, Ukraine is bordered on the south by the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea (where the Crimean Peninsula is part of Ukraine), Moldova, and Romania. The Carpathian Mountains extend from Romania into western Ukraine, which is also bordered by Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland. Belarus lies to the north, and Ukraine's longest international border is with Russia on the east.

Population (2007 estimate): 46,299,862

Religions: Ukrainian Orthodox—Moscow Patriarchate, Ukrainian Orthodox—Kiev Patriarchate, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox, Ukrainian Catholic (Uniate), Protestant, Jewish

Time zone: All of Ukraine is seven hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America (10 hours ahead of Pacific Time): when it is 12 noon in New York (9 am in Los Angeles), it is 7 pm in Kiev. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the first Sunday of April until the last Sunday of October.

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

01/01 New Year's Day
01/07 Orthodox Christmas Day
03/08 International Women's Day
05/01 Labor Day
05/02 Labor Day
05/05 Orthodox Easter
05/09 Victory Day
06/23 Orthodox Pentecost
06/28 Constitution Day
08/24 Ukrainian Independence Day

Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe, behind Russia, which for centuries dominated Ukrainian history. Many in the Western world thought of Ukraine as part of Russia, though Ukrainian culture stretches back centuries.

Ukraine was the center of the first Slavic state, a powerful nation called Kievan Rus, which dominated Europe in the 10th and 11th centuries. The cultural and religious legacy of Kievan Rus eventually led to the founding of the Ukrainian nation state, the Cossack Hetmanate in the 17th century. The Hetmanate remained independent for over 100 years before succumbing to the continuous pressure of their bigger neighbor, Russia.

The Russian Revolution and the collapse of the tsar's rule in 1917 led to a brief fling with independence for Ukraine. The Bolsheviks in the newly formed Soviet state of Russia began a brutal civil war in Ukraine that culminated in the armies of Russia, Poland, and various Ukrainian factions fighting for dominance, with the Soviets taking most of Ukraine and forcing the country to become a part of the Soviet Union. The brutal Soviet rule of the next decades culminated in artificial famines orchestrated by Soviet leaders that in 1921-22, and again in 1932-33, decimated the population of Ukraine, with over 8 million thought to have died. This was followed by the horrific fighting of German and Soviet armies in the Ukraine during World War II in which another 8 million Ukrainians died.

The 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine and the slow Soviet response left many in Ukraine embittered with their subservience to the Soviet state. A small nationalist movement founded in Kiev in 1990 eventually grew in power and scope and helped contribute to the next step—independence. With the breakup of the USSR in 1991, Ukraine became an independent country for the first time since the 18th century.

Finland (Optional Helsinki & Tallinn Extension)

Area: 130,558 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 (2007 estimate): 5,238,460

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
03/29 Good Friday
03/31 Easter Day
04/01 Easter Monday
05/01 Labor Day
05/09 Ascension Day
05/19 Whit Sunday
06/22 Midsummer
11/02 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: 17,457 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 (2007 estimate): 1,315,912

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 Estonia
03/29 Good Friday
03/31 Easter
05/01 May Holiday
05/19 Whitsun
06/23 Victory Day Estonia
06/24 St. John's Day
08/20 Restoration Estonia
12/24 Christmas Eve
12/25 Christmas
12/26 St. Stephen's Day
12/31 New Year's Eve

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.

Sweden (Optional Extension)

Area: 173,800 square miles

Capital: Stockholm.

Government: Constitutional monarchy

Geography: The countryside of Sweden slopes eastward and southward from the Kjolen Mountains along the Norwegian border, where the peak elevation is Kebnekaise at 6,965 feet in Lapland. In the north are mountains and many lakes. To the south and east are central lowlands and south of them are fertile areas of forest, valley, and plain. Along Sweden's rocky coast, chopped up by bays and inlets, are many islands, the largest of which are Gotland and Oland.

Languages: Swedish

Location: Sweden is situated on the Scandinavian Peninsula, between Norway and Finland. The north of Sweden falls within the Arctic Circle.

Population (2011 estimate): 9,088,728

Religion: Lutheran 87%, other (includes Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and none) 13%

Time zones: Sweden is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time.

01/01	New Year
01/06	Epiphany
02/14	Valentine
03/28	Maundy Thursday
03/29	Good Friday
03/31	Easter
04/01	Easter Monday
05/01	Labour Day
05/09	Ascension
05/19	Pentecost
05/26	Mother's Day
06/06	National Holiday Sweden
06/21	Midsummer Eve
06/22	Midsummer Day
11/01	All Saints
11/10	Father's Day
12/24	Christmas Eve
12/25	Christmas
12/26	St. Stephen's Day
12/31	New Year's Eve

SWEDEN, COMPRISED OF 173,800 SQUARE MILES OF LUSH FORESTS AND MORE THAN 100,000 LAKES, is a land where the urbane and the untamed are said to live harmoniously. It stretches about 990 miles from north to south, with a disproportionate amount of territory lying above the Arctic Circle. From top to bottom, Sweden lies at roughly the same latitude as Alaska. Forests cover more than half the land. The nation can be divided into three main regions: the mountainous northern zone of *Norrland*; *Svealand*, the lake-filled, hilly region of central Sweden; and *Gotaland*, the broad plateau in southern Sweden, home of most of the country's agricultural enterprises.

Sweden's expansive seacoast is more than 1,550 miles long. The west is bounded by the Kattegat and the Skagerrak, and the east by the Gulf of Bothnia and the Baltic Sea. Numerous small islands and reefs dot

the eastern and southwestern coasts. If all the inlets and islands were included, the coastline of Sweden would measure 4,650 miles. Oland and Gotland, Sweden's largest, most populated islands, are situated in the Baltic Sea off the eastern coast. There's ample space for all of Sweden's residents—it has a density of only 48 people per square mile. About 85% of Sweden's citizens live in the southern half of the country. The north is populated by Sweden's two chief minority groups: the Sami (Lapp), and the Finnish-speaking people of the northeast. Presiding over the Swedes is a constitutional monarchy supported by a parliamentary government. The royal family functions primarily in a ceremonial capacity. The actual ruling body is a one-chamber parliament, whose members are popularly elected for four-year terms.

Although the capital city of Stockholm was founded more than seven centuries ago, it did not become the official capital of Sweden until the mid-17th century. Today it's the capital of a modern welfare state. The medieval walls of the Old Town (*Gamla Stan*) no longer remain, but the winding streets have been preserved. You will encounter a glorious city of bridges and islands, towers and steeples, cobblestone squares and broad boulevards, Renaissance splendor and steel-and-glass skyscrapers.

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.

Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation By Andrew Wilson (History)
One of the most informed and up-to-date accounts of Ukraine and its people. The book focuses on the complex relations between Russia and Ukraine that stretch back centuries.

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.

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.

Ukraine

The Charge of the Light Brigade (1936 with Errol Flynn) (or 1968 with Trevor Howard)

For entertainment, the Flynn film is hard to beat: spectacular Hollywood action filmmaking. From the Indian frontier to a romantic triangle to the atrocity at Chukoti and the foolhardy charge at Balaklava, the camerawork and sweep are astonishing. For history (and political correctness) the Richardson movie is a better bet.

Earth (Alexander Dovzheko, 1930, black and white, silent) The third in a triptych of films by Ukrainian director Alexander Dovzheko. The plot revolves around passages from old to new, from traditional to modern, from poverty to prosperity, but the real story lies in the images Dovzhenko reveals, showing his deep love for the Ukrainian people and land.

Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (Sergei Paradjanov, 1964) Starring Nina Alisov, Tatyana Bestaeva) Deep in the Carpathian Mountains of 19th-century Ukraine, love, hate, life, and death among the Hutsul people continue as since time began. A young man's mother mourns her husband's murder, while the youth is drawn to the beautiful daughter of his father's killer. But the lovers cannot marry, and the young man's obsession with love lost lures him ever closer to a lover's reunion in death.

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.

Sweden

My Life as a Dog (Lasse Hallström, 1987) Starring Anton Glanzelius, Stig Engström

The story of Ingemar, a 12-year-old Swedish boy sent to live with his childless aunt and uncle in a country village when his mother falls ill, resulting in a Swedish look at the adult world through a child's eyes. A lovely, sometimes intense coming of age story with rural Sweden as backdrop.

Smiles of a Summer Night (Ingmar Bergman, 1957) Starring Ulla Jacobsson, Eva Dahlbeck

Ingmar Bergman's idea of a bedroom farce brought him international stardom. A melancholy comedy the film depicts the romantic entanglements of three 19th-century couples during a weekend at a country estate. It's also pure Bergman: sharp, serious, thoughtful, and sobering, though there's an undercurrent of humor that Bergman is not particularly known for. Other top Bergman films include *Wild Strawberries* and *The Seventh Seal* – and many more.



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

Government websites:

International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information

www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel

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

www.tsa.gov/public

National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information

www.travel.state.gov

General travel information websites:

Travel books

www.amazon.com

www.barnesandnoble.com

World weather

www.intellicast.com

www.weather.com

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

www.travlang.com/languages

Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.

www.travelite.org

Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe

www.cybercafes.com

Electric current and plug types

www.kropla.com/electric2.htm

Foreign exchange rates

www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM locators

www.mastercard.com/atm for **Cirrus ATMs**

www.visa.com/pd/atm for **PLUS ATMs**

Country information:

www.moscowcity.com/ **Moscow**

www.geographia.com/russia/peter01.htm / **St. Petersburg**

www.russia-travel.com/ **Russia Tourist Information**

www.ukraine.com/ **Ukraine**

www.goscandinavia.com **Scandinavia Tourist Boards**

www.visitestonia.com **Estonia**

www.tourism.tallinn.ee/ **Tallinn**

www.visiteurope.com/ **Links to countries**

<http://www.visitsweden.com/sweden-us/> **Sweden**

www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html



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