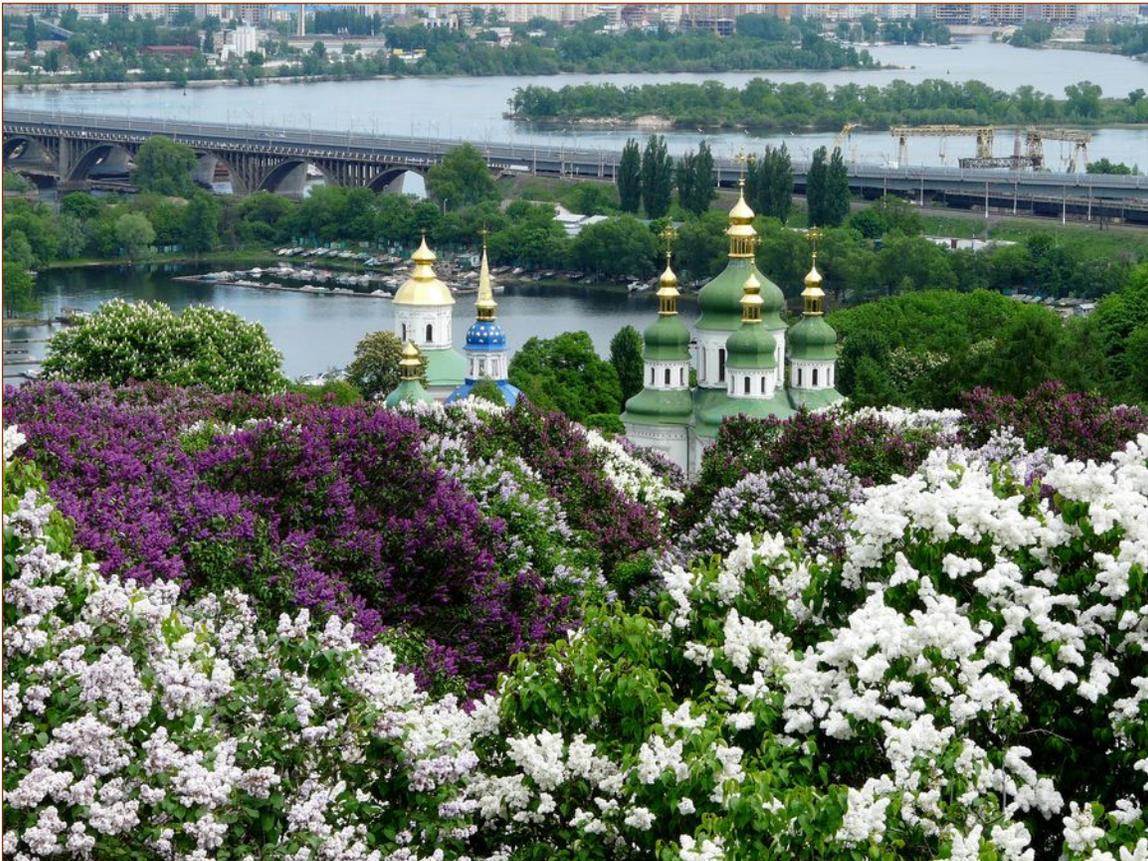


## **Russian Federation (St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad)**

May 14-19 and September 3-8, 2022



One thing certain, the world is constantly shifting and we at Original World take pride in keeping our tours fresh and up-to-date to match the latest developments. Now that Crimea is part of the Russian Federation, it is quite difficult to enter from Ukraine as we have in the past. At first we were told we could enter from Russia, but soon that possibility was denied. So we have added a week of travels to learn about Russian Imperial History and culture in the Russian Federation including the splendor of St. Petersburg and the fascinating historical Kaliningrad. Then we venture into the former Soviet Republics to continue our understanding of these complex intertwining cultures.

## THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

### May 14/Sep 3: Arrival in St Petersburg/ Hotel Angleterre or Astoria (D)

Met on arrival and transfer to your hotel. The rest of the day at leisure. This evening, dinner at restaurant Russian Vododka Room #1, <http://www.vodkaroom.ru/> and orientation with our guide.

### May 15/Sep 4: Full Day Touring St Petersburg/ Hotel Angleterre or Astoria (B, L)

Today is an exciting, active and comprehensive full day tour! We will have about 9 hours touring.

Centered upon the banks of the River Neva, St. Petersburg is the northernmost of the great cities of Russia. Its' lavish palaces, lush parks, hundreds of bridges, and world-class museums make it one of the Top 25 Travel Destinations in the World according to a recent survey by TripAdvisor. Since Peter the Great moved the seat of his young empire from Moscow to the shores of the Baltic Sea, St. Petersburg has been recognized internationally as a crown jewel of capitals. Its architects and planners drew from the majesty of Europe's most breathtaking sites, taking inspiration from the canals of Venice, the Palace of Versailles, the cathedrals of Rome, the streets of Amsterdam, and imbued it all with the aura of Vienna. In addition to an abundance of historic sights, St. Petersburg tourism infrastructure also meets the highest world standards with excellent hotels, fabulous restaurants, and world-class theater performances.

In the heart of the city stands the Winter Palace. Its' front faces Palace Square with its looming Alexander Column, a monolith of Finnish red granite erected to celebrate the victory of Tsar Alexander I over Napoleon Bonaparte. To the rear of the palace, itself a monument to "the might and power of Imperial Russia," is the Palace Embankment on the Neva. Just across the river stands the Peter and Paul Fortress, with its crenelated walls designed to hold the guns that would defend the city from water attacks.

A relatively small portion of the Winter Palace houses the world-famous Hermitage Museum, the largest collection of Russian art in the world. The Hermitage originated as the private art collection of Catherine the Great, with hundreds of paintings now displayed in the Palace's halls. Indeed, many of these halls are works of art themselves.

We shall start our day with a special early admission to the museum at 10:00 am. The museum officially opens at 10:30, so this allows us to explore without the crowds (and also without having to wait on any lines at the entrance).

A few blocks from the Palace Square, along the Griboedov Canal, stands what appears to be something of an answer to Moscow's Cathedral of St. Vasily, the Church of the Savior on Spilt Blood. Its name came from the murder of Tsar Alexander II by terrorists. Despite his efforts to reform and liberalize Russia, Alexander was attacked by three anarchists carrying bombs, the second of which succeeded in killing him. The church was erected by his son, Tsar Alexander III, on the assassination site, just a short walk from the bustling thoroughfare of Nevsky Prospect. We'll have a quick look.

Next, we shall enjoy a one hour public boat ride along the canals and rivers for a fascinating view of the city.

Afterwards, we enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, Legran <http://www.legran-rest.ru/eng/> and then an orientation tour around the city.

Not far from the Winter Palace, is St. Isaac's Cathedral. The largest Orthodox cathedral in the world, it was built in a severe classic Roman style (strongly favored by Tsar Alexander I) over the span of 40 years. When it was completed in 1848, the main dome rivaled that of the Pantheon of Paris and St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and as with these other great domed structures, it served as the inspiration for today's dome on the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. (completed in 1866). The cathedral's cupolas are decorated with 100 kilograms of pure gold.

Nearby, we visit The Peter and Paul Fortress built to protect the fledgling St. Petersburg designated in the midst of Peter the Great's war with Sweden. The original earth and log bastions were constructed between 1703 and 1704 under the supervision of Peter himself and five of his closest associates: Alexander Menshikov (his best friend and Generalissimo of the Russian Army), Gavril Golovkin (close friend and future Foreign Minister), Nikita Zotov (named by Peter as his "Prince-Pope of the Drunken Synod"), Ivan Trubetskoy (future Field Marshal), and Ivan Naryshkin (military commander and future St. Petersburg Governor).

Fortunately, at the time of its construction, King Charles XII of Sweden remained tied up in a war with Augustus II of Poland and Saxony. When Augustus sued for peace in 1706, Peter ordered the bastions rebuilt in stone by architect Domenico Trezzini and engineer Burchard Christophe von Mimmich. However, Charles' invasion army, assembled the following year, fell at Poltava in 1709, and no external enemy ever put the fortress to the test, either before it was completed in 1740, or after. At Peter's command, the St. Peter Gate was completed in 1718.

In addition to work on the bastions, Peter commissioned Trezzini to construct the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral inside the citadel. It was finally completed in 1733, after more than two decades of work, and became the new sepulchre of the Romanovs (other than Peter II and Ivan VI, the former of whom is buried in the Moscow Kremlin and the latter of whom died imprisoned, all the Romanov Tsars after Peter the Great were buried there). The bell-tower served as the city's watchtower and became the city's signature building. Its gilded, angel-topped cupola stretched high into the sky symbolized Russia's aspirations to become a European power.

Next we visit Yusupov Palace, also known as Moika Paalce, located on the Moika Embankment in the very center of St. Petersburg. A unique architectural ensemble and a veritable encyclopedia of St. Petersburg aristocratic interiors, the Yusupov Palace served five generations of the noble family by that name, starting with Boris Nikolayevich, who purchased the building in 1830. Both before and after the Yusupov family moved in, the palace had been reconstructed or added onto a number of times, and many distinguished architects worked on the magic of the Palace's décor and exterior. The list includes the names of Jean-Baptiste Vallin de la Mothe (the original designer of the palace), Ippolit Antonovich Monighetti (designer of some of the interiors), Bernard Simon, and many others.

However, this architectural marvel is perhaps best known as the location of the murder of Grigory Rasputin. In late December 1916, Prince Felix Yusupov and a group of colleagues decided that Rasputin's reputed mystical influence over the wife of Tsar Nicholas II, and the alleged abuses of the power he wielded through them, had become a threat to the security of the Russian Empire. Felix lured Rasputin to the palace. He suggested in a message that his beautiful young wife was receiving visitors, and the prince had him brought to the palace by private vehicle late in the evening. However, instead of Irina Yusupova, he met with Felix, who insisted on having cakes and red wine with the monk in his cellar while waiting for her to become available for a more private audience.

What happened next is a subject that remains under much dispute. According to the prince, the monk ate a couple cakes and drank the wine readily, and ingested by his calculation up to five times the amount of cyanide needed to kill him. However, the monk was still recovering from the earlier attack in Tobolsk, and Rasputin's daughter had suggested that her father suffered from hyperacidity - he wouldn't have eaten the cakes or drank the wine, she insisted. Indeed, the autopsy performed on the monk after he was found a few days later did not identify any poison in his system.

But if the legend is to be believed, Felix became impatient and a bit scared that the cyanide was apparently not working (they had to dispose the body before dawn), and after consulting with his fellow conspirators, he pulled an American revolver upon his praying guest and shot at his heart. Rasputin fell to the floor, appearing to the prince as if he were a broken doll. The cabal quickly left the palace, located across the River Moyka from a police station, and discussed what to do next. While they spoke, a groan came from the basement entrance the conspirators were standing near. Felix described the monk getting up, his eyes bulging in an inhuman way, his shirt bloodied as he pushed past his murderers and tromped out into the snow. The pistol was used to fire two more shots that dropped Rasputin in the snow.

For good measure, the cabal rolled the monk up in a carpet, tied it tightly and weighted it with chains, and then tossed the package into a suitable hole in the frozen River Neva. Supposedly, the monk survived long enough to break free of the carpet, but nonetheless drowned under the ice.

The prince, scion of the richest family in Russia and connected to the Romanovs through his wife, was ordered to leave his bright and colorful palace in St. Petersburg, following the murder, and was placed in house arrest at his country home in Rakitnoye for the three months that the Romanovs remained in power. The prince would only see the palace once more, in his brief visit before fleeing the slowly building Russian Revolution for Crimea, the last stop that he and his wife would make in the Russian Empire before immigrating to France.

Today, the Yusupov Palace is a grand museum full of exuberantly decorated rooms and a jewel-like theatre where the best plays are still staged. Each day it invites the tourist who seeks to get in touch with late to satisfy their curiosity about this uniquely St. Petersburg setting.

We'll return to the hotel by 7 pm. If anyone still has the energy, there may be **an option for a folklore show** at the Nikolaevsky Palace. The show starts at 9 pm; pick up at hotel 8 pm. (additional cost/schedule not guaranteed at this time).

## **May 16/Sep 5: Full Day Touring St Petersburg/ Hotel Angleterre (B, L)**

Pick up at hotel 8:30 am. Approx 11 hours touring today! We shall travel outside the city this morning (approx 1 hr 20 min) to visit the Peterhoff Grand Palace, a cluster of breathtaking palaces built on the Baltic Sea coast, the biggest overlooking a lush French formal garden with numerous fountains (all gravity-fed without the use of pumps, water is supplied by natural springs), the locale has been described as the “Russian Versailles.” the site was selected by Peter in 1705 as a landing for ships that would take him on state excursions into Europe.

After Peter defeated King Charles of Sweden at Poltava (within present Ukraine), he began construction in his new capital in earnest, and broke ground for his summer palace, the “Monplaisir” or “My Pleasure,” in 1714. Through the intervening 11 years, this earliest of the Peterhof palaces was erected. It was initially designed by Braunstein, but was later modified by Jean-Baptiste LeBlonde and then Niccolo Michetti into a Baroque-structure that still stands near the shore. This palace was later decorated with gardens and fountains, the greatest of which was the Grand Cascade. By the time it was finished by Catherine the Great, it had been transformed into what is generally regarded today as “the Russian Versailles.” After Peter’s death, the palace was preserved as a private museum dedicated to the late Tsar. Although it was badly damaged during the German occupation during the Siege of Leningrad, it has been restored to its mostly original state.

The Marly Palace, a Russian replica of the French Château de Marly at Marly le Roi, likewise served as a repository for Tsar Peter’s many collections. It was originally placed on a poor foundation, which settled so much that by 1899, the building had to be lifted and its foundation reconstructed. However, as with much of Peterhof, the original building was destroyed by the Nazis in their siege. It took until 1982 before the building could again house exhibits, and today it is temporarily under repairs. However, it still serves an important purpose of protecting the Upper Gardens from the winds coming off the Gulf of Finland.

The Grand Palace was built by Peter’s daughter, Elizabeth, who brought Bartolomeo Rastrelli in to create a new extravagant baroque building between 1747 and 1752. During the siege of Leningrad, the palace was left mostly destroyed; it was first burned during the opening days of the siege, and then bombed by the Germans when they vacated the building. It wasn’t until after the Stalin era that its restoration was begun. In 1964, after eight years of work, the building was opened for public viewing.

A similar fate was suffered by the Samson Fountain, depicting the Greek hero tearing apart the mouth of a lion. Depicting a representation of the defeat of the Swedes (which used the lion as its emblem), the statue was badly damaged by the retreating Germans. Its restoration, though, came about much quicker, with the restored 1735 work unveiled in 1947.

The greatest fountain at Peterhoff is the Grand Cascade. As with the Marly Palace, this work of art was modeled on an existing French fountain. It extends downward from the Samson Fountain toward the Baltic Sea.

The artistic achievement of the Peterhoff is a must-see highlight of St. Petersburg, and seeing this monument to Russian history can easily take the better part of a day.

From Peterhoff it is a one hour drive to Pushkin (aka Tsarskoe Selo) and on arrival have lunch at the traditional Russian restaurant, “Russian Podvorje.”

After evicting the Swedes from the area, Tsar Peter the Great gave over to his loyal friend Alexander Menshikov the old manor of Sarishoff. Menshikov constructed there a great palace, which he in turn gave over to Peter’s wife, Catherine I, whose rise from a childhood as an orphaned Polish peasant to Empress of Russia is said to have been a story as great as that of the rise of her husband. The resulting ornate Catherine Palace and beautiful Catherine Park, located in the fairy tale Tsarskoe Selo, or Tsar’s Village, in the suburb of Pushkin, are named for her. This is a truly remarkable piece of Russia’s Imperial heritage. We visit Catherine’s Palace and its Amber Room.

The drive back to St. Petersburg is approx 1.5 hours. We return to the city by 7 pm.

**The draw bridges—this is impressive in May when it stays light; not so in September:** the bridges open starting at 01:10 am! It lasts three minutes and the closing of them is between 04:00 and 05:00. If you so choose, you will be able to walk easily to the Palace embankment from where you can watch 3 main bridges opening: the Palace Bridge, the Annunciation (Blagoveschensky) bridge and the Trinity bridge (Troitskiy).

## **May 17/Sep 6: Fly to Kaliningrad / Hotel Radisson Blu (B)**

We will depart the hotel at 7:45 am and transfer to the airport for flight SU 6325 dep 10:55 am, arriving Kaliningrad 11:35 am (schedule subject to change). Our local guide will meet us on arrival.

Also known by its original German name, Königsberg, is the capital city of Kaliningrad Oblast a Russian exclave. It has about 450,000 inhabitants and is called 'Karaliaucius' in Lithuanian (Lithuanians [cousins to the 'Old Prussians'] used to live there). Along with the Polish name (Krolewiec) it is sometimes known as the 'City of the Four Ks: Kaliningrad / Königsberg / Krolewiec / Karaliaucius'. Following WWII it was briefly known as Kyonigsberg (Кёнигсберг), the Russian form of the original German name.

The old city fortifications (approx. 1860-'70), include 15 town gates - Sackheim, King's, Rossgarten, Attack, Railway, Brandenburg, Friedland, Friedrich Wilhelm III. One of the towers is home to the Amber Museum.

We shall begin touring immediately, starting with a walking tour down Kant Street to the old Cathedral of Königsberg founded in 1333.

Largely reconstructed after World War II, the cathedral on Kneiphof Island along the Pregolya River is a sight to see. The cathedral links Kaliningrad to its German past, where the Prussian kings were once crowned. There are two rooms in the Cathedral Museum devoted to the life of Kant, whose tomb lies beside the cathedral walls. Up the stairs to the left of the main door is a three-story museum dedicated to the life and work of Immanuel Kant (separate ticket needed). Kant's grave can be viewed outside the cathedral, on the northeast corner of the building.

We will see the *Fishing Village*. This is a reconstructed area located on the river near the cathedral. Red-roofed buildings and colorful exteriors illustrate the charm of old Königsberg, what Kaliningrad used to be known as.

Next is a visit of The House of Soviets, known to locals as 'The Monster,' is sort of an anti-attraction, but useful for orientation in the city center. It was constructed on the ruins of the Königsberg Castle, but was deemed structurally unsound and therefore never occupied. Rumor has it that a mysterious owner prevents it from being demolished. An archaeological dig is active on the grounds, which is not open to tourists.

Lunch at a local restaurant in city center, pay direct.

In the afternoon we visit Victory Square, the central area where the administrative buildings, banks and shops are.

Afterwards, we'll visit Bunker Museum, aka "Blindazh." Located behind the Kaliningrad Hotel, we must weave through three or four courtyards and children's playgrounds before finding it, which is barely marked except by two black upright triangular canopies over the bunker doors. It was the headquarters of the local German command during the 1945 battle. A museum of the city's German past (which lasted 689 years) and Soviet "liberation" of the city, including several interesting dioramas of events during the days of the battle.

The tour culminates with a visit to the Amber Museum, Marshal Vasilevsky Square 1 (in the Dohna Tower of the city wall), which houses a large number of amber ornaments and jewelry from Yantarny in the wider Kaliningrad region.

Transfer to hotel. Evening at leisure; dinner on your own.

### **May 18/Sep 7: Full Day Tour Kaliningrad / Hotel Heliopark Kaiserhof (B, L)**

We start at 9:30 am with a visit to the Museum of the World Ocean, a central maritime museum of the Russian Federation; includes two museum ships and one submarine. The main exhibit of the museum is the legendary scientific-research vessel VITYAZ that, under the flag of USSR Academy of Sciences, made 65 expeditions in the World Ocean (1949-1979) and was moored for good near the museum on July 12, 1994.

Lunch at a local restaurant, pay direct.

After lunch, an excursion to Svetlogorsk – picturesque resort on the Baltic Sea shore (42 km/50 min from Kaliningrad). Promenade along the seashore and getting a glimpse of the Old City architecture.

Transfer back to Kaliningrad for overnight.

## REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

### May 19/Sep 8: Arrival in Minsk. /

Transfer to the airport for the flight to Minsk on Belavia Air 948 departs Kaliningrad 910 am, arrives Minsk 1110 am.

### PRICES 2022

#### Based on Angleterre Hotel 4\* in St. Petersburg & Radisson Blu in Kaliningrad

**MAY:** \$2575 per person based on min 4 people, \$3140 per person based on min 2 people. **Single Room Supplement:** \$620

**SEPT:** \$2420 per person based on min 4 people, \$2975 per person based on min 2 people. **Single Room Supplement:** \$465

#### Based on Astoria Hotel 5\* in St. Petersburg & Radisson Blu in Kaliningrad:

**MAY:** \$2795 per person based on min 4 people, \$3360 per person based on min 2 people. **Single Room Supplement:** \$800

**SEPT:** \$2590 per person based on min 4 people, \$3160 per person based on min 2 people. **Single Room Supplement:** \$600

**Plus air tickets (estimate/subject to change):** St. Petersburg-Kaliningrad \$135, Kaliningrad-Minsk: \$165

**Includes:** accommodations, arrival airport transfers on tour start and end dates, local guides in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad, visa support letters for Russia. Meals: daily breakfast, 4 lunches & 1 dinner.

**Transport:** for 2 people: Mercedes 212 E Class; group size 4-10 people: Mercedes Sprinter, 17 seats

**Does Not Include:** International flight, Visa fees, air tickets within the tour (listed separately), tips to drivers and guides, hotel porters, trip cancellation/travel insurance; optional Folkloric Show (price TBA).

*Hotels, as listed or similar. Based on availability and subject to change  
Complimentary wireless high-speed Internet access is provided at most hotels*

St. Petersburg: Angleterre Hotel, classic room, 4 star hotel adjacent to St. Isaac's Cathedral, walking distance to Hermitage Museum and Nevsky Prospect. <http://www.anglerrehotel.com/>

OR Astoria Hotel, 5\* top hotel in the city located across from St. Isaac's Cathedral and Angleterre Hotel.

<https://www.roccofortehotels.com/hotels-and-resorts/hotel-astoria/>

Kaliningrad: Radisson Blu Hotel 4\* central location in Victory Square. <https://www.radissonhotels.com/ru-ru/hotels/radisson-blu-kaliningrad?>

**OR if it opens:** Kaiserhof Hotel 4\* Located in the heart of Kaliningard, Kaiserhof provides elegant spacious rooms, free Wi-Fi, flat-screen TV. The Hofburg Restaurant, with its transparent roof and stunning stained-glass windows, is the perfect place to enjoy European cuisine. The spa facilities include a stylish pool, sauna area, Turkish steam bath, pool bar and a terrace. There are also 5 steam baths and a hot tub. The hotel is close to Konigsberg Cathedral and the Baltic Expo Exhibition Centre. <http://kaiserhof-hotel.com/en/>

### NOTES:

Flight schedules within the tour are subject to change.