

TRAIN : Golden Eagle Trans Siberian Express

JOURNEY : Arctic Explore- Quest for the Northern Lights

Journey Duration : Upto 12 Days

DAY 1 ST PETERSBURG

Flight arrivals into St Petersburg and transfer to the luxurious Four Seasons Hotel (or similar) for a two-night stay. This evening you are invited to a champagne drinks reception with the opportunity to meet your fellow travellers before our exclusive welcome dinner. Specially selected international wines are included with dinner, as with all meals during the tour. At the start of your adventure why not extend your stay in St Petersburg with pre-tour nights to explore more of the city at your leisure?

DAY 2 ST PETERSBURG

St Petersburg is a stunning city, crowded with splendid palaces, impressive historical monuments, wide boulevards, beautiful bridges and is renowned as the Ballet Capital of the World. Today we have a guided tour of Catherine's Palace in Pushkin and the Hermitage Museum, the former Winter Palace of the Tsars which houses the royal art collection of over three million works. It is one of the world's largest and most impressive art museums. Make your evening in St Petersburg extra special by purchasing a ticket for a ballet or opera performance at one of the world-renowned St Petersburg theatres (subject to schedule and availability and pre-booked at least six weeks prior to departure).

DAY 3 ST PETERSBURG

Today there is a tour of St Petersburg featuring the key sights including St Isaac's Cathedral and Nevsky Prospect. This afternoon we transfer to the station to board Russia's premier train, the Golden Eagle and settle into our modern, stylish cabins to embark upon our rail adventure to the Arctic Circle. We have a unique opportunity to celebrate our arrival on board at our signature Gala Caviar Dinner in the beautifully designed Restaurant Car. Enjoy complimentary champagne and international wines with dinner and live musical entertainment.

DAY 4 CROSSING THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

We have the opportunity to have a relaxed start to the day and to unwind after our evening of celebration. We can reflect on the many sights we are about to experience on our rail journey, maybe listen to a talk or simply relax and enjoy the ever-changing winter landscape outside our window.

Our Guest Astronomer will host an afternoon tea with freshly baked Russian cakes and talk about the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in our stylish Bar Lounge Car.

DAY 5 KIRKENES & NORTHERN LIGHTS

This morning we leave our train with an overnight bag at the Russian border station of Nikel and we transfer by bus (90 minutes drive) across the Russian/Norwegian border to Kirkenes for a two night stay at the Thon Hotel (or similar). We will visit the magical Snow Hotel just 15 km outside Kirkenes. We'll have a welcome drink in the snow bar and a tour of the Snow Hotel with its ice sculptures and snow paintings by local and international artists. After a traditional meal in the snow hotel's Hoyloftet restaurant we'll take an evening bus tour in search of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). If the sky is clear our guest astronomer will be on hand to advise us during star-gazing and will bring the night sky to life with their extensive knowledge.

Optional Activities in Kirkenes: You may like to book some additional optional activities such as an evening snowmobile tour (3 hours) or husky dog sledge tour (2 hours) in search of the Northern Lights. Each sledge is pulled by a team of eight dogs and can seat two people and a driver called a dog musher. These activities have limited places and should be requested at the time of booking the tour - please contact us for prices.

For a really memorable experience why not choose the 'coolest' hotel check-in around and stay overnight at the Snow Hotel? Upgrades to the snow hotel are limited so book early to avoid disappointment. The snow hotel stays at a constant minus five degrees centigrade and thermal sleeping bags are provided. Showers, toilets and a Scandinavian sauna are provided in a building next to the snow hotel.

DAY 6 KIRKENES & NORTHERN LIGHTS

Today a unique winter experience awaits on our King Crab Fishing adventure. The excursion begins with a snowmobile drawn sleigh across the frozen fjords. Warm clothing and a helmet is provided. Through a hole in the ice you will be shown by your guide a catch of the magnificent Arctic King Crab (which can span two metres and weigh up to 15kgs). We then continue by sleigh to the nearby Fisherman's Lodge, where it is here by a roaring log fire that your fresh King Crab meal awaits.

Also included during your stay in Kirkenes is a one-hour husky dog sledge ride and a visit to the resident reindeers.

DAY 7 NORTHERN LIGHTS

We cross the border back into Russia and re-join our train which is waiting for us in Nikel. We'll spend the afternoon on board travelling through arctic Russia. Relax and enjoy the ever-changing winter landscape outside your window, or chat to fellow passengers. Afternoon tea with freshly baked Russian cookies will be served in our stylish Bar Lounge Car.

DAY 8 MURMANSK & NORTHERN LIGHTS

We will continue to Murmansk, a city halfway between Moscow and the North Pole, and 120 miles north of the Arctic Circle. As the main city of the Kola Peninsula, it started as a tiny settlement and Arctic trading post. In 1916, under pressure from the British to establish a support port, Murmansk was founded. Thanks to the influence of the Gulf Stream, the port is ice-free year-round. Homeport of Russia's nuclear-powered icebreakers we'll visit the Nuclear Icebreaker Museum Ship.

DAY 9 PETROZAVODSK

Petrozavodsk stretches along the western shore of Lake Onega - the second largest lake in Europe. It is one of the major cultural and industrial centres of the North-West of Russia and is the capital of the Republic of Karelia.

DAY 10 MOSCOW

This morning arrive at Moscow station.

Included in our time spent in Moscow is two nights at the five-star Four Seasons (or similar). Superbly located in Moscow city centre, and within easy walking distance of Red Square, the Kremlin and the Bolshoi Theatre, this historic hotel offers spacious and luxurious accommodation.

Today we visit Red Square, an iconic symbol of Russia's former military and political might with its eclectic mix of fascinating architecture, such as the ornate St Basil's Cathedral's magnificent onion-domed spires, the beautiful façade of the world famous GUM Department store, constructed in Tsarist times, and the sombre and evocative site of Lenin's tomb. Our touring programme also takes us to the grandeur of the Kremlin - the spiritual, historical and political heart of Moscow and to see the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber.

DAY 11 VLADIMIR & SUZDAL

Today we travel by regular train to the historic city of Vladimir, which was founded in 990 and is one of Russia's oldest communities. With an architectural wealth, it has been decreed a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our tour takes in Uspensky Cathedral, built between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. It is considered one of the most important and beautiful of Russian cathedrals, where many of the prominent Russian Tsars were crowned.

From Vladimir we travel to Suzdal, one of Russia's most perfectly preserved walled cities dating back to 1024, located 35 kilometres from Vladimir. Here we visit the atmospheric St Euthymius Monastery to witness an enchanting choral performance by the resident monks. No Russian winter experience would be complete either without the horse-drawn sleigh ride through this stunning location.

This evening we return to Moscow to enjoy our Farewell Dinner.

DAY 12 MOSCOW

Breakfast in the hotel brings the tour to a close and airport transfers are provided for your departure flights. Why not extend your stay in Moscow to explore more of the city at your leisure?