

ADVERTISEMENT

In St. Petersburg, Russian and European architectural influences meld to create a unique city with a history as colorful as its many minarets.

1. Moscow

Russia's culinary scene is more than just blinis and borscht. In Moscow you'll find chefs adding modern flair to traditional dishes in beautifully renovated historical buildings. After a fine meal, nothing beats a stroll through iconic **Red Square** with the minarets of St. Basil's Cathedral glowing colorfully in the crisp night air. End your evening with a flask of icy vodka at an elegant nightclub and drift home through streets rife with history.

2. Trans-Siberian Railway

To cover large swaths of country, your best bet is the famous Trans-Siberian Railway. Stretching from Moscow in the west to the seaport of Vladivostok in the east, it's the longest railway in the world. Disembark at Irkutsk where you can visit the dramatic shores of **Baikal Lake**, the oldest and deepest in the world, holding twenty percent of the world's unfrozen fresh water.

3. Kamchatka Peninsula

Think of Russia and you're likely to think of deep snow and frigid temperatures. But in the summer, the countryside is coaxed to life by balmy breezes and warm sunshine — even on the northeastern peninsula of Kamchatka. Here you'll find an ecologically diverse wonderland filled with mountains, tundra, lakes, valleys and **fields of wildflowers**. As a geologically active area, you'll also have plenty of opportunity to visit volcanoes, geysers and hot springs.

4. St. Petersburg

Consisting of over one hundred islands linked by canals and charming bridges, St. Petersburg has a decidedly European flavour. The city is a culture-lover's dream with the chance to visit dozens of palaces, churches and over two hundred museums. From May through the end of July, enjoy the White Nights Festival, a celebration of the near twenty-four-hours-a-day sunlight featuring opera, classical music and, of course, **ballet**.

Reveal Your Own

RUSSIA

From gumdrop-topped churches in expansive cities to jagged mountain peaks rising skyward amidst pristine wilderness, Russia is a land of contrasts ... and possibilities.

Spanning eleven different time zones, Russia is a vast land where culture flows through the streets of large cities and tiny towns as freely as fresh cold streams flow through its deep and seductive woodlands. While its sheer size can seem overwhelming when thinking about visiting, it's also this very same scale that lets travelers reveal their own Russia — be it a metropolitan adventure full of fine dining, top-notch shopping and cultured nights; a peaceful wander through timeless villages; a break in nature with ambles along sun-kissed beaches or zips down world-class ski slopes; or a combination of them all. Here we offer you six different destinations across a land that's inspired artists, writers, composers and thinkers for thousands of years.

5. Franz Josef Land

With one hundred ninety-one mostly uninhabited islands at the far north of Russia in the Arctic Ocean, Franz Josef Land is a place of stark, icy beauty. Special tours on icebreaking ships will take you through the watery wintry landscape where you can keep a lookout for whales, seals, **polar bears**, walrus and other wildlife. It's a chance to truly get away from it all and view a landscape few have ever laid eyes upon..

6. Catherine Palace, Tsarskoye Selo

Completed in 1756, Catherine Palace located in the town of Tsarskoye Selo (about fifteen miles south of St. Petersburg), is a riot of color and sheer beautiful architectural excess. In fact, it took more than two hundred and twenty pounds of gold to complete the decoration of its exterior. Not to be missed is the Amber Room which glows in honeyed light, thanks to the profusion of the semi-precious stone used in the decor.

My **RUSSIA**

