

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

RUSSIA

PASSPORT AND VISA INFORMATION

Your passport needs to be valid for at least six (6) months after your journey and should have a minimum of three (3) blank visa pages for entry and exit stamps.

A tourist visa is required for U.S. and Canadian passport holders for entry into Russia. A visa can be obtained either by applying directly to a Russian consulate or through a visa processing service. We strongly advise processing your Russian visa through VisaCentral as we have made arrangements with our visa service provider to obtain the Russia Tourist Visa Support Letter necessary to process your visa.

International cruise ship passengers with shore excursions booked at St. Petersburg and Vladivostok through Buongiorno Travel are permitted to visit these Russian ports without a visa for a period of up to 72 hours. You can go ashore during port calls without a visa provided that you are with an organized tour and licensed operator at all times. If you have booked shore excursions through Buongiorno Travel, Buongiorno Travel will provide you with a special Disembarkation Ticket included in your final pre-tour mailing. However, **passengers on river boat cruises (i.e., 'Volga Dream')** need to apply for a Russian visa prior to departure.

Citizens of other countries should contact the appropriate consular office for entry requirements pertaining to their journey.

VACCINATIONS

There are no vaccinations required to enter Russia.

CASH & CREDIT CARDS

Larger shops in Moscow and St. Petersburg generally accept major credit cards. Visa and MasterCard are the preferred brands; American Express is not as widely accepted. Travellers should note that for no apparent reason Russian credit card readers sometimes decline a valid credit card. For this reason, travellers intending to pay for goods and services by credit card should carry a back-up credit card(s) in case their card is not accepted. While it is illegal to use foreign currency to pay for everyday transactions such as small souvenir purchases, taxi fares, etc., in practice foreign currency is routinely used (and gratefully accepted) for such exchanges. It is suggested that you use U.S. dollars in excellent condition and small denominations (\$20 or less) to pay for your purchases in Russia. Old, worn, torn bills are likely to be rejected. ATMs are plentiful in Moscow and to a lesser extent in other large cities. Travellers should use only machines that are physically attached to an established banking institution and avoid "stand-alone" machines found on street corners and in metro stations.

OF SPECIAL NOTE

Should you wish to arrange an optional ticket for a theater or concert performance, please be aware that, in Russia, such performances are always subject to last-minute cancellation or change. Specific entertainment cannot be guaranteed. Luckily in major cities many alternatives are usually available; ask your Guardian Angel or hotel concierge to assist with tickets.

Russia has grown in popularity in recent years and you may notice large crowds queuing to enter the various sights. Buongiorno Travel will enable you to enter through fast track or early opening arrangements depending on availability at the different sights, thus avoiding you having to queue wherever

possible. However, please be aware that you may find large numbers of visitors outside these buildings or indeed in the entrance halls – please follow and trust your guides who are experienced in these procedures and know the best route to take you.

Please note that due to the complex opening schedules in Russia it may be necessary to rearrange or substitute the sightseeing program on this itinerary. Scheduled sightseeing may have to be altered to accommodate changes in accessibility of sites. We ask for your patience should such a situation occur.

Churches and museums in Russia may charge a fee (in rubles) for photography or video. Your local guide will advise when a fee is required. Restrictions on bringing large professional cameras into the Kremlin in Moscow apply:

Diameter - no larger than 70 mm (2.75 inches)

Height - no more than 140 mm (5.51 inches)

Camera lens - no larger than 250 mm

Cameras that are larger than these restrictions will not be allowed on the Kremlin grounds. There may be issues elsewhere in Moscow with professional photography equipment, such as tripods and large lens cameras, and Russian authorities may become suspicious of anyone carrying this equipment.

PACKING LIST

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Please use the provided Buongiorno Travel luggage tags, even if your bags already have ID tags. This makes it easier for Buongiorno Travel staff to find and manage your luggage for you.

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Choose versatile, casual clothing that can be layered if the weather (or level of air-conditioning) requires. Cotton and other light fabrics are comfortable choices for summertime. Pack a coat, hat, gloves, boots, warm socks and sleepwear, if you are visiting Russia between October and April. Smart casual attire is appropriate for evenings. Formal clothing is not necessary.

Cathedrals, churches, and other religious sites require conservative dress. Arms, shoulders should be covered – no shorts. This applies to both men and women. For women, barebacked, low-necked dresses or tops or short skirts, are not considered appropriate attire.

Clothing

- Casual slacks
- Walking shorts
- Polo shirts, casual short-sleeve shirts or blouses
- Long sleeve shirts or blouses
- Comfortable walking shoes with low or no heels
- Lightweight raincoat and umbrella
- Sweater or fleece jacket
- Brimmed hat or visor for sun protection
- Sleepwear
- Personal garments
- Socks
- Swimwear/cover-up

Other Recommended Items

- Sunglasses
- Sun block and lip balm
- Simple first-aid kit
- Prescriptions and medications (in their original bottles and/or packaging)
- Extra eyeglasses/contact lenses
- Smartphone
- Charging cables for electronics
- Global travel adapter

Laundry service is available at most hotels and dry cleaning is available in larger cities. Check costs and return times before using these services.

TIPPING GUIDELINES RUSSIA

While decisions regarding tipping rest entirely with you, we suggest the following gratuities (noted in U.S. dollars) depending on the type of journey:

	All Small Group Journeys and Pre/Post Tour Extensions	Tailor Made Journeys
Resident Tour Director or Group Extension Guide	\$20 per person, per day	Not applicable
Local Guides	Included	\$25 per person, per day (full day)
Drivers	Included	\$15 per person, per day (full day)
Airport Transfer Drivers	Included	\$5 per person, per transfer
Hotel Porters	Included	\$2 per bag
Housekeepers	Included	\$2 per person, per night
Included Meals	Included	Included
Restaurants or Room Service on Own	10-15% unless already added	10-15% unless already added

For extra nights or Tailor Made services added to a Small Group Journey, please follow the Tailor Made Journeys guidelines for these days only.

Gratuities to 'Volga Dream' crewmembers are not included. Please refer to 'Life on Board' Vessel Information for recommended gratuity guidelines.