



Useful information

Currency

The local currency in Russia is the Rouble. Major credit cards can also be used in many restaurants, shops and hotels. Cash will be required for smaller purchases, such as drinks or souvenirs. Roubles, USD and sometimes Euros, can be withdrawn from ATM machines, which are widely available in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Before leaving Australia, check with your bank to ensure that the card/s you are carrying will be accepted at the major ATMs. Please do not take travellers cheques, as they can be difficult to exchange.

Language

In Russia and countries of the former Soviet Union there are few signs in English and the Cyrillic alphabet is challenging for most travellers to decipher. With the exception of the younger generation, English is not widely spoken. We recommend that you always carry your hotel card with you when enjoying free time on your own.

Our tours - an explanation

Tailor-made independent tours

Flexible, pre-booked arrangements including free time to explore at your own pace. You have your own English speaking guide, car and driver for sightseeing and hotel transfers. Stopovers, Russia a la Carte, St. Petersburg in Style, Golden Road to Samarkand are examples of independent tours that can be tailor-made to your own requirements.

Privately escorted tours

Suggested itineraries with free time with your own driver, car and English speaking guide as specified. Golden Ring Highlights, Discover Belarus, Wonders of Georgia, Budapest to Sofia, Romania in Depth.

Escorted tours

Fully escorted group tours on fixed dates with coach, driver and guide. Tour guide may be multi-lingual or English only speaking. Examples are Scandinavian & Russian Treasures, Scenic Ukraine & Poland and Polish & Baltic Jewels.

Small group tours

Small group tours offer a more intimate touring experience. With fewer travellers in the group you will have more opportunity to communicate on a one-to-one basis with your guide, and the logistics of moving the group around will take less time. Maximum group capacity varies and we have indicated this wherever applicable. Some small group tours have escorts throughout and some are locally escorted. Russian Highlights, Fjords & Royal Capitals of Scandinavia and Norway's Fjords & Glaciers are examples.

Hotel classifications

The hotel gradings in this brochure are based on local classifications, which vary from country to country and do not always coincide with other international standards. Sometimes they may even

be superior. Hotel rooms can be smaller than similar categories in Australia, double beds may not be available and A/C is becoming more prevalent. Where there are standard or renovated/business rooms, we recommend the latter. In most Russian cities a local city registration fee of 295 roubles may be payable on the spot, if it hasn't already been included in the room rate. It is up to the discretion of each hotel.

Travellers with special needs

Travellers with medical, physical or other special needs may find travel in these regions very challenging. Hotels, cruise ships and tourist attractions may have many stairs with no lifts or ramps, and coaches, trains and cruise ships can be difficult to enter and leave. Toilet facilities can also be difficult to access. Travellers with dietary needs may be accommodated in the larger hotels in major cities. Simple requests like vegetarian meals can be accommodated on some tours and cruises.

Food/meals

Breakfast is included in your hotel each day. On escorted tours, lunches and dinners are included where indicated. On river cruises all meals are included. Most trains have a dining car. In the major cities, travellers have a wide choice of dining options ranging from local cafés to the finest restaurants offering international dishes as well as local delicacies.

Voltage

220/230 AC volts. Plugs are normally round two pin European type. Travellers should carry their own adaptors.

Australian Government travel information

We recommend that you refer to the websites of the Aust. and NZ Ministries of Foreign Affairs: www.smarttraveller.gov.au and www.safetravel.govt.nz. Here you will find general travel tips and information as well as specific Travel Advisories which provide information about the security environment in a particular country.

Visas

All travellers will require a tourist visa for Russia and the maximum duration of a tourist visa is 30 days.

Important note: If booking pre and post river cruise arrangements, the Russian Embassy/Consulate will only accept documentation from a maximum of two Russian tour operators for the entire stay in Russia, one of which will come from the cruise company. For visas for other countries in this brochure, please check with your travel advisor. Allow at least one month to secure each visa if obtaining them in Australia/New Zealand. Delays occur in consulates and urgent issue fees can run into hundreds of dollars. Airlines will automatically refuse boarding to passengers with invalid visas.

