



MONASTERIES & KREMLINS CHURCH & STATE IN NORTH-WEST RUSSIA

SUNDAY 31 MAY – MONDAY 8 JUNE 2020 (9 DAYS)

CICERONI

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

T R A V E L

£4150

- Discover rural north-west Russia & its heritage of monasteries & ‘kremlins’
- Some of the most important fortified Russian Orthodox monasteries included
- Remarkable medieval frescoes
- See the birthplace of Rimsky-Korsakov and enjoy some splendid Russian music
- Visit timed to coincide with wonderful display of early summer flowers
- Comfortable hotels in central locations



Church inside the Staraya Ladoga Fortress

OVERVIEW

‘Just before midnight the church doors swung open and in a flood of colour and candlelight the glittering procession emerged to circle the building three times, chanting. The long tapers they carried sparkled on the sumptuous brocaded vestments and the diamond-studded crowns...’ Lesley Blanch, *Journey into the Mind’s Eye*, 1968

This remarkable evocation of a ceremony held decades ago in a remote monastic complex captures not only the mystery of the Russian Orthodox Church’s liturgy, but also its remarkable tenacity, as in recent decades it has moved from living under relentless state persecution to Putin-supported ‘resurrection’. Indeed, at many levels the history of Russian Orthodoxy is also the history of Russia itself. Our new tour will untangle this relationship between church and state as we explore the territory north and east of St Petersburg, ending in Moscow.

Mention the word ‘Kremlin’ and that great complex looming over Moscow is imprinted on all our memories, visual and literal. This is partly due to its extraordinary silhouette seen against the skyline, partly the result of its ‘see-saw’ role in the development of Russia as a European and world power. However, the ‘Kremlin’ is not unique to Moscow as the word means a fortified complex, of which many more have survived throughout Russia.

Emerging from medieval isolation, as the autocratic state of *Rus* saw off the Mongol hordes, it turned west as new foes arrived. Defence became a priority. Long established monasteries became the ideal places from which to keep watch, upgraded within newly fortified enclosures, or Kremlins. Our itinerary will take us to some of the most important of these sites at Schlisselburg, Staraya Ladoga, Tikhvin, the Volgoda area and ending in Moscow.

We spend 1 night at the 4* Angleterre, St Petersburg; 1 night at the 4* Astral in Tikhvin; 3 nights at the 4* Istoria in Volgoda; 1 night on the 1st Class sleeper train to Moscow; and 2 nights at the 5* Metropol in Moscow. Hotels in St Petersburg and Moscow are very comfortable, those in Tikhvin and Volgoda are simple, clean and modern.

This is a demanding tour with one long journey by coach and an overnight 1st class sleeper train to Moscow, but the rewards will be worth it: remote monasteries set within their fortified ‘kremlins’, churches with wonderful frescoed interiors and the opportunity to see rural Russia at its early Summer best, the fields and woods awash in flowers. This is the Russia that few travellers from outside ever see.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Sunday 31 May – We fly to **St Petersburg** and check into the **4* Hotel Angleterre**, ideally situated in the historic centre, across from St Isaac’s Cathedral, followed by dinner in a nearby restaurant.

Day 2: Monday 1 June – We leave the city and drive out to **Lake Ladoga** to the **Schlisselburg Fortress**, a border defence post since medieval times, hugely important in the defence of Leningrad during World War II. We continue to **Staraya Ladoga** for a picnic lunch and to see the **Fortress, Archaeological Museum** and **St Nicholas Monastery**. We continue to **Tikhvin** and the **4* Astral Hotel** where we have dinner.

Day 3: Tuesday 2 June – **Tikhvin** is a charming rural town dominated by the remarkable **Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God**, established by Ivan the Terrible in 1560. Tikhvin was the birthplace of the

composer, **Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov** and the family home is now a **Museum** which we shall visit, followed by a private recital in a local church. After lunch we travel on to **Vologda** where we stay in the 4* **Istoria Hotel** for a three-night stay, with dinner in a nearby restaurant.

Day 4: Wednesday 3 June – A gently paced day as we explore **Vologda**. A charming town, medieval in origin and much favoured by Ivan the Terrible. It has always prospered and with much for us to see over two days. We visit the fine **Kremlin**, the **St Sofia Cathedral** and a local **Museum**. After lunch we visit the wonderful **Lace Museum** – ‘Vologda Lace’ has been highly prized for centuries. We have dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 5: Thursday 4 June – We spend today in the countryside when we visit two amazing monastic sites. The **Foropontovo Monastery** is an absolute must - within its **Church of the Nativity** there is a complete fresco cycle by the renowned painter, **Dionysus**, the only complete medieval cycle to survive in any Russian church. We continue to the village of **Kurakino** to visit a traditional sheep farm where the owners will offer us local hospitality. Then on to **Kirillovo** for lunch after which we visit the enormous **Kirillov-Belozersky Monastery**, at one time the largest and most powerful in northern Russia: its three-storey fortress walls contain *twelve* churches and the glorious **Cathedral of the Assumption**, truly breath-taking. We return to Vologda and dinner.

Day 6: Friday 5 June – A second day exploring **Vologda** with a visit to the nearby **Spasso-Prilutsky Monastery** dating from the fourteenth century and picturesquely reflected in the nearby river. Back in town there is the tiny **House of Peter the Great** in which he lodged when visiting. Nearby we will visit some of the remarkable **Wooden Houses** which are such a feature of the area. There will be free time to visit some of the local markets; lunch and an early dinner are both included. We board the **Overnight Train** for **Moscow** with each 1st class compartment assigned for either twin or single occupancy. A late supper snack is served in your compartment.

Day 7: Saturday 6 June – We arrive in Moscow in the early morning and transfer directly to the 5* **Metropol Hotel**. After breakfast we visit the **Moscow Kremlin**, a fortified medieval enclosure within which church and state shared its grounds; a ‘theatre’ within which some of the most significant events in Russian history were enacted. We shall visit the **Cathedral of the Assumption**, the famous **Armory Museum** and of course, the amazing, newly displayed **Imperial Regalia**. After a group lunch we visit the **Pushkin Museum** which has stunning Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works. The evening will be free.

Day 8: Sunday 7 June – After breakfast we return to Red Square to visit **St Basil’s Cathedral** after which we continue to the recently re-built **Cathedral of Jesus Christ the Saviour**. Nothing else marks so spectacularly the revival of the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church since the collapse of communism. After a group lunch we visit the **Tretyakov Gallery** which has the finest collections of Russian Icons to survive from medieval times, talismans of faith exceptional in every way. We return to our hotel on the **Moscow Metro**, visiting a series of remarkable stations with their lofty platform halls decorated in the most spectacular fashion. Later that evening we have our final group dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 9: Monday 8 June – This morning we drive out to visit the famous **Novodevichy (New Maiden) Convent**, founded in 1524 and within its walls we shall find some spectacular churches and bell towers. We continue to Moscow Airport for our return flights to the UK and elsewhere.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £4150 **Without Flights** £3850 **Deposit** £500

Single Supplement £695 (Double Room for Sole Use & 1st Class Sleeper Compartment for Sole Use)
£525 (Double Room for Sole Use & 1st Class Sleeper Compartment to share)

Hotels 1 night at the 4*Angleterre, St Petersburg; 1 night at the 4* Astral in Tikhvin; 3 nights at the 4* Istria in Vologda; 1 night in 1st class sleeper train to Moscow (single or twin occupancy per compartment); 2 nights at the 5* Metropol Moscow, all with breakfast

Flights KLM / British Airways

Outward: **KL1002** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 4) **0840**, arrive Amsterdam **1100**

KL1395 Depart Amsterdam **1300**, arrive St Petersburg **1650**

Return: **BA232** Depart Moscow **1605**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1800**

Price includes 7 dinners & 7 lunches with water & coffee, wine with dinners, all local transfers, City Tax, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan and our local Tour Manager

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 1 dinner & 1 lunch. You will require a Visa and your passport must be valid for 6 months after return from Russia. Visa Fee is from £102 (21 working day service plus visa agency fees).



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