



**CICERONI**  
T R A V E L

## COLLECTING THE BEST CONNOISSEURS' ST PETERSBURG

MONDAY 12 – SUNDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2018 (7 DAYS)

LECTURERS: DAME ROSALIND SAVILL & TOM DUNCAN

£2970

- **Comprehensive introduction to the Romanovs and their collections**
- **Several guided visits exploring the Hermitage Palace Museum**
- **Visits to a number of the Hermitage 'Reserve Collections' & two Treasuries**
- **Peterhof, Tsarskoe Selo & Pavlosk - the most enchanting of the country palaces**
- **Very comfortable 5\* Astoria Hotel close to the Hermitage & Nevsky Prospekt**



Gallery of Ancient Paintings, Winter Palace, The Hermitage

### OVERVIEW

Travellers who have been to St Petersburg are often overwhelmed by a visit to the Hermitage Palace Museum and the Imperial Palaces outside the city. Huge in scale, lavish in decoration, extraordinary in terms of the number, range and quality of contents, they can seduce and frustrate in equal measure – particularly so if visited during the 'peak' months from April to October.

Led by Dame Rosalind Savill (formerly Director of The Wallace Collection in London) and Tom Duncan, our visit is designed both for someone who may be planning a first visit and, equally, for those who may have been to St Petersburg in the past and encountered these palaces on an 'introductory' basis. If you would like to spend time discovering them without crowds, in an unhurried and scholarly fashion, with rarely granted private access within the Hermitage and the country palaces, this may very well be the visit for you - truly, a 'connoisseur's' visit.

The Hermitage was originally built as a 'winter' Palace for Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century. However, the core of the present structure is the fourth such palace on this site. It was built for the Empress Elizabeth by the Italian architect, Bartolomeo Rastrelli, between 1754 and 1762. It was Catherine the Great who added an adjacent *hermitage* to the already existing baroque/rococo structure so that she could house her fast expanding art collections in a building almost separate from the more formal state rooms of the main palace, though with easy access between the two. Thus, palace and museum came to be combined on the same site.

In the nineteenth century successive Tsars spent more and more time in their country palaces and as a result the Hermitage came to be occupied less frequently as an imperial 'home'. After the great fire of 1837 even more space was set aside not only for court ceremonial, but also for the display of the ever growing Imperial art collections. Over the course of several visits to the Hermitage we shall see not only all the major schools of painting on display, special emphasis will be placed on the decorative arts collection, particularly the French and Russian porcelain and, subject to confirmation, we plan to visit the reserve store rooms full of amazing treasures.

Other visits within St Petersburg will include three non-Romanov palaces: the Dutch inspired Menshikov Palace, the rococo Stroganov Palace and the later Yusupov Palace. The magnificent Fabergé Museum will be included.

The Romanovs built country palaces on the Gulf of Finland at Peterhof and inland at Tsarskoe Selo, the so-called Tsar's Village, and Pavlosk. These offer a more personal insight into the daily lives of the Imperial family and we shall visit the most important, full of the most exciting contents and memories of Peter the Great, Catherine the Great and their descendants. At Pavlosk our visit, guided by its Curator, will be private, when closed to the public.

We shall stay at the **5\* Astoria Hotel**, a member of the Rocco Forte group of hotels, ideally located a few minutes walk from the banks of the River Neva and the Hermitage. Sitting on one side of an impressive public space dominated by the magnificent St Isaac's Cathedral, the city's main shopping street, Nevsky Prospekt, is nearby.

**Participants will be able to attend opera, ballet and concert performances – details of these will be issued to participants once the programmes are published.** This tour can be combined with Moscow & the Birth of Russia for which a £300 discount will apply to the combined cost of both tours.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Monday 12 November – You will join this tour in one of two ways. For those coming with Tom from Moscow, arrival will be to the central station at around 6pm on the luxury Sapsan high-speed train and include a transfer to the hotel. Those arriving from London Heathrow will be met by the coach and our local tour manager before checking into our hotel, the **5\* Astoria**. Later that evening we have dinner in the Astoria's restaurant.

**Day 2:** Tuesday 13 November – We begin with a visit to the city's earliest surviving palace, the **Menshikov Palace**, built in the Dutch style for Peter the Great's favourite. We continue to the neo-classical **Yusupov Palace**, the home of Russia's richest family, and scene of the infamous murder of Rasputin! After a group lunch we have our first visit to the **State Hermitage Museum**. The museum fills several interconnected buildings of eighteenth and nineteenth century date, designed and decorated by a large cast of architects and craftsmen and our afternoon will be spent unravelling this complex palace. We shall also visit, by special appointment, the first of the two **Gold Treasuries**, which contains an unrivalled collection of Scythian and later gold. The evening will be free.

**Day 3:** Wednesday 14 November – The Tsar's village, **Tsarskoe Selo**, was much loved by the Imperial family and we shall visit the **Catherine Palace**. This contains a remarkable ensemble of interiors charting many changes of style from the rococo exoticism of the fabled Amber Room to the cool sophistication of Charles Cameron's neo-classical interiors, some of which we shall see privately, particularly the amazing **Agate Pavilion** (closed in winter). After a group lunch we return to our hotel for a rest and then continue to the **Hermitage** for an evening visit. Our focus will be the paintings collection, with its marvellous holdings of **Italian, Flemish and Dutch** pictures – here are rooms full of masterpieces by Leonardo, Raphael, Bernini, Rubens and Van Dyck, stunning paintings by Rembrandt and wonderful Dutch landscapes. The remainder of the evening will be free.

**Day 4:** Thursday 15 November – A memorable day awaits us as we return to the **Hermitage** to immerse ourselves in the unparalleled collection of **French paintings, furniture and decorative arts**. This is one of the world's great collections, formed by Catherine the Great and her successors. We shall see those works on public display, and, access allowing, we have been granted permission to visit certain storage areas to see the fabulous collections of French and Russian porcelain. We break for lunch in the museum (not included) and the evening will be free.

**Day 5:** Friday 16 November – **Pavlosk** was built for Catherine's son, Tsar Paul I, by Charles Cameron, and much extended by later Romanov owners. For many, it is the most elegant of all the country palaces, capturing the Romanov family in domestic mode. We are indeed privileged to have been given permission to visit the palace when closed to the public and we shall be guided by its Curator. We return to the city for a group lunch after which we visit the **Stroganov Palace**, a feast of rococo decoration. There will also be a second, optional, early evening visit to the **Hermitage**. Alternatively, you will be free to enjoy the late afternoon and evening as desired.

**Day 6:** Saturday 17 November – We drive out to **Peterhof**, built by Peter the Great to overlook the Gulf of Finland, though much altered by his successors. We also visit the smaller, intimate '**Catherine Block**' redecorated for Tsar Alexander I and the charming '**Cottage Palace**', a woodland retreat rarely included in itineraries. We have a group lunch and on our return to the city we visit the private **Fabergé Museum**, followed by some time to enjoy the shopping on stylish **Nevsky Prospekt**. Dinner is included tonight in a local restaurant.

**Day 7:** Sunday 18 November – We return to the **Hermitage** a final time to visit the second of the **Gold Treasuries**, an astonishing assemblage of personal objects representing Imperial taste over many centuries. Crossing Palace Square we end our week in the **General Staff Building** where the paintings from Impressionism onwards are now displayed. After a final group lunch we continue to the airport for the return flight to London.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2970

**Deposit** £375

**Single Supplement** £395 (Double for Sole Use)

**Please note that there is a £300 total discount if Connoisseurs' St Petersburg is taken with Moscow**

**Hotel** 6 nights with breakfast at 5\* Hotel Astoria

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA878** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **0925**, arrive St Petersburg **1545**

Return: **BA879** Depart St Petersburg **1640**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1720**

**Price includes** 2 dinners with wine, water & coffee, 3 lunches with water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan, Rosalind Savill & our local tour manager

**Not included** Travel to/from Heathrow, 4 dinners & 3 lunches, Visa: from approx £109 excluding agency fees. Please note that as part of the process you will need to provide biometric data (fingerprints) at the Russian Embassy or CIBT Visa Agency offices in London. Details will be sent with the booking confirmation.



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