

THE RISE AND FALL OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA

MOSCOW (4) – ST. PETERSBURG (4)

The Romanov dynasty ruled Russia for over 300 years. Over the centuries it conquered vast territories and transformed the initially small Russian state into Imperial Russia, the biggest country in the world and one of the greatest powers of 18th and 19th century Europe. The dynasty amassed unprecedented wealth both for itself and for the Russian nobility, the Boyars, while leaving the political and social fabric of the empire in a backwards state. Thus it laid the seeds for its own downfall and it eventually vanished in the maelstrom of the political and social upheavals of 1917. This tour is an opportunity to meet one of the world's most fascinating countries and the story of the rise and fall of a great empire and its imperial dynasty.

DAY 01: ARRIVAL IN MOSCOW

Transfer for a 4-night stay in a superior room at **Hotel Ritz Carlton Moscow***** deluxe**, check-in.

20:00 **Dinner at House of Literature**, refined Russian cuisine in the historical restaurant of the famed Russian writers of the silver age.

DAY 02: MOSCOW

09:00–14:00 A morning tour takes you to the **Moscow Kremlin**. You will see vast palaces, gold-domed cathedrals, the infamous Ivan the Terrible bell tower and much more. The highlight of the tour is a special visit to the **Armoury Museum**, which includes a vast collection of Imperial Russian treasures.

14:00 **Lunch at Restaurant Bolshoi**, Russian haute cuisine in a setting with exclusive contemporary paintings and sculptures and opulent furniture.

15:30–18:00 An afternoon **panoramic city tour** gives you an overview of the splendours of the city including the impressive Red Square and St. Basil's Cathedral, the GUM Department Store, Tverskaya Street with its glamorous shops and boutiques, Theatre Square with the Bolshoi Theatre and finally a drive along the Moscow River to Sparrow Hills to enjoy a breathtaking panoramic view of this magnificent Russian metropole.

DAY 03: MOSCOW

09:00–14:00 The first part of the day is reserved for a visit to **Kuskovo Estate**. The centrepiece of the estate is the wedding cake-like **Main Palace** with its sumptuously decorated halls and chambers and the magnificent ballroom with gold ornamentation, crystal chandeliers and relief panels. Behind the palace in the geometrically landscaped French garden stands the yellow, white and green **Grotto**. Nearby you will find the delightful **Italian Cottage** and beyond the Aviary and the open-air Green Theatre stands the **Orangery**.

15:00 **Late lunch at Restaurant Sem Pyatnits**, located in an elegant mansion abundantly decorated with late 19th century furniture and antiques and featuring authentic Russian cuisine.

DAY 04: MOSCOW

09:30–13:00 The morning tour offers a visit to the **Tretyakov Gallery**. You will in particular get acquainted with the exhibition of medieval Russian art in the gallery, made up of beautifully crafted icons dating from the 11th to the 17th century.

13:00 **Lunch at Restaurant Turandot**, one of the most upscale restaurants in the city, richly decorated in the Baroque style of 18th century Moscow.

14:30–17:00 The afternoon offers a visit to the impressive **Romanov Palace Chambers**.





20:00–22:00 **Moscow by night.** During this atmospheric tour you will visit St. Sofia's Embankment with a splendid panoramic view of the Kremlin, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, the Church of St. Nicholas, the White House of the Russian Federation and Moscow's illuminated boulevards.

DAY 05: MOSCOW–ST. PETERSBURG

10:00–14:00 You begin the day with a tour of the 16th **Novodevichy Monastery**, one of the city's most beautiful ensembles of buildings. Its white walls, towers topped by festive coronas, the magnificent Smolensky Cathedral and a stunning bell tower immediately attract the eye.

14:00 **Lunch at Café Pushkin**, authentic Russian food at this gorgeous turn-of-the-century mansion complete with costumed waiters and a pre-revolutionary atmosphere.

15:30 Transfer to the railway station to embark on the Sapsan high-speed train bound for St. Petersburg.

16:30 Departure. While the train takes you through endless Russian landscapes, enjoy the excellent dinner service in the 1st class carriage.

22:00 Arrival in St. Petersburg. Transfer for a 4-night stay in a superior room at the **Hotel Grand Europe***** deluxe**, check-in.

DAY 06: ST. PETERSBURG

10:00–14:00 This morning you are visiting the **Hermitage Museum**. You will see the highlights of the exhibitions and a special arrangement makes it possible for you to visit the **Gold Treasury Room** to see Greek gold from the 6th to the 4th century BC and jewellery of the Orient from the 16th–18th centuries.

14:00 **Lunch at Restaurant Old Customs House**, classy restaurant celebrating the cuisine of the Russian aristocracy.

15:30–18:00 The afternoon **panoramic city tour** includes the city's most famous sites: Nevsky Prospect,

the Admiralty Building, St. Isaac's Cathedral, Kazan Cathedral, the Church of the Bleeding Saviour and the Nevsky Convent and culminates with a visit to the **Peter & Paul Fortress**.

DAY 07: ST. PETERSBURG

09:00–17:00 The whole day is reserved for a visit to **Tsarskoye Selo (Pushkin)** and **Pavlovsk**. You visit the **Catherine's Palace** and the highlight of the tour of the palace is a visit to the **Amber Room**, which vanished during World War II and was restored for St. Petersburg's tri-centennial celebrations.

13:00 **Lunch at Restaurant Podvorye**, located in a traditional wooden Russian house, an "izba", and offering genuine Russian cuisine.

14:30 You continue to **Pavlovsk Palace** built for Paul I, the son of Catherine the Great. Its remarkable park is dotted with classical statues and temples and you explore the park during a **private ride in a horse-drawn carriage**.

16:00 Return to St. Petersburg.

DAY 08: ST. PETERSBURG

09:00–14:00 A morning tour takes you to **Peterhof**. You visit the **Grand Palace** and the **Monplaisir**

Palace and enjoy the breathtaking sight of the Grand Cascade and the Water Avenue before you return to St. Petersburg.

14:00 **Lunch at Restaurant Dostoevsky**, named after the famous Russian novelist and faithful to traditional Russian cuisine.

15:30–17:00 The afternoon tour takes you to the **Yusupov Palace**. During the tour of the palace you will see stately rooms decorated in very different styles, from classical French to bizarre Moorish, the theatre of the palace and the Rasputin Room in the cellar.

18:00 The evening is reserved for a visit to the **Mariinsky Theatre**, to enjoy a ballet or an opera performance of world class.

22:30 **Dinner at the Restaurant Taleon Club**, located in the stunning palatial interior of the former Eliseev Mansion.

DAY 09: DEPARTURE FROM ST. PETERSBURG

Transfer to the airport, departure.

Including: 4 overnights in a superior room in Moscow, 4 overnights in a superior room in St. Petersburg, 8 x sumptuous buffet breakfast, 7 x exquisite 3-course lunches, 2 x 4-course haute cuisine dinners, 1 x 3-course dinner on train, all transfers, sightseeing tours and excursions with private car and guide, entrance to Moscow Kremlin with Armoury Museum, Kuskovo Estate, Tretyakov Gallery, Romanov Palace Chambers, Novodevichy Convent, Hermitage Museum with Gold Treasury, Peter & Paul Fortress, Catherine's Palace with Amber Room, Pavlovsk Palace Park, Peterhof with Grand Palace and Monplaisir Palace, Yusupov Palace with Rasputin Room, private horse-drawn carriage ride at Pavlovsk Palace Park, tickets to Mariinsky Theater, 1st class ticket with Sapsan high-speed train Moscow-St. Petersburg, portage at hotels and railway stations and Russian passport registration fee.

