

The Northern Illinois University Alumni Association

Presents

NIU
ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

Russian River Cruise - St. Petersburg to Moscow

May 30 – June 10, 2017

Cabin Deck \$5,279 per person, double occupancy from Chicago

Main Deck \$5,839 per person, double occupancy from Chicago

Promenade Deck from \$6,379 per person, double occupancy from Chicago

Sun Deck from \$6,399 per person, double occupancy from Chicago



This is an exclusive travel program presented by the Northern Illinois University Alumni Association

Day by Day Itinerary

Tuesday, May 30 – CHICAGO / EN ROUTE (I)

We depart Chicago's O'Hare International Airport this afternoon by scheduled service of Lufthansa German Airlines on the overnight transatlantic flight to Frankfurt, Germany.

Wednesday, May 31 – FRANKFURT / ST. PETERSBURG (I,HD)

As the sun begins to rise on the German heartland, we arrive in Frankfurt and change planes for the connecting flight to St. Petersburg, Russia. On arrival we'll meet our St. Petersburg Tour Guide who will introduce us to the now cosmopolitan city of St. Petersburg. Built by Peter the Great at the beginning of the 18th century, St. Petersburg was once the capital city of the Great Russian Empire. Often referred to as the "Window to the West," St. Petersburg is considered the most graceful of all Russian cities

Thursday, June 1 – ST. PETERSBURG (Hermitage) (B,L)

Our day will begin with a visit to the Hermitage, incorporating the breathtaking state rooms of the Winter Palace, undoubtedly the most famous building of imperial St. Petersburg, not only as the residence of the tsars and the backdrop for the 1905 and 1917 Revolutions, but also the home of the world's largest museum of art with a collection of West-European paintings comprising works by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, El Greco, Rembrandt, and many others. Following lunch, we'll sit back and enjoy a sightseeing tour of the city where we'll see such distinctive landmarks as Smolny Convent, Pushkin Theater, Kazan Cathedral, and travel along Nevsky Prospect, the city's most famous avenue. In addition, we'll visit the Peter and Paul Fortress, located on Zayachi Island. The fort was named after the apostles Peter and Paul, and its magnificent cathedral is the burial place for the Russian Emperors and their families. We'll also visit St. Isaac's Cathedral, the third-highest domed building in the world, richly decorated with mosaics, gold and minerals from all over the world.

Friday, June 2 – ST. PETERSBURG (Pushkin) (B,L)

Today we travel to the Summer Palace of Pushkin. Formerly known as Tsarskoye Selo, it was presented by Peter the Great to his first wife Catherine. We'll have an opportunity to stroll the park with its numerous pavilions, ponds and sculptures as well as visit the magnificent palace of Catherine the Great, restored over the past 40 years to its original splendor. We'll see the main staircase and look up at the palace ceilings decorated with paintings by Italian artists in the 17th and 18th centuries. We'll also marvel at the magnificent Grand Hall, a gilded wonder with a spectacular painted ceiling and mirrored walls that are breathtakingly beautiful. Above all we don't want to miss the outrageously beautiful Amber Room, a brilliant and painstaking re-creation built in semi-precious stone by Russian craftsmen after the original panels were stolen by the Nazis during World War II.

Saturday, June 3 – ST. PETERSBURG / CRUISING (Petrodvorets) (B,L,D)

This morning we travel to the south shore of the Gulf of Finland to visit the royal residence of Petrodvorets, the grand summer palace of Peter the Great that sits atop a hill along the shores of the Gulf. Also known as Peterhof, and inspired by the Palace of Versailles, Petrodvorets is renowned for its beautifully landscaped parks that are filled with bronze statues, fountains and cascades. Comprised of 64 fountains, picturesque waterfalls, and stunning marble statues, we'll have an opportunity to indulge in the palace's charming French gardens, dotted with decorative ponds and a number of pavilions. In the middle of the grounds is the spectacular Grand Palace, built in Baroque and Russian styles, featuring hundreds of rooms including the large throne room used for ceremonies and special occasions, the Partridge Dining Room, and the magnificent Imperial Suite.

On our return to St. Petersburg we'll travel to the banks of the Volga River for embarkation aboard the luxurious *Volga Dream*. As we'll soon find out, the Volga River, Europe's largest waterway, holds a special place in Russian history and in the hearts and minds of the Russian people.

Sunday, June 4 – CRUISING (Svir River & Mandrogi) (B,L,D)

Our first full day on board the *Volga Dream* will be spent cruising the scenic Svir River, traveling the 139-mile "Blue Route" towards Lake Ladoga, Europe's largest freshwater lake. We'll step ashore in the charming 18th-century village of Mandrogi to experience daily life in this quaint wooden hamlet dotted with graceful willows, alder trees and stately pines. Home to numerous craft workshops, it comes with little surprise that one of the most popular attractions is the Museum of Russian Vodka. For the literary buffs in our group, in the nearby Fairytale Meadow you'll find a collection of charming wooden sculptures that recreate scenes from Alexander Pushkin's epic poem *Ruslan and Ludmila*.

Monday, June 5 – CRUISING (Kizhi) (B,L,D)

Today we cruise the tranquil waters of Europe's second largest lake before arriving at the island village of Kizhi. Blessed with one of the most picturesque ensembles of Russian wooden churches, Kizhi has long been a strategic stopover for travelers and to this day continues to provide one of the most scenic destinations on Russia's greatest waterway. We'll enjoy a walking tour through the Open Air Museum of Architecture, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, introducing us to a collection of wooden houses, windmills and churches representing ancient Russian architecture. The highlight is the famous three-tiered Transfiguration Church, a fairytale-like structure built in 1714 without a single nail.

Tuesday, June 6 – CRUISING (Goritsy) (B,L,D)

Today we'll bask in the medieval atmosphere of the picturesque river town of Goritsy, one of the most tranquil places in Russia. In times past, this picturesque village was set in the center of one of the largest accumulations of monasteries in Russia. We'll tour the Kirillo-Belozerskiy monastery that dates back to 1397. Its founder was a monk named Reverend Kirill who left his privileged life to seek a remote place to become closer to God. His monastery prospered and became a refuge for many nobles during the Time of Troubles. It soon turned into a fortress which resisted the attacks of the Poles and Lithuanians. It could not, however, resist the Bolsheviks. Despite this, the ornate building has managed to preserve much of its historic grandeur and was recently named one of "The New Seven Wonders of Russia."

Wednesday, June 7 – CRUISING (Yaroslavl) (B,L,D)

Our port of call for the day is considered one of Russia's most beautiful cities and the "Heart of the Golden Ring." Founded by Yaroslav, the son of Russia's first Christian grand prince Vladimir the Great, the city of Yaroslavl is over 1,000 year old. We'll learn about Yaroslavl's fascinating history on our guided tour with visits to both the Spassky Monastery, where we'll see the Transfiguration of the Savior, adorned with murals depicting St. John's apocalyptic visions, as well as the richly frescoed Church of St. Elijah the Prophet. We'll also attend a dance performance at the Governor's Building, home to a collection of over 60,000 icons, masterpieces of visual arts, sculpture, and handicrafts, some dating as far back as the 13th century.

Thursday, June 8 – CRUISING (Uglich) (B,L,D)

The Volga River winds its way through many beautiful landscapes and impressive towns on its way from Central Russia to the Caspian Sea. Perhaps one of its most famous bends on the river is the ancient town of Uglich, the perfect showcase for those wishing to experience pure Russian beauty. As one

of the oldest towns in Russia, Uglich represents life from every colorful decade of Russian history. Included as one of the Golden Ring of cities surrounding Moscow, a walking tour of Uglich will take us to the Chapel of Dimitry, a 17th-century treasure built on the site where Ivan the Terrible's 10-year-old son met his untimely death. We'll also visit the Church of the Transfiguration, noted for its beautiful iconostasis, and attend a concert of choral music.

Friday, June 9 – CRUISING / MOSCOW (B,L,HD)

This morning our Volga River voyage comes to an end as we cruise the Moscow Canal on our way into Moscow, founded in the 12th century on the banks of the Moscow River to keep out barbarian invaders from the east. Today Moscow is a modern city with wide boulevards and green parks, yet proudly preserving its historic monuments and impressive buildings from previous eras. Following disembarkation from the *Volga Dream* we'll enjoy a panoramic tour of the might and splendor of Moscow. We'll stop at the platform on Sparrow Hill for a panoramic view of the city and then make our way to the vast expanse of Red Square, the fourth largest square in the world. We'll learn about Red Square's importance and the countless pageants and processions throughout its long history. We'll see the red-bricked walls of the Kremlin and step inside St. Basil's Cathedral, the coronation church of the Tsars.

Saturday, June 10 – MOSCOW / CHICAGO (I)

Early this morning we will travel to Moscow's Domodedovo International Airport in preparation for the return journey home. No better time to reflect on memories of our Russian River Cruise from St. Petersburg to Moscow to last a lifetime and new friendships made along the way!

*** * * Welcome Home * * ***

Visit myniu.com to make your reservation.

The Tour Price Includes:

- Pre-trip assistance.
- Informational packet.
- Alumni staff assistance for a worry-free travel experience.
- Economy-class air transportation by scheduled service of Lufthansa German Airlines.
- Transportation by deluxe private motor coach with accompanying Tour Guides on pre and post cruise days.
- Accommodations in first-class hotels.
- Accommodations based on choice of stateroom aboard the *Volga Dream*.
- All meals as shown in the Day by Day Itinerary.
- Sightseeing as detailed in the Day by Day Itinerary including applicable entrance fees.
- Luggage handling and portage charges for one suitcase per person at the hotels and piers.
- Expedited Russian Visa.
- Taxes for included ground services, **and airline taxes and fuel surcharge of \$380 per person.**

The Tour Price Does Not Include: Items of a personal nature such as passport fees; gratuities to the motor coach driver(s), Tour Guide(s), shipboard personnel, and local guide(s); luggage handling at airports; personal and baggage insurance; and meals other than those stated above.

TOUR CONDITIONS

Tour Deposit and Payment: Reservations may be made by check or credit card (Visa, MC, or Discover). Tour prices do increase every year and it is possible that increases could occur after the printing of this brochure in advance of your tour's departure.

Tour Pricing: This is a package tour in which land tour costs and special group airfares have been combined in the most advantageous way. Should you wish to make any deviation from the package tour by changing your departure and/or return dates, the advantages of the package tour price may be eliminated and additional charges will be assessed.

Travel Insurance: Travel insurance is very important and can be purchased through USI Travel Insurance Services. This insurance is designed to cover you and your trip investment from trip cancellation/interruption penalties and provide medical expense, medical evacuation, baggage and personal effects loss, and accidental death coverage, as well as emergency assistance. There is an advantage to early enrollment in this travel insurance program. Purchasing coverage within 21 days (Plus and Elite Options) of your initial trip deposit can make you eligible for 1) Pre-existing Medical Condition Exclusion Waiver, and 2) Optional Cancel for Any Reason Coverage (Elite Option). If you wish to take advantage of the special above provisions, you must enroll within 21 days of the date your initial trip deposit is received. Contact Travel Insurance Services at 1-800-937-1387.

RESPONSIBILITY

THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION and/or any travel agency and/or supplier of services pursuant to or in connection with this itinerary shall not be responsible or become liable for any delay incurred by any person in connection with any means of transportation; nor for any loss, damage or injury to person or property by reason of any event beyond the control of any agency or supplier, or occurring without the fault or negligence of such agency or supplier. The right is reserved to substitute the airline to be used; the type of aircraft; and to alter the dates of the tour; the tour routing; or to cancel the trip if a minimum number of bookings is not reached for either the air or land portion of this itinerary. The right is also reserved to substitute hotels for other hotels in available categories. Further, the right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain at any time any person as a participant on any tour or to cancel any tour. No refund will be made for voluntary absence from the tour unless arrangements are made at the time of booking. The schedules contained herein are subject to change without notice. All rates are based on current Tariff and Exchange rates in effect at the time of the printing of this itinerary and are subject to adjustment without prior notification in the event of changes therein or in changes in the number of participants on which the rates are based. The carriers concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance. The passage contract in use by carrier concerned, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the carrier and the purchaser of this tour.

For more information contact the NIU Alumni Association at 815-753-1512 or visit the Travel section at myniu.com to make your reservation.

\$100 of the trip cost is tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

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