



# RUSSIA

## Practical Information

### CURRENCY

The official Russian currency is Rubles which consists of 100 kopeks. Notes come in 5, 10, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 denominations of rouble and coins are available in 1, 5, 10 and 50 kopeks and in 1, 2 and 5 roubles.

US Dollars and Euros are the best currencies to take in cash. You can use all major credit and debit cards in ATMs and in good restaurants and hotels. Consult with your bank to find out if your ATM card will work in Russia. Travellers' cheques are not very widely accepted, consult your bank which travellers' cheques they recommend. Only exchange currency at bank counters. Because of the risk of crime and ATM fraud we recommend you use ATMs inside bank premises and during business hours only. We also advise you to keep your credit card in sight during transactions. A good website to refer to before you travel is the [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) to adapt your currency to the places you are visiting.

### ENTERING & DEPARTING RUSSIA

All foreign citizens entering Russia are required to fill in a migration card. The entry portion of the card will be retained by Immigration upon arrival. The stamped exit portion of the card must be kept with your passport during your stay in Russia and submitted to Immigration upon departure. Loss of the exit portion of the card may result in significant delays and fines upon departure. You must complete a new migration card each time you enter Russia, even if you have a multiple entry visa.

### VISA

All foreigners visiting Russian Federation require a valid passport and a Russian visa. In order to receive a visa, you need a so-called Visa Support Letter from an authorized Russian travel agency. Visa Support Letter is not a visa, it should be taken to a Russian Consulate where the actual visa is issued. When you travel with us we will provide you with the Visa Support Letter and can assist you with your visa application.

### HOTEL REGISTRATION FORMALITIES IN RUSSIA

When arriving to Russia, your Russian visa should be registered within 7 days from arrival. The hotels would do this for you automatically on check in and you don't need to do anything. When you check in to the hotel, there is usually a small registration fee charged by hotel, this is usually less than AUD 10.00. You will also receive a registration card from the hotel when you check out, or sometimes it's delivered to your room. Please hold on this card until you depart Russia as the border control might ask this document on departure.

### TIME ZONE

Russia is a vast country spanning 9 time zones: European Russia (including Moscow & St Petersburg) and Asiatic Russia (from the Urals to Siberia). St.Petersburg and Moscow belong to The Moscow Standard Time Zone which is 4 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time: GMT+4. Russia abolished daylight saving practice in 2011.

### CLIMATE

Moscow is located in the middle of the continent, so the temperature is continental, which means hot weather in Summer and cold weather in Winter. The hottest months are July and August, when the temperatures can reach +30-35 oC. They're also the dampest months in much of European Russia, with as many as one rainy day in three.

In St.Petersburg from late May onwards, the weather is normally warm and humid, but not excessively so and evenings can be cooler even when the sun is still shining, The weather can fluctuate quite a lot and in a single summer's day the temperature may vary from +15oC to +30oC. Generally temperatures are somewhere near +20-25oC. July is the hottest month of the year and it starts getting a bit cooler in mid-August. The highest temperature ever recorded in the city was +33.6oC.

St.Petersburg's 'White Nights', from the end of May through to mid-July, are legendary. Due to the city's high latitude the sun does not go under the horizon deep enough for the sky to get dark. The dusk meets the dawn and it is so bright that in summer they do not turn street lighting on. Mosquitoes can be a nuisance in Summer. Wear light-coloured clothing, long pants and long sleeved shirts, avoid highly scented perfumes or aftershave and use mosquito repellent liberally.

## ELECTRICITY

The electric current in is 220 V. Thick round ended two-pronged continental plugs are used. We would recommend you take your own adaptor.

## HEALTH & MEDICAL SERVICES

No vaccinations are required for entry in Russia but according to Australian authorities water-borne, food-borne and other infectious diseases are prevalent with more serious outbreaks occurring from time to time. Consult your doctor about the need for having vaccinations before travelling. Hygiene standards vary in Russia, so be always careful when you buy food outside, always wash fresh fruits and vegetables, and try to keep your hands clean (carrying antibacterial hand wipes may help). You should also avoid unpasteurised dairy products, and raw and undercooked food. We advise you to boil all drinking water or drink bottled water, and avoid ice cubes.

Public medical facilities in Russian cities are well below western standards and are extremely basic in rural areas. There are a few international standard private facilities in major cities. These private facilities will require up-front payment or seek confirmation of the patient's level of insurance or obtain a written guarantee of payment prior to treatment. In the event of a serious accident or illness, medical evacuation (at considerable expense) may be necessary. We strongly recommend that you take out comprehensive travel insurance that will cover any overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation, before you depart. Many pharmacies (called "apteka" in Russian) are opened 24 hours a day and there are also many of them online. Some supermarkets have small pharmacy sections as well, usually opened until 8pm.

The emergency number for ambulance is 03 throughout Russia or 112 if you're calling from a mobile.

## SAFETY

Take good care of your personal belongings. Don't carry too much cash and remember that expensive watches, jewellery and cameras may be tempting targets for thieves. Petty crime, pick-pocketing and mugging (sometimes committed by groups of children) is common, especially around tourist attractions such as Red Square, the Ismailovsky tourist market and the metro in Moscow and St Petersburg. You should also avoid demonstrations and large public gatherings as they may turn violent.

Make two photocopies of valuable documents such as your

passport, tickets, visas and travellers' cheques. Keep one copy with you in a separate place to the original and leave another copy with someone at home. You should carry copies of a recent passport photo with you in case you need a replacement passport while overseas.

## COMMUNICATION

The country code for Russia is 7. Many hotels offer internet access, as well as connections for laptops in rooms. Some Russian mobile network providers also offer WAP services. There are also several internet cafes in city centres.

Mobile phones are very popular in Russia and the coverage exists even in remote areas. Visitors can buy a so-called "tourist simcard" to call home. These simcards can be purchased in mobile phone offices like "Svyaznoy", "Evroset" (tens of offices in the city) and at Moscow airports. Check with your mobile service provider if your phone needs to be unlocked before travelling. Be warned to turn off your global roaming and global data roaming whilst touring if you want to avoid being charged for this service.

## TIPPING

If a service charge is not already included in your restaurant bill, you might wish to leave the small change that is returned to you. Tips are not obligatory, but welcomed in Russia - from 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the total is normal.

## SHOPPING

General opening hours are from Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 7pm. Many shops are nowadays also open on Sundays, although often for shorter hours. Some shops, especially old, state-run stores, close for an hour at lunchtime, either from 1pm to 2pm, or from 2pm to 3pm. Department stores and supermarkets stay open throughout lunchtime. Also 24 hour stores are becoming more common. Markets generally operate from 10am to 4pm but it is advisable to go in the morning to get the best choice of goods.

## PACKING TIPS

We advise that you use either a compact backpack with wheels or a regular backpack. Wheels are difficult on cobblestones, but this small inconvenience is outweighed by the comfort of wheeling your bags through airports and such. Regular suitcases can be difficult to travel with as they are bulky and difficult to secure on transport, unless you are travelling on our private coach trips

where the suitcase is stowed underneath the bus for the tour.

We always recommend travelling light; however, the specific requirements for your tour will vary widely depending on where and when you are travelling. We suggest layers of clothing rather than heavy coats since no-one can predict the weather. Bring your umbrella and a windproof raincoat or jacket. You can wear shorts in Summer, though shorts might prevent you from entering some churches. And do bring a sweater or light jacket for those chilly evenings. There is usually a fair amount of walking included in the touring program, so good comfortable walking shoes are essential when visiting St. Petersburg and Moscow. Also bring a few travel-sized facial tissue packs and keep one with you wherever you go as often public bathroom facilities in Russia lack toilet paper.

Travelling during winter requires appropriate clothing as the temperatures will drop well below zero degrees celcius. Bring a warm winter coat, gloves, scarf, hat/beanie and warm, waterproof boots.

When travelling with us you will have access to a 24-hour emergency number in Norway. Our Lillehammer office will look after you if anything arises during your trip that affects your travels or the enjoyment of your holiday. We will always be just a phone call away.

**24-hour emergency number:** +47 21 04 01 00

[www.fiftydegreesnorth.com](http://www.fiftydegreesnorth.com)