

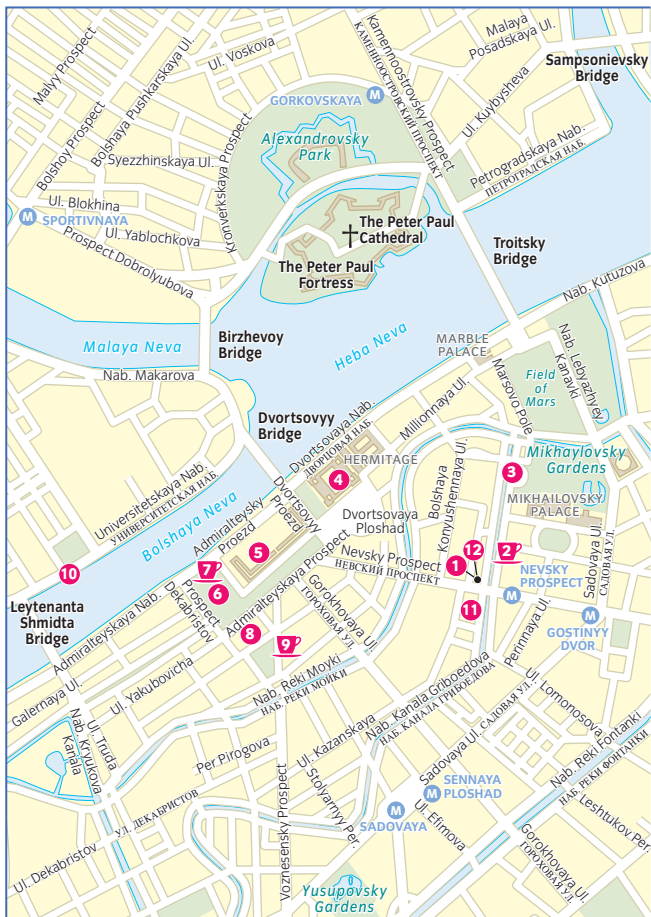
# 1

## The Best **Full-Day** **Tours**



PETRO PRIMO  
CATHARINA SECUNDA  
MDCCLXXXII

## The Best in One Day



- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 The Singer Building             | 10 The Angliiskaya Naberezhnaya<br>(English Embankment) |
| 2 Frikadelki/Prokoffi             | 11 The Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan                   |
| 3 The Church of the Spilled Blood | 12 Eliseevskiy Gastronom                                |
| 4 Palace Square & The Hermitage   | 13 The Anichkov Bridge                                  |
| 5 The Admiralty                   | 14 Get&Go   |
| 6 The Bronze Horseman             | 15 The Alexander Nevsky Monastery                       |
| 7 Ploshad Dekabristov             | 16 Vostochniy Express                                   |
| 8 St. Isaac's Cathedral           |   |
| 9 The Gallery, Angleterre Hotel   |   |



**A** 'get your bearings' tour taking you from the Winter Palace to the famous dead at the Alexander Nevsky cemetery, via the key sights on main thoroughfare Nevsky Prospect. While the points here have been arranged in a way that makes geographic sense, feel free to mix and match, timing wise: the riverside embankments are a joy to wander as the sun goes down over the Neva. **START: from Nevsky Prospect Metro onto the Griboedov Canal for the Church of the Spilled Blood**

**1 ★★★ The Singer Building.**

The first thing you see as you emerge from Nevsky Prospect metro, this classic piece of Style Moderne (p 105) was built for the Singer sewing machine company in 1904. Originally home to the US Embassy, a bank, and a museum of costume—in addition to the Singer offices on the upper floors, busily engaged in supplying uniforms to the Imperial army—it housed Petrogosizdata (the Petrograd State Publishing House), with the Dom Knigi (literally 'House of Books') on the two lower floors. Don't be misled by signs telling you literature is on the second floor: bear right from the entrance for a good selection of novels in English, as well as maps, guidebooks and souvenirs. **Nevsky**

*The Style Moderne former Singer building, now Dom Knigi.*



*Prospect d. 28. ☎ 812 448 2355. 24hr. Metro: Nevsky Prospect.*

**2 ★ Frikadelki/Prokoffi.** This is a long tour, so fill up on traditional Russian salads, coffee and cakes at either of these ultra-cheap buffets on the canal: Frikadelki's best, in my view. *Frikadelki, Nab. Kanala Griboedova d. 8/1. ☎ 812 571 5135. Prokoffi (same address). ☎ 314 5629. \$.*

**3 ★★★ The Church of the Spilled Blood.** Psychedelic domes on this Russian Revival masterpiece hit you as you turn into the Griboedov Canal. Built in 1883 to commemorate Tsar Alexander II's assassination in 1881 (an ironic end for one of the few Romanov reformers and the liberator of the serfs), this is an orgy of Russian nationalism, built in the nine-domed Muscovy style of St. Basil's cathedral (albeit some 300 years later), with the belfry decorated with the insignia of the cities and regions of Russia, and a series of plaques on the exterior walls celebrating the late 19th century reforms which were to prove their originator's undoing. The canal embankment was extended to allow the church to be built over the exact spot of the assassination, (which is now enshrined), complete with the original cobble stones. With the building only completed in 1907, a decade before the Revolution, the church has never been consecrated and



*The Church of the Spilled Blood.*

faced repeated threats of demolition throughout the Soviet era, before being made a protected monument in 1968. **Canal Griboedova d. 2a.** ☎ 812 315 1636. <http://eng.cathedral.ru/saviour>. Admission 300R adults, 170R kids. 10am–7pm, closed Wed. Metro: Nevsky Prospect.

**4 ★★★ Palace Square & The Hermitage.** The main attraction, but impossible to do in one day (or even a week). This timetable allows for two hours or so running through the Hermitage's State Rooms or your personal favorites: Grandmasters, the Italian Renaissance, or the Impressionists. Check the mini-tours on p 26–p 37 and take your pick. The arch through which you'll enter the square was built by Carlo Rossi 1823–1829. Previously the Head Quarters of the General Staff, the left wing is now part of the Hermitage Museum (see p 31). The Alexander Column in the center (August Montferrand, 1832) was erected to commemorate victory over Napoleon in 1812. Named

for Tsar Alexander I (whose face is reproduced on the angel at the top), it took more than 3,000 builders and troops to erect in 1834.

**5 ★ The Admiralty.** Nothing remains of Peter the Great's original fortress and shipyard, built here in 1704, although Konnogvardeisky Bulvar follows the route of the canal which once ran from here to New Holland. The Neoclassical building you see was built by Adrian Zakhraov in 1806–1823: it now houses the Naval Engineering Institute, and is closed to the public. Don't miss the ship-shaped weather vane on top of the spire, said to be based on Peter the Great's own korablik or 'little ship'. With the facades facing the river now quite shockingly tatty, this is best viewed from among the statues (and beer tents) of the Alexandrovsky Sad (the Maxim Gorky Workers' Garden until 1989). Directly behind, the building at No. 2 (now the Museum of the History of the Political Police) previously housed Felix Dzerzhinsky's Extraordinary Commission, an early forerunner to the KGB (see p 69). **Admiralteysky Proezd d. 1.**

*Carlo Rossi's Admiralty Arch.*



## Russian Museums: Need to Know

**Dual Pricing:** Some museums still operate dual pricing for Russian nationals and foreigners: ‘foreigner’ rates are shown throughout this guide. **Opening Times:** Russian museums close one day a week, usually Monday. Many also close for cleaning (the so-called ‘sanitarny den’) usually—although by no means always—on the final Monday of every month. **Floor Numbering:** What Europeans call the ground floor will be the first floor in Russia. This system is used throughout this book.

### 6 ★★ The Bronze Horseman.

Taking its name from Pushkin’s well-loved poem of 1833, this monument was commissioned by Catherine the Great in 1782, mounted on the ‘Thunder Stone’, a 1,600 ton boulder from Konnaya-Lakhta. The somewhat immodest inscription reads: ‘To Peter the First. From Catherine the Second.’ The square on which it sits was formed when the Senate and Synod (Carlo Rossi, 1834) were built along its western side. Now home to the Constitutional Court, look out for the plaque on the Senate commemorating the December 1825 uprising from which the square takes its name, where army officers led 3,000 troops in protest at Nicholas I’s accession to the throne. You’ll find some (all too rare) restrooms at the top of Konnogvardeiskiy Bulvar, between the Synod and the former Imperial Stables (the Manege). *Ploshad Dekabristov.*

### 7 ★★★ Ploshad Dekabristov.

Steer clear of the shashlik (kebabs) at this chaotic summer café facing the river, but be sure to stop for a beer: the nightly karaoke is just too hilarious to miss, as the fifty-plus generation belt out classic 1960s party-political pop. *Ploshad Dekabristov. No phone. \$.*

### 8 ★★★ St. Isaac’s Cathedral.

With its colonnades open until 4am during summer, this must be the city’s most romantic venue. The third cathedral to stand on this site (Peter the Great was married in the first), this was built by Auguste de Montferrand (together with more than half a million laborers over 40 years) and consecrated in 1858. Personally, I never pay the 300-ruble entrance fee: save your time to drink in the exquisite sculpture on the portico and dome. *Isaakievskaya Ploshad d.1. ☎ 812 315 9732. <http://eng.cathedral.ru>. Cathedral tickets 300R adults, 170R kids, colonnade 150R adults, 100R kids, 300R after 7pm. Cathedral 10am–7pm (and 7pm–10.30pm summer), colonnade 10am–6pm (and 7pm–4am summer). Closed Wed.*

### 9 ★★★ The Gallery, Anglettere Hotel.

Allegedly the poor relation to the Astoria next door, although I’ve never understood why. Stop for coffee in its perfectly preserved 1912 Art Deco interior, directly overlooking St Isaac’s Square. *M. Morskaya Ul. d. 24. ☎ 812 494 5125. \$\$.*

### 10 The Angliiskaya Naberezhnaya (English Embankment).

It’s a fascinating walk along Bolshaya Morskaya back to Nevsky



*The Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan.*

Prospect if you're so minded, but summer visitors shouldn't pass up the chance to enjoy a drink with the rest of the population at the summer cafes along the river bank. Don't miss the ornate Palace of Weddings at No. 28, or the monument in front of No. 44 (now the Museum of the History of St Petersburg, see p 49), marking the spot at which the *Avrora Cruiser* was moored the night the Revolution started, 25th October 1917.

**11 The Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan.** With the colonnade currently under scaffolding, and with a very relaxed approach to rubble

removal, Andrei Voronikhin's Neoclassical masterpiece (built in 1801–1811) isn't looking its best. It's worth a visit just to marvel at any government that could turn a building like this (in 1932) into a 'Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism'. The two statues in front are to Mikhail Kutuzov (hero of the Napoleonic War, buried in the chapel on the left-hand side) and Barclay de Tolly, Minister of War during Napoleon's invasion in 1812. *Kazanskaya Ploshad d. 2.* 📞 812 318 2548. Admission free. Daily, 8am–8pm. Metro: Nevsky Prospect.

## Telephone Numbers

The 812 St Petersburg city code is shown throughout this guide. If dialing long-distance, you'll need to prefix the number you're calling with '8' and wait for a tone before dialing the number. For international calls, dial '8', wait for a tone, then dial '10' before dialing the country code: see Savvy Traveler, p 163. Many small businesses here use mobile phones: these are 10-digit numbers, always prefixed with '8'.

**12 ★★★ Eliseevskiy**

**Gastronom.** This Style Moderne masterpiece, opened by the Eliseev brothers in 1903 (and the Soviet-era 'Gastronom No. 1'), has been closed since January 2007, no longer viable in the face of Nevsky's soaring rents, and the city government's insistence it remain a grocery.

The original fittings are still in place, however, so peer through the doors for a glimpse of the stained glass lining the main hall, and don't miss A.G. Adamson's allegorical sculptures (Industry, Commerce, Art and Science) outside. **Nevsky Prospect d. 28. Metro: Nevsky Prospect.**

**13 The Anichkov Bridge.** Don't get back on the metro without taking a moment to snap the Horse Tamers on each corner of this bridge, the first to be built in St Petersburg, in 1715. Peter Klodt von Urgensburg's statues were erected in 1851, Tsar Nicholas I had sent previous versions to Prussia and Naples. Urban myth has it that the sculptor—out of sheer frustration—carved the Tsar's face in the veins of one of the horses,

Statue at the Eliseevskiy Gastronom.



although others claim it is the face of his worst enemy, or his mistress. Pick up the green line (Line 3) at Gostiny Dvor metro and it's two stops directly to Ploshad Alexandra Nevskovo.

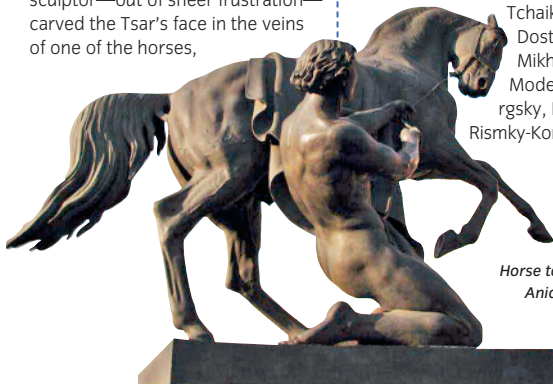
**14P Get&Go.**

In a city where it's all too easy to spend \$6 on a cup of coffee, it's worth breaking your journey at Mayakovskaya metro for this deli-style coffee bar in the Nevsky Atrium shopping mall. Fresh croissants and American style coffee for less than you'd pay at home. **Nevsky Prospect d. 71. No phone. \$.**

**15 The Alexander Nevsky**

**Monastery.** Founded by Peter the Great in 1710 to celebrate Alexander Nevsky's victory over Sweden in 1240, the Tikhvinskoye Cemetery has been the final resting place of St Petersburg's favorite sons since 1823. See p 54 for the full tour, or simply pay your respects to

Tchaikovsky,  
Dostoevsky,  
Mikhail Glinka,  
Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai  
Rismky-Korsakov,



Horse tamers on the Anichkov Bridge.





*The Alexander Nevsky Monastery.*

Anton Rubinstein, and the city's perestroika reformist mayor, Anatoly Sobchak. **Ploshad Alexandra Nevskovo d. 1** ☎ 812 274 1113, ☎ 812 274 2635. [www.lavra.spb.ru/](http://www.lavra.spb.ru/). Admission 60R. Daily 9.30am–5.30pm, closed Wed. Metro: Ploshad Alexandra Nevskovo.

**16** ★★★ **Vostochniy Express.**

Perfect Russian cooking and cheap prices: one to remember and come back to. Ignore the pricier restaurant next door in favor of the informal 'buf-fet' offering traditional soups, main courses, and fabulous *hachapuri* (Georgian cheese-filled bread). Feed a family from 350 rubles a head. **Ul. Marata d. 21.** ☎ 812 314 5096. \$\$.

## St Petersburg by Night

You can pick up a boat almost anywhere in the center but for a midnight cruise head down to the Admiralteisky Quay, right at the water's edge, opposite the *Tsar Carpenter* statue of Peter the Great and guarded by two marble lions, it's impossible to miss. Tickets sell out fast, so get there early and take advantage of the many summer beer tents. Boat tickets are available at Kassa No. 1, Lion Quay, Admiralteiskaya Nab. d. 2. ☎ 812 716 5886, ☎ 812 233 4577. Night trips 450R, 500R weekends. Or try AstraMarine, Admiralteiskaya Nab. d. 2. ☎ 812 320 0877. If you prefer dry land, you'll find numerous night-time bus tours among the bargain coaches to Helsinki outside the Bukvoed bookshop on Ploshad Vosstaniya. Admiral Tours depart at 11pm every night. Ploshad Vosstaniya. ☎ 812 971 5050.

## The Best in Two Days



- 1** The Vernisazh
- 2** The Russian Museum (Mikhailovsky Palace)
- 3** Stray Dog Cafe
- 4** The Mikhailovsky Garden
- 5** The Mikhailovsky Engineers' Castle

- 6** Chizhik Pizhik
- 7** The Stieglitz Museum of Applied Arts
- 8** The Summer Palace & Summer Garden
- 9** The Marble Palace

**A** day of pure decadence, among the most ornate of the **Romanov** palaces and gardens, exploring the art of the Russian Museum, the statues of the Letniy Sad, and the moats of the Engineers' Castle. **START: at the Vernisazh (market) directly behind the Church of the Spilled Blood.**

**1 The Vernisazh.** Most souvenir tourist-traps pall after about five minutes: but not this one, sandwiched between the Griboedov Canal and the River Moika, overlooking the Mikhailovsky Garden. All the *matroshkas* (Russian nesting dolls), fur hats, and Lenin busts you'd expect, and also amber, mini Fabergé eggs, and Lomonosov porcelain. **Nab. Kanala Griboedova d. 2.** ☎ 812 167 1628. *Daily, 9.30am–6pm.*

**2 ★★★ The Russian Museum (Mikhailovsky Palace).** See below for the full tour. There are two entrances to this museum, one directly from the Benios Wing on the Griboedov Canal, the other from the Mikhailovsky Palace wing on Ploshad Isskustv. If using the latter, take 10 minutes for an ice-cream or a beer in the shade of the Alexander Pushkin statue, erected in 1957 to commemorate the city's 250th anniversary.

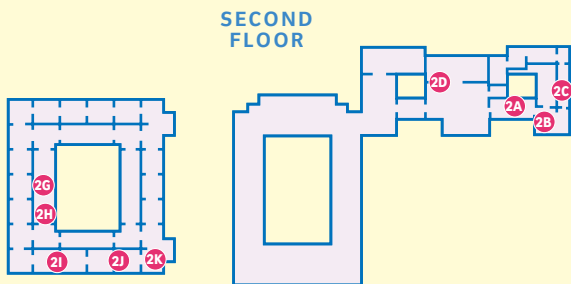
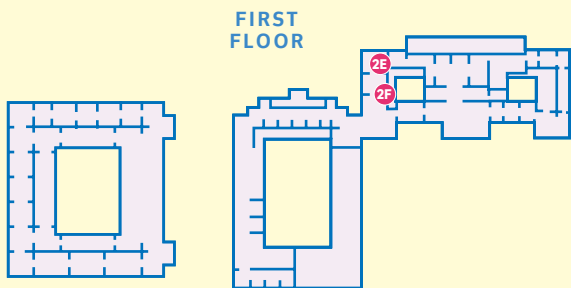
For something more upmarket, go to the Stray Dog Café.

The Mikhailovsky Palace was built in 1819–1835 for the youngest son of Paul I, and opened to the public as the Emperor Alexander III Russian Museum in 1898. This tour is highly selective, covering the best-known masterpieces only, but you should be able to do it in about two hours. Fans of Andrei Rublev, Dionysus, Simon Ushakov and other icon masters should head for Rooms 3 and 4 **2A–2B**: while the prize exhibits are Rublev's *The Baptism* (1408) and *Apostle Paul* (1408), the most striking piece is Ushakov's *The Old Testament Trinity* (1671). Room 5 **2C** contains some fascinating portraits of Peter the Great: don't miss Carlo Rastrelli's cast of Peter the Great's face, made in 1719, and compare it to Bartolomeo Rastrelli's very different bust beside it,

*The Mikhailovsky Palace, home to the Russian Museum.*



## The Russian Museum



completed in 1810. Don't miss Ivan Nikitin's *Portrait of Peter I on his Deathbed* (1725). Rooms 5 to 23 cover 19th-century art (there's an interesting portrait of 'Mad' Paul I (V.L. Borovikovskiy, 1800) as you leave the main gallery in Room 12 **2D**), but things don't get really interesting until you go downstairs to the Rossi Wing, en route to the Avant Gardists in the Benois. Rooms

33–35 are dedicated to Ilya Repin (1844–1930), a leading artist of the Peredvizhniki (or 'Wanderers') school, in revolt against the prevailing classicism of the Academy of Arts. The real masterpieces here are the *Bargemen on the Volga* **2E** (1870–1873) and *Zaporozhe Cossacks Writing a Letter to the Sultan* (1880–1891) **2F**. Once you reach the Benois wing, head straight for

Mikhail Vrubel's works in Rooms 74 and 75, including *Hamlet and Ophelia* (1884), *Flying Demon* (1899) **2G**, and *Morning* (1897) **2H**. Room 78 **2I** has three works by Vasily Kandinsky, *George* (1911), *Picture with Edges* (1919), and *Improvisation* (1910). The Avant Gardists start in Room 80 **2J**, with Alexander Rodchenko's *White Circle* (1918) and *Black on Black* (1918) as well as some more political works on the far wall, and continue into Room 81 with Kazimir Malevich's *Girls in a Field* (1928–1929) and *Suprematism* (1915–1916). 🕒 2 hrs. *Inzhenernaya Ul. d. 4.* 📞 495 595 4248. [www.rusmuseum.ru](http://www.rusmuseum.ru). Admission to this museum only, 350R adults, 150R kids. Tickets to all branches of the Russian Museum 600R adults, 300R kids. Wed–Mon 10am–6pm, to 5pm Mon.

**3** **Stray Dog Cafe.** A magnet for futurist poets (including Vladimir Mayakovsky and Boris Pasternak), the Stray Dog Cabaret (or Society for Intimate Theater) ran for three years until closed by the authorities in 1915. The sense of history is palpable.

Although the service will drive you stark staring mad.

*Ploshad Isskustv d. 5/4.*

📞 812 315 7764. \$\$\$

#### **4** ★★★ **The Mikhailovsky Garden.**

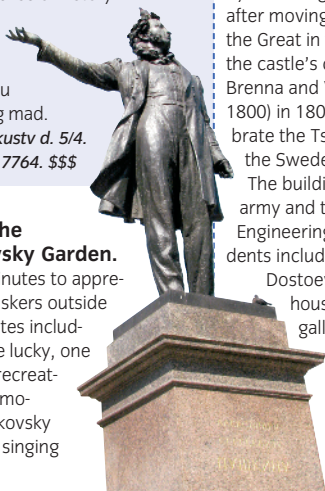
Take five minutes to appreciate the buskers outside the main gates including, if you're lucky, one gifted soul recreating fully harmonized Tchaikovsky on a tray of singing

glasses (see [www.crystalharmony.ru](http://www.crystalharmony.ru)). Originally attached to the Summer Palace of Catherine I, the gardens were re-laid in 1823–1825. Admire the Neoclassicism of the Mikhailovsky Palace (the Russian Museum's) rear view, then head north for the Rossi Pavillion (1825) and boat deck. Leave via the gates to the right of the Pavillion and you'll emerge directly opposite the Mikhailovsky (Engineers') Castle, testament to the eccentricity of Catherine the Great's only son, 'Mad' Paul I. *Inzhenernaya Ul. d. 4.* 📞 495 595 4248. Admission free. Daily, 10am–10pm May–Sept, 10am–8pm Oct–Mar. Closed Apr.

#### **5** ★ **The Mikhailovsky Castle (Engineers' Castle).**

Tsar Paul I's morbid fear of assassination and fascination with the Medieval were combined in this castle (complete with moat and drawbridges), built at the confluence of the Moika and Fontanka rivers. Legends abound, of a secret passage direct from the Royal bedroom, and tunnels carved under the Field of Mars (see p 42). All to no effect. He was murdered by his own guardsmen six weeks after moving in. The statue of Peter the Great in front was erected on the castle's completion (Vincenzo Brenna and Vasily Bazhenov 1797–1800) in 1801: the bas reliefs celebrate the Tsar's victories against the Swedes at Poltava and Hango.

The building was given to the army and the Central College of Engineering opened in 1822: students included a 16-year-old Fyodor Dostoevsky, in 1837. It now houses Romanov portrait galleries, Russian folk art and sculpture: worth a



*Alexander Pushkin statue on Ploshad Isskustv.*

visit if only for a look inside the restored state rooms. *Sadovaya Ul. d. 2*. ☎ 812 570 5112. Admission 300R adults, 150R kids (also includes entry to the Marble Palace and Summer Palace below). Wed–Mon 10am–6pm (to 5pm Mon).

**6 Chizhik Pizhik.** You'll see the crowds around this tiny statue as you approach the Panteleimonovsky Bridge: they're trying to throw coins to land on the head of the little metal bird underneath. Its name comes from an old Russian rhyme, a reference to the green-capped students (including a young Pyotr Tchaikovsky) from the Imperial College of Law on the Fontanka Embankment. Seven identical statues have been stolen since the first was installed in 1994.

**7 The Stieglitz Museum of Applied Arts.** Founded by Baron Alexander von Stieglitz in 1878, its architect (and first director) Maximilian Messmacher's building was inspired by the Italian Renaissance, although individual halls were

*Chizhik Pizhik.*



*The Engineers' Castle.*

decorated to match their original contents: don't miss the 18th-century Russian art: inspired by the Terem Palace in the Kremlin. Severely depleted after the Revolution, when many pieces were transferred to the Hermitage, it closed in 1926 before re-opening in 1945. Still used to display works by students of the Central School of Design (for whom it was originally built), its exhibits include glass, ceramics, porcelain and costumes from the 16th–20th centuries. *Solyarny Per. d. 9*. ☎ 812 273 3258. [www.stieglitzmuseum.ru](http://www.stieglitzmuseum.ru). 120R adults, 50R kids. Tues–Sat 11am–5pm.

**8 The Summer Palace & Summer Garden.** The modest, 14-roomed palace is worth visiting as an example of early Petrine architecture (see p 58), or simply to see the private rooms of Peter the Great and his wife, Catherine I. The oldest of the city gardens, the Letniy Sad, was established in 1704 and its layout completed in 1725. While the statues you now see are all copies,

they do nonetheless match the 100-plus figures that had been placed in the garden by 1728. Cut through the **Field of Mars** past the **Monument to Revolutionary Fighters** (see p 42) for the Marble Palace. *Letniy Sad*. ☎ 812 312 9666. 10am–10pm, May–Oct, 10am–8pm Oct–Mar. Closed Apr. Summer Palace open Wed–Mon 10am–6pm (to 5pm Mon).

**9 The Marble Palace.** Built by Antonio Rinaldi 1768–1785 for Catherine the Great's favorite (or lover?) Count Orlov, the Marble Palace (so-called for the 32 different types used in its construction) set new standards of opulence, even then. Perhaps the reason the Soviet government chose it to house the History of Material Culture (1919–1936) and, thereafter, a branch of the Lenin Museum. There's a permanent exhibition on *Foreign Artists in Russia*, but the real draw is the modern art in the *Peter Ludwig at the Russian Museum* collection, including works by Andy Warhol.



Statue in the Letniy Sad.

Millionnaya Ul. d. 5/1. ☎ 812 312 9054. Wed–Mon 10am–6pm (to 5pm Mon).

*The Alexander III statue at the Marble Palace.*



# The Best in Three Days



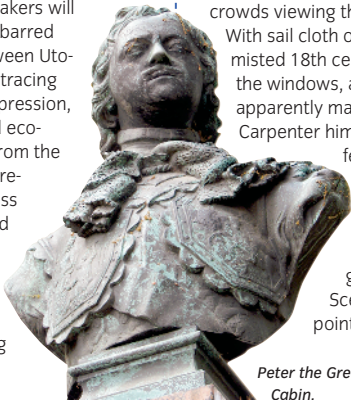


**The Romanov summer palaces (Peterhof, Tsarskoe Tselo)** are architecturally stunning and decadent beyond belief: a must see, even on a whistlestop trip (see Chapter 10). If you don't want to go beyond the city, however, the Petrogradsky and Vasilievsky islands north of the River Neva offer plenty to explore. **START: from Gorkovskaya metro, heading south down Kamenoostrovsky Prospect and east into Ulitsa Kuibisheva.**

**1 Sladkoeshka.** Only for the sweet-toothed, but still worth a visit for the sheer eye-boggling excess of the cakes on sale here. Open from 10am, follow the northern boundary of Alexandrovsky Park for a cup of coffee before you start. *Kronversky Prospect d. 47.* ☎ 812 310 8005. \$

## 2 ★★★ The State Museum of the Political History of Russia.

Housed in the former mansion of Mariinsky prima ballerina Mathilda Kshesinskaya (one of the city's Style Moderne landmarks, see p 105), much of the content does reflect its previous incarnations as a branch of the Central Lenin Museum and, later, the State Museum of the Great October Socialist Revolution. While it covers the key moments in 19th and 20th century Russian history (from the reforms of the 1860s to the events of 1917 and the Russian Civil War), the main draw for non-Russian speakers will be the no-holds-barred 'Soviet Era: Between Utopia and Reality,' tracing the history of repression, propaganda and economic realities from the mid-1920s to perestroika. Don't miss Lenin's office and the office of the Bolshevik Central Committee, kept as they were during the Bolsheviks' occupancy



in April–July 1917, or the video recording of Mikhail Gorbachev under house arrest during the coup of August 1991: and for an insight into Vladimir Putin's rise to power, see the newest collection, 'Russian Politics, With a Petersburg Face.' ⌚ 2 hrs. 2/4 Kuibysheva Ul. d. 2/4. ☎ 812 449 2833. [www.polithistory.ru/en/](http://www.polithistory.ru/en/). Admission 200R adults, 100R kids, tours in English from 250R pp, but call in advance. Daily 10am–6pm, closed Thurs. Metro: Gorkovskaya.

**3 Peter's Cabin.** I've almost come to blows with (philistine) friends over this, underwhelmed by the tiny log cabin built in three days by the newly arrived Tsar in May 1703. Although it did not officially become a museum until 1931, its importance was clear almost immediately after Peter's death, its first protective covering being built in 1723 and the interior altered in 1742 to allow easier access for the crowds viewing the Tsar's icon. With sail cloth on the walls, misted 18th century glass in the windows, and an armchair apparently made by the Tsar Carpenter himself, I've always felt it gives a direct sense of the founding fathers' austere and courageous lives. Sceptics, however, point out that the

*Peter the Great at Peter's Cabin.*



*The Aurora Cruiser.*

walls are suspiciously IKEA-smooth.

🕒 30 min. Petrovskaya Nab. d. 6.

☎️ 812 232 4576. [www.rusmuseum.ru/eng/](http://www.rusmuseum.ru/eng/). Admission 200R adults, 70R kids. Daily 10am–5pm, closed Tues. Metro: Gorkovskaya.

**4** ★★★ **kids** **The Aurora Cruiser.** Small boys will love this: a real battleship with real guns, and the chance to go below deck to visit the communications and boiler rooms. Its role in the Revolution (see p 39) is legendary—and

heavily disputed—some claiming the shots fired to signal the 25th October assault on the Winter Palace were, in fact, blanks. Nonetheless, the cabin from which Lenin broadcast the news of the Bolshevik victory is a must-see. There's a fascinating photo gallery covering its role in the Russo-Japanese War, the Revolution, and the dismantling of its guns for use on the frontline during the Siege of Leningrad (see p 50). With much material in Russian, it's worth taking advantage of any guides that may approach you. Be prepared for steep and narrow staircases: no heels. 🕒 1 hr. 2/4 *Kuibysheva Ul. d. 2/4.* ☎️ 812 230 8440. [www.aurora.org.ru](http://www.aurora.org.ru). Admission free. 10.30am–4pm, closed Mon and Fri. Metro: Gorkovskaya, then tram 2, 6, or 63.

**5** ★★★ **kids** **The Peter Paul Cathedral: Graves of the Tsars.**

Another magnet for small boys, it's worth taking a full day to do justice to the Peter Paul Fortress's prisons, cannon and ghoulish history, particularly if combined with the Artillery Museum directly behind (see p 67 for the full tour). If you're short of

## St Petersburg by Helicopter

Prices are eye-wateringly high, but if you've ever dreamt of viewing St Petersburg from the air, it's perfectly possible to arrange.

**Baltic Air** run 15-minute flights from the Peter Paul Fortress helipad at 2,000 rubles per person, Sat–Sun only, 12pm–6pm. ☎️ 812 704 1676, ☎️ 812 571 0084. They run a similar service at Peterhof (see p 162). **Airtours** will fly anywhere you like, any day from Monday to Thursday, starting at €2,100 per hour: they'll take off from the Peter Paul Fortress if you wish, although that's an additional €1,000. ☎️ 812 902 9029, ☎️ 812 969 6932. [www.airtours.spb.ru/excursions.htm](http://www.airtours.spb.ru/excursions.htm). A number of tour companies offer excursions taking off from Pulkovo: **U-Piter** are among the cheapest, with hire of a four-seater starting at 45,000 rubles per hour. ☎️ 812 458 8048, ☎️ 8 921 377 5540, ☎️ 812 322 9240.

## The St Petersburg Metro

Its development put on hold by the exigencies of recovery after the Siege, St Petersburg's first metro line (the Kirovsko-Vyborskaya (red)) did not open until 1955—two years after Stalin's death, when Khrushchev was already cutting back on the worst excesses of the earlier regime. As a result, only this line comes close to matching the glamour of the Moscow metro, but its central stations do not disappoint. **Ploshad Vosstania** is said to have the last remaining sculpture of Stalin (see p 42); and look closely at the sculptured panel you'll see above the escalators at **Narvskaya**: the characters seem to be encircling (and looking at) a blank space. Urban myth has it that a figure of Stalin was due to be placed here—never completed, for reasons of either death or dishonor. The station does, apparently, have a panel of Stalin, hidden behind a false wall in 1961. **Avtovo** is currently undergoing restoration, but the floor-to-ceiling cut glass on the pillars is still impressive, as is the sheer volume of granite, running from the cupola-topped ticket hall to the platforms.

time, however, head for the Peter Paul Cathedral, burial place of almost all members of the Romanov dynasty. Peter the Great is here, as are Catherine II, Nicholas and Alexandra, and the children of the last Imperial family, re-interred in 1998. While the original cathedral

was consecrated directly after the founding of the city (in 1704), this building was completed in 1733. Don't miss the iconostasis—an icon-filled tower rather than the typical layered screen—and try to time your visit for the daily cannon shot (from the Naryshkin Bastion) at noon.

*Ploshad Vosstaniya metro.*





*The Rostoral Columns.*

🕒 1 hr. 📞 812 230 232 9454. Admission to the cathedral only 150R adults, 70R kids. Daily 10am–8pm. Access to the belltower is possible at certain times (closed Wed), at 150R adults, 60R kids. Metro:

*The Strelka.*

Gorkovskaya, then marshrutka (mini-bus) Nos 46, 76, 183, 223, bus No. 6 or tram No. 46. Tram No. 6 also runs from the Avrora (see above).

6 ★★★ **The Strelka.** It's a long walk from the Peter Paul Fortress to the Strelka (the eastern-most spit of Vasilevsky Island), but worth it for the views of the Palace Embankment, Birzhevaya Ploshad (Exchange Square) and, if you time it right, floodlight fountains as you cross the Birzhevoy Bridge. This is one spot definitely to be visited during White Nights, when—during the annual Economic Forum or *Aliye Parusa* end of term street party—flares are lit from the top of the Rostoral Columns and lasers shoot across the facades of the Winter Palace. If you're still on your feet, follow Birzhevoy Proezd eastwards and wander the statue-lined Mendeleyevskaya Liniya and the Twelve Colleges, built between 1722–1742 to house Peter the Great's various ministries, now part of St Petersburg State University. See the full Vasilevsky Island tour on p 78. ●

