

ST. PETERSBURG: TREASURES OF THE RUSSIAN TSARS

27 February – 3 March 2019

Tour Leader: Tania Illingworth



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DISCOVER ARCHITECTURAL AND ARTISTIC WONDERS

Once again, by popular demand, Tania Illingworth (née Tolstoy) visits St. Petersburg - the legendary city founded by Peter the Great on the Gulf of Finland in 1703. This special tour explores the unique and unsurpassed legacy of architectural and artistic treasures, created and collected by successive Tsars, Tsarinas and their courtiers, both in the city itself and the surrounding countryside. St. Petersburg remains the only post WW2 city in Europe to have been rebuilt to its original 18th / 19th century classical skyline and retains a unique architectural harmony. The glorious palaces are fully furnished complete with all their works of art. The tour is accompanied throughout by Tania Illingworth and two guides, including one day at the Palaces accompanied by the fluent English-speaking Professor Alexei Leporc, a Curator in the Department of Western European Art at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.

This is a comprehensive introduction to St. Petersburg at a perfect time of year when this imperial city basks in wintry splendour and tourism is minimal. Highlights of the tour include: the Winter Palace which houses the State Hermitage Museum - one of the greatest art collections ever gathered in one place - and a day excursion to the famed 'summer palaces' seeing the grandiose rococo Catherine Palace with its superb State Rooms including the recreated Amber Room. Enjoy the thrill of a troika ride through the snow-covered 'English' Park to the Rose Pavilion! See the fine neo-Classical Palace of Pavlovsk and the exquisite Rococo private theatre at Prince Yussupov's Palace. The newly-opened Fabergé Museum (formerly Count Shuvalov's Palace) is a final highlight. There will be a private view of the world's largest collection of the Tsars' unsurpassed Fabergé 'Easter gift eggs' as well as hundreds of exquisite photograph frames, clocks, and cigarette cases made by the world famous Carl Fabergé.

There will be an opportunity to attend a ballet performance in its spiritual home - the renowned Mariinsky Theatre (ex Kirov Theatre) with its blue and gold auditorium and impressive Imperial Box, is considered one of the world's most beautiful theatres. Mariinsky II which opened in May 2013 at a cost of £450m, will also have a choice of performances. The exact programme of ballet and opera performances will only be available approximately 6 weeks prior to performance.





The Winter Palace

5-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 27 FEBRUARY 2019

27 February London / St. Petersburg

Depart London Heathrow on a British Airways morning flight to St. Petersburg. On arrival, transfer to St. Petersburg's most impressive building – The Winter Palace. Built in the mid-18th century in Baroque style by Rastrelli, the palace was once the winter home of the Imperial family but is now The State Hermitage Museum housing one of the greatest art collections ever gathered in one place. See the impressive collection of Impressionist and post-Impressionist masterpieces by Matisse, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Monet and others, alongside works from every notable school and artist of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Transfer to the centrally located Astoria Hotel, where four nights are

spent. Originally opened in 1913, this is the most central and charming of all the St. Petersburg hotels and, having been restored to its former glory, offers unmatched comfort in elegant surroundings. Dinner in the Astoria Cafe at the hotel.

28 February St. Petersburg

Your tour of St. Petersburg begins with a short walk to return to the State Hermitage Museum. Apart from the sumptuously furnished State Rooms, you will also see some of the unrivalled collections of European sculpture and masterpieces, the majority amassed during the reign of Catherine the Great. See more of the spectacular collection housed there which includes works by some of the world's most renowned artists such as Leonardo, Titian, Raphael, Goya, Velazquez, Van Dyck, Rembrandt and

many more. Lunch at a restaurant close by. Visit the 18th century Yussupov Palace which was once owned by the richest family in Russia, where the restored State Rooms can be seen, some still with their original furniture. Also see the exquisite Rococo private theatre where Chaliapin and Nicholas II performed amateur dramatics, and the cellars where the murder of Rasputin took place in December 1916. The scene eerily recreated in wax. Return to the hotel for an evening illustrated lecture (accompanied by vodka!) on 'St. Petersburg: City of Imperial Splendour' by Professor Alexei Leporc. Dinner under own arrangements.

1 March St. Petersburg

Return to the Hermitage Museum to see more of the spectacular collection



Traditional Russian Troika



Yusupov Palace

housed there which includes works by some of the world's most renowned artists such as Titian, Raphael, Goya, Velazquez, Van Dyck, Rembrandt and Watteau. There will also be the opportunity to view the dazzling Romanov Jewels Exhibition, featuring exquisite jewellery and objets d'art from the Imperial Collections, including diplomatic gifts and pieces commissioned from the renowned Carl Fabergé

Lunch at the Russian Vodka Room. See the famous statue of Peter the Great 'The Bronze Horseman' which was commissioned by Catherine the Great, and the magnificent waterfront with its panoramic views across the frozen River Neva before crossing the river to the Peter and Paul Fortress on Hare Island. Begun by Peter the Great in 1703, its massive stone walls surround a variety of early

18th century buildings including the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, where the tombs of all the Tsars and Tsarinas from Peter the Great onwards lie, including the last Tsar Nicholas II and most of his family, who were finally laid to rest here in 1998. Return to the hotel and dinner under own arrangements.

2 March Pavlovsk & Tsarskoye Selo

Today, accompanied by Professor Leporc, drive 29km outside the city to the Palace of Pavlovsk. Built by Catherine the Great for her son the future Tsar Paul I, the palace was designed by the Jacobite architect Charles Cameron and completed in 1796 in the most exquisite neo-Classical style. It has a series of elegantly decorated rooms filled with original furniture, exemplifying the best of 18th century taste and

craftsmanship during Russia's 'Golden Age'. Afterwards enjoy a troika ride through the snow-covered 'English' park. Continue to Tsarskoye Selo, translated as 'Tsars' Village', the town of Imperial Palaces which in the 19th century was the summer retreat of the Court and the aristocracy.

Lunch at Admiralty Restaurant. Visit Rastrelli's grandiose white, turquoise and gold rococo Catherine Palace which has a series of superb State Rooms including the famous Amber Room which 'vanished' in World War II but has now been recreated after painstaking work spanning more than 30 years. Return to the hotel and dinner under own arrangements.

3 March St. Petersburg / London

This morning enjoy a private visit to the recently opened Fabergé



St Isaac's Cathedral

Museum. The Ukrainian oil and mining magnate Viktor Vekselberg has reportedly spent \$30m renovating the former 18th century palace of Count Shuvalov where his personal collection of hundreds of exquisite Faberge clocks, cigar and cigarette cases are superbly displayed. V. Vekselburg bought the entire Forbes family collection of 'Imperial Easter Eggs' in one presale swoop purchase from Sotheby's for over \$100m in 2004 and the haul includes the famous Coronation Egg that Nicholas II presented to his wife in 1897. Fabergé enjoyed immediate fame from 1885 onwards both in Russia and across Europe until 1916. Fabergé's unsurpassed workmanship and designs, combined with the sheer wealth of materials, remain unique.

Return to the hotel to pick up luggage and continue to lunch at

a local restaurant. Drive via the moving Memorial to the Defenders of Leningrad which commemorates the great 999-day siege the city suffered during World War II, to the airport for a British Airways flight back to London, arriving at Heathrow Airport in the late afternoon.

NB: During your stay there will be an opportunity to attend an opera or ballet performance at the famous Mariinsky Theatre. The theatre, with its dazzling blue and gold interior, dates from 1859 and was named after Empress Marya (wife of Alexander II). It is home to the world-famous Kirov Opera and Ballet, which has now reverted to its original name of Mariinsky. Further details of performances at Mariinsky II and the State Mikhailovsky Theatre will only be available about 6 weeks prior to performance.

TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£2,395
Single Supplement	£390
Visa Fees (as at 26/04/18)	£145

PRICE INCLUDES

- Economy class scheduled flights
- Air passenger duty, passenger service charge, airline security charges, airport taxes and fuel surcharges where applicable - currently £81 (liable to change without notice)
- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 4 lunches; 1 dinner
- All entrance fees, visits, excursions and transportation as per the itinerary
- Gratuities in restaurants for included meals; gratuities to driver/s; portage
- Local English-speaking guide/s; the services of your tour leader throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- Travel insurance
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Visa and visa service
- Theatre tickets and transport to and from the theatre
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 04/05/18



Mariinsky Theatre



YOUR TOUR LEADER



TANIA ILLINGWORTH

Tania Illingworth (nee Tolstoy) is three quarters Russian by birth, all her grandparents having fled the Russian Revolution in 1918. A degree in Russian Language & Literature, with Byzantine Art, reinforced her passionate interest in all things Russian. This, and the extensive knowledge she has acquired through years of visits to Russia, make her tours very special.



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