



THE Nation. TRAVELS

RUSSIA ITINERARY | JUNE 2017

The Changing Faces of Russia: St. Petersburg and Moscow

CONTACT

WEBSITE

DETAILS & PRICING

THURSDAY, JUNE 9: DEPART THE UNITED STATES

FRIDAY, JUNE 10: ST. PETERSBURG

L, D

TRIP DATES:

JUNE 9 – JUNE 20, 2017

- Arrive in St. Petersburg and transfer directly to the Belmond Grand Hotel Europe.
- In 1703, St. Petersburg was founded by Peter the Great as a “European-style” capital, and today the city features architecture that exudes refined, Western European charm.
- This evening, meet fellow travelers for a glass of sparkling wine and hors d’oeuvres before proceeding to the hotel’s restaurant for a welcome dinner.

B: BREAKFAST

L: LUNCH

D: DINNER

SATURDAY, JUNE 11: ST. PETERSBURG

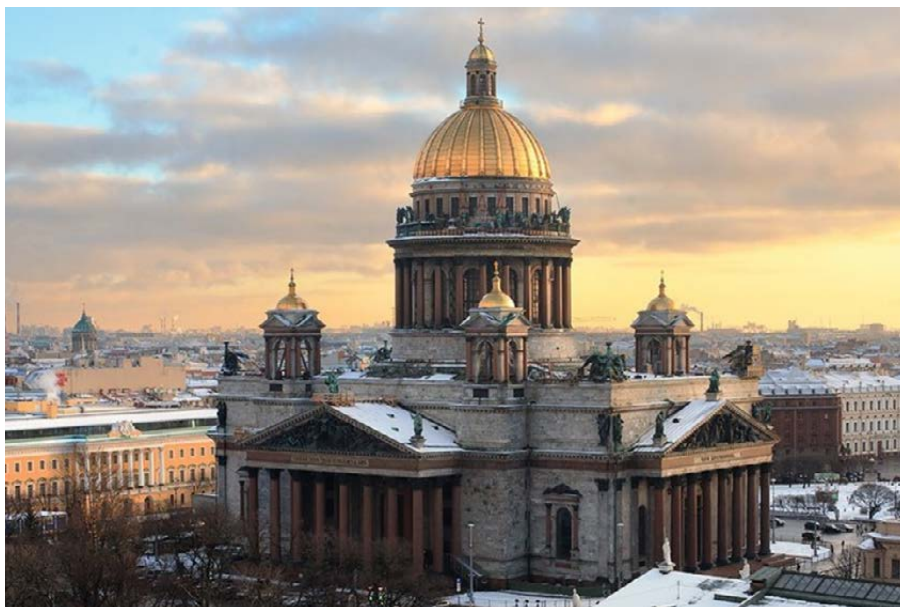
B, L, D

- Meet this morning for a lecture at the hotel by Dr. Sergei Akopov, titled “Czarist Russia: The Romanovs and Their Role in the History of Russia Until the 1917 Revolution.” Dr. Akopov is a professor in the department of political science at the St. Petersburg campus of the National Research University.
- Depart the hotel for St. Isaac’s Cathedral, which features a 72-foot-diameter dome covered with gold leaf and surrounded by huge granite pillars, each weighing more than 120 tons. The interior was lavishly decorated at the request of Nicholas I with mosaics, 14 types of marble, and an 8,800-square-foot painted ceiling.
- Continue on to the Peter and Paul Fortress, where the city was founded, which stands on a small island in the Neva River. At the center of the fortress is the Peter and Paul Cathedral, burial place of all but one czar (Peter II).
- Enjoy lunch at the Koryushka Restaurant, which features panoramic views of the Neva River and the historic heart of St. Petersburg.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11: ST. PETERSBURG

B, L, D

- After lunch, board a boat for a private one-hour journey on the city's canals. St. Petersburg comprises 42 islands, joined by the more than 90 waterways and canals of the Neva River estuary. The tour will pass by the Peter and Paul Fortress, the Summer Garden, and the Mariinsky Theatre, gliding beneath ornate bridges and offering a different perspective of this illustrious city. (Interestingly, until the mid-18th century, no permanent bridges were allowed to be built in the city, and residents crossed the many waterways by boat and ferry only in the summer. In the winter, of course, the frozen canals served as thoroughfares.) We'll also be able to admire the amazing exterior of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ (also known as the Church of the Savior on the Spilled Blood).
- Return to the hotel by foot.
- This evening, enjoy a traditional dinner at the wonderful Tsar restaurant, a short walk from the hotel.
- After dinner, there will be a chance to attend an optional performance. (Performance schedule has not yet been released.)



SUNDAY, JUNE 12: ST. PETERSBURG

B, L

- After breakfast, depart the hotel and walk to the Hermitage Museum, where an early entrance has been arranged for our group. Located in the lavishly decorated Winter Palace, the Hermitage was originally commissioned by Catherine the Great in the 1760s as a small building to house her growing art collection. Today it occupies four buildings, and its extraordinary collection of European art numbers over 2 million pieces. This afternoon, we'll meet in the spectacular Gold Room,



SUNDAY, JUNE 12: ST. PETERSBURG

B, L

where the group will be split into three groups, each accompanied by a Russian-speaking guide and a translator.

- Enjoy a traditional lunch of Russian pies before a visit to the stunning treasures at the Fabergé Museum. Founded by entrepreneur Viktor Vekselberg, the museum opened in 2013 and displays a glittering collection of Fabergé eggs and objets d'art created by Peter Carl Fabergé and his contemporaries. Vekselberg's collection is rated as one of the world's most valuable and includes items he bought from the Forbes family for \$100 million in 2004. His mission is to repatriate as much work of the great Russian masters that was sold off by the Bolsheviks as possible and to make it available to the public. One of the most famous pieces on display here is the Imperial Coronation Egg, made in 1897. The museum is housed in the magnificent Shuvalov Palace.
- Dinner at your leisure this evening.

MONDAY, JUNE 13: ST. PETERSBURG

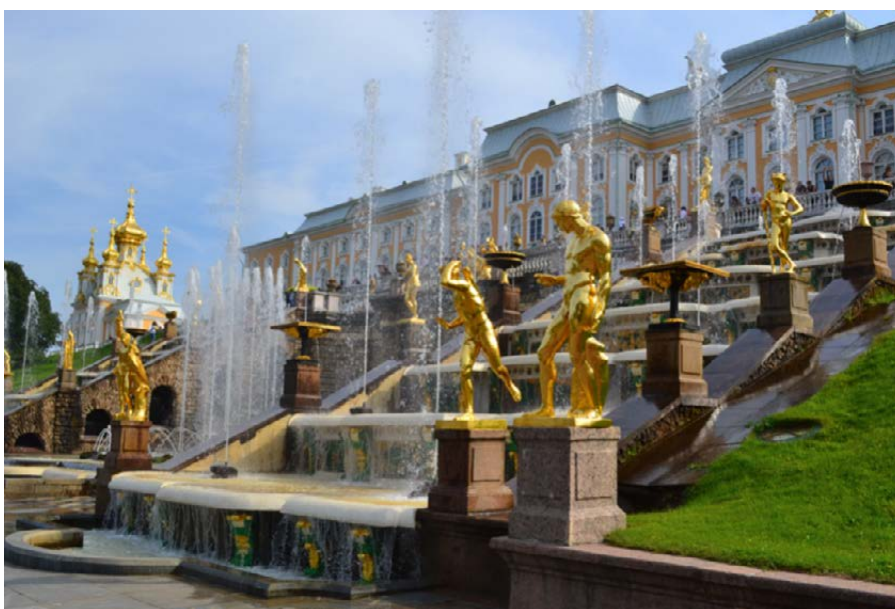
B, L

- After breakfast, enjoy a lecture and presentation by Russian artist Yuri Petrochenkov, a porcelain painter and graphic artist who was part of the Association of Experimental Art (TEI) in the 1970s and '80s, which brought artists together to fight the official system of Soviet art. Petrochenkov has a wealth of information about history, politics, and current events in Russia since the days of the Soviet era. He will bring a selection of his works, including his unique porcelain eggs, which evoke traditional and modern Russian art.
- Travel to the Erarta Museum of Contemporary Art and enjoy lunch at the museum's café.
- After lunch, tour the museum. Erarta opened in 2010 and features 2,300 works of contemporary art by more than 250 artists from more than 20 regions of Russia. The innovative museum's collection includes paintings, graphics, sculptures, objects, and installations, and the museum also hosts plays, concerts, film screenings, lectures, and creative round tables. Many of the works of art not physically on display are available for viewing in an electronic-image collection.
- This afternoon, enjoy an optional traditional banya, or bath house, experience. A banya usually consists of a parilka (a furnace-heated steam room) and a basseyn (a cold pool). Bathers lash themselves with vennik (bundles of dried birch leaves) and rub honey into their skin to release toxins and feel invigorated.
- Dinner at your leisure tonight
- This evening, there will be a chance to attend an optional performance. (Performance schedule has not yet been released.)

TUESDAY, JUNE 14: ST. PETERSBURG

B, L, D

- After breakfast, meet for a lecture in the hotel by Dr. Nina Philippova, titled “The Poet in Russia Is More Than Just a Poet.” Dr. Philippova is the retired academic director of the Center of Russian Language and Culture at St. Petersburg University.
- From the hotel, drive to Peterhof. Built by Peter the Great to rival Versailles, the palace stands on a natural terrace with its formal gardens sloping down to the shores of the Baltic Sea. We’ll stroll through the lower and upper gardens and marvel at the spectacular fountain system. The Grand Cascade—a delightful sequence of 37 bronze sculptures, 64 fountains, and 142 water jets descending from the terraces of the Grand Palace to the Marine Canal—is one of the highlights of this tour.
- Return by hydrofoil to St. Petersburg and disembark at the Hermitage Museum pier.



- After lunch at the Pryanosti i Radosti (Spices and Joy) restaurant, walk to the Hermitage’s collection of 19th- and 20th-century art. Last year, to mark the museum’s 250th anniversary, the Hermitage reopened Carlo Rossi’s staggering early-19th-century General Staff Building. Totally refitted, its interior now boasts a combination of sky-lit atriums, brushed concrete walls, and spaces that could well have been newly built for the optimal display of modernist friezes and landscapes. The extra space means that in many cases new paintings, which had been hidden away in storage or in other buildings of the museum, have finally made it into the display.
- This is no ordinary collection, but a roll call of the greats in modern European art. Many of the paintings here were culled by



TUESDAY, JUNE 14: ST. PETERSBURG

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the Bolsheviks from the private collections of Russian businessmen Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov, and even from that of German industrialist Otto Krebs, whose collection of Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings was removed by the Red Army from the ruins of Nazi Germany in 1945. The paintings here include key works of Monet, Cézanne, Renoir, Degas, Gauguin, Seurat, Pissarro, van Gogh, Matisse, and Picasso, to name but a few.

- Enjoy a private concert with the Rimsky-Korsakov String Quartet at the palace of the Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich, located a few minutes' walk from the Hermitage. This is one of the finest preserved residences of the Russian imperial family and, like the Winter Palace, is situated on the palace embankment overlooking the Neva River and the Peter and Paul Fortress. The construction of residences along the banks of the Neva was extremely prized by both members of the Russian imperial family and the Russian aristocracy. (The 2016 BBC War and Peace production was filmed here.)
- Initially formed in 1939, the Rimsky-Korsakov String Quartet's current members are Mikhail Bondarev (violin), Ekaterina Belisova (violin), Alexei Popov (viola), and Anton Andreev (cello), all of whom are graduates of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. They are known for their interpretations of a diverse repertoire of masterworks, including Russian classics and contemporary pieces.
- Return to the hotel by bus.
- Tonight, experience Georgian cuisine for dinner at the nearby ChaCha restaurant.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15: MOSCOW

B, L, D

- An early breakfast will be arranged at the hotel.
- Depart the hotel in time to take a morning high-speed Sapsan train to Moscow.
- Upon arrival in Moscow, drive to a local restaurant for lunch.
- After lunch, explore the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia. Housed in a 1780s mansion and the former premises of the Moscow English Club, this museum covers all aspects of Russia's recent history. A private guide, Alexander Frolov, will take the group through a series of rooms detailing the revolutionary phase and onward to the space race and perestroika.
- Cross the street and check into the Intercontinental Moscow-Tverskaya Hotel.
- This evening before dinner, meet in the hotel for a discussion with Ilya Oskolkov-Tsentsiper, who founded the Moscow lifestyle



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15: MOSCOW

B, L, D

magazine Afisha in 1999 and, in 2010, the Strelka Institute, a media-, design-, and architecture-education project. Oskolkov-Tsentsiper, who has also helped to reorganize the Russian postal system (one of the largest retail and logistical operations in the world), will discuss Russian culture. He argues that it is like a pendulum that swings between infatuation with the West and a preoccupation with its own identity—and perhaps the pendulum should now swing back to an interest in Russia and “Russianness.”

- This evening before dinner meet in the hotel for a discussion with independent journalist Nadezhda Azgikhin, who once worked at Ogonyok (The Flame), the ground-breaking magazine of the glasnost era, and was Executive Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists. In 2013 she was elected Vice president of the European Federation of Journalists and is published as a writer and editor of 19 books addressing topics such as gender, human rights, the safety of journalists and freedom of expression.
- After the discussion, depart the hotel and enjoy a short walk to the Pushkin Restaurant for dinner.

THURSDAY, JUNE 16: MOSCOW

B, L

- Depart the hotel this morning to begin exploring Moscow at the Kremlin, arriving early to enjoy a visit free of crowds. The Kremlin has always been perceived as a symbol of the power and might of Russia, with each era of history leaving its architectural mark. Within its walls are many churches, cathedrals, and museums, attesting to the rich cultural, religious, and political traditions of Russia. The Kremlin complex consists of the Assumption Cathedral, the Annunciation Cathedral, the Archangel Cathedral, the Church of the Deposition of the Robe, the Armory Palace, the Belfry and Bell Tower of Ivan the Great, the Patriarch's Palace, the Arsenal Building, the Senate, and the Palace of Congresses. We'll be led by a private guide.
- A short distance away is Red Square, the main plaza in Moscow and a symbol of great emotive power for the Russians. The history of Red Square inseparably links with the history of Moscow. Admire its vastness and beauty.
- Enjoy lunch at Bosco Bar, an excellent spot from which to watch the hustle and bustle of Red Square.
- After lunch, enter the extraordinary Cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed and enjoy a tour as well as a chance to hear from several members of the church choir.
- We'll end the day with a tour of the Metro, one of the busiest transit systems in the world and, with 190 miles of track and 185 stations, one of the largest. The stations aren't just transit hubs—they're artistic exhibits that tell the history of the city with their designs and decorations, intended to inspire workers on their way



THURSDAY, JUNE 16: MOSCOW

B, L

to dreary jobs under Soviet rule. These ornate stations eventually became known as “the palaces of the people” for their extravagant architecture.

- Return to the hotel via the Metro.
- Meet in the hotel for a lecture by Misha Smetnick, titled “Modern Russian History From the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 to Putin’s Russia.” Smetnick has worked with Mikhail Gorbachev, Dmitry Likhachev, Yevgeny Primakov, and other scholars and top government officials and has a deep understanding of modern Russian history.
- Dinner is at your leisure.



FRIDAY, JUNE 17: MOSCOW

B, L, D

- After breakfast, depart for Sergiev Posad to admire the Holy Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the destination of spiritual and nationalist pilgrimages. Because czars and merchants alike bestowed gifts and wealth upon it, the monastery could afford to invite the best architects and icon painters to construct and decorate its buildings. Medieval Russia still seems alive here with the heady mixture of incense, chanting, and pilgrims.
- Later there will be an opportunity to learn about matryoshka doll-making, which originated in Sergiev Posad. A set of matryoshkas consists of a wooden figure that can be pulled apart to reveal another, smaller figure inside, which has, in turn, another figure inside, and so

on. The number of nested figures is usually five or more.

- Lunch at Russky Dvorikt, a local restaurant.
- After lunch, depart and drive to the newly opened Gulag Museum, which is dedicated to the millions who were persecuted in Soviet labor camps from 1930 to 1950 in the so-called Gulag system. An estimated 20 million people died during Stalin's reign of terror. Inside the new building, which cost more than 300 million rubles (\$4.7 million) to renovate, the decor is exposed brickwork, cast-iron supports, and a series of black metal staircases. One of the outside walls is made entirely of copper and will gradually turn black over the coming years. "A visitor sees the exhibits on their own level and then ascends and sees the same thing from above. The idea is that we should climb up and look down from above on this history, which is painful and unrecognized in our country," says museum director Roman Romanov. He goes on: "It is a space where people—visitors—can meet themselves, meet with their personal history, or with themselves in this history. It is a moment of contact."
- The Gulag—an abbreviation of Glavnoye Upravleniye Ispravitelno-Trudovyykh Lagerei, or Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps—was a network of labor, detention, and transit camps that epitomize Soviet brutality and were famously described by authors including Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Varlam Shalamov, and Yevgenia Ginzburg. The Gulag Museum's exhibition outlines this system of camps, as well as their legacy in modern Russia, with artifacts gathered from all over the country.



- Return to the hotel in the late afternoon.
- Dine this evening at the wonderful Akademiya restaurant, where chef Danis Calmis serves locally produced meats and vegetables in an innovative take on old favorites.



SATURDAY, JUNE 18: MOSCOW

B, L

- At the hotel this morning, meet with Pavel Palazhchenko, who was the principal interpreter for Mikhail Gorbachev. Topics will include the US-USSR summit talks, which led to the end of the Cold War. Palazhchenko was a high-level Soviet conference interpreter, working with Mikhail Gorbachev and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. He is currently the head of the Gorbachev Foundation, where he also works as an analyst, spokesman, and interpreter.
- Drive to Gorky Park and the Moscow River, southwest of the Kremlin. Only five years ago, the park was an unkempt, weed-strewn expanse with pothole-filled roads and packs of stray dogs. But now, with the waterfront newly redeveloped and the park remodeled, families stroll in the summer sunshine or skate in the frozen winters. Unlike the jarring and ruthless changes of the 1990s, Moscow has changed less rapidly in recent years, but taken cumulatively, the changes have resulted in the emergence of a very different city—one that is eminently more livable.



- Walk to the nearby Muzeon Park of Arts, formerly known as the Park of Fallen Heroes. Established in 1923, the park gained prominence in August 1991 when, a day before the Communist Party was banned, a statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, a Soviet official, was dismantled and discarded in the park. In the days that followed, statues and busts of Lenin, Mikhail Kalinin, Yakov Sverdlov, and Stalin from across Moscow started to pile up on the grass.
- Drive to the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center for a Mediterranean lunch at the museum's Café Alef.
- After lunch, explore this sprawling state-of-the-art complex underwritten by oligarchs close to President Putin. Tap a Torah in a virtual synagogue while a cantor's voice rings in the air. In

SUNDAY, JUNE 18: MOSCOW

B, L, D

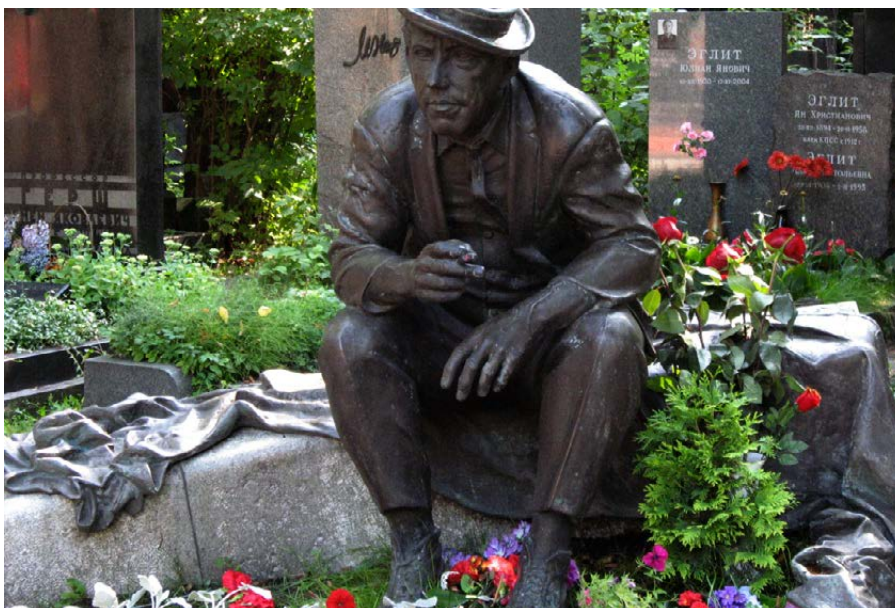
a virtual Odessa, one can sit down in an interactive café to chat with long-dead writers. Putin extended his personal support to the lavish project, donating a month's salary for its construction, which cost around \$50 million. In part because of its scale—organizers say it is the largest Jewish history museum in the world—the project is meant to convey a powerful message to Jews whose ancestors fled or emigrated: Russia wants you back.

- End the afternoon with a visit to Bunker-42, where we'll experience Russian life during the Cold War. Built in 1956 to withstand a nuclear attack and provide shelter for top Soviet officials, the bunker is 213 feet deep. We'll walk through its fortified tunnels and view a documentary depicting relations between the United States and the USSR when nuclear war looked inevitable.
- Dinner is at your leisure.

SUNDAY, JUNE 19: MOSCOW

B, L, D

- Take a morning visit to the beautiful, leafy Novodevichy Cemetery. The artistic gravestones of the country's most prestigious cemetery speak volumes about the Russian people—whom they consider important and what traits and accomplishments they value. Among those buried here are Anton Chekhov, Nikita Khrushchev, Raisa Gorbachev, and Boris Yeltsin.



- Drive to the State Tretyakov Gallery, which features an exquisite collection of Russian icons and pre-Revolutionary Russian art. Originally the private collection of a wealthy Russian merchant, Pavel Tretyakov, this vast assortment of over 100,000 outstanding works of art was given to the Russian nation as a gift in 1892.



SATURDAY, JUNE 19: MOSCOW

B, L, D

- Lunch at the nearby Sok Café.
- After lunch, drive to northeastern Moscow to the studio of RT (formerly Russia Today), Russia's first 24/7 English-language news channel that was founded in 2005 by Putin with a budget of about \$30 million. The RT television network now consists of three round-the-clock news channels broadcasting in English, Arabic, and Spanish, including RT America, airing from a Washington, DC, studio; RT UK, broadcasting from London; documentary channel RTDoc in English and Russian; and online news platforms in Russian, German, and French. Today, RT is available to 700 million people in more than 100 countries across five continents.
- Meet with Margarita Simonyan, who, in 2005 was named editor in chief of Russia Today. After the launch of RT Arabic in 2007 and RT Spanish in 2009, she became editor in chief of the global multilingual television news network. Under Simonyan's helm, RT became the only Russian TV network to garner three International Emmy Award nominations for news coverage. RT took gold at the Monte-Carlo Television Festival and has earned dozens of other media awards and accolades.
- Return to the hotel.
- Enjoy a farewell dinner this evening at the Reka restaurant, which offers unparalleled views of the Moscow River and serves the freshest food prepared by the award-winning chef Michel Lombardi.

MONDAY, JUNE 20: **DEPART**

B

- Transfer to the airport for onward flights.



DETAILS

- Trip Price: **\$6,850 per person**
- Single-room supplement: **\$1,000**

INCLUDED

- Accommodation, based on double occupancy, in hotels as listed
- Meals as listed in the itinerary, including bottled water
- Meals as listed in itinerary (**B,I,D**)
- Water on the bus at all times
- The St. Petersburg–Moscow train journey in tourist class
- All sightseeing and excursions in a private air-conditioned bus
- All private events and speakers as listed
- All entrance fees listed
- Services of an English-speaking local guide/tour manager who will travel with the group from the beginning to end
- Services of a local guide in St. Petersburg and Moscow
- Forty-five-minute cocktail reception at the hotel in St. Petersburg
- Meeting rooms as listed
- Private boat on the river and canals of St. Petersburg for one hour
- Porterage
- Gratuity to tour managers/guides and bus driver

NOT INCLUDED

- International airfare to and from Russia
- Drinks with meals
- Passport fees
- Visa fee for Russia, which is currently \$283 per person plus a visa service fee of \$150
- Excess luggage charges
- Travel insurance
- Items of a purely personal nature
- Theater tickets
- Any item not listed