

# St Petersburg

## САНКТ ПЕТЕРБУРГ

The birthplace of Russia's passenger railways, St Petersburg makes a fine start or finish to any Trans-Siberian journey. The locals call the city, simply, Piter. In its time – some 300 action-packed years and counting – it has been known by several other names all resonant of and appropriate to its pivotal place in Russian history. But whatever it's called there's no denying that St Petersburg is one of the most glorious cities in Russia, if not the world.

Look up from the banks of the Neva River and the canals that meander through the heart of the city and you'll gaze upon a seamless showcase of 18th- and 19th-century architecture. Enter these palaces and mansions and you'll discover a mind-boggling collection of museums covering practically everything from anthropology to zoology, and culminating in the truly breathtaking artistic collection belonging to the Hermitage.

It's small wonder that such an environment has nurtured some of Russia's greatest artists and cultural movements. Creativity continues to throb through the city's veins manifesting itself in a hedonistic and experimental nightclub and performing arts scene, as well as a delicious crop of restaurants.

Not everything is perfect: St Petersburg's splendour goes hand in hand with corruption, crime, decay, squalor and pollution. If anything, though, this gritty reality makes the city's dazzling façades and lightness of spirit seem even more magical. St Petersburg's beauty is one with a human face and all the more appealing for that.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Lose yourself amid the artistic treasures and imperial interiors of the **Hermitage** (p85)
- Cruise the **canals** (p90) for a boatman's perspective on the city's architecture and pretty bridges
- Enjoy a world-class opera or ballet performance at the beautiful **Mariinsky Theatre** (p92)
- Admire the Grand Cascade's symphony of fountains at **Petrodvorets** (p95)
- Feel your jaw hit the parquet floor as you take in the gilded splendour of **Catherine Palace** (p96)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 812

■ POPULATION: 4.4 MILLION

## HISTORY

St Petersburg was born when Peter the Great founded the Peter & Paul Fortress on the marshy estuary of the Neva River in 1703. A city built to grand design by mainly European architects swiftly followed. By the early 19th century St Petersburg had firmly established itself as the cultural centre of Russia. But at the same time as writers, artists and musicians, such as Pushkin, Turgenyev and, later, Tchaikovsky and Dostoevsky, lived in and were inspired by the city, political and social problems were on the rise.

Industrialisation brought a flood of poor workers and associated urban squalor to St Petersburg. Revolution against the monarchy was first attempted in the short-lived coup of 14 December 1825. The leaders (who included members of the aristocracy and who became known as the Decembrists) were banished to the outer edges of the empire (see p194).

The next revolution was in 1905, sparked by the 'Bloody Sunday' of 9 January when more than a hundred people were killed and hundreds more were injured after troops fired on a crowd petitioning the tsar outside the Winter Palace. The tsar's government limped on, until Vladimir Lenin and his Bolshevik followers took advantage of Russia's disastrous involvement in WWI to instigate the third successful revolution in 1917. Again, St Petersburg (renamed a more Russian-sounding Petrograd in 1914) was at the forefront of the action.

To break with the tsarist past, the seat of government was moved back to Moscow, and St Petersburg was renamed Leningrad after the first communist leader's death in 1924. The city – by virtue of its location, three million-plus population and industry – remained one of Russia's most important, thus putting it on the frontline during WWII. For 872 days Leningrad was besieged by the Germans, and one million perished in horrendous conditions.

After the war Leningrad was almost entirely reconstructed. As the Soviet Union came tumbling down, the city renamed itself St Petersburg in 1991. Millions of roubles were spent on restoration for the city's tricentenary celebrations and St Petersburg looks better now probably than at any other time in its history – a source of great pride

to local boy made good President Vladimir Putin, who often returns to his birthplace to show it off to official visitors.

## ORIENTATION

St Petersburg sprawls across and around the delta of the Neva River, at the end of the easternmost arm of the Baltic Sea, the Gulf of Finland. Entering St Petersburg at its southeastern corner, the Neva first flows north and then west across the middle of the city, dividing there into several branches and forming the islands making up the delta. The two biggest branches, which diverge where the Winter Palace stands on the south bank, are the Bolshaya (Big) Neva and Malaya (Small) Neva; they flow into the sea either side of Vasilyevsky Island.

If you arrive by train from Moscow, your entry point will be Moskovsky vokzal (Moscow Station) at the eastern end of Nevsky pr, St Petersburg's main thoroughfare, which heads west for about 3km through the heart

### ST PETERSBURG IN...

#### One Day

Take a tour of the **Hermitage** (p85). Enjoy an afternoon stroll in the nearby **Summer Garden** (p87) and a peek inside the beautifully restored **Sheremetyev Palace** (p87) along the Fontanka Canal. Hop on a boat for an early evening **cruise** (p90). If you're quick, you could also squeeze in a visit to **St Isaac's Cathedral** (p87), climbing its colonnade for a bird's-eye view of the city.

#### Two Days

On day two explore the splendid **Russian Museum** (p85). Move on to the polychromatic **Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood** (p87). After lunch head across the Neva River to explore the **Peter & Paul Fortress** (p89). If you have time, continue around to the **Strelka** (p88) to see the museums there, or to enjoy the view.

#### Four Days

Following on from the previous two days, spend a day each exploring the imperial parks and palaces at **Petrodvorets** (p95) and **Tsarskoe Selo** (p96). Cap off your trip with a performance at the **Mariinsky Theatre** (p92).

of the city towards the south bank of the Neva and the Winter Palace. All trains from the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe arrive at Vitebsky vokzal (Vitebsk Station), 2km southwest of Moscow Station. Trains from Helsinki end up at Ladozhsky vokzal (Ladoga Station) across the Neva in the eastern area known as the Vyborg Side.

The other main areas north of the Neva are Vasilyevsky Island, on the westernmost side of the city – at its eastern end is the Strelka (Tongue of Land), where many of the city's early buildings stand; and the Petrograd Side, a cluster of delta islands marked by the Peter & Paul Fortress.

## Maps

Dom Knigi (below) has the best map selection, including maps of transport routes and several street directories.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Anglia** (Map p86; ☎ 279 8284; nab reki Fontanki 40; ☎ 10am-7pm; 📖 Gostiny Dvor) St Petersburg's only English-language bookshop.  
**Dom Knigi** (Map p86; ☎ 325 6696; Nevsky pr 62; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Sat, 9am-10pm Sun; 📖 Gostiny Dvor) Good selection of guidebooks and maps at St Petersburg's largest bookshop.

## Emergency

The following numbers have Russian-speaking operators. If you need to make a police report and don't speak Russian, first contact the City Tourist Information Centre (p84). For serious matters contact your embassy or consulate (p304).

**Ambulance** (☎ 03)

**Fire** (☎ 01)

**Gas leak** (☎ 04)

**Police** (☎ 02)

## Internet Access

Internet cafés are common in St Petersburg. Wi-fi hot spots are also scattered across the city, including at City Bar (p92) and Zoom Café (p91).

**Café Max** (Map p86; ☎ 273 6655; Nevsky pr 90/92; per hr R40; ☎ 24hr; 📖 Mayakovskaya) Wi-fi available. Also has a branch in the Hermitage (p85).

**FM Club** (Map p86; ☎ 764 3674; ul Dostoevskogo 6A; per hr R60; ☎ 10am-8am; 📖 Vladimirskaaya)

**Quo Vadis?** (Map p86; ☎ 571 8011; Nevsky pr 24; per hr R80; ☎ 24hr; 📖 Gostiny Dvor) Wi-fi available.

## Internet Resources

[http://enlight.ru/camera/index\\_e.htm](http://enlight.ru/camera/index_e.htm) The excellent Wandering Camera website includes some 300 photo albums of the city.

<http://spb.yell.ru/eng/default.asp?site=spb> Yellow Pages for St Petersburg.

[www.eng.gov.spb.ru](http://www.eng.gov.spb.ru) Official site of the St Petersburg government.

[www.saint-petersburg.com](http://www.saint-petersburg.com) Has information on sights, current events and listings, a virtual city tour, online hotel booking and an up-to-date traveller's message board.

## Laundry

**Stirka** (Map p86; ☎ 314 5371; Kazanskaya ul 26; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1am Sat & Sun; 📖 Nevsky Prospekt) Combines a café-bar with a laundrette – what a good idea! A 5kg wash costs R100 with espresso included. The dryer is R30 per 20 minutes.

## Left Luggage

All the major train stations have luggage lockers and/or left-luggage services.

## Media

The following English-language publications are available free at many hotels, hostels, restaurants and bars across the city:

**In Your Pocket** ([www.inyourpocket.com/russia/st\\_petersburg/en](http://www.inyourpocket.com/russia/st_petersburg/en)) Monthly listings booklet with useful up-to-date information and short features.

**Pulse** ([www.pulse.ru](http://www.pulse.ru)) Slick colour monthly with fun features and reviews.

**St Petersburg Times** (<http://sptimesrussia.com>)

Published every Tuesday and Friday, this newspaper is the best source of information. It has an indispensable listings and arts review section.

## Medical Services

The following clinics are open 24 hours and have English-speaking staff:

**American Medical Clinic** (Map p86; ☎ 740 2090; [www.amclinic.ru](http://www.amclinic.ru); nab reki Moyki 78; 📖 Sadovaya)

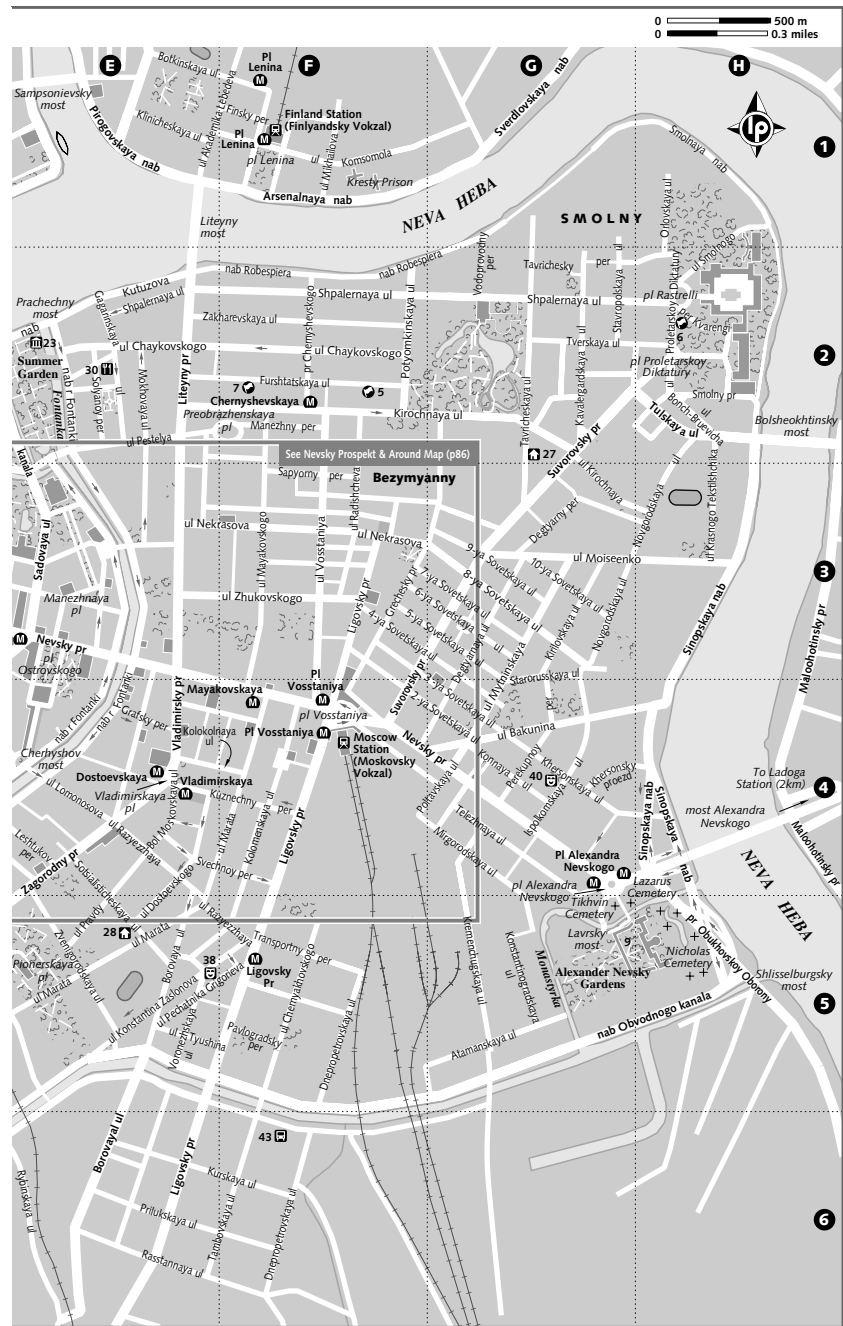
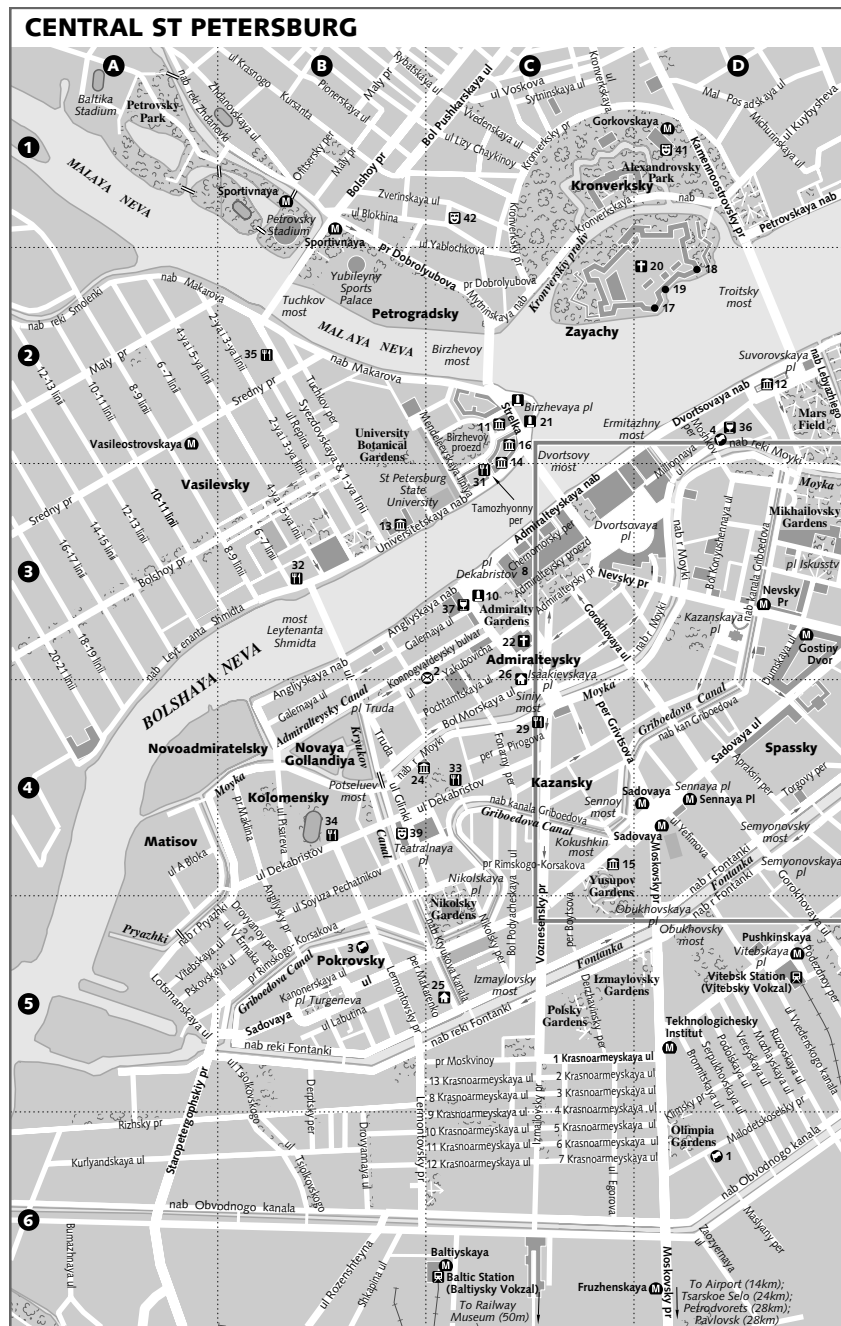
**British-American Family Practice** (Map p86; ☎ 327 6030, 999 0949; Graftsky per 7; 📖 Dostoevskaya)

**International Clinic** (Map p86; ☎ 320 3870; [www.icspb.com](http://www.icspb.com); ul Dostoevskogo 19/21; 📖 Ligovskiy Prospekt)

Look for the sign *apteka*, or the usual green cross, to find a pharmacy. The following are two central pharmacies that are open 24 hours:

**Apteka** (Map p86; ☎ 277 5962; Nevsky pr 83; 📖 Ploshchad Vosstaniya)

**Apteka Petrofarm** (Map p86; ☎ 314 5401; Nevsky pr 22; 📖 Nevsky Prospekt)



INFORMATION		Menshikov Palace		Host Families Association (HOFA)	
Canadian Consulate	Дворец Меншикова.....	13	B3	Office .....	27 G2
Консульство Канады.....	Museum of Anthropology & Central Post Office			Hotel California.....	28 E5
Главпочтамт .....	Ethnography (Kunstkamera)				
Chinese Consulate	Музей антропологии и этнографии (Кунсткамера)...	14	C2	<b>EATING</b>	
Консульство Китая.....	Museum of			Café Idiot .....	29 C4
French Consulate	Railway Transport .....	15	C4	Olyushka & Russkie Bliny	
Консульство Франции.....	Museum of Zoology			Олюшка и Русские Блины...	30 E2
German Consulate	Зоологический музей .....	16	C2	Restoran.....	31 C3
Консульство Германии.....	Naryshkin Bastion			Russky Kitsch.....	32 B3
UK Consulate.....	Нарышкинский бастион.....	17	D2	Stolle .....	33 C4
US Consulate	Nevskaya Panorama .....	18	D2	Stolle .....	34 B4
Консульство США.....	Nevsky Gate Невские ворота.....	19	D2	Stolle .....	35 B2
	Peter & Paul Fortress			<b>DRINKING</b>	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	Петро-Павловский собор.....	20	D2	City Bar .....	36 D2
Admiralty Адмиралтейство.....	Rostral Columns			Red Lion.....	37 C3
Alexander Nevsky Monastery	Ростральные колонны.....	21	C2	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>	
Лавра Александра Невского.....	St Isaac's Cathedral			Griboedov.....	38 E5
Бронзовый всадник.....	Исаакиевский собор.....	22	C3	Mariinsky Theatre	
Центральный военно-морской музей .....	Summer Palace			Марининский театр оперы и балета.....	39 B4
Marble Palace	Летний дворец.....	23	E2	Moloko Молоко.....	40 G4
Мраморный Дворец.....	Yusupov Palace			Par spb.....	41 D1
	Юсуповский дворец.....	24	B4	Tunnel.....	42 C1
	<b>SLEEPING</b>			<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
	Alexander House .....	25	C5	Bus Station (Avtovokzal No 2)	
	City Reality .....	26	C3	Автовокзал No 2.....	43 F6

## Money

There are currency-exchange offices all along Nevsky pr. ATMs are located inside every metro station, in hotels and department stores, main post offices and along major streets.

## Post

Post office branches are scattered throughout the city. All the major air-courier services are available in St Petersburg.

**Central Post Office** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 312 8302; www.spbpost.ru; Konnogvardeysky Bul 4; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; Sadovaya) The express mail service EMS Garantpost is available here.

## Telephone

Calling from a private phone is the simplest, though not necessarily cheapest, option – except for local calls, which are free.

See p312 for details of mobile-phone service providers. You can buy a local SIM card at any mobile-phone shop from as little as R300 – there's a handy phone shop inside the Quo Vadis? Internet café (see p81).

Local phonecards are available from shops, kiosks and metro stations, and can be used to make local, national and international calls from any phone. Better value for international calls are call centres – look for the sign Mezhdunarodny Telefon.

The most convenient is the **Central Telephone Office** (Map p86; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 28; ☎ 24hr; Nevsky Prospekt).

## Toilets

Portakabin-type toilets (R10) outside metros and the major sights are common. Shopping centres and chain cafés, such as Ideálnaya Chashka and Chainaya Lozhka, are the best places to look for a clean, odour-free loo.

## Tourist Information

**City Tourist Information Centre** Sadovaya ul (Map p86; ☎ 310 8262; www.ctic.spb.ru; Sadovaya ul 14/52; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; Gostiny Dvor); Dvortsovaya pl (Map p86; Dvortsovaya pl 12; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun; Nevsky Prospekt) The city tourist office's website is a paltry affair in Russian only. The English-speaking staff are vague about most things but will do their best to help, particularly if you are a crime victim (as we can personally attest). The Dvortsovaya pl branch is in a glass booth outside the Hermitage.

## Travel Agencies

The English-speaking staff at the following agencies can issue visa invitations and assist in getting a visa registered once you've arrived.

**Ost-West Kontaktserveis** (Map p86; ☎ 327 3416; www.ostwest.com; Nevsky pr 105; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Offering apartment rentals,

organised tours and tickets – heck, staff will even sell you a Lomo (it's the city's official distributor of that nifty little Russian camera).

**Sindbad Travel** (Map p86; ☎ 332 2020; www.sindbad.ru; 2-ya Sovetskaya ul 12; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; Ploshchad Vosstaniya) This is the main office of the agency owned by the HI St Petersburg International Hostel (p90); it also has a branch inside the hostel itself. It's a Western-style discount air-ticket office, staffed by friendly, knowledgeable people. It also sells ISIC/ITIC/IYTC cards and can book youth hostel accommodation through the IBN system.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Watch out for pickpockets, particularly along Nevsky pr around Griboedova Canal and in crowded places such as theatres and cinemas. Non-Caucasians should be aware that St Petersburg is notorious for race-related violent attacks. Avoid wandering around alone late at night or venturing out to the suburbs solo at any time.

Every year in early spring and during winter thaws, several people die when hit by giant icicles falling from rooftops and balconies; take care to make sure one of these monsters is not dangling above your head. From May to September mosquitoes are another nightmare.

Never drink unboiled tap water in St Petersburg as it could contain harmful bacteria, such as *Giardia Lamblia*, a parasite that causes stomach cramps, nausea, bloated stomach, diarrhoea and frequent gas.

## SIGHTS

In a few days you'll only be able to scratch the surface of what St Petersburg has to offer, particularly if you include a day trip to one of the country palaces. The following are the major sights; for more information, see Lonely Planet's *Russia & Belarus* or *St Petersburg* city guide.

### The Hermitage & Dvortsovaya Ploshchad

Mainly set in the magnificent Winter Palace, the **Hermitage** (Map p86; ☎ 571 3465; www.hermitagemuseum.org; Dvortsovaya nab 34; adult R350, ISIC cardholders & under 17 free, use of camera/camcorder R100/350; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10.30am-5pm Sun) fully lives up to its sterling reputation. You can be absorbed by its treasures for days and still come out wishing for more. Enter via Dvortsovaya pl.

The museum's main entrance is from **Dvortsovaya ploshchad** (Palace Sq), one of the most impressive and historic spaces in the city. Stand back to admire the palace and the central 47.5m **Alexander Column**, named after Alexander I and commemorating the 1812 victory over Napoleon. Enclosing the square's south side is the **General Staff Building** (Map p86; ☎ 314 8260; Dvortsovaya pl 6-8; adult/student R200/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), two great classical blocks joined by arches and topped by a chariot of victory. Inside is a branch of the Hermitage.

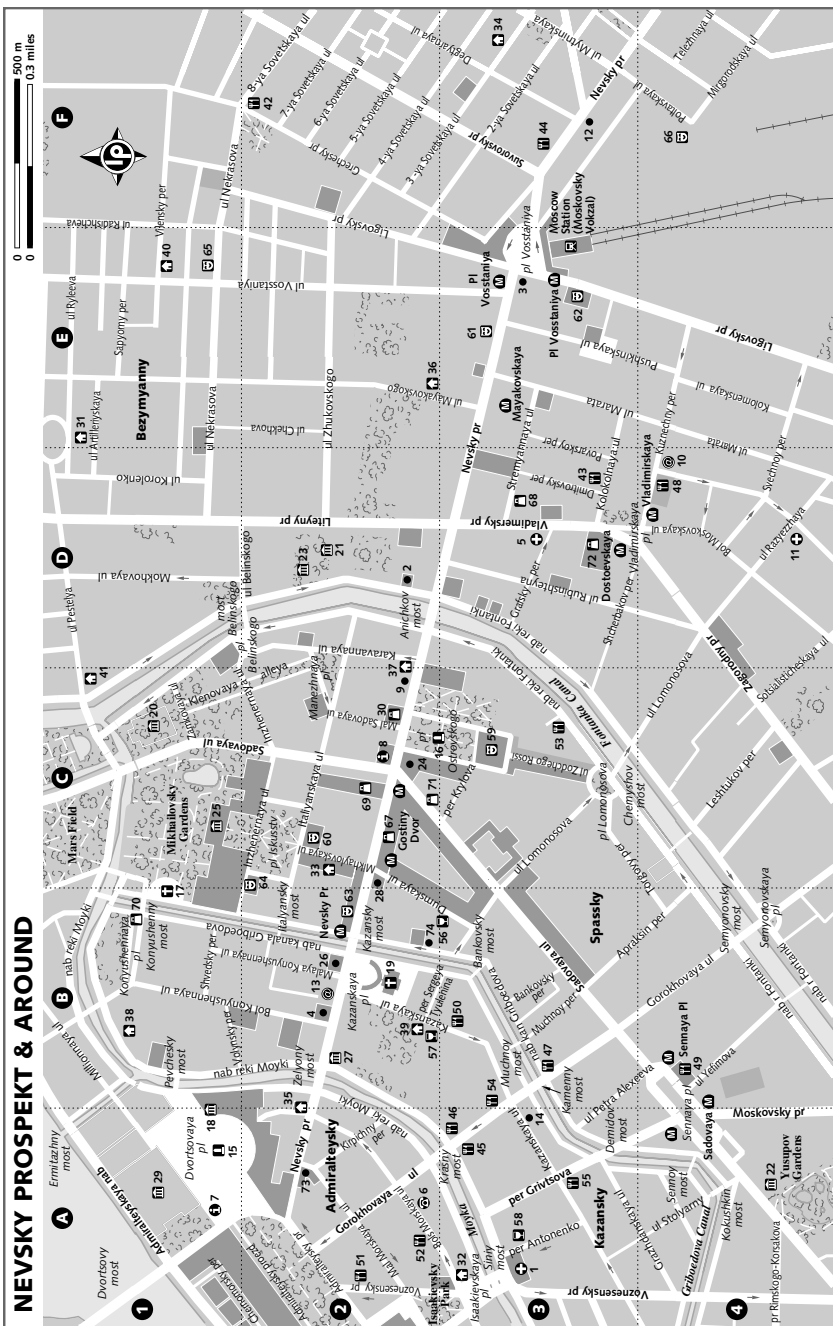
Queues to enter the Winter Palace, particularly from May to September, can be horrendous. Avoid them by booking your ticket online through the Hermitage's website: US\$16 gains you entrance plus use of camera or camcorder to the main Hermitage buildings; US\$24 is for the two-day ticket to all the Hermitage's collections in the city. You'll be issued with a voucher that allows you to go straight to the ticket booth.

Joining a tour is another way to avoid queuing. These whiz round the main sections in about 1½ hours and provide an introduction to the place in English. It's easy to 'lose' the group and stay on until closing time. To book a tour call the museum's **excursions office** (☎ 571 8446; ☎ 11am-1pm & 2-4pm); staff will tell you when they are running tours in English, German or French and when to turn up. Tours cost R1500 for up to 25 people.

## Russian Museum

Facing onto the elegant pl Iskusstv (Art's Sq) is the former Mikhailovsky Palace, now the **Russian Museum** (Map p86; ☎ 595 4248; www.rusmuseum.ru; Inzhenernaya ul 4; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, 10am-6pm Wed-Sun), housing one of the country's finest collections of Russian art. After the Hermitage you may feel you have had your fill of art, but try your utmost to make some time for this gem of a museum.

The museum owns three other city palaces, all worth visiting if you have time, where permanent and temporary exhibitions are held: the **Marble Palace** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 312 9196; Millionnaya ul 5; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon); the **Mikhailovsky Castle** (Engineers' Castle; Map p86; ☎ 313 4173; Sadovaya ul 2; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, 10am-6pm Wed-Sun); and the **Stroganov Palace** (Map p86;



**NEVSKY PROSPEKT & AROUND**

☎ 219 1608; Nevsky pr 17; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun. A ticket for R600, available at each palace, covers entry to all of them within a 24-hour period.

**Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood**  
This multidomed dazzler of a church (Map p86; ☎ 315 1636; eng.cathedral.ru; Konyushennaya pl; adult/student R270/150; ☎ 11-7pm Thu-Oct-Apr, 10am-8pm Thu-Tue May-Sep), partly modelled on St Basil's in Moscow, was built between 1883 and 1907 on the spot where Alexander II was assassinated in 1881 (hence its gruesome name). The interior's 7000 sq metres of mosaics fully justify the entrance fee.

**St Isaac's Cathedral**  
The golden dome of this cathedral (Map pp82-3; ☎ 315 9732; eng.cathedral.ru; Isaakievskaya pl; adult/student R270/150; ☎ 10am-8pm Thu-Sun, closed last Mon of the month) dominates the city skyline. Its lavish interior is open as a museum, but many visitors just buy the separate ticket to climb

the 262 steps up to the **colonnade** (adult/student R120/70; ☎ 10am-7pm Thu-Mon, closed last Mon of the month) around the dome's drum; the views make the climb worthwhile.

**Summer Garden**  
Perhaps St Petersburg's loveliest park, the **Summer Garden** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 10am-10pm May-Sep, 10am-8pm Oct-mid-Apr) is a great place to relax. In its northeast corner is the modest, two-storey **Summer Palace** (☎ 314 0456; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon early May-early Nov) built for Peter from 1710 to 1714. Inside it's stocked with early-18th-century furnishings of limited appeal.

**Sheremetyev Palace**  
Facing the Fontanka Canal, the splendid **Sheremetyev Palace** (1750-55) houses two lovely museums. The **Museum of Theatrical & Musical Arts** (Map p86; ☎ 272 4441; www.theatre-museum.ru/eng; nab reki Fontanki 34; adult/student R150/75; ☎ noon-6pm Wed-Sun; M Gostiny Dvor) contains

INFORMATION		Museum of Theatrical & Musical Arts		Kuznechny Market	
American Medical Clinic	1 A3	Шереметьевский дворец	23 D2	Кузнецный рынок	48 D4
Anglia	2 D2	Российская Национальная Библиотека	24 C2	Ленд	(see 72)
Аптека	3 E3	Russian Museum		Перекресток Перекресток	49 B4
Аптека Петрофарм	4 B2	Михайловский Замок	25 C1	Сукавати	50 B3
British-American Family Practice	5 D3	Sheremetyev Palace	(see 23)	Tandoori Nights	51 A2
Central Telephone Office	6 A2	Singer Building	26 B2	Taverna Olivia	52 A2
City Tourist Information Centre	7 A1	Stroganov Palace		Yerevan	53 C3
City Tourist Information Centre	8 C2	Строгановский Дворец	27 B2	Zoom Café	54 B3
Dom Knigi	9 C2	Зимний дворец	29 A1	Zov Ilyicha	55 A3
FM Club	10 D4	Yeliseyevsky		<b>DRINKING</b>	
International Clinic	11 D4	Гастрономия Елисейевский	30 C2	Dacha	56 B3
Ost-West Kontaktservice	12 F3	Aleksandrinsky Theatre		Tinkoff	57 B2
Quo Vadis?	13 B2	Александринский театр	59 C3	Tsinik	58 A3
Sindbad Travel	(see 34)	Болshov Zal	60 C2	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>	
Stirka Стирка	14 A3	Café Max	61 E3	Aleksandrinsky Theatre	
		Fish Fabrique	62 E3	Александринский театр	59 C3
		Maly Zal imeni Glinki	63 B2	Болshov Zal	60 C2
		Mussorsky Opera & Ballet Theatre	63 B2	Café Max	61 E3
		Театр оперы и балета им Мусоргского	64 C2	Fish Fabrique	62 E3
		Platforma	65 E1	Maly Zal imeni Glinki	63 B2
		Red Club	66 F4	Mussorsky Opera & Ballet Theatre	63 B2
		<b>SHOPPING</b>		Театр оперы и балета им Мусоргского	64 C2
		Gostiny Dvor		Platforma	65 E1
		Гостинный Двор	67 C2	Red Club	66 F4
		La Russe	68 D3	<b>SLEEPING</b>	
		Passazh Универмаг Пассажа	69 C2	Arbat Nord Hotel	31 E1
		Souvenir Market	70 B1	Casa Leto	32 A3
		Tovar dlya Voennikh		Чайна Hotel Europe	33 C2
		Товар для Военных	71 C2	Hi St Petersburg Hostel	34 F3
		Vladimirsky Passazh	72 D3	Nord Hostel	35 B2
		<b>TRANSPORT</b>		Novotel St Petersburg Centre	36 E2
		Central Airline Ticket Office	73 A2	Polikoff Hotel	37 D2
		Central Train Ticket Office	74 B2	Pushka Inn	38 B1
				Rachmaninow Antique-Hotel	39 B2
				Russian Room	40 E1
				Russian Room	41 C1
				<b>EATING</b>	
				Baltic Bread	42 F2
				Baltic Bread	(see 72)
				Bliny Domik Блины домик	43 D3
				Chaynaya Lozhka	44 F3
				Fasol	45 A3
				Herzen Institute Canteen	(see 46)
				Kharbin	46 A3
				Kilika	47 B3

a lovely collection of beautifully decorated instruments. Upstairs the palace rooms have been wonderfully restored; you get a great sense of how cultured life must have been here.

In a separate wing of the palace, reached from Liteyny pr, is the charming **Museum of Anna Akhmatova in the Fountain House** (Map p86; ☎ 272 2211; www.akhmatova.spb.ru/en; Liteyny pr 53; adult/student R120/80; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun, closed last Wed of month; 📄 Mayakovskaya), filled with mementos of the poet and her family, all persecuted during Soviet times.

### Yusupov Palace

Best known as the place where Rasputin met his untimely end, the **Yusupov Palace** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 314 9883; nab reki Moyki 94; adult/student R350/250; 🕒 11am-5pm; 📄 Sadovaya or Sennaya Ploshchad) sports a series of sumptuously decorated rooms culminating in a gilded jewel box of a theatre, where performances are still held. Admission includes an audio tour in English or several other languages. Places are limited to 20 daily for the Murder of Rasputin tour (adult/student extra R150/120) on each of the two English-language tours.

### Railway Museums

Every child's dream will be realised at the **Museum of Railway Transport** (Map p86; ☎ 315 1476; www.railroad.ru/cmrt in Russian; Sadovaya ul 50; adult/student R100/50; 🕒 11am-5pm Wed-Sun, closed last Thu of month; 📄 Sadovaya or Sennaya Ploshchad), which holds a fascinating collection of scale locomotives and model railway bridges often made by the engineers who built the real ones. As the oldest such collection in the world (the museum was established in 1809, 28 years before Russia had its first working train!), it includes models of Krasnoyarsk's *Yenisey Bridge*, the ship that once carried passengers and trains across Lake Baikal. It also has a sumptuous 1903 Trans-Siberian wagon complete with a piano salon and a bathtub.

Train spotters should also hasten to view the impressive collection of full-sized locomotives at the **Railway Museum** (☎ 768 2063; nab Obvodnogo Kanala; adult/student R100/50; 🕒 10am-6pm; 📄 Baltiyskaya), behind the old Warsaw Station: some 75 nicely painted and buffed engines and carriages are on display, including one dating from 1897.

### HISTORIC TRAIN STATIONS

As the birthplace of Russia's railway system, it's not surprising that St Petersburg has some grand train stations. The oldest and most elegant is **Vitebsk Station** (Map pp82-3; 📄 Pushkinskaya), originally built in 1837 for the line to Tsarskoe Selo. The current building dates from 1904 and is partly graced with gorgeous Style Moderne (Russian Art Nouveau) interior decoration.

While at **Moscow Station** (Map p86; 📄 Ploshchad Vosstaniya), look up at the expansive ceiling mural in the main entrance hall. There's a striking bust of Peter the Great in the hall leading to the platforms.

**Finland Station** (Map pp82-3; 📄 Ploshchad Lenina), rebuilt after WWII, is famous as the place where, in April 1917, Lenin arrived from exile and gave his legendary speech atop an armoured car in the square. Lenin's statue, pointing across the Neva, stands outside the station.

For more historic train stations along the Trans-Siberian Route, see p15.

### Vasilyevsky Island

Some of the best views of St Petersburg can be had from Vasilyevsky Island's eastern 'nose' known as the **Strelka**. The two **Rostral Columns** on the point, studded with ships' prows, were oil-fired navigation beacons in the 1800s; on some holidays, such as **Victory Day**, gas torches are still lit on them.

The best of many museums gathered on Vasilyevsky Island is the riverside **Menshikov Palace** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 332 1112; www.hermitage museum.com/html\_En/03/hm3\_9.html; Universitetskaya nab 15; adult/student R200/100; 🕒 10.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun), built in 1707 for Peter the Great's confidant Alexander Menshikov. Now a branch of the Hermitage (p85), the palace's impressively restored interiors are filled with period art and furniture.

The **Museum of Anthropology & Ethnography** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 328 1412; www.kunstkamera.ru/english; entrance on Tamozhnyonny per; adult/student R100/50; 🕒 10.30am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10.30am-5pm Sun), also known as the Kunstkamera, was established in 1714 by Peter the Great, who used it to display his ghoulish collection of monstrosities, notably preserved freaks, two-headed mutant foetuses and odd body parts: they still draw the crowds today.

Housed in what was once the Stock Exchange, the **Central Naval Museum** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 328 2502; www.museum.navy.ru/index\_e.htm; Birzhevaya pl 4; adult/student R100/15; 🕒 11am-6pm Wed-Sun, closed last Thu of the month), is a must for naval enthusiasts. Next door, the **Museum of Zoology** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 328 0112; www.zin.ru/mus\_e.htm; Universitetskaya nab 1/3; adult/child R60/30, free Thu; 🕒 11am-6pm Sat-Thu) has some amazing exhibits, including a complete woolly mammoth, thawed out of the Siberian ice in 1902, and a live insect zoo!

### Peter & Paul Fortress

Set aside some time to explore the **fortress** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 238 4550; Petropavlovskaya krepost, Kronverskaya nab; free entry to grounds, admission to all buildings adult/student R120/60; 🕒 11am-6pm Thu-Mon, 11am-5pm Tue May-Sep, Cathedral & Bastion 11am-6pm daily; 📄 Gorkovskaya), as there's plenty to do and see here. Dating from 1703, this is the oldest building in St Petersburg, planned by Peter the Great as a defence against the Swedes. It never saw action and its main use up to 1917 was as a political prison.

To get a sense of the scale of the place, and for river views, walk the **Nevskaya Panorama** (adult/student R50/30; 🕒 10am-8pm) along part of the battlements, then enter the **SS Peter & Paul Cathedral**, whose 122m-tall, needle-thin gilded spire is one of the city's defining landmarks. Its magnificent baroque interior is the last resting place of all of Russia's prerevolutionary rulers from Peter the Great onward, except Peter II and Ivan VI.

At noon every day a cannon is fired from **Naryshkin Bastion**. In the south wall is **Nevsky Gate**, where prisoners were loaded onto boats for execution. Notice the plaques showing water levels of famous floods.

### WALKING TOUR

Walking Nevsky Pr – Russia's most famous street – is an essential St Petersburg experience. Starting at Dvortsovaya pl, notice the gilded spire of the **Admiralty** (Map pp82-3) to your right as you head southeast down

Nevsky towards the Moyka River. Across the Moyka, Rastrelli's baroque **Stroganov Palace** (Map p86), containing a branch of the Russian Museum (p85), is looking grand after restoration for the 2003 tricentenary.

A block beyond the Moyka, on the southern side of Nevsky pr, see the great arms of the **Kazan Cathedral** (Map p86; ☎ 318 4528; www.kazansky.ru in Russian; Kazanskaya pl 2; admission free; 🕒 10am-7pm) reach out towards the avenue. It's a working cathedral, so please show some respect for the local customs if you enter. Services are held at 10am and 6pm.

Opposite the cathedral is the **Singer Building** (Map p86), a Style Moderne beauty recently restored to all its splendour when it was the headquarters of the sewing machine company. A short walk south of the cathedral, along Griboedova Canal, sits one of St Petersburg's loveliest bridges, the **Bankovsky most** (Map p86). The cables of this 25.2m-long bridge are supported by four cast-iron gryphons with golden wings.

View the lavish **Grand Hotel Europe** (p90), built between 1873 and 1875, redone in Style Moderne in the 1910s and completely renovated in the early 1990s. Across Nevsky pr, the fashionable arcades of **Gostiny Dvor** (Map p86) department store face the clock tower of the former **Town Duma** (Map p86), seat of the prerevolutionary city government. One of the world's first indoor shopping malls, Gostiny Dvor dates from 1757-85.

The arcade at 48 Nevsky pr, the **Passazh** (Map p86) department store, is also beautiful (notice the glass ceilings), while on the corner of Sadovaya ul is the Style Moderne beauty **Yeliseyevsky** (Map p86; Nevsky pr 56; 🕒 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat & Sun), the most sumptuous 'grocery store' you may have ever seen.

An enormous statue of **Catherine the Great** stands at the centre of **Ploshchad Ostrovskogo** (Map p86), commonly referred to as the Catherine Gardens. The square's western side is taken up by the lavish **National Library of Russia** (Map p86), St Petersburg's biggest with some 31 million items; at the southern end is **Aleksandrinsky Theatre** (Map p86), also known as the Pushkin Theatre, where Chekhov's *The Seagull* premiered in 1896.

Nevsky pr crosses the Fontanka Canal on the **Anichkov most** (Map p86), with its famous 1840s statues (sculpted by the German Pyotr Klodt) of rearing horses at its four corners.

### WALK FACTS

**Start** Ploshchad Dvortsovaya  
**Finish** Anichkov most  
**Distance** 2km  
**Duration** Around one hour

## TOURS

The best tour guides to help show you St Petersburg are with **Peter's Tours** (www.peterswalk.com). Its standard walking tour (R400) departs from the HI St Petersburg International Hostel (right) at 10.30am daily. It also offers lots of cool themed itineraries, with customised tours kicking off at R800 an hour for up to four people from May to November.

Viewing St Petersburg from a boat is an idyllic way to tour the city, and during the main tourist season (May to October) there are no shortage of opportunities to do this. There are four regular fixed-route hop-on, hop-off cruises on large **water buses** (tickets R200; ☎ 11am-7pm), which run from several landing stages around St Petersburg's centre. At the same places you'll find many private operators of smaller cruise boats (from around R150 for 40 minutes), as well as small boats that can be hired as private water taxis. You'll have to haggle over rates: expect to pay around R1500 an hour for a small group.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The city's biggest event is the **White Nights Arts Festival**, which includes numerous events ranging from folk to ballet. The official festival dates are the last 10 days of the month but all kinds of arts events and performances take place across the city throughout June and often into July, with the Mariinsky Theatre taking the lead.

## SLEEPING

Unless otherwise mentioned, the accommodation rates in St Petersburg are for high season and include breakfast.

The following agencies can arrange home-stays (from US\$30 per night) and apartment rentals (from US\$60 per night) across the city:

**City Realty** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 312 7842; www.cityrealtyrussia.com; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 35; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt)

**Host Families Association** (HOFA; Map pp82-3; ☎/fax 275 1992; http://webcenter.ru/~hofa; ul Tavricheskaya 5/25; ☑ Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Homestays start with basic B&B rooms (single/double from US\$25/40).

**Ost-West Kontaktservice** (Map p86; ☎ 327 3416; www.ostwest.com; Nevsky pr 105; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; ☑ Ploshchad Vosstaniya) For details about its services, see p84.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Casa Leto** (Map p86; ☎ 314 6622; www.casa.letto.com; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 34; s & d €160-225; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt; ☎ ☑ ☑) At Casa Leto, a dramatically lit stairwell leads up to this stylish mini-hotel. When we checked it out it had just five rooms, each named after a famous St Petersburg architect, all spacious, beautifully decorated in soft pastel shades and furnished with tastefully chosen antiques. There are plans to add several more rooms on the upper floors of the building. The Anglo-Italian owners are incredibly friendly, and the rates include Internet access and light refreshments throughout the day.

### Budget

**Nord Hostel** (Map p86; ☎ 571 0342; www.nordhostel.com; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 10; dm/d €24/48; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt; ☑) The Nord Hostel lies in an unbeatable location, and has spacious dorms in an elegant old building, newish Ikea fittings, free Internet access and international calls. Booking in advance via the Web is advised.

**Russian Room** (Map p86; ☎ 900 9928; www.russianroom.org; Apt 32, Vilensky per 5; dm/d €15/35; ☑ Ploshchad Vosstaniya; ☑) This is the main of the two locations for Russian Room (the other, open during summer only, is at ul Pestelya 13/15; Map p86), which gives travellers a chance to stay in a cosy Russian apartment. Advance booking is essential; it can also arrange visa invitations for €22 and registration for €10.

**Hotel California** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 901 301 6061; www.hotelcalifornia.ru; Apt 36, 67/17 ul Marata; dm from €16; ☑ Vladimirskaia; ☑) The entrance to this well-equipped, comfortable new hostel is through the courtyard on Sotsialisticheskaya ul. Run by some rock musicians, it promises to be a lively place to stay.

**HI St Petersburg International Hostel** (Map p86; ☎ 329 8018; www.ryh.ru; 3-ya Sovetskaya ul 28; dm/d US\$23/56; ☑ Ploshchad Vosstaniya; ☑) St Petersburg's oldest hostel remains popular among travellers. It has several clean, simply furnished dorms and one double room; all rates are slightly cheaper from November to March and for ISIC and HI cardholders. There's also a kitchen for self-catering and a video room.

## Midrange & Top End

**Rachmaninow Antique-Hotel** (Map p86; ☎ 327 7466; 3rd fl, Kazanskaya ul 5; s & d from US\$170; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt; ☎ ☑ ☑) At this stylish mini-hotel the minimalist décor is offset by antiques, and contemporary photography and paintings throughout the premises.

**Pushka Inn** (Map p86; ☎ 312 0913; www.pushka.inn.ru; nab reki Moyki 14; s/d/apt from €100/160/200; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt; ☎ ☑ ☑) Offers modern furnished rooms and apartments, some overlooking one of the city's prettiest stretches of canal. The spacious, well-equipped apartments are a great deal.

**Polikoff Hotel** (Map p86; ☎ 314 7925; www.poli.koff.ru; Nevsky pr 64/11; s/d from €80/100; ☑ Gostiny Dvor; ☎ ☑ ☑) Tricky to find (the entrance is through the brown door on Karavannaya ul, where you'll need to punch in 26 for reception), the Polikoff has rooms brimming with contemporary cool décor, a central location and pleasant service.

**Arbat Nord Hotel** (Map p86; ☎ 703 1899; www.arbat-nord.ru; ul Artilleriyskaya 4; s/d €185/195; ☑ Chernyshevskaya; ☎ ☑ ☑) This sleek new hotel offers comfortable rooms, a good restaurant and friendly English-speaking staff.

**Alexander House** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 259 6877; www.a-house.ru; nab Kryukova kanala 27; s/d from R4995/5735, prices quoted in units; ☑ Sadovaya or Sennaya Ploshchad; ☎ ☑ ☑) This boutique hotel's 14 spacious rooms are each named and tastefully styled after the world's top cities. There's a comfortable lounge area with an attached kitchen for guests' use, and even a separate library and restaurant.

**Grand Hotel Europe** (Map p86; ☎ 329 6000; www.grand-hotel-europe.com; Mikhailovskaya ul 1/7; s/d/ste from US\$470/510/690; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt; ☎ ☎ ☑) The height of luxury. Deservedly popular are the 17 terrace rooms with spectacular views across the city's rooftops. The beautiful Style Moderne décor of some of its bars and restaurants is worth a look in its own right. Rates are for a room only.

## EATING Restaurants

**Zov Ilyicha** (Map p86; ☎ 717 8641; Kazanskaya ul 34; mains R300-400; ☎ 1pm-2am; ☑ Sadovaya) 'Lenin's Mating Call' is hands-down the city's ultimate Soviet kitsch restaurant. Even better, the Russian food is extremely good. Screenings of racy videos mean no under-18s are admitted.

**Restoran** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 327 8979; Tamoz henny per 2; meals R400-500; ☑ Vasileostrovskaya) Chic minimalist décor provides an ideal setting for a range of traditional Russian dishes. There's a good table of appetisers and salads, and home-made, flavoured vodkas.

**Yerevan** (Map p86; ☎ 703 3820; nab reki Fontanki 51; mains R400-500; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) This classy Armenian restaurant has appealing ethnic design touches and equally impressive traditional food made with ingredients from 'ecologically pure' regions of Armenia.

**Tandoori Nights** (Map p86; ☎ 312 8782; Voznesensky pr 4; mains R300-400, prices in units; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) The city's most stylish Indian restaurant also serves great food, a mix of traditional and modern recipes road-tested by a top London Indian chef.

**Taverna Oliva** (Map p86; ☎ 314 6563; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 31; mains R200; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) There's nothing taverna-like about this cavernous place decorated in an array of Greek styles. The menu is traditional, and the food is both excellent value and extremely good – especially the salad bar.

**Sukawati** (Map p86; ☎ 312 0540; Kazanskaya ul 8; mains R160; ☎ noon-5am; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) Russia's first Indonesian restaurant offers stylish décor and delicious reasonably authentic food, with many dishes for vegetarians.

**Russky Kitsch** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 325 1122; Universitetskaya nab 25; meals R300; ☎ noon-4am; ☑ Vasileostrovskaya) The self-proclaimed 'period of perestroika café' raises bad taste to an ironic art. Come for a drink and a gawp.

## Cafés & Quick Eats

**Zoom Café** (Map p86; Gorokhovaya ul 22; mains R140; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt; ☎) This relaxed café offers tasty European and Russian food (with 20% off all prices till 4pm), wi-fi access and also a no-smoking zone.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Fasol** (Map p86; ☎ 571 0907; Gorokhovaya ul 17; mains R150; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) A few of the modern Russian-style dishes at this popular minimalist-design café include the name-sake *fasol* (beans), but we really love its *forsh-mak* (chopped herring salad) with freshly fried potato pancakes. The atmosphere is relaxed, making it a wonderful place just to hang out.

**Chaynaya Lozhka** (Map p86; Nevsky pr 44; mains R100; ☎ 9am-10pm; **M** Gostiny Dvor) Piter is blanketed with these brightly decorated cafés serving excellent bliny and salads, and a wide range of loose leaf teas and infusions.

**Kilikia** (Map p86; ☎ 327 2208; Gorokhovaya ul 26/40; mains R200-300; ☎ noon-3am; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) Served here are excellent-value Armenian and Russian dishes, and there's usually live music most evenings.

**Herzen Institute Canteen** (Map p86; Herzen Institute courtyard, nab reki Moyki 48; mains R50-100; ☎ noon-6pm Mon-Sat; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) Though it shares the kitchen of Chinese restaurant Kharbin (☎ 311 1732; nab reki Moyki 48), this bargain outlet caters to Herzen Institute students, who come in droves at lunch.

**Bliny Domik** (Map p86; ☎ 315 9915; Kolokolnaya ul; meals R100-200; ☎ 8am-11pm; **M** Vladimirskaaya) Try breakfast or a late lunch at this long-running favourite to avoid the crowds. It's set up like a country home, but isn't too kitsch like other places.

**Baltic Bread** (Map p86; www.baltic-bread.ru/eng; Vladimirskaaya pr 19; sandwiches R40; ☎ 10am-9pm) This outstanding bakery/café has a new ritzy branch in the Vladimirskaaya Passazh shopping mall serving some 80 different types of baked goods; come here for an espresso (R50), cake (R30) or sandwich. Also check out its original branch (Map p86; Grechesky pr 25).

**Olyushka & Russky Bliny** (Map pp82-3; Gagariinskaya ul 13; mains R55-75; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri; **M** Chernyshevskaya) Students at the nearby university swear by these authentic canteens that hark back to the simplicity of Soviet times. Olyushka serves only handmade *pelmeni* (dumplings), while Russky Bliny does a fine line in melt-in-the-mouth pancakes.

**Stolle** (Map pp82-3; pies R50; ☎ 8am-10pm) Dekabristov 33 (ul Dekabristov 33; **M** Sadovaya or Sennaya Ploshchad); Dekabristov 33 (ul Dekabristov 19; **M** Sadovaya or Sennaya Ploshchad); Vasilyevsky Island (Syezovskaya and 1-ya linii 50; **M** Vasileostrovskaya) Its savoury and sweet pies are so yummy we guarantee you'll be back for more. Either Dekabristov branch is close to the Mariinsky Theatre, although 33 is the more appealing.

**Café Idiot** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 315 1675; nab reki Moyki 82; meals R300; ☎ 11am-1am; **M** Sennaya Ploshchad; ☎) An ideal place to visit for a nightcap or supper after attending the Mariinsky (since its kitchen stays open late) is this eternally popular vegetarian café/bar.

## Self-Catering

**Kuznechny Market** (Map p86; Kuznechny per; ☎ 8am-8pm; **M** Vladimirskaaya) The best fresh-produce market in town.

Recommended supermarkets:

**Lend** (Map pp82-3; Vladimirskaaya Passazh, Vladimirskaaya pr 19; ☎ 24hr; **M** Dostoievskaya)

**Passazh** (Map p86; Nevsky pr 48; ☎ 10am-10pm; **M** Gostiny Dvor)

**Perekrestok** (Map p86; PIK, Sennaya pl 2; ☎ 24hr; **M** Sennaya Ploshchad)

## DRINKING

**Dacha** (Map p86; Dumskaaya ul 9; ☎ 6pm-6am; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) One of the few places in St Petersburg where you will find a truly mixed ethnic crowd of fun, interesting people. Dacha is an amazingly popular DJ bar, with cheap drinks and fabulous music that has everyone up and dancing.

**Tsinik** (Cynic; Map p86; ☎ 312 8779; per Antonenko 4; ☎ 11am-3am Sun-Thu, 11am-6am Fri & Sat; **M** Sadovaya or Sennaya Ploshchad) Laid-back, no-frills cellar bar with a cool, student-slacker/artly crowd. It also has the only men's toilets in the world with the walls entirely covered with Pushkin's poem *Eugene Onegin*.

**Red Lion** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 571 4526; pl Dekabristov 1; ☎ 24hr; **M** Sadovaya or Sennaya Ploshchad) Cavernous bar that pounds with atmosphere, offering a wide range of beers, big-screen TVs, a dance floor and standard British pub grub.

**City Bar** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 314 1037; Millionnaya ul 10; ☎ 11am-last client; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) This popular expat bar also offers wi-fi, and a free book, DVD and video lending library.

**Tinkoff** (Map p86; ☎ 718 5566; www.tinkoff.ru; Kazanskaya ul 7; ☎ noon-2am; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) Come to this gigantic contemporary brewery to sample one of eight fresh microbrewed beers. There's also good food, including a sushi bar.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Check Friday's *St Petersburg Times* for up-to-date listings.

## Classical Music, Ballet & Opera

The main season is September to the end of June. In summer many companies are away on tour, but plenty of performances are still staged. Tickets cost R300 to R4000.

**Mariinsky Theatre** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 326 4141; www.mariinsky.ru/en; Teatralnaya pl 1; ☎ box office 11am-7pm; **M** Sadovaya or Sennaya Ploshchad) Home

to the world-famous Kirov Ballet and Opera company. A visit here is a must, if only to wallow in the sparkling glory of the interior. Book and pay in advance on the website.

**Mussorgsky Opera & Ballet Theatre** (Map p86; ☎ 585 4305; www.mikhailovsky.ru; pl Lskustsy 1; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) It's generally cheaper and easier to get tickets to the performances staged here.

The grand **Bolshoy Zal** (Big Hall; Map p86; ☎ 710 4257; www.philharmonia.spb.ru/eng/index.html; Mikhaylovskaya ul 2; **M** Gostiny Dvor) is one of the two concert halls of the Philharmonia's Symphony Orchestra, the other being the **Maly Zal imeni Glinki** (Small Philharmonia; Map p86; ☎ 571 8333; Nevsky pr 30; **M** Nevsky Prospekt).

## Live Music

Check the Russian-language websites of the following venues for details on current gigs.

**Platforma** (Map p86; ☎ 719 6123; www.platforma.dub.ru; ul Nekrasova 40; cover R100-200; ☎ 24hr; **M** Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Some of St Petersburg's most interesting bands and coolest DJs play at this convivial space. It's also a fine place to eat, or for a drink earlier in the evening when you can browse its bookstore.

**Red Club** (Map p86; ☎ 277 1366; www.dubred.ru; Poltavskaya ul 7; cover R100-400; ☎ 7pm-6am; **M** Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Behind Moscow Station, this great warehouse venue is a mainstay for local groups.

**Moloko** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 274 9467; www.moloko.dub.ru; Perekupnoy per 12; cover R50-100; ☎ 7pm-midnight Wed-Sun; **M** Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Great bands running the gamut of genres play here.

**Fish Fabrique** (Map p86; ☎ 764 4857; www.fishfabrique.spb.ru; Pushkinskaya ul 10, entrance through arch at Ligovsky pr 53; cover R70-150; ☎ 3pm-late; **M** Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Legendary bar set in the building that's the focus of the avant-garde art scene. Live bands kick up a storm at 10pm.

## Nightclubs

**Griboedov** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 764 4355; www.griboedovclub.ru; Voronezhskaya ul 2A; cover R200, free 5-8pm; ☎ 5pm-6am; **M** Ligovsky Prospekt) Managed by the same people behind Hotel California, this hip club, in an artfully converted bomb shelter, is a guaranteed fun night out.

**Tunnel** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 233 4015; www.tunnel.dub.ru; cnr Lyubansky per & Zverinskaya ul; cover R250-350; ☎ midnight-6am Fri & Sat; **M** Gorkovskaya) The original 'underground' club, quite literally since it occupies a bomb shelter. Come here for hardcore electronic dance music.

**Par.spb** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 233 3374; www.par.spb.ru; Aleksandrovsky Park 5B; cover R400; ☎ 11am-6am Fri-Sun) This stripped-back, arty club, with two dance spaces and a chill-out area, offers different music each night and a strict door policy.

## SHOPPING

**Souvenir Market** (Map p86; Konyushennaya pl; ☎ 10am-dusk; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) This very well-stocked souvenir market is diagonally across the canal from the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood (p87).

**Tovar dlya Voennikh** (Map p86; Sadovaya ul 26; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; **M** Gostiny Dvor) The best place to buy cool Russian military clothes and memorabilia. Look out for the circular green and gold sign with Military Shop written in English; the entrance is inside the courtyard.

**La Russe** (Map p86; ☎ 572 2043; www.larusse.ru; Stremyannaya ul 3; ☎ 11am-8pm; **M** Mayakovskaya) Lots of rustic old whatnots and genuine antiques are for sale at this quirky, arty store.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Air**  
**Pulkovo-1** (☎ 704 3822; http://eng.pulkovo.ru) is the domestic terminal that serves St Petersburg, and **Pulkovo-2** (☎ 704 3444; http://eng.pulkovo.ru) is the international.

St Petersburg has direct air links with most major European capitals and cities across Russia. Tickets for all airlines can be purchased from travel agencies and from the **Central Airline Ticket Office** (Map p86; ☎ 315 0072; Nevsky pr 7; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat & Sun; **M** Nevsky Prospekt), which also has counters for train and international bus tickets.

## Bus

St Petersburg's main bus station, **Avtovokzal No 2** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 766 5777; nab Obvodnogo kanala 36; **M** Ligovsky Prospekt) – there isn't a

### BUSES FROM ST PETERSBURG

destination	buses per day	duration (hr)	one-way fare (R)
Helsinki	2	8	1700
Moscow	1	12	480
Rīga	2	11	500
Tallinn	7	7½	550-650



No 1 – has both international and European Russia services.

Tickets can be purchased here and at the Central Airline Ticket Office (p93).

## Train

The three major long-distance train stations in St Petersburg are: **Ladoga** (☎ 768 5304; Zhanevsky pr 73; 🚆 Ladozhskaya), for services to/from Helsinki and the far north of Russia; **Moscow** (Map p86; ☎ 768 4597; pl Vosstaniya; 🚆 Ploshchad Vosstaniya), for Moscow, the Urals

and Siberia; and **Vitebsk** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 768 5807; Zagorodny pr 52; 🚆 Pushkinskaya), for the Baltic states and Eastern Europe.

Tickets can be purchased at the train stations, the **Central Train Ticket Office** (Map p86; ☎ 762 33 44; nab kanala Griboedova 24; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-4pm Sun; 🚆 Nevsky Prospekt) and the Central Airline Ticket Office (p93).

## DOMESTIC SERVICES

There are 12 to 14 daily trains to Moscow, all departing from Moscow Station:

### RAIL ROUTES FROM ST PETERSBURG

#### Trains from St Petersburg to Moscow

Train no & name	Departure	Duration (hr)	Fare (R)
1 <i>Krasny Strela</i>	11.55pm	8	1700
3 <i>Ekspress</i>	11.59pm	8	1700
5 <i>Nikolaevsk Ekspress</i>	11.35pm	8	1700
23 <i>Yunost</i>	1.10pm	8	1300
159 <i>Avrora</i>	4.00pm	5½	1300
163 <i>ER200</i>	6.30pm	4½	1700
165 <i>Nevsky Ekspress</i>	6.30pm*	4½	1700

Notes: \*Mon, Thu & Fri only

#### Domestic Trains from St Petersburg

Destination	Train no	Departure	Duration (hr)	Fare (R)
Kazan	103	4.36pm MS†	27½	1482
Nizhny Novgorod (Gorky)	59	5.24pm MS	15½r	1600
Omsk	13	8.40pm MS†	53½	3037

Notes: MS – Moscow Station †odd days

#### International Trains from St Petersburg

Destination	Train no & name	Departure	Duration (hr)	Fare (R)
Brest	49	3.01pm VS	19	932
<i>The Brest train No 49 has carriages that are detached there and go on to Budapest and Prague:</i>				
Budapest	49	3.01pm VS*	45	5330
Prague	49	3.01pm VS	40½	3790
Helsinki	034 <i>Repin</i>	7.28am LS	6	1856
Helsinki	036 <i>Sibelius</i>	4.28pm LS	6	1856
Kaliningrad	079	6.16pm VS	27½	1247
Kyiv	053	9.11pm VS	24	961/1102‡
Minsk	051	7.03pm VS	15	1166
Odesa	19	11.40pm VS	35	1260
<i>The Odesa train has carriages that are detached along the way and go on to Berlin and Warsaw:</i>				
Berlin	19	11.40pm VS§	31	4670
Warsaw	19	11.40pm VS§	29	2240
Riga	037	9.46pm VS	13	1812
Vilnius	391	8.28pm†	15¼	1387/1499#

Notes: LS – Ladoga Station VS – Vitebsk Station \*Tues & Sun ||Mon, Wed, Thu, Sun †odd days ‡daily except Thu #Russian/Ukrainian train §Russian/Lithuanian train

the table opposite lists the best services. If you want to save money, four services (the 19, 27, 29 and 55) have *platskart* (*platskartny*; open carriage) tickets for R350.

## INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

Two daily trains run between St Petersburg and Helsinki: the Russian-operated *Repin*, and the *Sibelius* run by **Finnish Railways** (www.vr.fi). For details on services going to Helsinki see the table 'International Trains from St Petersburg' (opposite).

Services to Berlin, Budapest, Kaliningrad, Kyiv, Prague and Warsaw pass through Belarus; for these journeys you must hold a transit visa. Note that border guards have been known to force people off trains and back to where they came from if they don't have a visa.

## GETTING AROUND

St Petersburg's excellent public transport system makes getting around the city simple and inexpensive. Pack a sturdy pair of walking shoes, because the city centre is best seen on foot.

## To/From the Airport

About 17km south of the city centre, the airport is easily and (very) cheaply accessed by both metro and bus. From Moskovskaya metro, bus 39 runs to Pulkovo-1, the domestic terminal, and bus 13 runs to Pulkovo-2, the international terminal. There are also plenty of *marshrutky* (fixed route minibuses). The trip takes about 15 minutes and costs just R15 (R20 for a metro/bus combination), or you can take the buses and *marshrutka* K3 all the way from the airport to Sennaya Ploshchad in the city centre or K39 to Ploshchad Vosstaniya. All buses stop directly outside each of the terminals.

Taxis should charge around R600 to get to the city (R400 is the price from the city to the airport). Expect that most taxi drivers will request more once they realise you're a foreigner and be prepared to haggle or take the bus.

## Public Transport

The **metro** (🚇 5.30am-midnight) is usually the quickest way around the city and you'll rarely wait more than three minutes for a train. *Zhetony* (tokens; R10) can be bought

from booths in the stations. More convenient and better value are *karta* (magnetic-strip, multiride cards) valid for seven, 15 or 30 days, with various multiples of rides. All stations have card-reading turnstiles – place your card in the slot and when it comes back out you'll see a green light to proceed if there's sufficient credit left on the card.

# AROUND ST PETERSBURG

## PETRODVORETS ПЕТРОДВОРЕЦ

On the Gulf of Finland, **Petrodvorets** (☎ 427 7425; www.peterhof.org; ul Razvodnaya 2), just 29km west of St Petersburg, is arguably the most impressive of St Petersburg's suburban palaces. It's largely a reconstruction, having been pretty much demolished during WWII, but it is still mightily impressive – even when it's swarming with tourists, as it very frequently is.

The centrepiece of the palace is the **Grand Cascade & Water Avenue**, a symphony of over 140 fountains and canals. To see them you are required to pay to enter the **Lower Park** (adult/student R300/150; 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm Sat & Sun). They only work from mid-May to early October (from 11am to 5pm Monday to Friday and 11am to 6pm Saturday and Sunday), but the wonderful gilded ensemble still looks marvellous at any time of the year.

Between the cascade and the **Upper Garden** (admission free) is the **Grand Palace** (adult/student R430/215; 🕒 10.30am-6pm Tue-Sun, closed last Tue of month). Amid all the eye-boggling interiors, many find the finest room is the simplest – Peter's study, apparently the only one to survive the Germans. The estate features several other buildings of interest – all with their own admission charges and separate opening hours – which can easily take up a day to tour fully.

## Getting There & Away

To get to Petrodvorets, hop on the K404 bus that arrives and departs from outside the Baltic Station (R30, 40 minutes) and get off at the main entrance to the Upper Garden, which is on Sankt Peterburgsky pr. There's also a reasonably frequent suburban train (R20, 30 minutes) from the Baltic Station to Novy Petrodvorets, from where you'll have to take any bus but 357 to the fifth stop,

### THE LENINGRAD BLOCKADE

The Leningrad Blockade was the city's defining event of the 20th century. Around one million people died from shelling, starvation and disease in what's called the '900 Days' (actually 872). By comparison, the USA and UK suffered about 700,000 dead between them in all of WWII.

After the war began on 22 June 1941, with the Germans fast approaching, many residents fled. Art treasures and precious documents from the Hermitage and other museums were moved out by the train-load; factories were evacuated and relocated to Siberia; historical sculptures were buried or covered with sandbags. Yet no-one could have predicted the suffering to come.

The Nazi plan, as indicated in a secret directive, was to 'wipe the city of Petersburg from the face of the earth'. A fragile 'Road of Life' across frozen Lake Ladoga was the only (albeit heavily bombed) lifeline the city had for provisions and evacuations.

Food was practically nonexistent, and at one point rations were limited to 175g of sawdust-laden bread a day. People ate their pets, even rats and birds disappeared from the city. The paste behind wallpaper was scraped off and eaten, leather belts were cooked until chewable. Cannibalism started in the shelters for refugees from the neighbouring towns; without ration cards, they were among the first to die. The exhausted and starved literally fell over dead on the streets. There were periods when over 30,000 people per day died of hunger.

More than 150,000 shells and bombs were dropped on the city during the blockade, the effects of which are still visible on some buildings (notably on the west wall of St Isaac's Cathedral and the northwest corner of the Anichkov most). Still, life went on. Concerts and plays were performed in candlelit halls, lectures given, poetry written, orphanages opened, brigades formed to clean up the city. Most famous was the 9 August 1942 concert of Shostakovich's 7th Symphony by the Leningrad Philharmonic, broadcast nationally by radio from the besieged city.

According to survivors, random acts of kindness outnumbered incidents of robbery and vandalism, and lessons learned about the human spirit would be remembered for a lifetime. From a poem by Olga Berggolts, written after the blockade was lifted: 'In mud, in darkness, hunger, and sorrow, where death, like a shadow, trod on our heels, we were so happy at times, breathed such turbulent freedom, that our grandchildren would envy us.'

For a detailed, harrowing description of the blockade, read Harrison Salisbury's *900 Days: the Siege of Leningrad*.

another 10 minutes. Alternatively there are *marshrutky* to Petrodvorets from outside metro Avtovo.

Another option from May to September is the *Meteor* hydrofoil (one-way/return R250/450, about 30 minutes), which runs from the jetty in front of St Petersburg's Hermitage every 20 to 30 minutes from 9.30am to at least 7pm.

### TSARSKOE SELO & PAVLOVSK

#### ЦАРСКОЕ СЕЛО И ПАВЛОВСК

The popular and impressive imperial estate of **Tsarskoe Selo** (Tsar's Village; ☎ 465 2281; <http://eng.tzar.ru>; Sadovaya ul 7) is located in Pushkin, 25km south of St Petersburg. The big draw here is the baroque, Rastrelli-designed **Catherine Palace** (Yekaterininsky dvorets; adult/student R500/250; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon, closed last Mon of the month), built between 1752 and

1756, but almost destroyed in WWII. The exterior and 20-odd rooms have been expertly restored; the Great Hall and the Amber Room are particularly dazzling.

Wandering around **Catherine Park** (Yekaterininsky Park; adult/student R100/50; 🕒 6am-11pm) surrounding the palace is a pleasure. In the outer section of the park is the **Great Pond**, fringed by an intriguing array of structures, including a Chinese Pavilion, purposely Ruined Tower and Pyramid where Catherine the Great buried her dogs.

To escape the masses head 4km further south to **Pavlovsk** (adult/student R80/40; 🕒 9am-9pm), the park and palace designed by Charles Cameron between 1781 and 1786, and one of the most exquisite in Russia. Pavlovsk's **Great Palace** (☎ 470 2155; [www.pavlovskart.spb.ru](http://www.pavlovskart.spb.ru); ul Revolutsii; adult/student R370/185; 🕒 10am-6pm Sat-Thu, closed Fri & last Mon of the month), burnt down

in WWII, was fully restored by 1970. The sprawling park itself is a delight to explore.

### Getting There & Away

*Marshrutky* (R25, 30 minutes) regularly shuttle to both Pushkin and Pavlovsk from outside metro Moskovskaya.

Infrequent trains run from St Petersburg's Vitebsk Station. For Tsarskoe Selo, get off at

Detskoe Selo Station (R21), and for Pavlovsk (R28) at Pavlovsk Station. It's about half an hour by foot to either place.

From the Detskoe Selo Station frequent *marshrutky* (R10, 5 minutes) go to Tsarskoe Selo; many continue on to Pavlovsk Station (for entry to the park) and to the front of Pavlovsk's palace. Walking at least one way across Pavlovsk's park is recommended.

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