

St Petersburg Санкт Петербург

Locals call it, simply, 'Piter'. In its time – some 300 action-packed years – it has been known by several other names, all more resonant of 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. This grand dream of Peter the Great is like one gigantic museum: look up from the banks of the Neva River and the canals that meander through the heart of city and you'll gaze upon a showcase of 18th- and 19th-century palaces and mansions. Inside these you'll discover a mind-boggling collection of museums, culminating in the truly breathtaking Hermitage.

It's small wonder that such an environment has nurtured some of Russia's greatest artists and cultural movements. St Petersburg is the birthplace of Russian ballet, home to literary giants, including Pushkin and Dostoevsky, and musical maestros such as Shostakovich and Rachmaninoff. Creativity continues to throb through the city's veins manifesting itself in a hedonistic and experimental club and performing arts scenes, as well as, lately, a delicious crop of restaurants. Also make time to journey out of St Petersburg to at least one of the splendid old tsarist palace estates, such as Petrodvorets and Tsarskoe Selo. Many other rewarding day trips await those who choose to make the city their base for longer.

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

- Losing yourself amid the artistic treasures and imperial interiors of the **Hermitage** (p244)
- Cruising the **canals** (p272) for a boatman's perspective on the city's architecture and pretty bridges
- Enjoying a world-class opera or ballet performance at the beautiful **Mariinsky Theatre** (p262)
- Admiring the Grand Cascade's symphony of fountains at **Petrodvorets** (p295)
- Feeling your jaw hit the parquet floor as you take in the gilded splendour of **Catherine Palace** (p299)

■ POPULATION: 4.6 MILLION

■ AREA CODE: ☎ 812



HISTORY

The area around the mouth of the Neva River may have been a swamp but it's been long fought over. Alexander of Novgorod defeated the Swedes here in 1240 – earning the title Nevsky (of the Neva). Sweden retook control of the region in the 17th century and it was Peter the Great's desire to crush this rival and make Russia a European power that led to the founding of St Petersburg. At the start of the Great Northern War (1700–21) he captured the Swedish outposts on the Neva, and in 1703 he began his city with the Peter & Paul Fortress.

After Peter trounced the Swedes at Poltava in 1709, the city he named, in Dutch style, Sankt Pieter Burk (after his patron saint) really began to grow. Canals were dug to drain the marshy south bank

and in 1712 Peter made the place his capital, forcing grumbling administrators, nobles and merchants to move here and build new homes. Peasants were drafted as forced labour, many dying of disease and exhaustion; it's still known as the city built upon bones. Architects and artisans came from all over Europe. By Peter's death in 1725 his city had a population of 40,000 and 90% of Russia's foreign trade passed through it.

Peter's immediate successors moved the capital back to Moscow but Empress Anna Ioanovna (1730–40) returned it to St Petersburg. Between 1741 and 1825, during the reigns of Empress Elizabeth, Catherine the Great and Alexander I, it became a cosmopolitan city with a royal court of famed splendour. These monarchs commissioned great series of palaces, government

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*. Otherwise, a visit to one or all of these Blockade-related sites – St Petersburg History Museum (p263), Blockade Museum (p259), Monument to the Heroic Defenders of Leningrad (p268) and Piskaryovskoe Cemetery (p268) – would greatly enrich your understanding of its history.

buildings and churches, turning it into one of Europe's grandest capitals.

The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and industrialisation, which peaked in the 1890s, brought a flood of poor workers into the city, leading to squalor, disease and festering discontent. St Petersburg became a hotbed of strikes and political violence and was the hub of the 1905 revolution, sparked by 'Bloody Sunday' on 9 January 1905, when a strikers' march to petition the tsar in the Winter Palace was fired on by troops. In 1914, in a wave of patriotism at the start of WWI, the city's name was changed to the Russian-style Petrograd. The population at the time was 2.1 million.

In 1917 the workers' protests turned into a general strike and troops mutinied, forcing the end of the monarchy in March. Seven months later Lenin's Bolshevik Party had prevailed and the Soviet government came into being (p49). The new government moved the capital back to Moscow in March 1918, fearing a German attack on Petrograd. The privations of the Civil War caused Petrograd's population to drop to about 700,000, and in 1921 strikes in the city and a bloodily suppressed revolt by the sailors of nearby Kronshadt (p303) helped to bring about Lenin's more liberal New Economic Policy.

Petrograd was renamed Leningrad after Lenin's death in 1924. A hub of Stalin's 1930s industrialisation program, by 1939 it had 3.1 million people and 11% of Soviet industrial output. Yet Stalin feared it as a rival power base and the 1934 assassination of the local communist chief Sergei Kirov at Smolny was the start of his 1930s Communist Party purge.

When Germany attacked the USSR in June 1941 it took them only two and a half months to reach Leningrad. As the birthplace of Bolshevism, Hitler swore to wipe it from the face of the earth. His troops besieged the city from 8 September 1941 until 27 January 1944 (p225) but Leningrad survived and, after the war, was proclaimed a 'hero city'. It took until 1960 for the city's population to exceed pre-WWII levels.

During the 1960s and '70s Leningrad developed a reputation as a dissidents' city with an artistic underground spearheaded by the poet Joseph Brodsky and, later, rock groups such as Akvarium (p87). In 1989

Anatoly Sobchak, a reform-minded candidate, was elected mayor. Two years later as the USSR crumbled the city's citizens voted to bring back the name of St Petersburg (though the region around the city remains known as Leningradskaya oblast).

During the 1990s St Petersburg became notorious for its levels of corruption and high rates of criminality. At times it seemed the local 'Mafia' were more in charge than the elected officials. In 1996 Sobchak was succeeded by his deputy Vladimir Yakovlev, and later ended up in comfortable self-exile in Paris after charges of corruption and fiscal mismanagement. Yakovlev's first act after his victory was to change the title from mayor to governor.

Romanov ghosts returned to the city on 17 July 1998, when the remains of Tsar Nicholas II, his wife, three of his five children, their doctor and three servants were buried in the family crypt at the SS Peter & Paul Cathedral within the fortress of the same name (p437). Five years later the legacy of the tsars came further under the spotlight during St Petersburg's tricentenary celebrations. With millions of dollars having been spent on restoration and refurbishment the city looks better now probably than at any other time in its history – a source of great pride to President Vladimir Putin who wastes no opportunity to return to his birthplace and show it off to visiting heads of state and other dignitaries.

In 2003 Putin lured Yakovlev into federal government (sidelining him as the envoy to the federal district of the South, including the hot potato of Chechnya), leaving the way clear for the president's ally Valentina Matvienko to assume office. She has continued to capitalise on the injection of foreign interest in Russia and business in the city is booming. Overused as the term may be St Petersburg has, in fact, reestablished itself as Russia's window on the West.

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 into several branches and forming the islands that make 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.

The heart of St Petersburg is the area spreading back from the Winter Palace and the Admiralty on the south bank, its skyline dominated by the golden dome of St Isaac's Cathedral. Nevsky pr, heading east-southeast from here, is the main drag, along and around which you'll find many of the city's sights, shops and restaurants.

The northern side of the city comprises three main areas. Vasilyevsky Island is the westernmost, with many of the city's fine early buildings still standing at the eastern end – the Strelka. The middle area is Petrograd Side, a cluster of delta islands whose southern end is marked by the tall gold spire of the SS Peter & Paul Cathedral. The third, eastern, area is Vyborg Side, stretching along the north bank of the Neva.

Maps

There's a large number of maps covering the city, all available both abroad at any good travel bookshop and in the city itself. Dom Knigi (right) has the best selection, including maps of transport routes (including *marshrutky*, fixed-rate minibuses) and several street directories.

STREET NAMES

In the early to mid-1990s, the city changed the Soviet-era names of dozens of its parks, streets and bridges back to their prerevolutionary names. Ten years on, only their 'new' names are used, though 'Griboedova Canal' will probably never revert to its tsarist-era moniker, Yekaterinsky (Alexander Griboedov was a 19th-century playwright who lived in a house on this canal).

St Petersburg has two streets called Bolshoy pr: one on Petrograd Side, one on Vasilyevsky Island. The two sides of some streets on Vasilyevsky Island are known as lines (linii), and opposite sides of these streets have different names – thus 4-ya linia (4th line) and 5-ya linia (5th line) are the east and west sides of the same street – which collectively is called 4-ya i 5-ya linii (4th and 5th lines).

INFORMATION Bookshops

Books are for sale everywhere, but books in English are scarce. There are also many antiquarian bookshops worth rooting through for collectables and old maps; we list a couple of good options below.

Anglia (Map pp234-5; ☎ 279 8284; nab reki Fontanki 40; ☎ 10am-7pm; ☑ Gostiny Dvor) City's only English-language bookshop. Get your Lonely Planet guidebooks here. Entry inside the Turgenev Building.

Dom Knigi (Map pp230-1; ☎ 325 6696; Nevsky pr 62; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Sat, 9am-10pm Sun; ☑ Gostiny Dvor) You'll find a good selection of guidebooks and maps to the city on the 1st floor of St Petersburg's largest bookshop.

Na Liteynom (Map pp234-5; ☎ 275 3873; Liteyny pr 61; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; ☑ Mayakovskaya) Antiquarian book seller tucked away in a courtyard. Also an interesting place to browse for antiques and unusual souvenirs.

Staraya Kniga (Map pp238-9; ☎ 232 1765; Bolshoy pr 19, Petrograd Side; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat; ☑ Chkalovskaya) Excellent selection of old books and maps.

Cultural Centres

British Council (Map pp234-5; ☎ 718 5060; www.britishcouncil.ru; nab reki Fontanki 46; ☎ 12.30-7pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat; ☑ Gostiny Dvor) St Petersburg's best-organised foreign cultural centre holds classical concerts, theatre and film performances. For use of its excellent library the annual membership fee is R150 for teachers, R300 for everyone else.

Goethe Institute (Map pp230-1; ☎ 325 9835; www.goethe.de/ins/ru/pet/; nab reki Moyki 58; ☎ 9.15am-7pm Mon-Fri; ☑ Gostiny Dvor) Has a well-stocked German-language library.

Institut Francais (Map pp230-1; ☎ 311 0995; www.fr.spb.ru; nab reki Moyki 20; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) This busy centre has a library with over 12,000 French-language books, magazines, videos and CDs. It also organises numerous cultural events.

Emergency

All of the following numbers have Russian-speaking operators. If you need to make a police report and don't speak Russian, first contact the Tourist Information Centre (p243). For serious matters contact your embassy or consulate, too (p704).

Ambulance ☎ 03

Fire ☎ 01

Gas Leak ☎ 04

Police ☎ 02

ST PETERSBURG IN...

Two Days

Start in style with a tour of the **Hermitage** (p244). Enjoy an afternoon stroll in the nearby **Summer Garden** (p256) and a peek inside the beautifully restored **Sheremetyev Palace** (p258) along the Fontanka River. From here you're well placed to hop on a boat for an early evening **cruise** (p272). If you're quick, you could also squeeze in a visit to **St Isaac's Cathedral** (p252) climbing its colonnade for a bird's-eye view of the city.

Kick off day two by exploring the splendid **Russian Museum** (p252). Move on to the polychromatic **Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood** (p252). After lunch head across the Neva River to explore the **Peter & Paul Fortress** (p264). If you have time, continue around to the **Strelka** (p263) to see the museums here, or at least take in the view.

Five Days

Following on from the previous two-day itinerary, spend a day each exploring the imperial parks and palaces at **Petrodvorets** (p295) and **Tsarskoe Selo** (p299). Consider using the fifth day to explore the city's more off-the-beaten-track sights including the **Hermitage's Storage Facility** (p267), the nearby **Buddhist Temple** (p267) and the peaceful, traffic-free park on **Yelagin Island** (p266). Cap it all off with a performance at the **Mariinsky Theatre** (p262).

Internet Access

Internet cafés are common in St Petersburg. Wi-fi is also becoming popular with hot spots popping up across the city: City Bar (p285), Ili (p282), Mirage Cinema (p286) and Zoom Café (p282) all use the **Quantum** (www.quantum.ru in Russian) network.

Café Max (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 6655; Nevsky pr 90/92; per hr R40; ☎ 24hr; M) Mayakovskaya) Wi-fi available here. Also has a branch in the Hermitage.

FM Club (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 3674; ul Dostoevskogo 6A; per hr R60; ☎ 10am-8am; M) Vladimirskaaya)

Quo Vadis? (Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 8011; Nevsky pr 24; per hr R80; ☎ 24hr; M) Gostiny Dvor) Has 65 terminals and a café/library in which you can browse foreign newspapers and magazines.

Internet Resources

There is no shortage of information about St Petersburg on the Internet. Try the following as well as seeing individual sections in the chapter for more suggestions, and p22 for other handy sites.

http://enlight.ru/camera/index_e.htm Peter Sobolev's excellent Wandering Camera website includes some 300 albums of photos of the city.

<http://petersburgcity.com/for-tourists> Representing the official English-language portal for St Petersburg.

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

www.saint-petersburg.com One of the best places to start. There's information on sights, current events and listings, a virtual city tour, online hotel booking, and a great, up-to-date traveller's message board.

www.spb.ru/eng Another starting point for St Petersburg information, with several good links.

www.eng.gov.spb.ru Official site of the St Petersburg government.

Laundry

Most hotels offer a laundry service.

Prachehnaya (Map pp240-1; ☎ 305 0886; 11-ya linia 34; ☎ 9am-9pm; M) Vasileostrovskaya) A 3kg wash costs R170, ironing an extra R105.

Stirka (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 5371; Kazanskaya ul 26; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1am Sat & Sun; M) Nevsky Prospekt) Café-bar and laundrette – what a good idea! A 5kg wash costs R100 with espresso included. The dryer is R30 per 20 minutes.

Left Luggage

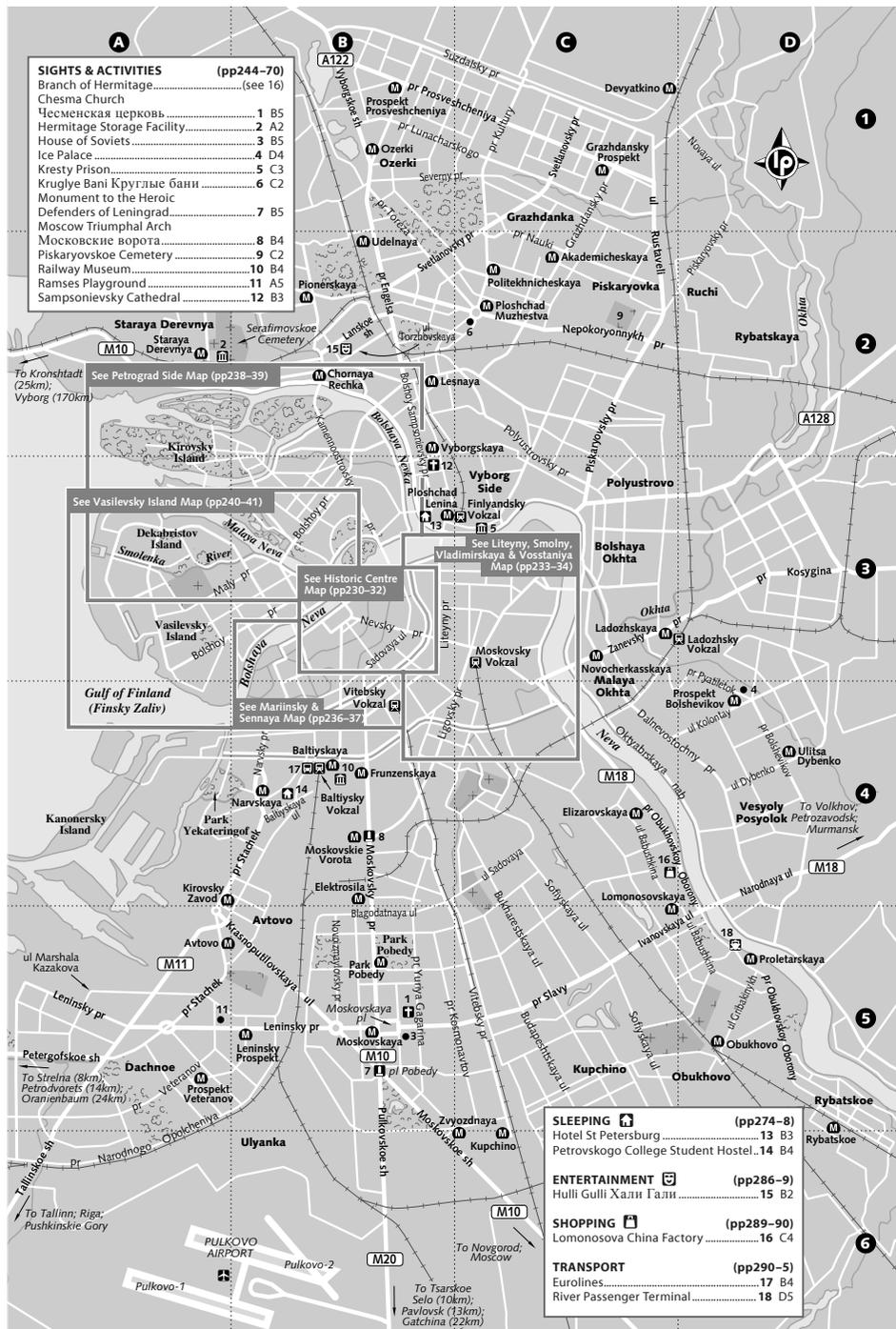
All the major train stations have luggage lockers and/or left-luggage services.

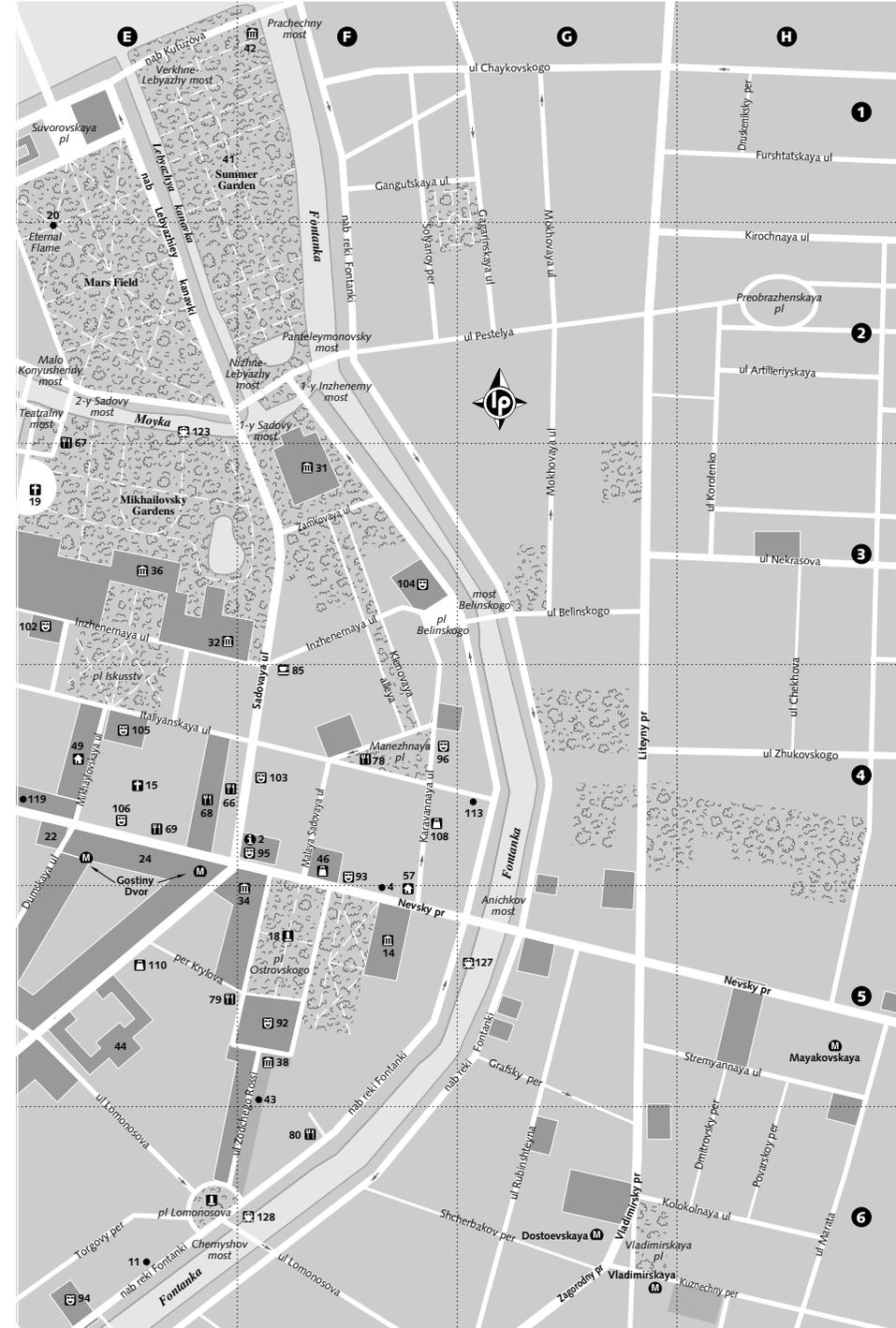
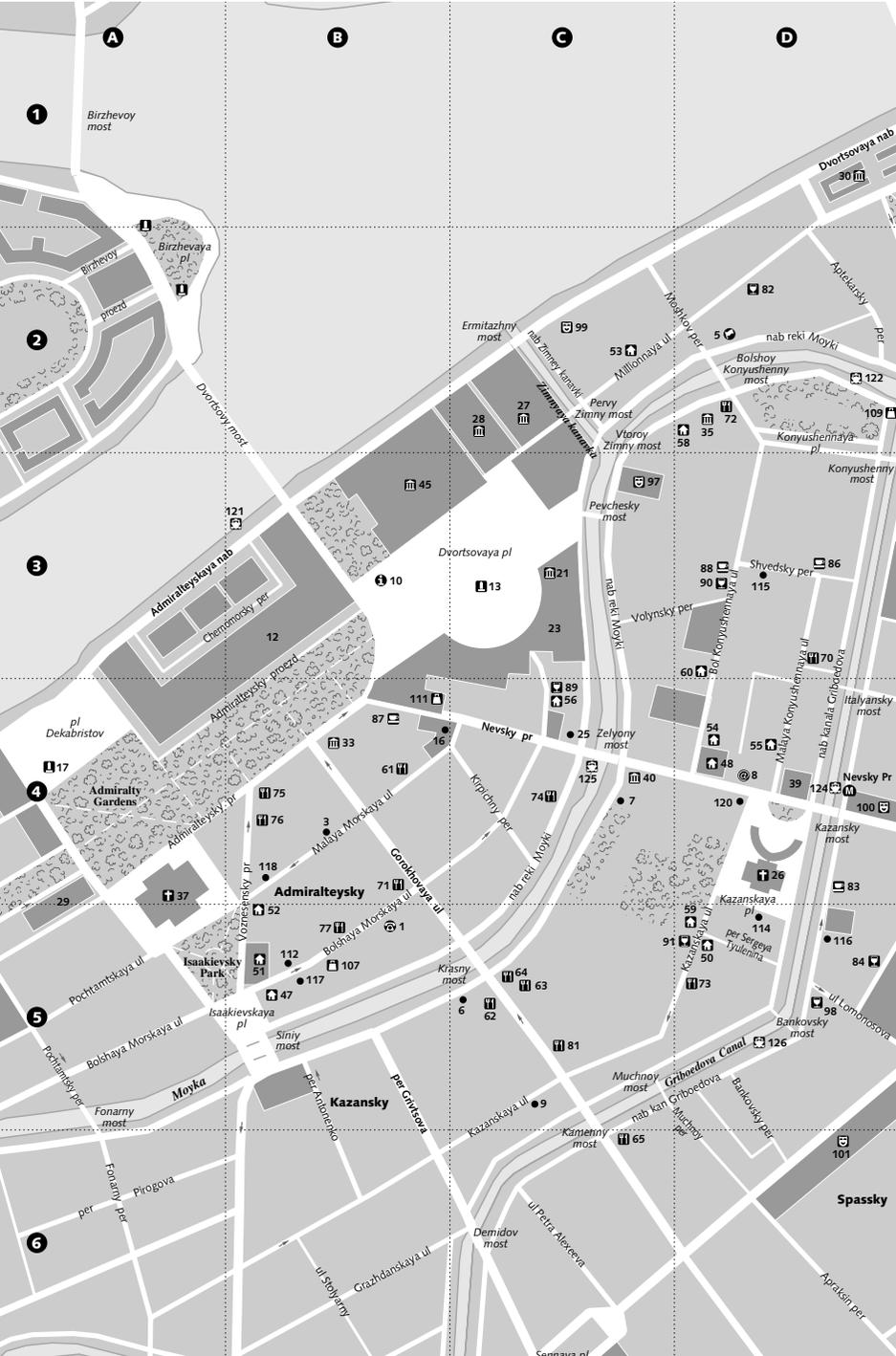
Media

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

Apart from the following English-language media (all of which are available free at many hotels, hostels, restaurants and bars across the city) there are a couple of useful Russian-language listing magazines. Both **Afisha** (<http://spb.afisha.ru/index-spb> in Russian; R20) and **Time Out** (www.timeout.ru/index.shtml in Russian; R24) are published every two weeks, with Afisha generally reckoned to have the edge in terms of features and coverage.

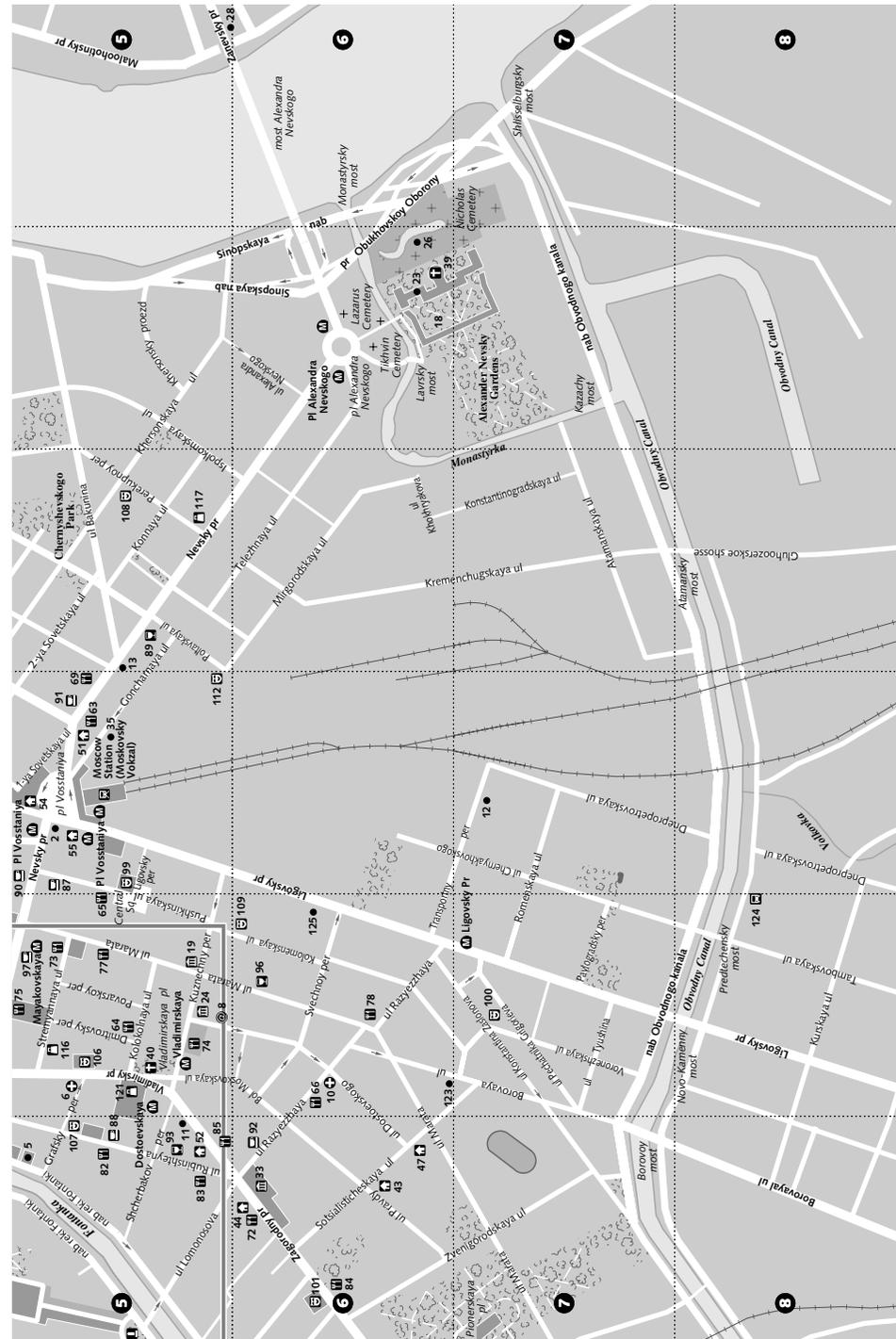
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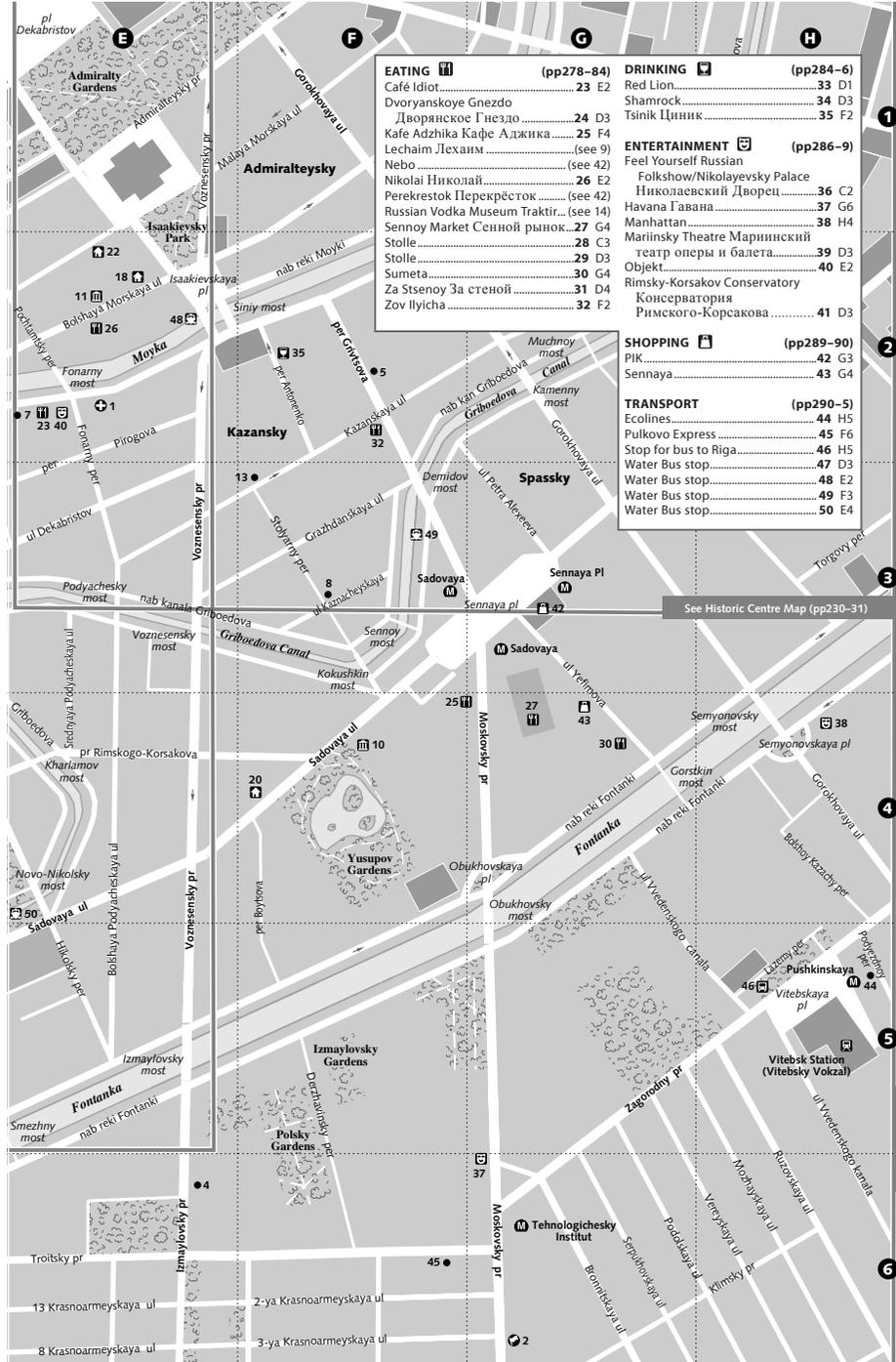
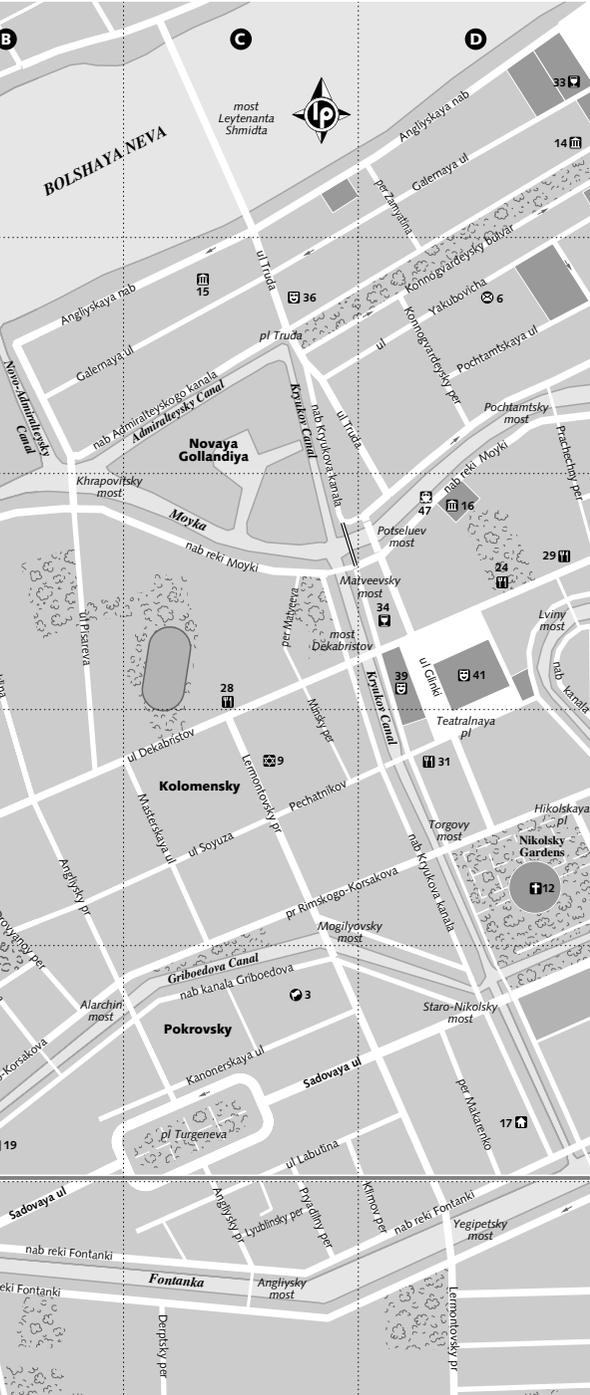
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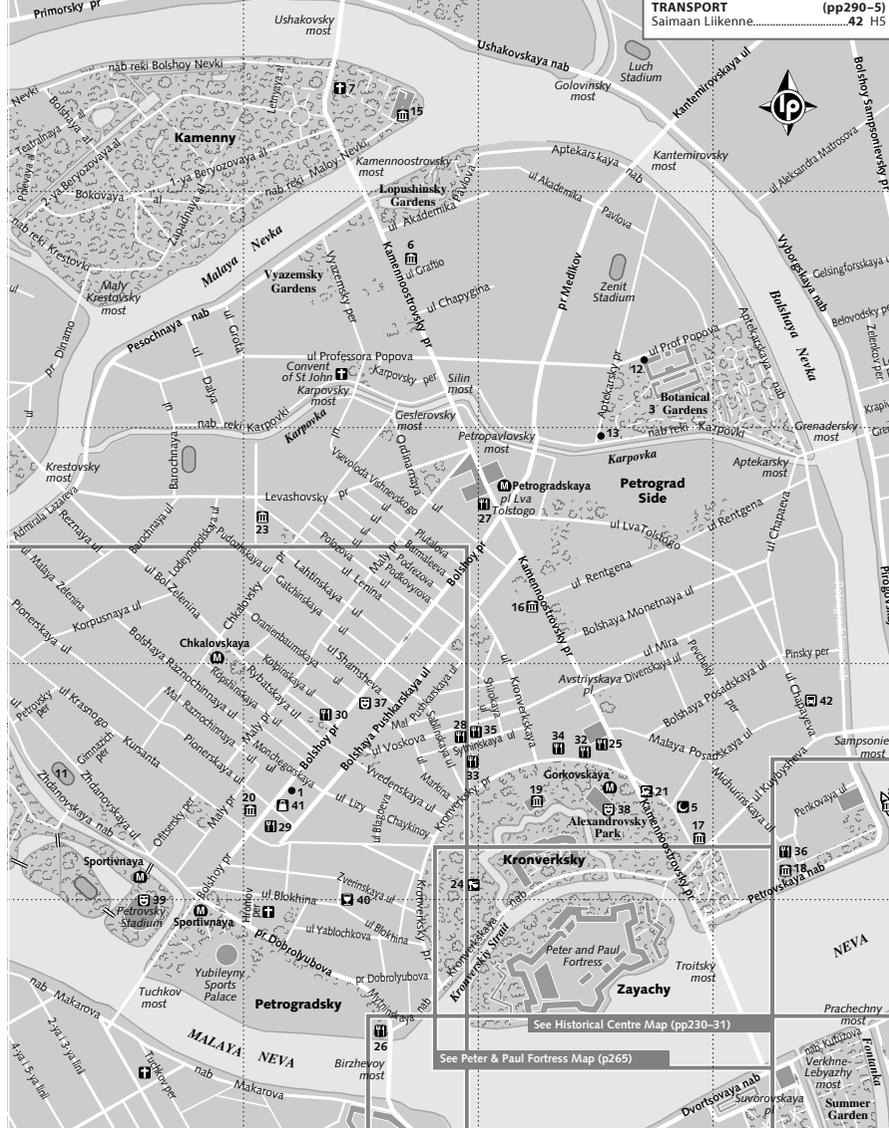
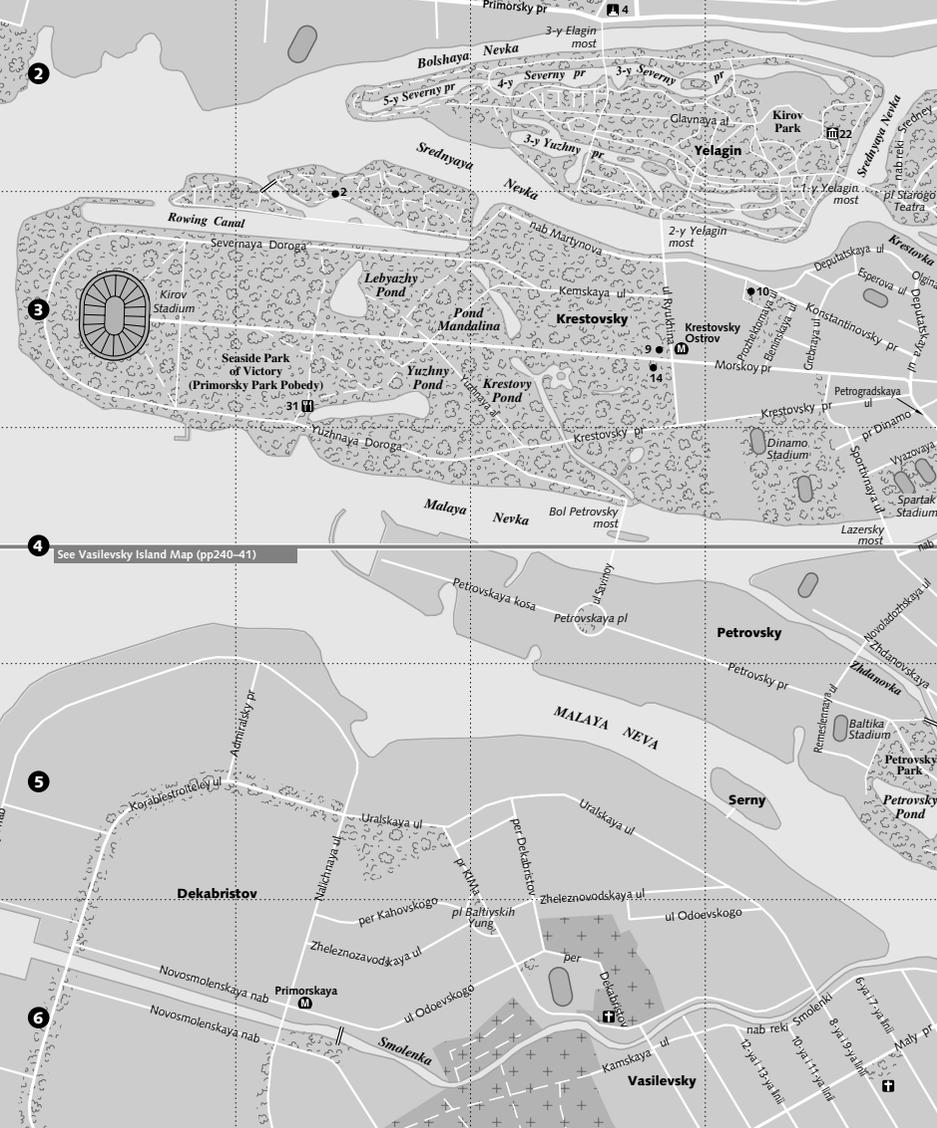
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In Your Pocket (www.inyourpocket.com/russia/st_petersburg/en/) Monthly listings booklet with useful up-to-date information and short features.

Neva News Generally dull monthly broadsheet that sometimes prints useful historical features about the city.

Pulse (www.pulse.ru) Slick colour monthly with fun features and reviews.

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

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

RADIO & TV

Among the more interesting FM stations to listen to are the all-jazz **Radio Hermitage** (90.1 FM), **Maximum** (102.8 FM) for pop music, and **Klassika Petersburg** (88.9 FM) for classical music.

As well as the main state TV channels, St Petersburg has several local channels, including Peterburg and Kanal 6. Satellite TV is available at all major hotels.

Medical Services

All the clinics listed below are open 24 hours and have English-speaking staff.

American Medical Clinic (Map pp236-7; ☎ 740 2090; www.amclinic.ru; nab reki Moyki 78; ☑ Sadovaya)

British-American Family Practice (Map pp234-5; ☎ 327 6030, 999 0949; Grafsky per 7; ☑ Dostoievskaya)

International Clinic (Map pp234-5; ☎ 320 3870; www.itcspb.com; ul Dostoievskogo 19/21; ☑ Ligovsky Prospekt)

PHARMACIES

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 pp234-5; ☎ 277 5962; Nevsky pr 83; ☑ Ploshchad Vosstaniya)

Apteka Petrofarm (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 5401; Nevsky pr 22; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt)

Money

There are currency exchange offices all the way along and around Nevsky pr – shop around since some places offer better rates than others. 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 St Petersburg and they vary in services, usually in proportion to size. American Express (opposite) will hold mail (letters only) for cardholders and holders of travellers cheques for up to 30 days; the mailing address is American Express, PO Box 87, SF-53501 Lappeenranta, Finland. All the major air courier services have offices in St Petersburg.

Central post office (Map pp236-7; ☎ 312 8302; www.spbpost.ru; Konnogvardeysky Bul 4; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; ☑ Sadovaya) While the original Style Moderne post office at Pochtamtkskaya ul 9 is under renovation, the city's central post office is running out of this address around the corner. The express mail service EMS Garantpost is available here.

DHL (Map pp236-7; ☎ 326 6400; www.dhl.ru; Izmaylovsky pr 4; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat; ☑ Tekhnologicheskyy Institut)

FedEx (Map pp236-7; ☎ 325 8825; www.fedex.com/ru; per Grivtsova 6; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat; ☑ Sadovaya)

UPS (Map pp234-5; ☎ 327 8540; www.ups.com; Shpalernaya ul 51; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat; ☑ Chernyshevskaya)

Westpost (Map pp234-5; ☎ 327 3211; www.westpost.ru; Nevsky pr 86; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-8pm Sat; ☑ Mayakovskaya) Privately run, international mail service. Mail is transported daily from St Petersburg to Lappeenranta in Finland, and mailed from there. To the USA, a 20g letter costs US\$2.20, and a 2kg parcel costs US\$64. It has a full range of delivery and courier services. For mail delivery in St Petersburg they offer post boxes in Lappeenranta, with daily pick-up or delivery to the Westpost office or, for corporate clients, to an address in St Petersburg.

Telephone

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

MOBILE PHONES

These days practically every St Petersburg has a mobile phone. See p712 for information on the main mobile providers. You can buy a local SIM card at any mobile phone shop from as little as R300, after which you only pay to make (and to a lesser extent, to receive) calls, although prices are very low. A handy place to arrange this is at the phone shop inside the Quo Vadis Internet café (p228).

PHONECARDS & CALL CENTRES

Local phonecards (*taksfon karta*) are available from shops, kiosks and metro stations and can be used to make local, national and international calls from any phone. Cards are sold in units of R25, R50 or R100.

Using a call centre (p712) is better value for international calls. There are large numbers of call centres around the city – look for the sign *Mezhdunarodny Telefon*. The most central is the **Central telephone office** (Map pp230-1; 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 *Idealnaya Chashka* and *Chaynaya Lozhka*, are the best places to look for a clean, odour-free loo.

Tourist Information

City Tourist Information Centre (Map pp230-1; ☎ 310 8262; www.ctic.spb.ru, in Russian; Sadovaya ul 14/52; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☑ Gostiny Dvor) It speaks volumes that 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). There's also a **branch** (Map pp230-1; Dvortsovaya pl 12; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) in a glass booth outside the Hermitage.

Travel Agencies

All the following agencies have English-speaking staff who can issue visa invitations and assist in getting a visa registered once you have arrived.

American Express (Map pp230-1; ☎ 326 4500; Malaya Morskaya ul 23; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) Only offers travel, not financial, services.

Infinity (Map pp230-1; ☎ 313 5085; www.infinity.ru; Hotel D'Angleterre, Bolshaya Morskaya ul 39; ☎ 10am-6pm; ☑ Nevsky Prospekt) Efficient travel agency. They can book you train and air tickets (and deliver them to your door if you are in a rush).

Ost-West Kontaktsservice (Map pp234-5; ☎ 327 3416; www.ostwest.com; Nevsky pr 105; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; ☑ Ploshchad Vosstaniya) The multilingual staff here can find you an apartment to rent, organise tours and tickets – heck, they'll even sell you a Lomo (they're the city's official distributor of the nifty little Russian camera).

Palladium (Map pp234-5; ☎ 279 6584; www.palladium.spb.ru; Hotel Rus, office 160; ul Artilleriyskaya 1; ☎ 10am-6pm; ☑ Chernyshevskaya) Small agency deep

in the belly of the Hotel Rus can register both tourist visas (€30) and business visas (€50). It also offers short-term apartment rentals around the city as well as all the other normal services.

Sindbad Travel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 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 (p275); they also have a branch inside the hostel itself and one on **Vasilyevsky Island** (Map pp240-1; ☎ 324 0880; St Petersburg Philological Faculty building, Universitetskaya nab 11; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; ☑ Vasileostrovskaya). All are genuine Western-style discount air-ticket offices, staffed by friendly, knowledgeable people. They also sell train tickets and ISIC/ITIC/IYTC cards and can book youth hostel accommodation through the IBN system.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Crime & Violence

Watch out for pickpockets particularly along Nevsky pr around Griboedova Canal and in crowded places such as theatres and cinemas. It's also wise to avoid crossing directly in front of *Moskovsky vokzal*, unless you have to, since the police there have a nasty habit of trying to shake down foreigners for supposed infringements of visa registration rules. The same goes if you are a foreigner staggering around Nevsky pr late at night.

Non-Caucasians should be aware that St Petersburg is notorious for its incidence of race-related violent attacks. Precautions to take include not wandering around alone late at night or venturing out to the suburbs solo at any time of the day.

Environmental Hazards

It's not just the ice on the streets that you have to look out for in winter. Every year in early spring and during winter thaws, several people die when hit by child-sized, sword-shaped icicles falling from rooftops and balconies. Keep your eyes peeled to make sure one of these monsters is not dangling above your head.

From May to September mosquitoes are a nightmare. Bring along industrial-strength repellent that's at least 95% DEET (although if travelling with children its best to use low or no DEET repellent). Alternatively make sure you keep covered up. The plug-in gizmos which slowly heat repellent-saturated cardboard pads are available everywhere in the city and are pretty effective.

DON'T DRINK THE WATER

Never drink unboiled tap water in St Petersburg as it could contain harmful bacteria, such as *Giardia lamblia*, a nasty parasite that causes unpleasant stomach cramps, nausea, bloated stomach, diarrhoea and frequent gas. Metronidazole (brand name Flagyl) or Imidazole (known as Feign) are the recommended treatments. Antibiotics are of no use. Symptoms may not appear for up to several weeks after infection, and may recur for years.

To be absolutely safe, only drink water that has been boiled for 10 minutes or filtered through an antimicrobial water filter (buy one at home) and treat ice with suspicion. While accepting tea or coffee at someone's house should be safe, it's best to always stick to bottled water. Brushing your teeth, bathing, showering and shaving with tap water should cause no problems.

If you're staying in a ground-level apartment in the city centre in early autumn, just before the central heating is turned on and after it starts getting cool, you may have problems with fleas, which come up through floorboards looking for warmth.

SIGHTS The Hermitage

Mainly set in the magnificent Winter Palace – a stunning mint green, white and gold profusion of columns, windows and recesses with its roof topped by rows of classical statues – the **State Hermitage** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 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, to 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.

The enormous collection (over three million items) almost amounts to a history of Western European art, and as much as you see in the museum, there's about 20 times more in its vaults, part of which you can now visit (p267). The vastness of the buildings – of which the Winter Palace alone has 1057 rooms and 117 staircases – demands a little planning. Consider making a reconnaissance tour first, then returning another day to enjoy your favourite bits.

The State Hermitage consists of five linked buildings along riverside Dvortsovaya nab. From west to east they are the Winter Palace, the Little Hermitage, the Old and New Hermitages (sometimes grouped together and called the Large Hermitage) and the Hermitage Theatre (only open for special events, mainly concerts). The art collection is on all three floors of the Winter Palace and the main two floors of the Little and Large Hermitages.

There are also separate sections of the museum in the east wing of the General Staff Building (p251), the Menshikov Palace on Vasilyevsky Island (p263), the Winter Palace of Peter I further east along the embankment from the main Winter Palace, and at the Lomonosova China Factory (p289). All have separate admission unless you purchase a ticket for R700 which gives you access to all the facilities over a two-day period. See opposite for more on tickets.

HISTORY

The Winter Palace was commissioned from Bartolomeo Rastrelli in 1754 by Empress Elizabeth. Catherine the Great and her successors had most of the interior remodelled in a classical style by 1837. It remained an imperial home until 1917, though the last two tsars spent more time in other palaces.

The classical Little Hermitage was built for Catherine the Great as a retreat that would also house the art collection started by Peter the Great, which she significantly expanded. At the river end of the Large Hermitage is the Old Hermitage, which also dates from her time. At its south end, facing Millionnaya ul, is the New Hermitage, which was built for Nicholas II to hold the still-growing art collection. The Hermitage Theatre was built in the 1780s by the classicist Giacomo Quarenghi, who thought it one of his finest works.

The Hermitage's collection really began with Catherine the Great, one of the greatest art collectors of all time. She pulled off some stunning deals, including famously exchanging one large framed portrait of herself for 15 Van Dykes from the collection of Sir Robert Walpole, Britain's first prime minister. Nicholas I also greatly enriched the Hermitage's collection, which he opened to the public for the first time in 1852. It was the postrevolutionary period

that saw the collection increase threefold in size, as many valuable private collections were seized by the state.

Throughout the 1990s, the museum has, partially thanks to partnerships with foreign museums and donors, been able to renovate its heating and temperature control system, install a new fire detection system, fit its windows with UV-filtering plastic, and to begin the first thorough, digitised inventory of its mammoth collection.

ADMISSION & TOURS

The main entrance for individuals is through the courtyard of the Winter Palace from Palace Sq. Just inside are the ticket counters, flanking a very useful information booth where you can get free colour maps of the entire museum in most major European languages. Groups enter from the river side of the Winter Palace.

Queues for tickets, particularly from May to September, can be horrendous. Apart from getting in line an hour or so before the museum opens or going late in the day when the lines are likely to be shorter, there are a few strategies you can use. The first is to book your ticket online through the Hermitage's website: US\$16 gets you an 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 (except the storage facility). You'll be issued with a voucher which allows you to jump the queue and 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 but at least 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); they 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.

Also contact the excursions office if you plan to visit the **Golden Rooms Special Collection** in Rooms 41 to 45. This costs another R350 (plus R1500 if you wish to have an English guide) and places are limited, so book early if you're interested. The focus is a hoard of fabulously worked Scythian and Greek gold and silver from the Caucasus, Crimea

and Ukraine, dating from the 7th to 2nd centuries BC.

There is a special entrance for the physically disabled from Dvortsovaya pl (the museum also has a few wheelchairs) – call in advance if you need this.

THE COLLECTION

Some of the rooms listed here will occasionally be closed without warning for maintenance or other mysterious reasons. The works on view change occasionally, too. Only a few sections have English labelling.

From the main ticket hall, the Rastrelli Gallery leads to the white marble Jordan Staircase, with windows and mirrors on all sides, which takes you up to the 2nd floor of the Winter Palace. The staircase is one of the few parts of the interior to maintain its original Rastrelli appearance.

Winter Palace, 1st floor

Rooms 1 to 33 showcase **Russian prehistoric artefacts**. Included in this are exhibits from

HERMITAGE HIGHLIGHTS

If your time at the Hermitage is limited, the following rooms include the highlights of the collection:

Room 100 Ancient Egypt

The Jordan Staircase Directly ahead when you pass through the main entrance inside the Winter Palace

Rooms 178–98 Imperial stateroom and apartments including the Malachite Hall, Nicholas Hall, Armorial Hall and Hall of St George

Room 204 The Pavilion Hall

Rooms 207–15 Florentine art, 13th to 16th centuries

Rooms 217–22 & 237 Venetian art, 16th century

Room 229 Raphael and his disciples

Rooms 239–40 Spanish art, 16th to 18th centuries

Rooms 244–47 Flemish art, 17th century

Rooms 249–52 & 254 Dutch art, 17th century

Rooms 228–38 Italian Art 16th to 18th centuries

Room 271 The Imperial family's cathedral

Concentrate the rest of your time here on the fabulous 3rd floor, particularly rooms 333–50 for late-19th-century and early-20th-century European art.

FRIENDS OF THE HERMITAGE

Since 1997, the **Friends of the Hermitage Society** (☎ 710 9005; www.hermitagemuseum.org) has been encouraging donations and membership to help with restoration and conservation programmes. Membership allows you access to special events hosted by the Hermitage, either at a reduced cost or for free. A US\$50 annual donation will get you a free entry to the Hermitage and Menshikov Palace for a year, plus a 20% discount at their shops; for US\$100 you can bring a friend along for free as well and get invitations to opening parties; US\$300 allows you to bring two friends along for free and even more privileges.

the Palaeolithic (500,000–12,000 BC) and Mesolithic (12,000–3000 BC) periods in room 11. Room 12 displays Neolithic (4000–2400 BC) and Bronze Age (2000–500 BC) artefacts, including **petroglyphs** from 2500 to 2000 BC taken from the northeastern shores of Lake Onega. Bronze Age items from the western steppes dating from the 4th to the 2nd millenniums BC can be found in room 13, and Bronze Age items from southern Siberia and Kazakhstan (2000–900 BC), including fine bronze animals, are in room 14. **Scythian culture**, covering the 7th to 3rd centuries BC, is showcased in rooms 15 to 18, but the best Scythian material is in the Golden Rooms Special Collection. Exhibits from the Forest steppes (700–400 BC) are located in rooms 19 and 20, and material from Altai Mountains burial mounds, including human and horse corpses preserved for over 2000 years (complete with hair and teeth) are displayed in rooms 21 to 23, and room 26. Iron Age items from Eastern Europe, including Finno-Ugrian and Baltic items, ranging from the 8th century BC to the 12th century AD, are in room 24. The Southern steppes tribes (3rd century BC to 10th century AD) are represented in room 33 along with some **fine Sarmatian gold**.

The **Russian East** collection is spread over a few rooms, with rooms 34 to 39 and 46 to 69 covering Central Asia from the 4th century BC to the 13th century AD. Rooms 55 to 66 have items from the Caucasus and Transcaucasia from the 10th century BC to the 16th century AD. This includes **Urartu**

items from the 9th to 7th centuries BC in room 56, pieces from Dagestan (6th to 11th centuries AD) in room 59, exhibits from 14th-century Italian colonies in Crimea in room 66 and a **Golden Horde** (13th and 14th centuries) display in rooms 67 to 69.

A very fine collection from **Ancient Egypt**, much of it uncovered by Russian archaeologists, is located in room 100 but sadly has no English labelling.

Little Hermitage, 1st floor

Most of this floor is off limits but rooms 101 and 102 have displays of **Roman marble**.

Large Hermitage, 1st floor

Ancient classical culture is covered in rooms 106 to 131. **Roman sculpture**, from the 1st century BC to the 4th century AD, can be found in rooms 106 to 109 and room 127. **Ancient Greece**, from the 8th to 2nd centuries BC, is represented mostly by ceramics and sculpture in rooms 111 to 114. Material from Greek colonies around the northern Black Sea area from the 7th century BC to the 3rd century AD is located in rooms 115 to 117, and room 121. Room 128 features the huge 19th-century jasper **Kolyvanskaya Vase** from Siberia. Ancient Italy, from the 7th to 2nd centuries BC, is represented in rooms 130 and 131 by Etruscan vases and bronze mirrors.

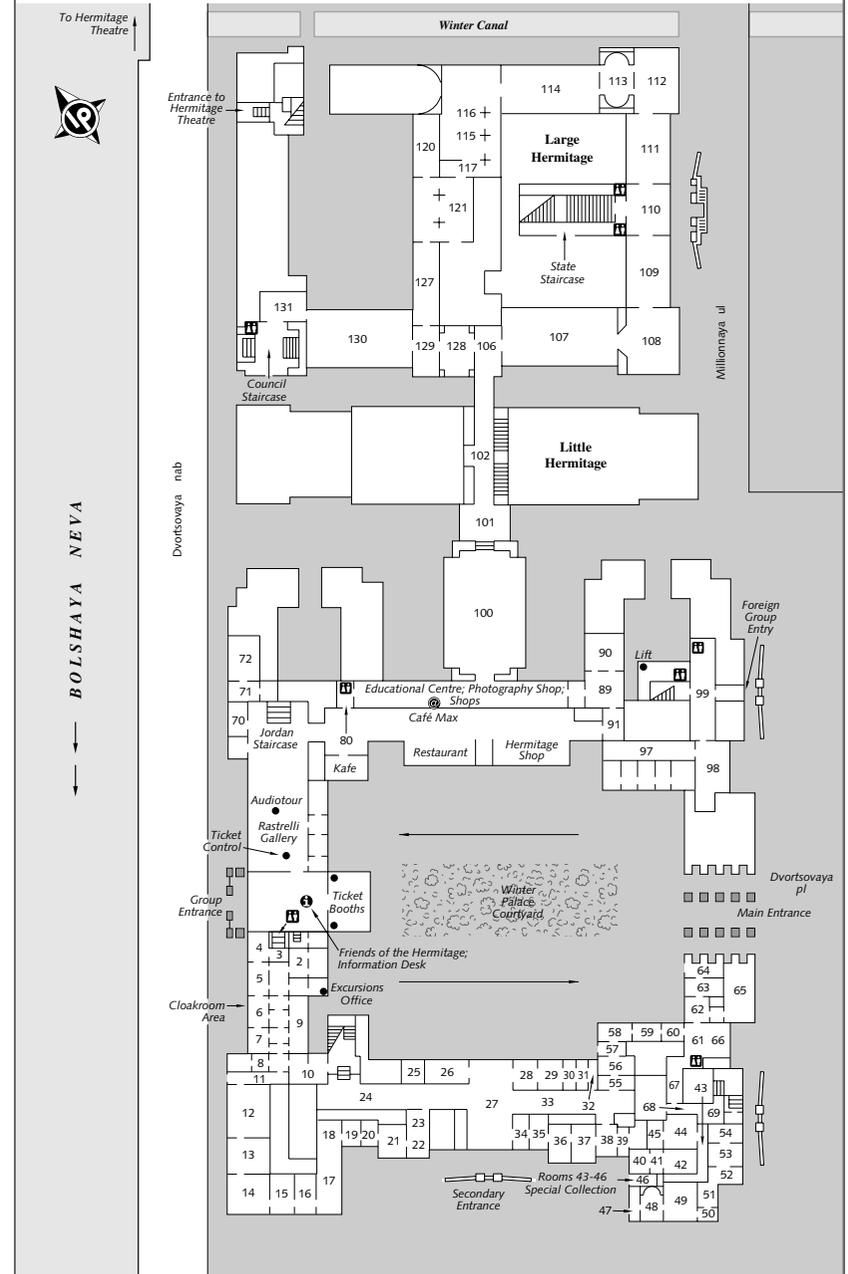
Winter Palace, 2nd floor

This is most of what used to be called the *Hidden Treasures Revealed* exhibit and features mostly **French Art** from the 19th and 20th centuries. Rooms 143 to 146 boast oil paintings captured by the Red Army from private collections in Germany, including works by Monet, Degas, Renoir, Cézanne, Picasso and Matisse, almost all never before publicly displayed.

Russian culture and art covers rooms 147 to 189. Rooms 147 to 150 display works from the 10th to 15th centuries and room 151 covers the period of the 15th to 17th centuries. Icons, ceramics, jewellery and more from the '**Moscow baroque**' period (1700–50) are shown in room 152, while room 153 features items relating to Peter the Great.

Rooms 155 to 166 showcase late 17th- and early 18th-century Russian works, including a Moorish dining room (room 155), a Rotunda with a bust of Peter the Great, and a brass Triumphal Pillar, topped by a

HERMITAGE – 1ST FLOOR



Rastrelli-created statue of Peter (room 156). The **Petrovskaya Gallereya** fills rooms 157 to the first half of room 161 and includes lathing machinery used by Peter. An ivory chandelier, partly built by the Great Guy himself, features in room 161 and room 162 contains a mosaic of Peter by Lomonosov. Room numbers 167 to 173 hold mid- to late-18th-century works (spot the bizarre 1772 tapestry image of Australia).

The next series of rooms is best viewed by starting at room 187 and working your way back to room 175. These rooms were occupied by the last imperial family, and display 19th-century interior design including Nicholas II's lovely **English Gothic-style library** in room 178 and the **Small Dining Room** in room 188 where the Provisional Government was arrested by the Bolsheviks on 26 October 1917. **Malachite Hall** is in room 189 and, with two tonnes of gorgeous green malachite columns, boxes, bowls and urns, is possibly the most impressive of all the palace rooms.

Rooms 190 to 192 are known as **Neva Enfilade** and make up one of two sets of state rooms for ceremonies and balls. Room 190 is a **Concert Hall** for small balls, and contains a now empty 18th-century silver tomb for Alexander Nevsky (his remains are in the Trinity Cathedral; see p259). Room 191 is the **Great or Nicholas Hall**, scene of great winter balls, and room 192 is known as the **Fore Hall**. All of these halls are now used for temporary exhibitions.

The second series of state rooms, or **Great Enfilade**, is located in rooms 193 to 198. It consists of the **Field Marshals' Hall** in room 193; **Peter the Great's Hall** in room 194 (with his none-too-comfy-looking throne) and the bright and gilt-encrusted **Armorial Hall** (room 195), displaying 16th- to 19th-century Western European silver. Also part of the Great Enfilade is room 197's **1812 Gallery**, hung with portraits of Russian and allied Napoleonic war leaders, and the **Hall of St George**, or **Great Throne Room** (room 198) – once a state room, now used for temporary exhibitions.

Western European tapestry, from the 16th to 19th centuries, fill rooms 200 to 202, while **German art** from the 15th to 18th centuries, including Dürer and Lucas Cranach the Elder, can be found in rooms 263 to 268.

Rooms 269 to 271 contain 18th-century Western European porcelain and room 271 was the tsars' cathedral.

French art from the 15th to 18th centuries is covered in rooms 272 to 289. Tapestries, ceramics and metalwork feature in rooms 272 and 273, while paintings by Poussin (room 279), Lorrain (280) and Watteau (284) make up part of the rest of the collection.

British art from the 16th to the 19th centuries is showcased in rooms 298 to 302 including Gainsborough's *Lady in Blue* in room 298, and works from Reynolds in rooms 299 and 300.

Room 303 is known as the 'Dark Corridor' and contains 16th- to 18th-century **Western European tapestry**, mainly from Flanders. Follow the confusing trail through 167 and 308 to get to a wonderful collection of Western European **stone engravings** from the 13th to 19th centuries in room 304, the Crimson Hall containing **English and French porcelain** in room 305, **Maria Alexandrovna's bedroom** (fit for a princess – room 306), and the Blue Bedroom containing **French, Austrian and German porcelain** in room 307.

Little Hermitage, 2nd floor

Room 204 (Pavilion Hall) is a sparkling white-and-gold room with lovely chandeliers and columns, looking onto Catherine the Great's hanging garden (under renovation at the time of research). The floor mosaic in front is copied from a Roman bath. Also here is the amazing **Peacock Clock** – a revolving dial in which one of the toadstools tells the time, and on the hour (when it's working) the peacock, toadstools, owl and cock come to life. Demonstrations are every Wednesday at 5pm.

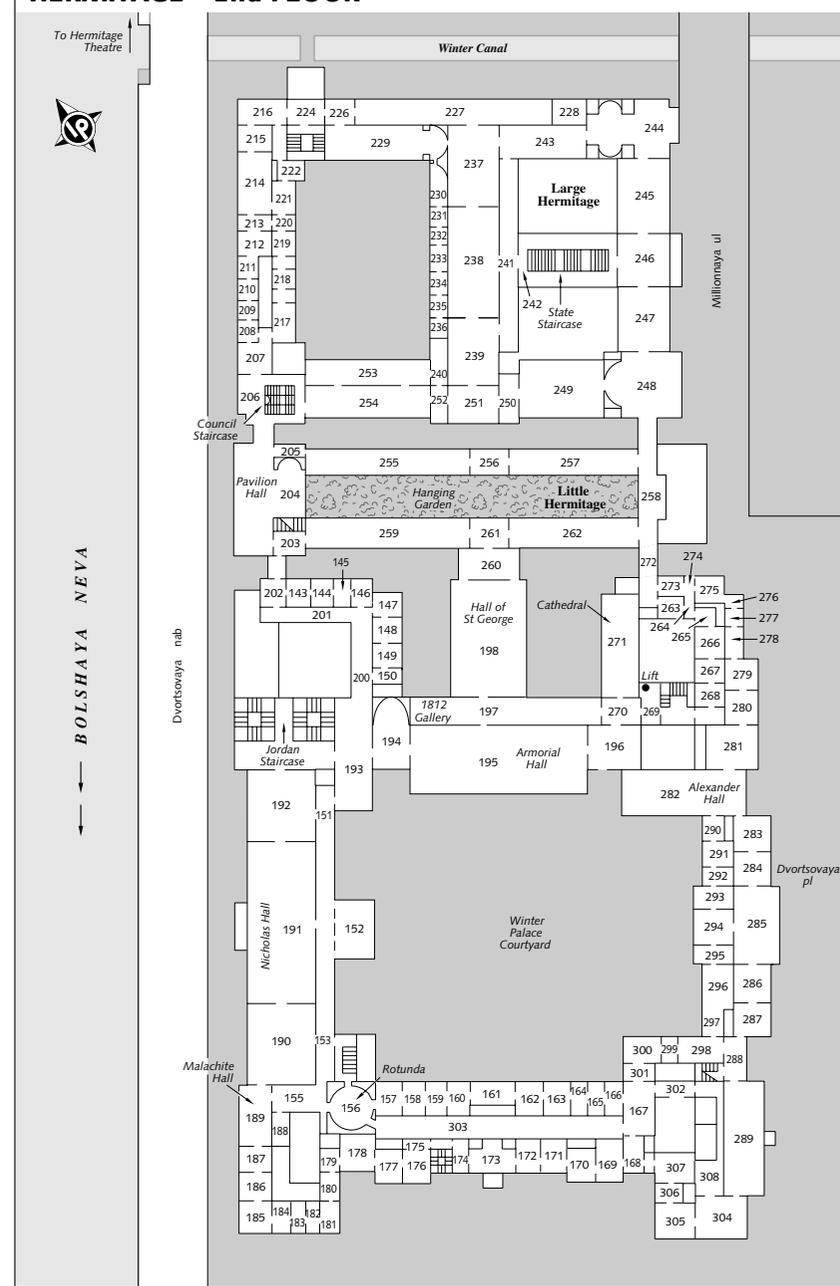
This floor is also home to 17th-century **Flemish art** in Room 258, 11th- to 15th-century **Western European applied art** in room 259 and 15th- and 16th-century **Dutch art** in rooms 261 and 262.

Large Hermitage, 2nd floor

Room 206 features a model triumphal arch in marble, malachite and glass which announces the beginning of the Italian section.

Florentine art from the 13th to 16th centuries takes care of rooms 207 to 215. Paintings from the 15th-century, including Fra Angelico, are in room 209. Room 213 has works from the 15th and early 16th century including two small Botticellis and pieces from Filippino Lippi and Perugino.

HERMITAGE – 2nd FLOOR



Russia's only two paintings by **Leonardo da Vinci** – the *Benois Madonna* (1478) and the strikingly different *Madonna Litta* (1490), both named after their last owners – are in room 214, while art by Leonardo's pupils, including Correggio and Andrea del Sarto, is in room 215.

As well as covering 16th-century **Italian mannerist art**, room 216 also has a nice view over the little Zimnaya (Winter) Canal to the Hermitage Theatre.

Rooms 217 to 222 are home to mainly 16th century **Venetian art** including Giorgione's *Judith* in room 217 and Titian's *Portrait of a Young Woman* and *Flight into Egypt* in room 219. Room 221 houses more Titian, including *Danae* and *St Sebastian*, while room 222 houses Paolo Veronese's *Mourning of Christ*.

Quarenghi's sumptuous 1780s copy of a gallery in the Vatican with murals by Raphael makes a nice contrast to costumes by theatrical designer Bakst in the **Loggia of Raphael** (rooms 226 and 227).

The **Italian art** theme continues in rooms 228 to 238 with the focus on works from the 16th to 18th centuries. Sixteenth-century ceramics are housed in room 228, while room 229 contains works by **Raphael** and disciples, including his works *Madonna Conestabile* and *Holy Family*, plus wonderful ceramics and decorations. Russia's only **Michelangelo**, a marble statue of a crouching boy, holds pride of place in room 230. Works from Paolo **Veronese**, **Tintoretto** and other paintings from the 16th-century are in room 237, and in room 238 you'll find works from 17th- and 18th-century painters including **Canaletto** and **Tiepolo** as well as two huge 19th-century Russian malachite vases. Rooms 237 and 238 also have lovely ceilings.

Spanish art from the 16th to the 18th century gets a run in rooms 239 and 240. Goya's *Portrait of the Actress Antonia Zarrate*, Murillo's *Boy with a Dog* and Diego Velazquez' *Breakfast* can all be viewed in room 239 and El Greco's marvellous *St Peter and St Paul* is in room 240.

Room 241 holds marble sculptures and works from Antonio Canova and Albert Thorwaldsen while room 242 is mainly taken up by the **State Staircase** leading down to the museum's original entrance. The slightly creepy Knight's Hall (room 243)

displays Western European **armour and weaponry** from the 15th to 17th centuries, featuring four 16th-century German suits of armour atop armoured, stuffed horses.

Flemish art from the 17th century is located in rooms 244 to 247. Most notable in these rooms are the savage hunting and market scenes by Snyders in room 245, the Van Dyck portraits in room 246 and the large room (247) displaying an amazing range of **Rubens**.

The five rooms comprising numbers 248 to 252, and room 254 display **Dutch art** from the 17th century. The Tent Hall (room 249) boasts landscapes and portraits by Ruysdael, Hals, Bol and others, and room 250 contains 18th-century Delft ceramics. Room 254 holds 26 **Rembrandts** ranging from lighter, more detailed early canvases such as *Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac* and *Dana*, to *The Holy Family* (1645) and darker, penetrating late works such as *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (c 1669) and two canvases entitled *Portrait of an Old Man*. There's also work by Rembrandt's pupils, including Bol.

Winter Palace, 3rd floor

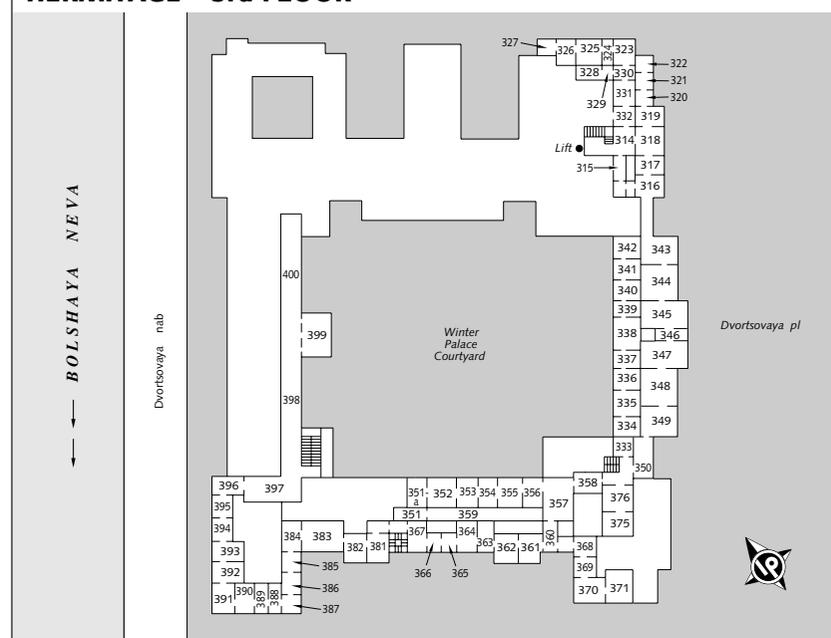
An approximate chronological order in which to view the **French art** collection is rooms 314, 332 to 328, 325 to 315 and 343 to 350. The staircase beside room 269 on the 2nd floor brings you out by room 314.

Rooms 316 to 320 contain works from the **Impressionist** and **Post-Impressionist** periods. Among other works are Rodin sculptures in room 315, Gauguin's Tahitian works (room 316) and works from Van Gogh, Rousseau, Forain and Latour in room 317. Room 318 exhibits Cézanne and Pissarro while room 319 has more Pissarro as well as some works by Monet and Sisley. Room 320 houses paintings by Renoir and Degas.

The **Barbizon school** and **Romanticism** are placed in rooms 321 to 325 and rooms 328 to 331. Works from Corot, Courbet and Rousseau are in rooms 321 and 322, Jean Léon Gerome's *Slave Woman Sold* is located in room 330 and works from Delacroix and Vernet are in room 331.

Russian art from the 20th century, including Kandinsky and Malevich's *Black Square* is in room 333. If you're looking for **19th-century European art**, visit rooms 334 to 342. Landscapes by Caspar David Friedrich and works by Vincent Van Gogh are in room

HERMITAGE – 3rd FLOOR



334. The Matisse collection covers rooms 343 to 345 and has 35 canvases, including *The Dance* and *Arab Coffeehouse*.

Rooms 346, 347 and 350 deal with 19th- to 20th-century **French art** including Bonnard, Vlaminck, Marquet, Leger and others. **Picasso** claims two rooms of his own; room 348 represents mainly his blue and cubist periods, including *The Absinthe Drinker*; while room 349 explores his cubist and later periods.

The collections swing back to the Orient and Middle East in rooms 351 to 371 and 381 to 397. The excellent collection **Art of China and Tibet** spans rooms 351 to 357 and rooms 359 to 364; **Indonesian** art is represented in room 358; while **Mongolian** (rooms 365 to 367), **Indian** (rooms 368 to 371) and **Byzantium, Near and Middle Eastern works** (rooms 381 to 387) are also shown here.

To top things off, rooms 398 and 400 have a collection of **coins**.

Historic Centre

Covered in this section are the major sights, in order of interest, found between the

Neva River, the Admiralty Gardens to the west and the Fontanka River to the east and south. Bisecting the area is St Petersburg's pivotal thoroughfare Nevsky pr. The most convenient metro station is Nevsky Prospekt/Gostiny Dvor.

DVORTSOVAYA PLOSHCHAD (PALACE SQUARE)

To get to the Hermitage you'll pass through the monumental **Dvortsovaya ploshchad** (Palace Square; Mapp230-1), one of the most impressive and historic spaces in the city. Stand well back to admire the palace and the central 47.5m **Alexander Column** named after Alexander I and commemorating the 1812 victory over Napoleon. It has stood here, held in place by gravity alone, since 1834. It was in this square that tsarist troops fired on peaceful protestors in 1905 (on a day now known as Bloody Sunday), sparking the revolution of that year.

General Staff Building

Curving around the south of the square is the Carlo Rossi-designed General Staff

Building of the Russian army (1819–29) – two great classical blocks joined by arches, which are topped by a chariot of victory – another monument to the Napoleonic wars. Inside part of the building are **exhibition halls** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 8260; Dvortsovaya pl 6-8; adult/student R200/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) with items from the Hermitage's collection including Art Nouveau pieces, Empire-style decorative art and some works by the Post-Impressionists, as well as temporary exhibitions. There are plans to relocate the Hermitage's collection of 19th- and 20th-century art here in the future following an ambitious US\$155m redevelopment plan.

CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR ON SPILLED BLOOD

Officially known as the **Church of the Resurrection** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 315 1636; <http://eng.cathedral.ru>; Konyushennaya pl; adult/student R270/150; ☎ 11am-7pm Thu-Tue; May-Sep 10am-8pm Thu-Tue; M Nevsky Prospekt), this multidomed dazzler, partly modelled on St Basil's in Moscow, was built between 1883 and 1907 on the spot where Alexander II, despite his reforms, was blown up by the People's Will terrorist group in 1881 (hence its gruesome name).

It's now most commonly known as the church that took 24 years to build and 27 to restore. In August 1997, with much fanfare, it finally opened its doors after painstaking work by over 30 artists on the interior's incredible 7000 sq metres of mosaics – which fully justify the entrance fee. On the very spot of the assassination is the marble bust *Shatrovy Cen*, a monument to Alexander.

ST ISAAC'S CATHEDRAL

The golden dome of **St Isaac's Cathedral** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 315 9732; <http://eng.cathedral.ru>; Isaakiyevskaya pl; adult/student R270/150; ☎ 10am-8pm Thu-Mon, closed last Mon of the month) looming just south of pl Dekabristov, dominates the St Petersburg skyline. Its obscenely lavish interior is open as a museum, although services are held in the cathedral on major religious holidays.

The French architect Ricard de Montferrand won a competition organised by Alexander I to design the cathedral in 1818. It took so long to build – until 1858 – that Alexander's successor Nicholas I was able to insist on a more grandiose structure than Montferrand had planned. Special ships and a railway had to be built to carry the

granite from Finland for the huge pillars. There's a statue of Montferrand holding a model of the cathedral on the west façade.

You'll need a 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 drum of the dome; the panoramic city views make the climb worth it. In theory there's a R25 fee for taking photos up here but you're likely to get away with sneaking a few shots.

RUSSIAN MUSEUM

The former Mikhaylovsky Palace, now the **Russian Museum** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 595 4248; www.rusmuseum.ru; Inzhenernaya ul 4; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, to 6pm Wed-Sun; M Gostiny Dvor), houses 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 palace was designed by Carlo Rossi and built between 1819 and 1829 for Grand Duke Mikhail (brother of Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I) as compensation for not being able to have a chance on the throne. The museum was founded in 1895 under Alexander III and opened three years later.

The Benois building, now connected to the original palace, was constructed between 1914 and 1919. Note that the façade of the palace is illuminated at night, making it a good time to take a photograph. The building is also impressively viewed from the back on a stroll through the lovely **Mikhaylovsky Gardens**.

The museum owns another three city palaces where permanent and temporary exhibitions are also held: the Marble Palace (p257), the Mikhaylovsky Castle (also known as the Engineers' Castle, p256) and the Stroganov Palace (p255). A ticket for R600, available at each palace, covers entrance to them all within a 24-hour period.

The museum's main entrance is through a tiny door on the far right side of the main building, off Inzhenernaya ul. You can also enter via the Benois wing off nab kanala Griboedova. English guided tours can be booked on ☎ 314 3448.

NEVSKY PROSPEKT

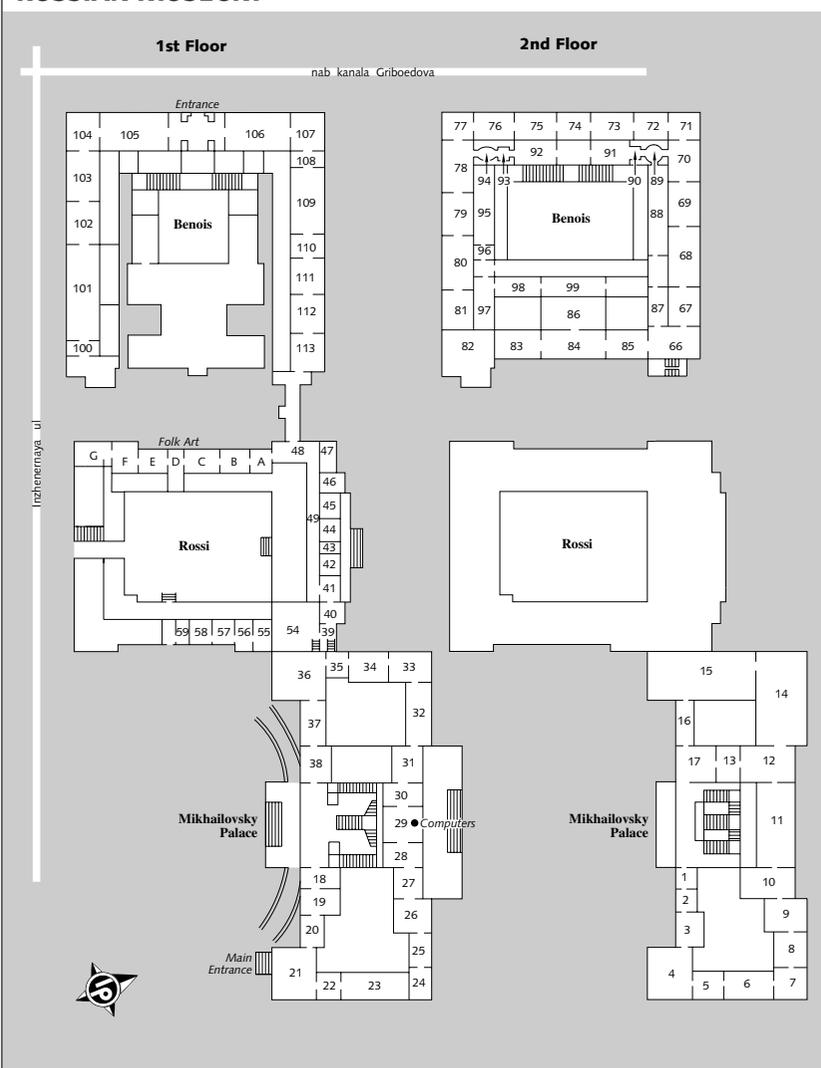
Nevsky pr is and always will be Russia's most famous street, running 4km from

the Admiralty to the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, from which it takes its name. The inner 2.5km to Moskovsky vokzal is St Petersburg's seething main avenue, the city's shopping centre and focus of its entertainment and street life.

Nevsky pr was laid out in the early years of St Petersburg as the start of the

main road to Novgorod and soon became dotted with fine buildings, squares and bridges. At the beginning of the 1900s, it was one of Europe's grandest boulevards, with cobblestone sidewalks and a track down the middle for horse-drawn trams. On either side of the tracks were wooden paving blocks to muffle the sound of

RUSSIAN MUSEUM



horse-drawn carriages – an innovation that was apparently the first in the world and for which the prospekt was dubbed the quietest main street in Europe.

Today, things are quite a bit noisier. The traffic and crowds can become oppressive and after a while you'll find yourself going

out of your way to avoid the street. However, walking Nevsky is an essential St Petersburg experience, and if you're here on a holiday evening (such as 27 May – City Day), the sight of thousands pouring like a stream down its middle is one you'll not soon forget.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RUSSIAN MUSEUM

Mikhailovsky Palace, 2nd floor

Rooms 1–4 Serene 12th- to 15th-century icons.

Room 7 Grand tapestries offset Rastrelli's statue of a pompous *Anna Ioanovna and an Arab Boy*.

Room 11 The White Hall, the most ornate in the palace, with period furniture by Rossi, is where Strauss and Berlioz, as guests, performed concerts.

Room 14 Karl Bryullov's massive *Last Day of Pompeii* (1827–33), which was, in its time, the most famous Russian painting ever; there were queues for months to see it. Petersburgers saw in it a doomsday scenario of their own city, which had a few years earlier been damaged in a huge flood. Ivan Aivazovsky's Crimea seascapes also stand out, most frighteningly *The Wave*. But don't let the big paintings overshadow the charming miniature watercolours kept under wraps in cases.

Room 15 Alexander Ivanov's most famous work, *Christ's Appearance to the People*.

Mikhailovsky Palace, 1st floor

Rooms 18–22 Nineteenth-century works focusing on the beginnings of the socially aware 'Realist' tradition and including **21** Konstantin Flavitsky's gigantic *Christian Martyrs in Colosseum*.

Rooms 23–38 The Wanderers (Peredvizhniki) and associated artists, including **26** Nikolai Ghe's fearsome *Peter I Prosecuting Tsarevitch Alexey in Peterhof*; **31** KA Savitsky's *To the War*; **32** Polenov, including his *Christ and the Sinner*.

Rooms 33–35 and 54 Works by Ilya Repin (1844–1930), probably Russia's best-loved artist; **33** has portraits and the incomparable *Barge Haulers on the Volga*, an indictment of Russian 'social justice'; **54** contains *Meeting of the State Council*, Repin's panoramic rendering of the meeting at the Mariinsky Palace on 7 May 1901 (it's full of tsarist hotshots; there's a scheme in the room to help you tell who's who).

Room 36 Mikhail Mikeschin's small bronze model of the Millennium of Russia.

Room 39 Vasily Vershchagin's *After the Success and After the Defeat* plus his paintings of Japan and Israel.

Rooms 40–47 Late-19th Century Russian Art, including **40 and 41** Stunning landscapes by Arkhip Kuindzhi; **44** works by Isaak Levitan; **45** Andrei Ryabushkin on pre-Peter the Great 17th-century Russian history, including the very telling and humorous *Yedut*, or *They Are Coming*, depicting the perturbed-looking reception committee for the first foreigners allowed in Russia.

Room 48 Marc Antokolsky's sculptures *Ivan the Terrible* and *Death of Socrates*. Exits straight ahead lead to 10 halls of wonderfully detailed and colourful Russian folk art; exits to the right lead to the Benois building.

Benois Building, 2nd & 1st floors

Rooms 66–77 Early 20th-century art, including **66** father of modern Russian art Mikhail Vrubel's *Russian Hero and Venice*; **67** Mikhail Nesterov's religious paintings of the history of the Orthodox Church and the highly stylised works of Nikolai Roerich (also in **69**); **70 and 71** portraits by Valentin Serov, sculptures by Paolo Trubetskoy; **72** Impressionists Konstantin Korovin and Igor Grabar; **73** Boris Kustodiev's smug *Merchant's Wife*. **77** Natan Altman

Rooms 78–79 Art Between the Revolutions (1905–1917), including works by Vasily Kandinsky and Natalya Goncharova.

Room 80 Features Cubism and Futurism including Lyubov Popova, Alexander Rodchenko's *Black on Black* and Pavel Mansurov's comic *American Inhabitant*.

Room 81–82 Late Avant-Garde Painting including Kazimir Malevich and Pavel Filonov's scary *Kings Feast* and beautiful *Formula of Spring*.

Room 83 Early Soviet Art including Yury Pimenov's terrifying *Disabled Veterans* and Malevich's *Portrait of a Shock Worker*.

Room 84–85 Fascinating exhibition of Socialist Realism art of the Soviet years up to the 1950s.

The following description lists the main points of interest from the Admiralty to the Anichkov most across the Fontanka River.

Admiralty End to Kazan Cathedral

Kafe Literaturnoe (Map pp230-1), at No 18 just before the Moyka River, is where the poet Alexander Pushkin ate his last meal before his deadly duel (p340).

Across the Moyka, Rastrelli's baroque **Stroganov Palace** (Map pp230-1) is looking grand after restoration for the 2003 tricentenary. Upstairs inside the salmon-pink painted building is a branch of the **Russian Museum** (☎ 219 1608; www.ruseum.ru; Nevsky pr 17; adult/student R300/150; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) displaying some beautiful examples of Imperial-era porcelain from the Gardner and Lomonosova factories in a series of splendidly restored rooms. Downstairs temporary exhibitions are held, while in the courtyard you'll find a café and the luxury restaurant Russian Empire (p280).

A block beyond the Moyka, on the southern side of Nevsky pr, the great colonnaded arms of the **Kazan Cathedral** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 318 4528; www.kazansky.ru, in Russian; Kazanskaya pl 2; admission free; 🕒 10am-7pm, services 10am & 6pm; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor) reach out towards the avenue. Built between 1801 and 1811, its design, by Andrei Voronikhin, a former serf, was influenced by St Peter's in Rome. His original plan was to build a second, mirror version of the cathedral opposite it on the northern side of Nevsky pr. The square in front of it has been a site for political demonstrations since before the revolution. The church is well worth entering but be aware it is a working cathedral so please show some respect for the local customs (p79).

Opposite the cathedral is the **Singer Building** (Map pp230-1; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor) a Style Moderne beauty recently restored to the splendour of 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** (1826). The cables of this 25.2m-long bridge are supported by four cast-iron gryphons with golden wings.

Griboedova Canal to the Fontanka River

Check out the lavish **Grand Hotel Europe** (p278) built between 1873 and 1875, re-

done in Style Moderne in the 1910s and completely renovated in the early 1990s. Immediately north of the hotel is the quiet **ploshchad Iskusstv** (Arts Square) named after its surrounding museums and concert halls. A statue of Pushkin, erected in 1957, stands in the middle of the tree-lined square. Both the square and Mikhaylovskaya ul, which joins the square to Nevsky pr, were designed as a unit by Rossi in the 1820s and 1830s.

Diagonally across Nevsky pr, the fashionable arcades of **Gostiny Dvor** (Map pp230-1; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor) department store stand facing the clock tower of the **former Town Duma** (Map pp230-1; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor), seat of the pre-revolutionary city government. One of the world's first indoor shopping malls, Gostiny Dvor (Merchant Yard) dates from 1757–85, stretches 230m along Nevsky pr (its completely restored perimeter is over 1km long) and is another Rastrelli creation. The shops inside are generally open 10am to 8pm.

On the other side of Nevsky pr, at No 42, the **Armenian Church** (Map pp230-1; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor) built from 1771 to 1780 and one of two in St Petersburg, has been completely renovated and is open to visitors. The arcade at No 48, the **Passazh** (Map pp230-1; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor) department store, is also beautiful to look at (notice the glass ceilings).

On Sadovaya ul, opposite the south-eastern side of Gostiny Dvor, the **Vorontsov Palace** (Map pp230-1; 1749-57; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor) is another noble town house by Rastrelli. It's now a military school for young cadets.

Ploshchad Ostrovskogo to Anichkov most

The airy square, **Pl Ostrovskogo**, commonly referred to as the Catherine Gardens after the enormous **Catherine the Great statue** (Map pp230-1; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor), which stands amid the chess, backgammon and sometimes even mah jong players that crowd the benches here, was created by Carlo Rossi in the 1820s and 1830s. At the Empress' heels are some of her renowned statesmen, including her lovers Orlov, Potemkin and Suvorov.

The square's western side is taken up by the lavish **National Library of Russia** (Map pp230-1; 🚶 Gostiny Dvor), St Petersburg's biggest with some 31 million items, nearly one-sixth of which are in foreign languages. Rossi's **Aleksandrinsky Theatre** (Pushkin Theatre; p288) at the southern end of the square is one of

Russia's most important theatres. In 1896 the opening night of Chekhov's *The Seagull* was so badly received here that the playwright fled to wander anonymously among the crowds on Nevsky pr.

Behind the theatre, appropriately enough you'll find the **St Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 311 2195; www.theatremuseum.ru/eng/; Ostrovskogo pl 6; adult/child R50/20; ☎ 1-7pm Wed-Mon), a treasure-trove of items relating to the Russian Theatre including model sets, posters and costumes. In a newly opened section aimed at children there are great models of the Mariinsky stage and antique contraptions used to create effects like the sound of wind, rain and trains. The museum also has branches in the Sheremetyev Palace (p258), and the former homes of composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (p260) and the opera singer Fyodor Chaliapin (p266).

A continuation of Rossi's ensemble running towards pl Lomonosova, **ulitsa Zhdchevo Rossi** is proportion defied: it's 22m wide, lined by buildings 22m high, and 220m long. **Vaganova School of Choreography** (Map pp230-1; ☎ Gostiny Dvor) is situated here and is the Mariinsky Ballet's training school where, Pavlova, Nijinsky, Nureyev and others learned their art; it is not open to the public.

Returning to Nevsky, on the corner of Malaya Sadovaya ul is **Yeliseyevsky** (Map pp230-1; Nevsky pr 56; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat & Sun), the most sumptuous 'grocery store' you may have ever seen. Built in Style Moderne between 1901 and 1903, it is decorated with sculptures and statues on the outside, and a gorgeous mirrored ceiling and stained-glass windows on the inside. Pedestrianised **Malaya Sadovaya ulitsa** is also worth a look. A number of statues and sculptures have been placed here (look up near the junction with Nevsky pr to see the tiny black-and-white cats poised on ledges on either side of the street), including a marble ball with a fountain underneath which makes it spin forever. At the end of the street turn right to enter a lovely triangular square, Manezhnaya pl.

Between pl Ostrovskogo and Fontanka River is the cream-coloured **Anichkov Palace** (Map pp230-1; 1741-50; ☎ Gostiny Dvor). Once the city's second most important palace, worked on by a slew of architects, including Rastrelli and Rossi, it was home to several imperial favourites, including Catherine the Great's lover Grigory Potemkin. It became

the city's largest Pioneer Club headquarters after 1935 and to this day houses over 100 after-school clubs for over 10,000 children.

Nevsky pr crosses the Fontanka on the **Anichkov most**, with its famous 1840s statues (sculpted by the German Pyotr Klodt) of rearing horses at its four corners. Take note of the southwestern horse's genitals: unlike those of his anatomically correct companions, the genitals of this one are apparently created in the image of the sculptor's unfaithful wife's lover (another version has it that it's Napoleon's profile).

SUMMER GARDEN

Perhaps St Petersburg's loveliest park, the **Summer Garden** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 10am-10pm May-Sep, 10am-8pm Oct-mid-Apr, closed mid-late-Apr; ☎ Gostiny Dvor) is between the Mars Field and the Fontanka River. You can enter at either the north or south end.

Laid out for Peter the Great with fountains, pavilions and a geometrical plan to resemble the park at Versailles in France, the garden became a strolling place for St Petersburg's 19th-century leisured classes. Though changed since that era, it maintains a formal elegance, with thousands of lime trees shading its straight paths and lines of statues.

St Petersburg's first palace is the modest, two-storey **Summer Palace** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 314 0456; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon early May-early Nov; ☎ Gostiny Dvor) in the garden's northeast corner. Built for Peter from 1710 to 1714, it is pretty well intact with little reliefs around the walls depicting Russian naval victories. Inside it is stocked with early-18th-century furnishings of limited appeal.

MIKHAYLOVSKY CASTLE

A much greater Summer Palace used to stand across the canal from the southern end of the Summer Garden. But Rastrelli's fairy-tale wooden creation for Empress Elizabeth was knocked down in the 1790s to make way for the bulky **Mikhailovsky Castle** (Engineer's Castle; Map pp230-1; ☎ 313 4173; www.rusmuseum.ru; Sadovaya ul 2; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, to 6pm Wed-Sun; ☎ Gostiny Dvor). The pale-orange painted building was briefly home of Paul I, who was suffocated in his bed only a month after moving into the castle. Later it became a military engineering school (hence its more common name Engineers' Castle). Inside are some

finely restored state rooms including the lavish burgundy throne room of the tsar's wife Maria Fyodorovna and some of the original statues from the Summer Garden.

MARBLE PALACE

Between Mars Field and the Neva is another branch of the Russian Museum, the **Marble Palace** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 312 9196; www.rusmuseum.ru; Millionnaya ul 5; adult/student R300/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt), built for Catherine the Great's lover Grigory Orlov from 1768 to 1785. Designed by Antonio Rinaldi, the palace is so named because it uses 36 different kinds of marble in its construction both inside and out. Check out the grey and blue marble staircase and the fantastic Marble Hall. The art on display here is eclectic, ranging from 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century works done by foreign artists in Russia to the splendid Ludwig Museum, part of the modern art collection of chocolate billionaire Peter Ludwig. This is one of the few chances to see such a large collection of contemporary art works in the city. The monstrous equestrian statue outside the museum is of Alexander III by the sculptor Paolo Trubetskoy who famously quipped that he 'simply depicted one animal on another'.

BRONZE HORSEMAN & PLOSHCHAD DEKABRISTOV

Between the Neva River and St Isaac's Cathedral is **plushchad Dekabristov** (Decembrists' Square; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt), named after the first attempt at a Russian revolution, the Decembrists' Uprising of 14 December 1825 (p45) which kicked off and quickly fizzled here.

The most famous statue of Peter the Great (practically a trademark image of the city) stands at the river end of the square. The **Bronze Horseman** (Map pp230-1) has Peter's mount rearing above the snake of treason and was sculpted over 12 years for Catherine the Great by Frenchman Etienne Falconet. The inscription reads 'To Peter I from Catherine II - 1782'.

Most of the square's western side is occupied by the Central State Historical Archives in the former Senate and Synod buildings, built in 1829-34. The **Manege Central Exhibition Hall** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 8253; Isaakievskaya pl 1; admission R100; ☎ 11am-6pm Fri-Wed; ☎ Nevsky Pr) across the street used to be the Horse Guards' Riding School (constructed

in 1804-07 from a design by Quarenghi). It now hosts rotating art exhibitions.

ADMIRALTY

The gilded spire of the old **Admiralty** (Map pp230-1; Admiraltyesky pr 1; closed to the public; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt), at the western edge of Dvortsovaya pl, is an unmistakable city landmark. Here was the headquarters of the Russian navy from 1711 to 1917, and today the building houses the city's largest naval college. Constructed from 1806 to 1823 to the designs of Andreyan Zakharov, it's a foremost example of the Russian Empire style of classical architecture, with its rows of white columns and plentiful reliefs and statuary. Check out the nymphs holding giant globes flanking the main gate. The gardens and fountain here are particularly lovely in summer.

MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY

To learn about Russia's fragile ethnic mosaic drop by the interesting **Museum of Ethnography** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 313 4320; Inzhenemaya ul 4/1; adult/student R250/150; gold & jewellery exhibition R100/50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; ☎ Gostiny Dvor). There's a bit of leftover Soviet propaganda going on here, but it's a marvellous collection highlighting the traditional crafts, customs and beliefs of the more than 150 peoples covered by the USSR: the sections on Transcaucasia and Central Asia are fascinating, with rugs and two full-size yurts (nomad's portable tent-houses).

PUSHKIN FLAT-MUSEUM

Beside one of the prettiest curves of the Moyka River is the little house where the poet Pushkin died after his duel in 1837 (p340). Now the **Pushkin Flat-Museum** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 3531; nab reki Moyki 12; adult/student R80/40; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm Wed-Mon; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt), it has been reconstructed to look as it did in the poet's time and includes (for morbid fans) Pushkin's death mask, a lock of his hair and the waistcoat worn on the day he died. Entry includes a Russian-language tour (English tours can be arranged in advance). There's a pleasantly quiet courtyard and café in front of the museum if you just want a rest.

MARS FIELD

Once the scene of 19th-century military parades, the grassy **Mars Field** lies immediately

east of the Summer Garden. An **eternal flame** (Map pp230-1) burns at its centre for the victims of the 1917 revolution and the ensuing civil war. Don't take a short cut across the grass – you may be walking on graves of the communist luminaries also buried here.

Liteyny, Smolny, Vladimirskaya & Vostanniya

This section covers sights on the east side of the Fontanka Canal along and around Nevsky pr towards Alexandra Nevskogo most. It includes the governmental Smolny region, one of less-touristed areas of the city, running east from Liteyny pr towards Smolny Cathedral.

MUSEUM OF DECORATIVE & APPLIED ARTS

Also known as the **Stieglitz Museum** (☎ 273 3258; Solyarnoy per 13; adult/student R400/75; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sat; 🚗 Chernyshevskaya), this must-see establishment is in the block opposite the eastern side of the Summer Garden; the entrance is through the Sol-Art gallery (p289). The objects displayed are gorgeous, from medieval handcrafted furniture to a rare collection of 18th-century Russian tiled stoves to the contemporary works of the students of the arts school. Their surroundings merely match their magnificence.

In 1878, the millionaire Baron Stieglitz founded the School of Technical Design and wanted to surround his students with world-class art to inspire them. He began a collection, continued by his son, that was to include a unique array of European and Oriental glassware, porcelains, tapestries, furniture and paintings. Between 1885 and 1895, a building designed by architect Max Messmacher was constructed to house the collection, and this building also became a masterpiece. Each hall is decorated in its own, unique style, including Italian, Renaissance, Flemish and baroque. The Terem Room, in the style of the medieval Terem Palace of Moscow's Kremlin, is an opulent knockout.

After the revolution, the school was closed, the museum's collection redistributed to the Hermitage and Russian Museum, and most of the lavish interiors brutally painted or plastered over, even destroyed (one room was used as a sports hall). The painstaking renovation contin-

ues to this day, despite receiving no funding from the Ministry of Education under whose direction it falls (being connected to the Applied Arts School next door).

SHEREMETEV PALACE

Splendid wrought-iron gates, facing the Fontanka River, guard the entrance to the **Sheremetyev Palace** (1750–55), which houses two lovely little museums. In the palace itself is the **Museum of Music** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 272 4441; www.theatremuseum.ru/eng; nab reki Fontanki 34; adult/student R150/75; ☎ noon-6pm Wed-Sun; 🚗 Gostiny Dvor), which has a collection of musical instruments from the 19th and 20th centuries, some beautifully decorated. The Sheremetyev family was famous for the concerts and theatre it hosted at the palace. Upstairs the rooms have been wonderfully restored and you get a great sense of how cultured life must have been here. Check the local press for notices of concerts which are occasionally still held here.

In a separate wing of the palace, reached from Liteyny pr, is the charming **Museum of Anna Akhmatova in the Fountain House** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 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). Even if you know little of this celebrated early 20th-century poet you will find yourself moved by the lovingly curated exhibits here. The evocative apartment on the 2nd floor is filled with mementos of the poet and her family, all persecuted during Soviet times. Outside, in a corner of the quiet garden, is a video room where you can watch Russian-language documentaries on her life.

ALEXANDER NEVSKY MONASTERY

The working **monastery** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 274 1702; www.larva.spb.ru; Nevsky pr 179/2; entrance to main complex adult/student R70/35; ☎ 11am-5pm Fri-Wed; 🚗 Ploshchad Aleksandra Nevskogo), with the graves of some of Russia's most famous artistic figures, is entered from pl Alexandra Nevskogo opposite Hotel Moskva. It was founded in 1713 by Peter the Great, who wrongly thought this was the location where Alexander of Novgorod had beaten the Swedes in 1240. In 1797 it became a *lavra* (superior monastery). Today it is open to the public (but don't come wearing shorts). Sadly, the courtyard is filled with homeless beggars hoping for the charity of visitors.

For most visitors the main reason for coming here is to view the **graveyards** (adult/student R70/55; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Fri-Wed) either side of the main entrance; tickets are sold outside the main gate (to your right as you enter). The **Tikhvin Cemetery**, on the right, contains the most famous graves. Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov (check out his wild tomb!), Borodin, Mussorgsky and Glinka all rest here. Turn right after entering and you'll reach the tomb of Dostoevsky. The **Lazarus Cemetery**, on the left, contains several late, great St Petersburg architects – among them Starov, Voronikhin, Quarenghi, Zakharov and Rossi.

Across the canal just outside the main *lavra* complex, the first main building on the left is the 1717–22 baroque **Annunciation Church**, now the **City Sculpture Museum** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 274 2517; adult/student R50/25; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Sun), featuring a large collection of the original models and designs for the city.

About 100m further on is the monastery's classical **Trinity Cathedral** (Map pp234-5; ☎ for worship from 6am Sat, Sun & holidays) built between 1776 and 1790. Hundreds crowd in on 12 September to celebrate the feast of St Alexander Nevsky. His remains are in the silver reliquary in the main iconostasis.

Opposite the cathedral is the St Petersburg **Metropolitan's House** (Map pp234-5) built from 1775 to 1778. On the far right of the grounds facing the canal you'll see St Petersburg's **Orthodox Academy**, one of only a handful in Russia (the main one is at Seriev Posad).

SMOLNY CATHEDRAL

The sky-blue **Smolny Cathedral** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 271 7632; eng.cathedral.ru/smolny; pl Rastrelli 3/1; 🚗 Chernyshevskaya), one of the most fabulous of Rastrelli's buildings, is the centrepiece of a convent built mostly to the Italian architect's designs from 1748 to 1757. His inspiration was to combine baroque details with the forest of towers and onion domes typical of an old Russian monastery. There's special genius in the proportions of the cathedral (it gives the impression of soaring upward), to which the convent buildings are a perfect foil.

At time of research the cathedral was closed for renovation, but when it reopens the climb up one of the 63m **belfries** is well

worth it for the stupendous views. If you don't want to make the long walk from the metro station, trolleybuses 5 and 7 from Nevsky pr end up here.

BLOCKADE MUSEUM

Next door to the Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts is the grim but engrossing **Blockade Museum** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 275 7208; Solyarnoy per 9; admission R70; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue, to 5pm Thu-Mon; 🚗 Chernyshevskaya), opened just three months after the blockade was lifted. At that time it had 37,000 exhibits, including real tanks and aeroplanes, but three years later, during Stalin's repression of the city, the museum was shut, its director shot, and most of the exhibits destroyed or redistributed. It reopened in 1989 and the displays now contain donations from survivors, including propaganda posters from the time, and an example of the sawdust-filled tiny piece of bread Leningraders had to survive on. Book in advance for English excursions.

CATHEDRAL OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR SAVIOUR

The interior of this beautifully restored yellow **cathedral** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 272 3662; Preobrazhenskaya pl; ☎ services 10am & 6pm; 🚗 Chernyshevskaya) is one of the most gilded in St Petersburg. The grand gates bear the imperial double-headed eagle in vast golden busts – reflecting the fact that Empress Elizabeth ordered its construction in 1743. This is where the Preobrazhensky Guards (the monarch's personal protection unit) had their headquarters. Rebuilt in 1829 to a neoclassical design by Vasily Stasov, the cathedral is dedicated to the victory over the Turks in 1828–29; note the captured guns in the gate surrounding the church!

BELOSELSKY-BELOZERSKY PALACE

The photogenic salmon-pink backdrop to the Anichkov most is provided by the 1840s rococo **Beloselsky-Belozersky Palace** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 315 5236; a_excuse@mail.ru; Nevsky pr 41; tours R100; 🚗 Mayakovskaya). Call or email about tours of the opulent interior here (in Russian only, but English information sheets are available), or check the posters outside for details of the concerts which are occasionally held in the palace's grandly oak-panelled and stuccoed concert hall.

VLADIMIRSKAYA CHURCH

The 18th-century **Vladimirskaya Church** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 312 1938; Vladimirsky pr 20; 🕒 8am-6pm; 📍 Vladimirskaya), designed by Quarenghi, was used as an underwear factory during Soviet times, but in 1990 it was reconsecrated and is now one of the busiest churches in town. For a brilliant view of its amazing onion domes have a drink in the 7th floor bar of the Hotel Dostoevsky across the road, part of the Vladimirsky Passazh shopping mall. If you can get past the hordes of babushkas and beggars outside, the church's interiors are also stunning (go upstairs to see the main body of the church).

DOSTOEVSKY MUSEUM

Dostoevsky lived in flats all over the city (mainly in the Sennaya area) but his final residence, where he penned most of *The Brothers Karamazov*, is preserved at the engrossing **Dostoevsky Museum** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 571 4031; www.md.spb.ru; Kuznechny per 5/2; adult/student R90/45; 🕒 11am-6pm Tue-Sun, closed last Wed of month; 📍 Vladimirskaya). It all looks just as it did before the writer died in 1881. There's also a rather gloomy statue of Dostoevsky outside the Vladimirskaya metro.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV FLAT-MUSEUM

The charming **Rimsky-Korsakov Flat-Museum** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 713 3208; www.theatremuseum.ru/eng; Zagorodny pr 28; adult/student R50/30; 🕒 11am-6pm Wed-Sun; 📍 Vladimirskaya) remains as it was when the composer lived here in the early 20th century. Rimsky-Korsakov's tradition of holding concerts here on Wednesday evenings continues.

ARCTIC & ANTARCTIC MUSEUM

In the former Old Believers' Church of St Nicholas is the **Arctic & Antarctic Museum** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 571 2549; www.polarium.spb.ru; ul Marata 24A; adult/student R100/50; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Sun; 📍 Vladimirskaya), which focuses on Soviet polar explorations. Apart from stuffed polar bears and the like, the most impressive exhibit is a wooden boat plane hanging from the ceiling. Check out the informative website though for details of Vicaar, an Arctic expedition and tourism agency linked to the museum.

WORLD OF WATER MUSEUM

The handsomely restored brick complex of 19th-century buildings between the Tau-

ride Gardens and the Neva River house St Petersburg's water treatment company Vodakanal and its **World of Water Museum** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 271 9479; Shpalernaya ul. 56; adult/student R40/15; 🕒 10am-5pm Wed-Sun; 📍 Chernyshevskaya). Hopefully the water tower will be open to climb (it wasn't when we visited) but otherwise the museum has slick, modern displays and is informative, if you can read the Russian-only captions.

TAURIDE GARDENS, TAURIDE PALACE & FLORAL EXHIBITION HALL

The former **Tauride Gardens** (Tavricheskii Sad; entrance on Potyomkinskaya ul; 📍 Chernyshevskaya), now the City Children's Park, is a great place for a stroll, and there are some rusty rides for the kiddies. The view across the lake towards the **Tauride Palace**, built between 1783 and 1789 for Catherine the Great's lover Potemkin, is a fine sight. The palace (closed to the public) takes its name from the Ukrainian region of Crimea (once called Tavriya), which Potemkin was responsible for conquering. Between 1906 and 1917 the State Duma, the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet all met here.

During the winter you may want to warm up at the **Floral Exhibition Hall** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 272 5448; Potyomkinskaya ul 2; admission R20; 🕒 11am-7pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Chernyshevskaya), a lush indoor tropical paradise, next to the gardens on the corner of Shpalernaya ul.

MUSEUM OF EROTICA

The chief attraction of this quirky **museum** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 320 7600; Furshtatskaya ul 47; admission free; 🕒 8am-10pm; 📍 Chernyshevskaya) housed in a venereal disease clinic, is doctor Igor Knyazkin's collection of sexually themed trinkets, the highlight being a 30cm-long grey, embalmed penis that allegedly belonged to Rasputin.

PLOSHCHAD VOSTANIYA

Marking the division of Nevsky pr and Stary (old) Nevsky pr is **ploshchad Vosstaniya** (Uprising Square; 📍 Ploshchad Vosstaniya), whose landmarks are the giant granite pillar with the communist star, and **Moskovsky vokzal** (opposite). The Cyrillic on top of Hotel Oktyabrskaya across from the station, translates as 'Hero City Leningrad'; several cities were designated 'hero cities' for heroism, stoicism and losses during WWII.

Mariinsky & Sennaya

This area, south and west of St Isaac's Cathedral, contains some interesting sights but is also fine just for casual wandering, particularly around the meandering Griboedova Canal which flows close to Sennaya pl (Dostoevskyland) and the theatre district of Mariinsky. Along it look for the **Lviny most**, another of St Petersburg's beautiful, beast-supported bridges, with cables emerging from the mouths of golden lions.

YUSUPOV PALACE

Best known as the place where Rasputin met his unpleasant, untimely end (p49), the interior of the **Yusupov Palace** (Map pp236-7; ☎ 314 9883; nab reki Moyki 94; adult/student R350/250; 🕒 11am-5pm; 📍 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) is also one of the city's most beautiful. A series of sumptuously decorated rooms culminate in a gilded jewel box of a theatre, where performances are still held. Admission includes an audio tour in English as well as several other languages. You have to pay extra for the *Murder of Rasputin* tour (adult/student R150/120); be warned that places are limited to 20 daily on each of the two English-language ones, so book ahead if you're interested.

SENNAYA PLOSHCHAD & AROUND

Once known as Haymarket, frenetic **Sennaya ploshchad** (📍 Sennaya Ploshchad) crowded with giant kiosks and surrounded by glitzy shopping malls, is the gateway to 'Dostoevskyland'. In this area *Crime and Punishment* is set and although the cathedral that once dominated the square in Dostoevsky's time has long been demolished,

the writer would still recognise something of the area's former raffishness, if not the squalor.

Just west of the square, across the Griboedova Canal, is the **flat** (Map pp236-7; ul Kaznacheykaya 7) where the peripatetic writer (he occupied around 20 residences in his 28-year stay in the city) wrote *Crime and Punishment*; the route taken by the novel's antihero Raskolnikov to murder the old woman moneylender passed directly under the author's window. The old woman lived at **flat 74, naberezhnaya kanala Griboedova 104**; you can visit the hallway outside the flat (residents are quite used to it). Entering from the canal side, walk straight back to entrance No 5 (apartments 22-81); the flat's on the 3rd floor.

THE MUSEUM OF RAILWAY TRANSPORT

Every trainspotter's dream is realised at the **Museum of Railway Transport** (Map pp236-7; ☎ 315 1476; www.railroad.ru/cmrt in Russian; Sadovaya ul 50; adult/student R100/50; 🕒 11am-5pm Wed-Sun, closed last Thu of month; 📍 Sennaya Ploshchad/Sadovaya), a fascinating collection of scale locomotives and model railway bridges, often made by the same engineers that built the real ones. 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 on the trans-Siberian route across Lake Baikal, and a sumptuous 1903 Trans-Siberian wagon complete with piano salon and bathtub. To see full-sized vintage trains visit the Museum of Railway Technology (p268).

HISTORIC RAILWAY STATIONS

As the birthplace of Russia's railway system, it's not surprising that St Petersburg has some grand stations. The oldest and most elegant is **Vitebsky vokzal** (Vitebsky Station; Map pp236-7; 📍 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 **Moskovsky vokzal** (Moscow Station; Map pp234-5; 📍 Ploshchad Vosstaniya) look up at the expansive ceiling mural in the main entrance hall. There's a striking giant bust of Peter the Great in the hall leading to the platforms.

Finlyandsky vokzal (Finland Station; Map p229; 📍 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. When the progress of the revolution began to look iffy, it was from here that Lenin hightailed it off to Finland, only to return again in October to seize power. Lenin's statue, pointing across the Neva towards the old KGB headquarters, stands outside the station.

GRAND CHORAL SYNAGOGUE

Recently restored to its full Byzantine-styled glory the **Grand Choral Synagogue** (Map pp236-7; ☎ 713 8186; Lermontovskiy pr 2; ☎ 11am-3pm Mon-Wed, 11am-2pm Thu & Fri, services 10am Sat; 📄 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) was designed by Vasily Stasov and opened in 1893. Its lavishness (particularly notable in the highly unusual and decorative wedding chapel to the left as you enter) indicates the pivotal role Jews played in imperial St Petersburg. All men and married women should cover their head on entering the building. The restaurant, Lechaim (p281) in the basement, is excellent.

MARIINSKY THEATRE

The pretty green-and-white **Mariinsky Theatre** (p287) has played a pivotal role in Russian ballet ever since it was built in 1859. Outside performance times you can usually wander into the foyer, and maybe peep into its lovely auditorium. To organise a full tour fax a request to **Dr Yuri Schwartzkopf** (☎ 326 4141; fax 314 1744) and call back for an answer.

NIKOLSKY CATHEDRAL

Its picture-perfect canalside setting, baroque spires and golden domes make the ice-blue **Nikolsky Cathedral** (Map pp236-7; Nikolskaya pl 1/3; ☎ 9am-7pm; 📄 Sadovaya), just south of the Mariinsky Theatre, one of the city's best-loved churches. Nicknamed the Sailor's Church (Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors), it contains many 18th-century icons and a

finely carved wooden iconostasis. A graceful bell tower overlooks the canal, which is crossed by the Staro-Nikolsky most (from this bridge, you can see at least seven bridges, more than from any other spot in the city).

NABOKOV MUSEUM

From his birth in 1899 until 1917, when his family fled Russia, Vladimir Nabokov, author of *Lolita* and arguably the most versatile and least classifiable of modern Russian writers, lived at this lovely 19th-century townhouse now turned into a small **museum** (Map pp236-7; ☎ 571 4502; www.nabokovmuseum.org; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 47; adult/student R100/20, admission free 11am-3pm Thu; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun; 📄 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad). In Nabokov's autobiography *Speak, Memory*, he refers to it as a 'paradise lost' and it's easy to imagine why after seeing the charming carved oak interiors. There are various displays of Nabokov-related artefacts, but the museum is more of a cultural centre hosting festivals and special events.

RUSSIAN VODKA MUSEUM

Who could resist the **Russian Vodka Museum** (Map pp236-7; ☎ 312 3416; www.vodkamuseum.ru; Konnogvardeyskiy bul 5; admission R50, with tour R100; ☎ 11am-10pm; 📄 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad). The two exhibition rooms are surprisingly interesting if you opt for the English-language guided tour. There's a shot of vodka at the end for everyone, but if you really want to

OFFBEAT ST PETERSBURG

Europe's fourth-largest city has its fair share of quirky sights. Our top five offbeat places to visit are:

- Free Arts Foundation (p289)
- Kresty Prison Museum (p268)
- Museum of Anthropology & Ethnography (Kunstkamera) (right)
- Museum of Erotica (p260)
- Sigmund Freud Museum of Dreams (p266)

do things in style, call ahead and book a spot on the special excursion (R360), which includes a proper tasting of three types of vodka plus choice of appetisers in the museum's *traktir* (tavern; p283). The food here, incidentally, is pretty good.

STATE MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF ST PETERSBURG

History buffs will want to check out the superb **State Museum of the History of St Petersburg** (Map pp236-7; ☎ 717 7544; Angliyskaya nab 44; adult/student R60/30; ☎ 11am-6pm Thu-Tue; 📄 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad). Housed in the majestic Rumyantsev Mansion (1826), its main focus is the Blockade; it has the city's largest repository of documents from that time. Ask for an English guide at the ticket office.

Vasilyevsky Island

The most convenient metro station is Vasileostrovskaya but for sights around the Strelka you'd do just as well to walk over the Neva from the Hermitage or catch one of the numerous buses that run there from Nevsky prospekt.

STRELKA

Some of the best views of St Petersburg can be had from Vasilyevsky Island's eastern 'nose' known as the **Strelka** (Tongue of Land). Peter the Great's plan was to have his new city's administrative and intellectual centre here. In fact, it became the focus of St Petersburg's maritime trade, symbolised by the white colonnaded Stock Exchange (now the Central Naval Museum, p264). 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.

MENSHIKOV PALACE

Well worth visiting is the riverside **Menshikov Palace** (Map pp240-1; ☎ 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; 📄 Vasileostrovskaya), built in 1707 for Alexander Menshikov, a close friend (many now say lover) of Peter the Great. Menshikov effectively ran Russia from here for three years between Peter's death and his own exile. Now a branch of the Hermitage (p244), the palace's impressively restored interiors are filled with period art and furniture. Organ concerts are held at noon on Sunday here.

MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY & ETHNOGRAPHY (KUNSTKAMERA)

The city's first **museum** (Map pp240-1; ☎ 328 1412; www.kunstkamera.ru; entrance on Tamozhenny per; adult/student R100/50; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Tue-Sat, to 5pm Sun; 📄 Vasileostrovskaya) was founded in 1714 by Peter himself. It's famous for its ghoulish collection of monstrosities, notably preserved freaks, two-headed mutant foetuses and odd body parts, all collected by Peter with the aim of educating the common people against superstitions. Sadly, most people rush to see these sad specimens, largely ignoring the other interesting (though not best displayed) exhibits on native peoples from around the world. Here you'll also find an exhibition devoted to the scientist and renaissance man Mikhail Lomonosov (whose statue stands beside the nearby Twelve Colleges building of the city university) with a recreation of his study-laboratory.

ACADEMY OF ARTS MUSEUM

The **Academy of Arts Museum** (Map pp240-1; ☎ 323 6469; excursions ☎ 213 3578; Universitetskaya nab 17; adult/student R200/100; English excursions R1500; ☎ 11am-6pm Wed-Sun; 📄 Vasileostrovskaya) doesn't get many visitors but is certainly worth a look, especially if you are interested in Russian art. It's guarded by two imported Egyptian sphinxes said to be about 3500 years old. Boys would live in this building from the age of five until they graduated at age 15 – it was an experiment to create a new species of human: the artist. It mostly worked since graduates included Ilya Repin, Karl Bryullov and Anton Losenko.

DRAMA AT THE MARIINSKY

St Petersburg's most famous theatre was built in 1859 as the home of the Imperial Russian Opera and Ballet companies. The gilded Italianate house saw the premieres of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*. In 1935 the Soviets renamed it the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre, and while the theatre has reverted to its prerevolutionary name, the company is still called the Kirov. The Kirov Ballet nurtured stars including Nijinsky, Pavlova, Nureyev, Makarova and Baryshnikov.

After hard times in the 1980s, the new Mariinsky has undergone an artistic renaissance under dynamic, workaholic artistic director Valery Gergiev. New productions are paid for by Western benefactors, or staged in conjunction with overseas companies, and these days not everything is sung in Russian (even so, there will be English subtitles).

Despite the Mariinsky's revival, the fact remains that the 19th-century theatre is clapped out, with ancient equipment unable to cope with modern productions, and is in desperate need of renovation. After much heated debate in 2004, ambitious plans were finally signed off to build a second stage for the theatre behind the current building (on the site of the Palace of Culture). Dubbed the 'Golden Envelope' the design – a series of black marble structures covered by giant golden angular shell – is by French architect Dominique Perrault, responsible for the minimalist national library in Paris. The plan is for it to be ready by 2008, when it will be the most striking architectural addition to the city in decades.

Inside are works done by academy students and the faculty since its founding in 1775, including many studies plus temporary exhibitions. On the 3rd floor, see models of the original versions of Smolny, St Isaac's, and the Alexander Nevsky monastery. Also take a peek into the fabulous old library.

TEMPLE OF THE ASSUMPTION

The attractive 1895 neo-Byzantine **Temple of the Assumption** (Map pp240-1; ☎ 321 7473; nab Leytenanta Shmidta 27; 🕒 8am-8pm; 🚶 Vasileostrovskaya) is again a working church, although restoration of the interior's beautiful murals continues. Closed during the Soviet period from 1957 it was turned into the city's first – and very popular – year-round skating rink. You'll find a good church shop here selling choral music and freshly baked cakes.

CENTRAL NAVAL MUSEUM

Housed in what was once the Stock Exchange, the **Central Naval Museum** (Map pp240-1; ☎ 328 2502; www.museum.navy.ru/index_e.htm; Birzhevoy proezd 4; adult/student R100/15; 🕒 11am-6pm Wed-Sun, closed last Thu of the month; 🚶 Vasileostrovskaya), is packed with maps, excellent model ships, flags and photos relating to the Russian navy up to the present – it's a must for naval enthusiasts.

MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

One of the biggest and best of its kind in the world, the city's **Museum of Zoology** (Map pp240-1; ☎ 328 0112; www.zin.ru/mus_e.htm; Universitetskaya nab 1; adult/child R60/30, free Thu; 🕒 11am-6pm Sat-Thu; 🚶 Vasileostrovskaya) was founded in 1832 and has some amazing exhibits. Amid the dio-

ramas and the tens of thousands of mounted beasts from around the globe is a complete woolly mammoth, thawed out of the Siberian ice in 1902, and a live insect zoo! Pay your entrance fee at the macroscopic cash window just west of the main entrance.

Petrograd Side

Petrograd Side (Petrogradskaya storona) is a cluster of delta islands between the Malaya Neva and Bolshaya Nevka channels, including little Zayachy Island, where Peter the Great first broke ground for the city.

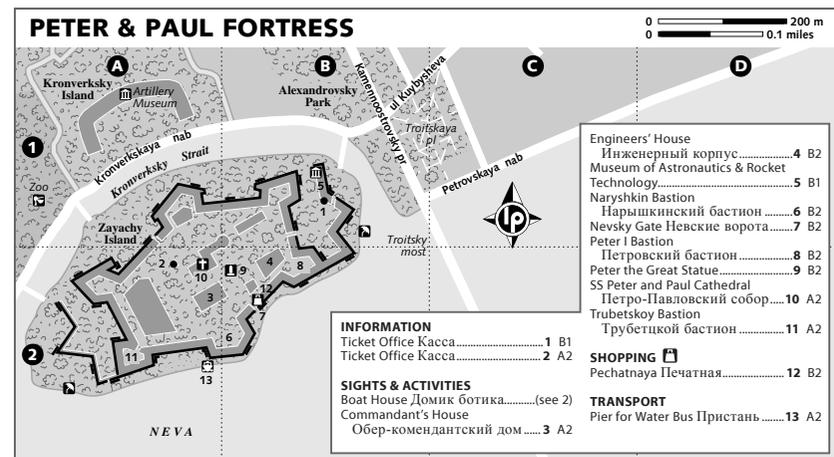
PETER & PAUL FORTRESS

Set aside a chunk of time to explore the **Peter & Paul Fortress** (Map p265; ☎ 238 4550; 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, the hexahedral fortress is the oldest building in St Petersburg, planned by Peter the Great as a defence against the Swedes. It never actually saw action and its main use up to 1917 was as a political prison; famous residents included Dostoevsky, Gorky, Trotsky and Lenin's older brother, Alexander.

To get a sense of the scale of the place, and for wonderful river views, first walk the **Nevskaya Panorama** (adult/student R50/30; 🕒 10am-8pm) along part of the battlements, then head inside the **SS Peter & Paul Cathedral**, whose 122m-tall, needle-thin gilded spire is one of the defining landmarks of St Petersburg. 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. Mondays and Fridays at 7pm the St Petersburg male choir gives concerts here.

Worthy of a view is the fascinating history of St Petersburg exhibition inside the **Commandant's House**. Covering up to the 1917 revolution, there are some very good displays here including a vivid painting of the great flood of 1824 that all but swept the city away, and a model showing how the Alexander Column in Palace Sq was erected.

Also included in the entry ticket are: the **Engineers' House**, rotating exhibitions and a permanent display of items from the decorative arts collection of the now defunct Old St Petersburg Museum; the reconstructed prison cells of the **Trubetskoy Bastion** (closed



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for renovations at time of research) – one of its first inmates was Peter's own son Alexey, whose torture Peter is said to have overseen personally; and the **Museum of Astronautics and Rocket Technology** – this was where Russia's first liquid-fuelled rocket was developed in the 1930s.

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. Note the plaques showing water levels of famous floods. Along the walls on any sunny day – including the rare ones in winter and spring – you'll see standing sunbathers (standing's said to give you a *proper* tan). In winter even harder souls come here to swim in holes cut through the ice! Back inside the fortress grounds, also look out for Mikhail Shemyakin's controversial **statue of Peter the Great** with its out-of-proportion head and hands.

CATHEDRAL MOSQUE

This working **mosque** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 233 9819; Kronverksky pr 7; 🚶 Gorkovskaya) built between 1910 and 1914 is modelled on Samarkand's Gur Emir Mausoleum. Although a serious place of worship, and decidedly not a tourist attraction, its fluted azure dome and minarets have emerged from a painstaking renovation and are stunning to view from outside.

MUSEUM OF POLITICAL HISTORY

Way more interesting than it sounds is the **Museum of Political History** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 233

7052; ul Kuybysheva 4; adult/student R150/70; 🕒 10am-5pm Fri-Wed; 🚶 Gorkovskaya). This elegant Style Moderne palace once belonged to Matilda Kshesinskaya, famous ballet dancer and one-time lover of Tsar Nicholas II. The Bolsheviks made it their headquarters and Lenin often gave speeches from the balcony. Although the main exhibit details Russian politics (with English captions) to the present day, you'll also find here some of the best Soviet kitsch in town and incredibly rare satirical caricatures of Lenin published in magazines between the 1917 revolutions (the same drawings a few months later would have got the artist imprisoned, or worse). For those who really want to dig deep into Russian politics there's an **annexe** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 312 2742; Admiralteysky pr 6/2; adult/student R100/40; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) opposite the Admiralty.

HOUSE MUSEUMS

The Petrograd Side includes a trio of 'house' museums that together make for an off-beat tour of St Petersburg. All are lovingly tended by small armies of babushkas who take as much care (if not more) of them as they would their own homes. Walking between each of the following will allow you also to enjoy some of the lovely Style Moderne architecture of the area.

The **Kirov Museum** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 346 0289; Kamennooostrovsky pr 26/28; admission R50; 🕒 11am-6pm Thu-Tue; 🚶 Petrogradskaya) is in the 4th- and 5th-floor apartment where Sergei Kirov, one of Stalin's henchmen, spent his last days. His

DIVING IN THE CHURCH

Intriguingly off limits, at the western end of Vasilyevsky Island's Bolshoy pr and on the grounds of what has long been a military training school, is the **Church of Mother of God the Merciful** (Map pp240-1), designed by V Kosyakov, who also did the Naval Cathedral in Kronshadt (p303). The Soviets converted it into a surreal training base for submariners and for life-saving exercises. The Russian Byzantine exterior is more or less intact, but the interior has been completely gutted, and there is a 26m-high tube filled with 333 tonnes of water, in which diving exercises take place.

murder started a wave of deadly repression throughout Russia. Don't miss the Party leader's death clothes, hung out for reverence: the tiny, bloodstained hole in the back of his cap where he was shot, and the torn seam on his jacket's left breast where doctors tried to revive his heart.

The **Yelizarov Museum** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 235 3778; ul Lenina 52, flat 24; adult/student R200/50; ☎ 10am-6pm, closed Sun & Wed; 🅓 Chkalovskaya) is housed in a striking ocean-liner-like building built in 1913. The comfortable home of Lenin's wife's family, the great revolutionary himself laid low here before the revolution. The flat's delightful turn-of-the-20th-century fittings have been preserved intact, and by the looks of things Lenin had a very bourgeois time of it.

Opera buffs will be thrilled with the **Chaliapin House Museum** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 234 1056; www.theatremuseum.ru; ul Graffio 2B; adult/student R30; ☎ noon-6pm Wed-Sun; 🅓 Petrogradskaya), where the great singer Fyodor Chaliapin last lived before fleeing postrevolutionary Russia in 1922. The kindly babushkas in charge will happily play the singer's recordings as you wander around.

SIGMUND FREUD MUSEUM OF DREAMS

A decidedly odd conceptual exhibition based on abstractions and ideas, the **Sigmund Freud Museum of Dreams** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 235 2929; www.freud.ru; Bolshoy pr 18A; adult/student R20/10; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue & Sun; 🅓 Sportivnaya) is an outgrowth of the Psychoanalytic Institute that houses it. The two-room exhibition aims to stimulate your subconscious as you struggle to read the display symbolising what Freud himself would have dreamt of in a dimly lit, incense-scented hall.

KIROVSKY ISLANDS

This is the collective name for the outer delta islands of Petrograd Side – Kamenny, Yelagin and Krestovsky. Once marshy jungles, the islands were granted to 18th- and 19th-century court favourites and developed into bucolic playgrounds. Still mostly parkland, they remain huge leafy venues for picnics, river sports and white-nights cavorting.

Kamenny Island

This island's charm, seclusion and century-old dachas (now inhabited by the wealthy), combined with winding lanes and a series of

canals, lakes and ponds, make a stroll here pleasant at any time of year. At the eastern end of the island the **Church of St John the Baptist** (Map pp238-9), built between 1776 and 1781, has been charmingly restored. Behind it the big, classical **Kamennooostrovsky Palace** (Map pp238-9), built by Catherine the Great for her son, is now a weedy military sanatorium.

Kamenny Island is a short walk south of metro Chyornaya Rechka (turn right as you exit, cross the bridge and you're there).

Yelagin Island

The centrepiece of this pedestrian-only, 2km-long island (admission R10 on Sat & Sun) is the **Yelagin Palace** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 430 1131; www.elagin.park.spb.ru; adult/student R100/50; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun; 🅓 Krestovsky Ostrov), built for his mother by Tsar Alexander I, who had architect Carlo Rossi landscape the entire island while he was at it. The palace, with beautifully restored interiors, is to your right as you cross the footbridge from Kamenny Island.

The rest of the island is a lovely park, with a plaza at the western end looking out to the Gulf of Finland. You can rent rowing boats in the northern part of the island.

Krestovsky Island

The biggest of the three islands, Krestovsky (🅓 Krestovsky Ostrov) consists mostly of the vast **Seaside Park of Victory** (Primorsky Park Pobedy), dotted with sports fields and, close to the metro, **Divo Ostrov** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 323 9705; www.divo-ostrov.ru/en; all day pass adult/child R500/250; ☎ noon-9pm Mon, noon-10pm, Tue-Fri, 11am-10pm Sat & Sun), a low-rent Disneyland-style amusement park with thrill rides that kids will adore. You can also rent bikes and in-line skates here (p269). At the island's far western end the 80,000-seat **Kirov Stadium** is set for demolition and reconstruction.

BOTANICAL GARDENS

Once the second-biggest botanical gardens in the world, behind only London's Kew Gardens, the **botanical gardens** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 234 1764; ul Professora Popova 2; grounds R20; all greenhouses R90; ☎ 11am-4pm Sat-Thu; 🅓 Petrogradskaya) contains giant dilapidated greenhouses on a 22-hectare site and, although very much faded from its glory days, it's still a pleasant place to stroll. A highlight is the 'tsaritsa nochi' (*Selenicereus pteranthus*), a flowering cactus which blossoms only one

night a year, usually in mid-June, when the gardens stay open until morning for visitors to gawk at the marvel.

PETER'S CABIN

A minor historical sight is St Petersburg's first residence – a **log cabin** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 232 4576; Petrovskaya nab 6; adult/child R20/10; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon; 🅓 Gorkovskaya) where Peter lived in 1703 while supervising the construction of the city. It's preserved inside a brick building in a patch of trees a short walk east of the fortress.

CRUISER AURORA

East along the river from the cabin is the **Aurora** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 230 8440; Petrovskaya nab; admission free; ☎ 10.30am-4pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun; 🅓 Gorkovskaya), a mothballed cruiser from the Russo-Japanese War, built in 1900 and now a museum that will appeal to naval enthusiasts and kids. It was from this ship that the shot marking the start of the October Revolution was fired. So hallowed was the cruiser that during WWII, the Russians sank it to protect it from German bombs.

ALEKSANDROVSKY PARK & AROUND

Don't come to **Aleksandrovsky Park** (🅓 Gorkovskaya) looking for peace and quiet: this bustling hang-out is too close to traffic and perpetually thronged with people. If you have kids to entertain there are a couple of options here worth knowing about, though.

The **Planetarium** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 233 5653; Aleksandrovsky park 4; shows R50; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Tue-Sun) offers 50-minute star shows throughout the day and day-glow displays in Russian. Further west of here is the **Zoo** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 232 4828; www.spbzoo.ru; Aleksandrovsky park 1; adult/child R100/15; ☎ 10am-8pm May-Sep, to 4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr). The lack of funds is pitifully evident, but all things considered, it's pretty well kept and has had remarkable success in breeding polar bears in captivity.

Vyborg Side

Peter the Great had little interest in developing the far side of the Neva. Attractions here are few and far between but many of the ones that do exist are worth seeing.

HERMITAGE STORAGE FACILITY

A superb reason for dragging out to northern St Petersburg is the **Hermitage Storage**

Facility (Map p229; ☎ 344 9226; www.hermitagemuseum.com; 37A Zausadebnaya ul; adult R200; ☎ tours at 11am, 1pm, 1.30pm & 3.30pm Wed-Sun; 🅓 Staraya Derevnaya). Inside the state-of-the-art complex you'll be led through a handful of rooms housing but a fraction of the museum's collection. This is not a formal exhibition as such but the guides are knowledgeable and the examples chosen for display – paintings, furniture, carriages – are wonderful. The highlight is undoubtedly the gorgeous wool and silk embroidered Turkish Ceremonial Tent presented to Catherine the Great by Sultan Selim III in 1793 (and not opened for over 200 years!). Beside it stands an equally impressive modern diplomatic gift – a massive wood carving of the mythical Garuda bird, given by Indonesia to the city for its 300th anniversary.

The Hermitage has big plans for this site; a copy of the hanging garden at the main Hermitage is being recreated outside the building and several more buildings are due to be completed here on the large plot next to the Serafimovskoye Cemetery. The storage facility is directly behind the big shopping centre opposite the metro station.

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

A short walk south from the storage facility, overlooking Yelagin Island, is the colourfully decorated **Buddhist temple** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 239 0341; Primorsky pr 91; ☎ 10am-7pm; 🅓 Staraya Derevnaya), built between 1909 and 1915 at the instigation of Pyotr Badmaev, a Buddhist physician to Tsar Nicholas II. Like many other religious buildings it was closed during the Communist period; however, the damage was not particularly profound and the *datsan* was returned to the city's small Gelugpa, or Yellow Hat, Buddhist community in 1990. Visitors are welcome, although it's best to avoid service times (10am). There's a small Buryat café downstairs.

SAMPSONIEVSKY CATHEDRAL

Brightening up the drab industrial area of Vyborg Side, is this delightful pea-green baroque **cathedral** (Map p229; ☎ 315 4361; http://eng.cathedral.ru/sampsonievsky; 41 Bolshaya Sampsonievsky pr; adult/concession R200/100; ☎ 11am-6pm Thu-Tue; 🅓 Vyborgskaya) dating from 1740. Catherine the Great is believed to have married her one-eyed lover Grigory Potemkin here in 1774 in a secret ceremony attended by just a couple of other people.

The church's most interesting feature is the calendar of saints, two enormous panels on either side of the nave, each representing six months of the year with every day decorated by a mini-icon of its saint(s). The enormous silver chandelier above the altar is also something to behold, as is the stunning baroque, green and golden iconostasis.

KRETTY PRISON

A sobering antidote to St Petersburg's high culture is a visit to its dark underbelly: **Kresty Prison** (Map p229; ☎ 542 6861; www.kresty.ru in Russian; Arsenalnaya nab 7; admission R250; ☎ tours 10.30am, noon, 1.30pm & 3pm Sat & Sun; 🕒 M) Ploshchad Lenina). This deathly grim place is the city's main holding prison. Opened in 1892 with 1150 individual cells (later reconstructed and designed to hold 2065 inmates), these days close to 10,000 poor buggers are incarcerated here. Six-bed cells hold 10 to 15 people, sleeping in rotation. Tuberculosis is rife, fleas abound, and there are masked guards with ferocious dogs policing the halls.

Certainly not to everyone's taste, tours are possible of the prison and its intriguing little museum. Here the guide will tell you about past residents – such as Trotsky and the entire Provisional Government from 1917 – and you can view objects made by prisoners with lots of time on their hands. Most impressive is a chess set with a 'cops and robbers' motif made entirely from glazed bits of hardened, chewed bread. To gain entry you'll need your passport; photography is strictly forbidden.

PISKARYOVSKOE CEMETERY

Some half-million WWII victims are buried in mass graves in the **Piskaryovskoe Cemetery** (Map p229; ☎ 247 5716; Nepokoryonnikh pr; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm; 🕒 M) Ploshchad Muzhestva). Nearly 200 raised mounds are marked only by simple plaques engraved with a year and either a red star or hammer and sickle (indicating a military or civilian grave mound). At the entrance is an exhibit of photographs from the blockade that need no captions. The cemetery is about 35 minutes from the city centre on public transport. From the metro turn left, cross Nepokoryonnykh pr and take bus 123. It's the sixth stop.

Southern St Petersburg

Stalin wanted to relocate the city centre to the south and you can see some of the grand Soviet master plan along Moskovsky pr. Elsewhere, dotted around southern St Petersburg, are a few other worthwhile attractions.

MONUMENT TO THE HEROIC DEFENDERS OF LENINGRAD

On the way to or from the airport you won't miss the awe-inspiring **Monument to the Heroic Defenders of Leningrad** (Map p229; ☎ 293 6036; pl Pobedy; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm Thu–Tue; 🕒 M) Moskovskaya). Centred around a 48m-high obelisk, the monument is a sculptural ensemble of bronze statues symbolising the heavy plight of defence, and eventual victory.

On a lower level, a bronze ring 40m in diameter symbolises the city's encirclement. Haunting symphonic music creates a sombre atmosphere to guide you downstairs to the underground exhibition in a huge, mausoleum-like interior, where 900 bronze lamps create an eeriness matched by the sound of a metronome – the only sound heard by Leningraders on their radios throughout the war save for emergency announcements. Twelve thematically assembled showcases feature items from the war and Blockade. Ask to see the two seven-minute documentary films, played on large screens at the touch of a button.

RAILWAY MUSEUM

Trainspotters should hasten to view the impressive collection of full-sized locomotives at the **Railway Museum** (Map p229; ☎ 768 2063; nab Obvodnogo Kanala; adult/student R100/50; ☎ 10am–6pm; 🕒 M) Baltiyskaya) behind the old Warsaw Station. Some 75 nicely painted and buffed engines and carriages are on display, including one dating from 1897.

CHESMA CHURCH

East off Moskovsky pr is the striking red-and-white 18th-century Gothic **Chesma Church** (Map p229; ☎ 443 6114; ul Lensovetta 12; admission free; ☎ 10am–7pm; 🕒 M) Moskovskaya) built from 1774 to 1780 in honour of Russia's victory over the Turks at the Battle of Çesme (1770). Its relatively remote location is due to the fact that Catherine the Great was on this spot when news arrived of the victory, so that's where she ordered the church to be built.

MOSKOVSKY PROSEKT

This long avenue, heading due south from Sennaya ploshchad to the airport, is the start of the main road to Moscow. Along it you'll find the iron **Moscow Triumphal Arch** (Map p229; 🕒 M) Moskovskiy Vorota), built in 1838 to mark victories over Turks, Persians and Poles, demolished in 1936 then rebuilt from 1959 to 1960.

Further south is **Moskovskaya ploshchad**, with its statue of Lenin and imposing **House of Soviets** (Map p229; 🕒 M) Moskovskaya), which was intended under a 1930s plan to become the new centre of St Petersburg, replacing the old tsarist centre. In a testament to the stubbornness of St Petersburgers during Stalin's terror, this plan was universally ignored.

ACTIVITIES Banya

Tired? Frustrated by Russian bureaucracy? A good beating may be all you need – or all you need to give! Here are a few of the better *bani* (bathhouses; see p71 for correct *banya* etiquette):

Bani 43 (Map pp236-7; ☎ 571 7041; nab reki Moyki 82; 🕒 M) Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) Book this whole place out for R500 per hour at any time. The friendly guys who run it can arrange massages (R150) and will get you beer. A Russian and expat crowd often meets here on Sunday around 9.30pm.

Kruglye Bani (Map p229; ☎ 247 6409; Karbysheva ul 29A; lyux-class R140; ☎ 8am–9pm Tue–Sun; 🕒 M) Ploshchad Muzhestva) One of the city's best baths with a heated circular open-air pool. Expats meet here at 9pm Wednesday and enjoy a unisex *lyux banya*. The *banya* is opposite the metro; look for the round building across the grassy traffic island.

Mitninskaya Banya (Map pp234-5; ☎ 274 5455; ul Mytninskaya 17-19; admission R35-70; ☎ 8am–10pm Fri–Tue, last entry 8.30pm; 🕒 M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya) The last *banya* in the city to be heated with a wood furnace, just like in the countryside. You'll see lots of tattooed bodies here.

Boating, Yachting & Kayaking

Rowboats can be rented (around R150 per hour) on Yelagin Island near the bridge to the Vyborg Side. For more serious sailing contact:

Baltic Shipping Company Yacht Club (Map pp238-9; ☎ 235 3935; nab Martynova 92, Krestovskiy Ostrov Island; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri; 🕒 M) Krestovskiy Ostrov) Arranges tours to Lakes Onega and Ladoga.

Sea and River Yacht Club (Map pp238-9; ☎ 235 0111; nab Martynova 92, Krestovskiy Ostrov Island; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri; 🕒 M) Krestovskiy Ostrov) Come here to rent boats from private captains.

Solnechny Parus (Map pp234-5; ☎ 327 3526; www.solpar.ru; ul Vosstaniya 55; ☎ 10am–8pm Mon–Fri, to 6pm Sat; 🕒 M) Chernyshevskaya) Agency that organises yacht cruises in the Gulf of Finland.

Kayaking on Lake Ladoga can also be arranged through the friendly guys at **Wild Russia** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 313 8030; www.wildrussia.spb.ru; nab reki Fontanki 59; 🕒 M) Gostiny Dvor). They can also arrange **rock climbing** trips outside of the city.

Cycling & In-line Skating

Pancake-flat St Petersburg is a great city for cycling around (as long as you avoid the major traffic-choked roads). A good website with information on cycling events in the city is www.velopiter.spb.ru (in Russian). In-line skating is also popular; you'll often find yourself dodging young things skating down Nevsky pr and across Dvortsovaya pl. Below are listed places to rent both bikes and skates: remember to take along your passport and a sizeable chunk of roubles (around R600) for a deposit.

Jet Set (Map pp238-9; ☎ 973 2145; Pirmorsky Park Pobedy, Morskoy pr, Krestovskiy Ostrov; bike rental per hr R150, per day R700, in-line skate rental per hr R100; ☎ 11am–11pm Mon–Fri, 10am–11pm Sat & Sun; 🕒 M) Krestovskiy Ostrov) Also rents helmets, pads and skateboards. **Skatprokat** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 8-90130 24112; www.skatprokat.ru; Gonchamnaya ul 7); rental per day R300; ☎ 24hr; 🕒 M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya) They also have scooters for rent at R200 per hour.

Diving

Red Shark Dive Club (Map pp234-5; ☎ 710 2795; www.redshark.spb.ru; 5-ya Sovetskaya ul 3/13; 🕒 M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Offers PADI diving courses in English and can arrange wreck dives for more experienced divers in the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga.

Gyms & Swimming Pools

Planet Fitness (Map pp236-7; ☎ 315 6220; Kazanskaya ul 37; entry R510, 2-week pass R2400; ☎ 7am–11pm Mon–Fri, 9am–9pm Sat & Sun; 🕒 M) Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) The cheapest and most central branch of St Petersburg's first big gym chain with eight locations citywide. **Sports Complex** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 238 1632; Kronverksky pr 9A; per 90 min R100; ☎ 7am–11pm;

(M) Gorkovskaya). Its 25m pool, under a glass roof, is heavenly and staff will let you in without the required medical certificate if you look clean. There's also a weights room.

VMF (Map pp240-1; ☎ 322 4505; Sredny pr 87, Vasilyevsky Island; admission R200; ☎ 7am-9pm;

(M) Vasileostrovskaya) The city's largest pool.

Ice Skating

Dvoret's Sporta SKA (Map pp238-9; ☎ 237 0073; Zhdanovskaya nab 2; entry R150, skate rental per hr R60; ☎ noon-5am Fri-Sun; (M) Sportivnaya) Has both indoor and outdoor rinks.

Ice Palace (Map p229; ☎ 718 6620; www.newarena.spb.ru in Russian; pr Pyatiletok 1; per hr incl skates R200; (M) Prospekt Bolshhevikov) Fancy arena built for the 2000 World Ice Hockey Championships. Although mainly used for concerts now, it does have a public skating rink. Hours are irregular, so call for more details.

WALKING TOUR

WALK FACTS

Start St Isaac's Cathedral
Finish Krasny most
Distance 3km
Duration around two hours

The best way of experiencing St Petersburg's architectural beauty is by walking tour. This one follows a route from St Isaac's Cathedral to Palace Sq, along the loop of the Moyka River, and down the Griboedova Canal and along Gorokhovaya ul to Krasny most.

Stand in **Isaakiyevskaya ploshchad (1)** and admire the golden-domed **cathedral (2)**; p252) and the surrounding buildings, including the **Hotel Astoria (3)**; p278) and the **Mariinsky Palace (4)**; not open to the public), home of the City Legislative Council. The **bronze statue (5)** is of Nicholas I on horseback, its plinth decorated with bas reliefs and figures representing Faith, Wisdom, Justice and Might.

From the square's northeast corner walk down Malaya Morskaya ul; this area was one of the wealthiest during Imperial times, hosting many financial institutions (several banks have now returned and, at No 24 Bolshaya Morskaya, the famed jewellers **Fabergé (6)**, is now the jewellers **Yakhont** (☎ 314 6415; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 24; ☎ 10am-8pm). The writers Ivan Turgenev and Nikolai Gogol

both lived at No 17 Malaya Morskaya, and Tchaikovsky died at No 13 in 1893.

On the corner of Malaya Morskaya and Nevsky pr note **Wavelburg House (7)**, a highly decorative greystone building designed after both the Doge's Palace in Venice and Florence's Palazzo Medici-Riccardi. The building is now occupied by the Central Airline Ticket Office. Cross Nevsky pr here, walk 50m east and turn left (north) at Bolshaya Morskaya ul. On the way keep an eye out for the wall of the school at **No 14 (8)** bearing a blue-and-white stencilled sign in Cyrillic maintained since WWII. It translates as 'Citizens! At times of artillery bombardment this side of the street is most dangerous!'

The most perfect way of seeing **Dvorts-ovaya ploshchad (9)**; p251) for the first time is to approach it via Bolshaya Morskaya ul. As you turn the corner, behold the **Alexander Column (10)**; p251), with the **Hermitage (11)**; p244) in the background, perfectly framed under the triumphal double arch of the **General Staff Building (12)**; p251). Continue walking towards the square, keeping your eyes fixed on the columns and enjoy the visual magic tricks as the perspective changes the closer you get to the arches' opening.

Head northeast across the square to Millionnaya ul, and into the **porch (13)** covering the south entrance of the New Hermitage and supported by semiclad musclemen. This was the museum's first public entrance when it opened in 1852. A favourite tourist shot is from here looking west towards St Isaac's Cathedral past the Winter Palace – you can usually fit in a few of the Atlantes, or at least a calf or two.

Walking northeast again, take the first right turn and walk along the **Zimny Canal (14)** the short block to the Moyka River (glance behind you towards the Neva for another great view). This stretch of the Moyka is lovely: cross to the east bank by the Pevchesky most and admire the views as you walk past **Pushkin's last home (15)**; p257), where the poet died in 1837.

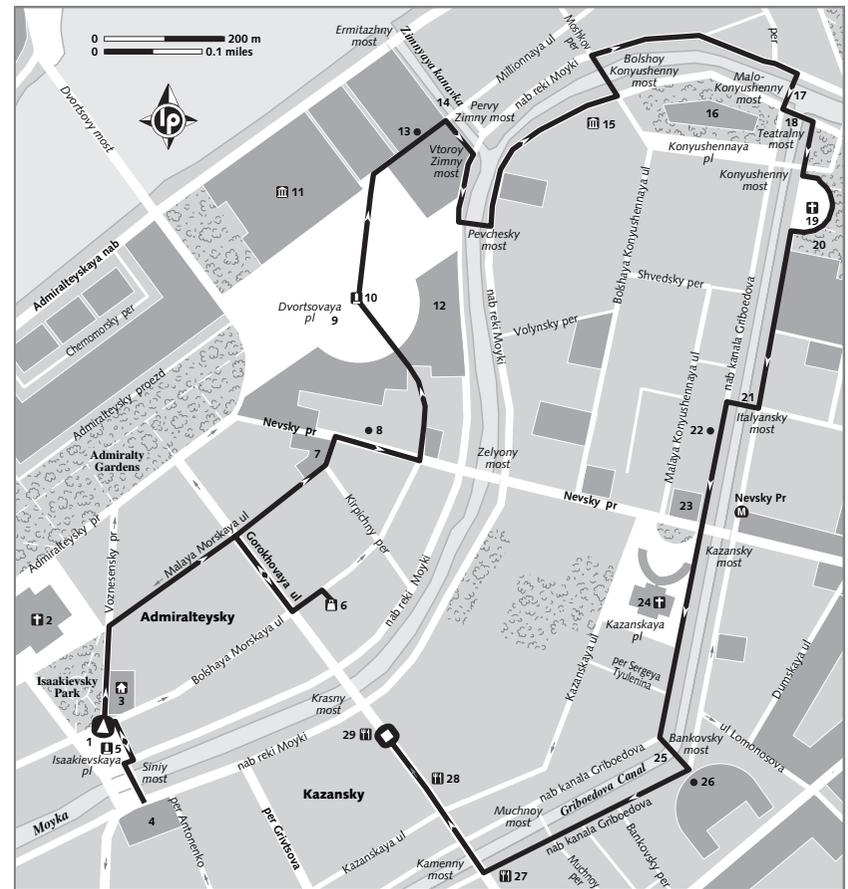
Cross the river again and head east beside the water; on the opposite bank you'll see what used to be the **Court Stables (16)**; not open to the public), dating from Peter the Great's time but rebuilt in the early 19th century. One of imperial St Petersburg's flashiest streets, Bolshaya Konyushennaya ul (Big Stables St) extends south from here.

Continue along the river until you come to a very picturesque ensemble of bridges where the Moyka intersects at right angles with the start of the Griboedova Canal. While crossing over the **Malo-Konyushenny most (17)** and the pretty **Teatralny most (18)**, you'll see the **Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood (19)**; p252) across the top of the touristy souvenir kiosk canopies. Head towards the church.

Having run the gauntlet of the souvenir sellers, circle the church; on your left will be the striking Style Moderne wrought-iron fence of the **Mikhailovskiy Gardens (20)**. Walk south along Griboedova Canal until you reach the sweet footbridge that crosses it. Called the **Italyansky most (21)**, it dates from 1896, but was redesigned in 1955. Its main

purpose seems to be to afford photographers a postcard-perfect view of the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood. Note the amazing building on the west side of the street at No 13. Originally the **House of the Joint Credit Society (22)**; not open to the public) and built in 1890, its central cupola was placed to give the appearance of a grand palace.

Continue down to Nevsky pr, where the Style Moderne **Singer Building (23)**; p255) stands regally on the corner. Opposite admire the grand sweep of the **Kazan Cathedral (24)**; p255), cross Nevsky pr and head south along the Griboedova Canal to the next bridge, no doubt St Petersburg's most picturesque and most photographed, the **Bankovskiy most (25)**. The bridge is named after the



building behind, formerly the Assignment Bank now the **University of Economics (26)**.

If you're feeling peckish at this point continue along the canal past the wrought-iron footbridge Muchnoy most to the Kamenny most around which there are several great eating or drinking options, including the Armenian restaurant **Kilikia (27)**; p282) or, slightly to the northwest along Gorokhovaya ul, **Zoom Café (28)**; p282) and **Fasol (29)**; p278).

COURSES

See the *St Petersburg Times* for private tutor and language class ads.

Herzen State Pedagogical University (Map pp230-1; ☎ 311 6088; www.herzen.spb.ru; nab reki Moyki 48; 📄 Nevsky Prospekt) Runs excellent Russian-language courses, from two weeks to graduate programs several years long, 20 hours per week, from US\$4 to US\$7 an hour in groups of two to eight.

Liden & Denz (Map pp234-5; ☎ 325 2241; www.lidenz.ru; Transportny per 11; 📄 Ligovsky Prospekt) Offers well-structured language courses from US\$650 for a two-week intensive program.

ST PETERSBURG FOR CHILDREN

There's heaps to do with kids in St Petersburg – there are even museums your kids will like! For starters, **Museum of Anthropology & Ethnography** (p263) is an all-time favourite with its display of mutants in jars, as is the **Museum of Zoology** (p264) for its stuffed animals. For live animals there's the **Zoo** (p267) and a popular **Dolphinarium** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 235 4631; Konstantinovsky pr 19, Krestovsky Ostrov; admission R50; 📄 shows at 3pm, 5pm & 7pm Wed-Fri; extra 11am & 1pm shows Sat & Sun; 📄 Krestovsky Ostrov).

The city's parks are first rate and many have kids' playgrounds with swings, roundabouts and climbing frames: check out the **Tauride Gardens** (p260) and the **Mikhaylovsky Gardens** (p252). **Ramses Playground** (Map p229; ul Ziny Portnovoy; 📄 Leninsky Prospekt) between houses No 6 and 8 was created by retired circus clown Arkady Kontsepolsky (it's named after his beloved dog Ramses) and is a charming, inventive place that any child will love. For more high-tech amusements there's always the **Divo Ostrov** amusement park (p266) on Krestovsky Island. If you need the little darlings to burn off even more energy check out the boat, bicycle and in-line skate hiring opportunities listed on p269.

Theatres in town catering to kids include a couple offering **puppet shows** and,

of course, the **circus** (p287). And if you're looking for a fun and inexpensive place for a meal, consider **Bushe** (p282), where they decorate bliny in the shape of faces.

TOURS

There's nobody better than Peter Kozyrev or his band of knowledgeable and spritely guides, **Peter's Tours** (www.peterswalk.com), to help show you the city. Their standard walking tour (R400) departs from the HI St Petersburg Hostel (see p275) at 10.30am daily. He also offers lots of cool itineraries, around themes such as Dostoevsky, Rasputin, the Great October Revolution, and food, not to mention the ever-popular White Nights pub crawl, all in English. Customised tours kick off at R800 per hour for up to four people during May to November. Also consider using him for guided tours out to the Imperial Palaces or to arrange transport and airport transfers.

Edlectica (Map pp230-1; ☎ 710 5942; www.edlectica.spb.ru in Russian; Office 4, 5th fl, Nevsky pr 44; 📄 Nevsky Prospekt) has booths outside Gostiny Dvor, which sell tickets for English-language tours around the city and to major sights outside the city such as Petrodvorets and Tsarskoe Selo.

Monomex Tours (Map pp234-5; ☎ 445 0159; www.2russia.com; Zanevsky pr 1; 📄 Zanevskaya Plushchad) offers exotic sociological tours, including ones entitled Russian Child Rearing Practices and Police Enforcement, while **Ost-West Kontaktservice** (p243) can arrange more standard tours of the city and surroundings sights.

Helicopter Tours

Baltic Airlines (Map pp230-1; ☎ 704 1676; www.balticairlines.ru/en/; 2nd fl, Nevsky pr 7/4; 10-15 min R1000; 📄 Nevsky Prospekt) offers helicopter flights over the Neva between the Admiralty and Smolny, which take off at regular intervals from in front of the Peter & Paul Fortress every weekend from May to October. They also fly three times a day on weekends to Petrodvorets (p295) and back (R1000 one-way). You can also arrange a tandem parachute jump with the same company for R5000.

River & Canal Trips

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 ways to do this. First up there are four fixed route hourly hop-on, hop-off cruises on large **water buses** (tickets R200; 📄 11am-7pm). The routes are:

Line A (Map p265; 55 min) Peter & Paul Fortress, Kunstkamera, the Admiralty Pier, Summer Gardens, Mikhaylovsky Gardens, Pushkin Flat Museum on the Moyka, Peter & Paul Fortress.

Line B (Map pp230-1; 90 min) Kazansky most, Mikhaylovsky Gardens, Anichkov Palace, Lomonosova Plushchad, St Nicholas Cathedral of the Epiphany, Sennaya Plushchad, Bankovsky most, Kazansky most.

Line C (Map pp230-1; 80 min) Stroganov Palace, Dvortsovaya Plushchad, Mikhaylovsky Gardens, Lomonosova Plushchad, Yusupov Palace, St Isaac's Cathedral, Stroganov Palace.

Line D (Map pp230-1; 90 min) Admiralty Pier, Hotel Okhtinskaya, Hotel St Petersburg, Peter & Paul Fortress, Admiralty Pier.

A fifth route runs on weekends only between the Admiralty and Yelagin Island.

In addition there are many private operators of smaller **cruse boats** (from around R150 for 40 minutes) – these boats are typically found at the Anichkov most landing on the Fontanka River, just off Nevsky pr; on the Neva outside the Hermitage and the Admiralty; beside the Kazansky most over the Griboedova Canal; and along the Moyka River at Nevsky pr. At the same places you'll find moored 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

Petersburgers, even more than their famously festive fellow countrymen, love a good knees-up. Whether it be through the carnival atmosphere of those endless summer nights or merrymaking during the freezing, dark winter days, rarely more than a week or two passes without special events taking place. See p707 for general Russian holidays.

February

Mariinsky Ballet Festival (www.mariinsky.ru) The city's principal dance theatre (p287) hosts this week-long international festival, usually in mid- to late-February.

April

Sergei Kuryokhin International Festival (SKIF) Three-day avant-garde festival in late April bringing

together an array of international figures of alternative modern music and performance. Named after the eclectic Russian musician Sergei Kuryokhin, a key part of the Leningrad rock and jazz underground of the 1970s who died in 1996.

Easter (Paskha) Head to Kazan Cathedral (p255) to see Russia's most important religious festival in full Russian Orthodox style.

May

International Labour Day/Spring Festival The vast Soviet era parades down Nevsky pr to Dvortsovaya pl may now be smaller and more subdued, but they still happen and 1 May remains a time for communist demonstrations and merrymaking.

Victory Day (1945) On 9 May St Petersburg celebrates not only the end of WWII but also the breaking of the Nazi blockade. The highlight is a victory parade on Nevsky pr, culminating in soldiers marching on Dvortsovaya pl and fireworks over the Neva in the evening.

City Day Mass celebrations and merrymaking are held throughout St Petersburg on 27 May, the city's official birthday.

June

KlezFest Mid-June music festival celebrating Klezmer, or Eastern European Jewish folk music with a busy programme of concerts, walking tours about Jewish history and lectures.

Beer Festival One of the city's best-attended festivals, for unsurprising reasons, held annually in mid-June in the Peter and Paul Fortress.

Festival of Festivals (www.filmfest.ru) Annual international film festival held in late June that's a noncompetitive showcase of the best Russian and world cinema.

Stars of the White Nights Festival Held at the Mariinsky, the Conservatoire and the Hermitage Theatre, this festival from late May until July has become a huge draw and now lasts far longer than the White Nights (officially the last 10 days of June) after which it is named.

August

Sailing Week Hundreds of competitors take part in a 150km race from Vyborg to St Petersburg in late August, part of a regatta founded by the sailing union of the city on the Neva in 1898.

September & October

Early Music Festival (www.earlymusic.ru) Held from mid-September until early October, this groundbreaking musical festival includes performances of forgotten masterpieces from the age of Catherine the Great, including operas and performances from the Catherine the Great opera.

GAY & LESBIAN ST PETERSBURG

There's a small but reasonably vibrant gay scene in St Petersburg, including Russia's only lesbian club **Tri El** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 710 2016; 5-ya Sovetskaya ul 45; admission R150 Wed, Fri & Sat; ☎ 6pm-midnight Mon & Tue, Wed 9pm-6am Wed, 7pm-midnight Thu, 10pm-6am Fri & Sat; 📺 Ploshchad Vosstaniya). Tri El allows only men in on Thursday and Fridays; a mixed crowd is welcome at all other gay venues.

The main club remains the sleazy but fun **Greshniki** (Sinners; Map pp230-1; ☎ 570 4291; www.greshniki.ru in Russian; nab kanala Griboedova 29; cover for men free-R200, women R200-500; ☎ 6pm-6am; 📺 Nevsky Prospekt), with its leather and chains décor, male strippers and drag queens. Late night male strip shows also feature on the bill at club Ty v Teme?! at **Objekt** (Map pp236-7; ☎ 921 791 3012; nab reki Moyki 82; admission R150; ☎ 10pm-6am Sun & Tue; 📺 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad), which attracts a glam, gay-friendly crowd. For a more intimate bar head to tiny **Mono** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 3678; www.monoclub.ru; Kolomenskaya ul 4; cover for men R50-100, women R200; ☎ 10pm-6am), a friendly, pleasantly decorated place with reasonably priced drinks. Thursday is for women when the cover prices are reversed.

Useful sources of information on the gay scene include the rather earnest **Krilija** (Wings; ☎ 312 3180; www.krilija.sp.ru/3eng.htm), Russia's oldest officially registered gay and lesbian community organisation; the website **Excess** (www.xs.gay.ru/english/) which has a link to the gay tour agency **Discover Gay St Petersburg** (www.discovergaypetersburg.com/eng.shtml), who promise, among other things, tours taking in the homoerotic art of the Hermitage!

December

Russian Winter Festival Tourist-oriented troika rides, folklore shows, games held outside of the city from 25 December to 5 January.

Arts Square Winter Festival (www.artsquarewinterfest.ru) A musical highlight of the year, this festival, held late December to early January at the Philharmonic (p286), takes different themes each year, and stages both classical and contemporary opera and orchestral works.

SLEEPING

In the last few years 'minihotels' (basically small, often family run, B&B operations offering anything from three to 30 rooms) have practically taken over central St Petersburg. Many of these minihotels, pleasant as they are compared to the drab Soviet megahotels of yesteryear, are interchangeable and, frankly, overpriced for what they offer: we list the best ones we found, but there are sure to be more by the time this guide is published.

There are also quite a few new hostels which is great for the budget traveller since St Petersburg remains an expensive city in which to bed down, particularly at the height of the summer. For this reason we've also included brief details of the best out-of-centre and Soviet hotels (ie the ones that have seen some smartening of rooms and management attitudes): when the city gets really packed these may be your only option. Many are also favoured by package

tour operators. Also consider home stays and apartment rentals: the latter can work out as the best deal for groups of travellers sharing or families.

Hotel bills in St Petersburg are always paid in roubles but prices can be listed in roubles, US dollars, euros and sometimes 'units' which is whatever exchange rate the hotel feels like charging. The prices listed here reflect this and are all for highseason (always June, often May and July, too). Note that all the top-end accommodation prices exclude the standard 18% VAT. Out-of-season rates at all hotels can tumble, sometimes by up to half what is quoted here.

The most convenient area to stay for all the major sights is the historic centre, but options around Liteyny pr and the Vladimirskaaya and Ploshchad Vosstaniya metro stations are also well located. Smolny is a much quieter and less convenient neighbourhood.

West of the historic centre, Mariinsky and Sennaya have some appealing options. Vasilyevsky Island, Vyborg Side and Southern St Petersburg are all less convenient for the main sights but are quieter places to stay if that's what you're looking for.

Homestays & Apartment Rentals

These agencies can arrange apartment rentals:

City Realty (Map pp236-7; ☎ 312 7842; www.cityrealtyrussia.com; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 35; 📺 Nevsky

Prospekt) Has a good range of short- and long-term rental apartments, and can help you buy a place should you really like the city.

Host Families Association (HofA; Map pp234-5; ☎ /fax 275 1992; http://webcenter.ru/~hofa; ul Tavricheskaya 5/25; 📺 Ploshchad Vosstaniya) The most established and reliable agency for private accommodation. Its homestays start with basic B&B (s/d from US\$25/40).

Nevsky Prostor (Map pp240-1; ☎ 325 3838; www.spb-estate.com/eng/; 5th fl Galerny proezd 3, Vasilyevsky Island; 📺 Primorskaya) Has a great website that can help you locate the ideal apartment.

Ost-West Kontaktservice (p243) This agency also arranges homestays and apartment rentals from about US\$50 a day.

Budget

HISTORIC CENTRE

Nord Hostel (Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 0342; www.nordhostel.com; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 10; dm/d with breakfast €24/48; 📺 ; 📺 Nevsky Prospekt) Located just seconds from Dvortsovaya pl this is an ideal budget base for exploring the city. The spacious dorms in this elegant old building have newish Ikea fittings (one even has a piano!). Other pluses include free Internet and international calls. On the downside they are bad at answering the phone, so best to book in advance via the Web.

Nauka (Map pp230-1; ☎ 315 3368; Millionnaya ul 27; s €20-30, d €25-40, tr/q €20/26; 📺 Nevsky Prospekt) A minute's walk from the Winter Palace, this Soviet hotel is superb value. Rooms are basic with clean, shared facilities (there's a R25 charge for a shower). Enter via the courtyard and take the ancient lift to the 3rd floor. Bookings are recommended and no English is spoken.

Herzen University Hotel (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 7472; hotel@herzen.spb.ru; Kazanskaya ul 6; s/d R1600/2300; 📺 ; 📺 Nevsky Prospekt) This hotel has a great location behind Kazan Cathedral. The old-fashioned rooms, with TV and fridge, are fine, but the hotel cannot register your visa, so you'll have to find an alternative way of doing this. Availability is tight, especially in summer, so make a reservation, for which there will be a 25% extra charge for the first night.

LITEYNY, SMOLNY, VLADIMIRSKAYA & VOSTANNIYA

Russian Room (Map pp234-5; ☎ 900 9928; www.russianroom.org; Apt 32, Vilensky per 5; dm/d with breakfast €15/35; 📺 ; 📺 Ploshchad Vosstaniya) This branch

is the main location of the two belonging to Russian Room (the other, which is open in summer only, is at ul Pestelya 13/15). Russian Room gives budget travellers a chance to experience life in a cosy Russian apartment. The manager Andrei is very friendly. You'll need to make a booking; they can also arrange visa invitations for €22 and registration for €10.

Sleep Cheap (Map pp234-5; ☎ 715 1304; www.sleepcheap.spb.ru; Mokhovaya ul 18/32; dm €19; 📺 ; 📺 Chernyshevskaya) The eight-bed dorms at this minihotel are spotlessly clean and all facilities are modern and in good condition. Airport pick-up is just €10 per person – a great deal if there's one of you, but less so if there's more.

Hotel California (Map pp234-5; ☎ 901 301 6061; www.hotelcalifornia.ru; Apt 36, ul Marata 67/17; dm with breakfast from €16; 📺 ; 📺 Vladimirskaaya) The entrance to this well-equipped, comfortable new hostel is actually through the courtyard on Sotsialisticheskaya ul. It's run by some of the musicians from local band Dva Samoliota and promises to be a lively place to stay, with visiting musos given preference.

HI St Petersburg International Hostel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 329 8018; www.rjh.ru; 3-ya Sovetskaya ul 28; dm/d with breakfast US\$23/56; 📺 ; 📺 Ploshchad Vosstaniya) St Petersburg's longest-running hostel remains popular. The clean, simply furnished dorms have three to six beds and there's one double; all rates are slightly cheaper from November to March and for ISIC and HI cardholders. It's just a five-minute walk northeast of Moskovsky vokzal. There's also a kitchen for self-catering and a video room. Note they don't accept credit card payment in the hostel.

St Petersburg Puppet Hostel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 272 5401; www.hostelling-russia.ru; ul Nekrasova 12; dm/d with breakfast US\$21/52; 📺 ; 📺 Mayakovskaya) This is a great budget option if you can get a bed. It's also an ideal choice if you're travelling with kids because it gives free tickets to the puppet theatre next door.

Zimmer Frei (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 0867; www.zimmer.ru; Apt 23, Liteyny pr 46; s & d €18; 📺 Mayakovskaya) Enter this curious apartment hotel from the unmarked black door on Liteyny pr. Basic, but very good value, the seven rooms sleep two to four people and share toilet and kitchen facilities. It feels more like an apartment than a hotel.

Also recommended are these two Soviet old-timers:

Hotel Mercury (Map pp234-5; ☎ 325 6444; fax 576 7977; Tavricheskaya ul 39; s/d with breakfast R1920/2340; ☎ Chernyshevskaya)

Hotel Neva (Map pp234-5; ☎ 278 0500; www.nevahotel.spb.ru; ul Chaykovskogo 17; s/d with breakfast, unmodernised rooms R1700/2400, modernised rooms R2200/3200; ☎ Chernyshevskaya)

MARIINSKY & SENNAYA

Hostel Na Sadovoy (Map pp236-7; ☎ 314 8357; www.budget-travel.spb.ru; Sadovaya ul 53; dm/d with breakfast \$22/55; ☎ ☎; ☎ Sadovaya/Sennaya Plushchad) Run by the ex manager of the HI St Petersburg Hostel this new hostel on the 4th floor of the Na Sadovoy Hotel is a welcome addition to the backpacker scene. It has clean four-bed dorms, a good location and clued-up English-speaking staff.

Domik v Kolonne (Map pp236-7; ☎ 710 8351; www.colonna.nm.ru; nab kanala Griboedova 174A; s/d without bath-room €20/25, s/d €40/45; ☎ Sadovaya/Sennaya Plushchad) Pushkin's family once rented rooms in this house, and the atmosphere of a large flat remains. Rooms, some with lovely views across the canal, have a homely Russian feel.

VASILYEVSKY ISLAND, VYBORG SIDE & SOUTHERN ST PETERSBURG

Petrovskogo College Student Hostel (Map p229; ☎ 252 7563; vassina@mail.wplus.net; Baltiyskaya ul 26; s/d/tr R300/600/900; ☎ Narvskaya) While not close to the centre, this is certainly the cheapest accommodation deal in town. The shared showers and toilets are OK and there's a cafeteria. Reserve in advance though, as it's often full. From the metro walk south down pr Stachek away from the Narva Triumphal Gates to Baltiyskaya ul, where you turn left and continue another 500m.

Midrange

HISTORIC CENTRE

Rachmaninow Antique-Hotel (Map pp230-1; ☎ 327 7466; www.kazansky5.com; Kazanskaya ul 5, 3rd fl; s & d with breakfast from US\$170; ☎ ☎; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt) A boho crowd hang out at this super stylish minihotel, where minimalist décor is offset by antiques. There are contemporary photography and painting displays throughout the premises.

Pushka Inn (Map pp230-1; ☎ 312 0957; www.pushkainn.ru; nab reki Moyki 14; s/d/apt with breakfast from €100/160/200; ☎ ☎; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt) Modern

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

A dramatically lit stairwell leads up to the ultradiscreet and stylish minihotel **Casa Leto** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 6622; www.casaletto.com; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 34; s/d with breakfast €160/225; ☎ ☎; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt). 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 upper floors of the building. The Anglo-Italian owners are very friendly and the rates also include Internet access and light refreshments through the day.

furnished rooms and apartments, some overlooking one of the city's prettiest stretches of canal. There's 20% off the menu for guests at its popular café-bar. Their spacious, well-equipped apartments are a great deal.

Polikoff Hotel (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 7925; www.polikoff.ru; Nevsky pr 64/11; s/d with breakfast 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 Hotel is worth hunting out for its rooms brimming with contemporary cool décor, quiet but central location and pleasant service.

Hotels on Nevsky Association (☎ 703 3860; www.hon.ru; s/d incl breakfast from €120/140; ☎ ☎); **Deluxe** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 7033860; Bolshaya Konushennaya ul 14; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt); **Nevsky pr 22** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 312 1206; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt); **Nevsky pr 90** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 7314; ☎ Mayakovskaya); **Nevsky pr 91** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 277 1888; ☎ Mayakovskaya) This excellent group of minihotels provides decent accommodation spread over four locations. Check out the website for more detailed information on each of the hotels, and apartments also managed by the same group – there are stylish touches to rooms not present in other minihotels and kitchens are available for guest use.

Korona (Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 0086; www.korona-spb.com; 2nd fl, Malaya Konushennaya ul 7; s/d/apt with breakfast from €134/174/242; ☎ ☎; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt) The lurid colour scheme of this minihotel is compensated for by its big rooms, good location and helpful staff. The apartments, of which there are three, come with minisaunas.

Turgeniev (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 4529, fax 571 5180; Bolshaya Konushennaya ul 13; s & d with breakfast from €90; ☎ Nevsky Prospekt) You must book ahead for the four very sweet rooms furnished with antiques (and no modern contraptions such as TV or telephone) at this cosy B&B tucked away in a courtyard off the street; they will meet you at the airport too.

LITEYNY, SMOLNY, VLADIMIRSKAYA & VOSTANNIYA

Arbat Nord Hotel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 703 1899; www.arbat-nord.ru; Artileriyevskaya ul 4; s/d with breakfast €185/195; ☎ ☎; ☎ Chernyshevskaya) This sleek newcomer shows its ugly Soviet neighbour the Hotel Rus, across the road, how to run a good establishment. It offers comfortable rooms, friendly English-speaking staff and a restaurant downstairs.

Brothers Karamazov (Map pp234-5; ☎ 335 1185; www.karamazovhotel.ru; Sotsialisticheskaya ul 11A; s/d with breakfast R3700/4240, prices quoted in units; ☎ ☎; ☎ Vladimirskaia) Even though the 28 uniformly large rooms at this appealing hotel are furnished in a vaguely antiques way, the overall feel is contemporary. It's professionally run and in a quiet, but handy location.

Marshal Hotel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 279 9955; www.marshal-hotel.spb.ru; Shpalernaya ul 41; d with breakfast from R3980; ☎ ☎; ☎ Chernyshevskaya) Professional service, large, modern rooms and a quiet location on the way to Smolny Cathedral are all in this hotel's favour. Dirty weekenders should request room 9 (R7950), which has a water bed!

Kristoff Hotel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 571 6643; www.kristoff.ru; Zagorodny pr 9; s/d with breakfast €110/130; ☎ ☎; ☎ Dostoevskaya) The 15 good-value rooms here are smart and modern with perks including wi-fi (€10 per day). Downstairs is a popular Russian-European restaurant which is worth a visit in its own right.

Five Corners Hotel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 380 8181; www.sugol.ru; Zagorodny pr 13; s/d with breakfast from €150/170; ☎ ☎; ☎ Dostoevskaya) This hotel's stylish rooms, decorated in warm colours and with huge beds, overlook the trendy hub of streets at the 'Five Corners' intersection. Staff are polite and efficient, rates include free Internet access and expansion is on the cards.

Vesta Hotel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 272 1322; www.vesta-hotel.spb.ru; Nevsky pr 90/92; s/d with breakfast €80/100; ☎ Mayakovskaya). Walk right back into the courtyard (which has a kid's playground

designed as a pirate ship) to find this minihotel. Rooms are nothing flash but they are friendly and clued up and it would be a good place if you have kids.

Oktyabrsky Filial (Map pp234-5; ☎ 718 1515; www.oktober-hotel.spb.ru; Ligovsky pr 43/45; s/d with breakfast R3500/5100; ☎ Plushchad Vosstaniya) Smaller, sister establishment of the Oktyabrskaya Hotel across the square, the Filial has a great location and has improved its service and room décor immeasurably since Soviet days. Book well in advance in summer as it's popular with tour groups.

Also recommended:
Oktyabrskaya Hotel (Map pp234-5; ☎ 718 1515; Ligovsky pr 10; Nevsky section s/d with breakfast from R3200/4800, Oktyabrskaya section s/d with breakfast R3800/5400; ☎ ☎; ☎ Plushchad Vosstaniya)

MARIINSKY & SENNAYA

Matisov Domik (Map pp236-7; ☎ 318 7051; www.matisov.spb.ru; nab reki Pryazhki 3/1; s/d/apt with breakfast from R2700/3900/6000, prices quoted in units; ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ Sadovaya/Sennaya Plushchad) There's a good range of rooms available at this comfortable, but somewhat remote, place a short walk west of the Mariinsky Theatre. It's a well run operation and there's also a secure courtyard for parking should you have a vehicle.

VASILYEVSKY ISLAND, VYBORG SIDE & SOUTHERN ST PETERSBURG

Prestige Hotel (Map pp240-1; ☎ 328 5338; www.prestige-hotels.com; 3-aya Liniya 52; s/d with breakfast from US\$116/141; ☎ ☎; ☎ Vasileostrovskaya) The single rooms here have double beds making this modern, light-blue-painted minihotel a good deal for a couple. The deluxe rooms have Jacuzzi baths. The English-speaking staff are very welcoming. Look for the flags outside the building.

SPB Vergaz (Map pp240-1; ☎ 327 8883; hotel@vergaz.spb.ru; 7-aya Liniya 70; s/d/apt €90/140/160; ☎ Vasileostrovskaya) Staff here are great and the rooms decent and smart. The apartment is a good deal, and includes an office and kitchen, as well as a bedroom and sitting room. All rooms have cable TV and a mini-bar and breakfast is €6.

Hotel St Petersburg (Map p229; ☎ 380 1919; www.hotel-spb.ru; Pirogovskaya nab 5/2; s/d incl breakfast unrenovated room US\$79/104, renovated room US\$110/140; ☎ Plushchad Lenina) If you are going to stay in an old Soviet dinosaur, you may as well make it this one as its rooms, both

RUSSIA'S MOST EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT

Discretely hidden at the back of the Stroganov Palace is **Russian Empire** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 2409; www.concordcatering.com; Nevsky pr 17; mains R1500; **M** Nevsky Prospekt), a place which proclaims itself to be the 'most expensive restaurant in Russia'. Well, if you throw caution and your platinum credit card to the wind in its outstanding wine cellar, then the bill will undoubtedly mount up, but otherwise it's possible to dine here without busting your travel budget. The showily opulent décor of the restaurant's intimate rooms, including Versace-designed plates to match the elaborately painted walls and copies of paintings from the Russian Museum and porcelain candlesticks from Versailles, is matched by the richness of the silver-served food; the excellent deer Stroganov (R1800) with truffle-flecked creamed potatoes was a meal on its own. The atmosphere isn't nearly as snooty as other places in town and management will keep surprising you with little treats. If you really get sloshed, for an extra US\$1000 it's possible to bunk down in a handsomely appointed suite in the very cellar where Alexander Stroganov used to hide out.

you be inspired by the cooking there's a Japanese grocery shop next door.

Imbir (Map pp234-5; ☎ 713 3215; Zagorodny pr 15; mains R200; ☎ noon-2am; **M** Dostoevskaya) Coming to you from the same people behind Fasol (p278) the effortlessly cool Imbir inventively combines ornate tsarist décor with contemporary design. It's always full of a trendy local crowd who come here for good coffee and a very reasonably priced menu.

Kafe Kat (Map pp234-5; ☎ 311 3377; Stremyanaya ul 22; mains R200; **M** Mayakovskaya) This cosy restaurant, with fake vines hanging from the ceiling, has been dishing up Georgian favourites for an age. A selection of appetisers plus the cheese bread will fill you up; also sample some of their fine Georgian wines.

Matrosskaya Tishina (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 4413; ul Marata 54/34; mains R600; **M** Ligovsky Pr) The comic book metallic-maritime design of this seafood restaurant complements the excellent menu of grilled, baked and fried fish. You can even pick which trout or perch you want to end up on your plate.

Trattoria Pompei (Map pp234-5; ☎ 571 2551; ul Rybinshteyna 15/17; mains R400-500 prices in euros; ☎ 5pm-11pm; **M** Mayakovskaya) Run by an Italian this convivial, unflashy place gets the thumbs up from expats for its great rustic Italian home-cooking plus excellent desserts. Go for the daily specials.

Caravan Saray (Map pp234-5; ☎ 272 7129; ul Nekrasova 1; mains R300; **M** Mayakovskaya) Tasty Uzbek cuisine is served here in an atmospheric Central Asian setting with a side order of belly dancing on some nights.

Bistrot Garçon (Map pp234-5; ☎ 277 2467; Nevsky pr 95; main R800-1000; ☎ 9am-1am; **M** Ploshchad

Vostnaniya) Although this bistro is like stepping into a French film set, it's saved from being too kitsch by professional service and delightful, authentic cuisine. Sometimes the atmosphere is enhanced by an accordion player and a Piaf-wannabe. Breakfast is available too.

Landskrona (Map pp234-5; ☎ 380 2001; 8th fl, Corinthia Nevskij Palace Hotel, Nevsky pr 57; mains from R400; ☎ 6pm-midnight; **M** Mayakovskaya) Dress smartly for this upmarket Mediterranean restaurant which really comes into its own in summer when its outdoor terrace seats afford panoramic views of the city.

Tres Amigos (Map pp234-5; ☎ 572-2685; ul Rubinshteyna 25; mains R250; **M** Dostoevskaya) Colourfully decorated and fun Mexican joint with all the usual dishes in place such as guacamole (R120) and beef taco salad (R230).

Propaganda Anichov most (Map pp234-5; ☎ 275 3558; nab reki Fontanki 40; mains R300; ☎ noon-3am; **M** Gostiny Dvor); Petrograd Side (Map pp238-9; ☎ 233 7042; Bolshoy pr 38/40; **M** Chkalovskaya) Constructivism is the theme of Propoganda's main casual restaurant beside the Anichov most. They do a mean burger and fries as well as some Russian dishes such as salmon-filled *pelmeni* (dumplings; R240).

MARIINSKY & SENNAYA

Zov Ilyicha (Map pp236-7; ☎ 717 8641; Kazanskaya ul 34; mains R300-400; ☎ 1pm-2am; **M** Sadovaya) With its silver busts of Lenin, racy porno videos intercut with Soviet propaganda and waitresses in saucy young Pioneer uniforms, 'Lenin's Mating Call' is hands-down the city's ultimate Soviet kitsch restaurant. Even better, the Russian food is extremely good. No under 18s admitted.

Za Stenoy (Map pp236-7; ☎ 327 0521; Teatralnaya pl 18/10; meals R400-600; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) The beautifully laid out official restaurant of the Mariinsky Theatre is tastefully decorated with props from past productions. Although there are some fancy modern Russian dishes on offer it's generally best to stick to the simpler ones, which are well executed.

Nikolai (Map pp236-7; ☎ 571 5900; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 52; mains R300; ☎ noon-9pm; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) This traditional Russian restaurant resides in an exquisite wood-panelled room in the House of Architects. It offers good-value, tasty dishes and pleasant service. Cash only.

Lechaim (Map pp236-7; ☎ 972 2774; Lermontovskiy pr 2; mains R500; ☎ noon-11pm Sun-Fri; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) Hidden away beneath the Grand Choral Synagogue (p262) it's likely you'll have this classy kosher restaurant to yourself despite it being the city's best place for traditional Jewish cooking, which is served in hearty portions.

Dvoryanskoye Gnezdo (Map pp236-7; ☎ 312 3205; ul Dekabristov 21; mains R1000; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) Set in the summer pavilion of Yusupov Palace, 'The Noble Nest' is the visiting VIP's choice, serving some of the finest Russian and European cuisine in town in an intimate, tsarist setting. Service is a little on the snooty side, though.

Nebo (Map pp236-7; ☎ 449 2488; 5th fl, PIK, Sennaya pl 2; mains R350; **M** Sennaya Ploshchad) From low grey sofas you gaze out at a splendid panorama towards the Neva. The food? Well, they do sushi of course, and other things, but who cares with a view like this? Well worth the price of an espresso (R70). Did we mention the view?

VASILYEVSKY ISLAND

Restoran (Map pp240-1; ☎ 327 8979; Tamozhenny per 2; meals R400-500; **M** Vasileostrovskaya) Chic mini-

malist décor provides an ideal setting for a well-presented range of traditional Russian dishes. There's a good table of appetisers and salads and some interesting, home-made, flavoured vodkas.

Byblos (Map pp240-1; ☎ 325 8564; Maly pr 5; mains R150-300; **M** Vasileostrovskaya) The only Lebanese place in town is worth visiting for its excellent value three-course lunch (R159), as well as in the evening for delicious meze, hummus, *kibbeh*, tabbouleh, kofta and of course hookahs (R300) and Lebanese wine.

Russky Kitsch (Map pp240-1; ☎ 325 1122; Universitetskaya nab 25; meals R300; ☎ noon-4am; **M** Vasileostrovskaya) The self-proclaimed 'period of perestroika café' raises bad taste to an ironic art that, against all odds, works. Check out Brezhnev smooching with Castro on the ceiling of the 'kissing room' and a host of other cheeky touches, including menus secreted in works by Lenin and Stalin. Most dishes (especially the salad bowl) are fine. Come for a drink and a gawp, if nothing else.

Staraya Tamozhnya (Map pp240-1; ☎ 327 8980; Tamozhenny per 1; mains R1000; **M** Vasileostrovskaya) The 'Old Customs House', one of the most consistently recommended places in town, has a delightful atmosphere with vaulted brick ceilings, live jazz, fantastic service and large portions of very well-prepared Russian and European specialities.

Swagat (Map pp240-1; ☎ 217 2111; Bolshoy pr 91; meals R400-500; **M** Vasileostrovskaya) Less conveniently located than St Petersburg's other Indian restaurants, but still worth visiting. Its north Indian cuisine, including tandoori, tikka and masala curry dishes, is authentically spicy. There's sometimes sitar music after 8pm.

PETROGRAD SIDE

Na Zdorovye (Map pp238-9; ☎ 232 4039; Bolshoy pr 13; meals R200-300; **M** Sportivnaya) Fun and colourful; a heady mix of both Soviet and Russian folk culture dictates the décor here. The food, also a combination of traditional Russian and Soviet cuisine, is imaginatively presented and tasty.

Salkhino (Map pp238-9; ☎ 232 7891; Kronverkskiy pr 25; meals R400-500; **M** Gorkovskaya) Justly popular Georgian restaurant, serving big portions of delicious food in a convivial, arty setting enlivened by the motherly service of its owners. It's worth splashing out on their quaffable Georgian wines.

TOP FIVE RUSSIAN RESTAURANTS

- Mechta Molokhovets (p279)
- Fasol (p278)
- Restoran (above)
- Na Zdorovye (right)
- Bliny Domik (p283)

Aquarel (Map pp238-9; ☎ 320 8600; Birzhevoy most, Petrograd Side; meals R600-1000; ☎ noon-6am; M) Sportivnaya) Based on a moored boat with fantastic views across the Neva to the Hermitage, this stylish place has a cheaper café on the top floor serving pasta and pizza, and a DJ in the evenings.

Russkaya Rybalka (Map pp238-9; ☎ 323 9813; 11 Yuzhnaya Doroga, Krestovsky Island; mains R600-800; M) Krestovskiy Ostrov) Worth stopping by if you're exploring Krestovskiy Island. The name means Russian fishing and that's exactly what you can do at the pools outside this operation based in a cutely designed wooden building. Its fish include trout, stertlet and other types of sturgeon.

Kafe Tbilisi (Map pp238-9; ☎ 230 9391; Sytninskaya ul 10; meals R300; M) Gorkovskaya) Behind the Sytny Market this Georgian place is a St Petersburg institution. It may be dark and Soviet-like inside, but nonetheless serves top-class food. Try the home-made cheese, and the *lavash* (flat bread) and *khachapuri* (cheese bread).

Aquarium (Map pp238-9; ☎ 326 8286; Kamennooostrovskiy pr 10; meals R600; M) Gorkovskaya) This slick upmarket Chinese restaurant is worth the expense. It serves a good range of seafood, including abalone, in a Fu Man Chu lair-like setting.

Cafes & Quick Eats

For cheap eats stroll along pedestrianised 6-ya 7-ya linii where you'll find several chain cafés and no-frills restaurants.

HISTORIC CENTRE

Zoom Café (Map pp230-1; Gorokhovaya ul 22; mains R140; ☎; M) Nevsky Prospekt) This literary-styled café has a lot of things going for it. Unfussy tasty European and Russian food (with 20% off all prices up till 4pm), wi-fi access, a very relaxed ambience, and a no-smoking zone. What are you waiting for?

BEST WORLD-CUISINE RESTAURANTS

| | | |
|------------------|------------------|---------|
| Caucasian | Yerevan | (p279) |
| Chinese | Aquarium | (above) |
| French | Bistro Garçon | (p280) |
| Greek | Taverna Olivia | (p279) |
| Indian | Tandoori Nights | (p279) |
| Italian | Trattoria Pompei | (p280) |
| Japanese | Gin-No-Taki | (p279) |
| Jewish | Lechaim | (p281) |

Chaynaya Lozhka (Map pp234-5; www.teaspoon.ru in Russian; Nevsky pr 44; mains R100; ☎ 9am-10pm; M) Gostiny Dvor) This incredibly brightly decorated, and good, fast-food café is found all over St Petersburg: check their website for a full list of locations. They do excellent bliny and salads and a wide range of loose leaf teas and infusions, hence their name which means 'golden teaspoon'.

Bushie Malaya Morskaya ul (Map pp230-1; Malaya Morskaya ul 7; snacks R20-40; ☎ 9am-10pm, Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun); ul Razyezzhaya (Map pp234-5; ul Razyezzhaya 13; snacks R20-40; ☎ 9am-10pm, Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun; M) Vladimirskaaya) A baked-goods paradise that's great for breakfast or a snack. At the Malaya Morskaya branch they also prepare bliny with funny face designs that the kids will love.

Kilikia (Map pp230-1; ☎ 327 2208; Gorokhovaya ul 26/40; mains R200-300; ☎ noon-3am; M) Nevsky Prospekt) This large yet cosy Armenian place is excellent value and serves up well-presented, delicious Caucasian and Russian dishes. It's especially popular with the large Armenian community in St Petersburg and has live music most evenings.

Herzen Institute Canteen (Map pp230-1; Herzen Institute courtyard, nab reki Moyki 48; mains R50-100; ☎ noon-6pm Mon-Sat; M) Nevsky Prospekt) This outlet caters to the students of the Herzen Institute who come here in droves at lunch. Things are basic – plastic plates and cutlery, but you'll not eat better at these prices.

Kharbin (Map pp230-1; ☎ 311 1732; nab reki Moyki 48; mains R400) This excellent Chinese restaurant shares the kitchen with the Herzen Institute Canteen next door.

Teremok (Map pp230-1; cnr Malaya Sadovaya & Italiyanskaya ul; bliny R30-100; ☎ 10am-10pm; M) Gostiny Dvor) Sprinkled all over the city, these bliny kiosks are super value and serve up great treats to which the crowds of satisfied customers milling about in the immediate vicinity can attest. You can make up your own pancake by just pointing to the fillings you want.

Ili (Map pp230-1; Nevsky pr 52; mains R100-200; ☎ 24hrs; M) Gostiny Dvor) With round the clock hours, a DJ playing at night, Internet access and a prime position on Nevsky pr, this café/bistro/bar is more of a hang out than a food destination per se. But it's all done quite stylishly and the food is OK.

Sever (Map pp230-1; Nevsky pr 44; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun; M) Gostiny Dvor) This legend-

ary cake shop, chock-full of cookies and oddly coloured pastries and cakes, also has an area for stand-up eating and drinking.

LITEYNY, SMOLNY, VLADIMIRSKAYA & VOSTANNIYA

Bliny Domik (Map pp234-5; ☎ 315 9915; Kolokolnaya ul; meals R100-200; ☎ 8am-11pm; M) Vladimirskaaya) There's more than bliny on the menu at Bliny Domik and it's all pretty good. This long-running favourite (it can get very busy – try breakfast or a late lunch to avoid the crowds) is set up like a country home but isn't too kitsch like other places and live piano music adds to the atmosphere in the evenings.

Bufof (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 7888; Pushinskaya ul 7; meals R200-300; M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya) This cosy café-bar charms with its eclectic mix of antiques and whatnots, from Indian puppets to a retro radio. They prepare loose leaf tea properly, the English-speaking owner will translate the menu for you and the food is also very tasty; try the chicken stuffed with apricot (R250).

Baltic Bread (Map pp234-5; www.baltic-bread.ru/eng; Vladimirskiy pr 19; sandwiches R40; ☎ 10am-9pm; M) Dostoevskaya) This outstanding bakery/café has a new ritzy branch in the Vladimirskiy Passazh shopping mall serving some 80 different types of baked goods; come here for an espresso (R50), cake (R30) or sandwich. Their original branch is at Grechesky pr 25 (Map pp234-5).

Olyushka & Russkye Bliny (Map pp234-5; Gagarskaya ul 13; mains R55-75; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri; M) Chernyshevskaya) The students at the nearby university quite rightly swear by these authentic canteens that hark back to the simplicity of Soviet times. Olyushka serves only *pelmeni*, all handmade, while Russkye Bliny does a fine line in melt-in-the-mouth pancakes.

Troitsky Most Zagorodny pr (Map pp234-5; Zagorodny pr 38; mains R100; ☎ 9am-11pm; M) Dostoevskaya; Kamennooostrovskiy pr (Map pp238-9; Kamennooostrovskiy pr 9/2; M) Gorkovskaya) The Zagorodny pr branch is by far the nicest of this chain of vegetarian cafés, with the Indian spiritual-style Trang Café attached and overlooking a small park. The Petrograd Side branch on Kamennooostrovskiy pr, facing the bridge after which it is named, is the original (with another branch a couple of blocks away). The mushroom lasagne is legendary.

Gauranga (Map pp234-5; Ligovsky pr 17; mains R100; ☎ noon-9pm; M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya) The cheap and decent vegetarian food at this Hare Krishna-ish place is largely inspired by Indian cooking, although there are several Russian dishes too, and Central Asian favourites such as *plov* (rice pilaf).

Marius Pub (Map pp234-5; ☎ 315 4880; ul Marata 11; mains R300; ☎ 24hr; M) Mayakovskaya) Reliable and rightly popular, Marius Pub serves hearty Russian and European pub grub at all hours, and also does a mean breakfast buffet (R300) and good value business lunch (R160).

U Tyoshchi na Blinakh Zagorodny pr (Map pp234-5; Zagorodny pr 18; mains R150; ☎ 10am-8pm; M) Vladimirskaaya; Sytninskaya ul (Map pp238-9; Sytninskaya ul 16; M) Gorkovskaya; Ligovsky pr (Map pp234-5; Ligovsky pr 25; M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya) 'Mother-in Law's pancakes' are being served up in so many locations that it's a wonder she's not dropped dead from exhaustion yet. The cafeteria-style chain is a great place to fill up quickly and cheaply.

MARIINSKY & SENNAYA

Stolle (pies R50; ☎ 8am-10pm); ul Dekabristov 33 (Map pp236-7; ul Dekabristov 33; M) Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad; ul Dekabristov 19 (Map pp236-7; ul Dekabristov 19; M) Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad; Vasilyevskiy Island (Map pp240-1; Syezdovskaya & 1-ya linii 50; M) Vasileostrovskaya; Konyushennaya per (Map pp230-1; Konyushennaya per 1/6; M) Nevsky Prospekt) This minichain of cafés bakes traditional Russian savoury and sweet pies that are so yummy we guarantee you'll be back for more. Both the ul Dekabristov branches are close to the Mariinsky, although the former is the more appealing.

Café Idiot (Map pp236-7; ☎ 315 1675; nab reki Moyki 82; meals R300; ☎ 11am-1am; ☎; M) Sennaya Ploshchad) This long-running vegetarian café popular with expats is a little overpriced, but the atmosphere is excellent – funky lamps and tables, couches to lounge on and several rooms with different ambiances (including one that's nonsmoking). An ideal place to visit for a nightcap or supper after attending the Mariinsky, as its kitchen stays open late.

Russian Vodka Museum Traktir (Map pp236-7; ☎ 312 9178; Konnogvardeyskiy bul 5; meals R200; ☎ 11am-10pm; M) Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) You don't need to be visiting the museum (p262) to eat at its simple *traktir* (tavern), which serves appetising Russian soups and dishes.

A couple of good, inexpensive Caucasian places near Sennaya pl:

Kafe Adzhika (Map pp236-7; Moskovsky pr 7; meals R150; ☎ 24hr; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad)

Sumeta (Map pp236-7; ☎ 310 2411; ul Yefimova 5; mains R100; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) Try their meat or pumpkin-filled *chudu* (large pancake; R150).

PETROGRAD SIDE

Butik (Map pp238-9; Kamennoostrovsky pr 40; meal R90; ☎ 9am-11pm; **M** Petrogradskaya) A great place for a quick snack of lunch, this appealing Subway-style sandwich operation is crying out to be franchised across the city.

Self-Catering

SUPERMARKETS

There are dozens of western-style supermarkets dotted all over the city. Some of the more central ones, all located in the basement of their respective buildings:

Lend (Map pp234-5; Vladimirsky Passazh, Vladimirsky pr 19; ☎ 24hr; **M** Dostoevskaya)

Passazh (Map pp230-1; Nevsky pr 48; ☎ 10am-10pm; **M** Gostiny Dvor)

Perekrestok (Map pp236-7; PIK, Sennaya pl 2; ☎ 24hr; **M** Sennaya Ploshchad)

MARKETS

These are fascinating venues to visit, and not only for the choice of exotic and fresh produce (the meat is so fresh that in some cases it's still being hacked off the carcass). Bargaining, even if the price is marked, is encouraged, and you'll often be beckoned to try samples of honey, cream products and pickles, with no obligation to buy. Try the following:

Kuznechny (Map pp234-5; Kuznechny per; ☎ 8am-8pm; **M** Vladimirskaaya) Best and most expensive market in town.

Maltsevsky (Map pp234-5; ul Nekrasova 52; ☎ 8am-8pm; **M** Ploshchad Vosstaniya)

Sennyoy (Map pp236-7; Moskovsky pr 4-6; ☎ 8am-8pm; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad)

Sytny (Map pp238-9; Sytninskaya pl 3/5; ☎ 8am-6pm; **M** Gorkovskaya)

DRINKING

St Petersburg is certainly not short of bars, with several of the live music venues (p286) being good places for a drink or a bite to eat earlier in the evening. If you're looking for a café, there are also plenty of appealing modern places to choose from, among them the

St Petersburg equivalent of Starbucks **Idealnaya Chashka** (www.chashka.ru; Map pp234-5; Nevsky pr 112 & 130; ☎ 9am-11pm) which has 11 other outlets around town, and the similar **Kofe Haus** (Map pp230-1; Nevsky pr 7 & Bolshaya Konyushennaya ul 13; ☎ 24hr; **M** Nevsky Prospekt). Chaynaya Lozhka (p282) serves a wonderful range of teas, while Stolle (p283) is also a convivial place for a drink, both soft and alcoholic.

Coffee & Tea Houses

The following are some of the more unique places you can get your caffeine or tea fix and several of them serve alcohol, too.

Le Goga (Map pp234-5; ul Razyezhaya 6; ☎ 11am-6am; **M** Vladimirskaaya) At the heart of the trendy 'five corners' area, this contemporary designed café-bar, does a nice line in creamy cakes and fortifying drinks with a side order of groovy atmosphere.

Café Rico (Map pp234-5; Nevsky pr 77/1, enter on Pushkinskaya ul; **M** Ploshchad Vosstaniya) The coffee is well made at this laid back café with South American-influenced décor. They also offer a wide range of coffee cocktails and snacks.

Coffee Break (Map pp230-1; nab kanala Griboedova 22; ☎ 7.30am-11pm; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) Not just a good modern café, but also an interesting art gallery infused with chill-out music. The choice of coffees, teas and other drinks is impressive.

El Barrio (Map pp230-1; Inzhenernaya ul 7; **M** Gostiny Dvor) The artfully minimalist décor and a good range of drinks, including some wines from R70 a glass, make this a pleasant place to revive or while away the evening.

James Cook Pub (Map pp230-1; Shvedsky per 2; ☎ café from 9am, pub from noon-last customer; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) There's a convivial expat-ish pub here, but the best reason for showing up is to sample their fantastic range of coffees, teas and home-baked pastries.

Untsiya (Ounce; Map pp234-5; Nevsky pr 63; ☎ 10am-10pm; **M** Mayakovskaya) Hiding behind this tea shop there's a very chic tea salon looking on to a quiet courtyard. Sample from among 100 different teas from R75 to R175 a pot.

Chayny Dom (Map pp234-5; ul Rubinshteyna 24; **M** Dostoevskaya) Laid back Oriental-style place with many teas on offer (from R80 a pot), as well as Turkish coffee, nice desserts, alcohol and hookah pipes (from R300); try one with absinthe (R1200) for a real head trip!

Tsely Mir (Whole World; Map pp240-1; 3-ya liniya 48; **M** Vasileostrovskaya) On Vasilyevsky Island, this is a tranquil place where you can lounge on cushions on the floor and choose from 120 different types of tea; a pot for two starts from R75.

Bars

Tsinik (Cynic; Map pp236-7; ☎ 312 8779; per Antonenko 4; ☎ 11am-3am Sun-Thu, 11am-6am Fri & Sat; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) Laid-back, no-frills cellar bar with a cool, student-slacker/arty crowd nursing cheap beer and famously delicious *grenki* (black bread fried in garlic). 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 pp236-7; ☎ 571 4526; pl Dekabristov 1; ☎ 24hr; **M** Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) Occupying a huge basement space in the Senat building, this long-running bar nonetheless pounds with atmosphere, offering a wide range of beers, big screen TVs, a dance floor and standard British pub grub, such as fish and chips, and Irish stew. Women get free Shampanskoye every Tuesday from 7.30pm to 10pm.

City Bar (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 1037; Millionnaya ul 10; ☎ 11am-last client; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) Fabulous St Petersburg identity Aileen presides over this popular expat place, busy every night of the week with foreigners, travellers and Russians who enjoy their company. There's a wi-fi connection for web surfers here, and a free book, DVD and video lending library.

Tinkoff (Map pp230-1; ☎ 718 55 66; www.tinkoff.ru; Kazanskaya ul 7; ☎ noon-2am; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) Set inside a gigantic, contemporary brewery, come here to sample one of eight freshly microbrewed beers, including the delicious White Unfiltered. There's also good, pricey food, including a sushi bar.

Sunduk (Map pp234-5; ☎ 272 6633; Furshtadskaya ul 42; ☎ 10am-11pm; **M** Chernyshevskaya) Cosy grotto space with good food, great atmosphere and the funkiest bathrooms in the city. There's an R80 charge for the live music (mainly jazz), which is performed nightly after 8.30pm.

Sakvoyazh Beremennoi Shpionki (Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 7819 Bolshaya Konyushennaya ul 13; ☎ noon-2am; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) In a city of bizarrely designed drinking and dining halls the 'Pregnant Spy's Suitcase' is one of the wack-

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

One of the few places where you'll find a truly mixed ethnic crowd of fun, interesting people, **Dacha** (Map pp230-1; Dumskaya ul 9; ☎ 6pm-6am; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) is an amazingly popular DJ bar, with cheap drinks and a strictly 'no house, techno or drum and bass' music policy. Jive it up to pop, punk, ska, R&B and soul inside, or take a breather with the crowds outside. The shabby chic décor, such as you may find in a many a Russian's dacha, inspired the bar's name. Convivial drunkenness is pretty much guaranteed; just remember to claim back your deposit at the end of the night on the beer mug.

iest. The food is notionally Mexican and European but you don't come here for that, more for the outlandish décor ranging from Kamasutra room to torture chamber.

Che (Map pp234-5; ☎ 277 7600; www.caféclubche.ru; Poltavskaya ul 3; ☎ 24hr; **M** Ploshchad Vosstaniya) This is where you'll find the smart set, slumped in the comfy sofas. It's one of the most Euro-trendy spaces in the city, serving good coffee, wine and snacks; there's often live jazz in the evenings and they also do a good breakfast.

Novus (Map pp230-1; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 8; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) The latest hit DJ bar is found on the 2nd floor of an otherwise anonymous bistro. Students and arty types gather to sink beers and play the Latvian table game the bar is named after.

Probka (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 4904; ul Belingskogo 5; **M** Gostiny Dvor) Small, romantic and sophisticated – what more could you ask of a wine bar that features a choice selection from around the world? Several wines are available by the glass and there's a menu of light snacks, or a more expensive Italian restaurant upstairs.

Time Out (Map pp234-5; ☎ 713 2442; ul Marata 36; ☎ 1pm-5am; **M** Vladimirskaaya) Your average sports bar, with pool table and satellite TV, but there's also a foreign book exchange, good pizza and happy hour from 5pm to 8pm.

A couple of lively, long-established Irish bars in town:

Mollie's Irish Bar (Map pp234-5; ☎ 319 9768; ul Rubinshteyna 36; **M** Dostoevskaya)

Shamrock (Map pp236-7; ☎ 570 4628; ul Dekabristov 27; 🕒 9am-2am; 🍷 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad)

ENTERTAINMENT

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

Tickets

The box offices at some of the city's largest venues, including the Mariinsky, Mussorgsky, Hermitage and Maly Theatres, charge higher foreigner's prices. It's still cheaper than what you'd pay for the same tickets purchased through a top hotel's concierge or travel agency. If you can prove that you're working or studying in Russia, you'll pay the Russian price.

If you purchase a Russian ticket and your cover is blown inside the theatre (an embarrassing experience), you'll be made to pay the difference by rabid babushkas. Scalpers usually sell last-minute tickets outside the theatre an hour before the show. These will be Russian tickets, and if they're for a sold-out show, they can go for anything up to and beyond US\$50 each. Check the ticket carefully and see that the date and seat position promised are correct – there are fakes around. See p85 for useful words to help you when buying tickets.

There are ticket-booking kiosks and offices all over the city; one of the handiest for all types of performances is the **Theatre Ticket Office** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 9385; Nevsky pr 42; 🕒 10am-9pm; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor).

Cinemas

Check out Friday's *St Petersburg Times* for full cinema listings. Movie theatres line Nevsky pr, but all of the Western films played at them are dubbed. Check out the following:

Avrora (Map pp230-1; ☎ 315 5254; www.avrora.spb.ru; Nevsky pr 60; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor) Young Dmitry Shostakovich once played piano accompaniment to silent movies here.

Dom Kino (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 0638; www.domkino.spb.ru; Karavannaya ul 12; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor) Arty Russian and foreign films, as well as some higher brow Hollywood productions screen here. This is also where the British Council holds its British Film Festival.

Mirage (Map pp238-9; ☎ 974 7448; www.mirage.ru; Bolshoy pr 35; 🍷 Petrogradskaya) Modern multiplex cinema, with restaurant and Internet café. Sometimes screens English-language movies. Watch out for pickpockets here.

Live Music BANDS

Check the websites of the following (all in Russian) for details on current gigs.

Platforma (Map pp234-5; ☎ 719 6123; www.platformaclub.ru; ul Nekrasova 40; cover R100-200; 🕒 24hr; 🍷 Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Some of St Petersburg's most interesting bands and coolest DJs play at this convivial space most evenings. Open round the clock it's also a fine place to eat or for a drink earlier in the evening when you can browse their bookstore.

Red Club (Map pp234-5; ☎ 277 1366; www.clubred.ru; Poltavskaya ul 7; cover R100-400; 🕒 7pm-6am; 🍷 Ploshchad Vosstaniya) This is a great warehouse venue, behind Moskovsky vokzal, that is a mainstay for local groups and is usually packed out for gigs.

Moloko (Map pp234-5; ☎ 274 9467; www.molokoclub.ru; Perekupny per 12; cover R50-100; 🕒 7pm-midnight Wed-Sun; 🍷 Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Everything an underground club should be – dimly lit, modestly decorated and bubbling with promise. Great bands running the gamut of genres play here, and it's one of the few places to get going earlier in the evening.

Fish Fabrique (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 4857; www.fishfabrique.spb.ru; Pushkinskaya ul 1; cover R70-150; 🕒 3pm-late; 🍷 Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Legendary bar set in the building that's the focus of the avant-garde art scene, thus attracting an interesting crowd, who give this cramped space its edge. Live bands kick up a storm at 10pm nightly. Enter through the arch at Ligovsky pr 53

Manhattan (Map pp236-7; ☎ 713 1945; www.manhattanclub.ru; nab reki Fontanki 90; cover R100-130; 🕒 2pm-5am; 🍷 Sennaya Ploshchad) Frequented by a sociable, studenty crowd, this basement space has a relaxed atmosphere, and often ear-splitting music sets from 8pm onwards.

Money Honey Saloon & City Club (Map pp230-1; ☎ 310 0549; Sadovaya ul 28-30, Apraksin Dvor 13; cover R100; 🕒 10am-5am; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor) Downstairs the Money Honey Saloon has great live rockabilly and country bands; the crowds' raucousness sometimes spills over into rowdiness later on. Upstairs at the more salubrious City Club is a dance floor and pool tables, and lots of space to mingle. Enter via the courtyard off Sadovaya ul.

CLASSICAL, BALLET & OPERA

September to the end of June is the main performing season – in summer many

companies are away on tour, but plenty of performances are still staged. Ticket prices range from R150 to R4000.

Mariinsky Theatre (Map pp236-7; ☎ 326 4141; www.mariinsky.ru/en; Teatralnaya pl 1; box office 🕒 11am-7pm; 🍷 Sadovaya/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. See p262 for a brief history of this famous theatre. Use the website to book and pay for tickets in advance of your visit.

Shostakovich Philharmonia Bolshoy Zal (Big Hall; Map pp230-1; ☎ 710 4257; www.philharmonia.spb.ru/eng/index.html; Mikhailovskaya ul 2; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor) The St Petersburg Philharmonica's Symphony Orchestra is particularly renowned, and this grand venue is one of its two concert halls, the other being the **Maly Zal imeni Glinki** (Small Philharmonia; Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 8333; Nevsky pr 30; 🍷 Nevsky Prospekt).

Glinka Capella (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 1058; nab reki Moyki 20; 🍷 Nevsky Prospekt) This venue also has high standards, focusing on choral, chamber and organ concerts.

Mussorgsky Opera & Ballet Theatre (Map pp230-1; ☎ 585 4305; www.mikhailovsky.ru; pl Iskustv 1; 🍷 Nevsky Prospekt) It's generally cheaper and easier to get tickets to the ballet and opera performances staged here. More contemporary works are also performed here than by the Kirov and standards are respectable.

Imperial Hermitage Theatre (Map pp230-1; ☎ 279 0226; www.hermitagemuseum.com/html_En/02/hm2_72.html; Dvortsovaya nab 34; 🍷 Nevsky Prospekt). Check the website to see what is being performed at this beautiful venue that's part of the Hermitage.

Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory (Map pp236-7; ☎ 314 9693; www.conservatory.ru/eng/eng.shtml; Teatralnaya pl 3; 🍷 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) This illustrious music school opposite the Mariinsky is worth checking out for its student performances.

JAZZ

Petersburgers have a particular love of jazz music. Cover charges range from R60 to R150 depending on the night and acts. Live jazz is also played at the café-bars Che (p285) and Sunduk (p285).

JFC Jazz Club (Map pp234-5; ☎ 272 9850; www.jfc.spb.ru; Shpaleynaya ul 33; 🕒 from 7pm; 🍷 Chernyshevskaya) Small and New York-styled, this is the best of its kind in the city and features

jazz, blues and improv bands from Russia and around the world.

Jazz Philharmonic Hall (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 8565; www.jazz-hall.spb.ru; Zagorodny pr 27; 🕒 concerts from 8pm; 🍷 Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshchad) Representing the traditional side of jazz. It has two resident bands performing straight jazz and Dixieland. Foreign guests appear doing mainstream and modern jazz.

Jimi Hendrix Blues Club (Map pp234-5; ☎ 279 8813; Liteyny pr 33; 🕒 from 7.30pm; 🍷 Chernyshevskaya) This intimate 15-seater bar-restaurant has good concerts from time to time.

Neo Jazz Club (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 3830; Solyanyo per 14; 🕒 8pm-midnight; 🍷 Chernyshevskaya) This is a laid-back place with more mellow live jazz music. Most people come here for supper too (very good Armenian specialities at reasonable prices) and to just chill.

Jazz Time Bar (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 5379; Mokhovaya ul 41; 🕒 noon-2am; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor) Charmingly unpretentious, this bar has live music every night ranging from jazz-funk, swing and country.

Circus & Puppets

Contact the theatres to check on performance times.

St Petersburg State Circus (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 8478; www.reserve.sp.ru/circus/index_e.htm; nab reki Fontanki 3; tickets R300; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor) One of Russia's leading circus companies has had a permanent home here since 1877.

Bolshoy Puppet Theatre (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 6672; ul Nekrasova 10; tickets R50-60; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor) This is the main venue for puppets; there are 16 different shows in the repertoire, including two for adults.

Demmeni Marionette Theatre (Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 2156; Nevsky pr 52; tickets R50-60; 🍷 Gostiny Dvor) This is the oldest professional puppet theatre in Russia, in business since 1917.

Nightclubs

The city's nightclub scene is varied, inventive and perpetually changing – you're bound to find somewhere you like. Cover charges range from R100 to R1000 depending on the venue and night; In the summer, dance parties are often held out on the Gulf of Finland islands around Kronstadt (p303).

Griboedov (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 4355; www.griboedovclub.ru; Voronezhskaya ul 2A; cover R200, free 5-8pm; 🕒 5pm-6am; 🍷 Ligovsky Prospekt) Run by ska band Dva Samoliota (the same guys behind

the Hotel California hostel, p275), this hip club in an artfully converted bomb shelter is a fun place most nights. Weekends are stifflingly crowded; for something different try Wednesday nights for 1970s and '80s Russian disco.

Tunnel (Map pp238-9; ☎ 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 sprawling bomb shelter. Come here for hard core electronic dance music.

Par.spb (Map pp238-9; ☎ 233 3374; www.par.spb.ru; Aleksandrovsky Park 5B; cover R400; ☎ 11am-6am Fri-Sun; ☎ M Gorkovskaya) This stripped-back, arty club, with two dance spaces and a chill-out area, offers different music each night and has a strict door policy.

Jet Set (Map pp234-5; ☎ 275 9288; www.jetset.spb.ru; Furshtatskaya ul 58B; cover R500-1000; ☎ 10pm-6am Fri & Sat; ☎ M Chernyshevskaya) Attracting top DJs and musicians, Jet Set is the kind of VIP club that many Petersburgers claim to loathe, although quite a few seem to want to be on the guest list. Make the grade with face control and you'll discover a sumptuous space, with an oriental theme upstairs.

Second Floor (Vtoroi Etazh; Map pp230-1; Dumskaya ul 9; ☎ M Nevsky Prospekt) Above Dacha (see boxed text, p285) is this relaxed club with substantially more room for dancing, plus a chill-out room. The music policy and clientele are similar to Dacha. The weekend R50 entrance charge goes towards your first drink.

Opium (Map pp230-1; ☎ 312 0148; Sadovaya ul 12; cover R500; ☎ 10pm-6am; ☎ M Gostiny Dvor) It's a similar story at Opium, which is expensive, elitist and glitzy but with excellent music and the in-crowd clawing at the door.

Havana (Map pp236-7; ☎ 259 1155; www.havana-club.ru; Moskovsky pr 21; cover R100-200; ☎ 9pm-6am; ☎ M Tekhnologicheskyy Institut) Work on those Ricky Martin moves as this is a real salsa and Latin club with a Cuban theme and imported dancers. It's big and fun, and fills up on the weekends.

Sports

Petrovsky Stadium (Map pp238-9; ☎ 328 8903; Petrovsky ostrov 2; ☎ M Sportivnaya) Petersburgers are fanatical about the fortunes of local soccer team **Zenit** (www.fc-zenit.ru) who usually play here. Tickets (R60 to R800) can be pur-

chased at theatre ticket booths or at the stadium, three days before a game. Be sure to be wearing Zenit's light blue colours if you want to avoid getting into any bothersome situations.

Theatre, Cabaret & Dance Shows

Drama is taken very seriously in St Petersburg and there are dozens of theatrical performances each night, practically all in Russian. Even if you don't speak the language, some of the theatres are visual treats in themselves. There is also a cabaret and a dance show that require little in the way of language skills for appreciation.

Feel Yourself Russian Folkshow (Map pp236-7; ☎ 312 5500; www.folkshow.ru; Nikolayevsky Palace, ul Truda 4; ticket incl drinks & snacks R1280; ☎ show 6.30pm; ☎ M Nevsky Prospekt) Terrible title, but not a bad show of traditional Russian folk dancing and music. Worth attending to get a look at the spectacular interior of the Nikolayevsky Palace, if nothing else.

Aleksandrinsky Theatre (Map pp230-1; ☎ 710 4103; pl Ostrovskogo 2; ☎ M Gostiny Dvor) Also known as the Pushkin, this is the city's premier drama theatre, where Chekhov's *The Seagull* saw its premier. It's an architectural treat.

Bolshoy Drama Theatre (Map pp230-1; ☎ 310 0401; nab reki Fontanki 65; ☎ M Sennaya Ploshchad) This is another top mainstream theatre, showcasing innovative productions.

Lenoveta Theatre (Map pp234-5; ☎ 713 2191; Vladimirovsky pr 12; ☎ M Mayakovskaya) Even if your Russian isn't great, the plays here are so good that you can't go wrong. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (B Ozhidaniy Godo) and Pinter's *The Lover* (Lyubovnik) are in the repertoire.

Maly Drama Theatre (Map pp234-5; ☎ 713 2049; ul Rubinshteyna 18; ☎ M Dostoevskaya) The theatre with the best international reputation, built up under the directorship of Lev Dodin whose productions of Dostoevsky's *The Devils* and Chekhov's *Play Without a Name* have been widely acclaimed.

Hulli Gulli (Map p229; ☎ 246 3827; Lanskoie sh 23; cover R500; ☎ 9pm-4am; ☎ M Chyornaya Rechka) Infamous cabaret show with a wild and foul-mouthed MC orchestrating the night's strip shows, saucy comedy and magic acts, and penis-measuring contests (for each of your centimetres you get 1% discount off the price of drinks). Get there by 10pm – staff may not let you in after the show has

begun. From the metro, head north along nab Chyornoy Rechki one block, turn right onto Lanskoie sh, and try to lose your inhibitions along the way.

SHOPPING

You can find pretty much everything along Nevsky pr. If you're feeling homesick for a Western shopping environment there are also the malls **PIK** (Map pp236-7; Sennaya pl; ☎ M Sennaya Ploshchad), **Sennaya** (Map pp236-7; ul Yefimova 3; ☎ M Sennaya Ploshchad) and **Vladimirsky Passazh** (Map pp234-5; Vladimirovsky pr 19; ☎ M Dostoevskaya).

Art

St Petersburg's art scene, fuelled by several illustrious art schools, is a great one to check out.

Free Arts Foundation (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 5371; www.p10.nonmuseum.ru/index_e.html; Pushkinskaya ul 10, enter through arch at Ligovskiy pr 53; ☎ 3-7pm Wed-Sun; ☎ M Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Often referred to simply by its address, Pushkinskaya 10, this contemporary art mecca is guaranteed to turn up something weird and wonderful. There are lots of separate galleries, all with different opening times, spread throughout the complex; most are open on Saturday. You'll find anything from paintings and sculpture to digital works. Occasionally performance pieces take place, such as poets firing live rounds of ammunition at bottles of Baltika beer. Check out The John Lennon Temple of Love, Peace and Music, in Wing C on the 1st floor, and the Gallery of Experimental Sound for artfully remodelled vintage clothes.

Artists' Union of Russia Exhibition Centre of Graphic Arts (Map pp230-1; ☎ 315 7474; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 38; ☎ 1-7pm Tue-Sun; ☎ M Nevsky Prospekt) Displays the more establishment side of the St Petersburg arts scene. Check out the lovely carved wooden doors on the 3rd floor. Some exhibitions here have an entrance fee.

Pechatnya (Map p265; ☎ 238 0742; Peter & Paul Fortress; ☎ 11am-5pm; ☎ M Gorkovskaya) Yet another reason for visiting the Fortress is this great shop making and selling unique prints.

A couple more good galleries with both paintings and souvenir arts and crafts available for sale:

Art Gallery Borey (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 3693; Liteynyy pr 58; ☎ noon-8pm Tue-Sat; ☎ M Mayakovskaya)

Sol-Art (Map pp234-5; ☎ 327 3082; Museum of Decorative & Applied Arts, Solyanoy per 15; ☎ 10am-6pm; ☎ M Chernyshevskaya)

Music & DVDs

The kiosks lining the underground passage from Nevsky pr beneath Sadovaya ul sell pretty much any bootleg CD or DVD you could wish for. Law-abiding citizens will avert their gaze and continue to **505** (Map pp234-5; Nevsky pr 72; ☎ M Mayakovskaya) which has an excellent range of legal CDs, DVDs and computer games at reasonable prices.

Photography

One-hour drop-off places for prints are common. For digital photo needs, slide film, professional rolls, equipment and development, your best option is **Yarky Mir** (Map pp234-5; ul Nekrasova 1; ☎ M Gostiny Dvor) and (Map pp230-1; Nevsky prospekt 6; ☎ M Nevsky Prospekt); it has several other branches around the city, too.

Souvenirs & Soviet Memorabilia

There's a well-stocked **souvenir market** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 10am-dusk; ☎ M Nevsky Prospekt), diagonally across the canal from the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood (p252) as well as stalls selling *matryoshka* dolls and the like outside other major tourist sights, such as the Hermitage. At each of these places, a certain amount of bartering is perfectly acceptable.

Tovar dlya Voennikh (Map pp230-1; Sadovaya ul 26; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☎ M Gostiny Dvor) In a city with men in uniform on every street corner, this is where you get yours (the uniform that is!). Buy cool stripy sailors tops, embroidered badges, boots, camouflage jackets and caps at decent prices. Look for the circular green and gold sign with Military Shop written in English; the entrance is inside the courtyard.

La Russe (Map pp234-5; ☎ 572 2043; www.larusse.ru; Stremyannaya ul 3; ☎ 11am-8pm; ☎ M Mayakovskaya) Lots of rustic old whatnots and genuine antiques at this quirky, arty store where you can unearth everything from a battered samovar to beautifully decorated sleighs and traditional wool spinning devices. Enquire about their occasional excursions into the countryside.

Lomonosova China Factory (Map p229; ☎ 560 8544; pr Obukhovskoy Oborony 151; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun; ☎ M Lomonosovskaya) This famous

factory has an outlet shop on site, where you get anything from the company catalogue at prices lower than in the department stores. You'll also find a branch of the Hermitage here. From the metro, turn left (east), walk under the bridge to the embankment then left – the factory's ahead. If you don't want to drag this far out, go to its **city centre shop** (Map pp234-5; Nevsky pr 160; ☎ 10am-8pm; M) Ploshchad Alexandra Nevskogo) where prices are only a bit more expensive.

Sekunda (Map pp234-5; ☎ 275 7524; Liteyny pr 61; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Sat; M) Mayakovskaya) This small antique and bric-a-brac place sometimes has unusual souvenirs from old postcards to stuffed moose heads. Enter through the courtyard.

Speciality Shops

Pchelovodstvo (Map pp234-5; ☎ 273 7262; Liteyny pr 46; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; M) Mayakovskaya) This is where you'll find many types of fresh honey from Russia's Rostov region, dozens of products, remedies and creams made from bee pollen, as well as unique teas, which make nice gifts.

Soldat Udachi ul Nekrasova (Map pp234-5; ☎ 279 1850; ul Nekrasova 37; ☎ 10am-9pm; M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya; Bolshoy pr (Map pp238-9; ☎ 232 2003; Bolshoy pr 17, Petrograd Side; ☎ 10am-9pm; M) Sportivnaya) This weaponry store has everything a modern-day Rambo could wish for, including GPS devices, Swiss army knives and camping gizmos.

Intendant (Map pp230-1; ☎ 311 1510; Karavannaya ul 18/37; ☎ 11am-11pm; M) Gostiny Dvor) St Petersburg's finest wine shop stocks a fantastic range of local and imported bottles. Try some Georgian wine, either the dry white Gyrozhan (R300) or the dry red Mukuzani (R450).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Pulkovo-1 and **Pulkovo-2** (Map p229; Pulkovo-1 ☎ 704 3822, Pulkovo-2 ☎ 704 3444; eng.pulkovo.ru/) are, respectively, the domestic and international terminals that serve St Petersburg.

St Petersburg has direct air links with most of the major European capitals. Airline offices, generally open from 9.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, in St Petersburg include:

Aeroflot (Map pp230-1; ☎ 327 3872; Kazanskaya ul 5; M) Nevsky Prospekt)

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS FROM ST PETERSBURG

| Destination | Flights per day | Duration | One-way fare |
|---------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|
| Arkhangelsk | 1 | 1½hr | R4243 |
| Kaliningrad | 2 | 1½hr | R3293 |
| Irkutsk | 1 | 5½hr | R7943 |
| Moscow | 10 | 50 mins | R2243 |
| Murmansk | 1 | 2hr | R4643 |
| Novosibirsk | 2 | 4hr | R6243 |
| Sochi | 1 | 3hr | R6023 |
| Vladivostok | 1 | 11hr | R12,743 |
| Yekaterinburg | 1 | 2½hr | R6143 |

Air France (Map pp230-1; ☎ 336 2900; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 35; M) Nevsky Prospekt)

British Airways (Map pp230-1; ☎ 380 0626; Malaya Konyushennaya ul 1/3A; M) Nevsky Prospekt)

Delta (Map pp230-1; ☎ 571 5820; Bolshaya Morskaya ul 36; M) Nevsky Prospekt)

Finnair (Map pp230-1; ☎ 303 9898; Malaya Konyushennaya ul 1/3A; M) Nevsky Prospekt)

KLM (Map pp230-1; ☎ 346 6868; Malaya Morskaya ul 23; M) Nevsky Prospekt)

Lufthansa (Map pp230-1; ☎ 320 1000; Nevsky pr 32; M) Nevsky Prospekt)

Pulkovo Express (Map pp236-7; ☎ 303 9268; 1-aya Krasnoarmeyskaya ul 6; M) Tekhnologicheskyy Institut)

Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS; Map pp230-1; ☎ 326 2600; Nevsky pr 25; M) Nevsky Prospekt)

Transaero (Map pp234-5; ☎ 279 6463; Liteyny pr 48; M) Mayakovskaya)

Tickets for all airlines can be purchased from travel agencies (p243) and from the **Central Airline Ticket Office** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 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.

If you have time and want to save money, consider flying part way to St Petersburg by one of the budget airlines such as Easyjet who have services both to Tallinn and Riga out of London and Berlin, or to Helsinki, then connect with trains or buses from there. See www.waytorussia.net/transport/international/budget.html for some detailed itineraries on how best to do this.

Boat

Between early April and late September international passenger ferries leave from the

Morskoy vokzal (Map pp240-1; ☎ 322 6052; pl Morskoy Slavy 1; M) Primorskaya). It's a long way from the metro, so take either bus 7 or trolley bus 10 from outside the Hermitage.

From here St Petersburg is regularly connected by **Silja Line** (www.silja.fi) cruises with Helsinki in Finland (from €120, 15 hours) and less frequently by ferry with Tallinn in Estonia (€20, 14½ hours) and Rostock in Germany (€90, 42hrs). **Baltfinn** (www.baltfinn.ru) offers a weekly ferry service on the *George Ots* (4-berth cabin from R2450, 18 hours), travelling between Baltiysk (the port near the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad) and St Petersburg. **Baltic Line** (www.baltics.ru/bl/eng/) and **Trans Russia Express** (www.tre.de) both run weekly ferries to Lubbeck in Germany which also go via Baltiysk, check their websites for current details. You can buy tickets direct from the ferry companies at the sea port or at several central travel agencies, such as **Baltic Tours** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 320 6663; www.baltic-tours.ru; Sergei Tyulenina per 4-13; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; M) Nevsky Prospekt).

From June to the end of August regular **river cruises** go along the Neva to inland Russia, including to Valaam, Kizhi and Moscow. Prices and schedules vary, so book through a specialist travel agency, such as **Cruise Russia** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 764 6947; www.cruise.ru.com; Ligovsky pr 87; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; M) Ligovsky Prospekt) or at the **River Passenger Terminal** (Map p229; ☎ 262 0239; pr Obukhovskoy Oborony 195; M) Proletarskaya).

Bus

St Petersburg's main bus station, **Avtovokzal No 2** (Map pp234-5; ☎ 766 5777; nab Obvodnogo kanala 36; M) Ligovsky Prospekt) – there isn't a No 1 – has both international and European Russia services.

Other international buses are offered by a number of companies:

Ardis Finnord (Map pp230-1; ☎ 314 8951; Italiyanskaya ul 37; M) Gostiny Dvor) Two buses daily run from its offices to Helsinki (R1700).

Ecolines (Map pp236-7; ☎ 315 2550; www.ecolines.ru; Podyezdny per 3; M) Pushkinskaya) Daily overnight bus from the Vitebsky vokzal to Riga (R500) and three times a week to Kyiv (R600) and Odessa (R840) in Ukraine.

Eurolines (Map p229; ☎ 449 8370; www.eurolines.ru; ul Shkapina 10; M) Baltiyskaya) From outside the Baltiysk vokzal, its buses run to Tallinn (five daily, R450 to R650) and Tartu (daily, R650) in Estonia, and Riga (daily, R400) in Latvia. The head office is 50m west of Baltiysk vokzal,

BUSES FROM ST PETERSBURG

| Destination | Buses per day | Duration | One-way fare |
|--------------|---------------|----------|--------------|
| Helsinki | 2 | 8hr | R1700 |
| Moscow | 1 | 12hr | R480 |
| Novgorod | 14 | 3½hr | R179 |
| Petrozavodsk | 1 | 9hr | R270 |
| Pskov | 2 | 5½hr | R302 |
| Riga | 2 | 11hr | R500 |
| Tallinn | 7 | 7½hr | R550-650 |

but you can also buy tickets at its kiosk inside the Central Airline Ticket Office (opposite).

Neofahrt Tour (Map pp234-5; ☎ 718 2189; Oktyabrskaya Hotel, Ligovsky pr 43/45; M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya) Overnight bus to Helsinki leaves from outside the main building of the Oktyabrskaya Hotel at around 9pm.

Saimaan Liikenne (Map pp238-9; ☎ 332 0833; www.savonlinja.spb.ru; ul Chapayeva 5; M) Gorkovskaya) Daily buses to Helsinki and Lappeeranta (departing from the Grand Hotel Europe).

Car & Motorcycle

See p734 for general driving information. Always remember to take it slowly; not only are there numerous speed traps (towards Vyborg, there's one just outside the city limits, where the speed limit becomes 60km/h), but the state of some roads can easily lead you to the repair shop in no time.

RENTAL

Agencies offering self-drive and chauffeured vehicles include:

Astoria Service (Map pp234-5; ☎ 712 1583; www.astoriaservice.ru; Borovaya ul 11/13; M) Ligovsky Prospekt)

Europcar (Map pp234-5; ☎ 380 1662; www.europcar.ru; nab reki Fontanki 38/4; M) Gostiny Dvor)

Hertz Malaya Morskaya ul (Map pp230-1; ☎ 272 5045; www.hertz.com.ru; Malaya Morskaya ul 23; M) Nevsky Prospekt); Pulkovo-2 airport (Map p229; ☎ 324 3242)

Train

The three major long-distance train stations are: **Ladozhsky vokzal** (Ladoga station; Map p229; ☎ 768 5304; Zhanevsky pr 73; M) Ladozhskaya) for services to/from Helsinki and the far north of Russia; **Moskovsky vokzal** (Moscow station; Map pp234-5; ☎ 768 4597; pl Vosstaniya; M) Ploshchad Vosstaniya) for Moscow, the Urals, Siberia, Crimea and the Caucasus; and **Vitebsky vokzal** (Vitebsk station; Map pp234-5; ☎ 768 5807; Zagorodny pr

52; **M** Pushkinskaya) for the Baltic states, Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Belarus. Some suburban services also run from these stations as they do from **Baltisky vokzal** (Baltic; Map p229; ☎ 768 2859; Obvedny Kanal 120; **M** Baltiyskaya)

and **Finlyandsky vokzal** (Finland; Map p229; ☎ 768 7687; pl Lenina 6; **M** Ploshchad Lenina).

Tickets can be purchased at the train stations, the **Central Train Ticket Office** (Map pp230-1; ☎ 762 33 44; nab kanala Griboedova 24; ☎ 8am-8pm

RAIL ROUTES FROM ST PETERSBURG

Trains from St Petersburg to Moscow

| Train no & name | Departure | Duration | Fare |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| 1 <i>Krasny Strela</i> | 11.55pm | 8hr | R1700 |
| 3 <i>Ekspress</i> | 11.59pm | 8hr | R1700 |
| 5 <i>Nikolaevsk Ekspress</i> | 11.35pm | 8hr | R1700 |
| 23 <i>Yunost</i> | 1.10pm | 8hr | R1300 |
| 53 <i>Grand Express</i> | 11.47pm | 9hr | R3000-13,000 |
| 159 <i>Avrora</i> | 4.00pm | 5½hr | R1300 |
| 163 <i>ER200</i> | 6.30pm | 4½hr | R1700 |
| 165 <i>Nevsky Ekspress</i> | 6.30pm* | 4½hr | R1700 |

Notes: *Mon, Thu & Fri only

Domestic Trains from St Petersburg

| Destination | Train no | Departure | Duration | Fare |
|-------------------------|----------|------------|----------|-------|
| Arkhangelsk | 390A | 8pm LS* | 25½hr | R1229 |
| Kazan | 103 | 4.36pm MS† | 27½hr | R1482 |
| Murmansk | 022 | 5.50pm LS | 28½hr | R1400 |
| Nizhny Novgorod (Gorky) | 59 | 5.24pm MS | 15½hr | R1600 |
| Novgorod | 81 | 5.00pm MS | 3hr | R158 |
| Omsk | 13 | 8.40pm MS= | 53½hr | R3037 |
| Petrozavodsk | 658 | 22.13 LS | 8½hr | R457 |
| Pskov | 677 | 5.24 VS | 5¼hr | R677 |

Notes: MS – Moskovsky vokzal LS – Ladozhsky vokzal VS – Vitebsky vokzal
* Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri † odd days

International Trains from St Petersburg

| Destination | Train no & name | Departure | Duration | Fare |
|--|---------------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| Brest | 49 | 3.01pm VS | 19hr | R932 |
| <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* | 45hr | R5330 |
| Prague | 49 | 3.01pm VS† | 40½hr | R3790 |
| Helsinki | 034 <i>Repin</i> | 7.28am LS | 6hr | R1856 |
| Helsinki | 036 <i>Sibelius</i> | 4.28pm LS | 6hr | R1856 |
| Kaliningrad | 079 | 6.16pm VS | 27½hr | R1247 |
| Kyiv | 053 | 9.11pm VS | 24hr | R961/1102‡ |
| Minsk | 051 | 7.03pm VS | 15hr | R1166 |
| Odesa | 19 | 11.40pm VS | 35hr | R1260 |
| <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§ | 31hr | R4670 |
| Warsaw | 19 | 11.40pm VS§ | 29hr | R2240 |
| Riga | 037 | 9.46pm | 13hr | R1812 |
| Vilnius | 391 | 8.28pm | 15¼hr | R1387/1499# |

Notes: LS – Ladozhsky vokzal VS – Vitebsky vokzal *Russian/Ukrainian train † Mon, Wed, Thu, Sun
‡ Tue & Sun § daily except Thu ||odd days # Russian/Lithuanian train

Mon-Sat, 8am-4pm Sun; **M** Nevsky Prospekt) and the Central Airline Ticket Office (p290).

MOSCOW

There are 12 to 14 daily trains to Moscow, all departing from Moskovsky vokzal: the table lists the best services. The overnight sleepers will save a night's accommodation costs (and for a small extra charge you'll also get breakfast or a light meal thrown in). If you really want to save money, four services (19, 27, 29 and 55) have *platskartny* (dorm) carriages with tickets for R350.

FINLAND & OTHER INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS

There are two daily trains 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, opposite. From Helsinki to St Petersburg the *Repin* leaves at 3.42pm and arrives at 10.25pm, while the *Sibelius* leaves at 7.42am and arrives in St Petersburg at 2.23pm. Services in both directions stop at Vyborg (p303), so you can save yourself some money if you take a bus or local train there and then catch the train to Helsinki.

Note services to Berlin, Budapest, Kaliningrad, Kyiv, Prague and Warsaw pass through Belarus, for which you're required to hold a transit visa (see p720). The train to Smolensk in Russia also passes through Belarus. Border guards have been known to force people off trains and back to where they came from if they don't have a visa.

RAISING THE BRIDGES

Many of St Petersburg's main bridges are raised nightly when the Neva isn't frozen (from the end of April to the end of September) to let seagoing ships through. The following schedule (which every year changes by five minutes here or there; double-check at www.cityspb.ru/bridges.html) governs the lives of the city's motorists and nighthawks trying to get from one area to another. Watching the bridges rise is also a favourite romantic activity of locals and foreigners alike.

Aleksandra Nevskogo most (Map pp234-5) 2.20am-5.05am

Birzhevoy most (Map pp238-9) 2.10am-4.50am

Bolsheokhtinsky most (Map pp234-5) 2.00am-5.00am

Dvortsovy most (Map pp240-1) 1.35am-2.55am & 3.15am-4.50am

Leytenantna Shmidta most (Map pp240-1) 1.40am-4.55am

Liteyny most (Map pp234-5) 1.50am-4.40am

Troitsky most (Map pp238-9) 1.50am-4.40am

Tuchkov most (Map pp238-9) 2.10am-3.35am & 3.55am-4.45am

GETTING AROUND

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

To/From the Airport

St Petersburg's airport is at Pulkovo, about 17km south of the centre. This is easily and (very) cheaply accessed by 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*. The trip takes about 15 minutes and costs just R15 (R20 for a metro/bus combination), or you can take the buses and *marshrutky* K3 all the way from the airport to Sennaya pl in the city centre or K39 to pl Vosstaniya. Buses stop directly outside each of the terminals.

If you do opt for a taxi you should be looking at 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. Practically all hotels and hostels can arrange transfers, generally for a slightly more expensive fee than a regular taxi.

Bus, Marshrutka, Trolleybus & Tram

Tickets (R10 to R15 depending on the service) are bought inside the vehicle. Bus stops are marked by roadside 'A' signs (for *avtobus*), trolleybus stops by 'III' (representing a handwritten Russian 'T'), tram stops by a 'T', all usually indicating the line

numbers too. Stops may also have roadside signs with little pictures of a bus, trolleybus or tram. *Marshrutky* stop anywhere you hail them. Most transport runs from 6am to 1am.

The following are some important long routes across the city:

Along Nevsky pr between the Admiralty and Moskovsky vokzal Station Buses 7 and 22; trolleybuses 1, 5, 7, 10 and 22. Trolleybuses 1 and 22 continue out to Hotel Moskva and Alexander Nevsky Monastery. Trolleybuses 5 and 7 continue to Smolny.

Around the Sadovaya ul ring road south of Nevsky pr Trams 3, 13 and 14. Tram 3 continues north of Nevsky prospekt and then crosses the Troitsky most into Petrograd Side.

From the Hermitage to the Pribaltiyskaya Hotel on Vasilyevsky Island Bus 7; trolleybus 10.

To the Kamenny Islands Tram 34 from the Baltisky vokzal or Liteyny pr just north of Nevsky prospekt goes along Kamennoostrovsky pr and ends up on Krestovskiy Island. Bus 10 from the corner of Bolshaya Morskaya ul and Nevsky pr will also get you there.

To the Petrograd Side at the Botanical Gardens Bus 128 runs from near Primorskaya metro station along both Bolshoy prs.

Metro

The **metro** (R10; ⌚ 5.30am-midnight) is usually the quickest way around the city and you'll

rarely wait more than three minutes for a train; the clock at the end of the platform shows time elapsed since the last train departed. The grandest stations are on Line 1 (see below).

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

Taxi

Official taxis (four-door Volga sedans with a chequerboard strip down the side and a green light in the front window) have a meter that drivers sometimes use, though you most often pay a negotiated price. If you want to book a taxi in advance try **Peterburgskoe taksi 068** (Petersburg Taxi; ☎ 068, 324 7777; www.taxi068.spb.ru in Russian; ⌚ 24hr), **Taxi Blues** (☎ 271 8888) or **Taxi-Million** (☎ 700 0000; ⌚ 24hr).

Most often though, people use unofficial taxis, ie any car you can stop. Negotiate the price for your destination before getting in; most short rides around the city centre

shouldn't cost more than R100. See p737 for safety rules on taking unofficial taxis.

AROUND ST PETERSBURG

Several grand imperial palaces and estates surround St Petersburg of which Petrodvorets and the palace-park ensembles at Tsarskoe Selo and Pavlovsk are the best. A visit to St Petersburg isn't really complete without a trip to at least one of these palaces, but be warned that at the height of the summer the crowds and lines to get into the palaces themselves are horrific (p296).

Other good day trips include Kronshadt, a once-closed naval base on an island in the Finnish Gulf, where you'll find one of the most striking cathedrals in northern Russia. Further northwest is the charming old Finnish town of Vyborg, and eastwards, near Lake Ladoga, is what very well could have been Russia's first capital, the sleepy village of Staraya Ladoga. If you have a bit more

time, spending a night in a monastery on an island in Lake Ladoga is also possible.

Longer excursions from St Petersburg, include Novgorod (p327), Pskov (p334), Valaam (p362) and Kizhi (p361).

PETRODVORETS ПЕТРОДВОРЕЦ

Looking especially stunning now the Grand Cascade fountains have been regilded, **Petrodvorets** (Map p297; ☎ 427 7425; www.peterhof.org; ul Razvodnaya 2), 29km west of St Petersburg on the Gulf of Finland, is arguably the most impressive of St Petersburg's suburban palaces.

This 'Russian Versailles' is a far cry from the original cabin Peter the Great had built here to oversee construction of Kronshadt naval base. He liked the place so much he built a villa, Monplaisir, and then a whole series of palaces across an estate originally called Peterhof (pronounced Petergof), which has been called Petrodvorets (Peter's Palace) since 1944. All are set within a spectacular ensemble of gravity-powered fountains that are now the site's main attraction.

While Petrodvorets was trashed by the Germans in WWII (what you see today is

TOURING LINE 1

If you've had your fill of museums and palaces in St Petersburg, an ideal way to spend a rainy or cold day is to take a tour of metro Line 1 – that's the red line on the official metro map. Along the section between pl Vosstaniya and Avtovo, opened in 1955, you'll find a striking selection of station designs. Here are the things to look out for:

Ploshchad Vosstaniya (Map pp234–5) Lenin and Stalin are depicted together in the rondels at either end of the platform, as well as Lenin on a tank, Lenin alone and the Kronshadt sailors.

Pushkinskaya (Map pp234–5) A statue of the poet rests at the end of the platform and a moulding of his head is above the escalators. Nip out the station to the view the nearby Style Moderne Vitebsky vokzal (p261).

Tekhnologicheskyy Institut (Map pp234–5) On the platform heading south are reliefs of famous Russian scientists, while on the northbound platform read the dates of Russia's major scientific achievements along the columns.

Baltiyskaya (Map p229) A naval theme here with a wavy motif on the mouldings along the platform ceiling and a vivid marble mosaic at the end of the platform depicting the volley from the Aurora in 1917.

Narvskaya (Map p229) One of the best stations, with a fantastic sculptured relief of Lenin and rejoicing proletariat over the escalators and lovely carvings of miners, engineers, sailors, artists and teachers on the platform columns.

Kirovskyy Zavod (Map p229) Named after the nearby heavy engineering plant, the decoration along the platform also takes its inspiration from oil wells and industry. A scowling bust of Lenin can just be seen at the platform's end, half hidden by scaffolding.

Avtovo (Map p229) Scaffolding also unfortunately obscures the red and gold mosaic at the end of this station's platform, but it doesn't distract from the otherwise Babylonian lavishness of the marble and cut-glass clad columns holding up the roof, the relief of soldiers in the ticket hall and the temple-like entrance.



TICKETS FOR THE PALACES

There's no avoiding the mammoth summertime queues to enter the main imperial palaces at Petrodvorets and Tsarskoe Selo. It's not unusual to stand in line for hours and in some cases not get in at all (for example when huge cruise ship tour groups are in town). Fights have even broken out in the queues! Avoiding some of this hassle is possible – at a price, of course. The simplest solution is to book yourself on a guided tour of either palace with a travel agency and make sure that they prebook your entry ticket; Peter's Walking Tours (p272) can do this for you. At Tsarskoe Selo it's also possible to buy a VIP ticket (€33) which gains you express entry.

and 11am–6pm Saturday and Sunday), but the gilded ensemble looks marvellous any time of year. The central statue of Samson tearing open a lion's jaws celebrates – as so many things in St Petersburg do – Peter's victory over the Swedes. If you're interested in knowing how the fountains work, pay a visit to the **Grotto** (R110; ☎) same as Grand Cascade) beneath the Grand Cascade, where there are also some trick fountains.

GRAND PALACE

Between the cascade and the formal Upper Garden is the appropriately named **Grand Palace** (adult/student R430/215; ☎) 10.30am–6pm Tue–Sun, closed last Tue of month). Be warned: it's almost always packed with tour groups in summer.

Peter's modest project, finished just before his death, was grossly enlarged by Rastrelli for Empress Elizabeth and later redecorated in lavish style for Catherine the Great. It's now a vast museum and a monument to the craft of reconstruction (which is still going on). Anything not nailed down was removed before the Germans arrived, so the paintings, furniture and chandeliers are original.

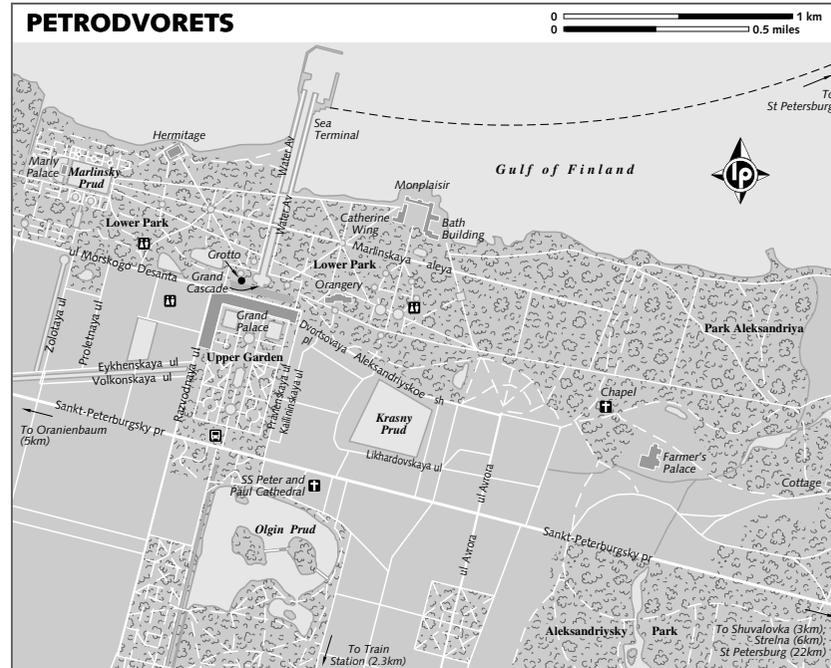
Highlights include the **Chesma Hall**, full of huge paintings of Russia's destruction of the Turkish fleet at Çesme in 1770. Of some 20 rooms, the last, without a trace of Catherine, is the finest – Peter's simple, beautiful study, was apparently the only room to survive the Germans. The study has 14 fantastic carved-wood panels, of which six reconstructions (in lighter wood) are no less impressive; each took 1½ years to do. Peter the Great still looks like the tsar with the best taste.

MONPLAISIR

Peter's outwardly more humble, sea-facing villa **Monplaisir** (adult/student R290/145; ☎) 10.30am–6pm Thu–Tue May–Oct, closed last Thu of the month) remained his favourite. It's easy to see why: it's wood-panelled, snug and elegant, peaceful even when there's a crowd – which there used to be all the time, what with Peter's mandatory partying ('misbehaving' guests were required to gulp down huge quantities of wine).

The Rastrelli-designed **Catherine Wing** (adult/student R110/55; ☎) 10.30am–6pm Fri–Wed May–Oct, 10.30am–5pm Sat & Sun Oct–May, closed last Tue of month) was added on the west side of Mon-

PETRODVORETS



plaisir by Empress Elizabeth in the 1740s; Catherine the Great was living here (conveniently) when her husband Peter III was overthrown. It has some pleasant period interiors. On Monplaisir's east side is Quarenghi's 1800 **Bath Building** (adult/student R150/75; ☎) 10.30am–6pm Thu–Tue, closed last Tue of the month), which is nothing special inside. In the garden in front of the buildings look out for some more trick fountains.

HERMITAGE & MARLY PALACE

On the west side of the Lower Park, near the shore, the **Hermitage** (adult/student R110/55; ☎) 10.30am–6pm Tue–Sun) is a two-storey pink-and-white box featuring the ultimate in private dining: special elevators hoist a fully laid table into the imperial presence on the 2nd floor, thereby eliminating any hindrance by servants. The elevators are circular and directly in front of each diner, whose plate would be lowered, replenished and replaced. The entry ticket here also includes admission to the modest **Marly Palace** (☎) 10.30am–6pm Tue–Sun), further to the west, inspired by a French hunting lodge.

PARK ALEKSANDRIYA & SS PETER & PAUL CATHEDRAL

To escape the crowds, even on summer weekends, wander through rambling **Park Aleksandriya** (admission free), immediately east of the Lower Park. Built for Tsar Nicholas I (and named for his tsarina), it features a neo-Gothic chapel, the ruined **Farmer's Palace** (1831), which vaguely resembles a stone farmstead, and the **Cottage** (adult/student R180/90; ☎) 10.30am–6pm Tue–Sun), a small palace dating from 1829 and modelled on an English country cottage, also with neo-Gothic interiors.

The eye-catching five-domed **SS Peter & Paul Cathedral**, across the road and east of Petrodvorets' Upper Park, is built in neo-Byzantine style but dates only from the turn of the 20th century.

Eating

There are tourist-orientated cafés and restaurants scattered around the Lower Park, none particularly outstanding and all overpriced. Bring a picnic, or consider visiting the good restaurant at Shuvalovka (p299), 3km back towards St Petersburg.

largely a reconstruction), according to recent historians it suffered heaviest damage under Soviet bombing raids in December 1941 and January 1942. This was because Stalin was determined to stop Hitler from his plan of hosting a New Year's victory celebration inside the palace.

While a visit here is highly recommended, if you plan to see all the various museums in the estate it can also be an expensive and frustrating affair. The total cost for entering the lower park and all the palaces and museums is R1900. Plus many of the museums have different closing days, and some are closed or only open for weekends from October to May.

The Upper Park is free – the gardens here are lovely. Admission to the Lower Park is payable at the cash booths on the jetty and outside the gates leading to the Grand Cascade; hold on to your ticket when exiting this area so you can go back in later if you need to.

Sights

GRAND CASCADE, LOWER PARK & GROTTTO

Petrodvorets' uncontested centrepiece is the **Grand Cascade**, a symphony of over 140 fountains and canals partly engineered by Peter himself. To see the fountains you have to pay to enter the **Lower Park** (adult/student R300/150; ☎) 9am–8pm Mon–Fri, to 9pm Sat & Sun) and they only work from mid-May to early October (☎) 11am–5pm Monday to Friday

Getting There & Away

Hop on the K404 bus from outside the Baltisky vokzal (R30, 40 minutes) and get off at the main entrance to the Upper Garden, on Sankt Peterburgsky pr. There's also a reasonably frequent suburban train (R20, 30 minutes) from the Baltisky vokzal to Novy Petrodvorets, from where you'll have to take any bus except 357 to the fifth stop, which will take another 10 minutes. Alternatively, there are *marshrutky* to Petrodvorets from outside metro Avtovo.

From May to September, a fine alternative is the *Meteor hydrofoil* (one-way/return R250/450, 30 min) from the jetty in front of St Petersburg's Hermitage, which goes every 20 to 30 minutes from 9.30am to at least 7pm. If you're really in a hurry there are also helicopter flights from the Peter & Paul Fortress (p272).

LOMONOSOV (ORANIENBAUM) ЛОМОНОСОВ

While Peter was building Monplaisir, his right-hand man, Alexander Menshikov, began his own palace, **Oranienbaum**, 12km down the coast, a grand enterprise that eventually bankrupted him. Following Peter's death and Menshikov's exile, the estate served briefly as a hospital and then passed to Tsar Peter III, who didn't much like ruling Russia and spent a lot of time there before he was dispatched in a coup led by his wife Catherine (the Great).

Spared Nazi occupation, after WWII Oranienbaum was renamed after the scientist-poet Mikhail Lomonosov and now doubles as a **museum and public park** (☎ 423 1627; park admission free; ☎ 9am-10pm). Sadly most of Menshikov's impressively large **Great Palace** (Bolshoy dvorets; adult/student R185/92; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon & 11am-5pm Wed-Sun), the first building you come to from the park's entrance, is in a shocking state and many of its decrepit rooms are still under renovation. Instead head straight south through the park to the extravagantly rococo **Chinese Palace** (Kitaysky dvorets; adult/student R370/185; open 29 May-1 Oct; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon & 11am-5pm Wed-Sun). Designed by Antonio Rinaldi, Catherine the Great called it her 'dacha', albeit one including painted ceilings and fine inlaid-wood floors and walls. Check out the sumptuous **Large Chinese Room**, done up in the 'Oriental' style of the day.

Also in good shape is **Peter III's Palace** (Dvoretz Petra III; adult/student R260/130), a boxy miniature palace, with rich, uncomfortable-looking interiors and some Chinese-style lacquer-on-wood paintings. It is approached through the **Gate of Honour**, all that remains of a toy fortress where Peter amused himself drilling his soldiers.

Perhaps Oranienbaum's best feature is the quiet and somewhat sombre park – it's a great place for a picnic or a tranquil walk away from the crowds.

The suburban train from St Petersburg's Baltisky vokzal to Petrodvorets continues to Lomonosov (R32). Get off at Oranienbaum-I (not II) train station, an hour from St Petersburg. From the station it's a short walk south, then west at the Archangel Michael Cathedral (Sobor Arkhangel'a Mikhaila) along Dvortsovy pr until you reach the palace entrance. *Marshrutka* to Lomonosov also run from outside metro Avtovo.

STRELNA & AROUND СТРЕЛЬНА И ОКРЕСТНОСТИ СТРЕЛЬНЫ

Six kilometres east of Petrodvorets is the town of Strelna, where you'll find two more palaces originally built for Peter. The butterscotch-painted Konstantinovsky Palace was chosen by Vladimir Putin as his St Petersburg residence, renovated to host 2003's Russia-EU summit and reopened as the **Palace of Congress** (Dvoretz Kongressov; ☎ 438 5360; www.konstantinpalace.ru; Beryozovaya alleya 3; adult/student R200/100, plus R200 for Russian language tour, R2500 for English-language tour; ☎ 10am-5pm Thu-Tue). Visits here are by appointment only, and although the palace is not a must-see sight, it nonetheless provides a fascinating glimpse of how a modern-day tsar (sorry, president) likes to entertain his guests. There's a small collection of medals from the Hermitage's collection here and some reconstructed rooms from the time of Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich, the palace's last Imperial owner and something of a poet and musician. As you'd expect, security is tight; you must bring your passport and it will be checked at regular intervals on the tour.

The compact, and infinitely more charming **Peter I's Palace at Strelna** (☎ 427 7425; www.peterhof.org/museums/strelny; adult/student R100/50; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) lies a short walk to the west of the Palace of Congress. This is one of the first palaces that Peter the Great

built out this way while supervising his far grander enterprise down the road. It has some well-furnished interiors with interesting exhibits, most notably a combined travelling chest and camp bed belonging to Alexander III.

Midway between Strelna and Petrodvorets is the tourist 'village' **Shuvalovka** (☎ 331 9999; www.shuvalovka.ru/english.htm; Sankt-Peterburgskoe sh 111; ☎ 10am-10pm). This complex of traditional-style wooden buildings is both quaint and kitsch but it does have plus points, namely an excellent restaurant and the opportunity to see Russian craftspeople in action.

Sleeping & Eating

All those visiting VIPs need somewhere to stay, so next to the Palace of Congress is the luxurious **Baltic Star Hotel** (☎ 438 5700; www.balticstar-hotel.ru; Berlozovaya alleya 3; s/d from R9280/9920 prices in units; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎). It's a fancy enough place, but there's no really compelling reason for staying this far out of St Petersburg. Its elegant European restaurant **Northern Venice** is worth a look if you're hungry. Otherwise beneath the Palace of Congress there's the **Rákóczi Wine Cellar** (☎ 320 6237; ☎ same as palace), specialising in Hungarian wines, where you can taste four wines for R100.

Also well worth checking out if you're really hungry is the traditional Russian restaurant **Sobraniye** at Shuvalovka, which serves a great four-course lunch for R200 as well as a full à la carte menu and many flavoured vodkas. If you get really sloshed the complex also includes the cute **Hotel Koshel** (s/d incl breakfast from €80/90).

Getting There & Away

Strelna is reached by the same trains and buses serving Petrodvorets (opposite).

TSARSKOE SELO & PAVLOVSK ЦАРСКОЕ СЕЛО И ПЯВЛОВСК

The grand imperial estate of **Tsarskoe Selo** (Tsar's Village; Map p300; ☎ 465 2281; eng.tzar.ru; Sadovaya ul 7) in the town of Pushkin, 25km south of St Petersburg, is often combined on a day trip with the palace and sprawling park at Pavlovsk (p301), 4km further south. This is a pity because both are gorgeous places that deserve a day each to be fully appreciated; if you have the time it's best to see them separately.

The railway that connects Pushkin and Pavlovsk with St Petersburg was Russia's first opened in 1837 to carry the royal family between here and the then capital. The town changed its name to Pushkin in 1937 after Russia's favourite poet, who studied here and whose school and dacha you can also visit.

Sights

CATHERINE PALACE

The centrepiece of Tsarskoe Selo, created under Empresses Elizabeth and Catherine the Great between 1744 and 1796, is the vast baroque **Catherine Palace** (Yekaterinsky dvorets; adult/student R500/250; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon, closed last Mon of the month), designed by Rastrelli and named after Elizabeth's mother, Peter the Great's second wife. As at the Winter Palace, Catherine the Great had many of Rastrelli's original interiors remodelled in classical style. Most of the gaudy exterior and 20-odd rooms of the palace have been beautifully restored – compare them to the photographs of the devastation left by the Germans.

Everyone has to go on a guided tour here but it's easy to slip away once you're inside the palace; getting in is another matter, especially in the summer (see p296). Tours start with the white **State Staircase** (1860). South of here, only three rooms have been restored: the **Gentlemen-in-Waiting's Dining**

THE MYSTERY OF THE AMBER ROOM

The original Amber Room was created from exquisitely engraved amber panels given to Peter the Great by the King of Prussia in 1716. Rastrelli later combined it with gilded woodcarvings, mirrors, agate and jasper mosaics to become the knockout highlight of Catherine Palace. Plundered by the Nazis during WWII, the room's decorative panels went missing in Kaliningrad in 1945, becoming one of the art world's great mysteries. It's believed, but is yet to be confirmed, that the panels were destroyed in a fire in Kaliningrad while under Red Army occupation. In 2004, as Putin and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder presided over the opening of the new Amber Room, restored largely with German funds, another rumour started doing the rounds: that this is in fact the original Amber Room, surreptitiously returned by the Germans.

Room, the dazzling **Great Hall**, the largest in the palace, and an **antechamber** with some huge blue-and-white Dutch ovens.

The rooms north of the State Staircase on the courtyard side include the **State Dining Room**, **Crimson** and **Green Pilaster Rooms**, **Portrait Room** and the famous **Amber Room** recently restored to its former glory (see p299) and much smaller than you may have thought from its publicity photos. This is the only room of the palace where photography is forbidden.

Most of the palace's north end is the early classical work of architect Charles Cameron, including the elegant **Green Dining Room**, the **Blue Drawing Room**, **Chinese Blue Drawing Room** and **Choir Anteroom**, whose gold

silk, woven with swans and pheasants, is the original from the 18th century.

CATHERINE PARK

Around Catherine Palace extends the lovely **Catherine Park** (Yekaterinsky Park; adult/student R100/50; ☎ 6am-11pm). The main entrance is on Sadovaya ul, next to the palace chapel. On the edge of the park is the **Cameron Gallery** (adult/student R160/80; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon) which has changing exhibitions. Between the gallery and the palace, notice the south-pointing ramp which Cameron added for the ageing empress to walk down into the park.

The park's outer section focuses on the **Great Pond**, where you can rent boats in summer. This section is dotted with intriguing

structures ranging from the **Pyramid**, where Catherine the Great buried her favourite dogs, to the **Chinese Pavilion** (or Creaking Summerhouse), **Marble Bridge** (copied from one in Wilton, England) and **Ruined Tower**, which was built 'ready-ruined' in keeping with a 1770s romantic fashion – an 18th-century empress's equivalent of prefaded denim.

ALEXANDER PALACE & PARK

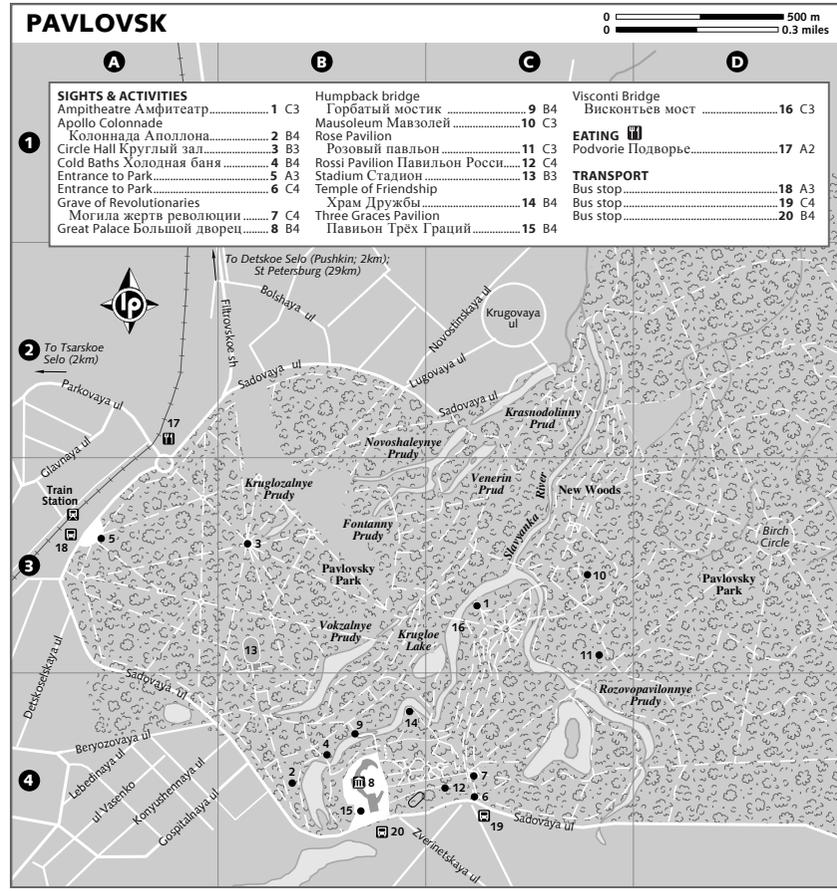
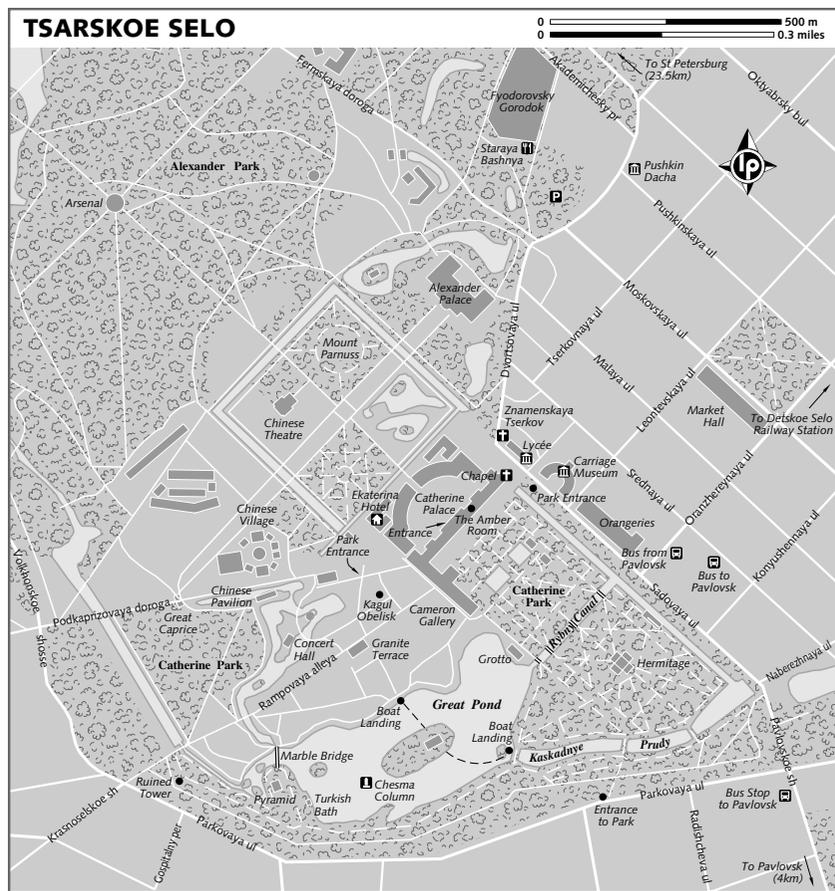
A short distance north of the Catherine Palace, and surrounded by the overgrown and tranquil **Alexander Park** (admission free) is the classical **Alexander Palace** (☎ 466 6071; www.alexanderpalace.org; Dvortsovaya ul 2; adult/student R260/130; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon, closed last Wed of the month). It was built by Quarenghi between

1792 and 1796 for the future Alexander I, but Nicholas II, the last tsar, was its main tenant. It's a poignant place that doesn't get many tourists and is a welcome contrast to the Catherine Palace.

PAVLOVSK PARK & GREAT PALACE

Pavlovsk's beautifully landscaped **park** (Map p301; adult/student R80/40; ☎ 9am-9pm) of woodland, rivers, lakes, tree-lined avenues, classical statues and temples is one of the most exquisite in Russia; it's a delightful place to wander around and swallows crowds easily compared to Tsarskoe Selo.

Although designed by Charles Cameron between 1781 and 1786, on Catherine the Great's orders for her son, the future Paul I,



the interiors of Pavlovsk's **Great Palace** (☎ 470 2155; www.pavlovskkart.spb.ru; ul Revolyutsii; adult/student R370/185; ☎ 10am-6pm Sat-Thu, closed 1st Fri of the month) were largely orchestrated by Paul's second wife Maria Fyodorovna. The original palace was burnt down two weeks after liberation in WWII by a careless Soviet soldier's cigarette which set off German mines (the Soviets blamed the Germans). As at Tsarskoe Selo its restoration is remarkable.

The finest rooms are on the middle floor of the central block. Cameron designed the round **Italian Hall** beneath the dome, and the **Grecian Hall** to its west, though the lovely green fluted columns were added by his assistant Vincenzo Brenna. Flanking these are two private suites mainly designed by Brenna – Paul's along the north side of the block and Maria Fyodorovna's on the south. The **Hall of War** of the insane, military-obsessed Paul contrasts with Maria's **Hall of Peace**, decorated with musical instruments and flowers.

On the middle floor of the south block are Paul's **Throne Room** and the **Hall of the Maltese Knights of St John**, of whom he was the Grand Master.

Sleeping & Eating

Ekatерina Hotel (☎ 446 8042; www.hotelekatерina.ru; ul Sadovaya 5; s & d with breakfast €120; ☎) Staying at this small, midrange hotel inside the palace's old servants' block not only provides great views on the building's gilded façade, but also is about your best chance of being first in the queue to get into the palace. The rooms are modern and reasonably spacious.

Podvorye (☎ 465 1399; Fil'trovskoye sh 16, Pavlovsk; mains R500-800, prices in units; ☎ noon-11pm) Run by the same company as the Ekatерina Hotel, this traditional Russian log house on steroids, a short walk northeast of Pavlovsk station, dishes up huge portions of delicious Russian food, with a side-order of live Russian music and dancing. It's one of Putin's favourite restaurants.

Staraya Bashnya (☎ 466 6698; Akademicheskoye pr 14, Pushkin; mains R600-800, prices in units; ☎ noon-11pm) There are just four tables shoehorned into an old watchtower at this darling restaurant five minutes' walk north of the Alexander Palace, so you must book. In summer they have outdoor tables too. You're bound to find something on its extensive menu to please and the atmosphere and service can't be beaten.

Getting There & Away

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

Infrequent suburban 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 to either place.

From Detskoe Selo station **marshrutky** (R10, 5 minutes) frequently run the couple of kilometres 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 the park at Pavlovsk is recommended.

GATCHINA ГАТЧИНА

☎ 81371

Notable for its weathered limestone exterior, much less florid than other imperial palaces, **Gatchina** (☎ 13492; www.alexanderpalace.org/gatchina; adult/child R200/100; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), 45km southwest of St Petersburg, was a gift from Catherine the Great to her lover Grigory Orlov for helping her get rid of her husband Peter III. It was later passed on to Catherine and Peter's son Paul I.

Gutted during WWII, only a small portion of the palace, which is shaped in a graceful curve around a central turret, has been reopened since restoration work began in 1985. The handful of state rooms on the first floor are impressive, as is the small chapel still under restoration. The most interesting feature is a 135m-long tunnel running from the palace cellar to the ornamental lake; the entrance is beside the small exhibition of antique firearms.

The best reason for coming here is to wander around the attractive **park** which has many winding paths through birch groves and across bridges to islands in the lake. Look out for the **Birch House** (Beriozoy Dom), with a façade made of birch logs, and the ruined **Eagle Pavilion** (Pavilion Orla).

In the nearby town there are a couple of interesting churches. The baroque **Pavlovsky Sobor** (ul Sobornaya), at the end of the main pedestrianised shopping street, has a grandly restored interior with a soaring central dome. A short walk west is the **Pokrovsky Sobor**, a red-brick building with bright blue domes.

Hungry? Take your pick from either **Dom Khleba** (ul Sobornaya 2; ☎ 8am-8pm), a good bak-

ery and café that's handy for a snack or for picnic supplies, or **Kafe Piramida** (ul Sobornaya 3A; mains R80; ☎ 10am-11pm), a public place serving simple Russian meals with some outdoor seats on the pedestrian street.

Infrequent suburban trains run to Gatchina (R30, one hour) from Baltisky vokzal. The palace is a couple of hundred meters directly east of the station. It is easier to take the metro to Moskovskaya vokzal and then hop on express bus K18 (R25, 40 mins) which runs roughly every half-hour to the palace entrance. Alternatively there are several **marshrutky** (R30, 40 mins) shuttling between Moskovskaya vokzal and Gatchina, stopping along pr 25 Oktyabrya from where the park and palace are immediately to the west.

KRONSHTADT КРОНШТАДТ

☎ 812 / pop 45,100

Within a year of founding St Petersburg, Peter – desirous of protecting his new Baltic toehold – started work on the fortress of Kronshtadt on Kotlin Island, 29km out in the Gulf of Finland. It's been a pivotal Soviet and Russian naval base ever since, and was closed to foreigners until 1996.

The main reason to visit here is to see the unusual and beautiful **Naval Cathedral** (Morskoy Sobor). Built between 1903 and 1913 to honour Russian naval muscle, this neo-Byzantine-styled wonder stands on Yakornaya pl (Anchor sq), where you'll also find an eternal flame for all of Kronshtadt's sailors, and the florid Art Nouveau monument of Admiral Makarov. The intricately detailed façade (anchors and all) repays close inspection, while inside a section of the cathedral houses the mildly interesting **Central Naval Museum** (☎ 236 4713; admission R300/100; ☎ 11am-5.15pm Wed-Sun).

Otherwise, Kronshtadt is pleasant to stroll around. In the harbourside **Petrovsky Park**, 700m southwest of the cathedral, there's a statue of Peter the Great and you can glimpse Russian warships and even some submarines: be careful about taking photographs though. For a drink or snack try **Skazka** (pr Lenina 31; ☎ 10am-11pm), a cute café on the main drag decorated with Disney characters.

In recent summers, Kronshtadt and some of the surrounding sea forts have been the scene of big dance parties – check the

THE KRONSHTADT MUTINY

In 1921 Kronshtadt was the scene of a short-lived mutiny against the Bolsheviks, one of the last overt signs of opposition to the revolution until *perestroika* (restructure). The Red Army sailors stationed there, ironically, were the most revolutionary, pro-Bolshevik element in 1917; Trotsky called them 'the pride and glory of the Russian Revolution'.

Four years later, hungry and poor, the sailors set up a Provisional Revolutionary Committee and drafted a resolution demanding, among other things, an end to Lenin's harsh War Communism. Red Army attempts to stifle the mutiny were at first repulsed, but on 16 March 1921 the mutineers were defeated when 50,000 troops crossed the ice from Petrograd and massacred nearly the entire naval force. Though bloodily suppressed, the event did cause Lenin to relax state pressure and scrap War Communism, marking the end of the Russian revolutionary movement.

St Petersburg media (p228) for details of events here.

Catch bus 510 to Kronshtadt from metro Staraya Derevnaya (R20, 30 minutes) or take a **marshrutka** from metro Chyornaya Rechka; exit the station to your left and cross the street to find the stop. In Kronshtadt, the bus stop is on the corner of ul Grazhdanskaya and pr Lenina. From there it's about a 1km walk southeast to the Naval Cathedral.

VYBORG ВЫБОРГ

☎ 81378 / pop 81,000

Pronounced Vih-bork, this Gulf of Finland port and rail junction, 174km northwest of St Petersburg and just 30km from the Finnish border, is an appealing provincial town dominated by a medieval castle and peppered with decaying Finnish Art Nouveau buildings and romantic cobblestone streets.

The border has jumped back and forth around Vyborg for most of its history. Peter the Great added it to Russia in 1710. A century later it fell within autonomous Finland, and after the revolution it remained part of independent Finland. Since then the Finns have called it Viipuri. Stalin took

Market (☎ 8am-6pm) Just north of the Round Tower, this market has fresh produce for a picnic.

Getting There & Away

Suburban trains for Vyborg leave from St Petersburg's Finlyandsky vokzal (R98, 2½ hours), usually early in the morning and in the late afternoon. The best service is the 87 *Baltika* leaving at around 7.50am (R128). It has comfy seats and a buffet. Returning from Vyborg, good trains include the 88 at 10am, 96 at 3.15pm and 98 at 8.13pm.

All buses between St Petersburg and Helsinki stop at Vyborg. There are also several buses a day to/from Vyborg (R130, 2½ hours). From St Petersburg, they leave Avtovokzal No 2 and stop in front of metro pl Lenina, on ul Botkinskaya.

STARAYA LADOGA СТАРАЯ ЛАДОГА

☎ 81363 / pop 3000

Although you'd hardly guess it now the tranquil village of Staraya (Old) Ladoga, 125km east of St Petersburg on the winding banks of the Volkhov River, was once an active participant in the very birth of the Russian nation (see boxed text, below). Today there's little to see along its quiet streets other than an ancient fortress, several churches and some prettily painted wooden cottages. It makes for a pleasant escape from St Petersburg, particularly in summer when a swim in the river adds to the charm.

Dating from around the 8th century, the town was known only as Ladoga until 1704 when Peter the Great founded Novaya (New) Ladoga to the north, as a transfer point for the materials arriving to build St

Petersburg. Protected as a national reserve, the town's basic structure and street patterns have remained virtually unchanged since the 12th century, give or take a few ugly Soviet blocks.

Sights

Everything of interest lies along the main street Volkhovsky pr. The highlight is the **fortress** (☎ 49331; free; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 9.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Sep-Apr) at the southern end of the village and with an excellent view along the river. Within its partially ruined 7m-thick walls you'll find the stone **St George's Church** (admission R30), only open May to October, to protect the delicate 12th-century frescoes still visible on its walls, and the cute wooden **Church of Dimitri Solun**. Inside the fortress' main tower is the **Historical-Architectural & Archaeological Museum** (admission R25) housing an interesting retrospective of the area's history including a scale model of how the fortress once looked, items found on archaeological digs and English explanations.

At one time, six monasteries worked in this small region. Now only the **Nikolisky Monastery** (☎ 9am-7pm), 500m south of the fortress, remains; it's in the process of being rebuilt, the main church and bell tower now looking quite handsome.

Atop the hill at the north end of the village the striking blue, onion-domed **John the Baptist Church** (☎ 9am-6pm), dating from 1694, is in much better repair, the frescos and iconostasis inside being particularly colourful. Nearby, beside the river banks, is an ancient burial mound and, beneath the church, caves where glass was once made.

RUSSIA'S ANCIENT CAPITAL

Just as the origins of Rus are continually debated, so will Staraya Ladoga's status as 'Russia's first capital'. Nevertheless, its age (historians have given 753 as the village's birthdate) and significance remain uncontested.

When the Scandinavian Viking Rurik, along with his relatives Truvor and Sineus, swept into ancient Russia in 862, he built a wooden fortress at present-day Staraya Ladoga and made this his base. You can see Rurik in a colourful mosaic on the side of the village school. Locals even claim the tumulus on the banks of the Volkhov River at the northern end of the village is the grave of Oleg, Rurik's successor.

Archaeological expeditions continue to uncover a wealth of information about the town's past. In 1997, a second 9th-century fortress was discovered 2km outside the village. Evidence of Byzantine cultural influences in the frescoes of the village's 12th-century churches point to the town as a cultural as well as historical and commercial crossroad.

Eating

There are no hotels in Staraya Ladoga and just a handful of eating options. In the past the food and ambience at Ladya, above the village's general store, was good but it was closed for repairs at the time or research.

An alternative is the café-bar **Nochnaya Ptitsa** (Volkhovsky pr; mains R30; ☎ 3pm-3am Mon-Thu, noon-3am Fri-Sun), a 100m north of the fortress. The food is nothing to write home about but its nicely decorated inside and has an outdoor seating area in summer.

Getting There & Away

Take one of the frequent *elektrichka* (suburban train) to Volkhov (the Volkhovstroy I station) from Moscow station in St Petersburg (R70, 2½ hours). From Volkhov, take the hourly bus or minibus 23 (R13, 20 minutes) headed towards Novaya Ladoga from the main bus stop outside the station, just across the square. Get off when you see the fortress.

NIZHNEVIRSKY NATURE RESERVE

НИЖНЕСВИРСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ ЗАПОВЕДНИК

On the southeastern shore of Lake Ladoga, the 414 sq km **Nizhnesvirsky Nature Reserve** (☎ 8126-420 5201; orlan@orlan.spb.su), 175km from St Petersburg, is an important stopover for migratory birds and home to a variety of animals, among them the Lake Ladoga ringed seal, a freshwater subspecies particular to the area. Arrangements to visit the reserve can be made directly, or through the American Association for the Support of Ecological Initiatives (AASEI). In St Petersburg call the AASEI's local branch **ADONIS** (☎ 812-307 0918; alexk@aasei.spb.su), or contact director Bill Wasch at its **US headquarters** (☎ 860-346 2967; www.wesleyan.edu/aasei).

KONEVETS ISLAND ОСТРОВОК КОНЕВЕЦ

An unusual overnight excursion is to Konevets Island, around 100km north of St Petersburg, close to the western shore of Lake Ladoga. The beautiful sky-blue domed monastery here was founded in 1393 by Arseny Konevetsky. The island was part of Finland between world wars, while in Soviet times, it became an off-limits military base (the base is still there). The monastery reopened in the early 1990s and has since undergone massive restoration with Finnish funding.

As well as the main Kremlin grounds there are several charmingly decorated wooden chapels in nearby forests, including one on a huge boulder; this was the site of pagan horse-slaughtering rituals. The rest of the island is very peaceful, with clean beaches and lots of forests to wander through.

The easiest way to the island is on a one-day tour (R580), held most Sundays, and organised by the monastery's St Petersburg office (Map pp234-5; ☎ 571 8079; www.konevets.spb.ru, in Russian; Zagorodny pr 7; ☎ Vladimirskaya). The tours depart around 9am from the metro station Ozerki. Two-day tours are scheduled once a month or during festivals and include accommodation. You can also contact the monastery about overnight accommodation on the island; they run a couple of simple guesthouses for pilgrims (R200 per night).

By public transport take a suburban train from Finlyandsky vokzal to Sosnovo, then a bus to Vladimirovka, then try to hire a boat to sail the 5km to the island, a total trip of around seven hours.

The monastery's website has a good map of the island and check the Wandering Camera website (www.enlight.ru/camera/290/index_e.html) for a visual preview of what you'll see there.

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