

PRACTICAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Russian visa

All foreigners visiting Russia require a Russian visa. The list of required documents depends on the nationality of the applicant and type of visa. Among them are visa invitation from a Russian citizen or a company (sometimes called a voucher for tourist visas), which is then taken to a Russian Consulate, where the actual visa is issued. Russian visa processing fees vary according to the applicant's citizenship and the Russian Consulate applied to.

Within seven working days of arrival in Russia, the visa should be registered by the hotel or at a local registration office (UFMS). Registration is important because people lacking registration may have trouble leaving the country.

Customs conditions

When planning your trip to Russia and then, when shopping during the trip, it's important to know the things that you can bring into and take out of Russia. Russian customs rules are similar to those in the West, still there might be some surprises. Please study the following information below to make sure you are on a safe way:

- You can bring to Russia amount equal to 10000 USD, up to 3 liters of alcohol, 250 g of tobacco, 5 kg of plant products;
- You can take out of Russia 10000 USD, 5 kg of fish and seafood, 250 g of caviar;
- You need special permission for guns, strong medicines, precious metals and stones, and items of cultural value.

Special permission on transportation of goods.

Some products require mandatory documentary support. You should provide certificates from the relevant authorities proving that the goods are being transported legally. Please be attentive if you are planning to bring in or take out of Russia anything from the following list:

- **Items of cultural value.** Cultural valuables may include: Artworks, including applied art and sculptures; Icons, prints, and lithographs; Valuable manuscripts, rare books and antique weapons; Antique scientific and technical equipment and tools; Antique coins, postage stamps and medals; Archival photographs, phonorecords, film recordings, and video archives; Unique and rare musical instruments; and other items protected by the Russian Government as the country's historical and cultural heritage.
- **Plants or animals** on the verge of extinction;
- **Vehicles;**
- State **awards and medals** of the Russian Federation;
- Precious **metals and stones;**
- **Guns**, explosives, ammunition;
- **Strong medicines** (anesthetics, sleeping pills, etc.), psychotropic or narcotic medicines, poisons, strong sedatives.

Currency and tipping

The currency used in Russia is called the Russian ruble. You can withdraw the money in rubles from ATMs which is the easiest and best way to get local currency. There are plenty ATMs around, therefore you don't really need to take much cash with you. Credit and debit cards are accepted almost everywhere and with a bit of planning in advance you can reduce the costs for monetary transactions to a minimum.

You can bring dollars or Euros to Russia, but it can be difficult to find a place to exchange other currencies. Keep in mind that exchange places at the airport will likely give you a bad rate, so try to wait until you're in the city.

Everywhere you are still expected to pay in rubles, and you will see that on your bill. Some places do accept euros / dollars. Restaurants at the airport and in touristy areas as well as hostels and hotels sometimes offer to take euros or dollars instead of rubles, although this is considered illegal.

As for tipping, in restaurants and cafés with table service, you tip around 10%. The amount you tip taxi drivers and bartenders is totally up to you, it is also ok not to tip if you are not satisfied with the services provided.

The best time to come

The best time to visit Russia is from May to September in terms of weather. Temperatures range from 21C-32C in the day to 10C-21C at night. Be aware that spring and autumn are unpredictable with snow flurries showing up in May and September, and mud ensuing. Take along with you waterproof shoes and a jacket. Please be aware that it's a high season and hotels prices depend on the season, day and flight availability. In Moscow, summers are usually splendid with daytime temperatures 20 to 30 Celcium. St. Petersburg can get a little chillier and, being near the coast, there is a chance of rain but a light jacket or mackintosh should be more than sufficient.

Taxi in Russia

In St. Petersburg and Moscow, Yandex.Taxi and Uber are among the most common taxi companies. Their apps are reliable and easy to use. If you already have an Uber account, you won't have any problems using it in Russia's bigger cities. TAXI is incredibly cheap, for about \$10-15 per taxi from the airport is absolutely no problem, if you know the right way to do it. The easiest way to take a taxi in Russia is to order it via a taxi app.

Food and drinks

Russia is a multinational, multicultural state with many different cuisines. There is also a huge variety available in Russia's supermarkets, and with a little effort you will be able to cook your favourite meal.

An average meal at a modest restaurant should cost around 500 roubles (just over \$8), with a three-course meal at a mid-range establishment costing 2,000 roubles (\$30). But of course, this varies enormously depending on the city, cuisine, and even the time of day. A Business lunch option which includes a multi-course meal and a drink is offered at many restaurants – usually between 300-500 roubles.

You will of course find a huge number of Russian restaurants in every town and city, commonly serving traditional dishes such as soups, salads, dumplings, and meat and fish dishes.

Drinking tap water in Russia is not advised, but hotels generally provide free bottled water. Alcohol is relatively cheap in Russia - a pint of beer can be purchased for around 250 roubles (\$4) and a glass of decent wine for 300 roubles (\$5).