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Peter the Great's Summer Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia

By Rick Chapo

During the communist reign in Russia, architectural styles could best be described as bland. Fortunately, the summer palace of Peter the Great wasn't affected.

Peterhof

Known as Peterhof, the summer palace of Peter the Great is a very impressive area. The palace is arranged with a central rectangle format over roughly two or three acres. This area is then surrounded by areas of wood and nature as the Russians call it. Peterhof stands out like a jewel among the bland communist structures found in greater St. Petersburg.

Fountains, Fountains, Fountains

At the time of construction in 1715, Peter the Great was clearly in his fountain phase. Peterhof isn't so much a palace as a collection of some of the most impressive fountains you've ever seen. There are fountains in the front, back, each side, in the bathroom and so on. All of them are impressive and worth a look.

Foremost of the fountains of Peterhof is the Great Cascade. Arriving from St. Petersburg by boat, one is offloaded on a long pier at the end of the Grand Canal. The Grand Canal cuts through the woods surrounding Peterhof directly to the front of the palace. As you proceed, you start to notice something big and colorful at the front of the palace. Welcome to the Great Cascade.

The Great Cascade sits at the base of Peterhof and is more impressive than the palace. Created in the Baroque style, the Great Cascade is hard to describe. At its base is a pool a large pool with rock platforms crowned by golden statues spouting water. Rising up from the pool to the palace are two sets of steps surrounding a plateau. The steps are a combination of black marble inlaid with gold and white marble. The steps are crowned with statues and, again, fountains, which make them a combination of sprouting water and cascading falls. All of this is built up on a collection of rock and rises over 30 feet to the base of the palace. As I said, the Great Cascade is hard to describe. If you would like to see it, just do a search for Peterhof on your search engine of choice.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about the Great Cascade is the power source. With fountains blowing water thirty to fifty feet in the air, there must be some serious pump action at work? Nope. Peter the Great created a system that runs entirely off gravity. Great, indeed!

Day trips to Peterhof are hocked something fierce in St. Petersburg. While I usually disdain tourist traps, this is one you should definitely see.

Rick Chapo is with

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Now Is The Time To Travel To Russia

By Frank Johnson

For a country that encompasses an area of over 10.5 million square miles, it is no coincidence most people know very little about Russia, aside, of course, from textbook blurbs of Tsarist rule, Mongolian raids, bloody revolutions and snowy, desolate Steppes. The mere expanse of the Russian border makes the country a more versatile destination than any other place in the world. Visit the arctic zone and navigate through sub-tropical regions without ever leaving the country! A closer look and a few tips can subdue your fear and pique your interest to travel to Russia.

Western Russia: Travel to Russia's Heart and Soul

Western Russia includes Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) and the Black and Caspian Seas, making this region the commercial and political core of the nation. Initially the capital of Russia, St. Petersburg was built by Peter the Great and is filled with both haunting and enchanting remnants of a time past. St. Petersburg is certainly the most European and best preserved city, adorned with stately architecture and regal cathedrals that echo of a romantic and prestigious era. In the early 20th century, the capital moved away from the European border to Moscow where the Kremlin, Red Square and Lenin's Mausoleum (where you can view his embalmed body!) stand as testaments to Russia's rocky history. In the Southwest, Volgograd is traditionally accepted as the origin of the Russian Empire and was fortified in the 1500s to protect tsarist Russia's southern border from

Cossack and Viking pillages. With these bases covered, leave the crowds behind and head east into a land with a history all its own.

Travel Russia from Europe to Asia

There is nothing quite like seeing six thousand miles of land in a single trip. The epic journey aboard the Trans–Siberian Railway is for those who consider the journey to be just as magical as the destination. The longest continuous rail line on the planet takes you from metropolitan Moscow through vast steppes and the Siberian taiga, the largest remaining forest in the world, to finally arrive in the commercial bustle of Russia's main Pacific port city, Vladivostok. Three alternate routes and several extensions into European and Asian nations have also been constructed and provide more options to travel Russia's breadth.

Many travel restrictions have been lifted since the 1990s and it is now possible to arrange overnight stays in many of the fascinating towns and breathtaking landscapes along the way. Make sure to spend a moment in the Siberian town of Ulan Ude, Russia's main Buddhist center, and visit the Tibetan Buddhist monastery that has been restored since the oppressive rule of Stalin. The Baikal Lake region is also a very popular stop and a perfect place to be immersed in the natural beauty of Russia's heartland. Baikal Lake is the oldest in the world, estimated at 25–30 million years old. The lake region is home to over 2,500 animal species including a unique Siberian species of freshwater seal and thousands of migratory birds.

Accessibility is the new attitude toward foreign tourism in Russia. A society that has long been closed–off, particularly to westerners, is now ready to embrace curious visitors with open arms. There has never been a better time to travel Russia!

For more information on travel to Russia and other destinations in Europe, and discount airfare to Russia, visit

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