

Arctic Explorer - Quest for the Northern Lights: St. Petersburg-Moscow

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Overview

The Highlights

- Nature's most spectacular and magical light show – the Northern Lights.
- Guest astronomer on hand to advise during star-gazing.
- All drinks, meals, gratuities, private airport transfers, more, included.
- The historic city of Vladimir, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The grandeur of Moscow's Kremlin, the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber and the somber and evocative site of Lenin's tomb.

- King Crab Safari in Kirkenes.

The Tour

The Arctic Explorer: Quest for the Northern Lights journey takes you from stunning to the far north in search of the magnificent Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). Travel aboard Russia's premier train, the incomparable [Golden Eagle](#). Spend two nights in Kirkenes, truly experiencing the Arctic, with a sleigh ride across the ice, ice-fishing demonstration, husky dog sledge ride and a drink at the Snow Hotel's snow bar.

Itinerary

Day 1: St. Petersburg

Upon arrival into St. Petersburg, transfer to the luxurious Four Seasons hotel (or similar) for a two-night stay. This evening, enjoy a welcome champagne reception and meet your fellow travelers. Specially selected international wines are included with dinner, as with all meals during the tour.

Day 2: St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg is a stunning city, crowded with splendid palaces, impressive historical monuments, wide boulevards, and beautiful bridges, and is renowned as the Ballet Capital of the World.

Enjoy a guided tour of Catherine's Palace in Pushkin and the Hermitage Museum, the former Winter Palace of the Tsars, which houses the royal art collection containing over three million works. It is one of the world's largest and most impressive art museums.

Make your evening in St. Petersburg extra special by purchasing a ticket for a ballet or opera performance at the world-renowned Marinsky Theatre (subject to schedule and availability and pre-booked six weeks prior to departure).

Day 3: St. Petersburg

Today there is a tour of St Petersburg featuring the key sights including St. Isaac's Cathedral and Nevsky Prospect.

This afternoon we transfer to the station to board Russia's premier train, the *Golden Eagle*, and settle into our modern, stylish cabins to embark upon our rail adventure to the Arctic Circle. We have a unique opportunity to celebrate our arrival with a signature Gala Caviar Dinner in the beautifully-designed restaurant car. Enjoy complimentary champagne, international wines and live musical entertainment.

Day 4: Crossing the Arctic Circle

Today will be a leisurely day to enjoy the train's amenities and the winter scenery. Our Guest Astronomer will host an afternoon tea with freshly baked Russian cakes, and talk about the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in our stylish Bar Lounge Car.

Day 5: Kirkenes & Northern Lights

This morning leave the train with an overnight bag at the Russian border station of Nikel, and transfer by bus (90 minutes drive) across the Russian/Norwegian border to Kirkenes for a two-night stay at the Thon Hotel (or similar).

We will visit the magical Snow Hotel, which is just 9 miles (15 km) outside Kirkenes. We'll have a welcome drink in the snow bar, and a tour of the Snow Hotel, with its ice sculptures and snow paintings by local and international artists. After a traditional meal including a reindeer hot dog in the snow hotel's warm lodge restaurant, we'll take an evening bus tour in search of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). If the sky is clear, our guest astronomer will lead star-gazing.

Upgrade to Snow Hotel: For the "coolest" lodgings around, choose to overnight at the Snow Hotel (at additional cost). Upgrades to the snow hotel are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment. The snow hotel stays at a constant minus five degrees centigrade and thermal sleeping bags are provided. Showers, toilets and a Scandinavian sauna are provided in a building next to the snow hotel.

Day 6: Kirkenes & Northern Lights

This morning, a unique winter experience awaits on our King Crab Safari. The excursion begins with a snowmobile-drawn sleigh ride across the frozen fjords. Warm clothing and a helmet is provided. Through a hole in the ice, your master guide will demonstrate how to catch the magnificent Arctic King Crab (which can span two yards and weigh 30+ pounds) and prepare it for cooking. We then continue by sleigh to the nearby Fisherman's Lodge, where we'll have a delicious King Crab meal by the cozy log fire.

Also included during your stay in Kirkenes is a visit to the resident reindeer and one-hour husky dog sledge ride. Each sledge is pulled by a team of eight dogs, and can seat two people, plus a driver (also called a dog musher).

Optional Activities in Kirkenes: Add a snowmobile tour or additional husky dog sledge in search of the Northern Lights. These activities have limited availability, are at additional cost, and are weather-permitting – please inquire at time of booking.

Day 7: Arctic Circle

Today we cross the border back into Russia and re-join our train which is waiting for us in Nikel. We'll spend the afternoon on board travelling through arctic Russia. Relax and enjoy the ever-changing winter landscape outside your window or chat to fellow passengers.

Day 8: Murmansk

Today we travel to Murmansk, a city halfway between Moscow and the North Pole, and 120 miles (200 km) north of the Arctic Circle. As the main city of the Kola Peninsula, it started as a tiny settlement and Arctic trading post. Murmansk was founded in 1916 under pressure from the British to establish a port. Thanks to the influence of the Gulf Stream, the port is ice-free year-round. It is the home port of Russia's nuclear-powered icebreakers, and we'll visit the Nuclear Icebreaker Museum Ship.

Day 9: Petrozavodsk

Petrozavodsk stretches along the western shore of Lake Onega – the second-largest lake in Europe. It is one of the major cultural and industrial centres of the North-West of Russia and is the capital of the Republic of Karelia.

Day 10: Moscow

Morning arrival into Moscow. Visit Red Square, an iconic symbol of Russia's former military and political might with its eclectic mix of fascinating architecture, including the ornate St Basil's Cathedral's magnificent onion-domed spires, the beautiful façade of the world famous GUM Department store, constructed in Tsarist times, and the somber and evocative site of Lenin's tomb. Our touring program also takes us to the Kremlin — the spiritual, historical and political heart of Moscow — and to see the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber.

Spend two nights at the five-star Four Seasons (or similar). Superbly located in Moscow's city center, and within easy walking distance of Red Square, the Kremlin, and the Bolshoi Theatre, this historic hotel offers spacious and luxurious accommodation.

Day 11: Vladimir & Suzdal

Today we travel by regular train to the historic city of Vladimir, which was founded in 990 and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and one of Russia's oldest communities. Our tour takes in Uspensky Cathedral, built between the 12th and 15th centuries. It is considered one of the most important and beautiful of Russian cathedrals, where many of the prominent Russian Tsars were crowned.

From Vladimir we travel to Suzdal, one of Russia's most perfectly-preserved walled cities dating back to 1024, located 22 miles (35 km) from Vladimir. Visit the atmospheric St Euthymius Monastery to witness an enchanting choral performance by the resident monks. Finish with a horse-drawn sleigh ride through this stunning location.

This evening we return to Moscow to enjoy our farewell dinner.

Day 12: Moscow

Breakfast in the hotel brings the tour to a close. Airport transfers are provided for your departure flights.

Why not extend your stay in Moscow to explore more of the city at your leisure? Please inquire.

Reverse itinerary

Day 1: Moscow

Upon arrival into Moscow, you will be met and transferred to the luxurious Four Seasons Moscow (or similar) for a two-night stay. This evening, you are invited to a champagne reception to meet your fellow travelers, followed by an exclusive Welcome Dinner. Specially selected international wines are included with dinner, as with all meals during the tour.

Day 2: Vladimir & Suzdal

Today, we enjoy first-class train travel to the historic city of Vladimir, which was founded in 990 and is one of Russia's oldest communities. With an architectural wealth, it has been decreed a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our tour takes in Uspensky Cathedral, built between the 12th and 15th centuries. It is considered one of the most important and beautiful Russian cathedrals, where many of the prominent Russian Tsars were crowned.

From Vladimir, travel to Suzdal, one of Russia's most perfectly preserved walled cities dating back to 1024, located about 20 miles from Vladimir. Here we visit the atmospheric St. Euthymius Monastery to witness an enchanting choral performance by the resident monks. No Russian winter experience would be complete without the horse-drawn sleigh ride through this stunning location.

Day 3: Moscow

Today is dedicated to exploring Moscow. First we visit Red Square, an iconic symbol of Russia's former military and political might, with its eclectic mix of fascinating architecture, such as the ornate St Basil's Cathedral's magnificent onion-domed spires, the beautiful façade of the world famous GUM Department store constructed in Tsarist times, and the somber, evocative site of Lenin's tomb. Continue to the Kremlin – the spiritual, historical and political heart of Moscow – and see the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber.

Tonight we board the Golden Eagle train to begin our extraordinary journey to the Arctic Circle. We have a unique opportunity to celebrate New Year's Eve on board at our signature Gala Caviar Dinner in the beautifully designed restaurant car, specially decorated tonight for our celebration. Enjoy complimentary champagne, international wines and live musical entertainment for a New Year's Eve you won't forget.

Day 4: On board the Golden Eagle

Happy New Year! Enjoy a relaxed start to the new year with a full day to relax on board our comfortable train. Our guest astronomer will host an afternoon tea with freshly baked Russian cakes in our stylish bar car, discussing the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights).

Day 5: Murmansk

Continue to Murmansk, a city halfway between Moscow and the North Pole, and 120 miles north of the Arctic Circle. As the main city of the Kola Peninsula, it started as a tiny settlement and Arctic trading post. In 1916, under pressure from the British to establish a support port, Murmansk was founded. Thanks to the influence of the Gulf Stream, the port is ice-free year-round. Homeport to Russia's nuclear-powered icebreakers, we'll visit the Nuclear Icebreaker Museum Ship.

Day 6: Kirkenes

This morning, leave the train with an overnight bag at the Russian border station of Nikel, and transfer by bus (90 minute drive) across the Russian/Norwegian border to Kirkenes for a two night stay at the Thon Hotel (or similar).

We will visit the magical Snow Hotel, which is just 9 miles outside Kirkenes. Enjoy a welcome drink in the snow bar and a tour of the unique hotel, with its ice sculptures and snow paintings by local and international artists. After a traditional meal in the snow hotel's warm lodge restaurant, we'll take an evening bus tour in search of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). If the sky is clear, our guest astronomer will be on hand to advise us during star-gazing.

Upgrade to Snow Hotel: For the "coolest" lodgings around, choose to overnight at the Snow Hotel (at additional cost). Upgrades to the snow hotel are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment. The snow hotel stays at a constant minus five degrees centigrade and thermal sleeping bags are provided. Showers, toilets and a Scandinavian sauna are provided in a building next to the snow hotel.

Day 7: Kirkenes

This morning, a unique winter experience awaits on our King Crab Safari. The excursion begins with a snowmobile-drawn sleigh ride across the frozen fjords. Warm clothing and a helmet is provided. Through a hole in the ice, your master guide will demonstrate how to catch the magnificent Arctic King Crab (which can span two yards and weigh up to 33 pounds) and prepare it for cooking. We then continue by sleigh to the nearby Fisherman's Lodge, where we'll have a delicious King Crab meal by the cozy log fire.

Also included during your stay in Kirkenes is a visit to the resident reindeer and one-hour husky dog sledge ride. Each sledge is pulled by a team of eight dogs, and can seat two people, plus a driver (also called a dog musher).

Optional Activities in Kirkenes: Add a snowmobile tour or additional husky dog sledge in search of the Northern Lights. These activities have limited availability, are at additional cost, and are weather-permitting – please inquire at time of booking.

Day 8: Nikel Murmansk

Today, we cross the border back into Russia and re-join the Golden Eagle, which is waiting for us in Nikel Murmansk.

We'll spend the afternoon on board traveling through Arctic Russia. Relax and chat to fellow passengers while taking afternoon tea with freshly baked Russian cookies, served in the stylish bar lounge car.

Day 9: Petrozavodsk

Petrozavodsk stretches along the western shore of Lake Onega, the second largest lake in Europe. It is one of the major cultural and industrial centers of the North-West of Russia and is the capital of the Republic of Karelia.

We take a city tour and then celebrate Sochelnik (Russian Christmas Eve) with a traditional Russian Christmas Eve meal, known as the Holy Supper. As always, a generous allowance of international wine and drinks are included with dinner as we celebrate together.

Day 10: St. Petersburg

Today will see Russians celebrate their Christmas Day and the city of St. Petersburg will be beautifully decorated for Rozhdestvo (Russian Christmas).

We are scheduled for a morning arrival into St. Petersburg, a stunning city crowded with splendid palaces, impressive historical monuments, wide boulevards and beautiful bridges. It is also known as the Ballet Capital of the World. We'll check in to the Four Seasons Lion Palace (or similar) for a two-night stay.

Optional Activities: Make one of your evenings in St. Petersburg extra special by purchasing a ticket for a ballet or opera performance at the world-famous Marinsky Theatre. These performances have limited availability and are at additional cost – please inquire at time of booking.

Day 11: St. Petersburg

Today, enjoy a guided tour of Catherine's Palace in Pushkin and the incomparable Hermitage Museum—the former Winter Palace of the Tsars—which houses the royal art collection of over three million works. It is one of the world's largest and most impressive art museums. Our city tour continues to St. Petersburg other key sights, such as St. Isaac's Cathedral and Nevsky Prospect.

Tonight, we enjoy a farewell dinner as we reflect on the experiences we have enjoyed over the last 11 days together.

Day 12: St. Petersburg

After breakfast, transfers to the airport or train station will be provided.

Dates & Prices

2023 Pricing - February Departure

ACCOMMODATION	DOUBLE	SINGLE	DEPOSIT
Silver Class	\$13,795	\$20,695	\$1,750
Gold Class	\$17,195	\$28,395	\$3,000
Imperial Suite	\$29,195	\$56,995	\$6,000

All prices are per person.

2023 dates are tentative and subject to change.

2024 Pricing - December Departure

ACCOMMODATION	DOUBLE	SINGLE	DEPOSIT
Silver Class	\$16,295	\$24,495	\$1,750
Gold Class	\$20,395	\$33,695	\$3,000
Imperial Suite	\$34,695	\$67,695	\$6,000

All prices are per person.

2024 dates and prices are tentative and are subject to change.

More

To keep you warm in the Siberian winter when you are off the train, we provide complimentary hats, Russian traditional felt boots and gloves, specially designed to keep out the worst of the cold. And they are yours to keep!