



Quest for the Northern Lights - Arctic Explorer

**This rail tour is currently on a "Stop Sell" basis. Take in the beautiful cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as exploring deep into the Russian and Norwegian Arctic Circle on this luxury, private train, in pursuit of the magnificent Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights).



12 days/11 nights

ITINERARY

Day 1: Moscow, Russia

Flight arrivals into Moscow and transfer to the luxurious Four Seasons Moscow (or similar) situated on Red Square for one night. This evening you are invited to a champagne drinks reception with the opportunity to meet your fellow travellers before our exclusive Welcome Dinner. Specially selected international wines are included with dinner, as with all meals during the tour.

At the start of your adventure why not extend your stay in Moscow with pre-tour nights to explore more of the city at your leisure and enjoy the lively atmosphere of the Christmas markets or go ice skating on one of the outdoor rinks in the central squares?

Day 2: Moscow, Russia

Today 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 sombre and evocative site of Lenin's tomb.

We'll also take a tour of the opulent and unique stations of the Moscow metro - showpieces of Socialist art furnished with statues, frescoes and mosaics, unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

Day 3: Vladimir & Suzdal, Russia

The historic city of Vladimir 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. What better place to spend Rozhdestvo (Russian Christmas), celebrated today? Our tour takes in Uspensky Cathedral, built between the twelfth and fifteenth 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 35 kilometres 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 is New Year's Eve on the December departures, with special programming.

Day 4: Relaxing day on-board

On the December trips, today we have the opportunity to have a relaxed start to New Year's Day and to unwind after our evening of celebration. On both December and January departures start your day with a sumptuous breakfast. Spend the day reflecting on the many sights we are about to experience on our rail journey, maybe listen to a talk or



simply relax and enjoy the ever-changing winter landscape outside our window. Today our train crosses the Arctic Circle on our quest to see the Northern Lights.

Day 5: Murmansk

We will 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 of Russia's nuclear-powered icebreakers we'll visit the Nuclear Icebreaker Museum Ship.

Day 6: Kirkenes & Northern Lights, Norway

This morning we leave our train with an overnight bag at the Russian border station of Nikel and we 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 just 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 in the snow hotel's Hoyloftet 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 and will bring the night sky to life with his extensive knowledge.

Optional Activities in Kirkenes: You may like to book some additional optional activities such as an evening snowmobile tour (3 hours) or husky dog sledge tour (2 hours) in search of the Northern Lights. Each sledge is pulled by a team of eight dogs, and can seat two people and a driver called a dog musher. These activities have limited places and are weather permitting – please request at the time of booking the tour. Contact us for prices.

For a really memorable experience why not choose the 'coolest' hotel check-in around and stay overnight at the Snow Hotel? 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, Norway

This morning a unique winter experience awaits on our King Crab Safari. The excursion begins with a snowmobile-drawn sleigh 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 metres and weigh upto 15kgs) and prepare it for cooking. We then continue by sleigh to the nearby Fisherman's Lodge, where the crabs you catch will be prepared and cooked for you. It is here you can enjoy your delicious King Crab meal by the cosy log fire.

This afternoon we return to the Snow Hotel to see the resident reindeers and visit the biggest husky dog farm in eastern Finnmark or return to Kirkenes Village for a walking tour.

Day 8: Nikel Murmansk

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

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. Afternoon tea with freshly baked Russian cookies will be served in our stylish Bar Lounge Car.

Day 9: Petrozavodsk, Russia & Sochelnik (Russian Christmas Eve)

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.

We take a city tour with local folk entertainment, followed by a traditional Russian meal, with a generous allowance of international wine and drinks included with our dinner.

For the December trips today is Sochelnik (Russian Christmas Eve). We take a city tour and then celebrate Sochelnik (Russian Christmas Eve) with a Karelian Folk Performance and continue our festivities 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 our dinner as we celebrate together.

Day 10: St. Petersburg, Russia - Rozhdestvo (Russian Christmas Day)

On December departures, today will see Russians celebrate their Christmas Day and the city of St. Petersburg will be beautifully decorated for Rozhdestvo (Russian Christmas).

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



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

Day 11: St. Petersburg, Russia

During our time spent in St Petersburg we have a guided tour of Catherine's Palace in Pushkin and the world-famous 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.

There is also a city tour of St Petersburg featuring the key sights including 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.

Day 12: St. Petersburg, Russia

After breakfast in the hotel our tour to the Arctic Circle finally comes to a close. Lunch, if required, would be by your own arrangement.

Flights should be booked to depart after 3pm or you may choose to extend your stay in St Petersburg to explore more of the city at your leisure, go ice skating on the open air ice rink or enjoy the continuing holiday celebrations

This rail journey may also be taken in January, 2021, starting in St. Petersburg, travelling to Norway before ending in Moscow.

Train Information

These special rail cruise itineraries are planned and operated exclusively by Golden Eagle Luxury Trains. They are dedicated to never losing sight of the little things that really matter to you, the valued guest, so that you can experience these Voyages of a Lifetime in a relaxed and informal manner. The Golden Eagle is your luxurious hotel-on-wheels. Unpack just once and settle into your well appointed and comfortable en-suite cabin as you begin this adventure by rail. One of your cabin attendants, available at all times, will be on hand to look after all of your needs.

Golden Eagle Luxury Train

Aboard your luxurious private train, you can expect well-appointed en-suite cabins, fine dining and elegant surroundings - no matter where you choose to explore. First-class service is included as standard, with a personal cabin attendant service, available at all times, to look after all of your needs. The Golden Eagle has been carefully designed with emphasis on your comfort, relaxation and enjoyment. In addition to our private en-suite sleeping cabins, we offer a beautifully appointed Bar Lounge Car and Restaurant Cars. Unwind in comfortable surroundings and watch the world go by as you get to know fellow passengers in the social heart of the Golden Eagle, the Bar Lounge Car. The perfect location to relax and unwind as you watch the ever changing scenery pass by. Reminisce the day's adventures with fellow passengers over afternoon tea or perhaps challenge your friends to a game of cards before dinner. Throughout your journey the Bar Lounge Car and Restaurant Cars will host a variety of entertaining and enriching activities such as Russian language lessons and engaging lectures on local history and culture from expert guest speakers. It is also here that our Tour Manager will organise a programme of activities for the journey ahead. Daily itineraries detailing train arrival and departure timings and information on the following day's excursions and activities will be provided, plus useful weather forecast and time zone information. As evening falls, enjoy the sounds of the resident pianist playing on the baby grand piano in the Bar Lounge Car. Each night the bar stays open until the last person leaves. Floor plans of each cabin class are available on request.

Details

Dates:

Select dates late December and early January

Prices:

Please inquire for current availability and prices.

Trip Code:

002297-W20

INCLUDED



- Experienced tour managers from arrival in St. Petersburg to departure from Moscow
- Arrival and departure transfers
- 5-star Hotel accommodation in St. Petersburg and Moscow
- Private, en-suite accommodation on-board the Golden Eagle
- Welcome and farewell dinners
- Gold Class – standard drinks from the Bar Lounge Car
- Imperial Class – standard and premium drinks from the Bar Lounge Car
- 2 nights of accommodation at Thon Hotel, Kirkenes
- Route guide, itinerary and information pack
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily
- Drinks with meals
- Guided touring as indicated in the itinerary
- Siberian felt boots, hat and scarf
- Personal headsets
- On-board doctor and medical facilities
- 24 Hour Service Attendant
- Porterage
- Gratuities to train staff and local guides

NOT INCLUDED

- Flights to St. Petersburg and from Moscow
- Passport and Visa fees, vaccinations as required
- Travel insurance
- Silver Class – drinks from the Bar Lounge Car
- Laundry
- Items of a personal nature
- Freedom of choice optional tours

TOUR NOTES

Please note: some programs may operate in reverse, beginning in Moscow and ending in St. Petersburg. Please check with us for the actual itinerary for your preferred date before booking any airfare.

At the start of your adventure why not extend your stay in St. Petersburg with pre-tour nights? This gives you time to explore more of the city at your leisure and enjoy the lively atmosphere of the Christmas markets (December departure only) or go ice skating on one of the outdoor rinks in the central squares?

Or, you may choose to extend your stay in Moscow to explore more of the city at your leisure, go ice skating on the open air ice rink at Red Square or, if you're on the December tour, enjoy the Russian Christmas celebrations.

Disclaimer: We do our utmost to ensure that information posted on our website is correct at the time of publication, however trip details are subject to change without notice by the suppliers and operators involved. We update the information as soon as possible when changes are advised to us, however, we cannot assume responsibility for such changes made by the suppliers and operators.

ROUTE MAP



ARCTIC EXPLORER ROUTE MAP

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