

Letter to Waterdown group

Hi everyone, my name is Wesley and I will be your tour leader on your tour to Russia:-)

I just wanted to introduce myself to you before I meet you in person in Moscow. I must apologise, I tried to use a camera to make a short video where I would just say all this, but I forgot the cable necessary to load it up onto the computer. So sorry about that....

Its hard to believe that its almost two years since I last travelled with Nathan Nathanovic and Waterdown. Some of you may remember following in the footsteps of the kipper onto Russian soil at Kaliningrad, if you do, you will also remember the song sung at the wolf's lair, it starts like this Hitler, had but just one ball..... some of you are whistling it right now and I am very much looking forward to meeting up with you again for some more adventure....as I am at meeting some of you for the first time. It is perhaps for some your first trip abroad, and oh my, what a first trip. Russia IS different, you may travel to lots of countries in the future but you will always remember Russia. I know that you will be well prepared and most likely I will be telling you stuff that you have already heard.

Some practicalities :

I dont expect it to be much colder in Russia than what you are already used to in Canada. Layers of clothing are the best way to go. Good shoes are of course necessary, especially as it could either be icy or very wet due to slush. Everywhere in Russia 220 Volt and 50 Hz AC current supplies are used. Most of the sockets are standard European-size. If your equipment does not already have an automatic voltage transformer you should make sure you use one before plugging in things like hairdryers, some have a switch to change over to the higher voltage used over here.

We will have a local guide in Moscow and St Petersburg, he or she will be doing sight seeing and taking us to all the included entrances and sights. We will have some free time and I am working on stuff to do during that time. We will most likely be using public transportation, this is partly wonderful, the moscow metro is itself a site, we may have to take public busses for a short distance between hotel and metro. This is a very local thing to do, and expect locals to be very surprised to see a large group of Cannucks taking local busses, its a necessity for us but also something authentic. Its never good to spend all the time in a country behind the glass window of a tour bus. However, it does mean that everyone will need to be extra vigilant regarding your personal belongings, especially on public transport and in tourist places such as along the Nevsky Prospekt- shopping street- in St Petersburg.

As of today 20 January the itinerary given to us is as follows-note that we will make up stuff for the « free time » periods, these are times when we are not with the local guides.

8 March arrival into Moscow around 4pm,meet myself and the Moscow local guide of course. I understand that the hotel transfer will be using minivans, 16 seaters. Thus there will be three minibusses taking us to the hotel, where we will have check in and evening meal.

9 March : our full day on and off the bus Moscow sight seeing, Kremlin,Red Square, Basils cathedral etc. Etc. We return to the hotel and there will be some down time before evening meal (about 2hours or so)

10 March : Today we have a large chunk of free time and I am working on things like Metro tour, visit to a statue park where you can see former Soviet leaders, it is close to Gorky Park where there maybe some fun rides, there may be chances to have some tasty blini or russian crepes along the street. I^m in touch with Mr Tidridge on this and we will come up with some great things. All our evening meals are at the hotel so we will head back there, taking in some more metro stations. This evening our guide will take us to the famous Nikulin circus, this is a great thing to do !

11 March : Today we depart for the north and St Petersburg, our train is somewhat awkwardly timed at 13.30. I am not sure how the morning will pan out on this day but we will have a transfer to the station in time for the train. We ride the sleek and fast Sapsam service, talking 3hours 40 to get to st petes where we will be met by another local guide. There is nothing planned for this day, we transfer to the hotel and have our evening meal. I have not stayed at either hotel before, I read that there are sports facilities at the st petes hotel but maybe it costs money to use them.

12 March : Full day sight seeing in ST Petersburg, including St peter paul fortress, Hermitage etc.  
Etc. Return to hotel

13 March : In the morning we have a visit to the museum of political history, check out their website <http://en.polithistory.ru/> This should be a great visit, I really hope the guide will make it as interesting as it is..... We then have « free time » for the rest of the day. I am in touch with some contacts and hoping to organise a meeting with a language school in St Petersburg. More details to follow. Of course there is tons of stuff to see and do in St Petersburg and that is also being worked on right now:-)

14 March : Today is your final day, it is also « free ».....

15 March is departure, again in 3 minibusses.

So that^s all I have for you right now... I hope you are all having a great Sunday !

Best wishes

wesley