



RUSSIA IN WINTER

*Friday, March 8th
to Monday, March 18th, 2002*

Sparkling in the snow and dramatic in the moonlight, St Petersburg, splendid capital of Peter's empire and his window on the west still captures the imagination as a city built for Tsars. We are drawn to this city of phantoms because we are seekers of dreams and the story of Imperial Russia continues to fascinate and allure.

However, by the early twentieth century, Russia had developed an extraordinary rich and diverse culture. Its music and literature took the world by storm. Its indigenous, pre-Petrine artistic traditions, rediscovered, served to enrich this cultural synthesis. Russia was a leading center, pioneering new forms of theater and generating ideas which fertilized modern design. Russian artists were responsible for evolving much of the modernity in which we live.

Our tour explores the rich heritage of St Petersburg as well as its present culture, music, dance and cuisine. The trip is led by **John Stuart**, a Russian history expert and previously Head of Sotheby's Russian Department in London. John has written

books and essays on icons and Imperial Russia, and is also the author of *St Petersburg, Portrait of an Imperial City*. Our co-host is Ivan Samarine, an expert on icons and Russian painting. He has recently written a book on Russian painting, *Seas, Cities and Dreams: The Paintings of Ivan Aivazovsky*.

Our program will take participants into the heart of the city that Peter The Great built astride the River Neva, with its neoclassical elegance, its splendid collections, its magnificent court, its unparalleled art works and its sumptuous lifestyle.

Through study of icons, art and architecture, as well as performances at the **Mariinsky Theatre** (also known as **The Kirov**) we will see how color and grandiosity was always key to the Russian heart. Our visit is timed to coincide with the second **International Ballet Festival** at the Mariinsky, and we will see how music and ballet have evolved out of Russia's religion and history. A quest for grandeur has been a class characteristic and a national impulse. Even the country's religious choice was made on that foundation. Prince Vladimir of Kiev (988) was convinced that his nation needed a mystical order sacred but visual enough to correspond to the Russian character. After sending his emissaries to investigate each of the principle four faiths of the time, his envoys returned from Constantinople spellbound. This situation changed abruptly when, following the cultural revolution of Peter the Great, Russia was brought directly into the community of European nations. The sumptuousness that distinguished the Russian court in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left foreign visitors bewildered.

Especially under moonlight it is possible to conjure up how things were only yesterday: the passing varnished sleighs flying over the snow, their bearded drivers in thickly padded sapphire blue kaftans, red velvet caps and bearskins; the emblazoned court carriages, liveried footman up behind, ferrying grave statesman and foreign ambassadors; the monk in his 'stovepipe' hat; strolling soldiers in colourful uniforms from the numerous city barracks; Tartars in cinnamon colored coats and caps trimmed with silver braid sweeping the palace Quay; nursemaids in diadem-shaped kokoshniks and amber and pearl necklaces; and Gypsies from the island encampments who entertained the clientele of fashionable restaurants with their song, some plaintive, others savagely intoxicating.

Through special events, private receptions, entrée to places not often open to the public, exposure to artists, musicians and writers, and scholarly study, we bring St Petersburg to life, both in the glory of its past and in the present.

Friday, March 8th

Arrive in London and check into the Ritz Hotel. We gather at the home of John Stuart where Ivan Samarine will give us a brief introduction to the artistic vocabulary of the icon.

Saturday, March 9th

Author and historian Laurence Kelly, noted for his exhaustive knowledge and research into primary material from the archives of Imperial Russian, will discuss Russia through the eyes of its people and foreign diplomats. Mid-day departure for St. Petersburg. Guests will stay at the Grand Hotel Europe for their entire trip to St Petersburg. Located in the heart of the city, it is one of the oldest hotels in Russia.

Sunday, March 10th

John Stuart introduces us to the city through a lecture on its history followed by an excursion through the historic districts. We will focus on the aesthetics of the distinct architectural traditions exclusive to St Petersburg. Palaces, churches, monuments and commercial buildings were designed to inter-relate and provide a continuous visual sweep across squares and avenues. At the Hermitage museum and adjoining Winter Palace, both masterpieces of architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli, we have focused study notably the private apartments inhabited by a succession of Romanov sovereigns. In the afternoon we visit the Neo-Classical Yelagin Palace designed by Carlo Rossi. Romantically situated in a beautiful park on its own island, it was built in 1817 by Tsar Alexander I for his mother, the Empress Marie Feodorovna. In the evening we attend a performance at the Mariinsky Theatre.

Monday, March 11th

Situated in the superb Michael Palace, also designed by Rossi and commissioned by Grand Duke Michael, the Russian Museum offers an unsurpassed survey of Russian paintings from thirteenth century icon panels to the fiery stage designs by avant-garde artists such as Bakst and Benois who were employed by Diaghilev. We visit the principal salons of the palace with its marble walls, gilded divans, shimmering chandeliers and collections of rare porcelain and glass. After lunch we visit a small private country estate outside the city. In contrast to the opulence of the noble

palaces, this country house on a large estate depicts the summer lifestyle of the nineteenth century gentry. At this private home, a short concert performance will be followed by a supper of bilinis with black and red caviar, borsch and meat pasties, served by a charming country steward dressed in colorful Russian folk costume.

Tuesday, March 12th

A full day excursion to the palaces of Tsarskoe Selo in the countryside near St Petersburg. The Alexander Palace, designed by Catherine the Great's architect Quarenghi in 1780, offers a rare opportunity to explore apartments inhabited by Tsar Nicholas II and his family. Lunch will be held in a log cabin (the former servant's quarters) on the estate where guests will be served by staff in traditional folk costume and serenaded by balalaika music. Proceeding onwards to Rastrelli's spectacular blue and gold Catherine Palace, we tour the lavish enfilade of baroque interiors and the extensive classical rooms designed by Scottish architect Charles Cameron.

Wednesday, March 13th

A guided tour to the labyrinthine Fortress of Peter and Paul, whose stone walls have housed a multitude of military offices, regiments and armies. We will then tour the legendary Yusopov Palace, where royal Grand Dukes lured Rasputin – allegedly to murder him and later witness his miraculous resurrection from death. Meeting at the hotel at tea-time, guests will continue to Rastrelli's Stroganov Palace, to dine in the former home of the great family of benefactors and art patrons, and be received by the gracious lady who is the last descendant of this auspicious family.

Thursday, March 14th

An excursion to the Palace of Pavlovsk, the secluded residence of Catherine the Great's son, Paul. Its sumptuous interiors owe much to the fantastic taste of his consort, Maria Feodorovna. Guests will ride a horse-drawn troika through the grounds to visit the Rose Pavilion, where we eat a country lunch with the table decorated as in the time of Alexander I. We will see more of Russia's Imperial glories as we see the recently restored Michael Castle, whose fine interiors make a fitting backdrop for a collection of portraits.

Friday, March 15th

Guests will check out of the hotel and proceed with luggage for an evening arrival at the historic city of Novgorod, named for Lord Novgorod the Great. En route, we will travel through breathtaking landscape bordering the Gulf of Finland and stop to explore the Peterhof Palace, where Empress Elizabeth's extensive redecorations took more than five years. Dinner will be provided by our hosts in Novgorod.

Saturday, March 16th

In contrast to the Imperial splendor of St Petersburg, Novgorod evolved a specific style of functional architecture. Described as elegant and minimal, Novgorod is also pastoral, allowing us a glimpse of craft aesthetics as they developed in the Russian provinces. We will tour the historic districts before visiting the Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom and its magnificent Treasury collection. Guests will have the opportunity to shop for local crafts in the afternoon, then meet in the evening to dine together in our hotel.

Sunday, March 17th

No visit to Russia would be complete without a visit to its Orthodox monasteries. Religion provided much of the inspiration behind its greatest art treasures, many of them created specifically for monastic collections. After checking out of our hotel, we will take excursions to old wooden monasteries in and around Novgorod to explore the relationship between secular and religious architecture, and the symbolism inherent in both styles. Lunch will be taken in the refectory of the Monastery of Novgorod prior to the return journey to St Petersburg, in time to embark on return flights that evening to London or New York.

Registration

The fee for the program is \$7,000 per person double occupancy with a \$1,500 single supplement. This includes nine nights luxurious accommodation, most meals, wine with meals, entrée to private collections and to places not generally open to the public, private entrée to museums and palaces, private sessions with curators, expert scholars, entrée to the palaces, extensive scholarly reading material prepared by Arts to Life, cocktail receptions, and luxury ground transportation. Arts to Life reserves the right to make changes to the schedule. Registration must be accompanied by a deposit of \$3,000. Half of the remaining balance is due on October 1st, 2001 and the balance of payment is due on December 1st, 2001. After December 1st, 2001 no cancellations will be accepted and no refunds will be made. Any cancellation will be subject to a processing fee of \$250 per person. We advise all persons to take out travel insurance and can provide information upon request. Any cancellation before the cancellation date will be subject to a processing fee of \$250 per person. We advise all persons to take out travel insurance and can provide information upon request. Arts to Life reserves the right to make any changes to the schedule whatsoever, should the need arise. Should any speaker or host withdraw we will endeavor to make a suitable replacement. Arts to Life does not act as a travel agent and any additional reservations at hotels, changes to scheduled airline, or extensions of vacation are to be made by the participants individually. For more information, please contact Arts to Life on 646-792-2340.

© Arts to Life, 2001

