

# RUSSIA

Thomas Wu

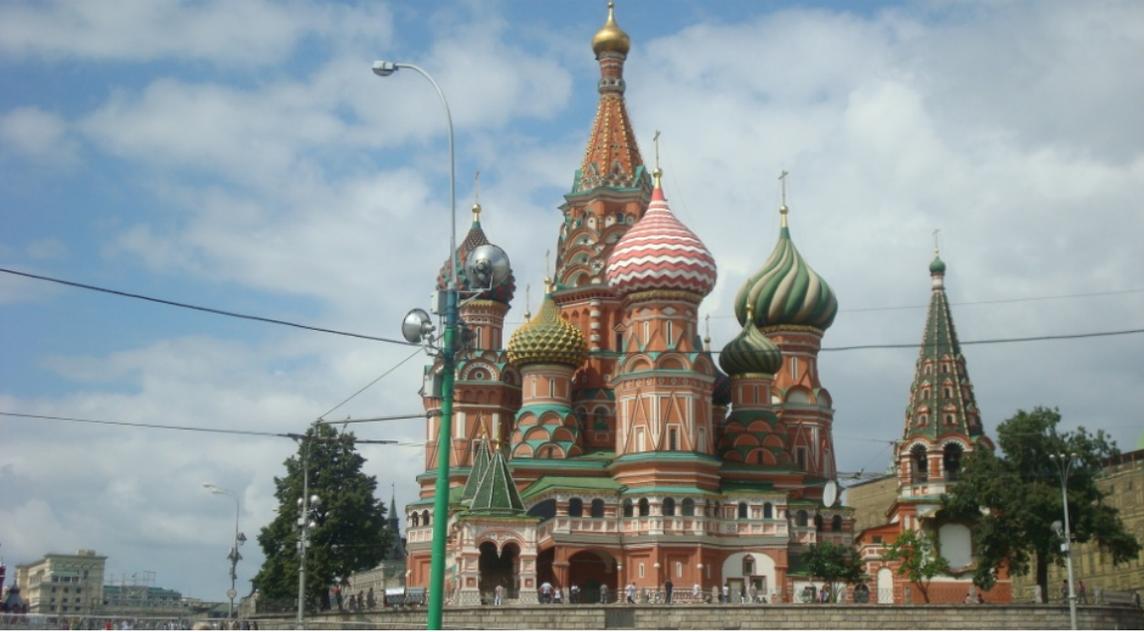
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## MOSCOW

The population of Moscow is 15 million, ten percent of the Russian population. This was the region which Russian leaders developed to become a political center of many principalities. An important event in Moscow's history is the French invasion of 1812. In that incident, Napoleon stayed in Moscow for 45 days. While Napoleon was awaiting a surrender agreement, a big fire broke out which destroyed most of Moscow. It also isolated Napoleon from his troops. The French troops were forced to withdraw from Moscow. Later the Russians celebrated their war victory.

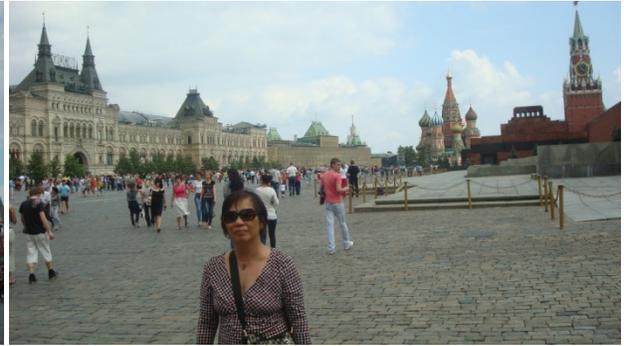
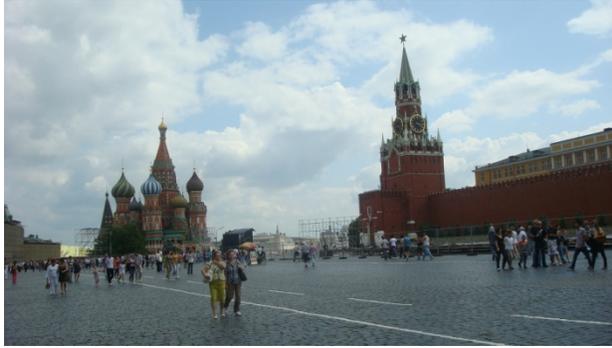
### Cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed

The Cathedral is located in Red Square. This symbol of Russia was built by Ivan the Terrible to commemorate the war victory over Kazan Khan, a war that finally liberated Russians from the Tatar/Mongol yoke. One additional chapel in honor of St. Basil was added, and the whole ensemble is now referred to as the Cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed. Basil the Blessed was someone who gave away all his possessions, becoming a beggar. He preached "fool for Christ" during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. Inside each chapel are worship chambers with icons on the walls. Icons are religious figures painted on wood, although other materials such as emerald or amber are also used. Common figures are Jesus Christ, the God's Mother (the Russian Orthodox term) or prophets. Icons are believed to be windows to the afterlife. Also, they are an important part of Russian life, a part of Russian Orthodox religion. Also shown is a picture of Mimi with Fresco background inside the chapel. Frescoes are drawings on plaster such as walls and ceilings.



## Red Square

Originally a marketplace outside the fortress of a citadel, it has become a place for state ceremonies. The four sides of the Red Square are the Kremlin Wall, the GUM Department Store, the St. Basil Cathedral and the History Museum. Close to the Kremlin wall, somewhere in the middle, is the Mausoleum of Lenin. Behind it are small pine trees and tombs of former Soviet leaders buried at the foot of the Kremlin wall. State ceremonies are carried out with current Russian leaders standing on top of the Lenin Mausoleum. Statements are made to all the living and all the dead, with former Soviet leaders looking through windows of afterlife from the other side.



### Alexander Garden and Tombs of Unknown Soldiers

On the other side of the Kremlin fortification is a large garden and the newer addition of the Unknown Soldiers of Second World War. It is said that over ten million Russians lost their lives during the Second World War. An eternal flame in the cemetery area has been lit ever since the cemetery began.



## The Kremlin

The Kremlin territory occupies 72 acres of land. It consists of government offices, DUMA, houses and churches. It is a walled city built as a fortification. Initially it was used to defend against Mongol horsemen. Its original wooden stockade and buildings were razed to the ground by Mongols. New constructions were again sacked by the Tartars. Through several generations of rebuilding, churches, palaces, an armory, and several bell tower buildings were constructed. The first Russian tsar who united all of Russia was Ivan the Terrible. Ivan the Terrible hired many Italian architects for structural design and construction. The fortification used limestone walls and its color was white. In later years red colored walls replaced the white walls. The October revolution of 1917 ended the rule of Russia by the Romanov Dynasty, who had ruled for the past three hundred years. The Government of the Union of Soviet Republic declared Moscow as its capital and the Kremlin as its government compound.



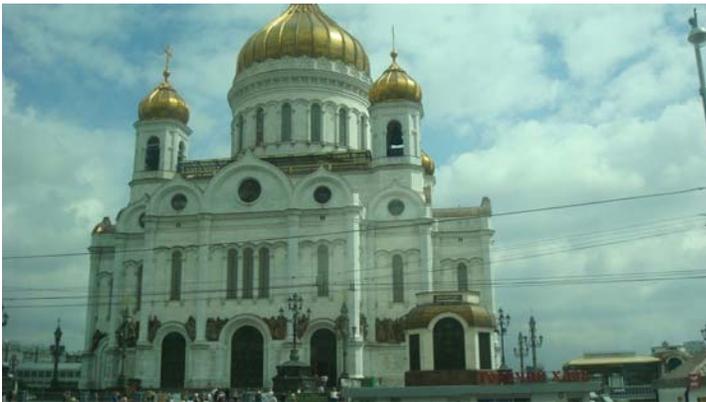
## The Metro

Moscow's metro stations are called underground palaces with magnificent halls. The halls have granite and marble columns, sculptures, and paintings. These subway stations are more than seventy meters underground. The system may still be able to operate if Russia is bombed with nuclear weapons.



## Cathedral of Christ the Savior

This cathedral was built in 1900 but Stalin ordered it demolished. Stalin also outlawed all church activities nationwide. The cathedral was rebuilt completely from scratch and returned to its original form in every detail in later years.



## Waterways between Moscow and St. Petersburg

The Volga River is the longest river in Russia, with more than 200 tributaries. Its watershed drains an area of more than half a million square miles. With the construction of a series of dams and reservoirs of the Volga River and other large rivers in the north, many artificial lakes have been created, connecting these lakes, reservoirs and rivers to create and facilitate navigation. The Volga River drains into the Caspian Sea in the south, and the Volga-Baltic waterway drains into the Baltic Sea. In 1937, Stalin ordered the Moscow Canal built to link the Moscow River and the Volga River. The numerous projects of the Moscow Canal were far greater than either the Panama or the Suez Canal projects. The Moscow Canal in effect has made Moscow an important port on the Russian seas.

SHIP LOCKS: Elevation differences of water surfaces average about 14 feet.



## Beautiful Russian Embroideries



A transfiguration church built out of wood, a UNESCO World Heritage Site



A dragon boat and a log cabin. Many log cabins can be found in riverside villages



A clothes drying rack



A young weaver who works and sleeps in this wooden house. An icon hangs in a corner of the house to bless and to watch.



A Vodka Museum where visitors may choose from 3000 different brands. Vodka is hard liquor fermented from wheat, corn, or other plants.



Pushkin Park in the village of Mandrogi has collected many characters from Russian fairy tales. These characters are often painted on lacquer boxes and in fairy tale books.



## St. Petersburg

Peter the Great was born in Moscow but he planned to build a city isolated from the oldest political and economic center of Moscow. St. Petersburg was founded in 1703 as a “window on Europe,” a trading center and a port on the Baltic Sea. Peter the Great then made the brand new city Russia’s capital and named it Petersburg. As a result, Peter the Great made the historical transformation of medieval Russia into a great European power. St. Petersburg was modeled after Amsterdam. The city has many rivers and canals. The artificial canals are only about four meters in depth but the winding waterways have reflections of buildings, bridges, arches and trees, giving the impression of a beautiful and romantic city. St. Petersburg is called “The Venice of the North.”

### The Hermitage

The Hermitage was the winter palace of Russian emperors. It is now a museum. The palace was built throughout several decades to become its current size. In later years, Catherine the Great added many art collections. The Hermitage has art works representing development of world culture and art from the stone age to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



One of many halls



Ceiling art works



An example of floor design



A piece of furniture



Ceiling Painting



Wall Sculpture



Front view

Icons on wall



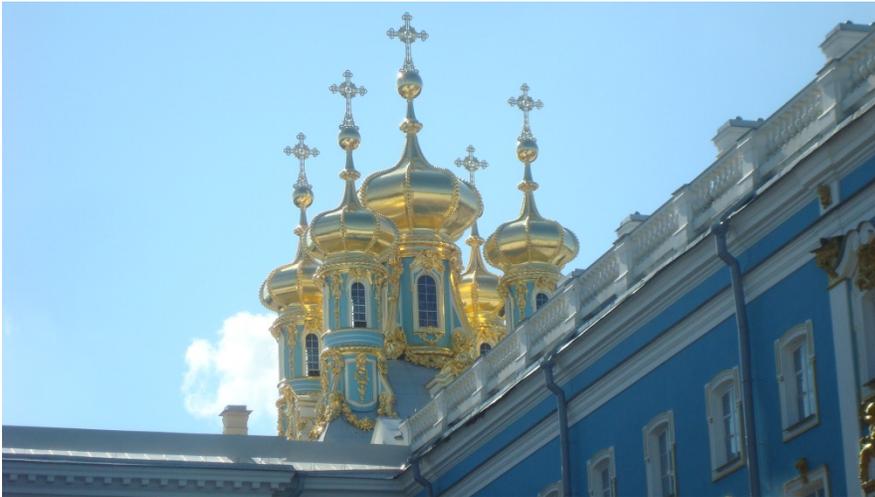
Main Entrance



## Pushkin Village

This village includes Catherine's Palace and beautiful gardens. It was a park for royal families. Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) was a Russian poet whose free style verse got him in trouble, but his contribution to Russian literature is insurmountable. His many poetry and prose collections include *The Bronze Horseman*, *the Captain's Daughter*, and many others. He is considered the founder of modern Russian literature. Catherine's Palace was named in honor of Catherine, the wife of Peter the Great, who later became a Russian empress.

## Palace Chapel



A sculpture of Alexander Pushkin



## Peterhof

St. Petersburg was originally a city without a fortress (like the Kremlin). Peter the Great decided to build a fortress in order to guard the river entrance to St. Petersburg. Today this fortress is known as Peter and Paul Fortress. In order to supervise the fortress construction, Peter the Great built a small country house on the Gulf of Finland. Later this site was selected by Peter the Great to build the most extravagant palace among all

European palaces. The palace is called The Great Palace. The palace has a huge garden with gold plated brass sculptures, fountains and music. The Great Cascade, as this area is known, caused great excitement. The Great Palace is not particularly large but is very elegant. Peter the Great had a gold colored and nicely decorated single bed. Judging from the size of the bed, Peter the Great was not a tall person, probably less than five feet. The walls of the grand waiting room where foreign dignitaries waited for their turns to meet with Russian tsars is filled with war pictures. It is said that Catherine the Great commissioned a distinguished Russian artist to draw the scenes of war ships where the Russian navy crushed the Swedish war fleet. Outside the palace is the town of Peterhof. The town now has a presidential residence where a G-8 meeting was recently held.

Photos of The Great Cascade







## Russian Souvenirs

### Matryoshka dolls



A little Russian mother can carry many kids in her belly

### Russian dolls

Shown here are a princess and a ballet dancer. These dolls have porcelain faces, hands and legs. They are hand painted by artists.



## Faberge Eggs

Music box



Jewelry box



Toy car can be stored in egg shell



## Lacquer Box



Many layers of thin paintings

## Balalaika



A Russian stringed instrument

## Amber Stones

Petrified resin of conifers. Huge amounts underneath the Baltic sea.

Green malachite stones are also shown.



(The Russia Article was edited by Jas Metz)