The Church of the Savior on the Spilled Blood (Photo Above) was built where Alexander II was fatally wounded on March 1, 1881.

This Port Guide is a detailed review of our Visa-Free, 2-day, Comfort Tour with Alla Tours. [Alla-Tour.com](http://Alla-Tour.com)

I’ve included maps, descriptions of the tourist sites, photos and links to the “Official” websites that provide a detailed description, the history, photos, videos, and virtual tours to help preview your visit. The virtual tours of State Hermitage Museum are amazing.
St Petersburg is an amazing city built over centuries to rival the best cities of Europe. Mission Accomplished!!

The city is “World Class” with unique architectural masterpieces, historic churches, grand palaces, world class museums, and some of the most impressive parks in the world. The beautiful canals are reminiscent of Venice, hence the name “Venice of the North.”

Many major cities have metros or subways. St Petersburg has the deepest subway in the world. It’s incredibly efficient and modern, but it doesn’t look like a subway. The stations are “underground museums” with gorgeous paintings, tile, sculpture, and art work!!!

I was so impressed with our private 2-day Alla Tour, I decided to write this guide to re-create our tour. I believe my pdf guide “comes alive” when you view it on your home computer and click on the links to watch the videos of St Petersburg, Peterhof Palace and Gardens, and the virtual tours of Hermitage Museum as if you were “with us on the tour”. I don’t know if this will work for you, but that’s my goal.

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CAVEAT

Information contained herein is believed to be accurate. PLEASE verify the information you use for your travel plans. Opinions expressed are my own. This port guide is protected by copyright law - see the last page of this guide for legal notices.

Tom Sheridan
Tips on Planning Your Shore Excursion in St Petersburg

- St Petersburg is “Russia’s Imperial City”. It’s one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Plan ahead on how to spend your limited time.  See this video  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAxf-05NTRY
- The cruise ship dock is 8.3 Km (5.1 mi) from the Hermitage State Museum. You’ll need transportation. Popular tourist sites can have long lines. Tour with a company that purchases tickets in advance to eliminate wasted time standing in line for tickets to enter tourist sites.
- You’ll be carrying your passport while touring. Similar to tourist sites in major European cities, there are some Pickpockets. They are in public spaces near entrances to popular museums, churches, parks, etc. They’re near crowded areas watching people buying souvenirs to see where you carry your money. Keep some cash in a readily accessible pocket to buy souvenirs. IMPORTANT: Keep your passport and credit cards where they are protected from pickpockets.
- Tourist sites usually have free toilets inside the site. There are pay toilets outside tourist sites that accept Ruble or Euro coins. Many toilets only accept Ruble coins. Get a few Ruble coins from your tour guide, if necessary, to use a public toilet. Cost of a pay toilet is about 20 Ruble. One USD = 63 Ruble. One Euro = 71 Ruble, A pay toilet is equivalent to 32 cents in USD or 42 cents in Euros.
- You’ll need a VISA to enter Russia. You could get a VISA on your own, but it’s easier to have your Russian private Tour Company or the ship’s tour company get a VISA for you.
- Cruise ship bus tours are expensive. Typically, you ride on a crowded big bus with 40-50 people. It’s difficult to get good photos from big buses because of reflections on the glass.
- We opted for a private tour with 10 people in a small bus. It was a “2-day, Visa Free, Comfort Tour” with Alla Tours  https://alla-tour.com  It was much less expensive than the ship’s tour. Our small bus had huge windows. I sat in a single seat next to the window on the right side of the bus. This allowed me to move around to position my camera near the glass so there were NO reflections in my photos. I got excellent photos from our moving bus - See the photos on pages 5, 11, 17 and 18 of this guide!!! Our tour included all transportation from and back to the ship, admission tickets to all the tourist sites, two great lunches at impressive restaurants, and we had our own guide and driver for two days. I show admission prices for the tourist sites in this guide for reference only. Our admissions were included.

Here’s my TripAdvisor Review of our tour:

We chose a 2-day Alla Comfort Tour in St. Petersburg and are glad we did.
It's Visa Free and includes lunch. The Alla tour is less expensive than the ship's bus tour.
Our tour group of ten was more personal than 40-50 people on the ship's big bus. As a small group, it was easy to stay close to our guide to ask questions and we got to know our fellow travelers. We had lunch at excellent, quiet, upscale restaurants that cater to small groups. We toured in a comfortable small bus with huge, clean windows to take excellent photos along the route.

Our guide was outstanding. When we arrived at Peterhof Gardens, there was a long, long line of tour guides getting tickets for their groups. Rather than waste time standing in line, our guide ran to another ticket office. Problem solved! In a few minutes we entered the park and looked back at the guides in line for tickets for their big bus tour groups. I can’t say enough about the personal attention we received from our Alla guide.

Bottom Line: I’ve traveled 600+ days on cruise ships and toured at many ports. I always prefer a private tour in a van or small bus over the more expensive, crowded, impersonal, ship’s big bus tours with 40-50 people. I highly recommend Alla Tours in St. Petersburg.
I provide GPS coordinates that can be used with Microsoft or Google maps and GPS enabled devices. The GPS format is Degrees, Minutes, and Seconds ddd° mm' ss.ss" N ddd° mm' ss.ss" E. **Copy and paste** GPS coordinates from this guide into Google or Microsoft Bing maps or type GPS coordinate numbers, periods and letters into the map search box replacing the symbols for degrees, minutes, and seconds with spaces. For example, coordinates for St. Isaac’s Cathedral are 59°56'05.2"N 30°19'31.8"E. You can type this into Google or Bing Maps as 59 56 05.2 N 30 19 31.8 E. Then press the enter key to see this location on the map. For information on how to use GPS coordinates with Google maps, see [https://www.tomsportguides.com/map-user-guide.html](https://www.tomsportguides.com/map-user-guide.html)
There are 4 Cruise Ship Terminals in St. Petersburg as shown on the map on the previous page.

Your cruise ship will provide you with a transit ticket to take with you to Russian Passport Control in your cruise terminal. Provide this ticket with your passport and proof that you are on a Russian authorized tour. Taking photos in the passport area is strictly forbidden. Once you clear immigration, you’ll meet your guide near the souvenir shops.

Peter the Great Statue  GPS = 59°56'11.6"N 30°18'04.0"E

Peter the Great reigned over Russia from 1682 to 1725.
He is credited for reforming education, transforming Russia from town-based industry to country based industry using advanced industrial techniques, and securing access to the Black Sea which improved trade. He strengthened the army and established a powerful navy.
We did not stop at the statue.
I took these photos at right from our bus as we drove past the statue.

State Hermitage Museum  GPS = 59°56'24.6"N 30°18'36.3"E

It’s the most popular and important museum in St. Petersburg. Adult admission = 700 Ruble.
Hours: Closed on Monday. Open 10:30am to 6pm Tues, Thurs, Sat, Sun. Open 10:30 am to 9 pm Wed. & Fri.
See http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/ for details and maps with incredible virtual tours of the entire museum complex to preview your visit on your home computer!!
Michelangelo Statue Crouching Boy

Peacock Clock – Above right. A 200-year-old timepiece with golden mechanical birds that sing.
Our friends had warned us about standing in long lines to get into, and walk around in, the museum. Our guide had already obtained tickets, so we walked past long lines of people waiting to get into the museum. We spent about 90 minutes walking with our guide as she explained the exhibits. We only saw part of the museum. It’s a huge complex with multiple buildings.
The paintings, sculpture, artwork, and architectural details of the buildings are amazing!
We left the museum and drove around the city to see parks, boats along the canal, churches, and impressive buildings.
Then we stopped at a small, quiet restaurant for a relaxing lunch featuring Russian food. The restaurant was impressive and lunch was included in our tour price!
The food was excellent as were the drinks and service.
There was a church down the street next to the canal (photo at left).
After lunch we drove to the Savior on the Spilled Blood Church for a tour. There were crowds of people outside the church in period costume and many people selling souvenirs. Our guide reminded us to be careful of pickpockets in the crowds around the church. Pickpockets are apparently religious people, they were next to us in churches in Rome.

**Savior on the Spilled Blood Church**  
GPS = 59°56'24.9"N 30°19'44.1"E  
Open: Daily 10.30 am to 6 pm. Evening May 1 - September 30, 6 pm to 10.30 pm. Closed: Wednesday  
Adult admission = 250 Ruble
The church was built where Alexander II was fatally wounded on March 1, 1881. It is the “Church of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ” and is recognized by locals as “Church of the Savior on the Spilled Blood” or “Church on the Blood”.
The Ceiling
St Isaac’s Cathedral  GPS = 59°56'05.2"N 30°19'31.8"E
http://www.saint-petersburg.com/cathedrals/st-isaacs-cathedral/

St. Isaac's Cathedral, photo right, is one of the most impressive landmarks. It dominates the skyline in St. Petersburg.

It’s a museum open daily 10.30 am to 6 pm, but closed on Wednesday. There are evening hours May-Sept and night hours May-Oct. Adult admission is 250 – 300 Ruble.

You can climb 300 steps up from the cathedral's colonnade to enjoy magnificent views over the city.
Foreign visitors should buy entrance tickets just inside the right hand door in the southern facade (not at the street-level ticket booth). We stopped for a photo of the outside, but did not go into St. Isaac’s Cathedral.

This is the colonnade and front entrance to Kazan Cathedral. GPS = 59°56'07.8"N 30°19'30.6"E

Hours: The cathedral is open daily, from 7:00 am until after the last liturgical service takes place at 18:00. Entrance is free. See  [http://kazansky-spb.ru/](http://kazansky-spb.ru/)  It was built to celebrate victory over Napoleon in the War of 1812. Field Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov is buried here and his statue is in front of the church.

I took the photo above from our bus as we drove by Kazan Cathedral.

When we visited, the church was packed with people standing in long lines for their turn to kiss, touch, or lay flowers in front of the icons.

It’s a tradition in the Orthodox Church for worshipers to pay respect to icons i.e. “religious pictures” by kissing or touching them.

An icon is a Byzantine-style portrait using several mediums, to represent a person, event of Christian history or scenes from the Bible. Icons preserve the doctrinal teachings and are an integral part of Orthodox faith and devotion. They have a “sacramental character”.
Photo at left: There were long lines on the left side of the church where people walked up to the altar to touch or kiss the icons. Note the man in the blue shirt at the altar.
This photo was taken in front of Kazan Cathedral looking north.
On the right side of the photo is the Monument of Field Marshal Prince Kutuzov who led Russian forces with Austria to defeat Napoleon.
The building in this photo was the original headquarters of Singer sewing machine company which opened a factory in Russia in 1904. Today, the building is occupied by a book store, a cafe, and offices for VK.com, Russia's version of Facebook.
St. Petersburg Metro Ride

We entered Subway Line 5 at Sportivnaya close to the old sports stadium, rode the subway under the Little Neva River, and exited at Admiralteyskaya, the deepest subway station in the world, 282 ft underground. See the stops for Line 5 at left. See the map on page 4 of this guide for the location of these subways stops.

The subway is incredibly efficient, clean, and beautiful. Each subway station has a theme with paintings, artwork, and displays to illustrate that theme. It’s an underground “museum”!

Sportivnaya is close to the old St Petersburg stadium. This subway station uses a sports theme (photo below).

We took several escalators, some of which were quite steep, but the ride was smooth and the areas were well lighted. Everything was spotlessly clean.
The theme of Admiralteyskaya station is sailing. It’s dedicated to Russian Admiralty. See the photos below.
Planning Your Shore Excursion to Peterhof Palace and Gardens

Peterhof is a colossal, incredibly impressive “must visit” site with 1023 acres of parks and gardens, 32 museums and 150 fountains. The fountains do not use pumps, they work by gravity. Water flows from a higher elevation through underground aqueducts to the fountains.

This seaside resort of Peterhof served as the summer residence for emperors for 200 years. It’s part of Peter the Great’s legacy. You’ll need a minimum of 90 minutes to walk the lower gardens. If you plan to visit the Palace, museums, and tour all the gardens, plan on 5 hours. Your tour company can provide options for your tour.

The Website for Peterhof Palace and Gardens is an excellent resource to help plan your visit.

See  https://en.peterhofmuseum.ru/

Watch this video  https://en.peterhofmuseum.ru/objects/peterhof

Download a PDF detailed map of Peterhof from  https://en.peterhofmuseum.ru/files/map.pdf?v=1.2

I suggest printing the map on three 8.5 x 11 sheets of paper to create a highly legible 25” x 11” map.

Open the PDF map file on your computer. Click on File, then choose Print. The print menu appears. 1) Click on Poster. 2) Enter 20% for the Tile Scale. 3) Click on “Tile only large pages”. 4) This shows the map will be printed on 3 pages. 5) Click Print. Align the pages and tape them together. The printed map is 25 by 11 inches and is easy to read. If for some reason, you want a larger map, increase the scale. For example, if you change Tile Scale to 26%, the map will measure 33” x 17” and be printed on six 8.5 x 11 sheets.
Three of the most important resources to study and plan your tour of Peterhof are the official website, the video, and the map. I highly recommend you use these resources from the comfort of your home to learn the tour options so that you can work with tour operators to plan the tour that best suits your needs and interests.

Travel Time from the Cruise Terminal to Peterhof is an IMPORTANT Issue (See this Google map below)

You can travel to Peterhof by bus, car, taxi, train, and boat. Bus and car travel can be directly from the cruise terminal. Other forms of travel will need some combination e.g. a bus to a boat to Peterhof.

Travel time is an important consideration. It’s a 1 hour and 19 minute 51.7 km (32 mi) ride from the cruise terminal to Peterhof Palace and Gardens. Considering travel time and time to tour the site, Peterhof can easily consume most of your day.

On the second day of our 2-day tour, we visited St Petersburg subway in the morning. Then we drove along a canal lined with impressive bridges and buildings on our way to Peterhof Palace & Gardens.

Scenic Drive to Peterhof Gardens Along the Canal in St Petersburg

Lomonosov Bridge  GPS = 59°55'47.9"N 30°20'12.9"E  Photo below from our moving bus.

It’s an 18th C stone bridge across the Fontanka River named after the Russian Scientist Mikhail Lomonosov.
Egyptian Bridge GPS = 59°55'02.0"N 30°17'52.4"E Photo below from our moving bus.
It was St. Petersburg's first metal bridge built in the 1820s. It collapsed in 1905 and was rebuilt in 1955.

This is an example of the colorful buildings along the canal. Photo below from our moving bus.
Map of Peterhof Palace and Gardens

Peterhof Gardens Walking Tour Map
This map shows Peterhof Palace and Gardens. The Bus Drop Off is where you begin your walking tour. There are souvenir shops and stalls between the bus drop off and Entrance Gate to gardens. Be careful of pick pockets in the crowded area near the souvenir shops. There is a Pay Toilet (Euro Coins) as shown. Toilets in the gardens are free. There is a coffee shop, small restaurant near the entrance gate.

Our walking route is shown as the dashed yellow line. The distance was ~ 3500 feet (0.66 mile) one way from the Bus Drop Off to the Trick Fountains on Water Road. The path was wide and generally flat so it was easy to walk. We walked slowly and stopped for photos. There are not many places to sit down, but there are a few benches next to Triton Fountain. There are ~ 28 steps from the Peterhof Palace down to Sampson Fountain. Walking down and back up those stairs is too much exercise for me. We stayed on the trail to see and photograph the major tourist sites, fountains, and had excellent views of the Grand Cascade for photos. Our walking tour took 90 minutes.
This photo shows Sampson Fountain in the Foreground and Peterhof Palace in the Background

The stairs have ~ 28 steps from the Palace down to the Sampson Fountain. Walking down and back up is a vertical distance of 35 feet. For people with mobility limitations, that can be too much exercise. Another issue is that the stairs can be very crowded with many people standing on each step. We avoided the stairs and walked on the path as shown as a yellow dashed line on the map on the previous page.

View from Frantsuzskiy Fountain looking up the hill to the Church and Palace

This photo shows the change in elevation down the hill from the Palace Church to the lower park.
You Can Avoid Stairs and Walking Long Distances By Riding In An Electric Car
The Electric Car is a 40 minute ride through the lower park. Cost is 33.52 Euro per person. See https://www.getyourguide.com/st-petersburg-l43/peterhof-lower-park-tour-by-electric-car-t236297/ for details

Peterhof Grand Palace and Gardens Entrance Gate  
GPS = 59°53'05.7"N 29°54'22.0"E

Ticket Office locations are shown on the map on page 19 by this symbol at left. There are many ticket offices around the park because there are many entrances.

Tickets are booked/sold on line to avoid standing in line at the park. You receive a voucher from the website. Take the voucher to a ticket office to get tickets for scanning at turnstiles to enter the park.

We walked with our guide to the ticket office at the Entrance Gate. There were long lines of tour guides getting tickets for their groups. Our tour guide did not want us to wait to enter the park. She ran back to the ticket office near the Bus Drop Off and immediately returned with our tickets.

View of Sampson Fountain from the Palace
Trick Fountains

Trick Fountains were installed by emperors who wanted to have fun with their visitors. It was common practice for guests to stroll through the garden in formal attire. The idea of a trick fountain is that it looks like a flower bed, a tree, a pathway, a bench, etc. When the unsuspecting visitor approaches, streams of water spray the visitor making them soaking wet in their finest clothes.

Today, the trick fountains are popular with visitors. People know the fountains are nearby but they are not sure when they water will be turned on. For details on Trick Fountains see https://en.peterhofmuseum.ru/objects/peterhof/fontan_shutiha_vodyanaya_doroga

The photo above shows a woman running past the Trick Fountain and getting wet because the spray of water is coming over the benches onto the path. There are people who work for the park in the green sheds that turn the spray on. The visitor does not know when the water spray will be turned on.
In the mid-18th Century, St. Nicholas Cathedral was built as the naval regiment church. It has always been associated with the Russian Navy and served as the city cathedral for many years. This 200 year old church retains its original Elizabethan Baroque style. It’s a beautiful church and is large enough for 5000 people.

**When we visited there were many people paying their respects to the Icons.**
**We were asked to not take photos and agreed to respect the worshipers.**
Lunch was included in our Alla Tour at the very impressive Majestic Boutique Hotel. It was a relaxing lunch with excellent food and service. We had lunch in the Majestic Hall (photo below).

How we found the “best” company for our “private tour” in St. Petersburg

Cruising friends told us about the beautiful museums, churches, palaces, and parks in St Petersburg, but warned about waiting in long lines, walking long distances, climbing a lot of stairs, and standing for a long time. We did not want to walk, climb stairs, and stand all day. We wanted a relaxing tour.

Cruise lines do not provide the name of their tour companies. All I know is I’m on Bus 13C which is one of 25 buses next to the ship. I know the bus route and stops along the tour, but I “know nothing about the reputation and ratings of the ship’s unnamed, tour company”.

My experience is that the ship’s bus tours are variable. Some tours are very good and some are lousy. I prefer private tour companies because I know their names and can review their reputation, website reviews/ratings and recommendations of cruising friends to choose a top-rated company.

Because I book with the “best” private tour companies, my private tours are consistently better and more memorable than the ship’s big bus tours. A private tour is also more personal because we travel with a small group in a van or small bus. And, the private tour is usually lower cost than the ship’s big bus tour.

For a comparison of the ship’s bus tour VS. other shore excursion options, see my web-page https://www.tomsportguides.com/choices.html

Our Private Tour of St Petersburg

We asked friends for advice and read ratings on the web. It didn’t take long to find Alla Tours. We chose a “Visa Free, 2-day Comfort Tour” with Alla Tours https://alla-tour.com. This tour is designed to visit major sites without a lot of walking, climbing a lot of stairs, or standing in long lines. We traveled with ten people in a small, comfortable bus. Our guide was one of the best I’ve met in 12 years of cruising to 90 ports of call! She was totally focused on our small group and very effective at addressing personal needs and interests of each individual in our group. Our Alla Tour was “perfect” for us! I was impressed and recommend their company.
User Feedback Is Welcome

Goal
My guides are designed to help you plan a great cruise vacation by providing information such as where the ship docks, location of tourist sites, public transit, walking tour maps, things to see and do, travel issues unique to the port, etc. Knowledge of ports is important when planning self-guiding touring and booking shore excursions because you have to make many decisions and commitments long before your ship docks.

Note: I believe the information in this guide is accurate, however you are responsible to verify accuracy of the information you use to plan your vacation. Information on cruise ports frequently changes such as bus routes, admission fees to sites, rental car locations, etc.

Cruise Critic is the best source for up-to-date, detailed, accurate information on travel details for shore excursions, reviews of cruise ships, etc. There are many knowledgeable people on Cruise Critic willing to share their knowledge, expertise, and travel experience. I highly recommend www.CruiseCritic.com, it's free to join.

Why feedback is important
User feedback helps me improve the format and content in my quest to produce the “ultimate” port guides. I welcome offers to collaborate with me or provide materials for use in my guides.

Please help “spread the word” about my website and port guides.
The only negative feedback I get is, “I wish I knew about your port guides before my vacation”.
Please tell your friends and post a link to my guides and website on the blogs.

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- Post a link to my website e.g. https://www.tomsportguides.com or

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If there is any question about permitted use of my guides, contact me at TomsPortGuides@Gmail.com

I wish you a great cruise vacation.
Tom Sheridan