Inside the Russian Space Program
From Star City to the Baikonur Cosmodrome

One departure in 2014 – 9 Days – Special Tour
November 25 - December 3

Enter the once highly classified world of Russian space travel as a privileged guest. Explore Star City, outside of Moscow, the premier training facility for cosmonauts and foreign astronauts heading for manned space flights. Next, journey to the arid steppe of Kazakhstan and the remote desert launch site of Baikonur Cosmodrome. Witness the manned launch of the Soyuz spacecraft on its way to relieve the crew of the International Space Station, enjoying unparalleled access to VIP viewing areas and briefing sessions. If you’ve ever dreamed of space travel, here is your chance to see it up close and personal.

This departure will be led by MIR president and founder, Douglas Grimes, a member of the Explorers Club and the pioneer of this amazing MIR program. Douglas knows this program inside and out and has had the opportunity to attend three previous manned launches at Baikonur.
Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Tuesday, November 25  Arrive Moscow
Day 2, Wednesday, November 26  Moscow
Day 3, Thursday, November 27  Moscow • optional Cosmonaut Training Day
Day 4, Friday, November 28  Moscow • fly to Baikonur
Day 5, Saturday, November 29  Baikonur
Day 6, Sunday, November 30  Baikonur
Day 7, Monday, December 1  Baikonur • launch date of a Soyuz • fly to Moscow
Day 8, Tuesday, December 2  Moscow • (note: flight to Moscow maybe this a.m.)
Day 9, Wednesday, December 3  Depart Moscow
MIR Signature Experiences

• Enjoy unparalleled access to VIP viewing areas and briefing sessions at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

• Meet and talk with one of the Russian cosmonauts at the formerly secret Star City training center on the outskirts of Moscow, where training takes place for all Soyuz-ISS missions.

• Get up close and personal in Baikonur with cosmodrome workers, officials, and former and current cosmonauts at the pre-launch activities, including the roll-out of the Soyuz rocket from the assembly hanger to the launch pad, the raising of the rocket ceremony, and the walk along the Alley of Cosmonauts.

• Participate in the press conference held at the Cosmonaut Hotel in Baikonur with the main and back-up crew members.

• Witness the launch of the Soyuz rocket on its way to the International Space Station, from the VIP viewing area.

• Take the unique opportunity to train like a real cosmonaut by signing up for one of the optional training activities: a Zero-Gravity Flight, or Space Walk Training in the Orlan Space-suit Lab at Star City.

Tour Highlights

Moscow: Novodevichy Cemetery (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Moscow Kremlin and Red Square (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Armory Museum, St. Basil’s Cathedral, Monino Air Museum, Cold War Museum Bunker

Star City: Mir Space Station simulator, Soyuz-TMA integrated simulator, world’s largest centrifuge, ISS mock-up, Star City Museum, lunch at the Cosmonauts’ cafe

Baikonur: Baikonur Cosmodrome on the Kazakh steppe, roll-out of Soyuz Rocket and the raising of the rocket, Soyuz assembly bay, Baikonur Museum including Gagarin and Korolev living apartments, Energia and Proton launch pads, VIP seating at ISS Crew Press Conference, VIP viewing area from which to witness and feel the power of the Soyuz launch
Itinerary

Day One, Tuesday, November 25

Arrive Moscow

On arrival in Moscow, transfer to a deluxe hotel located in the heart of the city. Gather for a welcome reception and dinner this evening at a local restaurant. After dinner, enjoy an optional evening walking tour of Red Square. Red Square is spectacular at night, with beautiful St. Basil’s Cathedral next to the Kremlin wall and Lenin’s Tomb.

Meals: D – Hotel Aquamarine or similar

Day Two, Wednesday, November 26

Moscow

Today drive to the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center, or GCTC, in the once highly classified and secretive Star City, located in a forested region approximately 25 km from Moscow. The center was established in 1960, and since 1968 has been named for Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space. On April 12, 1961, Gagarin was launched into space on board Russia’s secret Vostok spacecraft and returned safely to Earth, on the first manned space flight in the history of humankind. Today the GCTC remains the premier training facility for Russian cosmonauts and foreign astronauts planning manned space flights. The GCTC closely cooperates with the European Space Agency (ESA) as well as with CNES (France) and NASA.

The center is proud of its numerous achievements, including its support of the first female cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova, and the first space walk of Alexei Leonov, as well as the the training of the first space tourist, Dennis Tito, from the U.S. The center is known for its biomedical training enabling cosmonauts to efficiently spend a year or more in space and to recover quickly upon their return to Earth.

Trace the evolution of the Soviet space program, explore the Mir Space Station Simulator (the
Mir was operational from 1986-2001), and learn about Russian-American cooperation in space that the GCTC supports by training joint crews on the simulator of the International Space Station. Visit the Soyuz-TMA integrated simulator and the ISS mock-up. At the massive hydro lab, Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory, learn how crews acquire skills for operations on the external surface of the orbital station under simulated weightless conditions. Seeing the world’s largest centrifuge, used for simulating G-loads, is on the program as well.

Lunch is served in the Star City cafeteria, which is used by the crew members in training and other facilitators of the Star City complex.

Continue the tour with a visit to the Star City Museum, containing a wide assortment of space vehicles, simulators, space suits and a reproduction of Yuri Gagarin’s office, which Russian and international crews traditionally visit before their space launches.

Each program participant receives a special certificate recognizing his or her visit to Star City.

Note: Upon arrival, a Star City physician will conduct physical exams and prepare those who have signed up for the optional cosmonaut training activities, to take place the next day. There are some limitations on participation.

Return to Moscow for dinner at a local restaurant.

Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Aquamarine or similar

Day Three, Thursday, November 27

Moscow • optional Cosmonaut Training Day

Today those who take part in any of the optional cosmonaut training activities depart for GCTC again after an early breakfast.

Travelers not returning to GCTC will visit Moscow’s Space Exploration Museum, or the Memorial
Museum of Cosmonautics, as it’s called here. The museum is housed in the base of the monument named “To the Conquerors of Space.” The monument is a huge upright titanium contrail behind a rocket taking off into the sky. It was built in 1964 to commemorate the 1957 launching of Sputnik, the first-ever orbiting satellite. It was the lights of Sputnik moving across the night sky that shook the U.S. into stepping up its own space program.

The museum celebrates the Soviet Union’s exploits in space, and includes artifacts like Yuri Gagarin’s space suit and the first rocket engine, designed and built in 1931 by engineer Freidrich Tsander. The small movie theater for video showings resembles the inside of a spaceship.

GCTC passengers will rejoin the main group following lunch at the Star City cafeteria. The rest of the day will be dedicated to cultural touring in Moscow. Begin with a visit to the Kremlin and Armory Museum including special admission to the Diamond Fund.

The Moscow Kremlin reminds modern-day Russia of its medieval past. Built on the site of Prince Yuri’s hunting lodge, the Kremlin overlooks the Moskva and Neglina rivers. In the mid-14th century, the Russian princes, ruling from the Kremlin, became so powerful that Moscow was named the center of the Russian Orthodox Church. Under the guidance of Ivan the Great, Moscow extended its influence and soon became the seat of Russian political power as well.

Today, the Kremlin remains the center of Moscow and Russian politics. Inside the fortress walls are palaces, cathedrals, government buildings and the Armory Museum. Built in the 16th century as a warehouse for the Kremlin’s weaponry, the Armory was transformed into an exhibition hall and museum in 1814. It now houses Russia’s national treasures, such as religious icons, Fabergé eggs, and a bejeweled chalice belonging to Prince Yuri, and Catherine the Great’s ball gowns and shoes.

Dinner this evening is at a local restaurant.
Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Aquamarine or similar

Day Four, Friday, November 28
Moscow • fly to Baikonur

After an early breakfast this morning, transfer to the airport for a flight to the Baikonur Cosmodrome, located on the steppe of Kazakhstan. This will be a special flight for those going to witness and participate in the launch.

On arrival, transfer to the hotel and settle in before dinner.
Meals: B, L (on the plane), D – Sputnik Hotel or similar

Day Five, Saturday, November 29
Baikonur

The program begins with an early-morning viewing of the roll-out of the Soyuz Rocket.

This up-close-and-personal sight is awe-inspiring. Follow the Soyuz to the
After lunch at the hotel, observe civilian life in Baikonur with a visit to the city’s central market. Here you will have an opportunity to find some rocket-themed souvenirs while watching Kazakhs and Russians haggle over fresh produce.

Afterwards, return to the hotel for dinner.
Meals: B, L, D – Sputnik Hotel or similar

**Day Six, Sunday, November 30**

**Baikonur**

After breakfast this morning, transfer to the famous “Site 17,” or Cosmonaut Hotel, where the **ISS Crew Press Conference** will take place. Here is your chance to **ask any questions** you have of the next ISS crew. Before lunch at a local restaurant, take time to stroll down **Cosmonauts' Alley**, where each cosmonaut plants a tree. Here you can find the first tree planted by Yuri Gagarin.

Continue your tour of Baikonur in the afternoon with a visit to the **Baikonur Museum**, the monument to the beginning of the Space Age, and the Zenit launch pad.

Dinner tonight will be at the hotel.
Meals: B, L, D – Sputnik Hotel or similar
Day Seven, Monday, December 1
Baikonur • launch date of Soyuz • fly to
Moscow

Today is the **day of the manned space launch** of the Soyuz to the International Space Station. Witness the process before, during and after the launch. Experience behind-the-scenes events, including the **send-off from the Cosmonaut Hotel** and the **Space Crew ready-to-go official report**. Before the launch, take time to tour the **Buran hangar** where the rockets are assembled (the facility is approximately the size of the Astrodome)

and if time permits, the **Energia** and **Proton launch pads**. Pay your respects to the pioneers of Soviet space travel at the **Yuri Gagarin and Sergei Korolev living apartments**, then proceed to the **special designated launch viewing place** for the launch of the Soyuz.

After celebrating the launch, transfer to the airport for a flight back to Moscow. *NOTE: the flight back to Moscow maybe scheduled for the next morning and if so, one more night will be spent in Baikonur. Upon arrival in Moscow, transfer to the hotel for check-in and a late dinner, time permitting.*
Day Eight, Tuesday, December 2

Moscow

Head outside of Moscow after breakfast to see the Monino Air Museum. The Aviation Museum in Monino, the largest and most complete in Russia, is a coveted stop for anyone interested in aviation. Located an hour outside of Moscow at a former Soviet Air Force base, the museum displays dozens of Russian and Soviet aircraft from various periods and artifacts from the history of Russian aviation. Aircraft include the famous Tupolev Tu-95 – a huge Cold War bomber called the “Bear” – and plenty of MiGs and Yaks.

After a quick lunch, continue to UNESCO-listed Novodevichy Convent and Cemetery. The Novodevichy compound contains a spectacularly beautiful church, Smolensk Cathedral, with icons from the time of Boris Godunov. Strangely enough, the main attraction of the convent is its cemetery. Such luminaries as Gogol, Chekhov, and Khrushchev are buried here, and some of the graves are quite fanciful. Included are political leaders, aircraft designers like Tupolev and Ilyushin, several cosmonauts, the Soviet Union’s foremost anarchist, Peter Kropotkin, a female sniper named Lyudmila Pavlichenko and Stalin’s second wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva, who allegedly shot herself after an argument.

In the afternoon, take a tour of the Cold War Museum Bunker. Over 200 feet below Moscow is the Secured Command Post “Tagansky,” an abandoned relic of the Cold War built to withstand a nuclear attack. Stocked with food and provisions, the 75,000-square-foot space was meant to sustain 5,000 people for three months. Ordered by Stalin in 1951, the shelter was finished in 1956, and soon became a secret communication bunker and, reportedly, a missile control center. A tour of the former secret bunker includes a video presentation on the Cold War.

Celebrate the successful conclusion of the tour tonight with a festive farewell dinner inside of the Tagansky Bunker.

Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Aquamarine or similar
Following breakfast, the tour concludes with transfers to the airport for international departures.

Meals: B

**About the Tour Leader: Douglas Grimes**

This journey will be accompanied and led by Douglas Grimes, president and founder of MIR Corporation. Douglas’ international explorations to this part of the world began in 1986 when he pioneered a goodwill volleyball exchange with “comrades” in the Soviet Union.

He has been exploring this region ever since. Douglas is a member of the Explorers Club and has made over 100 journeys throughout MIR’s destinations over the past 27 years. He has witnessed three manned Soyuz launches to the International Space Station at the Baikonur Russian space facility on the Kazakh steppe. He has also relished two opportunities to experience weightlessness on the Russian Zero-G cosmonaut training flight. Douglas pioneered this unusual journey and looks forward to sharing it with you.

**Dates for 2014**

The land itinerary is scheduled to be operated on the following dates. Please note you need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to the tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

November 25-December 3, 2014

**Note: Due to launch date fluctuations, we recommend that you keep your schedule open at least two weeks before and two weeks after the tour dates.**

**Package Prices**

Special tour: 5-20 travelers, $14,295*** per person, twin share *(includes internal air, subject to change)*

Single supplement $1,395

***Cosmonaut training not included, call for prices.

**Tour Includes**

- Shared accommodations in well-located first class hotels in the major cities and best available hotels elsewhere. *(Best available properties may still be basic and simple.)*
- All meals starting with dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on final tour day
- Restaurant tips for included meals.
- Arrival and departure transfers. MIR will arrange for all travelers to be met upon arrival and seen off on departure whether we make your air arrangements or not, provided you arrive and depart in Moscow on the tour start and end dates.
- Transportation throughout itinerary by private van or coach *(size of vehicle depends on group size), and by air.*
• Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
• Services of an experienced, English-speaking MIR Tour Manager with local guides at specific sites.
• Baggage handling, where available.
• Bottled water at group meals.
• Gratuities to local guides and drivers.
• Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, insurance information.
• Touring with MIR handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
• Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
• Customized visa application and instruction kit (please note, visa fees are not included in the tour price).
• Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates, and more.

Not Included
• International airfare or taxes – available through MIR; please call for rates.
• Items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry, etc.).
• Gratuities to Tour Manager.
• Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
• Visa fees.
• Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

Interested in travel insurance?
To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1.877.709.5596.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?
While the accommodations we utilize in Moscow are superior class and in Baikonur are tourist class, please keep in mind that some aspects of the tourism infrastructure in Baikonur, Kazakhstan are not up to the standards North American travelers expect. Services are improving in the region; however you may encounter problems with bureaucratic service, road conditions and availability and quality of public restrooms. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets and sidewalks are uneven, and some attractions are not designed for visitors, as they are working facilities. Museums and sites generally do not have elevators.

We believe that this program is designed to be as comfortable as possible for travel in this region. It is rated as rigorous touring because of the daily walking involved, the length of some bus rides and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least a mile a day, keeping up with fellow travelers. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept changing schedules, local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this schedule is accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We do our best to inform participants in advance of any changes, but, due to the nature of travel in Russia and Kazakhstan, this may not always be possible.
Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp

Weather

Moscow is a wonderful city to visit any time of the year. Fall temperatures are mild, with temperatures ranging from the low 50's to mid 60's Fahrenheit. Rain is possible year round. Kazakhstan in the fall is warm and sunny; sunscreen, a sunhat and lip balm will be welcome. Loose, light-colored clothing will help you stay cool, and a light jacket or sweater is handy for evenings. As with traveling anywhere, it is best to bring layers of different weights and thickness to keep yourself comfortable.

International Airfare

Special note regarding air arrangements for this program: The dates of this program rely on the Soyuz launch date, and are therefore subject to change. Given the possibility of launch dates changing, MIR cautions travelers not to purchase non-refundable/non-changeable air tickets. Please note that MIR cannot be responsible for any expenses incurred due to purchasing such tickets. MIR can make your reservations and hold them until closer to the trip date to provide greater flexibility and minimize potential risks and expense. We also recommend that you keep your schedule open at least two weeks before and two weeks after the tour dates.

MIR’s in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers, and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Lufthansa, Swiss Air, and Aeroflot, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to Western Russia.

Please call us at 800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

Visas

A double entry Russian visa is required for this tour. Extensive pre-tour paperwork and time are necessary to obtain a Russian visa. MIR will provide you with the necessary application materials and instructions. Total current visa cost for U.S. passport holders, based on standard processing time, is $243. Visa prices are always subject to change.

Pre- or Post-Tours

MIR can arrange for an extended program in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Eastern or Central Europe before or after your tour. Suggested extensions include:
St. Petersburg – available year-round
St. Petersburg is often described as one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Its miles of canals, laced together with graceful bridges set amidst 18th century buildings, have earned it the name “Venice of the North.” Explore the Hermitage Museum and the grand estates of czars Peter and Catherine.

Also Nearby...
For other options to this region, you may want to check out

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Essential Russia, 7 days. A compact and compelling survey of Russia’s political capital, Moscow, and its culture capital, St. Petersburg, this tour communicates the character of Western Russia in a succinct and meaningful series of experiences.

Essential St. Petersburg 7 days. St. Petersburg, home of the czars and their courts, is a rich repository of extravagant palaces, brilliant museums and renowned theaters overflowing with music and dance. Its fashionable boulevards and serene canals glisten in the “White Nights” of summer and dazzle on sunny winter days.

Small Group Tours

A Chronicle of Russian Cuisine and Culture (New), 10 days. This delectable new journey, led by a passionate local foodie, lets you eat your way through Russia’s greatest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, while taking care to touch on all the definitive cultural sites. You will learn that Russian cuisine goes far beyond borscht and blini. Meet famed chefs for hands-on cooking classes and dine in a smorgasbord of restaurants, family homes, and a country dacha, where home-cooked cuisine and traditional Russian culture come together.

Classic Western Russia: Moscow, Novgorod & St. Petersburg, 10 days. This indispensable introduction to some of Russia’s great cities gives an insider’s view of the real Russia, spotlighting not only the glittering palaces and dignified official edifices of the Russian Empire, but also a birch bark crafts class in historic Novgorod, Stalin’s underground bunker, and the unforgettable warmth of a meal in a Russian home.

Russian Winter Wonder Land, 10 days. Nobody loves New Year’s Eve like the Russians do - it’s the most festive holiday of the year, with parties, presents and champagne toasts. This celebratory tour revolves around New Year’s in glorious St. Petersburg, with Moscow merrymaking and a visit to the 12th century Suzdal to round out the festivities.

Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses, 16 days. Explore the complex history and fascinating culture of Bulgaria and Romania, two Balkan countries whose rugged terrain and consequent isolation have helped preserve their heritage. Discover the luminous frescoes of the painted monasteries, breathe in the fragrance of the Valley of the Roses, and spend an afternoon visiting with villagers in a tiny Transylvanian town.

Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova, 16 days. Traverse a little known region that has changed hands from its earliest history. Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova are three of the least-frequented and least familiar countries in Europe. Time slowed drastically here after the devastation of WWII, but these beautiful countries are emerging from the shadows.
Treasures of the South Caucasus, 15 days. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan share stunning mountain backdrops, powerful stone architecture and a strong code of hospitality. Georgia’s renowned winemaking traditions, Azerbaijan’s Zoroastrian and Islamic background, and Armenia’s multitude of ancient churches combine to make this distinctive journey more than the sum of its parts.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2014 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR’s receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary).

Scheduled MIR Special Tours

Cost of cancellation, if received:
95 or more days prior to departure-------------------deposit due or paid in full of $1,500
65-94 days prior to departure-----------------------50% of the land tour cost
64 days or prior to departure after trip departure----no refund

References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators…

Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don’t do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last 27 years can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia), the Balkans (Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Central Asia (the five ‘Stans), Iran, the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Mongolia, China, Tibet and Central/East Europe (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania).
27 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn’t last 27 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.

Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by National Geographic Adventure. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as Outside magazine and National Geographic Traveler. Our trips have been featured in books like Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean and 1,000 Places to See Before You Die.

More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

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