



**Arctic Explorer by Private Train
Quest for the Northern Lights
2020**



Arctic Explorer by Private Train **Quest for the Northern Lights from St. Petersburg to Moscow** **Aboard the *Golden Eagle* Private Train**

Two departures in 2020 – Private Rail Journey – 12 Days

February 1-12 • December 29, 2020-January 9, 2021

You don't have to be a polar explorer to join a band of voyagers venturing far above the Arctic Circle on a hunt for the celestial phenomenon aurora borealis, the spectacular Northern Lights. You can be a comfort lover as well as an adventure lover, enjoying the amenities of the luxury Golden Eagle private train as it heads north from beautiful St. Petersburg. Rolling through the taiga until the trees thin and lose their stature, the train crosses the Arctic Circle. Across the border, in the Norwegian town of Kirkenes, which is squarely within the auroral zone near the Barents Sea, board a comfortable coach that chases the Northern Lights through the tundra. Visit the cool Snow Hotel, made of snow and furnished with ice sculptures. The trip includes stops in the ice-free Arctic port of Murmansk, the open-air museum at Kizhi Island, the Golden Ring towns of Vladimir and Suzdal, and ends in magnificent Moscow, with four fabulous UNESCO Sites along the way.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive St. Petersburg, Russia
Day 2	St. Petersburg
Day 3	St. Petersburg • board the <i>Golden Eagle</i>
Day 4	Cross the Arctic Circle
Day 5	Kirkenes, Norway • search for Northern Lights
Day 6	Kirkenes, Norway • search for Northern Lights
Day 7	Aboard train, Russia • search for Northern Lights
Day 8	Murmansk • search for Northern Lights
Day 9	Petrozavodsk
Day 10	Moscow
Day 11	Vladimir • Suzdal
Day 12	Depart Moscow

Please note, the December departure of this program operates in reverse, starting in Moscow and ending in St. Petersburg. Please call for details.



Tour Features

- Enjoy afternoon tea with a guest astronomer who explains the phenomenon of the aurora borealis, the Northern Lights.
- Venture far above the Arctic Circle and experience twilight at noon.
- Visit the Snow Hotel, its guestrooms built of snow and adorned with snow carvings and ice sculptures.
- Search out the Northern Lights across the Aurora Borealis Zone on two consecutive evenings, in the comfort of a cozy coach.
- Board the world's first nuclear-powered ice-breaker, the *Lenin*, now a museum ship.
- Skim over Lake Onega on a hovercraft to the UNESCO-listed open-air museum on Kizhi Island and admire Russia's oldest wooden church.
- Take an exhilarating traditional sleigh ride in old Suzdal.

Tour Highlights

St. Petersburg	Historic city center (UNESCO World Heritage Site), world-class Hermitage Museum
Pushkin	Catherine's Palace with the Amber Room
Kirkenes, Norway	Snow Hotel, optional add-on excursions, search for the Northern Lights by bus
Murmansk	Nuclear ice-breaker <i>Lenin</i>
Petrozavodsk	18th century Alexander Nevsky Cathedral
Moscow	Red Square and the Kremlin, St. Basil's Cathedral, Armory Museum (UNESCO World Heritage Sites)
Vladimir & Suzdal	12th century Uspensky Cathedral, Savior Monastery of St. Euthymius (UNESCO World Heritage Sites), choral concert, traditional sleigh ride



Daily Itinerary



Day One

Arrive St. Petersburg

Upon arrival to St. Petersburg, transfer to the centrally located hotel. The afternoon is yours to relax or explore the neighborhood. **UNESCO-listed 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." Conceived of by Peter the Great and designed by his favorite European architects, St. Petersburg was meant to be Peter's link to the Western world. A convergence of art and soul, the city survived the calamitous 20th century with its reputation as a storehouse of Russian culture intact. Some of the world's most radiant artworks hang in its museums, and some of the world's greatest performers, writers and musicians have walked its streets.

Gather this evening with fellow travelers for a **champagne reception and a welcome dinner.**

Meals: D – Grand Hotel Europe or similar

Day Two

St. Petersburg

Today, explore two of St. Petersburg's wonderful highlights, Catherine's Palace and the Hermitage Museum.

Outside of Petersburg, in Pushkin, is the royal residence of **Catherine's Palace**, originally built in 1717 by Catherine I. In 1752, famed architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli enlarged and embellished the palace, extending the facade to its current grandeur. The estate and palace buildings were almost completely destroyed by the Germans during World War II, but they have been carefully and expertly restored into a brilliant architectural monument.



The fully restored **Amber Room** inside Catherine's Palace has been years in the making. The wall coverings of amber



panels, created in the time of Peter the Great, were taken by the Nazis during the Second World War and never recovered. The beautifully crafted amber panels seen today were recreated from photos and descriptions of the originals, and have become one of the highlights of Catherine's Palace.

The Winter Palace, part of the **Hermitage** ensemble, was built in 1754-62 as the principal home of the czars, and was lavishly rebuilt in 1839 after it was destroyed by fire. Originally a small private palace gallery begun by Catherine the Great with a purchase of 255 paintings from Berlin, the Hermitage today houses one of the largest museum collections in the world. The fabulous rooms, with their inlaid floors, gilded woodwork and the grand double entry staircase, are works of art in themselves.

Meals: B, L, D – *Grand Hotel Europe or similar*

Day Three

St. Petersburg • board the Golden Eagle

After breakfast this morning, get to know Russia's second city, including St. Isaac's Cathedral and Nevsky Prospekt.

A drive or walk along **Nevsky Prospekt**, the three-mile avenue that is the backbone of the city, introduces the traveler to Peter's beautiful city. Landmarks include Gostiny Dvor, the city's oldest and largest shopping center, and the imposing Kazan Cathedral.

St. Isaac's Cathedral took 40 years to complete. The 48 red granite columns around the lower part of the building each weigh 110 tons, and the upper columns around the rotunda weigh 67 tons apiece. The dome is covered with 220 pounds of gold, and the interior columns faced with lapis lazuli and malachite. The cathedral is bursting with sculptures, frescoes, stained glass works and woodcarvings.

Board the *Golden Eagle* private train and settle into your elegant cabin. Enjoy dinner on board as the train heads north, with a signature caviar dinner in the handsome dining car.

Meals: B, L, D – *Aboard Golden Eagle train*

Day Four

Cross the Arctic Circle

Spend a relaxing day onboard the private train, chatting with the other guests, enjoying the privacy of your stateroom, or watching the *taiga* forest begin to thin, the trees shrinking as the train heads north, with numerous little lakes and boggy areas looking like empty white patches along the snowy tracks.

The *Golden Eagle* **guest astronomer** hosts an afternoon tea with fresh Russian cakes to talk about the phenomenon of the aurora borealis, the Northern Lights that you are speeding northwards to experience.

The train crosses the Arctic Circle today.

Meals: B, L, D – *Aboard Golden Eagle train*



Day Five

Kirkenes • search for Northern Lights



Pack your overnight bag and disembark from the train at the mining town of **Nikel**, near the border with Norway. (You may not be able to tell since the snow may cover the evidence, but the ecosystem around Nickel has been devastated by acid rain from the huge nickel smelting plant here. A 20-mile area around the town is devoid of any greenery.)

Board the coach and cross the Norwegian border for the 90-minute drive along a quiet road lined with skinny birch trees, low-growing bushes and rock outcroppings, passing a farmstead here and there.

Arrive in the tidy polar town of **Kirkenes**, Norway, overlooking the easternmost fjord in Norway. With a population of some 3,500, “Kirkenes” means “church on the headland.” Here, the Norwegian coastline swings eastward, so that the town is actually east of Finland, unlike the rest of Norway. Located far above the Arctic Circle, Kirkenes experiences continuous daylight from May to August, and conversely, polar night from late November to late January. In the middle of winter, only a blue twilight lights the sky around noon.

By mid-February, the sky can be significantly brighter, but still the nights are long here – perfect for viewing the Northern Lights.

Check into the hotel in Kirkenes, then drive out to visit the fantastic **Snow Hotel**, assembled each winter since 2006. The rooms are made by inflating a huge balloon and blowing six feet of snow over it. The balloon is deflated, and voila!

Have a **chilled vodka served in a glass made of ice** at the Icebar, decorated with snow and ice sculptures carved by craftsmen from the Harbin Ice Festival, and take a tour of the extraordinary hotel. Enjoy dinner at the lovely timbered restaurant serving meals family style at long wooden tables.



Take an evening bus tour **in search of the Northern Lights**. This region is known as **the Aurora Borealis Zone**, and was chosen as the place to study the phenomenon because of its dry winters and abundance of clear nights. If the sky is clear tonight, the guest astronomer will accompany you on your sky-gazing adventure.

Return to the hotel in Kirkenes for an overnight.

Meals: B, L, D – *Thon Hotel or similar*



Note: There's an option to stay one night at the Snow Hotel at an additional expense. Additional touring options are available here, **also at additional expense**, such as a snow-shoeing excursion. Please call for details on these extras.

Day Six

Kirkenes • search for Northern Lights

Enjoy a unique winter experience this morning, on a King Crab fishing adventure. Begin by snowmobile to the site on the frozen fjords, and then learn from your master guide how to catch the Arctic King Crab. Continue by sleigh to the nearby Fisherman's Lodge where your catch is prepared, cooked and eaten.



Return this afternoon to the Snow Hotel to visit their reindeer and a big husky dog farm, where more than 80 dogs are raised and trained to pull sleds across the frozen landscape.

Take another chance this evening to observe the **Northern Lights**, far from the lights of town. Odds are good that on at least one of these searches you will get to see the strange lights snaking across the sky in billows or waving like flags, sometimes showing colors, sometimes simply white against the deep black of the northern sky.
Meals: B, L, D – *Thon Hotel or similar*

Day Seven

Aboard the Golden Eagle • search for Northern Lights

Drive back to Nikel to re-board the train as it sets off toward Murmansk. From the cozy bar car or your warm cabin, continue to keep an eye out the window for an appearance by the Northern Lights. There's no predicting when they might suddenly show up.
Meals: B, L, D – *Aboard Golden Eagle train*

Day Eight

Murmansk • search for Northern Lights

Today's stop is Murmansk, the most important city on the Kola Peninsula. Founded in 1916, the **port city of Murmansk** exists because even though it is above the Arctic Circle, the **warm waters of the Gulf Stream** keep it ice-free for most of the winter. It is so far north that the trees stop growing over a hundred miles south. The sun doesn't set all summer, and doesn't rise all winter. During the winter, a ghostly fog rolls off the ocean, which remains much warmer than the land.

Board the **world's first nuclear-powered ice-breaker, the Lenin**, now a museum ship. The *Lenin* was launched in 1957 and worked clearing the northern sea routes until 1989. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, records became public that showed the ice-breaker had experienced two nuclear reactor accidents, one in 1965 and the other in 1967. After the second mishap, the original reactors were replaced with two more modern reactors. Explore the decks, inner corridors, some of the vessel's compartments and exhibitions about the future of the Arctic region.

Back on board the train, continue searching the skies for the aurora borealis.
Meals: B, L, D – *Aboard Golden Eagle train*



Day Nine
Petrozavodsk

Heading back south, the train makes a stop in **Petrozavodsk**. Petrozavodsk was founded by Peter the Great, who recognized that he would need a local iron foundry to outfit the ships he intended to build for his new navy. Petrozavodsk grew around the foundry that Peter built on the shore of Lake Onega.

Take a tour of the city, including the yellow **18th century Alexander Nevsky Cathedral**, constructed by and for the Petrozavodsk foundry workers, who, before it was finished, used to walk across town to a shabby little church to worship.

Re-board the train as it continues south.

Meals: B, L, D – *Aboard Golden Eagle train*



Day Ten
Moscow

Arrive in **Moscow** today. Founded in 1147 by Yuri Dolgoruky (literally “Yuri of the Long Arms”), Moscow rose to prominence during Mongol domination and eventually became the Russian capital. Eclipsed for 200 years by St. Petersburg, Moscow was restored as a political center after the October Revolution in 1917, and served as the capital of the Soviet Union until 1991. Today, the city is a booming metropolis, dignified yet dynamic, where ancient churches sit shoulder to shoulder with 21st century financial institutions, and where the new high-rise commercial district of Moscow City is changing the face of the city forever.

Begin an exploration of Moscow at **UNESCO-listed Red Square** and St. Basil's Cathedral, perhaps the most recognizable symbols of Russia. The square owes its origins to Ivan III, who in the late 15th century had all buildings removed from the eastern wall of the Kremlin.

St. Basil's was built to celebrate Ivan the Terrible's victory at the Tatar stronghold of Kazan in 1552. Built between 1555 and 1561, it was originally painted white. The domes were not patterned and colored as they are today until a hundred years later. St. Basil's is named after Vasily, the "holy fool" who predicted that Ivan would murder his own son. Admire the vivid exterior of St. Basil's today.

Take a tour of the **Moscow Kremlin**, reminding modern-day Russia of its medieval past. 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, a bejeweled chalice belonging to Prince Yuri and Catherine the Great's ball gowns.

Meals: B, L, D – *Four Seasons or similar*



Day Eleven Vladimir • Suzdal

Discover two of Russia's Golden Ring towns, Vladimir and Suzdal. **The Golden Ring** is a modern name given to the ancient towns that form an elliptical circle to the north and east of Moscow. Many of these were seats of political and economic power long before the rise of Moscow. Today, they are mostly quiet, sleepy towns dotted with the remnants of defensive kremlins, with active monasteries and with some of the oldest and most beautiful churches in Russia. Suzdal and Vladimir, **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**, are among the oldest of the Golden Ring towns, and offer intimate views into Russia's past.



Founded by the last of the great Kievan princes, Grand Duke Vladimir Monomakh, **Vladimir** is between 900 and 1,000 years old. The capital of Kievan Rus' from the 12th to the 14th centuries, Vladimir subsided into a small provincial town after power shifted to Moscow. During the Soviet years, it grew into an industrial and cultural center, and much of its wonderful old architecture has been preserved.

Visit the 12th century **Cathedral of the Assumption (Uspensky Cathedral)** rising gracefully from the surrounding countryside. Its six pillars and 12 blue and gold domes made it one of Russia's largest churches for over 300 years.

Continue to **Suzdal**, founded in 1024. It was named by Grand Duke Yaroslav the Wise of Kiev, who came to the region to quell a peasant uprising. In the 12th century, Suzdal was a capital city, exceeding London in physical size and population. Suzdal's UNESCO-listed monuments have been remarkably preserved over the ages; so much of the town's original architecture has been kept that a law was passed to prevent modern development from encroaching on these historic places.

Suzdal's biggest monastery, **UNESCO-listed Savior Monastery of St. Euthymius**, was founded in 1352, and its protective brick walls and towers date from the 17th century. Inside the walls stands the five-domed Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Savior, whose interior was frescoed by Gury Nikitin in the late 17th century. The monastery's 16th century bell tower chimes every hour. Attend a **choral concert by some of the monks** who live here.

Go dashing through the snow on a **traditional sleigh ride** around the monastery before re-boarding the train.

Return to Moscow this evening for a Farwell Dinner in the Russian capital.
Meals: B, L, D – *Four Seasons or similar*

Day Twelve Depart Moscow

The tour comes to an end today with transfers to the airport for international departures.
Meals: B

Please note, the December departure of this program operates in reverse, starting in Moscow and ending in St. Petersburg. Please call for details.



About The Golden Eagle Train

Train Accommodations

Three styles of accommodation are available on board the luxury *Golden Eagle*: Imperial Suites, Gold Class and Silver Class, each with private en suite facilities. Imperial Suites feature a king size bed, while Gold and Silver Class cabins are furnished with an upper/lower berth configuration.

Imperial Suites

Imperial Suite cabins are the most beautiful and spacious cabins available onboard the *Golden Eagle*. Measuring a surprising 120 sq ft (11.1 sq meters), they are furnished with a luxurious king size bed, dedicated seating area, dressing table and private en suite facilities with large power shower and under-floor heating. Individual air-conditioning, wardrobe, DVD/CD player with LCD screen and two large picture windows make the cabin a pleasant retreat. Imperial Class guests also enjoy butler service, a selection of complimentary drinks from the premium bar list, laundry service and room upgrades at hotels. Limited availability.

Imperial Suite Cabins:

- 120 sq ft (11.1 sq meters)
- Sleeps 2 in king size bed
- Sitting area
- In cabin dining options
- Remote controlled air-conditioning and heating
- Recessed lighting and wardrobe
- Dressing table
- Personal safe
- Minibar
- Private en suite bathroom with full power shower and under-floor heating
- Bathrobes, slippers and toiletries
- DVD/CD player with LCD screen
- Towels and linens changed daily
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water available at all times
- Dedicated butler service
- Drinks from the Bar Car included from the Standard and Premium Bar List (excluding Premium Wine List)
- Laundry service included
- Hotel room upgrade to next available category
- 1 cabin per carriage (plus 3 Gold cabins)



Note: cabin configurations and decor may vary from samples depicted

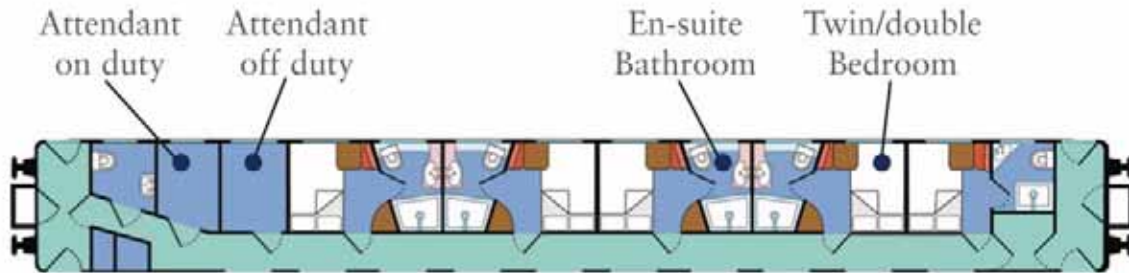


Gold Class

Gold Class cabins are well-proportioned and feature modern en suite amenities, including power showers, under-floor heating, a DVD/CD player with LCD screen, remote-controlled air-conditioning/heating, recessed lighting, a wardrobe and a personal safe. Each cabin is configured with upper/lower berths and can accommodate double, twin or single occupancy.

Gold Class Cabins:

- 77 sq ft (7 sq meters)
- Sleeps 2 in either lower standard (4ft 6in) double bed or bunk style
- Remote controlled air-conditioning and heating
- Recessed lighting and wardrobe
- Personal safe
- Private en suite bathroom with full power shower and under-floor heating
- DVD/CD player with LCD screen
- Towels and linens changed regularly
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water in cabin
- Drinks from the Bar Car included from the Standard Bar List
- Laundry service available for a fee
- 5 cabins per carriage (Note: The fifth compartment is of a slightly different layout – 68 sq ft – and will normally be allocated to single guests.)



GOLD CLASS FLOOR PLAN

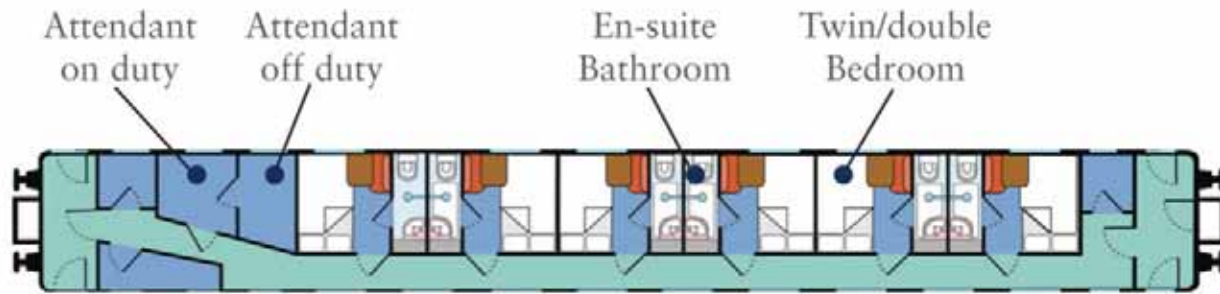


Silver Class

Silver Class cabins are smaller than Gold Class cabins but still have en suite facilities, though with a smaller shower area. Silver Class cabins feature the same amenities as Gold Class cabins but in a smaller space. Each Silver Class Sleeping Car has six two-bedded cabins, accommodating a maximum of 12 passengers per car.

Silver Class Cabins:

- 60 sq ft (5.5 sq meters)
- Sleeps 2 in lower small double bed (4ft) or bunk style
- Remote controlled air-conditioning and heating
- Recessed lighting and wardrobe
- Personal safe
- Private en suite bathroom with “wet-room”-style shower and toilet
- DVD/CD player with LCD screen
- Towels and linens changed regularly
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water in cabin
- Laundry service available for a fee
- 6 cabins per carriage



SILVER CLASS FLOOR PLAN



DAY



NIGHT



Dates for 2020 – Private Rail Journey

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

February 1-12, 2020

December 29, 2020-January 9, 2021

Please note, the December departure of this program operates in reverse, starting in Moscow and ending in St. Petersburg. Please call for details.

Package Prices

Land Tour Cost – Per Person:

Silver Class, twin share \$12,995

Silver Class, single \$18,195

Gold Class, twin share \$14,995

Gold Class, single \$21,495

Imperial Suite, twin share \$24,995

Imperial Suite, single \$49,995

Private Train Tour Deposits – Per person:

Silver Class deposit \$2,500

Gold Class deposit \$3,000

Imperial Suite deposit \$5,500

A non-refundable deposit and completed reservation form/signed release are required to hold space.

Land Tour Includes

- Accommodation aboard the *Golden Eagle* private train.
- Hotel accommodation per the itinerary (2 nights St. Petersburg, 2 nights Kirkenes, 1 night Moscow).
- All meals starting with dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on final tour day.
- A generous allowance of wine or local beer, soft drinks and water with all lunches and dinners.
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water round the clock from your car attendant while on board the train.
- Complimentary draft beer in the Bar Car for all passengers.
- Arrival/departure transfers, provided you arrive and depart on the tour start/end dates and in the tour start/end cities.
- All guided off-train tours per itinerary.
- The services of an experienced Train Tour Manager, with local guides for scheduled off-train touring.
- All gratuities.
- Baggage handling.

Not Included

- International airfare or surface transport to the point of joining/leaving the tour. MIR is able to arrange your air itinerary in economy or business class. If you wish to obtain an air quote, please contact us for details.



- Items of a purely personal nature (laundry, telephone, bar account, photography at museums, etc.)
- Optional pre- or post-tour extensions.
- Drinks, beyond draft beer in the Bar Car, and beer and wine at set meals
- Visa fees, any excess baggage charges, airport departure taxes, vaccination or medical costs.
- 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.

Start Planning Next Year Now

Dates for 2021 – Rail Journey by Private Train

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Next year's dates are shown below – please call if you're ready to book now.

February 1-12, 2021
December 29, 2021-January 9, 2022

Package Prices – 2021

Golden Eagle 2021 programs can be booked at the 2020 price (see pricing section above) until December 31, 2019. Please call to book!

Note: 2020 price lock is applicable to 2021 bookings secured with **non-refundable tour deposit and signed, completed Tour Reservation Form** prior to December 31, 2019. Subject to availability at the time of booking. Not combinable with other special offers. Offer subject to change without notice. Call for details.

Rail Journey by Private Train

Private Train tours are in a class of their own, offering the opportunity to experience remote destinations in unparalleled style. These all-inclusive overview tours aboard the fully-chartered *Golden Eagle* luxury private train bring together passengers from around the world. Group sizes are flexible and can be more than 100 passengers, though winter programs are expected to be smaller.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

- This trip is moderately active, and rated **moderate to rigorous** touring due to the daily walking involved 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 local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.
- This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets and sidewalks are uneven, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases. Museums generally do not have elevators.



- On the train, restaurant and bar cars may be some distance from your sleeping car. Although portage is provided where possible, you may have to carry your baggage across short distances.
- Passengers may encounter problems getting on and off trains; there may be low platforms, steep steps and/or gaps between the platform and the train.
- In true expedition style, some delays or changes in the itinerary are likely.
- The viewing of the Northern Lights will depend on atmospheric conditions, and trip participants acknowledge that they may not be visible during their two days and nights in Kirkenes.

MINIMUM PASSENGER REQUIREMENTS All *Golden Eagle* rail tours require a minimum number of passengers to operate. Should this not be reached, *Golden Eagle* will run a modified service of carriages attached to regular service trains to accommodate a smaller group or offer an alternative tour. If no alternative is suitable a full refund of land payments made (exclusive of payments made for air tickets, visa fees or other expenses) will be offered. Reduced numbers mean smaller and more intimate groups, and a shorter train, as unfilled cars are left behind. On a number of tours Russian Railways will be combining *Golden Eagle* carriages with regular trains departing at similar times. The on-board experience and off-train tours will be unaffected and, as there will be no connection with the regular trains, the *Golden Eagle* carriages will remain totally private and you will not notice any difference to the quality, comfort and enjoyment of your trip.

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

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Russia here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/russia-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Norway here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/norway-travel-advisory.html>

Weather

The arctic climate in winter is, unsurprisingly, extremely cold. Temperatures regularly drop below freezing, and a warm winter jacket, hat, gloves and boots are necessities for this trip.

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. It is always advisable to check with online resources such as weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific regions of Russia and Norway that you will be visiting.

International Airfare

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 published fares available. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel, 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 carrier for this tour is Aeroflot, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from Los Angeles, New York and Washington D.C. to Western Russia.

Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 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. An estimate of current visa costs for U.S. passport holders, based on standard processing time, is \$312. Your exact visa fees may differ as visa costs can depend on a number of factors, such as state of residence, processing time, and return shipping. Visa fees are always subject to change. At the time of writing, the Russian Embassy is offering U.S. passport-holders three-year multiple-entry visas at the same price as single- or double-entry visas (the \$312 estimated above). Travelers who need to expedite their processing may not have the same option of getting the multi-entry visa at the single-entry visa cost. Please call for information.

Standard visa processing in the Russian visa section is ten to fifteen days for this tour. Travelers should prepare to be without their passports for that amount of time. If you plan to travel extensively in the time leading up to your MIR tour, you may need to obtain a second valid passport or use expedited processing, depending on your plans. Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding the timeline for visa processing.

In the past some travelers have made their own visa arrangements instead of using MIR's preferred provider for their visa processing; either using their own visas service or attempting to process directly with the embassies/consulates. We strongly recommend you discuss it with us before choosing an alternate visa processing method, to help avoid difficulties and visa problems. **In the event that you plan to process visas without going through MIR's preferred provider, please contact us first so we can pass you detailed instructions with critical trip-specific information.**

Pre and Post-Tour Extensions

MIR can arrange for an extended program in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Eastern or Central Europe before or after your tour.

Contact us for pricing and more details.

Also Nearby...

For more tours 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 cultural 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.



Essential Poland, 6 days. On this focused tour, visit four Polish UNESCO sites in six days – Warsaw’s Old Town, Krakow’s Historic Center, the Auschwitz/Birkenau camp and the Wieliczka Salt Mine.

Essential Balkans, 14 days. Visit seven Balkan countries in 14 days on this compact overland journey through history. A remarkably complex region, the mountainous Balkan Peninsula is fascinating, diverse and incredibly beautiful.

Essential Caucasus, 10 days. Armenia’s intricate stone *khachkar* crosses, the bounteous wines of Georgia and the ancient petroglyphs of Azerbaijan are icons of these three intertwined Caucasus countries, where you can experience five UNESCO masterpieces in 10 days.

Essential Ukraine, 8 days. Ukraine is the new borderland between Europe and Russia. Explore this resilient region influenced by Polish princes, Cossack *hetmen*, Turkish khans, Russian communists and Ukrainian poets and nationalists.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 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

Please note that no partial refunds are available for any missed days of a tour or any whole or part of a tour, accommodation, meal or any other service not utilized by the participant during the tour. The quoted price represents a package price for the services offered and an itemization of individual component costs will not be provided. Please understand there will be no exceptions to our cancellation policies regardless of your situation. Should you need to cancel your travel plans, please notify us in writing immediately. At the time we receive written notification of cancellation, the following charges apply:

Scheduled Rail Journeys by Private Train:

121 or more days prior to departure-----deposit due or paid in full of \$2,500, \$3,000 or \$5,500

65-120 days prior to departure-----50% of the land tour cost

64 days prior to departure or 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 three decades 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 (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, North Macedonia Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 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.

MIR Corporation

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