



Saint Petersburg, Russia

INTERNATIONAL --- STUDENT GUIDE



ITMO *re than a* UNIVERSITY

INTERNATIONAL --- STUDENT GUIDE

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Guide for New International Students is designed to address some of the most frequently asked questions posed by international students about their arrival on campus and getting settled in the city. The information is presented in a sequence corresponding with the needs of a new arrival: from locating housing to leisure activities. We truly hope that you will find this guide helpful. We would welcome your suggestions to enhance the experience of future international students.

Please contact ITMO International Office
at international@mail.ifmo.ru



WELCOME from First Vice Rector

Dear International Student! Welcome to ITMO University!

We are glad that you have joined or will be joining us at ITMO University and we hope that your stay in St. Petersburg will be filled with exciting opportunities and unforgettable memories. So that you could take full advantage of your experience at ITMO University we have compiled this Guide to provide you with practical information that you will need before your arrival and during your stay in St. Petersburg. I kindly encourage you to read this Guide to help you smoothly phase into your new life here. The information presented in this guide book is a compilation of the most frequently-asked questions international students have when they first arrive in St. Petersburg. I would also advise you to visit our web site for more information designed for international students (en.ifmo.ru). For assistance with any questions, feel free to contact us at international@mail.ifmo.ru. The team at ITMO International Office takes great pleasure in supporting you during your program. We wish you good luck with your studies at ITMO University, and hope that you will enjoy your stay in St. Petersburg!

**Cordially,
Daria Kozlova, Ph.D.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| 8 | THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO GET SETTLED | |
| | Russia _____ | 8 |
| | Weather and climate _____ | 9 |
| 10 | ST. PETERSBURG | |
| | ITMO at a Glance _____ | 12 |
| | ITMO International Office _____ | 14 |
| | International Student Council _____ | 15 |
| | Plan for Your Arrival in St. Petersburg _____ | 16 |
| | Travel Tips _____ | 17 |
| 18 | WHEN YOU ARRIVE IN ST. PETERSBURG | |
| | Accommodation _____ | 19 |
| | Railway Stations _____ | 21 |
| | Public transport _____ | 21 |
| | Travel Cards _____ | 21 |
| | Currency and Banks _____ | 22 |
| | Cell Phone Services _____ | 22 |
| | Emergency services _____ | 22 |
| | Food _____ | 24 |
| | Art and Culture _____ | 29 |
| | Free Time Activities _____ | 32 |
| | Language _____ | 34 |
| | Tutoring _____ | 36 |
| | Russian grading scale _____ | 36 |
| | Before your departure from St. Petersburg _____ | 36 |

THE INFORMATION

you need to get settled

RUSSIA

Russia is one of the most magnificent and diverse countries. It has inspired renowned artists and writers through centuries. Its unique nature has been glorified in such literature masterpieces like "War and Peace", "Evgeny Onegin", "A Hero of Our Time", the immortal poems by Sergei Yesenin and other.

There are a lot of prejudices about the Russian culture; some of the most popular are:

Polar bears walk down the street

It's always extremely cold in Russia

Russians drink too much alcohol

Russians don't speak any language but their own

Every Russian can play the accordion and balalaika

The Russian mafia is out there

These and many other stereotypes make Russia seem rather hostile but they are only partly true. Yes, Russians drink alcohol but only occasionally; it is cold but only in winter; most Russians do speak only Russian but they do their best to make foreigners understand them; Polar bears do walk but in the Arctic region not downtown St. Petersburg; Russians are very talented but not everyone can play the balalaika; the Russian mafia...well, it's tales of the past.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

All four seasons are visible in the North-West of Russia. Winter is cold and dark, spring is short but beautiful, summer is warm and lively and fall can boast of its amazing colors.

SPRING (March – April/May) – Days get longer and warmer really fast. Nature wakes up and plants grow fast. St. Petersburg is marvelous this time of year.

SUMMER (May – mid-September) – Average day temperature is +20°C. The warmest month is July, temperature is often over +20°C but sometimes can be over +30°C. As summer is short it is very much enjoyed, Russians are outside a lot. Summer days are long in the North-West part of Russia and during midsummer a day can be 19 hours long.

FALL (mid-September – November/December) – Weather gets colder and it rains rather often. Average day temperature is about -4°C.

WINTER (November/December – February) – The coldest month is February, in the North-West of Russia temperature varies between 0°C and -20°C. Temperature can be closer to -30°C. Usually there is snow from December till March. Our advice for winter time – wrap up!



ST. PETERSBURG

Emergence of St. Petersburg is connected with an ambition of the Russian tsar Peter I to fortify his positions in the strategically important region on the Baltic seashore. The city was founded in 1703, and in 1712 here, on the Neva bank, the capital of the state was proclaimed. St. Petersburg is called the northern capital of Russia, the heart of Russia and the gates to Europe. The city ranges among the most beautiful and integral in respect of art. Its layout is notable for logic nature of the spatial composition, including numerous channels, bridges, embankments, gardens and parks.

It is rich in outstanding monuments, palace and church architecture, monumental statues that in most cases represent unique architectural ensembles. The city is mostly amazing in summer when locals and tourists can observe the bridges being raised. Historic Center of St. Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments are now protected by UNESCO as part of several museum-reserves, or have a status of ancient and cultural monuments.

ITMO AT A GLANCE

OUR MISSION:

To generate cutting-edge knowledge, implement innovative findings and prepare an elite workforce capable of working in a fast-paced world and ensuring progress in science and technology.



OUR PHILOSOPHY: **IT'sMO** *re than a*
UNIVERSITY

BRIEF HISTORY:

1900 Founded as a Mechanical and Optical Department of the Prince Nicolas Vocational School

1930 Changed name to Leningrad Institute of Fine Mechanics and Optics (LITMO)

2003 LITMO became the Saint Petersburg State University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics

2009 Received a designation of the "National Research University"

2014 ITMO University

LET'S TALK NUMBERS!

11200
student body

1130
lecturers/
professors

1500+
foreign students
from 71
countries

6550
Bachelor degree
students

4650
Master degree
students

DON'T MESS WITH THE BEST!

ITMO team is the only seven-time absolute champion of the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest in the world (2004, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017)

ITMO INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

ITMO International Office's mission is to enhance academic experience of international students by providing the highest levels of knowledge and expertise in advising, immigration services and administrative support.

Office hours:

**Monday – Friday,
9 a.m. – 6 p.m.**

SERVICES:

Advisory support for foreign students, scholars, staff, and faculty;

A wide variety of international programs and intensive courses;

Visa support for nonimmigrant students and scholars.

STOP BY AND SAY HI!

ITMO International Office team members are available on a daily basis during working hours. You can choose to stop by during our "drop-in" periods or by making an appointment ("Drop-in" means you don't need an appointment – just stop by our office. One of our team members will help you out on a "first come, first serve" basis).

ITMO International Office is located at: 9 Lomonosova St., off. 2139

If you want to make an appointment in advance, please call us at (+7 812) 457 17 90.



**Head of International
Educational Programs
Department:**
Ekaterina Tulugurova, PhD
etulugurova@mail.ifmo.ru

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL

Being aware that it takes time to get tuned to life in Russia the International Student Council has been founded to make every effort in order to speed up the adjustment process, because if one feels 100% comfortable he/she can truly unlock maximum of his/her potential!

To this end, it's much easier to be an international student at ITMO University than at any other institution!

The main purpose of the ITMO International Student Council is to solve urgent daily issues of foreign students, carry out social activities, support and implement social initiatives.

The Council arranges various events: workshops, concerts, informal meetings etc. Everyone is welcome to participate! The emphasis is put on enhancing friendship between people from around the globe!

A foreign student can address any questions to the ITMO International Student Council, ask for help or suggest new ideas and projects. The Council is a place where one can meet new friends from around the world, because all the participants are foreign students.



**Head of the International
Student Council:**
Mika Nurysheva
Tel: +7 (981) 278-40-53
E-mail: mika-angel-95@mail.ru

PLAN FOR YOUR ARRIVAL IN ST. PETERSBURG

REVIEW INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR YOUR VISA APPLICATION

Students should contact the Russian Embassy or the Consulate General office within the home country for more detailed information. ITMO University provides an invitation for obtaining a visa.

VERIFY YOUR PASSPORT EXPIRATION DATE

To obtain a visa you will need a passport with a valid date extending from 6 months to 18 months (depending on the type of your visa) beyond your intended period of stay in Russia.

YOUR HEALTH RECORDS

ITMO University policy requires all incoming students to meet certain health-related requirements. These include an insurance certificate and an official medical certificate of HIV infection absence issued not later than 6 months prior to the first day of studies. If you do not possess the required health records you can get them upon arrival before commencing the classes. If necessary, you should also obtain English translations of your medical history to ensure better care while staying in Russia.

BOOK YOUR TRIP AND FIND A PLACE TO STAY IN ST. PETERSBURG.

Once you have received your student visa, it is time to make your travel arrangements and find a place to stay in St. Petersburg. Learn more about living in St. Petersburg and temporary housing options before you find a place to live. ITMO University provides accommodation at its own dormitories upon availability. The ITMO dorms are located either downtown or within reasonable distance and close to a Metro station.



TRAVEL TIPS

TRANSPORTATION FROM THE AIRPORT

There is one main airport in the St. Petersburg area – Pulkovo Airport. To find out more, please, visit the airport's website at <http://www.pulkovoairport.ru/en/>.

If you don't have anyone meeting you at the airport you will need to get to your accommodation by yourself. But don't worry, it is rather easy.

BY BUS:

City buses number 39, 39Э and Minivan Taxi number K39 run between the nearest Moskovskaya Metro station and the airport. It takes about 20-35 minutes to get to Moskovskaya Metro station. The ticket costs about 35 RUR (0.4€). Check up the picture below.

BY TAXI:

Another option to get to your destination is by taxi. A taxi from the airport to downtown costs around 1000 – 1400 RUR (12-17€). It takes about 30-40 minutes to get downtown (depending on time of the day). The taxi services with English-speaking operators are the following:

Taxovichkof
taxovichkof.ru +7 (812) 333 00 00

Taxity
taxity.ru +7 (812) 3 200 200



WHEN YOU ARRIVE

in St. Petersburg

ACCOMMODATION

GET REGISTERED AT THE RUSSIAN FEDERAL MIGRATION SERVICE!

Within 3 days upon arrival in St. Petersburg you must get to ITMO Migration Department and provide the following documents in order to get registered:

Passport;

Migration card.

As you initially obtain a single visa you will need to get it extended at least one month prior to its expiration date (the sooner the better!).

In order to get your visa extended you must get to ITMO Migration Department again and provide the following documents:

Learning Agreement;

Photo;

Bank receipt (payment slip) confirming payment of the visa extension fee.

Visa extension fee is paid at Sberbank (the Russian state bank). You can do it via a payment terminal or via a cash desk; there are always bank officers who will help with payment transaction.

**ITMO Migration Office is located at:
9 Lomonosova St., off. 2139**

Currently ITMO University owns 5 dormitories; all of them are conveniently located either downtown or within reasonable distance from the main building of ITMO University.

If you need accommodation at one of the ITMO dormitories, please, inquire at international@mail.ifmo.ru well in advance.

Rental price depends much on a room type. The price varies from 1500 RUR (25 EUR) to 4900 (75 EUR) per month or 700 RUR (12) per day.

IN ORDER TO STAY AT THE ITMO DORM YOU NEED TO SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:

Learning Agreement

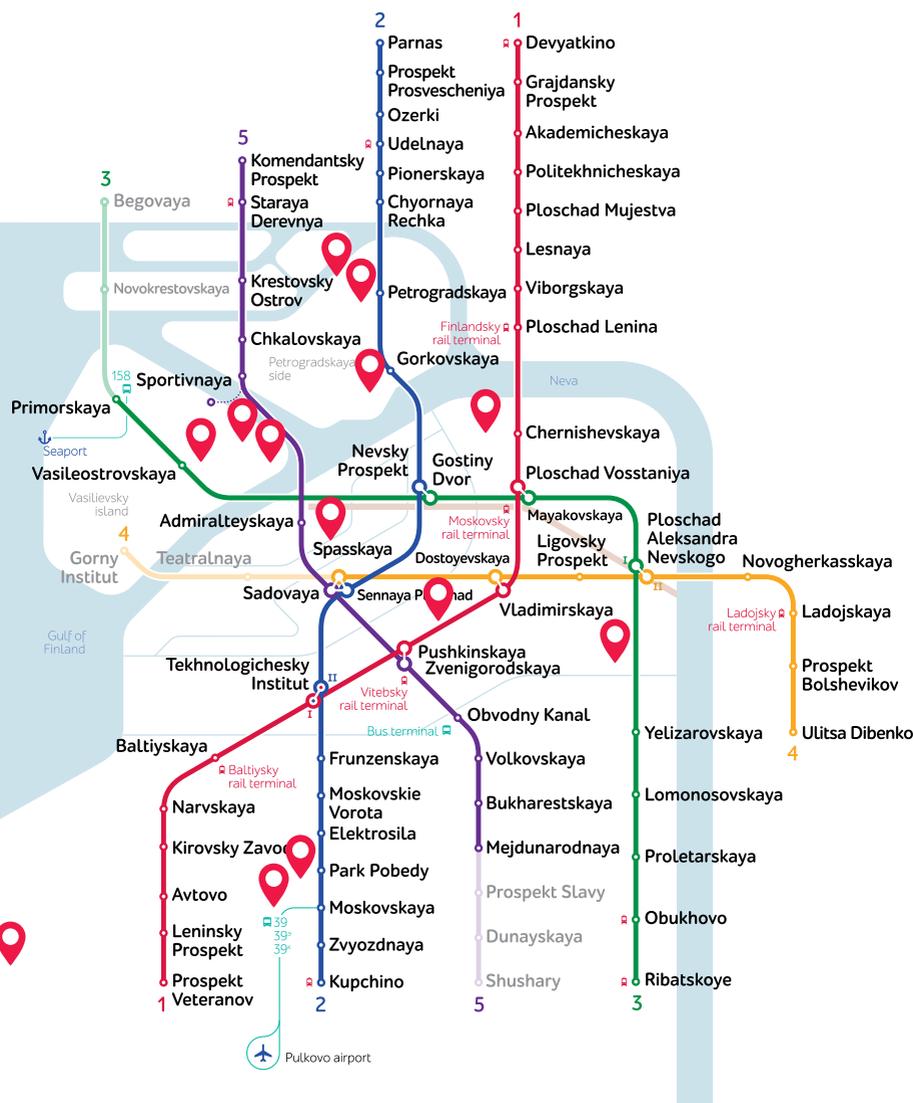
Passport copy

Photos

Chest photofluorography (obtained upon arrival in St. Petersburg)

Medical certificate 086 type (obtained upon arrival in St. Petersburg)

Along with staying at the University's dorms you can consider an opportunity of renting an apartment. The average rental price for a one-bedroom apartment varies from 25 000 RUR (390 EUR) to 30 000 RUR (470 EUR).



- 1 Red Line
- 2 Blue Line
- 3 Green Line
- 4 Orange Line
- 5 Purple Line
-  Transfer stations
-  Bus Lines
-  Rail terminals
-  ITMO campuses

RAILWAY STATIONS

There are four railway stations in St. Petersburg:

Moskovsky railway station: main destinations – Moscow (4 hours by Sapsan train), Velikiy Novgorog, Kazan

Ladozhsky railway station: main destinations – Petrozavodsk, Vologda, Murmansk

Vitebsky railway station: main destinations – Pskov, Tallinn, Riga

Finlyandsky railway station: main destination – Helsinki (3.5 hours by Allegro train)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transport in St. Petersburg works very smoothly. There are buses, Metro, trams, trolleybuses.

You can plan your route at the following web link:
spb.rusavtobus.ru/en/

TRAVEL CARDS

The Travel Card Podorozhnik can be used for all types of public transport across St. Petersburg.

Moreover ITMO students obtain a student ID card, which provides considerable discounts for certain types of transports.

Please, check the Metro website [at metro.spb.ru/en/](http://metro.spb.ru/en/) for more details.

A monthly student metro card costs about 850 RUR (12 EUR), you can find more information at <http://www.metro.spb.ru/en/cnblt3.html>.

CURRENCY AND BANKS

The national currency in Russia is the Russian Ruble (RUB). You can exchange cash or withdraw money in numerous banks, for example VTB (vtb24.ru), Sberbank (sberbank.ru), Bank St. Petersburg (bspb.ru), Citibank (citibank.ru) or Raiffeisen Bank (raiffeisen.ru). There are numerous ATMs across the city.



CELL PHONE SERVICES

Since you have a cell phone in your home country, you will, of course, need to inquire about its use in Russia; many companies have international plans. However, it may be more economical to buy a new SIM card after you arrive here. Do some research in advance by looking at the web sites of the major cell phone companies such as Megafon, MTS, Beeline, Tele2. For making international or long distance calls at lower price you should consult your cell phone company beforehand. Keep in mind that all the cell phone companies in Russia require that you have a passport with you to buy a SIM card. All the cell phone companies provide flexible mobile internet plans (the average rate is 300 RUB per 3 Gb). You can also use Skype or other IP services for making calls.



EMERGENCY SERVICES:

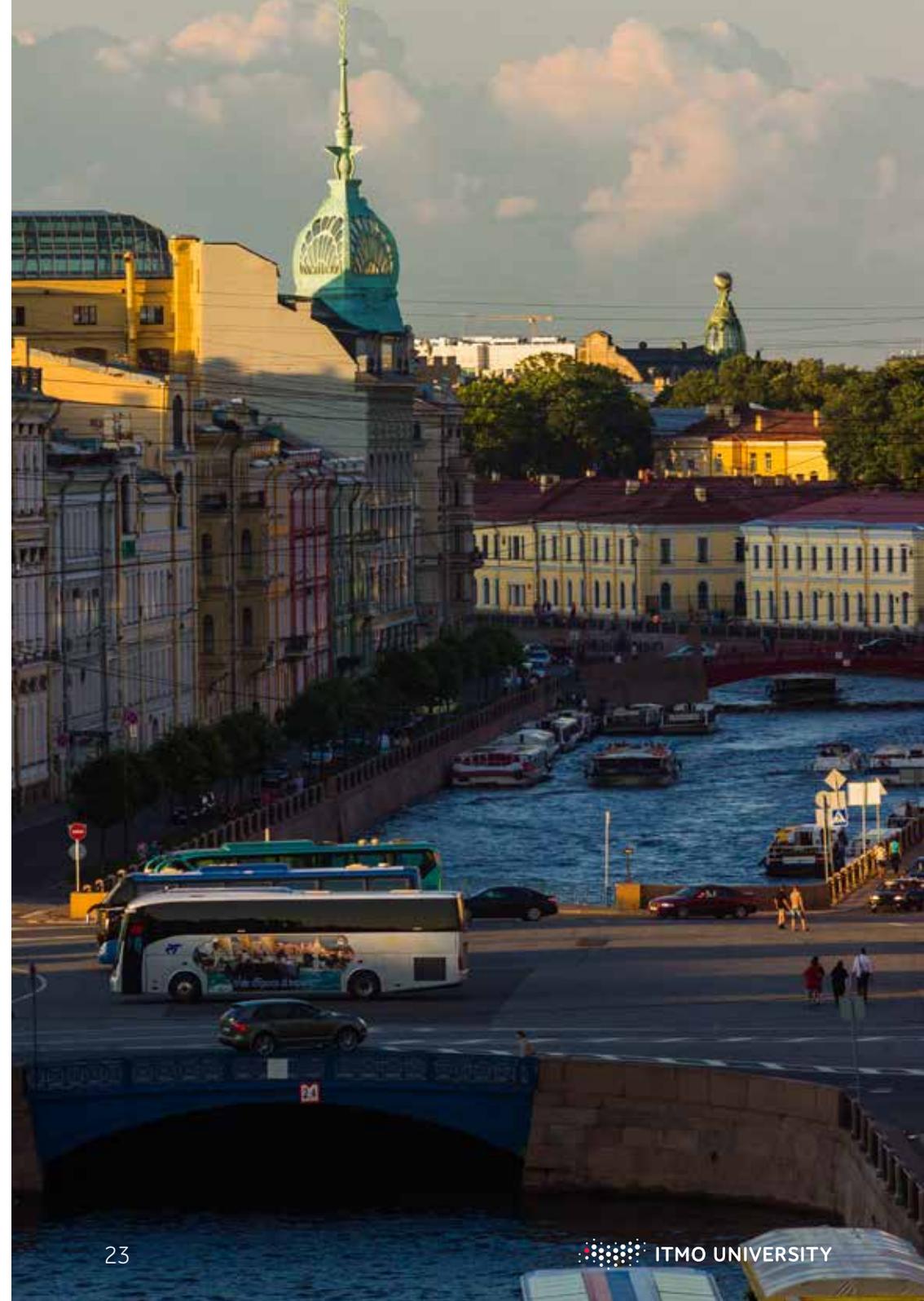
General emergency numbers – 112 or 911

To call an ambulance you can contact either of these 2 medical services (both English-speaking)

MEDEM +7 (812) 336-3333

American Medical Clinic +7 (812) 740 20 90

Please, be informed that both services are paid-for and may not be covered by your medical insurance!



FOOD

Common open hours in Russia for most stores are the following:

Weekdays 9-21

Weekends 10-20

However there are numerous stores operating 24/7.

TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN FOOD RESTAURANTS

The Pyshechnaya

One of the most delicious St. Petersburg pastry.

Address: Bolshaya Konyushennaya ul., 25.

Short description: The oldest Pyshechnaya in St. Petersburg, founded in 1958. It has become one of the most popular tourist attractions. We advise you to taste the most traditional pastry in St. Petersburg called "pishka" with tea.

The Yat

Buffet restaurant. (eatinyat.com)

Address: Moika Embankment, 26

Short description: Traditional Russian cuisine restaurant located in the heart of St. Petersburg. Always fresh pastries, homemade fruit drinks, branded liqueurs, dishes prepared according to the old Russian recipes.

The Teremok

Café chain of traditional Russian food.

If you want to taste delicious and inexpensive Russian food your option could be the Teremok. The most popular dish is a tasty pancake.





The Gogol restaurant

(restaurant-gogol.ru)

Address: Malaya Morskaya ul., 8

Short description: Russian restaurant styled as a St. Petersburg apartment of the late XIX century. Noble desk decoration, an antique piano and singing birds, carved oak tables, bookcases and a stove.

The Literary cafe restaurant

(litcafe.su)

Address: Nevsky prospect, 18

Short description: warm atmosphere supported with pictures, engravings with the architectural monuments of St. Petersburg and well-known places of the cultural capital of Russia.

en.ifmo.ru

Soviet cafe "Dachniki"

(litcafe.su)

Address: Nevsky Prospect, 20

Short description: An inexpensive Soviet-styled cafe. Interior: shelves with canned food, old carpets hanging on the walls, table covers with fringe. On the menu – smoked fish, grill dishes, soups, home-made fruit drinks and much more.

The Russian Zabava

Place from the Russian fairy tales located in the heart of St. Petersburg

Address: Gorokhovaya St, 3

Short description: The whole interior of the cafe and its elements are made entirely of wood. Here you can experience the Russian hospitality, enjoy the Russian dishes.

27

26



ART AND CULTURE

Without a shadow of a doubt St. Petersburg's culture is one of the richest in the whole world. There are numerous landmarks, some of which are held under the auspices of UNESCO. It may take a while to enjoy all of them.

SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS ARE:

The Hermitage Museum

The Hermitage Museum offers tourists a balanced mixture of art and culture. It is known as one of the oldest museums in the entire world as it was founded in 1764. Along with having a history all its own the museum is also one of the largest of its kind in the world boasting 11 different collections ranging from Egyptian Antiques to the Swiss fine art. The collections cannot all be seen in one day so it would be wise to have a plan if you have your sights set on visiting this massive museum.



Peter and Paul Fortress

This has to be the most noticeable building in the city whether from land, sea, or air. Originally built by Peter the Great around the year 1703 it has served a multitude of purposes over the years from fortress, to citadel, prison, museum, and tourist attraction. People come from all over to get a first-hand look at the prisons that once housed famous historical figures.



As the main building of ITMO University is located right across the Fortress you are lucky to enjoy the attraction as much as you like.



Peterhof

Peterhof, sometimes spelled Petergof, is actually a small town and not just a regular tourist site. This town acts as a municipality of the larger city of St Petersburg and has seen a lot of changes to its identity throughout history. Areas of interest would be the grand palace that sits just above the shoreline almost fifty feet above sea level. There is also a variety of gardens and fountains to take in while walking through the streets of St Petersburg's Peterhof municipality.

St. Isaac's Cathedral

The Russian Orthodox Cathedral was built over a 40 year period ending in 1858 and was not the first to be build on the same site. This was the fourth of such cathedrals. It may be familiar to many people because of the massive dome on top at the larger than life pillars adorning the front entrance.

Church of Our Savior on the Spilt Blood

It is best known for having an architectural style that stands uniquely among all of the other Russian churches. The church was reopened in 1997 after the restoration and currently acts mainly as an art museum and welcomes thousands of visitors every year.

Mariinsky Theatre

For opera and ballet lovers the Mariinsky Theatre is a must-see in St. Petersburg. It was originally founded in 1860 but the history of opera and ballet in the city dates back much further. The theatre still holds events and has contributed a lot to the careers of numerous world known opera singers and ballet dancers.



FREE TIME ACTIVITIES

SPORT FACILITIES:

There are numerous gyms and sport centers for those interested in keeping healthy lifestyle and wishing to stay fit. ITMO University has its own sport facilities available for all students.

SHOPPING:

St. Petersburg comprises a large number of shopping malls around the city.

The most popular are:

Galeria St. Petersburg

galeria-spb.ru/en

"Galeria" is a huge five-floor shopping mall located in just next to Moskovsky railway station, just 5 minutes walk from Nevsky prospect.

Gostiny Dvor

bgd.ru

Constructed between 1757 and 1785, Gostiny Dvor has a reputation for being one of the world's first shopping malls and occupies a whole city block on Nevsky Prospekt.

MEGA

megamall.ru

There are 2 MEGA malls located in different parts of the city. And there are many more!

PARKS AND GARDENS:

St. Petersburg is the greenest of Russia's major cities. There are over 200 parks and gardens, plus over a thousand tree-lined streets and more than 700 leafy squares.

The most famous and marvelous parks are the Botanical Garden, the Summer Garden, the Field of Mars, The Catherine Garden etc. A lot of people ride bicycles, jog, roller-blade and just go for a picnic to the parks. There are bicycle rentals by each Metro station.

NIGHT LIFE:

What happens in St. Petersburg stays in St. Petersburg!

Museums and ballet aside, St. Petersburg is undoubtedly famous for its nightlife. People here love a good bar crawl – either under the gleaming pink sky during summer white nights, or in the heart of a blizzard. You can find a lot of bars downtown. Some of them may charge an entrance fee (5-7 €).

Some of the popular places are:

PMI bar, XXXX (it's a chain; there are several clubs in different parts of the city), A2 and other hotspots.

The city is truly amazing during summer white nights. Therefore it's the best time to enjoy St. Petersburg nightlife. During this period (May-June) there are numerous summer terraces offering all kinds of entertainment 24/7.

LANGUAGE

Official languages: Russian. However, many Russians speak foreign languages, mostly English and German.

LOST IN TRANSLATION

There are some Russian words and expressions that may confuse most foreigners. So that you could feel on firm ground, below are some of the most “tricky” expressions with the explanations of their meaning:

| Russian Expression | Literal translation | Explanation of meaning |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Да нет | yes no | expression indicating that a person says no but can change his mind |
| Да нет, наверное | yes no maybe | same as the first one but with a hint of hesitation |
| Старый Новый Год | Old New Year | Although the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic officially adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1918, the Russian Orthodox Church continued to use the Julian calendar. The New Year became a holiday which is celebrated by both calendars. The New Year by the Julian calendar is still informally observed, and the tradition of celebrating New Year twice is widely enjoyed: January 1 (New New Year) and January 14 (Old New Year). |
| Ничего | nothing | In most cases it really means “nothing”, but it’s also a slang word meaning good, ok. It could be a reply to the question “How are you?” |
| Ну | | multifunctional word that is more often used to express someone’s consent but it can be used almost in every situation for emphasizing that “you are still there” |



USEFUL WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

Да [da] – yes

Нет [net] – no

Спасибо [spasíbo] – thank you

Пожалуйста [pozháluista] – please

Привет [privét] – hi

Здравствуйте [zdrávtsvuite] – hello (more polite)

До встречи [do vstréchi] – see you

Пока [poká] – bye

До свидания [do svidániya] – good bye (more polite)

Извините [izviníte] – excuse me

Пожалуйста [pozháluista] – please (if you’re asking for something), you’re welcome (a polite response)

Сколько стоит? [skólko stóit?] – how much?

TUTORING

Tutors are full-time degree students of ITMO University who have volunteered to support international students. You will get a tutor who will help you with your questions and he/she might also be your first friend in Russia. You will be contacted by an ITMO tutor a month before your arrival in Russia.

RUSSIAN GRADING SCALE

Russian grade ▶ ECTS grade

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 5 ▶ A | 4 ▶ B/C | 3 ▶ D/E | 2 ▶ F |
| excellent | good | satisfactory | failed |

BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE FROM ST. PETERSBURG:

DON'T FORGET TO:

Obtain your Transcript of Records of Records

Return your dorm key (if you stayed at one of the ITMO University's dormitories)

Make sure you have no fees/fines to pay



SEE YOU AGAIN
in St. Petersburg!



Follow us on social media

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en.ifmo.ru
e-mail: international@mail.ifmo.ru
tel: +7 (812) 457 17 90