

VOLGA DREAM

The Lower Volga

May 15 – 28, 2017

14-day Cruise from the Caspian Sea to Moscow



TRIP DESCRIPTION & HIGHLIGHTS

From the Golden Horde to the Soviet era, the scenic cities of Russia's grand Volga River have been witness to some of the most significant events in Russian history. On a journey aboard the deluxe *M.S. Volga Dream*, cruise from the Volga River Delta to Moscow on the Caspian Sea. Discover iconic onion-domed churches; stroll through gems such as medieval Nizhny Novgorod; and explore the treasures of Yaroslavl, the Volga's oldest city.

- Visit the world capital of caviar and taste this delicacy in the city of Astrakhan
- Experience Russia's diverse musical traditions at lively folk music performances
- Explore Volgograd, the site of the decisive battle of World War II's eastern front
- Visit magnificent Red Square and Kremlin and examine the collection at the Kremlin's State Armory

Day 1. Astrakhan

Upon arrival in Astrakhan, transfer to the deluxe *MS Volga Dream*. You may spend the rest of the day at leisure relaxing after the flight or exploring the city on your own.

In the evening enjoy the concert of a focal folk group.

Volga Dream Experience: Bread, Salt & Vodka Welcome Aboard Ceremony

Meals: D

Day 2. Astrakhan

In the morning proceed with a tour of a local fortress built in the reign of Ivan the Terrible and after lunch attend a lecture about famous black caviar followed by a private tasting of this precious delicacy (optional).

Meals: B, L, D



Day 3. Sailing day

Meals: B, L, D



Day 4. VOLGOGRAD (ex. Stalingrad)

Originally called Tsaritsyn, this remarkable city has had three name changes in its tumultuous history. The site of epic battles during the Russian Revolution, it was known as Stalingrad from 1925 until 1961. The city's heroic defence by the Russian people during World War II became the decisive battle of the eastern front.

Visit the memorial on Mamayev Hill, where the struggle saw its bloodiest fighting, and Stalingrad battle panorama museum.

Volga Dream Experience: Russian Cooking Class

Meals: B, L, D

Day 5. SARATOV

Once home to a large German community, today Saratov is known for its connection to Russia's first cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, who lived and studied here. Take a city tour, and visit Radishev State Art Museum - the first Russian picture gallery outside of St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 6 . SAMARA

This morning rest on the Sun Deck as we sail by the Zhigulevskie mountains and approach the city of Samara.

Start with a city tour of Samara, visit the space museum, then stroll along the Volga esplanade and visit to Space Museum and Samara State Art Museum.

Volga Dream Experience: Barbeque on the open deck

Meals: B, L, D

Day 7. KAZAN

This morning notice that Russian Orthodox Churches no longer dominate on the Volga river banks. Beautiful Muslim mosques appear from time to time as you cruise down the Volga River and enter the Republic of Tatarstan.

In the afternoon disembark from the *Volga Dream* to explore Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan and centre of Tatar culture of Russia. Visit the white-walled Kazan Kremlin (citadel) where the famous mosque Kul-Sherif neighbours the old Peter and Paul Cathedral. Later this day enjoy a concert by a local Tatar folk group.

Volga Dream Experience: Piano Concert – pieces by Tchaikovsky and Rakhmaninov

Meals: B, L, D

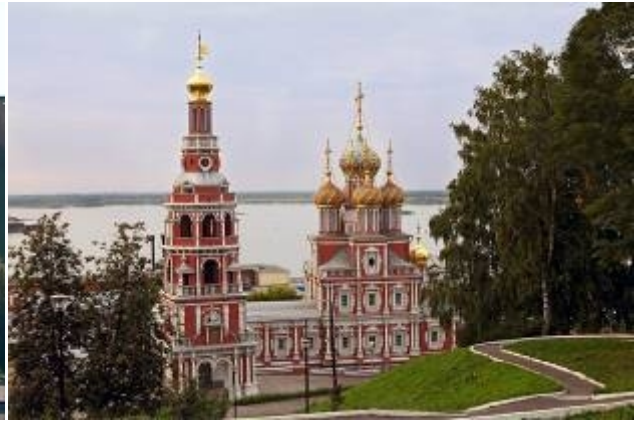


Day 8. NIZHNIY NOVGOROD

Nizhniy Novgorod (formerly Gorkiy), once a wealthy commercial centre poised on the trade routes to the East, became a closed city due to military activity during the Soviet era. Learn about the city's history as a place of exile for political prisoners. Walk the ramparts of the 16th-century Kremlin with its spectacular views, and visit elaborately painted churches. Tonight, attend a concert by a local children folk group.

Volga Dream Experience: Russian Dinner with Vodka Testing

Meals: B, L, D



Day 9. SAILING DAY

Spend this day at leisure as *Volga Dream* sails along the picturesque Volga River. Be on the Sun Deck as we pass by small villages, provincial towns, churches, and monasteries – an area flourishing for centuries supported by intense trade on the Volga.

Later today attend a lecture by our guest speaker about the history and traditions of these places.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 10. YAROSLAVL

This morning visit the oldest city on the Volga River, Yaroslavl, a World Heritage site. In the Spassky Monastery see the Transfiguration of the Savior, adorned with murals depicting St. John's apocalyptic visions, and the richly frescoed Church of St. Elijah the Prophet. Enjoy a costumed reception at the Governor's House, and then reboard the *Volga Dream* in time for lunch.

Volga Dream Experience: Costumed Russian Tea Ceremony

Meals: B, L, D

Day 11. UGLICH

We arrive this afternoon in Uglich, dating back to the 10th century. A walking tour of this Golden Ring city includes the Chapel of Dmitry on a Spilled Blood, a 17th-century treasure built on the site where Ivan the Terrible's 10-year old son met his death. Visit the Church of the Transfiguration, noted for its beautiful iconostasis, and attend a concert of choral music.

Volga Dream Experience: Documentary film "Constriction of the Moscow Canal"

Meals: B, L, D





Day 12. Moscow

This afternoon arrive in Moscow and following lunch proceed with an orientation tour of Moscow.

Visit magnificent Red Square to see its famous landmarks - Lenin's Tomb and St. Basil's cathedral, drive by the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, one of Russia's most important cathedrals, completely destroyed in Stalin's times and restored in 1990 and visit famous Novodevichi Cemetery which holds the

tombs of Russian authors, musicians, playwrights, and poets, as well as famous actors, political leaders, and scientists.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 13. Moscow

This morning enter the Kremlin for a visit to the Armory Museum, with its collection of tsarist thrones, ceremonial crowns, coaches and gifts of state. Continue to the beautifully frescoed 15th-century Assumption and Archangel Cathedrals.

After lunch in a local restaurant proceed to the Old Tretyakov gallery to view its extraordinary collection of Russian art, ranging from 12th-century icons to 20th-century paintings. Explore Moscow's Metro, known for its architectural splendour.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 14. Moscow

This morning transfer to the airport for your flight.

Meals: B

All arrangements are subject to availability and modification if necessary. Weather, heavy traffic and heavy crowds may affect the order of your sightseeing program.