

We wanted to point out on the NCL General Booking Information document we sent you with your confirmation invoice, it states:

Visa Restrictions for Russia:

U.S. and Canadian passport holders may only go ashore in St. Petersburg, Russia without a Russian visa if they have purchased a Norwegian Cruise Line Shore Excursion. To go ashore independently in St. Petersburg, a Russian tourist visa must be obtained before the cruise.

We Googled this a bit and found the following.

Visas for cruise ship passengers from this Website:

<http://www.saint-petersburg.com/russian-visa/for-cruise-ship-passengers/>

Cruise ship passengers visiting St. Petersburg - of which there are now almost half a million every year - do not need a Russian visa provided they are staying in the city for no longer than 72 hours. Therefore, if you book a cruise and St. Petersburg is one of the calls, you DO NOT NEED to get a Russian visa before you depart. However, travelling without a Russian visa does impose strict limitations on your time in St. Petersburg, so it's certainly worth considering the option of getting a Russian Travel Visa before you start your cruise.

The 72-hour exemption for cruise ship passengers does not mean that visitors have three days free in St. Petersburg. Not only will you have to sleep on the ship (not a problem for most cruise passengers), you will also have to be accompanied at all times on shore by a licensed tour guide. In other words, from the moment you leave the ship in the morning to the moment you step back on board in the evening, you will have to follow a pre-arranged schedule and will not have the opportunity to explore the city under your own steam. Cruise operators will expect their clients to book the St. Petersburg tours offered on-board or during booking. In fact, there are essentially three options for cruise passengers visiting St. Petersburg:

1. Book the tour recommended by your cruise operator

This is certainly the simplest option, the path of least resistance even. However, beyond the lack of choice in what you see and do in St. Petersburg, the tours offered by your cruise operator are likely to be significantly more expensive than tours you book independently.

2. Book a tour independently

Though you may be encouraged to think otherwise, the tours offered by your cruise operator are not the only options for cruise ship passengers to see St. Petersburg visa-free. There are a number of independent companies in St. Petersburg with the necessary licensing to offer shore tours for cruise ship passengers without Russian visas. Not only will this option give you much greater choice in terms of what you can see and do - as well as a wide range of more original and unusual tours, many companies will give you the option of designing your own itinerary - tours booked with independent local companies are in general considerably cheaper than those offered by your cruise operator.

3. Get a Russian Travel Visa

If you prefer to be truly free to do what you want while in St. Petersburg, the only option is to obtain Russian Travel Visas before you depart on your cruise. This is essential if, for example, you plan to meet up with friends or family in St. Petersburg, or if you want to enjoy the city's colorful nightlife (especially tempting if you're visiting during the White Nights). While getting a Russian Visa can seem a laborious process, our simple step-by-step guide will help to make it as painless as possible and, provided you apply

for your visas in good time, the expense is likely to be no more than you would otherwise have to pay for guided tours if you chose to travel visa-free.

If staying out late is part of your reason for wanting a Russian Visa, then it's probably also worth booking accommodation in St. Petersburg as there are likely to be restrictions on returning to your ship after a certain point in the evening. If you book accommodation, then you should be provided with visa support documents free-of-charge (this is certainly the case if you book hotel or apartment accommodation through our website). If you are not planning to book accommodation in St. Petersburg, you will need to order visa support documents separately.

Step-by-step guide: <http://www.saint-petersburg.com/russian-visa/step-by-step-visa-guide/>

From Russian Embassy Website:

Website: <http://www.russianembassy.net/rusvisa.html#tourist>

The following documents should be submitted to the Russian Embassy or Consulate to obtain a Tourist Visa to enter Russia:

1. Your original passport with at least 2 blank visa-designated pages (passport must be valid for at least 6 months after intended departure date from Russia).
2. Two copies of Russian visa application form, completed and signed.
3. Two passport-size photos signed on the back.
4. If Tour Group or Cruise Passenger: Letter from tour company or cruise line confirming itinerary and including a copy of the confirmation from authorized Russian travel company which shows the reference number and confirmation number for the visa.
5. If Individual Travel: Confirmation of hotel arrangements from authorized Russian travel company, or directly from the Russian hotel, showing reference number and confirmation number for the visa.

NOTE: There are three types of Visa: Russian Tourist Visa, Russian Business Visa, and Russian Private Visa. You would want the Russian Tourist Visa.

For assistance with expedited Russian Tourist Visa Invitations see Russian Visa Support Authorizations
Need help? Customer care consultants are standing by.

Call us 7.495.665 5424 or US and Canada toll free 1 800 324 0492.

You can also [send us an e-mail message](#) and we will get back to you within the following business day.

<http://www.visatorussia.com/russianvisa.nsf/message.html>

HOW TO GET A RUSSIAN VISA From Rick Steve's Website:

Note: Russian visa regulations are notoriously changeable. Confirm everything stated here before you make your plans.

Do I Need a Visa?

To enter Russia, residents of most countries, including the US and Canada, are required to obtain a visa in advance. The only exception is for travelers arriving by sea (on a cruise ship or passenger ferry), who can be in the country for up to 72 hours without a visa. However, there's a catch: You must book a tour through a local organization.

If you're arriving by cruise without a visa, things are a bit more restrictive: You must pay for a cruise-line excursion, and remain with your guide or escort the entire time you are on land — you'll have virtually no free time to explore on your own. An excursion is more expensive and completely scripted, but virtually effortless. If you're an adventurous traveler and want to experience the real Russia, consider obtaining a visa and exploring the city on your own. Note that if you go the visa route, you must start the application process well in advance.

Third-Party Visa Agencies

Various agencies specialize in steering your visa application through the process. They can also help you arrange visa invitations and navigate the confusing application. I've had a good experience with [Passport Visas Express](#).

In addition to the \$90 visa and the consulate's \$33 processing fee, visa agencies charge a service fee of about \$80–110 (including the invitation fee). To ship your passport securely to and from the visa agency costs another \$50 or so. Figure about \$300 total per person.

Entering Russia with a Visa

When you enter the country, the immigration officer will ask you to fill out a migration card in duplicate, listing your name, passport number, and other details. The officer will stamp both parts of the card and keep one. Don't lose the other half — it must be presented when you leave the country. (A digital version of this card is being phased in, but you'll still need to carry the hard copy.)

Once you arrive in Russia, it's wise to register your passport and visa with the local authorities. Usually your hotel will take care of this for you — they'll need a copy of your passport. You'll receive a confirmation slip, which you may need to show when you leave Russia. While this step is required only for stays of more than seven days, if you don't register, when you depart, you may be asked to show proof (such as hotel receipts) that you were in Russia for less than a week.

While in Russia, you are required to carry your original passport (not just a copy) with you at all times. Police in Russia can stop you at any time and ask to see your documents, though this seldom happens to tourists.

CRUISE LINE EXCURSIONS

Shore Excursions are available approximately 6 months prior to the first sailing of each cruise destination season. All tours are available to pre-request at My NCL, or you can call 866-625-1167 (US & Canada). Once onboard, Shore Excursions can also be purchased at the ship's Shore Excursion Desk.

I did find some general information on their website at this link about excursions in St. Petersburg:

<https://www.ncl.com/shore-excursions/search?destination=Europe+Cruises&port=LED&priceRange=0+2000&sort=searchFeatured&sortOrder=desc&perPage=48>

CRUISE LINE CHECK IN

You can now go to www.ncl.com (or My NCL), then go to the tab “Already Booked”.and login with your login and password. If you do not have one you can create one. You can then go to the tab “Check In” and complete this information. If you don’t have all the information you can complete the rest later, and it will save what you have entered so far. Here you can add prepaid gratuities, travel insurance, transfers (once your flights are booked), beverage packages, soda packages, water packages, photo packages, etc.

Eventually you will be able to go to the tab “Explore and Plan”, and then click on Shore Excursions to book them.

Under the “Summary Tab” you will see a listing of your onboard packages and purchases. You can also click on “Stateroom” to see information about the cabin booked. There is also a section “What you Need to Know Before You Go” with a lot of good information.