

# VOLGA DREAM

## The Russian Odyssey

September 30 – October 17, 2020

18-day Cruise from St. Petersburg to Volgograd



### TRIP DESCRIPTION & HIGHLIGHTS

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

- Experience Russia's diverse musical traditions at a series of lively performances of traditional folk
- Explore Volgograd, the site of the decisive battle of World War II's eastern front
- Visit the world caviar capital and taste the real stuff in the city of Astrakhan

### Day 1. ST. PETERSBURG

Upon arrival in St. Petersburg, transfer to the deluxe *MS Volga Dream*. Spend the rest of the day relaxing after your flight or exploring St. Petersburg on your own.

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

Meals: D

## Day 2. SVIRSTROY

The highlight of your day in Svirstroy is being invited into a local resident's home. Warm and welcoming villagers will offer tea with jam and "pirozhki" (local pies). They will enthusiastically tell you all about Russian tradition, lifestyle and the attractions of Svirstroy village while proudly showing off their homes and kitchen gardens. After tea, hop on a bus to tour the nearby town, see a spectacular WWII memorial and visit a local primary school.

***Volga Dream Experience: Dinner Costumed Russian Tea Ceremony & Russian Cooking Class***

Meals: B, L, D



## Day 3. KIZHI

Kareliya is a region that must be seen to be believed, it spans all the way from St. Petersburg to the Arctic Circle, a vast wilderness of forest and water. Lake Onega is fed by 58 rivers and is home to 1,369 islands, including our stop, Kizhi with its quaint collection of ancient wooden houses and windmills including the famous and remarkable Transfiguration church, built in 1714 without a single nail being used.

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

Meals: B, L, D



## Day 4. GORITSY

In this tiny settlement, we visit the Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery, founded in 1397, now home to one of the world's finest collections of Russian icons. After a guided tour, we continue cruising toward the majestic Lake Onega.

***Volga Dream Experience: Russian Dinner with Vodka Tasting***

Meals: B, L, D

## Day 5. YAROSLAVL

Founded in 1010, Yaroslavl is one of central Russia's oldest cities and boasts the Volga's first port. There is much to see: the Spassky Monastery houses the Transfiguration of the Savior and the Church of Elijah the Prophet and an impressive collection of mosaics. Take part in a costumed reception at the governor's house before re-boarding the *MS Volga Dream* in time for lunch.

***Volga Dream Experience: Barbeque on the Sun Deck***

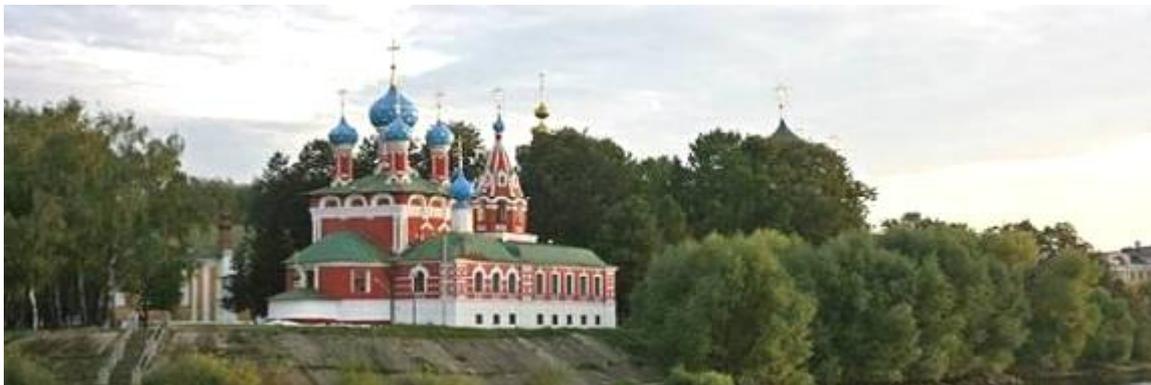
Meals: B, L, D

## Day 6. UGLICH

After a full day of cruising through idyllic forested countryside, we tie up in the ancient trading town of Uglich, a key point in Russia's renowned 'Golden Ring'. Explore the impressive Church of St. Dmitri-on-the-Blood, erected on the site where Dmitri, son of Ivan the Terrible, was murdered in 1591. Then an enchanting concert of choral music performed in St. John's Church.

***Volga Dream Experience: Farewell Dinner***

Meals: B, L, D



## Day 7. MOSCOW

Today we arrive in Moscow at 12 a.m. The rest of the day is at leisure.

## Day 8. MOSCOW

The day begins with an orientation tour of the city.

Visit the magnificent Red Square and its famous landmarks: Lenin's Tomb and St. Basil's cathedral, drive by the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, one of Russia's most important cathedrals, completely destroyed in Stalin's time and restored in 1990. Then we head for the famous Novodevichi Cemetery, where many noted Russian authors, musicians, playwrights, and poets are buried along with famous actors, political leaders, and scientists.

Meals: B, L, D

## Day 9. MOSCOW



This morning you will step inside the Kremlin and visit the Armoury Museum, with its collection of tsarist thrones, ceremonial crowns, coaches and extravagant gifts of state, the excursion also takes you to the beautifully frescoed 15th-century Assumption and Archangel Cathedrals. Then, back aboard the *MS Volga Dream* for a delicious buffet lunch as your breathtaking cruise along the Russia's Waterways begins. The evening provides a chance to meet your crew and fellow travellers at Captain's welcome reception and dinner.

Meals: B, L, D

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

## Day 10. UGLICH

After a full day of cruising through idyllic forested countryside, we tie up in the ancient trading town of Uglich, a key point in Russia's renowned 'Golden Ring'. Explore the impressive Church of St. Dmitri-on-the-Blood, erected on the site where Dmitri, son of Ivan the Terrible, was murdered in 1591. Then an enchanting concert of choral music performed in St. John's Church.

***Volga Dream Experience: Russian Cooking Class***

Meals: B, L, D



## Day 11. YAROSLAVL

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***Volga Dream Experience: Costumed Russian Tea Ceremony***

Meals: B, L, D

## Day 12. SAILING DAY

A relaxing day of leisure as the *Volga Dream* continues its gentle voyage along the picturesque Volga. The Sun Deck provides a glorious and ever-changing view as we pass small villages, provincial towns, churches, and monasteries. This is an area that flourished for centuries thanks to the volume of trade along the Volga.

Our guest speaker presents an entertaining and informative lecture on the history and traditions of the places we pass.

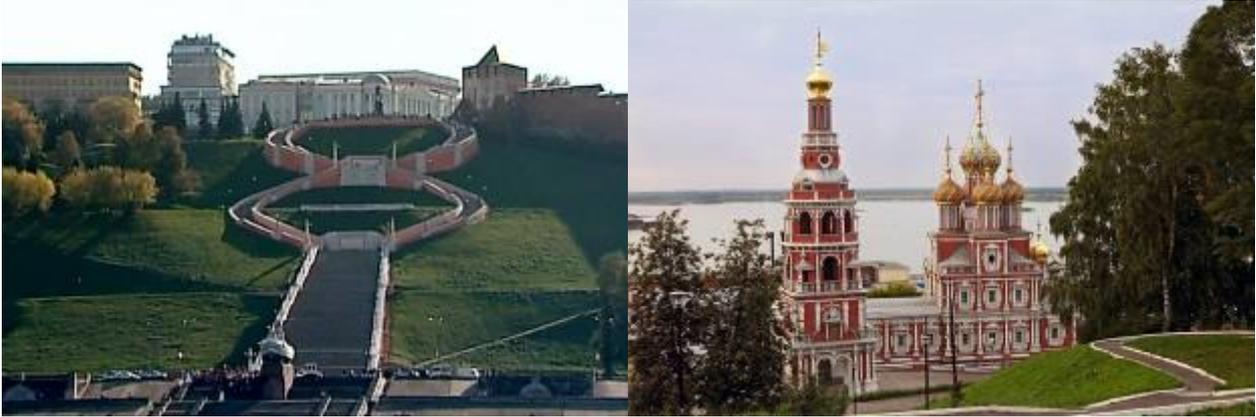
Meals: B, L, D

## Day 13. NIZHNIY NOVGOROD

Nizhniy Novgorod (formerly Gorkiy), once a wealthy commercial center poised on the important trade routes to the East, became a closed city due to military activity during the Soviet era. You will hear more about the city's history as a place of exile for political prisoners. Walk the ramparts of the XVIth-century Kremlin with its spectacular views, and visit elaborately painted churches. The evening's highlight is a folk concert presented by a local children's group.

## ***Volga Dream Experience: Russian Dinner with Vodka Tasting***

Meals: B, L, D



### **Day 14. KAZAN**

Today, you will notice that the now familiar Russian Orthodox Churches no longer dominate the banks of the River Volga. Instead, beautiful Muslim mosques begin to appear as you cruise across the border into the Republic of Tatarstan.

We will leave the *Volga Dream* for a while to explore Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan and very center of Russia's Tatar culture. The white-walled Kazan Kremlin or citadel is where the famous Kul-Sherif mosque stands side by side with the old Peter and Paul Cathedral. Later in the day, a local ensemble will delight us with a concert of traditional Tatar music.

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



Meals: B, L, D

### **Day 15. SAMARA**

A great opportunity to relax on the Sun Deck as we sail past the Zhigulevskie mountains towards the city of Samara.

We begin with a city tour, which includes a visit to the space museum, then stroll along the Volga esplanade to the Samara State Art Museum.

***Volga Dream Experience: Barbeque on the open deck***

Meals: B, L, D

### **Day 16. SARATOV**

Once home to a large German community, Saratov is better known today for its connection to the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin, who lived and studied in the city. Our city tour, takes us to the Radishev State Art Museum, the first Russian picture gallery outside of St. Petersburg or Moscow.

Meals: B, L, D



### Day 17. VOLGOGRAD (ex. Stalingrad)

Originally named Tsaritsyn, this remarkable city has had three name changes in its tumultuous history. The site of epic battles during the Russian, Revolution – between 1925 and 1961 it was known as Stalingrad. The people's heroic defence of the city during World War II was destined to become the decisive battle of the conflict on the eastern front.

We will then visit the imposing memorial on Mamayev Hill, which saw the bloodiest fighting of the war, and Battle of Stalingrad Panorama Museum.

***Volga Dream Experience: Farewell dinner***

Meals: B, L, D

### Day 18. VOLGOGRAD

Transfer to the airport for your return 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.*