

VOLGA DREAM

The Lower Volga

September 29 – October 12, 2021

14-day Cruise from Moscow to the Caspian Sea



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 Moscow to the Volga River Delta 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.

- Cross Moscow's famous Red Square to the iconic Kremlin and take a close look at the magnificent collection of world-class exhibits in the Kremlin's State Armory museum
- 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. MOSCOW

Upon arrival in Moscow, transfer to the deluxe Metropol Hotel***** in the historic city centre near the Bolshoi Theatre and Moscow Kremlin. Spend the rest of the day relaxing after your flight.

Meals: D



Day 2. MOSCOW

The day begins with an orientation tour of Moscow taking in a riding the city's spectacular metro. After lunch in a local restaurant, we move on to the Old Tretyakov gallery and its extraordinary collection of Russian art, ranging from XII-century icons to XX-century paintings.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 3. MOSCOW

This morning you will step inside the Kremlin and visit the Armory 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.

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

Meals: B, L, D

Day 4. 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 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, 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: Costumed Russian Tea Ceremony

Meals: B, L, D

Day 6. SAILING DAY

A relaxing day of leisure as *Volga Dream* continues its gentle voyage along the picturesque Volga river. 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.

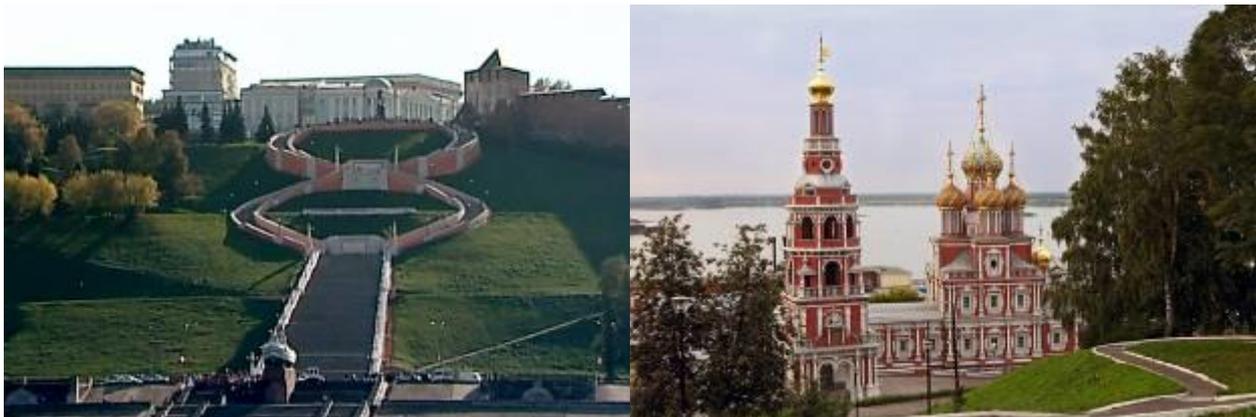
Meals: B, L, D

Day 7. 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 8. 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 9. 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 10. 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 11. 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 12. ASTRAKHAN

The *Volga Dream* arrives in the city of Astrakhan in the evening. This is the world capital of caviar, also the centre of the fishing industry in Western Russia. This is where the mighty Volga flows out into the Caspian Sea.

Volga Dream Experience: Concert in a local Conservatory

Meals: B, L, D



Day 13. ASTRAKHAN

The morning begins with a tour of a local fortress built during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. After lunch an optional and fascinating lecture on the famed and much coveted black caviar, followed by a private tasting of this most precious delicacy.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 14. ASTRAKHAN

Transfers 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.

ACCOMMODATION

MOSCOW – Metropol Hotel*****

Metropol Hotel Moscow is an iconic hotel located in the historic heart of Moscow, right in front of the Bolshoi Theatre. Built at the beginning of the 20th century, this hotel holds many secrets and boasts fabulous examples of Art Nouveau. Metropol Hotel has welcomed many famous guests throughout its 114-year history, including famous politicians, popstars, monarchs, movie stars and writers from Bernard Shaw to Michael Jackson and Sophia Loren.

