RUSSIA
LUXURY RIVER CRUISING ALONG THE VOLGA
ABOARD THE MS VOLGA DREAM
JUNE & SEPTEMBER 2015

Noble Caledonia
Exploring by River vessel is to our minds one of the most comfortable means possible and to discover Russia by any other way can be challenging. When journeying by river, your travelling hotel transports you through vast swathes of landlocked countryside, past towns and villages. From the comfort of your vessel, you are able to observe riverside life, appreciate the subtle changes in architecture and reflect on the many ways that the river you are travelling along has influenced the course of history. Once you have unpacked, you are there for the duration of the trip and can relax and enjoy your surroundings. We have therefore chartered the delightful MS Volga Dream for two journeys linking Russia’s two greatest cities, Moscow and St Petersburg.

**MS Volga Dream**

The MS Volga Dream entered service during the spring of 2007. This elegant vessel has been totally rebuilt from a vessel that originally accommodated over 200 passengers and now accommodates just 100. The result is a splendid and spacious vessel which offers the most superior accommodation and services on the route.

**Your Cabin/Suite**

Cabin is located over four decks and categories range from standard cabins on the Cabin deck to superior cabins on the Main deck. On the upper two decks, Promenade and Sun, you will find deluxe cabins and suites. All cabins offer individually controlled air-conditioning and heating, direct dial telephone, satellite flat screen television and minibar. Additional comforts provided include bathrobes, slippers, hairdryer, bathroom accessories kit, bottled water (replenished daily) and welcome fruit basket. Passengers in deluxe cabins and suites also receive a bottle of welcome champagne.

**Your Space**

Spread over three decks, the onboard facilities include a delightful restaurant which accommodates all guests in one sitting. The lounge is a pleasant space for relaxation with large panoramic windows and bar area. On the large, spacious Sun deck you will find comfortable deck furniture. There is also a library which features board games and internet access (charges apply), an outside bar with comfortable deck furniture, fitness centre and sauna.

**Your Dining**

The single sitting dining room offers the best of traditional Russian cuisine and international choices. Every day a delightful buffet lunch or set menu choice is served in the restaurant. Dinner is a served four or five course meal. Onboard there is also a luxurious lounge and bar where a pianist plays each evening and afternoon tea is served each day.
GUEST SPEAKER & ONBOARD ENTERTAINMENT

To further enhance your enjoyment onboard, our Guest Speaker Professor Ludmilla Selezneva will be joining us on both of our cruises along the mighty river Volga. She brings with her a unique insight into Russia’s politics and history both old and contemporary, the culture of this vast country and its fascinating heritage.

Professor Ludmilla Selezneva

Professor Ludmilla Selezneva is a graduate with honours from Rostov State University and received her first doctorate there in history in 1982. She attained her second doctorate in 1996 from the Russian State University of Humanities in Moscow. Since 2001, Ludmilla has worked as a professor of history and politics at the University of the Humanitarian Education in Moscow. She has published more than 50 articles and authored or co-authored 10 books. She is a well-recognised authority on 20th century Russia, the Russian political movements and parties, and the modern political history.

London Festival Opera

For our ‘Russia of the Great Composers, Writers and Painters’ cruise we are delighted to be joined by London Festival Opera who bring together artists from the major British opera companies including the Royal Opera House, English National Opera and Glyndebourne Festival Opera. The company has a considerable reputation and has appeared in some of the world’s leading opera houses.

Artistic Director, Philip Blake-Jones will provide a comprehensive programme during our time onboard; the repertoire planned being:

- Soirée d’Opéra – featuring the works of the great Italian, French, German and Russian opera composers
- A vocal and instrumental recital including the works of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov
- An evening/afternoon recital of opera and song
- Russian Gala – featuring the works of the great Russian composers, including highlights from Tchaikovsky’s ‘Eugene Onegin’ in period costume.

“OUR VIEW”

I was fortunate to travel along the Volga aboard the MS Volga Dream in the summer of 2011. Having always had a passion for Russian history, it had long been on my travel ‘to do list’ and Russia certainly didn’t disappoint. From the amazing display of artefacts in the Hermitage in St Petersburg and the beautiful fountains at Peterhof to Moscow’s Red Square, the sense of history in Russia’s two foremost cities is overwhelming.

To combine visits to both cities with a cruise along the Volga truly provides an insight into Russia’s past and present. Relaxing on deck, witnessing village life on the banks of the river with golden domes of numerous churches rising above the treetops in the distance provides time to reflect on all you have seen and the complex history of this vast country.

In addition to my time spent in St Petersburg and Moscow, I especially enjoyed visiting the tiny island of Kizhi and seeing the Church of Transfiguration, a wooden masterpiece which was built without a single metal nail. Yaroslavl was yet another highlight and somewhere which confounded my expectations. It is the oldest city on the Volga and a World Heritage Site yet is a surprisingly cosmopolitan city and a prime example of modern Russia.

While St Petersburg and Moscow lived up to my expectations, the places we visited along the Volga River between both cities far exceeded them. This was helped by the knowledgeable local guides who were so keen to share their experiences of living in both the rural Russian countryside and the now fast paced cities.

Returning each evening to the peace and serenity of the MS Volga Dream enhanced the experience immeasurably and she was by far the most elegant vessel I saw on the river with only 100 or so fellow passengers, a warm atmosphere onboard, superb food, friendly staff, interesting lectures and extremely comfortable cabins.

Laura Cochrane
Head of Marketing

Life Onboard

With just 100 passengers maximum onboard, the ship has a personal and friendly ambiance. Your daily programme will be busy ashore, but your time onboard will be relaxed and convivial, giving you time to recollect everything you have experienced in the daytime. Your time in Russia and onboard the MS Volga Dream will be truly memorable.
RUSSIA OF THE GREAT COMPOSERS, WRITERS & PAINTERS

A White Nights extravaganza of music, art, history and literature with London Festival Opera & Ludmilla Selezneva

22nd June to 4th July 2015

Travel with us aboard the luxurious MS Volga Dream on this exclusive charter that promises to be a truly captivating journey in Russia’s heartland, with its rich cultural heritage, wonderful architecture and dramatic history. We begin in Moscow, a city full of contrasts and energy, and cruise to St Petersburg, one of the world’s most beautiful cities. We have arranged for some memorable excursions for our journey along the Volga including specially arranged early entrances to the Hermitage and the Armoury Museum at the Kremlin.

During our cruise from Moscow to St Petersburg we will travel through quieter rural landscapes, whilst also visiting unique Uglich, Yaroslavl and Kizhi. In addition, your cruise coincides with the White Nights Festival, a summer celebration that takes place each year in St Petersburg, and we shall take this opportunity to offer a choice of opera and ballet events during your time here. To further enhance your journey you will be accompanied by London Festival Opera who will perform a selection of wonderful Russian repertoires. Our Guest Speaker, Ludmilla Selezneva will complete the experience with fascinating talks on all things Russian, especially its history and peoples.

This is surely the most satisfying way to visit Russia. The combination of music, history and art, together with an insight into the modern Russia of today and the momentous changes which are taking place, make for an all encompassing trip. With such a busy schedule, perhaps it cannot be described as the most relaxing of holidays but even amongst all we have planned there will be plenty of quiet moments, as we cruise through the vast forests of Kareliya, past the picturesque countryside along the Volga, to the enchanting cities of the Golden Ring. With the Volga Dream as our base, we are able to cover great distances in comfort and security, avoiding all the packing and energy-draining activities usually associated with a land tour.

“OUR VIEW”

This is the ultimate Russian experience, a wonderful expansive tour, covering the cultural highlights of the fascinating Volga River, including both Moscow and St Petersburg. The beauty of this trip is that within only a 12 day journey you will have gained a vast amount of knowledge in the best way possible, aboard the MS Volga Dream, a comfortable and well run vessel. The shore excursions, music events, talks by Ludmilla and music performances by London Festival Opera really do give the traveller a unique insight into Russian life, past and present, and altogether makes for a trip you will never forget.

THE ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Moscow. Fly by scheduled flight and on arrival transfer to the MS Volga Dream for embarkation. Meet your fellow travellers this evening at the Welcome Drinks and Dinner onboard.

Day 2 Moscow. This morning we have an early visit to the Kremlin to see the Armoury Museum, with its collection of Tsarist thrones, ceremonial crowns, coaches and gifts of state. View the ornate gems of the Diamond Fund, including Catherine the Great’s diamond-encrusted coronation crown and the 190-carat Orlov diamond. Continue to the Square of Four Cathedrals (outside views only). After lunch in a local restaurant proceed to the Novodevichy cemetery. After lunch in a local restaurant proceed to the newly refurbished Bolshoi Theatre for a backstage tour (subject to availability). Return to the MS Volga Dream and after dinner this evening enjoy an onboard performance by London Festival Opera.

Day 3 Moscow. Begin your day with a tour of the Old Troyakov gallery to view its extraordinary collection of Russian art, ranging from 12th-century icons to 20th-century paintings. Continue on to see Red Square and the GUM department store. Return to the vessel for lunch and have the afternoon free to relax or explore independently. Optional evening performance at the Bolshoi Theatre.

Day 4 Moscow. This morning we take a trip to see the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the beautiful Novodevichy cemetery. After lunch in a local restaurant visit Tolstoy’s House Museum, after which we will attend a private chamber concert with the London Festival Orchestra. Optional evening performance at the Bolshoi Theatre.

Day 5 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 Dimitry, 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.

Day 6 Yaroslavl. This morning visit the oldest city on the Volga River, Yaroslavl, a World Heritage site. Visit the Church of St. Elijah the Prophet, featuring detailed frescoes and icons. Here, you will be treated to a stirring a Capella choir performance. Afterwards there will be time to experience the lively market before re-boarding the MS Volga Dream. Alternatively, join an excursion to the Governor's Palace, a living museum of Russian art, history and culture. Evening onboard performance by London Festival Opera.

Day 7 Goritsy. Early this morning we cross Lake Beloye, or the White Lake, formerly known as the “tsar’s fishing grounds”. Arrive in the peaceful village of Goritsy to tour the fortress-like Kirillov-Belozersky Monastery with magnificent frescoes by one of the Russia’s most renowned icon painters.

Day 8 Kizhi. This afternoon we explore the tiny, picturesque island of Kizhi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site on Lake Onega. The open-air Museum of Architecture includes the Church of the Transfiguration, a unique onion-domed masterpiece built without a single metal nail and resembling something out of a Russian fairy tale.

Day 9 Svir River & Mandrogi Village. Be on deck as we navigate the Svir River toward Lake Ladoga, Europe’s largest freshwater lake, past a shoreline dotted with graceful willows, alder trees and stately pines. Step ashore for a brief visit to the village of Mandrogi to experience daily life in a quaint wooden village. This afternoon enjoy a performance by London Festival Opera.

Day 10 St. Petersburg. After breakfast onboard, we depart for a visit to the meticulously restored Peterhof. St. Petersburg’s most famous and spectacular Imperial estate, often cited as the “Versailles of Russia”. Visit Bath Cottage and stroll in the vast Lower Park with its 176 fountains of various forms and styles, four cascades, and numerous gilded statues of ancient gods and heroes. After lunch in a local restaurant, return to the city by hydrofoil and this afternoon visit Peter & Paul Fortress where the tour will end with a specially arranged Bell Concert. This evening there will be an optional performance at Mariinsky Theatre.

Day 11 St. Petersburg. This morning we visit the famed Hermitage Museum (early entrance arranged to avoid crowds). This former residence of the Russian Tsars has 400 rooms and contains spectacular examples of nearly all schools of Western art, including one of the greatest collections of French impressionist works. Proceed to the Gold rooms of the Hermitage (closed to the general public) to see the amazing collection of Scythian gold and tsarist jewellery. We will have lunch in a local restaurant and then in the afternoon we visit the magnificient Yusupov Palace, once the residence of the wealthiest and most respected family in Imperial Russia, which saw one of the most dramatic episodes in Russia’s history – the murder of Grigory Rasputin. Finish your day with an orientation tour of St. Petersburg and a visit to St. Isaac’s Cathedral. This evening there will be an optional musical performance ashore (details to be advised).

Day 12 St. Petersburg. This morning drive to Tsar’s Village for a visit to Catherine’s Palace. See the exquisitely restored Amber Room and stroll in the formal gardens. Return to the ship for lunch. This afternoon is free for relaxing or independent sightseeing. This evening enjoy your Farewell Dinner onboard with your fellow guests, followed by a final highlight performance by London Festival Opera.

Day 13 St. Petersburg to London. Disembark after breakfast and transfer to the airport for your return flight to London.

PRICES PER PERSON
Based on double occupancy.

BOOK BEFORE 31 MARCH 2014 AND SAVE £500 PER PERSON

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Price Includes: Economy class scheduled air travel, 12 nights aboard the MS Volga Dream on full board basis with house wine and soft drinks with lunch and dinner onboard, shore excursions and music performances as described, transfers, all gratuities, welcome fruit basket on arrival, welcome bottle of champagne (deluxe cabins and suites only), tour manager, guest speaker, London Festival Opera, port taxes, UK airport taxes. Not Included: Travel insurance, Russian visa, optional evening performances ashore.

N.B. Excursions and events ashore are subject to change depending on entrance time allocations and venue schedules. Details of music programmes and prices will be available approximately two months prior to departure. Ports and itinerary are subject to change.
Join us aboard the luxurious MS Volga Dream as we travel in comfort and style from magnificent St Petersburg to the imposing city of Moscow. Russia’s two most famous cities are also the greatest repositories of Russian art and architecture, St. Petersburg, the creation of Peter the Great, benefited from the inspiration of Europe’s greatest 18th century architects and craftsmen, whilst Moscow, the Medieval and 20th century capital, has a wonderful heritage of early buildings. We have allowed ample time in both cities to explore their riches and have arranged special early entrances to the Hermitage in St Petersburg and the Armoury in Moscow.

Day 2 St Petersburg. This morning we visit the famed Hermitage Museum (early entrance to avoid crowds). This former residence of the Russian Tsars has 400 rooms and contains spectacular examples of nearly all schools of Western art, including one of the greatest collections of French impressionist works. Proceed to the Gold rooms of the Hermitage (closed to the general public) to see the amazing collection of Scythian gold and tsarist jewellery. We will have lunch in a local restaurant and then in the afternoon we visit the magnificent Yusupov Palace, once the residence of the wealthiest and most respected family in Imperial Russia, which saw one of the most dramatic episodes in Russia’s history – the murder of Grigory Rasputin. Return to the vessel for lunch and this afternoon is at leisure, or you may like to join an optional excursion to see Dostoevsky’s Memorial Museum, apartments recreated and based on the recollections of Dostoevsky’s contemporaries and archive materials.

Day 3 St. Petersburg. Begin today at the meticulously restored Peterhof, St. Petersburg’s most famous and spectacular Imperial estate, often cited as the “Versailles of Russia”. Visit Bath Cottage and stroll in the vast Lower Park with its 176 fountains of various forms and styles, four cascades, and numerous gilded statues of ancient gods and heroes. After lunch in a local restaurant, return to St. Petersburg by hydrofoil and visit the State Russian Museum, which contains unique collections of the Russian art from icon-painting to avant-garde and socialist realism. This evening there will be an optional performance at Mariinsky Theatre.

Day 4 St. Petersburg. This morning drive to Tsar’s Village for a specially arranged visit to Catherine’s Palace. See the exquisitely restored Amber Room and stroll in the formal gardens.

Day 5 Svir River And The Village Of Mandrogi. Be on the deck as we navigate the Svir River toward Lake Ladoga, Europe’s largest freshwater lake, past a shoreline dotted with graceful willows, alder trees and stately pines. Step ashore this afternoon for a visit to the village of Mandrogi to experience daily life in a quaint wooden village.

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Day 10 Moscow. Arrive mid morning in Moscow. After lunch onboard we set off for a visit of the Old Tretyakov gallery to view its extraordinary collection of Russian art, ranging from 12th-century icons to 20th-century paintings. Afterwards continue on to see Red Square and the GUM department store.

Day 11 Moscow. This morning we have an early visit to the Kremlin to see the Armoury Museum, with its collection of tsarist thrones, ceremonial crowns, coaches and gifts of state. View the ornate gems of the Diamond Fund, including Catherine the Great’s diamond-encrusted coronation crown and the 190-carat Orlov diamond. Continue to the Square of Four Cathedrals (outside views only). After lunch in a local restaurant we visit the fascinating Tolstoy House Museum, an authentic and atmospheric re-creation, laden with original belongings that conjure up the long winters Tolstoy and his family spent here from 1881 to 1901. In the evening there will be an optional performance of opera or ballet at the Bolshoi Theatre (schedules and prices available 2 months before the trip).

Day 12 Moscow. In the morning we take a trip in the ornate Moscow Metro and then continue to the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the beautiful Novodevichy cemetery. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon is at leisure to relax onboard your vessel or sightsee independently. This evening enjoy your Farewell Drinks & Dinner onboard.

Day 13 Moscow to London. Disembark after breakfast and transfer to the airport for your return flight to London.