

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

A valid passport is required when traveling to Russia. Your passport must be valid for 6 months beyond the expected return date.

We suggest making a copy of the first two pages of your passport and keeping them in a separate bag as a backup. A copy should also be left with your emergency contact.

A Visa is also required for entry to Russia. This must be done prior to your arrival or you will not be permitted to enter the country.

RUSSIAN VISA

You will need to download an application form and our written itinerary and a letter of invitation from our hosting organization in Russia. You will need to submit these forms along with a valid passport, an additional passport photo and payment to your local Russian Consulate or a travel document company that can assist you in processing the Russian Visa. This generally takes place 2 - 3 months before the trip departure and will take 4 - 20 business days to process. Once your visa arrives, please check the date to ensure it covers your complete stay.

AIRPORT ARRIVAL

Upon arrival proceed to the Immigrations desk for foreign travelers. Proceed to Baggage Claim and then to Customs. There will be a random selection of bags for inspection. Be sure to keep all your bags together.

We will arrange a transfer from the airport to our hotel.

IN-COUNTRY TRANSPORTATION

The provided transportation in Russia as stated in the itinerary is via private vehicle.

IMMUNIZATIONS & TRAVEL MEDICINE

For the most current information on inoculation requirements and recommendations, please refer to the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

TRAVELER'S HEALTH

Travelers often suffer from upset stomachs when in foreign countries. There are some basic rules, however, that can help keep you healthy.

- **Hygiene** - It is important that you wash your hands thoroughly before meals and after using any bathroom. If water is not available for washing, we recommend using a hand sanitizer.
- **Water** - The number one rule is: don't drink the water, and that includes shower water and ice! Brush your teeth with purified water rather than tap water. You

should check bottled water for a good seal and use a napkin to wipe dry excess moisture in drinking glasses. Take care with fruit juice, particularly if it has been diluted with water. Carefully clean the tops of bottled beverages before opening.

- **Food** - If you can cook it, boil it, or peel it; you can usually eat it. Salads and fruits should be washed with purified water or peeled where possible. Be wary of ice cream and shellfish. Always avoid any undercooked meat.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Elbrus is a remote mountain without easy access to definitive medical care. We are our own rescue team.

The medical facilities in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other urban areas in Russia are limited except for routine, non-emergency needs.

This climb does come with risk of serious injury and death and should not be taken lightly.

RUSSIA COUNTRY FACTS

Russia is the largest country in the world at almost twice the size of the United States. Officially known as the Russian Federation, its main attractions include art, magnificent (and newly restored) cathedrals and monasteries, treasures and palaces of the czars, the performing arts, health spas, river cruises, historic sites, spectacular scenery, Siberia, and Moscow's Kremlin.

Russia has a captivating history. Tradition says the Viking Rurik came to Russia in 862 and founded the first Russian dynasty in Novgorod. Through the 10th and 11th centuries, Christianity united the various tribes, but Mongol raids broke the Russian territories into smaller dukedoms. It was Ivan the Terrible (1533-1584) who is credited with founding the Russian state. The succeeding period saw power wrested into the hands of the czars and expanded Russian territory. These actions ultimately led to revolution and the creation of the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) in 1922. The Union dissolved in 1991 and Russia became the federal presidential republic that it is today.

Russia will appeal to travelers who have a sense of adventure and an open mind. Don't expect a relaxing vacation and, unless you're in Moscow or St. Petersburg, don't expect deluxe accommodations - a trip through Russia requires determination, flexibility and plenty of patience.

WEATHER

The climbing season extends from May to September, with the highest summit success rate from mid-July through mid-August. September through April comprises the rainy and winter seasons.

The weather in Moscow and while traveling to and from the mountains can be very warm.

While there can be no guarantees of perfect weather in the mountains, our expeditions take full advantage of both the weather and route conditions for this expedition, and utilize prime months for optimal climbing experiences.

CULTURAL ETIQUETTE

Although it is not expected that we dress formally, we should dress modestly. Casual and comfortable clothing and shoes are suggested. Showing expensive cameras, watches, jewelry, etc. is considered unseemly and may attract unwanted attention.

Men shake hands when greeting one another and maintain direct eye contact. Women generally shake hands when meeting one another for the first time. In greetings between men and women, a light handshake is common. It is expected that you remove your gloves to shake hands, regardless of how cold it may be. The three alternating kisses used in greetings are common only between friends and family.

Chivalry, for the most part, is still valued in Russia. Men are expected to hold the door, offer their seat, or offer their coat.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity in Russia is different than in the United States. Russia has standardized on type F (Gost) sockets and plugs. Type C plugs and power points are still commonly found in older buildings. Both are used for 230 volt, 50 hertz appliances. U.S. appliances will require plug adaptors, convertors or transformers. Remember to bring any necessary adaptors if you plan to recharge electronics.

MONEY

The current currency of Russia is the Ruble. Currency can be easily converted at banks, hotels and kiosks. Check a financial newspaper or www.xe.com for the current exchange rate prior to departure.

You should find that \$500-\$800 for spending money is adequate for restaurant meals, drinks and pocket money. Cash machines are still the best way to get money in country, so if you are in doubt, be sure to bring your cash card. Cash machines are readily available in St. Petersburg, but become increasingly difficult to find outside of the main urban areas. Credit cards are accepted in most, but not all, areas.

Everyone has a preferred way to carry money. Some use money belts, others have hidden pockets. Whatever you do, be aware of pickpockets in any area which caters to tourists.

TIPPING

Local waiters, drivers, and other service personnel expect to be tipped. Ten to fifteen percent is standard.

Our guides work hard to ensure your well being and success on the mountain. If you have a positive experience, gratuities are an excellent way to show your appreciation. Amounts are at your discretion and should be based on your level of enjoyment. Tips for excellent service normally average 10 – 15% of the cost of the program.

RESOURCES

<http://wikitravel.org/en/Russia> and <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/russia> offer a wealth of information.