

UAS Pocket Guide

SPbSU, St. Petersburg

General Information

St. Petersburg is a very exciting place nowadays, and is a city that has always had a significant role in Russia. For the past three hundred years, it has been the Russian hub of modern, open-minded artists, scientists, writers and everyday Russian people who just wanted to have a taste of the West. This has resulted in a great mixture of Old Russian styles of living and of Western cultural influences. St. Petersburg can be perceived as a new city every single day, and is arguably Russia's most welcoming city for international students. The Saint Petersburg State University, located in the beautiful city center, is the oldest and one of the largest universities in Russia, founded in 1724.



Source: Facebook page of Prospekt Magazine

Travel

If you need a visa to enter the territory of the Russian Federation, you will have to wait for the additional letter from Saint Petersburg State University containing your special visa code and timing of your visa issuing. When you receive a visa code, contact the Embassy or the Consulate of the Russian Federation to complete your visa application. As a German citizen, you should not be worried about applying for a visa, but it can take a while to be processed. Don't forget to purchase medical insurance to cover your stay in Russia, insurance can be purchased in your home country or it might be available at the university, you should get informed prior to your arrival.

Living

Exchange students coming to study at Saint Petersburg State University usually get a place in one of the student dorms on Vasilevsky Island, the location of the main university buildings. As an exchange student you have a high probability of getting a room in the dormitories, which is comparably very cheap to other options. The dorm rooms are usually doubles, two people sharing the same room, and four people sharing one bathroom and one kitchen. It may sound strange to you, but it is the common situation in Russia and in other Eastern European countries, too. Former students participating in the partnership program have stayed in the dormitory located on Kapitanskaya street 3 on Vasilevskiy Island, which is a newly renovated and constructed part of the city just one hour ride from the University. Upon your arrival in Russia you will be registered by the police within two days, in order to record your accommodation arrangements. The University dormitory will do this for you but if you want to move out, you should ask before you move out to make sure it is legal. If you choose not to live in the dormitories, you can always rent an apartment but it won't be cheap, St. Petersburg has become an expensive city recently. If you want to experience the real face of St. Petersburg move into a kommunalka.



Source: Facebook page of Prospekt Magazine

Public Transport

The distance between the university and the dorm will be walking distance or easily accessible via bus or the trolleybus. Bicycles aren't popular at all as the city is simply not created for bike riding, especially not in the winter months, which begin in late October when it starts to freeze. You can purchase a monthly card for the public transport system, it costs around 850 rubles/month, or single tickets that cost 35-40 rubels/ trip. Tickets can be bought in almost every metro station or on a bus/tram/trolleybus, there are people selling and checking the tickets, they never speak English though.



It is a very good idea to learn some basic Russian phrases about buying tickets, and also always have a metro map with you. As a visiting student you won't be provided a monthly card by the university. St. Petersburg is a very large city with nearly five million inhabitants, so the public transport can get very, very crowded. If it's possible, try to avoid the rush hour.

Getting started at SPbSU

The person who will help you to arranging everything at the university and getting your student card is Anna Porodina, the head of the International Academic Cooperation Department Academic Office. You can find further information about the registration process on the website.

If your field of study is related to environmental sustainability you might be interested in the events offered by the Institute of Earth Sciences or you can just email them (politreg.earth@spbu.ru). However, you should contact your program coordinator or supervisor for any advice they can give, they can also suggest initiatives for you to join or to notify you of upcoming events.



The main campus, Saint Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg // Source: Facebook page of the university.

Saint Petersburg State University

If you don't speak any Russian at all it can be challenging to interact with locals but this is not the case at the university, although it is not a bad idea to learn a few basic Russian phrases. At the university there are events organized for visiting students, such as the International Studfest which is open to Russians and fellow foreign students. It may help to get to know each other's culture better and to easily make new friends who are also exchange students just like you.

Most of the courses at the university are in Russian, so pay attention to that as you register for courses. As an exchange student, you can work in the library but you won't have access to an office or your own working space. Once you get in touch with people at the university, everyone is going to be very helpful, welcoming and easy-going.



The main campus, Saint Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg // Source: Facebook page of the university.

Campus

The food court at campus is alright but it is not that affordable and everything delicious is gone after 1pm when the noon break ends. If you go outside of the university, you may find better options around the university. If you are a vegetarian, let alone a vegan, you will probably have a hard time to find tasty and affordable food (it is impossible to find soya stuff or good hummus in shops). There are loads of nice places to eat out though but not for vegetarians. Of course, there are more and more restaurants opening every year so it may change by the time you go there. If you are looking for places to go out, you shouldn't miss out on the Dumskaya street, the Rubinshteina street or the Fontanka embarkment. The most popular clubs are Prosto vino, Tsvetochki, The Hat, Brimborium and Siniy Pushkin.

Saint Petersburg Specialties

If you want to make the most out of your time in Saint Petersburg, check out the following sites: Paper-Paper (Russian) or the Clavertjournal (about Russia in English), and the most hidden treasures of St. Petersburg will be found on the website called Prospektmag, written by international journalism students studying in St. Petersburg. The touristy things can be pricy though, entrance fees will even be asked for at churches. There is a great local initiative called Sputnik that offers excursions to several cities guided by locals.



Other really awesome places such as the Udelnaya flea market, the Street Art Museum, and the Etagi Loft Project with exhibitions, shops and places to eat is super popular, all of them are highly recommended to have a look around. In case if you still aren't convinced that Saint Petersburg is the right place to go, just read about these two expats living in Russia whose stories were published in January 2015. They might help you to make up your mind. Saint Petersburg is a very happening and exciting place to be, where you can get the vibe of the city sitting in a café and looking at the babushkas passing by on the street while drinking tea from your samovar.

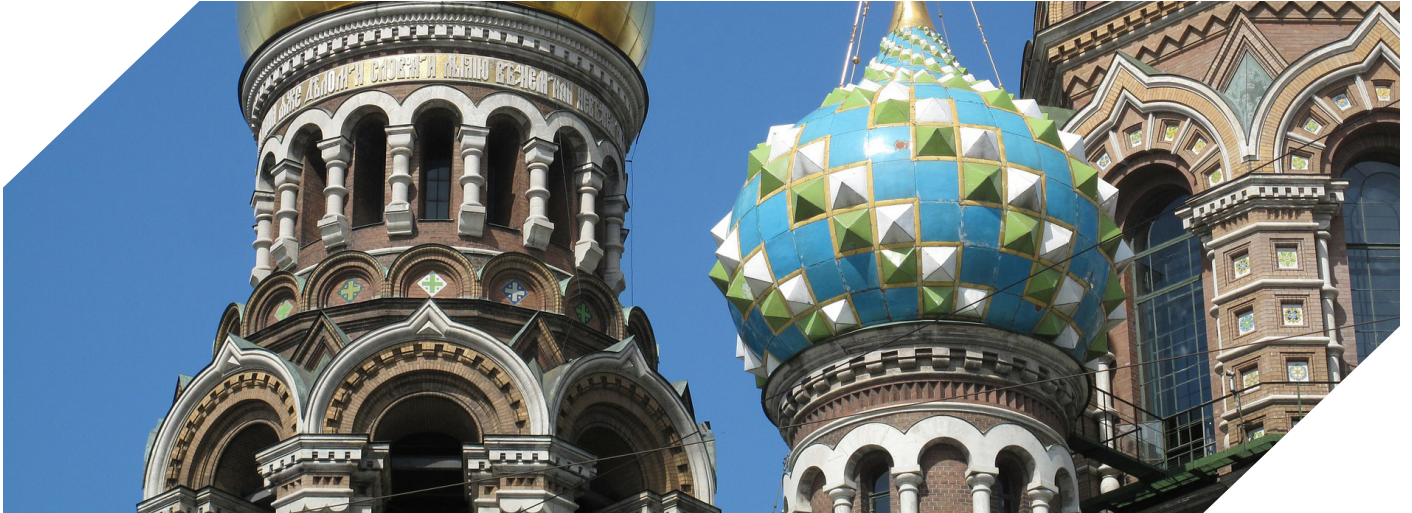


Photo: Pixabay

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