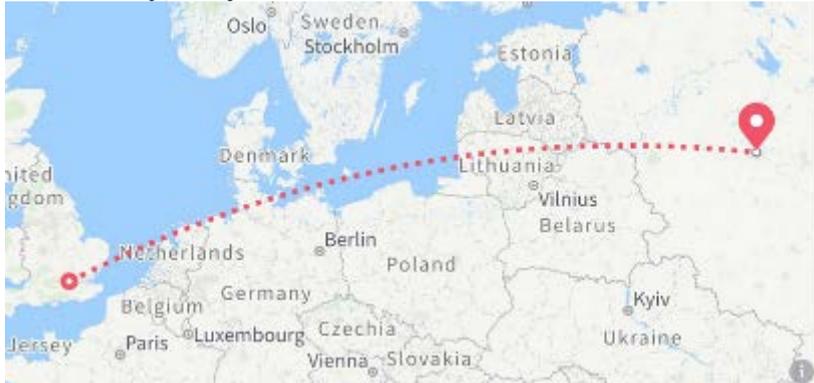


## Journal of European Trip, May-June 2019: Russian Component

This blog is based on Facebook posts covering the period 4-May to 25-Jun-19, during which we toured Ireland (by car), cruised on Russian rivers from Moscow to St Petersburg, visited Liverpool, cruised between Scottish Islands, spent a week near Oxford with friends, travelled to Tallinn (Estonia) for a work TNC (networking) Conference, and then had a couple of days in London before returning home. It has been constructed as separate Blogs (Ireland, Russia, Scotland, etc) to make each file manageable. Return to the Blog home page at <http://www.alex-reid.com/Blog/> to see the others.

### Wednesday, May 15: Off to Moscow, Russia!

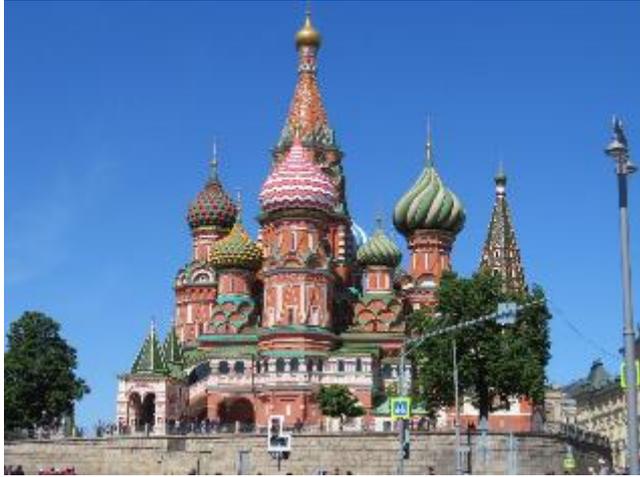


Arrived Moscow and boarded our river boat, the MS Russia - our ship for 2 nights and 2 days in Moscow, to give us the chance to "see the sights"... before we sail off for St Petersburg.

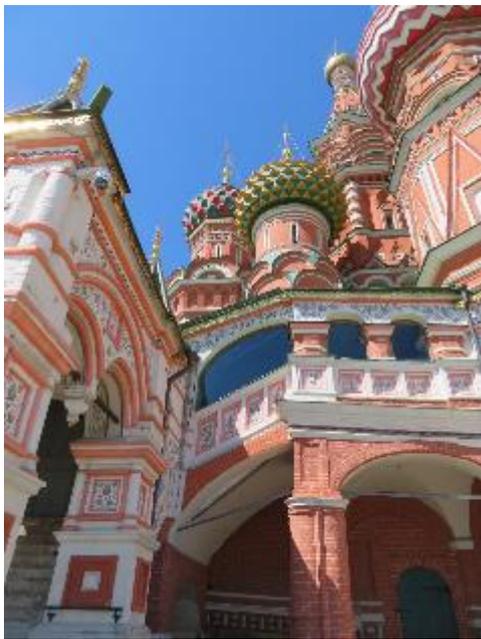


MS Russia (spelt РОССИЯ in Russian).

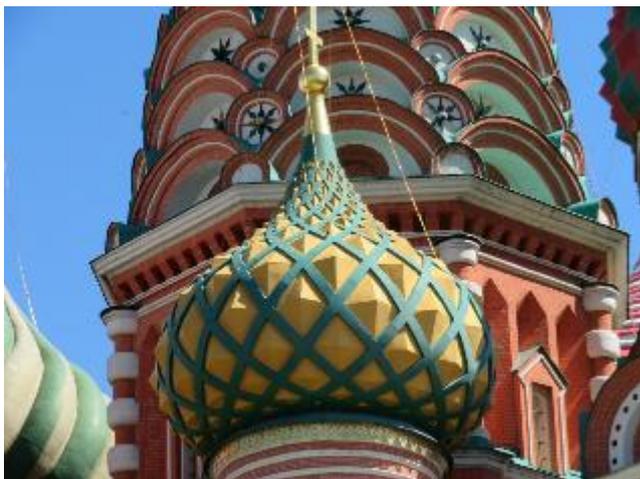
**Thursday, May 16:** Yay! We're in Moscow! Here's the marvellous St Basil's Cathedral, adjacent to Red Square (which means 'beautiful square', nothing to do with Communism.).



St Basil's Cathedral.



St Basil's Cathedral detail.

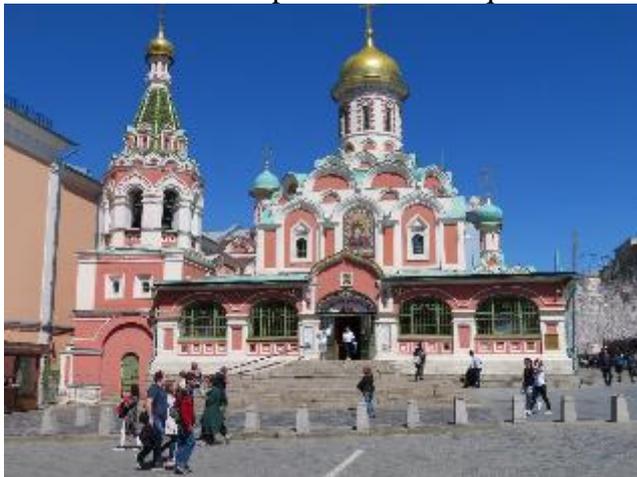


St Basil's Cathedral detail.



St Basil's Cathedral detail.

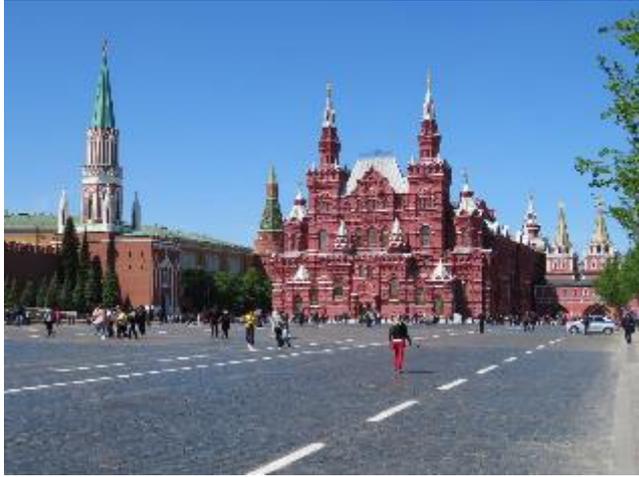
Here are some more photos of Red Square.



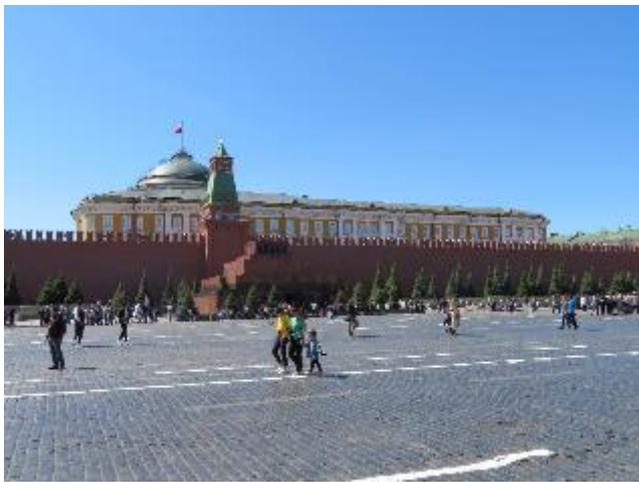
Red Square: Kazan Cathedral.



Inside Kazan Cathedral: typical orthodox iconostasis (a wall of icons).



Red Square: State History Museum, and St Nicholas Tower.

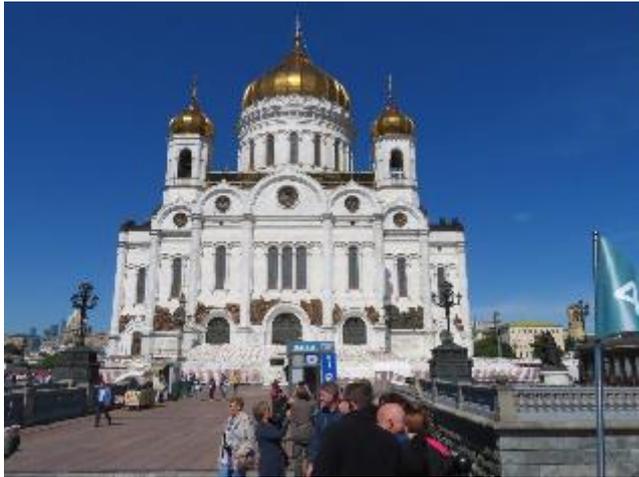


Red Square: Kremlin walls, Lenin Mausoleum in front.



On Red Square: Gum Department Store (spelt ГYM in Russian).

Nearby was the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.



Christ the Saviour Cathedral.



Side entrance door detail.

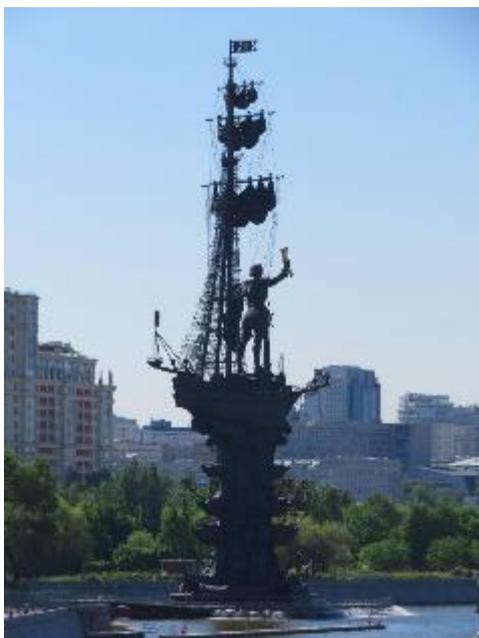


Viewed from inside the Kremlin.

Miscellaneous sights of Moscow as we drove around included Gorky Park, the Peter the Great memorial, and Stalin himself (just off Red Square)! Rumour has it that the Peter the Great statue was intended as a memorial to Christopher Columbus, but Spain declined it, so it was "repurposed" as Peter the Great!



Gorky Park, adjacent to the Moscow River.



Memorial to Peter the Great, on Moscow River.



“Stalin” greeting his admirers at the edge of Red Square.

Paid a visit this afternoon (Thursday) to the Cosmonautics Museum. Surprisingly well done. Of course, the Russians do have a lot to celebrate in connection with their "golden age" of

space travel, starting with Sputnik 1 launched on 4-Oct-1957 (a full-scale model pictured). Other photos include: the spectacular museum monolith; Soyuz-37 re-entry capsule (1980); an early rocket engine; food consumed by cosmonauts; a propaganda poster; the joint Soyuz-Apollo mission of July 1975; and a model of a proposed Russian shuttle (looking familiar!).



The Cosmonautics Museum.



Rocket at the top of the Cosmonautics Museum.



Model of Sputnik 1, launched on 4-Oct-1957.



The Soyuz-37 re-entry capsule (1980).



And early rocket engine.



Food eaten by cosmonauts.



Propaganda poster.

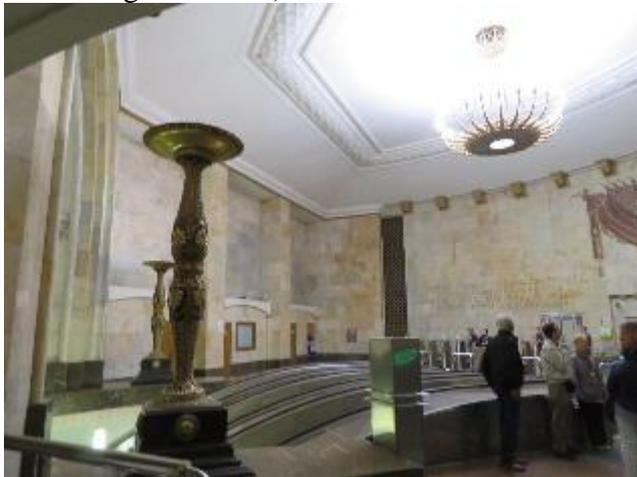


Joint Soyuz-Apollo Mission July 1975.



Proposed Russian shuttle.

In the evening (Thursday), we visited the Moscow Underground/Subway/Metro, which is something again! Here is a very small collection of photos of the some of the more fascinating Metro stations. I'll add station identifications when I get better Internet access. One friend I know would especially enjoy visiting Novoslobodskaya station for its stained glass! We were warned about the steep and fast and long escalators, but they weren't much faster, steeper, longer than (say) the London Underground... (but infinitely more interesting/beautiful!).



entrance.

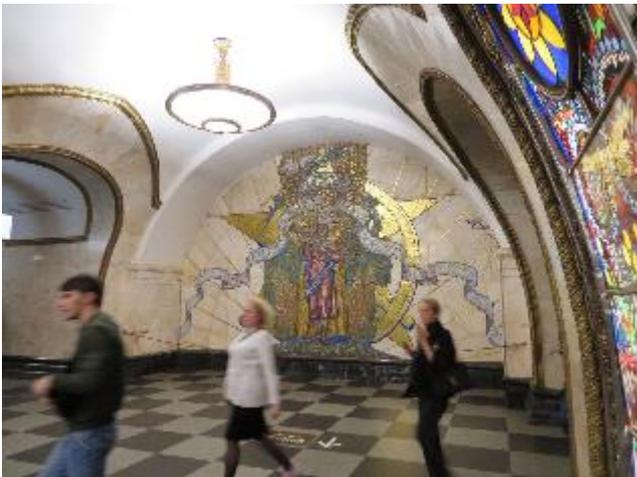
Ploshchad Revolyutsii Metro Station



Belorusskaya Metro Station.



Belorusskaya Metro Station.



Novoslobodskaya Metro Station.



Belorusskaya Metro Station.



Novoslobodskaya Metro Station.



Novoslobodskaya Metro Station.



Kiyevskaya Metro Station.



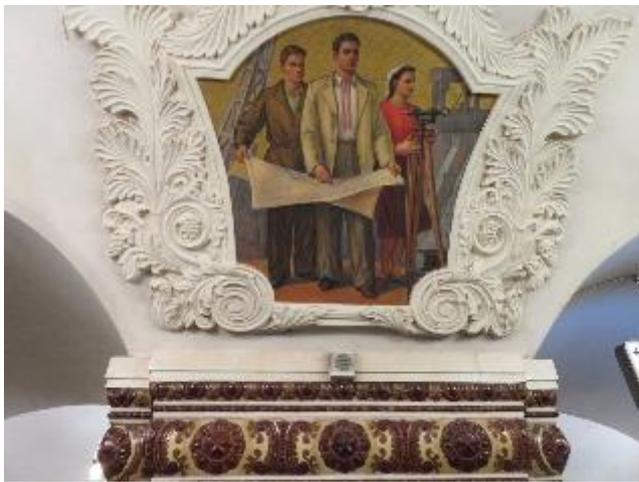
Kiyevskaya Metro Station.



Kiyevskaya Metro Station.



Kiyevskaya Metro Station (on another line).



Kiyevskaya Metro Station (on the other line).



Kiyevskaya Metro Station (on the other line).



Ploshchad Revolyutsii Metro Station (parts of these statues have been rubbed – for luck??).



Ploshchad Revolyutsii Metro Station.

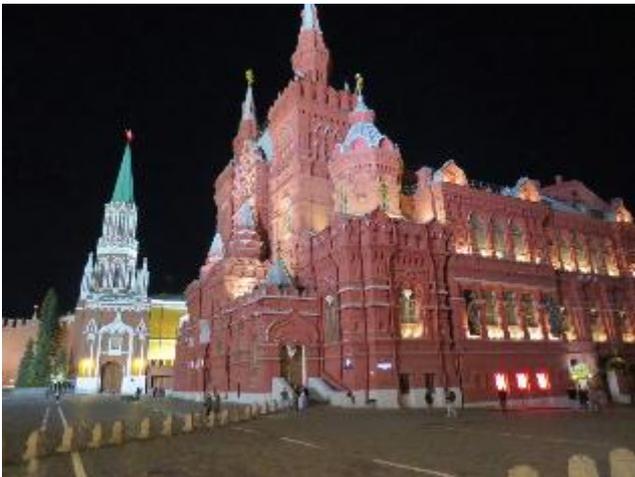


The very long, fast escalators of the Moscow Metro.

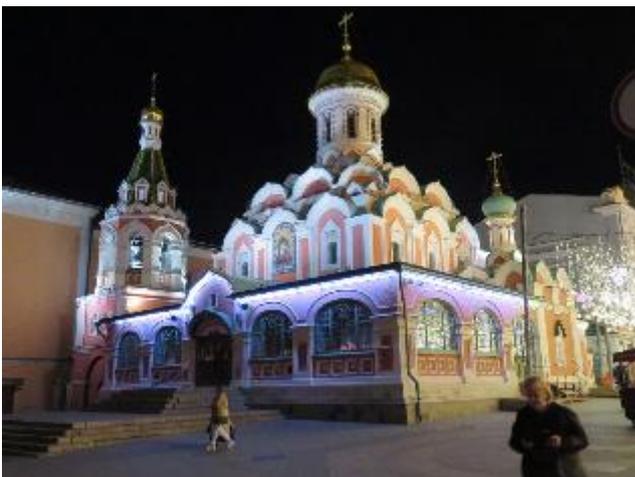
After the Metro, it was time to see Red Square by night, as well as other illuminations around the centre of Moscow, ending up at another square at midnight when they doused the lights/fountains.



Gum Department Store (actually, a shopping centre with many stores).



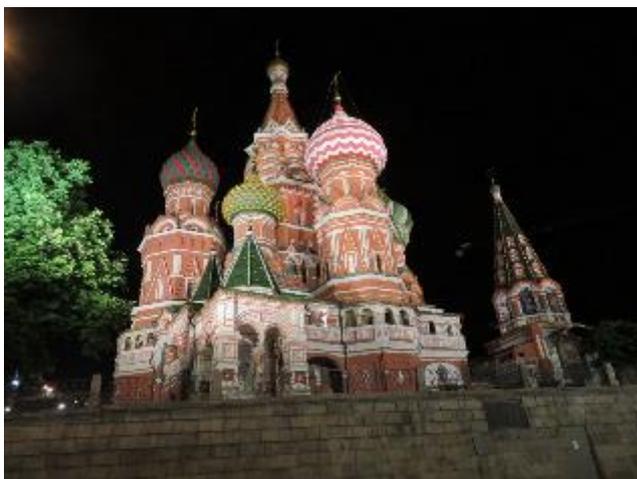
The State Museum on Red Square, one of the Kremlin towers in background.



Kazan Church, Red Square.



Gum Department store on Red Square.



St Basil's Cathedral on Red Square.



Another square, midnight.

**Friday, May 17:**

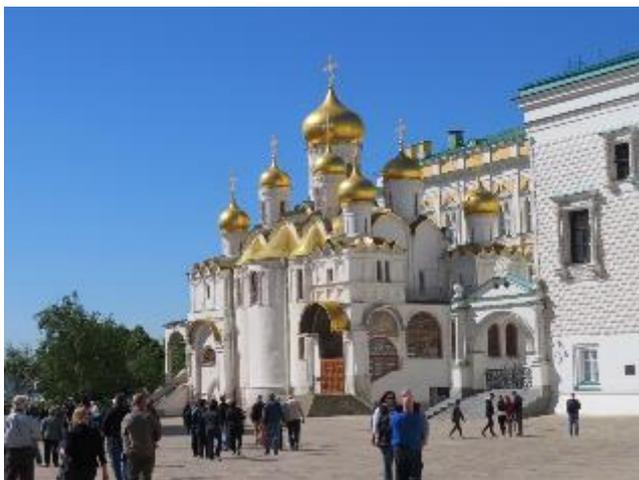
In the morning, we had a guided tour of the Kremlin – the various buildings therein (which includes several more cathedrals!), as well as inside the Museum. Kremlin actually just means “fortress”, and many other towns have kremlins. This should properly be called “the Moscow Kremlin”.



Near the Trinity Tower entrance to the Kremlin: domes over the Gift Shop.



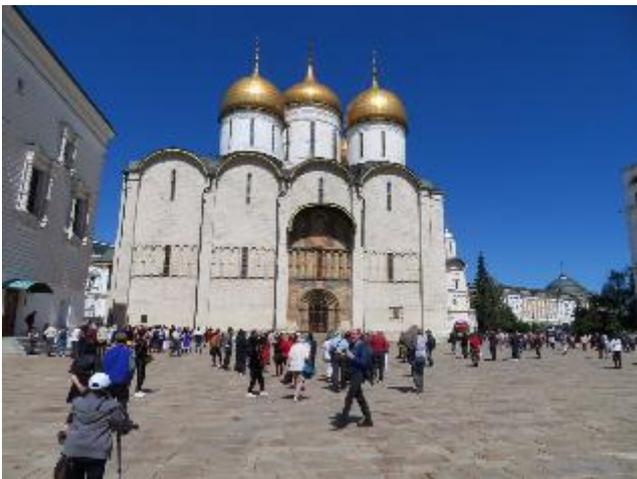
Kremlin: The Terem Palace.



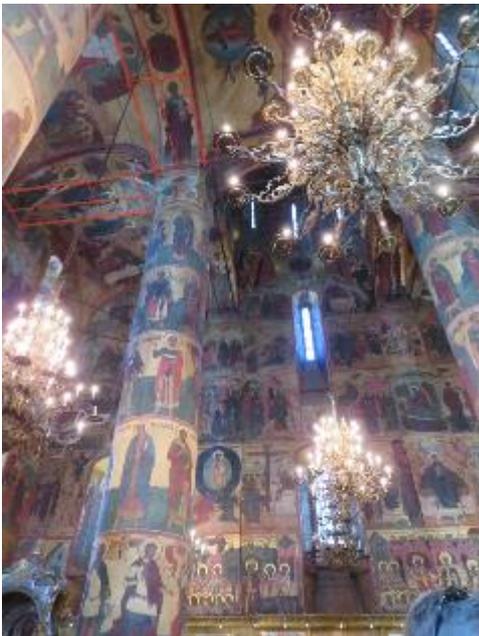
Kremlin: Annunciation Cathedral.



The Grand Kremlin Palace.



Kremlin: Assumption Cathedral.



Kremlin: Assumption Cathedral interior.



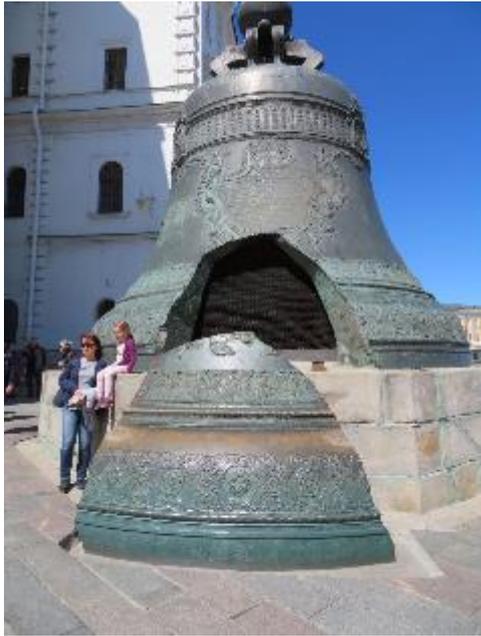
Kremlin: Assumption Cathedral doorway.



Kremlin: Ivan the Great Bell Tower.



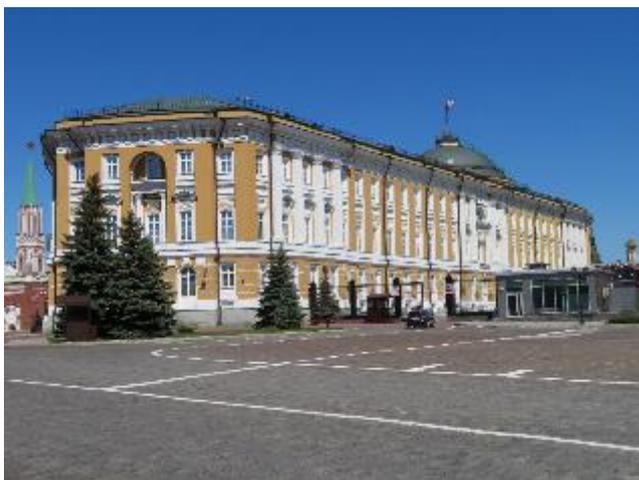
Kremlin gardens.



Kremlin: Broken Tsar Bell (largest bell in the world).



Kremlin: Tsar Cannon.



Kremlin Senate building (housing presidential suite).



Arsenal.

Kremlin: Russian soldiers leaving the



Troup of soldiers entering Kremlin.



Guard at the tomb of the unknown soldier.



Changing of the Guard: tomb of unknown soldier.

The Kremlin Museum holds many treasures. Here are 2 that took my eye: 1. the crown designed by Peter the Great to emphasise his position as "divinely appointed" - reflects the shape of the cathedral domes, including the cross on top. And 2. the Fabergé Egg that Nicholas II presented to his wife at Easter 1913 (with a surprise inside) - this continued a fashion (even among poor people, though they didn't all commission Carl Fabergé to design their egg surprise!) that Tsar Alexander III started in 1885; the Tsar requested Fabergé to produce a different egg/surprise every year after that.

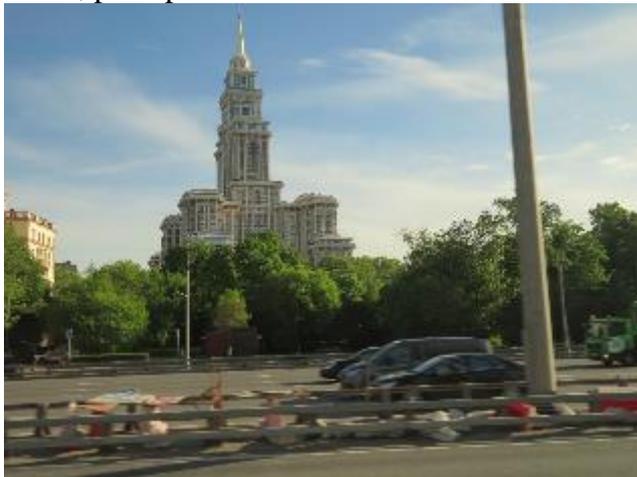


Peter the Great's crown.



Nicholas II's Fabergé egg.

I found the buildings in Moscow fascinating, for various reasons I'll try to share later. Here are 2 of the "Seven Sisters", skyscrapers ordered by Stalin (1947 to 1954) to proclaim the merits of the Soviet system. Actually, 8 were ordered, but only 7 built before he died. I find them quite attractive, and wonder what people thought of them at the time - a little too "art deco", perhaps?



One of the Seven Sisters.



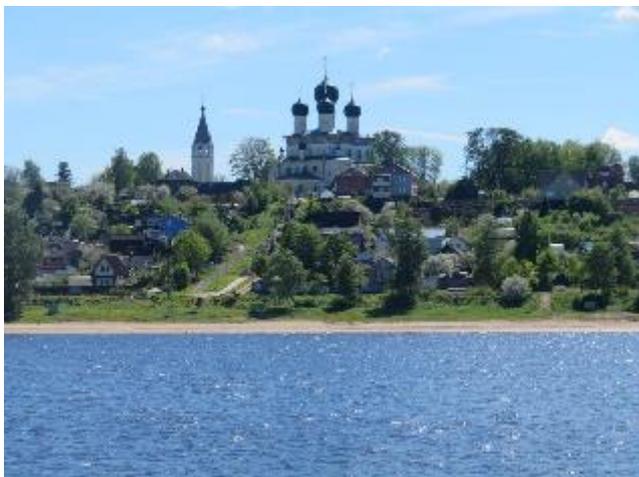
Another of the Seven Sisters.

Friday afternoon, we set sail from Moscow, on the Moscow-Volga canal, then on the Volga itself - "the greatest river in Europe" - not the longest, but maybe the greatest catchment area, and/or the greatest volume of water - certainly broader than the Danube for most of the time. Every village/town we pass has its Russian Orthodox church, with characteristic onion domes. There are locks (but most so far have been navigated at night). And we passed the Kalyazin flooded belfry tower in one of the many reservoirs that have been created along the route.



Just departing our mooring place on the Moscow canal.

Just departing our mooring place on the Moscow canal.



Every town/village has its onion-domed church on the Volga River.

Every town/village has its onion-domed church on the Volga River.



Uglich lock on the Volga River.



The flooded belfry at Kalyazin on the  
Volga.

**Saturday, May 18:** We stopped at Uglich today. A town of about 35,000, once a contender for the capital of Russia. But most famous for the town where the 9yo Prince Dmitry, son of Ivan the Terrible (or Ivan the Wise, according to where you come from) was murdered (by agents of Boris Godunov), ending the Ryurik dynasty and opening the way for the Romanovs. The story goes that a bell was used to summon the conspirators; in retribution, the bell was "sent to Siberia" (literally) for 200 years, had its tongue cut off (its clapper) and its ears clipped (the top part of the bell that it is hung from). There still seems to be quite a bit of feeling between Uglich and Moscow. This church (Church of St Dmitry on Spilled Blood) was built on the spot he died.



Church of St Dmitry on Spilled Blood.



Iconostasis of the Church of St Dmitry.



The exiled bell at the Church of St Dmitry,  
now rehabilitated.



Saviour.

The Church of the Transfiguration of the



Transfiguration.

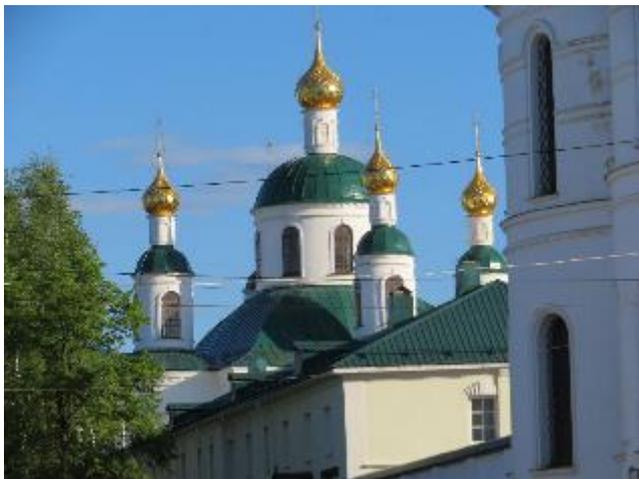
Iconostasis of the Church of the



Iconostasis of the Church of the Transfiguration.



Yet another church in Uglich.



Still another church in Uglich.



One final church, adjacent tour mooring place in Uglich.

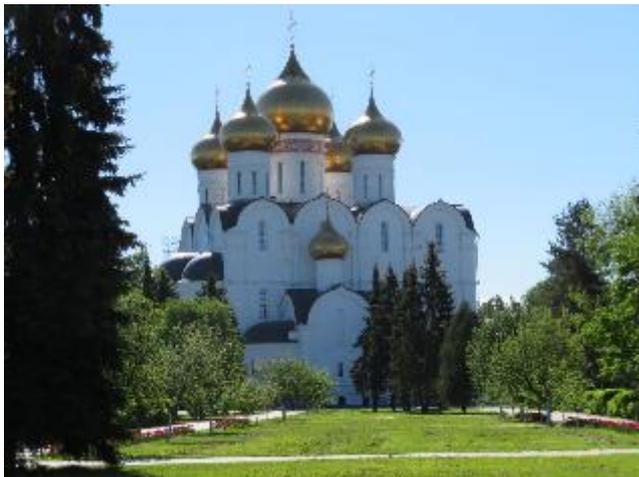
**Sunday, May 19:** Today we called at the city of Yaroslavl, founded by Prince Yaroslav the Wise in 1010, at the junction of the Volga and Kotorosl Rivers. Current population 605,000. It also rivalled Moscow for capital of Russia at one time. Here we see the War Memorial (complete with wreaths from 9-May, when the end of WWII is celebrated); also the view over the river junction (Volga on the Left); and the Church of Maria (originally 1642, demolished in 1937, rebuilt in 2010 - apparently to a much grander scale, which very nearly resulted in the UNESCO heritage listing for this area being removed).



Yaroslavl War memorial.



Yaroslavl: Junction of Volga (on L) and Kotorosl Rivers.

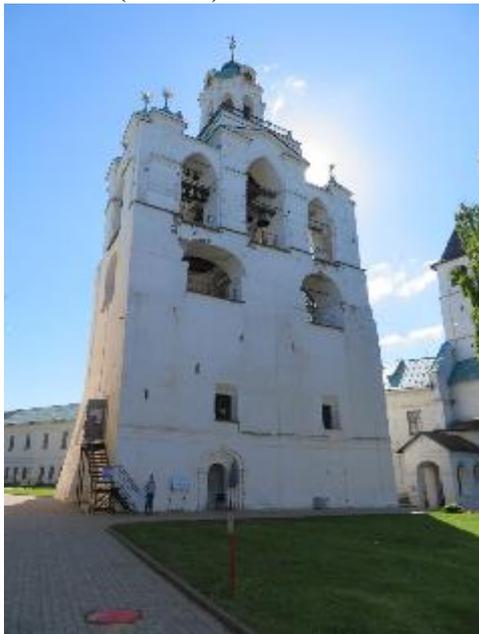


Yaroslavl: Church of Maria.



Yaroslavl: Church of Maria entrance.

Also in Yaroslavl, we visited the Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, founded in the 12th Century. It had the first library and school in Russia. Here is the fortified main entrance, the bell tower, and the monk dormitory (note the irregular line of that building, built to follow the terrain, as they believed God ordained it so!). It had 150 monks at its peak, and 50,000 serfs. The opera Prince Igor was based on a 15th century poem discovered here by Pushkin (I think).

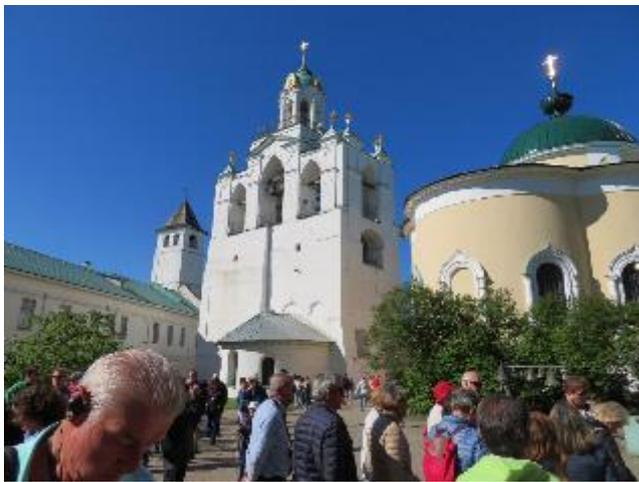


Yaroslavl: Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour.



dormitory block.

Monastery of the Transfiguration



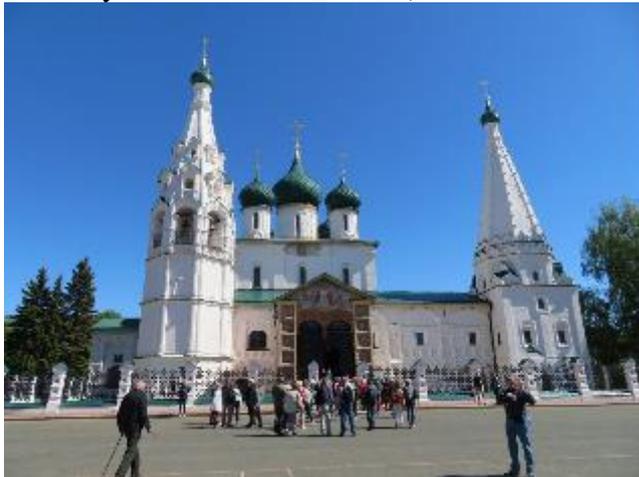
Monastery of the Transfiguration.



Monastery of the Transfiguration.

We also visited the Church of Elijah the Prophet in Yaroslavl, and were regaled with detailed descriptions of some of the frescos (mostly the ones to do with Elisha, not Elijah, as they were at a more accessible height on the wall). A very knowledgeable guide, who took pains to point out why the paintings often looked distorted - it's because they were never intended (as 2-D renditions) to represent real people, but rather caricatures, or the spirit of the persons;

interesting and enlightening insight... (but I still find them all a bit overpowering - I'm basically a "low church" fellow).



Yaroslavl: Church of Elijah the Prophet.



Church of Elijah iconostasis.



Church of Elijah: highly decorated.



Church of Elijah: super sunbeams.

Finally in Yaroslavl, we had free time to visit the markets and wander around town. Here are some colourful displays of fruit, nuts, spices, etc (many varieties of saffron on one stand). We were very tempted by offers of samples, but had been warned not eat anything that we hadn't first washed...



Yaroslavl: Great displays of fresh fruit.



Yaroslavl: Great displays of dried fruit.

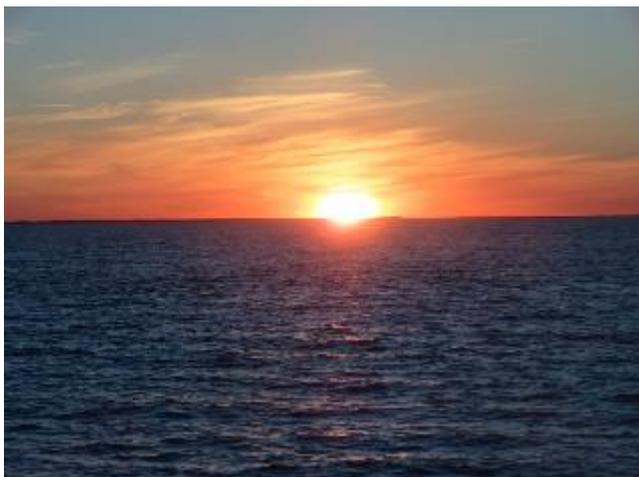


Yaroslavl: Great displays of condiments, etc.

Tonight, Sunday, we farewelled the Volga River, waved on by Mother Volga, into the vast Rybinsk Reservoir at sunset.



Mother Volga.



Rybinsk Reservoir at sunset.

**Monday, May 20:** This morning we arrived at Goritsy, and visited the Monastery founded by St Cyril (Kirillo) in 1397 at age 60 (he died in 1427 at age 90). It's the largest Orthodox Monastery in Russia, and covers 30 acres (its walls have a length of 1.3 miles). After the Revolution in 1917, there were only 20 monks left, then the leading monk was killed and the monastery disbanded. It became a museum, and so was preserved by the Soviets. Now a

functioning monastery again, it has 15 monks (see their dour accommodation block). The "Holy Gates" into the inner courtyard are covered in frescoes - it is said that if you keep silent while passing through the gates, you have one sin removed! On one side it is bordered by a lake (not the White Lake after which the monastery is named, which is nearby) - again, it is said that if you wash your hands, feet, face in the water you will be made younger! Curiously, Brezhnev ordered some of the more outstanding icons to be restored (at State expense), so much is preserved, though even more is desperately in need of restoration. Nearby, on the edge of the river near where we moored, is the Goritsy Nunnery (pictured).



Goritsy.

The Holy Gate of St Kirillo's Monastery,



Monks' quarters, St Kirillo (Cyril).



St Kirillo's Monastery Church.



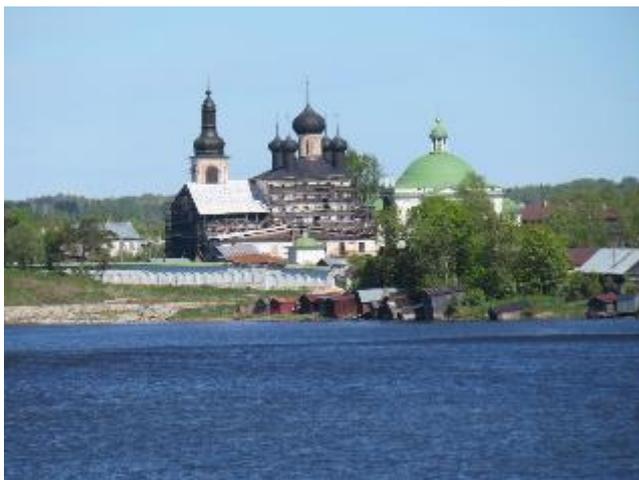
Church.

Iconostasis of St Kirillo's Monastery



lake.

The Monastery walls and the "curative"



Goritsy Nunnery.

**Tuesday, May 21:** Today we visited the island of Kizhi in Lake Onega, in the North of Russia. It is the site of some amazing wooden buildings, and the whole island has been turned into a museum of wooden buildings, with several from other parts of this region relocated here. The highlight is the Church of the Transfiguration, built in 1714, with 22 domes, made without a single nail. The builders were anonymous, but the story goes that it

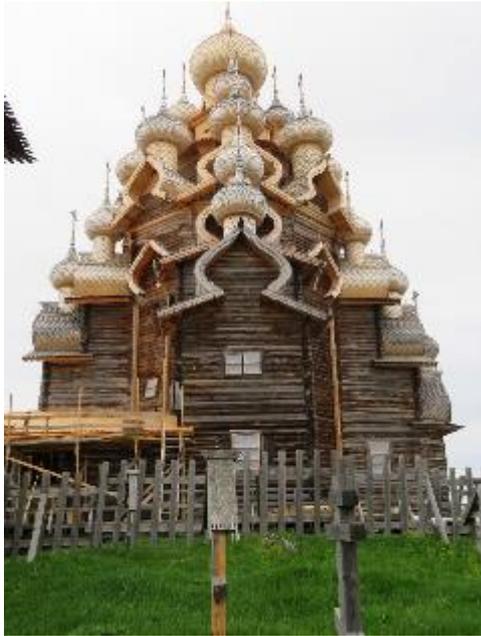
was the work of one craftsman, who upon completing it was so overcome with its beauty that he threw his axe far into the lake vowing never to build another. Here are views from several angles. Exterior restoration work has just been completed (hence the new wood), but it will be another year before the interior is fully restored. The shingles are made from aspen, which doesn't warp or rot, and there are 30,000 of them!



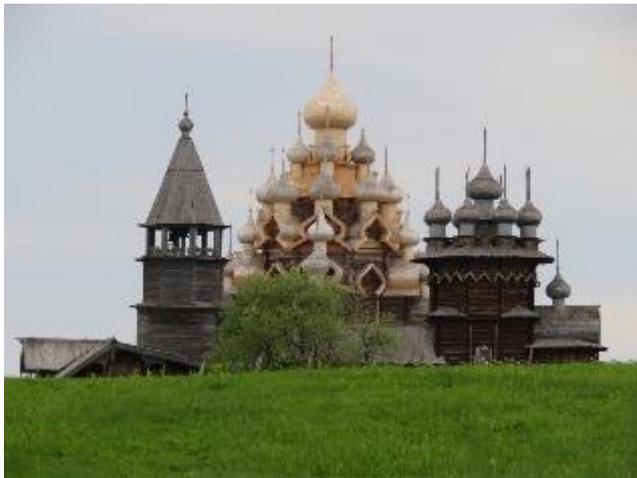
Kizhi: Church of the Transfiguration.



Kizhi: Church of the Transfiguration.



Kizhi: Church of the Transfiguration.



Church of the Transfiguration, framed by Intercession (L) and Bell Tower (R).

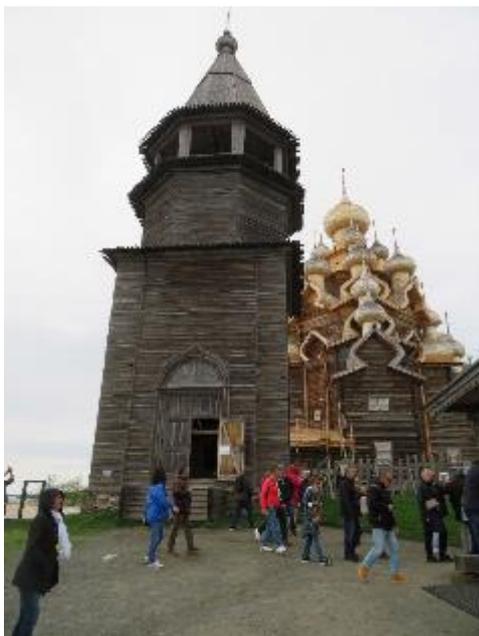
Also at Kizhi, adjacent to the Church of Transfiguration, was the Church of Intercession (built 1764), with only 9 domes. Both churches were closed down in 1937, and the priests killed as "enemies of the people" (90% of all priests died after the Revolution). Recently, this church has resumed regular services, so we could go inside. Both churches are "Summer churches", which are only used in Summer, as they have no heating or insulation; this actually helped a lot in their preservation (no condensation, etc). Between the 2 churches is the Bell Tower (built 1874).



Kizhi: Church of Intercession.



Church of Intercession iconostasis.



Kizhi: Bell Tower.

Many more wonderful wooden buildings on Kizhi Island. A small chapel from the Murom Monastery, the oldest building on the island (late 14thC), and the oldest wooden building in Russia. Another chapel had a super set of bells (they played them for us). A couple of farmhouses (one occupied by 18 members of an extended family, plus livestock, workshop, etc). And a granary and a sauna nearby - note the detail on the fascia board). A windmill (a more recent construction). Also a woodcutter demonstrating the art of using an axe to make shingles.



The Church of the Resurrection of Lazarus (late 14thC), brought from Murom Monastery.



Bell tower on one chapel.



Kixhi: the Oshevnev Farmhouse.



room.

The Oshevnev Farmhouse main living



stable.

The Oshevnev Farmhouse stock room and



The Oshevnev Farmhouse.



Kizhi: a Granary.



Kizhi: a Sauna.



Kizhi: Elizarov's farmhouse.



Carving detail on Elizarov's farmhouse.



Windmill (1928).



Kizhi: wood carver making aspen

shingles.

**Wednesday, May 22:** Today we stopped at Mandrogi (last stop before St Petersburg). This is a village (perhaps better described as a theme park) established by a businessman, Sergei Gutsait, to provide accommodation and an outlet for craftsfolk of various kinds. Of course, there were Matryoshka dolls, and all sorts of other crafts (glass-blowing, embroidery, blacksmith, etc) as well as a Vodka Museum (quite a few varieties!), and then lunch with entertainment from a fabulous balalaika player and singer.



Mandroggi Craft Fair!



Matryoshka dolls by the thousands!



Painting Matryoshka dolls.



Mandrogi Vodka Museum.



Vodka Museum: a few varieties!



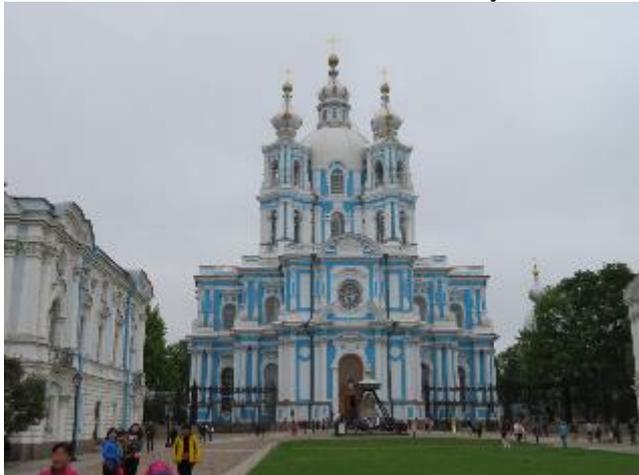
Mandrogi lunch-time entertainment: balalaika player and singer/dancer.

Christine shared this photo of us getting close to the locals at Mandrogi.

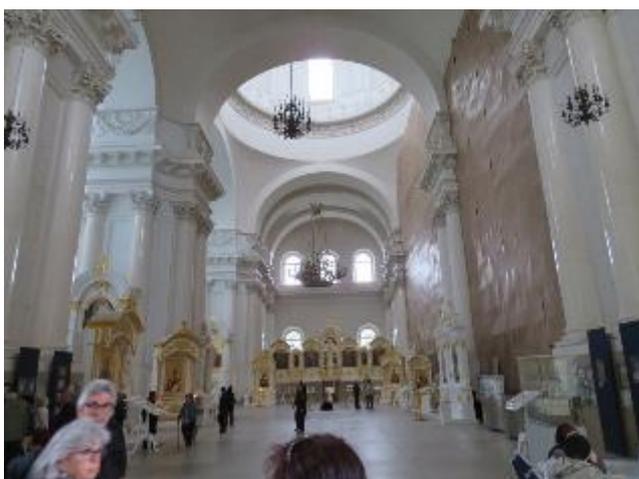


Mandrogli: Helen and Alex (and bear)

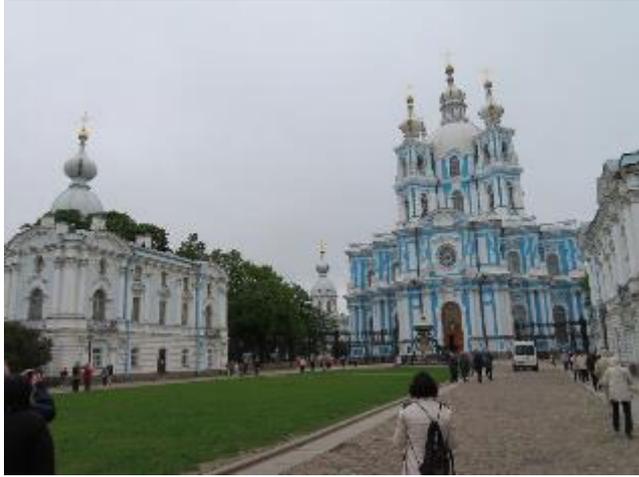
**Thursday, May 23:** And so we arrived in St Petersburg, founded by Peter I ("the Great") in 1703, following the war with Sweden, which saw Russia obtain a sea port on the Baltic. We had a bus tour to give us an overview of the city. Our first stop was the Smolny Cathedral on the banks of the Neva river on our way into the centre.



St Petersburg: Smolny Cathedral.

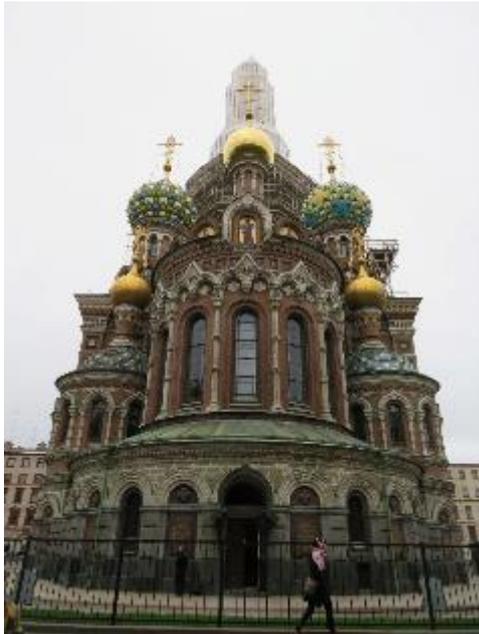


Smolny Cathedral interior.

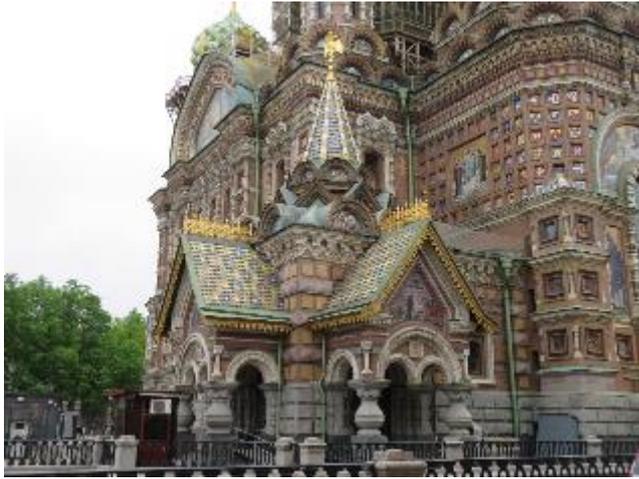


Smolny Cathedral and outer buildings.

One of the main attractions in St Petersburg is the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood - built over the site where Tsar Alexander II was shot (and later died). Sadly, it was not open, because its interior is being refurbished - however, we had been inside in 2010, and seen its amazing mosaics covering the whole of the interior. The Soviets, of course, stopped its use as a church, and had decided by 1941 that it had no architectural merit (fancy that!) and were about to demolish it, when war broke out (for Russia), so the government had more pressing issues to address.



Church of the Spilled Blood.



Church of the Spilled Blood porch.



Church of the Spilled Blood.



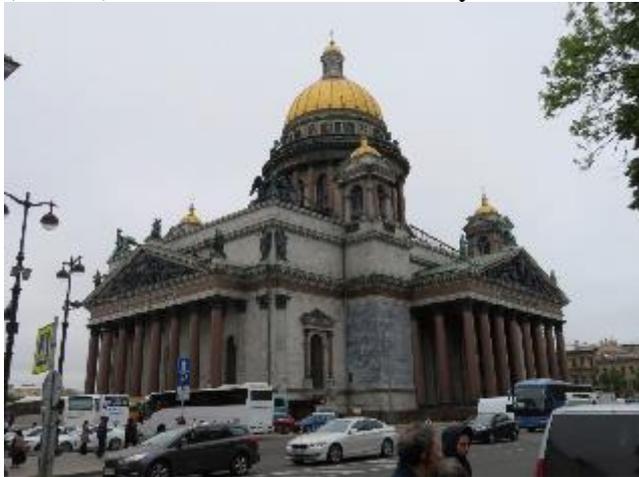
Church of the Spilled Blood detail.

In contrast to the Church on Spilled Blood, this building clearly had merit for the Soviets - it's the local HQ of the KGB. It is said that it's the tallest building in St Petersburg, because you can see Siberia from the first floor!



KGB Building.

Other major buildings in St Petersburg include the St Isaac's Cathedral, with the 4th-largest (church) dome in the world. Nearby is the famous equestrian statue of Peter the Great.



St Isaac's Cathedral.



St Isaac's Cathedral.

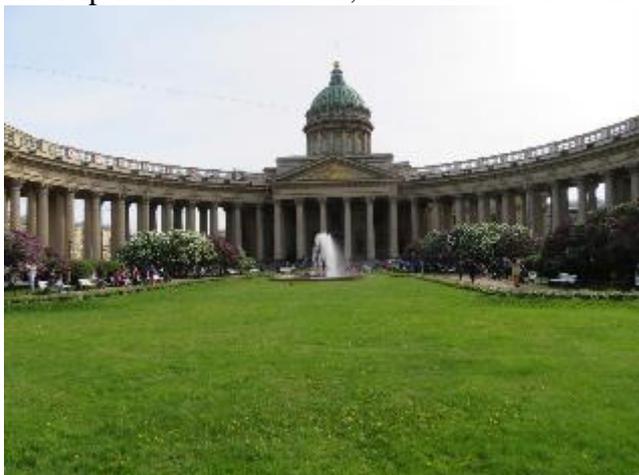


St Isaac's Cathedral detail.



Peter the Great statue.

Another huge cathedral in St Petersburg is the Kazan Cathedral. Started in 1801 and finished in 1811 (and based in part on the design of St Peter's in Rome), it was seen by most locals as commemorating the victory over Napoleon in 1812 by General Mikhail Kutuzov, who asked for help from the cathedral, and who is buried inside.



Kazan Cathedral.



Kazan Cathedral.



Kazan Cathedral interior.



Kazan Cathedral interior.

Across the Neva from the Winter Palace (aka Hermitage) are various buildings of note, including the Peter & Paul Fortress, the Exchange building (currently undergoing refurbishment), the 2 Rostral columns, and the cruiser Aurora, the only survivor from a

disastrous war against Japan in 1904-5, famous for firing a blank round to signal the start of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.



Peter and Paul Fortress and Cathedral.



Exchange Building.



Rostral Column.



The Cruiser Aurora.

Here's the statue of Catherine the Great, in front of the Alexandrinsky Drama Theatre, on Nevsky Prospekt (the main shopping avenue in St Petersburg).

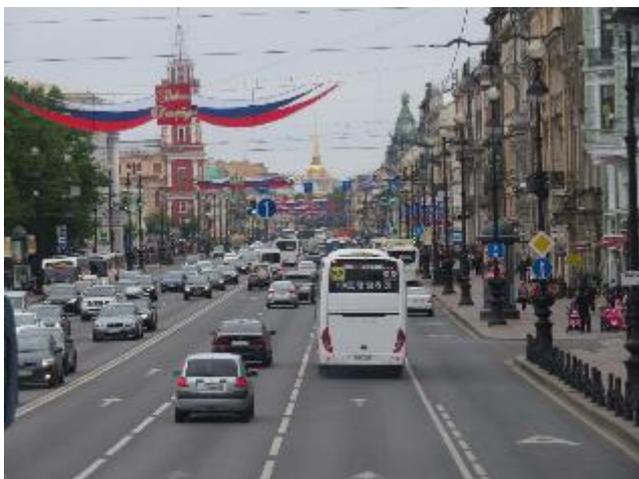


Drama Theatre.

Catherine the Great, and the Alexandrinsky



Alexandrinsky Drama Theatre.



Nevsky Prospekt.

Some more views of St Petersburg, including one of the longest escalators in the world to the Metro, tulips abounding, a mobile toilet van (!), vast quantities of the favourite souvenirs - Farbergé eggs and Matryoshka dolls.



Metro escalator.



Tulips.



Mobile toilet.

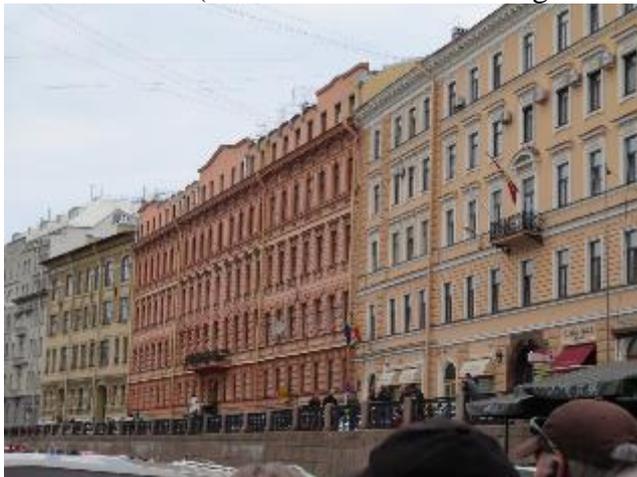


Fabergé Eggs by the thousand.



Matryoshka dolls by the thousand.

**Friday, May 24:** Two sets of photos from our time in St Petersburg weren't posted at the time (not in fact until 27-Jul-19). Here are some taken on the canal cruise we did in the afternoon of that day. I love the buildings along the canals (and streets); here are some of those, as well as going under the bridge that joins 2 parts of the Hermitage Museum (into the Neva basin from which the length of the Hermitage can be seen), and also of the Peter and Paul cathedral (with its beautiful slender golden spire) inside the Peter and Paul Fortress.



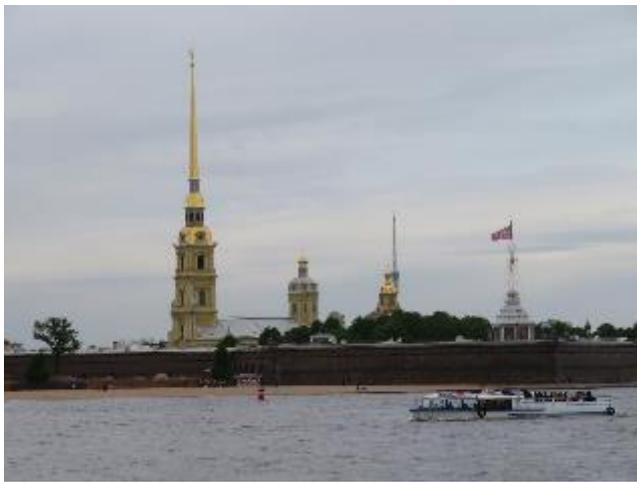
Buildings along the Moyka River.



Archway connecting Hermitage Museum to Hermitage Theatre.



The Hermitage Museum fronting the Neva River.



The Peter and Paul Fortress and Cathedral.

Then, of course, there's the Hermitage museum! We visited the Hermitage on the morning of Friday, 24-May-19, and had a guided tour. I then stayed on to see more on my own, while the others went back the ship for lunch (I met up with them prior to the Canal Tour, at the place where we all boarded the boat). So, where does one start to describe the Hermitage? Well, first, with the building(s) - based on the Winter Palace (the right-most in the photo from the river), and then extended several times, it must rival the Louvre in size.



The Hermitage fronting the Neva River.



The Winter Palace part of the Hermitage, facing Palace Square.



Rear of Winter Palace.

Quite apart from the amazing collections of art works in the Hermitage, are the many wonderful rooms, starting with the stunning Ambassador's Staircase, aka Jordan Staircase (as it was the route taken by the Tzar to perform a ceremony in the Neva River reflecting the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River). Here are also some of the more spectacular rooms of the Winter Palace...



Hermitage: Ambassadors (or Jordan) Staircase.



Hermitage: Armorial Hall.



Hermitage: St George Hall.



Hermitage: St George Hall Throne.



Hermitage: Small Throne Room (or Peter the Great Memorial Hall).

Some more rooms of the Winter Palace in the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, which we visited on 24-May-19. These include the Red Drawing Room, the private chapel, and the Raphael loggia (corridor), copied from the Vatican Museum.



Hermitage: Red Drawing Room.



Hermitage: Grand Church of the Winter Palace.

Hermitage: Grand Church of the Winter Palace.



Hermitage: Small Italian Skylight Room.

Hermitage: Small Italian Skylight Room.



Hermitage: The Hall of Italian Mayorika.

Hermitage: The Hall of Italian Mayorika.



Hermitage: The Raphael Loggia.



Hermitage: The Blue Room (foyer to the Theatre).

Then, still in the Hermitage Museum, there are the Pavilion Room housing the amazing Peacock Clock, the Malachite Room, and the State Apartments, including Nicholas II's library.



The Pavilion Room.



The Peacock Clock.



The Malachite Room.



The Nicholas II Library.

Finally I get to share photos of some of the wonderful works of art in the Hermitage Museum. We had a guided tour there on the morning of 24-May-19, but I stayed on to explore some more on my own, meeting up with everyone else when the canal tour started, a 20-minute walk away. Let's start with some sculptures: Michelangelo's crouching youth, Canova's Cupid & Psyche, a 2ndC BC Aphrodite, and Marcus Olconius Rufus unearthed from Pompeii.



Michelangelo's Crouching Youth.



Canova's Cupid & Psyche,



2ndC BC Aphrodite.



Marcus Olconius Rufus from Pompeii.

Here are some of my favourite paintings in the Hermitage collection - Rembrandt's Prodigal Son, his Old Man in Red, Goya's Dona Antonia Zarate, Raphael's Holy Family (with a beardless Joseph), Gainsborough's Woman in Blue, and Da Vinci's Litta Madonna.



Rembrandt's Prodigal Son.



Rembrandt's Old Man in Red.



Goya's Dona Antonia Zarate.



Gainsborough's Woman in Blue.



Raphael's Holy Family (with a beardless Joseph).



Da Vinci's Litta Madonna.

The statue of Marcus Olconius Rufus unearthed in Pompeii (in a great state of preservation!), was just one of several treasures in the Hermitage from a visiting Pompeii exhibition. Here is a mosaic and a mural together with a beautiful relief and a stove, all in wonderful states of preservation.



Mosaic from Pompeii.



Mural from Pompeii.



Relief from Pompeii.



Metal stove from Pompeii.

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