

# Iconic Landmark to Be Transferred to Russian Orthodox Church

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The governor of St. Petersburg Georgy Poltavchenko announced on Jan. 10 that St. Isaac's Cathedral, one of the city's most famous museums, will be transferred to the Russian Orthodox Church, the RBC news website reported.

According to the city's Property Affairs Commission, the cathedral will be given to the church for a 49-year long lease free of charge, the TASS news agency reported Thursday. The property transfer might take up to three years, Nikolay Burov, director of the St. Isaac Cathedral Museum, said. Until then, the museum will continue to bear all the maintenance costs, TASS reported.

The Church informed the public that entrance to the cathedral will be free of charge – currently the museum charges 150–250 rubles (\$2.5–\$4.5). “No-one charges people for entering a church,” the Orthodox Church spokesman Vladimir Legoida said at a press conference on Thursday. “Everyone who wants to visit the cathedral will be

guaranteed free access. Of course, [paid] tours will continue as well.”

Poltavchenko's move sparked public outrage nonetheless. Critics charge that the Russian Orthodox Church is unlikely to be able to maintain such a complex building. The cathedral is on the UNESCO world heritage list and accommodates 3.5 million tourists every year.

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