

St. Petersburg Cultural Getaway

The northern capital beckons

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St. Petersburg church in the snow **Pixabay**

The city of St. Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire for two centuries, is a vibrant center where art and history meet innovation and liberation. The winter may be long and the Neva River frozen, but inside palaces and theaters, cultural life is humming.

Where to see art

Piero Della Francesca – through March 11

“Piero della Francesca. Monarch of Painting” brings together works by one of the most celebrated 14th-century masters from art collections in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Britain. The exhibition is a unique chance to see Della Francesca’s artworks in Russia, since no museum has any of his works. Portraits and a large altarpiece are shown together for the first time, along with frescoes that he made when he worked at the courts of Italian rulers.

Hermitage Museum. 2 Palace Square. www.hermitagemuseum.org

Annie Leibovitz – through Jan. 21

Annie Leibovitz, one of the most successful international photographers in the world today, portrayed hundreds of celebrities for magazines and advertising agencies. Some of these masterpieces are on exhibit in St. Petersburg's biggest museum. The display has been created as part of the Hermitage 20/21 project that aims to collect, exhibit and study the work of contemporary artists. The collection of photographs has been presented to the museum as a gift from their creator with the help of the American Hermitage Museum Foundation.

Hermitage Museum, General Staff Building. 6-8 Dvortsovaya Ploshchad. www.hermitagemuseum.org

Sergei Kichigin: The Geometry of Winter – through Jan. 27

The perfect pastime during the St. Petersburg winter – going to see what creates the harshest season of the year. Snow and its geometry are the protagonists of Sergei Kichigin's photographs, which were inspired by the American photographer and scientist Kenneth Libbrecht. The exhibition of works by this economist and civil servant at Erarta Museum features amazing photographs and videos giving a glimpse into the mystery of ice crystal formation.

Erarta Museum. 2 29th Liniya Vasilyevskogo Ostrova. www.erarta.com/en

Pasha 183. Retrospective – through March 3

St. Petersburg Street Art Museum is celebrating the work of P183 (Pasha 183), also known as the Russian Banksy, with his first retrospective exhibition in the city. More than 65 of works by Pasha 183 (Pavel Pukhov) are on display, including canvases, stencils, art objects, reconstruction of installations and multimedia areas. "Pasha 183. Retrospective" is the first personal exhibition of the artist, held in the industrial space where he primarily worked. Sadly, he died from undisclosed causes at the age of 29.

St. Petersburg Street Art Museum. 84 Shosse Revolyutsii. <https://streetartmuseum.ru/en/>

What to do in the evening

Jan 19 – Opera Le Nozze di Figaro – Mariinsky Theater

"Le Nozze di Figaro" ("The Marriage of Figaro"), the famous comic opera composed in 1786 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, comes back to St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre on Jan. 19. The opera tells the story of how the servants Figaro and Susanna – performed by Gleb Peryazev and Irina Matayeva – succeed in getting married, foiling the efforts of their philandering employer Count Almaviva (Sergei Romanov) to seduce Susanna and teaching him a lesson in fidelity. The opera buffa in four acts, conducted by Mikhail Sinkevich, will be performed in Italian with synchronized Russian super-titles.

Mariinsky Theater. 1 Theater Square. <https://www.mariinsky.ru/>

Jan. 25, 26 – "Timeless" – Leningrad Center

The surreal performance "Timeless," directed by Felix Mikhailov, will be on the Leningrad Center's main stage starting from Jan. 25 and continuing for the following three weekends. "Timeless" is a mix of musical theater, guitar concert, orchestra, circus, and story-telling. Mikhailov's eighth production revolves around the concept of an open and closed door and the trials of twelve women who are locked in infinity where they must choose their destiny.

Leningrad Center, Tavrichesky Sad, Potemkinskaya ul. 4. leningradcenter.ru/

Jan 27 – Concert – Jungle

For the first time in Russia, the modern soul collective from the U.K., Jungle, will perform at Club Kosmonavt as part of their world tour. The duo – Tom McFarland and Josh Lloyd-Watson, called T and J – formed Jungle at the beginning of 2013 and had a huge success with their first single, "Platoon." Jungles' music mixes a fresh reincarnation of funk with disco and soul, playing with tropical percussion, wildlife noises, and falsetto yelps — easily recognizable in both albums, "Jungle" and "For Ever." After St. Petersburg, the "For Ever" tour will make a stop also in Moscow.

Club Kosmonavt. 24 Ulitsa Bronnitskaya. <http://www.cosmonavt.su/>

Where to eat

Julia Child Bistro

Julia Child Bistro is a French bistro that mixes hospitality and delicious food in a cozy place with a big window on an old St. Petersburg street. The choice ranges from a cappuccino and croissant for breakfast to a salad and a soup for lunch, or beef stewed in red wine for dinner. The relaxing atmosphere and impeccable service make the place an affordable and nice place to hang out in the city center. The restaurant's namesake would be pleased.

Julia Child Bistro. 27/30 Grazhdanskaya Ulitsa. www.facebook.com/juliachildbistro/

Edim Rukami

Edim Rukami is a new restaurant by the Ginza Project, the Russian chain that includes different world cuisines with restaurants all over St Petersburg. At Edim Rukami ("We eat with our hands") finger food is served in all its variety, including Sicilian arancini balls with mozzarella, Vietnamese shrimp, falafel with tomato salsa, semisweet mussels and royal prawns. As in every Ginza restaurant, the interior was designed with special attention to details to create an original atmosphere.

Edim Rukami. 41 Sadovaya Ulitsa. en.ginza.ru/spb/restaurant/edimrukami

Where to lay your weary head

Art-Hotel Rachmaninov

The Rachmaninov Hotel is located in a former communal apartment on Kazanskaya Ulitsa, where the Russian composer once lived. If you want, you can even sleep in the very room where Sergei Rachmaninov once slept: the most expensive room in the hotel, “Rachmaninov suite,” recalls a Russian room in the beginning of 20th century. In fact, the owner kept the same wallpaper and just renovated the parquet. As a gift for the fifth anniversary of the hotel, a group of St. Petersburg artists painted the corridors and rooms with musical themes inspired by the great Russian composer who once lived here. All the rooms are decorated with antique furniture, paintings, and books.

Art-Hotel Rachmaninov. 5 Kazanskaya Ulitsa. hotelrachmaninov.com/

Alexander House Hotel

Built in 1826, the Alexander House Boutique Hotel is located near historical monuments of the city, such as the St. Isaac Cathedral and the Mariinsky Theatre. What makes the hotel a bit different from others in St. Petersburg is definitely the style of the rooms: the 20 accommodations of various categories – from 16 to 65 square meters – bear the names of world capitals, from Stockholm to Mexico City, Barcelona and Bangkok. Winner of the Russian Hospitality Awards 2017 for the best mini-hotel, Alexander House’ rooms are all inspired by the spirit of different cities. Try romantic Paris or spiritual Kyoto, just to name just two.

Alexander House Hotel. 27 Naberezhnaya Kryukova Kanala. a-house.ru/

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