



Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh
To Russia with Love: Women's Mission to St. Petersburg and Riga
June 16-23, 2019

Day 1: Sunday, June 16 – *Depart the USA*

- Welcome to the experience! We are on our way. Today will be spent in the air as we make our way from Pittsburgh to Riga.

Overnight: In Flight

Day 2: Monday, June 17 – *Arrival in Riga*

- Arrive at 12:15 pm (Lufthansa 890 – recommended flight) at Riga international airport. Upon completion of airport procedures, we will be met by our tour educator and escorted to our awaiting coach transportation.
- Travel to **Riga's Old Town**, the geographic center of the city, located on the right bank of the Daugava River.
 - Tour **Riga Castle**, on the bank of the River Daugava, sits one of the largest medieval castles in Latvia. Home to the President of Latvia, this 14th century built castle is one of the most resilient icons of Latvia heritage and today houses the Latvian Art Museum and the National History Museum of Latvia.
 - Next, we will visit **St. Mary's Dome Cathedral**, one of the best-known landmarks in Latvia. Built-in 1211 by Bishop Albert of Riga, it is the largest medieval church in the Baltics.
 - Afterward, we will visit **The Large Guild**, home to the Riga Orchestra and the Small Guild, a Crafts Corporation House.
 - Next, we will visit **The Freedom Monument**, a 138-foot high granite, travertine and copper monument honoring soldiers killed during the 1918-1920 Latvian War of Independence.
 - Afterward, we will visit **The House of Blackheads**, originally mentioned in the 14th century as an important center of public life for unmarried merchants – the Brotherhood of Blackheads was later destroyed during WWII and reconstructed at the beginning of this century.
 - Next, we will visit **The Town Hall Square**, and an old Town Hall devastated during WWII and rebuilt in 2002. Town Hall Square has long been the economic and administrative center of the city.
 - Finally, we will visit **St. Peter's Church**, first built in the 13th century, which offers breathtaking views of the red roofs of Old Town, the modern parts of the city, Riga Bay, and the Daugava River.
- Our last stop of the day will be the **Peitav Synagogue**, the only Riga synagogue, which has survived the Holocaust. It is also the only active synagogue in Riga and one of the two active synagogues in Latvia.
- Check-in to our luxury hotel accommodations.
- Enjoy a **welcome dinner** together and an evening of relaxation.



Overnight: Radisson Hotel

Day 3: Tuesday, June 18 – *Jewish Life in Riga*

- After breakfast, we depart for the **Old Jewish Quarter of Riga**, which at its peak, before the Holocaust, was home to almost 44,000 Jewish inhabitants and was the heart of Jewish life in Latvia.
- Visit the **Memorial of the Burnt Synagogue**, site of the Great Choral Synagogue, destroyed by the Nazis on July 4, 1941. It stands as a memorial to the Jewish victims killed by the Nazis. In the aftermath of the war, the once strong Jewish population of Riga numbered 150 alone.
- Visit **Rumbula Memorial**, where many Jews of Riga and Germany perished.
- Lunch on your own, en route.
- Visit the **Jewish community building**, which is the center of Jewish life in the city.
- Visit the **Jewish Museum** to learn more about the Jewish History of Latvia.
- Visit the **Jewish Community Center**, partially funded by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and learn about the community activities that take place here for participants of all ages.
- Next, we will walk through Riga's **Art Nouveau district**; the Art Nouveau Movement was the architectural and artistic answer to the modernist literary movement that began in the late 19th century. Riga has one of the largest centers of Art Nouveau in Europe. (**Optional**)
- Return to hotel.
- Dinner on your own and evening at leisure.

Overnight: Radisson Hotel

Day 4: Wednesday, June 19 – *Introduction to St. Petersburg*

- Early check out of the hotel.
- Transfer to Riga International Airport.
- 7:50 a.m. Depart Riga on Air Baltic flight #442
- 9:10 a.m. Arrive in St. Petersburg
- Transfer to the city and begin your tour of the city with a **boat cruise** along the rivers and canals of the city to see the city's landmarks from a different perspective.
- Lunch at a restaurant.
- Tour the **Peter and Paul Fortress**, the oldest building in St. Petersburg and the founding location of the city. The fortress, located on the smallest island on the Neva River, was planned as a defense against the Swedes but the Swedes were defeated before its completion. Its main use until 1917 was a political prison; one of its first inmates was Peter the Great's son, Alexey. The Cathedral is the final resting place of all of Russia's pre-revolutionary rulers from Peter the Great onwards with a few exceptions. (**Optional**)
- Check-in to our luxury hotel accommodations.



- **Dinner and Dialogue with Professor Shimon Lakerson**, the Head Researcher at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy. The evenings topic will be an introduction to the History of the Jews of the Russian Empire and the Origin of the Jewish Community in St. Petersburg

Overnight: Angleterre Hotel

Day 5: Thursday, June 20 – Jewish History & Life in St. Petersburg

- Enjoy breakfast at the hotel.
- Visit the **Great Choral Synagogue**, the second largest in Europe after the Dohany Street Synagogue in Budapest.
- Next, we will visit the JDC-founded **YESOD**, a Jewish Cultural Center that serves as a hub for Jewish life and offers meaningful Jewish and Israeli programming to thousands of children and adults. YESOD has become the venue for cultural events and activities such as Interactive Theatre Sundays and professional concerts that attract previously unaffiliated families. YESOD also houses numerous Jewish organizations including the Adain Lo Jewish Family Center, Hesed Avraham, Hillel, and the Granatik kindergarten — providing a Jewish culture curriculum to more than 100 children and recognized as one of the top kindergartens in the city. We will have an opportunity to have a tour of the building, meet with elderly clients, and visit the early childhood center and interact with the children.
- Lunch at YESOD.
- Visit **Yusupov Palace**, once the residence of the wealthy and respected Yusupov family. This palace was the site of one of the most dramatic episodes in Russia's history – the murder of Grigory Rasputin. Felix Yusupov (1886-1967) was the Russian nobleman who arranged the murder in 1916 of the Tsar and Tsarina's close adviser, the 'holy man' Grigory Rasputin. A series of lavishly decorated rooms, each more spectacular than the last, culminating in a gilded jewel box of a theatre, where classical music, ballet, and opera performances are still held. In the cell room where the plot to murder Rasputin was hatched, are the waxworks of Rasputin and his nemesis Felix Yusupov.
- Visit the **Jewish Agency Activity Center**, including meetings with beneficiaries and seeing programs in action. Possible programs include: meeting and participating in activities with children ages 6-10, who are campers and participants of Masoret Sunday School Program along with their parents and counselors; meet with participants of the Moreshet Project for a facilitated discussion about community and leadership. Hear personal stories of these young leaders and learn about their volunteer projects.
- Return to the hotel.
- Dinner on your own and an evening at leisure.
- Optional: Attend a cultural event (details of cultural events to be advised based on the particular date).

Overnight: Angleterre Hotel



Day 6: Friday, June 21 – An Inside Look At St. Petersburg History & Culture

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Experience a guided tour of the splendor of **Peterhof** ("Peter's Court" in German). This fabulous complex of gardens and residences masterminded and built by Peter the Great as his summer palace was renamed Petrodvorets ("Peter's Palace") after WWII. Located on the shores of the Gulf of Finland, the breathtaking centerpiece of Peterhof is the Grand Cascade, comprising three waterfalls, 64 fountains (some of which are hidden, only triggered by the unsuspecting visitor!) partially engineered by Peter himself. The elegant Grand Palace finished just before Peter's death, was enlarged for Empress Elizabeth and redecorated by Catherine the Great, and contains original paintings, furniture, and chandeliers. Peterhof was destroyed during WWII and is largely a reconstruction from photos, drawings, and anecdotes.
- Return to the city by hydrofoil.
- Lunch at a restaurant.
- Visit the **Hermitage Museum**. Housed in the lavish Winter Palace from which Tsars ruled Russia for one-and-a-half centuries. Housing what was once their private art collection, the Hermitage is one of the world's most famous and greatest art museums, including masterpieces by Leonardo, Titian, El Greco, Van Dyck, Rubens, and Rembrandt, amongst many more.
- Return to the hotel with free time to prepare for Shabbat.
- **Kabbalat Shabbat** services at a local synagogue.
- Shabbat dinner with members of the local Jewish community.

Overnight: Angleterre Hotel

Day7: Saturday, June 22 – Shabbat in St. Petersburg

- Enjoy breakfast in the hotel's main dining room.
- Experience the atmosphere of Shabbat in St. Petersburg at leisure. For those interested in attending **Shabbat morning services** at nearby area synagogues, a list will be provided.
- Lunch at a restaurant.
- **Optional Walking Tour** in the city center of St. Petersburg, including:
 - **Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood**, on the site where Tsar Alexander II was assassinated and was dedicated in his memory.
 - **St. Issac's Cathedral**, the largest Russian Orthodox Cathedral, dedicated to Saint Issac of Dalmatia, a patron saint of Peter the Great who had been born on the feast day of that saint.
 - Return to the hotel.
 - **Ben Kodesh Lechol**: Havdallah and group reflection.
 - Farewell dinner at a restaurant.

Overnight: Angleterre Hotel



Day8: Sunday, June 23 – *Return Home*

- Enjoy breakfast in the hotel's main dining room.
- Check out of the hotel.
- Transfer to St. Petersburg International Airport.
- Departure flight to the USA
- Arrive in Pittsburgh