A Private Historical and Cultural Tour of the Golden Ring & Moscow
Featuring Extraordinary Experiences:
Dinner with a local family in Suzdal
Private visit to the dome of Christ the Holy Redeemer Cathedral
Private tour of Bolshoi Theater

Itinerary at a Glance:

- **Day 1** | Arrive in Moscow
- **Day 2** | To Suzdal
- **Day 3** | Suzdal
- **Day 4** | To Plyos
- **Day 5** | Plyos
- **Day 6** | To Yaroslavl via Kostroma
- **Day 7** | Kostroma
- **Day 8** | To Moscow via Rostov
- **Day 9** | Moscow
- **Day 10** | Depart Moscow
At Exeter International we have been creating memories and crafting our trademark extraordinary journeys to Central Europe, Russia, Scandinavia, and Central Asia for 25 years. Our specialty is to distill the best of the best in iconic places that are on so many people’s travel must-do list.

We are not a call center of nameless, faceless people. We do not try to be everything to everyone. We are a small team of specialists. We are all committed to providing the best travel experiences to our destinations. Each member of our team has travelled extensively throughout our destinations, giving them insider knowledge lacking in many other tour operators.

Our Extraordinary Experiences are different, unusual, and often closed to the general public. We can offer special insider access that takes you beyond the typical tourist sites. We know how important it is to remain authentic and increasingly going beyond the well-known sites is what is important to our guests—discovering the little-known museum or street market that adds to their experience. We do this through our local knowledge, cultivating our extensive contacts and regularly visiting each destination to enable us to share the most up-to-date insider information with you, our valued partner.

The most important part of your trip will be your guides. Guides come in many quality levels, especially in our part of the world. We have worked with a core group of the best of the best for over 20 years. We know them like family and if they weren’t the best, they wouldn’t work for us. Simply stated, a guide can make or break your experience. You should have 100% confidence in who is introducing you to your guide and the level of guiding that you are going to get throughout the countries you will be visiting. The best does indeed cost more and we pay our guides at the very top of the market, with pride.

You’ll also want to know what kind of vehicle your tour will include. We use luxury late-model vehicles, often Mercedes, Audi, BMW, or Volkswagen, depending on the size of the vehicle you need. You’ll want to see things that may or may not be open to the public and go in early or after hours before the crowds whenever possible. We also make every effort to skip lines whenever possible. Avoiding long museum lines is one of our top priorities and we work hard to minimize the wait time to get into the most popular sights in each city, maximizing your time in each destination.

You’ll want impeccable planning and someone to bounce ideas off of before your trip and speak English as well as you do while planning your trip so there are no cultural misunderstandings when you arrive. You’ll also want someone to talk to if your trip is not perfect when you get home. These are all ways that we distinguish ourselves from all other companies.

A lot goes into our travel program design. We arrange the program so that it is flawless and effortless for our travelers from the time they set foot in the first city until they leave us. The expertise to set up an itinerary like this comes after years of investing in staff on both sides of the Atlantic, and this too is a value that is incorporated into our traveler’s trips with us.
DAY 1

ARRIVE IN MOSCOW

Arrival into Moscow where your Exeter International driver who will be waiting for you just outside of Customs after you pick up your luggage. Please look for a sign with your name or Exeter International on it. Please note this flight is not included in program cost.

You will be transferred to your hotel. After some time to rest, our guide will meet you near the concierge desk in the lobby, for an overview walking tour of the neighborhood, including Red Square! Be sure not to miss the newly rebuilt church and Imperial Gates at the south end of Red Square - they were both destroyed under Stalin and only recently have been rebuilt in their original splendor. Your guide will also show you the stunning St. Basil’s Cathedral. This magnificent church-museum was commissioned by Ivan the Terrible was completed in 1561.

Later, you may want to experience the fascinating interiors of the Moscow Metro stations, ornately decorated with beautiful paintings, carvings and chandeliers. The metro stations were constructed between 1930 and 1960 and are considered underground palaces, featuring exquisite frescoes, statues, mosaics and stained glass, featuring designs from some of Russia’s most prominent architects. Each station has its own special theme - our favorite is Teatralnaya. Today this massive public transportation system is one of the largest in the world, carrying over 9 million passengers per day (twice as many as London or Paris!). Your guide will be delighted to show you as many stations as you like.

Afterward, you will walk over to the brand new Zaryadye park for sweeping views of the Red Square and St. Basil Cathedral. One of Moscow’s newest sights is the futuristic Zaryadye Park. With 32 acres of recreation space right in the very centre of the city, the park is located steps from Red Square. Designed by Diller, Scofidio & Renfro, architects who created the New York Highline, the concept is described as ‘wild urban’ – with the park merging historical streets with nature. For many years the area was the site of the largest hotel in the world (the Hotel Rossiya) and the area has been empty since the hotel was demolished over a decade ago.

Note: All services today are on foot. Please wear comfortable footwear.

EXETER SERVICES

Arrival transfer (one included); Guide (6 Hours)

HOTEL

Four Seasons Moscow
Meet your driver and guide in the hotel lobby. You will then be transferred to the train station to catch high-speed train to Vladimir. Your guide will travel with you. *Train tickets are included in your program cost.*

You will leave Moscow behind and depart to the magnificent cities of the “Golden Ring” - the “Mesopotamia” of Russian civilization.

Upon arrival in Vladimir you will meet your driver for a tour of this charming city. Tucked into a green valley and surrounded by forests and lakes, Vladimir is said to be the father of Russian cities. Founded in 1108 by Vladimir Monomakh, Prince of Kiev, the city quickly became the capital of the principality. Vladimir reached its peak in the latter half of the 12th century under Prince Andrew Bogolubsky before the Mongol invasions quickly destroyed the city during the 13th century when it was pillaged twice by the hoard of invaders. After its destruction the capital of the principality was moved to a small settlement called Moscow some 180 km away. Vladimir is the perfect location to view early Russian architecture and has become a popular tourist destination along the Golden Ring. One of the most famous sites in the city is the Holy Assumption Cathedral, built in 1160 and remains one of the few churches that survived the fires of the Mongol invasion. Here you will notice a combination of gothic and neoclassical influences, this cathedral was groundbreaking for its time and used as a model for many future cathedrals.

Afterwards, a driver will take you to the nearby town of Suzdal where you will check into your hotel.

**Evening**
Tonight, a special dinner has been arranged in a private home in Suzdal - a simple, but traditional Russian meal of natural foods from the dacha garden. Dinner consists of three courses, mineral water, coffee and tea.

**Exeter Services**
Train Station transfer (Moscow); Vehicle Driver & Guide (Golden Ring)

**Hotel**
Pushkarskaya Sloboda
Today enjoy the provincial life in Suzdal. More than any other city in the “Golden Ring,” Suzdal will show you a pastoral view of provincial life. Inside the Suzdal Kremlin, you can see the Church of St. Nicholas - a glorious example of Russian wooden architecture and the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin. This white-stone cathedral dates from the beginning of the 13th century.

Today you may also visit the Museum of Wooden and Peasant Architecture. Founded in 1960, this open-air museum features outstanding examples of Russian country architecture. You will find windmills, a church and several wooden houses – all from different villages in the Vladimir region.

There were once fifteen monasteries and convents in Suzdal, but today only five survive. You may visit any you wish. The most interesting is definitely the Spaso-Yefimiev Monastery, whose buildings house a museum. Another interesting visit is the Convent of the Intercession, widely known as a place of lifetime exile for women of aristocratic birth.

If you are interested, end the day with a sampling of homemade Russian mead at the Suzdal Mead Factory. Sold across Russia in small brown bottles, this local factory makes a wide variety of this medieval drink. You may choose to sample as many as you like, all spiced with different flavors, including hops, juniper, pepper and even horseradish.

**Exeter Services**
Vehicle, Driver & Guide

**Hotel**
Pushkarskaya Sloboda
Today continue your journey to Russia’s heartland with a visit to the artist colony of Plyos, located two to three hours by car from Suzdal. This charming village is located on the Volga River and features 19th century cottages and a serene atmosphere.

For the next two nights, you will be staying in one of the most unique hotels in Russia. Your accommodation will be a private, historic home in the village with the full services of a hotel (Gromov Mansion). Breakfast will be brought into your home in the morning, so you can enjoy the day at a leisurely pace and explore on foot the entire village, all just steps from your “home.” Staying in the guesthouse is like taking a step back in time, to a simpler Russia.

This evening you will have drinks at around 6:30PM followed by Candlelit dinner in Novozhilov Mansion in company with Sergey V. Shevtsov and a notable local resident.

Special Note: Your timing, while traveling in the Golden Ring is very fluid. Your guide will discuss the times for departure and touring on a daily basis.

**Exeter Services**
Vehicle, Driver & Guide (8-10 hours)

**Hotel**
Gromov Mansion
Today explore Plyos with your guide.

Begin today with Breakfast for two in the Gromov Mansion’s dining-room followed by a brief visit to the Plyos Landscape Museum, boasting a nice collection of paintings (500 meters along the Riverfront past the main landing stage for the cruising ships).

Later stroll along the historic houses of the Hidden Russia Wooden Architecture Museum (preserved by the host family), learning about the geography and raison d’être of Plyos.

Visit a local jeweler’s house and workshop.

Enjoy lunch in the Villa Fortecia Hotel on the Riverfront (in a private dining room). Villa Fortecia Hotel is located next to the Milovka Ski Resort and Milovka Estate (where Prime Minister Medvedev often takes residence).

Afterward, visit the plateau of Sobornaya Gorá (Cathedral Hill) and Viewpoint Number One (to the North-West), Viewpoint Number Two (to the East), traces of the fortress, Uspensky Sobór (Assumption Cathedral, 1690), the former Town Hall (now Historical Museum).

Next you will see Voskresenskaya Gorá (Resurrection Hill), which provides the best views of the Market Square and of the Resurrection Cathedral (1817). Built to celebrate the victory over Napoleon (in 1812-1815) it has recently been restored by Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

Later explore the Market Square and walk along Yurievskaya (St George Street) with historic dachas. Visit a local artist or a Soviet porcelain collector.

Spend the rest of the afternoon at your leisure.

Dinner will take place in the historic Krylov House (1870s) and will be focused on the Plyossian specialties such as smoked bream. (All meals in the host houses will be prepared by the family personal chef Anatoly and served by their butler Yury).
Important Notes from the host family in Plyos:

- There is a tradition to plan packed, intensive schedules, especially for VIP visitors. However, in reality we will be ready to secure much more spare time, just for enjoying this famous sweet and slow and even lazy Russian provincial way of life.
- All events, movements and pauses will be carefully tuned up in accordance with weather conditions and with the last-minute wishes of the Guest.
- Sergey Shevtsov will be with Guest in Plyos all the time. He lives in Plyos permanently and represents the host family there.
- Several additional visits to local artists, jewelers, historians, and architects may be arranged.
- Guests can also book the Russian Banya Experience, sauna, massages and spa treatments at our Villa Fortecia Hotel spa (please book in advance).
- We do not recommend long tours in the museums: 15 minutes is enough for Levitan House, 30 minutes - for the Landscape Museum.

Exeter Services
Vehicle, Driver & Guide (8-10 hours)

Hotel
Gromov Mansion
Plyos to Yaroslavl

Start today with breakfast for two in the club lounge of the Café Sophie Kuvshinnikova on the Riverfront. You will be served everything from eggs benedict to heavenly cottage cheese fritters. And, of course, our traditional sweets to enjoy with your coffee. Levitan’s favorite cookies and Plyossian version of cheesecake (Cooleyka) must be tried!

After breakfast stroll along the Riverfront to the House-Museum of Isaac Levitan, Russia’s most revered landscape painter.

Next visit the third hill of central Plyos — Levitan Hill. From there you will see the symbol of Plyos, the Over Eternal Peace wooden church.

Afterward say farewell to Plyos and continue your journey with a drive to the quaint town of Kostroma. Don’t miss the Ipatiev Monastery, which served as a refuge for Russian nobility during the Tatar invasions.

You will then arrive in the town of Yaroslavl. Famous for its ornate frescoes and ornamentation, you will understand why some call Yaroslavl the “Florence of Russia.”

Exeter Services
Vehicle, Driver & Guide

Hotel
SK Royal
YAROSLAVL

Today your guide will take you on a walk through this charming town situated at the confluence of the Volga and Kotorosl rivers. Your guide will take you to visit the 17th Century Spassky Monastery, a highlight of the city, dating from the 12th century.

EXETER SERVICES
Vehicle, Driver & Guide

HOTEL
SK Royal
Day 8

YAROSLAVL TO MOSCOW VIA ROSTOV

Depart Yaroslavl for your journey back to Moscow. Today you will stop in the ancient fairy tale town of Rostov.

With its classic Russian kremlin (fortress), abundant gold domes and silver spires, Rostov’s beauty dazzles its visitors. Here you will see exquisite enamel work which is a trademark of the city. The small cafes in this town make a great break for lunch.

Late this afternoon you will arrive in Moscow and have an overnight at the brand new Four Seasons, located right in the heart of the city with views of Red Square and the Kremlin.

EXETER SERVICES
Vehicle, Driver & Guide

HOTEL
Four Seasons Moscow
Today you will visit the grand Christ the Holy Redeemer Cathedral, which towers over historic Moscow. The cathedral was demolished under Stalin’s reign for a planned Lenin skyscraper, but eventually became an enormous outdoor swimming pool after construction failed repeatedly. After the fall of Communism, it was decided to reconstruct the cathedral and so Christ the Holy Redeemer was completely rebuilt by Mayor Luzhkov of Moscow in 2001 - at the budget of over 350 million dollars! It is a beautiful cathedral and it now stands as it did at the turn of the 20th Century.

**EXETER INTERNATIONAL EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE**

After touring the cathedral, a guide from the cathedral will join you for a private visit to the dome of the church. After ascending to the top via elevator, you will have the opportunity to view the city of Moscow at 360 degrees, from all four sides of the dome. Standing at 300 feet above the city, the dome provides a fantastic view of the city’s most significant sites including the Kremlin, St. Basil’s, Pushkin Museum, Red October Chocolate Factory and the Moskva River. Turn a corner and you are awarded with views of several of the Seven Sisters buildings. You may even witness the ringing of the bells in the Bell towers located just above your head! It’s the ultimate Moscow city tour from the top of the highest peak of central Moscow.

Later stroll with the guide across the bridge to the other side of the river where you will walk through the Graveyard of Fallen Monuments – a collection of some of the sculptures removed from Moscow after the fall of the Soviet era.

Next your guide will take you to the New Tretyakov Gallery, an annex of the Tretyakov Gallery. This huge museum is dedicated to Russian art from the early 1900’s to the present. You will find that most paintings are from the Socialist Realism movement. You may also want to visit the Modernist paintings, which include pictures by many previously outlawed artists.

**EXETER INTERNATIONAL EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE**

Today you will be invited backstage for an exclusive and rare tour of the Historic Stage of the Bolshoi Theatre. *This tour is by appointment only and cannot be moved to another time or day.*

**EXETER SERVICES**

Guide (8 Hours)

**HOTEL**

Four Seasons Moscow
This morning your guide will meet you in your hotel lobby to continue your exploration of Moscow. You will have an appointment to visit the famed Armory Museum, including its vast collection of Imperial Russian artwork. Here you'll see the Kremlin’s world-famous collection of Imperial Faberge Easter Eggs. Also, in the Armory are many of the most important Imperial thrones and crowns, including the most historic, the Cap of Monomachus.

We have made special arrangements to take you into the Diamond Vaults inside the Kremlin. You will see Catherine the Great’s scepter with its famous Orlov Diamond and one of the largest collections of diamonds and gem stones in the world!

Later today you will be transferred to the airport to catch your onward. Please note this flight is not included in program cost.

**Exeter Services**

Guide (8 Hours); Departure transfer (one included)
**Prices:**

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<th>Per Person for Two (2) guests traveling together</th>
<th>Low Season: November 2019 – March 2020</th>
<th>From $10,650</th>
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<td>Shoulder Season: April August 2019 – October 2019</td>
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<th>Per Person for Two (4) guests traveling together</th>
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<td></td>
<td>High Season: May-July 2019</td>
<td>From $12,450</td>
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**Meals**

No meals included, other than breakfast as described above. Your final documents will include our top recommendations. *Your guides will recommend restaurants that fit your exact needs daily.*

**Services**

Private vehicle, driver and guide at your service as described. The timing for each day is noted in your program.

Exeter International’s local offices are available for your assistance 24 hours per day while you are traveling. Our local staff may also assist you with restaurant reservations and purchasing of additional theater and museum tickets at your request.
Transportation
Transportation is included as noted. Unless otherwise noted, all transfer service is with a driver only, not a guide. In general, drivers have limited English-speaking skills. Timing for each day is noted in your program.

Guides
Hand chosen for their knowledge on local history, art, and architecture. Guides are at your disposal as noted in your itinerary.

Tickets
All entrance tickets as described in the program.

Exeter International Travel Information

BAGGAGE
The vehicles reserved for your itinerary can accommodate up to two medium-sized suitcases per person. If you intend to travel with additional luggage, please advise your travel consultant so appropriate arrangements may be made. In general, we schedule a sedan for parties of two, a minivan for parties of three to four, and a minibus for parties of five or more.

SIGHTSEEING
Sightseeing arrangements have been made with your special interests in mind. Your drivers and guides are at your disposal as indicated in the itinerary. Within those time and mileage guidelines, you are free to modify your program as you please. Should you require additional time or mileage, the costs will be quoted on request and may be paid for locally in the local currency or U.S. Dollars.

Every effort has been made to confirm that scheduled sightseeing venues will be open at the time you plan to visit them. However, individual estates, museums, gardens and other points of interest can change their hours of operation at short notice. If a particular attraction is closed on the day or time of your visit, your guide will offer alternative arrangements or rearrange your sightseeing to accommodate these unexpected events.

OPTIONAL EXPENSES
Charges for extra meals, transport, sightseeing services or other optional additions to your established itinerary are your responsibility and must be paid locally in the local currency.

GRATUITIES
Gratuities are not included in your tour price. Gratuities are at your own discretion. We recommend $30 per person, per day for your guide and $15 per person, per day for your driver. For your airport or station transfer, a gratuity of $20 is customary, based on service. Dollars, Euros and any local currency are all accepted.

DINING WITH YOUR GUIDE
On days when dinner and lunch costs have not been included in your itinerary (or in your tour cost), you may, at your discretion, choose to invite your guide to dine with your party. You are under no obligation to do so but, if you do extend such an invitation, the guide is your guest and you will be responsible for the cost of his/her meal.

Booking Conditions

PAYMENTS
Exeter International must receive a deposit of 25% of the total program cost before reservations for your independent travel program can be initiated. The balance of payment is due 60 days prior to departure. No reservations are made on your behalf until this deposit has been received. Availability and pricing is subject to change until this deposit is received. All deposits are nonrefundable.
CANCELLATION
Written cancellations received less than 60 days prior to departure are subject to the following forfeit of tour cost:
- 59–14 days prior to departure, 50% of total tour cost
- 14 or less days prior to departure, 100% of tour cost

REFUNDS
We regret that refunds cannot be issued for arrangements confirmed on your itinerary but unused once your tour has begun.

INSURANCE
Exeter International strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance to protect your investment. You will find insurance costs noted on your invoice and insurance coverage information in your original booking packet.

PRICES AND ARRANGEMENTS
Once an itinerary is finalized and final payment has been made, a $100 revision fee will be charged if the itinerary is changed. The tour price includes planning, handling and operational charges. Rates are quoted in U.S. Dollars on the current rate of exchange and tariff as of 2018. Exeter International reserves the right to increase tour prices to cover increased costs, tariffs and taxes, and to reflect fluctuations in foreign exchange markets. Devaluation of a foreign currency will be weighed against any tariff increases imposed. Exeter International does not breakdown costs involved in any Small Group or Individual Travel Program.

All arrangements are subject to availability and modification if necessary.
Prices are subject to change if necessary until paid in full.

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