



**RUSLAN ALTERNATIVE SPRING
BREAK**

**Slavic Dept/Residential College, The
University of Michigan,**

**St.Petersburg-Vytegra, February 25-
March 7, 2010**

PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

PART I PROGRAM OVERVIEW	3
Course Component/Credit Information	3
Itinerary	4
Estimated Trip Costs/Program Fee	5
Program Fees and Payment	6
Paperwork Checklist and Submission Deadlines	6
Important Dates	8
Travel to/from St Petersburg	8
On-site Orientations	9
Accommodation	9
Meals	10
Program Administration	11
Standards of Personal and Academic Conduct	12
Program Participation Agreement	12
Shortening of Program Participation (Withdrawal)	12
Financial Implications of Withdrawal or Dismissal	13
Program Policies and Procedures	14
Volunteer Work Policies	15
PART II PREPARING FOR TRAVEL	16
Essential Documents (Passports and Visas)	16
PART III HEALTH INFORMATION	19
Vaccinations	19
Health-related Issues while on RUSLAN ASB	19
Health Coverage	19
Some Coverage Benefits	20
Coverage in the US	21
Health Emergencies	21
Extended Insurance Coverage	21
Medical Facilities	21
Prescription Medications	22
Other Health Precautions you might want to Take	22
Disability Access	24
Medical Care Abroad	25
PART IV SAFETY	25
ITOC Website Registration	25
Emergency Plans	26
Alcohol Use	26
AIDS	27
Smoking	28
Safety Precautions	28
General Safety Considerations	29
Anti-Americanism	29
Personal Safety for Women Travelers	30
Racial and Ethnic Issues while Abroad	31
LBGT Students	32
Alcohol and Substance Abuse	33
PART V PERSONAL FINANCES	34
Cost of Living	34
Money and Banking	35
PART VI PACKING AND BAGGAGE	38

PART VII PREPARING FOR CULTURAL ADAPTATION	44
Living in St Petersburg and Vytegra	44
Meeting Russians	45
Culture Shock	46
Intercultural Communications	47
PART VII COMMUNICATIONS AND MAIL	48
Telephone	48
Laptops and Email	49
Post Office and Mailing Procedures	49
PART IX GROUND TRANSPORTATION	50
RECOMMENDED READING	52
USEFUL WEBSITES	53
SUGGESTED PACKING LIST	55

Congratulations on your participation in the RUSLAN Alternative Spring Break program in St. Petersburg and Vytegra, Russia. The information in these pages explains how the program will work for you and has been developed with strict concordance with the Office of International Programs policies and procedures. This handbook is designed to help you get started with all of your preparations for the trip. It outlines requirements applicable to all trip participants. Please read this handbook carefully and take it with you abroad as a reference.

PART I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This spring break the Slavic Dept and the RC have organized a service learning program that will take students to Russia, to spend the first two days exploring the old magnificent capital city of St. Petersburg, rightfully called the Venice of the North, before heading to the provincial North, to work for a week in the small town of Vytegra (Vologda Oblast', approx. 450 km north-east of St. Petersburg, population of 13,000) as volunteers in the local history museums and K-12 schools.

A rich cultural and educational program is planned. First, we will explore St. Petersburg on foot and by bus, seeing famous historical sites and visiting the world-renowned Hermitage museum. On the way to Vytegra we will visit a 15th-century monastery, and from Vytegra we will visit three Russian villages, get private tours of the town itself and its museums, climb the cathedral bell tower for a spectacular view, explore an atomic submarine, learn traditional local crafts and make our own souvenirs, visit a pottery studio and attend a concert of a children's folk group.

We will have a chance to meet with the Vytegra administration, have personal contact with town and village residents, as well as observe, discuss and reflect on the workings of small provincial towns, explore the history of the Russian North, examine Russian provincial life (and compare it to the life in the capitals and big cities), identify the social issues and problems facing the town's residents and examine the Russian educational system.

All Russian proficiency levels are welcome and accommodated, however, to function better in the Russian environment we recommend that you have completed **at least 101/193 and/or are enrolled in Russian 102/293 in the Winter Term 2010 (or equivalents)**. **All applicants are required to have completed at least one course in Russian literature, culture or history.**

Course component/credit information: students can sign up for a independent study (Russian 315) for 1-4 credits that will involve pre-trip meetings, reflection journals or blog entries throughout the trip and a final reflection essay analyzing your trip, service and learning experiences. All participants will be required to attend a pre-trip orientation meeting and participate in daily debriefings during the trip. The number of credit hours you sign up for will determine the nature and extent of the required assignments.

Volunteer service component: In the local history museum we will be: helping the severely underfunded (but very enthusiastic) staff to digitize their audio archives, to take digital images of their extensive collections of local artifacts and exhibits: and providing technical assistance in ordering their computer databases and catalogues of items. In local schools (2 town K-12 schools, 2 village schools and a vocational forestry school), also very underfunded, we will be working as conversational partners and teacher assistants to provide real contact with the English language for schools that have struggled to hire English teachers for the last two years and for the children who want to practice their new English skills. We will also be giving presentations about American culture to Russian children. There will be many chances to find a Russian pen-pal and explore summer/semester-long internships opportunities.

PROGRAM ITINERARY: Our itinerary will be as follows:

Day 2/25, pm: fly to St. Petersburg
1 Th

Day 2/26, pm: arrive in SPB, transfer to hotel, check-in, dinner, orientation
2 Fri

Day 2/27, am: breakfast, guided bus tour of Petersburg, souvenir shopping
3 Sat pm: lunch at Shtolle restaurant, guided tour of the Hermitage Art museum; free time downtown
evening: dinner, debrief, free time (free skate for the brave!)

Day 2/28, am: breakfast, checkout, bus to Vytegra,
4 Sun pm. stop in Svirstroy, lunch, tour of Aleksandro-Svirsky Monastery, continue to Vytegra
evening: arrive in Vytegra, hotel checkin/room assignment, dinner, debrief, free time

Day 3/1, am: breakfast, interview with town administration; private tour of the Vytegra Local History Museum; on-site orientation
5 Mon p.m. café lunch/visit the Sretensky cathedral, climb the bell tower for the aerial view of the town, volunteer work at the museum, tour of N. Klyuv Museum
evening: free time, dinner, debrief, study time

Day 3/2, am: breakfast, work at School # 1 (English lessons, cultural presentations)
6 Tue pm: lunch at school, tour of the school museum of local folklore, WWII history museum, concert of the school's folk-ethnographic group "Olonia", tea party/socialization with school children/teachers, meeting with teachers (internship program)
evening: free time, dinner, debrief, study time

- Day 3/3, 7 Wed** **am:** breakfast, work at School #2 (English lessons, cultural presentations)
p.m. lunch at school, tour of the school's museum, meeting with the school's literary group, tea/socialization, meeting with the teachers
evening: free time, dinner, study time
- Day 3/4, 8 Th** **am:** breakfast, board a van for the tour of the villages and Klyuev sites; visit a pottery studio in Tuzozero; walking tour of the village of Makachevo, meet the staff/children at the Makachevo village school, volunteer work (English lessons, presentations)
p.m. packed lunch, trip to the village of Devyatiny, tour of the village school, volunteer work (presentations), socialization; return to Vytegra
evening: free time, dinner, debrief, study time
- Day 3/5, 9 Fri** **am:** breakfast, volunteer work at the forestry vocational school
pm: tour of the children's craft museum, learn to make your own local traditional crafts, café lunch, tour of the "Northern waterways" museum, tour of an atomic submarine, souvenir shopping at a souvenir exhibition/"Wonderful world" store
evening: free time, farewell restaurant dinner, debrief, packing
- Day 3/6, 10 Sat** **am:** breakfast, hotel checkout, board the bus, departure for SPb, stop in Oshta, visit the WWII memorial, café lunch
evening: arrive in SPb, hotel checkin, dinner, early lights out
- Day 3/7, 11 Sat** **3 am:** rise, checkout, board bus to the airport, packed breakfast, catch a red-eye flight to DTW
evening: arrive in Detroit, transfer to AA

You will be participating in a 24 hour a day, full-immersion service learning experience designed not only to take you far beyond the physical borders of the U-M campus, but to deepen and enhance your Russian cultural knowledge and develop your Russian language skills. The experience of immersion in a foreign culture is multi-faceted, and you will be learning constantly, both through the cultural program and your service experiences, as well as through daily debriefings and reflections. However, we remind you that your program is, first and foremost, an academic undertaking. You go not as tourists, but as students, to some of the most interesting and culturally rich sites.

ESTIMATED TRIP COSTS/PROGRAM FEE:

All checks should be made payable to the University of Michigan (memo line should include "G008467")

Program fee (estimated at \$1,136) includes:

- complete university-required HTH Worldwide Travel Abroad Health Insurance coverage for the duration of the trip (https://www.hthstudents.com/documents/stud/brochures/2010/grp_6676.pdf);
- Russian visa (with migration and voucher cards),
- hotels in St. Peterburg/Vytegra for the duration of the trip (double rooms);
- 3 meals a day throughout the trip;
- airport transfers in St. Petersburg,
- coach transportation between St. Petersburg and Vytegra;
- admission tickets and guides for all group excursions,
- cell phone rental and basic airtime coverage for calls to/from participant phones
- program administration

Program fee does not include:

- passport pictures (\$20 estimate),
- your airline reservation (est. \$950 through Orbitz)
- ISIC student travel card (\$22 at the International Center), that provides you with travel insurance coverage (<https://www.myisic.com/MyISIC/Travel/Main.aspx?MenuID=5004>) and discounts at Russian museums and attractions
- extra visa cost for dual Russian/US citizens who wish to travel on their US passport (addtl fee of \$320)
- out-of-pocket expenses

Please remember that the program fees are estimates based on the current prices, current currency exchange rate and calculated for the group of 10. The final cost will be adjusted by the last week in January (in time for the stage III due date).

PROGRAM FEES AND PAYMENT

Program fee of \$1,136 (payable in 2 installments: \$350 at the time of application, refundable to applicants who have not been accepted, and \$786 by February 1).

All checks should be made payable to the University of Michigan (memo line should include "G008467").

It is your responsibility to make all payments and to make them on time. We do not send bills. Late charges will be assessed, so be sure to pay all bills on time. See section on personal finances for advice for budgeting for and handling your out-of-pocket expenses while in Russia.

PAPERWORK CHECKLIST AND SUBMISSION DEADLINES

All documents must be **submitted by hand to Alina Makin or to her mail box at the Slavic Dept or in the RC**

Stage I: PROGRAM APPLICATION

Due December 14, 2009 (these forms can be downloaded from <http://www.umich.edu/~resco/RUSLANASB.html> :

- RUSLAN ASB **Application Form**
- 1 letter of reference** from your Russian/REES instructor addressing your academic performance, seriousness of purpose, maturity, sociability, and suitability for a study abroad program in Russia
- Passport copy** (valid for at least 6 months upon your return to the US, i.e., until September 7, 2010) and a color scan of the first 2 pages of your passport (picture page and signature page) sent to resco@umich.edu
- Check for \$350** (included in the total program cost; refundable only to the applicants who are not admitted into the program)

STAGE II: PARTICIPATION ACCEPTANCE/VISA APPLICATION

Due January 6, 2010 (these forms will be sent to you by e-mail together with the admission offer to the program by December 29, 2009)

- RUSLAN ASB **Participation Agreement:**
<http://www.umich.edu/~resco/participationagreementwt10.pdf>
- Russian **visa application form**, please see the visa section below for guidelines on how to fill out your visa application:
http://www.umich.edu/~resco/AppFormVisa_US.pdf (for US citizens)
- 3 passport-size photos** (professionally made only), 1 glued to your visa application, 2 attached with a paper clip to the visa application form (see photo requirements in the visa section below)
- Original of your valid US passport** (dual RF/US citizens: please include a copy of all pages of your Russian passport and a copy of your naturalization certificate. Visa cost for you will be \$599, so please also include a check for an additional \$320)
- RUSLAN ASB **Health Information Form** - <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~resco/parthealthinfowt10.doc>

STAGE III: TRAVEL RESERVATIONS

Due February 1, 2010

- Copy of an ISIC student travel card** valid for the duration of the trip (can be obtained through the International Center for \$22) – recommended but not required
- Travel itinerary** (you must make your airline reservations individually; current price for a Lufthansa round trip ticket through Orbitz for these dates is \$950; please plan to

arrive in St.Petersburg no later than 5 p.m. on February 26 (start of the program) and leave no earlier than 4 am March 7, 2010, end of program)

HTH World Wide Student Health Insurance application form (will be sent to you during the last week in January)

Check for the remaining program fee balance (non-refundable; current estimate is \$786 for a group of 10; final amount will be adjusted for the actual group size and any fluctuations in prices/exchange rate by the last week in January)

IMPORTANT DATES

- The Program dates are February 25-March 7, 2010.
- There will a be mandatory pre-departure orientation meeting (on February 13, 10-4 pm (place TBA).
- You must arrive in St.Petersburg's International Airport (Pulkovo 2) no later than 6 p.m. on February 26, 2010. Students who land at the airport before 6 pm will be met at the airport by Alina Makin for airport transfer. If you have a connecting flight from Moscow (or other Russian city) to St.Petersburg, then you will land at Pulkovo 1 terminal. It is your responsibility to use airport transportation to reach Pulkovo 2 to meet with the group.
- The program ends early am on March 7, 2010 and this is the earliest you can depart from St. Petersburg.
- Late arrivals and early departures are not permitted
- You cannot arrive earlier than your visa dates (February 25-March 25).

TRAVEL TO/FROM ST. PETERSBURG

According to the University's rules, you must make your own air-line reservations (individual reservations are also cheaper than group reservations). You will need to plan to get to St. Petersburg no later than 6 p.m. on February 26th and leave St.Petersburg no earlier than March 7th. You will be met at the airport by Alina Makin/or the bus driver and transferred to the hotel. Ideally, we suggest that you try to make a reservation for the Lufthansa flight 443, DTW-Frankfurt leaving 2/25 6:59 p.m. and arriving in Frankfurt 2/26 at 9:05 am; Lufthansa flight 3217 Frankfurt-St.Petersburg leaving at 1:40 p.m. on 2/26 arriving at 6.25 p.m.

On the way back to the US, it would be ideal if you could make your reservation for the 6:05 am flight to Frankfurt from Petersburg by Lufthansa . That way we can travel together and we will have an easier time coordinating airport transfers. In each case, plan to submit your itinerary as soon as it is finalized. Currently these return flights are estimated to cost \$950 through Orbitz.

You should plan to arrive at the Pulkovo 2 Airport in St. Petersburg on the program start date no later than 6 p.m. If you have a connecting flight from Moscow (or other Russian city) to St. Petersburg, then you will land at Pulkovo 1. There are no free or paid shuttles between the two airports, only overpriced taxis. If you arrive at Pulkovo 1, it will be your

responsibility to get yourself to Pulkovo 2 to meet the ASB group for pick up/airport transfer.

Whatever your travel plans, you are responsible for getting to the hotel on time for the first orientation session in the evening of the arrival day.

You may change money at the airport. You may also get rubles from ATMs at the airport (see the Money and Banking section later in this handbook for more details regarding handling money while in Russia).

Students will be taken to the hotel at the Physical Education, Health and Fitness Center for check-in, dinner and orientation. All students will get the chance to call home using a program calling card before going to bed the first night in Russia to let loved ones know they've arrived safely. However time differences should be borne in mind 10 p.m. in Russia is 6 am in Michigan).

Detailed arrival and on-site orientation information will be mailed to you in early February, after we receive everyone's flight itineraries.

Packing for the program is discussed in the 'What to pack section' below. Pay special attention to the luggage restrictions to enter Russia—this may be more strict than your airlines' restrictions, so be sure you do not go over the 35 kilos of baggage recommended by RUSLAN ASB.

ON-SITE ORIENTATIONS

All students must attend the intensive training at the beginning of the orientation period conducted in St. Petersburg. If you are delayed en route to the orientation site, you must contact the Program Coordinator as soon as you realize you will be late.

During orientation, you will be provided a structured introduction to the country, the city, the culture, and the program. We will also give you lots of practical information about living in St. Petersburg, including:

- A review of emergency procedures
- Detailed information on health, well-being, and safety issues
- Local tours and guided visits in order to help with adjustment
- Accommodation information and assistance
- Practice with city public transportation, familiarizing students with places and routes around the city.

Individual orientation continues throughout the trip, so don't hesitate to ask for help when needed.

ACCOMMODATION

In **St. Petersburg**, we will be staying at the recently built and very comfortable Center for Physical Education, Sports and Fitness of the Vasileostrovsky Area (66, Maly Prospekt) for young athletes. The Center has a small inn for visiting teams (we will be staying in double rooms with shared bathrooms in the hallway), a very good and affordable café (which offers excellent home-style meals and where we will eat our breakfasts and dinners), a number of sports facilities (a fitness center, a skating rink, available for free skate and skates rental, soccer fields and tennis courts). It is within easy reach (even a walk) of downtown and is located in an old residential area with many places to eat, shop at and visit. There is a subway station nearby and a multitude of public transportation options. For group tours around town and airport transfers we will have the Center's comfortable brand new coach for our private use. For more details please visit their website (<http://www.centrsporta.ru/index.html>).

In **Vytegra** we will be staying at Vytegra Hotel (4, Lunacharskogo Str.), conveniently located in a quiet residential area within a walking distance of all of our service sites in town and with several shops, cafes, a post office and an internet cafe just around the corner. The hotel is currently being remodeled and will be completely overhauled by our arrival. We will be staying in double rooms with private bathrooms and using their café where we will be eating breakfasts and dinners.

Note: Please pack towels and wet wipes paper for the trip, as they are not always included in your room amenities.

MEALS

In **Petersburg**, we will eat mostly at the Center's Stolletka café and will have one lunch at the Shtolle restaurant near the Hermitage (6/1, Konushennyi Lane). The café and restaurant both belong to the same café/restaurant chain in Petersburg that specializes in grandmother's style pies and provides high quality food at affordable prices. They have an excellent web site where you can view their menu: <http://www.stolle.ru>.

In **Vytegra** we will eat our breakfasts and dinners at the hotel's café, lunches at school cafeterias and the two local cafes "Mariinka" and "Nostalgie". All venues chosen have vegetarian options and provide balanced, home-style traditional Russian meals. We will get our daily menus in advance. At Svirstroi we will eat at the Palomnik (Pilgrim) café right next to the Alexandro-Svirsky Monastery founded in the 15th Century (<http://www.svirskoe.ru/>). The café adjoins the hotel under the same name and offers healthy regular and Lenten-appropriate (vegetarian) meals to the visitors. All lunches and dinners are 3 course meals (appetizer, soup, entrée) with juice/tea, breakfasts include yoghurt/ *buterbrod*/ cereal/tea/ coffee/ fruit. We will also have a simple 3-course lunch at a small village café in Oshta on the way back to St. Petersburg. All cafes chosen have been "tested" several times by the RUSLAN director. We work very hard to accommodate all dietary restrictions and food allergies, just make sure to list them in your health form.

Vegetarians will, however, have to be especially flexible while traveling in Russia. It is certainly possible to eat strictly vegetarian meals, but most Russians do not fully understand this concept, and vegetarians often do not have a large variety to choose from in cafes and restaurants. The same goes for vegans and students with intense food allergies. If you have no or limited proficiency in Russian, ask your program coordinator to help you put together a sign in Russian about your food/nut allergies in case you go out alone.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The program is administered by the Slavic Department and the Residential College, with generous support from the Ginsberg Center of Service Learning. Although this is not an OIP-sponsored program, it has been developed with strict concordance with OIP's policies and procedures for study-abroad programs to ensure your safety, access to health coverage and emergency contacts for your parents during the trip.

Prior to application and departure, your first contact is with Alina Makin, Program Coordinator and Trip Leader. She coordinates recruitment, student selection, orientation and works as a liaison between you and the University. During the trip, she also works as your advisor and the first point of contact for all matters. While in Vytegra, Tamara Pavlovna Makarova will be our in-country resident director who provides the program with on-site support. Among other things, we are always there to provide you with support regarding local matters, program logistics and personal issues; provide information on cultural activities and help with on-site emergencies.

Group leader/trip organizer/faculty supervisor: Alina Makin, RUSLAN Coordinator, Head of the Intensive Russian Program in the RC, Lecturer IV (resco@umich.edu); (734) 647-4376. In-country contact details will be provided closer to the departure date.

A native Muscovite, she was educated at the Moscow Linguistics University and the University of Leicester, England, where she studied applied linguistics and language acquisition. In Moscow, she worked as a language teacher, translator and interpreter. At the University of Michigan, where she has worked for over 17 years, she teaches all levels of Russian in the Intensive Russian language program and at the Slavic Department, as well as advanced Russian readings seminars in the RC. In WT'09 she created and taught a Russian service learning course entitled "Russian people, language and culture in the United States) which places students to work in the AA Russophone community and local K-12 schools. She has produced a four-part video series (in Russian) on Russian Food (Russian food shopping in Detroit, Russian cooking, entertaining guests Russian-style and Russian peasant cooking). Her research interests include several areas of applied linguistics, second-language acquisition and pedagogy, and the history and culture of Russian food and cooking. Alina Makin travels regularly to St.Petersburg and Vytegra for research, business and pleasure.

Vytegra on-site director: Tamara Pavlovna Makarova, Director of the Vytegra Museum of Local History and its affiliates. Born and brought up in Vytegra, she has headed the

museum since 1983 and works very closely with the town's administration, merchants, and educators on promoting the town as a tourist and research destination. She is the person behind planning out all Vytegra logistics and programming.

STANDARDS OF PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Participants in U-M study abroad programs are expected at all times to be as responsible and considerate as they would on their own campus or in their home communities. All students are subject to U-M regulations, U-M codes of conduct, U-M and host institution program guidelines, as well as the laws of the host country. (See for example, www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/ and University of Michigan: Office of International Programs 3 www.studentpolicies.dsa.umich.edu/statementstudentrights.htm) In the event of serious violations, academic failure or academic misconduct, or behavior detrimental to the student, other students, or the program, the RUSLAN ASB Coordinator and host program representative has the authority to dismiss the student from the program. See the RUSLAN ASB Participation Agreement Form and see Dismissal and Withdrawal from THE PROGRAM section of this handbook for related policies.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

In order to participate in a U-M-sponsored study abroad program, students accept a space in the program and sign a Participation Agreement, which are included in your Stage II participation acceptance packet. Read them carefully, as they are important and the Participation Agreement represents a binding agreement between the University of Michigan RUSLAN ASB and you and/or your parents or guardians, and specifies you and your parents' responsibilities in connection with the study abroad program. This form must be signed by you, and if you are not financially self-supporting, it must also be signed by your parent(s)/legal guardian(s). To help your parent(s)/legal guardians understand your program and your responsibilities, you should share all RUSLAN ASB and partner information with them. In signing the Participation Agreement, you acknowledge that you are required to read and agree to the conditions outlined in the Agreement, and affirm your acceptance of those conditions by signing. Students also acknowledge they are responsible for reading and understanding the information contained in all materials prepared and/or provided to them by the Program and its partners, including materials on the OIP website. **Students have the obligation to inform themselves about the program they have chosen and the arrangements for their participation.**

SHORTENING OF PROGRAM PARTICIPATION (WITHDRAWAL):

Important points to consider:

1) Procedural: After you arrive in Russia you may decide that you want to change the length of your stay. This is considered withdrawal from the program. Sometimes, students have to return to the U.S. earlier than they had expected due to unforeseen

circumstances. To request to shorten the length of your stay, you must notify the your Program Coordinator in writing.

- 2) **Financial:** By accepting a place in the program, you commit yourself to paying all program costs. You will continue to be responsible for, and will be charged for, these costs even if you choose to withdraw from the program. See the section below on Financial Implications of Withdrawal or Dismissal for specific cost implications.
- 3) **Academic:** If you shorten your stay, please note that you are not likely to receive academic credit for work that you have completed up to that point, unless a full academic program has been completed. The date of withdrawal and structure of the local program will affect whether partial credit is possible.
- 4) **Travel:** Know the conditions of your airfare before you purchase a ticket; if you think you might want to change your travel dates, consider a more flexible airfare. Be aware the most affordable airline tickets often carry significant penalties. Some fares are valid only on the dates for which you purchased the original ticket, which could mean that you have to purchase a new ticket.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF WITHDRAWAL OR DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM

Definitions used in this handbook:

Withdrawal: The student decides to leave the program at any time after accepting a placement in the program and before the program's official end date.

Dismissal: When the program coordinator or on-site program director, program representative or other official determines the student should no longer be permitted to participate in the program. When you accept the offer to participate in the Program, the office will begin to make arrangements for your participation in the program. Withdrawal or dismissal after acceptance of a place in the program will result in the following financial obligations.

Students who withdraw or who are dismissed from the Program after they have accepted a spot in the program are responsible for all fees associated with the program. There will be no refunds. All scholarship awards must be repaid in full. Students are responsible for all travel/transportation logistics and costs associated with their departure. Students who are dismissed from the program are required to leave the program site immediately.

You must comply with any regulations established by the program and host organizations. The resident staff may establish additional requirements, which they consider essential either to achieving your educational goals or to maintaining discipline and cohesion within the group. If a Resident Director warns you that you are not complying with program regulations, you must take responsibility for changing your

behavior as requested, or risk early dismissal and consequent loss of time and money. No refunds are issued to students who are dismissed from their programs.

PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Violation of participation in all group activities:

Students must participate in all planned group activities, including orientation, daily debriefings, volunteer work and cultural programming. Students may be excused from group events only due to illness. Students who are late or miss more than one activity may be subject to disciplinary actions including dismissal from the program.

Drug and Alcohol Violations

Penalties for drug violations in many host countries are often harsher than in the United States. Use of illegal drugs can result in expulsion from the program, as well as possible criminal prosecution. Remember that students traveling abroad are subject to the laws of the country they are visiting – their own country's laws do not protect them. The U.S. and other governments can only seek to ensure that their citizens are not discriminated against, that is, that they receive the same treatment as citizens of the country in which they are arrested who are charged with the same offense.

Alcohol Policy

Students are subject to the laws of the host country and any policies and regulations of the host university.

Alcohol abuse by students is viewed by the program as a serious violation of the terms of participation and will be treated accordingly. There are degrees of abuse, as follows:

Consumption of alcohol that causes a student to miss any group event or be unable to participate fully in a program activity is considered alcohol abuse. At first instance, a warning letter will be issued. If there is a second instance, the student's parents and academic advisor at their school will be notified, and counseling may be required. Repeated instances may result in suspension or expulsion from the program.

Consumption of alcoholic beverages that results in loud, disruptive, or offensive behavior, according to U.S. or local norms, is more serious. Any infraction will result in a warning letter and notification of home school and parents. A second instance may, at the discretion of the Resident Director, result in immediate expulsion from the program.

Consumption of alcoholic beverages which results in any of the following is the most serious degree of alcohol abuse:

- Loss of consciousness or vomiting
- Destruction of property or abusive behavior
- Endangerment of self or of others
- Admission to a hospital or emergency room

- Treatment for alcohol poisoning
- Incarceration

Any instance of these circumstances or other circumstances of equivalent severity may, at the discretion of the Resident Director, result in immediate expulsion from the program.

VOLUNTEER WORK POLICIES:

Student's role:

- Be aware of the organization's needs and provide assistance where and when needed.
- Be available and participate actively in all initial meeting/orientation at the agency site to discuss service-learning hours and projects.
- Adhere to all organizational rules and procedures, including confidentiality of organization and property.
- Periodically reflect upon and re-evaluate the service experience keeping in mind the objectives of all parties involved.
- Operate with integrity and professionalism at all times; which includes being punctual, coming to service sessions prepared, meeting deadlines and being open to supervision and feedback which will facilitate learning and personal growth
- Maintain regular contact and update the project faculty and staff on their service experiences, questions or concerns.

Program Coordinator's role:

- Serve as a liaison between the students, the University and the host organizations
- Assist the students and the host organizations in service placement according to the student's personal and academic background
- Provide Russia-specific training related to the assigned community service task
- Provide students with structure, theory, knowledge and guidance to process and reflect upon service learning experiences
- Assist students in connecting their community-based learning experience with cultural and language knowledge
- Provide support and guidance for any challenges that may arise
- Provide pre-departure and on-site orientations

Resident Director's Role:

- Provide service-learning opportunities that are significant and/or challenging to the students, relevant to students, and address community agency's goals.
- Provide training, supervision, feedback, resources and sufficient information about the organization to aid in the success of students' service-learning projects.
- Assist with all local logistics and problems that may arise

- Serve as a liaison between the community organization, the students and the project coordinator

PART II. PREPARING FOR TRAVEL

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS, PASSPORTS AND VISAS:

When preparing to travel and live abroad, it is essential that you obtain all the proper documents prior to your departure. ruslan cannot accept responsibility, financial or otherwise, for a student who travels without the proper documents.

Passports

Each participant is responsible for obtaining a valid passport and **emailing a color scan of the signature and photo pages to Alina Makin (resco@umich.edu) as soon as possible**. You must have a signed passport, **valid for a minimum of 6 months after the date you depart from Russia**. If you do not have a passport, apply for one immediately and expedite your application as the process can take several weeks or even months. If you already have a passport, be sure that it is valid for the required period. If you lose or someone steals the passport listed in your application, please let your Program Coordinator know immediately—the passport you apply with should be the same passport you travel on to Russia.

According to the U.S. State Department, routine processing for passports may take as long as six to eight weeks. This is due to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, a law requiring airline passengers entering the U.S. from within the Western Hemisphere to possess a valid passport. U.S. citizens applying for their first passports must apply in person at a passport agency or at one of the several thousand federal or state courts or U.S. post offices authorized to accept passport applications. Applicants should research the requirements through the US Department of State website at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

Trap: Passport pitfalls

Under no circumstances should your passport be altered. Guard it carefully against loss or theft. Do not forget to sign your passport. Never pack your passport in luggage while traveling; it should be easily accessible at all times.

Tip: Take a lost passport kit

It happens. So save yourself a major headache. Take with you two U.S.-produced passport photos, a certified copy of your birth certificate (which you can shrink to wallet size), and the face page of your passport. Keep this "lost passport kit" separate from your actual passport. Also leave one copy of the passport face page with your parents or guardian and give another copy to the program staff at the host site, bring an electronic copy with you.

Visas:

A visa is an endorsement by a foreign government allowing you to enter and stay in that country for a specified period of time. A Russian visa is a piece of paper about the size of one passport page, pasted into your passport.

All participants in the program will need a single-entry tourist visa to enter Russia.

Our visas will be processed together as a group through UNISEL Travel in NY. Obtaining visas through this agency is slightly more expensive than through other group agencies but Unisel is very reliable, pain- and glitch-free and their visas come with a migration card and a voucher (that saves us from the hassle of dealing with Russian agencies).

Download and print out your application (http://www.umich.edu/~resco/AppFormVisa_USA.pdf, if you have a US passport, or here (http://www.umich.edu/~resco/AppFormVisa_NonUSA.pdf) if you don't have a US passport, and fill it out using the following embassy guidelines (if in doubt how to fill out a particular section, leave it blank, UNISEL will complete them for you):

Application form must meet the following requirements:

- The form must be filled out in capital letters using a black pen or typewriter or computer. Using ink pens is not allowed.
- In each cell of the form you can put ONLY ONE letter or digit.
- Writing must be legible
- Questions 1-7 must be answered by all applicants
- Question 8 is to be answered if you know what kind of visa you're requesting (tourist, single entry)
- Question 12 is to be answered, if you have already visited Russia
- Questions 13-14 must be answered by all applicants
- Question 15 is to be answered if you have medical insurance valid in Russia. You should put policy number and the name of insurance company.
- Question 16 is to be answered if you are travelling with the children included in your passport. A child having own passport must apply for a visa separately.
- Questions 18-21 must be answered by all applicants
- Your photo must meet following requirements:
 - The frame size must be 35 mm X 45 mm (1 3/8" X 1 3/4").
 - The photo must have been taken within the last 6 months
 - The photos must be clear, well defined and taken against a plain white or light-coloured background.
 - Your face must be square to the camera with a neutral expression, neither frowning nor smiling, and with your mouth closed.
 - Sunglasses are not acceptable.
 - The photos must show the full front view of the head, with the face in the middle of the photo, and include the top of the shoulders.
- THE PHOTO MUST BE GLUED ON THE FORM STRICTLY IN THE RESERVED SPACE.

Please request the following entry/exit dates on your visa: February 24-March 24, 2010. All tourist visas are issued for no longer than 30 days. List the following places that you are going to visit: St. Petersburg, Svirstroy, Vytegra. Purpose of visit should be listed as tourism.

Please submit your visa application form with 3 pictures to the Program Coordinator no later than indicated in the paperwork check section above. As soon as your visa arrives, so you will get a notification through e-mail or phone to stop by Alina Makin's Office to pick up your passport and your visa.

Documents that must be carried around on a daily basis

The police in Russia have the right to ask any person on the street to show them their ID. Russians show the police their internal passport. Foreigners show the police their passport, visa, migration card and registration (uvedomlenie). Document checks can happen often in Russia. Most of the time the police are looking for draft dodgers and illegal immigrants

Documents for non-U.S. Citizens

If you are not a U.S. citizen, check with your consulate for regulations regarding your stay in Russia and reentry into the United States. Failure to do this may result in your being refused permission to enter the country; or not even being allowed to board the aircraft at the point of departure. Also, you should call the nearest district office of the INS, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, for information on the documents necessary for you to leave and re-enter the United States.

If you plan to travel to Russia on a non-U.S. passport, please let RUSLAN ASB know immediately. Before departure from the United States, non-U.S. citizens must also obtain a Certificate of Compliance-often referred to as a Tax Clearance or a Sailing Permit-from the local IRS (Internal Revenue Service) office. This will certify that you do not owe taxes to the U.S. government. Contact your local IRS office for information on documents required to procure this permit.

What documents do I need as a permanent resident?

Permanent residents need to apply for a Re-entry Permit, which serves as a passport while overseas. Being out of the United States for more than one year may jeopardize your permanent resident status. Check with the nearest INS office for information regarding documentation and procedures for return to the United States.

What documents do I need as a stateless person?

If you do not have a country of citizenship, contact the nearest INS office and the appropriate consulate or embassy to determine the procedures you must follow to obtain the proper travel documents and visas. In addition, be sure to check with the consulate of any country where you may be spending a night or more in transit to the country of your study program. Failure to do this may result in refusal of permission to enter that country or even to board the aircraft at the point of departure.

PART III. HEALTH INFORMATION

HEALTH INFORMATION FORM

During the program acceptance stage, all students are required to submit a Participant Health information Form to RUSLAN ASB. If you are currently under a physician's or specialist's care, for treatment of an ongoing/recurrent medical or psychological condition, your physician or specialist must sign off on the clearance section of the form.

We encourage you to take with you (and give to the program coordinator) more detailed personal health information in a sealed envelope if you think it might be useful in a medical emergency. (Such information might identify your blood group, allergies, chronic medical problems, and prescriptions, for example). This envelope would be opened only in case of a medical emergency and would be kept confidential and shared only with those needing information to provide medical care or treatment. Otherwise the envelope and contents would be destroyed, unopened, at the end of the program.

VACCINATIONS

Although no vaccinations are required to enter Russia, several are strongly recommended. The CDC, the Centers for Disease Control, recommends that travelers to Russia be current on inoculations against typhoid, tetanus-diphtheria, and hepatitis-A (IG or gamma globulin).

HEALTH RELATED ISSUES WHILE ON RUSLAN ASB

Maintaining good health is of vital importance when travelling, working or studying abroad. While living in another environment is a good way to change a daily routine, it is important for students who are experiencing difficulties in the US (relationship, health, emotional, substance abuse, etc.) not to expect a vacation from their problems. Going abroad is not a 'geographic cure' for concerns and problems at home. Sometimes students feel that a change of venue will help them to move past their current problems. However, living, studying and working in a foreign environment frequently creates unexpected physical and emotional stress, which can exacerbate otherwise mild disorders. It is important that all students be able to adjust to potentially dramatic changes in climate, diet, living, and study conditions that may seriously disrupt accustomed patterns of behavior. In particular, if students are concerned about their use of alcohol and other controlled drugs or if they have emotional or physical health problems, they should address it honestly before making plans to travel and study abroad.

HEALTH COVERAGE

The University's Provost mandates that all travelling students (and accompanying faculty) obtain HTH World Wide Student Travel Abroad health insurance that (for \$1/day + \$5 registration fee) provides extensive coverage for a wide range of conditions and events and pays all upfront costs, eliminating the need for reimbursements. Details

about the coverage can be found here:

https://www.hthstudents.com/documents/stud/brochures/2010/grp_6676.pdf . HTH Worldwide has a website that provides full information about the insurance program and its benefits: www.hthstudents.com.

Coverage under this plan is required, and the RUSLAN ASB will be responsible for enrolling students in the program. Costs of the coverage are included in the Program Fee. If you obtain the ISIC student travel card, you will also be covered by their basic insurance for Accidents & Sickness, but it is not designed to be a primary insurance provider. Thus, your HTH insurance through RUSLAN ASB should be your main insurance.

For information about recommended vaccinations and health measures for Russia and Eastern Europe, consult the Centers for Disease Control website:
www.cdc.gov/travel/regionEasternEuropeNorthernAsia.aspx

We will obtain group coverage a week before departure. Each student will also be asked to get ISIC student travel cards (cost \$22) for travel insurance coverage in case of trip delays, cancellations, lost luggage, etc. Details of their coverage are at:
<https://www.myisic.com/MyISIC/Travel/Main.aspx?MenuID=5004> . As an added benefit, ISIC cards provide card-holders with discounts to museums and attractions in St.Petersburg and on public transportation.

Health care in St. Petersburg will be provided through the “Euromed” clinic (with English-speaking staff; located at 50, Suvorovsky Pr.), in Vytegra – through the Rayonnyi Hospital #1. To increase the safety of all participants, each student will be provided with a cell phone (with basic air-time coverage) for easy contact with the group members and the faculty supervisor.

SOME COVERAGE BENEFITS

- If students use an HTH preferred physician, HTH Worldwide will pay “up-front” for most medical treatment, eliminating the need to file claims for reimbursement
- If student see a non-HTH physician, students will pay up front and submit a claim form to HTH for reimbursement
- If students go to a pharmacy, they will pay up front for services and submit a claim form to HTH for reimbursement
- Valid entire time abroad, whether in your host country or travelling elsewhere outside the U.S.
- Includes payment for treatment of mental and nervous disorders including drug or alcohol abuse
- Includes most outpatient prescription drugs
- Pre-existing conditions are not excluded
- Includes payment for emergency medical evacuation as well as expenses (up to \$1,500) for a bedside visit by a family member if you are hospitalized

- Students have access to a website of HTH certified English-speaking physicians in their destination location and can pre-arrange an introductory appointment. The website provides links to other important resources available through HTH Worldwide, including drug translations, medical terms & phrases, and CityHealth Profiles (for safety and security in your destination location)
- Each student will receive an electronic insurance card, with important access numbers and contact information.

COVERAGE IN THE U.S.

While the HTH Worldwide insurance plan will provide some continued coverage for when you return home following a condition or injury abroad, this coverage is extremely limited and therefore you should by all means continue whatever current health insurance coverage you have in the U.S.

HEALTH EMERGENCIES

In the event of an emergency, students should go immediately to the nearest physician or hospital without delay and then contact HTH Worldwide. HTH Worldwide will then take the appropriate action to assist you and The University of Michigan: Office of International Programs will monitor the medical care until the situation is resolved. To contact HTH Worldwide in the event of an emergency, call 1.800.257.4823 or collect +1.610.254.8771 or globalhealth@hthworldwide.com.

We will walk you through detailed emergency plans during pre-departure and on-site orientations.

EXTENDED INSURANCE COVERAGE

If you wish to be covered for a longer period (e.g., if you plan to travel outside the US before or after the OIP program), you may elect to enroll for additional days, at your own expense, directly on the HTH Worldwide website. Students who wish to either purchase new coverage or who wish to extend coverage directly outside of the RUSLAN ASB PROGRAM must sign up directly on the HTH website using the UM Ann Arbor Online Group Self Enrollment Codes (OGSE): EAL-7718/ Subgroup Code: UMAO. Students will be billed an additional \$5.00 administrative fee for registering for travel before or after the RUSLAN ASB program, plus the daily cost of coverage.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

RUSLAN uses local clinics for most routine health care questions. Resident staff will always accompany a student. The costs for treating most routine health care questions, such as fevers or mild ear infections, at local public facilities are low and paid in cash, but they do not provide the sort of documentation that US insurance providers usually accept (i.e. in English). For routine health matters, a resident staff member will accompany you to quality medical facilities in St. Petersburg, and translate for you. In the

case of a medical emergency, the resident staff will assist you in getting to a hospital. We will be using the facilities at the private St. Petersburg clinic Euromed. The facilities and staff are good and speak English, but their services are expensive and must be paid in cash or credit card. They, however, do provide all the documentation needed for reimbursement from US insurance providers and some insurance providers (such as HTH Worldwide) can be directly billed for doctor's visits so a student will not need to pay out of pocket for the visit.

In Vytegra we will be using the local polyclinic 1 for routine visits and the rayonnaya bol'nitsa for emergency care. Again, the program director will accompany you on the visits and translate for you. Staff at the Vytegra hospital will not be English speaking and facilities are not as modern or well-equipped as in Euromed but everything will be much cheaper.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

If you require prescription medication, you should bring a supply with you to last the entire time that you will be abroad. Although many medications are available worldwide, they are not always identical in strength or composition to what you take at home. Bring medications in your carry-on luggage, in their original containers, along with a letter from your doctor explaining the dosage, why the medication has been prescribed, your diagnosis, the medication and its generic name (including active ingredients) and why you are traveling with this quantity. This is especially important if you enter the country with medications that are highly controlled due to their tendency to be abused in other contexts. Transportation Security Administration allows prescription medications in quantities exceeding three ounces and the medications are not required to be in a zip-top bag. Declare these items for inspection at checkpoints and have the letter from your physician on hand as well.

If you are taking prescribed medication for a medical condition, it is your responsibility to verify with the Russian Embassy to see if your US medication can be safely brought into Russia. Below is the contact information for Russian embassy and consulates in the US:

Students who wear glasses or contact lenses should be sure to take an extra pair as well as a copy of their prescription, but good eyewear is readily available at Western prices in Petersburg, should you need to purchase glasses. If you use contraceptives, please take an adequate supply with you, since your particular brand may not be available in Russia.

OTHER HEALTH PRECAUTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO TAKE

Although you may enjoy excellent health, you may find yourself susceptible to colds, diarrhea, and other types of traveler's maladies once you arrive in Russia. You may want to discuss the situation with your doctor, pointing out differences in diet, the severe weather conditions during the winter and spring and the hectic pace of the program. Your doctor can advise you what medicines to take and how much of each to pack. While

Russia now has a reliable supply of remedies for all conditions, the brands may not be ones you recognize. If there are particular brands of medicine that you are fond of, you might want to bring your own supply of medications for the following conditions: diarrhea, constipation, upset stomach, colds, sore throats, coughs, and other conditions that normally arise during inclement weather.

Again, while medicines for all these conditions are now available in Russia, they can be expensive and are probably not the brands you are used to. Also, you may want to pack band-aids, antiseptic cream, and an ample supply of vitamins and minerals. Be sure to take medicine for any recent or chronic ailment, which might pop up again in Russia. This might be anything from insomnia to athlete's foot. Women prone to bladder and yeast infections should definitely bring along medication to treat these infections. Many drugs can be bought without a prescription in Russia but you need to know the name of the drug you want. When talking to your doctor, keep in mind that though most prescription medications are available, in Russia they are labeled in Cyrillic and Latin script. In addition to bringing your own medicine, ask your health care provider to give you a clearly written prescription with the chemical name of the medicine in Latin script, if possible, in addition to the most common brand names. Most people seriously underestimate the amount of medicine they will need.

Although medical care is readily available in Russia, the standard treatment for many illnesses often includes routine hospitalization for a week. If you can control your condition with proper medication brought from home, you may be able to avoid such hospitalization. In any event, you should bring all medical problems, no matter how insignificant they may seem, to the attention of the resident staff. Proper medical attention at the outset of an illness may go a long way toward avoiding more serious consequences.

Drinking Water: The resident directors in St. Petersburg and Vytegra check their water with home detector kits, and have not found any indicators outside the norms. Nevertheless, they drink bottled water but brush their teeth with regular tap water. In years past Giardiasis has been a health problem in some Russian cities, notably St. Petersburg and Moscow. *Giardia lamblia* is a parasite present in water contaminated by rodents, especially beavers, and is a problem in many areas of the United States where people drink unpurified mountain stream water. It has been found in St. Petersburg and Moscow city water in greater or lesser concentrations at various times. It can be killed by boiling the water, and most Russians keep a pitcher of boiled water in the kitchen. You should not drink tap water that has not been boiled. Some people prefer to brush their teeth with boiled water.

If you are concerned about this you may want to bring an inexpensive home water test for microbiological parasites such as those marketed by Vital Living Products, Inc. out of Matthews, NC (brand name PurTest). You are most likely to find that the water from the tap where you're staying is free of parasites, but it is nice to have confirmation in any case. Tap water in Petersburg has a metallic taste and color, due to the city's old piping

system. Russians drink much less water than Americans and tend to drink more hot beverages like tea. Students tend to buy their own bottled water to drink daily.

Giardia symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting, loss of appetite, a bloated feeling, and gas. There is usually no fever, unless some other infection is also present. The incubation period is long- 2 to 3 weeks. It is not usually a dangerous parasite, but it can lead to weakness, weight loss, and fatigue. The medications for curing giardiasis are available in Russia, but some cases can be stubborn. Be very careful about the water you use. Please talk to the program coordinator if you think you might have giardiasis or any water related illness.

It is also good to keep in mind that although it may be safe to drink the tap water in most of the cities you may visit, you should not do so in large amounts. Although parasites may not be present, the Russian water system is heavy with minerals and the chemical composition of the water will be different from what you are used to, and it may upset your stomach or even affect your teeth.

For additional information concerning travel to Russia, American citizens may contact the [Embassy of the Russian Federation](#), Consular Section, 2641 Tunlaw Rd. NW, Washington, DC 20007, tel. 202-939-8907.

In addition, there are Russian Consulates in:

Houston: 1333 West Loop South, Ste.1300, Houston, TX 77027, tel. 713-337-3300

New York: 9 East 91 St., New York, NY 10128, tel. 212-348-0926

San Francisco: 2790 Green St., San Francisco, CA 94123, tel. 415-928-6878 or 415-202-9800

Seattle: 2323 Westin Building, 2001 6th Ave., Seattle, WA 98121, tel. 206-728-1910.

* You cannot mail medications to Russia, so you must either bring them with you, or see if they can be purchased there.

DISABILITY ACCESS

Russia still has only very limited disability access facilities (for the blind, hearing-impaired or people in wheelchairs) in big cities and almost no disability access in provincial towns. With our reliance on walking, using public transportation and long bus trips, and a very busy volunteering schedule we recommend that anyone who might be concerned about access issues consult the program director for advice before committing to the program. Students with disabilities should be aware that federal and state laws do not require the University to provide funding for accommodations and facilities beyond US borders. It is the student's responsibility to assure that any funding required for special services abroad is arranged well in advance. If no funding is available, students are responsible for all costs associated with special services abroad. Students who disclose needs at the last minute, or who require accommodations that cannot be made available in Russia, may be advised to postpone participation in the program.

Health questions to ask before committing to the program:

- If you have respiratory problems or severe allergies, what is the air and environmental quality in St. Petersburg and Vytegra?
- If your condition is affected by temperatures, what is the climate in these two cities?
- What special dietary considerations might you have?
- If there are extra expenses associated with special accommodations, who will fund these?
- If deaf or hard of hearing, will you need an interpreter/note taker? Who will fund interpreting/transcription services? If you are taking a personal FM system, can you obtain batteries in Russia that work for your device?
- Will you need to take a wheelchair? How will you ship your chair abroad? Where can your chair be repaired abroad? What are sidewalks like? What is the accessibility of the host cities (elevators, bathrooms, classrooms, housing, transportation, etc.)? Do you need to make additional arrangements to get from the airport to hotel/get around sites that have low or no accessibility? Who will fund any special accommodations?
- If visually impaired, will you need a mobility assistant to help you? Are there alternate formats available (Braille, CCTV, etc.)? Is there Braille signage on buildings, elevators, museums? Who will fund any special accommodations?

Resources:

<http://www.miusa.org/ncde/stories/russiawheelchairtips/?searchterm=Russia> – useful tips on wheelchair access in Russia.

<http://www.globalaccessnews.com/russia06.htm> -- article on wheelchair access in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

<http://www.miusa.org/ncde/intlopportunities/russia> -- general article on accessibility in Russia

MEDICAL CARE ABROAD

If you need to see a doctor or specialist while abroad, discuss this with your program coordinator and HTH insurance so you understand what physicians or medical facilities are available in your St. Petersburg and Vytegra. Establish contact with these medical providers before departure to clarify eligibility for services and payment issues.

PART IV. SAFETY

ITOC WEBSITE REGISTRATION

The University of Michigan requires students, faculty and Staff who will be travelling abroad on University-related business to register their travel plans and emergency contact information at the following web address: <http://www.umich.edu/~itoc/>. Information

entered here is accessible by the UM Department of Public Safety. It will be shared with relevant University administrators only in the event of emergency or other urgent need information.

EMERGENCY PLANS

Students will be informed at their pre-departure and on-site program orientations about established procedures to be followed in the event of any unexpected, catastrophic events. Students' safety is a paramount concern. RUSLAN ASB is prepared to respond to all emergency situations and takes reasonable precautions to prevent them, but all programs involve risk. Students need to assess the risks and take responsibility for their role in minimizing such risks.

ALCOHOL USE

For safety of all participants, alcohol use is strictly prohibited during all group events throughout the trip even though the drinking age in Russian is 18 years of age. However, if you go out on your own and decide to go to a bar, restaurant or a club, please bear in mind the following. Inordinate use of alcohol is a national problem in Russia. While some people are conscious about liquor consumption, liquor still flows excessively at many parties and family gatherings. Know your limitations and don't try to keep up with the hosts, especially if you rarely drink. Remember that Russians almost always eat when they drink—*zakuski* (snacks) are eaten to lessen the effects of alcohol. It is seen as poor etiquette to drink on an empty stomach, drink alone or binge drink in Russia—these are signs of alcoholism and are very much looked down upon in Russian society. Unlike the open free-for-all of American parties and bars, Russians prefer toasts with small groups of friends and *zakuski* from the bar's kitchen.

If you do not care to drink at all, use the excuse of having an allergy; people usually don't try to argue with this. Another excuse that is not challenged is that you're currently taking antibiotics (*antibiotiki*). Alcohol related deaths are a reality in Russia, and visitors are not immune. Among the victims in the past few years was an American high school student who died in St. Petersburg of alcohol poisoning: don't overdo it. Be very wary of moonshine or "samogon" (homemade hard liquor). It can be lethal because it is very strong and often impure. Use caution with all alcohol. If it smells like gasoline or turpentine, just leave it alone, no matter what the Russians around you might say. Also be aware that much Russian beer is stronger than what is sold in America, though some very good non-alcoholic beers are now readily available.

It is illegal to consume alcoholic beverages in public places, such as parks or beaches. It is also illegal to appear drunk in public or to ride public transportation while drunk. You can get picked up and taken to a sobering-up station for the night, an extremely unpleasant experience, to put it mildly, and have to pay a fine. The fact that you see Russians doing it does not mean that it is legal.

If alcohol consumption is part of your host country's culture, you may have greater access to alcohol abroad than you have had at home. Thus, it is important that you be aware of the risks it poses to your general health and safety.

The safety issue is simply this: when you are drinking, your inhibitions are lowered, and you are not in complete control of your faculties. This makes you more likely to engage in risky behaviors (such as unprotected sex) and more vulnerable to accidents (such as falling) and crime (such as theft or assault). The health issue is too much alcohol can make you feel terrible, damage your long-term health and, in extreme amounts, actually kill you. Therefore, if you drink at all, it is safest to do so only in moderation and to avoid alcohol completely if you are driving, even for a short distance. Remember some health insurance companies may refuse to cover injuries or illness they deem to be caused by alcohol or drug abuse. If you are not used to drinking, you probably have little knowledge about your own tolerance level or how alcohol affects you. You may be most vulnerable or find yourself in dangerous situations if you are under the influence of alcohol and in an unknown place. We encourage you to make informed choices about when and how to use alcohol safely, and what moderation means in concrete terms. Never feel pressured into drinking or drinking more than you wish (or engaging in any other potentially dangerous, illegal, or unhealthy personal behavior) for fear of offending someone in another culture. The object in such cases is to find ways to say "no" that are not offensive. Usually a friendly but firm "no thank you" or hand-over-the-glass gesture does the job. Saying "I cannot drink alcohol," "Alcohol makes me ill," or "I would like a non-alcoholic drink" are also good standard, straightforward options. Just because a glass is filled does not mean you have to drink all or any of it. Most importantly, only drink in moderation. If you are going to drink, eat something beforehand and while drinking. This will both slow down alcohol's effect on your body and provide nutrients you might otherwise skip while drinking."

On the whole, you can expect most Russians you meet to be well-intentioned to you. Some will see in you opportunities to make money or to pursue other personal goals at your expense, but most will probably be very welcoming. In the provinces you will be very visible, special people, who will, whether you like it or not, be very important representatives of your own culture. Whatever Russian you know will be considered a huge plus, people will be very anxious to learn about you and the world you live in, people will certainly want to appear hospitable. Try to be flexible and tolerant, while remembering that what you say and do may well be taken as indicative of what *all Americans are like*.

AIDS

Russia has one of the fastest growing AIDS epidemics in the world, with 100 new HIV infections every day, according to the BBC. Take the appropriate precautions. Many U.S. doctors are concerned about needle re-use in some countries. Should you need an injection while in Russia, make sure the needle comes sealed in a special package and is torn open in front of you. This will certainly be the case wherever you are with the Program staff.

SMOKING

Note that smoking is much more common in Russia and in Europe in general than in the United States. Though newer restaurants are offering non-smoking areas, the anti-smoking regulations that are common in the United States do not exist in Russia and if they do, they are not strictly enforced. Therefore, if you are allergic to or easily bothered by smoke, be aware that it will be more difficult to avoid in Russia than it is in the United States (even at hotels). If you go to restaurants and clubs and don't like the smell of smoke lingering on your clothing, bring some Febreze.

CDC Recommendations: Consult the Centers for Disease Control for recommendations for American citizens preparing to go to Russia. The CDC web site is www.cdc.gov

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

The health and safety of program participants abroad is understandably an important issue for all concerned. The following website contains information about study abroad safety issues –

http://www.nafsa.org/knowledge_community_network.sec/education_abroad_1/developing_and_managing/practice_resources_36/policies/guidelines_for_health.

Of course, we will provide you with safety tips during pre-departure and on-site orientation, as well as one-on-one safety guidance during the trip, but experience has shown that the single most important factor in assuring a safe study abroad experience is the sensible and cautious behavior of the participants themselves. When traveling abroad, you should exercise additional caution as you become familiar with your new surroundings. Always remain alert to what is going on around you, especially in crowded tourist areas and on public transportation.

Crime in St. Petersburg is, as for many large cities, a major topic. Purse snatching, pick pocketing, and other forms of theft occur frequently. As a Westerner, you will be a natural target for "petty" street crime, especially pick pocketing. Follow these general rules:

- The more Russian you speak on the street, even with your American classmates, the less visible you will be for thieves on the look out for foreigners. Even Russian with an accent is much less noticeable than English. Besides, it's good practice.
- Take precautions not to walk alone at night. Visit or explore in groups of two or three to avoid provocation or harassment, and to reduce the chances of assault. Don't walk around the streets wearing headphones, especially at night, as this prevents you from hearing someone approaching. Never get into a taxi that has more than one person in it.
- Tourists are common targets for pickpockets. Always be aware of your backpacks and cameras especially on crowded transportation. Sling backpacks on one shoulder and grasp when riding public transportation. A backpack in a stranger's face is

considered rude and makes for an easy target. Don't carry large amounts of cash with you. Never leave belongings in a parked car.

- Keep a suitcase that can be locked under your bed and leave your money, passport, camera, and other valuables secured in it.
- When you carry your passport, wear it around your neck in a thin pouch inside your shirt or around your waist. If you must carry it in a bag, use one that can be slung diagonally across your chest and that has a sturdy strap that cannot be easily ripped.
- Never carry valuables in the pockets of your pants.
- As noted earlier, keep a photocopy of your passport in a separate place. This will speed up the process of replacing your documents should they be lost or stolen.
- Be especially cautious in areas frequented by tourists, such as airports, train stations, museums, and U.S.-style restaurants such as McDonald's. Nevsky Prospekt is St. Petersburg's main street and the most frequent scene of pick pocketing.

One final note: In the former Soviet Union, the police were used to repress dissent as well as to fight crime. Re-educating and retraining the police force is a long and delicate process that is nowhere near completion. While it happens rarely, students have been harassed by the police, often in hopes of getting money. This aspect of life will be covered thoroughly in orientation.

Tip: Letting down your guard

When visiting a foreign country, you may well be enchanted by your surroundings and engage in behavior that is not typical of you. This may cause you to let your guard down and be susceptible to crime. Practice common sense and exercise good judgment. Remember that you are more likely to be a victim of crime if you have been drinking alcohol.

GENERAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

In the following pages you will find more general recommendations for travel and study abroad, some adapted from OIP's [2009-2010 Study Abroad Handbook](#).

ANTI-AMERICANISM

Many people have rather mixed feelings about the United States, partly because of a hostile perception of U.S. foreign policy, partly because of some unfortunate stereotypes, and partly because of envy. While it is very unlikely that you will encounter overt anti-Americanism in provincial Russia, you might like to bear in mind what OIP suggests if you feel that you are in a situation where anti-Americanism is likely:

- Avoid drawing attention to yourself as an American – in dress (e.g. with university logos or obvious American slogans), or in speech (no loud public discussions of American politics, policies, etc.), and avoid conspicuous, loud use of English in public places.
- Stay away from demonstrations and other political activities at which anti-American opinions are likely to be expressed.

- Travel in small groups (two to five people) rather than alone or in large groups. If your program has a Resident Director, keep them informed of your whereabouts if you travel away from the program site.

PERSONAL SAFETY FOR WOMEN TRAVELERS

OIP notes that you may or may not have thought about what it might mean to live as a woman in the country in which you will be studying, but they encourage you to do so.

“While it is impossible to generalize about the experience of women traveling in all places in the world, you may experience some gender-specific challenges when you live or travel abroad. In fact, the incidence of violent crime against women is higher in the U.S. than in many other countries. However, due to language and cultural differences, what you consider appropriate behavior for a woman in the U.S. may be interpreted much differently by the men – and women – of your host country. This is further compounded by the fact that people in some other countries may have distorted or stereotyped notions about American women, based on images acquired through American film and advertising. Be aware that behavior which is considered incorrect in the U.S. may not be viewed in this way abroad (e.g., whistling or personal comments). Similarly, a smile, eye contact, certain clothing, or the way you carry yourself can connote different things in different cultures. While we will supply you with what information we can, you are your own best resource. Read travel guides or articles and talk to women who have been to your host country. The more familiar you are with the customs and traditions of your host country, the more understanding you will have for why they exist and the safer you will feel while abroad. We have asked women on past programs for feedback on our Women Abroad Questionnaire. Suggestions they have made include:

- Travel in groups of at least two, especially when you are still unfamiliar with a town or city.
- Lock hotel rooms when traveling. Do not stay in hotels without adequate locks, even if you must stay where room rates are higher.
- Walk with purpose and avoid eye contact with strangers.
- Use alcohol sparingly, and be aware that drinking could blunt your ability to interpret social & behavioral cues and thus increase your vulnerability to assault.
- Firmly say "no" to any invitation you do not want and turn away. IGNORE persistent overtures.

If you are sexually harassed or assaulted, experience discrimination, violence, aggression or if you feel that particular situations are unsafe, contact your program director confidence. • Follow the example of women from your host country, in terms of culturally appropriate dress and demeanor. • Trust your instincts. If you don't feel safe in a situation or someone's behavior is making you uncomfortable, get out of the situation.”

Again, you are unlikely to encounter really challenging situations on the RUSLAN trip, but it is worth bearing in mind these recommendations – gender roles and sexual behavior in Russia are very different from the United States. A golden rule for women in Russian social situations is to be cautious, especially with alcohol, and to remember that the image of American women promoted by American commercial culture can easily be misinterpreted abroad.

References

- *More Women Travel: Adventures and Advice from More Than 60 Countries*, edited by Natania Jansz and Miranda Davies, Penguin Books, New York, 1995.
- *A Journey of One's Own: Uncommon Advice for the Independent Woman Traveler*, third edition, by Thalia Zepatos, Eighth Mountain Press, Portland, 2003

RACIAL AND ETHNIC ISSUES ABROAD

OIP notes that if you are a minority student in your host country (for example, African American in Russia, or European American in China), you may experience additional anxiety as you try to adapt socially and academically to your new culture.

“You may face special challenges that other study abroad students do not have to confront. You may experience racial bias, prejudice, and discrimination that others may not face because they do not belong to a visible ethnic or racial minority. You should recognize that there may not be many other persons of your race or ethnicity where you are living. Without this traditional comfort zone, you may feel especially isolated, since it may be difficult to identify with and relate to others due to contrasting circumstances. It is important to understand that your race and ethnicity will affect your overseas experience, and at times it may be quite challenging. You may find, however, that confronting and coping with these issues abroad is not necessarily an entirely negative experience; in fact, it presents a unique learning opportunity which may serve you well in future.

Michigan does not sponsor study abroad programs in countries where social conditions differ from those at home because it necessarily admires or endorses those conditions. Rather, the University sees profound and lasting educational value in exposing students to cross-cultural differences, even those they may find offensive (assuming, of course, that student safety is not compromised). The encounter with cultural “otherness,” particularly when we ourselves are put in the position of the “other,” allows us an opportunity to enlarge our understanding of human limits and possibilities, and to discover what we have taken for granted about ourselves as individuals and as a people. The process ultimately contributes to better social analysis and problem-solving—the student who witnesses racism or other forms of discrimination in another cultural context, for instance, learns

how others make sense of and deal with the condition, and such newly acquired knowledge may have useful applications back in the U.S. Because it enhances self-awareness and undermines prejudice, the process also fosters personal growth— students develop greater tolerance and compassion and a more sophisticated approach to identity issues in general.

In order to reduce your anxiety and apprehension, do some research on where you will be living so that you are prepared for what you may face. Think of ways you can bridge the gap with others by using your language and coping skills. Do not be afraid to ask for help and reach out for support. The Program Director and other students can be of great assistance to you no matter what their race. If you are concerned about these issues, please visit the OIP/CGIS before your departure to talk with one of the staff or Peer Advisors. You may wish to read the Students of Color Abroad Questionnaires we have collected from past participants. Try to speak to other students of similar background who have lived overseas to learn about their experiences. The International Center has a flyer entitled “Americans of Color Abroad” which may also be helpful.”

Unfortunately, there is considerable evidence of increasing national and racial tensions in Russia. Students from Africa and South Asia have been singled out for abuse and even violence in some Russian cities, while “guest workers” from Central Asian and migrants from the North Caucasus have also been targeted even in small Russian towns. Again, you are unlikely to encounter such problems on the RUSLAN trip, but you might like to note that even little Vytegra has a visible population of non-Russians (Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Central Asians, some Roma, some Finns...), and it is not entirely out of the question that there are some ethnic and national tensions below the surface.

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL OR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

OIP notes that differences in gender presentation and/or sexual orientation can also present special challenges to students living abroad, especially if you are going through or anticipating a period of transition such as coming-out or gender reassignment.

“We strongly recommend that you learn as much as you can about prevalent attitudes in the culture of your host country so that you will be prepared for any personal, social, legal or safety issues that may confront you. Again, think of ways to use your language and coping skills to bridge the gap with others, and do not be afraid to ask for help and reach out for support. The U-M Spectrum Center (734) 763-4186 (3200 Michigan Union) can help you identify valuable resources and support services. You can reach them by email at lgbt@umich.edu or <http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu/>. We strongly recommend that you familiarize yourself with the website of the Lesbigan Special Interest Group of the National Association of Foreign Study Advisors (NAFSA), at: www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/.

GLBT and similarly-identified students who are not familiar with the legal status and the attendant cultural attitudes of sexual orientation in the host country might consider purchasing the most current edition of one of the various gay and lesbian international reference guides before departing.

Whatever your own sexual orientation, keep in mind that there may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students in your EAP group as well as the various groups of individuals you encounter in the host country environment. Some will be 'out,' some not, and some may just be coming to terms with their sexual identity. Sensitivity to this diversity within your own group as well as the diversity of the host culture will further enrich your overall EAP experience. “

In Russia's metropolitan areas there are abundant signs of open and fairly relaxed gay culture (clubs, organizations, etc), but you are far less likely to encounter openly gay people in provincial Russia. In general, attitudes to sexuality in Russia may seem strange to Americans – in many ways, Russians are far more “liberal” than most Americans, yet there is little discussion of sexuality except among close friends, and some attitudes may seem very conservative.

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

OIP notes the following:

“The University of Michigan has had a long-standing concern about the harmful effects of alcohol abuse and use of illicit drugs, and concern carries over to all study abroad programs. A University-wide drug and alcohol policy has been instituted (www.studentpolicies.dsa.umich.edu/studentalcoholdrug.htm), and that policy applies to all students participating in OIP/CGIS programs. Briefly, the policy reminds students about the health risks of drug and alcohol abuse, about the availability of counseling and treatment programs, and about the sanctions that could be imposed by U-M, depending on the severity of the violation. You should bear in mind, however, that the counseling and treatment programs available at home are not likely to be accessible to you while abroad.

It is also essential to remember that once you leave the United States, U.S. laws and constitutional rights do not protect you in the same way they would in the U.S. Students must comply with laws of the host country and host university (for example, regarding age limits, driving, blood alcohol content levels, etc). The U.S. consular officers abroad can only intercede with local authorities to ensure treatment consistent with internationally recognized standards of human rights and to ensure that Americans are afforded due process under local laws. But the officer cannot demand your release. There is very little anyone can do to help if you are caught with drugs while abroad, and fines, imprisonment, and other penalties may be extremely harsh. Illegal drug use and possession are serious crimes. The State Department's “Special Warning About Drug Offenses Abroad” travel.state.gov contains valuable information that all students should read and retain.

Please also keep in mind that drugs or alcohol will impair your judgment and can increase your chances of being the victim of a crime.”

Alcohol use and abuse is very widespread indeed in Russia. You will almost certainly have the opportunity to consume alcohol while you are on the RUSLAN program, since alcohol is often an important part of Russian hospitality. If you do not want to drink, do not hesitate to say “no” – your hosts may encourage you, but they will probably be quite understanding if you reply with a firm refusal. If you do drink, drink in moderation. Russians often drink hard liquor, and frequently in shot glasses downed at intervals while eating; you do not have to drink every toast, you do not have to drink every shot in one; you must eat while you drink in this way, or else you will find yourself suddenly very intoxicated. Russians are used to this particular culture of alcohol consumption, and will almost certainly “hold their drink” better than you; do not try to compete.

Recreational drug use is also widespread nowadays in Russia, and, sadly, there is a growing drug problem throughout the country. You are strongly advised to refrain from the use of any illegal drugs while in Russia (penalties are stiff, and, as a foreigner, you are very likely to make the sort of mistakes that will get you into serious trouble). It hardly need be said that drug-dealing and drug-trafficking are serious offenses in Russia and in the United States; do not do anything at all that could be interpreted as dealing or trafficking, and do not take parcels through customs to pass on to unknown people.

PART V. PERSONAL FINANCES

COST OF LIVING

The exchange rate is not constant. The *New York Times* and similar publications publish exchange rates daily. You may also reference www.x-rates.com or www.oanda.com for up to the minute exchange rates. You should keep abreast of how a rate fluctuates leading up to departure.

The cost of living in St. Petersburg for Americans has increased considerably over the past few years, mostly due to a strengthening Russian economy (fueled by the high price of oil) and the devaluation of the dollar against the ruble. Vytegra, as many provincial towns, is much cheaper (sometimes up to 50% or more) than the capitals. You must keep in mind that Russia is no longer as cheap as it used to be. Students will need to get used to the cash economy of Russia where credit cards are not always accepted, especially in provincial towns (and if they are, your credit card company will most likely charge a Foreign Transaction Fee for each transaction in Russia), goods are more expensive, and budgeting is that much more important. While there will be an abundance of ATMS in St. Petersburg, Vytegra will have none, so be prepared for that by bringing enough cash with you from Petersburg. There are a few currency exchange points around both cities.

VAT: A Value Added Tax or VAT of 18% is levied on all goods and services in Russia. Most of the time the tax is figured into the total price, but this is not always the case.

What expenses should I budget for?

You will need money for entertainment, toiletries, cosmetics, gifts, local transportation, school supplies, independent travel, probably bottled water, and some meals (especially if you want to snack or supplement group meals). Drinks are not included with meals, so you will need to budget for that. Wait until the end of the program before buying gifts. You'll have a better idea of what is available and for how much, and most important, you'll know how much you have left to spend.

Besides inflation and currency exchange, another variable that will affect your spending abroad is your individual taste requirements. When creating a budget, it may be helpful to consider how much you normally spend in a semester and inflate it a bit. Although the cost of living for a student in Russia is comparable or a little lower than that of a student in the United States, the added cost of independent travel along with the impulse to splurge makes careful budgeting imperative. Former students have saved considerably by limiting meals to those provided by the program and limiting vacation travel to the general area around St. Petersburg. We suggest you take extra money, if possible, for unforeseeable expenses. It is certainly recommended that you have money accessible in a checking account at home.

Financial Arrangements

You will need to make arrangements regarding personal finances before leaving home. See the section Money and Banking for details.

Tip: Forget "Hey Mom, send money"

It is important that you make arrangements to receive enough money to cover your personal expenses for the time you are in St. Petersburg prior to your departure from the United States.

MONEY AND BANKING

Money

Arrive in Russia with several ways to obtain cash, so that in the event one method fails or is inconvenient, a back-up option is available. The best options are ATM cards, cash and credit cards as described below. The national currency is the ruble, broken down into one hundred kopeks. The current exchange rate is about 30 rubles to the dollar, but it changes by the day. You'll hear more about currency at orientation.

There are plenty of ATMs in most large Russian cities, but it is always worthwhile to have some cash in hand. Changing U.S. dollars is also usually simple. Middle-class Russians make ample use of "plastic", and most up-market stores, including supermarkets, in big cities readily accept credit cards. However, for Russians of modest means, especially in the provinces, cash is king.

St Petersburg is an expensive city – bars, restaurants, western-style supermarkets, and the like will all seem similar in pricing to equivalents in Western Europe and North America. Vytegra is a much more modest city. There are plenty of small shops, a few cafés, and the odd place to buy souvenirs. Most prices will be lower than in St Petersburg. If you plan just to buy a few souvenirs and have the occasional cup of coffee or snack in a café, you will not need to take a lot of money, however, having some cash in reserve “just in case” is always a good idea. For such a short trip, travelers’ checks will probably be more trouble than they are worth. Change into roubles only what you are likely to spend (but bear in mind that you must pay for everything in Russia in roubles). In St Petersburg you will be able to make at least some of your purchases using credit cards.

Participants say...

Bring more money than you think you'll need, and arrange an understanding with your parent regarding credit card charging, etc. before you leave. ATM's are the way to go. It was much less of a hassle than traveler's checks or credit cards.

As you can tell from the differing opinions above from past study-abroad participants, money and banking in Russia can be complicated. In general, individual students prefer different forms of access to money based on tradeoffs between safety, service charges, ease of use, availability and arrangements made back home before departure. Often students don't know what forms of money work best for them until they actually try it in St. Petersburg and Vytegra. So again, it's advised that you leave with many different ways to obtain money.

ATM & Debit Cards

Check with your bank to find out if they serve ATMs in Russia. Recently some US banks have discontinued service for ATMs in Russia. However, ATMs have become the most convenient best way to get money in St. Petersburg, so if your bank doesn't allow access from Russia, you should consider other options. Usually, if you bring your bank debit card (with Cirrus or Plus access), you will be able to get cash easily. There are ATMs all around the city, and more popping up by the day.

Consider opening a second bank account just in case one ATM card doesn't work. It is always a good idea to have more than one source of cash flow.

However, don't rely on ATMs as your only source of money. Make sure you know what you will be charged by your bank for getting cash from the machine. A three dollar charge on thirty dollars withdrawn is a lot more than three dollars on a three hundred dollar withdrawal.

Again, be aware that cash machines can be targets for thieves. Be aware of your surroundings when you take money from an ATM.

Debit cards are becoming more prevalent in St. Petersburg for point-of-sale transactions. To use at a large department store or supermarket, simply give the cashier your card and say —Пин код (*pin kod* -- PIN code). Check with your bank on the fees associated with

using your debit card in Russia. If you wish to use your debit card as a credit card (e.g. —Debit or Credit) you need to show I.D. which is, first and foremost, your passport. If you don't have your passport, you can show your —*spravka* (copy of your passport/visa/migration card + stamp of the University) and/or your US drivers license.

Cash

Make sure your bills are crisp and in mid to large denominations (\$20s are fine, \$50s and \$100s are better); banks, and change counters tend to be wary of even slightly dirty or wrinkled banknotes, and often refuse to change them. Also make sure your bills are the most recent series (e.g. new colors, larger faces and numbers) since banks in Russia keep track of new U.S. currency as soon as it is released and tend to be suspicious of older styled dollars. It can be difficult to cash traveler's checks for rubles, and there is usually a charge of three to five percent for every check cashed. Shop around for the lowest fee. It is obviously riskier to carry cash than traveler's checks, so you will have to decide what amount you feel comfortable carrying. Carry your cash in a travel wallet or money belt.

Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks are safe and widely recognized; they can be converted in any country you may visit. As long as you have a record of your traveler's check numbers, you can recover stolen or lost amounts. They are, however, most inconvenient in Russia. If you decide to go for them, the best bet is American Express travelers' checks, as American Express has an office in St. Petersburg, which means that lost American Express traveler's checks can be replaced there. Traveler's checks are cashed into local currency (rubles in Russia). Past participants nearly all suggest that traveler's checks are not worth the hassle at all. And they certainly will not work in Vytegra at all.

Currency Exchange

You can exchange your dollars for rubles at exchange counters in many places in St. Petersburg and other Russian cities. Most of the time you will be asked for identification (which is your passport in Russia) but there are some exchange counters that do not require a passport to change money. When you change traveler's checks you will have to have your passport.

You can change dollars, as well as get cash advances on Visa cards at some banks in the city. For both of these services the bank usually charges a 3-5% service fee/commission. They also have the worst exchange rates.

Participants say...

It's not hard to change money, but accessing foreign accounts is not always easy. Start frugal so you have money left at the end.

When you change money, ask for smaller ruble bills because most establishments are not keen on giving a lot of change back.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are becoming more and more popular, but still nothing like in the United States or Western Europe. Your best bet is to bring a Visa or MasterCard. Neither has

offices in St. Petersburg, but they are useful both as credit cards and as ways to get cash advances from major banks and some hotels. Credit cards are not used widely. They are sometimes accepted in tourist areas (i.e. more expensive restaurants, hotels and around Nevsky Prospekt).

When using your credit card, you must show your passport. If you don't have your passport with you, you can show your —spravka (copy of your passport/visa/migration card) and/or your US drivers license.

***Trap: PIN numbers**

For both credit cards and bank cards, inquire with the issuer to verify that the card is valid for an international banking system. And memorize your PIN in numbers not letters; Foreign number pads are often configured differently.

Personal Checks

If you have an American Express credit card and a checking account through a bank, you can sometimes cash personal checks at the AmEx office in Petersburg.

PART VI. PACKING AND BAGGAGE

Though airlines have various company limits regarding baggage weight, bear in mind that there is a law on the books that says that visitors to Russia may bring in only 35 kilograms of luggage duty-free (about 80 pounds) per person. In practical terms this means that people arriving by air will be charged for luggage over 35 kilos. The fee is about 4 Euros per a kilo payable in cash in euros, dollars or rubles. Furthermore, there is quite a hefty amount of paperwork to fill-out. The process takes time and is a hassle. Please pack light. CIEE strongly recommends that students limit the amount they bring in to 35 kilos.

Try to organize and pack a day or two prior to departure so that you can judge if you'll be able to carry your bags (you must be able to do this). Some students have even practiced by carrying their bags around the block! Also, by packing early you'll have time to rest before the long trip.

Consider using a backpack or duffel bag, especially if you are planning to travel on your own upon completion of the program; suitcases can be quite heavy even when empty. A knapsack or flight bag is great for carry-on luggage and for field trips. **On your flight to St. Petersburg, keep your essential medication, toiletries, and documents in this carry-on bag** in the event luggage is lost or delayed in transit. If possible, lock your luggage.

What are the baggage limits?

Read the above note first. If you choose to bring more than the duty-free limit of 35 kilograms, note that airline limits vary. Read the weight limitation and baggage allowance information provided by your international airline carrier. Generally flights

overseas permit two pieces of checked baggage and one carry-on piece. Usually, each checked bag must weigh less than 50 pounds. Total dimensions (length + width + height) of the first piece must be less than 62 inches, and the second piece less than 52 inches. Total dimensions of the carry-on must not exceed 45 inches and must be able to fit below the seat in front of you or in the overhead compartment. If your baggage exceeds any of these standards you may be charged for excess baggage. Check with your airline regarding any items that are oversized.

What should I pack?

For a complete list of what to take, please see the Suggested Packing Checklist at the end of this handbook. Experienced travelers agree take all the essentials you might need. You can get almost everything else in St. Petersburg and Vytegra (but our time for shopping will be very limited).

Climate and clothing:

St. Petersburg and Vytegra have very changeable and unpleasant weather. A rule of thumb in St. Petersburg is to always carry both an umbrella and sunglasses because the weather can change in a split second. Winters are long, cold, and unpleasantly damp/snowy, and much of our time will be spent out of doors walking rather long distances from site to site. In a typical year, the weather begins getting cold around the beginning of October and remains cold until the end of April.

All students should pack a winter coat, preferably one that is waterproof. Clothing, as with most goods in Russia, is much more expensive than in the US, so don't plan on buying it in Russia. We recommend packing lots of versatile layers: t-shirts, long-sleeved shirts, sweaters, raincoat, warm winter coat, warm hat and mittens/gloves.

St. Petersburg does not get much snow and the little snow that does fall melts within a few days into very inconvenient puddles. St. Petersburg is much more like the Pacific Northwest than North Dakota weather-wise. Think rainy, damp, slushy, sleety rather than the stereotypical Dr. Zhivago-like deep-snow in winter (save that image for Vytegra). The temperature in St. Petersburg never really gets that cold (it rarely dips below zero degrees Fahrenheit), but with an average humidity level around 90 percent, the cold can be felt in your bones. Petersburg is not a city for flip-flops! Vytegra's climate is much colder with more snow on the ground from early October until April. Streets in Russia are not cleaned very well in the winter, so you will need proper water-proof winter boots to get around.

Choose warm, comfortable, and practical clothing that wears well. Choose each type of clothing carefully. Versatility is the key, and a layered approach works well. You can save packing space by coordinating your clothing so that shirts and sweaters can be worn with different skirts and pants. While you do need to pack for cold weather, you'll be surprised at how little is really necessary.

You will spend a lot more time walking around outdoors than Americans usually do, so choose comfortable shoes. For winter wear, resident staff recommend a weather-proof shoe, perhaps ankle-high (or higher for women), that is comfortable but also dressy. A good winter jacket is also recommended—preferably a layered one with a waterproof shell and down liner. These types of jackets are more expensive to buy in Russia than in the US.

Every student coming on the program should bring with them, either galoshes or waterproof shoes (such as ankle-high dress shoes or women's boots). Other than style (which is usually understated business-like black shoes for men and boots for women), the most important thing is that students' footwear be waterproof.

Additionally, students should consider bringing ice creepers (one common brand is YakTrax). These are bands of rubber with metal spikes or spirals that can be slipped on shoes to allow the person to walk more easily on ice. This will keep you from falling when the slush freezes and there's a layer of ice on the sidewalk and it's raining (a.k.a. VERY SLIPPERY!).

We strongly recommend that you purchase these items in the US as they will cost MUCH MORE in Russia.

It is customary in Russia to take one's shoes off when entering an apartment and put on slippers (*tapochki*). Students may want to bring a pair of slippers with them to Russia. Flip-flops or shower shoes also come in handy, as the bathroom floors in some of the hotels won't be pristine.

Remember that dark clothing is easiest to keep clean. You will have to weigh your dislike for frequently washing socks, stockings, and underclothing against the space and weight limitations involved in bringing many changes. More frequent laundering will allow space for more variety in exterior clothing, so decide which is more important to you. There will be no laundry facilities at the hotels where we will be staying, so bring a small amount of Woolite for handwashing (a small amount goes a long way!).

Dark clothing is not very visible during the dark wintertime, when the sun goes down at 4pm and rises at 10am, so consider packing reflective strips to apply to your jacket.

Dry cleaning is inconvenient, less reliable, and more expensive than in the United States. Thus, choose machine and hand-washable, permanent press, and drip-dry materials. While traveling, you may be hand washing your clothes quite frequently. Laundry detergent is readily available for reasonable prices; however, you may want to pack a small stain remover stick.

U.S. students have often said they have taken too much clothing. Don't forget that nothing ruins traveling abroad more than having too much luggage, especially when you have to carry it yourself (and neither of the two hotels we will be staying at have elevators!). I would suggest limiting yourself to a standard carry-on suitcase on wheels

for easier travelling. And since we will be going away for 10 days only, it's certainly feasible.

Dressing Up: Recent study-abroad participants suggest bringing a dressy outfit to wear for working at the schools or going out to restaurants/farewell dinners/cultural events. Russians dress up when they go out, and in comparison many Americans feel under-dressed. On the other hand, some male students feel they could have managed just fine without a sport coat or blazer, which is bulky to pack. Some of the field trips include visits to historically important monasteries where women are expected to wear long skirts and a head scarf. Often the monastery will provide these, but it is a good idea to bring your own in any event.

Overall, Russians dress up more than Americans—not just at the opera, Russians dress up for class, going to bars or even just walking on the street. Black dress shoes are much more the norm than sneakers in Petersburg and calf-high leather high-heeled boots are basically the rule for women in the winter months. Russian women tend to wear more makeup than their American counterparts and cosmetics and perfume stores are ubiquitous. Female students are usually surprised by the style of Russian women. The comfortable, baggy, sweatshirt look is not as popular in Russia as it is in the US. Most Russian women (and some men) wear calf-high (or higher) leather boots in the wintertime. If you are planning on buying this sort of boots, they will probably be cheaper to purchase in the US.

As stated previously, clothing is more expensive to buy in Russia than in the US. Discount outlets, inexpensive stores to buy basics, and conveniently located shopping malls don't really exist in St. Petersburg and we won't really have time to look for good deals on clothing.

Participants say...

Russians dress very stylishly; forget the stereotype. Bring a few nice things; some of my teachers wanted to know why Americans dress so badly, always in T-shirts and jeans.

Jewelry: Do not take expensive or elaborate jewelry with you to Russia. Not only might it be lost or stolen, such jewelry will rarely be appropriate.

Toilet Articles:

For both men and women, most common toiletries are readily available. Bring your own supply only if you are particular about a certain brand. You will find that liquid hand sanitizer will come in very handy as will Febreze since restaurants and bars can be rather smoky.

Birth Control:

If you are sexually active and use a particular brand, bring your own contraceptives. Contraceptives are available without prescription in Russia, but note that STDs (sexually

transmitted diseases) are quite common, so it is important to be protected. Condoms can be found at the check-out counter at most small grocery stores in the city.

Contact Lenses: If you wear contacts, while lens solution is available, you may want to bring some for the time in transit. We discourage long-wear contact lenses because of the likelihood of eye irritation from pollution.

Cameras and Film: Be sure to try out your camera before you leave home. For film cameras, fast, sensitive film (400 speed or higher) is a must since flashes are prohibited in many museums and other buildings. Film is widely available. Digital photo developing is ubiquitous as are internet cafes for uploading digital photos to the Internet.

Books: Russian books are still relatively inexpensive in Russia and almost all English language books are more expensive than in the United States. Past participants have found that they bought more books than they had expected. Program staff will also assist students if they wish to ship their books and extra clothing home at the end of the trip.

Linens: Bedding is provided, but you might want to bring your own towels. Big bath towels are not common in Russia, so you may want to bring one or buy one when you arrive. Most Russian pillows are stuffed with down; so if you're allergic, bring your own pillow.

Electrical Appliances: The current in St. Petersburg and Vytegra, as in nearly all of Europe, is 220 volts, 50-cycle AC. Electric converters and adapter plugs must be used to connect North American equipment running at 120 volts. An adapter is used to make a US appliance plug fit into a foreign socket. It does not convert voltage, but simply allows the plug to fit in the foreign socket. Russian outlets are the standard European type with two round holes (see —Type C on this link <http://users.telenet.be/worldstandards/electricity.htm#plugs>). Adapters can be found at most major department stores in the United States. We recommend that you take several to Russia as they are needed to plug in laptops and can be easily misplaced. They are not easy to find in Russia.

A converter is a device that converts the 220- volt currency coming out of a Russian power socket into the 120-volts that a US appliance is designed to use. If you plan to bring any electrical appliance (hair straightener, for instance) from home, check the voltage. Most travel appliances (including laptop computers), almost all electric razors, and many travel hair dryers are dual voltage, meaning that they are designed to be used with a variety of voltages and therefore do not require a converter (on the plug look for —INPUT: 100-240V). Note that even if your item is dual voltage, it will still require a plug adapter to plug into a Russian wall outlet.

If you are taking devices that are not dual voltage, be sure that you pack at least one power converter. These can be found in US department and travel stores, and are not easily purchased in Russia. Note that converters are only meant to be used for short periods of time (usually 45-60 minutes) and should be unplugged when not in use. A

converter must be used in conjunction with an adapter in order to plug a US appliance into a Russian wall outlet.

If you are buying any new electrical items to bring with you, try to get dual-voltage models so you won't need a converter at all, though you will still need the adapter plug.

The simple solution for American devices such as hair dryers is to manage without them in Russia, although you can buy step-down transformers if you really must use such a device; however, transformers are very heavy and get very hot. For computers and other electronic devices, check the charger. If it is labeled "110-240 V 50-60 HZ", then it can be used to charge your device in Russia. Most computer power supplies and similar charging devices are compatible with Russian electricity, but DO CHECK. However, even with a compatible device, you will still need a converter plug, that will enable you to plug your device into the round-pin "Europlug"-style sockets used in Russia. Such converter plugs can be readily bought in stores such as Radio Shack. It is always worthwhile to take a few, since they are easy to leave behind, and if you don't have any, you can't charge your laptop, camera, IPOD, etc.

Mementos from home:

Bring things from home that you can share with the kids at schools we will be working at. This includes pictures of yourself and your family in the United States, recipes you like to cook, typical items from your community, college, or region of the United States, and items related to talents you have and wish to share.

Participants say...

Bring English-language material if you want to read any English. Bring a good dictionary and textbook. Waterproof shoes and lots of socks are a must. Bring peanut butter and silk long underwear. Bring more dress clothes than you think you will need; people dress up to go out.

Gifts:

Russians customarily give gifts to their guests, even those of short acquaintance. It is appropriate to reciprocate. When visiting someone's home for the first time, e.g., for dinner, you may show courtesy by bringing a modest bouquet of flowers, a bottle of wine, or a box of chocolates. Before leaving the States, consider bringing a small supply of typically American items that you can give as gifts to special little friends you meet and teachers at schools.

Some good choices:

□ Books and printed matter: Art or photograph books, a pictorial guide to your region/state, calendars, day planners are usually appreciated. A few Russians read English and a current novel or poetry anthologies can be good, but in general English is not read broadly.

- Music: current American popular music especially jazz, rock, folk music.
- Other suggestions: American regional items, e.g., Vermont Maple Syrup, gourmet coffee beans, teas, scarves; T-shirts, key chains, magnets and other memorabilia from your university and hometown.

*Tip: Passport and credit card numbers

Remember: leave a copy of your passport and a list of credit card numbers at home.

PART VII. PREPARING FOR CULTURAL ADAPTATION

Although cultural adaptation is highly individual, research indicates that most people go through similar stages in adapting to a new environment. Any travel you've done abroad, and perhaps even within your own country, has exposed you to culture shock. But if you've never had to overcome culture shock, you might want to read about it before you depart. You'll find books relating to cultural adaptation and culture shock on the recommended reading list at the back of this handbook.

During your on-site orientation, the resident staff will discuss details about culture shock and give strategies for adapting to your new surroundings. Near the end of the program, they will also provide information on reverse culture shock and suggest ways of coping with returning home. Participants say... If you come with an open mind it is an incredible experience, but if you expect it to be like what you are used to, it will be disappointing. The sad truth is that many people overseas have a terrible impression of Americans, so many American travelers I know try their best in a lot of ways to change their perception. Take everything in stride. It might take all afternoon to get one errand done, but you will acclimate to it and survive.

Participants say... You can never be prepared for life in Russia. A sense of humor and a boatload of patience are the best things to bring.

LIVING IN ST. PETERSBURG AND VYTEGRA

Remember, you are in another country with its own laws and customs, and they are different from the ones you're used to. Be aware of this and conduct yourself accordingly. Also, be sure to attend mandatory daily debriefings and participate in all program activities – they are aimed at preparing you for dealing with these differences.

The orientation described above will also cover practical aspects of living in a new place, Russian laws, proper social conduct, and cultural differences, including race, gender, and class. For example, some past student travellers have found that many Russian nationals had a distorted and stereotyped image of U.S. women, often acquired through advertising, television, and movies. The resident staff will provide insights into the local culture's view of women and suggest ways to reduce anxiety and to ensure personal safety.

While some aspects of Russian life may look Western on the outside, many things still operate by the Soviet method; and Russian bureaucracy can be extremely frustrating.

Russia has a long way to go before it becomes a completely efficient democracy, so patience, flexibility, and understanding are crucial to a positive experience.

Schedules will change at the last minute, there may be times when there is no hot water, and the food can get repetitive. The more you can go with the flow, the better off you and the rest of the group will be.

Participants say...

If you don't have a good sense of humor be prepared for a rough time. Cold showers and overcrowded buses can be very frustrating.

Be prepared for the unexpected-anything can happen and probably will. Keep in mind that you may not always be comfortable during your stay. Also remember that Russians have their own values and their own customs, and often these differ greatly from the Western values and customs with which you are familiar. Understanding this intellectually and actually living within a foreign cultural and political system are two very different things. You may often feel frustrated with the Russian way of doing things and think that your way is superior. As much as is possible, approach situations with a Russian mind-set. If you keep a sense of humor and an open mind, you'll end up learning a great deal, both about your host country and about yourself.

Russian society is going through many changes, not all of them pleasant. Ethnic tensions and prejudices -- some of them centuries old, others a legacy of the Soviet years, and still others of more recent origin,-- are emerging. At times this stress shows up as resentment toward Africans, Americans, Asians, Jews, or people from the Caucasus region. You may encounter some people with these prejudices, but most Russians are open-minded. There is a small extremist element in Russian society, and in recent years Petersburg, like other large Russian cities, has witnessed ethnic violence - including some murders. Again, this is not common, but program staff is very aware of the phenomenon, and the topic will be covered in orientation and during safety meetings throughout your stay in Russia.

MEETING RUSSIANS

Just as it is impossible to define a typical American, it is equally impossible to define a typical Russian. You will meet many types of people in Russia who have different opinions, attitudes, and habits. The more you interact with Russian people, the better chance you'll have of forming relationships and understanding the culture. During these interactions use common sense, intelligence, and a sense of objectivity. Be prepared to discuss your views freely and openly, and try to listen with an open mind.

You may arrive in Russia with some preconceptions about Russians and may encounter some Russians with preconceptions about people from the United States. Try to put aside stereotypes and make judgments based on real experiences. If you are confronted with what you feel is a false stereotype about the United States, be frank and truthful, yet tactful in your response. Avoid refuting arguments with odious comparisons to Russia.

This type of response will only create bad feelings. A positive and serious response from you will help dispel myths about the United States.

Volunteering and being engaged in the cultural programming are certainly two of the best ways for you to meet Russians. Be prepared to be outgoing and forward. Russians can be cautious with people they have just met (especially people in northern towns, like Vytegra). If you are going to come to Russia, you have to come with a positive attitude and a laid back mindset. Those who were least happy dwelled on inconveniences, were easily frustrated and did not come prepared for a completely different experience.

Making friends with the other members of our group is an integral part of the program, especially due to how much time you will spend together. Get everyone's address before you leave Russia; you'll want to contact friends when you get home.

Special Note to Women

Since women do not have the same status or role in Russia as in the United States, some female students may experience difficulties. Many Russians do not understand that the U.S.-style familiar manner with strangers is merely a gesture of friendliness. Outgoing behavior may be misconstrued as something more. A smile at a stranger could possibly be misunderstood as an invitation to spend the evening together. Some female participants have reported harassment by men on the streets. Program staff encourage students to use the buddy system if going out during free time periods and for returning home late at night to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

Special Note to Minorities

Students that are members of ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, gay and lesbian students, or overweight students may face particular difficulties studying abroad in Russia. Russian society is very homogeneous, and Russians often stare at people who look different. Program staff are sensitive to these issues and will provide as much information and support as possible. Feel free to contact Program coordinator before your program starts to discuss any concerns you may have with regard to this issue.

Participants say...

Be careful, Petersburg can be a dangerous city. For women especially, the sense of personal space is very different. And sexual harassment is rampant. Never go anywhere late at night alone.

CULTURE SHOCK

Russia is very different from the United States, and St Petersburg is very different from Russia. Even if you are an experienced traveler, be ready for some surprises (both pleasant and unpleasant), and try to be flexible. OIP has some wise words on the subject:

“Most people experience some form of culture shock when living abroad. Symptoms can include homesickness, irritability, and irrational behavior due to

feelings of anxiety, isolation, and apprehension over integrating into a different culture. This is to be expected since you will be adjusting to your new “home away from home.” You will be in a foreign environment with different surroundings and living conditions. Each day will present a new challenge that at first may seem overwhelming. However, this is a normal phase of adjustment. It may take you a few days or weeks to become accustomed to your new way of life. Everyone adjusts to culture shock in different ways depending on their personality. You should be aware that culture shock can be especially severe when you are also experiencing jet lag.

In order to reduce the impact of culture shock, there are a variety of things you can do to make your acclimation as smooth as possible. Above all, learn about your host country ahead of time. Before you depart you should try to prepare mentally for temporarily relocating overseas. If you plan for and anticipate the challenges you may face, then you are likely to find yourself assimilating into your new culture more easily. Talking with past program participants – OIP/CGIS can help put you in touch —will be especially helpful. Remember to take pictures of family and friends as well as a few small token items from the U.S. Do not make hasty comparisons between the U.S. and your study abroad site. Once there, get involved with local groups and make new friends. Write down your thoughts in a journal, send postcards/letters home to family and friends and encourage them to write to you.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

You must be aware of local customs and traditions in your host country as well as in other countries you visit. Observe the way people do things where you are living and do not assume that behavior acceptable in the U.S. will be permissible elsewhere. Hand signals and body gestures have different connotations in various parts of the world. Time, space, rituals, economic class and social status also have symbolic meanings that are not universal, but rather may vary widely.

Individuals from different cultures may observe the same event but interpret its content and significance in very distinct ways. It is important that you try to understand the perspectives of others; avoid making assumptions based on American practices and try as best as you can to “fit in” to your new culture. Misunderstandings are bound to happen no matter how prepared you might be. Take your experiences in stride and then make adjustments in your future behavior. For example, when packing, keep in mind that articles of clothing with U.S. logos or emblems will make you easily identifiable as an American, which you may or may not want to advertise, depending on the situation.

A common mistake of Americans is to assume that everyone knows how to speak English and that they are comfortable doing so. In many parts of the world English is not the official language. The “Ugly American” often assumes that speaking loudly or slowly will help someone understand what is being said.

American travelers are fortunate that many people are able to speak English as well as their national language. However, it is in your best interest to make every effort to learn the language of your host country. (Of course, for many of you, learning another language is the principal reason for going abroad.) This will be appreciated by the nationals and will also help you assimilate into the local culture.

An equally common mistake is overuse of alcohol. While alcohol consumption is part of many cultures, in very few countries is it socially acceptable to be visibly intoxicated. Alcoholic beverages are usually viewed as a pleasant accompaniment to a meal or an occasion for social rituals such as toasts. Loud, public displays of drunkenness are considered distasteful, and a sign of immaturity.

Women in particular should be careful about this, because a woman visibly drunk in public may be considered fair game for unwanted familiarities.

Please remember these are only basic guidelines and suggestions for etiquette and should be viewed as a point of departure for learning about cultural differences. Do further research on your own to look at norms, customs and mores of specific countries. The International Center has a wide variety of resources on these issues. In addition, we will also be discussing cultural issues in the program-specific orientation meeting.

PART VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND MAIL

TELEPHONE

Calls to Russia can be expensive, although you can sign up for an inexpensive long distance plan. There is no need to bring a calling card from home to use in Russia. Russian calling cards are easy to buy, have instructions in English and are not expensive. A US calling card, no matter what they tell you, will be considerably more difficult to use in Petersburg than local cards, and you will be able to buy a card during orientation. You will also be able to call from the orientation site soon after you arrive. Please bear in mind that cell phone calls are much more expensive on calling cards than landline calls. Also St. Petersburg and Vytegra lies in the same time zone as Moscow, usually 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. When it's 4 p.m. in New York, it's midnight in St. Petersburg.

Mail is slow, but cheap (mail is delivered to Vytegra just twice a week). You will probably be home before your postcards, and mail sent to you after you leave the States will probably not reach you.

Mobile phones abound in Russia, where GSM phones are sold *unlocked*, and you can insert the SIM chip of your choice, usually with a pay-as-you-go account that you can top up in many stores. To call home from Russia, you are best advised to buy a calling card, because most mobile calling plans make overseas calls very expensive. Vytegra now has good mobile reception from the North of Russia's biggest mobile company, Megafon.

LAPTOPS AND E-MAIL

On the first day in Petersburg you will be provided with your own mobile phone with basic airtime coverage to make calls to the program director and other members of the group (all included in your program fee). All calls outside of the group participants and emergencies should be made using a calling card that you can purchase yourself in St. Petersburg. At the end of the trip you will be returning your phone to the program, so please look after it!

Laptops: You may wish to bring a laptop to show pictures/presentations during volunteer work in schools and for digital work at the Museums. There are many places in Petersburg that offer Wi-Fi access. Most of these cafes, restaurants and movie theaters offer Wi-Fi through a service provider (such as Quantum Wi-Fi) and you need to buy a card to access their network, while some spots offer free Wi-Fi as long as the customer buys a coffee or snack.

If you do plan to take a laptop, note that many insurance policies will not cover laptop servicing overseas. Bringing a laptop to Russia does bring with it some risk as computers are a highly coveted item and, as elsewhere, are stolen with some frequency. Your ISIC travel insurance covers baggage and personal effects but only to a limited amount which will not cover the full amount of laptop replacement. We recommend that you contact your current insurance provider to ask about additional coverage for your laptop and/or other expensive electronic items.

Not many places in Vytegra offer wireless internet (although it can be found in some big-city cafés), but internet cafés are quite common. Internet connections should be possible in Vytegra (for example, at the Post Office), but do not expect to have constant, easy access to the Internet and your email account. SMS communication between Europe and North America is unpredictable. For example, you will almost certainly not be able to send text messages to Verizon customers in the USA.

Make sure that all your electronic devices are properly insured, and be careful with your laptop, digital camera, etc. Just as everywhere else, thieves in Russia love travelers who are careless with expensive items.

POST OFFICE AND MAILING PROCEDURES

Mail service to and from Russia is unpredictable but getting better. Allow 2-3 weeks for letters to and from the United States. Letters often take longer than postcards, and sometimes they never arrive. Do not plan on having packages mailed to you. It is costly (custom duty can be 100% of the declared value or value as determined by Russian customs) and there is a chance they will never reach you. The U.S. Postal Service Express Mail, DHL, UPS, and Federal Express all deliver to St. Petersburg. The U.S. Postal Service is the least expensive, but you may want to register the letter in order to ensure delivery. You need also to understand that a courier service's advertised delivery date almost always means to the Russian border. All these services are at the mercy of Russian Customs, so in reality — "overnight" usually means ten days. Keeping all that in

mind, DHL, UPS and FedEx are expensive yet reliable (and trackable) ways to get important and time-sensitive items to St. Petersburg (for example, replacement ATM cards). CIEE staff in St. Petersburg does not recommend sending replacement ATM cards by U.S. Postal Service Express Mail since that service is not trackable within Russia. The Grand Hotel Europe in St. Petersburg offers a mail service. At the post office window located to the right of the main desk in the lobby, you may send letters home by purchasing Finnish stamps and having the letter sent through the hotel's mail courier service. Your mail will reach the United States, though this service is quite expensive (\$4.00 to send one letter).

Finally, if you have an American Express card you can receive mail-but not packages-through the American Express office in St. Petersburg. The office will not notify you upon receipt, so you must check for mail every week or so.

Ask your American Express agent for the address if you plan to use this option.

***Trap:** Don't mail cigarettes or alcohol. It is illegal to send cigarettes, medicine, money (including credit cards) or alcohol through the mail.

PART IX: GETTING AROUND/GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Local Transportation

In St. Petersburg we will be travelling as a group at all times (either on a coach or by metro). If you would like to venture out on your own, you will be given detailed information on navigating St. Petersburg's public transportation system during orientation and upon arrival in St. Petersburg. Between cities we will be using coaches.

City Public Transport (government-subsidized):

Metro, bus, trolleybus, and tram lines for St. Petersburg can be found on Google Maps.

Bus, Tram, Trolleybus:

As of October 2009, the price for one ride on a bus, tram or trolleybus was 18 rubles. The network of busses and trolleybuses is extensive. Trams are seldom used, known to be rather slow and many are being decommissioned.

Metro:

As of October 2009, the price of one ride on the metro was 20 rubles.

City Private Transportation (Commercial):

Marshrutka:

A marshrutka is a communal route taxi. As with a bus, the passenger pays upon entering, but unlike a bus, the passenger can flag down a marshrutka anywhere along its route and can ask it to stop anywhere along that route. As of October 2009, the price for one ride in a marshrutka is 26 rubles. Marshrutkas can be either 15-passenger vans or small mini-busses.

Transportation maps listing the routes of busses, trolleybuses, trams, and marshrutkas are available throughout the city. It is highly recommended that students buy one if they are planning to travel without the group.

RECOMMENDED READING

We urge you to read several of these publications to expand your knowledge of Russia and ease your adjustment to Russian culture. Many of these books can be purchased at your local bookstore or may be available for reference at your campus study abroad office or local library.

Books On Russian Culture and History

- Baker, Peter and Glasser, Susan. *Kremlin Rising* Scribner, 2005
- Darbas, Zita. *The Russian Way*. Passport Books, 1995.
- Figes, Orlando, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution*
- Figes, Orlando, *Natasha's Dance*
- Levin, Anatol, *Chechnya, Tombstone of Russian Power*
- Gerhart, Geneva *Life and Language*. (2nd edition) Harcourt, Brace and Co.
- Lourie, Richard. *Russia Speaks: An Oral History from the Revolution to the Present*. Harper Collins, 1991.
- Massie, Robert. *Peter the Great*.
- Nelson, Lynn and Kuzes, Irina. *Radical Reform in Yelstin's Russia*. M.E. Sharpe (Armonk, NY), 1995.
- Remnick, David. *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*. Vintage Books, 1993-94.
- Rice, Tamara. *A Concise History of Russian Art*.
- Shipler, David. *Russia: Broken Idols*. Solemn Dreams.
- Smith, Hedrick. *The New Russians*. Random House, 1990.
- Taubman. *Moscow Spring*. Summit Books, 1990.
- Ware, Timothy. *The Orthodox Church*. Penguin.
- Yeltsin, Boris. *Against the Grain: An Autobiography*. Summit Books, 1990.
- Yelstin, Boris. *The Struggle for Russia*. Times Books, 1994.
- Yergin, Daniel and Gustafson, Thane. *Russia 2010: What it Means for the World*. Vintage Books, 1993.

Some past participants have found it useful to take a copy of Khavronina's *Russian As We Speak It* and Muravyova's *Verbs of Motion* with them, as they are good sources of vocabulary for everyday situations. A good reference grammar (though a bit pricey) is Blackwell's *Russian Grammar* (look for a good used copy on the internet). If you don't speak any Russian, a good phrase book for basic communication may come in handy.

The *Blue Guide to Moscow and Leningrad*, published by W.W. Norton, is available in the United States and is a great source of cultural and historical information. An additional guide book that past participants have recommended as being particularly useful is the *Rough Guide to St. Petersburg*.

Books On Cultural Adaptation

Adaptation to a new culture can be difficult. The following reading list contains publications that deal specifically with issues of culture shock and the difficulties associated with living overseas. Many of these books can be purchased at your local

bookstore or may be available for reference at your campus study abroad office or local library.

□ Citron, James. Short-Term Study Abroad: Integration, Third Culture Formation and Reentry, NAFSA: Association for International Educators, 1996.

□ Kepets, Dawn. Back in the USA: Reflecting on Your Study Abroad Experience, NAFSA: Association for International Educators, 1999.

□ Kohls, Robert. Survival Kit for Overseas Living: For Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad, Intercultural Press, 2001.

□ Storti, Craig. The Art of Crossing Cultures (Second Edition), Intercultural Press, 2001.

□ Storti, Craig. The Art of Coming Home, Intercultural Press, 2001.

□ Wolfgang, Aaron. Everybody's Guide to People Watching, Intercultural Press, 1995.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Website

www.travel.state.gov

Description

The U.S. State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs home page providing Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, U.S. Passport Information and Application Procedures, U.S. Consulate and Embassy Addresses Abroad, and U.S. Customs Information.

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/overseas/links/>

The Overseas Studies Office at the University of Southern California maintains an extensive web site with a number of relevant links under topics including cross cultural information, currency conversion/ money abroad, financial aid, government sites, health and safety issues, insurance, passports and visas, phone codes and time zones, weather, and transportation.

www.xe.net/ucc

Current exchange rates.

www.cdc.gov

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Provides updated information on required immunization and regional health advisories for travelers.

www.russiatoday.com

Web based daily news magazine covering Russia and the CIS that includes daily press reviews, television reports, business news, and original articles.

www.interknowledge.com/russia

Official web site of the Russian National Tourist Office. Offers an overview of

www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/eur/stp.htm

<http://www.sptimes.ru/>

<http://www.afisha.ru>

<http://www.fontanka.ru>

<http://www.spb.timeout.ru>
www.glimpseabroad.org

<http://vologda-oblast.ru/main.asp?V=196&LNG=ENG>

Russia today and helpful travel tips.

On-line travel guide to St. Petersburg from the very respected Lonely Planet series of travel guides.

St. Petersburg Times on-line (English language newspaper).

A listing of local happenings in St. Petersburg.

Local news from St. Petersburg updated daily.

St. Petersburg's Time Out Magazine on-line. Shopping, style, movies, music, opera, ballet, art, gay & lesbian life, and sports in St. Petersburg. Updated bi-weekly.

International information provided by National Geographic
Guide to Vytegra in English

SUGGESTED PACKING CHECKLIST

Naturally you'll want to pack what best reflects your own life style and taste, but we recommends the following. Note that practically everything from the general list below is available in Russia, though probably more expensive than in the US. You can save a lot of space by planning to buy things like soap, batteries, contact lens solution and tissues in Russia.

*Many of these items are optional and depend on your own preferences. Nearly all are available in Petersburg and some in Vytegra. If you have any questions about packing please feel free to contact us.

Important Documents

- Airline ticket and a copy of your itinerary
- Copy of RUSLAN ASB handbook and final details email
- Credit (and/or ATM) card
- Passport (with Visa glued inside)
- Photocopy of passport and visa (keep separate from passport)
- Traveler's checks (if desired)/List of traveler's check numbers (keep separate)
- Driver's License (can be used as backup form of I.D.)

Clothing

- Boots, sturdy, water-resistant, good for walking
- Pajamas
- Pants including at least one dressy pair (men)
- Robe
- Shirts
- Shoes (including a dress pair)
- Shower sandals/"flipflops" and/or slippers (1 pair)
- Skirts or dresses including one dressy, with slip if necessary
- Socks
- Sport coat/blazer and tie
- Sweaters/sweatshirt/fleece
- Underwear
- Winter coat (waterproof)
- (optional) Dress winter coat
- gloves/hat/scarf
- (optional) YakTrax or other ice creepers for shoes or boots

General

- 110/220 volt current converter with European outlet adapter if needed
- Address book, including email
- Batteries
- Camera, charger, film, batteries, memory cards
- Contact lens solution
- Flashlight
- Gifts/Photos from home

- Glasses or contact lenses, extra pair, prescription
- Guidebook
- Hair dryer
- Medication you are taking and a copy of the prescriptions
- Medicine kit, small: antacid/anti-diarrhea medicine/aspirin/band-aids/antibacterial ointment/cold medicine
- Money belt/neck pouch
- Pocket and/or normal-sized Russian-English dictionary
- Sewing kit
- Towels (optional)
- Hand sanitizer, personal wipes
- Sunglasses, good pair

Miscellaneous*

- Travel Umbrella
- Travel alarm clock
- MP3/music Player
- Reading materials: books, magazines
- Contraceptives
- Gynecological supplies