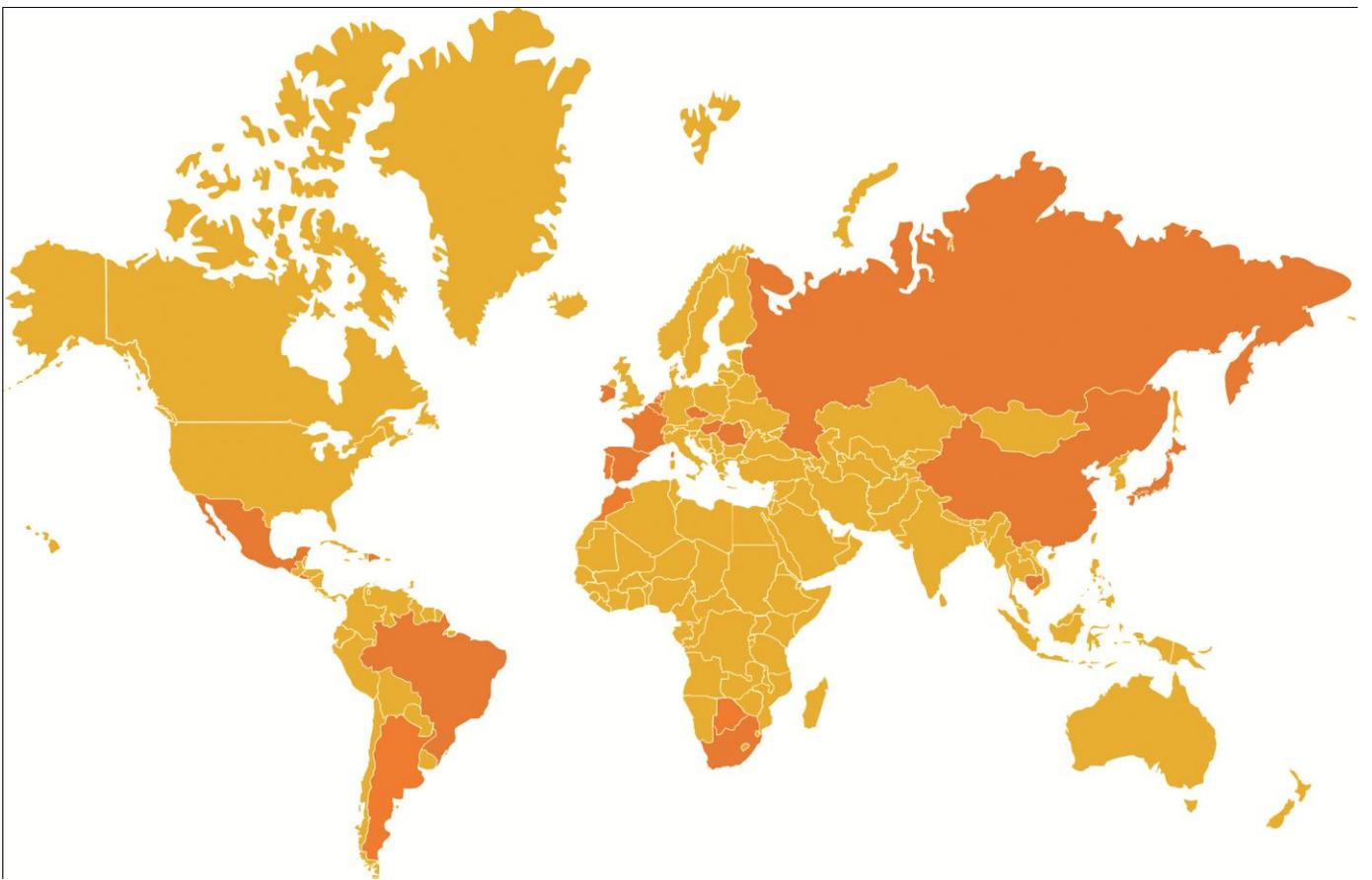


st. petersburg

russia

russian area studies / summer 2013



cīee

program handbook

CIEE Study Center at St. Petersburg State University

St. Petersburg, Russia

Part I: The CIEE Program in St. Petersburg	4
WELCOME TO YOUR ADVENTURE IN RUSSIA	4
Your Host: St. Petersburg State University	4
Academic Program	4
Faculty	4
Academic Culture.....	4
Class Locations.....	4
Class Hours	5
Field Trips	5
Meeting Other Students.....	5
THE CIEE PROGRAM	5
Departure and Arrival.....	5
Discount on Airfare	5
What happens when I arrive?	5
Online Pre-Departure Orientation	6
Orientation	6
CIEE's Office.....	6
CIEE Program Staff	6
Program Mailing Address	7
HOUSING AND MEALS	7
Homestay Housing.....	7
How can I best get along with my host?	8
Can I have guests?	9
What if I'm not happy with my housing?	9
What if I follow a special diet?.....	9
Part II: Before You Leave Home	9
A LOT TO LEARN	9
Get a Good Guidebook.....	10
Keep Up To Date	10
Tap Other Resources.....	10
Brush Up Your Russian	10
Check Travel Advisories	10
Be Informed about Home, Too	10
ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS.....	11
Passports	11
Visas	11
Documents for non-U.S. Citizens	12
Immunization Records	12
Student Identity Cards	12
Hostelling International Card	12
HEALTH.....	12
What health-related steps should I take before I leave?	12
What medical supplies should I take with me?	13
What other precautions should I take?	13
INSURANCE	14
Accident and Sickness Insurance.....	14
PERSONAL FINANCES.....	15
Cost of Living	15
What costs are included in my CIEE fee?	15
What expenses should I budget for?	15
CIEE Program Cost and Billing.....	15
Financial Arrangements.....	15
PACKING AND BAGGAGE.....	15
What are the baggage limits?	16
What should I pack?	16
PREPARING FOR CULTURAL ADAPTATION.....	18
Part III: Living in St. Petersburg	18

MEETING RUSSIANS.....	19
Special Note to Women.....	19
Special Note to Minorities.....	19
SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.....	20
COMMUNICATIONS AND MAIL.....	21
Telephone.....	21
Fax.....	21
Computers, Laptops, and E-mail.....	21
Post Office and Mailing Procedures.....	21
MONEY AND BANKING.....	22
Money.....	22
ATM/Bank Cards.....	22
Cash.....	22
Currency Exchange.....	22
Traveler's Checks.....	23
Credit Cards.....	23
Personal Checks.....	23
Transferring Money.....	23
MEDICAL FACILITIES.....	23
GETTING AROUND.....	23
Local Transportation.....	23
Independent Travel.....	24
Modes of Travel for Long Distance.....	24
Hotels and Hostels.....	24
DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM.....	24
VOTING WHILE ABROAD.....	24
INCOME TAX.....	25
EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION.....	25
Part IV: Policies and Procedures.....	25
A NOTE FROM CIEE.....	25
Credits and Grades.....	25
CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGE IS UP TO YOU.....	27
Part V: Additional Resources.....	28
RECOMMENDED READING.....	28
Books On Russian Culture and History.....	28
Books On Cultural Adaptation.....	28
USEFUL WEBSITES.....	29
Website.....	29
Description.....	29
SUGGESTED PACKING CHECKLIST.....	30

Part I: The CIEE Program in St. Petersburg

WELCOME TO YOUR ADVENTURE IN RUSSIA

You are about to embark on a great adventure, being in Russia at a time of historic change. This is an exhilarating time, but also a very challenging time. The Soviet Union is more than fifteen years gone, and Russia is dramatically different than it was a decade ago. St. Petersburg has benefited enormously. Although it still has some "Leningrad" left in it, Russia's northern capital is regaining its 19th century imperial splendor.

You will be studying at a Russian institution of higher learning and living among Russians. During your stay in St. Petersburg you will gain a real sense of what life is like for the average Russian, something few Americans will ever know.

Participants say...

Bring pictures; they are a good way to break the ice. Also, be prepared to accept that things are largely different from America.

Be open-minded, have fun, and don't drink the tap water!

Your Host: St. Petersburg State University

Like the city of Leningrad, Leningrad State University was given back its old name of St. Petersburg State University. Founded in 1819, St. Petersburg State University is one of Russia's leading institutions of higher learning. The campus has expanded from its original site on the Neva River to include over 400 buildings located at various sites around the old city center and the suburb of Peterhof. The university's 16 schools provide instruction for over 20,000 students from the former Soviet republics and around the world.

CIEE programs are housed at the Smolnyi Complex of St. Petersburg State University. The majestic buildings of the Smolnyi ensemble were commissioned by the Empress Elizabeth in 1744 as a nunnery to house orphans, and eventually grew to include Catherine the Great's Institute for the Education of Well-born Young Ladies. However, the Smolnyi complex is perhaps best remembered as the site from which Lenin and the Bolsheviks directed the October Revolution, serving as the seat of Soviet power until Lenin moved the government to Moscow in 1918.

Academic Program

Language Study: Students who choose to enroll in a Russian language class will receive language instruction from the Center of International Programs at the School of Political Science of St. Petersburg State University. Your level of language training is determined by a language proficiency test, administered at the beginning of the program.

Students taking a Russian language class are encouraged to speak Russian as much as possible both in and outside of the classroom. CIEE resident staff encourage students to use Russian during excursions and with their Russian host families.

Classes: All students are required to enroll in two courses—either two area studies courses or one area studies course and one language course. Russian language courses are taught in Russian and area studies courses are taught in English. Your classmates for these courses will be participants in the CIEE Summer Russian Area Studies program.

Faculty

The highly qualified faculty comes from St. Petersburg State University. They are very experienced at teaching Russian to foreign students.

Academic Culture

You'll hear this more than once: Teaching methods will be quite different from what you are used to. There tends to be less discussion and more memorization, a typical approach in most European universities. Relationships between students and teachers are more formal. Behavior that is taken for granted as normal in the United States may be considered quite rude in Russia. For example, students do not eat or chew gum in class; nor do they wear baseball caps or talk out of turn.

Class Locations

All instruction is offered through the Center of International Programs of the School of Political Science, St. Petersburg State University. Your classes are held at the Smolnyi campus located at Smolny Cathedral on the east side of St. Petersburg.

To get to classes you can take a free university-owned shuttle busses (from the Chernyshevskaya metro station).

Class Hours

Students attend classes five days a week with one afternoon reserved for cultural activities. Classes are 90 minutes in length.

Participants say...

I thought all of the teachers were wonderful and truly enhanced the experience

Take your own initiative because it's over before you know it.

Field Trips

You can expect to take two overnight field trips: one to Moscow and one trip to Valaam. The schedule of excursions and field trips is handed out at orientation or shortly after, but typical excursions include a city bus tour, the Hermitage, the Peter and Paul Fortress, Pavlock, Peterhof, the Yusupov Palace, a walking tour of Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, Pushkin's Apartment Museum, and the Baltika Brewery. Additionally, CIEE staffs arrange other activities for students, such as a Russian cooking class and tickets to concerts, ballets, and sports events.

Meeting Other Students

Taking part in student activities is a great way to meet Russian students.

During the summer, the university is not as active, but students meet their Russian peers by teaching English, volunteering, and taking part in the *sobesedniki* program (Conversation Partners program).

THE CIEE PROGRAM

Departure and Arrival

How do I get there?

The cost of transportation to and from the program is not included in the CIEE program fee. You will need to provide CIEE with your travel itinerary as soon as you purchase your ticket. Please fill out the Flight Arrival Information survey on your online CIEE account once you have purchased your ticket.

Note that due to the potential for major immigration complications, CIEE does not permit students to enter Russia by train at the start of the program. All students must arrive in Russia by air.

The CIEE St. Petersburg summer program has a required two week orientation the first two days of which are spent at the Crowne Plaza

“St. Petersburg – Airport” hotel near Pulkovo Airport.. **To be on time for the first group dinner, students should plan to arrive at the St. Petersburg Pulkovo Airport (LED) before 6:00pm on the start date of the program.**

Note: students cannot arrive earlier than their visa start date. If you have questions or concerns about your travel plans, please contact your CIEE Study Abroad Advisor and refer to the FAQ section of the Visa and Immigration Info document in the Readings section of your online account. Please also refer to the *Program Dates, Details and Arrival Information* document.

Participants say...

Our professors were impressive, knowledgeable people.

Listen to the radio if you can get one, it's a good way to pick up the language.

Discount on Airfare

As a part of your program fees you will receive an iNext (www.iNext.com) insurance card/student ID that allows a \$15.00 discount on flights costing \$100.01 to \$249.99 and a \$25.00 discount on flights costing \$250.00 or more when you purchase your airfare through Student Universe (www.studentuniverse.com). To take advantage of the discount, type “iNext” in the Promo Code text box when you finalize your reservation. Student Universe is a travel agency that offers plane tickets at a reduced student rate. Aside from Student Universe's already discounted student fares and the iNext discount, most Student Universe tickets allow changes to the ticket for as little as \$50. If you have one of these tickets, you can make your plans to travel independently even after you have already arrived on-site. Your iNext card is valid for 365 days and the code can be applied towards any two airfares purchased while you are covered by iNext.

What happens when I arrive?

Students should make their flight reservation to arrive on the date and time indicated in the Program Dates, Details and Arrival Information document located under the “Readings” section of your online CIEE account. **Due to strict visa regulations, students cannot arrive in Russia any earlier than the start date of the program.** Those students whose arrival coincides with the stated times will be greeted by the CIEE staff at the St. Petersburg Pulkovo 2 International Airport (airport code: LED).

Whatever your travel plans, you are responsible for getting to the hotel on time for the first orientation session.

You may change money for rubles at the airport. You may also get rubles from ATMs at the airport and at Crowne Plaza “St. Petersburg – Airport” hotel where orientation will be held.

Detailed arrival and orientation information will be emailed to students in a “Final Details” email sent out two weeks prior to departure. CIEE highly discourages travel through Moscow because the consequences of lost luggage are much more complicated when arriving to St. Petersburg’s Pulkovo 1 domestic terminal. If the proper paperwork is not filled out for a student’s lost luggage when transiting through Moscow, students will have to pay 4 EUROS per kilogram in customs duty to reclaim their lost luggage.

Online Pre-Departure Orientation

You will begin your study abroad experience in St. Petersburg before even leaving home—by participating in a CIEE Online Pre-Departure Orientation. Meeting with students online, the student services staff share information about the program and site, highlighting issues that alumni have said are important, and giving students time to ask any questions before leaving home. The online orientation allows you to connect with others in the group, reflect on what you want to get out of the program, and learn what others in the group would like to accomplish. The CIEE goal for the pre-departure orientation is simple: to help students understand more about the program and site, as well as their goals for the program, so that they arrive to the program well-informed and return home having made significant progress toward their goals.

Orientation

All students must attend the intensive training at the beginning of the orientation period, conducted at a hotel in the southern part of St. Petersburg. If you are delayed en route to the orientation site, you must leave a message with the Resident Director, or the CIEE home office who can then relay the message to the Resident Staff as soon as you realize you will be late.

Fellow participants of the Area Studies program, as well as participants in the Russian Language program will be at orientation together.

During orientation, the resident staff will provide a structured introduction to the country, the culture, and the academic program. They’ll 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
- Academic information relating to the program and the university
- Local tours and guided visits in order to help with adjustment
- Housing information and assistance.
- Practice with city public transportation, familiarizing students with places and routes around the city.

Individual orientation continues throughout the program.

Tip: Phone home

When you arrive, it is a good idea to call or email your parents. A brief phone call telling them that you have arrived and are fine will relieve them of any worries. At this time you can also pass along exact information on how they may reach you.

CIEE's Office

Location: The CIEE office in St. Petersburg is located at the Center of International Programs, School of Political Science on the Smolny campus of St. Petersburg State University, ul. Smolnogo 1/3, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Office Phone: +7 (812) 576-4494

CIEE Program Staff

The Resident Director, appointed by CIEE in consultation with the academic consortium, supervises and administers the program. The members of the resident staff have extensive experience in the former USSR and Russia. They can assist you with academic, administrative, and personal matters.

Resident Director

A native of Moscow, Irina Makoveeva received her Masters Degree in Russian Philology and Comparative Linguistics from the Moscow Lomonosov State University and her Doctoral Degree in Slavic and Film Studies from the University of Pittsburgh. Her dissertation *Visualizing Lev Tolstoi's Anna Karenina* reveals her interest in popular-culture adaptations of canonical literary texts. While her first publications focus on problems of translation and methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language, her recent articles explore various aspects of Soviet and post-Soviet culture. Throughout her long academic career,

she has taught various courses on Russian literature, culture, cinema, and all levels of Russian language at such schools as Moscow State Mining University, the Moscow Lomonosov State University, Virginia Tech, the University of Pittsburgh, and Vanderbilt University. While at Moscow State Mining University, she also served as a Vice Dean of the International Office. Her desire to expand American students' classroom experience culminated in her directing the Virginia Tech Summer Study Abroad Program in Russia for five years.

Student Services Manager

A native of Maine, Jarlath McGuckin has traveled widely in Eastern/Central Europe, primarily as a participant on the CIEE study abroad programs in St. Petersburg and Prague. Jarlath speaks Russian and received his degree in Russian and Political Science from the University of Rochester in 2002 and his Masters in Russian Area Studies from the European University at St. Petersburg in 2009. Jarlath has served CIEE as Assistant for External Relations and Campus Relations Coordinator in the Portland, Maine office. Jarlath moved to St. Petersburg in June of 2006. In his free time, Jarlath can be found playing in the local rock band The Dudes, or DJing at clubs in St. Petersburg.

Student Services Assistant

Student Services Assistant Katya Rubtsova joined the CIEE Study Center in 2009. A graduate from the Tula Lev Tolstoy State Pedagogical University with the major in teaching foreign languages, she has quickly become an indispensable member of the team aptly assisting CIEE students in their everyday endeavors. Twice she travelled to the USA as a participant of CIEE Summer Program. Her unflinching enthusiasm and energy allow her to successfully fulfill her life goal to serve people.

Program Mailing Address

Student's Name, CIEE
School of Political Science
St. Petersburg State University
1/3 ul. Smolnogo, Sedmoj Pomezd
St. Petersburg 191124
RUSSIA

Participants say...

Definitely make the effort to speak as much Russian as possible. Make the effort to get to know Russians.

HOUSING AND MEALS

You will find out your housing assignment during orientation in Russia. Thus you will not know your housing address before you depart for Russia. Have your mail sent to the program address as it is the most reliable address.

To provide the highest level of linguistic and cultural immersion, all CIEE students live with a Russian family. CIEE has a few host families with limited English.

The homestay families are pre-screened by CIEE staff and matches are made according to information provided by you in the online housing survey. It is therefore critical that you fill out the online housing form or risk being placed with a family that does not suit your needs. The form is found on your MY CIEE online checklist. On your checklist, you will also find a form for you to write a letter to your Russian homestay family. Excerpts from your Russian letters to the host families are read to the prospective hosts over the phone by the Housing Coordinator prior to your arrival.

Homestay Housing

In the homestay you'll have a single room in a comfortable Russian urban apartment. Living in private homes is considered the best of the housing possibilities in St. Petersburg because of its practicality and its contribution to the program objectives.

The houses are comfortable, but expect differences from what you are used to. Homes are generally smaller or more crowded. Soviet-era apartment buildings sometimes look rather shabby on the outside but are usually warm and cozy (and very modern) on the inside. The old adage should be used: "Don't judge a book by its cover!"

In the summertime, be prepared for some housing quirks that all Petersburgers have to deal with:

- The city of St. Petersburg shuts off the centralized hot water system in different neighborhoods over the course of the summer in order to clean the old corroding water pipes that run under the city streets. The hot water is shut off for differing periods of time, but usually for an average of a couple weeks. Most host families are not affected by this since they have a hot water boiler in their apartments.
- Though St. Petersburg lays astride rivers and canals and is built on a

swamp, many apartments are not fitted with modern window screens to keep out the plentiful mosquitos. Students combat this as all other Petersburgers do: with plug-in mosquito killers.

How can I best get along with my host?

During the orientation, you will receive housing guidelines; the host family will be given the same guidelines before you move in with them. It is very important that you respect these guidelines.

Of course you want to be well received by your host family. It is important to remember that although you will most likely be treated as another member of the family, you will also be treated to some extent as a guest in their home. Be considerate of your host family and respect their concerns. The following will help avoid problems:

- Bring a small introductory gift for your host family (picture book, region specific souvenirs, candy). Throughout the semester you might occasionally bring flowers, fruits, a small cake or candies for your hosts.
- Phone ahead or leave a note if you will be missing or be late for a meal, or if you will be coming home late at night. Families usually expect you to be home at a reasonable hour, especially on weeknights. Please respect their concerns. It may make your host parents uncomfortable to have you coming and going at all hours of the night.
- Respect your host family's belongings. Remember to ask permission to use stereos and other equipment or to go into the rooms of members of your host families.
- Be aware that it is not appropriate to enter the rooms of members of the opposite sex, even if they are brothers or sisters in your host family.
- Don't leave things in the bathroom unless advised to do so. Your host family will show you where to leave them.
- Laundry expenses are included in the compensation paid to the hosts. However, you are only allotted two to three loads of presorted laundry per week. Almost all the hostesses won't

allow you to use their washing machine on your own.

- If you smoke, ask where it's permissible. All University's buildings are smoke free.
- To feel secure in your new home, put your valuables (money, traveler's checks, passport, etc.) in a safe place. Your host family cannot be held responsible for theft and neither can CIEE. Please bring luggage locks so you can lock valuables in your suitcase or your closet. CIEE will also hold your valuables in its office safe if you ask.
- Don't develop the habit of lending money to or borrowing money from your host family.

Moving in will involve some adjustments that may be hard at first. Imagine yourself moving back with your own family to live, particularly after having had independence to do things without your family's immediate influence. You must be prepared to live by your hosts' rules. Try to handle difficulties that come up on your own. Your hosts may not intuitively understand your needs (for example, you may have trouble finding space to store all you bring with you), so communicate your concerns and work things out with them. Only after attempting to resolve any problems by yourself, should you ask help of the resident staff.

One discussion that is difficult to have, but which students have said helps a lot, is to talk about the hosts' expectations in having you stay with them, and yours in wanting to stay there. Watch out for a tendency to immediately criticize what is different from your own standards. You may find some things you have trouble accepting, but at least try to understand and interpret in terms of societal and cultural differences. One example is the attitude toward bread, especially, but to food in general. There are still thousands of elderly residents of St. Petersburg who lived through the World War II Siege of Leningrad, military history's longest, during which millions starved to death or barely survived on a few ounces of bread a day. While the memory is fading, that trauma has influenced attitudes toward food. Bread in many ways represents food in general, and Russians tend to be much more sensitive about throwing away food and bread in particular, than many Americans. Laundry is another topic that sometimes comes up. These sorts of questions are dealt with during orientation, but it is good to

remember that all sorts of things can come up that require tact and patience.

Can I have guests?

Overnight guests are not allowed in homestays. If you are planning to have guests during your stay in Russia do not assume that they may stay with you in your family housing. In most cases it is preferable and most comfortable for everybody if friends and family stay in a hotel. If you would very much like for them to stay with you, please ask the Program Director and your host family in advance, and be prepared to compensate them for the extra expenses.

Ask your host family upon arrival about bringing friends over, until what time they can stay, and if they permit friends of the opposite sex to come over. (This does not mean sleeping over, which is never permitted.) Don't abuse their home by having a constant parade of friends come through. Always ask your host's permission before bringing a friend over to eat dinner, and if you do have a friend over, be sure to bring something (a kilo or so of fruit is a nice touch).

What if I'm not happy with my housing?

Living with Russians is one of the most important parts of your learning experience in Russia. You have to adapt on a day-to-day basis to another culture, another mentality, another way of facing problems and making decisions. You will be exposed to other points of view and be closely involved with people from a different culture. We believe that if you are happy in your living situation, your studies will progress faster and your adjustment to living in St. Petersburg will be easier. It will also add to your understanding of Russia and greatly enhance your overall experience.

If you are uncomfortable with your housing arrangements, please discuss the situation with the resident staff immediately. Cultural differences and misunderstandings arise. Each house has been rated by the students who lived there before you. Please be aware that simply because a prior student has recommended a particular house does not necessarily mean it is the best place for you. If you have a problem that you haven't been able to work through with your host family, do not hesitate to talk to the Resident Staff. The Resident Staff are there to help, and will help you move to other housing if necessary.

Participants say...

I feel like my experiences were very challenging (understanding the language, understanding the Russian cultural differences, learning to live in a small space with a Russian family, etc), but that I gained a lot of perspective of Russian culture in addition to improving my language skills.

Tip: Try it!

Have an open mind and taste everything you are offered before you decide whether or not you like it. Russian cuisine is quite delicious, and you may miss out on a wonderful culinary experience if you reject something because you've never had it before.

What if I follow a special diet?

For participants with special dietary needs, CIEE and St. Petersburg State University staff will make every effort to find a suitable situation. Homestays for most vegetarians are not difficult to arrange.

Vegetarians will 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 cafés and restaurants.

Part II: Before You Leave Home

A LOT TO LEARN

Preparing for study abroad entails a lot more than just packing a suitcase. In fact, the thought and effort you put into preparing yourself will largely determine the success of the program you are embarking upon. At CIEE, we will do everything we can to provide you with the information you require prior to departure. But there is only so much we can do, and it is important for you to recognize your own responsibilities, which include:

- Thoroughly discussing your study and travel plans with your financial aid office, study abroad office, and academic advisor.
- Making any necessary arrangements for the following academic year, including housing, registration, and graduate school application. If you are a senior, be sure to make necessary arrangements for graduation.
- Reading all of the materials that CIEE has made available to you, including this handbook. Many of the questions that students ask are answered in this handbook.
- Doing additional reading about the region/country you will be visiting and the

customs of the host culture. While you couldn't possibly be prepared for every new experience that awaits you, reading about the host country will give you a base of knowledge that will serve you well in the early weeks of the program. (Refer to the Reading List at the back of this handbook for required and recommended reading.)

- Arriving at the program site with an open mind, a sense of adventure, and a positive attitude toward what lies ahead.

In addition to these required steps, there is a lot more we recommend you do to inform yourself before you go.

Get a Good Guidebook

Past participants recommend that you purchase a good guidebook and read a lot of it before you go. *The Lonely Planet* series is useful. Other guidebooks include the *Let's Go*, *DK Eyewitness Travel* and *Real/Rough Guide* series. Pay particular attention to sections on obtaining maps and other information from tourist offices, customs of the host country, currency exchange, telephoning home, safety, transportation, and general travel advice.

Keep Up To Date

One of the most important things that you can do to prepare yourself for your upcoming semester in St. Petersburg is to read up on current events and keep yourself up to date on all the changes. Read articles pertaining to Russia and the former Soviet republics on a regular basis up until your departure. As for preparing yourself for what to expect, the best advice is to expect the unexpected.

Tap Other Resources

Other good ways to learn about your new home:

- Check your college or university study abroad office for useful services and information.
- Seek out Russians through cultural organizations, international student organizations, and Russian or European area studies departments or centers at your college or university.
- Surf the Web. Many web sites, such as www.lonelyplanet.com, offer travel information, slide shows, and tips from other travelers. Find out what's going on in Petersburg today at www.sptimes.ru or www.afisha.ru.

- Check libraries for detailed information and keep yourself informed of current events through the news media.
- Consult the list of past program participants on the *Program Dates, Details and Arrival Information* document, available on your online CIEE account. They have agreed to be contacted about their experience. Some of their comments are interspersed throughout this book.

Brush Up Your Russian

It is a good idea to sharpen your Russian skills before departing. Listening to Russian music, watching films, reading newspapers, and talking to native speakers or fellow students are excellent ways to do this.

Frequently, students who have studied Russian for several years are surprised to find that they have difficulty understanding the language as spoken by native speakers. This is quite normal. In your foreign language class at home, you can quickly catch your instructor's accent and other personal speech characteristics. However, this may not be possible once you go abroad and are surrounded by native speakers. Don't worry: it gets easier.

For those students who have no background in Russian, the best way to start is to consult with a Russian professor on your campus or get some advice from your peers taking Russian classes. They will be able to recommend a good book or website to get you started. Other software, books and online tools used by beginners include Rosetta Stone, Schaum's Outlines and other websites hosted at U.S. universities.

Check Travel Advisories

The U.S. government issues travel advisories and consular information sheets for most countries. To receive updated information or advisories for other countries you may be traveling to, see the State Department website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

Be Informed about Home, Too

It is important that you be well informed about your own country, region, and hometown. New friends and acquaintances in your host country will be just as curious about you as you are about them. Be prepared to discuss your home political system, culture, traditions, history, holidays, geography, and social structures.

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

When preparing to travel and live abroad, it is essential that you obtain all the proper documents prior to your departure. CIEE 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 **uploading a scan of their passport to their online MYCIEE account**. CIEE requires this in order to request an invitation letter which you will need in order to apply for a visa. **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 CIEE know immediately—the passport you apply with should be the same passport you travel on to Russia.**

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 CIEE staff at the host site.

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 need a student visa to enter and study in Russia.

Students will be working directly with a visa company called **Travisa** to obtain their visa. You will be in communication with Travisa's Washington, DC office where they will work with the Russian embassy to complete visa processing on your behalf. The cost of this service is included in the program fee.

Detailed instructions for completing the Russian Visa Application are located on your online CIEE account.

Please note that you will need an HIV test in order to apply for your visa. Please see the "Visa and Immigration Information" document under the "Readings" section of your online CIEE account for further details. Also note that your summer visa will be a SINGLE-ENTRY VISA. This means that you will not be able to travel outside of Russia during the summer semester.

The police in Russia have the right to ask any person on the street for his or her documents. For CIEE students, this means showing your **passport** (with **visa** glued inside), **migration card**, and registration ("**uvedomlenie**").

Your **migration card** is a small white paper you fill out on the plane before arrival into Russia that is stamped by the border guard upon arrival.

The original of your "**uvedomlenie**" is kept at the University but you must carry around a photocopy of this document. It lists where you live in St. Petersburg.

On the first day of the program, you will receive a "spravka" which is an official copy of all of the documents listed above. We strongly suggest that students leave their passport, migration card, and *uvedomlenie* **at home** during the summer. If police ask for your documents, you can show them your "spravka."

The Russian student visa is sponsored by St. Petersburg State University only through the last day of the program. Should a student wish to change to another non-CIEE program or remain in Russia after the CIEE program ends, the student visa will no longer be valid and the student will have to return to the United States to receive a new visa.

Please note that you will be responsible for any expenses incurred in case you lose your passport or visa or migration card.

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 CIEE 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.

Immunization Records

You are not required to get any vaccinations for travel in Russia unless you are a citizen of, or arriving from, one of a number of less-developed countries or sites of disease outbreak. But, if you enter countries where immunizations are required, you must present a record of vaccinations. The most widely

recognized document for this purpose is the yellow World Health Organization booklet, International Certificates of Vaccination, which is available from most doctors and health centers.

Student Identity Cards

In Russia, you will receive a student ID from the University. This will be needed for all available discounts, and should be carried at all times. If you fail to have your Russian Student ID you may be asked to make up the difference between a discounted and regular ticket on program excursions.

The iNext travel card, included with your CIEE program fees can also be helpful, particularly at the beginning of the program before you receive your student ID. You should receive an email from iNext within a few weeks of your confirmation as a program participant with instructions on uploading a photo and requesting your card.

See www.inext.com for information on the benefits of an iNext card. CIEE students receive platinum level benefits. *St. Petersburg staff does not recommend purchasing phone cards or plans prior to arrival in Russia.

Hostelling International Card

If you plan to travel on your own while you are abroad, you may want to purchase a Hostelling International card at <http://www.hiayh.org/>. The card allows you to stay at hostels in many countries around the world at a discount rate.

HEALTH

What health-related steps should I take before I leave?

You are required to complete a medical report in order to participate in the program; please be sure it indicates any allergies you have, in particular to medications. This information is confidential and has no bearing on your participation in the program. If you have a chronic illness that needs medical attention, have your doctor write a clinical report that can be given to a specialist in Russia if necessary. In addition, we strongly urge you to have a complete physical and dental checkup before departing. Any required dental work should be done at home. Women should also have a checkup by a gynecologist.

Vaccinations: Although no vaccinations are required to enter Russia, the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control, recommends that travelers to Russia be up-to-date on routine vaccinations

and updates their list of other recommended vaccinations regularly:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/russia.htm>.

What medical supplies should I take with me?

If you take prescription drugs, take a sufficient supply with you for your time abroad as it is currently impossible to mail medicine to Russia. (Be sure to take these in their original packages and with the original prescription.) Students who wear glasses or contact lenses should be sure to take an extra pair as well as a copy of their prescription. Should you need to purchase glasses here, good eyewear is readily available at very reasonable cost. If you use contraceptives, please take an adequate supply with you, since your particular brand may not be available in Russia.

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, 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 and they can be expensive. If there are particular brands of medicine that you are fond of, you might want to bring your own supply of medications for things like the following conditions: headaches, sore muscles, diarrhea, constipation, upset stomach, colds, sore throats, coughs, and other conditions that normally arise during inclement weather.

Also, you may want to pack band-aids, antiseptic cream, and an ample supply of vitamins and minerals, including calcium and iron (especially for women). Be sure to take medicine for any recent or chronic ailment, which might crop 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 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 Russian 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.

What other precautions should I take?

Inform the resident staff of any existing health problems, including mental health, or any potential problems you anticipate arising throughout the course of the program. This includes any allergies to medications. CIEE staff will use this information to ensure that appropriate accommodations are made. Please make sure to submit the *Physician's Medical Report*, and fill out the *Student Medical Information* online survey.

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 staff 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 refrigerator. 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. In the homestays you'll drink boiled water or, in some cases, bottled water.

Giardia symptoms include diarrhea, 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 Resident Staff 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; it may upset your stomach or even affect your teeth.

Alcohol: 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. 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.

Don't take bottles to the beach with you. 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.

Participants say...

To future participants that don't drink: Realize that a lot of the social entertainment in Russia revolves around drinking and toasts. It's possible to go through your term here without drinking a lot, but there will be times when you may feel isolated or out of place.

AIDS: The HIV virus is now pandemic, meaning it is present everywhere, including Russia. 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 CIEE 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 and much of Western Europe are not enforced in Russia. 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. The University facilities are smoke free. If you frequent restaurants and clubs and don't like 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. If you plan to travel after the program to other countries, you may want to consult the CDC's information specific to these countries. The CDC web site is www.cdc.gov.

INSURANCE

If you are covered by a personal or parental insurance plan, CIEE recommends that you continue this coverage while abroad. Prior to departure, you should contact your current insurance carrier concerning coverage for accidents, illnesses, and liability cases that occur outside the United States. Check your policy's limitations before making any assumptions about coverage. Most U.S. based insurance companies will not cover property lost or stolen overseas.

Accident and Sickness Insurance

Each participant is covered by the iNext Platinum with security Plan designed to help cover the cost of unforeseen illnesses or accidents that occur while abroad. Additionally, the policy offers Emergency Medical Evacuation coverage, together with 24-hour Emergency Assistance Services. The policy also offers

coverage for travel document replacement and limited travel delay and lost/stolen personal effects coverage. Coverage begins two weeks before the program start date and continues for 364 days.

A complete description of the iNext Platinum Plan can be found under the "Readings" section of your online account. It is important that you read the plan carefully and note exactly what coverage it provides, and note items that are excluded from coverage.

The iNext Insurance is designed as a supplemental or secondary plan only, and does not cover liability. It also does not include routine physical, dental examinations or preventive medicine. Students are not covered for injuries resulting from acts of war or other political unrest such as riots and demonstrations.

Please note that CIEE does not cover medical expenses on-site. Students pay for any medical costs incurred and then file a claim directly with the insurance company for reimbursement. CIEE does not act as an intermediary between participants and the insurance company.

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.

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 costs are included in my CIEE fee?

CIEE Study Center fees include pre-departure information and services, on-site support services, tuition, orientation, cultural activities, local excursions and field trips, and travel insurance. The cost of homestay housing and most meals is included in the St. Petersburg program fee. CIEE does not cover local transportation to and from your classes at the university, nor does it cover the cost of any textbooks.

What expenses should I budget for?

You will need money for entertainment, toiletries, cosmetics, gifts, local transportation, school supplies, independent travel, bottled

water, and some meals (especially week day lunches at school). Please refer to the cost breakdown on the CIEE Website, www.ciee.org/study, to assist in your budget planning.

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.

CIEE Program Cost and Billing

For general FAQ about CIEE fees and billing, see our website at <http://www.ciee.org/study/apply/faq.aspx>. Also, information on CIEE billing procedures can be found at <http://www.ciee.org/study/apply/billing-procedures.aspx>. For more specific billing inquiries, contact CIEE Customer Service at 1-800-40-STUDY or studyinfo@ciee.org.

Financial Arrangements

You will need to make arrangements regarding personal finances before leaving home. See the section Money and Banking in Part III 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.

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.

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 so that you will have it in the event luggage is lost or delayed in transit (be sure to check your airline's carry-on restrictions). If possible, lock all of 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 as little as possible. You can get almost everything you need in St. Petersburg.

Climate and clothing: Much of your time during the semester is spent out of doors walking rather long distances from buses to classes. The weather in St. Petersburg is, in Russian, *непредсказуемая* (unpredictable). One day it will be raining, the next day it will be hot and sunny. St. Petersburg has a much higher level of humidity than other cities (usually hovering around 80%). Petersburg is a place where you always need to wear a light coat/raincoat, just in

case, and carry an umbrella AND sunglasses every day!

St. Petersburg has a real problem with mosquitoes in the summertime. Most host family apartments are not equipped with window screens so if you wish to cool down on a hot evening, expect lots of mosquitoes to invade your room. Wall-plug-in mosquito repellent devices are widely used, but you should bring mosquito repellent and anti-itch crème.

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. You will spend a lot more time walking around outdoors than Americans usually do, so choose comfortable shoes.

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.

One suggestion to save space/weight is to bring a smaller amount of socks and underclothing and hand wash them on a regular basis. More frequent laundering will allow space for more variety in exterior clothing, so decide which is more important to you.

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.

Almost all our host families have washing machines, but dryers are virtually non-existent in Russia. Your clothes will be ironed-soft, but not dryer-soft. Remember that 2-3 loads of pre-sorted clothing are included in the housing fees that CIEE pays to your host family; most host families will not allow students to use their washing machines on their own.

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. You should keep in mind that if you don't have a carry-on, you should bring a duffel bag for overnight field trips.

Dressing Up: Recent participants suggest bringing a dressy outfit to wear to cultural events like the theater, an opera or ballet. 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. Russian women tend to wear more makeup than their American counterparts and cosmetics stores are everywhere. Men—think Euro style, women—think fashion magazines.

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 in St. Petersburg. 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.

Prescriptions: If you take prescription drugs, ask your doctor to give you a copy of the prescription with the name of the generic drug, not a brand name. Not all medications are available overseas, but if you do need to try to fill a prescription, it will be easier if you have the generic name.

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 in Russia, 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.

Linens: Bedding is provided, but you might want to bring two small towels. If you plan to travel before or after the program, you may also want to bring a twin-size flat sheet or hosteller's sleep-sack. Most Russian pillows are stuffed with down; so if you're allergic, bring your own pillow. Big bath towels are not common in Russia, so you may want to bring one or buy one when you arrive.

Electrical Appliances: The current in St. Petersburg, 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. Travel shops as well as many electronics or hardware stores in the United States carry them. If you plan to bring any electrical appliance from home, check the voltage. Most travel appliances (including laptop computers) and almost all electric razors and many travel hair dryers are *dual voltage* (on the plug look for "INPUT: 100-240V"). Dual voltage appliances can be run in Russia with a plug adapter only – without a converter. Plug adapters are cheap and easy to find in Russia. If you're bringing something that isn't dual voltage, you must also bring a converter with you since they are not easy to find in St. Petersburg.

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 adapter should have a plug that fits European electrical outlets. The Russian plug is two round prongs--the standard European plug.

Laptop: A laptop is not required, but if you do have one, you will find it very handy to have with you.

As mentioned above, if you plan to take a laptop, be sure you have the appropriate electrical adapter. Additionally, we recommend that any students taking a laptop consider installing security/theft recovery software. One

example of this software is Computrace LoJack for laptops, made by Absolute software.

Tape recorder: You may want to bring a small portable tape or digital recorder to record your voice for Russian courses and to record lectures in content courses. You can also borrow a tape recorder from the CIEE office. Remember that you must always ask permission before audio recording a teacher's lecture and be prepared for teachers to say no.

Mementos from home: Bring things from home that you can share with your Russian family and friends. 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.

Theater tickets are about \$10 and you'll need something nice to wear.

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 friends and teachers. For your homestay Russian family, one nice gift for the family will suffice; no need to bring individual gifts for each family member. Some good choices:

- Books and printed matter: Art or photograph books, a pictorial guide to your region/state, calendars, and 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, keychains, magnets and other memorabilia from your university and hometown.

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, have 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.

Take everything in stride. It might take all afternoon to get one errand done, but you will acclimate to it and survive.

Part III: Living in St. Petersburg

Sometimes living in a university environment abroad makes it easy to forget you're not home. 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 classes regularly and participate in program activities.

The orientation described in Part I 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 participants 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 (particularly in the summertime), 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.

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 Russian cities, has witnessed ethnic violence - including some murders. Again, this is not common, but Resident 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.

One of the best ways for you to meet Russians will be by participating in extra-curricular activities. CIEE has staff specifically dedicated to helping you get involved in sports, volunteer activities, teaching, and almost any activity that you might be interested in.

Participants say...

Be prepared to be outgoing and forward. Russians can be difficult to meet.

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.

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. The Housing Coordinator creates an online map every semester for the CIEE office showing where all the students live so students have a sense of who lives nearby them. Onsite staff encourages students to use the "buddy" system if returning home late at night.

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 in the study abroad setting. Russian society is very homogeneous, and Russians often stare at people who look different. CIEE's resident staff is sensitive to these issues and will provide as much information and support as possible.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

The health and safety of program participants abroad is understandably an important issue for all concerned. CIEE was a founding member of the Inter-Organization Task Force on Safety and Responsibility in Study Abroad.

CIEE's approach to safety is fourfold. First, we conduct a careful safety evaluation of every program we run. Next we provide comprehensive and realistic information to prospective applicants so that they may make informed decisions as to participation. Then, when the students arrive on site, we conduct a thorough orientation that includes tips on reducing risk and handling difficult situations should they arise. Finally, program staff continuously monitors local conditions in order to provide guidance to participants throughout their stay.

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. You may leave things in CIEE's safe if you like.
- When you carry your passport, wear it around your neck in a thin pouch inside your shirt. 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.
- Be aware of the heating situation provided by your host institution and host residence. For locations where carbon monoxide-producing appliances may be present – i.e., any appliance that burns fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal – detailed information on the possible dangers associated with such appliances, along with safe operating instructions, will be provided in the on-site program orientation. For further information, please visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at www.epa.gov. You may wish to take a small battery-operated carbon monoxide detector to have in your housing.

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.

***Trap: 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.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MAIL

Telephone

Calls to Russia can be expensive, although you can sign up for a very inexpensive long distance plan. There is no need to bring a calling card from home to use in Russia. *St. Petersburg staff does not recommend purchasing phone cards or plans prior to arrival 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 in your homestay, marathon phone calls tie up a family phone.

St. Petersburg lies in the same time zone as Moscow, 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. When it's 4 p.m. in New York, it's midnight in St. Petersburg.

Participants typically buy cell phones when they arrive. CIEE staff will take the group to buy cell phones on the first weekend of the program. The cheapest model is about \$40 and a Russian SIM card costs about \$4. There are no contracts—all plans are pay as you go. It is very convenient (and safe) to buy a cell phone in Russia.

If you wish to use your US cell phone, you must have it unlocked by your cell phone provider in the US.

Fax

The CIEE Office will send a free fax if you need course approval in order to guarantee a semester credit. Otherwise, faxes can be sent from any post office and many internet cafes.

Computers, Laptops, and E-mail

The School of Political Science at Smolnyi has a computer lab that can be used for Internet access on a fee for service basis (current rate: 1 ruble per minute). The CIEE office at Smolnyi offers a free Wi-Fi internet connection for students with laptops. St. Petersburg also has many internet cafes with various prices and services. The CIEE office computer and email

are for business purposes only, and are not accessible to participants. Some students have bought 3-G and 4-G USB modems from cell phone providers like Beeline, Megafon and MTC in the past or from Yota (www.yota.ru).

Laptops: While you will not be required to type or word process for class work, you may wish to bring a laptop. There are many places in Petersburg that offer WiFi access. Most of these cafes, restaurants and movie theaters offer WiFi through a service provider (such as Quantum WiFi) and you need to buy a card to access their network, while some spots offer free WiFi as long as the customer buys a coffee or snack. If you do bring 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.

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, 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, 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).

There is also a Russian express mail service from St. Petersburg to the United States. In the past, students have shared the cost of sending one express mail package to one address in the United States (for about \$60), and then asked the recipient in the United States to mail all the letters from there. Visitors from the United States also sometimes volunteer to carry mail back. You may, therefore, want to take along a small supply of U.S. postal stamps.

The Grand Hotel Europe 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 typically reach the United States in 4-15 days (though it has been known to take much longer).

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 or alcohol through the mail.

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 cash, ATM cards, and credit cards as described below.

The national currency is the ruble, broken down into one hundred kopeks. You'll hear more about currency at orientation.

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.

Money and banking in Russia can be complicated. 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. So again, it's advised that you leave with several different ways to obtain money.

ATM/Bank 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 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.

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. Be sure to check into both Foreign Transaction fees and ATM fees.

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

Also, note that most foreign ATMs will not provide balance information on US accounts.

***Tip: Passport and credit card numbers**

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

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. Carry your cash in a neck pouch or money belt. Note that CIEE does not recommend that you travel with large amounts of cash.

Currency Exchange

You can exchange your dollars for rubles at exchange counters in many places in St. Petersburg and other Russian cities. Sometimes you may be asked for identification when changing cash.

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.

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. 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.

If you decide to go for them, the best bet is American Express traveler's 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). Not all exchange places in Russia will cash your traveler's checks. Also, note that you must have your passport in order to cash traveler's checks.

Past participants nearly all suggest that traveler's checks are not worth the hassle at all. They do serve as a good backup or if you are planning to travel before or after the program to other countries.

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. Some past participants have noted that they found Visa to be more widely accepted. Credit cards for purchases are not accepted widely, however. They are sometimes accepted in tourist areas (i.e. more expensive restaurants, hotels and around Nevsky Prospekt). If you do have a debit card, be sure that you know the pin number.

*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.

If you use a bank debit card for ATM withdrawals or write personal checks from a U.S. account while in Russia, be sure to keep track of your balance and arrange with a friend or parent to replenish your account as needed.

Transferring Money

Western Union: Western Union is a widespread way to send money to Russia. Whoever is sending the money must call the 800 number of Western Union and find out the code number of the bank. You must then call the person sending the money to find out the transaction number in order to pick up the funds. Banks in St. Petersburg charge a 3% receiver's fee, which is taken out of the funds being transferred. This is in addition to the fee for sending it from the United States.

Ask at Western Union for more information.

Tip: Credit card and traveler's check numbers

Remember to keep a list of your credit card numbers and traveler's check numbers separate from the cards and checks.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

CIEE uses local clinics for most routine health care questions. A resident director will always accompany a student. The cost 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 Director will accompany you to respected 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.

CIEE has often used 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.

GETTING AROUND

Local Transportation

You will be given detailed information on navigating St. Petersburg's public transportation system during orientation and upon arrival in St.

Petersburg. A system of "routed taxis" that are actually minibuses that stop anywhere along their specific route also function widely. It is very convenient and inexpensive.

There is a free CIEE bus that picks students up at Metro Chernyshevskaya every morning at 9am and brings them to the CIEE Study Center.

Prices for public transportation AS OF FEBRUARY 22, 2013:

This information will help you budget for the summer. Almost all students will need to take one form of public transportation each day to get to school.

Metro: 28 rubles

Bus/Trolleybus/Tram: 25 rubles

Marshrutka bus (private-owned service): 35 rubles

A Taxi to the Airport: 800 rubles

Participants say...

I found that the ediny billet (monthly transport pass), while convenient, actually costs more than paying as you go.

Independent Travel

You will no doubt want to explore this city, particularly on weekends.

If you plan to travel independently in Russia, on weekends, bear in mind that while resident staff will try to help you, you are responsible for making the arrangements. But before traveling outside St. Petersburg, you must submit an Independent Travel Form to the resident staff. The form is available in the program office. Independent travel must not interfere with class time.

Entering and Exiting Russia:

Please notify your Study Abroad Advisor immediately if you plan on staying in Russia after the end date of the program (either as a tourist or to study on another study abroad program). It is impossible to extend the date of your visa and very difficult to extend your visa registration after the end of the program, even for a few days.

Trap: Wherever you go...

You must inform the Resident Staff and your host family of any travel involving an overnight stay outside St. Petersburg. Failure to do this may result in your dismissal from the program.

Modes of Travel for Long Distance

Railroad: If you decide to do some independent travel in Russia, you will most likely take a train. Resident Staff can advise you further on train travel within Russia. Please note that CIEE does not allow students to enter Russia by train at the start of the program due to the potential for major immigration complications.

Car Rentals: CIEE participants are not permitted to rent cars while in Russia or to rent cars or drive elsewhere in Europe while the program is in session.

Air Travel: Flights from St. Petersburg can be arranged through local travel agents or online.

Hotels and Hostels

Many hostels are not considered official and therefore do not require Hostelling International Membership Cards. Many throughout Europe and Russia are listed in travel books and offer comfortable and clean accommodations.

DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM

You must comply with any regulations established by your home university as well as those of St. Petersburg State University. The resident staff may establish additional requirements, which they consider essential either to achieving your educational goals or to continuing good relations with the university or community. The resident staff may dismiss from the program any student who does not comply with the regulations and requirements as outlined in the Release, which all students must sign before being allowed to participate in the program.

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, money, and academic credit. CIEE does not refund program fees to students who are dismissed from their programs.

VOTING WHILE ABROAD

U.S. citizens, who expect to be away from home on Election Day, may request absentee ballots in person or by mail from their local election offices. Procedures vary by state but are usually quite simple if you have already registered to vote.

If you have not arranged this before leaving home, you may use the provisions of the Overseas Voting Rights Act of 1975, which requires states to establish a means for citizens

residing overseas to apply for voter registration. Some states permit you to use an FPCA (Federal Post Card Application) to register. Others use an SF76, which serves as both an application for registration and as an absentee ballot. You can get a list of states' voting requirements from a U.S. Embassy or consular office.

Tip: Notarize your ballot

FPCA forms used to register or obtain a ballot must be notarized.

If you are a citizen of another country, consult the authorities governing elections in your own country for similar instructions before you leave.

INCOME TAX

Most U.S. citizens and residents must file U.S. income tax returns even if their earned income is exempt from taxes. State requirements vary; call or write to the appropriate state office.

Internal Revenue Service income tax information and forms are available at U.S. Embassies and Consulates and on the internet. Since tax laws change from year to year, direct any questions to the U.S. Consulate. Non-U.S. citizens should contact the appropriate authorities in their own countries for taxation information.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In case of an emergency, parents or family can reach you by calling CIEE. The CIEE home office is in daily contact with our St. Petersburg office.

Contact information for the CIEE home office will be included in an electronic final mailing to both you and the emergency contact designated in your application materials within one month prior to the program start date.

Part IV: Policies and Procedures

Please click [here](#) to view CIEE's Policies and Procedures.

This website includes:

General Policies

- Admissions
- Late Arrival and Early Departure
- Exceptions
- Drug and Alcohol Violations
- Alcohol Policy
- Dismissal from the Program

Academic Policies

- Student Academic Orientation
- Course Loads, Credits, Equivalencies and Grades
- Academic Records
- Attendance
- Pass/Fail and Audit
- Drop/Add Period
- Incompletes
- Withdrawal from a Course
- Academic Honesty
- Appeals

Program Fees and Payment Policies

- Confirmation of Participation
- Payment of CIEE Program Fees
- Due Dates, Late Fees and Interest
- Exclusion from Participation
- Late Fees and Interest
- Withdrawal and Deferral Policy
- Program Cancellation

Please make sure to review this website. Your signature on the "Program Participant Contract" indicates that you have read and agree to comply with all of the policies provided to you on that website.

A NOTE FROM CIEE

Credits and Grades

Most students who choose to go abroad for a term or a year report that the experience is one of the most powerful and enjoyable parts of their undergraduate education. We hope that when you return home, you will have had an equally memorable experience.

Many students report that study abroad is also challenging, and that coming to terms with the challenges is one of the things that make it so powerful and memorable. Some students, however, report that the challenges of dealing with another country's academic culture are sometimes more frustrating than enjoyable.

The academic programs that CIEE provides are to varying degrees integrated into another culture's academic framework, and are often governed by rules that are unfamiliar to U.S. students. At CIEE we want you to experience the challenges of adapting to a new culture, of accepting different teaching styles, and embracing forms of learning that may be different from what you are used to.

But we are sure you will agree that problems associated with your credits and your grades should be avoided—that these should not turn out to be "opportunities for growth." We want to help you avoid these problems, and with some careful planning and attention to detail, you can:

1. Managing Your Registration.

You are probably going to sign up for five classes during your session overseas. Although it's surprising, one problem faced by some students when they return home is that the Course Registration Record we have for them doesn't match what the student actually took. You can avoid this. Read on.

Make it your responsibility to keep your Course Registration Record accurate and up to date.

Students select a preliminary course schedule, either in the U.S. before going abroad or after arrival at the Center. The courses selected constitute your Preliminary Registration, which will be sent to your home or sending school. There will be an opportunity to change courses during the first days of the regular semester (the "drop-add" period). Once this add-drop period ends, all courses for which you are registered will remain final, and will be permanently listed on your Course Registration Record. These will be the courses that will appear on the credit and grades report that we will send to your home or sending school after the session ends (called the "CIEE Academic Record").

Although CIEE staff, both in the U.S. and at your site, will make every effort to ensure that your Course Registration Record is accurate, we cannot do this unless you correctly follow all the formal procedures for making changes. **You must fill out a form to drop or add a course.** It is not sufficient to tell your professor, the CIEE Resident Director, or another staff person that you are changing courses—you must complete all required paperwork or the change is not official. In some cases you will also be required to obtain permission from your home institution.

To sum up, **make it your responsibility** to ensure that your Course Registration Record is accurate. If at any time you are not sure, ask to see a copy of it.

There's a difference between DROPPING a course and WITHDRAWING from one.

As noted above, once the drop-add period is over, all the courses for which you are registered will remain permanently on your record. However, if you realize, *after the end of the drop-add period but before the middle of the session*, that special circumstances will prevent you from completing a course successfully, it may be possible to "Withdraw" from the course. Please also be aware that it is not possible to add a course after the add-drop period. If you do withdraw from a course, it will remain on your CIEE Academic Record with a "W" grade. Permission to Withdraw from a course is not

automatically granted just because a student is not doing well; it is only granted when there are circumstances that the Resident Director believes *prevented* a student from doing well, and *only before the program's withdrawal deadline*. There is also required paperwork to complete if you are withdrawing from a course.

After the withdrawal deadline, all courses that remain on your Course Registration Record will be posted on your CIEE Academic Record with a letter grade. If you stop going to a course, fail to take the final examination, or fail to turn in required coursework, you will receive an F.

2. Getting Good Grades.

The time to think about your grades is at the beginning of each course, not at the end.

Make sure you understand the basis on which the professor will be assessing your work. Practices vary from country to country. Often a single final paper or examination will be the most important (perhaps the only) opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned and/or achieved in the course. In some courses, the basis for grades may have been explained during orientation or during the registration process. An explanation may appear on the course syllabus, and/or the professor may announce grading policies. In some cases, you may not be sure how the professor will be calculating the grade. In this case as well, **make it your responsibility to be sure you understand the basis for grading in each course.** If you're not sure, ask the professor or the Resident Director.

How am I doing?

Although grading differs from country to country, there are general guidelines that we can offer.

In the U.S., a student usually forms an idea of how he/she is doing as the semester progresses based on a self-appraisal of participation in class and a general sense of what the professor cares about. In most overseas situations, it is much more difficult, and often not possible at all, for a student to determine this. Although we ask our teachers to give students ongoing feedback, their own academic cultures are often very different in this regard, and many teachers do not always offer feedback in a way that enables a student to form a reliable opinion of his/her progress. We strongly recommend that you ask your professor how you are doing, perhaps two weeks after the semester has started and again two or three times during the session. Don't wait until mid-term time to do this.

“Demanding” doesn’t mean the same thing in most overseas academic cultures.

U.S. students are accustomed to forming an idea of how demanding a teacher is based on the pressure that is applied on a day-to-day basis. In the U.S., if a professor repeatedly challenges students to show they have read and understood the assignments, and then chastises those who can’t answer, students will conclude that this is a demanding teacher. This doesn’t always happen overseas. “*Demanding*” in an overseas context may mean simply that the grades awarded at the end of the course are lower than those awarded by other professors.

Because of these differences, you need to take stock of your situation early and often. If the regular clues are not present, you should ask, “How am I doing?” If there isn’t yet any basis for the professor to answer that question, you should ask, “What is important in this class? What should I be doing in order to succeed?” Make it your responsibility to actively seek confirmation of how well you are doing in each course.

All the CIEE staff, both in the U.S. and at your program site, want you to have an enjoyable and successful session overseas. We are committed to offering top-quality assistance to help you understand the host culture and its constraints. Please do not hesitate to contact any staff member if we can advise you on how best to manage your overseas experience.

Have a great year, learn all that you can about your temporary home, and try to bring back an excellent and accurate academic record.

CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGE IS UP TO YOU

Your stay abroad may be one of the most vital and rewarding times of your life. Don’t worry

about what you are going to miss at school by going overseas. You will learn so much abroad! The people you meet and the situations you experience may be invaluable in the years to come.

We hope you will arrive prepared to adjust to a way of living that is different from your own; to a way of thinking that may be, in some cases, more traditional, more conventional, and more conservative than your own. You will also most likely encounter new and different views about the U.S. and its people. Take the opportunity to learn from these and to clarify misconceptions about the U.S. when you can.

Remember that each person you meet will see you as a representative of the United States. If you can accept differences cheerfully and with an open mind rather than attempting to alter the environment around you, you can contribute to a positive relationship between the country and the United States.

CIEE wishes you every success during the coming months.

Participants say...

Overall my experience abroad is something that I would not trade for anything. Being abroad gave me the opportunity to push myself beyond my comfort zone thus increasing my abilities to deal with more confidence. My only advice to those coming abroad is to constantly push yourself. Venture out on your own and don’t let your fears deprive you of the opportunity to try something new.

Part V: Additional Resources

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
- Berlin, Isaiah. Russian Thinkers
- Darbas, Zita. The Russian Way. 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.
- Hoffman, David The Oligarchs
- 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.
- Ware, Timothy. The Orthodox Church. Penguin.
-

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).

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.

Jarlath, the Student Services Manager, recommends the Russian émigré writer Gary Shteyngart's The Russian Debutante's Handbook and Absurdistan for fiction, in the vein of Gogol, that will only make sense once your semester is underway in Russia and Kremlin Rising by Peter Baker and Susan Glasser.

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.ciee.org

www.travel.state.gov

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

www.x-rates.com

www.cdc.gov

www.russiatoday.com

www.interknowledge.com/russia

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

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

Description

CIEE's web site. If you haven't already, take a look and find out about other CIEE activities around the world.

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.

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.

Current exchange rates.

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

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

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

SUGGESTED PACKING CHECKLIST

Naturally you'll want to pack what best reflects your own life style and taste, but CIEE recommends the following. Note that practically everything from the general list below is available in Russia. You can save a lot of space by planning to buy things like soap, batteries, tapes, and Kleenex in Russia. There is a wide range of prices and styles.

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

Important Documents

- Airline ticket (including return ticket)
- CIEE final details email (printed)
- Credit and/or ATM card and pin number
- Home Advisor's (both academic and study abroad) address, fax, email
- Passport with visa
- Photocopy of passport (keep separate from passport)
- Traveler's checks/List of traveler's check numbers (keep separate)
- Youth Hostel pass/Eurail pass (if desired)

Clothing

- Shoes, sturdy, water-resistant, good for walking
- Pajamas
- Pants (including one dressy pair)
- Robe
- Shirts
- Shoes (including a dress pair)
- Shower sandals/"flip-flops"
- Skirts or dresses (one should be dressy) and slip if applicable
- Slippers (or house shoes for wearing indoors)
- Socks
- Sportcoat/blazer and tie
- Sweaters/sweatshirts
- Underwear

General**

- 110/220 volt current converter (for appliances/electronics that do not accept a 220 volt current. Not necessary for laptop or

- iPod chargers) European outlet adapters (more than one, highly recommended)
- Backpack/Overnight bag for traveling
- Bathing Suit
- Camera and film/extra flash cards, batteries
- Chargers (for all personal electronics)
- Contact lens solution
- Contraceptives
- Flashlight
- Gifts/Photos from home
- Glasses or contact lenses, extra pair, prescription
- Guidebook
- Gynecological supplies
- Hair dryer (dual voltage)
- Hosteller's sack or twin flat sheets (if you plan to travel using hostels)
- Laptop with electrical adapter and security/theft recovery software
- Medication you are taking and a copy of the prescriptions
- Medicine kit, small: antacid/anti-diarrhea medicine/Tylenol/Advil/band-aids/cold medicine
- Money belt or neck pouch
- MP3/music player
- Personal toiletry items (toothbrush, nail clippers, etc)
- Russian-English dictionary (standard size and/or pocket)
- Reading materials: books, magazines
- Sewing kit
- Sunglasses
- Travel Alarm Clock
- Umbrella