Table of Contents

Welcome to your Program

P. 3 | Academic Program
   Country/City Background
   Host University Overview
   Courses and Program Requirements
   CIEE Academic Field Trips

P. 5 | Office and Onsite Staff
   Study Center Office Hours and Location
   Site Staff Team

P. 6 | Arrival and Departure
   Discount Airfare and Booking
   Delayed Arrivals

P. 7 | Orientation
   Online Pre-Departure Orientation
   On-site Orientation

P. 8 | Housing and Meals
   Homestay
   Problems with Housing

Before You Leave

P. 12 | Essential Documents
   Passport
   Visa

P. 14 | Additional Items
   iNext Travel Insurance Card
   Lost Passport Kit
   Spare Passport Photos

P. 14 | Insurance, Health and Medical
   iNext Travel Insurance
   Immunizations
   Vaccinations
   Health Conditions
   Medical Supplies
   Medical Facilities

P. 18 | Personal Finance
       Budgeting

P. 20 | Financial Arrangements and Banking
       Money
       Traveler’s Check
       Bankcards and Credit Cards

P. 22 | Packing
       Clothing
       Toiletries
       Electronics

While Away

P. 27 | Living in Russia
       Cultural Adaptation
       Meeting Russians
       Special Notes

P. 29 | Transportation
       Daily Commute
       Independent Travel

P. 31 | Communications and Mail
       Telephones and Cellular Phones
       Internet
       Program Mailing Address

Additional Resources

P. 33 | Policies and Procedures
       CIEE Program Policies

P. 33 | Suggested Reading
       Books on Russia
       Books on Cultural Adaptation

P. 34 | Additional Info
       Websites
       Suggested Packing List
Welcome to Your Program

Academic Program

Country/City Background

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 twenty years gone, and Russia is dramatically different than it was more than two decades ago. St. Petersburg has benefited enormously. Although it still has some "Leningrad" left in it, Russia's northern capital has regained much of its 19th century imperial splendor.

Unlike many Americans who visit Russia, you have the added advantage of studying the Russian language, which will help you assimilate and adapt to Russian society. You will be studying Russian 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.

Host University Overview

St. Petersburg State University

Like the city of Leningrad, Leningrad State University was given back its old name of St. Petersburg State University in 1991. Founded in 1724, St. Petersburg State University (Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет, СПбГУ) (SPbGU) is one of oldest, largest and most prestigious institutions of higher education in Russia. 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 20 schools provide instruction for over 32,000 students from the former Soviet republics and around the world.

CIEE programs are housed at the Center of International Educational Programs within the School of Political Science at St. Petersburg State University which is located at the Smolny campus, right behind the architectural masterpiece of Smolny Cathedral. The majestic buildings of the Smolny 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 Smolny 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 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. The relationship between students and teachers is 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. The student/teacher ratio is usually under 7:1 and there is less changing of classrooms than you may be used to.
One thing that American students may find hard to get used to is greeting their teachers every morning. It is part of Russian etiquette to greet professors in the morning. The word “Здравствуйте!” (“zdravstvuite”) is used as a greeting only once a day, but should be said to those passing by in the hall in the morning and to teachers in the classroom.

Faculty

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

Courses and Program Requirements

At St. Petersburg State University you will take:

- Russian Grammar Course
- Russian Conversation Course (Placement for both courses is based off a language test administered at the beginning of the program)
- 3 area study courses (taught in English)

Class Locations

All instruction is offered through the Center of International Educational Programs within the School of Political Science at St. Petersburg State University which is located at the Smolny campus.

To get to classes you can take free university-owned shuttle buses from the Chernyshevskaya metro station. Note that for the majority of students who do not live within walking distance of the university, you will need to use public transportation daily as well. The average commuting time to the university is an hour.

Class Hours

The Russian academic day consists of ninety-minute periods called “para” (as in “pair” of 45 minute lessons). The actual schedule may vary, but based on the schedule during the previous academic year, note the following:

Classes will be held Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with one short day a week (usually Wednesday) from 10:00 a.m. till 1:10 p.m. Individual course choices will determine what hours a student spends at the CIEE Study Center.

Language Study

You will receive language instruction from professors of the Center of International Educational Programs within 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.

CIEE monitors your progress throughout the program, ensuring that your homework is graded and that you take regular tests, including final exams.

Classes

Students must take the 2 courses in Russian Language: Grammar and Conversation. These are offered at the elementary and intermediate level. In addition, students take three area studies courses – all taught in English. Your classmates for these courses will be participants in the CIEE Russian Area Studies program. You will not be in class with Russian students. The Center of International Educational Programs provides courses in Russian language and culture for foreign students.
Continued Study

If you want to continue your studies in St. Petersburg for a second semester, or decide to do a continuing program at one of the other CIEE Study Centers, remember that the deadline is November 1 for most spring programs and April 1 for most summer, fall, and academic year programs. See the resident staff for the appropriate enrollment extension form.

If you would like to spend another semester in St. Petersburg with CIEE, here are the guidelines:

- Students must first get approval for enrollment from their home school study abroad advisor.
- Getting one’s visa extended takes over five weeks, so students need to plan accordingly.
- During the period of extension, the student will be left WITHOUT A PASSPORT so he/she should plan to make sure that the five week extension period does not overlap with any planned trips. A passport is necessary for travelling on train and airplane within Russia.

CIEE Academic Field Trips

Field trips typically include the following: one trip to Moscow and one other weekend trip. The schedule of excursions and field trips is handed out at orientation.

Office and Onsite Staff

Study Center Office Location

CIEE’s Study Center (main office, student library, and classrooms) are located at the 7th entrance of the Smolny complex, surrounding the Smolny Cathedral. The CIEE Study Center is part of the Center of International Programs of the School of Political Science, St. Petersburg State University. Some classrooms of the School of International Relations are also located at the 7th entrance of the Smolny complex. The halls of the CIEE Study Center are filled with Russian students from both “fakultety” and opportunities to interact with Russian students on a daily basis abound.

Office Phone/Fax: +7 (812) 576-4494

Site Staff Team

**Irina Makoveeva, Center Director**

A native of Moscow, Irina Makoveeva received her Master’s 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.

**Nadejda Kirkova, Resident Director**

The Center’s new Resident Director Nadejda Kirkova was born in Sofia, Bulgaria, and graduated from Sofia University with a Master’s degree in Slavic Philology (Polish language and culture). Later she received her second Master’s degree in Russian literature and culture from Before joining CIEE in November 2013, she worked at the Defense Language Institute as Assistant Professor of Russian. Throughout her administrative and academic career Nadejda used professionally a variety of languages including Modern Greek, Russian, Bulgarian, and Polish. Her professional skills involve study abroad and
international education program management, language teaching and methodologies, as well as language testing in two U.S. acknowledged scales (ACTFL OPI and ACTFL ILR). Outside of work, Nadejda enjoys travel, tennis, rhythmic gymnastics, ballet, theater, cultural studies, and cinema. the University of Pittsburgh.

Katya Rubtsova, Program Coordinator

Student Services Assistant Katya Rubtsova joined the CIEE Study Center in 2009. A graduate of Tula Lev Tolstoy State Pedagogical University with a degree in teaching foreign languages, she assists CIEE students in their everyday endeavors. In addition, Katya has coordinated such projects as the Smolny Spring Ball, Stilyagi and Leningradsky Rock. In 2007-2008, as an administrator of a Russian-German NGO in Tula, Katya participated in many youth leadership conferences which included social and theatrical projects in Izhevsk, Nizhny Novgorod and other cities in Russia and Ukraine. She participated twice in the CIEE Work and Travel USA program.

Svetlana Mantsvetova, Housing Coordinator

Svetlana Mantsvetova, Housing Coordinator, has hosted the CIEE students since 2008. Starting September 2013, she took on the role of the Center’s housing coordinator. Svetlana comes from a diverse academic background with degrees in both organic chemistry and language pedagogy. As housing coordinator she is responsible for homestay placement, student/family issues and conflict resolution. The years of experience working with young people and hosting American students enable her to successfully manage an important aspect of our students’ life in Russia. In her free time Svetlana enjoys reading fiction and going to theatre.

Irina Navrotskaya, Administrative Coordinator

Irina Navrotskaya, Administrative Coordinator, became a part of the CIEE team in 2011. As a graduate of the philological faculty of Moscow State University, she spent much of her early career teaching Russian in local schools as well as the Austrian and American embassies in Moscow. She also worked as a chief-editor of a Russian morning TV-show. In her role as the Center’s Administrator, Irina frequently works behind the scenes ensuring the success of CIEE events and projects. In addition, as a politically engaged individual, she enjoys keeping up with current events and political discourse in and outside of Russia.

Julia Semibratova, Excursions Coordinator

Julia Semibratova, Excursions Coordinator, joined CIEE in 2011. A local of St. Petersburg, she graduated from the St. Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts with a degree in Russian cultural history. She turned her enthusiasm for history into a successful career as a professional tour guide and since joining CIEE has continued to share this passion with our students. Julia organizes CIEE tours and excursions in, around and beyond St. Petersburg. She also oversees most of these excursions personally, either leading RAS groups alone or translating from Russian to English when necessary. Julia adores classical ballet, is keen on embroidery, enjoys horseback riding and collects owls.

Anton Stepanov, Student Services Assistant

Student Services Assistant Anton Stepanov graduated from the Faculty of Political Science at Saint-Petersburg State University and joined the team in 2012. He studied modern British politics and took part in several intercollegiate model EU and UN events. For almost three years he was a CIEE volunteer and conversation partner for American students, which helped him to understand American culture better and prepared him for working at CIEE. In the Study Center he participates in such extra-curricular activities as excursions and field trips, sporting events, discussion club meetings, etc. Most important, he serves as a link between CIEE and Russian students. His free time is mostly devoted to philately and playing bass guitar in a rock band.

Liz McBean, Student Services Assistant

Liz studied with CIEE in St. Petersburg in 2010 and attended a recent CIEE alumni event in Moscow, has just joined the CIEE family. Liz, a native of Ohio, graduated from Kenyon College with a BA in Modern Languages & Literature (Spanish & Russian). After graduation, Liz spent some time teaching in South Korea, before making her way back to Russia, where she spent 10 months as a Fulbright ETA at
Orenburg State University. After her time in Orenburg, she moved to Moscow to recruit Russian program participants for American Councils for International Education’s FLEX program.

Arrival and Departure

Discount Airfare and Booking

Included in your program materials will be an iNext insurance card/student ID that allows airfare discounts through Student Universe (www.studentuniverse.com)

Benefits include:

- $15.00 discount on flights costing $100.01 to $249.99
- $25.00 discount on flights costing $250.00 or more
- Simply type iNext into the Promo Code text box when you finalize your reservation
- Your iNext card is valid for 365 days; the discount code is applicable for up to two separate purchases

- Most tickets allow changes to the ticket for as little as $50

You may book tickets directly through the airlines, many of which offer discounted prices on their websites. Iberia, Air Europa, British Airways, Continental, and Delta are some of the airlines that fly to Spain. Also, the following websites may be useful when searching for airlines and fares to Seville: http://www.expedia.com/; http://www.travelocity.com/; http://www.flycheap.com/; http://www.orbitz.com/.

STA Travel (http://www.statravel.com/) and Student Universe (http://www.studentuniverse.com/) also offer great options for students.

CIEE strongly recommends that all students travel with a round trip ticket. In the past, some students travelling to Europe have been denied boarding by their airline when they attempted to travel with a one-way ticket. For students who are unsure of their plans at the end of the program or will be taking regular university courses, we recommend researching fares with low change fees so that tickets may be changed later.

Dates

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.

Both of the CIEE Russian programs have a required two week orientation. Students must plan to arrive at the St. Petersburg Pulkovo Airport (LED) by 5:00 pm on the start date of their program. Please refer to the Program Dates, Details and Arrival Information document, located on your online CIEE account for arrival information.

Students cannot arrive earlier than their visa start date, which will be the start date of the program. Students who arrive between 10am and 5pm on the start date of the program will be met by CIEE staff and brought to the orientation hotel. If students arrive in the middle of the night before the CIEE meet and greet, they are NOT allowed to stay in the Pulkovo Airport and MUST reserve a room at the orientation hotel for that night. CIEE does not cover this expense.

Students should make their flight reservation to arrive on the date and time indicated in the Program Dates, Details and Arrival Information document, located on their online CIEE account under the
“Readings” tile. Those students whose arrival coincides with the stated times will be greeted by the CIEE staff at the St. Petersburg Pulkovo International Airport (airport code: LED).

St. Petersburg’s airport serves as a single terminal for both domestic flights and international flights. CIEE highly discourages travel through Moscow because the consequences of lost luggage are much more complicated when arriving to St. Petersburg’s Pulkovo. 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.

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

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

From the airport, students will be transported to the orientation hotel. Please refer to the Dates, Details and Arrival Info document in your account for arrival details.

All students will get the chance to call home using a CIEE calling card before going to bed the first night in Russia to let loved ones know they’ve arrived safely. Wi-Fi is also available for free at the orientation hotel. Detailed arrival and orientation information will be emailed to students in the Final Details email 2-4 weeks before the program start date.

Fees

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 submit this information using the Flight Arrival Information online survey, available on your online CIEE account.

Delayed Arrivals

If you are delayed en route to the orientation site, you must leave a message with the CIEE home office at 1-800-407-8839 and Resident staff as soon as you realize that you will be late.

In the event of a forced or unforeseen early departure from the program, any alternate arrangement to complete course work must be approved in writing by a representative of your institution and the CIEE Chief Academic Office.

Important Note: If you are delayed en route to the orientation site, you must leave a message with the CIEE home office at 1-800-40-STUDY as soon as you realize you will be late. CIEE does not permit students to arrive after the program start date for any circumstance with the only exception being unforeseen flight delays.

Orientation

Online Pre-departure Orientation

Before leaving home you will be participating in a CIEE Online Pre-Departure Orientation. During the online orientation, you will:

- Be meeting with other students online
- Get information about your program and site from your Resident Director
- Receive important alumni tips and concerns
- Get time to ask any questions you may have before leaving home.
The orientation will allow you to connect, reflect, and learn about what others in your 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 informed and return home having made significant progress toward their goals.

Onsite Orientation

All students must attend the intensive training at the beginning of the orientation period conducted in St. Petersburg. If you are delayed en route to the orientation site, you must contact the 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

Housing and Meals

The majority of students will be placed with homestays, but we will be offering a limited number of rooms in a hostel (singles) in the central part of the city.

You will find out your housing assignment during orientation in Russia, but not before. 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. Even after you find out your homestay’s address, you should still have mail sent to the program address.

Students live with a Russian family. CIEE will place students in families based on your answers in the housing survey on your MY CIEE online checklist. Some host parents of CIEE students have limited English and most host siblings speak English to some extent. If you would like to stay with a Russian family that speaks some English, please note that clearly on your housing survey.

The homestay families are pre-screened by CIEE 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 survey as early as possible.

Homestay

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 and the shower may be hand-held. 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!”

Though St. Petersburg lies 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 repellent “fumigators”.

**Hostel Housing**

CIEE offers a limited number of single-occupancy rooms at two separate hostels in downtown St. Petersburg. Here is the information for the two hostels:

Friends Hostel
Ulitsa Vosstaniya, d. 11

Friends Hostel
Naberezhnaya kanala Griboedova, d. 20

In both hostels, students will share a floor with a spacious common kitchen and bathroom (three or four showers and stalls). The single-occupancy rooms are fully furnished. In addition to one bed, each room includes a sofa, desk, wardrobe, and television. You will also be given access to a washing machine and free laundry detergent. Fresh towels and bed linens are provided at the hostel, as is Wi-Fi, free of charge. The common space offers students the opportunity to relax in a safe social environment and take part in weekly planned events.

Students are expected to keep a clean living space and respect hostel rules and regulations. There is a strictly enforced no-noise policy after 11:00pm. Students are expected to make their own meals using the shared kitchen, although water, warm drinks, and small snacks are provided by the hostel free of charge. Students will not be reimbursed for the meal portion of their program fee, as the hostel offers them much more freedom and a centralized location.

Both hostels are located within a 5-minute walk of Nevskiy Prospekt and a 20-minute commute to the CIEE Study Center.

For more information check out the hostel web-site

http://en.friendsplace.ru/friends-on-vosstaniya/
http://en.friendsplace.ru/druzya-na-griboedova/

**Getting Along with Your 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.

Host families take part in an orientation at the beginning of the semester as well, albeit much shorter than your comprehensive off-site orientation. They sign an agreement with CIEE to hold up their end of the housing bargain. Make sure to speak with CIEE staff if you feel your host family is not fulfilling their commitment.

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 you to avoid problems:

- Bring a small introductory gift for your host family (picture book, region specific souvenirs, and candies). 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 absent or 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, kitchen appliances 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 into the compensation paid to the hosts. However, you are only allotted two to three loads of presorted laundry per week. The majority of the hostesses won't allow you to use their washing machine on your own.

• If you smoke, ask where it's permissible. All the University's buildings are smoke free.

• To feel secure in your new home, put your valuables (money, 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.

• Never lend money to or borrow 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. 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.

Guests

Overnight guests are not allowed in homestays. If you are planning to have friends or family visit during your stay in Russia they may not stay with you in your family housing. CIEE staff can help you with hotel and hostel recommendations.

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, and if you do have a friend over, be sure to bring something (a kilo or so of fruit is a nice touch).

Meals
For participants with special dietary needs CIEE staff will make every effort to find a suitable situation. Homestays for most vegetarians are not difficult to arrange.

**Note to Vegetarians**

Vegetarians will, however, have to be especially flexible while traveling in Russia. It is certainly possible to eat strictly vegetarian meals, but most Russians do not fully understand this concept, and vegetarians often do not have a large variety to choose from in cafes and restaurants. The same goes for vegans and students with intense food allergies.

**Problems with 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.
Before you leave

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 proper documentation.

Passports

Each participant is responsible for obtaining a valid passport and uploading a color scan of the signature and photo pages to their online CIEE account with their application. 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 for your visa with must be the same passport you travel on to Russia. According to the U.S. State Department, routine processing for passports may take as long as six to eight weeks. This is due to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, a law requiring airline passengers entering the U.S. from within the Western Hemisphere to possess a valid passport.

U.S. citizens applying for their first passports must apply in person at a passport agency or at one of the several thousand federal or state courts or U.S. post offices authorized to accept passport applications. Applicants should research the requirements through the US Department of State website at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

Visas

A visa is an endorsement by a foreign government allowing you to enter and stay in that country for a specified period of time. A Russian visa is a piece of paper about the size of one passport page, pasted into your passport. All participants in the program will need a single-entry student visa to enter Russia. Your initial visa will not be valid for the entire semester; it will need to be extended on-site in St. Petersburg. The Resident Staff will work with all students during Orientation to compile the necessary materials to extend students’ single-entry student visas into multiple-entry student visas that will be valid for the entire semester.

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.

Instructions for Completing the Russian Visa Application are located in your online CIEE account under “Visa and Immigration Info” in the “Readings” section.

HIV test and visa extension

Foreign visitors are required to have an HIV test as a part of their visa application.
Please note that the first visa support letter ("invitation") that CIEE will provide will be for single-entry visas valid for only 90 days.

After arrival in Russia, CIEE will apply for extended, multi-entry visas for you.

Because you will apply for your extended visa after you enter Russia, you will not be able to travel outside of the country or the St. Petersburg region during the first six weeks of the program.

Documents that must be carried around on a daily basis

The police in Russia have the right to ask any person on the street to show them their ID. Russians show the police their internal passport. Foreigners show the police their passport, visa, migration card and registration ("uvedomlenie"). Document checks can happen often in Russia. Most of the time the police are looking for draft dodgers and illegal immigrants. You will have to carry a photocopy of your documents with you to use as identification while your passport (with visa inside) and migration card are being registered with the local authorities. You will receive official documents, an "uvedomlenie" and a "spravka", stating that your passport is on visa extension. While in Petersburg you must have this uvedomlenie and spravka with you any time you are not carrying your passport, visa and migration card.

The Russian student visa is sponsored by St. Petersburg State University only through the last day of the program. CIEE CANNOT EXTEND STUDENTS’ VISAS AFTER THE END DATE OF THE PROGRAM. ALL STUDENTS MUST PLAN TO LEAVE RUSSIA BY THE END DATE OF THE PROGRAM AS POSTED ON THE CIEE.ORG WEBSITE.

If you plan on studying on a different program in Russia after spending a semester with CIEE, be aware that you must get a new visa and therefore, must travel back to the US to have that visa processed.

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. All students on non-U.S. passports must secure all necessary visas for field trips planned during the semester (for example, visas to the Ukraine) either before the semester begins or in Russia. It is the sole responsibility of the student to apply and pay for such visas.

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.

Permanent Residents

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.

Stateless Persons

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.

Additional Items

iNext Travel Insurance Card

CIEE provides you with supplementary iNext travel insurance while you are abroad. You will need to have your iNext card with you to access the policies' provisions. For more information, please refer to the Insurance, Health and Medical section below.

Lost Passport Kit

Preparing a lost passport kit can help you speed up the process in re-obtaining your passport if it is lost or stolen while you are abroad. 

A passport kit should include:

1. Two passport photos
2. Official copy of his or her birth certificate
3. Photocopy of passport’s photo, signature, and visa pages

Spare Passport Photos

You may need to bring up to 2-4 additional passport sized photos for both school ID and city registration purposes.

Insurance, Health and Medical

iNext Travel Insurance

The iNext Accident and Sickness Insurance policy

- Helps you cover cost of accidents and/or routine sickness while abroad
- Offers Emergency Evacuation and Emergency Medical Transportation coverage
- 24-hour Travel and Medical Assistance Service
- Offers you travel document replacement and limited travel delay and lost/stolen baggage coverage.
- Coverage begins two weeks before the program start date and continues for 365 days.
- This Health Insurance is an additional or secondary policy only, and does not cover liability.
- It also does not include routine physical, dental examinations, or preventive medicine.

You can find a complete description of the Accident and Sickness Insurance policy on the enrollment website. It is important that you read the policy carefully and note exactly what coverage it provides and excludes. Doctors, hospitals, and clinics will require you to pay bills at the time of treatment. You must then submit receipts to the insurance company for reimbursement. With this in mind, be sure to budget at least $400 to pay for medical expenses and unexpected illnesses up front.
Personal 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.

Immunizations

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.

Other Precautions

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://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/russia.htm.

Students can get a flu shot safely in Russia that protects them from the Russian strain of influenza.

Smoking

Note that smoking is much more common in Russia 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 Western Europe do not usually exist in Russia and if they do, they are not strictly enforced. Therefore, if you are allergic to or easily bothered by smoke, be aware that it will be more difficult to avoid in Russia than it is in the United States. The University facilities are smoke free. If you frequent restaurants and clubs and don't like the smell of smoke lingering on your clothing, bring some Febreeze.

Drinking Water

The resident staff drink bottled water but brush their teeth with regular tap water.

In the past, Giardiasis was a health problem in St. Petersburg, though it is less common these days. Giardia lamblia is a parasite present in unpurified water. It can be killed by boiling the water for 3-5 minutes and most Russians keep a pitcher of boiled water in the refrigerator or on the kitchen counter. Many host families have high-tech filters that make the tap water potable. You should not drink tap water that has not been boiled. It is fine to brush ones teeth with tap 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. Giardia symptoms are very similar to those of Traveller's Diarrhea, so it
is always better to consult with a doctor before taking any anti-Giardia medication (e.g. Flagyl) since such medication has serious side effects and is carcinogenic.

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

**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, say that you had a bad experience with that particular type of alcohol or that you are currently taking antibiotics; people usually don't try to argue with this. Alcohol related deaths are a reality in Russia and visitors are not immune. Be very wary of moonshine or "samogon" (homemade hard liquor) which is usually only offered in the countryside at one’s “dacha”. 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. Public drunkenness is punishable by up to 15 days in jail plus a heavy fine. Regulations against public drinking and the purchase of beer have gotten much more severe since 2011 and foreigners can easily be targeted by policemen for violating these laws. The fact that you see Russians doing it does not mean that it is legal.

**Drugs**

Any use of illegal drugs during the whole duration of the program is strictly prohibited and will lead to a dismissal from the program.

**AIDS**

The HIV virus is now an epidemic in Russia with 100 new cases per day, as of 2005. Take the appropriate precautions. In the past, many U.S. doctors were concerned about needle re-use in Russia. This is no longer a problem in St. Petersburg. Should you need an injection while in Russia, you will get a fresh new needle.

**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](http://www.cdc.gov).

**Medical Supplies**
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 that medicine that you travel with is in its original package 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, but good eyewear is readily available at Western prices in Petersburg, should you need to purchase glasses. If you use contraceptives, please take an adequate supply with you, since your particular brand may not be available in Russia.

Although you may enjoy excellent health, you may find yourself susceptible to colds, diarrhea, and other types of traveler's maladies once you arrive in Russia. You may want to discuss the situation with your doctor, pointing out differences in diet, the severe weather conditions during the fall, winter, and spring and the hectic pace of the program. Your doctor can advise you what medicines to take and how much of each to pack. While Russia now has a reliable supply of remedies for all conditions, the brands may not be ones you recognize. If there are particular brands of medicine that you are fond of, you might want to bring your own supply of medications for the following conditions: headaches, sore muscles, diarrhea, constipation, upset stomach, colds, sore throats, coughs and other conditions that normally arise during inclement weather.

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

**Medical Facilities**

CIEE uses the international medical clinic, MEDEM, for health care issues and resident staff always accompany students to the clinic MEDEM ([www.medem.ru](http://www.medem.ru)) can handle all levels of medical ailments: from routine checkups to surgeries. The facilities and staff are good and the staff speak English, though their services are expensive and must be paid in cash or credit card. They do, however, provide all the documentation needed for reimbursement from US insurance providers and some insurance providers (such as HTH Worldwide or Aetna Worldwide) can be directly billed for doctor's visits so a student will not need to pay out of pocket for the visit.

CIEE’s iNext Travel Card includes accident and sickness insurance. Details on insurance coverage can be found on your MY CIEE online checklist.

Your iNext travel insurance is only supplemental insurance. All health insurance claims must first be submitted to your primary insurance provider and if rejected, to iNext.

**Things to do before you leave**

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.)

• Get a good Guidebook. Guidebooks include the Lonely Planet, 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. If you plan on travelling during vacation, get a guidebook for that region of the world.

• 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.

• 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 and www.wikitravel.org, 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 Updates document, available on your MY CIEE online checklist. They have agreed to be contacted about their experience. Some of their comments are interspersed throughout this book.

• Brush up on 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.

Personal Finance

Your CIEE Program fees include:

• Pre-departure information and services

• Optional on-site airport meet and greet

• Orientation
- On-site support
- Tuition
- Cultural activities and require local excursions and field trips
- iNext health insurance
- The cost of housing, some meals

**Budgeting**

You will need money for entertainment, toiletries, cosmetics, gifts, clothes, local transportation (including commuting to and from class each day), school supplies, independent travel, probably bottled water, and some meals (especially weekday lunches at school). Please refer to the cost breakdown online [www.ciee.org/study](http://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 restaurant meals and limiting vacation travel to the general area around St. Petersburg. We suggest you take extra money, if possible, for unforeseeable expenses.

The New York Times and similar publications publish exchange rates daily. You may also reference [www.x-rates.com](http://www.x-rates.com) or [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com) for up to the minute exchange rates. You should keep abreast of how a rate fluctuates leading up to departure. The exchange rate between the ruble and the US dollar has been hovering around 30 rubles to the dollar since 2009.

The cost of living in St. Petersburg for Americans has increased considerably over the past few years. Students must keep in mind that Russia is no longer as cheap as it used to be.

Remember that as a university student in the US, many of your expenses have been paid for (gym, pool, activities, subsidized outings etc.). Also keep in mind that you may use a “student ID” card daily that acts as a debit card on your campus. Students will need to get used to the cash economy of Russia where credit cards are not always accepted (and if they are, your credit card company will most likely charge a “Foreign Transaction Fee” for each transaction), goods are more expensive, and budgeting is that much more important.

**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.

**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.

**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/](http://www.hiayh.org/). The card allows you to stay at hostels in many countries around the world at a discount rate.
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 and Banking

Arrive in Russia with several ways to obtain cash, so that in the event one method fails or is inconvenient, a back-up option is available. The best options are ATM cards, cash and credit cards as described below.

Money

The national currency is the ruble, broken down into one hundred kopeks. The current exchange rate is about 30 rubles to the dollar, but it changes by the day. You'll hear more about currency at orientation.

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

Bankcards and Credit Cards

Credit Cards

Credit cards are becoming more and more popular, but still nothing like in the United States or Western Europe. Your best bet is to bring a Visa or MasterCard. Neither has offices in St. Petersburg, but they are useful both as credit cards and as ways to get cash advances from major banks and some hotels. Credit cards are not used widely. They are sometimes accepted in tourist areas (i.e. more expensive restaurants, hotels and around Nevsky Prospekt).

When using your credit card, you must show your passport. If you don’t have your passport with you, you can show your “spravka” (copy of your passport/visa/migration card + stamp of the University) and/or your US drivers license.

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 best way to get money in St. Petersburg, so if your bank doesn’t allow access from Russia, you should consider other options. Usually, if you bring your bank debit card (with Cirrus or Plus access), you will be able to get cash easily. There are ATMs all around the city, and more popping up by the day.

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

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

Again, be aware that cash machines can be targets for thieves. Be aware of your surroundings when you take money from an ATM and ALWAYS cover your hand when inputting your PIN code at an ATM.
Debit cards are becoming more prevalent in St. Petersburg for point-of-sale transactions. To use at a large department store or supermarket, you will hand your card to the cashier and dial the pin code on the terminal. Check with your bank on the fees associated with using your debit card in Russia. If you wish to use your debit card as a credit card (e.g. “Debit or Credit?”) you need to show I.D. which is, first and foremost, your passport. If you don’t have your passport, you can show your “spravka” (copy of your passport/visa/migration card + stamp of the University) and/or your U.S. driver’s license.

**Wiring Money**

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. You must bring your ORIGINAL passport with you to receive a Western Union transfer. 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.

**Travelers Checks**

Traveler’s checks are safe and widely recognized; they can be converted in any country you may visit. As long as you have a record of your traveler’s check numbers, you can recover stolen or lost amounts.

They are, however, most inconvenient in Russia. If you decide to go for them, the best bet is American Express travelers’ checks, as American Express has an office in St. Petersburg, which means that lost American Express traveler’s checks can be replaced there. Traveler’s checks are cashed into local currency (rubles in Russia).

Past participants nearly all suggest that traveler’s checks are not worth the hassle at all. They do serve as a good backup or if you are planning to travel before or after the program to other countries. Not all exchange places in Russia will cash your traveler’s checks, and even the American Express people won’t if you don’t have your passport, which you won’t while it is being registered at the beginning of the program (which can take up to one month).

**Personal Checks**

You should not plan to use personal checks while travelling in Europe.

**Cash**

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

When you change traveler’s checks you will have to have your passport. Since your passport will be held for registration for some time at the beginning of the program, you will need another source of money besides traveler’s checks for the first month or so. The resident staff will explain more about this at orientation.

You can also 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.

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

## Packing

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 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 carry your bags up the stairs as some homestay apartments do not have elevators). 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 (liquids should be carried in a plastic ziplock bag), a set of underwear and clothes, contact lenses, glasses, computers, and documents in this carry-on bag so that you will have them in the event luggage is lost or delayed in transit. Don’t forget to check with your airline for any carry-on baggage restrictions. If possible, lock your luggage.

If you choose to bring more than the duty free limit of 23 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 (the second one is paid for) 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.

## Clothing

### Climate and Clothing

St. Petersburg has very changeable and unpleasant weather. A rule of thumb in St. Petersburg is to always carry both an umbrella and sunglasses because the weather can change in a split second. Winters are long, cold, and unpleasantly damp, and much of your time during the semester is spent out of doors walking rather long distances from buses to classes. In a typical year, the weather begins getting cold around the beginning of October and remains cold until the end of April. Even in May it can be very cool. Summers however can be very warm and humid, even hot, but more often than not, they are cool.

St. Petersburg was built on a marsh so there are problems with mosquitoes. This can affect students in the summer, fall and even end of spring semester. Most families do not have screens on their windows and instead use plug-in anti-mosquito “fumigators” to ward away mosquitoes. Please take this into consideration when packing.

All students should pack a winter coat, preferably one that is waterproof. Clothing, as with most goods in Russia, is much more expensive than in the U.S., so it is better not to buy it in Russia. We recommend packing lots of versatile layers: t-shirts, long-sleeved shirts, sweaters, raincoat, warm winter coat.

St. Petersburg does not get much snow and the little snow that does fall melts within a few days into very inconvenient puddles. St. Petersburg is much more like the Pacific Northwest than North Dakota weather-wise. Think “rainy, damp, slushy, slety” rather than the stereotypical “Dr. Zhivago”-like deep-snow in winter. The temperature never really gets that cold (it rarely dips below zero degrees Fahrenheit),
but with an average humidity level around 90 percent, the cold can be felt in your bones. St. Petersburg is not a city for flip-flops!

Choose warm, comfortable, and practical clothing that wears well. Choose each type of clothing carefully. Versatility is the key, and a layered approach works well. You can save packing space by coordinating your clothing so that shirts and sweaters can be worn with different skirts and pants. While you do need to pack for cold weather, you'll be surprised at how little is really necessary. You will spend a lot more time walking around outdoors than Americans usually do, so choose comfortable shoes. For winter wear, resident staff recommend a weather-proof shoe, perhaps ankle-high (or higher for women), that is comfortable but also dressy. A good winter jacket is also recommended—preferably a layered one with a waterproof shell and down liner. These types of jackets are more expensive to buy in Russia than in the U.S.

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

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

We recommend that you purchase these items in the US as they will cost much more in Russia.

It is customary in Russia to take one’s shoes off when entering an apartment and put on slippers (“tapochki”). Students should bring a pair of slippers with them to Russia and wear them daily in their homestay. Flip-flops or “shower shoes” also come in handy if a student decides to join the gym, a sports team, or go to the Russian “banya” (bathhouse).

Remember that dark clothing is easiest to keep clean. You will have to weigh your dislike for frequently washing socks, stockings, and underclothing against the space and weight limitations involved in bringing many changes. More frequent laundering will allow space for more variety in exterior clothing, so decide which is more important to you.

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

Dry cleaning is inconvenient, less reliable, and more expensive than in the United States. Thus, choose machine and hand-washable, permanent press, and drip-dry materials. Almost all our host families have washing machines but dryers are virtually non-existent in Russia so your clothes will be ironed-soft, but not dryer-soft. 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 and women often wear dressy leather boots in the winter months. Russian women tend to wear more makeup than their American counterparts and cosmetics and perfume stores
Female students are usually surprised by the style of Russian women. The comfortable, baggy, “sweatshirt” look is not as popular in Russia as it is in the US. Most Russian women (and some men) wear calf-high (or higher) leather boots in the wintertime. If you are planning on buying this sort of boots, they will probably be cheaper to purchase in the US.

As stated previously, clothing is more expensive to buy in Russia than in the US. Discount outlets, inexpensive stores to buy basics, and conveniently located shopping malls don’t really exist in St. Petersburg.

Toiletries

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 as will Febreze since restaurants and bars can be rather smoky.

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.

Prescriptions

If you take prescription drugs, bring enough of your medication for the semester. In addition, ask your doctor to give you a copy of the prescription with the name of the generic drug, not a brand name, in case you need to try to have your prescription filled in Russia.

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

Contact Lenses

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

Camera

Be sure to try out your camera thoroughly before departure. If you are buying a new camera, it is good to have one suitable for taking pictures in low-light indoor conditions, as flashes are often prohibited in many museums and buildings.

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. CIEE has a library of English and Russian language books available, built up over the years by student donations. CIEE staff will also assist students if they wish to ship their books and extra clothing home at the end of the semester.

Linen
Bedding is provided, but you should bring your own towel(s) for daily showering. 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.

Electronics

The current in St. Petersburg, as in nearly all of Europe, is 220 volts, 50-cycle AC. Russian plugs are the standard European type with two round prongs. Electric converters and plug adapters must be used to connect North American equipment running at 120 volts.

Adapters can be found at most major department stores as well as travel shops and many hardware or electronics stores in the United States. We recommend that you take several to Russia as they are needed to plug in laptops and can be easily misplaced. They are not easy to find in Russia.

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

If you are taking devices that are not dual voltage, be sure that you pack at least one power converter. These can be found in US department and travel stores as well as many hardware and electronics stores, and are not easily purchased in Russia. Note that converters are only meant to be used for short periods of time (usually 45-60 minutes) and should be unplugged when not in use. A converter must be used in conjunction with an adapter in order to plug a US appliance into a Russian wall outlet.

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

Laptop

The CIEE Study Center is not equipped with a free computer lab so we strongly recommend bringing a laptop to Russia.

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.

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.

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, 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.
Other suggestions: American regional items, e.g., Vermont Maple Syrup, gourmet coffee beans, teas, scarves; T-shirts, key chains, magnets and other memorabilia from your university and hometown.
Living in Russia

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, 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.

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 an open mind. If you keep a sense of humor, 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 Central Asia and the Caucasus region. You may encounter some individuals 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 tension. - 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. Likewise, with the current political tensions over the situation in the Ukraine, CIEE staff keeps a close eye on any issues that may affect our students.

Cultural Adaptation

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

During your on-site orientation, the resident staff will discuss details about culture shock and give strategies for adapting to your new surroundings. Near the end of the program, they will also provide information on reverse culture shock and suggest ways of coping with returning home.

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. In addition, you have to register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) of the Department of State so you may do so now. This registration is mandatory for all CIEE students. Here is the link that you can follow to register:

http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/step.html

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 lookout 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. Always order taxis and never take “gypsy cabs.”
- Tourists are common targets for pickpockets. Always be aware of your backpacks and cameras especially on crowded transportation. Sling backpacks on one shoulder and grasp when riding public transportation. A backpack in a stranger's face is considered rude and makes for an easy target. Don’t carry large amounts of cash with you. Never leave belongings in a parked car.
- Keep a suitcase that can be locked under your bed and leave your money, passport, camera, and other valuables secured in it.
- When you carry your passport, wear it around your neck in a thin pouch inside your shirt or around your waist. If you must carry it in a bag, use one that can be slung diagonally across your chest and that has a sturdy strap that cannot be easily ripped.
- As noted earlier, keep a photocopy of your passport in a separate place. This will speed up the process of replacing your documents should they be lost or stolen.
- Be especially cautious in areas frequented by tourists, such as airports, train stations, museums, and U.S.-style restaurants such as McDonald's. Nevsky Prospekt is St. Petersburg's main street and the most frequent scene of pick pocketing.

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

The Glimpse Foundation

CIEE is an institutional member of The Glimpse Foundation. As a CIEE student, you get access to a full range of services that will help you prepare for your time abroad and/or enable you to share your insights during and after your overseas experience.

These services include:

- Access to Glimpse's content archive, which currently contains over 400 student-written articles from 88 countries.
• Access to the Glimpse ‘Ask the Expert’ database so you can connect with current and returned study abroad students in your country/region.

To get started go to GlimpseAbroad.org: http://glimpse.org

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, non-credit internships, teaching and almost any activity that you might be interested in.

Special Notes

For 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 students 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 to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

For Minorities

Students that are members of ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, gay and lesbian students, or overweight students may face particular difficulties studying abroad in Russia. 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. Feel free to contact CIEE before your semester starts to discuss any concerns you may have with regard to this issue.

Transportation

Daily Commute

You will be given detailed information on navigating St. Petersburg’s public transportation system during orientation and upon arrival in St. Petersburg. CIEE staff will conduct several activities during the first two weeks of the program (“orientation”) in which students will learn how to take public transportation. Here is a list of different forms of public transportation:

City Public Transport (government-subsidized)
Metro, bus, trolleybus, and tram lines for St. Petersburg can be found on Google Maps.

Bus, Tram, Trolleybus
As of March 2013, the price for one ride on a bus, tram or trolleybus was 25 rubles. The network of busses and trolleybuses is extensive. Trams are seldom used, known to be rather slow and many are being decommissioned.

Metro
As of March 2013, the price of one ride on the metro was 28 rubles. Students may buy multiple-use cards which allow a certain number of rides within a certain period of time. Another option is the “ediniy bilet” a monthly pass which can be used on the metro, bus, tram or trolleybus. Most students will take the metro in the morning to get to university as it is the fastest mode of transportation in the city.

Elektrichka (Suburban train)
Rides to/from a Petersburg suburb cost under 100 rubles. Though not the most comfortable form of public transport (many elektrichkas have wooden benches for seats) elektrichkas are inexpensive and can get you out of town quickly.

City Private Transportation (Commercial)
Marshrutka
A marshrutka is a communal route taxi. As with a bus, the passenger pays upon entering, but unlike a bus, the passenger can flag down a marshrutka anywhere along its route and can ask it to stop anywhere along that route.
As of March 2013, the price for one ride in a marshrutka is 35 rubles. Marshrutkas can be either 15-passenger vans or small mini-busses. Students will receive a “marshrutka cheat sheet” at orientation giving them a few helpful phrases for using the marshrutka system.
Transportation maps listing the routes of busses, trolleybuses, trams, and marshrutkas are available throughout the city. It is highly recommended that students buy one.
CIEE recommends using the new “PODOROZHNIK” cards which allow you to add money to a plastic card which can then be used in the metro, bus, trolleybus, and even on some marshrutkas! It’s more convenient than carrying around cash and can be topped up at any metro station.

Independent Travel
You will no doubt want to explore the city of St. Petersburg, particularly on weekends. You can also plan longer vacations exploring other regions of Russia during Travel Week or after the program. Before leaving the United States, gather as much information as possible about places you may want to visit. Of course, this may require additional funds.
Look online for locations of National Tourism Board of Russia offices. Other sources, which may be helpful, are the various Michelin Guides and the Lonely Planet series.
If you plan to travel independently in Russia on weekends or holidays, 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.
Remember that you will not be able to travel outside of Russia during the early weeks of the program while your visa extension is being processed.

Entering and Exiting Russia
Remember, you cannot enter Russia any earlier than the start date of the program and CIEE CANNOT EXTEND STUDENTS’ VISAS AFTER THE END DATE OF 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.

Air Travel During the Russian travel week students have often flown to distant parts of the Russian Federation. Flights from St. Petersburg can be arranged through local travel agents.

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.

Communications and Mail

Telephones and Cellular Phones

Telephone

Calls to Russia can be expensive, although you can sign up for an inexpensive long distance plan. There is no need to bring a calling card from home to use in Russia. Russian calling cards are easy to buy, have instructions in English and are not expensive. A US calling card, no matter what they tell you, will be considerably more difficult to use in Petersburg than local cards, and you will be able to buy a card during orientation. You will also be able to call from the orientation site soon after you arrive. Please bear in mind that in your homestay, marathon phone calls tie up a family phone.

St. Petersburg lies in the same time zone as Moscow. As of 2011, Russia does not change its clocks for Daylight Savings Time. Therefore, from fall until spring, St. Petersburg is 9 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and from spring until fall, St. Petersburg is 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

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. Should you decide to bring expensive smartphones, such as iPhones, to Russia, ensure that you will store them in safe places to avoid theft. Another possibility is to buy a MagicJack drive and use it with your computer. The number has to be registered in the U.S. prior to your departure for Russia. The MagicJack phone will function as a U.S. phone that can be used abroad. To use it, however, you need to either bring with you or buy an actual telephone (not a cell phone) device. This phone can only function through the Internet and any U.S. number (including cell phones) can be dialed for free.

Fax

The CIEE Office will scan and e-mail your course approval forms to send on to your home school in order to guarantee semester credit. Otherwise, faxes can be sent from any internet cafe.

Internet Access

Computers and Internet
The School of Political Science, SPbGU 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 Smolny offers a free Wi-Fi internet connection for laptop owners though the connection is nowhere near as fast as students typically expect from their university networks. 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 4-G and LTE USB modems from cell phone providers like Beeline, Megafon, and MTC or from Yota.

Students from previous semesters have recommended bringing a laptop because of the convenient Wi-Fi access available at the CIEE Study Center.

**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 free Wi-Fi access. Some cafes, restaurants, and movie theaters offer Wi-Fi through a service provider (such as Quantum Wi-Fi) and you need to buy a card to access their network, while some spots offer free Wi-Fi as long as the customer buys a coffee or snack.

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

**Program Mailing Address**

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, DHL, UPS and FedEx are expensive yet reliable (and trackable) ways to get important and time-sensitive items to St. Petersburg (for example, replacement ATM cards). CIEE staff in St. Petersburg does not recommend sending replacement ATM cards by U.S. Postal Service Express Mail since that service is not trackable within Russia. **All replacement ATM cards must be sent by trackable service (FedEX, UPS or DHL).**

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 reach the United States, though this service is quite expensive ($4.00 to send one letter).

Student’s Name, CIEE
School of Political Science
St. Petersburg State University
Ulitsa Smolnogo 1/3, Sedmoj Podezd
St. Petersburg 191124
RUSSIA

Additional Resources
Information you should know

Policies and Procedures

CIEE Program Policies

The link below provides additional details and information regarding CIEE program policies, academic policies, program fees and payment policies.

To view CIEE’s Policies and Procedures please follow:

http://ciee.org/study/terms.aspx

Suggested 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 Russia

- 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
- Hoffman, David The Oligarchs
- Massie, Robert. Peter the Great.
- Rice, Tamara. A Concise History of Russian Art.
- 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.

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.

Additional Info

Websites

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

www.travel.state.gov
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.

www.xe.net/ucc
Current exchange rates.

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

www.russiatoday.com
Web based daily news magazine covering Russia and the CIS that includes daily press reviews, television reports, business news, and original articles.
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, though
probably more expensive than in the US. You can save a lot of space by planning to buy things like soap, batteries, contact lens solution and tissues in Russia.

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

**Important Documents**

- Airline ticket (including return ticket)
- Printed copy of CIEE final details email (sent 3-4 weeks prior to the program start date)
- Credit (and/or ATM) card
- Home Advisor's (both academic and study abroad) address, fax, email
- Passport (with Visa glued inside)
- Photocopy of passport and visa (keep separate from passport)
- Traveler’s checks (if desired)/List of traveler's check numbers (keep separate)
- US Driver’s License (can be used as backup form of I.D.)
- Primary medical insurance card and iNext Card

**Clothing**

- Boots, sturdy, water-resistant, good for walking
- Pajamas
- Pants including at least one dressy pair (men)
- Robe
- Shirts
- Shoes (including a dress pair)
- Shower sandals/"flip-flops" and/or slippers (1 pair)
- Skirts or dresses including one dressy, with slip if necessary
- A below-knee length skirt + head scarf for visits to Russian Orthodox churches or monasteries
- Socks
- Sport coat/blazer and tie
- Sweaters/sweatshirt/fleece
- Underwear
- Long underwear (silk is most comfortable)
- Winter coat (waterproof)
- (optional) Dress winter coat
- gloves/hat/scarf
- (optional) YakTrax or other ice creepers for shoes or boots

**General**
☐ 110/220 volt current converter with European outlet adapter(s) if needed
☐ Address book, including email
☐ Backpack/Overnight bag for traveling
☐ Batteries
☐ Battery operated CO detector
☐ Camera, charger, batteries, memory cards
☐ Contact lens solution
☐ Contraceptives
☐ Electric tooth brush (if you use one)
☐ Flashlight
☐ Gifts/Photos from home
☐ Glasses or contact lenses, extra pair, prescription
☐ Guidebook
☐ Gynecological supplies
☐ Hair dryer –or can be purchased in Russia with the proper 220V outlet for under $10.
☐ Laptop (optional) with electrical adapter and security/theft recovery software
☐ Medications you are taking and a copy of the prescriptions
☐ Medicine kit, small: antacid/anti-diarrhea medicine/aspirin/Band-Aids/antibacterial ointment/cold medicine
☐ Money belt/neck pouch
☐ MP3/music player
☐ Pocket and/or normal-sized Russian-English dictionary
☐ Reading materials: books, magazines
☐ Sewing kit
☐ Sunglasses
☐ Umbrella (it rains frequently!)
☐ Travel alarm clock