



RUSSIA & BEYOND: FROM MOSCOW TO ALMATY

Our adventure began with a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Moscow aboard Air Astana. What followed was a fascinating journey through Russia's iconic landmarks, punctuated by breathtaking architecture, whimsical weather, and a delightful detour to Kazakhstan.

Moscow: Where History Meets the Unexpected

Our first stop was **Sergiev Posad**, where we visited the **Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius**, the spiritual heart of the Russian Orthodox Church. Founded in 1340, it is still home to over 300 monks. Back in the city, don't miss a ride on the Moscow Metro. The **Moscow Metro**, famously known as the People's Palaces, impressed us with its opulence-especially Victory Park station, where we rode the world's longest escalator.

On Board the Sapsan: Racing to St. Petersburg

We boarded the Sapsan high-speed train to St. Petersburg, a four-hour journey through the Russian countryside. A word to the wise: take an early train. Once night falls, the spectacular views vanish into darkness.

Traveling in May, we experienced all four seasons in a single day-sunshine, rain, snow, and wind! Be sure to pack for every possibility.

St. Petersburg: The Venice of the North

The Grand Palace of Peterhof, also known as the Summer Palace of Peter the Great. Facing a canal that flows into the Gulf of Finland, the palace took our breath away with its majestic fountains and gardens.

We also visited **St. Isaac's Cathedral**, the largest Russian Orthodox cathedral, which dome dominates the skyline. Just as grand is the **State Hermitage Museum**, housed in the stunning Winter Palace founded by Catherine the Great in 1754. With over 3 million works of art, it's one of the largest and oldest museums in the world. To see everything, you'd need to walk over 22 kilometres.



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Cruising Through Imperial Majesty

A **Neva River cruise** revealed the city's beauty from a new perspective. The 90-minute journey took us past landmarks such as the Peter and Paul Fortress, Mariinsky Theatre, St. Nicholas Cathedral, and the Hermitage itself.

Don't miss **Nevsky Prospekt** and its many iconic landmarks. Designed by Peter the Great, the avenue leads to Moscow and is lined with must-sees: Kazan Cathedral, the Singer House, Anichkov Bridge with its famous horse statues, and the 18th-century Elisseeff Emporium.

Stopover in Almaty: A Kazakh Bonus

Almaty offered a peaceful contrast to Russia's grandeur. We enjoyed a panoramic view from **Kok Tobe Hill**, visited **Ascension Cathedral** and the **Central Mosque**. No trip is complete without a visit to **Rahat Chocolate**. The bustling **Green Bazaar** was a perfect finale before heading home.

Final Reflections

St. Petersburg's imperial elegance, Peterhof's fountains, and the Hermitage's treasures made it my favorite stop. The Neva River cruise was the perfect conclusion to an unforgettable journey.

IT'S THE UNEXPECTED MOMENTS, THE CHANGING SKIES, AND THE QUIET RIVER VIEWS THAT STAYED WITH ME.

CALVINA CHUA

