

Other visits in Saint Petersburg

During our trip we didn't visit just the Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood and the St. Nicholas Naval Cathedral, but also the Ermitage State Museum, with its five palaces and the numerous art collections, the city of Peterhof, included in the metropolitan area of Saint Petersburg and nicknamed "the Russian Versailles" for its gardens and palaces, and the Cathedral of St. Isaac.



The Ermitage as seen from the Neva River. Below, Gertrud and August with dr. Fridolin G. Angerer.



THE ERMITAGE was originally conceived by Peter the Great as the new capital's Winter Palace. Abandoning his original house in Saint Petersburg (the so-called "Cabin of Peter I"), the tsar set his home in the first version of the Winter Palace, designed by Swiss architect Domenico Trezzini. The house originally was a two-story edifice with an attic and was later rebuilt and expanded twice under Peter II by Mattarnovy and once again by Trezzini. In 1728, three years after the death of Peter the Great, the court moved back to Moscow. When Saint Petersburg was restored as the capital of the Empire, Anne I entrusted the rebuilding of the Winter Palace to Florentine architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli, merging it with the surrounding buildings. His work continued under Elizabeth I, while Catherine I assigned the later modifications to Giacomo Quarenghi, an architect from Bergamo, Italy.

On the left, main entrance of the Ermitage with its baroque style.

Winter Palace, the first original core of the Ermitage, was followed by the Small and Large Ermitage, destined to collect more than 2000 paintings, gathered by Catherine II of Russia. The buildings of the museums were erected between 1764 and 1787 as designed by Yuri Velten. The two other edifices of the Ermitage are the Theatre (designed by Giacomo Quarenghi from Bergamo) and the New Ermitage (designed by Leo von Klenze in a Neo-Classic style and completed in 1851).

On the right, Ermitage Theatre, designed by Giacomo Quarenghi.



*"Madonna Conestabile" by Raphael and "Cupid and Psyche" by Antonio Canova.
Two of the numerous works by Italian artists exposed at the Ermitage.*

The Ermitage isn't famous for the buildings and the architectural beauty, but mainly for the immense collection of paintings, sculptures and enamels gathered since Catherine II up to now. Many of them are Italian (Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo, Caravaggio, Perugino, Canova), Spanish (Picasso, Velazquez), Dutch (Van Rijs, Rubens, Van Gogh) and French (Renoir, Cézanne, Dégas, Matisse, Monet). From the point of view of enamel art, the museum exposes mainly medieval enamel works from Limoges.



One of the medieval enamels from Limoges exposed in the Ermitage Museum.

PETERHOF is, as we mentioned, the so-called **Russian Versailles**, a name evoking a scenario with beautiful palaces and gardens. The first and most important building was erected during the reign of Peter the Great between 1714 and 1725, and he did that precisely with the French Versailles in mind. Nevertheless, the palace was never completed as Peter was still alive, but continued with later modifications during the reigns of his successors and enriched with the addition of fountains and beautiful Western-style palaces.



Above: statues and water games in the gardens of Peterhof, the Russian Versailles.



The **CATHEDRAL OF SAINT ISAAC** is another landmark of Saint Petersburg and is completely different from the St Nicholas Naval Cathedral and the Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood. What we can still see is a more recent church (1818-1858) embedding the interiors of a much older building, the "third cathedral" of St. Isaac, erected under Catherine the Great. The classic style of its architecture, its paintings inspired by Western art and its use of sculpture and bas-reliefs are somewhat alien to the typical and traditional Eastern Orthodox art.

On the left, the Cathedral of St. Isaac, view from the outside. Below, a mosaic with St Peter the Apostle and a detail with bas-reliefs from the main entrance door.



During our visit, we also had the occasion to admire the city from a particular point of view: **a ferry on the Neva River...**



On a finl note, we have to mention the **Hotel Park Inn Priybaltiskaya** (picture below), where we sojourned during the visit. Its interiors, in fact, are the home to many works of Russian enamel artist **Anvar Bagautdinov**, participating to the meeting at the Academy of the Baron von Stieglitz.



Works by Anvar Bagautdinov.

