

Saint Petersburg is the second largest city in Russia and one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It was founded in 1703 by Peter the Great as the window to Europe. Architects were brought from Western Europe to lay out the city in harmonious squares. Buildings were constructed in gray and rose-colored granite. The Hermitage and the Winter Palace, the homes of the Russian czars, were equal to any in Europe.

When the First World War began in 1914, the German-sounding name Saint Petersburg was changed to Petrograd. After the October Revolution the city was renamed after Vladimir Lenin.

During the Great Patriotic War the city suffered a great deal. The German armies laid siege to it in 1941, and for the next year and a half it was cut off from the rest of the country. Daily shelling and air raids destroyed parts of the city.

Now Saint Petersburg is an important industrial, cultural, and educational center. It is also a large transport center. Now there are five railroad stations, two airports, a seaport, two bus terminals, a sea passenger terminal, and a river passenger terminal.

The population of the city grew fast. At the beginning of the 20th century it was about one million, by 1941 — it was about two million people, in the seventies — it was about four million, and it is near six million people.

Saint Petersburg is a wonderful city: at every turn there is something to catch your eye. Alexander Column, the highest structure of this kind in the world, raises on Palace Square. Peter the Great Monument, better known as the Bronze Horseman, is on Senate Square.

The Field of Mars, with the area of twelve hectares, is the biggest square in Saint Petersburg. The main street of the city is Nevsky Prospect. Sadovaya Street got its name from a lot of gardens once facing the street. Moskovsky Prospect is the longest street in the city and Architect Rossy Street is the shortest one.

The city is called Northern Venice because there are 65 rivers, arms and canals there with artistically decorated bridges. Eight bridges across the Neva River open every night in summer giving together with the sunset sun and magnificent buildings a picturesque view. The longest bridge is Alexander Nevsky Bridge across the Neva River.

There are lots of museums in the city. The Kunstkammer, the first Russian museum, the Peter and Paul Fortress, the Smolny Cathedral, the Russian Museum, St. Isaac's Cathedral and Savior-on-the-Spilt-Blood, the Admiralty and the Winter Palace, and many others, attract thousands of tourists from all over the world. Saint Petersburg's many museums house some of the world's most famous art collections. The Hermitage, for example, contains the richest collection of pictures and pieces of applied art in the world.

Saint Petersburg is also famous for its legendary white nights. Different festivals take place at this time. It has also been a tradition for graduates of all kinds to celebrate their graduation and make marry in the night city.

People all over the world know that far north in Russia is the city of Saint Petersburg. Many of those who once visited the city liked it and want to be there again.