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Russia a tourists dream by Anne Mary

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As you would expect from the largest country in the world, there is an abundance of tourist opportunities in Russia which include a massive 23 different UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This remarkable nation extending across the whole of northern Asia and as much as 40% of Europe, spans an incredible nine time zones, so for visitors the diversity of destinations and cultures is extensive.

Any traveler will need to purchase a visa to gain entry and the most obvious first choice is Moscow, the 6th biggest city on earth, with Red Square and the surrounding buildings the focal point. Every first-timer in the capital city will want to have a photograph taken in front of St Basil's Cathedral the elaborate center piece of the square and one of the most recognized structures on the planet. Opposite is the Kremlin, which is the official residence of the President and a little further along is the Mausoleum of Vladiir Lenin the founder of the Soviet Union. His embalmed body attracts a steady stream of curious onlookers throughout each day.

Another very popular city to visit is St Petersburg, a place steeped in history and a very important port on the Baltic Sea. It is regarded by many as the most beautiful city in Russia and often described as being the most westernized in the country. This is the home of The Hermitage which is the largest Art Museum in the world.

The Trans-Siberian Railway is one of the most famous of rail journey's connecting Moscow to Vladivostok in the very Far East of the country on a 5,753 mile trek. It takes an incredible 8 days to complete the trip, passing through 7 time zones. Although it is not the longest single continuous service â€“ that position is taken by the Moscow to Pyongyang in North Korea, but for a train lover it is the ultimate journey.

Possibly the most celebrated natural visitor destination in Russia is Lake Baikal, nicknamed the Blue Eye of Siberia. Not only is it the oldest lake in the world it is also the deepest with a total depth of over 1,700 meters and has wonderful crystal-clear waters overlooked by a stunning mountain range. It is home to over 1,500 species of animals and plants, a huge proportion of which cannot be found anywhere else around the globe.

Another well visited region is Kamchatka with a high density of volcanoes all of which are active and sitting amongst glaciers makes the landscape a breathtaking sight. Many people fail to associate coastal resorts with Russia, but the warm subtropical Black Sea coastline is the site for several popular places such as Sochi, which attracts huge numbers to its beaches in the summer months, and just as many to its ski resorts in cooler times. It has major sporting connections as it is the location for the Winter Olympics in 2014, plus it will be home to the Russian Formula 1 Grand Prix from the same year and has been selected as a host city for the 2018 football World Cup.

Add the many Heritage sites including: Central Sikhote-Alin mountain range which contains one the richest and most unusual temperate forests of the world; the sand duned peninsula of Curonian Spit which dates back to prehistoric times and the Golden Mountains of Altai in southern Siberia which is a the source of the major Rivers the Ob and Irtysh and is a region of incredible altitude vegetation, it is also the habitat of many endangered animals in particular the snow leopard. The alternatives are wide and varied, so for any visitor in this vast land it is a matter of deciding on the nature of their visit, but with so many options available they really are spoiled for choice.

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Anne Mary - About Author:
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