



Travel Information for ExpeditionPlus!

St. Petersburg, Russia to Istanbul, Turkey

- A. Travel and Transportation
- B. Timeline Checklist
- C. While There

Weather Data Websites

View historical weather information for your destination.

- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com
- www.weatherspark.com
- www.eurometeo.com

Flight & Travel Websites

View itineraries to book your trip.

- www.kayak.com
- www.orbitz.com
- www.expedia.com
- www.whichairline.com
- www.yapta.com (to track flight prices)

Currency Conversion Websites

View exchange rates for local currencies.

Russia's currency is the Ruble (RUB). Latvia's currency is the Lats (LVL), Lithuania's currency is the Litas (LTL), & Poland's currency is the Zlotych (PLN). Slovakia & Estonia use the Euro (€). Hungary's currency is the Forint (HUF). Romania's currency is the Leu (RON). Bulgarians use the Lev (BGN), and the Turkish use the Lira (TRY).

- www.xe.com/ucc/

A. Travel and Transportation

Passport

You need a passport. Check yours today to see that it is valid for at least six months beyond the date you intend to return to the U.S. You can obtain application and renewal forms for a U.S. passport online at www.travel.state.gov or at a local Post Office. It can take up to six weeks to receive your passport.

Visa

Russia:

You will need a tourist visa to enter Russia. Allow at least one month for your visa to be processed. American citizens can fill out their visa application online at <http://evisa.kdmid.ru/Default.aspx>. Note that you cannot change your entry dates after submitting your application. ExperiencePlus! will provide a Russian-American consultant for Americans to complete the visa process. If you are from another country, or hold a passport of another country, please consult your local consulate for direction. ExperiencePlus! will provide pertinent documents needed to complete any official documentation or reservation requirements.

Turkey:

American passport holders do not need a Turkish visa in advance; however, a visa will need to be purchased (cash) at your point of entry into Turkey. You can find complete visa information on the [Turkish Foreign Affairs website](#). Fees will be around 35 Turkish Lira (around \$20).

Booking your Flights

Most international flights leave Europe in the morning often requiring you to book your homebound flight for the day after the tour ends. Check your *Getting To and Away* information specific to your ExperiencePlus! cycling departure for start and end towns and airports.

Tips for booking flights:

- Search the web. Be sure to review their policies for restrictions and cancellation penalties.
- Contact your travel agent. A good agent can help you find a competitive fare. He or she will charge a fee for this service.
 - Fly into smaller airports. Some European airlines and their American partners have competitive prices if you fly into large European hubs like London (on British Airways), Frankfurt (on Lufthansa), or Amsterdam (on KLM) and then connect to a smaller airport within your destination country. Also look at flying into major European hubs

- www.oanda.com/convert/classic

VoIP Phone Calls

Make free (computer to computer) and low-cost (computer to phone) calls with VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). Try Skype (www.skype.com), Google Talk (www.google.com/talk/), or VoipBuster (www.voipbuster.com).

Travel Language Guides

Learn the lingo with WorldNomads' language guides. Download free foreign language podcasts to your iPod or mp3 player. iPhone apps are available for purchase. Visit <http://journals.worldnomads.com/language-guides>

Safety Information for Traveling

- Be careful of pickpockets and purse snatching -- Do not wear valuable or showy jewelry and keep your wallet somewhere safe. Use common sense as you would in any large city.
- Keep a watchful eye on your personal belongings; never leave your luggage unattended. It takes seconds for someone to steal your things. Keep important documents such as passports, licenses, and money in a waist belt or passport holder around your neck. You can purchase these from your local discount retailer or

with standard airlines and then book internal European flights using low cost airlines. See www.whichairline.com

Travel planning services are available to assist you with transportation to and from the tour and pre/post tour hotels bookings. Contact us at travel.agent@experienceplus.com

Airport Transportation Information

Flying into St. Petersburg, Russia

Name and airport code: Pulkovo Airport (LED)

Website: <http://www.pulkovoairport.ru/eng/>

We will be coordinating airport transfers appropriate to your incoming flights.

Pulkovo Airport is around 10 miles south of the city center.

To and From the airport:

By bus/train: The airport is served by two local bus lines: line 39 from terminal 1 and line 13 from terminal 2. With a frequency of 8 minutes, both run to Aeroport railway station in 7 min from terminal 1 and only 4 min from terminal 2, costing 21 rubles one way. From there, hop on a suburban train to the Baltijski rail terminal in the city center in 18 minutes for 32 rubles. Note that service is infrequent and the signs in the stations are in Russian, but you are free to consult the timetable online (only in Russian), <http://www.tutu.ru/prigorod/> and follow these directions: Откуда = from, Куда = to, enter **Аэропорт (Балт. напр.)** for Aeroport and **Санкт-Петербург Балт.** for the city centre and choose your travel date. Click on **Показать расписание и билеты** and all departures on that day will appear. The direction is shown on the far right.

By taxi: Taxis can be ordered from the service booth in the arrivals hall. In Terminal 1, it's before the baggage claim, and in Terminal 2, it's by the exit door to the street. The fixed price for a taxi to the central district (Nevesky/Hermitage area) is 600 RUB, not including luggage fees. It will take about 2 hours to get into the city, as traffic is heavy. If you hail a taxi from the service booths, it will take about 20 minutes for the taxi to arrive.

Flying out of Istanbul, Turkey

1) Istanbul Ataturk International Airport

Name and airport code: Atatürk International Airport (IST)

Website: www.ataturkairport.com/eng/index.php

This airport is located 24km (15 miles) from the Istanbul city center. We recommend getting to and from the airport by taxi. It costs around TRY 40 from the airport to the historic Old Istanbul "Sultanahmet" district.

(Please note: there is another airport in Istanbul, but it is further from town and is rarely used by international flights. If you do fly into it, a taxi to the hotel should cost around TRY 90.

To and From the airport:

By bus: Line #96T is run by *İETT* and costs 5 TRY; it stops at Aksaray close to Sultanahmet. Travel times are 20–40 minutes, but depend a lot on traffic, and Istanbul is congested.

specialty
travel/luggage shop.

Passport Photocopies

Carry a copy with you, separate from your passport, and leave another copy with someone at home.

Credit Card Photocopy

Carry a copy in a safe place with you.

Insurance Information

Bring health and travel insurance policy numbers and phone numbers. Toll free numbers will not work internationally so bring the regular published number.

International Time Zone

Most of European Russia is on Moscow time (MSK/MSD), which is 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey are all on Eastern European Summer Time (EEST), 7 hours ahead of EST. Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary are on Central

By taxi: It will cost you about 40 TRY from Sultanahmet

Train Transportation Information

Russian Train Information:

Russian Railways (RZD)

Web: <http://poezda.net/> (only in Russian)

The train system in Russia is typically reliable. There are often direct trains from major European metropolitan areas to St. Petersburg. Note that there is a two-hour wait between European and ex-Soviet countries because the rail gauge is different, and sometimes due to customs and border controls. The wait is usually accounted for in the train's timetable.

Online ticketing services are principally in Russian, and the English sites charge 30-50% more. Our recommendation is to ask your hotel concierge or a travel agent to arrange your train travel if you are planning to travel by train prior to the trip within the country. All the signage is in Russian in train stations, so be aware of that challenge too!

Turkish Train Information:

Turkish Republic State Railways (TCDD)

Website: <http://www.tcdd.gov.tr/tcdding/index.htm>

By train: International trains from Europe arrive at the station in Sirkeci (close to Sultanahmet), where you can catch daily overnight trains to Belgrade, Sofia, Bucharest, & ultimately to Budapest. Eurail passes may be purchased for travel in Turkey.

Purchasing train tickets in advance:

You do not have to purchase train tickets in advance, especially if they are for post-tour travel plans (your tour leaders can help you with those).

Train Travel Reminders:

- **Before you board your train: *Validate Your Ticket!*** Look for the validation box (yellow box) on the platform or in the train station. Validate your ticket just before you board. Conductors will occasionally ask to see your ticket once the train is en-route. If your ticket is not validated, you may be fined. If for some reason you don't validate your ticket before boarding, find the conductor and inform him/her right away to avoid paying a fine.

Tickets purchased on-line: If you have purchased an online ticket and have printed your receipt, there is no need to validate your ticket as the printed ticket has a bar code that the train conductor will scan. Make sure you are traveling on the correct train on the correct day to avoid penalties.

- **To find your train:** At the train station, trains are listed in chronological order by departure time on large overhead boards. You can find your train by the exact departure time (rarely does more than one train leave at the exact same time). TRAVEL TIP: Please keep in mind that

European Summer Time (CEST) and are 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Electrical Appliances

Electric current in central Europe is 220V as opposed to the 110V in the U.S. and Canada. Electrical outlets have two round pins (standard continental European “europlug”), so you will need a converter for the voltage and an adapter to plug in your device. Many modern electronics have a built-in voltage converter. In that case, you will only need an adapter. Both items can be found at a hardware or travel store.

Computer/Wireless Access

There are dozens of Internet cafes in major cities, and larger towns along the route. Some hotels may also offer internet to customers

Bicycle Safety - Wear your Helmet Always

Be sure your bicycle helmet is properly adjusted to correctly fit your head and wear it always when you cycle.

Hotel Check-in and Check-out

frequently your destination is not the same as the train’s final destination (which is the city that will be listed next to the time on the board). Do not look for your destination town.

Other Types of Transportation

Subways in Russia:

The metro is the cheapest and most effective way to get around the city, and because of the well-decorated stations, also seems to be a tourist must-see attraction in the city. It costs 25 RUB per entry, regardless of distance. If you are planning on traveling this way, stock up on the brass tokens (*жетон – zheton*) easily found at entrance kiosks, because lines can get long and sometimes stations run out of the tokens. Central station names are (thankfully) signed in both Cyrillic and Latin alphabets and maps with both alphabets are posted in each metro car. Be aware that these metros get very crowded during rush hour, and the probability of pick pocketing and missing your arrival point because you can’t push yourself out fast enough both increase in those times.

Buses in Russia:

The Russian word for bus station is *Avtovokzal* (Ahv-tuh-vahg-ZAHL). Buses (*автобус*) and trolleybuses (*троллейбус*) are cheap (21 RUB) and frequent. Tickets are sold by a conductor sitting in the bus. Every bus has its own conductor. If the conductor is absent, tickets are sold by the driver. However, buses and trolleys on main routes are frequently overcrowded.

Taxis in Russia:

Route taxi (*маршрутка - marshrutka*) is sometimes the fastest way to get somewhere. Taxis are 14-20 seat vans, usually white or yellow, always with a letter K and route number plate (K-28). Often they are small Chinese or Turkish buses. There are no regular stops; you must tell the driver when you want to get out, or wave while on the roadside to stop one. You must pay to the driver at entry, usually from 20 to 27 rubles. If you cannot reach the driver on your own, pass the money through the other passengers and be ready to pass other's money if you sit close to the driver.

The *Marshrutka* experience may seem exciting sometimes, especially when you see some brave driver counting change while steering with his knees at 70 MPH (110 km/h). Many *marshrutka* drivers are illegal immigrants and speak Russian poorly (if any at all).

Rental Cars in Russia:

We recommend not renting a car while in Russia. St. Petersburg and other major cities have an extensive public transportation infrastructure and many taxis that you can use while you’re in the country.

Buses in Turkey:

There are numerous bus companies that offer reliable and comfortable transportation throughout Turkey. The buses are modern and comfortable, service is frequent, and fares are low to moderate. Every major city and most smaller ones have bus lines of some sort. There's even service to Greece, Bulgaria and other Balkan countries, and Europe. We recommend Best Ulusoy - <http://www.ulusoy.com.tr> and Varan - <http://www.varan.com.tr/>

Taxis in Turkey:

Hotel check out time along the route varies, but is typically around noon. Check-in time is around 2-3 pm; occasionally your room may be ready early.

Hotels are required to log passport information for each traveler so the front desk will ask you for your passport when you check in. As a convenience to you, ExperiencePlus! provides this information to the front desk while you are traveling with us on tour.

ATMs are called "Bankomats"

Credit Cards

Visa and Master Card are the most widely accepted cards in central Europe, followed by American Express. Most major hotels and restaurants and shops in large cities accept credit cards. Some museums, train stations, or bus stations may not accept credit cards. Particularly in the small towns we will be staying, cash is your best option.

Chip and PIN, Chip and Signature, and Magnetic Strip credit cards

Europe tends to use the chip-and-PIN type of credit and debit cards, meaning the "smartcard" contains a microchip that automatically authenticates the card with the use of a PIN at the time of the transaction. At this time, credit and debit cards issued in the United States are of the Chip and Signature or the

Taxis are numerous and are recognizable by their yellow color and lighted "taksi" signs on top. Each taxi is metered. If convenient, ask the hotel reception to call a taxi for you. Keep in mind that the cost may vary depending on traffic in the city.

Rental Cars in Turkey:

You usually save money arranging your rental from the U.S. Be sure to get the exact address of the rental car agency, (preferably at your arrival airport). We recommend renting a car only from major chains to avoid misunderstanding. It is advised to verify that all insurances are included.

B. Timeline Checklist to Prepare for your Tour

Upon Booking

- Check your passport. For US residents the expiration date should extend six months past your date of return to the US.
- Purchase trip cancellation/interruption insurance within 14 days of booking to comply with time sensitive coverage clauses. Visit our Travel and Planning Information Page for more information www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo.
- Submit your *Customer Information Form* online. Access the form at www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo/tourcif.
- Start checking air fare. Contact us to see if your departure is guaranteed to run before you reserve a nonrefundable flight.

2 - 4 Months Prior to Departure

- Reserve your flights if you have not yet done so.
- Apply for a Russian visa
- Plan your pre and post-tour transportation. Refer to the *Getting To and Away* (an email attachment named GTA) for details. Bring this with you on the plane.
- Reserve your pre and post-tour extra hotel nights. The hotel contact information is in your *Getting To and Away* (an email attachment named GTA).
- Evaluate your conditioning and begin training using our Joel Friel Bicycle Program available on our Travel and Planning Information Page. www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo.
- Final payments are due 90 days prior to departure. Refer to your *Deposit Payment Letter* and *Final Payment Reminder* email for details.

2 – 4 weeks Prior to Departure

- Review your flight and other transportation tickets and extra night hotels reservations.
- Refer to the *Bicycle Tour Packing List* available on our Travel and Planning Information Page at www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo and verify your packing needs.
- Distribute the *Hotel Itinerary* attached to your Final Mailing email to a responsible person so they can reach you in an emergency.

Day of Your Flight

- Make sure you have your tour specific *Getting To and Away* (an email attachment named GTA) that provides our staff contact numbers and meeting time and location.

magnetic strip type, with a very few companies starting to offer the Chip and PIN. U.S. credit card holders travelling in Europe can expect to find that some self-serve vending machines or kiosks such as those at train or metro stations, luggage lockers, toll booths, and fueling stations will not accept the magnetic strip or the Chip and Signature cards. You may wish to pay the transaction in cash, or make the transaction directly at a staffed window. Some smaller shops and vendors may not want to accept the magnetic strip card as they have to pay higher fees for those transactions. Again, having cash on hand for these transactions is advised. By far, the majority of hotels, restaurants and shops will accept a magnetic strip and the Chip and Signature cards.

Language Lessons

Russian is an East Slavic language and widely spoken in Latvia and Estonia as well as several other countries once a part of the USSR. The language is written using a modified Cyrillic alphabet.

- Hello - (*pree-viette*)
- Yes - (*da*)
- No - (*nyet*)
- Thank you - (*spas EE ba*)
- Goodbye - (*da svedAneeya*)
- Good evening - (*dObri vYEchyer*)
- How much is it? - (*skOI'ka Eta stO-eeť*)
- Where is the toilet? - (*gdye too-aIYEť*)
- The meal was very

- Drink plenty of water and little or no caffeine or alcohol to help reduce jetlag and try to get as much sleep as possible.
- Have a great trip, smile and we will see you there!

C. While There

Currency and Banking Information

Even though you may pay a fee, you usually get the best exchange rate using ATM machines for ready cash. Check with your bank to be sure that your standard PIN number will work, as some cards require an international PIN. Many towns along the tour have ATM machines, but fewer towns have places to change dollars. Most of our customers withdraw or change money two - three times during the trip. We suggest withdrawing or changing \$300 at your arrival airport. Be aware that some machines limit the amount you can withdraw. Once on tour the best place to change dollars is at the post office. Changing money in Europe will get you a better exchange rate than if you change money in the U.S. Only exchange money in banks and certified exchange offices. Exchange offices can be found in all major hotels, travel agencies, and department stores.

Use your credit card for major shopping, restaurant meals in large towns, and for hotels outside of the tour. VISA and Master Card are most commonly accepted followed by American Express. (Be aware that many credit card companies charge a foreign transaction fee – check your card's policies before you leave home.)

Open hours in banks (note that in Europe, they may close for an hour around lunchtime-1 pm-outside of the big cities):

Typically, banks are not open weekends or holidays.

Russia: 9:30am-5:30pm, M-F

Estonia: 10am-4pm, M-F

Latvia: 8:30am-4pm, M-F

Lithuania, Poland, & Slovakia: 9am-5pm, M-F

Hungary: 8am -3pm, M-Thurs, 8am-1pm on Friday

Romania: 9am-6pm, M-F

Bulgaria: 9am-4pm, M-F

Turkey: 8:30am-5pm, M-F

Traveling with your Cell Phone

For your cell phone to work in Europe you will need a mobile phone that supports the GSM Wireless system (Global System for Mobile Communications). Most cell phone providers do provide GSM capable phones although you may have to call your service provider to have the technology “turned on”. If you have T-Mobile or AT&T you will need to “unlock” your GSM phone. If a service provider does NOT provide GSM capable phones, it is possible to rent or buy a separate phone that is GSM capable. Once you have a GSM capable phone, you will need to have international roaming turned on in order to make phone calls. Please remember you will be charged for both outgoing and incoming phone calls and charges range between \$1-\$1.70 per minute.

Mobal International Cell Phones, www.mobal.com offers international

good, thank you –
(spasEEba, bEEla
Ochyen'fkOOsna)

- Water – (vadA)
- Do you speak English? –
(Govorite li vy po
angliyski)

Lithuanian is a Baltic language, considered to be the most pure living form of the Indo-European language.

- Hello – Informal – lavas,
Formal – laba diena
- Goodbye – Informal – iki,
Formal – viso gero
- Please – prašau
- Thank you – ačiū
- That one – tas
(masculine) ta (feminine)
- Yes – taip
- No – ne
- Do you speak English? –
(Ar kalbate angliškai?)
- Photo - nuotrauka

Polish is a Western Slavic language and the closest similar languages are those of Poland's neighbors: Czech and Slovak.

- Hello - Informal - Cześć
(Tch-esh-ch) Formal -
Dzień dobry (Jeyn Dob-ry)
- Good-bye - Informal - pa
(pah) Formal - Do
zobaczenia (doh zoh-
bah-chen-yah)
- Good night - Dobranoc.
(doh-brah-nots)
- Tomorrow - wczoraj (f-
chore-eye)
- Please - Proszę (PROH-
sheng)
- Thank you - Dziękuję.
(Jenkoo-yeng)
- How are you? - Jak się
masz? (Yahk sheng
mah-sh)
- I am fine, thank you -
Dziękuję, dobrze
(Jenkoo-yeng dob-zhe)

phones, SIM cards, and international phone service with no monthly plan or fee. The minutes do not expire and you pay for only the minutes used. Minutes can be added by credit card. If you already have a GSM cell phone you can purchase only the SIM card.

Alternatively, if you are GSM phone savvy, you can buy SIM cards (a phone number, basically) that fits into an **unlocked GSM phone**, and then you can buy prepaid credit as needed from local vendors. You can purchase a SIM card at a cell carrier's store of which there are usually at least one in any medium sized town. These cards for your cell phone cost around € 20 - € 30 for the card and then you need to buy credit.

Before you travel with your cell phone please check with your cell phone provider and make sure you know the answers to these questions:

1. Is my cell phone GSM capable?
2. If yes, is that option on and can I use it abroad or can I "unlock" the GSM?
3. If it isn't GSM capable can I rent a GSM phone, or where can I get one?
4. What are the international roaming fees for the country(ies) I am traveling in?

Attire and Etiquette

Turkey

When visiting a mosque, please remember to cover your shoulders and legs – shorts and sleeveless tops are not allowed. Most large mosques have wraps to be worn around the waist available for both male and female visitors.

Eating and Drinking

As general policy for ExperiencePlus! trips, tap water is available at meals and in the van unless the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) advises otherwise for the region of travel.

Russia

Russia has a wide spread of cuisine due to the country's sheer size and variation in landscapes, from peasant farmland in the barren interior to plentiful seafood on the coasts. Grain crops result in many breads, cereals, pancakes, beer, and vodka. You can expect a soup and stew brimming with seasonal products or those that are easily storable in the tough winter months.

Make sure to try some regional specialties along the way: *piroshky* (buns with sweet and savory filling), *borsch* (beet and garlic soup), *golubtsy* (cabbage rolls), *pelmeni* (meat-filled dumplings). Chicken kiev and beef stroganoff, although attributed to Russia, are often 'touristy' meals.

It is better to avoid the tap water in Russia and keep ice out of your drinks (even if it's hot out), and opt for bottled water if possible.

Estonia

Estonian fare is influenced by both Germany and Scandinavian cuisine. A national dish is called *verivorst*, or black pudding, usually served with

- Excuse me - Przepraszam. (*psheh-prah-shahm*)
- Do you speak English? - Czy mówisz po angielsku? (*chih moo-vish poh ahng-gyel-skoo?*)
- Where is the toilet? - Gdzie jest toaleta? (*g-jeh yest twa-leta*)

Slovakian is an Indo-European language belonging to the West Slavic languages (together with Czech, Polish, Kashubian and Sorbian). Slovak is mutually intelligible with Czech.

- Good morning - Dobrze rano. (*DOH-brehh RAA-noh*)
- Good afternoon - Dobry deň. (*DOH-bree deñ*)
- Good evening - Dobry večer. (*DOH-bree VEH-chehr*)
- Good night - Dobru noc. (*DOH-broo nohts*)
- Good-bye - Do videnia. (*doh VEE-deh-nee_ah*)
- Thank you - Ďakujem. (*DAH-koo-yehm*)
- Can you help me, please? - Môžete mi prosím pomôcť? (*mwoh-ZHEH-teh mi PROH-seeem POH-mwohtst*)
- Could I please use the telephone? - Môžem prosím použiť telefón? (*MWOH-zhem PROH-seeem PWOH-zhee-tuh teh-LEH-fawn*)
- Where are the toilets? - Kde sú tu záchody? (*deh soo too ZAA-koh-dí?*)
- What time is it? - Koľko je hodín? (*KOH-ehl-koh yeh HOH-deeen*)

Hungarian belongs to the Finno-Ugric group of languages and is unlike any Germanic, Slavonic or Indo-European tongue. For instance, rather than using

mulgikapsad, or sauerkraut stew.

You'll also see similarities between Estonian food and Russian food. Game meats are relatively common, and if you're lucky, you may come to find a restaurant offering bear meat. A national chocolate maker, Kalev sells its products in markets and specialty stores; for those of you who would like a little sweet treat, seek them out.

Common in all of the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), you will find flavored milk curd snacks, sometimes covered with chocolate or vanilla, or filled with jam or raisins. In Estonia, it is called *kohuke*.

Latvia

Latvia is known for its quality bread and milk products. In outdoor markets in Riga, for example, there will be a large variety of berries from the forests, and plentiful vegetables and fruits available.

The peasant culture is the basis for the cuisine of Latvia, so various crops from the land take the centerpiece of dishes (potatoes, beans, beets, buckwheat called *griki*). Some country favorites include pork, both smoked & raw fish, and sausage. Latvian rye bread is a great accompaniment to a stew or soup. One classic dish worth mentioning is the *piragi*: bacon and onion wrapped in thin yeast-based dough.

Tap water is safe to drink; locals often boil it prior to drinking it, however.

Lithuania

Most meals in Lithuania contain some combination of meat, potatoes, vegetables topped with a curd sauce. Pork is a common meat you'll find.

Lithuanians do like to drink beer; there could be more than 50 different beer brands at any given kiosk. A request for Lithuanian beer often is met with a satisfied and proud waiter or bartender. In the instance that you do visit someplace without planning on eating much, consider trying a bar snack of garlic bread covered with cheese.

Tap water is okay to drink in Lithuania, although locals choose bottled water or filtered tap water.

Poland

Polish cuisine uses a fair variety of ingredients. It is rich in meat, especially pork, cabbage (for example in the dish *bigos*, a cabbage and meat stew), and spices, as well as different kinds of noodles and dumplings, the most notable of which are the *pierogi*.

A typical lunch (*drugie śniadanie*) is usually composed of at least three courses, starting with a soup, such as *barszcz* (beet) or *żurek* (sour rye meal mash), followed perhaps in a restaurant by an appetizer of salmon or herring (prepared in either cream, oil, or vinegar). Other popular appetizers are various meats, vegetables or fish in *aspic* (consommé). The main course may be the national dish, *bigos* (cabbage with pieces of meat, mostly pork) or *kotlet schabowy* (breaded pork cutlet). Meals often conclude with a dessert such as ice cream (*lody*), *makowiec* (poppy seed cake), or *drożdżówka*, a type of yeast cake. Other Polish specialties include *chłodnik* (a chilled beet or fruit soup for hot days), *golonka* (pork knuckles cooked with

prepositions, such as "from", "to" etc. Hungarian relies on adding suffixes to words.

- Good morning - Jó reggelt
- Good day - Jó napot
- Good evening - Jó estét
- Goodbye – Viszontlátásra
- Yes – Igen
- No – Kérem
- Thank you/No thank you - Köszönöm/Nem Köszönöm
- Excuse me - Bocsánat!
- Pleased to meet you – Orvendek
- I understand/don't understand - Értem/Nem értem
- Entrance – Bejárat
- Exit – Kijárat
- Open – Nyitva
- Closed – Zárva
- How much is it - Mennyibe kerül
- Patisserie – Cukrászda
- Cafe/Coffee House – Kávéház
- Where is the toilet? – Hol van a mosodó? (*hol van a MOSH-doa*)
- Do you speak English (German / French)? - Beszél on angolul (németül/franciául)?

Romanian is a Romance language spoken principally in Romania and Moldova.

- Hello – Salut (*sah-LOOT*)
- Goodbye – La revedere (*lah reh-veh-DEH-reh*)
- Please – Vă rog (*vuh ROHG*)
- Thank you – Mulțumesc (*mool-tzoo-MESK moolt*)
- Thanks – Mersi
- Yes – da (*dah*)
- No – nu (*noo*)
- Do you speak English? – Vorbiți engleză (*vo-BEETZ eng-LEH-zuh*)

vegetables), *kolduny* (meat dumplings), *zrazy* (stuffed slices of beef), *salceson* and *flaczki* (tripe). Many dishes contain *quark*, (curd cheese).

If you want to eat cheaply, you should visit a *bar mleczny* (milk-bar). *Bar mleczny* is a typically Polish kind of a fast food restaurant. It was invented by the communist authorities of Poland in mid-1960s as a means to offer cheap meals to people working in companies that had no official canteen. Its name originates from the fact that until late 1980s the meals served there were mostly dairy-made and vegetarian (especially during the martial law period of the beginning of the 1980s, when meat was rationed). The milk-bars are usually subsidized by the state. Eating there is a unique experience - it is not uncommon that you will encounter people from various social classes - students, businessmen, university professors, elderly people, sometimes even homeless, all eating side-by-side in a 1970s-like environment. Presumably, it is the quality of food at absolutely unbeatable price (veggie main courses starting from PLN 1.80) that attracts people.

Tap water from your hotel or from any restaurant or cafe is perfectly potable even though most Poles drink carbonated water. Non-carbonated bottled water is generally widely available, called "woda niegazowana". Poland is known for its mineral waters. You can buy it in every shop, or try real mineral water with salts in "pavilions of water" (*Pijalnia wód*) in mountain resorts, where this water is produced. Note that drinking water with a meal is not a Polish tradition; you will almost always have to ask for water with your meal.

Slovakia

The traditional basic components of the Slovak diet have always been and still are milk, potatoes, and cabbage. '*Bryndzové halušky*' is the Slovak national meal made with potato dumplings and a special kind of non-pasteurized fermented sheep cheese called '*bryndza*'. They may serve pieces of fried meaty bacon on top of *Bryndzové halušky*. Apart from being very tasty and delicious, the *bryndza* is also extremely healthy. Some scientists suppose it can even prevent cancer and treat allergies.

Smoked or fresh sheep cheese products are sold in different forms and shapes and Slovaks love them. They are sold at all food shops all over Slovakia. Soups are also very popular - *kapustnica* (made of cabbage), garlic soup (served in a bread bowl), a bean soup with a frankfurter, or beef or chicken consommé.

Traditional desserts are pastries of risen dough filled with marmalade, curd, nuts or poppy seeds.

Tap water from your hotel or from any restaurant or cafe is perfectly potable even though Slovaks generally drink bottled water.

Hungary

Contrary to widespread belief, Hungarian cooking isn't all *gulyás* (goulash) and heavily spiced paprika dishes, just in the same way as Italian isn't all pasta, and Indian isn't all flavored with hot spices. Hungarian dishes have a distinctive, unmistakable character of their own, often rich with sour cream, onions, eggs, butter and wine. An abundance of good local produce, meat and fish make for dishes such as *Halászlé* (Fish soup), *Sült libamájselet* (pan-fried goose liver), *Almával töltött fácán* (pheasant stuffed with apples), *Szarvastokány erdei gombával* (venison stew with wild mushrooms) and

Bulgarian is a South Slavic language, with similarities to Slovenian, Russian, and Polish. It uses the Cyrillic alphabet.

- Hello – (*zdrah-VEY-teh*)
- Goodbye – (*doh-VEEZH-dah-neh*)
- Please – (*moh-LYAH*)
- Thank you – (*blah-goh-DAH-ryah*)
- How are you? – (*KAHK steh*)
- I am fine – (*doh-BREH*)
- Do you speak English? – (*govorish li angliiski*)
- Where is the toilet? – (*kade e toaletnatuh*)

Turkish is an Altaic language, and is known to be a difficult language to speak and to learn, due to its differences in grammar structure and vocabulary.

- Hello – Formal- Merhaba (*mehr hah bah*)
- Goodbye – Formal – Hoşçakalin (*hosh cha kaluhn*)
- Thank you – Teşekkür ederim (*teh shek uer eh der eem*)
- Do you speak English? – İngilizce biliyor musunuz?
- Bike mechanic – Bisiklet tamircisi
- Where is the toilet? – Tuvalet nerede? (*too va let ner eh de*)

Welcome !

Fogasszelet bakonyi módra (fillet of pike-perch Bakony style).

Vegetarians fair less well though with a Hungarian diet that's traditionally meat heavy, but vegetarian restaurants do exist. Most traditional restaurants will offer fried mushrooms (*rántott gomba*), *Trappista sajt* (Trappist cheese in breadcrumbs) or egg dishes.

Tap water from your hotel or from any bar is perfectly potable even though you will see Hungarians drinking liters of bottled water. Generally, the tap water is heavy with minerals and will taste differently.

Romania

Romanian food, although similar to Western European fare, is unique in itself, with its traditional sauces, polenta dishes, and continual flavor presence of garlic and onions.

Traditional dishes include *sarmale*, grape, chard, or cabbage leaves wrapped around minced meat paired with *mămăligă*, a polenta-like porridge and a spicy sausage called *mici*. If you're craving a meat and vegetable salad, try the *salata boef*, which also has a topping of mayonnaise, tomatoes, and parsley. One dessert to keep your eye out for *pandispan*, literally Spanish bread, which is a cake filled with sour cherries.

If you're roaming the streets looking for a snack or lunch, there is good street food to be found, ranging from *covrigi* (hot pretzels), *gogoși* (doughnut dough covered with fine sugar), several good pastries, *shawarma* (sandwich wrap of lamb, goat, chicken, and other meat mixture served with pita stuffed with French fries, onion, tomatoes topped with spicy sauces).

Romania is known to be a principal wine producer, with good quality and reasonable prices.

Bulgaria

As we continue closer to Turkey and Greece, you'll see both these influences in Bulgarian food. With a warm climate and diverse landscape capable of cultivating a variety of crops, you can expect many herbs, veggies, and fruits in the meals you eat here. Make salad eating a priority here; you will notice big salads at each meal alongside cold soups, or *moussaka* (oven baked potatoes, minced meat and white sauce). The most popular salad is the *shopska* with tomatoes, cucumbers, onion, roasted peppers, *sirene* cheese, and lightly dressed with vinaigrette.

Dairy products are important to the culture in Bulgaria, especially cheese made from goats and cheese native to the area (*Kashkaval*, similar to gouda and *Sirene*, a Feta variety). *Kiselo Mlyako*, is a Bulgarian native product too and contains the active culture found in plain yogurts elsewhere. This yogurt is somewhat of a staple of the country, used in several dishes, particularly a cold soup called *Tarator*. Keep your eye open and appetite piqued for *lutenitsa*, a red pepper, eggplant, & tomato puree commonly served on bread.

Traditional bakeries make treats like *mekitsa*, deep fried dough made with yogurt and served with jam, or *banitsa*, a cake-like treat made with eggs, & cheese cooked in filo pastry.

- **Dobro** **požalovat'** (welcome) to Russia
- **Tere** **tulemast** (welcome) to Estonia
- **Laipni** **lūdzam** (welcome) to Latvia
- **Sveiki** **atvykę** (welcome) to Lithuania
- **Vitaj** (welcome) to Poland
- **Vitajte** (welcome) to Slovakia
- **Isten hozta** (welcome) to Hungary
- **Bun venit** (welcome) to Romania
- **Dobre** **Došla** (welcome) to Bulgaria
- **Hoşgeldiniz** (welcome) to Turkey

Let the expedition begin!

Turkey

Turkey is a country on the cross-roads of continents, trade routes, immigration routes, and has four seasons, with various geographical regions. This makes the cuisine extremely rich and diverse. There are many options to eat, from casual street food to posh restaurants. One can enjoy eating "Doner Kebab" on the street cafes, or one of the many choices of warm toasted sandwiches. There are many restaurants in small towns that provide homestyle food that include numerous vegetable options. They are very inexpensive, fast and authentic. Another restaurant type is Kebab Restaurants, where you can find soups, salads and a large variety of kebabs. If dining in a nice sea food restaurant you will need to check the cost of the menu item before you order.

Try to avoid water from public water tanks and fountains (*şadırvan*), frequently found close to mosques. Though tap water is always chlorinated, it is better to drink only bottled water. Bottled water is readily available.

Personal Care

Restrooms (WC) Along the Route

We design our routes to pass through villages and towns to give you the opportunity to locate cafés when in need of a bathroom, called WC or water closet. However, it may not always be possible and in some situations you may need to use the "green door" (outdoors).

If you stop at a local café or bar, please note that it is a common practice and an expected courtesy to purchase a small item such as bottled water, coffee, or a snack when utilizing their facilities. It may be useful to carry some tissue with you, since not all public restrooms have toilet paper. Folks often stop at a bar for a mid-morning coffee use the bathroom and fill their water bottles from the tap.

In Poland, public toilets for ladies are marked with a small circle, gents with a small triangle. For using a public toilet a fee (PLN 1 - 2) is usually collected. At some gas stations and restaurants the bathroom door automatically opens after inserting a 1 zloty coin.

In Hungary, toilets usually have the words *Nők* or *Női* (women) and *Férfiak* or *Férfi* (men). Occasionally, signs for *Hölgyek* (ladies) and *Uraik* (gentlemen) also appear. Quite often a small fee of HUF 70 - 80 is paid to an attendant after using the facilities

Laundry Facilities

In all three countries it is very hard to find Do-it-Yourself Laundromats. Please be aware that we will not have any 24-hour stays at hotels along the route, so will be unable to use their laundry services. We suggest you bring some laundry soap and a portable laundry line with you in case you want to wash by hand.

Hair dryers

Some of our hotels have hair dryers in the room, and others have them available at the front desk. If you use a hair dryer regularly, we recommend you bring your own. Bring the correct electrical adaptor and or convertor.

Tipping Guidelines

Tipping in restaurants

A tip of about 10 - 15% of the total bill is appropriate in restaurants where you were pleased with the service. Be sure to keep an eye out; sometimes the tip is included in the bill.

In Poland, make sure you do not say *Dziękuję* (thank you) before the waiter brings back your change. If you say thank you when the waiter first takes your money, they will assume that you do not want any change back and this could become quite expensive.

Tipping Your Tour Leader Team

If your tour leader team has done their job well, we recommend each traveler tip the team \$15 - \$20 per day (the equivalent in local currency if possible). Feel free to give the tip to the head tour leader who will then divide it between the team. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage you to tip as individuals and not as a group. If you find your tour leader team has not done their job well, please let us know.