

Maymester in Russia 2018

Vodka, bears, long winters, The Cold War, Putin as dictator, **Break through these and other stereotypes!** Who is Putin, really? Is Russia still a superpower? Why is Russia doing that? Should we fear Russia? Are Russians more Asian or European? What do Russians think? **Find answers to these questions and more!**

Experience Russian hospitality and post-Soviet political, socio-economic and cultural change from the inside out.



Spend four weeks in the ancient provincial city of Vladimir – one of Russia's first capital cities and political-economic powerhouses – studying, serving, exploring, interacting with Russians from many different social groups, including Russian university students, and reflecting about your knowledge and perceptions of contemporary Russia.

"...any expectations I could possibly have had were surpassed. ...I participated in a culture without being a tourist...and spent [time] outside of my carefully constructed comfort zone. The experience was nothing short of changing my worldview."

"I wouldn't trade this experience for the world. I can honestly say that there's no other place I'd rather be. This trip has been the most amazing experience of my life."

"Visiting Russia has been one of the most life-changing experiences I have ever had. It taught me how little I really know about the world, how different somewhere can be from the USA. It also showed me that we as people, no matter where we live or what country we were born in, are more alike than we tend to let ourselves believe."

STUDYING

Daily presentations, lectures and excursions focus on aspects of economics, political science, international relations, education, culture, history, sociology, law, religious studies, etc. Every effort is made to include something relevant to each participant's area of interest.



SERVING

To experience first-hand how history and current economic, political, social, educational, legal, and cultural developments intersect and impact specific groups in Russian society we work in several community organizations, possibly including the Vladimir Handicapped Children's Association, a local preschool, a non-profit organization working with adult orphans, a local veterans' home, the Russian Orthodox Church, a dog shelter being organized and built by three local retired women.



EXPLORING

The schedule includes:

- Home stays (including home-cooked breakfasts and dinners)
- Conversations, dinners, and fun evenings with Russians from different social groups, including university students
- Excursions to UNESCO World Heritage Sites and other fascinating places
- Trips to Moscow, St. Petersburg (during the famous "White Nights"), Suzdal, Bogoliubovo, Murom, the rural village Schukhurdinovo
- Weekend at a dacha (summer home) with a Russian banya
- Concerts, ballet in St. Petersburg, and a soccer match
- Train, boat, bus, and bike rides



REFLECTING

While in Russia, each participant considers the guiding questions for the program: What is the current situation in Russia in general and in terms of my area of interest and specialization? How does my understanding of the current situation in Russia coincide and differ with what I am learning, hearing, seeing, and feeling in Russia?



SCHEDULE HIGHLIGHTS

Week 1:

- Volunteer at the Vladimir Handicapped Children's Association and Veterans' Home
- Tour the Golden Gates and Assumption Cathedral (UNESCO World Heritage site)
- Master class on Russian folk doll making
- Dinner with Russian university students
- Walking tour of central Vladimir
- Folk music and dance performance
- Day excursion to the ancient town of Suzdal (UNESCO World Heritage site)
- Weekend at dacha (country home) with a Russian banya

Week 2:

- Volunteer at local Orthodox Church
- Dinner with immigrant family from Uzbekistan
- Excursion and picnic in Bogoliubovo (UNESCO World Heritage site)
- Attend rock band rehearsal, meet with musicians
- Weekend in Moscow (Red Square, Kremlin, Moscow Circus, Moscow Conservatory, etc.) with volunteer work at the GULAG History Museum

Week 3:

- Volunteer at dog shelter and veterans' home
- Group dinner with Russian family
- Soccer match (Vladimir "Torpedo")
- Folk song singing
- Weekend in rural village
- Meet village elders who talk about their experience during WWII and their lives as Soviet and, now, Russian citizens

Week 4:

- Master classes on matryoshka doll making and middle ages sword fighting
- Overnight trip to the ancient city of Murom
- Murom Museum of Folk Arts
- Walking tour of Murom
- Trip to St. Petersburg (Catherine's Palace, ballet, Russian Museum, St. Isaac's Cathedral, Nevskii Avenue, "White Nights", etc.)
- Meet with a WWII blockade survivor

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

Blog posts from previous years:

Garrett Lappe (2017): <https://nicholshumanitarianfundblog2017.wordpress.com/2017/06/03/garrett-lappe/>

Samantha Long (2016): <http://considerablycaffeinated.blogspot.com/>

Monika Weisman (2014): <http://visitingmotherrussia.blogspot.com/>

Photos:

<https://www.facebook.com/AmericanHome/photos/a.414289011289.194837.184076861289/10153479611591290/?type=3&theater>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152424612366622.1073741839.585521621&type=1&l=21c280aeca>

Russian Television Reports:

<http://vladtv.ru/society/78658/>

http://variant33.ru/ekspressnovosti/22590_prikosnulis_k_nacional_nym_tradicijam/

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHSmJKk5QIQ>