Tour Notes

Arctic Explorer – No Flying Rail Adventure    Tour Duration – 16 Days

Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●○ | History ●●●○ | Wildlife ●●○○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

✓ A unique no-flying tour to the Arctic Circle
✓ Travel on Russian Railways’ flagship ‘Swift’ sleeper train from Berlin to Moscow
✓ From Moscow, head 2,000km north to soviet-era Murmansk, still the Arctic’s biggest city
✓ Thread through the Arctic wilderness on a Hurtigruten boat cruise from Kirkenes to Tromsø
✓ Experience the Midnight Sun in summer, and the Northern Lights in winter
✓ Explore Tromsø - gateway to the Arctic, the renowned ‘Paris of the North’
✓ Stopover in Stockholm to discover one of the most beautiful capitals in the world
✓ A flexible itinerary that can be tailored to include alternative or lengthier stops
Tour Essentials

**Accommodation:** Four star hotels throughout

**Included Meals:** As shown in the itinerary; breakfast (B), dinner (D)

**Group Size:** Private tour

**Start Point:** London

**End Point:** London

**Transport:** Private car or minibus for transfers and sightseeing excursions, scheduled buses, trains (second class seats for day time journeys and private sleeping compartments for overnight journeys), outside cabin (with window) on Hurtigruten cruise from Kirkenes to Tromsø

**Countries:** Belgium, Germany (transit only), Poland (transit only), Belarus (transit only), Russia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark (transit only)
Arctic Explorer – No Flying Rail Adventure

A unique no flying tour taking in a huge swathe of Russia, the Arctic and Scandinavia.

This year-round tour has been designed to show you the highlights of the Arctic and Scandinavia, travelling mostly by rail, including comfortable sleeper trains. In addition, you will take a two day voyage on the world renowned Hurtigruten Norwegian coastal service from Kirkenes to Tromsø – a wonderful opportunity to experience the Midnight Sun in summer and, in winter, the Northern Lights.

Your adventure starts from London’s emblematic gothic revival St. Pancras station with a trip on Eurostar to Brussels where you will stay overnight. The next morning your journey continues by comfortable German Railways ICE train as far as Berlin’s Hauptbahnhof, Europe’s largest station and a stunning piece of modern engineering. After time for something to eat or drink you will board Russian Railways’ twice-weekly sleeper service for the 24 hour trip to Moscow. Branded Strizh (Swift), it is a Spanish built Talgo train featuring a restaurant car and comfortable sleeping compartments, some with en-suite shower and toilet – ask us at the time of booking if you would like to upgrade. Because Russian track gauge is 5’, whilst most of Europe uses 4’ 8½”, at Brest on the Belarus frontier the train runs through a gauge-changing shed and, intriguingly, the axles automatically adjust to the new gauge. Once in Russia, the scenery offers rolling hills, birch tree forests, and villages of small wooden houses.

With two nights spent in Moscow you will have ample time to take in some of the city’s highlights on a private guided tour, including Red Square and Saint Basil’s Cathedral. The next part of your journey conjures up a true adventure, and one very seldom taken by tourists. Travel north by train on the 2,000km ‘Arktika’ service to Murmansk – a two night odyssey. Meet your fellow passengers, perhaps over a glass or two of vodka, in the train’s restaurant car.

During your stay in the Arctic’s largest city we have included a half day private tour to take in the highlights or for those who would like to extend their trip we can offer a variety of optional excursions. If you are travelling during the winter we can arrange an enervating dog-sledding excursion or you may choose to join a local guide to witness the incredible Northern Lights. In summer, you might wish to take an excursion to the village of Teriberka, set amidst the raw tundra beauty of the Kola Peninsula and located on the Barents Sea coast, last fishing village before the Arctic ice cap.

From Murmansk take a bus over the border into Norway. Join a spectacular Hurtigruten coastal cruise from Kirkenes to Tromsø and pass North Cape - the northernmost point on the European continent. Discover the magnificent spectacle of the Arctic wilderness as well as seeing some of Norway’s most northerly settlements. If the weather is good, you will be invited to try ice bathing in the Barents Sea.

After an overnight stay in Tromsø, continue by bus to Narvik where you will travel on the Ofoten Railway for a truly scenic trip that wends its way through a beautiful and wild landscape, contouring around the heads of fjords and crossing dramatic examples of sublime railways bridge architecture along the historic iron ore line. After crossing the border into Sweden, you will stay overnight to Stockholm. Enjoy a full day in one of the world’s most picturesque capitals, a joy to visit on foot, before heading south to Copenhagen and onwards to Hamburg. During the journey look out for the impressive Öresund Fixed Link, a tunnel and double-decker road/rail bridge linking Sweden with Denmark - a great experience for passengers as the train seems to veritably ‘fly’ over the waters of the straits.

After an overnight stay in Hamburg, a combination of high-speed trains and Eurostar will get you back to London the same day, marking the end to an incredible adventure, all achieved without a single flight.
Tour itinerary notes

The itinerary has been carefully planned based on the latest train schedules, but timings can change at short notice, or the days of the week that a particular train normally operates can also change. This will potentially require amending your itinerary and the number of nights that you stay in each city. Before you are asked to accept any changes our experienced travel consultants will of course discuss the options with you. These may well be limited, so it is important that you can be flexible.

Tour Guide

This journey will be best suited to experienced travellers who are comfortable exploring without being accompanied throughout by a guide or tour leader. For the stops in Russia we have arranged transfers from/to the railway stations and some private guided sightseeing. Elsewhere the hotels are conveniently located close to transport hubs and you will find that most locations can easily be explored on foot without a guide.

Itinerary

Day 1 – London to Brussels
Take the Eurostar from London's spectacularly-restored St. Pancras station to Brussels' elegant Midi Station, designed by Victor Horta, a journey of just over two hours. With several departures a day, let us know at the time of booking what time you would prefer to leave. If you would like some time in Brussels to explore the city, then take a morning train. Otherwise leave later in the day if you are happy to simply break your journey, before heading on to Berlin and Moscow the next morning. In Brussels we have selected the Pullman Centre Midi as our preferred hotel, given its convenient location adjacent to the station. Overnight Pullman Brussels Centre Midi, or similar.

Day 2 – Brussels to Berlin and Moscow
After a leisurely breakfast at your hotel travel by German Rail's high-speed ICE train to Cologne, where you will see the city’s magnificent cathedral which stands right next to the station, before taking a connecting train to Berlin. On both trains you will find a bistro car serving full meals and drinks, and you can order from an English language menu. The route takes you through some of Belgium and Germany's fascinating towns, whilst the modern architectural masterpiece that is Liege station is worth watching out for. You will arrive at Berlin's huge Hauptbahnhof station at around 5pm and then you will have about a three hour layover before taking the Strizh (Swift) branded Russian Railway’s sleeper to Moscow. At the station you can choose from a wide range of bars, cafes and restaurants to have something to eat or drink before boarding the train. Settle in to your private sleeping compartment for the night-train lengthy trip to Moscow. Standard compartments are comfortable and equipped with a washbasin; alternatively, ask us about upgrading to a deluxe compartment complete with private en-suite shower and toilet. During the journey the train’s restaurant car will be open serving meals and drinks, and the English speaking staff will be pleased to take your order. Payment can normally be made by debit or credit card, although it is always a good idea to have some euros cash just in case. Overnight sleeper train (2 berth compartment). (B)

Day 3 – Moscow
During the night the train will travel through Germany and Poland's vast plains before reaching Belarus and the border town of Brest. At this point the train will run through the intriguing gauge-changing shed where the axles automatically adjust to the new wider Russian track gauge. From Brest the train crosses Belarus's lowlands, with broad fields of crops stretching away under colossal skies as it heads onto Moscow. Very importantly it should be noted that most nationals, including UK citizens must obtain a Belarusian transit visa
in advance of travel. And this will be in addition to a visa for Russia. For the remainder of the journey you can expect the scenery to be a patchwork of grassy rolling hills, tumbling birch tree forests, and the sudden emergence of villages of small wooden houses that peep out of the landscape and then are gone. Arrival at the incredible neo-classical grandeur of Moscow’s Belorussky Station will be at around 9pm, where you will be met by a driver and transferred to your centrally located hotel for a two night stay. Overnight Mercure Arbat Moscow, or similar.

**Day 4 – Moscow**
After a leisurely morning you will join your guide for a private afternoon city tour. Proceed to Red Square - one of Russia’s most iconic landmarks, replete with history at every turn. You will wander under the gaze of traditional Russian churches with their inimitable onion domes, many of them gloriously coloured, and go inside some of them. Later walk through the 130 year old GUM shopping mall, an exquisitely designed glass-arched department store whose style of mediaeval-cum-nineteenth century railway architecture is a true sight to behold. Then see the famous tomb of the first Russian communist leader, Lenin, followed by Saint Basil's cathedral. Overnight Mercure Arbat Moscow, or similar. (B)

**Day 5 – Moscow**
After a leisurely breakfast, enjoy a private tour of Moscow’s famous metro system. With your guide, ride the metro like a local and enjoy a personalised itinerary. Learn about the history of the subterranean system and admire the intricate design, including the compelling futurist architecture at the Mayakovskaya station. Hear stories about each station and choose to add additional stations to your tour. Later return to your hotel and enjoy a free afternoon. At around 10pm you will check-out (late check-out guaranteed) and be transferred to Moscow’s Oktiabrskaya station where you will board the ‘Arktika’ service for the 2,000km trip north to Murmansk. The train departs at around midnight with the promise of the far north hanging tantalisingly in the air. Settle in to your private compartment for the two night journey. Overnight sleeper train (2 berth compartment). (B)

**Day 6 – On train**
Today the train will continue its epic journey north towards the dizzy latitudes of the Arctic Circle. The ride heads up parallel to the Finnish border, through the Republic of Karelia, a particularly lush region with numerous vast glittering lakes that contrast with the serrated pine-topped hills. Enjoy the contrasting sparseness of the scenery the closer you forge towards the Polar regions. Visit the train’s restaurant car, which is always a good opportunity to meet your fellow passengers, for something to eat and drink. In our experience, when travelling long distances by rail other travellers are always friendly and often curious. Sometimes a glass or two of vodka over a plate of calamari can even help overcome the language barrier. As the sun dips, late in the day, the patchwork of ‘ozera’ transform into silvery moonlit mirrors that lull you to sleep. Overnight sleeper train (2 berth compartment)

**Day 7 – Murmansk**
Arrival in the Arctic’s largest city will be late morning. After being met at the station you will be transferred to your hotel for a two night stay. The first glimpse of stolid Soviet-era architecture and the gritty port may not be the stuff of dreams, but beyond that, impressions simply get better and better. This lively city is surrounded by incomparable, often Spartan, but singularly striking Arctic scenery and is a playground for outdoor adventurers during the months of the midnight sun (late May to late July). During the winter darkness (late November to mid-January) the northern lights are often visible over the snow-covered landscape - an eerie, magical sight. After check-in, the remainder of the day will be free. Perhaps pursue some of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ symbolic sites, acquaint yourself with the compelling local history aboard the floating Lenin Nuclear Icebreaker Museum, learn about the polar wildlife at the oceanarium or wander the forest trails beside the river to view the breathlessly beautiful Lavna Falls. Overnight Park Inn by Radisson Poliarnie Zori, Murmansk, or similar.
Day 8 – Murmansk
After a leisurely breakfast your guide will meet you at your hotel and you will set-off for a private city tour to further see the main points of interest. You will learn about Murmansk’s history and about some of the great research expeditions of the most northern region of our planet. The city is a home port for the world’s most powerful vessels — icebreakers which are able to break channels through the thick Arctic pack. Murmansk is stretched along the coast of the Kola Bay, a large ice-free harbour encircled by many hills and lakes; the tour will finish with a visit to a viewpoint from where you can take in a beautiful panoramic view. Return to your hotel after which the remainder of the day is free. Overnight Park Inn by Radisson Poliarnie Zori, Murmansk, or similar. (B)

Day 9 – Murmansk to Kirkenes
Subject to restaurant opening hours, enjoy an early breakfast at the hotel, before we switch to our second form of transport: taking the bus scheduled to leave daily at 7am, you set off for Kirkenes, in northern Norway. The bus conveniently departs from outside of the Park Inn Hotel, our preferred accommodation in Murmansk and will take around four hours to cover the 220km to Kirkenes. Along the way the bus will usually make a short stop in Titovka (small cafe and toilet available) before it passes the Pechenga Valley, home to one of Russia’s formidable military facilities. Continuing, you skirt the mining town of Zapoljarnyj, before the gently rolling hills, birch trees and broad lakes lead indefatigably on to the border with Norway. Once immigration formalities have been completed, it is just another 15 minutes or so to Kirkenes in the heart of the Finnmark region. Drop off will be outside of the Scandic Hotel, our preferred choice of accommodation here. It is likely that you will be too early to check-in right away, so ask the hotel’s reception to store your luggage whilst you explore the tumbling streets of coloured houses that make up the town. Subject to opening times, you may enjoy a visit to the Borderland Museum which is about a 20 minute walk away. Here you can view a host of themed exhibitions connected to local history: the museum presents the history of the settlement and development of the region, from its curious past as a common territory between Russia, Finland and Norway. There is also a war exhibition which contains, amongst other things, an Ilyushin Russian fighter plane. Once you have checked-in at your hotel, the remainder of the day will be free. Perhaps enjoy the hotel’s spa with swimming pool and sauna. Overnight Scandic Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 10 – Hurtigruten Cruise: Kirkenes to Berlevåg
Mid-morning, you will walk about 20 minutes, or, you if you prefer, take a taxi, to the Hurtigruten passenger terminal, in time for your third mode of surface travel, the departure of daily lunchtime voyage to Tromsø. As the ship starts the voyage south, you can enjoy spectacular views from the deck or Panorama lounge. By the afternoon the ship will return to Norway's easternmost harbour, Vardø. If the weather is good you will be invited to participate in an intrepid, but invigorating ice bathe in the Barents Sea. Lectures are held about birds along the coast in the spring, and in winter local divers come up on deck and relate more about life in the sea. Continue sailing along the Varanger Peninsula, punctuated by graceful flooded glacial valleys, as far as Båtsfjord. As you head along the coast, perhaps put your newfound birding knowledge to the test: in winter, vast rafts of stunning wintering Stellar’s eider duck can be spotted in the colder months, whilst the spring and summer offers the great spectacle of tens of thousands of cliff-nesting species, such as puffins, razorbills and guillemots streaming out to sea to fish. The sharp-eyed may even catch views of imperious white-tailed sea eagles powering across their territory. In the evening the ship docks in the remote haven of Berlevåg, interestingly, the hometown of Norway's most famous men's choir. Overnight Hurtigruten ship (2 berth outside cabin). (BD)

Day 11 – Hurtigruten Cruise: The extreme North – Mehmann to Tromsø
In the middle of the night the ship will dock in Mehmann, a former whaling port nestled around the fjord against the distant backdrop of the rising mountains. In winter you can enjoy an optional snowmobile safari to Kjøllefjord to chase blazing Northern lights over the night sky – a thrilling experience! Later at Honningsvåg
you can start your day with breakfast at North Cape and experience the most obscure and uncelebrated wilderness expanses of Finnmark. On the journey towards Hammerfest in the winter, the ship serves an "energy coffee" on deck and you can expect a quick introduction to Melkøya – the world’s northernmost natural gas plant. In the autumn you will be invited to taste dried reindeer meat on the deck. Hammerfest, founded in 1798, was Norway's polar capital, and a base for hunting expeditions in the Arctic and remains the world’s most northerly town. Here you can see the Meridian column which was erected in 1854 in memory of the Struve international land measurements of the earth, and currently on the UNESCO Heritage list of cultural monuments. Be sure to watch out for the town’s ubiquitous and brazen reindeer population, locally viewed as a growing pest. Your voyage continues south to Øksfjord and after crossing the open sea, the ship docks at the old trading post of Skjervøy. In spring your vessel sails further into the beautiful Lyngenfjord, where you can enjoy the views of majestic mountains. Enjoy dinner on-board before the ship docks late in the evening in Tromsø where you will stay for two nights. After disembarkation, make your own way to your hotel, located a 5 minute walk from the Hurtigruten terminal. Overnight Scandic Grand Tromsø, or similar. (BD)

Day 12 – Tromsø
We have set today aside for you to explore Tromsø on your own, or simply to relax and enjoy the largest city in northern Norway. Your hotel is centrally located and most places of interest can easily be visited on foot. Alternatively optional excursions can easily be arranged locally or if you prefer in advance through Undiscovered Destinations. Tromsø has many attractions including a cable car, the idiosyncratic Arctic Cathedral and several museums such as the Polar Museum, Tromsø Museum, The Science Centre and Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum. Explore the rugged history of polar explorers, sample local beer at Mack Brewery and watch seal feeding at the Polaria aquarium. Overnight Scandic Grand Tromsø, or similar. (B)

Day 13 – Tromsø to Narvik and Stockholm
After breakfast, make your own way to the 'Prostneset' bus stop located close to the Hurtigruten terminal for a scheduled bus, the number 100, and a four hour scenic ride to Narvik. Stepping off at the final stop in Narvik, ‘Rutebilstasjonen’ is located about a 20 minute walk from the town’s railway station. Make your own way to the station where you will board Swedish Rail’s sleeper service to Stockholm which departs just before 4pm. Depending on the time of year that you are travelling and the hours of daylight, you will have stunning views as the train travels over the Ofoten Line – a 43km journey along Norway’s northernmost railway route from Narvik to Kiruna, built originally to cater for the burgeoning iron ore trade in the inaccessible north. This incredible stretch of line takes you over seven bridges, through 23 tunnels and past five stations, testament to the engineering skills of its architect and determination of the conscripted navies who forged this amazing artery across some of Europe’s most unyielding landscapes. Indeed, the train threads through the imposing, raw and historical Arctic landscape, where you will be greeted by dazzling mountain peaks and cascading waterfalls. Overnight sleeper train (2 berth compartment). (B)

If you are travelling at a time of year when this journey would normally be covered during the hours of darkness we can amend your itinerary to ensure you do not miss out on the spectacular scenery. By staying one night in Tromsø (rather than two nights) and one night in Narvik, this means you will able to take a morning train to Kiruna and onto Boden where you will connect with an overnight sleeper to Stockholm. Please ask for further details at the time of booking.

Day 14 – Stockholm
Arrive in Stockholm at around 9am (or at about 7am if you have taken the morning train from Narvik). Make your own way to your hotel, conveniently located very close to the station. As it will be too early to check-in, leave your bags at the hotel and feel free to explore the ‘Beauty on the Water’ city on your own. Alternatively partake of some breakfast (not included in the cost of your tour) and relax in the hotel’s lounge until your room
becomes available. The time in Stockholm will be yours to enjoy as you wish. For many visitors the most
striking thing about the city is its gorgeous waterfront promenades and harbours. Stockholm is comprised of
14 islands where the freshwater Lake Mälaren flows out into the Baltic Sea, and in addition there are the
30,000 islands, skerries and rocks of the Stockholm Archipelago, a short ferry ride away. Enjoy your day in in
the Swedish capital, but of course you may wish to have longer to discover this delightful city. Just ask us at
the time of booking if you would like to extend your stay – this can easily be arranged. Overnight Radisson
Blu Royal Viking Stockholm. (B)

Day 15 – Stockholm to Copenhagen and Hamburg
After breakfast make your way back to the station and board Swedish Rail’s 125 mph tilting X2000 train that
links Stockholm and Copenhagen. Visit the on-board self-service bistro car which serves a range of meals
and drinks. Enjoy the scenery as the train dashes south towards the Danish capital, and look out for the
impressive Öresund Link, a huge bridge and tunnel that connects Sweden with Denmark. You will reach
Copenhagen at around 1pm, and, given that the layover will be a couple of hours before taking an onward
train to Hamburg, you will have time for lunch. A wide range of eateries can be found on the station. Later join
a Danish inter-city train for Hamburg, a journey time of about 4½ hours. Or, should you prefer, take the
opportunity to break your trip in Copenhagen with an overnight stay or longer. Please ask for further
information at the time of booking. Assuming that you have made the same day connection in Copenhagen,
you will arrive in Hamburg at around 8pm, where you will stay overnight. Make you own way to your hotel,
conveniently located very close to the ‘Hauptbahnhof’ or main station. Overnight Intercity Hotel Hamburg
Hauptbahnhof. (B)

Day 16 – Hamburg to London via Cologne and Brussels.
With up to seven departures a day from Hamburg to London via Cologne and Brussels you can opt for the
time that would you like to set off. For example if you leave Hamburg at 11am you will reach London St.
Pancras the same day at just before 8pm. Whichever option you choose, it will involve a German Rail’s Inter-
city train to Cologne and then onto Brussels on a high-speed ICE train, and finally Eurostar to London.
Alternatively why not mark the end of your adventure with a longer stay in Hamburg? Seated on the River
Elbe between the North and Baltic seas, Hamburg is proud of its mediaeval history as a Free City and a key
member of the venerable and influential Hanseatic League. The city was also an important port of departure
for immigrants to the New World, and its trade routes still stretch across the globe. Hamburg is, and always
has been, a worldly, cosmopolitan, and diverse city with much to offer to its citizens and guests. (B)

Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions:
All accommodation
Transfers as per itinerary with a private car or minibus
Rail travel based on 2nd class seats for day time journeys and private sleeping compartments for overnight
journeys. Please contact us for details of first class upgrades
Hurtigruten cruise – 2-berth standard outside cabin (with window)
Private guided sightseeing tours as per itinerary in Moscow and Murmansk, with the services of an English-
speaking guide or driver/guide
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, D – Dinner)
Enterance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary
Excluded:
International flights
Travel Insurance
Visas
Meals not stated in the itinerary
Drinks
Items of a personal nature
Tips (Discretionary)

Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings
We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At this time there are no warnings in place for areas visited on this tour. It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times
As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival.

Accommodation Rating
In general international chain type hotels of a 4 star category will be used for much of this journey. Please bear in mind that you will not be accompanied by a guide for the whole duration of this tour. Therefore for assistance you will find that English is often spoken at the hotels, particularly those that are part of an international chain.

Rooms will be comfortable with en-suite bathrooms. And each of the hotels will have a restaurant and bar.

In many cities the hotel has been chosen for its proximity to the railway station.

Food and Drink
The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B) and dinner (D). Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Usually it will be impossible for Undiscovered Destinations to pre-pay for meals and drinks taken on the various trains. Therefore, it is essential that you travel with sufficient cash to pay for these services as credit and debit cards are not always accepted. We would recommend that you have euros available for travel as far as Berlin, and Russian Rubles when travelling onto Moscow and Murmansk. When travelling in Scandinavia you can easily exchange euros for local currency, or obtain cash from ATM machines. Also cards can be widely used in the Nordic countries including in the bistro or restaurant cars of most trains.
A unique feature of many trains in Russia is the availability of boiling hot water. Most sleeping cars will have a boiler known as “samovar” at one end of the carriage. So this is ideal for making drinks and snacks such as instant noodles, soup or porridge. And of course the samovars heat water for tea, the lifeblood for many Russians.

The food and drink served in restaurant cars can be limited so many travellers come prepared and choose to supplement what is available by bringing some snacks. In addition on long distance journeys vendors will pass through the train selling everything from smoked fish to fruit, and the same can be purchased from sellers on stations. Most trains will stop every couple of hours or so. As the layover can be for up to 30 minutes or even longer, passengers will leave the train for a welcome leg stretch and a spot of shopping. If you do get off the train make sure you do not leave the platform, and certainly not the station. The duration of the stop can be unpredictable so keep a close eye on your sleeping car attendant. See the notes below. When the attendant gets back on the train you will know it is time to leave.

**Dietary Requirements**
If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. Whilst we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

On trains within Russia the food can be limited. Even the most common dietary requests, including vegetarian options, may not be available.

**Budgeting for your Tour**
You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

**Food**
The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

- Lunch £5 to £15
- Dinner £10 to £25

**Drink**
The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general, you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

- Bottle of Beer £2 - £7
- Bottle of Water £0.50 - £3

**Tipping – Guide and Drivers**
Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. As you will not be accompanied by a guide throughout, we suggest you budget to tip the guide for each of the tours included in the itinerary. We would recommend €5 to €10 per person for each tour. This will depend on the duration of the tour.

Waiters and bar staff in most of the countries visited on this tour are generally low paid and it is common practice to leave a small tip – around 10% of the bill.
On Train Safety and Security
The Undiscovered Destinations' team have travelled widely by train and never experienced any problems, but you should not be complacent. It is essential that you take good care of your personal belongings. Pack wisely and store your most valuable possessions, including electrical items and of course your passports and travel documents in a separate day bag. Also remember to keep any important medicines and prescriptions or doctors' letters in the same bag. And make sure you keep this bag with you at all times, including during visits to the restaurant car. Some travellers choose to keep their passport, one or two credit/debit cards and some emergency cash in a money belt.

When travelling by sleeper train in Russia each carriage will be staffed by at least one 'provodnik' (male) or 'provodnitsa' (female) attendant. On newer trains you might be able to lock your compartment from the outside using a hotel type key-card. But this is still the exception. So you will need to ask your attendant to lock the door for you if you are planning to leave the compartment to visit the restaurant car. During the night you will be able to lock the compartment door from the inside. Some experienced travellers choose to bring their own padlock just in case the door lock is faulty. We can recommend a combination cable padlock as this can also be used to help secure your baggage to luggage racks.

Sleeping Car Attendant
The provodnik or provodnitsa plays an important role, and can add to the success of your trip. They will be responsible for your security and can be a great help in other ways. Although perhaps unfairly they may have a reputation for being surly, in our experience that has always been the exception. A few pleasantries in Russian will help, as will a small tip when they welcome you onto the train. Perhaps have a small gift to offer. Something from your home country will be a nice gesture. This can make all of the difference and you can be sure that you will be well looked after. For example when the train stops and you get a chance for a walk along the platform, the provodnik will ensure you do not get left behind. So it is well worth making the effort.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: As you will be visiting major cities on this tour ATMs will be widely available.
Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are widely accepted in the main cities including at larger restaurants and most hotels. Card acceptance on the trains will be more limited, particularly beyond Western Europe.
Local Currency: Euros, Russian Ruble, Norwegian Krone, Swedish Krona, Danish Krone.
Where to Exchange: Exchange facilities will generally be available at the railway stations. During sightseeing excursions your guide will be able to provide assistance, or ask the reception at your hotel.

Travel Insurance
It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.
Visa Information
UK, US and Australian passport holders do not need a visa for travel in EU states or Norway.

Most nationals, including UK, US, and Australian passport holders will require a transit visa for Belarus and tourist visa for Russia. Undiscovered Destinations will provide the necessary supporting documentation after receipt of your balance payment which will be due 10 weeks before departure.

As immigration requirements can change without notice it is essential that you check the latest information with your nearest embassy, consulate or visa agency. It is important to check the requirements both at the time of booking and again at the time you pay your balance.

Passports
It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country of residence.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country’s embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations and Protection
We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor’s surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information and advice regarding the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Meningitis.

Preparing for your tour

Climate
In the Arctic region of Russia and Norway the summers are short, cool, and mostly cloudy and the winters are long, freezing, snowy, windy, and overcast. For example Tromsø in Norway has an average temperature of -4 °C in winter and in summer an average temperature 12 °C. However, if you are planning to experience Arctic adventures or chase the Northern Lights, you need to expect temperatures from -25 °C to 5 °C.

Clothing
In general we would recommend that you bring warm and comfortable clothes and shoes. Layer your clothing so that you can easily regulate your temperature by removing or adding layers.

For travel in the Arctic region more information is provided below
Clothing - Spring and summer (May – August)
In early summer (May – June) it can be wet and cold, so a good idea is to bring thin under layers and a light wind and rainproof jacket when exploring on foot. The weather in July – August tends to be better, but the same range of clothing applies, especially if you intend to go on activity based excursions.

Clothing - Autumn and winter (September – April)
Warm clothing is key to a good and comfortable visit to the Arctic region. We would recommend thin under layers together with thicker layers of warm and dry sweaters and jackets. Do not forget to bring warm shoes, gloves, scarves and hats.

Equipment and What to Bring
The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is usually advisable to bring a torch/head torch in case of any electricity outages.

When travelling long distances by rail some travellers choose to bring a few games to while away the hours. A pack of cards, or travel versions of board games are popular. Something that can be played with your fellow travellers and non-English speakers is recommended.

A phrase book can of course be useful or download a translation app on your phone.

Please bring a small towel to use on trains as hand drying facilities are not always provided.

Wi-Fi
The majority of hotels used on this tour offer reliable wi-fi although charges may apply.

On most trains within Western Europe wi-fi is now available although charges may apply and the service might be limited to basic internet browsing and checking of emails. Travelling beyond Western Europe most trains do not offer wi-fi. Depending on your service provider you will probably be able to access wi-fi through local mobile phone networks. But check with your provider as costs can be high.

Footwear
Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. We recommend that you bring a pair of flip-flops to wear whilst moving about on long distance trains.

Journey times
Upon request we can provide you with the latest train schedules, although these may be subject to change.

Luggage on tour
Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs
Countries visited on this tour have an electrical supply that is 220V/50 Hz and plugs usually have two flat or round pins. On the majority of trains you will find electrical sockets which usually have two round pins.

We would recommend that you bring a universal travel adapter as there can be exceptions to the above.
Tour Itinerary Versions
Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 15 June 2020.