

OPTION 2

Catherine's Palace in Pushkin, panoramic city tour & a visit to the Faberge Museum

09:00	Meeting at the hotel
09:00 – 10:15	Drive to Pushkin
10:15 – 11:30	Tour the Catherine's Palace
11:30 – 12:00	Walk in the park
12:00 – 13:00	Return drive to St. Petersburg
13:00 – 14:00	Time at leisure in the city center
14:00 – 15:30	Panoramic city tour with photos stops
15:30 – 16:30	Visit the Faberge Museum
16:30 – 17:00	Return to the hotel

Join us this morning for a visit to one of the most splendid royal summer residence – Tsarskoye Selo which after the revolution acquired the name of Pushkin, after Alexander Pushkin, Russian most celebrated early 19th century poet and writer.

Following an hour-long drive, you will tour the **Catherine's Palace** that is considered to be one of the masterpieces of the world architecture. The lavish imperial palace was designed by architect Rastrelli in 1752 for Empress Elizabeth. She named it Catherine Palace in honor of her mother, Catherine I, who originally owned the estate.



You start the tour of the palace from the Great staircase by Monighetty which takes you to the state rooms on the first floor. The interior consists of a seemingly interminable succession of state-rooms, which give the impression of a golden corridor. The highlight of the visit is the splendid Great Hall. Light streams into this glittering hall illuminating the mirrors, gilded carvings and the vast ceiling painting. Of special interest is the Amber Room of the palace that was once considered to be the "Eighth Wonder of the World". You will learn the fascinating story of this room.

After the palace tour, take a brief guided stroll in the 1,400-acre (566-hectare) park. Next, re-board your coach and return to St. Petersburg. You will have 1 hour of free time to have a snack on your own.

Next, commence on a panoramic city tour including photo stops at the Spit of Vasilievsky Island and Spilled Blood Cathedral.

Your final destination will be a visit to the private **Faberge Museum** that opened its doors at the renovated Shuvalov Palace in St. Petersburg on November 19, 2013. Here billionaire Viktor Vekselberg has placed his priceless collection of Faberge Eggs on display for the general public.



The collection includes over 4,000 works of art from the late 19th and early 20th century, including fifteen Faberge eggs, nine of which are the famous Imperial Faberge eggs previously owned by the Romanov family.

It took 10 years to create the current collection, and it is still growing. You will see many unique exhibits, among which are other works of the famous jeweler, royal silverware, precious icons and other religious ornaments, collection of paintings on enamel, other objects of decorative and applied art, paintings by famous Russian and foreign artists.



Viktor Vekselberg purchased the famous Malcolm Forbes Faberge Collection from the Forbes family in 2004 for about \$100 million. Most notable amongst this collection are the Rosebud Egg, Lilies-of-the-Valley Egg, Coronation Egg and, particularly the Hen Egg and the Order of St. George Egg that represent the first and last eggs received by Empress Maria, wife of Alexander III.

The first Faberge egg was crafted for Emperor Alexander III who had decided to give his wife Maria an Easter Egg in 1885 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their betrothal. Known as the Hen Egg, this first Faberge egg was crafted from gold. Its opaque white enameled “shell” opens to reveal its first surprise – a matte yellow gold yolk. This in turn opens to reveal a multicolored gold hen that also opens.

Empress Maria was so delighted by the gift that Alexander appointed Faberge a “goldsmith by special appointment to the Imperial Crown” and commissioned another egg the next year. After that Peter Carl Faberge was apparently given complete freedom for future Imperial Easter Eggs, and their designs become more elaborate. It is believed that even the Tsar didn’t know what form they would take: the only requirement was that each contain a surprise.

Vekselberg’s nine Imperial Easter Eggs are of the 50 that are left in the world today. Ten are in the Moscow Kremlin Collection, five are at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Va., and Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II. The whereabouts of eight are unknown. The others are in various displays throughout the U.S., Switzerland and Monaco.

Following your visit, re-board your coach for a short drive back to the hotel.