



To Russia With Love:
Matthew & Alyson's Adventures in Russia

Our adventures in Russia

Some of you know, some of you don't. So here's the scoop. We're moving to Russia for a year!

We decided that we wanted to do something exciting, adventurous, and a little bit crazy! So we applied to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Jewish Service Corps volunteer program. In late May, we were accepted to the program and also awarded the Roslyn Z. Wolf Fellowship, which provides funding and a strong connection to the Petersburg Project, spearheaded by the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.

This year, the Jewish Service Corp is comprised of 12 young adults who are being placed in nine countries: Sri Lanka, India, Turkey, Poland, Austria, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Romania, and of course, Russia. You can learn more about the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the JSC program online at www.jdc.org/volunteer.

Why now? Why there?

We are going to St. Petersburg to help the Jewish community there continue to grow and flourish. This community is in need of non-Orthodox role models and informal Jewish education—in other words, meaningful Jewish experiences outside the classroom or synagogue. In January of this year, a Jewish community campus called Yesod was established by the JDC to serve the community's 100,000 Jews.

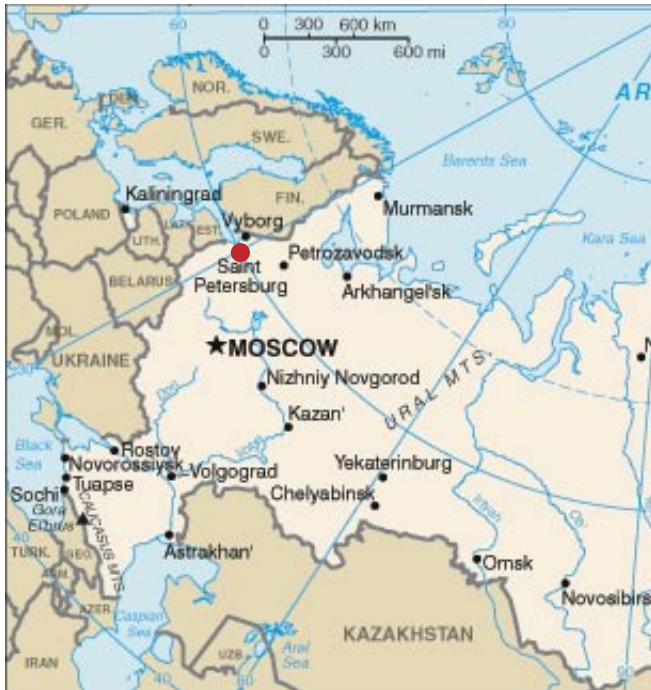
The Jewish community emerged from Communism about 18 years ago, when the USSR began to collapse. Until then, the Jews of Russia were not free to practice Judaism openly. Now there is a rebirth of Jewish life and interest, but very few role models and a limited understanding of how religion plays out in daily life. That's where we come in. Our primary goal is to model how Jewish life can happen anywhere—at a synagogue, in the home, or on the streets of St. Petersburg.

We are excited by this new challenge in our lives. It will no doubt be hard to learn Russian, integrate with the community in St. Petersburg, and leave our family and friends behind for a year. We hope that you will support our decision to be a little zany and follow our hearts. We'll be back before you know it!

Where is St. Petersburg?

St. Petersburg is located in the northwestern part of Russia, near the Baltic countries and Finland. By high-speed train, it is 4 hours to Moscow and just under 6 hours to Helsinki by train.

With its population of 4.7 million, St. Petersburg is the third largest city in Europe. It is also the world's northern-most city with over 1 million residents. Like in some parts of Scandinavia, the sun stays out all night long during the summer months (creating so-called "white nights"). During the winter months, the sun only makes brief appearances between 10am and 3pm.



What's it like there?

In a word, cold. Unlike some other parts of Russia further inland, St. Petersburg's climate is relatively mild. But compared to the weather we're used to in Washington, DC, it's going to be very cold! To give you an idea, the average temperature for January is 17° F and July is 63° F.

MONTH	TEMPERATURE (F)			
	AVG. MIN.	AVG. MAX.	RECORD MIN.	RECORD MAX.
January	9	19	-26	37
February	10	23	-27	37
March	18	32	-15	54
April	32	46	9	68
May	43	59	25	81
June	52	68	36	84
July	55	70	41	91
August	55	68	34	88
September	48	59	28	84
October	39	48	18	64
November	28	36	0	54
December	18	27	-9	41



Cultural. Known as the crown jewel of Russia, St. Petersburg is a cosmopolitan city of 4.7 million with a treasure trove of art and culture. It is home to the Kirov Ballet, the Hermitage, and world-famous palaces. St. Petersburg is also renowned for being the birth place of Russian literature.

Beautiful. The city was based on 18th and 19th-century European architects' ideas, making it one of Europe's most beautiful cities to visit. The city sprawls across and around the mouth of the Neva River, at the end of the eastern-most arm of the Baltic Sea, meaning a network of canals run through the city giving it the nickname "Venice of the North."



How do I reach you?

By telephone

We are hoping to continue using Vonage, so you can simply call us at our home number, 202.536.5736. Once we arrive, we'll let you know if this actually works or if we'll need to set up a phone number through Skype.

By email

Feel free to email us regularly. Just in case, here are our addresses:
alysonfieldman@gmail.com
mattfieldman@yahoo.com

You want periodic updates? That's so 1990!

We'll be posting to a blog, which you can access at:

<http://fieldmansinrussia.blogspot.com/>

We'll be sure to post pictures and sound clips, giving you a unique glimpse into our lives in Russia. If you want to subscribe to our blog, go there now and follow the instructions posted there.

Crash Course in Russian

yes	да	da
no	нет	net
hi	привет	pri'vet
hello	здравствуйте	zd' rravstvuite
bye	пока	po'ka
goodbye	до свидания	dosvi'daniya
good morning	доброе утро	'dobroye 'otro
good afternoon	добрый день	'dobry 'den'
good evening	добрый вечер	'dobry 'vecher
good night	спокойной ночи	spo'koinoi 'hochi
I don't understand	я не понимаю	ya ne poni'mayu
do you understand?	вы понимаете?	vy poni'maete?
please, write this	напишите, пожалуйста	napi'shite po'zhaluista
excuse me	извините	izvi'nite
sorry	простите	pros'tite
please	пожалуйста	po'zhaluista
thank you	спасибо	spa'sibo

Can we come visit?

YES! We would love visitors! Please feel free to come and visit us. One minor caveat: We have no idea how big our apartment will be. We look forward to showing you around. Just to get entice you, here are a few world-famous attractions in St. Petersburg:

The Hermitage



One of the most prominent museums in the world housing 2.7 million pieces of art, from Ancient Egypt to early 20th century Europe. Includes works by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Renoir, Cezanne, Monet, Van Gogh, Matisse, Gauguin, Rodin and others.

Peterhof

Known as the Versailles of the East, Peterhof was established in the beginning of the 18th century by Emperor Peter the Great to be the official royal summer residence. Today, it is a splendid showcase of Russian artistic culture of the 18th and 19th centuries. The grounds boast 176 fountains.



What will you do after?

We're not sure yet; we have not made any decisions about our future, professionally or otherwise. We are hoping to come back to Washington, but we're not opposed to moving elsewhere. Please let us know if you hear of any exciting opportunities for us!

When do you leave?

We're leaving on August 3rd! We are spending a weekend in St. Petersburg before heading to Shanghai to visit Matt's dad and tour around China on vacation for two weeks. Our position in St. Petersburg starts officially on August 20th.

Over the next six weeks, we have a lot of work to be done...passports, visas, packing and more! We hope to see you before we go!