



LADFAS

Lomond & Argyll

Decorative and Fine Arts Society

Report on Visit to St Petersburg 22nd –27th October 2105



Twenty seven members set off very early to fly from Glasgow via Amsterdam to St Petersburg. Our welcome dinner in the Paulaner Restaurant of the Park Inn Hotel was full of buzz as the hotel was celebrating the OktoberFest. This put us all in good humour for the 5 full days to come. The group, photographed by Maureen, includes the guide Elena.

We had an orientation tour of the city on the first drizzly morning. The buildings are intentionally uniform in dimension of frontages – no highrise office blocks and none protruding further into the street than any other. There are many canals and consequently interesting bridges connecting a rigorous one-way system, which our driver negotiated magnificently.



Our guide Elena took us very thoroughly and ably on tours of the Yusipov Palace, (where we heard the complicated story of Rasputin's difficult assassination), the Catherine Palace, Peterhof and Pushkin Palaces.

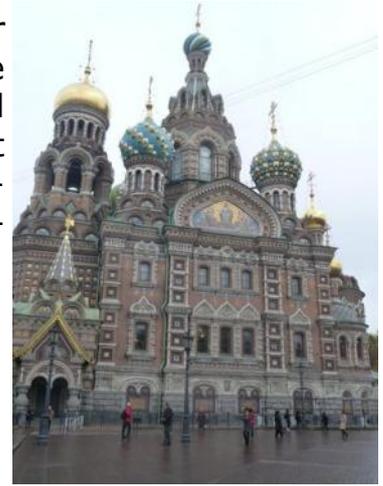
A whole day was enjoyed at the Hermitage Museum. The morning was devoted to various amazing displays including the Benoit Madonna and the Madonna Litta paintings by Leonardo da Vinci. The afternoon was spent touring a comprehensive exhibition mainly of French Impressionists plus a fantastic photographic exhibition by Steve McCurry, an American photojournalist of amazing talent. The group was privileged to see the fabulous Faberge Museum where we gazed in

wonder at the Coronation Egg and Lily of the Valley Egg among others. Elena's husband Sergei guided us through the Russian Museum where we learned of artists of enormous skill in portraiture (Kramskoi) and landscape (Repin) as well as icons from 13th and 14th Centuries.





Churches visited were the Peter and Paul Cathedral, where the Romanoff Tzars are interred and the Church on Spilled Blood, built on the spot where Tzar Alexander III was assassinated and featuring fantastic mosaics.



Elena also fitted in a touching few minutes at the St Nicholas Cathedral, where a service was in progress with beautiful unaccompanied singing. A capella singing was also enjoyed in the Yusipov Palace and in a side room of the Peter and Paul Cathedral. Here we had a further short history of the Romanoff Family, who were certainly a complicated lot!

Several of the group had outstanding experiences of theatreland, attending either Opera or Ballet at the Mariinsky or Mikhailovsky Theatres. This was the curtain call at the end of Le Corsaire at Mikhailovsky Theatre



Our arranged lunches and dinners were all of very good quality and in most interesting venues including an Italian Restaurant; a purpose-built wedding venue in the countryside; a romantic, darkly plush restaurant with little booths and lovely Tiffany-style lighting and a rustic cabin with Russian singers and musicians. Our farewell dinner and also dinners on two unarranged evenings were within walking distance off Nevsky Prospekt, the amazingly busy central thoroughfare of St Petersburg. We were impressed by the friendliness of the people and by the cleanliness of the city. It was also surprising to see that the shopping malls were just like Buchanan Galleries! Art Nouveau was also well represented in building style, particularly in the lovely Yeliseev's Food Hall, on Nevsky Prospek



Altogether it was a wonderful trip with a very friendly group who all mixed well together. We are looking forward to our reunion lunch on 29th November when we can share photographs and memorabilia.

Report by Maureen Morton, Tour Leader