

Journey through Mongolia and Russia small group tour

Reading List

Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World

by Jack Weatherford

The Mongol army led by Genghis Khan subjugated more lands and people in twenty-five years than the Romans did in four hundred. In nearly every country the Mongols conquered, they brought an unprecedented rise in cultural communication, expanded trade, and a blossoming of civilization. Vastly more progressive than his European or Asian counterparts, Genghis Khan abolished torture, granted universal religious freedom, and smashed feudal systems of aristocratic privilege. From the story of his rise through the tribal culture to the explosion of civilization that the Mongol Empire unleashed, this brilliant work of revisionist history is nothing less than the epic story of how the modern world was made.

Eagle Dreams: Searching for Legends in Wild Mongolia

by Stephen Bodio

Mongolia is a vast country located between Siberia and China, and little-known to outsiders. As Mongolia had long been under Soviet rule, it was inaccessible to Westerners. That was until 1990, when Stephen J. Bodio began planning his trip.

As a boy, Bodio was always fascinated with nature. When he saw an image in National Geographic of a Kazakh nomad, dressed in a long coat and wearing a fur hat, holding a huge eagle on his fist, his life was changed from then on. When Mongolia became independent in 1990, Bodio knew that his dream to see the eagle hunters from the picture in National Geographic

Bones of the Master: A Journey to Secret Mongolia

by George Crane

In 1959 a young monk named Tsung Tsai (Ancestor Wisdom) escapes the Red Army troops that destroy his monastery, and flees alone three thousand miles across a China swept by chaos and famine. Knowing his fellow monks are dead, himself starving and hunted, he is sustained by his

mission: to carry on the teachings of his Buddhist meditation master, who was too old to leave with his disciple.

Nearly forty years later Tsung Tsai — now an old master himself — persuades his American neighbor, maverick poet George Crane, to travel with him back to his birthplace at the edge of the Gobi Desert.

They are unlikely companions. Crane seeks freedom, adventure, sensation. Tsung Tsai is determined to find his master's grave and plant the seeds of a spiritual renewal in China. As their search culminates in a torturous climb to a remote mountain cave, it becomes clear that this seemingly quixotic quest may cost both men's lives.

Hearing Birds Fly: A Nomadic Year in Mongolia

by Louise Waugh

Louisa Waugh's passionately written account of her time in a remote Mongolian village. Frustrated by the increasingly bland character of the capital city of Ulan Bator, she yearned for the real Mongolia and got the chance when she was summoned by the village head to go to Tsengel far away in the west, near the Kazakh border. Her story transports the reader to the glacial cold and the wonders of the Seven Kings as they steadily emerge from the horizon. Through her we sense their trials as well as their joys, rivalries and even hostilities, many of which the author shared or knew about. Waugh's time in the village was marked by coming to terms with the harshness of climate and also by how she faced up to new feelings towards the treatment of animals, death, solitude and real loneliness, and the constant struggle to censor her reactions as an outsider. Above all, she aims to involve readers with the locals' lives in such a way that we come to know them and care for their fates.

Mongolia: Travels in the Untamed Land

by Jasper Becker

For seventy years Mongolia was all but closed to the west - a forbidden country, shrouded in darkness. Jasper Becker had long dreamed of exploring the sweeping land that lay just beyond China's Great Wall and when communism disintegrated, he finally did. Setting out from Kublai Khan's capital, Beijing, Becker was one of the first westerners to cross the border. Tracing the course of the Yellow River, he ventured deep into the heart of Mongolia, witnessing the birth of one of the world's youngest democracies as well as the deep and tragic impact of the rules of Mao and Stalin on the Mongolian people.

Unravelling the history of Mongolia which had for so long been obscured and distorted, Becker traces the rise and fall of the Mongols who emerged from the steppes to forge one of the greatest and most

feared empires of all time under Genghis Khan and his successors; he examines the shattering, divisive years of communist rule and explores present-day Mongolia, where poverty and the encroachments of westernisation cause as much damage. He goes in search of the fragile remnants of Buddhism and shamanism; visits Tuva - the lost world of Central Asia - and searches for the tomb of Genghis Khan which has been guarded and hidden by the same family for generations. Listening to the pulse of Central Asian history, Becker adorns his narrative with the stories of past travellers, tyrannical rulers, nomads, monks, missionaries, Russian officials, Mongolian activists and the memories of everyday people to paint a moving and enlightening portrait of Mongolia, a country that against all the odds has survived since the days of Genghis Khan and continues to beat to its own rhythm.

A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin

by Robert Service

Russia had an extraordinary twentieth century, undergoing upheaval and transformation. Updating his acclaimed History of Twentieth-Century Russia through 2002, Robert Service provides a panoramic perspective on a country whose Soviet past encompassed revolution, civil war, mass terror, and two world wars. He shows how seven decades of communist rule, which penetrated every aspect of Soviet life, continue to influence Russia today. This new edition also discusses continuing economic and social difficulties at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the military campaign in Chechnya, and Russia's reduced role on the world stage.

The New Russia

by Mikhail Gorbachev

After years of rapprochement, the relationship between Russia and the West is more strained now than it has ever been in the past 25 years. Putin's motives, his reasons for seeking confrontation with the West, remain for many a mystery. Not for Mikhail Gorbachev. In this new work, Russia's elder statesman draws on his wealth of knowledge and experience to reveal the development of Putin's regime and the intentions behind it. He argues that in order to further his own personal power, Putin has corrupted the achievements of perestroika and created a system which offers no future for Russia. Faced with this, Gorbachev advocates a radical reform of politics and new fostering of pluralism and social democracy.

Gorbachev's insightful analysis moves beyond internal politics to address wider problems in the region, including the Ukraine conflict, as well as the global challenges of poverty and climate change. Above all else, he insists that solutions are to be found by returning to the atmosphere of dialogue

and cooperation which was so instrumental in ending the Cold War.

This book represents the summation of Gorbachev's thinking on the course that Russia has taken since 1991 and stands as a testament to one of the greatest and most influential statesmen of the 20th century.

Sunlight at Midnight: St. Petersburg and the Rise of Modern Russia

by Bruce Lincoln

For Russians, St. Petersburg has embodied power, heroism and fortitude. It has encompassed all the things that the Russians are and that they hope to become. Opulence and artistic brilliance blend with images of suffering on a monumental scale to make up the historic persona the late W. Bruce Lincoln's lavish biography of this mysterious, complex city. Climate and comfort were not what Tsar Peter the Great had in mind when he decided to build a new capital in the muddy marshes of the Neva River delta. Located 500 miles below the Arctic Circle, this area, with its foul weather, bad water and sodden soil, was so unattractive that only a handful of Finnish fisherman had ever settled there. Yet to the Tsar the place he named Sankt Pieter Burkh had the makings of a paradise. His vision was soon borne out: though St. Petersburg was closer to London, Paris and Vienna than to Russian's far-off eastern lands, it quickly became the political, cultural and economic center of an empire that stretched across more than a dozen time zones and over three continents. In this book, revolutionaries and laborers brush shoulders with tsars and builders, soldiers and statesmen share pride of place with poets. For only the entire historical experience of this magnificent and mysterious city can reveal the wealth of human and natural forces that shaped the modern history of the city and the nation it represents.

The Invention of Russia: From Gorbachev's Freedom to Putin's War

by Arkady Ostrovsky

The end of communism and breakup of the Soviet Union was a time of euphoria around the world, but Russia today is violently anti-American and dangerously nationalistic. So how did we go from the promise of those heady days to the autocratic police state of Putin's new Russia?

The Invention of Russia is a breathtakingly ambitious book that reaches back to the darkest days of the cold war to tell the story of the fight for the soul of a nation. With the deep insight only possible of a native son, Ostrovsky introduces us to the propagandists, oligarchs, and fixers who have set Russia's course since the collapse of the Soviet Union, inventing a new and more ominous identity for a country where ideas are all too often wielded like a cudgel.

The Soviet Union yoked together dreamers and strongmen—those who believed in an egalitarian ideal and those who pushed for an even more powerful state. The new Russia is a cynical operation, where perpetual fear and war are fueled by a web of lies, as television presenters peddle the invasion of Ukraine and goad Putin to go nuclear. Twenty-five years after the Soviet flag came down over the Kremlin, Russia and America are again heading toward a confrontation—but this course was far from inevitable. With this riveting account of how we got here—of the many mistakes and false promises—Ostrovsky emerges as Russia's most gifted chronicler.

The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 2, Imperial Russia, 1689-1917

by Lieven, Dominic

The second volume of The Cambridge History of Russia covers the imperial period (1689-1917). It encompasses political, economic, social, cultural, diplomatic, and military history. All the major Russian social groups have separate chapters and the volume also includes surveys on the non-Russian peoples and the government's policies towards them. It addresses themes such as women, law, the Orthodox Church, the police and the revolutionary movement. The volume's seven chapters on diplomatic and military history, and on Russia's evolution as a great power, make it the most detailed study of these issues available in English. The contributors come from the USA, UK, Russia and Germany: most are internationally recognised as leading scholars in their fields, and some emerging younger academics engaged in cutting-edge research have also been included. No other single volume in any language offers so comprehensive, expert and up-to-date an analysis of Russian history in this period.

St Petersburg: Three Centuries of Murderous Desire

by Jonathan Miles

This extraordinary book brings to life an astonishing place. Beautiful prose renders brutality vivid' The Times - BOOK OF THE WEEK

From Peter the Great to Putin, this is the unforgettable story of St Petersburg – one of the most magical, menacing and influential cities in the world.

St Petersburg has always felt like an impossible metropolis, risen from the freezing mists and flooded marshland of the River Neva on the western edge of Russia. It was a new capital in an old country. Established in 1703 by the sheer will of its charismatic founder, the homicidal megalomaniac Peter-the-Great, its dazzling yet unhinged reputation was quickly fashioned by the sadistic dominion of its early rulers.

This city, in its successive incarnations – St Petersburg; Petrograd; Leningrad and, once again, St Petersburg – has always been a place of perpetual contradiction. It was a window on to Europe and the Enlightenment, but so much of the glory of Russia was created here: its literature, music, dance and, for a time, its political vision. It gave birth to the artistic genius of Pushkin and Dostoyevsky, Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich, Pavlova and Nureyev. Yet, for all its glittering palaces, fairytale balls and enchanting gardens, the blood of thousands has been spilt on its snow-filled streets. It has been a hotbed of war and revolution, a place of siege and starvation, and the crucible for Lenin and Stalin's power-hungry brutality.

In St Petersburg, Jonathan Miles recreates the drama of three hundred years in this absurd and brilliant city, bringing us up to the present day, when – once more – its fate hangs in the balance. This is an epic tale of murder, massacre and madness played out against squalor and splendour. It is an unforgettable portrait of a city and its people.

The Last of the Tsars: Nicholas II and the Russian Revolution

by Robert Service

In March 1917, Nicholas II, the last Tsar of All the Russias, abdicated and the dynasty that had ruled an empire for three hundred years was forced from power by revolution. Now, on the hundredth anniversary of that revolution, Robert Service, the eminent historian of Russia, examines Nicholas's reign in the year before his abdication and the months between that momentous date and his death, with his family, in Ekaterinburg in July 1918.

The story has been told many times, but Service's profound understanding of the period and his forensic examination of hitherto untapped sources, including the Tsar's diaries and recorded conversations, shed remarkable new light on his reign, also revealing the kind of ruler Nicholas believed himself to have been, contrary to the disastrous reality.

The Last of the Tsars is a masterful study of a man who was almost entirely out of his depth, perhaps even willfully so. It is also a compelling account of the social, economic and political foment in Russia in the aftermath of Alexander Kerensky's February Revolution, the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 and the beginnings of Lenin's Soviet republic.

The Russian Revolution: A New History

by Sean McMeekin

At the turn of the century, the Russian economy was growing by about 10% annually and its population had reached 150 million. By 1920 the country was in desperate financial straits and more

than 20 million Russians had died. And by 1950, a third of the globe had embraced communism. The triumph of Communism sets a profound puzzle. How did the Bolsheviks win power and then cling to it amid the chaos they had created? Traditional histories remain a captive to Marxist ideas about class struggle. Analysing never before used files from the Tsarist military archives, McMeekin argues that war is the answer. The revolutionaries were aided at nearly every step by Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland who sought to benefit - politically and economically - from the changes overtaking the country. To make sense of Russia's careening path the essential question is not Lenin's "who, whom?", but who benefits?
