

Welcome to Petrozavodsk State University!

Contact Details:

Letters may be sent to you at:

Tarasov Konstantin for [John Smith], Petrozavodsk State University,
Department of Philology, Pr. Lenina, 33-308, Petrozavodsk,
Republic of Karelia, 185910 Russia
К.Г.Тарасову для [Дж. Смита], ПетрГУ, Филологический
факультет, Пр. Ленина 33, каб. 308, Петрозаводск, Республика
Карелия, 185910 Россия

Your representatives:

Zahra Meru **Ciara Bartlam**

+7 911 143 3955 +7 965 075 5341

rlus.spb@gmail.com

Flights

The group will be met at the airport by a representative from the university and your RLUS representative, who will welcome you to Russia. The university representative will accompany you to Petrozavodsk by bus. You will have to make your own way back to the airport for departure, though your RLUS representatives will be able to assist you should you require it. Last year the students asked the university to arrange a bus for them, but a sudden and unpredicted snowfall meant the students were stranded and missed their flight. We recommend taking the train.

If you have booked a group air ticket you are able to change the return date for a fee of approx. 2000 roubles, though only one change is possible. There are details of how to do this in the general briefing document or you can contact your RLUS representative. If you do change your return date, then you must let the University have a copy of the changed ticket.

Travel Around Petrozavodsk

Petrozavodsk has a wide-ranging network of large public buses, minibus-sized private buses (marshrutkas) and trolleybuses. Prices are cheap compared to their British equivalents, and cheaper than in bigger cities such as Moscow or St. Petersburg.

Marshrutkas (private buses/minibuses) are a fairly new and efficient alternative form of transport. Travel by marshrutka is not included in the cost of any travel cards and tickets must be bought from the driver.

Bureaucracy

From day one you will see that this remains a very real, and very irritating and VERY UNPREDICTABLE reality of post Soviet Life.

You are required to register your visa within three days of arrival. This will be arranged for you by the University at a cost of 200 roubles. You may need to apply for a multi-entry visa upon registration. This currently costs 1000 roubles. You must make sure that you hand in your passport to the University when requested and make any necessary payments. Failure to do this may result in a fine, or at worst, deportation. As you may be without your passport for some time, please make sure that you have a photocopy of your passport and visa, before handing it in.

Until now OVIR, the organisation that registers you, have accepted the foreign insurance policies. However, they are now insisting that you are covered under Russian insurance too if you have a multi-entry visa. This will

mean that you will have to purchase a special Russian policy at a current cost of about 600 rubles. Please make sure that you have the money to pay this. Last year two students who needed medical treatment in Petrozavodsk found this policy extremely useful.

You will have to have another HIV test done on arrival. This will be arranged for you at a Russian clinic and it is much cheaper than having your original test officially translated. The clinic does not reuse needles. You can inspect the sealed needle if you wish before the test is done. If you prefer, you can bring your own needle, but do not put it in your hand luggage.

You must obey the rules for registering your visa in Russia. These may be very annoying but they must be obeyed. On arrival this will be done for you, but if you leave the city for more than three days you may have to re-register. Please ask the course provider for the latest information regarding this. If you leave the country for any period, you definitely have to re-register. If you fail to hand in your documents when requested or if you fail to re-register, you will be subject to a fine of up to 45,000 roubles. In extreme cases you may be deported in addition to having a fine.

Food and Drink

Unboiled water should on no account be drunk as this can lead to diarrhoea, followed by severe stomach cramps. Last year one student ended up with dysentery. Water should therefore be boiled for at least 5 minutes before it is drunk. Water filters can be picked up relatively cheaply from supermarkets and would be a good investment early in your stay. Bottled water is the best option and is readily available at shops and kiosks. If you need to, don't forget to see your doctor about suitable medicines before you leave home, though you can also buy them here.

You can buy a wide variety of food in Petrozavodsk, though prices (especially for processed food, fresh fruit and vegetables) are roughly the same as and sometimes more expensive than in UK. Any fresh food and vegetables bought should be thoroughly cleaned before being eaten. There are a growing number of western style supermarkets of a generally high standard, but again goods are no cheaper than would be in the UK. There are also markets, as well as traditional indoor markets.

Entertainment

At the beginning of the course, you will be taken around Petrozavodsk and will be shown where you can go. There is a swimming pool, gym, stadium, bowling club, cafés, bars and other places to spend time.

Eating Out

Petrozavodsk is home to various restaurants and there are many establishments offering international cuisine. As the best places seem to change year by year I won't list any here, but needless to say if you enjoy international cuisine there is plenty of choice at a reasonable price in Petrozavodsk.

Clothes

It can be surprisingly difficult to find good winter coats and shoes. You can find practical but unattractive snow shoes on markets from November onwards but fur coats will cost 5000 roubles at the very least. You are advised to bring with you clothes you can wear in several layers e.g. vests and tights, especially as it tends to be rather warm inside buildings and cold on the streets.

Books

There are several bookshops in Petrozavodsk, but unfortunately there are not many books in English if at all. You can however use the university library where you can read books in English and in Russian and students in the past have been more than satisfied with this.

Communications

Communication with the UK is pretty good. You can phone abroad from normal domestic phones but it can be a bit expensive, and of course family and friends can phone you on these numbers (they should dial 007 812 then the seven digit domestic number). It is pretty cheap to dial Russia from the UK. Prices on Telediscount (www.telediscount.co.uk) are currently 2p a minute to Russia (5p a minute to mobiles); and MoneySavingExpert (<http://callchecker.moneysavingexpert.com/intcallchecker>) are currently from 0.5p a minute to Russia (from 2p a minute to mobiles).

Alternatively you can buy phone cards which give you credit in an account which you access by dialling a local number and then entering a pin (Evroset usually has good rates for phoning the UK and other countries). Amongst other places, phone cards can be bought in computer shops and kiosks around the town. Western European Mobile phones (the GSM system – like in England) can usually be used in St Petersburg (if they are not blocked by the UK operator) but most students chose to connect to a Russian mobile phone network (and this is worth doing!) – Petrozavodsk is served by three main [GSM] providers: MTS, Beeline and Megafon. You need to be registered before you can buy a sim card.

Post usually takes at least 2-3 weeks to arrive and may not arrive at all. You can send it to the address on page 1. Students can also use e-mail at the main telephone office and at a growing number of Internet cafes all over the town.

Money

You should expect to spend as much money as you do in the UK, if not a little more. A good average seems to be about 3000 roubles per week, depending on your lifestyle (this doesn't include accommodation). Please don't make the mistake of coming here and expecting to live on next to nothing.

Changing cash (dollars) is no problem as there are currency exchanges in the numerous banks and some shops, particularly in the centre, though please be aware that **dollars themselves cannot be spent in Russia**. Do not bring all your money in cash, as you are not covered by insurance if it is stolen. Do not bother with travellers' cheques either.

Roubles and sometimes dollars and euro can be withdrawn on credit cards and debit cards from the many cash machines around the city. Most dispensers limit the amount you can withdraw. Keep a record of all transactions. Visa and MasterCard are best, but Cirrus is also widely accepted. Chequebooks and cheque guarantee cards cannot be used in Russia. There is a cash machine in the hall of the main university building.

You are required to show ID whenever you change money. A photocopy of your passport and visa is generally adequate when changing cash. On no account try to change money on the black market i.e. with individuals on the street – you will be ripped off.

Homestays

RLUS cannot guarantee where the families are situated. Your landlady may let you use her washing machine or even do your washing for you, usually because they are particular about the type of powder used or the settings etc. You should ask permission to do your laundry and pay for each load.

Please note that if you find your own accommodation, you must give a month's notice in writing or pay a month's rent in lieu of notice. You should also inform your UK University Liaison Officer and your RLUS rep. You are advised to make sure that it is safe and you cannot expect any assistance from the RLUS Representative to solve any problems

The landladies are almost without exception pensioners. As a guest in their flat, you should be courteous and inform them if you are expecting to come home very late at night, ask their permission if you want to have a guest round making sure they don't stay later than 9-10pm and ask to use their phone, washing machine etc.

Finally, while the University does its best to take into account the preferences that you have stated on your accommodation preference forms, it is unable, in return, to offer you any information about the families where you will be staying in advance. This is due to the fact that in Russia such issues are resolved much later than in the UK and it would not be possible to get you the information in time.

The Course

Tuition will take place in the University building about 5-10 minutes walk the train station. Tuition is usually in the mornings. The teachers are friendly and willing to adapt lessons to meet the needs of students. The groups are split according to ability.

The faculty sometimes arranges a few activities per semester for students, but other than this the onus will be upon you if you want to get out and make Russian friends. Russian universities are different to British ones in that they often don't have many clubs, societies, a student union etc. for students to be involved with, and the State University is no exception to this. Past students have noted that more 'personal' treatment is often on offer in smaller towns such as this.

Unlike the system in most English universities, classes at the University here are one and a half hours long. There will be a fairly long test on your first day. This test is to place you in groups in terms of ability. Don't be too concerned, should you have a bad day as it will be possible later to request a change of group.

Life In General

As with any city, Petrozavodsk has more than its fair share of crime and students should always be on their guard. Though it is not as bad as bigger cities, crime still occurs and you should be careful. Make sure that you have a bag that closes securely and try not to carry valuables (purses, wallets, cameras) in outside pockets (even if they do zip up) as in a crowded trolleybus or shop it is all too easy to have something stolen without even noticing. Recently, a number of students have fallen victim to theft, therefore it must be stressed that carrying large quantities of money, personal documents and credit cards – especially all in one place (i.e. in one wallet) - should be avoided. It is not unusual for foreigners (usually males) to be stopped in the street by the militsiya and requested to show their documents. **CARRY YOUR RUSSIAN STUDENT CARD AND A PHOTOCOPY OF YOUR PASSPORT, VISA AND REGISTRATION AND MIGRATION CARD WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES.**

The majority of problems that students seem to have occurred late at night, when they are out and about and drunk, so be careful. If you do go out and drink a lot, bear in mind that you will probably be forcing other students into taking care of you, which may not be as easy as it is on a British campus.

Students have asked us to stress that you should be prepared for anything and everything to take a long time and to be difficult to arrange. You can expect things to be closed when the cold has set in (even if your guide book says that it will be open). Don't be offended if people don't smile and take care when crossing roads.

Finally, one thing to be aware of is that, as in parts of Eastern Germany and Central Europe, nationalism is on the increase in Russia and in St Petersburg in particular. This has only ever been directed towards non-white students of African/Asian appearance and is something that all students should be aware of – please feel free to get in

touch with your RLUS rep if you have any further questions. The senior RLUS representative in St Petersburg is of Asian appearance and can answer any questions you may have regarding this issue.

Visas / Travelling Outside Petrozavodsk

In Britain you will be issued with a single-entry, ninety-day visa, which at present is the only visa issued to students. This may not be long enough for your entire course, and so on your first day at university you will hand in your passport and apply for a multi-entry visa. You will have to pay for this (1000 roubles), as well as an HIV test (yes, another one), during your first week. The advantage of having a multi-entry visa is that you can leave Russia (and return!) whenever you want. It does, however, take around six weeks to process so you can't leave the country during that time. Your passport will be taken from you for 2-3 days initially for registration, and then for 2-3 days when the visas are ready. In the meantime, you are free to travel within Russia at the weekends.

When travelling, use your common sense. There are areas that should be avoided (e.g. Chechnya and the Caucasus), and you will need to apply for a visa if you decide to travel to Belarus, as some students did last year. If you are not sure about the situation in a country or area that you are intending to visit please check with the consulate and they will be able to advise you. You can also look at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website. There is a link to the page on Russia on the RLUS website.

Students will get reading weeks in which they can travel, the dates are in the general briefing document. If you leave Petrozavodsk, even to travel to St. Petersburg or Moscow, you must be in possession of your passport - a photocopy is not sufficient.

It is possible to invite friends or relatives through agencies in the city. You could go through an agency in Britain that offers the full service - invitation, visa and advice about registration on arrival, air ticket and accommodation. Scott's Tours 141 Whitfield St London W1T 5EW, phone 020 7383 5353 or Regent Holidays, 15 John Street, Bristol BS1 2HR, tel. 0117 921 1711 can make such arrangements. It is best not to be over-ambitious regarding travel during reading weeks as the best-laid plans can fall through without warning.

Your insurance may cover you for Europe only. If that is the case and you decide to travel beyond the Urals or into Asia, you will need to extend your insurance. Ensure that you know how to do this with your insurance company.

Many students prefer to go to St Petersburg for at least one of the reading weeks as the city has so much to offer and it's not far. Outside the city there are miles of lovely countryside dotted with imperial estates, all of which are well worth a visit. When the rivers and canals aren't covered in ice, cruises can be taken both in the city and around its environs.

All in all, Petrozavodsk is an excellent place for studying and few students would have any hesitation in recommending it in the strongest terms.

FAQs

- **Do I need to bring passport photos with me?**

Yes, they would be useful, but it's easy to get them done here. You'll need one for your student card and your multi-entry visa (for courses longer than 13 weeks). The requirements of the photos may be specific so don't get any done before you come if you don't have any.

- **Do I need to get another HIV test done?**

It's possible that you may need one for your multi-entry visa. If you do need it for the multi-entry visa,

it's cheaper and easier to get another one done in Russia rather than pay to have an English one officially translated.

- **Can I withdraw money from cash machines?**

Yes, cash machines can be found everywhere. Be warned that sometimes some cards don't work in some machines. You just have to keep trying until you find a machine that's willing to dispense you some money, so it's a good idea to make sure you always have a bit of cash on you just in case you can't find a machine that works for you. Some bank cards just don't work at all, so it's a good idea to bring more than one card with you just in case. Remember to carry only one with you at any one time in case you lose it, it's stolen or whatever. That way you'll have a back-up way to access your money in case of a bad situation. Speaking of money, don't bother bringing cheques or travellers' cheques.

- **How far from the university will I be living?**

This can't be confirmed much before your arrival, but central locations are not guaranteed. You may find yourself commuting on a daily basis, but in Petrozavodsk the furthest commute is relatively short.

- **How do I get the multi-entry visa?**

If you are on a course longer than 13 weeks, your passport will be taken by the school following your arrival and your visa will be annulled. You will be given a multi-entry visa after this, though this can take up to five weeks to process, during which time you will not be allowed to leave the city.

- **How do I register my visa and what are the rules?**

The rules change like the wind so be prepared for that. The current rules are that you should submit your passport, visa and migration card (you should get this on the plane before you land) and the school will register you for the duration of your stay. If you leave the city, for example in reading week, and travel within Russia, you should register in whichever city you go to. This can be done at the hostel/hotel where you stay. If you leave the country during reading week, you **MUST** inform the university of the date that you will leave and return. If you fail to do so, migration services may impose a fine and in the worst case, could deport you. Following your return to Russia, you must turn in your documents on the first working day in order to be re-registered. Failure to do so could result in a very large fine and possible deportation. Please check the latest rules with your RLUS representative before you travel.

- **What clothes should I bring?**

Bring layers for the cold weather as it's usually warm inside buildings but obviously cold outside. It can actually be rather warm in Petrozavodsk in September so don't bring just cold weather clothes, but the warm weather won't last long. It's rather rainy here and can be slushy so boots are advisable.

- **Where can I use the internet?**

If you have a laptop, you can take advantage of a few cafés that have wi-fi. You can also buy USB modems at any phone or electronic shop. There are some internet cafés too. You could use the internet in your host family's flat provided that you ask their permission first and you pay for it. This is best discussed and negotiated upon arrival.

- **What are the host families like?**

Let's be honest, having paying guests is like a business for them. Bed and breakfast is what you're paying for and that's exactly what you'll get. However, many families in Petrozavodsk can be rather friendly and will happily chat to you to help you practice your language skills, though this cannot be guaranteed. Note that cooking facilities are not necessarily available for you to use.

- **What will happen on the first day?**

On the day of the group arrival you will be taken by bus to Petrozavodsk and you will arrive late in the evening. The next morning you will meet at the university (there is a map on the RLUS website, and your host family will tell you the best way to get there) and have a language test, be registered, etc. One

of the teachers will help you to get a sim card and show you around the town a bit and will be able to tell you where the best or most popular places are to hang out. As Petrozavodsk has been changing rapidly over the last few years, it is difficult to print information here as it very quickly goes out of date!

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact your RLUS reps at rlus.spb@gmail.com

Updated June 2010; please note that inflation is high and prices are subject to change.