

TREASURES OF RUSSIA



DIAMOND FUND OF RUSSIA



The Diamond Fund is the largest exhibition of gems, jewelry and golden nuggets in Russia, situated in Moscow Kremlin. It dates back to 1719 when the Emperor Peter the Great established the Russian Crown's Treasury. All successive emperors of the Romanov Dynasty had added to the Treasury and after the Russian Revolution of 1917 the new rulers of the country have followed the trend.

The exhibition was opened to the general public from 1967. As the modern Russian State retains monopoly for mining gems and precious metals, it keeps the most valuable items in the State Fund of Precious Stones from which only the most outstanding pieces go for an exhibition in the Diamond Fund. The Imperial Crown of Russia made for the Cather-



rine the Great is one of the most famous pieces of the collection that had been worn for the coronations and other special occasions by all the emperors that followed her up to the last Russian Tzar Nicolas II.

The Crown is made of precious metals and nearly 5000 diamonds. It weighs about 4 kilograms. At the center of it is a large red spinel, weighing almost 400 carats. It is one of the historic stones of the early

Russian Diamond Collection, which was brought to Russia from China in 17 century. It is thought to be the second largest spinel in the world. Nowadays the Crown appears on the Coat of arms of the Russian Federation.

There is also a number of gems in Diamond Fund that hold an important historical significance apart from their treasure value. One of the examples is a diamond called 'Orlov', named by Catherine the Great after her former lover Count Orlov, who presented the gem to her. Originally the diamond can be traced to second century AD Hindy Temple in Tamil Nadu (Southern India), where it once served as an eye of the statue of the presiding deity. It was much later stolen by a French soldier and went through many hands before being purchased by the Count. The earlier origins of the gem are lost in time.

Another historic gem is 'Shah' diamond that once belonged to one of the greatest



rulers of India – Emperor Akbar, as well as to the number of other famous kings of the Islamic World. It was brought to Persia by another great ruler – the victorious Nadir Shah (hence the name of the diamond). A hundred years later, after the murder of the Russian envoy in that country, the famous poet and diplomat Alexander Griboyedov, the gem was given to the Tzar Nicolas I as a gift, in order to withhold his wrath.

Some of the more recent additions to the Fund may not have so much history behind them, but rated among the largest uncut diamonds and largest unmelted gold nuggets in the world.

Precious gems and metals always fascinated people. But visiting the Diamond Fund of Russia is not only a chance to see some of the best specimens of those, but also getting in touch with the rich history of Russia and broader world and seeing great works of jeweler's art.

RELICS OF NOVGOROD



Novgorod is one of the oldest Russian cities with a history as rich as that of many old European countries'. It was in fact a separate independent country, for much of its early history. Prosperous Medieval republic that elected its rulers by majority of its citizens and treated powerful princes of the House of Ruric, who hoped to rule it, merely as mercenary warlords. It controlled a territory of the size that, again, very few of countries in Europe at the time could boast of, populated by peoples of various origins, speaking different languages. The capital city



in 14th century was among the biggest in Europe. As a trading hub, it sent its merchants to the West and the East as far as the Urals and Siberia. The great majority of the Novgorodian population was literate, including women and children, and their notes and letters on birch bark still convey to us their thoughts, emotions, rumours, quarrels and business agreements. It challenged foreign domination in the West and East through military and diplomatic means and

managed to keep fragile balance of power with other principdom-states of greater Russia.

Obviously such a great culture created many priceless artifacts. Some of them you can see in Novgorod on the display in the Golden Treasury of Novgorod, that is defended by the ancient walls of Novgorod Kremlin. The exhibition includes more than two hundred pieces made of precious metals and gems. They were made by Russian, European and Byzantine artisans and craftsmen from 5th to 19th centuries. Majority of them belonged to the churches and monasteries.

Some of them were gifts of foreign ambassadors and merchants.

The earliest artifacts in the collection is the jewelry made in Byzantium such as earrings and rings of gold and gems.

Significant part of the collection is dedicated to silverwork such as rizas (jewelry covers for the most venerated icons) and Bible covers. Beautiful mitres (tall hats of the Orthodox priests) are very eye-catching with

their state of art embroidery, enamel and engraving. Among unique artifacts of the exhibition are two panagias (enameled medallion containing portrait of Virgin Mary or saints, worn by a priest during a service) of 14th and 15th centuries and beautiful golden church bowls of 11-12 centuries.

Western European art is represented among all by a jewelry box of 12 century, enamels of 13 century and relics container of 14 century.

Exhibition of Golden Treasury of Novgorod is not only a collection of beautiful jewelry and items. It provides an insight into the history of one of the most interesting, culturally advanced and influential states among those, that created the Russian civilization, the one that had its peculiar way of social development – what we call nowadays the democracy.



THE TREASURIES OF THE HERMITAGE

Even those people who do not know much about Russia have heard something about the Hermitage. As one of the oldest and largest museums in the world it is well known far beyond Russia. The State Hermitage museum was founded in 1764 by the empress Catherine the Great and since 1852 has been open to the general public.

Nowadays the Hermitage is a huge collection of art objects that is hosted in a number of buildings. It may take a few full days to properly observe all its galleries and exhibitions. So it is not a surprise that many visitors overlook the real treasures that kept in the heart of the museum – it's Golden and Diamond Treasuries.



The style has some Greek and Iranian influence but mostly unique. Other large parts of the exhibition include golden artifacts of Sarmatians (people related to Scythians who replaced them as the masters of the Great Steppe) and Pontic Greeks.

Another large part of the Golden Treasury exhibition consists of the jewelry presented to the Russian Emperors by rulers of different parts of the world. It includes many masterpieces of Persian, Indian and Chinese art, such as jewelry of the Great Mughals presented to Russia by Nadir-Shah of Persia in 1739.

The second large jewelry exhibition of the Hermitage is called The Diamond Treasury. It also contains hundreds of artifacts from Scythian and Greek burials. But most of the collection consists of European jewelry, presented to the Russian Emperors



as well as the family treasures of the Tzars and Tzarinas. Among the most attractive relics of the Diamond Treasury are the miniature copies of the State regalia of the Russian Empire – large and small Imperial Crowns the Sceptre and the Orb made by Russia's most famous jeweler Carl Faberge, as well as some other of his works. For the visit to each of the treasuries separate tickets are needed to obtain.



The Golden Treasury contains around 1500 items from various parts of the world dated from 7-th century B.C. to 19-th century A.D. The oldest part of the exhibition is so called Siberian Collection of Peter the Great.

It mostly consists of artifacts found at the time of the Tzar by amateur diggers in kurgans (burial mounds) of Altai (Southern Siberia). Those huge structures were built by Saka-Scythians – the nomadic people of Eurasian steppes who, at different ages, fought powerful armies of Emperors of Persia and Alexander the Great with much success. Those items most often depict various animals, both real and fictional, made with great artistry and craftsmanship. That style of art has a special name Scythian Animalistic Style.

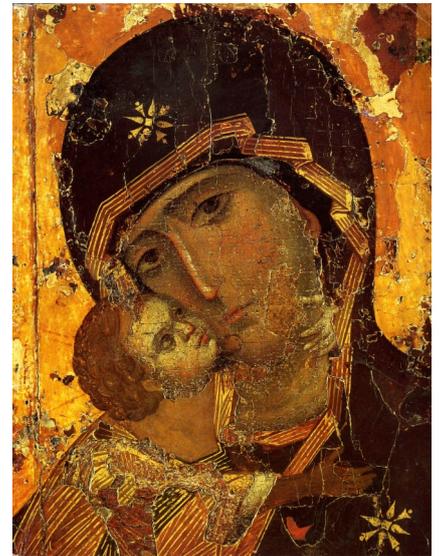
Next to Siberian Collection one can see Scythian Gold that was excavated by modern archeologists in Pontic-Caspian steppe. This elaborate jewelry was created by Western Scythians the cousins of the people who produced the artifacts of Siberian Collection. It shows even higher level of craftsmanship.

ICONS OF THE TRETYAKOV GALLERY



The word 'icon' derives from a Greek word for 'image'. This kind of paintings are very revered among the Orthodox Christians and you can see them in almost any Orthodox church. Some of the old icons have a great importance not only as a part of

collection that is universally recognized around the world is the Holy Trinity Icon, created by the most famous Russian icon painter Andrei Rublev in the XV century. It is most celebrated of his works, that some believe to be one of the highest achievements of traditional Russian art.



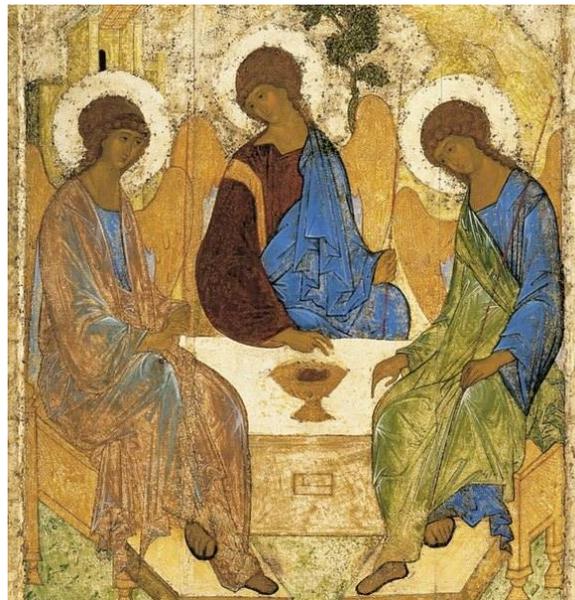
The icon depicts the three angels who visited Abraham at the Oak of Mamre, but it also symbolically interpreted as an incarnation of the Holy Trinity.

Another set of icons attributed to this great artist is also on display in Tretyakov Gallery. These are parts of iconostasis created by Andrei Rublev for Dormition Cathedral in Vladimir. The most stunning centerpiece of this painting ensemble is the Christ Pantocrator sitting on the throne, surrounded by four Biblical animals.

the cult, but also as art objects and historical artifacts. One of the richest collections of old icons is accumulated in Tretyakov State Gallery of Moscow – the leading depository of the Russian fine art. There are some of the most famous icons of the Golden Age of the Russian icon created from XI to XVII centuries.

Presumably the centerpiece of the collection is the Icon of Our Lady of Vladimir.

It is one of the most venerated icons of the Russian Orthodox Church. The legend says that it have been painted by St. Luke himself, but the modern scientists believe that was created by a Byzantine painter in early XII century shortly before it was sent over to Russia as a gift to Grand Duke Yury Dolgoruky the ruler of Kiev and founder of Moscow. The icon depicts the Virgin and Child and seen as universal expression of motherly love, tenderness and protection. The icon



has a very rich history almost as Russia herself that is too big for this humble overview. Nowadays, due to its religious significance, the icon is kept separately from the main collection in a small church attached to Tretyakov Gallery.

Another masterpiece of the Tretyakov Gallery's icon

Our Lady of Don. Again an impersonation of motherly love, bearing many similarities with the Vladimir one, but still unique in its technique and features.

Here we mentioned just a few icons of the Tretyakov Gallery, but there are many more. It's definitely one of must see, when you come to Russia.

RUSSIAN IMPERIAL PORCELAIN

The word 'porcelain' for many people is connected to China, that invented it. Hence the other name for this beautiful material that is also simply called 'china'. The beginning of mass production of porcelain in Europe started in 1710th when millennial old Chinese secrets were unveiled. The first Russian porcelain factory was established in 1744 by decree of Elizabeth I, the daughter of Peter the Great.

The quality of the Russian porcelain almost from the beginning was on the level with the best European specimens of the time. The early designs were rather original and distinctive but by the time of Katherine the Great the design started to reflect classical Antiquity tradition popular in Europe at the time. The main buyer of the factory's production was the Russian Imperial Court. By the reign of Paul the First the Imperial Porcelain Factory, as it was named, had become one of the leading manufacturers of chinaware in Europe. The second half of 18th century is regarded as the Golden Age of Russian porcelain both in quality and design.



Some of them are still functioning manufactures even today. The biggest collection of historical Yusupov's Porcelain can be seen in Arkhangelskoye Palace museum near Moscow. It includes some of



the most exquisite examples of the Russian 19th century chinaware

In the beginning of 19th century the Imperial Porcelain Factory was reorganized and employed some of the best masters of applied arts from Russia and Europe. The common designs of that period reflect traditional Russian motifs or portray heroes of war against Napoleon. Others are in the Empire Style that in Russia obtained some distinctive local flavour.

The beginning of the 20th century brought the Modern Style wares into production and the post-revolutionary years gave birth to great variety of experimental forms and styles. That was the time when some world famous artists such as Malevich and Kandinsky took part in developing the new language of art in many spheres, including the porcelain design.



The Imperial Porcelain Factory is still fully functional nowadays and some years ago returned its historical name. It still produces some top quality chinaware that is highly valued around the world.

The finest examples of the Russian porcelain, historical and modern, are represented in the museum and the gallery at the Imperial Porcelain Factory in St.Petersburg, as well as in the famous suburban palaces of Peterhof and Pushkin.

GOLDEN TREASURY OF SUZDAL



The small town of Suzdal is well known beyond Russia. It is one of the most picturesque and atmospheric places keeping the spirit of the Old Russia. First mentioned in 1024 AD, the town has changed very little since Late Middle Ages and today it is one of the most popular stops at so called The Golden Ring route.

Suzdal has so many architectural masterpieces and other attractions that it is very easy to overlook the real treasures that are hidden in one of its fortified monasteries – the Monastery of Saint Euthymius.



The Golden Treasury of Suzdal is a part of the Museum of Suzdal that includes the monastery as well as a number of other impressive monuments. It includes around five hundred historical items that for centuries were accumulated in churches and monasteries of Vladimir and Suzdal region.

The earliest Russian made artifact in the Treasury is dated back to 13th century. It is a miniature icon carved in stone – one of the few surviving examples of such art in Eastern Russia before the Mongolian invasion. There are even earlier carved gems in the collection but they were made in Byzantium. Personal crosses and other jewelry made of gold and gems show high level of skill and sophistication of Ancient Russian artisans. Some of the most interesting items are equipped with magnifying glasses that help to see every detail.

Big part of the collection is dedicated to rizas (icon covers) and other items of church embellishment and

cult ritual made of precious metals and gems. A riza (in Russian oklad) was usually made of gold, silver or other metals and covered with enamel or filigree, for the most venerated icons to protect and embellish them. It left the face and hands of the painted image open. Some of the crosses, bowls and relic boxes in these rooms are true examples of high art.

Another room in the treasury contains finest examples of needlework and embroidery made for the religious purposes, using silk, silver and golden threads. They include covers for the tombs of saints and usually depict portraits of the saints. Some of them hold important historical significance as well as show the highest level of craftsmanship. They date back to 16-17 centuries. Among the artists who achieved true



mastery of such technique was one of the Russian Tzarinas – Solomonia Saburova, the first wife of Tzar Vasili III of Muscovy. She was sent to exile to a monastery in Suzdal, because of being childless, where she lived and worked for many years and later was canonized by the Orthodox Church. Her works are represented in the museum. Another noble woman who succeeded in the art of needlework was the first wife of Ivan the Terrible – Anastasia Romanovna.

One more room is dedicated to the highly sophisticated vestments of the church hierarchs, made of precious fabrics with great skill.

The Treasury of Suzdal is one of the best collections of church relics of Ancient Russia that supposedly can be rivaled only by museums of Kremlin.

THE AMBER ROOM

The story of the Amber Room is mysterious and enigmatic as well as exciting. Some of art connoisseurs call it the Eight Wonder of the World.

Initially this richly decorated baroque chamber made of amber panels was constructed in Prussia, around 1701. It was presented by the King of Prussia Frederick William I to the Russian Emperor Peter the Great in 1716. In Russia the work continued for other 10 years, some decorations were added and the room took its final shape in Catherine Palace at Tsarskoye Selo (now Pushkin) in the reign of Peter's daughter Elisabeth. By that time the room covered more then 55 square



Soon the various theories started to appear about its fate and possible whereabouts. Some would speculate that the treasure has burned in the ruins of Königsberg Castle, others that it was hidden somewhere, waiting to be discovered. Some even suggested that the Nazis could ship it to South America where they run after the war. In 1997 a

mosaic, part of the original Amber Room was found in Germany and returned to Russia. But the most of the original pieces are still lost.

The attempts to restore the Amber Room have started in Russia in 1981. The best specialists in arts, chemistry, history, crime investigation and restoration were gathered for this enormous task. But the collapse of Soviet Union, the economical and political mess of the following decade and the resulting lack of funds have slowed the works down significantly. Nevertheless the work continued and the German company E.ON has provided \$3,5 million to help to finish it. Finally, by 2003 – the year of 300th anniversary of St.Petersburg the reconstruction was finished. All the pieced of decoration and furniture were painstakingly recreated in exactly the same way as they were originally made, using the remaining photos, measurements and recordings. Many experts state that the reconstruction was performed brilliantly and the Amber Room now looks exactly as it was before the war.

Nowadays everybody can see again this Eighth Wonder of the World in its full beauty at Catherine Palace in the suburb of St.Petersburg.



meters and contained 6 tonnes of amber. The Katharine's Palace was one of the summer palaces of the royal family until the revolution of 1917.

With the beginning of WWII the Soviet art experts tried to disassemble and evacuate the Amber Room but failed due to technical difficulties and rapid advance of the German troops. When the Nazis took over the suburbs of Leningrad in the autumn of 1941, they took the Amber Room apart and moved it to Königsberg where it stayed till the end of the war and where its trace finally disappears.

In August 1944, Königsberg was heavily fire bombed by the British aviation. The room was disassembled once more and presumably hidden in the Königsberg Castle. In April 1945 Königsberg was shelled by the advancing Red Army before the city was finally taken over. The Amber Room has disappeared without a trace.



THE GOLD OF TROY



Every treasure keeps many secrets. The famous Gold of Troy (also nicknamed Priam's Treasure) is not an exception. The honor of discovery of this stash of golden artifacts belongs to keen amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann who at the time when archeology as a science just started to take shape was very eager to find the legendary city, mentioned in the epics of Homer. Before his findings were made public, the story of Troy was regarded as merely a legend, a fantasy of a great storyteller. But Schliemann strongly believed in its reality, he was a fanatic in a good sense.

Finally on 31 May 1873 he caught a glimpse in the digging pit and it turned to be a big silver jar full of golden and silver artifacts. Schliemann called it Priam's Treasure after the legendary Trojan king but it was proofed later that the items are in

fact a thousand years older and were created around 2400-2300 BC.

Not all archeologists at the time agreed with the Schliemann's discovery. Some claimed that he faked the artifacts in order to gain fame. But majority of



the scientists believe now that they are genuine. Schliemann was concerned that the authorities of the Ottoman Empire could confiscate the treasure, so he

decided to smuggle it out of the country. He offered the collection to the museums of Athens, London, Paris and Naples but due to various reasons they refused to acquire the treasure. Finally the Gold of Troy found its place in the Royal Museum of Berlin where it stayed till WWII.



At the end of the Second World War the collection was hidden in a bunker beneath the Berlin Zoo and was handed over to the Soviet military authorities by a German professor.



It was taken to USSR and then completely disappeared from sight for a half of century. Only in 1996 the famous treasure was opened for general visitors. It took its new home in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, while some of the artifacts were given to the

Hermitage in St.Petersburg. During 1990-s there were some talks with German authorities about possibility of returnin this treasure to Berlin. But the 1998 Russian law about the cultural valuables that were taken from Germany as a reparation for the Russian museums that were looted and pillaged by the Nazis during the war (see the Amber Room, for instance), completely forbade any restitutions of this kind. So it is very likely that for the foreseeable future the Gold of Troy will be remaining in Pushkin Museum. And at least the good thing is that after 51 year of oblivion now everybody can see it



FABERGE EASTER EGGS



One of the names that people around the world remember, when talking about Russia and her treasures is the name of Peter Carl Fabergé. He was creator of some of the most recognizable jewelry art objects of the Modern Era – the Fabergé Easter Eggs.

The most famous Russian jeweler was born in the Russian imperial capital Saint-Petersburg in the family of a Baltic German father from Livonia (who's ancestry originated first in France, then in Germany), also a jeweler, and a Danish mother, a daughter of an artist. Carl Fabergé inherited the jewelry business of his father after he decided to retire.

By 1885 the House of Fabergé was held in such high esteem by the Tzar and his family and court, that the company was awarded the title 'Goldsmith by special appointment to the Imperial Crown'.

The same year the first of the famous Easter Eggs was ordered by the Emperor Alexander III for his wife Maria Fedorovna.

The Tzarina Maria was so delighted with the beauty of the gift that the next year another Easter Egg was ordered to the jeweler.

After that the House of Fabergé was given a free hand in designing and crafting the Eggs for the successive Easters. Their design become more exquisite and they contained little surprises inside. They were crafted from precious metals and gems by the best masters of Fabergé company on the design and under personal supervision of Carl Fabergé. When Nicolas II ascended the throne after the death of his father, he continues the fashion, pre-



sending Fabergé Eggs to both, his wife Alexandra and his mother Maria Fedorovna.

All in all 65 Fabergé Imperial Easter Eggs are known to be made, 57 of which have survived up to the present day. A number of other Eggs were made for private clients such as House of Yusupov, the Rothschild family and Duchess of Marlborough.

In the aftermath of Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the following years of the Civil War the fate of the Fabergé Eggs and their creators was as much turbulent as that of Russia herself. The House of Fabergé was nationalized by the new authorities and the members of the family fled to Switzerland, where Peter Carl Fabergé died in 1920. The Imperial Treasures were moved to the Kremlin Armory in Moscow.

Many of the Eggs were sold abroad on order of Joseph Stalin in 1927 and in 1930s in order to provide hard currency for the cash hungry, fast developing Soviet industry.

The biggest collection of the Easter Eggs and other Fabergé artifacts that had left Russia were accumulated by Malcolm



Forbes and were put for sale by his heirs. The whole collection was purchased in 2004 by the Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg for over \$100 million.

Those items served as the foundation for the Fabergé Museum that was opened in St.Petersburg in 2013 to become one of the biggest private museums of the new Russia, opened to the general public. The museum is housed in 18th-century Shuvalov Palace that was thoroughly renovated and restored specially for this purpose. Nowadays it is the biggest collection of works by the House of Fabergé in the world. Together with other objects of art the museum contains 4 thousand of various pieces.

The second largest collection of the artifacts from the famous jewelry company is presented in the Kremlin Armory in Moscow. It actually has even more Imperial Eggs – ten sets versus nine kept in Fabergé Museum in St.Petersburg. Still the total number of Easter Eggs in St.Petersburg is fifteen (including those made for private clients).



Dear colleagues

We are pleased to introduce our travel company:

We are professionals in tourist business, and put together our skills and experience to contribute the development of tourist industry in Russia. Our goal is to show Russia to your clients using our broad knowledge, many years of practical experience and commitment that enable us to offer a highly competitive tourist product meeting your requirements.

The head office of **COMINTOUR** is located in the very heart of St. Petersburg, the second largest city of Russia.

We specialize in inbound travel to Russia. Our travel operations cover a wide range of **services for tourist groups, individual travellers and businessmen** in St. Petersburg, Moscow, ancient Russian cities of the Golden Ring, the Russian North-West as well as Siberia, The Urals, The Baikal Lake region and other parts of Russia.

Individually served impressions to all your customers is the distinguishing feature and motto of **COMINTOUR**.

Your COMINTOUR Team

Touoperator Register:MBT 000551

COMINTOUR is your COMpanion IN TOURism

Tel.: +7 (812) 324 5478, +7(812) 740 1314; fax +7 (812) 740 1312

Address: office 1, 21/23, Mokhovaya Str, St. Petersburg 191028, Russia

E-mail: operations@comintour.com

<http://www.comintour.com>