

Sailing trip to Saint-Petersburg (SPB), Russia July 2018.

12 April, 2018

This message aims to set out a VERY preliminary concept and plan to sail to SPB in the summer of 2018.

Initially we wanted to arrive in Saint-Petersburg (Russia) before the World Cup but that is getting a bit tight so we have decided to arrive after. (World Cup: 14 June – 15 July 2018). During the World Cup, immigration rules tighten considerably and territorial waters will be subject to random closures without sufficient warning. Not helpful, if you are just about enter and the door gets shut in your bow. I'll liaise with our agent about this before confirming a date.

Our collective jumping-off point to SPB will be Vergi, in Estonia, the last port before the Russian border where we will be checking out. Vergi is about 90km from the capital "Tallinn". Tallinn has good air connections just in case. I expect everybody coming to Estonia under their own sails, with their own crew. If there is any interest, we can meet in Tallinn to get to know each other, before we sail to Vergi. Tallinn has a lovely old town. From Vergi where we will check out of the country. Then it is about 125nm to SPB. I will agree on a time of arrival and depending on that we'll depart. The good thing is that we'll be coming up to the longest day of the year, so we have long days and very short nights.

We clear immigration and customs in Kronstadt, an island in front of SPB. After that we'll sail on to the marina. Vladimir Ivankiv will be our agent. He is a very decent chap, representative in Russia of various cruising organisations/association, including the British one. Unfortunately a simplified clearance for yachts does not exist in Russia. Most European and US visitors need a visa. A tourist visa is 28 days. To obtain a visa, you need an invitation. That all must be arranged well in advance. Invitations can be issued within 24hrs. Check the websites of your closest Russian consulate for further requirements. Visas CANNOT be obtained at the border.

All boats themselves obviously have to decide how they want to stay. Considering that most people will never come back, I suggest you take a week. There is so much to see. I have asked a friend of mine who runs a travel agency in SPB to come up with a three-day program just for us with an English-speaking guide. Of course, you can all do it by yourself. If you speak Russian, that is no problem. But in the summer, the city is full of tourists and you may have problems to get into museums if not organised in advance. If you decide to stay for a week to stay in SPB, you will have plenty of own-time, and to work on the boat if necessary.

Checking out of the country will be again in Kronstadt facilitated again by Vladimir Ivankiv. Every boat decides and agrees with Ivankiv when they want to leave. (Note that the person who is the skipper when the boat checks in must be the skipper again when the boat checks out.) You can also decide to stay longer in Russia and visit Moscow too. Once you are in Russia, you might as well use the opportunity.

I will sail to Lakes Ladoga and Onega before I exit the country again via St-Petersburg. If there are other boats that would like to explore Russia's inland waterways, let me or Vladimir Ivankiv know. There are some additional requirements. If you'd like a taste of how that was, read our book "Sailing through Russia", available on Amazon.

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