

My name is Thomas Wiseman. I am a junior majoring in Russian and German and I am currently spending a semester in St. Petersburg.

After my sophomore year, I spent ten weeks of the summer in Russia with the University of Arizona, a program that I would recommend to any student of Russian. I was in St. Petersburg for five weeks and Moscow for five weeks. At my arrival in St. Petersburg in the summer, I knew all of the basics of grammar in theory and could apply them, along with a few other fancy turns-of-phrase, to written assignments. However, my ability to practically use the language was lacking, and my summer experience greatly enhanced that ability. I improved from becoming confused and flustered enough to hinder my understanding, to comprehending slowly without being able to provide a timely response, and finally to being able to respond and interact. During the summer program I stayed in a dormitory in St. Petersburg and in a homestay in Moscow. I would recommend the homestay, for although Russian mothers and grandmothers tend to baby “children” of any age, your language abilities will greatly improve around the clock, whereas they tend to stagnate if you spend your down time in the dorm.

I greatly prefer St. Petersburg, and I am glad that I chose it for my semester here in Russia. I am in a homestay about a ten minute walk from the metro Academicheskaya (north, red line, about a twenty-five minute metro ride from the center). My family includes a mother, a father, and son of nineteen. They have a dog and a turtle, and in the first week I managed to convince my host mother that I wanted to eat the turtle. They have been very good to me, and as many hosts seem to do, love to feed me more than I am comfortable eating. On my birthday, Nina Petrovna, the host mother, said that I am her favorite student because I eat everything she gives me. So if you do end up staying with a host family, they will definitely like you better if you eat a lot.

- 1) Beauty: While Moscow has a few beautiful spots, much of the city is just vast and ugly. St. Petersburg, with an unofficial population around seven million still a big city, comes off as much more beautiful all around. Moscow: a city of skyscrapers. St. Petersburg: city of old palaces.
- 2) Expense: Everything in Moscow is more expensive. Sure, there are some cheaper places outside of the center, but the fact is that Moscow is the most expensive city in the world. St. Petersburg restaurants and groceries are much more reasonable. The cheapest I've bought ice cream in St. Petersburg is seven roubles, and the cheapest I found it in Moscow was twelve roubles (30 roubles ~ 1 dollar).
- 3) Chainaya Loshka ("Tea Spoon"): A fast food blini (Russian pancakes filled with or covered with certain toppings or fillings) restaurant that St. Petersburg has and Moscow doesn't. The blin of the month you can buy for about \$0.66. Delicious.
- 4) Metro: This point is a toss-up between the two. The St. Petersburg metro has five lines and is much simpler, so if you need to find a metro or get somewhere you don't have to do much thinking. The Moscow metro has many more stops and many more lines (about 13, if I remember correctly), so it's harder to find the metro at which you are meeting for any given event. However, the trade-off is that you will have to walk more in St. Petersburg, as the metro stations are much farther apart.
- 5) One point for Moscow: souvenirs. There is a market specifically for souvenirs in Moscow, so you can buy cheaply what you need to buy for your family and friends. The markets in St. Petersburg are more for the people who live there, so they don't really sell souvenirs except for at more expensive stores.

