

Listening script

Unit 12

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Good evening. I'm really pleased to be asked to be part of your winter series on cities around the world and I can see from your programme that you have had speakers talking about a wide range of places from Asia to Africa and South America. This helped me narrow my choice down to three different places, and I finally decided on a city that made a huge impression on me, namely St Petersburg in Russia. Before we start, ... if you'd like more information about the places mentioned in the talk you can find it on my website and in my blog, details of which I'll give you at the end.

All of the places I've visited over the years have made a profound impression on me. But my trip to St Petersburg will always stay in my memory. ... And I have to say that the city is definitely in the top ten places that I have ever visited for a holiday.

The first time I went there was in winter ... it was memorable, partly because I visited various cultural places like the Hermitage, the famous museum on the bank of the River Neva, a place that I had always wanted to visit. But I remember my visit particularly well because it was very cold ... the river was frozen solid and I saw moisture freezing in mid-air as the wind came off the frozen river. The place was so magical. It's moments like this that make travelling so worthwhile. It was such a different experience from anything I'd ever had before.

The city is famous, like Venice, for its canals, but there is just so much to see, as it is a city full of beauty. The people are so welcoming, ... and what strikes you as a visitor is the richness of the heritage. Near to the Hermitage Museum, that I have already mentioned, is a very striking statue, the Bronze Horseman, which is a memorial to Peter the Great. Other places that are worth seeing are the Mariinsky Theatre and the metro of St Petersburg, which although is not as famous perhaps as that of Moscow, is still worth seeing, especially the Avtovo metro station, which is without doubt one of the most beautifully decorated metro stations you're ever likely to see. But for me, if I had visited nothing else in St Petersburg and had only gone around the Hermitage Museum, it would've been well worth the visit.

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For breaks to a city like St Petersburg, you have different ways of travelling and different types of holidays. You can fly direct to St Petersburg from London or you can visit the city as part of a summer cruise of the Baltic Sea that also takes in the Gulf of Finland. Visits don't have to be restricted to the city itself. In the city suburbs there're fabulous palaces and gardens to entice visitors. Apart from the famous Peterhof Palace, there's also the Catherine Palace with its famous Amber room and extensive park. So, if you are thinking of visiting the city, leave yourself some time to explore further than the centre of the city.

But of course, any holiday destination is a personal choice. For many people the word 'holiday' conjures up different things. For example, adventure holidays to places that are generally inaccessible are now increasingly popular, as are those to pristine beaches untouched by humans, but for me, even as a seasoned traveller, my trip to St Petersburg in the heart of winter among the ice and snow was a novel experience and a true adventure.

Now let's look at ...