

RUSSIA

2018 →

VOLGOGRAD
MOSCOW
KALININGRAD
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ROSTOV
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RUSSIA 2018

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Otkrytiye Arena/Andrew Flint



Luzhniki/Andrew Flint



Luzhniki/Andrew Flint

Enjoy Russia 2018 with lib eroguide.com!

The world's greatest football showcase takes place at 12 stadiums in 11 cities across Russia – and Libero has visited every one, plus every bar, pub, café and hotel recommended in this unique, first-hand guide.

From **Kaliningrad** by the Polish border to **Yekaterinburg** where Europe meets Asia, Libero has assessed the new-build arenas and long-revered stadiums, the pre-match drinking venues and lodging options around the grounds and in city centres.

Following Platini's pattern established at the successful staging (and winning) of the 1998 World Cup in France, group matches are no longer concentrated in local clusters but spread out across the country. And, this being Russia, across means way across – it's 2,500km from Kaliningrad to Yekaterinburg, the equivalent of London to... Moscow.

Ah, **Moscow**. Given these vast distances, hundreds of thousands of fans will be passing through its three airports, Sheremetyevo, Domodedovo and Vnukovo (each connected to the capital by high-speed Aeroexpress train), on their way to or from the Black Sea

resort of **Sochi**, the historic jewel of **St Petersburg** or the heroic city of **Volgograd**.

Other cities are easily accessed by **train** (russianrailways.com), Moscow to **Nizhny Novgorod** being a mere four hours, **Saransk** to **Samara** under nine hours...

Some of these destinations may be host cities but not specifically football ones. Sochi hosted the Winter Olympics 2014 but, like Nizhny Novgorod, locals would not know what top-flight league football looks like, let alone the international variety.

Each city has a **designated fan zone**, open on match days. In the capital, the choice of Moscow State University is suitably grand, backdropped by a Stalinist wedding-cake skyscraper, overlooking the river and, just beyond, the rebuilt **Luzhniki** national stadium where the opening match and final will take place within a month of each other.

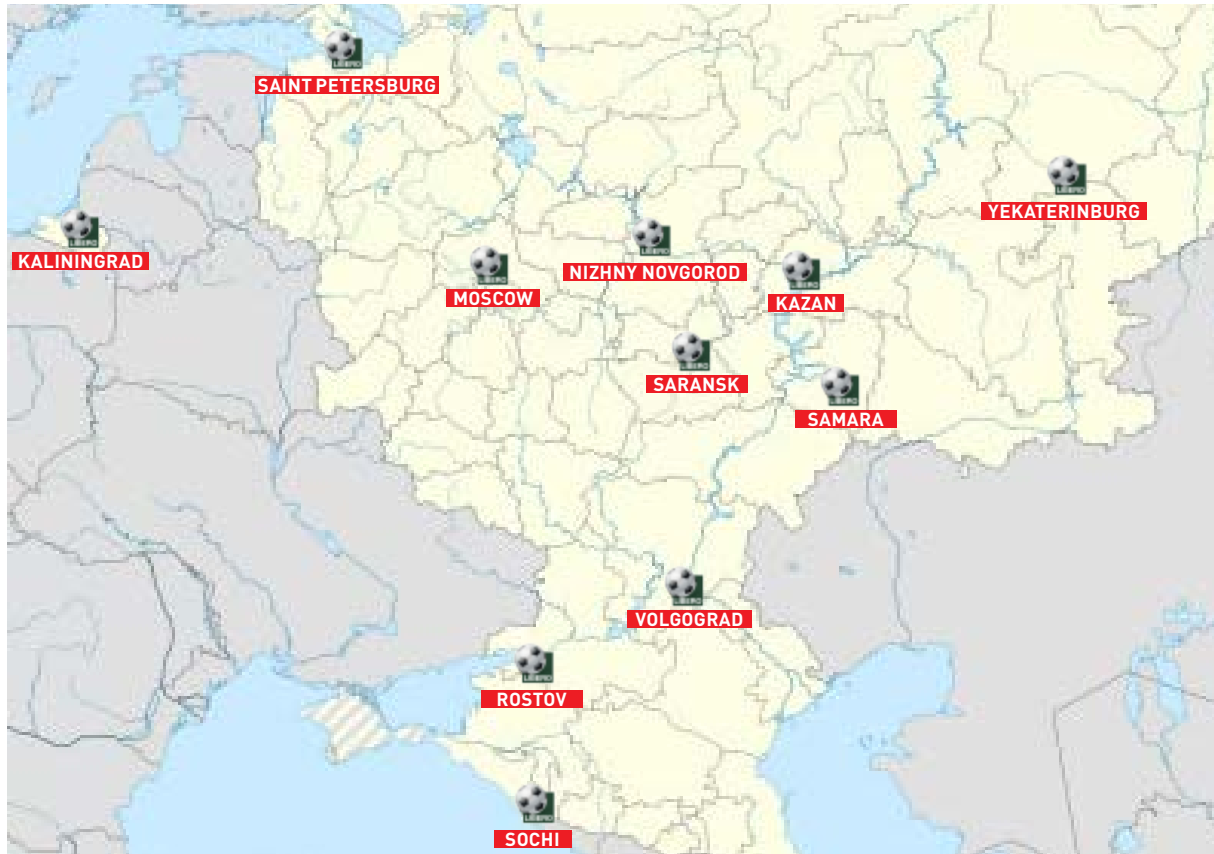
Here John Terry famously slipped in Chelsea's doomed penalty shoot-out with Manchester United, the only time Moscow hosted the Champions League final, in 2008. The event saw

Russia's draconian visa restrictions lifted for travelling fans filling the then 67,000-capacity arena.

For Russia 2018, the bureaucratic red tape is again being lifted, again for ticket-holders only. In place is a Fan ID system that not only allows you to circumvent the visa requirements but also allows use of city transport and special cross-country trains on the match days in question.

So far, so good. But gone are the days when you could rock up at some unlikely World Cup venue – Montpellier, say, in 1998 or Bari in 1990 – snag a ticket, find a room, dive into the atmosphere and have yourself an utterly memorable three days.

Russia 2018 is also the last major finals in a single traditional football country – for some time at least. Next comes Euro 2020 and its 12 host nations, then Qatar... ➔



Russia 2018 – Facts

Travel to Russia *usually* requires an inordinately expensive **visa**. For most Europeans, processing at the Russian embassy in their capital takes three to ten business days, plus a five-day waiting period. Note that you can only arrange it in the

country of your citizenship – you can't go along to any old Russian embassy.

A company such as **Visa to Russia** (www.visatorussia.com) charges €42 to help process a 30-day tourist visa – before Russia charges £185 to UK citizens to issue the actual

documentation. The express service (four working days) is £285 (!).

You will also need an invitation letter from your hotel.

Thus the benefits of the **Fan ID**, successfully set up for the Confederations Cup in 2017, are



obvious. First you must have purchased a match ticket and at least have its ID code, if not the actual piece of paper in your hand. Then you must apply **online** (<https://www.fan-id.ru/?locale=en>) – the service is free of charge, only requiring a passport-sized photo. Select the option to pick up your **laminated pass** at the Fan ID centre at the Russian city where you'll be – by now, it's too late for postal passes to be sent to your home town. Airports in all host cities also have a Fan ID desk.

The Fan ID also allows **free city transport** on the day of the match – though metro tokens and tram tickets cost pennies anyway – and free use of certain trains between cities. It also means that you can come and go in and out of Russia for the duration of the tournament, a luxury generally only enjoyed by high-powered diplomats and oligarchs.

Note that Fan ID holders do *not* need transit visas for Belarus if accessing Kaliningrad overland from Moscow.

The Russian currency is the rouble, currently trading at £12 for 1,000r, \$16 for 1,000r. All prices quoted in this guide are given approximate sterling conversions. It's always a good idea to take euros and dollars in small denominations with you.

Travelling around Russia is easier with a number of budget airlines, the best of which is **S7** (s7.ru), which serves all 12 host cities via Moscow Domodedovo. British Airways also now uses Domodedovo from Heathrow. **Aeroflot** (aeroflot.ru/ru-en) is still based at Sheremetyevo. Its low-cost subsidiary, **Pobeda** (pobeda.aero/en), uses Vnukovo.

Train tickets can be purchased online from **Russian railways** (russianrailways.com), with four classes of comfort and overnight services.

Train stations are usually centrally located, airports – most notably the new one now serving **Rostov-on-Don** – can be a long way from town. Taxis are usually affordable but agree a fee first. Public transport is still cheap and reliable, particularly in the metro systems in larger venue cities.

In the smaller ones, hotel rooms will be at a premium – look out for hostels and lodgings close to town. Always pack two or three bathplugs, water purifying tablets and mosquito spray. ➔



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Russia 2018 – Fun

At presstime, news of various alcohol bans – vodka on trains, booze in certain cities on match days – had done the rounds. No overall nationwide policy, as imposed around Italy in 1990, seemed evident. Whether some kind of draconian measure can be enforced in every hotel bar, restaurant and café for the entire length of the tournament is doubtful – not to mention fan zones.

The pubs and bars recommended in this guide were visited within the last year, and all, obviously, sold alcohol. Currently, as elsewhere, craft beers are all the rage. In terms of over-the-counter sales, however, we cannot guarantee what the situation will be on specific days in specific cities during the tournament.

Restaurants will certainly be serving food, Russians being big meat-eaters, with burgers, kebabs and steaks the focus of many menus. This being summer, you may see stalls set up near certain grounds, the **Saint Petersburg Stadium** in particular – although the trend for building new stadiums miles from city centres does little to encourage convivial alfresco snacking.

Most of all, have a splendid, safe Russia 2018!



Nizhny Novgorod/Andrew Flint

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The digital travel guide for football fans, **liberoguide.com** is the most up-to-date travel companion to the game's most exciting destinations, city-by-city, club-by-club. Using thousands of original photos and only first-hand research, taken and undertaken over the last six seasons, **liberoguide.com** has been painstakingly put together to

enhance every football weekend and Euro night experience. From airport to arena, downtown sports bar to hotel, **liberoguide.com** aims to give the best out of your visit to Europe's main clubs and major football cities.

Stadiums, bars, stores and tours, **liberoguide.com** features all members of Europe's main leagues plus the key ones from 30 others.

Right now, we're just sorting through our photos and notes from visits to the Azores, Nîmes, Macclesfield and De Graafschap, and other newly promoted destinations, plus awaiting the draws for the Champions League and Europa League qualifiers, to create the definite travel guide to the 2018-19 season. Not to mention, of course, Kisvárdá Master Good... **LG**



Lev Yashin/Andy Potts

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Moscow/Andrew Flint



Moscow

Russia's capital and Europe's largest city, **Moscow** has a long footballing heritage.

The game arrived here in the late 1880s thanks to the mill-owning Charnock brothers from Blackburn, who brought over leather balls and, of course, blue-and-white shirts. A century later, Moscow would witness Blackburn players Graeme Le Saux and David Batty

engaging in less than fraternal activities during a fractious European tie.

Moscow has always been seen as a prestigious stage for major events. This stage, the recently rebuilt and reopened **Luzhniki Stadium**, has hosted an Olympic Games and two European club finals, one involving Manchester United and Chelsea in a penalty shoot-out in 2008.

When Russia was awarded hosting of the 2018 World Cup in 2010, there

was never any question where the final – and, indeed, the curtain-raiser starring the hosts themselves – would take place.

The Luzhniki is the only one of the 12 World Cup stadiums with a capacity of 80,000-plus. Secondly, the Luzhniki has been the national stadium ever since its unveiling in 1956. The nation in question, of course, has since changed from the USSR to Russia but, with the statue of Vladimir Ilyich still prominent outside, the former Lenin Central Stadium



Get Jerry/Andrew Flint

still feels very much Soviet. This was once a place of mass gymnastics and Spartakiads.

It was also, for many years, the home ground of once rootless **Spartak Moscow**. Crowned champions in 2017 for the first time in 16 years, Spartak opened their own **Otkrytiye Arena** in 2014. Bankrolled by oil baron Leonid Fedun, this 45,000-capacity stadium co-hosted the 2017 Confederations Cup and allows Moscow to be the only host city with two World Cup venues.

Bearings

Moscow has three **international airports**. All are served by **Aeroexpress trains** (500r/£6 online or from machines, cards accepted). It's 560r/£6.70 including one onward journey by public transport. **Those carrying Fan ID may ride for free.**

From **Domodedovo**, 42km (26 miles) south of the city centre, half-hourly trains run to **Paveletskaya** station (45min). Use exit 3 at the air-rail complex, in between domestic and international arrivals. From **Sheremetyevo**, 29km (18 miles) north-west of town, they run every half-hour from terminals D-F to **Belorusskaya** station (40min). From terminals B & D at **Vnukovo**, 28km (17.5 miles) south-west of town, trains run hourly to **Kievskaya** station (35min). Each of these hubs is located on the circle line of Moscow's ornate, cheap and efficient **metro**. Tokens are sold at electronic kiosks for **one ticket** (55r/£0.65) and from windows for **multi-journey passes**, including **24hr** (210r/£2.50). A **90-minute ticket** (€0.78) allows you to use the metro then a **bus, trolleybus** or **tram**, which are otherwise 50r/£0.60 per journey, pay on board. →



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Ritz-Carlton/Andrew Flint

Machines and windows also dispense **Troika** top-up smart-card passes (50r/£0.60) for cheaper, easier journeys.

Those carrying Fan ID can ride for free.

You plan your journey with **Moscow Transport** (transport.mos.ru/en). The **Luzhniki** south of the city centre has its own stop on new circle line 14, with Sportivnaya on line 1 also close. The new Spartak metro station by the **Otkrytiye Arena** is on line 7, north-west of town.

Mostaxi (+7 495 540 4040) has fixed rates for airport transfers, around 1,000r/£12-1,500r/£18 depending on type of car and city destination/set-off point. Across town, a minimum price is 200r/£2.40-350r/£4.20 in a standard car.

Bed

During the league season, a visiting big-name team will probably stay at the high-end **Four Seasons**, the **Ritz-Carlton**, **Metropol** or **National**, all within



High Level Hostel/Andy Potts

walking distance of Red Square. Lenin was a guest at the latter two, hence the plaques.

More affordable, with advance booking, are the **Moscow Marriott Grand** near Mayakovskaya metro and the **Radisson Royal** on Kutuzovsky prospekt, set in the classic Ukraina building, a Stalinist skyscraper almost designed for King Kong to scramble up.

A perennial affordable option is the four-building **Izmailovskaya** complex built for the 1980 Olympics. With rooms from

2,500r/£30 a night, the **Gamma-Delta** section is near a flea market offering team scarves and shirts. Though way north-east of town, nearby Izmailovo metro station is now on the No.14 line, the same as the Luzhniki.

Other cheap hotels are best avoided. Filling the gap are hostels such as **Godzillas** at central Bolshoy Karetny 6 with singles and twins around 2,500r/£30 per person, though at least twice this price during the World Cup. Set amid the skyscrapers of Moscow's fledgling financial district,

the **High Level Hostel** (Presnenskaya naberezhnaya 6) opened in 2014. Though on a spur of metro line 4 rather than a main route, it still has dorm beds at 3,000r/£35.60 for the second half of the World Cup. Rates are usually 1,700r/£20.

With the **Luzhniki** back in full swing, the newly opened hotel of the same name, provide convenient mid-to-upper-range lodging overlooking the river – though availability during the World Cup is practically zero. Close to Sportivnaya metro at ulitsa 10-Letiya Oktyabrya 11,



Liga Pap/András Fekete

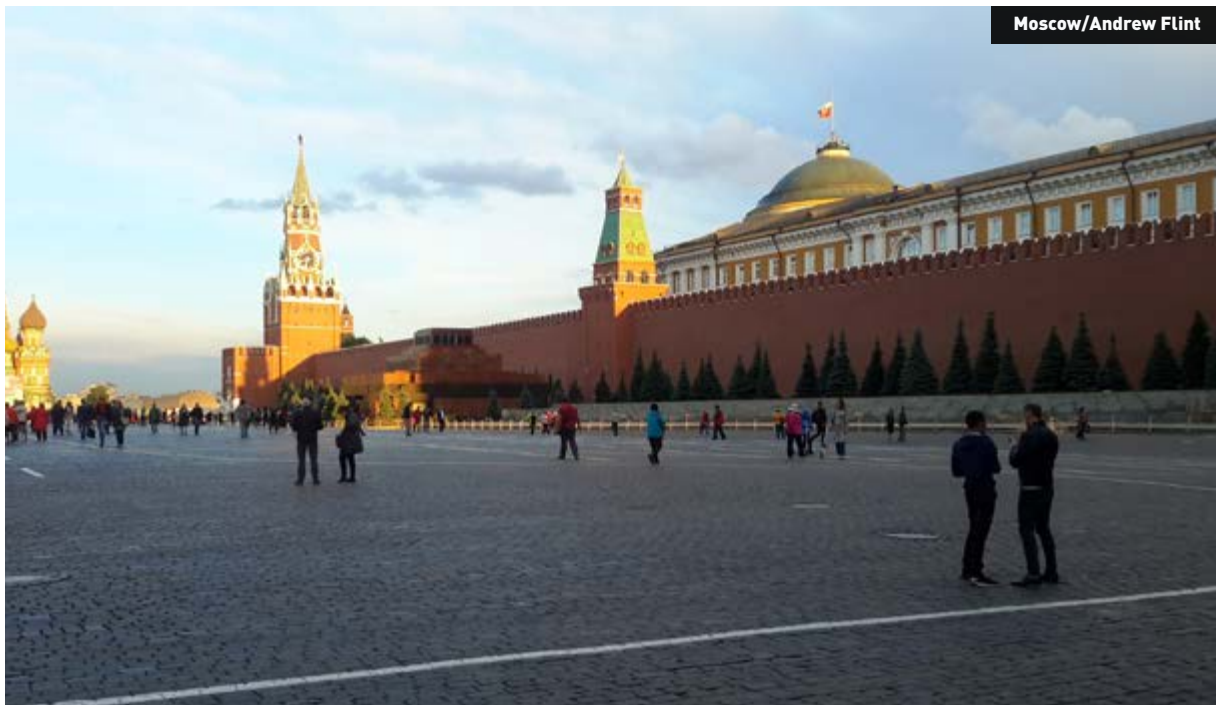
the 147-room **Gostinitza Arena** has a spa and café, plus affordable availability on many World Cup days. The nearby 24-room **Blues Hotel** at Dovatora 8 is in a quieter location also within easy reach of Sportivnaya.

The **Yunost** has been serving the Luzhniki since 1961, hosting the likes of Yuri Gagarin and Mikhail Gorbachëv. Still very Soviet, it has a pool, sauna and gym. With 200-plus rooms, it may have availability during the World Cup but you need to email (reservation@yunost.com) or call ahead (+7 499 242 0091).

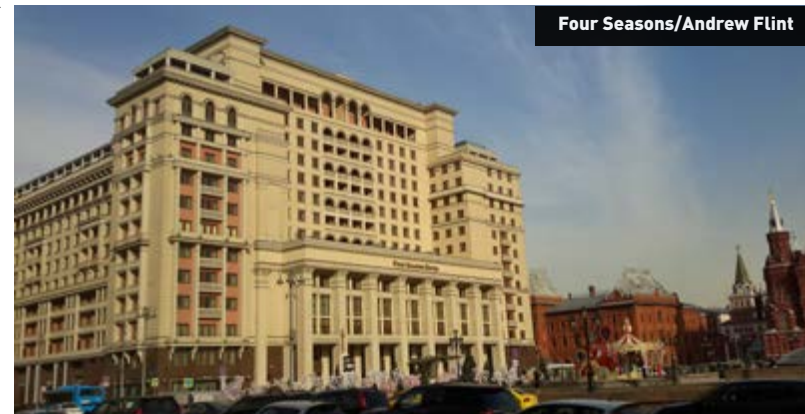
There is no lodging around the Otkrytiye Arena – and you'd be way out of town anyway – but accommodation around the new **CSKA stadium** is reasonably handy for metro line 7 and closer to town. This includes the four-star Art Hotel Moscow (**'Art 'Otel'** to Russians), where a 24-hour lobby bar doubles up as a pre- and post-match hangout for CSKA games. It's also close-ish to line 14 for the Luzhniki. →

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Moscow/Andrew Flint



Four Seasons/Andrew Flint



Hotel National/Andrew Flint

Beer

The city's official fan zone extends outside Moscow State University ('MGU') on match days, overlooking the Luzhniki. Reasonably close is Universitet metro on the same metro line 1 as Sportivnaya. Around the city, sport-focused pubs and bars abound.

Of the Brit- and Irish-type venues, **Bobby Dazzler** (Kostyanskiy pereulok 7/13, Turgenevskaya/Chistiye prudy metro) is home to the Moscow Reds

– note the flag signed by ex-United star Andrei Kanchelskis. Beers include Fuller's, Shepherd Neame, Marston's and Belhaven. At weekends, it's tables by reservation only.

The four branches of local pub chain **John Dunne** all show scheduled TV football, including the most central one near Arbatskaya metro at Nikitsky boulevard 12, the first outlet to open a decade ago. Seven large screens complement 15 types of draught beer, ale and porters. The **Union Jack** chain

has three outlets, the two most central being at Nizhny Kiselny pereulok 3 near Trubnaya metro and ulitsa Maroseyska 13 near Kitay-gorod metro.

The somewhat more contemporary **One More Pub** mini-chain attracts a business crowd during the week and a sporting one at weekends, with its local craft brews, draught-beer offers and wide range of TV games. You'll find the main branch in the business centre at Butyrskiy val 5, near Belorussky station, halfway between the city centre and Dinamo stadium.

Closer to Red Square at Bolshoy Cherkasskiy pereulok 15, **Old School Pub** is neither old-school nor a real pub, but is a handy find for football watching, partly because of its round-the-clock opening, partly because of its plethora of screens.

The former **Radio City** sports bar in the Hotel Peking building, at Bolshaya Sadovaya 5 near Mayakovsky metro, still contains vast banks of TV screens tuned to football, along with 29 types of beer, but pan-Asian cuisine has come with a name change to **Bar2545**.

The popular **Liga Pap** is still very much a major TV football hangout, still has a vast screen and is still a 24-hour operation – the only difference is that a new branch at Krasnoproletarskaya 16 has opened to partner the original venue at Bolshaya Lubyanka 24, where the party can spill out the street for major tournaments.

Once uniquely trendy **Vsye tvoi druzya** ('All Your Friends') stood out for its craft beers, shabby-chic décor and detached affection for football – now this spot at Maly Gnezdnikovskiy pereulok 12/27 has been joined by several new competitors just the other side of Tverskaya. This includes contemporary beer-and-burger joint **Get Jerry** (Strastnoy bulvar 4), with a big screen, a decent range of lagers, and, rare for Russia, cider. Here you'll also find a branch of **Harat's**, the sport-focused pub with scores of outlets across the former Soviet Union. **LG**



RUSSIA 2018 Luzhniki

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Luzhniki/Andrew Flint



Luzhniki metro/Andrew Flint

Luzhniki

Russia's national stadium is a suitably grandiose arena for the 2018 World Cup Final, opening game, second semi-final and four other matches.

Tucked in a bend of the Moskva river, facing the Sparrow Hills, the **Luzhniki** was designed for huge communal Soviet events. The first was the sports Spartakiad of 1956.

Since then, the stadium has seen four major revamps, the most recent completed in 2017 and costing €350 million.

The first was for the 1980 Olympics – the Luzhniki is now one of only seven stadiums to host the Games and a World Cup final. The second came in the 1990s, by which time the Central Lenin Stadium was renamed Luzhniki, 'Meadows'. It had acquired a roof and, lowering capacity to below 80,000, individual seating.

Having successfully hosted a European final in 1999, the Luzhniki welcomed Manchester United and Chelsea for the Champions League final of 2008, and John Terry's fateful slip on the penalty spot.

For much of the modern era, the Luzhniki had also served as a club stadium, mainly for the rootless Spartak Moscow. It staged speedway, wrestling and rugby, rock concerts and music festivals.

Shortly after the World Athletics Championships in 2013, it closed for the construction of what is effectively a new stadium.

The athletics track has been removed, and new seats installed, 3,000 more than before, increasing capacity to 81,000. The roof has gained a visor for added protection, as well as a translucent polycarbonate covering. For all that, the Luzhniki remains the kind of neo-classical bowl favoured by Socialist stadium architects. Lenin still stands outside, gazing purposefully at the horizon.

Behind him, Tribuna A is the main stand, C the opposite sideline stand, with B and D behind each goal. Sports halls still surround the main stadium.

On November 11 2017, a black-gloved Lionel Messi led Argentina to a 1-0 win over Russia here to open the new

Luzhniki. Russia again will be the participants for the opening game of the World Cup on June 14, against Saudi Arabia. Messi is more likely to be involved a month later, when the final takes place on July 15.

Transport

The Luzhniki now has its own **metro stop** on outer circle line 14, closer to the stadium than the traditional gateway, **Sportivnaya** on red line 1.

Also nearby, on the same line 1, **Vorobyovy gory** allows access to the main pre-match eateries in the vicinity.

Bars

On the waterfront at ulitsa Luzhniki 24, 400 metres from **Vorobyovy gory** metro station, classy restaurant **Olymp Junior** has its own enclosed garden and a massive terrace. Food is the focus but there's also a wooden bar counter with a huge tap of beer.

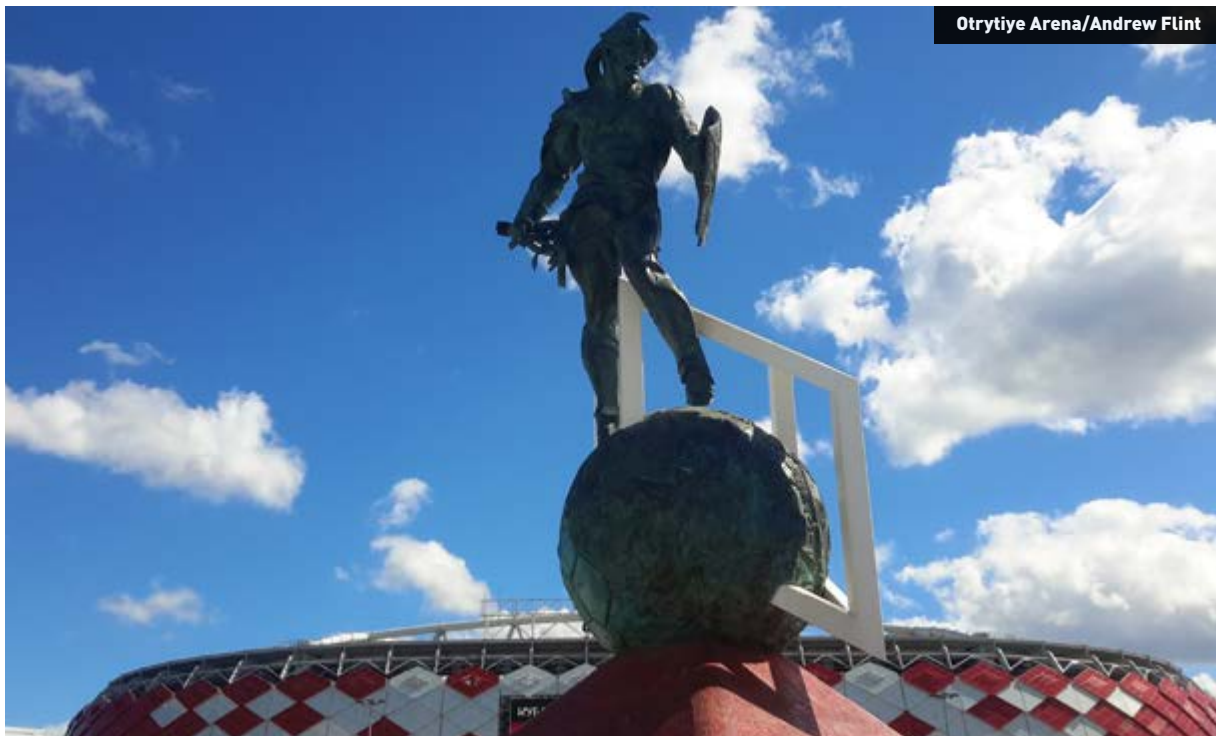
Veranda Lounge Café, further round the riverfront where the Soho used to be at Luzhnetskaya naberezhnaya 24, is another restaurant with cosmopolitan pretensions, dotted with TVs, and offering Spaten beer on draught. The menu features steak, fish and pastas.

At the **Fan ID centre** at **Sportivnaya** metro, a small **sports bar** beckons for a pre-match swiftie. **LD**



RUSSIA 2018 Otkrytiye Arena

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Otkrytiye Arena/Andrew Flint

Otkrytiye Arena

When it opened in 2014, above the main entrance of the **Otkrytiye Arena** was a striking black-and-white image of a classic **Spartak** line-up, a broad white band proudly spread over players' chests. The shirt symbolised independence from ministry and army officialdom, which backed Dynamo and CSKA.

Within the stadium stands a statue of the Starostin brothers, led by the redoubtable Nikolai. The eldest of four footballing siblings, Starostin arranged initial sponsorship for Spartak from the food workers' union. He then led the club to wrest the Soviet title from Dynamo, headed by Secret Police chief Lavrenty Beria. He and his brothers were sent to the notorious Lubyanka prison, then into exile in Siberia.

After Stalin's death, Starostin moved back to his beloved Spartak as president. Now

openly revered as the people's team, Spartak began winning silverware again.

For most of their illustrious history, Spartak have been homeless. In recent times, they took up a tenancy at the **Luzhniki**, but the Red-and-Whites have played home games at almost every arena in town.

That all changed when Sepp Blatter announced that Russia would host the 2018 World Cup. Suddenly the plans



Otkrytiye Arena/Andy Potts

for a Spartak stadium on the old Tishino Aerodrome site, proposals that had lain neglected for years, were dusted down as a matter of urgency.

Less than four years later, Spartak hosted Red Star Belgrade in a friendly to inaugurate their new home (Dynamo Kyiv were forced to cancel) and in September 2014, the Red-and-Whites eased past Torpedo in the first competitive fixture at the **Otkrytiye Arena**.

Since opening this 44,000-seater venue, the club has struggled to fill it. Many have criticised the arrangements for VIP facilities – rather than set up a tier running all round the stadium, the executive facilities take up the whole of one side.

Another snag is that the ground is in the middle of nowhere, served by a single, crowded metro line.

That said, the new stadium is impressive. It's something of a new departure for Russian football – a purpose-built, large arena that meets the current requirements of top-level sport. Sightlines



Otkrytiye Arena/Andrew Flint

are good and the concourse areas are more attractive than most.


The stadium is composed of four stands. Home north end B and south end D are behind the goals, C is along one sideline and, opposite, the main A stand is for press and VIPs.

Transport

The Otkrytiye Arena is served by a purpose-built and suitably decorated metro station, **Spartak**.

The station is on **purple line 7**, six stops from **Krasnopresnenskaya**, a hub on the circle line.

Bars

All the main food-and-drink outlets – the Food Court, the Gold and Silver restaurants – are behind Stand A and thus off-limits to everyone except VIPs and press. For the proletariat there are **New Yorker** hot dogs available on the concourses and the promise of **Trekhgornoye** ('Three Hills') beer. Sadly, licensing restrictions mean that only the alcohol-free brand is available. 



RUSSIA 2018 Saint Petersburg

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St Petersburg/Howard Hockin

Saint Petersburg

St Petersburg is in a constant battle with Moscow for the right to be the capital of Russian football. While the country's second city took a back seat for most of the Soviet era and its immediate aftermath, in recent times the tables have been turned.

Flagship club **Zenit**, backed by energy giant Gazprom, won four league titles between 2007 and 2015. They were also the last (and only the second) Russian club to win a European trophy, in 2008.

When Gazprom pulled out of funding a new World Cup arena, the City stepped in – to the tune of nearly \$1 billion. On Krestovsky Island, a 60,000-plus capacity superdome was unveiled in June 2017, just in time to stage the Confederations Cup final that July. Designed by Kisho Kurokawa, responsible for innovative airports, galleries and an entire master plan for



St Petersburg/Howard Hockin

Astana in Kazakhstan, the new **Saint Petersburg Stadium** is a World Cup 2018 and Euro 2020 venue.

Also referred to as the **Krestovsky**, it stands on the site of the old **Kirov Stadium**, where Zenit and **Dynamo St Petersburg** played its inaugural match in 1950. Some 100,000 were squeezed in here when CSKA Moscow visited in 1951.

Football was first played at this outward-looking port city in 1897, a game between English and Russian workers on Vasilyevsky Island, closer to

the city centre than Krestovsky. By 1914, a local team was formed, playing at the **Obukhovsky Stadion**, today a **sports complex** by the Bolshoy Obukhovsky Bridge.

After two ensuing revolutions, chaos, civil war and Communism, St Petersburg was renamed, and this local team was revived as **Dynamo Leningrad**. The team played at the **Dynamo Stadium**, built in 1929 on Krestovsky Island, a kilometre from today's Saint Petersburg Arena. In 1942, Dynamo staged the so-called Siege Game, with Leningrad under blockade.

Post-war Dynamo went through a number of convoluted changes. Eventually, an **FC Dynamo St Petersburg** emerged to play at the smaller Malaya Sportivnaya Arena (MSA) ground in the same **Petrovsky Stadium** complex where Zenit were based until recently.

In April 2017, Zenit moved to the St Petersburg Stadium, where seven games for the World Cup take place, including a semi and the third-place match. Each may feature Germany, winners of the Confederation Cup here in 2017.

Bearings

Pulkovo Airport is 17km (11 miles) south of the city centre, international terminal 2 slightly closer than terminal 1, used mainly for domestic flights.

Bus No.39Ex runs from the arrivals terminal to **Moskovskaya station** every 25-30mins (journey time 20mins).

Bus No.39 is every 15min, journey time 30-35min. In each case, give the yellow-vested conductor on board the ticket money, about 40r/£0.48. **Minibus K39** is more frequent, also calling at Moskovskaya plus six other metro stations. Pass your coins to the driver.

Moskovskaya station is near the southern terminus of the **blue M2 metro line**, seven from central **Nevsky Prospekt**, six from the **Sadovaya** interchange where you can take the **purple M5** to **Krestovsky**. Moskovskaya should not be confused with **Moskovsky**, the main train station in town. By the stadium, **Novokrestovskaya** metro has opened on green line M3, change at Nevsky Prospekt from the blue.

From the airport, a **taxi** can be arranged from the Taxi Pulkovo desk on the first floor of Arrivals, where a price is agreed. You can pay by cash or credit card there. Expect to pay between 1,000r/£12 and 1,500r/£18 for a ride to the city centre. Around the city, the green-branded **Taxovichkof** (+7 812 330 0002) is as good as any and can be booked online. →



RUSSIA 2018 Saint Petersburg

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St Petersburg/Howard Hockin

In town, **buses, trams** and **trolleybuses** run on the same system of paying the conductor 40r/£0.48, also the fee for minibuses, money passed to the driver. One journey on the five-line **metro system** is 45r/£0.55 with a token or less with a ten-trip card (355r/£4.30), both available from ticket offices at stations.

Bed

There are a handful of hotels around Krestovsky Island, within easy reach of the Saint Petersburg Stadium. The

nearest, the **Arena**, is practically next door, with 27 mid-range rooms. On-site are a pool, gym, sauna and restaurant. Also close is the **Hotel Park Krestovsky**, a large three-star built in 2009, with tennis courts in summer.

On the northern bank of the island, on Naberezhnaya Martynova by the Divo Ostrov amusement park, is the smarter **Hermes Park Hotel**.

All three have little to no availability during the World Cup, though it's always

worth checking for cancellations. The Krestovsky has nearly 200 rooms.

The imposing **Courtyard by Marriott St Petersburg Vasilievsky** sits directly opposite the Petrovsky, delivering four-star comfort and stunning waterside views. At presstime, there were still available rooms in June, from 17,000r/£205 a night. Tucked in from Tuchkov Bridge across from the Petrovsky Stadium, the three-star **Shelfort** (3-ya liniya Vasilevsky ostrova 26) also has doubles, but considerably



St Petersburg/Andrew Flint

dearer, and considerably less impressive.

On the same riverbank facing the stadium, between Tuchkov and Birzhevoy Bridges, the **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** is one of three branches in this upscale Finnish chain. Expect stupendous spa facilities and the first indoor golf club in St Petersburg. Rooms start at 23,000r/£278 during the World Cup. Also close to Sportivnaya metro, at Maly prospekt PS 16 on the stadium side of the water, the **Sharf Apartment Hotel** has classy lodgings in the 8,000r/£97 range.

The city centre is choc-a-bloc with lodgings, from box-like hostels to historic luxury.

Right by St Isaac's Cathedral in the heart of town, the **Astoria** dates back to 1912, 'iconic and palatial', and good

enough for the French squad who stayed here in March 2018. It's all high-end, the spa, the bar, the restaurant and the rates – with some availability during the World Cup. Alongside, the **Angleterre** is similarly swanky, with some rooms at 25,000r/£300 on various nights halfway through the World Cup. Nearby at Malaya Morskaya ulitsa 14, the **Petro Palace** is in the same luxury bracket, with rates through the roof in June/July 2018.

On the other side of the cathedral by the river, the **Nevsky Breeze** at Galernaya ulitsa 12 is more mid-range but modern, having been opened in 2008. Availability and rates during the World Cup are currently reasonable, about 9,000r/£109 per person on certain nights. On the same street at No.4, the **Deluxe** is similar in standard, price and availability, although with only eight rooms.

RUSSIA 2018 Saint Petersburg

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St Petersburg/Andrew Flint

An easy metro hop away near Tekhnologicheskoy Institut (M1/M2), the **Sokos Olympia Garden** at Batayskiy pereulok 3A exudes sleek, Scandinavian cool, amenities including all kinds of business-friendly functionality. With nearly 350 rooms, availability in June/July is reasonable, lowest rates per room from around 12,000r-17,000r/£145-£205.

Another plus here is the **Sports Bar '84**, named after Zenit's title winning season and occupying half the first floor. Sports fans – thirsty Finnish

aficionados of ice hockey are regulars – can also watch in a separate movie theatre space with soft chairs.

If you're coming into **Moskovsky train station**, you'll find the modern **Park Inn by Radisson Nevsky St Petersburg** alongside at Goncharnaya ulitsa 4A, its **Paulaner Bar** doubling up as a handy city-centre pub. Given its location, availability is extremely low during the World Cup.

The locality is otherwise dotted with cheapies of varying degrees

of acceptability. The **Fermata** (Goncharnaya 10/flat 2) is happy to offer its box-like rooms for around 2,000r/£24, unless the World Cup's on, in which case it's 7,000r/£84.

Beer

St Petersburg is full of football-friendly bars. Suitable places to watch the match include **Mollie's Mews** (Bolshaya Konyushennaya ulitsa 5), one of many in a local pub-like chain. It also includes **Mollie's** at ulitsa Rubinstein 36 and the **Office Pub** at Kazanskaya ulitsa 5.



Shamrock/Andrew Flint



Liverpool/Andrew Flint

Also near Kazan Cathedral, right on Nevsky at No.22, you'll find the **Tower Pub**, with TV football – it sits next door to **O'Hooligans**, a pub mini chain with four outlets in town, one a short taxi hop from the Saint Petersburg Stadium.

Liverpool (ulitsa Mayakovskogo 16) lays the Beatles theme on thick but also offers regular live Premier League action in high definition.

Picturesquely set by the canal at Naberezhnaya reki Fontanki 108,

Dickens has little to do with London but offers a large range of draught beers and whiskies. The **Oliver** pub (ulitsa Belinskogo 3) is in the same family and in similar vein.

By the Mariinsky Theatre, the **Shamrock** is probably the most authentic of the football-focused pubs, in business since 1994.

Across from the Sokos Olympia Garden hotel (Batayskiy pereulok 3A), which has its own excellent **Sports Bar '84** and mini-cinema for match-viewing, **Old Friends** is another pub geared to football watching.

For a more Russian experience, **SPB** is a local chain of a dozen pubs, with one at Nevsky 8 near Admiralteyskaya metro, offering Belgian, German and own-brand brews, along with Guinness, plus a better class of bar food.



RUSSIA 2018 Saint Petersburg Stadium

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St Petersburg Stadium/Andrew Flint

Saint Petersburg Stadium

Known as the **Stadion Saint Petersburg** and more familiarly as the **Krestovsky Stadium** after the island it stands on, the new home of Zenit St Petersburg staged the Confederations Cup of 2017 – way over original deadline and way over budget.

This 68,000-capacity dome replaced the former **Kirov Stadium**, the Soviet-era bowl that once held 110,000 people.

A statue of Sergei Kirov, head of the Leningrad Communist Party, still stands outside.

Perhaps it's no surprise that the Krestovsky took ten years to build. From the groundwork in 1932, the Kirov required 18 years to complete, interrupted by war.

The curtain-raising match came in 1950 between local teams Zenit and Dynamo. In 1994, Zenit moved to the smaller Petrovsky Stadium. The Kirov was demolished in 2006.

In 2009, Russia submitted its bid to host the World Cup. The decision had already been made to build a new arena where the Kirov had stood, with the City of St Petersburg picking up the tab after Gazprom pulled out.

By then Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa had passed away, but left in place a plan for a futuristic dome that would dominate one fifth of the island, from Victory Park to the waterfront.

Above a two-tiered bowl, a retractable roof and a retractable pitch come into



St Petersburg Stadium/Andrew Flint

play during the long, bitter winter. A snow-melting feature amid the roof membranes of hot air allowed the opening game to take place between Zenit and Ural in April 2017, with much of the city still iced over.

Capacity for the Confederations Cup was set at 64,000, as it is for the World Cup. Only 50,000 witnessed Russia's debut here, a 2-0 win over New Zealand, and 57,000 the final between Germany and Chile.

For Zenit games, average gates are 44,500, the best in the Russian Premier. The best seats are in 1xBet Sektor A and Rossiya Sektor C along the opposite sideline.

Transport

Opened in May 2018, the nearest metro station is **Novokrestovskaya** (Новокрестовская), an extension of green line M3, directly linked to Nevsky Prospekt. **Krestovsky Island** (Крестовского остров) on purple M5 also serves the stadium but is 2km/25min away, through Park Pobedy.



O'Hooligans/Andrew Flint

Bars

The Krestovsky is surrounded by parkland and waterfront. Two minutes away, rustic brewhouse/restaurant **Karl und Friedrich** is a beer hall and garden offering schnitzel and sausages, and house beer by the litre.

Alongside, lakeside **Russian Fishing** is a cosy cabin where fish kept in the adjoining waters are served. There's a huge vodka selection too.

Across pedestrianised Yachtennyi Bridge in the **Piterland** centre, German-style **Papasha Klauss** has views over the stadium and a beach bar in summer.

In the same complex, **Sasha's Bar** enjoys equally great views. Nearby **Bar XXXX**, part of chain formed by two mates at a ski lodge in Korobitsyno, is a convivial indoor spot whose beach bar opens in June. DJs spin, bands play, beer and cocktails flow.

Also close are a branch of **O'Hooligans** Irish bar at Primorsky prospekt 137, and the **Maximilians Brauhaus** in the Merkuriy Centre at Savushkina 141. **LG**



RUSSIA 2018 Kaliningrad

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Kaliningrad

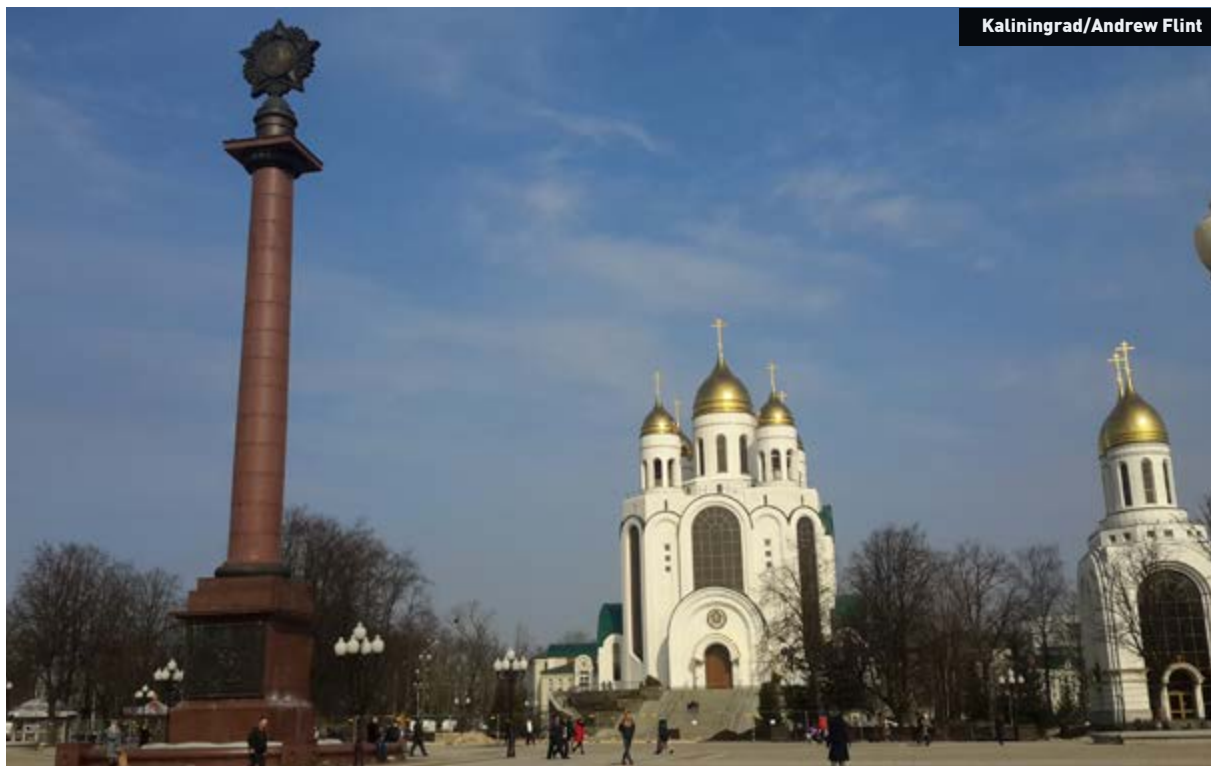
The Baltic port of **Kaliningrad** sits in an isolated exclave of Russia squeezed between Poland and Lithuania. Once part of Prussia, then Germany, the former Königsberg was claimed by Stalin and became Russian almost overnight.

What was left of the German city, its citizens, churches and football clubs, was expelled or extinguished. The newly named Kaliningrad rose in its place.

As a World Cup venue, its inclusion as a host city is political as well as geographical, Kaliningrad being close to the EU border, nearer to Berlin than it is to Moscow. In April 2018, **Baltika**, the flagship club created in the 1950s, left their creaking ground dating back to the Prussian era.

The last game there attracted 3,000 people. For the 0-0 draw with Khimki, 25,000 gathered at the newly unveiled **Kaliningrad Stadium**, the World Cup venue where four group games include England's with Belgium.

Its Prussian predecessor, the **Baltika Stadium**, was set up in 1892. After considering razing it and constructing the new arena in its place, the modern-day authorities decided to site their €250 million-plus investment on Oktyabry Island.



Kaliningrad/Andrew Flint

If the whole project screams 'white elephant' – the stadium is even covered with a stark wraparound exterior – Baltika will continue to play there. 'Balda' last played top-flight football in 1998 – another 20 years in the second tier may see followers dwindle in this unusual outpost of the European game.

The old Baltika Stadium, meanwhile, close to the city centre on prospekt Mira, is worth a visit as a historical

curiosity. The South Stand, now covered, is the same structure that oversaw Nazi parades in the 1930s and the tower over the halfway line was once crowned with a Fascist eagle. An information board behind even has a picture of the sculpture. Rebuilding after 1945 involved removing all other traces of German history. The portico at the main entrance to the stadium was created from the walls of the damaged Altstadt Church.

Bearings

Kaliningrad **Khrabovo Airport** is 24km (15 miles) north of the city centre. Nearly all flights require a change in Moscow or St Petersburg.

Minibus No.244 (every 40 minutes 8.20am-7.45pm, tickets 80r/£0.95 on board) and **city bus No.144** (18r/£0.20 on board) take 30-45min to reach the main square of ploshchad' Pobedy. A taxi should only be 500r-600r



London/Andrew Flint



Baltika/Andy Potts

(£6/£7.20). Two kiosks outside Arrivals dispatch cabs.

Ploshchad' Pobedy is next to **Kaliningrad North** (Severnyi Vokzal), a station serving local trains. The main terminus, **Kaliningrad South** (Yuzhnyi Vokzal), is over the river, connected by several buses to town. If you're planning to travel here by **train from Moscow**, you'll need a **Belarus transit visa (type B)**, current cost €60/€120 for 48hr process. Journey time is 21 hours. From **St Petersburg**, it's 24 hours but you don't cross Belarus.

City transport consists of buses, trolleybuses and trams, pay 18r/£0.20 on board, and minibuses, pay 22r/£0.26 on board. →

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LiBEERty/Andrew Flint

Most taxi journeys across town cost around 150r/£1.80. **Maxim** (+7 40 12 222 222) is a local Uber-type service that you can book online in English.

Bed

Within walking distance of the Kaliningrad Stadium on ulitsa Oktyabrskaya, four-star **Kaiserhof** offers waterside views, the quality Amber Spa, a restaurant and bar. Just along the embankment, cosy, 18-room **Skipper** carries on with the nautical theme in the lobby.

Just over the water at Moskovsky prospekt 52, the **ibis Kaliningrad Center** is ideally located for stadium and city centre.

Slightly closer into town, the Kaliningrad on prospekt Leninskiy is handy and affordable, its 200-plus rooms surprisingly spacious.

Further up Leninskiy at ulitsa Teatral'naya 30, the mid-range **Evropa** (+7 401 231 0495) sits opposite a pretty square. On focal ploshchad' Pobedy, stylish **Radisson** provides a brasserie, bar and airport transfers.

Near the Baltika Stadium at prospekt Mira 19, the three-star **Moskva** dates back to 1930. For enquiries about accommodation in June 2018, phone +7 401 235 0780 – and speak Russian.

Also close, the **Cherepakha**, aka **Turtle Hotel**, is a lovely find, with a billiard room and sauna. It's tucked off ulitsa Tchaikovskogo at Zoologicheskii Tupik. Further down Tchaikovskogo, pricier **Tchaikovsky** retains the classy air of the early 1900s when it was built. Closer to the bars of prospekt Mira, **Chaika** is



Skipper Hotel/Andrew Flint



Kaliningrad countdown/Andrew Flint

an upper mid-range hotel with a spa and restaurant. TV channels include BBC World.

Amalienau at Karla Marksa 19 offers cheap hostel lodging and private rooms with shared facilities.

Beer

The intersecting streets of **Leninskiy prospekt** and **prospekt Mira** are best for a bar crawl, starting with Irish-tinged **LiBEERty**, where you can watch TV football in pub comfort over cheap local

beers and bar snacks. You'll also find Czech brews at **Hašek** ('U Gasheka'), and German ones at adjoining **Zötler**, big on TV football.

Round the corner, the **Planeta** complex includes a large main pub lined with dozens of screens permanently showing football, a karaoke bar, nightclub and restaurant, plus summer terrace. At weekends, it runs until 6am. Nearby, Britannika is a standard faux pub, part of a local chain of eateries called, bizarrely, the Britannica Project.

Further up on prospekt Mira, **London** at No.33 is a pub/nightclub with many beers on tap, live football and a global menu.

Redyuit at Litovskiy val 27 attracts local fans for Russian action on big screens, house-brewed ales and half-decent sausages. There's a pleasant beer garden too, and the Kaliningrad Stadium is a short taxi hop away. **LB**



RUSSIA 2018 Kaliningrad Stadium

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Kaliningrad Stadium

Kaliningrad Stadium stands on its own island, Oktyabrsky, referred to by medieval Prussians as 'The Swamp'. This former grazing land was devoid of any housing precisely because the ground was so marshy and unstable.

The enormous feat undertaken to build a World Cup arena here, only to be used afterwards by a club, Baltika, relegated from Russia's top tier 20 years ago, beggars belief. It not only involved hauling in a million tons of sand to reclaim the land for construction, then two years to compact and stabilise it, but angered local ecologists. The last remaining natural wetland site within the city has been given up for four games of football. At one point Vitaliy Mutko, then head of the World Cup organising committee, attempted to push through a refurbishment of the historic **Baltika Stadium** in town.

The Kaliningrad Stadium was duly built at a cost of €250 million-plus, its stark white exterior modelled on Munich's Allianz Arena. Capacity of 34,000, the smallest of all the World Cup stadia, will be reduced to 25,000 after the tournament.

What will happen to the Baltika Stadium isn't yet known, though having survived



Kaliningrad Stadium/Andrew Flint

two revolutions, a change of nationality and a world war, chances are that it will be welcoming back the namesake local team within a couple of seasons.

Transport

With a special permit required for vehicles crossing onto Oktyabrsky Island on match days, **shuttle buses** will be running from the **airport**, and from both railway stations, **Kaliningrad North** (Severnyi Vokzal) by ploshchad'

Pobedy in the modern city centre, and **Kaliningrad South** (Yuzhnyi Vokzal), over the river. This main terminus, serving trains from Moscow via Belarus, is pretty much walkable to the stadium in any case.

Regular city transport from the city centre takes you to within about 1km/15-20min walk of the stadium, **tram No.5** conveniently runs from the bar hub where prospekt Leninsky

and ulitsa Chernyakhovskogo meet. **Trolleybus No.5** takes the quicker route straight down prospekt Leninsky. Both stop at **Rybnaya derevnya**, by the pretty terrace restaurants on the waterfront and a more direct walk to the ground, and **Veteranov Emb**, closer to Kaliningrad Stadium as the crow flies.

Beer

There's nothing around the stadium but flatlands. If you alight at **Rybnaya**



Kaliningrad Stadium/Andrew Flint



Rybnaya derevnya/Andrew Flint

derevnya, facing the cathedral across the Pregolya River, a row of historic buildings overlooking the water includes a couple of hotels and restaurants. The one at the **Skipper Hotel**, **Fish Club** ('Rybnii Klub') offers piscine cuisine in a nautical atmosphere, with plenty of beer on the menu. Alongside, **Magiya Kofe** serves standard coffee and cakes, beer and wine too, though the riverside view from the terrace is probably its best feature. Next to that, **Madame Boucher** is a Frenchified café/restaurant with chanson singers on certain weekend nights. All above board but again, the location makes it.





RUSSIA 2018 Kazan

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Kazan

Capital of Tatarstan, its skyline studded with onion domes and minarets, **Kazan** is a curiously un-Russian city. In Soviet times it was something of a backwater, though Lenin studied here before his expulsion from the city's university. In the 21st century, its fortunes have revived thanks to the oil wealth of Tatarstan.

The gush of petrodollars has also bubbled its way into the city's sporting scene. **Rubin Kazan** are now an established force in Russian soccer and the impressive **Kazan Arena** co-hosted the 2017 Confederations Cup and stages six matches, including a quarter-final, for the 2018 World Cup.

Bearings

Kazan International Airport is 25km (15.5 miles) south-east of the city. A **train** (40r/£0.48) runs to **Kazan main station** (30min) roughly every hour during the World Cup, otherwise every 3-4hrs. The service is free on local match days to those carrying Fan ID.

Taxi Kazan City (+7 843 233 2 332/+7 987 297 8097) charges around 600r/£7.25 into town, credit cards accepted.

The overnight **train** from Moscow takes around 12 hours and costs from 4,000r/£48 in a four-berth compartment.



Kazan/Andy Potts

A ticket on the **local transport** network of a one-line metro, buses, trams and trolleybuses costs 25r/£0.30. Use the ticket office at the metro station or pay the conductor on trams and buses.

Bed

Near the Kazan Arena, the **Salma** (+7 843 527 78 31) on Adoratskogo has basic rooms from 1,800r/£21.70, limited availability during the World Cup.

Near the station, the **ibis** on Pravo-Bulachnaya ulitsa has some rooms free during the World Cup, starting at 4,000r/£48. By the cathedral at

ulitsa Profsoyuznaya 16B, three-star **Hotel Nogai** also has rooms, from 9,000r/£108.

The **Amaks Safar** hotel is handy for buses heading to the Arena but not for the centre. Some doubles available, from around 10,000r/£120.

The grandiose **Shalyapin Palace** is perhaps the swankiest hotel in town, where Baumana meets Universitetskaya. Limited availability starts at 25,000r/£300 a night.

Budget travellers might try the **Wings Hostel** on Chernyshevskogo

ulitsa (dorm beds 700r/£8.48) or **Kazanskoye Podvorye** on bar-lined Baumana, with beds at a premium in tournament time.

The **TatarInn** has a lakeside location and rooms from around 9,000r/£108 during the World Cup. You're at the opposite end of town from the stadium, though the metro is ten minutes' walk away, the station 15.

Beer

Pedestrianised **ulitsa Baumana** is where many bars are found. Stand-outs include the **Trinity Irish Pub** on the corner with ulitsa Musa Djalila.



SPB/Andy Potts



Beerhouse/Andy Potts

Over the road, the **Zhiguli** basement bar at No. 42/9 has cheap local brews on tap.

Branches of the **SPB** (No.44) and **Coyote Ugly** (No.13) offer sport or dancing as required. Above Coyote Ugly, **Twin Peaks** shows football at every table rather than cult TV. Ale aficionados may try the **Belgian Beers Bar** and friendly craft-beer specialist **Fomin**, at the corner of ulitsa Profsoyuznaya.

Nearby at No.16, the **Gute Elefante** shows games. Other German-style hostelries include **Beerhouse** (ulitsa Astronomicheskaya 10) and, with TV football, **Maximilians** (Spartakovskaya ulitsa 6) in the Suvar Plaza mall. **LB**



RUSSIA 2018 Kazan Arena

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Kazan Arena

The first of the new 2018 stadiums to be unveiled, the **Kazan Arena** opened in 2013. Later adapted to host the World Aquatics Championships in the summer of 2015, it is the home of regular European competitors **Rubin Kazan**, twice Russian champions in the last ten years.

The club had taken off after its chief patron, Kamil Ishakov, became mayor of Kazan. He then unveiled a masterplan to get Rubin into the top flight. With financial fears a thing of the past, Kazan tore up Division 3 then, in 2002, gained a first-ever promotion the top level of Russian football.

Under head coach Kurban Berdiyev, Rubin sensationally celebrated the club's 50th anniversary in 2008 by winning the title. Then they did it again in 2009, pausing only to deliver a 2-1 win over Barcelona at the Nou Camp as they became the easternmost



team ever to feature in the Champions League group phase.

After moving into the Kazan Arena, Rubin were temporarily forced to move back to their previous homes of the **Tsentralny** and **Rubin Stadiums** at various stages during the adaption of the new venue.

The 45,000-seater, €292-million Kazan Arena ('not just a football stadium but a true metropolis') was inspired by the local surroundings and culture. Although from the outside it's not quite clear how true that is, the Populous group, with lead architect Damon Lavelle, has created an impressive contemporary arena. Long-term plans include a business complex, a children's entertainment centre and other sports facilities. As always with these new complexes, it's out of the centre with little else around it.

A Confederations Cup venue in 2017 – it was here that Chile beat Portugal in the semi-final – the Kazan Arena



sees Germany return here to face South Korea in the group stage of the World Cup. Local fans can also look forward to the visits of France, Spain and Colombia, as well as a quarter-final, possibly involving England or Brazil.

Transport

The Kazan Arena has its **own stop** on **tramline Nos.5 and 6**. Alternatively, **trolleybus No.1** shuttles to and from **Kozya Sloboda metro station** in about ten minutes. **Bus route Nos. 74, 74A and 75** run from Tsentralny to the

Arena in 15 minutes or so but continue on circuits that take about 40 minutes to loop back to the city.

Bars

Unless you want to spend serious roubles in the fourth-floor **Palladium restaurant** – stained-glass windows, state-of-the-art karaoke system, European and Japanese cuisine – which is probably only open for World Cup VIPs and business clients anyway, drinking and dining options are limited. All you'll find amid the malls and chains are the **Grillwood** restaurant



(prospekt Khusaina Yamasheva 103, by the Sberbank), with its hulking steaks and burgers, and various uninspiring fast-food outlets.

KAZAN ARENA



RUSSIA 2018 Nizhny Novgorod

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Nizhny Novgorod/Andrew Flint

Nizhny Novgorod

A city closed to outsiders for half a century until 1990, **Nizhny Novgorod** has little experience of international football. Here sport meant ice hockey, athletics and that bizarre winter hybrid of bandy. The leading football club in town, **Olimpiyets**, dates back to 2015.

Owned by the City of Nizhny Novgorod, Olimpiyets have just survived in the second-flight FNL thanks to a late run

– coinciding with a move to the new arena built for the 2018 World Cup.

Overlooking the Volga, the **Nizhny Novgorod Stadium** would not feel out of place in St Petersburg. Here England take on Panama, Argentina play Croatia and a semi-final berth will be decided, possibly involving Spain, France or Portugal.

Until the arrival of Messi, Modrić and Kane, the last World Cup star to grace the city was Slava Metreveli.

Semi-finalist in 1966, Metreveli played for local club Torpedo Gorky before moving to Moscow.

Today's Nizhny Novgorod, 'Nizhny' to locals, was known as Gorky during the Soviet era, after Stalin's favourite writer who was born here. This was the kind of city where street maps were banned until the 1970s, so records are hazy – but Torpedo merged with Raketa to create **FK Volga**, whose solitary season in the Soviet first league came a year later.



Marins Park Hotel/Andrew Flint

A later, different FK Volga were usurped by their nursery team, today's **Olimpiyets**. Their crucial late-goal win over Vladivostok in May 2018 took place before 42,000 at the Nizhny Novgorod Stadium, the largest ever attendance for a football match in the city.

Bearings

Strigino Airport is 14km (8.5 miles) south-west of the city centre. The nearest stop on the **Nizhny Novgorod metro line**, **Park Kultury** (Парк культуры), is 3km away. A taxi journey there should be 150r/£1.80 if drivers will take you – certainly, when coming back to the airport, Park Kultury+taxi is an easy, cheap option.

A firm such as **Taxi 555** (+7 831 2 555 000) should charge about 500r/£6 to/from main **Moscow train station**, **Moskovsky vokzal** (Московский вокзал), 1.5km from the stadium on the same side of the river, and charge about 700r/£8.50 to the stadium and 800-900r/£9.70-£11 to the city centre.

Public transport from the airport, **bus Nos. 11 and 20**, **communal minibus Nos. 29 and 46** (pay 20r/£0.24 on board) runs to **ploshchad Kiselev** (Площадь Киселева), next to Park Kultury metro station – but not to the city centre or the stadium. From Park Kultury, the **metro** (tokens 28r/£0.34) runs to Moscow train station and **Gorkovskaya** (Горьковская) towards the city centre across the river. From the station, **tram 1** (pay 20r/£0.24 on board) goes closer to the centre, served by the stops of **Ulitsa Dobrolyubova** (Улица Добролюбова) and **Cherny prud** (черный пруд).

As its name suggests, Moscow station serves the many **trains** to/from the capital, journey time between 3hr 45min and 6hr 30min.

At press time, there were no direct metro or tram links to the stadium, the nearest transport hub being Moscow train station. Cars (but not trams) can cross nearby Kanavinsky Bridge, so a taxi is your best bet. It's only about 3-4km from the centre.

Bed

Close to the stadium, by the cathedral, elegant **Nikitin** at Strelka 13 will only have availability if rooms become free during the knock-out stage. Also near, the **Hotel Titul** (ulitsa Kerchenskaya 14A) may still have rooms in June – contact titul52@yandex.ru or +7 831 1 777 999. →



RUSSIA 2018 Nizhny Novgorod

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Near the river at Sovetskaya 12, four-star **Marins Park Hotel** (+7 495 139 1054) should still have rooms available (16,700r/£200) on certain days during the tournament.

Nearer to Moscow train station, the **Bugrov Hostel** (ulitsa Sovetskaya 20) is a cheap option of budget rooms and small dorms.

On the city centre side of the water, the **ibis** at ulitsa Maxima Gorkovo 115 offers reliable mid-range comfort near the metro terminus of Gorkovskaya. Limited availability in early July.

The upper mid-range **Sheraton** stands by the Kremlin at Ploshchad' Teatral'naya 1. Rates for certain nights in June are 9,000r/£110. By the Kremlin wall, the unpromisingly named **Hotel Rest Home** (Bolshaya Pokrovskaya 7/10) has a handful of gloomy rooms in the 7,500r/£90 range.

Also by the Kremlin, the mid-range **Hotel Joy** is a suitably happy find at ulitsa Oktyabrskaya 4, with availability in June but a minimum three-night stay.

Rather joyless but central, **Akvarel** (ulitsa Timiryazeva 3B) usually charges 3,000r/£36 per room – in June, they'll be at a premium.

Beer

Alongside the Kremlin, the pedestrianised street of **Minin &**



Nizhny Novgorod/Andrew Flint

Pozharsky is where you'll find the city's **Fan Zone** for 2018.

Several bars line **Rozhdestvenskaya ulitsa**, parallel to the river. Here at No.8, the **Union Jack** offers TV football and live music. Round the corner at No.19, the **Black Pearl Pub** is more of a DJ bar but has a TV for games. **Kabanchik** at No.18 is one of three in town, pubs for

serious beer guzzlers, carnivores and football gawpers, with a weekly schedule posted up. The other two venues are at **Maxima Gorkovo 80/1** and outside Moscow train station at **Lunarcharskogo 25**.

At Rozhdestvenskaya 1, **Expeditisia** is a curiosity, a restaurant that specialises in food from Siberia and the Arctic, also with a terrace

overlooking the Volga, live music and TV sport.

Nizhny Novgorod has a **Sports Bar**, at Piskunova 40, more of a restaurant but with a screen in the dining room.

The other street for dining and drinking is **Bolshaya Pokrovskaya** south of the city centre, where **Hell Yeah** (No.27) has rock attitude but



Union Jack/Andrew Flint



Sports Bar/Andrew Flint

no football. At No.35, **Druzhkova Kruzhka** is a Czech restaurant with quality beers and TV football.

Nearby at ulitsa Zvezdinka 12, the two-floor **English Embassy Pub** offers a full menu of decent bar food, tons of screens and sought-after ales from Britain and the States. Also a short walk from Gorkovskaya metro, the **Union Jack** at Maxima Gorkovo 150 is the sister operation to its namesake across town, with live music more to the fore.

The local branch of bar chain **Harat's** is at Varvarskaya 32. **LB**



RUSSIA 2018 Nizhy Novgorod Stadium

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Nizhy Novgorod Stadium

The epic colosseum design of the **Nizhy Novgorod Stadium** suits the location. On the convergence of the Oka and iconic Volga rivers, across from the historic Kremlin, it is not designed to blend into the background. The enormous outer structure is precise in its angles, giving the impression of extraordinary size. The roof alone weighs 11,000 tons due to the metalwork supports.

Although initial impressions are designed for high impact, other stadium elements are softer. The roof allows floods of light through its translucent surface, while the curves and light-blue colour scheme mimic the Volga. The grandeur of the exterior is offset by the surprisingly compact interior, where 45,000 spectators sit. On the same premises are futsal and tennis facilities – the stadium is not solely dependent on football as its sole source of revenue.

This is just as well, as **Olimpiyets Nizhy Novgorod** are the city's only professional club. They have only been in existence for an official three years, taking the place of Volga Nizhny Novgorod who had a short spell in the Premier. This season, Olimpiyets came



dangerously close to relegation down to the third tier.

While Nizhny Novgorod hit the jackpot with the World Cup draw – Messi, Modrić plus England's last group game, not to mention a quarter-final – the visit of Tyumen for a second-flight fixture this July will bring local fans back down to earth.

Transport

Construction of **Strelka (Стрелка) metro station** by the stadium was still ongoing in the early days of June but it should be ready by the time Argentina meet Croatia on June 21, and England play Panama on June 24. It's one stop from the main train station, **Moskovskaya (Московская)**, a 20-minute walk away. **Match-day shuttle bus S1** runs from the station as far as **Bul'var Meshcherskiy**, about 5-10min from the stadium.

The city centre is not far as the crow flies but separated by Kanavinsky Bridge across the Oka, and traffic



restrictions may be in place. Assuming Strelka station is operational, take the metro from **Gorkovskaya (Горьковская)** to Moskovskaya (Московская), then change.

Beer

Although there are no out-and-out pubs in the immediate vicinity of the stadium, the **Nikitin hotel** right by the cathedral has a somewhat elegant café.

Bars and restaurants are found on the other side of the Sedmoe Nebo ('Seventh Heaven') shopping mall. **Hooligan's** at No.18 ulitsa Volzhskaya Nabarezhnaya (улица Волжская Набережная) is a must, with rows of signed shirts, craft beers and regular appearances by Olimpiyets players. Across the road at ulitsa Sibirskaya (улица Сибирская) 3, **Solyanaya Birzha** on the water's edge is also a sports bar, but large in size and with

live music to follow the match action on the big screen.

For a sit-down meal, nearby **Khachapuri** (ulitsa Volzhskaya Nabarezhnaya 23) does great Georgian food.

Look out, too, for **Craft**, where ulitsa Sovnarkomorskaya and Portoviy pereulok meet, a little specialist beer bar seemingly put up in five minutes. **LE**



RUSSIA 2018 Rostov

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Tornado/Andy Potts

Rostov

Rostov-on-Don is a city of a million people in Russia's far south, close to Crimea. This port and rail hub, where combine harvesters were made in Stalin's Russia, came to football prominence in 2016 when **FC Rostov** finished league runners-up.

Meanwhile, the **Rostov Arena** was taking shape on the southern bank of the Don, facing the city centre.

It took until 2018 before the new stadium was ready. FC Rostov continued playing at their old ground, **Olimp-2**, by the bus station, until mid-April, the season ending without the ignominy of relegation.

Bearings

Platov Airport is at **Grushevskaya**, 28km (17.5 miles) north-east of town.



Rostov/Andy Potts

Journey time into town by public transport is 1hr, by **bus No.285** to the train station (95r/£1.15) or **bus No.286** (75r/£0.90) to Oktyabrskaya ploshchad by the bus station. Buses set off every 30-40min.

A **taxi** to the city should take 50min. **Maxim** quotes 650r/£7.80 but most are nearer to 1,000r/£12.

Many hotels offer a shuttle service.

For buses and minibuses (19r/£0.23), trams and trolleybuses (17r/£0.20), pay on board in small change. **Taksi**

Galant (+7 863 230 0300) is based on the stadium side of the city centre.

Bed

The nearest hotel to the Rostov Arena, **Visoki Bereg** (tel +7 863 248 9730) at Levoberezhnaya ulitsa 27 has usual rates of 6,000r/£72 for a double, tripled during the tournament. You get a large pool and negotiable use of a speedboat.

Re-opened on the opposite bank, smart **Radisson Blu** (Beregovaya ulitsa 25G/4) is a short taxi ride from the stadium. Rooms start at 6,200r/£74. Closer to Voroshilovsky Bridge at Ulyanovskaya

ulitsa 52, mid-range **Hermitage** imposes a two-night minimum stay during the World Cup, working out at 18,000r/£216 per night – as opposed to the regular 4,500r/£54.

Next door, budget **Don Quixote** operates the same policy, though doubles here are 5,000r/£60 per night.

Comfortable **Marins Park** (Budonnovskiy prospekt 59) has availability at 8,000r/£96, plus a spa and pool. Nearer the river, the **Mercure** (Voroshilovsky prospekt 34/107) is an 89-room three-star, from 18,000r/£216 a night.

The nearest lodging to the bus station for airport transfers is **Villa Rio** (prospekt Sholokhova 132/1), a mid-range 23-room hotel that usually charges around 4,000r/£48 for a double. Email hotel_villadona@mail.ru for availability.

At No.79/14, three-star **Valencia** is slightly more expensive.

Beer

The **2018 Fan Zone** is at central **Teatral'naya ploshchad'**.

Bars dot leafy **Pushinskaya**, where it crosses with **Voroshilovsky prospekt**. At the junction, **Dobri El** has plenty of screens and micro-brewed house beer Doroshenko.

One block down Pushinskaya at the corner with prospekt Sokolova, **Abbey Road** is Beatle-themed and Brit-friendly, with TV sport.

A 'billiard club and music pub' officially at Voroshilovsky prospekt 18/18, the **Dublin Club** is, in fact, at Suvorova 20 behind the Solnecheny supermarket – offering beer and pool. At Suvorova 19, **Mojo** does cocktails.

Tornado has four branches, one at Bolshaya Sadovaya 41, about 300 metres down from Pushinskaya. More fast-food chain than pub, with betting thrown in, Tornado is convenient for a quick beer while gawping at match action. **LB**



RUSSIA 2018 Rostov Arena

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Rostov Arena/Andrew Flint



Rostov Arena/Andrew Flint



Rostov Arena/Andrew Flint

ROSTOV ARENA

Rostov Arena

Set across the Don from the city centre, the **Rostov Arena** was one of the last of the new 2018 stadiums to be completed. Regular hosts **FC Rostov** had to wait until the end of April before they could move in, vacating the strangely named Olimp-2 ground in the east of town.

The new stadium holds 45,000 and host five matches for the 2018 finals, including Brazil's opening game,

against Switzerland, visits by Uruguay, Mexico and Croatia, and one round of 16 fixture.

The Olimp-2, a reference to the old ground being designed for the 21st century, had been home to FC Rostov since the club's formation in 1930. It played host to Rostov's surprisingly upbeat showing in the Champions League of 2016-17, including a victory over Bayern Munich.

A third-place finish allowed Rostov to take on Manchester United in the

Europa League, and a subsequent draw and single-digit defeat in March 2017.

Since then, club form has dipped, though a healthy 37,000-plus nearly filled the Rostov Arena when 'Selmashi' overcame Ural 1-0 to make it to safety at the end of the 2017-18 campaign.

While FC Rostov were flying high, and the conflict in nearby eastern Ukraine and subsequent economic sanctions hadn't hit home, the Rostov Arena

formed part of an urban plan to redevelop the city on the south bank. As it stands, stadium capacity will probably decrease by 3,000 as FC Rostov disappear out of the limelight and the club becomes marooned in mid-table.

Purely from an aesthetic point of view, the stadium many have lost its initial revolutionary design as a cost-cutting measure, but it remains an intimate and comfortable place to watch a football match, set in greenery and backdropped by the calm waters of the Don.

Transport

From 2pm on match days, **shuttle bus S4** runs from **Privokzal'naya ploshchad'** outside the **main train station** to the stadium, and **shuttle bus S8** from the junction of ulitsa Maksima Gorkogo and Teatral'ny prospekt, near the Fan Zone in the city centre. The service is free for Fan ID holders.

Alternatively, the stadium is a short, straight taxi hop over Voroshilovsky Bridge from somewhere like the Mercure Hotel.

Bars

You'll find a couple of outlets between the stadium and the river, a beach area by Levoberezhny Park. These include the somewhat sketchy steak restaurant **Smirnoff** on the stadium side of the bridge as you cross over from town.

On the other side of the **Visoky Bereg** hotel, the **Don** 'restaurant on the Left Bank' is reasonably tacky but has a welcome waterfront view. The Visoky Bereg itself has a bar and restaurant, with a summer terrace.

On the city centre side of Voroshilovsky Bridge, you'll find a huge screen for live games, and shashlik and fish dishes, at the Soviet-vintage **Zhiguli restaurant** (ulitsa Beregovaya 35).





RUSSIA 2018 Samara

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Samara

During World War II, **Samara** was designated as the alternative capital were Moscow to fall, and a bunker was duly built for Stalin outside town. Vostok rockets, that sent Yuri Gagarin into space, were later built here.

No wonder, then, that Samara was a closed city, its football team, **Krylia Sovetov**, only qualifying for Europe post-Soviet times.

Just as the flagship club has retained its titular links to the political past, so the newly built World Cup stadium, the **Cosmos Arena**, harks back to the Gagarin days.

Krylia having moved out of the old **Metallurg Stadium**, there was a sigh of relief when they regained top-flight status this year – though fans may not take kindly to the long trek north of the city centre to the club's new home.



Samara/Andrew Flint

Downtown Samara is pleasant, stretched along the Volga with a beach near the city centre. Further round the bend is Togliatti, where Lada cars are made.

Bearings

Kurumoch airport is 35km (22 miles) north of the city centre, 45min away by minibus (120 r/£1.50 from the kiosk inside the terminal). A taxi to town are

should cost around 1,000r/£12. The **rail station**, where trains come in from Moscow 16hrs away, is south of the centre. The city's solitary **metro line** doesn't serve the station or the stadium, best reached by taxi.

Navigating the city is best done by **metro** or **trolleybus**. The bar hub is the river bank and beach, close to **Alabinskaya metro**.

Bed

Samara has a very limited hotel stock, which makes its selection as a World Cup venue even more baffling.

Close to the Cosmos Arena, **Dubki** (ulitsa Dalnyaya 45A) is cheap but will have no availability on match nights. You're also miles from the centre. In town, **Hampton by Hilton** at ulitsa Lva Tolstova 131 (6,300r/£75) is down

the road from the station, with a few beds left on certain dates.

On ulitsa Alexei Tolstoy one in from the riverbank, **Holiday Inn Samara** (No.99) is a swish official World Cup lodging but may have rooms after the group stage. Budget-class **Wave** (No.35) is charging an outrageous 12,000r/£143 for a basic room.

Near the beach, the vintage **Volga** (Volzhski prospekt 35, 6,000r/£75) provides a Soviet resort experience while the classier **Equator** (ulitsa Sadovaya/Potapova) and **Best City Hotel** (ulitsa Osipenko 3, +7 846 240 9109) are located at the start of the metro line, with rooms in the 5,000r/£60 range.

Beer

Volzhski prospekt on the river has plenty of options, most notably **Na Dne** craft-beer bar (No.4), with screens for football. **Art&Fact** (No.19) offers a large terrace beneath an aviation monument, with a huge screen within.

Facing it from the pier of Ulyanovskiy spusk, the floating **Beluga** terrace restaurant is atmospheric. Also close to the beach, Shannon (ulitsa Krasnoarmeyskaya 1) provides a pub experience while a few blocks inland, **Hali Gali** (ulitsa Frunze 101) is more bar-like but serves great pub grub, with decent beers and TV sport on tap. **L9**



RUSSIA 2018 Cosmos Arena

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Cosmos Arena

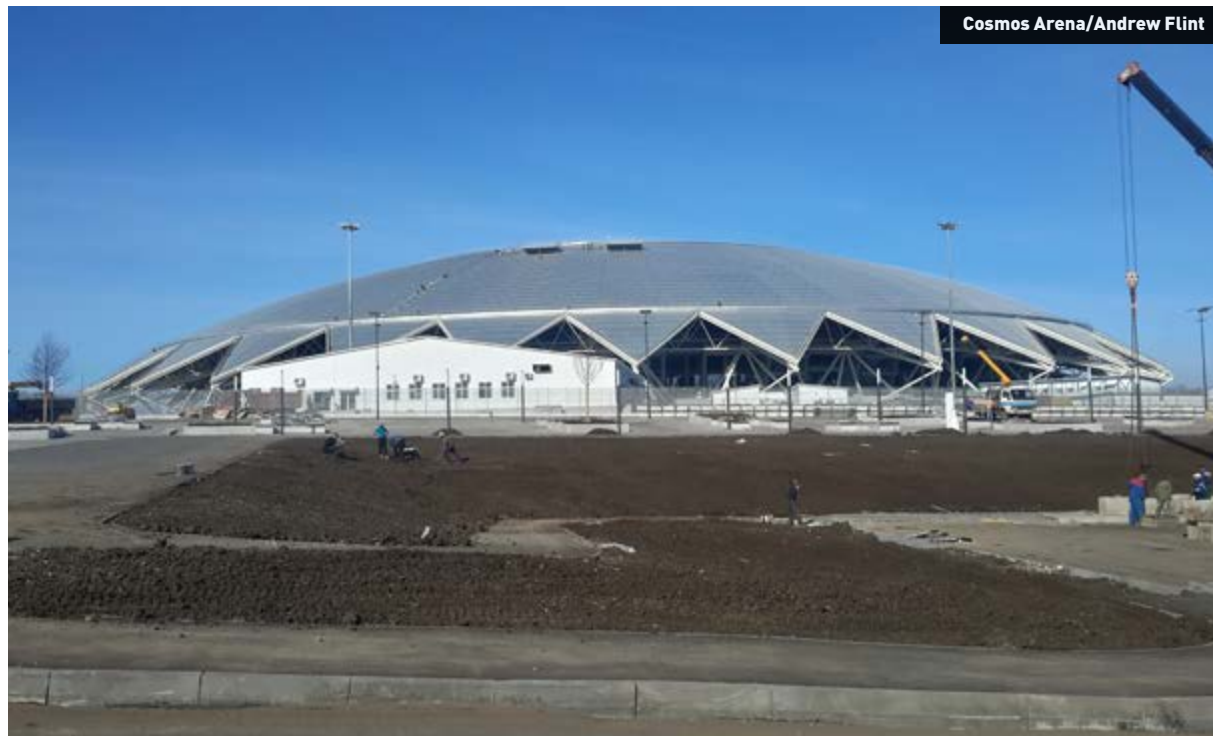
Given Samara's historical links to aviation and space travel, the name and style of the **Cosmos Arena** are hardly surprising. One side is an enormous structure shaped like a multi-angled star, with each point reaching far out beyond the main stadium's wall to provide cover from the elements.

The surrounding area has been completely redeveloped with work ongoing right up until the eve of the World Cup itself.

So impressive is the scale of the stadium exterior that its diameter surpasses even the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow, at nearly twice its capacity. The original plan had been to build the stadium on a relatively inaccessible island to the south of the centre, but rearrangements delayed construction significantly.

Even after the new location had been agreed, 15km (!) north of the city, the roof designs had to be altered due to the financial crisis in 2014. Exterior lighting and atmospheric translucent roofing materials were ditched, while the roof was lowered by 20 metres.

This was the last of the World Cup venues to be opened – up until mid-April 2018, home club **Krylia**



Cosmos Arena/Andrew Flint

Sovetov Samara were still playing at the Stadion Metallurg closer to town. After the tournament, Krylia ('Wings'), newly promoted back to the Premier, reoccupy the new arena.

Local crowds are used to top-flight football and there are no plans to reduce capacity from its current 45,000. The last home game of the 2017-18 campaign, a 1-0 win over Kuban Krasnodar, attracted nearly 41,000.

Transport

Located way out of the centre on the edge of a quiet residential suburb, the Cosmos Arena is a pain to get to. Even in May 2018, there were no regular transport links, although by the World Cup there will be special free bus services laid on, and water transport up the Volga has been promised.

With two knock-out rounds being played here, including a quarter-final, the choice between waiting for a spare

seat on shared **minibus No.50** (stopping the Hotel Dubki) or walking up from **Demokraticeskaya** 500 metres away, stop for **tram Nos.21, 22, 24 and 25** from town) is poor considering the stadium was built at a cost of \$320 million.

Bars

There is precious little within walking distance of the stadium for any kind of pre-match drinks. The nearest option would be the café of the Hotel Dubki (Demokraticeskaya ulitsa 52),



Samara station/Andrew Flint



Hotel Dubki/Andrew Flint

although it's as basic and as functional as the lodging it serves, the bar counter not even embellished with so much as a beer tap.

Further up Demokraticeskaya from the Hotel Dubki, set in woodland just past the stadium, the **Laska Hotel** is a more modern and brighter version of its relative neighbour. Equally, its restaurant is more attractive, though probably not enough to make it worth your while searching around for it. **LB**



Saransk/Andrew Flint

Saransk

Saransk, capital of the Republic of Mordovia has a population of 300,000, making it the smallest of the 11 World Cup cities. Panamanians, Peruvians and Tunisians should find it easy to navigate around town. Despite its small stature, Saransk has a surprising number of architectural wonders, honouring the world's only patron saint of nuclear-armed

strategic bombers, Fyodor Ushakov, with a stunning cathedral and statue.

Mordovia Saransk secured promotion back to the second tier of Russian football in 2018 after two successive relegations. They have never troubled the record books – one eighth-placed finish three years ago is their best to date – and will struggle to fill their new home. You can actually see the **Mordovia Arena** from the top of the main stand at their old ground, the

Start Stadium. While Mordovia Arena screams 'white elephant' (OK, it's bright orange, but...), the old ground is now open for public use, and lies next to the Fan Zone.

Bearings

Tiny **Saransk Airport**, 4km (2.5 miles) south of the centre, can only handle 600 passengers per hour at peak capacity. Transport links are limited to two bus services, the **No.15** and **No.7** (20r/£0.25) from outside the terminal,



Hotel Meridian/Andrew Flint

though a taxi to the centre takes ten minutes and shouldn't cost more than 350r/£4.20.

Getting around the city is best done on foot. The train station is on the eastern edge of the compact city centre. There are two **trains** a day from Moscow, taking 8.5hrs and 9.5hrs respectively.

Bed

The quiet, spa-equipped **Admiral Hotel** (ulitsa Respublikanskaya 103), on the stadium side of the city centre, often hosts visiting teams. Rooms are 4,700r/£58. **Four Points by Sheraton** (ulitsa Sovetskaya 54) and **Park Hotel** (ulitsa Krasnaya 4) offer scenic views for 5,200r/£65 and 4,000r/£50 respectively.

Ulitsa Kommunisticheskaya – which leads right past the Mordovia Arena – is where you find the newly opened **Mercurie** (4,300r/£54) at No.33, and gleaming **Hotel Saransk** (2,700r/£32) at No.35, close to the Fan ID centre.



Big Pig/Andrew Flint

Hostel Klyuch (+7 927 276 4358) at ulitsa Mordovskaya 35 is a cheaper if basic option, a 20-minute walk from the centre and to the stadium.

Beer

Saransk doesn't have a bustling bar scene, but does contain a few gems here and there. One is **Big Pig** at Bolshhevistskaya 60, where a great grill menu and local beer selection can be enjoyed on the terrace.

Mordovskoye Podvorye has a large seating area and nice views across the river towards the centre from its location at ulitsa Saranskaya 21. For simpler beer fare, try **Beer Loga** – it shares the same address with Big Pig, but the entrance is from ulitsa Bogdana Khmel'nitskogo.

Harat's Pub at ulitsa Tereshkovoy 7 is a more traditional pub option, and part of a nationwide chain of sports bars – but here involves a further 15-minute walk out of the centre from the main streets. **LD**



RUSSIA 2018 Mordovia Arena

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Mordovia Arena/Andrew Flint



Mordovia Arena/Andrew Flint

MORDOVIA ARENA

Mordovia Arena

Less than a kilometre as the crow flies from **Stadion Start**, the ramshackle but charming former home of local club **Mordovia Saransk**, lies the immaculately modern **Mordovia Arena**. The fading orange outer shell is designed to resemble the sun, and creates a stunning effect in the early evening sunlight. Although the main structure was German-designed, the final aesthetic designs were made by a local firm, and have drawn strong comparisons to Johannesburg's JNB stadium.

The outer fencing is designed to control security checks for over 44,000 spectators on full match days. This capacity will drop by more than a third after the World Cup itself, after which the upper tiers will be used for retail and recreation space. The Insat River provides a natural border, over which fans can walk from the centre in a matter of minutes. The remaining immediate surroundings were cleared of residential housing to leave a largely empty expanse.

With \$300 million spent on a stadium to host six hours of football (including



Mordovia Arena/Andrew Flint

Panama-Tunisia), the wisdom of overlooking Voronezh or Tula has to be questioned. In their current guise, Mordovia Saransk were only formed in 2005 after an amalgamation of two previous clubs, although they trace

their original roots back to 1961. They rose to the top flight within seven years before suffering back-to-back relegations. Having returned to the second tier for next season, crowds will certainly rise, but it is doubtful they will come close to regularly filling even the downsized version of the Mordovia Arena.

Transport

So small is Saransk that heading there on foot is the most convenient option. **Ulitsa Kommunisticheskaya** runs through the very centre no more than 100 metres from the Fan ID centre, and becomes **Volgogradskaya ulitsa** as it crosses over the river. The stadium is on the other side. For a more scenic route, one can also approach the far side of the stadium walking down **Sovetskaya ulitsa**, on which you find the picturesque Mordovia Government building.

Free buses will go directly to the stadium during the World Cup. From the airport, the **S4** and **S5** take around 20 minutes with three services running every hour. To head to the Fan Zone, take the **S6** from the airport. From **Lyambirskoye Shosse** in the north of the city, the **S1** heads to the Fan Zone, the **S2** and **S3** to the stadium.

Bars

In the immediate vicinity there is nothing by the way of bars or pubs. As the city centre is close, it makes more sense to do all your dining and drinking there, but if you need to plot yourself up somewhere closer to the stadium, the only choice is the basement **Kafe24** (Kommunisticheskaya ulitsa 10). It's not a non-stop as its name suggests but operates 10am-2am. Cheap, simple food, beer and a single screen provide scant reason to linger. **LB**



RUSSIA 2018 Sochi

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Sochi

The Black Sea resort of **Sochi** is adept at hosting prestigious sports events, though it has little football tradition.

For the Winter Olympics of 2014, a whole Olympic Park was created: showpiece stadium, ice palace, indoor arenas and a village for 3,000 people. Costs are said to have hit \$50 billion and beyond – an autodrome, site of the Russian Grand Prix, opened later that year.

Converting the 47,000-capacity **Fisht Olympic Stadium** for the Confederations Cup of 2017, and now 2018, was another \$46 million.

Apart from its astronomical costs, the stadium is not in Sochi but **Adler**, a good 20km from town.

Greater Sochi extends for 150km along the Black Sea, as far as what the former frontier with Georgia.

Bearings

Sochi International Airport is in Adler, near the Olympic complex, 35km (22 miles) south-east of central Sochi. A **train** takes you to **Sochi rail station** in 45min, running roughly every hr. Tickets are 165r/£2, free on match days to Fan ID holders.



Sochi/Andrew Flint

Tulip Inn/Andrew Flint

Outside the terminal, at the stop marked **Аэропорт Сочи (высадка)**, **bus Nos.57** and **57k** run to the Olympic Park, tickets 20r/£0.24 on board. **Taxi Aeroport Sochi** (+7 938 440 32 32/+7 938 442 30 30) quotes 450r/£5.35 to the Olympic Park and 900r/£10.70 to central Sochi.

Bed

Adler and Sochi are resorts, filled with hotels. Conveniently by the media centre, 270-room **Tulip Inn Omega Sochi** has been block-booked but may have cancellations. Nearby, and

cheaper, the **Mini Hotel Parus** (ulitsa Starookhotnichya 29, +7 988 238 2202) may have availability.

Nearer Olympic Park station, **Ruskiye Sezoni** is still offering rooms (8,000r-10,000r/£95-£119) with spa admission.

Near Sochi station, smart **Park Inn Sochi Centre** also has availability, but at 20,000r/£238.

Nearer the seafront, the 200-room **Mercure Sochi Centre** has rooms at

8,840r/£105 and its own private beach. In the same complex and under the same umbrella, five-star **Pullman Sochi Centre** offers sea-facing balconies and pools inside and out, for 13,400r/£160.

Close by, **Mirit** has been raised to three-star status, the pre-2018 overhaul also providing a sauna, spa pool and wine cellar.

On the other side of main Kurortnyi prospekt, the **Spa Hotel Fidan** still has cheap rooms for most of the tournament.



Beer

Bars and restaurants dot the city centre and seafront, catering to holidaymakers from Russia and ex-Soviet states.

Right on the promenade, **Harat's** is the Sochi branch of a sports-pub chain that stretches from St Petersburg to Irkutsk. Near the port, Germanic beerhall **Frau Marta** (ulitsa Sovetskaya 2) has Belgian and Irish beers and plentiful pub grub.

Near the Mercure/Pullman hotel complex, **Legenda** (Kurortnyi prospekt 47/3) is more restaurant than bar but shows TV sport. At Kurortnyi 16, on the top floor of the Melodiya shopping centre, **Dobri EL'** is the Sochi outlet of this Rostov-based chain of sports bars.

Near Sochi station, **Draft** (Navaginskaya 11) is the pub-like outlet of a local beer distribution company, convivial for match-watching. At the nearby Park Inn hotel, the **Paulaner Bar** should slake most thirsts. **LD**



RUSSIA 2018 Fisht Olympic Stadium

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Fisht Olympic Stadium/Andrew Flint



Fisht Olympic Stadium/Andrew Flint



Fisht Olympic Stadium

Built for the 2014 Winter Games, converted for the Confederations Cup and the World Cup, the **Fisht Olympic Stadium** centrepieces a vast Olympic Park out in Adler. Close to Sochi's airport but 20km from the centre of the city, Fisht is named after the nearby mountain whose 3,000-metre-high peaks rise off to the distance.

Their outline inspired the signature roof while the nearby Black Sea provided the idea for the half-shell shaped topping of cushions of recyclable translucent thermoplastic. Resistance to earthquakes was another element that British structural engineers BuroHappold, of Emirates and Aviva Stadium fame, had to factor in.

Capacity for the Winter Games was 40,000, gathered for the opening and closing ceremonies and medal presentations. The overall cost: \$779 million.

But for the events in 2017 and 2018, FIFA insisted on an open stadium, with no roof. With the conversion bill of \$46 million footed by the Krasnodar regional government, BuroHappold and designers Populous worked on a reconfiguration that not only swept away most of the roof but increased capacity to 47,659. Fans at the south end now get a view of mountain peaks to the north, those in the north end, the Black Sea.

Once the Fisht hosts six matches for the World Cup, including a quarter-final,

its will then provide winter training facilities for Russia's national team.

Transport

The Fisht is in **Adler**, location for Sochi International Airport. From the terminal, the stop marked Аэропорт Сочи (высадка) serves the **Nos.57 and 57k buses** to the Olympic Park. Journey time should be 15min. Special match-day transport should also be laid on. **Taxi Aeroport Sochi** (+7 938 440 32 32, +7 938 442 30 30) quotes 450r/£5.40 to the Olympic Park – the airport-recommended service will be dearer.

Fisht Olympic Stadium/Andrew Flint



From the airport, the rail service runs into Sochi but not to the Olympic sports complex, where two stations were built for the 2014 Winter Games. **Olympic Village** (Олимпийская деревня) serves the media centre while one stop further down, beside the Autodrom and slightly closer to the Fisht Stadium, what is **Imeritinsky Kurort** (Имеретинский Курорт) on regular timetables

becomes **Olympic Park** on events occasions. From Sochi station to the Olympic complex, the **train** takes 40min and costs 170r/£2 (free on match days with a Fan ID).

Bars

If you're coming into the Olympic Village station, beside the **Hotel Parus** near the media centre, the **Cowboy** is a themed bar/restaurant offering beers, burgers and a terrace.

Near the Bolshoy Ice Dome, **Baikal** is more upscale restaurant than bar but provides a reasonable range of beers, including Slovak Zlatý Bažant and Belgian Affligem.

Close to the Fisht, **La Punto** on Mezhdunarodnaya is a smart gastropub where well dressed customers tuck into steaks and manghal barbecue dishes.

On the concourse in the shadow of the stadium, Heineken beer is served on the wide terrace of the **Pasta & Tril'** restaurant. **LG**



RUSSIA 2018 Volgograd

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Volgograd

Forever associated with the Battle of Stalingrad, Volgograd is a bustling port set alongside the Volga. Parallel to Europe's mightiest river, the local Metrotram calls at the gigantic statue on Mamayev Kurgan, built to commemorate the bloodiest battle in human history.

Overshadowed by the *Call to the Motherland*, the next stop along is **Central Stadium**, serving the renamed **Volgograd Arena**, rebuilt to stage four matches at the 2018 World Cup, including England's opening group game against Tunisia.

Everywhere are reminders of the momentous events of 1942-43 that claimed nearly two million lives. Even the city name frequently reverts to Stalingrad – the following game, Iceland-Nigeria on June 22, coincides with one of such war-time anniversary.

Meanwhile, flagship club **Rotor** are waiting on a decision as to whether the financial instability of other clubs will allow the Blue & Sky Blues to continue in the second flight after finishing in a relegation spot in May.

Rotor's one night of glory took place in Manchester, in 1995. Rotor had taken a 0-0 scoreline to Old Trafford when they went into a shock 2-0 lead. United

then threw everything at the Russians, who held out until the 89th minute and an equaliser from goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel. Away goals got Rotor over the line.

On the home front, the most memorable game took place during World War II. On May 2 1943, with Stalingrad reduced to rubble, a morale-boosting football match was organised at the Azot factory – still relatively untouched. Players from Spartak Moscow flew down to Volgograd, where a 'Dynamo' side had been formed from surviving locals. The attendance figure

of 10,000 might be ambitious – but the event is legend. In 2013, 10,500 gathered at the Central Stadium for another 'Ruins of Stalingrad' game, Rotor drawing 3-3 with Spartak.

Planned in the 1930s, interrupted by war then the mass urban rebuilding after it, the Central Stadium dates to 1958, when work started at a former oil depot by the Volga. Some 100,000 Young Communists then laboured for four years. On September 27 1962, Konstantin Belikov, veteran of the Battle of Stalingrad and participant in the original war-time match, signalled

the stadium unveiling, officiating as Lev Yashin's USSR beat an Olympic XI 1-0.

After Rotor's purple patch in the 1990s came the financial collapse of 2005. Representation by reserve side Rotor-2 saw crowds dwindle to three figures.

In a complex merger, FC Rotor were revived but have failed to regain top-flight status.

Volgograd's symbolic status as 'Hero City' helped its inclusion as a World Cup venue for 2018. In 2014, the Central Stadium was knocked down and the



Volgograd/Andrew Flint



Bamberg/Andrew Flint



Volgograd/Andrew Flint

Volgograd Arena arose. Opened with a Rotor league game in April 2018, it can accommodate 45,000 spectators. High above, dramatically illuminated by the sunset, the statue of the Motherland wields her mighty sword.

Bearings

Volgograd International Airport is 15km (nine miles) north-west of town.

Marshrutka minibus No.6 (28r/£0.33, pay on board) runs to the ulitsa Tulaka bus concourse, on ulitsa 25 Letiya Oktyabrya. The southern terminus of the **Metrotram** (23r/£0.27, pay on board), →



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Svejk/Andrew Flint

Yel'shanka, is about 500 metres away, with the stadium another eight stops through the centre of Volgograd.

Alternatively, frequent **bus 6** (25r/£0.30, pay on board) goes to central **Alleya Geroev** near the main train station and Komsomolskaya, closer to the stadium on the Metrotram line.

Airport-recommended **Bonjour Taxis** charges over 1,000r/£12 into town but **Taxi Saturn** (+7 844 2400 400) should be cheaper.

The main railway and bus stations are 500 metres apart at the southern end of town. **Russian Railways** runs four trains a day from Moscow, journey times 18-24hrs.

Bed

The nearest hotel to the stadium is the **Hilton Garden Inn**, across the park at prospekt Lenina 56A, with 157 rooms. Availability during the World Cup only



Hotel Inturist/Andrew Flint

starts once the circus has left town.

By the railway station, the **Park Inn by Radisson** does have availability in June from around 8,500r/£101. Reasonably close at ulitsa Imeni Rokossovskogo 7, the **Hotel Gallery Park** includes a spa, pool, billiard room and the **Greenwich Pub**. Availability in June is very limited.

Close to the bus station, the 100-room **Inturist** at ulitsa Mira 14 is similarly booked in June.

Close by, the classic **Hotel Volgograd**, built in 1890 and revamped in 2015, still has a few rooms available in June, starting at 8,800r/£105. In its time, the Volgograd has hosted a theatre, a caviar market and, in 1918, Joseph Stalin.

A cheaper option near a scattering of bars, the **Yuzhnyi** (Raboche-Krestyanskaya 18), has reasonable availability in June but a minimum two-night policy.

Beer

Bars and restaurants cluster around the city centre. Where ulitsa Sovetskaya meets Komsomolskaya, German-style **Bamberg** offers house brews, pub food, TV football and live music. Just across Komsomolskaya, **Bochka** ('Barrel') is in similar vein, also with live games. At Sovetskaya 13, **Porter** puts the gastro into gastropub but has a TV too.

It's right by the **Alley of Heroes** (Alleya Geroev) where the **Fan Zone** will be – and



Harat's Pub/Andrew Flint

also where you'll find the **Turman Pub**, with TV football.

At the Krasnoznamenskaya end of Sovetskaya, popular **Svejk** is another honest beerhall with televised action.

For outdoor drinking, terrace bars by the Children's City Park include the Volgograd branch of the Russia-wide sports pub chain **Harat's** and, by the Drama Theatre, the **Bar & Grill**, with quality steaks and quality vodkas.

Another hub is between the Yuzhnyi and Hampton by Hilton hotels. Here, the **Doubler Pub** (Raboche-Krestyanskaya 14) offers bar food, TV sport and global beers until 2am. Across Profsoyuznaya, **Killfish** makes no bones about its cheap drink offers – it's a Slav chain version of Wetherspoons, without the spoons.

Nearby towards Akademicheskaya ulitsa, **Poneslos** strips things down to beer, live music, football and food. On the same street at No.8, **Draft Craft** is more hipster, with a TV amid the ale ads. **LD**



RUSSIA 2018 Volgograd Arena

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Volgograd Arena

The **Volgograd Arena** could not be more symbolically placed. On the banks of the Volga where the Soviet army held Nazi forces at bay, overlooked by the third tallest statue in the world – the fearsome *Motherland Calls* – stands the World Cup stadium. Its open concourses, where fans mingle in the build-up to kick-off, are backdropped by the lattice exterior, with views over the river and to the statue above.

Inevitably, the original cost became bloated twofold. The design was restricted by the surrounding land; the river forms a natural obstruction on one side, while on the other the shape of the land would have required considerable and costly landscaping to accommodate a larger stadium. The enormous roof is suspended by an intricate cable system that had to be lowered gradually into place over the course of three months. It creates a slight optical illusion of the stadium's size, by making the upper edge of the shell wider than the base. Actual capacity is 45,000.

Fans of a certain vintage will remember local club **Rotor Volgograd** knocking Manchester United out of Europe in 1995. The entity that holds that name today has survived bankruptcy, ownership changes and



Volgograd Arena/Andrew Flint



Volgograd/Andrew Flint

financial misdeed, and bears little resemblance to its storied predecessor. The present-day Rotor only recently survived relegation from the second tier due to other clubs failing to meet requirements.

Transport

Getting to the stadium could not be easier. The one **metro line** runs along Prospekt Lenina parallel to the river and stops at **Central Stadium** (Центральный стадион), above ground directly outside the largest entrance gate. Fares are paid onboard to a conductor – it's free on match days for those with Fan ID.



Volgograd Arena/Andrew Flint

Taxis will be unlikely to carry passengers as far as the stadium due to the narrow road and strict police cordons. From the city centre to **Europa City Mall**, 1km/15min from the stadium, should set you back around 400r/£5. Free shuttle buses will also be laid from the mall to the stadium,

Bars

The area is not a densely populated residential zone, it's probably best to

do your pre-match drinking around **ulitsa Sovetskaya**, parallel to Prospekt Lenina, where the bulk of restaurants and bars are located.

Nonetheless, there is a small handful of alcohol shops cheekily circumventing licensing laws by placing a stool inside to register as a bar, and thus allow them to serve alcohol beyond the nationwide limit of 9pm. The closest to the ground on

Prospekt Lenina is the **Vkhlam Bar** at No.264, where fans gather before and after Rotor games.

For a more upscale experience, the **Hilton Garden Inn** at Prospekt Lenina 56 is still easily within walking distance of the stadium, and contains the **Garden Grill & Bar**, and the **Pavilion Lounge** where beers and cocktails are served, usually to non-guests too.



RUSSIA 2018 Yekaterinburg

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Yekaterinburg/Andrew Flint

Yekaterinburg

Straddling Europe and Asia, the industrial city of **Yekaterinburg** is the easternmost host of the 2018 World Cup. The actual border with Europe is some 30km outside town, as is the burial place of the Romanovs, murdered where there now stands a stunning Orthodox church in town.

The city is otherwise busy and modern, with nearly 1.5 million inhabitants. Just west of the centre, the remodelled

Centralniy Stadium (Yekaterinburg Arena) for the World Cup has maintained its Neo-Classical Soviet-era façade, but added two extraordinary stands outside the stadium itself. They will be removed to accommodate league team Ural Yekaterinburg, habitual toilers. In the last couple of years they have flirted with European qualification thanks to a Russian Cup final appearance and improved league form.

Bearings
Koltsovo Airport lies 16km (ten miles) south-east of the city centre, a

30-minute ride by No.1 bus (25r/£0.30 pay on board) to **Yekaterinburg Passazhirskiy** train station, the hub for most **city transport**.

Taxi NonStop (+7 343 270 0000) quotes 520r/£6.20 for the same journey and accepts credit cards.

Around town, the **one-line metro**, trams, buses and trolleybuses carry the same a flat fare of 25r/£0.30, either pay on board or with a token for the metro. Fan ID allows for free transport on match days.



Yekaterinburg/Andrew Flint

Travelling by **train** to Yekaterinburg from Moscow is an adventure rather than a convenience, average journey time 26hrs.

Bed

The nearest lodging to the stadium is the **Champion Hostel** (ulitsa Krylova 26), about 400 metres away behind Gordon's bar. As everywhere else, availability is scarce in tournament time, but you may just find a dorm bed at 1,100r/£13 – though probably not one of the private rooms for two.

Towards the stadium, the **Green Park Hotel** (ulitsa Narodnoi Voli 24, by the cathedral) has singles for 3,100r/£37 and doubles at 3,900r/£46.50 on certain days of the World Cup while the plusher **Renome Hotel** (ulitsa 8 Marta 50) has rooms around 6,600r/£82, and offers airport transfers. It's also near Geologicheskaya metro station.

Centralny (ulitsa Malysheva 24, +7 343 312 2211) is Soviet vintage but convenient, rooms going for 4,600r/£55.



Americanka/Andrew Flint

Immediately outside the main entrance to the train station, **Hostel Penaty** may have a random bed if you enquire in person. Nearby at ulitsa Chelyuskintsev 106, **Marins Park Hotel** is an upper three-star with rooms around a reasonable 5,000r/£60.

Beer

The **Fan Zone** is at **Mayakovsky Central Park** near the Luch sports complex.

The best bar hub is around **Ploshchad' 1905 Goda** metro station, where the riverside **Dr Scotch pub** (ulitsa Malysheva 56A) is under the same umbrella and with a similar offering as Gordon's by the stadium. On the metro side of the river, **Lavcraft** (Malysheva 31A) has 12 Russian ales on draught and TV football.

In the same vicinity, **Killfish** (ulitsa Vaynera 9A) offers discount beers while the **10/25 Pub** (ulitsa Popova 2) is a lively spot with DJs, bands and TV football. At Karla Libknechta 13, **Americanka** provides 24hr drinking. **LB**

RUSSIA 2018 Central Stadium

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Central Stadium/Andrew Flint

Central Stadium

The easternmost stadium to host the 2018 World Cup is also the most bizarre. Yekaterinburg's **Centralniy Stadium** was only partially redeveloped for the tournament, and it blends a listed building in the form of a Neo-Classical façade with two extraordinary stands that extend outside the stadium perimeter. Like many of the specially constructed or remodelled venues in Russia, there are specific plans to reduce the capacity to a more

manageable size after the tournament at a relatively minimal cost – hence the unusual stands and their less than permanent appearance.

Construction was carried out by local firm Sinara, who have also bankrolled the city's hugely successful futsal team. Original plans to refurbish the stadium actually began in 2004, but were halted by the financial crisis four years later.

The positive is that a beautiful stadium dating back to 1957 has been preserved and improved and, despite



Gordon's/Andrew Flint

what you might think, the acoustics are brilliantly designed to create a fantastic atmosphere. Capacity for the tournament, for which the stadium welcomes the visits of France, Mexico and Uruguay, is 36,000, to be reduced by



Central Stadium/Andrew Flint

a third once the temporary stands are removed and regular domestic football returns.

Top-flight **Ural Yekaterinburg** resume residency in their traditional home from next season. They are enjoying a brief surge in success with an inventive scouting system and faith in youth, having threatened to edge into the Europa League twice in the last two years.

Transport

Getting to the stadium is simple and cheap. From the train station – where shuttle buses from the airport arrive – take the metro two stops to **Ploshchad' 1905**, and then walk the remaining 15 minutes along nearby prospekt Lenina to the ground, or hop on **trams Nos.2 and 18** to **Vechniy Ogon'**, two stops away.

The stadium also has its own bus stop for several routes, most notably the **Nos.3 and 7** from the train station, dropping you outside entrance 2 to the ground.



Central Stadium/Andrew Flint

Bars

Behind the stadium near entrance 4 is a number of small but decent drinking and dining options. Right next door, **Gordon's** (ulitsa Krylova 27) is the most traditional pub serving its own beer, with plenty of screens permanently showing games. Steak features prominently on the menu, as do sausages and several kinds of beer snacks.

Further up Krylova at No.5, tucked away amid residential blocks, **Tri Tolstyaka** is one of several branches of the same chain offering reasonable fare.

Diagonally behind Gordon's, the **Black Fox Lounge Bar** (aka Chorny Lis) at ulitsa Mel'nikova 27 is more upscale, with matches screened and DJs occasionally booked.

For those in less of a rush, there's a lively bar area along Malysheva ulitsa before strolling over the river Iset straight up to the stadium. Bus Nos.3 and 7 also stop at the nearby corner of ulitsa Gorkogo, three from the stadium. **LB**