EVENT ADVISORY
FIFA Football World Cup
RUSSIA 2018
FIFA Football World Cup, Russia 2018: Event Advisory
14 JUNE to 15 JULY 2018

RUSSIA RISK SUMMARY: RISK LEVELS

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OPERATING ENVIRONMENT KEY FACTS

- Estimated Population: 144.3 million (Russia, 2016 estimated)
- Geographic Area: 17.1 million Km²
- Language: Russian and 27 other regional languages
- Religion: Christianity, non-religious, Islam, and other beliefs
- Climate: Varied dependent on location
- UTC: +2 to +12
- Capital: Moscow
- Currency: Russian Ruble
- Emergency Services: 112

ATHLETES

- 31 countries and territories have qualified for the 2018 FIFA Football World Cup and are joined by Russia as the host nation. 20 teams are making back-to-back appearances while Panama and Iceland are making their debuts at the event.
- Each team is limited to a final squad of 23 players submitted by 04 June 2018. A provisional squad of 35 players must be submitted by 14 May 2018.
- A total of 2.5 million tickets will be made available for the 64 matches at the World Cup. The event is oversubscribed with more than four million ticket applications in the second round alone. More than 1.5 million tickets have been allocated as of 03 April 2018.
- 40,000 personnel from the Emergencies Ministry are to be deployed to ensure safety and security during World Cup matches across the country. A tourist police force has also been created for the event.
- There are 12 venues hosting matches for the World Cup in 11 host cities. These are: Moscow, St Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Volgograd, Saransk, Sochi, Rostov-on-Don, and Yekaterinburg. All 32 competing countries will also have training camps.
Criminality: Low-level criminality is a long-term challenge for travellers to Russia and the largest potential threat posed to travel. In host cities, especially Moscow and St Petersburg, travellers are at a heightened risk of petty crime in busy areas and are actively targeted. Theft from hotel rooms is also not uncommon. Kidnappings are uncommon and usually personal in nature. Foreigners should be particularly aware in bars and nightclubs, where violent crime is often reported. Moreover, criminals have drugged some travellers at bars or taken strangers back to their lodgings only to be drugged, robbed, and/or assaulted.

Hooliganism: During the European Football Championships in 2016, Russian fans were at the centre of troubles and violence which led to a suspended disqualification and a €150,000 (€167,392) fine for the Russian Football Union. Hooliganism is a longstanding issue in Russian football. As recently as February 2018, a police officer died as Athletic Bilbao and Spartak Moscow fans clashed before a Europa League match in the Spanish city; several other injuries were also reported. At least nine people were subsequently arrested as some fans arrived with batons and knives. Russian football hooligans, known as ultras, are described as being very effective and well organised. While most countries, notably England, have issues with hooliganism, Russian fans are often singled out for their serious intent to carry out barbaric violence. Commentators have suggested that the Russian political leadership has historically encouraged far-right hooliganism. Russian authorities have begun cracking down on hooliganism, with strong penalties for minor offenses; 'ultras' have complained of harassment by security forces ahead of the World Cup. Foreign hooligans, or those in their presence, are likely to face a firm response from police.

Corruption: Corruption is endemic in Russia, with strong ties between politicians and business. Public officials and police officers may demand bribes from travellers, including traffic police. Moreover, criminals and police frequently work together and act with near impunity. Reports suggest that the average bribe has increased substantially in recent years. Russia was ranked 135 of 180 countries on Transparency International’s 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption scandals involving state-owned or state-linked enterprises may bring civil unrest.

Terrorism: Historically, Russia has been threatened by Islamic militancy from a number of sources. Chechynan terrorists have previously conducted attacks in the Caucasus region and further afield, including Moscow. It is highly likely that terror groups such as Islamic State or Al Qaeda will seek to conduct attacks before and during World Cup events. In 2017, Islamic State published propaganda directly targeted at the World Cup. Russia has an advanced security apparatus and is likely to prioritise anti-terror operations to mitigate any threats. Indeed, on 27 April 2018, it was announced that the FSB security service had thwarted a planned Islamic State attack in an area of Moscow where World Cup matches are due to take place. Russia, like countries in the West, is dealing with the threat of returning fighters as Islamic State’s territorial losses mount in the Middle East.

Cyber Security: Cybercrime is a well-documented threat of travel to Russia. Hackers based in Russia have been accused of interfering in the US 2016 elections, as well as targeted attacks on companies including Yahoo. There is a significant risk that cyber criminals or ‘cyber-activists’ will target underprepared foreign travellers to Russia. Unsecured WiFi hotspots are especially at risk and should be avoided.

Politics and International Relations: Russia’s degrading relationship with the West is continually present in the media. Over the past six to 12 months, tensions have increased dramatically, with the poisoning of a former Russia spy, Sergei Skripal, in the UK and coalition airstrikes against Syrian government targets just brief highlights in 2018 alone. However, the effects on individual travellers to Russia for the World Cup are unlikely to be significant. As with the Winter Olympics in 2014, the World Cup forms an aspect of Russia’s soft power initiative. Moreover, the event is expected to generate significant income for Russian industry. It is therefore in Russia’s interest to ensure that foreigners have a positive experience. Foreign travellers may experience some xenophobia when visiting the event. Domestically, President Putin and his supporters maintain a strict control over the political process in Russia and have crushed most forms of dissent. Political protests are possible during the Games, possibly led by anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny, but are unlikely to reach the size, scale, or impact of unrest in Brazil four years ago.

Cultural Differences: Within Russian society, there are vocal nationalistic, reactionary tendencies. Hate crimes and racist murders have risen in recent years, often targeting those from the Caucasus or Central Asia. Russian football has commonly been associated with racism. In March 2018, FIFA opened an investigation into racist abuse of French players by Russian fans. In 2013, a law banning the promotion of ‘non-traditional sexual relations’ came into force. The law is purposely vague and may lead to the arrest, imprisonment, or deportation of foreign nationals. LGBT travellers may face harassment and acts of violence, instances of which have reportedly increased since the law came into force.
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EVENT LOCATION INFORMATION

Here are 12 stadiums for the 2018 World Cup in 11 host cities:
1. **Moscow**, Russia’s capital, is home to two stadiums which are set to host World Cup matches. The final will be held at the Luzhniki Stadium on 15 July 2018.
2. **St Petersburg** is Russia’s second largest city and will host a semi-final match and the third place play-off.
3. **Kaliningrad** is the westernmost host location and a Russian enclave between Lithuania and Poland. It is difficult to reach without air travel.
4. **Kazan** is known as the ‘Sports Capital of Russia’ and will host a quarter-final match.
5. **Nizhny Novgorod**, Russia’s fifth largest city, will host one quarter-final and a handful of group games.
6. **Samara** is Russia sixth largest city and will host six games in total.
7. **Volgograd**, formerly named Stalingrad, will host four group games but none in the knockout stages.
8. **Saransk**, in the Republic of Mordovia, will host four games.
9. **Sochi** hosted the 2014 Olympic Games and will host a quarter-final game.
10. **Rostov-on-Don** is the closest host city to Ukraine, where an insurgency by Russian-backed rebels is ongoing.
11. **Yekaterinburg** is the easternmost host city and will only hold four group games.

GENERAL TRAVEL ADVICE

- All travel to Russia should be planned carefully in advance.
- Travellers to Russia should maintain a low-profile, a slightly heightened level of situational awareness, and sensible security precautions at all times.
- Travellers should be especially vigilant in crowded areas.
- Take extra care of passports, credit cards, and wallets/purses when in crowded or tourist areas. Take extra care when travelling alone, at night, or on public transport, due to the greater potential for crime.
- Be sure to carry a form of ID as well as details of your next of kin. Avoid carrying any valuables in a backpack as this is an easy target for thieves.
- Road safety in Russia is poor. Russians are known to drive aggressively and routinely ignore road signs. If driving, a defensive style should be implemented. Due to the different culture and language, travellers should consider the use of a prearranged driver for all travel.
- Russia is generally a cash-based economy. Outside of Moscow and St Petersburg, ATMs may be difficult to find.
- On entering Russia, travellers are required to sign a migrant card which is needed when exiting Russia. All passports should be signed; those with unsigned passports may not be permitted entry into Russia.
- You can be arrested for attempting to leave the country with antiques, even if they were purchased legally. Certificates should be sought from the Russia Ministry of Culture.
- Photographing military establishments and strategically important sites (such as airports) is not permitted and may lead to detention or arrest.

SECURITY PROVISIONS

Russian security authorities have experience of hosting global events, having held the 2014 Winter Olympics and the Football Confederations Cup in 2017. Security at these events was notably tight.

Russian police practice intelligence-led security, with a focus of being proactive rather than reactive.

A series of regulations are set to be in place for the World Cup:
- Road closures and high security on trains and planes which transport competitors between venues.
- Controlled and prohibited zones in venue cities.
- Total bans of planes and ‘flying devices’, such as drones around World Cup stadiums.
- Rigorous ID checks ensuring that the identities of fans are known in advance.
- Bans on maritime movements close to stadiums.
- There will be strong restrictions on sales of arms, explosives, poisons, and narcotics near venue locations.
- Factories manufacturing dangerous goods are set to be closed for the duration of the event.
- Severe constraints on selling and consuming of alcoholic beverages in venue cities before and after matches.
**SCAMS**

- **ATM Skimmer:** Skimmers on ATM machines are not uncommon. Always make sure the slot where you insert your card has nothing attached to it. These devices may be disguised to look like regular parts of an ATM, so check carefully. Try to use ATMs inside banks if possible.

- **The Money Drop:** This scam is especially common around Red Square in Moscow. Although there are variations, it looks like the following. Somebody is going past you and “accidentally” drops some cash, another individual sees it as well. He starts picking up the money and offers to share it 50-50. You look for the owner of the money, and he is long gone. You take your share of it and walk away. A minute later, the real owner of the money asks for the full amount back and is not alone. As you only have half, you will need to visit the closest ATM to make up the amount to get away unhurt. The best advice is to ignore items which are dropped.

- **Fake Tickets:** In this situation, scammers prey on desires to see World Cup games. Often fake websites for ‘free tickets’ will be found online in advertisement boxes or via an email. These require the user to put in their credit card details for ‘security purposes’. Always search the website of the company offering free tickets, such as Coca-Cola, rather than following a link or an advert.

- **The Airport Pickup:** Fake drivers work at the airport. As you walk out of your gate you unexpectedly see a driver with your name on a board and knowledge of your hotel (information which has probably been fed to them by a member of cabin crew). En route to your hotel, your driver stops and demands money as fare, which you feel obliged to pay. Travellers should not accept unexpected trips and should follow journey management plans if pre-arranged drivers have been organised.

- **Taxis Parked In Front Of Your Hotel:** Many four and five-star hotels have taxis waiting outside all day. Despite appearances, these taxis are not associated with the hotel. These drivers may not switch on their meters when picking up passengers and instead insist on an excessive charge whilst already in motion. Travellers should avoid taxis waiting outside of hotels. Ask your hotel to order one for you from a reputable company and ensure they meter your journey. If the vehicle has a meter, it should be used. Taxi drivers have also been reported as taking intentionally extended journeys in order to overcharge fares.

**MEDICAL CONCERNS**

- All travellers to the World Cup should visit their doctor at least six to eight weeks before arriving in Russia.

- Travellers should ensure that they are up to date with all routine vaccinations before travelling, this includes tetanus, tuberculosis, polio, and measles, mumps and rubella. Other recommended vaccinations may include: hepatitis A and B, Japanese encephalitis, rabies, and tick-borne encephalitis.

- Certain travellers may also be required to provide a yellow fever vaccination certificate.

- Travellers to the World Cup should take the necessary precaution against sun- and heat-related illnesses. Sun creams with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or above and 4 or 5 star UVA (ultraviolet A) protection should be used. Travellers should also ensure that they drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.

- If taking long-term prescribed medication, travellers should contact their local Russian diplomatic mission to ensure that the import of such medication does not contravene any local laws. Travellers should also ensure that they maintain the original prescription, consider having it notarised and translated, and that they have more than enough to cover the length of their stay.

- Health facilities in Russian cities are generally adequate with some private hospitals offering western-level care. However, such care can be expensive. Travellers should ensure that they have adequate medical insurance to also cover repatriations.

- Travellers should avoid drinking tap water, drinks with ice, or uncooked food such as salads. Bottled water is widely available.

**KEY DATES**

- **14 May**
  - Preliminary World Cup squads must be named

- **04 June**
  - Final 23-man squad must be submitted to FIFA

- **14 June**
  - Group stages of the World Cup begin as Russia plays Saudi Arabia in Moscow
  - Eight groups of four teams compete in a total of 48 matches

- **30 June**
  - The second round begins
  - 16 teams compete in eight games between 30 June and 03 July

- **06 July**
  - Quarter-finals begin
  - Four matches will be played on 06 and 07 July

- **10 July**
  - Semi-finals begin
  - The final four teams compete in two games from 10 to 11 July, with matches held in Moscow and St Petersburg

- **14 July**
  - Third-place playoff
  - The two losing semi-finalists compete for third place in St Petersburg

- **15 July**
  - The World Cup final
  - The two victorious semi-finalists compete at Moscow’s Luzhniki Stadium.
LOCAL ETIQUETTE

- Many Russians are very patriotic. It is advisable to avoid criticism of Russia or discussion of current political events. Topics including ethnic minorities and the holocaust should also be avoided.
- Russians are considered to be reserved, which may be confused with rudeness at times. Staring is common while ‘excuse me’ and ‘thank you’ are not.
- Punctuality to social events or business meetings is considered important in Russia.
- Communication is typically direct.
- Putting your thumb through your index and middle fingers or making the "OK" sign are considered very rude gestures in Russia.
- Russians love entertaining guests in their homes. They will often put more food on the table than can be eaten to indicate there is an abundance of food (whether there is or not). Guests who leave food on their plates honour their host. It means they have eaten well.
- Business dress remains formal; for meetings, men generally wear shirts and jackets, and women, typically modest dresses. Wearing very light or bright colours might make you appear lazy or unreliable to a Russian.
- Greetings and introductions are often carried out with handshakes and on first-name terms. The use of titles and family names is unlikely in the majority of situations, and insisting on their use may come across negatively. Shaking hands should not be undertaken over a threshold as this is considered bad luck.
- Business cards are important to Russian business culture and are given out liberally. The ceremony of presenting and receiving business cards is important.
- Learning Russian, even just a small amount, will go a long way to helping you in a business or social situation.
- Drinking alcohol is an important cultural pastime in Russia. When drinking occurs, it is rarely done in moderation; it is advisable to be prepared for an all-or-nothing affair. After a toast, Russians like to clink glasses. This should not be done with a non-alcoholic drink.
- Tipping is not mandatory, but a tip of approximately 10 per cent is common in restaurants. In less formal settings, such as shops or cafés, servers may simply be told to “keep the change”.
- An overtly masculine culture still exists to a degree. Men will be expected to hold open the door for women, pay for meals etc.
- Never show the soles of your shoes as it is considered rude and they are considered dirty; do not let them come in contact with a seat.