

Northwest Russia: Facts and Events

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Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy Barbro Holmberg Visited St. Petersburg

Barbro Holmberg, Sweden's Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, had a meeting with Andrey Chernenko, Vice-Governor of St. Petersburg, at Smolny, St. Petersburg City Hall, on 23 March. The meeting was also attended by May Andersson, Consul General of Sweden in St. Petersburg, Leonid Bogdanov, Chairman of the St. Petersburg Committee for Justice, Legal Order and Safety, and Alexander Prokhorenko, Chairman of the St. Petersburg Committee on External Relations. The discussion was focused on visa procedures both for Swedish citizens visiting St. Petersburg and St. Petersburg inhabitants visiting Sweden, as well as the interaction between St. Petersburg and Sweden on migration issues.

Source: Vyacheslav Stepchenko, Press center of the Vice- Governor of St. Petersburg Andrey Chernenko, e-mail: press_center@gov.spb.ru

Russia to Become One of the Most Popular Tourist Destinations

World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has published its annual research on the situation in the world tourism branch and the forecast for its development in the nearest decade.

Russian Federation has been paid special attention in the research as one of the countries showing rapid development in the tourism branch. By 2014, Russia is expected to be ranked second in terms of travel and tourism capital investments. The growth in travel and tourism employment in 2004 will comprise 10%, which is the seventh highest result in the world. In 2004 Russia will see twice as many tourists as in the previous year.

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Privatization of City Hotels

The St. Petersburg Committee on City Property Management is planning to sell all City share holdings within the St. Petersburg hotel sector. This issue was discussed at the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry meeting on 25 March where Igor Metelsky, Chairman of the St. Petersburg Committee on City Property Management, announced the news to the executives of companies-members of the Chamber. According to Igor Metelsky, by selling its shares in the fixed capital of St. Petersburg hotels, the City will acquire sufficient funds. Privatization will also result in increased inflow of investments and improved service standards in the city hotel sector. The issue will be discussed at the City Executive Board in the nearest future.

Source: Press-center of St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, e-mail: pr@spbcci.ru

New Cruising Lines between St. Petersburg, Tallinn and Rostock

In the tourist season of 2004, two new ferry routes will connect St. Petersburg with other countries in the Baltic Sea Region.

From 1 April 2004 Estonian company *Tallink* is launching Tallinn-St. Petersburg –Helsinki cruise line that will be operated by *Fantaasia* vessel having 10 decks and the capacity of over 900 passengers. According to Tallink's marketing director, approximately 300-400 thousand passengers are expected to use the services of Fantaasia during the year, thanks to the interest towards St. Petersburg from abroad.

Silja Line company is starting the new ferry line St. Petersburg-Tallinn-Rostock from 17 June 2004. *Finnjet* ferry vessel that will serve the line, can take onboard 1800 passengers and 400 cars. According to Silja Line management, the new route will allow an increase in passenger stream from Russia by 50 thousand people per year.

Source: Piter-T newspaper, 26 March 2004; Ratanews – the electronic newsletter of the Russian Union of Travel industry, 26 March 2004

New Bill on Waste Handling in Leningrad Oblast

The Government of the Leningrad Oblast will within the next month consider a new Bill on Waste Handling proposed by Valery Serdukov, the Governor of the region. The idea of the Bill is to regulate the whole circle of waste treatment, as it is now stated in the corresponding Federal Law. The regional law contains two innovations, as compared to the Federal Law: it sets up limits for landfills and introduces the collection of payments for the waste imported into the Leningrad oblast. At the moment, more than 50% of waste from St. Petersburg is buried on the territory of the Leningrad oblast.

The Legislative Assembly of the Leningrad oblast has already approved of the Regional Targeted Environmental Programme, which in 2004 will provide over 30 million roubles (approximately 8.1 million SEK) for the construction of landfill areas. In 2005, it is planned to start the construction of waste treatment factories in the Leningrad oblast.

Source: Delovoy Peterburg, 22 March 2004.

New Forestry Code

The Government of the Russian Federation has approved the draft of the new Forestry Code. During this month the draft of the Code is going to be further elaborated by the Russian Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The new Forestry Code allows private ownership of forest lands. According to the Code, a leaseholder can purchase the forest land after 15 years of lease in case the regulations on its use have not been violated. The Code also offers a transparent procedure for granting rights of long-term use of forest lands based on lease contracts, with the terms of validity ranging between 10 and 99 years. In accordance with the long-term lease contract, the leaseholder is obliged to carry out forest restoration activities. One-year rent will still be available. The contracts for long-term lease of forest lands will only be signed upon the open tender procedures.

Source: Delovoy Peterburg, 19 March 2004

Conference *Innovations for Urban Development*

The 14th International conference of European and Russian cities within the frames of the Eurograd-XXI partnership *Innovations for Urban Development* will be held in St. Petersburg on 20-22 May. The conference organized by the *Eurograd Institute* is focused on implementation mechanisms for strategic projects, urban and regional marketing, public-private partnership in urban services, e-government, as well as networking and international cooperation of cities and municipalities.

Eurograd institute is a private independent institute founded in 1991 in St. Petersburg by the initiative of researchers from Russian Academy of Sciences especially for implementing and coordinating the partnership within the frames of the International Programme EUROGRAD-XXI.

Source: *St. Petersburg 2004. Calendar of events*, website: www.spbculture.ru

Aquaterra Fair and Conference

The 7th International Fair and Conference *Aquaterra* is taking place at Mikhailovsky Manege exhibition center in St. Petersburg on 15-17 June 2004.

The event is organized in particular by Russia's Ministry of Natural Resources, the City of St. Petersburg, city water supply company *Vodokanal* and the exhibition company *Restec*. The organizing committee is headed by Nikolay Tarasov, First Deputy Minister of Natural Resources. The conference and the exhibition will cover a large number of issues such as water resources, drinking and industrial water supply and water drainage, technologies and equipment, control and testing instruments etc.

The *Aquaterra* organizers invite all interested parties to submit registration forms for participating in the exhibition (by 15 May 2004) and the conference (by 1 June 2004).

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International Health Conference in St. Petersburg

On 20-21 April St. Petersburg is hosting the international conference "*Healthy Nation – Healthy City. How the Business Community, Society and Municipalities Can Contribute to the Favourable City Habitat*". The conference is arranged by the Interregional Charitable Foundation *Nation's Health and Soul* and The Russian Academy of Business and Commerce with the support from the Government of Russian Federation and the City of St. Petersburg.

Leading scientists and specialists within the healthcare field, representatives from education, physical culture and sports sectors, environmentalists, businessmen etc will take part in the forum. Important achievements within the improvement of healthcare and living standards in the cities of Russia will be awarded with special prizes and diplomas.

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New Private Clinic in St. Petersburg

A new private multi-profile clinic *Scandinavia* was opened in St. Petersburg in January 2004. Among the shareholders of the clinic are the Finnish company *Scanfert*, owner of AVA international clinics network, *RESO* insurance company and *Miihiläinen* – another network of private Finnish clinics.

The clinic started with a diagnostic department and outpatient reception. Maternity and surgery departments will be soon opened. The staff of the clinics will only consist of Russian specialists. However, it will be possible for them to consult West-European colleges when needed.

For the moment there are about 1000 private clinics in St. Petersburg, most of them specialising in stomatology and gynaecology. Only during the last year, about 30 medical centres appeared in the city.

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Modern and Classical Art in St. Petersburg

The IV Open Competition for Modern Choreographers was held in St. Petersburg on 18-20 March 2003. Dancers and choreographers up to 26 years old from all regions of Russia demonstrated their vision of the modern dance development. Apart from prizes, the winners were given the opportunity of free-of-charge participation in international festivals of modern dance.

The XII International Festival of Arts *Stars of the White Nights* will take place at Mariinsky Theater in May - June 2004. It is one of the most well-known music events in the world, attended by leading conductors, orchestras, dancers and singers from Europe and USA.

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The archive of the newsletters can be found at <http://www.stockholmregion.org/tpl/topic.asp?ID=457>

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