Join Catherine Crowston, Executive Director on this exclusive Art Gallery of Alberta Members Tour to experience the art treasures of the Hermitage as well as the palaces and museums of St. Petersburg and Moscow. Enjoy an intimate view of masterpieces of art and architecture that defined the grace and beauty of 18th and 19th century Imperial Russia. As a special treat, arrangements have been made for us to visit the Hermitage on a Monday when it is closed to the public. Examine the fine details of the newly restored Amber Room in the Catherine Palace and other sights in the “Tzars Village”. Delight in studying the stunning Forbes Collection of Imperial Easter Eggs at the just opened Fabergé Museum. Don’t miss the Russian Museum holding the finest collection of Russian art anywhere in the world. We will be in St. Peterburg during the White Nights Festival when the whole city lights up with the best of ballet, opera and symphonic delights at the world renown Mariinsky theatre. In Moscow we will visit the Kremlin, take in Red Square and St. Basil’s, one of the most photographed sites in the world. We will visit the Diamond Treasury Reserve beneath the Kremlin as well as the great art collections at the Treyakov and Pushkin Museums. Take the opportunity to enjoy a ballet at the Bolshoi Theatre only steps from our hotel. This truly is a trip of a lifetime!

INCLUDES:
- four nights hotel accommodation in St. Petersburg at the 5-star Anglettere Hotel (classic room)
- three nights hotel accommodation in Moscow at the 5-star Intercontinental Tverskaya Hotel (deluxe room)
- all transportation based on luxury private coach
- seven breakfasts | two lunches | one dinner
- economy class train from St Petersburg to Moscow
- arrival and departure transfer assistance
- fast track porterage
- museum curator/specialty expert guides for the Hermitage visits
- guides provided at all destinations
- sightseeing and meals as outlined in the itinerary
- gratuities
- privileged access to the Hermitage Museum
- all departure taxes

CONTACT: Robert Kaszanits
President, The Hermitage Foundation of Canada
613.850.3220 | kaszanits@sympatico.ca

CDNS pp dbl occ. Single supplement: $895. Not included: Airfare, any personal expenses, such as insurance, passport fees, any meals, or items not mentioned, theater performances. Space is limited on this hosted departure. Contact a Merit Travel Specialist for full terms and conditions.
Thursday, July 07: DEPART Edmonton

Day 1 – Friday, July 08
ARRIVE IN ST. PETERSBURG | (D)
A private coach will bring us to our hotel where our luggage will be fast tracked for our convenience. Check into the Angleterre Hotel. Rest up or enjoy a delightful stroll along the Neva embankment and the majestic Palace Square. Walk out on Palace Square and to Nevsky Prospect, the main thoroughfare for shopping and fashion in St. Petersburg all within a short walk. This evening enjoy a welcome dinner at the hotel restaurant with your group and we will review the week’s activities and answer any questions.

Day 2 – Saturday, July 09
PETERHOF PALACE & GROUNDS OR HERMITAGE / RUSSIAN MUSEUM | (B)
Today you can select to enjoy a day visiting the art galleries of the Hermitage Museum and the Russian Museums on your own or join us for a day at the Peterhof Palace and extensive grounds on the shores of the Gulf of Finland. The Lower Gardens of Peter the Great’s time are a masterpiece of Russian 18th century design. The park is a labyrinth of paths and ornate iron foot bridges, as well as Montplaisir, Peter’s cottage by the shore. Peterhof (Peters court) is a stunning formal summer palace, modelled after Versailles, but which possibly outdoes the original in grandeur and scope.

At 2 p.m. we will visit the Stroganoff Palace and continue to the state Russian Museum, home of the largest collection of Russian art in the world. Don’t miss the Benios block of Russian Avant-Garde art with works by Kadinsky, Chagall and Malevich among others. A not to be missed experience.

Day 3 – Sunday, July 10
FULL DAY AT THE CATHERINE PALACE | (B,L)
Travel by private coach to the Village of Pushkin and the Catherine Palace, summer retreat of Russian royals and visiting nobility for almost 300 years. Here you will see the legendary Amber Room, which was recently reconstructed. The room was so beautiful that the retreating Nazi armies tried to dismantle it and take it back to Germany. Only a small panel of the original room was ever recovered. Stroll the extensive grounds or take a carriage ride around the lake. Optional evening performance.

Day 4 – Monday, July 11
A FULL DAY AT THE HERMITAGE MUSEUM | (B,L)
Explore the wonders of their collections including the masterworks and interiors of the museum when it is closed to the public. The tour will focus on the European painting collection and the collection of decorative arts as well as the state rooms of the Winter Palace including the recently restored Memorial Hall of Peter the Great and the Large Throne Room where Nicholas II announced the sale of Alaska to the United States. In the Pavilion Hall we will see the world famous Peacock Clock 18th Century by James Cox of Britain. We will visit the Diamond Treasure Gallery of diplomatic gifts and the personal jewelry of the Romanovs. Lunch will be served in the Hermitage Museum.

We suggest an evening performance at the Philharmonic.

Day 5 – Tuesday, July 12
FABERGÉ MUSEUM / SAPSAN TRAIN FROM ST. PETERSBURG — MOSCOW | (B)
This morning we will visit the new Fabergé Museum to see the Forbes Collection of Fabergé eggs that Tsar Nicholas II gave to Empress Alexandra. It is absolutely stunning.

Afterwards transfer to the railway station for your Sapsan day speed train from St Petersburg – Moscow (economy class with hot meals onboard) approx. 4 hours. Arrive in Moscow and transfer to the 5-star hotel Intercontinental Tverskaya.

Day 6 – Wednesday, July 13
KREMLIN AND PUSHKIN MUSEUM | (B)
After breakfast, transfer to the Kremlin. This ancient walled fortress contains historic and richly decorated cathedrals around the square. In particular, you will experience the “Assumption”, the primary Church of Russian Orthodoxy and site of all manner of coronations, victory services and intrigues; the “Archangel”, the most Italianate of the Kremlin’s churches and home to the remains of everyone from Grand Prince Ivan Kalita to Tsar Ivan V; the “Annunciation”, the golden domed former private chapel of the Tsars with its famous icons; as well as the “Armory Palace”, which houses many of the treasures of the Tsars, such as ambassadorial gifts from the Eastern Sultans; the Coronation dress of Catherine the Great; splendid gilded carriages, and so much more. You will also tour of the Diamond Fund, deep in the heart of the Kremlin. Have lunch on your own.

Then transfer to the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts for a guided tour of its outstanding collections from the gold Treasures of Troy to European art from the 13th to 20th century. Delight in the large collection of French Impressionist paintings collected by Moscow businessmen Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov. In the evening complimentary transfers will be provided to the legendary Café Pushkin. We have made dinner table reservations for your group. Dinner is at your own expense.

Take your photo in front of St. Basil’s on Red Square and peek in to see the beautiful G.U.M. Department store also on Red Square.

Day 7 – Thursday, July 14
TRETYAKOV STATE GALLERY/GARAGE CONTEMPORARY GALLERY | (B)
Today your coach will take you to the Tretyakov State Gallery where over 100,000 works of art charter the development of Russian painting from the 10th to 19th centuries. You will also see the works of Kandinsky, Chagall and Malevich, all of whom brought international attention to Russian art at the beginning of the 20th century. Lunch will be on your own. In the afternoon enjoy a city tour of the Red Square and stand where tanks once paraded past Lenin’s tomb and where Napoleon watched Moscow burn. Take a walk around St. Basil’s Cathedral with its colourful domes, rising majestically from the cobbledstones like a fairy tale castle; You will also see Sparrow Hills and New Maiden Convent. Tonight your evening is at leisure.

Day 8 – Friday, July 15
RETURN TO CANADA | (B)
After breakfast, transfers will be arranged to the airport for your departure.

BREAKFAST INCL. (B), LUNCH INCL. (L), DINNER INCL. (D)

NOTE: The daily itinerary may change slightly as required to enhance the program.
RESPONSIBILITY
Merit Travel Group Inc. doing business as Merit Travel, acts solely as agents for the Travel Service Suppliers such as hoteliers, airlines, ground service operators, bus operators, etc. who are providing their facilities as described in this brochure. We do our best to select such suppliers but exercise no control over them and cannot be held responsible for the failure of these suppliers to carry out any obligations. Any and all bookings made with these suppliers by us, for you, are subject to the terms and conditions of each and every such supplier. Supplier liability may also be limited by law, tariffs, or conditions set forth in their documentation, tickets, etc. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, Merit and its directors, officers, employees, affiliates, successors, assigns, agents and other representatives are not responsible for any and all claims for losses, damages (whether direct, indirect, special, punitive, or other consequential damages, lost profits or opportunities) delays, illness, injuries, inconvenience, loss of enjoyment, or anxiety (whether based in contract, tort, negligence, strict liability or otherwise, and even if Merit and the Travel Service Suppliers have been advised of the possibility of damages to such party or any other party) arising from:
(a) Fault or negligence or omissions on the part of the said travel service suppliers;
(b) Illness, theft, strikes, mechanical problems, quarantine, governmental intervention, weather conditions, acts of hostility or violence, and any other ground beyond our control;
(c) Your failure to obtain passport, visas, other travel documents or inoculations;
(d) Your failure to advise us the name of the traveller exactly as it appears on the passport;
(e) Your failure to report on time at an airport or ground transfer facility;
(f) Material damages, theft or other mysterious disappearances of your goods;
(g) Personal injuries or death;
(h) Force Majeure - an event(s) beyond our, or our supplier(s), reasonable control including, but not limited to, acts of God, strikes, lockout or other labour disputes or disruptions, wars, blockades, insurrections, riots, earthquakes, weather conditions, floods or acts of restraints imposed by governmental authorities.

PRICING
All prices are per person in Canadian dollars unless otherwise noted. GST, HST and provincial taxes are applicable on tours as noted.

INCREASE IN TOUR COSTS
Merit reserves the right to increase tour prices in the event of an increase in government and airport authority imposed taxes and fees, fuel and currency surcharges, supplier price increases, or any other cost increase. If the increase is greater than 7% of the tour cost, the client may cancel the booking within seven days of notification and obtain a full refund.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE
A deposit of $1,000 per person is required at the time of booking. Full and final payment is due 90 days prior to departure (April 08, 2016).
Deposit requirements for some tours may vary. You will be advised of such cases at time of booking.

LIABILITY
Merit cannot assume responsibility for any costs incurred for any travel arrangements purchased separately from the Merit tour. Merit’s responsibility shall extend only to the provisions of advice as to industry-standard or supplier recommended connections and check-in times. Provided Merit supplies such advice, they shall not be responsible for missed connections or departures, regardless of the cause.

TRAVEL PROTECTION PLAN (INSURANCE)
Trip cancellation and interruption insurance, medical and hospital insurance, baggage insurance, and various additional insurances are available and HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. If you choose not to purchase insurance, you are required to sign an Insurance Waiver Form. Note that if you choose not to purchase insurance, you are fully liable for any and all penalties imposed as stated under Cancellation Policy on this page. Please speak to your representative at the time of making reservations about insurance.

REFUNDS
The nature of travel involves risks and unpredictable weather and thus Merit cannot assure any departure or arrival times at any point of an itinerary. Your right to receive a refund is limited.
There will be no discounts or monies refunded for any missed or unused services. Merit reserves the right to cancel the tour for any reason. Should this occur, a full refund will be made to the traveller.

CANCELLATION POLICY
While Merit will do its utmost to minimize any penalties charged, there are irrecoverable costs associated with your tour. The following penalties will be considered the costs incurred with cancellation:
(A) 90 days or more prior to departure: Loss of total deposit.
(B) 89 – 60 days prior to departure: Loss of 50% of total tour cost.
(C) 59 days or less prior to departure: Loss of 100% of total tour cost.
Cancellation penalties for some tours will vary and there may be additional penalties associated with the airfare. If so, these policies will be noted separately at time of booking and will prevail.

TOUR CHANGES
We reserve the right to substitute itineraries, hotels, airlines or vessels due to conditions beyond our control. In such cases we will do everything possible to ensure the locations visited, the excursions taken and the hotels offered are similar to the ones originally planned. Any change to itineraries will not result in eligibility for a refund.

REVISION FEE
Changes to your tour reservation might not be possible. Should you request a change and we are able to accommodate it, you will be subject to any charges imposed by the airline or tour suppliers. In addition, we reserve the right to charge a $50 revision fee for any change made after the deposit is paid. A change in name or departure date may constitute a cancellation, and the corresponding penalties may apply.

PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION
All passengers travelling internationally must travel with a passport. Many countries require the passport to be valid for 6 months beyond the traveller’s return date. Visas may be required for some destinations. It is the passenger’s responsibility to obtain at the passenger’s expense, all documentation required by all relevant authorities. In the event that the passenger does not possess the correct documentation, the air carrier has the right to refuse passage.

DESCRIPTION
Every effort has been made to describe and produce the travel services and photographs as accurately as possible in the printed tour description. However we reserve the right to correct errors and we will make all reasonable efforts to inform you should any significant changes occur.
Please note that the living standards and local conditions during your tour may be different from what you are accustomed to at home.

CONSENT
Your retention of tickets, reservations or bookings after issuance shall constitute your consent to the above terms.
If you encounter any concerns during your tour, please inform your local travel service provider. If the matter cannot be resolved, please inform Merit Vacations in writing upon your return.