The Seven Wonders of Russia Collection
The Seven Wonders of Russia

“The Seven Wonders of Russia Collection” is a thematic tourism project of Zelenski Destination Management Solutions created in a form of 7 tailor-made tour packages to familiarize international travelers with Russia’s top cultural and natural attractions.

Zelenski Destination Management Solutions offers an exciting opportunity to visit the 7 Russian wonders – top-voted national attractions, at some of the most amazing locations of the country.

Initially the “Seven Wonders of Russia” is a project organized by some of Russia’s top media channels in 2008 to identify 7 most amazing touristic spots of the country – the seven wonders of Russia.

The competition was held in three stages. During the first stage there was a collection of options and preliminary voting on them. Eventually, 49 wonders of the 7 federal districts of Russia were selected.

The second stage left only 14 finalists to take part in the grand finale. On June the 12th, 2008, after a secret voting that was carried out by SMS and Internet, 7 winners of the competition were announced on the Red Square.

Some of the original winners of the competition are located in extremely isolated locations thus the selection of original “wonders” was modified slightly leaving only accessible attractions.

Warmest regards from Russia
Chapter 1

St. Basil's Cathedral
St Basil’s Cathedral was originally constructed in 1555, under the orders of Tsar Ivan IV, also known as Ivan the Terrible. Ivan’s intention in building St Basil’s Cathedral was to celebrate his victory in the Russo-Kazan Wars, specifically the siege of Kazan and the cathedral’s name was derived from that of a Russian Orthodox saint called Vasily (Basil) the Blessed.

St Basil’s Cathedral consists of 9 individual churches based on the same foundation.

There is a legend, that when architects Barma and Postnik have finished building the cathedral, Ivan the Terrible asked them if they are able to build a Cathedral more beautiful than the first one. Ivan the Terrible was violent and frightening dictator, they were afraid of him and they said if he wants them to build, they will. Ivan blinded them so they can never build anything again in order to make St. Basil’s Cathedral a truly unique in it’s architecture.

The Cathedral has one highest church and eight side churches of different height surrounding the main one. It makes the cathedral look like a bonfire: churches are like flames, rising to the sky. Nothing similar was ever built in Russia.

The cathedral stands on the dais at the far end of Red Square, and when you come to the area, this majestic unusual cathedral with a square sprawling beneath him draws on all of your attention.
Chapter 2
Tsarskoye Selo
Tsarskoye Selo, St. Petersburg

Tsarskoe Selo, in the town called Pushkin near St. Petersburg, is one of the area's most impressive sights. The palace complex of Tsarskoe Selo (which means “Tsars' Village” in Russian) includes attractions that are popular draws on their own: the Catherine Palace and parks, the Alexander Palace and parks, and associated outbuildings that have been restored or renovated into exhibition spaces. The entire complex is a part of the UNESCO-protected Russian World Heritage site.

The world famous “Amber Room” at the Catherine Palace was recreated using more than 6 tons of amber and sometimes referred to as the “eighth wonder of the world”

Built for Empress Elizabeth by Bartolomeo Rastrelli, the architect of St. Petersburg's Winter Palace, the Catherine Palace is undoubtedly Tsarskoe Selo's top attraction, particularly renowned for the extraordinary Amber Room.

Less well known, and currently much more dilapidated, the Alexander Palace is nonetheless a neoclassical masterpiece, and has a particularly poignant connection with the family of the last Tsar, Nicholas II.

The town of Pushkin, which surrounds the Tsarskoe Selo estates, is St. Petersburg’s most charming suburb. Renamed in Soviet times to honor Russia's greatest poet, the town has numerous sights connected to Alexander Sergeevich, including a museum in the former Imperial Lycee, where he was schooled.

Like Pushkin, Tsarskoe Selo is one of St. Petersburg’s must-see attractions, and can easily occupy visitors for a full day. And, like Pushkin, it can be very crowded during the tourist high-season in the summer. Arrive early or be prepared to join long queues, especially for the Catherine Palace.
Chapter 3
Kizhi Island
The Kizhi Museum is one of the largest open air museums in Russia, located in the central Karelia region, easily reachable by train from St. Petersburg or Moscow. This unique historical, cultural and nature complex is a particularly valuable object of cultural heritage of the people of Russia. The basis of the museum collection – the Kizhi Ensemble – is the UNESCO World cultural and natural heritage site.

The wooden Kizhi Ensemble, built in the XVII century, is believed to be constructed without a single nail.
Chapter 4
Mamaev Kurgan
Mamayev Kurgan, Volgograd

Mamayev Hill or “Mamayev Kurgan” in Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) in Russia is a memorial complex dedicated to the Battle of Stalingrad. This battle was considered to be a defining moment in World War II in which the Russians defeated German forces, turning the tide of the war and starting a chain of events which would lead to the downfall of the Nazi powers.

At over 85 meters high the body of the monument is almost double the size of the Statue of Liberty in New York.

The Mamai Hill is a sacred place for the Volgograders and all the Russians. It is the highest point in Volgograd. During the Great Patriotic War the hill was called “Height 102”. The whole city can be seen from the top of the hill.

That’s why terrible fights were waged here for its possession. Stalingrad Battle lasted for 200 days and 135 days the Soviet troops fought for the “Height 102”. All the Mamai Hill was dug with bombs, projectiles and mines. Every 1 sq. meter of the Mamai Hill was covered with 500 – 1300 bullets and shells.

The burnt ground soaked with soldier’s blood after bombing was quite lifeless. Even grass didn’t grow there. After Stalingrad Battle the Mamai Hill became the brother’s grave for 34,5 thousand people fallen down defending the city and its population.

Making a project of the memorial complex took a lot of time. The building of it started only in May, 1959. The memorial complex “To the heroes of Stalingrad Battle” was opened in October 1967. It is considered to be one of the 7 wonders of Russia.
The Kul Sharif Mosque is one of the symbols of the Tatar people, the main icon of the Tatarstan, the well-known memorable construction and the major place of worship. This mosque has its own history, originating from the 16th century. Mosque-Museum of the Kazan Kremlin, Kul-Sharif is now part of the state reserve of the Kazan Kremlin.

The mosque dome is built in a form of a Kazan crown hat that used to be worn by the Kazan Khans. St. Basil’s cathedral domes in Moscow were designed by the same principle.

Kul Sharif Mosque, Kazan

The Kul Sharif Mosque, the main mosque of the Republic of Tatarstan was erected on the territory of the Kazan Kremlin in the early 2000s. Opening of the mosque took place on 24 June 2005 and was dedicated to the 1000-anniversary of Kazan.

It was built for 10 years, mainly on donations, which (according to some estimates) was attended by over 40 thousand citizens and organizations. Designers of the new mosque tried to recreate the main mosque of Kazan khanate, destroyed in 1552 by the troops of Ivan the terrible.

It was named in honor of the last Imam Seid Kul-Sharif.

The mosque complex includes a building of the mosque, the Museum of history of Islam on the territory of the Middle Volga region, room for the grand wedding ceremony (nikah) and an office of Imam.

In the main hall of the mosque books can be found with the names of all contributors to its construction. Also in this hall there is a large collection of gift editions of Koran in many deferent languages.
Chapter 6

Baikal Lake
Lake Baikal, Irkutsk

Lake Baikal (meaning "nature lake" from Buryat language) is the world's largest and deepest lake, and is located in the South-East Siberia near the city of Irkutsk. At more than 25 million years old, Baikal is also the world's oldest lake. The scale of the lake Baikal can be easier imagined, if compared to an area of some of the European countries – it approximately equals to the size of Belgium, Netherlands or Denmark!

Lake Baikal contains roughly 20% of the world's surface fresh water.

Lake Baikal which is often called the Well of the Planet or the Pearl of Siberia is one of the world's renowned wonders attracting thousands of tourists each year.

With its pure water, unique nature, abundant flora and fauna and original culture of the indigenous people Baikal has become one of the top tourist attractions both in Russia and the world.

Lake Baikal is home to more than 2,000 species of plants and animals, two-thirds of which can be found nowhere else in the world, including the Baikal omul fish which can only be tasted here as well as the nerpa, one of the world's only freshwater species of seal.

Baikal can be called a sunny lake - the number of sunny days in its surroundings are almost a record for Russia. On Olkhon island, which divides the Baikal on the so-called Big and Small seas, for example, there are only 48 cloudy days a year.
Chapter 7

Volcanos of Kamchatka
Kamchatka is a 1,250km-long peninsula in Russian Far East. Kamchatka is extremely geologically active and has numerous volcanoes, geysers, hot springs, and even a lake of acid! It contains the southernmost expanse of arctic tundra in the world and is notable for its wealth of arctic wildlife, fish, game, and marine life. Furthermore, nineteen of Kamchatka's volcanoes constitute the "Volcanoes of Kamchatka" UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In the USSR mysterious Kamchatka Peninsula was one of the most "closed" areas. Until 1990, no foreigner could enter the land of Kamchatka, and even Russians needed a special pass.

Kamchatka climate is diverse and numbers several climate zones, divided along alpine, coastal and geothermal lines. Summer and autumn months are the most popular among tourists when max temperatures range from 15°C to 30°C. The high season lasts from June to September.

There are no roads connecting Kamchatka with other parts of Russia. Indeed, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski is the second-largest city in the world which cannot be reached by road. Arriving by plane is the only practical way of reaching Kamchatka. There are regular flights from Moscow or St. Petersburg and other major Russian cities.