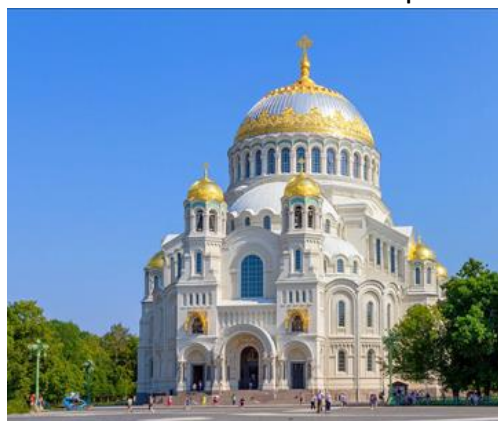




The best weekend plan is an escape from the city away from the hustle and bustle to the serene coast of the Gulf of Finland. A noisy highway connects the coast with the amazing island of Kronstadt in the Gulf of Finland.

Kronstadt is a city where almost all sights are connected with the history of the navy and the sea. The city is located on Kotlin Island and was founded by Peter the Great in 1704 to protect St. Petersburg. The location turned out to be so fortunate that not a single enemy ship passed by in its entire history. It is worth starting to explore it from the main naval temple of Russia - St. Nicholas Naval Cathedral. In 1903 a solemn foundation of the cathedral took place in the presence of Emperor Nicholas II. A salute of 31 salvos was fired from the arms of the ships that were in the raids. On the same day the emperor, his family and entourage planted 32 young oaks in the square around the cathedral. The cathedral was carefully restored by 2013. The immense opulent dome is decorated with gilded anchors and crowned with a cross and is clearly visible in fair weather from other shores of the bay. There are images of various fishes, algae, underwater monsters and ships on the paved marble floor. Names of heroic sailors are immortalized in gilded letters on 130 black marble slabs along the perimeter. On the last Sunday of July on Navy Day, Kronstadt becomes the venue for the main naval parade.



There is no better place than the sandy beaches on the shore of the Gulf of Finland for a romantic walk or a picnic at sunset which is just 40-minute drive from the center of St. Petersburg. For its exquisite beauty, this coast is called the "Northern Riviera". The jewel of the Kurortny district is the Laskovy ("Gentle") beach with sand dunes

surrounded by ship pines. As a symbol of endless and freedom, the sculptural composition "Seagulls" was created in 1969 to decorate the entrance to the beach. It's perfect for outdoor enthusiasts: beach volleyball players gather here and on a windy day extreme surfers tame the Baltic wave.



A little further on the coast I advise art connoisseurs to visit the estate of the well-known Russian artist Ilya Repin "Penates" in the village of Repino. Its relative closeness to the capital enabled the artist to create in peace while not feeling cut off from "society life. He was enchanted by the nearby sea and the severe local nature. The estate is quite small, with no brilliance or grandeur - it is an amazing complex with ponds, little bridges, lanes and a restored wooden house, in which the artist had his studios. On the painted wooden gates of the estate Repin depicted the Penates - the Roman gods who were the guardians of the hearth and home.

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