

# HARPER'S

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weekend guide

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cool bold  
prints

## SUMMER OF TRAGEDY

The 26 days that  
finally destroyed  
the Kennedys  
By Carole Radziwill

# Free spirit

*Thandie Newton on life after  
'Crash', & her battle for respect*





RIGHT, FROM TOP:  
THE PALACE  
BRIDGE. THE  
CHURCH OF  
OUR SAVIOUR ON  
SPILLED BLOOD



CLOCKWISE FROM  
ABOVE: GLASS  
SWIZZLE STICKS,  
THE GRAND  
HOTEL EUROPE. A  
BARMAN MIXING  
A VODKA COCKTAIL.



# Tsars in their eyes

*Party in the palaces on a decadent weekend in St Petersburg, the city where the sun never sets, say ELEANOR SOUTHALL and KATYA GALITZINE*

Not so long ago, there was only one party in Russia – the Communist party; but now St Petersburg is the ideal place to hold the decadent party of your dreams. Almost all the grand palaces can be hired, and the huge ballrooms are perfectly designed for big events. Elton John played for 100 guests at the Catherine Palace; Valentino arrived incognito with his best friends Stella McCartney and Gwyneth Paltrow to celebrate his birthday here; and last summer was crowned by a three-day fancy-dress masquerade, during which the bright young things of Europe danced wildly in country palaces. Aim to visit in June during the White Nights, when the sun skirts the horizon and people take to the streets for revelries until the early hours. KG

## FRIDAY EVENING

We arrive, and go straight to the Grand Hotel Europe, which is steeped in history and just off the main drag of Nevsky Prospekt. We

head out for some leisurely sightseeing, and find that there are revellers everywhere enjoying the celebratory White Nights atmosphere. The canals reflect the evening sun and everything is bathed in a beautiful light; it's reminiscent of the waterways of Venice.

At Yeliseevsky, a sophisticated art nouveau food store on Nevsky Prospekt opposite the statue of Catherine the Great, we stock up on borscht and vodka. The decor and food at Onegin, 11 Sadovaya Ulitsa (+7 812 571 8384), tempt us to go in for dinner, and we stay to watch the beautiful people who come to dance. At midnight we head to the river to join the crowd gathering to watch the raising of the bridges (but don't stay on the wrong side, as you won't be able to get back across until the morning). We wander back through the park where, in the dusky light, wily old chess players sit battling it out over well-worn boards. The sight, at 2am, is surreal.

## SATURDAY MORNING

We sleep in and order breakfast in bed as we fantasise about throwing a wild party at one of the palaces.

## SATURDAY AFTERNOON

By noon we are soaking up the sunshine and blowing away the cobwebs from last night on a boat steaming across the Gulf of Finland to Peter's Palace. Feeling lazy and decadent when we arrive, we opt to take a *troika* (a horse-drawn carriage) to ensure we see all of the grounds and the fountains. We marvel at the sheer scale of the palace – it was modelled on Versailles and is no less impressive.

## SATURDAY EVENING

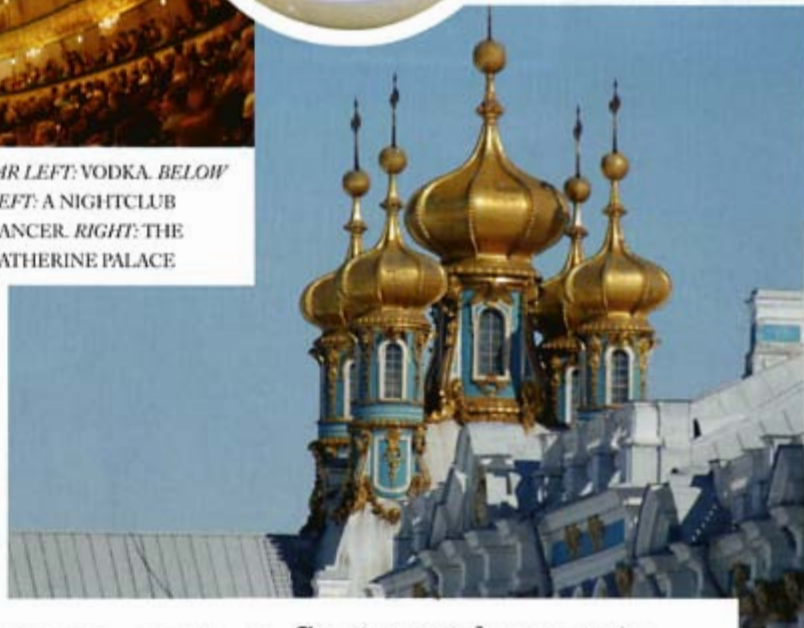
We get dressed up for a night out at the Mariinsky Theatre (+7 812 326 4141), home of the Kirov Ballet, for a breathtaking performance of *Swan Lake*. During the interval



FROM LEFT: INSIDE THE MARIINSKY THEATRE. A BOWL OF BORSCHT. A PARTYGOER



FAR LEFT: VODKA. BELOW LEFT: A NIGHTCLUB DANCER. RIGHT: THE CATHERINE PALACE



(with champagne and caviar), the audience takes a stroll around the hall; it's an excellent spot for people-watching. At the first curtain call, we run out, bottles of champagne in hand, and jump into a boat for a cruise along the canals – the perfect way to see more of the beautiful palaces and soak up the atmosphere. Revellers line the streets, and impromptu parties spill out of bars along the way. Hungry, we steer for Violet, Pl Lomonosova (+7 812 713 5207), a sleek, contemporary restaurant that serves excellent sushi and Asian food. It's past midnight and still light as we walk across the Fontanka canal to Decadance, 17a Sherbakov Pereulok (+7 812 974 7070), the latest chic nightclub with the best DJs.

## SUNDAY MORNING

We wake just in time for the hotel's huge Sunday brunch – for those who can stomach it – and there are plenty of fresh juices for those who can't.

## SUNDAY AFTERNOON

There's just time for a quick stroll to the nearby Church of Our Saviour on Spilled Blood with its fantastic domes and baroque

decorations. We also spend a couple of hours in the State Hermitage Museum (+7 812 710 9625), home to one of the world's largest art collections, enjoying a leisurely look around before the flight home.

*Grand Hotel Europe, Mikhailovskaya Ulitsa 1-7 (+7 812 329 6000; www.grandhotелеurope.com).* *Steppes Travel (01285 651010; www.steppes-travel.co.uk) offers three nights B&B from £1,200 a person, including flights and transfers. This year's White Nights Festival runs from now until 26 July.* □

## Create your dream party

*POTEL ET CHABOT (+7 812 387 4464). This reputable French catering company will create food for your party in a classic style.*

*PODVORIE (+7 812 466 8543; dmitgut@rol.ru). This firm does probably the best catering and décor à la Russe, and also provides a stuffed bear holding a tray of vodka for every party.* *KATSUBA PRODUCTIONS (+7 812 932 7805; katsuba@hotmail.com). Should you want your party dreams brought to life, this firm has a good reputation and great imagination. KG*

## IF YOU LIKE THIS, TRY... LONDON

*Five reasons to head to the capital for a party weekend*

- 1 For the unparalleled party-outfit shopping – try Brompton Cross and Chelsea.
- 2 You're spoilt for choice for restaurants; refuel before your evening out at La Famiglia, 7 Langton Street, SW10 (020 7351 0761); Eight Over Eight, 392 King's Road, SW3 (020 7349 9934); Cocoon, 65 Regent Street, W1 (020 7494 7600); or Nobu Berkeley, 15 Berkeley Street, W1 (020 7290 9222).
- 3 Start the night with cocktails at Sketch, 9 Conduit Street, W1 (0870 777 4488).
- 4 Avid partygoers should book into the slick Baglioni Hotel, 60 Hyde Park Gate, SW7 (020 7368 5700) – the nightclub downstairs adds a decadent edge.
- 5 Recover with lunch at the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens, W8 (020 7402 6075). *Hip Hotels London (Thames & Hudson), the first in a new series of city guides by Herbert Ypma, is out now, priced £12.95.*

