Perhaps the most well known drink in the world, VODKA is the most popular alcoholic drink in Russia. Although vodka originated in Poland around the early 1400’s, Russia has perfected the drink over the years. The world enjoys fine Russian vodka exported from Russia itself. Over the centuries, many different types and tastes of vodka have been created. Polish merchants first brought vodka to Russia during the Kievan Rus era in history. Originally thought to be a cure for disease and sickness, vodka had quickly turned into a favorite drink of the countries of Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. The "vodka belt" consists of mainly Slavic countries of Eastern Europe, and the three Scandinavian countries of Finland, Sweden, and Norway.

The word vodka comes from the Russian word for water, “вода.” Typically called dangerous water in some areas in Russia, vodka is usually the first thing that comes to mind when someone says Russia in a different country. In several countries around the world, if vodka does not contain a minimum of 40% of alcohol, then it is not vodka! In Russia, vodka was at first a drink for royalty. Perhaps the most famous brand of vodka is Smirnoff. This vodka brand came about in the 14th century by Sydnayaska Krueger. Smirnoff grew into a favorite of many around the world over the years. Also brands like Nemiroff (Ukrainian), Stolichnaya, Russkiy Standard, and Putinka (named after President Putin) are well known worldwide. In 1911, vodka accounted for 89% of all the alcohol consumed in Russia. Nowadays, vodka is produced in factories all around the world. St. Petersburg is home to the museum of vodka, which is a great museum with even a tour and vodka sampling at the end of the tour. The vodka museum is a must see place when in St. Petersburg.

There are so many great vodka brands in Russia, but we had to narrow it down to the five one must try when in Russia:

- Russian Standard Platinum - Distilled in St. Petersburg, Russian Standard always leaves you satisfied with its smooth taste.
- Kauffman Luxury - A king among vodka, Kauffman comes a close second.
- Stolichnaya Elit - A Russian favorite, its expensive but is crisp, fresh, and great quality.
- Parliament International - Inexpensive and great, tastes like a 100-dollar bottle of vodka.
- Tsarskaya - The king’s vodka comes in 5th, great tasting vodka also!
And what is YOUR favourite brand of Vodka and why?