

Grand Kremlin Palace

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Moscow, the Kremlin included, was temporarily discontinued. It was not until the 1740s that the famous architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli, commissioned by Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, renovated the czar's palace which had fallen into decay and erected a splendidly ornamental building on the old 15th-century foundations. The construction of the present Grand Kremlin Palace was started in 1839 and lasted 11 years. Czar Nicholas I, in whose reign it was built, intended to emphasize the idea of greatness of the Russian autocracy by the immense size of the building. The new palace was 125 meters long and had a total floor area of some 25,000 square meters. It contains several old royal suites, the Terem Palace, the Golden Chamber of the czarina, nine churches dating from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, and over 700 separate rooms. The west building housed state reception rooms and the imperial family's private apartments. The noted Russian architect Konstantin Ton, Academician of Architecture and Nicholas I's favorite architect, projected and supervised the building. He was the founder of the eclectic "Russian-Byzantine style" which was officially promoted in Russia at the time. In addition to the Grand Kremlin Palace and the Armory in the Moscow Kremlin, he also designed the famous Moscow Church of Christ Our Savior. The buildings of the palace form a rectangle enclosing an inner courtyard. Its main, south facade faces the Moscow River. Because of its three rows of windows and substantial height (about 47 meters), the palace appears to be three stories high, but in fact there are only two, for the windows of the top floor are set in two tiers.