Before becoming a city, St. Petersburg was a utopian vision in the mind of its founder, Peter the Great. Conceived by him as Russia’s window to the West, it evolved into a remarkably harmonious assemblage of baroque, rococo, neoclassical, and art nouveau buildings that reflect his taste and that of his successors, including Anna I, Elizabeth I, Catherine the Great, and Paul I. Crisscrossed by rivers and canals, this Venice of the North, as Goethe dubbed it, is of unique beauty. Never before has that beauty been captured as eloquently as on the pages of this sumptuous volume. From the stately mansions lining the fabled Nevsky Prospekt to the magnificent palaces of the tsars on the outskirts of the city, including Peterhof, Tsarskoe Selo, Oranienbaum, Gatchina, and Pavlovsk, photographer Alexander Orloff’s portrait of St. Petersburg does full justice to the vision of its founder and namesake. The text, by art historian Dmitri Shvidkovsky, chronicles the history of the city’s planning and construction from Peter the Great’s time to the reign of the last tsar, Nicholas II. Anyone who has ever visited—or dreamed of visiting—the city of white nights will find St. Petersburg irresistible.

My Personal Review:
While I’m still making my way through the in-depth text of the book (a pleasant surprise, for a “pretty coffee table book”!) it is a beautiful book to leaf through, photographically. I’ve just completed Arthur L. George’s terrific history St. Petersburg: Russia’s Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries, and this has been a wonderful visual to accompany that, and prepare / excite me for my first visit to the city. (As a long-time architecture buff, I really appreciate the narratives that accompany the often-dazzling creations from 3 centuries of construction, as captured and beautifully presented in this book; although I do think a tiny number of the many images have not enlarged as successfully or cleanly as they should.) Beyond the marvel of the Hermitage/Winter Palace, the book is shaping my tourist agenda for what I need to see in person, once I get there.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price: