

## TIPS AND TRICKS FOR YOUR SUCCESSFUL STAY IN MOSCOW

You will find out very quickly, that things work differently in Moscow than in other western European countries or in the US. Therefore, we have put together at short list with some important aspects to ensure you a pleasant stay.

### Asking information

A lot of information is difficult to access for foreigners due to the lack of public postings and online information systems. Also, laws and rules change everyday, so that nobody can keep track of everything. The number one rule is:

"Ask as many people as you can. If more than half tell the same, the probability that it is correct is very high."

It may well be, that people on the street also approach you with questions. You may simply try to respond in English or say я не знаю ("Ya ne snau"), I don't know. Here is a list of important numbers and agencies that provide information for tickets, museums, telephone numbers, addresses, flights etc.

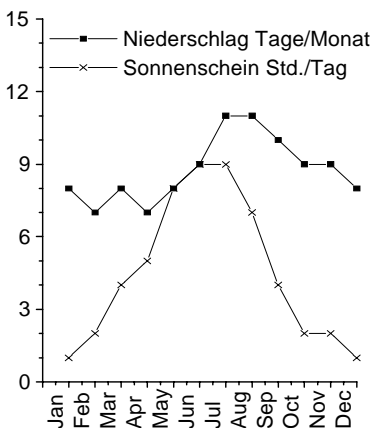
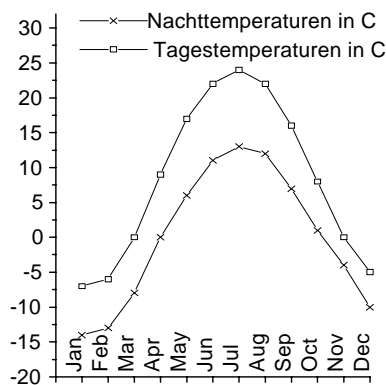
- general information (theater program, concerts, addresses): 05 or from public phones: 292 53 81
- phone directory service for Moscow: 09
- general information (phone numbers, addresses, concerts, events) 927 00 09
- lost & found: 923 87 53 (buses), 222 20 85 (metro)
- emergency calls: fire department: 01, police: 02, medical aid: 03
- medical assistance: 255 00 06, 205 05 50, 303 13 33
- Intourist: 923 85 75, 923 88 40 (Fax: 230 23 87, 924 84 81)
- information on Russian railway: all numbers from 266 99 00 to 266 99 99, railway tickets: 266 83 33
- information on international flights (Aeroflot): 156 80 02, 155 09 22
- Moscow State University Language Center: Tel. 939 51 49, Fax 939 56 92, Telex: 411 483 MGU SU

A large collection on important and useful addresses can be found in 'All M o s c o w', a publication usually sold on streets for a few dollars or at the publisher 'All Moscow, Tschistoprudnij Boulvar 8, Tel. 925 13 27, 925 55 81.

### Books

The largest selection of books can be found at the famous Dom Knigi, Arbatskaja 26 (former Kalinina 26), open everyday from 11<sup>00</sup>-20<sup>00</sup>. They also sell antiques and music. For classic literature and dictionaries, go to the library called Progress, at Zubovskij Boulvar 25, open daily. A lot of people are trying to sell books on the streets where you may be able to make good bargain buys. Try it out.

### Clothes



The summer in Moscow is comparable with northern European summers, hot but with frequent showers. So, don't forget a sweater and raincoat. Nights and evenings can get cold even in July and August, so bring enough warm clothes. People usually dress casually, and jeans are quite acceptable even for a visit to the Bolshoi Theater. In churches, you should always wear clothing covering your shoulders and wrist. In some orthodox churches outside Moscow, females may be asked to wear special long trousers and a scarf. Shoes should be strong, light

and comfortable, as you will have to walk a lot while touring around Moscow. During winter times (November - March), warm clothing is essential.

## **Cockroach (Tarakani)**

Cockroaches are sometimes called domestic animals of Moscow since they populate many Russian homes, especially student dorms. They are active only at night, harmless, but able to eat away all accessible food within hours. Usually, people would leave on lights all night in the kitchen to prevent cockroaches. The university has several times fought against them using chemicals and other means, and in general, succeeded in expelling them from the main campus.

## **Eating out**

A Russian Restaurant is not only a place to eat out, but also a place to be entertained. Usually, live bands will play from 20<sup>00</sup>-24<sup>00</sup> and people will sing and dance. The quality of the bands is usually measured by the volume rather than by the quality of the sound. Eating times are different from Western European habit:

Lunch: 14<sup>00</sup>-15<sup>00</sup>  
Dinner: 19<sup>00</sup>-21<sup>00</sup>

For small dishes, you may also consider Cafes to eat out. They are usually cheaper and don't have music. Prices for a meal are around 5 \$, 5-10\$ in a cheap restaurant. Middle class and exquisite restaurants charge 2-5 times more. Bringing your own wine/drinks is not allowed. Tipping is not required, but always welcome for good service.

## **Electricity**

Electricity in Russia is 220 V 50 Hz AC. Sockets require a European-type plug or adapter. Phone and modem jacks are different from other European countries or the US, and you might want to bring a converter if you need to work online with your computer. Trains usually provide sockets for electric razors.

## **Entertainment**

The university offers numerous entertainment possibilities such as films, concerts, theaters, discos, excursions, etc. Look out at the message boards. Moscow offers a rich variety of cultural events, operas, theaters, concerts etc. The best night clubs and discos are usually found attached to big hotels.

## **Export**

Antiques and pieces of art such as 'paintings, drawings, sculptures, icons, books and pieces of archeological value' are generally forbidden to export. However, with permission of the Russian ministry of culture, info: 925 11 95, and a 100% tax of the estimated value, export is officially allowed. This procedure is lengthy and time consuming and only worth if you want to experience the Russian bureaucracy. An easier way is to pay a "commission" to the customs officer at the airport, which in general will not exceed USD 100. Try to avoid obvious bribing by offering money.

Customs will also inform you about maximum allowance of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and money to export. The most severe restriction is imposed on money. Generally, you are not allowed to take out more than USD 500 per person. You will be asked to fill out a customs declaration when you enter and leave the country. Please make sure that your indications are accurate for at least the parts of luggage you want to show a customs officer when being asked to present the valuables declared. Exporting other goods for commercial purpose is strictly regulated. Inquire in our office for questions.

## **Family**

If a Russian family hosts you for your accommodation, you will very soon take part of their everyday life. There might be things that you don't agree on or that are unknown to you. We expect you to be willing to learn and respect. To avoid misunderstandings, set times for meals and using bathrooms and showers. We expect you to be generous to the family if

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Switzerland: Tel./Fax: (+41 21) 791 39 65, US: Tel./Fax (+1 510) 644 37 45, Moscow: Tel./Fax: (+7 095) 939 09 80*

they organize theater tickets, visits of museums, excursions, etc. You may also buy fruits or goods they generally do not have. Should you have serious disputes or should you not at all be satisfied with your stay in a family, please report to our representatives and ask for possible solutions. We might be able to find another family or organize accommodation at Moscow State University instead.

## ***Gifts / etiquette***

Russians are great present givers and will present you with souvenirs when invited at Russian homes. Great gifts to give include specialties from your home town or country, chocolate, coffee, key rings, baseball caps, army knives, foreign coins or badges, watches, perfumes, etc. All Western goods are usually available in Moscow now, so don't bother with goods you think Russians still be deprived of. The days where a pair of jeans equaled a month's salary are long gone. If you are invited to private homes for dinner, bring a bottle of wine, candies, fine tobacco or a bouquet of flowers (odd number of flowers). A small gift for children is always appropriate. Be prepared to accept all drinks and food offered when visiting friends. Refusing a drink or a toast is a serious breach of etiquette.

## ***Holidays***

National holidays are many in Russia. If a holiday falls on Thursday, then Friday and Saturday may also be a holiday. If a holiday falls on the weekend, then Monday will be generally considered as a holiday.

1 Jan New Year  
7 Jan Russian Orthodox Christmas Day  
13 Jan Russian Orthodox New Year  
15 Feb Defenders of the Motherland Day  
8 Mar International Women's Day  
22 Apr Lenin's Day  
April/May, Russian Orthodox Easter  
1 May Day of Spring and Labour  
9 May Great Victory Day  
12 June Independence Day  
22 Aug Holiday in honor of the defeat of the 1993 coup  
7-8 Nov Anniversary of the October Revolution, now called Grief Day  
12 Dec Constitution Day

Universities including Moscow State University start on September 1st, and finish on July, 1st with a winter break from January 25th to February 8th.

## ***Luggage***

Always take your valuables and documents into your hand luggage. Carry money and passports underneath your cloths to prevent losses from robberies, which occur frequently at train stations or airports. Always lock your luggage with a separate lock, since cases of theft have been reported even from airport workers opening pieces of luggage.

## ***Medical aid***

Take your own medication with you, since you will not know whether your preferred or prescribed medication is available. Western pharmacies can be found at

- 'Litpharm', Ul Tschernjachovskogo 4, Tel: 155 87 88, 155 70 80
- 'Pharmakon', Ul. Tverskaja 4, Tel 292 08 43, 292 03 01
- 'Sana', Ul. Nischn. Pervomaiskaja 65, Tel 464 12 54
- Hotel 'Mezhdunarodnaya'

There is a medical center on the university campus where you have access in case an emergency. A small fee may be asked to cover material costs. If you wish to cover general medical treatment for non-emergencies, you may purchase a 60\$ per month medical insurance from the same center. Please inquire in our office for details.

There are also several Western European Medical Centers that offer medical services

- European Medical Center (per. 2nd Tverskoi-Yamskoi 10), emergency Tel. 251 6099
- American Medical Center (pr. Shmitovsky 3), Tel. 956 3366

Make sure your insurance will cover the costs at these clinics. Entering the clinics, you might be asked to make a deposit by credit card.

No vaccinations are required for Western tourists visiting Moscow and Russia in general. If you spend more than 3 months in Russia, you must present evidence of a recent negative AIDS test when applying for a visa.

## **Money**

Hard currency is still required in Moscow to survive even though a number of restaurants, bars and expensive shops accept credit cards. Cash advancements on credit cards are possible in several banks, but commissions usually as high as 2-5% in addition to the commission required from you issuing bank are imposed. There are several ATM's for EC International that spit out roubles. Inside the University, at least three ATM's are reported to work. Your issuing bank of your credit card will be able to tell you exact locations in Moscow for ATM's.

Hard currency should be used in small denominations like \$1 to \$20. For larger changes at currency exchange offices, \$50 or \$100 bills should be used. Make sure that all you \$ notes are new and in immaculate condition, since torn, creased or strongly worn notes will be rejected by banks. Usually, a minimal amount of \$50-\$100 is asked to change to get good exchange rates. Russia introduced new roubles in 1998, devaluating the old roubles by a factor of 1000. The old roubles notes from 1996-1997 are still valid though: a 10000 note from 1996 will actually be worth 10 new roubles. However, be aware, that all notes from 1991, 1993 and 1995 are no longer valid as a matter of strange currency policies by the Russian Central bank (to undermine claims that regions had printed their own notes that were flooding to Moscow, etc.).

As a result of the desolate economic situation, the yearly inflation rate is estimated to grow to 30-50% for 1999. Also, the exchange rate for roubles is oscillating strongly.

## **Passport photos**

It is good advice to take 5-10 passport photographs with you that you will need to establish your student card, library card, monthly transportation cards, etc. Photos are hard to get in Moscow unless to take pictures of yourself with your own apparatus.

## **Phone calls**

Local calls are free from private phones. Public phones require phone cards or 1 rouble coins. The coins are difficult to find and cost up to 1\$. International phone calls are possible from most private phones and from our office. Also public phones with calling cards now offer to possibility to call abroad without the hassle of going to the central telegraph station to order a call, wait for 1-2 hours to make the connection, just to know in the end that the line was busy. You may always use our FAX number to send and receive faxes.

Our office (Ziegler & Partner): 007 095 939 09 80 (Farid Valitov)  
Russian Language Center: 007 095 939 56 92 (Prof. Pautov)

## **Photographing, films**

Even though there are officially no restrictions, people still consider filming or photographing railway stations, military installation, airports, etc. unlawful. Using flashes in churches or performances is not allowed. Museums usually ask for special fees if you want to take flash pictures. Film material and development agencies are abundant.

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## **Security**

Visiting Moscow as a tourist can still be considered safer than visiting New York even though business and Mafia related crime has reached unprecedented highs. Beggars, especially gypsy children, will occasionally bother tourists. You should ignore them and walk away. Robberies and thefts have been reported at airports and train stations. So, watch out carefully for your luggage. Metro stations are safe even if you might find some drunken people returning home late at night. It is always best to be in a group of 2 or more. Official taxis are safe to ride, though expensive. A money-belt is essential to safeguard your documents and cash. You may also want to put your valuables into a safe at our office in Moscow or at the Russian Language Center. Moscow State University itself has a strict security system. In fact, all the university buildings, including the dorms, require an entry pass (called propusk) that you should always wear with you.

## **Sport events**

Tickets for sport events are usually sold at the sport stadium. There is a huge sport complex near the university, where ice hockey games are played during the season. Other popular sports are soccer games. The university campus offers a huge variety of sports. You may also join a group of soccer players in the fields outside the main building.

## **Tickets for travel**

Tickets are usually sold at the train stations where the trains bound for your destination leave. So, ask for tickets to St.Petersburg at the Leningradski train station, to Kazan and middle Asia, at the Kazanski train station, to Western Europe at Belorusski station, for Trans-Siberian trains (except No 26 to Novosibirsk via Kazan, which leaves from Kazanski) from Yaroslavski (metro Komsomolskaya) station. If you make purchases, you need to know the number of the train, the date you want to leave and the time the train leaves, in advance, since ticket clerks will not advise you on possible train connections, but just tell you whether there are places available for the train and destination you cite. Information on train schedules is available in all the train stations, both in written tables and on computers.

Tickets must be purchased within 2-5 days prior to departure. Usually, only one way tickets can be issued, and you have to buy the return ticket after arrival at your destination. Always bring your passport and valid identification with you to make reservations. As a foreigner, you will be asked to go to special ticket offices for foreign individuals. Unfortunately, prices will be higher than for Russians. If you fluently speak Russian, you can try to obtain discounted tickets with your Russian student identity card issued by MGU if you are taking language courses. These discounts can amount to 90% of the price you would pay as a foreigner. All tickets must be paid in roubles.

For reservations and tickets with several stops, the company TRANSAGENSTVO located at the corner of Ul. Petrovka, Stolesnikov per is a good address (at least in 1996 and 1997). They make both train and air ticket reservations.

Tickets for local trains within Greater Moscow (Elektritschnaja) can be bought at the train station without passports or identification. Just ask people around where to buy the corresponding ticket to your destination.

Metro tokens (called 'jetons') and magnetic cards for multiple rides are available at all metro stations in the entrance hall. One token is good for an unlimited number of rides, unless you exit the metro station. One token costs about 30 cents. Trains are running from 06<sup>00</sup>-01<sup>00</sup>, usually every 5 minutes during rush hours and every 10-20 minutes at later at night.

Bus tickets are available in strips or booklets from people outside all metro stations or from bus drivers. Don't forget to punch the bus tickets inside the bus. If the bus is crowded and you can't reach, pass your money (if you want to buy tickets) or ticket to someone else who will pass it to the driver or the punching machine.

## **Tickets for ballet, circus, theater, concerts.**

Programs and tickets for all cultural events are usually available at small kiosks on streets or outside metro stations. Programs and available places are posted on the window. Don't expect the selling person to advice you with tickets. Tickets for the Bolshoi-theater (the season is from September-Mai, during the Summer the Bolshoi is closed) can be purchased from our office. Tickets for the circus next to the university can also be bought at special ticket offices outside the circus prior to the opening (usually at 19<sup>00</sup>).

Moscow has a number of excellent theaters playing classic and modern Russian pieces. Our favorites are

- drama theater, Ul. Malaja Bronnaja 2
- Gogol theater, Ul. Kazakova 8
- Gorki art theater, new house, Tverkoj Boulvar 22
- small theater, Pl. Sverdlova 1
- satire theater, Ul. Sadovaja Bolschaja

The best musicals are performed at the musical theater, Ul. Puschkinskaja 6

Lomonosov State University offers a variety of cultural events throughout the academic year in their own theater, concert hall and cinemas. Inquire at the Russian Language Center for tickets.

## **Teachers**

If you book individual tuition, we want you to feel comfortable and in good relationship with your personal teacher. However, for some reason, you may want to change to another teacher. Let us know of any problems as soon as you encounter them. We will always try to find a solution. However, we also ask you to be tolerant and respect local habits.

## **Vodka ('little water')**

Vodka is the national drink, which is always ordered in grams (50g or 100g) and usually served pure, non-chilled. You may also buy bottles of vodka in stores. Vodka that is sold on the street is usually of bad quality or simply diluted industrial alcohol. Some reliable brands are Crystal, Moskovskaya, Absolute (Swedish though), Stolitschnaja Export, and Kremlievskaja. On the campus, no alcoholic beverages must be sold, however, the fire department in the main building of MGU on the 5th floor (sign 'Пожарники') also sells vodka to quench your thirst, if you knock on their door and inquire for spirit.

At dinners, vodka is usually served before dinner starts and usually drunk in rounds. Be prepared to give a toast on your host's hospitality, on your friendship relations, business success etc., if you are invited by friends at home or in a restaurant. At special occasions, Russian's would even drink pure alcohol ('spirit'), however, nobody will expect you to taste. Opened vodka bottles are usually finished since they cannot be closed anymore once the aluminum cap is removed.

## **Water**

Boiling tap water before drinking tap water is strongly recommended. For fresh water, you should bring purification tablets with you (like the Micropure®-system) that are available in all stores/pharmacies. You may buy bottled drinking and sparkling water at any local supermarket in Moscow.

*Самый большой и самый известный университет России приглашает Вас  
и Мы желаем Вам приятного путешествия !*