

Welcome to Moscow

During any season, any hour of day, Moscow thrills visitors with its artistry, history and majesty.

Kremlin & Red Square

Moscow started in the 12th century as a triangular plot of land – a smallish fort – perched atop Borovitsky Hill. Surrounded by a wall for protection, the fort contained the earliest settlement, while ceremonies and celebrations were held on the plaza outside. The fort, of course, is the Kremlin, while the ceremonial plaza is Red Square – still at the heart of Moscow historically, geographically and spiritually.

Performing Arts

The classical performing arts in Moscow are still among the best and cheapest in the world. But New Russia comes with new forms of entertainment. Nowadays, even the most traditional theatres are experimenting with innovative arrangements and cutting-edge choreography, reviving lost favourites and hosting world premieres. Sometimes debauched and depraved, sometimes intellectual and inspiring, Moscow's performing arts are always eye-opening. And if you're not into that, there's always *Swan Lake*, which is lovely too.

Communist History

The remains of the Soviet state are scattered all around the city. Monuments remember fallen heroes and victorious battles, while museums attempt to analyse and synthesise the past. Some of the sites evoke whimsy, such as Art Muzeon Sculpture Park, where you can see Lenin and Stalin off their pedestals, or the All-Russia Exhibition Centre, which evokes a Socialist Realist fantasy. Other sites are deadly serious, such as the Gulag History Museum, remembering the millions who suffered in the labour camps. Nowadays, retro is all the rage in the capital's clubs and cafes, which allow their guests to relive the Soviet experience.

Nightlife

Night owls enjoy a dynamic and diverse scene out on the town – not only exclusive clubs, but also bohemian art cafes, underground blues bars, get-down discos and drink-up dives. You don't have to be a high-heeled glamour girl or a deep-pocketed man about town to enjoy the capital by night. Moscow has a club or a cafe for everyone, from nostalgia-rich retro to rocked-out indie. And no matter where you spend the evening, all are invited to gather in the wee hours to watch the sunrise over Moscow's golden domes and silver skyscrapers.



Why I Love Moscow

By Mara Vorhees, Author

Moscow surprises me every single time, and has done for more than 20 years. The Russian capital never ceases to inspire, confound, disgust or delight me in some unexpected way. This time I was thrilled to see how brave cyclists are taking to the streets and (not unrelated) how drivers have become more conscientious, when previously cars had the right of way, even on the sidewalk!

Over the years, I have witnessed impressive cultural developments in Moscow, including the tantalising restaurant scene, an innovative home-grown fashion industry and the incredible explosion of contemporary art and design. I certainly didn't see any of that coming 20 years ago.

For more about our authors, see p280.