Arts & Architecture

Arts & Architecture

Moscow has always been known for the richness of its culture, ranging from the classic to the progressive. Whether a Tchaikovsky opera or an Ostrovsky drama, the classical performing arts in Moscow are among the best – and cheapest – in the world. The Tretyakov Gallery and Pushkin Fine Arts Museum house internationally famous collections of Russian and impressionist art.

Of course, New Russia comes with new forms of art and entertainment. This bohemian side of Moscow – be it a beatnik band at an underground club, or an avant-garde exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art – provides a glimpse of Russia's future. Sometimes intellectual and inspiring, sometimes debauched and depraved, it is *always* eye-opening.

BALLET

First brought to Russia under Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich in the 17th century, ballet in Russia evolved as an offshoot of French dance combined with Russian folk and peasant dance techniques. Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre (p146) dates from 1776. Under the Soviets ballet was treated as a natural resource. Its highly privileged status allowed ballet companies to perform lavish productions and have no-expense-spared star searches.

At the Bolshoi, Yury Grigorovich emerged in the 1960s as a bright new choreographer, with productions of *Spartacus*, *Ivan the Terrible* and other successes. Grigorovich directed the company for over 30 years, but not without controversy. In the late 1980s, he came to loggerheads with some of his leading dancers. Stars such as Maya Plisetskaya, Ekaterina Maximova and Vladimir Vasiliev resigned, accusing him of being 'brutal' and 'Stalinist'. With encouragement from President Yeltsin, Grigorovich finally resigned in 1995, prompting his loyal dancers to stage the Bolshoi's first-ever strike.

Under artistic director Vladimir Vasiliev, the Bolshoi commenced a turnaround. During the years of his stewardship, productions included *Swan Lake* and *Giselle*, starring dancers such as Nina Anaiashvili, Sergei Filin and Svetlana Lunkina. Reviews were initially positive, but trouble was brewing. Politics and finances made Vasiliev's task near impossible, and he soon came under fire for mismanagement.

A power struggle ensued, with the ever-present Yury Grigorovich playing a leading role. Finally, in 2004, the rising star Alexey Ratmansky was appointed artistic director. Born in 1968 in Ukraine, Ratmansky is young but accomplished. Of his more than 20 ballets, *Dreams of Japan* was awarded a prestigious Golden Mask award in 1998. Yury Grigorovich continues to play an active role in Moscow's ballet scene. The Bolshoi often performs his classic compositions. In 2005 he was president of the jury for the 10th Annual International Competition of Ballet Artists. The Bolshoi's brightest star is currently Maria Alexandrova.

The Bolshoi is Moscow's most celebrated (and therefore most political) ballet company. But other dance companies in Moscow have equally talented dancers and directors. Both the Moscow Classical Ballet Theatre and the Stanislavsky & Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theatre (p147) stage excellent performances of the Russian classics.

The New Ballet (p146), directed by Aida Chernova and Sergei Starukhin, stages a completely different kind of dance. Dubbed 'plastic ballet', it combines dance with pantomime and drama. Productions vary widely, incorporating elements such as folk tales, poetry and improvised jazz. This bizarre, playful performance art is a refreshing addition to Moscow's dance scene.

MUSIC

The classics never go out of style. This is certainly true for music in Moscow, where Mussorgsky, Stravinsky and especially Tchaikovsky still feature in concert halls on an almost-daily basis. The atmosphere in these places is a little stuffy, but the musicianship is first-rate and the compositions are timeless. Music in Moscow takes many forms, however. And these days, Western rock, blues and jazz are also ubiquitous in the capital. Russified versions of these popular genres can be heard in pubs and clubs all over Moscow.

CLASSICAL

As the cultural heart of Russia, Moscow was a natural draw for generations of composers. Its rich cultural life drew talent from throughout Russia, even during the years in which St Petersburg was the Russian capital.

The defining period of Russian classical music was from the 1860s to 1900. As Russian composers (and painters and writers) struggled to find a national identity, several influential schools formed, from which some of Russia's most famous composers and finest music emerged. The so-called Group of Five, which included Modest Mussorgsky (1839–81) and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908), believed that a radical departure was necessary, and they looked to *byliny* (folk music) for themes. Mussorgsky penned *Pictures at an Exhibition* and the opera, *Boris Gudunov;* Rimsky-Korsakov is best known for *Scheherazade.*

Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840–93) also embraced Russian folklore and music, as well as the disciplines of Western European composers. Tchaikovsky is widely regarded as the father of Russian national composers. His output, including the magnificent *1812 Overture;* his concertos and symphonies; the ballets *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker;* and his opera *Yevgeny Onegin* are among the world's most popular classical works. They are certainly the shows that are staged most often at the Bolshoi and other theatres around Moscow (see p145).

Following in Tchaikovsky's romantic footsteps was Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943) and the innovative Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971). Both fled Russia after the revolution. Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* – which created a furore at its first performance in Paris – and *The Firebird* were influenced by Russian folk music. Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953), who also left Soviet Russia but returned in 1934, wrote the scores for Eisenstein's films *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*, the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Peter and the Wolf*, so beloved by music teachers of young children. His work, however, was condemned for 'formalism' towards the end of his life.

Similarly, the beliefs of Dmitry Shostakovich (1906–75) led to him being alternately praised and condemned by the Soviet government. He wrote brooding, bizarrely dissonant works, as well as accessible traditional classical music. After official condemnation by Stalin, Shostakovich's *7th Symphony – the Leningrad* – brought him honour and international standing when it was performed by the Leningrad Philharmonic during the Siege of Leningrad. The authorities changed their minds again and banned his anti-Soviet music in 1948, then 'rehabilitated' him after Stalin's death.

Classical opera was performed regularly during the Soviet period, and continues to be popular. In March 2005 the Bolshoi premiered *Rosenthal's Children*, with music by Leonid Desyatnikov and words by Vladimir Sorokin, its first new opera in 26 years, to a hail of protests over its alleged pornographic plot (see the boxed text, p32). More often, though, Moscow theatres and performance halls (see p145) feature classics from the 19th and 20th centuries that Russians know and love.

ROCK

Russian music is not all about classical composers. Ever since the 'bourgeois' Beatles filtered through in the 1960s, Russians both young and old have been keen to sign up for the pop revolution. Starved of decent equipment and the chance to record or perform to big audiences, Russian rock groups initially developed underground. By the 1970s – the Soviet hippy era – the music had developed a huge following among the disaffected, distrustful youth. Although bands initially imitated their Western counterparts, by the 1980s a home-grown sound was emerging.

Boris Grebenshikov and his band Akvarium (Aquarium) from Yekaterinburg caused a sensation wherever they performed; Grebenshikov's folk rock and introspective lyrics became the emotional cry of a generation. At first, all music was circulated by illegal tapes known as *magizdat*, passed from listener to listener; concerts were held, if at all, in remote halls in city suburbs, and even to attend them could be risky.

The god of Russian rock was Viktor Tsoy, originally from Kazakhstan. His group Kino was the stuff of legends. A few appearances in kung-fu-type flicks helped make Tsoy the 'King of Cool', and his early death in a 1990 car crash ensured the legend a long shelf life. To this day, fans gather on the anniversary of his death (August 15) and play his music.

Many contemporary favourites on the Russian rock scene have been playing together since the early days. One of the most notable Moscow bands is Mumi-Troll, led by the literate, androgynous Ilya Lagushenko. After 25 years, the band continues to produce innovative stuff. Their 2005 album, *Mergers & Acquisitions*, provides a sharp commentary on contemporary Russian culture.

The pseudo-lesbian performance of girl duo Tatu at the 2003 Eurovision Song Contest helped alert international listeners that Russian pop today is as good (or bad, depending on your point of view) as the rest of the world's. Elena Kiper is the songwriter behind some of Tatu's bigger hits, but she has joined Oleg Borshevsky to form the group Nichya. The style is certainly similar, but appeals to a more mature audience.

Gaining worldwide renown is B-2, whose members, Shura and Leva, now reside in Australia. In 2005 this 'post-punk' duo appeared on Red Square alongside the Pet Shop Boys at Live-8 Moscow. The goth rocker Linda, a hometown favourite, also used the international event to show off her sound, which is an eclectic blend of world and dance music.

RUSSKY ROCK *Kathleen Pullum*

Huge stadium shows and colossal festivals have become pillars of Russian rock culture, with the largest rock events of the year enticing fans to relax with a few beers, wreak some havoc and rock out with 50,000 of their closest friends. The most prominent festivals take place in the summer months, mostly due to weather constraints.

Krylya (www.krylya.ru), or 'Wings', is generally held the last weekend of July. This festival gained notoriety when it was targeted by two Chechen female suicide bombers in 2003. (The women were stopped by security but ended up killing a score of people.) After a brief relocation to Luzhniki Stadium, where security could be better monitored, the festival returned to the Tushino airfield outside of Moscow in 2005. The two-day event draws tens of thousands of visitors and several dozen bands from Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Performers in 2005 included veterans Chaif and Spleen and current stars Zemfira and Umaturman.

The granddaddy of Russian rock festivals, however, is Nashestviye (www.nashestvie.nashe.ru), which is hosted by Russian rock radio station Nashe (meaning 'Ours') in the first or second week of August. Nashe broadcasts all over Russia, and is widely considered *the* forum where emerging Russian musicians get their start. Nashestviye is a three-day festival that expands every year. In 2005 the event added more performers and three stages, allowing different subcategories in Russian rock to emerge. Alternative rock, Russian reggae, 'wild music' and others are all grouped together in the concert schedule. Among a list of nearly 100 performers, from old legends to new faces, 2005 highlights included Russian punk-styled, notoriously naughty Leningrad – barred by Moscow's mayor from performing in the capital city – along with B-2, Mumi-Troll, Billy's Band, Two Siberians and many more well-known acts. Nashestviye is held at Emmaus, near Tver, accessible by *elektrichka* (suburban train). Camping on the festival grounds for the duration will cost you just R500.

Kathleen is the editor-in-chief of the magazine, element

Switch on Russian MTV, and you'll see local versions of boy bands and disco divas doing their sometimes desultory, sometimes foot-tapping stuff. Meanwhile, Moscow clubs (p140) are filled with garage bands, new wave, punk, hard rock and many Beatles cover bands.

LITERATURE

Although Russian writers really only got going in the 19th century, they have wasted little time in establishing themselves a prime place in the cannon of world literature, producing renowned classics in the fields of poetry, plays and novels. Most of the big names of the

MOSCOW FICTION

- *Anna Karenina* (Leo Tolstoy) tells of the tragedy of a woman who violates the rigid sexual code of her time, and offers a legitimate alternative for readers who don't have time for *War & Peace.* Tolstoy represents a pinnacle of world literature, and many of his novels are set at least partly in Moscow.
- *Dead Souls* (Nikolai Gogol) is a biting satire that gives a special, cynical insight into 19th-century provincial Russia. Gogol has created some of Russian literature's most memorable characters, and the absurd Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov is no exception. This novel was written – and subsequently thrown into the fire – in Gogol's tiny Moscow flat.
- *A Hero of Our Time* (Mikhail Lermontov) is a short but important novel set in the Caucasus, though the author lived in Moscow. Its cynical antihero, Pechorin, is an indirect comment on the political climate of the times.
- *The Twelve* (Alexander Blok) is pretty much a love letter to Lenin. Ironically, Blok later grew deeply disenchanted with the revolution, consequently fell out of favour and died a sad, lonely poet. In one of his last letters, he wrote, 'She did devour me, lousy, snuffling dear Mother Russia, like a sow devouring her piglet.'
- *The Ordeal* (Alexey Tolstoy) is a trilogy that takes place during the revolution and civil war. Alexey, not to be confused with his more famous ancestor, was one of the few Soviet authors who managed to produce serious literary work without being censored.
- *Dr Zhivago* (Boris Pasternak) recounts the romantic tale of a doctor who is separated from his lover by the events of the revolution. The author was not allowed to accept the Nobel Prize that was awarded to this dramatic novel, which was written at his dacha outside of Moscow.
- *The Master and Margarita* (Mikhail Bulgakov) has the Devil turn up in Moscow to cause all manner of anarchy and make idiots of the system and its lackeys. This darkly comic novel is the most telling fiction to come out of the Soviet Union.
- *Children of the Arbat* (Anatoly Rybakov) is based on the author's own experiences as an idealistic youth on the eve of the Great Purges. This tragic novel paints a vivid portrait of 1930s Russia. It was written in the 1960s, but published only in 1987.
- *Moscow To the End of the Line* (Venedict Erofeev), written in 1970, is a novel that recounts a drunken man's train trip to visit his lover and child on the outskirts of the capital. As the journey progresses, the tale becomes darker and more hallucinogenic. *Moscow Stations* is another bleakly funny novella recounting alcohol-induced adventures.
- *On the Golden Porch* (Tatyana Tolstaya) is a collection of short stories focusing on the domestic life of regular people – big souls in little flats – in 1990s Moscow. Tolstaya, another distant descendent of Leo, was one of the first post-Soviet writers to earn international attention.
- *The Slynx* (Tatyana Tolstaya), the celebrated author's earlier, lesser-known novel, is set in postnuclear-war Moscow that seems strangely similar to Moscow in the 1990s. In this dystopia, an uneducated scribe learns enough history to start his own revolution.
- *Homo Zapiens* (Viktor Pelevin) is the latest novel from this darkly comic author, and tells the tale of a literature student who takes a job as a copyrighter for New Russian gangsters, offering a hilarious commentary on contemporary Russia. Pelevin won the 1993 Russian 'Little Booker' Prize for short stories.
- *Russian Beauty* (Victor Erofeyev) tells the tale of a wily beauty from the provinces who sleeps her way to the top of the Moscow social scene. She finds herself pregnant just about the same time she finds God. Caustically funny and overtly bawdy, this bestseller in Russia has been translated into 27 languages.
- *The Winter Queen* (Boris Akunin) is one in the series of popular detective novels featuring the foppish Erast Fandorin as a member of the 19th-century Moscow police force. Several of these are now being made into movies (p33).
- *White on Black* (Ruben Gallego) is an autobiographical account of surviving the bleak, cruel Soviet orphanage system. Gallego's exquisitely written memoir was the 2003 Russian Booker Prize winner.

Golden Age of Russian literature passed through Moscow at one time or another, and you can visit museums dedicated to Alexander Pushkin (p89 and p92), Leo Tolstoy (p96 and p93), Fyodor Dostoevsky (p80) and Mikhail Lermontov (p88) in the capital. For a walk through Moscow's literary heritage, follow the Literary Sojourn on p115.

Spanning from the end of the 19th century up until the early 1930s, the Silver Age of Russian literature produced additional towering talents. This period corresponded with the rise of the symbolist movement, represented in Moscow by poet Alexander Blok (1880–1921). Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930) – practically the revolution's official bard – also has a museum (p75) dedicated to his memory. Both of these poets were praised by the Bolsheviks as examples of established writers who had seen the light, yet both of their lives ended in disillusionment and tragedy.

In 1932 the Communist Party officially demanded socialist realism from art and literature. This meant 'concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development…in accordance with…ideological training of the workers in the spirit of Socialism'. Henceforth artists and writers had the all but impossible task of conveying the Party's messages, as well as not falling foul of Stalin's notoriously fickle tastes.

The Soviet Union's most celebrated writers – the likes of Boris Pasternak (1890–1960) and Mikhail Bulgakov (1890–1940) – were silenced in their own country, while their works received international acclaim. Many other accounts of Soviet life were printed in *samizdat* (underground) publications, secretly circulated among the literary community. Now famous novels such as Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat* were published in Russia only with the loosening of censorship under *glasnost*.

Recent years have seen a flowering of Russian publishing, and the traditional Russian love of books seems as strong as ever. Just note the number of people reading novels to wile away the minutes on the Moscow metro.

ARCHITECTURE

The Russian capital is an endless source of amusement and amazement for the architecture aficionado. The city streets are a textbook of Russian history, with churches, mansions, theatres and hotels standing as testament to the most definitive periods. Despite the tendency to demolish and rebuild (exhibited both in the past and in the present), Moscow has so far managed to preserve an impressive array of architectural gems.

MEDIEVAL MOSCOW

The earliest Russian architecture – developed in Kyivan Rus – was based on the 'cross in square' church plan borrowed from 9th-century Byzantium. At its simplest, this consisted of three aisles, each with an eastern apse (semicircular end), a dome or 'cupola' over the central aisle next to its apse, and high vaulted roofs forming a crucifix shape centred on the dome. As Russian culture moved north, Novgorod, Pskov and Vladimir-Suzdal developed their own variations on the pattern in the 11th and 12th centuries. Roofs grew steeper to prevent heavy northern snows collecting on them and crushing them, and windows grew narrower to keep the cold out.

Moscow in the 15th century looked to these earlier centres for inspiration in its grand building programme. Though the architects of two of the Moscow Kremlin's three great cathedrals built between 1475 and 1510 (p54) were Italian, they took Vladimir's churches as their models; the third cathedral was by builders from Pskov.

IMPERIAL MOSCOW

Later in the 16th century many of the north Russian wooden church features, such as the *shatyor* (tent roof) and the onion dome on a tall drum, were translated into brick. This change contributed to a new, uniquely Russian architecture, more vertical in effect than the Byzantine shape. St Basil's Cathedral (p63), the Ivan the Great Bell Tower in the Kremlin (p58), and the Ascension Church at Kolomenskoe (p105) are three highlights from this era.

In the 17th century builders in Moscow added tiers of *kokoshniki* (gables), colourful tiles and brick patterning to create jolly, merchant-financed churches, such as St Nicholas of the Weavers (p93) and the Trinity in Nikitniki (p77). In the middle of the century, Patriarch Nikon outlawed such frippery shortly after the construction of the Nativity of the Virgin in Putinki (p82).

Embellishments returned later with the Western-influenced Moscow baroque. This style featured ornate white detailing against red-brick walls, such as at the Epiphany Cathedral in the monastery with the same name (p77) in Kitay Gorod.

In 1714 it all came to a halt. Peter the Great's edict banned stone construction in Moscow and everywhere else in Russia, as all the resources were needed for the new city of St Petersburg. But frequent fires and a general outcry from Moscow's wealthy elite meant that the order was rescinded in 1722.

In the later 18th century, the grandiose Russian Empire style developed under Tsar Alexander. Moscow abounds with Empire-style buildings, since much of the city had to be rebuilt after the fire of 1812. The flamboyant decorations of earlier times were used on the huge new buildings erected to proclaim Russia's importance.

A series of architectural revivals, notably of early Russian styles, began in the late 19th century. The first, a pseudo-Russian phase, produced GUM (State Department Store; p63), the State History Museum (p64) and the Leningradsky vokzal (Leningrad station; p79). The early-20th-century neo-Russian movement produced the extraordinary Kazansky vokzal (Kazan station; p79), which embraces no fewer than seven earlier styles; Style Moderne (Russian Art Nouveau) yielded the bizarre Yaroslavsky vokzal across Komsomolskaya ploshchad (p79).

SOVIET MOSCOW

The revolution gave reign to young constructivist architects, who rejected superficial decoration in favour of buildings whose appearance was a direct function of their uses and materials – a new architecture for a new society. They used lots of glass and concrete in uncompromising geometric forms.

Konstantin Melnikov was probably the most famous constructivist, and his own house (p88) off ulitsa Arbat is one of the most interesting examples of the style. The *Izvestia*

SEVEN SISTERS

The foundations for seven large skyscrapers were laid in 1947 to mark Moscow's 800th anniversary. Stalin had decided that Moscow suffered from a 'skyscraper gap' when compared to the USA, and ordered the construction of these seven behemoths to jump-start the city's skyline.

One of the main architects, Vyacheslav Oltarzhevsky, had worked in New York during the skyscraper boom of the 1930s, and his experience proved essential. (Fortunately he'd been released from a Gulag in time to help.)

With their widely scattered locations, the towers provide a unique visual look and reference for Moscow. Their official name in Russia is *vystony dom* (high-rise) as opposed to *neboskryob* (foreign skyscraper). They have been nicknamed variously 'Seven Sisters', 'wedding cakes', 'Stalin's sisters' and more:

Apartment Block (Map pp248–9; Kudrinskaya pl 1, Barrikadnaya) 1954; 160m high; The Real McCoy (p133) eatery and bar is here.

Apartment Block (Map p255; Kotelnicheskaya nab 17/1, Zayauzie) 1952; the Illuzion cinema (p150) is here.

Transport Ministry (Map p254; ul Sadovaya-Spasskaya, Chistye Prudy) 1953; 133m high; near Krasnye Vorota metro.

Foreign Affairs Ministry (Map pp252–3; Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl 32/34, Arbat District) 1952; 27 floors; near Smolenskaya metro.

Hotel Ukraina (Map pp248–9; Kutuzovsky pr 2/1, Barrikadnaya) 1957; 200m high with 29 floors.

Leningradskaya Hotel (Map p254; Kalanchevskaya ul 21/40, Chistye Prudy) 1954; the smallest of the group.

Moscow State University (Map pp246–7; Universitetskaya pl 1, Outer Moscow) 1953; 236m high with four huge wings and 36 floors.

building (p111) on Pushkinskaya ploshchad is another. In the 1930s, the constructivists were denounced. Another revival, monumental classicism, inspired a 400m-high design for Stalin's pet project, a Palace of Soviets, which (mercifully) never got off the ground.

Stalin favoured neoclassical architecture, which echoed ancient Athens ('the only culture of the past to approach the ideal', according to Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first Soviet Commissar of Education). Stalin also favoured building on a gigantic scale to underline the might of the Soviet state. Often, convict labour was used, with a high death toll, to create enormous structures around the country. They reached their apogee in Stalin's seven skyscrapers – the 'Seven Sisters'. Gothic in effect, the skyscrapers popped up around Moscow soon after WWII (see the boxed text, p29).

In 1955 a schizophrenic decree ordered architects to avoid 'excesses'. A bland International Modern style – constructivism without the spark, you might say – was then often used for prestigious buildings, while drab blocks of cramped flats sprouted seemingly everywhere to house the people. These tower blocks, not unlike those constructed for the masses in other cities around the world, were ugly then and have not improved since.

CONTEMPORARY MOSCOW

Since the end of the Soviet Union, architectural energies and civic funds have mostly gone into the restoration of decayed churches and monasteries, as well as the rebuilding of structures such as the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (p90).

As far as contemporary commercial and cultural buildings are concerned, post-Soviet architects have not been kind to Moscow. Featuring bright metals and mirrored glass, modern blocks tend to be plopped down in the middle of otherwise unassuming vintage buildings. The trend has sparked a campaign to preserve the city's historic architecture (see p22).

VISUAL ARTS

ICONS

Up until the 17th century religious icons were Russia's key art form, though only in the 20th century did they really come to be seen as 'works of art', as opposed to objects of worship. Originally painted by monks as a spiritual exercise, icons are images intended to aid the veneration of the holy subjects they depict, and are sometimes believed able to grant luck, wishes or even miracles. They're most commonly found on the iconostasis (screen) of a church.

Traditional rules decreed that only Christ, the Virgin, angels, saints and scriptural events could be painted on icons – all of which were supposed to be copies of a limited number of approved prototype images. Christ images include the Pantokrator (All-Ruler) and the Mandilion, the latter called 'not made by hand' because it was supposedly developed from the imprint of Christ's face on St Veronica's handkerchief. Icons were traditionally painted in tempera (inorganic pigment mixed with a binder such as egg yolk) on wood. When they faded, they were often touched up, obscuring the original work.

The beginning of a distinct Russian icon tradition came when artists in Novgorod started to draw on local folk art in their representation of people, producing sharply outlined figures with softer faces and introducing lighter colours, including pale yellows and greens. The earliest outstanding painter was Theophanes the Greek (Feofan Grek in Russian), who lived between 1340 and 1405. Working in Byzantium, Novgorod and Moscow, Theophanes brought a new delicacy and grace to the form. His finest works are in the Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin (p60).

Andrei Rublyov, a monk at Sergiev Posad's Trinity Monastery of St Sergius (p195) and Moscow's Andronikov Monastery (p102) – 20 years younger than Theophanes – was the greatest Russian icon painter. His most famous work is the dreamy *Old Testament Trinity*, in Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery (p100).

The layman Dionysius, the leading late-15th-century icon painter, elongated his figures and refined the use of colour. Sixteenth-century icons grew smaller and more crowded, their figures more realistic and Russian-looking. In 17th-century Moscow, Simon Ushakov moved towards Western religious painting with the use of perspective and architectural backgrounds.

PEREDVIZHNIKI

The major artistic force of the 19th century was the Peredvizhniki (Wanderers) movement, which saw art as a vehicle for promoting national awareness and social change. The movement gained its name from the touring exhibitions with which it widened its audience. These artists were patronised by the industrialists Savva Mamontov – whose Abramtsevo estate (p193) near Moscow became an artists' colony – and by the brothers Pavel and Sergei Tretyakov (after whom the Tretyakov Gallery is named). Artists included Vasily Surikov, who painted vivid Russian historical scenes, Nicholas Ghe (biblical and historical scenes), and Ilya Repin, perhaps the best loved of all Russian artists, whose works ranged from social criticism *(Barge Haulers on the Volga)*, to history *(Zaporozhie Cossacks Writing a Letter to the Turkish Sultan)* to portraits. Many Peredvizhniki masterpieces are on display at the Tretyakov Gallery (p100).

Inspired by sparkling Byzantine and Venetian mosaics, the work of late 19th-century genius Mikhail Vrubel showed early traces of Western influence. His panels on the sides of Hotel Metropol are some of his best work (see the boxed text, p166).

FUTURISM

From about 1905 Russian art became a mishmash of groups, styles and 'isms', as it absorbed decades of European change in a few years. It finally gave birth to its own avant-garde futurist movements, which in turn helped Western art go head over heels.

Mikhail Larionov and Natalya Goncharova were at the centre of the Cézanne-influenced Knave of Diamonds group (which Vasily Kandinsky was associated with) before developing neoprimitivism, a movement based on popular arts and primitive icons. Works by all of these artists are on display at the New Tretyakov Gallery (p99), as well as the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (p80).

TOP FIVE ART MUSEUMS

- Museum of Private Collections (p91)
- New Tretyakov Gallery (p99)
- Pushkin Fine Arts Museum (p91)
- Rerikh Gallery (p92)
- Tretyakov Gallery (p100)

In 1915 Kazimir Malevich announced the arrival of Suprematism. His utterly abstract geometrical shapes (with the black square representing the ultimate 'zero form') finally freed art from having to depict the material world, and made it a doorway to higher realities. See one of his four *Black Square* paintings at the New Tretyakov. Another famed Futurist, who managed to escape subordinate 'isms', was Vladimir Mayakovsky, who was also a poet.

SOVIET ERA ART

Futurists turned to the needs of the revolution – education, posters and banners – with enthusiasm. They had a chance to act on their theories of how art shapes society. But at the end of the 1920s, Formalist (abstract) art fell out of favour. The Communist Party wanted socialist realism (see Literature, p28). Images of striving workers, heroic soldiers and inspiring leaders took over, plenty of which are on display at the New Tretyakov Gallery (p99). Two million sculptures of Lenin and Stalin dotted the country – Malevich ended up painting penetrating portraits and doing designs for Red Square parades; Mayakovsky committed suicide.

After Stalin an avant-garde 'conceptualist' underground was allowed to form. Ilya Kabakov painted or sometimes just arranged the debris of everyday life to show the gap between the promises and realities of Soviet existence. Erik Bulatov's 'Sotsart' style pointed to the devaluation of language by ironically reproducing Soviet slogans and depicting words disappearing over the horizon. In 1962 the authorities set up a show of such 'unofficial'

art at the Manezh Exhibition Centre; Khrushchev called it 'dogshit' and sent it back underground. In the mid-1970s, it resurfaced in the Moscow suburbs – only to be literally bulldozed back down.

CONTEMPORARY ART

Although many contemporary painters of note have left Russia for the riches of the West, the country is still churning out promising young artists, whose work is on display at a few specialist art galleries (see the boxed text, p158).

One of the most popular painters in Russia today is the religious artist Ilya Glazunov, a staunch defender of the Russian Orthodox cultural tradition. Hundreds of thousands of people visit exhibitions of his work, most recently at his new namesake gallery (p90). More notorious than popular is the artist and architect Zurab Tsereteli, whose monumental buildings and statues (many monumentally ugly) grace Moscow. See the boxed text, p92 for more on Tsereteli, or check out his gallery (p93).

Artists are now freer than ever before to depict all aspects of Russian life, but there have, of late, been several public attacks on modern art (see the boxed texts, below and p78). Somewhat balancing this disturbing trend is the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (see p9).

CINEMA & TV

CINEMA

Russian – or rather Soviet – cinema first flourished shortly after the revolution. Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) remains one of the landmarks of world cinema, famous for its Odessa Steps sequence recreated in many other films, most notably Brian de Palma's *The Untouchables*. Charlie Chaplin described *Battleship Potemkin* as 'the best film in the world'. It and scores of other films marked the output of Moscow's film studios, the most active in the country during the 20th century.

During the Communist era, the fate of any movie was decided by the vast bureaucracy of Moscow-based Goskino, which funded films and also distributed them. It was known for its aversion to risks (which during the Stalin era was undoubtedly smart).

During a 1986 congress of Soviet filmmakers held in Moscow, *glasnost* touched the USSR's movie industry. By a large vote, the old and conservative directors were booted out of the leadership and renegades demanding more freedom were put in their place. During the remaining years of communism, over 250 previously banned films were released. For the first time, films began to explore real, contemporary issues.

ART UNDER ATTACK

Since journalists have largely failed (see Media, p18), contemporary Russian artists are now taking on President Putin and the sacred cows of Russia's establishment. At the Russia II exhibition, part of the 2005 Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, protest art included works that tackled themes of terrorism, the war in Chechnya and the Russian Orthodox Church. Predictably, a group of Orthodox Christians filed a criminal complaint against the exhibition.

It's not the first time art has provoked such complaints. In 2003 an art exhibit mocking the Russian Orthodox Church at Moscow's Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Centre was closed following protests (p78). Agitprop artist Avdey Ter Oganyan lives in exile in Berlin because of death threats made against him. Ter Oganyan hit the headlines when he chopped up Christian icons on the street with an axe in the name of art. He was charged with incitement under the federal antihatred law.

In March 2005 the Putin-supporting youth group Moving Together picketed the Bolshoi's staging of *Rosenthal's Children*, a new opera with a libretto by Vladimir Sorokin. His novel *Goluboye Salo (Blue/Gay Lard)*, depicting sex between former Soviet leaders Josef Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev, had already got him into trouble with the authorities in 2002. In a typically Soviet-style knee-jerk reaction, right-wing politicians were quick to denounce the opera as pornographic, vulgar and unfitting of the Bolshoi, despite not having seen the work.

MOSCOW FILMS

- *Irony of Fate* (*Ironiya Sudby ili s Legkim Parom;* 1975), directed by Eldar Ryazanov, is a classic and national favourite screened on TV every New Year's eve. After a mindbending party in Moscow, the protagonist wakes up in St Petersburg, unbeknownst to him. Lo and behold, his key fits into the lock of a building that looks exactly like his at the same address in a different town. Comedy ensues.
- *Little Vera* (1989), Vasily Pichul's groundbreaking film, caused a sensation with its frank portrayal of a family in chaos (exhausted wife, drunken husband, rebellious daughter) and its sexual frankness – mild by Western standards but startling to the Soviet audience.
- *Burnt by the Sun* (1994) tells the story of a loyal apparatchik who becomes a victim of Stalin's purges. Mikhalkov's celebrated film won an Oscar for best foreign film in 1994.
- *Brother* (Brat; 1997) is a gangster drama by Alexei Balabanov that portrays the harshness of post-Soviet Russia. A geeky kid – played by superstar Sergei Brodov – returns from his army service and joins his brother working as a hit man in St Petersburg. The sequel, *Brat 2* (2000), follows the star to the capital; like most sequels, it does not live up to the original.
- *Night Watch* (*Nochnoy Dozor*; 2004) is a Russian mix of *The Matrix* and *Dracula*. Directed by Timur Bekmambetov, the glossy sci-fi fantasy thriller took in box office revenues in excess of US$16 million in Russia alone. In true Hollywood style, there will be a sequel in 2006.
- *You I Love* (*Ya Lyublu Tebya*; 2004), directed by Olga Stolpovskaya and Dmitry Troitsky, is a quirky, independent film that's an offbeat and sometimes charming tale of modern love in Moscow, with not a hammer and sickle in sight!
- *The State Councellor (Statsky Sovetnik)*, a 2005 blockbuster, is based on a tsarist thriller penned by Boris Akunin (see p27). It is directed by that old warhorse of Russian cinema Nikita Mikhailkov, who co-stars in it along with Oleg Menshikov, heartthrob of a million Russian housewives.

However, by the time Nikita Mikhalkov's *Burnt by the Sun* won the Oscar for the best foreign movie in 1994, Russian film production was suffering as funding disappeared during the economic chaos of the early 1990s, and audiences stayed away from cinemas.

Since the mid-1990s, Moscow's film industry has made a remarkable comeback. Mos-Film – the successor to Goskino – is one of the largest production companies in the world, producing almost all of Russia's film, TV and video programming. Moscow is indeed the Russian Hollywood. Unfortunately, just like its American counterpart, the industry does not leave much room for artsy, independent films that are not likely to be blockbusters.

Fortunately, the Moscow Interfest (International Film Festival; p10) offers a venue for directors of independent films from Russia and abroad to compete for international recognition. In recent years Russian films have won the top prize, although this is not always the case. Boris Khlebnikov and Alexei Pogrebsky won in 2003 for *Koktebel*, their heart-warming tale of a father and son taking a cross-country journey in search of new lives. The 2004 winner was *Harvest Time*, Marina Razbezhkina's nostalgic look at life on a collective farm in the 1950s. In 2005 the award for best film went to *Dreaming of Space*, a film that contrasts the feeling of optimism in the air in 1957 with the bleak reality of life in a northern port city.

TV

Entertainment programming on TV is dominated by crime series, in which shaven-headed veterans of the war in Chechnya pin down conspiring oligarchs and politicians. That said, Russian TV does provide a wide choice of programmes, some of which are modelled on Western formats. The most popular show at the time of research was a reality show called *Dom*, or House. Similar to MTV's *The Real World*, the series brought together disparate personalities – mostly minor Russian celebrities – to live under one roof. The resulting show was filled with shagging and scandal. Viewers were looking forward to more of the same in the follow-up season, cleverly dubbed *Dom Dva (House Two)*.

Programmes do include high-quality, educational shows – documentaries shown have been especially good in the last few years. Kultura is an excellent national, noncommercial channel dedicated to arts and culture.

Other unconventional channels have recently emerged, reflecting social trends. Zvezda (Star) belongs to the Defence Ministry and is supposed to encourage young people to serve in the army. Spas TV is designed to summon lost souls under the auspices of the Orthodoxy. And the English-language Russia Today is preparing an onslaught of Kremlin propaganda for Western audiences.

CIRCUS

While Western circuses grow smaller and scarcer, the Russian versions are like those from childhood stories – prancing horses with acrobats on their backs, snarling lions and tigers, heart-stopping high-wire artists and hilarious clowns. No wonder the circus remains highly popular, with around half the population attending a performance once a year.

The Russian circus has its roots in the medieval travelling minstrels *(skomorokhi)*. And circus performers today still have the lifestyle of such travelling minstrels. The Russian State Circus company, RosGosTsirk, assigns its members to a particular circus for a performance season, then rotates them around to other locations. What the members give up in stability, they gain in job security. RosGosTsirk ensures them employment throughout their circus career.

Many circus performers find their calling not by chance, but by ancestry. It is not unusual for generations of one family to practice the same circus skill, be it tightrope walking or lion taming. As one acrobat explained quite matter-of-factly: 'We can't live without the circus. There are very few who leave.'

Moscow is home to several circuses, including the acclaimed Nikulin Circus on Tsvetnoy bulvar (see p149). Its namesake is the beloved clown Yury Nikulin, who is described as 'the honour and conscience of the Russian circus'.

Speaking of honour and conscience, most of the major troupes have cleaned up their act with regard to the treatment of animals. Certainly in Moscow circuses, it is unlikely you will see animals treated cruelly or forced to perform degrading acts.

THEATRE

Drama has long been an important part of the arts scene in Moscow, ever since Konstantin Stanislavsky implemented his innovated approach of method acting and made Anton Chekhov a success in the process (see the boxed text, p147). During the Soviet period, the stage was sometimes used as a forum for social criticism – indeed, the rebellious director of the Taganka Theatre, Yury Lyubimov, was sent into exile as a result of his controversial plays. These days, the capital hosts over 40 theatres, which continue to entertain and provoke audiences. While the most famous venues, such as the MKhT and the Maly Theatre, primarily stick to the classics, many lesser-known venues are staging cutting-edge contemporary drama. For details, see p147.

History

History

THE RECENT PAST

COPS IN THE KREMLIN

In December 1999, Boris Yeltsin delivered his customary televised New Year's greeting to the nation. On this occasion, the burly president shocked his fellow countrymen yet again by announcing his resignation from office and retirement from politics. The once combative Yeltsin had grown weary from a decade full of political adversity and physical infirmity.

Yeltsin turned over the office to his recently appointed prime minister, Vladimir Putin. As an aide to the president, Putin had impressed Yeltsin with his selfless dedication, shrewd mind and principled resolve. It was Yeltsin's plan to spring this holiday surprise on the unprepared political opposition to bolster Putin's chances in the upcoming presidential election. The plan worked. In March 2000, Putin became the second president of the Russian Federation.

Mystery surrounds the cop in the Kremlin: he is a former KGB chief, but an ally of St Petersburg's democratic mayor; well-heeled in European culture, but nostalgic for Soviet patriotism; diminutive in stature, but a black belt in karate.

In his first term, Putin's popular approval ratings shot through the onion domes. He brought calm and stability to Russian politics after more than a decade of crisis and upheaval. The economy finally bottomed out and began to show positive growth. The improved economic situation led to budget surpluses for the first time since the 1980s, and wages and pensions were paid in full and on time.

Putin vowed to restore the authority of the Moscow-based central state, engineering a constitutional reform to reduce the power of regional governors and launching a second war against radical Chechen separatists. His main opponent in the 2000 election, Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov, took note and hastily allied his political machine with Putin's new 'Unity' party.

Putin was re-elected in 2004. His second term accelerated the disturbing trend toward a more authoritarian approach to politics. Former police officials were named prime minister and speaker of the parliament. Restraints on mass media, civil society and nongovernmental agencies were further tightened. Russia's big business tycoons were cowed into submission after independent-minded oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky was jailed for tax evasion (see the boxed text, opposite).

Where Russia's young tycoons failed, its senior citizens succeeded. Putin's 2005 attempt to scrap the existing system of subsidised social services was met with unexpected resistance from protesting pensioners. Thousands filled Moscow's streets, denouncing the pension reforms and forcing Putin to back off his plan.

THE TAXMAN COMETH *Jerry Easter*

In October 2003, the cosy world of Moscow millionaires was rocked by the arrest of Russia's richest man, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, for tax evasion. The event marked a turning point in postcommunist politics.

Khodorkovsky was one of Russia's self-proclaimed 'oligarchs', a group of about a dozen big-business tycoons with formidable political clout. These robber barons managed to gain control of the economy's most valued assets in rigged privatisation deals made in the 1990s.

Khodorkovsky, in particular, enjoyed a phenomenal rise to riches. He took advantage of Gorbachev's limited market reforms to try his hand as an entrepreneur, starting up a software company and commercial bank. During the Yeltsin years, Khodorkovsky's business ventures blossomed into a multibillion dollar financial-industrial empire, by adeptly manipulating his access to political patronage. The centrepiece of this empire was the Yukos Oil Company, which he acquired at auction with a US$350 million bid. The company was valued at US$9 billion when it went public only two years later.

Soon after taking office, President Putin summoned the anxious oligarchs to the Kremlin for a chat. Putin clarified his position on their ill-gotten gains: stay out of politics, invest in Russia and you can hold on to your wealth. Khodorkovsky apparently was unimpressed. The brash billionaire actively opposed the government's effort to raise taxes on the energy sector, he financed the electoral campaigns of Putin's political rivals, set up his own nongovernmental organisation and speculated about running for the presidency himself in 2008.

Enough was enough. In October 2003, masked commandos seized Khodorkovsky from his private plane at a Siberian airport. The tycoon languished in jail while prosecutors compiled a long list of allegations. His company, Yukos, was hit with bills for unpaid taxes and fines, covering the years 2000 to 2003, for more than US$15 billion. Khodokorvsky's personal tax debt was US$2 billion.

The Yukos Affair was a showcase of unchecked coercive powers. The combined forces of the secret police, the justice ministry and the tax police were mobilised against the company and its top directors. The legal system provided no protection. The courts followed the prosecutor's recommendations in close step. On one occasion when a Moscow magistrate made a decision in favour of Yukos, she was quickly removed from the case. Due process was ignored. Yukos bank accounts were frozen and its assets seized. Even the state-controlled media piled on, airing a documentary that tied Khodorkovsky to Chechen terrorists and murdered journalists.

In late May 2005, the Yukos Affair finally reached its climax, when Khodorkovsky was sentenced to nine years in prison. Earlier, the state had already begun the process of redistributing the prised pieces of the company.

But the episode had larger implications. The Yukos Affair was roundly denounced by Western governments and business leaders, while Khodorkovsky was recast from villain to victim by Western media. In the meantime, economic investment in the Russian economy dropped off precipitously.

For Putin, however, the political benefits were worth the bad press. As a new election season opened, the president was cheered for his aggressive populism. The president and his party subsequently were big winners.

Furthermore, the Yukos case had a profound effect on the behaviour of big business. Further tax investigations revealed billions of dollars in back taxes owed by other tycoons, who expressed a willingness to settle. Tax rates in the energy sector were increased with the begrudging consent of industry leaders. By concentrating its coercive resources at one highly visible target, the Russian state fundamentally transformed its relationship with big business.

Jerry is an associate professor at Boston College

TERROR IN THE CAPITAL

Though the origins of the Russian–Chechen conflict date to the 18th century (see the boxed text, p38), it is only in recent times that Moscow has felt its consequences so close to home. In September 1999, mysterious explosions in the capital left more than 200 people dead. Chechen terrorists were blamed for the bombings, although the evidence was scant. Conspiracy theorists had a field day.

In 2002, Chechen rebels wired with explosives seized a popular Moscow theatre, demanding independence for Chechnya. Nearly 800 theatre employees and patrons were held hostage for three days. Russian troops responded by flooding the theatre with immobilising toxic gas, disabling hostage-takers and hostages alike and preventing the worst-case scenario. The victims' unexpectedly severe reaction to the gas and a lack of available medical facilities resulted in 120 deaths and hundreds of illnesses. The incident refuelled Russia's relentless and ruthless campaign to force the Chechens into capitulation

Chechen terrorists have responded in kind, with smaller scale insurgencies taking place regularly; and Muscovites are all-too-aware of the ongoing conflict. The strike closest to home occurred in February 2004, when a bomb exploded in a metro carriage travelling between Avtozavodskaya and Paveletskaya stations, killing 39 and injuring over 100.

Other incidents have served as unnerving reminders, including a series of attacks that coincided with the horrific school siege in Beslan, which resulted in 331 deaths. A couple

TIMELINE

1147 Founding of Moscow by Yury Dolgoruky; the first low walls are built around the settlement

1326 Moscow becomes the headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church

1327 Ivan 'Moneybags' Danilovich establishes Moscow as the capital of the Vladimir-Suzdal principality

1360 A `White Stone Kremlin' with limestone walls is built on the site of the present-day structure

CONFLICT IN CONTEXT

The 1990s marked the revival of a war that is more than 200 years old. In the late 18th century, Catherine II (the Great) expanded the Russian empire southward into the Caucasus. The Chechens – a fiercely independent, Muslim mountain tribe – refused to recognise Russian rule.

In the 19th century, Russia sought to consolidate its claim on the Caucasus to maintain access to southern sea routes and to thwart British expansion into the region. The tsar ordered General Yermelov, a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars, to pacify the mountain peoples. An intense 30-year conflict ensued between Russians and Chechens, with displays of wanton savagery on both sides. The leader of the Chechen resistance, Imam Shamil, became a larger-than-life folk hero and the inspiration for today's separatist fighters. Chechnya was tenuously incorporated into the empire through deals that Russia struck with the more cooperative of the Chechen clans, but separatist sentiments remained strong.

Under Soviet rule, a Chechen independence revolt broke out during the Nazi invasion, even while thousands of Chechens fought against the Germans. Toward the end of WWII, Stalin wreaked his revenge terrorising villages and deporting nearly 500,000 Chechens to remote areas of Central Asia and Siberia. In 1969 the statue of General Yermelov in the Chechen capital of Grozny was dynamited.

National separatists declared Chechnya independent in the early 1990s. President Yeltsin tried unsuccessfully to cajole, buy off and threaten Chechnya into submission. In 1994 he unleashed a military assault on the renegade republic. By 1996, fighting had subsided as Russian troops were contained to a few pockets of influence, and rebel gangs ruled the mountainous countryside in a condition of de facto independence.

The Russian military recommenced hostilities in 1999, kicking off the 'second' Chechen War. Provoked by the incursion of Chechen rebels into neighbouring Dagestan, attacks in Moscow that were blamed on Chechen terrorists and political pressure, Russian troops descended on war-torn Chechnya with a vengeance.

The fighting continues. Though the Caucasus seems far off, the repercussions of war continue to reach Moscow, as terrorists make their dissatisfaction known in the capital (see p36). Prospects for a negotiated peace appear all but nonexistent.

of days earlier, in late August 2004, two planes that took off from Moscow exploded almost simultaneously in mid-air, killing all 90 passengers, including the suicide bombers on board. Soon after, a suicide bomber failed to enter Rizhskaya metro station, but still managed to kill 10 and injure 50 people on the street.

Meanwhile, Chechens living in Moscow have endured increased harassment, both officially and unofficially. They complain of increasing difficulty obtaining residency permits and constant and unwarranted attention from Moscow police. No less damaging is the growing mistrust between Russians and Chechens, as the racial tension continues to mount.

THE PARTY AFTER THE PARTY

Since 1999, Russia has recorded positive economic growth. With the devaluation of the rouble, domestic producers are more competitive and more profitable. A worldwide shortage of energy resources has heaped benefits on the economy. The Russian oil boom, going strong since 2000, has enabled the government to run budget surpluses, pay off its foreign debt and lower tax rates.

Moscow, in particular, has prospered. The city's congested roadways are replete with luxury driving machines. The new economy has spawned a small group of 'New Russians', who are alternately derided and envied for their garish displays of wealth. According to *Forbes* magazine, the Russian capital boasts the largest contingent of resident billionaires in the world. (Russia ranks second only to the US in total billionaires.) And in 2005, Yelena Baturina, property magnate and wife of Mayor Luzhkov, became Russia's first female billionaire.

Apart from this elite, Russia's transition to the market economy came at enormous social cost. The formerly subsidised sectors of the economy, such as education, science and healthcare, were devastated. For many dedicated professionals, it became close to impossible to eke out a living in their chosen profession. Sadly, many of the older generation – whose hard-earned pensions were reduced to a pittance – paid the price for this transformation. Many have been forced to beg and scrimp on the margins of Moscow's new marketplace.

Following decades of an austere and prudish Soviet regime, Muscovites revelled in their new-found freedom. Liberation, libation, defiance and indulgence were all on open display. Those reared in a simpler time were no doubt shocked by the immodesty of the younger generation.

In the 21st century, the rhythms of the city seem to have steadied. Decadence is still for sale, but it has become more corporate; espresso coffees have replaced five-for-one drink specials. Moscow, however, remains the most freewheeling city in Russia; for the cynics there are no surprises, and for the ambitious there are no limits.

FROM THE BEGINNING

The hilly terrain of the region has supported human inhabitants for at least 5000 years. Its earliest occupants were forest-dwelling hunter-gatherer tribes that lived off the plentiful bounty of the woodlands and waters. More than 2500 years ago, small agricultural settlements started sprouting up along the many rivers and lakes in the region. These first farmers were descendants of the Ugro-Finnic tribes that long ago populated the northern Eurasian forests.

MEDIEVAL MOSCOW

Early Settlement & Founding

Around the 10th century, eastern Slav tribes began to migrate to the region from the Kyivan Rus principality further west, eventually assimilating or displacing the earlier inhabitants. They came to cultivate hardy cereal crops in the abundant arable land and to escape the political volatility of the fractious principality.

The Krivich tribe settled in the north, while the Vyatich tribe relocated to the south. Present-day Moscow grew up on the Vyatich side as a trading post between these two Slav tribes, near the confluence of the Moscow (Moskva) and Yauza Rivers. For a brief time, these outlying communities enjoyed an autonomous existence away from the political and religious powers of the medieval Kyivan Rus state.

Anxious to secure his claim of sovereignty over all the eastern Slavs, Vladimir I, Grand Prince of Kyivan Rus, made his son Yaroslav the regional vicelord, who oversaw the collection of tribute and undertook the conversion of pagans. Upon his death, in 1015, Vladimir's realm was divided among his sons, leading to a protracted and often violent period of family feuds. In this conflict, the descendants of Yaroslav inherited the northeastern territories of the realm, wherein they established the Golden Ring of towns, fortresses and monasteries (see p185).

Political power gradually shifted eastward. Under Vladimir Monomakh, Yaroslav's grandson, the Vladimir-Suzdal principality became a formidable rival in the medieval Russian realm. When Vladimir ascended the throne as Grand Prince, he appointed his youngest son, Yury Dolgoruky, to look after the region.

Legend has it that Prince Yury stopped at Moscow on his way back to Vladimir from Kyiv (Kiev). Believing that Moscow's Prince Kuchka had not paid him sufficient homage, Yury put the impudent *boyar* (high-ranking noble) to death and placed Moscow under his direct rule.

Moscow is first mentioned in the historic chronicles in 1147, when Yury invited his allies to a banquet there: 'Come to me, brother, please come to Moscow.' Moscow's strategic

1380 – Dmitry Donskoy defeats the Golden Horde in the Battle of Kulikovo

1382 – Moscow is burned to the ground by the Mongols of the vengeful Golden Horde

1475-1516 – Grand Prince Ivan III oversees the building of new Kremlin walls and three great cathedrals therein

1480 – Ivan III is crowned Ruler of all Russia, earning him the moniker 'Ivan the Great'

importance prompted Yury to construct a moat-ringed wooden palisade on the hilltop and install his personal vassal on site.

With its convenient access to riverways and roads, Moscow soon blossomed into a regional economic centre, attracting traders and artisans to the merchant rows just outside the Kremlin's walls. In the early 13th century, Moscow became the capital of a small independent principality, though it remained a contested prize by successive generations of *boyar* princes.

Mongol Yoke & the Rise of Muscovy

Beginning in 1236, Eastern Europe was overwhelmed by the marauding Golden Horde, a Mongol-led army of nomadic tribesmen, who appeared out of the eastern Eurasian steppes and were led by Chinggis (Genghis) Khaan's grandson, Batu.

The ferocity of the Golden Horde raids was unprecedented, and quickly Russia's ruling princes acknowledged the region's new overlord. The Golden Horde's khan would constrain Russian sovereignty for the next two centuries, demanding tribute and allegiance from the Slavs.

The Mongols introduced themselves to Moscow by razing the city and killing its governor. Their menacing new presence levelled the political playing field in the region, thereby creating an opportunity for a small Muscovite principality.

The years of Mongol domination coincided with the rise of medieval Muscovy in a marriage of power and money. After Novgorod's Alexander Nevsky thwarted a Swedish invasion from the west, Batu Khan appointed him Grand Prince of Rus and moved Nevsky's throne to Vladimir, where he could be watched more closely. Meanwhile, Alexander's brother, Mikhail, was charged with looking after Moscow. The Golden Horde was mainly interested in tribute, and Moscow was more conveniently situated to monitor the river trade and road traffic. With Mongol backing, Muscovite officials soon emerged as the chief tax collectors in the region.

As Moscow prospered economically, its political fortunes rose as well. In the late 13th century, a new dynasty was created in Moscow under Prince Daniil. His son Yury Danilovich won the khan's favour and in the early 14th century, Moscow – for the first time – held the seat of the Grand Prince. Yury's brother, Ivan Danilovich, earned the moniker of Moneybags (Kalita) because of his remarkable revenue-raising abilities.

Ivan Kalita used his good relations with the khan to manoeuvre Moscow into a position of dominance in relation to his rival princes. By the middle of the 14th century, Moscow had absorbed its erstwhile patrons, Vladimir and Suzdal.

Soon Moscow became a nemesis rather than a supplicant to the Mongols. In the 1380 Battle of Kulikovo, Moscow's Grand Prince Dmitry, Kalita's grandson, led a coalition of Slav princes to a rare victory over the Golden Horde on the banks of the Don River. He was thereafter immortalised as Dmitry Donskoy. This feat did not break the Mongols, however, who retaliated by setting Moscow ablaze only two years later. From this time, however, Moscow acted as champion of the Russian cause.

Visitors to Moscow during the early 15th century said it was 'awesome', 'brilliant' and 'dirty', comparable to Prague or Florence, and twice as large. Toward the end of the

15th century, Moscow's ambitions were realised as the once diminutive duchy evolved into an expanding autocratic state. Under the long reign of Grand Prince Ivan III (the Great), the eastern Slav independent principalities were forcibly consolidated into a single territorial entity. The growing influence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the west forced Ivan to take action. In 1478, after a seven-year assault, Ivan's army finally subdued the prosperous merchant principality of Novgorod and evicted the Hansa trading league.

After Novgorod's fall, the 'gathering of the lands' picked up pace as the young Muscovite state annexed Tver, Vyatka, Ryazan, Smolensk and Pskov. In 1480 Poland-Lithuania's King Casimer conspired with the Golden Horde to join forces in an attack on Muscovy from the south. Casimer, however, became preoccupied with other matters, and Ivan's army faced down the Mongols at the Ugra River without a fight. Ivan now refused outright to pay tribute or deference to the Golden Horde and the 200-year Mongol yoke was lifted. A triumphant Ivan had himself crowned 'Ruler of all Russia' in a solemn Byzantine-style ceremony.

Ivan the Terrible

At the time of the death of Ivan the Great, the borders of Muscovy stretched from the Baltic region in the west to the Ural Mountains in the east and the Barents Sea in the north. The south was still the domain of hostile steppe tribes of the Golden Horde.

In the 16th century, however, the Golden Horde fragmented into the Khanates of Crimea, Astrakhan, Kazan and Sibir, from where they controlled vital river networks and continued to raid Russian settlements. At this time, Ivan the Great's grandson, Ivan IV (the Terrible), led the further expansion and consolidation of the upstart Muscovy state. In the 1550s, Muscovy conquered the Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates, thus securing control over the Volga River. Two decades later, a Cossack army commissioned by Ivan defeated the Khan of Sibir, opening up a vast wilderness east of the Urals. Ivan was less successful against the Crimean Tatars, who dominated the southern access routes to the Black Sea.

On the home front, the reign of Ivan IV spelt trouble for Moscow. Ivan came to the throne in 1533 at age three with his mother as regent, though she died only five years later. Upon reaching adulthood, 13 years later, he was crowned 'Tsar of all the Russias'. (The Russian word 'tsar' is derived from the Latin term 'caesar'.) Ivan IV's marriage to Anastasia, a member of the Romanov *boyar* family, was a happy one, unlike the five that followed her early death.

In 1547 the city was consumed by fire. The tragedy provoked hysteria when a crowd became convinced that the inferno was the work of Ivan's grandmother, a suspected witch. The mob stormed the Kremlin and killed Ivan's uncle.

The year in which his beloved Anastasia died, 1560, marked a turning point for Ivan. Believing her to have been poisoned, he started a reign of terror against the ever-intriguing and jealous *boyars*, earning himself the sobriquet *grozny* (literally 'dreadfully serious', but in his case translated as 'terrible'). Later, in a fit of rage, he even killed his eldest son and heir to the throne.

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

As Moscow emerged as a political capital, it also took on the role of religious centre. Relations between the Church and the Grand Prince were always closely intertwined. In the 1320s, Metropolitan Pyotr, head of the Russian episcopate, departed from Vladimir and moved into the Kremlin.

In the mid-15th century, a separate Russian Orthodox Church was organised, independent of the Greek Church. In the 1450s, when Constantinople fell to heathen Turks, the Metropolitan declared Moscow to be the 'Third Rome', the rightful heir of Christendom. Ivan the Great vowed to make Moscow a stronghold of spirituality. Under Ivan the Terrible, the city earned the nickname of 'Gold-Domed Moscow' because of the multitude of monastery fortresses and magnificent churches constructed within the city.

1555-61
Construction of St Basil's Cathedral in honour of the taking of Kazan by Ivan IV

1560
Ivan IV's wife dies provoking a reign of terror and earning him the moniker 'Ivan the Terrible'

1571
Moscow is burned to the ground by Crimean Tatars

1591-1613
The so-called 'Time of Troubles', when Russia is ruled by a string of pretenders to the throne

Ivan suffered from a fused spine and took mercury treatments to ease the intense pain. The cure, however, was worse than the ailment; it gradually made him insane.

The last years of Ivan's reign proved ruinous for Moscow. In 1571 Crimean Tatars torched the city, burning most of it to the ground. Ivan's volatile temperament made matters worse by creating political instability. At one point he vacated the throne and concealed himself in a monastery.

Upon his death, power was passed to his feeble-minded son, Fyodor. For a short time, Fyodor's brother-in-law and able prime minister, Boris Godunov, succeeded in restoring order to the realm. By the beginning of the 17th century, however, Boris was dead, Polish invaders occupied the Kremlin and Russia slipped into a 'Time of Troubles'. Finally, the Cossack soldiers relieved Moscow of its uninvited Polish guests and political stability was achieved with the coronation of Mikhail as tsar, inaugurating the Romanov dynasty.

IMPERIAL MOSCOW

Peter the Great & the Spurned Capital

Peter I, known as 'the Great' for his commanding frame (reaching over 2m) and equally commanding victory over the Swedes, dragged Russia kicking and screaming into modern Europe. Born to Tsar Alexey's second wife in 1672, Peter spent much of his youth in royal residences in the Moscow countryside, organising his playmates in war games. Energetic and inquisitive, he was eager to learn about the outside world. As a boy, he spent hours in Moscow's European district; as a young man, he spent months travelling in the West. In fact, he was Russia's first ruler to venture abroad. Peter briefly shared the throne with his half-brother, before taking sole possession in 1696.

Peter wilfully imposed modernisation on Moscow. He ordered the *boyars* to shave their beards, imported European advisers and craftsmen, and rationalised state administration. He built Moscow's tallest structure, the 90m-high Sukharev Tower, and next to it founded the College of Mathematics and Navigation.

MOSCOW'S DEVELOPMENT – THE EARLY YEARS

Today, the red brick towers and sturdy stone walls of the Kremlin occupy the founding site of Moscow. Perched atop the Borovitsky Hills, the first Kremlin, built in 1147, was a simple wooden fort that overlooked a strategic bend in the Moscow River, at the intersection of a network of waterways feeding the Upper Volga and Oka Rivers.

With the rise of the Muscovy state during the late 14th century, Moscow city underwent its own impressive development. The city's defence structures were upgraded. The Kremlin was refortified and expanded when Dmitry Donskoy replaced the wooden walls with a more durable limestone edifice as the once-small village grew into a prosperous urban centre. By the early 15th century, Moscow was the largest town in the Russian lands, with a population surpassing 50,000 people.

Between 1475 and 1516, Ivan III (the Great) launched a rebuilding effort to celebrate his military successes. He imported a team of Italian artisans and masons for a complete renovation of the fortress. The Kremlin's famous thick brick walls and imposing watchtowers were constructed at this time (see the boxed text, p56). Next to the Kremlin, traders and artisans set up shop in the surrounding Kitay Gorod. After the Crimean Tatars devastated the city in 1571, a stone wall was erected around these commercial quarters. Ivan IV (the Terrible) celebrated the defeat of Kazan with the erection of St Basil's Cathedral on Red Square (Krasnaya ploshchad; see p63).

The city developed in concentric rings outward from this centre. Outside the Kremlin walls, the city's inhabitants were mostly clergy, merchants, artisans and labourers. Moscow was ringed by noble estates, monastery holdings and small farms. A 16km earthen rampart was also built around the city to establish a forward line of defence. The town recovered quickly from fire, famine and fighting; its population topped 100,000 and then 200,000. In the early 17th century, Moscow was the largest city in the world.

1613 – Mikhail Romanov is crowned tsar, inaugurating the Romanov dynasty

1712 – Peter I (the Great) moves the Russian capital to St Petersburg

Yet, Peter always despised Moscow for its scheming *boyars* and archaic traditions. In 1712 he startled the country by announcing the relocation of the capital to a swampland, recently acquired from Sweden in the Great Northern War. St Petersburg would be Russia's 'Window on the West', and everything that Moscow was not – modern, scientific and cultured. Alexander Pushkin later wrote that 'Peter I had no love for Moscow, where, with every step he took, he ran into remembrances of mutinies and executions, inveterate antiquity and the obstinate resistance of superstition and prejudice.'

The spurned former capital quickly fell into decline. With the aristocratic elite and administrative staff departing for marshier digs, the population fell by more than a quarter by 1725. The city suffered further from severe fires, a situation exacerbated by Peter's mandate to direct all construction materials to St Petersburg.

In the 1770s, Moscow was devastated by an outbreak of bubonic plague, which claimed more than 50,000 lives. It was decreed that the dead had to be buried outside the city limits. Vast cemeteries, including Danilovskoye and Vagankovskoye, were the result. The situation was so desperate that residents went on a riotous looting spree that was violently put down by the army. Empress Catherine II (the Great) responded to the crisis by ordering a new sanitary code to clean up the urban environment and silencing the Kremlin alarm bell that had set off the riots. By 1780, St Petersburg's population surpassed that of Moscow.

By the turn of the 19th century, Moscow had recovered from its gloom. The population climbed back to over 200,000, its previous high point. Peter's exit had not caused a complete rupture. The city retained the title of 'First-Throned Capital' because coronations were held there. When Peter's grandson, Peter III, relieved the nobles of obligatory state service in 1762, many returned to Moscow. Moreover, many of the merchants had never left Moscow and, after the initial shock, their patronage and wealth became visible again throughout the city.

The late 18th century also saw the construction of the first embankments along the Moscow River, which were followed by bridges. In the 1700s, Russia's first university, museum and newspaper were started in Moscow. This new intellectual and literary scene would soon give rise to a nationalist-inspired cultural movement, which would embrace those features of Russia that were distinctly different from the West.

Napoleon & the Battle of Moscow

In 1807 Tsar Alexander I negotiated the Treaty of Tilsit. It left Napoleon in charge as Emperor of the west of Europe and Alexander as Emperor of the east, united (in theory) against England. The alliance lasted until 1810, when Russia resumed trade with England. A furious Napoleon decided to crush the tsar with his Grand Army of 700,000 – the largest force the world had ever seen for a single military operation.

The vastly outnumbered Russian forces retreated across their own countryside throughout the summer of 1812, scorching the earth in an attempt to deny the French sustenance, and fighting some successful rearguard actions.

Napoleon set his sights on Moscow. In September, with the lack of provisions beginning to bite the French, Russian general Mikhail Kutuzov finally decided to turn and fight at Borodino, 130km from Moscow (see p205). The battle was extremely bloody, but inconclusive, with the Russians withdrawing in good order. More than 100,000 soldiers lay dead at the end of a one-day battle.

Before the month was out, Napoleon entered a deserted Moscow. Defiant Muscovites burned down two-thirds of the city rather than see it occupied by the French invaders. Alexander, meanwhile, ignored Napoleon's overtures to negotiate.

With winter coming and supply lines overextended, Napoleon declared victory and retreated. His badly weakened troops stumbled westward out of the city, falling to starvation, disease, the bitter cold and Russian snipers. Only one in 20 made it back to the relative safety of Poland. The tsar's army pursued Napoleon all the way to Paris, which Russian forces briefly occupied in 1814.

1812 – Muscovites burn their own city in anticipation of the invasion by Napoleon's Grand Army

1905 – War in the Far East provokes general strikes in Moscow and St Petersburg

The 19th Century

Moscow was feverishly rebuilt in just a few years following the war. Monuments were erected to commemorate Russia's hard-fought victory and Alexander's 'proudest moment' – a Triumphal Arch (see p106), inspired by their former French hosts, was placed at the top of Tverskaya ulitsa on the road to St Petersburg. The sculpture of Minin and Pozharsky, who had liberated Moscow from a previous foreign foe, adorned Red Square (see p64). And the immensely grandiose Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, which took almost 50 years to complete, went up along the river embankment outside the Kremlin (see p90).

The building frenzy did not stop with national memorials. In the city centre, engineers diverted the Neglinnaya River to an underground canal and created two new urban spaces: the Alexandrovsky Garden (p61), running alongside the Kremlin's western wall; and Theatre Square (p66), featuring the glittering Bolshoi Theatre and later the opulent Metropol Hotel. The rebuilt Manezh, the 180m-long imperial stables, provided a touch of neoclassical grandeur to the scene (p65).

Meanwhile, the city's two outer defensive rings were replaced with the tree-lined Boulevard Ring and Garden Ring roads. The Garden Ring became an informal social boundary line: on the inside were the abodes and amenities of the merchants, intellectuals, civil servants and foreigners; on the outside were the factories and dosshouses of the toiling, the loitering and the destitute.

A post-war economic boom changed the city forever. The robust recovery was at first led by the big merchants, long the mainstay of the city's economy. In the 1830s, they organised the Moscow Commodity Exchange. By mid-century, industry began to overtake commerce as the city's economic driving force. Moscow became the hub of a network of new railroad construction, connecting the raw materials of the East to the manufacturers of the West. With a steady supply of cotton from Central Asia, Moscow became a leader in the textile industry. By 1890, more than 300 of the city's 660 factories were engaged in cloth production and the city was known as 'Calico Moscow'. While St Petersburg's industrial development was financed largely by foreign capital, Moscow drew upon its own resources. The Moscow Merchant Bank, founded in 1866, was the country's second-largest bank by century's end.

The affluent and self-assured business elite extended its influence over the city. The eclectic tastes of the nouveaux riches were reflected in the multiform architectural styles of their mansions, salons and hotels. The business elite eventually secured direct control over the city government, removing the remnants of the old *boyar* aristocracy. In 1876, Sergei Tretyakov, artful entrepreneur and art patron, started a political trend when he became the first mayor who could not claim noble lineage.

The increase in economic opportunity in the city occurred simultaneously with a decline of agriculture and the emancipation of the serfs. As a result, the city's population surged, mostly driven by an influx of rural job seekers. By 1890, Moscow could claim over one million inhabitants. That number would increase by another 50% in less than 20 years. Moscow still ranked second to St Petersburg in population, but, unlike the capital, Moscow was a thoroughly Russian city – its population was 95% ethnic Russian.

By 1900, more than 50% of the city's inhabitants were first-generation peasant migrants. Some stayed for only short stints in between the planting and harvesting seasons, others adjusted to the unfamiliar rhythm of industrial society and became permanent residents. They settled in the factory tenements outside the Garden Ring and south of the river in the Zamoskvorechie district.

The influx of indigents overwhelmed the city's meagre social services and affordable accommodation. At the beginning of the 20th century, Moscow's teeming slums were a breeding ground for disease and discontent. The disparity of wealth among the population grew to extremes. Lacking a voice, the city's less fortunate turned an ear to the outlawed radicals.

RED MOSCOW

Revolutionary Moscow

The tsarist autocracy staggered into the new century. In 1904 the impressionable and irresolute Tsar Nicholas II was talked into declaring war on Japan over some forestland in the Far East. His imperial forces suffered a decisive and embarrassing defeat, touching off a nationwide wave of unrest.

Taking their cue from St Petersburg, Moscow's workers and students staged a series of demonstrations, culminating in the October 1905 general strike, forcing political concessions from a reluctant Nicholas. In December, the attempt by city authorities to arrest leading radicals provoked a new round of confrontation, which ended in a night of bloodshed on hastily erected barricades in the city's Presnya district.

Vladimir Ilych Ulyanov (Lenin) called the failed 1905 Revolution the 'dress rehearsal for 1917', vowing that next time Russia's rulers would not escape the revolutionary scourge. Exhausted by three years of fighting in WWI, the tsarist autocracy meekly succumbed to a mob of St Petersburg workers in February 1917. Unwilling to end the war and unable to restore order, the provisional government was itself overthrown in a bloodless palace coup, orchestrated by Lenin's Bolshevik Party (which was eventually renamed the Communist Party). In Moscow, regime change was not so easy, as a week of street fighting left more than 1000 dead. Radical socialism had come to power in Russia.

Fearing a German assault, Lenin ordered that the capital return to Moscow. In March 1918, Lenin set up shop in the Kremlin and the new Soviet government expropriated the nicer downtown hotels and townhouses to conduct affairs. The move unleashed a steady stream of favour-seeking sycophants on the city. The new communist-run city government authorised the redistribution of housing space, as scores of thousands of workers upgraded to the dispossessed digs of the bourgeoisie.

The revolution and ensuing civil war, however, took its toll on Moscow. Political turmoil fostered an economic crisis. In 1921 the city's factories were operating at only 10% of their prewar levels of production. Food and fuel were in short supply. Hunger and disease stalked

1914-17	1917	1918	1930s
Russia suffers immeasurably from losses in WWI	Tsar Nicholas II succumbs to a mob of workers in St Petersburg	Vladimir Ilych Lenin moves the capital back to Moscow; the Kremlin is closed to visitors	Stalin launches a campaign of modernisation and a reign of terror

the darkened city. The population dropped precipitously from two million in 1917 to just one million in 1920. Wearied workers returned to the villages in search of respite, while the old elite packed up its belongings and moved beyond the reach of a vengeful new regime.

Stalin's Moscow

In May 1922, Lenin suffered the first of a series of paralysing strokes that removed him from effective control of the Party and government. He died, aged 54, in January 1924. His embalmed remains were put on display in Moscow (see p63). St Petersburg was renamed Leningrad in his honour, and a personality cult was built around him – all orchestrated by Josef Stalin.

The most unlikely of successors, Stalin outwitted his rivals and manoeuvred himself into the top post of the Communist Party. Ever paranoid, Stalin later launched a reign of terror against his former Party rivals, which eventually consumed nearly the entire first generation of Soviet officialdom. Hundreds of thousands of Muscovites were systematically executed and secretly interred on the ancient grounds of the old monasteries.

In the early 1930s, Stalin launched Soviet Russia on a hell-bent industrialisation campaign. The campaign cost millions of lives, but by 1939 only the USA and Germany had higher levels of industrial output. Moscow set the pace for this rapid development. Political prisoners became slave labourers. The building of the Moscow-Volga Canal was overseen by the secret police, who forced several hundred thousand 'class enemies' to dig the 125km-long ditch.

The brutal tactics employed by the state to collectivise the countryside created a new wave of peasant immigrants that flooded to Moscow. Around the city, work camps and bare barracks were erected to shelter the huddling hordes who shouldered Stalin's industrial revolution. At the other end, Moscow also became a centre of a heavily subsidised military industry, whose engineers and technicians enjoyed a larger slice of the proletarian pie. The Party elite, meanwhile, moved into new spacious accommodation such as the Dom Naberezhnya (House of the Embankment), across the river from the Kremlin.

Under Stalin, a comprehensive urban plan was devised for Moscow. On paper, it appeared as a neatly organised garden city; unfortunately, it was implemented with a sledgehammer. Historic cathedrals and bell towers were demolished in the middle of the night. The Kitay Gorod wall was dismantled for being 'a relic of medieval times'. Alexander's Triumphal Arch and Peter's Sukharev Tower likewise became victims of unsympathetic city planners, eager to wrench Moscow into a proletarian future.

New monuments marking the epochal transition to socialism went up in place of the old. The first line of the marble-bedecked metro was completed in 1935. The enormous Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was razed with the expectation of erecting the world's tallest building, upon which would stand an exalted 90m statute of Lenin. This scheme was later abandoned and the foundation hole instead became the world's biggest municipal swimming pool. Broad thoroughfares were created and neo-Gothic skyscrapers girded the city's outer ring.

In the 1930s, Stalin's overtures to enter into an anti-Nazi collective security agreement were rebuffed by England and France. Vowing that the Soviet Union would not be pulling their 'chestnuts out of the fire', Stalin signed a nonaggression pact with Hitler instead.

Thus, when Hitler launched 'Operation Barbarossa' in June 1941, Stalin was caught by surprise and did not emerge from his room for three days.

The ill-prepared Red Army was no match for the Nazi war machine, which advanced on three fronts. By December, the Germans were just outside Moscow, within 30km of the Kremlin. Only an early, severe winter halted the advance. A monument now marks the spot, near the entrance road to Sheremetyevo airport, where the Nazis were stopped in their tracks. Staging a brilliant counteroffensive, Soviet war hero General Zhukov staved off the attack and pushed the invaders back.

1935
Opening of the Sokolniki line of the Moscow metro

1944
The Nazi advance on Moscow is halted by a severe Russian winter

Post-Stalinist Moscow

Stalin died in March 1953. His funeral procession brought out so many gawkers that a riot ensued and scores of mourners were trampled to death. The system he built, however, lived on, with a few changes.

First, Nikita Khrushchev, a former mayor of Moscow, tried a different approach to ruling. He curbed the powers of the secret police, released political prisoners, introduced wide-ranging reforms and promised to improve living conditions. Huge housing estates grew up around the outskirts of Moscow; many of the hastily constructed low-rise projects were nicknamed *khrushchoby*, after *trushchoby* (slums). Khrushchev's populism and unpredictability made the ruling elite a bit too nervous and he was ousted in 1964.

TOP FIVE HISTORY BOOKS

- *Comrade Criminal* (Stephen Handelman) is an in-depth investigation of the Russian mafia, written by the Moscow correspondent for the *Toronto Star*.
- *Lenin's Tomb* (David Remnick) describes the *Washington Post*'s Moscow correspondent's entertaining and award-winning first-hand account of the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- *Midnight Diaries* (Boris Yeltsin) is a truly insider perspective on the Yeltsin years, recounting tales of oligarchs and alcohol.
- *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Timothy Colton) delivers a comprehensive (937-page!) history of modern Moscow.
- *Pushkin's Button* (Serena Vitale) is a fascinating recounting of the duel that killed Russia's most famous poet.

Next came the long, stagnant reign of ageing Leonid Brezhnev. Overlooking Lenin's mausoleum, he presided over the rise of a military superpower. Brezhnev provided long sought-after political stability and material security. Most Russians, even today, say that their living standard was higher in Brezhnev's time.

During these years, the Cold War shaped Moscow's development as the Soviet Union enthusiastically competed with the USA in the arms and space races. The aerospace, radio-electronics and nuclear weapons ministries operated factories, research laboratories and design institutes in and around the capital. By 1980, as much as one-third of the city's industrial production and one-quarter of its labour force were connected to the defence industry. Moscow city officials were not privy to what went on in these secretly managed facilities. As a matter of national security, the KGB discreetly constructed a second subway system, Metro-2, under the city.

Still, the centrally planned economy could not keep pace with rising consumer demands. While the elite lived in privilege, ordinary Muscovites stood in line for goods. For the Communist Party, things became a bit too comfortable. Under Brezhnev, the political elite grew elderly and corrupt, while the economic system slid into a slow, irreversible decline. And the goal of turning Moscow into a showcase socialist city was quietly abandoned.

Nonetheless, Moscow enjoyed a postwar economic boom. The city underwent further expansion, accommodating more and more buildings and residents. Brezhnev showed a penchant for brawny displays of modern architecture. Cavernous concrete-and-glass slabs, such as the now defunct Hotel Rossiya, were constructed to show the world the modern face of the Soviet Union. The cement pouring reached a frenzy in the build-up to the 1980 Summer Olympics. However, Russia's invasion of Afghanistan caused many nations to boycott the Games and the facilities mostly stood empty.

Appreciation for Moscow's past, however, began to creep back into city planning. Most notably, Alexander's Triumphal Arch was reconstructed (see p106), though plans to re-erect Peter's tall Sukharev Tower were not realised. Residential life continued to move further away from the city centre, which was increasingly occupied by the governing elite. Shoddy high-rise apartments went up on the periphery and metro lines were extended outward.

1953
Stalin dies and is entombed next to Lenin on Red Square; he is succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev

1961
Stalin is removed from the mausoleum on Red Square and buried in the Kremlin wall

The attraction for Russians to relocate to Moscow in these years was, and continues to be, very strong. City officials tried desperately to enforce the residency permit system, but to no avail. In 1960 the population topped six million, and, by 1980, it surpassed eight million. The spillover led to the rapid growth of Moscow's suburbs. While industry, especially the military industry, provided the city's economic foundation, many new jobs were created in science, education and public administration. The city became a little more ethnically diverse, particularly with the arrival of petty-market traders from Central Asia and the Caucasus.

TRANSITIONAL MOSCOW

The Communist Collapse

The Soviet leadership showed it was not immune to change. Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in March 1985, with a mandate to revitalise the ailing socialist system. Gorbachev soon launched a multifaceted programme of reform under the catchphrase *'perestroika'* (restructuring). Gorbachev recognised that it would take more than bureaucratic reorganisations and stern warnings to reverse economic decline. He believed that the root of the economic crisis was society's alienation from the socialist system. Thus, he sought to break down the barrier between 'us and them'.

His reforms were meant to engage the population and stimulate initiative. *Glasnost* (openness) gave new voice to both a moribund popular culture and a stifled media. Democratisation introduced multicandidate elections and new deliberative legislative bodies. Cooperatives brought the first experiments in market economics in over 50 years. Gorbachev's plan was to lead a gradual transition to reform socialism, but in practice, events ran ahead of him. Moscow set the pace.

In 1985 Gorbachev promoted Boris Yeltsin from his Urals bailiwick into the central leadership as the new head of Moscow. Yeltsin was given the assignment of cleaning up the corrupt Moscow Party machine and responded by sacking hundreds of officials. His populist touch made him an instant success with Muscovites, who were often startled to encounter him riding public transport or berating a shopkeeper for not displaying his sausage. During Gorbachev's ill-advised antialcohol campaign, Yeltsin saved Moscow's largest brewery from having to close its doors.

More importantly, Yeltsin embraced the more open political atmosphere. He allowed 'informal' groups, unsanctioned by the Communist Party, to organise and express themselves in public. Soon Moscow streets, such as those in the Arbat district, were hosting demonstrations by democrats, nationalists, reds and greens. Yeltsin's renegade style alienated the entire Party leadership, one by one. He was summarily dismissed by Gorbachev in October 1987, though he would be heard from again.

Gorbachev's political reforms included elections to reformed local assemblies in the spring of 1990. By this time, communism had already fallen in Eastern Europe and events in the Soviet Union were becoming increasingly radical. In their first free election in 88 years, Muscovites turned out in large numbers at the polls and voted a bloc of democratic reformers into office.

The new mayor was economist Gavril Popov, and the vice-mayor was Yury Luzhkov. Popov immediately embarked on the 'decommunisation' of the city, selling off housing and state businesses and restoring prerevolutionary street names. He clashed repeatedly with the Soviet leadership over the management of city affairs. Popov soon acquired a key ally when Yeltsin made a political comeback as the elected head of the new Russian Supreme Soviet.

On 18 August 1991, the city awoke to find a column of tanks in the street and a 'Committee for the State of Emergency' claiming to be in charge. This committee was composed of leaders from the Communist Party, the KGB and the military. They had already detained Gorbachev at his Crimean dacha and issued directives to arrest Yeltsin and the Moscow city leadership.

1964-82
The so-called 'Years of Stagnation' under Leonid Brezhnev

1985
Mikhail Gorbachev implements *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness)

But the ill-conceived coup quickly went awry and confusion ensued. Yeltsin, Popov and Luzhkov made it to the Russian parliament building, the so-called White House (see p86), to rally opposition. Crowds gathered at the White House, persuaded some of the tank crews to switch sides, and started to build barricades. Yeltsin climbed on a tank to declare the coup illegal and call for a general strike. He dared the snipers to shoot him, and when they didn't, the coup was over.

The following day, huge crowds opposed to the coup gathered in Moscow. Coup leaders lost their nerve, one committed suicide, some fell ill and the others simply got drunk. On 21 August, the tanks withdrew; the coup was foiled. Gorbachev flew back to Moscow to resume command, but his time was up as well. On 23 August, Yeltsin banned the Communist Party in Russia.

Gorbachev embarked on a last-ditch bid to save the Soviet Union with proposals for a looser union of independent states. Yeltsin, however, was steadily transferring control over everything that mattered from Soviet hands into Russian ones. On 8 December, Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus, after several rounds of vodka toasts, announced that the USSR no longer existed. They proclaimed a new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a vague alliance of fully independent states with no central authority. Gorbachev, a president without a country or authority, formally resigned on 25 December, the day the white, blue and red Russian flag replaced the Soviet red flag over the Kremlin.

Rebirth of Russian Politics

Buoyed by his success over Gorbachev and coup plotters, Yeltsin (now Russia's president) was granted extraordinary powers by the parliament to find a way out of the Soviet wreckage. Yeltsin used these powers, however, to launch radical economic reforms and rapprochement with the West. In so doing, he polarised the political elite. As Yeltsin's team of economic reformers began to dismantle the protected and subsidised command economy, in early 1992, the parliament finally acted to seize power back from the president. A stalemate ensued that lasted for a year and a half.

The executive-legislative conflict at the national level was played out in Moscow politics as well. After the Soviet fall, the democratic bloc that had brought Popov to power came apart. In Moscow, a property boom began, as buildings and land with no real owners changed hands at a dizzying rate with dubious legality. Increasingly, the mayor's office was at odds with the city council, as well as the new federal government. Popov began feuding with Yeltsin, just as he had previously with Gorbachev.

In June 1992, the impulsive Popov resigned his office in a huff. Without pausing to ask him to reconsider, Vice-mayor Yury Luzhkov readily assumed the mayor's seat (see the boxed text, p50). The city council passed a vote of no confidence in Luzhkov and called for new elections, but the new mayor opted simply to ignore the resolution.

Throughout 1993, the conflict between President Yeltsin and the Russian parliament intensified. Eight different constitutional drafts were put forward and rejected. In September 1993, parliament convened with plans to remove many of the president's powers. Before it could act, Yeltsin issued a decree that shut down the parliament and called for new elections.

Events turned violent. Yeltsin sent troops to blockade the White House, ordering the members to leave it by 4 October. Many did, but on 2 and 3 October, a National Salvation Front appeared, in an attempt to stir popular insurrection against the president. They clashed with the troops around the White House and tried to seize Moscow's Ostankino TV centre.

The army, which until this time had sought to remain neutral, intervened on the president's side and blasted the parliament into submission. In all, 145 people were killed and another 700 wounded – the worst such incident of bloodshed in the city since the Bolshevik takeover in 1917. Yeltsin, in conjunction with the newly subjugated parliament, put together

1991
A failed palace coup results in the dissolution of the Soviet Union; Boris Yeltsin is elected president of the new Russian Federation

1993
Yeltsin orders troops to force the parliament out of the White House, provoking the most violent political conflict since 1917

THE MAYOR IN THE CAP

Within the Moscow city government, the election of Yury Luzhkov as mayor set the stage for the creation of a big-city boss in the grandest of traditions. Through a web of financial arrangements, ownership deals and real-estate holdings, Luzhkov is as much a CEO as he is mayor. His financial interests range from the media to manufacturing and from five-star hotels to shopping malls.

When Luzhkov was first elected in June 1992, Moscow was exempted from the privatisation process then sweeping the country. This allowed the city government to retain ownership of land and property. In addition, hardly a business venture of any size receives approval from the authorities without the government as a partner. Most of the large Western hotels can boast the Moscow government as an investor, an arrangement that obviously has its advantages when city inspectors come calling. Luzhkov is also seen as the driving force behind myriads of construction (and reconstruction) projects, which have raised the protests of preservationists.

But Luzhkov also plays the role of populist with genuine aplomb, cleaning streets and planting trees. He consistently supports patriotic causes and identifies himself with nationalist themes. He has been generous with the city's money in the restoration of the long-neglected churches and historic monuments. His 'bread and circus' strategy has included hosting spectacular city celebrations, such as 1997's over-the-top 850th anniversary fete. Luzhkov also made crime prevention a priority, a policy appreciated by voters, who put personal safety ahead of concepts such as human rights.

Blessed with the riches of Moscow, the mayor delivers the goods. He won election three times: in 1996 with 95% of the vote, in 1999 with 70%, and in 2003 with 75%.

the 1993 constitution that created a new political system organised around strong central executive power.

Throughout the 1990s, Yeltsin suffered increasingly from heart disease. Come 1996, however, he was not prepared to step down from his 'throne'. Insider deals reached a peak in the 1996 presidential election. Russia's newly rich financiers, who backed Yeltsin's campaign, were rewarded with prized state-owned assets in lucrative, rigged privatisation auctions, and policy-making positions in the government. In a scene reminiscent of the medieval *boyars*, the power grabs of these 'oligarchs' became more brazen during Yeltsin's prolonged illness.

Economic Prosperity

In the New Russia, wealth was concentrated in Moscow. While the rest of Russia struggled to survive the collapse of the command economy, Moscow emerged quickly as an enclave of affluence and dynamism. By the mid-1990s Moscow was replete with all the things Russians had expected capitalism to bring, but which had yet to trickle down to the provinces: banks, shops, restaurants, casinos, BMWs, bright lights and nightlife.

The city provided nearly 25% of all tax revenues collected by the federal government. Commercial banks, commodity exchanges, big businesses and high-end retailers all set up headquarters in the capital. By the late 1990s, Moscow had become one of the most expensive cities in the world.

When the government defaulted on its debts and devalued the currency in 1998, it appeared that the boom had gone bust. But as the panic subsided, it became clear that it was less a crisis and more a correction for a badly overvalued rouble. In the aftermath, Russian firms became more competitive and productive with the new exchange rate. Wages started to be paid again and consumption increased.

Above all else, Moscow remains a centre of power – the seat of the president, government and legislature. While it may be true, in general, that power and wealth tends to find each other, this is especially the case in postcommunist Russia, where politicians have enormous control over the redistribution of economic resources. The hallways of the Duma and the offices of the White House magnetically attract favour seekers and fortune hunters.

1999	2005
Vladimir Putin succeeds Yeltsin as president	Moscow's population estimated to reach 10 million and beyond