

# Moscow Москва

Sunlight glinting off gold-domed churches. Scantly clad women emerging from sleek, black cars. Uniformed military marching across the vast expanse of Red Sq. This is Moscow – the political, economic and cultural capital that defines this massive nation.

Russia's medieval roots are here: the Kremlin still shows off the splendour of Muscovy's grand princes; St Basil's Cathedral recounts the defeat of the Tatars. Yet this place also recalls Russia's more recent history, still fresh in our memories. On Red Sq, the founder of the Soviet state lies embalmed. And only a few kilometres away, his heir, Boris Yeltsin, heroically defied the army – leading to the demise of that same state.

Moscow has always been known for the diversity of its population and the richness of its culture. Today, more than ever, visitors and residents alike can enjoy events ranging from the classic to the progressive. Whether a Tchaikovsky opera or an Ostrovsky drama, classical performing arts in Moscow are among the best – and cheapest – in the Western world. The Tretyakov Gallery and Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts house internationally famous collections of Russian and impressionist art.

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

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Be awestruck by the endless array of jewels and weapons at the **Kremlin Armoury** (p107)
- Marvel at the artistry of the **Moscow metro** (p122)
- Sip a cappuccino at the **Café Pushkin** (p116)
- Bargain for trash and treasure at **Izmaylovo market** (p119)
- Pay your respects at **Novodevichy Cemetery** (p111)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 495

■ POPULATION: 10.4 MILLION

## HISTORY

Moscow's recorded history dates to the mid-12th century, when Yury Dolgoruky constructed the first Kremlin at a strategic spot atop the Borovitsky Hill. Moscow blossomed into an economic centre.

In the 13th century, the Mongols burned the city to the ground. The Golden Horde was interested in tribute, and Moscow was conveniently situated to monitor the river trade and road traffic. Moscow's Prince Ivan acted as tax collector, earning himself the moniker 'Moneybags' (Kalita), and Moscow developed into a regional capital.

Towards the end of the 15th century, the once diminutive duchy emerged as an expanding state under the reign of Grand Prince Ivan III (the Great). To celebrate his successes, he imported a team of Italian artisans for a complete renovation of the Kremlin. The city developed in concentric rings outward from this centre. Under Ivan IV (the Terrible), the city earned the nickname of 'Gold-Domed Moscow' because of its multitude of monastery fortresses and magnificent churches.

In 1712 Peter the Great startled the country by announcing the relocation of the capital to St Petersburg. In the early 1800s, Moscow suffered further at the hands of Napoleon Bonaparte. But after the Napoleonic Wars, Moscow was feverishly rebuilt and industry prospered.

When the Bolsheviks gained control of Russia in 1917, the capital returned to Moscow. Stalin devised an urban plan for the city: historic cathedrals and monuments were demolished; in their place appeared the marble-bedecked metro and neo-Gothic skyscrapers. In the following decades, Moscow expanded at an exponential rate.

Moscow was the scene of the most dramatic events of the early 1990s' political transition. Boris Yeltsin led crowds protesting the attempted coup in 1991; and two years later, he ordered the army to blast the parliament into submission. Within the Moscow city government, the election of Mayor Yury Luzhkov in 1992 set the stage for the creation of a big-city boss: his interests range from the media to manufacturing and from five-star hotels to shopping malls. While the rest of Russia struggled to survive the collapse of communism, Moscow emerged as an enclave of affluence.

## MOSCOW IN...

### Two Days

Spend one day seeing what makes Moscow famous: **St Basil's Cathedral** (p109), **Lenin's Tomb** (p108) and the **Kremlin** (p104). Allow a few hours in the afternoon to gawk at the gold and gems in the **Armoury** (p107). Art lovers should spend their second day at either the **Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts** (p109) or the **Tretyakov Gallery** (p110), both world-class art museums. Afterwards, spend some time exploring the surrounding neighbourhoods.

### Four Days

Take in all of the activities suggested in the two-day itinerary. On the third day, visit **Novodevichy Convent** (p111), where so many scenes from Russian history have been played out. Finally, hit the money machine and head to **Izmaylovo market** (p119) for some serious souvenir shopping.

### One Week

Take in all of the activities suggested in the four-day itinerary. Then, plan an excursion to the Golden Ring, visiting **Rostov-Veliky** (p124) and **Sergiev Posad** (p123).

## ORIENTATION

Picture Moscow as five ring roads that spread out from the centre: the Inner Ring Road, about 500m north of the Kremlin; the dual-carriageway Boulevard Ring (Bulvarnoe Koltso), about 1km from the Kremlin; the busy Garden Ring (Sadovoe Koltso), 2km out; the high-speed, eight-lane Third Ring (Tretoe Koltso), about 4.5km from the Kremlin; and the Outer Ring Road, also called MKAD, a highway that forms the city limits about 15km from the Kremlin.

Radial roads spoke out across the rings, and the Moscow River meanders across everything from northwest to southeast. The Kremlin, a north-pointing triangle with 750m sides, is at Moscow's heart in every way. Red Sq lies along its eastern side while the Moscow River flows to the south.

About 2.8km northeast of the Kremlin is Komsomolskaya pl, Moscow's transportation hub. Three bustling train stations dominate this square, including Yaroslavsky vokzal (Yaroslavl Station), the most

important of Moscow's nine train stations for Trans-Siberian travellers. Next door is Leningradsky vokzal (Leningrad Station), for services to and from St Petersburg, while across the road is Kazansky vokzal (Kazan Station), the terminus for some trains from the Urals including the main service from Yekaterinburg.

If you're arriving in Moscow on trains from Western and Eastern Europe your likely entry points will be Belorussky vokzal (Belarus Station), 2.8km northwest of the Kremlin, or Kievsky vokzal (Kyiv Station), 2.4km to the west.

## Maps

An excellent map store, **Atlas** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 928 6109; Kuznetsky most 9; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun; **M** Kuznetsky Most) stocks city and regional maps covering the whole country.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Biblio-Globus** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 928 3567; Myasnitskaya ul 6; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat, 10am-8pm Sun; **M** Lubyanka) A huge store with lots of reference and souvenir books on language, art and history, and a good selection of maps and travel guides.

**Bookberry** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 291 8303; Nikitsky bul 17; ☎ 10am-11pm; **M** Arbatskaya) A slick new chain that offers the city's best selection of guidebooks and maps.

**House of Foreign Books** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 928 2021; ul Kuznetsky most 18/7; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun; **M** Kuznetsky Most) A small shop specialising in foreign titles, including a decent selection of guidebooks.

## Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 03)

**Crisis hotline** (☎ 244 3449, in English 937 9999)

**Fire** (☎ 01)

**Police** (☎ 02)

## Internet Access

Besides the plethora of Internet cafés, wireless access is also becoming more common around Moscow. Take advantage of free wireless access at several upscale hotels, as well as NetLand or Time Online. A more complete listing of clubs and cafés with wireless access is found at <http://wifi.yandex.ru>.

**Internet Club** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 292 5670; Kuznetsky most 12; per hr R60; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat & Sun; **M** Kuznetsky Most) Small, simple and very central.

**NetCity** Kamergersky per (Map pp102-3; ☎ 292 0111; Kamergersky per 6; per hr R60; ☎ 10am-11pm; **M** Teatralnaya; Paveletskaya pl (☎ 969 2125; Paveletskaya pl 2/1; per hr R60; ☎ 9.30am-midnight; **M** Paveletskaya) Work stations offer more than function, but are sufficient to surf the Net.

**NetLand** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 781 0923; Teatralny pro 5; per hr R40-60; ☎ 24hr; **M** Kuznetsky most or Lubyanka) A loud, dark club that fills up with kids playing games.

**Phlegmatic Dog** (Map p106; ☎ 995 9545; Okhotny Ryad, ground level; Internet access free; ☎ 10am-1am; **M** Okhotny Ryad) Recently voted 'most stylish' Internet café in the world by Yahoo! Mail. Free Internet access with the purchase of food or drink.

**Time Online** Okhotny Ryad (Map p106; ☎ 363 0060; per hr R65-75; ☎ 24hr; **M** Okhotny Ryad); Belorusskaya (Map pp102-3; ☎ 363 0060; Bolshaya Kondratevsky per 7; per hr R65-75; ☎ 24hr; **M** Belorusskaya) Offers copy and photo services, as well as over 200 zippy computers or free wi-fi access.

## Internet Resources

**<http://eng.menu.ru>** A comprehensive list of Moscow restaurants, including location details and menus.

**[www.expat.ru](http://www.expat.ru)** Run by and for English-speaking expats living in Russia. Provides useful information about real estate, children in Moscow, social groups and more.

**[www.maps-moscow.com](http://www.maps-moscow.com)** An energetic group of international journalists raising awareness of architectural preservation issues in Moscow.

**[www.moscowout.ru](http://www.moscowout.ru)** A full calendar of events in the capital, with links to restaurant and movie reviews, nightlife, and activities for kids.

**[www.moscow-taxi.com](http://www.moscow-taxi.com)** Viktor the virtual taxi driver provides extensive descriptions of sites inside and outside Moscow, as well as hotel booking and other tourist services.

## Media

**element** ([www.elementmoscow.ru](http://www.elementmoscow.ru)) This oversized newsprint magazine comes out weekly with restaurant reviews, concert listings and art exhibits.

**Go** ([www.go-magazine.ru](http://www.go-magazine.ru)) The *Moscow Times*' monthly entertainment guide.

**Moscow Times** ([www.moscowtimes.ru](http://www.moscowtimes.ru)) The undisputed king of the hill in locally published English-language news is this first-rate daily, which covers Russian and international issues, as well as sports and entertainment. The Friday edition is a great source for what's happening at the weekend.

## Medical Services

**36.6 Pharmacy** Kitay-Gorod (Map pp102-3; ul Pokrovka 1; **M** Kitay-Gorod); Kuznetsky most (Map pp102-3; Kuznetsky most 18; **M** Kuznetsky Most); Novy Arbat (Map pp102-3; ul Novy Arbat 15; **M** Smolenskaya or Arbatskaya); Tverskaya

(Map pp102-3; ul Tverskaya 25; **M** Tverskaya or Mayakovskaya) A chain of 24-hour pharmacies.

**American Medical Center** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 933 7700; [www.amcenters.com](http://www.amcenters.com); Gorkholsky per 1; ☎ 24hr; **M** Prospekt Mira) Offers 24-hour emergency service, consultations and a full range of specialists, including paediatricians and dentists. Has an on-site pharmacy with English-speaking staff.

**Botkin Hospital** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 237 8338, 945 7533; 2-y Botkinsky pro 5; **M** Begovaya) The best Russian facility.

**European Medical Center** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 933 6655; [www.emcmos.ru](http://www.emcmos.ru); Spirdonevsky per 5; ☎ 24hr; **M** Mayakovskaya or Tverskaya) Includes medical and dental facilities, which are open around the clock for emergencies. The staff speaks 10 different languages.

## Money

Banks, exchange counters and ATMs are ubiquitous in Moscow. Credit cards, especially Visa and MasterCard, are widely accepted in upscale hotels, restaurants and stores.

**Alfa-Bank** (☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Arbat (Map pp102-3; ul Arbat 4/1; **M** Arbatskaya); Kuznetsky most (Map pp102-3; Kuznetsky most 7; **M** Kuznetsky Most); Marriott Grand Hotel (Map pp102-3; ul Tverskaya 26; **M** Mayakovskaya) Usually changes travellers cheques. ATMs at the branches listed dispense either roubles or US dollars.

**American Express** (☎ 933 6636; fax 933 6635; ul Usachyova 33; ☎ 9am-5pm; **M** Sportivnaya) The most reliable place to cash American Express travellers cheques. It also offers ATM, mail holding and travel services for AmEx cardholders.

**Western Union** (☎ 797 2197) For wire transfers.

## Post, Telephone & Fax

Moscow pay phones operate with cards that are widely available in shops, kiosks and metro stations. The cards come in a range of units. The phones are fairly user-friendly, and most of them have an option for directions in English. Make sure you press the button with the speaker symbol when your party answers the phone.

For international calls, it is often easier to place your call from the Central Telegraph, where you prepay for your call.

**Central Telegraph** (Map pp102-3; Tverskaya ul 7; ☎ post 8am-10pm, telephone 24hr; **M** Okhotny Ryad) Offers telephone, fax and Internet services.

**FedEx** (☎ 234 3400) Air courier services. Call for information on drop-off locations and to arrange pick-ups.

**Main post office** (Map pp102-3; Myasnitskaya ul 26; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun; **M** Chistye Prudy)

## Tourist Information

Moscow has no tourist information centre, but plenty of information is available at hostels and upscale hotels, as well as through travel agencies.

## Travel Agencies

**G&R International** (☎ 378 0001; [www.hostels.ru](http://www.hostels.ru); ul Zelenodolskaya 3/2, 5th fl; ☎ 24hr; **M** Ryazansky Prospekt) Organises itineraries, providing visa support and selling transport tickets.

**Infinity Travel** (☎ 234 6555; [www.infinity.ru](http://www.infinity.ru); Komсомolsky pr 13; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat & noon-4pm Sun; **M** Park Kultury) Affiliated with the Travellers Guest House, this on-the-ball travel company offers rail and air tickets, visa support and trans-Siberian and Central Asian packages.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

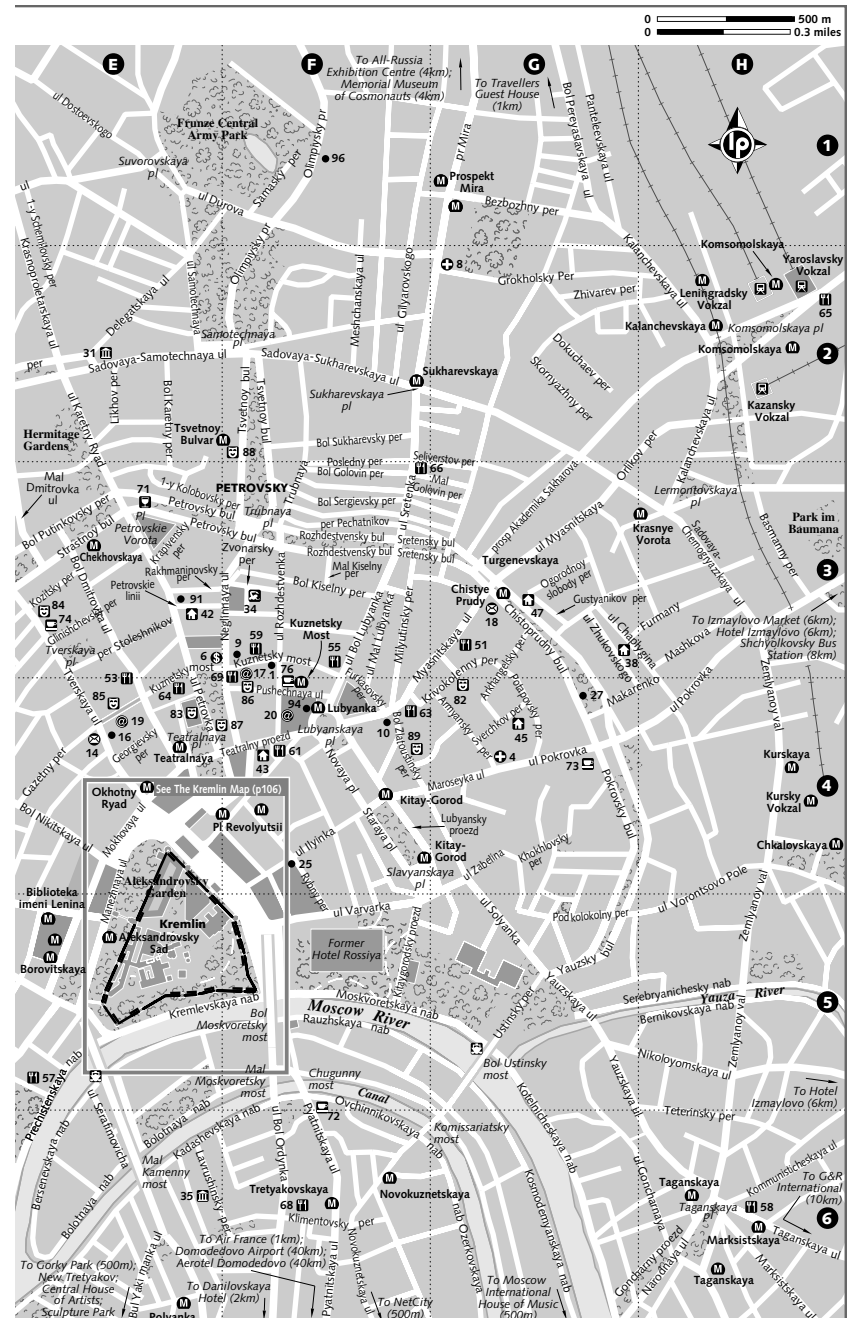
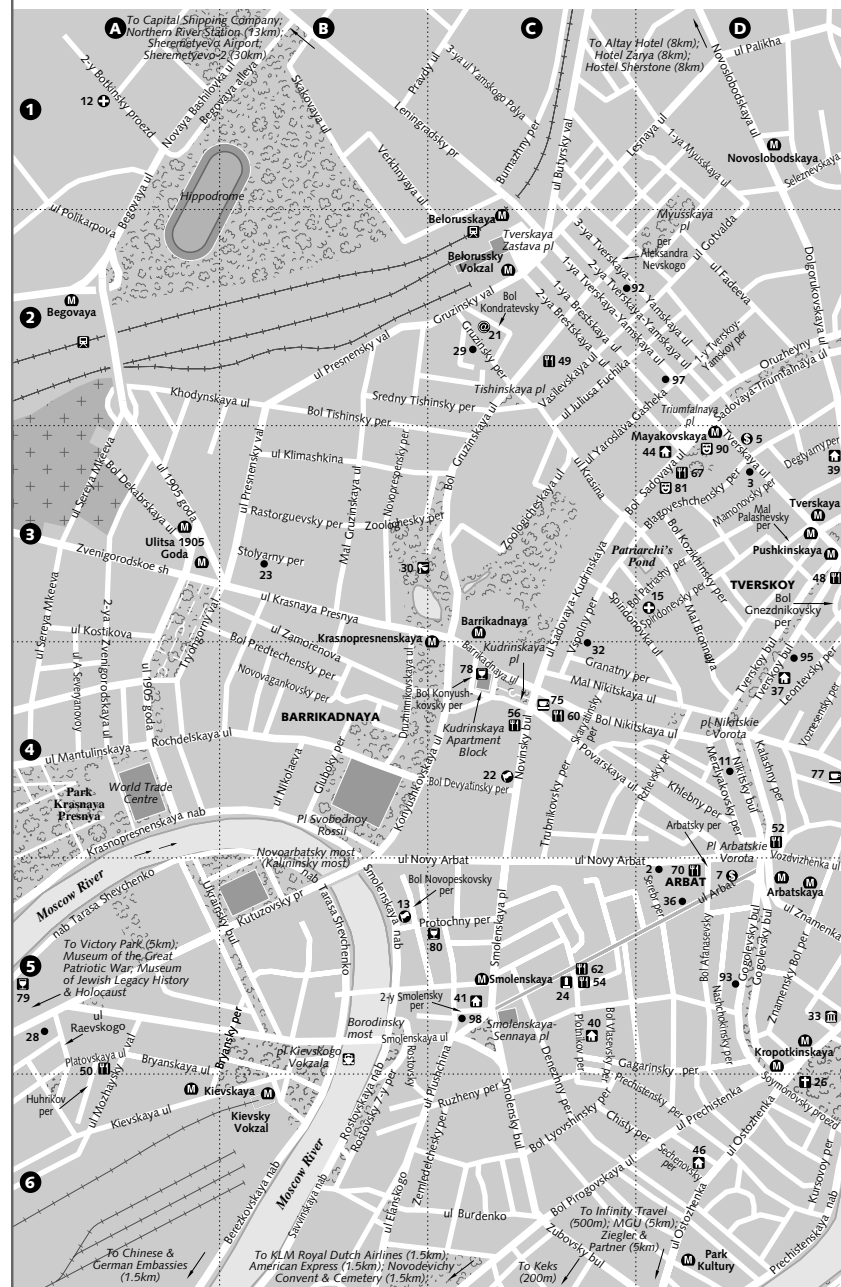
Unfortunately, street crime targeting tourists has increased in recent years, although Moscow is not as dangerous as paranoid locals may have you think. As in any big city, be on your guard against pickpockets and muggers. Be particularly careful at or around metro stations at Kursky vokzal (Kursky Station) and Partizanskaya, where readers have reported specific incidents.

Some police officers can be bothersome, especially to dark-skinned or otherwise foreign-looking people. Practical advice from a Moscow synagogue is 'cover your kippa'. Other members of the police force target tourists. Reports of tourists being hassled about their documents and registration have declined. However, it's still wise to carry a photocopy of your passport, visa and registration stamp. If stopped by a member of the police force, don't hand over your passport! It is perfectly acceptable to show a photocopy instead.

## Scams

Beware of well-dressed people dropping wads of money on the streets of Moscow. A common scam in Moscow involves a respectable-looking person who 'accidentally' drops some money on the pavement as he passes by an unsuspecting foreigner – that's you. Being an honest person, you pick up the money to return it to the careless person, who is hurrying away. A second guy sees what is happening and tries to stop you from returning it, proposing that you split the money and, well, split.

### CENTRAL MOSCOW



MOSCOW

MOSCOW

<b>INFORMATION</b>	Patriarchy Dom Tours	Moo Moo My-Mu	62 C5
36.6 Pharmacy	Патриарший Дом Туры	Мoo-Moo My-Mu	63 F4
36.6 Pharmacy	Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts	Pelmeshka Пельмешка	64 E4
36.6 Pharmacy	Музей Изобразительных	Ramstore Рамстор	65 H2
36.6 Pharmacy	Искусств имени Пушкина	Simple Pleasures	66 F3
Alfa-Bank Альфа-Банк	Sanduny Baths	Starlite Diner	
Alfa-Bank Альфа-Банк	Сандуновские бани	Старлайт Дайнер	67 D3
Alfa-Bank Альфа-Банк	State Tretyakov Gallery	Tiflis Тифлис	(see 46)
American Medical Center	Государственная	Yolki-Palki Ёлки-Палки	68 F6
Американский	Третьяковская Галерея	Yolki-Palki Ёлки-Палки	69 F3
Медицинский Центр	Wall of Peace Стена Мира	Yolki-Palki Ёлки-Палки	70 D5
Atlas Atlas магазин			
Biblio-Globus	<b>SLEEPING</b>	<b>DRINKING</b>	
Торговый дом	East-West Hotel	Bar 30/7 Бар 30/7	71 E3
Библио-Глобус	Ист-Вест Отель	Coffee Bean Кафе Кофе Бин	72 F5
Bookberry Букбери	Ирина's Flat	Coffee Bean Кафе Кофе Бин	73 G4
Botkin Hospital	Квартира Галины	Coffee Bean Кафе Кофе Бин	74 E3
Боткина больница	Golden Apple	Coffee Mania Кафе Манья	75 C4
British Embassy	Золотое Яблоко	Coffee Mania Кафе Манья	76 F4
Посольство Британии	Hotel Arbat	Coffee Mania Кафе Манья	77 D4
Central Telegraph	Гостиница Арбат	Real McCooy	78 C4
Центральный телеграф	Hotel Belgrad	Red Bar Красный Бар	79 A5
European Medical Center	Гостиница Белград	Tinkoff Тинкофф	80 C5
Европейский	Hotel Budapest		
Медицинский Центр	Гостиница Будапешт	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>	
Euroset Евросеть	Hotel Metropol	B-2 Б-2	81 D3
House of Foreign Books	Гостиница Метрополь	bilingua	82 G4
Дом Иностранной Книги	Hotel Peking	Bolshoi Theatre	
Internet Club Интернет Клуб	Гостиница Пекин	Большой Театр	83 E4
Main Post Office	Гостиница Пекин	Bunker Бункер	84 E3
Главпочтамт	Гостиница Сверчков	Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre	
NetCity НетСити	Гостиница Сверчков	МХАТ имени Чехова	85 E4
NetLand НетЛенд	Гостиница Тифлис	Karma Bar Карма Бар	86 F4
Time Online Тайм Онлайн	Kazakh Embassy Hotel	Maly Theatre	
US Embassy	Гостиница Посольства	Малый Театр	87 E4
Посольство США	Kazakhstan	Nikulin Circus	
		Цирк Никулина	88 F2
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>EATING</b>	Propaganda Пронаганда	89 F4
Banya on Presnya	Café Pushkin Кафе Пушкин	Tchaikovsky Concert Hall	
Бани на Пресне	Correa's	Концертный зал	
Bulat Okudzhava Statue	Dorogomilovsky Market	имени Чайковского	90 D3
Памятник Булату	Дорогомилровский Рынок	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
Окуджаве	Drova Дрова	Aeroflot Аэрофлот	91 E3
Capital Tours	Drova Дрова	British Airways	
Cathedral of Christ the Saviour	Drova Дрова	Британские Авиалинии	92 C2
Храм Христа Спасителя	Eastern Quarter	Delta Дельта	93 D5
Chistyey Prudy	Восточный Квартал	GlavAgenstvo	
Чистые Пруды	GlavPivTorg ГлавПивТорг	ГлавАгенство	94 F4
Kuklachev Cat Theatre	Il Patio Ил Патю	GlavAgenstvo	
Театр Кошек Кулачёва	Il Patio Ил Патю	ГлавАгенство	95 D4
Liden & Denz	Il Patio Ил Патю	Lufthansa Лужфтанса	96 F1
Moscow Zoo	Jagannath Джаганнат	SAS	
Московский зоопарк	Karetny Dvor	Скандинавские Авиалинии	97 D2
Obraztsov Puppet Theatre & Museum Кукольный театр им Образцова	Каретный Двор	Transaero Трансаэро	98 C5
	Loft Café Лофт Кафе		

This is a no-win situation. These guys are in cahoots. While you are negotiating about how to split the money – or arguing about returning it – the first guy realises he is missing his cash so returns to the scene of the crime. But lo and behold, the cash you give him is not enough: some is missing and you are culpable. This leads to a shakedown or any number of unpleasanties.

The moral of the story is that the streets of Moscow are not paved with money. Re-

sist the temptation to pick up money that's lying on the pavement.

## SIGHTS Kremlin

The apex of Russian political power and once the centre of the Orthodox Church, the **Kremlin** (Map p106; ☎ 202 3776; www.kremlin.museum.ru; adult/student R300/150, photography permit R50; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Fri-Wed; Aleksandrovsky Sad, Borovitskaya or Biblioteka im Lenina) is not only the

kernel of Moscow but of the whole country. It's from here that autocratic tsars, communist dictators and democratic presidents have done their best – and worst – for Russia.

Occupying a roughly triangular plot of land covering little Borovitsky Hill on the north bank of the Moscow River, the Kremlin is enclosed by high walls 2.25km long with Red Sq outside the east wall. The best views of the complex are from Sofiyskaya nab across the river.

The main ticket office is in Aleksandrovsky Garden, just off Manezhnaya pl. The ticket covers entry to all buildings except the Armoury and Diamond Fund Exhibition; it also does not include the special exhibits that are sometimes held inside Patriarch's Palace or inside the Ivan the Great Bell Tower. In any case, you can and should buy tickets for the Armoury here, to avoid queuing up once inside. Arrive early before tickets sell out. Before entering the Kremlin, deposit bags at the nearby **left luggage office** (per bag R60; ☎ 9am-6.30pm), beneath the Kutafya Tower.

There's also an entrance at the southern Borovitskaya Gate, mainly used by those heading straight to the Armoury or the Diamond Fund Exhibition.

Inside the Kremlin, police will keep you from straying into the out-of-bounds areas. Visitors wearing shorts will be refused entry.

Numerous freelance guides tout their services near the Kutafya Tower, with prices ranging from R300 to R600 per hour, and the quality varying widely. Capital Tours (see p113) offers standard daily tours of the Kremlin and Armoury, while Patriarchy Dom Tours (see p113) offers more in-depth tours of the Kremlin cathedrals, sometimes including a visit to the otherwise off-limits palaces.

## GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

The **Kutafya Tower** (Map p106), which forms the main visitors' entrance today, stands away from the Kremlin's west wall, at the end of a ramp over the Aleksandrovsky Garden leading up to the **Trinity Gate Tower** (Map p106). On the way to central Sobornaya pl you'll pass a series of buildings that are closed to visitors. On the right is the 17th-century **Poteshny Palace** (Map p106), where Stalin lived, and the bombastic mar-

ble, glass and concrete **State Kremlin Palace** (Map p106), formerly the Palace of Congresses, built from 1960 to 1961 for Communist Party congresses and now used by both the Bolshoi and Kremlin Ballet companies (see p119). On the left is the **Arsenal** (Map p106), home to the Kremlin guard and ringed by 800 captured Napoleonic cannons, and the yellow, triangular former **Senate** (Map p106) building, now the ultimate seat of power in the modern Kremlin, the offices of the president of Russia. Next to the Senate is the 1930s **Supreme Soviet** (Map p106) building.

## PATRIARCH'S PALACE

The palace contains an exhibit of 17th-century household items, including jewellery, hunting equipment and furniture. From here you can access the five-domed **Church of the Twelve Apostles** (Map p106), which

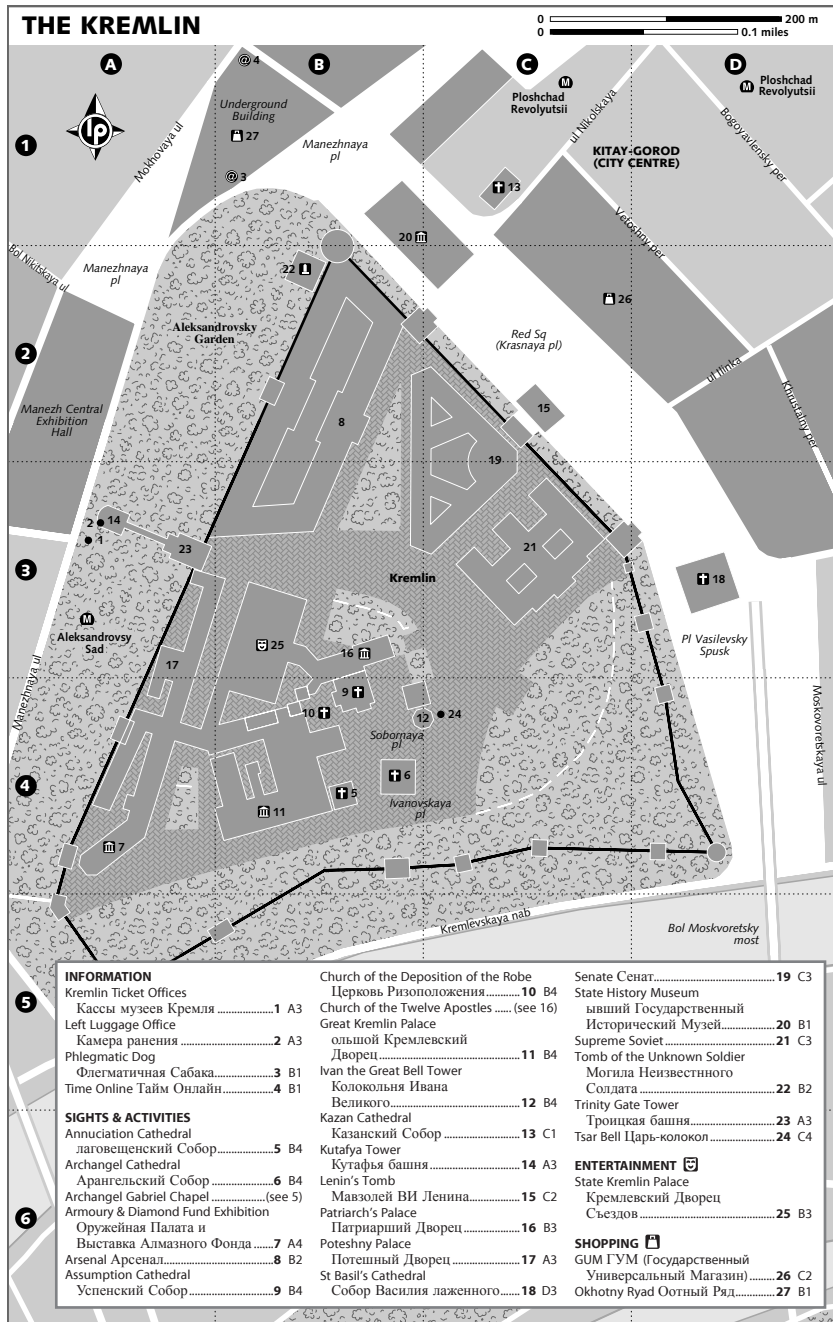
## HISTORY OF THE KREMLIN

A 'kremlin' is a town's fortified stronghold. The first wooden wall around Moscow was built in the 1150s, and the Kremlin grew with the importance of Moscow's princes, becoming in the 1320s the headquarters of the Russian Church, which had shifted from Vladimir. The 'White Stone Kremlin' – with limestone walls – was built in the 1360s, with almost the same boundaries as today.

At the end of the 15th century, Ivan the Great brought master builders from Pskov and Italy to supervise new walls and towers (most of which still stand), as well as the Kremlin's three cathedrals. Although Peter the Great shifted the capital to St Petersburg, tsars continued to show up here for coronations and other celebrations.

Over the years, the biggest threat to the Kremlin was Napoleon, who blew up parts of it before his retreat in 1812. Fortunately, the arrival of Russian troops prevented total destruction. The citadel wouldn't be breached again until the Bolsheviks stormed it in November 1917.

The Kremlin remained closed to the public until 1955. It was Stalin who, in 1935, had the imperial double-headed eagles removed from the wall's five tallest towers, replacing them with the distinctive red-glass stars still there today.



has a gilded, wooden iconostasis and a collection of icons by leading 17th-century icon painters.

The Patriarch's Palace often holds **special exhibits** (adult/student R300/150), which require an additional ticket and reservation time.

#### ASSUMPTION CATHEDRAL

On the northern side of Sobornaya pl, with five golden helmet domes and four semi-circular gables facing the square, is this cathedral (Map p106), built between 1475 and 1479. As the focal church of prerevolutionary Russia, it's the burial place of most heads of the Russian Orthodox Church from the 1320s to 1700. The tombs are against the north, west and south walls.

The iconostasis dates from 1652 but its lowest level contains some older icons, including the *Virgin of Vladimir* (Vladimirskaya Bogomater), an early-15th-century Rublyov-school copy of Russia's most revered image, the *Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God* (Ikona Vladimirskoy Bogomateri). The 12th-century original, now in the Tretyakov Gallery (see p110), stood in the Assumption Cathedral from the 1480s to 1930.

The delicate little single-domed church beside the west door of the Assumption Cathedral is the **Church of the Deposition of the Robe** (Map p106), built between 1484 and 1486 by masons from Pskov.

#### IVAN THE GREAT BELL TOWER

With its two golden domes rising above the eastern side of Sobornaya pl, the 16th-century Ivan the Great Bell Tower is the Kremlin's tallest structure, visible from 30km away. Exhibitions from the Kremlin collections are shown on the ground level of the **bell tower** (Map p106; adult/student R100/50).

Beside the bell tower (not inside it) stands the **Tsar Bell**, which is the world's biggest bell. Sadly, this 202-tonne monster never rang. North of the bell tower is the **Tsar Cannon**, cast in 1586 for Fyodor I, whose portrait is on the barrel. Shot has never sullied its 89cm bore – and certainly not the cannonballs beside it, which are too big even for this elephantine firearm.

#### ARCHANGEL CATHEDRAL

Back on Sobornaya pl, this 1508 **cathedral** (Map p106) at the square's southeastern corner was for centuries the coronation, wed-

ding and burial church of tsars. The tombs of all of Moscow's rulers from the 1320s to the 1690s (except Boris Godunov, who is buried at Sergiev Posad – see p123) are here. Tsarevich Dmitry (Ivan the Terrible's son, who died mysteriously in 1591) lies beneath a painted stone canopy. Ivan's own tomb is out of sight behind the iconostasis, along with those of his other sons.

#### ANNUNCIATION CATHEDRAL

At the southwest corner of Sobornaya pl, this cathedral (Map p106), built by Pskov masters in 1489, was the royal family's private chapel. Ivan the Terrible's first marriage disqualified him under Orthodox law from entering the church proper, so he had the southern arm of the gallery converted into the **Archangel Gabriel Chapel**, from which he could view services through a grille.

The cathedral contains the celebrated icons of master painter Theophanes the Greek. Theophanes probably painted most of the six icons at the right-hand end of the deisus row, the biggest of the six tiers of the iconostasis. *Archangel Michael* (the third icon from the left on the largest of the six tiers of the iconostasis) is ascribed to Andrei Rublyov, who may also have painted the adjacent *St Peter*.

The basement – which remains from the previous 14th-century cathedral on this site – contains a fascinating exhibit on the **Archaeology of the Kremlin**. The artefacts date from the 12th to 14th centuries, showing the growth of Moscow during this period.

#### ARMOURY

The 700-room State Kremlin Palace is used for official visits and receptions, but isn't open to the public. In the Kremlin's southwestern corner is the **Armoury** (Map p106; adult/student R300/175; ☎ 10am, noon, 2.30pm & 4.30pm), a numbingly opulent collection of treasures accumulated over time by the Russian State and Church. Tickets specify entry times.

Of the Armoury's nine rooms, Rooms 6 and 7 are the most fascinating, containing royal regalia such as the joint coronation throne of boy tsars Peter (the Great) and his half-brother Ivan V (with a secret compartment from which Regent Sofia would prompt them), the 800-diamond throne of Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich, and the coronation dresses of 18th-century empresses.

If the Armoury doesn't sate your diamond lust, there are more in the separate **Diamond Fund Exhibition** (☎ 229 2036; adult/student R350/175; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Fri-Wed), which is in the same building as the Armoury. The lavish collection shows off the precious stones and jewellery garnered by tsars and empresses over the centuries, including the largest sapphire in the world.

### ALEKSANDROVSKY GARDEN

A good place to relax is the pleasant garden (Map p106) along the Kremlin's western wall. At the garden's northern end is the **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**, containing the remains of a soldier who died in December 1941 at km41 of Leningradskoe sh – the nearest the Nazis came to Moscow. The changing of the guard happens every hour from 10am to 7pm in summer, and to 3pm during winter. Opposite the gardens is Manezhnaya pl and the underground Okhotny Ryad shopping mall (p119), a popular meeting spot for young Muscovites.

### Red Square

Immediately outside the Kremlin's north-eastern wall is the infamous **Red Sq** (Kras-

naya ploshchad; Map p106). It was once a market square adjoining the merchants' area in Kitay-Gorod. Red Sq has always been a place where occupants of the Kremlin chose to congregate, celebrate and castigate for all the people to see.

Incidentally, the name 'Krasnaya ploshchad' has nothing to do with communism or the blood that flowed here: *krasny* in old Russian meant 'beautiful' and only in the 20th century did it come to mean 'red', too.

### LENIN'S TOMB

The granite **tomb** (Map p106; ☎ 923 5527; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun; 🚫 Ploshchad Revolyutsii), standing at the foot of the Kremlin wall, is one of Red Sq's must-see sights, especially if the former leader is eventually buried beside his mum in St Petersburg. Before joining the queue at the north-western corner of Red Sq, drop your camera at the left-luggage office in the State History Museum (see opposite), as you will not be allowed to take it with you. Humourless guards ensure that visitors remain respectful during the visit. After trooping past the embalmed, oddly waxy figure, emerge from his red and black stone tomb and inspect

### LENIN UNDER GLASS

Red Sq is home to the world's most famous mummy, that of Vladimir Ilych Lenin. When he died of a stroke (on 22 January 1924, aged 53), a long line of mourners patiently gathered in winter for weeks to glimpse the body as it lay in state. Inspired by the spectacle, Stalin proposed that the father of Soviet communism should continue to serve the cause as a holy relic. So the decision was made to preserve Lenin's corpse for perpetuity, against the vehement protests of his widow, as well as his own expressed desire to be buried next to his mother in St Petersburg.

Boris Zbarsky, a biochemist, and Vladimir Vorobyov, an anatomist, were issued a political order to put a stop to the natural decomposition of the body. The pair worked frantically in a secret laboratory in search of a long-term chemical solution. In the meantime, the body's dark spots were bleached, and lips and eyes sewn tight. The brain was removed and taken to another secret laboratory, to be sliced and diced by scientists for the next 40 years in the hope of uncovering its hidden genius.

In July 1924, the scientists hit upon a formula to successfully arrest the decaying process, a closely guarded state secret. This necrotic craft was passed on to Zbarsky's son, who ran the Kremlin's covert embalming lab for decades. After the fall of communism, Zbarsky came clean: the body is wiped down every few days, and then, every 18 months, thoroughly examined and submerged in a tub of chemicals, including paraffin wax. The institute has now gone commercial, offering its services and secrets to wannabe immortals for a mere million dollars.

In the early 1990s, Boris Yeltsin expressed his intention to heed Lenin's request and bury him in St Petersburg, setting off a furore from the political left as well as more-muted objections from Moscow tour operators. It seems that the mausoleum, the most sacred shrine of Soviet communism, and the mummy, the literal embodiment of the Russian Revolution, will remain in place for at least several more years.

where Stalin, Leonid Brezhnev and many of communism's other heavy hitters are buried along the Kremlin wall.

### ST BASIL'S CATHEDRAL

No building says 'Russia' more than **Pokrovsky Cathedral** (St Basil's Cathedral, Sobor Vasiliya Blazhenogo; Map p106; ☎ 298 3304; Krasnaya pl 2; admission US\$3; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Mon; 🚫 Ploshchad Revolyutsii), commonly known as St Basil's. Rising from the slope at Red Sq's southern end, this crazy confusion of colours and shapes was created between 1555 and 1561, replacing an existing church, to celebrate Ivan the Terrible's taking of the Tatar stronghold of Kazan. Its design is the culmination of a wholly Russian style that had been developed for building wooden churches.

The misnomer St Basil's actually refers only to the northeastern chapel, which was added later. It was built over the grave of the barefoot holy fool Vasily (Basil) the Blessed, who predicted Ivan's damnation and added correctly, as the army left for Kazan, that Ivan would murder a son. Vasily, who died while Kazan was under siege, was buried beside the church that St Basil's soon replaced. He was later canonised.

### STATE HISTORY MUSEUM

At the northern end of the square, this **museum** (Map p106; ☎ 292 4019; www.shm.ru; adult/student R150/75; ☎ 11am-7pm Wed-Mon; 🚫 Ploshchad Revolyutsii) has an enormous collection covering the Russian empire from the Stone Age onwards. The building, dating from the late 19th century, is itself an attraction – each room is in the style of a different period or region, some with highly decorated walls echoing old Russian churches. A **joint ticket** (adult/student R230/115) allowing access to the State History Museum and St Basil's Cathedral is available at either spot.

Tiny **Kazan Cathedral** (Map p106; ul Nikol'skaya 3; admission free; ☎ 8am-7pm, evening service Mon 8pm; 🚫 Ploshchad Revolyutsii) is opposite the museum entrance. It's a replica of the original, which was founded in 1636 and demolished on Stalin's orders in 1936, allegedly because it impeded the flow of parades through Red Sq.

### Arbat District

Bound by the Moscow River in the south-east, this district includes the area south of ul Novy Arbat (or ul Vozdvizhenka) and in-

side the Garden Ring. It includes ul Arbat, the 1.25km pedestrian mall stretching from Arbatskaya pl on the Boulevard Ring to Smolenskaya pl on the Garden Ring.

### ULITSA ARBAT

The Arbat – Moscow's most famous street – is something of an art market, complete with instant portrait painters, soapbox poets, jugglers and buskers (and some pickpockets). It is an interesting walk, dotted with old pastel-coloured merchant houses and tourist-oriented shops and cafés. Near ul Arbat's eastern end, the **Wall of Peace** (Map pp102-3) is composed of hundreds of individually painted tiles on a theme of international friendship. The statue at the corner of Plotnikov per is of **Bulat Okudzhava** (Map pp102-3), the 1960s cult poet, singer and songwriter who lived at No 43 (see p110).

### PUSHKIN MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Moscow's premier foreign-art museum is the **Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 203 7998; www.museum.ru/gmii; ul Volkhonka 12; adult/student R300/150, audio guide R250; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚫 Kropotkinskaya). It is famous for its impressionist and postimpressionist paintings, but also has a broad selection of European works from the Renaissance onwards, mostly appropriated from private collections after the revolution. There is also an amazing array of statues through the ages.

### CATHEDRAL OF CHRIST THE SAVIOUR

Dominating the skyline along the Moscow River is the gargantuan **Cathedral of Christ the Saviour** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 201 2847; www.xcc.ru; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm; 🚫 Kropotkinskaya). It sits on the site of an earlier and similar church of the same name, built from 1839 to 1883 to commemorate Russia's victory over Napoleon. The original was destroyed during Stalin's orgy of explosive secularism. Stalin planned to replace the church with a 315m-high 'Palace of Soviets' (including a 100m statue of Lenin) but the project never got off the ground – literally. Instead, for 50 years the site served an important purpose as the world's largest swimming pool.

### Zamoskvorechie

Zamoskvorechie (Beyond-Moscow-River) stretches south from opposite the Kremlin, inside a big river loop.

**ARBAT, MY ARBAT**

Arbat, my Arbat, you are my calling  
You are my happiness and my misfortune.

*Bulat Okudzhava*

For Moscow's beloved bard Bulat Okudzhava, the Arbat was not only his home, it was his inspiration. Although he spent his university years in Georgia dabbling in harmless verse, it was only upon his return to Moscow – and to his cherished Arbat – that his poetry adopted the freethinking character for which it is known.

He gradually made the transition from poet to songwriter, stating that, 'Once I had the desire to accompany one of my satirical verses with music. I only knew three chords; now, 27 years later, I know seven chords, then I knew three.' While Bulat and his friends enjoyed his songs, other composers, singers and guitarists did not. The ill feeling subsided when a well-known poet announced that '...these are not songs. This is just another way of presenting poetry.'

And so a new form of art was born. The 1960s were heady times – in Moscow as elsewhere – and Okudzhava inspired a whole movement of liberal-thinking poets to take their ideas to the streets. Vladimir Vysotsky and others – some political, some not – followed in Okudzhava's footsteps, their iconoclastic lyrics and simple melodies drawing enthusiastic crowds all around Moscow.

The Arbat today – crowded with tacky souvenir stands and overpriced cafés – bears little resemblance to the hallowed haunt of Okudzhava's youth. But its memory lives on in the bards and buskers, painters and poets who still perform for strolling crowds on summer evenings.

**STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY**

Nothing short of spectacular, the **State Tretyakov Gallery** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 951 1362, 953 5223; www.tretyakov.ru; Lavrushinsky per 10; adult/student R225/130, audio tour R120; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Tretyakovskaya) holds the world's best collection of Russian icons and an outstanding collection of other prerevolutionary Russian art, particularly the 19th-century Peredvizhniki (see p48). Within the museum grounds, the **Church of St Nicholas in Tolmachi** is the church where Pavel Tretyakov (one of the museum's founders) regularly attended services. The centrepiece is the revered 12th-century *Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God*, protector of all of Russia.

**NEW TRETYAKOV**

The premier venue for 20th-century Russian art is the new building of the State Tretyakov Gallery on Krymsky val, better known as the **New Tretyakov** (Novaya Tretyakovskaya Galereya; ☎ 238 1378; adult/student R225/130; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Park Kultury). Besides the plethora of socialist realism, the exhibits showcase avant-garde artists like Kasimir Malevich, Vasily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, Natalia Goncharova and Lyubov Popova.

In the same building as the New Tretyakov, the **Central House of Artists** (Tsentralny Dom Khudozh-

nikov; ☎ 238 9634; adult/student R50/20; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Park Kultury) is a huge exhibit space used for contemporary art shows.

Behind the complex is a wonderful, moody **Sculpture Park** (Park Skulptur; ☎ 290 0667; Krimsky val 10; admission R50; ☎ 9am-9pm; 🚶 Park Kultury). Formerly called the Park of the Fallen Heroes, it started as a collection of Soviet statues (Stalin, Felix Dzerzhinsky, a selection of Lenins and Brezhnevs) put out to pasture when they were ripped from their pedestals in the post-1991 wave of anti-Soviet feeling. These discredited icons have now been joined by contemporary work.

**GORKY PARK**

Part ornamental park, part funfair, Gorky Park is one of Moscow's most festive places to escape the hubbub of the city. Officially the **Park of Culture** (Park Kultury; ☎ 237 1266; Krymsky val; adult/child R50/15; ☎ 10am-10pm; 🚶 Park Kultury), it's named after Maxim Gorky, and stretches almost 3km along the river upstream of Krymsky most. You can't miss the showy entrance, marked by colourful flags waving in the wind and the happy sounds of an old-fashioned carousel. Inside, Gorky Park has a small Western amusement park with two roller coasters and a dozen other terror-inducing attractions.

**Outer Moscow  
NOVODEVICHY CONVENT & CEMETERY**

A cluster of sparkling domes behind turreted walls on the Moscow River, **Novodevichy Convent** (Novodevichy Monastir; ☎ 246 8526; adult/student R150/75, photo permit R60; ☎ grounds daily 8am-8pm, museums Wed-Mon 10am-5pm; 🚶 Sportivnaya) is rich with history and treasures. Founded in 1524 to celebrate the retaking of Smolensk from Lithuania, the convent is notorious as the place where Peter the Great imprisoned his half-sister Sofia for her part in the Streltsy rebellion.

Adjacent to the convent, **Novodevichy Cemetery** (Novodevichy Kladbishche; admission R30; ☎ 9am-6pm; 🚶 Sportivnaya) is among Moscow's most prestigious resting places – a veritable 'who's who' of Russian politics and culture. You will find the tombs of Anton Chekhov, Nikolai Gogol, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Sergei Eisenstein, Andrei Gromyko, and many other Russian and Soviet notables.

**ALL-RUSSIA EXHIBITION CENTRE**

Nowhere sums up the rise and fall of the Soviet dream like this **exhibition centre** (Vserossiyskiy Vystavochnyy Tsentr, VVTs; ☎ 544 3400; www.vvc.entre.ru; pr Mira; ☎ pavilions 10am-6pm, grounds 9am-7pm; 🚶 VDNKh). The old initials by which it's still commonly known, VDNKh, tell half the story – they stand for Vystavka Dostizheniy Narodnogo Khozyaystva SSSR (USSR Economic Achievements Exhibition).

Originally created in the 1930s, VDNKh was expanded in the 1950s and '60s to impress upon one and all the success of the Soviet economic system. Two kilometres long and 1km wide, it is composed of wide pedestrian avenues and grandiose pavilions, glorifying every aspect of socialist construction from education and health to agriculture, technology and science. The pavilions represent a huge variety of architectural styles, symbolic of the contributions from diverse ethnic and artistic movements to the common goal. Here you will find the kitschiest socialist realism, the most inspiring of socialist optimism and, now, the tackiest of capitalist consumerism.

The soaring 100m titanium obelisk is a monument to Soviet space flight. In its base is the **Memorial Museum of Cosmonauts** (Muzey Kosmonavtov; ☎ 283 8197; adult/child R40/20, English audio guide R100; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 VDNKh),

a high-concept series of displays from the glory days of the Soviet space programme.

**VICTORY PARK & AROUND**

This huge memorial complex celebrates the Great Patriotic War. The park includes endless fountains and monuments, as well as the memorial **Church of St George**. The **Museum of the Great Patriotic War** (☎ 142 4185; ul Bratiev Fonchenko 10; admission R30; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Park Pobedy), within the park, has a diorama of every major WWII battle. Exhibits highlight the many heroes of the Soviet Union, and show weapons, photographs, documentary films, letters and much other authentic wartime memorabilia.

Make arrangements in advance to visit the **Museum of Jewish Legacy History and Holocaust** (☎ 148 1907; Minskaya ul; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, noon-7pm Sun; 🚶 Park Pobedy).

**ACTIVITIES**

What better way to cope with Moscow than to have it steamed, washed and beaten out of you? There are traditional *bani* (hot baths) all over town. If you aren't shy, general admission to shared facilities is cheaper than renting a private bath. See also p44, for a guide to *banya* etiquette.

**Banya on Presnya** (Map pp102-3; ☎ men 255 5306, women 253 8690; Stolyarny per 7; per hr R300; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun; 🚶 Ulitsa 1905 Goda) lacks the old-fashioned decadent atmosphere of Sanduny. Nonetheless, this new, clean place provides a first-rate *banya* experience.

**Sanduny Baths** (Map pp102-3; ☎ private 925 4631, general 925 4633; www.sanduny.ru; Neglinnaya ul 14; private room per hr from R1200, general admission per hr R500-700; ☎ 8am-10pm) is the oldest and most luxurious *banya* in the city. A work of art in itself, the Gothic Room has rich wood carving and the main shower room has an almost aristocratic Roman feel to it.

There's no shortage of winter in Moscow, so take advantage of it. You can rent ice skates and see where all those great Russian figure skaters come from at **Gorky Park** (opposite) or **Chistyey Prudy** (Map pp102-3). Bring your passport to rent skates.

**WALKING TOUR**

This walking tour winds its way through Kitay-Gorod, which – settled in the 13th century – is one of the oldest parts of Moscow. Kitay-Gorod translates as 'Chinatown',

but the name actually derives from *kita*, meaning 'wattle'. It refers to the palisades that reinforced the earthen ramp erected around this early Kremlin suburb.

Start at the Hotel Metropol and walk east down Teatralny pro to the gated walkway. This historical complex is **Old Fields (1)**, and includes excavations of the 16th-century fortified wall that used to surround Kitay-Gorod and the foundations of the 1493 Trinity Church, as well as the memorial statue of Ivan Fyodorov, the 16th-century printer responsible for Russia's first book.

Walk down Tretyakovskiy pro to Nikol'skaya ul, Kitay-Gorod's busiest street. Turn right to head west on Nikolskaya ul, which used to be the main road to Vladimir.

The green and white building, with the lion and unicorn above its entrance at No 15, is the **Synod Printing House (2)**, where Ivan Fyodorov reputedly produced Russia's first printed book in 1563. Up until the early 19th century, Kitay-Gorod was something of a printing centre, home to 26 out of Moscow's then 31 bookshops. The **Zaikonospassky Monastery (3)** at Nos 7 to 9 refers to the busy icon trade that also took place here.

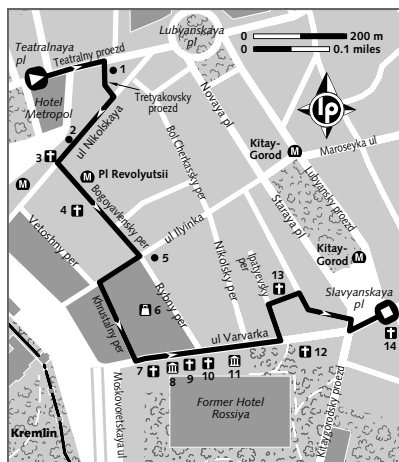
#### WALK FACTS

**Start** Teatralnaya pl (M Teatralnaya)

**Finish** Staraya pl (M Kitay-Gorod)

**Distance** 1.5km

**Duration** Two hours



Turn left on Bogoyavlensky per and head south, looking for the Moscow Baroque Epiphany Cathedral on the right-hand side. The church was built in the 1690s, but the **Monastery of the Epiphany (4)** dates to the 13th century.

Continue to ul Ilyinka, which was Moscow's financial heart in the 18th and 19th centuries. The old **Stock Exchange (5)** is on the corner at No 6. Built in the 1870s, it now houses the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Turn left and walk down Khrustalny per. The Old Merchants' Court – **Gostinny Dvor (6)** – occupies the block between uls Ilyinka and Varvarka. It is now completely renovated and filled with shops, including some excellent stops for souvenir hunters.

Take another left and head east on ul Varvarka, which is crowded with tiny churches, old homes and what remains of the giant Hotel Rossiya. The pink and white **St Barbara's Church (7)**, now government offices, dates from 1795 to 1804. The reconstructed 16th-century **Old English House (8)**, white with peaked wooden roofs, was the residence of England's first emissaries to Russia.

Built in 1698, the **Church of St Maxim the Blessed (9)** at No 4 is now a folk-art exhibition hall. Next along is the pointed bell tower of the 17th-century **Monastery of the Sign (10)**, incorporating the monks' building and a golden-domed cathedral.

Tucked in between the street and the former Hotel Rossiya is the small but rather interesting **Romanov Chambers in Zaryadye Museum (11)**; ☎ 924 4529; ul Varvarka 10; admission R150; ☎ 10am–5pm Thu–Mon, 11am–6pm Wed), which is devoted to the lives of these high-ranking nobles. The colourful **St George's Church (12)** at No 12 dates from 1658.

Cross ul Varvarka and walk up Ipatyevskiy per. The enchanting 1630s **Church of the Trinity in Nikitniki (13)** is an exquisite example of Russian baroque hidden amid the overbearing façades of the surrounding buildings.

Head east on Ipatyevskiy per out to Staraya pl. At the southern end of Staraya Pl, **All Saints Cathedral on the Kulishka (14)** was built in 1687. In 1380, Dmitry Donskoy built the original wooden church on this site to commemorate those who died in the battle of Kulikovo. Some remains of the old city wall can be seen in the underground passage at the corner of ul Varvarka and Staraya pl.

## COURSES

### Cooking

Russian cooking classes are hard to come by, but Patriarchy Dom Tours (see right) does offer an occasional half-day course. Learn to whip up some bliny, then eat them for lunch.

### Language

Check the *Moscow Times* for advertisements for Russian tutors and short-term courses.

**Liden & Denz Language Centre** (☎ 254 4991; www.lidenz.ru; Gruzinsky per 3-181, ground fl; 16hr course R4480; (M) Belorusskaya) More-expensive courses service the business and diplomatic community with less-intensive, evening courses.

**Ziegler & Partner** (☎ /fax 939 0980; www.study.russian.com; Moscow State University, cnr ul Akademika Khokhlova & pr Vernadkogo; 2-wk, 40hr course US\$860; (M) Universitet) A Swiss group offering individually designed courses, from standard conversation to specialised lessons in business, law, literature etc.

## MOSCOW FOR CHILDREN

Kids may not appreciate an age-old icon or a Soviet hero but Moscow has plenty to offer the little ones.

For starters, the city is filled with parks, such as **Aleksandrovsy Garden (p108)**, which has a playground and plenty of room to run around. Or take them to **Gorky Park (p110)** – thrilling rides in summer and ice skating in winter make it the ultimate Russian experience for children. For a more post-Soviet experience, the **All-Russia Exhibition Centre (p111)** also has amusement park rides and video games.

Russia excels at the circus, and crazy clowns and daring acrobatics are all the rage at the atmospheric **Nikulin Circus (p119)**. Another Russian favourite is the puppet theatre. **Obraztsov Puppet Theatre and Museum (Map pp102-3; ☎ 299 3310, 299 5563; Sadovaya Samotechnaya ul 3; (M) Tsvetnoy Bulvar)** runs colourful Russian folk tales and adapted classical plays; kids can get up close and personal with the incredible puppets at the museum.

What better entertainment for kiddies than performing kitties? At the **Kuklachev Cat Theatre (Map pp102-3; ☎ 249 2907; Kutuzovskiy pr 25), Yuri Kuklachev's** acrobatic cats do all kinds of stunts to the audience's delight. Kuklachev says, 'We do not use the word *train* here because it implies forcing an

animal to do something; and you cannot force cats to do anything they don't want to. We play with the cats.' Bigger cats are the highlight of the **Moscow Zoo (Map pp102-3; ☎ 255 6367; www.zoo.ru/moscow; cnr Barrikadnaya & Bolshaya Gruzinskaya uls; admission R80; ☎ 10am–8pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Oct–Apr; (M) Barrikadnaya)**, an obvious destination for children.

## TOURS

For new perspectives on Moscow neighbourhoods, fine views of the Kremlin, or just good old-fashioned transportation, a boat ride (adult/child R200/100, end to end 1½ hours, departing every 20 minutes) on the Moscow River is one of the city's highlights. The main route runs between Kievskiy vokzal (Map pp102–3) and the Novospassky most near Novospassky Monastery. There are six intermediate stops, including one at Gorky Park and another at Ustinsky Most near Red Sq (Map pp102–3).

The boats seat about 200 people (most Muscovites are actually going somewhere, not just out to enjoy the ride) and are operated by the **Capital Shipping Company** (☎ 458 9624; www.cdk-ship.ru; Rechnoy Vokzal, Leningradskiy sh 51; (M) Rechnoy Vokzal). Boats run from mid-April to mid-October.

Other useful tour companies: **Capital Tours** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 232 2442; www.capitaltours.ru; Gostiny Dvor, ul Ilyinka 4; (M) Kitay-Gorod) This spin-off of Patriarchy Dom offers a twice-daily Kremlin/Armoury tour (US\$37/20, 10.30am and 3pm Friday and Wednesday) and Moscow city tour (US\$20/10 per adult/child, 11am and 2.30pm). Tours departs from Gostiny Dvor.

**Patriarchy Dom Tours** (Map pp102-3; ☎ /fax 795 0927; http://russiatravel-ptours.netfirms.com; Vspolny per 6, Moscow school No 1239; (M) Barrikadnaya) Provides unique English-language tours on just about any specialised subject; some provide access to otherwise closed museums. Day tours range from US\$16 to US\$40 per person. Look for the monthly schedule at Western hotels and restaurants or online.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

See p305 for a list of Russian spectacles. While Mayor Luzhkov is a keen proponent of bread and circuses for the masses, the festivals are an ever-changing lot from year to year; consult the Moscow newspapers for what's on.

Standout seasons to visit are late spring (May or June) and early autumn (September



or October), when the city's parks are filled with flowering trees or colourful leaves. The city is spruced for the May holidays and City Day, both festive times in the capital.

**Winter Festival** An outdoor funfest during early January for those with antifreeze in their veins (though plenty of people use vodka for this purpose). Teams compete to build elaborate ice sculptures in front of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts and on Red Sq.

**Golden Mask Festival** (☎ 755 8335; www.goldenmask.ru) Two weeks of performances by Russia's premier drama, opera, dance and musical performers, culminating in a prestigious awards ceremony. Brightens up otherwise dreary March and April.

**Moscow Forum** (☎ 290 5181; www.cmm.ru) A contemporary music festival held every year in April at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory.

**Interfest** (☎ 917 2486; www.miff.ru) Short for the Moscow International Film Festival, which takes place in June.

**City Day** (Den Goroda) Celebrates the city's birthday every year on the first weekend in September. The day kicks off with a festive parade, followed by live music on Red Sq and plenty of food, fireworks and fun.

**December Nights Festival** Held at the main performance halls, theatres and museums from mid-December to early January. Classical music at its best, performed in classy surroundings by the best Russian and foreign talent.

## SLEEPING

The optimal area to stay is within the Garden Ring, which guarantees easy access to major sights and plenty of dining and entertainment options. Tverskoy and Arbat Districts are particularly lively. If you do find yourself far from the centre, look for easy access to the metro.

## Budget

**Galina's Flat** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 921 6038; galinasflat@mtu-net.ru; ul Chaplygina 8, No 35; dm/s/d R300/

540/750; 🏠 Chistye Prudy; 🚶) It's just that – a private, Soviet-era flat with a few extra rooms that Galina rents out. Staying at Galina's feels like staying in your friend's crowded apartment – cosy, comfortable and convivial. She has six beds, as well as kitchen and laundry facilities, but she doesn't provide visa support. Galina can help you find a spot at her neighbours' or in other apartments if her place is full.

**Travellers Guest House** (☎ 631 4059; www.tgh.ru; Bolshaya Pereyaslavskaya ul 50, fl 10; dm R690, s/d with shared bathroom R1350/1650, d with private bathroom R1800; 🏠 Rizhskaya; 🚶) Calls itself Moscow's 'first and only' budget accommodation. Perhaps the first but no longer the only, this place is still one of the better options for budget travellers. Despite its location on the 10th floor of a drab hotel, it manages to maintain a vibrant, hostel-like atmosphere, thanks to the travellers hanging out in the common lounge and the services available through the affiliated Infinity Travel (p101). From Rizhskaya metro, walk away from pr Mira and turn right under the highway bridge. Walk along Bolshaya Pereyaslavskaya ul until you see the tall, unnamed hotel on the left side of the road.

**Hotel Izmaylovo** (Gamma Delta; ☎ 737 7187, 737 7104; www.izmailovo.ru; Izmaylovskoe sh 71; s/d from R1440/1540; 🏠 Partizanskaya; 🚶) Built for the 1980 Olympics, this hotel has 8000 beds, apparently making it Europe's biggest hotel. Four of the five buildings are budget accommodation, but Gamma-Delta is the snazziest and most service-oriented. If you need to escape the frenetic atmosphere that surrounds Izmaylovo market, it's just a few steps to lovely Izmaylovsky Park.

**Hostel Sherstone** (☎ 711 2613; www.sherstone.ru; Gostinichny pro 8/1, fl 3; dm/s/d R600/1200/1550;

## FIND A FLAT

Hotels in Moscow can easily break your bank. In response to the shortage of affordable accommodation, some entrepreneurial Muscovites have begun renting out flats on a short-term basis. Flats are equipped with kitchens, and sometimes with other useful amenities like Internet access. Often, a good-sized flat is available for the price of a hotel room or less. It is an ideal solution for travellers in a group, who can split the cost.

Several websites provide information about apartments for rent. The apartments vary widely, but many have photos available online. Apartments are around US\$80 to US\$120 per night, with prices decreasing for longer stays. Expect to pay more for fully renovated, Western-style apartments.

- www.apartmentres.com – bills itself as gay-friendly lodging. Most flats include free airport transfers and international phone calls.
- www.enjoymoscow.com – Rick's apartments are off the Garden Ring between Sukharevskaya and Tsvetnoy Bulvar metro stations.
- www.flatmates.ru/eng – a site for travellers looking for somebody to share short- or long-term accommodation in Russia.
- www.hofa.ru – has apartments from €40 per night and homestays from €20 per night.
- www.rentline.ru – offers online reservations for a variety of centrally located flats, starting from US\$80 per night.
- www.unclepasha.com – Uncle Pasha is an unbelievable grouch, but his flat – at US\$75 per night – is a great deal. He also maintains an extensive list of other budget accommodation options and will help you locate one.

(🏠 Vlad'ykino) The tree-lined streets west of the Botanical Gardens comprise something of a hotel district (thus, the name of the street, which means 'Hotel Way'). This friendly YHA hostel occupies one floor of a hotel by the same name. Its main advantage is the English-speaking staff, but rooms and services are also satisfactory. From Vlad'ykino metro, cross busy Botanicheskaya ul and continue west on Gostinichny pro.

**Hotel Zarya** (☎/fax 788 7277; Gostinichnaya ul 4/9; s/d from R1350/1500; 🏠 Vlad'ykino) A complex of short brick buildings, also near the Botanical Gardens, about 1km south of Hostel Sherstone. Renovation of the rooms is ongoing, so the cheapest ones are pretty plain. But the reception is welcoming and the atmosphere is cosy. Upgraded rooms with new furniture and bathrooms are R2100/2700.

## Midrange

**East-West Hotel** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 290 0404; www.eastwesthotel.ru; Tverskoy bul 14/4; s/d R4800/6500; 🏠 Pushkinskaya; 🚶) Located on the loveliest stretch of the Boulevard Ring, this small hotel evokes the atmosphere of the 19th-century mansion it once was. It is a kitsch

but charming place with 26 individually decorated rooms and a lovely fountain-filled courtyard. Prices include breakfast.

**Hotel Budapest** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 923 1060; www.hotel-budapest.ru; Petrovskie linii 2/18; s/d with breakfast R3850/5450; 🏠 Kuznetsky Most; 🚶) This 19th-century neoclassical edifice makes a perfect retreat after strolling in the swanky shopping district that surrounds it. The grandeur does not extend to the rooms unless you dish out some extra cash for a suite (from R5775), but the hotel is excellent value.

**Danilovskaya Hotel** (☎ 954 0503; hotdanil@cityline.ru; s/d with breakfast from R3300/3900; 🏠 Tul'skaya; 🚶) Moscow's holiest hotel is on the grounds of the 12th-century monastery of the same name; nearly all the rooms have a view of the beautiful grounds. The rooms themselves are simple but clean, and breakfast is modest: no greed, gluttony or sloth to be found here.

**Hotel Sverchkov** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 925 4978; Sverchkov pr 8; s/d with breakfast from R2600/3000; 🏠 Chistye Prudy) On a quiet residential lane, this is a tiny 11-room hotel in a graceful 18th-century building. Though the rooms are nothing special, this place is a rarity for its intimacy and hominess.

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Golden Apple** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 980 7000; www.goldenapple.ru; ul Malaya Dmitrovka 11; r from R9000; 🏠 Pushkinskaya or Chekhovskaya; 🚶) Calling itself Moscow's first boutique hotel, this smallish, slick hotel is indeed a novelty. The location is prime – in the heart of Moscow's shopping district and steps from the serenity of Hermitage Gardens. A classical edifice fronts the street, but the interior is sleek and sophisticated. The rooms are decorated in a modern, minimalist style – subdued whites and greys punctuated by contrasting coloured drapes and funky light fixtures. But comfort is also paramount, with no skimping on luxuries like heated bathroom floors and down-filled duvets. Even if you can't afford to spend the night, it's worth dropping in to have a drink in the lounge – walls splashed with colour – or to dine at the relatively subdued but highly acclaimed restaurant. This is the best of New Russia: contemporary, creative and classy.

**Hotel Peking** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 209 2215; www.hotelpekin.ringnet.ru; Bolshaya Sadovaya ul 5/1; d from R2500; (M) Mayakovskaya) With ongoing renovation, this Stalin-esque building boasts a prime location towering over Triumfalnaya pl. It's hard to see past the flashing lights of the casino, but this place is blessed with high ceilings, parquet floors and the marble staircase. The upgraded rooms (singles/doubles R3500/4200) – elegantly decorated in jewel tones – are worth the investment.

**Hotel Arbat** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 244 7628; fax 244 0093; Plotnikov per 12; s/d with breakfast from R4320/5130; (M) Smolenskaya) One of the few hotels that manages to preserve some appealing Soviet camp, from the greenery-filled lobby to the mirrors behind the bar. The whole place has an anachronistic charm. Its location is also very charming – on a quiet residential street, just steps from the Arbat.

**Hotel Belgrad** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 248 1643; www.hotel-belgrad.ru; Smolenskaya ul 8; s/d R2560/2880; (M) Smolenskaya) The big block has no sign and a stark lobby, giving it a ghost-town aura. Rooms are similar – poky but functional, unless you pay for upgraded 'tourist' or 'business-class' accommodation (R4160 to R5280). The advantage is the location, which can be noisy but is convenient to ul Arbat.

**Kazakh Embassy Hotel** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 208 0994; Chistoprudny bul 3; s/d with breakfast R2700/3000; (M) Chistye Prudy) Caters – as you may guess – to guests and workers of the nearby Kazakh embassy. But anyone can stay in this grand, modern building that fronts the prestigious Boulevard Ring.

**Altay Hotel** (☎ 482 5703; altayhotel@comail.ru; Botanicheskaya ul 41; s/d with breakfast R2200/2890; (M) Vldykin; ☎ (M)) The classiest place to stay in the hotel district near the Botanical Gardens. The place has been completely revamped, from the elegant lobby to the tastefully decorated guest rooms. Only a few old-school rooms remain (singles/doubles R800/1250). Convenient to the metro.

Recommended for transit travellers who need to crash between flights:

**Sheremetyevo-2** (☎ 578 5753/4; fax 739 4464; Sheremetyevo-2 airport; r from R3450) More affordable than the nearby Novotel. You can walk here from the airport, or use the Novotel's free shuttle.

**Aerotel Domodedovo** (☎ 795 3868; fax 795 3569; Domodedovo airport; s & d from R3500; ☎ (M)) A brand-new hotel within walking distance of its namesake airport. Excellent value.

## Top End

**Hotel Metropol** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 927 6000; www.metropol-moscow.ru; Teatralny pro 1/4; s/d from R9000/10,500; (M) Teatralnaya; ☎ (M)) Nothing short of an Art Nouveau masterpiece, the historic Metropol brings an artistic touch to every nook and cranny, from the spectacular exterior to the grand lobby to the individually decorated rooms. The overall effect is breathtaking, but the charm lies in the details, like stained-glass windows, Oriental rugs and early-20th-century furnishings. Located opposite the Bolshoi; it's worth stopping in just to check out the exquisite stained-glass ceiling in the restaurant.

**Hotel Tiflis** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 733 9070; www.hotel.tiflis.com; ul Ostozhenka 32; s/d incl breakfast from R7100/9200; (M) Park Kultury or Kropotkinskaya; ☎ (M)) Georgians know hospitality; the proof is in the fine restaurants, like the landmark Tiflis (opposite), and now this hotel by the same name. With only 30 rooms, this refined four-star offers an intimate atmosphere and personalised service. Ask for a room with a balcony overlooking the fountain-filled patio.

## EATING

In Soviet days, eating out meant either a cheap meal at the local cafeteria, or for special occasions, nearly identical food at a cheesy hotel restaurant. These days, theme restaurants are all the rage. From the Uzbek restaurant with a live camel out front, to the French restaurant with a Gothic cathedral interior, restaurateurs are going all out to ensure their patrons' dining experiences are at least interesting.

## Restaurants

**Correa's** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 933 4684; Bolshaya Gruzinskaya ul 32; sandwiches R200-300, brunch R400-600, meals R600-1000; ☎ 8am-midnight; (M) Belorusskaya or Belorussky Volkzal) It's hard to characterise a place that's so simple. It is a tiny space of only seven tables. Large windows and an open kitchen guarantee that it does not feel cramped, just cosy. The menu – sandwiches, pizzas and grills – features nothing too fancy, but everything is prepared with the freshest ingredients and the utmost care.

**Café Pushkin** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 229 5590; Tverskoy bul 26a; business lunches R525, meals R1500-2000; ☎ 24hr; (M) Pushkinskaya) The queen mother of *haute russe* dining, with an exquisite blend

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Tiflis** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 290 2897; ul Ostozhenka 32; meals R1000-1500; (M) Kropotkinskaya or Park Kultury) Moscow is the best place outside the Caucasus to sample the rich, spicy cuisine of the former Soviet republic of Georgia. And Tiflis is the best place in Moscow. The name comes from the Russian word for the Georgian capital, Tblisi, and when you enter this restaurant, you may think you are there. Its airy balconies and interior courtyards recall a 19th-century Georgian mansion – a romantic and atmospheric setting. Tiflis takes Caucasian cuisine upscale. The *kharcho* (beef soup) is thick and rich, while the *basturma* (grilled lamb) is spicy and cooked to perfection. The dishes are particularly delectable when accompanied by the Tiflis wine, produced by the restaurateur's winery in Georgia. According to Moscow foodies, Tiflis counts among its regular customers the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Igor Ivanov, who happens to be of Georgian descent.

of Russian and French cuisines; service and food are done to perfection. The lovely 19th-century building has a different atmosphere on each floor, including a richly decorated library and a pleasant rooftop café.

**Simple Pleasures** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 207 4043; ul Sretenska 22; meals R800-1000; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 2pm-midnight Sat & Sun; (M) Sukharevskaya) The chef is American, but the menu is wide-ranging, including his favourite dishes from Italy, Spain and the American South. The common denominator is fresh ingredients and simple cooking techniques, an ideal match for this comfortable, uncluttered space.

**GlavPivTorg** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 928 2591; ul Bolshaya Lubyanka 5; business lunches R125-195, meals R600-1000; (M) Lubyanka) At the 'central beer restaurant No 5', every effort is made to re-create an upscale apparatchik dining experience. The Soviet fare is authentic, but not too authentic. So you may get a side of peas, but they will be fresh and sweet. Add three varieties of tasty beer brewed on-site, and you've got a restaurant to suit any ideology.

**Eastern Quarter** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 241 3803; ul Arbat 45/24; meals R400-600) Uzbeks cooking in the open kitchen and more Uzbeks filling up the dining room are the sign that this Central Asian eatery is serving some of Moscow's best national cuisine. The speciality: tasty, filling rice *plov* (pilaf rice with diced mutton and vegetables).

**Yolki-Palki** (Map pp102-3; meals R200-400; ☎ 11am-midnight) Tverskoy District (☎ 928 5525; Neglinnaya ul 8/10; (M) Kuznetsky Most); Arbat District (☎ 291 6888; ul Novy Arbat 11; (M) Arbatskaya); Zamoskvorechie (☎ 953 9130; Klimentovsk per 14; (M) Tretyakovskaya) This excellent Russian chain is beloved for its country cottage décor and its well-stocked salad bar. Outlets all over the city specialise in traditional dishes and cheap beer.

**Starlite Diner** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 290 9638; ul Bolshaya Sadovaya 16; meals R500-700; ☎ 24hr; (M) Mayakovskaya) Outdoor seating and classic diner décor make this a longtime favourite of expats in Moscow. The extensive brunch menu includes all kinds of omelettes, French toast and freshly squeezed juice. Otherwise, you can't go wrong with burgers and milkshakes, any time of day or night.

**Jagannath** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 928 3580; Kuznetsky most 11; meals R300-500; ☎ 10am-11pm; (M) Kuznetsky Most) If you are in need of vitamins, come to this funky vegetarian café, restaurant and store. Service is slow but the sublime food is worth the wait.

**Il Patio** (Map pp102-3; business lunches R190-280, meals R400-500) Arbat District (☎ 201 5626; ul Volkhonka 13a; (M) Kropotkinskaya); Barrikadnaya (☎ 785 6553; Novinsky bul 31; (M) Barrikadnaya); Taganskaya (☎ 230 6662; Taganskaya ul 1/2; ☎ 8am-11pm; (M) Taganskaya) Patio Pizza has gone upscale, with a more Italian name and a more stylish look. Wood-oven pizzas and fresh salad bars are the highlights of the menu.

**Karetny Dvor** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 291 6376; Povarskaya ul 52; meals R600-800; ☎ 24hr; (M) Barrikadnaya) Moscow's most popular Caucasian place has a simple, relaxed interior and a green, leafy courtyard. Go for classic Azeri fare like dolmas in grape leaves, and lamb kebabs.

## Cafés

**Coffee Bean** (Map pp102-3; ☎ ) Tverskoy District (☎ 788 6357; Tverskaya ul 10; ☎ 8am-11pm; (M) Pushkinskaya); Zamoskvorechie (☎ 953 6726; Pyatnitskaya ul 5; ☎ 8am-10pm; (M) Tretyakovskaya); Chistye Prudy (☎ 923 9793; ul Pokrovka 18; ☎ 8am-10pm; (M) Chistye Prudy) One could claim that Coffee Bean started the coffee thing in Moscow – the original outlet on Tverskaya has been around for years. It's still the coolest café in the city, with high

ceilings, fantastic architectural details and large windows looking out onto the main drag. Coffee runs around R100; it's that rare place that does not allow smoking.

**Coffee Mania** (Map pp102-3) Kuznetsky Most (☎ 924 0075; Pushechnaya ul; ☎ 8am-11pm; ☎ Kuznetsky Most); Barrikadnaya (☎ 290 0141; Kudrinskaya pl 46/54; ☎ 8am-midnight; ☎ Barrikadnaya); Bolshaya Nikitskaya (☎ 775 4310; Bolshaya Nikitskaya ul 13, Nikosk Conservatory; ☎ 8am-1am; ☎ Aleksandrovsky Sad) This is a popular spot to grab a cup o' joe or a light lunch. The Bolshaya Nikitskaya branch has a delightful outdoor seating area in front of the conservatory.

**Loft Cafe** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 933 7713; Nikolskaya ul 25; meals R800-1000; ☎ 9am-midnight; ☎ Lubyanka) On the top floor of the Nautilus shopping centre, you'll find this tiny, trendy café with a fantastic view of Lubyanka sq. Innovative, modern dishes fuse the best of Russian cuisine with Western and Asian influences.

## Quick Eats

**Moo-Moo** (Map pp102-3; meals R100-200; ☎ 9am-11pm) Arbat District (☎ 241 1364; ul Arbat 45/23; ☎ Smolenskaya); Lubyanka (☎ 923 4503; Myasnitskaya 14; ☎ Lubyanka) You will recognise this place by its black-and-white Holstein-print décor. It offers you an easy approach to all the Russian favourites.

**Drova** (Map pp102-3; meals R200-400, all-you-can-eat buffet R350; ☎ 24hr) Chistye Prudy (☎ 925 2725; Myasnitskaya ul 24; ☎ Chistye Prudy); Arbat District (☎ 202 7570; Nikitsky bul 8a; ☎ Arbatskaya); Tverskoy District (☎ 229 3227; ul Bolshaya Dmitrovka 7; ☎ Teatralnaya) The self-serve buffet ranges from *solnyanka* (soup from pickled vegetables and potato) to sushi and sweet-and-sour pork. It's not the best place to sample any of these items, but the price is right.

**Pelmeshka** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 292 8392; ul Kuznetsky most 4/3; breakfast R60, lunch R125, meals R150-200; ☎ 11am-midnight; ☎ Teatralnaya) Serves many different kinds of *pelmeni* (Russian-style ravioli stuffed with meat), the most filling of Russian favourites. It's packed at lunchtime, a sign that it is tasty as well as cheap.

## Self-Catering

**Ramstore** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 207 3165; www.ramstore.ru; Komsomolskaya pl 6, Moskovsky Univermag; ☎ 24hr; ☎ Komsomolskaya) The Turkish-owned supermarket – just opposite Yaroslavsky vokzal – is an ultraconvenient place to stock up for your Trans-Siberian journey.

**Dorogomilovsky market** (Map pp102-3; Mozhay-sky val 10; ☎ Kievskaya) Moscow's *rynky* (food markets) are bustling places full of activity and colour. Even if you are not buying, it's fun to see what's for sale: tables piled high with fresh produce; golden honey in jars that are as big as basketballs; vibrantly coloured spices pouring out of plastic bags; and silver fish posing on beds of ice.

## DRINKING

**Bar 30/7** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 209 5951; ul Petrovka 30/7; ☎ 24hr; ☎ Chekhovskaya) This slick new bar on the Boulevard Ring is the latest place to see and be seen in Moscow. If you can snag a seat in the attached 'sun room' seating area, you will enjoy a lovely view of the boulevard promenade. Good luck, as the place gets packed on weekends.

**Real McCoy** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 255 4144; Kudrinskaya pl 1; business lunches R180, meals R500-1000; ☎ 24hr; ☎ Barrikadnaya) The main features of this 'bootlegger's bar' are walls plastered in old newspapers and a dining room crowded with expats. The menu includes barbecue ribs, seafood curry and everything in between. This is a popular spot for drinking, especially during the two-for-one happy hour specials (5pm to 8pm daily).

**Red Bar** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 730 0808; 22-24 Kutuzovskiy pro; beers R175, meals R1400-1750; ☎ noon-3am; ☎ Kievskaya) On the 27th floor of a skyscraper overlooking the Moscow River, Red features funky décor and a fabulous view. The name refers to its colour, not its politics: the place is draped in swanky red, except the glistening white piano.

**Tinkoff** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 777 3300; Protochny per 11; 500mL beer R120, meals R600-800; ☎ noon-2am; ☎ Smolenskaya) Moscow's branch of this nationwide microbrewery features sports on the big screen, lagers and pilsners on draught, and a metre-long sausage on the menu.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Moscow can easily keep you entertained for months. To find out what's on see the weekly magazine *element* and the weekly entertainment section in Friday's *Moscow Times*. For a laugh, try the *Exile*.

## Classical Music, Opera & Ballet

**Bolshoi** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 250 7317; www.bolshoi.ru; Teatralnaya pl 1; tickets R200-2000; ☎ Teatralnaya) A night at the Bolshoi is still one of Moscow's most

romantic options. Ballet and opera companies perform a range of Russian and foreign works in the glittering auditorium. At the time of research, the Bolshoi was preparing to close its main stage for renovations, expecting to reopen in 2008. The smaller Novaya Stena (new stage) will remain open.

**State Kremlin Palace** (Map p106; ☎ 928 5232; www.kremlin-gkd.ru; ul Vozdvizhenka 1; ☎ Aleksandrovsky Sad) The Bolshoi does not have a monopoly on ballet and opera in Moscow. Leading dancers also appear with the Kremlin Ballet and the Moscow Classical Ballet Theatre, both of which perform here.

**Moscow International House of Music** (☎ 730 1011; www.mmdm.ru; Kosmodamiyanskaya nab 52/8; tickets R60-600; ☎ Paveletskaya) This graceful, modern building opened in 2003. It has three halls, including Svetlanov Hall, which holds the largest organ in Russia. Needless to say, organ concerts held here are impressive.

**Tchaikovsky Concert Hall** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 299 3957; www.philharmonia.ru; Triumfalnaya pl 4/31; ☎ Mayakovskaya) Home to the famous State Symphony Orchestra.

## Theatre & Circus

**Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 632 4105; http://art.theatre.ru; Kamergersky per 3; ☎ Okhotny Ryad) Also known as MKhT, this is where method acting was founded over 100 years ago. Watch for English-language versions of Russian classics performed by the **American Studio** (☎ 292 0941).

**Nikulin Circus** (Old Circus at Tsvetnoy Boulevard; Map pp102-3; ☎ 200 0668; www.circusnikulin.ru; Tsvetnoy bul 13; tickets R50-500; ☎ Thu & Fri 7pm, 2.30pm & 6pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Tsvetnoy Bulvar) The show here usually mixes dance, cabaret and rock music with the animals and acrobats. Performance schedules are subject to change.

**Maly Theatre** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 923 2621; Teatralnaya pl 1/6; ☎ Teatralnaya) A lovely theatre founded in 1824, performing mainly 19th-century works.

## Nightclubs

**Karma Bar** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 924 5633; Pushechnaya ul 3; cover R100-200; ☎ 7pm-6am Thu-Sat, 11pm-6am Sun; ☎ Kuznetsky Most) A worldly mix of Asian food, Latin music and Russian fun. Thursday nights usually feature live music, while the other nights are for DJs and dancing (free lessons from 9pm to 11pm Friday to Saturday). Add to the mix happy hours and

hookah pipes and you've got one of Moscow's top expat clubs.

**Keke** (☎ 246 0864; ul Timura Frunze 11; meals R200-300; ☎ 11am-late; ☎ Park Kultury) Finally, a trendy place that won't bust the budget. Converted from a textile factory, this place now features black and white photos, deep, comfy armchairs, and a balcony ideal for watching the dance floor. And the dance floor is worth watching on Friday and Saturday nights, when DJs spin cool music and young folks turn out in droves.

**Propaganda** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 924 5732; Bol Zlatoustinsky per 7; meals R300-400; ☎ noon-7am; ☎ Lubyanka) This longtime favourite place is a café by day, but at night they clear the dance floor and let the DJ do his stuff. This is a gay-friendly place, especially on Sunday nights.

**bilingua** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 923 6683; Krivokolenny per 10/5; meals R200-500; ☎ 24hr; ☎ Chistye Prudy) Crowded with grungy, artsy student types, this café also sells books and funky clothing. If you can stand the smoke, it's a cool place to grab a bite to eat and listen to live music (nightly).

Both **Bunker** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 200 1506; ul Tverskaya 12; ☎ 10pm-7am; ☎ Mayakovskaya) and its sister club **B-2** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 209 9918; ul Bolshaya Sadovaya 8; ☎ Pushkinskaya) have cheap food and drinks, and live music almost every night.

## SHOPPING

Artists set up their stalls on ul Krymsky val, opposite the entrance to Gorky Park (p110), and in the underground walkway. There are also galleries within the Central House of Artists (p110) in the Arbat District.

**Izmaylovo market** (admission R15; ☎ 9am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Partizanskaya) This sprawling area is packed with art, handmade crafts, antiques, Soviet paraphernalia and just about anything you might want for a souvenir.

**GUM** (Map p106; ☎ 921 5763; Krasnaya pl 3; ☎ 10am-10pm; ☎ Ploshchad Revolyutsii) On the eastern side of Red Sq, this 19th-century building is a sight in itself. It houses a huge collection of pricey shops.

**Okhotny Ryad** (Map p106; ☎ 737 8449; Manezhnaya pl; ☎ 11am-10pm; ☎ Okhotny Ryad) Built in the 1990s, this mall was originally filled with expensive boutiques and no people, but times have changed. Now the stores cater to all income levels and are usually packed. There is a big, crowded food court on the ground floor.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Of Moscow's five airports, two of them service most international flights and most flights to destinations along the Trans-Siberian railroad. Moscow's main international airport is **Sheremetyevo-2** (☎ 956 4666; www.sheremetyevo-airport.ru), 30km northwest of the city centre. Across the runways (and accessible by shuttle bus), **Sheremetyevo-1** services many domestic flights, especially to/from St Petersburg and northern European Russia.

**Domodedovo** (☎ 933 6666; www.domodedovo.ru), 40km south of the city centre, has undergone extensive upgrades in recent years in order to service more international flights. Most notably, all British Airway flights now fly in and out of Domodedovo.

You can buy airline tickets at most travel agencies (see p101). Airline offices in Moscow include:

**Aeroflot** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 753 5555; www.aeroflot.ru; ul Petrovka 20/1; **M** Chekhovskaya)

**Air France** (☎ 937 3839; www.airfrance.ru; ul Korovy Val 7; **M** Oktyabrskaya)

**British Airways** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 363 2525; Business Centre Parus, 1-ya Tverskaya Yamskaya ul 23; **M** Belorusskaya)

**Delta Air Lines** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 937 9090; www.delta.com; Gogolevsky bul 11; **M** Kropotkinskaya)

### SAMPLE DOMESTIC FLIGHTS FROM MOSCOW

Destination	Flights per day	Duration (hr)	One-way fare (R)
Chita	5 weekly	6	10,000
Irkutsk	2	5½	8500-9000
Kazan	2	1	2500-2900
Khabarovsk	3	8	11,980
Krasnoyarsk	1	4½	6950
Nizhny Novgorod	2	1	1800-2300
Novosibirsk	6	4	3600-6800
Omsk	2	3	3500-4800
Perm	2	2	5000-5150
St Petersburg	20	50min	2800-3500
Tomsk	1	3	6800
Tyumen	6	2½	4400-5700
Ulan-Ude	1	5½	9500
Vladivostok	3-4	8½	12,500-13,800
Yekaterinburg	11	2½	5300-5400

**KLM Royal Dutch Airlines** (☎ 258 3600; www.klm.com; ul Usachyova 33/2; **M** Sportivnaya)

**Lufthansa** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 737 6400; www.lufthansa.com; Renaissance Moscow Hotel, Olimpiyskiy pr 18; **M** Prospekt Mira)

**SAS** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 775 4747; www.sas.ru; 1-ya Tverskaya Yamskaya ul 5; **M** Mayakovskaya)

**Transaero** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 241 4800; Smolenskiy 2-y per 3; **M** Smolenskaya)

### Boat

In summer, passenger boats from Moscow ply the rivers and canals of Russia all the way north to St Petersburg, and south to Astrakhan or Rostov-on-Don. The navigation season is generally May to September, although it depends on the route. The Moscow terminus for these sailings is the **Severnoy Rechnoy Volkzal** (Northern River Station; ☎ 457 4050; Leningradskoe sh 51; **M** Rechnoy Volkzal). Take the metro to Rechnoy volkzal, then walk 15 minutes due west, passing under Leningradskoe sh and through a nice park.

**Capital Shipping Company** (☎ 458 9624; www.cck-ship.ru; Rechnoy Volkzal, Leningradskoe sh 51; **M** Rechnoy Volkzal) Operates transit boats departing regularly from Moscow's Severny Rechnoy Volkzal.

**Cruise Marketing International** (☎ 800-578 7742; www.cruiserrussia.com; 3401 Investment Blvd, Ste 3, Hayward CA USA) Offers a series of 11- and 15-day cruises between Moscow and St Petersburg, with stops in little villages and Golden Ring towns.

### Bus

Buses run to a number of towns and cities within 700km of Moscow. Bus fares are similar to *kupe* (*kupeyny*; compartmentalised carriage) train fares. Buses tend to be crowded, but they are usually faster than the *prigorodny* (suburban) trains. To book a seat go to the long-distance bus terminal, the **Shchyolkovskiy bus station** (**M** Shchyolkovskaya), 8km east of the city centre. Queues can be bad, so it's advisable to book ahead, especially for travel on Friday or weekends.

### Train

Moscow has nine main stations. Multiple stations may service the same destination, so confirm the arrival/departure station.

**Belorussky volkzal** (Belarus Station; Map pp102-3; ☎ 251 6093; Tverskaya Zastava pl; **M** Belorusskaya) Serves trains to/from Smolensk, Kaliningrad, Minsk, Warsaw, Vilnius, Berlin; some trains to/from the Czech Republic; and suburban trains to/from the west.

**Kazansky volkzal** (Kazan Station; Map pp102-3; ☎ 264 6556; Komsomolskaya pl; **M** Komsomolskaya) Serves trains to/from Kazan, Izhevsk, Ufa, Ryazan, Ulyanovsk, Samara, Novorossiysk, Central Asia; some to/from Vladimir, Nizhny Novgorod, the Ural Mountains, Siberia; the Volga; and suburban trains to/from the southeast, including Bykovo airport.

**Kursky volkzal** (Kursk Station; Map pp102-3; ☎ 916 2003; pl Kurskogo Volkzala; **M** Kurskaya) Serves trains heading south and east, including to the Caucasus, eastern Ukraine, Crimea, Georgia, Azerbaijan. It also has some trains to/from Vladimir, Nizhny Novgorod and Perm.

### TRAINS DEPARTING FROM MOSCOW

#### Trains from Moscow to St Petersburg

Train no & name	Departure time	Station	Duration (hr)	Fare (R)
2 <i>Krasnaya Strela</i>	11.55pm	–	8	1700
4 <i>Ekspress</i>	11.59pm	–	8	1700
6 <i>Nikolaevsky Ekspress</i>	11.30pm	–	8	1700
24 <i>Yunost</i>	12.30pm	–	8	1300 (seat)
160 <i>Avrora</i>	4.30pm	–	5½	1300 (seat)
164 <i>ER200</i>	6.28pm	–	4½	1700 (seat)

#### International Trains from Moscow

Destination & train no	Departure time	Station	Duration (hr)	Fare (R)
Almaty 008	10.25pm*	Kazansky	78	4100
Beijing 004	9.51pm	Yaroslavl	132	6413
Kaliningrad 029	2.06pm	Belarus	22	3650
Kharkiv 019	9.25pm	Kursk	13	700
Kyiv 001	11.23pm*	Kievsky	14	1033
Minsk 001	10.25pm	Belorussky	10	1200
Riga 001	7.11pm	Rizhsky	16	2030
Tallinn 034	6.15pm	Leningradsky	15	1560
Ulaanbaatar 006	9.30pm	Yaroslavl	101	3800
Vilnius 005	7.01pm	Belorussky	15	1588
Warsaw 011	22.15pm	Belarus	20	2200

#### Trans-Siberian Train Fares from Moscow

Destination & train no	Departure time	Station	Duration (hr)	Fare (R)
Chita 002	9.20pm*	Yaroslavl	94	8000
Irkutsk 010	11.30pm*	Yaroslavl	77	5400
Kazan 028	7.28pm	Kazan	11	1150
Khabarovsk 002	9.20pm*	Yaroslavl	135	9060
Krasnoyarsk 056	4.35pm	Yaroslavl	59	6400
Nizhny Novgorod 062	4.55pm	Kursk	4½	300 (seat)
Novosibirsk 026	4.35pm†	Yaroslavl	46	5300
Omsk 048	8.16pm†	Kazan	41	3550
Perm 018	9.40pm	Yaroslavl	20½	2300
Tomsk 038	10.45pm*	Yaroslavl	55	5600
Tyumen 060	5.40pm†	Kazan	35	2800
Ulan-Ude 002	9.20pm*	Yaroslavl	85	6600
Vladivostok 002	9.20pm*	Yaroslavl	149	8000
Vladimir 816	6.04pm	Kursk	2½	208
Yekaterinburg 016	4.08pm	Kazan	26	2350

note: \* odd days † even days

**Kievsky vokzal** (Kyiv Station; Map pp102-3; ☎ 240 1115; pl Kievskogo Vokzala; M Kievskaya) Serves Kyiv and Prague, as well as suburban trains to/from the southwest.

**Leningradsky vokzal** (Leningrad Station; Map pp102-3; ☎ 262 9143; Komsomolskaya pl; M Komsomolskaya) Serves Tver, Novgorod, Pskov, St Petersburg, Vyborg, Murmansk, Tallinn, Helsinki.

**Paveletsky vokzal** (Pavelets Station; ☎ 235 0522; Paveletskaya pl; M Paveletskaya) Serves trains heading south, including the express train to Domodedovo airport.

**Rizhsky vokzal** (Riga Station; ☎ 631 1588; Rizhskaya pl; M Rizhskaya) Serves Latvia, as well as suburban trains to/from the northwest.

**Savyolovsky vokzal** (Savyolov Station; ☎ 285 9005; pl Savyolovskogo Vokzala; M Savyolovskaya) Serves suburban trains to/from the north.

**Yaroslavl vokzal** (Yaroslavl Station; ☎ 921 5914; Komsomolskaya pl; M Komsomolskaya) Serves most trains to Siberia, the Far East, China and Mongolia.

For long-distance trains it's best to buy your tickets in advance. Tickets on some trains may be available on the day of departure, but this is less likely in summer. Always take your passport along when buying a ticket.

Tickets are sold at the train stations, but it is much easier to buy tickets from a travel agent (see p101) or *kassa zheleznoy dorogi* (railway ticket office). These are often conveniently found in hotel lobbies. Most local agencies charge a small service fee, but be careful of international travel agencies that may charge considerable mark-ups.

One agency selling airplane and train tickets with many outlets around town: **GlavAgentstvo** (Map pp102-3) Lubyanka (☎ 924 8728; Teatralny pro 5/1; M Lubyanka); Tverskoy (☎ 290 2771; Tverskoy bul 14/5; M Pushkinskaya) Additional outlets are in Sheremetyevo-1 airport, as well as Belorussky and Leningradsky vokzaly.

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

An express train from Savyolovsky vokzal to Sheremetyevo airport is expected by the end of 2007. In the meantime, there is no convenient way to reach the main international airport. Minibuses travel between Rechnoy vokzal and Sheremetyevo-1, with Sheremetyevo-2 as the middle stop in either direction. They make the journey as soon as they are full, which is about every 30 minutes or less. City bus 551 also follows this route, but takes much longer.

A taxi arranged on the spot between Sheremetyevo airport and the city centre takes about 45 minutes (with no traffic) and should not cost more than R800. It's better to arrange one in advance (see below).

An express train leaves **Pavelets vokzal** (M Paveletskaya) every half-hour for Domodedovo airport (R100, 45 minutes). This route is particularly convenient, as you can check into your flight at the train station. Alternatively, a taxi fare to/from the city centre is R700 to R800, with the trip taking one to 1½ hours, depending on traffic.

## Bus, Trolleybus & Tram

Buses, trolleybuses and trams are useful along a few radial or cross-town routes that the metro misses, and for reaching sights away from the city centre. Tickets (R10) are usually sold on the vehicle.

## Metro

The metro is the easiest, quickest and cheapest way of getting around Moscow. Many of the stations are marble-faced, frescoed, gilded works of art. The trains are generally reliable: you will rarely wait on the platform for more than two minutes. Nonetheless, they get packed during rush hour. Up to nine million people a day ride the metro, more than the London and New York City systems combined.

The 150-plus stations are marked outside by 'M' signs. Magnetic tickets (R13) are sold at ticket booths. It's useful to buy a multiple-ride ticket (10 rides for R120, 20 for R195), which saves you the hassle of queuing every time.

## Taxi

Almost any car in Moscow could be a taxi if the price is right. Expect to pay R100 to R150 for a ride around the city centre.

Official taxis – recognisable by the chequerboard logo on the side and/or a small green light in the windscreen – charge about the same. No driver uses a meter (even if the cab has one), and few will admit to having any change. Don't hesitate to wave on a car if you don't like the look of its occupants. It's best to avoid riding in cars that already contain more than one person.

To book a taxi in advance, call the **Central Taxi Reservation Office** (Tsentralnoe Byuro Zakazov Taxi; ☎ 927 0000; www.cbz-taxi.ru).

# AROUND MOSCOW

Ancient Rus grew up northeast of Moscow in the clutch of towns that is now known as the Golden Ring. In many cases, the whitewashed walls of these once-fortified cities still stand; the golden spires and onion domes of their monasteries still mark the horizon. Bells ring out from towering belfries; robed holy men scurry through church doors; historical tales recall mysterious, magical times.

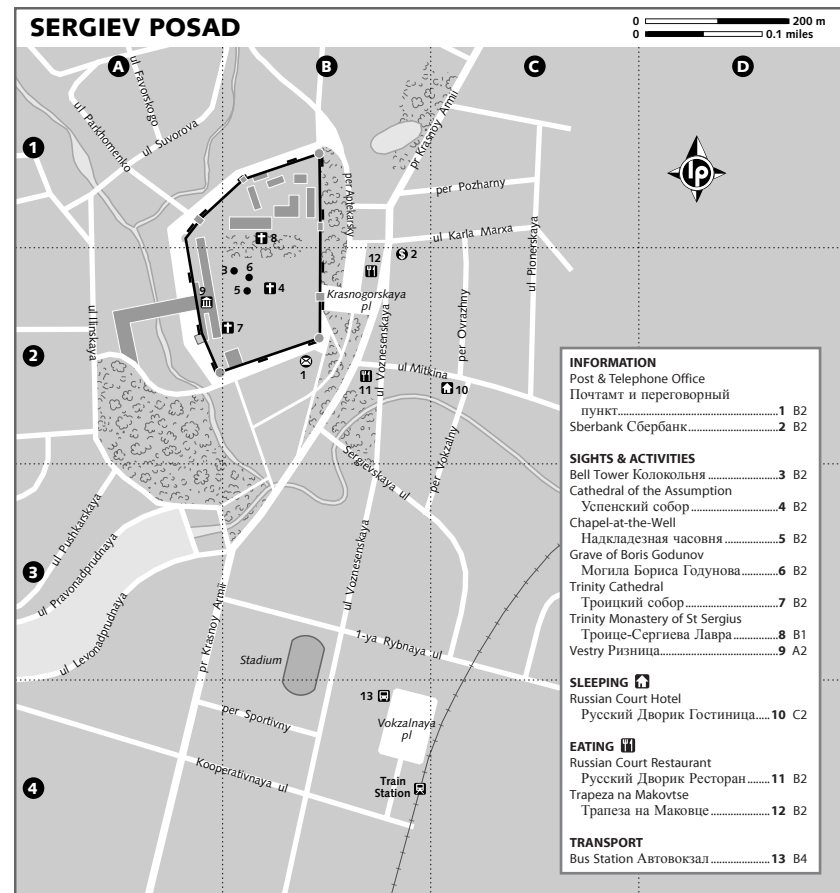
The Golden Ring – so called for its wealth of architectural and artistic riches – is one of Russia's most delightful destinations. The towns covered here are accessible from

Moscow by day trip. Additionally, the old capital of ancient Rus and the Orthodox Church, Vladimir (p130), is a stop along the train route heading east into the Urals. Trans-Siberian travellers should certainly take this route and stop off at Suzdal (p132), the most enchanting Golden Ring destination.

## SERGIEV POSAD СЕРГИЕВ ПОСАД

☎ 254 from Moscow, ☎ 49654 from other cities / pop 100,000 / ☎ Moscow

According to old Russian wisdom, 'there is no settlement without a just man; there is no town without a saint'. And so the town of Sergiev Posad tributes St Sergius of Radonezh, founder of the local Trinity Monastery and patron saint of all of Russia. The



monastery – today among the most important and active in Russia – exudes Orthodoxy. Bearded priests bustle about; babushkas fill bottles of holy water; crowds of believers light candles to St Sergius, Keeper of Russia. This mystical place is a window into the age-old belief system that has provided Russia with centuries of spiritual sustenance.

Often called by its Soviet name of Zagorsk, Sergiev Posad is 60km from the edge of Moscow on the Yaroslavl road. It is an easy day trip from Moscow – a rewarding option for travellers who don't have time to venture further around the Golden Ring.

Pr Krasnoy Armii is the main street, running north–south through the town centre. The train and bus stations are on opposite corners of a wide square to the east of pr Krasnoy Armii. The monastery is about 400m north of here.

## Information

**Post & telephone office** (pr Krasnoy Armii 127A)

Outside the southeastern wall of the monastery.

**Sberbank** (pr Krasnoy Armii; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Fri)  
Exchange facilities available, but no ATM.

## Sights

The **Trinity Monastery of St Sergius** (Troitse-Sergieva Lavra; ☎ 45 356, 45 350; admission free, guided tour R600, photos R150; ☎ 10am–6pm) is an active religious centre with a visible population of monks in residence; visitors should refrain from photographing them. Female visitors should wear headscarves, and men are required to remove hats in the churches.

Built in the 1420s, the squat, dark **Trinity Cathedral** is the heart of the Trinity Monastery. The tomb of St Sergius stands in the southeastern corner, where a memorial service goes on all day, every day. The icon-festooned interior, lit by oil lamps, is largely the work of the great medieval painter Andrei Rublyov and his students.

The star-spangled **Cathedral of the Assumption** was modelled on the cathedral of the same name in the Moscow Kremlin. It is closed to the general public but included as a part of guided tours. Outside the west door is the **grave** of the tsar Boris Godunov.

Nearby, the resplendent **Chapel-at-the-Well** was built over a spring that is said to have appeared during the Polish siege. The five-tier baroque **bell tower** took 30 years to build

in the 18th century, and once had 42 bells, the largest of which weighed 65 tonnes.

The **vestry** (admission R160; ☎ 10am–5.30pm Wed–Sun), behind the Trinity Cathedral, displays the monastery's extraordinarily rich treasury, bulging with 600 years of donations by the rich and powerful – tapestries, jewel-encrusted vestments, solid-gold chalices and more.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Russian Court Hotel** (☎ 75 392; www.zolotoe-kolto.ru; ul Mitkina 14/2; s/d with breakfast Mon–Fri from R1500/1900, Sat & Sun R1700/2100; ♿) Some of the rooms at this delightful hotel boast views of the onion domes peeking out above white-washed walls. The place is quite modern, despite the rustic style.

**Russian Court Restaurant** (☎ 45 114; pr Krasnoy Armii 134; meals R500–800; ☎ 10am–9pm) Not to be confused with the hotel by the same name, this restaurant is decorated like a Russian dacha. Appropriately enough, it features wait staff in peasant dress and hearty country cuisine. The place is popular with tour groups in summer.

**Trapeza na Makovtse** (☎ 41 101; pr Krasnoy Armii 131; meals R500–800; ☎ 10am–9pm) Location, location, location. The highlight of this 'refectory' is alfresco dining in the shadow of the spires and cupolas. Dining is also pleasant inside, where live music plays nightly.

## Getting There & Away

The fastest transportation option is the daily express train from Moscow's Yaroslavsky vokzal to Rostov (one hour from Moscow).

Suburban trains also run every half-hour (R55, 1½ hours); take any train bound for Sergiev Posad or Aleksandrov. To go north to Rostov-Veliky (3½ hours) or Yaroslavl (five hours), you may have to change at Aleksandrov.

Bus services to Sergiev Posad from Moscow's VDNKh metro station depart every half-hour from 8.30am to 7.30pm (R50, 70 minutes).

## ROSTOV-VELIKY РОСТОВ-ВЕЛИКИЙ

☎ 48536 / pop 40,000 / ☎ Moscow

For a place called Rostov-Veliky, or 'Rostov the Great', this town gives the impression of a sleepy village. Perhaps for this reason, the magnificent Rostov kremlin catches visitors off guard when its silver domes and

whitewashed stone walls appear amid the dusty streets. Rostov is one of the prettiest of Golden Ring towns, idyllically sited on shimmering Lake Nero. It is also one of the oldest, first chronicled in 862.

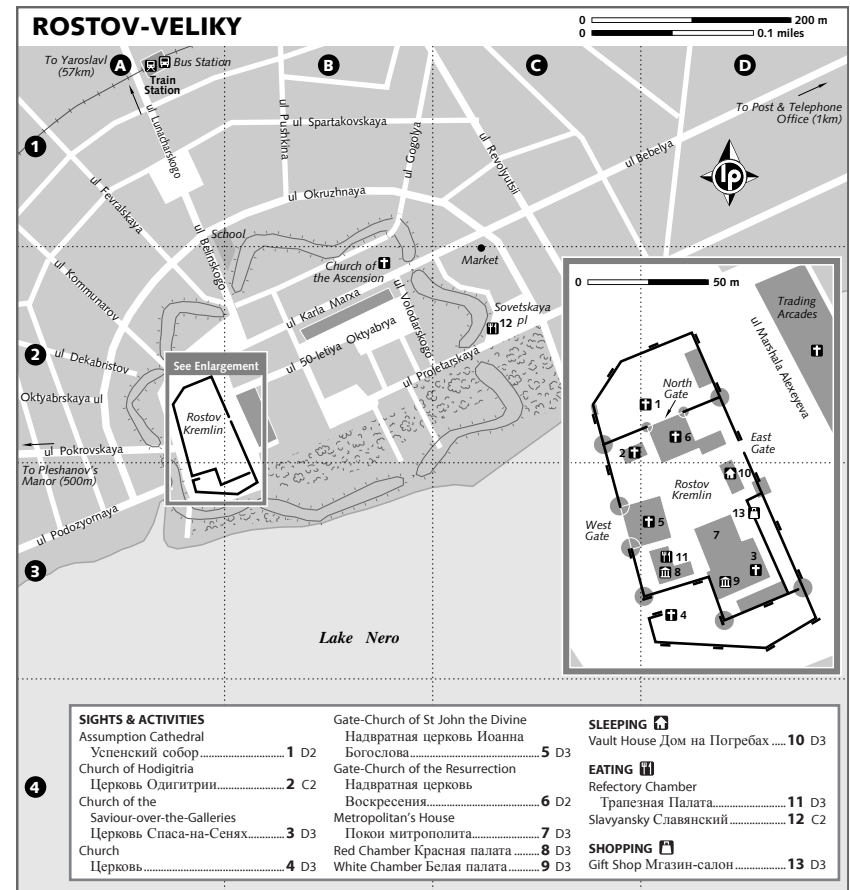
Rostov is about 220km northeast of Moscow. The train and bus stations are together in the drab modern part of Rostov, 1.5km north of the kremlin.

## Sights

Rostov's main attraction is its unashamedly photogenic **kremlin** (☎ 61 717; admission grounds R5, exhibits each R15–25; ☎ 10am–5pm). Although founded in the 12th century, nearly all the buildings here date from the 1670s and 1680s.

With its five magnificent domes, the **Assumption Cathedral** dominates the kremlin, although it is just outside the north wall. Beyond service hours, you can get into the cathedral through the door in the church shop on ul Karla Marksa. The cathedral was here a century before the kremlin, while the belfry was added in the 1680s. Each of 15 bells in the belfry has its own name; the largest, weighing 32 tonnes, is called Sysoi. The monks play magnificent bell concerts, which can be arranged through the excursions office, in the west gate, for R250.

The west gate (the main entrance) and the north gate are straddled by the **Gate-Church of St John the Divine** and the **Gate-Church of the Resurrection**, both of which are richly



decorated with 17th-century frescoes. Enter these churches from the monastery walls, which you can access from the stairs next to the north gate. Like several other buildings within the complex, these are only open from May to September. Between the gate-churches, the **Church of Hodigitria** houses an exhibition of Orthodox Church vestments and paraphernalia.

The metropolitan's private chapel, the **Church of the Saviour-over-the-Galleries**, has the most beautiful interior of all, covered in colourful frescoes. These rooms are filled with exhibits: the **White Chamber** displays religious antiquities, while the **Red Chamber** shows off *finift* (enamelware), a Rostov artistic speciality.

Although the ticket office is in the west gate, you can also enter the kremlin through the north gate. Don't leave without stopping at the gift shop behind **Metropolitan's House** to shop for *finift* souvenirs and to sample the home-brewed *medovukha* (honey ale).

### Sleeping & Eating

**Pleshanov's Manor** (Usadba Pleshanova; ☎ 76 440; www.hotel.v-rostove.ru; ul Pokrovskaya 34; r Mon-Fri R1200; Sat & Sun R1500; 🚗 🚘) This 19th-century manor house – once the residence of a merchant and philanthropist family – is now a welcoming inn with a nice restaurant, cosy library and wood sauna. The charm

of the common areas does not extend to the rooms, which are modern and fresh, but bland. Prices, which include breakfast, decrease between October and April.

**Vault House** (☎ 31 244; s/d with shared bathroom R350/600, d with private bathroom R1400-1600) Right inside the kremlin, and near the east gate, this place has clean, wood-panelled rooms that vary in size and view.

**Refectory Chamber** (☎ 62 871; meals R200-400; 🕒 9am-5pm, later in summer) The attraction of the refectory is also its atmospheric location inside the kremlin, near Metropolitan's House. The grand dining room is often crowded with tour groups supping on traditional Russian fare.

**Slavyansky** (☎ 62 228; Sovetskaya pl 8) About 100m east of the kremlin, the semiswanky Slavyansky gets many a recommendation from the locals. Come here if you're looking for traditional Russian fare in a romantic setting.

### Getting There & Around

The express service from Yaroslavsky vokzal (R180, three hours) is the fastest train from Moscow. Otherwise, some long-distance trains stop at Rostov-Veliky en route to Yaroslavl. You can also catch a suburban train, which requires changing at Aleksandrov.

Bus 6 runs between the train station and the town centre.