

# Entertainment

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With its lively club scene, atmospheric cafés and crowded cultural calendar, this cosmopolitan city offers highbrow, lowbrow and everything in between.

## Information

The key to finding out what's on in Moscow is the entertainment weekly *element* (www.element.ru, in Russian), as well as the *Moscow Times* weekly entertainment supplement, called *Context* (www.context.themoscowtimes.com). The *Moscow Times* also puts out a monthly magazine, *Go!* (www.go-magazine.ru), which focuses on restaurant reviews and club news. For a laugh, you can also try the *Exile*, which deals specifically with listings in the lowbrow category, to say the least.

All of these English-language publications are distributed (free!) throughout the city – check at centrally located hotels and popular expat eating and drinking establishments.

## DRINKING & CLUBBING

There is not one area of Moscow where bars and pubs are clustered; indeed, the whole city is now littered with such establishments, with more opening every day. Traditionally, ulitsa Arbat is a prime spot for the café scene, especially as it is closed to automobile traffic. Likewise, the newer and trendier Kamergersky pereulok is pedestrian-only, which makes it a hot spot for strollers and drinkers. In summer, these walkways are crowded with guests who clamour for a seat at the sidewalk cafés.

These days, Moscow nightlife is much about being elite. The trendiest spots are guarded by bouncers who take their job a little too seriously. They use 'face control' to keep out potential patrons who won't enhance the atmosphere at their establishment by looking fabulous and spending money. (For more information, see the boxed text, opposite.)

Fortunately, plenty of drinking establishments offer a more welcoming ambience, for those who don't look fabulous and spend wads of money. Most clubs and bars offer food as well as drinks – whether trendy small plates, traditional pub grub or ever-popular sushi.

### 12 VOLTS Map pp248-9

☎ 200 1506; Tverskaya ul 12; meals R400-600; h 10pm-7am; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
The founders of Moscow's gay and lesbian movement opened this welcoming café-cum-social club, tucked in behind the Bun-

ker club (enter from the courtyard). Besides good food and cheap drinks, the place offers a consultation service for discussing homosexual issues. This is one of the few hangouts that attract lesbians as well as gays.

### 911 Map pp248-9

☎ 292 2911; Glinishchevsky per 3; admission free; h noon-2am; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
This used to be a straight bar with a gay night, but it has grown into a gay bar with some straight guests – 'gay expansion', as one local in the know describes it. Although the place has a small dance floor and a drag show on Saturday night, it is more of a café scene. Look for the entrance down from Studio Casino.

### A PRIORI Map pp248-9

☎ 291 7783; Bolshaya Molchanovka ul 12; cover from R400; h midnight-10am Fri & Sat; m Arbatskaya  
To strut your stuff on the dance floor, head to this progressive house club. It has a huge bi-level dance hall, as well as an exclusive 'sofa zone'. Resident and visiting DJs host dance parties at weekends. It's a new experience every time, as the interior is redesigned every few weeks. There's strict face control, so dress your best.

### B2 Map pp248-9

☎ 209 9918; Bolshaya Sadovaya ul 8; admission free; h 24hr; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
This huge, four-storey complex has long rated among Moscow's favourite nightlife

## TOP FIVE TIPS FOR GETTING PAST FACE CONTROL

- If possible, book a table.
- Dress up: think Barbie doll for women, black for men.
- Arrive by car. The bigger the better.
- Arrive in a small group, preferably with more women than men. If you're alone, imply that you're meeting somebody, even if you're not.
- Speak English. Foreigners are not as special as they used to be, but they're still pretty special. And they still (supposedly) have money.

hot spots, probably because it offers something for everyone. Take your pick from several dance floors, a 'chill-out room', an airy courtyard, billiards, karaoke and more. The place holds over 1500 people, which makes it an excellent venue for top music acts. This is a branch of the original club, Bunker (see p143), on Tverskaya ulitsa.

### BAR 30/7 Map pp248-9

☎ 209 5951; ul Petrovka 30/7; admission free; h 24hr; m Chekhovskaya or Tsvetnoy Bulvar  
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 it gets packed at weekends. This place does not have much of a food menu, so plan on dining elsewhere.

### BODY & SOUL (CHANCE) Map pp246-7

☎ 298 6247; ul Kusunina 19A; cover men/women R150/R300; h 10pm-6am Fri & Sat; m Polezhayevskaya  
The sheer size of this place is its most notable characteristic. This mammoth gay club offers nearly limitless entertainment possibilities: two dance floors – one techno, one pop – billiards, Internet and live entertainment. It's a chic place that is becoming popular with a mixed crowd, but the dark room is for men only.

### GIFTS OF THE SEA Map pp248-9

Maly Gnezdnikovsky per; admission free; h 2pm-midnight; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
This divey, smoky bar feels like the underground gay club it once was. The crowd is

mostly made up of regulars – older than at most gay bars (or any Moscow bar for that matter). Cheap prices, red tablecloths and dirty, dingy bathrooms give it its retro Soviet feel. Enter through the courtyard behind the Meeting Place restaurant and look for the dark-brown door.

### HERMITAGE GARDENS Map pp248-9

admission free; h 10am-2am May-Sep; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
On a mild evening, head to a *letny kafe*, or summer café, for a cold beer and a pile of peanuts. Sit outside under the stars and forget about 'face control' and thuggish bouncers. The informal beer tents at the Hermitage Gardens are all refreshingly democratic, meaning that everyone is welcome – an appropriately open atmosphere for a public park.

### HUNGRY DUCK Map pp248-9

☎ 923 6158; Pushechnaya ul 9/6; admission varies; h noon-6am; m Kuznetsky Most  
This infamous bar is often described as the wildest in Europe. Its reputation is that most people lose most of their clothes by midnight, with every woman dancing on the bar. This may have something to do with the policy of free drinks for women till 11pm on some nights. Everybody agrees, for better or for worse, that this place is 'not the same as it used to be'. Enter from the courtyard next to the metro station.

### KARMA BAR Map pp248-9

☎ 924 5633; Pushechnaya ul 3; cover R100-200; h 7pm-6am Thu-Sat, 11pm-6am Sun; m Kuznetsky Most  
The Karma Bar is home to a worldly mix of Asian food, Latin music and Russian

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fun. Thursday night usually features live music, while the other nights are for DJs and dancing – there are free lessons from 9pm to 11pm on Friday and Saturday. Add to this mix happy hours and hookah pipes, and you've got one of Moscow's top expat clubs.

### KEKS Map pp252-3

☎ 246 0864; ul Timura Frunze 11; meals R200-300; h 11am-last guest; m Park Kultury  
Finally, here's a trendy place that won't bust the budget. Converted from a former textile factory, this place now features black-and-white photos, deep, comfy armchairs, and a balcony ideal for watching the activity on the dance floor. And the dance floor is worth watching on Friday and Saturday night, when DJs spin cool music and young folks turn out in droves. The food does not exactly receive rave reviews, but the big salads and hearty grills are affordable and edible.

### KULT Map p254

☎ 917 5706; Yauzskaya ul 5; admission free; h noon-midnight Sun-Wed, noon-6am Thu-Sat; m Kitay Gorod  
This hang-out for arty types comes complete with a big screen showing avant-garde films and a gallery featuring local artists. DJs spin all kinds of music, with an emphasis on jazz and bossa nova. Board games, hookah pipes and cool vibes make this one of Moscow's most chilled locations. Beware: just because it's bohemian doesn't mean you don't have to look good.

### NEW AGE (THREE MONKEYS) Map p254

☎ 953 0909; www.gaycentral.ru, in Russian; Nastavnicheskyy per 11/1; no cover before midnight; h 10pm-7am Thu-Sun; m Chkalovskaya  
The newest and best club on the gay scene, New Age has a hopping dance floor, drag queens and go-go boys, an Internet café, and a cinema. The clientele comes dressed to kill.

### NIGHT FLIGHT Map pp248-9

☎ 299 4165; Tverskaya ul 17; dinner R1000-2000, cover incl drink R650; h restaurant 6pm-4am, club 9pm-5pm; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
This continues to be one of Moscow's most popular spots for business travellers on

## TOP FIVE NIGHTSPOTS

- **lingua** (opposite), Chistye Prudy. Young, bohemian and friendly.
- **Karma Bar** (p141), Petrovsky District. Moscow's hottest expat club.
- **Keks** (left), Khamovniki. Hip and cheap – is that an oxymoron?
- **Propaganda** (below), Kitay Gorod. One of Moscow's longest-standing nightclubs.
- **16 Tons** (opposite), Barrikadnaya. Top spot to hear live music.

expense accounts, despite – or because of – its dubious reputation. Indeed, it's hard to miss the crowds of working women hanging around this club. Nonetheless, the restaurant continues to receive rave reviews, thanks to Swedish ingredients and chefs. And the dance floor is always hopping. There's no cover charge for restaurant guests.

### PROPAGANDA Map pp248-9

☎ 924 5732; Bolshoy Zlatoustinsky per 7; meals R300-500; h noon-7am; m Lubyanka  
A long-time favourite, Propaganda looks like it's straight from the warehouse district, with exposed brick walls and pipe ceilings. By day it's a café with a popular business lunch, but at night the dance floor is cleared so the DJs can do their stuff. This is a gay-friendly place, especially on Sunday night.

### ROSIE O'GRADY'S Map pp248-9

☎ 508 0752; ul Znamenka 9/12; meals R400-600, Guinness pints R200; h noon-last guest; m Biblioteka imeni Lenina  
One of a handful of friendly Irish pubs in town, Rosie's offers Guinness, Harp and Kilkenney on tap, the widest selection of Irish whiskeys, and the most extensive food menu. It's an old favourite of English-speaking expats, especially football fans.

### SPORTLAND Map pp248-9

☎ 291 2041; Novy Arbat ul 21; cover R500; h 24hr; m Smolenskaya or Arbatskaya  
At Sportland there is nonstop sport on three giant screens and countless smaller plasma TVs around the bar. You will undoubtedly be able to catch your team's big game here, no matter who your team

might be. Otherwise, there is no reason to frequent this casino-bar, unless you enjoy glaring lights, blaring slot machines and greasy food. The cover charge is subtracted from your bill.

## POP & ROCK

Moscow is not Russia's top spot for home-grown bands, but the capital is nonetheless chock full of places to hear music. Live bands and DJs travel from other parts of Russia and all over Europe to play in this metropolis. For more information about Moscow's hottest acts, see p26. Tickets are usually available at the venue's box office in the hours leading up to the show. For big names, look for advertisements in *element* or in the *Moscow Times*; tickets for these events can be bought in advance.

### 16 TONS Map pp248-9

☎ 253 5300; www.16tons.ru; ul Presnensky val 6; cover R250-600; h 11am-6am, concerts 10pm or 11pm; m Ulitsa 1905 Goda  
This club is widely believed to be the hottest live-music venue in the capital, attracting top local and foreign bands, which almost always play to a packed house. The brassy English pub-restaurant downstairs has an excellent house-brewed bitter.

## TOP FIVE EXCLUSIVE CLUBS *Kathleen Pullum*

Conspicuous consumption is the name of the game in Moscow, and many clubs gain popularity not by providing amazing DJs, great atmosphere or a central location but by their levels of exclusivity. It's called face control. Unless you're superelite and have a beyond-beautiful face, expensive threads and someone even more beautiful on your arm there waits a tough group of implacable black-suited bouncers that you're going to have to pass to get in.

- **Billionaire** (Map pp252-3; ☎ 737 4100; 1-y Golutvinsky per 6, Zamoskvorechie; h 11pm-last guest Fri & Sat; m Polyanka) Word is that you have to show your last pay cheque and the figure has to be more than six digits for you to gain entry.
- **Leto** (Summer; ☎ 967 3620; Yauzskaya ul 1/15; h 11.30pm-last guest Fri & Sat; m Kitay Gorod)/**Osen** (Autumn; ☎ 921 9888; Teatralny pr 3; m Teatralnaya)/**Zima** (Winter; ☎ 205 6216; Tryokhgornyy val 6; m Ulitsa 1905 Goda) This club rotates seasonally, changing name, location and concept every few months to ensure it will always be fresh and trendy. It also seems to get more exclusive with every incarnation.
- **First** (Map pp252-3; ☎ 951 3598; Sofiyskaya nab 34, Zamoskvorechie; h restaurant noon-midnight, club noon-6am Fri & Sat; m Novokuznetskaya) This club has posh written all over it. When Will Smith was in Moscow for the premier of *I, Robot* in 2004, he and his pal Jazzy Jeff spun a set here at the after party.
- **Penthouse No 1** (Map pp248-9; ☎ 299 8853; Hermitage Gardens, Karetny ryad 3, Tverskoy District; h café noon-midnight daily, club midnight-6am Thu-Sat; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya) Located in the picturesque Hermitage Gardens, Penthouse prides itself on its beautiful clientele and eclectic visual displays.
- **Cabaret** (Map pp248-9; ☎ 789 8315; Strastnoy bul 8A, Tverskoy District; h 11pm-last guest Thu-Sun; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya) As the name suggests, Cabaret is a fancy club with all the requisite luxury cars and drivers parked out the front. But don't feel bad about not getting in: upstairs in the same building is Sky Bar, which offers a fine rooftop patio with views of the capital and a smart, atmospheric interior.

### BILINGUA Map p254

☎ 923 6683; Krivokolenny per 10/5; meals R200-500; h 24hr; m Chistye Prudy  
Crowded with grungy 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 some music (nightly) or to peruse the literary offerings. Despite the name, there's not much in the way of foreign-language literature.

### BUNKER Map pp248-9

☎ 200 1506; Tverskaya ul 12; admission varies; h 24hr; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
The smaller, original version of B2 (see p140), this more intimate setting also has an impressive calendar of local bands and DJs. There's not too much room for dancing but those who want to manage to make do.

### CHINESE PILOT DZHAO-DA Map pp248-9

☎ 924 5611; www.jao-da.ru, in Russian; Lubyanskiy proezd 25; cover R150-200; h 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm Sat & Sun, music from 9pm; m Kitay Gorod  
A relaxed and relatively inexpensive place to hear live music, this divey basement place hosts lots of different kinds of bands from around Europe and Russia. Check out the website for details of upcoming shows.

## TOP FIVE GAY MOSCOW

- **Body & Soul** (Chance; p141), West of the Centre. A huge club with multiple dance floors.
- **New Age** (Three Monkeys; p142), Chistye Prudy. The newest hot spot for gay Moscow.
- **911** (p140), Tverskoy District. A casual café attracting a mixed crowd.
- **Propaganda** (p142), Petrovsky District. A long-standing favourite on Moscow's gay scene.
- **12 Volts** (p140), Tverskoy District. A friendly gathering place for Moscow's gays and lesbians.

## GORKY MOSCOW ART THEATRE

Map pp248-9

MKhaT; % 203 8773; Tverskoy bul 22; admission R300-3000; h box office noon-7pm;

m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya

The huge brown block is the newly re-opened Moscow Art Theatre named after Maxim Gorky (not to be confused with the more renowned Moscow Art Theatre, or MKhT, which is named after Chekhov; see p147). This Soviet-style venue is home to its own theatre troupe, but it's more interesting for the big-name music acts that occasionally play here.

## PROEKT OGI Map p254

% 229 5489; www.proektogi.ru, in Russian;

Potapovsky per 8/12; cover R50-80; h 8am-11pm;

m Chistye Prudy

This vaguely hippy (but definitely hip) place is for student types; enter through the unmarked door in the corner of the courtyard and descend into the underground –

literally and figuratively. Live music plays here most nights.

## WOODSTOCK Map pp248-9

% 748 0343; 3/1 Pokrovsky bul; h 10am-6am;

m Kitay Gorod

Comfy couches and busy billiard tables lend this club a low-key, loungey atmosphere. Weekends feature live music, usually blues and rock. This place is for the low-maintenance clubber – beer drinkers who enjoy a casual atmosphere and good music without expecting too much more.

## JAZZ & BLUES

BB KING Map pp248-9

% 299 8206; Sadovaya-Samotechnaya ul 4/2;

cover R200; h noon-2am, concerts 8pm Wed-Sun;

m Tsvetnoy Bulvar

This old-style blues club hosts an open jam session on Wednesday night, acoustic blues on Sunday (at 7pm) and live performances at Friday and Saturday. The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner, when you can listen to jazz and blues on the old-fashioned jukebox. The place also organises the annual outdoor Putinka Blues Festival, which takes place in July.

## CLUB FORTE Map pp248-9

% 202 8833; www.blues.ru/forte, in Russian;

Bolshaya Bronnaya ul 18; cover R300-600;

h 2pm-midnight, concerts 9pm; m Pushkinskaya

or Tverskaya

Here the nightly concerts range from swing-jazz to Latin-jazz to golden oldies. The atmosphere is more formal than

at some of the other places, attracting a pseudo-intellectual crowd. Thursday and Friday are reserved for local band Arsenal, which plays rather uninspired big-band. Be sure to book.

## JAZZTOWN Map p255

% 912 5726; www.jazztown.ru; Taganskaya pl 12; cover R200-2000; h 6pm-last guest, concerts 7pm;

m Taganskaya

Moscow's newest jazz venue is this flashy place, hosting Russian and international acts on most nights. The gigantic complex includes a restaurant and a casino. The 'jazz-cothèque' makes for a fun night out, if you don't mind the Las Vegas-style atmosphere.

## LE CLUB Map p255

% 915 1042; www.le-club.ru; Verkhnyaya Radishchevskaya ul 21; cover R300-3000; h concerts

8.30pm; m Taganskaya

Moscow's number one venue for jazz is in the building of the Taganka Theatre (p148). Performers from all over the world come to play in this 1930s Chicago-style club. Tickets to international acts can be pricey, but they're the top names in the business.

## CLASSICAL MUSIC

### MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF MUSIC Map p255

% 730 1011; www.mmdm.ru; Kosmodamianskaya

nab 52/8; tickets R60-600; m Paveletskaya

This new venue opened in 2003 in a graceful, modern, glass building. It has three halls, including Svetlanov Hall, which holds the largest organ in Russia. Needless to say, organ concerts held here are impressive. This is the usual venue for performances by the National Philharmonic of Russia (% 730 3778; www.nfor.ru, in Russian), a privately financed and highly lauded classical-music organisation. Founded in 1991, the symphony is directed and conducted by the esteemed Vladimir Spivakov.

### MOSCOW TCHAIKOVSKY CONSERVATORY Map pp248-9

% 229 8183; Bolshaya Nikitskaya ul 13;

m Okhotny Ryad or Arbatskaya

The country's largest music school has two venues: the Great Hall (Bolshoy Zal) and the Small Hall (Maly Zal). Every four

years, hundreds of musicians gather at the Conservatory to compete for the titles of top pianist, singer, cellist and violinist at the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition. A competition is to be held in summer 2006.

### TCHAIKOVSKY CONCERT HALL

Map pp248-9

% 299 0378; www.philharmonia.ru, in Russian;

Triumfalnaya pl 4/31; tickets R100-1000;

m Mayakovskaya

Home to the famous State Philharmonic (Moskovsky Gosudarstvenny Akademichesky Filharmonia), the capital's oldest symphony orchestra, the concert hall was established in 1921. It's a huge auditorium, with seating for 1600 people. This is where you can expect to hear the Russian classics such as Stravinsky, Rachmaninov and Shostakovich, as well as other European favourites.

## OPERA & DANCE

The classical performing arts remain an incredible bargain in Moscow. Highly acclaimed professional artists stage productions in a number of elegant theatres around the city, and tickets in prime seats often cost only a few dollars. Of course, the Bolshoi is Moscow's most famous theatre. Other venues, however, host productions of comparable quality – tickets are a fraction of the price, and the venues themselves are often in better shape. Unfortunately for summer visitors, most theatres are closed between late June and early September. Most performances start at around 7pm.

### TICKETS FOR THE BOLSHOI

If you have your heart set on going to the Bolshoi, it gets tricky. In theory, tickets can be reserved by phone or over the Internet, or (depending on the season) it is often possible to purchase tickets at the Bolshoi's box office if you go at least several days in advance. Otherwise, you are better off showing up shortly before the show and trying to buy tickets from a scalper. Scalpers are easy to find (they will find you); the trick is negotiating a price that is not several times the ticket's face value. Expect to pay upwards of R1000. Most importantly, make sure you examine the ticket and the date of the show (even the year) before money changes hands.

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## THEATRE

Moscow has around 40 professional and countless amateur theatres, staging a wide range of plays – contemporary and classic, Russian and foreign. Most performances are in Russian. An excellent resource for theatre buffs – with links to many Moscow theatres – is [www.theater.ru](http://www.theater.ru).

Tickets are available at the theatre box offices, which are open from 11am or noon daily until showtime (normally about 7pm), usually with a break for lunch. The cheapest seats are usually less than R100, but even prime seats are usually less than R500. For more on Russian theatre, see p34.

### CHEKHOV MOSCOW ART THEATRE

Map pp248-9

MkHt; % 692 6748; <http://art.theatre.ru>, in Russian; Kamergersky per 3; h box office noon-7pm; m Teatralnaya

This is where method acting was founded over 100 years ago (see the boxed text, below). Besides the theatre itself and an acting studio-school, a small museum about the theatre's history is also onsite. Watch for English-language versions of Russian classics performed by the American Studio (% 292 3936).

### LENKOM THEATRE

Map pp248-9  
% 299 0708; [www.lenkom.ru](http://www.lenkom.ru), in Russian; Malaya Dmitrovka ul 6; tickets R50-1500; h box office noon-3pm, 5-7pm; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
The Lenkom isn't the most glamorous theatre, but it's widely considered to have

in this beautiful and complicated genre of opera'. As such the New Opera stages the old classics, and does it well. The gorgeous, modern opera house is set amid the lovely Hermitage Gardens.

### STANISLAVSKY & NEMIROVICH-DANCHENKO MUSICAL THEATRE

Map pp248-9

% 229 8388; [www.stanislavskymusic.ru](http://www.stanislavskymusic.ru); Bolshaya Dmitrovka ul 17; m Chekhovskaya

This is another opera and ballet company with a similar classical repertoire to the New Opera and high-quality performances. This historic theatre company was founded when two legends of the Moscow theatre scene – Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko – joined forces in 1941. Their newly created theatre became a workshop for applying the innovative dramatic methods of the Moscow Art Theatre to opera and ballet (see the boxed text, below).

### STATE KREMLIN PALACE

Map p258  
% 928 5232; [www.kremlin-gkd.ru](http://www.kremlin-gkd.ru); ul Vozdvizhenka 1; tickets R100-1000; h box office noon-8pm; m Aleksandrovsky Sad

The Bolshoi doesn't have a monopoly on ballet in Moscow. Leading dancers also appear with the Kremlin Ballet and the Moscow Classical Ballet Theatre, both of which perform here. The Bolshoi is magical, but seeing a show inside the Kremlin is something special, too. The repertoire is similarly classical.

## STANISLAVSKY'S METHODS

In 1898, over an 18-hour restaurant lunch, actor-director Konstantin Stanislavsky and playwright-director Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko founded the Moscow Art Theatre as the forum for method acting. The theatre is known by its Russian initials MKHt, short for Moskovsky Khudozhestvenny Teatr.

More than just providing another stage, the Art Theatre adopted a 'realist' approach, which stressed truthful portrayal of characters and society, teamwork by the cast (not relying on stars), and respect for the writer. 'We declared war on all the conventionalities of the theatre...in the acting, the properties, the scenery, or the interpretation of the play', Stanislavsky later wrote.

This treatment of *The Seagull* rescued playwright Anton Chekhov from despair after the play had flopped in St Petersburg. *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* all premiered in the MKHt. Gorky's *The Lower Depths* was another success. In short, the theatre revolutionised Russian drama.

Method acting's influence in Western theatre has been enormous. In the USA Stanislavsky's theories are and have been the primary source of study for many actors, including such greats as Stella Adler, Marlon Brando, Sanford Meisner, Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman and Gregory Peck.

MKHt, now technically called the Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre, still stages regular performances of Chekhov's work, among other plays.

in Moscow for its innovative – even experimental – opera performances. Director Dmitry Bertman is known for 'combining musical excellence with artistic risk', according to one local dramaturge. The Gelikon's 250-seat theatre provides an intimate setting that allows for interaction between the performers and the audience.

### NEW BALLET

Map p254  
% 261 7603; [www.newballet.ru](http://www.newballet.ru); Novaya Basmanaya ul 25/2; h box office 11am-7pm; m Krasnye Vorota

If you can't stand to see another *Swan Lake*, you will be pleased to know that the New Ballet performs innovative contemporary dance. This performance art, called 'plastic ballet', incorporates elements of classic and modern dance, as well as pantomime and drama. The theatre is tiny, providing an up-close look at original, cutting-edge choreography.

### NEW OPERA

Map pp248-9  
% 200 0868; [www.novayaopera.ru](http://www.novayaopera.ru); ul Karetny ryad 3; tickets R70-700; h box office noon-3pm & 3.30-7.30pm; m Mayakovskaya or Chekhovskaya  
The theatre company was founded in 1991 by Mayor Luzhkov and artistic director Evgeny Kolobov. Maestro Kolobov himself stated 'we do not pretend to be innovators

**BOLSHOI THEATRE** Map pp248-9  
% 292 0050; [www.bolshoi.ru](http://www.bolshoi.ru); Teatralnaya pl 1; tickets R200-2000; h box office 11am-3pm & 4-8pm, New Stage box office 11am-2pm & 3-7pm; m Teatralnaya

An evening at the Bolshoi is still one of Moscow's most romantic and entertaining options, with an electric atmosphere in the glittering six-tier auditorium. Both the ballet and opera companies perform a range of Russian and foreign works here. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the Bolshoi has been marred by politics, scandal and frequent turnover (see p24). Yet the show must go on – and it will.

At the time of research, however, the Bolshoi was preparing to close its main stage for long-needed renovations. It is expected to reopen for the 2008 season. In the meantime, the smaller New Stage (Novaya Stsena) – newly remodelled in 2003 – will continue to host performances.

See the boxed text on p145 for details on how to purchase tickets.

### GELIKON OPERA

Map pp248-9  
% 290 5359; [www.helikon.ru](http://www.helikon.ru); Bolshaya Nikitskaya ul 19/16; tickets R50-500; m Arbatskaya  
Named after famous Mt Helicon, home to the muses and inspiration for musicians, this early 1990's opera company is unique

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the strongest acting troupe in the country. Flashy productions and lots of musicals keep non-Russian speakers entertained. The attached restaurant, Tram, is a fun spot for a post-performance bite to eat.

### MALY THEATRE

Map pp248-9  
% 923 2621; Teatralnaya pl 1/6; tickets R50-500; m Teatralnaya  
'Maly' means small, meaning smaller than the Bolshoi across the street. This elegant theatre, founded in 1824, mainly features performances of 19th-century works by Ostrovsky and the like, many of which premiered here.

### PUSHKIN DRAMA THEATRE

Map pp248-9  
% 203 8582; www.pushkin.theatre.ru, in Russian; Tverskoy bul 23; h box office noon-7pm; m Pushkinskaya or Tverskaya  
This 18th-century theatre sits in the heart of romantic Tverskoy bulvar. The strategy of artistic director Roman Kozak is to attract established directors to the large stage, while using the small stage to showcase young, up-and-coming names. The result is a diverse repertoire.

### SATIRIKON THEATRE

Map pp246-7  
% 289 7844; www.satirikon.ru, in Russian; Sheremetyevskaya ul 8; tickets R50-1500; h box office 11am-8pm; m Rizhskaya  
Boasting one of Moscow's most talented theatre producers, Konstantin Raikin, as well as a whole host of big-name directors, the Satirikon earned a reputation in the early 1990s with its outrageously expensive production of the *Threepenny Opera*. It has since broken its own record for expenditure with *Chantecler*, which featured ducks, cockerels and hens dancing on stage. From Rizhskaya metro take any trolleybus to the Kinoteatr Gavana stop and follow the crowds.

### TABAKOV THEATRE

Map p254  
% 928 9685; www.tabakov.ru, in Russian; ul Chaplygina 1A; tickets R100-1000; h box office 11am-7pm; m Chistyey Prudy  
The theatre is named after its present director, Oleg Tabakov, a famous actor who is also the current director of the Checkhov Moscow Art Theatre (p147). Recent productions of *As I Lay Dying* and *Uncle Vanya* were highly praised.

### TAGANKA THEATRE

Map p255  
% 915 1015; Zemlyanoy val 76/12; h box office noon-8pm; m Taganskaya  
This legendary theatre is famous for its rebellious director, Yury Lyubimov, and the unruly actor Vladimir Vysotsky. During the 1980s, in response to his provocative plays, Lyubimov was exiled to London and had his citizenship revoked. These days, he's back in Moscow and continues to stage top-notch contemporary productions.

## CHILDREN'S THEATRES

Cultural instruction starts at a young age in Moscow, with many companies and performances geared specifically towards young kids. Performances are almost always in Russian, but at that age the language of fun is universal. Performances are usually in the afternoons.

### DUROV ANIMAL THEATRE

Map pp248-9  
% 971 3047; www.ugolokdurova.ru; ul Durova 4; tickets R30-150; h showtimes vary, 11am-5pm Wed-Sun; m Prospekt Mira  
Dedushka Durov, or Grandpa Durov, founded this zany theatre for kids as a humane alternative to the horrible treatment of animals he saw at the circus. His shows

feature mostly domestic animals, including cats and dogs, farm animals, and the occasional bear. His most popular show is *Railway for Mice*, and guided tours of the museum give kids a closer look at the railway.

### KUKLACHEV CAT THEATRE

Map pp246-7  
% 249 2907; Kutuzovskiy pr 25; m Kutuzovskaya  
Here acrobatic cats do all kinds of stunts to the audience's delight. Director Yury 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.'

### MOSCOW CHILDREN'S MUSICAL THEATRE

Map pp246-7  
% 930 7021; www.sats.theatre.ru; pr Vernadskogo 5; tickets R50-150; h shows 3pm Wed, 6pm Fri, noon & 6pm Sat, noon & 4pm Sun; m Universitet  
Founded by theatre legend Natalya Sats (the official name of the theatre is the Natalya Sats Moscow Children's Theatre) in 1965, this was the country's first children's theatre. Sats, apparently, was the inspiration for Prokofiev's famous rendition of *Peter and the Wolf*, which is still among the best and most popular performances at the children's theatre. All performances are highly entertaining and educational, as actors appear in costume before the show and talk with the children.

### OBRAZTSOV PUPPET THEATRE & MUSEUM

Map pp248-9  
% 299 3310; www.puppet.ru; Sadovaya-Samotechnaya ul 3; adult R200-500, child R150-250; h museum noon-3pm & 4-7pm, showtimes vary; m Tsvetnoy Bulvar  
Russia's largest puppet theatre performs colourful Russian folk tales and adapted classical plays. Kids can get up close and personal with the incredible puppets at the museum, which holds a collection of over 3000.

## CIRCUS

The circus has long been a favourite form of entertainment for Russians, young and old (see p34 for more information). Visitors to Moscow can choose from two venues to see dancing bears and fun-loving clowns. Tickets are available at the circus box offices.

### GREAT MOSCOW CIRCUS

Map pp246-7  
% 930 0300; www.circ.ru, in Russian; pr Vernadskogo 7; tickets R100-450; h 7pm Wed, Fri & Sun; m Universitet  
This huge circus has five rings and holds 3400 spectators. The company includes literally hundreds of performers, from acrobats to animals. It is a great spectacle that is certain to entertain and amaze.

### NIKULIN CIRCUS ON TSVETNOY BULVAR

Map pp248-9  
% 200 0668; www.circusnikulin.ru; Tsvetnoy bul 13; tickets R50-500; h 7pm Thu & Fri, 2.30pm & 6pm Sat & Sun; m Tsvetnoy Bulvar  
Founded in 1880, this smaller circus is named for beloved actor and clown Yury Nikulin, who performed at the studio here for many years. Unlike a traditional circus, Nikulin's shows centre on a given theme, adding some cohesion to the production. But the gist is the same, with lots of trapeze artists, tightrope walkers and performing animals.

## CINEMAS

Russia – as well as the Soviet Union before it – boasts a rich cinematic culture, and Moscow is its capital (see p32). These days, most theatres show the latest blockbusters from Hollywood, usually dubbed over in Russian. A few cinemas show more interesting Russian and foreign films, especially during Moscow's film festivals (see p10). Several cinemas also show films almost exclusively in English. Showtimes vary, so stop by the cinemas (or call) for the schedule.

### AMERICAN CINEMA

Map pp252-3  
% 941 8747; www.america-cinema.ru; Radisson Slavyanskaya Hotel, Berezkhovskaya nab 2; tickets R200-350; h shows 7pm & 9.30pm; m Kievskaya  
This huge theatre is where you can see the latest from Hollywood. Besides the two daily screenings, there are additional shows on Saturday and Sunday. Russian speakers can listen to voiceovers on headphones.

### DOME THEATRE

Map pp248-9  
% 931 9000; www.domecinema.ru; Renaissance Moscow Hotel, Olimpiyskiy pr 18/1; tickets R200-400; m Prospekt Mira  
This is one of Moscow's first deluxe American-style theatres. These days films are shown in

THIS IMAGE  
NOT AVAILABLE  
IN PICK & MIX

the original language – usually English – with dubs in Russian on the headphones.

### ILLUZION Map p255

☎ 915 4353; Kotelnicheskaya nab 1/15; tickets R20-60; 📍 Taganskaya  
The location inside one of Stalin's Seven Sisters (see p29) is appropriate for the repertoire, which focuses on old-school Soviet films. Foreign films are also sometimes shown.

### MUSEUM CINEMA Map pp248-9

☎ 255 9095; Druzhinnikovskaya ul 15; tickets R20-100; 📍 Krasnopresnenskaya or Barrikadnaya  
This art-house cinema is a favourite of film buffs and intellectual types for its selection of alternative films, including old classics and lesser-known contemporary films. Frequent festivals feature both Russian and foreign films, usually in the original language with Russian subtitles. The Kino Centre, in the same building, shows more mainstream fare, usually with subtitles.

### NESCAFÉ IMAX CINEMA Map pp246-7

☎ 775 7779; www.nescafe-imaxcinema.ru, in Russian; Ramstore City, Leningradskoe sh; adult R300-500, child R200-300; 📍 Rechnoy Vokzal  
Moscow's first IMAX theatre is just inside the MKAD ring. The theatre surrounds spectators with fantastic three-dimensional images of sharks, butterflies, astronauts, dinosaurs or whatever the subject of the day. The advantage here is that it doesn't matter what language the movie is in, as the dialogue isn't really the point. A free shuttle runs from Rechnoy Vokzal metro station.

### ROLAN CINEMA Map p254

☎ 916 9190; Chistoprudny bul 12; tickets R100-400; 📍 Chistye Prudy  
The two theatres – one large and one small – show art-house films and host interesting festivals, usually featuring contemporary Russian cinema. This place is popular with Moscow's bohemian crowd.

## ACTIVITIES

Moscow is not a great choice for an 'active vacation', as you won't find many opportunities for rock climbing or river rafting. (It is commonly noted that if you see some-

body out jogging, they are probably trying to catch a bus.) Skating and bicycle riding are becoming more popular in the capital, but equipment is still not available for rental, so you must bring or buy your own. That said, dodging traffic and stomping through snowdrifts will provide plenty of exercise for visitors. Otherwise, there are opportunities for swimming, skiing, skating and more. For the ultimate in bodily experiences, visit the Russian bathhouse, or *banya*.

## BANYA

What better way to cope with Moscow than to have it steamed, washed and beaten out of you? There are traditional *bani* (Russian baths) all over town. If you aren't shy, shared facilities are cheaper than renting a private bath. Either way, the *banya* is a sensuous, exhilarating Russian experience.

### BANYA ON PRESNYA Map pp248-9

☎ men 255 5306, women 253 8690; Stolyarny per 7; admission R500-600; 🕒 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun; 📍 Ulitsa 1905 Goda  
Lacking the old-fashioned, decadent atmosphere of the Sanduny Baths (below), this new, clean, efficient place nonetheless provides a first-rate *banya* experience.

### EXPEDITION SIBERIAN BANYA

Map p254  
☎ 775 6075; Pevchesky per 6; 2-hr session R4800-6400; 🕒 24hr; 📍 Kitay Gorod  
In the basement of the Expedition restaurant (p124) is a small Siberian steam *banya* that's big enough for two guests. A professional *banshchik* is on hand to ladle water on the coals when the temperature starts to drop and to provide a healthy beating with birch branches.

### SANDUNY BATHS Map pp248-9

☎ private rooms 925 4631, general 925 4633; www.sanduny.ru; Neglinnaya ul 14; private rooms per hr from R1200, general admission per hr R500-700; 🕒 8am-10pm; 📍 Tsvetnoy Bulvar or Kuznetsky Most  
Sanduny is the oldest and most luxurious *banya* in the city. The Gothic Room is like a work of art with its rich wood carving, and the main shower room has an aristocratic Roman feel to it. Recommended.

### WELLNESS SPA Map pp246-7

☎ 709 5491; www.wellness-hall.ru, in Russian; Volgogradsky pr 54; private rooms R2300-2900; 🕒 by appointment; 📍 Kuzminki  
This distinctly New Russian place has private baths for groups of up to four people. Options include a Japanese sauna, a Greek bath and an ultra-fancy 'modern hall', in addition to the Russian *banya*.

## BOWLING & BILLIARDS

### CHAMPION BOWLING Map pp246-7

☎ 747 5000; www.champion.ru; Leningradskoe sh 16; bowling per hr R400-800, billiards per hr R100-350; 🕒 5pm-6am Mon-Fri, noon-6am Sat & Sun; 📍 Voykovskaya  
Champion is a huge complex featuring 10-pin bowling, billiards, karaoke, sushi, big-screen TVs and more. It's easy to suffer from sensory overload, especially with the lights and whistles of nonstop slot machines and a dance floor packed with dooted-up *devushky* (young women).

### COSMIC BOWLING Map pp252-3

☎ 246 3666, 246 4662; www.cosmik.ru, in Russian; ul Lva Tolstogo 18; bowling per hr R360-885, billiards per hr R240-600; 🕒 noon-5am; 📍 Park Kultury  
'Cosmic' refers to the psychedelically lit lanes – one of many hi-tech features at this supercool bowling alley. The separate billiards room offers both Russian and American pool, as well as snooker. This popular place is often packed: be prepared to hang out at the bar and wait for a lane or a table.

## SWIMMING

Public pools are difficult places to take the plunge if you are a foreigner because attendants insist on a Russian doctor's certificate of your good health before they'll let you in. Fortunately, the pools generally have somebody on hand who can issue the certificate on the spot (for a small fee).

### CHAIKA SWIMMING POOL Map pp252-3

☎ 246 1344; Turchaninov per 1/3; admission R350; 🕒 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 8am-7pm Sun; 📍 Park Kultury  
Boasting eight lanes and heated to a pleasant 29°C, this 50m open-air pool is an ideal place for swimming laps year-round. The entire facility, including locker rooms, is clean

and relatively easy to navigate. Kids under 16 are only welcome at designated times, so phone before bringing the little ones along.

### LUZHNIKI Map pp252-3

☎ 201 0795; www.luzhniki.ru, in Russian; Luzhnetskaya nab 24; per hr R130; 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm; 📍 Vorobyovy Gory  
The vast complex built for the 1980 Olympic Games includes five swimming pools: two outdoor, two indoor and a kiddie pool. The pools are open year-round, and the water is heated to between 27°C and 29°C. The complex also includes a training room, sauna and tennis courts.

### SILVER FOREST Map pp246-7

Serebryany bor  
On a hot summer day, join many Muscovites and head to the beaches at this series of lakes and channels on the Moscow River, 20km north of the city centre. There are areas that are unofficially dedicated to families, gay people, nudists and even disco dancers. Take the metro to Sokol and then ride trolleybus No 65 to the end of the line.

## WATCHING SPORT

Moscow is a great sports town, boasting Russia's top teams in football, hockey and basketball. See p17 for more information on these teams. Buy tickets at the stadiums.

### DINAMO STADIUM Map pp246-7

☎ 212 3132; Leningradsky pr 36; 📍 Dinamo  
Of the five Moscow teams that play in Russia's premier football league, Dinamo stadium hosts Dinamo, as well as TSKA (see p152). In winter the stadium is home to Moscow's ice hockey team, also called Dinamo.


### LOKOMOTIV STADIUM Map pp246-7

☎ 161 4283; Bolshaya Cherkizovskaya ul 125; 📍 Cherkizovskaya  
Reconstructed in 2002, this smaller stadium hosts its namesake team, Lokomotiv, which plays in the premier football league.

### LUZHNIKI STADIUM Map pp252-3

☎ 785 9717; www.luzhniki.ru, in Russian; Luzhnetskaya nab 24; 📍 Sportivnaya  
Moscow's largest stadium seats up to 80,000 people and gleams from its recent

reconstruction. Luzhniki is home to Torpedo and Spartak, both of which are teams in Russia's premier football league. This stadium is part of a larger complex that was the main venue for the 1980 Olympics. Besides the giant stadium, Luzhniki includes a collection of swimming pools (see p151), tennis courts and other facilities, which are used by casual and professional athletes alike.

**TSSKA STADIUM** Map pp246-7  
% 213 2288; Leningradsky pr 39A;  Aeroport  
A top Moscow basketball team, TsSKA is a recent champion of the Russian league and also does well in the European league.

Some of the best games come from the TsSKA women's team, which plays from September to May.

## WINTER SPORTS

There's no shortage of winter in Moscow, so take advantage of it. You can hire ice skates – usually for R50 to R100 per hour – and see where all those great Russian figure skaters come from at Gorky Park (Map pp252-3) or Chistye Prudy (Map p254). Bring your passport. Izmaylovsky Park (Map pp246-7) has both ski and skate rental. To get here, take bus No 7 or 131 from Partizanskaya metro and get off at the third stop.

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