



MOSCOW RUSSIA

It's not unfair to label the former Cold War hub "a city of contradictions": this is precisely what makes the Russian capital such a fascinating place. Its split personalities (harsh with a soft centre; the huge disparity between rich and poor; its cold, miserable winters and colourful, leafy autumns) make it one of most interesting cities on Earth. While it may have lost some of that mystique now that it's a free-for-all for travellers, it's still tough enough, strange enough and foreign enough to leave you impressed, bewildered, intrigued and confused all at the same time. It'll leave you with the feeling that, no matter how many times you pass through, you may never truly get to know or understand it.

HISTORY ON THE STREETS

Despite the changes brought about since the collapse of communism in the former Soviet states, Russia — and Moscow, in particular — hasn't lost its sense of self-importance, or its

grasp of its place in history. Part of this is due to the resilience of the people: their stubborn, bloody mindedness has seen them struggle back from adversity on more than one occasion, and it is their resulting cold exterior which hides a warmer heart. The city's tumultuous history has seen it grow from a provincial outpost in 1147 to a commanding capital under the reign of Ivan the Terrible in the 16th century, only to be robbed of its status and forced to play second fiddle to St Petersburg under Peter the Great a hundred or so years later. And that's before you even get to Napoleon, Marxism, revolutions, either World War or the fall of communism. Wherever you walk there are reminders of this history and its impact on Muscovites. The most poignant reminder of recent history has manifested itself in the divide between rich and poor brought about by the move from communism to capitalism, and the extreme poverty which can be witnessed on the streets of the capital each day.

WORTH A LOOK

Red Square

Flanked by the history and politics of the Kremlin, the 'New Russia' glitz of the GUM shopping centre, and the majestic beauty of St Basil's Cathedral, Red Square is the place around which the rest of the city buzzes.

The Kremlin

Ivan the Terrible, Stalin, Napoleon, Lenin, Khrushchev, Gorbachev, Yeltsin. Russian history has been influenced through the years from within these walls. Allow a good day to make your way through the grounds and its museums, churches and gardens.

Vernisazh market

In Izmaylovsky Park east of the city lies a bustling market full of as many Russian clichés as you could ever hope to find in one place. From stands full of old war medals, Russian dolls and chess sets to jewellery, clothes and toys, there are enough souvenirs here to fill every vacant hole in even the largest of backpacks.

Moscow Metro

In any other city, a network of train tunnels underground would be more a functional by-product of a visit to a place than a highlight. But Moscow's transport lifeline is an entirely different story. Mosaics and sculpture are scattered through this system, built as a showcase of Soviet beauty and power. Kievskaya station, which features mosaics dedicated to the Ukrainian people and Ploshchad Revolutsii, with its sculptures of Russian workers are just two highlights.

— LYNETTE EYB

Additional information supplied by Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com). The second edition of *Lonely Planet's Moscow* is out now. See page 98 for more on Russia.



Bonus points for:
History with a vodka chaser
Loses marks for:
It can be hard work
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