

IWC Practical Information Document

The International Women's Club of Moscow wants to help you feel at home in this enormous and often challenging city. We would also like to help you discover the other side of Moscow, the amazing metropolis that has a lot to offer for those who are willing to take on this challenge.

Something every expat warmly welcomes is practical information on living in Moscow. So when you meet people, for example during IWC Coffee Mornings or General Meetings, it is always interesting to talk about day-to-day life and the practical problems each of us runs into from time to time, and to learn about each other's (sometimes very creative) solutions to these problems. There is nothing as valuable as first hand tips from people who have been living in Moscow for some time, who know their way around town and who are happy to share their inside knowledge with others!

Just in case you have some questions you forgot to ask during the last Coffee Morning or General Meeting, some basic practical information is included in this document. This document is not intended to be a complete guide to living in Moscow, and it probably is not even a completely correct guide to living in Moscow (things change very fast here), but it contains a nice collection of tips and suggestions that will hopefully be useful for you and your family.

If you cannot find the information you are looking for, don't hesitate to send your question to iwcmembership@gmail.com and we will do our best to help you!

The IWC team

Content

IWC Practical Information Document.....	1
The International Women’s Club of Moscow	4
❖ History of the IWC	4
❖ Membership of the IWC.....	4
❖ Organization of the IWC.....	5
❖ IWC Meetings and activities.....	6
❖ IWC Charities.....	7
❖ Communication with the IWC	7
❖ Contact the IWC	8
Language	9
❖ Language Schools	9
❖ Mobile Apps	9
❖ Websites in Russian.....	9
❖ Audiobooks.....	9
❖ IWC Interest Groups.....	9
Transportation.....	10
❖ Airports.....	10
❖ Metro	11
❖ Buses, Trolleybuses and Trams	12
❖ Minibuses (маршрутка)	13
❖ Taxi	13
❖ Pedestrian	13
❖ Maps and addresses.....	14
Phone/internet	14
❖ Skype / Facetime	14
❖ Mobile Phone	14
❖ Public Phone.....	15
❖ Internet & Wi-Fi.....	15
Water.....	16
Medical Care.....	16
❖ Clinics	16
❖ Medicine.....	16
Moms and Babies	17
❖ Home Deliveries	17

❖	Baby Groups and Play Groups	17
❖	Nannies in Moscow	17
	Pets	18
❖	Taking your pet in and out of Russia	18
❖	Pet supply stores:	18
❖	Pet care	18
❖	Pet Hotels	19
❖	Veterinarians	19
❖	Stray animals and shelters	19
❖	Adoption.....	20
	Shopping & Leisure	20
❖	Grocery Shopping.....	20
❖	Food sanctions	21
❖	Home delivery	22
❖	Buying Clothing	22
❖	Secondhand, retro and other markets	22
❖	Buying Books	23
❖	Going to the gym.....	23
	Finance and Banking.....	23
❖	Money and Banks.....	23
❖	Paying a tip	23
❖	Restaurants	24
	Foreign Newspapers and websites.....	24
❖	Newspapers and Magazines.....	24
❖	Useful Websites.....	24
	Useful mobile applications	25
	Other Moscow expat organizations	26
	Thank you	26

The International Women's Club of Moscow

Let's start with a chapter on ourselves, shall we? You've just joined us and are probably interested to know what's going on in the Club.

❖ History of the IWC

The IWC of Moscow was founded in 1978 by four women accompanying their husbands on diplomatic assignments. Their idea was to bring women of all foreign nations represented in the Soviet Union's capital together for friendship, activities and cultural exchange. More than 37 years later, their original purpose is still relevant and going strong.

Clearly, over time the Club has adapted to the changing needs of expats in Moscow. In the beginning, members had to rely on each other to learn where to buy familiar products or even share sugar or coffee when food availability was restricted. Nowadays, IWC gatherings are more about socializing with friends, exploring each other's culture, participating in interesting activities and sharing experiences – but of course there's still room for tips on good restaurants and shops!

Since the end of the 1980s, raising funds for charitable activities has become an increasingly important goal for the IWC. We feel that supporting those in need is a great way to give back to a city that has given us so much: a home away from home, open minds, unforgettable experiences and new friends.

As the focus of the IWC has extended over the years, its membership has also changed. At first, the Club consisted mainly of diplomats' wives, but now also includes many women who accompany their husbands on business assignments and female business professionals who come to Russia in connection with their own careers. Also husbands accompanying their wives are welcome to join the Club. It comes as no surprise then that the IWC has become the largest women's club in Moscow.

We believe that our strong tradition of international friendship in Russia's capital will continue for many more years thanks to expatriates like you. Thank you for your participation and interest in the Club, and we hope that you will have a great time as a member of the IWC in Moscow.

❖ Membership of the IWC

Who can join the IWC?

The IWC is open to all expatriate women and men residing in Moscow. The number of Russian passport holders is limited to 5% of the total number of members.

What are the benefits of joining the IWC?

As a member you can:

- Participate in a variety of interesting meetings and events in different locations,

- Join our Interest Groups, which cover a wide range of activities,
- Volunteer your time to help the Steering Committee or charity projects supported by us,
- Read about what's going on at the IWC in our Monthly Bulletin and Newsletter.

The IWC wants you to feel at home in Moscow. Meeting other people in the same situation is essential in achieving this goal, but practical information about living in this enormous and often challenging city can also help you get settled. We have gathered some of this information in this brochure.

What happens now that I've joined the Club?

When you first sign up as a member of the IWC, you receive a temporary badge that is replaced by a permanent one personalized with your photo (once you've sent it to us). The badge allows others to know who you are and where you are from. Your badge comes with a lanyard, which identifies you as a member of the Club for a specific season.

Please remember to bring your badge and lanyard with you to all IWC events. If you cannot show them to prove that you are a member of the Club, you will be asked to pay a guest fee for the event. Also, please note that if you lose your badge or lanyard, there will be a replacement fee.

We keep our members informed about meetings and activities organized by the Club through our mailing list (to which your email address will be added) as well as through our website and Facebook group. This group is a closed community, which only members can join: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/554958397937133/>

Your personal copy of the Interest Group booklet gives you a detailed overview of our Interest Groups, including contact details of their Leaders. Now all you have to do is choose which activities to participate in or organize your own! The time and enthusiasm of our members is what makes the IWC work.

❖ Organization of the IWC

The IWC is run by a dedicated Steering Committee that manages the Club's responsibilities and coordinates all of the meetings and activities described here. These volunteers work in areas like finance, PR and event management or help create and manage our website and Newsletter. The Charities Team is an integral part of the IWC and is represented in the Steering Committee as well.

We are continuously on the lookout for talented new Steering Committee members! If you want to spend some of your time in Moscow to volunteering and help running the Club, we can find a position that suits you and your schedule. Recording minutes once a month or a full-time job, it's up to you! Besides adding a new experience to your CV, it's also great fun.

The President of the Club, who chairs Steering Committee meetings, is always an Ambassador or Ambassador's Spouse.

❖ IWC Meetings and activities

Coffee Mornings

Coffee Mornings are informal gatherings where you can meet other expatriate ladies, learn more about the IWC and its activities and sign up as a member of the Club. Existing members and newcomers are both more than welcome. These meetings are usually organized on the **first Saturday** and the **second Tuesday** of each month in **Le Pain Quotidien**, between 10 a.m. and noon. Please check iwcmoscow.ru for the exact dates and location. Coffee, tea and snacks are offered courtesy of the IWC and LPQ.

Meet & Greets

Come to our Meet & Greets to meet your friends and new people in a wonderful atmosphere, enjoy talented guest entertainers and discover different cultures. Each year, our Meet & Greet Team finds great venues for these gatherings, which makes each meeting a unique experience.

Meet & Greets take place from September to June, usually on the **third Thursday** of the month, and are open to all IWC members, but please remember to bring your badge and lanyard! Guests can join for a small fee. Online **registration is required** for members and guest alike. Information about registration is provided via email and on our website before each Meet & Greet.

Professional Women's Evenings

In response to the increasing number of female business professionals among our members, we organize Professional Women's Evenings to offer ladies the opportunity to socialize and network outside working hours. The event is open to all our members and guests, whether they work or not! Guest speakers are invited to discuss career, family and business issues and share their experiences as expats. Professional Women's Evenings are organized one evening a month. Please email iwcpwe@gmail.com if you'd like to receive emails about these events, information is also published on our website.

Interest Groups

Do you want to continue your favourite hobby here in Moscow and meet people with the same interests? Do you want to try new activities and develop new skills? Or do you want to learn the Russian language, culture and history? We've got an (or several) Interest Group for you!

In small groups, IWC members can participate in activities such as Arts and Crafts, Body, Mind and Soul, Cooking, Culture, Languages, Music and Dance and Outdoor Sports. Activities change each season according to demand and the availability of the volunteer organizers. A complete overview of the Groups can be found in the Interest Group booklet, updates are communicated in the Monthly Bulletin.

If you don't see the Group you're looking for, consider starting your own!

Fundraising events

Supporting charitable activities is another important goal of the IWC, and we have a long tradition of raising funds for our charity partners in a fun and elegant way.

The **Winter Bazaar**, organized for the first time in 1998, has become the largest IWC event in terms of number of guests and revenue. You can help us make this year's event an even bigger success by participating as a volunteer and/or guest in this annual fair where products from different countries are gathered in one venue – it's holiday shopping for a good cause! This event is open to members and guests alike. If you are connected to an embassy, you can help organize your own stall.

The Winter Bazaar is held at the Radisson Slavyanskaya Hotel on the last Saturday of November.

Our second yearly fundraising event is the glamorous **Dinner & Ball**, usually organized in March or April. Guests are invited to dinner followed by an evening of dance and entertainment in a central location in Moscow. Expats and Russians alike mark this event in their calendar.

❖ IWC Charities

The IWC Charities Team provides long-term support and emergency care for children in need and people below the poverty line by contributing funding and/or resources to many different projects. They started in the 1990s as a group of ladies visiting orphanages, and have become a strong team of motivated volunteers helping people in need every year.

Newcomers are sometimes hesitant about engaging in charity work, as they are still settling in; others fear that helping, as a volunteer is a full-time commitment. You can participate in many ways, choosing your level of commitment based on the projects and your schedule. You can always find out how to help by writing to iwccharityvol@gmail.com.

Whether you get involved in the charity projects on a regular basis or just volunteer a few hours at events like the Winter Bazaar, we can always use your support! The IWC Charities Team also collects gently used clothes and household items in the **IWC Donations Office** and passes them on to charity projects that can use them. Anything is welcome as long as it's clean and in good condition. If you have something to donate, please contact iwcdonations@yahoo.com.

❖ Communication with the IWC

Newsletter

Four times a year, the IWC publishes its Newsletter, which contains information on upcoming meetings, detail on the Charities Team's activities, photos and reviews of past IWC events and articles written by our members. Printed copies are available at Meet & Greet and Coffee Mornings.

Monthly Bulletin

The Monthly Bulletin is for members only and brings you Club news hot off the press: the most recent list of Interest Groups, dates for upcoming events such as Coffee Mornings and Meet & Greets, new volunteering options and other information. Look for the Bulletin in your mailbox in the first days of every month (except for July, August and January).

IWC Website

The most detailed and up-to-date information about the IWC is always available on our website www.iwcmoscow.ru. Everything you want to know about the Club and its activities – past and future – is only a click away.

Facebook

If you're looking for a more personal connection, you can find all the important news and dates on our Facebook page International Women's Club of Moscow (<https://www.facebook.com/IWCMoscow>) or join our closed Facebook group for members only (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/554958397937133/>).

❖ Contact the IWC

If you cannot find the information you are looking for in this booklet or on our website, please contact us. We are always happy to answer any questions you might have and to receive your suggestions or remarks.

For information about:

Membership, including Coffee Mornings

Interest Groups

Charities

Donations Office

Volunteering in Steering Committee

Meet & Greets

Professional Women's Evenings

Winter Bazaar

Dinner & Ball

Newsletter & Monthly Bulletin

Website

Partnership possibilities

PR

Please contact:

iwcmembership@gmail.com

iwcigmoscow@gmail.com

iwccharities@gmail.com

iwcdonations@yahoo.com

iwcgeneralofficer@gmail.com

programco.iwc@gmail.com

iwcpwe@gmail.com

iwcwinterbazaar@gmail.com

iwcedb@gmail.com

iwcm.news@gmail.com

iwcwebsite@gmail.com

iwcsponsorship@gmail.com

iwcmoscowpr@gmail.com

If you're not sure who to contact, please send an email to iwcgeneralofficer@gmail.com or talk to us in person at one of our events!

Language

A basic knowledge of the Russian language is helpful if you plan to spend more than a couple of months in Moscow: it will make you feel more comfortable, and will greatly enrich your experience here. We recommend that you at least learn the Cyrillic alphabet, so you can find your way in the metro, read the menu in a restaurant, etc.

❖ Language Schools


There are several language schools that offer private lessons (at your home or at school), or group classes. Some people choose to take an intensive course as soon as they arrive; others have lessons once or twice a week over a longer period of time. The Moscow University also offers Russian language courses for those who want to obtain an official degree.

❖ Mobile Apps

- Russian Alphabet by Hamdouchi Interactive (iPhone)
- Google Translate

You can translate Russian to almost any language with Google Translate. If translating to your native language doesn't give good results, try translating to English instead. It usually gives a better result. The app can also translate text from pictures and pronounce words in Russian.

❖ Websites in Russian

Most Russian websites don't have an English version. If you're struggling to find information on Russian websites or to shop online, you can install the Google Chrome browser. When you go to any website, this symbol appears in the right corner of the address bar: . When you click it, you can translate the entire webpage. It will continue to translate the page you're browsing as long as you don't click the "back" button.

❖ Audiobooks

- Russian Survival Phrases
- Rosetta Stone Software (<http://www.rosettastone.eu>)
- The Everything Learning Russian book

❖ IWC Interest Groups

The IWC organizes various interest groups on Russian language. Whether you are a beginner, an intermediate or an advanced speaker, there is definitely an IWC interest group that can help you learn and/or improve your Russian language skills. We have both language learning classes and conversation classes.

Transportation

❖ Airports

There are four large airports in Moscow: Domodedovo, Sheremetyevo, Vnukovo and the new Ramport. The ride to or from these airports by car can take two hours or more, depending on traffic. As in most countries, try to book a taxi in advance or at the dedicated counters in the airport and avoid the drivers offering rides in the arrivals' hall.

If you do not have to carry a lot, the easiest way to reach these airports is by train. Comfortable high-speed trains departing every 30 minutes connect Sheremetyevo airport with Belorussky station, Domodedovo with Paveletsky station and Vnukovo with Kievsky railway station. Ramport airport will be connected to Kotelniki metro station. From the railway stations, you can easily get onto the metro. More information on the Aeroexpress trains is available on <http://www.aeroexpress.ru/en/>. The Aeroexpress App for Iphone and Android enables you to book your tickets and check the train schedule online. One-way tickets cost 420 roubles.



From the train station at Domodedovo airport regular suburban commuter trains also service Paveletsky Rail Terminal. These local trains, called *elektrichka* (электричка), have the same route as Aeroexpress trains, but make stops along the way resulting in a longer travel time. They are also less comfortable and run less frequently than the high-speed trains, but they are a lot cheaper.

Buses and minibuses (*маршрутка*) also connect the airports with the city center, but travel time is very unpredictable because of the unavoidable Moscow traffic jams.

More information about the three large international airports in Moscow can be found on their websites:

- <http://www.domodedovo.ru/en/>

- <http://www.svo.aero/en/>

- <http://www.vnukovo.ru/eng>

- <http://www.ramport.aero/en/>



❖ Metro

Travelling in the city is very easy thanks to the extensive metro network. Due to this extensiveness and the lack of English signs, however, it might seem challenging at first to take the metro, but after a couple of journeys by metro it will become clear that it is actually not difficult at all and very reliable.



Metro entrances are recognizable by a big red “M”. During the opening hours (5.30am-1.00am) there is a train every two to three minutes, and trains run even more frequently during rush hours, although then it can still be very busy. You enter through the doors with the green signs “Вход” (entry), the doors with red signs are for exiting passengers. Watch out for the heavy swinging doors and don’t expect anyone to hold them for you!

The metro network consists of 12 lines and is ever expanding. Each line has a unique number and color. At transfer stations lines of different colors intersect. It is advisable to look for the signs with the number of the line you need, because the colors are not always very clear.

Many transfer stations have a different name according to the line on which they are located. On the intersection of the grey, purple and green line for example there are three stations, and the one on the green line (line n°2) is called Tverskaya, the one on the purple line (line n°7) Pushkinskaya and the one on the grey line (line n°9) Chekovskaya. So when transferring from one line to another, you have to look for signs with the name of the station on the line you will be taking next!

To exit the metro, follow the signs “Выход в город” (exit to the city). It is not always easy to find your destination once you exit the metro: stations usually have multiple exits, the streets the exits lead to are marked in Cyrillic inside the metro station. A good map or a smartphone with Wi-Fi connection can come in handy if you are new to town.

The metro is not expensive and there are several fare schemes, so you can buy the ticket that best suits your travel needs. Most people buy a ticket for a limited number of rides, which can be used for metro and monorail, bus, trolleybus and tram. Details on prices and the validity of tickets can be found here (in Russian) <http://mosmetro.ru/tariffs/>.

The easiest way is to buy a so-called Troika card for 50 rubles at the cash desks (say “mozhna karta troika”), you can reload it with cash at the vending machines in all stations. Once there’s money on your card (a ride costs 32 rubles) you simply touch it to the sensors at the entrance gates, the screen shows the amount on your card, the light goes green and you can walk through the gate on the left side of where you touched your card. Make sure the light turns green before you walk or the gates just close and that’s very painful! Troika cards are also valid on buses, trolleybuses, trams and monorail.

Tip: buy a bilingual metro map (available in all large bookstores – see below) or get an app for your smartphone.

The app Yandex.Metro is a great help getting around Moscow. It even automatically adapts to the city you're in! You can change the language to English (use the Settings button on the top right, choose "язык" and then "английский") but I don't recommend that. All the metro signs are in Cyrillic, so it's easier to have the same alphabet on your app. If you want to go somewhere, tap the station you're closest to (Yandex usually marks that station with "Y"), click "отсюда", then tap the station you want to travel to and click "сюда". The app will give you a few possible routes and a time estimate.

❖ Buses, Trolleybuses and Trams

These methods of transport do not run at fixed times, because they are susceptible to congestion, even on dedicated lanes. Bus, trolleybus and tram stops are marked as follows:

- Buses: yellow plates with an "A" sign (Avtobus)
- Trolleybuses: white plates with a "T" sign
- Trams: white plates with "Tp" sign

On <http://msk.rusavtobus.ru/en/> you can look up your route for trips by public transport. This website allows you to select tram, bus and trolleybus as means of transport, but also metro, mini-bus and electrical train are options in this route planner.

Another great app is Yandex.transport. It's based on the Yandex.maps app (also worth downloading) and shows all public transport stops and routes. It's great fun seeing all the buses drive through Moscow on your screen! If you're in for a serious bus ride instead of entertainment, you can click a stop near your location and it will show all the lines passing by that stop and how many minutes it will take them to arrive. By then clicking a number, you can see the route that bus, trolleybus or tram takes. The times aren't always very reliable in traffic. You can also click a bus, trolleybus or tram you see driving on the screen to see its route, or use the route planner (button on the bottom right). In Yandex apps, you can use Latin alphabet, but it can be tricky to figure out the English spelling of Russian streets.

As mentioned, you can use your metro ticket to pay for your trip by bus, trolleybus or tram. You can also buy tickets at kiosks (located at most bus stops) or on the bus, trolleybus or tram. Tickets bought from the driver are slightly more expensive. Note that nearly all buses have tickets gates installed so you best enter through the front door.

❖ Minibuses (маршрутка)

Minibuses usually follow the same routes as buses and display the same numbers. They run more frequently than buses, but drivers are notorious for their driving style.

Tickets cost slightly more and are purchased from the driver. If you are sitting in the back, it is custom to pass your money to the front – change will also be handed back to you via the other passengers.

To stop a mini-bus simply wave it down like a taxi. They do not stop at every stop so you must tell the driver where you want to get out.

❖ Taxi

Two types of taxis can be found in Moscow: taxis from an official company and illegal, private (gypsy) cabs. In 2011 new laws have been adopted to end illegal taxis. There are far less official taxis than gypsy taxis, but official taxis are safer to use. If possible, you best order a taxi in advance because waiting times can otherwise be long.

Some taxi companies that have English-speaking staff:

- <http://www.taxi-in-moscow.com>

- <http://www.newmoscowtaxi.ru>

- <http://www.nyt.ru>

You can download the app “Get Taxi” on your smart phone, where you can order a taxi in English and it will notify you when it arrives.

Yandex also has a taxi app, Yandex.taxi, which is very reliable and inexpensive. When you order a taxi for the first time, you need to enter your phone number for a confirmation code. Then just point the marker at your location or where you want to be picked up, click “Next”, choose a service class (Economy cars are just fine) and payment method. You don’t have to add a destination, but it’s recommended as the driver will already know where you want to go and you won’t need to explain in Russian, plus the rate will show. You can add requirements like a non-smoking driver, pet transport, child seat or receipt. Click “Order a taxi” and relax until your transport arrives! You’ll get an SMS with the license plate, car brand and colour and driver’s name. You can follow the car’s progress in the app and rate your ride afterwards.

❖ Pedestrian

Perekhods (переход) are underground walkways, which you can find along most major streets. They are recognizable by a blue sign showing a person walking downstairs and they are the safest way to cross the street in Moscow.

If you are crossing the street above ground, it is recommendable to cross only at regulated crosswalks. But even then you should be extremely careful: some cars deliberately ignore a green light for pedestrians!



❖ Maps and addresses

Whether you're walking, driving, or using public transport, a map always comes in handy. It might seem silly, but I'd recommend to have both Google Maps and Yandex.Maps, as each is better at different things.

Google Maps is clear and straightforward, speaks English and knows where most things are even if you don't. Their pedestrian route planner is really good, showing passageways between buildings and different routes. Also when you choose public transport, they estimate quite well how long your ride + walk from your starting point and to your destination will take.

Then why do you need Yandex too? It's the number one app when it comes to building numbers and current traffic. Maybe you've seen a Moscow address before, sometimes it has four numbers! It usually goes like this: Street (улица), house number (дом), building number (строение), entry number (въезд), apartment number (квартира). Sometimes, the floor (этаж) of the apartment or shop is also mentioned. For example, the address for our Coffee Mornings is Ulitsa Bolshaya Sadovaya 46/2. That means we're in Bolshaya Sadovaya street, in the second building of the buildings numbered 46. You'll get used to it! Yandex can help you find those buildings with strange numbers hidden in backyards and alleys where Google fails.

When you're driving, Google will show different routes with their current traffic jams. If you're just interested in the traffic jams but don't want to calculate a route, you can open Yandex.Maps and switch on the "show traffic" button on the upper left of the screen. It shows the same map with the locations of accidents and marks all streets green, yellow or red according to the current traffic.

Phone/internet

It is much easier to keep in touch with friends and family in your home country – or elsewhere – than it was only 10 years ago! Post may still take long, but loved ones are now only an e-mail or phone call away.

❖ Skype / Facetime

The computer program Skype allows you to make free (voice and video) calls from one computer to another computer, or to make low cost calls from your computer to landline and mobile phones. Go to <http://www.skype.com> to download the software and get started. Skype is also available as an app for your smartphone.

If you and the person you want to call both have an iPhone, you can also use Facetime.

❖ Mobile Phone

International calls with a mobile phone can be rather expensive, and if you use a subscription from home for your mobile phone you can also expect a considerable invoice. But making local calls, i.e. within Moscow, with a local subscription is not very pricey.

There are many mobile phone service providers in Moscow, the largest ones being MTS, Beeline and MegaFon. If you work, you will often receive a mobile phone from your employer. Spouses and other family members might consider signing up for the same mobile phone service provider, since there are often tariff plans that give discounts for calls to the same service provider.

There is no contract when you sign up for a mobile phone service provider, so if you do not like your telephone company you can always change without paying a penalty.

Recharging a mobile phone can be done at most ATMs, where you have to enter your telephone number and how much credit you want on your phone. The payment will then be automatically executed. Also at payment terminals in the shops of your mobile phone service provider you can recharge your mobile phone. By using the terminals in the shops you avoid paying the extra fee that is often charged at payment terminals located in the street or at the entrance of supermarkets or shopping centers.

❖ Public Phone

You can find public phones on the streets and in metro stations. Most of these phones require a phone card that you can buy at any metro station's ticket office.

❖ Internet & Wi-Fi

You can find free Wi-Fi access in most cafes and restaurants, but the speed is not always great. Sometimes you have to ask for a password, “parol” (пароль) in Russian.

Most people’s mobile phone subscriptions include a data plan, so they have Internet access everywhere on their Smartphone. All large mobile phone service providers offer this possibility and the 3G network in Moscow is overall of good quality, although some users complain about poor 3G connection in their apartment (probably due to the structure of their building) and some of the compounds are also known to have a problem with 3G Internet.

If you live in a building or compound with poor 3G connection, you might consider buying a USB modem for 4G Internet. This has proven a good solution to connect your devices wirelessly to Internet. The company Yota is currently the leading company in the 4G market.

If your apartment has no broadband Internet connection, you can ask your landlord to have one installed. Usually the landlord will pay the installation costs; you will have to pay the monthly subscription.

Water

Tap water in Moscow isn't drinkable. You won't get sick from drinking it, but in the long run the heavy metal particles and other unhealthy things it contains will have an effect on you. It's enough to boil and filter the tap water if you want to drink it. If you don't want to use it at all, there are companies who deliver only water, you can even have your own Sipwell at home.

If you're not living in a brand new building, you probably have a pipeline with cold water and one with warm water running through your apartment, and no boiler. During summer, the warm water is switched off for about two weeks for maintenance works. The dates are different for each building, you can check them here: <http://www.moek.ru/ru/>. You'll have to type your street name in Cyrillic, but you can easily add the alphabet on a mobile phone. The second field is for your house number.

Medical Care

❖ Clinics

Most expats go to one of the international medical centers. The EMC or European Medical Centre (<http://www.emcmos.ru>) is perhaps the best-known and most recommended medical center, but there are many good others as well. Contact your medical assistance company to check which medical facilities and services they cover, because medical care can be very expensive here.

There have been considerable improvements in the Russian health care system in recent years, but it is recommended that you don't go to a local hospital if you don't speak Russian well, or that you take someone with you who can translate: most local doctors and nurses only speak Russian.

❖ Medicine

Unlike in most European countries or the USA, you can get the vast majority of medicines without prescription. The only issue is explaining what you need in Russian and figuring out the instructions. If your spouse has an assistant, you can ask him/her to get your medicines. The lady behind the counter usually knows just what you need. If you suffer from hay fever, you might want to stock up on allergy medicine. Birch trees are everywhere in Russia.

Moms and Babies

Let's be honest, being a young mom in Moscow isn't always easy. Trying to get around with a stroller can be challenging, even if most of the Russians will help you without hesitations. But, there is one thing that will make your life so much easier: home deliveries.

❖ Home Deliveries

In Moscow, you can basically have everything delivered. Anything! Here is a list of stores that do delivery for children's goods:

- Baby food, toys, hygiene products or even strollers: <http://www.olant-shop.ru/>
- Diapers, Food, Things for mom: <http://www.mladenec-shop.ru/>
- Kids clothes: <http://www.kidmart.ru/>
- Strollers and furniture: <http://kupi-kolyasku.ru/>
- Mothercare: <http://mothercare.ru/>

❖ Baby Groups and Play Groups

- Music and play: <http://www.gymboreeclasses.ru/en/clubs/russia/>
- Swimming and yoga: <http://brightfamily.ru/>
- IWC International Toddler group, where moms meet with their children: <http://iwcmoscow.ru/interestgroups>
- American Women's Organization Toddler Group (meets Friday mornings): <http://awomoscow.org>

❖ Nannies in Moscow

Yes, there is no such thing as a care center or day care for toddlers under 3 years old, so finding a nanny is very important. For the nanny, most people hire a Pilipino nanny. They are great nannies, dependable, affordable and they speak English. They can be part-time, full-time or live in nanny and they are also great housekeepers. You can find one through IWC, our members, the mom groups, or different sites, like expat.ru or the Facebook site "[Children in Moscow](#)". With members leaving to go back home or moving to their next Expat assignment, there are always nannies looking for work.

There is also an agency working with IWC, but they charge you one month of salary- but then they find you a replacement if necessary. <http://www.family-care.ru/>

Pets

❖ Taking your pet in and out of Russia

You can contact your Embassy for more information on country-specific regulations for importing and exporting pets. In general, all pets travelling in and out of Russia need yearly rabies inoculations. The three-year rabies vaccine isn't valid in Russia. Before arriving, you need a veterinary certificate from a government-approved veterinarian stating that your pet is healthy enough to travel. When arriving through an airport, you need a stamp from the veterinary control agency. When leaving Russia, you need another health declaration from a Russian vet, maximum five days before your departure. When travelling back to Europe, your pet needs an identification chip and a passport. Some veterinarians have experience with travelling pets and can even pick them up at the airport for you. Extra regulations can apply when travelling with valuable breeding animals.

❖ Pet supply stores:

- <http://www.bethowen.ru> (Delivers)
- <http://www.petshop.ru> (Delivers)
- <http://www.zoo-z.ru> (Delivers)
- Petshop.ru (Delivers)
- <http://feedthebeast.ru/> (Delivers on a subscription basis)

There are many, many more online pet supply stores, this is just a selection. When walking through the city, keep an eye out for signs “зоомагазин” (pet shop). Maybe there's a tiny pet food store hiding just two buildings from your door. Many German, Canadian and some Asian brands are available in Moscow, and there are decent local brands too. Do keep an eye on the labels though, many international brands are also produced in Russia, but to lower standards.

❖ Pet care

Our pets are very important to us, so here are some facts you should know to help keep them safe. Ticks are a big issue during the spring and summer Months. Make sure you use either a tick collar or use a monthly tick prevention medication starting in April till the first snowfall. Don't forget rabies and other yearly inoculations.

During the winter months, make sure you have a good coat and booties for your pets. They use harsh chemicals to melt the snow and ice and these can cause damage to your pet's paws, which can lead to bleeding and pain when they walk.

Cats shouldn't go outside in Moscow. The city is huge and dangerous, traffic is crazy, the weather is harsh and even if your feline is chipped, collared and listens to its name, it's bound to get lost.

Veterinary care in Moscow sometimes seems a little outdated compared to Europe, but

it works just as well. Several times I've seen operation techniques that are no longer used at home, or been given a lot of medicines with a lot of instructions while my pets would just get one injection and one simple medicine at home. There are really good vets here, the treatments are just a little different.

❖ Pet Hotels

- Cat hotel Kot Behemot: <http://www.kotbegemothotel.ru/lp/>
- Cat's Dream hotel: http://www.cat-hotel.ru/english/index_eng.html
- <http://zoohotel.ru/>
- Yulia's and Constatine's Hotel for Dogs: <http://www.alvas.ru/ps.htm> (they speak English and can pick up and drop off your dog for an additional charge)

Also, most Pilipino housekeepers and nannies are willing to stay at your home and take care of your pets (feed, walk and play) while you are on vacation.

❖ Veterinarians

- Olga Smolenskaia- Suvorova: olga_ivcp@mail.ru +7(962) 962-92-74 (Does home visits and speaks English) or her partners Lena +7(916) 634 06 13 and Vladimir +7 (916) 629 99 39
- Movet veterinary clinic, 24/7: <http://movet.ru/> (see bottom of the page for English), Ulitsa Vasilisy Kojinoy 23, Tel.+7-499-142-01-05

❖ Stray animals and shelters

Moscow region is full of strays, both cats and dogs. The mentality towards pets here can be a bit of a shock: unless it's a thoroughbred show animal in prime health, there's a big chance it just gets dumped on the street or left outside the dacha once it's outgrown puppy or kitten size. Wounded and ill animals aren't even looked at. People don't bother to sterilize their animals and let them roam free, so you can imagine the results. Moscow's shelters and streets are overflowing with homeless animals. They can be a danger at night and for people walking their pet dogs, so be careful. Most dog packs in the city center have disappeared though.

It's hard to help, municipal shelters are off-limits to foreigners and private shelters are hesitant to accept anything but food, medicine and money. It's always hard to ensure the support is actually going to the animals, so if you do donate, it's safer to donate items and food instead of money. Of course there are people who really care about the strays and want to find them good homes.

❖ Adoption

Buying animals at pet stores is a bad idea, you won't get a pedigree and probably a sick animal. Finding a reputable breeder is also hard, and with so many four-legged friends out on the streets, who'd want to support bad breeders? If you're ready for a new family member and endless amounts of gratitude and love, here's some places you can look:

- Adopt, don't buy (only FB) <https://www.facebook.com/vozmiizpriuta/>
- Adopt a pet (also on FB) <http://adoptapet.ru/>
- Private shelter GAV (also on FB) <http://priut-gav.com/>
- LAPA, helping animals in Russia (also on FB) <http://www.lapauk.org/en/>
- Fund Giving Hope (also on FB) <http://www.ghope.ru/>
- Dog shelter Call of the Wild (also on FB) <http://www.zovpredkov.net/>
- Moscow Animals (only FB) <https://www.facebook.com/moscowanimals/>
- Zooafisha (FB group, also purebreds) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/zooafisha/>

The contact persons for these organizations don't always speak English, but they're pretty good at finding someone who does when you ask them a question. We've adopted a cat from Nellie Savelieva who works with the Giving Hope fund and speaks excellent English. She can help you find a pet in the shelters supported by the fund: es@tt-c.us

Shopping & Leisure

❖ Grocery Shopping

There are plenty of supermarkets, grocery stores, corner shops and markets in Moscow, and you can buy most products that you would use at home, although you might have to visit different shops to find all items on your shopping list. Especially larger, more expensive chains carry well-known American, Asian and European brands. For tips on buying (and preparing) food in Moscow we suggest you check out the website of Jennifer Eremeeva: <http://www.moscovore.com>.

Weekend grocery shopping is not recommended at large supermarkets like Metro and Auchan, unless you enjoy going to overcrowded supermarkets and endless queuing. The smaller city supermarkets are often open 24/7 and not too crowded. These are the most well-known supermarkets in Moscow, besides your *produkty* around the corner:

- Perekrestok: <https://www.perekrestok.ru/shops/> They have tiny Express shops, larger blue supermarkets and fancier green supermarkets. Cheaper than Azbuka but the same quality.
- 7th Kontinent: <http://corporate.7cont.ru/customers/shops/> Regular supermarkets with an average choice of goods.
- Azbuka Vkusa: <https://av.ru/shops/> If you're looking for anything special, this supermarket probably has it, but you're going to pay for it. They do have a nice deli section with fresh soups, salads and sandwiches.

- Alie Parusa: <http://www.alieparusa.ru/universamy/> About the same size as 7th Kontinent, but a little more expensive. Usually has a deli counter.

- Auchan and Metro: <https://www.auchan.ru/> <https://www.metro-cc.ru/> These huge malls are located outside the city center and sell in bulk. Here you can find decent wines, spices and other things that you don't find in the smaller shops. They're best visited by car but the lines can be impressive in the weekend. If you have a driver and a family, they're definitely worth checking out.

Particular spices are difficult to find in Moscow, so if you like to use for example dried sage, onion powder or dried chilies, you best bring them with you.

❖ Food sanctions

This is a fairly new subject in this guide and the situation changes continuously. If before, you had a list and then went grocery shopping, you'll now have to make up your menu from what's available instead. Here's what you probably can expect:

- Cheese:

There's no European cheese available apart from overpriced Swiss cheese. Camembert and Brie are lactose free so they can be imported, but they seldom are. If you do buy Russian cheese, check the label carefully. Most are made of palm oil and don't even have milk as their first ingredient. There are some Georgian cheeses available and you can get creative with tvorog (Russian fresh cheese). You can bring 5 kg of cheese with you from abroad.

- Fruit and vegetables:

If you arrive in spring or summer, the supermarkets don't look too bad yet. In general, white and red cabbage, carrots, onions, small cucumbers and tomatoes are available throughout the year. Apples are available but often not of good quality. Recently, produce from Turkey has also been banned (like pomegranates, eggplant, zucchini, pumpkin) so we'll have to wait and see whether they are replaced with imports from other countries or not. Keep an eye on the prices too, they can be crazy.

Usually there are weekend farmers markets for fresh fruits and vegetables in some localities, which are quite nice. Try to find if there is one near you. There are some permanent reynoks also in the city like Dorogomilovsky Market near Kievskaya Metro http://www.inyourpocket.com/moscow/Dorogomilovsky_42126v and Danilovsky Market. <http://danrinok.ru/>

- Fish and meat:

There's usually no shortage of these. Chicken and some fish is very affordable. Maybe you won't be spoiled for choice, but there is enough variation. It's easier to buy prepackaged food, but the deli counters usually have a wide range of meat and fresh fish. Don't expect the fish to be cleaned for you though.

❖ Home delivery

Almost anything can be bought online and delivered to your home in Moscow. If you have trouble browsing Russian websites, please refer to the Language section where we explain how to use Google Chrome. The only disadvantage of ordering online is that you usually get a phone call when they're on the way to you. Usually replying "ja doma" (I am home) is enough. Here are just a few of the online stores:

- Office supplies: <http://www.komus.com>
- Lavka Lavka (organic food): <http://lavkalavka.com/>
- Supermarket: <http://utkonos.ru> (also has an app)
- Clothes: lamoda.ru, kupivip.ru
- Food delivery: yakitoriya.ru (also has an app), dostavka1.com, <http://zotman.ru/delivery-tukhachevskogo.html> (pizza), plov.com

❖ Buying Clothing

If you want to save some money, purchase warm clothing prior to arriving in Moscow. Obviously you can find excellent clothing here, but the price tag will be higher than at home. Following shopping malls have numerous stores with well-known brands.

- Atrium <http://www.atrium.ru>
- Afimall City <http://afimall.ru/>
- Evropeisky Mall <http://europe-tc.ru>
- Mega Khimki <http://megamall.ru/khimki/>
- Metropolis Shopping Center <http://www.metropolis-center.ru>
- AviaPark Mall <http://aviapark.com/en/>
- Belaya Dacha (Outlet Store) <http://www.outletvillage-bd.com/en/>

❖ Secondhand, retro and other markets

There are very few second hand stores, but this one has friendly, English-speaking staff and often sells fur coats in good state for very low prices: <http://charity-shop.ru/> . To find Charity Shop, you need to go to Novokuznetskaya metro after 11 a.m., walk to the other side of the metro station, cross the street (with tram tracks) and follow it to the right, past Azbuka Vkusa, until you reach number 1. You'll only see a wooden door in a yellow building. Open it and face the grumpy guard, tell him you're going to Charity Shop. Pass through the second door and go left, there's a little door at the end of the courtyard leading to a flight of stairs. The shop is downstairs. Or ask your Membership Team to guide you!

Recently, retro has become hip in Moscow too! Speaking about hip, if you're into the hipster thing there's a market for you as well. Arts & crafts, food stalls, souvenirs, ...

there's always a place to find it.

Retro market Bloshinka <https://www.facebook.com/bloshinka/>

Arts & Crafts market Artflection <http://artflection.ru/>

Creative supplies shop ArtKvartal <https://www.facebook.com/artkvartal.ru/>

Food stalls fair <https://www.facebook.com/CityFoodMarket/>

Trendy design market Lambada <https://www.facebook.com/lambadamarket/>

Moscow Museum (organizes retro markets) <https://www.facebook.com/mosmuseum/>

❖ Buying Books

An extensive list of bookstores that sell foreign language books is available on <http://expat.ru/phonedir.php?cid=3>.

❖ Going to the gym

Gyms are considered a “privilege” in Russia and not a hobby or activity and so expect to pay more than you would back home. The upper scale gyms are very expensive, but also offer a lot of facilities like a salon, spa, sauna, pool and childcare center.

Gyms usually do not give out 1-week trial periods. Most gyms want the total payment for a year upfront and don't allow you to pay on a monthly basis. We recommend you try to negotiate on the price when you sign up for a gym, so ask for discounts. The gyms usually have a half day passes if you go between the hours of 7am and 5pm.

Finance and Banking

❖ Money and Banks

Moscow is a cash society. You can use your bankcard from home at certain stores and most ATMs, but certainly not everywhere. Be aware that the banking costs can be significant. So either get a local card or make sure you have cash with you. When using an ATM to withdraw cash you need to ensure that you select a secure ATM, preferably from a reliable bank like Citibank, Sberbank or Bank of Moscow. A lot of grocery stores also have an ATM inside and most ATMs have the option to select an English interface.

Banks are open on Saturdays.

❖ Paying a tip

In restaurants an average tip is 10%. When paying a bill with a credit card you will need to leave a cash tip because the credit card payment will not go to the server.

In bars and cafés a 10% tip is not obligatory, but obviously also appreciated by your waiter!

❖ Restaurants

A new law was passed on June 1, 2014 making smoking inside restaurants and bars prohibited.

Most restaurants still do not know how to split a bill, so if you are planning on meeting friends it is best to bring cash.

Reservations are recommended for some of the popular restaurants especially on a Friday and Saturday night.

Foreign Newspapers and websites

❖ Newspapers and Magazines

- Moscow In Your Pocket (<http://www.inyourpocket.com/russia/Moscow>)
- Moscow Expat Life (<http://www.moscowexpatlife.ru>)
- My Destination – Moscow (<http://www.mydestination.com/moscow>)
- Moscow Times (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com>)
- Le Courier de Russie (<http://www.lecourrierderussie.com>)

❖ Useful Websites

- Moscow Travel Resource. Links for “where, what and when” (<http://en.travel2moscow.com>)
- My destination Moscow (<http://www.mydestinationmoscow.com/>)
- We heart Moscow (news about events, works on the metro, restaurant openings) (<https://weheart.moscow/>)
- Angloinfo Moscow (<https://www.angloinfo.com/moscow>)
- Ask Sophie (questions and replies on life in Moscow) (<https://asksophiemoscow.wordpress.com/>)
- The School of Russian and Asian Studies “Off the beaten path” in Moscow (http://www.sras.org/off_the_beaten_path_in_moscow_2)
- Epicurious

(<http://www.epicurious.com/articlesguides/diningtravel/restaurants/topmoscowrestaurants>)

- Russian Railways (<http://eng.rzd.ru>)
- Buying railway tickets online, checking local railway schedules (tutu.ru)
- Bridge to Moscow tours (<http://bridgetomoscw.com/>)

Useful mobile applications

We've already mentioned quite a few apps in this guide, we're listing some of them again to have an overview. Some of these can only be downloaded when you're in Moscow.

- Tripadvisor: This well-known app has English reviews on most restaurants, hotels and attractions in Moscow. Sometimes there's only Russian and you'll have to be the first reviewer!
- Skype: If you put this app on your phone, you can call your friends and family for free whenever you have an internet connection. Feels just like a regular call!
- Google Translate: This life-saver can translate from a picture and pronounce Russian words.
- Yandex.Maps & Google Maps: They both come in handy when exploring Moscow, when stuck in traffic, while looking for a hidden building or when someone only gave you the name of a place, not the address.
- Yandex.Metro: This is a great and very clear map of the Moscow (or Petersburg) metro and even works offline. Just tap your location and destination and off you go.
- Yandex.Transport: Like Yandex.Maps but with buses, trolleybuses, trams and metro.
- Yandex.Taxi: There are several taxi apps, but this one lets you request a non-smoking driver and an invoice.
- Aeroexpress: shows the schedule of trains to the airports, the flight tables at each airport and lets you buy tickets for the Aeroexpress train.
- Utkonos (утконос): The grocery store that has much more than just groceries and delivers to your door. If you're wondering about the logo, that's a platypus.
- Discover Moscow (Узнай Москву): Have you noticed those blue signs with QR-codes on many buildings? This project by the Moscow City Government lists many historical buildings in the city and tells their story. Explore your surroundings while you walk or plan a route at

home. The English can be awful, but it's usually enough to understand the explanations. (<http://um.mos.ru/en/>)

- Yakitoriya: In need of sushi? Yakitoriya is all over the city and delivers, too.

Other Moscow expat organizations

- The virtual community for English-speaking expats and Russians (<http://www.expats.ru>)
- American Women's Organization (AWO) (<http://www.awomoscow.org>)
- British Women's Club (BWC) (<http://www.bwcmoscow.org.uk>)
- Latin American Ladies (<http://www.damaslatinas.ru>)
- Children in Moscow (<http://www.childreninmoscow.ru>)
- Dutch Women's Group (De Tulpen)
(<http://www.nederlandseverenigingmoskou.ru/tulpen>)
- Moskva Accueil (French Women's Club) (<http://www.site-moskva-accueil.org>)
- Swedish Women's Association (<http://www.swea.org>)

Thank you

Most information in this document is based on tips and suggestions from IWC members. Ladies, thank you for sharing your knowledge!

Some information was found online, on the websites mentioned in above section "Useful Websites". Obviously there are many more websites that provide similar information on Moscow, so find the one that you like best, take in the available information and enjoy living in Moscow!

If you think we should add something to this guide, please let us know!