



Diary

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Moscow is a giant city with fifteen million residents - a pulsating metropolis that seems far away, but which can be reached by plane from Zurich in three hours. Unfortunately, only a few people in the West have an idea of this city. Many people are surprised when you tell them that you live there - voluntarily and with great pleasure - and that Moscow is in some respects one of the most beautiful and remarkable cities in the world.

The dimensions are enormous. Moscow is built in a circle. In the centre is the Kremlin. Around the innermost centre circles the Boulevard Ring - a horseshoe 9 kilometres long. The second ring is the Garden Ring - a twelve-lane motor road of 16 km. Then comes the third ring - 35 km. The MKAD is the fourth ring with a

length of 108 km, roughly Zurich- Bern. It almost encloses the urban area of Moscow. Finally, the ZKAD is the fifth ring. It is currently being completed and will have a length of 340 km - as long as a trip from Zurich to Munich.

The two major airports are located in the north (Sheremetyevo) and in the south of the city (Domodedovo). The journey from one airport to the other takes about the same amount of time as a trip from Zurich to Ticino - about two hours. These are unimaginable dimensions for a Swiss soul.

The development of Moscow in the last twenty years has been breathtaking. The grey, the factories, the sometimes musty has disappeared. The centre is beautiful, very green and brimming with history and culture. Moscow is incredibly well-kept. The Moscow police are friendly and helpful.

If you love art, you will fall in love with Moscow. Those who love music can indulge in this addiction every day at a cost and quality that would bring tears to the eyes of even a Zurich resident. The people who attend these concerts do so because they are music lovers, not to show that one is cultured and belongs. The result is a unique atmosphere in the concert halls, one of emotion and enthusiasm.

The infrastructure works - full stop. The metro transports 8.5 million people a day between stations that are works of art in their own right. Those who like to walk are rewarded with a feast for the eyes in the centre. Magnificent buildings and an overall picture that testifies to an unparalleled grandeur. Even worldly architects are speechless: "similar to Paris, just much more generous".

At the weekend, the centre is full of families and couples - people stroll, enjoy and chat. The internet works - there are no Swisscom-style disruptions. The traffic problem has been reduced through discipline. Parking violators are towed away. Those who meet this fate have to pick up their car on the outskirts of the city and, above all - in the best case - wait four hours. There is a system to this. The name of the organisation: Moscow Parking - a humorous twist on the part of the city government. Lucky are the city centre residents without a car.

A quarter of a century ago there were only a few completely overpriced restaurants in this city, today there are over 20,000. There is a huge choice for every taste, every cuisine and every budget.

Shopping. From the smallest sausage shop to the gigantic shopping centre, there is everything. From cheap to astronomically expensive. For the perfect shopping experience, the Muscovite does not need Milan, New York or Hong Kong.

The weather in Moscow is continental. When it snows in winter, the snow that has been swept away has to be removed because of the cold - 40,000 men and thousands of lorries and other equipment are used for this. Summer is summer.

The stereotypical image of the Russians is hard, grim, somehow threatening. The reality is different. The Russian soul is so warm that the Siberian winter doesn't stand a chance. Although you can survive well in Moscow with English, the Russian soul opens up with the key of language. Admittedly, a big barrier, since Russian is a challenge in every respect - grammar, intonation, writing - that should not be underestimated as well as the country and its inhabitants themselves.

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