



# **RLUS Moscow Orientation Pack**

**2018-2019**

# Welcome to Russia!

Welcome to Russia from your RLUS representatives, Sophie Morrow and Bethany Rickus. We both work at Language Link and share the job of providing RLUS students in Moscow, Kazan, Tver and Yaroslavl with advice, assistance and support for the duration of your stay in Russia. We have both graduated with Russian degrees and have experience travelling and working in Russia.

This document contains a lot of the information that you might need during your stay (including important safety and emergency information), so please read it carefully and keep it for future use. If you have any questions that cannot be answered by this document, contact us and we will be happy to help. However, please remember that RLUS is only one part of our full-time jobs as we are also English teachers. Things like organising trips and booking theatre tickets are not part of our responsibilities. As RLUS representatives, we can help you in the following ways:

- **If your valuables/documents get lost or stolen**, you should notify one of us within 24 hours. As soon as possible (preferably the same day), one of us will go with you to file a police report. We will then help you arrange your insurance claim.
- **If you lose your passport** we will help you make arrangements to get a replacement.
- **In the unlikely event that you get arrested**, contact the British Embassy Duty Officer. If you cannot get through to them, you should contact us and we will keep trying to make contact for you. NON-BRITISH STUDENTS please note: We will not be able to help you unless you provide us with the contact details of your Consul and Embassy duty officer. Do not leave a voice message as this is counted as a call, of which you will only be given the opportunity to make one.
- **If you fall seriously ill**, you will probably be able to contact the appropriate clinic yourself (at Western clinics in Moscow the staff speak English). However, you may contact us if you need assistance, and we will arrange for a doctor to visit you, or for an ambulance to take you to a clinic. We will also help you make an insurance claim for your medical bills.
- **If you want to make a doctor's appointment**, you can contact them yourself (see page 15), or we can help you if necessary.
- **If you need to go home for compassionate or health reasons** we will assist you in this and also in making the necessary insurance claims.
- **If you are having problems with your course or accommodation** we can liaise with the course providers to resolve the matter.

We will have regular drop-in sessions to deal with any queries or problems that arise, and all of us can be contacted at work or at home. We will provide you with our mobile phone numbers in case of emergencies, so you can always contact one of us wherever we are. Please email us with any general queries. Please phone us on our mobiles in an urgent situation.

Russia is a unique place, and the lifestyle and attitudes here are quite different from those in the West. Living here will be a rewarding but challenging experience. It will undoubtedly leave you with memories to treasure for the rest of your life, but at times, unexpected cultural differences may arise. We therefore ask you to pay attention to the information in this pack, even if you have spent time in Russia before. Things here are constantly changing, so you are bound to come across something new.

Enjoy your stay!

Sophie Morrow +7 (977) 822-62-08

Bethany Rickus +7(985) 009-37-24

rlus.moscow@gmail.com

## Contents

### Tips on Living in Russia

- <i>Life with a host family</i>	4
- <i>Cultural Differences in Interpersonal Relations</i>	5
- <i>City transport</i>	6
- <i>Travelling by train and plane</i>	7
- <i>Safety in Russia</i>	10
- <i>Visitors</i>	11
- <i>Shopping</i>	12
- <i>Telephones</i>	14
- <i>E-mail</i>	14
- <i>Post</i>	14
- <i>Health</i>	15
- <i>Money</i>	16
- <i>Laundry</i>	16
- <i>Entertainment</i>	17-19

### Useful Web Links

19

## Tips on Living in Russia

### *Life with a host family*

All Moscow RLUS students stay in homestay accommodation, unless they choose to find their own accommodation. As Moscow is a huge city, you should expect a commute to the school of about 45 minutes. You will have your own room and share the facilities of the flat with the host family. The standard homestay setup is usually with a middle aged or elderly lady who is used to having foreign students as lodgers. The main advantage of homestay accommodation is that you get to speak a lot of Russian. Payment is made directly by you to your host family in roubles on a monthly basis. Please be aware that you will have to make the first rent payment on arrival or within the following two or three days and that these prices are subject to increase as inflation is much higher in Russia than in the UK (though Language Link will give you plenty of warning if this is the case). You are required to pay a deposit of 1000 roubles which will be returned to you at the end of your course provided that you have not broken or damaged anything during your stay.

#### **Relations with your hosts**

Russian parents do not always regard their teenage and young adult children as adults, and tend to advise them on what to wear and eat, and generally ask plenty of questions about what is happening in their lives. As a 'host child' it is likely your 'host parents' will treat you in a similar manner. Please try not to take offence – it is simply a demonstration of care for your well-being. If you really find such attention annoying or unpleasant, just remark politely that you are not accustomed to it, or that it embarrasses you.



Many host families are relatively elderly, and it is unacceptable to regularly come home in the early hours of the morning in a less than sober state. Although you have a right to an independent lifestyle, please try to respect your host family's feelings, and always warn them if you are planning to come home late. Please **DO NOT** bring friends to stay overnight without asking permission first. *Friends of the opposite sex will not be allowed to spend the night.*

Please make sure that you pay your rent on time every month, and that the first payment is made on the day of or very shortly after your arrival, so as to avoid any problems or misunderstandings with your host family.

#### **Meals**

If your hosts provide you with breakfast or supper, do not hesitate to say if you find something too rich or sweet, or that you simply do not eat a certain food. Your hosts might try to give you more food than you are used to eating—do not politely accept this at first, as later they might worry that your appetite has decreased. In order not to offend the hostess, you may say that the food is tasty, but that you are not used to it and would prefer something else or that you are already full (useful phrases include “Я у ж е с ы т ( а )” (I am full); “У м е н я а л л е р г и я н а э т о т п р о д у к т ” (I am allergic to this); “Я н е м о г у п р и в ы к н у т ь к э т о м у в к у с у , я б о л ь ш е н е х о ч у , с п а с и б о ” (I am not used to this kind of food – please do not give it to me again. Thank you).

Students opting for bed and breakfast will be given access to the kitchen to prepare evening meals for one hour between 6 and 9pm. You should discuss the specific times with your host. Please be considerate if you use your host's kitchen to cook any of your own meals and clean up after yourself.

### **House Rules**

In Russian homes it is not acceptable to wear your street shoes in the house. Instead, people wear slippers (т а п о ч к и) or socks. Russians will often wash their hands when they first enter their home and may expect you to do the same. Russian apartments are not usually very spacious, so it is not acceptable to leave your belongings all over your room, or other rooms, or to leave your bed unmade. Please make an effort to be tidy.

## ***Cultural Differences in Interpersonal Relations***

### **Visiting Russian Friends**

If you visit acquaintances for the first time, it is a good idea to take a gift for the hosts (e.g. a box of sweets or chocolates, a bottle of wine or flowers). Only buy odd numbers of flowers, as even numbers are associated with funerals.

### **Conversations with Russians**

Russians are more open than Westerners in talking about their incomes, although this is becoming less common. Do not be offended if someone asks how much your parents earn, or about average salaries for various professions in your country (although of course you are not obliged to answer such questions).

The 'В ы' form should be used during introductions, in conversations with people older than yourself and with strangers. You can use 'Т ы' to address students your own age, children, or once your Russian acquaintances suggest speaking 'Н а Т ы'.

Russians often criticize and even curse their authorities, laws, systems, and government, but they can react very negatively to similar criticism by foreigners.

It is generally acceptable to phone people between 10am and 10pm. You should only call earlier/later if you have given prior warning, or are sure the person will not object.

### **Behaviour in Public Places**

It is not considered acceptable to speak loudly on public transport, in public areas, in restaurants, or in museums.

Russians often seem very serious and unsmiling to foreigners. However, the absence of a smile simply signifies a neutral attitude. A smile expresses goodwill.

Russians have a different concept of personal space from Westerners. It might feel that they are standing very close to you in queues or on escalators, and they may lightly touch you during conversation.

In the street and on public transport you may be stopped by strangers asking for neutral information, e.g. directions, what time it is, if you have a lighter etc. (they generally start such questions with "И з в и н и т е, В ы н е п о д с к а ж е т е..."). In other circumstances you can ignore strangers who speak to you in the street.

### **Gender Roles**

At bars and restaurants, the person who invited you usually pays the bill, although you should always offer if you are unsure. It is becoming increasingly common for each person to pay for themselves.

The division of roles for men and women is often more traditional than in the West. Men will offer to carry women's bags, and it is considered unacceptable for women to lift or move heavy objects such as furniture.

They also often give up seats on the metro for women when it is busy. On the other hand, men often do not get involved with cooking and washing up.

## City Transport

### Russian Drivers

Unfortunately, Russian drivers are not the strictest observers of traffic regulations. Be very careful when crossing the street here. Where possible, take an underground pedestrian passage called a *п е р е х о д*, the location of which is indicated by a blue sign with a picture of stairs, or use a pedestrian crossing.



### Taxis

Most official taxis are yellow, but you will often see Russians flagging down “gypsy cabs” (private cars) instead. This is illegal and you must avoid it at all costs. The car may not be insured and the driver may be without a license or have no intention of taking you to your requested destination. If you are under the influence of alcohol or not sure about how to get home this is particularly dangerous. Be safe and book a taxi.

The Yandex taxi/Get Taxi applications are very useful for booking a taxi. You can download the application for free on smart phone application stores. All you have to do is type in where you are, where you want to go and then the closest driver on their network will come and pick you up. The service provides a text message service as well as GPS location services, which make it easy to locate your taxi. The journey is on a meter, so in theory no Russian has to be spoken at all.

It is also advisable to never get into a taxi on your own, even for males.

### Buses, Trams, Marshrutkas and Trolleybuses

Moscow is served by an extensive system of buses, trams and trolleybuses that run until about midnight, with 5-20 minute frequency. These run without a conductor. If you haven't got one, you must buy a ticket from the driver for 55 rubles, then validate the journey by touching the yellow reader at the front of the bus. Ticket prices are set irrespective to distance travelled.

There are also night buses, which run approximately every half an hour. Information about the routes can be found here: <http://www.mosgortrans.ru/about/projects/nightroutes/>

Buses, marshrutkas, trams and trolleybuses are equipped with electronic readers next to the driver. To validate your ticket or transport card, tap it to the reader. Occasionally ticket inspectors get on, and will fine you if you do not have a valid ticket. If you purchase a transport card (Troika) in the Metro, you may also use this on buses, trams, marshrutkas and trolleybuses. You can see the different ticket options here: <http://troika.mos.ru/en/tariffs/table/> Please note that the English version of the website is not updated as often as the Russian version, so use the Russian version to check the exact prices: <http://troika.mos.ru/tariffs/table/>

There is no legal limit to the number of people that can travel in one vehicle and therefore transport can be claustrophobic when travelling at peak times of the day.



### Metro

The Moscow metro is extremely fast and efficient. Services begin at approximately 05:30 and the entrances to stations and *п е р е х о д ы* close at 01:00.

Tickets for the metro can be bought for 1 (55 roubles), 2, 5, 11, 20, 40 or 60 trips. It is possible to buy a monthly pass for no more than 70 trips or a pass that gives you unlimited journeys within 30 days or 90 days. You can also use a Pay-As-You-Go system with the Troika card, which brings the cost of one ride down to 36 roubles. Make sure to write down the number on the back of the card, so that you can get it replaced for a nominal charge if you lose it.

For route planning and finding the closest exit/knowing which carriage to get into, you can download the Moscow Metro smartphone app. It is free to download and very reliable. Look for: Moscow Metropolitan. Yandex Metro also gives up-to-date information.

### **General Advice on Public Transport**

If a Russian says something to you on public transport, nine times out of ten they are asking whether or not you are getting out at the next stop (“Вы будете выходить на следующей?” or simply “Выходите?”). If you are not, move to let them through.

Seats on public transport are intended for the elderly, pregnant women, people with young children or disabled people. Be courteous and give up your seat.

It is a good idea to always be as aware as possible on the metro. It is a very busy and place, and at times people push and shove. It is best to always keep an eye and hand on your belongings, and to be quick on your feet. Have your rucksacks and bags in front of you where you can see them and also be aware of your pockets. It is also considered polite to remove your rucksack when the metro is busy. Pick-pocketing is rare but the metro is an ideal place for thieves to take advantage.

### ***Travelling by Train and Plane***



#### **Russian Railways**

Train travel within Russia is still very cheap in comparison with the West. The two main classes are *купе* (four to a cabin, two up; two down) and *плацкарт* (open carriages, less luxurious but cheaper). All carriages have a samovar, so there is a constant supply of boiling water for making tea, coffee and pot noodles. You can borrow a cup from the train manager or bring your own. If you are travelling overnight, the train will be equipped with a mattress and bedding, but be prepared to make your own bed at night and strip your sheets at the end of your journey.

#### **Buying Train Tickets**

Train tickets can be bought in advance from any station (be warned that queues are often long). Do check that the queue you choose is not for a counter that is going to have a break at some point soon (there is usually a notice above or next to the window). Tickets can also be bought from railway ticket agencies (*железнодорожные кассы*) often located in and around metro stations. The queues are much shorter for these, but be aware that you will on average pay an extra 150 roubles per ticket. You can also buy tickets for the *электричка* (short distance regional train) from the ticket machines located in and around the train stations, if you do not want to queue or speak Russian.

You need your passport number to buy tickets and your passport to get on the train. Tell the lady at the counter: “Один билет (2/3 билета) на поезд No. \_\_\_ на \_\_\_ число.” (“One ticket (2/3 tickets) for train number \_\_\_ for the [date you wish to travel]”).

You can also book train tickets online at [www.realrussia.co.uk](http://www.realrussia.co.uk). Booking tickets through the Russian railways website ([www.rzd.ru](http://www.rzd.ru)) is also an option, although this can sometimes be inconvenient as you will be asked to create an account and, more importantly, print your own tickets.

### Moscow Stations

There are nine railway stations in Moscow. Generally, these railway stations correspond to the following travel directions:

- Western direction (to Belarus and Poland): Б е л о р у с с к и й в о к з а л
- Northern/north-western directions (St Petersburg and the Baltics): Л е н и н г р а д с к и й в о к з а л, С а в ё л о в с к и й в о к з а л, Я р о с л а в с к и й в о к з а л, Р и ж с к и й в о к з а л (NB. If you are buying tickets to St Petersburg, the tickets will state М о с к в а - О к т я б р ь с к а я as the departing station, but the trains leave from Л е н и н г р а д с к и й в о к з а л.)
- Eastern, north-eastern, and south-eastern directions: К а з а н с к и й в о к з а л, П а в е л е ц к и й в о к з а л
- Southern direction: К у р с к и й в о к з а л
- South-western direction: К и е в с к и й в о к з а л

### Plane Tickets

For contacting airlines directly: BA operate from Д о м о д е д о в о airport (where the group flight arrives); you can contact them on 8 (495) 363 2525. А э р о ф л о т also offers good deals: For details of your nearest office and information on prices and flight times, visit [www.aeroflot.ru](http://www.aeroflot.ru). А э р о ф л о т fly from Ш е р е м е т ь е в о airport. Keep an eye out for the increasing number of other budget airlines, such as Pobeda and S7, flying to various locations across Russia. Some other Russian websites such as anywayanyday.com or ozon.travel can also be helpful in identifying flights to and from Russia. Skyscanner can also be used.

Additionally, many Russians prefer travelling in groups with their friends and families through package holidays where they often stay in hotels with other Russians and pay for most expenses up front. Travelling with packages like these can offer good deals as they organize travel to places like Thailand or Egypt for flat rates that are often cheaper than standard plane tickets. Additionally, travelling with a big group of Russians is a prime opportunity to improve your language abilities and make friends. Visit these websites for more information: [www.bgoperator.ru](http://www.bgoperator.ru) or [www.meridian.travel](http://www.meridian.travel).

### Getting to the Moscow Airports

Moscow has several airports, but the ones you are most likely to travel to and from are Д о м о д е д о в о and Ш е р е м е т ь е в о. In order to help you with independent travel plans or leaving Russia at the end of your course, here are directions on how to get to both of these airports.



**Д о м о д е д о в о:** There is an express train that leaves from П а в е л е ц к и й в о к з а л, which is located near П а в е л е ц к а я metro station (at the intersection of the green and ring lines in the southeast of the city). The easiest way to locate the к а с с а selling tickets for the express train (а э р о э к с п р е с с), is to exit at the green line station and follow а э р о э к с п р е с с signs to the ticket desk. Tickets cost 500 roubles or 1000 for a round trip. The train generally leaves every 30 minutes from 06:00 to 00:30 and it takes approximately 45 minutes to get to the airport. For more specific information about departure and



arrival times, check the аэроэкспресс website (<http://www.aeroexpress.ru/>) or download the аэроэкспресс application from an application store. The platform you arrive at is connected to the airport terminal. Domodedovo has a good website if you need more information: <http://www.domodedovo.ru>. You can also get to Domodedovo from Domodedovskaya metro station, near the end of the green line of the metro. If you exit the metro and follow vague but just discernible signs for buses to the airport (bus number 308), you should see the place where they all line up outside a cafe with a Nescafe sign. They go very frequently, take approximately half an hour, and are cheaper than the aeroexpress.

**Шереметьево:** There is an express train that leaves from Белорусская metro station (at the intersection of the green and ring lines in the northwest of the city). This takes approximately 35 minutes to get to the airport. Tickets cost 500 roubles or 1000 for a round trip. You can also take the metro to Речной вокзал metro station at the top of the green line, where you can catch a bus or амаршрутка to the airport. At the metro station, exit up the stairs out of the first carriage from the city centre; you will have to walk from the station to the main road. The airport bus, number 851, and marshrutka 949 run from there. From Планерная you can take the 817 (bus), 948 (marshrutka) as well as the night bus Н1. You will be able to use your Troika (metro card) on the bus services, but not the marshrutkas. Make sure that you get off at Шереметьево 2, as the buses also go to the domestic airport Шереметьево 1. The airport also has a website, although the English version is not as helpful as Domodedovo's: [www.sheremetevo-airport.ru](http://www.sheremetevo-airport.ru).

### Visas and Insurance

Most RLUS students have an initial 3-month single-entry visa which is converted into a multi-entry visa to cover the duration of their course after the first month. These allow you to cross the border as and when you like. **DO NOT LEAVE RUSSIA BEFORE THE END OF YOUR COURSE IF YOUR VISA IS STILL SINGLE-ENTRY. YOU WILL BE UNABLE TO RE-ENTER THE COUNTRY.**

We will collect your passport upon arrival in order to extend your visa for the duration of your course and convert it into a multi-entry visa (allowing you to leave the country and return). This usually takes a minimum of 4 weeks, and can take significantly longer. The process is out of the control of RLUS and Language Link, so unfortunately there is nothing we can do to guarantee the exact date your passport will be returned to you. Since you will need your original passport to travel on any long distance train and to stay in any hotel or hostel in Russia, we must advise that you **DO NOT MAKE ANY TRAVEL PLANS THAT CANNOT BE REFUNDED OR RESCHEDULED UNTIL YOU HAVE YOUR PASSPORT AND EXTENDED VISA IN YOUR HANDS.**

In order to apply for your visa extension as promptly as possible, we will need you to bring the following documents on the first day of your RLUS course: your passport, a 3x4 passport photograph and your migration card, which will be placed inside your passport at the border.

If you are going travelling south or west, even within Russia, check you have the visas required for any countries you may pass through on the way (e.g. a transit visa for Belarus). US, Canadian, EU and Swiss citizens currently do not need visas for the Ukraine (for maximum 90-day trips); however, this policy may change and you should always check the latest visa requirements with the Embassy before you travel.

If you are travelling to another country that requires a visa (e.g. China), it is your responsibility to sort out that visa yourself. However, you are able to have an entry visa for another country in your passport at the same time as having an active Russian visa. You must fill out and hand in all the documents that are listed on that country's Moscow consulate website.

Please check your insurance policy. If you are covered for Europe only, you will not be covered for travel beyond the Urals.

### **General Travel Advice**

If you are staying in one place for more than seven working days then you must be registered at that address according to a law which came into effect in July 2018. Hotels and hostels should automatically carry out registration for their guests, but it is best to check when making your booking that they do register foreign citizens. As for privately rented flats, the owner is legally responsible for your registration, so make sure to tell them when you are making your booking.

If you go abroad for any period of time, then we need to be informed at least 72 hours before your departure. This is because you will need to submit your new migration card to our visa department when you return to Russia so that we can re-register you within seven working days.

Please inform your host family of your travel dates and destinations. Leave a contact number and address, if possible. Remember that no one guarantees your complete safety during your travels throughout Russia. Be careful and attentive, and keep in contact with your host family and communicate with the RLUS representatives if you require assistance. It is imperative that you always inform your RLUS representatives about your travel plans; you also need to let them know if you have made plans and then changed them. We need to know where you are in order to contact you in the case of an emergency.

Before you plan any trips, we recommend you visit the British foreign office website ([www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)), which provides up-to-date information about where it is unsafe to travel, and what regulations there may be. This recommendation extends to students who are not British; however, you should also check your own foreign office website for specific information and travel advice pertaining to citizens of your country.

PLEASE NOTE: Absence from the course is only permitted in cases of illness or during official travel weeks. **Attendance and marks will be sent to your universities.**

### ***Safety in Russia***

#### **Documents**

You must have a copy of your documents (passport, visa, migration card and registration slip) with you at all times. If you are stopped by the police and you don't have your documents, they can detain you for up to three hours to establish your identity and you will have to pay a fine.

If you believe the risk of losing your documents is higher than the risk of being stopped and fined, then you may choose to carry photocopies of them instead. Strictly speaking, the law requires you to have the originals with you, but you can often get away with copies as long as they are clear. Make sure you have copies of your passport information page, your visa, migration card, and registration slip. Double check that your passport number matches the one quoted in your visa. As a side point, for any kind of first transaction in a bank, your original documents are absolutely vital, so let your RLUS representative know upon arrival if there is anything that you need to do at a bank.

#### **The *politsiya***

Contact with the police (once known as the милиция, but now known officially as the полиция), should be avoided as much as possible. Most often you will see them in the metro and near buildings of governmental or state importance. You should try to blend in as much as possible. Please note that if you are very drunk, the police have the right to, and will, arrest you. The police regularly stop young males – normally they just check your documents and let you go. Your documents will be in order and registered, so if the police try to say otherwise and start demanding money, they are probably just trying to supplement their own (admittedly meagre) salary. There are a number of ways to deal with this: offer to travel to the police station to pay the fine on the condition that a representative from your Embassy meets you there, and get out your mobile phone to call the Embassy. If that does not stop them bothering you (it should do), then demand to see their names and numbers on their Police ID (удостоверение). If you legitimately have to pay a fine (for drunken behaviour or not

having your documents with you), demand a receipt that has been stamped and signed. However, if you are on your own very late at night, and the police officers are behaving threateningly or aggressively, the easiest thing to do is to pay the fine. Being out alone in the early hours of the morning, especially when carrying large sums of money, is asking for trouble. It is illegal to bribe a policeman and you can get yourself into more trouble for trying. Although people are generally being stopped less than they used to be, there is still the possibility that you could be asked at any point to produce your documents. If in doubt, ring your Embassy.

If the police visit you at your home to check your documents, you are not required to open the door. Be aware that there are people who will represent themselves as police in order to gain access to your apartment. The best policy is not to let them in.

If you are arrested SAY NOTHING and SIGN NOTHING. If you are forced to sign something write that you do not understand what you are signing. Keep demanding to speak to your Embassy or to an RLUS representative (you should carry the emergency numbers included within this pack at all times). Try to use the one phone call you are entitled to from the station to speak to the Embassy, rather than an RLUS representative or your course provider, as the Embassy Duty Officer is better placed to provide assistance.

### **Common Sense Advice**

Foreigners are particularly vulnerable to crime in tourist areas, so avoid drawing attention to yourself – do not walk in big groups speaking loudly in English. Pick-pocketing is a problem. Only carry a small amount of money in your purse/wallet and keep most of your cash separate. Watch out for pickpockets at markets, in tourist areas and on the metro. Keep bags and wallets shut at all times, and ensure that they are in front of you where you can keep an eye (or even better, a hand) on them at all times. Never leave your bag or coat with valuables in the pockets unattended, or on the back of a chair in a cafe. If you do have something stolen, you can make a claim for it through your insurance policy.

To make a claim, you will need to obtain a police report (с п р а в к а) within 24 hours of the crime. An RLUS representative can accompany you to the police station (о т д е л е н и е п о л и ц и и) nearest to where the crime took place; the RLUS representatives will then assist you with sending the с п р а в к а and claim form to the insurance company.

Absolutely never touch drugs here. The penalties are simply not worth the risk, and if you break the law, we cannot help you. The attitude even towards lower-level drugs like cannabis is no different than to heroin, and usually entails a prison sentence.

If you go out for the evening, stay in a group, and plan it so that you accompany each other home right up to the front door, even if you then have to stay the night on someone's floor. It is inconvenient, of course, but better to be safe than sorry, and your hosts (given some warning) should be understanding. Female students are strongly recommended not to walk home alone after 11pm, and they should be prepared to put up with occasional verbal harassment late at night as the attitude of some Russian men towards the opposite sex unfortunately leaves a lot to be desired. Russians who have had too much to drink might be loud and obnoxious, but if you ignore them they usually will not bother you. Male students should be especially careful when out late at night in large English-speaking groups, as nationalism is on the rise and there has been a growing number of unprovoked attacks on foreigners.

Some streets are badly lit, so if you are out at night try to keep to the main streets, which tend to have better street lighting. When taking a taxi late at night, see that you are delivered to your doorstep and NOT to the nearest metro.

Remember that safety, both here in Russia and at home, is generally a question of using common sense and making sensible decisions. Always be aware of yourself, your belongings and your surroundings, and you should not come across any major problems.

### **Visitors**

If you are going to be entertaining guests from home, they will need to have a tourist visa. If they are coming through a tourist company, and staying in a hotel, then this should all be organised for them and they can register their visa at the hotel.

If your guests are travelling independently, things are a little more complex, but not impossible. Visas can currently be purchased from on-line companies and UK- or Russia-based tourist agencies. Your guest will have to register their visa within seven working days of arrival in Russia (make sure the visa company you use gives you instructions on how to do this). You could try searching for visa companies on Google, but we would recommend trying to organise visas through an established travel agent as they are usually much more reliable. Although many people do use online companies without any problems, visa laws are subject to frequent change, and online companies do not always offer legal registration. A few tourist agencies in the UK worth looking into are Scotts Tours ([www.scottstours.co.uk](http://www.scottstours.co.uk), [sales@scottstours.co.uk](mailto:sales@scottstours.co.uk), 020 7383 5353), Intourist ([www.intourist.co.uk](http://www.intourist.co.uk), [info@intourist.co.uk](mailto:info@intourist.co.uk), 020 7727 4100).

You can refer to Russian National Group at metro Чистые пруды, located on Чистопрудный бульвар 5/10 office 214, +7 (495) 755-50-45, which offer visa invitation and registration services. The most cost-friendly option that we have found is Moscow Bureau of Voyage, located at Petrovka str., 26 building 2, office 49. The documents usually required for registration are: passport, visa and migration card.

Many hotels in Moscow are expensive. The latest edition of the Lonely Planet is very up-to-date on more budget options, as are the following websites:

- [www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com)
- [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com)
- [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

Previous students advise looking at hotel options outside of the city centre. Although Moscow is a big city, the metro makes it very easily navigable.

### **Shopping**

#### **Grocery Shopping**

Western-style supermarkets are now common in Moscow. The main chains include Перекрёсток, Дикси, Билла, Ашан and Пятёрочка. The best of these with the largest amount of choice seems to be Ашан, and there are many branches around the city.

Prices in supermarkets are generally comparable with the local stores. In larger shops where products are on open display, you sometimes have to leave your bags at the entrance, either with an attendant or in a locker.

There is bound to be at least one small **п р о д у к т ы** shop within 5 minutes' walk of your home-stay, where you can buy basic items like bread, cheese and frozen food. In such small shops, the products are stored behind counters, so you have to explain to the attendant exactly what you want. Be advised to bring a bag if you would like to save money, as you will often be charged a small amount for each bag you need to take your purchases home.



Most fruit and vegetables can be bought from small kiosks on the street. There is a smaller variety of fruit and vegetables in Russia than in the West, and availability depends greatly on the season.

Summer is a great time for fruit – all around the metro stations older ladies gather to sell their home-grown apricots, apples, plums and berries.

### Shopping for Household Goods

There are three Ikea stores (located in **М Е Г А** malls) on the outskirts of Moscow that Moscow RLUS students usually visit at least once during their course. You can find information about getting to three stores on the following web pages: [http://yapotrebitel.ru/malls/mall?tc\\_id=8](http://yapotrebitel.ru/malls/mall?tc_id=8) (Northern Moscow), [http://yapotrebitel.ru/malls/mall?tc\\_id=10](http://yapotrebitel.ru/malls/mall?tc_id=10) (South-East Moscow) and [http://yapotrebitel.ru/malls/mall?tc\\_id=5](http://yapotrebitel.ru/malls/mall?tc_id=5) (South-West Moscow). However, for cheap, basic household goods, it is best to look for smaller Russian stores (**х о з я й с т в е н н ы й м а г а з и н / т о в а р ы д л я д о м а**) in the area where you live. There are also numerous shops selling household appliances, including M-video and Eldorado. Many household goods can also be found in **А ш а н** or Fix Price, both of which have many locations around the city.

### Shopping for Clothes

Russia is not a great place for buying clothes, as good-quality clothes are very expensive and Russian styles and sizes often differ from those in the West. For a true Russian experience, it is best to travel to a market (where goods are cheaper, though the quality can be suspect). Large markets in Moscow include **С а д о в о д** in the south-east ( information about public transport can be found here: <http://tk-sadovod.ru/kak-dobratsya-do-rynka-sadovod/>) and **С а в е л о в с к и й** next to metro Savelovskaya.

Good places to buy clothes are the large shopping centres at Kievskaya, which is called **Е в р о п е й с к и й**, and at Kurskaya named The Atrium. **Г а г а р и н с к и й** shopping centre is another option located at Leninsky Prospekt metro. This shopping centre has a large branch of Ashan which stocks food, electronic goods, household goods, clothes and stationery. A wide variety of stores can also be found at the three **М Е Г А** shopping centres (see the section about Ikea stores above).

Second-hand clothes shops are also becoming increasingly common. The largest chain is called **С т о л и ч н ы й г а р д е р о б** and they can sometimes stock even designer brands at an affordable price. The prices are sometimes calculated per kilo or per item. The price drops each day after a delivery.

### Shopping for Books

In Moscow there are a number of larger bookstores, including:

- **Б и б л и о - г л о б у с** (metro **Л у б я н к а**, ул. **М я с н и ц к а я** 6) has a large selection of literature including text-books and other books in foreign languages, art books and postcards.
- **Д о м к н и г и** (metro **А р б а т с к а я**, ул. **Н о в ы й А р б а т** 8) has a large selection of different books, though the English language section is rather limited. This shop also stocks atlases and posters.

- Москва or Книги (ул. Тверская 8) sells educational and children's books, fiction and modern classics, including in English.
- Дом педагогической книги (metro Театральная, ул. Кузнецкий мост) has a medium sized selection of books, but a great section for Russian as a foreign language in the back corner on the second floor.

### **Shopping for Souvenirs**

The most popular places for buying souvenirs are Старый Арбат and the Вернисаж near Партизанская metro station, which tends to be reasonably priced.

Unfortunately, shopkeepers and market stallholders often overcharge people with a foreign accent, so you should always bargain. It is advisable to go souvenir shopping with a Russian who can haggle for you, or to find out beforehand what a reasonable price is for whatever you are shopping for (ask your host family, or do some research). You can sometimes get good deals on souvenirs by shopping at the end of the day, as the stallholders are packing up.

## ***Telephones***

### **Mobile Phones**

You can buy a Russian SIM card for approximately £7-8 (giving you some credit to start), and have it inserted in your phone from home, or buy a Russian phone for £20 - £100. It is recommended to get your UK phone unlocked before you come to Moscow to guarantee you can use a Russian SIM. They are not expensive to run and it is easy to top up your credit in shops, using automated kiosks.

Technically it is not possible to buy a SIM card without a passport and a registered visa, although in certain shops you may be lucky with only a copy of your passport and a letter stating that your visa is in the process of being registered. However, your RLUS representative will take you on your first day to get a SIM card so that you are contactable. MTS, Megafon and Beeline are widespread networks, although some students have had difficulties text messaging England from Megafon and Beeline networks. You may be charged heavily for receiving calls from the UK on your mobile phone.

## ***E-mail***

If you have a laptop, you will be glad to know that internet access is much cheaper than at home, and is simple to set up using a portable modem (a dongle which allows you to connect wirelessly to the internet). This can be purchased from almost any phone or electronics shop. A Wi-Fi connection is easy to find, especially in McDonald's, chains of coffee shops and cafes, and it is usually free as long as you make a purchase. You can also find a Wi-Fi connection at Language Link central school.

## ***Post***

### **Sending Letters**

The postal service in Russia is unreliable and can be extremely slow. If you feel that somebody is sending you something very valuable, it is possibly better to wait until you return home, or to send it express via DHL, FedEx, or Pony Express. If you want to send letters abroad, you can buy stamps at any post office. Just ask for "марки на письмо в Англию/wherever you want to send your letter".



### **Sending Parcels**

There is a post office at ул. Новослободская 49/2 (about 10 minutes from the metro on the left-hand side), which accepts parcels.

If your parcel is small and weighs less than 20g, you can send it as а б а н д е р о л ь . This is a small plastic packet, in which they will place the item you wish to send (do not wrap it up yourself). It is a bit simpler and less time consuming than sending а п о с ы л к а , which is a bigger type of parcel that has to be wrapped up in brown paper (at the post office), glued and tied with string. For both types of parcel you have to fill in a number of customs declaration forms (in Russian only) stating the contents and its value, the sender and the recipient.

If you want to send books home, there is a special reduced rate for sending printed matter (and it does not involve any forms). You have to go to Moscow's main post office (п о ч т а м т ) which is located next to Ч и с т ы е п р у д ы and Т у р г е н е в с к а я metro stations (the exit for the п о ч т а м т is signposted at the top of the escalators) – ул. Мясницкая 26. Take your books in a plastic bag (not ready-packed) to one of the windows for 'International Correspondence' (О т п р а в л е н и е м е ж д у н а р о д н о й к о р р е с п о н д е н ц и и). You will be asked whether you want to send it as registered mail (з а к а з н а я ) or not, and whether you want to use overland mail (н а з е м н а я ) or airmail ( а в и а ). Prices range from approximately 400 to 800 roubles for 5kg books, depending on the type of service you use.

### **Receiving Mail**

Letters and parcels that are NOT being sent to you express can be sent to you at the Language Link PO Box address (Your Name, c/o Sophie Morrow, Language Link, Post Office Box 309, Moscow, Russia 125047. Or in Cyrillic script: Р о с с и я , 125047, М о с к в а , а / я 309, Л э н г в и ч Л и н к , c/o Sophie Morrow, Your Name).

If you have things sent to you express (i.e. DHL, FED-EX, UPS, Pony Express, EMS, US Post Office Global Priority, etc...), they should be sent to the Language Link Central Office address. (Your name, c/o Sophie Morrow, Language Link, Novoslobodskaya St, Building 3, floor 5, Moscow, Russia 127055. Or in Cyrillic script: ( Р о с с и я , 127055, М о с к в а , У л . Н о в о с л о б о д с к а я , д . 3 , э т а ж 5 , К о м п а н и я Л э н г в и ч Л и н к , c/o Sophie Morrow, Your name).

To pick up letters/parcels, please inform the RLUS representatives, and they will collect them from Central Office and bring them to Central School for you.

It is not advisable to send large parcels via DHL. Past experience has shown that they are prone to being stopped at the border and can only be picked up for a fee (with the added complication of Russian customs forms) or sent home on payment of a fine. In our experience, letters coming from the UK take at least two months to arrive. In the past students have needed bank cards to be sent to them. In this case the embassy can help as you can have the documents express delivered to the embassy and pick them up from there. Also Dr Bivon can help: if the documents are sent to him, then he can give them to you when he visits Russia on his pastoral visit (twice a year, October and March/April).

### **Health**

Moscow offers a good variety of 'Western' and other clinics for treatment and regular appointments. The following is a list of clinics, used and recommended by former students (and teachers at Language Link). Keep in mind that while at 'Western' clinics you will be able to make an appointment with an English-speaking doctor, you will most likely have to pay for this privilege.

MEDICAL CLINICS:

1) European Medical Center ([www.emcmos.ru](http://www.emcmos.ru)) (email: [emcinfo@emcmos.ru](mailto:emcinfo@emcmos.ru)) is a modern clinic with European standards and an English-speaking staff. They have several locations (see below), check their website first because the different locations specialize in different fields. In the past the clinic at Prospekt Mira has been best for general consultations with doctors. Consultations cost around 7000 roubles.

- Metro Проспект мира, ул. Щепкина, д.35. Telephone: 8 (495) 933 66 55
- Metro Пушкинская, Маяковская or Баррикадная, Спиридоновский переулок 5. Telephone: 8 (495) 933 6655; 8 (495) 933 66 45 (doctor for house calls); 8 (495) 510 54 14 (hotline)

2) American Medical Center ([amcenter.ru/en/](http://amcenter.ru/en/)) is a highly recommended full-range clinic with Western standards and often cheaper rates than the European Medical Center. All staff speak English. Проспект мира, д. 26, стр. 6 (entrance on Грохольского пер.) 8 (495) 933 77 00

3) InterMedCentre *formerly The American Clinic* ([www.intac.ru/en](http://www.intac.ru/en)) is an excellent clinic and also has its own ambulance service. Metro Проспект мира, Грохольский переулок 31(1st floor). Open 24 hours / 7 days a week. Telephone: 8 (495) 937-5757.

#### DENTAL SERVICES:

1) US Dental Care Clinic ([www.usdentalcare.com/home\\_eng.htm](http://www.usdentalcare.com/home_eng.htm)). Metro Охотный ряд or Театральная, ул. Большая Дмитровка 7/5, корпус 2. Open Monday to Friday 08:00-20:00, Saturday 09:00-17:00. Telephone: 8 (495) 933-8686.

2) American Russian Dental Center ([www.ardc.com](http://www.ardc.com)). Metro Маяковская or Баррикадная, ул. Садовая-кудринская 21А. Telephone: 8 (495)797-9759.

Teachers and students at the Language Link RLUS centre have also gone in the past to a Russian clinic located at metro Китай город, Большой Черкасский переулок 13. Here it is possible, even as a non-member, to have a basic diagnostic appointment for 500-550 roubles. Appointments can be made with English- and Russian- speaking doctors. Tel: 8 (495) 921 2340.

Please read your insurance policy before you have any medical treatment, as if you have any which is not covered then you may have to foot the bill (e.g. treatment on problems which existed before you came to Russia is normally not included). Please be aware that even for things covered by your policy, you will have to pay all charges directly to the clinic where you are treated and make an insurance claim afterwards.

Always use a condom if you have sex, as STDs in Russia are not uncommon. Most chemist's stock a wide range of brands. There are a number of 24-hour pharmacies operating in Moscow. You should consult a pharmacist about the nature of the purchases you make.

Be wary of food poisoning, and be careful when buying fast food from street kiosks.

In Russia you should not drink water straight from the tap. You should always boil it first, and then filter it to improve the taste if you so wish. If you travel to St Petersburg you should definitely avoid the tap water since it is taken from the Neva River and contains various pollutants, such as lead and mercury. It also has the parasitic bacteria 'Giardia lamblia', which can cause stomach cramps and diarrhoea. The treatment for this is 200mg of Metronidazole every day for two weeks. In Russian chemist's this is known as Trikapol.

## **Money**

### **Changing Money**



There are plenty of places in the city (о б м е н в а л ю т ы) where you can change cash. NEVER change money on the street – it is illegal, and you will probably be overcharged. It is generally better to change money in a bank, such as Sperbank.

### **Cash machines**

Cash machines (б а н к о м а т ы) are easily located. Your bank will probably charge you 1.5% to 2% per withdrawal for roubles and some banks may make an additional charge if you withdraw dollars. Previous students recommend getting a Caxton FX or a Halifax Clarity card as it does not charge you for withdrawals abroad. You should let your bank know before you are coming to Russia, so that they do not block your card or allow the machine to swallow it, although this has been known to happen despite letting the bank know.

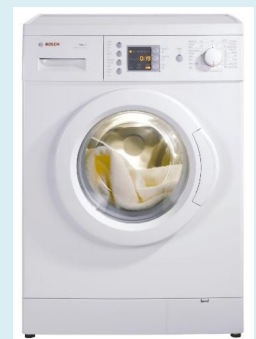
### **Emergencies**

If you need to be sent money from abroad in an emergency, you can use Western Union. Please note that often only original passports will be accepted as ID, so contact us if this is a problem (ie. whilst your visa is with the authorities for extension).

## ***Laundry***

If you are staying with a host, you will be allowed to do laundry once a week, however you will be asked to buy your own washing powder as this is not included in your rent.

Self-service laundrettes are non-existent as far as we know, although there are dry-cleaners (х и м ч и с т к а) where you can drop off your laundry and pick it up later. These are located all over Moscow but are usually expensive.



## ***Entertainment***

### **Listings publications**

The best Russian language listings about exhibitions, sports events, plays, and films happening all over Moscow (with addresses) can be found online. The Moscow Times (<https://themoscowtimes.com/events>) provides information on this topic in English. А ф и ш а and kudago.ru are Russian websites which also list events taking place in Moscow.

### **Radio and TV**

TV listings can be found on this website: <https://tv.mail.ru/moskva/>

BBC World Service broadcasts on MW around 1300 kHz. The most popular Top 40 radio station is Radio Maximum 103.7FM. Э х о М о с к в ы on 91.2FM is good for current affairs and political interviews. Radio Monte-Carlo 102.1FM plays mostly western up-to-date music and a few golden oldies, while Н а ш е Р а д и о on 101.7FM and Р у с с к о е Р а д и о focus on Russian music.

### **Sport and Leisure**

The number of ways to spend your free time is endless. Outdoor ice-skating is great in winter at П а р к Г о р ь к о г о. You can hire skis or snowboards at К р ы л а т с к и е г о р ы (at the end of the light blue line) and skis, skates, rollerblades, and bicycles at С о к о л ь н и к и п а р к (on the northern branch of the red line). Essentially you can take part in almost any sport here.

In the spring and summer a river cruise is highly recommended. Boats leave from the Н о в о с п а с с к и й bridge near metro П р о л е т а р с к а я, or outside the Radisson-Slavyanskaya hotel at metro К и е в с к а я.

The Svetix dance school offers a variety of classes. Classes are held at different times and locations throughout the week and at weekends. The classes are for beginners to advanced students, and cost around 150 roubles per hour dance class (or 900 roubles a month if you would like to make it a regular habit). The website [www.svetix.ru](http://www.svetix.ru) allows you to see where/when and with which instructor the classes are.

The Moscow International Choir meets on Tuesdays at 7pm in St. Andrew's Church, Vosnesensky Pereulok., 8. They perform once or twice a semester. This is a great chance to make not only Russian friends, but acquaintances from all over the world.

There are a multitude of cinemas in Moscow, and often the tickets are cheaper here than in the UK. If you would like to watch films in English there are a few options, such as the cinema 5 З в е з д ( м е т р о Н о в о к у з н е ц к а я ) and the cinema Ц Е Н Т Р Д О К У М Е Н Т А Л Ь Н О Г О К И Н О ( м е т р о П а р к К у л ь т у р ы ). The cinema О к т я б р ь о н Н о в ы й А р б а т has one theatre showing films in English. For an assortment of international films, as well as interesting film festivals, look into the cinema 35mm at metro К у р с к а я or К р а с н ы е В о р о т а ([www.kino35mm.ru](http://www.kino35mm.ru)). П и о н е р is also reasonably priced and shows English films, and is located near Kievskaya. On this website, you can see a list of subtitled films currently being shown in Moscow: <https://www.gluxix.net/kinoafisha>

There are several professional football and ice hockey teams in Moscow. Tickets can usually be bought at the stadium or arena, or at kiosks around the city. Most of the matches (especially for the ice hockey teams) should not be dangerous for foreigners, with the exception of any С п а р т а к football matches; the С п а р т а к supporters are known for their nationalism and hooliganism.

To keep yourself entertained, the best thing to do is to look up one of the listings sites and proceed from there.

### **Cafes, Bars and Clubs**

Moscow has simply too many cafes, bars and restaurants to list here. Whether you are the sort of person who enjoys just having a quiet drink in a bar or if you are someone who enjoys visiting clubs, you can guarantee that there is something for you here in Moscow.

#### **Orangery**

Conveniently located close to Language Link, Orangery is the perfect place for a post-class drink and something to eat for cheap prices. It is a buffet-style restaurant with different kinds of cuisine so you will find something you like.

С у щ е в с к а я у л . , 21  
м . Н о в о с л о б о д с к а я / М е н д е л е е в с к а я

#### **Gogol**

Although Gogol is set on one of Moscow's most expensive shopping streets, you will be surprised at how reasonable the prices are. Themed around a Soviet bunker, Gogol is split into three areas: a bar, a restaurant and a dance area.

С т о л е ш н и к о в п е р . 11 , с т р . 1 (Entrance through arch opposite Chanel)  
м . Т е а т р а л ь н а я / К у з н е ц к и й М о с т

#### **Avocado**

A delicious reasonably priced vegetarian restaurant with two locations near Ч и с т ы е п р у д ы and О х о т н ы й р я д .

Ч и с т о п р у д н ы й б у л ь в а р , 12 к 2  
м . Ч и с т ы е п р у д ы

#### **Propaganda**

If you are looking for somewhere a little more trendy, Propaganda is perhaps more suited for you. During the day it doubles as a restaurant, however at night expect to hear some of the best mixes the city has to

offer from world-renowned DJs. Propaganda operates an anti-face-control policy, so do not turn up in your smartest clothes. The more trendy you look, the better. Free Entry.

Б о л ь ш о й З л а т о у с т и н с к и й п е р е у л о к , д о м 7  
м . Л у б я н к а / К и т а й - г о р о д

This list is by no means exclusive and these locations will not all be to your liking. You can find out more about entertainment venues using Google, sites such as TripAdvisor or by warily and cautiously making friends with the locals. However, wherever you do choose to go, conduct some research and make sure you dress appropriately. It should also be noted that most clubs in Moscow are closed on Mondays and therefore most bars will close earlier too, if quiet.

## Useful web links

### Processing your Russian visa

- <http://ru.vfsglobal.co.uk/>

### Advice about travel to Russia

- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/russia>

### General information about Russia

- [www.moscowtimes.ru](http://www.moscowtimes.ru) - English Language newspaper providing up-to-date news on Russia and entertainment listings for Moscow
- [www.expats.ru](http://www.expats.ru) - The Moscow Expat Site – a virtual community for English speaking expats and Russians
- [www.rbc.ru](http://www.rbc.ru) - news and information site

### Travel in Russia

- [www.agent.ru](http://www.agent.ru) (Russian) – search engine for flights/air tickets
- [www.tutu.ru](http://www.tutu.ru) (Russian) – elektrichka timetable for Moscow and Moscow region

### Information about Moscow

- [www.afisha.ru](http://www.afisha.ru) (Russian) - Russian site providing entertainment listings for Moscow
- [www.vashdosug.ru](http://www.vashdosug.ru) (Russian) - Russian site providing entertainment listings for Moscow
- [www.waytorussia.net/Moscow/Info.html](http://www.waytorussia.net/Moscow/Info.html) - featuring 'What is Moscow', and Practicalities, Maps, Transportation, Accommodation, Eating Out, Entertainment, Sightseeing
- [www.kudago.ru](http://www.kudago.ru) (Russian) - Russian site providing entertainment listings for Moscow

**Final note: All information in this orientation pack is correct at time of going to press, but as things in Russia change almost daily (restaurants open and close, new registration laws are passed), it is very likely that information will change during your stay here.**