

Rituals

Birthdays

1 Birthday parties at 16 and 18 years are very popular and become public occasions with lots of relatives and friends as guests. At 16 Russians receive their passports and can vote. At 18 they come of age and no longer need permission from their parents to sign legal documents.

2 As in South Africa, the type of birthday presents you select for close friends depends on their interests or hobbies. Russians prefer to have presents which they can keep to remind them of their friends and parties. Providing the food is usually the duty of the host at a party. They will not understand if you bring home-made salads, cakes or deserts.

3 Friends are not usually allowed to see a newborn baby for at least 14 days. This protects the baby from unexpected illness. When you visit Russians on these occasions it will be appreciated if you bring presents such as children's clothes, bedding or toys.

Attending a Russian Wedding

1 In Russia, as in South Africa, there are different options for a wedding ceremony:

- in a church
- by a magistrate (official and mandatory).

The first marriage usually takes place at the Palace of Marriage.

A wedding is a solemn, public occasion.

- 2 The Russian bride usually wears a gown and veil, and has the accoutrements of a church wedding.
- 3 A bachelor party and a kitchen tea which have been arranged by the bride and bridegroom are not obligatory.
- 4 Presents are given to the newlyweds at the wedding party.
- 5 At a wedding party, which is usually quite a charming table ceremony with a large list of guests (naturally, this depends on the financial standing of the families), after a toast traditionally guests shout '*Gor'kof*' (The wine tastes bitter!) and the newlyweds have to kiss each other to 'make the wine sweet'.
- 6 See also '*Giving Presents*', 2-6, on pages 11-12.

Funerals

- 1 The funeral ceremony (service) for the deceased takes place at a crematorium, graveyard or church. Naturally, black or dark colours of clothes are expected.
- 2 At Russian funerals the coffin is customarily left open until just before the burial. Family and friends can bid a last farewell by kissing the deceased on the forehead.
- 3 When going to a funeral or cemetery, bring along an even number of flowers.
- 4 Unlike South Africans, Russians never take flowers from funerals or graveyards or put them on the table of a

funeral repast where refreshments will be served for guests in memory of the deceased. The funeral repast is usually served in the home of the deceased.

5 According to an old tradition, Russians may organise a repast not only on the day of the funeral but also on the ninth and fortieth day, and also a year after the death of their relatives. They do not usually invite a lot of people on those days, particularly on the annual remembrance of the death. At a funeral repast people are more reserved and taciturn than in South Africa. Guests neither speak loudly nor laugh. Russians usually exchange good reminiscences about the deceased.

6 At a funeral repast very simple food is offered, the first course being blini (pancakes) with honey. There is usually a glass of vodka with a piece of rye bread on top (as a symbol of hospitality for the deceased), which should be kept for 40 days. When drinking toasts guests never clink their glasses.

7 Unlike the South African custom, the tradition of sending a card with their condolences to the relatives of the deceased on the day of the funeral is as yet unknown in Russia.

8 See also 'Giving Presents', 3, on pages 11–12.



On Business

1 Remember that, because of the traditional sociopolitical system in Russia, Russian business people have different views and perceptions of general business practices, skills and development mechanisms. These may appear to reflect badly on Russians. However, be aware that it is not intentional.

Generally this applies to the following areas:

- Timing: be ready to accept some unpunctuality, misunderstanding of times and venues of meetings, or long speeches by people who chair ordinary business meetings.
- Methodology: don't be surprised if more people than anticipated arrive at business discussions or meetings and discussions are conducted in ways which might appear unrelated to the merit of the topic.
- Approach and expectations: be patient and careful if Russians approach business ventures with unrealistic expectations and suspicion.

2 Don't plan your business trip to Russia in summertime, that is, in June–August during the long school holiday, which lasts for almost three months. During this time most parents, particularly if they are teachers and university lecturers, will be on leave as they have 48 working days' annual leave. Also avoid the public holidays from mid-December to mid-January. Recently Russia joined the Western countries in unofficial celebrations from 24 December. They continue with their celebration through the official days of New Year (from 31 December to 1 January) to 7 January (Christmas according to the Russian Orthodox calendar) and end on 14 January with the Orthodox New Year.

3 Bear in mind that despite democratic changes in Russia, bureaucracy still prevails and many frustrations may be experienced in dealing with official requirements and documentation about legal obligations. Notaries, bookkeepers, auditors and inspectors, with their demand for stamps, forms and signatures, may bring you a lot of disappointments. It will be helpful to use the services of legal agents or consultants; in

other words find a person who sympathises with you and will ease a difficult endless situation.

4 Expect new ideas to be met with some scepticism, but Russian business people are normally very good at improvising ways around bureaucratic constraints. They will even try to find loopholes in laws if these laws do not allow them 'to get rich quickly'.

5 Business with overseas partners is rarely conducted over the phone. Russians prefer to look into your eyes when making decisions on a contract etc.

6 Unlike South Africa or Britain, Russians seldom make a distinction between the business day and a private evening. They can phone their colleagues (even their chief) if they want to discuss business, ideas and projects after office hours.



7 Business hours (including lunchtime) vary in the different companies, institutions, offices, etc. So you should find out in advance when it will be convenient to pay a visit.

8 Russians usually work hard and often stay in their offices till late evening to prepare the work which has to be done the following day. It is difficult for Russians to understand if an urgent matter is not sorted out immediately. The Russian custom is that no one leaves before the matter is resolved.

9 Russian women play an important role at home and in business. Actually, they have always been involved in business. Remember that about 40 million Soviet people (most of them men) were killed in the Second World War and in Stalin's concentration camps, and several thousands of young men were lost in the Afghan war. That is why you may meet women who work in the industrial sectors of the economy, commerce, the public sector, science and technology and, naturally, health care and education. You might even see women engaged in road and housing construction, transport and agriculture, etc.

10 Dress well and a little conservatively for business meetings because from the beginning of your visit you will be judged by the way you dress. However, ultimately you will be evaluated by your intelligence. A Russian proverb warns: *Po od'ózhke vstrecháyut. po umú provozháyut*, which can be translated as 'You can be judged by a dress at the entrance, but you will be judged by your mind at the exit'.

11 As everywhere around the world, jeans are very popular among young people, even women, and acceptable on some Russian business occasions. Try to understand Russians when they come to your office dressed like this. Behave in accordance with the Russian proverb which can be translated as: 'Don't judge a book by its cover.'

12 Shake hands with everybody when you greet Russian partners.

13 See also 'Conversations', 7, on page 15, and 'On a Visit', 1, on page 6.

In Russian Cities

Public Transport

1 Be careful when crossing the street and, please, remember that in Russia traffic drives on the right, that is, you'll have to look left and then right (as in continental Europe).

2 South Africans who visited Russia have different ideas about Russian driving manners. Some of them think that Russian drivers are quite irresponsible and reckless, while others regard them as highly competent and well qualified. However, it is best to remember that a pedestrian cannot expect total politeness from Russian drivers and must be particularly cautious in heavy traffic.

3 Distances throughout Russia are given in kilometres.

4 The speed limit is 60 km/h in cities and up to 100 km/h on highways (unless otherwise directed by road signs). The basic traffic regulations are practically the same as in most European countries.

5 Driving while under the influence of alcohol is an offence punishable by a considerable fine or suspension of your

driver's licence (from six months to two years). Traffic officers are quite strict and unrelenting, though sometimes you can count on their understanding if you are a foreign driver. Drunken driving that results in a road accident is a serious offence that may be taken to a court of law. Please, take care.

6 In an event of a road accident stay put and try to call the nearest road police precinct, though it may take a couple of hours to sort things out. Sometimes minor damage to other motor vehicles can be settled with the appropriate compensation, though legally this is unacceptable. Be warned that if you are involved in a serious accident, none of the vehicles may be moved until measurements and a written report have been taken by a GAI officer. But if guilt is admitted, a direct cash payment can be made to the person who suffered damages.

7 Public transport in Russian cities is quite diversified: buses, trolley buses, trams, the subway or underground (called the 'metro'), taxis, minibuses and commuter trains. Unfortunately, overland public transport does not work to a strict timetable as it does in Germany, for instance. Because of their financial difficulties municipal bus services are not always reliable. Bus schedules are not usually available for most routes except the special scheduled buses between main cities and the suburbs. Undoubtedly, the most dependable transportation service is the metro.

8 The Moscow metro is a real attraction for foreign visitors because of its fabulous architecture and decor. Apart from being the best transportation facility, it's literally the national pride of many Russians. Please, don't miss the opportunity to enjoy its beautiful stations, paintings, mosaics and sculpture.

There are metro networks in a number of major Russian cities. These operate from 6:00 am till 2:00 am and you can change lines till 1:00 am. The fare is constant, irrespective of the travelling distance or the number of changes you make. You can buy a plastic token at any metro station and put it in the slot of an automatic boom.

When on the escalators, keep right, because people use the left side for going up or down the stairs.

9 When using overland public transport you should pay your fare with a special ticket that can be bought at a metro station or directly from the driver. But you'll have to accept that tickets are sold by 'carnets' (that is, a batch of ten tickets). Passengers travelling without a ticket are liable to be fined.

If you are going to stay in a Russian city for a month or more you can buy a so-called season ticket which is valid for all types of public transport except taxis, minibuses and trains.

10 Intercity buses do not have the same facilities in Russia as in South Africa. There is no food and drink service, nor are there toilets on board.

11 On public transport Russians often offer their seats to elderly people, pregnant women, mothers with babies and small children and invalids, though the tradition is gradually fading. To be honest, some elderly Russians are somewhat spoiled by the custom. They expect you to give up your seat; some may even insist on it.

12 The following remark might be helpful for men. If you intend to use public transport with a female companion, Russians usually follow the rule of ladies first when getting onto a bus, tram or trolley. When getting off, you will be the first to step off – to offer a helping hand to the woman. It's considered good manners.

13 Nowadays pets, cats and dogs are acceptable on the underground. However, big dogs without muzzles are prohibited on public transport.

14 You can order a taxi by phone, though it would probably cost you a pretty penny. Cabs can be hailed in the street, using the international beckoning sign, or hired at special taxi parking zones. Russian taxis are easily identified by their colour (dark yellow), the yellow lamp on the roof and a black chequerboard pattern on the door. Meters have been abandoned in Moscow and the fare is negotiated between the driver and the passenger, although in other cities meters are still in use.

A single passenger in a taxi would usually sit next to the driver. But I would recommend that you stick to your own habits and sit in the back seat.

Never allow a taxi driver to take along other passengers, because this may be a setup for an assault and robbery. There are many private taxis (often without a proper licence); though it's fairly safe to use them (another benefit may be a less expensive trip), but avoid using a private taxi if you are alone or there is another passenger inside.

15 Basically, minibuses are a convenient and safe form of transport. Find out the itinerary and fare in advance. A driver will stop at any point of the itinerary at your request.

16 Unfortunately, invalids in Russia probably feel uncomfortable in the city streets. There are no special facilities such as reserved parking, ramps for wheelchairs, or dogs for the blind. Perhaps this is why you seldom see invalids in such places as theatres, concert halls and stadiums.

17 You won't find the South African style of garage in Russia. In large cities such as Moscow there are some specially designed petrol stations, but as yet there are no food shops or public toilets at garages.

18 Big cities like Moscow and St Petersburg are not easy to navigate. Street signs are written in Russian, so if you are not familiar with the language you will experience many problems in driving. It will be advisable to rent a car with a driver, or use a taxi or guide.

Telephoning, Sending Letters

1 Public phones are to be found at every post office, metro station, shopping centre and in the street (but some of these phones may be damaged). To make a call you need a special plastic or metal token (sold at every metro station) or a magnetic card. Each token dropped into the slot on top will allow a three-minute conversation.

You may have some difficulty in making an intercity or international call from a public telephone if you don't know the proper area code. The necessary code number can be found with the assistance of a special telephone service by dialling 09 or 07 or by going to special telephone stations called '*Mezhdunaródnaya/Mezhdugoródnaya stántsíya*' (International/Intercity telephone station).

2 Telephone tones in Russia differ slightly from those in South Africa. In Russia a continuous tone means dial the number; long peeping tones with intervals mean the line is free, wait for someone to answer; and short peeping tones mean that the line is engaged.

3 Emergency numbers:

Fire brigade – 01

Police – 02

Ambulance (first medical aid) – 03

Telephone time service – 100

Telephone number inquiries – 09, 07 or 05.

Please note that you can hardly expect to find an English-speaking operator.

For direct dialling from the RSA to Russia, dial the international code: 097 + the area code (for instance, Moscow – 095, St Petersburg – 812) + the telephone number.

Direct dialling from Russia to South Africa: 8 +10 + 27 (the international code for South Africa) + the area code (for example, Pretoria – 12, JHB – 11, Cape Town – 21) + the telephone number.

4 Russians have their own traditional way of writing down telephone numbers: if a telephone number has seven numerals, it will be recorded as 125-37-04; hence, one has to read it accordingly: one hundred and twenty-five – thirty-seven – zero four.

If a telephone number comprises only six numerals, it will be recorded as 86-29-16 or 862-916; it could be read – eighty-six – twenty-nine – sixteen, or eight hundred and sixty-two – nine hundred and sixteen.

5 Try to avoid phoning Russians before 7:00. Russians rarely get up so early. Usually office hours in the government service begin from 8:15 to 8:30. But don't hesitate to give them a call between 20:00 and 22:00. Russians go to bed later than South Africans. Accept it if Russians give you a call at this time.

6 Please remember that Russians find the foreign custom of beginning a telephone conversation with the phrase 'Who's speaking?' (*Kto govorit!*) unacceptable. Try to avoid it, otherwise you run the risk of hearing some unpleasant or even rude words. It is better to introduce yourself and then ask for the person whom you wish to speak to.

7 Since Russians pay monthly for their phone and local calls are free, a lot of time is spent on the phone (see also 'On Business', 6, on page 22).

8 Sometimes your call may be interrupted or jammed. This may be because of a worn-out or outdated exchange. Redial the number.

9 You can mail your letter at a post office or drop it into a letter box in your hotel or at the nearest metro station. Letter boxes in Russia look different from the ones in South Africa: they are smaller and are placed on walls of buildings or on special bases near the entrances to the subway. They are dark blue for domestic mail (in Russia) and red for international correspondence.

10 Post offices work according to a specific timetable. Find this out before you visit the nearest post office.

11 It is better to mail your international letters at a post office as you may need a special airmail (*par avion*) or international mail envelope and a certain number of postage stamps (please, consult a postal clerk). Don't put any money in your letter because you may lose it.



Leisure Activities

1 Russians spend their spare time according to their habits and hobbies – sports, reading, watching TV and movies, visiting the theatre, cinema, museums and restaurants.

2 The most popular sports in Russia are football (soccer), ice-hockey, volleyball, figure skating and tennis. Do not miss the opportunity to watch or try winter sports in Russia. You will really enjoy it! A magnet for foreign visitors has always been to watch Russians practising winter swimming in an ice-hole.

3 Citizens mostly spend their weekends and vacations travelling around. In summer they are in summer cottages in the suburbs, planting vegetables, fruits, berries, etc. The standards of summer cottages vary widely from a single all-purpose dining/living/kitchen/bedroom, with a toilet outside, to the Western standard of houses with gardens, tennis courts, sauna, and swimming pools.

Russians are very fond of going to the forests to pick berries, mushrooms and nuts. Like South Africans, they also enjoy barbecues. On a scorching summer's day you will see throngs of Russians rushing to dams and rivers.

4 Russian culture is renowned worldwide. You will find an assortment of museums, art galleries and exhibitions in every major Russian city. Don't miss the chance to become acquainted with Russian art. Usually museums are open at weekends, Monday often being the day off. Taking photographs may be prohibited in many galleries; appropriate warnings will be displayed at the entrance.

5 Many museums and palaces which are used as art galleries have magnificent parquet floors. To protect the parquetry, visitors have to put on slippers from a bin at the entrance and wear them throughout the visit. Watch your step on woodblock floors – this footwear is extremely slippery!

6 To get a ticket to a theatre, concert, stadium or cinema, you can go to one of the box offices which can be found in big shopping centres, on the streets, at the underground stations (metro) or at the entrance to these places of entertainment.

7 Entrance fees for foreigners to exhibitions, museums and theatres (as well as the prices of train tickets) are different from the fees and prices for Russian citizens.

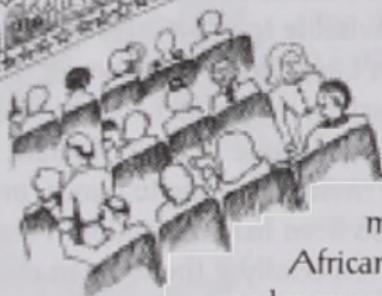
8 There are many theatres in the Russian Federation. Each has its own history and repertoire. Moscow and St Petersburg in particular boast many world-class theatres with a wide variety of performances.

9 It is advisable to make reservations for the most popular theatres such as the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and the Bolshoi Drama Theatre in St Petersburg.

10 At a theatre, museum or restaurant you should leave your coat and any large bags in a cloakroom. Wearing or carrying your coat inside is considered uncivilised. But this rule is not applicable at a concert held in a stadium.

11 To take food – cold drinks or ice-cream – into a cinema or theatre is prohibited, and so is smoking.

12 At a theatre, concert or cinema Russians face people who are already seated when they move past them, that is,



they use a different method from South Africans. This is considered good manners in Russia. Hence, Russians may be annoyed or even offended if you move past them in your traditional manner.

13 When going sightseeing, men may wear T-shirts and trousers. Women may wear trousers and a shirt, a skirt and blouse, or a dress. Shorts are usually acceptable only at beach resorts (see also 'A Visit to the Russian Orthodox Church' on page 35). Nowadays when visiting a theatre on weekdays after office hours most Russians will be casually dressed because they haven't had time to change their clothes.

14 Do not whistle in public. It is considered rude. Russians never whistle at home because of a superstition that whistling indoors might bring financial problems (see also 'Superstitions' on page 38). In Russia whistling is a sign of dislike or contempt. Russians find it difficult to understand that in other countries whistling has a different connotation, therefore they find whistling very disconcerting. You can find an example in the film *Valery Chkálov*, which tells about the Russian pilot

who made the nonstop flight from Russia to the USA. He was stunned by a crowd of Americans whistling and shouting at him. However, the American influence has become very strong among youngsters: at a rock session they would express their appreciation by whistling.

15 To obtain a table in a restaurant, especially on a holiday or at the weekend, it is advisable to make a reservation by telephone. This rule doesn't apply on weekdays.

At a restaurant Russians may dance to a hi-fi or an orchestra and even sing. If you came to the restaurant without a female partner you may invite someone to dance, provided you ask permission to do so from her companion. Please, watch her companion's reaction (especially if the woman doesn't object), because Russians can be fairly jealous.

16 According to tradition waiters at the restaurants will expect you to order liquor. They may even be unreasonably annoyed if you do not do so. At inexpensive Russian restaurants waiters usually bring you an opened bottle of wine. They won't give you a sample of wine to taste; you therefore don't have the opportunity of declining an inferior wine.

17 Tips for waiters (or taxi drivers) are not mandatory though very much welcomed by the recipients. Ask your Russian friend to help you with this.

18 See also 'On a Visit', 13, on pages 8-9.

A Visit to the Russian Orthodox Church

1 Russian Orthodox Churches usually open daily and at weekends. Morning services start at 7:00 or 8:00 and the evening services at 17:00 or 18:00.

2 Women should wear scarves (kerchiefs) or hats to cover their heads, and skirts are preferable. Women who are wearing jeans or slacks may be stopped at the entrance, especially in more remote towns where moral standards are most rigorous. It's better not to wear make-up. Men should take off their hats when entering a church.

3 Before entering a church people make the sign of the cross and they do the same before going out. Please, do not disturb people while they are facing the entrance and inside facing the apse. There may be paupers standing or sitting next to a church and begging for



money from Russians and foreigners. Even if they are not really so poor, it is the Christian tradition to give them a small donation before, but usually after, the service.

You will see lots of icons of Jesus Christ, Mary, the Mother of the Lord, and other saints in a Russian Orthodox Church. You can go round a cathedral and look at the icons even during a service but, please, do not disturb people who are praying or lighting their candles. You cannot take photographs during the service.

4 Russian churches have no pews; people remain standing throughout the service. If you go to a Russian Orthodox Church, you cannot talk (though a word or two in a whisper is not a major sin). Christening, wedding and burial ceremonies (services) may be taking place.

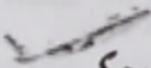
Do not put your hands in your pockets or keep them crossed behind your back.

5 The Russian Orthodox Easter is determined according to a star calendar and differs from Protestant and Catholic Easter. This service begins two hours before midnight and ends with Mass in the early hours of Easter Sunday. The general rules to celebrate Easter for true Orthodox Christians are:

- One cannot use any animal produce for 40 days before Easter.
- A visit to a church late on Easter Saturday to attend a special service is mandatory.
- The family should prepare painted hard-boiled eggs, a special cake called '*kulich*', and cooked cottage cheese called '*paskha*'.
- This food has to be blessed with holy water in a church. Russians start Easter morning by eating only the

prepared holy meal; then they can eat anything to their heart's content.

6 Christmas falls on 7/8 January according to the Russian Orthodox Church calendar, which has not been changed since Peter the Great established a law to use the Western calendar.



Something about Non-Verbal Communication with Russians

1 Russians often shrug their shoulders instead of saying '*Ne znáyu*' (I just don't know). This might be accompanied by raised eyebrows and a protruding lower lip.

2 Sometimes, instead of indicating a direction with the hand, Russians give a nod showing a required direction.

3 When counting something, Russians open their palm and 'curl' their fingers one by one, starting with the little finger.

4 Perhaps you will see someone making the sign of cutting his or her throat with his/her palm. It means 'I am completely satisfied with my meal' or 'I have eaten more than enough'. This gesture can also denote that 'I am sick and tired (of something)'. However, it's applicable only among very close friends.

5 There is another gesture: a forefinger and thumb click on a throat. It signifies an invitation to have a drink or symbolises a drunk man or an alcoholic.

6 See also '*Conversations*', 9, on page 15.



Superstitions

1 Unlike some Europeans, Russians are not afraid to put the number 13 on their buildings, houses and apartments. But if something unpleasant happens, they would usually joke about the 'unfortunate' number and make it responsible for the failure (not really seriously, though).

2 Unlike South Africans, Russian women do not talk to everybody about their pregnancy in the early stages. They also do not show the baby outside the family within approximately two weeks of his/her birth.

3 To avoid potential trouble or bad luck, some Russians pretend to spit thrice over their left shoulder or knock on wood three times. One of the popular tunes during the Second World War was a pilot's song:

We are brave fellows

To prevent a misfortune through an 'evil eye' of our girlfriends

We shall kiss them passionately before a sortie

And we shall spit three times over our left shoulder.

4 See also 'Giving Presents', 5-6, on pages 12-13, and 'Leisure Activities', 4, on pages 33-34.



Miscellaneous

1 South African currency is not accepted in Russia. The most widespread foreign currencies in Russia are US dollars and Deutschmarks, which can be changed at almost every

bank and exchange offices (of which there are plenty). Refrain from changing your money with individual moneychangers (blackmarketeers, to be precise) even if they offer you the best rate: buying foreign currency is not a sin in Russia but selling it to individuals is a criminal offence. (I shall not dwell on possible fraud.)

2 Paid parking and autobanks are quite rare even in Moscow, though the system is growing dynamically.

3 Major international credit cards such as American Express, Diner's Club, Mastercard and Visa are accepted in some places in Moscow and St Petersburg. However, use may be restricted or limited in some shops and restaurants, and in small towns and country areas.

4 On weekdays and at weekends food shops are usually open till 7:00–8:00 pm with a lunch break between 1:00 and 2:00 pm. Other shops usually do not open on Sundays, but now this schedule is changing and you would be surprised to know how many shops are open even on Sundays. Some shops stay open till 21:00 with lunch time from 14:00 to 15:00. If you need something urgently, look through the small kiosks on the streets, which are usually situated near the underground. There may be a few all-night shops in the big cities. Use only cash in these shops and kiosks: credit cards and cheques are not accepted.

Practically all shops sell things at fixed prices only, though you may be given a discount at a vegetable market.

Don't be angry with some Russian salesgirls because of their obvious unfriendliness or indifference. They still have to be taught to be polite and responsive to clients.

5 Weights and measures: Russia uses the metric system. If you are buying clothes or shoes in Russia, bear in mind the difference between Russian and South African sizes:

Women's dresses, suits

RSA	10	12	14	16
Russia	44	46	48	50

Women's shoes

RSA	3,5	4,5	5,5	6,5
Russia	35	36	37	38

Men's shirts

RSA	15	15,5	16	16,5
Russia	39	40	41	42

Men's suits, coats (jackets)

RSA	36	38	40	42
Russia	46	48	50	52

Men's shoes

RSA	7	8	9	10
Russia	41	42	43	44

6 Don't go to a Russian pharmacy if you need to buy cosmetics or perfume. There are differences in the variety of goods in Russian and South African pharmacies.

7 Most public toilets in streets are a paid utility and can be found around the city and in major hotels, supermarkets, terminals and the like. However, the standards of hygiene in Russian toilets may be inferior to those in some South African cities and occasionally they are not very clean and up-to-date.

- 8 Facilities for the disabled are poor. Wheelchairs still cannot be hired even in Moscow. Hotels and public toilets lack facilities for the disabled.
- 9 If you are booking a room in a hotel in Russia, remember that rooms with windows facing south are warmer and more sunny and vice versa.
- 10 Bear in mind that Russians do not call 'ground level' by this name. They regard it as the first level. Unlike South Africa, there are flats on the first floor in most Russian buildings. You may have some difficulties finding garages underneath flats, because they are usually built separately from residential buildings.
- 11 Central heating systems in Russian buildings operate according to the seasons and are therefore turned off from May till the beginning or middle of October. Visiting Russia in summer you will most probably experience problems with hot water during June–August. It is the most suitable time (bearing in mind the Russian weather) for repairs and renovations. The hot water in all the buildings in one district may be turned off for a period of 2–3 weeks. So, be prepared, take it easy and be philosophical about it.
- 12 The electrical voltage used in Russia is 220 V. The electricity outlets take European-style plugs with two round prongs. Obtain adaptors in South Africa because in Russia you will have a lot of difficulty in finding adaptors which have three prongs.
- 13 Tap water in big Russian cities is quite safe to drink.
- 14 The climate varies throughout the Russian Federation.

This variation will be a significant factor for visitors, who could find themselves in the hot conditions of summer (June–August) in Astrakhan, the freezing cold winter days and nights (December–February) of Yakutsk, or the rainy and windy winter conditions of St Petersburg. In between these extremes is Moscow with its warmer winter and cooler summer days. Temperatures throughout Russia are given in degrees Celsius.

15 Your choice of season and time to visit Russia depends on your desire to see an exotic country with snow (winter in Russia lasts from December till February) or to be more comfortable about avoiding flu. In this case you can visit Russia during summer (June–August) or early autumn (September – the beginning of October). In the first case take warm clothes suitable for a Canadian weather – wearing them will make you feel very comfortable in Russia.

16 In winter, Russian time is an hour ahead of South African time, whilst in summer (from April to October) add two hours to South African time.

17 If you like certain programmes or films on Russian TV and you want to record them, remember that Russian TV operates on the SECAM/MESECAM system and you will need a multisystem video recorder to show colour. Otherwise, the recording will be in black and white. Do not worry about this happening when you buy videos from a shop or kiosk. All these films are recorded on the PAL system.

18 You may be disconcerted to see pornographic magazines without plastic covers in shops and at street kiosks. The winds of change brought us positive aspects but also extremes.

19 Crime: as far as tourism is concerned, there is little you need to be afraid of if you behave sensibly. It is not advisable to leave valuables in your hotel room when you depart, even for a short period. Be cautious about walking alone in parks and secluded areas late at night.

Conclusion

In conclusion, please, take this very important advice.

- Try to forget any preconceived ideas you might have about the culture of the nation you are going to visit. Leave them at home and be as open-minded as you can.
- Vary your behaviour in Russia according to specific situations, people and their cultural level, as well as their attitudes.
- Try not to generalise! A generalisation may be erroneous. There is no rule without an exception.

I shall be happy if some of my recommendations prove helpful in your official duties or private life in Russia as well as in your communications with Russians.



Appendix

Useful Information:

Embassies and Consulates

I have attempted to verify all telephone and fax numbers but during the publication period numbers may possibly be changed without notice.

The Russian Embassy and Consular Offices in South Africa

The Embassy of the Russian Federation

Butano Building	Postal address
316 Brooks Street	PO Box 6743
0081 Menlo Park	0001 Pretoria
Tel (012) 362-1337/8	
Fax (012) 362-0116	

Consular Offices

Pretoria Consular Office

135 Bourke Street	Postal address
0132 Sunnyside	PO Box 5715
	0001 Pretoria
Tel (012) 344-4812/20	Office hours:
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Typical Russian Phrases in Transliteration

(with translation into English, Afrikaans and North Sotho)

In the table Russian phrases are given in transliteration, accordingly to the Royal Geography Society US Board (BGN/PCGN) 1959. It means that the Latin alphabet is used to make the Cyrillic alphabet more readable for foreigners from South Africa and other Western countries.

Some rules of pronunciation should be considered:

- The stress is indicated by the sign ['] placed over the stressed vowel.
- In unstressed syllables the letter 'o' is pronounced as a sound 'a' in the word 'mother'. This rule is typical for mass media – radio and TV broadcast programmes – and for Moscow and St Petersburg citizens, but is not widely spread in other areas of Russia.
- The sign ['] after a consonant indicates that this consonant is soft.
- The letter 'y' after or before a vowel resembles the English sound rendered by 'y' in English word 'day'.
- The 'zh' combination of letters resembles to some extent the English 's' in the words 'pleasure' or 'measure'.
- The 'ch' combination of letters resembles the English consonant rendered by the same letters in the word 'cheese'.
- The consonant 'g' in the intervocal position, for example between letters 'e' and 'o' or 'o' and 'o', must be pronounced like a sound 'v' in the word 'vacation'.


English
Afrikaans
North Sotho
Russian

Social Formulas

Good morning!	Goeiemôre!	Dumela!	Dóbroje útro!
Good afternoon!	Goeiemiddag!	Thobela!	Dóbryj den'!
Good evening!	Goeienaand!		Dóbryj vécher!
How do you do!	Hoe gaan dit!	Le kae!	Zdrávtstvuyte!
How are you!		O phela bjang!	Kak delá!
Very well, thank you	Baie goed, dankie	Ke sa phea gabotse!	Spasibo, óchen' khoroshó
Goodbye!	Totsiens!	Sala gabotse Sepela gabotse	Do svidániya!
Good night!	Goeie nag!	A e be boroko	Spokóynoy nóchi!
Bye!	Totsiens!	Gabotse	Poká!
Thank you!	Dankie!	Ke a leboga Ke lebogile	Spasibo!
Please. You are welcome	Asseblief	Tswetswee	Pozháluysta!
Sorry. Excuse me!	Dit spyt my Ekskuus	Tshwarelo	Izviníte!

Toasts

Prosit!	Prosit!	Mahlatse!	Za zdoróv'ye!
To your health!	Gesondheid!		Za Váshe zdoróv'ye!
To you!	Op jou!	Go wena	Za Vas!
To our business!	Op ons besigheid!	Kgwebong ya rena!	Za nash bíznes!
To hospitality of our hosts!	Op die gasvryheid van ons gasheer!	Kamogelong ya moamogedi wa rena	Za gostepriimstvo khoz'áyev!

Compliments

You are looking fine today!	Jy sien vandag goed daaruit	O thakgetše lehono	Vy prekrásno segódn'a vygl'adite!
You are getting younger and younger!	Jy word al hoe jonger	O ba mofsa ka mehla	Vy molod'éyete s kázhdym dn'om!

Everyday phrases and words

When?	Wanneer?	Neng!	Kogdá!
Where?	Waar?	Kae!	Çde!
Who?	Wie?	Mang!	Kto!
Mister	Meneer	Morena	Mister, gospodin
Missis,	Mevrou,	Mohumagadi	Çospozhá
Miss	Mejuffrou	Mohumagatšana	Çospozhá
Çirl, young woman	Dogter, jong vrou	Mosetsana, kgarebe	Dévushka
Young man	Jong man	Lesogana	Molodój chelovék
friend (male)	vriend	mogwera	drug
friend (female)	vriendin	mogwera	podrúga
I do not speak Russian	Ek praat nie Russies nie	Ça ke bolele Serašia	Ya ne govor'ú po-rússki
I do not understand Russian	Ek verstaan nie Russies nie	Ça ke kwešiše Serašia	Ya ne ponimáyu po-rússki
I need an interpreter	Ek het 'n tolk nodig	Ke nyaka mofotoledi/ toloki	Mne núzhen perevódkhik
Stop here!	Stop hier	Ema mo	Ostanovíte zdes'!
Show ...	Wys ...	Bontšha ...	Pokazhíte! ...
Çive me ...	Çee my ...	A ko mphe ...	Dáyte ...

How much does it cost?	Hoeveel kos dit?	Ke bokae?	Skól'ko stóit!
Call ...!	Roep ...!	! Bitsa motho!	Pozovíte ...!
Help me!	Help my!	A ko nthuše!	Pomogíte mne!

Something for Further Reading

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