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Pskov and the Pushkin Mountains

By Samantha Rodgers



The Russian Spring Break-four days, three nights, and travel possible by train overnight both ways. Nine students, one professor, and a Russian native speaker from the Moscow State University set off for a journey that will take them 12 hours to reach their destination. The town they will stay in is located north west of Moscow. It became an important town between the 11th and 13th centuries to the Novgorod Land. The remarkable landscape is marked by the mighty fortifications that enclose the beautiful onion domed Trinity Cathedral.

It was so nice to get out of the hostel and out of Moscow. As we all knew, the weather would not be changing, if anything the weather would be colder since we were heading up north. The train ride, though the temperature inside was like we were revisiting Puerto Rico, made for a refreshing form of travel. I think we all felt like we were in one of the James Bond movies with our little sleeping cabins. Upon arriving in the town of Pskov, we found that the weather warmed up and much of the snow on the streets made for very large lakes and very icy "slip and slides". Nothing however stopped this pack of clumsy Americans.

Our hotel was quite pleasing,

Crime Watch 99

By Dax Fleckenstein



Spending the semester in Russia has been an incredibly eye-opening experience for me and for the rest of the group. However, some of these experiences have taught me a lesson the hard way. One such instance occurred about two weeks ago. On one of our journeys through the city, we discovered, to our delight, a new restaurant named "The Great Canadian Bagel." It was almost more than we could ask for! Since then we have made many excursions to buy a dozen bagels or to stay and grab a tasty bagel sandwich. On one such occasion, Joe, Samra, Samantha, and I decided to stop in for a bagel sandwich and some coffee before going to a club later in the evening. We made the move to leave after spending an hour. As we entered the nearest metro station I pulled my wallet out of my jacket to retrieve my metro card. Opening my wallet, I noticed that everything was rearranged since the last time I had looked. I thought that this was rather strange. Upon further inspection I realized that my money was gone and my credit card had disappeared-I had been robbed.

The four of us decided to go back to the bagel shop and try to explain what had happened to the guards posted inside. However, only one person spoke English inside, and not very well. Eventually, they ended up calling the

especially since the showerheads in the bathrooms were actually attached to the walls. Plus nothing could beat our tour guides Mike and Lidia who spoke very good English. Who could forget our unique form of transportation? Included in our vacation was our own personal bus that could have fit thirty people. I distinctly remember the pink silk hyacinth flowers that hung from the rear view mirror. Where are we? Hawaii?

The tour around the town was quite remarkable. The age and history alone made our towns back home look modern and boring. Among the historical sites in Pskov, we also learned about the famous Russian poet Pushkin whose 200th birthday would be this coming year. We visited the towns he lived in and the St. Nicolas Cathedral in which his body was buried. The last exciting event landed us in Izborsk, a town that houses a real working Monastery. The women in our group had to put on skirts that fit over our pants so that we would be able to enter the fortress in which many monks come to live. It was an interesting custom that I felt proud to be apart of. The trip went so very fast. If I sit back and think about it, I wonder if it were a dream. Before we could blink we were back in the hostel and it felt like we never left Moscow.

police, who arrived about 45 minutes later. I had to go to the police station with them. Soon a woman entered the room who spoke some English, to act as a translator. There I told my story through a female interpreter. In short, they told me that there really was nothing that they could do. After some further deliberation I decided I had better get home as the metros were going to close in twenty minutes. So, I thanked them and ran to the nearest metro station.

I made it home and immediately phoned my parents. They called and cancelled my credit card. However, in the short span of time between having my wallet stolen and arriving back at my hostel, these people had run up \$8000 + on my credit card. A very nice way to top off a delightful evening.

Through all of this I, and the entire group, have learned a very valuable lesson: always be aware of what is going on around you. We had all become rather lax with our money and belongings, so something like this was bound to happen sometime. Though we all knew that this could happen, it took something like this to really open our eyes to its reality.



February 17, 1999 - Moscow



February 21, 1999 - Moscow Region

This is our Russian Education Teacher Evgueni Shmelev. Here we are learning about the Russian Educational System at his classroom, in a little town outside of Moscow.

cr. Erik E. Kelling



Russian Education System

By Jamie Rayman



"...**A**nd please, remember your task." This was the refrain of instructor Evgueni Shmelev during our course The System of Continual Agricultural Education in Russia. In this course we were introduced to the Russian education system through a series of lectures and school visits.

Evgueni Shmelev was invited by MSAU to teach our course about the Russian system of education because of his experience as a teacher, researcher, and planner for the Russian education system. Mr. Shmelev graduated from Moscow Institute of Agricultural Engineers (now called MSAU, the university we attend) with degrees in engineering and education. He taught Ag and Ag Education for 20 years at Yahakomsky State College, in Dimitrov, a town in the Moscow Region. His love of young people sustained his teaching career and continues to influence his career at the Educational Methodology Center.

For the past six years he has worked for the Educational Methodology Center of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Russian Federation. The Methodology Center works with foreign partners such as the European Union, the Netherlands, and the USA. They work to revise and update Russian agricultural and agriculture education curricula for secondary schools and teacher training colleges and universities.

Here Ksusha is leading us into the forest. The American Students are getting ready to prepare for their first experience in a Russian Banya.

cr. Erik E. Kelling

Good Food in Moscow

By Lincoln Rodgers



Although I hit on some of the less desirable aspects of Russian food last time, living here in Russia does have its culinary delights. Perhaps the best aspect of eating here for an American is the price of food. You can easily get a good meal for under a dollar throughout the city. We have a stand near our hostel where you can buy an entire roast chicken for under three dollars. Compare that to KFC prices. Even McDonalds is cheaper here. You can get super sized fries for a dollar. Yes, we eat at McDonalds; usually it is the most accessible restaurant, and you know what you are going to get when you order.

Not only is the food cheap, it is good. Not the food in the canteens, but real Russian food, the kind of food that Russians fix for themselves and serve to us when we visit. I have had some of the most delicious food of my entire life here in Russia! For instance, bliny, a traditional dish of pancakes with either sour cream or jam, is absolutely delicious and has been served to us on several occasions.

Finally, another good thing about food during our stay in Moscow is the weekly group dinner. It gives us all a chance to show off our culinary talents, or in my case, lack of them. Some of the people in our group have been able to produce truly amazing things on the three burner Electra stove. Dax, seems to be specializing in potatoes. For three weeks

As part of our course with Mr. Shmelev, it was our task to try to create our own agricultural curriculum. We were to accomplish this by integrating knowledge of the hierarchy of the Russian education system and our own observations of the system during school visits. We visited a kindergarten and were enchanted by the charm of small children; we visited a secondary school and talked to students about their aspirations, their Russian traditions and their favorite music groups; we visited a business technical school and were treated to a concert by their singing group.

Mr. Shmelev realized that our understanding of the Russian system would be enriched by these human interactions. If we were very enthusiastic about finding out about what dance clubs the high schoolers preferred or about playing with the kindergartners' pet bird, Mr. Shmelev would gently remind us to "remember your task." His hopes were that we Americans would learn about the Russian educational system and that our task would give us a taste of what it is like to design a curriculum.

he has made some fantastic dishes with only potatoes and spices. Jamie and Bethany have been cooking soups. They are so good; even the one they burnt tasted delicious. Even professor Les Gallay gave us a display of his cooking skill. He made excellent omelets for the group one Tuesday night.

These people are by no means the only people who cook, but I don't have space to list all the miracles that have been performed in the kitchen at the end of the hall.

Most of the foods we have eaten here have been quite different from what we would normally eat; nonetheless many dishes have been delicious. Living in Moscow has given us a chance to try new foods. Indeed we have begun to develop a taste for many of the dishes we have encountered here.



*Day by Day Schedule
By Erik Kelling and
Bethany Nelson*



Mar 1 Les's class all day. Bethany and Lincoln with Valery to Relcom to take care of the e-mail account. Randomly selected without replacement to Co-lead sheep. People went to the American Bookstore.

Mar 9 Arrived in Moscow at 7 am. Today was Joe's birthday. Had Russian class at 11 am, then Jamie, Lincoln, Samantha, Samra, and Joe, went to the Vietnamese black market. Dax, Erik, and Bethany went to buy flowers for Helen. Help clean and set up our new classroom, then went to the Canadian Bagel for dinner.

Mar 10 First day of Tracey's class. After class we went to the market. Everyone had a quiet night, still recovering from the weekend.

Mar 11 Tracey's class all day. Jamie, Andrew, and Bethany went to Arbat Street after class. Joe's birthday dinner. Then Erik, Dax,

- Mar Russian class until 11:00. Dax and
2 Samra went to Valery's office to discuss our upcoming trip to Pskov. Today was Jamie's Birthday. We had a party for Jamie in the evening.
- Mar Left at 9 am for Evgueni's school.
3 We visited the Agricultural University, and went to a greenhouse and a college. We returned late in the afternoon.
- Mar Last day of Les's class, we had our
4 final that day. Tracey Hoover arrives from Florida. Jamie, Dax, and Bethany went downtown.
- Mar Russian class at 9 am. Met with
5 Tracey in the afternoon. Went to market to get food for our trip. Met Helen at 6:30 pm and board the train to Pskov at 8:00 pm.
- Mar We arrive at Pskov at 8 am, and
6 met our English-speaking guide Mike. Checked into a hotel, then went for breakfast. Toured the Pskov Kremlin and the Pskov History Museum. Had dinner at 8 pm, then the students went to the bar.
- Mar Left at 8 am to visit the house of
7 Pushkin's friends located two hours out of Pskov and also visited Pushkin's great-grandfather's house. Then we went to the Monastery where Pushkin is buried. Returned to Pskov in the evening.
- Mar Women's Day. Visited a fortress
8 outside of Pskov and then a working Monastery next to the Estonian border. Returned to Pskov had dinner, then went to the train, we left at 7 pm.
- Joe, Samra, and Samantha went to Manhattan Express to dance and listen to \$hura.
- Mar Had Russian class at 9 am, today
12 we learned our first Russian song. Jamie, Dax, Erik, Andrew, Lincoln and Tracey, went to the Red Square and toured St. Basil's Cathedral. Then we went to the GUM. Dax, Andrew, Jamie, Erik, Lincoln, and Bethany went to dinner at Pizza world. We played Yahtzee with Tracey when we returned.
- Mar Visited the Paleontology Museum
13 with Yulya and Sveta. At night we had dinner and watched a Pathetic Hulk Hogan Movie-OH BOY, we're having fun now!!!
- Mar Today the group minus Erik, Joe,
14 Lincoln and Dax went to the Puskin Arts Museum. Dax and Erik went to the Kremlin to take pictures. Tracey and Helen went to Ismailovsky Park to buy gifts. In the evening we had a group meeting about our upcoming presentation on Tuesday.

Happy Birthday, Jamie and Joe!



Culture Shock
By Bethany Nelson
with input from the INTAG team



After several minutes, we returned to the heat and relived the experience again. This took place several more times. When our time was over in the




In our two-month stay in Russia, we have been exposed to a great deal of Russian culture and many customs. However, I don't think any of us were prepared for what awaited us at the now infamous banya. We had heard about this "banya" from the moment we arrived in Russia; how relaxing and enjoyable it was. Everyone told us it resembled an American sauna. Of course, when we were given the opportunity to go, we jumped at the chance. We all loaded into our "minibus" and headed off to the country to enjoy a "relaxing" afternoon in the banya. Little did we know what awaited us.

We arrived and were told we had to split up into males and females. The males headed in one direction and the females in the other. This seemed a little strange to our virtually inseparable group until we entered the changing room. At this point we, girls, were informed that you enter banyas without clothes on. Once inside, we sat on benches while Lidia, our Russian instructor, made steam. After the steam was made, we each had to lay on the bench and take a turn at being hit with hot birch branches. Apparently, this is to clean your spirit. After our beatings, we had to leave the steam room and some of us opted to roll naked in the snow, while others just stood in the cool room.

banya, we had to take a shower, with the assistance of Lidia, before we could leave. After the shower, we got dressed and sat down to cool off. We enjoyed tea and bliny, while waiting for the guys. As they rounded the corner of the banya it was easy to see by the red faces and wet hair that they had been through an experience much like our own. The guys had a true bonding experience sitting in a steamy room naked with the owner of the banya, Yuri. He informed the boys, "You must have a good heart." That's because the heat was so extreme that near the end of the session it was as hot as boiling water. They too had to go through the ritual of birch beatings and snow rolling.

However, they also had to rub hot cedar all over their bodies. Some of the guys found the experience to be extremely invigorating. As Andrew put it, "I have never before experienced the exfoliating power of white cedar being rubbed all over my body. Nor had I experienced being switched by birch branches. It is fitting that we were beaten with birch, which is the national tree of Russia. It is everywhere, and I feel one with Russia now that I have been beaten with her national symbol."

I think as a group we have all determined that the banya was a unique experience that we will remember forever. We are appreciating the culture that we are being exposed to and are thankful to all those who have helped us make the most of our experiences.

 E-mail us your questions/suggestions:
[Dr. Thomas Bruening](mailto:thomas.brueening@psu.edu)
 (Project coordinator)

Class Schedule	
Mo/Thu Development:	Leadership Tracy Hoover 9am to 4 pm
Tue	Russian Language 9am to 12:30pm
Wed	Russian Ed System

with	Evgeni Shmelev 10:50am to 3:00pm
Fri	Various field trips

