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Danielle presents a gift of appreciation to Monsanto's Biotechnology Manager

## All in Nine Days

### Activities

#### By Matt Brubaker

Exactly how many museums and ballet performances have you been to recently? Only one or two? Maybe none? Well, for us, we can honestly say that we have attended one ballet performance, visited four museums, begun our four-week computer class, and had the first excursion for our Russian and American Agriculture Seminar. And we did it all in nine days.

It can seem exhausting trying to keep up with all these activities, but it is worth it when we stop to look back our specific experiences. It is these amazing activities that make this whole experience so much more worthwhile and memorable.

On February 5, the first day of our most recent cultural spree, we saw an extraordinary performance of the Nutcracker at the Kremlin Palace Theater. Afterwards, we dined on pizza, lasagna, garlic bread, and spaghetti at an Italian restaurant to satisfy that craving for

## It's Electric!

### Weather

#### By Barbie Berrang

It's a firefly.  
It's a space ship.  
No, it's magic lightning!

Everybody knows what lightning looks like, but did you know that clouds and live high-tension can create bolts of light? The clouds in Russia hover so low that when they drift over power lines, the cocktail produces sporadic bursts of lightning.

Due to the friction that is produced by opposite wind currents, clouds are able to store energy. As these clouds float through the sky, they build up energy that has to be released. When the clouds meet the ungrounded high-tension wires, the high amount of energy within them reacts with the wires, creating branches of lightning. It is a wonderful fireworks show, and it takes place just outside of our hostel.

The electric fireworks aren't the only things keeping us outside. Spring is on its way, or so it seems. The temperature is averaging 31 degrees Fahrenheit and we have been taking advantage of it. From strolls on Arbat Street to spontaneous excursions to unknown cemeteries, there is no fear of cabin fever.

the taste of Italian food.

The next morning went to Tretyakov Gallery, a huge art museum. Most of the art at the gallery was collected by Tretyakov who left his entire art collection to the government when he died.

While we were all taking in the ballet and consuming Italian cuisine, Dr. Pat Whittington, Assistant to the Dean of the College of the Agricultural Sciences, was arriving in Moscow. On the seventh, Dr. Whittington began teaching our International Web Development class, which was also our first class with the Russian students.

Dr. Whittington's course is being taught in the university's computer lab, so at 8:40 in the morning, twice a week, we walk about three blocks on the icy sidewalk to arrive in class by 9:00.

On Tuesday the eighth, we toured the Kremlin Armory Museum to see the elaborate collection of dresses, crowns, jewelry, thrones, and carriages of the Russian royalty. Also on display were guns, swords, silverware, dinnerware, and knights' armor.

The following day, our Russian and American Agriculture Seminar took us to Monsanto's head office in Russia. Monsanto, an international biotechnology company specializing in genetically engineered crop seeds, made a special presentation to us including the ten Russian girls participating in the program. Both the Deputy General Director/Sales Manager and the Biotechnology Manager spoke before the group. The speakers discussed the historical, financial, structural, and biotechnological aspects of the company.

When the weekend rolled around again, it was back to the museums. On Saturday the twelfth we toured the State Museum of the Arts of the People of the East that was an art gallery devoted to the art of the Asian countries. At the same time a special exhibition was being held in connection with the Iraqi embassy displaying art from the Middle East. The culture-filled weekend came to a close on Sunday when we went to the Home of the Artists exhibition hall, a lavish and modern building in which Russian



Meg, Barbie, Sara and Sasha Busting Out

## Tower of Benevolence

People

By Meg Bruening

Imagine going to a place where you do not know the language, a place where you have to depend on someone else for simple communication: a place where we are. When we first arrived in Moscow we could barely function in our daily lives without the help of our Russian friends. They did everything with us and for us and took the time to teach us about their culture and language during each excursion - whether we were visiting Red Square or simply buying cheese at the supermarket. They showed us the places to eat, to do laundry and the most important of all-the places to have a good time. When we first went to a club, the women's restroom was immediately pointed out, and right afterwards we were told where to meet if we ever lost the group. During this crucial time, we got to know some of our counterparts better than others: particularly, Alexander Zolotov, or Sasha to us.

artists come together to sell their artwork.

Our time here starting ticking away the moment we stepped off the plane onto Russian soil (we have already been here over a month!), but Moscow is a huge city with an incredible amount of fine culture to be seen. We have seen a lot in only nine days, and there is still much more waiting to be discovered.



Administration Building at MSAU

## What Do Those Initials Mean?

### Education

By Danielle Cowden

Even before we left the United States we started hearing about MSAU, and now those four letters are all around us - in English and in Russian. At this point, I am sure some of you are curious and asking yourselves, "What exactly is MSAU anyway?"

The letters MSAU stand for Moscow State Agroengineering University. MSAU was founded in 1930 and stresses the teaching of agricultural engineering and agricultural education techniques. Today approximately 3,500 students and 400 professors complete the structure of MSAU.

Over the last several years the social, economic, and political changes in Russia have put a strain on the educational system. Previously, in the Soviet Union, students were instructed and prepared for a predetermined career field; this ensured that



Towering above us, this six-foot six-inch Russian helps us in every way. Sasha lives on the fifteenth floor of the hostel, just ten floors above us (a short distance compared to the two hours that many of the Russian students travel to get to the university). So we go to him anytime we need the help of someone who can speak Russian or who understands how things work here in the city of Moscow - which is a great deal of the time. When we wanted to clean our rooms, he was the one that talked with the building administrators to set up a weekly time for us to get new bedding and use of a vacuum cleaner. When we need help with our Russian homework late at night, Sasha is always more than willing. And after supper, Sasha often takes those who are interested on "evening strolls" to the center of Moscow and around the area, teaching us both about navigating on our own as well as the history of the city. He is our personal tour guide, translator, and friend.

How and why would anyone, especially a fourth year MSAU student like Sasha, be able to find time and energy to be around Penn State students so much? The answer is not eminent, but the part of his willingness may be explained by the fact that this twenty year-old has spent the past three summers working in a camp with juvenile delinquent children. Perhaps it is because Sasha has already passed his exams for February and doesn't have class until the beginning of March, or maybe he is like many of the people we meet on the street and simply wants to practice his English skills. It could also be the fact that he's just a nice guy and enjoys

students were highly trained and specialized in their respective fields. The Federal Law of Higher Professional Education, passed in 1996, defined the major changes in the Russian educational hierarchy. Due to the challenges Russia has encountered since 1991 instruction in the areas of marketing, finance, and economics have greatly increased.

How is Moscow State Agroengineering University adapting to these challenges? Several key modifications are up and running to guarantee the quality of the education MSAU students are receiving from their studies. First and foremost, the administration is emphasizing education abroad and programs that bring foreign students to study at MSAU. As most of you know, at the moment MSAU is conducting an international joint teaching venture with The Pennsylvania State University. The two universities began to collaborate on this program in 1994. Finally, after five rigorous years of planning on both sides, the first group of Penn State students ventured to Russia in 1999 for the spring semester. Because the program proved to be valuable and effective, a second group of students from PSU made the journey over the Atlantic to study at MSAU. Happily for these non-Russian-speaking Americans, a major selection criterion for the ten Russian students involved (who are all female) was a good knowledge of the English language. Together, they have classes, in English, and take cultural excursions throughout the city. In addition to the usual expected textbook education provided by a college course, these twenty individuals are also seizing the opportunity to work closely with foreign students and experience at least a portion of another culture. This project is just one example of how MSAU is enhancing its educational system for the 'new' Russia and a new century. Like many other institutions of higher learning, MSAU recognizes that a key to giving its students a serious advantage in the modern job market is an education about foreign countries, including interaction with the people of those countries.

spending time with us. In actuality, it is a combination of everything. Sasha helped out with the INTAG group last year and had such a wonderful experience, he wanted to take part in the program again.

As the semester progresses, there will be (and there are), without a doubt, more and more people that we meet that will become friends like Sasha; people with whom we share our cultures and our lives.



## Senses of the Arts

### Culture

By **Christin Ondrusek**

Saturday January 29th was a day to remember for the Penn State Students. This was the day when Russian culture came alive to the song and dance of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker. The performance was staged at the Palace of Congresses located within the Kremlin's walls.

While the experience was a treat for all, it was especially exciting for those of us who had never before attended a ballet. And to enjoy the Nutcracker in Russia, its country of origin, was overwhelming. The production differed from American staging in parts, but the overall storyline was identical. My favorite part involved a fanciful girl dreaming about dolls indigenous to Russia, Asia, Spain, England, and Egypt. The dolls danced in pairs performing a cultural dance to music from their native countries. A special thanks to Yulya Bolotova for helping organize our excursion.

Another culturally enlightening experience took place at the Tretvakov Gallery, one of Russia's many art galleries. What set this gallery apart was its vast collection of classical Russian art in various mediums. Many of the pieces have become historical relics, as integral to the national spiritual tradition as ballet and theatre. Russians of all ages visit the Tretvakov



Pictures courtesy of:  
Dr. Pat R. Whittington  
Suzanne Bruening  
Sara Hayden

Gallery to remember the works and teachings of their ancestors.

When visiting a gallery of such magnitude, I sometimes schedule a plan of attack. Spending about fifteen seconds on each painting, I hoped to cover the entire gallery in one afternoon. However, one painting in particular helped me to remember one must sometimes step back and take the time to enjoy all the beauty that is passed by the regimented onlooker. There he was, an elderly man strolling through a pine forest. I stopped in the middle of the gallery and began to smell the air, redolent of pine. With every breath, the scent grew stronger. Suddenly, I glanced over and there he stood next to me, his clothes comfortably faded from the years of wear. Together we began to walk through the forest. Along the way, I found his precious grin to be contagious and my lips began to slowly curl and mimic his. I don't recall when I left him but my smile, his gift to me, remained long after my departure. I hope to visit again.

We have merely broken the surface. A whole sea of culture awaits us in our explorations to come.

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