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Students Visit Farm Machinery Facility

Activities

By Nila Kreidich



Masha's First Tractor Ride

Valentine's Day was our first field trip outside of Moscow to The Central Agricultural Testing Station where head officials and leading engineers gave us an extensive tour. This facility tests farm machinery for a number of factors including: fuel consumption, noise levels, draw bar power, efficiency, internal cab conditions, and other mechanical functions. This information is used to develop better farm machinery and to produce reports on the safety of farm equipment. A writer from the local newspaper followed us around to report on our visit.

Before lunch we went to visit a local school. Teachers and students gave us a warm Russian welcome as we visited their classes. We spoke with small children that were just learning English along with 12-14 year old students that spoke English very well.. Dr.

The Russian People

Culture

By Wade Taylor

The Russian culture has been easy getting use to for the most part. The Russian people are focused and don't seem to have a lot to say. A prime example of this is in the Metro. In the Russian subway people hardly talk at all and are quite tranquil. Often the only voices heard are the Americans in our group. Out of millions of people this is quite amazing.

As far as clothes go, there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of diversity. For the most part people dress in dark colors and rarely anything too flashy. In the winter months most Russians, men and women both, wear big fur hats made mostly from rabbit, fox, wolf, and other animals. The hats come in all sizes and colors though most are natural in color. The bigger the hat and the longer the fur shows wealth and importance on the men. Most women sport elegant fur coats to show their status as well. The Russian women take a lot of pride in their appearance and have a tendency to dress up all of the time.

In short, the Russian culture is far different than anything any of the American students are accustomed to seeing. It has been quite an experience for all of us learning about the Russian conditions, character, temperament, and culture.

Briers had fun teaching students how to say the Texas phrase, "Howdy y'all!" The students shared with us about their hobbies, family, and favorite school subjects. Some revealed that they liked the Backstreet Boys just like American kids their age. Lucky for us it was Valentine's Day so we received valentines from some of the students in exchange for our autograph. It was striking how generous these students were as they tried to give us hair barrettes, bookmarks, and crayons. As we left children throughout the building peered out the window to wave good-bye. That was quite the treat for all of us to experience.



Dr. Briers and Russian High School Students

After visiting a few more rooms in this testing facility we were invited to a traditional Russian meal. The hospitality we received from the Russians was tremendous. They offered us many Russian dishes including pickled herring, rye bread, cabbage, meat dumplings, potatoes, and a variety of creamy fresh salads. Our hosts toasted vodka to issues such as Russian American relations, family, and friendship. We learned first hand what Russian hospitality and culture was like. Some of us were happier to leave than others but as we rode home we laughed and talked about how much we had learned. That day our team of eight students bonded with each other as never before.



Wade Modeling a Woman's Fur Coat

Russian Higher Education

Education

By Graham Rupe

Our American group of students has been studying with a group of nine Russian students. They have been very good to work with and have a very good understanding of the English language. These nine have been chosen out of a group of thirty-five students with whom they have been studying for the past three years. Unlike American Universities, students here study with the same group of people from the time they enter the University until the time that they graduate. Their classes are assigned to them at the beginning of each semester. The students have no choice as to which classes they are going to take or at what time they are going to take them. The curriculum that our Russian associates are studying prepares them to be an English teacher, an interpreter, and a tractor "engineer." Most of them would like to be an interpreter when they graduate because this field provides the most opportunities for future employment. Some of the different classes that they take include chemistry, physics, math, tractors, lots of English and some agriculture classes. These



Russia's Newest Boy Band and their Fans

Religious Tradition

Special Focus

By Matt Kreifels

During most of the Soviet era religious practice was strictly discouraged and the Communist Party controlled religious institutions. In the late 1980s, however, the government began to ease its restrictions on religion, and a 1990 law granted Russians far more religious freedom. Since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, religious following has increased and there has been a resurgence of traditional religions, particularly Orthodox Christianity.

Russians adopted Orthodox Christianity in the 10th century and Russian Orthodoxy is now the country's primary religion. About one-fourth of the population are members of the Russian Orthodox Church and these followers are dispersed throughout the country. However, the vast majority of Orthodox believers do not attend church on a regular basis. Nonetheless, the church is widely respected by both Russian believers and nonbelievers, who see it as a symbol of Russian heritage and culture. The state officially observes Orthodox holidays and many politicians attend major church festivals.

While we have not attended a Russian Orthodox Church service, we have had the

Russian students have a different English class each semester that increases their language skills. Another way that they strengthen their English fluency is by taking technical classes in English. Their last agriculture class was taught completely in English.

The course work of our new friends is much different than anything that anyone would experience in America. After examining their system in much detail, I see that there are some advantages to using this system. The average Russian facts retention rate at the University level is much higher than it is for students in America. American universities provide much more flexibility for student by allowing individual choice in course work at different times. As a whole, the United States' University system is much more developed than the Russian University system. I say this because American students have the ability to become much more specialized in their area of study.



Our Russian Counterparts: Rita, Nina, Oksana, Masha, Lena, Ksenia, and Roman

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Pictures courtesy of:
Graham Rupe, Theresa Lynn, and Matt Kreifels

A Cold Winter for Me, but

opportunity to visit some churches in Moscow. They range from the small but elaborate church near the Kneeling Hill World War II Memorial to the official church of Russia, Christ the Redeemer Cathedral. Great pride has been taken in the construction, maintenance, and historical preservation of the Russian churches. Inside the Kremlin grounds there are four churches that are several centuries old. The Archangel Cathedral, dedicated to the Archangel Michael, is the final resting place for forty-six tombs of members of the families of the Russian grand princes and tzars, including one that dates to the 1320's. Religion in Russia has a long, proud history that has withstood even government suppression.

Historical Information from MS Encarta



**Cathedral of Assumption
Located inside the Kremlin**

Warm for Russia

Weather

By Noah Handley

As one might imagine, the weather here is pretty cold! I have been keeping up with the weather in America and most of the continental United States has been colder on a daily basis than it is here. Russians consider this a relatively warm winter.

What is cold anyway? Is it not just a relative classification that people use to understand or describe a situation? I am a good example of this. I am use to Florida's temperate winters, so Russia is much colder than what I am accustomed to, but then people here are amazed at the warmth of this winter.

Why is it that a person gets cold or that they are outside of their comfort zone? Most of the time it is that a person lets too much of their body heat escape, so in turn it is their own fault for not being prepared enough for their current environment. This leads me to the point that Russian people do not wear big heavy clothes that are bulky, uncomfortable, and unattractive. No, they wear thin, under layers and then outer layers of materials such as polyester or wool. Then, if it is at or below 0° F they wear a long, heavier, lined coat which is still very stylish.

Another observation I have made is that almost all people look very fashionable. It is hard for me to comprehend how these Russian people can constantly look so fashionable through some of the severe weather conditions that they have. I am amazed and surprised to see many of the styles that are frequently observed here in Moscow.

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