



## Moscow with kids

By [www.holidaysfromhels.co.uk](http://www.holidaysfromhels.co.uk)

### Pre trip preparation

1	When to go for the snow?	February is ideal as Moscow is not at its coldest. There is a good chance of snow, but the pavements will not have turned into slushy rivers as they do in March.	
2	How do you get a Russian visa?	Website	Apply here: <a href="http://ru.vfsglobal.co.uk/online_application_form.html">http://ru.vfsglobal.co.uk/online_application_form.html</a>  It is hard to identify the official website. Some travel companies have pages that look like they are the official channel but are in fact agencies charging you a fee.
		Cost:	Approx £100 each  Children with their own passport need their own visa
		Timings:	Apply not more than 3 months before you travel.

		<p>Application form:</p>	<p>You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of all former passports</li> <li>• Dates of all countries visited in last 10 years</li> <li>• All social media accounts</li> <li>• Bank account details</li> <li>• A hotel sponsor confirming your booking - The hotel needs to send you a "voucher" to present to the embassy with everyone's dates of birth and names spelled properly.</li> <li>• Passport photos</li> <li>• Dates of children's start dates at school and school address</li> <li>• Confirmation of your parents dates of birth</li> <li>• Confirmation whether you have ever worked for the government</li> </ul>
		<p>Answering the questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lot of repetition on the form. It took me several hours to complete. You can save it and return later.</li> <li>• It is often hard to know what information the form is looking for.</li> <li>• For children, when presented with the option to tick employed /unemployed, do not select "unemployed". Enter school details instead or your form will be rejected</li> </ul>
		<p>Submission:</p>	<p>Travel to London to present the forms and documentation and to be bio-metrically fingerprinted (children too)</p>
	<p>Moscow with kids Hotel Choice</p>	<p>Stay in the family friendly <a href="#">Novotel Moscow City</a> where kids under 16 stay in your room and breakfast for free</p>	

		Location: 5k from the centre It is next to the Metro, a handy shopping mall, a park, the Moscow River.	
	Moscow with kids Holiday Schedule	<p>Have one of these. It is too cold to browse guide books in the street or wander the streets without a plan.</p> <p>Know where you can find food in advance.</p> <p>Be aware that most things close on a Monday</p>	
<h2>Practicalities</h2>			
1	Playing in the snow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your first job will be to play in the untouched snow in the park next to the hotel.</li> <li>• There are also elaborate illuminations and a tube run.</li> <li>• Wear 2 pairs of gloves.</li> <li>• Don't say out too long as the temperatures plummet after dark</li> </ul>	
2	Finding food	Food court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mall next door has a food court to ease you in gently</li> <li>• Have a copy of the Russian alphabet handy so you can read menus</li> <li>• Google translate photo app is amazing</li> <li>• Pointing may be necessary</li> </ul>
		Street stalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try a traditional Russian blini (chocolate pancake) from a stall Red Square</li> </ul>

		Cafe Pushkin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book a table here for haut-Russian cuisine in a 19th-century building with a different theme on each floor, including a richly decorated library, pharmacy and a rooftop cafe.</li> <li>• Be prepared to redress for dinner in the subterranean cloakroom</li> <li>• Prebook a lunch menu with a glass of wine for about £20/head</li> </ul>
3	What to wear		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Layers are key.</li> <li>• Go for thermal long sleeve/fleece/waterproof jacket</li> <li>• Consider soft shell trousers - waterproof and fleece lined</li> <li>• Waterproof socks</li> <li>• Gortex boots</li> <li>• Hats/scarves/gloves</li> </ul>
	Moscow metro		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Moscow tube system is a tourist attraction in its own right. There are art deco marvels, stations where everyone has to rub a brass chicken and gold frescos.</li> <li>• Ordering tickets is tricky. Research phrase books before you go and show them to the person in the ticket booth. Buying a ticket for 10 journeys will save you having to order repeatedly.</li> <li>• Print off your route from Googlemaps in advance in case you lose signal. Count the number of stops your journey will take as the names are tricky to read</li> </ul>

## Moscow Activities

1	Verssing Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastiche of a Kremlin. Modern, colourful and visually arresting.</li> <li>• About an hour from the centre by Metro.</li> <li>• One of the few things open on a Monday</li> <li>• Very quiet in winter but some stalls are open selling Russian dolls and Soviet souvenir hats. The café is open</li> <li>• Look out for the huge Russian Doll</li> </ul>	
2	Red Square	<p>This is the epicentre of Moscow's attractions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Kremlin containing the Armoury</li> <li>• GUM, a huge historic shopping complex,</li> <li>• a large military museum,</li> <li>• colourful cathedrals</li> <li>• St Basil's Cathedral</li> <li>• tombs of former presidents against the Kremlin walls</li> <li>• a winter market with food stalls and rides</li> </ul> <p>Make sure you return at night to see the illuminated Kremlin and St Basil's</p>	
3	Spring Festival	Don't miss the orange decorated trees by Red Square in the Spring Festival	
4	St	Entrance fee	500 roubles (about £6) and kids under 16 are free

	Basil's Cathedral	Language	The historical information is helpfully provided in English
		The building	Exterior - walk around this iconic building to take in the coloured onion domes from all angles  Interior - Every inch of ceiling, wall and door is covered in gold or fabulous murals.
5	GUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GUM is a historic department store housing hundreds of retail outlets</li> <li>• Don't miss its impressive glass roof</li> <li>• Great place for window shopping, cafes and keeping warm.</li> </ul>	
6	Moscow River	Just behind St Basils check out the frozen river	
7	Kitay Gorod	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the historical quarter of Kitay Gorod, behind Red Square</li> <li>• Go at sunset for the best views of the pink buildings and golden onion domes</li> </ul>	
8	Kremlin and crown jewels	What is in the Kremlin	<p>Inside the Kremlin is a collection of cathedrals, military establishments and an armoury housing the Russian crown jewels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ivan the Great Bell tower:</b> under 14's cannot enter</li> <li>• <b>Armoury:</b> Russian crown jewels</li> <li>• <b>Archangel cathedral:</b> Ivan the Terrible buried here.</li> <li>• <b>Assumption cathedral</b> - golden frescoes</li> <li>• <b>Patriarch's palace</b> - where the tsars feasted</li> </ul>

		Timings	<p>The guidebooks advise allowing 2 hours for the armoury and 2 hours for Cathedrals - separate tickets are available so you can visit one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.</p> <p>With kids we needed less time and saw them all together, only needing about half an hour for the cathedrals.</p>
		Tickets	<p>Get to the ticket booth when it opens so you can have your pick of time slots (especially if also planning a slot in a trip to Lenin's tomb).</p> <p>You can order online but kids, although free, need tickets which I couldn't find online. We didn't want to risk booking for us only for the kids not to be allowed in if they were full.</p>
		Lunch	No eateries in Kremlin. Cover it all in one session or pop out to GUM for food between the armoury and cathedrals.
9	Lenin's Tomb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See the embalmed body of Lenin in the mausoleum just inside Red Square.</li> <li>• Entry is free and the tomb is open 10-1pm Tue-Thur (not public holidays).</li> <li>• The queue is usually 30-40 mins.</li> <li>• You can take a small bag</li> </ul>	
10	Tomb of the unknown soldier	See the Russian military standing guard over the tomb by the walls of the Kremlin	
11	Gorky Park	Park entrance	Check out the historic stone entrance way to the park

		Tubing	Hire a snow tube for an hour or so
		Ice skating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is one of the largest all-weather ice rinks in Europe. It covers 18,000 square metres of the park's pedestrian pathways and can host 4000 skaters</li> <li>• Gorky's "rink" is a maze of paths, roundabouts and cul-de-sacs</li> <li>• Don't miss the light show after dark, with over 33,000 lights installed under the ice</li> <li>• Disco tunes make for a party atmosphere</li> <li>• Hot chocolate cafes can be accessed with your skates still on</li> <li>• Skate hire available</li> <li>• Complicated pricing and opening times. Check the <a href="#">website</a></li> </ul>
12	Moscow Zoo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R 500/kids free</li> <li>• Highlights are the Arctic foxes and fluffy snow cats</li> <li>• Going inside the tropical monkey/bird house is a bit of a pain clothes-wise</li> </ul>	
13	Medieval folk fair	<p>Just outside Café Pushkin try our hand at jousting and shooting a cross-bow.</p> <p>Market stalls, live music and light tunnels fill the streets</p>	