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Forbes Gives 50 Reasons to Stay in Russia

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There are at least 50 reasons not to leave Russia — starting with a tycoon who controls 80 percent of the global market for optical fiber lasers and ending with an opera singer nicknamed "La Bellissima," Forbes said Monday.

In a nod to the country's infamous brain drain, the Russian edition of the magazine published a new rating dubbed "50 Russians who conquered the world," which lists businesspeople, celebrities, athletes and researchers who are recognized worldwide.

The rating comes with the subhead "Time to leave? Ask them," referring to the immigration of talented people for financial reasons and weariness over issues such as corruption, a hostile business environment and political stagnation.

Leading Russians

Top global investor: Len Blavatnik

Top Russian-born abroad-based entrepreneur: Igor Olenicoff

Top athlete: Maria Sharapova

Top researcher: Andre Geim/Konstantin Novoselov

Top artist: Anna Netrebko

— Forbes

The publication consists of five lists of 10 names each. One list enumerates Russia's top global investors, starting with emigre Len Blavatnik, whose global investment stands at $4.7 billion, and Alisher Usmanov, who has spent $4.4 billion on numerous Internet ventures and a stake in the Arsenal London football club.

A separate list of Russian-born entrepreneurs who built business empires abroad is topped by Igor Olenicoff, a Florida-based real estate mogul with an estimated fortune of $2.6 billion, diamond king Lev Leviev ($1.6 billion) and Valentin Gapontsev, who has carved out a near-monopoly in the optical fiber laser industry, earning a fortune of $1.1 billion.

A rating of top athletes, based on Google queries, is predictably topped by tennis star Maria Sharapova, and far behind her trails Washington Capitals winger Alexander Ovechkin and Andrei Kirilenko, formerly of the Utah Jazz.

Anna Netrebko, the star of the Mariinsky Theater and Metropolitan Opera and nicknamed "the most beautiful one," leads the "culture" list, which also includes director Timur Bekmambetov of "Wanted" fame and Mariinsky director Valery Gergiyev.

Nobel laureates Andre Geim and Konstantin Novoselov lead the academic top 10. All people on this list, except the recluse mathematician Grigory Perelman, are based at research centers or colleges outside Russia.

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