The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Santa Out-Earning Ded Moroz

By Irina Filatova

December 28, 2011



Despite the pay difference, Father Frost's job is similar to Santa Claus'. **Vladimir Filonov**

When Anatoly Shishkin, a photographer from Pushkino in the Moscow region, found an online advertisement by a private kindergarten seeking a freelancer to portray Ded Moroz, or Father Frost, at a kiddy party five years ago, he didn't expect that the one-off job would become a long-term career.

"They paid kopeks. I got 1,000 rubles [$32] for three sessions a day. But I was a student and needed money," said Shishkin, 25. "So I tried it, and I liked it."

Shishkin's daily income during the New Year's holidays has increased significantly since then. He is now invited to appear at apartments and corporate parties, where he works in tandem with Snegurochka — a fairy tale snow maiden generally believed to be the granddaughter of Ded Moroz.

"I don't need to advertise anymore. I have permanent clients, and they pass my phone number to their acquaintances," he said.

Shishkin's profile appears to be typical for Moscow, as every second freelancer seeking a job as Ded Moroz and about 85 percent of ladies seeking to play Snegurochka are under 30 years old, according to a survey released Wednesday by recruiting site SuperJob.ru.

The average income of a Ded Moroz-Snegurochka team in Moscow ranges from 1,000 to 4,000 rubles an hour, the survey said.

"Event agencies usually want to see a Ded Moroz and Snegurochka who are experienced working together. The magic duo's income depends on their experience and professionalism, as well as the event itself," it said.

Shishkin, who is not attached to any agency, said he gets 2,500 rubles an hour when he performs at apartments and 5,000 for working a corporate party. His rate usually doubles on New Year's Eve, he said.

The monthly income for portraying Ded Moroz reaches about 50,000 rubles ($1,600) Shishkin said, adding that the season usually starts in early November.

But, on average, the Russian hero is outearned by his U.S. peer, Santa Claus. A person portraying Santa in shopping centers and corporate parties could make $20,000 to $60,000 during the Christmas season, ABC News reported last month, citing estimates by Santa schools.

Santas working in shopping centers get $20 an hour, while an appearance at a corporate party brings them $100 an hour, the report said.

Meanwhile, costs are equally high for both Ded Moroz and Santa Claus, as the price for a good suit ranges between $800 and $1,000.

Shishkin said it's possible to find a costume for 10,000 rubles, but one should have at least two red coats and two pairs of valenki, traditional Russian boots made of wool felt.

"I always have a reserve costume and a pair of valenki in a trunk — and I made my staff myself," he said.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/12/28/santa-out-earning-ded-moroz-a11697