

Domodedovo Tames Passport Lines

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Newly installed metal barriers at the country's busiest airport mean that arriving passengers form a single line at immigration. **Nikolaus von Twickel**

When U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul called Russia a wild country, he may well have been thinking of the lines at passport control.

That era may have come to an end. Domodedovo Airport has finally introduced a single-line system — putting an end to the pushing, shoving and spread-betting on different lines that saw only the strongest and most ruthless travelers make it across the border in a timely fashion.

The first hurdle for new arrivals was selecting the most attractive herd at a passport control booth, and then making your way to the front of it — a task requiring cunning, sharp elbows and animal tenacity.

The newly installed metal barriers at the country's busiest airport mean that arriving passengers now form a single line before being served by immigration officials as booths

become free.

The previous system, still in use in many other airports in Russia and other former Soviet countries, taught seasoned travelers to size up the likely waiting time based on the length of the line, the perceived laziness of immigration officials and the skin color of fellow travelers.

In an emailed statement, Domodedovo told the Moscow Times that the new system, known as the "serpentine," was introduced in December 2011 in one of three international arrival halls.

Since "the innovation was highly estimated by border control and passengers, it was decided to install 'the serpentine' in all international arrival halls by summer 2012," the statement said. "This system is easily removed and its positioning does not interfere [with the] evacuation of passengers in emergency cases."

A Domodedovo source who asked not to be named because he is not authorized to talk to the press said it had taken several months of negotiations with the Border Guard Service to allow the railings to be installed.

"We spent a long time consulting with other airports, with fire officials and police services over how to do this — whether they should be fixed or movable, and so on," the source said.

Domodedovo was also the first Russian airport to set up airline check-in counters before going through customs.

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