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Night at the Museum Returns, Fewer Lines Expected

By Katherine Jacobsen

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The city's museums will open late Saturday and admission will be free.

Nearly 200 of Moscow's museums, parks, theaters and cultural centers are staying open after hours Saturday as part of the city's sixth annual Night at the Museum project. Most participating venues will be open from 6 p.m. until midnight, some much later, and will offer free admission.

The evening's calendar includes special night tours, performances, street concerts and master classes on a range of topics from cooking to painting.

"This project is important for Moscow because the whole city is participating," said Natalya Malafeyeva, spokeswoman for the night's organizing committee.

By organizing such a wide variety of events spread across the city, organizers say they hope to provide event-goers with an enjoyable and accessible cultural experience.

Events are divided into districts in which they will take place, as well as categories of interest, including science, technology, history, classical art, modern art, decorative art, literature, music and theater. In short, event planners say, there is something for everyone.

The event's website offers a map and a list of events, as well as information about four extra bus routes planned especially for the event. Night at the Museum organizers anticipate anywhere from a remarkable 500,000 to 1 million participants.

Previous years have seen huge lines to get in to many museums and complaints about overcrowding inside. To combat the problem, organizers have a map on their site, which will show which museums have the most visitors so that people can avoid the lines. They also have a hotline for information on the night.

This year, 10 museums, including the Mayakovsky Museum, the Museum of Retro Automobiles and the Museum of Gulag History, are allowing event-goers to register early online or via a telephone hotline, to ensure a quick entrance into the respective museum.

The project this year is funded by the city government in partnership with MITs, an investment-development group.

In particular, the Multimedia Art Museum promises a sleepless night, as it stays open until 2 a.m. The museum has a host of shows on at the moment, such as one dedicated to Soviet chess sets, which includes sets used in the Gulag. The exhibit is timed to coincide with the World Chess Championship, which started in Moscow last week. The lobby of the museum currently also works as a chess board.

Other shows at the museum include the New York photos of Chinese dissident Ai Weiwei and a fascinating look at the Soviet avant-garde buildings of the 1920s and 1930s.

Other Night at the Museum projects take place in more than 42 cities, including London, Paris and Amsterdam. There is no formal connection between the city's project and others abroad, Malafeyeva said, save from the uniting principle of after-hours museum admission.

On Sat. May 19. To find out more about Night at the Museum, see Museumnight.org. Museum hotline: 543-9693.

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