

An Alcoholic's Guide to Moscow Nightlife Dangers

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Moscow's nightlife can be a maze if you don't have an expert guide. **Vladimir Filonov**

If Moscow's nightlife has you in a daze, let my weekly society blog make you an expert.

I will be your guide for the most talked-about events on Moscow's social scene and a comrade-in-arms on nightlife excursions through the city. The events described below might not have happened during the same night, but when you're out every Friday and Saturday like I am, they might as well have.

The concert at Artefaq (32/1 Ulitsa Bolshaya Dmitrovka; +7 495-650-39-71; artefaq.ru) is amazing, but the club is bursting at the seams. Getting a beer from the bar is next to impossible but not as impossible as finding one's friends, considering there is barely any cell phone coverage. When the concert's over, all the coat stands are overturned and the clothing's strewn about on the floor. People are literally crawling around trying to find their coats. A sigh of relief escapes your lips when you finally manage to get out, clutching a coat.

You hope it's yours. It is, but the sci-fi magazine you just bought is gone. Your friends are tired and decide to go home, and you think of stopping for a beer at Kamchatka, a short walk away.

Kamchatka (7 Ulitsa Kuznetsky Most; +7 495-624-88-25) greets you with a huge line at the bar and no space to sit down. While waiting for a beer you scan the crowd and find about half a dozen friends. Kamchatka's 70-ruble-a-liter beer is quite decent, but their cranberry vodka infusion is deadly. It can and will be your downfall. Soon you start exchanging jokes with 50-something Australians at the table next to you and realize it's time to go to Masterskaya. Some of your friends agree to come along.

Masterskaya (3/3 Teatralny Proezd; +7 495-625-68-36; mstrsk.ru) is the place where you never know whether it's going to be crowded or completely deserted. It's better to come around 1 a.m., after the live concert is over and the dancing has started. Unfortunately, it's one of those days when the dancing hasn't started and probably never will. Your friends get bored and go home. You notice a girl in red knee-high boots who is sort of tentatively smiling at you. You dance. But there's also a Romanian guy who came to a conference on futurism and the works of Stanislaw Lem. He looks like a hipster vampire (bushy beard) and is a bit more persuasive. He tells the girl in red boots that this is just like one of Lem's novels and suggests they get married right away.

Your walk is not exactly steady, so when you decide to go to Krizis Zhanra (16/16 Ulitsa Pokrovka 16/16; +7 495-623-2594; kriziszhanra.ru), you hail a gypsy cab. The trick with Krizis is to come after the loud cover bands are done. If you've seen them once, you are probably not too keen on seeing them again. You spot an old friend of yours whom you haven't seen in ages. You dance with her and you both seem to be having lots of fun, but when you try to get more intimate she tells you she's getting married in a month. Bad luck. You feel lonely again and take a cab back to Lubyanka to bar 1920 (10/2 Ulitsa Nikolskaya; +7 495-621-1368; bar1920.ru).

The bouncers here might be really fascist early in the night, but by 4 or 5 in the morning they'd let anyone in. There's no coat closet, so you hang your coat on the wall and get into the middle of the crowd. You start dancing with a pretty girl. She might even let you get to second base, but suddenly there's a whole posse of her girlfriends sitting at the next table. They start screaming at you, "It's girls' night out. Leave our friend alone."

It's time to leave, but you can't find your coat. It's definitely not where you put it. You go around the place looking for it a couple of times and realize that it's gone. You go to the manager. She tells you to call back in a day or two. You argue that it's too cold out, plus your apartment keys were in the coat's pocket. The manager suggests you sleep at your friend's. It's around 7 a.m. and you suddenly get very sober. You notice there's still one coat left hanging on the wall and you grab it. The manager suddenly remembers that someone left her a number in case his coat turns up. "Let's call him. He might've taken your coat." It turns out that the coat from the wall is indeed his coat, and he has yours so an exchange of coats is arranged in the metro at 8. You get your coat and shake hands with the guy who stole it. It's a happy ending.

Some tips for getting into Moscow nightlife venues:

- Dress well. If you don't know how, ask someone who does.
- Look relaxed. Don't let it show that you are worried that you won't get in.
- Always take your hat off before the club's entrance. Moscow hat fashion is rather fickle. Better not to second guess it.
- Grow a beard. Since every fashionable Muscovite is trying to be a hipster, it won't hurt.

Don't come in large groups. Not even in threes. A couple of single guys or single girls always have a better chance than a group of four. It's simple economics. The bar management knows you will spend more money if you meet someone inside.

Show up early to clubs that have demanding face control and late for the ones easy to get into. Try to get acquainted with the bouncers whenever you can.

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