

Giant Louis Vuitton Suitcase on Red Square Causes Outrage

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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An exhibition pavilion in the guise of a huge Louis Vuitton suitcase blocking the view of the Spasskaya Tower. **Igor Tabakov / MT**

A massive pavilion shaped like a Louis Vuitton suitcase that has been erected on Red Square for a suitcase exhibition has angered State Duma deputies and a top architectural preservationist.

Sergei Obukhov, a Duma deputy from the Communist Party, accused the Kremlin of "undermining state foundations" by "deriding and mocking" Red Square, which is on UNESCO's world cultural heritage list, together with the Moscow Kremlin.

"I am surprised that the presidential administration and the Federal Guard Service, both of which control the territory, have allowed this raunchiness," Obukhov told RIA Novosti on Tuesday.

The pavilion, which is 30 meters long and 9 meters high, blocks the view of the Spasskaya Tower and the Kremlin wall from some locations.

The Communist Party will complain to the authorities about the pavilion, Obukhov said.

United Russia Duma deputy Alexander Sidyakin has asked the Moscow branch of the Federal Anti-Monopoly Service to examine whether the pavilion is in violation of Moscow's architectural and advertising rules, saying it has damaged the historical image of Red Square.

Konstantin Mikhailov, a coordinator from Arkhnadzor, an architectural preservation watchdog, said that tens of thousands of people "want to see Red Square itself and not a pavilion belonging to a well-known firm."

Those responsible for putting up the pavilion should "take into account the status" of Red Square, Mikhailov said in a statement on the website of the Public Chamber, of which he is also a member.

This is not Louis Vuitton's first publicity stunt connected with Russia. In 2007, it published a print ad featuring former President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev in the back of a car with a Louis Vuitton bag. A magazine sticking out of the bag carried a headline that read, "The Murder of Litvinenko: They Wanted to Give Up the Suspect for \$7,000," in reference to Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian intelligence agent who died in 2006 from polonium 210 poisoning. Before he died, Litvinenko said Putin was behind his poisoning.

A Louis Vuitton spokesman denied at the time that the magazine had been picked intentionally.

Contact the author at n.krainova@imedia.ru

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