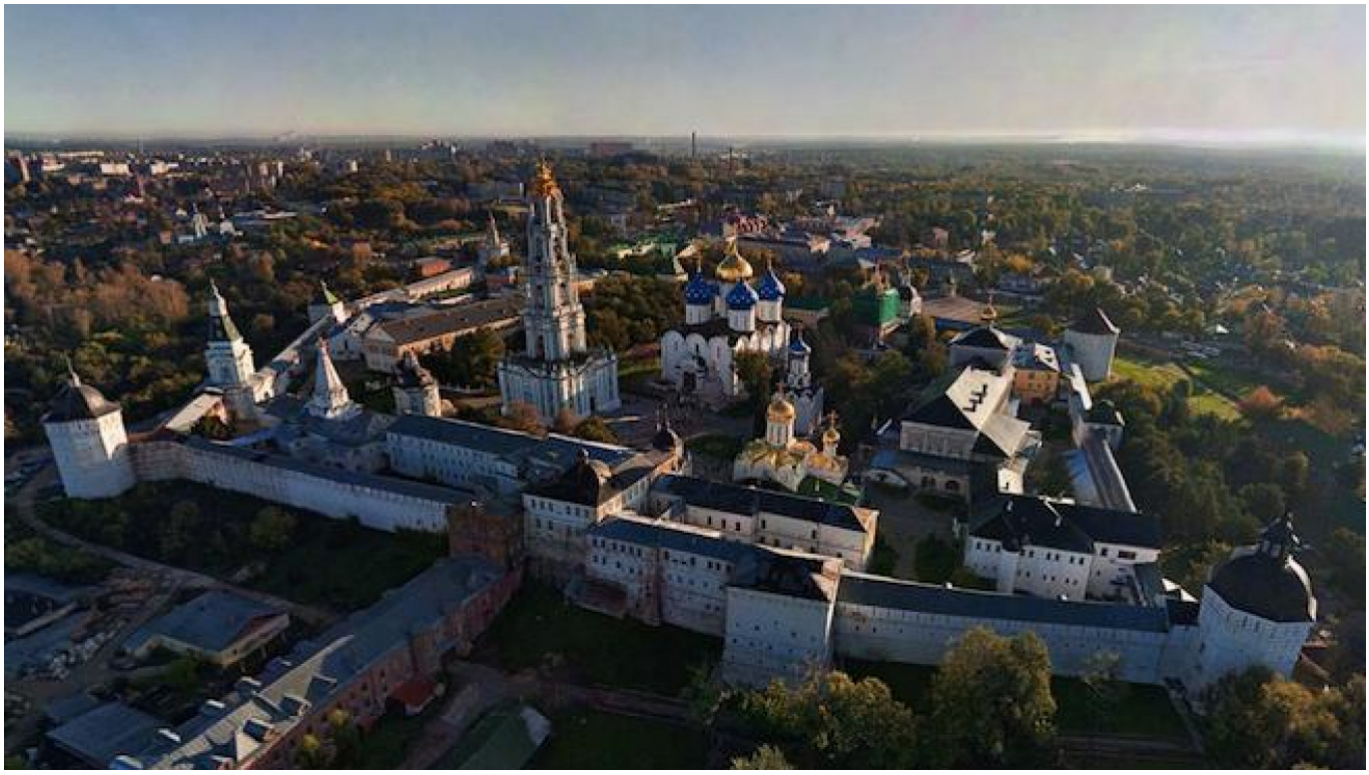
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Best of Moscow: Four Day Trips From the City

By The Moscow Times

August 18, 2016



Mikhail Lomonosov / Wikicommons

On edge from the constant drilling in Moscow's center and dreaming of fresh air, onion domes and a town small enough to explore without using the metro? Look no further. There's plenty of beauty and adventure to be found outside the big city — and it's closer than you might think.

Abramtsevo

Artistic retreat on a beautiful estate

Abramtsevo estate — just 60 kilometers from Moscow — has a long and eventful history. It started life as the center for the Slavophile movement in the early 19th century. Under the

leadership of Sergei Aksakov the estate was frequented by the likes of Nikolai Gogol and Ivan Turgenev. After Aksakov's death the estate was bought by industrialist Savva Morozov, who was also a known patron of the arts and gathered the greatest minds of his time at the estate. Among the well-known artists who spent time and worked at Abramtsevo are Valentin Serov, Ilya Repin, Isaac Levitan, Viktor Vasnetsov and Mikhail Vrubel.

For a ticket costing 800 rubles you can view the works of these artists and visit the on-site buildings which contain more paintings and historical items. Don't miss a small church designed by Viktor Vasnetsov and a majolica bench made by Mikhail Vrubel. At the entrance to the estate there are stands with traditional Russian baked goods and soft drinks. Alternatively stop at cafe Abramtsevo for a light bite or the slightly pricier restaurant at hotel Galereya.

Train from Yaroslavsky Station to Khotkovo and then bus no. 55. Closed on Monday and Tuesday.

Sergiev Posad

Religious heartland

The main attraction of Sergiev Posad, a small town about 70 kilometers north of Moscow, is the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The monastery was founded by Sergius of Radonezh, one of the most revered 14th century Russian saints. The architecture of the monastery is simply unbelievable — you'll find your head constantly turning from one marvel to the other. The masterpieces not to miss are the Trinity Cathedral, which houses Andrei Rublyov's icon "The Trinity," the Assumption Cathedral and the refectory building built in the Baroque style. Both St. Sergius himself and Tsar Boris Godunov are buried on the site.

You are allowed inside the churches during services but be sure to respect the dress code of the monastery. Near the monastery there is a picturesque park where you can rent a boat and relax after all that architectural splendor. If you're looking for a pit stop there's a great little place with burgers, cider and craft beer called Svoi Bar on the way from the monastery to the train station — perfect if you have a little while to wait for your train.

Train from Yaroslavsky Station.

Vladimir

An ancient capital

175 kilometers to the northeast of Moscow, Vladimir was a heavyweight political, religious and cultural destination when Moscow was still in its provincial youth. The city's golden age was during the 12th century when Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky moved the capital to the city from Kiev and built many of the city's most famous landmarks.

Take the express train from Kurskaya Station — the journey takes around three hours — and don't be put off by the rather dour Soviet infrastructure you'll be greeted with upon leaving the train. If you head into town you'll soon see what everyone's talking about. First stop is the Cathedral of St. Demetrius, which bears intricate stone carvings depicting King David, wild beasts and the Kievan Prince Vsevolod III.

Walk past the Palaty, an 18th century court building which holds a children's museum, exhibition and art gallery, toward the fairy-tale golden domes of the Assumption Cathedral. After gawking at the Byzantine-inspired exterior head inside for frescoes by Rublyov and the coffin of Alexander Nevsky of Novgorod. Ghoulish types will get a thrill from the glass coffin through which you can see his withered, mummified hand. A word of warning: take no notice of the signs and instead enquire with the babushka on the desk about when you can expect the churches to open their doors.

Express train from Kurskaya Station or bus from Shchyolkovskaya metro station.

Suzdal

Onion domes and old-world charm

If you've made it as far as Vladimir it would be a shame not to hop on a bus and make the 40 minute journey to Suzdal, rightfully referred to as the diamond of the Golden Ring. If you're looking for rustic charm, more wooden carving than your Instagram account can cope with and a remarkable ratio of churches to human beings, Suzdal is the place for you.

Start your explorations at the Suzdal Kremlin, home to the beautiful blue-domed Nativity of the Virgin Cathedral, a museum. a few streets of houses and several smaller churches. Leaving the Kremlin, take the bridge across the river to the Museum of Wooden Architecture and Peasant Life. It's more about the former than the latter, but the picturesque 1756 Church of the Transfiguration, cafe serving medovukha — a honey based drink — and the old mills make it a lovely place to while away an hour or two.

Further north is the Savior Monastery of Saint Euthymius, Suzdal's biggest monastery. The complex features buildings and churches funded by Ivan the Terrible and the wealthy Pozharsky family. There is no shortage of guest houses and restaurants so if making the journey back to Moscow doesn't seem like an attractive option, spend the night and have dinner and a few glasses of Georgian wine on the terrace at "Gostiny Dvor."

Express train from Kurskaya Station to Vladimir. Cross the road to the bus station and buy a ticket to Suzdal. Buses depart every 30 minutes.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/08/18/best-of-moscow-four-day-trips-from-the-city-a55021