The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

How to Do the Holidays in Moscow

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GUM Christmas market **gum.ru**

Find yourself staying in Moscow over the holidays either through choice or circumstances? Not to worry. While you may not be able to surround yourself with your eccentric relatives, with a little effort, you can bring most of the trappings of the festive season to you. Here's a helping hand.

Where to Buy a Turkey

Bag a bird

At the heart of any self-respecting Christmas table is the turkey. But finding a bird which deserves pride of place in Moscow can be a little tricky. While you can buy turkey meat in almost every large Russian supermarket, to get your hands on something a little more special head to Danilovsky market or Usachyovsky market. Here farmers sell big, healthy turkeys that, while pricier than your average, are certainly worth it in terms of flavor. If you're short of time or want something convenient head to your local Azbuka Vkusa, or order one of their turkeys online. Farmer's cooperative LavkaLavka will also deliver an organic turkey and all the trimmings from a farmer straight your door. That's one thing off the list.

danrinok.ru, usachevsky.ru, azbukavkusa.ru, lavkalavka.ru

Where to Buy a Tree

How lovely are your branches

A tradition brought over by Peter the Great in the 17th century, the "yolka" — Christmas tree — is traditionally purchased for New Years celebrations and therefore appears a little later in Russian homes. The lazy person's best option is elki.ru, a website that can deliver you a Fraser Fir (from 2,300 rubles)— the preferred White House Christmas tree — and many other varieties from just 500 rubles (dependent on the size of the tree). Alternatively, if you don't mind waiting until December 20 to purchase your tree, dozens of official vetted Christmas tree bazaars will open across the capital. They are designed to stop people selling you a bootleg Christmas tree illegally collected at night with a saw. See the Moscow News Agency for the full list.

elki.ru, mskagency.ru/materials/2479455

Where to Celebrate Hanukah

Festival of lights

A number of concerts and events will take place in the city to mark Hanukkah, which starts on the evening of December 24 and runs through January 1, including a concert and party organized by the Israeli Cultural Institute in Moscow. If you're celebrating at home, jewishbookstore.ru sells a number of Hanukkah menorahs which can be delivered to your home. And for kids, don't forget to check out the events organised by Moscow's Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, including a children's art masterclass inspired by their current Gerhard Richter exhibition. The Federation of Jewish Communities will also present its "Fiddler on the Roof" award for cultural and social achievements at the Kremlin Palace on December 21 — tickets are still available.

the-hanukkah.ru, jewishbookstore.ru, jewish-museum.ru

Where to Buy Christmas Tipples

Cheers!

The holidays wouldn't be the holidays without sipping prosecco at breakfast or enjoying a glass of red by a roaring fire — or a roaring radiator. If you're looking to splash out on something a little more refined than your average supermarket vino, why not treat yourself with a visit to Grand Cru, a superb wine emporium where you can browse — and perhaps even sample — the more than 1,200 vintages on offer. 2016 has been quite the year and if you're after something a bit stronger, head to winebutik.ru. Here you can order a huge array of wines and spirits including gin, whisky, sherry and then have it delivered to your door— saving a perilous metro journey back home. Spend more than 3,000 rubles on up to six liters of booze and delivery will be absolutely free.

grandcru.ru winebutik-ru

Where to meet Santa Claus

Embrace your inner child

If you have kids and they're dying to meet Ded Moroz (Grandfather Frost), the Russian answer to Santa Claus, you'll be pleased to know he's receiving visitors through January 8 at his wintery abode near Kuzminki park. "Ded Moroz Village," open every weekend in December and from January 1 through 8, includes a Ded Moroz's house, the abode of his assistant Snegurochka (Snow Maiden), a post office where children can drop off their Christmas letters, and even a small exhibition about the history of the greetings card in Russia. Afterwards you can enjoy a wander through the snow-covered trees in the surrounding forest. Adult tickets 400 rubles, children's tickets 300 rubles.

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Where to Buy Christmas Cookies and Candy

Share the joy in sugar form

Russians seem to have a hereditary sweet tooth, and the holiday season is just another excuse to indulge it. For your candy cane needs, head to candy-life.ru, where you can buy candy canes of every color under the sun, not to mention other goods of the kind dentists have nightmares about. The trick is to buy in bulk — orders over 2,500 rubles will receive free delivery. For traditional American Christmas cookies made by a Long Island native put in an order in with New York Bakery. The kind-hearted bakers are happy to make you a bespoke batch, but you'll need to order 200 at a time. If that seems like an obscene amount, why not pair up with a some friends, buy in bulk and make some new pals at the office by sharing them around.

candy-life.ru, newyorkbakery.ru

Where to Eat Out on Christmas Day

For those too lazy to cook

December 25 is really like any other day in Moscow, and given that it's a Sunday, a number of bars and restaurants say that it will probably be even quieter than usual. That said, you should still be able to find yourself a traditional roast dinner — if not a party atmosphere. Moscow's favorite Irish pub Katie O'Shea's promises to put on a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings, as does H2, the reincarnation of Hudson on Lesnaya Ulitsa, where a small party will start at 6 p.m. and continue until late. Alas, expat favorite Scandinavia won't be putting on a special lunch to mark Western Christmas, but if you're looking to get close to reindeer — if only in charcuterie form — this is the place to do it.

facebook.com/h2bar, scandinavia.ru, katieosheas.ru

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