

Museum Night: Moscow calls on culture to win 'battle of the sofa'

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Once celebrated as the city of 1,000 churches, these days Moscow is a city of museums. On the evening of May 20, over 200 museums, galleries, and art schools will open their doors to the public for the 11th annual citywide “Museum Night” festival.

From 6 p.m. on, the festival offers a range of special events in museum and art spaces: interactive lectures, concerts, master classes, historical reenactments and walking tours. Most venues will be open until midnight.

The Russian Department of Culture sponsors the festival, a large-scale attempt to connect with youthful Muscovites and broaden the audience of active museum-goers.

“One of the goals of cultural politics is to form taste, to form habits and modes of consumption of cultural content,” says Vladimir Filippov, deputy head of the Moscow

Department of Culture.

The nocturnal art fest, which today is among the largest cultural events in the country, is one of a growing number of similar “museum nights” around the world. Moscow’s Museum Night attracts a young audiences, says Filippov, with the median age at about 33 to 35.

“We are winning the battle with the sofa for Muscovites’ free time,” he says. “Sponsoring this event develops the city’s creative economy.” Pioneered in the capital 11 years ago, Museum Night is now a Russia-wide event, taking place in cities and rural estate-museums from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka. The organizers hope to attract audiences of all ages and educational backgrounds with an ambitious and varied program.

On Saturday, leading scholars and representatives of Moscow’s major museums will give lectures at the Hermitage Garden on a variety of topics, from audiovisual art to the physiology of memory. Meanwhile, the Winzavod art space will host a series of theatrical sketches and performances in its courtyard on the theme of dreams. Its gallery spaces will also be open to the public.

For children and young people, however, Museum Night opens up potentially magical experiences.

Families with young children might enjoy a historical reenactment of the court of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich (1629–1676) at the main palace in Kolomenskoye Park. The museum staff will play out a court scene in 17th-century costumes from 9:00–9:30 p.m. Children can also participate in master classes at the All-Russian Museum of Decorative, Applied and Folk Art.

Moscow’s youth makes up an important part of this target market: To reach this group, the Department of Culture has hired minor celebrities—including cosmonauts, actors and other television personalities—to present their take on the museum’s collections. Some of these tours will be videorecorded and available online.

For those who don’t speak Russian, Museum Night will also offer musical concerts for a wide range of tastes.

At the M.C. Shepkina House-Museum, composer Misha Mishenko will perform live piano accompaniments to short films by the fashion designer Lesya Paramonova. For lovers of mid-century modern jazz, meanwhile, the Solo-Ts Jazz ensemble will play a concert in the style of Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan at the Tolstoy House Museum on Ulitsa Pyatnitskaya.

Meanwhile, the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art on Gogolevsky Bulvar will present sets of live electronic music (dance music, ambient and noise) all evening.

To facilitate transportation around the city, the Tele2 telecommunications company has paid for a shuttle service between eight museums, including the Museum of Cosmonautics at VDNKh, the Jewish Museum of Tolerance, the Bulgakov Museum, the

State Tretyakov Gallery's two branches and the Darwin Museum. Attendees can pick up a burger and coffee at the shuttle stops before they commute to the next museum.

"It's great that in one day you can see the best of the museums," says Yelena Sakharova, a press representative for the TV channel Moya Planeta, who attended in 2016.

"After Museum Night, I feel full of strength, energy and creativity."

More information is available [here](#)

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