

# Creatures Great and Small: 7 Places For City Kids to Meet Animals

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## Cat Cafe 'Kotiki i Lyudi'

### *Pet therapy*

Since their start in Japan in the late 1990s, cat cafes have become a worldwide phenomenon. Kotiki i Ludi, which has two Moscow locations, adopts homeless cats with particularly docile temperaments and charges 400–500 rubles (\$7–8.50) for visitors to hang out with them. The felines can depart to a quieter back room at any point.

## Moscow Zoo

### *A traditional zoo in the city center*

The Moscow Zoo opened in 1864, and since then it has offered Muscovites a chance to see the world's wild animals with their own eyes: giraffes, elephants, polar bears, a

reptile house and wildebeest from the savannah. It also offers birthday parties, guided tours, and an interactive lecture on Thursdays at 1 p.m.

## **The Children's Park of Wonders**

*Kids to the petting zoo, parents to the mall*

There are petting zoos tucked into many city parks. But the Retail Park shopping complex on Varshavskoye Shosse offers an enormous wooden playground and "mini-zoo" resembling a Russian folk village. Kids can feed goats, pigs, lambs, poultry and white rabbits that would have populated the courtyards (and dinner tables) of villages long ago.

## **Grandpa Durov's Circus Theater**

*You can train a cat to dance?*

This theater was founded in 1912 by Vladimir Durov, a circus performer and trainer who developed his own zoo-psychological techniques. At "Grandpa Durov's Corner," actors sing, dance, and clown around the stage. Each delightful play features trained animals: exotic elephants and seals, domestic cats and poodles, even lemurs, raccoons and donkeys.

## **Voroby Bird Park**

*Camp out at the zoo*

If you're up for a daytrip to the Kaluga region, the Voroby Bird Park combines a stay in a national park with a zoo. Only in its second year of operation, it has 484 species of birds, fish, reptiles. Guests can stay in the park hotel, rent riverside cottages and even fish in a small pond. Guests can hang out for a weekend, or at least long enough to visit the "night pavilion" full of nocturnal birds and rodents one might otherwise never see.

## **Moskvarium**

*An ocean in the capital city*

At Moscow's "Sea World," visitors can see more than 8,000 animals and fish from small coral inhabitants to three-meter-long sharks. There is a show with dolphins, seals and an orca, and also a touch-pool zone, where kids can feel starfish and other sea life.

## **Horse Rides in Izmailovsky**

*Park stables in a city park*

A small recreational stable in Izmailovsky Park offers horse and pony rides for families. You can even take a donkey or camel for a spin if you call ahead. A one-hour ride on a horse costs 1,500 rubles (\$26) on weekdays, and 2,000 rubles on weekends. The Izmailovsky stable also offers lesson packages (4,800–8,400 rubles). Those nervous about saddling-up can glide around the park in a carriage or a sleigh during winter. The youngest children can take a tour around the stable and interact with horses without riding them.

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