

# Dagestan: Russia's Wrestling Goldmine

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In the fall of 2016 and winter of 2017, Moscow-based Dutch photographer [Michiel Graafstal](#) traveled to the North Caucasus to photograph the region's wrestlers. "I wondered how it is that the sport is so big" in Dagestan, he told The Moscow Times

Graafstal says that gyms have had to turn newcomers away and many experienced wrestlers have left for Belarus and Uzbekistan where they have a better chance of competing internationally.

But, he said, Dagestan will continue to grow as a source of internationally successful wrestlers. "As long as they on keep winning, I think things will continue the way they are or even get bigger."

Follow [Michiel Graafstal](#) on Instagram [here](#).

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