

With IKEA, 'Later' Finally Arrived

By [Anna Anufrieva](#)

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I had visited the IKEA in Prague, so when it opened its first store in Moscow, I went on opening day.

There were huge crowds — just enormous numbers of people. The lines to check out started way back in the flower section and the cashiers were working so hard, people brought them bottles of water so they didn't faint. It took two hours to check out, but no one minded.

There was music playing and it was like a holiday. There was nothing like this in Russia at all — nothing like their designs, colors, or styles, not to mention the service and design tools.

In the Soviet period, if you weren't a bureaucrat or someone with "pull," you had no access to imported or well-made and attractive Soviet goods. The only way to buy them was on the black market for double the price. Household goods weren't accessible or affordable.

When IKEA opened, it was as if our dreams came true — nice things that were both accessible

and affordable for just about everyone. As one of my friends said, “We always used to say, ‘I’ll buy that later. Sometime later I’ll get that.’ And with IKEA, that ‘later’ finally arrived.”

Even now, the joke in the family is that we go to buy lightbulbs and end up with only four lightbulbs and 5,000 rubles (\$85) worth of “accessories” — and frozen Swedish meatballs. I’m convinced that there isn’t a family in Moscow who doesn’t have IKEA frozen meatballs in the freezer.

It’s just a fun place to be. When my son was small, he used to say after a trip to the mall, “I want to live there!”

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