

What's Trending in Russia in 2018?

At the start of the year, we look ahead at the main trends

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Sophia Miroyedova

Don't say it, rap it!

Last year even the biggest culture snobs were forced to recognize the power of Russian-language hip-hop. In 2018, the genre will decisively emerge from the shadows. And it won't just be Russia's youth moving their heads to the beats.

"There's a market for hip-hop musicians who can appeal to all age groups," says Dmitry Konnov, managing director at Universal Music.

DIY entrepreneurship and social media

Russians are setting up their own businesses and initiatives left, right and center. Who needs sluggish state television channels when there's YouTube? Not online journalist Yury Dud or opposition activist Alexei Navalny.

And who needs a site when you can launch your own channel on Telegram? [[Plug @MTLive here.](#)]

Downshift close to home

Дауншифтинг, or downshifting, has been a trend in Russia for some time, but traditionally required moving to Thailand or other exotic destinations. This year, Russians get to downshift closer to home, as it's all about staying local.

Trips to Lake Baikal or hikes in the Altai steppe are becoming more popular, and arts and crafts are in.

To stay with the theme, the ingredients of 2018 are mushrooms, berries and edible plants and flowers, says Boris Akimov, the co-founder of the LavkaLavka farmers' cooperative. Wait a moment — isn't that just classic babushka fare?

Protest politics

Granted, no one will raise an eyebrow when Putin emerges as the winner in the March 2018 elections. But in the year that also marks the centenary of the assassination of the Romanovs and the 200th birthday of communist ideologue Karl Marx, politics is in the air.

Opposition leader Alexei Navalny and his supporters will hold protests before and after the election. And women's rights activists are also increasingly making their voices heard.

Let your inner canine out

According to the Chinese horoscope, 2018 is the year of the yellow mountain dog. And that's no joke to superstitious Russians.

If 2017, the Year of the Rooster, was marked by whims, eccentricity and a fight in the pecking order, the Year of the Dog will be filled with more dialogue, solidarity and cooperation.

Dogs need plenty of physical exercise, so gyms are in business. But adjust your outfit accordingly and throw out those leopard print leggings — dogs can't stand cats. And be warned: In the year after #Metoo, it pays to keep your alpha male behavior on a leash.

Foreign agents

In 2017, a new law made it possible to label media outlets 'foreign agents.' This year could see that measure put into practice, including against individuals.

'It's clear that the presidential administration sees 2018 and the years after as complicated socially and politically,' says Fyodor Kravchenko, from Media Lawyers. 'Like a fort preparing for invasion, it has prepared as many tools as possible to control the informational sphere in the country.'

The real risk, he says, is that foreign agent media outlets could go on to be labeled 'undesirable organizations.'

'In that case any person, no matter what his or her citizenship, could face punishment for cooperating with foreign correspondents or even giving an interview.'

Cryptoriches

Russians love tech and they love anonymity. Combine that with the prospect of getting rich and you've got a winning currency — especially when Putin seems to have embraced cryptocurrency as the Kremlin's pet project.

'This year will reveal the success rate of companies that raised money via ICOs in 2017,' says Sergei Dobryshkin, chief editor of Cryptorussia.ru. 'If Russian startups do better than expected, it'll set a good precedent.'

Unless Russia's financial regulators get in the way, of course.

Don't Expect

an end to meat

While some are chewing on edible plants, meat is undergoing its own revival. The 2017 trend of meat restaurants such as Zharovnya, Meatless and Myaso & Ryba will continue, says The Moscow Times food writer Andrei Muchnik.

Or, in the words of Akimov, from LavkaLavka: 'Pork is the new beef!'

a green energy revolution

Oil-rich Russia has been slow to catch up with the green energy trend, and 2018 is unlikely to be an exception, says Vladimir Chuprov, head of the energy program at Greenpeace Russia.

'We're not expecting a big breakthrough,' says Chuprov. 'The extraction of oil, coal, gas and nuclear power is still the main focus and it is heavily subsidized.'

Russia will increase its renewable energy output in solar and wind in 2018, however, thanks to the completion of projects launched in 2013-14.

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