

A Day at the Museum

June 01, 2018



Dmitry Yermakov / Moskva News Agency

The Tretyakov Gallery

The Tretyakov Gallery houses Moscow's largest and finest collection of Russian art. The collection was founded by Pavel Tretyakov, the scion of a wealthy textile merchant family. Tretyakov bought his first paintings in 1856; by 1892 when he gifted it to the city of Moscow, it already contained 2,000 works. Tretyakov kept his paintings at his home, adding on halls almost yearly as his collection grew. After his death in 1898, the space became a dedicated gallery with almost nothing remaining of the original house. The distinctive façade — a very Russian blend of art nouveau and fairy tale ornamentation designed by the artist Victor Vasnetsov — was built along with other major additions in 1902-04.

Today the Old Tretyakov Gallery houses an enormous collection of Russian art from its beginning in Orthodox icons up until the turn of the 20th century. The museum is very accommodating to foreign visitors, with the works identified in Russian and English, and an audio guide in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Italian and Chinese. There are book and souvenir shops and a café.

Open: Tues., Wed., Sun., 10 a.m to 6 p.m. Thurs., Fri., Sat., 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Closed Monday

Tickets: 500 rubles

Lavrushinsky Pereulok tretyakovgallery.ru/en

The New Tretyakov Gallery

With the “Old Tretyakov Gallery” bursting its seams with art and in desperate need of repairs, in 1985 the museum opened the “New Tretyakov Gallery” not far away on the Moscow River. It is housed in a huge rectangular box of a building shared with the Central House of Artists and surrounded by an art park now called Muzeon.

When you come to the museum, be sure to leave some time before or after to wander around Muzeon, which has a sculpture garden that includes Soviet-era monuments torn down in the 1990s, an outdoor movie theater, art market, cafes, and that holds concerts and other events on the weekends.

The New Tretyakov (entrance on the long side) now showcases 20th and 21st century Russian art as well as special exhibitions. The permanent collection is a beautifully curated exhibit of the Russian avant-garde. Here you can find works that changed world art, such as Kazimir Malevich’s “Black Square.”

This summer there are two special shows of interest. One is a retrospective of the Russian painter Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904), a military man and traveler famous for his evocative scenes of Russia, Persia, and Central Asia and his battlefield scenes. The other is a show of works by Vadim Kosmatschhof, a Russian sculptor who was compelled to emigrate from the Soviet Union in 1979 in order to pursue his artistic vision.

The New Tretyakov has audio-guides in English, book guides in several languages in the bookshop, a café and souvenir stands.

Open: Tues., Wed., 10 a.m to 6 p.m. Thurs., Fri., Sat., Sun., 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Closed Monday

Tickets: 500 rubles

Krymsky Val, 10 tretyakovgallery.ru/en

Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts

Moscow’s other great museum is the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, founded by Ivan Tsvetayev to bring Western European art to Russians. His dream was realized in 1912 when the last tsar, Nicholas II, opened the museum.

As the museum complex undergoes expansion and reconstruction, two of the buildings are open for visitors. The Main Building houses most of the collection, which begins with the art of ancient Greece and the Near East. In this part of the collection you can see the Trojan Gold that disappeared from Germany during WWII and reappeared publicly in Moscow only in 1993. The collection of Dutch masters is particularly fine, and now complemented by a temporary show of the Leiden Collection.

Next door is the celebrated collection of American and European art from the late 19th and early 20th century.

Here you will find works that you've only seen in books before by Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Henri Rousseau.

The museum offers free audio guides in izi. TRAVEL application and traditional audio guides in Russian, English, German, French, Italian and Chinese for the permanent exhibition and English for temporary shows.

Open: Tues., Wed., Sat., Sun., 11 a.m to 8 p.m. Thurs., Fri., 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Closed Monday

Tickets: 400 rubles

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