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Moscow Runs Low on Beer for Thirsty World Cup Fans

By Reuters

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Reuters

Beer-guzzling football fans risk drinking parts of Moscow dry, with some bars and restaurants in the Russian capital saying they are running low and having to wait longer than usual for fresh supplies.

Moscow has been transformed by the World Cup, with singing, chanting and beer-swilling fans overwhelming some of the packed bars and restaurants around the Kremlin and Red Square.

"We just didn't think they would only want beer," said one waiter at a upscale eatery in central Moscow who asked not to be identified for fear of scaring off future customers.

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The waiter said his restaurant ran out of draft lager on Monday and deliveries are taking longer than usual, at least 24 hours, because suppliers' stocks are also running low.

"There are really a lot of people in Moscow ... and they are all drinking," he said. "It's hot, and it's football."

Beer sales in Russia have fallen by around a third as duties have risen and rules been tightened on sales and advertising. Brewers had not been expecting a major reversal of the trend this year.

Baltika, the Russian unit of Carlsberg, said although there was an increased risk of supply disruption during the World Cup, its business had not been affected.

Heineken said sales were so far going well and it did not yet see any challenges supplying its beer.

Anheuser-Busch InBev, the world's biggest brewer and an official FIFA sponsor for the World Cup, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

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Dmitry, a barman at trendy courtyard bar Gogol, said visiting football fans had drunk 800 liters of beer in three days, downing the cheap lager before moving on to more expensive bottled beers.

Gogol was taking three deliveries on Tuesday to replenish supplies, he said, as workers busily unpacked boxes of beer, vodka and whiskey from a nearby van.

"The sun makes them thirsty," he said of his customers. "In Russian we say 'to the bottom!' I like that these guys are embracing our culture."

Ivan, a Croatian in Russia to see his team take on Argentina on Thursday, said he had yet to encounter any shortages.

"There is beer everywhere," he said, swigging from a can of Russian Zhiguli lager whilst sitting on a bench near the Bolshoi Theatre. "Some places yes, some places no. You just have to know where to find it!"

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