

Jewish Moscow: Eat Pray Learn

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Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center

Due to restrictions on settlement during the tsarist era, Moscow has never been a true center for Jewish culture. But a tourist looking to learn about Jews in the Russian Empire will have no trouble filling their itinerary with sights and museums. Moscow has several synagogues, kosher restaurants, special museums and, according to a 2010 census, around 50,000 Jews living in the city.

Moscow Choral Synagogue

Center of Russian Judaism

The Choral Synagogue is Moscow's oldest and most frequently visited center of Jewish worship. Located next to the historic Jewish "ghetto" of Zaryadye, the pale yellow neoclassical structure was consecrated in 1906 after protracted negotiations with the local authorities and the tsar, none of whom were overly keen to have a synagogue in the city. It

continued to serve Moscow's Jews through the Soviet period, despite the official ban on religion, and still holds regular services. Inside, the main sanctuary is as beautiful as the exterior, almost Venetian in the richness of the textures and mosaics.

10 Bolshoi Spasoglinishchevsky Pereulok. Metro Kitai-Gorod. centralsynagogue.ru

Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center

Experience Jewish history

This impressive state-of-the-art museum is Russia's main showcase for the history of Jews in the country. It is housed in a historic constructivist bus terminal in the city's main Jewish district, and was renovated and equipped with a 4D movie theater, panoramic and interactive displays and a wide collection of materials relating to the Jewish experience in Russia, from the time of Catherine the Great to the present. In the powerful and immersive permanent collection, you can easily spend an afternoon watching videos, reading documents and even listening to traditional music. Additionally, the museum regularly hosts temporary exhibitions, lectures and events.

11 Ulitsa Obraztsova, Bldg. 1A. Metro Marina Roshcha. jewish-museum.ru

Museum of Jewish History in Russia

Window into Jewish daily life in the Russian Empire

Open an unassuming door marked with the cryptic initials MIEVR, walk up a flight of stairs and you will enter a treasure chest of Jewish life in the Russian Empire. The curators of this museum have traveled extensively around eastern Europe collecting everything from beautifully painted Torah arks and tombstones to kitchen utensils and tefillin. The museum depicts in detail how Jews spent their lives, from bris to funeral, using objects from everyday life. When they are available, the staff is happy to give free tours and answer questions, though calling in advance is recommended.

10 Petrovsko-Razumovskaya Alleya, Bldg. 3, office 7. Metro Dinamo. mievr.ru

Jerusalem

Kosher rooftop café

On the roof of Moscow's Bolshaya Bronnaya Synagogue, you'll find a breezy kosher restaurant that offers lovely views of the surrounding rooftops and a chance to try the cuisine of the Mountain Jews. Like their Christian and Muslim neighbors in the Caucasus, the Mountain Jews eat plenty of grilled meats, making this a great place to try shashlik, whether you keep kosher or not.

6 Bolshaya Bronnaya Ulitsa. Metro Pushkinskaya. facebook.com/jerusalemnmoscow

Shtetl

Traditional Ashkenazi specialties

Looking like a set from “Fiddler on the Roof,” this kosher meat restaurant serves borshch and knishes just like your Bubbe’s Bubbe used to make them. It is located in the Marina Roshcha district, a short walk from the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center.

5A 2nd Vysheslavitsev Pereulok. Metro Marina Roshcha. koshermeal.ru/#shtetl

Rynok i Obshchepit Shuk

Israeli fast food

Part fast-food counter, part market and part bar, this is the place to go in Moscow for authentic Israeli cuisine, including probably the best shakshuka in the city. The menu is not kosher and the shop is open seven days a week. It also can get crowded: Sometimes it’s necessary to fight for a seat at one of the long communal tables, so plan ahead if you are with a group.

7 Veskovsky Pereulok. Metro Novoslobodskaya. facebook.com/rynokshuk

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