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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

What's On Over the May Holidays in Moscow

What to do in the capital for the first 10 days of May

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Denis Voronin / Moskva News Agency

Easter

The Russian Orthodox Church celebrates Easter this year on May 2, which means that there will be lines outside churches on Saturday as people bring baskets of kulich (sweet bread), paskha (a sweet cheese spread), colored eggs and other treats to be blessed. The main Easter service, with the glorious procession around the church, is held towards midnight Saturday night. VDNKh Park will have Easter events for kids and adults, and Danilovsky Market is planning an Oval Day of celebrations which include an egg-shaped pinata, master classes in egg decoration, entertainment by the group Under the Covers (2-5 p.m.), not to mention plenty of homemade Easter food. For more visual delights, head over to the Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts for a lovely show of decorated eggs.

May 9 is Victory Day

Last year the pandemic made the jubilee celebrations of the end of The Great Patriotic War a very quiet affair, but this year the parade and air show will take place as usual, starting right at 10 a.m. For good viewing, line up along Nizhniye Mnevniki, Zvenigorodskoye Shosse, and then Tverskaya-Yamskaya and Tverskaya Ulitsa. Unfortunately, the very moving Immortal Regiment parade will take place online this year on May 9, but live in June if the coronavirus pandemic is under control. After the ceremonies, spend the day at the Victory Museum for performances, games, concerts and other activities for kids and adults (not to mention tanks to climb on). There will also be a series of concerts at the Conservatory from May 5-10, with a special musical program on May 9 called "Songs. Memory. War." Information about the programs and ticket purchases here. And at 10 p.m. the fireworks display will begin in nearly 80 spots around the city. VDNKh, the Victory Museum, Sparrow Hills and Zaryadye Park are all good places to watch.

Spring is sprung

The weather in Moscow for the May holidays doesn't look promising. But if the sun comes out, or if you are dying for the colors and scents of spring anyway, head over to the Apothecary Garden just north of the Ring Road on Prospekt Mira. Founded by Peter the Great in 1706, it is an oasis of beauty and peace in the heart of the busy, noisy capital. From April 10 to May 30 they are celebrating their 20th annual Spring festival, when the entire garden is set alight by wave after wave of spring flowers. They are most proud of the 100,000 tulips which are planted to bloom on Victory Day (but may be a bit late this year). The garden also has dozens of flowering trees, including three types of Sakura (cherry trees) — one from Mount Fuji that was gifted to the garden from Tokyo in 2010 — which are already starting to bloom. If it's cool and rainy, head into one of the hothouses and wander among the palms and vines to find all the magnificent orchids.

The garden is open every day from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. For more information about tickets and events, see the garden site.

For kids: Alpaca Park

Alpaca Park may be the perfect outing for families over the May break. The two breeds of alpacas in the park were imported from Germany and, like all alpacas, seem to be on earth for humans to hug them. You can wander among them, pet them, feed them, take walks and photographs with them and then go back for more. There is also a film about alpacas and plenty of alpaca souvenirs. Prices range from 800 rubles for entry up to 7500 for a photo session with the park photographer. Not cheap, but the park guarantees that you will leave in a better mood than when you came. For more information, see the site.

Travel to Venice

The Neo-Gothic Tsaritsyno Palace and Nature Preserve was founded by Empress Catherine the Great as her country residence. But after a glance at what she had ordered her architects to create, she decided it wasn't to her taste after all and drove away in her carriage, never to return. The buildings and park slowly slipped into picturesque ruins until several years ago

when modern architects restored what was and built on to the original structures. Now it is a very pleasant nature preserve — where the Rope Park will open for the season on May 1 — and also a venue for concerts, events and art shows.

This week Venice came to town: a rich exhibition called Under the Mask of Venice: Everyday Life in the 18th century. Carnival masks, Murano glassware, gondola decorations, clothing, books, paintings... thousands of items from Venetian museums that you can see, touch, smell, and hear. For more information in Russian and tickets, see the site here.

Stand-up comedy

On Mon. May 3 at 9:30 p.m. get in your seats and prepare to laugh. Josh Wilson will explore an audience member's universal truth in Masks. What hill are you ready to die on? Waffles are better than pancakes? "Leave It to Beaver" was the greatest sit-com of all time? Chocolate is terrible? Whatever it is, Wilson will weave a hilarious tale of truth or falsehood. Next Frances Ransome will be in the Fran Zone to keep you laughing over Star Trek, life in Russia, relationships, sex, and everything else that keeps her and us awake at night. Both performances are in English. Tickets and more information available at the site.

Art revelations

If you think you know painter Ilya Repin, head over to the old Tretyakov Gallery to see the "Known and Unknown Ilya Repin" show. The modest-sized show punches above its weight to show how the painter most of us consider to be the classic realist evolved, explored and expanded his style to include elements of impressionism and even the avant-garde.

And then head to the other side of town to see what was behind some closed doors during the Soviet period. While socialist realism reigned in museums and official art galleries and exhibitions, some art lovers in relatively high positions and with extremely discerning tastes defied the law against "speculation" (buying and selling by individuals) to collect works of banned artists. The Museum of Russian Impressionism just opened a new show called "Seekers of Art" to celebrate 14 collectors and their magnificent collections.

Go Retro at the movies

On May 3 at 6 p.m. you can sit back in a comfortable seat in a big movie theater with a soda and bag of popcorn and watch "Rear Window" in English with Russian subtitles. Tickets can be ordered here. All weekend at dozens of theaters you can watch the second film in the "Lord of the Ring Trilogy," "The Two Towers," and third film in the series, "The Return of the King." For more information about times and theaters, see the site here. Pioner is also showing both films and several other foreign-language films for kids and adults; for more information see the site here. If you want to go dark, you can watch the David Lynch thriller "Mullhollad Drive" with Naomi Watts and Laura Harring or see Arnold Schwarzenegger in "Total Recall" at a number of theaters. For more listings of foreign language films, see the site msk.subcity.ru.

On stage

From April 22 to May 18, Moscow is celebrating a musical Easter Festival at several of the best

finest venues in the city, including the Conservatory, Tchaikovsky Hall, the chamber hall of Christ the Savior Church, the Russian Army Theater and Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin. The program includes symphonic, choral and bell-ringing concerts, the last a rare event in the capital. For more information see the site here.

If you wish to immerse yourself in a bit of madness, you can see "The Man From Podolsk" at teatr.doc, where a young man from a small town is arrested without cause in Moscow. But in this reality, the police are the only people who care about his cultural upbringing. The production was directed by Mikhail Ugarov and Igor Stam.

And while it appears that tickets for the ballet and opera over the holidays were snapped up as fast as Airbnb apartments in Sochi, there are a few tickets available for the charming ballet "La Esmeralda" at the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theater.

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