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In Photos: Russians Celebrate Maslenitsa with Bonfires and Blini

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This past week Russians across the country celebrated Maslenitsa. The weeklong holiday marks Shrovetide, the last week before Lent begins, but has roots in Slavic pagan traditions. The holiday culminates in large bonfires and the burning of straw effigies — a symbolic funeral for the winter that has just passed. This is the last week Orthodox Christians can eat dairy products and fish before the rigorous Lenten fast, hence the holiday's name Maslenitsa (Butter Week) or Cheesefare Week. It is associated with the eating of blini — traditional thin pancakes that are thought to symbolize the sun. They are topped topped with everything but meat, from caviar to sour cream to fruit preserves. Here's a look at the Maslenitsa celebrations in Moscow and at the Nikola-Lenivets art park in the Kaluga region:



Yaroslav Chingaev / Moskva News Agency

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