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# Travel Adventures - Part 4:

## Moscow

by Noella Ballenger

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**This beautiful woman lingered for a moment on the steps at one of the several churches in the Sergeiv Posad Monastery. I thought she was absolutely beautiful.**

So far in this journey we have visited some wonderful cities ... Helsinki, Finland, Tallinn, Estonia and St. Petersburg, Russia. We have traveled together along the waterways of Russia to such exotic sounding places as Mandrogy, Kitzy Island, Goritzzy, Uglich, and Yaroslavl and seen the beauty of the countryside in between these towns. But our ship finally came to dock in Moscow, the capital of Russia and I really had no idea what to expect!

One advantage of travel tour is that you get a good general overview of an area. That's the good news, of course. The bad news on most tours -- and this tour certainly was no exception -- was that you never did have a lot of time to explore on your own. The guides and the schedule kept you pretty busy all of the time. It was great for getting information and seeing a lot, but difficult for photographers who like to explore in more depth.

When we got to Moscow, we hopped on buses and were off to tour the city. Moscow is a huge city with so much traffic that I vowed never to complain about the traffic on Los Angeles freeways ever again. I couldn't believe how tough you had to be to drive in this city. It played havoc with all schedules and timetables because what should have taken just 20 minutes to drive ended up taking an hour. One of the reasons is how they handle their traffic accidents. From what we understood and saw, cars involved in accidents were not allowed to move until both the police and the insurance

adjuster came. So, a simple traffic accident could snarl things for hours. There is definitely a different viewpoint here than back home.

**The traffic on every street no matter the hour seemed to be hectic.**



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The city of Moscow is upbeat with many shops, theaters, and restaurants and such. We saw shops with all of the latest and most expensive designers. All of the big brand names in clothing had shops. During this introductory tour, we were dropped off on a rather large street and told to walk through an arch into a huge open area. A large red brick/stone wall ran down one side and the most magnificent Russian Church we had seen so far was at the far end. The area was enormous and, of course, it was the famous Red Square. Behind the brick/stone wall was the Kremlin. I had to pause to take it all in, because never in my life would I have ever imagined myself standing there! The look on my sister and friend's faces, told the same story that I was feeling ... ABSOLUTE AWE!

We had some time to wander and walk by Lenin's tomb before we had to return to the bus to continue the general tour of the city.



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**From an overlook within the St. Basil Cathedral, you can get a fabulous overview of Red Square. The Kremlin wall is on the left side of the image; at the end of that wall is the Spasskaya Tower. The red building with two towers is the National Historical Museum, barely seen and tucked into the corner to the right of the Museum is Kazan Cathedral and along the right side is the turn of the century arcades of Gum's department store.**



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**Along the wall that separates the Kremlin from Red Square is Lenin’s tomb. His body has been on public display there since the year he died in 1924.**

A night tour took us past some of the brightly lit gambling casinos in Moscow. The bouncing bus, combined with the bright neon lighting, brought a few interesting photo opportunities. We attended a wonderful concert that featured many of the traditional musical instruments of Russia -- another photo opportunity not normally available in a theater, but because the audience was from the various tours and ships that were in Moscow that particular evening, we could take photos -- but of course, not with flash, which is always a disturbance to the performers. As we left the concert, the moon was just rising over one of the beautiful cathedral spires. My friend Anne caught the shot (3rd below/right). She is quick and steady and got a round of applause when she “nailed it!”



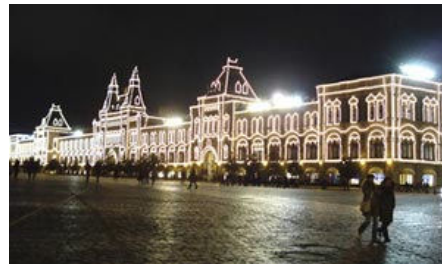
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**Driving through Moscow’s downtown area at night was fascinating. It was bright with colored lights. Many casinos and restaurants were lit up and looked very busy. It was a supercharged city that came alive at night.**



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**Fabulously lit fountains switched colors to make an exciting night shot.**



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**Square at night is spectacular**



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**St. Basil's in Red Square was beautiful during the day but at night it was a fairy tale. This is one of Russia's most beautiful cathedrals.**

**with the Gums building in sparkling lights.**

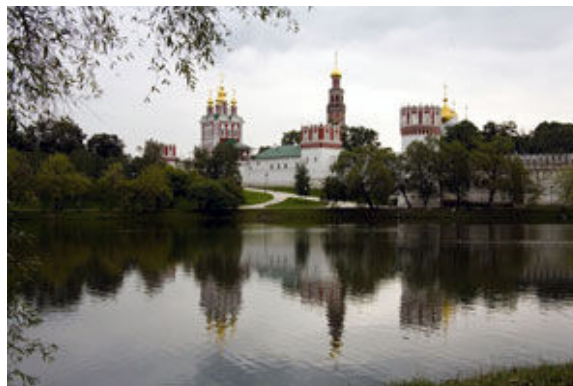


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**Leaving the theater one night we were just in time to see the moonrise near one of Moscow's cathedrals.**

The next day we toured the park adjacent to the grounds of the beautiful Novodevichy Convent where many exiled or self-exiled royal wives, daughters and lovers "took the veil" (which means they chose to become a nun), to get out of their marriage, family or mistress arrangement, since divorce was not allowed. It is in this park where you will find the lovely bronze ducks, given as a gift by President George Walker Bush and Mrs. Barbara Bush. We visited the Kremlin and I was surprised to find out that there were 5 or 6 churches within its walls. In the Armory, the stunningly beautiful royal clothes, jewels and carriages were housed. It was amazing to see that even the carriages were embedded with jewels.

**The Novodevichy Convent where many exiled or self-exiled royal family members "took the Veil". The park like setting was one of the most beautiful we had seen.**



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We had the opportunity to go into their frightfully expensive, but stunningly wonderful GUM (pronounced we discovered like "goom" not

"gum" as in chewing gum). Just wandering up and down this multilevel shopping extravaganza was a treat.



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**Gums is a large collection of shops on one side of Red Square. The three level, indoor mall features eating establishments, large walkways and bridges from one side to another. It is frequently used as a setting for newly wed brides.**

The next morning, my friend Stan Westfall and I decided to take the tour to the Sergiev Posad Monastery. My sister, Sunny, and our friend Anne Westfall opted to visit the Pushkin Museum in the morning and the Tretyakov Gallery in the afternoon. Since we were going to have separate adventures to share that evening, I reminded them to take lots and lots of photographs so we could enjoy their day as well.

**In the center of the Sergeiv Posad Monastery there is a beautiful Holy Water fountain where people come to drink, to bless and to carry home a small jar of Holy Water.**



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