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# The Author

## Mara Vorhees



Often asked why she chose to study Russia, Mara is stumped for a satisfactory reply. Certainly, she admits, she sometimes wishes she had given more consideration to the cuisine and climate before making the decision.

Nonetheless, she has been travelling to Russia since the days of communism. She recalls the time when the lines inside GUM (State Department Store) were dwarfed only by the lines outside Lenin's tomb. Later, she spent two years working on a foreign-aid project in the Urals and fighting with the tax police. During this time, Moscow was a frequent destination for 'recovery trips'.

These days, Mara's time in Moscow is spent sipping coffees at Coffee Bean (p121) and seeking inspiration amid the architecture of Kitay Gorod (p114). She is the co-author of Lonely Planet's guides *Russia & Belarus* and the *Trans-Siberian Railway*, and her stories about Russia have appeared in the *Boston Globe* and the *Los Angeles Times*. She has even come to love Russia's cuisine and climate, a transformation she attributes to *solnyanka*, a steamy, salty soup to delight any palate; and the *banya* (Russian bathhouse), an infallible antidote to Russian winters.

## MARA'S TOP MOSCOW DAY

The best days in Moscow start off at Coffee Bean with the *Moscow Times*. After a leisurely latte, I hop on the metro to buy fresh fruit and hot *pirozhki* (Russian pastries) amid the sounds and smells of Dorogomilovsky Market (p122).

Then I ride the riverboat along the Moscow River, past the golden domes of Novodevichy Convent (p95) and the Stalinist skyscraper at Sparrow Hills (p106), getting off at Gorky Park (p99). Here, among babushkas pushing strollers and lovers kissing on park benches, I find a quiet corner to enjoy my picnic.

After lunch, I explore the art galleries and trolling for treasures in the Central House of Artists (p161). I don't miss the opportunity to stroll around the Sculpture Park (p100), where statues of Lenin, Stalin and others rest among flower-filled gardens.

For dinner, I have my heart set on the rich, spicy flavours of Georgian food, and that means Tiflis (p136). I sit out on the restaurant's grand terrace, sipping wine from the house vineyard, and toast a delightful day in Moscow.

## PHOTOGRAPHER

### Jonathan Smith

Raised in rural Aberdeenshire, Jon graduated from Scotland's St Andrews University in 1994 with an MA Honours in German and little idea of what to do with his life. After a spell teaching languages in newly independent Lithuania, he spent three years travelling around the former USSR, trying to carve himself a niche as a freelance travel photographer. Jon's byline has appeared in over 100 Lonely Planet titles and recent commissions have included Lonely Planet's *Edinburgh, Stockholm, Paris* and *St Petersburg* city guides. This is Jon's third assignment in Moscow and his first major digital shoot; the highlights of which he says were snapping *devushky* (young women) at the Creamfields festival, people-watching at the zoo and lodging with a host family. Indeed he would like to thank Marina and Slava for putting up with him and his smelly trainers for four weeks.

## LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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