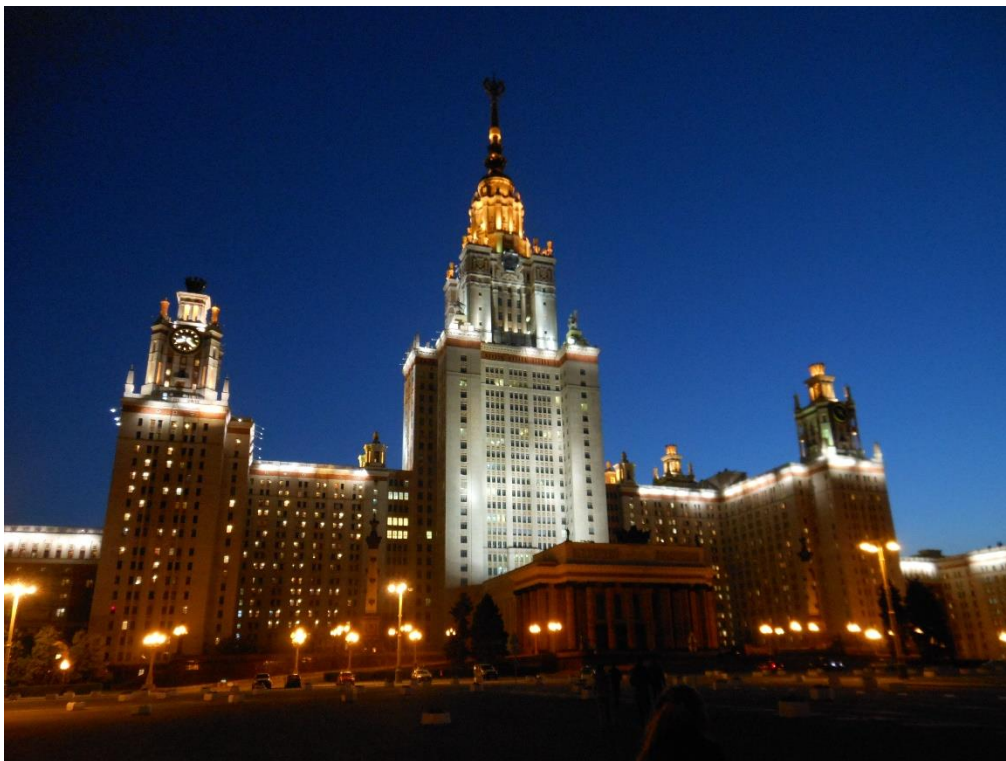


**Московский Государственный Университет имени
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Report

Exchange semester at the Faculty of Economics

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The University

The Moscow State University is one of the biggest and most prestigious universities in Russia – the Russian answer to „Harvard“, so-to-speak. Many important and well-known Russian scientists, politicians and economists studied here, amongst others Mikhail Gorbachev and other Nobel Prize winners.

The University was founded in 1755 and built on Sparrow Hills in Moscow. Today, it has more than 40.000 students and 11.500 employees, studying and working in more than 40 faculties.

The building itself is very impressive, with pompous entrance halls and huge lecture halls. Every building is guarded by security at the entrance, which only allows you to enter the building if you have the appropriate identification, e.g. a student ID from MSU. The main building is one of Stalin’s famous “Seven Sisters”, which were all built in the same style. Until 1985, it was also the highest building in the world. The upper floors of the building (24.-28. Floor) now serve as museum and are accessible for the public. Besides the very interesting exhibition, a visit to the museum (free of charge) also offers the best view of the city.



View from the museum, 27th floor

Apart from the museum, the huge main building offers everything a (Russian) student needs: numerous ATMs, food stalls and stores, a butchery, two canteens, a restaurant, a laundry room, a hairdresser’s, a beauty salon, a boutique, a swimming pool (which can only be used with a health certificate), a florist, a travel agency, a drug store, a pharmacy, a post office and a bookstore which offers books, stationery and branded university-items, like pullovers and pens. Furthermore, there are two banks on campus and various indoor and outdoor sport facilities.

The main building also hosts the main administrative offices that every student needs to pay several visits to during the stay. There are several offices for student housing, registration etc. In general, the main building is built in a symmetrical way and structured in sectors, which is a bit confusing at the beginning. Most exchange students live in сектор Ж (sector Ж).

Housing

Students live directly on campus, often even in the main building. The dorms are as old as the rest of the university. They consist of nine floors and two elevators. Every floor has a small kitchen that offers two stoves and a sink, but no pans and pots, and housing units. Every housing unit has two furnished bedrooms, one bathroom and a toilet. The bedrooms are about 10m² and furnished with a bed, a cupboard, a shelf, desk and chair. Everything is rather old, but convenient. Students can also change their bed linen free of charge every two weeks in the basement of the building. The only thing that is missing is a refrigerator to store food, but that problem solves itself as soon as it gets cold enough outside to store food on the windowsill. Kitchen utensils like pans, pots and dishes can be



My room in sector Ж

The kitchen in sector Ж



bought relatively cheap from “Auchan”, the biggest supermarket in the area, in the shopping center “Capitoli”, not far from the metro station. The MSU International Club (a private Club organised by Russian students to help internationals find friends and get to know Russians, more information and event announcements can be found on their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/MSU-International-Student-Club/423581547748039?ref=ts> or VK-page <http://vk.com/msuisc>), also offers free utensils that exchange students left behind the semester before. However,

the canteens in the faculties and main building are very cheap (2-3€ for a full meal), and the food is generally good, so eating there is also a good option.

The rooms cost about 180-230€, depending on the current exchange rate and on which room you get (they vary in size & quality). The dorm also offers internet for a very small fee (less than 5€ a month), so it is recommendable to bring a LAN-cable or buy it in the Uni-store (Argument) in the main building. Furthermore, there is an old lady called “Deschurnaja” on every floor, who is responsible for administration and happy to help anytime. She gives students the keys and the «пропуск», a special pass they need if they want to leave the building with luggage. However, she only speaks Russian.

In general, the dorm is convenient, because it is very close to the faculties. There are also many people from different cultures living there, so you have enough opportunity to practice your foreign language skills and meet new friends. Unfortunately, there are no common rooms or bars on campus, because alcohol is not allowed on university premises and also can't be bought in the stores on campus.

Studying

I studied at the Faculty of Economics. The building of this faculty is one of the newest and lives up to European standards, which many of the older ones don't. It is important to get in touch with the coordinator, Anastasia Leonova, immediately after arrival, because she will issue the student card and help with administrative matters like the dorm, metro card etc. Unfortunately, she has a lot on her plate and needs to be reminded of things quite often, but she tries her best and is very nice. She also speaks English quite well, which is very helpful since everybody else at the university speaks only Russian.

Unfortunately, most of the courses that were on the list we were provided with before we arrived in Moscow were not offered in the end. The courses offered for foreigners were held in English and are worth 5 ECTS credits. I chose “Free Economic Zones and Offshore Territories”, “Marketing Principles and Decisions”, “Organizational Behavior” and “Cross-Cultural Communication”. Most of the lecturers did not speak English very well and they did not put too much effort in their courses, but they tried to get to know their students better and tried to take suggestions and requests into account. The exams (especially Free Economic Zones & Offshore Territories and Marketing) were rather hard. The workload in general was pretty tough, since we had to prepare presentations and homework throughout the semester and pass midterm and final exams. Exchange students also have the opportunity to take very extensive Russian classes for free. At the beginning of the semester we had to take an oral & written test to determine our level of Russian. Based on the result, we were assigned groups.

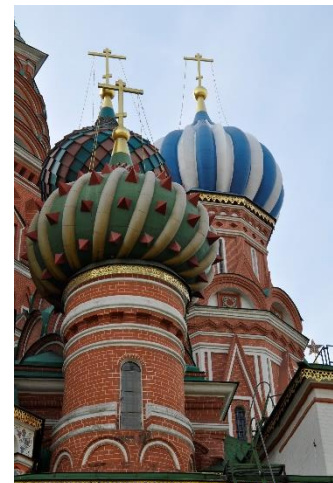
Additionally, we could choose from numerous Russian seminars, like Business Russian, literature, grammar etc. Attendance is mandatory for all courses and seminars. Sometimes though, if many people in the group have plans for a certain day and cannot attend class, the teachers agree to move it to another day/time.

The business courses were very interesting because they covered themes that we do not touch upon at university very much, e.g. free economic zones and offshore territories, or cross-cultural communication with Russians. The Russian classes were also highly beneficial since they really helped to improve my Russian skills, also in specific fields like Business Russian. I'm sure that the skills I acquired during this semester will also help me in my professional future, providing me with the ability to conduct negotiations in Russian.

Furthermore, studying in Russia requires patience. Everything takes very long, no matter whether it is administrative matters at the university or grading of papers. Therefore, apart from the academic learnings, my semester abroad taught me to be patient and keep my nerves, while being persistent and never give up.

Everyday life and leisure time

Moscow is an amazing city and offers everything the heart desires. There is a huge variety of cultural activities, like theatre, ballet, concerts, circus, museums etc., and sports activities like ice skating and skiing. Additionally, there are so many sights in Moscow, that it is more or less impossible to see them all in just one semester. There are student discounts for almost everything in Moscow with the MSU student card. Make sure to ask everywhere, even in restaurants and bars, for discounts. At the Bolshoi theatre for example, students even get tickets for ballet performances for 100 RUB two hours before the show starts (in comparison to 5000 RUB for a regular ticket...). The Kremlin Palace (www.kremlinpalace.org) also offers ballet performances and concerts for pretty cheap (200-300RUB), and often even features the crew of the Bolshoi theatre.



Even though the city is very big, with its official 12 million inhabitants, everything can be reached easily and relatively cheaply by metro. The metro stations themselves are so beautiful, that the Russians call them “underground palaces”. However, the metro stops at 01:00 in the morning. After that, there are taxis available everywhere, which are also cheap; but it is important to pay attention and avoid taking “gypsy cabs”, which are illegal “taxis”. Also, if you don't speak Russian, it is advisable to take someone with you who knows Russian to avoid being scammed in the taxi.

Moscow's nightlife is simply amazing. There are uncountable bars and clubs and usually the entrance is free. However, it is important to comply with the strict dress code (which, in most cases, includes high-heels and dress or skirt for females).

There is also a lot to see *around* Moscow. The cities of the Golden Ring are within reach by train (some even only 1-2h from Moscow, e.g. Sergiev Posad). St. Petersburg can be reached by night train, which is a very typical experience and really recommendable. When I was there, we also went on a weekend trip to Kazan, which is the culturally very rich and beautiful capital of Tatarstan, about 12h per train from Moscow. For the very adventurous, it is also

possible to take the Trans-Siberian Railway to Beijing or Vladivostok from Moscow. In Moscow, the iVAN Hostel is recommendable, if friends and family want to visit. In St. Petersburg, the Soul Kitchen Hostel is absolutely lovely and one of the best I've ever stayed in.

The Russians in general are very friendly and helpful, even though they might seem cold and unfriendly at first. If you get to know them though, they are very hospitable and friendly, and make very good friends. However, without any knowledge of Russian it is difficult to make Russian friends, since they speak either no, or only very little English. Also upon arrival, student who do not speak English should make sure to arrange their pick-up from the airport with the coordinator, since signs and metro plans are all only in Russian. In general, learning the Cyrillic alphabet is necessary for everyone coming to Moscow, in order not to get lost in the metro and on the streets.

Financing

In terms of financing, I was very "lucky", because the ruble depreciated massively when I was there, which resulted in relatively cheap prices for me. However, the dorm room will cost around 12.000 RUB a month, the metro ticket costs 300 RUB a month (but you will only get it after about 6 weeks, until then one metro ride costs around 40 RUB). For the telephone card, you will need between 300 and 600 RUB, depending on how much data/text messages etc. you require. The internet in the room also costs between 150 and 300 RUB, depending on which internet speed you want. Laundry costs 100RUB per load for washing and 100RUB for drying. The taxi from the city center to the dorm costs around 500 RUB. Sightseeing entrance fees vary between 100 and 300 RUB. A drink in a club or bar will cost between 300 and 500 RUB. In terms of food, it depends on where you eat, but portions are typically very small, so you might need to order two main dishes. In the canteen, lunch costs around 300 RUB. In the restaurant you will probably pay at least around 500-800 RUB for a meal with drink. The visa for Russia is free of charge for students, if they apply for it directly at the Russian Embassy in Vienna. The Visa Service Center charges 25€ fee. In Moscow, the visa has to be prolonged, which costs another 1000RUB. The flight there and back, if booked with Austrian or Niki directly from Vienna to Moscow, will cost around 250€. Additionally, an insurance is necessary, which also costs around 50€ per month. The hostels cost about 700-1000 RUB for a dorm bed, and the night train to St. Petersburg costs about 2000-2500 RUB one-way.

Conclusion

My semester abroad in Moscow was an extremely interesting and rewarding experience. I could not only improve my language skills, but I also learned a lot academically. Furthermore, living and studying in Russia really broadened my horizon and taught me important life lessons. I learned how to be patient, creative and imaginative and how to improvise and make the most of every situation.

