

## 5.4 RUSSIA

### Gorky Literary Institute

**Address:** Moscow, 123104, Tverskoi Boulevard, 25 (Москва, 123104, Тверской бульвар, 25)

**TCD Co-ordinator:** Dr Sarah Smyth, Tel 896 1819, Fax 896 2655, e-mail: [ssmyth@tcd.ie](mailto:ssmyth@tcd.ie)

Contact person in the International Department (Международный отдел): Tatiana (+89036667608) and Ksenya (+74956940812)

Mail: [liternity@litinstitut.ru](mailto:liternity@litinstitut.ru)

Hostel number: +7 495 618 33 90

Website: <http://www.litinstitut.ru/>

### Agreed programme

The following is for guidance only and may be subject to change.

Students are required to attend 20 academic hours of classes per week: 8 hours of language and 12 hours of non-language courses. Apart from the compulsory language components, students may select three year-long (or six semester-long) courses from those listed below. In the non-language components, TCD students attend a lecture with their Russian peers (2 hours) and a seminar conducted by the lecturer of a given course on their own (2 hours).

A Russian academic hour is 45 minutes, so students are required to do 8 academic hours of Russian, which is actually 6 hours

Количество учебных часов в неделю составляет 20 часов (8 часов русского языка и 12 часов общественно-политических дисциплин):

1. Русский язык 6 часов (обязательно)
2. Русский язык через газету 2 часа (обязательно)
3. 3 спецкурса 1 лекция (вместе со студентами института) = 2 часа  
+ 1 семинар по теме лекций = 2 часа

#### Спецкурсы (по выбору)

1. Отечественная история
2. История философии
3. История культуры
4. Политология
5. История политических учений
6. Новая и новейшая история
7. История религии

8. Социология
9. История средних веков
10. Эстетика

### **Examination and assessment**

At the end of the first semester students are examined in all subjects. The assessment in language is the ONLY element to count as part of the annual assessment. At the end of the second semester students are examined/assessed in all courses.

Студенты обязаны сдавать экзамены по всем предметам в конце как и первого так и второго семестров. Зато экзамены/зачеты по общественно-политическим дисциплинам в первом семестре, хотя и отмечены в сертификате, считаются пробными.

Students are required to sit the State Examinations in Russian at the end of the academic year at a level considered appropriate by their language instructor.

Студенты обязаны в конце учебного года сдавать государственные тесты по русскому языку.

Students are required to write a long essay (3000 words) during the second semester. The topic of this essay should normally be related to one of their lecture courses and should be agreed with their supervisor before Christmas/the end of the first semester.

Студенты обязаны писать курсовую работу в течение второго семестра по теме, связанной с одним из спецкурсов по общественно-политическим дисциплинам и согласованной с научным руководителем до конца первого семестра.

The Institute is able to facilitate access to archives and libraries. Students are also permitted to participate in PE and sporting activities organised by the Institute. The GLI organises a cultural programme, the cost of which is included in the overall fee paid by TCD. Excursions include a Moscow guided tour, a visit to the Kremlin, visits to museums and may include trips to towns outside Moscow, such as St Petersburg, Suzdal, Vladimir, ...

Культурная программа включает в себя самые основные и популярные экскурсии: обзорная поездка по г. Москве, посещение территории Кремля, посещение музеев по просьбе учащихся. Могут организоваться также экскурсионные поездки в другие города: С.-Петербург, Владимир, Суздаль и др.

2014-15: we haven't been able to participate in P.E or sporting activities because the Institute told us none were on offer.

2015 – 2015: The Institute put on a play (a variation on Alice in Wonderland) in which one of the girls participated.

### **Academic Contacts:**

Dean of Russian as a Foreign Language Faculty (РКИ): Надежда М. Годенко

Dean of Humanities Faculty/Acting Head of the Institute (Общественных наук): Людмила Михайловна Царева

### **General Information from current and former students :**

**Do register at the Irish embassy. It's a good safety precaution just in case anything happens to you, and they also have free wine/food receptions several times a year with various interesting guests.**

### **Weather and What to Wear:**

- It is cold! Temperature and humidity: November/December in Moscow averages between -5°C and -15°C, but there can be cold snaps. There are around 7 hours of sunshine a day and humidity is quite low, so winter can actually be very pleasant in Russia.
- In St. Petersburg and other places near the coast/ a river humidity can be much higher and winds can be much stronger, making it feel much colder.
- Dressing for winter in Russia: The most important thing to remember, as any Russian will tell you, is to look after your extremities, i.e. feet, hands, heads. So good shoes, gloves and hats are essential.
- Rules for clothing: There is no need to buy special gear, but it is important that the items you bring with you do the following;
  - Hats must cover your ears
  - Shoes must be water proof and have a sole at least 1 to 1.5 inches thick, and should ideally be ½ a size too big (or at least roomy). This will allow the air inside the boot to warm up and will keep your feet protected.
  - Hence, socks should not be too thick
  - The same principal applies to gloves: mittens are much warmer, as they create a warm air-pocket

- Scarves are necessary, because if the temperature drops to less than -15°C it is much more comfortable to breathe through it, as your lungs are not used to such cold air.
- Layering: You will find that although outside it is very cold, inside can be extremely warm; Russians like to heat their houses/ restaurants/ metro.
- Not only will layers keep you warmer outside, it means that you will not be stifling inside.
- It is advisable to bring leggings or tights to wear under trousers.
- What to buy and where to buy it: Although it is not necessary to buy your cold gear in Russia, if you find that you arrive and that you have forgotten something or that what you have is not warm enough, anything you might need can be found at the street markets that are dotted around the place.
- The market is the perfect place to buy hand-made pure wool socks and mittens, and sometimes hats too.
- They are also often sold by elderly women in metro stations.
- General cautions: Packed snow can be very slippery and they do not always totally clear the footpaths, so walk with caution.
- Take care when passing under buildings/ bridges/ window ledges, as ice-stalactites can form and grow to quite a size and may then drop unexpectedly.
- You will also need a few sturdy pairs of waterproof shoes with grip. The ground is very slippery from November-February, and very slushy from February-May, when the snow is melting. Hiking boots are good.

### **Accommodation:**

Most students stay in the Literary Institute hostel (общежитие) on the international floor.

Standards of Accommodation (urban vs. rural)

- Regardless of accommodation it is necessary to register on arrival. It is by far the easiest option to let hotel/guest house do this for you for a fee of 500 roubles (€13). You will need to give passport to receptionist for a few hours.
- It is commonplace that the tap-water is not drinkable

In Moscow:

- *Hotels*: These are generally very expensive. A 3-star usually ranges €80-150/room/night, depending how close to centre. The standard of accommodation is pretty average.
- *Guest House/ Hostel*: This is either an established tourist hostel or could be in a 'student residence'. Tourist hostel especially in centre can be reasonable- €10-25/night. Basic, but facilities usually good. A student residence is usually €10/night but entails shared facilities and is likely of bad quality.

#### In Provincial Areas:

- *Hotels*: These are generally very reasonably priced and accommodation most likely pretty standard.
- *Hostels/ guest house*: Tourist Hostel or 'Halls of Residence' (as above)
- The *obshezhitie* is by far the cheapest accommodation you will find, but if you do want to move out it's possible. You can look on Russian websites, or on English sites like Expat.ru for rooms or whole apartments to rent. It's ok to live with other expats/English speakers, just make sure you keep up contact with Russian speakers as well! If you can find some Russian speaking flatmates, even better.

It costs approx. 9000 roubles per month if you are sharing a room and 18400 per month if you want a room on your own.

#### **Work:**

- Work is abundant in Moscow. There is a huge demand for native speaker English teachers, and you can work every day of the week if you want to. You will most likely earn more in Russia than you could working at home – anything from 25 to 65 euro for an hour's teaching. Qualifications help, but are by no means necessary.

#### **Food:**

- Food is unfortunately very expensive. The best place to shop by far is Ashan, a big discount supermarket chain with stores around Moscow. The prices are low and the choice is extensive. For eating out, there are several nice restaurants very close to the Gorky institute:
  - Pelman, a dumpling restaurant, Hacha-Puri, a Georgian restaurant that does good

lunchtime deals, Moo-Moo, a buffet style café, and Café Pushkin, famous for traditional Russian food ( though only if you are feeling incredibly wealthy!). Pie-Point which does proper British pies and great coffees.

- *Eating:* Russian food can be an acquired taste. The main types of food eaten are meat, dumplings, pancakes, hearty soups and substantial salads. Dishes tend to be quite heavy in comparison to their European counterparts, but in winter it is exactly what is needed!
- Particularly popular are “pelmeni” (пельмени): a kind of ravioli/ boiled dumplings filled with meat or potatoes, and often served with sour cream called “smetana” (сметана)
- Russian salads tend to be made up of chopped meat, potatoes and other vegetables mixed together with a type mayonnaise. Cabbage and carrot salads are also very popular.
- A common snack is piroshky (пирожки): these are kinds of mini pies filled with cabbage and egg, meat, cheese, cherry or poppy seeds. They are often sold hot in the metro, and cost around 25 RUB.
- Soups are often the best choice on the menu. Russian soups tend to contain meat and are very substantial. Favourites are: borsch (борщ), a beetroot and paprika soup, schi (щи), a cabbage soup that often contains bacon, and solyanka (солянка), a mixed meat soup.
- Russians love sweets, and there is always a large selection of desserts on offer.
- There is a lot of pop up Time Cafes, one on Tverskaya which is called “zifferblatt”, which charge you based on how long you spend in the cafe and you can have unlimited teas, coffees and snacks and also use their kitchen facilities.
- From a vegetarian perspective: It’s difficult to find a veg option in restaurants. Usually when you ask for a vegetarian option they offer fish or even chicken, so be careful that you understand! It’s quite easy to buy vegetarian groceries in local shops and cook at home though!

### **Mobile phones**

Tip to make things easier when you arrive-get your phone unlocked in Ireland so that you can get a Russian sim as soon as you arrive. Some of us didn’t get our phones unlocked so had to buy new phones in Russia.

### **Russian People and Culture:**

- People may appear rude at first. In general they tend to be much more direct than Irish people, and it may initially surprise you. However, you soon get used to it, and eventually you might even start to pick up some of the habits.
- If you are in a situation where a Russian knows you're a foreigner, you will probably be met with a lot of polite curiosity. If the Russian doesn't realise you are foreign or can't hear you very well (in the metro, for example), they may assume you are also Russian, but are speaking badly, and might get frustrated with you. Don't take this as a sign that your Russian is poor or unintelligible. It's just that Russian speaking foreigners are quite unusual! Russians have a reputation for being very cold and unfriendly, but this is only true until you get to know them. Once you do they are extremely warm and hospitable.
- However, do not expect a smile from people serving you in restaurants or in metro stations. Customer service as a concept does not really exist.
- **Culture clashes:** People in Russia tend to be a quite xenophobic, particularly towards people from the Caucasus or indeed any people that look Caucasian, i.e. anyone Asiatic in appearance. This can make for some awkward conversation.
- The gender divide in Russia is also quite strong. For example, when greeting somebody (when you meet them for the first time, but also if you already know each other) it is customary for the men to shake hands. However, they will rarely shake a woman's hand.
- **Visiting people:** Russians love to invite people to their homes. If going on an informal visit, there are some general things that are good to bear in mind.
- As in most countries, you should not show up empty-handed. Preferred house-gifts are alcohol or sweets.
- Russians have an extremely sweet tooth, so any biscuits, chocolates, cakes or even just jam go down very well.
- There is a lot of bad vodka available in Russia, so a nice bottle (anything over 500 rubles, around €12.50) is a nice offering.
- When entering someone's house, you always take off your boots/outdoor shoes (this is probably due to the snow etc in winter, but the rule applies at all times of the year).
- Inside Russians wear what they call "tapotchki", or slippers. They can be like plastic sandals or like traditional slippers. They will often have spare pairs to offer you, but sometimes you are expected to bring your own.
- Similarly if a Russian is coming to visit you, it is advisable to have a spare pair to offer them.

### **Infrastructure (travelling around):**

*In Moscow-* Walking and Metro are by far the most efficient means of transport. Although sometimes you may need to negotiate trolleybus, tram or “marshrutka” (public mini-bus taxi) – not the most accessible for the foreigner, therefore best avoided. Traffic is renowned as worst in world. If getting taxi to airport have it pick you up several hours in advance. The cheapest way to travel is to get a student metro ticket. The application process is incredibly arduous, but the discount is so huge that it is worthwhile. The International office in the Institute will help you with the application form.

- *Metro:* Extremely efficient but very busy. At peak times the metro comes every 30 seconds, and the interval between metro rarely exceed 7 minutes. The Metro runs from 6am to 1am. Tickets may be bought individually at the ‘kassa’ or the cashier. A single ticket costs 50 rouble, probably best bought in bulk. If you have little confidence in your ability to count in Russian, then easiest is to gesture using fingers (10 fingers equals 10 journeys- 280 rouble.) Note that 2 or more metro line may interconnect in an underground ‘perekhod’ (indicated by stick man running up a stairs). Student metro ticket costs 350 roubles a month. (2015 – 2016: we were unable to get student metro tickets. The admin people in the international office said it wasn’t possible but it’s probably just that they didn’t want to go through the process as it really is incredibly arduous. We’ve resorted to buying a 60-trip pass which costs 1400 roubles (20 euro), with each trip working out at 23 roubles, so it’s the best deal available to us).
- *Trolleybus/ Tram/ Marshrutka (minibus-taxi):* These can be pretty inaccessible for foreigners who don’t speak the language (writing down the name of stop helps). These generally are very slow. 20 or 30 roubles.
- *Taxi:* There are some private companies but telephone numbers will only be found in guidebooks or on the internet. Most common in Moscow are ‘unofficial’ taxis- ordinary Joe Soap who wants to make a couple of rouble on the side. These are not as sinister as they sound are very widely used but there is some ‘danger element’, so best used in groups only. It is necessary to negotiate price before entering. Usually no more than 300-



500 rouble. Don't expect seatbelt! Download the Yandex taxi app, it makes things so much easier

- To airport best mode of transport is the AeroExpress which leaves from metro stations Pavletskaya (Domodedovo Airport) or Savyolovskaya (Sheremetovo)
- Roads in Moscow are very good, if not slightly treacherous in winter (with nightmarish traffic). Best means of transport is Metro- by far!
- Outskirts of Moscow: To travel out of Moscow you can get a train from various train stations which are reachable by Metro.
- Train Stations can be very stressful. As in most countries they can be shady and you are likely to be hassled by 'taxi drivers' etc. Since the terrorist bombing of Domodedovo last January there are now security checks on entry. Best to have exact time and date of travel, and type of carriage in mind before approaching cashier (Kassa). Although ticket salespeople can 'help' you if you are uncertain/flexible, they are not known to be very patient. There is usually a discreet Information Desk somewhere if you need to enquire about tickets. Passport need to be shown when purchasing ticket, and will be checked by conductor.
- Travelling by train: There are several types of ticket. The cheapest is 'seat only' but this is only for daytime travel. For overnight travel there is a choice between "kupe" (compartment) which provide you a bed in a closed compartment with three other passengers and *platzkart* tickets (economy class) which provide you a bed in an open carriage with about twenty-five other passengers.
- Roads out of Moscow get notably worse the further away from the centre but they are not too bad. These are generally motorways. In Provincial Areas roads generally tend to be bad, uneven with potholes.
- Travel within provincial areas: It is unlikely there will be a metro so trolleybuses and "marshrutka" will have to be used.

- *Trolleybuses*: 30 rouble. These can be difficult for the foreigner to use. If no knowledge of Russian write place name on a sheet of paper and show to driver. Stops are sometimes called over intercom, but not usually.
- *Marshrutka* (public mini-bus taxi): 20-30 roubles which you hand to the driver on entry. You must tell the driver to stop when approaching your stop. Very inaccessible for foreigners.
- *Taxis*: In provincial areas there are surprisingly more official taxis than unofficial taxis. Official taxis can usually be found at train station, or can be hailed from street. ‘Unofficial’ taxis (private cars) are hailed from street but are probably best avoided, or use in groups. Always negotiate price before entering (official and non official) – usually between 200-400 roubles. It is never necessary to pay more than 1000 roubles.

### **Standard of Accommodation (urban vs. rural)**

- Regardless of accommodation it is necessary to register on arrival. It is by far the easiest option to let hotel/guest house do this for you for a fee of 500 roubles (€13). You will need to give passport to receptionist for a few hours.
- It is commonplace that the tap-water is not drinkable
- In Moscow:
  - *Hotels*: These are generally very expensive. A 3-star usually ranges €80-150/room/night, depending how close to centre. The standard of accommodation is pretty average.
  - *Guest House/ Hostel*: This is either an established tourist hostel or could be in a ‘student residence’. Tourist hostel especially in centre can be reasonable- €10-25/night. Basic, but facilities usually good. A student residence is usually €10/night but entails shared facilities and is likely of bad quality.
- In Provincial Areas:
  - *Hotels*: These are generally very reasonably priced and accommodation most likely pretty standard.
  - *Hostels/ guest house*: Tourist Hostel or ‘Halls of Residence’ (as above)

### **Local customs/ norms/ greetings**

- In Moscow people are less forthcoming. ‘Small talk’ with strangers is unusual although people can often be curious if hear English being spoken and may start conversation.
- Very little English is spoken except for some restaurants
- In Provinces virtually no English is spoken, not even in restaurants (although some places may have an English menu)
- People are generally friendlier than in Moscow and are especially curious if they find out you are foreign. Once or twice encountered racist remarks but people are usually accepting.
- Some Russians are very superstitious and it is generally expected that you observe customs (There are too many superstitions to enumerate but you will be told as you go along!)
- It is generally seen as rude to refuse something (especially in the way of food and drink) although sometimes you need to draw the line. A Russian host/hostess will keep on treating you until you say no!
- There is a huge culture of alcohol in Russia. It is officially banned to drink beer on the streets, however this is never observed. In provinces especially it is standard to see men drinking on streets, in buses, on the way to work and at any time of day. Beer (sometimes vodka) can be bought at any kiosk or shop.
- It is not uncommon to drink vodka with meals or with guests. Drinking is a ceremonious procedure and there are hundreds of drinking customs. Few examples: drinking is always accompanied with toasts. If someone pours a drink for himself it is tradition to pour drink for drinking partner too (never drink alone!) There are often calls to drink ‘to my leaving’ when someone is leaving.

### **Money:**

- The currency is the Russian rouble (рубли), currently valued at roughly €1 = 78 RUB. There are 100 kopeks in a rouble.
  - There are 1 kopek, 2 kopek, 5 kopek, 10 kopek coins, but they are worth so little that shops sometimes do not accept them as legal tender.
  - There used to be a 10 rouble note, but that is being phased out and a coin brought in. You may find yourself with both the notes and the coins.
  - With 1000 and 5000 rouble notes (€12 and €65, respectively) make sure to check the hologram as there are quite a few fake notes in circulation.

- Not everywhere accepts laser cards/ credit cards, even in many restaurants and bars, so it is necessary to have cash at all times. There are ATMs everywhere.
  - Some places do not accept large notes (1000 and 5000 rouble notes) on the bases that they cannot/ do not want to give you change. It is easier to break them in large supermarkets or banks.
  - When buying items in shops it is not uncommon for the person at the till to demand exact change.
  - You can exchange euro in all banks.
    - Raiffeisen Bank (Райффайзен Банк) is particularly foreigner-friendly and they usually have English-speaking clerks available. There are many all over Moscow and St. Petersburg.
  
- Moscow is more expensive than the rest of the country, and within Moscow there is a large range of prices depending on what type of establishment it is.
  - Sample prices: Some average prices from the local produktis and shops near the obshezhitie: Milk 65 roubles per Litre. Potatoes 30 roubles per kg, grechka 54 roubles per kg
  - A business lunch never costs less than 250 roubles. In addition to the local restaraunts mentioned, there's a lovely buffet 5 minutes walk from college called "Karavaevi" which is not too expensive and delicious.

### **Academic Standards:**

- Don't expect the same kind of academic standard in the Institute that you are used to from Trinity. The Russian education system is very different, and is more similar to our school system than to university. You'll need to write one extended essay for the year, on a topic of your choosing, and the rest of your exams will be specially organised for you and anyone else on Erasmus with you. You do NOT need to sit the equivalent of Trinity exams in Russian, so don't panic!

### **Minor Language:**

- If you are interested in keeping up your second language while away, ask the foreign languages department in the Gorky Institute if they can accommodate you. They have a

sporadic timetable of French, German and Italian classes, and if at all possible they will be more than happy to welcome you into their classes.

**Websites:**

For general travel information (good for almost everything- trains, visas, customs...):

[www.waytorussia.net](http://www.waytorussia.net)

Russian politics, economics, society:

[www.russiaprofile.org](http://www.russiaprofile.org)

Travel trips and blogs:

[www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)