

MOSCOW

Moscow is the capital of Russia, its political, economic, commercial and cultural centre. It was founded 8 centuries ago by Prince Yuri Dolgoruky. Historians have accepted the year of 1147 as the start of Moscow's history. Gradually the city became more and more powerful. In the 13th century Moscow was the centre of the struggle of Russian lands for the liberation from the tartar yoke. In the 16th century under Ivan the Terrible Moscow became the capital of the new united state. Though Peter the Great moved the capital to St Petersburg in 1712, Moscow remained the heart of Russia. That is why it became the main target of Napoleon's attack. Three-quarters of the city was destroyed by fire during Napoleon's occupation, but by the mid-19th century Moscow had been completely restored. After the October revolution Moscow became the capital again.

Now Moscow is one of the largest cities in Europe. Its total area is about nine hundred square kilometres (ancient Moscow occupied the territory of the present-day Kremlin). The population of the city is over 8 million.

Moscow is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. The heart of Moscow is Red Square. It has more historic associations than any other place in Moscow. The Kremlin and St Basil's Cathedral (Vasily Blazheny) are masterpieces of ancient Russian architecture. The main Kremlin tower, the Spasskaya Tower, has become the symbol of the country. On the territory of the Kremlin you can see old cathedrals, the Bell Tower of Ivan the Great, the Palace of Congresses, the Tzar-Cannon and the Tzar-Bell, the biggest cannon and bell in the world. St Basil's Cathedral was built in the mid-16th century in memory of the victory over Kazan. There is a legend that Ivan the Terrible blinded the architects Barma and Postnik, because he didn't want them to create another masterpiece.

There are a lot of beautiful palaces, old mansions, cathedrals, churches and monuments in Moscow. Now Moscow is being reconstructed and we all hope that in a few years the city will become even more beautiful.

There are more than 80 museums in Moscow. The largest museums are the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts and the State Tretyakov Gallery. Other unique museums in Moscow include the All-Russia Museum of Folk Arts, the Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art, Alexei Bakhrushin Theatre Museum, Mikhail Glinka Museum of Musical Culture and many others.

Moscow is famous for its theatres. The best-known of them is the Bolshoi Opera House. Drama theatres and studios are also very popular.

Moscow is a city of students. There are over 80 higher educational institutions in it, including several universities.

Moscow is the seat of the Russian Parliament (the Duma) and the centre of political life of the country.