

Advice for International Conference Visitors

1. **Arrival** in Moscow will be much smoother and relaxing if everyone takes the Aeroexpress instead of an airport cab (which could cost around 50 USD vs. just 10 USD for the Aeroexpress). There are signs directing people to the train service at the airport, although maybe the signs are mostly in Russian! Look into that. There are electronic kiosks to buy tickets in the Aeroexpress area and there is a much shorter line to buy a ticket at the kiosk than from a person (but check that the kiosk has an English language option). Getting through the turnstiles to reach the Aeroexpress train requires some kind of bar code swipe with the ticket. Of course there is then the problem of reaching ВИИΘ from the end of the Aeroexpress line, but honestly a cab from central Moscow has to be better than one from the airport.
2. **Money.** In all three airports (Domodedovo, Sherementievo, Vnukovo) you can find cash machines once you pass the customs. Taking roubles from cash machines gives you better exchange rate comparing to any other option. In Moscow you can find cash machines, for example, at the entrance of majority of metro stations. The rough exchange rates are as follows: 1 US dollar = 30 Roubles, 1 Euro = 40 Roubles, 1 British pound = 50 roubles.
3. Technically all visitors to a city in Russia need to officially register there. Hotels can all handle this task, although practically speaking it may not be needed: as of mid-2011, a visitor to Russia does not need to register in a city if he/she is staying there for *less* than 7 business days. Hence a visit that includes a 5-day workweek and either or both weekends before or after that work week need not register.
4. Have your passport on you anytime you go outside (so, for simplicity, anytime at all). Police are allowed to stop anyone on the street or in the Metro and ask for the travel documents. Since they are not paid a lot, police may “discover” a problem with your documents and say you need to go with them to the police station unless perhaps you offer some money to them. One piece of advice at an online travel website is to carry a cell phone with your country’s embassy number on the contact list and tell the police officer that you will call your

embassy to have a representative meet you. Apparently the mere suggestion of this plan convinces the police to find another sucker for their scam.

5. Hotel at ВШЭ

- There are ironing boards available, and an iron, upon request of the maid staff. The ironing boards are out in the hallway and the maids should have the iron in their room marked something like “Maid Services” (in English) on each floor. Making a hand motion to the maids with some clothes as if you’re ironing will make it clear what you’re requesting. (Or give people a card with the word Ютка on it.) The maids may even do the ironing for you.
- Let visitors know that they are expected to give the security guard at ВШЭ the room key when leaving the hotel and then you get it back when you return. Visitors are given some kind of document (прописка??) when they first arrive at the hotel which they apparently are required to provide the guard upon returning in order to get the room key. This was not clearly explained when arriving at the hotel, so get this point across to visitors without needing the staff’s help. I wonder if the staff’s level of English might frustrate people who can’t speak Russian.

6. Below are some words and phrases you may meet on signs and doors, with translations:

- ДА (Yes)
- НЕТ (No)
- ВХОД (Entrance)
- НЕТ ВХОДА (No Entrance)
- ВЫХОД (Exit; note it differs from Entrance in one letter, Ъ)
- ВЫХОД В ГОРОД (Exit to City, which is in many Metro stations).
- ПЕРЕХОД (Transfer route, e.g., in Metro to switch lines)
- НЕТ ПЕРЕХОДА (No transfer this way)
- НА СЕБЯ (Towards You = Pull)

- ОТ СЕБЯ (From You = Push)
- ОТКРЫТО (open)
- ЗАКРЫТО (closed)
- ВНИМАНИЕ! (Attention! Walk carefully if you notice this sign.)
- РАСПИСАНИЕ (schedule, e.g., in a store or at a train station)
- РЕЖИМ РАБОТЫ (hours of operation)
- КАФЕ (cafe)
- РЕСТОРАН (restaurant)
- АПТЕКА (pharmacy)
- ИНТЕРНЕТ (internet)
- КАССА (cashier)
- БАНК (bank)
- БАНКОМАТ (ATM machine)
- СУВЕНИРЫ (souvenirs)
- ПОДАРКИ (gifts)

7. Note that doors with a large handle are not necessarily meant to be pulled; some are pushed.
8. Provide a list of some sit-down places to eat nearby the conference. In particular tell everyone about the АШАН shopping center near ВШЭ, which has a T.G.I. Friday's on the ground floor and free Wi-fi in the front atrium.
9. **Using Metro.** In order to use metro you need to buy a card at the entrance of metro (before passing the gates). You need to specify the the number of rides you want to make.
10. In the central corridor of Metro stations there is a red and blue post marked ИНФО/INFO with a metro map on it. Normally this is well-placed, but in at least one station it was hidden near a wall.

11. There are *no* garbage pails in the metro. The police removed them so terrorists can't hide bombs there. So if you take wrapped food into the metro prepare to hold the wrapper until you leave. There won't be a good place to throw it away on the trains or in the stations.
12. Watch where you walk! Obstacles that are easy to trip over may appear on a sidewalk or door passage without warning. Construction projects do not necessarily have a big fence separating the workers from where the public passes by. Door entrances to stores may have unexpected stairs or bars to step over. Note in particular the chain across the path towards the entrance to БИИЭ.
13. Cultural note: cashiers seem to really have a thing for consumers making it easier for the cashier to give back change. For example, if something costs 107 rubles and you can't pay exactly 127 rubles, pay 127 or 157 rubles rather than 120 or 150 rubles so the cashier just needs to give you a 10 ruble coin or three 10 ruble coins as change instead of 13 or 23 rubles.
14. Museums are usually dual-priced, meaning that foreigners pay a higher rate. (There are counterexamples, e.g., the Moscow planetarium charges a uniform price for all adults.) If you visit a museum with a Russian friend and have the friend buy a pair of tickets at Russian citizen prices while you stand somewhere else, you can generally get into the museum at the lower fare provided you keep your mouth shut when you hand over your ticket. This method has worked at many museums, with two exceptions: the Pushkin Fine Art Museum in Moscow and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. At the Pushkin museum the cashier wanted to see everyone who was buying the tickets and directly pointed at the non-Russian and said "he's not Russian". At the Hermitage everyone getting a ticket is required to provide some form of ID, so it's really impossible there to avoid outing yourself as a foreigner when you buy a ticket.