

**10 Surprises for an American Living in Russia**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcALReuxxc8>  
Transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/russia1.pdf>

Hey, everyone, what's up?

So my name is Rachel, and today I'm here to share with you things that I find interesting, surprising and remarkable, about life in Russia.

So, I'm here in St. Petersburg, Russia.

I've been living here for two months now, right in the center of the city.

I'm here for a semester abroad for college and I love it here.

I'm having an incredible time and I think that two months is a good amount of time to have been here ~~performing~~ [and it's a good time to make] this video because I kind of have a good sense of what life is like.

I've seen a lot of different aspects of life here but at the same time I haven't been here long enough that everything is completely ~~normalized~~ [familiar], so I still get surprised and I still, I'm sort of remarking on the things that I find different here every day.

So, number one, this is something that I noticed right from driving into the city from the airport: remnants of the Soviet Union.

I know, [it's] kind of [a] really interesting mix of old and new.

There's a lot of visual evidence of Russia's history right along one of the big avenues on the way into the city.

There's this giant building, Soviet style, large imposing, and a big statue of Lenin in front of it.

And then you keep going a little further and you get a big Soviet style World War II memorial.

And then, right after that, you get a big gate leading into the city which is a remnant from Imperial times.

And then as you drive into the city, you really see, you see, the kind of Soviet style block apartments.

And then you go further and further and you get more into the roots of the city, right in the center, which are essentially exactly the same as they were when the city was founded in 1703.

So there's a lot of history evident wherever you go.

Number two, number two, is something that I also noticed right from my first days in the city, something that's very evident on the streets and that is [there is] a very strong military presence.

and I've talked [to] my host about this (I'm living with a host here) and she told me that it's because there are a lot of sort of army academies in the city, military academies, especially right near where I live.

So there will be the younger trainees, but it's just very interesting to me because I'm not accustomed to seeing big squadrons of guys in their military uniforms just walking through the streets.

And I see that on a daily basis here, so, and it's not all one type either, it's not just like one academy, there, there are, several different uniforms that I've just gotten used to seeing on the street.

That's not really something that you see outside of kind of areas where we have big naval or military academies in the US.

Number three, um, so you know the stereotype with, like, Russian nesting dolls and [with] like babushkas, babushkas, I guess you say in the US.

It's all over our images of like, historical Russian women with the headscarf, right, one second, this is how you see the stereotypical Russian woman with [her] head wrapped up like this, something like that right?

That is still a big thing here, especially with the older women, so they'll always have something covering their head it seems but also with younger women like my age.

And that was a surprise at first, but then one day I was visiting a lot of Orthodox churches with my program and it's part of the religion that you're supposed to cover your hair, your head, as a woman so I did that.

It was a cold windy day, as per usual here, and I realized it's an incredibly useful, like practical, thing to wear because it blocks the wind from getting in your ears and it sort of protects your hair from flying everywhere and it just keeps you a lot warmer than you would expect it to.

So, I've started on the really cold days, I've just started wearing my scarfs wrapped around my head and it's very practical.

I'll actually open a picture ~~remains to go~~ of the first time I wore the head scarf at a church.

And wow, it changed my life!

Number four, something that struck me was that this city, St. Petersburg is extremely young and attractive and fashionable so it seems like the majority of the people that you encounter on the streets are sort of under age 30.

That, or they're like old grandmas, um, they're often times very, very well dressed and they're often times in couples.

It's just kind of like, sometimes I feel a little odd walking alone as a woman because it seems like all of the women are paired up with men.

And then the women also, are usually dressed like, very kind of stereo-typically feminine, so pretty high heels are the norm here and the hair and makeup [are] really done nicely.

Okay, point five, the beeping on the street.

The city is so noisy, granted I live on a large avenue, so it's something that I'm especially aware of because these drivers are right outside my window noticed just like.

Well, there's actually a couple different words for it in Russian but I really like you could say, [beep-beep] that's a verb.

Driving here in general is, it seems, very stressful to me because there are a lot of crosswalks, a lot of stoplights, but what people will do is, there just doesn't seem to be speed limits, other than like when you have to stop, so people just speed until they hit a red light.

And they'll just zoom down the, down the streets, uh, and then they hit a red light they slam on the brakes.

Point number six: so this is kind of a fun one.

~~The escalators here are insane, specifically not just in general, specifically the escalators going down to the metro station.~~ [The escalators going down to the metro station are insane.]

You can stand on an escalator for eight to ten minutes, so, like, you've got to count [figure] that into your time for getting into the metro.

And it's because the city is built kind of in a weird geographical place, geological place, so all of the metro stations are very deep below the city.

Actually, the very deepest metro station in the world is here.

And it's insane just standing on those escalators, it's actually very surreal, like you kind of lose your sense of reality, you're just kind of standing there with this mass of other people.

So, yeah, very interesting experience, very inconvenient if you're running late.

Number seven: another inconvenience, um, there is a distinct lack of trash cans on street.

If you like, bring a fruit with you, say, an apple and you you need to throw away the apple core, like tough.

You're gonna have to walk for like 10-20 minutes with your apple core in a lot of cases before we [you] find a trash can.

Number eight: and then, kind of on a similar note, recycling isn't really a thing here, I guess it used to be at one point during the Soviet era, but it's just not a thing at all though I'm just trying to cut down on the plastic as much as possible.

Number nine: there is a surprising lack of English [spoken] here.

There's a large portion of the population that just doesn't speak any English.

Gotta say this was a different situation in Moscow, so in Moscow I was hearing a lot more English on the streets around me.

And since it's more of an international sort of business and political center you can very much expect that English is more the norm there.

Number 10: beware of dill, and I am talking about the ~~food like the~~, the herb.

~~right~~ Russians put dill anywhere and everywhere.

I'll put in a picture right here of what one of my friends here ordered.

I don't even know what it was but they put in a heinous amount of dill.

You know, like, it looks like someone took this little container of food, stuck it onto the Christmas tree for a week and let all of the pine needles fall in there.

~~right after Christmas~~ You know what I mean, it's absurd so, like, beware.

So, thank you so, so much for watching.

It would mean the world to me if you would subscribe and like this video.

I'm gonna keep on making videos about living abroad as a young person.

They are about Russia [and] about my travels.

I would really appreciate if you would check out my social links in the description and I will see you next time, bye!