

# C.V. Starr~Middlebury School in Russia

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*Please note that information in this Handbook is subject to change.*

## Добро пожаловать в Школу Миддлбери Колледжа в России!

Our School in Russia staff has prepared this Handbook to assist you as you make preliminary preparations for study in Russia. You should find answers to many of your basic questions in the material presented here, and we ask that you review it very carefully.

The School in Russia is a unique and challenging program in a uniquely challenging place. Your experience in Russia will test you in new ways and will reward you beyond your expectations, but it will require concerted effort, determined independence, and extreme flexibility on your part. We stress the importance of “informed participation” throughout the study abroad experience, and, beginning with this Handbook, we will do all that we can to help you with this approach.

Closer to your departure date, you will receive a city-specific “hint book” for your particular School in Russia site. These are updated each semester, based on information and hints which current staff and students provide, and will include more specific details about academic and daily life in your host city.

As you make your preparations, please remember that our offices always welcome your emails, phone calls, and inquiries. We hope that you will continue to seek personal guidance and support as you prepare for your School in Russia experience. Likewise, our staff is always available to talk to your parents and/or guardians and to answer any questions they may have regarding your time in Russia.

This Handbook is a companion piece meant to be read and used in conjunction with the [C.V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad General Handbook](#).

Best wishes as you head out on this exciting adventure! We look forward to meeting you in Moscow soon!

Sincerely,

Nana Tsikhelashvili  
Associate Professor and Director  
Middlebury College School in Russia

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# PRE~DEPARTURE

## APPROXIMATE PROGRAM COSTS

The following is an estimate of program costs for full and half-year students as of March 2009. Middlebury College will bill you for the comprehensive fee (and the \$1,100 per semester study abroad fee for Middlebury students); the remaining expenses will be out-of-pocket. Figures may vary depending on individual lifestyles and situations. Please note that the “personal” figure covers only some basic necessities and does not and is not intended to include students’ discretionary spending (e.g. entertainment and travel).

N.B. These figures are used for determining financial aid awards for Middlebury College students and cannot be adjusted to account for fluctuating exchange rates.

<b>Full Year</b>	<b>Irkutsk</b>	<b>Moscow</b>	<b>Yaroslavl</b>
Comprehensive Fee: Tuition, Room, Partial Board, Visa, Medical Insurance	<b>\$28,750</b>	<b>\$28,750</b>	<b>\$26,000</b>
Additional Board	2,000	2,500	2,000
Books/Supplies	350	350	350
Personal	3,000	3,000	3,000
RT Airfare	1,400	1,400	1,400
Study Abroad Fee (Middlebury student only)	2,200	2,200	2,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>~\$37,700</b>	<b>~\$38,200</b>	<b>~\$34,950</b>

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Irkutsk</b>	<b>Moscow</b>	<b>Yaroslavl</b>
Comprehensive Fee: Tuition, Room, Partial Board, Visa, Medical Insurance	<b>\$14,375</b>	<b>\$14,375</b>	<b>\$13,000</b>
Additional Board	\$1,000	\$1,250	\$1,000
Books/Supplies	\$175	\$175	\$175
Personal	1,500	1,500	1,500
RT Airfare	1,400	1,400	1,400
Study Abroad Fee (Middlebury student only)	1,100	1,100	1,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>~\$19,550</b>	<b>~\$19,800</b>	<b>~\$18,175</b>

## EXPENSES

In general, you should plan to spend at least as much in a given month in Russia as you would at home. Keep in mind that the amount of money you spend ultimately depends on the lifestyle you choose.

Remember to budget extra if you are planning to travel before or after your program. Travel during the semester is not recommended (Except during fall/spring break) due to changing course schedules and make-up classes. Plane tickets are often more expensive than in the U.S. Train travel has remained comparatively inexpensive, but fares increase by at least 30% each year. If you are a big

spender in the U.S., bringing more money would be a good idea. Students who plan on regularly sampling the nightlife of their cities (particularly Moscow) should budget extra money for taxis. Public transportation in all cities shuts down between 11 pm and 6 am and the only way to get home during these periods is by taxi.

### VISAS

Russia requires both entry and exit visas for American citizens and most other foreign nationals. A visa application and instructions for completing it will be provided to you a few months prior to departure. You will need to submit a completed application, one passport photo, recent HIV test results (dated within 3 months of entry into Russia), as well as your original passport. If you will be in the United States prior to your departure for Russia, we will apply on your behalf to the Russian Consulate in New York.

PLEASE NOTE: The visa issuing process requires that your original passport be sent to the Russian Consulate. If you will be overseas and will not be able to give your passport to Middlebury for the eight-week visa application process, you will have to apply for a visa at the nearest Russian Consulate, in the country where you are located. Please keep in mind that, due to new laws enacted in October of 2007, American citizens will only be allowed to apply for student visas in countries where Americans can reside for more than 90 days without a visa. The only country where we can guarantee a visa application will be accepted is Great Britain. However, the visa processing time will be at least 10 days, so plan accordingly. Middlebury will provide you with all necessary documentation to apply for your visa. However, Middlebury is not able to otherwise obtain a visa for you overseas and the actual application must be made by you, in person. Please contact the Vermont office as soon as possible, if you have questions about these procedures. *Students who apply for their own visas will not be granted any refund. Likewise, students who do not submit the requested material by the deadline jeopardize their ability to get a visa.*

All students who submit their material to Middlebury by the appropriate deadline will receive a single-entry Russian visa valid for 90 days. This will be converted into a multi-entry visa, valid for the length of the program within the first few weeks in Russia. This second visa will allow them to enter and depart the country as often as they wish, for the duration of the visa.

Because of current visa registration rules in-country, visas cannot be issued earlier than the start-date of the program. Middlebury CANNOT accommodate students who wish to arrive in Russia early.

Students who wish to remain in Russia longer than their original visas will be required to obtain additional visa support and leave the country, at their own expense, to apply for a new visa.

Students should also note that at the present time, visas from one university cannot be transferred to another city or university in Russia. If a student chooses to study at a second School in Russia site during the spring semester, he/she will be required to leave the country over winter break and apply for a new visa for that new site. The cost of the second visa will be covered by the School in Russia, but the student will be responsible for all related travel costs.

Please note that by law, multi-entry visas cannot be replaced. If a student loses his/her visa or loses the passport into which the visa is affixed during the term of study, he/she will be given a single exit visa, valid for 30 days. He/she will have to leave Russia within that 30-day period and return to the country on an entirely new Russian visa. New visas CANNOT be issued in Russia and students are responsible for all costs (travel, visa, etc.) related to obtaining a new Russian visa. This process is EXTREMELY long, complicated and expensive, and we recommend that students be very careful with their passports and visas to avoid this hassle. (Multi-entry visas currently cost approximately \$400, not including travel costs to leave and return to Russia.)

Once we have your passport and visa back from the Russian Consulate, we will mail your passport and visa to you via FedEx or UPS. Visas are generally ready one week prior to the suggested date of departure from the U.S.

If you are a dual citizen (Russia-US), the Russian Federation requires that you enter Russia on your Russian passport (so no visa is needed.)

### **REGISTERING AT THE U.S. EMBASSY**

In addition to securing a visa, all U.S. citizens are advised to register themselves with the U.S. Embassy in Russia before departure from the U.S. In the event of international, political, or family emergencies, or in the event that a passport is lost or stolen, the U.S. Embassy will be much better able to assist registered citizens. Please visit the Department of State's website to register:

[travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/home.asp](http://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/home.asp)

Registration is fast and costs nothing. Please print the confirmation page after you have registered; leave one copy at home and take a copy with you. Students of other nationalities should check to see if it is possible to register with their own embassy in Russia.

### **HIV TESTING**

In 1995 the Russian Federation passed a law requiring all foreign visitors whose stay will exceed three months to provide certification that they are not HIV positive. Russian law also stipulates that test results must date from an examination conducted **no more than three months** prior to entry into the Russian Federation.

While the School in Russia does not require HIV test results, nor does it discriminate on the basis of HIV status, these results are required by Russian officials during the visa application process and/or as a requirement for registration in your host city.

All students must obtain certification of negative HIV status before applying for a Russian visa. The results must be dated within three months prior to departure. **Fall and academic year students are advised to have the test completed in early July, and spring semester students are advised to have the test completed in early December.** It is also best to keep more than one copy of your negative status with you, as students have given their single copy to one administrator only to have the results demanded by someone else later. You should likewise carry a copy of your results anytime you will be leaving and re-entering Russia.

### **TRAVEL TO RUSSIA**

#### **Airline Reservations**

Students are responsible for making their own flight arrangements to the orientation in Moscow. Fall and year students are required to arrive on Thursday, September 3d (which means a Wednesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> departure if leaving from the U.S.). Spring semester students must arrive on Feb 4<sup>th</sup> (which means a Wednesday, Feb. 3d departure).

Students will be responsible for arranging their own transportation to the orientation site in Moscow. Students should be at the hotel on Sept 3<sup>d</sup> or Feb 4<sup>th</sup> for the beginning of orientation.

Student travel agencies normally offer the most flexibility and the best rates:

- [www.studentuniverse.com](http://www.studentuniverse.com)
- [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)
- [www.travelcuts.com](http://www.travelcuts.com)

Individual taxis from Moscow's international airports to the center of town cost approximately \$70. Public transportation to and from the airport is also available, but is not generally a practical option

with large amounts of luggage. Detailed information and hints for independent travel from the airport into Moscow will be sent in a later mailing.

Departures from Russia: Return tickets should be booked according to the calendar at the end of this handbook. NOTE: No departures will be allowed earlier than the dates noted, except in the case of medical emergency.

The School in Russia will coordinate and pay for students' return travel to Moscow from Irkutsk and Yaroslavl, but once in Moscow, students will be expected to make their own way to the airport, according to their own personal travel plans. Students needing to stay a night(s) in Moscow due to flight schedules will do so at their own expense.

### **TSA Regulations (formerly FAA)**

The [Transportation Security Administration](#) regulates what items may be carried aboard the aircraft and, as these regulations are subject to change frequently, you should consult their website close to your date of departure.

*N.B. Possessing certain items while going through security may result in fines of \$250 - \$1,500 or, in the case of firearms, may be considered a criminal offense.*

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>

### **Airline Luggage Regulations**

Students should contact their airline to confirm exact luggage allowances. We strongly suggest you stick to these guidelines, or be prepared to pay excess baggage fees, which can be quite expensive. We also suggest that you consider insuring your luggage through a comprehensive travel insurance policy. For a list of providers please see: [www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com).

Students who will be studying in Irkutsk will be subject to the luggage restrictions of Aeroflot or S7 (formerly Sibir), the domestic carriers usually used by the School in Russia. Please note that passengers on domestic flights are allowed only 20 kg. (approx. 45 lbs.) of TOTAL baggage. Anything over 20 kg. will be charged as excess baggage and no single bag may weigh more than 30 kg. (approx. 65 lbs.), even if you are willing to pay extra. All excess baggage fees are the responsibility of the individual student. You should plan to have sufficient rubles in cash on hand to cover them. Credit cards are not usually accepted at the airport. Excess baggage rates in Russia change regularly, but you should expect to pay approximately as much as you would pay for excess baggage on any airline.

### **Important materials to bring abroad**

- Schools Abroad [General Handbook](#)
- This Handbook**
- Passport (and photocopy)
- Visa – this will be affixed to your passport (and photocopy)
- HIV test results (and photocopy)
- Airline ticket/itinerary (and photocopy)
- 4 extra passport photos (minimum)
- Insurance card
- Insurance claim forms
- Debit/Credit cards
- Certified copy of original birth certificate (in case your passport is lost or stolen)
- Medications in original containers and copies of prescriptions
- International Student Identity Card ([www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org))

### **GENERAL PACKING SUGGESTIONS**

Plan your packing carefully, keeping in mind that you will have to carry all of your own luggage while traveling. This means: TRAVEL LIGHTLY. We cannot emphasize this strongly enough!

Consider what you will use for luggage. Durable backpacks are lightweight and easy to carry. As you pack for the flight over, also keep in mind that you will be carrying this same luggage by yourself, sometimes over great distances or on crowded trains. Take things that are easy to manage and avoid over-packing. One rule of thumb is to walk around the block with your bags, then re-pack. It is also prudent to bring at least one bag or container that can be securely locked for storage of money or valuables, and a smaller bag that can be used for weekend trips out of town.

Choose each item carefully, and avoid duplication. Russians do not have as many changes of clothing as Americans, so a small wardrobe will not be noticed. Less is more when packing!

You should be prepared for extremes in weather. Following are average low/high temperatures in Russia (in Fahrenheit):

	<u>Moscow</u>	<u>Irkutsk</u>
October	37/48	25/45
November	26/35	3/23
Dec-Feb	3/24	-11/7
March	18/32	1/27
April	34/50	25/46
May	46/66	34/59

Temperatures in Yaroslavl will generally be slightly lower than those in Moscow.

Don't be misled by these numbers; they are only averages. Our staff has suffered through -30 in January and 104 in July in Moscow and as low as -50 in Irkutsk. You would be well-advised to follow directions from the on-site staff regarding appropriate clothing since frostbite and greater threats to health are a very real hazard in Russian winters. Keep in mind that once you are in Russia temperatures will be given in Celsius.

Bring clothing that is comfortable, durable, and suited for the climate of the area in which you will be studying. Washing machines are sometimes but not always available and dry-cleaning is unreliable. Most students will wear clothes longer between washings than they do in the U.S. and wash out clothes by hand. Choose hand-washable, permanent press, and drip-dry materials. Durable fabrics are most preferable. Bring clothes for different occasions: sports, classes, dress occasions.

You will be walking and waiting for and standing on public transportation a great deal. Comfortable walking shoes and **waterproof** insulated boots are essential. You should waterproof your boots before departing or bring a can of waterproofing solution with you.

We recommend that you do NOT bring expensive jewelry or items that can only be dry-cleaned.

Winter coats and boots can be worn over on the flight to save room in your luggage. Conversely, you may wish to wait to buy a winter coat and boots in Russia. Prices are comparable to the U.S. (\$150-\$200 for boots and \$200-\$400 for a good winter coat). Many students prefer this option, so as to blend in better and be considered more stylish by local standards.

A rope or chain sewn onto the inside of your winter coat for hanging is very useful. Coat checkers sometimes refuse to hang coats that have no *вешалка* and are guaranteed to grumble at you.

Although the "dress code" in Russia is becoming freer and slowly approaching practices in the West, certain styles of dress such as: baggy pants and work or hiking boots (especially on women) will clearly identify you as an American. You will likely find yourself torn between conformity and self-

expression; make sure you bring a selection of clothing to cater to both moods. Russian women rarely leave their homes dressed "casually." Black or dark clothing is very useful as it is easy to dress up and wears well.

### **Other suggested items:**

- Overnight bag for short trips out of town
- Shoulder bag or knapsack for daily use
- Swiss army knife (in checked bag)
- YakTrax
- Small first aid kit
- Ziplock bags to use for wet clothes and other small items
- Plastic containers for medicines, cosmetics, etc.
- Travel-sized sewing kit (in checked bag)
- Camera, film/memory cards, batteries
- Multi-vitamins
- Portable alarm clock
- Portable CD player or MP3 player
- Good, full-sized **Russian dictionary** (Katzner is the best, but cannot be purchased in Russia.)
- Russian grammar book for reference
- Money belt
- Small hand-held dictaphone, or iTalk (for iPods) for recording lectures
- Guidebook of the region (Lonely Planet or other)
- Recipes from home to share with host family

Recent recommendations from students include bringing vitamins, Pepto Bismol, and allergy medications, especially non-prescription Sudafed or general cold medications with pseudoephedrine. Claritin is available in Russia. Also, consider bringing medicines for reoccurring ailments that might reappear during your time abroad such as insomnia, athlete's foot, ear or eye infections, etc. Women prone to yeast or urinary tract infections should pack medicine to treat them.

### **Gifts**

People in Russia frequently exchange small gifts and you may want to take a supply for host families, friends, teachers, and acquaintances. A guide for choosing gifts is to select those that mean something to you and are light and easily packed. You might consider the following ideas:

- Books - books about the U.S., poetry, art and photography books, children's picture books, American fiction and best sellers, etc.
- College paraphernalia of all kinds: T-shirts, sweatshirts, stickers, pens, postcards
- Small souvenirs of the U.S.: postcards, buttons, pins, stickers, magnets, cards, U.S. stamps, flags.
- DON'T FORGET PHOTOS! Your friends will be interested in where you come from: your family, town, friends, and school. Take pictures that help explain parts of your life in the U.S.

### **Toiletries**

Toiletries are readily available throughout most of Russia and generally cost as much as they would at home. If you are particular about brands, you may want to pack an appropriate supply of the articles you regularly use. This is particularly true for women, in terms of feminine hygiene. Not all Western brands are available, and those that are will be more expensive than the Russian version. Otherwise, we recommend that you pack enough toiletries to last one month, then plan on purchasing additional items in Russia.

### Prescriptions

Not all medications available in the United States and Europe have been approved for sale in Russia. Even if they have been approved, they are not always widely available. Do not assume that you will be able to renew any particular prescription while in Russia.

If you are taking any prescription medications, you should bring a full supply for the semester/year with you **in your carry-on luggage** and bring copies of all the appropriate prescriptions with you. Mailing medicines across borders is extremely difficult, time consuming and expensive, due to international drug trafficking laws, and we do NOT recommend it. Prescription medicines should be left in the original containers. It is also suggested that you carry the original prescription or a note from your doctor confirming your condition, to avoid questioning.

Please also note that in the event that a prescription must be replaced in Russia, you must have the GENERIC NAME of your medication on the prescription, in addition to the American 'brand' name. Amoxicillin, for example, is sold under a different name in Russia. Local doctors will not be able to assist you in filling a prescription unless you know the generic/Latin name of the drug that you need.

### Immunizations

Although no agency requires proof of any immunizations for travel to Russia, experts strongly recommend that travelers take certain precautions. We have compiled the following recommendations from information provided by Drs. Atkinson and Orenstein of the National Center for Prevention Services (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and by Professor Murray Feshbach, a leading expert in the United States on environmental and medical problems in the former Soviet Union. You may check the most recent CDC recommendations by connecting to their homepage at:

[www.cdc.gov/travel/easteurp.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/easteurp.htm).

Tick-borne encephalitis has been a problem during the warm weather months in Russia in recent years, and students should pay particular attention to the final section of this CDC information.

- Tetanus/diphtheria ("TD"): Doctors recommend that you should have received a booster shot within the past ten years. (Doctors do not usually believe that inoculation is necessary after age 5 for people who do not travel.) The diphtheria component is the more important of the two, particularly as there is currently a diphtheria warning for Moscow. The primary schedule for persons older than 7 years of age requires three doses of tetanus and diphtheria toxoids that are specifically for adult use. The doctor should administer one dose, then the second dose 4-8 weeks after the first. The third dose is administered 6-12 months after the second. The third dosage would be relevant only to those students planning to stay in, or return to, the FSU or Baltic countries after the end of the program.
- Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR): You should have had two shots, or you should be able to prove by blood test that you are immune to measles.
- Polio: The Center recommends a single dose, assuming you have undergone the routine childhood dosage.
- Hepatitis A & B: The Center is now embarking on a program to immunize every child in America against Hepatitis B. Although the disease is almost fully blood-borne or sexually transmitted (like the HIV virus), it is spreading rapidly both at home and abroad. Therefore, Dr. Atkinson recommends immunization to all adults, whether they are traveling or not. The vaccine is effective and has few or no side effects. You should receive the immune globulin for both Hepatitis A and B as close as possible to your date of exit. If you are also receiving the vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), you should receive the MMR vaccine at least 2 weeks before the hepatitis immune globulin.
- Typhus, cholera, rabies, plague, tick encephalitis: There is no vaccine for typhus, and the cholera vaccine is not very effective and often results in severe side effects. The best prevention for these diseases is common sense. You can protect yourself against typhus and tick encephalitis by

wearing insect repellent while in the woods, as these diseases are transmitted by insects. Bring with you a small bottle of concentrated insect repellent with a high percentage of DEET, such as Cutter Deep Woods Off or Old Woodsman. Rabies, plague, and cholera are transmitted by animals, so you should avoid any contact with animals, particularly any which seem sick or wounded.

### **Electrical Appliances**

U.S. domestic appliances operate on 110 volts (60 cycles), while Russian appliances use 220-240 volts (50 cycles). If you plan to bring any electrical appliances (e.g. hairdryer, alarm clock, computer, CD player) you will need to bring a converter, adapter, and/or transformer, unless these are built into your appliance. You should be sure to consult with a travel accessories provider such as Travel 2000 (1-800-903-TRAVEL), Magellan (1-800-962-4943), or your local Radio Shack to determine what your needs will be.

Electrical appliances with voltage transformers built-in will still require a round-prong plug adapter in Russia. These plug adapters are widely available in Russian cities and are very cheap.

### **Computers**

Please consider the following factors in making a determination of whether or not to bring a computer with you to Russia:

1. Russian students handwrite most of their course work and papers and Middlebury students will often be expected to do the same. However, term papers in many mainstream classes and School in Russia classes must be typed.
2. E-mail, Internet, and printer access is available for a fee at all of our host universities and at local Internet cafes, with much faster and more reliable connections than would be available from host family telephones.
3. Internet access from your host family, if they allow it, will mostly be via dial-up connections. Not all host families will want you to tie up their phone lines with your laptop, and the local internet centers are a better option.
4. Wireless internet access is becoming more common in Russia (especially in Moscow, where WiFi is available in many cafes and restaurants.) In many places where it is available, there is a fee for the access.
5. USB flash-drives are useful as they will enable you to compose emails to home before you actually start using your minutes in an internet cafe.
6. There is a risk of theft, which, for some students, outweighs the benefits of having a personal laptop in Russia.

Students should be aware that, as with all personal belongings, Middlebury doesn't provide any insurance or compensation in case of loss or theft. Check your parents' home owner's insurance policy or see: [www.safeware.com](http://www.safeware.com) for more information.

### **U.S. Calling Cards**

Students who hope to phone home regularly might wish to look into long-distance calling card options with their U.S. long-distance carrier. Calling direct from Russia to the U.S. is reasonably inexpensive (20-30 rubles per minute, approximately \$1.00/minute) but can be cheaper with a long-distance international calling card or special international payment plan set up at home. This option is also far more convenient than settling bills with one's host family.

Most U.S. long distance carriers (e.g. AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, MCI) offer cards and special plans for international calls. You can contact the carrier directly for detailed information. Before leaving for Russia, however, thoroughly review all conditions for special calling card rates and confirm that you understand the procedures for placing calls. Misunderstandings can cost up to \$5.00 a minute.

It is much cheaper to call from the U.S. to Russia using a commercial calling card such as Teletzar, which charges as little as 5 cents a minute. Such phone cards can be purchased on-line. Some

students arrange for their friends or family to call them at a certain time each week at their host families to keep their international calling expenses to a minimum.

### **CUSTOMS**

If you plan to bring any new, non-U.S.-made articles of value, such as cameras, MP3 players, computers, bicycles, or jewelry that are LESS THAN 6 MONTHS OLD, you should register them with U.S. Customs and Border Protection before departure ([CBP Form 4457](#)). Alternatively, you can carry your original sales receipts to prove that you purchased them in the U.S. This avoids your having to pay a duty upon your return. Customs regulations vary from country to country; there are usually limitations on liquor, cigarettes, and other goods.

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

If you are an international student, you should meet with the international student advising staff at your home institution as early as possible to discuss how study abroad may affect your international student status in the United States and the ways it may affect your future plans.

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) require re-entry documents for some foreign nationals. If you are living in the U.S. but are a citizen of another country, check with the USCIS to determine the regulations that apply to you and be sure to obtain all necessary re-entry documents before you leave the United States.

# ARRIVAL IN RUSSIA

## IMMIGRATION/CUSTOMS

After you have landed in Moscow you will immediately enter passport control, where your passport, visa and migration card (distributed and filled out on the plane) will be checked and stamped by a member of the border patrol. **You must keep the migration card with your passport and visa for the duration of your stay, and turn it in at passport control when you leave the country.** Getting through passport control can take up to 2 hours, depending on how many other flights arrive at the same time as yours.

After your passport, visa, and migration card have been checked, you will then fill out a customs declaration (if necessary – see below), collect your luggage at the carousel, and proceed with your luggage, passport, and declaration to the customs line. All luggage is technically subject to examination, although detailed inspections nowadays seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

When filling out your customs declaration, make certain that you accurately state the amount of dollars and other foreign currency (cash and travelers checks) you have with you, as well as items made of precious metals (gold or silver) and any jewelry containing precious stones. **All musical instruments must also be declared.** It can cause major complications and forfeiture of undeclared items if you are careless in filling out the customs declaration.

**If you have cash/traveler's checks in excess of \$10,000 or are carrying any of the above-mentioned items (including musical instruments) with you, you must go through the Red ("something to declare") customs line.** Your declaration will be returned to you after it has been examined and stamped by the customs agent. Make sure it is stamped by a customs official. Customs officials may tell you that you don't need a stamp on your form, but insist on one and don't leave customs until you get back your declaration. Keep this declaration in a safe place so that you can present it again when you leave the country. (Otherwise you will not be allowed to take your musical instruments out of Russia.) Middlebury College School in Russia staff can not help students who don't have properly filled out customs forms.

Students who do not have musical instruments, or more than \$10,000 in cash/traveler's checks may exit through the Green ("nothing to declare") line. Your customs declaration will not be examined or stamped and you are allowed to walk straight through to the exit. Please note: these procedures will be different if you arrive in Russia by train.

## ORIENTATION

Upon arrival in Russia, all students will participate in an orientation program. The first day of orientation will be held in Moscow, and the two following days will be in your host city. During orientation, you will have the opportunity to ask the School in Russia staff any questions you may have. There will be discussions, lectures, individual interviews, and free time. On-site orientation includes city and university tours, excursions and meetings with key instructors and university staff.

## RUSSIAN LANGUAGE TESTING

Language testing will be conducted on-site. All the students will take the Russian Language Test on the first and the last day of the semester at the School in Russia (SiR). (Year-long students will take this at the end of the year rather than after the first semester.) It will be the same at each host university. The test will consist of 4 parts – grammar; oral comprehension – interview and text retelling; written essay; cultural comprehension. The test will assist in dividing students into appropriate language-level groups. The test results will show the progress each student makes during the course of study on our program in Russia. Those students who would like to get records of their oral comprehension parts will be able to have them at the end of semester.

## DOCUMENTATION

You will be issued a *студенческий билет* (student ID) from your host university. The student ID is necessary in order to receive student-rate tickets (where available) when traveling. It can also be required for student-rate city transport passes and should be carried at all times. Ask when and in what circumstances it will be required, as this will vary among institutions.

All foreigners in Russia are required to officially register in the city where they will be residing. To register in your city, the international department of your host university - the *ИНОТДЕЛ* or its equivalent - will require a copy of your passport, migration card and visa. They will also request several photos for student IDs, library cards, etc. These photos must be of a Russia-specific size and standard; therefore students should be prepared to purchase these during on-site orientation. The cost will be anywhere between 100-250rr.

# ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

## RESIDENT COORDINATOR'S ROLE

The School in Russia employs its own on-site Resident Coordinator at each of our host universities. This person serves as Middlebury's official representative and is generally the student's first contact for administrative and academic matters on-site. Resident Coordinators can be reached by cell phone 24 hours a day.

The Resident Coordinator's role varies from site to site, depending on the needs of the particular group, and on the academic environment in the given semester. To varying degrees, Resident Coordinators may:

- Assist in establishing class schedules
- Advise and assist students in their search for mainstream university classes
- Offer tutoring for particular courses as necessary
- Plan cultural events and/or trips
- Assist students in locating co-curricular activities or volunteer work
- Mediate in academic or housing problems

A very important part of the School in Russia program, however, is student independence. While the Resident Coordinators are on-site to ASSIST participants on a daily basis, they are not tour guides. They are advisers. Rather than doing things for students, their role is to help students learn to function on their own within Russian academic and social life. As such, the Resident Coordinator will not:

- Escort you to mainstream classes once they have been located
- Buy travel tickets for your independent travel
- Assist you (other than with advice) in obtaining visas for visitors
- Escort you to extracurricular activities once he/she has helped you locate them
- Take you to internships after the initial interview
- Loan you money for any period of time
- Plan regular social events or guarantee that you make friends

The Resident Coordinator is available to consult with and assist students whenever necessary and is obviously every student's first emergency contact in Russia. However, students should realize that on a day-to-day basis, the Resident Coordinator's role is indeed one of adviser, and that they should be prepared to tackle their daily life in Russia independently.

## RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Although it is changing rapidly, the Russian educational system still more closely resembles the European model than the American. The system guides students early in their academic careers into their particular disciplines, where they study a pre-set, standard curriculum together in a group (*группа*). The university groups students by department, then by major or sub-department, for the five undergraduate years of study. For example, one might belong to the class of '10, Political Economy major, sub-department Canadian economics.

Within each department or *факультет* there are several subsections, or *кафедры*. These are the operative units in the Russian educational system. Choosing a *факультет* and *кафедра* at a Russian institution is akin to declaring a major in the U.S. Students' lives revolve around their *кафедры*. The departments assign advisers and a *группа* within their respective *кафедры* and also arrange dorm rooms and stipends. Typically, after the second year, students enrolled in a particular *кафедра* choose

a major or desired specialization on which their studies become focused for the final three years. For example, the History *факультет* may comprise the following majors, or *кафедры*: ancient history, history of foreign countries, and Russian history of various periods.

Also contrary to the American system, Russians do not choose any of their courses, nor do they "cross enroll" in other departments at their university. History students, if they study sociology or a foreign language as a part of their program, do so within the History department. They are not allowed to enroll in another department at their university to study these subjects. For all intents and purposes, that would be akin to enrolling in another university.

For School in Russia students, the majority of course work proceeds under the auspices of an RFL (Russian as a Foreign Language) *кафедра*, an equivalent university subdivision serving as such, and/or in special courses designed by the School in Russia and the host university for your program. We also encourage students to enroll, whenever practicable, in regular or "mainstream" courses offered in other university departments (see "Regular University Courses" below). In these regular courses, students attend classes with their Russian peers and are normally held responsible for the same material.

### **CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

Russian students tend to relate to their professors with greater deference than do American students to American educators. Students always address professors in the formal, *вы* and by *имя и отчество*. It is not common practice for Russian students to converse freely with, or question the opinions of, their professors. This is both a matter of learning philosophy and classroom etiquette, and American students will likely find less interaction in their courses in Russia than they are used to at home. They may even encounter situations in which their professors scold or actively disagree with their opinions. This is, believe it or not, a normal part of the educational philosophy in Russia and should not be taken personally.

Conversely, a variety of practices that we take for granted in the United States are considered rude or otherwise inappropriate in the Russian educational setting. You should follow these local rules of etiquette at all times:

- Sitting on the floors and steps at the university is not accepted in Russia, nor will you ever see Russian students place their feet on desks.
- Eating or drinking in class is NEVER done, and American students routinely offend instructors by drinking from bottles of water or eating snacks during class periods. Food and drink should only be consumed before or after class.
- Coats, jackets, and hats should always be checked at the university coat check and never worn or carried into the classroom. It is usually a sign of disrespect to the instructor to bring your coat into the classroom with you.

Those of you who take regular classes should keep in mind that while Russian students may act rudely toward professors, this does not mean that you should too! Remember that Russian students who converse or read magazines in class will probably be able to cram for finals. They will be able to read large amounts of material during the short reading period at the end of the semester. Your language skills will limit your ability to do this. In addition, Russian students have the opportunity to retake the exam if they fail it. School in Russia students do not have this option.

### **ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

Students should consult the calendar of the School in Russia (both for the core courses and the universities on our website, as the dates may change after the publication of this handbook [www.middlebury.edu/academics/sa/russia/calendar](http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/sa/russia/calendar)). Please keep in mind that dates may change even after your arrival in Russia.

**Important:** All students must remain in Russia until they have taken their final exams within the university's official exam period. Students who choose to leave before the exam period may forfeit credit for the entire semester. Students from universities other than Middlebury College should note that core curriculum courses and exams finish in mid-December and/or mid-May.

## **CREDIT**

### **All Undergraduates**

A student's workload must be approved by the Director of the School in Russia. *Students are not permitted to take lighter loads, nor will they receive additional credit for heavier loads.* Forms are available from the Resident Coordinators to help students document all information relevant for course recognition and transfer to their home institutions.

### **Middlebury Undergraduates**

Middlebury College students receive four units of credit for the fall or spring semesters, five units of credit for the fall/winter or winter/spring semesters and nine units of credit for the academic year. Where J-term equivalency credit is awarded, reduced course loads result in the loss of this credit as well.

The duration of the program can vary by site. Mainstream courses at all sites *typically* end in late December or late May. Exams are usually held from late December through mid-January or throughout the month of June. Fall semester students whose exams officially end in December will be permitted to return to Middlebury for J-term. Exam dates at all universities are subject to change based on the individual academic department and course so **students must be prepared to stay into January.**

Students who do not take a mainstream course (those who have completed the 200 level only, prior to going to Russia) in the fall will finish in December and be able to return to Middlebury for J-term.

### **Non-Middlebury Students**

Middlebury College considers a semester/ academic year abroad equivalent to a semester/academic year in the U.S. Students who transfer their credits to other institutions typically receive 15-16 credit hours per semester or 20-25 quarter units per semester for 4 or 5 courses. Because an undergraduate student's home institution determines the number of credits awarded for work abroad, students are urged to consult with their advisers well ahead of time. Please be aware that even if your home institution will only give you credit for 4 classes, students are required by Middlebury College to take 5 classes for credit. This is considered a full load of classes.

## **TYPICAL ACADEMIC SCHEDULE**

Single semester students and first semester students staying for the academic year:

1. Intensive Russian Language I: Grammar: 4 academic hrs/wk
2. Intensive Russian Language II: Spoken Russian/Speech Practice: 4 academic hrs/wk
3. Intensive Russian Language III: Russian Writing: 4 academic hrs/wk
4. Russian Culture (Life and Mentality): 4 academic hrs/wk
5. *Spetskurs*: To be selected from offerings: 4 academic hrs/wk

Exception: Middlebury undergraduates who have completed the 0300-level, and others of similar language ability who choose to take a mainstream class for credit will pursue that in place of one of the above-mentioned courses. Specific drop/replace options will be discussed and approved on an individual basis by the Director of the School in Russia.

Second Semester (academic year students):

1. Intensive Russian Language I: continued segment: 4 academic hrs/wk
2. Intensive Russian Language II: continued segment: 4 academic hrs/wk

3. *Spetskurs*: To be selected from offerings: 4 academic hrs/wk
4. *Spetskurs*: To be selected from offerings: 4 academic hrs/wk
5. Mainstream course, or credit-bearing internship (Middlebury undergraduates only), or spring project (with advanced approval obtained prior to departure from the U.S.)

Exceptions: Middlebury undergraduates who have completed the 0300-level will pursue two mainstream courses in place of two of the above-mentioned courses.

### **Russian Language Courses**

For Russian language instruction, students will be grouped into appropriate skill/competence levels, based on tests taken prior to departure and/or on the basis of evaluation and interviews at their host universities.

During their first semester, all undergraduate students are required to take a set of core Russian language classes taught exclusively for program students (making up a 3-class component of the School in Russia's standard 5-course "normal full load"). The average enrollment is 3 to 6 students per course. While the content, duration and daily/weekly scheduling of these classes differ somewhat between sites, all programs include grammar and speech components in the core set. Students may expect to average 2-3 hours of daily language instruction during their first semester. In the second semester they may opt for a significantly smaller language class commitment as they take on more Special Courses (see below), mainstream classes, and/or credit-bearing internships in arranging their 5-course schedules.

### **Special Courses (*Spetskursy*)**

The School in Russia offers a complement of *spetskursy* each semester. These are special content-oriented courses, covering a variety of subjects in the humanities and social sciences. They are conducted entirely in Russian, but are geared toward a student audience composed exclusively of School in Russia students. *Spetskurs* may include a required excursion component.

All courses assume a working knowledge of Russian, based on at least two successfully completed years (4 semesters/6 quarters) of college-level preparation. While students' capability in Russian does not figure in the evaluation of course work, some *spetskursy* may prove significantly more demanding than others for students who have completed only the minimum requirements for admission to the School in Russia. Students are thus urged to consult with their Resident Coordinator and/or Director before finalizing their choice of *spetskursy* on site each semester.

No *spetskurs* assumes special preparation or prior knowledge in a particular area or discipline. However, students are *strongly* advised to familiarize themselves, if they have not already done so, with the basic outlines of Russian history and culture before beginning School in Russia *spetskursy* at any of the sites.

Students will receive information prior to departure about the specific *spetskursy* to be offered at their program site this fall/spring. At that time you will be asked to rank your *spetskurs* selections for the upcoming semester in order of preference.

Please note that Middlebury *spetskursy* require a minimum enrollment of three students. As such, **we cannot guarantee that any *spetskurs* option will be available in any given semester.** Students who hope to fulfill a particular course requirement for their home university should have a back-up plan, in the event that the course they have chosen will not be offered.

### **Regular University Courses**

Middlebury College undergraduates who have completed third-year Russian are required to take one regular ("mainstream") university course in their first semester, and two in their second. Motivated first-semester students from other U.S. universities who demonstrate advanced capability in Russian are also encouraged to pursue mainstream university courses for credit. Students who have

completed the equivalent of Middlebury's fourth year Russian may choose to pursue additional mainstream courses in either semester, pending approval of the Director.

During the spring semester, all year-long students who demonstrate appropriately advanced capability in Russian are expected to take one mainstream class. This requirement may in certain cases be waived or modified to include the non-credit auditing of a class (it is possible to audit mainstream classes – though not for credit – in Moscow and Yaroslavl, but not in Irkutsk), but only by petition to the Director. Should questions arise as to whether a student's skills qualify as "appropriately advanced", final approval to enroll in a mainstream will depend on evaluation by the student's first semester language instructors.

Mainstream university courses are taken in place of one or more School in Russia classes. All mainstream courses must meet for a **minimum of 30 academic hours** to qualify for Middlebury credit. Half credit courses are usually not allowed. Seminars, if a required part of the lecture course for Russian students, are also required for Middlebury students and are not credited as a separate class.

Credits and grades for mainstream courses will be assessed through detailed course forms submitted by students directly to the university instructors. Evaluation of credit transferability and decisions on the fulfillment of degree or major requirements are the responsibility of the student's home institution.

**In general, because the educational systems in Russia and the United States are so different and in some disciplines few courses are directly comparable, students should not expect to automatically fulfill specific major or other requirements by taking mainstream classes.** Interesting courses will be available and will offer excellent, advanced-level practice in Russian, but we cannot promise that any particular course will fulfill a student's requirements within a particular department at home. Students who nonetheless hope to receive specific major or other credit should arrive in Russia with a detailed description of the course they require (ideally, a copy of the syllabus for the course which they would have otherwise taken at home). If and when an analogous mainstream course is found in Russia, students should also maintain regular contact with their home adviser to ensure that they are fulfilling all of the requirements necessary to receive credit.

Enrollment in mainstream courses requires significant independence on the part of the student. Students will be responsible for introducing themselves to the instructor, obtaining reading lists and course descriptions, and requesting that the instructor fill out our enrollment/grade sheet form.

Finally, American students should be aware that advance information on mainstream course offerings and schedules is normally very limited. As mentioned above, Russian students take classes exclusively within their major departments, following a set curriculum and without "cross-enrolling" in other departments. Hence there is no perceived need for a university-wide catalog, and many departments post their class schedules only a day or two before the beginning of the term. School in Russia participants will, however, find appropriate mainstream classes by consulting with their language instructors and Resident Coordinators and by visiting the departments themselves during the first weeks of classes.

Prior to the start of the semester, there is no set schedule for mainstream classes. Once it is established it is still subject to change, including start and end dates of classes. Some mainstreams start later in the semester than others. Students who choose mainstream classes must be aware that they are **required** to attend all class sessions and take their final exams within the OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY EXAM PERIOD, never before. Work submitted or exams taken earlier than the first day of the exam period will not be accepted. Final paper deadlines and/or exams for mainstream courses can be rearranged within the exam period with prior approval from the professor and the Director of Middlebury College School in Russia. Each student's academic schedule will be discussed, reviewed, and approved on an individual basis with the staff of the School in Russia.

### **GRADE EQUIVALENCY**

Grades in School in Russia classes are awarded by the instructors, based on a student's mastery of the course material and his/her effort in the class. In questionable situations, the School in Russia reserves the right to adjust students' grades up or down, to more appropriately reflect their work in particular classes. Repeated unexcused absences will result in an automatic reduction of the grade.

Grades in Russian institutions are given on a "five-ball" scale, similar to that used in the U.S. While pluses and minuses are not commonly used for Russian students, they are often added to grades for foreigners.

Russian Grade	U.S. Grade Equivalent
5	A
4	B
3	C
2	D
1	F

Due to the late reporting of grades by the individual universities, students should understand that they will not receive their grades until a few months after the end of the semester.

### **LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

The School in Russia encourages all students to take full advantage of their experience abroad by participating in learning experiences outside the classroom. Internships, volunteer work, and cultural activities provide students with opportunities to deepen their social immersion in Russian culture, enhance their language skills, and gain a better understanding of present-day Russia.

#### **Internships**

As an interesting complement to their study of the Russian language and culture, students of advanced Russian ability have the opportunity to pursue unpaid internships as part of the School in Russia program. The School in Russia requires that all internships take place in an environment that is at least 60% Russian-speaking, and in provincial cities internships are usually only available in 100% Russian-speaking organizations. Hence, students must have sufficiently advanced Russian speaking and writing skills in order to qualify for an internship. Normally a credit-bearing internship will be for 15 hours per week. The School in Russia requires that every internship be a commitment of at least 10 hours per week (no exceptions).

For the most part, experience shows that the majority of students are best able to participate in internships during their second semester in Russia. However, certain single-semester students, particularly those with applicable work experience or high levels of Russian, may be granted permission to pursue an internship.

Undergraduates are strongly encouraged to pursue an internship for credit and may earn one course unit for the internship on a letter grade (A-F) basis.

Students at all sites have enjoyed holding internships in a number of exciting fields, including business and finance, politics, law, education, journalism, women's health issues, human rights, the arts, and advertising. Past internships have included work with the International Finance Corporation, museums and art galleries, different Russian NGOs, Yaroslavl School #4, Project Harmony, the Eurasia Foundation, Human Rights Watch, the MacArthur Foundation, NY Times, Golden Ring Newspaper, Baikal Wave, etc.

Detailed internship rules, applications, and instructions will be sent to you in this or a later mailing. Students who hope to apply for an internship will be required to submit a professional (not academic)

resume and cover letter addressed to the director with their application and may wish to consult with their career services center now for assistance in writing and editing their resume.

Internships are not guaranteed for any participant. They are granted on a competitive basis and are subject to the agreement of the School Abroad and the prospective employer. Placements are dependent on availability, previous experience, qualifications, and the language ability of each student.

Students who pursue internships are expected to follow through with their commitment until the end of the semester. Students who withdraw from a credit-bearing internship after on-site registration period will earn an “F” and will be ineligible to enroll in another course.

### **Libraries**

Library cards (*читательские билеты*) for university libraries can be obtained after students receive their student IDs. One passport photo is always required.

Library cards for city and regional libraries may also be arranged. Students who wish to use these facilities should consult with their Resident Coordinators and their Russian language instructors for instructions and assistance. Librarians are notoriously impatient and unhelpful to the uninitiated. Access to certain archives and specialized libraries may also sometimes be arranged through the university *ИНОТДЕЛ*, but this is usually limited to graduate students working on specific, approved projects arranged through the university. Students should be aware that in Russian libraries, books are not usually taken out. Some books may be checked out if a deposit is left, but most must be used exclusively in the library. Coats and bags must also generally be checked before entering the library. With the exception of dictionaries and notebooks, no written material can usually be brought into reading rooms.

# LIVING IN RUSSIA

## HOUSING

All School in Russia students are placed in home-stays, both to maximize immersion in the local culture and to minimize exposure to the less than desirable conditions in Russian university dormitories. Students are housed based on information they provide on a questionnaire prior to departure. All hosts have been personally recommended to the School in Russia and are pre-screened by our staff. Home stays will be guaranteed by Middlebury through the end of December/May. Mainstreaming students will have their housing in January/June covered on a case-by-case basis.

The composition of host families and location of the home stays varies. As in the U.S., family structure and lifestyles also differ. Some hosts may be young or middle-aged couples with children, though today, such "traditional" families are even less common in Russia than in the U.S. A greater number can be widows (*бабушки*), while others may be single mothers. We try to choose hosts with maximum potential for interaction, but we cannot guarantee your version of an "ideal" situation. Certain home-stays, particularly in Moscow, may also require lengthy commutes. (As in New York City, a commute of 1 hour or more is relatively standard for Muscovites.) Regardless of the arrangement you find yourself in, the placement will be in a hospitable, Russian-speaking environment in which you will live as if you were Russian.

The cost of board is included in the program fee: 2 meals/day on weekdays and 3 meals/day on weekends and holidays. Lunches during the week are taken on your own, either at the university or elsewhere in town. Hosts will always attempt to accommodate your tastes and requests, but you should generally expect a very "Russian" menu. Lunches on your own can provide an opportunity to supplement your diet with other things, particularly when *pelmeni* and *borsch* become tiring and you want something to drink other than tea!

Students have the option of cooking for themselves and receiving a reimbursement of the board stipend each month, either as a credit to their student account at Middlebury or in cash on-site.

From a cultural perspective, home-stays are both challenging and rewarding. Although all students will be given their own rooms, Russian apartments are small and you should be prepared for tighter living quarters and less privacy than you are probably accustomed to at home. (Note: there is no word for privacy in the Russian language and the concept as we know it does not exist in Russia.) Russian families are typically very close, and parents play a much more active role in their children's lives than is customary in the United States. Russian parents can sometimes appear nosey or domineering from an American cultural perspective. This is done with the most sincere and well-meaning intentions from the Russian point of view, but it can be strange to someone who is used to living on their own at an American college.

Another challenge that students in home-stays face is that Russians are more cautious and closed to outsiders than Americans tend to be (see "Cultural Differences" below). They will not always welcome a stranger into their "inner circle" of family and friends as readily and casually as would be done in the United States. Although all hosts have expressed an interest in interacting with our students, the initiative for CLOSE interaction still often must come from the student. To overcome this cultural barrier and become a "family member" rather than a "boarder," students must often be prepared to make significant overtures on their own (for example, by choosing to spend free time with host family members, doing what they do instead of coming home just for meals and to sleep).

On the positive side, those students who are able to cope with these (and other) cultural differences are granted a window into Russian culture and the Russian mentality that greatly supplements their formal study of the language and culture. In the best situations, students return home with a new "mama" or "babushka", with whom they remain in contact long after the program has ended.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The language barrier and living as a foreigner in a strange city will present a variety of challenges. Culture shock and cultural differences specific to Russia will be discussed in detail in later School in Russia literature, but it is a good idea to begin preparing yourself for some of these challenges now.

During your stay in Russia, you will need to adapt to new patterns of behavior. The best way to begin this is to keep in mind how you as an American appear to local citizens. Notice the differences in the behavior of students of your gender and age. Our participants do not go to Russia deliberately indifferent to local sensibilities. However, some customs and attitudes differ from ours, and it is possible to offend someone unintentionally. You will also sometimes be offended by the behavior and comments of Russians. Be aware that prejudices that exist in American culture (against African-Americans, Asians, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and Jews, etc.) are common in Russian culture as well and are spoken of much more openly.

### Some Good Things to Do

- When joining someone who is having a meal, at the beginning of a meal with others, or when you approach someone who is already eating (even with no intent of joining them) wish them *"приятного аппетита!"*
- Wash hands before eating. It is considered very uncultured not to do so, even if you don't think your hands are dirty.
- When visiting a private apartment, especially in winter, you should always take off your outdoor shoes or boots. Often you will be offered *тапочки* (slippers).
- When someone returns from a shower or bath, greet them with *"с легким паром!"* This is as common as saying "bless you" in the U.S, when someone sneezes.
- When Russians go visiting, see someone off, or take part in practically any happy or sad ritual, they bring flowers. Flowers can be bought at a variety of locations. The number of flowers should be odd, as even numbers are thought to be bad luck and are only given at funerals. When visiting someone, you may want to bring an edible delicacy, but be sensible in the amount you buy. Those Russians who are truly interested in you will become distressed if they feel that you think they're only interested in what you can bring them.
- The custom of amateur entertainment is more widespread in Russia than in the U.S. If it is suggested that you or your group of friends perform at a party or other social or ceremonial event, join in (enthusiastically, if possible!) rather than react to the request with incredulous horror. Amateur performances are considered a way to give other people pleasure and have a good time. If you play a musical instrument, by all means bring it with you. (Note: instruments should be declared on your customs form when entering the country.)
- Cultivate an expression of polite attention while listening to explanations on excursions. There will be times when more will be explained than you wish to hear, but exert yourself. Everyone should be responsible for asking at least one intelligent question per excursion.
- If you will be visiting a Russian Orthodox Church on an excursion or on your own, remember that there are strict rules for attire. Women must be in skirts and must cover their heads (usually done with a decorative scarf). It is also considered rude to keep your hands in your pockets while inside a church and you may be scolded by an offended *babushka* if you forget.

### Some Things to Avoid

- Putting feet on chairs or coffee tables. This is EXCEPTIONALLY rude in Russia and includes not only private homes, but also classrooms, auditoriums, airports, metro benches, etc. Americans are notorious for offending their hosts by such behavior.
- Casually saying, "Sure, I'll probably come," in response to an invitation and then not showing up; or informally inviting someone somewhere ("Come visit sometime") and not following up. Russians take invitations and responses thereto more literally than Americans do. They also interpret "probably" and "maybe" to mean "yes," when Americans are more likely to interpret these

phrases as "I don't know" or "no." If you're not sure you can attend, the best words to use are simply "I don't know" until you can give a definite answer.

- Sitting with legs wide apart or resting one foot on the opposite knee is considered rude and may bring forth an umbrella whack from a *бабушка*. As we once heard a Russian say, "No nice Russian girl would talk to a Russian guy sitting like that."
- Eating or generally being indoors with a hat on. No matter how attached you are to your Red Sox cap, it should never be worn at meals, in class, or in polite society indoors.
- Standing with your hands in your pockets may be considered crude, especially in churches, as mentioned above.
- Sitting with your feet on your own chair, tilting back your chair in class, or sleeping with your head on the desk.
- Being boisterous in public, talking or laughing loudly, pushing or running on the street. You may see Russian teenagers acting this way these days, but it is still not acceptable behavior – especially for anyone over the age of 15.
- Whistling at a performance or sports event. This signifies disapproval.
- Sitting on the floor anywhere. This is simply NOT done in Russia.

Americans usually mean well but out of sheer ignorance or thoughtlessness sometimes do things that give their hosts the impression that Americans are self-centered barbarians. Here are a few such behaviors, as observed by other Americans:

- Using a quite decent bedspread as a rug. Floors are always considered to be dirty and Russians would never put linens on them.
- Accepting an invitation to a function, such as a meeting arranged by the student club, then deciding at the last minute that it would be more fun to go out for pizza and not showing up, thus leaving a group of well-dressed peers who have made a trip for nothing. If you agree to participate in something, follow through!
- Eagerly telling all about yourself and the American way of life, but not showing interest in the hosts' way of life, will leave a bad impression. Interact!
- Showing no interest in cultural-historical places that local citizens deem important.

Because material goods are often more expensive and/or difficult to obtain, it is also necessary to show more respect towards your own and others' possessions. The attitude that we are Americans, and therefore we are automatically entitled to the best, is one that we must all be on guard against, especially since local friends will often try to give us the best, just because we are Americans. It is far too easy to develop an exaggerated idea of one's own importance.

Finally, one of the greatest concerns of American students in Russia is that it is often difficult to make friends in this culture. The American practice of making friends quickly and casually is unusual to Russians, most of whom have well-established and close-knit groups of friends, little changed since grammar school. They do not make great efforts to interact with new people and breaking into these circles can require effort and patience on the part of the foreigner. Moreover, because most of your classes will be taken with other international students, it requires extra physical effort (and generally, extra-curricular activities) to meet Russian students of your own age. Your Resident Coordinator will be able to help you locate extracurricular activities, but significant initiative must also come from you. Please also remember that one way NOT to make local friends is to spend your time speaking English with Americans or other foreigners. Venture out on your own!

Remember too -- to the people you meet, you represent not only yourself but all of America. You may be the only American they have encountered, and they will often judge all of us by their impressions of you.

## DRINKING

Long-standing tradition and the cheap and widespread availability of alcohol have made drinking to excess common in Russian culture. Because of your status as an American, particularly at the beginning of your stay, you may find yourself the guest of honor at gatherings. As a result, you will be exposed to more excessive drinking than you would normally witness, even on your college campus at home.

Many people in Russia partake in an old tradition of drinking hard liquor in rounds of toasts. Many toasts are offered and it can become increasingly difficult to refuse. Often it is easier not to begin drinking than it is to stop drinking once the ritual has begun. Unless you are confident that you will be able to bow out assertively after a few toasts, it is safer not to start.

Other cultural details to be aware of:

- Vodka and other strong alcohols are always consumed with food. It is considered extremely bad not to have a bite to eat (“*непекыснуть*”) after each shot, and only true alcoholics will drink without accompanying food. If you wish to learn to “drink like a Russian,” you should stick to this rule strictly. Otherwise, you will be looked upon as a stupid, uncultured foreigner.
- Russian society is very traditional and it is uncommon that women drink full toasts along with men. While male drunkenness is generally looked upon with a strange level of tolerance and almost inevitability, female drunkenness is very seriously frowned upon. In almost all situations, women should avoid keeping up with the men. Drunken women are also looked upon as easy targets, and intoxication can lead to a variety of unwanted and potentially dangerous advances from Russian men.
- Public drunkenness is still considered to be a crime and the authorities are not sympathetic in handling drunken people. Drunks are often forced to spend some time in the *вытрезвитель* (sobering-up station); a ghastly, vomit-covered institution to be avoided at all costs.
- From one region of Russia to the next, homemade alcohol, or moonshine, can be found in many varieties. *Самогон* is the generic Russian equivalent of moonshine. The strength (*крепость*) of *самогона* varies, but it is always higher than store-bought alcohol and is often 100% pure alcohol. Because it is produced at home and susceptible to contamination, many cases of blindness and even death have been reported from drinking even small amounts. Always use your common sense. Also be aware that there have been more and more instances of alcohol substitutes (*цыппогам*) which are bottled as legal alcohol but cause jaundice, kidney failure, and often death. NEVER buy cheap vodka or vodka from anywhere except licensed stores.
- Although drinking together is the ultimate sign of camaraderie among males in Russia, they do generally respect medical reasons for avoiding alcohol. “Язва” is the word for ulcer and is a good excuse to give if you do not wish to imbibe.
- Drinking and driving laws in Russia are very strict, but while many Russians will cut back on their consumption if they will be driving, they will still drink more than most Americans would in a similar situation. More than 25% of traffic accidents in Russia involve alcohol and you should be careful about getting into cars with friends after drinking. Better to make excuses and insist on calling a cab or taking a bus than to trust assurances that they didn’t have “much.”

Students should keep in mind that drinking heavily in Russia can be dangerous because no matter how well you adapt to the host society, you are still a foreigner and less adept at sensing a dangerous situation. In “the old days,” foreigners always had a KGB escort when traveling in Russia and they were automatically protected from random attacks when intoxicated. Today, this is not the case, and drunken foreigners are viewed as very easy targets for theft and violence. ***With the exception of random pick-pocketings, practically all of the safety incidents that students at the School in Russia have experienced (robberies, accidents requiring medical attention, etc.) have occurred when the students were intoxicated.***

You should also **never drink with someone during a first meeting, or when traveling**. In 1993-94, one Middlebury student who did not follow these guidelines was poisoned, almost fatally, by compartment-mates on a train.

The School in Russia also forbids alcohol consumption during any program-sponsored event (travel, city excursions, parties, group events etc.), Student alcohol consumption and related intoxicated behavior can compromise the safety of the entire group and could result in your dismissal from the program.

### **TRAVEL WITHIN RUSSIA**

One trip outside of your host city is included in the cost of the program each semester. Destinations are agreed upon by the group and trips are led by the Resident Coordinator, generally for up to one week. In certain semesters, two shorter (weekend) trips might be substituted for a single, longer excursion. Group trips are not mandatory, but students are not reimbursed if they choose not to attend. Group trips are open only to participants on the School in Russia program. Unfortunately, friends, visiting family members, and/or spouses cannot be included on any group trips.

The School in Russia likewise encourages students to take advantage of independent travel opportunities available in Russia and the former Soviet Union. Students are, however, expected to adhere to the following guidelines when embarking on independent travel:

1. Independent travel is permitted only on weekends and holidays. No class time (Friday afternoon or Monday morning) may be missed to accommodate independent travel plans.
2. All independent travel plans must be discussed with the Resident Coordinator.
3. Students are **STRONGLY** discouraged from traveling in Russia alone.
4. All students who plan to travel independently must submit a Travel Notification Form to the Resident Coordinator before their departure. This form must include travel dates and destinations, accommodation information, and contact telephones and addresses. This information will be kept confidential and used only in cases of emergency or urgent messages from parents.
5. Students are forbidden to travel to any area of Russia or the former Soviet Union against published U.S. [State Department Advisories](#) or Warnings. These may be checked by phone in the U.S. at (202) 647-5225 or on the State Department's web page. You may also confirm advisories with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. As of spring 2008, these included the entire northern Caucasus region -- Chechnya, N. Ossetia, Daghestan, Stavropol, Ingushetia, etc. -- as well as the country of Uzbekistan.
6. All independent travel is undertaken at the student's own risk. Middlebury College cannot be held responsible for students' safety and well-being while traveling, as outlined in the Conditions of Participation form, which all students must sign prior to enrollment.

Each Resident Coordinator has a collection of travel guidebooks available for student reference that describe destinations throughout Russia and offer hints for inexpensive travel. You would also be well-advised to **bring a good guidebook with you**. The School in Russia books cannot leave the offices. We recommend and prefer [Lonely Planet](#) for its thorough, down-to-earth descriptions and budget travel hints.

Students should also note that all former republics of the Soviet Union (except the Baltic States, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) now require their own visas for American citizens, and it is the student's responsibility to obtain all necessary travel documents for trips outside Russia.

**NEVER travel without your passport, visa, registration documents, and migration card.**

### **VISITS FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

The most complicated part of arranging visits by family and friends is securing visa support and a Russian visa. All visitors to Russia, no matter the length of stay, are required to obtain a Russian visa

before arriving in the country. To apply for a visa, they must first secure visa support from someone in Russia. Visa support can only be provided by registered Russian organizations or by private Russian citizens. Middlebury College, as a foreign organization in Russia, is not allowed to issue visa support and cannot offer assistance to students who wish to invite friends and family to visit. Foreign citizens in Russia are likewise not able to invite other foreigners.

The three viable options for obtaining visa support are:

- 1) Booking a full tour, with visa support, through a travel agency.
- 2) Purchasing visa support through a travel agency and arranging the rest of the trip yourself.
- 3) Obtaining an invitation from a private Russian citizen and arranging your own trip otherwise.

Most find the second option to be the simplest. Obtaining visa support through a Russian friend, though less expensive, is a lengthy, complicated and labor intensive process. It generally takes six weeks and requires the friend to stand in a number of lines, pay various application fees, and fill out a variety of forms. For the sake of simplicity and time, working through a travel agency is generally easier. Several agencies in Moscow are able to issue visa support for short-term visitors. Among them, the School in Russia has had good experiences with Unifest Travel ([www.unifest.ru](http://www.unifest.ru)). Applications for tourist visas may be made on-line.

We regret that the School in Russia staff is unable to help students obtain visas for their friends or families or make travel plans for friends or family of students. All travel arrangements must be handled by you and your visitors.

Visits by parents, relatives, or friends do not constitute a valid excuse for not attending classes. We do not encourage extended visits that will distract you from the language pledge and the academic purpose of your stay in Russia. Please also remember that visitors cannot be included on any official group excursions or trips.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

## PHYSICAL SAFETY

Whether going to Los Angeles, Paris, Moscow, or Vladivostok, all travelers must take their personal safety into consideration. That said, the issue of safety in Russia has become particularly complex and controversial in recent years. Russians all seem to agree that "crime is on the rise" in their country, yet it is difficult to get an objective sense of this phenomenon. Since a free press and empirical social statistics are relatively new in Russia, one cannot necessarily rely on information from experts as one might in other countries (even our own sociologists constantly remind us that crime "statistics" are highly unreliable).

If you talk to Russians about crime, you will likely hear reports of more burglaries, more robberies, more car theft, etc., combined with increasing evidence of the police's inability to catch criminals. However, talk of rising crime usually drifts into the realm of second-hand experience and enforces a general sense of the disintegration of the old political order. Russians, like Americans, can now sit at home behind locked doors and vicariously experience crime on television and in the newspapers (including everything from the sensational "police gazette" genre to crime statistics gathered by professional sociologists). Television and magazines under communism did not report crimes in this way, so the feeling that crime has increased is understandable. Guidebooks, newspaper articles and commentary, and various forms of other current information that Americans have access to are also often written by westerners who are inexperienced with Russian reality. Therefore, the best approach for assessing one's safety in Russia is to rely on one's own experience and that of friends.

For the observer who has become accustomed to much more theft, burglary, and violence in American cities than exists in Russian cities, it seems quite extraordinary that there is not more crime in Russia. If there were as much political and economic disarray in the United States as there has been in Russia in recent years, one would expect that American cities would become extremely dangerous places for people of all social classes. Comparing the United States and Russia hypothetically in this way, one can't help speculating that law and order is being maintained relatively well in Russian society.

Regarding specific threats, theft of students' belongings, particularly in the form of pick-pocketing, has occurred somewhat more often in recent years.

To prevent loss of property:

- Wallets and documents should always be carried in closed compartments inside of bags (ideally in an inner, zippered pocket) and not in coat pockets, outside pockets of backpacks, or other areas that would be easily accessible to would-be thieves.
- We recommend that students carry ONE credit card permanently in their wallets. The other cards should be kept at home and carried only when you travel or otherwise know you will use them on a particular day. Canceling and replacing credit cards from Russia is difficult and time consuming. Please keep in mind that credit cards and debit cards cannot be sent to Russia through regular international mail. They can only be sent via UPS or FEDEX.
- Keep your valuables packed and out of sight in your rooms, and avoid bringing expensive jewelry, audio, video, camera, or computer equipment with you.
- Bring a lock for each suitcase. Large sums of money and other valuables should always be kept in a LOCKED bag, even in one's apartment, in the event of random break-ins or robberies.
- Distribute large sums of money among several locations, write down credit card and traveler's check numbers, and keep records stashed in several different places.
- When traveling on trains, dress modestly, carry an unobtrusive handbag or briefcase rather than the Jansport-type backpacks that are so popular on American campuses, and avoid displaying expensive belongings or large sums of money.

- Keep a photocopy of your passport and registered visa in a safe place, separate from the originals.
- Theft of coats from coat-checks (*запдеробы*) is becoming more common at nightclubs, posh restaurants and discos. Keep coat-check numbers in a safe place, inaccessible to pickpockets and thieves.

The School in Russia does not carry insurance for stolen property, and students who are particularly concerned should look into additional policies before leaving the U.S. The School in Russia cannot offer to store money or valuables for students.

To help protect yourself from violent crime:

- Do not appear drunk in public;
- Identify the dangerous areas of the cities you visit or live in and stay out of those areas;
- At night, do not walk around alone and avoid gypsy cabs whenever possible;
- Never take a taxi if there is more than one person in the car already;
- Do not speak English loudly in public places.
- Never leave your drinks unattended at nightclubs.

Foreign women in Russia need to be a bit more cautious than they would at home, keeping in mind that in this more traditional culture, actions that we consider normal can be taken as overly forward or inappropriate. Among other things, women should not smile at men they do not know. This is not a common practice in Russian culture and may be misinterpreted, particularly at the *рынок*, where many of the merchants are from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Women from these societies are more sheltered than in ours, and men are not as accustomed to casual interaction with women. If you look too friendly, or enter too freely into conversations with them, you may have problems ranging from the amusing to the seriously annoying or dangerous. Russian men also have a reputation for being somewhat more chauvinistic than American men and can be rather forceful in making sexual advances. Be careful of putting yourself in situations that might be misinterpreted.

In all situations with Russians, it will take you a while to figure out who's who. At home you can tell pretty quickly if a new acquaintance is someone you want to get to know better or can trust, or if this new acquaintance spells trouble. In Russia you will lack the cultural background needed to make these determinations and may miss some signals, especially at the beginning of your stay.

In other words, use common sense. As a foreign student, you should take the same precautions you would in any large city, anywhere in the world. During orientation, we will address the issue of security in greater depth. For more information about general conditions in Russia, you can also see the State Department information page for Russia at: [www.travel.state.gov/russia.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/russia.html) .

### **DIET AND HEALTH**

The best way to stay healthy while living in Russia is to choose your food carefully and eat enough of it. Obtaining fresh fruits and vegetables in Russia can be challenging and expensive, although it has become much easier in recent years. The fruits and vegetables you do find at the *рынок* (open market) are usually those in season and can be quite fresh and nutritional.

Retail distribution of food is slow in Russia, and preservatives are not as widely used as in the United States. These factors may result in better tasting food but can also make food poisoning more common. Be especially careful when purchasing dairy products and meats. Be sure to wash all fruits and vegetables. It is wise to peel them as well. Bring a supply of vitamins and take them daily.

A note to vegetarians: You are already used to thinking carefully about your food and nutrient intake, a habit that will be especially useful to you in Russia. It is possible to live healthily without meat in Russia, but vegetarianism as a concept does not really exist in this country. Be prepared to be offered

sausage, fish, and chicken-based soups repeatedly by well-meaning hosts, no matter how you define your vegetarianism. It's always best to ask twice before digging in. You should also note that the word "мясо" in Russian means only red meat and you will need to mention poultry and fish separately if you do not eat them. Finally, beware of too much starch, and don't forget your vitamins!

For all students, it is important that you have a complete physical examination before departure. Discuss the program with your doctor, pointing out the less varied diet, the severe weather, and the hectic pace of life in Russia. With your doctor, determine what medicines to take with you and how much. While Russian and Western cold/flu medications are widely available, you may wish to consider bringing special medicines, if you use them, for these and other standard seasonal ailments (see Packing Suggestions).

As mentioned previously, if you are currently taking any medication prescribed by a doctor, and your doctor has ascertained that you may need to continue taking it while abroad, be certain that you have a copy of the prescription with you indicating the generic name of the drug (not the U.S. brand name) and information concerning the use of the medication. In any case, buy enough to last through your stay, as it may be difficult or impossible to renew the prescription in Russia.

Most people underestimate the amount of medicine they will need. Remember to take into consideration that change of time, climate, the pace of life in Russia, and a diet lower in nutrients can result in an illness lasting longer or recurring after it has been "cured." Plan the amount carefully with your doctor.

### **MEDICAL CARE AND CONCERNS**

Travel and study in a foreign country can be very strenuous and in the event of an illness, you should use your common sense about whether or not to seek outside help.

School in Russia students have been treated at university polyclinics, local hospitals, and Western hard-currency clinics (Moscow only). Students have been more satisfied with the treatment they receive at university polyclinics than the treatment at local Russian hospitals. The polyclinic, though it may seem spartan, can handle most minor ailments or direct you to a specialist if necessary. Foreigners are usually given the best care and special attention.

That said, degrees of helpfulness vary as greatly from institution to institution as they do from individual to individual. You should speak with your Resident Coordinator before agreeing to treatment from a particular local clinic or doctor.

In cases of serious illness when the student can travel, they may choose to visit one of Moscow's or St. Petersburg's Western medical clinics for treatment. Western clinics generally provide high quality care, although at a very hefty price. Students may also want to consult with a Western health care clinic by phone. Following is a list of several such establishments in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Please note that such establishments only accept cash or major credit cards and expect payment at the time of service:

#### **MOSCOW**

- The American Medical Centers (AMC), Address: Грохольский пер. 1; tel. (495) 933-77-00. Fax: (495) 933-77-01. General practitioners with access to local hospitals. American, British, Australian, and Russian staff. Hours: 8:30-6:00 M-F. The AMC accepts all major credit cards. There is a pharmacy on the premises and dental services are available. (METRO: Проспект Мира)
- European Medical Center, Спиридоневский пер. 5, bldg. 1; tel. 933-6655, 787-7000. Full Western medical and dental care, including ophthalmology. Pharmacy on premises. Payment by credit card or cash. (METRO: Маяковская).  
[www.emcmos.ru](http://www.emcmos.ru).

- American Clinic Address: Грохольский пер. 31 tel. 937-5757 24hr emergency care with American and Russian staff. (METRO: Проспект Мира).
- Adventist Health Center of Moscow. Проспект 60-лет Октября, 21А; tel. 126-7906. There is a good dental clinic as well as a physical therapy department located here. (METRO: Академическая)
- U.S. Dental Care, ул. Шаболовка 8, корпус 3; tel. 931-9909. Western dental center staffed by Americans. (METRO: Октябрьская) 2nd office: 7/5 Большая Дмитровка, корпус 2, 2nd floor; tel. 933-8686. (METRO: Театральная)

#### **ST. PETERSBURG**

- American Medical Clinic (AMC). Фонтанка, 77; tel. (812) 119-6101. See above description for AMC office in Moscow.

#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND COUNSELING**

Students should be very realistic about their abilities to function in a high-stress environment. Russia is a difficult place to live and, rather than disappearing in the new surroundings, conditions like depression and eating disorders are often exacerbated by a stay in Russia. Extremely limited psychological counseling services are available in Russia, and they are not provided by the School in Russia. English-language counseling is only available in Moscow and is also very limited in scope. Students with particular concerns in this area are encouraged to consult with the Office of International Programs at Middlebury College prior to departure.

#### **BIRTH CONTROL AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES**

Birth control devices are often difficult to obtain in the former Soviet Union. Although condoms can now be purchased widely in Russia, other forms of birth control will be limited. Prescription birth control pills can, however, be reliably purchased in pharmacies that take Russian prescriptions. They won't be the same as in the U.S., but European pills are available (Yarina, for example). Plan and pack accordingly.

Sexually transmitted diseases are more prevalent in Russia than in the United States due to the traditional unavailability of condoms and a low emphasis on sexual education. Social mores discourage discussion of STDs, which makes the spread of them worse. Middlebury students have contracted syphilis and other STDs in the past, and while proper treatment is now more easily obtained in Russia, you are strongly advised to observe safe sexual practices in Russia.

HIV is now spreading in Russia at alarming rates, and statistics are particularly frightening in the Moscow and Irkutsk regions. Although infection rates are highest among intravenous drug users, the virus is quickly and quietly seeping into the general population. Three quarters of all reported cases are now found in the 17-30 year age range, so university students need to be particularly cautious.

#### **DRINKING WATER SAFETY**

Many Western doctors advise travelers that it is unsafe to drink tap water in many cities of the former Soviet Union. There is a danger of contracting giardia, hepatitis, and other biological infections, especially in St. Petersburg and some other cities.

In most Russian cities other than St. Petersburg however, simple filtering or boiling of water will be sufficient treatment for tap water. All Russians boil water before drinking it, so you need not be concerned about host family practices. In Irkutsk, the tap water is some of the purest in the country and is perfectly safe and drinkable. Water filters are readily available in Russia if needed, although many students prefer to bring portable-sized ones from home.

If you believe that you have contracted giardia (symptoms include severe diarrhea, low grade fever, headaches, cramps, bloating, which continue for more than 7 days), seek medical help immediately.

# ON~SITE MONEY MATTERS

## CURRENCY EXCHANGE

At the time this handbook went to press the exchange rate was \$1.40= 33.29 RUB. However, the exchange rate may fluctuate between now and when you arrive in Russia. The easiest way to know the current exchange rate is to check on this website: <http://www.xe.com/>

## MONEY AND BANKING

Students often underestimate the amount of time and energy it takes to get money during their stay in Russia. We ask you to review the following section carefully, keeping in mind that the School in Russia cannot offer any assistance with financial transactions, **nor can any funds be loaned to students for any amount of time.**

### Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks can be cashed at some but not all banks in Irkutsk, Moscow and Yaroslavl. Those banks that do accept them, including the American Express offices in Moscow and St. Petersburg, take a percentage (1-5%) from each check cashed. If you lose traveler's checks, you can only replace them in person, and only in Moscow or St. Petersburg. If you choose to bring travelers checks, American Express and VISA checks are both accepted, but American Express checks are simpler to replace. Be sure to keep checks in a safe place and record all check numbers on a list, which you should keep separate from the checks themselves.

### Credit Cards

We strongly recommend that you bring a VISA card or MasterCard with cash advance capability, for emergency cash needs. Even if you do not carry a credit card at home, and even if you do not expect to use one in Russia, our experience of many years has shown that credit card cash advances offer the best and often the only solution to many financial emergencies.

VISA and MasterCard/EuroCard are the most widely accepted credit cards in Russia. American Express cards are useless outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

**IMPORTANT DETAILS:** Make sure that your credit card will be valid for the duration of your stay in Russia. If your card will expire during your stay, call the credit card company before you leave for Russia and ask them to send you a new card immediately with a later expiration date. Many companies are happy to do this. If new/replacement credit cards must be sent to you while you are in Russia, make sure that they are mailed by DHL or Federal Express to the company's main office in your city, for you to pick up there. Credit cards should never be sent to university addresses or by regular mail.

### Credit Card Cancellation

Make sure to leave all your credit card account information with a family member at home so that your card(s) can be canceled if lost or stolen. Calling your card company from Russia can be problematic, as Russian phones are still rotary (pulse) dial and cannot always interface with American companies' automated answering services. A contact in the U.S. will be able to cancel your cards much more quickly than you will.

### **Cash Advances**

Visa and MasterCard offer cash advance service - by far the easiest way to get money in Russia - via their credit card advances. Cash advance services are available in all School in Russia cities. However, many banks will only offer advances in rubles, not dollars.

American Express maintains its own ATM machines at its offices in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but American Express cards are rarely accepted at regular Russian banks' ATMs. The company also allows cardholders to write personal checks for cash at their offices in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Fees for cash advance services generally range from 1% to 3% of the amount advanced. Often, prepaying to the card account can prevent this fee from being assessed. Please confirm with your card company, before you leave, that cash advance services are available in Russia with your particular card and that your PIN is valid outside the U.S. Past students have arrived in Russia only to find that their card did not work as expected.

ATM cards linked to your checking account may have the lowest foreign transaction fees. Check with your bank.

### **Changing American Dollars to Rubles**

The best places to change money are at *обмен валюты* points, which can be found throughout most Russian cities. Exchange windows inside banks are the safest. Never exchange money with a private citizen on the street. This is a very common way to be robbed.

Single dollar bills in Russia are virtually useless. Many banks or exchange venues will not trade lower than \$20 denominations, and we therefore do not recommend bringing smaller bills.

Bills should be as new and as crisp as you can find, without tears or marks on them. If you bring large bills (twenties, fifties and hundreds), make sure they are from the newest series, which has a watermark across one end. Counterfeit money is a problem in the former eastern bloc states, and the newer and less suspicious the bill, the easier it will be to change it. Many exchange points will simply refuse to change bills which they consider to be too dirty or wrinkled.

### **EMERGENCY CASH**

BEFORE you leave, you should discuss with your family and friends a plan for getting more money during your stay. The easiest way to get money in an emergency, as noted above, is a cash advance on a Visa or MasterCard. Parents can also wire money through Western Union to major cities in the former Soviet Union (including all School in Russia sites), but it is usually sent in dollars and received in rubles only. Some Western banks (in Moscow and St. Petersburg) may allow you to receive money wired in dollars, but only at a significant additional cost. Please note that wiring money can take between 2-5 days, and that significant fees are usually charged on each end.

Once again, the most reliable way to get cash in less than 48 hours is by cash advance on a VISA or MasterCard (or on an American Express card in Moscow or St. Petersburg).

# COMMUNICATION WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

## COMMUNICATION AND IMMERSION

Students in Russia are often surprised by the comparatively limited and low-tech means of communication available in Russian cities. Although phone connections have improved in recent years, Russian phone systems still function on rotary dial, dialing international calls can still require multiple attempts, and echoes and other sound interference are not uncommon. Although e-mail access is now available in most large Russian cities (Irkutsk and Yaroslavl included), high-speed cable connections are the exception and not the rule. You should remember that only twelve years ago, almost no Russian universities had any fax machines or personal computers. As such, you should not expect the ease of communication that you are accustomed to at home.

Students who seek maximum immersion in Russia should also note that regular communication with home can significantly hinder their language acquisition and their adjustment to the new culture. If your goal is maximum immersion, you should prepare family and friends for the reality that you may be difficult to contact and that, even when possible, regular calling or emailing may interfere with your language acquisition. If something has gone wrong, your family will learn about it immediately. Otherwise, you can remind them that no news is good news.

## MAIL

Letters mailed from the United States generally take 3 weeks (and sometimes longer) to reach Russian cities, so do not be discouraged if you do not receive mail at the beginning of your stay. Registered mail from the U.S. usually takes less time and aerogrammes from the United States often arrive more quickly than regular letters or postcards. They are available at any U.S. post office.

Your mailing address at your host university will be:

### **Irkutsk**

Россия 664003  
Иркутск  
Ул. Карла Маркса, 1  
Иркутский Государственный Университет  
(ИГУ)  
Your name  
Middlebury College School in Russia

Russia 664003  
Irkutsk  
ul. Karla Marxa, 1  
Irkutskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet (IGU)  
Your name  
Middlebury College School in Russia

### **Moscow**

Россия 125267  
Москва  
Миусская пл., 6  
РГГУ, Отдел по международным связям,  
ком. 345  
Your name  
Middlebury College School in Russia

Russia, Moscow, 125267  
Miusskaia ploshad', 6  
RGGU, International Cooperation Dept.  
Room 345  
Last name, first name  
Middlebury College School in Russia

### **Yaroslavl**

Россия 150000  
Ярославль  
Ул. Республиканская, 108  
Ярославский Государственный  
Педагогический Университет  
Отдел международного сотрудничества  
Your name

Russia 150000  
Yaroslavl  
Ul. Respublikanskaya, 108  
Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University  
Department of International Cooperation  
Your name

Students may also elect to receive mail at their host family's address, to be confirmed upon arrival. University addresses are usually more reliable, but either may be used.

Letters from Russia to the United States should be sent via airmail. *ABIA* (for air mail) should be printed on the envelope. Many short letters are preferable to lengthy letters, since some letters will inevitably be lost in transit. Letters can be dropped off in any mailbox and should take three to four weeks to reach the United States, although delivery time varies. In the boxes on the left bottom corner of the envelope, write "500" in block numbers. This designates international mail.

In writing home, consider that if using regular mail it will not be received in the U.S. for several weeks. On a given day you may be feeling upset, but by the time your relatives receive your letter you will be in good spirits again. Remember that your friends and relatives will be very concerned about you and have little recourse from the United States. For daily troubles, nearby friends are the best people to consult.

Problems and inconveniences that you feel are significant enough to mention to your parents (by mail, e-mail, or phone) should also be discussed with your Resident Coordinator. The Office of Off-Campus Study at Middlebury College often receives calls from worried parents with valid concerns. If you have not communicated these concerns to your Resident Coordinator, however, the Middlebury office is unequipped to address your parents' concerns.

An informal journal can be kept by recounting your activities in letters home and requesting that your friends and relatives keep the letters for you. You may want to number your letters so that all letters can be tracked, and the people receiving them will know when one has been delayed or lost.

In very limited circumstances (lost credit cards, travel documents, theft, etc.), School in Russia staff who are traveling to Russia may be able to bring letters for students to the Moscow office. Students will then have to travel to Moscow to pick up their letters. It is the sender's responsibility to inform the student of the plan, and **we cannot guarantee a time schedule**. If time is of the essence, letters and packages should be sent directly to the student. Please understand that the School in Russia offices are not to be used as a destination address for personal mail and that you must receive permission from the Director before using this channel.

### PACKAGES

Using regular mail service for shipping packages can be risky. Packages travel very slowly and do not always arrive with all of their original contents, if they arrive at all. We do not recommend sending valuables via regular post. If you do decide to take this route, keep in mind that air mail for packages via the U.S. Postal Service takes at least two months.

It is possible to mail packages via the U.S. Postal Service's Express Mail. This method has proven to be relatively quick and reliable, with a mailing time of about two weeks to Moscow and Yaroslavl, but not Irkutsk. It is, however, expensive. Check at your local post office for details.

United Parcel Service, Federal Express and DHL have more dependable service to Russia and do service all of Middlebury's host cities. However, prices are usually very high (min. \$60 for the first pound). Call UPS, FedEx or DHL if you would like more information about these services.

In general, students should not plan on receiving packages from home regularly, as service is unreliable. If you will need supplies of something from home, the School in Russia recommends that you take these supplies with you. **Keep in mind that you may also have to pay a customs fee upon receipt of the package in Russia for anything valued at more than \$50.** One student was asked to pay a duty on his winter coat sent from the States, which was more than twice what the coat was worth!

### EMAIL

Although Russian universities do not have free computer labs for their students, e-mail is available at all of Middlebury's host universities in Russia and at several Internet cafes in each host city. Your

Resident Coordinator will explain the provisions and costs for e-mail use at your campus shortly after you arrive. In most cities, however, students have found that local Internet cafés provide the fastest and most effective services, as the connections at university computer centers can be horrendously slow. City hintbooks, which you will receive prior to your departure for Russia, will explain e-mail facilities at each site in more detail.

Most students choose to use internet-based e-mail addresses while in Russia, whether through their home universities or by taking advantage of yahoo, gmail, or other services. Local addresses may also be set up at host universities in Russia, if desired.

### **TELEPHONE**

Public telephones are dispersed throughout major cities and can be used for calls within that city only (unless they are calling card compatible, in which case long-distance is also possible). It is possible to purchase necessary *жетоны* (telephone tokens) or calling cards in kiosks at transportation stops, or at the Central Telegraph office. In Moscow, you can also purchase thirty to sixty minute payphone calling cards, to be used in city payphones.

Calls between Russian cities must be placed from private homes or at special phone booths labeled *междугородный*. From a private home, you must dial "8", wait for the next dial tone, then dial the city code and number. From a public phone, the operator will generally place the call for you.

From Moscow, Yaroslavl, and Irkutsk you can dial international calls directly from a private telephone (such as from a friend's or host family's house). Cities in western Russia are 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time; Irkutsk is 13 hours ahead. Daylight Savings Time in Russia begins one week later than it does in the US – last Sunday of March- and ends one week earlier – last Sunday in October. To place an international call from a private phone in Russia, you must dial "8", wait for the next dial tone, then dial "10" for an international line, plus the country code ("1" for the U.S.) and the number you are calling, area code included. Example: to call Middlebury College, you would dial 8, pause, 10-1-802-443-5000.

Calls to Russia from the U.S. can also be made directly or through an international operator. If calling direct you must dial 011-7-495 for Moscow, 011-7-4852 for Yaroslavl, 011-7-3952 for Irkutsk, and then the number in the city. Most other large cities also have direct dial service. Call your long distance carrier for more information.

Students who hope to use U.S. calling cards or international 800 numbers while in Russia should contact their American phone company before they leave and receive detailed information about how to use their services in Russia. Calling card services are available through most major American phone companies, but the School in Russia offices and staff rarely use these services and cannot offer advice about them once students are already in Russia. We have no experience with international 800 numbers in Russia. Please confirm all of these details with your company before you leave the United States.

There are also many pre-paid calling cards available in Russia, with rates as low as 5 cents a minute from Moscow. Options differ from city to city and will be discussed in later city-specific hint books.

### **VOIP – VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL**

Students are now frequently using the Internet to speak to people around the world at low or no cost. Former study abroad students have recommended using Skype, an Internet phone software service: <http://www.skype.com>

### **CELL PHONES**

For students who are interested, cell phones may be very easily purchased in all School in Russia host cities. Most providers now offer exclusively GSM phones (the most widely used technology in Europe) and an inexpensive handset/SIM card start-up package can usually be purchased for around

\$75-150. A wide variety of monthly subscription and per-minute rates are otherwise available and, since they tend to change regularly with new promotions, they can only be confirmed on-site. Additional details may be viewed on any of the main providers' websites:

MTS: [www.mtsgsm.com](http://www.mtsgsm.com)  
(Moscow, Irkutsk, Yaroslavl)

Beeline: [www.beeline.ru](http://www.beeline.ru)  
(Moscow, Yaroslavl)

Megafon: [www.megafon.ru](http://www.megafon.ru)  
(Moscow, Yaroslavl)

### **FAX**

Public fax services are available at major telephone/telegraph offices in all School in Russia host cities. **School in Russia offices cannot accept or send personal faxes for students, except in cases of emergency.**

# LOCAL INFORMATION

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Students will receive an emergency contact card during orientation, which they should carry on their person at all times. In addition, students should memorize the following emergency numbers:

Fire, Natural Gas Emergency	01
Police	02
Скорая помощь (ambulance)	03

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mass transit in most cities is extensive and inexpensive but very crowded during *час пик* (rush hour). In order to learn the layout of your city, buy a *схема* (street map) at a kiosk as soon as you arrive. Carry the map with you, but don't be afraid to ask for directions.

A transportation pass called a *проездной билет* is the most convenient way to pay for mass transit. The *единый билет* is good for all forms of mass transit and generally can be bought starting on the 25th of each month, for the following month. A *проездной билет* can be for one or many forms of transit. This ticket eliminates worrying about change and buying separate tickets. You may be able to save some rubles by getting the student discount through your university's International Student Office.

For trolleys, trams, and buses, *талоны* (tickets) can be bought at kiosks or from the driver or conductor on the bus. Frequently, a checker (кондуктор) will flash a badge and ask to see your ticket. If you do not have a ticket, *единый билет*, or *проездной билет*, an embarrassing scene will ensue and you will immediately be fined. The Moscow metro now uses multi-use electronic cards for tickets.

In Irkutsk and Yaroslavl, one of the main forms of transportation are маршрутные такси – private minivans which run on set routes throughout the city. They are faster and run more frequently than city buses, but each ride must be paid individually and no monthly passes are available.

Learn the hours during which public transportation operates in your city and plan accordingly. Remember that trolleybus and tram hours vary from line to line, though most close for the night between 11:30 pm and 1:00 a.m.

Taxis are expensive but convenient. If a taxi is hailed on the street, a *частник* (private car owner) will often stop. This practice is illegal if the driver is not registered as a private cabdriver, but it is a thriving activity welcomed as an aid to crowded public transportation. It is also a way for private car owners to defer the high cost of owning a car. While hailing cabs in this manner is a universal practice, the School in Russia **does not recommend it**.

If you do choose to make use of gypsy cabs, certain rules should be followed. Before entering the car, tell the driver where you would like to go and for how much. If you are having difficulty catching a ride it may be necessary to offer more money. Agree on the price before you accept a ride. It is customary for single passengers to ride in front. Never ride in a gypsy cab alone, after dark, or under the influence of alcohol. Never get into a car that is already carrying another passenger. Foreigners have been abducted and robbed in such situations.

Taxis that are ordered through taxi companies are reliable and safe for individual and late-night travel.

## SHOPPING

Stores usually close at lunch for an hour. They also close irregularly, but at least once a month, for cleaning day ("*санитарный день*"). Because many stores do not provide bags for purchases, always carry a sturdy plastic bag with you.

Many Russian stores are modernizing and simplifying their procedures. Nevertheless, in stores that sell bread, cheese, milk, and other items, a three-step system is still often used. (1) Find the item you want to buy and note the price. (2) Tell the cashier the item and the amount you desire (for example, "*сыр, триста грамм*"). After paying the cashier, you will be given a receipt that should be brought to the person working at the counter where your item is being sold. (3) Give the salesperson your receipt and specify what you need, such as the specific type of sausage or cheese.

Although prices are sometimes higher than in stores, the selection and quality of produce at the *рынок* (open market) are usually greater. Feel free to bargain for as low a price as possible, and make sure the produce is as good as the sample the salesperson had you try. It is a good idea to listen to a Russian make a purchase and insist on the price s/he got on a particular item.

Russian stores do not always have a particular name, such as "K Mart" or "Stop and Shop" and stores are often referred to simply according to what they sell:

<i>Булочная</i>	Bakery: bread, rolls, and cookies
<i>Молоко</i>	Dairy products: milk, yogurt, cheese, and eggs
<i>Продукты</i>	Fruits and vegetables, juices, canned goods, candies, some dry goods
<i>Галантерея</i>	Haberdashery: scarves, scissors, buttons, mittens, etc.
<i>Электротовары</i>	Electric tea kettles, fans, and other electrical products
<i>Гастроном</i>	Dairy products and meat
<i>Кулинария</i>	Prepared foods
<i>Парфюмерия</i>	Perfume, toiletries, mirrors, jewelry
<i>Универмаг</i>	Department store
<i>Хозяйственный Магазин</i>	Soap powder, kitchen utensils, brooms, etc.

## EATING ESTABLISHMENTS

As in the U.S., every city has good restaurants and restaurants to be avoided at all costs. Service is generally slow no matter which restaurant you choose, so do not plan on eating in an hour before going to a show. Sometimes you will be seated at a table with other patrons, which can be a great opportunity to meet new people. Do not be surprised if much of what is on the menu is not available or if the prices change frequently.

When dining in a restaurant, make sure that you know exactly what you are being charged for and that the server knows that you are keeping track. Ask for a menu with price listings if one is not offered to you.

Reservations are often hard to obtain at the nicer restaurants. It is best to make them in person and in advance. If you do make a reservation by phone, it's not a bad idea to leave a Russian name for your party.

Various establishments — *грили, бары, кафе, and буфеты* — are available for quicker, less expensive food.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Cultural events will be a major part of your experience in Russia, and going to the movies is a favorite leisure time activity. Ask acquaintances which Russian films are worth seeing and invite them along. A native speaker will be very helpful in explaining the finer nuances (or even the basic plot), which

may be elusive during your first months abroad. Films are an entertaining way to become more proficient in Russian and learn about the host country's society -- though the profusion of dubbed foreign (often American) films in Russian theaters can sometimes make good Russian movies hard to find.

Listings of movies are posted throughout each city and often published in local newspapers. Movie tickets are inexpensive and can be bought at the theater's *касса*. For popular movies, tickets often have to be bought in advance. Movie tickets are sometimes for assigned seats, and no one is usually permitted into the theater after the film has begun.

Opera, ballet, and classical concerts are inexpensive and much more widely attended in Russia than in the U.S. Locals are proud of their theater and musical culture. Student productions at large universities are worthwhile, as are concerts and productions at the local *дом культуры* or *дом молодежи*.

Theater can also be very entertaining, but it is best to ask local acquaintances about which plays are worth seeing. If possible, read or get a brief summary of the play before the performance. Theater tickets are bought the same way as movie tickets.

Remember that when getting to your seat in a Russian theater, it is considered impolite to move past seated patrons facing the stage (bluntly, putting your rear in their faces). Be sure to move down the row facing those who are already seated.

### Museums

Local museums and art galleries contain wonderful collections. The admission price is usually nominal, and, except for special exhibitions, there are rarely lines. Look for information about student tickets, which are usually considerably less expensive. Also, don't miss the "local history" museums in smaller cities. They often have wonderful relics of Soviet propaganda as well as displays of pre-revolutionary (and sometimes, pre-historic) artifacts.

### Sports

Tickets for sporting events such as hockey, basketball, and soccer are available at stadium ticket kiosks. Ask friends which matches are the best to see, or read the sports pages. If you are in a large city, make sure you know where the match is being played before you buy the ticket.

### Tickets

Tickets for many cultural events can also be obtained by standing in front of the place of the event and asking those who approach the theater for *лишние билеты*. This technique is useful for popular shows that sell out and for events that you "stumble" across.

### Media

The uneven development of post-Soviet mass media since 1991 has meant an explosion of news sources and competing points of view. Often news broadcasts in Russia, as in Europe, tend to be more graphic than in the U.S.; sometimes shockingly so. Among the better-known publications are:

Известия - A leading, relatively independent newspaper; a good source for national and international news.

Литературная Газета - A weekly newspaper geared toward intellectuals, containing important literary and cultural articles as well as articles on current social and economic issues.

Комсомольская Правда - a sometimes gossipy but always interesting daily.

Новый Мир - The most prestigious monthly literary journal.

Московский Комсомолец (МК) - The largest circulation Moscow daily newspaper. Most major Russian cities now have their own, local versions of МК.

Аргументы и Факты (АиФ) - A popular weekly newspaper. It often provides information on the latest economic statistics or hot political issue, as well as interviews with leading political and cultural figures.

Коммерсант - A daily newspaper and a weekly magazine on economic and business issues; required reading for all Russian *бизнесмены*.

### **Television**

As with print media, television is changing rapidly. At this time, most national channels are either directly controlled by the government or are functioning under “self-censorship” in fear of government interference. For the most part, this has affected only news broadcasts. Entertainment based channels and shows continue as they have for the past several years.

The main national channels are *ОРТ, РТР, НТВ, Культура* and *Снопт*. A variety of smaller television stations also broadcast in large cities (*СТС, ТВЦ, Пен-ТВ*), focusing almost entirely on entertainment shows and not news. Irkutsk and Yaroslavl also have their own, local television stations that broadcast news and other local shows in the mornings and evenings. Weekly TV listings can be found in local newspapers.

# RETURNING TO THE U.S.

## RUSSIAN CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

Upon departure, you will be required to fill out and submit a departure customs declaration, together with your original entry declaration (if you filled one out and had it stamped). All items of value (jewelry, musical instruments) that were declared on your original form should be listed on your departure declaration as well. If you do not have a stamped entry declaration, you will be allowed to take no more than \$3,500 cash with you when you leave. Amounts in excess of that can be confiscated at the border.

Purchases made in Russia: Be wary of antiques and artwork! Any article that could appear old to the customs service, including icons, samovars, rugs, books, musical instruments, and other antiques must have a certificate indicating that they have no historical value [Note: "old" and "antique" in Russian customs laws generally mean items made or published before 1961.] These certificates may be obtained from the vendor, if the item was purchased at a store licensed to sell to foreigners, or from the Ministry of Culture.

It can take several months to obtain such certificates from the Ministry of Culture, so you should begin the process several months ahead of your departure if you have any questionable items. Often a duty of up to 100% must be paid.

Russian law allows each departing passenger to legally leave the country with two liters of alcohol (3 regular-sized bottles of vodka). However, you should note that U.S. Customs laws only allow arriving passengers to carry one liter of alcohol into the country.

Failure to follow customs regulations may result in confiscation of the property in question on the border. Please also note that Russian customs laws are known to change frequently and that certain other restrictions may or may not be in place by the time you are ready to leave Russia.

# SCHOOL IN RUSSIA

## CALENDAR 2009-10

### FALL SEMESTER

Wednesday, September 2	Flight to Moscow, if traveling from U.S.
Thursday, September 3	ALL students must arrive in Moscow
Thursday - Friday, Sept 3-4	Orientation in Moscow
Friday, Sept 4	Depart for host city
Saturday - Sunday, Sept 5-6	On-site orientation
Monday, Sept. 7	Academic program begins. Russian Language Test
Monday - Friday, Oct. 26-Oct 30	Fall Break
Wednesday, November 4	Day of Unity
Friday, Dec. 18	Last Day: Russian Language Test
Saturday, Dec. 19	Earliest recommended departure day for students not taking mainstream classes*
Wednesday, Dec. 30	Last day mainstream classes
Thursday, Dec. 31- Jan 10	New Year's Holidays
<b>Saturday, Jan. 2-31</b>	<b>Mainstream exams (certain exams WILL take place after Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, during the official holiday period)**</b>
Saturday, January 23	Earliest recommended departure day for students taking mainstream courses

### SPRING SEMESTER

Wednesday, February 3	Flight to Moscow, if traveling from U.S.
Thursday, February 4	ALL students must arrive in Moscow
Thursday - Friday, Feb. 4-5	Orientation in Moscow
Friday, Feb. 5	Depart for host city
Saturday-Sunday Feb 6-7	On-site Orientation
Monday, Feb. 8	Academic program begins. Russian Language Test
Tuesday, Feb. 23	Armed Forces Day holiday
Monday, March 8	Women's Day holiday
Monday - Friday, Mar. 29- April 2	Spring Break
Saturday, May 1	Labor Day Holiday
Sunday, May 9	Victory Day Holiday
Friday, May 21	Last day School in Russia classes/exams. Russian Language Test
Saturday, May 22	Earliest recommended departure day for students not taking mainstream classes*
Monday, May 31	Last day mainstream classes
Tuesday-Wednesday, June 1-30	Mainstream Exams**
Saturday, June 19	Earliest recommended departure day for students taking mainstream courses

### ***N.B. This calendar is subject to change***

\* Students traveling from Irkutsk are strongly advised to fly to Moscow one day prior to their international flight. Flight delays from Irkutsk are common and there is a risk of missing one's connecting flight from Moscow if you attempt to fly out on that same day.

\*\* Certain mainstream classes and/or exams may finish earlier than this, but students will not be able to confirm their exam schedules until well into the semester. Those who are concerned about leaving as early as possible would be advised to purchase tickets from an agency where they allow date changes (on a space available basis) for a comparatively small fee. Your home stay will be guaranteed by Middlebury through the end of December/May. Mainstreaming students will have their housing in January/June covered in a case by case basis.