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With Russia’s World Cup winding down, many are asking what will happen to its giant stadiums

BY DANIEL KOZIN

Months after the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, the stadiums built for the tournament had already started to decay. It wasn’t just venues in the country’s furthest reaches that were crumbling. Even the 55,000-seat Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro seemed to be coming apart at the seams.

With just days to go until Russia’s World Cup ends, the fate of the country’s massive infrastructure investments is in the spotlight. How will cities that don’t have major football clubs be able to fill gargantuan new stadiums with over 10 times the number of seats.

Little league
Russia spent an estimated $3.4 billion on constructing nine new stadiums from scratch and renovating three others, in addition to building 96 training grounds, which will reportedly be passed on to youth teams after the tournament, according to FIFA.

In Samara, a city with a population of more than 1.1 million, officials are scratching their heads over how they’ll afford the upkeep of their new stadium. During the tournament, the 42,000-seater arena hosted heavyweight teams including England, Uruguay, Brazil and Russia. But the teams scheduled to play there next season will be unprofitable. The city’s local club, Kriya Sovetov, which has hardly just been promoted to Russia’s top league, is only scheduled to host around 18-20 games per year. The ticket sales from those matches, local officials say, are insufficient to pay for the costs of maintenance.

When the stadium was still being designed, there were plans to include many options to get the greatest commercial benefit from its use, “the region’s interim sports minister, Dmitry Shlyakhtin, was cited as saying by the Kommersant business daily on July 10. “Now, we don’t fully understand how it will be utilized. We’ll decide later.”

That same scenario could play out across the rest of the host cities. Of the 12 stadiums that hosted games in the World Cup, only six will be used by football clubs playing in Russia’s top flight of football this season.

A slow decay

According to Natalya Zubareva, an expert in regional economics and a professor at Moscow State University, what will happen next is clear. “It’s obvious that all the stadiums, with the possible exception of those in Moscow or St. Petersburg, will be unprofitable.”

“The government is aware of the problem, at least on paper. According to a World Cup legacy report commissioned by President Vladimir Putin last October and published in April, it will cost 16.65 billion rubles ($269 million) to maintain the tournament’s infrastructure, including stadiums and training grounds, until 2023.

“This is clearly unaffordable,” she said. “It’s a matter of bartering between the regional and federal powers. But city authorities will most definitely not be able to sustain them. Their budgets are too small.”

The government is aware of the problem, at least on paper. According to a World Cup legacy report commissioned by President Vladimir Putin last October and published in April, it will cost 16.65 billion rubles ($269 million) to maintain the tournament’s infrastructure, including stadiums and training grounds, until 2023.

Don, Samara and Saransk. Five other World Cup stadiums – in Kazan, St. Petersburg, Sochi and two in Moscow, which were jointly financed by regional, municipal or private funding – will have to survive without subsidies.

A slow decay
Alexander Alayev, the general secretary of Russia’s football union, said the organizers of the 2018 World Cup took the problems of past sporting events to heart.

“We’ve thoroughly studied the examples of the previous World Cups in Brazil and South Africa, so we’ve developed a joint program with FIFA for the legacy of the World Cup,” he was cited as saying by Brazil’s O Globo news website.

Even so, the Russian government’s legacy program says that because of the high costs of maintaining the stadiums, as well as the low profits of football clubs… it is impossible to expect the commercially viable use of stadiums in the next three to five years.

Many consider even that prognosis to be overly optimistic. While newly built stadiums in Europe and North America see returns on their investments 10-15 years after opening, the expected period in Russia will be more than 10 years, Forbes cited Kirill Tikhonov, a sports consultant at PwC, as saying in June.

While the financial burden on the federal government will be high, the Kremlin has made clear that it is ready to spend billions of rubles to ensure the World Cup infrastructure does not go to waste.

Putin reiterated the message during his “Direct Line” televised call-in show on June 7, when he issued a decree for a new government program for the “effective implementation” of the legacy framework by Aug. 15.

“I’d like to address my colleagues in the regions. Under no circumstances should the structures turn into things like markets, which sprung up in Moscow’s sports venues in the mid-90s. This turn of events is categorically not an option,” he said.

However, Zubareva says that the venues face prospects worse than being turned into market places.

While the central government may try to encourage locals to use the venues, she says, “the idea that they could successfully do that for [places like] Saransk or Kaliningrad is laughable.”

“It is clear that there will be abandoned stadiums. They won’t be allowed to crumble straight away, but they will still eventually.”

It’s obvious that the stadiums, with the exception of Moscow and St. Petersburg, will be unprofitable.

A Jungle of White Elephants

Moscow’s Olympiyskaya Stadium is now a mall.

Saransk, a city of just over 300,000 residents, now has a 30,000-seat stadium to fill and maintain after the World Cup.
**Souvenir Time**

*Which souvenirs are World Cup fans picking up in Russia to take back home?*

![Image](image1)

We thought that Zabivaka was really cool and these figures are funny.

![Image](image2)

These hats are so funny! I even found the one that suits my country's flag. I was so happy!

**Social Media's Newest Stars**

The stars of Russia's World Cup football squad have seen a massive spike in their social media followers after their team’s unexpected run into the quarterfinals.

- The number of people following Russian players increased by 2.4 million compared to before the World Cup, according to Match TV’s HYPERMETER 2018, a service tracking social media usage. The BBC news website reported Wednesday.

- Striker Artem Dzyuba experienced the highest jump— with more than 825,000 extra followers on Instagram, bringing his audience to over a million, from just 777,000 in early June. Dzyuba also had the most liked post of any Russian player, with 545,000 people liking his picture with goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev.

- Midfielder Denis Cheryshev, who tied with Cristiano Ronaldo as the third-highest goal scorer in the tournament (four goals), recorded the second biggest jump in popularity among Russian players, with more than 437,000 additional followers.

- Fyodor Smolov, who was widely criticized in Russia for his performance and for missing a penalty kick against Croatia, was third, with 318,000 more followers. Alexander Golovin and Mario Fernandes rounded out the top five.

- All five players have been linked to possible big-money moves to clubs outside Russia after this summer, including Golovin, who is rumored to be joining Chelsea FC.

- The official social media accounts of Russia’s national team also increased by a total of 709,000 followers, spread across Instagram, Facebook and Vkontakte.

**98% Attendance**

FIFA says it has recorded a near-perfect attendance rate at World Cup games in Russia this summer.

At the beginning of the group stage, reports of empty seats at low-profile matches in remote host cities raised fears that the World Cup fever would elude the country.

However, according to Colin Smith, FIFA’s chief competitions officer, Russia recorded a 98-percent attendance rate in the first 61 games of the tournament, Interfax reported Wednesday.

“The attendance was 98 percent, all of the stadiums were full, which is set to continue until the end of the tournament,” he said.

The majority of fans were Russians, of course, but among foreigners, fans from the U.S., Germany and Brazil were the most numerous, “he added.

An estimated half a million fans visited fan zones on match days, while 160 million fans actively followed the tournament on television from around the world, according to FIFA figures.

The director of Russia’s World Cup organizing committee, Alexei Sorokin, said that his team was surprised by the atmosphere at the tournament.

“The World Cup exceeded the expectations of even the organizers. I was amazed by the atmosphere that gripped our country,” he said.

**OPINION**

*By Evan Gershkovich*

**A Retired Mayor Predicts Crackdowns**

Evgeny Roizman looked refreshed. “I’ve never not worked this long in my entire life,” the recently retired mayor of Yekaterinburg said.

In Moscow last week to visit friends, talk to publishers about a possible memoir and plan several art exhibitions (history, he reminded me, was his first love before politics), Roizman also made some time to chat in a large apartment overlooking Chistye Prudy in central Moscow. Dressed in blue jeans and a royal blue t-shirt with the words “no pain, no gain” printed across the chest, he talked about the pros and cons of the World Cup and what will follow.

“Surrounded by enemies,” he said. “A lot of people have seen that this country can be completely different,” he said. Still, Roizman believes the freedoms will have been short-lived and that they will vanish soon after the World Cup final on Sunday. After that, the “screws will be tightened.”

The reason is pension reforms, Roizman said, an issue that has been bubbling to the surface throughout the World Cup and one that all Russians have paid close attention to, even if it has slipped under the radar of foreign visitors.

Announced on the eve of the World Cup, the government called for retirement ages to be raised past many people’s life expectancy.

More than 2.76 million people have since signed an online petition against the decision, and President Vladimir Putin, whose fourth term has only just begun, has seen his approval rating fall steeply. Over the course of a single week in June, it dropped from 72 to 63 percent, according to the state-funded VTSIOM pollster. (Putin was also conspicuously absent from Russia’s matches following his opener against Saudi Arabia.)

And in advance of Russia’s upset of Spain in the round of 16 on July 1, Russians across the country protested the reforms.

“We have a very serious problem with our aging population, we are having a tough time with our economy and at the same time we are spending too much money on wars in Ukraine and Syria and PR projects like the Olympics and the World Cup,” Roizman said. “So we are seeing a lot of budget cuts, including in education, healthcare and now the pension fund.”

While Roizman thinks the budget cuts are necessary, he regrets that the authorities have excised popular will from their decision-making. One of the side-effects of this, he says, is that the government has no other option than forcing the people to accept its decisions. Which, he predicted, means they will have “surrounded by enemies.”

“If you ask people why they are protesting, many will say ‘We want to keep our pension benefits.’ But really, as much as we hate to say it, they are protesting their lack of self-determination,” Roizman said. “So we are seeing a lot of budget cuts, including in education, healthcare and now the pension fund.”

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Evan Gershkovich is a reporter at The Moscow Times.
Kokoshniki Are Russia’s Newest Inside Joke

At a shop outside the Teatralnaya metro, sales manager Dilorov is having to turn customers away. “We’ve completely sold out of kokoshniks,” he said while haggling with a Ukrainian fan over a shirt glass featuring President Vladimir Putin’s face. “Even the men are wearing them.”

The headaddresses, traditionally worn by women in pre-revolutionary Russia to signal their married status, became a hit after cameras zoomed in on a Russian family wearing them while they marched on hot dogs during Russia’s match against Spain. After appearances on national television, the family quickly became celebrities and were dubbed the home side’s “lucky charms.” (Notably, one of the men is employed by a public relations company which has worked on publicity campaigns for Putin and Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin.)

From Zabivaka the wolf to replace trophies, these football fans look like they are in on the joke.

Invetro, a clinical testing company, offered a 50% discount on blood and urine samples for local businesses. “People forget about check-ups, and this was a huge success,” Dmitry Khrapunov said in a phone conversation. Kokoshnik sales were already on the rise in the summer. “It’s been a miracle,” he said. “It’s just Russians who are buying them,” Andrei, 33, agrees. “Europeans are mostly buying matryoshki and (traditional square-shaped hats) ushchans. They also like communist symbols, which are particularly popular among Latin Americans.”

As teams have been eliminated and fans have returned home, however, the souvenir rush has noticeably weakened, staff said. At her stall, Svetlana, 47, seemed unfazed — if a little left out — by the kokoshnik craze. She had traveled from Nolinsk, a city more than 1000 kilometers away, to sell matryoshkas, and nothing else. “We’ve seen them do well in other stalls,” she added, glancing sideways at her neighbors.

While the kokoshnik is all the rage now, however, the matryoshka is proven gold year-round. “This has been one of our best ever seasons,” she said. “It’s been a miracle.”

Anton Muratov contributed reporting.

The Regions Are My World Cup Souvenir

This is my eighth World Cup, and the main thing I’ve learned is that the best souvenirs are always away from the football. Usually in some place you will never visit again — Sapporo in Japan, the Amazon River in Brazil. What will stay with me from this World Cup is provincial Russia. Flying around the country, I glimpsed lives that I hadn’t known existed, and that nonetheless felt remarkably familiar.

For someone who spent a year once learning intensive Russian but has forgotten almost all of it since, this may have been the easiest month in history to travel to Russian provincial cities. Say what you like about big tech companies, but I couldn’t have done it without Yandex and Airbnb.

Yandex’s English-language taxi app means no more haggling with drivers in your 100 words of Russian. And Airbnb brought me into charming, impeccably-kept homes inside peeling Soviet-era apartment blocks around Russia, helped by the fact that just for this month, the hosts didn’t seem bothered about registering me with the authorities.

I stayed in five Airbnbs. All my hosts were women, aged under 40, who spoke good English and were taking the opportunity to monetize homes that no foreigner might ever need again.

My first host was a medical student who lived in a suburb of Volgograd, in an apartment building for which she apologized the moment she saw me. She told me about her time studying in Montenegro, and her treasured biannual trips abroad. I’ll never see her again, but I left feeling that she was an internationally-minded person who wanted much the same things from life as I do, except that her chances of getting them were much slimmer.

It was an experience I kept having. My hostess in Nizhny Novgorod, thousands of miles and hefty visa requirements removed from Paris, was studying French. The night in Nizhny, a middle-aged woman came up to me and spoke impeccable English. I asked her where she had learned it. She taught English at the local university, she replied. I later calculated that she must have learned it in Soviet times, when Nizhny was a closed city to foreigners. The day we talked, England played Panama in the local stadium (now already a white elephant, like most built for the World Cup). The game brought possibly the largest inflow of English-speaking ever to visit Nizhny. I hope some of them will come back. I especially hope I will come back.

Russians who couldn’t speak English showed me constant acts of kindness. In Samara, where my Airbnb hostess was away, her mother mutely presented me with a specially made jar of her apricot jam. Sadly, I couldn’t take it on the flight.

The town I will remember best is Kaliningrad — German Königsberg until 1945. The cathedral where Immanuel Kant is buried lies in a pleasantly landscaped park. Wandering the lanes and lawns, I suddenly realized: I’m walking on top of what used to be downtown Königsberg. In the park, and in various local museums, you can admire lovingly presented black-and-white photos showing the electric trains that ran through this spot in the 1880s, the swinging cafés of the day, the German kids playing on the streets. Kaliningrad was once a place of Soviet triumph: The central square, which in the last years of Königsberg was Adolf Hitler Platz, has been renamed Hlouchad Pobedy, or “Victory Square.” But lately Kaliningrad has also become a place of sad remembrance. This was once a great, rich, beautiful, connected European city, a kind of Hamburg or Amsterdam. Many locals now mourn that lost place.

Meeting these provincial Russians yeaming for the outside world, I kept being reminded of “Three Sisters.” In Anton Chekhov’s play, the sisters in their Garrison town forgot by time long for Moscow. One of them laments, “In this town to know three languages is an unnecessary luxury. It’s not even a luxury, but a sort of unnecessary addition, like a stethoscope.”

Later in the play, one of the sisters is reassured she will not be abandoned in the backward and uneeducated town. “Others like you will come, perhaps six of them, then 12, and so on, until at last your sort will be in the majority.”

That is now happening. Clever cultural provincial Russians are still thwarted, and they may never again get to see Mexicans dancing on their local streets. But at least now they are like the three sisters with internet.

Simon Kuper is a Financial Times columnist. @KuperSimon
The World Cup is coming to an end on Sunday. For most people watching around the world, it will likely fade into distant memory. But for a new generation of Russians who had never experienced an event of this magnitude, the tournament will have a lasting impact.

“It was my first time really watching a World Cup all the way through and getting to see Russia do so well,” said Artyom Pavlovsky, 14. “I can’t even begin to explain all the emotions I felt.”

During a water break at a summer football camp in central Moscow, five Russian national team hopefuls spoke about their favorite memories from the past five weeks. The home team’s performance surprised them all. Asked if they had expected Russia to not only advance out of the group stage but to get all the way to the quarterfinals for the first time in 48 years, the young footballers answered with a chorus of “no.”

“I highly doubted that Russia would get out of the group. I thought they would finish third, maybe even fourth,” said Igor Chudaikin, 11. “Even after they beat Saudi Arabia, I thought, ‘why is everyone celebrating? This is Saudi Arabia, after all.’

Against the odds Russia’s national team, a dark horse candidate to win the tournament, rallied an apathetic nation around it with surprise performances. As the lowest-ranked team heading into the World Cup, it sent shockwaves around the world by advancing all the way to the quarterfinals for the first time since 1970.

“I cried after the win over Spain,” Pavlovsky said. “I have never seen Moscow so excited and happy.”

Timur Tridrikh, 12, lives next to Vorobyovy Gory, the setting of the FIFA fan zone that has attracted tens of thousands of spectators throughout the tournament to watch matches, drink and celebrate. He said he will miss being kept up late into the night by the sounds of their revelry. “It was so awesome,” he said. “I wish it could always be like that.”

More than just enjoying the festivities and Russia’s play, though, the tournament has changed the way they see their home country.

“I didn’t believe in Russia before the tournament,” said Alexander Ogloblin, 11. “Now I know you always have to believe in yourself, no matter what anyone says.”

I can do it too

That newfound belief is what 12-year-old Vadim Shiryayev, who plays for local club MFK Krepost, says will drive him to one day become a professional footballer.

“The fact that no one believed in [the team] and they were able to do something not done in so many years gives me even more motivation to become a professional,” he said. “If they could do it, then we can too.”

Shiryayev, two of his teammates and their coach were standing next to a football field set up at Red Square, where fans have been playing scrimmages and local clubs competed in a tournament. MFK Krepost came in third place. But even better was getting a taste of what it’s like to play in front of foreign fans.

“I will always remember this experience. Some were even rooting for us.”

Getting noticed

It wasn’t just academy players who got to experience something beyond their ordinary schedules. In May, 18 Russian orphans participated in the Street Child World Cup, a week-long football tournament held for abandoned children from around the world in the FIFA World Cup host country.

The monthlong tournament may be drawing to a close, but Russia’s budding footballers see a lasting legacy.
For players that usually train on a “vegetable patch,” as one of the coaches put it, getting to play on professionally-maintained fields in the capital was life-changing.

“I can’t describe how I’m feeling. I am so driven to play for Russia,” said Valery Bombin, 15, who aspires to one day play for Russia at the World Cup. “We want to win so that we get noticed. That would mean something to us.”

For Vadim Vize, the deputy director of the Moscow Football Federation’s Beskov Center for preparing youth coaches, the World Cup atmosphere and the home team’s performance will be a big boost to Russian youth football.

“There was a point when no one could run the mile in under four minutes,” Vize said. “The record seemed impossible. But once the first person was able to do it, a whole bunch of people followed. The same effect will be seen here. As soon as the national team creates a norm, the next generation tries to surpass it. They will play with stronger belief in themselves.”

Foreign spectators

Beyond football, Vize believes that hosting the World Cup will affect Russia’s youth whether or not they become professional footballers — or even play football.

Almost three million foreigners flocked to Russia, the state-run TASSnews agency reports, giving the 11 host cities an international feel that many residents don’t usually get to experience.

“People who had doubts about football will have seen this incredible atmosphere in the host cities and the uniting power of the game,” Vize said. “They will have seen how many people from different countries came to Moscow and how wonderful that was for everyone.”

The children were also proud of how Russia had treated their foreign guests.

“I really love how welcoming my country was to all of these different people,” said Eduard Movsesyan, a 15-year-old camper. “They also did a lot of reconstruction to make it nice for them.”

Ahead of the World Cup, Moscow embarked on citywide renovations and restorations to prepare for the large influx of tourists. (It didn’t hurt that mayoral elections will fall in September following the tournament.)

The renovations — among the children, at least — have been a hit.

Shedding stereotypes

For the children who spoke with The Moscow Times, foreign visitors were, ultimately, their favorite part of the entire experience.

For Russia’s emerging footballers, meeting foreigners was an integral part of the World Cup.
A Country Changed

The World Cup is not even over and Russians are already full of nostalgia for a time when, it seemed, everything was possible. Luckily, we’ll still have the photos.

Photos by Ksenia Yablonskaya
Old meets New

Unparalleled Excitement

Tokyo
The Costume Gallery of the Hermitage Museum brings old clothes to light

By Galina Stolyarova

The Costume Gallery of the Hermitage Museum brings old clothes to light

Peter the Great’s quilted house coats and stylish velvet costumes, canonical clothing of Orthodox priests, embroidered ceremonial dresses of Russian aristocrats and colorful wedding gowns of Cossack women—these are just some of the amazing items of clothing on display at the Costume Gallery of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, each with its own story.

The Gallery, which opened in December at the Hermitage’s Staraya Derevnya Restoration and Storage Center, is unusual. It isn’t a traditional museum, but a hybrid between an exhibition space and a repository.

The exhibits are displayed in dimly lit halls that go completely dark as soon as visitors leave (they are equipped with motion sensors). This is designed to protect the fragile items, which are sensitive to light and humidity.

Behind the mannequins dressed in the gowns of Russian tsars and peasants, there are rows of lockers containing most of the precious collection, which give the visitors a sneak peek at the museum’s “backstage” area.

The Hermitage’s collection of costumes features more than 24,000 items covering the period from the late 17th century to the beginning of the 21st century. The Gallery currently displays 130 mannequins and numerous small items, such as hats, shoes, fans, bags, satchels, mirrors and hangers. Because the venue is a repository, there are no labels or descriptions. All the information and legends must come directly from your guide, which makes for a more personalized experience.

The exhibition opens with a section devoted to the clerical clothes of the Russian Orthodox Church. In many cases these came from Russian empresses, including Elizabeth and Catherine the Great, who donated their ceremonial and evening dresses to monasteries by the thousands, where they would be remodeled to suit ecclesiastical needs.

“We have an item on display—a deacon’s surplice—that covers a period of three centuries,” said Nina Tarasova, the gallery’s curator. “Its shoulders were made in the 17th century, and the robe was added in the 18th century. And the middle part was replaced in the 19th century with a more modern fabric.”

The works on display travel to other venues for temporary exhibitions. As Tarasova points out, Peter the Great’s wardrobe alone would make a wonderful exhibition. The Hermitage boasts around 280 items that once belonged to the founder of St. Petersburg, from underwear to full costumes.

“Even a quick look at Peter’s fine velvet camisoles and delicate lace shirts is enough to completely dismiss all those derogatory nicknames like the ‘Carpenter Tsar’ and the ‘Savage Tsar’,” Tarasova said. “The emperor was a person with good taste and an extensive, elegant wardrobe. True, when he arrived in Paris without frills, ruffles and wigs, French dandies ridiculed him and called him a barbarian. But, deep at heart, the French envied Peter’s brutality and willpower, and once he was gone, they started copying his style.”

One of the most intriguing sections displays masquerade costumes created especially for a ball in 1903 at the Winter Palace celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty. Russian aristocrats took their ballroom dresses seriously: Sumptuous bejeweled costumes and exquisite richly decorated dresses were made out of the finest fabrics and often involved the elaborate handiwork of lace makers, embroiderers and seamstresses. No less striking are the military uniforms that once belonged to royals.

The Hermitage also boasts an impressive collection of folk clothing, including traditional wedding gowns from various Russian regions.

“The folk items were purchased during the museum’s ethnographic expeditions,” Tarasova said. “What is really precious about them is that we know the story behind each dress or shirt—the occasion the garment was created for and the person who owned it. Such displays do make history very tangible, very meaningful. They make it something people can easily relate to and feel close to.”

The gallery can be visited by appointment only. Book at hermitagemuseum.org.
Russia and Vodka: A History Primer

By Jennifer Eremeeva | @JWEremeeva

In Russia, almost every day is a holiday. In addition to public holidays such as Victory Day and New Year’s Day, Russians also annually celebrate over 400 professional holidays.

There is even a day in January dedicated to vodka — the official Birthday of Russian Vodka, the day on which Dmitry Mendeleev defended his doctoral dissertation “On Combing Water and Alcohol” in 1865. In his dissertation, he continued his exploration of chemistry, a study that would see Mendeleev four years later publish his groundbreaking Periodic Table. The Periodic Table established Mendeleev as one of the leading scientists of his age, and it was this job that got Mendeleev into the vodka business. Legend has it that in 1894, Tsar Nicholas II ordered Mendeleev to create a standard recipe for Russian vodka. Mendeleev supposedly simply rounded up his dissertation number of 38 percent alcohol to a more marketable 40 percent (80 proof), the number still in use today.

Mendeleev’s actual participation in the vodka recipe was probably far more minor than the legend purports, but the marketing people are still using it to great effect in the brand building of modern labels such as Russian Standard. Russian vodka, of course, dates much further back than 1894, though not, perhaps, as far as we might imagine, just as vodka is not as Russian as we might think. Poles were distilling grain and potato spirits as early as the eighth century, but Russians encountered distilled spirits only in the late 14th century, when Genoese merchants passed through Muscovy en route to Lithuania with a fiery grappa-like liquor they called “aqua vitae.”

Historians recount that the Muscovites didn’t think much of it. Aqua vitae, they agreed, might make a good medicine — topical or internal — if one were truly ill, but for drinking, they preferred their own, more labor-intensive home-brewed mead and beer.

It would take another century before monks in the Chudov Monastery in the Kremlin began to master the art of distilling grain alcohol. They found a sassy patron in Tsar Ivan III, who recognized in vodka a partial solution to his need to fill the national coffers. He instituted the first state monopoly on vodka in 1472, inaugurating a 500-year tug-of-war between the state and its thirsty citizens over vodka’s price, quality, quantity, access and distribution.

High vodka prices and restrictions on access to it often led to civil unrest in the uneasy 16th-century “Time of Troubles.” Russian nobles recognized in vodka a partial solution to their need for Russian vodka. Mendeleyev supposedly rounded up his dissertation number of 38 percent alcohol to a more marketable 40 percent.

Abolition of Serfdom in 1861 paved the way for more commercially-minded vodka merchants such as Pyotr Smirnoff, who focused on making a purer version of vodka in safer working conditions, mindful of the concern that home-brew was known as a leading cause of illness and death among the lower classes. This is the era of Mendeleev and his legendary 40 percent. When revolution came in 1917, it did little to curb the national thirst for vodka. Production, distribution and sales were nationalized by the government. Vodka remained the cornerstone of every hatching, matching or dispatching, and all the celebration in between. And so it is today.

Jennifer Eremeeva is a longtime expat who writes about food, cuisine, history and travel.

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**Recommended**

**Russian Pub**
The concept of the gastropub—a place where the kitchen perfectly complements the bar and the setting balances both comfort and aesthetics—is embodied in every particular by the Russian Pub, from its tasty dishes, to the wood-based interior, to the atmospheric background music. The pub doesn’t neglect English traditions, but adapts them to Russian culture, filling a traditional English pie with rich Stroganov meat and adding a layer of sauerkraut. Visitors can marvel at the variety of excellent beer options from all the best Russian breweries, or try one of the pub’s well-balanced cocktails, inspired by Russian recipes of old.

10 Tverskoi Bulvar, Bldg 1. Metro Pushkinskaya. ruspub.ru/en

**Goodman**
If you treat meat as a cult or a religion, you’ve come to the right place. At Goodman steakhouses they know everything there is to know about good meat and how to cook it to perfection. Check out their menu, bustling with tantalizing options from beef cheek burgers to beef ribs in raspberry sauce to pastrami on a piece of farmer’s bread—the list of wonders goes on and on. If you’re more into original steaks, try the Tomahawk and you’ll experience the combination of perfectly charred outside and luscious rare-red center. And don’t despair if you’re more into fish and seafood: Between grilled oysters, crab cakes and fresh melt-in-your-mouth sea bass, you’re sure to find a favorite dish.
Multiple locations goodman.ru

**GoPinball**
This fun and quirky private Pinball Museum opened in Sokolniki Park in May and is the first of its kind in Russia. More than 30 rare machines constructed from 1934 to 2013 from all over the world have been carefully collected and restored by GoPinball’s founder Alexander Kazmin, a long-time fan of tech and electronics. The museum offers visitors a rare opportunity to experience a century of pinball firsthand as they get to play on each one of the vintage machines. Don’t forget to stop and recharge at the Museum Café. You can sample one of their delicious desserts, baked with secret home recipes passed down for generations—a unique chance to combine your love of food with your interest in gaming.
1b Sokolnichesky Val. Metro Sokolniki. gopinball.ru

**Expedition. Northern Cuisine**
The legendary restaurant Expedition. Northern Cuisine has been around for 16 years, and has long been a favorite among Moscow’s adventurous and foodie crowds. Here you can try unique delicacies from the Russian North—products delivered from ecologically clean Russian regions where a regular tourist is unlikely to ever set foot. The dishes, from the traditional “Ayarshir” stroganina of reindeer to “Baikal Port”—lightly marinated Baikal omul with onions and garlic—are prepared using unique and creative recipes. The interior of the restaurant immerses visitors in the atmosphere of a real expedition: Siberian cedar furniture, a real Mi-2 helicopter and a mountain river under your feet.
6 Pevchesky Pereulok. Metro Kitaи-Gorod. expedicia-restaurant.ru
It’s coming. We know it’s coming. It probably even began a week or more ago. Letdown. There’s a sense of dread about the conclusion of the World Cup among those of us living in Moscow. For four amazing weeks, our city has been filled with people from all around the world. Everything about the city seemed to radiate during this time. And when the football fans return home and things go back to normal, the letdown is going to be mighty.

Be that as it may, Moscow’s museums stepped up to the occasion of Russia’s hosting the World Cup in their individual ways, and most of their football-focused exhibitions will last into August (though not all). So for those of us remaining in the city now, they are a great way to remember the fun we’ve had this summer — or just as likely, they will be useful vehicles for us to wallow in the miserable self-pity of the anti-climax.

But whatever your state of mind, here are some of the football exhibitions that are worth checking out.

The “Not Only Football” exhibition at the New Tretyakov Gallery is a good place to begin. In Russia, sports became a focus for the arts in the late 1920s and early 1930s — when sports for recreation became more popular. The New Tretyakov Gallery has dipped into its massive collections to find some of the most interesting paintings, drawings and sculptures regarding sports from the 1920s onward. Also, any trip to the New Tretyakov is a welcome opportunity to visit the museum’s permanent collection, the largest of Russian and Soviet art from the 20th century in Russia. Here you can see some of the best avant-garde, socialist realist and underground art.

Speaking of the best of Russian avant-garde, you only have until July 15 to catch the tiny exhibition of football works by artists Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. Here, you can see their superb sports drawings and designs, including Stepanova’s sketches of uniforms.

The “Anxiety on the Couch” exhibition at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art is something of the moment and a bit out of the ordinary. In honor of the World Cup, photographer and football fanatic Juergen Teller shot a special series of photographs and videos about football, new and old football players and fans, football games and football accoutrements. Some photographs are funny, and others are even unsettling.

The curators of the Shchusev Museum of Architecture in Moscow have used the World Cup as a reason to hold an exhibit of the rich art and history of Soviet and Russian stadiums. The first half of the show is dedicated to sketches, drawings and photographs of some of the country’s great Soviet stadiums that varied in style from slightly avant-garde to solidly classical. The show highlights some unusual stadiums, like a U-shaped one, and brings to life the excitement of the first major sporting events held in the country. The second half is about some of the world’s best stadiums and the Russian stadiums built or reconstructed for this year’s matches, illustrated with models, photographs and designs. For something entirely unrelated, while you’re

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**Moscow Museums and the World Cup**

*Even the city’s greatest art institutions are going to miss the football*

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THE WORD'S WORTH
By Michele Berdy

Russian’s Foreign Memories
Kouma: nightmare (from the French cauchemar)

In this issue, we’re looking at words from other languages that have found their way into the Russian language. These words can tell us a lot about the history and culture of the Russian people.

Ancestors of the players and fans from the seminal nations left their mark on Russia over the centuries.

The museum check out one of the permanent exhibitions at the Shchusev: “David Sarkisian’s Office.” David Sarkisian was director of the Shchusev Museum from 2000 until his death in 2009, a beloved and colorful fighter for the preservation of Moscow’s architectural heritage. His office was also a legend — an unfathomable, cluttered mess. After his death, colleagues at the museum check out one of the permanent exhibits in the permanent collection, where you can learn about Moscow from the city’s beginnings in the 12th century through today. The exhibits are in Russian and English, and there is a lot of informed commentary from the experts. The Karelia Pavilion at VDNKh is hosting a large exhibition about football in Russia and the Soviet Union. It is divided into three sections: the history of pre-revolutionary and Soviet football, a hall of fame honoring the best players of all time and the modern history of Russian football.

You can see Soviet and Russian football in rare news photos, admire football badges, banners and other fan and player attributes lent by collectors and sports clubs, listen to “the sound of the stadium” recorded in various stadiums over the years; and see photographs and examples of less well-known Russian footballers, like special uniforms and even play football on old Soviet slot machines and early computer games – and learn about virtual football promoted by the Russian Federation of Cyber Football. Basically, if you are curious about Russian football, this is the exhibition to see.

So, do check out these fine exhibitions while they last. And by doing so, extend the fun we’ve had celebrating the World Cup a little longer.

Michele A. Berdy is a Moscow-based translator and interpreter, author of “The Russian Word’s Worth,” a collection of her columns. Follow her on Twitter @MicheleBerdy.
Celebrate Life and Art With Anatoly Zverev

By Michele A. Berdy | @MicheleBerdy

Don’t miss this truly joyful exhibition at the AZ Museum

The artist and his times
Anatoly Zverev (1931-1986) was one of the most famous of the “non-conformist” artists of the post-war period in the Soviet Union. And certainly one of the most prolific, with an estimated 30,000 works attributed to him. He did not have a formal art education, was not part of a group or movement and worked in many genres: painting, drawing, illustrations and graphic art. He also wrote poetry, philosophy and treatises on aesthetics, paints, brushes and paper sold only to artists. Not having access to materials — domestic or imported can mean creating work that did not conform to the day."

The first floor of the show is dedicated to Zverev’s portraits and self-portraits. Over the years, he asked dozens of women to pose for him with the line: "Sit down, kiddo, and let me make you immortal." And so he did. His portraits of his women friends, young and old, are among his most famous and beloved works. He was also a constant chronicler of himself, producing hundreds of self-portraits in drawings and paintings.

The second floor has even more portraits of women, as well as drawings and sketches of fancies and nudes. You see why Picasso, who saw his works in Paris in a 1965 show, reportedly called him "the best draftsman in Russia." Here, too, are landscapes of churches, pine forests and rivers, painted with the same emotion as his portraits to create complex images of beauty, decay and suffering.

The third floor exhibits some of Zverev’s early “supremacist” drawings and paintings from the 1950s, where the abstract and geometrical themes of the early 20th century Russian avant-garde are textured and richly colored. From the same period (1955) are the illustrations for Gogol’s “Diary of a Madman” from the collection of Dmitris Apadidis, exhibited for the first time, and the charming film by Aldashin.

At the end of the exhibition you leave with an appreciation for the extraordinary talent and importance, you leave with a sense of enormous pleasure in life and joy. And that is Zverev’s greatest gift.

New Media Night

July 14
For this festival you’ll have to travel three hours outside of Moscow, but it will certainly be worth it. New Media Night is an open-air digital art festival at Niko-la-Lenvets. Part of a natural reserve, the forests and fields here are dotted with site-specific land art installations, including works by Russia’s most prominent land artist, Nikolai Polissky. At this year’s festival, two neo-classical bands from Moscow – Kymatic and Questa Musica – will perform Steve Reich’s ‘Music for 18 Musicians’ at a mammoth installation titled “Universal Mind.”
Nikola-Lenivets, Kaluga region.
nikola-lenivets.ru

Concert Pyotr Nalich
July 13
Pyotr Nalich has come a long way from being the YouTube sensation, when his sarcastic video “Guitar” became so popular that he was chosen to represent Russia at Eurovision. Since then Nalich has acquired a proper band, released several albums and even sang in an immersive opera “Queen of Spades.” Come see him at the VDNKh’s summer Stage on the Water, located by the Garden Pond in the Ostankino Estate. Stage on the Water
7A 1st Ostankinskaya Ulitsa. Metro VDNKh. vdnkh.ru/water-theatre

Concert Zhu
July 14
Zhu is a stage moniker of Steven Zhu, an electronic musician from the U.S. His debut track “Moves Like Ms. Jackson” gained him recognition and he started performing anonymously as Zhu, only revealing his identity in 2014. His freshman album “Generationwhy” was released in 2016, and since then Zhu has launched several other musical projects. Saturday’s concert at GlavClub will be his first in Russia.
GlavClub
11 Ulitsa Orzhonikidze. Metro Leningradskaya. glavclub.com

Concert Guns N’ Roses
July 13
A band that needs no introductions, Guns N’ Roses launched a reunion tour titled “Not in This Lifetime” last year. It’s been so successful that they extended it into 2018. The concert at the Otkritie Arena stadium will be their first in Moscow and takes place just before the World Cup final.
Otkritie Arena
69 Volokolamskoye Shosse. Metro Spartak. otkritiearena.ru

Concert Guru Groove Foundation
July 13
Guru Groove Foundation, an English-language indie-pop band from Moscow, will present their new album “Just Another Day” at 16 Tons. Guru Groove Foundation is known as one of the few Russian bands successfully playing a mix of acid jazz, funk and lounge music. They’ve opened for Western artists like De Phazz, Janelle Monae and Sinead O’Connor. With a powerful female lead vocalist and a distinct art-pop aesthetic, it’s no wonder why.
16 Tons
6/1 Ulitsa Presnensky Val. Metro Ulitsa 1905 Goda. 16tons.ru

Concert Kirill Richter
July 14
Russian neo-classical pianist and composer Kirill Richter, who wrote the theme song for Fox Sports’ World Cup broadcasting in North and South America, will perform at the Ostankino Estate’s summer Stage on the Water on Saturday. He will play his new works with a string orchestra, including music for Ivan Tverdovsky’s new film “Jumpman.”
7A 1st Ostankinskaya Ulitsa. Metro VDNKh. vdnrh.ru/water-theatre

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16 Tons
6/1 Ulitsa Presnensky Val. Metro Ulitsa 1905 Goda. 16tons.ru
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