

Customs & Taboos in Russia

Excerpts from the book “The Russian Way”

By Zita Dabars

Clothing (#13): Think dark! ☺ Black jeans, dark sturdy shoes, dark colored coat is the normal dress. However, the younger generation is beginning to wear more diverse colors

Crafts (#16): Craft items available in Russia include Lacquer boxes, painted woodenware, Matryoshkas Dolls, embroidered linens.

Flowers (#23): Flowers play a large role in Russian Social Life. Always give an odd number of flowers for all occasions. Give an even number only if the occasion is a funeral.

Gifts (#27): Some gifts that Russians like to receive are flowers, books, illustrated art books, audio tapes, clothing, watches, and other practical items. Peanut Butter is also a favorite gift since it is mostly unavailable in Russia.

Hygiene (#32): Like in some parts of Europe, Russians don't take daily baths. This is more of a Western custom than most of the rest of the world. Washing machines not common and clothes must be hand washed using a wash board.

Introductions (#35): Take the initiative and introduce yourself to someone joining group. In Western culture it is the responsibility of the person who knows that person in the group to make the introduction. In Russia, you must take the initiative to introduce yourself.

Physical Distance (#45): In the United States our comfortable distance is about arm's length. In Russia 12 inches is normal. Women will typically stroll arm in arm. Male best friends will often walk putting their arm over each other's shoulders.

Privacy (#47): Russians regard privacy as not important. There is no comparable Russian word for privacy. In Russia, you must “Live an exposed, explicit life, or you will be exposed”.

Punctuality (#48): If you are invited to a social function, your arrival at 6pm, 6:10pm, or 6:30pm is acceptable.

Tea (#63): Taken at breakfast, lunch, and after dinner. Not served “with” the evening meal, but served after dinner with some pastries or candies for desert.

Toilets (#67): Toilet paper rare in public places so it's wise to carry tissues. The paper is also more course as compared to paper in the United States.

Workday (#73): The typical workday starts at 9:30am or 10am, lunch at 1pm, tea at 3:30pm or 4pm, leave 5pm or 6pm. The primetime for radio is 10pm, so Russian are often up late.