

Moscow's Jews enjoy five synagogues. The oldest of the five, the Polyakov Synagogue on Bolshaya Bronya Street, was constructed in 1880 by the famous railroad baron Polyakov family. The synagogue was forcibly closed by the Communists in 1937 and then converted into a theater and cultural center. Early in 1991, the city of Moscow returned the synagogue to the Jewish community.

The Choral Synagogue, built in 1891, was first opened for prayer services in 1906. The third of Moscow's synagogues, the Darkei Shalom Synagogue in the Otradnaya area of Moscow was constructed in 1997. The Memorial Synagogue, constructed in 1998 by Vladimir Gussinsky, held dedication ceremonies that President Boris Yeltsin attended, the first time ever that Russia's highest level government official attended a Jewish ceremony.

One of the most famous Jewish landmarks in Moscow is the Marina Roscha Lubavitch Synagogue, built in 1926. The only synagogue built during the Communist reign, Marina Roscha was meant to be no more than a symbolic gesture to the Jewish community. But despite the constant gaze of the KGB, Jews throughout the Communist era came to the synagogue to learn and pray, and to pass on in secret information about loved ones.

In December of 1993, the historic Marina Roscha was destroyed by the hands of an arsonist. The Jewish community rallied together and decided that it was time to not merely rebuild but to construct something bigger than before. In the aftermath of the fire, the seeds were planted for the construction of today's Jewish Community Center on the very site of the burned down synagogue.

In the interim period before the center was complete, the community built a temporary synagogue not far from the old synagogue. This temporary structure was partially destroyed by a bomb set off in May of 1998. The attackers were never caught or prosecuted. The Jewish Community Center is today the heart of the community. It is also a show of strength and defiance of would-be anti-Semites.

The 75,000 square feet Moscow Jewish Community Center, near completion, is the epicenter of Jewish life in Moscow. With an active membership of over 80,000, the center is the meeting place of classes, prayer, holiday programs and much more. The center will also house the headquarters of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS, the central organization of Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union.

TEEN SUPPORT CULTURE



Moscow has also witnessed a revitalization of Jewish education, once strictly forbidden under the former Soviet communist regime. Today Jews of all ages have a tremendous opportunity to learn about their heritage and Moscow boasts six Jewish day schools, kindergartens and a Jewish college for higher learning.

Despite the openness and freedom, upon your visit to the city, you will undoubtedly notice some of the negative impact the collapse of Communism has had on the Jewish community. Throughout Moscow (and all of the former Soviet Union), poverty is fairly widespread. Economic ills have brought about social unrest, as well as overall deterioration of the health of the population. Demographically, the hardest hit have been the elderly.

The leadership within the Jewish community has done much to alleviate the hardship including the establishment of soup kitchens and the provision of medical supplies. In addition, the schools are subsidized by outside support as very few families could afford to send their children to private schools.

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*Towards this end, there is a need for your support. Please join the Moscow Jewish Community in providing support for the much*