

Night at the Museums Returns

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Last year there were half a million people wandering around looking for culture late at night. This year, organizers hope — and warn — that there will be more.

Moscow museums will open their doors at night once again Friday in the “Night at the Museum,” an annual event in which state museums and galleries offer free entry between 6 p.m. and midnight. Many private museums will remain open till the early morning.

Twenty-four federal museums, including the Pushkin and the Tretyakov galleries, and another hundred organizations will stay open late, but whether it will be a success is a different matter, with even organizers saying it is better to choose the smaller venues where there will be fewer people.

“There are tons of really interesting exhibitions, and we don’t want everyone feeling as if they’re on the metro at rush hour!” said Lena Novoselova from events organizer Buro17, which is behind Friday’s event along with the city government.

More than half a million people took part in last year's event, said Sergei Khudyakov, head of the city's culture department, news agency Itar-Tass reported. That event was marred by many complaints on blogs of overcrowding, a lack of toilets and interminable queuing.

But, organizers say, if you choose where you go carefully then you can find some gems, and guides will be placed at the city's bigger museums to point you to another exhibit. Posters will be up listing the events on, organizers say, as well as minibuses to bring visitors from event to event.

Some of the night's offerings include a master class called "How They Painted in Antiquity" at St. Basil's Cathedral, a mini observatory that will roam the grounds of the Golitsyn mansion in Kuzminki and traditional Indian dancing at the Museum of the East on Nikitsky Bulvar.

The Pushkin Museum has been one of the most popular for visitors, too popular as the museum pulled out of the event due to overcrowding two years ago. This year, it will be taking part, though it will be the only museum to charge entry, 50 percent of the normal price, which will hopefully reduce crowding.

The New Tretyakov Gallery will have performance art and video installations from contemporary Russian artists on all of its four floors, and expects up to 10,000 people, said Lara Bobkova, head of the 20th-century art department. Bobkova suggested the much smaller Mayakovsky Museum, where there will also be live performances, as a place to go to if crowds get too much.

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