

A Muscovite's Guide to an Almost-Sober Weekend

By [Andrei Muchnik](#)

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Avoiding the city's nightlife temptations is harder than it looks, as The Moscow Times columnist found out. **Vladimir Filonov**

This was meant to be a weekend of reflection and cleaning of the apartment. No partying or excessive drinking. Not so easy to do in Moscow, as I found out, where temptation abounds.

On Saturday afternoon, I got dressed and went to the Satirikon Theater to see a play that got stellar reviews. So far, so good. But during the first act, I got a text that a friend of ours was performing that night at Barry Bar. I enunciated to myself "sober weekend" and ignored it. But three intermissions and several champagne glasses later, I was ready to say yes to my friends' suggestion.

It turned out our friend wasn't on until 1 a.m., so we went to Time Out Bar at the Pekin Hotel first (5 Ulitsa Bolshaya Sadovaya, +7-495-229-0180). To get to the bar, you have to go through the lobby, which hasn't changed much since the Soviet times, and up to the 13th floor

in a very small, claustrophobia-inducing elevator.

Time Out Bar is a large, spacious room with high ceilings that was probably once used for some sort of Soviet official functions. Huge windows offer spectacular views in all directions, but wait till you get to the restroom, from which you can see the Garden Ring. Time Out Bar has quite an inventive cocktail menu and an array of snacks, which aren't bad but not something to write home about.

When we finally reached Barry Bar (1 Ulitsa Kuznetsky Most, +7-495-276-0736), it was already crowded. Apparently we didn't look flamboyant enough, so the bouncer asked us whether we'd been at Barry before. However, his look suggested a somewhat different line of inquiry, as in, "Do you know this is a gay bar?" We said, "Yes, of course" and were allowed in. Barry Bar has great cocktails, which in Moscow translates as "the bartenders are not stingy with the alcohol."

When I was ordering an Old Fashioned, the girl standing next to me turned around and said, "There's something very wrong with my Pisco sour." "Not sour enough?" I inquired helpfully. "It's not that. I don't know, can't put my finger on it. Meet my friend Kostya, by the way."

Kostya had something furry on and glasses a couple of sizes too large. He leaned over above the bar and almost shouted "How long since you shaved your beard?" "About a month, why?" I replied. "You're lying. It looks a lot more recent." "Well, I do trim it once in a while." The conversation was taking a weird direction, and I retreated from the bar with my drink.

Our friend Artyom, also known as Arty, was performing on an improvised stage. He has quite a strong voice, and his electro-pop performance was very impressive. After a second Old Fashioned, I needed to use the restroom and went around searching for it. I bumped into someone right next to the coat check and excused myself. I then realized I was talking to my own reflection in a mirror. It was time to leave.

We walked the short distance to Shop & Bar Denis Simachev (12/2 Stolesnikov Pereulok, +7-495-629-8085). Right at the entrance, a tall, gorgeous blonde whispered to me in passing, "Oh, you're such a handsome young man." She then proceeded to the bar, where she started making out with a much older man in a suit.

They make a great Long Island ice tea at Simachev. My friends and I started dancing.

In the middle of the club, there is a staircase leading to the second floor, where the store is. Under the stairs is a row of sinks, as if this was a bathroom. A couple of girls got on them, kicking around and spilling cocktails and started dancing.

One of them managed to raise her leg all the way to the ceiling, but when she brought it down, her heel got caught in the sink and broke. The whole of Simachev started helping her break off the other heel. The heel turned out to be quite formidable, and it took a while. The girl didn't stop dancing, even with both heels removed; she just sort of tiptoed around.

We were tired but thought we should make an early morning stop at the Real McCoy, only a few minutes' ride away, and get some breakfast. But it was closed. For good. Real McCoy, that stronghold of sin and alcoholism, was no more. What a sad morning.

Contact the author at artsreporter@imedia.ru

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