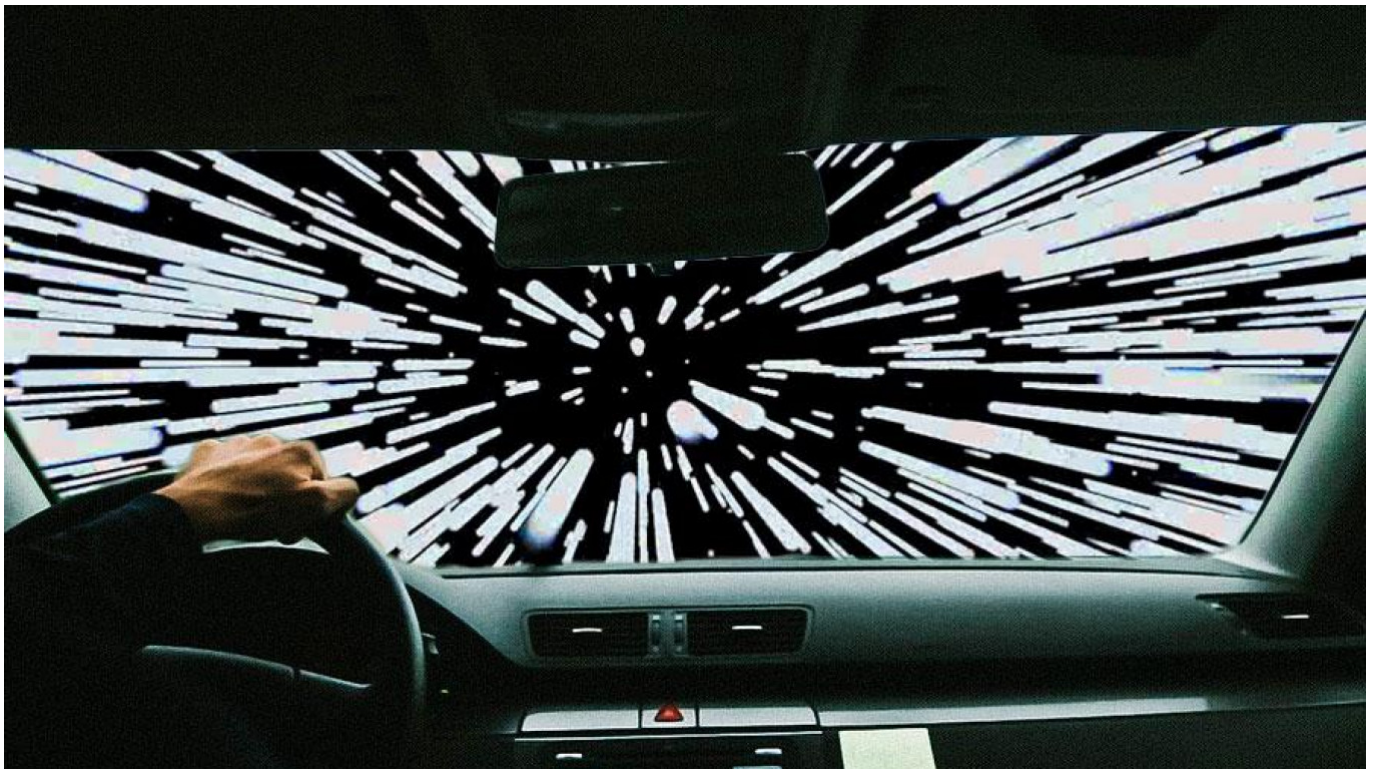


Your Next Moscow Uber Ride Could Include Some Expensive Teleportation

The Kremlin's GPS-spoofing creates headaches for taxis services

By [Kevin Rothrock](#)

October 28, 2016



Pixabay

Thanks to apparent efforts by the Kremlin to spoof geolocation signals in central Moscow, 21st-century taxi services have gained the impressive power of teleportation, though customers complain the glitch is costing them hard cash.

RTVi's Igor Belkin was the first to look at the problem in any detail, discovering on Oct. 27 that his Yandex.Taxi ride through central Moscow magically transported him to Vnukovo airport and back — a 60-kilometer roundtrip. Thanks to the GPS disruption, the taxi's meter recorded that the car traveled 140 kilometers (87 miles) an hour. (Watch a video of the trip [here](#).)

Belkin says the taxi's instruments and fare reverted to normal, when the vehicle exited the

spoofing zone on Lyusinovskaya Street (more than two kilometers from the Kremlin), but he was nonetheless charged an additional 200 rubles (\$3) because the trip recorded a visit to Vnukovo airport, which costs riders extra. Belkin's driver had to call his dispatcher and manually recalculate the correct taxi fare.

If the ride had ended nearer to the Kremlin, inside the GPS spoofing zone, Belkin says his fare would likely have been significantly higher, because Yandex.Taxi's geolocation algorithm might never have reverted and corrected itself even partly.

Earlier this month, Griffon Media chief editor Alexander Belanovsky reported the same problem, saying Uber overcharged him for rides near the Kremlin on four separate occasions. He says it took the company several business days to issue a refund, after he complained.

According to TJournal, Uber says it has recorded complaints by several riders in the area of the Kremlin, but the company says the number of rides disrupted by GPS spoofing hasn't spiked significantly since the summer.

Yandex.Taxi told the website TJournal that its algorithm is designed to correct sudden jumps in geolocation tracking, saying such disruptions "in no way influence the final cost of a trip." The company nevertheless says it's ready to offer credit to customers for any overcharges resulting from GPS spoofing.

The Israeli taxi service Gett has also addressed the geolocation problem, saying it will recalculate fares or refund anyone who's been overcharged for rides near the Kremlin.

In mid-October, the popular Russian blogger and podcaster Grigory Bakunov, better known online as "Bobuk," [published data](#) revealing that the Kremlin appears to be spoofing geolocation signals, fooling GPS and GLONASS devices into thinking they're actually 30 kilometers southwest at Vnukovo airport.

Bakunov speculates that this is because the government is targeting drone quadcopters, many of which now come preprogrammed to stop operating near major airports.

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<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/10/28/your-next-moscow-uber-ride-could-include-some-expensive-teleportation-a55941>