

# A Complicated Marriage

**Moscow frustrates entrepreneur Guy Archer, but he always forgives it**

By [Max Walker](#)

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Guy Archer says there is a 'creative, wild spirit' in Moscow's people that cannot be found in the U.S. **Guy Archer / personal archive**

Since coming to Moscow from the U.S. in 1998, Guy Archer has set up a publishing company, worked as communications director at the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia and even co-founded the Moscow Architectural Preservation Society. He has just launched the corporate publications and communications firm, Capital Perspectives.

**I'm from Richmond, Virginia.** I was in graduate school there [in Charlottesville, Virginia] working in magazine publishing as a writer. There were a lot of great writers there but we were all competing to write about steeplechase [horse racing over hurdles and other

obstacles] and so forth.

**Long story short, I moved to Moscow, arriving three months before the crash of '98.** For me it was fascinating, it was the most interesting and exciting part of my life. Moscow is a bottomless resource of things to write about. It was a whole new world for me; everything in this city and this country is just endlessly interesting. As a foreigner, there are always a million questions.

**When I first lived here I moved to Voikovskaya.** And I just fell in love with that neighborhood. I still want to write a book on Voikovskaya. It's changed though; now there's [shopping mall] Metropolis, with great big giant offices there. I've really got to do the book now because I've been talking about writing it for 10 years and people are getting tired of it!

**In '98 a lot of people pulled out and left, great big companies, and boy did they regret doing that because, in a very short period of time, things turned around very quickly.** Even recently, I'd say among Europeans and North Americans, about 70-80 percent of the people I know have left in the last few years because of the economy here. When things get rough, particularly for people trying to support families, it becomes more difficult.

**The Intourist hotel, which was torn down years ago and replaced by the Ritz, was the seediest, nastiest place you've ever been. It was fantastic.** A great big 20-story building, brown, full of a lot of seedy characters, bewildered tourists and government officials on the 20th floor being bombed. Full of stories!

**Narkomfin, next to the American embassy, is a very historical building.** Everybody has been fighting to try to save it but it really looked like it was doomed, even Mayor [Yury] Luzhkov was openly contemptuous of the building, but now it's about to undergo a major renovation. There's a great tour there, I really recommend it.

**Every time I leave Moscow I'm miserable.** But my family has told me to stop complaining about Moscow, it's like a complex marriage. I love this city, even when she makes me furious.

**I'm a big music lover.** I organized an event a couple of weeks ago at Dzhimi Club, a real dive. I love that place! The owner is a big hard rock fan, it's a great music venue and it's not beating you over the head like a lot of places here with how clever the design is, it has a sort of honky-tonk atmosphere to it. If everything in Moscow was terrible I would still want to live here for the Conservatory, it's a holy place.

**People here like breaking the rules.** It's sort of part of what they do. I love that spirit. For my work, my biggest asset here is the fact that there are so many talented people in terms of my Russian friends and colleagues. I feel like that creative, wild spirit wouldn't be the same in the U.S.

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