

Russia's Oddest Stories of 2020

The headlines that brought some cheer to the pandemic-hit year.

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There was no shortage of oddball news in 2020. **Instagram, Pixabay, Roscosmos / MT**

Many are understandably longing to flip the page and never look back on 2020. But amid the stress and tragedy of this year, there was also no shortage of oddball news that made headlines in Russia and abroad — from memes, online [challenges](#) and flashmobs protesting virus lockdowns to wild animals [roaming](#) the suddenly deserted cities.

Here's a look at The Moscow Times' five most-read whacky stories of the year that can help you say goodbye to 2020 with a smile.

Russian Venus

Dmitry Rogozin, the outspoken head of Russia's state space agency, is no stranger to gaffes closely scrutinized in the press, most famously for telling NASA to launch astronauts into space on trampolines as a joke.

This year, Rogozin raised eyebrows again by [suggesting](#) that Venus is a “Russian” planet after

British and American scientists discovered gas that could indicate life on the planet.

Hot nurse

Battling Covid-19 in layers of protective equipment can get sticky, so who could blame a young Russian nurse for [wearing](#) nothing but a bikini beneath her see-through gown at work? Readers and patients at the men-only ward found nothing wrong with the cheeky stunt, but hospital administrators reprimanded her for drawing unwanted attention.

The nurse, 23-year-old Nadezhda Zhukova, ultimately came out on top as her sudden international fame helped her land a modeling contract with a Russian sportswear brand.

Gay Disney

Russia is known for its intolerance for members of the LGBT community, so it came as little surprise that Russian distributors appeared to censor an innocuous gay scene from Disney and Pixar's animated [feature](#) "Onward."

Nevertheless, viewers were no less dismayed to hear a lesbian character mention her "partner" in Russian instead of "girlfriend" in the original English-language version of the cartoon.

Big brother

No end-of-year Russia retrospective would be complete without a Putin story, and 2020 is no exception.

A prankster [carried out](#) an unwittingly brutally honest public opinion poll by hanging a giant Putin portrait inside an apartment building elevator and filming its residents' reactions — nearly all of them foul-mouthed.

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Space trampoline

In a full-circle moment, Russia's space chief Rogozin made a splash again when tech entrepreneur and SpaceX founder Elon Musk referenced his "[trampoline](#)" remarks from six years ago after the rocket manufacturer made history as the first commercial company to send humans into orbit.

"The trampoline is working," Musk quipped at a post-flight briefing before adding: "It's an inside joke."

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