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## EDITOR'S LETTER 2020!



The combination of two “twenties” contains something unique – 2020! Something magic, right? It may be beaten by 2222 only! Do you agree with me? Such combinations as 1818, 1919, 2020 appear once in a century. But 2222 along with 1111 – only once in a thousand years.

We are lucky. We came through the matchless year 2000, which was the transition from one millennium to another. Do you remember endless arguments about the start of the 21st century – was it 2000 or 2001? The dilemma is clear. The first year rounds up the 00s. Everything is correct. But the thing is, so-called “Anno Domini” (Common Era) started with the birth of Jesus Christ. He was born in the year One. Generally, the digit “zero” and the term “zero” did

not exist either in Greek, or Roman, or Chinese mathematical systems or digit symbol systems. It means, if we assumed that Jesus was born in the year One, then our millennium started with 2001.

Actually, the digit “0” was newly used in India as late as in 876, and it was the Bakhshali manuscript. This digit was named “sunyata” in Sanskrit, that stated for “emptiness” or “voidness” and was originally drawn as a circle which we understand now with ease.

Digits always excited people’s imagination. There is even “numerology” – a semi-magic science, or a quasi-science, based on “magic of the digits”. It affirms, that some digital code determines a human’s life and such “fate code” can be identified. Of course, it is nonsense. But the nonsense reflecting our reverential attitude towards running time.

So, let us welcome the digits 2020 with a big smile and focus on our business.

Happy New Year, dear readers!

**Victor Loupan**

**Russian Mind  
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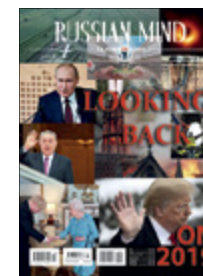
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# RUSSIA AND WE

*Sometimes the image of the home country is the most important factor for the people living abroad*

VICTOR LOUPAN,  
*Head of the Editorial Board*



*Donald Trump congratulated Boris Johnson with this victory so enthusiastically, that they could think it was Trump's own win!*

At this time of the year we usually sum up the results, as if calendar settings would play some role in developing processes. Of course, it is not the case. But mechanically we follow this tradition. On New Year's Eve, we first of all toast the expiring year and only then welcome a new year. With this, also due to the tradition, we warmly say goodbye to the departing year, recalling success and hiding or forgetting to mention unfortunate turn of events.

Sometimes the image of our home country is the most important factor for the people living abroad. When living far from the motherland, an individual faces another life compass, so an everyday reality touches him or her less than, saying frankly, symbolic realia.

So, how can we describe Russia's image for the last year 2019? As compared to emigrants settling in the USA or Australia, the Russians residing in Western Europe feel like not

that in a strange land. This is not only due to geographic proximity or affiliation with common cultural values of Europe, but also for Europe showing eccentric Russophilia and even expressing certain obsession with Russia. Metaphorical and objective greatness of Russia both has always been attracting Europeans. A great neighbour being attacked by them in wars many times – and punishing them consequently – still remains a proverbial symbol of a “Russian bear”.

However, on the one side, a bear is a dangerous animal, but on the other side, it is cartoon-cute Bruin.

Over the year 2019 Russia's image has not worsened, but instead, became better for the first time in years. On the one part, little seems to have changed in formal relations. On the other part, we saw a sharp drop in the number of aggressive anti-Russia articles in Western Europe-

an mass media. Back in 2018 I perceived them as a seismic sea wave! But when Emmanuel Macron unexpectedly expressed his desire to reorient relations between the European Union and Russia, something has changed fundamentally. And it became absolutely clear! It means, that he did not express his personal opinion (as they declared he did) – that was the opinion maintained by European and transnational ruling elite wishing to break the deadlock and move towards a game-changing historical landmark.

This trend appears in Europe in the forms of a surprisingly successful resolution of the crisis faced by the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline construction, a same-level surprising

pressure on Ukraine, successful completion of the pending Turkish Stream gas pipeline. It was also interesting how European mass media covered the newly launched Power of Siberia gas pipeline. They started unanimously accusing European establishment of “their sanctions” which sent Russia “into China's arms”. Not long before that, literally all the European mass media suddenly stopped promoting anti-Russia sanctions, like doing one's bidding, despite the fact



*Macron declared that the “European security” idea is inconceivable without rapprochement of the EU and Russia*

that before they tirelessly promulgated them as a necessary and effective bargaining tool against headstrong Russia. Today they do not recall this pressure factor, but rather remind of multi-billion losses and harm caused to European economy, especially European farmers.

I would avoid forecasting or foreseeing, but it seems to me, that the trend for improvement of relations between Western Europe and Russia will continue and even speed up. There are objective reasons for it. One of major causes includes a worsening crisis of the US' supreme power. Future presidential election will turn into such a furious fight for the office of President, that the administration of Donald Trump (who runs for re-election) will simply have no time for anything else. Many Western European political leaders already say with uncovered depression, that America gave them its back making them abandoned. There is the big truth. The idea of “orphanning of Europe” is also supported by Trump's honest exultation about Brexit, which will definitely follow the historic Conservative general election win. He congratulated Boris Johnson with this victory so enthusiastically, that they could think it was Trump's own win!

Europeans had been thinking of distant America as of a close friend for a long time. Now they have suddenly realised its real farness, while Russia has always been within easy reach.

When Macron declared that the “European security” idea is inconceivable without rapprochement of the European Union and Russia, some Eastern European countries quivered, but Western European countries understood the speech of a young French President. By the way, highlight military officials also pay their great interest to sensationally fast revival of the Russian Army. They are honestly excited about slashing modernisation of the Russian Armed Forces – not only for technological advance, but also for a better combativity of the Russian Army. At the beginning they were surprised with virtuosity of the Crimea operation, and now they have been captivated by the victorious intervention in Syria. They call it as “the great victory by weak force”.

I think, the year 2020 will be a defining period for relations between Russia and the European Union. They have begun, and will continue, to improve – especially as backgrounded by festering weakness of the US' influence on Europe.



## DISSENTING OPINION

# RUSSIA ENTERS 2020

*Russophobes do their best to downgrade Russia's global role and achievements*

VYACHESLAV KATAMIDZE

Last November we saw appearance of a new public transport in Moscow – they launched the first two routes of the Moscow Central Diameters (MCD). The total length of railways exceeds 130 kilometers and they host 57 stations. The Diameters offer free transfer to trains circulating on Moscow Metro and Moscow Central Circle (the latter is similar to London Overground system). These two MCD lines cost 40 bln rubles.

The MCD launch is a wonderful New Year's gift to the population of Moscow: it allowed improvement of mobility of over four million inhabitants of the metropolitan city. The MCD run uninterruptedly from 05:30 AM to 01:00 AM. In addition to passengers' comfort, new lines will help significantly reduce transportation cost as transfer to Metro is free.

About a million and a half passengers have used the MCD trains over the first three days after launch, that is close to the amount of passengers carried by Moscow Central Circle (MCC). Both MCC and MCD significantly save time spent by people to get to work or home, reduce load on Moscow Metro, and it has been immediately appreciated by locals and tourists. In due course of time the number of routes will notably increase.

I had the opportunity to use the MCD trains twice. They are called "Ivolga" and feature well-equipped interiors and modern appearance. I feel how metropolitan transport starts its new era and becomes much more comfortable, rapid and substantial for this huge city. It is worth

reminding that around 12.5 million people reside in Moscow officially, with other 3 million people having no local residence.

Another event happened on 02 December 2019 that was of special importance to Russia: the Power of Siberia main gas pipeline was launched to transport raw gas from Irkutsk and Yakutia production complexes to Primorski Krai and Asia-Pacific countries (so-called "eastern" route). This is a new step in development of economic cooperation between Russia and China, and this explains why Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping participated in the launch ceremony of the pipeline via teleconference.

The first stage includes a 2.200 km pipeline segment running from the Yakutia production complex to Blagoveshchensk (which is located near the Sino-Russian border). The second section will extend the pipeline for the other 800 km. Consequently, the total length of the Power of Siberia will be around 3.000 kilometers.

Pipeline construction took over five years and cost 1.1 trn rubles. The total amount of the contract is around \$400 bln. Gazprom is planning to supply up to 5 billion cubic meters of fuel to China in 2020, up to 10 bln cbm in 2021, and up to 15 bln cbm in 2022. They plan to reach design capacity of 38 bln cbm by 2025.

It would seem that these two events having good potential for improvement of life standard and quality in Russia, would be perceived

positively in the West, – the more so, because they continuously express their dramatic worry about Russia's failure to eradicate low earnings and improve living conditions of the citizens occupying remote settings. But they show a counterreaction. Western Russophobic newspapers immediately started publishing articles mentioning that development of transport and general infrastructure in Russia lags too far behind the

Western world, and the Power of Siberia pipeline is supposed to be "insecure" and "subject to climate and technology hazards".

These ideas perfectly fit the campaign full of grief and slander which is unrolled every time when Russia generates a new message regarding its economic and social achievements. With this, Western mass media strive to ignore the original publications prepared by Russian news agencies.

For example, recently the newspaper Izvestia wrote that according to the Urban Environment Quality Index, Moscow exactly offered the friendliest urban environment when compared to all other Russian million-plus cities (the capital has earned 73% of the maximum available points). By the way, in the course of evaluation of Russian cities they used geoinformation data, space images, global positioning system data



*Last November we saw appearance of a new public transport in Moscow – they launched the first two routes of the Moscow Central Diameters (MCD)*





The total length of the Power of Siberia pipeline will be around 3,000 kilometers

and social media content. Moscow became a leader not due to the widest financial opportunities, but due to thoughtful and intentional establishment of supportive environment for the habitants of the great city.

But when it comes to “climate and technology hazards” challenging the pipeline safety, it pays to remind that developers of the Nord Stream and Turkish Stream pipelines express no concerns about climate factors or technology criteria of organising or laying pipelines. Oilfields and gas reservoirs are exploited particularly in the Arctic Region and cold Siberian areas, and even so Europe has been seamlessly receiving Russian gas and Russian oil over the decades. In 2013 Russia supplied gas satisfying 100% of Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Slovakian markets; 70% to 97% of Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Slovenian markets; over 60% of Greek, Czech, and Austrian markets; and was a supplier to other six European countries.

To be sure, it is hard to get used to the fact that Russophobes do their best to downgrade Russia’s global role and achievements, for which they widely apply not only lies, but also double standards and tricks that are customary to West. For example, the following thesis is proactively distributed in the USA and NATO countries: at some point the USSR was a real superpower, but upon its dissolution Russia could not even pretend to be called a developed country. It is clear that when saying so, Western political persons and economists gloat over it recalling how massively NATO countries – together with liberal Yeltsinists – led Russia so that it would have turned into the country without econ-

omy, without industry, and – moreover – without own interests.

However, Russia has survived and even recovered its feet. This fact does not satisfy its enemies from the political point of view, that is why US print media often declare the follow-



ing idea: Russia today cannot be considered as a developed country. This is because it is unable to restore its previous economy. In the meantime, Russia occupies the sixth line of the table indicating distribution of ranks among ten leading – and developed – countries in the world, for a variety of factors. But, please, note that three of five countries besting Russia for economy, include the countries with the population vastly outspending Russian population, namely India, China, and the USA, and this factor is critically important to calculation of economical aggregates.

It seems to be impossible to push Russia down from this placing. It explains why both Russia’s enemies and Russian domestic liberals offer a new thesis: Russia is far behind the USA, one of Russia’s global competitors, for Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Fair enough, according to this indicator (as based on a calculation made by American economists), Russia is far behind because the GDP in Russia (which is around \$1.6 trn), as they affirm, is almost 13 times less than the GDP in the USA (which is around \$20.5 trn). On the one side, everything is correct. But actually, no.

Let us analyze the case. Gross Domestic Product is a macroeconomic indicator reflecting market value of all the products and services produced in the given country over the year. In Russia we calculate the GDP in a correct way, based on summation of the costs of the manufactured goods and services only. But what is the method applied in the USA?

Russian economists discovered the following. When calculating the GDP in the USA, they include value of the existing buildings and structures, including among this, military



bases, too. In Russia, they definitely do not count this way.

The GDP in the USA includes potential income which could be earned theoretically by residential property owners and householders if they would offer their property for rent. In other words, they receive no real income, but they account some possible amount of income when calculating the GDP in the USA, together with financial instruments, such as treasuries (US debt securities), derivatives, and futures. They also include income from the entities owned by the USA or the entities jointly owned by the USA in foreign countries. Finally, they include even potential income of housewives, even if they are unemployed on a permanent or a temporary basis.

Which conclusion does arise from the abovementioned explanations? It is ineffective to compare the Russia’s GDP to the US’ GDP as they are calculated based on different methods. But it is really easy to understand why the USA has developed such formula for GDP calculation. The USA is a country living on credit. Nowadays US’ national debt numbers \$23

trn. Only China and Japan credited the USA for 1.1 trn each. The USA is indebted even to Cayman Islands and small Luxemburg! Consequently, if the USA steps back from evident overstating of its GDP through the use of its funny arithmetic, the rest world will cease purchase of American debt securities and American stocks. A small, but workable trick...

Respectively, for a better idea of the economies of the USA and Russia, it is more preferable to talk about purchasing power parity that actually reflects per capita GDP. The total picture changes immediately. The GDP in the USA, as calculated based on purchasing power parity, is \$62,606 with the population counting to 330 mln people, while the GDP in Russia is \$29,267 with the population of 146.5 mln people.

Yes, Russia is far behind the USA, but it is almost free of debts and has very secure financial reserves. It means that Russia always remains a more reliable partner in any deal and always has a wide margin for manipulation of its assets. It supports China’s readiness to partner in many Russian projects.



# VLADIMIR PUTIN'S END-OF-YEAR PRESS CONFERENCE



Russian President Vladimir Putin held his annual end-of-year press conference on Thursday, answering questions from state media and independent journalists on an array of topics related to Russia's domestic and foreign policy.

He spoke on a variety of issues during his traditional end-of-year appearance. Some 2,000 journalists were registered to attend, but few were lucky enough to be called to ask a question.

Here are the highlights from the marathon presser that lasted four hours and 19 minutes.

## *Putin on Trump*

Putin said US President Donald Trump was impeached for “far-fetched” reasons, calling the move by Democrats a continuation of their fight against the Republican leader. He also predicted the move would fail.

“ [Impeachment] has yet to pass the Senate, where Republicans have a majority, and they will be unlikely to remove a representative of their own party from office on what seems to me an absolutely far-fetched reason in my opinion.

“It’s just the continuation of the political in-fighting, and one of the parties that lost the elections – the Democratic party – is trying alternative means to get the results by accusing Trump of colluding with Russia.”

## *Putin on climate change*

The triggers behind global climate change are hard to predict, Russia’s president said – but he admitted global warming could be “a disaster” for the country’s icy north.

“It is very difficult, if not impossible, to work out exactly how human-kind affects climate change. But we cannot stay idle either ... we should make our best efforts to prevent dramatic changes in the climate.

“As for our country, this process is very crucial for us. The temperature in Russia is rising 2.5 times faster than the planet’s average. As you know, Russia is a northern country, and 70 per cent of our territory is located in the north latitudes. Some of our cities were built north of the Arctic Circle, on the permafrost. If it begins to thaw, you can imagine what consequences it would have. It would be a disaster.”

## *Putin on Russia's Olympic ban for doping*

Putin said sanctions announced by the world doping agency contradicted “common sense and the law”.

The WADA sanctions announced on December 9 ban the use of the Russian team name, flag or anthem at a range of major sports competitions over the next four years, including next year’s Olympics.

“As for WADA and its decisions, I believe that they are not only unjust but also defy common sense and are illegal.

“Any sanctions must target specific, individual breaches. If someone was caught doing something illegal, sanctions are natural and fair. But if an overwhelming majority of Russian athletes are clean, how can they be sanctioned for someone else’s actions?”







### **Putin on Ukraine**

Putin warned that the peace process in eastern Ukraine would “hit a dead end” if Ukraine’s president changed earlier agreements.

“If we revise the Minsk Agreements, the settlement process will hit a dead end, because the main element of the Minsk Agreements is a law on the special status of Donbass, which must be formalised in the Ukrainian Constitution.

“There must be a direct dialogue with Donbass. There is none so far. It has been announced that amendments concerning decentralisation will be made. This is good. But is this meant to replace the Minsk Agreements? Or the law on the special status of Donbass?”

### **Putin on Belarus**

The Russian leader said it would be a “mistake” to “run ahead” and set

dates for creating a union state with Belarus, while maintaining that he was “very happy with the fact that we are becoming closer”.

Russia and Belarus signed a union agreement in 1997 that envisaged close political, economic and military ties, but stopped short of forming a single nation.

The Kremlin has recently cranked up the pressure on the neighbouring nation of 10 million, raising energy prices and cutting subsidies.

Some in Belarus fear new agreements could pave the way for a full merger of the two countries, concerns fueled by Russia’s 2014 annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula.

There also has been speculation that Putin, who has been in power for nearly two decades, could contemplate a merger with Belarus as a way to stay at the helm of the new union state of Russia and Belarus after his current Russian presidential term expires in 2024.

“I still believe that we should not change the constitution,” he said.

### **On constitutional term limits for the presidency**

– “One thing that could be changed about these [presidential] terms is removing the clause about ‘successive’ [terms]. Your humble servant served two terms consecutively, then left his post, but with the constitutional right to return to the post of president again, because these two terms were not successive. [This clause] troubles some of our political analysts and public figures. Well, maybe it could be removed.”

### **On Russia's spat with Germany over the killing of an ex-Chechen rebel in Berlin**

– “The issue of extraditing Khangoshvili was discussed at the level of our special services but there was no official request, because we knew that it would be refused.”

– “This is an absolute bloody killer. He killed 98 people in the Caucasus – think about it. He participated in the attacks in the Moscow metro.”

### **On the election of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson**

– “Johnson can be congratulated. He was victorious after all and had a better sense of the British public’s mood than his political opponents. And as far as I understand, he intends to implement all of his Brexit plans.”

– “In regards to [Russian] interference or non-interference, we’ve heard many times from official governing bodies in various countries, including Britain, assessments of what is happening inside Russia. Is that interference?”

### **On China**

– “We do not have a military alliance with China and we do not plan to create one.”

– “But our relations with China continue to develop, including in the sphere of defence technologies... I think China is capable of producing its own ballistic missile early warning system, but with our help it can do so sooner. This will improve our strategic partner’s ability to defend itself in a significant way.”

### **On the Libyan conflict**

– “Russia is in touch with [Libyan Prime Minister Faye] al-Seraj and with [eastern Libyan commander Khalifa] Haftar. We are also constantly maintaining dialogue with our partners, including Turkey, Europe and other countries.”

– “In our opinion, the best outcome would be for an agreement to be reached between the two conflicting sides that would lead to an end to military actions, and would establish who will rule the country, how, and what responsibilities they would have.”

### **On extending the New START arms control treaty with the U.S.**

– “We are ready until the end of the year to extend the existing agreement, the new START treaty.”

– “But thus far there has been no answer to any of our suggestions. And without a new START treaty, there is nothing to curb an arms race. And that, in my opinion, is bad.”

### **On Russia's doping scandal**

– “If WADA does not have any claims against our national Olympic Committee, then our team should be allowed to participate under its own flag.”

### **On Ukraine peace talks**

– “If a revision of the Minsk [peace] Agreements starts, then the situation could enter a complete dead end.”

– “Direct dialogue on Donbass is needed. It is lacking.”

### **On internet freedom and the “foreign agents” law**

– “Free internet and sovereign internet do not contradict each other. The [‘sovereign internet’] law is aimed only at preventing negative influence in case foreign resources are restricted.”

– “We are not moving toward closing off the internet and are not going to do that.”

– “It wasn’t us who coined the term ‘foreign agent.’ A similar law has been in force in the U.S. since the 1930s.”

– “If you receive money from abroad and do this kind of work, you should indicate this so people know.”

### **On whether a woman can become president of Russia**

– “In terms of management abilities and responsibilities, the requirements cannot differ by gender. The main thing is competence and decency. Women bring a female principle into politics, less aggression, and I think this will be in demand [in the future].”





# VLADIMIR VYSOTSKY'S RETURN TO LONDON

*Premiere of the Documentary "Vysotsky...Odessa Notebook"*

IRENE KUKOTA

Only few admirers of Vladimir Vysotsky's talent know that in addition to Paris or Mexico he also performed in London. In November 2019, in anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the poet's death, which will be commemorated in 2020, London public had the opportunity to watch the premiere of the documentary "Vysotsky... Odessa Notebook" and celebrate the life the poet, who left an unforgettable trace in the history of Russian culture of the late 20th century.

On November 30, the documentary "Vysotsky... Odessa Notebook" premiered at the Mayfair Hotel in London, UK. The event was organised by the Antropov Foundation in collaboration with Apollo Film and Russian Day. The viewers were welcomed by the organiser Alexey Antropov, film director Anatoly Balchev and film producer Mark Ivasilevich. Among special guests of the evening were Nikita Vysotsky, the poet's son, and Mikhail Shemyakin (also spelled as Chemiakine) famous artist, sculptor and close friend of Vladimir Vysotsky.

On the day before the premiere, the director of Vladimir Vysotsky Museum and the son of the poet Nikita Vysotsky, gave a talk at the conference "Russian Heritage in the Modern World. Heroes. Enthusiasts.

Creators" organised by the Russian Heritage in the UK society Russian and held at the Embassy of the Russian Federation. He outlined the development of recent studies and monographs on Vladimir Vysotsky's life and highlighted some remarkable discoveries made in connection with the studies. He also mentioned that in July 2020 the museum was planning to commemorate the for-



*Left to right: Alexey Antropov (philanthropist), Vlada Krassilnikova (Paris Match), Mark Ivasilevitch (film producer), Pierre Spengler (film producer)*

tieth anniversary since the death of Vladimir Vysotsky and was preparing an extensive educational and events programme. The conference at the Russian Embassy was also attended by philanthropist Alexey Antropov, sculptor Mikhail Shemyakin, director Anatoly Balchev and producer Mark Ivasilevich.

On 30th November, the premiere of "Vysotsky... Odessa Notebook" took off with a brief wine and canapes reception: everyone was welcome to share their memories of Vysotsky,

take a photo or socialise with Nikita Vysotsky and Mikhail Shemyakin, film director Anatoly Balchev, film producer Mark Ivasilevitch, or with the event's patron Alexey Antropov. Among the guests attending the event was spotted famous French film producer Pierre Spengler (famous for producing Richard Donner's trilogy "Superman" and for the "Underground" directed by Emir Kusturica), accompanied by author, screenwriter and producer Kyra Pahlen. One could also rub shoulders with glamorous Swiss fashion designer Olga Roh (founder of the fashion brand Rohmir), philanthropist and arts patron Prince Nikita Lobanov-Rostovsky, head of the Russian department at Bonhams Daria Khristova-Chernenko, the press attaché of the

Russian Embassy in the UK Mr. Ilya Erofeev, architect Alexander Barabanov, curator and art critic Anthony Fawcett, coach and founder of NASSA Sports Academy All Stars Natasha Hart, MBE, as well as director of Chance for Life charity Olga Makharinsky, research scholar and head of the Vysotsky Centre in the UK Dr. Olga Tabachnikova, the famous Brodsky scholar Dr. Valentina Polukhina, film producer Maria Rusanova, director of the Hertfordshire Press, vice president of the Eurasian

Creative Guild Marat Akhmedzhanov, director of the Aitmatov Academy in London Rahima Abduvalieva, as well as journalists, major art collectors and gallery owners, including those who knew Vladimir Vysotsky personally.

The documentary highlighted the role that Odessa played in Vladimir Vysotsky's life and artistic career. Most iconic films starring Vysotsky, such as "The Vertical", "Dangerous Tour" or "The Meeting Place Cannot be Changed", were shot at the Odessa Film studio – the all are now considered indisputable classic of the Soviet cinematography.

Prior to the screening, the film director Anatoly Balchev addressed the audience, mentioning that Odessa had always been known as a free-spirited, buoyant community, kindred in spirit to Vladimir Vysotsky. It was producer Mark Ivasilevich who came up with the idea to consider Vysotsky's artistic heritage in the context of this city. And this is how the film "Vysotsky... Odessa Notebook" came to fruition.

The screening concluded with a panel discussion with Anatoly Bal-



*Left to right: Nikita Vysotsky (actor), Anatoly Balchev (film director), Aya Antropova, Alexey Antropov, Mikhail Chemiakine (artist), Pierre Spengler, Mark Ivasilevitch*

chev, Nikita Vysotsky, Mikhail Shemyakin and Marc Ivasilevitch held in a warm, friendly atmosphere. Interestingly, both Russian-speaking and English guests equally took part in this discussion addressing their questions to the participants and offering commentaries. For instance, art-critic Anthony Fawcett enquired about the connection that existed between Vysotsky, Odessa and London. Nikita Vysotsky, reminded that Vladimir Vysotsky had once performed in London and even dedicated a poem to the city – the fact that came across as a pleasant surprise for the British guests. The poem's original is now kept in the collection of Vladimir Vy-

sotsky's Museum. In fact, Vladimir Vysotsky gave a single concert at the Soviet embassy in London in 1975 (he then arrived from Paris to London with Marina Vlady). The event was very popular and the space was overflowing with admirers and fans of the poet. After this trip, Vysotsky also composed the popular song "Arrows of Robin Hood".

At the end of the discussion, Mikhail Shemyakin shared the story outlining the circumstances that led to composing and subsequent recording of Vysotsky's song "French Demons". Shemyakin and Vysotsky were close friends who had been first introduced to each other by dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov. Subsequently, Shemyakin acted as producer for his friend and released seven vinyls with Vysotsky's songs. Their major project took more than two years: Vysotsky spent generous amounts of time recording with famous Parisian performer of gypsy romances Alyosha Dmitrievich. Eventually, Shemyakin and Vysotsky released a unique vinyl that paid tribute to the disappearing pre-revolutionary Russian performance tradition and became timeless classic.

The evening concluded with a gala reception at the Novikov restaurant in honour of the distinguished guests.



*Left to right: Mikhail Chemiakine, Mark Ivasilevitch, Nikita Vysotsky, Anatoly Balchev*



# PROMINENT RUSSIANS: ANTON CHEKHOV



Admirers around the globe today mark the 160th anniversary of the birth of Anton Chekhov, one of history's best-loved writers of plays and short stories.

Chekhov is one of the most widely translated and imitated writers in the world. His works are performed as far afield as Tokyo, Santiago, and New Delhi. Already available in many dozens of languages, Chekhov this year will be translated for the first time into a number of African tongues, including Swahili. He even has a crater on Mercury named in his honour.

Anton Chekhov was born in Taganrog, a diversely populated city in southern Russia on the Azov Sea on 29 January 1860. He was the third of six children. His father, Pavel Chekhov, was a grocery store owner. Pavel Chekhov wasn't passionate about his trade and preferred to spend most of his time at church, singing in the choir and engaging in social activities. Chekhov's grandfather was a serf who worked hard to buy himself out in 1841, two decades prior to the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

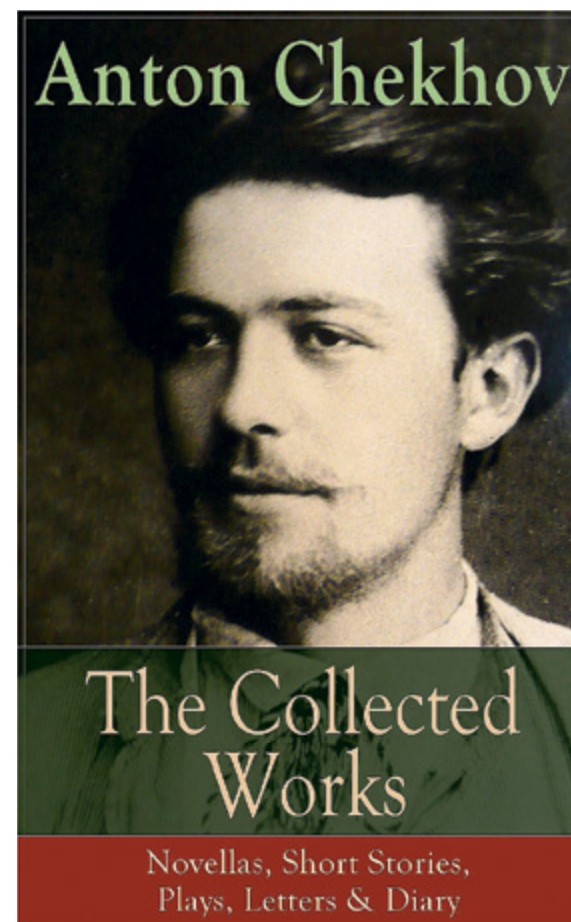
In Melikhovo he resumed his medical activity, but never charged for his services. He volunteered as a district field doctor during a cholera outbreak, providing medical care for 25 neighbouring villages; he sponsored the opening of a medical station in Melikhovo and supplied it with medications. Chekhov built three schools for local children, a bell tower and a fire department for village dwellers; he also negotiated the village road construction. At his request, a post station and a telegraph were opened in the area; he also engaged in massive forest plantation. In his hometown of Taganrog, Chekhov opened a library and donated over 200 volumes from his private collection, among them very rare exemplars. He also remembered to regularly replenish the library with new publications.

Despite the long and laborious way to the estate, guests simply streamed to visit the Chekhovs. Chekhov was never a homebody himself. He fre-

quented Moscow and St. Petersburg, attending editorial offices and participating in the literary circles. But amid his pro-active lifestyle, Chekhov never stopped working.

In drama, Chekhov emerged as an innovator with the first of his four major plays, "The Seagull" (1895). Although the first production in St. Petersburg in 1896 was an utter failure, a new one by the Moscow Art Theatre – recently formed and propagating new principles of directing and acting – won desired recognition and became a new start for the dramatic art as such. The play was such a spectacular success that the seagull later became, and remains, the theatre's official emblem. Subsequent Moscow Art Theatre productions of "Uncle Vanya" (staged 1899), "Three Sisters" (1901), and "The Cherry Orchard" (1904) solidified Chekhov's reputation as a master of new drama and imposed the worldwide influence of his plays and methods on world drama art.

In 1897 Chekhov's tuberculosis worsened. His health, already unstable, was significantly undermined by the Sakhalin expedition, and doctors insisted on his relocating to a warmer climate. So, he spent the winter of 1897–1898 in Nice and Paris. In May 1898 Chekhov returned to Russia and immediately left for Yalta, Crimea, where he bought a piece of land. In October of 1898 his father died, and Chekhov sold Melikhovo to move to Yalta permanently with his mother and sister. In Yalta he again performed intensive social work: he was elected member of the board of trustees of the women's gymnasium, he donated money for construction of the local school and supervised the opening of the first local biological research station. A tuberculosis victim himself, he never stopped providing medical supervision for anyone seeking his help. Not only did Chekhov solve people's health issues, but also assisted in straightening out naturalization papers for Jewish settlers.



At the turn of the 20th century Chekhov was already recognized nationwide and his many pieces were the subject of fierce discussion; in 1900 Chekhov was elected an honoured member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Science, but he voluntarily resigned to support another writer and friend, Maxim Gorky, after the latter was expelled from the Academy for his "political instability."

In the spring of 1900, the Moscow Art Theatre came with a tour to Crimea. The entire company spent days at Chekhov's estate. But already in July of that same year, Olga Knipper, the theatre's leading actress in all of Chekhov's plays, had come to visit him. Chekhov met Knipper in 1898 when the rehearsals at the theatre were only just starting, and had begun a correspondence with her. This July spent together sealed their fate as a future couple.

In the winter of 1900–1901 Chekhov undertook a health-improving

trip to France and Italy. When he came back in May, he and Olga Knipper were married. Almost immediately after the wedding Olga took him to the city of Ufa to receive koumiss treatments, said to be a very effective anti-tuberculosis remedy. Very weak and unwell, Chekhov kept on working and helping everyone out, as, in his own words, he "despised idleness, weakness, and listlessness of the soul."

Knipper acted in Moscow and had a very packed schedule, while Chekhov stayed in Yalta, the only place his sickness did not worsen. They both suffered their parting and their correspondence, touching and romantic, indicated their deep

mutual affection. In one of the letters Chekhov wrote, "If we are not together now, this is neither your, nor my fault – this is the devil who had inflicted this disease on me and this love of art on you."

In June 1904, "The Cherry Orchard" was staged, the last of Chekhov's creations. Chekhov's health declined and he set off for Badenweiler, Germany with his wife, not in hope of recovery, but just in an attempt to mitigate his suffering. On 2 July 1904, he died in a hotel at Badenweiler. His body was returned to Moscow for burial.

Over the years, none of Chekhov's plays have lost their acuteness. Works of art of many layers, they present every director with a chance to see something new and appealing; this is the reason why the plays are still incredibly popular with theatres worldwide. Chekhov's short stories are reprinted in several editions and are part of the Russian school curriculum.



# CHRISTMAS DISHES IN TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN CUISINE

Aaah, Russia. A land of snow, extreme weather temperatures and a vividly colourful history which spans over 1,000 years, Russia is also one of the most amazing places to spend Christmas.

Prior to the Russian revolution of 1917 and the fall of the Romanov dynasty that had ruled the country for over 300 years, Russia was loyal-ly Orthodox Christian. Under Soviet rule, however, atheism became the order of the day, and typically religious days in the calendar (such as New Year's Eve and New Year's Day) became eagerly-celebrated national secular holidays.

Nevertheless, not long after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the ghosts of Russian Christmas past made a rather heart-warming return, and the religious spirit quickly resumed, with customs and traditions becoming cherished again. So, Christmas Day is commonly observed on January 7 rather than December 25, due to the Orthodox Christian observance of the Julian Calendar.

This unique national history and the Orthodox influence means a Christmas in Russia is distinctly different from how countries in the west celebrate. If you

fancy celebrating Russian-style this year, be sure to try these delicious festive Christmas dishes in Russia – but don't read with an empty stomach, please.

## Olivier salad

A staple dish on any Russian Christmas dinner table, the Olivier Salad (also known as the Russian Salad) was first invented in the 1860s, by Belgian chef Lucien Olivier. As the owner of a Parisian-style restaurant in Moscow named the Hermitage,



Olivier's salad creation quickly became a much-loved favorite. It's made with diced boiled potatoes, eggs and carrots, pickles (or gherkins), peas, boiled meat and apples, and dressed with plenty of mayonnaise.

## Devilled eggs

The name sounds a little satanic, but these divine little beauties are an absolute genius of a dish and ridicu-



lously easy to make. The first record of this dish (also known as Russian eggs or stuffed/dressed eggs) was during the Roman era, where they boiled and seasoned eggs to serve as appetizers for wealthy members of the Roman society.

Today, devilled eggs are very popular across European and North American countries, and are often made by stuffing hard-boiled eggs with a mouth-watering mixture of other ingredients such as mayonnaise and mustard, spices, pickles, cheese, and meats or seafood – yum.

## Pirozhki (stuffed buns)

Pirozhki (correct pronunciation: piroshki) is a delicious and easy-to-bake must-have culinary delight on



every traditional Russian table. I personally have a weakness for anything stuffed, particularly a pastry stuffed with meat (\*drools\*), which is precisely what pirozhki is.

These tasty, cushiony buns – golden and crispy on the outside, soft and doughy on the inside – are stuffed with a generous amount of savory meat (usually beef) or a conservative vegetable filling consisting of mushrooms, mashed potatoes, onions and egg, or cabbage if your Orthodox Christian beliefs mean you are fasting.

If you have more of a sweet-tooth, then fear not, because pirozhki can also be stuffed with sweet, fruit fillings made from apples, apricots, cherries, and much more.

## Kulebyaka (Russian salmon pie)

Not all those observing the Lenten fast are allowed to eat fish, eggs and butter, however, for those who do, kulebyaka is a delicious option. It's a salmon turnover made with butter, eggs, dill, rice or buckwheat, onions and mushrooms, all neatly encased in a deliciously warm and crisp puff pastry.



Boasting a rather interesting history, it was created in the 1800s – at a time when fish was an important part of pre-revolutionary Russian cuisine, to replace meat during Russian Orthodox fast days.

## Kutya/sochivo

In many parts of the world, Christmas is a time of tight-knit unity and



family gatherings, and in the Russian Orthodox tradition, this is even more apparent. Kutya in Russia (also known as sochivo) is a sweet and fruity cereal, usually a concoction of wheatberries (or other grains such as rice, barley, or legumes) and honey, dried fruits, nuts, and sometimes spices or poppy seeds.

It's usually served as the first-course Christmas Eve pudding to celebrate the end of fasting days, and is eaten from a common dish, to keep with the family-oriented sentiments.

## Priyaniki (Russian spice/gingerbread cookies)

No Christmas is complete without ginger and cinnamon cookies dusted with soft icing sugar. In Russia, priyaniki are a wonderfully delicious and spicy batch of festive, home-baked cookies with a beautifully stamped decoration, often filled with jam and traditionally served with either tea or the traditional Russian wintertime beverage known as sbiten – a hot,



spicy and very sweet honey-based winter drink, and a popular favourite during the harsh, Russian winters.

## Kiev Cake

Kiev Cake is probably one of the most popular cakes in Slavic countries, and has been made in Kiev, Ukraine (hence its name) since December of 1956, by the Karl Marx Confectionary Factory.

The recipe of Kiev cake has gone through many changes over time. In the 1970s, less than a couple of decades since the first Kiev cake was made, bakers used a well-made protein-nut mixture, before experimenting with hazelnut and eventually peanuts and cashews. Because of the cashew nuts' expensive price, however, the factory went back to using hazelnuts, and today the cake mainly consists of Russian buttercream sandwiched between layers of sweet, hazelnut meringue... delightful.





# THE MOST ANTICIPATED BOOKS OF 2020

ASHLEY JOHNSON

With a new year (and new decade!) there comes a brand new wave of books to obsess over and we are excited to bring you our most anticipated books of 2020. With picks in all genres, these are the books readers everywhere will be loving in 2020.

## A Beginning at the End by Mike Chen

It's been six years since a pandemic rocked the world, wiping out most of the people on Earth. Those who survived are now living in a multitude of communities and doing their best to pick up the pieces of their lives. Among this population, however, there's a group of four people who will band together, face the ghosts from their pasts and prepare themselves for a rumored second outbreak.



## More Myself: A Journey by Alicia Keys

An intimate portrayal, Alicia Keys shares her private story. From her relationship with her father, romantic revelations, her career and the difficult expectations of 'female perfection,' she bares it all in this exploration of who she really is. She candidly recounts her



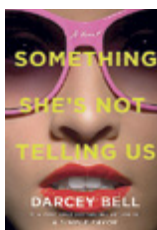
story and shares how she rediscovered herself and found her truth.

## Something She's Not Telling Us by Darcey Bell

Charlotte's life is as close to perfect as anyone's life can be. But when her brother brings home his new girlfriend to meet the family, everything changes. Before Charlotte can nail down what it is about Ruth that she doesn't like, her daughter mysteriously goes missing. Did Ruth take Daisy and what does that mean for these two women who have been brought together by a man they both love?

## Darling Rose Gold by Stephanie Wrobel

Rose Gold Watts has lived all her 18 years convinced by her mother Patty that she is ill. Now she is finally free from her mother's hold, and of the lies she told about her health. After Rose testifies against Patty for her wrongdoing, she goes to prison for five years. When she is released with nowhere to



go, Rose invites her mother into her home as a sign of forgiveness. But secretly, Rose has not forgiven her mother and is ready to seek revenge.

## The Glass Hotel by Emily St. John Mandel

The award-winning author of Station Eleven is back in 2020 with a new thriller that will have you obsessively turning the pages. Vincent once worked as a bartender at Hotel Caiette where she found a warning that read, "Why don't you swallow broken glass." A year after the incident, Vincent has married Alkaitis, the hotel's owner, who continues to be involved in dangerous business deals. But then everything crashes down and Vincent does her best to leave the wreckage behind... until years later when she boards a ship and is never seen again.

## The Other Mrs. by Mary Kubica

Sadie and Will are ready for a new start when they move from Chicago to a small east coast town. But their lives soon become a nightmare when their neighbor is murdered and Sadie worries that there's a killer on the loose. The crime, combined with the fact that their home is terribly creepy,

makes this a thrilling and terrifying read.

## Weather by Jenny Offill

As both a librarian and a fake shrink, Lizzie Benson is plenty busy attending to her library and the damaged people in her life. Just when she thinks she can't take on anything more, she is approached by her former mentor, a famous podcaster, who needs help answering her fan mail. As the world changes around her, she soon realizes just how unprepared and inexperienced she is to take on all aspects of her life, including taking care of those she loves.

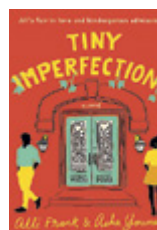
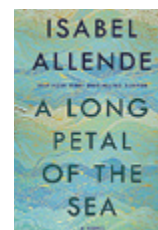


## Little Secrets by Jennifer Hillier

College sweethearts Marin and Derek seemingly lead the perfect life. But everything changes in an instant when their son Sebastian is taken. A year later, the case to find young Sebastian has gone cold, forcing Marin to hire a private investigator to make sure his case gets the attention it deserves. While the P.I. doesn't immediately find more information on Sebastian, he does learn that Derek is having an affair. Armed with this heart-breaking knowledge, Marin sets out on a mission to make sure her husband's mistress goes away for good.

## The Herd by Andrea Bartz

Katie Bradley has just arrived back in New York after a failed research trip. Luckily for Katie, her sister is best friends with Eleanor who owns the most exclusive and elite women-only



co-working space in the city. Katie starts to think that Eleanor could be the subject of her next book. But just when Eleanor is getting ready to announce big news about her company, she goes missing. Because the police think there was foul play involved, everyone becomes a suspect and Katie and her sister are thrown into a dangerous case that will have a severe outcome.

## A Long Petal of the Sea by Isabel Allende

Young, pregnant and widowed, Roser has just been forced out of her home in 1930s Spain. It's on a treacherous trip over the mountains to the French border that she must marry the brother of her late lover in order to survive. Escaping to Chile, the two begin their life together as they dream about their future. A Long Petal of the Sea beautifully captures heartbreak, unexpected love and sacrifice.

## Long Bright River by Liz Moore

Sisters Kacey and Mickey live completely separate lives in an opioid-ridden neighbourhood in Philadelphia. But everything changes when Kacey goes missing and Mickey fears that her disappearance has something to do with the string of murders that are taking place in her area. Doing her best to track down her sister and the killer, Mickey will do whatever it takes to get justice for her sister and her neighbourhood.

## Lady Clementine by Marie Benedict

Clementine Churchill never let herself be defined by her husband and his success. From saving his life at a train station in 1909 to being an influential force during World War I and II, she was the best wife and comrade Winston could ask for. In Lady Clementine, the New York Times bestselling author of The Only Woman in the Room returns with a story of an ambitious woman who faced darkness in many forms, never flinching when things got difficult and grim.

## The Sun Down Motel by Simone St. James

In 1982, Viv Delaney took a job at the Sun Down Motel in Fell, New York to pay for her eventual move to the Big Apple. But the motel is unsettling and eerie, and Viv disappears without a trace. Thirty years later, Viv's niece Carly sets out to find out the truth about her aunt's disappearance.

## Tiny Imperfections by Alli Frank and Asha Youmans

Josie Bordelon was once a beloved model and the vision of perfection to everyone who knew her. But now at 39, she spends her days as the director of admissions at one of the best private schools in San Francisco. She also does her best to ensure that her daughter Etta doesn't make the same mistakes she once did. As Josie considers getting back in the dating game and her daughter pursues her ballet dreams, the two come to learn that history has a funny way of repeating itself.



# THE BEST MOVIES COMING OUT IN 2020

NICOLE POMARICO

As one decade ends and another begins, we have a lot to look forward to – especially when it comes to movies. Not only are there a bunch of highly anticipated original films coming out, but there are also sequels from everyone's fav franchises in the works. I mean, it looks like 2020 is the year we finally get another Legally Blonde movie. What a way to kick off the new decade!

Here are the movies you definitely need to add to your calendar for the year ahead. Some of them aren't coming out for months, but it's going to be a big year for films.

## Birds of Prey

Set to hit theatres on February 7, Birds of Prey is the next chapter in the story of Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie). Now that she's on her own,



she's teaming up with Black Canary, Huntress, and Renee Montoya. Who needs the Joker?

## Mulan

Because who isn't ready for another live action Disney movie? Liu Yifei stars in this new retelling of Mulan. This time, the movie isn't quite going back to its more musical roots (which sadly means there will be no updated version of "I'll Make a Man Out of You") while honouring the Chinese culture that inspired the original film. Mulan is out March 27.

## Black Widow

Sure, Avengers: Endgame is in the past, but that doesn't mean there aren't still stories to tell when



it comes to our favourite Marvel heroes. In Black Widow, Scarlett Johansson reprises her role as Natasha Romanoff in her very own movie, which takes place after Captain America: Civil War. The movie hits theatres May 1.

## Minions 2: The Rise of Gru

No matter how much success the animation studio has with Dr. Seuss adaptations and funny animal franchises, Illumination will always be the house that Minions built, and they aren't likely to forget it any time soon. The little yellow mischief-makers have dominated the box office since Despicable Me debuted in 2010, and after ten years, two sequels, and their own spin-off, the characters will get their second chance at leading their own big-screen outing.



Minions 2 was pretty much a given after the first film took over theaters and toy stores everywhere, but Illumination has proven throughout the Despicable Me franchise that there's still a lot creativity behind this juggernaut. It still remains to be seen what the banana-loving little guys will be up to in their standalone sequel, but the first movie promised a glimpse at their early adventures with a young Gru. We have faith that whatever the studio comes up with will be fun for the whole family.

## Dolittle

Dr. Dolittle is a character with a weird history. The physician who could talk with animals was created by author Hugh Lofting in letters written home to his children from the trenches of World War I. The charac-



ter would go on to become the star of a series of popular children's books, set in Victorian England and published from the 1920s through the '50s.

A number of adaptations appeared over the following decades, including cartoons, radio plays, stage productions, and a lavish 1967 movie musical starring Rex Harrison. Upon hearing the title, however, modern audiences will

probably think of the 1998 movie starring Eddie Murphy, which became something of a franchise all its own, spawning such intriguingly titled direct-to-DVD sequels as Tail to the Chief. Now, the good doctor is returning to the big screen in the form of Robert Downey Jr. The animal cast will be voiced by a star-studded line-up that includes Rami Malek, John Cena, Emma Thompson, Octavia Spencer, Tom Holland, Selena Gomez, and Ralph Fiennes.

## Onward

On March 6, 2020, Pixar's Onward hits theaters. Onward is set in a fantasy suburbia and follows two elf brothers (voiced by Tom Holland and Chris Pratt) as they set out into the world in search of magic that will allow them to spend a day with their dead father. Cue the heavy sobbing.

Onward is a completely new entry to the Pixar canon (with the exception of 2017's Coco, the studio has been devoted to sequels in recent years), so its imaginative world promises to be like nothing we've seen from them so far. And judging by the film's first teaser trailer – which features dozens of mythical creatures, from pet dragons to trash-eating unicorns – there will be plenty to explore.

Onward is directed by Dan Scanlon, who helmed 2013's Monsters University and has worked on the senior creative team for Brave, Inside Out, Coco, and Toy Story 4. It's a personal project for him – he told the

audience at D23 that the story was inspired by his own personal search for answers regarding his father, who passed away when he was a year old.

## Legally Blonde 3

Nearly two decades after we first saw charming, idealistic law student Elle Woods demonstrate the perfect bend and snap, Reese Witherspoon is set to reprise one of the biggest roles of her career with Legally Blonde 3. According to Deadline, Witherspoon won't be the only familiar face returning for the threequel – it seems as though most of the original film's creative team has signed on as well.

Currently, not a whole lot is known about the film. It's yet to secure a director, and specific plot details are being kept under wraps (whether or not that spells doom for its targeted May 2020 release date, we'll wait and see). Rumor has it that Legally Blonde 3 will be in line with the two previous movies, in that it will center on Elle Woods' ability to overcome adversity through optimism, ingenuity, and sheer determination. The idea with this one is that it will most likely focus on female empowerment, which, as Deadline points out, will "draw back in the audience that grew up with the original film and find a new global audience."





# BEST HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS 2020

OLIVIA BLAIR

**L**ike to beat the crowds? Stay ahead of this year's travel trends with our list of the best holiday destinations for 2020.

## Bhutan

**Why for 2020:** Topping 'Best in Travel for 2020' is the kingdom of Bhutan. As well as its rich culture and history, the country has been awarded the number one spot because it is the only carbon-negative

country in the world and set to be the first fully organic nation by next year. Taking its surroundings into consideration, Bhutan also operates a tourist fee to curb any negative effects of tourism, charging around £195 per day for visitors.

**Top Tips:** Any visit to Bhutan must be organised through an authorised travel agent in advance, so that in itself can be handy for tips. Lonely Planet recommends mountain hikes through the monastery-laden hills, witnessing ancient Buddhist tradi-

tions and basking in the country's natural beauty all while enjoying what nature has to offer, unspoiled an oversaturation of tourism.

## Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

**Why for 2020:** Next year, the city will be the host for the Democrat National Convention (DNC) where the party will select its nominees for President and Vice President to take on Trump in the 2020 elections,



bringing renewed focus to the city. This is one of the reasons, according to Airbnb, why there has been a whopping 729% year-on-year increase in people searching for accommodation in the city.

**Top tips:** The booking platform says the city's impressive bar and restaurant scene often 'slips under the radar' but should not be overlooked. Milwaukee is also home to cultural attractions like the city's art museum and sits on the shores of Lake Michi-

gan so offers plenty of opportunities for water sports. For avid cyclists, the city offers 105 miles of scenic bike lanes with plenty of rental stores to pick up a bicycle too.

## Salzburg, Austria

**Why for 2020:** The Alpine City has been ranked the best city to visit in the world for 2020 by Lonely Planet, largely due to the centenary of its famous annual festival taking place in July-August.



For this special occasion, there'll be dedicated exhibitions and events, from concerts and operas to readings.

**Top tips:** As the birthplace of Mozart and the backdrop for The Sound of Music, there's plenty of museums and buildings dedicated to the city's rich cultural

history. Visit the Mozart museum, the composer's birthplace and take part in a bike tour retracing the steps of the hit musical. Lonely Planet also recommends marvelling at the medieval fortress on the hills and striding alongside the Salzach river.

## Tokyo, Japan

**Why for 2020:** Though there's arguably been buzz over Japan's capi-



tal city in 2019, as it has hosted the rugby world cup, there's going to be an even bigger spotlight on the city next year when it is home to the 2020 summer Olympics.

**Top tips:** There's so much to do in Tokyo, from the historic temples like Sensō-ji and Meiji-jingu to the bustling modern cities and buildings including the Skytree and Tower to the instantly recognisable Shibuya crossing. It's also home to incredible food (if you like matcha, you're in for a treat) and great karaoke.

## Nicaragua

**Why for 2020:** After a couple of years of political unrest in the country, the foreign office dropped its travel restrictions for UK visitors (it previously advised against all but essential travel to the central American country) in February 2019.

While the FCO still advises travellers exercise caution as 'the situation is now quieter but remains unpre-



dictable', the experts at Original Travel say this change in FCO guidance may encourage more people to visit the country.

**Top tips:** As the tour guides advise, 'Nicaragua has everything that we love so much about Costa Rica, but with fewer tourists and more space to get off the beaten track.' They recommend heading to the city of Granada which is set on the shores of Lake Nicaragua and lined with pastel coloured baroque buildings. For the adrenaline junkies, head to Omitabe island where you can scale one of the two volcanoes.

## Istanbul, Turkey

**Why for 2020:** Next year, the Champions League Final will be held in the Turkish city in May, putting the destination under the spotlight again, say Expedia's travel experts.

**Top Tips:** Tick off a visit to the awe-inspiring Blue Mosque, take a boat ride across the Bosphorus river,





indulge in a spot of vintage shopping and then head to a rooftop restaurant for views across the city where you'll also likely experience the call to prayer which vibrates across the city.

### Jeju Island, South Korea

**Why for 2020:** The experts have scouted out South Korea and, in particular, spots on Jeju Island like Seogwipo as an emerging destination to visit next year.

**Top Tips:** Jeju island is an area of natural beauty with a volcanic coast-



line and impressive waterfalls like Jeonbang (pictured) and Cheonji-yon Falls. A destination well suited to the active traveller, activities on offer include hiking up Mount Hallasan, scuba diving, and swimming is the island's second largest city, Seogwipo. Booking.com also recommends Olle Market for street food and fresh produce and downtown Seogwipo for traditional Korean restaurants.

### Tbilisi, Georgia

**Why for 2020:** According to trend forecaster's WGSN, Georgia – and specifically the capital Tbilisi – are likely to be big for 2020. Joe McDonnell, head of WGSN insight, puts this down to a number of factors including the increasing notoriety of



Tbilisi Fashion Week (and the street style that comes with it), night-clubs attracting top electronic talent, coupled 'with a burgeoning art scene and swelling youth movement'.

**Top Tips:** It's accessible from London in just over four hours, which is ideal. Travel experts at TTC add that Tbilisi is 'fast becoming one of the coolest cities on the continent and won't stay so secret for long'. They suggest also venturing beyond the capital to visit snow-capped mountains, taste the local wine and take part in a Georgian bread making class.

### Edinburgh, Scotland

**Why in 2020:** The Scottish capital will be getting a luxury update in 2020 when the Red Carnation Hotels

group renovates 100 Princes Street, opening a sister hotel to London's Hotel 41. The hotel, the group's first in Scotland, will boast views of Edinburgh Castle and will serve as an 'exclusive retreat' on the city's famous street.

**Top tips:** Edinburgh is a beautiful city with must-sees including the aforementioned castle (touring it with an audio guide is recommended). Climb up to Arthur's Seat for unparalleled views of the city, stroll through the cobbled streets of the



Old Town and, at night, experience the atmosphere of places like The Dome, The Witchery and The Outsider restaurants. Head to the city in August for the world-famous Fringe festival if, comedy and drama are your thing.

### Krakow, Poland

**Why for 2020:** Next year marks a poignant anniversary for the museum of Auschwitz – 70 years since the Nazi concentration camp was liberated. Commemorated at the end of January, it is likely to see hundreds of people come to pay their respects. The city of Krakow is just an hour and a half away from the museum.



**Top tips:** In Krakow, itself, there's a lot to explore. The Main Square is a beautiful central location as is the Cloth market hall, St Mary's Basilica and Wawel Castle. The city has also garnered a reputation for its exciting nightlife complete with plenty of bars and clubs.

### Bilbao, Spain

**Why in 2020:** Ever since winning the European City of the Year title in 2018, Bilbao has been a destination to watch. Next summer, the city will be one of 12 European cities to host

the UEFA Euros competition which will bring Bilbao both visitors and attention aplenty. All this explains why it's Airbnb's second highest trending destination for 2020, with a YOY increase of 402%.

**Top tips:** Take a wander down the Ria de Bilbao (you can also take boat rides down the actual river) and walk over the many famous bridges the Basque city has to offer. Bilbao is home to many museums, including



the world-famous Guggenheim and Fine Arts museum. Visit one of the many pintxos small plates tapas bars for scrumptious traditional food and if views are your thing, an old-fashioned cable railway takes you up to Mount Artxanda for panoramic views of the city.

### Aruba

**Why for 2020:** Ranked fourth on Lonely Planet's Best in Travel guide, for countries, is the Caribbean nation of Aruba. For those considering the environment and sustainability for their 2020 holiday, Aruba could well be the choice for you. It's currently a testing



hub for other destinations' renewable energy solutions and is working to ban single-use plastics and reef-harming sunscreens next year.

**Top tips:** The pictures of the island speak for themselves. Think white beaches, clear blue waters and pink sunsets, so if it's a paradise destination you're after, Aruba is your place. Lonely Planet also recommends the southern hub of San Nicolas, aka the Sunrise City, which is experiencing a cultural revival in the form of street art, pop-ups and festivals.

### Romania

**Why for 2020:** According to Airbnb, interest in visiting the eastern European country is up 298% YoY. This might be due to the country's easy access from the UK, the fact it's pretty affordable or, for those considering

the environment when travelling, its positions 15th in the world for eco-system vitality.

**Top tips:** The charming capital of Bucharest (which will also be a hot city for the Euros) has a lot to offer, from grand buildings – like the parliament palace built by former dictator Ceausescu – to the brilliant restaurants and buzzing nightlife. From the city, you can head down the coast



to the Black Sea beach resort of Mamaia for a spot of sunshine or up to the picturesque mountains and forests. Romania is full of variety and has something to offer for everyone.

### Washington DC, USA

**Why for 2020:** There are big things happening in the US capital next year. From around the middle of the year until November, the city will be abuzz with the 2020 presidential election – which will see Trump try to keep his seat in the Oval office against a Democrat candidate.

Secondly, 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment,



which saw the right to vote extended to women. Lonely Planet has ranked the city second on its' Best in Travel list largely for this reason, explaining that a range of museums will host exhibitions to tell the story of the American women's suffrage movement.

**Top tips:** Of course, there are the land marks: The White House, Lincoln Memorial, Capitol building, Washington Monument, Smithsonian Institute, the list goes on. The city also has a thriving food scene, including the Union Market, and in the spring months, beautiful natural cherry blossom lines the streets.





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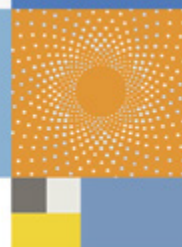


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LEGAL ADVICE

# UK IMMIGRATION – WHAT MIGHT BE EXPECTED IN 2020

MERIAM ALTAF

Each year, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) make changes and updates to the UK's immigration system and rules. Last year has brought a variety of changes interrelated with politics and immigration. The most significant ones relate to Tier 1, Tier 2, EU Settlement Scheme and introduction of Start – Up and Innovator visas.

2020 promises to bring new immigration developments in relation to international students, graduates, new business opportunities and inevitably higher application fees and other costs related to the immigration applications. After January 2020, it is very likely that the current regulations concerning EU nationals in the UK, as comprised in Appendix EU to the Immigration Rules, will become settled law.

A new graduate immigration route will be opened to international students, applicable to those entering the UK in 2020–21. This category will allow students to remain in the UK for up to 2 years after graduation, and, although it will not lead to indefinite leave to remain on its own, it will provide an opportunity for graduates to carefully consider and plan their career in the UK. It should be noted that currently graduates have only 4 months after their graduation to find employment in the UK, this short time-limit resulting in a majority of students either applying for a higher education course or coming back to their home countries.

Since the UK is about to exit the EU, new provisions and regulations are coming into place concerning EU nationals and businesses in the UK. Although



these provisions are not written in stone yet, businesses which export goods between the UK and EU need to be clear on the role they take in the supply chain and consequent VAT implications. Countries such as The Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Germany have already adopted measures to minimise the direct tax impact of Brexit for domestic taxpayers. The aim of the provisions is to prevent legal disadvantages for taxpayers and businesses arising solely as a result of Brexit in connection with the EU and the UK. Further developments with regards to the tax and trade agreements should be coming this year.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that a special focus will be placed on the International Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) students and graduates coming to the UK. The most relevant visas which STEM graduates should consider are Tier 1

Highly Skilled migrants, Tier 2 skilled workers (shortage occupation list), Tier 4 student and Start-Up visas. Opportunities around STEM workforce are expected to grow this year regardless of the applicants' nationality.

It appears that the immigration to the UK will become more relaxed in this year. The new positive developments in relation to post-study work visa, settlement scheme, and STEM subjects will create successful opportunities for talented and bright people carrying an economical and cultural developments along with them.



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