

Here is a brief report on Math in Moscow from Emma Smith, Class of 2004, who attended this program in Spring 2004. Email Emma at: [emmas@math.uchicago.edu](mailto:emmas@math.uchicago.edu)

**Living conditions:** We were placed in the 'international' dormitory of Moscow State University. The view from my room was incredible and the males mostly had suitemates in the same program. As there were few females, I had a suitemate who was studying Russian in another program. The suites consisted of two small single rooms (lockable) with a shared entry, bathroom, and shower along with an exterior door lockable with a different key. There was a kitchen on each floor and the program provided us with a pot, an electric teakettle, and a washbasin. There was an old woman living on each floor who could be asked for things like lightbulbs and clean sheets were provided periodically. Mail was placed on a table on the first floor where there was also an entrance guard who would check residency or guest passes. There was a cafeteria in the main building that served three meals a day as well as a cafeteria at school that served lunch on weekdays. There were also multiple shops in the main building and several markets on the route to school. Although this is not in the official information, if a student requests, the program will find a Russian host family for them.

**Academics:** The only classes offered were math, Russian language, Russian literature, and either Russian history or the history of math and science. I took the history of math and science, Russian I, homological algebra, algebraic geometry, and representation theory. The history class was more informal than any classes at MIT and the only work outside of attending class was a final paper and a presentation. The language class was an immense amount of work. On the basis of that one semester class, I successfully went on to 2nd year Russian when I started graduate school at the University of Chicago. The math classes were generally excellent. Most of the professors have written their own textbooks for the classes which can be found at very good prices in the school bookstore. The professors' English was excellent although they were not particularly accommodating to the differing backgrounds of the students. (Perhaps they were more so in the lower level classes.) Coming from MIT as a senior, I was in good shape for most of my classes and spent a fair amount of time helping others. I especially enjoyed Alexei Gorodontsev's homological algebra class. We began at the beginning with commutative diagrams and short exact sequences and worked up to the Serre spectral sequence building lots of tools along the way.

**Extracurricular:** The program organized a tour of Moscow, a tour of St. Petersburg, and a tour of two "ancient Russian towns" Vladimir and Suzdal. We also had a walking tour of points of interest led by the history professor. We were living close enough to the center of Moscow that getting around was very easy, even with minimal Russian, although knowing more would allow greater freedom. As students, we were given Russian student IDs which often get you very good entrance prices, at least when paired with passable Russian and sometimes even without. In addition to the organized trips, I went to St. Petersburg again with a visiting friend and I went to Riga, Latvia, during the weekend they joined the EU with several classmates.