

FROM MOSCOW WITH LOVE

1997-1999

AMAZING

IN THE BEGINNING

Russia was from the very beginning pure excitement. I was at first scared, because I left France and my job and apartment in less than 2 weeks! To end up living in a hotel called Budapest (premonition to what will be one of the countries I would live in?), in a city where I only had time to learn how to read in Cyrillic without understanding a single word of what I was reading, was pretty challenging! Life in Moscow was fast and furious! I got used very quickly to use the metro, got lost a couple of times, especially at the very beginning when I thought I had a great reading proficiency! I spent few week-ends alone, summer time is an opportunity to discover the city and the outdoor activities: walks in the parks, boat ride on the Moscva, shashlik at the Dacha with colleagues and friends. When my husband finally got his job and moved to Moscow, we settled into our apartment: 150m² for the 2 of us after living in a 23m² studio made me feel like a super queen! And I realized how important it was in Moscow to have a nice and cozy place when on September 27th it started snowing!!

I have always felt very happy and privileged to be in Moscow and my work was full on: working in advertising in the late 90's was extraordinary demanding, though fulfilling. Russia was new to so many things, and I had highly demanding international clients, my

team was young and eager to learn, we had an amazing time, through ups and downs, but mostly I remember the connection with people, the enthusiasm of my Russian team and their eager to always do more and better.

Life in Moscow offered fewer outing options than today. I got lucky to go back to Russia last year in 2019 and was puzzled how the city has bloomed. In 1997, the most amazing things I did was the Bolshoy and the Kremlin theatre: so many amazing ballets, music concerts, I never got tired of it. Going to the Bolshoy or any music recitals or dance performances is a way to discover Russia and the Russians. There was almost no restaurants, and no supermarket. I had in my container over 200 boxes of Barilla pasta boxes and Pesto sauce! And each trip back to France we would bring back some cheese that I will freeze. There was very little to buy at that time, fruits and vegetables weren't top quality, and I can't recall buying meat even once! I used to buy fish, once a week, at this shop called "Ribu" (fish in Russian). For nearly 2 years every week I went to this shop and not even once the lady greeted me! "welcome to Russia!!". Despite an obvious "coldness" from the locals, I've learned that you should never judge a book by its cover, and this is so true when it comes to the Russian people! They might seem cold from the outside, but so warm and welcoming from the inside.

I remember week-ends going to the Dacha, sharing shashlic and vodka!

We took few trips, around Moscow, somehow challenging at that time as the road asphalt wasn't always in top conditions. Staying at the hotel was requiring a lot of check points: at the reception, then once at your floor a lady will make sure that you were the right people, and only the number of people entitled to stay in the room. The whole experience was very "communist time", the gap

between Moscow and the outside circle of the city was tremendous.

We took during our life in Moscow a trip to Cuba and a trip to Uzbekistan. Amazing memories there too... End of 1999 arrived quickly so was our time in beautiful Moscow... There are in the world places where you know you belong. Your heart tells you that somehow, right here, right there, this is your place. I do not know if I have other connections to Russia and its amazing culture other than my name (Nadiejda is Nadia=Hope) but I know that Russia will always be in my heart...

