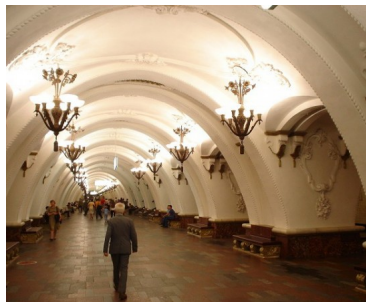


# MOSCOW METRO: ATTRACTION FOR HISTORY LOVERS



The Moscow Metro is the second most heavily used subway system in the world. Although modernized, even today the metro reflects the long history not only of the underground tunnels but of the whole Russian capital as well.

The Moscow subway is the backbone of the city's transport. Approximately nine million people use it every working day and some seven million people use it during weekends. More than 500 trains go 10 thousand times through 180 stations each day. The trains come and go in 90 seconds intervals. **As such it is the world's second most heavily used metro system after the Tokyo's twin subway.**

According to the manager of Moscow's subway, Dimitrij Gajev, the crisis has caused a drop in the number of passengers of eight per cent. Nevertheless, some of the lines were recently operating at 140 per cent of their capacity so even now the subway transports approximately 20 per cent passengers more than it should, reported Czech Press Agency

The subway was built already in 1930s to alleviate the deteriorating transportation situation in the city. Traffic jams were paralyzing Moscow and everything even worsened with the massive arrival of refugees from the countryside in 20s and 30s. After a total collapse of the transport system in 1931, the government decided to build the subway originally named after Lazar Kaganovich - Stalin's right hand and the ruler of Moscow

**The first train tested the subway on 4th February 1935 and the subway itself was opened to the public in May.** However, during the WWII, Russians decided to blow the subway up as the Nazis were approaching the city in 1941. Explosives were planted and people from the office buildings above the metro evacuated. In the end, however, Stalin decided to defend the city and the subway system survived. During the fights, the tunnels were used as a bomb shelter and as an office of the government. As soon as the attacks ended the construction of the subway continued.

After Stalin's death, Russians changed the subway's name from Kaganich's to Lenin's and Stalin's portraits disappeared. Nevertheless, after a recent reconstruction, words of the Soviet anthem praising Stalin reappeared. **Today, called simply the Moscow Metro, the subway serves as a witness of the city's tumultuous history.** For instance, besides the marks of the previous regime you can admire here several marble benches from the Cathedral of Christ the Savior blown up in the 1930s. Tourists can also look forward to the ornate design of many of the metro stations, which contain outstanding examples of socialist realist art. It is no wonder that the subway may seem to some visitors as a museum with a 26-rouble entrance fee.

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