

The City of Kirov, Kirov Region, Russian Federation

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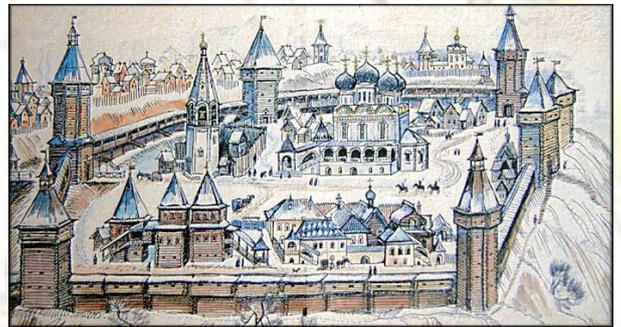


The 7th VGIK International Summer School



Kirov is widely known as one of the oldest historic cities of the Russian Federation, which has a vast cultural heritage, including architectural monuments, museums, parks, and other places of interest. The city lies on the banks of the picturesque Vyatka river. Its population amounts to 487 thousand people, whereas the territory of the city makes up 757 km².

In the course of Kirov's history various landmarks and the periods of Russian history may be observed. The former name of the city – Vyatka, had been tracked since 1374. Yet, it wasn't the first time for the city to change its name, later on, in 1457, to be more precise, it was renamed Khlynov, after the eponymous Khlynovitsa river.



The current name of the city was adopted in 1934, after Sergey Kirov, a prominent Bolshevik leader back in the Soviet Union time.



The origins of Kirov's coat of arms may be of interest, for it dates back to 1497 and refers to the most ancient Russian emblems. The first person to put it on his state seal was Ivan IV the Terrible, who ruled the country in those times.



In 1781 the coat of arms was ratified by Catherine the Great, the image itself denotes the main occupation of the local population, namely, hunting; the cloud is a symbol of the Divine Providence; the crux represents homeland defense.

Naturally, one could barely comprise the great variety of local arts and crafts of Vyatka. Up to nowadays there remain and keep developing the Dymkovo toy (also known as the Vyatka toy), the fine Vyatka lace, wood painting and carving, flax embroidery, decorative ironwork, along with casting.



The Dymkovo handicraft emerged in the XV century. In ancient times artisans of the Dymkovskaya sloboda, a village near Vyatka, fashioned and molded clay figurines of fine ladies with umbrellas in their hands, apple-cheeked gentlemen, horses, bears, deer, ducks and roosters. Almost all of them are pennywhistles painted in bright strips and lines, circles and dots, resembling flowers. Although the toys are quite plain, the painting gives them certain elegance. Scarlet, blue, green, yellow, and orange colours glint on the white surface.

The Vyatka region is largely famous thanks to the renowned names of Russian writers and painters, who used to dwell and work here.



The history of the city is closely bound up with the name of Alexander Grin, a prolific Russian writer (“Scarlet sails”, “She who runs on the waves”). The only museum dedicated to the writer was established in Kirov in 1980.



Besides, the city served as a place of exile for another prominent Russian author and satirist, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin. The house where the writer stayed during the exile transformed into a museum familiarizes the visitors with the author’s work, focusing on the period he spent in Vyatka.

It should be mentioned, however, that the Vyatka region has been known as a place of political exile since Boris Godunov, the Russian tsar, who used to send the “political undesirables” away to these places.



At the beginning of the XIX century Vyatka assumed an air of an exile, backwater place. In 1938 one of the largest Russia's forced labor camps called Vyatlag was based in the Vyatka region. This camp was notorious for its extremely severe life conditions, the average number of prisoners could be estimated by 15-20 thousands. From the very first days of World War II (the Great Patriotic War) the key role of the camp was confined to providing defense plants with timber. Oddly enough, there was a drama theater on the Vyatlag territory, its activity was covered in a documentary film, directed by Tatiana Halezova. You can see a still from this film in the picture.

At the turn of the XIX – XX centuries Vyatka housed a number of outstanding painters, the development and promotion of arts in the region came first with the celebrities including the Vasnetsov brothers, famous artists who came up with the idea of the Vyatka Art Museum. The core of the collection is constituted by works of the famous Russians artists such as Karl Bryullov, Fyodor Vasilyev, Ivan Shishkin, Isaac Levitan, along with masterpieces of different West European schools of art. The new building of the museum was opened in 1992. At the same time, a bronze monument of the Vasnetsov brothers designed by Yury Orehov was erected in front of the building.



Kirov – a city located on the seven hills, striking with a magnificent silhouette of its cultural architectural complexes – managed to keep both the historic area and landscape.



One of the oldest cultural monuments in Kirov is a majestic architectural complex of the St. Tryphon's Monastery with its Dormition Cathedral, which is situated on the Vyatka river bank at quite a picturesque place. The monastery belongs to the most ancient churches of the region.



In 1903 a Warsaw architect Alexander Voytsehovsky designed the Alexander Catholic church. For nearly half of a century the church was lost in its original function, it was only in 1989 that the former majestic look of the building was restored.

The mansion of the merchant Tikhon Bulychev appears to be a true treasure of the city. No wonder, for its castle-like Neo-Gothic exterior implemented with strait double-headed eagles on the front and loosely placed corner tower enclosed in an open-work iron fence cannot but catch a passenger-by's eye. However, the outside decorations fade in comparison with a truly majestic interior, which was regarded as one of the best at that time due to its unique mosaic floors, wide staircases, and lifts.



The oldest park of Kirov and one of the best landscape gardening artworks is Alexander's Garden, opened in 1835 to commemorate the visit of the Russian Emperor Alexander I to Vyatka. Today it is one the most beautiful city parks, there one may take a walk along its lanes, being smitten with the beautiful sight of the Vyatka river. Both the garden gates and the fence were elaborated in accordance with the architect Vitberg's project, whereas Tikhonov's drafts underlie the central building and riverside rotunda.



Having taken a stroll around Kirov's museums, parks, and exhibitions you will discover a great number of gripping and exciting facts, which become a powerful source of new creative ideas and endeavours!

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