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The Soviet state dedicated extensive resources to the Olympic Village, creating shops, a disco and cafeterias with a bounty of meat and produce ordinary citizens had never seen

moscow walks

# Olympic memories

The spirit of the 1980 Games lives on in southwest Moscow's Olympic Village

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**As construction for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi escalates, check out a fascinating reminder of Games past: Moscow's Olympic Village from 1980. Located just off Michurinsky Prospekt, it was designed as a regular neighbor-**

for granted – but the average Soviet citizen has never known.”

After the 1980 Games some buildings were put to different uses, such as the cultural center (now the Vladimir Nazarov Theater) and administrative building (today's Museum of the Defense of Moscow); others, like the sports complex and the apartments,

wooden Misha bear stood at the entrance to the security-fortified village. More recently, Misha has been replaced as a marker by the looming multicolored poles around the Festival shopping center. After arriving at the bus stop, head straight back through the small park towards the poles, then turn right onto Olimpiyskaya Derevnya

#### 4. Concert hall (currently the Vladimir Nazarov State Theater of National Art)

*Olimpiiskaya Derevnya Ulitsa 1*  
The yellow building across from the shopping center served as the Olympic village's concert hall and cultural center. Today it's occupied by the Vladimir Nazarov Theater, a

defeat of the Nazi attempt to capture the capital from October 1941 to January 1942. Displays trace Hitler's unsuccessful “Operation Typhoon” through period posters, photographs, uniforms and military equipment. Even if you don't check out the museum, walk around the old artillery sitting outside, which double as jungle gyms



**Olympics in Sochi escalates, check out a fascinating reminder of Games past: Moscow's Olympic Village from 1980. Located just off Michurinsky Prospekt, it was designed as a regular neighborhood complete with medical clinics, kindergartens and 18 apartment buildings.**

However, it could never be mistaken for just another housing development: Olympic correspondent David K. Willis, of the Christian Science Monitor, at the time expressed awe at the "collection of colorful shops, fine restaurants, comfortable apartment buildings, and convenient personal services that the West takes

uses, such as the cultural center (now the Vladimir Nazarov Theater) and administrative building (today's Museum of the Defense of Moscow); others, like the sports complex and the apartments, remain unchanged. To get to the Olympic Village, take the metro to Yugo-Zapadnaya. Exit left out of the last train from the center, then take a left in the underground passage. Board marshrutka 162 (or bus 227) and ride one stop to "Olimpiiskaya Derevnnya."

### 1. Olympic plaque

*Olimpiiskaya Derevnnya Ulitsa 3*  
During the games, a colossal



The Museum of the Defense of Moscow displays World War II artillery

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looming multicolored poles around the Festival shopping center. After arriving at the bus stop, head straight back through the small park towards the poles, then turn right onto Olimpiyskaya Derevnnya Ulitsa. Several meters down, you'll reach a granite memorial plaque that's the first sign of the original Olympic village.

### 2. Former shops, cafeterias and disco

*Olimpiiskaya Derevnnya Ulitsa 4*  
Walk to the shop-lined concrete square across the street. This was the epicenter of the village's social life, complete with shops, a disco and cafes. Four cafeterias served about 1,000 people each, and brimmed with what Willis called "an array of meat, tomatoes, apples, fish, lettuce, cucumbers, spring onions, fruit juices, soup, and soft drinks that would make a Muscovite gasp – and a man from Toms or Tula weep." The overgrown grass in the square's center used to sport a fountain. Much of the building is now occupied by the Lyuks mall, which has a surprisingly sleek renovated interior and an upscale vibe (and the unfriendly security guards to prove it).

### 3. Sports complex

*Olimpiiskaya Derevnnya Ulitsa 2*  
Just after the shopping center is the sports complex where Olympic athletes completed their warm-ups. Facilities included an indoor pool, three gymnasiums, three football fields and a track and field stadium. Athletes were shuttled back and forth from the apartments to the fields by minibuses. Afterwards, the complex was given over to the city, allowing locals to go there to play tennis or swim. Visitors aren't allowed in without a pass, but walk through the arched passageway to the front door for a peek inside the retro foyer.

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The complex built for athletes' warm-ups is still a functioning sports center

*Olimpiiskaya Derevnnya Ulitsa 1*  
The yellow building across from the shopping center served as the Olympic village's concert hall and cultural center. Today it's occupied by the Vladimir Nazarov Theater, a stalwart (if somewhat cheesy) spot run by the Russian singer and actor of the same name. Walk to the far side to see the original poster stands that advertised concerts during the Games. Look closely and you'll see that the windows still bear the seal of the Ministry of Culture's concert organization, Roskontsert.

### 5. Museum of the Defense of Moscow

*Olimpiiskaya Derevnnya Ulitsa 3, open daily, 10 am-6 pm, Thurs. and Sat. 1 pm-9 pm, closed Mon.*  
From the poster stands, walk toward the elevated rectangular building across the street. On the left hand side above the teahouse, note the blue clock that once ticked time for the Olympic Village. This former administrative building was a product of Moscow's 1970s fad for buildings "on legs" (or above-ground supports). It now houses the Museum of the Defense of Moscow, an in-depth look at the

Typhoon" through period posters, photographs, uniforms and military equipment. Even if you don't check out the museum, walk around the old artillery sitting outside, which double as jungle gyms for neighborhood kids.

### 6. Apartment buildings

*Olimpiiskaya Derevnnya Ulitsa 5*  
Continue toward the 16-story apartment buildings. Although similar to most of Moscow's Brezhnev-era high rises, they featured some special touches, like the white decorative panels on each balcony, which required painstaking assembly by hand, and flower beds and Arbat-style streetlamps in the courtyards (now gone). Inside, apartments featured chalkboards for writing schedules and practice formations. Many of the buildings remained empty due to the boycott by many Western nations of the Moscow Olympics (over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), but afterward they were taken over by permanent tenants. Try sneaking into one of the buildings for a look at the marble entranceway, then take a stroll around the leafy courtyards. Return to the bus stop to catch a ride back to the metro. ■

## route of the week

