



PRESS RELEASE

2009 MOSCOW SAINT PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

At 13.00 on Sunday, March 22, Moscow City will close Novy Arbat to traffic for several hours for the 17th Annual Irish St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Joining cities all over the world such as New York, London, Sydney, Beijing and of course Dublin in celebrating Ireland's National Day, the Parade has become the largest festivity in Moscow after City Day attended annually by over 10,000 Muscovites.

A big supporter of Irish culture in Moscow, Mayor Yury Luzhkov will attend the Parade in person for the first time since its inception in 1992 to greet Dublin's Lord Mayor, Evelyn Byrne, who is travelling to the Russian capital specially for the event. Both Mayors will be accompanied by their delegations at the Parade. Other guests on the 80 seat tribune will include the Ambassador of Ireland in Russia, His Excellency Justin Harman, President of the Irish Business Club, Avril Conroy, and other leading Irish and Russian business and cultural figures, as well as representatives of Moscow's Irish community.

Novy Arbat will be once again transformed into a bustling Celtic cultural fiesta for all the family featuring over 1000 parade participants including Irish dancing and music groups, Ministry of Defence marching bands, Cossack horsemen, parade performers, fairy tale characters, and decorated 'floats' from key participants Pepsi, Aer Rianta International (who run the Duty Free Shops at Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo), DHL, Diageo (Guinness, Bailey's), The Irish Film Festival in Moscow, and the Irish Diary Board.

March 17th marks the anniversary of the death of St. Patrick who converted Irish from Celtic Druid paganism associated with the Celtic celebration of Halloween, to Christianity in the 5th Century A.D. At 16, he was captured by Irish raiders from his home in Britain and taken as a slave to Ireland where, as a shepherd tending sheep on a hillside, he is said to have seen a vision from God telling him to convert the people of Ireland from their pagan Celtic ways. Patrick escaped from Ireland to Britain and then on to Gaul (France) where he studied in a monastery for over twelve years before returning to Ireland.

Legend credits Patrick with banishing snakes from the island (there are still none to this day, although they are widely found in Great Britain), though one suggestion is that '*snakes*' referred to the serpent symbolism of the Druids of that time. Legend also credits Patrick with teaching the Irish about the concept of the Trinity by showing people the shamrock, a 3-leaved clover, using it to highlight the Christian belief of 'three divine persons in the one God'. After the successful conversion the Irish population to Christianity, St. Patrick died on March 17th, 461 AD.

Organized by the Irish Business Club, The Parade is part of a series of events around St. Patrick's Day including The Irish Club Charity Ball, a concert of classical music by Irish composer John Field at the Glinka Museum, and the second Irish Film Festival in Moscow at Khudozhestvenni Cinema (March 25-29).



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