



Moscow's Underground Palace

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Moscow, the capital city of Russia with a population of 9 million, is a must for any visitor to Russia. The St. Basil's Cathedral in Red Square with its multi-coloured domes has long become the icon of the biggest country in the world. There are many other important churches, museums, buildings and monuments scattered throughout the vast territory of Moscow that are reminiscent of Russia's tumultuous but colourful history.

The easiest, quickest and cheapest way to move around Moscow to visit all those attractions is the metro. Boasting some 10 lines and more than

150 stations, Moscow's underground system transports up to 9 million people a day, more than the London tubes and the New York City system combined.

The first metro station was opened in 1935. One of the project managers responsible for the early construction work was none other than Nikita Khrushchev, who later became the prime minister of USSR from 1958 to 1964.

The early stations are very deep because they have been designed for another purpose to serve as air-raid shelters in case of war.

The Moscow metro is famous for the art and design of many of its stations. The Circular Line, in particular, has become a tourist attraction in its own right. When I was visiting some of the stations, I came across two groups of tourists each led by a tour guide who was explaining to them the story depicted in the elaborate decorations. All the stations are done in marble and decorated in bas-reliefs, stucco mosaics and chandeliers.

The picture here shows but one of the many such magnificent stations. It looks like an underground palace, doesn't it? ■

