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Marimba, Merengue, and Mate: Moscow Hosted the Culture Festival of Latin American and Caribbean Countries

From July 18 to 26, Moscow served as the venue for the fifth Culture Festival of Latin American and Caribbean Countries. Over the course of a few years, this project has grown into a prominent platform for international humanitarian cooperation. Its program brought together music, cinema, gastronomy, educational formats, creative industries, and family activities. The festival itself was once again part of Moscow's systematic efforts to develop direct ties with foreign capitals, regions, and diplomatic missions.

The main events took place on July 18 and 19 at the Hermitage Garden. For two days, one of the capital's famous cultural venues transformed into a vibrant hub of Latin American culture. It hosted concerts, dance masterclasses, lectures, creative workshops, and sports activities, alongside a themed market and a gastronomic zone.

The official opening took place on July 18 with the participation of Moscow Government officials and the diplomatic corps. The musical program introduced the audience to the diverse traditions of the region's countries. The stage featured singer Fantine with a Dominican repertoire, the Tangovsky Project performing Argentine tango pieces, the Colombian group Marimbea, the Cuban Hot Havana Orchestra, Brazilian multi-instrumentalist Ricardo Rodrigues, and other performers. The dance program

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was presented by ensembles from Paraguay, Mexico, Ecuador, and Colombia.

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Guests could do more than just watch the performances – they were invited to actively participate in the program. Professional instructors led masterclasses in salsa, bachata, Argentine tango, merengue, zumba, reggaeton, and Paraguayan polka. The evening continued with a Latin American dance party. This highlighted one of the festival's core principles: experiencing a culture happens not just through observation, but through personal involvement.

Educational and informative events also took center stage. The lecture hub covered the history, traditions, tourism, and modern life of the region's countries. Dedicated sessions focused on Paraguay, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Argentina, and Brazil. Embassy representatives, educators, and experts shared insights into national costumes, cultural heritage, languages, crafts, coffee production, and tourist routes. This format complemented the festival's vibrant atmosphere with deep, meaningful insights into the region.

The gastronomic program offered yet another way to experience Latin America. The food court featured ceviche, tequeños, burritos, fajitas, empanadas, tropical fruit drinks, and coffee, cocoa, and chocolate from across the region. At the "Latina Market" zone, visitors could purchase spices, accessories, jewelry, and goods inspired by national cultures. For producers, this setup offered an opportunity to showcase their products to a wide audience, while guests could continue their journey through the region via its flavors and crafts.

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The program extended well beyond the Hermitage Garden. From July 20 to 25, cultural and educational events took place at the M. I. Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature. The venue hosted concerts, book presentations, meetings with embassy representatives, lectures by foreign diplomats, language classes, workshops, and a roundtable discussion titled "Latin Americans in Russia." The library also featured exhibitions dedicated to literature, Brazilian fairy tales and legends, and the ancient civilizations of Latin America.

From July 20 to 26, the Illuzion Cinema hosted a festival of Latin American and Caribbean films. The lineup included 14 movies from 11 countries. Audiences watched feature films and documentaries from Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Ecuador, and Paraguay, which joined the film program for the very first time. Themes of family, creativity, personal choice, social change, and economic challenges helped present the region not just as a collection of familiar images, but as a complex and diverse cultural landscape.

The Moscow Zoo became a new venue for the festival. It hosted photo exhibitions dedicated to the natural diversity and wildlife of Colombia and Paraguay. This expanded the project's thematic scope and brought environmental issues and the preservation of natural heritage into the conversation about the region.

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The experience of the previous year had already demonstrated Moscow's sustained interest in this format. In 2025, the festival was also held across several city venues, and its program included concerts, film screenings, lectures, diplomatic meetings, and exhibition projects. The fifth festival continued this tradition, maintaining a balance between mass public programming and professional, educational content.

For Moscow's business community, the festival's significance went far beyond the event calendar. Cultural projects create an environment of trust, making it easier to develop business contacts, discuss joint initiatives, and introduce audiences to products, tourist destinations, and creative industries from foreign nations. The participation of embassies and official representatives lent an institutional character to the program, while the open city format made the international agenda clear and accessible to the capital's residents.

The Latin American direction occupies a prominent place in Moscow's international activities. The capital is developing relationships with cities and regions in Latin America and the Caribbean across the fields of culture, tourism, urban management, digital technologies, education, and the preservation of historical heritage. Examples of this interaction include cooperation with Santo Domingo and Caracas, the exchange of urban practices, joint cultural events, and the implementation of commemorative projects.

Humanitarian ties play a special role in this work. They help foster a sustained mutual interest, support professional contacts, and create a foundation for further cooperation. The festival demonstrated that culture can serve not only as an independent value but also as an effective tool for city diplomacy, tourism development, and the creative economy.

The event was organized by the Moscow Government, the Department for External Economic and International Relations of the City of Moscow, and the Moscow Center for International Cooperation, with the support of the embassies of Latin American and Caribbean countries in Russia. Thanks to this, the program was shaped with the direct involvement of representatives from the region's countries, showcasing national cultures without oversimplifications or formal stereotypes.

The fifth festival confirmed that Moscow remains a sought-after platform for international cultural dialogue. For residents and guests of the capital, it offered an opportunity to witness the diversity of Latin America and the Caribbean through music, cinema, language, cuisine, and traditions. For the city, the festival served as another practical tool for strengthening international ties and developing cooperation with the countries of the region.

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