

A Timeless Encounter: The Spasskaya Tower

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Introduction:

The Spasskaya Tower was constructed in 1491 by Italian architect Pietro Antonio Solari. It takes its name from the iconic "Spas Nerukotvorny," meaning "The Saviour Not Made by Hands." Between 1491 and 1585, a clock was added to the tower, known as the Kremlin chimes, which serves as the official timekeeper for Moscow. The clock face has a diameter of 6 meters (20 ft).

The Spasskaya Tower, with its clock face, is a recurring annual theme in postage stamp designs to mark the celebration of New Year.

01

Image on Left: Maxi Card with the theme Happy New Year 2016, issued on Dec 10, 2015, with a postmark showing a clock about to strike 12. Catalogue Number Scot RU7706.



02

Image on Right: Die Cut issue with the theme Happy New Year 2010, issued on Dec 1, 2009, Catalogue Number: Scot RU7190



Legends and Tradition:

The Spasskaya Tower has long been held in high esteem by the Russian people. Legends attribute the tower with miraculous powers, claiming it could protect the Kremlin from invaders. Those passing through the gates would traditionally make the sign of the cross and remove their hats as a sign of respect. According to legend, Napoleon's horse became frightened as he rode through the gates without removing his hat, causing the French emperor's hat to fall from his head. The tower was commissioned by Ivan III, also known as Ivan the Great, the leader of the Grand Duchy of Moscow and grandfather of Ivan the Terrible.

03

Image on Left: Stamp issued by India on Dec 30, 1972 to commemorate 50th Anniversary of the USSR. Catalogue No: Scot IN 567



04

Image on Right: Sheet with theme Happy New Year 2009, issued Dec 18, 2008. Catalogue – Michel RU 1526KB



Modern Day Use:

In 1936, Joseph Stalin replaced the two-headed eagle on top of the Spasskaya Tower with a red star during the Soviet era as part of his efforts to erase evidence of the former Tsarist period. The red star rotates 360 degrees and the tower, with the star, stands at a height of 71 meters. The tradition of dismounting horses and removing hats at the tower ended during the Soviet era when the Kremlin became a center for government and politics. In 1961, the Kremlin was transformed into a museum and was added to the World Heritage List in 1990. The current director of the Kremlin Museums is Elena Gagarina, daughter of Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. Today, the Spasskaya Tower opens to receive the presidential motorcade on inauguration day, during victory parades, and to receive the New Year's tree.

05

Image on Left: Definitive Stamp issued on Oct 12, 1982 on the theme of UNESCO World Heritage Site, Catalogue Number: Scot SU 5038a.



06

Image on Right: Stamp with attached label issued by Mongolia on Nov 7, 1972 to commemorate 50th Anniversary of the USSR, Catalogue Number: Scot 698

