New Years' time in Russia

To my mind, one of the best times to visit Russia is before New Year's Eve, as it is a big celebration in Russia. During Soviet times, New Year's Eve became a large celebration, complete with a big sit-down dinner. This tradition has continued today. Christmas is also now openly celebrated in Russia, but on a smaller scale.

As New Year's Eve in Russia is more of a family holiday, you may not find the kind of rowdy parties that you see in other countries on New Year's Eve. If you're lucky enough to be invited to someone's home, be sure to bring thoughtful gifts and possibly your own slippers, although most families will have spares. Russian hospitality is quite fantastic if you have friends who will host you. And be prepared to answer a million questions about traditions in your home country!

A common New Year's expression is "The way you spend New Year's Eve is the same way you'll spend the rest of the year". That's why it's so important for the last day of the year to be free from worries and arguments. You should forgive people, pay off your debts, and clean your home in order to start the new year happy and clean. A lot of Russians will also visit a Russian sauna or at least take a hot bath on the 31st of December to purify their bodies. You definitely should not sleep through the New Year, as it is considered a bad omen and will make the upcoming year sleepy and uneventful for you. Many people will also buy new clothes to wear on the New Year's Eve to celebrate a fresh start.

If you're in Moscow, you can head to several look-out points in the city to watch the fireworks. My friend recommended heading to Moscow State University to have the best view over the city, and I don't regret it. Many tourists head towards the Kremlin for **iconic** beautiful views of the fireworks along the river, although you need to get there early and wait in the cold for hours to see the fireworks.

The New Year is a big deal everywhere in Russia. The decorations are lavish, gorgeous, and so rich that at some places they seem over the top. Shops can be so cluttered and even a little kitschy, it makes you feel like a kid in a huge candy store — with gaudy, colourful packaging, and lots of foil and cellophane... everything is in colour and glistening.

And still, all those heavy decorations somehow fit Russia. In territorial terms, Russia is the largest country in the world, and this affects everything in it. The buildings are enormous, as are the boulevards and the squares. And of course, they are all given a festive look before the New Year.

The facades of the enormous apartment buildings are adorned with huge decorations that light up in the dark and remind you of Las Vegas. Christmas trees are everywhere — on every corner, in front of every shop, every square and so on. What's more, in order to make the atmosphere full of charm, gentle classical music pours through the spaces of malls, restaurants and all other public places. I am absolutely sure that when I was in Vienna, I rarely heard classical music as often as I did in Russia in the winter.

And to finish with my advertisement, I should mention that Russians are people with a highly developed culture, especially musically. I was amazed at their good taste for music. It is impressive how many concerts are performed in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the country's two major cities. At the end of the year, the number of these concerts increases and tickets for the Bolshoi Theatre are sold out months in advance.

To sum up, if you want to see Russia all lit up and covered with winter beauty, dress warmly and embark on a trip in December. But don't plan too much for the last week, as it gets very crowded with people doing last-minute preparations.

What is implied by the author's comparison of Russia with Vienna?

1. The author prefers European countries.
2. Vienna is better decorated than Russia.
3. There are more Christmas trees in Russia.
4. Russian people love classical music.