Maslenitsa is one of most popular festivals in Russia. It is pagan in origin signals the end of winter and welcomes spring. Russian pancakes blini are very important in the celebration of Maslenitsa. They are given to friends and family all through the week. Blini are eaten with jam, sour cream, and of course lots of butter. Warm, round and golden blini are a symbol of the sun. Ancient Russians actually believed that by eating a pancake they were getting part of the Suns life energy.

The festival is week-long. It starts on Monday and ends on Sunday. Troika  
rides, sledging, puppet theater, pole climbing, tug-of-war contests and fireworks are all part of the Maslenitsa celebrations. There is usually a storming of a snow  
fort. In the 18th century there were bear shows too! But don't be afraid if you see  
a bear now. It is an actor dressed in a bear costume!  
The week ends with burning the scarecrow Maslenitsa, a symbol of winter. In  
this way people say goodbye to winter till the next year and welcome the coming of  
spring