teatures

WC fans flock to party in 'street of lights'



Nikolskaya street has become the most hangout place of the World Cup fans

The 700-metre-long street with elegant stucco facades is packed to bursting

Moscow

quiet pedestrian street leading off from Red Square, over the street. Moscow's Nikolunexpectedly become the party using TripAdvisor and I just each South American country zone of choice for thousands of saw the lights. There are other colonised a part of the street. international World Cup fans, to pedestrian streets but it's wonthe bemusement of locals.

During the day but even more so at night, the 700-metre-long street with elegant stucco facades is packed to bursting.

Walking through, a passerby has to squeeze past ubiquitous groups of Argentinian supporters, pass a cafe taken over entirely by Tunisians and shake hands with innumerable Mexican fans, all of them wearing sombreros.

"Normally, Nikolskaya Street is very quiet," said Armen, an Armenian student living in Moscow who was watching highlights of the Croatia-Argentina

is usually more of a shopping destination with some luxury boutiques, especially since it was pedestrianised five years ago. But for some reason, fans have chosen this particular Mexican fans pose at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow street as their main hangout.

Colombian Harold Castillo, popularity down to the spectacular curtain of lights that hangs

Fans are travelling great distances across Russia to follow

Multiple garlands of lights teams -- the Peruvians went to Mohamed Chaaben, a 28-yeara 22-year-old student, puts its hang over most of the street, giv- see their team lose to France in old Tunisian engineer sitting

ing it a festive air as soon as night Yekaterinburg in the Urals and on the terrace of a cafe with his falls. Even before the World Cup the Tunisians have left for south-friends, a national flag wrapped kicked off, Iranian fans were ern Volgograd to watch Satur- round his shoulders. "I came here by chance. I've rubbing shoulders with Saudis day's game with Belgium. Yet skaya Street has been walking all over Moscow here and flag-draped fans from while fans come and go, Nikolskaya has retained its vibrancy. 'A Tower of Babel' "This is the fans' street," said

> Plenty of Russians are coming of the street's real name.

"This street is like a Tower of

"It has the best atmosphere, it's a pedestrian street and it feels safe, there's no risk."

He and his friends were amused at the interest from locals in their national Tunisian headgear, round red caps with tassels known as chechias.

to stroll on Nikolskaya Street too, eyeing the exuberant fans with a mixture of surprise and amusement. Argentinians have nicknamed the party-zone street the "house of lights," said Santiago Saltiva from Argentina's different language." city of Cordoba. He said that's

resented, everyone is speaking a is part of a large Moscow chain.



Multiple garlands of lights hang over most of the street, giving it a festive air as soon as night

The fans' choice of Nikolskaya how he was directed there by a Street as their main base caught WhatsApp group of Argentini- the city authorities by surprise an fans as soon as he landed in and they had to make some rapid Moscow, while he has not heard changes. Public toilet cubicles were brought in and barriers "They told us that all the Ar-removed. The crowds of fans entinians were here on this have been great news for local street," the 42-year-old busi- traders, many of whom have opted to remain open for 24 hours

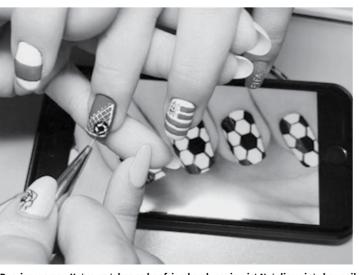
"We've had to bring in staff Babel," he said. "Every national-from other branches," said Maria ity is here, every country is rep- Kuzina, manager of a cafe that

Manicures in World Cup designs hit the nail on the head

Reuters | Samara

love to make nails beautiful," says manicurist Natalia, as she applies the finishing touches to a World Cup soccer ball design on her friend's nail in her home in Samara.

Natalia, who chose not to give her real name, certainly does brighten up any room with her smile and character, as well as her football-themed nail painting. Living close to the Samara Arena, which plays host to six World Cup matches during Russia 2018, Natalia is using the tournament as inspiration.





Russian woman Katya watches as her friend and manicurist Natalia paints her nails with flags of teams and themes

"It gives you a lot of fun because you get to be creative. You can use different colours, materials, whatever you want so that your soul is fulfilled," she told Reuters on Saturday.

Natalia works mainly as a babysitter but in her spare time she likes to paint beautiful and extravagant designs onto her friends' nails.

For the World Cup, Natalia is basing her designs around soccer balls, goal netting and of course national team flags.

"I find the design for this World Cup really interesting," she said whilst painting Uruguayan and Russian flags in preparation for their encounter.