

Portable Toilets Going Upscale

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Attractive colors, hot water and heating will be part of the new design. **Vladimir Filonov**

In case anybody has doubts about Muscovites' posh tastes, gold painted, high-comfort portable toilets will soon be springing up around the city. Moscow's housing and utilities department is expected to announce an auction this week to select companies that will get the rights to install the luxurious lavatories.

Over 1,300 new toilets will be installed near public spaces, such as metro stations and parks, by next summer, the general director of the city's sanitation institution, Anatoly Ashikhmin, told Izvestia.

The city's architecture department is still finalizing the designs, but based on previous reports, they are expected to have heating, hot water and mirrors. The modular units could also be bright yellow or even gold in color.

"The choice of a golden color can be explained as a way to emphasize comfort," said Yelena Bukhlina, marketing specialist at the Redwin agency. "Golden things are usually well taken

care of and cherished. This attracts people.”

Moscow Deputy Mayor Pyotr Biryukov announced in September that municipal authorities had finalized the planned locations of over 1,000 new toilet cabins around the city. Auction winners will invest at least 1 billion rubles (\$31 million) to buy and put up the advanced latrines, Izvestia reported.

A portable toilet in a high-traffic location can bring its owner 3,000 rubles in revenue per day, said Vladimir Priorov, expert at the industry portal Tualet.ru. Considering that the most expensive plastic cabin costs 15,000 rubles to buy, the investment can pay off in just a few days.

The deluxe toilets will cost from 700,000 rubles to 1.5 million rubles, so the return on investment period can be up to two years, Priorov said. Although the city won't regulate usage fees, experts said prices are not likely to increase.

“Twenty-five to 30 rubles is the ceiling. Beyond that people will start going in the bushes, as they tend to do here,” Priorov said.

Investors will get additional revenue by selling advertising, though experts are doubtful about advertisers' willingness to use this platform. Advertising will contribute only up to 15 percent of total profits in the best-case scenario, Priorov said.

Advertising themes should be carefully selected, he added.

“Sanitation products rather than Snickers bars or chicken nuggets,” Priorov said.

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