

Rubble and Dust Mask Splendor of Sochi Games

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Amid the dust and rubble and the rumbling, wheezing construction vehicles, it takes a fair stretch of the imagination to picture Sochi's Winter Olympic playground in its pomp.

But ignore the landscape of trucks and cement mixers hauling materials up and down the roads. Ignore the gangs of workers in concrete-encrusted boots swarming around embryonic scaffolding-clad buildings.

Ignore, too, the main stadium, which sits mid-construction, its yawning innards bared to the skies.

Because most other venues have been completed or are nearing completion, and organizers say they are right on schedule.

With 15 months to go before the Feb. 7 opening ceremony, although the venues nestled in this

Black Sea resort mostly resemble a building site, nothing suggests any concern over readiness.

Construction will be completed by August 2013, organizers say. At that stage, work will be halted on some commercial properties to begin the much-needed beautification of the area.

The commercial buildings will then be finished once the Olympic party has left town.

"We have to postpone finishing the commercial properties in the city because we want the city to look good," Sochi native and organizing committee president Dmitry Chernyshenko said. "Those who [don't] finish by August will have to wait so as not to harm the environment because we will spruce up the city to prepare for the games, and then [construction] will continue after the games."

Scruffy buildings will have no place in the picture for a Russia hoping to use the Sochi Winter Olympics to showcase itself much as China used the 2008 Beijing Games.

"Beijing was presenting to the world the Chinese can-do," said International Olympic Committee member Kevan Gosper, of Australia. "Russia, as Russia, is now making a new presentation of itself to the world following the long history of the tsarist and Soviet times."

"You can see firsthand the can-do attitude, which is now known as the new Russia, 23 years after the break-up of the Soviet Union," he continued. "The 2014 Games will mark the new Russia's 25th anniversary."

The 2014 Winter Games will take place in two centers, the Coastal Cluster along the Black Sea shore in the Imeretinskaya Valley and the Mountain Cluster in Krasnaya Polyana.

Between those two Olympic clusters, 98 events in 15 winter sports will be held during the Feb. 7-23 extravaganza.

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