

Ready to Take the Plunge? Here Are 5 Tips for Surviving Epiphany in Russia

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

This weekend, tens of thousands of Russians will plunge into freezing rivers and lakes to celebrate the feast of the Epiphany, known as *Kresheniye* in Russian.

For Orthodox Christians, the day celebrates the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, and a dip into blessed waters is said to cleanse the faithful of sins and purify the spirit. But it's not just Orthodox Russians who will take the plunge — the celebration has also become popular among non-believers, who maintain that a quick ice bath is good for your health.

The religious holiday will be celebrated on Saturday, Jan. 19, but the first bathers can take the plunge on Friday night according to tradition. In Moscow, Saturday's forecast predicts temperatures falling below -6 degrees Celsius. For many foreigners, the prospect of doing anything in this weather other than hiding under a pile of blankets can seem daunting. But for those brave enough to put themselves to the test, here are a few tips for staying safe and healthy during the Epiphany festivities.

Related article: [How Russians Marked the Epiphany on Instagram](#)

1. Practice with a cold shower

Taking several contrast showers before Epiphany can help prepare your body for the shock of the cold. Start by standing under warm water for around five minutes and then switch to cold water for one minute. Continue to alternate between hot and cold, incrementally increasing the time spent under cold water.

2. Avoid alcohol

Though it may seem tempting to drink before Epiphany to stay warm, doctors advise against alcohol consumption pre-bathing. Alcohol causes blood to flow away from your core, resulting in heat moving from your vital organs to your skin. Drink warm tea instead.

3. Eat a good meal

Indulge in a meal high in fats around two hours before hitting the ice. Your body will expend most of its energy on staying warm and needs a solid reserve of calories.

4. Warm up your muscles

Once you're outside — and especially once you're begun removing layers — it's a good idea to do a few exercises to warm up your body and increase blood flow. Do 10-15 squats and jumping jacks before taking the plunge.

5. Don't forget your *tapochki*

Rubber *tapochki* — Russian for slippers — are an essential part of the Epiphany experience. Large, warm slippers will keep your feet warm and are easy to don after bathing — footwear with shoelaces should be avoided. Other essential items: a large towel, a warm change of clothes (seasoned bathers recommend clothes without buttons for speedy dressing) and a hat.

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