

Getting Wet, Cold for Charity

By [Andrea Bernoth](#)

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A typical January weekend would normally see many Australians and New Zealanders at the beach. Next weekend will see Aussies, Kiwis and other expats living in Moscow at a beach with a chill as they take the plunge into the icy waters of the Moscow River to raise funds for the city's homeless.

The Auski social group of Australians and New Zealanders in Russia has joined forces with the Russian chapter of Australian Business in Europe for the Cold Plunge for the Homeless event on Jan. 29.

Auski coordinator Jessie Cumming was inspired to create the event after hearing her Russian boss talk about his experiences jumping into freezing water. The idea interested her, but she thought, "I'm going to do it — but only for a good cause." Concern for and wanting to help the homeless who face the "freezing cold winters" in Moscow led her to put the two ideas together.

Auski plans to manage and distribute the money raised through the International Women's

Club of Moscow's charities arm. The IWC coordinator for their soup kitchens and street people projects, Anna Baldwin, hopes that they will be able to contribute to providing food and shelter to the homeless, as well as providing support to similar projects that "help pave the way so that a more well-informed society realizes the importance of addressing this problem without delay."

Any expat wanting to participate in the plunge is welcome to join in as long as they raise the minimum 2,000 rubles (dollars and euros will also be accepted) and complete an entry form and liability waiver. Cumming is hoping for between 50 and 100 people at the event.

In addition to the purported health benefits of jumping into icy water, the Cold Plunge was "doubly appealing," said Scottish lawyer Robert Gray, because he could "take part in a Russian cultural experience ... [and] at the same time raise money for a good charitable cause."

Medical staff from event sponsor International SOS Medical Center will be on hand to monitor participants' health.

The event will be held at the Polar Bear Club at Serebryanny Bor and be followed by an after-party at club Garage. Buses will be provided to transport participants from Metro Polezhayevskaya to the two venues.

For more information about participating in or sponsoring the Cold Plunge for Homeless, contact taketheplungeinmoscow@gmail.com or join the Facebook group Take the Plunge in Moscow.

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