

New Ice Rink at Gorky Park Sees Fans, Long Lines

By [Madelienne Grieve](#)

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Those who don't want to skate can watch the rink from a wooden bridge that stretches along part of the rink. **Vladimir Filonov**

Gorky Park, which has been transformed under new management, is attracting thousands this winter with an ice rink years ahead of the rough and ready one of old.

The rink, as the park claims, is Europe's largest at 150,000 square meters and, using special technology, has been open nonstop since early December despite Moscow's unusually mild winter. It will remain in use until mid-March.

"America can do this, Europe can do this and now we want to show that Moscow can too," said Sergei Kapkov, Moscow's culture department head, at the rink's opening last month, saying the buzzwords for the park are "atmosphere, friendliness and community."

The rink has one main ice road and a number of paths which wind round part of the park.

Above the main road, a wooden bridge goes from one entrance to the other, the farther one often has fewer people in line, where the two changing rooms are located. Smart and clean, they are a long way from the slightly odorous old shed where Muscovites once put on skates.

"I remember before, the rink was not very well organized and the ice was really bad, now it is really nice. But I've got a young baby and the park is still not baby-friendly," said Anna Lipscomb, who was waiting with her baby for her sister to come off the ice.

The park, whose reputation had sunk in recent years with shabby attractions, little investment and poor management, has seen huge changes since Kapkov was put in charge of the park last summer.

Free Wi-Fi is available all over the park and last year saw a host of lectures, yoga lessons and events that drew thousands more to the park.

Food is served at four new cafes and restaurants at the rink. One cafe, clad in colorful lighting, is from the same group as Jean Jacques and Cafe Mart. Music comes courtesy of radio Follow Me, part of Moscow's trendy online magazine, TV and radio station Look at Me.

There have, however, been problems along the way.

Initially skates could be borrowed for free, but after hundreds were stolen, a deposit of 1,500 rubles (\$47) was introduced.

There have also been complaints about huge waits over the holidays. Skating through as many people as there are on Tverskaya Ulitsa on a busy Saturday does kill some of the romance.

Rink organizers say they have opened three extra entrances to the rink to help reduce lines, and they say the situation has improved.

The park closes between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. for the ice to be cleaned, and unless you come early in the morning the first hour after it has reopened can be the best time to get in as quickly as possible.

The park also plans to have cross-country ski routes of 1 and 3 kilometers, but these will only be possible once the weather goes below minus 4 degrees Celsius, which is predicted for this week.

The rink also has an ice hockey rink, a children's area and a figure-skating rink, and the park has its own figure skating school, where one-on-one lessons cost 1,200 rubles an hour or for 800 rubles per person for group lessons of four people.

Entry costs 150 rubles for the morning session and 300 after 5 p.m. Children under 7 get in for free, with a 100 ruble fee for those 7 to 12 years old.

Gorky Park ice rink is open 10 p.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. until Mar. 15. The park is closed Jan. 16, 23 and 30. 9 Krymsky Val. Metro Park Kultury, Oktyabrskaya. Tel. (499) 237-1355. www.facebook.com/park.gorkogo

Chloe Cranston contributed to this report.

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