

# Russia Parties at London Olympics

By [The Moscow Times](#)

August 02, 2012

**The  Moscow Times**

LONDON — Russia wants to knock your socks off. Denmark is stylish and sophisticated. Ireland is up for a party — on a budget.

There are more than 200 countries at the Olympics, and they have two ways to stand out. One is on the medal podium; the other is by partying.

Dotted across London, national hospitality houses offer a base for a country's athletes, officials and occasional celebrities.

Here's an eclectic, unscientific guided tour:

## **Russia: 2014 Is Ours**

Russia, home to the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, has pulled out all the stops with two open-air attractions, Russia Park and Sochi Park, set in London's Kensington Gardens.

Russia Park is a vast sea of Astroturf dotted with bean bags, ping pong, chess and mini-golf.

Medal winners and artists share the stage, with entertainment ranging from Central Asian throat singers to jazz bands to mini-rock festivals.

Inside scoop: Admission is free. Blinis and beef stroganoff are available but alcohol is not, and you must be able to stomach an endless loop of Queen's "We Are the Champions."

### **Winter Palace**

A 10-minute walk away, Sochi Park is the showcase for the Russian city and region that will host the next Winter Games, with attractions including virtual skiing and a nightly ice dancing show featuring big-name Russian skaters.

Scoop: Ouch on the admissions price: 18 pounds (\$28) in advance, 20 (\$31) at the door. Adding to the pinch, the ice show is extra.

### **Samba, Baby**

Brazil, home to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, has transformed Somerset House, a sprawling edifice beside the River Thames, into Casa Brasil.

The courtyard has been taken over by Brazilian bands, including Sargento Pimenta (Portuguese for Sgt. Pepper), a popular Carnival ensemble that takes a samba approach to Beatles classics. The bar serves up a mean caipirinha, a popular Brazilian cocktail.

Scoop: Brazil is a vast, varied and vibrant country, so bring on the 2016 games! But who forgot to sell any Brazilian food?

### **Cheap Yet Cheerful**

Recession-hit Ireland has installed its national house — inevitably, perhaps — in a pub. In the King's Cross area, close to the Javelin trains that run to the Olympic Park, it sprawls over three floors, from a basement bar styled on a British comedy to a main floor with live music to a roof terrace and bar.

Scoop: Debt crisis, what debt crisis? Financial woes are not going to stop this party, but the menu offers more burgers than truly Irish fare.

### **The Big Orange**

The dedicated party crowd heads to the Netherlands' Heineken House, legendary for its festive vibe and free-flowing beer. It has taken over Alexandra Palace in north London, which has many areas in which to eat, drink and relax.

Scoop: Party, party, party! But that orange color is bright and it's a slightly out-of-the-way location. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

### **Small Is Beautiful**

Denmark has turned a yacht-fringed marina, St. Katharine Docks, into a little corner of Scandinavia. There is music, hotdogs and beer, Scandinavian designs, meaty food and big

screens showing Olympic highlights including handball — a Scandinavian obsession.

Scoop: Cool and relaxed. Pork neck marinated in beer with rosehip compote, anyone? Admission is free, but bring raingear, most activities are outdoors.

### **Alpine Treats**

Nearby, Austria House offers bratwurst with sauerkraut and Stiegl beer on a ski chalet-style terrace with views of the Tower of London.

Scoop: Sporty and fun but celebrity potential is limited.

### **Czech Mate**

Some houses, including Jamaica's, have yet to open, but so far the gold medal goes to the Czech House, which has transformed a conference venue in north London's Islington neighborhood into a giant party playpen.

We're talking indoor basketball, pool tables, foosball, a chill-out zone and plenty of Pilsener.

Outside is a large sculpture by Czech artist David Cerny of a London double-decker bus doing push-ups. Inside, an inflatable version floats surreally over the heads of partygoers.

Scoop: Fun and wacky, but does Czech food really need to cost 17 pounds (\$27) for goulash and bacon dumplings?

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/08/02/russia-parties-at-london-olympics-a16756>