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7 Ways to Brave the Cold (Photo Essay)

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Winter arrived with a bang this week with temperatures in the Moscow region dropping to minus 30 degrees Celsius on Tuesday night. To help you cope, we've come up with seven clever ways to stave off the worst of the cold.

1. Have a Shot of Vodka.



Pascal Dumont for MT

Russians have long proclaimed the benefits of their national drink and if ever you needed a reason to knock back a shot of vodka, then “keeping away the cold” is a fairly good excuse.

Two circus elephants survived exposure to the bitter Siberian frost in the winter of 2012 after their water was laced with the spirit, so why wouldn't it work for you too?

Don't worry if vodka is not your thing, a cup of tea with lemon and honey will do the job nearly — if not just — as well.

2. Buy a Fur Hat.



Pascal Dumont for MT

One of the best ways to keep your head warm during winter is to invest in a Russian fur hat. Ushankas are perhaps the best option and come complete with ear flaps designed to keep out the cold. Just make sure not to wear your new hat at the same time as your mink-skin coat, or you may end up committing the ultimate fashion "fur" pas.

3. Grow a Beard.



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What better way to keep your cheeks warm than to grow your own face-full of fuzz? Bring back the old school with a neat beard-mustache combination — favored by Nicolas II — or keep it straggly *à la* Rasputin. Ladies, this tip won't only stave off the cold, but it'll also keep (un)desirable men at bay: two birds with one stone!

Many Russians escape the cold by traveling to exotic destinations like India, Turkey or Egypt. Our photographer traveled to Goa, India, to capture how Russians are bridging the winter. See the full photo gallery here.

4. Throw a Banya Party.



Take a trip to the banya, and steam away the cold in the company of friends. While you're there, invest in a couple of veniki birch branches to beat away any lingering winter blues. Combine with tip 1 at will.

5. Wear Valenki.



Pascal Dumont for MT

These boots — once the footwear of choice of many Russians — will certainly help protect your tootsies from the cold. Traditional Valenki are made entirely from felt and are therefore not waterproof, though manufacturers of modern-day Valenki have overcome this problem by attaching a rubber sole to the boot.

6. Go Ice-Skating.



Pascal Dumont for MT

Once you've grown that beard, put on your fur hat and valenki, and head down to the ice-rink — there's nothing like a bit of rigorous exercise to get the blood pumping. Daydream about the upcoming Winter Olympics while you strut your figure skating or ice hockey moves.

7. Stay Inside.



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With the unbearably hot central heating system making t-shirts inside the norm rather than the exception, why brave the cold at all? Dig through your wardrobe for a Hawaii shirt and go for the safest option: denial.

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