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Sochi Social: What Journalists Didn't Expect From Their Stay in Sochi

By Eva Hartog

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Being a host city is never an easy task. But the flood of Western journalists into Sochi this week in the run-up to the Winter Games, many of whom have probably never been to Russia before, was paralleled by a flood of complaints and comments on social media.

Barely a couple of days into their stay, Sochi has become a source of hilarity, whining and in some cases outright despair for many Western journalists.

Here's a list of the five things that have captivated Western journalists on social media this week.

1. Toilets.

An obsession with the porcelain chairs began weeks before the start of the Games when a

picture of a twin toilet at the Olympic Biathlon Center went viral after a BBC correspondent tweeted "Seeing double in the Gentlemen's Loo at the Olympic Biathlon Center."

> Just to make clear, this is not photoshopped. You can see my reflection in the flusher. #Sochi #Olympic loo pic.twitter.com/LONZhbt6pZ
>
> — Steve Rosenberg (@BBCSteveR) January 21, 2014

But single toilets in Sochi also manage to surprise, another journalist found.

> People have asked me what surprised me the most here in Sochi. It's this. Without question ... it's ... THIS. pic.twitter.com/1jj05FNdCP
>
> — Greg Wyshynski (@wyshynski) February 4, 2014

2. Manholes.

Who thought a stroll along the pier was boring? In Sochi, keeping your eyes on the ground rather than on the horizon could be the wiser choice.

> Watch your step @Sochi2014 -- I've noticed on walkway and on sidewalks that not all man holes are always covered. pic.twitter.com/a5Nv4wu5iA
>
> — Jo-Ann Barnas (@JoAnnBarnas) February 1, 2014

3. Stray Dogs.

Without question animals stole the show in Sochi this week.

While Putin showed some love to a Persian leopard, journalists were outraged by the number of stray dogs getting in their way.

But just when the authorities thought they could score some points, those same puppy eyes sparked a wave of protest with journalists expressing outrage at reported plans to have the Russian canines shot and removed.

> One of the stray dogs that #Sochi officials have tried to cull ahead of the #Olympics. This one so docile pic.twitter.com/yq5jEbsOqU
>
> — Matt Gutman (@mattgutmanABC) February 5, 2014

4. Incomplete Infrastructure.

Despite several reports from The Moscow Times warning readers that much of the infrastructure in Sochi was still unfinished, many journalists were still surprised to find that their pre-booked accommodation existed only on paper.

"One of the main buildings in Sochi- the 'Sochi Plaza' hotel. 11 days to go until the Olympic opening ceremony," one user tweeted, with pictures of the hotel looking more like a building site than anything close to resembling to a place you'd want to stay at.

> Один из главных Олимпийских объектов в Сочи - гостиница «Sochi Plaza». До открытия Олимпиады осталось 11 дней. pic.twitter.com/pBfJ7BuebO
>
> — Старик (@StarikDen) January 27, 2014

> Ok, so my hotel doesn't have a lobby yet.
>
> — Mark MacKinnon (@markmackinnon) February 4, 2014

5. Completed Infrastructure.

But even those journalists who were lucky enough to have a bed found that did not necessarily bode well.

> Late to the party but this light fixture crashed a foot from my bed on second night in #Sochi media hotel. pic.twitter.com/rhuchVmy3i
>
> — Vicki Hall (@vickihallch) February 5, 2014

> This is the one hotel room @Sochi2014 have given us so far. Shambles. #cnnsochi pic.twitter.com/RTjEkmyan3
>
> — Harry Reekie (@HarryCNN) February 4, 2014

> #sochi good news , I have Internet , bad news, it's dangling from the ceiling in my room... pic.twitter.com/WPp560Nr5c
>
> — Simon Stanleigh (@Stanleigh77) February 2, 2014

It makes us wonder. Did anyone brief the writers on Russia before they arrived?

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