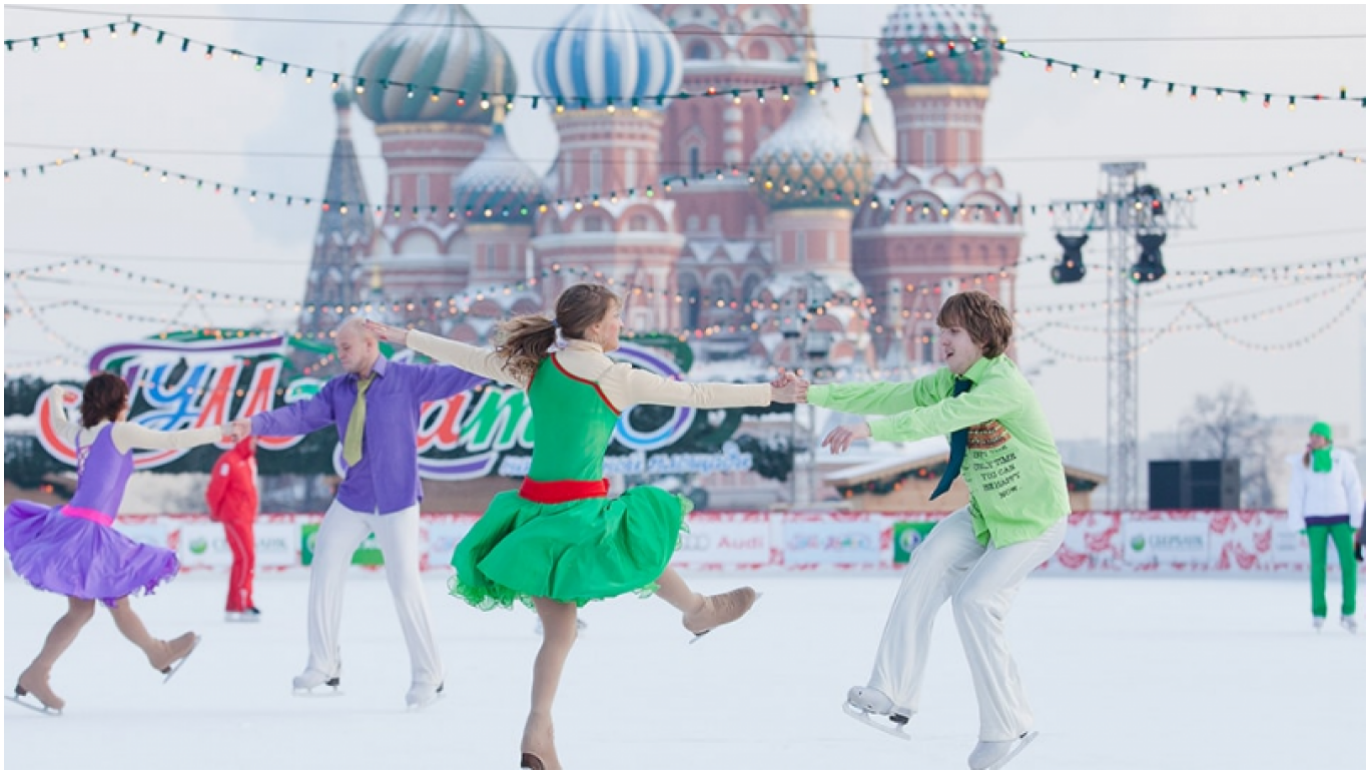
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Get Your Skates On: Moscow's Best Ice Rinks

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GUM ice rink **gum.ru**

It's that time of year when we wrap up warm, tie our skates on and pray that our coordination skills have improved since the previous winter. With many ice rinks situated in the city's most picturesque locations, there's no better way to see Moscow at its festive best. You can reward yourself with a mulled wine afterwards.

Gorky Park

Slick, stylish and street-art inspired

Ever one to be relied on for its Instagram opportunities and general polish, Gorky Park has pushed out the boat this year with a 16,000 square meter ice rink based on a street art theme. Alongside murals and colorful stencil designs, skaters can glide under luminous geometric shapes, which offer an edgier alternative to your standard fairy lights. At the heart of the rink is a central installation based on the constructivist Shukhov Tower, with LED lights that will pulse and change color as you move around the rink. A new foot bridge has been built this year

connecting the ice rink with the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art and as in previous years the sponsor, Jacob's, will offer ice skating coaches and piping cups of coffee to weary visitors. Adult tickets cost 400 to 550 rubles. Skate hire is free, but a deposit is needed.

VDNKh

Get lost on the ice

VDNKh's gargantuan ice rink once again takes home the laurels for the biggest ice rink in the country. The 20,000 square meters of ice can accommodate 4,500 skaters, so make sure you take a fully charged cell phone with you or your risk losing your friends down one of the many alleys that branch off from the central ring. After flashing your fancy footwork drop by the food court — which has been adapted so that you can keep your skates on — and pick up a mulled wine or a hot donut. Clever lighting effects, pumping music and fascinating architectural sights make this one not to miss. Kids can practice their moves in a specially adapted children's rink off the main thoroughfare. An adult ticket costs from 300 to 600 rubles and it's 150 rubles for additional skate hire.

GUM Ice Rink

Small but spectacular

Serious skaters might sniff at the diminutive size of the GUM rink, which accommodates just 450 people per session, but where else in Moscow are you going to be able to glide on the ice with views of St. Basils, the Kremlin and GUM in all their architectural glory. The rink is particularly romantic at night, when you can admire GUM bedecked in twinkly fairy lights. An adjoining Christmas market — while a total tourist trap — offers the perfect opportunity to warm up afterwards with hot waffle or a steaming cup of tea. An adult ticket costs from 400 to rubles, with skate hire free if you provide a deposit. Buy your tickets online in advance to skip the queues.

Hermitage Garden

City center skating

Hermitage Garden, situated in the very heart of the city, boasts both a natural and artificial ice rink this winter. The former will be four times larger when it opens later this year, and has a variety of snack stands you can buy refreshments from without the hassle of unlacing your skates. With its cheesy music and penguins for balance, the artificial rink is more of a kiddie's affair. Parents can watch their children in action from the viewing platform or enjoy a coffee in the changing area. The artificial rink will set you back 350 rubles for an adult ticket.

Sokolniki Park

Music and dancing

Skating enthusiasts are spoilt for choice at Sokolniki, a picturesque park in the northeast of the city. The Lyod (ice) rink has artificial ice, and spans a modest but perfectly respectable 5,300 square meters. This year the rink has a rock "n" roll theme, meaning visitors can enjoy

special zones where you can perfect your dance moves on the ice and inexplicable objects like a two-meter-high guitar. Adult tickets cost from 250 to 350 rubles and it’s 200 rubles for skate hire.

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