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Putin Takes Icy Dip in Orthodox Christian Ritual

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Russians believe a freezing ice bath is good for you. **Kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin took a dip in freezing water on Tuesday to mark the Orthodox Christian feast of the Epiphany.

Video shared by Kremlin pool reporters from the state-run RIA Novosti news agency showed Putin wading into the water in blue swimming trunks and dunking three times while crossing himself before hastily exiting the ice hole.

"It's his tradition. He doesn't betray tradition," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, shortly before the video appeared online.

Russians celebrate the feast of the Epiphany every year by bathing in ice-cold lakes and rivers to celebrate the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan.

The Orthodox Christian tradition is popular with non-believers too, as a freezing ice bath is thought to be good for you.

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> — Кремлевский пул РИА (@Kremlinpool_RIA) January 19, 2021

This is the first official video footage of 68-year-old Putin braving the bone-chilling waters since Jan. 19, 2018, when he was shown approaching the icy bath in a coat and boots, stripping off to his trunks and immersing himself in freezing waters. Reports of his Epiphany baths in subsequent years contained archived photographs.

This year, Peskov did not say where Putin took the icy dip or what the temperature was at the time. The Kremlin pool reporters' Twitter account said the video was filmed outside Moscow in minus 20 degree Celsius weather.

Observers were quick to notice the similarities between the color of Putin's swimwear and opposition leader Alexei Navalny's underwear, which an alleged FSB officer accused of his poisoning revealed in a trick phone call last month to be blue.

Putin's icy dip also continues the tradition of him being photographed bare-chested engaged in activities including horse riding, hunting, catching fish and lounging in the sun in Siberia.

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