

Cure the Post-Holiday Blues the Russian Way

Five places to visit for a spa-like, health-restoring, relaxing break.

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Vladimir Smirnov / TASS

If you've been feeling a little overwhelmed and burnt out after the January holiday and return to work, here are our top five wellness getaways in and around Moscow. From Soviet sanatoriums to communal dacha experiences, you can relax yourself back to health and good spirits in no time.

The Walrus Club of Serebryany Bor

According to Andrei Zamyslov, chairman of The Walrus Club of Serebryany Bor — Moscow's oldest winter swimming club — there's no better way to boost the immune system and mood than diving into a hole in the ice for a brisk swim. Towards the end of the 1950s, "cold water treatment" was promoted across the country for its health-giving effects, which led to a rapid growth in popularity. Since 1959 the club has been meeting in a picturesque spot on Lake Bezdonnoye and hosting a training ground for the Moscow national team and regular

swimmers alike. Once a member, you can enjoy the winter swimming months (November to March), with the club's 25 x 5-metre ice hole, where the water temperature usually varies from freezing point to +4 Celsius. Regular competitions are held here in addition to basic invigorating swimming. Zamyslov – himself a silver and bronze medalist of the World Championships in winter swimming — adds that for fellow club swimmers “this is the battery from which we draw energy for the whole week. How could you not love it?” For those brave enough to take the plunge, make sure that you are well rested so that you can enjoy the full benefits of ice swimming. If you're still having doubts, remember that however cold the water is, it's still warmer than Moscow's winter air. Find details and sign up [here](#).

Bolotov Dacha

Always fancied going to a dacha to relax but never had one to go to? Bolotov, situated in the Tula region (1.5 hours from Moscow) is “a dacha for people without dachas.” There is a wonderfully communal element to Bolotov's seemingly secluded dachas as, for example, in ‘The Big Dacha’, the Bolotov HQ, you will find Ziferblat cafe on the second floor where you can help yourself to the buffet, a communal working space, and a pay-by-the-hour option for day-trippers. Bolotov also offers a number of brightly colored dachas in a forested area that can be rented for large parties or smaller groups and individuals. To kick back and relax, you can enjoy ice skating on the nearby pond, trips to a nearby banya, walks through beautiful countryside and light-filled dachas with pastoral views. More information and reservations can be found [here](#).

Chaika outdoor pool

If you don't have the time or haven't budgeted for a getaway this early into the New Year but still want rejuvenating and quick fix, look no further than the Chaika outdoor in the heart of Moscow. Lovers of Soviet architecture and modernism will be particularly captivated by these iconic pools, which were built in 1957 by architect Boris Topaz and designer Yuri Dykhovichny. In the past, the baths were used for the U.S.S.R. swimming team to prepare for competitions, but in more recent years, Chaika has acquired a health and fitness center within its grounds, complete with gym, sauna, tennis court and minigolf. The main attractions are the two outdoor pools for adults — one 50 meters and one very deep one that is 25 meters, as well as two children's pools, not to mention diving boards, ice water fonts, a relaxing waterfall and jacuzzi. With the pools heated to 28 degrees C, the most beautiful time to swim is at night, when the steam is visible above the water, lit from the pool beneath. A one-time adult admission ticket, which includes a medical check, starts at 1,500 rubles. Tickets and more information can be found [here](#).

Pushkino

If you've always been curious about a holiday in a Soviet sanatorium, now is your chance to experience one not far from Moscow. Tucked away in a picturesque is the Pushkino sanatorium, built in the 1940s as a sanatorium for the Communist Party elite. Sanatoriums are a sort of organized relaxation, where you will first have a health check and then be issued a tailor-made health plan. If you choose a recovery program, your days will be meticulously planned, from mealtimes to your treatments and in what order you will receive them. At Pushkino, you can follow shorter programs of six days which promote heart, joint and spinal

health (among other ailments), to longer 14-day recovery programs which can, for example, treat the respiratory or cardiovascular system with the help of expert doctors. Or you can just come to enjoy the pool, sauna, game and work-out rooms, and pleasant grounds. In the old days Pushkino hosted a rather impressive hall of fame, with reported visits from figures who played key roles in 20th century politics, including Leonid Brezhnev, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Indira Gandhi and Umberto Eco. You never know who you'll see lounging by the pool. Bookings with and without treatments can be done [here](#).

Aminevsky baths

If what you're craving is the well-loved pastime of banya relaxation with friends, then Aminevsky provides one of the most private, luxurious and under-the-radar banya experiences in Moscow. Situated in the Ochackovo-Matveyevskoye district, Aminevsky gives you a choice of seven themed log cabins, each with its own built-in banya and housing up to 17 guests. With a variety of expert treatments on offer, it'd be hard not to leave feeling replenished after a day, or longer, spent here. You pay by the hour for the log cabin plus any services that you choose. These include a range of banya delights, from being beaten with birch branches to having a peel (which can be performed with a kessa mitt (excellent for circulation), and a broad range of different types of post-banya cold-water bathing. For frequenters of the banya, plunging into cold water is said to tone the skin, strengthen the metabolism and relieve fatigue. Aminevsky banya offers eleven variations of plunge pools, from a Siberian pool that uses herbs from the forest to milk and eucalyptus, each with its own unique health properties. For more information, prices and reservations, see the site [here](#).

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