

RUSSIANS PREFER PLANES BUT CHOOSE TRAINS FOR SHORT DISTANCE



According to the Russian Aviation Agency, air passenger traffic in Russia has grown more than 7% in the last two months. Russians seem to prefer flying to travelling by rail.

A number of destinations across Russia is easily accessible by plane while traveling by rail takes more time and is less convenient. **Experts point out that while trains were preferred in the past especially thanks to lower prices of tickets, in recent years the prices of airplane tickets became comparable.** Airlines lowered the costs thanks to governmental subsidies while railway generally increased their prices.

Railways used to be the cheapest, most reliable, and most accessible means of transportation. However, today a short distance trip by train like Moscow - Saint Petersburg, which is a very popular route in Russia, takes around 12 hours and costs 3,000 rubbles. By plane the passengers pay the same price but travel only 40 minutes.

“Air transportation accounts for about ten percent of all trips on inter-city routes but 90 percent in international transportation,” said Yelena Conjuva, a researcher from the Moscow Institute of Transportation Policy.

For many travelers airlines offer more options than the railway especially in terms of booking. Plane tickets are offered by a number of different air companies and the travelers can use various websites for comparing the prices and lengths of routes. With respect to trains, the Russian railway is a monopoly and there is no other company that operates trains in Russia.

However, Yelena Conjuva explained that trains are still very popular: “Railways are an important mode of transportation if we speak about intercity route because on these routes about thirty percent of all transport in Russia is made by railway”

One of the advantages of train travel is that trains usually arrive to central locations of the city while airports are often located far away and travelers spend hours getting in the city center. No fees on baggage in trains are yet another advantage of the rail.

“The difference of course is that people prefer to travel by rail for shorter distances because it is usually cheaper and more convenient. But for international routes we tend to choose air transport,” said Yelena Conjuva.

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