

SWITZERLAND WELCOMES MORE RUSSIAN TOURISTS



Growing number of Russian tourists head to Switzerland.
Favourable exchange rate attracts wealthy Slavs.

Switzerland is one of the few destinations that did not suffer the decline of interest among Russian tourists. According to the Swiss National Tourist Board **the number of tours and stays of Russians in the country from January until July 2009 even grew by 9%** on average.

The greatest growth was recorded in May when the number of tours rose by 32% and in July when there was 20% more tours of Russians. However, the number of overnight stays decreased by 3% over the same period. Switzerland is thus affected by the latest trend in tourism adapting to the financial crisis - **people are willing to travel but reduce their holiday expenses and prefer shorter stays.**

According to the Russian Union of Tourism Industry the constant numbers of Russian tourists can be explained by several factors. First of all, most of the travelers come from wealthier classes and were not affected by the economic downturn. Furthermore, the Swiss franc is now cheaper than Euro and thus the prices in Switzerland are more attractive than in the neighboring countries. Also, the **Swiss image of a quiet stress-free haven in the middle of Europe influences Russians as well.**

The Swiss authorities are well aware of the importance of Russian market. In 2009 the official budget for promotion of the country in Russia was thus increased by 14%. The intensified campaigns focused mainly on the promotion of summer vacations as well as city tours. The latest statistics suggest that this strategy was successful - Russians took the 8th position among countries with the greatest number of tours to the Alpine nation.

The Geneva Tourist Board admitted that travelers from the Russian market are the only ones among the top 10 countries whose numbers are going up in 2009. During the first 6 months of this year 3.5% of foreign tourists in Geneva came from Russia. However, this number includes leisure tourists, business travelers as well as diplomats. At the same time, the general preference of cheaper vacations could be recorded in Geneva too - last year 75% of Russians stayed in 4-5 star hotels; in 2009 the most popular accommodation facility were 3-4* hotels.

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