

RUSSIAN RAILWAYS TRANSPORTED SIGNIFICANTLY FEWER PASSENGERS



Russian Railways recorded decreased interest of travelers by almost 12% in 2009. The drop in passenger numbers was more significant on short-distance routes because of the competition of buses.

In 2009, the number of Russian Railways passengers on long-distance routes declined by 11.8% to 119.6 million travelers. The decreased numbers of the company, which is a monopoly within Russia, were caused not only by the crisis but also unreasonably high ticket prices.

Not even summer discounts of the tickets for some routes and trains helped to avoid the striking drop in the traffic. **In December 2009 the amount of travelers compared to the December 2008 decreased even more - by 14.2%.** The same decline was recorded in November (14%) and October (13.7%), reported Travel.ru.

However, if we look at the amount of transported passengers per one kilometer, the numbers dropped only by 10.6% in 2009 (and by 10.5% in December). These figures suggest that **the decline in rail transport was greater for shorter routes**, where the rail fights a strong competition of regional buses offering more favorable prices. In an effort to win greater market, last summer the Russian Railways even tried in Moscow to ban the bus operators from taking passengers from the capital's railway stations.

On the long-distanced routes, where coaches are no competitors and air transport is often not available, the decline of rail traffic was not as significant. **As airports and the infrastructure are developing however the number of passengers preferring comfortable and faster air transport is growing at the expense of the rail.** Thus, the Russian Railways has been gradually losing travelers over the last years where air routes between major cities were established.

An increased demand for trips to Black Sea resorts prevented the rail from recording even greater drop in traffic numbers. Since over the summer many Russian tourists opted for cheaper holidays at home rather than abroad the amount of passengers traveling to southern resorts markedly increased.

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