

MOSCOW WELCOMED ALMOST 10% FEWER FOREIGN TOURISTS IN 2009



Number of foreign tourists visiting Moscow in 2009 decreased by almost 10%. The tourism board supports the construction of new hotels to press the hotel room prices down.

According to the latest figures released by the Committee for Tourism in Moscow the number of foreign visitors in the Russian capital decreased last year by 9.7%. **The city welcomed 3.7 million foreigners compared to 4.1 million in 2008**, reported Tourinfo.ru

According to the tourism board, the drop in Moscow's tourist arrivals is however much smaller than the overall decline in other sectors of economy caused by the crisis. Moreover, the greatest decline was recorded in the 1st quarter when the amount of foreign visitors in Moscow dropped by 19.8%, while at the end of 2009 the decline was only 10%.

Last year Moscow was a popular destination especially among tourists from Israel who represented the largest group of foreigners visiting the city. Their number increased by 19.8% in comparison to 2008. With respect to Russia's neighboring countries, the capital was visited the most by people from Belarus - their number increased by 36.7%.

The sharpest fall in tourist arrivals was recorded for visitors from the UK (-32.3%) and Turkey (-30.7%). However the amount of tourists from the U.S. (-15.2%), China (-12.5%), and Italy (-10.2%) also declined.

Moscow's tourism board is currently seeking solutions to minimize the impact of the global downturn on tourism. The authorities thus announced their support of the construction of new hotels in the capital city which should increase the competition and force other hoteliers to reduce the prices. For 2010 the board is optimistic and forecasts the inbound tourism will return to the level of 2008 and Moscow will welcome more than 4 million foreign tourists.

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