

CRIMEA EXPECTS USD2 BILLION FROM SUMMER TOURISM



Crimean officials have projected that more than 4 million tourists will visit the peninsula's beaches this year, according to RIA Novosti, the state-operated Russian language news agency. This forecast is expected to boost the economy of the region up by \$2 billion (125 billion rubles).

Yelena Yurchenko who is the Crimean Tourism Minister said that **most of the 4.3 million visitors expected to visit Crimea in 2015 are from Russia.**

Crimea was annexed from Ukraine by Russia in March, 2014. The annexation was widely applauded domestically. However, the West condemned the move and imposed sanctions on most of the investment in Crimea. According to Rostourism, Russia's tourism watchdog, 6 million visitors toured Crimea annually before the annexation. Most of the 6 million tourists were from Ukraine.

The economy of Crimea is dependent on tourism. Therefore, Russia is making efforts to rejuvenate visits to Crimea. Because of the Russian and Ukrainian guard posts on the Crimean border, the land route via mainland Ukraine has had a significant drop in use by visitors.

Therefore, Yurchenko said that more than half of the tourists in 2015 will visit Crimea by plane while 45% will visit by the Kerch Strait ferry. Implementation of plans for Russia to construct a multibillion dollar bridge between Crimea and Russia is underway. However, the construction of the bridge will not be over until 2018.

Therefore, Crimea may introduce an airline to boost ties with Russia. According to Kriminform, a news agency, the United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) in **Russia proposed to develop a local air carrier.** The proposal is being considered by the Crimean authorities. In accordance with the proposal by UAC, the airline which is yet to be named, will cost \$24 million (1.45 billion rubles). According to Sergei Turik, the UAC spokesman, it is expected that the air carrier will transport almost 0.5 million passengers in its first year of operation in 2016.

The air carrier will be based in Simferopol, Crimea's capital. It will serve Crimea from 14 locations in Russia, with very high chances that it will extend to 36 destinations in the long run. According to the news agency RBC, 90% of all trips will be from locations other than Moscow. To bolt sanctions from EU and US on Crimea, the airline will be supplied with six Sukhoi Superjet 100 airliners owned by UAC.

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