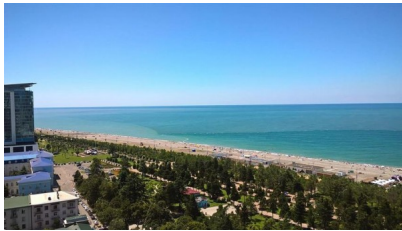


TOURISM IN GEORGIA BENEFITS FROM IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA



The relations between Russia and Georgia have been finally warming after several years of crisis. This is evidenced by the rate of trade between the two countries, and the rapid growth of business tourists as an indicator of the recovery of business connections. Tourism in Georgia naturally benefits as well

The demand for flights to Georgia among the Russian business travelers has increased by 59% in the past months compared to last year.

According to the Georgian National Statistics Service, the **trade turnover between Georgia and Russia between January and July 2016 increased to \$ 459.6 million**, up by 16%, compared to the same period in 2015. The export of Georgian goods to Russia grew by 119.2% during the period to \$ 101.6 million, while imports increased by 15.1%, to \$ 358 million.

However, tourism in Georgia improved not only thanks to the business travelers. According to the Russian Statistic Agency, in the first quarter of this year, 106 thousand of Russian tourists visited Georgia, which is 27.7% more than in the same period last year.

The Russian travel search and reservation engine "Tutu.Ru" stated that in August this year, the number of searches of tickets from Moscow to Tbilisi grew almost 1.5 times, and to the city of Batumi - more than twice. **Along with the increased demand the ticket prices also went up: by 14% from Moscow to Tbilisi and by 6% from Moscow to Batumi.**

"The interest of tourists from Russia is clearly on the rise. 36% more potential travelers in Russia search for flights to Georgia compared to the last year. And ticket sales in this area increased by 31% when compared to the period from January to August 2015 with the same period in 2016," said the experts.

The most popular months to travel to Georgia are from May to August. In July there were registered record ticket sales - 32% higher than the average sales per month, and 6% more than last July.

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