

St. Petersburg: Inconsistent Tourism Season of 2010

The 2010 tourist season was rather complicated for tourist companies and agents, whose main business destination was internal and incoming tourism. The average number of overseas tourists, interested in standard group tours was reduced to 10–15 %.

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However, thanks to the beginning of the operation of passenger port "Sea facade", the number of cruise tourists who visited St. Petersburg increased by 12–17 % , that by expert estimations will allow to keep the number of foreign visitors at the level of 2009 and probably to surpass it.

The year 2010 has confirmed the tendency of Russian and foreign individual tourist stream growth. Individuals often arrange the tickets and book their accommodation themselves. The number of individual tourists could have been even higher, if there would not have been so many challenges with obtaining Russian entry visa that actually enforces the overseas tourists to use the local tourist operators' assistance. However the increase in demand for individual tours has led to the growth of the number of "low-budget" tourists, both among Russians and foreign visitors. This fact created a new market and operating conditions for tourist companies.

There is also one more interesting and important reason, which promoted the growth of the tourist stream to St. Petersburg. There has been a high exchange rate difference between ruble and euro, which has lowered the real cost of tours to Petersburg. In such way it has allowed the particular segment of the tourist target audience – those who postponed their holidays in Russia before, waiting for the proper moment – to undertake a trip to St. Petersburg.

The tourist stream has been also highly supported by the stable price rate for hotel rooms and entrance tickets to museums and theatres. The increased demand for the river and channel trips has been followed by the growth of tourist offers and occurrence of new services in a branch segment.

Considerable inflow of Russian tourists – Moscow tourists to be precise – has been caused and stimulated by such natural cataclysms, as forest fires. This internal tourist stream has increased the burden of city hotel fund by 30–40 %.

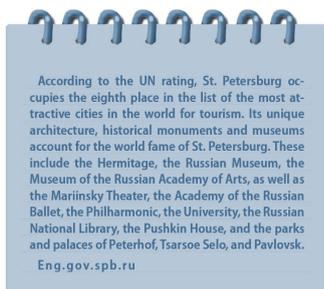


Thanks to significant efforts of the local police and military forces the security level for external and internal visitors has raised up to 70% that has been proved by the obvious decrease in the number of pick pocketing and other criminal incidents, which involved the city guests.

Among the most challenging problems of the local tourism is according to the experts the lack of quality buses that are often used as a part of cruise trip, and also an important problem with hotels, where hot water supply is usually interrupted in the peak season. Among the negatives are also the terrible traffic jams, which appear 24/7, as well as closures of many traffic lines and roads for repair during the high season.

The tourist surveys report, that in general the visitors are satisfied with the service level and quality of local tourist agents. But the main disadvantage is noted in the accommodation prices and living expenses, which are even higher than the average rates in Europe. According to the expert analyses this issues lower the St. Petersburg's competitive opportunities in the international tourist market.

In spite of the low decrease in the volume of some tours, the general tourist stream to St. Petersburg will surpass the 2009 level, but obviously there's no guarantee that this positive tendency will continue developing, first of all it will depend on accommodation and living expenses prices and entry fees to the museums and cultural events, that unfortunately tend to grow each year.



Photos: Boxx

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Date: 2010-09-27

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-tourist-season-of-2010-ups-and-downs-article1317>