

New Tourist Police Unit Not Ready to Help Moscow Visitors

With well over five and a half million tourists visiting Moscow annually in the past few years, officials have deemed it necessary to implement a new team of tourist police, instructed how to respond to the needs and concerns of visitors from all over the world. Having only recently been placed into action, in July, this police form has nevertheless proven to be a bit of a disappointment.



Several first-hand accounts, including one from an undercover journalist, have shown that this police force, supposedly trained to respond to questions from various foreign travelers, were unable to live up to their expectations. Several were completely unable to communicate in English, and others were unable to provide even the most basic of directions to popular Moscow tourist destinations.

The chairman for the Moscow Committee for Tourism and Hospitality Management, Sergei Spilko, compared the team of Moscow tourist police with other such police forces found in cities across Europe, indicating that the Moscow force had been trained in skills ranging from basic foreign language comprehension to interpersonal skills. Without directly remarking on the supposed shortcomings of the new Moscow tourism police force, Spilko did indicate that these were only the initial stages of the operation and that further expansion is already underway.



This new force will not be taking to the streets alone, however, which may prove to a fact that greatly improves the reputation of Moscow's tourism efforts. Accompanying the police force there will also be a number of volunteer members from the Moscow State Tourism Industry Institute. Aware of how foreign visitors respond to certain modes of speech, as well as body language – especially in regards to English speaking tourists – these volunteers have been trained to assist tourists on a more personal, in-depth level. Their appearance is automatically rendered more friendly and approachable than that of the police

force, as they will not be sporting official uniforms. Instead, they will be identified by bright t-shirts that read, "Welcome to Moscow." These volunteers will be stationed throughout the Moscow city center, ready to assist tourists in any way possible.



While these initial, negative impressions regarding Moscow's new tourism police force have certainly raise a great many doubts, it can be interpreted as an important learning experience, a sort of test drive, so to say. Officials are now more firmly aware of any weak areas in their force that require additional support, and through the inclusion of a well-trained volunteer force, it may be expected that Moscow's tourist based efforts have not yet been in vain.

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