

CHANGES IN MOSCOW: DOUBLE DECKER BUSES AND TOURIST CARDS



Tourism stakeholders in Moscow have worked hard to develop an image of the city as one of the most significant tourist centers in the world. Moscow has become one of the top venues for various events and growing number of travelers visit the Russian capital every year. However, Moscow is still facing various challenges that the local authorities plan to solve this year.

In the first quarter of 2012, the number of foreign tourists increased by 21%. In 2011, the recorded increase was 12% compared to 2010. Based on the data, tourism representatives believe that Moscow is now playing bigger role in the tourist market. Annual events and festivals are particularly attractive to inbound travelers. Pancake Week, various cultural festivals or a recent re-enactment festival managed to draw tens of thousands of visitors.

Sergie Shpilko, the head of the Moscow Committee for Tourism and Hotel Industry, strongly supports the **idea that these events will help Moscow match what Rio de Janeiro or Venice has achieved in terms of famous carnivals**. Most of the festivals however are designed for locals so the committee wants to make them more international.

Local authorities also plan to launch excursions on double decker buses in the near future with audio guides in 8 different languages. The buses have already been bought and will be utilized for sightseeing.

All-purpose tourist cards are also soon to be released. These cards will allow travelers to visit different sights for lower price, use public transport, and use it as a discount card as well. River cruises are also being prepared.

Among the most important demands of foreign visitors are more affordable hotels. This however is a challenge for Moscow because of the high prices in the real estate industry at present. According to Euromonitor International, within four years there will be an increase in the number of hotel rooms from 37, 500 to 51, 700.

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