

RUSSIA NEEDS TO ATTRACT VISITORS FROM US AND WESTERN EUROPE



World Travel Market had released their latest tourism update during its Vision Conference in the Russian capital, Moscow. The study revealed that Russia's poor image among other countries impedes its maximum inbound tourism potentials to attract more foreign travelers especially those from Western Europe and the US.

According to the Euromonitor International data, the country's inbound tourist arrivals for the year 2012 exhibited a significant growth of 26 million tourist arrivals. Conversely, Mantas Kaluina, WTM Senior Research Analyst, told the Russian delegates during this year's Vision Conference that **Russia's inbound tourism industry is still dependent upon travelers from its neighboring countries**, and that there is a huge necessity to improve tourism flows from Western Europe and US markets. She also added the aspects that contributed to the country's poor image overseas such as infrastructure, security, visa bureaucracy and its quality tourism services in general.

Neighboring countries, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, accounted almost half of the tourists, driving around 2 million, 3 million and 6 million visitors respectively. Foreseeing the year 2017, Euromonitor International anticipates insignificant changes of those figures.

Germany is Russia's strongest market in Western Europe. However, the figures for the years 2012 to 2017 will eventually fall short of approximately 1 million each year. Nevertheless, the number of tourists from China will increase more than a million by 2017.

The outbound market of Russia increased by 9% last year, brought about by the emergence of middle classes. Among the most preferred destinations are Finland, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. By the year 2017, Russian households in general will have the disposable income of US\$ 25,500 or 40%. Russia is also seen to have an additional 8 million travels overseas by that year which is considered as the biggest in the world apart from China.

For many Russians, traveling around the world is a booming trend. In fact, **half of the package holidays that cost between US\$ 600 to US\$ 1,500 were sold to Russians last year with Egypt, Greece and Turkey dominating the market.**

Online market will also encourage outbound travels, with total sales increasing by more than 10% each year until 2017. The largest categories include air tickets, hotels and social media. Euromonitor International also projects that global tourism industry will spur by 4% between the years 2012 to 2017.

Simon Press, WTM Reed Travel Exhibition Director predicted consistent growth in Russia's outbound tourism traffic which is apparently a good news among other countries. On the other hand, the result also shows that the country's inbound tourism venture needs extensive improvements to continually attract more visitors.

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