

SOCHI NOT CAPITALIZING ON WINTER OLYMPICS



The 2014 Winter Olympics hosted by Russian Sochi are coming fast. The tourism industry experts however warn that the country has missed its opportunity to capitalize on the event and promote Sochi to domestic and international tourists.

Sochi is one of the cities that have long been a popular tourist destination for Russians. However, the city has lost its popularity as many Russians found they could travel abroad for the same money. Sochi is not making any plans for tourists and may have lost its opportunity to be the focus of travel of the next Olympic Games.

Many people might be interested in the city as an Olympic site, but it is currently not being promoted as a city to visit. The only thing that people seem to know is that Sochi is hosting the Olympics, but in terms of domestic and foreign travel, with fewer than 100 days left until the Games, the country has little opportunity to capitalize on the fact and promote the city to visitors.

Studies have shown that Sochi's tourism numbers have declined in recent years. This is in part due to Olympic related construction and traffic jams. **The number of visitors went from 1.3 million travelers in 2012 to 900,000 today.** Even though Russians know where Sochi is and may think of visiting, the lack of targeted marketing effort has prevented the city from being a hallmark of visitors.

People will associate Sochi with the Olympics but after the Games are over why should the city continue to be known? Even though generally encouraging messages about Sochi are running around, negative messages in regard to the Games keep people away.

Russian tourists who want to visit Sochi often get discouraged by the high prices of hotel rooms - on average a room costs about 5,600 rubles for one night. A neighboring city Krasnodar offers hotel rooms for only 2,400 per night. Unfortunately, nearby regions aren't expecting to cash in on the winter games. Within 100 days the federal highways will show no trace that the Games will have taken place in Russia. It seems very likely that the city of Sochi will only be known as the site where the Olympic Games were held and not as a tourist mecca.

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