

# ITALIAN-RUSSIAN TOURISM TIES STRENGTHENED



The cross-year of tourism between Italy and Russia officially started on Nov 26 launched by Prime Minister Enrico Letta and President Vladimir Putin. Tourism is the area identified among the most promising for further development in the cooperation between the two countries.

From the Italian point of view, Russia remains a market with huge potential. In the last five years, among the non-EU countries, Russia has stood out from the point of view of tourism, when the number of Russian tourists increased by 15% each year.

In 2012, 632,000 Russians obtained Italian visas. It is a third of the total number of visas issued by Italian consulates worldwide. For 2013, according to estimates by the Embassy of Italy, **it is expected to release a total of over 900,000 visas for Russian tourists.**

According to a recent study of ENIT Moscow, only 10-15% of the 143 million inhabitants of Russia have traveled abroad. It is a large consumer base for foreign travel, if the growth of purchasing power and the rise of the so-called 'middle class' are taken into account.

According to forecasts by Goldman Sachs, the BRIC countries will dominate world tourism for the next 10 or 20 years, doubling the growth in average volumes. Although it is the least populated and least dynamic economy among the four giants of the acronym BRIC, Russia is, however, the market with the highest number of trips made abroad: the Russians make 1.3 times more trips overseas than the Chinese, 3.4 times more than Indians and 4.6 more compared to Brazilians.

**The final numbers on outbound Russian travel is associated with the number of travelers, which in the past five years has increased by 50%, compared with 41 % increase in Chinese travelers.**

Europe is the most acceptable macro destination for the Russian traveler, who no longer perceives it as a destination which is too expensive and inaccessible.

Italian operators must be able to respond to the changing demands and expectations of Russian tourists they have gained over the last 20 years. If initially trips were mostly tours and excursions into the cities of art, the ENIT study now shows that many Russians now visit Italy two or three times, addressing more niche forms of tourism such as visits to 'small towns' to participate in cultural or traditional festivals, gastronomy, spas and winter sports.

According to the data provided by the Bank of Italy, in 2012 Americans spent an average of €128 per person per day, the French €90 and the Germans €85, while the Russians registered an average of €150, second only to Japanese nationals.

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