

SOCHI: THOUSANDS OF TICKETS STILL UNSOLD



With less than two weeks to go until the opening ceremony of Olympic Games in Sochi on Feb 7, nearly 300,000 of tickets are yet to be sold. Even though this is Russia's first winter Olympics, spectators around the globe do not seem to show much interest in visiting the country.

There are many reasons that signify the lack of interest of foreign fans and their will to stay away. **Expensive flights, terrorist threats, lack of tourist excursions, long travel distances, and expensive hotels are some reasons that conclude to the fact.** However, hassles of visa and spectator passes are also counted as major cause of lack of demand. Sochi organizers announced that nearly 70 percent of the tickets have been sold for the Games.

According to reports, hockey, figure skating, snowboard, biathlon, and freestyle are most popular sports among spectators. With 70 percent tickets sold, there's still a lot of anticipation on the remaining 30 percent. According to the organizing committee, they are expecting a strong last minute ticket sales. They are confident that all the seats will be sold on the game day itself with no empty spaces to be seen.

According to market reports, Sochi had a total of 1.1 million tickets on offer and approximately 300,000 tickets are yet to be sold. However, the game authority has not yet confirmed the stats.

The sale for Sochi Olympic tickets began in February 2013 and was organized on the "first come first serve" basis. However, even after a year, there is still a huge number of seats left unsold. The Box offices are open in Sochi and Moscow.

The cheapest ticket costs 500 rubles, and the most expensive one is worth 40,000 rubles. Since the average monthly salary of people in Russian is around 30,000 rubles, people are expected to buy the middle range tickets for that matter. Many, however, complained that the least expensive tickets were out of stock and they had to end up buying the expensive ones.

Expensive flights are the main cause of turn down of international visitors. However, some feel that increased bureaucratic complexities became a major concern for people traveling from other countries.

Jan Serenander, MD of Jet Set Sports, also said that lack of tourist attractions and excursion spots is also one of the main reasons for fall out in the ticket sales. Security and other factors also play a major role in keeping international spectators away. Apparently, the risk of terrorism cannot be neglected as well with back-to-back suicide bombings in Volgograd killing 34 people last month. The place is about 640 kilometers from Sochi itself. Also, after video threatening post going viral it can become rather a great challenge to encourage even Russians to take active part in the Games.

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