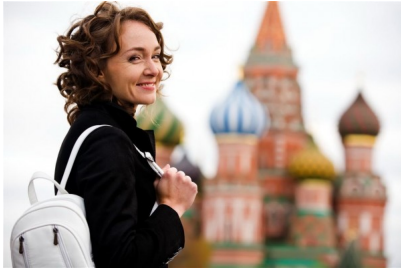


RUSSIAN TOURS BEING CANCELLED BY SCORES OF GLOBAL TOURISTS



A drop in visitor numbers in Russia is expected to some degree this year, given the current political turmoil in the region, the country's questionable actions and the potential security risks, but national agencies and tour companies are dismayed by the size of these declines and the vast number of holidaymakers from around the world that are cancelling their trips.

Visitors from many different countries have their own reasons for cancelling their tour of Russia.

It is no surprise that America is on the list of countries that are boycotting Russia and demanding a refund, with many citizen's following the lead of Washington and cancelling their trips based on Russian action in Ukraine, and there has been a similar move in Poland; however, this threat to Russian tourism is much more widespread and there are some interesting nations pulling away from the country for interesting reasons. The cancellations in South-east Asia and China are odd because of the general lack of interest shown in this political story but it is those made in "loyal" countries like Finland that have really come as a shock to Russian tourism officials. Additionally, an Albanian tour group is said to have reconsidered it decision to travel and sought assurances over safety and compensation should a full-blown war break out. This decline in interest is not just a reaction to what Russia are up to on the Ukrainian side of the boarder; it is also brought on by fear over the safety of Russian destinations in the immediate future and potential unrest in Moscow.

What impact will these political and security-based boycotts have on Russia's tourism revenue for 2014?

There is an undeniable global impact being seen here and the repercussions of the conflict with Ukraine are having a much greater effect on Russian tourism than the country expected. To make matters worse, it does not look like the situation will improve. The April-May time period is the prime booking window for the summer season yet it has seen such a dramatic drop in interest, with little chance of gains, that the season looks set to suffer.

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