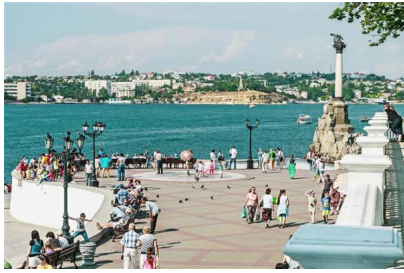


CRIMEA TOURIST NUMBERS DOWN FOR THE LAST MONTHS



The number of tourists traveling to Crimea has dropped markedly this year, according to the latest figures. The drop in tourist numbers was reported last week by Olga Burova, Crimea's Deputy Resorts and Tourism Minister.

Compared to the first half of 2013, there has been a 35 percent drop in tourists to Crimea in the first half of this year. This time last year, tourist numbers were up at 1.7 million, whereas this year, the figure has dropped to 1 million tourists.

In terms of the total number of people who traveled to Crimea in 2013 and 2014, a 30 percent drop was reported by Burova. In 2013, the number of people who visited Crimea totalled 2.5 million, which is a significant step up from the 1.7 million number of travelers this year. This fall in the country's tourism numbers is likely to have negative repercussions on Crimea's already flailing economy.

In the past, Crimea ordinarily received 6 million tourists each summer. Of this number, a significant proportion - two thirds - were from the Ukraine. But it is now evident that the annexation of the region by Russia from Ukraine in March this year has proved to have deleterious effects on the inflow of tourists, the bulk of whom used to be Ukrainians.

In response to this apparent setback in Crimea's tourism industry, Russia is taking a number of initiatives to fill this gap and restore the region's struggling economy. One such initiative was through the Federal Tourism Agency, where Russian government officials corresponded with state-owned companies to try and encourage them to offer employees Crimean package holidays.

The Russian annexation didn't just affect tourist numbers, it has also affected the way travelers enter the region. This year, more people are using ferry as their mode of transport to travel to Crimea, almost three times as much as in 2013. In the first half of 2014, a total of 25 percent of tourists came by ferry.

There has also been a 60 percent increase in the number of people traveling by plane compared to 2013. Travel by train has dropped to below 50 percent of what it was last year. So this year, of the number of tourists traveling to Crimea, 55% came by train (down from last year) and 20 percent came by plane (up from last year).

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