

RUSSIAN TOURISTS ARE BACK IN TURKEY



Turkey regained its status as the top destination for Russian tourists. Currently about 40% of sales of Russian tour agencies account to Turkey.

The renewal of charter flights between Russia and Turkey has led to a significant increase of the demand for the country. Some tour operators reported over 40% of sales accounted to Turkey in September. **This is ten times more than last month and corresponds to the same period in 2015.** Tunisia is second (34%) in popularity among Russian tourists, while Greece is third with 28%. Russia itself is fourth with 27%, according to the tour agents.

Turkey is also in the lead in the number of requests - 30% (3% higher than in September last year), followed by Thailand (12%) and Tunisia (8.6%).

Tour agencies rejoice over the recent developments. The representative of Tez Tour Larissa Akhanova says that in the velvet season the trend is even more noticeable. Tour sales have increased twice compared to 2015 due to pent-up demand and the lack of offer to Egypt. "High interest in Turkey was recorded not only by inhabitants of Moscow, but also residents of other regions," Akhanova added. Her claim is supported by the fact that flights from nine Russian cities are in all cases filled to the maximum.

The ban of tour sales to Turkey, introduced in November 2015 after the Turkish Air Force shot down a Russian jet in Syria, was canceled at the end of June this year. Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev approved a decree to abolish the ban of charter flights to Turkey on August 26.

The Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR) estimated that tens of thousands of Russian tourists will visit Turkey in the velvet season. However, according to executive director of ATOR, Maya Lomidze, during September and October Turkey will be visited by about 150 thousand people. This number corresponds to the numbers from 2015.

Akhanova notes that the majority of flight programs to Turkey are planned until mid-November. At this time, the demand will be high enough. After that everything will depend on the prospects of renewal of the tour sales to Egypt.

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