

70% OF RUSSIAN TOURISTS IN ITALY BOOK THEIR HOLIDAY ONLINE



Russian tourism inflow to Italy is registering signs of revival, with significant developments in the ways of booking. 70% of Russian tourists coming to the country for holiday book their accommodation online, according to Carlo Biraschi, consultant of the Emilia Romagna region and former director of ENIT Moscow.

As a result, the Italian tourism authorities in the regions review their promotion strategies and re-orient the marketing plans. "It's the case of Emilia Romagna where I work, but also of Tuscany and Sardinia. This in addition to pushing actions to other markets, reviewing partnerships with tour operators, several of which are failing, while the nation is pushing its state employees to go on vacation to Crimea. On this subject, however, the results are not that which are expected," according to Biraschi.

When it comes to Turkey and Sharm el Sheikh, Russia is relaunching the flights. **Because sea and sun and the classic and inexpensive beach holiday is what Russian tourists seek.**

Only 30% of visas are issued by tour operators. "In 2015 the figure had already dropped from a historic 70%, amounting to 38%. Today the balance is completely reversed. Online agencies have taken action to provide service and issuing visas is now a smooth process. In multiple locations across the country, online travel industry has a medium-high purchasing power," Biraschi notes.

In an economic environment, which saw a 4-5% GDP growth, today Russia is in crisis and the collapse in oil prices has aggravated the situation. **"Italian tourism destinations have always offered more expensive holidays compared to Turkey or Greece, but made up for it with quality.** In fact, Russian company Aeroflot doubled the number of daily flights to Bologna. They are also thinking of launching charters to other airports. Turin is as good as sealed (from the winter season), while the company is studying the feasibility of Verona."

Other sources say that S7 Airlines are already selling tickets for the summer to Pisa and Catania. Other two companies - VIM Airlines and Ural are planning to launch flights to Rimini, with up to three weekly connections. Aeroflot already operates four daily flights to Malpensa (Milano), many to Fiumicino in Rome and two to Venice. From Bergamo there is a connection flight with the Vnukovo airport in Moscow. It is operated by the airline Pobeda which belongs to the Aeroflot group.

In 2015, 481 thousand Russian tourists visited Italy, according to Rostourism data (the Federal Agency of Tourism). The number for this year remains to be seen, but presumably it will be higher.

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