

RUSSIAN OUTBOUND TOURISM RETURNS TO PRE-CRISIS LEVEL



Turkey is once again a hit with Russian tour operators. At the end of 2015, the sale of Turkish holidays was banned in Russia after a Russian jet was shot down by the Turkish army. It has been a year since the sales were relaunched which boosted the Russian outbound tourism.

Russian tour operators and travel agents note that trips to Turkey have accounted for one-third to more than half of all sales. **From January to September this year, 4.1 million Russians visited the Turkish resorts.** This was reported by Interfax citing the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. These numbers are very close to the levels of 2014. At that time, according to the Federal State Statistics Service, Turkey was visited by 4.2 million Russians.

Outbound Tourism Numbers Rising

The Russian outbound tourism market has been falling for two years in a row. The peak was reached in 2014, when 42.9 million Russians traveled abroad. In 2015 and 2016 the market fell by 19 and 9%, respectively. Data for January – September of this year have not yet been published. However, over the first half of the year the tourist flow increased by 30% to 17.1 million people.

In addition to the higher demand for the Turkish sector, sales growth was also caused by stabilization of the economic situation in the country. Other popular destinations are Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Spain, according to the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR). Tourists also actively traveled to Montenegro and Croatia.

The most expensive destination was Cyprus. The average tour to this country cost 1,215 EUR. The lowest average price was for Bulgaria (610 EUR) and Montenegro (770 EUR).

Moreover, according to Cyprus' statistical office, from January to September 3 million foreign tourists arrived on the island. Russian inflow was second with 703,446 arrivals. By the end of the year, almost 1 million Russians are expected to visit the island.

Domestic Tourism Stable

Meanwhile, domestic tourism flow significantly exceeds the foreign flow. In 2016, according to estimates, it amounted to more than 50 million. In 2017 domestic tourism grew by about 10%. According to a survey, no more than 28% of Russians have passports. This signifies that the prospects for development

of the domestic markets are high.

Tourists mainly travel around Russia independently. Although, in recent years organized group holidays have grown significantly. Five years ago, it was 5%, now it has increased to 25%, according to experts.

Popularization of tours in Russia, new routes and good prices – that is what attract tourists to buy trips from travel agents.

All in all, the tourism market is expected to completely come back to pre-crisis levels in 2018 provided that flight connections with Egypt are restored, according to experts. At the moment, there is good demand for early bookings. For example, Russian tourists are already buying summer trips to Turkey, Cyprus, Spain, Greece, Croatia and Montenegro.

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