

# RUSSIA EXPECTS MANY VISITORS FOR FIFA WORLD CUP



The FIFA World Cup kicks off on June 14 and Russia is finalizing preparations for the biggest sporting event of the year. Along with the 32 teams involved, the country is preparing to welcome masses of fans and many visitors from all over the world who want to experience the atmosphere of the World Cup.

According to estimates, about 1.5 million foreigners will come to Russia during the event. **Overall, over 1.8 million tickets were sold for the matches**, according to the official website of FIFA World Cup. 568,448 were sold between December and January. The foreign fans who acquired most tickets are those from the USA (85,941), Brazil (72,061), Colombia (63,955) and Germany (60,317).

## Russia vs. Brazil

Going into more details regarding the many visitors planning to come, 570 000 foreign football fans are expected in the country. This is an assessment of the “unique” visitors of matches, based on data on the sale of tickets. In comparison, Brazil welcomed 1 million foreign tourists. Out of this, some 600 thousand visitors attended the football matches.

The contribution of tourism to Russia’s GDP is projected at \$2 billion for 2018. Of course, the lion’s share of these effects is accountable to the World Cup. Organizers expect that the tourist flow will not only increase, but also the level of expenditure will change.

One of the reasons is that tourists will arrive on average for 12 days. Secondly, the composition will change. There will be more guests from far abroad, who are more solvent. And thirdly, there is no escape from the rise in prices for transport, accommodation and food, which will affect not only the many visitors at the FIFA World Cup but also ordinary tourists.

In comparison, the total contribution of tourism to the GDP during the World Cup in Brazil was \$2 billion. They took into account both internal and external tourism. According to estimates, the contribution of external tourism amounted to about \$1 billion.

## A boost for an already positive trend

The World Cup comes as a boost in an already positive period for Russian tourism. In 2017, the number of visitors of the capital Moscow grew by 13.2%. Inflow in St. Petersburg, meanwhile, increased by 8.4%. The number of tourists in Moscow amounted to 21.5 million people, while St. Petersburg was visited by 7.5 million people.

According to estimates, **in 2018 the average annual occupancy of hotels in Moscow could grow by 5%, amounting to 80% in total**. In St. Petersburg a 3% increase is expected, reaching 71%. The World Cup will have great effects on the sector, as well as free railway travel and affordable airfare rates.

Along with the World Cup, the driver of tourism growth in Russia is the weakening of the ruble, as well as active advertising of Moscow and St. Petersburg abroad. Moreover, the country is able to

attract tourists from countries with which Russia has signed a visa-free travel agreement.

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