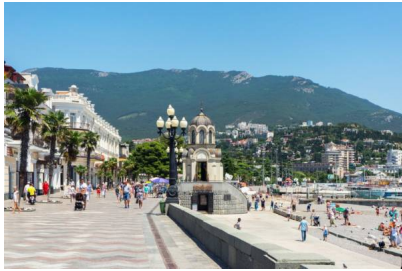


CRIMEAN TOURISM AIMING FOR ABSOLUTE POST-SOVIET RECORD



Despite the skeptical predictions during the spring and certain infrastructural problems, the Crimean tourism industry showed very good results in the high tourist season of 2015. According to the forecasts of the federal and regional authorities, the Crimean Peninsula will break the tourist record of the post-Soviet period before reaching new year.

As of September 1, 2018, more than 6.3 million people visited Crimea, according to figures presented by travel expert, Mr. Safonov. A little later, in the media, there was evidence that the number of holidaymakers could even reach 7 million by December 31.

Safonov's forecast does not seem exaggerated, quite the contrary. **In early September of this year, it was reported the about 5.6 million people visited the peninsula, which is more than 30% more than in the same period last year.** At the beginning of October, the number of tourists in Crimea reached, according to official numbers, 6.16 million.

Interest not declining

The interest in the destination is not declining. Recently, the agency RIA Novosti, citing analytical data from the company Biletix, reported that Crimea was on the second place in the ranking of Russia's most popular destinations for vacation during the New Year holidays. Sochi took the first place (6.2% of sales of domestic airline tickets), but the demand for Crimea is growing rapidly and is already at 4.7%. Yalta, according to data, is ranked third in terms of popularity in Russia, second only to Sochi and Gelendzhik.

Crimean bridge a growth factor

According to the Minister of Resorts and Tourism of Crimea, Vadim Volchenko, the Crimean tourism season on the peninsula proved to be extremely successful. The head of the department linked this achievement with the opening of traffic on the Crimean bridge and the completion of the reconstruction of the Simferopol Airport. This made the peninsula more accessible and, at the same time, improved the image.

The findings of the Minister are confirmed by statistics released a few days ago. From the moment the traffic opened on the bridge until October 31, more than 3 million cars drove across the bridge. Taking into account the fact that the cost of the ferry crossing through the Kerch Strait was about 2 thousand roubles, the guests of Crimea and residents saved about 6 billion rubles over half a year.

New prospects for Crimea

According to officials, the launch of rail traffic on the Crimean bridge next year will open up new prospects for the Crimean tourism industry. It is estimated that Crimea can receive up to 10 million tourists per year. However, it is necessary to work to ensure that the distribution of tourists during the year becomes more balanced and even. To do this, it is needed to focus on the development of year-round health resorts with medical programs, spa centers and entertainment complexes.

Another prospect for the development of tourism will be the opening of the Tavrida highway. This will connect Sevastopol and Kerch. "This is by far the most important issue that will make it easier for all travelers to move around the peninsula on their own and public transport. The problem of traffic jams is concrete and it will be solved with this construction," an expert on the matter Dmitry Sharov said.

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