

SPAIN PREPARES TO LIVE WITHOUT RUSSIAN TOURISTS



Nearly 134,000 Russian tourists traveled to Spain in 2021 despite travel restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to the statistics on tourist movements at Borders (Frontur) prepared by the National Statistics Institute (INE).

These tourists spent last year in Spain a total of 228 million euros (13.09% more than in 2020), which means that **each Russian tourist entering Spain leaves on average about 1,703 euros (31.66% more than a year earlier)**, according to the latest tourist spending data provided by the INE.

Russian tourists have an average daily expenditure in Spain of around 119 euros, one of the highest among international tourists visiting the country, and spending an average of 14.35 days in the country.

Conflict in Ukraine Disrupts the Forecasts for 2022

The outlook for this year was very positive and it was hoped that the improved global health situation would contribute to a new boost in Russian tourism to Spain. Last September, the Russian Executive authorized new air routes with Spain and up to August, a total of 123,184 air seats had been scheduled between Russia and seven Spanish airports with direct connectivity.

Most of the seats were allocated to Barcelona (45,314), Alicante (27,064), Madrid (21,548) and Malaga (19,424) airports. The airports of Valencia (4,098), Tenerife Sur (4,056) and Palma de Mallorca (1,680) were also expecting to receive Russian tourists.

But since Feb 24 everything turned upside down. The invasion of Ukraine has caused all these positive prospects to collapse, and Russian citizens are rethinking tourist outings in the face of the international geopolitical situation.

On February 27, the European Union closed its airspace to all Russian airlines in a new package of sanctions on Russia in response to the invasion of Ukraine. Russia has responded, closing its airspace to 36 countries, including Spain.

The Russian Tourists: Stay Longer and Spend More

Russian tourist arrivals to Spain have registered significant ups and downs during the last decade. According to Frontur figures, the peak moment was in 2013, when 1.58 million Russian travelers visited the country.

Arrivals fell the following two years, coinciding with the occupation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas, preceding the current war in Ukraine. Subsequently, tourism recovered again and from 2016 to 2019 the trend was upward but again it was abruptly interrupted due to the pandemic.

Most of the Russian tourists stay overnight in hotels (80%) and their favorite activities

while visiting Spain are shopping (57%), city tours (54%) and cultural visits (49%).

Currently, the closure of airspace, coupled with other economic sanctions by Western governments against Russia such as the blocking of credit cards, suggests that this year Russian tourism will plummet throughout Europe and will have serious consequences in Spain.

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