

CYPRUS AND BULGARIA ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE COMING SUMMER SEASON



Russian tourists are highly esteemed guests in Cyprus and Bulgaria. Now, however, the customer base is falling away because of the EU sanctions against Russia. Turkey could come in third - at least in one region, the demand is rising.

In Cyprus and Bulgaria, the tourism industry is worried about the 2022 summer season. **The EU sanctions against Russia are likely to keep Russian guests away almost entirely.** Following the slump in sales caused by the pandemic, many companies fear that they will not be able to make ends meet for much longer. Turkey could benefit: Ankara opposes sanctions and is keeping its airspace open for Russian planes.

The Russian ambassador in Nicosia, Stanislav Ossadchi, bluntly told a Cypriot TV station shortly after the war began, "Where will Cyprus get Russian tourists? They won't come!" Nicosia had closed its airspace to Russian planes. Cyprus had shot itself in the knee, Ossadchi said. Russians would travel to Turkey instead and spend their money there.

Russians previously accounted for about 25 percent of vacationers on the island. "If we assume that we will lose all these guests, it will cost us up to two percent of our gross domestic product," warns Finance Minister Konstantinos Petridis.

A bad summer season is also on the horizon for Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. Hotels there are now housing war refugees from Ukraine. In addition to Russian and Ukrainian tourists, the 350,000 or so Russian owners of vacation properties could also miss out - there are currently no flight connections between the countries. There have also been hardly any bookings from Western and Central Europe since the beginning of the war. The country is probably too close to the theater of war.

It remains to be seen whether Russian vacationers will head to Turkey this year instead. There, too, the industry fears a slump. "If the war continues and there is no new development, only 30 percent of Russians will come," the head of the Etik Tourism Association, Mehmet Isler, told Turkish media. There are already cancellations, he added. **In 2021, 4.6 million tourists came from Russia, followed by about 3 million Germans and 2 million Ukrainians, according to the statistics agency.**

Real estate agents in Antalya, on the other hand, report significantly more inquiries from Russian and Ukrainian clients. Experts point out that current demand is two and a half times higher than usual at this time of year.

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