

RUSSIAN INBOUND TOURISM COLLAPSED LAST YEAR



restrictions.

Russian inbound tourism is - not surprisingly - at a standstill. According to the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (Ator), the number of visitors to the country fell by 96.1% in 2022. The country welcomed just over 200,000 foreign tourists. In 2019, this figure was 5 million visitors, a figure that dropped in 2020 due to covid

restrictions. Germans, who are traditionally the most numerous Europeans to visit Russia, were counted at 25,400 last year which is 33.3% less than a year earlier. In 2019 however, there were more than half a million German visitors.

Turkey is the second source market in the ranking with 22,600 people who arrived in 2022, which was almost the same number as in the previous year. The third is Iran, which was the source of 14,600 tourists to Russia - this is 24 times more than in 2021. The top ten source markets also include Kazakhstan, Cuba, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, the USA, and Armenia.

"The reasons for the drop in Russian inbound tourism are obvious: the closed airspace between Russia and the vast majority of European countries, as well as the impossibility of using Visa and Mastercard cards issued by foreign banks in Russia," explained the association in a statement.

Since February 2022, the date of the Russian invasion, Europe has almost completely closed its airspace to Russian aircraft. As a retaliatory measure, the national airline Aeroflot then suspended almost all its international flights except those to "friendly countries". The Russian inbound tourism thus stopped.

As for the Chinese, who were the most numerous tourists in the past, they have completely disappeared from the radar following the drastic health measures in the country.

In 2000, Russia and China signed an agreement on visa-free travel for tourist groups. In January 2021, the document was suspended due to the pandemic and has not yet been renewed. Negotiations between Russia and China on the resumption of visa-free travel are ongoing.

The first group of Chinese tourists will arrive in Moscow on February 23. Its arrival was postponed twice in anticipation of the restart of visa-free tourist exchanges, but in the end, the tourists were granted visas.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, most foreign tourists in Russia were Chinese. In 2019, 1.2 million Chinese citizens entered the country under the visa-free group travel agreement, more than 60% of the total.

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