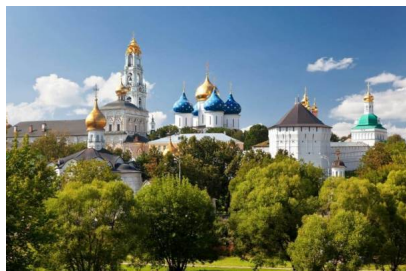


THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN GUESTS WITH ELECTRONIC VISAS IS GROWING IN RUSSIA



Since August 1st, Russia's new electronic visa system has resulted in a 25% increase in hotel bookings for tourists compared to the previous month and a 40% increase from last year. The ease of obtaining visas attracts tourists from countries such as China, Turkey, Iran, India, and even Europe. However, the current influx of travelers consists mostly of independent tourists, with limited numbers. Group tours to the country will not grow significantly until next year.

According to the booking platform Ostrovok, the number of hotel bookings made by foreigners in Russia increased by 25% in August compared to July and 40% compared to last year. Experts noted that July saw no significant growth compared to June. Additionally, the percentage of bookings made from foreign IP addresses for Russian hotels increased by 7.7% in two months (July and August) compared to the previous year. Experts attribute the growth of foreigners' demand for hotel accommodation in August to the launch of electronic visas to Russia. This was for citizens of 55 countries.

This type of visa permits a stay of approximately two weeks in the country and costs around \$52. According to Alla Gordienko, the head of the visa and migration department at Continent Express, there is currently a high demand for this visa among applicants from India, Turkey, China, Iran, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Spain.

According to experts, electronic visas have increased entry flows for independent travel rather than tour operators.

According to Ostrovok data, citizens of India, UAE, Germany, Turkey, Finland, and Saudi Arabia lead in hotel accommodation bookings in Russia.

There has been a significant rise in the demand for visiting Irkutsk, with the number of reservations in August increasing threefold from the previous year. Similarly, Vladivostok has seen a double demand, while Moscow and Kazan have experienced increases of 58% and 50%, respectively. Other popular destinations in Russia include St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Sochi, Yekaterinburg, and Novosibirsk.

According to Ostrovok.ru, only 10% of bookings in August were made by tourists visiting Russia, despite positive trends.

Experts predict that the effect of electronic visas on the market will become more apparent next year since the current travel season in Russia is already drawing to a close. Group tours typically plan their trips well in advance, usually six months to a year beforehand. There has already been a noticeable increase in pre-bookings for the upcoming tourist season thanks to electronic visas. However, it's still being determined if these trips will ultimately take place.

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