

No State Help for Tourists in Tunisia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Stranded passengers waiting at the Tunis airport for the resumption of flights out of Tunisia on Friday.
Thibault Camus

No federal agency moved to evacuate any of the 200-plus Russian tourists stranded in Tunisia by rioting dubbed the “Jasmine Revolution,” but some managed to leave Sunday aboard a regular Transaero flight.

Thousands of tourists were stranded after President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the North African country Friday amid accusations of nepotism and rampant corruption.

The toppling of the 23-year government led to the closing of the country's airspace on Friday. The ban was lifted Saturday, with Transaero dispatching a Boeing 767 jet capable of seating 235 passengers to the capital, Tunis.

The plane headed back Sunday but was unable to pick up all Russians seeking to leave the country, a spokesman for the Federal Tourism Agency said, Itar-Tass reported.

The passengers had to pay for their tickets because it was a regular flight, not an evacuation, Tourism Industry Union spokeswoman Irina Tyurina said, Interfax reported.

Some tourists chose not to leave early despite the street riots, which did not affect the main tourist destinations, Itar-Tass said.

Various state agencies will be involved in “solving” the situation with stranded tourists, Federal Tourism Agency deputy head Alexander Radkov said Sunday. He did not say why they had not intervened earlier.

Many European travel agencies evacuated their clients, including some 4,000 Britons, 8,000 French and 9,000 Germans, by Sunday morning, Interfax reported.

Tunisia is a popular destination for Russians, with 180,000 tourists visiting the country each year, according to figures from the Federal Tourism Agency. An off-season trip to Tunisia can be booked for just \$300.

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