The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Vladivostok Open Skies Policy a First

By Roland Oliphant

November 08, 2011



Vladivostok's airport is looking forward to up to 5 million more passengers per year and international hub status. **Sergei Porter**

Vladivostok Airport is set to reposition itself as a major international hub for the Pacific rim after launching the country's first ever "open skies" scheme — allowing any aircraft from any country to land regardless of restrictions that affect the rest of the country.

Until now, airlines have only been able to use Russian airports under bilateral agreements between states, which specify which carriers can fly to which airports. Aircraft were allowed to land outside a bilateral agreement, but only to refuel.

The new open-skies status — conferred on the airport in a letter from the Transportation Ministry on Nov. 3, according to Kommersant — allows aircraft stopping off at Vladivostok to take on passengers and cargo.

The airport's management hopes that the new legal status could increase passenger numbers to as much as 5 million a year, as the Far Eastern capital lures Chinese airlines seeking

to circumvent the limitations of their government's own bilateral air transportation treaties with the United States, the newspaper reported.

But the new hub will face stiff competition from Seoul's Inchon Airport, 600 kilometers to the south, which handles about 30 million passengers a year.

Sheremetyevo Airport, which manages Vladivostok's airport, said it had received expressions of interest from Chinese, U.S. and Australian carriers, but did not name them, Kommersant reported.

Vladivostok's small Soviet-era airport has been run by Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport since 2008, when President Dmitry Medvedev gave the Moscow management company the brief to upgrade the facility ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit that the Far Eastern city will host in September 2012.

Flights will begin operating from the new terminal in February, Vladivostok Airport director Dmitry Chernenko told the Regnum news agency Tuesday. The airport, up to an hour's drive from the city, will also receive a new rail link.

Earlier this month, Basic Element announced a joint venture with Changi International, the company that runs Singapore's main airport, to develop an international hub around four airports the holding owns in the Krasnodar region.

Basic Element did not respond to e-mailed questions about whether they, too, would seek open-skies status for their project.

Calls to the Transportation Ministry and the Sheremetyevo Airport Authority, which manages Vladivostok Airport, went unanswered Tuesday.

The Federal Air Transportation Agency may lift temporary restrictions placed on four airlines flying to Europe over safety shortcomings.

VIMAvia, Dagestan Airlines, Yakutia Airlines and Tatarstan Airlines were handed the restrictions on Nov. 2 after the European Commission downgraded their safety ratings following spot runway inspections.

"The restrictions are temporary and may be lifted if all the shortcomings are dealt with," a spokesman for the agency told Interfax on Tuesday.

European Aviation Safety Agency officials were due to meet with Russian officials and representatives of the airlines Tuesday.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/11/08/vladivostok-open-skies-policy-a-first-a10667