

\$60M Earmarked for Tourism

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The Federal Tourism Agency says less than 10 percent of foreign visitors to Russia are coming solely to sightsee. **Igor Tabakov**

Russia is to spend up to \$60 million on a six-year advertising campaign to bolster its image as a tourist destination, the Federal Tourism Agency said Monday.

The spending is part of the government's program for the development of tourism through 2018 that was approved in July and will see a total expenditure of \$10.2 billion, of which \$3 billion will come from the federal budget. Under the plans, tourism should consist of 6 percent to 7 percent of gross domestic product by 2018.

The \$60 million earmarked for advertising will be spent on "subjects and programs about Russia on federal channels, promotion on social networks, exhibitions, the organization of presentations about Russia in foreign countries, promotional campaigns and the organization of press tours," agency head Alexander Radkov said, RIA-Novosti reported.

"I am sure that this will be conducive to the attraction of foreigners and motivate Russians

to go on holiday in Russia," he said.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said in July that 70 percent of Russia's tourism potential is not being exploited.

The Federal Tourism Agency has already spent \$5.1 million on the advertising campaign, which began this year, and is planning to pay out a further \$4.2 million in 2012.

The development of tourism in Russia will be concentrated around a number of clusters — the Golden Ring in the Central Federal District, the Silver Ring in the Northwest Federal District, the Volga cities in the Volga Federal District, in the North Caucasus and Southern Federal District, the Krasnodar, Stavropol and Rostov regions and Kabardino-Balkaria.

While the campaign is directed at both domestic and foreign tourists, Radkov admitted Monday that the total number of foreign tourists visiting in 2011 was likely to be disappointing. He blamed the European economic problems affecting the chief suppliers of visitors to Russia: Germany, France, Britain and Italy.

"Things aren't in order in Europe at the moment," Radkov said. "The number of Europeans traveling as tourists has fallen."

He added that, despite the \$60 million commitment, Russia's foreign advertising budget was much smaller than countries like Spain and Italy.

Radkov also said a minority of those coming to Russia in 2010 came for tourism. Of the 22 million foreign visitors in 2010, only 2.1 million were tourists.

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