

Country to Play Up Cultural Showcase

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia will try to boost the number of tourists coming to the country on cultural trips, a senior official said Tuesday.

"It's our way to success. In our country, the potential for cultural and educational tourism is limitless," head of the Culture Ministry's tourism and regional development department Sergei Korneyev said, Interfax reported.

He added that the ministry aims to increase the length of tourists' visits to Russia and to encourage them to make repeat trips.

In July, Deputy Prime Minister Olga Golodets said a bill would be introduced in the fall authorizing visa-free travel and stays of three days for tourists attending major cultural events.

Korneyev also said that improving the level of service for tourists across the country is a key goal for the Culture Ministry, Interfax reported.

He said his department is planning to draft 80 regulations and nonbinding standards on issues including immigration policy, visas, transportation, hotel classifications and resort areas.

Finland's Consulate General will open a visa center in the Murmansk region next month, Interfax reported. The visa center, which will start operations Oct. 12, will accept applications for visas to Finland, Iceland and France.

Applicants will be required to pay 21 euros (\$27) for the center's services.

Finland, which borders the Murmansk region, is a popular tourist destination for the region's residents.

Last year, the local consulate issued a record 48,000 visas in Murmansk and expects to issue about 75,000 visas this year, a local consulate representative told Interfax.

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