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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

# Top 5 Online Travel Companies in Russia

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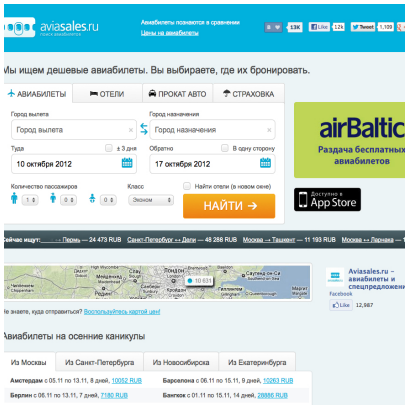

Russia has the largest online population in Europe, and its online travel market is expected to reach over $7 billion in 2012, up 50 percent from 2011. This year online travel will account for 15 percent of the Russian travel market, but it is growing apace. By 2013, online travel in Russia is forecast to exceed $10 billion, accounting for 20 percent of the total travel market.

Global online travel conglomerates Priceline and Expedia are well behind the local online travel market leaders in Russia because locals are better equipped to market and serve customers in their home market. Russian Internet companies are also well known for having better access to domestic engineers who are globally recognized for their strong technological background. It is hoped that these Russian online travel companies can help the market develop by educating Internet users about the advantages of online travel planning and booking. While many people in Russia may use the Internet to research a trip, relatively few are making transactions online — yet.

So, in this exciting and fast-growing market, who are Russia's top online travel companies in travel planning, hotel booking, airline ticket sales, tours and travel tips? Here are my top 5

picks:

## 1. Travel planning: Aviasales.ru



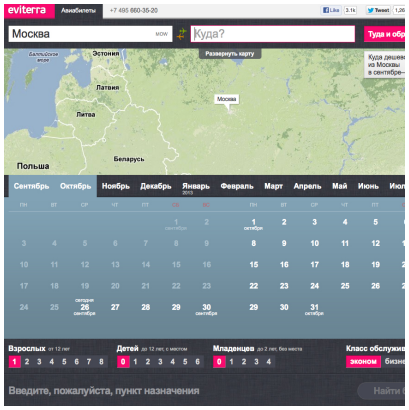

Launched in 2008, Aviasales.ru has more than 1.5 million unique visitors each month. It offers the most comprehensive travel planning for Russian-speaking users. In addition to offering a search function for airline tickets, the site also allows users to search for hotels. Led by chief executive Max Krainov, the company may well look to raise venture capital in the near future to accelerate growth. Today the firm's iOS app has become the No. 1 travel app in Russia.
The company's owners also develop travel-planning firm JetRadar.com for English-speaking users and ifeiso.com for Chinese users.

## 2. Hotel booking: Oktogo.ru



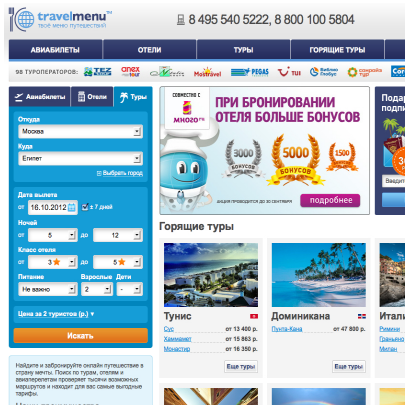

This online hotel-booking service offers over 3,000 hotels in Russia and 250,000 hotels worldwide and is specifically designed for Russian-speaking travelers. The site attracts over 1 million unique visitors per month. Headed by founder and chief executive Marina Kolesnik, the company has raised $15 million from Mangrove Capital Partners, VTB Capital, Ventech and ABRT. With a head office in St. Petersburg, Oktogo has the largest database of hotels online in the Russian regions, including the northwest of Russia and Novosibirsk in Siberia.

## 3. Airline tickets: Eviterra



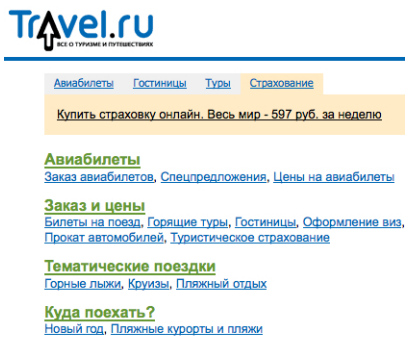

Moscow-based Eviterra operates one of the fastest-growing airline-ticket-sale websites in Russia. Funded by business angel investors, Eviterra is headed by chief executive Nikolai Zayarny. Launched in early 2011, Eviterra has a very high conversion rate from site visitors to buyers thanks to a slick user interface. The average airline ticket value sold by the website is nearly $700.

## 4. Package tours: Travelmenu




Funded by Almaz Capital Partners and Runa Capital, Travelmenu sells package tours online, addresses both the corporate travel agency B2B markets and the B2C market. Headed by chief executive Katrin Buckenmaier, Travelmenu, which raised just over $3 million in venture capital, is looking for a major round of financing. Its business model is to become a distribution system for package tours online for tour operators in Russia. In addition, Travelmenu powers tours on Travel@Mail.ru and other online properties. It models itself on a combination of the TravelTainment Group and Expedia.

## 5. Travel tips: Travel.ru



Around 70 percent of Russian Internet users research trips online, which may explain the success of Travel.ru. Launched in 1998 by chief executive Asya Patrysheva, Travel.ru is one of the most visited online travel portals in Russia. It publishes travel-related online content in Russian such as travel news, guides to popular destinations and countries, tips on getting tourist visas and special offers from airlines and tour operators. The firm, which recently launched airline ticket sales, is soon to add online hotel booking to its website.

*This article first appeared on* Eyefortravel.com

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