

EasyJet to Fly Moscow-London Route in 2013

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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EasyJet said it would offer a fare of no more than £125 (\$200) for the first three years of flights between the British and Russian capitals.

EasyJet will operate flights between London and Moscow from next year after Britain's Civil Aviation Authority granted the low-cost airline a license for the route over Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic.

Britain's aviation regulator announced its decision Wednesday, choosing the Luton-based easyJet for its "potential to deliver the greatest dynamic fare benefits for customers," said Iain Osborne, the aviation authority's director of regulatory policy.

"We concluded that easyJet's proposal would introduce a distinctly different product into the market and would stimulate innovation on the route as a whole," Osborne said in a [statement](#).

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of flights between the British and Russian capitals, the Financial Times reported, citing easyJet's chief executive Carolyn McCall.

EasyJet's fares represent a significant discount to current market rates, as flights between London and Moscow frequently stretch to \$450 or more.

The budget airline plans to start flying two services a day from London's Gatwick Airport in the spring, according to Reuters.

McCall said that easyJet was considering launching an alternative route between Manchester and Moscow.

In statements at a Civil Aviation Authority hearing three weeks ago, Virgin Atlantic argued that it could better compete with British Airways, the other Moscow-route license holder, and would offer a better service for business and first-class travelers.

EasyJet responded by saying it could cater to a wider range of customers and stressed that it had 10 million business passengers a year — double Virgin Atlantic's total number of passengers.

The opportunity to bid for the Moscow route opened up in March when International Airlines Group — the holding company that controls British Airways — received approval from European authorities to buy BMI, which had previously offered flights to Moscow.

Under a bilateral agreement, only two British and two Russian carriers can hold licenses to fly between the two countries' capitals.

On the Russian side, flagship Aeroflot and Transaero, the country's second-largest airline, operate the route.

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