

Thai Protesters Tell Russian Businesses to 'Get Out'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Hundreds of protesters on the Thai island of Phuket, a popular destination for Russian tourists, staged a protest on Monday against "Russian-owned" businesses, accusing them of undercutting local competitors and taking jobs from native-born workers, the [Phuket News reported](#).

Russians have made inroads into the taxi, restaurant, and laundry businesses, where they charge lower prices, badmouth locals and are a magnet for lucrative Russian-speaking tourists, the protesters said. One complained about the practice of advertising tours at restaurants.

"So how can we keep living here? I have to do something to protect the rights of the local people," another told the local newspaper.

The protesters, in the resort town of Bang Tao, focused their ire on the Alex Tour company,

mobbing the business's storefront and smashing its sign. They held placards and chanted "Alex Tour get out!" "Russian business get out!" and "Bang Tao Russian mafia free!"

Tensions had been simmering for weeks. At a rowdy town hall meeting earlier this month, locals also accused Russians of scaring away other European tourists.

But Alexander Kolesnikov, a Russian who has lived on Phuket for the past five years, said some of the anger was misplaced, because many businesses that employ Russians are actually Thai-owned. Furthermore, competition against taxi and tuk-tuk drivers was legal, he said.

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