

One in 20 Russians to Buy Tourism Services Online

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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One in twenty Russians will buy tours and tickets online to go on vacation abroad this year, according to recent estimates by Data Insight, a market research agency.

As many as 5.6 million people purchased plane tickets and tourism services through the Internet last year, said Data Insight CEO Boris Ovchinnikov, Interfax reported.

Ovchinnikov said he expected this figure to grow 20 to 25 percent or about 7 million people this year.

He said the figure did not include those who booked tours online and bought them at travel agencies.

Ovchinnikov said that in 2012 the market for tourist services bought online amounted to 160 billion rubles (\$5.3 billion), 45 percent growth compared with 2011.

Most online buyers were men below 35.

The most popular online service, which 53 percent of tourists bought, was plane tickets.

Shopping for tours on the Internet was once a novelty for many Russians, who preferred to buy "all inclusive" tours offline for popular destinations like Egypt and Turkey, but things are changing, experts said.

More and more English-speaking young Russians are booking tickets online through sites like expedia.com and cheaptickets.com.

The trend has not gone unnoticed by travel agencies, said Alexander Rudomyotkin, an executive at the Svoi Ludi travel agency. The company deals with travel to Western Europe and South Asia, among other destinations.

He said that travel agencies were preferable to buying tickets online.

"They are young people looking for cheaper tickets and tours. But travel agencies still have an advantage, because they provide more guarantees in case something happens," said Rudomyotkin.

He added that many well-to-do tourists prefer to deal with travel agencies.

"They have money for someone to take care of them," Rudomyotkin said.

Last year more than 11 million Russians vacationed abroad, according to the Russian Association of Travel Agencies. Turkey, Greece and Egypt were the most popular destinations.

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