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Crimean Tourism Falls Drastically

By The Moscow Times

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Tour operators said that selling vacations to the Black Sea peninsula will be difficult no matter the result of Sunday's referendum to rejoin Russia.

"Sales of tours to Crimea fell 60 percent compared to last year. There are also cancellations. In place of Crimea, tourists are switching to the Krasnodar region and Abkhazia," said Maxim Solomatin, director of travel agency Eve Tour, RBC reported.

Tourists will only be lured back to Crimea through lower prices, Sergei Romashkin, CEO of tour operator Delfin, told Interfax. He added that his company would talk to resorts about discounts of no less than 50 percent.

Vacationers have been frightened away from Crimea, which is currently under the control of unidentified military forces believed to be Russian.

However some operators expressed hope that the region could still welcome vacationers if the political situation calmed after Sunday's vote. "It all depends on the referendum. If

Crimea unites with Russia, if there is no war, then tourist season will take place," said Eve Tour's Solomatin.

Romashkin said that trips for March and April had largely been cancelled, but those with Crimean vacation plans for May and afterwards appeared to be waiting to see if the region stabilizes.

Despite concerns, finding alternative vacation options may also be difficult, said Ilya Umansky, director of the tour operator Alean, adding that Crimean resorts are 20 to 25 percent cheaper than similar destinations in the Krasnodar region.

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