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30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Travel Operators Say Tourism Affected By Ukraine Crisis

By Anna Dolgov

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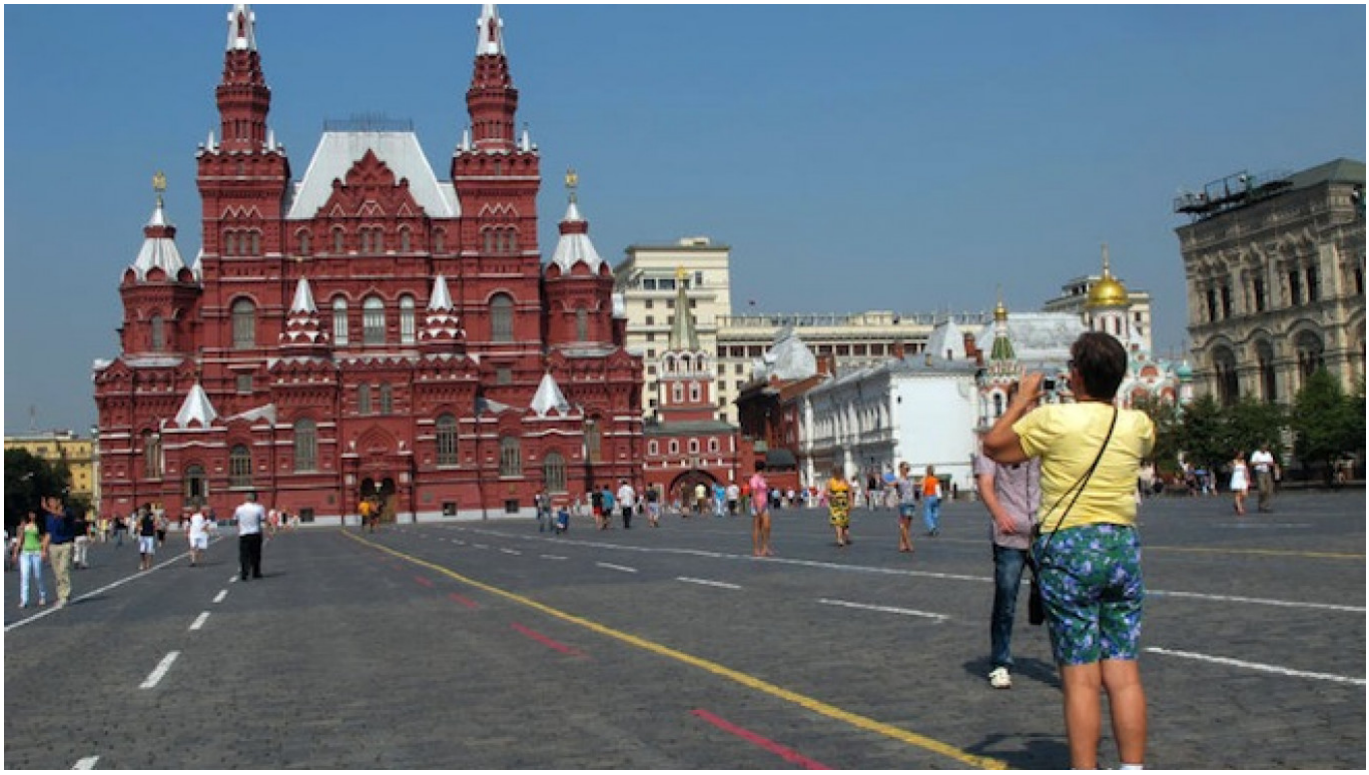

Foreign tourists have canceled a number of their tours to Russia.

Moscow's interference in Ukraine has caused a sharp drop in foreign tourism to Russia, with scores of travel cancellations for political and security reasons coming ahead of the summer holiday season, an industry newsletter said.

Most Russian tour operators have reported a significant drop in sales, with cancellations coming in from around the world, including regions that were traditionally considered "loyal" to Russia, RATA News tourism industry newsletter reported Monday.

Group tours that do arrive often show up in sharply reduced numbers, Nina Zharova, an inbound tourism director at Intourist, was quoted as saying.

"What is worse is that April-May is the main time for booking tours for the season, but there are very few new bookings now, sales have dropped sharply," she said.

Tour operators from Poland have canceled most of their reservations, and operators from Finland, a country that is traditionally viewed in Russia as a "loyal" tourist market, have also put through a number of "unexpected" cancellations, the report said.

While most Europeans cite their objections to Russia's actions in Ukraine as reasons for canceling travel reservations, some are also concerned about security in Russia. A group from Albania has agreed to visit Moscow only after it received guarantees that all losses and damages would be compensated in case of a war, the report said.

Americans are "actively annulling" their travel reservations to Russia, the report said, blaming the cancellations by U.S. and Latin America travelers on Washington's criticism of Russia's actions in Ukraine.

Tourists from Southeast Asia, who are usually undeterred by political upheavals, have also canceled a number of their tours, and a handful of cancellations have also been received from China — a country that has largely maintained a relative neutrality throughout the crisis in Ukraine — the report said.

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