

Federal Agency Recommends State Companies Treat Employees to Crimean Vacation

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A sunny day on the south coast of Crimea

The government has urged state-owned corporations and big businesses to treat their employees to a vacation in Crimea, pulling out all the stops in the effort to fill beaches left empty by estranged Ukrainian tourists and prevent a collapse of the peninsula's tourism industry.

In a telegram sent by the Federal Tourism Agency on May 29, companies were told that "to fulfill the Russian president's orders ... we propose that you purchase vacation packages to the sanatoriums of the Crimean Federal District for your employees with company funds," RIA Novosti reported Wednesday, citing a copy of the document.

The head of the ministry's press service confirmed to RIA Novosti that the letters had been

sent, and said the companies could either pay for the vacations themselves, partially or in full, or labor unions could step up to purchase the holiday packages.

With little developed industry to its name, Crimea's economy is highly dependent on its tourism industry. Hoteliers on the peninsula say that up to 70 percent of their clients used to be Ukrainians — people who, thanks to Russia's annexation of the peninsula in March, are now on the wrong side of a hostile border. Tourists from other countries have also been scared off this year by media coverage of the annexation and of unrest in Ukraine. Six million tourists visited Crimea last year, according to the Federal Tourism Agency, meaning that Russian big business may have to send millions of tourists to keep Crimea's tourism sector afloat.

The Russian government is striving in other ways to encourage domestic tourism. A state-funded exhibition last month allowed Crimean tourism professionals to advertise their wares in Moscow free of charge. Other approaches have been more direct — the deputy head of Moscow's cultural department told Izvestia last month that 10,000 school children will vacation in Crimea this summer, with the government footing the 290 million ruble (\$8 million) bill.

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