

Western European Tourists Avoid Russia Over Ukraine Crisis

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 17, 2014



Russian traditional Matryoshka wooden dolls and other gifts are on display, with sale advertisements seen behind a shop window, in St. Petersburg.

The number of Western European tourists coming to Russia is decreasing due to deteriorating political relations, Foreign Ministry official Yevgeny Ivanov told news agency RIA Novosti on Monday.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has issued 1.1 million tourist visas over the past 10 months, a 17 percent decrease compared with the 1.33 million visas issued for the same period last year. Dwindling numbers of Western European tourists were the prime factor behind the drop, which Ivanov attributed to the "complicated political situation."

Relations between Russia and the European Union broke down in March, when Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine. The EU has imposed several rounds of sanctions against Russia over Moscow's hand in the Ukraine crisis, to which Russia has responded with

sanctions against EU food imports.

At the same time, the Foreign Ministry reported an increase in South Korean tourist visas. South Korea was granted visa-free travel to Russia at the beginning of this year.

Russia is also in talks to begin a visa-free regime between Russia and North Korea, news agency Interfax reported last month.

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