

Egypt Tries to Lure Russian Tourists by Allowing Them to Pay in Rubles

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Egypt's Ministry of Tourism said Wednesday that some stores have started accepting Russian rubles as legal tender in a bid to maintain levels of tourism to the country.

"Russians are already allowed to pay in rubles at many [Egyptian] stores, though an official agreement has yet to be reached," Muhammad Salem, a spokesman for the tourism ministry, was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

More than 3 million Russians visited Egypt in 2014, according to the report, and the ministry is keen to offset any decrease in tourism caused by the devaluation of the ruble, which has lost more than half its value against the U.S. dollar since last year.

The ministry earlier announced it would waive a \$25 visa fee levied on Russian tourists traveling to Egypt between Jan. 15 and April 30. The tourism ministry spokesman said

Wednesday that arrangement could be extended into the summer season, Interfax reported.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah al-Sisi also discussed the possibility of using national currencies — rather than U.S. dollars — to settle bilateral trade accounts in a meeting in Cairo earlier this month.

"Evidently, settlement of accounts in national currencies will contribute to creating more favorable conditions for millions of Russian citizens who annually spend their holidays in [Egypt]" Putin was cited as telling the Al-Ahram daily in comments published on the Kremlin website.

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