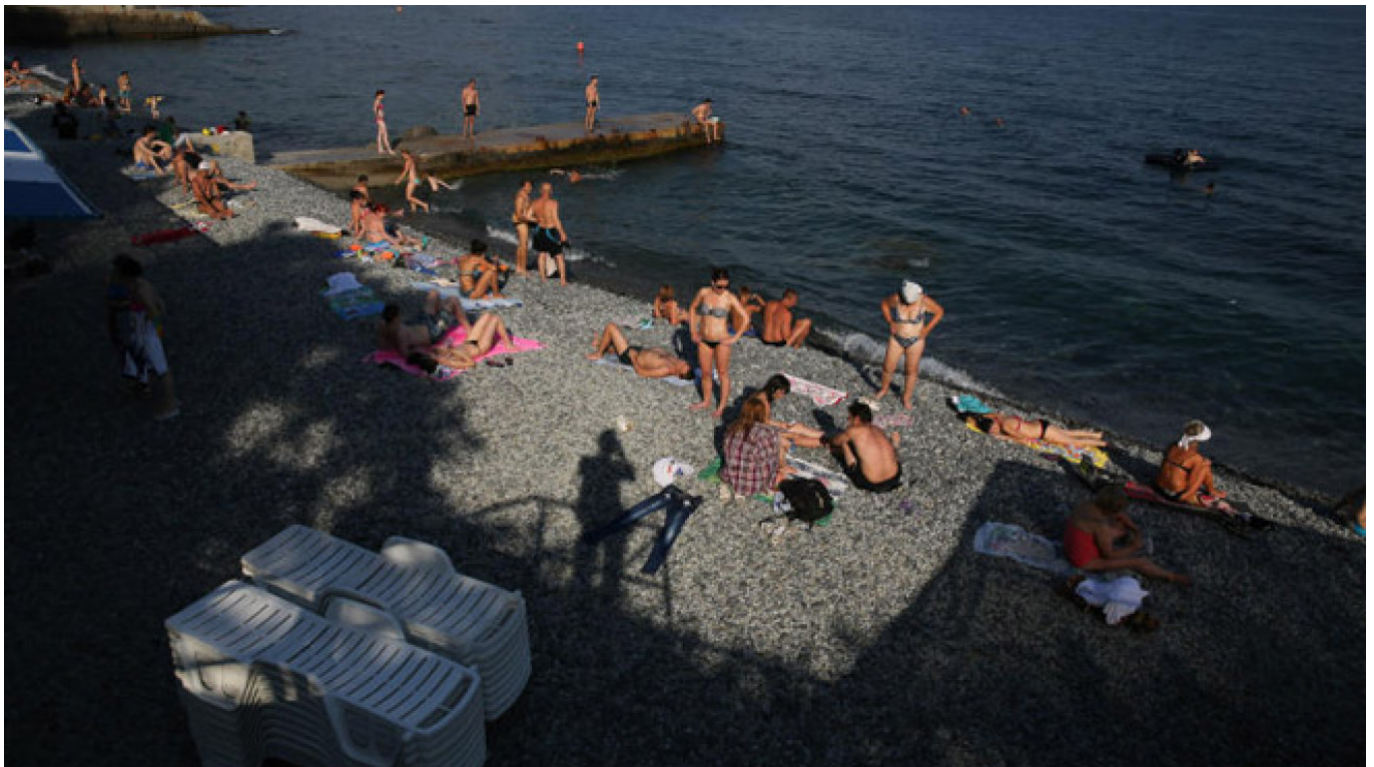


Crimea Plans to Make \$2 Billion on Summer Tourism This Year

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia is trying to stimulate travel to Crimea to help the region's tourism-dependent economy.

Crimean officials estimate that over 4 million tourists will visit the recently annexed peninsula's beaches this year, boosting the region's economy by up to 125 billion rubles (\$2 billion), news agency RIA Novosti reported Thursday.

"We expect to welcome 4.3 million people to Crimea in 2015, most of them from Russia," Crimean Tourism Minister Yelena Yurchenko was quoted as saying.

Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine in March last year in a move widely applauded at home but condemned by the West, which imposed sanctions on investment in Crimea.

Before the annexation, 6 million tourists visited Crimea annually, according to Russia's tourism watchdog, Rostourism. Most of these were Ukrainians.

Russia is trying to stimulate travel to Crimea to help the region's tourism-dependent

economy, but the land route through mainland Ukraine has seen a steep drop in use since Russian and Ukrainian guard posts were placed on the Crimean border.

Over half of tourists this year will come to Crimea by plane and 45 percent will come by the Kerch Strait ferry, according to Yurchenko.

Russia plans to build a multibillion-dollar bridge between Russia and Crimea, but construction will not be complete until 2018.

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