

Russian Airlines Axing Over 70 International Routes

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The  **Moscow Times**

Russian airlines are axing more than 70 international routes as the country struggles with a severe economic downturn, the RBC news agency reported Tuesday.

Transaero and UTair are getting rid of the most routes — 19 each — the report said, citing an official at Russia's air transportation watchdog Rosaviatsia.

The ruble has lost about 40 percent of its value versus the euro and U.S. dollar over the past year due to a fall in oil prices and Western sanctions over the country's meddling in Ukraine.

A sharp decline in tourism brought on by the economic downturn means that many international air routes are no longer profitable, leading the airlines to request their cancellation. The Transportation Ministry is reportedly set to review the requests by the end of this month.

While a few flights out of Moscow and St. Petersburg are among the proposed cancellations, Russia's provincial capitals will be hit the hardest, with several including Yekaterinburg

and Samara set to lose routes to popular tourist hot spots such as Barcelona and Dubai.

The ruble's plummet has hit the tourism industry hard, with tourism out of Russia falling between 50 and 70 percent this year, Russian Tourism Industry Union spokeswoman Irina Tyurina told The Moscow Times this week.

Last year saw a spate of travel agencies go bankrupt, and earlier this month Swiss International Air Lines and Icelandair decided to halt routes out of St. Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport.

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