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Russians Choose Domestic Destinations Over Foreign Travel for May Holidays

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A view of monastery in Suzdal, one of the eight cities included in the tourist route of the Golden Ring.

Outgoing tourism during the upcoming May holidays, traditionally a popular time for Russians to holiday abroad, has dropped by 25 percent compared with last year, while tourism within the country has increased by 15 percent, the Kommersant newspaper reported Tuesday, citing Russia's Association of Tour Operators.

"Many clients cannot now afford a summer vacation and to travel during the May holidays," the association's executive director Maya Lomidze was cited by the paper as saying.

The period from April 30 to May 11 is a popular time for Russians to travel abroad because there are several bank holidays in that period which celebrate Labor Day and the end of World War II.

The drop of 25 percent was significantly less than analysts had predicted, Kommersant reported, saying international tourism among Russians had been expected to fall by about 50 percent as a result of tumbling oil prices and the ruble's devaluation.

Fewer Russians can now afford to go to Europe and Southeast Asia, opting instead for cheaper, all-inclusive package deals to Egypt and Turkey.

Among domestic holiday destinations, the Krasnodar region in southern Russia leads the way, accounting for 60 percent of all sales, Lomidze was cited as saying, followed by trips around the Golden Ring — a set of ancient cities northeast of Moscow — and to spa resorts in the Caucasus town of Mineralnye Vody.

Sales of airplane tickets to foreign destinations during the May holidays have slumped by 20 percent year-on-year, while domestic flight ticket sales have grown by 15 percent, Kommersant cited Dmitry Gorin, head of the VIP Service booking agency, as saying.

The average budget for a May holiday ranges from 12,000 rubles ($212) to 22,000 rubles ($390), up 15 percent on the previous year, Kommersant reported, citing Sergei Romashkin, head of the Delfin travel agency.

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