

Crimean City of Simferopol Most Popular Destination for Russians This Summer

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A railway station of Simferopol, Crimea

Russian tourists are setting their sights on closer-to-home summer vacation destinations as they feel the pinch from the country's economic crisis, and Simferopol, the capital of the Crimea region annexed by Russia from Ukraine in March last year, tops the list, according to one travel agency.

Simferopol has proven the most popular destination for Russian travelers for the period from June 1 to August 31, the online air tickets sale website anywayanyday.com said in a press release.

The Moscow-Crimea route saw a 68-percent increase in airline ticket sales from January to May compared to the same period the year before, the statement said.

The cost of flights has, however, soared by 23 percent to 9,454 rubles (\$190), the statement

said. In March, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said the price of airline tickets to Crimea should not exceed 8,000 rubles (\$160).

The second most popular destination was Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi, host of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, to which airline ticket sales increased by 32 percent and cost an average of 10,639 rubles (\$216), Anywayanyday said.

Tivat, a coastal town in Montenegro, and Spain's Barcelona were the next most popular destinations.

Some destinations that used to be popular among Russian vacation-makers have seen a sharp drop in ticket sales, including Rome, Munich, Tel Aviv and Vienna, the press release said.

Russian hotels started introducing all-inclusive deals in April in a bid to offer similar deals to those at Russia's favorite resorts in Turkey and Egypt.

According to preliminary estimates by the Russian Tourism Industry Union, some 41.5 million tourists will head to Russian resorts this year, while 3 million will opt to vacation in Turkey, the Lenta.ru news website reported at the end of last month.

The ruble has lost more than 30 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar since the start of last year as the Russian economy faltered amid plunging oil prices and Western sanctions over the conflict in Ukraine.

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