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Moscow Hotels See the Rise in Russian Guests Amid Domestic Tourism Boom

By The Moscow Times

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The number of foreign guest dropped by only 1 percent, or 50,000 people, in 2014 compared to 2013, Chernikov said.

The number of Russian guests in Moscow hotels increased by 9 percent last year as Russia experienced a boom in domestic tourism driven by the ruble crisis, the RIA Novosti news agency reported Tuesday, citing a government official.

The number of Russians guests increased by 320 thousand or 9 percent in 2014 compared to 2013, said Vladimir Chernikov, head of Moscow city's Department of National Policy, Inter-Regional Relations and Tourism.

The rise in the number of Russian guests may have been driven in part by the sharp devaluation of the ruble last year, which raised the price of trips abroad. Domestic tourism in Russia increased by 30 to 40 percent last year, RIA Novosti reported earlier this year, citing the head of the Federal Tourism Agency, Oleg Safonov.

"As you can see, the mechanism of import substitution in the tourism sector has started to work," RIA quoted Chernikov as saying.

Russia's government has heavily backed import substitution, or the production of domestic analogues for imported goods, since the imposition of Western sanctions over the Ukraine crisis last year.

Foreign tourism seemed to have no need for "import substitution" though — the number of foreign guest dropped by only 1 percent, or 50,000 people, in 2014 compared to 2013, Chernikov said.

Neither Russia's economic crisis nor Western sanctions have had a significant impact on Moscow hotels' revenue growth, Chernikov added, according to Interfax.

Moscow hotels' revenues increased by 6 billion rubles ($107 million) last year compared to 2013 to hit nearly 55 billion rubles ($982 million). Revenues have increased by about 50 percent over the last four years, Chernikov said, Interfax reported.

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