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Russia to Set Up Own Airline Ticket Booking System

By The Moscow Times

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The online booking system will be expanded in the future to allow Russian customers to purchase train tickets, hotels and excursion packages.

Russia is developing its own booking system for airline tickets, as foreign online booking companies could leave the Russian market due to a new personal data law, Russian government daily Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported Friday.

Russia's personal data protection law comes into force on Sept. 1, and requires that all personal data collected on Russian citizens be stored on servers located on Russian territory.

Currently, airline tickets are predominantly booked through foreign companies whose servers — containing data collected on Russian citizens — are located overseas.

Because the foreign companies' servers do not comply with the new Russian legislation, Russia must develop its own booking system, the head of Russia's Federal Tourism Agency

Oleg Safonov said in an interview with Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

A national online booking system is being developed by state-owned technologies corporation Rostec, according to Vedomosti business daily.

Travelers using Russia's airline booking system will also benefit from an online information portal — Russia.travel — that is currently being developed by the Federal Tourism Agency, Safonov said, according to Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

The online booking system will be expanded in the future to allow Russian customers to purchase train tickets, hotels and excursion packages.

Safonov believes that the establishment of a national online booking system will have a positive impact on Russian holiday resorts and will increase their occupancy.

Kommersant newspaper reported Wednesday, citing Russia's Transportation Ministry, that the personal data protection law does not apply to foreign ticket reservation companies, as the online ticket booking services act as agents of airline companies. The airlines are not effected by the new legislation and neither are the booking services, the newspaper said.

However, the Federal Security Service (FSB) opposes this exemption and insists that all foreign companies store personal data of Russian citizens within the country's borders, an unidentified federal official told Kommersant.

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