

Weak Ruble Boosts Tourism to Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The weakening of the ruble has helped Russia to attract more tourists, the Kommersant newspaper reported Tuesday.

According to estimates by the Russian Tourism Industry Union, the number of tourists visiting Russia has increased by 13 percent in the first nine months of the year, compared with the same period in 2014, Kommersant reported.

In total, foreign tourists have made 2.54 million trips to Russia between January and September this year, which is the highest amount since 2008, the report said.

Chinese tourists became the largest group of foreign tourists to Russia in the first nine months of the year, accounting for 22.9 percent of the total amount of foreign travelers visiting Russia, according to data from the Russian Tourism Industry Union.

Germany came in second with 12.6 percent of the total number of visits followed by the U.S. with a 6 percent share and Turkey, accounting for 4.6 percent of the total number of tourists, according to the report.

Vladimir Kantorovich, first vice president of the Association of Tour Operators of Russia, attributes the growth of the number of tourists visiting Russia to the weakening of the ruble, which lost more than 40 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar since the beginning of last year.

Russia became a very cheap destination for many tourists, Kantorovich told the newspaper.

While the number of foreign tourists traveling to Russia is growing, the outbound tourism in Russia has been reeling from the economic recession and the ruble drop.

Since the beginning of the year, the tourist flow from Russia fell by 31.4 percent, Oleg Safonov, the head of Russia's federal tourism agency Rostourism, said Tuesday, the TASS news agency reported.

Apart from the economic causes, the outbound tourism in Russia has been affected by Russia's recent ban on flights to Egypt imposed after the crash of the Russian passenger plane in the Sinai Peninsula as a result of a terrorist attack, as well as the ban on selling package tours to Turkey after the downing of the Russian warplane near the Syrian border.

In addition, Russia will introduce visa requirements for Turkish citizens starting on Jan. 1, 2016 as part of the sanctions against the country, which can have a negative impact in the development of the inbound tourism in Russia.

According to the statistics, Turkey represents a significant growth in the number of tourists coming to Russia.

In the first nine months of the year, the number of tourists from Turkey visiting Russia has increased by 15.6 percent, compared with the same period last year, according to data from the Russian Tourism Industry Union, cited by Kommersant.

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