The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Crimea Sees Sharp Drop in Russian Tourists

By Anastasia Bazenkova

May 16, 2016



Russians are losing interest in traveling to Crimea, as the demand for flights to Simferopol among tourists has declined by more than 25 percent this year, the Kommersant newspaper reported Monday, citing data from Svyaznoy-Travel ticket agency.

The Biletix ticket booking agent saw demand for tickets to Crimea fall by 7.5 percent this summer.

Analysts attribute the falling popularity of Crimea among Russian travelers to the lack of service infrastructure on the peninsula.

“The peninsula's infrastructure does not provide the same quality of service as Turkey and Egypt, and many travelers who visited Crimea have decided that it will not become a regular destination for their holidays,” commercial director of Svyaznoy-Travel, Andrei Osintsev, was quoted as saying by Kommersant.

As Moscow has suspended flights to both Turkey and Egypt amid strained ties and tightened security respectively, Russian tourists now prefer to travel to the southern resort towns of Anapa, Gelendzhik and Sochi, all of which offer better service than Crimea.

The number of tourists traveling to Sochi has grown this year by 40 percent, according to data from Svyaznoy-Travel.

Another negative factor that affects the popularity of Crimea is the increasing cost of airline tickets.

The average price of return tickets has reached 16,000 rubles ($246), according to Sergei Romashkin, CEO of the Delfin travel company.

Package tours to Crimea, however, haven't suffered such a dramatic decline. There is currently a sales slowdown, but the demand for package tours is still 40-50 percent higher than last year, Romashkin told Kommersant. However, members of the tourism industry say this growth will have stopped by next year.

The Crimean authorities have denied the falling popularity of the peninsula among Russian tourists. Crimean Deputy Prime Minister Ruslan Balbek, who oversees the tourism sector, said that Svyaznoy- Travel's data don't reflect the the real situation in the market.

“This is most likely either an information attack or a lack of knowledge. Crimea is one of the main tourist destinations in Russia,” Balbek was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency.

Contact the author at a.bazenkova@imedia.ru. Follow the author on Twitter at @a_bazenkova.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/05/16/crimea-sees-sharp-drop-in-russian-tourists-a52879