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Greece Offers Russians Long-Term Schengen Visas

By The Moscow Times

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Greek police and army officers stand by Greek, Russian and EU flags at the Athens international airport, Greece.

Greece has moved to offer Russians long-term Schengen visas to increase an already considerable tourist flow from Russia, the Interfax news agency reported Thursday.

Those Russians who have already made at least one trip to the European Union will be able to apply for multiple-entry visas valid for three or five years, Interfax reported, citing Nikos Ksidakis, the deputy head of the Greek Foreign Ministry.

Amid bans on flights to Turkey and Egypt — previously Russia's two most popular tourist destinations — the number of Russian travelers to Greece has skyrocketed. Ten thousand Russian tourists traveled to Greece in March, an increase of 523.6 percent from March 2015, according to the Russian Tour Operators Association.

Ksidakis said that Greece is prepared for the increased tourist flow from Russia.

“Despite the small problems that were reported in early May, at the moment we are able to cope with all of the demand from Russian tourists. We can issue up to 10,000 visas daily,” he said, Interfax reported.

In late April, the Russian Tourism Industry Union reported that the Greek Consulate in Moscow had problems coping with the increased number of applications from Russian tourists.

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