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Russian Tourism to Turkey Falls 90%

By The Moscow Times

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Russian tourism to Turkey in May 2016 was down 91.82 percent year-on-year, according to figures released by Turkey's Culture and Tourism Ministry, the RBC newspaper reported Tuesday.

May is typically a popular time for Russian tourists in Turkey. In May 2015, over 501,000 Russians visited the country, and in 2014 — almost 695,000, RBC reported, citing the ministry report. In May 2016, just 41,000 Russian tourists visited Turkey.

In November 2015, Russian authorities banned the sale of package tours to Turkey and stopped all flights between the two countries, while also introducing a raft of economic sanctions. This followed the shooting down of a Russian warplane by the Turkish military over the Syrian-Turkish border earlier that month. The measures have led to the almost total collapse of the Russian market for the Turkish tourism industry.

Russians made up 1.65 percent of the foreign tourists to Turkey in May 2016 — compared to 13.17 percent for the same period in 2015 and 17.82 percent in 2014. The drop in Russians visiting Turkey is part of a wider trend of falling visitor numbers to Turkey.

In the first five months of 2016, Turkey was visited by 8.3 million foreigners, 22.93 percent fewer than during the same period last year, RBC reported.

Ankara sought to repair Russian-Turkish relations this week with a personal letter from President Erdogan to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The letter apologized for shooting down the Russian jet in November 2015 and offered "deepest condolences" to the pilot's family, the Kremlin reported Monday.

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