

# Anti-Russian Coverage Fuels Tourism from U.S. in 'Wow Effect,' Agency Says

March 15, 2018



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A reverse psychology effect has caused a spike in the number of American tourists visiting Russia despite bilateral tensions, according to Russia's state tourism agency.

The U.S. State Department warned travelers to reconsider visiting Russia over fears of terrorism and harassment in a new travel advisory system released earlier this year. Russia called the move a "scare tactic" designed to divide the two nations.

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Year-on-year tourist numbers from the United States grew by 25 percent in January-September 2017, the head of the Federal Tourism Agency Oleg Safonov [told](#) the pro-government Izvestia newspaper on Thursday.

“Anti-Russian propaganda arouses great interest toward our country among American citizens,” Izvestia cited Safonov as saying in an interview.

The state official noted that anti-Russian coverage in U.S. media motivates Americans “to come and see [Russia] for themselves.”

“Our U.S. guests are pleasantly surprised to meet friendly people, delicious food, beautiful streets with proper facilities, interesting tourist sites, ample opportunities for recreation and reasonable prices in Russia,” Safonov claimed.

“They have a lower threshold of expectations, so you get a ‘Wow Effect’,” he was cited as saying.

Safonov said the agency plans to open 46 new tourist offices in 23 countries, as well as in five major U.S. cities.

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