

Russia Considers Ban of Booking.com Over U.S. Sanctions

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Russia's Culture Ministry has ordered the federal tourism agency to look into banning the popular Booking.com website as part of countermeasures against the latest U.S. sanctions.

Russian tour operator Svoi TS asked to ban Booking.com, TripAdvisor and Airbnb after the United States imposed sweeping sanctions against some of Russia's biggest firms and businessmen for "malign activities," the online outlet Tourprom.ru [reported](#) in April.

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This week, the Culture Ministry instructed Russia's Rosturism agency "to consider a proposal to ban the activities of Booking.com in Russia" by June 4, the RBC business portal [reported](#) on Tuesday.

“No Russian tour operator can compare with Booking.com,” RBC quoted head of Svoi TS Sergei Voytovich as saying.

The potential ban would prohibit customers from using Booking.com to book hotels in Russia, he was cited as saying.

Users in Russia [accounted](#) for the highest share of Booking.com’s traffic in the world, according to the SimilarWeb ranking service.

Svoi TS’s Voitovych has developed several services that seek to compete with Booking.com, the Bell news website [reported](#).

The tour operator signed at least five contracts with Rosturism in the past two years to advertise Russian tourism abroad, raising potential conflict of interest concerns.

Meanwhile, the Culture Ministry’s tourism and regional development department said it does not plan to ban Booking.com or regulate its activities within Russia.

“Moreover, the department is categorically against posing the question in those terms,” its head Olga Yarilova [said](#) in an online statement Wednesday.

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