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Russia's Pobeda Airline (Finally) Relaxes Hand Luggage Rules

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Russia's Pobeda budget airline eased up its hand luggage policy on Monday to allow passengers to carry backpacks and other items free of charge, following numerous complaints and lawsuits from passengers.

Earlier this month, Russia's Supreme Court ordered Pobeda to change its hand luggage allowance to reflect the Transport Ministry's 2017 ruling that gave all passengers 5 kilograms of free hand luggage plus an additional item. The court ruled that the airline had violated the regulations by charging passengers extra fees for "special" items exceeding the size of a handbag or briefcase.

"As of Feb. 18, you can choose which carry-on rules for hand luggage you follow yourselves," Pobeda said in a statement on Sunday.

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Passengers will be allowed to bring an unlimited number of pieces of hand luggage of any weight, provided that they do not exceed a combined 36x30x27 centimeters.

Under a second option, passengers will be allowed one 10-kilogram item that does not exceed 36x30x4 centimeters and one additional carry-on. These include a handbag, backpack, suitcase, flowers, jacket, baby carriage, foldable wheelchair or limited-sized goods bought in duty-free shops.

"Our customers were wholly satisfied with the old rules," the RBC news website quoted Pobeda spokesman Andrei Kalmykov as saying two weeks before the changes took effect on Monday.

Kalmykov said the airline had complied with Russian Supreme Court-mandated federal aviation rules "to a tee."

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