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European Low-Costers Will Start Flying to St. Petersburg in 2020, Ministry Says

By Reuters

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The move follows the introduction of a special electronic visa system for tourists visiting St. Petersburg. **Anna Zvereva / Wikicommons**

Low-cost airline Ryanair and other budget carriers are expected to start flying from Russia's St. Petersburg airport in 2020, the Russian Transport Ministry said.

The move is part of Russia's plan to boost tourist flows to St. Petersburg and will mean more competition for Russian air carriers, including national flag carrier Aeroflot.

The ministry said on Tuesday that Ryanair, EasyJet, WizzAir, Volotea, AirBaltic and Fly One had expressed interest in flights from St. Petersburg's Pulkovo airport, Russia's fourth largest after Moscow's three major hubs.

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It said the companies had applied for flights from Pulkovo, coded LED by the International Air Transport Association, to 22 countries, including Britain, Germany and France.

Russia will introduce a so-called "Open Skies" regime for the companies for five years, the ministry said, allowing airlines to fly to St. Petersburg without requiring the traditional bilateral inter-governmental agreements.

The move follows the introduction of a special electronic visa system for tourists visiting St. Petersburg which nationals from 53 countries can take advantage of.

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