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Thousands of Russians Traveled Abroad in April Despite Border Closures, Canceled Flights – RBC

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Russia grounded nearly all international flights in late March to slow the coronavirus outbreak. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Several thousand Russians traveled abroad in April despite closed national borders around the world due to the coronavirus pandemic, the RBC news website reported Wednesday.

Russia grounded nearly all international flights in late March to slow the coronavirus outbreak, allowing only special flights evacuating Russians from abroad and other flights authorized by the government. Many other countries also grounded flights and sealed their borders to fight off the virus' spread.

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According to RBC's analysis of the countries' tourism data, 1,223 Russians traveled to South

Korea in April, followed by 922 to Turkey and 635 to Bulgaria.

April 2019 figures showed 34,200 Russian travelers in South Korea, 391,600 Russians in Turkey and 6,400 in Bulgaria.

RBC's analysis also listed between 100 and 200 Russians visiting Serbia, the United States, Indonesia, Finland, Switzerland and Austria in April. Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong reported one, seven and eight visitors respectively.

Tourism industry experts told the outlet that the Russians who were able to cross the border despite the closures were likely either dual nationals or those with permanent residency in the countries.

Russia's Transport Ministry, following reports of plans to resume international travel on July 15, said this week that it was too early to restart international flights.

On Monday, Russia said it will begin re-opening borders to Russians going abroad for work, study, medical treatment or to take care of relatives. Foreigners who need to come to Russia for medical treatment or to take care of relatives would be allowed in, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said.

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