

Wizz Air Opens First Russian Base With 5 European Routes

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Wizz Air, Ireland's Ryanair and Britain's EasyJet are all vying for a foothold at St. Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport as Russia offers simplified e-visas to its second-largest city. **Steve Parsons / PA / TASS**

One of Europe's largest low-cost carriers Wizz Air [said](#) it plans to open its first base in Russia with five European routes from St. Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport starting this September.

Pulkovo this year became Russia's first airport to permit "seventh freedom flights," which [allow](#) international carriers to operate flights outside their country of registration. Russia [grounded](#) international flights indefinitely in late March as its coronavirus outbreak accelerated.

Related article: [European Low-Costers Will Start Flying to St. Petersburg in 2020, Ministry Says](#)

Wizz Air has opened bookings for tickets from St. Petersburg to Oslo, Stockholm Skavsta, Copenhagen and Salzburg for 24.99 euros (\$28) and to Malta for 29.99 euros (\$33.50) starting

Sept. 18, the Hungarian airline said last Wednesday. Its base in Pulkovo, the airline's first in Russia and 32nd overall, will house one Airbus A320.

"Today's announcement underlines Wizz Air's commitment to create more and more low-fare travel opportunities for Russian travelers," said CEO József Váradi in a press release.

"By adding five new routes in St. Petersburg and keeping ourselves to the highest standards of our sanitizing protocols, we are confident that Wizz Air's ultra-low fares will make travel affordable to ever more passengers," he added.

Leonid Sergeyev, the CEO of Pulkovo operator Northern Capital Gateway, made no mention of Russia's continued grounding of international flights amid the Covid-19 outbreak but noted that Wizz Air's launch will stimulate Russia's ties with other countries "as soon as the situation in the world stabilizes."

Related article: [Russia to Offer Simplified E-Visas to 53 Countries, Snubs U.S. and Britain](#)

In addition to Wizz Air, Ireland's Ryanair and Britain's EasyJet have applied to operate direct flights between Pulkovo and 33 countries as news emerged last year that the airport planned to operate "seventh freedom" flights for a five-year trial period.

Starting Jan. 1, 2021, St. Petersburg will offer simplified e-visas to tourists and businesspeople from 53 countries, excluding Britain and the United States. The move is expected to attract 12 million tourists each year, up from 8.2 million in 2018.

Wizz Air in January announced four routes from Pulkovo to Bratislava, Bucharest, Sofia and Vilnius. Pulkovo's website, however, currently [lists](#) Budapest as the only destination for Wizz Air flights, with the first scheduled for July 14.

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