

Russian Air Fares Soar as Coronavirus Restrictions Keep Planes Grounded

Russian tourists are paying double pre-pandemic prices for trips to Dubai and other tourist-friendly destinations.

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Russia has banned international flights except with a handful of countries. **Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency**

Air fares have more than doubled for flights from Russia to some of the few countries around the world that remain open for tourism, price data from travel agents has shown.

The average price paid for a return flight from Moscow to all destinations was 15,700 rubles (\$212), at the beginning of March, the *Kommersant* business daily [reported](#) — 40% more than the pre-coronavirus average.

But tickets to Dubai — which has some of the world's loosest entry restrictions for tourists — have more than doubled compared with 2019. Flights to other open countries, including the Maldives and Egypt have also risen steeply.

Russia [closed](#) its borders at the start of the coronavirus pandemic and has only reestablished direct flights with a handful of countries.

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Ticket prices for flights from Moscow to the Belarusian capital Minsk — which is often used as a hub for Russians to take onward flights to other international destinations — have also more than doubled since the start of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, internal flights are cheaper than they were before the pandemic. The average price of an internal flight is around 5,000 rubles one-way (\$67), *Kommersant* reported — slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels.

The Russian government hoped widespread border closures would [kick start](#) the country's domestic tourism industry and last year launched a nationwide [voucher scheme](#) to reduce the price of package tours for stay-at-home travellers.

Both popular Black Sea resorts such as Sochi and Crimea, as well as less traditional tourist hotspots such as Dagestan, reported record inflows last summer.

That helped cushion Russia's economic contraction, economists say, as travel complications helped keep some \$30 billion that would otherwise have been spent on foreign summer holidays inside Russia. The country's low-cost airlines — such as Pobeda — were also some of the world's least-affected last year, thanks to their focus on internal flights, where traffic held up despite the unprecedented slump in international flights.

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