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Russia to Soften Visa Policy for Tourists, Relatives of Russians

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Foreign tourists will be able to visit Russia for up to six months, up from the current one-month maximum, if the bills are passed. **Valery Matytsin / TASS**

Russian lawmakers have moved toward easing visa rules for tourists and relatives of Russian citizens.

The reforms introduced last week will allow foreign tourists with valid hotel bookings to stay in Russia for up to six months, up from the current maximum visa stay of one month.

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Relatives of Russian citizens will be able to obtain simplified visas valid for up to 12 months, up from the current three months, and will be permitted to stay in the country while applying for renewals.

The new visa policy will also allow Russian citizens to apply for their relatives' entry through

a diplomatic mission without requesting an invitation through the Interior Ministry.

The State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, passed both pieces of legislation submitted by the government last Wednesday. They are tentatively scheduled for the second of three needed Duma votes sometime in April.

The bills will then need a single vote from the upper-house Federation Council and President Vladimir Putin's signature to come into effect.

Current coronavirus restrictions limit travel to and from Russia to a handful of countries where daily case numbers are deemed safe.

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