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Foreigners Cancel Trips to Russia Over Covid Pass Uncertainty

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Russia's tourism sector has been hit hard by the pandemic. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Foreign tourists are canceling trips to Russia in droves over confusion surrounding digital coronavirus passes after current nationwide restrictions are lifted, the Russian Association of Tour Operators (ATOR) said Tuesday.

ATOR head Maya Lomidze said foreign visitors vaccinated with non-Russian jabs are not allowed to visit popular tourist destinations like museums and theaters in certain cities.

Moscow, the epicenter of Russia's Covid-19 outbreak, will require scannable digital passes known as QR codes at any entertainment or sporting event after the nationwide restrictions end on Nov. 7.

"Most of the foreign tourists coming to Russia are vaccinated. But in Russia, QR codes don't work for those who have received foreign vaccines," Lomidze told Interfax.

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She added that Moscow allows foreigners to receive QR codes after submitting a negative PCR test, but other regions have not made that option publicly available.

"You can't guarantee that QR codes won't be required upon arrival at hotels. It's unknown what sights foreign tourists will be able to visit and what documents they'll need," Lomidze said. "After the non-working days, tourists will not be able to visit museums and theaters."

Lomidze's comments follow a since-denied announcement from authorities in the Leningrad region surrounding Russia's second-largest city of St. Petersburg that museums will allow visitors who have received non-Russian vaccines.

She did not specify how many foreigners have canceled tours since Russian President Vladimir Putin imposed a "non-working" period this week to curb record-breaking deaths and infections during the Delta-driven fourth wave of the pandemic.

Putin has authorized regional leaders to extend the "non-working" period beyond Nov. 7 if cases don't fall. At least one region has exercised that option, ordering all non-essential workers to take a mandated paid holiday for an additional week.

Russia's tourism sector has been hit hard by the pandemic, with authorities reporting 64,400 foreign visitors from January-July 2021 compared with nearly 2 million during the same period in 2020.

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