

1.5K Russians Stuck in S. Africa Over Omicron Flight Bans

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Cape Town international airport. @ONgutjinazo / twitter

As many as 1,500 Russian tourists have been left stranded in South Africa as countries scramble to ban flights from the region over fears of the heavily mutated Omicron coronavirus strain, media reported Monday.

Russia last week banned flights from South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Madagascar, Swaziland and Tanzania, as well as Hong Kong. Some officials [believe](#) that Omicron may have already been brought to Russia by tourists returning from Egypt, a claim that health authorities deny.

Citing estimates by Russian diplomats, the state-run TASS news agency [reported](#) that up to 1,500 Russian citizens may still be in South Africa after Moscow suspended flights there over Omicron fears.

Related article: [Russia Says Developing Sputnik Omicron Booster](#)

Russia's Consulate General in Cape Town said it was working on options to evacuate Russian tourists with the help of European and other airlines.

According to the consulate's Telegram channel, up to 15 Russians will be able to [fly home](#) on a charter flight around Dec. 1. It said later Monday that it was finishing a list of passengers for a Dec. 3 Ethiopian Airlines flight to Moscow via Addis Ababa.

Nearly 800 people have subscribed to the Russian Consulate's evacuation Telegram page as of Tuesday afternoon.

TASS [reported](#) that "several dozen" Russian nationals have in recent days left South Africa for other cities on the continent, from where they can continue their journey back home.

Airlines that continue to fly from South Africa have jacked up their prices, while EU-based carriers deny boarding to non-EU citizens including Russians, the outlet added.

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