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Tourism to Russia Plummets to 4% of Pre-Pandemic Levels Amid Ukraine War

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Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency

Foreign tourism to Russia fell below 4% of its pre-pandemic levels in 2022 as the country faced international condemnation over its invasion of Ukraine, the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR) has said.

A mere 200,100 tourists traveled to Russia last year, according to ATOR's breakdown of Federal Security Service (FSB) border service data.

That marks a 96.1% decrease from the 5.1 million tourists who had visited Russia in 2019, before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The reasons are clear: closed skies between Russia and the vast majority of European countries, as well as the inability to use foreign-issued Visa and Mastercard cards in Russia," ATOR said Wednesday, referring to the airspace closures and financial sanctions passed by Ukraine's Western allies shortly after the invasion.

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Last year's tourism figures also marked a decrease from 288,300 visits in 2021 and from 335,800 in 2020, the peak years of the pandemic.

German, Turkish and Iranian tourists were the top three nationalities visiting Russia in 2022, with 25,400, 22,600 and 14,600 visitors respectively.

A mere 842 Chinese tourists visited Russia in 2022 due to strict Covid restrictions that Beijing started to relax late last year, according to ATOR.

Overall visits to Russia, which include tourism, work, study and business, totaled 13.1 million in 2022, an increase from the previous two years but down by 20 million from 2019.

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