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War, Sanctions Force Russian Officials to Vacation Close to Home – Reports

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Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matvienko and State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin. **Ramil Sitdikov / RIA Novosti Photo Host Agency**

Russian officials are opting out of traditional European travel destinations in favor of those closer to home for their summer vacations, the investigative outlet Vyorstka reported Wednesday, citing multiple anonymous lawmakers and regional officials.

Western sanctions and the Kremlin's strict controls on foreign travel are limiting options for Russian civil servants to domestic resorts, ex-Soviet countries and their dachas.

"Only crazy officials would go abroad now," Vyorstka quoted an unnamed senator as saying.

"You'll be given the boot like a cork from a champagne bottle, and count yourself lucky if you don't end up on trial," they added.

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Another lawmaker said they and their colleagues who own property in Europe are scrambling to sell it amid uncertainty as to when Russia's war in Ukraine will end and EU sanctions are potentially lifted.

"It's not that I'm worried or want to go there, I'm fine vacationing in Russia. It's just that the house [in Europe] needs care, I'm afraid everything will rot or something will be stolen," they said.

Besides summer homes, Vyorstka named Black Sea resorts — including those in annexed Crimea — the mountainous Siberian Altai republic and the volcanic Far East Kamchatka peninsula as the most popular vacation spots for Russian officials.

Those destinations have grown more crowded with ordinary Russians after European countries tightened visa procedures and banned direct flights in retaliation to Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

Officials unaffected by the Kremlin's travel bans spend their summer vacations in Turkey, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia and Moldova, according to Vyorstka.

Officials are also forbidding family members to post travel photos on social media "not to anger the [Russian] people who are already angry," Vyorstka quoted an unnamed Moscow Mayor's Office spokesperson as saying.

Children and close relatives of top Russian officials have frequently been spotted vacationing abroad, including in NATO and EU states, despite the targeted Western sanctions against their parents and visa restrictions for Russian nationals.

The controversy over civil servants' wartime visits to luxury resorts overseas have led to informal bans on local officials from traveling abroad.

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