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Russian Tourists Flock to Thailand – Bloomberg

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A resort in Thailand. **Tirachard Kumtanom / pexels**

The number of Russian visitors to Thailand has skyrocketed by more than 1,000% this year, as other popular destinations in Europe and elsewhere have become difficult to enter for Russian nationals following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Bloomberg reported late Thursday.

Between January and June, the Thai Tourism and Sports Ministry recorded 791,574 arrivals by Russian nationals, Bloomberg said.

More than half of those flew directly into the island of Phuket, which has long attracted Russia's wealthier citizens.

This year, Phuket has become the top source of tourists in the popular resort, Bloomberg added, citing Phuket Tourist Association data.

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At the same time, around half of the 338 villas sold in Phuket in 2023 were bought up by Russians.

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) recorded an uptick in the number of Russian travelers abroad this year, with Turkey, Thailand and the UAE among the most visited destinations.

Direct flights between Russia and Europe are virtually nonexistent due to tit-for-tat airspace bans, while individual EU member states have beefed up visa restrictions for Russian nationals.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in early July that Thailand plays a critical role in Moscow's diplomatic push in Southeast Asia, as the Kremlin seeks to "pivot to Asia" amid its isolation from the West.

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