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Russia Sees Surge in Schengen Zone Visa Demand Despite Travel Obstacles

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Russians have applied for more visas to Europe's visa-free Schengen area so far this year than in 2023, despite bureaucratic and geopolitical hurdles, the business newspaper Kommersant reported Wednesday, citing travel industry data.

Demand for business and tourist visas to the 29-nation Schengen Zone rose by 35% between January and October compared to the same period in 2023, according to the travel agency Continent Express.

Kommersant reported that the uptick was due to EU consulates in Russia cutting back on multiple-entry visas, leading more Russians to apply for single-entry visas.

Industry representatives said high demand for Schengen visas persists despite the EU's restrictions in response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. They expect interest to remain steady as Russians "quickly adapt to new barriers."

With most European countries closing airspace to Russian airlines, travelers often take connecting flights through non-EU nations like Turkey to reach their Schengen destinations. Before the war, Russians accounted for a significant portion of Schengen visa recipients worldwide, obtaining between one-fourth and one-third of all visas issued.

Kommersant, citing the travel website OneTwoTrip, reported a 30% increase in flight bookings from Russia to Europe in September and October, with France, Italy and Spain representing around 17%-18% of bookings each.

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