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Rising Costs and Tighter Rules Push Russians Out of Turkey – Izvestia

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Engin Akyurt / pexels

The number of Russians living in Turkey has nearly halved over the past two years, falling from 154,000 in 2023 to about 85,000 in 2025, the pro-Kremlin daily Izvestia reported Monday, citing figures from the Russian Embassy in Ankara.

Once one of the top destinations for Russians leaving the country after President Vladimir Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Turkey is now seeing a steady outflow.

The sharp decline comes as inflation in Turkey nears 33% and housing prices, according to the country's central bank, have risen more than 30% in the past year.

While those leaving were largely recent arrivals at first, Izvestia reported that longtime residents, including some who have lived in Turkey for a decade or more, are now departing.

Irina Nepluyeva, an Istanbul resident, told the paper that many of her acquaintances in Istanbul, Antalya and Alanya have been denied residency permit renewals, even if they own

property or have lived in Turkey for five to 10 years.

“Living without a residence permit means becoming an undocumented immigrant. Not everyone is ready for that,” she said.

Related article: Turkey Stops Granting Residence Permits to New Russian Arrivals — Report

Russian diplomats in Ankara pointed to additional hurdles: some districts are now closed to foreign property purchases and rentals; taxes for foreigners have risen; and migration controls have tightened.

In August 2024, Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced that the government would stop issuing short-term residence permits for tourists altogether.

Beyond financial and bureaucratic pressures, departing residents also cite a decline in public services, long hospital waits, littered streets and smoking in public spaces.

These conditions are prompting some Russians to return home, while others go on to destinations like Serbia, Portugal, Spain and, in some cases, Georgia.

The Economist has described the wave of political emigration from Russia since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 as the country's largest mass emigration since the 1920s.

Citing estimates from the Re: Russia project, the magazine reported that Kazakhstan and Serbia have each taken in around 150,000 Russian emigrants, Armenia about 100,000, Turkey 90,000, Israel more than 70,000, the European Union nearly 60,000 and the U.S. around 30,000.

According to Russian state statistics agency Rosstat, between 1.6 million and 2 million people left the country during Putin’s time in power before the war and roughly half that number have left since the invasion.

The independent outlet Takie Dela has put the total far higher, estimating that more than 5 million Russians emigrated between 1999-2021 and suggesting that with this figure may now exceed 6 million after taking the wartime exodus into account.

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