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# Russian Hotels Ordered to Use State Messenger Max for Guest Check-Ins

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**REUTERS / Ramil Sitdikov**

Hotels in Russia will soon be required to check in guests who do not have an internal passport with them by using the state-backed messaging app Max, Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov said Tuesday.

Under the new regulation, hotels with more than 50 rooms must purchase hardware and train staff to use Max before the law takes effect on Sept. 1. Reshetnikov said Max's developer, the tech company VK, is ready to help hotels with the transition.

The mandate builds on a framework introduced on April 1, which allowed Russians to check in at hotels using a driver's license, biometric data or the state services portal Gosuslugi rather than an internal passport. Foreigners, however, must still present physical passports for mandatory migration tracking when checking in at hotels.

The hotel requirement marks the latest government push to scale Max, which launched in spring 2025 as a Kremlin-vetted alternative to WhatsApp and Telegram.

In an apparent attempt to force Russians onto Max, Russia's media watchdog has spent months throttling features on WhatsApp and Telegram.

Max is already legally required to come pre-installed on all smartphones and computers sold in Russia. Access to the app is strictly limited to Russian citizens with domestic phone numbers and users from countries designated as "friendly" by the Kremlin.

Officials eventually plan to turn the platform into a "super-app" that combines private messaging, digital payments and government services.

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