

RUSSIANS TURN TO DOMESTIC TRAVEL AMID SANCTIONS



Before the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, many Russians avoided traveling within Russia, opting to spend their vacations abroad. However, domestic travel has become the norm, and Russians take pleasure in exploring their own country.

Suspended Flights

Two years ago, the EU suspended direct flights between the EU and Russia, and many countries tightened visa requirements for Russian citizens. In addition, the prices of plane tickets to third countries, especially Turkey, have exploded. Finally, **Russians can no longer access payment cards that can be used abroad or online on non-Russian sites.**

According to market research firm Statista, Russian trips abroad to all destinations fell by 44% between 2019 and 2023. Within the country, this number jumped by 21% year-on-year in 2023, according to the Russian government. In the first six months of 2024, the number of Russian tourists traveling within Russia increased by 9.35%, according to the TASS agency, based on the Ministry of Economy statistics.

Risks

Moscow is the most popular destination, with 5.9 million trips, followed by the Krasnodar region in the southwest, known for its Black Sea resorts (4.3 million trips). Even though there are risks, hundreds of thousands of Russian tourists continue to travel to the southwest of the country, close to Ukraine, despite the Ukrainian strikes.

The number of tourists visiting the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea decreased in 2023 following several attacks on the Kerch bridge, which links it to Russia and is used by the majority of tourists. Despite this, the authorities aim to be reassuring, with the governor of Crimea stating that the peninsula had welcomed more than 3.2 million tourists between January and July, an increase of 19% compared to the same period in 2023.

Less Convenient but More Profitable

Traveling to the southwest of Russia takes longer because several regional airports, including Anapa and Guelendjik, popular for their beaches, have been closed for over two years due to military operations. **Consequently, many tourists opt for train or road trips of more than 24 hours to reach the seaside resorts.**

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said in March that the tourism industry, which has become very profitable, recorded a profit of about 280 billion rubles (2.7 billion euros) in 2023, 2.3 times more than in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

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