

NEW YEAR'S: MORE FOREIGN TOURISTS TO SPEND HOLIDAYS IN RUSSIA



2025.

This year, foreign tourists purchase more tours for the New Year holidays in Russia than last year. For instance, in December, Tour Operator Intourist reported that the sales of New Year holiday tours nearly tripled compared to December of the previous year. The New Year holidays in Russia will commence on Sunday, December 29, and will continue for 11 days, concluding on Wednesday, January 8,

Although winter is typically considered a low season for inbound tourism in Russia, **by October and November, only a few rooms were available in quality hotels in the center of Moscow for the New Year period.** Inbound tour operators need to take exceptional efforts to secure accommodations for these holidays. The situation is similar in St. Petersburg, where all popular hotels in the higher price range are fully booked.

Where Do Foreign Tourists Come from?

In winter, Russia attracts many tourists from the Middle East and China. Experts report a significant increase in inbound tourism from the UAE. Russia is a visa-free destination for UAE residents, with ample air transportation available.

Besides the UAE, many foreign tourists come from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman. Citizens of these countries can obtain an electronic visa to enter Russia within four days. Although Qatar is also a promising market for inbound tourism to Russia, its residents do not qualify for the electronic visa program.

China remains the leading source of foreign tourists to Russia, with the number of travelers from this country far exceeding that of any other nation. According to FSB statistics, from January to September 2024, Chinese citizens made 731,800 trips to Russia for tourism, nearly seven times higher than last year, when there were only 105,800 visits.

In comparison, Germany ranked second, with 52,300 tourists visiting Russia during this time, a 24% increase year on year. Other countries in the top five included Turkmenistan, Iran, and Turkey.

Notably, the number of tourist trips from the UAE to Russia doubled in the first nine months of this year, reaching 43,200. India also experienced a similar growth, with 17,700 trips. However, the most significant surge came from Saudi Arabia, where the number of tourist trips to Russia skyrocketed nearly twelvefold in a year, totaling 39,100.

Where Will Foreigners Spend the New Year's Eve?

Moscow is traditionally the most popular winter holiday destination for foreign tourists. The Russian capital is the main entry point for visitors, especially those from the Middle East. While many travelers tend to spend their entire vacation in Moscow, there has been a noticeable increase in short trips to St. Petersburg and Kazan over the past year. St. Petersburg has established itself as a significant destination, although it still attracts fewer visitors than Moscow. Kazan and Sochi have also begun to see some interest, albeit in smaller numbers.

Experts attribute Moscow's popularity for New Year holidays to the availability of flights, efficient logistics, and opportunities for business meetings. Additionally, winter trips to St. Petersburg are gaining appeal, either as part of a package or as standalone visits. Foreign tourists are also interested in traveling to Lake Baikal year-round, both in winter and summer. Furthermore, there is growing interest in northern cities like Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, where visitors can experience the lights of the north.

Foreign guests typically seek individual excursions, personalized services, and winter activities. Popular options include husky rides, out-of-town trips, gourmet tours, stays in eco-hotels, visits to the circus, and extreme tours using SUVs or military vehicles. Notably, Chinese groups enjoy riding tanks in the forests of the Moscow region and taking icebreaker cruises along the Moscow River.

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