

Foreign Ministry: Tourists Will Return to Egypt by March

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The  **Moscow Times**

Tourists will return to the Red Sea resorts of Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh by March, provided that the political situation in Egypt has improved, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Thursday, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

Hotels in the resort area were expected to go on a two-week "vacation" starting Monday because the inflow of tourists is halted by anti-government protests that have swept the country since last month, leaving more than 300 dead.

But the industry, which will ask the government to help it cope with multimillion-dollar losses, expects to start admitting tourists after the vacation, senior ministry official Gocha Buachidze said.

Buachidze and his colleagues have personally visited Egypt to take stock of the situation. The diplomat said staying in the resort zone — some 600 kilometers removed from the main centers of protests, Cairo and Alexandria — remains safe.

Operators have stopped selling tours to Egypt in the last week, and most of the 45,000 Russian tourists have already left the country, many of them cutting their stay prematurely.

Only 372 Russian tourists remain in Egypt, Buachidze said, adding that they are set to leave within two days.

Reports also said up to 35,000 Russians, most of them real estate owners, might be living in Egypt. No evacuation was started for them, but Buachidze said it was not necessary as most also live in the safe resort area.

In absence of the tours to Egypt — a destination favored by 2.3 million Russians last year — demand rose for trips to Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Thailand, RIA-Novosti reported Monday, citing industry experts.

Resignation of Egypt's President

For live updates on Hosni Mubarak's resignation as president of Egypt, a frequent travel destination for Russians, see coverage from [Al Jazeera](#), [CNN](#) and [the BBC](#).

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