

Charter Flights Blacklist Threatens Holiday Travel

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Russia-based tourists looking to get away for the May holidays now have another reason besides unrest in the greater Middle East and high fuel surcharges to expect expensive fares, or worse: The Federal Air Transportation Agency (Rosaviatsia) has decided to blacklist scores of international charter flights scheduled for May to popular resorts including Palma de Mallorca, Barcelona, Treste and Napoli.

The move could leave thousands of travelers without travel alternatives and may have a serious impact on tour operators' bottom line.

The Federal Air Transportation Agency claims that it's following standard procedure by issuing and denying clearance certificates to charter airlines. It also says there are many other airlines, including non-charter flights, that can handle the demand, a fact that remains to be seen.

The big question is why only regional operators, as opposed to federal carriers, have had clearances denied. Could it be a way to help federal carriers dominate the market at the

expense of travelers?

There is still a chance that the canceled charter flights will be accommodated; carriers can apply for one-time clearances from Rosaviatsia, or they can try to secure non-peak time slots between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. from airports.

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