

Russian Tourism Market Recovers to Pre-Crisis Levels

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The number of Russians vacationing abroad has recovered and has almost passed its pre-crisis peak. From January to June 17.1 million Russian tourists went abroad, up by 30 percent from last year, the Russian government's statistics agency reported on Nov. 8.

Russian outbound tourist trips peaked at 42.9 million in 2014, before dropping by 19 percent and 9 percent in 2015 and 2016 due to the ruble's devaluation, geopolitical turmoil, and the closure of main Russian tourist destinations Egypt and Turkey.

Turkey is regaining its status as Russia's most popular tourist destination with 4.1 million tourists having already visited this year, or almost 25 percent of total tourist flow, according to another report by the Interfax news agency.

The largest tour operators surveyed by the Vedomosti business daily said that Turkey accounted for two-thirds of all tour sales this year. Following Turkey are Greece, Cyprus,

Bulgaria and Spain, as well as Montenegro and Croatia.

The domestic tourism that was picking up after 2014 has so far grown at a slower 10 percent in 2017, but the number of internal tourists is much higher at about 50 million people.

Vedomosti reported that less than 28 percent of Russians have a passport valid for traveling abroad, forcing a large number of them to take a holiday at home.

In October, Vedomosti reported that the bankruptcy of Russian charter air carrier VIM Avia means the cost of tours to Russia's most popular destinations could rise by 10 to 20 percent next summer.

VIM Avia held 15 percent of the charter airline market, which is the preferred way to get to holiday destinations, with 1.8 million passengers carried from January to August in 2017, up by 31 percent from the year before.

Pulling such a large player out of the market will push both charter and regular flight prices up, markets panelists surveyed by Vedomosti say.

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