

Coronavirus Hits Russian Tourism for \$400M Loss

Tour operators warn of an "unprecedented situation" which could put industry on brink of collapse.

By [Reuters](#)

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Russia has blocked entry to Chinese citizens trying to enter the country on tourist visas. **Wu Hong / EPA / TASS**

Russia's tourism sector has already taken a 27 billion ruble (\$406 million) hit from the impact of coronavirus, the head of the Russian Association of Tour Operators said on Thursday in a plea for government support.

The coronavirus outbreak has caused havoc across the global travel industry as companies restrict employee trips, airlines axe flights, major events are postponed and holidaymakers choose to stay at home or delay their travel.

Russia has restricted flights to China, Iran and South Korea and warned against travel to those

countries, as well as to Italy which is a popular destination for Russian tourists.

In the past week, the number of bookings with Russian tour operators has slumped 20% to 25% from the previous week, with some agencies reporting no sales at all, lobby group chief Maya Lomidze told a news conference in Moscow.

"The situation is unprecedented, and demands unprecedented measures be taken in support," she said after a letter published by the association warned that the sector could collapse.

The industry is not only struggling with a fall in demand. Tour operators must refund cancelled trips to countries such as Italy that have been designated dangerous by the government following the outbreak, the letter said.

Lomidze said this was a severe blow: "I am not able to forecast right now how many companies will close but absolutely everyone is suffering."

Foreign tourists are still coming to Russia but the lobby group has seen a wave of cancellations by tour groups from Asian countries and expects 20% to 25% fewer tourists from the region to visit this year compared with 2019.

Russia has temporarily banned travellers from China and Iran from entering the country and has imposed strict restrictions on who can visit from South Korea.

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