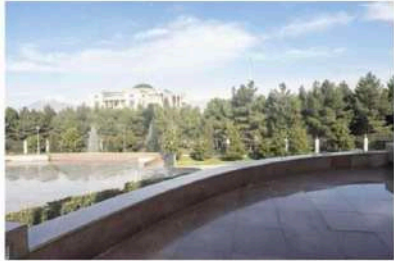


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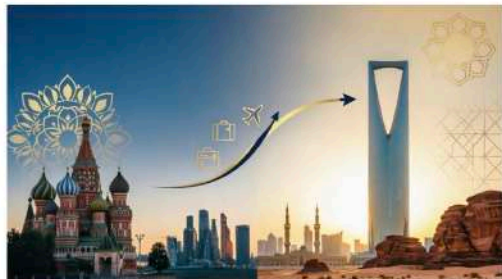
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Saudi Arabia Drops Visas for Russians: What Changes on the Ground?



A visa-free regime between Russia and Saudi Arabia has come into effect starting from May 11, 2026. Citizens of Russia can enter Saudi Arabia and stay for up to 90 days per calendar year (continuously or in total). For work, study, Hajj, and Umrah, a visa remains mandatory.

Russian Travel Digest has analyzed whether we can expect an increase in demand among Russian tourists for trips to the Kingdom. First, some statistics, the key figures look like this:

2021 and earlier: Before 2019, Saudi Arabia did not issue tourist visas, so there was virtually no organized tourist flow from Russia.

2022: The country was visited by **around 55,000** Russians.

However, the visa waiver could attract more Russian tourists to the Red Sea coast resorts, which could compete with Egypt and the UAE, said Mohammed Al-Jassem, Deputy Head of OIPBC to RIA Novosti. He refers to beach tourist zones such as the Red Sea project with Al-Wajh and Sharyrah islands, as well as the Amaala resort. Travel agency representatives agree, reporting that a vacation on the Red Sea in Saudi Arabia is comparable in price to Egypt. That is, literally, before the Iranian conflict, an entire family could fly there and have a vacation for 250,000 rubles.

Among the disadvantages of the destination, experts cite the lack of alcohol and a strict dress code, in which Saudi Arabia significantly loses out to other Arab Gulf countries: the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain. Some also note that Saudi Arabia does not yet have a large presence of Russian-speaking staff. It is also very difficult to find a good Russian-speaking guide in the country.

Summer is not the season in Saudi Arabia: it is too hot. The tourist flow there usually revives closer to winter. In the fall, the interest from Russians could be quite real, and Saudi Arabia could be in demand. But one should not expect a strong surge in tourist traffic.

For the interest of RTD readers, here is the list of some tour operators with Saudi Arabia in its portfolio: Space Travel, Art Tour, Intourist, Pegasus Touristic, Russian Express, ICS Travel Group, Solves, Amix Tour, Coral Travel (and Summar).

Tags: [Saudi Arabia](#)

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A visa-free regime between Russia and Saudi Arabia has come into effect starting from May 11, 2026...

12 May 2025



Marina Zaitseva, More than 20 years experience in travel trade industry in all sectors: tour operator, travel agency, destination management company. Higher education in PR and Marketing. Master Degree in Linguistics.

Hainan Island: Russian demand has increased by 60 percent



Russian tourist flow to the Chinese island of Hainan, having reached record levels last year, continues to rapidly increase in 2026.

In the first two months of 2026, Hainan welcomed 89,000 tourists from Russia, a 61.9% increase compared to the same period last year. Russia accounted for 31% of Hainan's total tourist flow in January-February.

Sanya remained the most popular resort on the island among the Russian guests. From January to February 2026, the average hotel occupancy rate in this resort city was approximately 88%, 5% higher than the 2025 figure.

Among the main factors driving the growth in demand from Russians, Mr. Song Shi, a representative of the International Cooperation Department of the island's Department of Culture and Tourism, cited the visa-free regime, the expansion of its geographic reach and the increase in the number of direct flights, the active promotion of Hainan in the Russian tourism market, and the development of tourism infrastructure and services for Russians.

The Middle East crisis is also having a positive impact on demand. Hainan is catching tourists who have postponed their tours there from the Persian Gulf region.

Aeroflot launched new scheduled flights from Irkutsk to Sanya in March 2026. Direct flights are now available from 11 cities: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Ufa, Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, Krasnoyarsk, Vladivostok, Ulan-Ude, Yekaterinburg, and Irkutsk itself.

Photo by Hainan Overseas Tour Operators Tour 2026

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Russian travelers are discovering Tajikistan. According to the Russian Union of Tourism Industry, demand for trips to Tajikistan is steadily growing — and many visitors are pairing it with neighbouring Uzbekistan for a double dose of Silk Road culture and mountain adventure.

"Tajikistan is not a promoted destination,"...



MIDDLE EAST

Russia-UAE flights set for major expansion by October 2026

As of mid-July 2026, regular passenger flights between Russia and the United Arab Emirates are operating across 11 routes. Travelers can depart from seven Russian cities—Moscow, St. Petersburg, Sochi, Makhachkala, Mineralnye Vody, Yekaterinburg, and Kazan—to two UAE destinations: Dubai International (DXB) and Abu Dhabi (AUH). The below information...



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Predictable six-month visas drive Russian travel demand to the UK in 2026

Russian tourists are booking more trips to the United Kingdom this year. According to the Russian tour operators' association (ATOR), bookings have gone up by 10% to 91% compared to last year, depending on the company. Most tourists still choose London,...



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New Tunisia flight program from Russia launches with 100% occupancy on debut flights

Pegas Touristik has officially resumed sales and operations for Tunisia, initiating charter flights from both Moscow and St. Petersburg to Monastir. The new flight program is being operated by Egypt's Pyramids Airlines, on an Airbus A321 aircraft configured with 220 economy-class seats. The schedule is designed to offer maximum flexibility for travelers...

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We cover **all parts of the world** where the Russian-speaking tourists go

Region	Number of articles
Middle East	340
Asia	650
Europe	960
Africa	290
America	200



ANALYTICS

Foreign tour from Russia now costs \$2,500 on average

As follows from the data of the Onlinetours package tour booking service, in Russia, the average check for foreign tours in the first half of 2026 increased to 196,500 rubles (\$2,500), or by 7% compared to the same period in 2025. The demand for trips abroad increased by 44%.

Turkey remained the leader in terms of booking...



INCOMING

Russia extends visa-free entry for Chinese — expects 25–33% growth in 2026

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree extending the visa-free entry for Chinese tourists until December 31, 2027 — a move that could boost arrivals by 25–33% by the end of 2026, according to Maya Lomidze, executive director of the Association of Tour Operators. The...



TOUR OPERATORS

200 Belarusian agents and 22 Egyptian hoteliers meet at Intercity workshop in Minsk

Over 200 Belarusian travel agents gathered for a high-energy B2B event, bridging Minsk and the Red Sea. On July 20, 2026, the DoubleTree by Hilton in Minsk served as the venue for a large-scale workshop organized by Belarusian tour operator Intercity in cooperation with its strategic partner, the Egyptian DMC Joyde Tours. The event brought together...



EVENTS

ITB China Conference 2026 to Spotlight AI, Luxury Travel Shifts and China's Changing Travel Demand

Taking place from 26–28 May 2026 in Shanghai, the ITB China Conference will feature 70+ topics and 180+ global speakers, offering a premier platform for dialogue between China and the international travel industry.

At the heart of ITB China, the ITB China Conference will convene global and

Media Profile

Focus on **analytical** materials assisting readers to boost their cooperation with Russian-speaking markets

Column	Number of articles
Analytics	640
Tour Operators	30
Incoming	320
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27.07.2026

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13.07.2026

Israel expects more Russian tourists

Michael Itzhakov, the Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, hosted a delegation of representatives of the leading Russian mass media in Jerusalem this week, according to [Vesti...](#)

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10.07.2026

Russian tour operators expand flight programs to UAE on Fly Dubai

Russian tour operator FUN&SUN has announced the launch of its own scheduled flight program to the United Arab Emirates, operating in partnership with flydubai. Tours are now on sale with departures from 11 Russian cities, with the program set to begin in August and continue through mid-May 2027. Flights...

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06.07.2026

Oman Air adds Tashkent and Sochi direct flights

Oman Air launched two new direct routes from Muscat: to Tashkent (starting July 3) and to Sochi (starting July 2). The Tashkent service marks the airline's first-ever connection to Central Asia. Flights to Sochi operate once a week—departing Muscat on Thursdays and returning from Sochi on Fridays—with...

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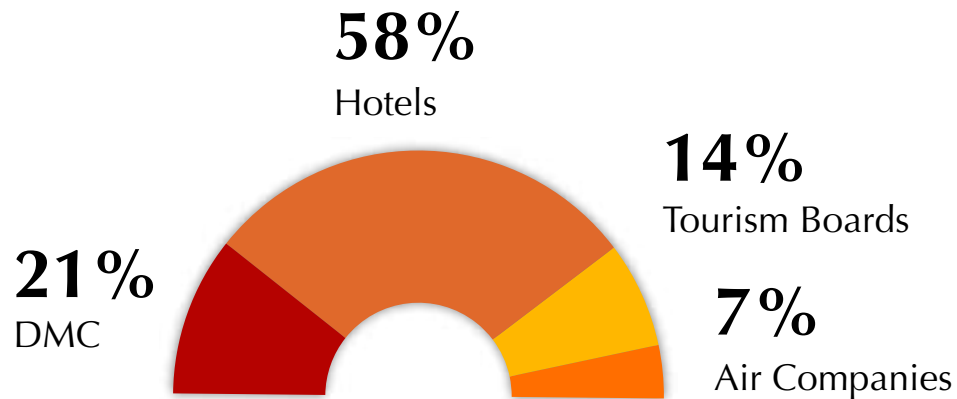
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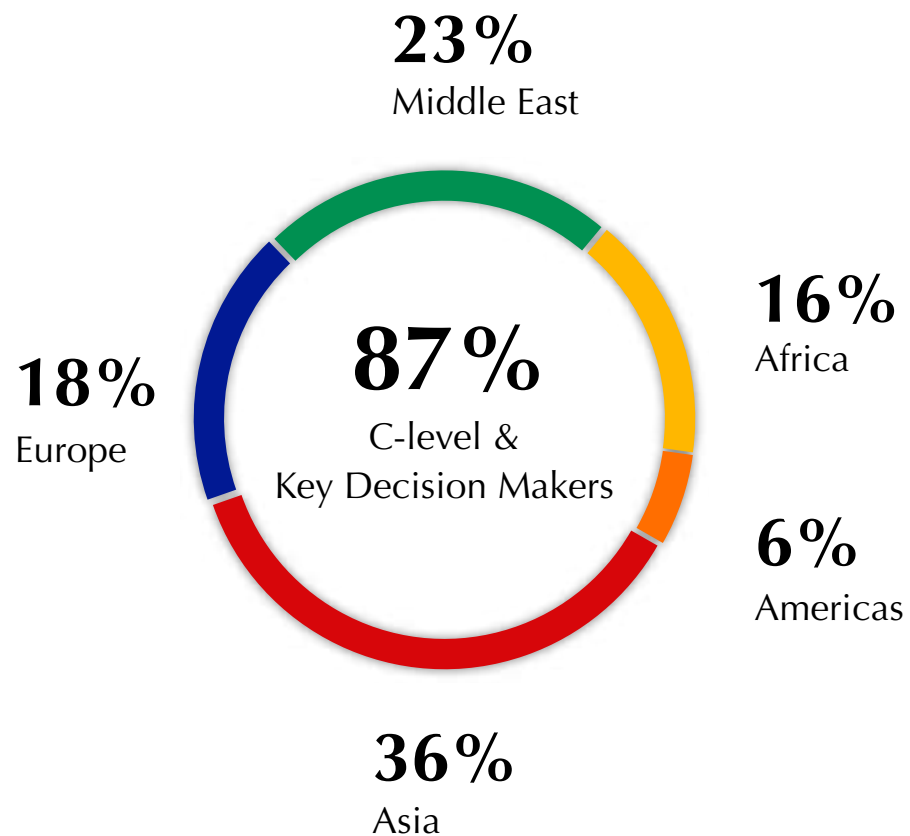
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Audience Profile

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Russian Travel Digest

Newsletter

Wednesday, 22.07.2026



by Marina Zatssepina

Hello and welcome to the [Russian Travel Digest](#) newsletter: your semi-weekly source of news from the outbound and inbound travel market of Russia and CIS. We are glad to keep you updated! Please send any feedback, thoughts, or useful information to: project@baginet.com.

Analytics

Travel Barometer: June 2026 Sales & Trends



June 2026 sales analysis from Baginet by recent meetings with travel agencies across Russia reveals a polarized market. While mass-market beach destinations continue to dominate, there is a growing interest in unique, safe alternatives, particularly in Asia. The reports consistently indicate that Turkey and Egypt remain the undisputed leaders in outbound tourism. The UAE, previously a top seller, has been mentioned as a source of stress due to "closed airspace" and a "halt in sales," pushing agencies to redirect clients to other destinations like Vietnam and Egypt.

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Africa

New Tunisia flight program from Russia launches with 100% occupancy



Pegas Touristik has officially resumed sales and operations for Tunisia, initiating charter flights from both Moscow and St. Petersburg to Monastir. The new flight program is being operated by Egypt's Pyramids Airlines, on an Airbus A321 aircraft configured with 220 economy-class seats. The inaugural flights from both capitals departed with 100% load factors.

[More](#)

Tour Operators

Coral Travel Network Hits 1,050 Offices



Coral Travel Market (CTM), operating the Coral Travel, Sunmar and Coral Elite brands, has expanded its franchise network to 1,050 offices across Russia – the highest count among all tourism franchise chains in the country. Geographic spread: 60% of branded agencies are located in Russian regions, 26% in Moscow, and 14% in the Moscow region.

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Middle East

Russian tour operators expand flight programs to UAE on Fly Dubai



Russian tour operator b2bSun has announced the launch of its own scheduled flight program to the United Arab Emirates from 11 cities of Russia, operating with Fly Dubai. Other tour operators (Space Travel, Intourist) also take blocks of seats to UAE on Fly Dubai.

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Middle East

Israel expects more Russian tourists



Michael Itzhakov, the Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, hosted a delegation of representatives of the leading Russian mass media in Jerusalem this week. He emphasized that Israel's tourism industry is operating at full capacity and assured that there are currently no restrictions for travelers.

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Other news in brief

[Russia extends visa-free entry for Chinese](#) until December 31, 2027 and expects 25-35% growth in 2026, although Association of tour operators of Russia calls for stronger promotion of Russian destinations in China and regular educational tours for Chinese travel agents.

[Taiwan has simplified entry for Russians](#). An electronic visa system for entry to Taiwan was launched for Russians on July 7 on a one-year trial basis.

[Pegas Touristik launches flight program to Phu Quoc](#) from 4 Russian cities: Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, and Krasnoyarsk in cooperation with the Russian airline Ikar.

Thank you for reading and see you in two weeks!



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04.04.2026

ITB China conference 2026 to spotlight AI, luxury travel shifts and China's changing travel demand



Taking place from 26–28 May 2026 in Shanghai, the ITB China Conference will feature 70+ topics and 180+ global speakers, offering a premier platform for dialogue between China and the international travel industry.

At the heart of ITB China, the ITB China Conference will convene global and Chinese travel leaders to discuss the most pressing trends shaping the industry, including the rise of AI in travel, a new focus on the evolution of luxury toward lifestyle-driven experiences, and the transformation of China's outbound and inbound tourism markets. The program features seven key tracks - Outbound Travel, Inbound Travel, Luxury Travel, Themed & Customized Travel, Hospitality, MICE & Incentive Travel, and Travel Tech & Innovation.

In 2026, China's industry think tank will further strengthen this positioning by expanding the diversity of its topics and speakers, bringing together perspectives from diverse markets across the entire travel value chain, and reinforcing its role as a two-way exchange platform between China and the global travel industry.

About ITB China

ITB China 2026 will take place from 26 to 28 May in the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center.

ITB China is the B2B-exclusive travel trade show focusing on the Chinese travel market, bringing together hand-selected top buyers with industry professionals from around the world. The show provides various networking events and a unique state-of-the-art matchmaking system to maximize business opportunities. The ITB China Conference takes place in parallel with the show.

Photo by ITB China

Tags: China

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Each press-release additionally is featured in semi-weekly newsletter of Russian Travel Digest.



Number of views

ITB China 2026: Russian hosted buyers and journalists explore Zhejiang and Hainan post-tours



4524

The B2B travel trade fair ITB China 2026 successfully took place from 26–28 May in Shanghai, China. The event was hosted at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Center in the Pudong district, bringing together the global travel industry under one roof. This year's show was the largest to date, growing by 20% and featuring over 900 exhibiting companies from 85 countries and regions. More than 280 international hosted buyers and media representatives attended the event, highlighting global interest in the Chinese market.

To foster deeper connections, organisers arranged exclusive post-show familiarization trips (FAM trips) for the attending international journalists and buyers. Participants were invited to explore two of China's most dynamic provinces – Zhejiang and Hainan. The excursions allowed guests to experience China's rich cultural heritage, coastal landscapes, and world-class tourism infrastructure firsthand. The trip to Zhejiang highlighted the province's mix of ancient heritage cities and modern leisure destinations, while the Hainan route emphasized the island's tropical beaches and duty-free shopping.

«During ITB China 2026, we conducted approximately 40 meetings with representatives of hotels, DMCs, technology partners, and regional tourism boards. We are currently discussing potential cooperation formats and assessing opportunities to expand our China product portfolio, with a particular focus on Zhejiang Province, which impressed us with its wide range of travel experiences. The Hainan Haikou Workshop was especially valuable, allowing us to meet in person with partners we are already working with, as well as discover new hotels and tourism products that can further enhance our Hainan offerings. We would also like to highlight the excellent work of the ITB China Buyer Team, whose professionalism, responsiveness, and support ensured a smooth and well-organized experience throughout the event. Russian Express will continue to actively develop its China portfolio and strengthen cooperation with key partners across the Chinese tourism industry», said the representative of tour operator Russian Express Natalia Khokhlova.



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Editorial article

Editorial article can be in form of an interview about your travel fair or result of a post-tour after the trade show.



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Russian Travel Digest

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