

QUICK FACTS AND INSIGHTS RUSSIA

Economic environment

Population:	143million
Internet penetration:	28% of the population use the internet
GDP 2006 (PPP):	US\$1,741 billion
GDP growth:	c. 7%

Russia is the world's 9th largest economy, and 3rd within Europe. Economic growth is expected to slow slightly in 2008-09. The Presidential Election is due in March 2008. Although internet penetration is relatively low, this represents about 40million people, usually in the higher socio-economic groups.

Source: Economist / ETC

Russian outbound travel trends

- With greater personal affluence, spending on leisure activities - including travel - is increasing. However, only a small proportion of the population travel abroad.
- While greatest potential so far has been from the super-rich Russians looking for a luxury holiday experience, in future there is expected to be increasing outbound travel by the growing number of middle-class Russians. Much of outbound travel emanates from the major urban centres such as Moscow, St Petersburg and Ekaterinburg.
- Top destinations are China, Turkey, Finland, Egypt and Dubai, that is, countries where visa requirements are minimal. (The UK visa is perceived to be relatively difficult to obtain). Sunny beach destinations are the preferred location for many holidays. Touring holidays are the next most popular type of holiday.
- Foreign travel is a status symbol and expectations are high, so Russians can be demanding customers. Information and services in the Russian language are preferred and high quality food and accommodation is expected.
- The main sources for information to plan a holiday are the internet, personal recommendations, travel agents, guidebooks, TV travel programmes and magazines. Travel agents play the major role in booking holidays.

Scotland's visitors

- Russians who travel internationally for holidays have positive perceptions about the UK and Scotland as destinations for cultural holidays – the key attractions being history and heritage and seeing the major sights.
- Perceptions of Scotland amongst Russians who have not visited before tend to be traditional – relating to history, kilts, Loch Ness, bagpipes and whisky. (Golf is also becoming more popular amongst the elite Russians.) Russians have strong impressions of our nature and scenery, and tend to feel warmly about the Scottish people.
- London tends to be the main target for first time visitors, while subsequent visits might involve travelling further afield. However, practical knowledge on visiting Britain was very limited, and so there is a considerable need to educate both travellers and the travel trade.
- There are currently no direct transport links to Scotland, but flights are available via London from Moscow, St Petersburg and Ekaterinburg, as well as via other travel hubs.

For more information on Scotland's visitors from Russia, visit www.visitscotland.org