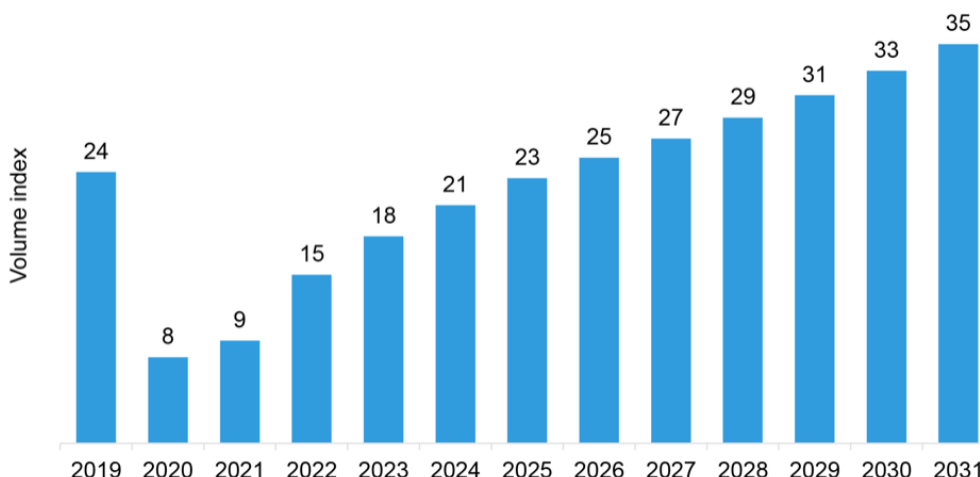


Maldives, Sri Lanka & Egypt gain Russian travelers

Travel ticketing analysis company ForwardKeys has stated that in 2022 Russian outbound travel is expected to increase by +64% over 2021, and +96% when compared to 2020.

10 year forecast – Russian outbound travel



Source: ForwardKeys Forecast Data.

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Nan Dai, China Market Expert at ForwardKeys says: “Looking at the current pattern and pace for bookings, it is expected to recover to 2019 levels approximately in 2025-2026.”

The Top Performing Destinations in APAC in 2021

In 2019, Thailand was the top Asian destination for Russian travelers, accounting for 37% of market shares of all destinations in Asia. At that time Sri Lanka ranked 9th on the list of Asian destinations from Russia, but last year this shifted; Thailand’s market share decreased to 11% while Sri Lanka increased to 4%, placing the country at #4 on the destination list.

Top 10 destinations in Asia for Russian travellers

2021 vs 2019, with tickets issued as of 11 January

Ranking in 2021	Destination country	2021 vs. 2019 Var%	Shares in 2021	Shares in 2019
1	Maldives	+168%	64%	3%
2	Thailand	-96%	11%	37%
3	Iran	-70%	5%	2%
4	Sri Lanka	-77%	4%	3%
5	India	-85%	4%	3%
6	South Korea	-95%	3%	7%
7	Singapore	-82%	3%	2%
8	Japan	-93%	2%	5%
9	China	-99%	1%	13%
10	Indonesia	-96%	1%	4%
-	Others	-99%	2%	21%

Source: ForwardKeys Total Air Market Data.

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Travel restrictions caused by the pandemic have strongly affected travel in the region; Russia is not on Thailand's quarantine-free travel list of approved countries, while Sri Lanka's tourism association spied an opportunity and launched tourism initiatives in Russia last year. Additionally, Sri Lankan Airlines returned to Russia with direct flights last summer after six years.

Thailand is a traditional favourite for Russian travelers. "That is mostly because Thailand's reopening time was later than the other destinations in the region, such as the Maldives and Sri Lanka," comments Dai. "Thailand's Sandbox program has started last July and launched the quarantine free 'Test and Go' program last November; Sri Lanka in Jan 2021 and Maldives in July 2020."

Russian travel to Asia in 2021, while picking up slightly, remained at only 3% pre-pandemic levels. Thailand is up over 2020 by 4%, Singapore by 18%, Indonesia by 4% and Vietnam by 1%.

Looking ahead

Far from surprising, January and February air tickets from Russia lead to sunny leisure destinations. The UAE is the most-booked destination, followed by Thailand and Maldives, which saw a dramatic increase of 142%. Sri Lanka shows 30% growth, but all of these are starting from low numbers.

The outlook of Russian outbound travel during Jan and Feb 2022



1 January – 28 February 2022 vs 2019, with tickets issued as of 13 January; market share >3%

Destination country	2021 vs. 2019 Var%	Shares in 2021
United Arab Emirates	-2%	13%
Thailand	-60%	11%
Maldives	+142%	9%
Turkey	-20%	7%
Sri Lanka	+30%	4%
Egypt	+272%	3%

Source: ForwardKeys Air Tickets Data.

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Maldives was the only destination to see an increase in numbers of Russian arrivals compared to 2019; this is attributed to clever marketing.

“According to Visit Maldives, a client of ForwardKeys, due to the pandemic, they altered their focus to utilize online & digital platforms to maintain the destination presence and partnered with some of the leading Russian tourism-related organizations, operators, travel agents and travel TV channels to spread the knowledge about the Maldivesto boost arrivals from Russia,” says Nan Dai.

Turkey and Egypt remain popular destinations, with Egypt doing especially well. “It appears the sun and sea of theMaldives and Egypt are winning over Russian travelers this year,” concludes Dai.