



Post-release
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“Tourism in Russia is More than Just Tourism”: a Retrospective of MITT 2023

From March 16 to 18, Moscow hosted the most anticipated event in the Russian tourism industry calendar – the 29th International Travel and Hospitality Show MITT 2023.

This year’s event was an unprecedented success, drawing over 14,800 visitors, which is 61% more than in 2022. Almost 800 companies and organizations were exhibitors at MITT in 2023, including delegations from Russian regions and foreign countries, leading travel operators, hotel chains, carriers, MICE agencies, online search and booking systems, representatives of the HoReCa segment, and other industry participants.

Exciting displays at the stands of 57 Russian regions were among highlights this year. The regions are making special efforts to create tourist infrastructure and develop different types of tourism, from skiing and gastronomy to child and educational travel. A total of 20 countries, including Iran, Indonesia, Thailand, Uganda, Algeria, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Sri Lanka, showed off their holiday and leisure and opportunities, adding international color to the show.

“We need to provide comprehensive assistance to regions that are only beginning to develop their tourism potential. Our statistics show that the number of people using the services of travel companies increased by 8% (63 million people) in the past season. The government is making its contribution by supporting initiatives in the tourism industry in every possible way,” said **Dmitry Chernyshenko, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation**, speaking at the exhibition opening ceremony.

The important role of tourism in the national economy was emphasized by **Christophor Konstantinidi, Chairman of the Expert Council of the State Duma Committee on Tourism and Tourism Infrastructure Development**. *“Tourism in Russia is more than just tourism. We are looking again at its role as a driver for the entire economy. A range of new opportunities are appearing today, including the social function of cultivating and educating a new tourist generation,”* he said.

MITT 2023 offered a number of new sections promoting growth sectors of the tourism industry – Glamping, Health and Medical Tourism, and Designer Tours.

In the Glamping section firms presenting outdoor recreation in comfort included FREEDOME, MODOM, Arh.Bro, Enjoy by Fantalis, KupolHall, Art House Center and others. The **Glamping Association** acted as partner of the section.

Participants of the Health and Medical Tourism section displayed a new approach that combines the best traditions of Soviet health resorts with modern leisure concepts. Leading market players that took part included PMD Hospitality (Azerbaijan), STL, Grand KRiO and SUE Medical Center. The **Association of Recreational Tourism and Corporate Health** acted as partner of the section.

This year's exhibition also featured representatives of the hotel and restaurant business in the HoReCa and the HoReCa Cleaning sections. Firms putting their services on display included Unisaw, Golden Weavers, Profdisplay and others companies that help hotels ensure the best level of service to their guests. **The Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers** (FRIO) acted as general partner of MITT 2023.

The HoReCa section included a special zone for hotel architecture and design with **ArchDialog** architectural bureau as partner.

MITT Business Program 2023

The business program at MITT 2023 included 17 conferences, presentations and sessions, with 170 leading speakers and influencers. **Maxim Reshetnikov, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, and Ali Asghar Shalbafian, Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran**, were among those taking part. The events were attended by over 3600 guests from the tourism and hospitality industry who spent three days discussing latest trends and challenges.

The Tourism and Hospitality Leader Forum was the main event of the business program. The Forum brought together heads of travel companies and hotels, and government officials. It was co-organized by the city government of Sevastopol and included the following strategic, analytical and expert sessions:

- Russian Tourist 2023.
- State regulation and measures to support the tourism industry in Russia. What is in store for the industry in 2023?
- Developing investment potential and tourist infrastructure in regions.
- Recreational tourism. Growth and development prospects.
- Glamping 2023. Priorities, perspectives, case studies.

The **MITT Digital** conference, dedicated to IT in tourism and hospitality, looked at the technology component of the tourism industry. The main topic of discussion was the changing preferences of travelers in 2023, and particularly the growth of demand for a convenient one-stop service for purchasing tickets and tours (to replace Booking.com).

“Booking.com was a virtual monopolist, providing up to 70% of hotel occupancy. It has been successfully replaced since its departure, with the share of direct bookings growing to 50%. But there is still a lack of good alternatives that can fully replace all its features,” said **Ilya Umansky, President of the Russian Travel Industry Union**.

Participants of the **Gastronomy Tourism and Eating Out** conference discussed the development of gastronomy tourism in Russia and its various areas, such as wine, cheese, organic rural tourism, etc. The event was organized by the Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers of Russia (FRIO), which was a General Partner of the MITT show. The conference was moderated by **FRIO Vice President Vladimir Bakanov**.

At the **Russia-Iran international discussion**, experts discussed strategic partnerships in several areas, including tourism. The event was moderated by **Daria Kozlova, presenter at Russia-24 TV channel**.

“Much work is underway at present to increase tourist flows to and from Iran,” said **Maxim Reshetnikov, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation**. He noted that Russia and Iran have agreed on visa-free group travel from 2023, and details of non-cash payments between legal entities in the two countries are being negotiated.

Ali Asghar Shalbfian, Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran, also took part in the discussion. He announced new upcoming direct flights from Russian cities to Iran and said that the Russia’s Mir payment system may be launched in Iran.

Highlights of the business program included **Traveler's Day at MITT. Let's Discover Russia and the World Together**. Representatives from different regions of Russia, from Crimea to the Far East, held a series of presentations demonstrating the potential of their native regions. Guests learnt about folk crafts of Dagestan, hiking trails in Monchegorsk, the beauties of Sevastopol and much else that Russian regions have to offer.

The MITT travel startup competition

The jury of Travel Start, the third MITT travel competition for travel startups, picked the best startup companies in the Russian tourism industry – companies that are developing innovative projects using IT technologies.

The winners of MITT’s Travel Start 2023:

- 1st place — FunTam aggregator of nearby events and places
- 2nd place — 2ROOMZ web service for sale of services and communication with hotel guests
- 3rd place — Avatar virtual employee system

The finalists and prize-winners were invited to speak at the MITT digital conference, and we offered a workplace at the exhibition site in the Travel Startups zone, a stand at the MITT 2024 anniversary exhibition, as well as opportunities to partner with member companies of the Russian Travel Industry Union.

The MITT Travel Start competition is organized with the support of the Travel Startups professional community.

MITT 2023 Awards Ceremony

On March 18, an award ceremony was held to celebrate the most distinguished and active participants of the MITT 2023 show.

Nominations and winners of the ceremony:

- Best National Stand – Iran
- Loyalty and Constancy – Tunisia
- Best Country Presentation – Malaysia
- Most Hospitable Stand – Sri Lanka
- Most Welcome Back to MITT – Republic of Cuba
- Fruitful Cooperation – Myanmar

Winners of the Russian-language exposition:

- Most Active Participant – Republic of Belarus
- Most Creative Stand – Nizhny Novgorod Region
- Most Hospitable Stand – Republic of Abkhazia
- Best Representation of a Russian Region – Altai Territory
- Best Debut by a Russian Region, Partner of the Opening Ceremony – Republic of Khakassia
- Most Attractive Stand – Republic of Tyva
- Loyalty and Constancy – Samara Region,
- Loyalty and Constancy, Partner of the Minister's Cocktail – Sakhalin and Kuril Islands
- Most Visited Stand – Moscow Region
- Most Attractive and Most Active Stand, Strategic Partner of the Exhibition – Republic of Dagestan
- Best Stand of a Russian Region, Republic of Tatarstan
- Best Representation in the Glamping Section – ENJOY
- Best Representation in the HoReCa Section – TravelLine
- Breakthrough of the Year – Republic of Altai

Exhibition Partners of MITT 2023

- General Partner – Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers
- General Partner of the Business Program – Krasnaya Polyana Resort
- Opening Ceremony Partner – Republic of Khakassia
- Partner City – St. Petersburg
- Official Partner – Check In
- Official Partner of the Tourism and Hospitality Leader Forum – the City Government of Sevastopol
- Mountain Partner – Caucasus RF
- Business Program Partner – MTC Travel
- Official Banking Partner – Sber
- Strategic Partner – Republic of Dagestan
- Strategic Session Partner – Yamal
- Minister's Cocktail Partner – Sakhalin and Kuril Islands