
The leading Russian tourist sending operator, Natalie Tours, will increase up to 8% the number of Russian tourists in Catalonia during the year 2005

The Catalanian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs announced today the good perspectives of this market for the summer season, with the incorporation of Catalonia in the catalogues of new operators

Thursday, 31 March 2005.— Natalie Tours, Russia's leading tour operators, will increase up to 8% the number of tourists in Catalanian destinations, according to Josep Huguet, the Catalanian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, speaking at the press conference in which he reviewed the Easter occupancy figures for Catalonia. According to the Minister, the Russian market ***“is becoming more and more loyal to the Brand Catalonia and is the top destination within the Spanish peninsula”***. Some 134,000 Russian tourists reach Catalonia nearly every year.

The Directors of Natalie Tours have communicated this to Ignasi de Delàs, the Head of *Turisme de Catalunya*, during their recent participation at Moscow's MITT fair. De Delàs, who presented the Brand Catalonia to 250 Russian travel agents at an event organised by Natalie Tours, confirmed that Catalonia is the top destination of this market in the Spanish state.

Moreover, Tez Tours, a tour operator that this year has joined the operators that send tourists to Catalonia, has programmed Catalanian destinations for the first time and has elaborated a 100-page catalogue exclusively about Catalonia.

Also within the framework of the MITT 2005 fair, tour operator Capital Tour, from the hand of its President Igor Belchukov, presented the prize that the leading Russian tour operators award to distinguish the work carried out by institutions on behalf of tourist promotion, to the delegation of *Turisme de Catalunya*, a body attached to the Catalanian Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs. For the sixth time running since 1993, the award was granted to the *Turisme de Catalunya* office for the eastern European countries. In fact, the office was inaugurated in 1993. Catalonia has pioneered tourist promotion in eastern European countries.