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Tourism as a factor of migration and the formation of the Russian-speaking community in Indonesia

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to identify the characteristics of tourism flows from Russia to Indonesia and to examine their role as a factor in the formation and functioning of Russian-speaking communities. Tourist flows from Russia to various countries can serve as a foundation for the development of a Russian-speaking economy. Due to relatively favorable visa regime and good climate conditions, some tourists subsequently decide to remain in a given Southeast Asian country and obtain legal migration status there. Indonesia, a highly popular destination for Russian tourists, serves as a prime example of this phenomenon. This study analyzes various sources of information regarding the migration of Russian citizens to Indonesia. It demonstrates that national statistics capture only permanent migration flows, excluding temporary forms. Consequently, the number of Russians actually residing in Indonesia is underestimated. Estimates of the Russian population in Indonesia vary widely — ranging from a few hundred (according to Indonesian sources) to tens of thousands (including tourists and temporary residents, according to the Russian Embassy in Indonesia). The study also highlights how the significant reduction or complete cancellation of direct flights to Southeast Asian countries popular among Russians has skewed outbound border statistics due to the use of transit routes. At the same time, inbound border statistics from host countries — including Indonesia — fail to provide a complete or accurate picture of the size and socio-demographic structure of migration flows. This is largely due to the “Visa run” practice widely used by foreigners in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, by cross-referencing various data sources — including information from the Russian Embassy in Indonesia and media reports — it has been possible to draw conclusions regarding the age and professional profile of Russians in Indonesia. In particular, the predominant group consists of individuals aged 30–50, including families with children. Key employment sectors include information technology, tourism, real estate, trade, and consulting services. Notably, many activities within the Russian-speaking economic sector are geared toward serving fellow Russians, primarily tourists. The study concludes that the migration of Russian citizens to Indonesia is driven by the active development of tourism, a relatively favorable visa regime, and investment opportunities. These factors foster

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the formation of stable Russian-speaking communities and exert a significant influence on the local economy and culture.

Keywords: Indonesia, Russian-speaking population, Russian-speaking economy, factors of tourism development, migration flows, sources of information on population migration

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Туризм как фактор миграции и формирования русскоязычного сообщества в Индонезии

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Аннотация. Цель исследования — выявить особенности развития туристических потоков из России в Индонезию как одного из факторов формирования и функционирования русскоязычных сообществ. Потоки туристов из России, направляющиеся в разные страны, могут быть источником формирования русскоязычной экономики. Благодаря относительно либеральному визовому режиму и благоприятному климату многих стран Юго-Восточной Азии, часть туристов в дальнейшем закрепляются в выбранной стране, получая тот или иной миграционный статус. Ярким примером в этом отношении является Индонезия, пользующаяся высокой популярностью у туристов из России. В исследовании проанализированы различные источники информации о миграции граждан РФ в Индонезию. Показано, что национальная статистика фиксирует только потоки постоянной миграции, не включая ее временные формы. Таким образом, число реально проживающих в Индонезии россиян является недооцененным. Оценки численности россиян в Индонезии различаются многократно: от нескольких сотен человек, по данным индонезийских источников, до десятков тысяч человек, в т.ч. туристов и временно пребывающих, по оценкам Посольства РФ в Индонезии. Также акцентировано внимание на том, что значительное сокращение или полная отмена прямых авиарейсов в популярные у россиян страны Юго-Восточной Азии привели к искажению выездной пограничной статистики из-за использования транзитных маршрутов.

В то же время въездная пограничная статистика стран приема, в т.ч. и Индонезии, также не дает полной адекватной картины численности и социально-демографической структуры миграционных потоков из-за широко используемой иностранцами в странах Юго-Восточной Азии схемы «визаран». Тем не менее, сопоставление различных источников данных, а также информация российского посольства в Индонезии и средств массовой информации позволили сделать выводы о возрастном и профессиональном составе россиян в Индонезии. В частности, преобладающей группой являются лица в возрастах 30–50 лет, в т.ч. семьи с детьми. К основным сферам занятости можно отнести информационные технологии, туристический бизнес, недвижимость, торговлю и консультационные услуги. При этом многие сферы занятости представителей русскоязычной экономики ориентированы на оказание услуг своим соотечественникам, прежде всего туристам. Делается вывод о том, что миграции российских граждан в Индонезию способствуют активное развитие туризма, относительно благоприятный визовый режим, возможности инвестиционной деятельности. Это приводит к формированию устойчивых русскоязычных сообществ и оказывает значительное влияние на местную экономику и культуру.

Ключевые слова: Индонезия, русскоговорящее население, русскоязычная экономика, факторы развития туризма, миграционные потоки, источники информации о миграции населения

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Introduction

In the modern era, international tourism has been developing rapidly, involving hundreds of thousands of people travelling between countries. Over the past thirty years, the number of international tourists has steadily increased from 201.9 thousand in 1995 to 876.6 thousand in 2019. After the collapse in international tourist numbers caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021, tourist flows began to recover and reached 596.8 thousand people in 2024, and, taking excursionists into account, exceeded one billion.¹ A wide range of factors contributes

¹ Tourism Statistic — Outbound Tourism. UN Tourism. 2024. Retrieved 15 September 2025 from <https://www.untourism.int/tourism-statistics/tourism-data-outbound-tourism>

to the development of international tourism: economic, physical and geographical, infrastructural, political and administrative, technological, socio-demographic, cultural and others. The economic factors include the growth of household incomes in tourist-sending countries, a decrease in the cost and an increase in the affordability of tourism products, the purchasing power parity of destination countries, as well as investment in the tourism sector and the development of tourism infrastructure. The growth of international tourism is also stimulated by increasing urbanization and higher levels of education in sending countries, most of which are characterized by population ageing, leading to the emergence of retirees with sufficient income and free time. Changes in family structure, manifested in a declining number of children and later marriages, also contribute to the growth of tourist flows from sending countries. Among the most important factors are the political, legal and administrative measures adopted by countries that receive international tourists. Many states have national tourism strategies to promote their tourism products, use tax instruments to develop their industries and pursue policies aimed at simplifying or abolishing visas for foreign tourists, and there is now active expansion of electronic visas on arrival (eVOA), which also stimulates and facilitates the arrival of international tourists. A special place is occupied by the group of technological factors in the development of international tourism, which is characterized by the advancement of digitalization and online technologies for searching, comparing, booking and paying for tourism services by cashless means worldwide. Due to the current level of technological development, new forms of tourism are emerging that evolve into temporary forms of migration — digital nomads, for whom travel is combined with work. The combined effect of all groups of factors driving the development of international tourism allows us to speak of a recovery to its pre-pandemic level in the coming years.

Russia is an active donor of international tourists, whose flows declined due to travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and then as a result of sanctions that limited entry into many Western countries and led to a reorientation of tourist flows from Russia towards transit countries, making them “invisible” to many statistical sources. Nevertheless, in 2024, according to the Border Service of the Federal Security Service of Russia, more than 11.6 million departures were made from the country for tourism purposes, while in 2019 this figure was 17.9 million.² Data from the United Nations World Tourism Organization recorded 45.3 thousand international tourists from Russia in 2019.³ Many destinations popular among Russian tourists have become “invisible” to official statistics. Therefore, to assess the scale of migration and the formation of Russian-speaking communities, it is necessary to use a broader range of information sources.

² Arrivals of Russian citizens. Unified inter-bodgetional information and statistical system. 2024. Retrieved 15 September 2025 from <https://www.fedstat.ru/indicator/38480>

³ Tourism Statistic — Outbound Tourism. UN Tourism. 2024. Retrieved 15 September 2025 from <https://www.untourism.int/tourism-statistics/tourism-data-outbound-tourism>

In the context of globalization, tourism is increasingly acting as a powerful social catalyst, shaping new models of mobility that blur the line between a short visit and permanent residence. This phenomenon, which balances between a “long vacation” and full-fledged migration, is particularly evident in “warm” countries with developed infrastructure and a liberal visa regime. Indonesia, and in particular the island of Bali, has become one of the most representative examples of this global trend, attracting thousands of digital nomads, entrepreneurs and seekers of an alternative lifestyle from all over the world, including from Russia.

Therefore, **the aim of this study** is to identify the specific features and analyse the development of tourist flows from Russia to Indonesia as a factor in the formation and functioning of the Russian-speaking community.

Methods

The methodological basis of the study is a statistical analysis of various flows and forms of migration from Russia to Indonesia, aimed at comparing a set of empirical data obtained from historical sources, academic literature, media publications, data from international organizations, as well as different types of statistical observations on both the Russian and Indonesian sides. It is precisely the comprehensive analysis of these information sources that makes it possible to identify current features in the development of tourist flows as a factor in the formation of the Russian-speaking community in Indonesia.

History of interaction and migration of the Russian-speaking population in Indonesia

The first contacts with Russians date back to the colonial period, when Indonesia was known as the Dutch East Indies. The first Russian seafarers and merchants began visiting the Malay Archipelago in the early 19th century. Thus, Russian navigators I.F. Krusenstern and Yu.F. Lisiansky were the first to visit the island of Java during their circumnavigation in 1803–1806, which resulted in descriptions of the nature, customs and culture of the local population. In 1821, under the leadership of Otto von Kotzebue, a Russian expedition visited Jakarta and Surabaya (Esakov, Plakhotnik, Alekseev, 1964). A significant contribution to the study of Java and the Malay Archipelago in the 19th century was made by Russian researchers I.A. Goncharov, N.N. Miklukho-Maclay, A.I. Voeikov, S.O. Makarov and A.N. Krasnov (Putilov, 1981).

In the mid-19th century, trade as a means of strengthening the presence of the Russian Empire in Southeast Asia became a basis for establishing contacts and relations. Russia shipped kerosene and manufactured goods by sea to the Dutch East Indies and imported tea, coffee, tobacco, spices and tin. In 1894, the first Russian consulate appeared in Batavia (the capital of the Dutch East Indies, now part of Jakarta), headed by M.M. Bakunin (Panarina, Astaf'eva, 2019). Batavia was also visited twice by members of the Russian imperial family: in 1890 by Tsarevich Nicholas and in 1911 by Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich.

The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia triggered a large wave of “White” emigration, part of which also headed to Indonesia. There are no precise data on the number of Russian emigrants in Indonesia, and estimates range from several dozens to a few hundred people. Most of them were highly qualified specialists in various fields and settled on the islands of Java, Sumatra and others.

In the early 20th century, Indonesia saw the rise of the national liberation movement, and already in the 1920s the USSR supported it through the Communist Party of Indonesia. The proclamation of the country’s independence after the Second World War was openly supported by the USSR in the UN Security Council as early as 1946, which eventually led to the recognition of Indonesia’s independence by the Netherlands in 1949, and in 1950 diplomatic relations were established between Indonesia and the USSR. During this period, Russian-Indonesian relations developed rapidly in political, economic and military-technical spheres. Agreements on economic and technical cooperation were signed, under which the USSR provided loans totalling about 900 million US dollars for economic development projects. This period was accompanied by an inflow of Soviet specialists to Indonesia, who built a number of major facilities, including the Krakatau steel plant, a network of highways on the island of Kalimantan, a research nuclear reactor in Yogyakarta, the Druzhba hospital and the Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta, among others (Aleshin, 1963).

The deterioration of relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands over West Irian led President Sukarno to appeal to N.S. Khrushchev with a request to create the country’s navy. Between 1959 and 1962, the USSR supplied Indonesia with a large number of warships, aircraft, helicopters, submarines, tanks, air defense systems and other equipment. The USSR also provided for the development of military infrastructure and the training of crews and military specialists, which resulted in the deployment of a military contingent and Soviet ships at the naval base in Surabaya, where the Consulate General of the USSR was opened in 1962. In 1967, with the coming to power of General Suharto and the establishment of the “New Order” oriented towards the USA, Japan and Western Europe, Soviet-Indonesian relations were reduced to a minimum, leading to the large-scale departure of Soviet specialists in various fields. Bilateral relations only began to “thaw” in the late 1980s (Malenin, Khokhlova, 2022).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, relations moved to a new format focused on economic cooperation, which led to the emergence of new forms of temporary migration from Russia to Indonesia. For many Russian citizens, Indonesia, and especially the island of Bali, over the past thirty years has transformed from an exotic beach holiday destination into a place of longer-term migration, often turning into permanent residence. Many visitors, initially arriving as tourists, gradually integrated into the local environment, turning into so-called “winterers”, staying on the island for longer periods, starting businesses, educating their children and organising their lives around the Indonesian “location” (Anh et al., 2022).

An important stage in the most recent period is the Special Military Operation in Ukraine, after the beginning of which, in 2022, flows of “relocants” from Russia

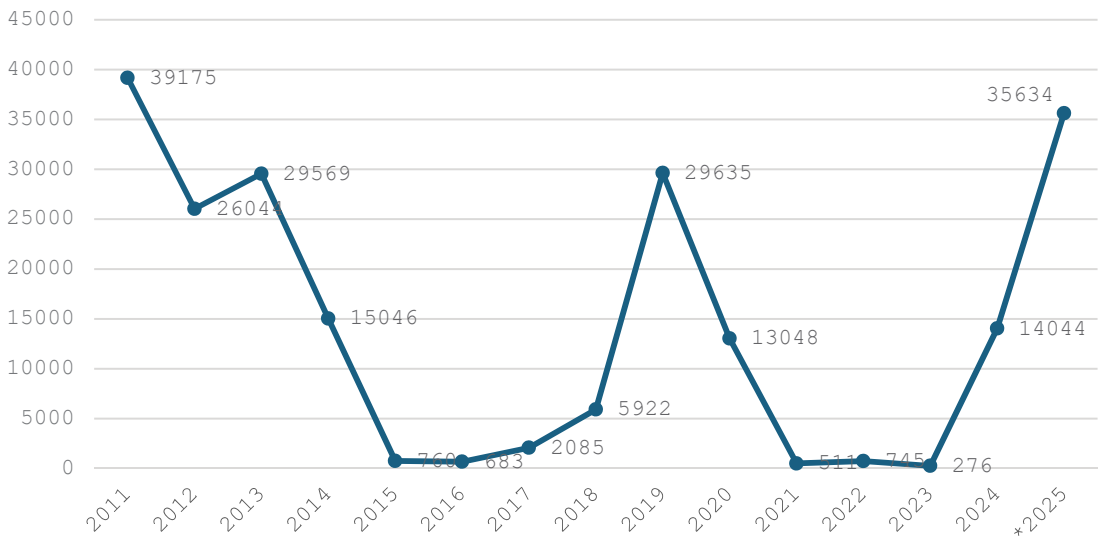
to various countries of the world, including Indonesia, were recorded. According to estimates by researchers from the RANEPА, around 650 thousand people may have emigrated from Russia in 2022.⁴

Approaches to estimating the size and formation of the Russian-speaking community in Indonesia

The Russian-speaking population in Indonesia is represented by several migration categories. These include immigrants who have left Russia to reside in Indonesia, renounced their Russian citizenship and obtained new citizenship, a residence permit, or dual citizenship. Expatriates are understood as those who have retained their Russian citizenship and stay in Indonesia for an extended period on a work visa or a repeatedly extended tourist visa. To extend such a visa, many expats have to travel to neighboring countries in order to renew their “tourist” period of stay upon returning to Indonesia. This is facilitated both by the liberal visa regimes of many Southeast Asian countries and by the increase in permitted lengths of stay for tourists. For example, the authorities of Thailand, which is very popular among Russian tourists, extended the length of stay for Russian citizens to 90 days from 1 November 2023 to 30 April 2024 (Ryazantsev, Lukashenko, Smirnov, 2024; Bagautdinov, 2022; Phyo, Kuznetsov, 2023). To combine all these categories, the term “Russian-speaking community abroad” is used, which includes Russian-speaking and Russian-speaking citizens regardless of their ethnic origin (Ryazantsev, Ruban, Anan’in, 2023; Lukyanets, Tyshkevich, 2023).

There are relatively few statistical sources available for estimating the size of the Russian-speaking population residing in Indonesia. First of all, it is necessary to consider the available sources of current statistics on migration flows from Russia to Indonesia. The first of these is the data of the Border Service of the Federal Security Service of Russia, which record the fact of crossing the border. However, they count the number of border crossings by purpose of visit, rather than the number of individuals. In the absence of direct air connections between Russia and Indonesia, a significant share of migrants who enter Indonesia in transit through other countries are not “visible” in this data source. Thus, the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of direct flights since 2022 have led to a multiple reduction in flows during this period. Conversely, while only 111 border crossings were recorded in the first half of 2024, as many as 1,294 were registered in the third quarter alone, when Aeroflot launched direct flights on the Moscow-Denpasar route (from 17 September 2024 — two flights per week, and from 3 October 2024 — three flights per week). By the end of the first three quarters of 2025, this figure had more than doubled the value for the entire year 2024 and reached 35.6 thousand (Figure 1).

⁴ RANEPА. 10 % of relocants have returned to Russia. Vedomosti. 2025. Retrieved 15 March 2025 from URL: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2025/02/07/1090699-v-rossiyu-vernulis>



*Data for 2025 covers the first three quarters only.

Figure 1. Departures of Russian Citizens to Indonesia, 2010–2025 (border crossings)

Source: Data from the Border Service of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of Russia on the departure of Russian citizens.⁵

An important feature of this data source is that not all migrants indicate tourism as the purpose of their visit, and in the case of connecting flights the first country of arrival, i.e. the transit country, is recorded. Therefore, on the one hand, what is counted are instances of border crossing rather than the number of individuals, and on the other hand statistical distortions arise due to inaccurate indication of the destination country and purpose of travel.

The predominantly tourist nature of these trips is confirmed by the purposes stated upon departure. Thus, tourism accounted for 74% of trips in the third quarter of 2025 and 72% in the last pre-pandemic year 2019, and there was not a single case during the entire period 2010–2025 where relocation for permanent residence was indicated as the reason for departure. This is partly corroborated by data from the Association of Tour Operators of Russia on outbound tourist flows, where the figures of the Border Service of the FSB of Russia are adjusted using national statistics from destination countries. In this case, the data on the number of tourists from Russia are more than 4.5 times higher than domestic figures, revealing “transit” and “return” tourists. Over the first nine months of 2025, the total outbound tourist flow from Russia amounted to 14.8 million trips and compared to the same period of the previous year, thanks to direct flights to Bali, the number of trips to Indonesia increased by one third to reach 161 thousand. It is also worth noting the growth in tourist trips to countries whose airlines offer connecting flights from Russia to popular tourist destinations (Zulyaev, 2023) (Table).

⁵ Departure of Russian citizens. Border Service of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. 2025. Retrieved 10 August 2025 from <https://fedstat.ru/indicator/38480>

Key destinations for Russian outbound tourism

Destination	Number of visits from the Russian Federation	
	Jan — Sep 2024	Jan — Sep 2025
Turkey	5 473 380*	5 525 621*
China	1 361 020**	1 723 217**
UAE	1 345 908**	1 576 636**
Egypt	1 035 974**	1 417 569**
Thailand	1 156 753*	1 272 337*
Vietnam	159 382*	435 161*
Maldives	162 289*	198 617*
South Korea	149 300*	172 000*
Indonesia	120 776*	161 003*
Serbia	141 926*	131 984*
Japan	63 900*	129 900*
Sri Lanka	127 232*	122 144*
Malaysia	94 951*	101 400*
Cuba	141 619*	88 879*
Qatar	81 187**	76 115**

Calculated by ATOR based on: * — National statistics of foreign countries; ** — Data from the Border Service of the FSB of the Russian Federation.

Source: Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR)⁶.

If we compare these figures with the data of the Indonesian statistical office on the number of entries by Russian tourists, the values are even higher: for example, by the end of 2024 more than 180 thousand visits from Russia were recorded (Figure 2).

As can be seen from Figure 2, by the end of 2023 the number of Russian tourists in Indonesia had already exceeded pre-pandemic levels, which is not reflected in Russian statistics and partly includes relocants.

A more permanent type of migration is reflected in another source of current statistics — the number of persons who have left Russia for Indonesia and have deregistered with the territorial offices of the Federal Migration Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia (Figure 3).

⁶ Destinations of tourist trips from Russia. Data from the Association of Tour Operators of Russia. 2025. Retrieved 10 August 2025 from URL: <https://www.atorus.ru/article/v-kakie-zarubezhnye-strany-ezdit-bolshe-vsego-rossiyskikh-turistov-65032>

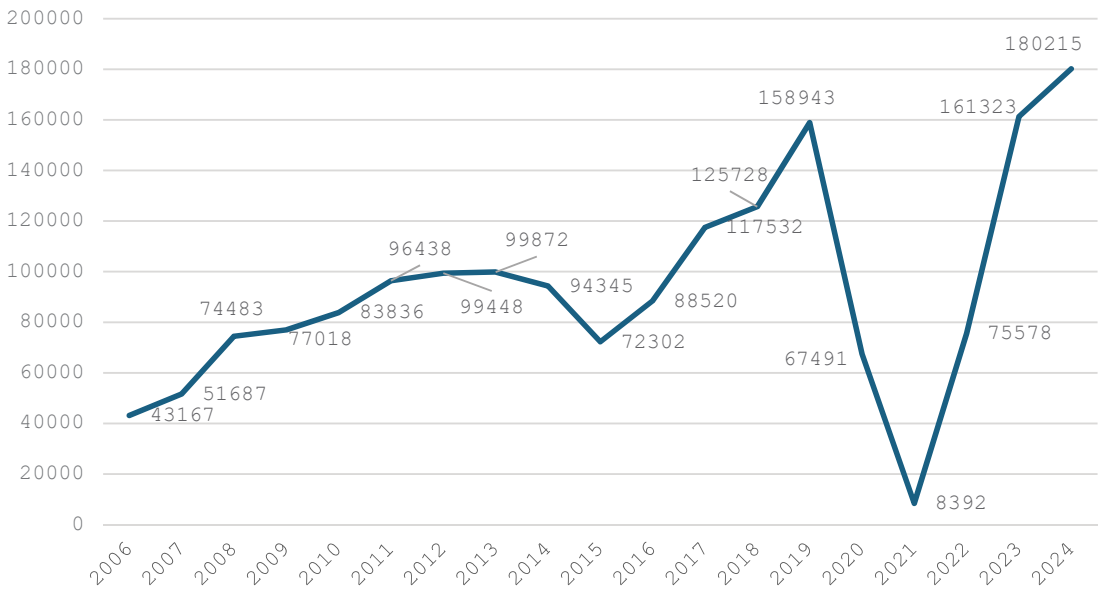


Figure 2. Number of tourist visits from Russia to Indonesia

Source: Data from the Statistics Indonesia (BPS) on the number of foreign tourists.⁷

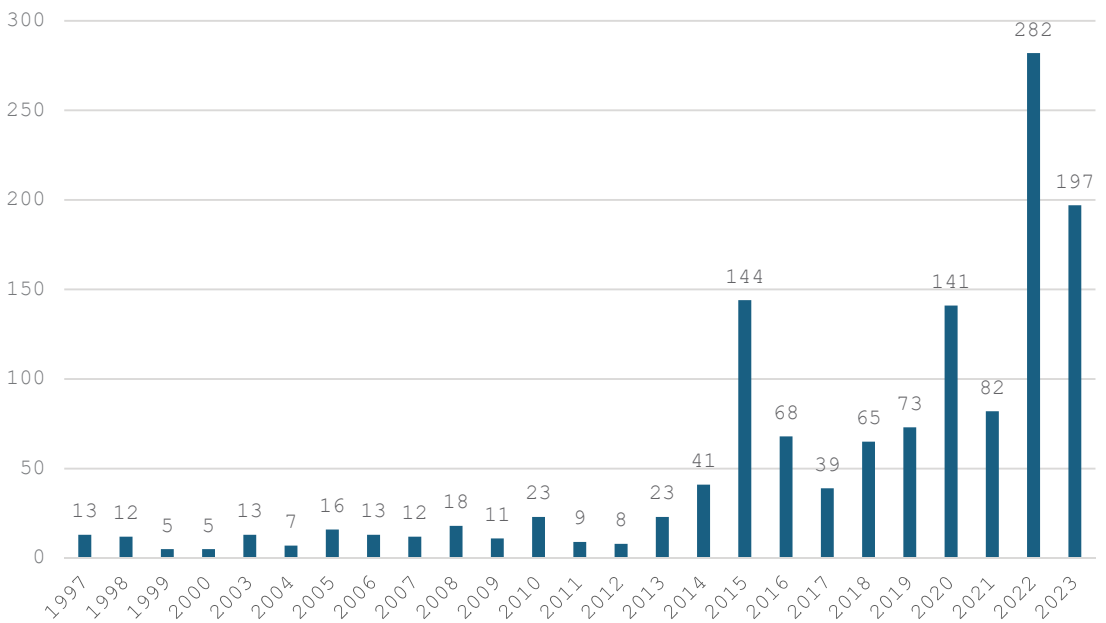


Figure 3. Number of emigrants from Russia to Indonesia, 1997–2023, persons

Source: Data from Rosstat on the number of emigrants.⁸

⁷ Number of foreign tourists. Statistical Bureau of Indonesia. 2025. Retrieved 10 August 2025 from <https://www.bps.go.id/en/statistics-table/2/MTgyMSMy/number-of-foreign-tourist-visits-to-indonesia-by-nationality--visit.html>

⁸ Departure from Russia. Rosstat. 2025. Retrieved 25 August 2025 from URL: <https://fedstat.ru/indicator/43513>

As we can see, current Russian statistics do not fully reflect the scale of migration to Indonesia, since they record only permanent forms of migration, and even those not in full, while temporary forms of migration remain “invisible” to statistical observation.

Another source is population censuses in migrant-receiving countries, which make it possible to estimate migrant contingents. According to the 2020 census in Indonesia, about 3,500 people who speak Russian were living in the country, which is a negligible share of the total population.⁹ Population censuses can provide information on the number of migrants in the country of residence, the length of their stay and degree of integration, showing migrant contingents born abroad, language proficiency, religion and other characteristics.

Current statistics in Indonesia likewise do not allow the estimation of permanent migration flows from Russia and are presented only as the number of foreign tourists, including those from Russia.

According to estimates by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Indonesia, L. Vorobyeva, between three and five thousand Russian citizens reside in the country on a permanent basis, while only a small proportion of Russians¹⁰ register with the consulate (about 3,500 people as of August 2024, according to an interview at the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Jakarta). Many estimates suggest that no more than 10–15% of Russian citizens register with consulates in most countries, including Indonesia (Manshin, Moiseeva, Kuznetsov, 2024).

Such a wide range of estimates for the size of the Russian-speaking population in Indonesia is due to the possibility for expats to reside there on a permanent basis while formally using temporary tourist visas that can be extended, combined with short-term trips to neighboring countries (the so-called visa runs). The majority of the Russian-speaking population (90% or more) lives on the island of Bali, with estimates reaching 10–11 thousand people, although they do not appear in permanent migration statistics. For example, in Ubud, located in the central part of Bali, Russians have been living in a compact settlement for many years, mainly using temporary visa arrangements.¹¹

A smaller part of the Russian-speaking population is concentrated in Jakarta, Surabaya and other cities, where their legal status is documented and represented by diplomats, businesspeople and specialists working in the mining, oil and gas industries. The compact settlement of the Russian-speaking population on Bali is driven by Indonesia’s liberal visa regulations, which allow people to reside in the country for years using temporary tourist visas. This, in turn, predetermines the social and professional structure of the Russian-speaking community.

⁹ Population Census of Indonesia. Statistical Bureau of Indonesia. 2020. Retrieved 25 August 2025 from <https://www.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2021/01/21/1854/hasil-sensus-penduduk-2020.html>

¹⁰ Russia’s Ambassador to Indonesia: What You Need to Know About the Country for a Great Vacation. TASS. 2024. Retrieved 25 August 2025 from <https://tass.ru/interviews/20005987>

¹¹ “They make money off Russians here”. Moslenta. 2022. Retrieved 10 August 2025 from <https://moslenta.ru/lyudi/na-rasstoyanii/na-russkikh-tut-delayut-dengi-kak-tysyachi-rossiyan-zhivut-na-ostrove-bali.htm>

A comfortable climate and “eternal summer” initially attracted tourists, turning them into “winterers”, who then became permanent residents. The structure of the Russian-speaking population can therefore be described as follows: people who have large businesses in Russia and manage them remotely while permanently residing on the island; those living on accumulated savings; those who rent out apartments in Russia and live on this income; freelancers and digital nomads working remotely, most often in the IT sphere for international companies; bloggers and info-coaches in a wide variety of fields who shoot videos, produce online courses and run YouTube channels, among others.

Most of the Russian-speaking population are between 30 and 50 years old. A considerable number of Russians also live there permanently with their families, including children. The age structure ranges from young professionals to retirees: the former tend to arrive as digital nomads, while the latter choose the country for a comfortable retirement.

A small number of Russian specialists work under official contracts in major bilateral projects in the oil and gas sector (Gazprom’s participation in oil and gas exploration and production and in pipeline construction; the Tuban oil refinery project with PJSC Rosneft; projects to create LNG reception infrastructure from Russia, etc.), whose numbers cannot be assessed using current statistics. The main sectors of employment for the Russian-speaking population in Indonesia are IT (programming, web design, internet marketing, etc.), tourism (hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, guides), real estate (rental and sub-rental of housing, etc.), manufacturing and trade (clothing, souvenirs, etc.), and consulting services in various fields aimed at the Russian-speaking population.

This employment structure is driven by Indonesia’s simplified visa policy for tourists, which many Russians actively use to ensure long-term stays on Bali, often working without permits despite the risk of deportation. In practice, many of these “tourists” arrive without a return ticket, obtain a visa on arrival (VOA), and after a month fly to a third country in order to obtain the same visa again for another month, repeating these many times (visa runs), which allows them to stay for long periods without significant visa costs (around 35 US dollars). Some obtain the B211 tourist visa for two months with the possibility of extending it twice for two months, which allows them to stay on the island for up to six months (around 500 US dollars for six months). This visa regime makes it possible to turn tourists into permanent migrants, many of whom work with an undocumented status, offering their services through social networks. They work as instructors, trainers, guides, sublet rented housing and motorbikes, provide consulting services, work as photographers and models, teach languages, and so on. This causes dissatisfaction among local authorities, who have set up a special commission to search for such advertisements on social media in order to combat illegal employment of foreigners. Thus, in the first quarter of 2023 alone, 23 Russian citizens were deported from Bali.¹²

¹² Russian citizens have become the leading nationality in terms of the number of deportations from Bali since the beginning of the year. RG. 2023. Retrieved 5 August 2025 from <https://rg.ru/2023/04/18/rossijskie-grazhdane-stali-liderami-po-kolichestvu-deportacij-s-bali-s-nachala-goda.html>

On the other hand, there is a group of Russian-speaking migrants who obtain long-term two-year visas and work visas (KITAS), which allow them to work legally, although many of their businesses are still oriented towards compatriots (cafés, restaurants, real-estate and travel agencies, etc.). For instance, in Ubud, a residential complex “Parq Ubud” was built with substantial Russian investment; it includes restaurants and cafés, rental housing and hosts various interest-based meetings, fairs, exhibitions, fashion shows and other events, clearly targeting the Russian-speaking population.

Another way to secure long-term residence in Bali is the investor KITAS, which allows one to stay in Indonesia on a continuous basis. By the end of 2023, Russians had purchased more than 1,000 properties on Bali worth 240 million US dollars, which is 70% more than in 2022.¹³

Tourism is one of the most important factors influencing migration flows and the formation of diasporas in various countries around the world. In the case of Indonesia, which is a particularly popular tourist destination, this impact is especially significant. Bali represents a special case, where a Russian-speaking community has formed on a permanent basis thanks to the country’s liberal visa policy.

Tourism has a direct impact on migration processes in several ways:

1. Employment in the tourism sector. Many Russian-speaking migrants find work in tourism-related areas, although not always formally.
2. Investment in real estate. Popular tourist destinations attract investors, including from Russia. Purchasing property for rent or for opening a business encourages relocation and the formation of Russian-speaking communities.
3. Quality of life. A mild climate, affordable housing and food, as well as the opportunity to lead an active lifestyle, attract Russian-speaking tourists who later decide to stay in Indonesia permanently.
4. Favorable economic conditions for digital nomads and freelancers, who formally retain tourist status but can stay on the island for long periods.

After the restrictions on tourist travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian authorities began to ease visa requirements for tourists. The Government of Indonesia added Russia to the list of countries whose citizens can obtain an eVOA (Visa on Arrival) from 30 May 2022, which can be extended in the country and thus allows a sufficiently long stay. As of January 2023, citizens of 86 countries were eligible for a visa on arrival (eVOA).¹⁴ As a result, by the end of 2022 Indonesia received 74,143 tourists from Russia, which is eight times more than in 2021, and the tourist flow recovered to 50% of its pre-COVID level. In 2019,

¹³ The number of real estate transactions involving purchases by Russian citizens in Indonesia has increased 1.5-fold. Vedomosti. 2024. Retrieved 5 August 2025 from <https://www.vedomosti.ru/realty/articles/2024/01/22/1016068-chislo-sdelok-po-pokupke-rossiyanami-nedvizhimosti-v-indonezii-viroslo>

¹⁴ Immigration: the influx of Russian foreign nationals to Bali has increased since 2022. Antara Indonesia. 2022. Retrieved 5 August 2025 from <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/3432468/imigrasi-kedatangan-wna-rusia-ke-bali-meningkat-sejak-2022>

158.9 thousand Russian tourists visited Indonesia.¹⁵ By the end of 2023, the tourist flow from Russia exceeded 161 thousand people, indicating that it surpassed pre-COVID levels. The launch of direct flights from Moscow to Denpasar in September 2024 contributed to a further increase in incoming tourists from Russia, with the number of visits exceeding 180 thousand by the end of the year. Among Russian tourists travelling to Indonesia, 90% choose the island of Bali. According to the Ambassador of Indonesia to Russia, Jose Antonio Morato Tavares, negotiations are underway to increase flight frequencies and expand routes by opening direct flights from St. Petersburg.¹⁶

In the case of Indonesia, the positive dynamics of tourist flows from Russia are supported by both package tourists and independent travellers. The average length of stay of Russian tourists in Indonesia in 2023 was 46 days, which makes it possible to speak of the arrival of “winterers” and “relocants” to Bali.¹⁷

Tourism thus acts as a powerful catalyst for the formation and growth of Russian-speaking communities in Indonesia. The increase in tourist flows is accompanied by investment in real estate and the creation of new businesses and jobs for compatriots, which in turn strengthens the economic and social impact of Russian-speaking migrants on the local community.

Conclusion

In the modern era of globalization, international tourism is no longer merely a form of temporary leisure and increasingly acts as a driver for new mobility patterns that blur the boundary between short-term visits and permanent residence. Thanks to the development of internet technologies and digitalization in general, as well as the liberalization of visa regimes in many tourist destinations, there is a growing trend whereby long holidays abroad evolve into long-term and even permanent migration. Indonesia, and Bali in particular, has become one of the most representative examples of this global trend, attracting thousands of digital nomads, entrepreneurs and seekers of alternative lifestyles from all over the world.

The Russian-speaking population represents a unique case of evolution from episodic trips for recreation and extended stays abroad toward the formation of a stable and structured community integrated into the socio-economic life of the island. Tourism has directly stimulated migration, creating demand for services for compatriots, investment in real estate, and business

¹⁵ Data from the Association of Tour Operators of Russia on tourist trips from Russia to Indonesia. Association of Russian Tour Operators. 2025. Retrieved 5 August 2025 from <https://www.atorus.ru/node/51334>

¹⁶ Indonesia expects a record number of Russian tourists in 2024. Interfax. 2024. Retrieved 5 August 2025 from <https://www.interfax-russia.ru/tourism/news/indoneziya-v-2024-godu-ozhidaet-rekordnoe-chislo-rossiyskih-turistov>

¹⁷ Data from the Association of Tour Operators of Russia on tourist trips from Russia to Indonesia. Association of Russian Tour Operators. 2025. Retrieved 10 August 2025 from <https://www.atorus.ru/node/53912>

activities targeting both Russian-speaking clients and the international market. The Russian-speaking community is characterized by a high share of temporary and circular migrants (“winterers”, digital nomads, relocants), which leads to a significant discrepancy between the official statistics of both countries and realistic estimates of its size.

There is a clear geographical concentration: over 90% of the Russian-speaking community is concentrated on the island of Bali (especially in Ubud and the southern districts), while in major cities (Jakarta, Surabaya) it is mainly legally employed specialists in the corporate sector who are represented. Russian-speaking migrants occupy specific market niches, without engaging in direct competition with the local population in mass sectors. The key fields are IT services, tourism and hospitality, consulting, trade and real estate. Business models are often hybrid in nature: they leverage cultural and linguistic advantages to serve compatriots while simultaneously seeking access to international and local markets. Thus, we can speak of the development of migration and the formation of a Russian-speaking community through tourism, shaped at the intersection of a liberal visa policy and global trends toward remote work and lifestyle change.

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