The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Tourism Head Eyes Military Cosmodrome as Next Big Russian Tourist Attraction

By The Moscow Times

February 04, 2015



Similar attempts to turn Russia's primary cosmodrome, Baikonur, into a mainstream tourist attraction have not yet panned out.

Russia's federal tourism agency, Rostourism, wants to turn a secretive cosmodrome operated by the Defense Ministry into an internationally recognized attraction, the agency's head Oleg Safonov said at a press conference on Wednesday.

Russia has been hit hard by the ruble's decline of over 50 percent to the U.S. dollar since last summer, and the tourism industry is eager to draw in foreign tourists and their currencies.

"Rostourism is constantly challenging our [nation's] tour operators to offer internationally known tourism products," Safonov said, news agency TASS reported.

"There is a potentially interesting attraction in the Arkhangelsk region — the Plesetsk

cosmodrome. But, we need to make a tourism product [out of it]," he said, explaining it could be a great way to demonstrate Russia's status as a major space power.

Such a proposal may be easier said than done. Plesetsk is the Defense Ministry's private launch site, comparable to the U.S. Air Force's spaceport at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Plesetsk is often used to launch highly classified military satellites.

Safonov said that any tour packages created for the cosmodrome would respect the Defense Ministry's security and secrecy requirements.

Similar attempts to turn Russia's primary cosmodrome, Baikonur, into a mainstream tourist attraction have not yet panned out. Although control over Baikonur is left to the civilian space agency, bureaucratic red tape and the launch site's remote location in Kazakhstan have prevented it from becoming anything more than a niche attraction for space enthusiasts.

Plesetsk would be easier to market due to its proximity to the city of Arkhangeslk in Russia's Far North, which is already easily visited by interested foreigners. According to Safonov, a package could be created that includes travel arrangements and arranged tours.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/02/04/tourism-head-eyes-military-cosmodrome-as-next-big-russian-tourist-attraction-a43566