

Russia Will Restrict Lake Baikal Tourism, Putin Aide Says

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Tourists could be barred from visiting Russia's Lake Baikal in order to protect its ecosystem, a senior aide to President Vladimir Putin has said.

Pollution has plagued Lake Baikal, the world's deepest and oldest freshwater lake, for at least two decades. Scientists recently [warned](#) that government proposals risk exacerbating the problem.

Related article: [Russian Scientists Ring the Alarm on Lake Baikal's Pollutants](#)

"We'll have to artificially limit the flow of tourists to Baikal, as sad as it sounds ... to preserve its unique nature and purity," Putin's environmental protection aide Sergei Ivanov said on Tuesday.

"After all, we don't let people into other protected areas," the state-run TASS news agency

quoted him as saying at a water forum in Moscow. “We should be doing the same with tourist flow to Baikal.”

About 1.6 million people visited the UNESCO World Heritage Site in January–August 2018, including almost 300,000 foreigners, according to official data.

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Small hotels are sprouting “like mushrooms” on the lakeshore, Ivanov said, with no facilities to treat waste.

“All of it is going into Baikal, [with] tons of garbage lying on the shore.”

Also on Wednesday, a Russian Academy of Sciences official said that Lake Baikal’s water has become undrinkable. Concentrations of bacteria from algae growth and ammonia from forest fires exceed the limits for safe drinking water, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency cited Andrei Fedotov as saying.

Regional authorities halted the construction of a Chinese-owned water bottling plant on Lake Baikal earlier this year after a nationwide backlash and pressure from Moscow.

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