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Russia to Open Tourism Center in Remote Arctic Archipelago

By The Barents Observer

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Visits to Franz Josef Land must be made more attractive to tourists, the local national park director says.



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Russia is set to open a new tourism center in Franz Josef Land, a remote Arctic archipelago, in response to heightened interest in traveling above the Arctic Circle.

The visitor center is located on Guker Island, one of the largest in the archipelago. On this site in 1929, Soviet explorers established the very first research station in the region. The facility was regularly visited by Arctic expeditions afterward. In 1937, an Arctic observatory headed by the famous explorer Ivan Papanin was opened on the site.

The visitor center is set to open by Aug. 30 to mark the 90-year anniversary since the first research station was established.

The official opening will be made in connection with the arrival of the Silver Explorer, a cruise ship that is currently on its way across the Northern Sea Route, the Russian Arctic National Park said. Each of the 144 tourists on board the luxury vessel has paid at least 33,000 euros ($36,600) to make the Arctic voyage from Nome, western Alaska, to Norway's Tromsø.

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"The popularity of visits to the Arctic is growing year by year and therefore it is necessary to create attractive conditions for guests," Alexander Kirilov, the director of Arctic National Park, said.

Workers are now building an outdoor museum and a total of six buildings have been already renovated. Tourists will be offered overnight stays and longer-term stays as well as involvement in local research activities, the Russian Natural Resources Ministry said.

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