The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Thousands of Tourists Stuck at Lake Baikal as Ice Road Conditions Remain Hazardous

February 25, 2026



Olkhon Island on Lake Baikal. **Alexander Ryumin / TASS**

More than 3,000 tourists are stuck on an island located on Lake Baikal, the world's deepest freshwater lake, authorities in Far East Russia said Wednesday.

Irkutsk region Governor Igor Kobzev said around 250 of the people currently stranded on Olkhon Island are foreign tourists. "Supplies of essential food items and medications are sufficient. Arrangements with retail outlets and the pharmacy have been worked out," he said.

Lake Baikal freezes over between January and April, featuring exceptionally clear and thick ice that attracts visitors from all over the world. Ice roads to Olkhon Island typically operate during the high season between February and March.

However, Kobzev said much of the ice along routes leading up to the island is still not thick enough to safely support vehicles. Seven Chinese tourists and a Russian man drowned last

week after their van fell through the ice and was submerged underwater.

“I want to emphasize once again: until an official ice road is opened, driving onto the ice is strictly prohibited. It is extremely dangerous,” Kobzev said in a statement.

The governor said transportation authorities are trying to set up a safe route to Olkhon Island, which they hope to open in the next three days.

“Transportation of passengers to and from the mainland is being handled by six hovercraft vessels,” Kobzev said. “Until the ice crossing opens, essential goods will also be delivered by hovercraft.”

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/02/25/thousands-of-tourists-stuck-at-lake-baikal-as-ice-road-conditions-remain-hazardous-a92048