

KAZAKHSTAN TO TURN HISTORIC RUSSIAN SPACEPORT INTO A TOURIST HOTSPOT



Kazakhstan has big plans for Russia's Baikonur Cosmodrome, the first and biggest working facility for space launches - they want to convert it into a tourist attraction, in hopes that space age enthusiasts will flock to the desert steppes to watch vessels being launched into outer space.

The big plan devised by Kazakhstan's Investment and Development Ministry includes the **construction of viewing stations, where visitors would be able to watch rockets being launched**, as well as the institution of a new protocol for tourist visits to the facility, which would allow for larger groups of visitors to satisfy their curiosity at once.

The project seems to be well underway at this point, seeing as foreign investment is already being favorably discussed, and the new structures that would be built upon the basic ones already in place to be used by the facility's personnel during launches, which are mainly lacking in comfort, are meant to be finished by the end of 2017.

The Baikonur Cosmodrome is located in one of the bleakest regions of southern Kazakhstan's dry steppes. The launch facilities are operated by the Russian Federal Space Agency and the Russian Aerospace Defense Forces, to which the Kazakh government has them leased until 2050. Given this particular situation the project, should it come to fruition, would have to be approved by the Russian authorities, who would also have to sanction each and every visit to take place after the project is completed.

But even if the Russian pose any difficulties to the project - and they aren't likely to, as they could also profit from it - **the Baikonur Cosmodrome still holds immense potential as a tourist attraction**, not only because of its current activity, which is still abundant, especially seeing as all Russian crewed spacecraft is launched there, but also because of its history, seeing as both Vostok 1 and Sputnik 1 were launched at Baikonur, a fact which is sure to attract enthusiasts to the spaceport, as it can easily be accessed through the local military airport, even if it is under Russian authority as well.

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