3 EU Citizens Detained at Russian Spaceport

By [AFP](#)

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Baikonur Cosmodrome. **Christopher Michel (CC BY 2.0)**

Three EU citizens were detained this week for illegally entering the Russian-controlled Baikonur Cosmodrome in central Kazakhstan, local authorities said Thursday.

The secretive space launch facility in a remote area of the Kazakh steppe has become a magnet for daredevil tourists, many of whom attempt to break into the hangars housing old Soviet-era spacecraft.

The three foreigners, two Dutch citizens and a Belgian, "were arrested on Tuesday for unlawfully entering the territory of Baikonur," a Russian military court spokesperson told AFP.

The three were removed from the city after spending 24 hours in police custody, the spokesperson added.

The Baikonur Cosmodrome is the largest and most active spaceport in the world, launching thousands of rockets including the world's first manned spacecraft carrying Yuri Gagarin in 1961.

Several tourists including social media influencers have managed to break into the complex, sometimes after spending nights hiding from the site's security in the surrounding desert.

A French tourist died on the territory of the spaceport in June, apparently after suffering "dehydration in extremely hot and dry temperatures," officials said at the time.

British travel blogger Benjamin Rich, whose YouTube channel "Bald and Bankrupt" has over 4 million followers, was detained and fined for entering Baikonur in the spring of 2022.

Opened by the Soviet Union in 1955, the spaceport became part of independent Kazakhstan when the U.S.S.R. dissolved in 1991 but remains controlled by Moscow under a lease set to expire in 2050.