

Ghost trees rising from ice: The 100-year-old earthquake that created Kazakhstan's eerie underwater forest

TIMESOFINDIA.COM | Feb 11, 2026, 03.28 PM IST



The story of nature tucked away in Kazakhstan's Tian Shan Mountains, Kaindy Lake, seems like something out of a dream. Tree trunks poke eerily out of the water, ghostly and silent. It's strange. Almost unreal. Locals and travellers alike are drawn to it, though, curious to see a forest frozen in time. Over a century ago, an earthquake changed the landscape, creating the lake and preserving the trees beneath its cold, clear surface. Experts say the water never warms above six degrees, which keeps the spruce trees surprisingly intact. It seems like nature hit pause, leaving something both haunting and beautiful.

How Kaindy Lake became home to a

frozen forest under water

As reported by [IFLScience](#), the story goes back to 1911, when a massive earthquake of magnitude 8 reportedly shook the Tian Shan region. Landslides followed. Huge chunks of rock blocked a gorge. A natural dam was born. Slowly, the valley filled with rainwater and melting glaciers. The water submerged a forest. Spruce trees, some hundreds of years old, ended up underwater.

The lake grew gradually. The twisted shapes of trees above the surface, and below, the forest remains almost intact. Experts say the cold water preserved the branches and needles. It seems impossible, but it's real. The earthquake didn't just shake the ground, which created a tiny underwater time capsule. The trunks look like skeletons. They rise out of the water like fingers reaching for the sky. Some call them "misplaced toothpicks." Walking around the lake, it feels surreal. You expect the trees to crumble, but they don't. They stand, frozen. Visitors reportedly go in for a swim, though the water is icy. It's eerie. But beautiful. You can't help staring. The green-blue water shimmers. Limestone carried by the landslide scatters sunlight, giving the lake a strange glow. It's almost magical.

Nature preserved in ice at Kaindy Lake

Diving or peering underwater, the forest continues. Tree trunks stretch down. The water is crystal-clear. It seems to trap the forest in time. Tiny fish swim around, unnoticed, while the branches remain stiff and brittle. Tourists often gasp when they see it. There's something almost unreal about it. A century-old forest, untouched in its watery grave. It makes you wonder how fragile and enduring nature can be at once.

Despite being near a city of over a million, the lake feels isolated. Quiet. Almost untouched. Trails wind around the edges. Locals sometimes guide visitors, sharing stories of the 1911 quake.