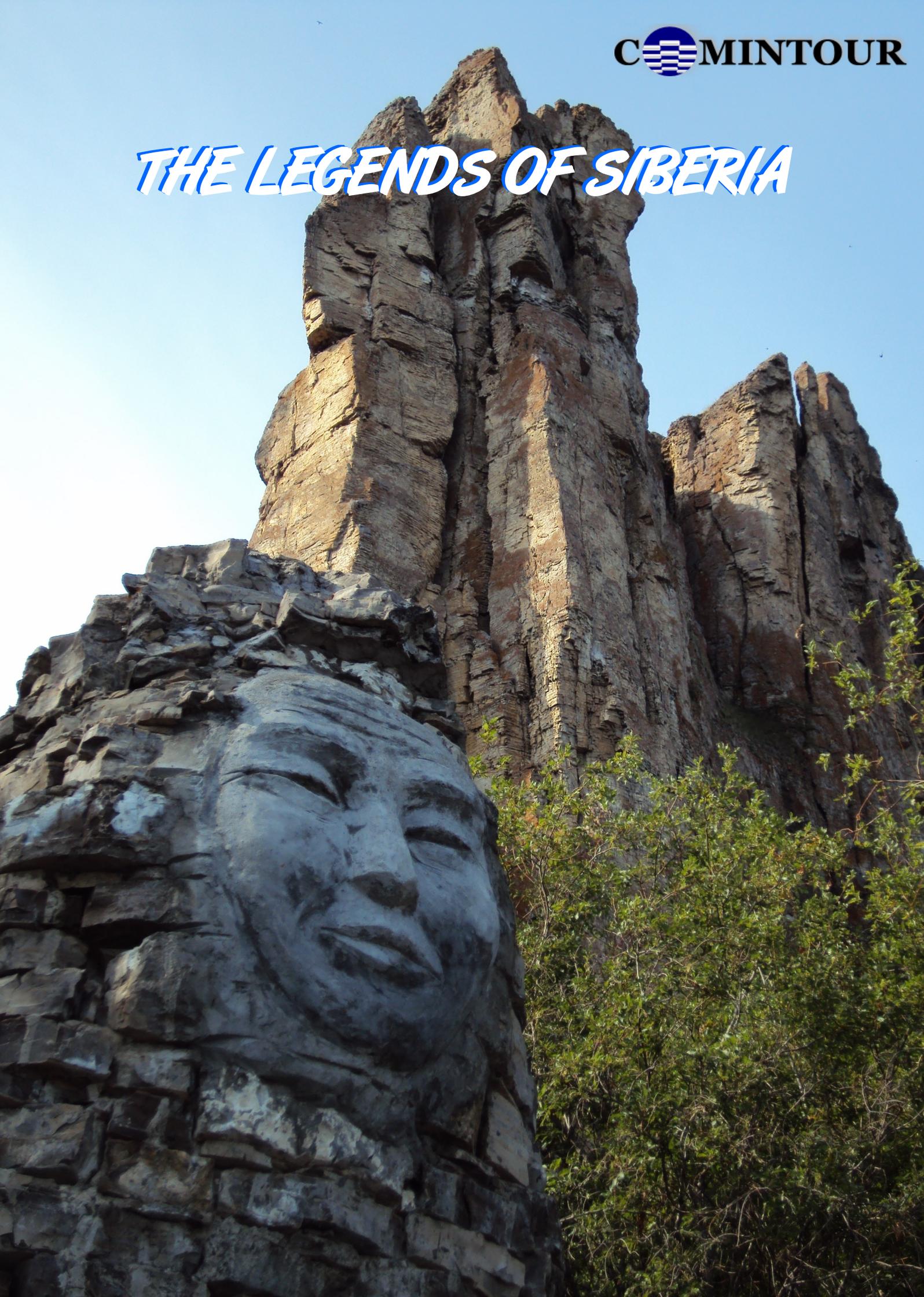


THE LEGENDS OF SIBERIA



KAMCHATKA



Kamchatka is a wonderful land that is little known in Russia itself, not to mention travellers from outside. In the old days the way to Kamchatka from European Part of Russia took more than a year, few were brave enough to go there to the end of the known world.

Kamchatka was discovered by Russian Cossacks more than 300 years ago. The first information about the Kamchatka Peninsula dates back to the mid-17th century, when expedition of Semyon Dezhnev had landed on the shore. The Russian sailors of the expedition were the first Europeans who spent winter on the peninsula.

In about fifty years Vladimir Atlasov, led a force of 120 people and established Verkhnekamsk settlement, therefore claiming the Kamchatka Peninsula to the Russian state.

In the early 18th century, Russia became a Maritime power, but the Pacific and Arctic oceans were still little studied. Peter the Great issues a decree in December 1724 on the organization of the First Kamchatka expedition, to define the North-Eastern border of the state, to search for unknown lands, and to establish trade with the countries of East

The appointed commander of the expedition was Vitus Bering, a Russian of Danish origin, who's name was later given to the strait between Asia and North America. The first Kamchatka expedition went to the shores of the Pacific ocean in the beginning of 1725. After much hardship and deprivation on the way from St. Petersburg to Kamchatka, the participants in 1728 got to the bottom of the Kamchatka Peninsula. The Second Kamchatka ex-

pedition led by Vitus Bering and Alexei Tchirikov went to the Avacha Bay on the "St. Peter" and "St. Paul" boats on 17 October 1740. In honor of the vessels of the expedition, the Bay was named Peter and Paul Harbor. There was later established a town called Petropavlovsk the present capital of Kamchatka region.

In the twentieth century airplanes brought the region closer to Europe and to America, but it has not made it more accessible. Mysterious Peninsula was among the most secret and closed areas of the Soviet Union. Until 1990 no foreigner could enter the land of Kamchatka, and even Russians needed a special permission.

But those who wanted to see the magical world of Kamchatka own eyes, travelled to Kamchatka, despite all obstacles, telling stories of the black beaches on the coast, smokey volcano hills, blue mountain ridges, vast limitless snowfields, abundance of wildlife that have not seen many people.

Nowadays Kamchatka is open to everyone, a tourist, a scientist, and a businessman. Each can experience the mysterious power of its charm. The people who come there usually find what they are looking for in this amazing world where the life-giving rivers flow side by side with deadly volcanoes, snow lies next to hot springs, and wild creatures live not far from a man:

Kamchatka is captivating. There are places on earth where time seems to flow differently: a month spent here is sometimes a whole life, and this life that is worth remembering!

BIG KAMCHATKA ADVENTURE

The tour includes:

1) Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky city tour. Panoramic journey around the Kamchatka capital is accompanied by the stories of the rich nature and history of the town and its surroundings. The group visits Nikolsky hill allowing spectacular panoramic view over Petropavlovsk and Avacha Bay. At the end of the tour the group visits Kamchatka State Museum that hosts numerous exhibitions dedicated to the ways of life of the native people of Kamchatka and the history of the peninsula's exploration.

2) Helicopter tour of Valley of Geysers and Uzon Caldera

The Valley of Geysers is located on the territory of the Kronotsky nature reserve and is a canyon gorge 4 km wide and 400 m deep and 8 km long, through which flows the Geysernaya River. About 6 km from the mouth of the river there is a huge concentration of geysers and many hot springs, grouped into 9 sections. Here you can see all known modern forms of hydrothermal activity, including permanent and pulsating boiling springs, hot lakes, geysers, mud pots, mud volcanoes, steam jets, heated area.

The Uzon Caldera is a bowl-shaped basin size 9x12 km, framed by steep ledges with height of 200-800 m. The highest point of the Uzon Caldera is at 1617 meters above sea level. Caldera was formed about 40 thousand years ago. The helicop-

ter tour includes a 1 hour and 15 minutes flight including flying around two of the most spectacular volcanic peaks, landing and 10 minutes rests, 1,5 hour tracking along Valley of Geysers visiting sites of most active geysers and some of the geyser lakes. Flight to Uzon Caldera (5-7 minutes). Tracking along Eastern Thermal Field (1 hour). Bath Lake (sulfur springs), colonies of sulfur bacteria, chloride-sodium lake with sulfur beach, mud volcanoes, mud cauldrons. All looks a bit like Dante's hell. Flight to a riverside tourist shelter. Lunch over there, possible swim in the warm springs. Return flight to the town (35 min). Transfer to the hotel.

3) Boat trip along Avacha Bay to Starichkov Island

Starichkov Island is located in the Avacha Bay of the Pacific ocean 12 km South from the entrance to the Avacha Bay. The area of the island is only 93 hectares and surrounded by numerous coastal reefs and rocks, exposed at low tide. More than 50 thousand seabirds of 11 species breed annually on the island. On the coastal rocks there are mixed colonies of guillemots, kittiwakes and cormorants. On the reefs around the island you will see the seal rookeries and common seals. In the adjacent waters of the Bay orcas and Dalls. Dolphins could be seen.

4) Tracking up Goreliy and Mutnovsky volcanoes (2 days).

In about 60 km from Petropavlovsk there is an active volcano called Goreliy. Its height is 1829 m above the sea level. The



volcano is shaped as array of volcanic cones rising from the elliptical caldera, 9-14 km in diameter. Absolutely unique is the set of 11 of craters at its top part. Situated to the East is the largest and most beautiful crater "Blue lake", with a diameter of 500 m and a depth of 200 meters, filled with a lake of extraordinary beauty.

The other volcano Mutnovsky (2322 m) consists of four merged cones whose tops are destroyed by eruptions of different nature. On the West side is the active crater is major modern activity of the volcano. It allows people to easily see the active volcano from the safe distance. Active fumaroles, steam emissions, mud pots, the formation of minerals, volcanic sulfur, fantastic volcanic landscape set this place as one of the best volcanic manifestations in the world. A river cuts through the bottom of the Northern crater and forms an 80 meter waterfall, forming a deep canyon below. The canyon and the waterfall have global significance as wonders of nature. In August, you can get to the place by tracking, but in the rest of the year, the volcano can be examined only by helicopter.

5) Rafting on the Bystraya river (3 days)

Bystraya river is the second longest river in Kamchatka, located in the central part of the peninsula. It originates from the spurs of the volcano Bakening and flows westward to the sea of Okhotsk. Length of the river is 275 km. In the middle course there are cascades of easy, but spectacular rapids. The maximum water level happens in June-July, which is connected with the intensive melting of snow in the mountains. At this time, the

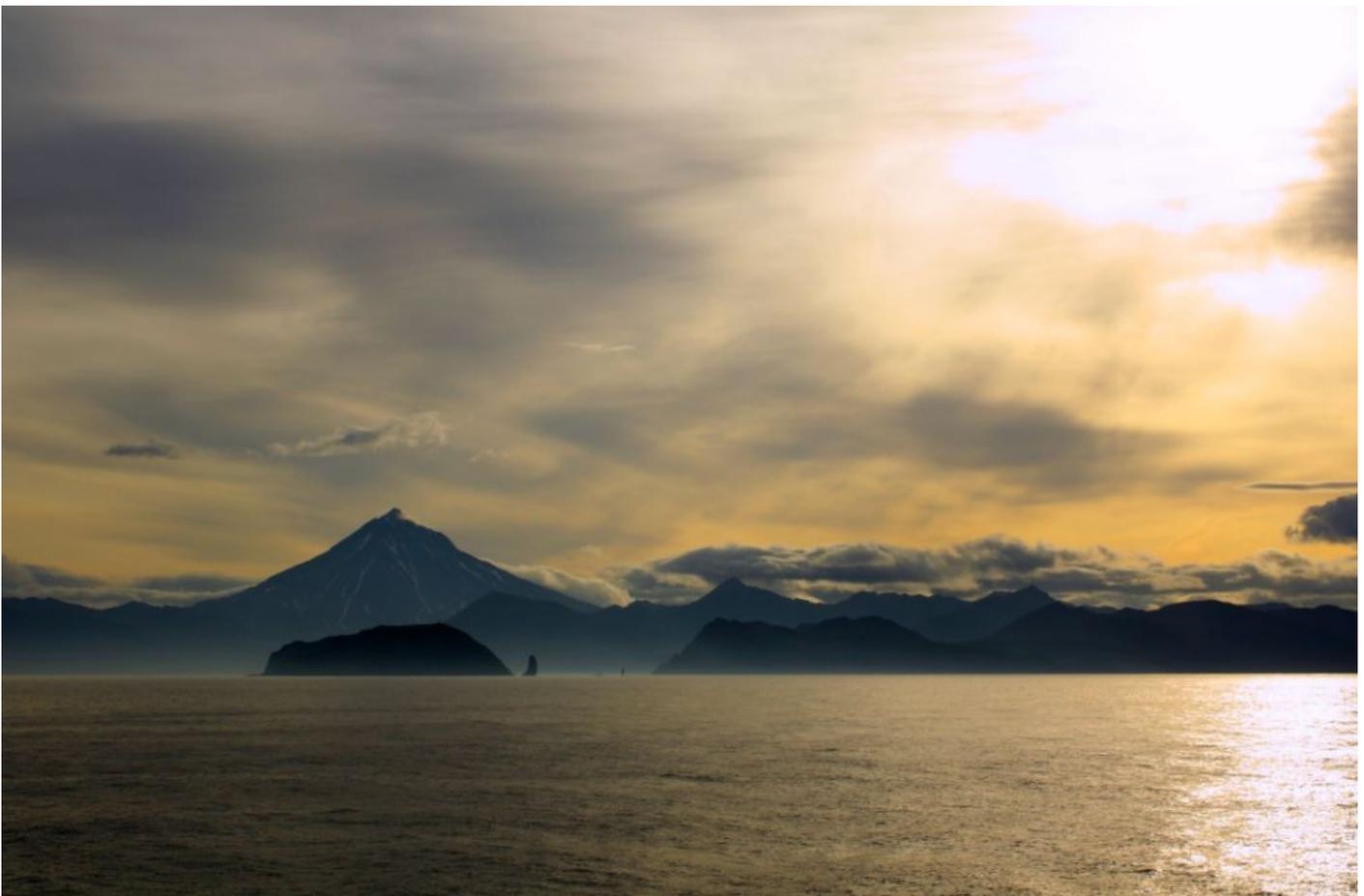
look of the river changes. There is a magnificent scenery on the way. Tourists can enjoy the views of the Kamchatka grasslands, bizarre rocky shores and slender birch trees. Along the way you can pick up mushrooms and berries, watch seagulls and ducks, and if you are lucky, you can even see a bear. Most of the tourists who took part at the rafting saw brown bears at some point. Fans of angling will be pleasantly surprised by abundance of fish in the river. The third day of the rafting is the most difficult: the most spectacular rapids that leave the most lasting impressions on the travelers.

6) Excursion to ethnographic village "Kainyran".

Ethno-cultural village "Kainyran" (from the Koryak word "Bear house") located near Zelenovka springs, about 40 km from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky in a picturesque place, opening beautiful and majestic views of the Koryak-Avachinsky group of volcanoes. Situated on the shores of scenic, never-freezing lake. It offers celebration in ethnic style to guests of the peninsula. The gives insight into life of the native people of Kamchatka: The guests can visit she-bear Sonya and her cubs, Kamchatka-breed sled dogs. They will take part in the celebration with the best ethnographic dance ensembles of Kamchatka, hear first hand stories from native inhabitants about their life and culture, legends and customs of the peoples of Kamchatka.

7) Helicopter tour over the Kuril lake (bear watching), Khodutkinskie hot springs.

Kuril lake is a large caldera with a crater lake, situated in the



South Kamchatka natural reserve. It has a large basin with depth of about 300 m. Elevation above sea level is 103 m. It is the third largest among all lakes of Kamchatka and the second among freshwater lakes. The picturesque lake, surrounded on the one hand by spectacular Ilyinsky volcano, on the other by Dikiy Ridge with its rocky outcrops and several Islands. There

is the most significant spawning habitat of sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka* Walbaum) in Eurasia (and apparently in the world). Travelers, photographers, and researchers from all over the world come here to enjoy the uniqueness of the Kuril lake. Only in such places, you can watch up to a few dozens of brown bears engaged in fishing at the same time.

Day 1	Arrival to Kamchatka. City tour of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky with visit to Museum of Kamchatka history. (1) Transfer to the hotel, rest.
Day 2	Helicopter tour of Valley of Geysers and Uzon Caldera (2) . Breakfast. 10.30 transfer to the airport
Day 3	Boat trip along Avacha Bay to Starichkov Island (3) . 7.30 am Transfer to the boat. 9.00 am Departure. 3 pm. Back to the port. Transfer to the Pacific Ocean beach. 6 pm Transfer to the restaurant. Dinner. 9 pm. Back to the hotel.
Day 4	Tracking up Goreliy and Mutnovsky volcanoes (2 days) (4) 7 am Transfer to Goreliy volcano by 4X4 cars. 10 am Arrival to the bottom of the volcano.
Day 5	9 am breakfast. 10 am tracking ascension to Mutnovsky volcano. Meal at the summit. 7 pm Back to the town.
Day 6	Rafting on the Bystraya river (3 days) (5) Breakfast in the hotel. 8.50 am Departure to the Bystraya river 160 km, 3 hours drive). 12 am Beginning of rafting. 8 pm. Dinner. Overnight sleeping in tents.
Day 7	Second day of rafting. Fishing Lunch stop. Overnight sleeping in tents.
Day 8	Third day of rafting. Dinner stop. 5 pm. Finish. 8 pm. Back to the hotel
Day 9	Excursion to ethnographic village "Kainyran". (6) Breakfast at the hotel. Leisure time. 11.20 am Transfer to the village. 1.30-2.45 pm Folk show. 3.15-3.45 pm Lunch in ethnic style. 4-4.30 End of program. Back to the town Possible swimming in a lake on the way back.
Day 10	Helicopter tour over the Kuril lake (bear watching), Khodutkinskie hot springs. (7) Breakfast in the hotel. Transfer to the airport. In the evening back to the town.
Day 11	Reserved day (in case of bad weather in one of the above days excursions can be shifted to this day). If everything goes as planned – visit to a fish market in the town, souvenir shopping
Day 12	Departure.



ALTAI



Altai is the name of the area in South-Western Siberia where the Altai Mountains are situated. It's a land of exceptional beauty, abundant natural life, mostly unspoiled by the human activity and spiritual power, that some scientists believe to be the cradle of civilization.

The Altai mountains form the major mountain range in the western Siberia and provide the source of its greatest rivers – the Ob and the Irtysh. Some call the Altai mountains – The Alps of Siberia. But in reality the natural life of the Altai is much more abundant and unspoiled than that of the Alps.

Three areas of Altai region are included in the UNESCO World Heritage list under the name the Golden Mountains of Altai. These are Altaisky Nature Reserve and a buffer zone around Lake Teletskoye; Katunsky Nature Reserve and a buffer zone around Mount Belukha; and the Ukok Quiet Zone on the Ukok plateau.

Dividing North from Central Asia, desert from grassland, taiga from mountain steppe, the Altai Mountains have functioned for thousands of years as a homeland for the hunting, herding, and nomadic cultures of Eurasia. Fifty thousand years old remains of Denisovan

- the extinct ancestor and less known cousin of Neanderthals where found in a cave in 2010.

Altai is commonly regarded as the ancient homeland of Turkic people from where they spread across vast areas of Eurasian continent from Europe to China. The region has long been regarded as an area of spiritual and occult significance, and Russian philosopher and painter Nikolai Rerikh (Nicholas Roerich) visited the region in the early 20th century in an attempt to locate the entrance to Shambala, the mythical enlightened land of Tibetan Buddhism.

Altai is not only the land of mountains, but also has a lot of lakes. All in all there are more than 7 thousand lakes. The most famous is Teletskoe Lake. It is sunnily beautiful fresh water lake of tectonic origin. Teletskoe is the deepest lake not only in Russia, but in the whole world. Its depth is 325 meters. The shores of Teletskoe are surrounded by centuries-old cedars and birches and covered with picturesque rocks. All that beauty is set against the background of the snow-covered mountain peaks. There are also a lot of river valleys, next to glaciers and snowfields:

The highest mountain of the Altai is Mount Belukha. It is a twin-peaked mountain massif that rises along the border of Russia and Kazakhstan, just north of the point where these two borders meet those of China and Mongolia. The highest point is the eastern peak raising up to

4,506 m (14,784 ft.). Among the local native peoples , practicing Buddhism and Shamanism, Belukha is revered as a sacred mountain. Archaeologist and some scholars of Buddhist history and philosophy believe that Belukha may be Sumeru, the Central Asian mountain, mentioned in Buddhist belief, that is the center of Shambala (Shangri-la)... where only the spiritually advanced may enter. Belukha is also the source of the sacred Katun River. There are shrines, burial sites, petroglyphs, and standing stones scattered all around the mountain.

The Altai mountains are home to the semi nomadic Altai people, and to a renowned diversity of flora and fauna. The endangered snow leopard and Argali mountain sheep populations have retreated into the safety of these mountains. Apart of those rare species, the nature of Altai is thriving with more usual animals and plants such as elk, maral (Siberian deer) and roe. Deep in taiga, far

from people's habitat, live bears, lynxes and wolverines. There are plenty of smaller animals as well as great diversity of wild birds.

The Altai people are closely related to Mongolians and are considered the original Turkic people. Traditionally native people of Altai lived in felt tents similar to Mongol yurt. They continue to practice Shamanism, Buddhism, and Burkhanism (or the "white faith"). Burkhanists revere totem animals and totem flowers. They mix Shamanic, Christian and Buddhist beliefs into one system. And use throat singing at gatherings and in in fire ceremonies. Native people believe in spirits and revere the clan ancestors.

Altai region is blessed with great spectacular landscapes, abundant unspoilt wildlife and rich and exotic cultural traditions of its native people. This beautiful mysterious land is waiting to be explored.

GOLDEN MOUNTAINS OF ALTAI

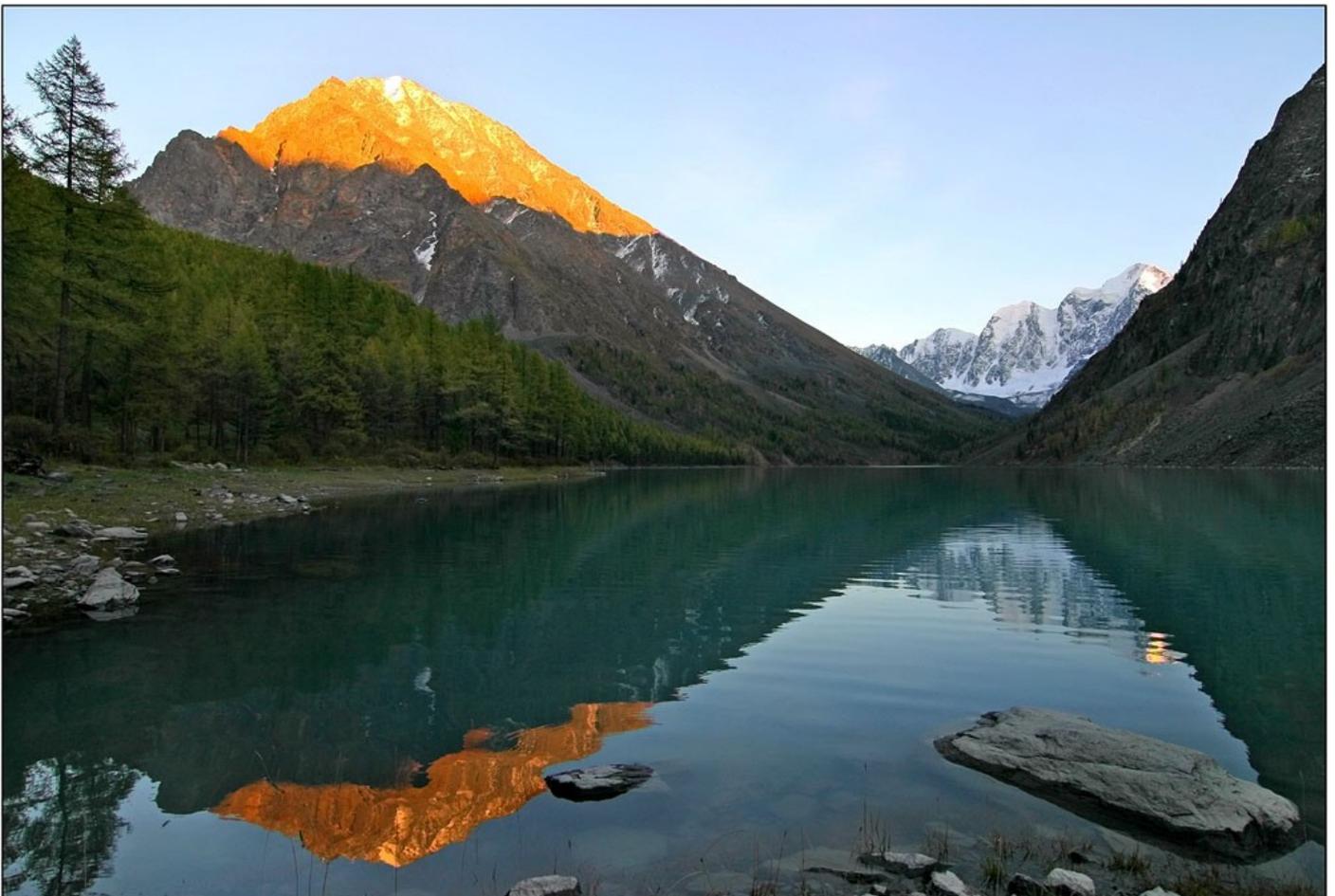
The tour includes:

1) Chemal village.

It's an old Russian settlement in the region, that is one of the gateways to Altai for many tourist groups and travellers. The

name means an ant hill in the native Altai language. It is situated in a serene valley among picturesque hills crisscrossed by rivers and streams.

The tour of the place includes the local Hydro-power dam and water storage, the church and the confluence of Katun and Chemalka rivers. Crossing the river over hanging suspended



bridge provides unforgettable memories.

2) Rafting on Katun river.

Katun is the major river of Altai. It is tributary and one of the sources of Ob – one of the great rivers of Siberia. It originates in the glacier on southern slope of Mount Belukha – the sacred mountain of Altai. There are a few rapids on the way that are exciting to go through but still safe for inexperienced tourists. Travellers on the way stop at beautiful Kamyshlinsky waterfall. Visit to long and picturesque Tavdinsky karst caves that were inhabited by people during Bronze Age.

3) Drive along Chuya Highway .

The famous Chuya Highway (Chuysky Trakt) that goes from West Siberia all the way to the border with Mongolia crossing Altai mountains in the process. On the way group stops at two very scenic mountain passes – Seminsky and Chike-Taman.

4) Archeological site Kur-Kechu.

On the way we stop at Kur-Kechu. It contains many artifacts, pillars and steles of various civilizations from Early Scythian to Middle Ages. Next stop is a site called Kalbak-Tash famous for its Petroglyphs – Neolithic Era pictures of humans and animals carved in stone.

5) Trip to Arshan-Tuu mountain pass.

The view from the top of the pass is simply stunning. This part of the region is often called The Alps of Altai and its beauty easily matches European Alps. Below the pass lies huge picturesque valley framed on the other side by other mountain range. There are many ancient archeological sites on Arshan-Tuu pass and in the vicinity.

6) Trekking to Tchibitsky and Voucharakh waterfalls.

The track goes along very serene and scenic Chuya valley that is also called “Waterfall Country”. Picturesque rocky outcrops and huge boulders are intertwined with pine forests and mountain streams.

7) Pazyryk—the burial site of the Scythian kings.

Drive to Chulyshman river valley passing famous Red Gate on the way. Red Gate is the name of two cliffs of red stone that guard the way to Chibitsky Lake District. Excursion stop is Pazyryk – the burial grounds of ancient Scythian kings containing many *kurgans* – tall burial mounds. Here a rich and unique Saka culture flourished between the 7th and 3rd century BC. From there a breathtaking descent along a winding mountain road takes to Chulyshman valley abundant with rivers and waterfalls.

8) Walking tour to Akkurum site.

The Akkurum is famous for its “stone mushrooms”. Those are rocks of fanciful shape resembling mushrooms, similar to those in Turkey’s Cappadocia. The stone mushrooms formed as a result of thousands years of erosion. The cap is formed from a harder stone and the stalk is made of softer kind of stone so it becomes thinner than the “cap”.

9) Altai Nature Reserve

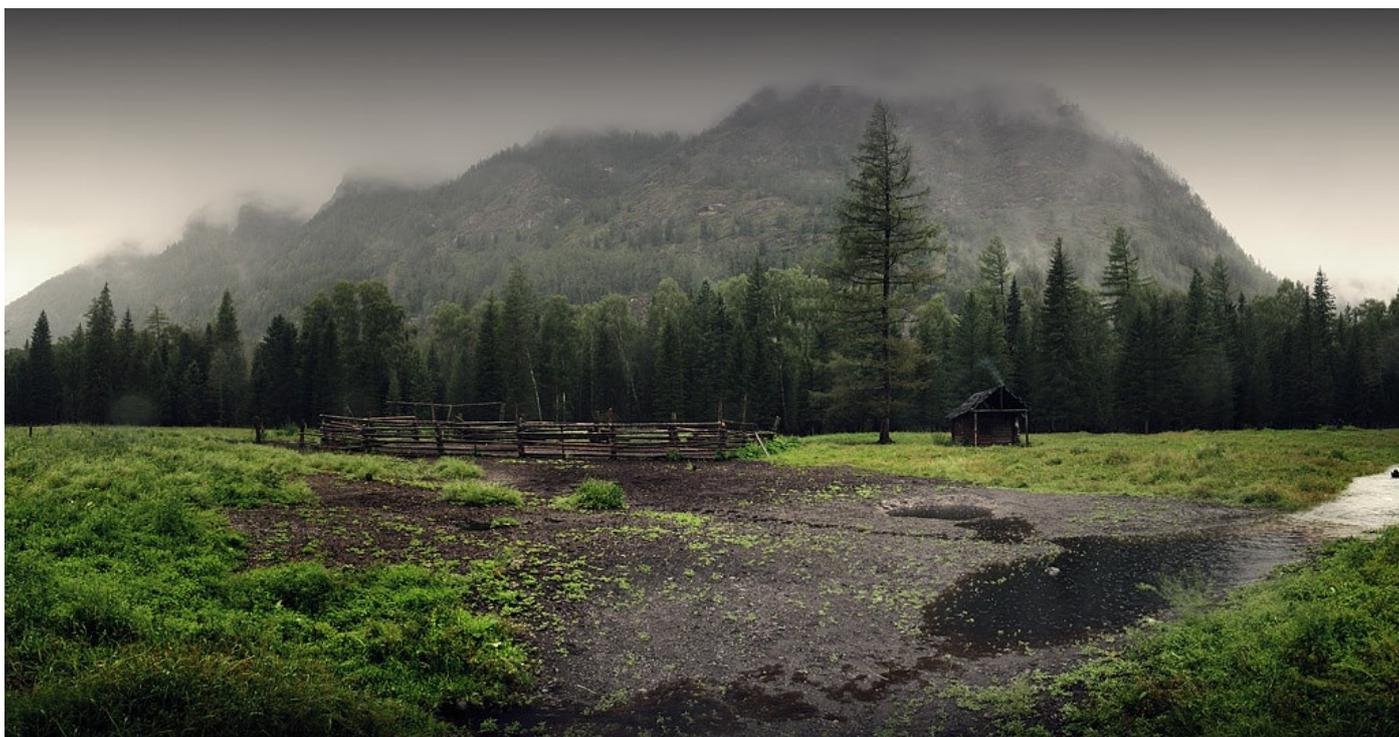
Tour to Chiri station in the Altai Nature Reserve on the Southern shore of Teletskoye Lake – the largest and one of the most beautiful lakes of Altai. The water in the lake is very transparent due to many mountain streams and rivers that constantly feed it with clear water. Teletskoye Lake is one of the areas of Altai included in UNESCO World Heritage List. On the way the group visits a unique orchard grown on the soil brought from elsewhere.

10) Boat trip on Teletskoye Lake

The trip includes a stop at Korbu waterfall. The visitors can enjoy the magnificent view of 12 meters high wall of water falling from a cliff.

11) Trekking up the Tilan-Too mountain

to enjoy fabulous panoramic view of Eastern part of Lake Teletskoye, source of Biya River and surrounding villages. The name of the mountain means “Serpent Mount” due to local legend about giant snake that used to live there.





Day 1	Arrival to Gorno-Altaysk – the capital of Altai region. Transfer to Chermal. Check in.
Day 2	Tour of Chermal (1) . After the lunch it is possible to make a trip to one of the mountains surrounding Chermal or to one of the local lakes. Dinner.
Day 3	After the breakfast rafting on Katun River (2) . Lunch at Kamyshlinsky waterfall. Overnight sleep in a comfortable guest house.
Day 4	After the breakfast we drive along Chuya Highway (3) . Stop at mountain passes Seminsky and Chike-Taman. Excursions of archeological sites Kur-Kechu and Kalbak-Tash (4) . Lunch on the way in a cafe serving traditional Altai cuisine. Overnight stay on a tourist base “Kochevnik” (Nomad) sleeping in traditional Mongol yurts. Russian steam bath.
Day 5	Trip to Arshan-Tuu mountain pass (5) Return to “Kochevnik” tourist base. After the lunch trekking along picturesque Chuya valley to Tchibitsky and Voucharakh waterfalls (6) Overall walk is about 6 km (in a few parts).
Day 6	After the breakfast drive to Chulyshman valley, stopping at Pazyryk (7) – the burial grounds of Scythian kings. Upon arrival to Chulyshman check in Ezen tourist base. Evening party around camp fire. Overnight stay in traditional Altai <i>aiil</i> (wooden cabin).
Day 7	Moving to Kyrsai tourist base. On the way stop at Akkurum site (8) of fancy “stone mushrooms”. Sightseeing of archeological monuments of Chulyshman valley. Lunch stop on the way. In the evening steam bath and tasty dinner. Overnight stay in warm houses. Daily walking is 4 km.
Day 8	Excursion to Chiri station in Altai Nature Reserve. (9) Back to Kyrsai base.
Day 9	Boat trip on Teletskoye Lake (10) . Lunch at Korbu waterfall. Overnight stay at comfortable rooms of Solnechnaya Gorka tourist base.
Day 10	Ascent to Tilan-Too mountain (741 meters high) (11) . After the lunch trip to Tretya River with lively waterfall cascades. After the dinner farewell party.
Day 11	After the breakfast departure back to Gorno-Altaysk.

BAIKAL



Baikal is one of the most famous lakes on our planet. It is situated in South-East Siberia. Lake Baikal is the oldest (25 million years) and deepest (1,700 m) lake in the world. It contains one fifth of the world's total freshwater reserve.

Its age and isolation have produced one of the world's richest and most unusual freshwater faunas, that's why it is sometimes called 'Galapagos of Russia'. Baikal is one of the most biodiverse lakes on Earth, with 1,340 species of animal, 745 of them met only there. Additionally there are 570 species of plant, 150 are also unique for the region.

The landscape surrounding the lake is very diverse, with its mountains, forests, tundra, lakes, islands and steppes, is exceptionally picturesque.

The whole Lake Baikal is listed by UNESCO in the World Heritage List. since 1996. The area surrounding the lake has five Nature Reserves and National Parks and number of other protected territories.

The Baikal region has around 1,200 historical, archaeological and cultural monuments. A number of these are considered sacred by local native population. The local cultures form a vivid mix of distinctive traditions and have very long and interesting history.

Among the native peoples of Baikal region the most numerous are Buryats. They were originally nomadic peo-

ple of Mongolic stock, related to Mongols by language, culture and religion. Majority of Buryats are Buddhists of Tibetan branch, but some are still following ancient Shamanism, making the region one of the last strongholds where classical Shamanism, the prehistoric religion of humankind, still survives.

Another unique cultural tradition of the Buryats is a traditional dance of a very old origin called Yokhor. Members of the community gather around a camp fire, take each others hands and dance around with rhythmic singing. Buryats have many myths, folk stories and epic tales.

The Buryat cultural tradition is ecological in its origin and based on the cult of nature. The environment has traditionally been deeply respected by Buryats due to the nomadic way of life. The harsh climatic conditions of the region have created a fragile balance between humans, society and the environment itself. This has led to a delicate approach to nature, oriented not towards its conquest but rather towards a harmonious interaction and equal partnership with it.

The majority of local population are Russians. The first Russian Cossacks came to the area in mid-17 century. Like in the rest of Siberia they built fortresses and towns, traded with local native population, shared cultural trends and sometimes intermarried with them. The Russian settlers also brought with them their religion – Orthodox Christianity, both in form of official Russian

Church and in form of Old Believers.

The Old Believers separated from the main body of the Russian Orthodox Church after religious reform of 1666. They didn't support Patriarch Nikon who introduced reforms to make Russian Church more in line with other contemporary Orthodox Churches in the West. Old Believers decided to stick to the old ways of worshiping and life and where prosecuted, sometimes severely, by the Russian state.

One of the main cities of the region is Irkutsk. Sometimes called 'the Paris of Siberia' Irkutsk have always been the main cultural and administrative hub of the whole area. In the early 19th century, many Russian artists, officers, and nobles were sent into exile in

Siberia for their part in the Decembrist revolt against Tsar Nicholas I. Irkutsk became the major center of intellectual and social life for these exiles, and much of the city's cultural heritage comes from them; many of their wooden houses, adorned with ornate, hand-carved decorations, survive today.

The famous Trans-Siberian Railway runs along the Southern shore of Baikal connecting the cities of the region with the rest of Russia as well as with China and also providing a stunning views of the surrounding landscapes to its passengers.

The cultural and natural diversity of Baikal region make it one of the most interesting destination for those interested to explore Russia and in particular Siberia.

LAND OF FOUR RELIGIONS



The tour includes:

1) Irkutsk city tour

For most of its history Irkutsk has been unofficial capital of Eastern Siberia. The city was little affected by modern urban reconstruction and mostly kept its historical look and original layout. There is plenty of fine historical buildings, especially in the central part of the city, many of them are residential houses made of wood with richly decorated carved window frames. Church of the Savior is one of the first stone buildings in the city, built in the beginning of 18 century on the place

where the original wooden church once stood. The other church of the same period – beautifully decorated Epiphany Cathedral. The tour also pays attention to the famous figures of Russian history who lived there and visited Irkutsk.

2) Ust'-Orda

This town is the center of Buryat culture in the area. Here we visit local museum featuring the history of Buryat people. Next we meet local shaman who performs Shamanic ritual. A folk dance band performs traditional Yokhor dance in which the travellers can also take part.

3) Olkhon island

Olkhon is the largest island on Baikal Lake and the fourth largest lake island in the world. Its population mostly consists of the native Buryat people. The landscape combines high hills and steep cliffs raising above the waters of the lake with taiga, steppe and even a small desert. The island even has its own small lakes. A deep strait separates the island from the mainland. The indigenous Buryats, adherents of Shamanism, believe the island to be a spiritual place. On the western coast of the island there is Baikal's most famous landmark, the Shaman's Rock. Natives believe that Burkhan, a modern religious cult figure of the Altai peoples, lives in the cave in this rock. The rock is one of nine Asian Most Sacred Places.

Olkhon has the largest concentration of archeological monuments in the whole Baikal area. There are also many local shrines called *obo*.

4) Ulan-Ude city tour

Ulan-Ude is the capital city of Buryatia – the land of Buryat people. It is located about 100 kilometers southeast of Lake Baikal. The city is the center of Tibetan Buddhism in Russia.

There are also a number of Orthodox churches as well as old merchants' mansions richly decorated with wood and stone carving in the historical center of Ulan-Ude, along the river banks which are exceptional examples of Russian classicism. The city has a large ethnographic museum which represents the history of the peoples of the region. There is also a large and highly unusual statue of the head of Vladimir Lenin in the central square, the largest in the world.



5) Ivolginsky Datsan

A datsan is a monastery and a place of Buddhist learning in Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. Ivolginsky Datsan is the largest and the most important of this kind in Russia. It was opened in 1945 as the primal Buddhist spiritual centre and the headquarters of the Central Spiritual Buddhist Board of the Soviet Union.

Nowadays it serves as the center of Buddhist community of Russia, as well as residence of Pandido Khambo lama, the head of the Russian Buddhists.

6) Tarbagatay – the Old Believer's town

Tarbagatay – is one of the centers of Old Believers in the Baikal region. The followers of the Old Rite treat the travellers with the local cuisine. The local folk band sings the old songs and performs traditional wedding ceremony according to the Old Believers way. The group visits museum of the local traditional culture and the Old Believer's church.

Day 1	Arrival to Irkutsk. City tour (1)
Day 2	After the breakfast transfer to Olhon through Ust'-Orda (2). Folklore program. In the evening arrival to Olhon (3). After the dinner walking tour of Huzhir town – the administrative center of Olhon. Visit to the Shaman's Rock.
Day 3	Excursion to Hoboy peninsula in the north of the island. Stop at <i>obo</i> (shrine) of one of the local clans. Visit to Cape of Sagan-Hushun – very beautiful and picturesque white rock formation. There is a number of the archeological sites around.
Day 4	Return to Irkutsk. Train to Ulan-Ude.
Day 5	Arrival to Ulan-Ude. City tour (4).
Day 6	Excursion to Ivolginsky Datsan (5). On the way back stop at Lion's Mountain. After that tour to Tarbagatay (6) the Old Believer's town. Back to Ulan-Ude.
Day 7	Departure from Ulan-Ude or Irkutsk.

BEAUTY OF BAIKAL

1) Ulan-Ude city tour

Ulan-Ude is the capital city of Buryatia – the land of Buryat people. It is located about 100 kilometers southeast of Lake Baikal. The city is the center of Tibetan Buddhism in Russia.

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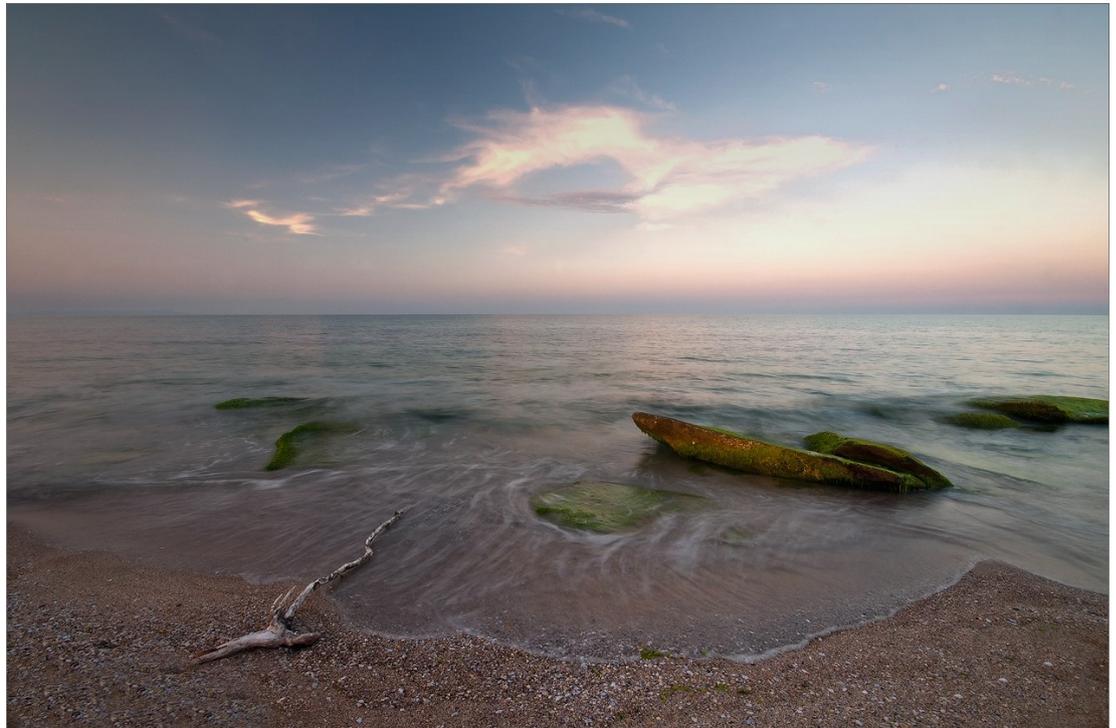
There is also a large and highly unusual statue of the head of Vladimir Lenin in the central square, the largest in the world.

2) Ust'-Barguzin tour

An old Cossack town founded in the days when the Russians first came to this part of Siberia. The place still somehow keeps the look and feel of the frontier town at the gates of the Wild-Wild-East. Beyond of Ust'-Barguzin lies protected territory of Trans-Baikal National Park and there is not much of civilized territory or good roads for a few hundreds kilometers. The main means of transportation in this part of the world is Baikal Lake itself, or boats and ships to be precise.

3) Baikal seals

Boat trip to Ushkan'i islands where colonies of Baikal seals reside. Baikal seals are local endemic species that have some archaic features showing their very ancient origin. They are also some of the smallest true seals. Those peaceful and cute



animals can be observed from a special viewing platform in their natural habitat.

4) Trip to Barguzin Valley

Barguzin River valley is situated between two mountain ranges and forms the heart of Dzherga Nature Preserve. It is said that the grave of Genghis Khan the Fearsome Conqueror of Lands is somewhere in this valley. There are many fanciful rock formations in the valley. One of them, near Suvo village, reminds huge ruined towers of an ancient castle. Another is called Bull-Stone and considered a sacred place by the locals. In the valley there is another picturesque old Cossack village called Barguzin surrounded by mountains.

5) Boat trip to Tchivyrkuisky Bay.

Tchivyrkuisky Bay is the second biggest on Baikal Lake. Lunch stop at Kuburlik fishing village. Lunch in a local family. Next stop is the Zmeinaya (Serpent) Bay, famous for its hot medicinal springs.

Day 1	Arrival to Ulan-Ude. Transfer to Ust'-Barguzin. City tour (1).
Day 2	Boat trip to Ushkan'i islands (2). Watching Baikal seals.
Day 3	Trip to Barguzin Valley (3). Back to Ust'-Barguzin.
Day 4	Boat trip to Tchivyrkuisky Bay (4). Back to Ust'-Barguzin.
Day 5	Back to Ulan-Ude. City tour (optional) as in the previous tour.

KRASNOYARSK KRAI



The recorded history of Siberia started in 1581, when Russian Cossacks, commanded by Yermak, broke through the Tatar state of Siberian Khanate successor of the Golden Horde and entered vast domain of Siberia proper. The colonization of Siberia in many ways similar to the American run for Wild West, was done by pioneers and free enterprising traders as well as by the soldiers and exiles. In the Russian case it was the Fur Rush, rather than Golden Rush that attracted large numbers of adventurers. Great modern change to Siberia was the Trans-Siberian railway, constructed in 1891–1916. It linked Siberia more closely to the rapidly-industrializing Russia of Nicholas II. Millions of peasants moved to Siberia at that time looking for better life and land.

Krasnoyarsk is one of the oldest and biggest of the Siberian cities, founded by the Cossacks commander Andrey Dubensky in 1628, and for 100 years Krasnoyarsk used to be the Russian frontier advanced post. When Siberia was finally joined to Russia in 1690 the fortress officially received the status of a town. The extension of the Great Siberian Post Road in 1735 stimulated further development of the town. The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad in 1895 turned it into a big in-

dustrial center. The city is situated on the banks of the deep water powerful Yenisey River that is a symbolic border between the Western and the Eastern Siberias. The city, with the current population around 1 million, stretches for 18 km along the left bank of Yenisey and for 25 km along the right one. The original symbol of Krasnoyarsk is a Chapel of the Saint Veil (Paraskeva Pyatnitsa) built in 1855 on top of the sentry hill that can be seen from everywhere in the city. The breathtaking panoramic view of Krasnoyarsk with its gold church cupolas and crosses surrounded by picturesque rocks covered with conifers can be enjoyed from this hill.

The town of **Divnogorsk** is situated within 40 km southeast of Krasnoyarsk. It originated as a settlement built for the constructors of the **Krasnoyarskaya Hydro Power Station** in 1957. The fabulously picturesque Sayan Mountains account for the name of the town - Divnogorsk means 'wonderful mountains'. The town was designed as a staircase with the steps formed by green terraces descending to the Yenisey bank.

The modern town is one of the most picturesque towns known for its impeccable ecology. The construction of the Power Sta-

tion began in 1959, and completed by 1971. The assembly of the Hydro Station includes the dam, the building of the Station and the unique sloping ship elevators. This Station produces 6 mln kw, and is the 2nd powerful station of the country. The height of the dam is 124 m, the large water reservoir is 380 km long, and occupies 2000 sq.m.

The village **Ovsyanka** situated between Krasnoyarsk and Divnogorsk, on the right bank of Yenisey, was founded in 1671. Victor Astafiev, the writer, was born in this village. It was him who initiated building the library and the church of the St. Innocent of Irkutsk here.



The State Nature Preserve “**Stolby**” (the Pillars) founded in 1925 is situated within 3 km southwest of Krasnoyarsk, on the right bank of Yenisey. The 80 groups of gigantic pillars formed during million years by winds and rains stretch for 34 km; some pillars are over 100 m high. **The reserve for fishing** is situated within 3 hours drive from Krasnoyarsk, in the confluence of Angara and Yenisey. There are a 2-storey wooden cottage, 3 summerhouses, a Russian bath, and everything a fisherman needs for a rich catch.

Yeniseysk was founded as a jail by Cossacks in 1619. The waterway from the River Ob towards Lake Baikal was the main trade way for many years. Yeniseysk being in the middle of this way was growing quickly, and became the base for Cossacks who conquered the Northern, Southern and Eastern areas of Siberia for Russia. Yeniseysk is a historical preserve

town, as numerous original buildings are protected by the State. In the beginning of the 18th century a few scientific expeditions arrived at Yeniseysk for research work and investigation of the Siberian Northern and Eastern territories. In the 19th century the discovery of the golden lodes in taiga around the town attracted lots of gold miners, manufacturers and merchants that served to further growth of the town, and to the development of its economics and culture.

Lesosibirsk is situated southwest of the plateau beyond the River Angara, on the left bank of Yenisey, within 300 km from Krasnoyarsk. It is the center of the timber industry with about 30 wood processing enterprises. The highlight of this town is the Cathedral of the Holy Cross built of red bricks. This is the only church in Siberia with 30 cupolas 63 m high.

Day 1	Arrival in Krasnoyarsk , transfer to the hotel, check-in, breakfast, time at leisure; 13:00 – lunch at the hotel; 14:00 – general sightseeing tour of the city including a visit to the Museum of the Local Lore ; trip to Divnogorsk via Ovsyanka village towards the Krasnoyarskaya Hydro Power Station ; return to the hotel; at 19:00 folklore show artists welcome the guests with vodka, bread and salt according to the Russian traditions; folklore concert, the guests are offered to play the folk music instruments; tour of the art saloon “Diana” to see the collection of the artistic objects made by local craftsmen of birch bark, wood, stone, mammoth tusk, antlers, paintings by local artists. Dinner at the hotel.
Day 2	Breakfast, excursion to the Nature Preserve “Stolby” . Lunch in a cafe in the Preserve area, 5pm return to the hotel; in the evening visit to the opera theater. Dinner at the hotel.
Day 3	Breakfast, trip to the Fishing reserve, briefing about history and culture of Siberia, in the afternoon a stroll in the woods, boat fishing, Russian bath. Dinner. In the evening meeting with local people, folk songs and dances.
Day 4	Breakfast; transfer to Yeniseysk , sightseeing tour of the town including a visit to the Iberian Nunnery , to the Friary of the Saint Savior, and to the Assumption Church, lunch in Yeniseysk, after lunch trip to Lesosibirsk , sightseeing tour of the town, a visit to the Timber Museum , Exhibition Hall, and to the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, return to the Fishing Reserve. Dinner.
Day 5	Breakfast; all day in the village of the old believers.
Day 6	Breakfast, transfer to Krasnoyarsk. Lunch in a downtown cafe, transfer to the airport .

YAKUTIA



Yakutia (Sakha) Republic is situated in North-Eastern part of Russia. If it would be a separate country it would be eighth biggest country in the world. It is also the biggest of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation.

Nevertheless the population of Yakutia is less than one million of people. About half of it are native Yakuts, the rest are smaller indigenous peoples of Siberia as well as Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars and other ethnic groups. The Yakuts came to the land that now bears their name from Lake Baikal area, three centuries before the Russians, as brave and fearsome warriors, conquering smaller tribes as they went.

The traditional culture of Yakuts has similarities to life of nomadic peoples of Central Asia but has very distinct features due to harsh climate that they had to survive in. In central part of the region they combine husbandry, hunting and fishing. Their livestock is specially selected to live through the cold snowy winters.

Heroic epic tale of the Yakuts called *Olonkho* is included in UNESCO Cultural Heritage List. Yakuts practice throat singing and play mouth harp. Though most of Yakuts converted to Orthodox Christianity, some of them still practice Shamanism.

The climate of Yakutia is known for its extremes. The Verkhoyansk in Yakutia is known as the

Pole of Cold, being the coldest area in the northern hemisphere. Some of the lowest natural temperatures ever recorded on the planet have been here in the winter. On the other hand it can be quite hot in the summer, from mild +19 C up to over 30 C on some particular days.

The nature of Yakutia is very diverse. About 40% of Sakha lies above the Arctic circle and all of it is covered by permafrost which greatly influences the region's ecology. Arctic and subarctic tundra compose the middle region, where lichen and moss grow as great green carpets and are favorite pastures for reindeer. Below the tundra is the vast taiga forest region. Larch trees dominate in the north and stands of fir and pine begin to appear in the south. Taiga forests cover almost half of Yakutia's territory.

There are many rivers in Yakutia. Lena is the greatest river of East Siberia, one of the ten biggest and longest rivers of the world. Its source is in the mountains near Baikal Lake and it flows all the way into the Arctic Ocean. In the language of the native Siberian Evenk people the name means simply 'The Big River'. It was discovered for the big world in the beginning of 17 century by the Russian fur hunters. In 1632 the first *ostrog* (wooden fortress) of Yakutsk had been founded, to become later the capital of North-Eastern Siberia and modern Sakha (Yakutia) Re-

public of Russian Federation. For most of its course Lena flows across vast, majestic and mostly unpopulated Siberian landscapes. Western bank of the river is mostly flat and inundated in the spring. Eastern bank is steep and hilly. There are many scenic cliffs and crags along it. The most famous and stunning of them are Lena Pillars which were included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Yakutia is blessed with huge reserves of natural resources: oil, gas, coal, diamonds, gold, silver, tin, tungsten and many others. The region produces 99% of all Russian diamonds and over 25% of the diamonds mined in the world. As the result Yakutia is one of the richest regions of Russia, combining modern amenities and traditional lifestyle.

UP THE GREAT SIBERIAN RIVER

The tour includes:

1) Yakutsk city tour

The capital of Yakutia (Sakha Republic) is called Yakutsk and situated about 450 km south of the Arctic circle. It is a major port on the Lena River. During the tour the group visits some museums such as Museum of Culture of the Native Peoples of the North, Sakha Republic Treasury, Museum of Permafrost.

2) The Pillars of Lena

UNESCO World Heritage listed The Pillars of Lena inspire awe and awaken imagination.

The picturesque shapes of the cliffs is a result of erosion processes in permafrost condition. There are also unique tukan blowing sands around this area which is state-protected as Nature Park. It is possible to ascend to the top of the Pillars to enjoy the view of the great river from there. The program of the visit to the Nature Park also includes introduction to the

traditions and culture of the local native tribal people.

3) Olekminsk tour

The town was founded by the Cossacks led by Pyotr Beketov in 1636, sited on the left bank of the Lena opposite the mouth of the Olyokma River. The outpost was later moved a few kilometers upstream, to a location less prone to flooding in spring.

As the junction for river traffic on the Lena and Olyokma, the settlement was the base for Russian expeditions further east and eventually became a trade center on the river route to Yakutsk. During World War II, an airfield was built here for the Alaska-Siberian (ALSIB) air route used to ferry American Lend-Lease aircraft to the Eastern Front.

4) Vitim

Next stop is an old Siberian town of Vitim. This settlement situated in a very picturesque natural surrounding saw very little



industrial development during last 380 years. There is sawmill in the town but in general there is not much industry in the town so it's ecologically clean. The main source of income in Vitim in the past centuries have been gold prospecting.

5) Lena Cheeks

Further up the river we arrive to the Lena Cheeks. It's a narrow winding canyon surrounded by huge red rocks up to 200 metres tall. The Lena Cheeks is one of the most beautiful and famous sites on the Lena river.

6) Lensk

Further up the river there is a town called Lensk. It's the main

hub for the diamond trade – one of the major industries of Yakutia. Lensk is also very important hub for the oil trade – another big source of income for Yakutia.

7) Mirny. Dimond works

Next day the group lives the boat and takes a ride on a bus to Mirny – the diamond capital of Russia and has an open air diamond mine – one of the biggest in the world of this sort. Here it is possible to visit the mine's viewing platform as well as the museum of kimberlite diamonds. Also the group visits Nature Park “Living Diamonds of Yakutia” where you can see the local flora and fauna.

Day 1	Arrival to Yakutsk. City tour (1) . Boarding the boat. Departure to the river cruise.
Day 2	Excursion to Pillars of Lena (2) . Welcome party. Time for photos on the top. Free time for a piknic on the river bank. Amusement program on the boat.
Day 3	Leisure stop at Hara Balyk. Fishing on the river. Amusement program on the boat.
Day 4	Olekminsk tour (3) . Excursion to the local museum. Amusement program on the boat.
Day 5	Ura river. Amusement program on the boat.
Day 6	Vitim tour (4) . Amusement program on the boat.
Day 7	Lena cheeks (5) . Leasure stop. Amusement program on the boat.
Day 8	Lensk town tour (6) . Walk on the embankment. Transfer to Mirny. Overningt in the hotel (***)
Day 9	Mitny town tour. Excursion to the diamond works (7). Local flight to Yakutsk.
Day 10	Departure from Yakutsk.





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