



Altai - in the Temple of the pure nature (Russia)

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Russia's nature does offer more than endless steppes and also mountains different than Kawkaz... Far East among the boundless Asian space, in the middle of this widest continent, from the infinite Siberian wilderness - raises one of the most captivating mountains in on the Earth – Altai. Vast forests, turbulent rivers, mirror surfaced lakes, snow-capped peaks and amongst them the highest one – Belukha, sparkling masses of ice, vertical rocky walls charm the travelers. The peak itself severe and hardly approachable but surroundings so perfect for tourism – picturesque pathways, views and...the silence and purity of one of the last virgin places on the planet, inspiration that have given the beginning of Nikolay Rerikh's spiritual teaching.

If you like mountains and searching for a place which is not congested with mass tourism it is Altai!
A return to the solitary, primary beauty of the nature!

Tour Highlights: the ancient rock paintings by Kyulu river; the milky-turquoise waters of Kucherla river; Kucherla lake at 1780m.a.s.l; the spectacular view over Belukha Mountain from Kara-Tyurek pass (3060m.a.s.l); Ak-Kem lake at 2000m.a.s.l; Verhniy Uymon village - founded by religious group more than 300 years ago;

Itinerary

Day 1. Transfer Novosibirsk – Ust-Koksa.

Leaving Novosibirsk at 8.00 pm and from Barnaul at 11.50 pm. The road goes along the famous Chuysky Tract, once a main route of Russia - China trade. The road goes along Kanskaya steppe and finishes its run in Uymoskaya valley. The change of different landscapes and natural zones provides the traveler with general impression of this unique region of Asia.

Day 2. Ust-Koksa

Arrival in Ust-Koksa. Dinner. Getting the equipment. Instructing. Supper.

Day 3. Ust-Koksa – Tyungur - Kucherla river

Early awakening. Breakfast. Transfer to Tyungur at 08.00 a.m. The Kucherla river (in Altai - Kudzhur-ly, «with saline soils») has a wonderful milky-turquoise water. The total length of the river is about 50 kilometers.

Day 4. Up the valley of Kucherla river

On the way in a rock cave next to the Kyulu river the ancient people created more than 100 rock paintings. Since the ancient times people have settled down under the shadow of Mysterious Belukha Mountain. More ten paintings are situated on the surrounding rocks not far away from the cave.

Day 5. Radial excursion to Kucherla lake

The lake is at 1780m.a.s.l, 5220 meters long, 900 meters wide and 55 meters deep. There is fish, which leave the running circles on the lake surface, sometimes disturbs its blue-green waters.

Day 6. Kucherla lake - Kara-Tyurek pass – Ak-Kem lake

Climbing up the mountain pass of Kara-Tyurek (3060 meters). From the top of the pass the spectacular panoramic view on Belukha Mountain and endless snow peaks of Katun ridge unfolds in front of the traveler. It is a good opportunity to make pictures from the bird's eye view where the presence of eternal outer space is clear and tangible. Overnight at Ak-Kem lake.

Day 7. Ak-Kem lake – the foot of Belukha

Radial excursion to the bottom of Belukha to the realm of scalding ice and icy caves at the feet of the incredibly high vertical wall of the Ak-Kem glacier.

Day 8. Ak-Kem lake – the Time for rest next to Ak-Kem lake at the altitude of 2000 meters. In a distance the huge icy masses of Ak-Kem glacier is visible. In still weather the Belukha Mountain is reflected in the green-white waters of the lake. After the lunch there is an excursion to the Yarlu gorge where the entire town is

built from stones by the followers of mystical teachings of the famous Russian researcher and painter Nikolay Rerikh

Day 9. The valley of Ak-Kem river

Going up the speedy Ak-Kem river with milky-white water. The word Ak-Kem means White Water in Turkish language and corresponds with the reality. The river starts in Ak-Kem glacier and carries in its steams the tiny pieces of white limestones from the slopes of Belukha.

Day 10. Ak-Kem river - Kuzuyak pass - Ust-Koksa

Climbing up the Kuzuyak mountain pass (1513 meters). Coming back to Ust-Koksa settlement. Relaxation. Supper.

Day 11. Ust-Koksa - Verhniy Uymon village - Novosibirsk

Time for rest. After the lunch transfer to Verhniy Uymon village. The village is one of the oldest settlements in the area and was founded by religious group of old-believers more than 300 years ago. There are two museums in Verhniy Uymon village: The Ethnographical museum named after famous artist Rerih and The Museum of old-believers' religious traditions and culture. After the excursion departure to Barnaul/Novosibirsk at 05.00 p.m.

Day 12. Novosibirsk

Arriving in Novosibirsk at 11.00 a.m.

Tour type: GT

Difficulty grade: C

Best period: June-September

Trekking conditions:

There are 10 days of moderate to strenuous hiking on varied terrain (maximum elevation is 3060 m). Large proportion of the walking is quite demanding, though technically it is not hard, a reasonable degree of fitness is required.

Weather:

In summer Altai is under the influence of arctic aerial masses, which become warmer in West Siberia. They cause rainy and chilly weather in the mountains. The highest quantity of rain falls in the mountains in the first half of August. In the middle of the third ten-day period of August snow doesn't melt at the altitude of 2600 meters or so and then it comes the best weather here for a week or two. Generally speaking, a rapid changes of hazy and damp into dry and warm weather are common things in September and October.

Equipment and clothing:

warm jacket, rain gear, trekking boots, trainers and slippers, track-suit and warm hat, 2-3 T-shirts, shorts, 4 pairs of simple socks and 2 pairs of warm ones, cap and sun-glasses, bathing suit, flashlight, knife, matches, electric batteries, personal tableware, personal hygiene utensils; See also "General".

The base camps:

Base Camp "Vysotnik"

It is situated on a picturesque bank of the Katun River which is in front of the village of Tiungur (850 m), 750 km by car from the city of Barnaul. Wooden Buildings of Hostel, Café, Bar and Sauna (Russian Banya) are carved in The Russian Style. There is a car park, rental equipment, a storage room, volleyball and badminton ground. Russian and foreign guests may stay at Hostel in double, triple or four-bedded rooms or at double camping tents with bed linen. It is possible to stay at your own tent on a specialized ground. Café with Siberian and European cuisine works up to the last client! At the camp you can buy maps, typographic, CD and DVD material concerning Russia, Altai, as well as Altai souvenirs. All standard tours take their start from "Vysotnik". They are: trekking, climbing to Belukha, horseback riding, rafting.

The Mountain Refuge Ak-Kem

The Mount Refuge "Ak-Kem" is situated in Altai Mountains on the bank of The Ak-Kem River in a forest area at the height of 1950 m, which is 1,5 km lower than the same-name lake. The Camp is equipped with wooden buildings of The Russian style: banya, ail (traditional Altai building). Three-time meals are served in a canteen. You may also buy some food here. There is storage room and rental equipment. According to preliminary order you may get some equipment right there. There is radio communication with the base camp "Vysotnik". The Mount Refuge "Ak-Kem" is the basic camp for making the Belukha ascent.

Luggage transportation: From day 3 to day 6 of the trekking the luggage is taken by horses, after two days camping descending back to the valley - then you will have to carry your luggage!

Included in the price: full board (except the meal during the transfer); excursions per program with entrance fees (11-th day); transfer from Novosibirsk/Barnaul to the starting point of the route and back to Novosibirsk/Barnaul; guides/interpreters; special equipment (tent, sleeping bag, mat, backpack, equipment for camp-fire); insurance; invitation letter for Russian visa; pack-horses rental (from 3-d till 6-th days);

Excluded from the price: air tickets; consular fees for visa;

Extra cost services: meeting at the airport; accommodation in hotels in Novosibirsk or Barnaul;

GENERAL

TOUR TYPES & GRADES

We provide different varieties of tours as regards to their types and difficulty grades!

Whether you will choose individual and group tours with a guide or combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip depends on you. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

GT: Group tours There is a guide accompanying you throughout the whole trip, meeting you at the airport upon arrival and leaving you at the airport again for departure. We use well-trained and experienced local people with good knowledge of English. The group size is normally 7-12 people, if not specially mentioned.

Difficulty grades

In order to prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in an advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling every day. Swimming a couple of times a week is also highly recommended. You do not need much to get yourself in shape. And don't forget that the most important tip for an unforgettable active holiday is to choose a trip which corresponds to your physical condition!

C: Difficult These tours include trekking which is a little harder, normally on a challenging terrain. We take it for granted that you are in good condition and fit. You should be physically prepared at home to get the maximum of the tour. Most of the trekking is done at a greater height (about 3000 m). As on other tours you are free to skip some treks and have a rest.

Money and personal expenses

You will need some extra money to cover meals, drinks and extra trips not included in the tour price. Additional money for souvenirs and personal things could also be spent.

The payments in Altai are usually made in "Ruble", which is the official currency. The exchange rate with EU and USD is approximately: RUB:EU - 36:1; RUB:USD - 24:1. Travelers should not rely on automated teller machines (ATM) for cash. Major hotels and restaurants in Moscow may be able to suggest locations for cashing travelers checks or obtaining cash advances on credit cards. Here are some examples of comparative costs in Russia (NB: prices in mid-range restaurants!):

- Coffee, tea -1 Euro
- Beer (0,5 l) – 2 Euro
- Bottle of water (0,5 l) – 1 Euro
- Three-course lunch – 7-8 Euro

Equipment and clothing:

You should always remember that you must try to keep the weight of your clothing equipment down to a minimum. Your packed rucksack should weigh no more than 10-15 kilograms.

Recommended items: waterproof rucksack (60-80 l) & daypack (35 l); walking waterproof boots with suitable ankle support; foam sleeping mat, 3 season sleeping bag; light casual shoes for walking and/or for travelling; gaiters; loose, casual trousers for trekking; waterproof trousers; fleece windstopper jacket; windproof, waterproof outer shell garment (breathable if possible!); hat for sun protection; sunglasses with UV protection; sunscreen lotion and lip balm; water bottle; torch (headlamp); mobile phone; underwear (not cotton); mosquito repellent; trekking sticks.

Vaccination

Vaccination against tick-borne encephalitis is recommended when traveling to Altai in summer (especially in June and the first two weeks of July). Check latest requirements with your doctor or vaccination clinic prior to departure.

Cell phone coverage

A cell phone with you while being on this tour is something you should have. Cellular phone services in Russia are almost always much cheaper than calls from the hotel room. Roaming is extremely expensive. There is no coverage around camp Vysotnik.

Electricity

220V, 50Hz
You will have access to electricity only in Barnaul and camp Vysotnik.

Briefly about Altai

Territory: 92 600 sq. km.
Capital city: Gorno Altaysk
Internal borders: Kemerovo Oblast (N); Republic of Khakassia (NE); Tuva Republic (E); Altai Krai (W/NW)

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International borders: Mongolia (SE); China (S); Kazakhstan (S/SW)
Population: 202,947 (2002)
Ethnic groups: ethnic Russians 57.4%, ethnic Altay people 30.6%, Kazakhs (6.0%), Telengits (1.2%), Tubalars (0.8%), Ukrainians (0.7%), others (3.3%)
Religion: The traditional religion of the native Altaians is shamanism. Ethnic Russians primarily practice Orthodox Christianity. Tibetan Buddhism has also recently begun making some inroads by way of neighboring Mongolia and Tuva.
Highest point: Mt. Belukha (4506m)

Weather

The climate of Altai Republic is temperate continental with cold winters and hot summers, greatly affected by altitude fluctuations (from 350 to 4500m). Winters have very severe conditions and an absolute minimum of -62°C has been registered in the mountain valleys. Average January temperatures in Tchuya Steppe are -31,7°C, while in the south extremity of the Teletskoye Lake - only -8,1°C. Summers in the Altai Republic are colder than in the neighboring valley, due to glaciers, numerous rivers and lakes and considerable height of mountains. While average July temperatures in lowlands and midlands are 16-18°C, at the altitude of approximately 2000 m. they are 8-10°C. Summers are the hottest in the intermountain hollows, where the temperature rises up to 30-35°C. Precipitation (rain, melted snow, and other forms of moisture) ranges from (2000 - 2500 mm per year) at the mountain ridges to 500 - 600 mm per year in the midlands. In the region of Belukha Mountain these numbers reach 3000 mm per year.