

EXPERT field expedition to pilot districts Ridder and Katon-Karagai and workshops

July 14-27, 2014 with 5 participants from Kazakhstan, 5 representatives of EU partners

The expedition was organized by the EcoAltai and Machaon International in cooperation with associated project partner National Park Gesouse and main project partners Boomerang and TEC. The expedition aimed to assess the situation in pilot areas and provide feedback on local opportunities for sustainable rural tourism (SRT) from their perspective.

The expedition programme consisted of a research part (7 villages: Poperechnaja, Uryl, Topkain, Katon-Karagaj, Korobiha, Akkain (Olenij park) Akmaral, Enbek, 2 protected areas) and a meeting part (in each project district a formal and an informal workshop for protected area managers, representatives of local akimats and entrepreneurs were organized where experience from Europe was presented, criteria for a sustainable nature-based tourism defined and adaptation of EU experience and best practice discussed. Important that plans for implementation of several activities described in the project were improved and become more cost-effective thanks to the work of the expert group (for example they proposed to improve infrastructure by the organisation of international volunteer camps, not by usual ordering or construction by a building company).

Report (summary) on evaluation of tourism potential of selected protected areas and villages and propositions for SRT development

From one hand, the project area in Ridder in Katon-Karagaj district is remarkable for its high ecological, cultural and historical value. The project area encompasses 2 protected areas declared by WWF as 'Gift to the Earth', a designation provided to the most important wilderness areas. There is a process underway to inscribe the Katon Karagai National Park on the UNESCO world natural heritage list. This indicates the high value and uniqueness of the project area and is an evidence of excellent conditions for tourism and recreation, which are so far underused.

There are about 10,000 visitors per year, mainly going to mountain spas and recreation sites near lakes. In comparison, the Russian part of Altai is visited by 2 million and the Chinese part (Kanas lake area) by 1.5 million visitors each year. The project area is not affected by industrial pollution, and therefore also offers opportunities to develop organic farming and small manufacturing. The high demand for organic food and hand-made items together with the unique natural and cultural environment of the region provide a great potential for local environmentally oriented business development that can generate sufficient income for local communities.

From another hand, large countries such as Kazakhstan have specific problems in rural development in regard to the geographical extent of their territories where many villages and regions lie too far away from major cities. A significant part of the rural population in the East Kazakhstan oblast lives in poverty and is still as passive as it used to be in the era of the Soviet Union. These people lack knowledge and skills to initiate change and to start their own businesses.

So far, the project area was poorly developed for tourism. Little known sights of the area, long distances between key sight-seeing areas, lack of suitable accommodation facilities and hotels, deficit in good local guides and souvenirs contribute to a low level of tourism development. On the other hand, such less frequented spots which offer adventure and wild nature become more and more popular among a growing segment of tourists looking for active holidays (trekking, cycling, rafting, horse riding) and an authentic experience of nature and traditional culture. A key aspect is to attract this segment of tourists from Kazakhstan, Russia and possibly other countries by targeted promotion (including internet presentation) that is so far missing and increase the level of service.

Due to the lack of coordination, the tourism potential of the region is poorly managed and used. In many European countries (especially in Austria), protected areas significantly contribute to sustainable tourism development, influence the formation of socio-cultural identity and successfully co-operate with local stakeholders and coordinate SRT development. Western Altai Nature reserve and Katon-Karagai NP as well local akimats lack financial, human and institutional capacities to initiate and support their own SRT strategies and involve vulnerable groups of people in socio-economic activities.

There are no policy and institutional mechanisms at oblast and municipality levels, which would encourage collaboration between LAs, NSAs, cultural and educational organizations, protected areas and other stakeholders dedicated to tourism development and promotion.

Expert group selected main target group of tourists for each district and formulated propositions for each village and protected area for SRT development.

Target groups:

Ridder district (pilot village Poperechnaja and Western Altai nature reserve):

Kazakh people from cities - 60%

Russians - 30%

other - 10%

Katon-Karagaj district

Kazakh people from cities - 80%

Russians - 10%

other - 10%

Assessment of tourism potencial of villages and propositions for SRT development

Ridder District, Poperechnaja village

Strong and attractive for SRT sites

- ⤴ well-conserved cultural landscape and nature potential out of zapovednik
- ⤴ Only one village near Zapovednik which will bring people
- ⤴ Living style of local residents (very close to nature)
- ⤴ gastronomy and "slow food"
- ⤴ extensive agriculture and rich biodiversity as result
- ⤴ warm and friendly people

Idear for development (most of them will be started in the framwork of the project. A lot of ideas were already described in the project but will be implemented in more cost-effective way)

- ⤴ Necessary to find and train village leaders;
- ⤴ Development of series of products from non-timber productions from nature ecosystems (especially from herbs and honey);
- ⤴ easy to create souvenir production from wool, bich-barks and herbs berries and honey;
- ⤴ development of guides courses developed in cooperation with zapovenik;
- ⤴ 1 women ready to create museum of dayly live and typycal house;
- ⤴ Living museum - to use the concept;
- ⤴ Existent folklore groups need to create more authentic folklore programmes and create

costumes;

- ⤴ necessary to create model authentic house with minimum standart of hygien. Possible to organise volunteer camp for assistance for 1 owner of guest house for creation of suitable facilities for guests (playground);
- ⤴ necessary to create the package programmes for tourists and provide informational facilities (map with information about trails, houses, souvenirs, food);
- ⤴ festival programme will be developed in cooperation with Slovak partners (3-weeks volunteer camp for construction of festival place and assistance for local people in festival organising);
- ⤴ Potential place for playground is in existent place with fence;
- ⤴ Cross-marketing of zapovednik and village;
- ⤴ Potential for horse-riding and hiking - and bicikiles and skiing are too early because people will be demotivated;
- ⤴ the most suitable target group is families with children, for example is necessary to create playground in the centre of the village - necessary to buy equipment for wood working, cooking tools, electric tools;
- ⤴ Necessary to create road wooden sign with piktograms (in Katon-Karagai);
- ⤴ Art-symposium and photographer master-class will be included to festival programme;
- ⤴ necessary to involve to village development forestry and raise awareness of our project

Katon-Karagai District, Uryl village

Strong and attractive for SRT sites

- ⤴ national park and nature
- ⤴ relatively good access to village
- ⤴ demand for SRT (accommodation in rural guest houses, souvenirs, etc.) higher than supply

Idear for development

- ⤴ necessary to develop new guest houses and services
- ⤴ new programmes for tourists using fact that main target group is families with children over 7 years and old people for 1 week
- ⤴ informational tourist centre and souvenir kiosk in rural akimat
- ⤴ special measures for attracting people who are going on main road (for sale local agr. products and crafts)
- ⤴ necessary to develop at least 1 trail near Uryl (in cooperation with national park)
- ⤴ more concentrated activities near Uryl as perspective for SRTD
- ⤴ to create place for rest near the river (camping sites)
- ⤴ community-places suitable for rest as for local people as well for tourists

Topkain

- ⤴ Village near NurBulak with potencial of guest houses development
- ⤴ Model urta (in farm) created with professional assistance of the ethnographer
- ⤴ Seminars for local people on guest houses in model urta
- ⤴ The suitable place for sales souvenirs

Korobicha

- ⤴ To develop souvenirs as small models of museums exponats and package for local products
- ⤴ Special packages (glass bottle) for honey and special souvenirs about honey
- ⤴ Information stand about museum near main road
- ⤴ Organize the consultation of ethnographer for improvement of the museum
- ⤴ A lot of bees farm with symple accommodation facilities
- ⤴ Seminar on guest houses - high interest of local people
- ⤴ Produce design of etikets for honey
- ⤴ 10000 labels

Akkain (Olenij park) Akmaral, Rakhmanovskie kluci

Organize the consultation of ethnographer for improvement of the guest houses

For all villages

We met several types of house holders in villages

usual sheep and horse farm with very symple and poor facilities could be used for 1-2 hours testing traditional food and traditional way of life	
bee farm	
guest house near sanatorium which can provide health services but limited capacities of accomodation facilities	
existent guest house of reach person	
traditional rural guest house	

Propositions to all villages

- ⤴ All investments should be cofinanced;
- ⤴ necessary to create graphic style for local production;
- ⤴ to pay special attention to crusual points as sanitary;
- ⤴ volunteer camps as suitable instrument to help local people to create basic sanitary infrastructure and improve landscape
- ⤴ Trail making team training in Austria
- ⤴ 1 step is to create database of rural people who ready to participate
 - Make classifications:
 - partners
 - guardians of heritage

All need assistance in promotion and marketing

The project of promotional panorama of the village Poperechnaya

The panorama (fig.1) will be used as the basis of the internet site about the village Poperechnaya and for setting of the information center in the village and of the information center of the West-Altai nature reserve.



Fig. 1. The project of the promotional panorama of the village Poperechnaya

The following objects will be shown in the panorama:

- ▲ the guest houses (the example of internet site windows with specific information about the guest house is shown on the fig. 2);
- ▲ the main places of interest in the village;
- ▲ the houses of local food;
- ▲ the houses of local folk arts;
- ▲ directions of the main tourist routs.

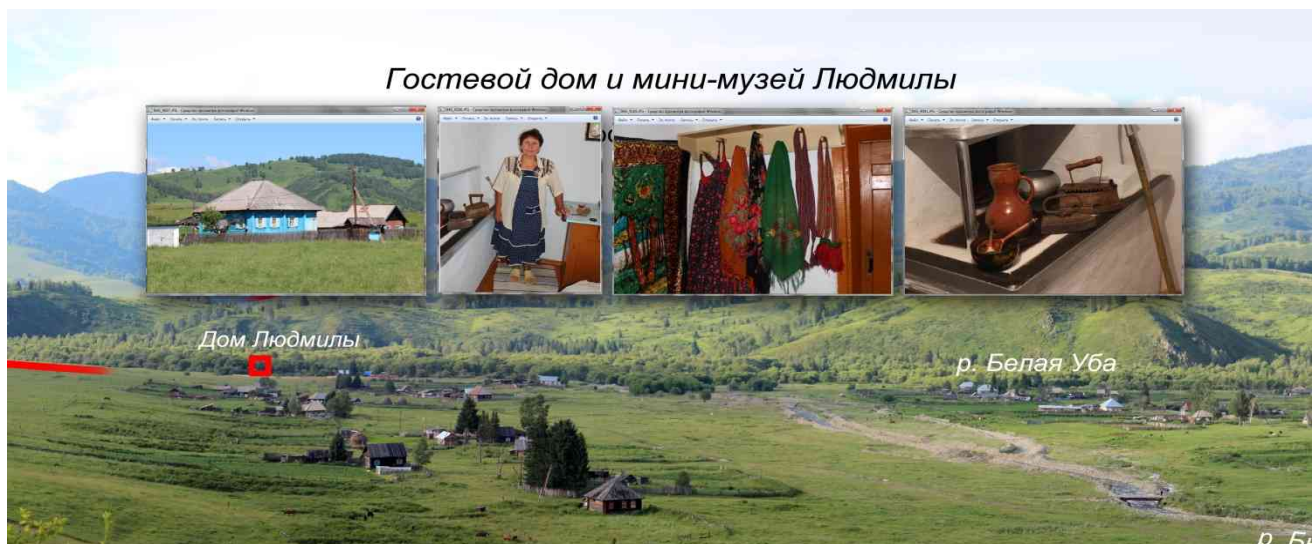


Fig. 2. The project of the internet site windows with specific information about the guest house

The project of signs of partners of the Katon-Karagay biosphere reserve and of guardians of heritage

The main requirements to signs were discussed with officials of the Katon-Karagay biosphere reserve. On the base of the results of the discussion the project of signs were elaborated. The project of sign of the Katon-Karagay biosphere reserve **partners** includes the image of the mountain Belucha and national kazakh ornament (fig. 3).



Fig.3. Project of sign of the Katon-Karagay biosphere reserve partners

The sign of guardians of heritage includes the image of the mountain Belucha and the Kazakh symbol of jurt, home, family, well-being (fig.4)



Fig.4. Project of sign of guardians of heritage of the Katon-Karagay biosphere reserve partners